

e-Thinking;

Pre-empting global instability in the 21st Century

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Eric Dion, CD, MBA, PhD

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Biographical note

Eric is a contracted professor, an executive management consultant and military veteran who served 25 years in the Canadian Armed Forces. His research focuses on the strategic management nexus in national security & global defence. More at: www.synergybook.ca

¹ <https://www.museumize.com/products/rodin-the-thinker-statue-metropolitan-museum-8652>

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“We can’t solve problems using the same logic we used when we created them” – Einstein

Introduction

Global events don’t always happen by accident; human designs have a great part to play. As we invented the “world”, “time” and money of course, we can deconstruct these ideas as Lego® blocks that can be melted down intellectually, and philosophically redesigned. Indeed, taking an original holistic *e-Thinking* perspective, this article aims to deconstruct our so-called “cognitive dissonances” and fundamentally reflect upon our epistemologies. Moreover, we will purport that *e-Thinking* is quintessential to pre-empt global instability. The Allies, as we refer to 20% of the world’s population living in the Occident, have essentially been avoiding major wars at all cost, preventatively engaging in the World. Our interest fundamentally rests in stable socio-economic conditions for our way of life. In the 21st Century, National Security & Global Defence are really about pre-empting instability.

In a comprehensive perspective, six dimensions support major human decision-making: The situational-context, socioculture, organisational structure, strategic policies, systemic processes and synergistic dynamics. Each dimension can be thought of independently, and it is what most theories of our world do, placing the locus of thinking within one or two dimensions idiosyncratically. However, this meta-theoretical model really adds value when all dimensions are considered interdependently, as complex and wicked problems in the “real world”. Moreover, accepting that most of humanity is well intended, is an important philosophical underpinning to contemporary war theory, which manages by exception and less by example. So engaging constructively and proactively in the world are key premises.

Situational Context

It may appear global instability is at our doorstep, and moreover in our “Internet of Things”. Since the Allies have been wholly unable to manage the Middle-East conflicts with some intellectual wherewithal, it seems we are now facing an era of “unending warfare”. Indeed and from the start, the plan has been to bug down the Allies in “civilisation wars”. What’s worse, Russia plays *Hybrid Warfare*, China plays *Unrestricted Warfare* and non-state actors play *Asymmetric Warfare*. This global context thus creates a perception that we are in for a “long war” in this century perhaps even in for a *Fourth Generation War* as it goes. What is much less apparent and more ambiguous is the fact that the vast majority of today’s humanity lives much longer and livelier than any of their predecessors in modern times². Hence, major wars and conflicts the scale of world wars are avoided at all possible cost. Plausible war scenarios remain, but the potential of global contemporary war is much more unconventional in this perspective, however, still involving all crucial elements of power. Thus, new emerging approaches are not so much interesting as they are truly required because the global context has changed, at least in our own perception of this environment.

As we are building the World, we are creating our own military chaos, if only by accident. Thus: “[...] *they came to realize that what to think and how to think are integral parts of the making and unmaking of contemporary conflicts* (Beaulieu-B. & Dufort, 2018, p. 2)”.

² https://www.ted.com/talks/hans_rosling_shows_the_best_stats_you_ve_ever_seen?language=en

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Indeed, more people die in suicides annually than in all conflicts around the world (2008)³, although population displacement from these conflicts remains a major unaddressed issue, which impacts more the living than the dead. Thus, different from the popular view, terror is not a strategic issue: It's more of a globally recurring annoying wart, but not debilitating⁴. Hence, the global contemporary context is intrinsically tied to our own perception of it, as much as it still has to do with the cold hard facts, both of which we must therefore balance.

Socio-Culture

As the rational-comprehensive perspective has dominated through the industrial era, in the information era, alternative perspectives to this paradigm have emerged namely from the lens of social-constructivism. Often conflated within context, the socio-cultural dimension now requires an analysis of its own system, within the system of six dimensions presented. Indeed, war is a social construct, as the “war of peoples” are waged by proxy through their militaries for governments. Sometimes literally contracted out, warfare officially remains the prerogative of nation-states, but socially constructed challenges to this westphalian view have emerged through the ideas of indirect warfare, such as terrorism and insurgency. No longer are occidental peoples seemingly satisfied with their international engagements and this social-political pressure out-maneuvers contemporary warfare in their name sake.

The soldier-citizen disconnect is more obvious, as the military social contract is outdated. Our enemies include civilians within their arcs of fire, but civilians are part of the solution. Citizens are “fighters” in their everyday lives because warfare is now social and economic. “[Thus terror] can be successfully challenged over the long run by prudent policies that maintain the fundamental tenets of society⁵” – Raheel Raza, *Their Jihad ... Not My Jihad!* Warfare, if legitimised by the people for the people, must maintain this moral high ground. As such, Allied militaries carrying out the people's wars must be highly intelligence-aware, understanding intelligence not only as a military function for example, but as a human one. Indeed: “NCM⁶s should be educated and empowered to think (Lummack, 2018, p. 104)⁷” and to this effect, military structures of thought must be opened and rapidly transformed.

Organisational Structure

In order to “think outside of the box”, there first must be an acknowledgement of the box! Thus, we are not proposing to burn the box that has served us well, but rather that we think from the box and particularly for the box, beyond the box. Without a box to start with, box in which we are all educated and experienced, a whole endeavour is fundamentally devoid of intellectual structure. However, this is not the sole dimension to consider as we argued. The military alone is unable to solve the root causes of contemporary and human conflicts so even the false dichotomy between civilian and military, like many others, needs revision.

³ <https://ourworldindata.org/causes-of-death>

⁴ <https://cdainstitute.ca/e-expectations-why-terrorism-is-just-the-smoke/>

⁵ http://www.mqup.ca/detained-products-9780773555099.php?page_id=73&

⁶ Non-Commissioned Members in the *Canadian Armed Forces* or Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs).

⁷ <http://militaryepistemology.com/systems-of-systems-thinking-and-hybrid-warfare-a-sof-approach/>

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We should promote Operations & Intelligence fusion structures akin to brawns with brains and integrate organisations within the whole of National Security & Global Defence teams. By design, we can prepare our military offer of services while we don't control the demand, that is both structurally in the terms of physical and virtual organisation, and intellectually. The current *regimen* of military silos does not provide a structurally sound organisation in time and space and thought, when deconstruction of *Regiments* and reconstruction of *Task Forces* happens in the midst of battles. The main challenge that frustrates military planners is mostly organisational issues and not so much strategic ones, like rearranging the chairs...

As such, our naval, land, aerospace and special forces are organisational silos created in an era of industrial mass-production, not for the matrixed and networked threats characterised by organised asymmetric, hybrid, unconventional, unrestricted and / or irregular warfare⁸. “Staff colleges need to create a learning environment where students have the opportunity to think hard about messy complex problems (Reffenstein, 2018)⁹”. But is the very idea of staff colleges still a valid one, when so-called out of the box thinking is quintessential? A balance of experiential and educational learning is required to foster creative knowledge, thus unstructured and structured learning is key, combining our intuition with intelligence. As *e-Thinking* vital force, constructive education and pragmatic experience are required in order to shape the next generation of General Officers to lead our militaries' reflexive turn.

Strategic Policies

“For Zweibelson, the promises of reflexive turn are too important to wait for organizational change as armed forces are becoming more and more irrelevant (Beaulieu-B. & Dufort, 2018, p. 18)”. This perception is becoming more common in military circles because of the failures to achieve strategic success, yet, in such forbidden places as Afghanistan and Iraq. Strategic success is dependent on our own measures and the Allies did defeat Al'Qaeda in its international terror capacity the same way the Allies did defeat Islamists from creating a state in the Levant. But if the measure of success is global peace and stability, the Allies are setting themselves up for failure by attacking this utopia and neo-liberal idealist dream. Constructive pragmatists do understand peace to be a measure of relative global instability. Allied militaries must focus on enabling strategic success and not simply operational ones.

The world has been preventing major wars at all cost since the “new world disorder” and end of the Cold-War. Conventional warfare has become special for the foreseeable future. Unconventional is the new conventional, and conversely, so-called conventional warfare has become a strategic exception delegitimised as it is by the people of the world in general. Everyone is special relatively speaking; so-called *Special Forces* are actually military elite, conducting *Secret Operations*, and not so much “special”, since special is our new normal. Sun Tzu, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Clausewitz, Jomini, Galula and other thinkers may have been right on the conduct of war in their time, but nature of war remains. These nuances are not semantic as warfare's leadership must emerge from our government and global instability can be strategically pre-empted, engaging the World through peoples.

⁸ http://www.soc.mil/ARIS/IWAnnotated_BibliographyS.pdf

⁹ <http://militaryepistemology.com/hardly-thinking-or-thinking-hard/>

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Through the predominance of indirect approaches, war and conflict remain the expression of chaos, so whatever strategy used to conduct war, it will be countered through adaptation. Specifically: “Hybrid warfare in its purest sense is the integration, exploitation, and leveraging of diverse networks, to accomplish strategic goals (Mitchell, W., 2017)¹⁰”. And furthermore: “We have traditionally approached National Security in terms of Defence. [It] is quite obvious that Defence alone does not offer a comprehensive integrated response to our Nation[s], to serve [their] overall security concerns and interests (Dion, 2004, p. 2)¹¹”. Moreover, because the nature of war is multidimensional, and not solely a military concern, a more holistic and synergistic approach is required to tackle conflicts in all its complexity. Call it integrated or comprehensive approach, its idea is to unleash and leverage *e-Thinking*.

“The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting” – Sun Tzu

Systemic Processes

In a systemic military & defence perspective, efficiency trumps efficacy because resources are limited, at least on Earth, so ensuring “each buck has a bang” is quintessential for effect. “Managers must make sense of factors contributing to the problem and how to manipulate resources to nudge the system [...] in different directions (Mitchell, 2017, p. 98)”. As such: “Design is not, strictly speaking, a defined methodology, but rather a collection of approaches and loosely connected ideas. Design is more of an art form rather than a process: it cannot be ‘taught,’ but learners can be ‘coached’ through design problems, just as artists, sportsmen and trades are developed in terms of practice (Mitchell, 2017, p. 101)”. Nonetheless, there needs to be a method to madness since indeed: *Hope is not a method*¹². The “design-planning bridge” (Porkolab & Zweibelson, 2018)¹³ must be built on the divide but if pushed or rushed, design may indeed become a “bridge too far” for many militaries.

Far from advocating new *Operational Planning Processes* (OPP) or *Military Decision Making Processes* (MDMP), integration of *Arts* and *Sciences* seems to be the more fruitful avenue so design elements in planning should be integral to *e-Thinking* about conflicts and wars. Thinking of the box, from the box and for the box, we should challenge these ideas from outside and from beyond the proverbial box and incorporate these views within. As net effect, this will increase the systemic scope and scale and strength of our thoughts. The incorporation of *Systemic Operational Design* along an *Operational Planning Process* for example, can provide not only for unstructured and structured frames of references for operations, but should as well allow for deconstruction and reconstruction of critical ideas. What’s more, the systematic application of innovative knowledge should be fostered within doctrine, as a way to challenge our assumptions, both at the operational and strategic levels. In a “system of systems” perspective, we must address root causes, not simply symptoms so a “reflexive turn” should only be the start of the process in a spiral development scheme.

¹⁰ <http://militaryepistemology.com/systems-of-systems-thinking-and-hybrid-warfare-a-sof-approach/>

¹¹ <https://cdainstitute.ca/synergistic-thoughts-for-canadas-defence-policy-review-3/>

¹² <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/175183/hope-is-not-a-method-by-gordon-r-sullivan/>

¹³ <http://militaryepistemology.com/creating-the-design-planning-bridge/>

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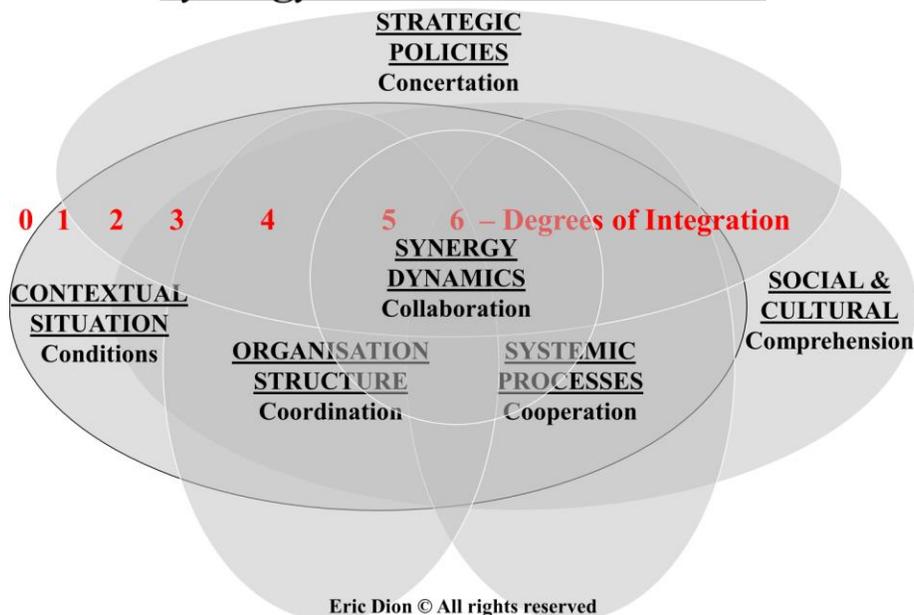
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Synergy Dynamics

“Several defence professionals often portray the design thinking movement as an “insurgency” sustained by “subversion”. As these are generally used figuratively [...] (Beaulieu-B. & Dufort, 2018, p.18)¹⁴” they nonetheless reflect well on this “reflexive turn”. Part of the challenge is that this reflexive turn is emerging in military circles, but not within the larger public service and government, which has “defence” for a primary responsibility. To pre-empt global instability is to answer why we need a synergistic and comprehensive approach. Our public service needs to step up to the global instability challenge, while we can still use the “hammer” on occasion. At the end of the day, fire preventing is generally better than firefighting, but this view trumps our militaries’ very sense of accomplishment. As adventurers caught in the branches of trees, it precludes us from seeing the global forest and it prevents us from actually seeing the whole nature of war, and its intrinsic instability.

Moreover, limiting our thinking to the military domain is preventing service opportunities: “all contributors [...] have argued that the challenges of contemporary conflicts demand radically new thinking, at odds with rationalism (Beaulieu-B. & Dufort, 2018, p. 7)¹⁵”. For our part, our argument is more constructive, pragmatic: All epistemologies are welcomed. We need smarter *e-Thinking* to challenge our own dichotomies and cognitive dissonances, while acknowledging such a dynamic metaphysical perspective will create yet other issues. Some academics may argue this is incommensurate, that is, only in our own mental frames. If we accept that our antagonists are not bound by such thinking, so too must we also adapt. Training trainers, but moreover, educating educators in *e-Thinking* are thus quintessential, leveraging and integrating the fundamental dimensions of *Synergy – A theoretical model*:

Synergy – A theoretical model



¹⁴ <https://jmss.org/jmss/index.php/jmss/article/view/696/655>

¹⁵ <https://jmss.org/jmss/index.php/jmss/article/view/696/655>

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Since through asymmetric, hybrid, unconventional, unrestricted and/or irregular & 4GW, military theorists are referring to various combinations of warfare, or conduct of war and its various degrees of conflict, we tend to miss a fundamental point about war's chaotic nature. In a global perspective this dynamic will always exist, hence the need for applied *Synergy*¹⁶ leveraging a multidimensional understanding and comprehensive approach to the issue. If we apply a constructive pragmatic epistemology, a vast majority of humankind is already at peace and even contributing each in their own way to a better quality of living. Hence, managing the exception must not become the norm while setting an example is key. Warts do not require amputation nor hospitalisation, but they require surgical operations¹⁷. For the present and foreseeable future, instability is relatively manageable on a global scale by deliberately creating clusters of *Synergy* that in sum, will foster positive dynamics. Not discussing artificial intelligence (AI) *per se*: *The wars of the future are those of the mind*.

Conclusion

We are facing epistemic warfare of our own creation. War remains the expression of chaos by nature, but for the foreseeable future the conduct of warfare has clearly become indirect. Whether we call it “out-of-the-box”, reflexive, unconventional, strategic, systemic or holistic *e-Thinking* the fundamental point remains: Our cognitive dissonances are complex. While we think we may have found solutions to some of our most complicated issues, like water on Mars, complexity remains critical for humans on Earth, because of our thinking. For example, if we somehow keep on imagining our elite military forces as: “‘Masters of Mayhem,’ capable of mastering the dynamic of change itself (Mitchell, W., 2018)¹⁸”, which is cliché from *Masters of Chaos*¹⁹, even our best and brightest are missing the point: Chaos happens within our minds first and foremost, through human intellectual existence. Mayhem and chaos are what we get if it is what we look for regardless of our perspective. A small revolution in thinking, an “insurgency sustained by subversion”, is truly required.

It is through collaborative intelligence that human endeavours progress in every dimension. By physically and virtually going faster and farther we are only accelerating and expanding the scope and scale of warfare, which as a counter probably requires more focused thinking. But: “As some of our allies have seen, incorporation of design is not without its challenges, nor is design a panacea that will solve every problem we confront (Strickland, 2018)²⁰”. So like time and money, we created the “World” and the economy, which the vast majority is destined to manage in their lifetime. Until the time comes, our allied militaries must think beyond the proverbial box, and if design is such an *e-Thinking* approach, all the best to it! In concluding, perhaps our design community needs to take a common sense constructive pragmatic approach to its clusters of ideas, and integrate in *Synergy*²¹ to support our Allies.

¹⁶ <http://www.synergybook.ca> & <https://ericdion43.wixsite.com/synergy>

¹⁷ <https://cdainstitute.ca/e-expectations-why-terrorism-is-just-the-smoke/> & <http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vo8/no4/dion-eng.asp>

¹⁸ <http://militaryepistemology.com/systems-of-systems-thinking-and-hybrid-warfare-a-sof-approach/>

¹⁹ <https://www.amazon.com/Masters-Chaos-Secret-History-Special/dp/1586483528>

²⁰ <http://militaryepistemology.com/planting-seeds-at-the-strategic-level/>

²¹ <http://www.synergybook.ca> & <https://ericdion43.wixsite.com/synergy>

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