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"THE STRATEGY BRIDGE"

IN THIS EDITION

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SPECIAL EDITION

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A Note From The Editor

Infinity Journal Special Edition, "The Strategy Bridge"

Some may say that Colin Gray's book, *The Strategy Bridge: Theory for Practice*, is not much helped by having a picture of an actual bridge on the cover. The bridge that the book is concerned with is, of course, metaphorical and not in any sense literal. Yet, in some ways the title tells you all you might ever need to know about strategy.

Strategy is the link (or perhaps more befitting, the "bridge") between the ends of policy and the means of tactics. If you start reading it with that in mind then all else becomes clear. But, be warned: "Bridge," as it has come to be known within the classical strategy community, is no easy read, and it's not for the beginner. Having said that, it is completely comprehensible and will vastly inform any student of strategy to a very useful degree, but it is not a book that should be anyone's first read on strategy. As all readers of Infinity Journal know, while strategy is fundamentally simple in terms of understanding what it really is, the theory surrounding it is often of byzantine complexity, and the use of strategy in actual application is probably the most challenging and serious human activity bar none. It is literally about life and death.

Thus it is here that "Bridge" serves its real and unique purpose in navigating those already tolerably familiar with the subject, through the theories, statements, memes, myths and utter nonsense that has been written on the subject. This is what separates Gray's coldly practical and analytical work from the more popular and less practically minded works recently penned by historians. If you were to tip over the brief case of someone who really "does" strategy then you would hope "Bridge" would be one of the books to fall out and not something with a colour cover.

The "Bridge" has done a great service. It has provided those both knowledgeable and curious about strategy with a work that ought to enable their understanding and explanation of strategy to be taken to another level. Gray has quite rightly dismissed much of the cartoon-like discussion that has afflicted strategy in recent years and gone for the jugular in terms of the real theory that has flowed from both practice and empirical evidence. "Bridge" is not just another work that has "strategy" in the title and that recycles the same old vacuous arguments beloved, opposed to, or sceptical as to the merits of violence in progressing political behaviours or conditions. Additionally "Bridge" makes for uncomfortable reading for those who want to feign understanding from behind the veil of complexity. Anyone wanting to argue that policy and strategy are really somehow indivisible, or that the meaning of the word strategy, thus its "nature," has altered, will find that their intellectual cupboard is bare by the time they turn to the last page.

The bridge on the cover may be metaphorical, but the words "theory for practice" should be read as a warning.

William F. Owen
Editor, Infinity Journal
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Thoughts on Colin Gray's Strategy Bridge

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Professor Williamson Murray has taught at a number of academic and military institutions, including the Air War College, the United States Military Academy, and the Naval War College. He has also served as a consultant with the Institute of Defense Analyses, where he worked on the Iraqi Perspectives Project and he was the Harold K. Johnson Professor of Military History at the US Army War College. He is the author of numerous books and articles, including among others, War Strategy and Military Effectiveness (Cambridge University Press), and Military Adaptation in War, With Fear of Change (Cambridge University Press). Professor Murray retired from Ohio State University as Professor Emeritus of History, and he has just completed a two-year stint as a Minerva Fellow at the Naval War College and is at present serving as an adjunct professor at the Marine Corps University.

In theory there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice, there is.[i]

Strategy is the hot buzzword in Washington at present. It appears to be on the minds of the myriads of bureaucrats who make up the vast arms of America's national security establishment.[ii] Their efforts include the "National Strategy for Maritime Security, "the National Strategy for Homeland Security," the "National Strategy for Combating Terrorism," and the "National Military Strategy," among a host of others. In reality, these statements are completely useless. At best, they represent bureaucratic obfuscation in which immense numbers of words spell out no path to the future and refuse to discuss any controversial issues. At worst, they are shallow attempts to justify the purchase of expensive weapons systems in a time of scarcity in defense budgets. Such strategic assessments make no controversial arguments; they rest on no theoretical foundations; they entirely ignore the historical past; and they make no statements that suggest that the United States, the Department of Defense, and senior policy makers are going to have to make hard choices over

the course of coming decades. Above all, they reflect a culture that is ahistorical and almost entirely ignorant of "the other."[iii]

In effect those who make policy or who write about it live in a gated community, the United States Department of Defense, and they believe that most of the rest of the world accepts the same liberal principles to which they pay homage. [iv] About the only thing that one can say in the defense of those attempting to find a strategy is that they at least recognize that the United States has been without a strategic framework since the ending of the Cold War. Astonishingly, some do not believe the United States needs a strategy to deal with the complex challenges it confronts. As one senior "strategic thinker [?] and defence analyst" recently commented to Professor Colin Gray "strategy [is] only needed by the weak."[v] But then one might have thought that the wreckage left by U.S. political and military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, where no strategic thinking has been discernable, might have disabused those with such a view of defense policy of such notions.[vi] There are in fact no such indications.

Professor Gray has now stepped into this non-debate over strategy with a wonderful book: *The Strategy Bridge: Theory for Practice*. It is Professor Gray at his best… and worst. At its heart lies a deeply perceptive argument that shines a sharp and clear light on the problem of strategy. As always, he presents insights and nuggets of thought that take one's breath away. Nevertheless, at times he is verbose, repetitive with long laundry lists, and too clever by half, as he has been all too often in his many and various works. But one must forgive Professor Gray his idiosyncrasies. He has written an extraordinarily important book that challenges those who think about strategy to reconsider their subject. Whatever its stylistic imperfections, *The Strategy Bridge* represents a major contribution to the education and the thinking of strategists, military as well as civilian, not only in the present, but especially in the future.

Nevertheless, *The Strategy Bridge* will be of little use for those who are making strategic sausage in the Pentagon or the National Security Council at present. They will certainly, given their proclivities and how little time they have available to keep the wheels of bureaucracy spinning, have no time for such a work. *The Strategy Bridge* is indeed a difficult read,

but then it is dealing with a complex and difficult subject. However, it should be of enormous use to those involved in security studies, both as students and those who teach the subject. It might even be of use to the students in America's institutions of professional military education, if their faculties and their administrators ever became interested in such study, or their institutions actually were to teach the subject of strategy in depth.[vii]

In sum *The Strategy Bridge* represents an educational tool that can prepare and extend the minds of those who may, at some time in the future, find themselves responsible for guiding or advising the nation's leaders in the complex processes involved in strategic decision making. But it is not a book for those involved in on-the-job training at the National Security Council or in the bowels of the Pentagon. Professor Gray has not given us a work that is reducible to the PowerPoint slides so beloved by those who inhabit the various defense agencies of the United States and which play such a role in muddying America's approach to strategic issues.[viii]

The best that those who teach or write about strategy can hope to achieve is to prepare their students or readers for the interactive, ambiguous, and uncertain world with which the strategist must deal. Professor Gray quotes a passage from Clausewitz that epitomizes what he is attempting to do:

> Theory exists so that one need not start afresh each time sorting out the material and plowing through it, but will find it ready to hand and in good order. It is meant to educate the mind of the future commander, or, more accurately, to guide him in his self education, not to accompany him to the battlefield, just as a wise teacher guides and stimulates a young man's development, but is careful not to lead him by the hand for the rest of his life.[ix]

For his part Professor Gray is specific about what a theory of strategy can and cannot do: "The general theory of strategy, however it is presented – mingled in a historical narrative (Thucydides), all but PowerPointed cryptically (Sun Tzu), or more than a little entangled in a somewhat challenging philosophical exposition (Clausewitz) – can only educate, it cannot instruct with specific advice for today."[x]

What makes Professor Gray's work unusual is the fact that, like Clausewitz and unlike most American political scientists, he grounds his theory in historical examples.[xi] Moreover, he points out what most historians ignore at the peril of their accounting of the past. Invariably the outcome, which we know, prejudices the historical judgment and lessons that all too many commentators draw from the past. It is all too easy for the historian to leave out the ambiguities and uncertainties that cloak the decision-making process.

In the past those ambiguities and uncertainties made decision making just as difficult for strategists and policy makers in the past as it is for those who make policy and strategy in the present. Thus, first rate strategic history consistently emphasizes the complexities and ambiguities that policy makers and strategists confronted in the past, but such histories are very much the exception rather than the rule.[xii] In other words to be useful, history must present a non-linear depiction of events with full attention paid to the unexpected, chance, friction, uncertainties, and unintended

effects. This harsh reality, Professor Gray understands in a fashion that too many of his colleagues in the academic world do not.

Not surprisingly, at least for this reader, Gray reserves particular praise for Clausewitz and Thucydides in their examination of the issues involved in strategy. His admiration, like mine, rests on the ability of those two great minds to draw complex understanding from the historical record. As Clausewitz noted, only history can provide the basic framework for constructing a theory of war. For Gray it is much the same for strategy, for only history can inform the strategist about how he must think about the future. As this writer noted several years ago:

> Without that basic understanding of how the present has evolved through a perspective on the historical and cultural uniqueness of their nation's position as well as those of others, strategists have no way of understanding where they stand. If strategists do not know where they stand in the present, then any road to the future will do, as it has done in the past – all too often with disastrous consequences. A perceptive understanding of the present based on historical knowledge is the essential first step for thinking about the future.[xiv]

So what is the strategy bridge, then? Shortly after we had completed the three volume *Military Effectiveness* study for Andrew Marshall's Office of Net Assessment, Allan Millett and this author held a long conversation on an area that we found it difficult to conceptualize and about which we could see little useful commentary by either historians or political scientists. That area had to do with the translation and transmission of ideas and conceptions from the policy-making world where grand strategy is made, to the strategists who find themselves charged with the conduct of military operations. It is that difficult passage, the bridge between those who cast grand strategy and the world of politics on one side and the world of the military strategist practitioner on the other, that is the heart of Colin Gray's intellectual journey.

Above all the strategy bridge is not built of stone; it is not an engineering project; and it is not a theory that exists in the world of abstract truths. As Professor Gray notes in his opening chapter,

> This idea of the strategy bridge, in common with possible alternative metaphors, is open to challenge by pedants. For example, a material bridge is a passive construction to be used simply by traffic that is usually, but not always, two way. The strategy bridge, however, is not passive, at least it should not be. The strategists who hold the bridge are tasked with the generally inordinately complex and difficult mission of translating political purpose, or policy, into feasible military, and other, plans. Theirs is the task of turning one currency – military (or economic, or diplomatic, and so forth) power – into quite another (desired political consequences).[xv]

What makes such transmission and creation at the same time so difficult lies in the harsh reality that the strategist lives entirely in a non-linear world, where constant change provides the context within which he or she must work. War itself has a way of completely altering the context within

which a conflict occurs. War may be a continuation of politics by other means, as Clausewitz suggested, but its violence and murderous nature invariably insure that it will alter the strategic equation in unexpected ways. In fact, not only do we change during the conduct of a war both in our strategic aims as well as our conduct of operations, but so do our opponents. And no matter how quickly we may adapt to the conditions raised at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of the war, our opponents will adapt as well and more often than not in a fashion that we do not expect.[xvi]

Above all, the enemy always gets a vote. Invariably, he will choose avenues and paths that surprise us. His forces will often turn out to be far more tenacious and capable than our intelligence has estimated. And there will be the invariable impact of chance, Thucydides' *tyche*, to wreck the best-laid plans, not to mention friction in the conduct of operations. One should also not underestimate the potential impact of incompetence to affect the outcome of what appeared to be well-planned and thought-out operations. Here, the disastrous campaign at Gallipoli springs to mind. As Winston Churchill remarked, "the terrible ifs accumulate."[xvii] And so in its disastrous mishandling at the tactical and operational levels, the Gallipoli campaign ensured that there was no real alternative but for the British and Dominion armies to dig the Germans out of their lairs on the Western Front with the resulting terrible slaughter on the Western Front that was to last for the next three years.[xviii]

Effective strategy is essential to guide a nation's military to the successful achievement of its tasks, whether they be defensive or offensive. This is the heart of Professor Gray's argument. Only through education and long-term thinking can a strategist prepare himself or herself to adapt to the surprises the future will throw up. How important is strategy and its bridge? In the late 1980s this author and his colleague, Allan Millett, pointed out that if a nation cobbled together an effective strategic approach to its problem and if it possessed sufficient time, it could repair whatever deficiencies existed at the operational and tactical levels.[xix] But if a national leadership got the strategy wrong, then no manner of virtuosity at the tactical and operational levels could overcome the deficiencies at the strategic level.

The Germans present the foremost example of a willful disregard of strategy in both world wars. In the Great War, the chief of the great general staff, Graf Alfred von Schlieffen designed the German war plans for a massive sweep through Belgium in order to outflank the French armies assembling to invade Alsace-Lorraine. On the basis of "military necessity," he dismissed entirely the fact that such a military operation might bring Britain into the war.[xx] By so doing, he guaranteed that the Germans would lose the Great War.[xxi]

Perhaps the clearest warning to those American policy makers and senior officers who do not believe that the United States needs a strategic framework for addressing the challenges of the future lies in the abysmal record of the German state in the first half of the twentieth century. In the First World War, the Germans to all intents and purposes invented modern tactics. Those adaptations led them from one impressive performance on the battlefield to another. But so constrained was their vision by achieving tactical virtuosity, that General Erich Ludendorff, responsible for ordering the MICHAEL Offensive in March 1918 commented: "I object to the word 'operation.' We will punch a hole into [their line]. For the rest we shall see."[xxii]

Having won an impressive list of battles in the war, but having paid little attention to strategy, the Germans then lost the war. The record of German military strategy in the next war was even worse and in the long-term even more disastrous to the nation's fate. In August 1938, Germany's foremost practioners of operational art, Erich von Manstein, wrote to the chief of the general staff that "Hitler has always estimated the political situation correctly" and that it was the army's duty to follow the *Führer*. That, Manstein was to do with his fellow generals to the bitter end.

The fate of Germany in its two great wars represents an example to which the American military should pay attention. It should take professional military education far more seriously than it is at present. Not to do so is to risk repeating the mistakes that its senior military leaders made on both the strategic and operational levels in Iraq from 2003 to 2006, and those mistakes represented a repetition of virtually every mistake American policy makers and strategists had made in the Vietnam War and which the British had made in Mesopotamia in 1920.[xxiii]

An old, bedraggled sign in Andrew Marshall's Office of Net Assessment in the Pentagon notes that "there is just so much ignorance that one individual can prevent." Professor Gray has made another major effort to prove that sign wrong. But I am afraid his effort will fail in the current climate of willful intellectual ignorance both outside and within the American military. But at least he has tried to stem the tide. And for that we should be deeply thankful.

References

[i] Attributed to the great American philosopher Yogi Berra.

[ii] The latest triumph of that massive structure appears to be the defense budget which it submitted to Congress in February 2014 and which involves major cuts, but at the same time increases overall spending significantly.

[iii] The same can be said of the products of America's intelligence agencies, which consist of large numbers of bureaucrats who know no foreign languages and are entirely ignorant of the histories of the nations about which they supposedly report.

[iv] For an example of the nonsense swilled out by so-called U.S. defense strategists, see among others Thomas P. M. Barnett, The Pentagon's New Map, War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century (New York, 2004).

[v] Colin Gray, The Strategy Bridge, Theory for Practice (Oxford, 2010). P. 116.

[vi] For the impact of such views on those who ran the war in Iraq, see the concluding chapter in Williamson Murray, Military Adaptation in War, For Fear of Change (Cambridge, 2011).

[vii] Only the Naval War College has consistently emphasized the study of Clausewitz and Thucydides, the two thinkers on strategy whom Professor Gray ranks as the most significant, in its curriculum over the past thirty years, while the other war colleges have usually provided only the barest introduction to those two thinkers in the their curricula.

[viii] Robert Gates, in his recent memoirs, recounts his efforts to get the military and civilian staffers to dispense with PowerPoint in their briefings. He admits that these efforts were a complete failure. Robert M. Gates, Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War (New York, 2014), p.

[ix] Carl von Clausewitz, On War, trans. and ed. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ, 1976), p. 141.

[x] Colin S. Gray, The Strategy Bridge, Theory for Practice (Oxford, 2010), p. 244.

[xi] He does not use the case study method, which this author used so extensively in three works that he has published on the subject of strategy: see Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox, eds., The Making of Strategy, Rulers, States, and War (Cambridge. 1994); Williamson Murray and Richard Hart Sinnreich, eds., The Shaping of Grand Strategy, Policy, Diplomacy and War (Cambridge, 2011); and Williamson Murray and Richard Hart Sinnreich, Successful Strategies, Triumphing in War and Peace from Antiquity to the Present (Cambridge, 2014).

[xii] From this author's perspective, over the past twenty years only Fred Anderson's brilliant Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766 (New York, 2001) truly meets this standard.

[xiii] Unfortunately, the Naval War College has largely diminished the focus on Thucydides as a theorist of war, turning his case study of the Peloponnesian War into an historical case with no examination of Thucydides' complex theoretical examination of that fifth century BC conflict. For my approach, written in response to the Strategy and Policy Department's minimization of Thucydides as a theorist, see Williamson Murray, "Thucydides: Theorist of War," Naval War College Review, Fall 2013.

[xiv] Williamson Murray, War, Straegy, and Military Effectiveness (Cambridge, 2011), p.16.

[xv] Gray, The Strategy Bridge, p. 7.

[xvi] See in particular for a discussion of this issue in Murray, Military Adaptation in War.

[xvii] Churchill's comment on the Dardanelles Caampaign,

[xviii] There is considerable argument among historians as to whether an Allied success in Gallipoli would have shortened World War I. It is not worth rehashing all those arguments here, but it is worth noting that what might have been a successful strategy to attack the Central Powers from the south died without being tested in the wreckage of the terrible fighting that took place on the peninsula.

[xix] There are some exceptions in history, the most obvious being 1940. The Western Powers possessed a war winning strategy, but their (was this failure due to timidity or other factors?) failure to undertake serious military operations until the spring of 1940 allowed the Germans to place everything they had on one massive throw of the iron dice and gross French incompetence at the operational level resulted in the catastrophic defeat of the Allied armies in May and June 1940. For a discussion of these issues, see Williamson Murray, The Change in the European Balance of Power, The Path to Ruin (Princeton, NJ, 1984), pp. 310-353.

[xx] For a ground breaking discussion of the impact of "military necessity" on the German conduct of the First World War, see Isabel V. Hull, Absolute Destruction, Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany (Ithaca, NY, 2005).

[xxi] As early as November 1914, the chief of the German general staff, General Erich von Falkenhyn indicated to the German Chancellor, Theobold von Bethmann Hollweg that Germany could no longer win the war. Hull, Absolute Destruction, pp. 215-217.

[xxii] Crown Prince Rupprecht, Mein Tagebuch, vol. 2, ed. By Eugen von Frauenholz (Munich, 1928), p. 372. It is worth noting that punching a hole in the enemy lines had been what the armies on the Western Front had been attempting to do since early 1915 with singular failure. Thus, the German success in achieving that tactical goal in the Michael Offensive represented a considerable success, but it led nowhere operationally or strategically and the exhaustion of German military strength led directly to the complete collapse of the German Army in the fighting at the end of the summer and fall of 1918.

[xxiii] For the latter sorry story see James Aylmer Haldane, The Insurrection in Mesopotamia, 1920 (London. 1922). During the second trimester at the Naval War College, academic year, 2011-2012, I had the students in my elective, all of whom were veterans of the Iraq War, read the Haldane account of the British experiences in confronting the revolt of the tribes in 1920. They were deeply depressed because Haldane's recounting of his campaign replicated all too closely their own experiences.

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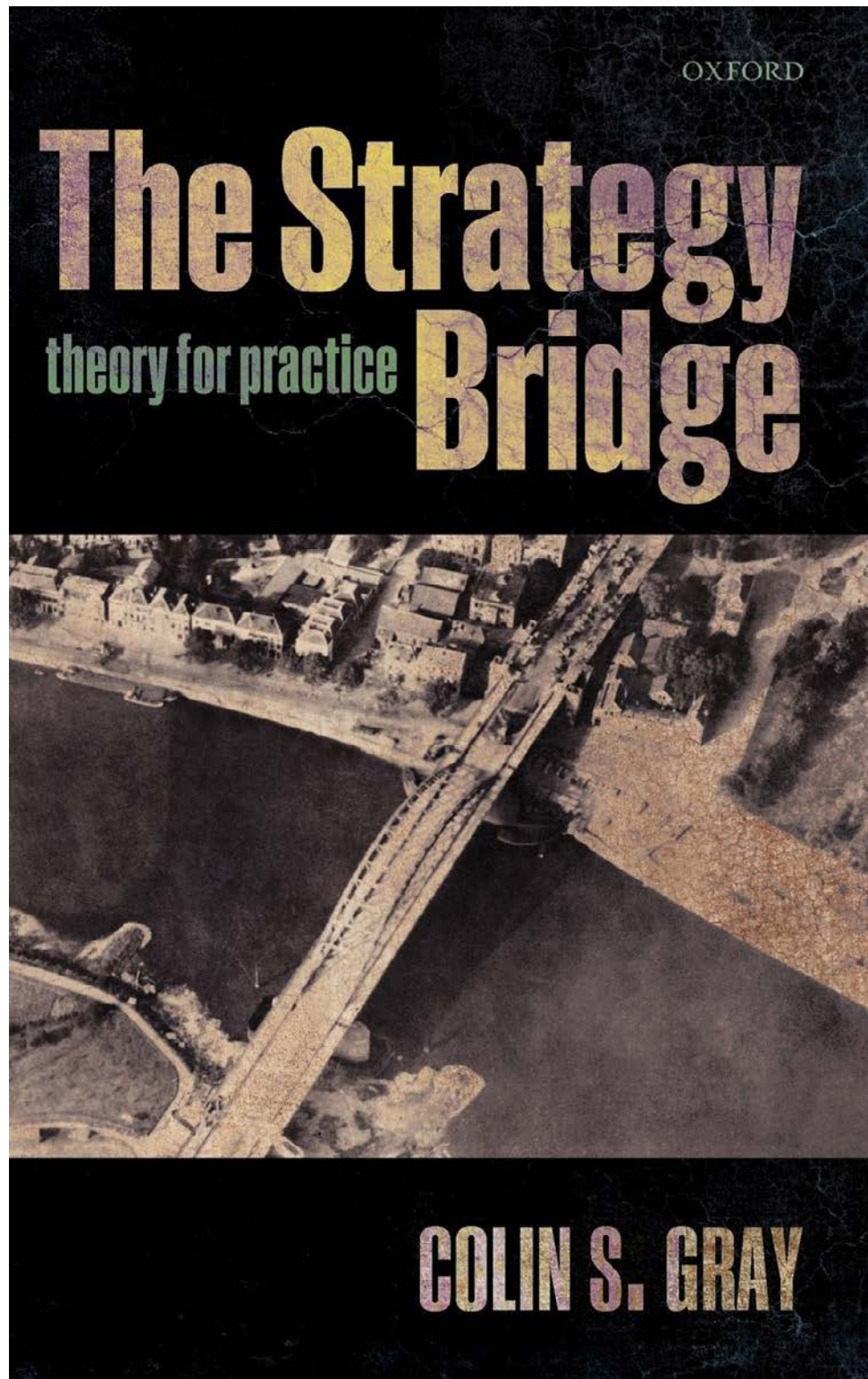
A Theory for Practice: But Where is Machiavelli?

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With criticism of contemporary strategy so fierce and so widespread these days, a theory with the potential to enhance strategic practice is most welcome. British failures in the implementation of strategy have been recently noted by the eminent historian Sir Hew Strachan.[i] The nature and extent of American strategic miscues meanwhile have been documented in sources too numerous to list here.[ii] Thus, Colin Gray's *Strategy Bridge: Theory for Practice*, which comes to the aid of strategic practice by organizing and explicating its body of theory, is both timely and germane. As explained elsewhere, *Strategy Bridge* is a worthy addition to any library.[iii] However, the purpose of this review is to extend the critique further and to promote discussion.

Gray's *Strategy Bridge* seeks to advance a "general theory of strategy explicable in terms that should be universally and eternally valid."[iv] This task is obviously an ambitious one, as the author freely admits. We may judge a theory's universality, but its eternal validity is another matter. Such an ambitious aim requires a positive verdict, not only from our generation, but from every successive one; a tall order indeed. Gray's task, though, rests on the assumption that a fundamental strategic "logic" exists for strategy, and that it has been more

or less successfully captured by history's great strategic theorists, especially those the author ranks in the top tier—Sun Tzu, Thucydides, and Clausewitz. For that reason, the mission of *Strategy Bridge* is less daunting than it appears at first glance. Instead of beginning the construction of his bridge by drawing up an original blueprint, the author merely (and wisely) pulls together the essential principles from strategy's canon and assembles them into a "coherent unity, a theory worthy of the ascription," and does so in the language of our times.[v] This mission Gray accomplishes with his customary skill.

Readers will surely note that the contemporary theory advanced in *Strategy Bridge* is eminently defensible. It is hard to imagine anything but consensus on the book's basic assumptions that strategy is universal, that its purpose is to seek "control over an enemy's political behavior," and that military force figures prominently in the process.[vi] Readers will also likely agree with Gray's use of the "bridge" metaphor, which conveys the sense that strategy ought to be thought of as a two-way conduit between policy aims and military actions. Strategists occupy the bridge, and bring policy aims into realization by converting military power into political consequences. Unfortunately, how that conversion should take place is too often elided in strategic theory; practitioners must discover it by trial and error. The assumption that military victories lead directly to policy successes has plagued Western ways of war for centuries. Nonetheless, the book describes the basic role of the strategist accurately. The author might have stated up front that strategists must also know how to convert political consequences, such as civil unrest following a defeat, into additional military power or political leverage; for military power is but military force combined with the influence of political circumstances. Fortunately, such points are generally implied throughout *Strategy Bridge*, as is the importance of bilateral (or multilateral) communications, and a shared understanding of the tasks to be accomplished and the capabilities of the means available. All of these are necessary for any bridge to achieve its purpose.

Readers will also welcome Gray's discussion of those things that sometimes make strategy a "bridge too far." These include the difficulty of knowing what is possible, what should be done, how to do it, how to determine whether it is getting done, and in the right way. Most of these problems, of course, derive from the capabilities of an "inconvenient" opponent,

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the influence of friction, culture, personality, expertise, and the force of circumstances—all of which the author addresses. The same can be said for strategy's enablers. He recounts some of each in list form in the book's four appendices. These may be all too handy in some respects, but busy practitioners will no doubt find them useful. Despite the obvious difficulty of doing strategy, argues Gray, it remains a worthwhile labor because our actions will have strategic effects regardless, possibly severe ones. Strategy helps ensure those effects accrue to our benefit, and not to our adversary's.

While Gray's *Theory for Practice* is, by his own admission, not wholly original, it can be amply justified by its necessity. As the author notes, strategy's canonical works are not always clear on vital points and the passage of time makes updates necessary.

However, there is one donor to strategy's canon who surely deserves more coverage in a theory purporting to address strategic practice; the much maligned but indispensible Niccolò Machiavelli. To be sure, the ingenious Florentine and his best works are mentioned several times in Gray's *Strategy Bridge*. [vii] Yet, these references do not get to Machiavelli's real contribution, what Sir Francis Bacon and others have referred to as the founding of an "objective science of politics." [viii] Indeed, the Florentine's overriding concern in his timeless *Il Principe* (*The Prince*) was decidedly "not with what should be, but with what is, not with hopes and fears, but with practical realities." [ix] In the same vein, Gray's *Strategy Bridge* might well have given readers more of "what is" in strategic life, as the book is primarily about what "should be."

To be sure, scholars have long debated how *The Prince* should be read. Yet, the work's introductory note provides the crucial clue: the manuscript is a crude dialectic of sorts. It is a distillation of knowledge regarding "what makes for greatness" in a ruler; but, importantly, it is an understanding achieved both through classical teachings and practical experience. [x] The former were openly revered in Machiavelli's day, but the latter, especially for one aspiring to serve as an advisor, was manifestly invaluable. In fact, nowhere in *The Prince* are the classics derided or dismissed in favor of base preachings, as some have claimed. But, as the following quote shows, they are contemporized and couched with lessons drawn from a life that had been nasty, brutish, and (to that point) relatively short:

> A ruler … needs to know how to be both an animal and a man. The classical writers, without saying it explicitly, taught rulers to behave like this. They described how Achilles and many other rulers in ancient times were given to Chiron the centaur to be raised, so he could bring them up as he thought best. What they intended to convey with this story … was that it was necessary for a ruler to know when to act like an animal and when like a man; and if he relies on just one or the other mode of behavior he cannot hope to survive. [xi]

Notably, Machiavelli's own "experience of contemporary politics" was lengthy and less than ideal. [xii] He was tortured, tricked, lied to, betrayed, rewarded, demoted, and passed over. Fortune's smile was less his lot than her frown. Yet, the critical point is that his advice, a true bridge from theory to practice, was a blend of canonical teachings and practical

experience—though heavily weighted to the latter. To its ample credit, Gray's *Strategy Bridge* contributes admirably to our knowledge, not only because of the book's reliance on strategy's classics, but also because of its fitting use of historical examples, the storehouse of practice. However, the bridge cants perceptively more in favor of the former than the latter, making travel across it risky for the strategist. The world of today's strategist is not necessarily as nasty or brutish as that of Machiavelli, but it is far from ideal.

As generations of scholars have noted, the key theme running through *The Prince*, and which secured Machiavelli's legacy as the founder of an objective science of politics, is the importance of self interest as a basis for political behavior. The advice in *The Prince* was aimed at a specific reader (initially Giuliano de' Medici) whom Machiavelli clearly wanted to impress with wise counsel, advice that would enable Giuliano, a neophyte at governing, not only to rule but to survive. [xiii] As *The Prince*'s would-be advisor explains, it is in the ruler's interest to appear virtuous at all times, but it is also in his interest to act otherwise when he must. Else, he will not last long: "For of men one can, in general, say this: They are ungrateful, fickle, deceptive and deceiving, avoiders of danger, and eager to gain. As long as you serve their interests, they are devoted to you." [xiv] Of course, the shrewd Florentine was also using *The Prince* to showcase his personal knowledge and talents, attributes he would bring to bear as a counselor, if granted the opportunity.

While Gray has no need to showcase his talents as a scholar and a theorist (they have been apparent for decades), his counsel needs to befit not just seasoned practitioners but neophytes like Giuliano. The dynamics, the clash of interests that combine to influence the implementation of strategy require more attention and explication; and Gray's pen ought to have been the one to do so. As his favorite Prussian, Clausewitz, famously observed, politics is the "womb in which war develops." [xv] Whatever is good or bad, proper or improper about a war ultimately comes back to its politics; and all politics are nothing but an ongoing conflict of interests, a quarrel that tends to persist regardless of the status of policy.

What holds true for war must also hold true for strategy. Without the telling influence of politics in mind, strategy can appear dangerously elementary. Its process should be straightforward, friction and inconvenient foes notwithstanding. Ideally, the principal actors in the formulation of strategy should be able to subordinate their individual interests to a larger one—that of winning the war quickly and with the lowest cost possible. Unfortunately, that rarely happens. Some interests are served only by winning in a particular way, some by prolonging the conflict; and some are served by withdrawing as quickly as possible, whether victorious or not. Vietnam is a good example. Not only did the US Army and US Air Force have different ideas (tied intimately to service interests) about how the war should be fought, branches within each service also had different ideas about how to fight it. [xvi] Service and branch interests were thus at odds not only with each other, but with the constraints of having to fight a limited war against unlimited aims. Outside the military, views about prosecuting the war were sharply divided along partisan lines. The lines flipped and the interests changed sides when direction of the war transitioned from the presidency of Johnson (Democrat)

to that of Nixon (Republican).

The critical absence of Machiavelli pertains as much to Gray's *Strategy Bridge* as to how the theory of strategy is represented and taught more broadly. We are perhaps too quick to assign a unilateral logic to strategy when we ought to see it, not as paradoxical (or even ironic) as Gray suggests, but rather as dialectical.[xvii] Genuine paradoxes do not exist in war or, in truth, anywhere; both they and ironies that amuse and intrigue us are but artificial bridges that distance us from the hard choices, the risky tradeoffs, and the shifty compromises we must make when developing and executing strategy. More often than not, strategy splinters off in the several directions the prevailing interests take it in any case.

Perhaps one way to improve our practice of strategy would be to incorporate the idea of conflicting interests directly into our basic theory. Thinking of strategy as possessing a logic that is essentially dialectical may offer a better foundation than continuing to think of it in ideal terms. Our dialectical exchanges are evident not only in how we deal with our foes, but also how we interact with friends and allies, and how, ultimately, we reconcile political interests with military ones, or not. A happy synthesis between competing aims or between aims and capabilities is rarely achieved; rather, the conflicts between rival interests and between competing objectives continue in different forms. If contemporary strategic practice is truly deficient in some way, as recent events suggest, a lack of classical theory can hardly be the reason. It is more likely that we have yet to achieve our Machiavellian balance. The book that succeeds in doing that will truly be a classic.

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[x] Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince, ed. and trans. by David Wootton, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publ., 1995), 5.

[xi] Machiavelli, Prince, 54.

[xii] Recent biographies include: Alan Ryan, On Machiavelli: The Search for Glory (New York: Liveright, 2014); Corrado Vivanti, Niccolò Machiavelli: An Intellectual Biography, trans. Simon MacMichael, (Princeton: Princeton University, 2013); Maurizio Viroli, Redeeming "The Prince": The Meaning of Machiavelli's Masterpiece (Princeton: Princeton University, 2013).

[xiii] Machiavelli's introduction is addressed to Lorenzo de' Medici, but Giuliano is considered to have been intended as the initial recipient.

[xiv] Machiavelli, Prince, 52. Some have pointed to Machiavelli's sharp passages as little more than an exercise in dark humor, a style in vogue among some Renaissance literati; but it was more than that. The language and examples were deliberately chosen to demonstrate the Florentine's dry wit and his facility with irony, all of which would distinguish him as a man of the world and an engaging and capable advisor.

[xv] Carl von Clausewitz, On War, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University, 1984), Book II/Chap. 3, 148; Vom Kriege, 19th Ed., 303.

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The Reluctant Theorist: Colin Gray and the Theory of Strategy

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Dr. James J. Wirtz is Dean of the School of International Graduate Studies and former Chairman of the Department of National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California. He served as the two-term Chairman of the Intelligence Studies Section of the International Studies Association and as the President of the International Security and Arms Control Section of the American Political Science Association. A graduate of the University of Delaware, with a Ph.D. from Columbia University, New York City, Dr. Wirtz is the author and co-editor of several books on intelligence, arms control and strategy.

Colin Gray is a reluctant theorist. He is acutely aware of the achievements of the great strategic thinkers that he admires and that the objectives he set for The Strategy Bridge might in fact turn out to be a bridge too far. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he recognizes that he can only follow in the footsteps of Carl Von Clausewitz, which to his mind turns any effort to trump the Prussian philosopher into a fool's errand. Anyone who is familiar with Gray's work also knows that he is adept at identifying the flaws in competing efforts to update, enhance or modify the insights offered by the great theorists he embraces. He is in fact an expert at highlighting how logical flaws, an inattention to historical detail or a focus on one element of strategy at the expense of other critical considerations, stymie such efforts. One cannot escape the impression that Gray senses that the effort to develop a general theory of strategy comes dangerously close to heresy and that heretics can be torched for their efforts. Armed with only his intellect and a mastery of the literature, he has burned a few himself.

Parsimony comes at a price and Gray is reluctant to pay that price. Every explanatory claim, relationship or premise he offers is honed to a razor's edge so that it is finely balanced and completely qualified. No theoretical statement claims too much or too little, no point is left untested, no relevant context is ignored. He goes to great pains to define terms and to specify the scope of his inquiry, only in the end to admit that we lack a metric to identify exactly where some concept sits on the continuum of ideas that constitute strategy. Context and practice makes it difficult to find conceptual clarity at the margins. Colin's great gift is thus his cross to bear. He understands and can actually specify how just about everything is related in some way to just about everything else when it comes to making strategy, and that it is often some unrecognized political, economic, social or military consideration that emerges among a myriad of factors that dooms the best laid plans to failure. He can see the big picture, but that makes it even harder for him to explain the art of strategy in a way that has immediate practical utility. Gray traffics in nuance and the most exquisite distinctions. He is loathe to offer unqualified pronouncements or to leave his students to squabble about the details. Theory does not come easily to a mind like this.

So what chasm has our reluctant theorist actually bridged? What is the essence of this theory of strategy? I will take a stab at providing a few parsimonious observations about *The Strategy Bridge*; Colin Gray has provided the insight.

The First Chasm: The Dialectic of War and Conflict

Strategy: devising a way to use available political, economic, military, social and cultural resources to alter the range of political options available to an opponent in a favorable way, is an extraordinarily challenging task. Ironically, it is an especially challenging task for politicians, policymakers and officers. At the heart of the problem is an inability or unwillingness to accept the dialectical nature of political or military conflict and to instead embrace a sort of "linear approach" or "administrative" view of war. War is a duel: the outcome is determined by the interaction of competing wills, politics, policies and militaries. But military establishments and their political leaders often tend to concentrate on their part in the conflict, ignoring the opponent's motivations or the fact that it is the "interaction" in conflict that drives outcomes. Throughout his career, Gray has highlighted the pitfalls produced by this linear approach to war and by implication to strategy, but this failing continues to manifest, often in insidious ways, among people who should know better, among strategists.

This lack of strategic awareness and inability to recognize and act on a dialectical view of conflict also runs deep among scholars, who often focus on one side of conflict's dialectic to explain events. In the aftermath of strategic surprise and intelligence failure, for instance, scholars quickly take up the task of explaining why some unlucky intelligence community or defense establishment failed to anticipate a significant military or political *fait accompli*. Their explanations generally focus on why organizational, analytic, informational or cognitive failings led one party to be surprised by an attack, not on why the attacker was attracted to launching an extremely risky enterprise in the first place. Even less effort is given to explaining how the pre-attack motivations of the aggressor and victim might actually generate conditions conducive to deterrence failure, strategic surprise and war. Surprise attack is a phenomenon produced by the interaction of at least two parties in conflict; to understand this phenomenon one would need a theory of surprise that can capture that interaction. To understand and avoid deterrence failure, surprise attack and war, one has to understand how the interaction between victim and aggressor creates a set of conditions that makes intelligence failure likely.[i] Strategists who fail to understand that the interactions among adversaries shape their circumstances and opportunities, are unlikely to devise strategies that advance their interests while constraining their competitor's options.

Dialectical thinking – a strategist's approach to war – is not only reflected in the advice Gray offers to strategists, but in the way he presents strategic theory itself. For example, he notes that brilliant strategy is not a necessary condition for victory in war. Instead, even a weak strategist, *ceteris paribus*, can triumph over a more mediocre adversary. Strategy's dialectic reflects the notion of "relativity," an idea that permeates Gray's work but is often lost in the way other observers depict conflict. When other scholars identify new weapons systems or technologies (i.e., "silver bullets"), or sure-fire strategies or new dominant realms of conflict (e.g., space, cyberwar), as a clear path to victory, they often fail to qualify such assertions with the opponent in mind. For example, the suggestion that Mao Zedong's People's War represents a revolutionary and unstoppable approach to modern warfare must be judged against the quality of the force the People's Liberation Army faced – Chiang Kai-Shek's Kuomintang units, which never achieved much combat effectiveness even after decades of continuous war and an outpouring of U.S. material and technical support. By contrast, Mao's peasant armies suffered devastating casualties when they encountered competent U.S. units during the Korean War. Strategy is relative.[ii]

Much of *The Strategy Bridge* demonstrates how an awareness of conflict's dialectic must inform strategists – the effort to account for and manipulate the outcome of this dialectic is the basis of all strategy. In this sense, Gray reveals a constant and universal element of our reality, even though he repeatedly cautions the (maybe less perceptive) reader that the factors and forces that have a dominant influence on conflict's dialectic vary from time to time. Gray is very careful to note that there are no strategic "silver bullets" when it comes to conflict and that the exact relationships among the strategic considerations he surveys, at least on the margins, tend to be historically specific. Theories of strategy that privilege certain instruments or methods of war

as transformational or permanently dominant – counter-insurgency, information operations, air power, cyber war, space power, etc. – are both misguided and misleading. Here too Gray fights an uphill battle because "focused" strategic theories are parsimonious, reassuring and pleasing, at least to the community that possesses the weapons system or type of operation championed. By contrast, the weapon wielded by true strategists is strategy; they strive to sense and appreciate conflict's dialectic in all its manifestations.

The Second Chasm: Politics

The effort to account for and manipulate politics, in both its domestic and international manifestations, is the Achilles heel of strategy. Because war is ultimately about politics, Clausewitz would suggest that politicians have to make the final judgments about strategy because they possess the skills and experience needed to assess what is necessary, and to some extent achievable, in the realm of politics. Nevertheless, many elected officials lack the expertise to judge or even understand the requirements and potential course of the strategies, operations and tactics advocated by their military subordinates. All politics is local, so most politicians' careers focus on issues that are profoundly domestic – provision of various services, employment and economic policy, government entitlements, social equity, etc. Their direct military experience, which usually occurs during their youth, is usually tactical in nature and highly idiosyncratic.[iii] Dwight Eisenhower, whose military experience was both profoundly political and strategic, is the exception, not the rule.

By contrast, most military officers are never asked to make strategic, let alone political, judgments about the use of force. They initially become experts in executing tactics or operating particular weapons systems or service administrative procedures. Most end their careers in positions where they focus on developing combined arms operations, integrating and de-conflicting service preferences and capabilities (joint operations), helping to run their own service, or helping Defense Ministry officials administer the defense enterprise. Officers who excel at these tactical, operational or administrative tasks and progress through the "idealized" career paths championed by their own service simply find themselves one day responsible for politically protecting their service's slice of the budgetary pie, or offering strategic advice to politicians. Military career progression virtually guarantees that the officer occupying some billet is a neophyte – this is also true for those who are asked to develop strategy, i.e., to assess how war or the threat of war can be used to achieve political objectives.

Occasionally, officers who intuitively grasp politics, or who have a knack for strategy, occupy positions where they can put these talents to good use. Their backgrounds, however, tend to be both unusual and unsanctioned. The fact that they might have some prior relevant experience or an appropriate education is actually an impediment to career advancement because it forces them to deviate from an operational focus that facilitates promotion to a higher rank. If their talents are not recognized by senior officers at an early stage of their career, so that they can be protected, they can fall by the wayside because promotion boards favor conformists, not iconoclasts.[iv] Gray devotes a good deal

of attention to debating what type of education would be most helpful to the strategist, but what he fails to realize is that the problem is more fundamental. In terms of the U.S. military, career progression emphasizes operational experience over education, especially education related to understanding strategy or politics. One might sum up this general attitude among promotion boards as "learning is good, doing is better."

Strategy thus occurs in the context of modern civil-military relations, where both sides largely focus on their own concerns and develop different types of expertise until they are forced by circumstance to think seriously about strategy. When the chasm of politics looms, two types of mistakes often occur. Politicians can ask for specific types of military operations without knowing fully the scope, nature, requirements and ramifications of the actions they are about to take. In other words, military operations have their own unique logic, and sometimes politicians fail to understand that logic. By contrast, officers sometimes fail to recognize how key tactical or operational considerations and requirements embodied in some evolution will actually undermine political success. When this occurs, even victory on the battlefield can impede the achievement of political objectives.

Gray continually warns the reader that there is no natural harmony between different levels of war or in the effort to use, or threaten to use, force to constrain the political options of an opponent in a way that suits our interests. Strategy is the art of ensuring that our political objectives, and the means we select to obtain them, actually work in unison towards a common goal. One might also suggest that the first objective of strategy is "to do no political harm."

The Strategy Bridge

The 21 Dicta of Strategy developed by Gray provide a description of these chasms, with an eye towards correcting more or less common misperceptions and mistakes when it comes to the art of strategy. *The Strategy Bridge* is more about the chasm that needs crossing than it is about building the span itself. Of course Colin, being Colin, has much to say about the factors that come into play in bridge construction, and his musings about the philosophy of science, history, strategy, war and peace are insightful, perceptive and entertaining. But, these are embellishments, qualifications, observations and distinctions that sometimes add to and sometimes detract from the fundamental objective achieved by Gray. Ironically, Clausewitz seems to have worked in a similar fashion. First came a series of observations on a range of details and relationships; upon revision came the theoretical insights. Maybe Clausewitz was also a reluctant theorist. Or is it only a coincidence that *The Strategy Bridge* resembles *On War* in both *style* and substance?

The Strategy Bridge achieves its objective by offering a general theory of strategy. In other words, it offers an empirically grounded explanation of strategy, much in the same way Clausewitz offered an empirically grounded explanation of war, or Kenneth Waltz offered an empirically grounded explanation of international politics.[v] Although normative implications can be derived from all of these works, these authors do not intend to tell the reader how to make, or to explain how states actually make, strategy, war or foreign and defense policy. Instead, they focus on explaining the phenomenon itself, by describing the sometimes hidden or even quite obvious forces, dynamics, opportunities and challenges that shape our reality. They boil down our circumstances to their essence so that we can understand our situation, what interests and forces are in play, and gain some insight into how we can better our position to achieve our objectives. They are attempting to tell us how the world works, not how to work the world.

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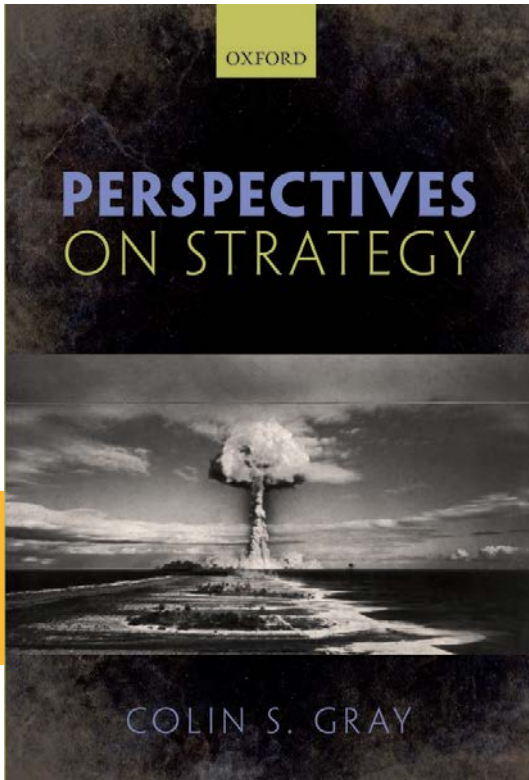
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War, 'Moral Forces', and the 'Virus of Strategism'

David Betz

Dr. David J Betz BA, MA (Carleton) PhD (Glasgow) joined the Department of War Studies, King's College London after completing his PhD in 2002. His research interests are insurgency and counterinsurgency, information warfare and cyber war, propaganda, as well as civil-military relations and strategy. Betz is head of the Insurgency Research Group and was the academic director of the War Studies Online MA program for its first five years. He also leads a two-year U.S. Department of Defense Minerva-funded project on 'Strategy and the Network Society'. Beyond the Department of War Studies, Betz is also a Senior Fellow of the Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI). He has advised and worked with the Ministry of Defence (UK) and Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) on strategic issues, counterinsurgency and stabilization doctrine, and cyberspace and cyber strategy. He also lectures abroad (United States, Israel and Italy) as well as in the UK at the Defence Academy to the Advanced and Intermediate Command and Staff. Betz is a member of *Infinity Journal*'s Editorial Advisory Panel, and he is the author of, among others, *Cyberspace and the State* (with Tim Stevens).

One of the things I admire most in the writings of Colin Gray is how well they reflect his innate good humour. Over three decades he has written twenty-seven books, dozens of monographs and book chapters, and as many scholarly articles on strategic theory and multitudinous aspects of the practice of strategy. The latter range from 1975's 'Salt II and the Strategic Balance' (a rumination on Cold War arms control) through to 2013's 'The Strategic Anthropologist', an extended review essay on Ken Booth's *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*. [i] Particularly noteworthy thesis-in-the-title contributions to strategic studies include 'In Praise of Strategy'.[ii] He evidently cares deeply about strategy, about which he has a precise understanding honed over many years; and he holds an 'exalted view of the strategist' for which some of his peers have taken him to task.[iii] And yet in *The Strategy Bridge* he warns against 'an undue reverence for strategy'.[iv] I like that. It seems to me a mark of the best sort of scholar to take one's subject very seriously and oneself markedly less so.

I like also that he does not cut corners, nor oversimplify that which is inherently complex. This is sometimes pitched as a criticism but I reckon that it ought not to be. In *The Strategy Bridge* he describes fully twenty-one dicta of strategy in four categories in three parts – theory, practice, and context and purpose – before concluding with six 'broad, more than a little compounded' claims tempered with five 'cautions, or caveats'.[v] This is clearly not a book to be read and digested in a lazy Sunday afternoon. Strategy, as he illustrates in a recurring theme throughout the text, is complicated to conceive and to practice: it is, he writes, 'possible but difficult'. If one adds 'but worth the effort' to complete the epigram it would seem also an apposite description of *The Strategy Bridge*. It is not that the author of 'Clausewitz Rules, OK?' is unable to make a point concisely; it is, rather, that in this case he has quite a few points to convey – and, moreover, they intertwine in complicated ways that defy easy unravelling. I found crossing *The Strategy Bridge* to be hard going but the effort was amply rewarded. This is not a review, however; it is instead a short essay inspired by the reading.

There are two issues on which I would like to cordially remonstrate with Professor Gray. First, I wonder if (like the Prussian master himself) he gives curiously short shrift to 'moral forces' in war and strategy. These are mentioned, of course – indeed, *morale* is noted by Gray as 'by far the most important ingredient in fighting power' while Clausewitz also reckoned moral forces to be supreme.[vi] In my opinion, though, the nettle is not grasped as firmly as one should; for if one seeks explanation of the profound faultiness of Western strategy of late it is, above all, to be found in a deficiency of the 'spirit which permeates the whole being [and not just the fighting–DJB] of war.'[vii] Second, Gray who lists a 'canonical ten' works on strategic theory ordered in four tiers, does, I think, a disservice to his countryman C.E. Callwell whose mettle as a strategic thinker is underestimated – surely he deserves ranking as an 'other contender', says I.[viii]

You've Got To Be In It To Win It

Chapter One, Book One, of *On War* is characterised by an aphoristic specificity beloved by staff college readers and grad students, many of whom, one suspects, begin and end their reading of Clausewitz's masterwork here, taking away a few handy bumper sticker-sized concepts: 'war is a

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continuation of political commerce', it is an 'act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will', it is 'nothing but a duel on an extensive scale', and so on. That part of the book devoted to moral forces, by contrast, is frustratingly ambiguous and half thought through. Undoubtedly, he considers them important – pre-eminently and irremediably so:

> …theory cannot banish the moral forces beyond its frontier, because the effects of the physical forces and the moral are completely fused and are not to be decomposed like a metal alloy by a chemical process… And therefore the most of the subjects which we shall go through in this book are composed half of physical, half of moral causes and effects, and we might say the physical are almost no more than the wooden handle, whilst the moral are the noble metal, the real bright-polished weapon.[ix]

It seems too that Clausewitz does not consider their importance to be purely tactical or simply cognate with 'morale' or 'fighting spirit', as so often commentators do (though clearly there is a high degree of overlap); on the contrary, he says, they are so important because they '…form the spirit which permeates the *whole being of war*.'[x] But, frustratingly, he makes essentially no attempt to specify these forces or to scale them up from the field of battle to the war councils in which strategizing is conducted – indeed he disparages any such effort as fruitlessly professorial, commonplace and trite:

> We prefer, therefore, to remain here more than usually incomplete and rhapsodical, content to have drawn attention to the importance of the subject in a general way, and to have pointed out the spirit in which the views given in this book have been conceived.[xi]

This is a mistake, or at any rate an elision, that I think Professor Gray also makes. On the one hand, as noted already, the spirit of irremediably complex connectedness of factors in strategy – material, political, societal, and more – pervades *The Strategy Bridge*. Yet when he finally gets 'moral forces' squarely in his analytical sights, quoting the same passage from Clausewitz that I have above, he drops the shot.[xii] Readers are urged to be cautious about the power of will to make up for material considerations in war. This is indubitably good advice. Hitler's tiresome exhortations of will in lieu of basic strategic acumen and tactical common sense while the combined allied forces relentlessly eroded his actual power to resist has soured Clausewitz's countrymen on such talk for coming on three generations now. Readers, however, ought also to be counselled as strongly against the opposite foolishness: that material preponderance can make up for a gaping lack of moral self-belief. For insight on the cause of the West's serial martial failures in the last half-century, especially since September 11, 2001, they need look no further.

While he was the Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld several times expressed incredulity at the way that he saw the United States being outperformed by its enemies in the 'war of ideas'. His public elucidation of the problem in 2006 was to the point:

> Our enemies have skilfully adapted to fighting wars in today's media age, but for the most part we, our country,

our government, has not adapted… For the most part, the U.S. government still functions as a five and dime store in an eBay world… There's never been a war fought in this environment before.[xiii]

A year later the situation was no better when his successor Robert Gates professed it embarrassing that Al Qaeda was still beating America in the new environment. 'How has one man in a cave managed to out-communicate the world's greatest communication society?' he lamented.[xiv]

The reason is essentially uncomplicated. Back in the 1970s Norman Gibbs, then Chichele Professor of the History of War at Oxford University, explained Clausewitz's understanding of 'moral forces' as equalling ideology, defined broadly as '…something more comprehensive than simply political doctrine; something which, operating in the hearts and minds of men, moves them and inspires them to action.'[xv] In modern times we would likely use the term 'psychological' to cover much of the topic. We are speaking, in other words, of a coterminous and intertwined element of that part of the trinity that Clausewitz described as 'passion'. And yet the definitive characteristics of the multitude of theories of victory derived from the never-put-a-man-where-you-can-put-a-bullet logic of the Revolution in Military Affairs, which have so preoccupied strategists for decades, are dispassion and detachment respectively.

It is a profound strategic conundrum of our day, this desire to fight wars the object of which is to compel foreigners to govern themselves in a manner congenial to the West's interests and in line with its shifting sense of rectitude – at the lowest possible cost in blood, treasure, and political bother. Clausewitz grasped that war requires society to cohere around the project towards which violence is aimed at achieving. That is the real and vital driving force of war. The point is sufficiently basic in principle that it was hardly his unique insight. It is, for instance, the same truth to which Shakespeare makes Henry V give voice in his 'Cry God for Harry, England, and St George!' speech at the high point in his dramatisation of the siege of Harfleur. Or a more contemporary reference: Gerard Butler as the Spartan King Leonidas booting the messenger of the Persian King Xerxes in the sternum while bellowing 'This is Sparta!' in the 2006 film '300'.

After Clausewitz, others made similar sorts of argument. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century French philosopher Georges Sorel, for example, is remembered primarily for his *Reflections on Violence* in which he remarked,

> …men who are participating in a great social movement always picture their coming action as a battle in which their cause is certain to triumph. These constructions, knowledge of which is so important for historians, I propose to call 'myths'.[xvi]

And yet by the last years of the twentieth century many statesmen and soldiers in the West had come to practice a way of war in which the 'moral forces' of war seemingly no longer pertained. As a result, they grossly overestimated their own strength fighting in the name of half-truths and vague hopes, while underestimating that of their principal opponents who in their own minds at least were fighting for

the proverbial 'truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth'. It is this realisation that forms, in my view, Rupert Smith's most noteworthy contribution to the strategic canon: 'wars have become media events far away from any ongoing social reality.'[xvii] Put more simply, the answer to Gates' question about the fortunes of the War on Terror is that one side is just better at convincing itself that the work in which it is engaged is serious, formidable, and sublime than the other; and so in this case the Islamists have been better able, to paraphrase George Sorel's comments on the revolutionary socialists of the early twentieth century, 'to raise themselves above our frivolous society and make themselves worthy of pointing out new roads to the world.'[xviii]

The above is not a value judgment; it is simply the case that material considerations notwithstanding, a civilisation that does not much believe in war anymore will, naturally, struggle to prevail against a civilisation that largely still does.

In Strategic Trouble? Better Callwell!

Over the last decade or so alongside the resurgence of interest (for obvious reasons) in counterinsurgency, citations have mounted to the British strategic thinker C.E. Callwell. Born in 1859, Callwell had a long and distinguished military career, starting in the Royal Artillery in 1878. He fought in the Second Afghan War (1878-80) and the First and Second Boer Wars (1880-81 and 1899-1902), also taking part in the Greco-Turkish War (1897) as an interested observer. He retired as a colonel in 1909 but was recalled at the beginning of the First World War to serve as the director of military operations and intelligence with the rank of major general. He died in 1928. His seminal work, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice*, was first published in 1896, then revised and republished in 1899 and again in 1906, the last edition becoming the standard reference.[xix]

A classic in the small wars sub-genre, though no doubt more widely cited than read, it deserves more attention for its contribution to strategy generally. Indeed it is in this context that Gray in a delightful turn of phrase references his work as 'a useful prophylactic against the virus of strategism'. Specifically, he notes Callwell's observation that strategy is not the 'final arbiter in war. The battlefield decides.'[xx] This ought not to be a controversial point. As Gray avers, the defining characteristic of war is that it is waged by violence – warfare: 'War may be much greater than warfare, but warfare lies at its black heart.'[xx] It is controversial, though, to the extent that contemporary doctrine has internalised gnomic utterances such as Sun Tzu's 'a victorious army first wins and then seeks battle; a defeated army first battles and then seeks victory' to such a degree that battle – the destruction of an enemy's ability to materially resist the political object imposed on him – seems almost incidental.[xxii]

To be sure, Callwell's relentless enemy-centrism and offense-mindedness (he entitles one chapter 'The Object is to Fight, Not Manoeuvre') tends to hit modern readers raised on 'manoeuvrism' like a slap in the face with a wet fish. It certainly puts him at odds with the orthodox population-centrism that currently reigns in doctrine and staff college curricula on counterinsurgency, the prevailing war type of the day. As it was put by General David Petraeus a few years

ago, in reference to the NATO campaign in Afghanistan:

> …you don't kill or capture your way out of an industrial-strength insurgency, which is what faces Afghanistan. Rather, it takes a mix of every aspect. It takes a comprehensive approach, and not just military but civil–military.[xxiii]

One suspects Callwell would reckon the first half of that statement nonsensical and the second half just plain obvious. 'It cannot be insisted upon too strongly', he advised,

> …that in a small war the only possible attitude to assume is, speaking strategically, the offensive. The regular army must force its way into the enemy's country and seek him out. It must be ready to fight him wherever he may be found. It must play to win and not for safety.[xxiv]

To the contemporary reader the stridency of such pronouncements is striking, particularly as, it must be said, a good deal of what Callwell says is freighted with the blithe racism characteristic of his time and place. That does not make them incorrect. Consider as a case in point Mark Urban's evident discomfort with the finding of his own detailed research into the British involvement in the 'secret war' in Iraq by SAS units operating with American Special Forces in Baghdad, that the 'truly disturbing (to those of a liberal mind, in any case) things about the special operations campaign in Iraq is that it suggests a large terrorist organisation can be overwhelmed under certain circumstances by military force.'[xxv]

Why would this be disturbing except that it conflicts with a by now deeply embedded ideal that force is if not incidental then decidedly secondary to success? Post-Second World War wisdom on counterinsurgency, for instance, especially that of the French practitioner cum theorist David Galula, holds that the counterinsurgent force's strengths are 'congenital' and in large part unusable. As he put it, for a regular force 'to adopt the insurgent's warfare would be the same as for a giant to try to fit into a dwarf's clothing'.[xxvi] And yet, it seems, the giant's donning of the dwarf's clothing was the key to success (such as it was) in Iraq.[xxvii]

Perhaps even more pertinent to the present discussion, though, is the importance Callwell placed on what he called the 'moral force of civilization'. Ultimately, his point here is not primarily tactical, nor even at the military strategic level on which Gray focuses in *The Strategy Bridge*. Take, for instance, this line from his chapter on the 'Need of Boldness and Vigour':

> It is not a question of merely maintaining the initiative, but of compelling the enemy to see at every turn that he has lost it and to recognise that the forces of civilisation are dominant and not to be denied.[xxviii]

It seems to this reader that Callwell conceives of moral force as an approximation of what we might describe as 'civilisational confidence', a firm belief that the object of one's efforts, tactical, strategic, and *political*, is right (if not just) and in some sense an inevitable part of the natural order. Though it was already on the wane by the time the final version of *Small Wars* was published, in the wake

of the Second Boer War – the last, greatest, and probably most humiliating of Britain's imperial wars – the Victorians possessed this confidence.[xxix]

Where Have You Gone, Joe Dimaggio?

We do not. As popular as the term 'dominance' is in the lexicon of doctrine writers it is hard to imagine it deployed alongside the word 'civilizational'. The devastating world wars of the twentieth century followed by a couple of decades of fruitless wars of decolonization, the latter fought under the Damoclean Sword of the Cold War's nuclear stand-off, largely put paid to the West's belief in the efficacy of war and, more generally, to its self-belief of moral purpose. On the whole, it is for the better that the West has lost the appetite for ruling others directly, by force. It has not wholly, however, given up on doing so indirectly – by proxy, as it were – with largely unhappy results. The most recent Afghanistan war illustrates very well what happens when one's strategic endeavours rest upon a nullity of moral conviction.

Forty-nine countries have contributed to the ISAF mission one way or another at the time of writing – every single one of them dogged by the simple question: why? Even the United States, by far the largest contributor and driver of strategy, has had no particularly compelling answer. In his recent memoirs, Gates recounts this startling realisation during a March 2010 cabinet-level meeting on Afghan strategy: 'As I sat there, I thought: *The president doesn't trust his commander, can't stand Karzai, doesn't believe in his own strategy, and doesn't consider the war to be his.'* [xxx] Considering that for the other forty-eight contributors to ISAF the bottom line is that they were there more or less purely to be alongside America, their strategic position proved even more invidious.

As an illustration, consider the words of Major General John Cantwell, an Australian officer with thirty-eight years of service encompassing three wars from Operation Desert Storm in 1991, through Iraq in 2006, and Afghanistan in 2010 where he headed the Australian contingent. In his memoirs he recorded his struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder. At the root of the painful expatiation in his book was gnawing doubt about what it had all been for:

> As I paid a final salute at the foot of yet another flag-draped coffin loaded into the belly of an aircraft bound for Australia, I found myself questioning if the pain and suffering of our soldiers and their families were worth it. I wondered if the deaths of any of those fallen soldiers made any difference. I recoiled from such thoughts, which seemed disrespectful, almost treasonous. I had to answer in the affirmative, or *risk exposing all my endeavours as fraudulent*. I had to believe it was worth it. But the question continues to prick at my mind. I don't have an answer. [xxxi]

In war, it is perfectly natural to confound one's enemy – indeed, that's the main point. A degree of dissembling amongst one's allies is also sometimes necessary to paper over contradictions in respective aims and objectives – provided the overall goal is sufficiently mutually vital, a degree of diplomatic falsity is not fatal. It is wholly undesirable, however, to deceive oneself. This is the essential gist of the oft-quoted remark by Clausewitz that the supreme and most far-reaching act of the statesman and commander is to establish 'the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.'[xxxii]

That, however, unfortunately, is basically how we do it. The West fights deliberately passionlessly, which makes its material strength belie a weakness of heart. It is like a heavyweight boxer fighting with one hand behind his back and both bootlaces tied together. The other side is a scrawny flyweight by comparison, but at least it knows what it is fighting for and the 'moral force' that animates its adherents is more secure and coherent.

It seems odd to argue that strategists must grapple much more directly with the moral force of war, that that is the Kryptonite source of their current strategic enervation. There is more than a hint of Spenglerian scolding of civilizational decline about it.[xxxiii] Nonetheless, that is where we are.

Moreover, I feel that Clausewitz's own simultaneous highlighting and prevaricating on the subject ought to be something of a red flag to present day followers of the major philosopher of war. Indeed, it should have been long ago. Paul Simon's 1968 song 'Mrs Robinson', written as the theme of the film *The Graduate* (itself a sort of morality play disguised as a rom-com) contains this wistful lament of a verse:

> Laugh about it, shout about it
> When you've got to choose
> Every way you look at it you lose.
> Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio?
> A nation turns its lonely eyes to you.

> After DiMaggio's death in 1999, Simon penned an obituary *cum* op-ed in which he explained the meaning of the lyric. It drew upon the fashion for using baseball as a metaphor for America, in which context DiMaggio represented, for Simon, the clash of old values including 'excellence and fulfillment of duty (he often played in pain), combined with a grace that implied a purity of spirit' with the 'iconoclastic, mind-expanding, authority-defying' new values of the 1960s. The lines resonated because, in Simon's words, they reflected the wider culture's subconscious, unsatisfied, and necessary yearning for heroes.

Why do we do this even as we know the attribution of heroic characteristics is almost always a distortion? Deconstructed and scrutinized, the hero turns out to be as petty and ego-driven as you and I. We know, but still we anoint. When the hero becomes larger than life, life itself is magnified, and we read with a new clarity our moral compass. The hero allows us to measure ourselves on the goodness scale: O.K., I'm not Mother Teresa, but hey, I'm no Jeffrey Dahmer. Better keep trying in the eyes of God.[xxxiv]

In my view, for strategic theory to regard this aspect of war and strategy, the clarity of our moral compass, as Clausewitz did – as important to understand but incompletely and unspecifically elucidated – is perilous. Moral force is not about what is objectively ethical in war (a thing which I, frankly, am resolutely ambivalent –damn the oxymoron) but about what is subjectively societally inspirational, motivating,

and resonant. The fact that a verse from a forty-year-old pop song illustrates the point shows its fundamentality to the social reality of which war is a part and not its triviality.

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[ii] Colin Gray, 'Clausewitz Rules, OK? The Future is the Past—with GPS', Review of International Studies, Vol. 25, No. 1 (December 1999), pp. 161-182; and 'In Praise of Strategy', Review of International Studies, Vol. 29, No. 2 (2003), pp. 285-295 – an article which was actually a reply to Martin Shaw's sharp critique of him in 'Strategy and Slaughter', Review of International Studies, Vol. 29, No. 2 (2003), pp. 269-277.

[iii] To quote Lawrence Freedman, one of the few to match Gray's output in quality and quantity, in his recent tome Strategy (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 238. Freedman devotes a chapter 'The Myth of the Master Strategist' to Gray, which is high praise indeed notwithstanding the distance between their views.

[iv] Colin Gray, The Strategy Bridge: Theory for Practice (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 84.

[v] Gray, The Strategy Bridge, p. 238.

[vi] Gray, The Strategy Bridge, p. 215; Carl Von Clausewitz (J.J. Graham, trans.), On War (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 1997), p. 150.

[vii] Clausewitz, p. 150.

[viii] Gray, The Strategy Bridge, pp. 240-241.

[ix] Clausewitz, p. 151.

[x] Clausewitz, p. 150. Emphasis added.

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[xviii] Sorel, p. 29.

[xix] Charles E. Callwell, Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2010).

[xx] Callwell, p. 90, quoted in Gray, The Strategy Bridge, p. 84.

[xxi] Gray, The Strategy Bridge, p. 105.

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[xxiv] Callwell, p. 75.

[xxv] Mark Urban, Task Force Black: The Explosive True Story of the SAS and the Secret War in Iraq (London: Little, Brown, 2010), p. xvi. The theory that killing one's way to success is in fact possible in certain circumstances is bolstered by other analyses, including Christopher Lamb and Evan Munsing, 'Secret Weapon: High-Value Target Teams as an Organisational Innovation', Strategic Perspectives 4, (Washington, DC: Centre for Strategic Research, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defence University, March 2011). Also see, William F. Owen, 'Killing Your Way to Control', British Army Review (Spring 2011), pp. 34-37.

[xxvi] David Galula, Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice (London: Praeger, 1964), p. 73.

[xxvii] A point, not incidentally, which applies well also to Britain's pacification campaign in Iraq in the early 1920s. See Mark Jacobsen, 'Only by the Sword: British Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 1920', Small Wars and Insurgencies, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1991), pp. 323-363.

[xxviii] Callwell, p. 75.

[xxix] See Thomas Pakenham, The Boer War (London: George Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1979).

[xxx] Robert Gates, Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War (London: W.H Allen, 2014), p. 557. Emphasis in original.

[xxxi] John Cantwell, Exit Wounds: One Australian's War on Terror (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2012), p. 13. Emphasis added.

[xxxii] Clausewitz, p. 100.

[xxxiii] Oswald Spengler (Charles Francis Atkinson, trans.), The Decline of the West, 2 Vols. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922).

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Relativity and Negotiation: Core Elements of a General Theory of Strategy

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Few modern intellectuals have had as large an impact on military strategists as Colin Gray. From articles that reluctantly (and somewhat tongue-in-cheek, I believe) describe strategists as heroes for struggling to overcome the innumerable issues with creating purposeful strategy, to treatises on the strategic effectiveness of air and cyber power, Gray has covered practically every aspect of strategy and its place in the modern world.[i] The most far-reaching of his works, in both ambition and scope, is his 2010 magnum opus, *The Strategy Bridge: Theory for Practice*.[ii] I only half-jokingly refer to this book as the "strategist's bible", as much for its ambiguity that can provide for diverse interpretations as its sound analysis and the provided dicta inherent to strategy. Akin to Carl von Clausewitz's *On War*, another work that can be considered the "strategist's bible", *The Strategy Bridge* provides some key concepts that strategists must understand. Foremost among them are the relativity of strategy and the primacy of negotiation in strategy development.

I came to Gray through his previous works, particularly his writing on strategic history.[iii] Having been designated a US Army Strategist (a lofty title, particularly for a young captain that had only worked in the defense/military realm for half a dozen years), I began voraciously reading all I could get my hands on that provided a better understanding of the many facets of strategy. Gray came highly recommended, particularly his books *War, Peace, and International Relations* and *Modern Strategy*. These were fantastic works that provided context and more than passing knowledge of the importance of strategy and strategic history. But it was the publication of *The Strategy Bridge* a few years into my exploration of strategic studies that opened my eyes to the true implications of my appointment as a strategist; its prose described the sheer complexity and nuance of my new discipline, most especially the difficulties in creating purposeful strategy. While he comes at the issue from the realm of academia as opposed to as a military practitioner, Gray is not unlike his predecessor, Carl von Clausewitz, in that he tightly packs decades of knowledge into an ambitious book, of which the content and language is capable of losing the reader in a single sentence for minutes…a chapter for hours.

This similarity to the classical texts of strategy, most apparently *On War*, is no accident. Where Clausewitz endeavored to articulate a general theory of war, Gray is attempting in *The Strategy Bridge* to articulate a complementary general theory of strategy. I believe Gray is as successful as his intellectual progenitor. While there are myriad insights in this book that drive forward a general theory of strategy, the two largest contributions Gray provides to such a theory are an understanding of strategy's relative nature, and the process of dialogue and negotiation inherent in strategy development.

It's All Relative

Strategy, the method of employing the instrument of war to achieve desired political effects, is a contest of opposing forces, dependent upon the interaction between them. Clausewitz described war as a duel in which combatants attempt to compel the other to their will. In such a duel one is not required to have the most effective force or best strategy to be successful, just be subjectively better when relative to adversarial actors and the strategic context at the time. Success in strategy is continuously relative, based within the time in which it is developed and employed and dependent on historical context, the cultures and personalities of the players, and the capabilities available and how they are employed to create strategic effect. More than this, the belligerent that is more effective at translating tactical action into political effect will be in a relatively better position for success than adversaries.

In the end, strategy is a contest in which the exclusion of the opponent in strategic calculation is likely to result in failure. Despite the lip service most modern military forces give to the complexity and nonlinearity of war, acknowledging Clausewitz and those that have addressed this aspect of conflict, much of the contemporary discussion on military concepts and strategies today largely has removed the mental and moral calculations of "the other" from their own calculations, instead focusing on discrete capabilities that threaten our own military means. In so doing, these discussions are missing vital considerations needed to provide meaning and clarity; they sanitize the endeavor, removing the interactive nature of strategy between belligerents.

The importance of Gray's work, particularly as a major element woven throughout his general theory of strategy, is to re-focus the reader on the relative nature of strategy; particularly to the fact that strategy is a human activity that takes place in a strategic context to achieve purposeful change in behavior. There are others that have made this distinction, but in *The Strategy Bridge* Gray focuses on the obstacles and problems that the strategist faces in creating purposeful strategy while avoiding prescriptive solutions; he is educating his readers in how to think about strategy development, not providing replicable processes for it.

It's All Negotiation

The second, and most potent, contribution to a general theory of strategy codified in *The Strategy Bridge* is the dialectic nature of strategy-making between civilian and military stakeholders. While not an ironclad rule, strategy is typically developed through the dialogue and negotiation of actors spanning the policymaking and policy-enforcing functions. Rarely is there a Huntingtonian dynamic in which politicians independently develop a policy then pass it off to military professionals who execute military operations independently, only handing the reins back upon war termination.[iv] Instead, there is a constant and iterative negotiation in which each of the "negotiators will express the interests of their organizations as they and their staffs perceive them."[v]

While to some this may seem intuitive, the value of how it is addressed as a part of Gray's general theory of strategy is in the elaboration of obstacles and considerations that the strategist, who provides the function of acting as the bridge between policy and tactics, must understand. The difficulties in the required human interactions of personalities with differing goals and motivations are not the least of these. As such, the outcome of these interactions is rarely perceived as a rational process:

> Unfortunately for the theorist, and hence the practitioner in need of assistance from his ideas and way of thinking, strategy-making is not the product of rational choice reached through debate over the strategic merit of alternatives. Instead, it may well express the balance of power in an exercise in bureaucratic politics.[vi]

Like war, strategy is ultimately about politics. Therefore, the best analysis or most effective approach given the strategic context can be less relevant than the "culture,

biology, personality, and historical context"[vii] at play in the negotiation between stakeholders. Not only must the strategist contend with the adversary's strategy, but internal divisions as well. There are interactions within bureaucratic systems involved in strategy development that must be understood, addressed, and frequently fought over.

Because of the human dynamics of a negotiated solution, stakeholders will approach the dialogue focused on their own personal or organizational concerns. Politicians will likely be focused on domestic politics that affect the accomplishment of their political agenda, their management of the political process, their own cognitive biases, and/or the various factors that most influence the security of their own power base. Military leaders, on the other hand, may tend to focus on current tactical and operational issues that affect their forces, as well as the administrative necessities to recruit, train, equip, and manage their services. These stakeholders rarely come together in a strategy development process until a specific foreign policy issue rises to the level that may require some element of military attention. Just as it is dangerous for those attempting to create purposeful strategy to forget the relative nature of strategy and focus on internal imperatives instead of the external imperatives determined by the enemy as discussed above, "[w]hen politicians and military commanders focus unduly, even exclusively, upon their own problems at the expense of the appreciation of the enemy's difficulties, their strategic performance is certain to be impaired."[viii]

During the creation of particular strategies, and in between the pressing issues that drive civilians and the military together into the development of purposeful strategy, there exists a strategic function to be performed and actors that facilitate such a function. This is where Gray employs the analogy of a bridge. The bridge, from which his book derives its title, is a representation of the function of translating and facilitating the negotiation between policymakers and the military, both through dialogue and analytical support during the development of strategy and by translating desired political effects into military objectives that can achieve them. This bridge straddles the gulf between those interested in their domestic base of power (and the effect that the use of the military will have on it) and those desirous of the resources and operational control to militarily achieve tactical effectiveness.[ix] Strategy, being a human endeavor, requires actors – specifically strategists – to enact the bridging function, which brings personalities and agendas into the equation.

Even when there is little friction between the involved actors, the creation of purposeful strategy can be equated to the duel Clausewitz attributed to war between two actors external to the state, though devoid of the use of force. In the same way belligerents interact in war based on their strategic context, and through that interaction create new contexts, stakeholders in strategy development give and take according to their desired interests – with policymakers desiring to achieve political effects and the military attempting to threaten or use force to achieve tactical successes that can be used for political effect. It is the interaction of two forces that drive outcomes, just as in the actions of two belligerent forces on the battlefield. As Hew Strachan is quoted, "the principle purpose of effective civil-military relations is national security; its output is strategy."[x]

The Strategy Bridge provides important insight as to the considerations that must be taken into account to better understand the function of strategy as a bridge so that stakeholders, particularly those strategists that maintain the expanse, can create more effective strategy. Even though strategy is relative and a strategist must simply be better than his opponent in the end, the only possible way to better ensure superiority is to develop more effective strategies that make appropriate use of military means to achieve political ends.

It's All in the Effect

Just as strategy depends on tactical actions being translated into political advantage to be considered effective, a grand design for creating a general theory of strategy, as is the purpose of *The Strategy Bridge*, depends on the ability of those practicing the art to find practical value in translating theory into application. Clausewitz was most concerned not with an academic, ethereal theory of war, but on theory's ability to inform and support its application in actual theaters of war. Gray is equally as focused upon the practical use of this mechanism in his general theory of strategy. This does not mean he prescribes processes or approaches that must be used for more effective bridging of tactical success to political effect, thereby resulting in more relatively successful strategy development. *The Strategy Bridge* is above all a conceptual primer to support strategists in their education in how to think about strategy, not what to think. From twenty-one dicta that help describe the nature and character of strategy, how to make and execute it, and its consequences, to practical considerations in the practice of strategy, this work is invaluable to the education of a strategist.

Beyond a deeper understanding of the relational aspects of strategy and the nature of negotiation in its practice, strategists get an insider's experienced view of the difficult nature of performing as a strategist through Gray's work. The reader is quickly disabused of the notion that strategy is easy or can be done by everyone. In fact, acting as an effective bridge takes particular skills and personality that cannot be accomplished through training alone.

In the case of military officers, they must be proficient in the use of tactics and simultaneously be able to intuitively grasp the necessary skills and traits inherent to politics. Additionally, largely out of a strategist's personal control, military institutions or individuals of influence must be available and willing to protect them when they pursue unorthodox and/or unusual career paths. Rarely have effective strategists trod traditional paths to advancement within the military bureaucracy. Frequently, those with the education and personality for strategy do not end up in the positions of influence required to affect the development of purposeful strategy. The same can be said of those in the political realm. Politicians rarely break out from a fairly typical career path that is largely devoid of military service, particularly at the level of strategy. Eisenhower was an anomaly that is unlikely to occur in the near future.

Conclusion

What is clear from *The Strategy Bridge* is that there is a general theory of strategy that can be distilled empirically from history and experience to complement Clausewitz's general theory of war. It is also clear that it may be easier to capture in a thoughtful work than to actually implement it. Clausewitz's theory of war requires men of "genius" with *coup d'œil* to achieve success. Similarly, though he does not state it explicitly, Gray's concept of strategy requires strategists of "genius" that can intuitively see the strategic context and effectively provide a bridge in the negotiation between politics and tactics. As such, Gray's bridge does not necessarily require commanders, but conductors that can translate the relativity in the contemporary strategic context and manage civilian-military relationships, for "the principal core competency of the strategist is the ability to direct armed forces in war, not necessarily to command and lead them."[xi]

The Strategy Bridge has completed the yeoman's work toward a general theory of strategy, but even it is not completely above reproach. While an understanding of the relative nature of strategy and the negotiation inherent in its development is critical in understanding strategy's nature, Gray provides little substance on how this comes into play in reality, or how to navigate the incredibly complex architecture of government for the production of strategy. Additionally, while *The Strategy Bridge* admirably covers the daunting number of challenges inherent to developing strategy, little is addressed as to the equally numerous challenges to enacting strategy. The lack of these elements is one of choice; Gray explicitly acknowledges that this book is one directed at explaining theory, not a medium for explaining any civilian academic views on the practice of force.[xii] A general theory of strategy would be greatly bolstered by a robust discussion on these challenges and approaches for navigating them, however.

Such criticisms do not detract from the significant value in what *The Strategy Bridge* does provide – in fact, these two criticisms are similar to those that could be leveled at Clausewitz himself. Both *On War* and *The Strategy Bridge* address crucial aspects of genuine theory, but in the process largely do not take into account just how taxing it is to translate their theory from the page into practice.

In the end, strategists are admirably served by the work done by Gray in *The Strategy Bridge*. Contemplation on his insights, particularly the relativity of strategy and its development through negotiation, will improve the knowledge and conceptual tools available to those interested in strategy development. This will allow them to better provide the necessary bridging function between politics and military action, a necessary function for the development of purposeful strategy.

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Anachronism and Strategic History

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For an 'eighteenth-centuryist', strategy is a problem issue, at once fascinating and deeply problematic. This is because, as so often for the historian, there are the problems involved in discussing a subject when the modern vocabulary was not employed, and, partly for that reason, parallels with modern conceptualisation are difficult to find. As a result, there can be a serious tension between the approach of the historian, with, in particular, the disciplinary emphasis on documentary sources from the period and the exposition of the social scientist. Colin Gray directly addresses this point in appendix C of *The Strategy Bridge*. Entitled 'Conceptual "*Hueys*" at Thermopylae? The Challenge of Strategic Anachronism', this is a characteristically vivid piece and one that is of major conceptual interest. Gray points out that 'we modern strategists are damned if we do and damned if we do not' use history (p. 272), before arguing that anachronism does not really matter if an explanation is anachronistic as long as 'it does its intended job plausibly' (p. 272). He closes the piece by suggesting 'that when one thinks of strategy as a function, much of the sting goes away from the charge of strategic anachronism across time and culture' (p. 273).

Using the past as a convenient data set in order to unlock thoughts for the present seems a reasonable proposition for a modern strategist. At the same time, there is the risk, as throughout strategic studies, that the data is selected, indeed in this case manipulated, in order to suit a theory for the present. Whether that is 'functional' is an interesting case.

Rather than pursuing this point at the grand conceptual level, I would prefer to turn to particulars, as they offer the possibility of showing that detailed historical work can throw light on strategic issues. More crucially, there is the possibility of approaching a more informed and a more profound understanding of the situation than if the past is simply used as ready information to be deployed without an awareness of the problems of the conjuncture, the contingent, and the evidence. In short, a close-grained or granulated use of past examples is necessary. It is immaterial whether this usage is by historians or political scientists/strategists but, in either case, it is essential to employ the skills of historical scholarship. The apparent 'anachronism' of the past, at least by modern standards, may emerge as a problem, but it is, in practice, a valuable perspective.

At times, the contrasts appear an extraordinary challenge. Societies where conflict is located in terms of confrontation alongside spirits against similarly arrayed hostile forces, for example the societies of Antiquity, may appear to have little to offer to the present-day strategist. In a different light, the same point can be made about pre-modern technologies, with their dependence for power sources (and the basic economy) on human and animal muscle and the wind, and current counterparts. These cases are very different, but they unlock major issues for consideration. The first, that of the spirit world, raises the significance of ideological drives and imaginings, and how these are to be understood in the case of goals and suppositions. The second, the case of technology, invites attention not only to the role of resources, but also to how resources that may seem fit for purpose in a particular context nevertheless greatly shape options.

The role of historical understanding can be highlighted by considering the power that for long most approximated in its time (and the latter qualification requires emphasis) to the modern USA. Of course, the very comparison invites selection in terms of the needs and interests of the present. The theme of imperial overstretch, of the Britain of the 1930s, appeared most pertinent to the USA of the 2000s, with both confronted by a number of difficult challenges and facing serious fiscal problems. However, aside from the complicating issues of the particular comparison that is made, notably

America's greater economic strength in the 2000s (and 1930s) compared to that of Britain in the 1930s, there is also the point that other periods offer differing points of reference. In the sense of being in a very different strategic environment, Britain in the 1850s was not the same as the USA in the 1950s, and so on.

The same point can be made about eighteenth-century Britain and, for that age, there is the additional perspective of a contemporary discussion in terms of a strategic concept that still makes sense today, that of the balance of power. Moreover, the balance reflects the impact, in then contemporary strategic thought, of scientific ideas; an impact which raises the question of how best to assess the impact of such ideas today. Indeed, it can be suggested that current strategic discussion has failed adequately to probe this issue.

The balance of power drew on mechanistic themes, not least because of the intellectual thrall of Newtonian physics. Sir Isaac Newton not only measured natural forces, he also argued that forces affected each other and thus could and should be measured. This understanding was linked to 'political economy', to adopt a British phrase of the time, referring in practice to the mathematisation of policy. If mathematics was found in both physics and public policy, the notion of measurement drew on a wider, though far from complete, spread of the Scientific Revolution into Western culture.

As a result, ideas such as the balance of power had weight culturally, as well as being of functional value. The idea of the balance of power also drew on rhetorics of limiting excessive power, both in international relations and in domestic politics. Thus, opposition to 'universal monarchy', the tyrannical expansionism and expansionist tyranny supposedly posed by France, notably under Louis XIV (r. 1643-1715), was linked to opposition to autocracy within a state, particularly hostility within Britain to James II of England (VII of Scotland, r. 1685-8), who was overthrown in the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688.

In opposition to 'universal monarchy', the balance of power offered a strategy for international relations that was intended to protect the sovereignty of a multipolar system. States were seen as sovereign but linked as if within a machine. This system was regarded as self-contained, and as part of a static and well-ordered world. The concept was based on the model of the machine which, in turn, was treated as well-ordered and enabling its parts to conduct activities only in accordance with its own construction. The mechanistic concept of the system of states was well-suited to the wider currents of thought, specifically Cartesian rationalism, as well as its successors.

These currents of thought provided not only an analytical framework but also a moral context for international relations. For example, to take balance-of-power politics, which, as generally presented, appear as selfishly pragmatic, bereft of any overarching rules, and lacking any ethical theoretical foundations. In practice, however, the situation was somewhat different. There was a widely-expressed theory of the balance of power, with rules for its politics, outlined in tracts, pamphlets, doctoral dissertations, and explanations of the reasons for the resort to war. The relationship between

such theoretization and rules on the one hand, and decision-making processes on the other, is obscure, and clearly varied by ruler and minister, but such discussion set normative standards that helped shape policies and responses.[i]

Without denying a central role for such notions, it is necessary to complement them with an awareness of organic assumptions. These were important, not so much at the level of the international system (until the nineteenth century), but at that of individual states. Moreover, these assumptions helped provide a dynamic component that is generally lacking with the more structural nature of the mechanistic themes. This dynamic component was vitalist in intention. In particular, there was a sense of a state as the expression of a nation, of the latter as linked in a national character, and as this character as capable of change and as prone to decay. The latter looked in part on cyclical accounts of the rise and fall of empires which drew much of their authority on the commanding role of Classical Rome in the historicised Western political thought of the period (there were similarities in China), but there was also a strong input from ideas of health. Thus, a traditional sense of the nation as akin to a person remained important.

This idea translated into the international sphere with a sense of nations as competitive and as under threat from challenges that were foreign as well as domestic in their causation and mechanism. As far as the conflicts involving England/Britain from the English war with Spain of 1585-1604 to the Seven Years' War (1756-63) was concerned, anti-Catholicism was crucial in affecting English/British attitudes. [ii] This point is worth underlining because it encouraged a sense that the struggle should be persisted in, even in the face of news that was very negative, which was the case in the early days of the Seven Years' War.[iii] Anti-Catholicism led to a sense of existentialist and meta-historical struggle. As a result, each war was but a stage in a more sustained and wider conflict.

Colin Gray would already have sat up and said that there is a confusion of strategy and policy here; and, indeed, that was very much the case as far as the period was concerned. There was a conceptual flexibility that reflected both the specific issue of the use of concepts in both a descriptive and a prescriptive fashion, and the more general porosity of language. The very lack of fixity engaged Samuel Johnson (and others) as they strove to provide linguistic structure in the eighteenth century shape of dictionaries, but it also reflected the absence of institutions that could shape strategy and policy, let alone relevant linguistic tools. There was no General Staff, the Admiralty was not a strategic-planning centre, and discussions in Cabinet were perfunctory.

As a result, there is no coherent body of documentation for the scholar to assess and deploy. Nevertheless, there were choices and priorities that had to be made, and these choices and priorities both leave a trace in the archives and provide the basis for discussion of strategy.

The most accessible situation occurred when Britain was a coalition partner as it was then necessary to coordinate policies with allies. This was the situation during most of England/Britain's wars from 1672 to 1815, with the principal exceptions being the War of Jenkins' Ear with Spain, and

the War of American Independence, both before and after French intervention.

In these cases, it is readily possible to see the intertwining of military planning and diplomatic exigencies. Alliance warfare of this type was mostly the case on land. In contrast, the navy rarely was involved with allies after the decline of Dutch naval power. Thus, the evidence of, and for, strategy is more striking for land operations. At sea, however, there was the need to balance between tasks. This need and experience can be seen with the detachment of squadrons from home waters for the Baltic and the Mediterranean, an issue that remained a recurrent feature in naval planning and, with a different geographical span, is still pertinent today. Moreover, a strategy of naval commercial interdiction played a role in operations against the Dutch in the late-seventeenth century

and, including a powerful trans-oceanic dimension, in the Anglo-Spanish crisis of 1725-7. Furthermore, the planned use of naval power in international crises, as in 1730, 1731, 1735, 1770 and 1790, can be seen as wide-ranging and reasonably sophisticated given serious limitations with communications and institutional support.

Thus, Gray is correct to discern the value of discussing strategy for periods that lack the vocabulary. At the same time, it is necessary to understand the issues, exigencies and concepts of specific historical episodes in order to develop a better understanding of them and thus to make a more appropriate use of such comparisons. Ultimately, the past does not belong to historians, but historical tools are required for its appropriate analysis.

References

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