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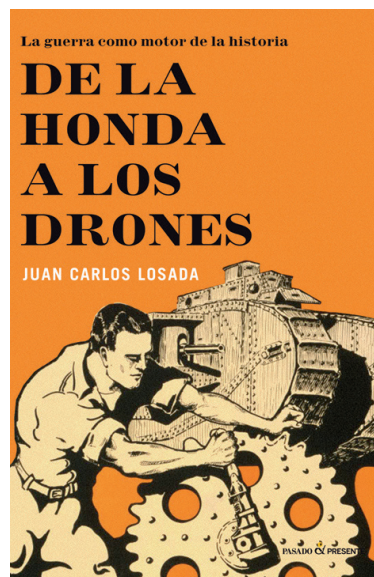
REVIEW

OF THE BOOK: FROM SLING TO DRONES. WAR AS THE HISTORY'S DRIVING FORCE

Author: Juan Carlos Losada

Editorial: Barcelona. Past and Present. 2014.

ISBN: 978-84-94-2129-3-2 (332 pages with Bibliography and alphabetic index)



This interesting book is a historic survey about the existing relations between society, technology and war. The author presents how the technological changes have had an impact on social evolution and in the art of war. In this respect it is also a history of war; but from a sociologic and technological standpoint rather than from a facts and battles perspective. This sort of war history global analysis is certainly not a very common fact in Spanish bibliography although more traditional works offer this kind of approach.

The book is divided into nine chapters. The three first chapters mainly focus on Ancient History (Prehistory, Middle East, Greece and Rome). Chapter four investigates the war in the middle Ages and the two following ones deal with the Modern Age (from Renaissance to Napoleonic wars as well as the Industrial Revolution outburst). The three last ones examine the twenty century and the beginning of the current century (the First and Second World War, the Cold War and all current wars).

Within the Ancient World it emphasizes the usage of the first tools (slings, arcs) that will allow certain groups to convey a superiority consequently triggering the progressive appearance of permanent armed groups. The Neolithic Revolution starts shaping the appearance of the first cities and the specialization in the art of war. The founding of the first empires ; Egyptian ,Hittites, Assyrians, Persian derived from the usage of bronze, then iron along with horse taming and carriage building , new techniques will then demand specialized craftsmen that will also create tools destined to civil usage.

Greece is responsible for the appearance of the citizen/soldier (hoplita), the creation of the phalanxes which implies a disciplined combat in order to maintain order. The Macedonian Phalanx will be the ultimate expression and will therefore evolve to the roman legions which lacked any technological revolution in regards to armament although when dealing with city sieges, naval wars, and the importance of communications and logistics, in those stages, roman were complete masters.

All through the middle ages there were significant differences between the all divided Western Europe, The Byzantine Empire, The Mongol Empire and the Islam extension. Nevertheless they shared the importance of cavalry, whereas for Greece the art of war is based upon infantry, in the middle ages cavalry will stand out considering the accessories invention such as: horseshoes, stirrups, horse saddles and armours for both the horse rider and the horse. All cavalry ideals, personalized combat, the role of religion, the walls protection, and all this facts will clearly define this period. All this will imply a development in irons metallurgy, walls building, and new ships destined to the emerging trade. All that will involve the development of specialized craftsmen for any of the technological aspects. All this will boost a social change, will generate a progressive urbanization and will achieve a gradual cities' triumph over villages and of burgeois over peasants.

The introduction of gunpowder from the Western World along with the use of long pikes (firstly swiss units, then the Spanish thirds) will definitely cause a Military Revolution that will now cause infantry prevail over cavalry. Due to the introduction of both the iron technology as well as the gunpowder new guns would flourish; firstly the canyons later the individual gunfire. The walls will then prioritise depth versus height. All this will provoke the need of a more “scientific” art of war therefore all calculations need to be accurate and a new mathematic advancement and new developments in physics will be of need to calculate a projectile path. Armies will gradually be more numerous which will imply greater logistic advancements and the existence of pathways and roads, new recruitment systems, and schools that will breed qualified professionals with scientific knowledge.

A more deadly armament and a greater number of soldiers will indeed bring about more victims. The Enlightenment period will unveil consciences and this will bring up the need to regulate in a “civilized” way the war practise.

This new scenario will imply a Medicine and medicaments development. Then the Napoleonic wars will be this period culmination with the birth of the idea and the reality of a “total war” therefore war consequences will equally affect military and civil society.

The territorial discoveries and the greater need for a maritime trade will have an influence on the new ships and new technologies therefore the naval war will gradually become more important in order to achieve the empire advancement and upholding.

All those elements contributed to the Industrial Revolution outburst .The steam when applied to transportation will result in the appearance of the railway which will have paramount consequences in terms of the mobility of both logistics and people. All communications will start a revolution that will have a growing impact on the control and command capacities. The introduction of the bayonet will modify the fire rhythm and the body combat. A big Army will need to bring on big productions (armament, clothing, transportation, medicines) triggering a greater demand in terms of productions systems and industrial organization. The financing, industrial and military world starts creating new relations. The American civil war will be the first experience that will gather both the total war and the Industrial Revolution.

Both World Wars in the twenty century will be a reflection of the power of technology but also reverberates its terrible consequences specially under a totalitarian regime. All Advancements of Science applied to technology will trigger social, political, strategic, and operative changes in both art and war but it also indicates the birth of an international humanitarian right that will also establish great changes in the field of health (penicillin, sulfamide, transfusions, etc.).

The nuclear technology presence that brings the possibility of humankind annihilation will lead to a new scenario; the Cold War. The development of nuclear weapons, the information technologic revolution , the race to the space, a progressive

and radical technological change foster a great revolution in regards to military affairs and its doctrinal and strategic consequences.

The end of the Cold War will lead to new scenarios owning new actors (terrorist groups, failing states, organized crime, pirates) that will join to traditional actors (states and army) consequently defining new relations and conflicts where asymmetry will be the core concept. The gradually faster technological development (communications, cyberspace, nanotechnology, etc) along with the easy access to any resources for all actors shape a new spaces not only for new progresses but for great threats. But this is not considered History but Futurology.

This is a useful book as a synthesis that offers a pertinent analysis about society-technology and war easy and pleasant to read which makes it highly recommended as both a reading and a consult book.