

Chapter 12

The strategic thinking of George F. Kennan and the fourth-generation wars in the framework of the Cold War

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287602502.12>

Miguel Antonio González Martínez

Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto"

Abstract: This paper aims to analyze, in the light of the concepts of the theories of war and armed conflict and of strategic leadership and prospective analysis, the Cold War and the participation of Colombia in that historical period. Specifically, the subject is studied through the lens of leader George F. Kennan (1904-2005) and his policy of containment exercised by the United States in that war. In addition, it is intended to complement the analysis by delving into the conceptual contributions of William Lind (2004) on *the generations of the war* and its impact on Colombia. An effect that, as will be seen, the author himself recognizes within his work. Methodologically, it is a qualitative-hermeneutical study based on Kennan's strategic thinking embodied in his intellectual production and Lind's concepts of generations of war.

Palabras clave: Colombia, containment, strategy, generations of war, Cold War.

Miguel Antonio González Martínez

Ph.D. student in Strategic Studies, Security and Defense, Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes Prieto". Master's Degree in History, National University of Colombia. Professional, International Relations and Political Studies, Universidad Militar Nueva Granada. Junior researcher categorized by MinCiencias. Professor and research fellow, Army Department, Escuela Superior de Guerra.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6034-912X> - Contact: miguel.gonzalez@esdeg.edu.co

APA citation: González Martínez, M. A. (2023). The strategic thinking of George F. Kennan and the fourth generation wars in the framework of the Cold War. In S. Uribe-Caceres & D. López Niño (Eds.), *Theoretical Approach to Notions of War and Strategic Leadership* (pp. 241-262). Sello Editorial ESDEG. <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287602502.12>

THEORETICAL APPROACH TO THE NOTIONS OF WAR AND STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

ISBN (print): 978-628-7602-49-6

ISBN (online): 978-628-7602-50-2

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25062/9786287602502>

Security and Defense Collection

Sello Editorial ESDEG

Escuela Superior de Guerra "General Rafael Reyes prieto"

Bogotá D.C., Colombia

2023



Introduction

The Cold War was a conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union (USSR), the victorious superpowers of World War II from 1945 to 1989. From the academic level, there is a wide academic production referring to the interpretation of this ideological confrontation of the second half of the twentieth century, from different theoretical and conceptual approaches. However, this chapter expands and contributes to the debate based on two specific axes that determined the order and balance of the international system of the Cold War. The *policy of containment* and *fourth-generation wars*, embodied in the growth of guerrilla groups in the hemisphere.

This chapter first provides the background of the Cold War, and then enters into the analysis of the confrontation between the superpowers taking into account the horizon of the containment strategy used by the Americans. Specifically, the strategic leadership that inspired George F. Kennan, its architect, is analyzed in depth, based on an analysis of its belief system and symbols. Then the argumentation is spun, with the Cold War in Latin America and for the Colombian case. In this section we see how concepts about warfare such as *asymmetric warfare* and *fourth-generation wars* turn out to be an interpretative framework to explain the phenomenon of the Cold War in the hemisphere. The work concludes with a few brief final reflections.

Background

For many historians, there is still no specific consensus on a specific date for the start of the Cold War. A comparison between the Cold War and contemporary hybrid warfare (Mattis & Hoffman, 2005) based on the development of the means

and modes used leads to the finding of many similarities, since their practices were diffuse and indirect, which refers us to the *volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous* environment (VUCA), which characterizes the contemporary world; hence the challenge that this poses for the design of strategy. However, the truth is that some authors, such as Kissinger (1995) and Hobsbawm (1998) place as an important milestone of its beginning the diplomatic conferences between the victorious leaders of World War II. Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945), Winston Churchill (1874-1965) and Joseph Stalin (1878-1953), who established the world order from the defeat of the powers of the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis, in Potsdam (July 17-2 August 1945) and Yalta (February 4-11, 1945). Other authors are usually located in the enunciation of the *Truman Doctrine* and the beginning of the program of reconstruction of Europe: the *Marshall Plan* (Bostdorff, 2008). However, in general and for the purposes of this work, the beginning of this period will be temporarily located in 1945, as the historical milestone that marks the beginning of the Cold War, given the characteristics and maneuvers in terms of strategy that can be identified practically from this year.

In consideration of the above, it will be presented as the main antecedents of the Cold War both to World War II (1939-1945) and to the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japanese sovereign territory, in August 1945. As a second precedent, the Chinese Revolution (1949) will also be cited, a historical fact traditionally overlooked in historiography, but which today, due to the geopolitical relevance of China, takes on a central importance when explaining the situation of actors in the international system of the present.

World War II

World War II was a conflict of an ideological nature that pitted France, Britain and the USSR - and subsequently, the United States - against Germany, Italy and Japan in the period 1939-1945 (Hobsbawm, 1998). Its origins can be traced to the convulsive "interwar" period (1919-1939), notorious for the widespread discontent in German domestic politics over the treatment received by his country because of the Treaty of Versailles (1919), at the end of the First World War, and led by the *German National Socialist Party* (Carr, 2004). Undoubtedly, the demands of this treaty on the part of Germany, and the geopolitical pretensions on the European stage on the part of Italy, and Japan, in Asia, created the environment conducive to a new war on a planetary scale.

The beginning of the war was caused by the events that occurred from the end of August 1939, with *Operation Himmler*, and that subsequently ended with the

invasion of Poland, during the first days of September of the same year. For the Nazis, the strategy was based on the tactic known as *blitzkrieg*, or *blitzkrieg*, after its German name, and which for William Lind (2004) emphasizes the importance of aviation, the replacement of infantry by heavy artillery, and collapse from the enemy's rear.

The Germans faced with the Second World War had to reformulate their strategy from the mistakes made during the World War I, in which the power of artillery was quickly contained with the tactics of the trenches, which turned the war into a war of attrition, which ended up leading them to imminent defeat. Thus, for World War II Germany used the *blitzkrieg* with greater mobility from the use of mechanized and armored (panzerkampfwagen), in addition with firepower of the same or greater intensity to the wars that allowed the incursion of the *second-generation wars*, when the Industrial Revolution and the military industry were incorporated. This new strategy allowed amazing advances in the spring and summer of 1940, on the eastern front (Benelux, France, Denmark and Finland) and on the western front, until the winter of 1941-1942, in an attempt to invade the USSR militarily.

However, from then on, the retreat of the German forces began, to the extent that their troops were worn out fighting two battlefronts without any practical result. In fact, by the end of 1943 it was known that the Nazis were going to lose the war, but what was not clear was how much they could continue to resist their fall, until in the summer of 1944, with the landing of *D-Day*, or *Operation Overlord* the German retreat on the western front began to take shape, while the Red Army advanced on the northern Slavic countries, until it reached Berlin, in April 1945.

While the military operations advanced successfully on the European front, on the Pacific front the cessation of hostilities seemed very far away. Japan continued to resist the onslaught of the Americans, who had just entered the war in the early winter of 1941, after the attack of the Japanese on the Pearl Harbor base, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. A fact named by the President of the United States Franklin D. Roosevelt with the *Day of Infamy*. However, in August 1945 the newly inaugurated Harry Truman, his successor (1945-1953), gave the order to release two nuclear bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in a definitive attack to lead Japan to its surrender. It is estimated that at least 250,000 people died until the end of 1945 as a result of the radioactive footprint, and another 20,000 over the next two years (López Sánchez, 2016).

In short, the panorama that the two atomic bombs threw was a total rethinking of military strategy. The war reached a point of no return: a scenario where the survival of life on the planet was completely threatened. Hence, *game theory* achieved acceptance within the field of academia as a way of interpreting and predicting the

unilateral decisions and actions of the actors (*behaviorism*) in dispute in a confrontational scenario.

The Chinese Revolution

Including the 1949 *Chinese Revolution* as an antecedent of the Cold War is based on the purpose of identifying the roots of China's meteoric rise as a major power on the contemporary stage. In the same way, it is important to analyze the effects of the triumph of a revolution with communist ideology, which tipped the balance of the international balance during the Cold War - at least, ideologically - in favor of the communist bloc. While it is true that the Russian Revolution (1917) has been categorized as a proletarian revolution, and the Chinese Revolution, as a peasant revolution, it is no less true that both ideologies, apparently antagonistic within the thought of the left, served as intellectual influences of the subversive groups that developed throughout the so-called "Third World" (Escobar, 2007) within the framework of the conflict of the dominant superpowers in the second half of the twentieth century.

Until the beginning of the 20th century, China had been ruled, for millennia, through a dynastic system that ended with the Qing Dynasty (1636-1912). The leaders of the *Kuomintang* nationalist party were the architects of the overthrow of the dynasty in favor of the beginning of a republican government for China, and it was in this way that a new political period for the Asian giant began. However, Japan's continental territorial aspirations materialized with the invasion of China in 1937, until 1945, when, with the help of the United States, the Nationalist Party recovered the north of the country amid tension in the area with the Soviets. However, China soon fell back into civil conflict, and in 1946 the *People's Liberation Army* was created against the rule of the Kuomintang Nationalist Party.

The end of the civil conflict came with the triumph of the revolution led by Mao Zedong, who, after a long march, gained power after the exile of the Nationalist Party to the island of Taiwan. From then on, Greater China was divided into two territories, with a geopolitical tension in force to this day.

The Cold War

The Cold War, which, as already mentioned, could be categorized within the typologies of hybrid warfare, received its name because the United States and the USSR, the rivals, never entered a direct confrontation of fires, but competition occurred in

other scenarios, such as espionage (the Soviet KGB and the American CIA), propaganda, information and even *soft power* (sport, art and development, industrial, scientific and technological - the space race). For Eric Hobsbawm,

Entire generations grew up under the threat of a global nuclear conflict that, as many believed, could erupt at any moment and wipe out humanity. In reality, even those who did not believe that either side intended to attack the other found it difficult not to fall into pessimism, since Murphy's law is one of the generalizations that best fit the human being ("If something can go wrong, it will go wrong"). Over time, there were more and more things that could go wrong, both politically and technologically, in a permanent nuclear confrontation based on the premise that only the fear of "mutually assured destruction" (aptly summed up in English with the acronym MAD, "mad") would prevent either side from giving the signal, always on point, of the planned destruction of civilization. It didn't happen, but for forty years it was an everyday possibility. (1998, p. 230)

In the course of the war, two military blocs were established: initially, in 1949, the *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* (NATO), led by the United States and formally constituted by the European countries called the "free world", rivaled the later created *Warsaw Pact* (1955-1991), whose members would be, mainly, the countries east of the *Curtain and Iron*, and which were called the "satellite countries" of the USSR, a strong division marked by *Fulton's Speech*, by Winston Churchill on the "Iron Curtain" (Muller, 1999). From the economic point of view, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) (1949-1991), as an economic organ of communist leverage, rivaled the Western financial aid contained in: the Marshall Plan, the Monnet Plan (1946-1950), the institution of the Economic Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) -which would become the antecedent of the European Economic Community (EEC), today the European Union (EU)-and, finally, more formally, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), of 1960.

Although, in essence, due to the arms and nuclear race developed by the United States and the USSR, a direct conflict between the powers would have implied mutually assured destruction, there were conflicts between the countries that orbited within one of the two ideologies. The first of these was the Korean War, between 1950 and 1953 - with direct participation of the Colombia Battalion supporting the United Nations contingent - and the Vietnam War, between 1955 and 1975. The latter, catalogued within the conceptual scheme of *guerrilla warfare* (Aznar Fernández-Montesinos et al., 2018, p. 92).

Already at the end of the seventies, the conflict had entered a stage of attrition and that demanded an early solution on the international stage, due to the pressure of the group of Non-Aligned Countries, led by Egypt, under the government, in turn, of Gamal Abdel Nasser (1956-1970), and with the good offices of Colombia, under the liberal government of Alfonso López Michelsen (1974-1978) (Cepeda Ulloa & Pardo Garcia-Peña, 1984). Moreover, in the late 1970s the USSR maintained a sustained war on the southern front with Afghanistan, by the *mujahideen*. Faced with the Soviet impossibility of achieving a victory, its military capacity was seriously questioned, its internal fractures within the Kremlin soon began to become visible. In the mid-eighties the reformist Mikhail Gorbachev (1985-1991) assumed power in the USSR, who implemented *Perestroika* and *Glasnost*, which proved insufficient to contain his fall, and finally, the Soviet project ended up falling apart in 1991.

George Frost Kennan and the Politics of Containment

The case of the *politics of containment* is a clear example of how a person's ideas can decisively impact the course of events in history. George Frost Kennan was a diplomat in the newly created foreign service of the United States Department of State, and a political scientist and historian by training. He was a mentor of the containment strategy of Soviet expansion and considered one of the "wise men" of the group of foreign policy elders, along with leading figures such as Henry Kissinger (1923-). After his period of training in diplomatic academia, Kennan was sent to Europe for low-profile missions given his degree in foreign service; however, he gained prestige for the negotiations he led against Portugal for the use of the Azores islands as a military base, by the Allies, during World War II. Although a junior diplomat, his obstinacy, discipline, and interest in Soviet affairs led him to specialize in the study of Russian culture, and he was appointed to the corresponding embassy as an adjunct in trade relations.

In 1946, the then young diplomat sent the now famous *Long Telegram* to the State Department, in which he restated several controversial points about some "overvalued beliefs" that Washington had in relation to the Soviet Communist State (Kennan, 1988). With his first-hand knowledge and study of Russian culture, Kennan managed to accurately understand the strengths and weaknesses that the *Russian* people had from within, and that they externalized in their ways of exercising foreign policy. The containment proposal was published, academically, in *Foreign Affairs*,

under the pseudonym of Mr. "X"; thus he gained more popularity, for the mystery of a publication made under a suggestive pseudonym. In his writing, he argued that the Soviet regime was expansionist by nature, and that its influence should be *contained* in areas of strategic importance to the United States.

About Kennan's Leadership Beliefs

G. Kennan designed the bases of the containment strategy in the *Long Telegram* and published them anonymously in the journal *Foreign Affairs* (Kennan, 1998, p. 124); therefore, his beliefs are contained in these texts. A critical analysis of these publications can reveal that their beliefs were based on the sociological analysis of the "other"; a kind of "mirror game" that, from the point of view of constructivism, cemented the American political personality and its antagonism through its interpretation of communism and its meaning in the foundations of Russian society; Kennan, as an expert in Soviet affairs, knew very well the distinction between the Soviet and the *Russian*. Thus, for Kennan (1988), Russian socialist militants were

Frustrated, dissatisfied, with no hope of finding their own personality or too impatient to seek it within the restricted confines of the tsarist political system, though without receiving broad popular support in choosing a bloody revolution as a means of social betterment, these revolutionaries saw in Marxist theory a rationalization highly suited to their own instinctual desires. (p. 140)

On the *Russian revolutionary dictatorial way*, he argued that

The circumstances of the immediate post-revolutionary period of civil war and foreign intervention in Russia, together with the obvious fact that the Communists represented only a small minority of the Russian people, made it necessary to establish a dictatorial power. The experiment with 'war communism' and the abrupt attempt to eliminate private production and trade had unfortunate economic consequences and increased bitterness against the new revolutionary regime. (Kennan, 1988, p. 141)

Regarding the totalitarian and greedy nature of the communist leaders, he stated:

But had it been so, Stalin and those whom he /Lenin led in the struggle to succeed Lenin in leadership could not tolerate rival political forces in the sphere of power coveted by them. His sense of insecurity was too great. (Kennan, 1988, p. 141)

Of the need to create the external enemy, he expressed that

The need for the creation of the external enemy by the Soviets in capitalism, given that a serious or extensive opposition to the Kremlin that arose spontaneously from the liberated masses to which they ruled could not be admitted, had to reinforce the threat of capitalism beyond the borders, to justify the persistence of the dictatorship. (Kennan, 1988, p. 142)

It is clear that Keenan, through his ideas, represents a leadership in the mobilization of people who are in competition with the USSR, under political and psychological principles. Northhouse (2010) also identifies that "Leadership is a process by which a person influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal." This definition also conforms to Kennan's leadership, insofar as his proposal constitutes an international crusade against communism, which, in effect, materialized during the Cold War period.

On the Meanings of Kennan's Leadership

Following the theory of the *linguistic sign*, by Ferdinand de Saussure (1945), it can be inferred that Kennan built a network of meanings on basic signifiers such as ideology and the end of the human being in society. In this sense, it fed the totalizing *metanarrative* of modernity about the ends and purposes of human organizations and in the ideological discourses that were reinforced with the Industrial Revolution. The natural opposition between the leadership exercised in each ideological system: democratic capitalism and demagogic dictatorial communism, diverged, making them practically irreconcilable, giving positive values to capitalism, and negative values to communism in a kind of Manichaeism.

Perhaps there is no episode of confrontation as relevant in international history as the Cold War, with such a high load of Semitic meanings: signs and symbols arranged as a representation of identity built on both sides, and which played a special role. Thus, cartographies, advertisements, declarations, and statements formed a corpus of semiotic objects loaded with intention and content that sought to undermine the communist position vis-à-vis internal American public opinion.

The graphic semiosis of the Cold War

Cartographies

Figure 1. Map of the Cold War frontier: the Iron Curtain.



Source: La Nación (2019).

One of the best used elements since the beginning of the war was the euphemism Iron Curtain, which when taken to the maps of the war established a natural and insurmountable barrier between two worlds imagined by the statesmen of the time, as established in the map of figure 1. Maps are not neutral elements: they help shape geopolitical thinking and a way of seeing and analyzing reality. For Kennan and the Western world, everything that was "behind the Iron Curtain" was underdeveloped and hidden; and before some, even, with an infection that had to be fought.

Figure 2. "The communist contagion".



Source: Time Magazine (April 1, 1946, p. 27).

Cartoons

The cartography served to “caricature” the expansionist claims of Soviet control beyond the Iron Curtain. Kennan (1988) vehemently led the idea of containment to Soviet expansion, and his strategy created that way of interpreting the world by the “free world”. As he would say in his article “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” “In these circumstances it is clear that the central element of any U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union must be long-term, patient, but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies” (p. 145).

Figure 3. Stalin's attempts to extend Soviet control beyond Eastern Europe.



Source: British cartoonist Leslie Illingworth (June 1947).

Magazines and newspapers showed a sinister, armored, and dark world in the countries on the “other side” of the Iron Curtain, and thus an exotic and inhospitable world was created in the Western mentality through these images.

Figure 4. *“The Iron Curtain”*.



Source: British cartoonist Leslie Illingworth.

Propaganda

In the propaganda poster of the United States Information Service shown in figure 5, the anti-Soviet feeling of containment of communism is evident: in this one, Juan de la Cruz, a national symbol of the Philippines, is seen supporting the policy of containment of communism.

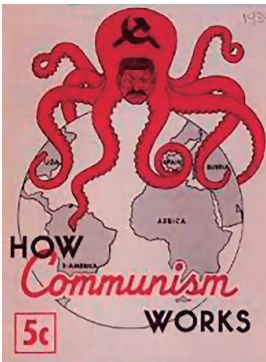
Figure 5. *Poster of the United States Information Service distributed in Asia.*



Source: National Archives at College Park (1951).

Figure 6 illustrates how communism is symbolically homologated with the tentacles of an octopus that stalk the world. The relevance of the color red, representative of communism, is notorious..

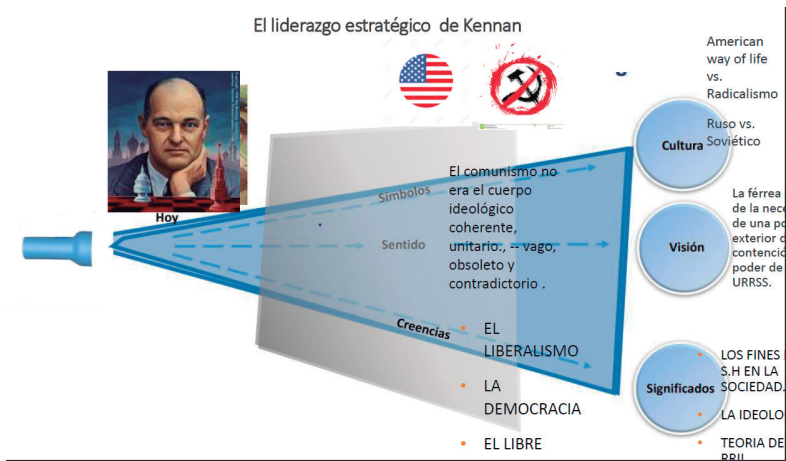
Figure 6. "How Communism Works".



Source: Catholic Library Service pamphlet (1938).

This is how the conjunction between beliefs, meanings and symbols constructed in Kennan’s mind emerges from a vision directed towards the containment of the enemy communist force, created in his mind as an innate strategist in favor of the political organization represented by the United States, his own country, and the countries allied to it in the Western bloc, also calling, metaphorically, “the free world”, as seen in figure 7.

Figure 7. G. Keenan's leadership system.



Source: Own elaboration.

The system of beliefs, meanings, and symbols endowed the leader with a vague, ethereal, and overrated perception of the Soviet in the culture of the United States, and thus projected it onto the minds of other American political leaders and those who followed him. The Western world had to exercise an ironclad foreign policy aimed at stopping, *containing*, the expansionist aspirations of the Soviets in the international system.

In *The Origins of Soviet Behavior*, George Kennan generated critical positions by those who attacked the proposal, for its intention to recruit, subordinate and manipulate satellite countries around the globe to effect such “containment”. However, the doctrine of containment became official Washington policy vis-à-vis that of Moscow from the arrival in the White House of Harry Truman (1945-1953).

Kennan gained even more notoriety when he collaborated with George Marshall, Secretary of State, as Director of Policy Planning, on the European Reconstruction Plan of the same name. Thus, it is possible to think that, in terms of studies in strategy, Kennan contributed and was a pioneer in terms of being a civilian *Policy Adviser* in an area of study classically enunciated from military studies in military training academies (Bueno, 2018, p. 241). The development of the strategy, in its practical sense, materialized in the foreign policy of the United States in the observed period. The subsequent governments, of Dwight Eisenhower (1953-1961), J. F. Kennedy (1961-1963), Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-1969), Richard Nixon (1969-1974), Gerald Ford (1974-1977), Jimmy Carter (1977-1981), Ronald Reagan (1981-1989) and George Bush (1989-1993), continued to implement the policy in their respective mandates, until leading to the defeat of the Soviets in their claim to world domination, more than 30 years ago.

However, Kennan's popularity began to wane when he observed that the implementation of his policy took on a militaristic form, a view that coincided with the appointment of Dean Acheson as Secretary of State in 1949. In 1950 Kennan left the State Department, except for two brief commissions as a diplomat in Moscow and Yugoslavia, and already from academia he became a critic of American foreign policy. In effect, the policy of containment was a tool of the foreign policy of the northern country that strengthened its position in the face of the expansionist pretensions of communist ideology around the world. A palpable example can be illustrated from the hemispheric policy of the United States, in its objective of preserving an America united under the principles of freedom and democracy.

The Cold War in Latin America

In this scenario of confrontation, Latin America played a decisive role as a region of vital importance for the interests of the United States (Katz, 2004). In the same way that in World War II, under the leadership of the United States, the ideal of a united Latin America had materialized in the face of the threat of a Nazi *Fifth Column*, the aspiration of the colossus of the north was to exercise strategic control of the most important hemispheric areas that could violate the security of its *heartland*. However, it was a purpose that was not easy to achieve.

Indeed, Latin America's effort in the framework of World War II had concentrated on at least three tasks. The first of these was the sending of troops by the countries that had a greater human resource to reinforce the Allied lines and the fronts of the war (in the case of Brazil and Mexico). The second moment was the shipment of raw materials (rubber, aluminum, metals, etc.) for their transformation into the war industry (in the case of Colombia and the other Andean countries). The third was the defense of the hemisphere through the commitment of mutual assistance, reached in 1939, in Panama - and of some critical geostrategic points, such as the Panama Canal (Bushnell, 1989). However, at the Chapultepec Conference in 1945, during the central diplomatic moment facing the architecture of the new world order, Latin America sought a greater commitment from the United States to promote and develop its precarious economies, dependent on the products of the first sector of the economy. This aspiration transcended until the end of the war, when the United States launched plans for the reconstruction of Europe and Japan, and therefore postponed hemispheric attention to the threat of the Soviets.

However, in 1948 a hemispheric breakthrough was achieved in the face of the tense situation created on the international scene by the confrontation between the United States and the USSR. In Bogotá, in the middle of Bogotazo, with the celebration of the IX Pan American Conference, the Organization of American States (OAS) was created; a diplomatic forum for the debate on inter-American problems in terms of safety, health, finances and Human Rights, among other areas, but also, to ratify the democratic commitment of the countries of the hemisphere. In the same way, the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR), also called the *Treaty of Rio*, signed on September 2, 1947, was a purely defensive agreement, an inter-American alliance of mutual defense that reaffirmed the commitment of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Panama City, September 1939.

In the fifties, an important part of the administration of Dwight Eisenhower (1953-1961) concentrated its efforts on the American presence on the European front, with the exception of the coup against Jacobo Árbenz, in Guatemala, in 1953. And on the containment of the first pro-communist revolutionary guerrillas that were present in practically all of Latin American territory. However, in 1959, with the triumph of the *Cuban Revolution*, a new stage in history and hemispheric relations began within the framework of the Cold War (Katz, 2004), since the United States had to overcome the strategy of military containment in favor of an aid program aimed at strengthening the social and economic fabric of the countries. According to Stephen Rabe, cited by González et al. (2002),

One of the aspects to be highlighted according to this conception is that in 1954 the United States, in the voice of President Dwight Eisenhower (1953-1961), made clear the strategic importance of Latin American territory in the fight against Soviet socialism. The president referred to his Latin American policy as a chapter of 'the Cold War against our enemies' and indicated that in Latin America a war against communism was being fought. (w. p.)

Thus, starting in the 1960s, the strategy of hard power in Latin America was rethought, in favor of strategies such as the *Alliance for Progress*, designed from the *theory of modernization*, studied and taught in the main American universities, as a "recipe" to achieve the development of poor countries (Rojas, 2010). Colombia was a pilot in its implementation, and thus housing solutions were created in the capital of the Republic, as a response to the numerous wave of peasant migrants fleeing the rural conflict. Even a second agrarian reform even materialized, at the recommendation of the program emanating from Washington.

Colombia in the Cold War and the Asymmetric War

Although the historic bipartisan conflict in Colombia had resulted in at least nine civil wars during the nineteenth century, the first half of the twentieth century, for a good part, was characterized by an atmosphere of widespread peace throughout the national territory (Bushnell, 2004). However, in 1930 the arrival of the liberals to power, with Enrique Olaya Herrera (1930-1934), stoked the old rivalries between liberals and conservatives, to the point of resulting in sporadic acts of violence in some parts of the country. The opposition exercised by Laureano Gómez in the

Senate of the Republic, the liberal reforms carried out in the first government of Alfonso López Pumarejo (1934-1938) and that of Eduardo Santos Montejó (1938-1942). And, finally, the murder of the liberal leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, on April 9, 1948, caused the episode known as *La Violencia* (1948-1953) to formally explode, until the amnesty promised under the military government of General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla (1953-1958) (González & Chavez, 2021).

The liberal strongholds that did not enter the amnesty -particularly in the south of Tolima (Republic of Marquetalia)— as a direct effect of the ideological confrontation in the international system, in 1964 took up arms against the Colombian State under a Marxist-Communist ideological inspiration, and thus created the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). In the same year the National Liberation Army (ELN) was founded, and entered into operations the following year, in the oil zone in the Santanderes, while the Movimiento 19 de abril (M-19), another representative group, saw the light six years later, in 1970, after the controversial presidential elections where the conservative candidate Misael Pastrana Borrero (1970-1974) was elected (Melo, 2017).

The bloody internal war that the Colombian State has waged against the guerrillas fits with asymmetric warfare, which, in a specific definition, can be said to “constitute a violent conflict, in which there is a considerable difference, quantitative and qualitative, of military, technological, diplomatic and/or media power” (Gajate Bajo, 2019). From here different maneuvers and tactics emerge to balance the asymmetry in favor of the “lower” power, such as *guerrilla warfare*. Indeed, under the inspiration of the Chinese Revolution, in the framework of the Colombian conflict¹, concepts such as the *prolonged people’s war* and the *combination of forms of struggle* were discussed. These strategies drove the maneuver towards attrition, undermining morale from within the enemy troop, in the face of “uncertainty”, and thus reaching victory. In a clear example, the Colombian conflict has lasted for more than 60 years.

While regarding the typology of conflicts established by William Lind (2004), the Colombian conflict could clearly be located in the fourth-generation wars as derived from the analysis presented by María Gajate Bajo:

¹ According to Hobsbawm, “At the very moment when the young and hopeful leftists were citing Mao Zedong’s strategy to make the revolution triumph by mobilizing the countless millions of peasants against the beleaguered urban fortresses of the system, those millions were leaving their villages for the very cities. In Latin America, the percentage of peasants halved in twenty years in Colombia (1951-1973), in Mexico (1960-1980) and -almost- in Brazil (1960-1980), and fell by two-thirds, or close to it, in the Dominican Republic (1960-1981), Venezuela (1961-1981) and Jamaica (1953-1981)” (1998, p. 243).

[...] in fourth-generation struggles, the most momentous mutation would be that the State loses its monopoly in the exercise of war. Thus, new actors appear, such as the media, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), religious groups... Winning in the tactical and physical realm does not automatically imply a strategic or mental triumph. (2019, n.d.)

Indeed, other authors, such as F. Münkler (2005) and M. Kaldor (2001), agree that in *new wars* there seems to be a return to the premodern phase of States, in which the permanent dispute for the right of sovereign subsistence of States was the constant dispute. Although the Westphalian pact laid the foundations of a new international system based on respect for the sovereignty of territorial entities, it seems that the dispersion of the nature of the actors erodes the monopoly of the use of internal force of the States, as William Lind himself argues, and links the Colombian guerrillas as an example of the fourth generation of war, in the following terms:

Characteristics such as decentralization and initiative carry over from the Third to the Fourth Generation, but in other respects the Fourth Generation marks the most radical change since the Peace of Westphalia. In Fourth Generation war, the state loses its monopoly on war. All over the world, state militaries find themselves fighting nonstate opponents such as al-Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. Almost everywhere, the state is losing. (2004, p. 13)

Conclusions

Once the above analysis has been made, the following conclusions can be drawn.

Although the Cold War was not a conflict in which direct military strategies were put in place, since its antagonists did not come into direct fire, it can be established that in their derivative conflicts, such as the Korean War, the Vietnam War or even the guerrilla wars in Latin America, they were able to incorporate elements that have been extensively analyzed from the perspective of strategic and military studies. Indeed, for William Lind (2004) the case of Colombian guerrillas may be the empirical evidence for his concept of *fourth-generation wars*.

An important element to highlight is that, on the contemporary level, from the studies of Hoffman and Mattis (2005), of Valery Gerasimov and of unrestricted

warfare, of the Chinese colonels Liang and Xiangsui (1999), one can speak of hybrid warfare scenarios. However, within the framework of the direct confrontation between the United States and the USSR, it can be argued that many elements that the aforementioned authors highlight as the classic tactics of contemporary hybrid warfare were presented in their means and strategic modes.

From the conceptual point of view, it is striking the wide range of concepts that have been used here, and others that have remained in the pipeline, such as irregular warfare, war of positions and war of movements, among others that seem to accommodate, complement and even redound to other interpretations.

Finally, the point of the strategy is central to this work. The role of George Kennan is highlighted, who can be cited as the precursor of strategic studies, from a civilian perspective, in a field traditionally dominated by the military. The belief system based on the defense of liberalism, democracy and the free world, of ideological meanings based on natural opposition between the leadership exercised in each ideological system (democratic capitalism and demagogic dictatorial communism) diverged and made both positions practically irreconcilable, granting positive values to capitalism, and negative values to communism, as well as symbols and signs that fed cartographies, advertisements, statements and statements by leader George F. Kennan, was the antecedent towards the international containment of communism, which was satisfactorily implemented and, ultimately, led to the victory of the United States in the Cold War.

The mind of this leader shaped a vision that projected the United States towards an indirect form of confrontation that could be sustained throughout the Cold War without reaching a warlike confrontation between the two superpowers, and whose result would have been catastrophic for the survival of life on the planet. This, in an epistemological moment when it began a methodological revolution of studies based on *behavior*-behaviorism- of the fifties, accompanied by quantitative methodology when explaining -and even trying to predict- the action of the actors in conflict.

References

- Aznar, F., Sánchez, G., Gómez, A., Díaz, F., & Sánchez, E. (2018). *Amenazas pasadas presentes y futuras: las Guerras asimétricas*. Universidad Santo Tomás.
- Bostdorff, D. (2008). *Proclaiming the Truman Doctrine. The Cold War Call to Arms*. A&M University Press.
- Bueno, A. (2018). De los Estudios Estratégicos. Conceptualización y evolución de un campo de estudio. *RESI. Revista de Estudios de Seguridad Internacional*, 4(1), 237-256. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18847/1.7.14>
- Burns, J. (1978). *Leadership*. Harper & Row.
- Bushnell, D. (1989). *Eduardo Santos y la Política del Buen Vecino*. El Áncora.
- Bushnell, D. (2004). *Colombia una nación a pesar de sí misma. De los tiempos precolombianos a nuestros días*. (C. Montilla, Trad.). Planeta.
- Carr, E. (2004). *La Crisis de los Veinte Años (1919-1939). Una introducción al estudio de las relaciones internacionales*. (E. B. Alonso, Trad.). Catarata.
- Cepeda, F., & Pardo, R. (1984). La política exterior colombiana (1946-1974). En A. Tirado (Ed.), *Nueva Historia de Colombia Tomo III Relaciones Internacionales; Movimientos Sociales*. Planeta.
- Croce, M. (1992). Algunos elementos geopolíticos del Pacto Cafetero. *Cuadernos de administración*, 13(18), 23-34.
- Escobar, A. (2007). *La invención del Tercer Mundo: Construcción y Decostrucción del Desarrollo*. Fundación Editorial El Perro y la Rana.
- Gajate, M. (2019). Reflexiones sobre la guerra asimétrica a través de la historia. *URVIO, Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios de Seguridad*, (24), 204-220. [dx.doi.org/10.17141/urvio.24.2019.3522](https://doi.org/10.17141/urvio.24.2019.3522)
- González, M. (2002). Colombia y la OTAN: ¿Una alianza estratégica de disuasión o de contención? *Revista de Relaciones Internacionales, Estrategia y Seguridad*, 17(1), 87-100. [doi:https://doi.org/10.18359/ries.6056](https://doi.org/10.18359/ries.6056)
- Gonzalez, M. (2016). *¡Café y Buenos Vecinos! Una mirada a las relaciones colombo estadounidenses a través del Acuerdo Interamericano del Café de 1940*. Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- González, M., & Chávez, C. (2021). En D. González (Ed.), *De Angostura a La Habana: Doscientos años buscando la paz en Colombia*. Neogranadina.
- Hobsbawm, E. (1998). *Historia del Siglo XX*. Crítica.
- Kaldor, M. (2001). *Viejas y Nuevas Guerras*. Tusquets.
- Katz, F. (2004). La Guerra Fría en América Latina. En D. Spenser. (Coord.), *Espejos de la guerra fría: México, América Central y el Caribe*. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social.

- Kennan, G. (1988). Los orígenes de la conducta soviética. *Secuencia*, 11(221), 138-150.
<https://doi.org/10.18234/secuencia.v0i11.221>
- Kennan, G. (1998). *Al Final de un Siglo*. Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Kissinger, H. (1995). El comienzo de la guerra fría. *Política Exterior*, 9(44), 55-68.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20643681>
- La Nación. (2019, 20 de agosto). La "Cortina de Hierro" de la Guerra Fría. *La Nación*.
https://www.lanacion.com.py/tendenciaedicion_impresa/2019/08/20/la-cortina-de-hierrode-la-guerra-fria/
- Liang, Q., & Xiangsui, W. (1999). *Unrestricted Warfare*. PLA Literature and Arts. Publishing House.
- Lind, W. (2004). Understanding Fourth Generation War. *Military Review*, 12-16.
- López, G. (2016, 13 de agosto). *El terror radiactivo de Hiroshima y Nagasaki*. ABC Ciencia.
https://www.abc.es/ciencia/abci-terror-radiactivo-hiroshima-y-nagasaki-201608131823_noticia.html
- Mattis, J., & Hoffman, F. (2005). *Future warfare: The rise of hybrid warfare*. US Naval Institute.
- Melo, J. (2017). *Historia Mínima de Colombia*. Turner Colegio de México.
- Muller, J. (1999). *Churchill's "Iron Curtain" Speech Fifty Years Later*. University of Missouri Press.
- Münkler, H. (2005). *Viejas y Nuevas Guerras*. Siglo XXI Editores.
- Northouse, P. (2010). *Leadership: Theory and Practice*. Thousand Oaks.
- Rojas, D. (2010). La alianza para el progreso de Colombia. *Análisis Político*, 23, 91-124.
- Saussure, F. (1945). *Curso de lingüística general*. Editorial Lozada.