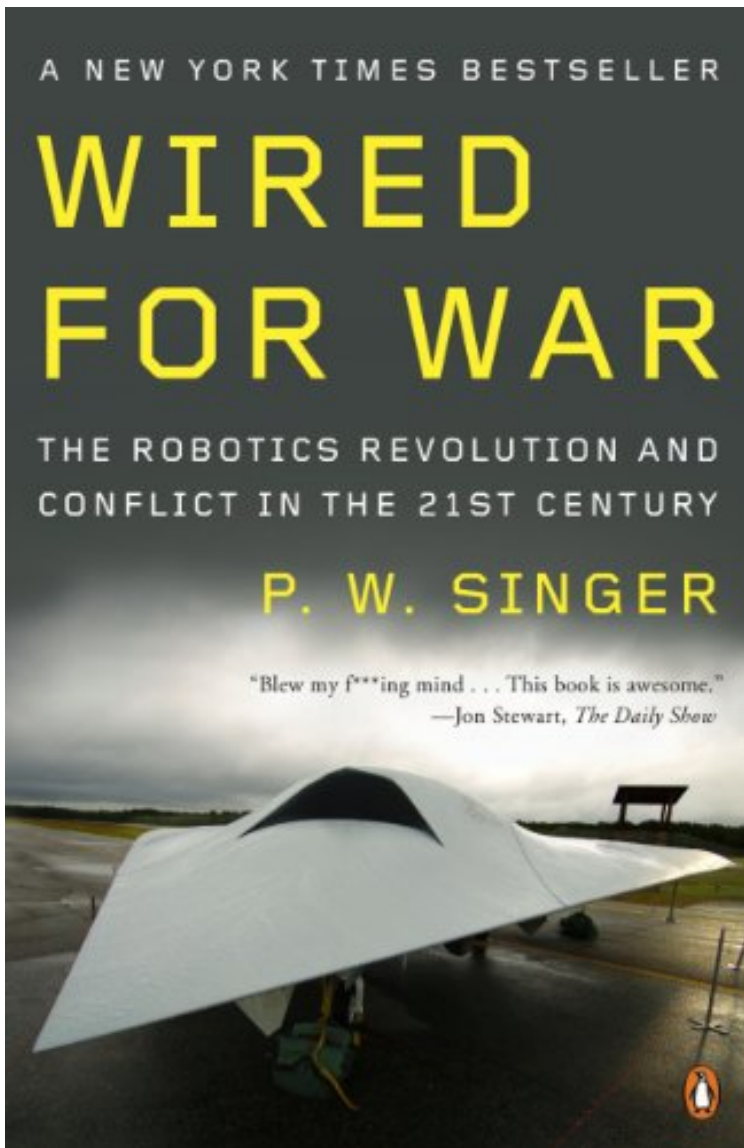


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# Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century



Par P. W. Singer  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurP. W. Singer explores the greatest revolution in military affairs since the atom bomb: the dawn of robotic warfareWe are on the cusp of a massive shift in military technology that threatens to make real the stuff of I, Robot and The Terminator. Blending historical evidence with interviews of an amazing cast of characters, Singer shows how technology is changing not just how wars are fought, but also the politics, economics, laws, and the ethics that surround war itself. Travelling from the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan to modern-day "skunk works" in the midst of suburbia, **Wired for War** will tantalise a wide

readership, from military buffs to policy wonks to gearheads. **WHY A BOOK ON ROBOTS AND WAR?** Those people who think they know everything are a great annoyance to those of us who do. **ISAAC ASIMOV** Because robots are frakin cool. That's the short answer to why someone would spend four years researching and writing a book on new technologies and war. The long answer is a bit more complex. As my family will surely attest, I was a bit of an odd kid. All kids develop their hobbies and even fixations, be it baseball cards or Barbie dolls. Indeed, I have yet to meet a six-year-old boy who did not have an encyclopedic knowledge of all things dinosaur. For me growing up, it was war. I could be more polite and say military history, but it was really just war. In saying the same about his childhood, the great historian John Keegan wrote, It is not a phrase to be written, still less spoken with any complacency. But it is true nonetheless. Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that the generations before me had all served in the military. They left several lifetimes worth of artifacts hidden around the house for me to pilfer and play with, whether it was my dad's old military medals and unit insignia, which I would take out and pin to my soccer jersey, or the model of the F-4 Phantom jet fighter that my uncle had flown over Vietnam, which I would run up and down the stairs on its missions to bomb Legoland. But the greatest treasure trove of all was at my grandparents house. My grandfather passed away when I was six, too young to remember him as much more than the kindly man whom we would visit at the nursing home. But I think he may have influenced this aspect of me the most. Chalmers Rankin Carr, forever just Granddaddy to me, was a U.S. Navy captain who served in World War II. Like all those from what we now call the Greatest Generation, he was one of the giants who saved the world. Almost every family gathering would include some tale from his or my grandmothers (Maw Maw to us grandkids) experiences at war or on the home front. It's almost a cliché to say, but the one that stands out is the Pearl Harbor story; although, as with all things in my family, it comes with a twist. On December 7, 1941, my grandfather was serving in the Pacific Fleet on a navy transport ship. For three months after the Pearl Harbor attack, the family didn't hear any word from him and worried for the worst. When his ship finally came back to port (it had actually sailed out of Pearl Harbor just two days before the attack), he immediately called home to tell his wife (my grandmother) and the rest of his family that he was okay. There were only two problems: he had called collect, and that side of my family is Scotch-Irish. No one would accept the charges. While my grandfather cursed the phone operators ear off, in the way that only a sailor can, on the other end the family explained to the operator that since he was calling, he must be alive. So there was no reason to waste money on such a luxury as a long-distance phone call. Granddaddy's study was filled with volume after volume of great books, on everything from the history of the U.S. Navy to biographies of Civil War generals. I would often sneak off to this room, pull out one of the volumes, and lose myself in the past. These books shaped me then and stay with me now. One of my most prized possessions is an original-edition 1939 *Janes Fighting Ships* that my grandfather received as a gift from a Royal Navy officer, for being part of the crew that shipped a Lend-Lease destroyer to the Brits. As I type these very words, it peers down at me from the shelf above my computer. My reading fare quickly diverged from that of the other kids at Myers Park Elementary School. A typical afternoon reading was less likely to be exploring how *Encyclopedia Brown*, *Boy Detective*, cracked *The Case of the Missing Roller Skates* than how Audie Murphy, the youngest soldier ever to win the Medal of Honor, went, as he wrote in his autobiography, *To Hell and Back*. War soon morphed over into the imaginary world that surrounds all kids like a bubble. Other kids went to Narnia, I went to Normandy. While it may have looked like a normal Diamondback dirt bike, my bicycle was the only one in the neighborhood that mounted twin .50-caliber machine guns on the handlebars, to shoot down any marauding Japanese Zeros that dared to ambush me on my way to school each morning. I still remember my mother yelling at me for digging a five-foot-deep foxhole in our backyard when I was ten years old. She clearly failed to understand the importance of setting up a proper line of defense. I certainly can't claim to have been a normal kid, but in my defense, you also have to remember the context. To be so focused on war was somewhat easier in that period. It was the Reagan era and the cold war had heated back up. The Russians wouldn't come to our Olympics and we wouldn't go to theirs, the military was cool again, and we had no questions about whether we were the good guys. Most important, as a young Patrick Swayze and Charlie Sheen taught us in *Red Dawn*, not only were the Commies poised to parachute right into our schools, but it was likely us kids who would have to beat them back. What I find interesting, and a sign of the power of Hollywood's marketing machine, is that usually some artifact from science fiction is in the background of these memories, intertwined with the history. For example, when I think back to my childhood bedroom, there are the model warships from my grandfather's era lined up on display, but also Luke, Leia, Han, and Chewbacca peeking up from my *Star Wars* bedsheets. As most

of science fiction involved some good guy battling some bad guy in a world far, far away, the two memes of my fantasy world went together fairly well. In short, your author was the kind of little boy to whom a stick was not a mere piece of wood, but the makings of a machine gun or a lightsaber that could save the world from both Hitler and Darth Vader. WAR! WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR? I look back on these memories with some embarrassment, but also guilt. Of course, even then, I knew that people die in war and many soldiers didn't come home, but they were always only the buddy of the hero, oddly enough usually from Brooklyn in most World War II movies. The reality of war had no way of sinking in. It was not until years later that I truly understood the human costs of war. I remember crossing a jury-rigged bridge into Mostar, a town in Bosnia that saw some of the worst fighting in the Yugoslav civil war. I was there as part of a fact-finding mission on the UN peacekeeping operation. Weeks of back-and-forth fighting had turned block after block of factories and apartments on the riverfront into a mass of hollowed-out hulks. The pictures of World War II's Stalingrad in an old book on my grandfathers shelf had sprung up to surround and encompass me. The books never had any smell other than dust, but here, even well after the battles, a burnt, fetid scent still hung in the air. Down the river were the remnants of an elegant 500-year-old bridge, which had been blasted to pieces by Serb artillery. The people, though, were the ones who drove it home. Haunted is the only adjective I can think of to describe the faces of the refugees. The standout memory, though, was of a local provincial governor we met with. A man alleged to have orchestrated mass killing and ethnic cleansing campaigns for which he would soon after be indicted, he sat at an immense wooden desk, ominously framed by two nationalist paramilitary (and hence illegal) flags. But he banally talked about his plans to build up the tourism industry after the war. He explained that the war had destroyed many of the factories and cleaned out whole villages. So on the positive side, the rivers were now clear and teeming with fish. Forget the war crimes or the refugees, he argued, if only the United States and United Nations would wise up and give him money, the package tourists would be there in a matter of weeks. This paradox between the good wars that I had fought in my youth and the seamy underside of war in the twenty-first century has since been the thread running through my writing. During that same trip, I met my first private military contractors, a set of former U.S. Army officers, who were working in Sarajevo for a private company. Their firm wasn't selling widgets or even weapons, but rather the very military skills of the soldiers themselves. This contradiction between our ideal of military service and the reality of a booming new industry of private companies leasing out soldiers for hire became the subject of my first book, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry*. During the research, I was struck by another breakdown of the traditional model of who was supposed to be at war. In West Africa, the main foes of these new private soldiers were rebel bands, mostly made up of children. Many of these tiny soldiers had been abducted from their schools and homes. For me as a child, war had merely been a matter of play; for these children, war was the only way to survive. My next book, *Children at War*, tried to tell their story, in a way that didn't just tug at heartstrings, but also explained the causes and effects of child soldiers, such that we might finally act to end this terrible practice. This contradiction of war as we imagine it to be, versus how it really is, isn't just the matter of a young boy growing up and putting his lightsaber away. It is part of something bigger that has haunted humanity from its very start. One of the original sins of our species is its inability to live at peace. From the very beginning of human history, conflicts over food, territory, riches, power, and prestige have been constant. The earliest forms of human organization were clans that first united for hunting, but soon also for fighting with other clans over the best hunting grounds. The story of the dawn of civilization is a story of war, as these clans transformed into larger tribes and then to city-states and empires. War was both a cause and effect of broader social change. From war sprung the very first specializations of labor, the resulting stratification into economic classes, and the creation of politics itself. The result is that much of what is written in human history is simply a history of warfare. It is a history that often shames us. And it should. War is not just merely human destruction, but the most extreme of horror and waste wrapped together. Our great religions view war as perhaps the ultimate transgression. In the Bible, for example, King David was prohibited from building his holy Temple, because, as God told him, You are a warrior who has shed blood (1 Chronicles 28). The ancient prophets ideal vision of the future is a time when we will learn warfare no more (Isaiah 2:4). As one religious scholar put it, War is a sign of disobedience and sinfulness. War is not intended by God. All human beings are made in the image of God and they are precious and unique. The same disdain for war was held by our great intellectuals. Thucydides, the founder of both the study of history as well as the science of international relations, described war as a punishment springing from mans hubris. It is our arrogance chastised. Two thousand years later, Freud similarly described it as emanating from our

Thanatos, the part of our psyche that lives out evil. Yet for such a supposed abomination, we sure do seem to be obsessed with war. From architecture to the arts, wars horrors have fed the heights of human creativity. Many of our great works of literature, arts, and science either are inspired by war or are reactions to it, from the founding epics of literature like Gilgamesh and the Iliad to the great painters of surrealism to the very origins of the fields of chemistry and physics. War then, appears in many more guises than the waste of human destruction that we know it to be. War has been described as a testing ground for nobility, the only true place where mans arte (excellence) could be won. In the Iliad, the master narrative for all of Western literature, for example, fighting is where man will win glory. From Herodotus to Hegel, war is described as a test of peoples vitality and even one cultures way of life versus another. War is thus often portrayed in our great books as a teacher a cruel teacher who reveals both our strengths and faults. Virtues are taught through stories of war from Homer to Shakespeare, while evils to avoid are drawn out by war in stories ranging from Aeschylus to Naipaul. War is granted credit for all sorts of great social change. Democracy came from the phalanx and citizen rowers of the ancient Greeks, while the story of modern-day civil rights would not be the same without Rosie the Riveter or the African American soldiers of the Red Ball Express in World War II. War then is depicted as immoral, yet humanity has always found out-clauses to explain its necessity and celebration. The same religions that see violence as a sin also licensed wars of crusade and jihad. And it is equally the case in politics. We repeatedly urge war as the means to either spread or defeat whatever ideology is in vogue at the time, be it enlightenment, imperialism, communism, fascism, democracy, or even simply to end all wars. This paradox continues in American politics today. Avoidance of war has been a traditional tenet of our foreign policy. Yet we have been at war for most of our nations history and many of our greatest heroes are warriors. We are simultaneously leaders of weapons development, being the creator of the atomic bomb, and the founders of arms control, which seeks its ban. We are repulsed by the idea of war, and yet entranced by it. In my mind, there are two core reasons for humankinds almost obsessive-compulsive disorder. The first is that war brings out the most powerful emotions that define what it is to be human. Bravery, honor, love, leadership, pity, selflessness, comradeship, commitment, charity, sacrifice, hate, fear, and loss all find their definitive expressions in the fires of war. They reach their ultimate highs and lows, and, in so doing, war is almost addictive to human culture. As William James put it, The horror is the fascination. War is the strong life; it is life in extremis. The other reason that war so consumes us is that for all humanitys advancement, we just cant seem to get away from it. After nearly every war, we cite the immense lessons we learned that will prevent that calamity from repeating itself. We say over and over, Never again. Yet the reality is ever again. THE FUTURE AINT WHAT IT USED TO BE

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