

Because strategy never stops...

Infinity Journal



IN THIS EDITION

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A Note From The Editor

Dear IJ members,

Welcome to the last ever volume of Infinity Journal.

Well, it might be unless we can hunt down some writers with something insightful to say about Strategy. The more perceptive of Infinity Journal's readership will notice that this edition is somewhat late, and the reason for that is generally related to content.

As wonderful as we may think we are, we have no right to exist without good content. No good content, no publication. If it takes time to get good content, then we only publish when we have enough. The alternative would be to stick to a deadline and publish an issue with three articles in it.

Is it really that difficult? Well, it is.

Amazing as it may seem, I actually wrote an article for this issue in an attempt to inject some quality content into the mix, and the reason you will not see it published is because it failed to pass the external peer review process... twice!

As editor, I was even tempted to suggest we publish my article anyway, to demonstrate to our readers the sort of stuff we have to turn down! Having said that, we do have to turn down some truly exceptional articles, because while they may be good, they are simply not about Strategy. Many of these articles contain very useful insights into various aspects, but they belong in other publications.

Strategy is not easy to do, but it is simple to understand. In the last two years we at least seem to have educated a readership as to what Strategy is, but we have much more work to do in order to produce insights and information as to how it gets done 'good enough', and what it looks like when it is done badly.

None of the above needs to scare off potential writers. Both the Publisher and myself want to see your work make it into Infinity Journal. As I said, Strategy is simple to understand, so if you have questions while you're writing an article for us, send us an email. After all, while we may be a Strategy journal, we are also here to help our writers, and we will happily and patiently guide you where needed. So, help us to ensure that this is not the last volume of Infinity Journal.

William F. Owen

Editor, Infinity Journal

March 2013

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The common history of grand strategic thought is dominated by only a couple of names, and the interpretation of this history is dominated by assumptions about the trajectory the evolution of the concept has taken based upon misinterpretations of the past. These two factors blend together into a mythology which not only obscures most of the real history and development of grand strategic thought but also supports the current major interpretations of the concept, which are otherwise unquestioned and arguably unjustified. Ultimately, the way to a full and conscientious understanding of grand strategy necessarily lies through a serious study of the concept's history.



Clausewitz and Connectivity

David Betz

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'So you think you're changed, do you?'

The Caterpillar to Alice in Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865)

Amongst the small subset of students of politics who concern themselves with the nature and conduct of contemporary war there is something of a holiday tradition. Periodically they gather to discuss what to do about the family patriarch, Carl von Clausewitz. Argument soon rages across the divide. 'He's a withered corpse. It's past time for the mausoleum!' exclaims one side. 'He's a venerable sage!' splutters the other. 'He speaks to me everyday!' Then they separate to different rooms—half going with Martin Van Creveld to the lounge to mutter about non-trinitarianism; the other half going to the library with Colin Gray to bellow at each other for the *n*th time 'but it says right there in black and white, book 1, chapter 1, there are two trinities. **Two!**' [i] Then everybody vows never to go back home for Thanksgiving ever again.

It's a caricature, of course, but not a totally unfair one. The pattern of debate is now well worn and predictable. Clausewitzians are dogmatists. 'Like the aging Marxists with a Karl of their own,' wrote one critic, 'the Clausewitzians today are more interested in exonerating their idol from the evil perpetrated in his name than in demonstrating what good he could bring to the current challenges facing the military.' [ii] Anti-Clausewitzians are dilettantes. Take, for instance, the British strategist Basil Liddell-Hart, the granddaddy of Clausewitz-haters who once bestowed on him the epithet 'Mahdi of mass and mutual massacre' laying primary blame on him for having laid the intellectual foundation of the ghastly industrial slaughter of First World

War trench warfare. [iii] It is increasingly widely thought that Liddell-Hart had not so much misread *On War* as not read it *at all* until later in his career. [iv]

**It is increasingly widely thought
that Liddell-Hart had not so much
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Quite commonly calls for the dethroning of Clausewitz are predicated on the basis of the occurrence of some technological development that has fundamentally altered the *nature* of war. Alternately, more subtly, some technological development has fundamentally altered the nature of the *society* in which war occurs. Either way, the point is that Clausewitz's theory of war—its utility as a conceptual framework—has been unhinged as a result of some external factor. Clausewitzians, who ought always to be mindful that the 'contexts of war are all important', should not blithely dismiss the latter argument in particular. [v] It has some powerful supporters, as we shall see below.

That, in essence, is the object of this paper—not to settle the debate *per se*—but to give fair (albeit brief) hearing to the notion that the Clausewitzian trinity, the 'most original and insightful' of his discoveries, is no longer up to the task of explaining contemporary war. [vi] The finding: actually, it still seems quite adequate. Before explaining why that is the case it behoves us first to say a few words about technology and specifically about information and communications technology or, as I prefer, the 'connectivity', that underpins the current iteration of anti-Clausewitzian thinking. [vii]

'Technology is so much fun but we can drown in our technology. The fog of information can drive out knowledge.'

Daniel J. Boorstin (1914-2004), Director of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of History and Technology

In Clausewitz's day technology was relatively static. In historical perspective it is our time that is unusual in respect of the pace of change. As one recent analysis of digital media and society put it:

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The information society is a society in constant flux and change. It moves at an ever-quickening pace and causes the ties that bind us to the old, to the traditional and to the known, to easily slip their moorings.[viii]

Score one for the anti-Clausewitzians, then, who share the same premise. If practically everything else is changing because of the way that the world has been wired up so should war also. By and large, the pace of scientific discovery and developments in engineering was very slow throughout history up to Clausewitz's time and for a few decades after.[ix] This was true of industrial, agricultural, and military enterprise. As late as the 18th century commanders still found the tactical advice of the 4th century Roman text *De Re Militari* by Vegetius to be very apposite.[x] The Napoleonic Wars which so preoccupied Clausewitz that they pervade practically every chapter of *On War*, were fought almost entirely with weapons that would have been mostly recognisable to soldiers 300 years earlier. Napoleon's astonishing run of victorious battles was achieved through innovative use of existing technologies combined with new tactics and military organisational forms. It was not until the middle of the 19th century that the industrial revolution developed such a momentum that changes in technology became more apparent and rapid.[xi] Mechanical transportation (initially steam-powered rail and ships followed by vehicles powered by internal combustion engines), electrical communications (first the telegraph followed by telephone and radio), combined with advancements in diverse fields of design and manufacture that drove rapid increase in the range and lethality of weapons, all have had a vast impact on the conduct of warfare—ultimately, in respect of the development of nuclear weapons at least, taking it beyond the point of which the Clausewitzian conception of war as a *rational* act of policy made much sense to anyone.[xii]

All of this was after Clausewitz, however; he, it is fair to say, had little interest in technology whose portent was somewhat nascent in his lifetime and he barely mentions it in his work. This lacuna in *On War* has in subsequent years attracted the interest of many scholars. Nowadays, for example, many of the new prophets of cyber power implicitly or explicitly disparage him, consigning his philosophy to the bin of history as 'outdated' and 'ever more irrelevant' because of this lack. It is noteworthy, though, that thoughtful observers of the effects of connectivity in other fields do not feel it necessary to slaughter the iconic figures in their disciplines in order to comprehend the present. The Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells, for instance, who perhaps better than any other thus far has explained the social and economic relations of the emerging 'network society' does not disparage Max Weber, another nineteenth century German philosopher and political economist, although he defined the exercise of 'power' in almost exactly the same terms that Clausewitz did i.e. war as the collective action of a group of men to realize their own will even against the resistance of another group. Quite the opposite, he concludes of Weber that '...the voice of the master resonates with force one hundred years later'. [xv]

Why is what is good for sociologists studying the workings of the network society not sauce for the strategists looking at a key aspect of the same thing? Surely, if Clausewitz had written in the 20th century then he would have read with great interest

about such things as the growth of a factory proletariat, the urbanisation of the bourgeoisie, the consequent political adaptations of European regimes, and other developments of the Industrial Revolution and discussed the application of his theory in that context—no doubt observing the shift it caused in the basis of military power to one based in a large part upon industrial capability.[xvi] Similarly, if he were writing in the 21st century, now, when the rapidity of technological change provides the *leitmotif* of much scholarship from anthropology through zoology he would wonder about the sources and meaning of military power in the post-industrial 'Information Age'. These are not especially impertinent assumptions. Clausewitz himself was no dogmatist. Towards the end of *On War* he explained how every age has its 'own kind of war, its own limiting conditions, and its own peculiar preconceptions.' The events of every age, therefore, 'Must be judged in the light of its own peculiarities.' [xvii]

'We're lima lima mike foxtrot in Iraq', says Sergeant Frank Cleveland, who's riding shotgun in the truck where I've hitched a ride.

'What does that mean?' I ask from the backseat.

'We're lost like a motherfucker', he says.

*A conversation in Iraq somewhere near Baghdad
(April 2003)[xviii]*

let us consider what happens to the element of the trinity that would seem most subject to mitigation and remediation by information technology: chance

In that spirit, then, let us consider what happens to the element of the trinity that would seem most subject to mitigation and remediation by information technology: chance. Does it go away? Does information and communications technology make managing the 'interplay of probability and chance' no longer the hallmark of the art of war? This is one of the most vital of all Clausewitz's dicta:

War is the realm of chance. No other human activity gives it greater scope: no other has such incessant and varied dealings with this intruder. Chance makes everything uncertain and interferes with the whole course of events. [xix]

If it were no longer true then, truly, it would mean the theory was seriously deficient. The answer, however, is no—of course no.[xx] Ironically, since it was precisely on this point that expectations were the highest in the years between the triumph in the Gulf War of 1990/91 and the post-9/11 expeditionary campaigns of the War on Terror, it is harder now to convince people that the enthusiasts of the 'Revolution in Military Affairs' were partly right than it is to say they were simply utterly wrong. Consider this passage from the memoirs of General Tommy Franks, the man in charge of the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, upon whom more ordure has been poured in a decade than the averagely well-fertilised farmer's

field:[xxi]

In the 21st century, operational success—what the military calls 'effect'—would be found in both space and time: putting the most effective force, at the right place, at the right time. In this new way of thinking, the historical strategic imperatives of objective, mass, and economy of force would acquire new meaning. [xxii]

Actually, this is not wrong. It is possible to produce more combat power with a smaller force when you improve the quality of its information systems and processing. [xxiii] Sun Tzu mentioned this aphoristically 2,500 years when he enjoined his readers to 'know yourself, know your enemies' and advised them that 'all war is deception'. [xxiv] Most generals ever since have found these points sufficiently self-evident not to bother belabouring them. George Washington, in a letter to one of his officers written in 1777, provides an excellent example: 'The necessity of procuring good intelligence is apparent and need not be further urged.' [xxv] If I may be forgiven for presuming to think as Clausewitz might have, I would say that he would improve on this phlegmatic and pithy statement only by underlining the word 'good'. Because, as he observed, much information in war is contradictory, even more is false, and even more than that is doubtful. The good stuff is rare—and not always recognisably good until it is not nearly as useful as it might have been. Information technology can help you gather more data, it can help you move it around more widely and quickly, but that does not necessarily mean that the commander is better equipped with better knowledge upon which base to make decisions. It is a worthy aspiration but 'total information awareness' is a chimera. Equally, even in the most wired-tight force someone, always, will pack the wrong batteries, insert the wrong code module, drop the GPS in the latrine... etc. Chance and its close relation, friction, are no less present today than they were in Clausewitz's day or even Alexander's day.

'Computers are useless. They can only give you answers.'

Pablo Picasso [xxvi]

The last decade of war has demonstrated, painfully and repeatedly, the limitations of this way of conceptualising war.

The larger truth, though, is that (as Clausewitz also noted) you make war against a living, thinking opponent and not against an inert mass. One of the most remarkable things about the 1990s discussion of 'high performance information grids' generating high levels of 'battlespace awareness' and closing the 'sensor-shooter gap' is how little it referred to the enemy. The 'logical model of Network Centric Warfare', for instance, referred only to 'objects' that are sensed, identified, and subsequently 'negated' by fire. [xxvii] The last decade of war has demonstrated, painfully and repeatedly, the limitations of this way of conceptualising war. As an illustration, the American defence analyst James Russell has recounted a conversation he had while receiving a briefing on counterinsurgent operations in Afghanistan in 2010:

I recall ... seeing the obligatory PowerPoint slide with all the red 'X's' through the Taliban's leadership structure in the province I was visiting. Stupidly, of course, I mentioned to the briefer:

'Well, we must be winning, then.'

He laughed and responded:

'You could have shown up here for every year for the last few years and seen the exact same slide. They just keep coming back.' [xxviii]

It is not the fault of Clausewitz or a flaw in his theory that governments are attempting to make war 'work' as a tool of policy against threats that are difficult to permanently staunch with the kinetic blows that armed forces are generally designed to deliver. Indeed, it rather confirms the continuing salience of another aspect of the trinity: reason, or political purpose. [xxix] This ought not to have required pyrrhic (at best) victory in Iraq or (most likely) flat out defeat in Afghanistan to have become (now common) wisdom. The British general Rupert Smith, who commanded the United Nations Protection Force in Bosnia in 1995 at the decisive time in that war, glimpsed some while ago in the trend of recent military operations the unhappy truth:

...that the more the operation is intended to win the will of the people, the more the opponent adopts the method of the guerrilla and the more complex the circumstances, the longer it will take to reach the condition in which a strategic decision can be made and a solution be found. And while it is being found the condition has to be maintained, and since in part at least it has been arrived at by force it must be maintained by force for want of a strategic decision. [xxx]

Thus we may see how the modern theatre commander finds himself as if at the crux of a scissors. Faced tactically with opponents who generally quickly learn how to drop below the threshold of his weapons systems he must, like Alice, follow the White Rabbit down his rabbit hole into Wonderland. Contrary to some belief, it is possible for regular forces to become very good at hunting in this environment. [xxxi] Unfortunately, the dark fire cannot avail them much when it is harnessed to the achievement of misconceived policy, or when political forces persistently fail to set goals directly pertinent to and achievable within the context of the conflict in question. Although the problem is essentially widespread, the British Army has suffered particularly acutely in this way in its operations since 2003. Successive governments, eager to illustrate to the United States Britain's value as an ally, have sought to keep 'in the game' militarily but at the lowest possible cost in blood and treasure. Generally, as one would expect with such a contingent mindset (which, moreover, it is politically inexpedient to state openly), they have forsaken answering the question 'why are we here?' in part because the occasional rhetorically vigorous efforts of ministers to do so have been contradictory, but more importantly in the hope that by avoiding the issue the public will remain lethargic enough for the matter to remain off the electoral agenda. [xxxii] Politically, this has been a moderately successful gambit; militarily, it has been quite costly.

'The most unfortunate commander of all is the one with a telegraph wire attached to his back.'

*Field Marshal Helmuth Von Moltke (1800-1891),
Chief of the Prussian General Staff[xxxiii]*

Connectivity has had the effect of heightening the invidiousness of the commander's position in a very specific way. Commanders on the ground have always feared and resented the potential interference of more senior commanders, and ultimately their political masters, in their tactical decision-making. Perversely, as any reader of C.S. Forester's Hornblower novels will know, there is a special joy and freedom in being a frigate captain on your own thousands of miles and weeks or months of travel away from higher command. Nowadays, no commander is ever really disconnected from the potential meddling of political authority. Nor, for that matter, are politicians ever completely free of the temptation to stare down as though with Sauron's fiery eye on the One Ring to the lowest tactical level that the technology allows them.

The problem today, however, goes well beyond tactical interference.

The problem today, however, goes well beyond tactical interference. It is, rather, as Britain's Chief of Defence Staff has argued, that the main vector of change is not primarily in military technology but in the technology underlying society more generally. Changes in information technology are causing, he said, the fading of 'old assumptions... old frontiers and old frontlines', which are no longer impregnable to 'global networks of competing cultures'. [xxxiv] The resulting anxiety is particularly acute in what might be called the 'perceptual realm of conflict'. Essentially, what we are talking about here is the third element of the trinity: the support (or 'passion') of the people for the war. Commanders well understand the importance of this because it is well established in theory that big powers lose small wars when their home population becomes convinced that the war is not worth it and makes politicians bring their forces home. [xxxv] Thus we see such figures as H.R. McMaster, one of the most forward thinking and accomplished senior officers in the US Army today, write in the foreword to a recent text on influence and perception in modern warfare that,

Although combat in Afghanistan and Iraq continue to require the defeat of the enemy on physical battlegrounds, US commanders have discovered that lasting success over terrorist and insurgent groups requires winning on the battle ground of perception... Ideas are weapons in the information age... [xxxvi]

Be this as it may, there are at least two especially problematic aspects here that have prevented the nettle being grasped by its head. First, touching as it does upon the thorny issue of propaganda, and particularly of propagandising one's own people (the proverbial 'third rail' for defence establishments in the democracies), the literature on 'strategic communications' has generally avoided the full extent of the issue it is putatively meant to address. [xxxvii] Second, in the absence of strong political leadership on the logic and purpose of the wars they are in the responsibility has fallen

heavily on theatre commanders to maintain domestic will. A handful of them have been suited by temperament if not training to this role of the modern media general—notably David Petraeus until his recent downfall—but most, not surprisingly, have been fish out of water, mired in domestic politics in a way that is good neither for them nor the polity. [xxxviii] Perception matters in war—Clausewitz would not have disagreed; indeed his point, though he described it in the more elegant and less euphemistic way of his day, was that war is never solely directed against material things but is always aimed at the intelligences (or 'moral quantities') that give life to those material forces, and that separating the physical and the perceptual is impossible.

'The Dude abides.'

The Dude in the Joel and Ethan Coen film, The Big Lebowski (1998)

The late 20th century burgeoning of connectivity is historically unparalleled and the pace of the 'wiring up' the world is still sharply increasing. It is long past argument that this is causing us to do all sorts of things *differently*, whether that is how we engage in commerce and organise our economies, educate and entertain ourselves, maintain our social lives, and even attend to our spiritual affairs. But these are not *different* things: we still buy and sell, teach and learn, and talk and argue—things that as human beings we have always done. Surely, this distinction applies also to warfare and war. None of this is particularly threatening to Clausewitz's theory, which presupposes change in the character of the object of study. The trinity is not a device for fixing the meaning of war for all time. On the contrary, the simile of war as a 'chameleon' rests upon the essential mutability of these 'tendencies' within the trinity, their constant variance in strength and respective influence.

The trinity is not a device for fixing the meaning of war for all time.

Looking at contemporary warfare through the prism of Clausewitzian theory should not lead us to conclude there is something wrong with it as a conceptual frame. In fact, what it does quite well is illuminate that, to employ a cutting edge Internet meme, 'You're doing it wrong.' [xxxix] We have underestimated the tenacious hold of chance on the conduct of war and, entranced by a strategy of gadgets and plasma displays, forgot that information is not knowledge, knowledge is not wisdom, and wisdom is not foresight. [xl] Wisdom, in particular, has eluded the makers of policy. One may speculate, to judge from their speeches, this is because of their preoccupation with and apprehension of time and the sheer interconnectedness of things, in light of which it seems impossible, immoral even, to stop and ponder before leaping to action of one sort or another. This was especially evident in George Bush's January 2002 State of the Union speech, which fairly neatly encapsulated the enduring spirit of the age when it comes to security:

... time is not on our side. I will not wait on events while dangers gather. I will not stand by as peril draws closer and closer. [xli]

We have also not learned how to harness—in both the sense of restraining as well as guiding—the passions of the people who are no longer so well separated from conflicts, even those far abroad, by the gulf of incomprehension caused by distance. Instead, connectivity brings with it a sense of distance-killing immediacy as well as an illusion of presence. These are all challenging problems and not easier to solve by jettisoning a set of concepts that still illuminates them better than any others.

In 1889, the American inventor Thomas Edison who was touring Europe showing off to the great and the good his new

invention—the phonograph—visited Von Moltke who was then near the end of his long life. It is not unreasonable to say Edison was one of the ‘founding fathers’ of the information age. In a recording that still exists Von Moltke remarks that telecommunications really is an astonishing development in human history allowing us to do extraordinary things; but he points out too, rather poetically, that all our artifice cannot force nature to give what it does not wish to give because things in their *nature* are extraordinarily resistant to change. [xlii] This remains a valid reflection on the unchanging nature of war. Not bad for a man who learned his business in Clausewitz’s classroom.

References

- [i] Well, not exactly half and half. The small faction of Fourth Generation Warfare believers are banished by everyone else to the end of the garden to drink beer with T.X. Hammes. Meanwhile, the Hybrid Wars Gang shuffles after Frank Hoffman between the parties bumming cigarettes and explaining why everyone else is partly right and partly wrong.
- [ii] Tony Corn, ‘Clausewitz in Wonderland’, Policy Review, Hoover Institution (1 September 2006).
- [iii] Liddell-Hart’s criticisms of Clausewitz featured in much of his writing but were especially pointed in *The Ghost of Napoleon* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1934).
- [iv] Jon Tetsuro Sumida critically assesses Liddell-Hart’s critique of Clausewitz effectively in *Decoding Clausewitz: A New Approach to On War* (Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Press, 2008), pp. 25-35. The BBC Radio 4 programme ‘In Our Time’ which (17 May 2012) featured an episode on Clausewitz with Profs. Hew Strachan, Saul David, and Beatrice Heuser also touched upon the man and his critics.
- [v] ‘Context’ is at the top of the list in Colin Gray’s *Fighting Talk: Forty Maxims on War, Peace and Strategy* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Press, 2009), pp. 3-6 in which he quotes approvingly and at length the historian Jeremy Black’s point that war ‘in its fundamentals’ changes far less, and less frequently, than is widely supposed. See, Jeremy Black, *War and the New Disorder in the Twenty First Century* (New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 163-164.
- [vi] Quote is from Beatrice Heuser, *The Evolution of Strategy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 13.
- [vii] The preference for ‘connectivity’ as opposed to, say, the currently very popular prefix ‘cyber’ is that it more accurately reflects the fact that the ‘Information Age’, ‘Post-industrialism’, or ‘Network Society’ (you may take your pick of a range of roughly cognate descriptors) is driven not only by burgeoning digital communications, but also by webs more generally. Post-war mass migration and ease of travel, as well as the liberalisation of trade are equally important parts of the ‘globalisation’ (another buzzword for the same phenomenon) jigsaw. The literature on the subject is vast but the key texts are Peter Drucker, *The Age of Discontinuity* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969) and, Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1973). A more recent work specifically focused on security is David Betz and Tim Stevens, *Cyberspace and the State* (London: Routledge for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2011).
- [viii] Robert Hassan, *The Information Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), p. 13.
- [ix] William H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society Since AD 1000* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982).
- [x] The Austrian field marshal, Prince de Ligne, waxed poetic about it: ‘A God, said Vegetius, inspired the legion, but for myself, I find that a God inspired Vegetius’. Quoted in the introduction to *De Re Militari* [The Military Institutions of the Romans] by Lieutenant John Clarke in Brig. Gen. T.R. Phillips (ed.), *The Roots of Strategy*, Vol. 1 (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1985), p. 67.
- [xi] Archer Jones’s magisterial account of *The Art of War in the Western World* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001) is illustrative of these points. Chapter 6 on the Napoleonic Wars is centred on the theme of tactical and strategic adaptation, whereas Chapter 7 covering the period from Napoleon’s defeat to the outbreak of the First World War is concerned primarily with technological change.
- [xii] Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), p. 461.
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Quantum Strategy: The Interior World of War

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Strategy – the consideration of ways, ends and means – is an inherently practical subject, concerned as it is with translating aspirations into realizable objectives. The essential feature of strategy, as Colin Gray describes, is that it functions as the 'bridge' between tactics – actions on the ground – and the broader political effects they are intended to produce.[i] For this coherently parsimonious reason strategy, in both its operational and academic manifestations, concentrates on practices as physically revealed phenomena. Strategy is, thereby, revealed in clearly observable facts and things, most notably in its association with actions in war. In this regard, strategy, in its application, and in its study, is about palpable acts and outcomes: armed clashes, organized violence, plans, battles, campaigns, victories and defeats.

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The purpose of this brief essay, however, is to suggest that strategy is, or certainly can be, far more than an understanding of tangible phenomena. It can be pursued further back into the realm of the intangible. This is not to imply that the non-material aspects of strategy and war have always been ignored. Far from it, serious analysts do very much consider the moral forces that give rise to war,[ii] and which in many other respects impact on values and preferences that have such a crucial bearing on the material practice of strategy. What this article intends to convey, nonetheless, is that a closer look at the un-manifested forms of strategy can reveal

an interior world of war, which can be just as fascinating a source of insight into both theoretical and real-world concerns as the concrete, perceptible, realities. While an emphasis on the ethereal and the abstract may present itself as an original, even transgressive, appreciation of strategy, one suspects that the argument here is not necessarily the first to have made this connection. The figure of Clausewitz, as ever, looms as someone who may have trod this particular intellectual path before.

The Result in War is Never Final

In a short, and certainly under-analyzed, passage in *On War*, Clausewitz observes the following: 'even the ultimate outcome of a war is not always to be regarded as final. The defeated state often considers the outcome merely as a transitory evil, for which a remedy may still be found in political conditions at some later date'.[iv] Innocuous though these words might sound on first reading, these two concise sentences challenge wholesale the basis of many popular conceptions of war and strategy as a discernible and recognizable condition, manifested in the realm of physical phenomena. It is this challenge that leads into an appreciation that, as process and practice, war and strategy possess an interiority worth exploring in more detail than may have been the case hitherto.

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Before elucidating the point, why should the argument assert that this important Clausewitzian thought has been neglected? Arguably, it has been so because strategists, be they civilian policy makers and planners, military leaders, perhaps all of us to some degree, want to believe that we have resolved problems and dilemmas. We wish to bring finality. After all, effective strategy is about constructing viable means to reach an *end*, a finite point. When considering the condition of war, the contention appears almost tautological. Who in their right mind wishes to have a continuation of

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hostilities? The desire is to devise successful ways to bring matters to a conclusion. One wants a result, preferably outright victory, to make war final.

However, in his passage declaring that the result in war is never final, Clausewitz contests such common expectations about war and strategy. An apparently definitive result – a victory or defeat – does not, *ipso facto*, mark a point of termination. It is not the case at all. War is not subject, he indicates, to clinical endings or for that matter, by implication, clear beginnings. Without wishing to stretch the analogy too far, in the manner that quantum mechanics questions continuum theories in the physical sciences, Clausewitz is inviting readers to engage with the thought that rather than presuming war and strategy possess wholly linear qualities that move logically from idea, to action, to completion, that, ultimately, at some deeper level of understanding, seemingly decisive outcomes in war are, in fact, inherently uncertain and unstable.

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In these few lines, then, Clausewitz is intimating that, even if war does apparently end conclusively through a crushing blow inflicted by one side on another, war possesses the potential to reconstitute itself through 'resistance'. What 'resistance' actually is and where it comes from, though, is ambiguous and unpredictable. Resistance is the volatile sub-atomic matter of strategy.

The Roots of Resistance

It is these general propositions that represent the beginning of an excursion into quantum strategy. The use of the term quantum strategy is not intended to sub-divide the notion of strategy into a distinctive element, which might falsely multiply entities and create confusion. The use of the term is introduced solely in order to help think and reason by analogy with the aim of showing, firstly, that there is a deeper realm of strategy that may be explored, and secondly, to illustrate that this realm is, ultimately, inseparable from the whole.

Conceivably, it must be that if you are to truly make war final, you have to do far more than destroy the enemy's armed forces

To begin this excursion by analogy, then, let us start by posing a question. In theory, could one actually secure a result in war that *is* final? Conceivably, it must be that if you are to truly make war final, you have to do far more than destroy the enemy's armed forces, that is, the physically observable instruments of resistance. You have to destroy the entire means of resistance. But what are the constituents of resistance,

and how might they be eliminated forever? As Clausewitz's statement discloses, it is an aspiration that, in practice, exists beyond the realms of human possibility.

To take a perhaps not so hypothetical example: imagine a situation where one side in war has clearly prevailed over the other in terms of the exercise of physical force. With the vanquished power's means of armed resistance destroyed the victor can impose its will via a treaty, a formal surrender, or simply by *force majeure* through the occupation of the adversary's territory. The outcome is, seemingly, categorical: the war is over. Yet, Clausewitz postulates that in war the result is *never* final. Why so?

What if, despite a condition where one side has clearly triumphed over another, producing a result that is definitive, a solitary individual flings a rock at a patrolling armoured vehicle of the occupying forces? Or perhaps a lone figure merely stands, shopping bags in hand, in front of a tank, preventing it moving, if only for a few seconds? Let us recall the centrality of Clausewitz's most renowned aphorism that war is a continuation of politics. Is the private moment of defiance a useless act of futility or a deed full of underlying political meaning? We can speculate that following Clausewitzian logic that these seemingly tiny, discrete, actions of the disaffected contain an essential moral force: the most basic form of resistance and therefore comprise acts of war in their purest theoretical and elemental sense.

If these singular acts of moral will are the most basic constituents of resistance then we can contemplate that, as such, they are purposeful, and intended to achieve or signal something. To that extent, they are significant because through such resistance, as Clausewitz noted, the opportunity is always there to remedy the 'transitory evil'. Symbolic deeds of individual resistance are the basic units of quantum strategy in action and always the precursor to full-scale war as a physical, collective and organized manifestation. Thus, may be others will see the youth throwing their rock and be emboldened to start throwing rocks themselves. A rudimentary escalation process is thereby initiated and perhaps a self-contained exploit culminates in a sustained armed campaign. Nor should we understand that such postulations exist only in the abstract if we consider, for instance, how a solitary act of self-immolation on the part of a Tunisian stallholder escalated into the so-called 'Arab Spring'.

Symbolic deeds of individual resistance are the basic units of quantum strategy in action

War and the Mind

If, to continue the analogy, an individual's apparently inconsequential action represents the atomic particle of strategy, then it may be posited that the sub-atomic matter of strategy resides in the mind of the individual who chooses to throw the rock or immolate themselves in the name of resisting an apparently settled political condition. Here, we can uncover another layer of meaning. To truly make war

final in a theoretical sense it is necessary to change, or conquer, the mind of every individual who might conceivably constitute an adversary.

It is in the practical improbability of conquering the mind that Clausewitz's observations assume evident plausibility. Not that it has stopped some from trying. A generation of twentieth century totalitarians, Soviet Communists, the Nazis in Germany, and Maoists in China, were all deeply interested in contesting the private realm – something rendered explicit in the writings of those like Erich Ludendorff, who not without reason titled his 1930s book *Der Totale Krieg* – total war – the notion of total war being applied as much to the fight for control over the minds of people as the actual instruments of the state apparatus.[v] Totalitarian constructs represent the ultimate attempt to make war final. But, according to Clausewitz, the result in war is never final. And so it turns out. Stalin asks "how many divisions does the Pope have?" Yet, in the end, a Polish Pope helps bring down Communism in Eastern Europe precisely because the Kremlin lacked the ability to control the interior world of a vast empire.

Political Power Does Not Grow Out of the Barrel of a Gun

Pondering Clausewitz's observation in the light of the failure of totalitarian attempts to make war final leads to an interesting, counter-intuitive, conclusion: political power does not grow out of the barrel of a gun, as Mao would have it; it grows out of the inner world, the passions and moral forces, of the individual. With this understanding it is possible to see Clausewitz's notion that the result in war can never be final is full of practical insight for the careful policy maker wishing to think 'strategically'. Given that war, as Clausewitz maintains, arises out of social forces at work in the minds of those in society then, logically, that is where a long-term solution to war should ultimately be sought. War arises from political conditions, so it has to be settled by political conditions that address the interior world if there is to be any expectation that a result in war will be of lasting significance.

political power grows out of the inner world, the passions and moral forces, of the individual

To give an example, the destruction of Nazi Germany's armed forces in World War II was wholesale. Undoubtedly its people were ground down to defeat: the country invaded, occupied and dismembered. The fact that it had come to this, however, testified to the hold that Nazi ideology possessed over the minds of vast swathes of the population. Arguably, it was not the physical ruination that Nazism necessarily wrought that reconciled Germans to the post-War settlement. What reconciled most people over the long term in the West was the construction of a functioning independent state, West Germany, and the development of a liberal democratic polity which provided the means of economic empowerment and personal political expression. Clearly, this was a situation that even the vanquished came to see as a more virtuous than the condition that preceded it, something that for most people satisfied that society's interior world. In the East, where a conscious attempt to gain control over the private realm of

thought was prevalent, it was, as we have noted, a different story.

The governing assumption is that the winner should not take all.

Thus, we can discern pragmatic wisdom in the view that the result in war is never final. Even in conditions where a social actor may be fighting for its very survival, when the war is over, and one side has secured victory, it pays to allow the adversary to survive in some sort of dignity. The governing assumption is that the winner should not take all. In the end, the winner has to live with the people it may have defeated and to keep them in permanent subjugation will be a lot more costly in the long run. The relentless attempt to extinguish resistance and keep a defeated people in subjection will, in all likelihood turn out to be self-defeating in the long run: it will keep the flames of grievance alive, only for the 'war' to be reconstituted through resistance at a later date in order to remedy the present 'evil'. The only alternative is to seek to wipe out every single adversary, and potential adversary, which is something likely to be disproportionate in cost and effort,[vi] and thus something utterly at odds with a proper strategic understanding of political conduct.

The past, moreover, testifies to examples of such practical wisdom. For instance, we can see such understandings at work in Count Otto von Bismarck's restraining influence on his generals during the wars of the German unification in the 1860s. Bismarck was determined to teach Prussia's enemies a lesson but never to humiliate, let alone exterminate, them. Likewise, we may see such applied virtue in a succession of so-called British counter-insurgency campaigns in the later twentieth century that, from Malaya to Northern Ireland, sought to placate one time adversaries with promises of independence, economic progress or a voice in government. Such examples can be said to make a result in war long lasting by addressing the interiority of war.

A Warning About Self-Limiting Strategies

Therefore, as well as offering pragmatic utility, the reflection on the lack of finality in war may also be seen to provide a warning that the remedy to political problems cannot be settled through self-contained technical and doctrinal solutions that seek only the defeat of the enemy through force of arms. For those tempted to argue that such a warning is merely commonsense, will find historical evidence in plentiful supply that demonstrates how easily commonsense is ignored in favour of military conduct that seeks to make war final: from the Schlieffen Plan that sought to address Germany's 'two-front' problem prior to World War I, to the American preference for technology and firepower over any real understanding of the interior motivations at work in the Vietnam war. Continuing failures to address what may be said to constitute the interior world of war have also been seen in arguments that allege degradations in the quality of contemporary British and Israeli strategic thinking that in the recent past have demonstrated a pronounced emphasis on inadequate operational solutions to complex problems, be they against the Taliban in Helmand province, Afghanistan, or the Hezbollah in the Lebanon, to the detriment of serious

consideration of what enduring political effects need to be achieved.[vii]

Conclusion: The Ubiquity of War

In conclusion, perhaps it is true that a concern for the interior world of war reflects merely that which is obvious for anyone who thinks about war and strategy in a systematic way. Even so, a consideration of Clausewitz's short statement on the result of war not being final is important, for it yet again re-connects war with politics. War *is* politics and it is at the level of politics that war is eventually resolved: a point always in danger of being forgotten by policy planners and military professionals, enamoured as they have so often proved to be, by self-limiting technical solutions that seek, impossibly, to bring an end to all resistance. Successful strategy in war is bringing a situation about that is better than that which preceded it, and this challenges ideas that military victories are the key to political victory – they are not. It is in an understanding of the interior world of war that a long-term result may more likely, and preferably, be found. In sum, applying a few basic precepts of quantum theory leads to an appreciation of what it is in the science of war, and in the study of ways, ends and means more generally, that is inherently uncertain, or even unknowable and uncontrollable. Such an appreciation, in the words of George Musser, 'enlarges our capacity to reason', which therefore facilitates the ability to think strategically.[viii]

Like the forces of economics, the quintessence of war is all around us. The impulse to war is ever present.

For those who might still insist that beneath all the talk of quantum strategy such thoughts are still just re-statements of self-evident truths, let us return to what might constitute the most radical implication of the claim that the result in war is never final, which is that it defies popular conceptions about where war begins. The lasting spirit of war is not, according to this understanding, necessarily an act of violence. It does not begin with armed force, organized or otherwise. It begins in the mind with an act of mental resistance, and it is in the mind that the ultimate goals of war are achieved or lost. The result in war can never be final, therefore, because, philosophically speaking, war is everywhere. Like the forces of economics, the quintessence of war is all around us. The impulse to war is ever present. It has no beginning or end. Physical warfare may burst out into the open at various points when certain interests and tensions culminate, but essentially war is always incipient, being latent in all social conduct. Not only does the ubiquity of war clarify why the result in war can never be final, it also, thereby, explains why strategy, as the title of this journal declares, is itself truly infinite.

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A U.S. Military Force-Political Objective Disconnect: Assessments and Assumptions Matter

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In light of recent US defense planning, there is a military force and political objective disconnect caused by recycled assessments leading to flawed military concepts founded on unrealistic assumptions. Examination of this disconnect provides an opportunity to then present some reassessments and refined assumptions. A military force-political objective disconnect often begins with ideal conceptions of war. For instance, *US military forces in the next century must be agile, lethal, and require a minimum of logistical support. We must be able to project our power over long distances and identify targets by a variety of means—then be able to destroy those targets, with an array of weapons. On land, our heavy forces must be lighter and organized in smaller formations that are easier to deploy. On the seas, we need to pursue promising ideas like ships packed with long-range missiles to destroy targets from great distances. In the air, we must be able to strike from across the world with long-range aircraft and with unmanned systems where military force is projected on the long arc of precision guided weapons. In space, we must be able to protect our network of satellites, essential to the flow of our commerce and the defense of our country. The best way to keep the peace is to redefine war on our terms.*

An alert reader of *Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for the 21st Century Defense* and recent US military concepts might recognize the abovementioned words and ideas. However, it was paraphrased from "A Period of Consequences" speech delivered by Presidential Candidate Bush at The Citadel in 1999.[i] Ironically, the idea of using networked precision-fires to rapidly defeat adversaries and to redefine war on our terms led, in part, to a decade of prolonged

war. In *Cobra II*, Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor critically noted that such ideas were "supposed to be nothing less than a Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) that would reduce the requirement for ground forces." [ii] Considering the similar rhetoric between past and present revolutionary ideas, strategists should ask: are we matching military force to complex political objectives and the security environment we have, or with the quick, decisive battle some foresee, once again?

Recycled Assessments

First, there is a military force-political objective disconnect caused by recycled assessments. Security and prosperity are enduring US political objectives. They are defined in the latest defense strategic guidance as security in Asia-Pacific for our nation, allies, and partners where prosperity flows from an open economic system. In the Middle East and North Africa, the US seeks political and economic reform as well as partnership fostering to ensure regional security. Meanwhile, the US military is pulling back by investing in over-the-horizon technology while enduring political objectives lean forward in an increasingly connected global economy that demands forward postured expeditionary forces. Three notable assessments highlight this disconnect. That is until an unforeseen event, miscalculation, or a timely reassessment forces an ends-means readjustment, with the latter being preferable.

there is a military force-political objective disconnect caused by recycled assessments

The first assessment is that the US is embarking upon a *new era* where once again everything important has changed about American behavior with the rest of the world. Here, the Asia-Pacific "pivot" comes to mind with China suddenly labeled a rising power despite having been a regional and global power for some 25 centuries less its 'century of humiliation.' While assessments of China's military rise are valid, our shift, as Robert S. Ross noted in *Foreign Affairs*, is based primarily on a "misreading of China's leadership where Beijing's tough diplomacy stems not from confidence

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in its [*military*] might but from its insecurity caused by internal issues.”[iii] History shows that China’s internal insecurity will only be exacerbated when combined with external threats. This was the case when China struck out against the US (1950), India (1962), Russia (1969), and Vietnam (1979).

A second assessment is that the permissive threat environment is slipping away as peer threats emerge with advancing technologies. As such, the US military should invest in ‘crown-jewel’ weapons to deter peer competitors through denial and kinetic punishment. In part, this recycled narrative dates back to the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA) 2003 release of Meeting Anti-Access Area-Denial (A2AD) Challenges report. This report was based upon a 2002 Department of Defense assessment that “vulnerable US military forces create incentives for adversaries to develop “access denial” capabilities to keep us out of their neighborhoods, and we must exploit long-range aircraft and stealthy platforms, while reducing ground forces.”[iv] Such assessments arguably did not serve the US well, neither with early precision-strikes in Afghanistan, nor with “Shock and Awe” in Iraq.

State and non-state actors are increasingly employing unconventional approaches to counter US strategy.

Paradoxically, the ‘permissive’ environment is not slipping away. State and non-state actors are increasingly employing unconventional approaches to counter US strategy. They methodically attack US strategic plans by presenting time-space, psychological, and political problems that net-centric and ballistic weapons simply cannot respond to. Essentially, they are one strategic move ahead of future US air-sea battle solutions that are predisposed to see a *military access problem* against a pacing military threat. Conversely, competitors and adversaries see a *political problem* where they seek to avoid set piece military decisions, to prolong war if it begins, and resolve to outlast the US or its allies. The Taliban attacking the US-Afghanistan exit strategy, China attacking US military concepts with coercive diplomacy and maritime bullying, Egypt and Iran using proxies, and quasi-state actors exploiting failed states are all examples of asymmetric counters to US conventional superiority.

Third, American military solutions are based upon an assessment that we must improve our power projection primarily with over-the-horizon weapons rather than with forward presence and human interaction. It is believed that superior weapons will deliver effects in denied areas allowing rapid exploitation of technology thereby making future war less dirty and dangerous. Additionally, long-range capabilities will create a window of time by halting enemy strikes, which is reminiscent of the *Halt Phase* strategy promoted in 1997. The problem is that niche weapons are often devoid of political purpose and can be ahistorical. As Eliot Cohen’s 1980 examination of system analysis revealed: it discovers what is sufficient for a given concept and weapon system and then finds the funds for procuring it [*at the expense of general military readiness*]. History, therefore, is of “no use other than to remind us of the importance of

understanding technological change, thereby reducing strategic challenges to a set of passive targets upon which our weapons will deliver effects.”[v]

Flawed Concept

Next, a military force-political disconnect exists due to flawed military concepts. Recycled assessments lead to concepts that seek to redefine *war on our terms*. Alcibiades, an Athenian General and proponent of the failed 415 B.C. Sicilian Expedition, promoted decisive battle and low risk to ground forces. After the US bombings of Japan in 1945, Major General Lemay offered that “ground forces are not necessary for the further prosecution of the war in the Pacific and the future of land armies has been decidedly curtailed.”[vi] The 1992 to 2000s RMA asserted that networked-effects based operations would change war by requiring fewer ground troops and by ensuring rapid execution. Today, as in the past, the ‘maturing’ revolution of counter-A2AD weapons offers appealing—networked, integrated to attack-in-depth to disrupt, defeat, and destroy (NIA-D3)—solutions to US strategic challenges.

A case in point is the air-sea battle (ASB) concept. In 2010, ASB was an *operational concept* offered to counter a rising China. It is qualified now as a *limited-operational concept* for weapons procurement, and a distinct concept that must precede littoral and land maneuver operations. ASB certainly has a role to play in war. At its best, however, ASB is an *operational phase* focused primarily on weapon kill-chain effects. Unfortunately, it is this phase (with its own public affairs engagement agenda) that is attempting to drive how all US military forces organize, train, and equip. Ironically, the more we prepare for the air-sea battle that some envision, the less we are unprepared for dirty and dangerous war.

Unrealistic Assumptions

Finally, there is a military force-political objective disconnect because of unrealistic assumptions. ASB assumes that adversaries, primarily China, will initiate military actions with little or no indications and warning with an all-out attack on US aircraft, ships, homeland, and allies with ballistic and cruise missiles. Prudence dictates that a strategist should never rule out an all-out-attack by a regional power. However, selective inattention to the most-likely quarrels in far off places is an unacceptable risk that can lead to war—World War I and Afghanistan come to mind. Additionally, why would peer competitors risk political and economic survival in war when they can counter US strategy with protracted approaches featuring relatively cheap civil-military weapons and proxy forces? This is exactly the type of campaigns that US strategy seeks to avoid due to political and economic considerations and this is precisely why adversaries may pursue it.

The remaining ASB assumptions note that US forces will be within the A2AD environment during hostilities, that all domains will be contested, and that no domain can be completely ceded to the adversary. First, it is a fact, rather than an assumption, that US forces will be within the A2AD environment considering US joint forces have been globally postured since World War II, based upon treaty alliances

and enduring national interests. Second, all domains being contested and not completely ceded is what history has recorded as combined arms, joint integration, or simply warfare. Moreover, it is not clear what strategy these assumptions support, and thus what political purpose they serve. If the answer is to *project power despite A2AD challenges* as one of the ten military missions in the latest strategic guidance, then how do assumptions of all-out-war reassure allies and promote economic stability as outlined in the same strategic guidance?

Collectively, such assumptions do not consider whether a strategic striking force that seeks to deny sanctuaries and hold an enemy's heartland at risk can also deter limited aggression, much less respond to politically complex events. Still, it is assumed that long-range capabilities will ensure access. Then, land and carrier-based strike assets will neutralize threats to ground forces, enabling them to conduct "mopping-up" operations. Mission Accomplished? In the process, we purchase deterrence at a very high risk. We stake enduring political interests on long-range weapons that national leaders may be reluctant to employ short of all-out war with China or Iran. Eventually, US strategy will be forced to reconcile such assumptions with the reality of being forward postured for the most-likely including proxy disputes and politically complex events against assorted actors.

Reassessments

Examination of this military force-political objective disconnect provides an opportunity to consider some necessary reassessments and refined assumptions. As Clausewitz noted in *On War's* final book, "when we contemplate all this [military-political objective disconnect], we are overcome by the fear that we shall be irresistibly dragged down to a state of dreary pedantry, and grub around in the underworld of ponderous concepts where no great commander, with his effortless coup d'oeil, was ever seen." [vii] Fortunately, strategy is iterative and demands more than a static concept of kill-chain effects misaligned with complex policy objectives. As such, reassessments can serve to address the means-end disconnect and reduce the expanding precision battle—real war gap (Figure 1.)

Fortunately, strategy is iterative and demands more than a static concept of kill-chain effects misaligned with complex policy objectives.

- An overarching assessment, as strategist Colin S. Gray highlights, is that our next century will be "another bloody century and that human political behavior as revealed by Thucydides will be driven and shaped by three master motivations: fear, honor, and interest." [viii] This assessment, along with the ones below, is also recycled. The difference here, however, is a foundation in strategic history rather than in mirror-imaging and wishful thinking.
- China's long-term internal problems and the rise of collective Indo-Pacific powers suggest that the biggest

geopolitical payoff is global commons presence—not contested commons [air-sea battle] confrontation. A future China under internal duress and provoked by long-range weapons may be forced to do what it has historically done—stoke nationalism for regime survival and strike out to show its resolve. Moreover, to *strike* [mainland China] and *alienate* [allies and partners] would undermine the objective to *unify* collective political-economic interests; it also undercuts an opportunity to *paralyze* China's disruptive approach of one-on-one maritime bullying of US allies with cooperative forward presence. [ix] If war does occur, then forward presence and engagement will have set the preconditions for favorable strategic and operational adaptation.

- *Transitions—past and potential—from post-colonial autocrats to extremist theocracies in Iran, Egypt, Libya, and Syria combined with failed states in Mali, Somalia, Congo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and Yemen makes for a volatile security environment.* It is, therefore, critical that we plan for a persistent presence to deter dirty and dangerous quarrels around the globe. Ironically, it was turmoil and insecurity in Afghanistan that led in part to a decade of war.
- *Where there is turmoil and insecurity, there is proliferation of militant groups and their effective use of extremist ideologies and crude weapons that erode Western staying power.* As noted by the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO), since January 2011, there have been more than 10,000 global IED events in 112 countries executed by more than 40 regional and transnational networks. [x] Clearly, a problem that it is not going away despite investments in advanced weapons. We view politically complex conflicts and crude weapons as an aberration to avoid; our adversaries view it as a strategic opportunity to exploit.

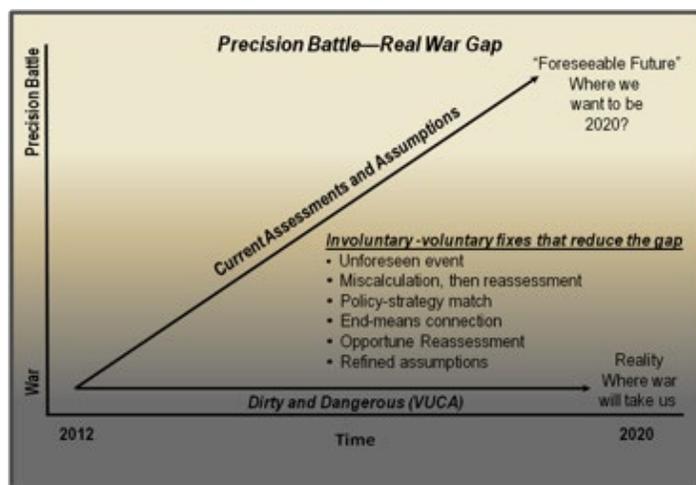


Figure 1: Precision Battle—Real War Gap. Current assessments and assumptions ignore the realities of war (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous)

Refined Assumptions

Refined assumptions can also correct the military force-political objectives mismatch and reduce the *precision*

battle—real war gap. It is critical to balance existing military-centric assumptions in operational concepts with some cultural predispositions, situational realities, and political and economic considerations.

Fear, honor, and interest put this mutual goal at risk. With this, a security dilemma emerges where there is a failure to understand motives, and ambiguity of offensive or defensive intentions.

- *US and China avoidance of war is of mutual political and economic benefit. Therefore, each would be reluctant to engage in adventures that may involve the risks associated with general war. Rising competitors will seek weapons parity to influence events short of war rather than first-strike capability to start a war. Fear, honor, and interest put this mutual goal at risk. With this, a security dilemma emerges where there is a failure to understand motives, and ambiguity of offensive or defensive intentions.[xi] If we only assume an all-out attack by a rising peer competitor as ASB does, then we only intensify our security dilemma with the potential net effects of general military unpreparedness, arms races, and aggressive alliance disruption.*
- *Forward presence and "armed suasion,"[xii] will asymmetrically counter advancing A2AD threats. 'Supporting fires' such as this will allow diplomatic, political, and economic instruments of national power to exert the decisive influence, and to ensure access. As such, forward presence helps to underwrite the security*

of the global economy; it invests in collective security to deter conflict; and it lends credibility to US security commitments. Spanning the vertical levels of war, it facilitates *strategic interaction* with competitors and allies while providing a vehicle for *operational adaptation* in events short of war and *tactical transitions* in war, and it buys time for *strategic reassessments* in times of crisis.

- *Still, rising competitors and adversaries will "strike" [happening now] with a series of long-term methodical moves to subtly absorb their peripheries or to build their caliphate to delay US political and military response and achieve their goals "without fighting." Transnational actors will selectively attack US interests and exploit failed states to promote their ideology and inflict the greatest possible political-economic damage on the US.*

Despite decades of what are touted as revolutionary military concepts and ever-advancing weapons, we cannot redefine war on our terms now or in the future. Nor, can we transform the security environment of today or tomorrow into a new era of military *surveillance and strike* solutions as we transition away from the so-called *dirty and dangerous* wars. History records such pitfalls as mirror-imaging and wishful thinking. As a result, military force assessments and assumptions become increasingly detached from complex political objectives, which only exacerbate the myth that future war can be a short and a relatively bloodless affair. While we should not prepare to fight the last decade of war, we should certainly stop preparing to fight the last tactical engagements where drones, Special Forces, and precision strikes have all appeared to make war more bearable. As we contemplate strategic hard choices and continue to reassess strategy, perhaps we should remember that air, sea, and space technology exists to support the one critical military tool we will need in war - ground and expeditionary forces made up of well-trained Americans on-the-scene.

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Strategy: How to Make it Work

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"[At] the highest realms of strategy... there is little or no difference between strategy, policy and statesmanship."

Carl von Clausewitz, On War[i]

It is broadly understood that the fundamental interaction described by the term "strategy" is the reconciliation of desired policy ends with the available means and methods of battle. However, strategists are practitioners in peace as well as war. They must not only translate policy objectives into military objectives, but must also engineer the very instruments that are required to prevail in future conflicts. A critical question raised by this dual-responsibility of strategy professionals is whether the conduct of military strategy can be properly divided from the provision of war's instruments in peacetime. In other words, is the strategy function, which governs war's conduct alien to the preparation for war, or is there a general nature that unifies the two?

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There is more at stake in how we answer these questions than merely adding nuance to our view of the strategist's craft. Our understanding of the necessary interaction between the function of planning for the peacetime military establishment and the function of translating policy goals into military objectives for war determines the perspective we assume in every aspect of strategy and statecraft. It is

the symbiotic link between policy and the conduct and preparation for war that distinguishes strategy from every other instance of organizational planning. At the national-level, strategy is necessarily disjointed absent a justification of policy. It is the inclusion of policy's rationale that makes strategy truly strategic. Strategic planning at the apex of our military institutions conceptually begins only after answering the existential questions of enduring purpose during peace as well as during war. Policy articulates the answer to those questions, and it is this dependency of strategy upon policy that represents the essential nature of what is strategic.[ii]

Senior U.S. military leaders have not accepted the distinction between crafting a strategy in the pursuit of given wartime goals and articulating a strategy in pursuit of enduring national interests. American general officers have frequently presumed to segregate strategy from policy under the premise of preserving professional autonomy and submission to civil authority. However, this commitment to proper civil-military relations undermines the planning bridge that binds strategy to the national will, in the form of policy, and ultimately makes military professionals less accountable by absolving them of any significant responsibility for providing cogent advice on what is within the realm of the possible. The public discourse of the past year regarding the future of the U.S. military has affirmed that pattern of behavior.[iii]

U.S. Army Gen. Martin Dempsey introduced the summer 2012 issue of *Joint Force Quarterly* with a brief article titled "Making Strategy Work" in which he affirmed the direction set by senior U.S. military leaders in support of the defense strategic guidance released in January 2012.[iv] In the article, the 18th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) holds that strategy is about balancing ends against available ways and means and that the military's decisions over the past six months have established a framework for doing precisely that. Gen. Dempsey summarizes the key points which he had been elaborating on through the spring months at several speaking engagements, reassuring the public that the military services were doing the necessary work to emerge from the heated political battles ready to protect American interests into the future. In that vein, the CJCS names three decisions in *JFQ* that he and the military service chiefs have made: "mainlining" new capabilities, rebalancing toward the Asia-Pacific region, and cooperation across parochial boundaries internal and external to the Department of Defense (DoD). He reiterates his confidence in those choices and asserts

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that the future rests on the challenge of implementing them.

This assertion, however, overstates the sufficiency of those choices for assuring the security of the U.S. It exaggerates their value by understating a necessary distinction between the nature of strategy in the operational and the strategic domains, and the operational nature of the choices that Gen. Dempsey highlights. This means that U.S. national security over the long-term remains at risk through acts of policy as much as from external threats.[v]

This means that U.S. national security over the long-term remains at risk through acts of policy as much as from external threats.

This article focuses on the underlying problems with Gen. Dempsey's line of argument and how those flaws point to broader issues with the prevalent understanding of strategic theory and its practice amongst senior leaders. At the root of strategy malpractice has often been the application of strategy's ubiquitous *ends-ways-means* construct. Carl von Clausewitz suggested this triune approach when he defined strategy as "the use of the engagement for the purpose of war." [vi] More recently, the trinitarian view of strategy was rearticulated in 1993 by retired U.S. Army Colonel Arthur Lykke, Jr., as a three-legged stool upon which rested national security policy, with each leg representing one of the aforementioned components of strategy. The metaphor facily conveyed the need to calibrate one's chosen ends to the available means and the ways in which those means could be feasibly employed.

The elegance and intuitiveness of Lykke's articulation of strategy led it to become broadly accepted amongst American strategy practitioners as a tool, and as a means for communicating the art of their profession. However, Lykke's conceptualization of strategy deals with the practice thereof and not its comprehensive nature. The brilliance of *ends-ways-means* is in how it intuitively conveys strategy's function and essential value, but, as a method, it ignores the unique and necessary requirements of strategy at the national-level – where one leads institutions, and not formations. Understanding the limits of Lykke's distillation of strategy is critical for institutional leaders because it is not enough for them to be managing available means to advance national interests. For something as complex as national defense, institutional leadership is necessarily also about driving organizations toward purposes that are enduring. It is this aspect of managing institutions that requires going beyond balancing Lykke's trinity.[vii] Strategy at the national level is as much about policy, and its articulation of ends, as it is about strategy's reconciliation of ends with ways and means. [viii]

Colin Gray, a leading strategy theorist, distinguished between the nature of strategies which are focused on operational issues, and hence contextualized, and the general theory of strategy which he describes as universal and timeless.

The simplistic utilization of *ends-ways-means* forces a narrowly reductionist view of strategy and precludes one from acknowledging the choices that must be made at the national-level.

The simplistic utilization of *ends-ways-means* forces a narrowly reductionist view of strategy and precludes one from acknowledging the choices that must be made at the national-level. The focus on allocating means towards identified goals imposes blinders on decision-makers by directing them into taking an episodic, or programmatic, perspective instead of adopting an enduring, or institutional, mindset. The former approach assumes the "why" or the purposes to which we align resources in our material preparation for future conflict. The latter demands a sober reevaluation of the goals to which we ascribe and a reconsideration of how we define those goals in a dynamic operating environment where central ideas, such as security, are perpetually subject to redefinition. The critical distinction between the nature of strategy in the operational world and that of the institutional, which is necessarily strategic, is what has been missing from the public discourse amongst senior defense officials and military leaders. A dismissal, or ignorance, of the divergent natures of the contingent and the enduring has been a major shortcoming in U.S. strategic planning.[ix]

It is in this regard that the January 2012 guidance and the choices described by Gen. Dempsey leave unfinished the task of focusing the U.S. military on a force structure and design which guards the nation's enduring interests and of offering a logic which effectively governs resourcing across the U.S. joint force. The critical test of a strategic vision and plan for any institution is the degree to which it enables the intelligent and responsible contraction, or expansion, of the institution according to the ups and downs of resource availability over time. As Gen. Dempsey himself has said, America's armed forces "will need to be selective in the joint capabilities [they] reconstitute after a decade of war." [x] Even so, what will the U.S. military do if it cannot have all that it desires?

The solutions designed in the present have thus far not offered a foundational logic for institutionally responding to the unexpected turns of the future. American senior military leaders have emphasized their role as responsible stewards and articulated institutional strategies which align to operational priorities, but they have not provided the strategic logic that would ground the military services in a coherent justification of the ends for which American armed force is to achieve. While strategy in general is about reconciling the use of means with the ends to be achieved, the necessary aspect of strategy at the national-level is the determination and prioritization of the strategic effects to be realized. It is at the national-level that one charts the future course and exercises the fullest expression of political initiative.

Leaders at this level alone have the power and responsibility for synthesizing moral values and material interests into a

coherent articulation of purpose or what Gray categorizes as "vision" (a concept of the desired condition that serves to inspire, and provide moral and political authority for, policy preferences and choices) and "policy" (the political objectives that provide the purposes of particular historical strategies). As such, national leaders have the freedom and burden of prioritizing those goals so that the fluctuation in available means can never lead to a loss of focus or resolve. When done properly, strategy for the nation and for national institutions captures what must be done, what should be done, and in what order those aims are to be abandoned in moments of exceptional austerity. An obstacle for properly exercising these functions of strategy remains the way in which the U.S. military has understood extant and future operating conditions.[xi]

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The operating environment itself has often been interpreted in tautological terms. In *JFQ*, Gen. Dempsey contrasts the global political trends toward stability with the disruptive trends toward the diffusion of destructive means, referring to the situation as a "security paradox." He concludes that "more people have the ability to harm us than at any point in many decades." [xii] There is no denying that the myriad threats present a daunting picture for senior military leaders, but the juxtaposition of political calm with the tumult of threats and vulnerabilities is less a paradox than a historically common problem for hegemony.[xiii]

Every great power has confronted like tensions during past transitions in the international order. The key is in avoiding the debilitating tendency of responding to every threat without rational calculations as to their essential significance to strategic concerns. Phillip II's Spain ultimately failed in this regard, fighting wars and shadows of war around the globe to the point of exhaustion, while Imperial Britain passed its trials in better condition. "The [Spanish] empire on which the sun never set" seemed to its leaders to have become "the target on which the sun never set," and Spain's response to those arrows mortally wounded Phillip II's empire before its culmination in 1580. So the creative tension between stasis and disruption, or from those that wish to reorder the world and those that wish to maintain that order, has not uniquely and capriciously aligned against the U.S. in the twenty-first century. The world has seen this play out before.

The strategy choices highlighted by Gen. Dempsey in *JFQ* ("mainlining" new capabilities, etc.) can therefore be justified as prudent tactical policy decisions for dealing with the evolutionary interaction between stability and conflict-driven change. They are not, however, strategic choices. The danger inherent in the current approach is that senior leaders have prejudicially determined that future conditions only require that the U.S. military choose how and where it

will likely operate and not in what it will, or will not, seek to achieve. Even in cyberspace and space, the investments in those domains represent changes in emphasis and structure rather than true strategic choices which acquire, divest, or reprioritize select ends. The perceived enormity of changes across the future operating environment seems to have led military leaders to abandon the exercise of strategic initiative in favor of optimizing the defense institutions as they currently exist. For example, the advent of U.S. Cyber Command and emergent initiatives which Gen. Dempsey cites are tactical outcomes, resourcing latent or warm-based capabilities in order to render them fully functional.[xiv]

The CJCS states that the real test of the military's strategy is in "putting the choices to work," but this presumes too much in both the soundness of the chosen strategy and the preparedness of future leaders to steer that strategy. The absence of strategic choice has artificially lowered the threshold for future success by shifting the focus from macro issues, which require strategic solutions, over to the component problems which privilege crisis management and incumbent interests in the bureaucracy. This runs in contradiction to Gen. Dempsey's own stated intent of driving the military services toward interdependence.[xv]

Arguably, the real test of strategic planning is not in implementation but in the fidelity that one's choices keep to the vital and important interests of the nation. This is as much about knowing what we will not do as it is about what we will do. More work must be done in this regard to bind near- and mid-term priorities, as outlined in the defense strategic guidance, to enduring U.S. national interests. This shortcoming in American national and institutional planning must be resolved if the U.S. military is to properly contribute to the security of its nation and of American allies and partners. American senior military leaders must be cognizant of this planning gap in order to identify all the necessary choices to be made. It falls to them as military professionals to ensure that the aggregate capabilities of the military are necessary and sufficient for preserving national interests when taken in combination with those of the interagency community. Such a comprehensive responsibility has been made all the more challenging for the U.S. military by the absence of a consensus amongst American elites over future U.S. grand strategy. Yet, while the military leadership cannot wait idly for such a consensus to emerge, the military service chiefs should be under no illusions about the adequacy of their institutional strategies until vital national interests have been properly ensconced in a reconciled balance of ends, ways, and means.[xvi]

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Beyond the conceptual issues, however, the other critical barrier to having effective and enduring institutional strategies for the military services has been uniformed leaders recusing themselves from deliberations on the ultimate purpose of

military force. General officers should offer their perspective when policymakers deliberate over the ends which military force must be prepared to serve. Generals and policymakers must understand, however, that involving senior officers in the deliberation over the purpose of military institutions is a distinct and separate matter from involving them in the determination of policy objectives. Clausewitz identified this dichotomy when he observed the convergence of policy and strategy at the national level but warned that "[in] no sense can the art of war ever be regarded as the preceptor of policy." [xvii] Generals may joke that they, unlike academics and businessmen, cannot refuse a task given to them, but this self-limiting assertion abdicates the duty of military professionals to never allow their civilian masters to be held responsible for misadventures in which they were not properly advised. No one should know better what is possible and plausible in war, and no single corps of individuals is more accountable when military institutions are ill-prepared than those in uniform. [xviii]

To fulfill their professional responsibility, senior military leaders must demand that the existential question (i.e., for what enduring national interests does military force serve and in what priority?) be answered while accepting that their elected leaders may yet ask for the impossible. Great Britain emerged victorious in the Battle of Britain in large part because the Royal Air Force's (RAF) Sir Hugh Dowding properly determined the ends to be pursued with the

approval of his civilian masters and chartered a rational strategy to make those ends manifest. Dowding's advice against expanding the RAF's commitment to the defense of France in May 1940 is evidence of the British commander's strategic comprehension. It is also proof of his unwavering commitment to a vital national interest (namely, protecting the home islands) and his understanding of the foundational assumptions that further defined that end. More important than his decisions in war, however, Dowding had used the preceding decade to build an RAF that was based on an understanding of the enduring policy ends to be achieved and that was thoroughly reconciled with those ends in its structure, equipment, doctrine, and strategic perspective.

The imperative in the U.S. today for senior military professionals is to likewise provide substantive policy advice for the peacetime transition of American military institutions to follow the end of major operations in Afghanistan. Gen. Dempsey and the military service chiefs must address this imperative in order to preclude Lykke's strategy construct from being a model road to ruin or merely a serendipitous path to victory. [xix]

Disclaimer: The arguments and characterizations presented in this document are the author's alone and do not in any way represent the policy or position of the U.S. Army Materiel Command, the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

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Must American Strategy Be Grand?

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Does America need a grand strategy? Is our current one defective? This essay submits that the concept of "grand strategy" in American policy discourse suffers from several major deficiencies. First, grand strategy is conceptualized as a dominant "big idea" instead of the steps that translate high concept into action. American grand strategy's conceptualization of strategy is divorced from classical strategy's instrumental focus on bridging violence and politics. American grand strategy's present form simply adds a superficially strategic character to what is predominately ideological foregrounding to national policy.

Like a family, American grand strategy and classical strategy need not always agree. But classical strategy provides a framework from which grand strategy originated, and American grand strategy's somewhat "grand" departure from this original grounding has not yielded greater analytical utility or practical value. It is time for a family reunion.

American grand strategy and classical strategy need not always agree

Grand Expectations

The author has previously registered his concerns with the idea of grand strategy from the standpoint of classical strategy. Yet this essay does not categorically reject the concept of grand strategy.[i] Whatever its divergence from the insights of classical strategy, it nonetheless endures in

American political life. Provisionally accepting its vocabulary, however foreign to the analyst or practitioner of classical strategy, is a hitherto more pragmatic course than outright antagonism.

Strategy itself is partly a process of negotiation and dialogue

Strategy itself is partly a process of negotiation and dialogue, and fruitful engagement with an eye towards improving the discussion of American grand strategy may yield strong benefits.[ii] Grand strategy has many prominent defenders known for their appreciation of military history and classical strategic theory, also suggesting that form of pluralism is essential for the functioning of useful debate on strategic theory. Williamson Murray, Eliot Cohen, Colin S. Gray are just some of the many noted scholars of classical strategy who have written about grand strategy.

There is, however, a critical difference between the ways in which military historians and American foreign policy analysts conceive of the term. In American foreign policy discourse, grand strategy's status as "grand idea" is highlighted. The average American grand strategist yearns to be a George Kennan, identifying the destination to which the ship of state travels. These views proffer "strategy" as progressive social transformation, conservative reaction, or some ungainly mixture of both. The instrumental focus on reconciling ends, ways, and means is lost in the quest to define a master concept that links ends, ways, and means together as an organizing principle.

In classical strategy, the high concept is the policy. But in American grand strategy, there is no distinction between policy and strategy.

In classical strategy, the high concept is the policy. But in American grand strategy, there is no distinction between policy and strategy. For example, Rosa Brooks critiques the

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Obama administration for lacking a grand strategy, which she defines as follows:

"[T]he big idea" of foreign and national security policy – the overarching concept that links ends, ways and means, the organizing principle that allows states to purposively plan and prioritize the use of "all instruments of national power," diplomatic, economic, cultural, and military." [iii]

Also, Anne Marie Slaughter recently favorably reviewed a set of proposed grand strategies that make similar claims, from a revised approach to liberal internationalism to a design for greater global sustainability.[iv] Lest it appear that this essay pick on one school of international relations unfairly, it should also be noted that realist critics have consistently opposed what they view as a strategy of "global hegemony" and called for a greater conservatism in international affairs. [v] What links both sides is their prioritization of *vision and narrative over implementation*. Grand strategy in American political discourse is foremost a *political choice* about America's ideal role in the world rather than a means of getting from point A to B.

Daniel Nexon understandably expresses boredom with the "grand strategy debate." Given the lack of new themes, we should all react with a roll of the eyes to the latest excited op-ed calling for a radically new grand strategic approach. [vi] What is being contested is not any new or interesting approach of relating ends, ways, and means but two ideologically inspired visions that will likely never see eye-to-eye. Strategy should not be theology, but there is little to the American grand strategic debate besides badly sung gospel. It should thus be no surprise that American grand strategy is, as the perennial critique goes, mostly aspirational in nature.

Grand Ideology

Barry Posen is correct that the best means of producing security is central to the American conception of grand strategy. But the abstract question of *what produces security* is deeply implicated in differing ideological conceptions of how society should be organized.[vii] As Beate Jahn has detailed, notions of the "state of nature" provided classical political philosophers such as Immanuel Kant, Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau an image of how a society could meaningfully advance.[viii] Security remains central to these social images. Hobbes' depiction of life in the state of nature provided inspiration for concepts such as the "security dilemma" in international relations, and Kant and Jeremy Bentham more explicitly contributed ideas as to how perpetual peace in the international environment could be established. The influence of Niccolo Machiavelli and Thucydides on conceptions of security is also likely very familiar to *Infinity Journal* readers and scarcely needs any elucidation.

Larger debates about philosophy and society have had a powerful, though only sometimes explicitly conscious, impact on American national security. Thomas Jefferson's idea of the "Empire of Liberty" was a vehicle for the protection of America's republican form of government. Alexander

Hamilton astutely observed that Britain had preserved its own liberalism because it was geographically isolated and thus could afford to keep a small army and focus on the legally protected production of wealth. He desired the same for America, instead of the large armies and absolutist governments of continental Europe.[ix] Aaron Friedburg has also tied American desires to preserve its unique system of government and political economy to American conceptions of national security in the Cold War.[x]

The Cold War-era discipline of modernization theory—the basis of so many Cold War development efforts—presupposed what Charles Tilly derided as an idea of a society advancing in "stages" to more prosperous and liberal forms of government. [xi] Even military strategy itself has been influenced by American ideology, as Mark Clodfelter argues in his survey of the American Progressive movement's influence on the World War II strategic bombing program.[xii] A conception of how society should be organized also suggests notions of *who can rightly rule*, a social fact central to American discourse that justified the subjugation of the Native American peoples and provided a basis for more than one hundred years of expansion.

American international thinkers have always struggled to create a conceptual schema that would produce policy implications for American security from notions of civilizational difference.

The ideological implications of identity and difference have also always been key to grand ideas about American destiny. From the early 20th century to Samuel P. Huntington's "clash of civilizations," American international thinkers have always struggled to create a conceptual schema that would produce policy implications for American security from notions of civilizational difference. Are the roots of "Muslim rage" hostility to modernity, as Bernard Lewis famously suggested? Is Henry Kissinger correct that Chinese national identity and Confucian heritage provides practical policy lessons for US-China relations? Scholars can endlessly debate whether or not these ideas are correct, misleading, or even bigoted. What matters is whether policy elites and popular pundits believe such ideas and incorporate them into their conceptions of foreign policy and national security.

The Vietnam-era "best and the brightest" took their inspiration from an implicit theory of identity (modernization theory) and the wellspring of Cold War liberalism. John F. Kennedy and his contemporaries pledged that the United States would "pay any price" and "bear any burden" to resist the Soviet Union, emphasizing the need for the US to compete with the Communists in the economic and political modernization of the former colonial world. The "Ugly American" had to compete for the allegiance of the peasant at the local level with Communists selling him a dream of a better life. These were not just empty words. They deeply entwined the US in political and military struggles across several continents, sometimes with horrific results. No less a Kennedy-Johnson man than Robert McNamara regrettably admitted that a

monolithic worldview blinded American policymakers to the politics behind the wars in Southeast Asia.[xiii]

The Chimera of Strategic Holism

Understanding the impact of ideology on American conceptions of grand strategy also means recognizing the holism implicit in recent grand strategic discourse. Overly loose conceptions of strategy's power and reach have been key to justifying liberal, conservative, and imperialist views of national destiny. Having a comprehensive view is not inherently bad, but the problem is that holism is often cast as a *rejection* of analytical and practical tradeoffs. If the world is an integrated, complex adaptive system, with even the most remote of factors intimately and causally linked, how does one determine what deserves attention or where to devote resources?

The recent Wilson Center monograph *A New National Strategic Narrative* states that national borders and natural barriers cannot protect states anymore, and in a "complex, interdependent, and constantly changing global environment, security is not achievable for one nation or by one people alone." It repeatedly argues that "our interests converge with those of people in every part of the world." The *Narrative's* authors call for an end to what they dub "binning"—the idea that national security, economic health, and other spheres of national activity should be considered separately.[xiv] At every turn, they try to link together disparate fields of social action into a tidy whole. At the international level, they try to draw connections not often glimpsed by mainstream foreign policy and strategy thinkers. Their discussions are often eloquent and empirically supported, but there is a fundamental conceptual problem lurking in the background.

Holistic approaches to grand strategy often overestimate our ability to really un-"bin" the social world.

Holistic approaches to grand strategy often overestimate our ability to really un-"bin" the social world. Certainly one would be foolish not to acknowledge the historical reality of both historical and contemporary economic, ideational, informational, and biological exchanges among the human community. Various aspects of national power are certainly interlinked. But choice is always involved in determining *which* flows are important and *what* to make of them. As Max Weber noted in his survey of the methodology of the social sciences, "all the analysis of infinite reality which the finite human mind can conduct rests on the tacit assumption that only a finite portion of this reality constitutes the object of scientific investigation." [xv]

No one man or woman can visualize the complexity of the interactions inherent in the social world and the natural processes that gave rise to it. Weber acknowledges that choice is involved in what is "worthy of being known," and debate can be waged about what political problems

deserve sustained American attention. The answer is simply to "bin" more wisely.[xvi] How can we best understand *some* of the world's relationships? For example, the logistical and informational web that connects jihadists in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia to al Qaeda's leadership in Pakistan obviously is more important to the American people and their representations than other hypothetical social formations.

The all-encompassing holistic character of grand strategy also enables "domestic politics by other means." Today, everything from childhood obesity to the need for rebuilding American infrastructure can be justified through reference to American national strategy. Expansive programs of domestic social and economic change can be justified by reference to external competition. If one considers strategy to be legitimately everything under the sun, it is hard to argue against the idea that fat children are a danger to American national security.[xvii] One's own political preferences are "strategic" and meaningfully advance the national interest, while the opponent is simply "playing politics."

The *Narrative's* authors, like many before them, dive deeply into domestic politics. They write about health care, education, and economic growth, and call for a "National Security and Prosperity Act" that would seek to harmonize domestic policies and foreign policies completely. This act is portrayed as disinterested and nonpartisan, despite entailing what would obviously be a far-reaching transformation of government and domestic life. That such a maneuver is impossible to pull off in society as politically divided as 21st century America barely needs to be stated.

The amorphous character of discourse on American grand strategy also makes effective critiques and assignments of responsibility effectively impossible. Andrew Bacevich's latest essay lays out a laundry list of American policy flaws, from issues of statecraft to military strategy. In total, it is much too diffuse a list of woes to dump at the feet of what he views as myopic military "strategists." [xviii] Can one chide Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Martin Dempsey for America's failure to adjust to the rise of Asian powers, shifts in global energy supply, climate change, or the "Arab Awakening? If strategy is everything, then who is really at fault for strategic failure?

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Strategic holism keeps strategy fixated on applied theology, and some determined reductionism would help grand strategists stick to the fundamentals. Weber warned that every meaningful value judgment about someone else's aspirations always will be a criticism from the standpoint of one's own worldview. Science, he declared, while not telling what *should be*, can delineate what is possible. [xix] Strategy, as a purpose-built bridge between politics and action, cannot tell a politician the "why" but can illuminate the "how."

Classical strategy, though very much different in conception from American grand strategy, should be emulated because it does not concern itself with big ideas. It is about big *actions*.

Must American Strategy Be Grand?

The dynamics of political enmity, competition between two opposed forces, and the management of violence are key to classical conceptions of strategy. If the various conceptions of strategy constitute up a family, classical strategy is the venerable elder. All children differentiate themselves from their elders. But classical strategists can no longer perceive basic family resemblance in their wayward American grand strategic children. Classical strategy, from the perspective of American grand strategy enthusiasts, may seem frustratingly reductive. But its grounding in thousands of years of history suggests that classical strategy cannot be completely tuned out. Strategy and American grand strategy need not always agree on the fundamentals but should at least be able to communicate with each other.

What separates *strategy* from political doctrine is an *adversarial character*. All members of the strategic "family" must deal with a fundamental disconnect between their own aims and those of others. Strategy is thus inherently relational in that it concerns itself with a power relationship between organized social entities and the means by which power creates different material realities that favor one side at another's expense. Power shapes the relative autonomy and choice of others.[xx]

A grand strategy thus cannot be about setting the grand idea.

A grand strategy thus cannot be about setting the grand idea. Rather, strategy must be about what—or more importantly, *who* stands in the way of the idea becoming reality and how he or she can be made to accept it. American grand strategy should be a technical and instrumental assessment of the gap between a presumed future vision of the ordering of the social world and the present. It would abdicate the normative content of setting national aspirations to politicians and polemicists.

Rather, the task of a grand strategist should be to delineate the *ways and means* necessary to use national power to

accomplish the ideological consensus. The remit of the grand strategist's reach would also be radically circumscribed. The problematic nature of the policy-strategy distinction means that a restrained grand strategy would still impinge on domestic politics. But its inherent clash with domestic politics would be nonetheless be substantially minimized down from the substantial domestic transformations American grand strategy demands today.

A Truly Grand American Strategy

A hypothetical American grand strategist advising Thomas Jefferson would not draft a brilliant policy memo calling for the *idea* of an "Empire of Liberty." Instead, he would tell Jefferson what kind of army such an Empire would necessitate, the political and social relationships to be leveraged, and the economic costs to be borne. He would analyze how British, Spanish, and French military forces on the continent would impede the realization of the Empire of Liberty and the steps that might be necessary to overawe them. But perhaps more important is what our hypothetical Jeffersonian grand strategist would *not* do.

He would not use his strategic calculations to dictate to Americans how many calories their children should eat; he would not strain to connect the troop requirements for checking British power in Canada to the environmental and urban design practices of the day, and he would understand that most of the world's complex interconnections do not relate to his analytical task. He would eschew devising claims about whether or not the world was more complex or adaptive than before. Whenever our grand strategist would be tempted by such considerations, he would remember the ancient tribulations he learned in his childhood study of classical Greek and Roman history and conclude that complexity and adaptation is simply an inescapable and timeless part of the strategist's burden.

Finally, he would accept that his political masters determined whether a liberal, realist, or constructivist national policy was best. International relations theory, while informing his own thinking, did not *determine* his strategic vision. His task was to plot how fine ideological aspirations might be realized in a politically divided nation with a perennially short attention span. Our intrepid fellow scribbling strategic calculations in longhand would certainly not be a classical strategist. But history may very well come to regard him as an able American grand strategist.

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The Mythology of Grand Strategy

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Lukas Milevski is writing his PhD dissertation on the historical evolution of grand strategic thought under Professor Colin S. Gray at the Graduate Institute of Political and International Studies, University of Reading. He is the 2010 winner of the RUSI Trench Gascoigne essay competition and a member of Infinity Journal's Special Advisory Group. Some of his previous articles have been incorporated into university and war college syllabi on both sides of the Atlantic.

Grand strategy means different things to different people. Its meanings range from Robert Art's restricted definition that "a grand strategy tells a nation's leaders what goals they should aim for and how best they can use their country's military power to attain these goals,"[i] to most major foreign policy analysts' view "that 'grand strategy' and 'foreign policy' are not synonymous. Grand strategy, the conceptual framework, is necessarily broader than foreign policy, the political actions of the state in international relations." [ii] As one astute observer noted,

[g]rand strategy, it turns out, is one of the most slippery and widely abused terms in the foreign policy lexicon. The concept is often invoked but less often defined, and those who do define the phrase do so in a variety of different, and often contradictory, ways. The result is that discussions of grand strategy are often confused or superficial. Too frequently, they muddle or obscure more than they illuminate. [iii]

Most definitions, however, hold to a particular shared set of myths about grand strategy. These misconceptions are generally either factually incorrect or distinctly arguable, yet they are largely taken on faith by today's grand strategic literature.

Most definitions, however, hold to a particular shared set of myths about grand strategy.

Two particular misconceptions will be treated herein. The first is merely factual, reflecting a relative lack of historical awareness within a segment of the literature. The second concerns the value of the trajectory of the evolution of grand strategic thought and thus, being subjective, may be argued either way. The first misconception is the common idea that Basil Liddell Hart invented the concept of grand strategy. The second *subjective* myth is that the post-WWI and especially post-Cold War expansion in the meaning of grand strategy benefits strategic studies or international relations, in theory or in practice. The aim of this article is not to establish a proper meaning for grand strategy, nor to condemn the existence of the idea as unnecessary or counterproductive to theory, or practice, but rather to indicate that the grand strategic literature lacks appreciation of its own history, of how the concept has developed over time. Any serious attempt to define grand strategy within, or remove it from, wider strategic theory must be founded upon a full understanding of its evolution first and foremost.

The Liddell Hart Myth

The notion that Liddell Hart introduced the concept of grand strategy to strategic studies is prevalent.[iv] Liddell Hart first mentioned grand strategy in his 1925 pamphlet *Paris, or the Future of War*, by suggesting that "the function of grand strategy [is] to discover and exploit the Achilles' heel of the enemy nation; to strike not against its strongest bulwark but against its most vulnerable spot." [v] This initial formulation was swiftly followed by a more familiar one:

As tactics is an application of strategy on a lower plane, so strategy is an application on a lower plane of 'grand strategy.' If practically synonymous with the policy which governs the conduct of war, as distinct from the permanent policy which formulates its object, the term 'grand strategy' serves to bring out the sense of 'policy in execution.' For the role of grand strategy is to co-

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ordinate and direct all the resources of a nation towards the attainment of the political object of the war—the goal defined by national policy...Furthermore, while the horizon of strategy is bounded by the war, grand strategy looks beyond the war to the subsequent peace. It should not only combine the various instruments, but so regulate their use as to avoid damage to the future state of peacefulness, secure and prosperous. Little wonder that, unlike strategy, the realm of grand strategy is for the most part terra incognita! [vi]

Yet, this elucidation is where Liddell Hart's development of grand strategic theory ends. His paragraphs concerning grand strategy are repeated nearly unchanged through numerous publications, even to the third edition of his magnum opus, *Strategy*. In 1967, 28 years later, "the realm of grand strategy is for the most part *terra incognita*—still awaiting exploration, and understanding." [vii]

The sudden lurch in Liddell Hart's definition of grand strategy between 1925 and 1929 notwithstanding, he never developed any momentum for exploring grand strategy, which itself raises questions as to whether he truly did introduce the concept to strategic studies. He confidently maintained that grand strategy was largely unexplored, without ever pushing the further boundaries of understanding himself. This is not the behavior of a theorist eager to impress upon his audience the worth of an important idea. "Liddell Hart was a corsair... He did not sift evidence discriminately to see what would turn up; he ransacked it thievishly and bagged what he could find." [viii]

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Throughout the 1920s, Liddell Hart had a close working relationship with an older military theorist, John Frederick Charles Fuller, who overawed even Liddell Hart at first. Indeed, it has been suggested that "[s]o profoundly impressed was he [Liddell Hart] with the book [Fuller's *The Reformation of War*] that he simply plagiarized it almost lock, stock, and barrel in his own first important book, *Paris, or the Future of War* (1925)." [ix] As a corsair, Liddell Hart may simply have stolen the idea of grand strategy from Fuller, who had actually been using the term with familiarity during the First World War, not bothering to define it even in a 1917 report to his superiors entitled "Projected Bases for the Tactical Employment of Tanks in 1918" as if it already had some sort of currency with practitioners at the time. [x]

The notion that Liddell Hart introduced the idea of grand strategy being thus disproven, the task yet remains to indicate just how old the usage of 'grand strategy' is. "The earliest citation to *strategy* in the second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* is from 1810." [xi] The first identified use of the term grand strategy to date follows surprisingly soon thereafter. The term was used with familiarity as early as 1834, [xii] but the lack of an explicit definition may imply an even older

usage and currency. The development of such a term and attendant concept was probably inevitable. Bernard Brodie noted that "[s]o dynamic and pregnant a word [as strategy] was bound to be applied also to numerous other kinds of competitive situations". [xiii] That it happened so quickly is noteworthy, even though the actual earliest origins of the term remain obscure. The real origins may be important to the history of grand strategic thought, to why a separate form of strategy developed, or they may not be. Without knowing, the importance of the ultimate origin is impossible to gauge.

Whether or not the actual meaning of grand strategy, so early in Anglophone strategic theory is recognizably grand strategic today is not only immaterial, but indeed leads directly to the second misconception. This misconception is that there is a single proper meaning to grand strategy, or at least that it rightly belongs to a certain family of concepts – foreign policy – rather than to strategic studies.

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The Trajectory of Grand Strategy

The mythologized history of grand strategic thought as framing foreign policy is a conflicted one, torn between two competing interpretations. One interpretation states that "[t]he concept of grand strategy has recently regained prominence among international and diplomatic historians. It evolved from the study of military strategy and history, where the idea has an old pedigree... But the term itself, as employed today by international historians, is a recent invention. It has been broadened to encompass a country's foreign-policy outlook in war and peace." Yet this very same exposition also reveals the second interpretation of the mythology, for "[c]lassical realists – intellectually closer to political philosophy and history – understood the value of the concept of grand strategy to the study of foreign policy." There indeed was an allegedly "classical concept of grand strategy in international relations", despite its "recent invention" by certain luminaries in the field. The conflicting interpretation concerns the history of grand strategic thought, of how and when the prevailing modern concept originated. Within the space of three pages, this source promotes both of these conflicting interpretations.

This conflict reveals a segment of the relevant scholarship that appears insecure with itself. The broadened interpretation of grand strategy, as a framework for foreign policy, is eminently arguable: was it necessary or appropriate, is it actually strategy, and so on. The new breadth was never really justified as filling any appropriate need in the field, whether the field be strategic studies or international relations. Thus on the one hand, scholars wish to recognize their contemporaries who have contributed significantly to the modern development of grand strategic thought, to those who have defined the

direction it has taken in the past twenty years. On the other, the advocates of grand strategy as foreign policy framework have attempted, deliberately or not, to legitimize their novel use of the term by placing it within a mythologized continuity of meaning.

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To examine the second trend first, one may often see assertions of the timelessness of the foreign policy framework interpretation of grand strategy. "We don't have, per se, a grand strategy in the sense that we don't have what people historically mean by grand strategy," followed by allusions to diplomats such as Talleyrand and Bismarck as having had proper grand strategies. [xv] To unpack this tendency, to reach so far back into history to legitimize modern conceptions of grand strategy, one must appreciate how the Cold War influenced the form of grand strategic thought.

The United States and the West had a constancy of purpose for nearly fifty years, i.e. containing the Soviet Union. The policy of containment arched over all other, less important, US foreign policies and, as necessary, over the developed, implemented grand strategies for war. Ever since the end of the Cold War; however, the United States has been putatively adrift, unsure of what to do and what to strive for in the world. Since then many have proposed grand strategies for interacting with the world, including neo-isolationism, selective engagement, cooperative security, and primacy. [xvi] Yet, interpreting grand strategy in this manner reveals a fundamental misreading of the character of Cold War containment. Containment was never a generic policy for interacting with the rest of the world. Rather, it always had a very specific end, the internal collapse of the Soviet Union, and so was a specific policy to achieve that specific end, which only happened to accrue global dimensions because it was a policy concerning how one global superpower interacted with another.

By advocating particular manners of interacting with the rest of the world, advocates of any form of grand strategy are conflating ends with ways. One does not act in a particular manner merely for its own sake—and a country should do so even less—but because it is anticipated to contribute toward the achievement of a particular desired outcome. Given a particular end to achieve, ways can be discussed meaningfully, but without a given end, merely become hollow exchanges among various ideologies. Some international relations theorists have recognized this, noting that "[g]rand strategies are not nearly as important as grand strategists like to think, because countries tend to be judged by their actions, not their words". [xvii] The idea of grand strategy throughout its use has moved continuously away from strategy in its classical sense, reaching the stage where it is frequently not even associated with purposeful action at all, but merely with the expression of purpose or posture. The

current understanding of grand strategy, as framing foreign policy has but weak foundations, necessitating a long, legitimizing history to shore it up.

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Besides occasionally pointing to notable and successful practitioners of diplomacy, such as Talleyrand and Bismarck, the mythology also emphasizes particular theorists whose writings may be construed to contribute to the expansion and separation of the term from its military past. Two theorists in particular have eminent places in the mythology of grand strategic thought. The first and preeminent is its erstwhile originator, Liddell Hart, who is given pride of place due to his contribution as the supposed originator of the term. The second theorist is less recognized, and more frequently by Americans than by others: Edward Mead Earle. Despite this possible neglect, one scholar asserts his importance by suggesting that "[i]n the twentieth century, the subject of grand strategy as a topic for rigorous historical examination first appears in serious form in Edward Meade Earle's classic, *Makers of Modern Strategy*". [xviii] Paul Kennedy has attempted to define both men's places in the history of grand strategic thought, suggesting that

if Liddell Hart's ideas about British strategy remain debatable, his contribution to the study and understanding of grand strategy as a whole was very important. What he and, slightly later, Earle were arguing for was a substantial broadening of the definition of the term, to show what a complex and multilayered thing proper grand strategy had to be—and thus to distinguish it very firmly from the strictly operational strategy of winning a particular battle or campaign. [xix]

This is debatable. Liddell Hart's definition of grand strategy was hardly as broad as has been implied. He equated grand strategy with the policy governing the conduct of the war, and particularly with its actual implementation. "While practically synonymous with the policy which guides the conduct of war, as distinct from the more fundamental policy which should govern its object, the term 'grand strategy' serves to bring out the sense of 'policy in execution'." [xx] By tying war policy to the condition of the subsequent peace, Liddell Hart was only emphasizing the continuity of politics from peace to war to peace. He merely reiterated and extended Clausewitz's position that "war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means." [xxi]

Edward Mead Earle argued in 1942 that "[t]he highest type of

strategy—sometimes called grand strategy—is that which so integrates the policies and armaments of the nation that the resort to war is either rendered unnecessary or is undertaken with the maximum chance of victory.”[xxii] This definition does broaden grand strategy, but primarily only within the mythology of grand strategic thought, made possible by ignoring the writings of JFC Fuller. Fuller had suggested as early as 1923 that grand strategy was primarily a peacetime activity. “Paradoxical as it may seem, the resting time of the grand strategist is during war, for it is during peace that he works and labors. During peace time he not only calculates the resources in men, supplies and moral forces of all possible enemies, but, having weighed them, he, unsuspected by the enemy, undermines them by a plan.”[xxiii]

No writer on grand strategy has ever justified his own definition.

Interpreting these explications as supporting a broader definition of grand strategy lacks the one crucial element that would confirm the broader definition. No writer on grand strategy has ever justified his own definition. Rather, all the early writers who employed the idea of grand strategy—including Julian Corbett, Fuller, Liddell Hart, and Earle—merely assert their individual definitions of grand strategy. There was no attempt by any of them to compare his concept of grand strategy against any other, even to those of contemporaries or close associates, nor to discuss the merits of his own interpretation. Definitions of grand strategy to date have always been arbitrary, starting points for analysis rather than the result of reasoned examination. The reason Liddell Hart and Earle are remembered, but Corbett and Fuller frequently are not, let alone the usage of grand strategy dating from the 19th century, is because of the state of grand strategic thought today. As Brodie noted, “[i]t is characteristic of our convictions, in strategy as in all affairs of life, that we tend to regard them as natural and inevitable.”[xxiv] The mythology of grand strategy is a form of historical cherry picking which conforms to the current structure of grand strategic thought by imposing an ahistorical, relatively unchanging meaning onto the term ‘grand strategy.’

There never was a golden age of grand strategic thought, one when consensus on its meaning existed. Consensus still does not exist today. It did not exist between the wars. At about the same time that Earle’s *Makers of Modern Strategy* was published, so too were two other books. *A Study of War* by Quincy Wright defined grand strategy as “[t]he management of operations so as to determine the times, areas, and results of campaigns in order to win the war”.[xxv] *Grand Strategy*, by Henry Antony Sargeant and Geoffrey West, by contrast, defined the role of grand strategy as dealing “with the connections between war and the rest of the society or civilization in which war occurs.”[xxvi] During the 19th century, grand strategy was frequently worse, even more ill-defined, if defined at all, and in some cases there appears to be little

difference between it and strategy. Grand Strategy secures those combinations, which will assure the highest possible advantage in the employment of military force. It deals with the theatre of war, its character, resources, topographical features, inter-communication, and all substantial difficulties to be overcome in the way of success.”[xxvii] Moreover, as with strategy itself, grand strategy swiftly found application beyond the fields of strategic studies and even of international relations.[xxviii]

Conclusion

How, then, does one attempt to understand grand strategy fully and conscientiously? The answer is: historically, first and foremost. Brodie’s comment on our human tendency to consider our own convictions natural and inevitable continues:

However, if we examine the history of ideas contained in these convictions, we usually find they have evolved in a definitely traceable way, often as the result of the contributions of gifted persons who addressed themselves to the needs of their own times on the basis of the experience available to them. Our own needs and experience being different, we are enabled by our study to glimpse the arbitrariness of views which we previously regarded as laws of nature and our freedom to alter our thinking is thereby expanded. Where new circumstances require fundamental adjustments to our thinking, such aids to adjustment may be useful.[xxix]

Grand strategy must be treated historically. Indeed, the history of grand strategy as an idea must be delineated and explored: how the idea evolved; what the strategic and geopolitical circumstances were which led to its evolution; how it fits in with other ideas; how it came to be differentiated from military strategy; and so on.

Establishing grand strategy within broader strategic history, and within the history of ideas, will require jettisoning cherished myths. Observing the changes in the meaning of grand strategy, in their historical context, not only will allow one to ascribe purpose to each step in a messy succession of ideas but also to fit it within wider strategic theory. This will allow measurement of the utility of the successive and parallel ideas of grand strategy, both in theory and to the particular strategic contexts in which they were born. A mature understanding of the history of the concept is the first step to a mature understanding of the idea itself—of what it should comprise, of what questions it should seek to answer and what issues it should strive to address, and even whether the concept itself is necessary at all, or whether it merely distracts attention from or dilutes more useful concepts. Once strategic studies has an understanding of how and why individual ideas on grand strategy as theory were developed, it may then proceed to develop the next iteration of the concept, or to excise the idea entirely.

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