INSTANT WAR IN THE THEORY OF NETWORK SOCIETY

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The information revolution produced major social changes at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. The new social theories were required in order to understand and explain social phenomena in modern, changed society, as well as to understand and explain the very society itself. One of the most influential contemporary social theories was offered by Manuel Castells, whose network society provides excellent analytical insights into many social phenomena, including war.

The paper explains Castells' theoretical view of the division of war in the modern world into instant war and prolonged war. Instant war has been made possible by breakthroughs in technology that have been achieved in recent decades, but the need for it arose in the appropriate social context and on the basis of certain political decisions. In modern developed countries, conclusions have been drawn that war is acceptable for their citizens under three conditions: if ordinary citizens are not engaged in war, but the professional army is; if war is short and does not require a large expenditure of human and economic resources; and if war is viewed as clean, with the precise destruction of justified targets. The explanation of the social context in which the war transformation has taken place is also the subject of this paper. The main hypothesis that is being proven is that the theoretical concept of instant war enables the understanding of the perception of acceptable war, from the perspective of a modern, consumer society. The paper critically discusses the possibilities of conducting instant war, and it hypothetically-deductively derives dangers that the transformation of war and the army brings to modern democracies.

Key words: *information revolution, network society, instant war, slow war, military obligation, professional army, Manuel Castells*

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Introduction

Bernard Brodie claims that "a good strategy presupposes good anthropology and sociology" (Blagojević, 2021: 418). Many theoretical papers of Serbian army officers on strategy and strategic topics show that this statement is true. Thus, for example, Živojin Mišić's *Strategy* begins with general considerations of war, its origin, its constant essence and occasional transformations of the content of this form of social conflict. Such considerations by Mišić are completely in the spirit of Social Darwinism, which was a contemporary and very influential sociological theory at the time. Mišić's view of war, speaking more precisely, follows Gumplovitz's theory, but he changes it in his conclusion about the outcome of the struggle between old cultural nations and young nations (Mišić, 1993: 1–6). Petar Mišić starts from philosophical and anthropological assumptions about human nature in which the possibility of war is instilled (Mišić, 2021: 45–49). Todor Pavlović's guiding principle is Durkheim's theory, which this officer and author applies to the issues of military discipline, formation in depth, that is, the ratio of the number of victims of the winner and the defeated in battles, etc. (Kajtez, Starčević, 2021: 908–929)

Sociological theory is "a set of interrelated ideas that enable the systematization of the knowledge about society, the explanation of such a society and the prediction of its future" (Ricer, 2012: 36). It is easy to conclude from this definition that a good sociological theory, i.e. the one that explains our modern society, is necessary, among other things, in order to understand what modern war is and what it is like, why wars break out in the modern world and why and under what conditions and which individuals or social groups accept or do not accept the goals of war and the like. It is necessary in order to understand the influence of the type of society we live in on the type of military organization we prefer, or that we necessarily have, as well as to predict real capabilities of our society for waging war, providing armed or unarmed resistance, etc.

The assumption of the existence of social determinism results in the fact that changes in society cause changes in social phenomena. In the national military sociology, an adequate expression has been used for the social determination of the military: the character of society as a determinant of the military (Starčević, 2022a: 230–232). The essence is simple - a change in the type or character of society also causes a change in the dominant type of the military. At the same time, when the character or type of society changes, the old social theory is no longer cognitively fruitful, so a new theory replaces it.

The information revolution has changed society, and a new social theory was proposed by Manuel Castells at the end of the 20th century and continued to shape it in the last two decades. Castells notes that a new type of society, network or informational society, has emerged from the fusion of information technology and a new organizational logic, the network, which replaces the old hierarchical organization. His theory offers an excellent analytical apparatus, through which the main functions and processes are viewed as networks (e.g. financial, political,

geopolitical, multimedia communications, military and security network, etc.). It also provides an opportunity to understand the changes that have happened in important spheres of society, primarily in the economy, culture and politics, and also in modern warfare (Starčević, 2022a: 79–90 and 219–220).

According to Castells, the roots of war go deep into human nature. Nevertheless, societies in the most developed countries of the world have begun "to reject war and to show strong resistance to the authorities that call on citizens to make that ultimate sacrifice" (Kastels, 2018b: 626). War, however, has remained the most effective and perhaps the only way to translate one's economic, technological and demographic power into (political) domination over other states. Therefore, the Western states and their strategists, until then committed to the use of national standing armies, have tried to find ways to continue war, but without society. This social context, briefly presented, has greatly defined the transformation of war and the military at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century.

Contemporary society and war transformation

Describing the decline in "the ability of states to commit their societies to destruction for reasons that are not entirely convincing", Castells agrees with authors who have noticed the same phenomenon: that modern (Western) societies are no longer ready to wage wars or to directly participate in the military resource of their state in the form of a national standing army, which is why professional armies and private military companies are established (Kreveld, 2012: 626; Hobsbaum, 2008: 93; Bauman, 2009b: 60).

The problem of reduced attractiveness of military service, due to a change in the social ideal, is common to all societies of the same type, so that even the richest countries have problems related to manning their armies (Starčević, Stanar, 2022: 160). Although Bauman's theory of fluid modernity is more suitable for explaining this complex process, Castells' theoretical optics allows us to better view the war transformation (Starčević, Blagojević, 2022: 209–227; Starčević, 2022b: 69–81).

According to Castells, two processes have transformed war. The first one is the pressure of civil society on governments in developed, technologically advanced countries, with clear and strong resistance to participation in war. Although Castells mentions North America, Western Europe, Japan and Oceania as the area within which this change took place, it is clear from his considerations that it is a broader process, which also includes Russia (Kastels, 2022b: 625–626). In terms of time, this change occurred in the second half of the 20th century, often as a consequence of prolonged and unsuccessful warfare (Algerian War, Vietnam War, Soviet - Afghan War). The result of this process is the development of a strategy that would allow war to remain a tool of state policy, but without the participation of the people. It has been concluded that war is acceptable for society under three conditions: if ordinary citizens are not engaged in war, but the professional army is; if war is short and does not

require a large expenditure of human and economic resources and if it is viewed as clean, with the precise destruction of justified targets (Kastels, 2022b: 627). Waging these wars is a matter of choice, not survival, which decreases tolerance for losses. For example, in Somalia, in a firefight in Mogadishu in October 1993, 18 US soldiers were killed, which is why Washington and its allies withdrew from this country.

The other process is represented by the development of military technology. According to Castells' explanation, technological breakthroughs in electronics have enabled warfare in which new technology gives a great advantage over the enemy, so a well-equipped professional army replaces wider participation of citizens in war efforts, and control over the media enables the selection of information and the manipulation of public opinion. The availability and effective use of informational instruments of foreign policy are limited by the undisputed global dominance of multinational companies from the West.

In short, the political pressure of civil society (deeper changes in society are behind it) was the cause of the transformation of war and the military. The social context and political decisions made from the permanent structures of political power in international relations, on the one hand, and the findings of strategy experts, on the other hand, have led to the acceptance of a technological emphasis in warfare. New technologies have made it possible to break Clausewitz's trinity of war, more specifically - to wage war without people, without society. These changes, however, have affected only those countries where new technologies are available. In other, developing states, located at the other end of unbalanced globalisation, warfare has retained its temporality and long duration. Thus, the convergence of technology and the pressure of civil society have led to the transformation of war and its new temporality - the emergence of instant war.

Instant war as a theoretical concept for understanding modern war

Life in modern society also brings a change in the social meaning of space and time, i.e. changing human experience in relation to space and time. Bearing in mind the effects of unbalanced globalisation, it can be said that there is a division of both space and time as material dimensions of human life.

When it comes to space, modern technology, the way work processes are organized and the global economy create a new spatial logic in which the dominant impression is that space as a size is overvalued by better, faster, and even immediate connectivity, and that technological foundations are being created as its new quality and exclusive bans that show the dominance of the new, globalised elite (Kastels, 2022b: 577). Castells offers an understanding of the new logic of space in the concept of the space of flows. On the other hand, there is still great space that is excluded from economic welfare and the networks woven by globalisation, which Castells calls the space of places (Kastels, 2022b: 590–596).

When it comes to time, in modern society there is a breakdown of the natural (biological) and social organization of time, and there is time compression, the abolition of time schedules and the acceleration of time, which Castells unites in his theoretical concept of timeless time (Kastels, 2022b: 601–625). However, time is also divided, because in addition to timeless time, reserved for the functioning of the space of flows, there is still linear time with old biological and social cycles.

These changes in our understanding of space and time and experience with them also lead to the doubling of war on axis of time. Thus, according to Castells, in the modern world there is instant war (advanced war of the information age) and the well-known prolonged or slow war.

Instant war should be understood as a theoretical concept, a kind of ideal type of war of high-tech consumer societies, which satisfies the previously explained three conditions under which war is acceptable to them and which is made possible by technological advantage. Such a war implies the engagement of only a part of society which, for whatever reasons, is willing to participate in military operations and risk its death, which in terms of duration tends to be immediate and which is or can be presented through the media manipulation as a surgically precise use of proportional violence, thus being clean.

Instant wars are "the privilege of technologically dominant nations" (Kastels, 2022b: 631). Castells mentions that the Gulf War was the first such war, pointing to the transformative power of new technologies and their impact on the war duration. "Most importantly, the technology of communication and electronic weapons enables devastating action against the enemy in extremely short time intervals. The Gulf War was, of course, a full-dress rehearsal for a new type of war, and its denouement, lasting a hundred hours, in the confrontation of the large and well-equipped Iraqi Army, was a demonstration of the determination of the new military powers when it comes to the stake that matters to them (supplying West with oil, in this case)" (Kastels, 2022b: 628). Recognizing problems in the practice of instant wars, he also introduced the term "quasi-instant war", which he used to denote wars that tend to be or appear to be instant wars, but they are really not such wars. As such a war, he mentions the NATO aggression against the FR Yugoslavia, noting that NATO expected a two-day war, which did not happen, but also that NATO had no human losses in the battle, which enabled the members of this Alliance to win "the media victory in their countries" (Kastels, 2022b: 628).

The instant and quasi-instant wars mentioned by Castells were wars between a great power or military alliance and relatively small states, with the first party having a decisive technological advantage. It is precisely the vast disparity in terms of power, wealth and available technologies between different countries that allows for the bifurcation of war on time axis. The costs of modernizing armies are not reduced; states are allocating more and more for military budgets, and arms trade has long been one of the most lucrative businesses in the world. Waging instant wars is reserved for the powerful, rich and developed, while prolonged, slow wars are still more numerous and are fought worldwide in developing states (Kastels, 2022b:

631). Castells seems to be right when he points out that the involvement of great powers in a conflict can change the timing of war, if it is in their interest to do so. Thus, he notices that "some country can make a leap from slow to instant wars, all depending on its relationship to the global system and the interests of the dominant power" (Kastels, 2022b: 632).

Considering a hypothetical conflict between two technologically advanced countries, Castells predicts that the outcome of an instant war would depend "on rapid exchanges that represent the real state of technological imbalance between the warring parties", and as an acceptable strategy he views mass destruction in a very short time or a quick demonstration of its possibility (Kastels, 2022b: 629).

A critical approach to the concept of instant war is possible and desirable. It is primarily a materialistic concept in which the opportunities provided by technological advantage are accurately perceived, but the wisdom of Clausewitz about war as an act of violence in which the strength of the will is demonstrated is overlooked (Klauzevic, 1951: 41-44; Starčević, Blagojević, 2017: 119). It seems that instant war is possible only between countries whose societies lead consumer life. For example, a quick demonstration of the possibility of mass destruction in a hypothetical conflict between two technologically advanced countries might indeed be an acceptable strategy, but only if the will to fight and resist is very weak. More precisely, it could happen in societies whose ideal citizens are people without social ties, to borrow Bauman's terms - the selfish economic factor hungry for monetary gain and the egoistic buyer in search of the best price as a cure for loneliness (Bauman, 2009a: 87). At a place where life is different, at least for the society of a warring party, instant war would be only a prelude to a prolonged conflict, a quasi-instant war, with a possible dishonourable end for the technologically superior party, or to the opening of new war chapters, as Castells himself perfectly shows (Kastels, 2022: 30–32). The history of the wars of the great powers in Afghanistan is illustrative, in which (in a chronological order) Great Britain, the USSR and the coalition of the NATO countries led by the US suffered defeats, which is why Afghanistan is called the "tomb of empires".

The practice of instant war as a problem of developed societies

The change in warfare has altered human experience, on which identities and culture are established. Castells notes that in technologically advanced societies, war recedes into the background and there are the first generations of men who did not participate in war. He believes that this fact leads to changes in people's culture and behaviour, and above all, to the disappearance of patriarchy (Kastels, 2018b: 630–631). There are also other changes caused by the transformation of war, which can be dangerous for democratic societies.

The first group of problems arises from the effects of instant war, which have a reversible effect on the dominant party, whose political system is democratic, as a rule. The bitter experience from Afghanistan has caused the emergence of new

views on military intervention in the NATO member countries, which say that sometimes it is better to carry out a military action in a country with the aim of killing the enemies, and then withdraw, without the intention of establishing a new (democratic) order in a country that is being military intervened, if there are no forces on which NATO could rely in the process of democracy building. Going back to the framework of Castells' theory, it can be concluded that in this way military intervention will be reduced to an instant war, without the danger of turning into a quasi-instant war or a prolonged war due to burdensome political engagement with an uncertain outcome. Therefore, an ethical dilemma arises: should everything that can be done also be done? Modern technology allows military intervention with a very narrow, limited goal of physical liquidation of a personalized enemy, while it obviously does not allow the transplanting of a functional model of political organization, especially not the transfer of political culture from one social and political tradition to the other one. The answer could be different from one case to another, similar to the justification of humanitarian military intervention and preemptive war (Stanar, 2021b: 307–318). Bearing in mind the past failures in establishing stable states and functional democratic political systems after military intervention, it is obvious that instant wars would produce worse effects. It is possible to imagine serious political, social, demographic and security problems that would be created by such an action. Firstly, it is the problem of failed states that are impossible to live in; such a problem gives rise to political and economic instability, poverty and, ultimately, migration of "superfluous people" (Bauman, 2018: 11). We should not forget that the migrant crisis in Europe, which reached its peak in 2015, has shown the weaknesses of modern European democracies: the increase in xenophobia and intolerance, the rise of populism and the radical right, the collapse of multiculturalism and the mutual lack of solidarity of the EU member states (Blagojević, Starčević, 2019: 204). The second problem is an identity problem: "superfluous" and unaccepted people in Western societies, as well as many who perceive their country to be in a state of colonial humility, are prone to vengeful and extremist adherence to local identities. This leads to an increase in intolerance, the outbreak of local conflicts and the rise of terrorism, which, again, affects democratic societies (Starčević, 2022a: 181–183).

The other group of problems arises from the choice of the type of the army that conducts instant war: professional armies and private military companies, which include "corporate agents", whose legality is still debatable.

At this point, it is not bad to recall the military roots of Athenian democracy. Military obligations in ancient Athens were, after Solon's reform, divided according to social strata: the richest class of citizens equipped and supported the navy, the next class had a military obligation to polis to equip the cavalry and serve in it, the third and most numerous class of citizens provided the phalanxes of heavy infantry, and the poorest received weapons from polis and constituted light infantry. Since the war at that time involved large land battles, with heavy infantry carrying the greatest burden, the third class of citizens, until then without special political rights, after

returning from the war demanded that their contribution to freedom and the victory of polis be recognized in the public sphere and paid in the currency of those political rights (Starčević, Stanar, 2022: 164–165). "Their political engagement produced democracy, and also the possibility of distinguishing citizens (polites) from idiots (idiotes)" (Starčević, Stanar, 2022: 165). Since then, democracy means civic duties and political engagement, a citizen's activity in the public sphere, as opposed to enjoying the rights of a "spoiled child" or the passivity and obedience of subordinates.

The relationship between a citizen in a uniform and the state would, in an ideal case, be a covenant, which implies the state care for citizens who risked their lives in the name of the nation state. Experiences in this regard are different, and those related to the care of the Republic of Serbia for war veterans from the wars for the Yugoslav heritage in the last decade of the 20th century show that the veterans have not received "real compensation for the sacrifice" (Marković-Savić, 2018: 191). Instead, "there is a lack of systemic care for citizens, who participated in wars with the assistance of the state authorities" (Marković-Savić, 2012: 342). Since the attitude of the society and the state towards veterans is reflected in the future engagement of citizens in the military affairs of their countries, different responses of citizens to calls for mobilization in different societies are expected (compare: Čevtajeva 2023; Palikot, 2023; Prelić, 2023).

A professional army is a logical choice of the type of the army in contemporary society and the practice of instant war (Starčević, Blagojević, 2022: 211–214). Nevertheless, the fact that citizens are not engaged in the war efforts of their countries, as well as that they are exposed to the media manipulation or even completely disinterested in those efforts, can put freedom and democracy at risk. We should not ignore the fact that members of the armed forces "enable the 'normality' of life and the functioning of all other important social institutions" (Stanar, 2021a: 45). For example, the participation of a state in war or military intervention in a distant country can become the exclusive decision of the political elite, which makes such a decision based on particular interests, without consulting the will of the "sedated" people or with the intensive media manipulation and consent, but without real general interest in participating in war. One could also imagine a rebellion by a private military company, similar to the Wagner rebellion in Russia, in some other smaller country that would rely on such an auxiliary army in a crisis.

The first fact that would support this claim is that a professional army is not enough to satisfy the social needs for protection, especially in states that pretend to be neutral and prefer a strategy of deterrence (Stojanović, 2022: 192-195).

The other argument is related to the supervision of the military resource and the power that arises from it. All the current types of armies can be classified either as militia armies or mercenary armies. These are the armies in which the members of the society bore the burden of military service or the armies formed by those people that the members of the society transferred such a heavy burden to, with

financial compensation. It can be concluded that only those societies that were rich enough to hire warriors had mercenary armies. Jovan Babić comes to the same conclusion, in his way, claiming that professional armies are suitable for empires and that their quality "depends on a factor that is partially independent from the fact of the establishment of sovereignty as an expression of collective life: wealth" (Babić, 2021: 7).

Wealth in modern societies, however, is not evenly distributed; there are extreme inequalities even in the most developed countries. The distribution of the most important values in society greatly affects the political competition of actors within the society and is essentially related to power. If this distribution provides the relative equality of actors, then the possibility for a polyarchy system (democracy) increases. If the distribution provides a monopoly to a social group, then "a hegemonic political system is developed and maintained", on whose basis the dominant social group imposes dominance over the social order and potentially deepens social inequalities (Dal, 1997: 65; compare: Bolčić, 2013: 153-164, 169–173 and Miladinović, 2011). One of the key values is the military resource, which Dahl calls "soldier's courage" and "military technology" (Dal, 1997: 94, 65). Dahl proved that the military resource in the past sometimes strengthened inequalities, and sometimes equality in the society. In times when a relatively small social group established a monopoly over the military resource, social inequalities grew. The dispersion of the military resource, in contrast, strengthened equality (Starčević, 2010: 199). The disinterest of members of the society and social groups in the military resource leads to the establishment of a monopoly over this resource, a monopoly established by a political stratum, (extraterritorial) economic elite or a praetorian alternative to civil power. All three options are disastrous for civil society.

The ways to engage citizens can be found by elaborating on Castells' concept of individuation - focusing on one's projects that are related to the common good (Kastels, 2018a: 220-221). That can be enough to provide a sufficient number of citizens ready to perform voluntary military service and enable the manning of the army (Starčević, Blagojević, 2023: 41–45).

Conclusion

During the development of human societies, the ways of warfare and the perception of acceptable war have changed, but war remained present in international relations as a universal constant. The concept of instant war, as presented by Manuel Castells in his theory of network society, makes it possible to understand the perception of acceptable war, from the perspective of a modern, consumer society. It is a war that lasts for a short time, in which a professional army or private military company is engaged, and not citizens as conscripts, and which is perceived by national public opinion as "clean". Castells himself notices that many

wars that were supposed to be short, instant wars, are prolonged against the will of the state that started them, so he has labelled them as quasi-instant wars. Since the possibility of waging instant war is based on technological superiority, it is a materialistic concept that neglects the volitional factor of war. From the aspect of social determination of war as a form of social conflict, it can be concluded that instant war is only possible between consumer societies, when a quick demonstration of the superiority of one party ends the will of the other party to fight or when a party does not have the means to oppose the other party. In all other cases, what begins as an instant war necessarily prolongs and turns into some of the previously known forms of war.

The concept of Manuel Castells can be useful for military sciences in Serbia, not only for the purpose of monitoring the contemporary social reflection on war, but also for the purpose of understanding the requirements that modern society places before its state and armed forces regarding the conduct of war, its length and the engagement of citizens, as well as for finding ways to confront military challenges, risks and threats, in the conditions of fluid modernity.

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S u m m a r y

The information revolution produced major social changes at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. The new social theories were required in order to understand and explain social phenomena in modern, changed society. One of the most influential contemporary social theories was offered by Manuel Castells. Castells' network society provides excellent analytical insights into many social phenomena, including war.

Castells' theory explains the division of war in the modern world into instant war and prolonged war. Instant war has been made possible by breakthroughs in technology that have been achieved in recent decades, but the need for it arose in the appropriate social context and on the basis of certain political decisions. In modern developed countries, conclusions have been drawn that war is acceptable for their citizens under three conditions: if ordinary citizens are not engaged in war, but the professional army is; if war is short and does not require a large expenditure of human and economic resources; and if war is viewed as clean, with the precise destruction of justified targets.

Instant war should be understood as a theoretical concept, a kind of ideal type of war of high-tech societies. It satisfies the previously explained three conditions under which war is acceptable to these societies and which is made possible by a technological advantage. It is primarily a materialistic concept in which the opportunities offered by technological advantage are accurately perceived, but the wisdom of Clausewitz about war as an act of violence in which the strength of the will is demonstrated, is overlooked. It seems to us that instant war is possible only between countries whose societies lead consumer life. Otherwise, instant war would only be a prelude to a prolonged conflict, a quasi-instant war.

The practice of instant war can create problems that are dangerous for democratic societies. The first group of problems arises from the effects of instant war, which have a reversible effect on the dominant party, whose political system is usually democratic: these are the consequences of the establishment of failed states and the identity choices of rejected and humiliated people. The other group of problems arises from the choice of the type of the army that conducts instant war: the professional armies. The fact that citizens are not engaged in the war efforts of their countries, as well as that they are exposed to the media manipulation or even completely disinterested in those efforts, puts freedom and democracy at risk.

Key words: *information revolution, network society, instant war, slow war, military obligation, professional army, Manuel Castells*