

# The Neo-Methodist Warfare – Dawn of a New Age?

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*With the re-escalated Russo–Ukrainian War, the modern world has met the conventional war again, however, the rapid technological development changed warfare since the Cold War. In this study the author will present similarities between the modern conventional war and the 18<sup>th</sup> century’s warfare (called the methodist warfare). The similarities are so widespread (both in the fields of security politics and tactical-level land warfare), that the modern conventional warfare in our age can be called neo-methodist warfare.*

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## Introduction

After the end of the Cold War, most of the international organisations and most of the experts thought that the age of great wars was over and the small local wars were only minor but necessary “disorders” on the road, leading to ultimate world peace. This statement is true if one considers that World War III between NATO and the Warsaw Pact did not happen, only small wars became more common (e.g. Vietnam, Afghanistan, etc.). After the beginning of the Russo–Ukrainian War in 2014, this theory proved to be wrong. Moreover, it proved to be even more inaccurate after the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War and with the escalation of the Russo–Ukrainian War on 24 February 2022. However, instead of returning to the “normal” era of wars, when countries fought each other with regular armies, warfare has developed to a whole other level. This new type of warfare is called hybrid war, or – after its Russian name – non-linear warfare.

Studying the military operations conducted on land in the Russo–Ukrainian War and the Nagorno-Karabakh War led the author to a new path. He discovered numerous similarities between the 18<sup>th</sup> century’s warfare and the warfare in the above-mentioned two recent wars. In this study, the author will try to prove that warfare today has a great amount of similarity with the 18<sup>th</sup> century’s methodist warfare, thus one can easily call it “neo-methodist” warfare.

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## States' attitude to total war – Applying indirect methods other than war

Military historians call the era between the end of the Thirty Years' War and the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars the era of methodist warfare.<sup>2</sup> In this era, the European great powers which were predominantly absolute monarchies did not wage war in order to completely destroy each other. This is because the rulers of states considered their states to be their own property and as a property, they felt responsible for their own country or countries. The other, more practical reason is that the military systems were simply unable to sustain a prolonged war with huge armies that could have destroyed whole states.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, the devastation and the almost unbearable cost of deploying mercenary armies in the Thirty Years' War had forced the heads of states to form a professional, well-disciplined and standing army that consisted of their own people and which stood in arms in peacetime, too. This army indeed proved to be more disciplined but the rapidly developing military technology required employing and learning new tactics, which were extremely sophisticated and complex according to the "zeitgeist" of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

All of this resulted that the training of the army required even more time and the upkeep of this army had proved to be almost as expensive as the mercenary army's. Furthermore, in order to preserve the army's discipline, the states had to organise the supply of the army, which only could be organised by building huge warehouses in huge forts and continuously maintaining the level of supplies.<sup>4</sup>

This phenomenon had resulted that even if the states which would have had the intention to completely destroy each other had fought each other with armies that were extremely expensive to risk their destruction in a total war. Therefore, the wars became limited both in time and intensity, and most of the military actions consisted of manoeuvring, and trying to cut each other's connection with their strategic baseline between the army and its supply base. Decisive battles took place only when one of the armies found itself in an unfavourable situation and had to fight its way out of it.<sup>5</sup>

The interstate conflicts of this era could be decided by military force only extremely seldom. Because of this, the warring parties had to find alternative ways to force their will on the other. The early 18<sup>th</sup> century became the era when the rules of diplomacy were solidified and forming wide alliances became usual. With the help of these two political tools, the states tried to outmanoeuvre each other in the political sphere. Diplomatic manoeuvres, trade sanctions and offensive trade agreements became even more usual in order to weaken the opposing party.<sup>6</sup> This time was the debut of the political caricature which can be considered to be the precursor of propaganda and as of this the precursor of information warfare.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, those countries started to employ indirect methods which did not have sufficient military power. In times of conflict, the belligerent that possessed a smaller

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<sup>2</sup> SZENDY 2013: 111.

<sup>3</sup> PERJÉS 1961: 526.

<sup>4</sup> PERJÉS 1961: 524.

<sup>5</sup> PERJÉS 1961: 527.

<sup>6</sup> PERJÉS 1961: 519, 526.

military might have tried to weaken the enemy's economy and tried to involve more military power via alliances or – if existed – supporting tensions and uprisings in the enemy's territory. A good example for this was the French support for the American War of Independence or for the Rákóczi's War of Independence.

Nowadays, one can observe a similar phenomenon. Leaders of democratic states gain and lose power depending on the will of the population of their countries. In autocratic or even dictatorship states leaders also try to have the sympathy of the masses, therefore, keeping the power by force can consume lots of resources which can divert the resources from the outside enemies.

Just like in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, nowadays it is still very expensive to upkeep a modern and effective army. Furthermore, in the ranks of this army, the state's own people (and their loved ones) serve; therefore, suffering heavy casualties is unacceptable both politically and economically. Here one can see the dictatorship states as an exception but if we think about the Russian mercenaries in Syria or the Syrian mercenaries in the Nagorno-Karabakh War by Azerbaijan, we can easily see that sacrificing their own people is undesired in any political system.<sup>7</sup> This phenomenon can be seen also in Russia as the first wave of "territorial volunteer battalions" were formed in non-ethnic Russian regions of the country and according to the local sources the urban, more sophisticated Western Russian regions were relieved in the first wave of mobilisation also.<sup>8</sup>

Because of all of this, nowadays the states have turned to alternative methods instead of waging a total, conventional war. Of course, one can argue the author that Russia has just launched one. But if one considers the original Russian attitude to this conflict, it is hardly likely that the Kremlin had planned the "Special Operation" to be turned out this way.

Furthermore, states and alliances are considering security as not just one (military) dimensional topic. According to Barry Buzan's classic, security has five main sectors: military, political, economic, social and ecologic.<sup>9</sup> By the 2020s, these five sectors have been supplemented and reinterpreted, though all five sectors have a dimension in the information space and cyberspace also. Similarly to the absolute monarchies, nowadays also the weaker countries turn their focus to the alternative (non-military) sectors of security. Those non-military methods by which one side can force its will on its counterpart, the author calls indirect methods.

Russia, which had a smaller military and economic potential than the USA has intervened in the U.S. Presidential Elections in 2016 via cyberspace.<sup>10</sup> China also constantly employs alternative methods (jiggery-pokery with the airspace and naval rights, operations in the information space) against Taiwan.<sup>11</sup> Last but not least, it is important to mention those indirect methods which Russia implemented in the spring and summer of 2014, when they occupied Crimea and the Donbas, or which we saw at the end of 2021 at the Polish–Belorussian border or which one can think of the machination with

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<sup>7</sup> HAUER 2019; BUTLER 2020.

<sup>8</sup> CANCIAN 2022.

<sup>9</sup> GAZDAG–REMEK 2018: 20.

<sup>10</sup> MTI 2019.

<sup>11</sup> KOCSI 2018: 91.

the gas supply. These alternative methods can also be used when a belligerent party does not want to take part in a conflict by military force. In this case, its only option is to employ alternative methods, the best example of which is the EU sanction policy against Russia after 24 February 2022.

In this regard, the author sees a well-established parallel between the 18<sup>th</sup> century and today when the opposing parties, instead of waging a full-scale war (or previous to waging a full-scale war), try to manoeuvre themselves into a favourable position by attacking the security of their enemies by using non-military means. In this way, they try to force their enemy into an intolerable situation in which they can easily force their will on their opponent.

The reasons for this phenomenon are the same as deploying an expensive army would cause unbearable damage both economically, morally and politically; therefore, they use the above-mentioned indirect methods.

The author wrote this article before the escalation of the Russo–Ukrainian war, and insists on that it is still true. It is enough if one considers the political and economic situation in which Russia found itself just after weeks the conflict started.

If one remembers the first weeks of 2022, one can see that everyone was afraid of a Russian invasion and its possible consequences. Most experts declared that the Russian armed forces will defeat the Armed Forces of Ukraine in a matter of week(s).<sup>12</sup> Leading European politicians gave each other the doorknob in Moscow, trying to convince Putin not to commence an offensive. It is often forgotten that energy prices were rapidly rising since 2021 October resulting massive incomes to Russia. Parallel with this, the Zelensky Government's popularity was declining, the foreign investors were leaving Ukraine on a grand scale. All in all, one can easily see that Putin was in winning up until 24 February 2022.

The author is strongly convinced that if Moscow continues implying indirect methods (e.g. diplomatic manoeuvres, using the gas price advantage, appearing as an important depositary of the peace) they could have achieved a lot more favourable position than the one that they are in now.

## **Indirect methods employed by the military**

### ***Swift strikes with light troops***

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, armies, due to the limits of military technology and their limited numbers were unable to close whole strategic directions, even so, continents. This opened the possibility of deploying fast-moving, light troops. As a great example, the author has to highlight the raid on Berlin by András Hadik in 1757. It was one of (if not the) best-executed light units' operation and it was not just an anomaly. The deployment of light troops was a popular topic at all levels of the era's military science.<sup>13</sup> Multiple memoirs

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<sup>12</sup> VOROZHKO 2023.

<sup>13</sup> PERJÉS 1961: 530.

and descriptions of a given operation had been written in comprehensive scientific papers. It is without exaggeration that one of the most outstanding scientific works on this topic is written by Mihály Lajos Jeney in 1759. The title of his work is *The Raider – Fighting the Small War with Success According to Our Age's Genius*.

In his study, Jeney thoroughly examines all aspects of deploying light troops (or as he called them, raiders) and he illustrates his examinations with examples of the recent wars of his age. He extensively writes about the possible operations of small troops both in offensive and defensive operations in the enemy's territory. He writes in detail about the optimal composition of a light troops' formation, the requirements for the commander, the issues of logistics, the decision-making process during the execution, and the tactical military methods executed in a light troops' operation.

In the author's point of view, nowadays, the regular armies are unable to close whole strategic directions just like in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The reason for this is of course the number of soldiers in these armies hence, after the Cold War, the number of military personnel had radically decreased. Because of this, in times of war, modern states would be unable to close and monitor whole frontiers between the seas as they did in World War I and II.

The most spectacular example of this we could see in Eastern Ukraine in the summer of 2014. Here took place the largest land military manoeuvre in modern history, which received the name "The Great Raid". It was executed by (at the time) Lt. Col. Mikhail Zabrodskiy between 13 July and 24 July 2014 by a brigade combat team (BCT) based on the 95<sup>th</sup> Air Assault Brigade. This brigade combat team consisted of approximately 800 personnel, 70 IFVs and APCs, and 50 MBTs and they executed a 470 km long raid behind their enemy's line. The primary purpose of this raid was to free the Ukrainian troops trapped along the "official" border and try to get access to the wrecks of the recently crashed Malaysian airliner. The latter could not be accomplished because after the first shock, the separatist forces (and their Russian "advisors") pulled themselves together and put up a fierce resistance which forced the raiding BCT out of their territory via the Luhansk airport.<sup>14</sup>

Just like in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, at this time, in Eastern Ukraine neither side had the appropriate number (the enormous amount) of troops to close down the whole frontline. The Ukrainian Army at that time simply did not have a sufficient number of troops such as the separatists, furthermore, the Russian regular forces were not yet involved in a great number. This resulted that the main forces gathering around Luhansk and Donetsk and the gaps had provided favourable conditions to execute such a bold operation just like Hadik's raid in 1757.

All in all, the author has to outline that both nowadays and in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the regular armies are too expensive for a full-scale deployment and this leads to a situation where the warring parties cannot control huge frontlines. These frontlines have gaps and these gaps can provide favourable conditions to the deployment of fast-moving, light troops.

It is still true if we take a look at the ongoing war in Ukraine. In the first stage of the war (from 24 February to 7 April), when Russian forces attacked on a wide front from

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<sup>14</sup> TAKÁCS 2020: 24.

North of Kyiv down to Kherson, even the Russian Armed Forces did not have enough troops to control all their line of communications neither had a consistent FLOT (Forward Line of Own Troops) and FEBA (Forward Edge of Battle Area). This led to ambushes and raids, executed by Ukrainian small units, which led to great losses that forced the Russian forces out from the Northern and Northeastern parts of Ukraine.<sup>15</sup>

After the Russians have restrained their focus on Eastern Ukraine, one can say that this situation is contradictory. But here the author has to explain why he still does not consider this to be a strategic level military operation. Decisive operations are only taking place on a 2 × 10 km wide front between Dibrovne and Mazanivka and between Dolyna and Bohorodychne (NE Slovyansk) and another 10 km wide front between Spirne and Vovchoyarivka.<sup>16</sup>

According to all relevant Western and Eastern military manuals, a 10 km width of attack is an offensive task of 2–4 brigades (depending on territory, enemy, task, etc.). Therefore, these operations cannot be considered at a strategic level, only operational level military operations.

Examining the Ukrainian offensive of September 2022, it can be seen that the inadequate number of Russian troops led to the Ukrainian success.<sup>17</sup> Not only the low number of troops, but without the thinly held Russian lines, the Ukrainians could not have achieved this level of success.

Therefore, the author's previous statements regarding the insufficient number of troops are proved again. Furthermore, the warring parties do not even have sufficient forces (and leadership and supply capabilities, but this is another topic) to execute decisive operations larger than operational level.

### ***The two reasons for the non-consistent frontline***

Examining 18<sup>th</sup>-century warfare, one can ask, where are the huge warehouses in spectacular fortresses today? Nowadays, modern armies proclaim that they are capable of sustaining themselves and supplying the manoeuvre units in times of war. At least they claimed to be able to do this until the escalation of the Russo–Ukrainian War. In a full-scale war, high operational tempo and high-intensity operations consume an enormous amount of war material (ammunition, fuel, healthcare products, etc.). Furthermore, in an operation with a high operational tempo, it is even more difficult to organise the supply of the manoeuvre forces, even if a sufficient amount of supplies are miraculously available.

Furthermore, on the battlefields of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, even a mechanised infantry company has a great amount of destructive power, which makes the continuous supply of a given unit unnecessary. This is because in a high-intensity, conventional war a unit achieves victory in a few days or it will suffer heavy casualties which force its superior

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<sup>15</sup> For more information see <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-7>

<sup>16</sup> For more information see [www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-june-27](http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-june-27)

<sup>17</sup> TAKÁCS 2023.

to withdraw this unit from combat. That is why it became usual that an independently deployable battalion-sized battlegroup has only three days of supplies and can require resupply only ammunition and fuel depending on its operational tasks.

This operational freedom and the small armies (explained in the previous paragraph) are one of the reasons why the author thinks that in future wars there will be no continuous frontlines formed by divisions, corps and field armies facing each other. However, the author wrote this statement before the re-escalation of the Russo–Ukrainian War. One can easily think that the current events (grinder for Bakhmut, mobilisation at both sides) disprove this statement. However, if one thinks about the original plans of this war (according to both the Russian generals and the bulk of international experts), one will find that almost nobody expected this WWI-style warfare to happen.

One can question the freedom of operation thanks to the logistics, if one thinks about the severe logistic problems of the Russian Armed Forces. But before jumping to a superficial judgement, it must be mentioned that the bulk of the logistical problems of the Russian forces is not in the nature of war, but the corruption and poor organisation. Of course, in a high-tempo operation, the expenditure on ammunition and other war materials is extremely high, and in the chaos of war, it is extremely difficult to replenish the frontline forces (i.e. 90<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Division [GTD] in Brovary, or even the whole Battle of Kyiv).<sup>18</sup> But the author also has to underline that before suffering defeat, the 90<sup>th</sup> GTD performed a swift offensive manoeuvre from Konotop all the way down to the Eastern suburbs of Kyiv.<sup>19</sup> This underlines the statement that a properly trained, equipped and supplied unit can freely execute long manoeuvres thanks to the gaps in the frontline and the freedom from logistics.

The other reason why the author thinks that the characteristics of the frontline must change is newer but more significant. Even in the summer of 2014 in Eastern Ukraine, experts had examined the increase of precision artillery strikes supported by fire observer drones, and parallel with that the decrease in the lifespan of units exposed on the frontline.<sup>20</sup> This resulted that after the end of large-scale operations (after spring 2015), the belligerent forces started to man checkpoints all along the Line of Contact (LoC) and they have withdrawn their main forces from the effective range of the enemy's artillery. The question may arise whether this was the result of the changing nature of war, but it was the result of the Minsk Agreements. The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War and the escalated Russo–Ukrainian war have dispersed all these questions.

The most recent war between Azerbaijan and Armenia started on 27 September 2020 and finished with an Azeri victory on 9 November 2020. In this war, Azeri drones destroyed Armenian armoured vehicles, artillery pieces, command posts and supply depots in a large number. And if those types were unable to carry weapons, they were used as artillery observers to enhance precision artillery strikes. Military units in the Forward Line of Own Troops (FLOT) or the Forward Edge of Battle Area (FEBA) are extremely

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<sup>18</sup> For more information see [www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-1](http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-1)

<sup>19</sup> KRAMER 2022.

<sup>20</sup> KARBBER 2015: 17.

vulnerable to the strikes of Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs) and precision artillery strikes helped by Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) observers. It is proved to be true even if the defender is in perfectly fortified battle positions. The Armenian air defence was not prepared for fighting against relatively small, hence difficult-to-detect drones, and this has led to heavy losses.<sup>21</sup>

These two wars are the finished ones; the still ongoing Russo–Ukrainian war is the most recent one fought by modern armies. In these wars, both armies deployed modern sensors on a large scale.<sup>22</sup> The electronic warfare (EW) subunits can discover tactical radios from a long distance. Tactical information systems can be paralysed by cyber strikes. Ground radars can discover units and vehicles from more than 10 km. Drones can provide real-time reconnaissance to the leaders from small unit level to strategic level both day and night.<sup>23</sup>

Because of all this, the battlefield became “naked”. If modern armies face each other, anyone who tries to carry out a manoeuvre will be discovered and the defender will carry out a strike probably before crossing the frontline.

## On the theory of the escalation of violence

Nowadays, both military theorists and strategists of NATO countries agree that the future war will not be a joint forces war, but rather a wider scale, so-called multi-domain conflict. Briefly, it means, that the warring parties will fight each other not just in the “traditional” land, sea and air dimensions, but in space and cyberspace, too.<sup>24</sup>

According to the author’s opinion, this is a straight consequence of the phenomenon, which is experienced by researchers of security studies, and the broadening of the concept of security. The opposing states and alliances have discovered that they can force their will on their enemy by gaining the upper hand in an alternative, non-military sector of their enemies’ security. This trend has been helped by the circumstances I have mentioned in the first paragraph:

- the will of avoiding heavy losses
- strikes that can be more easily explained to the public
- actions that can be more easily denied to the international public

The author firmly thinks that multi-domain warfare and the usage of non-military aspects of security have already led us to a new era, but it will develop even further. In this era, the opposing parties will attack each other’s cyber and information systems as the first mean of attack. The main goal of these strikes is to decrease the population’s trust in their own government and at the same time to promote the attacker’s goals and political vision as

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<sup>21</sup> WATLING 2020.

<sup>22</sup> MASUHR 2019: 2.

<sup>23</sup> KARBER 2015: 14.

<sup>24</sup> New America s. a.

acceptable. Of course, apart from this, cyberspace is perfectly fit for gathering information and destroying the enemy's critical information infrastructure which can be found in and targeted from cyberspace. If one side is successfully using these methods, it can force its will on its enemy because it had destroyed the enemy's informational system, and totally controls cyberspace. If decisive success could not be achieved, the disadvantaged party can decide to accept defeat and accept the terms of its counterpart, or can ignore this situation and "raise the bet" by spreading the operations to another domain. Of course, this spread can be done before either side would achieve success in the first (mainly cyber and informational) stage of the conflict in order to resolve the stalemate.

If one side decides to escalate, it can do this in several other domains. There is a wide variety of economic sanctions or economic operations against goods (buying up raw materials, attacking the financial system, etc.) which are important for the enemy. It is also possible to form alliances which can result in an unfavourable situation for the enemy. In this stage of the conflict, there is only a very small chance for armed hostilities to break out (but in the communication it is highly likely that one or each side will threaten the other with "serious consequences"). If in this domain, victory cannot be achieved as the opposing parties will try to find new methods to attack each other. Just like at the previous level of the conflict, if one side does not accept defeat, the hostilities will escalate to another level.

In this new (third) level one can observe offensive diplomatic manoeuvres (expulsions, diplomatic protests, etc.), and also it is likely that the parties will support their enemy's enemies by concrete means (see proxy conflicts) if something like this can be found. Just like before, the conflict will widen and the deployment of armed forces will become unavoidable. This has two cases:

1. one side finds itself in an extremely unfavourable situation and it sees the armed violence as the only way out (see cornered dog effect)
2. the opposing parties cannot find a solution to their conflict and one side will deploy its military (possibly the one which has a more powerful military) trying to achieve a swift victory

At this stage one can rightfully say that what the author has written in this part of the study is hybrid war itself. The author agrees with this opinion: the stages of hybrid warfare before the military escalation can be found in the neo-methodist warfare. Furthermore, if one examines the theory of hybrid warfare, one can clearly see that the goal of the hybrid warfare is to avoid full-scale armed conflict by employing hybrid methods (which are largely similar to the indirect methods of the neo-methodist warfare). However, the real difference immediately emerges because, in the author's opinion, according to the theory of the neo-methodist warfare, at the end of the escalation ladder there is the full-scale conventional military conflict.

Thus, mainly because of the rapid development of military technology, the subsequent part of this study will present the main characteristics of a near-future neo-methodist war.

## Warfare in the age of neo-methodism

In the previous section, the author briefly described the escalation of violence that can lead to the outbreak of a multi-domain armed conflict. In this paragraph, he will describe the nature of a multi-domain armed conflict.

The available time for mobilisation depends on the speed of escalation before the war. In the time of escalation, it is highly likely that the mobilisation, the structure of forces, and the order of battle will be discovered by the opposing side. Precisely, this is why a mobilisation and the deployment of troops to the borders should be done in a way to have a deterrent effect. Reservists should be called into service, and they have to be trained and forged into whole units. At the same time, their morale needs to be defended against the enemy's informational operations (of course, this is true of the morale of the professional soldiers).

The opposing parties will conduct reconnaissance against each other well before the commencement of the armed clashes. Reconnaissance will be done in all domains, such as real-time satellite images, cyberspace operations, multispectral ground-based sensors, and of course the binocular of the reconnaissance soldier. In the potential conflict zone, modern sensors will see and hear everything. If one side positions its forces within the range of the enemy's artillery (either traditional or missile) with a goal of deterrence or because of a mere mistake, these forces will face the risk of destruction. A spectacular example of this is when the Ukrainians had ill-positioned one of their battalions, and the whole battalion had been wiped out by a Russian MLRS (Multiple Launched Rocket System) strike.<sup>25</sup> Of course, one can see multiple examples of exposed forces and command posts destroyed by long-range artillery strikes in the ongoing war mainly by U.S. supplied Ukrainian HIMARS system helped by U.S.-gathered reconnaissance data.

Because all of these – according to the author's opinion – in future armed conflicts between modern states with modern armies, the FLOT and FEBA will not consist of the battle positions of the mobilised forces that are fighting shoulder to shoulder. Instead of this, the FLOT and FEBA will be a chain of sensor groups and their close protection forces. This will minimise the exploitation of its own forces and maximise the possibilities of monitoring the enemy's activities.

If the opposing parties will not make an agreement, the last step of the escalation will be the deployment of military power, or in other words, to wage war (in this article, I will not talk about the nuclear option, because it will terminate all discussions within ours). The only way to achieve decisive military victory is offense. With offense, the army will try to capture territory and destroy the enemy's armed forces in accordance with the state's political will in order to force its will on the enemy.

In a future war, the way to achieve success is to break through the chain of sensors. This can be achieved via the destruction (or jamming) of these sensors. This can be done by strikes of EW weapons, conventional artillery and/or air strikes, and of course with the strike of the manoeuvre forces. Since manoeuvre forces will be discovered way before crossing their own FEBA, the first three methods will be more common.

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<sup>25</sup> TAKÁCS 2020: 23.

After punching through the line of sensors – if the political goal will make it necessary, or the attacked side will not call for an armistice instantly – there is a possibility to deploy large manoeuvre forces. These forces have (from the size of a battalion battlegroup to a combined arms army) to be:

- well-trained, equipped with the most modern arms
- capable of executing tasks independently
- have to be capable of reckoning the enemy's remaining sensors and the incoming strikes or the counterattacking manoeuvre forces
- have to be capable of defending itself from all types of strikes (armoured counterattacks, air attacks, counter-attacks, obstacles, IEDs, cyberattacks against the battlefield computer systems, EW strikes against sensors and communication systems) coming from all domains

Only a force like this can carry out a strike that can help reach the political goals of the state.

Of course, a manoeuvre force like this needs to be supported in all domains. This support can be executed by diversionary attacks, further information and cyber operations. The author finds the name “multi-domain operational battlegroup” fit to this further formation.

At this part, the reader can rightfully ask, what does this so-called multi-domain operational battlegroup have to do with neo-methodism. The author states that it is obvious that a military fielding multi-domain operational battlegroups is extremely costly to build up and maintain. Therefore, the warring parties will take care of this military as they can. This is the reason of the possible employment of indirect methods presented in the third section of this study.

However, if war breaks out, the militaries will probably not go head-to-head against each other. Instead, they will employ indirect (most of the time, non-kinetic) means to overcome each other. They will try to destroy targets used in a certain domain by strikes coming from a different domain. The other indirect method can be the more classical: manoeuvre. Execute a lot of probing attacks, feints, evasive manoeuvres, etc.

Briefly, the author thinks that the features described in this paragraph will be the main features of a future neo-methodist war.

## **The ongoing Russo–Ukrainian War and neo-methodism**

By the time the reader reaches this part of the study, he/she can raise multiple questions. It is crystal clear that the ongoing Russo–Ukrainian war does not look like the one the author has just described.

However, at this point, the author must call the reader's attention that before 24 February 2022 multiple indirect means were employed both by Russia and the Western organisations and countries. The information space was filled with narratives and comments on those narratives. There were diplomatic manoeuvres: heads of states visiting each other, ultimatums, treaty offers, etc.

After 24 February 2022, mainly because of the rapid advance of the inadequate number of Russian troops, there were no coherent FEBA. It had given the opportunity to the Ukrainian defenders to employ tactical indirect means. These were the ambushes, raids, small counterattacks and operational-level delaying action executed against the Russian armoured onslaught. The Ukrainians' goal was to evade the Russian strikes (both by troops and fire) in order to preserve their precious forces. This is clearly a neo-methodist feature of this war. The other clearly indirect method is the aforementioned deployment of long-range rocket artillery to sever the logistics of the Russian forces.

Later the Ukrainians have suffered enormous casualties in the summer of 2022 and in the Battle of Bakhmut where they were trying to hold territory, which shows how difficult it is to evade the Russians' strikes.

In this war, the Russians had employed indirect means also, but on a smaller scale. Of course, the Russian onslaught in the informational space was overwhelming and is still significant. However, on the battlefield they tend to use more traditional, direct methods. The only significant indirect method they used were the strikes against the Ukrainian energy infrastructure.

Of course, there is the battle for Bakhmut which turned out to be a "blood pump". At the time the text was finalised, the author could not decide whether the meatgrinder for Bakhmut serves the strategic goal of draining the offensive power of Russia as an indirect tool. On the other side, the battle for Bakhmut can be a "failure in the system" resulted by stubborn political will. Only time will tell the truth.

Finally, the author must highlight, that the ongoing Russo–Ukrainian War is not purely neo-methodist; however, the escalation spiral leading to it was something that the author described in the third section. The theory of neo-methodist warfare is based on a near-future near-peer conflict where countries and/or alliances are facing each other using the most recent methods and equipment in order to achieve their goals. However, because the ongoing war turned out to be much longer than expected, the most modern equipment is clearly out of stock, therefore, the warring parties must employ older (even out of date) technology. Of course, with this outdated equipment, the most modern methods are more difficult to execute.

Finally, the author must underline here that the theory of neo-methodist war is a theory and as such it cannot perfectly predict the future but it can provide a theoretical background for understanding the complex process of international struggle.

## **Assessing the reason behind the name neo-methodism**

According to the author, the above-described era could be called the age of neo-methodist warfare.

First of all, states, just like in the 18<sup>th</sup> century are not interested in the total physical destruction of each other. They want to reach their political goals without sacrificing a large number of casualties and without losing a large number of other resources. This is also true if we think about the reluctant Putin regarding mobilisation. That is why the

deployment of the armed forces can be seen only as a last resort. In this regard, there is a similarity with the fact that decisive battles in both ages can take place after one side finds itself in an extremely unfavourable condition after indirect manoeuvres.

Exactly like in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when armies tried to cut their enemy from their strategic baseline, nowadays the opposing sides try to cut the ties between the army and the population and critical infrastructure. Furthermore, in case of all-out war, long-range precision strikes are carried out to cut the enemy's army from its strategic baseline.

If a military is deployed, it will likely not have sufficient force to fully close whole strategic frontlines with military forces, and because of technological advances, it is not necessary anymore. There will be a possibility, and a need to carry out long-range strikes of autonomous, swift-moving forces in order to achieve strategic goals. These forces can be special operations forces or a manoeuvre force that carries out decisive strikes. All of these have a huge similarity with the operations of the 18<sup>th</sup> century's raiding forces (or as Clausewitz called them a bit later, the armies fighting "small war").<sup>26</sup>

Considering all of these factors, I firmly think that because of the significant similarities between today's (and probably the near future's) warfare and that of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, we can call our age the age of neo-methodist warfare. To support this statement, the author made the below chart. The first four lines will present the similarities and the last one will present the difference.

*Table 1: Comparative chart between today's armed conflicts and that of the 18<sup>th</sup> century*

<b>18<sup>th</sup> century</b>	<b>Comparative aspect</b>	<b>Nowadays</b>
Rather be avoided, because the state is the property of the ruler and he is responsible for his property.	<i>States' attitude to total war</i>	Rather be avoided because the government is responsible for the voters (in autocracy, responsible for the masses).
Sanctions, economic operations (protectionism), the advent of propaganda, and supporting the enemy's enemies.	<i>Employing indirect methods</i>	Sanctions, embargos, information operations, using proxy forces.
The ranks are filled with citizens, expensive to train and upkeep. Regular, disciplined army.	<i>General condition of the armies</i>	The ranks are filled with citizens, expensive to train and upkeep. Regular, disciplined army.
No sufficient force, leading to gaps. Deployment of light forces to cover gaps and flanks.	<i>FLOT and FEBA</i>	Main forces are not exposed to the first lines. The frontline is controlled by sensors.
<i>Supplementary directions to help the main force to achieve strategic goals.</i>	<i>Deployment of swift-moving manoeuvre forces</i>	<i>After destroying the chain of sensors, deploying as decisive force to achieve strategic goals.</i>

Source: Compiled by the author.

<sup>26</sup> CLAUSEWITZ 2015: 21.

## Conclusion

In this short study, the author did not have the option to thoroughly examine all aspects of interstate and inter-alliance conflicts. Instead, he relied on axioms, widely accepted in military science and sciences of security politics. After that, he added the results he gained after examining the military operations in the Russo-Ukrainian War and the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War.

Of course, the author is ready to accept if someone refutes his statements based on firmer knowledge of international security and military politics. Nevertheless, it is without a doubt that during an armed conflict the factors described in the fourth section of this study will be authentic. The topic of a further study is in what circumstances soldiers will need to fight the mechanised infantry units of the Hungarian Defence Forces in the near future, and what changes need to be done in order to meet these challenges. Because the author firmly thinks that the ultimate defence of a state's sovereignty is a competent and effective armed force.

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