

## **Extracts from preface by General Bruno Cuche, French Army Chief of Staff (CEMAT)**

*The book written by General Sir Rupert Smith is fundamental to throw light on our prospective reflections about our models of forces. Moreover, it is really revolutionary. The author indeed draws precise conclusions that go against generally accepted ideas. I consider, however, that a large number of them are quite relevant.*

*General Sir Rupert Smith's thoughts place back opportunely the human factor at the heart of operational stakes. It is then taking the place of material and technological factors that were predominant at the time of the industrial war. The success of a war is, at the end, a matter of "control". This can be achieved only on the ground, among human societies, in contact with others, generally in the long term [...].*

*This book has the courage of rehabilitating the concept of war. It allows to break with the confusion maintained for too many years about the idea that there is no war anymore. It enables to reconsider the adequate use of force that we marginalized and restricted to the industrial war. It kills the destructive myth of "great war" as a reference still alive with some of us. Then it necessarily gives structure to our organization and mindsets. Force is required, but its structure and its use should be appropriate [...].*

*General Sir Rupert Smith's thesis has then the merit to be daring and to remind how urgent the choices to make are. In broad outline, it looks very much like our analysis on a necessary re-assessment of our force model to adapt it to real and most likely commitments.*

# Interview

## with General Sir Rupert Smith

### **In your book *The Utility of Force* you say war no longer exists, why?**

After 40 years of service I have come to the conclusion that war as it is understood, as a defining experience where you seek to win a trial of strength and thereby break the will of your opponent, to dictate the result, the political outcome you wished to achieve, no longer exists. For all my service I was trained and equipped for the type of war I have described but we went and did operations instead.

### **What is the difference?**

I call the former model 'Industrial War' and argue that it ceased to be the model of war as it is practised with the dropping of the Atomic Bomb in 1945. I call the model we are in "War Amongst the People". We have lived through a paradigm shift. In this new model you seek to change the intentions or capture the will of your opponent and the people amongst which you both operate, to win the clash of wills and thereby win the trial of strength. The essential difference is that military force is no longer

used to decide the political dispute, but rather to create a condition in which the strategic result is achieved. We are now in a world of continual confrontations and conflicts in which the military endeavour to support the achievement of the desired outcome by other means.

## What is the difference between confrontation and conflict?

Confrontations occur all day in everyday life they are the basis of all politics. They occur when two or more groups of people have a different outcome in mind. There may be a confrontation between two parties over an issue; one or other party may be persuaded by argument or have other reasons to adopt the other party's position or desired outcome, or they agree on a position which more or less compromises both of their original intentions. However, if one or other party will not agree and will not follow a set of rules or the law to resolve the confrontation then they may adopt conflict as a course of action.

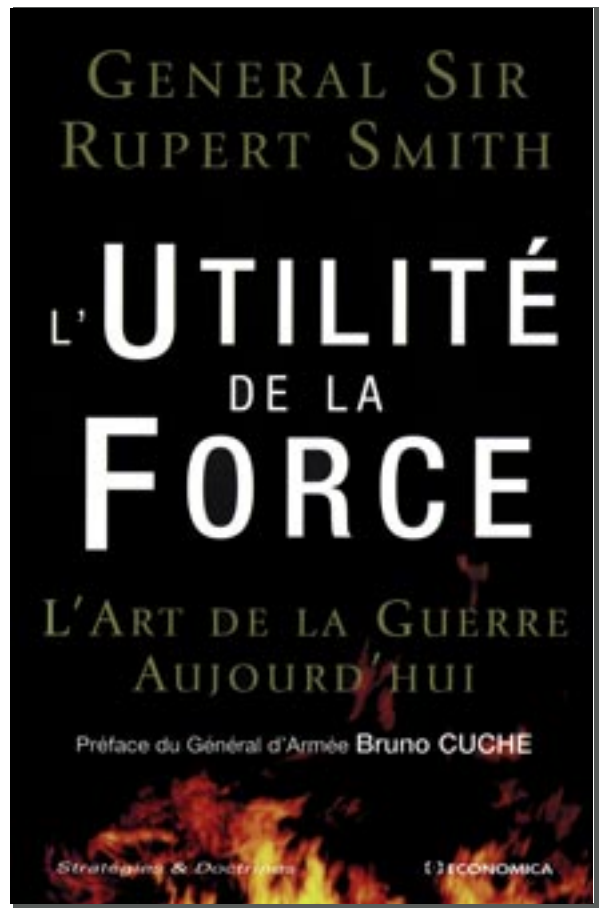
In Industrial War the conflict was intended to win the trial of strength so as to impose ones will, the desired outcome to the confrontation. In War Amongst the People the object of the conflict is to create a condition, to change intentions, so that the opponent adopts the desired outcome.

## But that difference occurred with Industrial War?

Yes, but it occurred at the political level and only in part because if you won the conflict you imposed your will. In War Amongst the People the change from confrontation to conflict is often down at the tactical level. For example: in Bosnia in 1995 UNPROFOR, even with the Rapid Reaction Force supported by NATO's 5 ATAF, never used force above the tactical level. The UN was in a complex confrontational situation; UNPROFOR was in a confrontation with all the parties to the larger confrontation that existed between the Bosnian Serbs and the Federation, and when conflict, or military force, had been used by the UN it had failed to improve the UN's

position with the Serbs in particular. Indeed they improved their position in the confrontation. This erosion of the UN's position contributed to the disaster of Srebrenica. However, in late August when UNPROFOR supported by NATO attacked initially the Bosnian Serbs around Sarajevo, the tactical engagements in the conflict were sufficiently successful to create a condition in which Richard Holbrook, the US Diplomat, could win the confrontation and the Dayton Accords were signed.

In sum: instead of being in a world in which peace is understood to be an absence of war and where we move in a linear process of Peace-Crisis-War-Resolution-Peace, we are in a world of continuous confrontation. The opponents in confrontation seek to influence each other with military acts. To be effective, these acts must be coherent with and allied to the other measures that affect intentions so as to gain advantage in the confrontation. Our institutions of governance are not well suited to handing this new world.



## But we could still have an industrial war, couldn't we?

I am not saying that you won't get big fights, or large forces deployed. But the fighting will not be for the purpose of Industrial War; to impose ones political will by force of arms. It will be to create a condition. The fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in July/August 2006 gives an example. The initial operation to invade Iraq in 2003 gives another. Furthermore, where are the production lines for men and materiel to sustain Industrial War? And with modern weapons systems, both WMD and precision weapons, the ability to destroy mass faster than it can be created whether in the factories or the field is evident.

## So does military force work anymore?

Yes. If it does not why are we so bothered by terrorism, nuclear proliferation and so on? We have to understand how to use it in the new paradigm of war, War Amongst the People. Take the example of the United States, a state

with the largest best-equipped military forces in the world, which are unable to dictate the desired outcome as they did in World War 2. Their forces have limited utility in relationship to their opponent's. In the present confrontations and conflicts, military forces with great potential to exert power are unable to do so to advantage when challenged by forces that are by the same standards ill-equipped and disorganised. We must find and learn the way to use our forces so that they have utility in achieving our ends in these confrontations.

## What should we do to make this change?

The first thing to do is to change the way we think about the use of military force, to recognize the change in paradigm. It is as important for the institutional thinking process to change as it is for the individual to think differently; after all, our institutions whether military, governmental or administrative and whether national or international, have all evolved to conduct the old model of war, Industrial War. We must understand the strategic objectives for the use of military force are not the hard decisive objectives of Industrial War. In War Amongst the People they are malleable objectives to do with setting a condition in which the confrontation can be resolved by other means.

We must learn to understand the forceful military acts in relation to the overarching confrontation. In Industrial War we operated to the simple logic of firepower; how to bring the maximum necessary to achieve our objective while preventing the enemy from doing the same to us. In War Amongst the People it is complex, we have two

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logics running together: the logic of the confrontation and the logic of the conflict. The currency of the confrontational logic is information; it is with information that you gain your position in a confrontation. The logic of the conflict has not changed it is firepower. The difficulty is for commanders to understand which logic they are operating to and in particular at what point in the chain of command the logics change.

## What changes to our weapon systems and organisations should we make?

I do not think we should make any changes until we have changed the way we think. Until we understand War Amongst the People and have worked out our method in general terms we are likely to make the wrong decisions about equipments and organisations.

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***“Brilliant re-interpretation of western military history”***

*Etienne de Durand, IFRI, Politique étrangère*

***“A book which helps us to understand how politics work”,***

*Javier Solana*

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