

Ask A Genius 48 – War 2
Scott Douglas Jacobsen and Rick Rosner
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Scott: That leads to thoughts about the drone campaign, ongoing, and cyberwarfare by Russia, as you noted. The future would seem to then presage more cyberwarfare and more drone, or at-a-distance, mechanized warfare.

Rick: Let's go back to the WWII model of warfare, which is nations fighting each other using everything they have, and what makes wars like that, and so, I don't know that much history, but one thing that makes for big national wars is nations thinking they can get away with conquest, or aggression.

To some extent, some nations feeling aggrieved. Certainly, that is what Germany was feeling, or at least Hitler was able to exploit the national feeling of Germany because Germany felt cheated by the Treaty of Versailles that ended WWI. That Germany felt put upon. That they were blamed for everything, made to pay for everything, had land taken away. So, they had a bunch of national grievances.

So, I assume that's a cause for big national war. I guess another cause for war would be the feeling among nations and national leaders that they can't get what they need or want via less belligerent means. And to go to the modern means of war, war has often been seen as a means of last resort, though not always. I don't think when the Greeks and Romans fought wars that they saw wars as a means of last resort.

They saw them as a norm, especially the Romans who were constantly on a war footing. They kept doing their business on a framework of war: 'we're going to come conquer you via fairly warlike methods, and then we're going to incorporate you under the empire.' Since they were constantly at war, I don't know if their wars were as brutal as other countries. War was their deal.

I think they made war more of a business than a bloodbath. But I don't know that much history. In more recent times, war has been seen as what happens when you exhaust other means. And as we come up with new ways to fight war, what war is changes, and a drone war tends not to kill the people flying the drones, I don't know that we've lost any American troops to drone warfare since we're the ones using drones to target missiles and people.

Although, you could say some Americans are the victims. The victims of the drone attacks get pissed off enough to commit terrorist attacks. Some Americans are victims of the terrorist attacks. But drone warfare takes war fighting away from troops in the field to some extent, and then cyberwarfare is a form of warfighting that is even more remote from what we think of as combat than drone fighting. To the extent where it blurs the line between war fighting and getting what you want via other means, the whole dividing line between war and not war becomes blurred, in some good ways and some terrible ways.

The terrible ways are people don't even realize they are in a war. Russia pretty much committed an act of war against us in screwing up the election. Now, there are a lot of other reasons that contributed to a less competent politician becoming president, but you can argue fairly effectively that if Russia hadn't helped out that the election wouldn't have gone the way it did, and the US will be less effective politically, more divided. The US is just worse off with the outcome of the election.

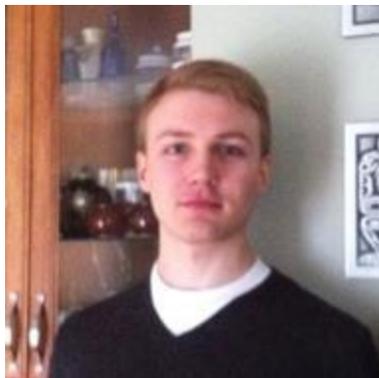
Which makes Russia more powerful, I think for the fourth year in a row *Forbes* has named Putin the most powerful person in the world. He's going to be more free to do what he wants due to the outcome of the American election. That was war. He won this battle. But it doesn't feel like war. It feels gross and confusing and disheartening in a way that we don't want it. Obama just kicked 35 Russian diplomats out of the country, and that feels more of the right scale than, say, 'I had to launch missiles at Russia.'

It is confusing. I just saw a survey that more Trump voters by almost 4-to-1 approve of Putin than approve of Obama. 35% of Trump voters approve of Putin versus 9% approve of Obama. That is effective war fighting. Anyway, we don't have a clear view of what war is, the means of fighting war. There are more and more ways of handling international conflict. And when I say "international," I mean conflict among nations.

There are, since 9/11, more conflict that is not based in nations, but is based more in, you could call it, religious extremism. But it is al-Qaeda and ISIS, and whatever you consider them. Yea, they are Islamic extremists, but they are not just that. Because, really, they use Islam as an excuse, but they are really a bunch of assholes who want to kill and be pirates...

(Laugh)

They are not a lot different in certain ways than warlords in some ways. They want to set up little empires.



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