

6-21-2023

## Book Review: The Weaponisation of Everything: A Field Guide to the New Way of War

Robert J. Bunker

Follow this and additional works at: [https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters\\_bookshelf](https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters_bookshelf)



Part of the [Defense and Security Studies Commons](#), and the [Military and Veterans Studies Commons](#)

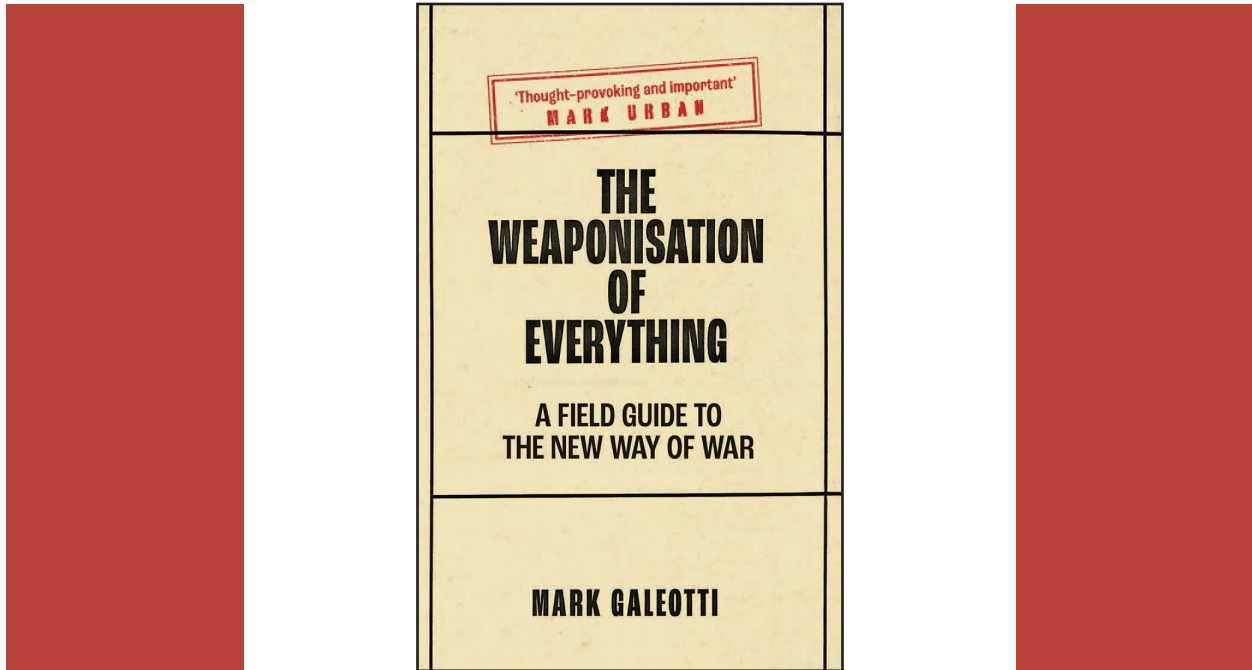
---

### Recommended Citation

Robert J. Bunker, *Book Review: The Weaponisation of Everything: A Field Guide to the New Way of War* (US Army War College Press, 2023),  
[https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters\\_bookshelf/11](https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters_bookshelf/11)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Parameters and Associated Collections at USAWC Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in Parameters Bookshelf – Online Book Reviews by an authorized administrator of USAWC Press.

## — PARAMETERS BOOKSHELF —



Reviewed by Dr. Robert J. Bunker, director of research and analysis,  
managing partner, C/O Futures, LLC

**A**cademic, international consultant, and media personality Mark Galeotti (PhD, London School of Economics) interacts with the world through many professional facets. He is recognized as a top-tier subject matter expert on Russian organized crime and security studies, with recent publications such as *We Need to Talk About Putin: How the West Gets Him Wrong* (Edbury Press, 2019) and *The Vory: Russia's Super Mafia* (Yale University Press, 2018). But in his new book, *The Weaponisation of Everything: A Field Guide to the New Way of War* (Yale University Press, 2022), Galeotti departs from his customary focus on Russia and covers a broad area of new ways—or emerging twenty-first century means—of warfare. Galeotti's expertise allows him to inject informed insights into his work. With a penchant for illustrative and entertaining vignettes, he syncretizes military historical and contemporary examples pulled from time and space.

The book's unique and dynamic structure will engage readers. Galeotti organizes the work into an introduction, four parts, and a useful index.

He divides the introduction and chapter 1, entitled "The Renaissance of Weaponisation," from Part I. Part I contains chapters 2 "The Weaponisation of Warfare?" and 3 "Soldiering-plus and Gig Geopolitics," and Part II consists of chapters 4 "Business," 5 "Buying Friends and Influencing People," and 6 "Crime." Part III has chapters 7 "Life," 8 "Law," 9 "Information," and 10 "Culture." Part IV concludes the book with chapters 11 "Weaponisation Instability" and 12 "Learning to Love the Permanent, Bloodless War."

Galeotti hedges somewhat on defining the book's theme, stating, "This book is a field guide to the new way of war, or maybe *a* new way of war, or even the new world of war" (5). The author knows something ethereal is afoot. He forecasts that "we will live in a world of permanent low-level conflict, often unnoticed, undeclared and unending, and one in which even our allies may also be our competitors" (5). His prediction seems at once Hobbesian-lite and reminiscent of retro—though in some ways high-tech—Italian renaissance conflict, exemplifying how the emerging future often echoes the distant past. Decades ago, Brian Jenkins, in *New Modes*

of *Conflict* (RAND Corporation, 1983), recognized the emergence of a new security environment—now seemingly forgotten: a mash-up of terrorism, guerilla warfare, and conventional war predating current hybrid warfare constructs. Jenkins’s perspectives on conflict dovetail nicely with Galeotti’s perspectives on criminality. From a contemporary perspective, Galeotti’s work does not concern itself with armed robots or a more encompassing weaponized Internet of Things—which would go down the path of P. W. Singer’s *Wired for War* (Penguin Books, 2009) or Paul Scharre’s *Army of None* (W. W. Norton and Company, 2018). Instead, the work addresses the current climate in which everything from “information to . . . Football hooliganism” can be weaponized (5). Galeotti’s book belongs more to the genre of Audrey Kurth Cronin’s *Power to the People* (Oxford University Press, 2019) and John Robb’s *Brave New War* (John Wiley and Sons, 2007), but with a more military—and at times criminal—focus. References to elements and archetypes from related titles, such as Sean McFate’s *The Modern Mercenary* (Oxford University Press, 2017) and P. W. Singer and Emerson T. Brookings’s *Like War* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018), are evident in Galeotti’s coverage and synthesis of the subject matter.

By the author’s admission, the work is more “a cautionary tale” and “a quick and opinionated overview of a monstrously complex set of processes and challenges” than a predictive or “how-to” work (20). In a world where our “outdated” vocabulary of “war, enemy, [and] victory” should be “re-thought” (209), some of Galeotti’s proposed options for individuals to improve global security— “[c]lick for it . . . [w]ork for it . . . [v]ote for it” —would seem to fall short (221–22).

Galeotti wrote this book for the mass market. On the plus side, this makes it highly readable, entertaining, and informative in a refreshing “big

picture” way. Neither siloed as a military scholar nor military historian, Galeotti provides a multidisciplinary take on the emergence of future war and conflict. To the detriment of readers, the mass-market work provides no endnotes or other reference material. Instead, at the end of each chapter Galeotti includes a section titled “Want to Know More?” containing a short list of topical readings. The lack of citation necessitates readers have absolute faith in Galeotti’s expertise, and the concluding sections’ style cultivates a campy, propagandistic vibe, à la *Starship Troopers* (the movie).

*The Weaponisation of Everything* chronicles the effects of the breakdown of contemporary warfare—that is, the notional Western conduct of war—and the Westphalian state system itself. With the ad nauseam blurring and erasure of institutional lines between crime and war, public and private, and soldier and civilian, it is little wonder “everything” and everyone may be “weaponised.” Galeotti and many scholars analyze and attempt to understand the effects of state deconstruction on early mid-twenty-first century warfare. These scholars—the reviewer included—strive to see the new, partially formed military mosaic while immense social, economic, technological, and state structural change takes place in the background.

A solid read for general information on the topic, this book would merit inclusion as auxiliary reading for an academic military course. I would not choose it as a primary course text since it is not intended for that purpose. It may appeal to military professionals who want to keep up with the subject matter in a lighter, after-hours read.

New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2022 • 248 pages • \$26.00

---

**Keywords: technology, war, irregular war, guerrilla war**

Disclaimer: Book reviews published in *Parameters* are unofficial expressions of opinion. The views and opinions expressed in *Parameters* book reviews are those of the reviewers and are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army, the US Army War College, or any other agency of the US government.