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Omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent commanders: The impact of a cultural paradigm derived from a secularised Christianity on the philosophy of infocentric warfare

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Abstract: This article examines how a religious cultural paradigm deriving from the Humanism of the West affects the modern art and science of War. It was in the framework of a religified Humanism, in which man ‘stole’ God’s capabilities and properties, that the worldview of man-god was created. This worldview permeated the development of military strategy, thereby facilitating its transformation in the worldview of a commander-god; this is the same worldview which today threatens to reach extremes, assisted by technological evolution allowing the development of robust C4ISR networks¹ interconnected with precision guided munitions (PGMs) of various configurations. The article then examines the influence of Western intellectualism, which is a basic element of Western Christianity, over the development of modern theories and perceptions on military strategy and the risks that can arise for future Western armies from this impact. As an antidote to this influence, the article suggests a new perception on military strategy which emphasises adaptability and flexibility and is based on a cultural paradigm from the Orthodox Christian Faith.

Keywords: religion, infocentric warfare, decentralised warfare models

1 Introduction

‘The common root of all forms of the human ability for destruction is indeed the self-deification of man, the ‘God complex’, as it was called. The position of the dethroned

¹ Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance. The acronym today is C5ISR, with the addition of Combat Systems.

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God was not taken by the ‘enlightened man’ but by the pompous man-god’². – Speech of the Ecumenical Patriarch, Mr. Bartholomew, at the Technological Educational Institute of Kalamata at the inauguration of a conference on the Environment and sustainable development, on 1 February 2010.

Associating religion with the art and science of war can be seen as irrational or even impious. However, the evolution of civilisation follows a parallel path with the evolution of religions in the history of mankind. Religion is a basic factor for the development and creation of the civilisation of each era and any attempt to study the military thought outside the wider cultural framework giving birth to it and shaping it is rather imperfect and misleading³.

While, thus, the impact of the individual scientific paradigms, in the meaning given to the term by Thomas Khun, on the development of the notions on the best strategic theory throughout the centuries has been sufficiently studied⁴, the impact of cultural paradigms deriving from the influence of religion has not been widely examined to date.

As professor John Gray argues, the decline of Christianity in the West and the rise of Humanism essentially replaced God in the people’s collective conscience with the belief in man’s capabilities. Thus was created the worldview of man-god, as described by Fyodor Dostoyevsky in his book *‘Demons’*. In simple words, man stole God’s competences and capabilities and deified himself. As John Gray characteristically argues, *‘humanism is not a science*

² Source: Zoiforos website (<http://www.zoiforos.gr/ar8rografia/lai-koi-2/diafora/item/1584>).

³ For the impact of the wider cultural framework on the types of war, see Lynn, John, A. *Battle. A HISTORY OF COMBAT AND CULTURE. From Ancient Greece to Modern America*, Westview Press, USA, 2003.

⁴ For a more specialised approach regarding the role played by the each time scientific *paradigm* in the diachronic ideas and methodologies about the war and the role of the theories of Chaos and Complexity in the strategic thought, see Bousquet, Antoine, *The Scientific Way of Warfare. Order and Chaos on the Battlefields of Modernity*. Columbia University Press, New York, 2009.

but religion⁵. The same conclusion is drawn by religion scholar, Oxford professor, Karen Armstrong, who argues in her famous book 'A History of God' that '*humanism is itself a religion without God*'⁶.

Very briefly, we could say that human beings, since the Age of Enlightenment, have not seen themselves as yet one more primate with higher intelligence than the rest but as a completely separate being with no relation to their biological relatives. In a way, God's exile from human affairs has, instead of downgrading the perception of man to the level of an intelligent animal, 'upgraded' it to the level of a god. Man saw himself not as a creation of God but rather as God himself or at any rate as a being that can have absolute control of its destiny⁷.

This existential condition was inevitably reflected at the level of military strategy. From the moment man treated himself as a god, he believed that he could achieve perfection. He believed that this can also be applied to the art of war. He tried, that is, to create the perfect strategic theory, the perfect model of war, the perfect warfare.

According to the author's view, this course reached its peak in the '90s with the model of infocentric warfare, which was based on omnipotent centralised C4ISR networks. The aim of infocentric war models, which were developed in the wider framework of the phenomenon called Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), was to lift the fog of war, to obtain an absolutely clear sense of what is going on in the battlefield and allow the highest levels of command to control the depth and width of their forces in real time and to supervise the warfare and be able to attack targets anywhere using precision guided munitions (PGMs)⁸. In a sense, these models aspired to

create commanders – gods, offering them the possibility to be omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent. The worldview of man-god penetrated the field of the art of war and was transformed into the chimerical dream of commander-god. The result was that these models proved dysfunctional exactly due to their centralisation and the tendency to strengthen the micromanagement of commanders, suppressing the initiative of low ranking leaders and, therefore, their ability to adapt to the fluid reality of the battle. There was the threat that the pace of operations would slow down instead of accelerating, while the ability to adapt to the unsure nature of war operations decreased instead of increasing. The volume of information caused inflexibility and in the end produced a denser fog of war. Furthermore, the inflexible structure, on the top of which there was the commander-god, also created new 'Achilles' heels' that could be exploited by the enemy by developing 'asymmetric' abilities. Therefore, the complexity of warfare increased instead of decreasing, resulting in a wider vagueness regarding the effectiveness of the various weapon systems, technologies and tactical and operational perceptions, with greater geopolitical consequences whose investigation cannot be part of the restricted scope of this text.

2 Western intellectualism and strategic thought

This impact of religion on the chimerical attempt to create the perfect combat model and the perfect commander in the battlefield may be more deeply rooted than the transfer of God's competences to man, which occurred during the decline of religion in the West and the rise of Humanism. The basic causes for this phenomenon may be traced to the intellectual spirit that constituted the core of Western Christianity and the humanistic model that

5 Gray, John, *STRAW DOGS. THOUGHTS ON HUMANS AND OTHER ANIMALS*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2002, p. xiii (Foreword).

6 Armstrong, Karen, *A HISTORY OF GOD*, Ballantine Books, New York, 1993, p. xix (introduction).

7 'By contrast, arising among Christians who set humans beyond all other living things, it trigger a bitter controversy that rages on to this day. In Victorian times this was a conflict between Christian and unbelievers. Today it is waged between humanists and the few who understand that humans can no more be masters of their destiny than any other animal. (...) Humanists insist that by using our knowledge we can control our environment and flourish as never before.'

Gray, *STRAW DOGS*, p. 4.

8 For the exceptionally ambitious plans of the USA and the optimism prevailing then about what the achievements of RMA could be in the future, see indicatively: Binnendijk, Hans (ed.). *TRANSFORMING AMERICAS MILITARY*, National Defense University Press, Washington D. C. 2002 and Scales, Robert, H., Jr. *FUTURE WARFARE ANTHOLOGY*, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 2001. For a more complete and later approach of the RMA phenomenon both in the USA as well as in other states, see: Adamsky, Dima, *The Culture of Military Innovation. The Impact of Cultural Factors on the*

Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the US, and Israel, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California 2010.

For the wider relationship of technology in the American way of war, see: Mahnken, Thomas, G. *TECHNOLOGY AND THE AMERICAN WAY OF WAR SINCE 1945*, Columbia University Press, New York 2008.

For the theories about the use of PGMs in an infocentric environment as a dominant factor in forming the war result and the problems arising from the application of these theories, indicatively see: Budiansky, Stephen, *AIR POWER. THE MEN MACHINES, AND IDEAS THAT REVOLUTIONIZED WAR, FROM KITTY HAWK TO IRAQ*, Penguin books, New York 2004 and Farquhar, Scott, C (ed.), *Back to Basics: A Study of the Second Lebanon War and Operation CAST LEAD*, Combat Studies Institute Press, US Army Combined Arms Center Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2011.

prevailed in the West⁹. Absolute intellectualism can be roughly described as belief in the unlimited capabilities of the human intellect¹⁰. In the West, the human mind was considered the unique instrument of proof (or not-proof) of the existence of God and the only proper tool to solve theological issues and determine the relationship of man with God¹¹. The result was to deify mental functions and abilities and surround them with essentially supernatural capabilities. It was believed that from the moment the human mind had, even potentially, the power to prove the existence (or non-existence) of God and define His nature, it could do everything. It could create perfect models and achieve perfect solutions for everything¹².

9 'Frankish theologians derived from Augustine the presuppositions for a secularized 'religionization' of the Christian life, emphasizing individual conviction against experiential participation in the Church as truth. Intellectualism and individualism afterwards always pervaded the Western religious tradition'.

Yannaras, Christos, *Orthodoxy and the West*, translated by Peter Chamberas and Norman Russell, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, Massachusetts, 2006, p. 17.

'Individualism and intellectualism, which are the pivots of Western European life and culture, are historical products of a theology which denies the priority of personhood, of participation in relations and experiential knowledge, for the sake of the intellectual certainties of the individual and denies the ecclesial mode of existence for the sake of an individual 'religious' certainty'.

Western theology turns God into an 'object' subject to the individual's comprehension. It conceives of him as Being defined by logical thought, by the rational conceptualization of his essence. The first twenty-five chapters of Thomas Aquina's *Summa Theologiae* or any Roman Catholic dogmatic handbook depict an intellectual being, subject to human logic, in place of the living God. What is missing is the experimental basis of the Christian Gospel, the approach to the truth of the personal Triadic God through participation in the ecclesial communion of persons'. Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and the West*, p. 37.

10 'But Calvinists believed that God could be discussed as objectively as any other phenomenon.

(...) the new theologians were not as interested in the content of Aristotle's thought as in his rational method. They wanted to present Christianity as a coherent and rational system that could be derived from syllogistic deductions based on known axioms'.

Armstrong, *A HISTORY OF GOD*, p. 283.

11 'Westernized admired scholasticism, transforming religious into an ideology consisting of a strictly determined world view and obligatory methodology. The Scholastics grounded truth in the syllogism and in the defense of theses by the systematic refutation of contrary statements. This 'technology of truth', based on intellectual dexterity and methodological effectiveness, measured every aspect of Western European life'. Yannaras, *Orthodoxy and the West*, p. 12.

12 'The rupture of every mythical and religious understanding brought to the center of modernity the ultimate value of scientific knowledge and the dominance of man over nature'.

Yagazoglou, Stavros, *AT THE VERGE OF THEOLOGY. Essays on the Dialogue of Theology and Culture*, Publisher Domos, Athens, 2018, p. 69.

Furthermore, if we consider that everything is a matter of understanding, then, we practically accept that there is a world waiting to be understood. In the context of a dialectical relationship, a perfect mind would not have any meaning if a perfect world did not exist. If mental powers are able to interpret the nature of God, surely it is impossible for them not to be able to interpret the material world. It would be a blasphemy and it would be irrational¹³. Further, if the human mind can fully understand the world, it can of course understand the individual phenomena inside this world¹⁴. One of these phenomena is war and the way it is conducted. And since you can understand something, you can control it.

This gave rise to the belief in the omnipotence of science as an applied function of the omnipotent human mind that could lead to the comprehension and, then, to the subjugation and control of the world and the phenomena occurring in it. The belief in the scientific approach of war and the expectation of creating perfect warfare models based on scientific principles was born as a result of this rationale.

In other words, the belief in the absolute and unlimited capabilities of the human mind was introduced into the world of science and, then, of military strategy, leading to the pursuit of various chimerical targets, such as the perfect warfare model, the perfect military strategy and the perfect command model in war. The last of these reached its ultimate limit with the vision of the super-commander who would be the core of an omnipotent C4ISR network.

To summarise, we may state that the result of the absolute belief in the ability of the human mind to discourse with God was arrogance and so was the metaphysical-type belief in the capabilities of science and

13 'Now the man as the only source of the truth, he can recognize himself as the only god and human history as the only reality (...) The Cartesian version of the thinking subject has transformed the world into a subject of knowledge. The world is inside the human being, who rightfully can thus become his «owner and master». The world became object and the man became subject, the universe was divided into nature and history.(...) The man, the only protagonist in the history theater, free from any metaphysical commitment, discovers his infinite-potential. The deification of human as the purpose of history provides its only possible ontological definition. History as a progressive realization of freedom is ultimately the place of human's Epiphany'.

Yagazoglou, Stavros, *AT THE VERGE OF THEOLOGY. Essays on the Dialogue of Theology and Culture*, Publisher Domos, Athens, 2018, pp 70–71.

14 'Scientific fundamentalists claim that science is the disinterested pursuit of truth'

Gray, *STRAW DOGS*, p. 18.

technology, which in war affairs reached its peak with the model of commander-god¹⁵.

Perhaps it is not accidental that the eminently atheistic military power in the world, the Soviet Union, promoted an extremely centralised command model. When the unofficially deified Stalin was also the highest leader of the armed forces of the country, it was natural and logical to adopt a corresponding command form. The persecution of the Soviet generals in the '30s could perhaps be examined in the light of this logic. A man-god, who is also a military commander, cannot tolerate the existence of intermediary stages that have a mind of their own and can give orders and draw principles of strategy. This would be a blasphemy¹⁶.

On the other hand, perhaps we should examine the emphasis that the Russians and the Soviets placed on the creation of the operational art of warfare, as an interim level between strategy and tactics, to be partly an indirect result of the Orthodox religious culture. As we will see below, the Orthodox paradigm rejects intellectualism and consequently is a factor that limits the chances of generating centralised command models¹⁷.

3 The apocalyptic quest for the 'perfect victory'

When the model of intellectual Christianity and the stealing of Gods' competences by man were introduced in the art and science of war, apart from the belief in

the unlimited capabilities of the human mind, these are perhaps partially responsible for other theories on war which attributed metaphysical-type capabilities to man.

For example, ideas such as the ones in French military thought at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century greatly emphasising the will for victory and, in general, the morale factor, very simply believing that if there is will in the army, then this can conquer material forces, may not be fully explained unless they are incorporated in this framework. These ideas comprise one of the factors that led the French army to the ceremonial massacres of the irrational attacks against the machine guns and barbed-wire fences of the Western Front in World War I¹⁸.

The encroachment of the illusion of man-god to war strategy can perhaps explain the perseverance in the chimera of the 'decisive battle' that beset the people of the 'Age of Reason'. Indeed, military theoreticians at that time up to World War I (in reality, the temptation of the 'decisive battle' continues to exist even today) had proclaimed the decisive battle as the Holy Grail of all war acts. We are tempted to think that, even partially, this can result from the belief of man in his omnipotence, which derives from the imaginary theosis of the man himself when he decided to steal the divine powers from the 'dead' God of the old religion. This deified man believed that he could achieve

¹⁵ As characteristically John Gray argues, 'today (science) it is the only institution that can claim authority'.

Gray, *STRAW DOGS*, p. 19.

¹⁶ ' (...) the execution of Tukhashevskii and his supporters dealt a severe blow to the development of the operational theory. Instead of the lively theoretical debates of the recent past, Soviet military writings became increasingly dominated by bombastic declarations about the Red Army's 'invincibility' and publications on the civil war, **which were little more than hosannas to Stalin's wise leadership.**' (emphasis added).

Harrison, Richard, W., *The Russian Way of War. Operational Art, 1904–1940*, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, 2001 p. 224.

¹⁷ 'Movchin argued that the demands of a modern war required the creation of the front level of control between the high command and the armies in the field. He singled out for criticism the younger von Moltke's 1914 attempt to coordinate his seven armies on the western front from general headquarters, when, in fact, these armies were conducting three separate front operations. Conversely, Movchin warned that the high command should not burden the front commander with the conduct of more than one series of complex operations and supported the creation of fronts containing as few as three to four armies'.

Harrison, Richard, W., *The Russian Way of War. Operational Art, 1904–1940*, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, 2001 p. 159.

¹⁸ For the French war thought of that period and its perseverance in the moral factor, see: Howard, Michael, *Men against fire: The doctrine of the offensive in 1914*, in Paret, Peter (ed), *Makers of Modern Strategy. From Machiavelli to Nuclear Age*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1986.

'French doctrine still emphasized morale as the most important factor in the battle'.

Murray, Williamson A., *The West at War*, in Parker, Geoffrey, (ed) *THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF WARFARE*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2005, p. 287.

Even the practical Germans did not escape of this trap. As Jorg Muth mentions:

'Several high – ranking German officers visited the United States Military Academy at West Point and were not overly impressed. Instead the visit to the Ford car factories became an 'essential part of the officers' missions in the United States. Technological interests ranked before everything else and the American mobilization capacities were correctly considered by the German officers as crucial for the U.S. Army's efforts in World War I. With this knowledge and the deep insights they got from their view of American industrial potential, it is all the more surprising that they were completely unable to grasp, even remotely, the industrial potential of the future enemy. **A cultural barrier that ranked immaterial and rather spiritual abilities like willpower and creativity far above industrial capacity as decisive in war can partly be identified as the reason for that.**' (emphasis added).

Muth, Jorg, *COMMAND CULTURE. Officer Education in the U.S. Army and the German Armed Forces, 1901–1940, and the Consequence for World War II*, University of North Texas Press, Denton, Texas, 2011, p. 35.

the perfect battle, the absolute battle, the ‘decisive battle’: the one that could bring unquestionable, clear and fixed results without objections, exactly as would a divine intervention. This ‘decisive battle’ is essentially the fantasy of man that—with a revealing action—could achieve the fixed and uninfluenced perfection, namely the ‘perfect victory’.

Perhaps the most typical incarnation of the man-god commander is Napoleon. Thus, for Napoleon the quest for the ‘decisive battle’ became his nemesis.¹⁹

4 Can the decentralised battle models flourish in a war culture dominated by the man-god model?

The man-god command model aims in effect at collecting competences at the top of the pyramid, the highest commander, who is treated like a god. Any decentralisation attempt in this framework takes on the character of a crime against the holy, regardless of whether this is understood or not. As a consequence, attempts promoting decentralising command models, such as the continuous American efforts for the promotion of *Mission Command* methodologies, face many difficulties in their application, exactly because they are opposite to the deeper elements of the culture of the organisation inside which they function²⁰.

Even the homeland of *Auftragstaktik*, the open type of battle, the battle waged at the bottom, in Germany, could not be freed from this trap²¹. On the one hand,

¹⁹ ‘Near the end, the army became too large and cumbersome even for Napoleon to control personally. **Mesmerized by the search for a decisive battle**, he failed to see that in both Spain and Russia military solutions could not deal with what basically were political issues’. (emphasis added).

Archer, Christon I., Ferris, John R., Herwig, Holger, H., Travers, Timothy, H. E., *WORLD HISTORY OF WARFARE*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, USA, 2002, p. 400.

(...) ‘the quest for a war – deciding battle (...) is truly the core of the Napoleonic paradigm’.

Heuser, Beatrice, *The Evolution of Strategy. Thinking War from Antiquity to the Present*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2010, p. 137.

²⁰ For the difficulties the USA and other countries have been facing in the application of flexible and adaptive methodologies of battle that greatly emphasize the assumption of initiatives by lower-ranking leaders, see: Shamir, Eitan, *Transforming Command. THE PURSUIT OF MISSION COMMAND IN THE U.S., BRITISH, AND ISRAELI ARMIES*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California 2011.

²¹ The beginning of the evolution of *Auftragstaktik* dates back to the years of Frederick the Great. However, its basic form as a

there prevailed the open form of command, the emphasis on adaptability and the assumption of initiatives by the lower ranks spread on a monumental scale at the tactical level during World War I. On the other hand, before World War I, an extremely centralised and ‘programmable’ warfare model appeared, leveraging the evolutions of technology at that time. This tendency was expressed by the dominant personality of *Schlieffen* and found its absolute expression with the notorious *Schlieffen plan*, the purpose of which was to achieve absolute and unquestionable victory against France, in a climactic ‘decisive’ battle. Only during the last phases of the war did Germany rediscover the virtues of *Auftragstaktik*, but it was too late by then to transform their initial impressive tactical successes to victory at the operational level²².

methodology of battle was shaped in the Western Bloc in World War I. For the development of this philosophy of war, indicatively see: Gudmundsson, Bruce, I. *STORMTROOP TACTICS. INNOVATION IN THE GERMAN ARMY, 1914–1918*, Praeger, Westport, Connecticut, London, 1989 and English, John, A. Gudmundsson, Bruce, I. *On Infantry*, Praeger, Westport, Connecticut, London 1994.

For the philosophy of Mission Tactics in the American army, indicatively see: U.S. Marine Corps Staff, *WARFIGHTING*, Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, Washington D.C. 1997.

²² ‘Schlieffen championed a highly centralized role for the modern Alexander. The *Feldherr* would be situated farther behind the front than in the days of Napoleon, ‘in a house with spacious orderly – rooms, where electric and wireless telegraphs, telephone and signaling apparatuses are readily at hand’. Platoons of motorcars and motorcycles, ‘outfitted for even the most distant of journeys’, would stand by to dispatch orders. ‘**The modern Napoleon, seated in a comfortable chair before a wide table, the entire battlefield on a map before him** would be ready to receive a flood of reports from ‘army and corps commanders, from dirigibles and tethered balloons, which observed the enemy’s movements and guarded his position along the entire expanse of his lines’. The commander, for his part, would send out ‘stirring words’ via his network of telephones.

(...) It was robotic warfare concocted in a cocoon.

(...) Not surprisingly Schlieffen’s pupils avoided deeper analyses of statecraft and historical forces. **The worshipped the goddess ‘efficiency’ as the logical culmination of nineteenth century rationalism and positivism**. Theirs become a narrow world of technical marvels: cartography, communications, railroads, weapon systems, and the like. They mastered statistical tables, devised intricate mobilization schedules, and formulated complicated military responses to every conceivable political contingency. **Long before the computer age, they reduced the art of warfare to an exact algebra.**

Whether that would suffice for the war of the future was the crux of the matter. In Germany two such disparate personalities as Helmuth von Moltke (the Elder) and Friedrich Engels contested Schlieffen’s vision of a clockwork war’. (emphasis added).

Archer, Christon I., Ferris, John R., Herwig, Holger, H., Travers, Timothy, H. E., *WORLD HISTORY OF WARFARE*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, USA, 2002, pp 429 – 430.

In conclusion, the example of man-god at the battlefield leads to the quest of the utopia of the perfect commander, the omnipotent commander; and as each level of command is subordinate to another, the quest of this utopia is practically centralised and leads the lower levels to a passive subordination to the higher ones, suppressing, thus, proposals for a decentralised command, with emphasis on improvisation, assumption of initiatives, flexibility and adaptability. In the past, this trend was checked by a series of factors, with the prevailing one being the pragmatist-individualistic spirit of the West and the weaknesses of the means of the period offering the highest echelons the possibility to control everything below them; today, however, technology gives the hollow promise that it can secure a strong grid of sensors and communication links, combined with a wide range of PGMs that shall offer the highest commander the sense of omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence.

The worldview of man-god urges the whole military thought of the West to try to create 'ideal commanders' at the highest levels and, specifically, at the operational and strategic ones. There is a tendency to wage warfare from the top, where the highest commanders take the right decisions and the lower ranks win – provided, of course, they properly implement the orders of their superiors. However, this leads to centralisation and suppression of the initiative of the lower echelons. This logic in practice restricts the possibility of flexibility and adaptation to the 'friction' and the 'fog of war', according to the famous terms of Clausewitz which describe the fluid reality of the battle. The effective philosophy of adaptation and flexibility takes it for granted that one cannot predict what will happen in advance and one should all the time adapt; in other words, one must oneself be fluidic. To achieve this, one should probably invest on a command model from the bottom, where the events at a tactical level would be the primary factor of taking decisions, with the highest echelons continuously trying to adapt to the fluid reality on the battlefield instead of trying to impose what should be done at a tactical level. However, for this to be achieved, the highest echelons should be characterised by great 'humility', and also the tendency for supremacy should be radically suppressed. The highest echelons should be treated rather as servants of the lowest ones and managers of the results that the lower echelons achieve and not the opposite. Therefore, planners of warfare models should remember that the basic virtue of Christianity is humility and that this is the base for the development of high capabilities of flexibility, adaptation and harmonisation with the *chaoplexic*²³ and fluid nature of the warfare.

²³ From the words 'Chaos' and 'Complexity'.

The same can be done by anyone insisting that he is an atheist. In this case, he should relieve his thoughts and the way he deals with life from the 'infections' imposed by the absorption of the competences of God by man and would reach the same conclusions which derive from the ascertainment that perfection is not a characteristic of this world. Therefore, to escape from this trap, we need a new cultural paradigm that would give emphasis on adaptation and flexibility. This paradigm, according to the author's opinion, can be offered by the Orthodox Spiritual Tradition.

5 The Orthodox Christian paradigm and humility as basic military virtues

'We draw near to God by means of a way of life, not by means of a way of thinking'.

Yannaras, Christos²⁴

Contrary to Western Protestants, Orthodox Christians do not believe in the omnipotence of the human mind. On the contrary, they think that the human intellect is by nature an imperfect organ with finite abilities which not only cannot give answers to everything but can lead to erroneous and dangerous conclusions if assigned duties for which it is not made. The intellect is not just an imperfect tool to approach the Divine. It is the wrong tool. God, His nature and manifestations, are outside the limits of the human mind²⁵. The view has been expressed that the

²⁴ Yannaras, Christos, *ELEMENTS of FAITH. AN INTRODUCTION TO ORTHODOX THEOLOGY*, translated by Keith Schram, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, p. 14.

²⁵ 'For if there is one thing we know about God the Father, it is that he is unknowable. (...) we start with God, not as knowing him, but as standing before a mystery that is, and will remain, beyond our understanding. (...) Our worship is a response to an unfathomable mystery'.

Louth, Andrew, *Introducing EASTERN ORTHODOX THEOLOGY*, IVP Academic, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2013 p. 1.

'what is perhaps the most developed expression of Greek theology: the first eight chapters of On the Orthodox Faith by the eighth – century theologian, St John Damascene. This begins with an assertion of the incomprehensibility of God. (...) it remains axiomatic to John that here we are approaching a mystery that is beyond human comprehension. (...) John goes on to outline various ways in which the sense of the mystery of God has been preserved in Christian theology. First and foremost, we cannot know God, only what he is not – not – finite, not – created, not – visible – something expressed in Greek by the alpha – privative, so that we have almost a theology of the alpha – privative (...)'

Louth, *Introducing EASTERN ORTHODOX THEOLOGY*, p. 29.

ostensibly peculiar doctrine of the triadic nature of God received its final form as a result of the efforts of the Greek theologians who remained in history as the Cappadocians (Basil, Bishop of Caesarea, Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus), as part of the effort to make it clear that God and His manifestations in the human world is a reality outside the limits of reason and, therefore, the human mind is not the proper tool to be used to approach Him²⁶. In the assumed omnipotence of the mind

'First we need to remember that it was in Greek that these ideas were thought through, and that something of what is meant is lost in translation, whether into Latin or into English. For the key word here is logos, which can be translated as word, or reason, or meaning, or principle; and the word translated 'rational' is, in Greek, logikos. So the translation 'rational' only preserves part of the meaning of the Greek logikos, and disguises the link the Greek suggests between the World, or Logos, and logikos. The word logikos suggests, as its root meaning, participating in the Logos, or World; it implies a relationship, rather than simply a property'.

Louth, *Introducing EASTERN ORTHODOX THEOLOGY*, p. 86.

'Theological teaching locates itself with difficulty between gnosis – charisma and silence, contemplative and existential knowledge – and episteme – science and reasoning'.

Lossky, Vladimir, *ORTHODOX THEOLOGY. An Introduction*, Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1978, p. 14.

26 *'Greek and Russian Orthodox Christians continue to find that the contemplation of the Trinity is an inspiring religious experience. For many Western Christians, however the Trinity is simply baffling. This could be because they consider only what the Cappadocians would have called its kerygmatic qualities, whereas for the Greeks it was a dogmatic truth that was only grasped intuitively and as a result of religious experience. Logically, of course, it made no sense at all. In an earlier sermon, Gregory of Nazianzus had explained that the very incomprehensibility of the dogma of the Trinity brings us up against the absolute mystery of God; it reminds us that we must not hope to understand him'.*

Armstrong, *A HISTORY OF GOD*, p. 117.

'The Trinity reminded Christians that the reality that we called "God" could not be grasped by the human intellect'.

Armstrong, *A HISTORY OF GOD*, p. 118.

'In the Greek Orthodox Church, however, all good theology would be silent or apophatic. As Gregory of Nyssa said, every concept of God is a mere simulacrum, a false likeness, an idol: it could not reveal God himself'.

Armstrong, *A HISTORY OF GOD*, p. 115.

'To all intents and purposes, many Western Christians are not really Trinitarians. They complain that the doctrine of Three Persons in One God is incomprehensible, not realizing that for the Greeks that was the whole point.

(...) (The Greeks) had become distrustful of rationalism, finding it an inappropriate tool for the discussion of God who must elude concepts and logic'.

Armstrong, *A HISTORY OF GOD*, p. 201.

'At no point did the Church seek to solve the mystery of the Trinity: that was an accusation often made, whether justly or not, against the heretics, the proponents of positions rejected by the Church'. (emphasis added).

Louth, Andrew, *Introducing EASTERN ORTHODOX THEOLOGY*, IVP Academic, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2013 p. 27.

and intellect as tools, Orthodox Christianity puts forward direct knowledge, direct contact from the continuous exercise in esoteric techniques and prayer²⁷.

There is no perfect world waiting to be discovered by the human mind²⁸. Perfection is the privilege of God. Our world is

27 *'As whatever level or degree, faith is an event and experience of relationship, a road radically different from intellectual certainty and 'objective' knowledge. If we wish to know the God of the biblical tradition, the God of the Church, we must search by the right road, the road of faith. Logical 'proofs' for his existence, the objective attempts of apologetics, the historical trustworthiness of the sources of the Christian tradition, can be useful aids in order that the need for faith be born within us. But they do not lead to faith, nor can they replace it'.*

Yannaras, *ELEMENTS OF FAITH*, p. 13.

'Saint Gregory Palamas claims that all heresies derive their origin from human wisdom whose center is logic and human thought.

(...) If we examine the ecclesiastic history, we will see that all heretics started from the human thought and humancentric views of life. They always tried to examine and analyze the truth of the Church with logic. On the contrary, the basis of the holy Fathers was the method of the Orthodox piety that is the purgation of the heart and the enlightenment of the mind. They acquired the knowledge of God after these two stages of spiritual life and started to create their theology inspired by God and within the Church'.

Hierotheos, Metropolitan of Nafpaktos and Agios Vlassios, *The person in the Orthodox Tradition*, Holy Monastery of the Birth of the Theotokos (Pelagia), Livadia 1997, p. 38.

'Anyone who thinks that that he knows God, that is to say he limits God by his own notions, is – from a Christian point of view – spiritually dead'.

Stăniloae, Dumitru, *ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN TEACHING ON GOD*, translated by father Konstantinos Coman & Giorgos Papaefthymiou, Armos Publications, Athens 2011, p. 31.

'Saint Gregory of Nyssa claims (about the rational knowledge of God) that God reveals Himself in it too as a mystery that cannot be defined which makes it equivalent to the beginning of apophatic knowledge and the desire for a more profound experience of the latter'.

Stăniloae, *ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN TEACHING ON GOD*, p. 21.

'Saint Gregory the Theologian expresses the inability of man to contemplate about God, about the Holy Trinity'.

Hierotheos, *The person in the Orthodox Tradition*, p. 45.

'It is completely impossible for anyone to comprehend God with reason and contemplation. This is a basic theological argument and basic theological thought. Whatever we know about God is not a product of revelation and reason but of experience and revelation of God Himself'.

Hierotheos, *The person in the Orthodox Tradition*, p. 46.

'The nous breaks away from reasoning, the surrounding world and the passions through the hesychastic method, enters the heart, unites in grace with the heart in Grace and, then, is lifted up to the vision of God. This results in man's cure, the deification of his whole being. And naturally in this way he becomes a person'.

Hierotheos, *The person in the Orthodox Tradition*, p. 94.

'The Holy Trinity as a mystery is incomprehensible'.

Hierotheos, *The person in the Orthodox Tradition*, p. 99.

28 *'I began by asking: where do we start? and reflected on the paradox that we seem to start from a place of unknowing, not in the sense of ignorance - as if we started off with little knowledge and found that it increased - but in a more fundamental sense - starting off with an*

by nature imperfect and, therefore, there is no perfect model to deal with the various events of this world, such as war. Neither can the human intellect offer the appropriate tools for the best way to achieve victory in war. Moreover, there is no fixed way of how best to conduct war. The Orthodox thought puts humility in the place of absoluteness. Humility leads to flexibility, adaptation, improvisation, continuous change, self-questioning and the effort to harmonise with the events in the battlefield, which has been proven to be a reliable formula for victory in the battlefield since the dawn of human wars to the second decade of the 21st century²⁹.

6 The development of military art and science and cultural paradigms outside the West

One might think that matters such as possible impacts deriving from the anthropological model of man-god on

awareness that the One we seek to know is beyond any capacity we might have for knowing.

I suggested that we find ourselves standing before the mystery of a God who is beyond knowledge’.

Louth, Andrew, *Introducing EASTERN ORTHODOX THEOLOGY*, IVP Academic, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2013 p. 4.

*‘Yet you do not have to believe to go into a church; you can stand there alongside people who do believe, next to people you know, or even out of curiosity. But here is where theology begins, according to the Orthodox tradition, at least as I understand it: in a **mysterious togetherness**’ (...). (emphasis added).*

Louth, Andrew, *Introducing EASTERN ORTHODOX THEOLOGY*, IVP Academic, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2013 p. 5.

*‘Maximos (St Maximos the Confessor) goes on to discuss the seven mysteries contained in the paryer: ‘theology, adoption of sons by grace, equality with the angels, participation in eternal life, the restoration of human nature..., the abolition of the law of sin, and the destruction of the tyranny ... of the evil one’. **These are not just mysteries to contemplate, still less to solve; they are mysteries that draw us into communion with God**’.* (emphasis added).

Louth, Andrew, *Introducing EASTERN ORTHODOX THEOLOGY*, IVP Academic, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2013 p. 20.

29 For the practical implementation of the open warfare methods emphasising the decentralised operation and the assumption of initiatives by the lower ranking leaders and their prevalence against enemies with a centralized philosophy of action, indicatively see: Pollack, Kenneth, M. *Arabs at War. Military Effectiveness, 1948 – 1991*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, USA, 2002.

For the virtues of flexibility and adaptability to the war processes, indicatively see: Finkel, Meir, *ON FLEXIBILITY. Recovery from Technological and Doctrinal Surprise on the Battlefield*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2011 and Williamson, Muray, *MILITARY ADAPTATION IN WAR. With Fear of Change*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2011.

military thought, command in battle and, in general, the art of war—even if we were to accept that they exist—are not of particular importance or that, in any case, we cannot do many things about them. If the West, however, continues to be trapped in this paradigm, then an ‘Achilles’ heel’ may emerge in the Western art of war. It is not that, in this way, the attempt for decentralised models of battle is undermined but the opportunity may be given to emerging war cultures, such as the ones of China, Iran and other countries, to escape Western influence and develop their own philosophies about war that could overthrow the advantage enjoyed by the West with the Western way of war³⁰. These countries and cultures are less influenced by the Western worldview and, therefore, they can, with greater ease, get rid of the centralised mentality and the subjection of the warfare to an omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent commander. Therefore, they can make a step to combine decentralised, *chaoplexic* battle models with new technologies of weapon systems, acquiring a potential strategic advantage compared to Western forces. We should remember that it is not primarily advanced weapons that win battles but the way one functions at the time of war, and this way is directly associated with one’s culture. The West was considered to have achieved top war results owing largely not to its advanced technology but to its decentralised operation derived from the individualistic culture and the consequent imposition of war models emphasising the assumption of initiatives, the adaptation to the events on the battlefield and the achievement of a faster pace of operations than the opponents, which were basically more centralised. There is the risk, therefore, for the model of man-god, interconnected with the possibilities provided by the new technologies, to deprive Western armies of such virtues, while, on the contrary, other armies, such as China’s, may have the opportunity to escape from their centralised logic and invest in decentralised models, achieving, thus, a more effective type of war than the West and reversing a course of centuries. The large size of the Chinese army, particularly if combined with new technologies, may impose the use of decentralised, *chaoplexic* command models as, exactly due to this size, the Chinese army cannot be part of a centralised command model if it wishes to be effective in a modern environment where the pace of the operations may be extremely fast. Furthermore, decentralised, chaos-woven

30 For the western way of war, see: Hanson, Victor, Davis, *THE WESTERN WAY OF WAR. INFANTRY BATTLES IN ANCIENT GREECE*, Alfred A. Knopf, California, USA, 1989 and Hanson, Victor, Davis, *Carnage and Culture, Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power*, Doubleday, 2001.

command models seem to derive directly from the Chinese military thought, i.e. the one of the *thousand grains of sand* that, as it seems, is applied to cyber warfare, but can possibly penetrate into the strategy of conventional Chinese armed forces³¹.

Finally, Iran seems to have also invested on decentralised models of war operation, such as the notorious idea of *Mosaic Warfare*, adopted by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). This fact may offer significant advantages to the Iranian armed forces against their Western opponents in the future, in particular if the latter persist on monolithic centralised models. In general, decentralised war models that place emphasis on swarming methodologies are making their appearance in more and more countries outside the West and may play a significant role in the war affairs of the forthcoming decades³².

³¹ Minnick, Wendell, 'U.S. Report Accuses China of Cyber Warfare', *Defense News*, Vol. 23, No 47, December 8, 2008, p. 22.

³² For a transhistorical approach of the swarming war methodologies, see: Edwards, Sean, J.A. *SWARMING ON THE BATTLEFIELD. Past, Present and Future*, RAND, Santa Monica, California, 2000.

Finally, the appearance (or re-appearance) of more complex war methodologies, such as the one of *Hybrid Warfare*, makes the effort of fighting all tendencies of centralisation and the subsequent creation of monolithic structure and operational function of the Western armies more imperative³³.

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³³ For a transhistorical approach of the phenomenon of hybrid warfare, see: Williamson, Murray, Mansoor, Peter, R., (ed) *Hybrid Warfare. Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, 2012. For the wider increase of the complexity of war through its operation in a decentralized – network-centred world, see: Rid Thomas, Hecker Mark, *WAR 2.0. Irregular Warfare in the Information Age*, Praeger Security International, Westport, Connecticut, 2009.