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Surrogate warfare: the art of war in the 21ˢᵗ Century?

Airpower, drones and cyber-weapons are employed by states in conjunction with local armed non-state actors in an effort to coercively intervene in the crises of the 21ˢᵗ century. While the externalization of the burden of warfare is a return to pre-modern war, it is the change in the underlying socio-political relations between the state and its military agent that is a novel phenomenon in surrogate warfare. This article demonstrates that in a post-Westphalian era characterized by non-state violence, globalized conflicts, a prioritization of risk management in a mediatized environment, the state has to explore new ways to remain relevant as the primary communal security provider. Thereby, the organization of violence has departed from the employment of the state's soldier as the primary bearer of the burden of warfare to a mode of war where technological and human surrogates enable the state to manage the risks of post-modern conflict remotely. In this article, we conceptually explore surrogate warfare as a socio-political phenomenon within the context of globalized, privatized, securitized and mediatized war.

Introduction

The debate about the changing character of war is more than two decades old. While initially the 'new wars' were often merely characterized against the backdrop of the fading dynamics of the Cold War, throughout the 1990s and 2000s the debate about these allegedly new wars became more nuanced looking at a variety of different features shaping post-modern conflict. The entire socio-political and geo-strategic context in which warfare in the 21ˢᵗ century is conducted, is fundamentally different from the purely Westphalian, Clausewitzian ideas of warfare that were prevalent in the late 18ᵗʰ, 19ᵗʰ and 20ᵗʰ century. This article deals with the issue of the changing nature of war from a socio-political point of view, suggesting that surrogate warfare as the prevalent mode of war in the 21ˢᵗ century helps the state to deal with the demands put upon it when providing national security in the complex globalized context of the new millennium.

The War on the 'Islamic State' (ISIS) exemplifies how the approach to warfare has changed in the new millennium not just in the Western World but also in the Arab World. The hybridity with which ISIS operates – locally as an insurgency movement and in Europe as a terrorist organization – the asymmetry of power between Al Baghdadi's *Mujahedeen* and the diverse anti-ISIS coalition, and the various ways and means states employ fight the extremists, are indicators of a new era of warfare. First, the fight against ISIS is a globalized war. It requires counterterrorist operatives and counterinsurgents to cooperate in a transnational, multi-dimensional battlespace where armed forces and law enforcement operate across borders to tackle geographically contrapuntal

threats. Second, the War on the 'Islamic State' is one that is widely privatized, namely where the boundaries between state and non-state authority are increasingly blurry. ISIS as a pseudo-state entity is confronted by state and non-state actors who provide security to communities supplementing or substituting state authority. Third, the jihadist peril is a risk that is subjectively securitized. The *mujahedeen* in the waning self-proclaimed caliphate are as much part of the intangible threat environment as homegrown terrorists in the suburbs of Europe's cities are. Fourth, fighting ISIS is a battle on narratives as well as one using kinetics. In the 21st century where war is a spectacle broadcasted live via social media, victories are no longer just won on the physical battlefield but also in the cyberspace and in the information sphere. A subjective, ideologically-shaped perception of victory can sometimes overcome an actual military defeat on the battlefield.

It is within this context that the state is trying to remain relevant as the communal security provider. Communal security here refers to the security of the community the state presides over. The state, which developed into the monopolist on violence during the 19th century, needs to justify its existence by delivering on people's security needs. It has to do so in a globalized context, opposed and undermined by non-state actors, in a climate of risks that are too intangible to pinpoint but potentially too severe to ignore, and on the radar of a global public sphere capable of turning battlefield victories into strategic defeats. This article argues that considering the demands put upon the state in the 21st century, the state is increasingly looking to externalize the burden of warfare to human and technological surrogates. As this article will show surrogate warfare allows the state to manage the increasing portfolio of risks globally while minimizing its exposure to human, financial and reputational costs, and thereby ultimately political risks. Although the motivations for the supplementation or substitution of the state's own statutory forces differ, great powers, small powers, liberal and authoritarian regimes increasingly engage in warfare by surrogate in the 21st century.

This article commences by conceptualizing warfare by surrogate as a socio-political phenomenon transforming the way states deal with the risks and uncertainties of the world in the 21st century before explaining the geo-strategic context in which the concept has to be read. It continues by outlining the motivations for why states have resorted to the use of surrogates in the wars of the new millennium. In the conclusion, the article will briefly touch upon the consequences of

surrogate warfare for conflict and conflict resolution questioning whether it can be a panacea for dealing with the complexities of 21st century warfare.

The Concept of Warfare by Surrogate

Fighting a war by surrogate is a concept that lies at the intersection of the debates around proxy and compound warfare (Huber, 2002). Yet, it is neither one nor the other. Surrogate warfare exceeds the boundaries of the strategic debate about proxy warfare that emerged in the Cold War, while also going beyond the too operational debate on Huber's concept of compound warfare. The reason is that the means of substituting or externalizing the burden of warfare for taxpayers, policy makers and the military, have become a lot more diverse in the information and automation age, allowing patrons to explore new routes to minimize their own burden of war while still achieving their objectives.

Etymologically, the term 'surrogate' comes from the Latin verb *surrogare* meaning 'to elect as a substitute', thereby entailing the aspect of proxy, replacement and supplement (Oxford Dictionary, 2017). .On the fringes of the Special Forces literature a conceptualization has emerged, which albeit insufficiently contextualized, comes closes to the concept as understood in this article. As Smith writes

> "A surrogate, in its simplest sense, takes the place of something or someone. The surrogate is also a proxy for a particular function or set of functions. The word surrogate is not meant to be pejorative, but rather an expression that conveys substitution of one for another. Generally, it implies that the surrogate is acting on behalf of the interests of another and is in some way distinct from the source of its authority to act" (Smith, 2009, p.40)

We define surrogate warfare as the conceptual umbrella for all forms of externalization of the burden of warfare to supplementary as well as substitutionary forces and platforms. The concept applies to the activator-proxy relationship of the 20th century concept of proxy warfare, as well as to the purely operational, niche concept of surrogate warfare as developed by Smith (2009).

Unlike the literature that looks at different forms of deputation of war from a historic or operational point of view, we approach the concept more holistically and conceptually as a socio-political phenomenon. We see the externalization of the burden of warfare as a socio-political

transformation in the nature of war, whereby the state in the 21st century is exploring non-trinitarian ways and means to deal with the contemporary risks and uncertainties we outline in the next section. It constitutes a break from the classical, trinitarian model of war where the state employs the citizen soldier to generate security as a public good exclusively for society as a discretionary association.

Amid the globalization and transnationalization of conflict, the privatization of security and the resulting intangibility of threat, the state has discovered surrogate warfare as a means to externalize, partially or wholly, the strategic, operational and tactical burden of warfare to a human or technological surrogate with the principal intent of minimizing the burden of warfare for its own taxpayers, soldiers and ultimately its policymakers (Krieg, 2016a, p.99). Surrogates can be human or technological platforms. Human surrogates can be terrorist organizations, insurgency groups, transnational movements, mercenaries or private military and security companies. As a technological platform, the surrogate can be an unmanned air power or space power weapon enabling the patron to wage war by means more effective, economical or clandestine than the conventional infantry force. The cyber domain which brings states, non-state actors and individuals together, is particularly favourable for waging warfare by surrogate as attribution is almost impossible. The patron-surrogate relationship can be intentional and unintentional. Cooperation, coordination or force integration can be direct, indirect or coincidental. Human surrogates can employ regular, irregular or hybrid means of warfare, providing the patron with a range of core and niche capabilities. In that way, a surrogate can be any agent allowing the patron to externalize the burden of warfare, mostly through deputizing for his own ground forces. A surrogate does not necessarily substitute for the entire military capability of the patron, as the conventional proxy does, but may at times merely supplement existing capability.

The idea of using surrogates to externalize the burden of war is not revolutionary in itself. Since Ancient times, empires and states have entrusted auxiliaries, substitutes and proxies, at least partially, with the execution of military functions on their behalf. As much as irregular, asymmetric or unconventional warfare have been part of the norm in the history of warfare, so have surrogates (Mumford, 2013, p.1). Romans employed 'barbarian' tribes to multiply their forces, relying on their local knowledge and relations with local populations; the most famous example is that of Arminius, the German chieftain who supplied the Romans with tribal support in the

inaccessible terrains east of the Rhine (Lacey, 2012). The wealthy Renaissance city-states of northern Italy employed the condottieri—commercial armed contractors—to protect their wealth from greedy neighbours (Singer, 2003, p.22). In the American Revolution, the British Army multiplied its forces by using 35,000 Hessian mercenaries to fight the hybrid threat of Washington's continental army and colonial militias (Atwood, 1980). Wellington owed his success in the Peninsular War against Napoleon's Grande Armée to the support of the Spanish guerrillas attacking the French occupier's lines of communication (Boot, 2013, p.82). The relatively small island nation of Britain was able to rule more than a quarter of the world only by relying on colonial surrogates: twelve political officers, 100 British soldiers and 800 paramilitary surrogates could control 10 million people (Ferris, 2012, p.201). In the early stages of the Second World War, when Britain was far from ready to engage the Nazi threat directly, Churchill envisaged employing continental resistance movements as surrogates to attack the Wehrmacht from the rear (Mansoor, 2012, p.4). During the Cold War, with the growing need for deniability, the superpowers often resorted to the use of surrogates to achieve strategic objectives overseas, the Soviet support for the Vietcong in Vietnam and the US support for the *mujahideen* in Afghanistan being the most famous examples.

Although not a novel concept, contemporary surrogate warfare has become the norm rather than the exception in the state's management of violence in recent decades. It is here where surrogate warfare constitutes a break from the past: it helps the state as a trinitarian actor to remain the primary communal security provider in a globalized, privatized, securitized and mediatized world. Competing with non-state actors, the state desperately tries to hold on to its role as the primus in pares in a neo-medieval global system where the primary benefactors of war might not be the nation at home but communities elsewhere. Unwilling to bear the burden of post-modern war, the aversion to war that societies at home, particularly in the Western world display, confront the state with a delicate dilemma: protecting society from ever more risks while minimizing direct military commitments overseas in doing so.

Here, the concept of burden of war is central to the understanding of surrogate warfare. The burden of war has not been a defined, static variable. On the contrary, the burden of war is a concept that has changed throughout history. Traditionally the burden of war referred to the human and financial costs incurred by the belligerents. Since these costs used to be borne by aristocratic leaders waging war using their own funds to pay for both equipment and warriors,

civilians were only directly affected when they actually got caught in the crossfire. As wars developed into people's wars in the 18th century and hostilities were no longer just confined to distant battlefields but increasingly moved into the public space, the financial and human burden of war was increasingly carried by society as well. Throughout the 20th century the *levée en masse* ideologically underpinned by social-Darwinist nationalism and reinforced by the technological advancement of the Industrial Revolution created the preconditions for total war and with it total sacrifice. The burden of war had become all-encompassing.

People's wars, as conceptualized by Prussian military theorists such as Moltke in the 19th century (Förster, 1987, p.210), brought with it another cost for governments. Irrespective of the socio-political system, introducing the populace to the warfare equation, meant that governments now had to justify and legitimize human and financial costs before the people when going to war. By the mid-20th century the idea of the total war consuming all of society's resources had become less attractive; both due to the devastating experience of World War II and due to the realistic prospect of a nuclear apocalypse during the Cold War. At the same time, media had created a public arena of political scrutiny, where governments suddenly had to defend the expenditures in the nation's blood and money before their people. The decision to resort to war evolved into a subjective cost-benefit analysis whereby the sometimes intangible benefits of military action are weighed against the expected costs (Mandel, 2004, p.25). The globalized wars of the late 20th and early 21st century as well as the increasing transparency of international affairs have thereby created a new political burden of war that is borne by policy makers. With a public antagonism and antipathy towards conflict and organized violence, policy makers are now forced to manage the political costs of armed conflict as the post-modern burden of war. That is to say, the risks arising from soldier casualties, constant wars with limited obvious benefits for society at home, and the direct armed intervention into supposedly sovereign states, are incurred by the state as an authority under international, domestic and local scrutiny. This post-modern burden of war is thereby not an exclusive phenomenon to liberal states but can be observed in non-liberal states as well. Russia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have all distinct motivations to externalize the burden of war for reasons of discretion and deniability as will be demonstrated further below.

And this is where surrogate warfare appears as a panacea for the state in the 21st century. By externalizing the burden of warfare, the state is able to dissociate itself from organized violence executed under its direction by surrogates. Apart from minimizing the financial and human costs

of war, the state can also avoid bearing the political costs of warfare. The surrogate as an extra-trinitarian agent has no direct ties to society at home but operates in relative autonomy from the human input of the patron's society. It is a non-trinitarian mode of warfare that allows states and non-state actors to manage risks globally and contain threats without having to rely on their people as the principal trinitarian actor to provide for it.

Surrogate warfare cuts the socio-political ties between society, state and soldier allowing the state to replace the soldier as the executive agent from the midst of society with an external agent. The only link the surrogate maintains to the patron is through the body that either pays, trains or directs it or him. In so doing, surrogate warfare is a return to warfare amid the socio-political realities of the pre-1792 years where the *Kabbinetskriege* or cabinet wars, were waged by the aristocracy and their cabinets for their own private interests. The cabinet wars of the medieval and early modern ages "had been conducted in order to secure dynastic interests, and had been fought with the aid of mercenary armies, led by aristocratic officers, largely to the exclusion of the civilian population" (Förster, 1987, p.210). Surrogate warfare in the 21st century witnesses a return to these pre-modern practices in the management and application of violence with executive action enabling the state to protect less than existential national interests (Johnson, 1987, p.210). It allows wars to be fought in the shadows, off the global and domestic public radar.

In a transnational security complex where a spectrum of global actors are connected by the mutuality of threats and risks as well as their fear from each other, security has become a global public good with beneficiaries who more often than not, are external to the trinitarian constructs that provide for it. That is to say that in the absence of a world government as a global authority, the security of the global community lies in the hands of individual states as the only legitimate rights holder and security provider in the current state-centric international law system. Yet, the state's social contractarian set-up provides the state's authority with the dilemma of having to provide security as a potentially global good, i.e. beyond its boundaries, through a mechanism created to provide security as a discretionary, public good (Krieg, 2016c). The state as the sovereign entrusted with the provision of public security defined in terms of national security, has to engage threats that are less tangible emanating from transnational actors who increasingly pose a threat to communities far away and only secondly to society at home.

Thus, with warfare being less trinitarian both in respect to who fights these wars and who is the principal benefactor, the public security complex of the trinity of community, sovereign and security provider becomes increasingly challenged – internally and externally. Internally, the community exercises scrutiny over the treasure and blood being spent by the sovereign to provide security primarily for community outsiders. Externally it is the international community that holds the sovereign accountable for its employment of coercive means in out-of-area operations. Finally, also local communities in the conflict theatre critically examine how the external patron intends to provide security overseas. What emerges is a complex construct of internal and external push and pull factors that drive the state to externalize the burden of warfare to surrogates. The trinitarian relationship between community, authority and security provider, conventionally defined by society, state and soldier, expands to a patron-surrogate relationship with minimal internal or external scrutiny (see figure 1).

In essence, surrogate warfare provides the ideal means for states to fulfil its security function and thereby stay relevant in an apolar, globalized world where the global distribution of power makes it challenging for any one single actor to become a world hegemon. The externalization of the burden of warfare goes beyond the Clausewitzian conceptualization of war as a trinitarian activity (Clausewitz, 1832, p.28). States enter into complex security assemblages that re-define the socio-political nature of war (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2010, p.91). For example, in the fight against ISIS, Western states use remote controlled weapon systems to support human surrogates who provide local communal security half way around the world in the Middle East. What emerges are
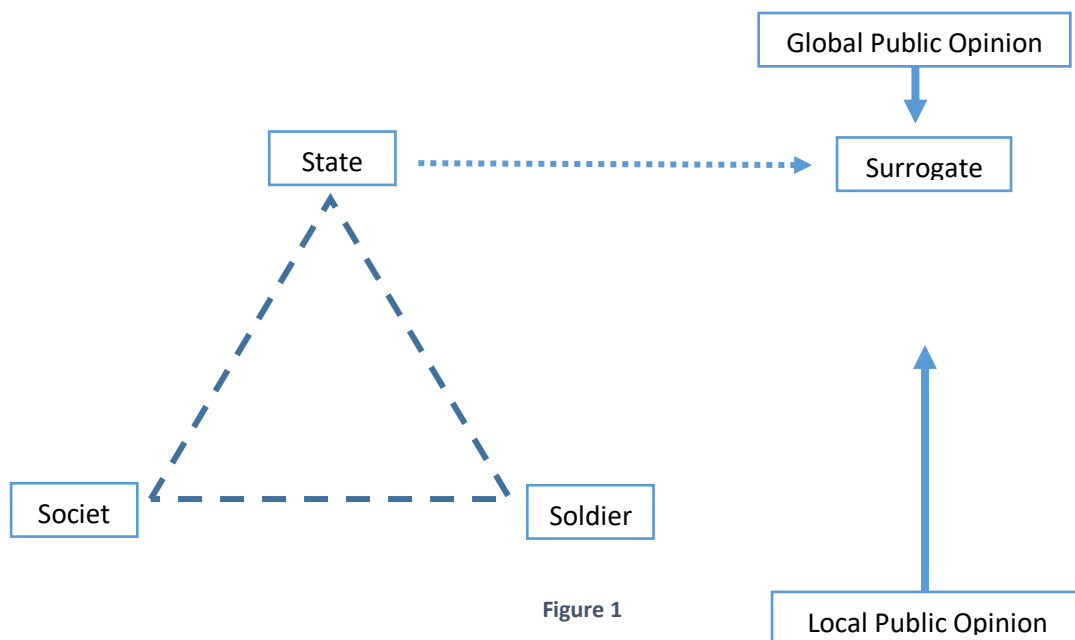

Figure 1

assemblages of external state actors employing technological platforms to remotely support their local human surrogates who primarily serve local interests – all that to mitigate potential future risks that might emerge from an organization such as ISIS left uncontained.

The Context of Surrogate Warfare

When writing about the changing nature of warfare, scholars, analysts and military professionals tend to compare organized violence in the 21st century to the classical metaphysics of war as defined in the post-French Revolutionary era by the likes of Clausewitz. Thereby, classical warfare in itself, i.e. state on state war fuelled by patriotic, nationalist ideology mobilizing entire societies to fight for survival, is a historic anomaly. Nonetheless, in the literature classical warfare remains the point of reference to define the changes in the strategic and operational context in which organized violence is planned and executed since the end of the Cold War. In essence, it is the non-trinitarian character of post-modern war that sets it apart from the Clausewitzian ideal of the classical trinitarian war. Clausewitz frames war as an interplay of the socio-political relationships between society, state and soldier: society as the principal assigns the state with a duty to protect communal interests, the state in turn raises the soldier from among the midst of society as its executive agent to protect the trinity (Clausewitz, 1940, p.89). Security as a public good is confined in its scope to the boundaries of the state and the public sphere of society that brings the particular state into existence. This trinitarian idea of security as a public good and the consequent division of power in the management of organized violence appears to be increasingly far from the norm in the 21st century where interstate wars for national survival have become more the exception than the norm (Holmqvist, 2005, pp.77-138).

At the beginning of the 1990s Van Creveld predicted that by the end of the 2nd millennium the state would no longer be in a position to determine the outcomes of conflicts. While state authority is increasingly undermined by non-state actors and states increasingly refrain from major combat operations, the level of transnational violence is on the rise (Van Creveld, 1991, p.192; Realuyo, 2015). In addition to the decline of the state as the main protagonist in war, Van Creveld argued that the clear division of labour within Clausewitz's trinitarian war, i.e. between the government that wages and directs war, the soldier that fights and dies, and the people who pay and suffer, was no longer apparent (Van Creveld, 2002, p.8). Thus, according to Van Creveld, violence in the 21st century had become a non-trinitarian undertaking. Following Van Creveld's deconstruction of war, Mary Kaldor coined the term New Wars to illustrate the fact that modern

wars are first, fought by a combination of state and non-state actors; second, rely on identity politics to achieve political rather than physical control of populations through fear and terror; and third, are financed through predatory and illicit means (Kaldor, 1999). These non-trinitarian wars in the post-modern era have four recurring attributes: they are globalized, privatized, securitized and mediatized.

Globalized War

The world at the beginning of the 21st century is shaped by the digital revolution allowing for the rapid exchange of data and ideas; by the transportation revolution increasing the transnational mobility of individuals and communities; by the organizational revolution redirecting the flow of authority; influence and power, the economic revolution enhancing the global flow of goods, services and capital (Rosenau, 1999); and finally by an exponential rate of technological progress, involving increasing computing power, big data generation and the fusion of physical, digital, cognitive and biological science which have the potential to create a Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) (Schwab, 2016; see also Rickli 2017a, 2017b). The latter has consolidated the dynamics of globalization increasing the interconnectedness of people and communities as well as conflicts and threats. Socio-political and intercultural affairs and exchange have merged into transnational flows that can no longer be contained by individual states or state authorities. The resulting state of uncertainty has often been referred to as anarchical in absence of state regulation. Bull points already in 1977 to a *neo-medievalization* of the world, a quasi-return to the pre-Westphalian era (Bull, 2012). From the point of view of the 2000s with its 9/11 attacks and the spread of global jihadism, massive transnational migration streams, the financial crisis of 2008 and the widespread collapse of state authority across Africa and the Middle East, the classical era of the 19th and 20th century appears in the far distance of history. The institutions, organizations, authorities and values that we have come to cherish have been somewhat undermined. Units of analysis such as 'national' and 'international' are being complemented by categories of 'transnationality' so as to be able to describe the sphere that affects individuals both within and outside the boundaries of the state and the nation – two concepts that have equally lost their strategic significance in the disintegrating order of the 21st century. Paradoxically, the loss of significance of these two concepts, has contributed to the recent successes of populist movements across the globe who exploit popular fears of communal identity loss. This phenomenon is supported, and has been

enabled, by the digitalisation of socio-political affairs, which is characterised by the ubiquity of the spread and the global reach of ideas (Rickli, 2007).

These dynamics reshuffled the global system. While the state retains in law the full authority to regulate and manage global affairs, its authority is in practice challenged by non-state actors operating in the global transnational system. In this new apolar system, just like the one of medieval times, no one actor can dominate this increasingly anarchic environment across all dimensions of power (Haass, 2008). Anarchy in this context exceeds the conceptual boundaries of the Realist or Neo-realist idea of international anarchy. The anarchical apolarity in the 21st century is far less than just a leaderless state-centric construct; it is a competitive system of transnational nature that is no longer shaped exclusively by territorial integrity and state sovereignty, but by a dynamic interaction between state and non-state authorities across and beyond the boundaries of states.

As a consequence, state-centrism, the premise on basis of which socio-politics and ultimately war have been conceptualized, is in a process of evolution and change. The idea that individuals and communities can only escape the state of nature through a social contractarian covenant binding them to an enforcement authority modelled on the post-Westphalian nation-state, has become increasingly challenging in a world of porous borders and growing migrant populations. Thus, war in the 21st century, which is concerned with the delivery of security as a global or transnational public good, might no longer exclusively be provided by the nation state for its citizens but by alternative socio-political enforcement authorities.

Privatized War

Non-trinitarian war has thereby been impacted by a privatization of security, namely the delivery and maintenance of security by non-state actors of whom many are either exclusively private or transnational in their orientation. The privatization of security is both bottom-up and top-down, whereby the latter occurred against the backdrop of the former. Top-down privatization of security has to be understood within the context of the globalized world, where the Weberian notion of the state monopoly on violence has been challenged by non-state actors who have taken over functions that the state had previously internalized since the early 19th century (Thomson, 1996, p.10). The formation of transnational societies inhibiting an increasingly transnational political space affected by problems that call for transnational solutions, created the need for

former state-centric decision-making processes to develop into processes governed by supra-state or non-state entities that increasingly rely upon private input (Leander, 2002, p.11). The state monopoly on violence has been exposed to a process of erosion in the developing world where the state is no longer capable of exercising this monopoly competing with warlords, war profiteers, organized crime, terrorists, rebels and paramilitary groups (Wulf, 2005).

In the West in particular, the state itself has contributed to the privatization of war through the top-down commercialization of military and security services (Bislev, 2004, p.284). Amid the neo-liberal wave of privatizing public goods under Reagan and Thatcher in the 1980s, the United States and Britain started to loosen the state's monopoly on the delivery of public goods (Krieg, 2016b). In an effort to enhance effectiveness and efficiency, commercial enterprises were allowed to create a market for the management of violence. Unlike the *ad hoc* nature of mercenary bands operating in Africa in the 1960s and 1970s, private military and security companies are hierarchically organized enterprises, which are registered locally and openly trade with their services, thereby driven by business profit rather than individual profit (Singer, 2003, p.46). Security has become a tradable commodity that is being sold to the highest bidder. Consequently, the state's role in non-trinitarian war has often been that of a dispatcher, i.e. an authority delegating security functions to executive agents, which are not always inherent to the socio-political milieu of the state. That is to say, the bonds between those providing security and those consuming it, though managed by the state, have been diffused – a circumstance that can be attributed to the new threat environment in the post-Cold War era and new approaches to securitization that came with it.

Securitized War

The post-modern threat environment after the Cold War has by no means become more manageable or predictable, but more intangible and uncertain. While throughout the 20th century wars were fought as zero-sum games for national interests that were often defined vis-à-vis a tangible and proclaimed referent object, the system finds it hard to do the same in the 21st century. The nemesis, the evil empire or the archenemy that had always been present on the horizon has dissolved into a blurry concept – a concept that at the least is not as visible or tangible anymore as it once was. In this environment where threats are less tangible and objectively hard to define, subjective securitization has been on the rise (Rasmussen, 2006).

The socio-political conceptualization of threat or securitization, underlying the legitimization of war in the 21st century, has most severely affected liberal states that seemed to be evermore entangled in wars that for their people are no longer recognizable as such. The global public sphere, which through social media has penetrated societal discourse in liberal and illiberal states alike, has exposed even the most remote communities to information and narratives that autocrats and liberal find hard to contain (Krieg, 2017, Chapter V). Therefore, as states, liberal and illiberal, have become increasingly accountable to their own populations, policy making has become far more scrutinized domestically and globally – something that elevates the precautionary principle to a major driver of policy making. It follows that states are particularly pressured to demonstrate to their public that they are doing something within a heterogeneous threat environment that ranges from global terrorism and insurgency, over state failure and financial crises to global warming and mass migration. The containment of these threats, at least in the developed world, remains the prerogative of the state even when acting supplemented by commercial actors and non-governmental organizations or as part of multinational coalitions. As threats emanate from localities far away, often simultaneously and within different domains, developed states feel the need to develop an ability to respond instantly across the globe – even when the required response might be of low intensity. Gregory calls these wars permanent 'everywhere wars', characterized by geographically contrapuntal and protracted threats (Gregory, 2011, p.239). Threats need to be engaged before they evolve, sometimes even before they really exist. Hence, threats have given way to risks as the drivers of security policies in the 'global North'. Whereas the definition of threats requires a tangible other with plausible capabilities and communicated intentions, the definition of risks is more subjective as they refer to a probability of something disruptive happening in the future.

The resulting securitization effort behind constructing these threats is something that Beck has defined as an integral effort of post-modern risk societies. Direct major wars between modern states have become somewhat unthinkable morally, financially and legally even as the West becomes more concerned about Russia's surrogate interventions in Eastern Europe or about North Korea's nuclear program. As the natural antagonist, traditionally another state power, has disappeared, threats in the modern sense of the word seize to exist spatially and temporally. Nonetheless, insecurity not security has become the norm in post-modern society (Coker, 2013, p.7). Beck argues that post-modern risk societies deal with this intangibility and unpredictability of threat by socially constructing threats on basis of risks. War as life in the post-modern society,

has become an exercise of risk construction, prevention and management (Beck, 2006, p.332). Within an environment of de-localized global risks, preventive diplomacy and the use of force at the global level have become a necessary evil of mitigating the political costs of omitting risks; namely it has become more socially acceptable to overreact to a potential risk than to underreact (Beck, 2006, p.335). The precautionary principle has indeed opened a Pandora's Box of the "everywhere wars". The consequences of trying to mitigate the unknown within a global sphere of uncertainty has confronted the state as the enforcement authority with an ironic reality where the lines between rationality and hysteria have become blurred.

Mediatized War

In an era where social media has revolutionized patterns of communication between and within communities across space and time, wars are broadcasted, subjective realities (Cottle, 2006, p.9 ff.). Shaping the narrative of war has become a competitive effort between those intervening, those affected by intervention and third-party outsiders trying to influence public opinion globally and locally (Kaspersen and Rickli, 2016). Unlike internet 1.0, which provided a one-dimensional and one-directional flow of information from the platform to the consumer, internet 2.0 facilitated by mobile devices provides a virtual platform of interactive discourse whereby content is being consumed and produced at the same time by both broadcasters and viewers (Andersen, 2003, p.41). The exchange of information is instantaneous, multi-directional and interactive. The internet accessed through mobile devices has created a public cyberspace – a global public sphere characterized by Habermas' principles of inclusive accessibility and interaction, which can hardly be controlled or sanctioned by any one state (Habermas, 1974, p.49-50). Information flows somewhat unrestrictedly across borders and when disseminated through social media, can be accessed anywhere, anytime by anyone. War is situated within this cyberspace – not just the operations themselves but most importantly the narratives of war that shape global public opinion. It is these narratives that often make the difference between an operational success on the battlefield and the strategic victory in a war as the defeat of Israel against Hezbollah in 2006 demonstrated (Mayfield, 2011, p.80; see also Calwell et al, 2009, p. 6). States and the military are constantly on the public radar scrutinized locally, domestically and globally, increasing the potential political burden of war. It follows that influence and disinformation operations are becoming key instruments in the toolbox of state and non-state actors. In an age of 'post-factual'

socio-political discourse, the control of public opinion at home abroad and locally in theatre, becomes a vital centre of gravity (Davies, 2016).

As a consequence of globalized, privatized, securitized and mediatized war, states seek solutions to stay relevant as the foremost authority to manage violence and protect communities. Societies at home demand ever higher levels of security while displaying an ever-growing aversion to war and casualties as communities' expectations and attitudes towards war have changed (Mueller, 1996, p.31; Smith, 2005, p. 500, Levy 2013). In an effort to create the illusion of bloodless wars that are being fought on battlefields far removed from the borders of one's own homeland, liberal and illiberal states alike, have to reduce their direct military engagements overseas in terms of visibility, costs and accountability. States do not become less violent but have to find new ways and means to dissociate themselves from the management of violence. Fundamentally, states are looking towards new non-trinitarian means to fight wars, disrupting the classical bond between society and the state's executive agent in war. The management of organized violence seems to be externalized to surrogates that would operate outside the conventional trinity, yet serving less than existential interests. Thereby, surrogate warfare appears as the natural response to the difficulties of managing risks, threats and conflicts in the 21st century in a global environment characterised by uncertainty and the ubiquity of information.

The Motivations for 21st Century Surrogate Warfare

In the globalized, privatized, securitized and mediatized security environment in which states operate in the 21st century, the motivations to externalize the burden of warfare are complex. A patron's propensity to use surrogates depends on a variety of factors that for purely illustrative purposes can be put into a formula as follows:

$$deniability + legitimacy + (urgency - costs) - capability \\ = propensity\ to\ use\ surrogates$$

The most important aspect for the state is the social contractarian management of communal security. Therefore, for the state, the cost factor, which is comprised of the anticipated financial, human and political costs of the use of force, has to be weighed against the urgency of a crisis and the anticipated returns in terms of public security at home. The perception of urgency of a crisis through the broadened lens of risk and threat in the 21st century has been significantly diminished in comparison to security perceptions during the Cold War that were framed in reference to the

defence of vital national interests. In a globalized security context where security is more of a global public good rather than a public good, the urgency of a threat is no longer just a sum of realist considerations of vital national interests but, particularly in the West, can entail a reference to less tangible humanitarian interests. Surrogates provide particularly liberal states with a means to transfer or externalize the operational risks from the serviceman to the surrogate (Shaw, 2004, p.94) – thereby indirectly allowing the sovereign to externalize the political costs of war as well. Political costs refer here, to the costs for policy makers to commit to a crisis in face of public opinion, which can be both positive and negative, namely in support of intervention or strongly opposed to it. More often than not, however, public opinion, at least in Western democracies, appears to be unsupportive of military action (Smith, 2005). Therefore, public opinion is a factor related to costs rather than urgency.

This is where the phenomenon of casualty aversion fits in as well – a phenomenon that though first observed in the Western world seems to be applicable to other non-Western states in the developed world as well. Within the trinity of community, sovereign and security provider, the community develops a close bond to the security provider, i.e. the serviceman whose *raison d'être* is primarily tied to the social contractarian duty of providing security as a public good for society at home. Deploying the serviceman as the trinitarian security provider of society and state overseas in crises that in the eyes of the public are not vitally urgent, decreases societal acceptance for casualties. For society, the life of a fellow citizen regardless of whether a soldier or a civilian, is rated higher than the life of a communal outsider. Society appears to be highly sensitive to the casualties suffered by its own soldiers, while remarkably insensitive to the deaths of outsiders, such as surrogate forces (Mandel, 2004, p.10). Even if society has an inclination to provide security as a global public good, the life of the soldier as a trinitarian actor, appears to always take precedence over the life of a stranger, even a non-combatant. As Mueller observes "When Americans asked themselves how many American lives it was worth to save hundreds of thousands of Somali lives, the answer came out rather close to zero" (Mueller, 1996, p.31). When the soldier as a public security provider, is assigned to out-of-area operations primarily benefitting the security interests of community outsiders, the community develops an aversion against the operational risk exposure of the soldier (Cook, 2004, p.69).

Casualty aversion in liberal societies is a contested concept (Carruthers, 2014). Most analysts would agree, however, that the societal acceptance of casualties depends on a rather rational

cost-benefit analysis whereby the human costs of war are compared to the potential benefits an operation might generate for the nation (Larson, 1996, p.10). Moving beyond a narrow definition of benefits as merely vital national interests, the fact that the security perception in the 21st century has become more abstract often based on less tangible risks rather than concrete threats, causes communities to regard the deployment of servicemen overseas with a degree of suspicion (Levy, 2011, p.69). The more abstract the nature of securitization, e.g. the definition of threats and risks, the more difficult it becomes for the community to accept the human costs borne by the soldier as the trinitarian agent. The surrogate therefore provides the sovereign with a means to externalize these human and material costs to a substitute security provider. One of the most publicised patron-surrogate relations in recent years has been the United States' delegation of warfighting to the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The Obama administration, eager to minimize the political costs of war in the Middle East to a minimum, while haunted by the prospect of a further radicalization of the Syrian Civil War, made a calculated decision to support its airpower campaign against jihadists with Syrian militias, trained and equipped by US Special Forces in theatre. Both presidents Obama and Trump, were able to wage war in northern Syria at minimal financial and human costs for the US military. Consequently, although covered by the mainstream media in the United States, America's light-footprint intervention in Syria barely found its way into public debate (Humud, Blanchard, Nikitin, 2017).

In this respect, the availability of technological platforms as potential substitutes for the human capacity in war can act as an intervening variable that might ease the patron's decision to use force. The financial endowment of the patron plus the negative relationship between the patron's disposal of human capacity and the patron's disposal of technology constitutes the intervening variable of 'capability'. The more capital-intense the patron's policy-making, the readier the patron is to substitute capital for labour, namely use financial means to pay for human or technological surrogates. In particular, small states with relatively high financial endowments but small local human capacity such as the Arab Gulf States, have arguably a high propensity to use surrogates – both human and technological (Almezaini and Rickli, 2016). In the Arab Gulf States, loan servicemen from the developing world, most notably Northern Africa, Pakistan and Bangladesh have long constituted the backbone of local military capacity. More recently, private military companies have provided another form of surrogacy to the Gulf monarchies. The UAE's heavy reliance on contractors in the Yemen War since 2015 is a case in point (Hager & Mazzeti 2015; Sabi & Robertson, 2015).

Further, the state needs to manage its perception externally vis-à-vis the international community. Here the externalization of warfare to an extra-trinitarian surrogate can blur the direct lines of responsibility and accountability between the trinitarian security provider, the sovereign and the community. Particularly as military intervention has often a negative connotation in a state-centric international law system, surrogates can provide the patron with a degree of deniability (Shaw, 2005, p.88). The advent of the cyber domain in warfare has brought deniability to a new level and has thus increased the incentive to resort to covert operations to induce coercion. In times of transnational conflict involving a growing number of non-state actors waging war across borders, it has become increasingly easier for any actor to generate an effect on the ground without having to overtly deploy its own troops. Direct or indirect support for local forces in a conflict as surrogates can generate desired effects more covertly. The reliance of the Kremlin on private hacker communities and bots to disrupt the 2016 US Presidential Elections is one of the most recent examples of how a state can achieve disruptive effects covertly employing both human and technological surrogates (Lipton, Sanger & Shane, 2016). In the realm of kinetic warfare, Russia has also explored new avenues of employing contractors as surrogates who working for private military companies affiliated with the Kremlin, could be deployed to Ukraine in 2014 and Syria in 2015 with a degree of plausible deniability (Grove, 2015). In both cases Russia has generated a disruptive effect avoiding conclusive attribution.

In Africa assemblages between state and non-state actors can take two forms. First, assemblages between patron and surrogate can take the form of externalizing expeditionary operations to surrogates who can operate covertly across borders without being attributed to the patron. The reliance of Liberia's President Taylor on the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) as a surrogate in neighbouring Sierra Leone in the 1990s (Gberie, 2005, p.59) highlights this dynamic as much as Uganda's support for the Mouvement de Libération du Congo (MLC) in Congo (Autesserre, 2010, p.48). Second, assemblages in Africa between patron and surrogate can also be more benign as in the case of Tanzania where the central government indirectly provides security to local communities by externalizing the burden of security provision to mining companies hiring private military and security companies (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2017). Here, the motivations are not so much deniability as the lack of capacity and the need for local legitimacy.

Finally, the externalization of the burden of warfare to surrogates allows patrons to manage their relationship with local communities in the theatre as the strategic and operational environment

in the 21st century becomes increasingly complex. Surrogates allow patrons to get involved in insurgency struggles, civil wars or rebellions while maintaining the legitimacy in the eyes of the local civilian population (Mansoor, 2012, p.9). Generating a desired effect indirectly through surrogates who are part of the local socio-political fabric, means that the patron can pursue his agenda potentially facilitated by the popular support for the surrogate. At the same time, legitimate bonds between the local population and the surrogate allows for a more effective achievement of strategic and operational objectives in a population-centric warfare environment. As the undeclared champion of surrogate warfare, Iran has a long record of both implanting and nurturing insurgent movements within the socio-political fabric of states within the wider Middle East. Since its foundation the Islamic Republic has relied on militias both internally and externally to effectively wage war against its pronounced enemies. These militias were not only trained and equipped to master guerrilla warfare but were embedded within wider humanitarian efforts to elevate disenfranchised communities from socio-political and socio-economic marginalization. In Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen, Iran has been able to wage its own wars with considerable public support and legitimacy – doing so with a degree of plausible deniability (Deghhanpishe, 2014; Wiggintona, 2015, p.155; (Quaidari, 2015).

The relationship of these variables to each other can be best illustrated in a formula where each variable is context dependent as well as relies on the subjective calculus of the actor committing to surrogate warfare:

$$\begin{aligned}
deniability &+ legitimacy \\
&+ [(threat\ perception\ \&risk\ framing\ ) \\
&- (financial\ costs + human\ costs + public\ opinion)] \\
&- [capacity - (technology + financial\ endowment)] \\
&= propensity\ to\ use\ surrogates
\end{aligned}$$

Conclusions

The idea to externalize the burden of warfare appears atypical in the era of Westphalian statehood despite its historic precedents in pre-modern times. As a matter of fact, the pre-Westphalian era exhibited many of the same characteristics of warfare that we identify in the surrogate wars of the 21st century. The fundamental change with the deputation of the state's citizen soldier lies more substantially in the new socio-political context in which violence in the new millennium is being organized and executed. As Clausewitz argued already in his magnum opus 'On War':

"Very few of the new manifestations in war can be ascribed to new inventions or new departures in ideas. They result mainly from the transformation of society and new social conditions" (Clausewitz, 1940, p.515).

It is the socio-political underpinnings of these new security assemblages between state and surrogate that bring with it fundamental transformations in the nature of warfare. The departure from trinitarian warfare creates hybrid non-trinitarian security assemblages, whereby the state remains as a mere primus inter pares. These assemblages might appear essentially pre-modern but are run by states. In that way, the modern state remains the primary communal security provider, manoeuvring through a complex globalized security context, where risk management takes precedence over threat mitigation; where non-state actors both challenge and supplement state capability; and where transnational communities clash over ideas and narratives in a global public sphere.

As a socio-political phenomenon, surrogate warfare defines a non-trinitarian mode of war, which at first sight seems to provide the state with a silver bullet to solving the dilemma of having to cater for ever more communal security requirements, with less visibility and exposure to risk in the course of doing so. Defying public opinion at home, locally and in the global public sphere, surrogate warfare offers the state with a non-trinitarian means to engage in conflicts that are often removed from the consciousness and concerns of the state's trinitarian principal, society, as well the global public.

Yet, this alleged panacea for the state's problem of shaping post-modern conflicts is not without negative consequences. Most of these are related to the principal-agent problem within the surrogate relationship, namely the loss of patron control amid a constant surrogate quest for more autonomy. The loss of control over its non-trinitarian agent can lead to surrogates overcharging and underperforming, often not achieving the patron's intended outcomes, protracting conflicts, or abusing patron support for self-interested alternative agendas.

Thus, surrogate warfare is probably not the panacea for fighting wars in the 21st century but it provides states with a relatively cheap and rapid way of fighting wars in the short-term. Since the scope of risks and conflicts in this century is not likely to recede, surrogate warfare is likely to become the new norm in 21st century warfare.

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