



COURSE MANUAL

M.A. (DLB) 0662 – Non Contact Warfare and Future Conflicts

Course Information

Course Duration: 15 weeks
Credit Hours: Three per week
Meetings:
Location:
Prerequisites:
Equivalent Courses:
Exclusive Courses:

Instructor Information

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Non Contact Warfare and Future Conflicts

Name of the Faculty: Shashank Ranjan

Fall 2026

This document is prepared by the course instructor and contains basic information relevant to the execution of the course. It is the official record for all intents and purposes as far the elective course, Non Contact Warfare and Future Conflicts, is concerned.

This course manual can be used as a general guide to the subject. However, the instructor can modify, extend or supplement the course (without tampering its basic framework and objectives) for the effective and efficient delivery of the course. The instructor will provide students with reasons for such changes.

Part I

Course Title: **Non Contact Warfare (NCW) and Future Conflicts**

Course Code: **M.A. (DLB) 0662**

Course Type: Elective

Course Duration: **One Semester (15 Weeks)**

No. of Credit Units: **4 Credits**

Level: **PG / UG**

Medium of Instruction: **English**

Pre-requisites: **None**

Part II

1. Course Description

As the wars and conflicts during the contemporary times have unfolded, these have got more complicated, directly or indirectly affecting our lives. The dividing line between peace and war has blurred. Wars have become all pervasive and ever unfolding, to cover multiple domains like cyber, space, information, trade etc - beyond the conventional domains of land, sea and water.

The overall texture and construct of warfare is evolving, making conflicts a 'whole of the nation' affair, giving rise to evolution of multiple methods across varied domains. Non contact wars - both kinetic and non-kinetic, lethal and non-lethal have emerged as the self-assured measures to swing influence in a controlled and calibrated environment. The new generation weapons, emerging and disruptive technologies and doctrines are being leveraged by both state and non-state actors to remain ahead in the race for dominance and power play.

Emergence of armed non-state actors has added complexity to already contested space with presence of peer competitor, rogue and failing nation-states. The security situation has worsened by the destabilisation of the established norms created after World War II, thereby considerably widening the scope of conflicts. The future conflicts are going to be much beyond military and kinetic means. The chaotic waves are being felt across multiple security domains, witnessing varied domains of conflicts like space wars, information wars, trade wars, water wars, lawfare etc. To understand the emerging game of dominance it is therefore pertinent to understand the ever-changing character of war and the important linkage of politics, war and strategy.

Non Contact warfare is a contemporary field of study. The volatility in International Relations and the tussle amongst various poles in the world order is likely to be an all encompassing display of dominance and counter dominance strategy. The game will be played for deterrence, deception, degradation, denial, dislocation, disintegration and destruction. Victory will be gauged for every action and effort undertaken by the security establishment.

In such a dynamic situation a conceptual understanding of the related facets, in which the non-contact warfare will manifest is very important to be understood and analysed by students of International Affairs, so as to enable them have a grip on the domain of Non Contact warfare. This shall provide the students with an agency to apply their knowledge in different capacities that they acquire, in future.

This 15-week course delves into the evolving nature of contemporary and new age warfare that has become an indispensable sub-set of International Relations. This course is all about new wars, spread over sub-topics like Emerging and Disruptive technologies to include AI, Cyber, Autonomous weapons like Drones, Space, hybrid and grey zone conflicts, lawfare etc - all contextualised with case studies of past and present - to look at the future.

2. Course Aims

- To study multiple domains of present day warfare and achieve a basic understanding of the concept of NCW.
- To study the global scenario in the field of Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (EDT) in the military realm, including application of the same and lessons from recent conflicts.
- To comprehensively understand the cyber domain of warfare and its role in shaping global geopolitics.
- To carry out a detailed analysis of NCW (kinetic and non-kinetic) capabilities of China's Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) as also the Chinese approach to practising NCW.
- To assess implications of EDTs on India's military and its war-fighting capabilities.

- To discuss certain miscellaneous facets connected to NCW like Lawfare, Water wars, Information warfare and Outsourced wars.

3. Teaching Methodology

The primary methodology to deliver the course will be through weekly lectures. The instructor would follow the Socratic method of teaching and thus expect the students to actively participate in the class discussions. Students should have read the compulsory readings, before the class to enable class discussions. Students would be allocated topics of their choice duly approved by the instructor, to write a paper on, so as to consolidate their learning and knowledge.

4. Intended Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete this course would:

- Know multiple domains of present day warfare and achieve a detailed understanding of the concept of NCW.
- Have a fair idea of the global scenario in the field of Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (EDT) in the military realm, including application of the same and lessons from recent conflicts.
- Comprehensively understand the cyber domain of warfare and its role in shaping global geo-politics.
- Be able to examine detail, the capabilities of China vis-a-vis NCW, in both kinetic and non-kinetic domain.
- Be able to carry out a thorough assessment of above-mentioned developments and their implications on India.

5. Grading of Student Achievement

To pass this course, students must obtain a minimum of 40% in the cumulative aspects of coursework, e.g. internal assessments and final examination. **End of term or final examination will carry 30 marks and internal assessment shall be out of 70 marks. Students have to obtain a minimum of 40% aggregate to fulfil the requirement of passing the course.**

Grade Sheet

Percentage of Marks	Grade	Grade Value	Grade Description
80 and above	O	8	Outstanding – Exceptional knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and extraordinary critical and analytical ability
75 – 79	A+	7.5	Excellent - Sound knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and critical and analytical ability
70 – 74	A	7	Very Good - Sound knowledge of the subject matter, excellent organizational capacity, ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles, critically analyse existing materials and originality in thinking and presentation
65 – 69	A-	6	Good - Good understanding of the subject matter, ability to identify issues and provide balanced solutions to problems and good critical and analytical skills
60 – 64	B+	5	Fair – Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems and reasonable critical and analytical skills
55 – 59	B	4	Acceptable - Adequate knowledge of the subject matter to go to the next level of study and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
50 – 54	B-	3	Marginal - Limited knowledge of the subject matter and irrelevant use of materials and, poor critical and analytical skills

6. Criteria for Student Assessments

Internal assessment of the participants will be based on the following criteria:

Assessment	Weightage	Remarks
Mid-Term submission, presentation, in class Quiz and class participation	70 marks	Each student will be required to write an essay of not more than 2,500 words (exclusive of footnotes), on a topic concerning the subject of the elective. The student should get the topic and outline of the essay approved by the instructor. The student will also be required to present the paper in the class towards the end of the semester mainly in week(s) 14 and 15. In addition to the above-mentioned, during the eighth or ninth week, an in-class Quiz shall be conducted.
End Semester Examination	30 marks	They will be a 1.5 hours close book examination of the entire course.

Part IV

Course/Class Policies

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Learning and knowledge production of any kind is a collaborative process. Collaboration demands an ethical responsibility to acknowledge who we have learnt from, what we have learned, and how reading and learning from others have helped us shape our own ideas. Even our own ideas demand an acknowledgement of the sources and processes through which those ideas have emerged. Thus, all ideas must be supported by citations. All ideas borrowed from articles, books, journals, magazines, case laws, statutes, photographs, films, paintings, etc., in print or online, must be credited with the original source. The university has a framework to deal with cases of plagiarism. All form of plagiarism will be taken seriously by the University and prescribed sanctions will be imposed on those who commit plagiarism.

Safe Space Pledge

To make sure that all students collectively benefit from the course, it is incumbent upon all within the classroom to pledge to maintain respect towards our peers. This does not mean that you need to feel restrained about what you feel and what you want to say. Conversely, this is about

creating a safe space where everyone can speak and learn without inhibitions and fear. This responsibility lies not only with students, but also with the instructor.

Cell Phones, Laptops and Similar Gadgets

Students are free to bring cell phones, laptops and other similar gadgets to the class and use them for academic purposes such as referring to topics being discussed in the class or to focus on readings. Use of these gadgets for non-academic purposes in the class is strictly prohibited.

Part V

Keywords Syllabus

Non Contact Warfare, Hybrid Warfare, Emerging and Disruptive Technologies, Cyber Warfare, Artificial Intelligence, Internet of things (IoT), Quantum technology, Autonomous systems, Kill Chain etc.

Course Design and Overview (Weekly Plan)

Week	Topic	Compulsory Reading / Course Materials
1	Course overview. Multiple domains of warfare	Bahnareanu, Cristian, 'The Evolution of Warfare from Classic to Hybrid Actions', Strategic Impact; Bucharest Iss. 55, (2015): 57-66. Richard A Gabriel and Karan S Metz, 'A short history of war - the evolution of warfare and weapons', SSI, US Army War College - Ch 4,5,6 (1992)
2	Understanding NCW	Maj Gen PK Mallick, 'Understanding NCW - dimensions and domains', indianstrategicknowledge.com Brig Vivek Verma, ' NCW - an appraisal of China's military capabilities' Pentagon Press, USI, Ch 1, pp 1-53 (2021)

3	EDTs and Military Application - The Global Scenario	<p>Michael O’Hanlon, ‘Forecasting change in military technology - 2020 to 2040’, Brookings (2019)</p> <p>Michael J Mazarr, ‘Disrupting deterrence’, RAND (2022)</p>
4	Cyber Domain of Warfare	<p>Douglas Waller, ‘Onward cyber soldiers’, Aug 21 1995, Time magazine</p> <p>Lok Sabha Secretariat, ‘Cyber warfare and national security challenges’ (2017) available at https://loksabhadocs.nic.in/Refinput/New_Reference_Notes/English/Cyber_Warfare_and_National_Security_Challenges.pdf</p>
5	Cyber Conflicts and Shaping of Geopolitics	<p>Christian Ruhl, Duncan Hollis et al, ‘Cyberspace and geopolitics: assessing global cyber security norm processes at a crossroad’, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2020)</p> <p>Mohan B Gazula, ‘Cyber warfare conflict analysis and case studies’, Working Paper, CISL (2017)</p>
6	EDTs in Recent Conflicts	<p>David E Sanger, ‘The perfect weapon - war, sabotage and fear in the cyber age’, Amaryllis, Ch(s) Preface, 1, 4, 5 & 7 (2019)</p> <p>CFR event, ‘Cyber conflicts: the evolution of warfare’, June 20, 2018, CFR</p>
7	NCW and China’s Security Doctrine	<p>Brig Vivek Verma, ‘NCW - an appraisal of China’s military capabilities’ Pentagon Press, USI, Ch 2, pp 60-82 (2021)</p> <p>Praveen Sawhney, ‘The last war - how AI will shape India’s final showdown with China’, pp 171-200 (2022)</p>

8	PLA's NCW capabilities and China's approach to practising NCW	<p>Brig Vivek Verma, ' NCW - an appraisal of China's military capabilities' Pentagon Press, USI, pp 107-166, 232-280 (2021)</p> <p>Praveen Sawhney, 'The last war - how AI will shape India's final showdown with China', pp 249-53, 335-360 (2022)</p>
9	Mid Term	
10	Discussion - "The Kill Chain" by Christian Brose	Christian Brose, 'The Kill Chain', machete, New York (2022)
11	Innovation set-ups in militaries around the world.	<p>Akshat Upadhyay, 'Emerging Frontiers', Pentagon Press, pp 57 - 132 (2025)</p> <p>Rajeev Sabharwal, 'Disrupt or get disrupted', CLAWS, pp 219 - 253 (2024)</p>
12	Implications for India and the Way Ahead	Brig Vivek Verma, ' NCW - an appraisal of China's military capabilities' Pentagon Press, USI, pp 282-320 (2021)

13	Miscellaneous Issues Pertaining to NCW - IW, Trade Wars, Water Wars, Lawfare and Outsourced Wars	<p>James Chen, 'Trade Wars: History, Pros & Cons, and U.S.-China Example', Investopedia, February 28, 2022</p> <p>Yukon Huang, 'The U.S.-China Trade War Has Become a Cold War', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 16, 2021</p> <p>FAS, 'Information Warfare', available at https://irp.fas.org/eprint/snyder/infowarfare.htm</p> <p>Roger C. Molander, Andrew S. Riddile, Peter A. Wilson, 'Strategic information warfare - a new face of war', Ch(s) 1,4 & 6, RAND (1996)</p> <p>Orde F Kittrie, 'Law as weapon of war - Lawfare', Ch 1, OUP (2016)</p> <p>Robert Farley, 'What is water war?', March 24, 2021, The Diplomat</p> <p>Sandy Milne, 'How water shortages are brewing wars', BBC, August 17, 2021</p> <p>Yudhajit Shankar Das, 'Blackwater to Wagner, how war has been outsourced to private militaries around the world', India Today, June 27, 2023</p>
14 & 15	Case Presentations	