



Jesús Díez Alcalde

*Lieutenant colonel . Main Analyst of the the Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies
CESEDEN. Ministry of Defence*

REVIEW

OF THE BOOK:TALES AND EQUATIONS ABOUTWARS: CULTURES, CONFLICTS, LANGUAGES

*Authors: Entender la guerra en el siglo XXI Y La ecuación de la guerra, by
Federico Aznar Fernández-Montesinos*

*Editorial: Entender la guerra en el siglo XXI (Editorial Complutense) y La
ecuación de la guerra, (Editorial Montesinos)*

ISSN: 8499380565, 9788499380568, (304 pages)

**Books review: “Understanding the war in the XXI century” (Editorial
Complutense) and “The equation of the war” (Editorial Montesinos)**

In 2008 brigadier general Miguel Ángel Ballesteros Martín, Director of the Spanish Strategic Studies Institute, entrusted navy commander Federico Aznar Fernández-Montesinos the mission of making a book that collected the rich experience of the Strategy Department and International Relations of Spanish Army Superior School on war, and that could be useful to the students of the Military Staff course and to the civil society interested as well.

The task was challenging, since the Department stored the legacy of twelve courses of Military Staff and the homologue department of the Spanish Army War School. The

debates in class and between teachers, hundreds of articles, books and lectures given in different forums; but moreover, to be constituted as a scientific knowledge, the way to analyse and understand reality had to be standardised and documented. Navy commander Aznar became, de facto, in the gatherer and synthesiser of the debates and reflexions of a huge Think Tank constituted by all the distinguished officers that had preceded him.

During four years he was committed to the task entrusted and from it came a doctoral thesis "The new wars. Validity of polemology to the analysis of conflicts in XXI century", that was qualified with honors. This way the thinking works developed in the CESEDEN were certified by a seal, the strongest academic quality mark.

The hard core of his thinking is that war has no sense by itself, it is an instrumental nature function; it has a political end and sense, is Politics who points the "for what" of war. And in this sense the nature of the ends is affected by the nature of the means. When the mean is the war and if the war is brutal, disproportionate and without limits, probably the political ends will be affected by this. A total war leads to a total victory but to a total defeat too.

War implies a power confrontation. It is not an ethic, fair or legal act... it is not even military, and other analysis originated from this levels without being false are incomplete and mislead to erroneous decisions. It is a political act that, according to its integral dimension, exceeds any considered levels: war is certainly an International Public Law Institution, but it is more than this. Among the first actions taken by the British during the Malvinas War can be listed the seizure of private property of the British Argentinian in the islands.

It is, above all, a tool of the Politics; it is subordinated to the service of other ends. And it embodies a contradiction: the end of the war is the peace, being understood as the new political situation generated after the conflict. Furthermore, in every conflict should exist a clear subordination of military action to political action, because without political control it can be reached the disproportion of an absolute war without any sense, as the only founded is in the peace.

In practical terms, the expression of this ideas were almost 800 pages that, for didactic and divulgative reasons, it had to be lightened. This is how the text, free from academic constraints, turned into two books. The first "Understanding War in XXI century" was published by Editorial Complutense with a prologue by the former Defence Minister. The work approached the war as a comprehensive phenomenon, entering conceptual debates about its meaning and practice inherently politics, its evolution in different generations or waves and its embodiment in the terrorism and asymmetrical warfare, documenting this statements with the analysis of recent conflicts.

If the tone in the first book was more institutional, the second showed from the beginning a more breaking character, seeking for a different public. Its title was "The equation of the war" and came by the hand of a relevant editorial: Montesinos (second mark of "El Viejo Topo") that some at first instance could consider

ideologically not aligned with Defence problematics; it came with a prologue of a professor equally controversial but a renowned polemologist, professor Jorge Verstrynge.

The text analyzed the phenomenon of war from a double dimension. On one side temporally, studying its causes, the beginning, its development and ending (not only the peace but a quite new concept as it is the “post-conflict”). On the other side, it assessed the phenomenon from multiple levels and aspects: ethic, legal, technological, economic...

It has to be outlined that both books were very well received in our country and abroad, specially by the academic community; in every Spanish university library can be listed one or more copies as well as in many universities in South America and, although it has not been yet translated into English, in some USA thinking and reflection institutions (Yale, Harvard, Library of the Congress...)

All this comes to certify the excellent quality of the documents and reflexions that emerge from CESEDEN, the thinking and reflection center on safety and defence issues more powerful in Spain.

