

Because strategy never stops...

Infinity Journal



IN THIS EDITION

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A Note From The Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of Infinity Journal

A few months ago we released a 'Back to Basics' special edition (December 2013). Its popularity grew faster than imagined and we even received compliments from some high-ranking officials praising the edition. And yet, here we are in this editorial going back to basics, as we continue to receive article after article with a misunderstanding of the triadic hierarchy of war: policy, strategy, and tactics. We are not altogether sure that this is necessarily a bad thing though. After all, learning is a process, and we cannot expect our readers to simply take our word for it, no matter how much we wish you would. So, if not our word, how about what history has to say?

From the bottom-up: "There is only one means in war: combat... the fact that only one means exists constitutes a strand that runs through the entire web of military activity and really holds it together." This may have been written nearly 200 years ago, yet it remains valid for all wars, past, present, and with a very high degree of probability, the future. The means of war is fighting. In its essentials, that is what war is all about: applying the fight so that we can gain the political condition that we seek. But, should we desire to end up like Hannibal in Italy and Carthage shortly thereafter or Germany at the end of both World Wars, then a grasp of the following is critical: the means of war demands a helping hand to it connect to its purpose, our policy. That helping hand (or 'link' or 'bridge', whichever you prefer) is strategy, and its job is to assist in making use of the fight for the purposes of ending the fight on our terms. It is all too easy to perceive strategy as an abstract concept. It is not. Strategy is a very real, very serious activity. Without the helping hand, military behavior will not connect with our purpose, and nothing in war is more important than our political purposes for fighting in the first place.

Devoid of this understanding, you can expect your mind to end up right back in that confused place that Carl had already understood was running rampant centuries ago. Rather than understanding war for what it really is - a true political instrument by way of fighting - you can continue to expect individuals to present you with 'new theories', "as they try so hard to make their systems coherent and complete that they are stuffed with commonplaces, truisms, and nonsense of every kind." Sound familiar today? Take our advice: stick to what thousands of years of history has been kind enough to offer.

William F. Owen
Editor, Infinity Journal
Winter 2014

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Politics, Strategy, and the Stream of Time

Colin S. Gray

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Professor Colin S. Gray is a strategist, author and professor of international relations and strategic studies at the University of Reading, where he is also the Director of the Centre for Strategic Studies. Professor Gray served five years in the Reagan Administration on the President's General Advisory Committee on Arms Control and Disarmament, including studies of nuclear strategy, maritime strategy, space strategy, and Special Forces. Professor Gray is also a member of *Infinity Journal's* Editorial Advisory Panel. He has written over 25 books, most recently including *The Strategy Bridge: Theory for Practice* (2010), *War, Peace and International Relations: An Introduction to Strategic History* (2nd Edition, 2012), *Airpower for Strategic Effect* (2012), and *Perspectives on Strategy* (2013). He is currently writing *Strategy and Defence Planning: Meeting the Challenge of Uncertainty* (forthcoming, 2014).

It is a commonplace truth that we do not waste valuable time by debating matters that are common knowledge, or at least are presumed to be such. Occasionally, however, one is faced with a professional mission that requires examination beyond that which is readily visible on the surface. This can be uncomfortable and unusually challenging for those of us who typically work on problems about which there is less consensus – often, that discomfort comes from the problems' very familiarity. This essay has been triggered by the necessity of my venturing into unusually perilous waters as a consequence of an attempt to grapple with some exceptionally challenging issues. What follows here is a very terse report on some of the more troublesome issues with which I found myself obliged to deal. In the interests of clarity and discouragement of unhelpful verbiage, the text below is organised into answers to four large questions that are of the utmost importance to the purposes of *Infinity Journal*.

Q1 What do we mean by 'politics'?

Carl von Clausewitz could hardly be clearer than when he tells us that 'war springs from some political purpose'.^[i] He continues by explaining that 'war is not a mere act of policy but a true political instrument. . .'; policy, he insists

'...will permeate all military operations, and, in so far as their violent nature will admit, it will have a continuous influence on them'. But, one should ask, just what is meant by this rather abstract concept that we refer to glibly, even unthinkingly, as politics? The most plausible answer, shocking though it can appear at first sight to some audiences, is that politics is simply influence and the process that achieves it – and by that one has to mean relative power (the ability to be influential). This simple claim would belong properly in the basket of banalities, were it not for the fact that it is so obvious that its implications commonly escape attention. When, in 1936, American political scientist Harold D. Lasswell began a book with the flat claim that '[t]he study of politics is the study of influence and the influential', he was expressing a profound epiphany.^[ii] As students of strategy we may forget the ever dynamic foundation of our subject that pertains to relations of relative influence (or power). Of course, strategy instrumentally is about issues and ideas. But also, indeed fundamentally, it is about the relative weight in the political process that creates and is able to act with those ideas upon the topics of contemporary concern. In order to be influential, one must first win in the relevant political process.

As students of strategy we may forget the ever-dynamic foundation of our subject that pertains to relations of relative influence (or power).

Stripped to its essentials, politics is entirely naked of substantive content, save for its ability as a process to enable governance by means of recruiting and enabling or disabling the fears and wishes of all too human politician-policymakers. Politics would appear to be about national security, social welfare, and a host of other pressing matters. But, most profoundly, if somewhat vacantly with respect to content, it is about who is more, or less, influential. It should be needless to say that

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people and institutions allow themselves to be influenced by promises and hopes of gaining relative advantage with respect to the values that they believe they hold. Very often, the values at issue will lend themselves to some material expression. This is a truth that is both sovereign and rules over all politics everywhere, and always has been so. For those of us committed professionally, and even somewhat personally, to solving problems in national security, full appreciation of the necessary truth in Lasswell's claim can come as an unwelcome shock. After all, we may have believed that politics is, or should be, about doing good in the world, making the world safe for our particular favourite ethical code, strategic truth, and so forth. To realize that politics at root is about who is most influential over others (e.g. us) is not a morally attractive tale to tell; therefore, typically it is resisted, if not simply ignored. The arguable fact that many politicians around the world believe that their careers are really about the good that they first need power in order to enable and promote, does not subvert the merit in this claim. Strategy requires the expenditure of effort and the commitment of scarce resources for which there will always be politically competing claimed needs; it has to follow, therefore that politics, understood as the process that enables influence, must be appreciated as fundamental. Politics is not about strategic prudence, necessary though that may be. Rather, it is about power as influence. Political apparatchiks and their bosses who listen to them are far more interested in winning influence over the relevant public(s) than they are in winning in order to accomplish or attempt something of high social value.

Politics is not about strategic prudence, necessary though that may be, rather is it about power as influence.

Q2 Can we distinguish wars from other episodes, and does it much matter?

Inevitably, the large and even frightening idea of war looms over the whole subject of strategy in a military context. However, not all that looms with apparent menace does so to enlightening effect; at least, this tends to be the case when scholars go mining for allegedly different granularities. Ironically, perhaps, on the one hand I find that the earnest quest for particular truths about particular wars (conflicts? happenings?) is essential for understanding, even as I worry that it may, as a consequence, have the effect of losing sight of the larger story (strategic narrative in today's fashionable scholarly jargon). [iii] Names, what we call things, matter. But we need to be alert lest smaller truths have the inadvertent effect of obscuring larger ones, an under-recognized problem. It has been my recent experience to find much that is persuasive in a book about war (?) by a then-serving junior British officer, even if it is a little challenging to grasp on first reading. The work in question, *War from the Ground Up*, by Emile Simpson, on balance is admirably insightful. He is persuasive when he argues that the decade-plus conflict in Afghanistan has been substantially misunderstood both by those sent there to fight (?), and by those who ordered

their commitment. However, I was surprised by Simpson's own surprise at his epiphanies about armed conflict: his arguments are not especially revelatory. More to the point, I find scant difficulty in enlisting the blessed Carl to explain the recent and current unpleasantness in Afghanistan, adapting only lightly. As for the discovery that what was afoot in Helmand was 'armed politics' and not war, I must confess that a variant of that idea had been drilled into me by Chapter 1 on 'The Diplomacy of Violence', in Thomas C. Schelling's influential 1966 book, *Arms and Influence*. [iv] Also, it so happened that while reading Simpson on Afghanistan I dipped back into an insightful 1995 study by (then) Major David S. Fadok, USAF. The major found that air power theorist John Warden accepted the Clausewitzian view that wars are 'by nature political instruments'. Fadok then proceeded to comment: 'Seen as such, wars are essentially discourses between the policy makers on each side'. [v] This scholarly jargon served to remind me of the optimistic and ambitious theorizing of the 1960s (and later) concerning the possible conduct of limited nuclear war. [vi] It is necessary for me to admit to some scepticism about the political effect of military threat and action. Diplomacy by carefully controlled explosive effect is perilously vulnerable to cultural misunderstanding across borders. In addition it is vulnerable to cultural, physical and other practical constraints on the ability of belligerents to respond cooperatively, even if they should be inclined to do so. My view on diplomacy by discretely employed violence is closely aligned with that of the then RAND air-power analyst and theorist, Benjamin S. Lambeth, when in the wake of Operation Desert Storm he wrote as follows:

Air power is a blunt instrument. It is designed, at bottom, to break things and kill people in the pursuit of clear and realistic policy grabs on the ground. If you want to send a message, use Western Union. [vii]

The more closely we examine wars in their historical context, the more impressed we ought to be by the continuities in their nature. Moreover, we should appreciate that war and its disparate forms of warfare do not effect a fusion of purpose and function. In other words, warfare does not become politics, even though it is unavoidably political in meaning. In the very early 1920s in the Anglo-Irish War, the historically notable Irish strategist, Michael Collins, understood that he was directing irregular warfare as political theatre against the mobilizable might of the British Empire. [viii] The fighting was important, but it was all about the political effects that he needed to create and exploit. In the 1960s there were some American aspirations to stage political theatre with nuclear use if need be, but the differences in the natures of war and politics always looked to many people as being very likely to thwart political artistry as a strategic guide. Sophisticated endeavour to render war and warfare more political have not been clearly successful. By far the most insightful thought expressed in the 1995 movie 'The Crimson Tide' was by Executive Officer Hunter who uttered the disturbing Clausewitzian opinion "that while the purpose of war is to serve a political end, the nature of war is to serve itself".

warfare does not become politics, even though it is unavoidably political in meaning

Theorists have long striven to impose their preferred policy logic on the 'grammar' of war.[ix] This is readily understandable and indeed it is necessary, always provided it does not offend unduly against the distinctively competitive nature of warfare. War can always threaten to assume a life of its own, obedient to its own logic, rather than to the political process that launched it. This is a powerful reason why one must be careful to deny a practical fusion of politics and war. The latter may not only serve itself, it will also threaten to oblige politics to be its servant, rather than vice versa. In order to guard against loss of political control of the competitive violence of warfare it is advisable to resist liberal urges to diversify our master theory of war and warfare in order seemingly to accommodate recent experience.[x] This is not hard to do. We need to be crystal clear about what is, and what is not, war. From a host of scholars' offerings, I choose the following definition from the writings of Hedley Bull: 'War is organised violence carried on by political units against each other. Violence is not war unless it is carried out in the name of a political unit; what distinguishes killing in war from murder is its vicarious and official character, the symbolic responsibility of the unit whose agent the killer is'. [xi] Theorists will seek to diversify and discriminate among different forms of contemporary and hypothetical warfare (e.g., regular, irregular, hybrid, 4th generation, and the like), but one would be wise to be sceptical about such apparent sophistication, because the costs of undue self-persuasion could be high. General theory has no difficulty coping adequately with changing strategic contexts and recently novel-seeming conflict. The general theory both of war and of strategy insist that they address and command phenomena that effectively are permanent in nature, but also are ever certain to manifest themselves in belligerencies that can be very different in character. Furthermore, the rich diversity in character of conflict was as plainly discernible in ancient times as it is today. Then, now, and in the future, the phenomena are captured well enough in the general theories of war and strategy.[xii] In order to discipline scholars' imagination, lest they err into undue creativity, it is important that the timeless authority of general theory should continue to be appreciated. It helps save us from ourselves, with our urge to create ever more elaborate theory of the kind that unwittingly sacrifices lasting major truth in the interest of promoting fashionable and usually transient ideas of recent vintage (though probably pre-existent but unrecognized). If war is confused with politics we are certain as a consequence to misunderstand both, and that can matter profoundly.

War always can threaten to assume a life of its own, obedient to its own logic, rather than to the political process that launched it.

Q3 Policy, strategy, operational art, and tactics—can they cohere?

Policy should answer the 'what' question, while strategy provides the answer to 'how'. In its turn, strategy requires answers at what commonly, if somewhat contestably, may be understood as the operational and tactical 'levels' of

behaviour. There are problems pertaining to just about everything identified or imagined in the previous two sentences. To the possible annoyance of some readers, I must say that I believe it is sensible to recognize both the essential and vital integrity in the meaning of the two sentences, while also being alert to the challenges that can render them misleading or worse. My concern here primarily is to minimize the danger of lesser strategic truths crowding out full appreciation of much greater ones. It is useful to begin thinking about strategy by recognizing frankly the inherent limitations of the bare and simply PowerPointable model. It may be thought that 'Ends, Ways, Means and Assumptions' provides a neatly mechanistic grand design for intentions and actions that allows expediently for mutual adjustment among the elements. In practice, the doing of strategy is never smooth and mechanistic, because the pieces in the model have little if any natural tendency to cohere.[xiii] There is no gravitational force strong enough to overcome the motivational and behavioural traits most typical of each element in the E, W, M, formula. The human and collective institutional agents at each level strive to achieve excellence (even just survival) on terms best suited to their distinctive concerns. But a very substantial problem for the entire enterprise of a polity's strategic effort is the fact that there are always difficulties particular, indeed characteristically particular, to each level of that effort, that have the malign ability to undermine the integrity of the whole enterprise of strategy. There is no single magical elixir that can fix the difficulties to which I allude here, but at least we can identify the nature of the coherence problem for strategy; this should enable a location of much of the answer needed. The answer is to insist upon a 'whole house of strategy' approach to meeting the challenge of incoherence that always threatens to defeat cunning plans and grand designs.[xiv]

The fundamental problem lies unavoidably in the relations of interdependency among levels (policy, strategy, operations, tactics). Both scholars and practitioners have observed that although E, W, M is, and has to be, a hierarchy of authority, that characterization tends to obscure the degree of dependence of higher levels upon competence at lower (e.g. if soldiers decline to fight hard, it will not much matter whether their higher direction – operational, strategic, and political – is or is not inspired). One approach to this conceptual challenge is to alter the brand names on military activity. For a leading example of an apparent collapsing of categories, we may elect to go along with General Krulak of the USMC with his idea of the 'strategic corporal'. [xv] This endeavour to melt conceptual categories is paradoxically simultaneously true, yet unhelpful and probably even harmful. A corporal does strategy in the same sense that a strategist does politics. All strategy needs to be done in the field, which is to say tactically by someone, including corporals. Everything that a strategist does or fails to do is likely to have strategic meaning. Whether corporals are more or less important for the course of conflicts of a particular character has no bearing on the nature of their function in the hierarchy, puzzle, or mosaic of conflict. Strategic effect has to be built on tactical foundations. The conceptual elevation of a corporal's contribution to the course of history is, therefore, simply a categorical error. While there may be some value in recognizing that in wars of different character different loads, perhaps even kinds, of responsibility rest on corporals, the price paid in mistaken understanding of the structure of conflict is likely to be forbidding. Even corporals

having an effect that is undoubtedly strategically valuable, require direction by higher – which is to say operational, strategic, and political – authority.

Three subjects of high importance for Q3 have attracted much controversy in recent years, some of which appears to be founded upon a poor understanding of the basics that need to govern the field of most concern to *Infinity Journal*. These basic issue-areas pertain to: (1) the proposition that there should be operational art exercised at an operational level of war; (2) the relations among politics, policy, and strategy; and (3) the nature and therefore the proper character of civil-military relations.

the idea of an operational level of warfare, with its associated notion of operational art, is sufficiently sound as to oblige us to decline to be misled even by somewhat valid criticisms

First, much has been written in recent years that is highly critical of the idea of there being an operational level of war. More to the point, much of the criticism has appeared sensible and even empirically well enough founded.[xvi] I will confess to having been persuaded for a short while that even the stronger critics were more right than wrong. However, on more careful reflection and historical study, today I am reasonably convinced that fundamental criticism of the linked ideas of an operational level of war and of operational art is ill advised. As usual in conceptual debate, there is a powerful-seeming reason for dissatisfaction with contemporary orthodoxy. At root, the critics of operational theory are troubled, understandably, indeed commendably, by the all too common military phenomenon of operational design and practice devouring strategy. The critics have noticed correctly the absence of coherence among war's levels of behaviour, and have correctly flagged the frequent occurrence of generals as operational artists in effect taking control, or trying to do so, of a whole military effort that requires, but is lacking, a central strategic grip. [xvii] This phenomenon is common to warfare because of the enduring incoherence among the immediate pressing challenges and opportunities that appear to require action 'now' by particular kinds of armed forces committed to distinctive operations. My belief, overall, is that the idea of an operational level of warfare, with its associated notion of operational art, is sufficiently sound as to oblige us to decline to be misled even by somewhat valid criticisms. To reject operational level thought and practice, fundamentally for the reason that it may be a redundant level of command that encourages undue distance from battlespace realities on the part of strategists, and that it hinders necessary strategic grip on the *evolving course of combat*, is only to register problems that require urgent attention. It is vitally important for forces engaged tactically to be commanded and led by officers who connect on their 'bridge' with strategy, for the purposes of advancing a coherence that links the tactical to the interests of higher strategic design. If operations are indeed permitted to devour strategy, the best cure for the

malady is to discipline and change military leaders. This kind of criticism, though often well founded, is not dissimilar in kind from the view that because electorates cannot be trusted to elect prudent political leaders – which is certainly true – we need to remove the popular vote from having practical relevance to our strategic affairs. This would be poor advice, notwithstanding the impressive weight of historical evidence one can assemble in its support. The simplest of reasons for rejecting both the 'dump the operational level', and the 'abandon popular democracy', ideas is that the alternatives are certain to be worse. The principle of prudence in human affairs is keyed on the importance of practical consequences, not moral rectitude. By way of a final point on coherence and its absence, it is really important to recognize that poor though the coherence may be between tactical conduct and operational plans, that poverty is likely to be as nothing when compared with the consequences of incoherence between Political/Policy Ends, and Strategic Ways and Military Means. Vietnam and Afghanistan are historical exemplars of this level of incoherence.

Second, many scholars appear to be resistant to the conceptually, perhaps even morally, necessary recognition of the implications of the fact that all 'policy' is made by political process, and that that process, everywhere and in all periods, is run and dominated by the people who succeed in being influential over others. The substantive content of policy is made in a process of political negotiation among the people and organizations who contend for power, as they must. Decisions on national defence are taken politically, usually with input from subject-specific experts and interests. But, in all systems of governance politics ultimately rules. Prudent assessment concerning the maintenance of their preeminent popular influence flags to political leaders where the limits of the politically tolerable most probably lie. This is not to be critical, it is simply to recognize that we humans run our affairs, including our security affairs, by the means of a political process that is geared to generate power as influence, not prudent policy. Policy does not emerge, pristine and unsullied by unduly subjective emotions, as the ever dynamic product of objective expert analysis.[xviii] This is not to claim that political process will be indifferent to arguments that are armed with evidence of apparent national danger. But it is to say that strategic theorists and defence analysts (like this author) need to appreciate the humbling professional truth that their contribution to debate on public policy can always be trumped by politics.

Third, civil-military relations may well be said to lie at the heart of strategy, as Eliot Cohen claims, but it would probably be more correct to argue that public political tolerance is as, if not even more, vital.[xix] As a very general rule, people will go only whither they are content to be led. Great leaders always require willing, even if somewhat politically passive, followers. Civil-military relations vary in detail, of course, given the breadth of unique historical circumstance that is their particular foundation in every polity. However, this critically important subject does allow authority to an elementary golden rule: the military power of the state must always be subject to authority that is accepted very widely as politically legitimate. The substantive reason for this is that the well-being of society and state cannot prudently be entrusted, or surrendered, even to their coercive instruments. It is only common sense to deny those coercive instruments the

opportunity to be more than they should be, given the temptations to organizational mission creep that can come opportunistically to soldiers. Military culture often differs from public and private political culture(s), and it would be imprudent to have one's national security policy and strategy decided by professional military experts (or their civilian defence analytical associates and frequent functional allies). The price one pays for insisting upon civilian political authority over defence matters is, naturally, necessarily an acceptance ultimately of the sovereignty of a public political will that is ever likely to be inadequately understanding of security problems. It is worth noting that the danger of undue military influence over the policy realm is understandably enhanced when the polity is committed to war (even only to 'armed politics' or 'politics with arms'). However, the peril to civilian (political) supremacy in war lies not only in the scope and weight of the burdens of actual armed conflict, but also in the nature of war itself. By this I mean that the balance of relative influence between the civilian and the soldier is likely to alter simply because of the dynamic and ever unpredictable course of a (necessarily unique) particular war. Whatever the constitutional niceties and formalities in relations, in wartime the state can find itself serving the present and near-term future apparent necessities of a conflict that has evolved beyond expectation, let alone confident anticipation. There is in effect a natural and inevitable tendency for the needs of an on-going conflict to subordinate and even subvert civilian society so that national priorities are reordered more and more in practice in favour of the plausible necessities of war. Not infrequently in strategic history, this re-prioritization in favour of the military security interest has occurred with good enough reason. My point is that even when military leaders are not seeking to reduce or subvert civilian political authority, a context of armed conflict may itself achieve that end.

the military power of the state must always be subject to authority that is accepted very widely as politically legitimate

Politics and their armed forces are all but organised by design for high incoherence among levels. The trouble is that energetic and sincere efforts to impose greater unity of effort tend to promote, or even cause directly, worse sins than incoherence. While organisational reform and tinkering certainly can improve coherence between levels, it has to be admitted that more often it does not. By far the most reliable approach to fixing the challenge preventatively is to adopt rigorous selection methods for high and higher military command.

Q4 How can we plan for future security? Just how ignorant are we about the future?

Given that we cannot extract data about the future from the future, how can we aspire to conduct defence planning prudently? Notwithstanding the persistent popularity of futurology, there is no way in which the future can be studied directly. Both science and social science are disarmed

conclusively by the unavoidable fact of the total absence of data. There is, and can never be, some all but magical computer program (even at RAND) capable of delivering reliable knowledge about the future. If science is respected as it should be as an endeavour to seek out reliable knowledge, and if that knowledge can only be regarded as reliable if it is verifiably testable, then it cannot assist the futurology needed for defence planning. Unarguably, such planning cannot be aided usefully by science or social science that is totally incapable of discovering knowledge of the future. However, perhaps ironically, we are anything but ignorant about the future: there are four compelling reasons why we can be modestly confident in our understanding of tomorrow, including the certain fact that that future will have an important strategic dimension.

1. We should understand that human history (including strategic history) needs to be viewed as a continuum in time that effectively is endless.[xxi] In other words, past, present, and future are really a unity and need to be understood with the aid of the metaphor of a constant stream. We are not as a species embarked on a journey that should be regarded as one of progress towards moral, let alone political, perfection. Recognition of this essential continuity makes an important contribution to understanding that we must and can learn from our past, because it is our future also. Strategic history occurs in ever changing character of detail, but nonetheless in enduring obedience to the human motives that do not alter. Thucydides summarized the motives for human behaviour, including political behaviour, with his justly famous triptych of 'fear, honour, and interest'. [xxi] These motives are the fuel for calculations and of the emotions expressed in armed conflict. They are contrasts in explanation of the course of events in the great stream of (all) time.
2. Strategic history occurs in the context of the ever changing character of detail, but nonetheless in enduring obedience to the human motives, which do not alter. Thucydides summarized the motives for human behaviour, including political behaviour, with his justly famous triptych of 'fear, honour, and interest'. [xxiii] These motives are the fuel for calculations and for the emotions expressed in armed conflict. They provide an explanation for the course of events in the great stream of (all) time.
3. All of our strategic history, everywhere and at all times, has been governed by political process. Human beings, needful of security, require collective governance, and inevitably that requires political process. The coming century will be no less in thrall than was our past to the political phenomenon of competition for weight of relative influence.
4. In addition to future history, necessarily being driven both by our persisting human nature and the necessity for political process to provide governance, we know that our condition is certain to continue to be obedient to the practical consequences of the logic of strategy. Our future has to be a strategic one, because there is no way in which human beings, endeavouring to behave prudently or not, can avoid the mandated consequences of strategic logic. The authority of the essential theory

of strategy is not only intellectual, but also pragmatic. Political units of all kinds cannot escape the discipline of the necessity of weighing these Ways and Means in the balance with the political Ends they wish to secure – to offend against the basic logic in the architecture of strategy is, in effect, to offend against Strategy Law, and it is a capital mistake. But, the value of the logical discipline of strategy is entirely vulnerable to possible imprudence in the policy Ends that are selected and endlessly revised politically. If policy/politics is undisciplined in its demands, disciplined coherence at lower levels will not serve to avert disaster.

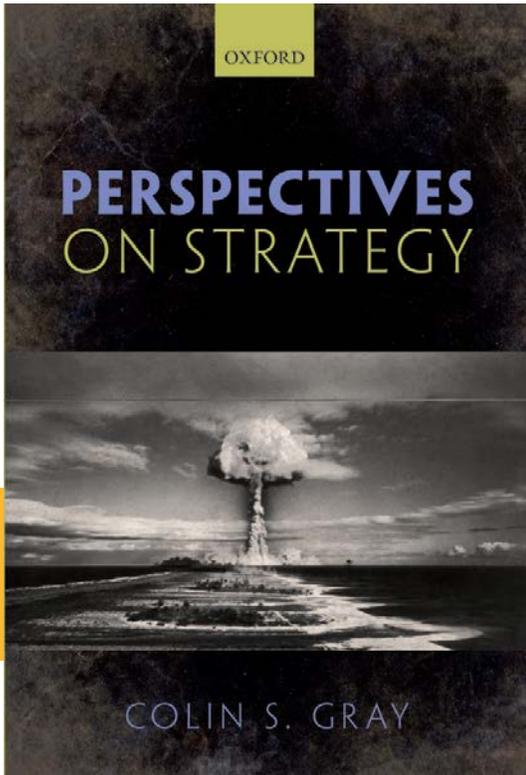
As a constructive codicil to points 1–4 above – on the stream of time, human nature, politics, and strategy – it is necessary to recognize that we are as well armed intellectually to cope and to survive with the challenges to security in the 21st century, as we both need to be and can be. We know

that the strategic problems for future security really will be political problems that are inescapably human. We cannot learn from history what will occur in the future in detail, because chance, human nature, and political discretion in an adversarial context must preclude such knowledge.[xxiii] Science is of no value because there can be no empirical data from happenings that are yet to, indeed may not, occur. But a firm intellectual grasp of the nature of humanity, politics, and strategy, revealed abundantly as they are in the two and a half millennia of our strategic historical experience from the time of Herodotus until today, should be more than adequate as a source of reliable data about the future. Thucydides, Sun Tzu, and Clausewitz can tell us most that is knowable and worth knowing about the Twenty-first Century. No all but magical quantitative methodology can be discovered that will reveal what the stream of time has yet to reach. Our past is our future also, because really the two are but one, even as the tools for security change as they must in detail.

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Beyond Strategy as a Means to an End

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Strategy is often analyzed through the frame of ends-based rationality. Strategists examine a strategy and look to see if it correctly synchronizes ways of employing violence with the resources available to accomplish a given policy end. This method, while good as a simple heuristic, neglects important aspects of strategy-making that arise from the characteristics of strategic problems themselves. For strategic research to advance, strategic thinking must be approached from perspectives that examine the tractability and ambiguity of certain situations and the plausibility of canonical strategic ideas. While ends-based rationality is often identified with neo-Clausewitzian frameworks, the recent work of Colin Gray and others on the problems of the strategist show that neo-Clausewitzian strategy is far more than ends-based rationality. Different concepts and methods may bring out a richer picture of strategy and strategy-making.

A Means to an End?

A strategy is a heuristic about how to create and exploit asymmetry, not a complete plan.

Traditional definitions of military strategy provide very little guidance about the process of strategy-making. They typically conflate strategy formulation with strategic *planning* – the implementation of strategies that already exist. Instead, strategy – while many things – can also be considered a heuristic or hunch about a problem that creates or exploits a decisive asymmetry. This is why the notion of “asymmetric

warfare” is so valueless – *all strategy* deals with the creation and exploitation of asymmetry. But one implication of this view is that one can have no idea of how a strategy will play out over time. A strategy is a heuristic about how to create and exploit asymmetry, not a complete plan.[i]

Why? The Trinity, after all, implies that war as a holistic entity is suspended between tendencies pulling in opposite directions. It is this characteristic that has led some to describe Clausewitzian thought as “nonlinear” and use mathematical theories of chaos and complexity to analyze the General Theory of War.[ii] If war from the perspective of the General Theory is a dynamic process, its dynamic character is often ill-served by the decidedly Jominian models of strategic reasoning taught in Western explications of strategy. Nowhere is the disjuncture between the holistic, terrifying, and chaotic vision of war and strategy Clausewitzian thinking implies and the reductionist understanding we have today more clear than in the idea of ends-based rationality.

The framework of ends, ways, and means – like Clausewitz’s injunction that war is “political intercourse, with the addition of violence” is useful when understood as both an abstract model of strategy and a certain model of strategic reasoning. In the abstract sense, every strategy can be analyzed based on whether its ways and means are properly integrated with ends. Of course, this abstractness can also be a double-edged sword. What ends, ways, and means represent in any one historical case is open to substantial interpretation. It is all too easy to say “General ___” had no strategy when he merely had one that didn’t work, and the relational character of strategy means that the enemy’s vote further complicates a purely endogenous study of one actor’s decision process.

When taken to an extreme, ends, ways, and means turns strategy into an engineering problem. It reduces strategy-making to a mathematical formula. As Antulio Echevarria argued, an ends-ways-means framework is often approached in an overly scientific manner:

*“In all the online debates and blog sites concerning strategy, one theme is constant: we call strategy an art, but approach it as a science. We praise creative thinking, but assess our strategies with formulae: strategy = ends + ways + means (the **ends** we want to achieve + the **ways** or concepts + the available **means**). This*

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formula is as recognizable to modern strategists as Einstein's equation $E=mc^2$ is to physicists. Each defines its respective field. Like all good math, good strategies consist of balanced equations. As our variables change, we merely rebalance our strategy: scale down the ends, increase the means, or introduce new ways. Like any good equation, our strategy remains valid so long as we keep one half equal to the other. This is a far cry from when military strategy meant the "art of the general" and, by extension, grand strategy meant the "art of the head of state." If the art of strategy is truly lost, perhaps it is because – despite our rhetoric to the contrary – we really wanted it to be a science all along. [iii]

Einstein's famous equation was intended to explain the energy content of an object of interest. One cannot similarly explain the "strategy content" of a given strategy by adding its ends, ways, and means together. "Ends," "ways" and "means" are far more slippery terms than mass in physics.

Finally, there is an open question as to whether ends, ways, and means is a useful analytical tool. Given that strategy is relational, a strategist can balance ends, ways, and means in a catastrophically bad fashion, and be saved by the fact that an opponent's balancing is even worse. Given the dependence on enemy balancing as a parameter, viewing one's own ends, ways, and means balancing as a function that outputs a good strategy becomes problematic. Is it really possible for us to cross the strategy bridge in the way that "balancing ends, ways, and means" suggests if we can horribly unbalance them and survive if the opponent is *more* incompetent?

In the mathematical areas of social science, the assumption of optimizing behavior in creating models is often useful for telling us how an agent *should* decide, if he or she had cognitively unrealistic and socially unrealistic decision-making qualities. Never mind bounded rationality, let's just aim for what *would* have been the objectively best choice. Sometimes this can be useful. For example, the computer scientist E.W. Dijkstra famously retorted that the question of whether machines can think was "about as relevant as the question of whether [s]ubmarines can swim." [iv] While the general public thinks about artificial intelligence research through the framework of the Turing test, many computer scientists are interested in producing computational agents that *do* things of interest in an optimal manner. A Facebook ad-placement algorithm has faculty for probabilistic prediction that humans do not, but it doesn't matter as long as the user is supplied with ads that he or she finds agreeable.

Similarly, the ends-ways-means framework is how both individuals and institutions *ought* to make strategy. Arthur Lykke, the popularizer of the framework, was an Army War College instructor seeking to give military students a model of how strategy should be formulated, and cast the elements of the equation as questions to be asked rather than variables to be plugged in. [v] But given the Jominian culture of the American defense community, it was likely inevitable that a simple concept intended for the purpose of assisting practitioners would take on an overly "scientific" quality.

Second, there is an inherent tension in the way instruction of strategy is embedded in Anglo-American institutions.

Militaries and governments need strategic thinkers capable of strategic planning and analysis. When Echevarria notes the "far cry" from traditional meanings of strategy and Hew Strachan talks about "strategy's lost meaning," they are reacting to the bureaucratization of strategy implied by the rise of powerful state civilian and military security bureaucracies and the genesis of the military-industrial complex. [vi] Similarly, the military and security communities – as the dominant communities with control over both the "ways" and "means" of organized violence that strategy seeks to direct – are the primary consumers of strategic writing.

Militaries and governments need strategic thinkers capable of strategic planning and analysis.

Hence strategic studies, as left-leaning critics have often noted, is trapped within the institutional worldviews of the Western security community. Strategy is indelibly linked to Western geopolitical imperatives, and American hegemony in particular. [vii] These gravitational attractions shape the character of strategic research, and often devalue *explanation* of strategic dynamics in favor of research that trains Western security strategists or produces tools for increasing Western strategic efficiency. Left-wing critics of strategy were wrong in saying that strategic knowledge production perpetuates war and prevents peaceful solutions – strategic thinking as an intellectual industry is a recent invention, and war itself has hardly depended on salaried strategists for its perpetuation. Their singular bias against the moral defensibility of working for the state is also unsustainable. But they are correct that this focus has distorted understanding of strategy and strategy-making. One might even say that this distortion harms practitioners as well. It muddles their understanding of strategy, and when it comes time for them to understand why particular strategies have succeeded and failed, they are left with "just-so" stories revolving around virtuous or deficient strategists that either succeeded or failed in "balancing ends, ways, and means." From such a perspective, they do not learn much about strategy beyond the ability to use motivated reasoning to force historical cases to validate their own internal narrative of how strategy ought to be done.

Expanding The Varieties of Strategic Experience

Ends, ways, and means stories are "just so" stories in part because they elide the complexity of strategic reasoning. Differing strategic problems vary in their tractability and ambiguity, and ends-based rationalism as a worldview poorly equips strategic thinkers to understand such variation. [viii] It is easy to understand why ends, ways, and means appeals to military strategic thinkers. Though classical strategists and those who study strategy in business may share some common areas of study, classical strategy differs in that policy can be achieved through organized violence. *Violence literally creates new political realities and shelves old ones.* While "disruptions" in markets may make old ways of doing business obsolete, the strategist's capability to violently destroy blood and treasure, alter the dynamics of power, and break up political, cultural, and economic institutions is something that has no analogue in the business world.

However, violence is a blunt and unpredictable tool. Clausewitz's "Trinity" implies that state reason must inevitably compete with violent passions and the chance outcomes of the battlefield to guide the course of warfare. Hence strategy has often – at least in the last 100 years – been seen as a way to *control* violence, as captured in heuristics like J.C. Wylie's idea about achieving "some measure of control" over the adversary and Clausewitz's own statements about using force to "disarm" the opponent, casting of war as duel.

Clausewitz and Wylie were both realistic about the difficulties of control and disarmament. But the pathology of the Jominian way such ideas have been processed is that it invokes a fantasy of rational control over the *future* merely because one has a framework that rationalizes the past. As Paparone has argued:

"The world is full of intractable situations and fraught with ambiguity. Some say that it has become increasingly so, but this has actually been the case all along and educators and practitioners of strategy just have the luxury of viewing the past through the lens of causal certainty, a lens that does not work when looking toward the future. Their retrospective sense of certainty epitomizes the fallacy of the proverbial Monday-morning quarterback. Only through the study of history do they know how things ended up. Knowing how the story ended, institutions can attribute causal relationships that reinforce beliefs that such ends can be rationally achieved through purposeful strategies toward the future. Indeed, this knowledge of the past reinforces an ideological bent toward ends-based rationality; hence, [it] provides the historic context for the objectification of an imagined future. The military profession has relied too much on the expectations envisioned by the limited philosophy of ends-based, rationalistic models of strategy. As the profession struggles with making sense of complex, ambiguous world events, the end game view has produced false expectations. The hope of ends-based rationalism – to create effective strategies, plans, and decisions to reach a desired future end state – has been confounding. Yet, our [military] institutions continue to teach this Weberian *Zweckrationalität* (sociologist Max Weber's term, meaning "ends-rationality") version of strategic thinking, assuming that practitioners can decide ahead of time how to employ resources in ways to achieve the ends we have in mind." [ix]

Western institutions find ends-based reasoning seductive precisely because it allows them to envision a world of endless possibility. If we could only find the right way to optimize our ends, ways, and means, the thinking goes, we might succeed in achieving our aims. It is a subspecies of the thinking practiced by self-help booklets that cast the individual as the arbiter of his fate – wealth, fame, popularity, and attractive female companions can be yours as long as you exercise "good strategy." This is something of a perversion of the intention for which many soldiers and civilians use strategy, and the conservatism about the use of force that many strategists hold to. Yet while many paradoxically rail against game-theory and math-loving "whiz kids" that believe in making strategy as a science, the institutional worldview of means-end reasoning is far more scientific and deterministic than even the most reductive of game theorists or social scientists. [x] This is what Echevarria refers to when

he states that we always wanted (in our hearts) strategy to be a science.

If we could only find the right way to optimize our ends, ways, and means, the thinking goes, we might succeed in achieving our aims.

Using ends-based rationality as a blunt tool, strategists approach the past not as an open-ended, contingent field amenable to multiple potential crossings of Colin S. Gray's "strategy bridge," but as a source of validation for the idea of using violence to control the world. When Richard Betts asks whether "strategy is an illusion," he is most certainly not saying that *strategy* itself is an illusion. If it were, then both individual and organized human action would be impossible. And given that strategy also exists a way to describe the dynamics of evolution in the field of evolutionary game theory, strategy as an explanatory tool also transcends humanity itself. Rather, Betts is asking (and not particularly convincingly attempting to answer) the question of whether ends-based reasoning is an illusion. [xi]

Of course, it is not an illusion. Ends-based reasoning is useful not only as an abstract model of strategy, but also as a specific way of conducting strategic reasoning. However, it is one of several different modes of reasoning appropriate for strategic problems of varying tractability and ambiguity. Though strategy as a whole is a combination of many different problems that demand a combination of differing modes of reasoning, distinct problems exist that demand different skills from those of the strategist. Ends-based reasoning is only one of them. There is a gigantic literature in strategy, and for space reasons only a tiny (but relevant) fraction can be covered. Christopher Paparone's "quad-based" concept of strategic reasoning summarizes many of the complexities of strategy.

His concept of varieties of strategic reasoning rooted in a contrast between tractable-objective problems, problems where known-knowns must be synthesized and alternatives excluded, problems where involving multiple interpretations of the problem exist, and problems of high ambiguity. Tractable-objective problems assume situations are technically available, with reasoning as a process of recognition and matching. Considered in isolation, force projection strategies involve having to build mathematical models of time and space that will allow the most efficient projection of violence. The problem is framed by the solution, which can be calculated utilizing tools involving optimization. When the problem is not mathematically tractable, decision makers have to decrease the search space of potential solutions by excluding alternatives. The emphasis switches from programming to orchestration, akin to the way a conductor ensures a symphonic orchestra plays a melody by ensuring each instrument is combined in the proper manner. These are both "ends-based reasoning" in the most classic sense. [xii]

When problems become more ambiguous, it results in multiple interpretations of what to *do* about the problem. This is the realm of dialogue, negotiation, coalition-building,

and other similar mechanisms. It is here where strategy as taught from the perspective of logistics (technical rationality) and the commander (the planning of campaigns) often breaks down. Eisenhower-like coalition managers, not the game theorist working on the defeat of U-Boat teams or the planners seeking to develop a military OPLAN, come into the picture. Tractability is an issue here, but it is experienced through the framework of whether or not it is possible to reach a *consensus* about ways and means. The last element of the quad is reflective reasoning, where the problem is large scale, complex, and resistant to institutional knowledge. Considerable uncertainty exists, institutional knowledge is poor, and relevant variables are so tightly coupled that thinking about cause-effect relationships is difficult. These problems require constant reflection about the framing of the strategic problem, and ought to be considered through the framework of "good enough" solutions rather than an "end state." [xiii] The illusion of an "end" – while helpful for military planning and "home by Christmas" political rhetoric – belies the tendency of many social and political problems to persist over time.

A Future Research Agenda

It is one thing to diagnose a problem, and another to talk about how strategic researchers ought to go about dealing with it.

It is one thing to diagnose a problem, and another to talk about how strategic researchers ought to go about dealing with it. As Papparone argues, a more pluralistic way of strategic reasoning implies different tools to study and teach strategy. While many exist – ranging from different methodologies of interpreting military history to innovations in training and education for complex situations, this essay will comment on several that the author – as a PhD student in Computational Social Science – is equipped to briefly explicate. These should be utilized alongside the proper qualitative study of military history and strategic theory in order to ensure that the analyst is kept properly grounded in the referent areas he or she seeks to study.

Strategic thought can be improved through a different methodological approach. In their book *Complex Adaptive Systems: Computational Models of Social Life*, John Miller and Scott Page argue that simulations of social situations like markets, alliance dynamics, and normative change offer two primary advantages. First, a model can serve as a "map" to understanding the topology of the social world we are trying to explore. While the map may not be the territory, it can serve the function of helping us understand the system of interest and its characteristics. Certainly in the military, maps and tabletop terrain environments may fit to scale but they also are spaces for examining (in an abstract sense) the nature of the terrain and the positions of the political, military, and economic factors of interest. Second, a model can serve as an "existence proof" of some idea of interest. They are experimental, and are not necessarily intended to *simulate*

an idea as much as test its underlying plausibility. [xiv]

Because it is impossible for us (and also likely unethical) to recreate the violent past to scale, the two tools we have available are historical analysis and gaming. Historical analysis allows us to try to get in the shoes of a statesman and/or commander and see what options were available. But the problem of counterfactual reasoning inevitably comes up – we can only speculate about alternative possibilities, not experiment. Gaming has often been used in the military community to understand a given situation better by evaluating multiple possibilities as structured by underlying game "rules." Modeling and simulation – though devoid of "player" interaction – also serves the same function. If we vary X parameter, how does the result change? Can we find a critical value to manipulate that will make the system shift into a qualitatively distinct new regime of behavior? These tools are both intended to give us a heuristic understanding of the underlying dynamics and range of possibilities inherent in a situation.

When it comes to strategy, some convergence of the *participatory* commercial and government/academic wargaming communities and the mathematical and computational modelers could be a boon for strategic thought. Mathematical and computational modelers who enjoy things like agent-based modeling, for example, have expertise about the nature of social interaction, causality, and simulation of social life that is valuable. But their simulations are essentially static – one can only adjust what is built into the simulation already. And the underlying code and mathematics behind the way it works is often opaque, making validation of complex models difficult. Finally, strategic thought can only succeed with buy-in from practitioners. Practitioners unfamiliar with the underlying mathematical or computational assumptions behind simulation models distrust them, and also find them overly reductionist. The interactive quality of gaming – and the way it allows the gamer to discover and learn underlying dynamics on their own – is a quality that simulation could learn from.

The idea of an "existence proof" is related but also distinct. We are inevitably attracted to overly simple and idealized ideas of how society works. The distinction between classical economic actors and the boundedly rational, cognitively limited, and learning agents in vogue in modern complexity modeling is famous. Second, many theories of human action often struggle with causality. It is easy to use overly simple statistical regressions or canned case studies to validate a theory of how something works, and much more difficult to demonstrate that a theory's *conclusions* follow from its *premises*. Hence the modeler is really looking to avoid a situation in which the theorist claims (to borrow *IJ* editor William F. Owen's longtime Small Wars Council tagline) "I don't care if this works in practice. I want to see it work in theory!" [xv] Finding a way to marry theory and practice, however, has been difficult and a source of divides between the strategic thinker and the practitioner "in the arena." Modeling for plausibility could be a way to ensure that a way of thinking about strategy is relevant to those besides the theorist.

When factors such as computational difficulty, complexity of interaction, or uncertainty are added in, strategic concepts

can be evaluated for underlying plausibility.[xvi] In a world of learning, co-evolution, adaptation, bounded rationality, and interactive and distinctive social agents, does the theory still hold true? For example, the notion of an “evolutionary stable strategy” (ESS) in game theory is rooted in the framework of equilibrium analysis. But while the underlying mathematical description implies the existence of a Nash equilibrium, it does not state that every game has an ESS. This and other considerations impact the plausibility of finding a solution to an evolutionary problem without inordinate time and resources spent. What holds true for one evolutionary game may not for another.[xvii] Context is king in strategy, as implied in Clausewitz’s distinction between “real” and “ideal” war. Hence existence proofs can be used to evaluate the impact of contextual details on the structure of strategic problems and solutions as implied by theory – much in the same way that removing the possibility of an ESS for every game has implications for the complexity of finding a problem solution.

Lastly, one might also look to the cognitive sciences and artificial intelligence to begin to research, model, experiment on, and contrast differing ways of strategic reasoning. One big choice to make will be level of analysis – do we want to understand models of strategic reasoning from the perspective of an individual strategist? If so, we might turn to cognitive sciences to shed light on human biases and strategic decision – or look at an strategy-devising AI program like IBM’s Deep Blue chess computer playing a game like the “fog of war” chess variant *Kriegspiel*. But if we want to

look at an organization at work making strategy, the same assumptions relevant for a person or an individual program will likely not hold as they are scaled to where “bureaucracy does its thing.” Hence different methods may be used to envision different organizational problems with strategic reasoning. Additionally, differing tools will fit differing ideas of strategic cognition. The mathematical formalisms of an AI may not capture the sensemaking aspect of strategy, and likewise cognitive architectures that can model sensemaking may not capture more structured strategic reasoning.

the continuing attachment to a monolithic ends-based idea of strategic rationality stunts the growth of strategic thought

Classical strategy is in many ways fortunate. Neo-Clausewitzian thinking provides a solid backbone for the advancement of strategic thought and practice. The “general theory of war” is congruent with modern understandings of chaos and complexity in social life, and has outlasted more reductionist and deterministic ideas about war. However, the continuing attachment to a monolithic ends-based idea of strategic rationality stunts the growth of strategic thought. It is time to embrace ways of thinking about strategy that are more congruent with the implications of the Trinity, featuring a wider array of models of strategic reasoning.

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North Korean Provocations Gone Nuclear: What Happens Next & How the U.S. Can Prevent It in the First Place

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Introduction

North Korea has commanded significant attention throughout the last year due to its third nuclear test, suspending operations at the Kaesong Industrial Complex, warning foreign diplomats that it could not guarantee their safety past mid-April, and declaring itself in a state of war with South Korea and in preparation for nuclear attacks against the United States. America responded to this round of provocations through combined military exercises with South Korea and by flying a couple of nuclear-capable stealth bombers from the U.S. to the Korean peninsula.[i] The international

community responded by unanimously approving another round of sanctions through United Nations Security Council Resolution 2094.[ii] Even North Korea's traditionally staunch ally, China, annoyed by the renewed belligerent rhetoric and actions of the Kim Jong-un regime, agreed to increased sanctions against North Korea.[iii] More recently, the execution of Kim Jong-un's uncle, Jang Song Theak, who was thought to be the second most powerful person in North Korea, raises questions about the regime's stability and whether the young leader has successfully consolidated power.[iv] So far Theak's execution has been treated by the international community as an internal matter, though monitored closely to see what it might portend for North Korea's future in terms of increased instability, provocations, miscalculations, or regime collapse.[v]

The U.S. should accomplish these policy objectives through a strategy of compellence and a broad international coalition

These types of events often cause military strategists and policy makers to revisit contingency plans to ensure readiness and alignment with the current political environment.[vi] In addition to planning for a North Korean collapse, they should consider the following questions related to the worst case scenario: How might North Korea use nuclear weapons against the United States? What would the appropriate U.S. response entail and why? This article briefly addresses the first question, but focuses on the second. It argues that if North Korea attacked the U.S. with nuclear weapons, America should pursue regime change and Korean unification. The U.S. should accomplish these policy objectives through a strategy of compellence and a broad international coalition led by the U.S. during the invasion and by South Korea during the long unification and reconstruction process. Further, the U.S. should take specific steps now in partnership with South Korea and in coordination with China and other regional players to limit the chances of such an attack or other miscalculation by Kim Jong-un.

North Korean Nuclear Attack Scenarios

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In one scenario North Korea might launch a direct nuclear attack against the United States or its allies. Were a nuclear attack perpetrated directly by North Korea, American bases in Guam, Japan, or elsewhere across the Pacific would be likely targets. This is because the bases located there are within the range of North Korean missiles, house U.S. military equipment and personnel, and therefore present North Korea with iconic targeting value. Preemptively attacking a U.S. target, even with conventional weapons, however, risks Kim Jong-un's fundamental objective (*survival*) by placing himself squarely in American crosshairs.

The more plausible development is one in which the Kim Jong-un regime transfers a nuclear weapon to a terrorist group which then uses it against the U.S. This would afford Kim Jong-un plausible deniability and test American nuclear forensics capability. Yet that scenario is also fraught with problems for Kim because it yields target control to the terrorist group and still risks his survival—and that of his country—if the U.S. traces the nuclear device back to North Korea. While neither scenario is likely, nor present good response options for America, being ready for the worst case scenario before it happens can facilitate deterrence or a more coherent reaction.

Assumptions

For assessment and planning purposes, it is necessary to make a number of assumptions regarding these scenarios and the corresponding U.S. response. One assumption is that the nuclear attack would be a *single* attack against the U.S. *abroad* due to North Korean missile range, accuracy, and limited stockpile. A second is that U.S. nuclear forensics will trace the weapon's origin to North Korea, even if detonated by terrorists. Third is that the U.S. will depose Kim Jong-un. A nuclear attack would be too significant a psychological blow for the U.S. to respond by "turning the other cheek" or by a limited punitive strike that lobbed cruise missiles at North Korean targets. A fourth assumption is that although there would be no good options in such a situation, a conventional war will yield better political results than a nuclear retaliation. [vii] Fifth, multilateral involvement would be a must for diplomatic legitimacy and for burden sharing; further, the international community would support American political and military action. Sixth, if either scenario happened in the next few years, because of the economic situation and the experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. will not follow the extensive and largely *unilateral* nation building paradigm followed in those countries. Seventh, South Korea will embrace reunification. [viii]

The final major assumption is that a reunified Korea would be the best political outcome for the U.S., make the most sense historically and culturally, and be the course most likely supported regionally and globally. A new regime could be established in North Korea by eliciting Chinese action to prop up another North Korean elite in Kim-Jong-un's place. Alternatively, the Chinese may vie for annexation of North Korea. [ix] Due to China's significant interests in outcomes on the Korean peninsula, and its perspective which holds North Korea as a barrier against democratic encroachment, it would likely be apoplectic to have a unified, democratic Korea on its border. Therefore, it would be willing to pay a high

price to avoid this result. The U.S. should view such a Chinese response as positive rather than negative. It would afford America diplomatic leverage by which it should secure Chinese support and burden sharing for shaping North Korean regime change. Counterintuitively, it might even benefit the U.S. in the long run if China were responsible for the expensive and long-term project of restoring (or annexing) North Korea. On the margins, it might distract and preoccupy China, be a resource drain, lead to overreach, shrink its appetite for global engagement, or lessen its aggressiveness elsewhere. Such an aftermath could, then, actually have its upsides for the U.S. Many Asian nations, however, already concerned about increased Chinese assertiveness, would strongly oppose this result. [x] Additionally, it would marginalize the U.S. "rebalance to Asia." Historical and cultural ties between North and South Korea make its reunification a more logical end, and more supportable internationally. Thus, on the balance, the best initial American policy would be for North Korean regime change and Korean unification led by the South and backed internationally.

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Ends & Ways

The ends and ways the U.S. should pursue to change the Kim Jong-un regime and facilitate Korean reunification would be similar regardless of the nature and scale of the attack. [xi] The difference in the second strike scenario is that the U.S. would also seek the complete decapitation and dismantlement of the responsible terrorist network. In either case, a retributive response must achieve several corollary objectives simultaneous to accomplishing the primary political ends. First, it must punish the responsible party (North Korea and/or the terrorists). Second, it must signal to potential nuclear attackers (terrorists and states) that the high cost they will pay for striking the U.S. is not worth the perceived benefits. Third, the American response must accomplish these two goals without compromising related aims. An effective reprisal might satisfy Americans' cry for justice and deter potential attackers, yet alienate critical international actors by being clearly disproportionate in scope. Such a response would make unification of the Korean peninsula more time or cost intensive, or outright impracticable. As Richard Haass points out, the U.S. may not need the international community's permission to act abroad, but America does need their support for its foreign policy endeavors to be successful. [xii]

a retributive response must achieve several corollary objectives simultaneous to accomplishing the primary political ends

This would especially be true for the unification of the Korean peninsula, an immense undertaking generally regarded as one that will be much more difficult than the unification of Germany in the 1990s. [xiii] While the South Korea government and people would bear the brunt of the merger socially and economically, the effort would depend on the rest of the international community for security assistance, economic aid, refugee support, and diplomatic top cover. If the U.S. military response alienated international actors, America could jeopardize the political outcome, the ways, and the means available. This could leave the entire region worse off, with an on-going civil war and massive refugee flows, but without the requisite global support.

Promoting broad human and financial investment in a military response, reconstruction, and reunification would be crucial to eventual success.

America's ways would entail a combination of various elements of national power including diplomatic, informational, military, and economic measures. Whether the target of a direct nuclear attack from North Korea or an indirect terrorist attack, the U.S. would use diplomatic channels and information media to garner robust international support. These ways would support actions in the military and economic domains. Building a coalition to share the burden of regime change and nation building efforts would be the fundamental focus of diplomatic efforts. Promoting broad human and financial investment in a military response, reconstruction, and reunification would be crucial to eventual success. The more buy-in from the more actors, the greater the perceived legitimacy would be. If properly coordinated and resourced, this could translate into greater positive impact.

Recognizing this, if either of these scenarios were to unfold as indicated, the U.S. should capitalize on the opportunity to set a new "Pottery Barn" precedent: if we break it, we don't necessarily own it. Secretary of State Colin Powell's comment during the lead up to the Iraq invasion of 2003 that "if you break it, you own it [xiv]" is the current version of the "Pottery Barn" metaphor. The legacy of American involvement in Iraq following the invasion demonstrated that there was much truth behind his statement. Yet this slogan and the Iraq experience should be illustrative of particular situations and bear a cautionary warning—not foreclose on other policy options. A North Korean nuclear attack against the United States and an American response to spearhead Kim Jong-un's fall should not dictate a decade-long presence of 150,000 U.S. soldiers and Marines. Proximity, interest, and kindred ties will force South Korea and China to be the long term lead states, with other regional actors who have a significant stake in the outcome playing supporting, (albeit occasionally competing), roles. The U.S. should work for regional buy-in from the outset and reinforce it over time throughout diplomatic exchanges with South Korea, China, Russia, Japan, and others. [xv] Likewise, the U.S. should follow its rhetoric with corresponding, measured actions that left much room for and required other actors to take ownership.

Means, Sequencing, & the Remainder of the Theory of Victory

America would initially utilize robust diplomatic, informational, and military means in the ways already addressed. Following the demise of the Kim Jong-un regime, the offensive military means would transition to a security and stabilization effort in line with phases four and five of joint operations (stabilize the environment and enable civil authority). Civilian reconstruction and economic development would become the supported efforts while the remaining military elements would be in a supporting role. Diplomatic coordination would arguably be even more vital during these stages to ensure the success of political, economic, and social dimensions of Korean reunification. Development aid from the UN, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and various states would be crucial to addressing the sad state of North Korea's economy and the hunger of its people. [xvi] South Korea and the United States would be smart to draw on the expertise and lessons learned by those involved in working Germany's reunification in the 1990s to the extent they are relevant. [xvii]

The International Atomic Energy Agency would play a role in safeguarding North Korea's nuclear weapons, material, and facilities. The U.S., South Korea, China, Russia, and Japan would all have a significant interest in facilitating that mission. Non-governmental agencies would flood the peninsula providing aid, agricultural training, health education, and microfinance investments. Multinational corporations (MNCs) would follow, but at a slower rate. South Korea's pattern of significant economic growth over the last thirty years would eventually provide a catalyst for foreign direct investment, but all except the most entrepreneurial MNCs would wait for the establishment of robust security and stability. Regional intergovernmental organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations may incorporate a unified Korea into their bodies, helping its long-term security and economic trajectory. An integrated approach using these means, all instruments of national power as the ways, and a heavy reliance on international allies and partners, would be the only realistic manner in which America could successfully pursue regime change and Korean unification in the aftermath of a nuclear attack by North Korea.

Risk

Even with strong support, the U.S. would face very real political, economic, and military risks

Even with strong support, the U.S. would face very real political, economic, and military risks and would need to emplace substantial mitigation measures. Politically, if the U.S. acted too ambitiously it would risk losing the international support that it would initially enjoy following a nuclear attack. This would be similar to the situation America experienced following 9/11 when President George W. Bush's decision to invade Iraq despite significant opposition from European allies led to an

erosion of goodwill in the war against terrorists. Economically, the U.S. could be saddled with unexpected commitments leading to greater debt accumulation. This would especially be true if it became embroiled in a long nation building effort for which it assumed the brunt of the burden. America could then find itself at greater risk of imperial overreach in line with Paul Kennedy's famous thesis of why great powers fall.[xviii] Continued profligacy on domestic spending, the primary culprit, would only exacerbate the problem.[xix] Militarily, faced with a robust conventional, asymmetrical, and nuclear threat, the U.S. could experience casualties on a scale not seen since Vietnam. Popular resilience would be important as the enterprise tested the American social fabric over time. The U.S. could mitigate these challenges by maintaining the moral high ground throughout the duration of its multifaceted response, ensuring that the international community shared the burden militarily and economically, and by setting the new Pottery Barn precedent.

Militarily, faced with a robust conventional, asymmetrical, and nuclear threat, the U.S. could experience casualties on a scale not seen since Vietnam.

Conclusion

In conclusion, none of the options (*cheek turning, a limited punitive response, nuclear retaliation, or regime change*) available the US vis-à-vis a North Korean nuclear attack are good options. All of them involve significant trade-offs. The best that can be done is to prepare for and diminish the threat by strengthening American and alliance capabilities,[xx] as well as international resolve. To do so, there are a couple steps America should accentuate to diminish the chances of threat realization posed in these scenarios.

First, the North Korean nuclear attack scenarios underscore the importance of regular diplomatic coordination and combined military, law enforcement, and intelligence training exercises. These exercises carry both deterrent and operational value. The U.S.-South Korean alliance has utilized these exercises throughout the sixty years since the Korean armistice as a key signaling device to North Korea and for crisis management. As demonstrated by last spring's round of military exercises and stealth bomber flights, in conjunction with tough diplomacy and support from regional players like China, they are important elements in de-escalation.[xxi] Moreover, moving beyond bilateral maneuvers to multilateral training that included multiple Asian partners such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, and even Vietnam and China would also be useful. In addition, establishing internationally recognized "red lines"[xxii] regarding North

Korea that would trigger specific, agreed upon actions would be helpful, albeit extremely difficult to achieve.[xxiii] Finally, the U.S. must reassure South Korea that despite the switch to a nine-month rotational presence, its commitment to the alliance remains strong and effective.[xxiv] One method to do this would be by having rotational units serve a portion of their deployment near the demilitarized zone-North Korean border.[xxv]

establishing internationally recognized "red lines" regarding North Korea that would trigger specific, agreed upon actions would be helpful

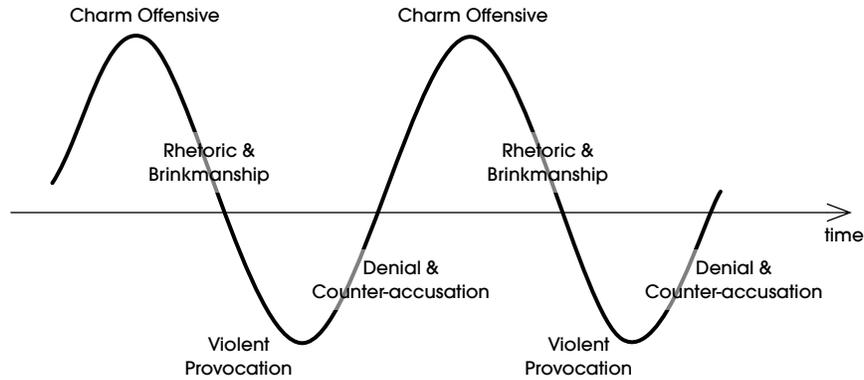
Second, the U.S. should continue hunting globally minded terrorists while further developing its nuclear forensics and implementing cutting edge missile defense technologies in appropriate locations.[xxvi] As with the training exercises, these steps offer deterrent and operational value. Effective capability and credibility in these areas signal America's strength, deterring states from attacking the U.S. and from transferring nuclear capability to terrorists who might. Effective counterterrorism and counter radicalization may also deter less ideologically driven individuals from attacking the U.S., driving them underground or causing them to pursue alternative outlets of protest. Operationally, however, is where the real impact occurs. Rapid disruption and dismantlement of terrorist organizations renders their target planning and execution more difficult. Finally, effective forensic detection and missile defense hold operational value by enabling rapid and accurate response when attacked.

In sum, the most realistic and least bad option for an American response to a North Korean nuclear attack, or one perpetrated by terrorists with a North Korean provided nuke, is a conventional response to depose Kim Jong-un, eliminate any involved terrorists, and unify the Korean peninsula. But to be both effective and affordable, all elements of an American response must be undergirded by South Korea and coordinated with China and the broader international community.[xxvii] The threat reduction measures outlined in this section will not make the recommended reaction much more palatable should it ever need implementation. They stand the best chance, however, of decreasing the likelihood of North Korean miscalculation and of degrading terrorist capability, which is all the U.S. can work toward right now.

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Appendix A – Lifecycle of North Korean Foreign Policy Statements & Acts^[xxviii]

Lifecycle of North Korean Foreign Policy Statements & Acts



Legend
U.S. – North Korea Bilateral Relationship: Better (High Points) & Worse (Low Points).
 In the past, North Korean provocations have included incendiary rhetoric, shelling South Korean islands (November 2010), sinking South Korean vessels (March 2010), border incidents (every decade since the Korean War armistice), and nuclear tests (2006, 2009, 2013).

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Appendix B – Simplistic Game Theory Model of U.S.-NK Relations^[xxix]

	US Actions		
	Military Action (Ex: Strikes)	Diplomatic Action (Ex: Six Party Talks)	Economic Action (Ex: Sanctions)
NK defects (provocations)	1, 2	6, 3	4, 4
NK cooperates (passive / charm offensive)	2, 1	5, 6	3, 5

The payoffs associated with each action/player are annotated in the boxes (higher is better). The shaded box represents the Nash Equilibrium. Although the payoff structure is subjective, these numbers represent the recent historical pattern fairly well. One of the major actions that the U.S. (and the international community through the UN) tend to take following each new round of North Korean provocations, is to pass more economic sanctions. The low payoffs for both players associated with U.S. military action demonstrates why the U.S. has not taken significant military action against North Korea since the Korean War, and why it likely will not unless the North attacks it or South Korea. However, this does not mean that the U.S. military is unengaged. An additional combat battalion just deployed to South Korea in early January 2014. The unit will be there for nine months and represents a permanent plus-up of the U.S. military presence. Other military actions are discussed elsewhere in the paper and in Appendix C. Furthermore, it is important to note that combinations of U.S. actions (mixed strategies) are possible—and typical. In the interest of clarity and simplicity, this model does not depict that. Yet as one might expect, reality does not always follow simplistic theory. The purpose of this model is not an attempt to perfectly portray reality. Rather, the purpose is to provide one simple means of understanding, and potentially predicting, aspects of the actions each player is most likely to take and why.

Appendix C – Barometer for U.S.-NK Relations & Corresponding U.S. Measures^[xxx]Barometer for U.S.-NK Relations &
Corresponding U.S. MeasuresNK conducts nuclear attack against US interests abroad

- Build an international coalition.
- Obtain UNSCR condemning the attack and authorizing military force.
- Consult / Negotiate with China regarding NK's fate:
 - 1) Reunification with SK; 2) China annexes NK; 3) Alternate options?
- Military Retribution (including involved Terrorists if Scenario #2).
- Push SK, China to take the lead on Reconstruction, Stabilization, Civil Authority Phases. (New Pottery Barn Precedent, See pages 6 & 8)

NK violent provocation portion of its Foreign Policy Lifecycle towards US/SK

- Show of Force Operations:
 - Fly nuclear capable stealth bombers to SK.
 - Park additional Naval Presence in the region (Aircraft Carrier / Carrier Wing).
- Place Missile Defence Capabilities in Guam.
- Pass new UN Sanctions.
- Improve Nuclear Forensic Capabilities, CT Ops.
- Conduct increased bilateral & *multilateral* defense & intelligence exercises (larger, longer, more involved countries).

NK charm offensive portion of its Foreign Policy Lifecycle towards UK/SK

- Six Party Talks.
- Food Provision despite Economic Sanctions.
- Conduct periodic bilateral Military, Intelligence, & Law Enforcement Exercises with SK.
- Disrupt & Dismantle Terrorist Networks to whom NK could pass a Nuclear Device.

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- [i] For a graphical depiction of North Korea's lifecycle of foreign policy statements and acts (i.e. provocations and charm offensives toward South Korea and the U.S.), see Appendix A. For a simplistic game theoretical model of this lifecycle, see Appendix B.
- [ii] Susan E. Rice, "Fact Sheet: Un Security Council Resolution 2094 on North Korea," U.S. Mission to the United Nations (March 7, 2013). <http://usun.state.gov/briefing/statements/205698.htm> (accessed December 20, 2013).
- [iii] More recently than the new UNSCR, China is contemplating abandoning its longtime ally, which is in accord with generally better relations between Beijing and Seoul over recent years. See: Jin Dong Hyeok, "China Notes Possibility of Abandoning Pyongyang " Daily NK (February 6, 2014). <http://www.dailynk.com/english/m/read.php?catId=nk00100&num=11467>.
- [iv] Jang Song Theak is generally thought to be the one responsible for much of North Korea's limited business ties and economic success.
- [v] Bruce W. Bennett, "Preparing for the Possibility of a North Korean Collapse," (2013). Bruce W. Bennett, Preparing for the Possibility of a North Korean Collapse. Given the recent execution of Jang Song Theak, scholars have become even more worried about North Korean regime collapse, pondering what his execution may mean regarding the state of Kim Jong-un's government and opposition forces. See: "North Korean Military Faces Massive Shakeup after Jang's Execution," Radio Free Asia (February 5, 2014). <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/korea/military-02052014114911.html>. Although not the main subject of this paper, regime collapse may be more likely than a nuclear attack. Bennett provides a comprehensive treatment of the subject, including how to handle North Korean, South Korean, and Chinese dynamics related to collapse scenarios.
- [vi] Kori Schake, War on the Rocks (December 17, 2013). <http://warontherocks.com/2013/12/the-army-needs-a-better-argument/> (accessed December 17, 2013). Kori Schake points out that the current political and budget environments mean that no U.S. president would be excited about sending the 530,000 troops to secure the Korean peninsula that she alleges Pentagon plans call for.
- [vii] One policy option to accomplish these goals would involve a conventional military response as part of the broader diplomatic and economic campaigns. This approach would minimize unnecessary suffering to noncombatants by funneling violence discriminately against the regime instead of the North Korean people. It would also facilitate the eventual restoration of the global taboo against nuclear weapon use. Last, it would likely stand the best chance of maintaining robust levels of sustained international support. Employing a nuclear response would be another policy option. The positive of this approach is that it would demonstrate U.S. strength and a willingness to respond in kind, potentially contributing to future deterrence of state-centric nuclear attacks against America. Yet a nuclear response would likely be counterproductive to accomplishing broader U.S. policy aims. It would be a geopolitical distraction, endangering vital international support. It would kill many innocent civilians as well as members of North Korea's ruling elite, individuals who would be important to an effective and efficient rebuilding process. Finally, it might lead to further escalation involving both sides launching multiple nuclear weapons against the other. All things considered, a conventional military response by the U.S. is arguably the best of the available bad response options.
- [viii] Ha Eo-young, "In First Press Conference, Pres. Park Calls Reunification "the Jackpot"," Hankyoreh, (January 7, 2014). See also: "Reunification "Would Boost Korea's Credit"; Chosun Media, The Chosunilbo (January 10, 2014). http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2014/01/10/2014011001148.html (accessed January 10, 2014). "N.Koreans "Want Reunification"; Chosun Media, The Chosunilbo (February 4, 2014). http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2014/02/04/2014020401519.html. Richard C. Bush III, "Korea: Surprising Excitement About Unification (Part 2) " (January 24, 2014). <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2014/01/24-korean-unification-us-bush>. "Kerry to Discuss Korean Reunification with China," Chosun Media, The Chosunilbo (February 4, 2014). http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2014/02/04/2014020401526.html. Although the U.S. and South Korea have a long stated goal of Korean unification, they have long eschewed its implementation, hoping for its eventual attainment through peaceful means. However, my contention is that a North Korean nuclear attack against the U.S. would provide the occasion not only for regime change in North Korea, but for reunification led by the South. Arguably, a new regime could be established in North Korea, perhaps even by the Chinese. While outside the scope of this paper to explore this fully, future research should explore that possibility.
- [ix] China's reaction to Korean reunification is a matter of much interest and some debate. See the following articles: Minxin Pei, "Would China Block Korean Unification? With Some Arguing China Is Turning North Korea into a 21st-Century Tributary State, It Can't Stop Its Reunification with the South.," The Diplomat, (January 27, 2013). Relations United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign, China's Impact on Korean Peninsula Unification and Questions for the Senate a Minority Staff Report Prepared for the Use of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, One Hundred Twelfth Congress, Second Session, December 11, 2012 (Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 2012). See-Won Byun, "China's National Identity and the Sino-U.S. National Identity Gap - a View from Four Countries: A View from South Korea, 2013," Joint U.S.-Korea Academic Studies, Asia's Uncertain Future: Korea, China's Aggressiveness, & New Leadership. Gilbert Rozman, Editor-in-Chief. Korea Economic Institute.
- [x] China's increased patrolling around the Senkaku Islands and November 2013 announcement of an extended Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) that overlaps with South Korean, Japanese, and Taiwanese zones have only exacerbated these concerns.
- [xi] Some argue that an appropriate U.S. response would be calibrated based on the nature and scale of North Korea's nuclear attack. Dr. Michael Matheny from the Army War College and Dr. Shane Smith from the National Defense University have made this case in discussion or email exchange with me. The logic is that distinctions should be made based on the target(s) of the North Korean attack, the extent of the casualties and damage, and the manner and timing of its execution. For instance, an attack during peace (Korean War armistice notwithstanding) demonstrates greater barbarity than does a nuclear escalation during war. An attack against civilian population centers is fundamentally different than an attack against military targets and may lead to a different response. A fifteen megaton hydrogen bomb would result in tremendously more damage than a ten kiloton nuclear improvised explosive device detonated in the same location. An attack against the U.S. homeland has a greater psychological impact than does one levied against American interests abroad, such as an embassy. A similar dynamic would also be at play if the target were an American ally or partner thought to be of little geopolitical significance to the U.S. An attack perpetrated by a state lends itself to a large military response more readily than does one wrought by a terrorist organization. I agree that in many contexts the nature and scale of an attack would be the predominant factors shaping a response. Yet I contend that these dynamics, however important, would not significantly impact the strategic outcome in either of the nuclear scenarios outlined in this paper—as long as the U.S. could verifiably trace the origin of the nuclear weapon back to North Korea. In either of these scenarios, the main factor governing a U.S. response would be the use of nuclear weapons. Specific differences in how the attack occurred would not outweigh that overarching similarity. In either scenario, therefore, the U.S. response would involve significant military action—accompanied with an intense diplomatic and informational campaign—to affect regime change. Despite the current and seeming hard-learned lessons from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars tending to a more limited and less overtly militarized U.S. foreign policy, Americans would not allow a medium size regime that utilized nuclear weapons against it to stay in power. The challenge in the terrorist scenario would be proving North Korean culpability to the world community. The difference in that situation from a direct North Korean strike would be the need to bring to justice the responsible terrorist organization in addition to the Kim Jong-un government.
- [xii] Richard Haass, Foreign Policy Begins at Home: The Case for Putting America's House in Order, Philadelphia: Basic Books, 2013, p. 83.
- [xiii] Australian Colonel David Coghlan, "Prospects from Korean Reunification," Strategic Studies Institute, April 2008, p.3. See also Robert Kelly's Asian Security Blog, "Korean-German Unification Parallels (2): Differences," Available at <http://asiansecurityblog.wordpress.com/2011/03/07/korean-german-unification-parallels-2-differences/>, accessed May 28, 2013.
- [xiv] In the lead up to the Iraq invasion, Secretary of State Colin Powell explained to President George W. Bush that he would own all the problems of Iraq after military victory. This became known as the Pottery Barn rule after the furniture store, and was codified in the simple phrase, "if you break it, you own it." In the case of Iraq, Powell warned Bush that he would also need to "fix it." See William Safire's article, "Language: You break it, you own it, you fix it," New York Times, October 18, 2004, available at http://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/17/arts/17iht-saf18.html?_r=0, accessed May 28, 2013.
- [xv] The U.S. and China are reportedly already coordinating on the full range of options regarding North Korea's future, including regime collapse. See: Lee Chi-dong, "U.S., China Discussed Contingencies in N. Korea: Report," N.K. News (January 13, 2014). <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2014/01/13/26/0401000000AEN20140113000200315F.html> (accessed January 13, 2014).
- [xvi] Jasper Becker, Rogue Regime: Kim Jong Il and the Looming Threat of North Korea, Oxford: University Press, 2005.
- [xvii] Korean unification would be even more challenging than Germany's due to North Korea's greater population, less infrastructure, and a significantly higher level of poverty than that in East Germany. See Robert Kelly, Asian Security Blog, "Korean-German Unification Parallels (2): Differences," Available at <http://asiansecurityblog.wordpress.com/2011/03/07/korean-german-unification-parallels-2-differences/>, accessed May 28, 2013. See also the article by Australian Colonel David Coghlan, "Prospects from Korean Reunification," Strategic Studies Institute, April 2008, p.3.
- [xviii] Paul Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500-2000, New York: Vintage Books, 1987.
- [xix] Richard Haass, Foreign Policy Begins at Home: The Case for Putting America's House in Order, Philadelphia: Basic Books, 2013.

[xx] Colonel (Retired) Dave Maxwell, Associate Director of Georgetown's Center for Security Studies and Security Studies Program, as well as a Korean expert, often argues via a daily national security email distribution list that the strength of the U.S.-South Korea alliance is the key to deterring provocative North Korean behavior.

[xxi] Anne Gearan, "U.S., China agree to cooperate on Korea crisis," Washington Post, April 13, 2013, available at http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-04-13/world/38503257_1_kerry-s-joint-chiefs-new-missile-launch, accessed May 28, 2013. See also "North Korea agrees to return to nuclear talks under pressure from China: Pyongyang's special envoy makes concession on nuclear disarmament to ease tensions between communist allies," The Guardian, May 24, 2013, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/may/24/north-korea-nuclear-talks-china>, accessed May 28, 2013.

[xxii] Former Secretary of Defense William Perry indicated in an interview with Best Defense that he favored red lines along the 'three no's': "no new nuclear weapons, no improved nuclear weapons, and no export of nuclear weapons." The interview occurred on June 20, 2013. It was posted June 25, 2013 on Thomas E. Ricks' foreignpolicy.com blog, available at http://ricks.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/06/25/the_best_defense_interview_former_defense_secretary_perry_on_what_to_do_about_north.

[xxiii] For a "barometer" of U.S. and North Korean relations and corresponding U.S. actions that can complement these "red lines," refer to Appendix C. For a discussion of "thermostats," tipping points, and other practical, policy relevant concepts, see: Thomas C. Schelling, *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*, New ed., Fels Lectures on Public Policy Analysis (New York: Norton, 2006).

[xxiv] This is also important given that the U.S. has insisted, and South Korea has agreed, to pay more in 2014 for the costs associated with the U.S. troop presence in South Korea. See: "South Korea to Contribute \$867 Million for U.S. Military Forces in 2014," (January 11, 2014). <http://mobile.reuters.com/article/idUSBREA0B01S20140112?irpc=932>. Furthermore, the U.S. and South Korea are conducting long-standing talks regarding when South Korea will take the lead in warfighting command for the contingency of a war with North Korea. All of these actions could make South Korea feel that the U.S. is becoming less committed to them—if not allayed by other actions.

[xxv] Colonel (Ret.) Dave Maxwell argued in a national security distribution list email on January 6, 2014, that South Korea is concerned about the U.S. move to a rotational presence and that America needed to take steps to assure them of continued commitment to the alliance. He suggested that one way to do this would be to place rotational units along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) along the border with North Korea.

[xxvi] It is important to place American missile defense equipment in strategic locations, again both as a signaling device (deterrent), and for force protection should deterrence fail. President Obama's decision to reposition some of this defensive capability in Guam is an important, positive step.

[xxvii] Chi-dong.

[xxviii] Colonel (Ret.) Dave Maxwell's comments on a national security oriented daily email distribution inspired this graphical depiction.

[xxix] Robbie Richards, a fellow Duke Public Policy PhD student, helped me develop this simple game theory model.

[xxx] South Korea has created something similar to this barometer as well, though it has not revealed the details. See: "S. Korea Creates N. Korea Situation Index," Yonhap News Agency (January 26, 2014). http://m.yna.co.kr/mob2/en/contents_en.jsp?cid=AEN20140126000600315&domain=3&ctype=A&site=0100000000.

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Blurred Lines: The Myth of Guerrilla Tactics

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Irregular warfare is in style. As the United States and its allies waged two wars against irregular actors in the last decade, the need to understand the conflicts in which the West was engaged spawned an industry of theorists discussing the phenomenon, and a few evangelists who feared a US shift to irregular warfare. The discussion is based on one assumption: that conventional tactics and irregular tactics are different. This conversation garnered so much emphasis that glaring issues of strategy were largely ignored. It is built on a false assumption: that there are two different styles of warfare. In fact, there is no meaningful difference between conventional and guerrilla (or irregular) warfare when it comes to tactics, and continued artificial segregation obscures more important military issues. This is a vital point for those thinking about strategy to understand since matters of strategy rest on tactics. At the same time, a focus on allegedly new tactics cannot be allowed to obscure higher, and more important, issues of strategy.

**there is no meaningful difference
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Definitions and Doctrine

Similarities can be seen in definitions of guerrilla and conventional warfare. T. E. Lawrence described the guerrilla tactics his Arab revolt would use against the Ottomans in terms of "orthodoxy" that were simply translated to the characteristics of his forces and terrain.[i] Mao Tse-Tung, arguably the greatest theorist of guerrilla warfare, described guerrilla tactics as:

"based primarily on alertness, mobility, and attack... select the tactic of seeming to come from the east and attacking from the west. Avoid the solid, attack the hollow; attack; withdraw; deliver a lightning blow... engage a stronger enemy, they withdraw when he advances; harass him when he stops; strike him when he is weary; pursue him when he withdraws...the enemy's rear, flanks, and other vulnerable spots are his vital points, and there he must be harassed, attacked, dispersed, exhausted and annihilated."[ii]

Robert Taber recognized the similarities as well:

"The policy of hitting the enemy when he is weak, evading him when he is strong, taking the offensive when he falls back, circling around when he advances- all of this is only common sense. There is no great novelty in it... What is new... is the application of guerrilla activity, in a conscious and deliberate way, to specific political objectives..."[iii]

This last statement – that activity is tied to political objectives – is of course applicable to all warfare. Thus we are left with only similarities. In his recent book, *Invisible Armies*, Max Boot also points out the similarities:

"At the lowest level, guerrilla war has much in common with the small-unit tactics of conventional armies: both rely on ambush and rapid movement. The difference is that guerrilla warfare lacks front lines and large-scale, set-piece battles - the defining characteristics of conventional conflict."[iv]

Are set-piece battles and front lines still defining characteristics of conventional conflict? A quick look at modern descriptions of combat belies the notion. The US Army describes its "Unified

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Land Operations" as a method that "begins and ends with the exercise of collective and individual initiative to gain a position of advantage that degrades and defeats the enemy throughout the depth of the enemy's organization." [v] Guerrilla organizations also stress individual initiative, only fight where they possess an advantage, and fight throughout the depth of the enemy organization rather than recognize front lines. In fact, the US Army's conception of how it fights is so "guerrilla-esque" it could be used as a definition of guerrilla warfare. The US Marine Corps' MCDP-1 *Warfighting* goes even further, describing what that service defines as *maneuver warfare*:

"...warfare by maneuver stems from a desire to circumvent and attack it from a position of advantage rather than meet it straight on... enemy concentrations are generally avoided as enemy strengths. Instead of attacking enemy strength, the goal is the application of our strength against selected enemy weakness... Maneuver relies on speed and surprise..." [vi]

Modern conventional tactics are so similar to so-called guerrilla tactics that even the same words must be used to describe them.

Modern conventional tactics are so similar to so-called guerrilla tactics that even the same words must be used to describe them. Both US definitions above show far more of Mao's DNA than any other theorist. The distinguishing feature of conventional warfare, "front lines and set pieces battles," does not even merit mention in definitions of so-called conventional warfare. Steven Biddle terms this the "modern system," where modern combat forces military organizations to use cover, concealment, dispersion, small-unit independent maneuver, suppression, and combined arms integration" [vii] far more than they used to. Mao's Three Stage ladder has collapsed into one step.

It is this modern system that both conventional and guerrilla organizations practice at a fundamental level. The differences are only uniform deep. Conventional armies and guerrilla organizations have no monopoly on any one tactic or set of tactics, even combined arms. A complex attack that combines an IED strike on an entry control point followed up by infiltration attacks is a form of combined arms. The principles of warfare and technological change drive soldier and guerrilla alike towards the same tactical adaptations. For example, the devastating capability of field artillery and close air support since the early 20th century has made large unit concentrations more and more dangerous. In fact, they are nearly suicidal. Ideas of front lines and set-piece battles still ensconced in doctrine are vestigial. Soldiers may enjoy more training than the guerrilla before they arrive on the battlefield, but the guerrilla's deficit is quickly reduced in the harshest of schools. The only tangible differences between conventional and non-conventional organizations are uniforms, codified regulations, and official designation. History shows that such pomp and circumstance is no guarantor of success in battle. Speaking tactically, there is no "guerrilla" system or "conventional" system. There is simply good tactics, and the guerrilla and the soldier can become equally adept at

them. In other words, "irregular" always refers to actors, not the tactics that actors utilize. When combatants as varied as the Lashkar-e-Taiba [viii] in Mumbai, the US Army and Marine Corps, and developing armies like the Somali National Army [ix] are coming to the same conclusions and utilizing the same tactics in vastly different contexts, the idea that a true guerrilla/soldier dichotomy exists falls apart.

In other words, "irregular" always refers to actors, not the tactics that actors utilize.

The Battle of Wanat

Take, for example, the Battle of Wanat in 2008. For a period of about four hours, Taliban fighters used direct assaults and massed firepower in an attempt to overrun a US Army unit defending a position from sandbag barriers and bunkers. The Taliban force, estimated at about 150 strong, used high ground and dead space around the combat outpost to their advantage just as a conventional force would. [x] The Taliban force very nearly overran the Army position, and it took sustained close air support, field artillery support, and the commitment of two Quick Reaction Forces (QRF) on the part of the Army to end the battle. There is almost nothing to distinguish the tactics of either side from, to pick just one example, an Imperial Japanese Army banzai charge against an entrenched US position on a Pacific Island in 1943. The tactics chosen by the Taliban were chosen solely for their effectiveness given the situation and environment rather than their alleged adherence to a particular tactical style.

There is little that needs to be said about the proliferation of so-called guerrilla tactics in conventional forces. The soldiers, as well as the guerrilla have long utilized the staples of ambushes, cover and concealment, and hit and run attacks. In recent years, many conventional armies have greatly expanded their special operations forces that are even more focused on so-called guerrilla tactics.

The 2006 Lebanon War

The best example, perhaps, is Hezbollah- specifically the performance of that organization's armed forces against the Israel Defense Force in Southern Lebanon in 2006. Hezbollah used tactics, specifically kidnapping and rocket attacks, to attack Israel until the IDF responded. When the IDF did respond, they assumed that Hezbollah could not contend with conventional forces and armored offensives. Instead, the Hezbollah fighters were well prepared in strong defensive positions, which they refused to abandon as the Israelis expected. [xi] In fact, Stephen Biddle and Jeffrey A. Friedman wrote that Hezbollah in 2006 was, "in many ways, as "conventional" as some state actors have been in major interstate warfare." [xii] Even Hassan Nasrallah recognized the blurring of lines when describing his organization's fighting: "It [Hezbollah] did not wage guerrilla war, either. I want to clarify this point: it was not a regular army, but [it] was not a guerrilla [army] in the traditional sense, either. It was something in between." [xiii]

The conflict between Hezbollah and the IDF in 2006 has been very influential and Hezbollah is now seen as the quintessential "hybrid threat." Hezbollah clearly used sophisticated tactics in this instance but sophistication does not constitute the development of a new and distinct form of warfare. It only appears to be so on the surface. The appearance of a blend of conventional and irregular tactics is not new. In fact, it is rather ancient. For example, it occurred during the Peloponnesian War when the Athenians used conventional forces and "irregular" tactics to defeat the vaunted Spartan phalanxes in the Battle of Sphacteria in 425 BC. The 2006 Lebanon War does not signal a new form of warfare or the convergence of two distinct tactical styles. It is just more evidence that tactics are tactics. This "modern" system is the new normal and actors- be they state or non-state- will either need to adopt it or they risk defeat.

Just Good Tactics

Whether it is called the "modern system," maneuver warfare, or hybrid warfare, we are simply discussing warfare – professionally and historically known as tactics. Armies that are effective and adaptable will utilize these tactics to a greater or lesser degree because they are effective given a situation and the operational and technological environment in which it occurs. A "large-scale maneuver," for example, makes little sense on the modern battlefield against an irregular actor, such as so-called guerrillas; "guerrillas" will simply evade it, and a "conventional" enemy will utilize the massive firepower available to modern combatants to annihilate it. Colin Gray has written that a distinction between "something" and "irregular" warfare in strategic theory is not useful and unnecessarily confusing.[xiv] Beyond theory, it is clear there is no fundamental practical difference either. What does this realization mean for strategy?

First, theorists are too quick to say that changing tactics represent fundamental changes in war. Tactics are the currency used to buy strategic effect and they are far more tangible than the item that they are intending to purchase. Observers tend to focus on the tangible at the expense of the intangible: the underlying nuances. Much ink has been spilled in recent years debating counterinsurgency tactics with little progress and less focus on the strategic context within which tactics must be used.[xv] Meanwhile, the US has prosecuted two wars with murky policy, and subsequently strategic, objectives – seemingly predicated on rebuilding whole societies in its own image – with very little to show for it. The currency of tactics will have little worth if the shopper has no idea what he is supposed buy.

The currency of tactics will have little worth if the shopper has no idea what he is supposed buy.

Second, there is too much worry about the atrophy of conventional armies that participate in counterinsurgency campaigns. Some warn that such militaries will lose essential skills needed to defeat conventional threats because they are focused on fighting guerrillas. But good tactics learned against insurgents will transfer to the battlefield against

professional armies. Lieutenant General John Lejeune, Commandant of the Marine Corps from 1920-1929 and World War I veteran, attributed the success of Marine Corps units in Europe during that war to the skills they had learned fighting guerrillas in Haiti and Santo Domingo in the years before the war.[xvi] The idea that a military's skill in good tactics will atrophy when they are actually engaged in practicing good tactics is nonsensical. Dodging Taliban ambushes in Helmand is better training than armored maneuvers at Fort Benning, where every slightly dangerous action is sanitized to prevent injuries and protect soldiers from friction. Techniques like division-sized armored maneuvers atrophy but this is because they are rarely useful in modern combat. The sterile training environments favored by US forces have two deleterious effects. One, it deprives troops of realistic training that simulates the experience of combat. As Clausewitz said, such experience is "the only lubricate that can ease the grip of friction." [xvii] Second, unrealistic training will produce mutated and stunted tactical evolution as troops learn bad habits and then carry them forward. This is particularly dangerous during peacetime when training is the only experience troops have access to.

Third, as warfare changes some tactics - as the currency of strategy - are more valuable than others. The ambushade is clearly up, as is the landmine (albeit in improvised fashion), and so is small unit-independent maneuver enabled by *auftragstaktik* or mission command. Combined-arms integration is an old and stable currency, as is concealed movement and maneuver. These tactics are common because they work in the current tactical environment but this does not signify a tectonic shift in the nature of war. Many theorists look for patterns and try to ride rising tactics to literary glory by declaring new ways of war, new generations, new revolutions, and the death of stodgy old theories. The realization that there is little meaningful difference between irregular and conventional warfare at the tactical level clears up the confusion such theorists have wrought. New tactical patterns are not changes in the nature of war, but simply a reflection of the ebb and flow of the strategic context: a product of swirling eddies in the geopolitical situation and technological trends. Forays into the concept *du jour* only distract from the underlying strategic principles that truly are different from conflict to conflict, combatant to combatant. Facile changes in tactical trends do not constitute revolutions in theory. Hybrid warfare is perhaps the most egregious example of this. Rather than a new threat or form of warfare, hybrid warfare is just a misrepresented and misunderstood recognition of the utter lack of a fundamental difference between conventional and irregular warfare at the tactical level. Nor is the mixture new. Military leaders as varied as Fabius Maximus, the Marshall de Saxe, and George Washington used "guerrilla" methods in conventional contexts.

Ends, Ways, Means

The breakdown of the conventional/guerrilla dichotomy has important implications for the ends, ways, means construct. The means, of course, is combat- victories gained, or not gained, on the battlefield through the application of tactics. But since the tactics employed by soldiers and guerrillas are basically the same the only difference lies in the ways that those tactics are employed. For example, in the use of

tactics in the employment of either a strategy of attrition or annihilation, conventional armies typically pursue strategies of annihilation while guerrilla armies pursue strategies of attrition (or exhaustion). But this difference lies in the strategy-*a la* Hans Delbrück-employed by each, not in the tactics. The means will be much the same, but ways as determined by the ends may be quite different.

If we use the much more clear attrition versus annihilation dichotomy rather than the conventional/guerrilla construct, our thinking about war and warfare can become clearer as well. Force planners should take comfort in the realization that, where bullets and bayonets meet, tactics are tactics despite facile appearances. An infantry battalion well trained in basic small unit tactics can be equally adept at fighting a like infantry force or a guerrilla cell. The practitioners that employ tactics will always turn to better ones, whether they wear a uniform, enjoy state sanction, or not. Theorists would do well to realize what the practitioners have already discovered. Commanders confronted by a guerrilla enemy pursuing a strategy of exhaustion should spend less time writing tactical manuals and more time focusing on the strategy. Finally, clarification of modern tactics and how they fit in with strategy will go far in ending what Colin Gray calls a "conflation of war with warfare." [xviii]

Conclusion

The artificial separation of guerrilla and conventional tactics has insidious effects conceptually and practically. Established militaries create centers of "irregular warfare" that soak up resources and manpower while writing documents that only serve to further cloud tactical trends. Such centers also allow

the rest of the organization to ignore changes in the tactical environment and focus on archaic "conventional" tactics. Such segregation leads to the idea that counterinsurgency, as defined by the U.S. military, is more political than other forms of warfare - a preposterous statement. In the US military, this has led to an Army and a Marine Corps that understand and preach how to fight in modern warfare, but typically fail to practice it. Both organizations are beholden to a vestigial conventional warfare system that is only relevant when placed in mythological juxtaposition with the so-called guerrilla system.

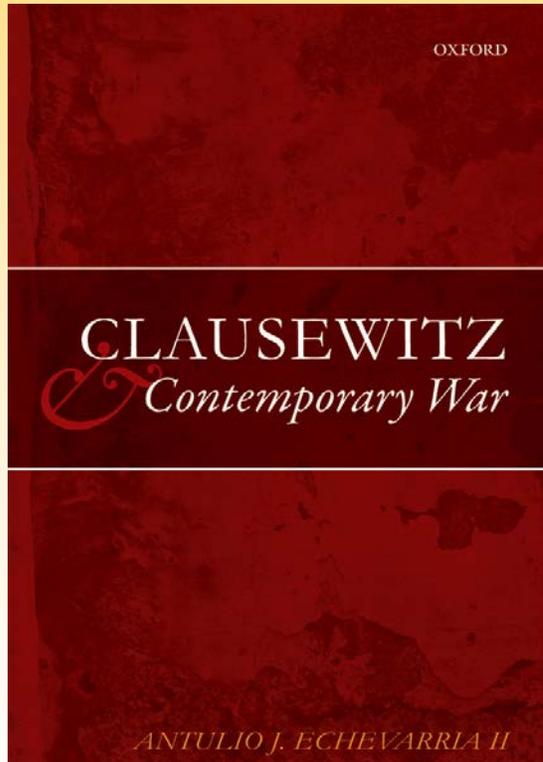
Successful militaries will not get bogged down in defining styles of warfare

Successful militaries will not get bogged down in defining styles of warfare, will not agonize over how much to focus on one style of warfare over the other, and will not bemoan the atrophy and loss of tactics useful in bygone eras. An armed force interested in victory at the tactical level will practice good tactics until they are second nature, and then employ them at an appropriate place and time. While it lies in the realm of strategy to tie those tactics to policy goals, it is incumbent upon theorists and practitioners to understand the tactics that are the currency of combat and what they can purchase. Strategy depends on the execution of tactics and thus tactics are important. But, tactics never trump strategy. The unnecessary schism between so-called conventional and guerrilla tactics is simply chaff that he must see through.

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The Fox and the Hedgehog: Contrasting Approaches to Anticipating the Environment

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Dr. Randy Borum is a Professor and Coordinator for Strategy and Intelligence Studies in the School of Information at the University of South Florida. He previously served on the DNI's Intelligence Science Board (ISB), and has studied behavioral dynamics in violent extremism and counterintelligence. He has authored/co-authored more than 150 professional publications, and currently serves as Senior Editor for the Journal of Strategic Security.

Introduction

Anticipating, though not predicting, the future environment is an essential part of strategic planning[i]. Over the past 20 years, however, the global security environment has become increasingly complex. Navigating the contemporary environment requires a different mindset than was needed during the Cold War. Leaders most likely to succeed are those who embrace uncertainty, are highly adaptive, constantly learning, and know how to maneuver incrementally and with agility. In this paper, I will refer to them as foxes.

The fox and the hedgehog are popular metaphors for two different styles of thinking[ii]. The fox is more diffuse, with a breadth of knowledge and the ability to use multiple frameworks to understand the world. The hedgehog is more focused, with deep knowledge of one thing, using a single idea or frame of reference. Not everyone fits neatly in one of the two categories, but they may tend toward one side or the other.

The exact origin of this typology is not completely clear, but it is known to have appeared at least 2,500 years ago in the writing of the Greek poet, Archilochus, who said: "The fox knows many tricks, but the hedgehog knows one big trick."

Foxes seem to know something about everything, while hedgehogs seem to know everything about something in particular—that one big trick. Throughout history, there have been some phenomenal hedgehogs whose single, unifying big ideas transformed entire fields of inquiry. It was true for

Freud and the concept of the unconscious; for Marx with his idea of class struggle; and with Darwin and his proposed process of natural selection.

Foxes seem to know something about everything, while hedgehogs seem to know everything about something in particular

Hedgehogs are the most sought after commentators on TV and the first to volunteer their insights and predictions. In recent years, the hedgehog concept has become the aspirational ideal in the business community as well. In his book "Good to Great", former Stanford business professor Jim Collins evangelizes the way of the hedgehog[iii]. In his study of what makes business highly successful, he found that the great companies were those that focused only on one thing and did it well.

As a business tactic, there is merit to the hedgehog idea, but as a competitive strategy and approach to the future, it needs to be put in context. As Collins tells the story, the cunning fox tries day after day to catch the hedgehog. The fox tries to be faster, smarter, trickier, but every time the hedgehog just hunkers down and curls into a spiny ball. The frustrated fox just walks away. In Collins' words, "the hedgehog always wins." Presumably he means this to be true of the literal and metaphorical hedgehogs.

But here is an update from nature – in some parts of the world, foxes are, unfortunately, believed to be responsible for large declines in hedgehog populations[iv]. It turns out the foxes have adapted, but the hedgehogs have not. Foxes have learned to leap at the hedgehog, knowing the hedgehog will hunker down. The fox then skulks away a couple of feet behind the hedgehog and sits quietly. Thinking the threat has passed, the hedgehog begins to uncurl, extends his rear legs, and the fox leaps on him from behind and grabs the legs before the hedgehog can pull himself back in, and the hedgehog doesn't win.

Despite the hedgehog's mastery of the hunker down defense and the fact that he may do it better than anyone else in

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the animal kingdom, he is vulnerable to the more agile and adaptive adversary.

Foxes and hedgehogs tend to look at problems and approach the future in strikingly different ways.

Foxes and hedgehogs tend to look at problems and approach the future in strikingly different ways. One approach is not inherently better than the other, but different styles work better in different environments. Curling into a ball works well with small predators, but not so well with oncoming cars. So, what are some of the differences between foxes and hedgehogs?

When it comes to strategy and planning, hedgehogs are characteristically determined. They pick a strategy and stick to it - even when things are not going their way. They are the same way with their ideas. They have a single set of principles or a framework that guides them. When new information comes in, they either squeeze it into their framework, or dismiss it if it doesn't fit. Hedgehogs interpret an evolving reality to fit their preconceived notions, rather than adapting their assumptions and ideas. When the world was in bipolar equipoise, hedgehogs dominated global security strategy, and they did it effectively[v].

Hedgehogs interpret an evolving reality to fit their preconceived notions, rather than adapting their assumptions and ideas.

Foxes, though, tend to be adaptive. If a plan isn't working, they'll look at ways to change. They are open to new information. And if new information does fit with their original formulation, they will re-think their strategy.

Hedgehogs and foxes also differ in their intellectual values. Hedgehogs like to accumulate knowledge, but foxes are focused on learning. In a competition, hedgehogs seek to know more than their competitors, but foxes focus on new ways to acquire and apply knowledge.

When they anticipate the future, hedgehogs and foxes also handle forecasts and foreknowledge quite differently. After hedgehogs come to a conclusion, they are certain they are right. They assert their position with confidence and authority. Foxes are more diffident. They are much more likely to recognize their uncertainty. Foxes are more likely to say "I don't know" or "that's what I'm thinking at this point" even "I could be wrong." That's part of the reason that foxes don't make for pithy pundits and media experts.

Finally, the two styles also assume different postures in implementing their plans and ideas. Hedgehogs set a course, and barrel ahead. Foxes tend to move in smaller increments, watching for changes at each step, ready to reassess and modify their ideas as necessary. They nudge their way through change.

We do not want to do away with the hedgehogs, but as the security environment becomes more cluttered and complex, we need more foxes. Psychologist Philip Tetlock some years ago did a large-scale study looking at expert predictions of future events[vi]. As a whole, experts were terrible forecasters, but some definitely did better than others. This led Tetlock to compare the hedgehog and fox-like styles.

as the security environment becomes more cluttered and complex, we need more foxes

Hedgehogs tended to be confident, decisive and steadfast in their opinions. They were also the worst predictors. In fact, as hedgehogs gained more knowledge and fame (as measured by media appearances), their forecasts actually became less accurate.

Foxes, on the other hand, tended to be less sure, more nuanced, and more adaptive. Though the foxes' predictions were not great, they consistently outperformed the hedgehogs. As their knowledge increased, their forecasts actually became more accurate.

As we face the security challenges that lie ahead, critical decisions depend on our ability anticipate them. But the future environment will not make it easy. In the past, the world may have seemed more orderly and predictable, but it is now increasingly complex, interconnected and highly dynamic. As the US Army War College concluded, the conditions are volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA)[vii].

conditions are volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous

A fox-like style is a good fit for this kind of complex, interconnected world, and that is why, as we train the next generation of strategists, we need to be nurturing more foxes. Hedgehog approaches are fine in a stable environment but they can quickly break down when conditions are unstable. Hedgehogs struggle with complexity and change - they want reality to fit within their preconceived ideas. Foxes are more comfortable with uncertainty and change.

When faced with a rapid pace of change, foxes will adapt. When the environment is unpredictable, foxes are less likely to fight or deny the uncertainty; they embrace it. They will constantly question their own appraisals and re-examine their assumptions.

With increasing complexity, foxes engage by learning. They look for non-linear interconnections. They take a systems-oriented view to understand how different factors and parts of a process affect each other.

And when navigating in a fog of ambiguous signals and outcomes, foxes will move ahead incrementally. This makes them more agile and adaptable than if they went full speed ahead on an unmodifiable course.

As we muddle through this century and prepare leaders and strategists for a 21st Century security environment, governments, militaries and businesses need to be nurturing more foxes – strategists and problems solvers who are constantly learning and adapting.

Leaders with fox-line inclinations should use their strengths to help others navigate a disorderly global environment. For those whose natural affinity lies more with the hedgehog, I would like to offer three suggestions for how we might better value foxes in the study and practice of strategy.

do not mistake certainty for accuracy

First, do not mistake certainty for accuracy. The scientific literature on decision making is replete with studies showing that confidence and accuracy are often not highly correlated[viii]. Being more confident does not make it more likely that an analyst is right. The challenge, of course, is that confidence is often persuasive[ix].

Two domains of confidence are at issue here self-confidence and source confidence. We need to monitor both, but understand the difference between them. With self-confidence our subjective experience of confidence is often tangled up in our assessments of accuracy; that is whether we (or our viewpoint) is “right.” From research, we know that overconfidence is ubiquitous. Most people are much more likely to over estimate than to under estimate whether what they know/believe is correct. Knowing this, in any given instance, we can just downwardly adjust our own confidence and assume that we are calibrating it in the right direction. Another useful tool is to intentionally seek evidence that supports a contrary position. Because we usually are drawn to information that supports what we think and dismiss information that contradicts it, this intentional exercise can serve as a counterweight to our typical human biases.

With source confidence, we must be mindful that if we are typically more confident than right, then the analyst, briefer, or other persuader is too. Some will boldly saunter in with an “obvious answer.” In these instances, we have to take extra care to separate the objective evidence from the subjective experience and the delivery. We may need to re-orient ourselves to listen to ideas that start with “what if...” or “I wonder what would happen...” or “this may seem silly, but...” Those ideas do not have to prevail, but they should not be summarily dismissed. Quiet voices can also speak truth.

Second, do not mistake broad interests with being scatterbrained. We should not look only to the input of international relations scholars. The successful strategist of the future is likely to be trained across several disciplines. This is a positive trend because some of the greatest innovations in history have come from introducing a new or a borrowed perspective on an old problem.

This is not an argument against developing or using focused areas of expertise. But sometimes when we have one “big idea”—a master theory about how the world works—it is easy to stick our arrow in the target and just paint the rings

around it. Colin Gray reminds us: “beware of the pretentiously huge idea that purports to explain what everybody else, supposedly, has been too dumb to grasp.” Reading (and knowing) military history can be incredibly valuable, but if that is all you consume, you might miss out on some opportunities for innovation or for having new frames of reference that can help you adapt.

The future is inherently uncertain so it is foolish to act like it is not.

Finally, don’t mistake being adaptive for being wishy-washy. The future is inherently uncertain so it is foolish to act like it is not. As Colin Gray has so wisely noted “If you spend a lot of time talking about the future you can forget that you do not really know the subject[x].” Re-evaluating decisions and changing course are not the trappings of intellectual cowardice. Adaptability is a virtue. “Commitment” should be valued, but over-commitment to our own ideas and plans should not. When our wish for a particular outcome makes us unable to see that it is not attainable, or at least not attainable though the current course of action, then commitment is replaced by stubbornness and pride.

Adaptiveness requires intellectual humility. We must be willing to examine and question our own assumptions, and embrace the question “why.” Sometimes tactics are applied or actions are chosen simply because they are doctrine. But it is useful for adaptive leaders to also explicitly consider the fundamental question: why (and on what basis) do I think this particular course of action is likely (or more likely than others) to lead to my desired objective. This is a potentially useful way to navigate strategic intent[xi]. Think about how you know, not just what you know. And don’t chop off “the other hand.” You just might need it later.

Conclusion

Facing the future, security and defense leaders will need more fox-like thinking to help us muddle through the VUCA and work on solutions to critical world problems. As the global security environment has become increasingly complex, these leaders have had to shift mindsets. In a bipolar world with one big, state-based threat, security contingency planning was manageable. There was no hand-wringing about what the big threat would be, where it would be, or who the key actors were likely to be.

Now, though, we are faced with dozens of failed or failing states dispersed around the world, criminal threats to national sovereignty, and a host of nonstate actors including militias, warlords, and illicit transnational networks with diverse agendas, all leaving long trails of brutal, indiscriminate violence, unrestrained by international conventions and laws of armed conflict[xii].

Strategic leaders need not only to adapt to the new environment, but also to how they think about the security environment.

Strategic leaders need not only to adapt to the new environment, but also to how they think about the security environment. Those who are vexed by the transition might seek and use the perspectives of others whose approach is more like that of the proverbial fox. Tolerating and managing

uncertainty will be an essential skill set. Leaders, as they navigate the terrain, will be increasingly challenged to adapt, to learn, and to innovate. Plans will need to be flexible and responsive to external changes, using incremental moves to preserve agility. To make it work, we may need more foxes[xiii].

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B L O O M S B U R Y



Strategy and the Use of Covert Operations: The Failed Attempts to Overthrow Saddam Hussein

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"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle".

– Sun Tzu

Introduction

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is in the business of overthrowing governments or ousting leaders that are not in sync with the United States, especially when it relates to its hegemony. While many have succeeded, there have been numerous, highly publicized failures (*Schuster*). [i] Former CIA official Allan Goodman said, "We know this business very well. It doesn't mean we're good at it" and Bill Gates once said, "It's fine to celebrate success but it is more important to heed the lessons of failure". [ii] In order to heed the lessons of failed operations, the reason for failure and the consequences of failure must be understood. One series of failures that should be analyzed are the attempts to remove Saddam Hussein from power between 1991 and 1996. These failures cost the United States over 100 million US dollars and a substantial amount of embarrassment. This article demonstrates how flawed planning and assessment led to flawed strategy, and

the consequences of not matching strategy and subsequent operations, with policy in Iraq.

Overview of Operations against Saddam Hussein (*Ṣaddām Ḥusayn ʿAbd al-Maǧīd al-Tikrītī*)

In the years between 1992 and 1996, the CIA ran Cold War stylized operations against the Iraqi Ba'ath regime, with the goal of eliminating Saddam Hussein. Operations involved everything from radio propaganda to paramilitary plots. This was one foreign policy fantasy shared between Presidents William Clinton and George Bush. The motivation for the United States to take action against Saddam lay primarily in him taking Iraq out of the anti-Soviet Union Pact, his subsequent threats to invade Kuwait, his intent at nationalization of Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) i.e. the British oil consortium that exploited Iraq's oil, and his increasingly extensive endeavors into nuclear and chemical weapons.

During the Bush administration, a presidential finding was signed, directing the CIA to "create the conditions for the removal" of Saddam Hussein [iii]. The Administration perhaps hoped to avoid the danger of downed pilots being paraded through the streets by Saddam and having to publicly confront its reluctant allies through the use of covert action. When initial covert operations were launched, the United States believed that Saddam was severely weakened by the rebellion of the Kurdish nationalist at the end of Desert Storm. The dilemma that faced Saddam with the Kurds was enhanced by the support afforded them by the United Nations (U.N.) in the form of food, supplies and flight restrictions imposed over part of Iraq. However, since it seemed imminent that his opponents would remove Saddam, covert efforts were markedly passive. The general plan was to isolate, marginalize, and weaken Saddam by increasing the autonomy of the Kurds in the U.N. protected areas.

The general plan was to isolate, marginalize, and weaken Saddam

In 1995-1996 when the Clinton administration realized that while Saddam had indeed been weakened he still endured, President Clinton signed an order to supply arms and other

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assistance to Iraqi groups seeking to overthrow Saddam. The view that increased covert action was necessary was shared in part by Congress. The efforts of the Clinton administration were focused on removing Saddam while avoiding war at all costs. This avoidance was with good reason as it would have likely led to much the same outcome as it did in 2012. Iraq today is still far from being a democracy and far from pro-American. The destruction of Iraq shifted power in favor of Iran in the Persian Gulf and cost the US over 1 trillion US dollars. [iv] Additionally, the war also had a seriously negative effect on the image of the United States around the world.

As a result of President Clinton's order, the CIA embarked on two types of covert action - one dealt with information warfare through the spread of propaganda, while the other dealt with support for paramilitary operations with the hope of a coup d'état. The planned overthrow of Saddam through a coup d'état was to be achieved through CIA supported Iraqi military officers opposed to Saddam, and two Kurdish nationalist groups who wanted to ensure Kurdish autonomy. The Kurdish groups were the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).

Flawed Strategy Means Failed Operations

Many consider the failure of covert operations in Iraq to be a colossal disaster. All that was thought to be missing was media coverage of helicopters evacuating U.S. agents and allies from rooftops. While it is easy to blame the administrations of the time, or the CIA, it is more prudent to analyze the failure to determine what went wrong so that future operations could be guided accordingly. Operations in Iraq adopted a strategy with the ambitious goal of toppling Saddam rather than trying to prevent him from future military aggression or revitalizing programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Given the dynamics in Iraq, and in the larger Persian Gulf at the time, the plan seems to have been ill conceived. The plan was flawed in four (4) major areas; assessment of Saddam's intelligence resources, assessment of the geopolitics of the region, the plausibility of covert action and alignment with foreign policy.

Operations in Iraq adopted a strategy with the ambitious goal of toppling Saddam rather than trying to prevent him from future military aggression

Similar to the unsuccessful invasion of the Bay of Pigs, there was a gross underestimation of the capabilities of the targeted leader. With the Bay of Pigs, policymakers failed to apprise themselves of Fidel Castro's military capabilities or the degree of intelligence sharing with the Soviet Union/KGB. The CIA also failed to evaluate the ability of the KGB to recruit a double agent within the U.K. or U.S. intelligence services. In the case of Saddam, the coup planned by the CIA with the Iraqi National Accord (INA) was far from secret and was well known by the Iraqi government. The INA or Wifaq was a paramilitary organization that the CIA utilized to penetrate the Republican Guard. Many of the defectors being used by

the CIA were actually Mukhabarat double agents. Unknown to them, the Mukhabarat acquired a secure satellite used by the INA to communicate with agents in Baghdad, which allowed them to acquire detailed information on the planned coup (that wasn't). This shortcoming in assessing the intelligence/security capabilities of the targeted leader led to failure in both cases. Information oversight led to a poorly conceived strategy which resulted in dismal failure. At the core of this problem was insufficient support from Baghdad-controlled Iraq to supply timely information needed to collate intelligence on the capabilities and activities of Saddam's secret services. The diplomatic, political and economic structures, which would traditionally be used to conceal CIA officers and agents [embassies, political contacts or businessmen travelling to and from the country] did not exist in Iraq. This made it exceedingly difficult for agents to infiltrate the inner circle of Saddam's regime and security forces. This in direct contrast to Saddam who had tens of thousands of soldiers and spies dedicated to preserving his power through information collection, covert operations and security protocols. It became clear that Saddam held power for all those years because he relentlessly suppressed all opposition and utilized an extensive intelligence and security apparatus.

shortcoming in assessing the intelligence/security capabilities of the targeted leader led to failure in both cases

Secondly, the conceived strategy was poor and lacked intelligence on the geographic and political relationship between Iraq, its surrounding nations and the United States. Any successful strategy needed to be militarily operational and advantageous to U.S. allies in the region, such as Turkey, so that the cooperation necessary for success could be acquired. The U.S. was limited in the quantity of support it could afford the Kurds due to Kurdistan's remote location. Sworn enemies of the U.S. such as Iran and Syria surrounded the region. While access may have been possible through Turkey, unfortunately for the U.S. they had an opposing policy towards the Kurds. The planned increase in the autonomy of Kurdistan was inconsistent with broader U.S. policy toward Turkey, which opposed the creation of an independent Kurdish state along its borders. Also, due to the deterioration of the coalition formed during the Persian Gulf War - with key players the United Kingdom, France, Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia - it was becoming difficult to maintain support for the continuation of U.N. economic sanctions on Iraq. This was essential in weakening Saddam and thereby ensuring the success of the potential coup. Also, Saddam had the full support of the elite Sunni, who feared loss of wealth, prestige and possibly their lives, if Saddam was to be overthrown. The Sunni also feared that, in a post-Saddam Iraq, the fundamentalist Shiite Muslims, who formed 67% of the Iraqi populace, would seize the opportunity to obtain political power. This made the possibility of them lending support to a coup d'état highly unlikely. Additionally, given the hardships that the Iraqi people had suffered since the Persian Gulf War, there was a fear that a post-Saddam regime may prove even more virulently anti-United States than Saddam. Moreover, Iraq is in an exceptionally turbulent region and therefore has

an incentive to develop nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, regardless of who is in power.[v]

Covert action seemed to ignore the recognized need for expediency in dealing with Saddam

Thirdly, covert action was never a plausible option, nor was it necessary, given Saddam's intent to strike at the U.S. and its allies after the Persian Gulf War. Covert action seemed to ignore the recognized need for expediency in dealing with Saddam, as Iraq continued to amass Weapons of Mass Destruction, intimidate neighbors and support terrorism. Additionally, the instability of any Kurdish alliance, due to a continuous struggle for power, put a potential time limit on any plan utilizing the Kurds. Masoud Barzani, the leader of KDP who was one of the two leading political Kurdish entities receiving CIA funding betrayed the operation. In his quest to regain control of the Kurdish capital and suppress the rival PUK, Barzani acquired military assistance from Baghdad and abandoned both the U.S. and members of the Iraqi National Congress (INC). Also, the Kurds who were terribly inexperienced in covert operations were more focused on gaining power and prestige than maintaining secrecy. As such, Kurdish leaders talked freely to the press, disclosing what could be considered critical information.

All the planned action seemed to contradict existing U.S. policy for the Middle East at the time, which required a stable Iraq to counter balance the troublesome Iran.

Most importantly, this strategy in principle contradicted the foreign policy that already existed for Iraq: for stability to be maintained. Due to this inconsistency the U.S. appeared to lack the commitment to do what was necessary or supply the required financial backing. Firstly, the U.S. refused to support an all-out guerrilla war but chose to finance organizations capable of possibly overthrowing Saddam by giving finance. However, even this assistance was half-hearted, as they did not commit to guiding activities, even though they concluded that the Kurds, in particular, lacked the necessary dexterity in covert operations. The Kurds would call those in Saddam's regime on unsecured phone lines and their networks lacked counterintelligence measures and therefore were easily infiltrated. While the CIA claimed the U.S. would give full support to the INC, the support was never backed by sufficient cash infusions. Some say what was given was less than 5% of what was needed for the INC to overthrow Saddam [vi]. This was possibly due to a fear that Wifaq or Kurdish inspired uprisings would hurt U.S. interests. For example, Iran may have tried to acquire Iraqi territory during the mayhem, or the Kurdish fight for autonomy could have spread to Turkey, a member of the NATO war alliance. All the planned action seemed to contradict existing U.S. policy for the Middle East at the time, which required a stable Iraq to counter balance the troublesome Iran. All the planned action seemed to lead to long-term instability in Iraq which

was contrary to existing U.S. policy. While the U.S. desired the removal of Saddam, the territorial integrity of the Iraqi state needed to be maintained. Balancing the contending power of Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iraq to maintain stability in the Gulf would be extremely difficult if Iraq devolved into a motley federation of ethnic states.[vii]

Consequences of Failure

The 1996 plot to oust Saddam evolved from a classic case of 'the tail wagging the dog'; policymakers guided the intelligence rather than the intelligence guiding the policymakers.

Covert action should not be used when a government wants to avoid confrontation for reasons of comfort. The Clinton Administration simply got impatient with the slow process of installing democracy and opted for a quick-fix solution to oust Saddam, hopefully, before the 1996 presidential campaign. Clinton, much like Bush before him, allowed political considerations and sensitivity to public perception to shape the goal and timing of covert operations against Saddam. The 1996 plot to oust Saddam evolved from a classic case of 'the tail wagging the dog'; policymakers guided the intelligence rather than the intelligence guiding the policymakers. The policymakers, feeling pressured by the resilience of Saddam during the Persian Gulf War, which had resulted in an extremely expensive and open-ended commitment, ignored some pertinent facts. Two notables were the effectiveness of Iraqi Intelligence and the instability of any Kurdish alliance due to the continuous struggle for power. Masoud Barzani, the leader of KDP, who was one of the two leading political Kurdish figures receiving CIA funding, betrayed the operation. The administration likely overlooked these problems as they succumbed to groupthink, [viii] catalyzed by the knowledge that presidential elections were on the horizon. Driven by a false sense of unanimity, invulnerability, and self-righteousness, the group ignored policy options and made faulty decisions without sufficiently considering potential outcomes. [ix]

As a result of the repeated failures in Iraq, the United States suffered a substantial political setback, albeit due to its half-hearted reliance on covert action against Saddam and an unwillingness to confront Iraq directly. Additionally, in this case, failure likely influenced subsequent decisions by Saudi Arabia and other states to align themselves with Iraq rather than Washington. The apparent ease with which the Kurds were abandoned, after the U.S. claimed they were in full support of Kurdish actions towards autonomy, further exemplified the issues associated with trusting the U.S. This abandonment was almost an endorsement of the claims of dictators such as Saddam and Fidel Castro: that the U.S. could not be trusted. It also sent the message that joining forces with the U.S. could be an act of suicide. According to the press, Iraqi intelligence forces executed more than one hundred Iraqi

dissidents and military officers cooperating with the U.S. when the operation failed. This certainly jeopardized the U.S.'s ability to acquire the necessary assistance for overt and covert action in the region. Friends and allies in the region no longer believed that the United States would take definitive action against Saddam, which resulted in them rushing to reach separate arrangements with Baghdad. Jordan, which initially was against Saddam, became publicly critical of U.S. efforts to isolate him. European allies and Saudi Arabia pointedly declined to support subsequent military moves by Clinton, lest they too fall subject to his same humiliating defeat. [x]

This failed attempt at a coup not only humiliated the U.S. but also effectively demolished the Desert Storm coalition

It should also be noted, that this failed attempt at overthrow acted in Saddam's favor as it allowed him an opportunity to identify, assess and weaken opposing coalitions. Saddam also gained considerable information on U.S. tradecraft, technology and operations through interrogations and the multitude of equipment left behind by CIA operatives who fled Iraq. Rather than weakening him through a show of omnipresent power, the U.S. only succeeded in solidifying and stabilizing Saddam's authority. By allowing him to strike such a devastating blow against CIA led attacks, facilitated by the Kurds and INC, his dominance in the region was reinforced. The national and international newspapers showcased the failed covert U.S. intelligence operation. Saddam boasted that he destroyed the U.S. supported by Kurdish operatives. The U.S. had no response. This failed attempt at a coup not only humiliated the U.S. but also effectively demolished the Desert Storm coalition, assembled by President Bush, to fight the

Gulf War. Saddam in turn consolidated his internal authority and international image. The operations allowed Saddam to identify and destroy his internal opposition in the military and in Kurdistan and reasserted his authority in the so-called safe havens in northern Iraq. The exploitation of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), which coordinated the United Nations' weapons inspection programmes, by the CIA Near East Division, was discovered by a Mukhabarat team dedicated to UNSCOM. This discovery seriously stymied any chance of Iraq disarming under UN supervision.

The failure of covert action in Iraq demonstrates the need for careful consideration when using covert action.

While covert action can be a useful tool, or as Clausewitz implies; a natural extension of foreign policy, it must be used appropriate to be effective and must avoid the consequences of failure. History, as Thucydides phrases it, is "philosophy teaching by examples", a useful tool for strategists aiming to improve their craft. The failure of covert action in Iraq demonstrates the need for careful consideration when using covert action. The variables to be considered include sociological, religious, geopolitical and historical factors, all of which can be very dynamic. Policymakers must therefore resist the urge to seek expediency through rushed covert operations, especially when covert operations are not the only or the best option. While policymakers have access to significant education and experience from professionals at the CIA, the Department of State and the Department of Defense, they have in the past succumbed to biases and made assessments tainted by political influence.

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