

**Ask A Genius 49 – War 3**  
**Scott Douglas Jacobsen and Rick Rosner**  
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**Scott: That's some background. What will be future wars?**

Rick: Future wars will, obviously, be fought in a variety of ways including things that aren't clearly combat along the WWII model. But I think when people talk about the future of war, and will there be war, I don't think nuclear weapons can be left out of the discussion. The United States and Russia each have over 7,000 nukes.

I think in third place might be France with vastly fewer nukes, maybe around 300, then you've got Pakistan and India, which might have 150 each. I've seen the list. Israel maybe with 50 or 100. The deal with nukes, I think, is that when there's the possibility of something being used, and that possibility exists for a long enough time. Eventually, that possibility will come to pass.

If there's a 0.1% of an earthquake per year, there's a fair chance that an earthquake will happen with 1,000 years. There's a fair chance that a 1-in-a-1,000 per year thing will happen in 1000 years. And it's almost inevitable that something like that will happen, this 1-in-a-1,000-year earthquake will happen in 10,000 years. There's a non-zero risk of a nuclear weapon being used per year. Eventually, you will see a nuclear weapon used.

You could argue, or I tend to believe that it is probable, that the use of nuclear weapons will not be what people have feared since WWII, which is a massive use of nuclear weapons between the US and Russia, the US and China, or China and Russia. Any of those. Instead, it is more likely that you'll have a smaller country with a smaller nuclear stockpile being controlled by a psycho a-hole not being controlled by his political system, like Kim Jong-un.

He's more likely, I think, to launch a nuke than Russia to launch a nuclear attack. Although, the US and Russia have more to lose via a nuclear exchange, and have more controls in place. It is more likely that you've got a smaller crazier nation, or you have non-state actors getting a hold of nuclear material and setting off, probably not a functioning nuclear bomb but, a dirty bomb, but one that doesn't successfully undergo fission.

Instead, it has a packet of radioactive material that gets distributed across a few hundred yards via a conventional explosive, which would scare the world almost as much as a nuke because most people don't understand the difference between nuclear material distributed and scattered via conventional explosives and nuclear explosives.

**Scott: It would set a precedent, too. It would provide the possibility in the minds of bad people.**

Rick: Sure, but I think that would mean somebody managing to do that. What has captured the imagination of terrorists since 9/11 has been easy things that kill a lot of people, grabbing a plane and flying it into a building turns out to kill a lot of people without a lot of having to build

weapons. More recently, hijacking a truck and driving it through a crowd kills a lot of people without having to build any weapons.

It scares people because planes and trucks are everywhere. So, if some group or person were to set off a dirty bomb, that would capture the imagination in a new horrible way, but it is not likely to happen a lot. At least, until, the first time it happens, but it is more likely than a full scale nuclear exchange among super powers.

**Scott: What about narrow artificial intelligence designed to combat systems specific to nations, integral to their infrastructure? I do not mean a science fiction movie or a takedown from AI becoming conscious and destroying everything human. I mean the notion of someone design an artificial intelligence geared towards taking down specific systems within nation.**

Rick: Some kind of analytic system that takes a look at the distribution of ISIS forces across Syria and Iraq, and trying to determine the optimal distribution of resources. Some kind of AI-based analytics for some specific military intelligence.

**Scott: That would be half. The other half would then be the computer program can infiltrate the computer system and take it down. You can have some nuclear reactor, and it takes down its computer system.**

Rick: We know that Iraq's centrifuges were attacked by a computer worm or something. We took over their centrifuges and made them spin so fast they wrecked themselves. That aggression will continue. Yesterday, in the news, or the day before, it came out that there was evidence of Russia attacking or hacking into Vermont's power grid. Anyway, it was into part of the US energy infrastructure.

All three major – the US, Russia, and China – countries have many people working. It is their normal jobs. I'm sure. It is their normal jobs to be hacking into other countries' internet and computer systems. We are hacking each other all of the time now. You could say right now there is ongoing cyberwar. Although, mostly, there's ongoing hacking going on. There's the actual aggressive acts using the hacks, which are still only occasional, I guess.

You have, along with the constant hacking by state actors, state actors working in concert with private entrepreneurial hackers. In Russia, I'm sure the government hackers sometimes team up with freelance hackers to go after our stuff. I don't know if the NSA ever uses freelancers. I assume that in the US there's a more official division than the NSA and the CIA, and whatever other agencies do our hacking, probably like to think of themselves as competent to do it without having to bring in freelancers.

And would feel it would be kinda criminal to bring in freelancers, whereas Russia probably has less qualms about that, but there's constant hacking among bigger countries and India's in on it too. There's freelance hacking going on every place. Stuff that isn't hacking, but isn't exactly kosher.

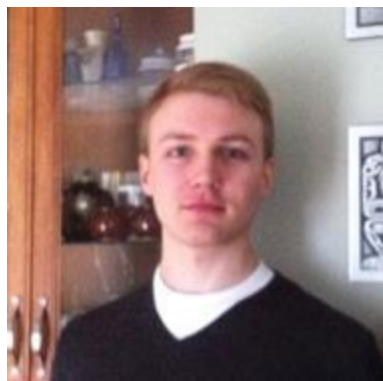
This isn't war, but it is bullshit. In that, I can go online and find somebody in Bangladesh who can sell me 1,100 fake Twitter followers for ten bucks. In fact, I do this a lot. I go online. I find a vendor. Usually in a third world but technically able country, a lot of people do this in India, Sri Lanka. I try not to business so much in Pakistan because people doing this from Pakistan...I don't want to be supporting who knows what.

It's a big creepy world of people doing bullshit online in addition to a big world of people doing legitimate business online, the world of cyberwarfare is in itself hard to think about with the clarity that we think about WWII. There's too many moving parts to it. Most Americans don't know how to frame the Trump victory.

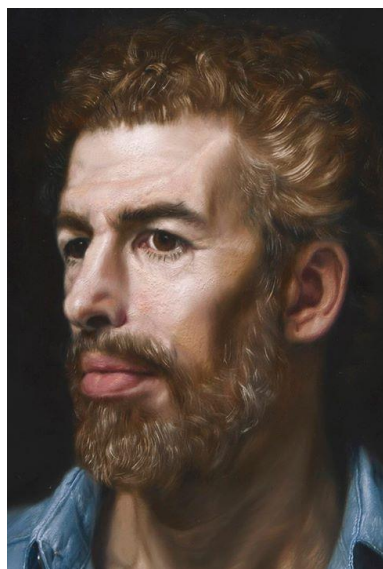
There are so many moving parts to it that it is completely confusing. It is similar to Brexit, where I'm sure if you're in Britain or just looking at Britain – how that happened. The Trump victory and Brexit are both things that the fair majority of each nation don't want. Yet, they still won electoral victories. It's confusing to people. Both things consist of many forces whose affect on the process are hard to judge.

When you want to talk about the current state of war or the future state of war, those things are subject to similar confusion because there are so many moving parts, and the size and the power of each of the moving parts are hard to judge or to fit into a picture that can easily fit into your imagination.

So, we have countries and individuals who are constantly committing aggressive acts against other countries and individuals or preparing to do so. We have no idea the extent to which this is going on, and no idea the ways in which this is going on.



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