

Because strategy never stops...

Infinity Journal



IN THIS EDITION

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A Note from the Editor

It will be obvious to all that this edition of Infinity Journal contains only five articles whereas it should contain six. The reason for this is simply the cost of maintaining a high editorial standard and adhering to the objectives for which we created this journal.

We don't use the word "Strategy" as a bumper sticker for catch-all debate, and our website serves primarily to allow for the delivery of our journal. Beyond that its role is to inform and educate those who wish to learn about strategy in its truest sense.

As I have said before, most articles fail peer-review. The reasons are simple and consistent. We receive many articles that are mere political opinion and also many from people who have simply not understood what strategy is, and have thus failed to read the information supplied on the website. We also reject plainly reputational writing, where we judge the writer to be saying nothing useful, bar getting his name in print. Sadly, such articles are far from rare.

While everyone is entitled to their own opinion, you are not entitled to alter our editorial policy. We know what strategy is, and what fields of study and discussion encompass it. If you have a different opinion, then go elsewhere. We are not publishing to survive. We are publishing to a standard.

Our sister publication, The Journal of Military Operations, ceased publishing some two years ago, because the submitted material was poor, and the majority of those submitting simply could not meet the standard. The fact that there are many websites and blogs publishing poor material is not an argument against this position. Lots of people enamoured with military issues and discussion are fascinated by excellence and that simply fails to exist if everyone doesn't win a prize, and the pool is full of non-swimmers.

That we are only publishing five articles should not be seen as a negative for a number of reasons. Firstly, it's not easy to meet the standard. That is a good thing. Secondly, that standard is a direct reflection of our board, all of which participate because of their proven track record. If you didn't make the cut, it's because those who know their subject said so, and in many cases that is not a clear-cut decision. Where opinions have been divided we've usually gone with the high-risk option rather than the low one. Why? Because while we exist to inform and educate, we do not see our role as to exclude those learning their craft and attempting to convey what for them may be a difficult or unclear idea. We've published some excellent material, but we've also had a few anomalies, which challenge any sense of comfort we might have.

Publishing only five articles does challenge our comfort zone, but we can live with it because we know it is the outcome of a higher standard.

William F. Owen
Editor, *Infinity Journal*
January 2019

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The phrase 'no comment policy' refers to Israel's unwillingness to claim responsibility for military operations. The primary objective of the policy is to prevent countries and organizations from retaliating against Israel. The policy, which was particularly salient during the years after 2007, achieved its desired outcome. The countries and organizations that Israel was compelled to attack over the years consistently took advantage of Israel's denial to avoid the necessity to retaliate time and time again.

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Operation PBSUCCESS was a covert operation carried out by CIA that deposed the democratically elected Guatemalan President Jacobo Árbenz and ended the Guatemalan Revolution of 1944–1954, installing the military dictatorship of Carlos Castillo Armas. PBSUCCESS was a success for the U.S. Government in foreign policy with plausible deniability and CIA-mediated action where it demonstrated CIA's quick and decisive ability to perform covert action like never before.



Lance Corporal Kevin C. Quihuis Jr. (USMC) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

Can Strategy be Taught?

Colin S. Gray

United Kingdom

Dr. Colin S. Gray has lived in three countries and has performed official advisory duties in both the UK and the USA. Of recent years he has focused on policy and strategy at both ends of the spectrum of violence, Special Operations and Nuclear Strategy. His most recent book *Theory of Strategy* was published by Oxford University Press, in May 2018 (UK) and July 2018 (US).

Problems

Should the most accurate answer to the question in the title of this essay be found to be some variant of 'no', I must ask myself what I have been attempting to do professionally for the past fifty years. Alas, the question posed here is all too probing personally, and politically relevant to the world at large. It is somewhat irritating to need to mention, even discuss briefly, the meanings of strategy in common discourse. It is prudent to identify and hopefully clarify the meanings, presented as plural phenomena, before proceeding further here.

Strategy is a concept employed widely with two alternative, though apparently mutually compatible, meanings. The first simply is that supplied by the greatest theorist on the subject of war available to us, General Carl von Clausewitz. In his words:

'Strategy is the use of the engagement for the purpose of the war. The strategist must therefore define his aim for the entire operational side of the war that will be in accordance with its purpose. In other words, he will draft the plan of the war, and the aim will determine the series of actions intended to achieve it; he will, in fact, shape the individual campaigns and within these, decide on the individual engagements.'^[i]

The second meaning shifts focus from the purpose of war, requiring instead that the focus be placed upon the plans both for, as well as in, war. To summarize, strategy is a concept employed widely to refer either to a possibly contingent intention to use force, or to the consequences

of such. Ironically perhaps, as Beatrice Heuser explains well in a major study, since the days of the Prussian general the political purpose of military forces has come to assume more weight in the hierarchy of theory, if not always of practice.^[ii] Quite obviously, if legitimate military violence, force in other words, can be taught as strategy also it has to be legitimate to discuss it as tactics and operations. It may be significantly correct to suggest a thorough revision of the conventional austere conceptual hierarchy. We can conceive a systemic correction that ascends inclusively and holistically from relatively humble tactics, through possibly ambitious operations, to the rugged highlands of strategy, requiring a final climb to the ethereal heights of policy purpose in political choice.^[iii]

Notwithstanding possibly prudent advice to revise the orthodox hierarchy of military thought and effort in a notably holistic fashion, the fact remains that orthodox wisdom continues to prefer what is essentially a pyramidal structure to strategic theory conceived as a hierarchy. What, for many, is a truly formidable challenge is the suggestion that much of the conventional wisdom of theory has the effect of misleading, instead of educating people. Since this essay is concerned particularly with education, it is necessary to be clear beyond doubt on the subject of just what it is necessary to teach as strategy. This is not to deny that many, indeed probably most, students will find themselves so entrapped by their immediate context that an attention span for strategy is unlikely to be available. A prime objective in this essay is an aspiration to persuade or remind military officers that what we have come to call strategy is not simply the 'box' at the top of the hierarchy chart above tactics and operations. Strategy is different in kind from all other, preceding, professional concerns in a soldier's life. The preeminent challenge to the soldier as strategist is that he (or she) must do both soldiering and politics simultaneously. This will be different in his thought and behavior from, even distant from, what had worked so well for him (or her) for many years. The people chosen for the highest positions of command are unlikely to have understood fully just what four-star command may require. Indeed the burden of personal responsibility may prove debilitating.

Of course, strategic thought may well be a significant feature of particular staffs, military, civilian or both more or less combined. However, although genuinely strategic reasoning may not be in short supply, very few people are entrusted by

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their nation with truly strategic responsibility. There is excellent reason why strategy has to be understood as the choice and subsequent management of the consequences of action or inaction.[iv]

As Clausewitz sought persuasively to insist, the first problem that must be learnt is the understanding of the particular problem the polity believes it needs to solve.[v] We are unlikely to solve a problem that we do not understand adequately. It is more likely than not that the 'problem' in question will not have stably enduring features. Given the competitiveness of strategy, threats can become a menace, succeeded by hostile actions. It would be difficult to exaggerate the relative importance of the nature of the strategist's particular problem. If, or as, that nature changes, so must the specific character of the strategist's problems. Few conflicts pose effectively eternal features; change is constant. The beginning of wisdom for the strategist, as also for the rest of us, is self-knowledge. The strategist needs to acquire military self-knowledge not decorated with fantasies of hope. He ought not to be in doubt about the differences between rightful and wrongful conduct, but such moral assessment, heavily dependent upon cultural values as it must be, prudently can never be permitted to overrule consideration of the strategist's prime concern. That top ranking must always be with the likely consequences of adversarial misbehavior. Indeed, concern with possible consequences is readily identifiable as key to the strategist's tradecraft in all periods.

The more serious problems for the strategist are ever likely to be the human limitations that, to some degree and in some quantity, eternally trouble us all. No matter how many stars are awarded to an individual, he or she will have physical or mental limitations. Ideally, of course, a polity will manage to succeed in avoiding the kind of crisis that literally requires solution by a 'savior general' or politician.[vi]

Politics

Even fit and healthy athletes find it essential to follow a strict and tough regimen in training. The same reasoning applies to the fitness for purpose of the great organizations of state. Practice will not make perfect, but it is likely to improve performance. This can be a matter of high importance for the strategist to know. Inexperienced strategists have to appreciate that austere diagrammatic representations of the world of real action are always in need of substantial amendment. Both the human and the inanimate assets the strategist is told are his to command, or at least inspire and simply guide, will tend to rust and eventually suffer atrophy if not used. It would be agreeable to be able to claim with confidence that we learn from experience, especially our own. However, a difficulty in the military sphere, unique to the strategic level of assessment, is that that particular context often fails to manifest a host of problems that are usefully comparable. Possibly one just cannot train profitably to be a better strategist, or perhaps just to be one at all! This may be too severe a judgment to offer with respect to a candidate education in strategy. Nonetheless, it is necessary never to forget that there are few, if any, genuinely simple strategic problems. Any claimed to be such will likely be a complex issue predictably misunderstood by simple minds. It should be needless to say that of course there are some elementary

reasoning problems, but simplicity of subject need not mean an ease of feasible solution.

The signature problem with all strategy, by definition even, lies in the requirement for the strategist to attempt to satisfy the world of politics as well as war. Some books, innocently perhaps, seek to hide, at least understate, the intimate relationship between political authority and military power. This close connection, interdependency even, is scarcely much in evidence in the tactical and operational realms of military action, but it leads, and may dominate, at the level of strategy.

It is quite common for soldiers, even senior ones, to feel distinctly uncomfortable about issues that really are ones of political choice. Of course there are and always will be exceptions, but it is important to understand just how deep can be the antipathy between the world of politics and the military.[vii] Universally, soldiers learn, and sometimes are taught formally, that they are not permitted a political role domestically. They may well play vital and possibly controversial parts internationally, but that political significance ought not to figure in soldiers' behavior domestically. The bedrock of such thought are the principles that in our world today only internationally and legally recognized states are permitted to employ lethal violence, but even then the use of military force must be fully properly licensed by some domestic political process that should be recognizable as legitimate. Such force is politics in action, to put the subject properly in Clausewitzian terms. The military profession ought not to need to teach and be taught that there are many reasons why it should eschew a political role in domestic debates about public policy. The soldier may exercise his right, possibly even his duty, to bear arms, but he has no license to use lethal force, or the menace of such, on behalf of his domestic political preferences. Of course this is an aspiration for democratic procedures, notwithstanding the continuing existence of more authoritarian models of governance.

All too obviously, the licensed professional in skill at arms can be substantially ignorant in the ways of politics, insofar as they intrude upon the military aspirant to strategic expertise and possibly authority. Education in strategy requires recognition that the common coin of this extra-military world is really influence. The strategist needs to know that argument may be made literally by force of arms, in place of persuasion alone.

Although history is always somewhat strategic, it is also notably ever political.[viii] Both domestically and internationally, communities usually organize in the character of states jockeying for power and influence. This condition is permanent and is essential for the aspirant strategist to know. Notwithstanding occupational rhetoric about that strange, but distressingly elusive phenomenon, 'world order', he is taught, and possibly might learn, that international politics has long, indeed probably eternally, remained a truly ruthless arena.[ix] Ungentlemanly behavior is commonplace; indeed, expediently ruthless behavior is standard malpractice. The public references to some strange transnational beast called a Rules Based International Order are so bizarre as to be all but insulting in their obvious and manifest irony. Nonetheless, this familiar incantation continues to be uttered with due, if insincere, solemnity. However, the treacherous world of the

opportunistic professional politician is a light year away from the professional cultural context of the soldier.

It is difficult to write this without the reality, or certainly the appearance, of moral outrage at the plenitude of more or less dishonest statements that constitute a noteworthy core of political discourse. In pursuit of greater leverage for higher relative influence, politicians everywhere and always are more or less economical with the truth. Indeed, after years of political activity at all levels of public responsibility, it is more likely than not that even the very notion of truth becomes substantially altered in meaning, from an empirical actuality to an expedient shape-shifter. This idea is advanced quite consciously as an exaggeration to make a point. To be unmistakably precise, despite the undoubted phenomenon of the truly 'rogue' character, the very senior soldier, in other words the only soldier whose official duty includes a necessity to think and behave strategically, is likely to be substantially dissimilar in thought and deed to the senior politician.

The fundamental question posed here concerns the awkward and sometimes ugly zone of action wherein politics and the military profession really do meet in order to conduct their nation's business somewhat jointly. However, there is a particular quality of difficulty in the relationship between the soldier as strategist and the (usually civilian) politician. It should not be forgotten that the former is unlikely to have been granted many years of preparatory time for his third star, though particularly and for certain not for his fourth. The general as strategist must learn, if he does not know already, that in effect he has left the professional military world with the culture that he understands and has truly mastered, proven by his stellar military advancement. The deadly secret of strategy is that it cannot be taught, it can only be learnt by experience. As a person who believed for more than fifty years that he taught strategy well enough so that everyone, seemingly, was content, this negative judgment came as a considerable surprise, indeed revelation.

It is not easy to try to tell a military audience that a much favored subject, strategy, neither lends itself obligingly with a smile for the camera, nor has any particular existential reality beyond doubt. Difficult though this can be to attempt to teach, a student audience has to be told that strategic meaning is acquired or given because, and only because, of its context and consequences. Photographs, maps, models and plans do not serve to illustrate and highlight particular 'strategic' truths, because, alas, they cannot do so. What education needs to explain and emphasize is not that the concept of strategy has no meaning, but rather only that it does not have the existential meaning often ascribed to it. The mistake so easily made is the unthinking assumption that strategic qualities are existential. For example, if we are told by those who should know better, but may not, that Mt Fearsome is of high strategic importance, we are likely not to grasp quite why that claim is made. The sole sensible meaning is that nature or the enemy may well make our attempt at transit especially perilous. The height of the mountain and the weather are likely to be considerations relevant to possible consequences of military action on or close by the mountain. Nonetheless, the possibility of enemy action, in the geographic context of mountainous terrain, could have truly strategic consequences. This was Italy in 1942-43.[x] The total military situation in the Mediterranean

area had strategic meaning for the campaign planned for the invasion of German held Europe, and for the fate of the mighty German adventure in the East. However, the genuinely momentous pace and scale of the campaigns in 1942-3 did not, as a result, render them strategic. What did have deep strategic meaning, though, were the profound unfolding consequences of the military campaigns of those years. Lest I should be accused of fixing my attention unduly upon military events of which I approve heartily, I must explain that strategic reasoning applies as much, if not more, to history's losers as well as winners. The same strategic logic applies to all parties in a conflict.

Preeminently, the idea that needs to be taught about strategy is that the quality of strategic value is not physical, it is situational and may be moral or psychological at source. The arena for conflict must be physical, but the natural and human made geography is only the stage on and within which conflict is set. We must evade the danger of intellectual capture by the irrelevant physicality of things and places. What renders a plan strategic is its concern with the intended consequences of action, not the geography itself.

The view of strategy taken here, admittedly is a rather demanding one to put to a military readership, because one is advocating an approach that rewards the consequences of useful behavior, not so much the seeking of gain from particular behaviors. If I could identify and confidently label them with known and therefore predictable value, life would be far easier for the strategist. As things are today, and have always been, I must add, searches for strategy too often are akin to expert tiger hunts in land that has no tigers.

Fuel for Strategy: Tactics and Operations

If searches for strategy are disappointing as must be the case, it is important to ask basic questions about both the nature and the character of the subject. Should we hunt for strategy even though we have a growing suspicion that the strategy beast no longer lives here, or even if he ever did so? Should maps continue to be innocent of existential claims to identify objects and structures, natural or manmade, ironically we are left with an urgent apparent need to raise our game into the stratosphere of explicitly strategic reasoning. The teacher of strategy has a duty of translation that is often of monumental proportions. There are severe difficulties both of subject matter and with the prospective audience. The challenge of understanding for an audience of would-be strategists often is one born out of the ignorance all but imposed by professional years or decades mastering definitely non-strategic problems. Competent soldiers, particularly in wartime, have scant time or inclination to ruminate on matters strategic. Such matters, that tend almost by definition to pertain to topics of high importance, ought not to be developed either truly casually, or even as a consequence of divine revelation that is hard to test empirically in a prudent manner.

The concerns of soldiers at war are and need to be focused upon the twin mutually dependent topics of survival and effectiveness. The former may need to crowd the latter out of current attention, of course. Although the military profession can hardly help but do strategy, simply as a product of its existence, it has as great a necessity for wise strategy as it

can be near impossible to obtain such. This is the rationale underlying the drafting of this essay, of course. The dominant relevant fact of military life, in times of both peace and especially war, is that strategy is not 'done' regularly below the four-star level of higher command. Although three-star (lt. general) strategizing is fairly common, at the superior four-star level explicitly strategic thought is a requirement of command. While trusted three-star generals can find themselves deciding and even implementing command responsibility at a very high level of operations for considerable periods of time, it is the fourth star that bears strategy in the job description.

The point of most importance here is the need to emphasize the difference between the most senior of generals and the rest of the armed forces. Hardly anyone 'does' strategy explicitly. This is not in any sense intended as criticism, for reasons that should be powerfully obvious. If we adhere to a Clausewitzian approach to force, as does this author emphatically, strategy by definition is neither political nor military, rather is it both. This is the way things are and strictly need to be in an orderly polity within a world that is run well enough. An unavoidable consequence of the logic here is the certainty that senior officers, not only those charged in the production of strategy, find themselves committed to the endeavor to explain the military approach to strategy to civilian politicians: these can vary across the entire range of knowledge on the local and the great issues in theatre, wherever the theatre happens to be. Personality types vary in the professional military, as they do in other professions. It is not wholly unknown for senior soldiers to be popular with, possibly trusted by, troops. Such generals can prove a political menace as a consequence of their probable facility with rough language and possibly extravagantly exciting deeds, neither of which might play well on today's global social media. The once happy days when generals might report on their deeds and misdeeds only with a live temporal pause of months, is very long gone. The blessings of silence while John Jervis searches for the French fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean could hardly have a greater contrast than is the febrile context of today. Even a camel's coughing on the Great Silk Road is likely to appear the same day on the BBC's 'Outside Source' news report.

Strategy is difficult, if not impossible, to explain or even illustrate except by the aid of a map. However, difficulty in using maps for education in strategy lies in the fact that the world is divided not only, or even largely, on the basis of physical geography. Because there is distinctive historical narrative about nearly the whole Earth, and because we humans have managed to contest the entirety of the planet; there can be no evasion by soldiers of the physical geography of inter-state quarrels. Wherever soldiers look they cannot evade politics. As Clausewitz noted, strategy and policy fuse together, one cannot and should not even conceive of the former without the latter.^[xi] This is reality, it is neither a matter of discretion, nor is it contemporary. Rather is it an existential reality for the human condition.^[xii] However, that fact, all too true though it certainly is, poses the most serious of questions for military power. Do we mean to insist that all soldiers should obey orders, until – that is – they achieve four-star rank, when they are almost literally obliged to inform political authority about the military advisability or otherwise of its possible political intentions?

Politics and War

Recognition of the hybrid nature of strategy is key to understanding the deepest and most intractable of reasons why it is so mysterious and difficult. Once we leave the straightforward worlds of politician on one hand and soldier on the other, the relevant context for strategic effects is, we learn, neither that of war nor of politics. Rather is the pertinent context the confused and confusing realm that is made of both politics and war. Of course the latter is only intelligible and morally tolerable with careful reference to the former. Unavoidably politics behaves as licensee for all that is done and probably caused in its name.

The logical structure of strategy is not complex, but the complications do not show on the basic introductory slides. Unsurprisingly, the devil is in the details. It is far from sufficient simply to explain the essential components of strategy, which is to say Ends, Ways, and Means, together with most favored assumptions. Full grasp of this structure should be helpful, but cannot inform usefully as to what a strategist needs to know. The inexperienced aspirant strategist needs to understand, not merely learn, that his undoubted and widely praised skill at the tactical and operational levels of war are not really very relevant to the conduct of strategy. It is quite possible he will never learn how to be a competent, let alone superior, strategist. What he will need to learn is how to threaten and use military force to encourage, and if need be impose, a net favorable trend in the unfolding course of events. He has to understand that all strategic, which is to say consequential, advantage can flow solely from a stream of happenings that must be comprehended as inherently tactical, though probably do operational when considered in compound temporal context.

The general theory of strategy reminds strategists willing to listen that theirs is a duty often impacted critically by the challenge of time, really meaning future events. The quality of strategy typically is significantly time dependent. Strategy that may well succeed, might age rapidly should the domestic public despair of success, or should the enemy anticipate successfully what dire consequences for his misdeeds we plan for him.

I am arguing that would-be strategists need to understand that although the fundamental logical architecture of their subject does not change, critically important details alter much of the time. As significant, perhaps, the strategist has to be aware that his domestic and international contexts are ever-changing. The most important change in conditions for the strategist can be a major shift in national policy – the Ends that the basic logic of strategy is unduly apt to pass over with little comment. There is good reason for the strategist to decline to linger over the category of Policy (Political) Ends. After all, it is important for the strategist always to remember that the profession of arms should play no role in domestic politics. This is not quite a total prohibition against military action on the domestic scene, because all countries regard their armed forces as constituting ultimate insurance against internal disorder.

The integrity of strategy, hence inevitably also the integrity of the strategist, is challenged fundamentally when public political choice poses problems that have no realistically

feasible solution. Recent history illustrates very clearly the argument just advanced here. No matter how worthy the political cause may be, how serious the nation or alliance interest, the theory of strategy may offer no very plausible prospect of success. Even competent strategists well enough supported politically by domestic opinion can err fatally.[xiii] It is well not to forget that strategy is competitive in nature. This means that historical narrative cannot be owned and controlled by one party only to a conflict. Writing as an American I cannot responsibly refrain from noticing that the United States unmistakably has lost in every war it has waged since Korea (1950-53). Not to mince words, the United States suffered strategic failure and therefore defeat in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. Moreover, this sad tale is choosing to ignore the American humiliation and defeat in Somalia (1993).

Question and Answer

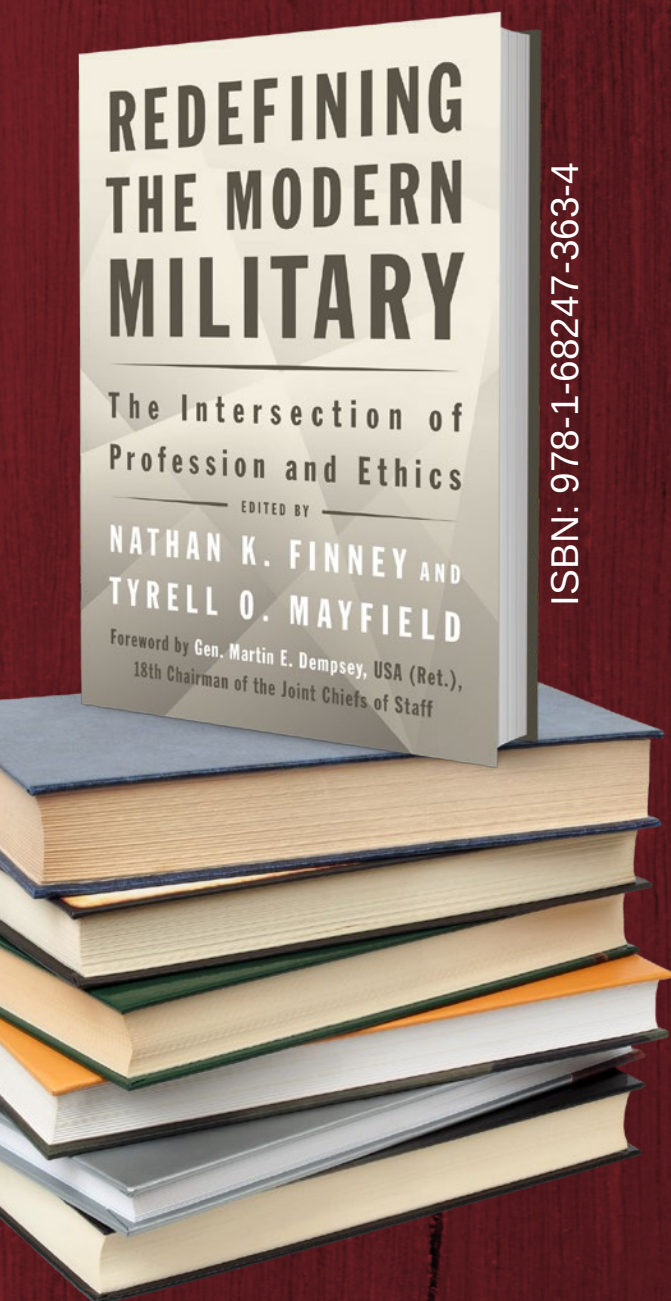
It has been argued in this essay that while tactics and operations can both be taught in a meaningful sense, largely because both categories of military behavior have empirically well attested histories, even when asked to exploit changing tools and methods. In short, both categories of behavior can be addressed usefully by confident military doctrine. Tactical and operational excellence in means and methods should be rewarded with military success at those levels of engagement. It is starkly obvious, however, that there cannot be doctrine sufficiently suitable in specificity to fit occasions of necessity in strategy. Ironically, perhaps, strategic doctrine, popularly so called, has to address all but every development deemed likely to have important consequences in the future. In practice, of course, we do not concern or alarm ourselves

with regard to all that is changing, but the strategist does have a license to anticipate and interpret how and as the world is changing. Although official publications in many countries do not recognize the fact, there is a fatal opposition in the grand sounding high concept, 'strategic doctrine'. Actually, noun and adjective are in unrecognized opposition to each other. If this essay accomplishes nothing else, at least let it bury the nonsensical concept of strategic doctrine. There is, and can be no such conceptual beast. Why? Because the very idea of strategy encourages a flexibility that is anathema to the meaning of doctrine. A worthy hunt after best current practice is what doctrine is about, resting usually on an empirically well founded belief. Strategy, in contrast, needs to be able to address novel and sometimes quite unprecedented situations. It does not and cannot rest comfortably on established truths concerning best current practice.

Strategy engages too many concerns to be taught. The future may well prove to be violently disorderly and thus seemingly determined to resist confident anticipation. The only strategy that sensibly should be taught is one both hugely respectful of the literally timeless verities of Ends, Ways and Means, while retaining a commanding respect for the virtues of flexibility and adaptability in readiness for change. Strategic challenges are not simply operational problems of a greater cause. They comprise irregular problems that will not be met well enough by people who are equipped by nature only with minds that think in and of regular wars. The current state of play in education about and in strategy may be gauged helpfully from a recent article by Jean-Louis Samaan.[xiv] Because strategic problems are virtually by definition irregular, it is not obvious that the Army understands what it needs for genuinely strategic command appointments.

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- [iii] General Sir Rupert Smith advocates an approach to the subject that requires tactical, operational, and strategic (including political) thought and behaviour simultaneously. This holistic approach is the product of his varied expertise of high command in the Balkans in the 1990s.
- [iv] The importance of consequences is emphasized in Colin S. Gray, *Theory of Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 61-4.
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- [vi] See Victor Davis Hanson, *The Savior Generals: How Five Great Commanders Saved Wars That Were Lost – from Ancient Greece to Iraq* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013).
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Strategic Anarchy and the American Way of War*

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Pundits of all types have recently warned that revolutionary technologies—especially artificial intelligence (AI)—are changing life as we know it.[i] The age of the algorithm is upon us, and machines capable of vast computations at lightning speed are rapidly replacing functions normally performed by humans. China and Russia, currently the West's chief antagonists, are investing great sums of money into ways of exploiting AI for military purposes. Meanwhile, the "weaponization" of social media, as evidenced by Russian interference in the US presidential election of 2016, is presenting democracies with a new challenge, some would say a new way of war, that leverages freedom of speech to create doubt and to undermine political will.[ii] This news comes at the heels of sustained and largely successful efforts by China and Russia to operate aggressively under the threshold of war, that is, in the so-called gray zone between war and peace.[iii] These and other developments raise serious questions about the West's, and especially America's, ability to keep pace with the changing character of contemporary conflict. Is the American way of war, as some claim, too in love with conventional war and high-tech solutions to adapt to the 21st-century challenges it faces?

To answer this question, we must first explain what is meant here by the American way of war. In brief, it means the sum of the historical patterns of thought, or of practice, that characterize how the United States has applied coercive force against other parties. Patterns, of course, can only be known historically, that is, after they have happened. Also, the significance of any pattern is historically contingent, which is to say its importance depends on the historical context. For instance, Russell Weigley's seminal work on the American way of war relied on an either-or, annihilation or attrition, model of strategy.[iv] However, Weigley's argument drew from a sample of US wars that was too narrow. When we add the many US interventions in Latin America, the Middle East, and in parts of the Pacific, the strategic pattern that emerges most conspicuously is not one of attrition, but rather of decapitation, of "striking the head of the snake." [v] Often the US goal was to neutralize hostile parties by removing their leaders and replacing them with individuals more to the liking of America's leaders.

It is also inaccurate to say that military force has always been America's first choice, though that belief remains strong. Rather, from the Truman administration onward, America's first choice was usually economic power instead of military force. The typical model involved imposing economic or financial sanctions, followed by covert or clandestine operations carried out by the CIA, usually augmented by special forces and air power; conventional forces were normally introduced only as a last resort. As always, there are exceptions—such as George Bush's impatience with economic sanctions in the run up to the Gulf War of 1990-1991—that prove the rule.[vi]

Accordingly, a more accurate characterization of the American way of war is to see it as a pattern of adaptation, adjusting pre-war models and expectations to accommodate the nature of the war at hand. The American way of war does, however, run into trouble when it adapts too slowly to a conflict, as it did in Vietnam and more recently in Iraq and Afghanistan. When that happens, America's leaders begin to lose public support as well as the backing of their allies and coalition partners. That was largely the case with the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan which, even if the naive expectation of decisive victory is set aside, suggest America simply adjusted too slowly to the type of conflict it found itself confronting.

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I

For that reason, the key trait the American way of war must have in the decades ahead is the ability to adapt much faster than its opponents to the *nature of the war at hand*. One step in the right direction, and likely the most profitable one, is for the emerging generation of American strategists to do something its predecessors have not done well in the past—develop a multi-dimensional model for understanding war's nature. Such a model could serve as a foundation for conducting strategic analysis *prior to* and *during* a conflict, and it would provide a basis for formulating integrated strategic theories. With such a foundation, America's strategists stand to increase the facility with which they can adapt to unexpected developments in the wars that might come.

This solution is not another version of the "whole of government approach," a catchy slogan that ultimately yielded little in the way of new thinking, or new practices. To be sure, discord among the US government's various agencies and departments is important to avoid, or at least reduce, in the execution of any strategy. It is also wise not to overuse one element of national power, such as military force, at the expense of others. However, one can unify the efforts of the agencies within the US government without a detailed understanding of the nature of war, or of the nature of peace for that matter.

A multi-dimensional model of war's nature is also not "multi-domain operations," a concept that endeavors to integrate the elements of national power into a coherent operational scheme of maneuver.[vii] Such a concept is indeed useful, and a multi-dimensional model of war's nature could assist it. But, according to the US military's understanding, domains are narrower and more limited than dimensions. Moreover, of necessity, multi-domain operations must concentrate on, and find solutions within and for, the military dimension of armed conflict.

Instead, the goal of a multi-dimensional model of war's nature is to provide a framework for analyzing war's socio-cultural, military, and political dimensions. That analysis, in turn, will shed light on how the forces of hostility, chance, and purpose are likely to affect the war at hand.

Clausewitz's trinity can serve as a useful starting point for such a model. The trinity was never "paradoxical." That adjective did not exist in the original text because the elements are not necessarily at odds. Michael Howard and Peter Paret replaced paradoxical with remarkable in their revised translation of *On War*, a term that comes closer to the German *wunderliche*.[viii] What's more, the trinity is not just a representation of war's irrational, nonrational, and rational forces.[ix] Rather it is about *theory* primarily and war only secondarily. In important ways, the trinity is Clausewitz's advice to the theorist, who must arrive at observations through analysis: to determine the nature of any war, theory must maintain three perspectives simultaneously: socio-cultural, military, and political. The nature of any war is, thus, the composite of those perspectives, while the elements associated with each are subject to change.

Accordingly, the nature of war, as Clausewitz tells us, is both

changeable and composite.[x] War is *not* a true chameleon because a chameleon can change only the color of its skin; whereas war's entire composition can change. One of the lessons Clausewitz and the other Prussian reformers learned from Napoleon is that whenever warlike passions, the military's ability to leverage chance, and the political purposes of the war are in alignment—as they often were for the French—these forces can generate a synergy capable of taking war to a more violent, more warlike level.[xi] War, in other words, can transform from a chameleon into a much fiercer animal, much like the transition from dynastic to national wars.[xii] The latter, he argued, possessed a natural force or logic that dashed eighteenth-century conventions to pieces and exposed war's true nature.[xiii] He later revised that idea and placed the origin of war's logic on policy and political circumstances. But he never retreated from the notion that certain elements of war's nature, when combined, could produce a remarkable synergy, as they had under Napoleon. Instead, he conceded that this phenomenon had occurred only three times in history—with ancient Rome, with the Tartars, and of course with Napoleon; he also came to admit that such measures were not always necessary to accomplish the objectives of policy.[xiv]

In short, the larger point of Clausewitz's trinity is that strategic theorists cannot afford to overlook any one of war's dimensions, lest they be taken unawares. Theory must not see war only as a political instrument; otherwise it might overlook developments within armed conflict's socio-cultural and military dimensions such as an epoch-changing revolution and the emergence of a particularly effective style of operational art. Rather, the key is to remain alert to all dimensions and to be sensitive to possible synergies.

At some point, however, we must decide whether Clausewitz's trinity and its associated dimensions suffice for the twenty-first century. In 1970s and 1980s, historian Michael Handel suggested adding a technological dimension to Clausewitz's trinity, thus squaring it, to capture the influence that nuclear weapons might have on war and were already having on US strategic thinking.[xv] For various reasons, that idea gained little traction at the time. In addition, Clausewitz tells us nothing about war's economic or technological dimensions, neither of which was necessarily obvious to him nor to the other Prussian reformers who were impressed with the power of the warlike spirit of the French, unleashed by the revolution and harnessed by Napoleon. Arguably, by the beginning of the twentieth century, war's economic and military-technological dimensions were all but decisive in great power contests, though not necessarily in others.

II

Unfortunately, American military theorists from Alfred Thayer Mahan to Arthur Cebrowski, the strategic canon of professional military education, have only focused on one or two of war's dimensions at a time. The reasons for such limited scope owe partly to the historical context; many US theorists perceived themselves to be engaged in a revolution of sorts and thus saw one or, at most, two dimensions as more important than the others. A distant second reason is perhaps the nature of scholarly or academic writing, which usually necessitates strict focus.

Mahan's theories of sea power explicitly linked the military and economic dimensions of armed conflict.[xvi] That linkage had become enormously important to the American way of war in practice; it is one of the chief legacies of the American Civil War, as exemplified by the naval blockade of the Confederacy and General Sherman's march to the sea. That legacy was further cemented by America's imperial wars and military interventions from the turn of the century into the 1930s, and which prompted two-time Congressional medal of honor winner, Major General Smedley Butler to claim, with more than a little justification, "war is a racket." [xvii]

In the mid-1920s, William (Billy) Mitchell's theories of air power maintained that military-economic linkage, but only tentatively.[xviii] His principal focus, like that of many air power theorists of the early twentieth century, was war's new military-technical dimension and how it had revolutionized warfare. The central concept of these theorists was to using aerial bombing to inflict intolerable levels of pain on the hostile party's populace and thus compel its government to concede. They assumed a direct connection existed between a foe's political and socio-cultural dimensions, an assumption that proved problematic in the Second World War.

After the Second World War, limited war theorists, such as Bernard Brodie, Robert Osgood, and Henry Kissinger concerned themselves mainly with the political dimension of armed conflict, and to a lesser extent war's military-technological dimension in terms of the development of nuclear weapons.[xix] They saw the chief purpose of war's political dimension as twofold: to set limited objectives for a conflict and to control the military and socio-cultural dimensions of war in order to prevent escalation. Brodie and Osgood, especially, wrote of war's nature as if it were a coiled spring: one ill-considered move might cause the whole thing to release with sudden, uncontrollable violence. The invariably quirky Herman Kahn challenged this model by suggesting that even major wars would not necessarily escalate automatically. One could identify several stages or steps, as many as 44, through which escalation might progress, and thereby offer opportunities for diplomacy to work.[xx] His escalation model, though controversial, at root reflects a more realistic understanding of the nature of war, one that incidentally approaches Clausewitz's concept more closely than did the paradigms of the limited war theorists.

In the 1960s, Thomas Schelling's theories of bargaining and compellence examined the political-psychological dimensions of conflict more rigorously than any theorist hitherto.[xxi] His focused chiefly on the decision logic of opposing political leaders, though it could also be modified to accommodate military leaders. Schelling's efforts advanced game- or decision-theory tremendously, but they did so largely at the expense of the other dimensions of war.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the theory of strategic control advanced by Herbert Rossinski, and naval officers J.C. Wiley and Henry Eccles focused on achieving control within the military dimension of war.[xxii] However, their theory can be readily applied to other dimensions. Unfortunately, it remains underdeveloped.

The counterinsurgency theories of the 1960s and 2000s,

drawing heavily from British and French writings, focused on the military and socio-cultural dimensions of war.[xxiii] Socio-political revolutions became important topics of study, as evidenced by Chalmers Johnson's *Autopsy on Peoples' War* in the Vietnam era.[xxiv] But while these works shed much needed light on war's socio-cultural dimension, they were not integrated into a holistic model of war. Many counterinsurgency theories concentrated on achieving success in a foreign host nation, without fully taking into account how difficult it might be to sustain support for such efforts on the home front. That problem was especially acute if the home front experienced a social revolution of its own, as America did in the 1960s.

The maneuver theorists of the 1980s and 1990s, such as John Boyd and John Warden for airpower and William Lind and Robert Leonard for land power, explored the military-psychological dimension of armed conflict.[xxv] It was within this dimension, they believed, where the decision to concede was made, and thus it was vastly more important than war's military-technological dimension. Every clash of arms short of nuclear war would require some degree of operational maneuver, they assumed; regrettably, operational art itself had declined as a field of study since the advent of nuclear weapons seemed to have rendered it superfluous. The maneuver theorists modelled their understanding of war's nature around Clausewitz's concept of friction. Their theories, though different in important respects, shared the underlying assumption that the shock of swift, violent maneuver could exploit war's natural friction, induce strategic paralysis, and break an adversary's willingness to fight.

The information revolution of the 1990s gave rise to an influential school of thought that concentrated on the military-technological dimension of war. Perhaps best reflected in the writings of William Owens and Arthur Cebrowski, this school of thought saw information technology as the key to changing war's nature by eliminating Clausewitzian friction, or at least by reducing it to irrelevance.[xxvi] Not only was war's nature changeable, it was tamable. Information technology seemingly enabled one to manipulate war's nature and thereby make the employment of military force less costly and more useful politically.

III

As we can see from the above, American strategic thought has specialized on a limited number of war's dimensions and, thus, has evolved into what Herbert Rossinski once referred to as "an *anarchy* of the most differently conceived military strategies." [xxvii] American strategic thinking gives harbor to numerous schools of thought or intellectual regimes which, in Rossinski's words, have drifted away from the "envisagement of war *as a whole*." [xxviii] For the American way of war to succeed in the 21st century, our limited focus on just a few of war's dimensions must end.

Fortunately, returning to, and further developing, the theory of strategy as control as articulated by Rossinski, Wiley, and Eccles holds some promise. Control is, of course, implied in the very act of war. Clausewitz's familiar definition of war, that it is "an act of force to compel an opponent to do our will," certainly does not rule out control. Indeed, compellence

requires not just sufficient pain, as Schelling assumed, but also enough control to deprive the adversary of other options. Compelling our adversaries to do what we want, while also deterring them from doing what we do not want usually requires achieving some degree of control in dimensions other than the military one.

To avoid strategic anarchy and achieve a Rossinski-like vision of war as a whole, therefore, the American way of war must decide how many dimensions of armed conflict actually exist, and which ones it can hope to affect. A theory involving four dimensions seems a reasonable starting point: socio-cultural, military, political, and economic. These, in turn, may have any number of sub-dimensions, each of which must be identified and examined through rigorous study. Furthermore, we need to determine what types and degrees of control we can realistically achieve in these dimensions.

Additionally, we must reach a better understanding of how actions in one dimension might reverberate in another. It is almost pedestrian to suggest that the best way to resolve a tactical or operational impasse in the South China Sea or in the Baltic region is to increase our efforts outside the military-technological dimension of war. What is less pedestrian, however, is the idea that enlarging our understanding of war across all its dimensions might lead to the discovery of new, Clausewitz-like synergies that our narrow perspectives prevented us from seeing.

In any case, the first step is to develop an historically based, multi-dimensional theory of war. Such a theory will not be easy to arrive at; each of war's dimensions is vast and complex. But one thing is certain—the American way of war cannot afford to accept strategic anarchy any longer.

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Teaching Your Enemy to Win

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'Strategy trumps tactics' is arguably as near as our field comes to a golden rule, a permanently operative injunction for soldiers and scholars alike that is applicable to all wars wherever and whenever we choose to look. The concept is variously rendered—*Infinity* readers will have heard it a hundred times. For instance, in the mid-1980s Allan Millett and Williamson Murray concluded an essay on the 'Lessons of War' with the line, 'Mistakes in operations and tactics can be corrected, but political and strategic mistakes live forever.'^[i] Its most frequently quoted encapsulation, however, is undoubtedly that *attributed* to Sun Tzu who said something to the effect that 'strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory; tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.'^[ii] Further explication of a basic, time honoured concept is unnecessary.

Which makes it all the more interesting (or curious, appalling, infuriating: choose one according to your own mood), when we observe the current state of strategic affairs. All the wars of the Global War on Terror (GWOT, howsoever we may call it now), and the overarching GWOT itself, so precisely fit the mould of 'noise before defeat' that one wonders if Sun Tzu had a crystal ball. To recap:

- The 2003 invasion of Iraq triggered a sectarian civil war, inside an incipient region-wide schismatic conflict, wrapped in a global insurgency that is clearly a strategic debacle for the major Western powers, not to mention

those living close to or in the Middle East. Islamic State, a particularly hideous foe to arise from this bloody cauldron, has been beaten back, but no doubt a successor will emerge—assuredly more virulently righteously deranged.

- The West's almost two decades long adventure in Afghanistan has been a colossal waste of blood and treasure.^[iii] The country remains near the very bottom of the international human development index and at the top of the international perception of corruption rankings. The Afghan police and army cannot effectively police the country or hold their own against a resurgent Taliban that is now as strong as ever. At the time of writing news reports are saying that the senior US commander there was just nearly assassinated in an attack that took out a reputed Afghan police general plus the intelligence chief of Kandahar province, as well as wounded the regional governor.^[iv]

The obvious question, then, is 'why?' How did this happen? What is it which has made our strategic efforts so fruitless? It is often supposed that the problem is a lack of strategy—or a surfeit of bad strategy, at any rate. Another variant of this thesis holds that the West is tactically proficient but strategically deficient.^[v] That would be bad, if true, albeit putting us in good company; after all, Livy records even Hannibal the Great being rebuked by his lieutenant Maharbal after the Carthaginians wiped out a Roman army at Cannae, 216 BC for the same sin. 'You know how to win victory', he said, '[but] you do not how to use it.'^[vi]

It is not true, though. In actuality, our tactics are also quite poor. We argue that two reasons, amongst possible others, are foremost. First, strategy is irrelevant in our current context because policy so utterly dominates tactics—a situation arrived at by a combination of:

- social drivers, including notably a heightened leadership perception of war as essentially a tool of 'consequence' or 'risk-management' rather than for the pursuit of victory *per se*.^[vii]
- which are especially pertinent in offensive liberal wars, or 'wars of choice', such as have typified the landscape of security affairs since the end of the Cold War;^[viii] and,

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- both the above being aggravated by advancements in information technology that expose the 'home front' to formerly distant 'small wars' in ways that consistently imperil political will, while also enabling senior commanders to dictate low-level decision-making in ways that defeat the possibility of tactical initiative, boldness, and pursuit.

Second, because we operate in this manner, we force our enemy into an adversarial predator-prey relationship at the beginning of any conflict in which we, in effect, in an evolutionary manner progressively teach our enemy how to win. The British Army, for instance, boasts that it has the oldest and best Infantry Battle School in the world. And that may be true, but it is not located in the Brecon Beacons, Wales where its soldiers train to be tactical leaders; it is located where London sends its soldiers not to fight and win, but just to fight and 'hold the ring' for a time while some promised sub-strategic/non-kinetic political accommodation fails to materialise.[ix]

A Hollow Fist In a Khaki Glove

Strategy is supposed to be the 'bridge' between policy and tactics, or in other words to connect political 'purpose' with military 'means' through strategic 'ways'. It is meant to ensure that military power is applied towards ends which force can plausibly effectuate. In the words of Colin Gray, 'one has a strategy, which is done by tactics.'[x] The metaphor implies a dialogue between statesmen and commanders, the object of which is to achieve a clear goal setting by the former, and appropriately bounded and orientated means on the part of the latter—an honest and objective mutual understanding of the sort of war on which they are embarking, for a start. The dialogue is unequal, in democratic states, and always a messy back and forth because the statesman may interject himself in any aspect of war-making that he wishes, though normally it is imprudent to do so—whereas the soldier must stay in his lane of professional competence.[xi] Getting this right is far from easy.

Sadly, civil-military relations, as the strategic dialogue may be described, are now far from the correct ideal. Statesmen are very unclear on goals—indeed, to take the ever-shifting narrative of the now 17-year Afghanistan war as an exemplar, they are sometimes downright deceptive with their own populations, their allies, their commanders, and even themselves. It is not hard to read profound frustration with political leadership between the lines of the Canadian General Andrew Leslie's lament on the state of affairs:

"I often get asked... why are you there? We're there because you sent us. As a soldier, it's not my job to explain why you sent us. Soldiers don't do that. We tell you what we're doing, we tell you how we're doing it, but we should not be in the position of explaining to the people of Canada why we're there. The responsibility for that lies with the political leadership and those who sent us." [xii]

'Why?' is always the most fundamental question and, nowadays, it is frequently unanswered, it is perhaps even unanswerable. It could well be argued that it will remain

unanswerable in perpetuity until we lose the fear and shame we feel towards linking a conflict directly to the national self-interest. It is also arguable that because the national self-interest is often inextricably bound up with humanitarian principles that it is an enlightened self-interest which should add weight to any argument in its favour. Lord Palmerston, the politician who dominated British foreign policy at the height of its imperial power, including two stints as Prime Minister from 1855-58 and 1859-65, is reputed to have quipped sagely that, 'whenever I hear the words "something must be done" I know that something stupid is about to happen.' The unhappy reality, though, is that nearly all of the West's wars for a generation at least have begun from an implicit answer to the question 'why?' that amounts to no more than: well, *something* must be done.[xiii] More often than not the something that is available is military force, irrespective of the actual utility of force in the context of the problem at hand.

Lawrence Freedman remarked over a decade ago that the 'management of [the] tension between liberal ends and illiberal means is at the heart of many problems of contemporary strategy.'[xiv] This is, in our view, quite true, but also something of an understatement. The liberal state engaged in a 'war of choice' brings along with it all the predictable values and urges that a determined and ruthless opponent requires to defeat it—such as the desire to limit conflict only to combatants and to spare them as well as civil society generally from harm (even to 'develop' a people, while fighting amongst it at the same time), to regularise war as much as possible and to legalise its conduct in all aspects. The 'problem' of contemporary strategy, really, is in fact more like a stake in its heart.

Information technology further complicates matters in a couple of significant ways. On the grand strategic level, the time-honoured technique of politically managing the vagaries of small wars has been to keep them simmering along just below the threshold of public attention. There has never been a time when imperial forces, such as those which Palmerston commanded, were immune to tactical setbacks. Pick a painting on any wall in the Officers' Mess of any old British regiment to find the evidence of battles hard fought and won at great cost, or simply lost and forgotten.

The difference now is that the degree and immediacy to which our lives are increasingly intertwined with those of distant others—economically, politically and culturally—in ways that erase the distinction between inside and outside, has magnified exponentially. There are no longer distant events that do not potentially impinge in real-time on people everywhere, notably amongst the home population.[xv] It used to be that Western populations were insulated from small wars by distance, by solid frontiers, and by a superiority of conventional armaments, but this is no longer the case. That is what has driven the shift in strategic studies from more of a preoccupation with material combat power to a greater concern with narrative, strategic communications, and even a 'virtual dimension' of conflict that supposedly supersedes its tangible layers.[xvi]

On the sub-strategic level, the counterintuitive effect of digitisation that was supposed to make wars fast, decisive, and cheap by empowering the most high-tech capable armies to operate more nimbly, to make them more agile,

and able to achieve more with less has been quite the opposite. The command apparatus of the most high-tech armies is more top heavy than ever, certainly no more agile, and produces good decisions no more reliably than before. The syllogism 'knowledge is power' remains true but only when it is the sum of information that is well understood and effectively used, else it is nothing more than poorly used data. In practice this is often the case, as a main result of technological advancement has been the enhancement of the ability of senior commanders and distant headquarters to intervene in local command decisions, to militate against and occasionally decisively countermand on-the-spot judgment. Examples of this are legion in the literature on contemporary wars, but this vignette from the United States Marines operations in Helmand, Afghanistan in 2010 is particularly apposite:

"Day Three in Marjah. The Forward Air Controller, Ben Willson, was almost having a nervous breakdown. I hadn't seen him sleep since we'd landed. I hadn't seen him anywhere other than the cold central corridor of the central police station, hunched over, fixated on the chunky laptop that showed him what the drones above us were filming... What drove Ben to the verge of that nervous breakdown was that he requested up to forty air strikes a day but almost all were denied. The few approvals that came through took so long—one took two hours, by which the planes had run out of fuel and flown away—that the little figures he saw on the laptop screen laying IEDs simply escaped. [He] like all the other forward air controllers in Afghanistan, had to go through five levels of approval for an air strike, including a lawyer and ending with the general and his staff." [xvii]

Instead of a nimbler command system able to respond swiftly to events in a bottom-up manner with strong local initiative, the reality is more the opposite with local initiative squelched by a command hierarchy obsessed with what crews have described as 'Predator porn' [xviii] or 'Kill TV'. The result is armed forces that possess all the outward appearances of strength—equipment, uniformity, manpower, training, and so on—which are actually severely handicapped by a constipated command and control system.

Darwinian Competition: The Ecologist and The Doctor

A doctor engaged in tackling the problem of treating a bacterial infection that is resistant to antibiotics would recognise completely the issues faced by a military commander in this scenario. Too harsh an antibiotic and you risk damaging the patient, exposing them to a different suite of problems. Too weak or too small an amount of antibiotic used, and you will not kill the infection. The bacteria that are left behind spawn further bacteria that have inherited the tools necessary for survival. The doctor views this as a problem to be addressed through a more intelligent use of drugs as but one part of treating an infection, attempting to get so far ahead of the bacteria as to render moot its capacity to evolve. An ecologist would view the same phenomenon as an integral part of the Darwinian nature of the natural world; perpetual, incremental adaptation, and the survival of the fittest. We should seek to think more like the medical scientist.

Political hesitation, lack of strategic clarity, and a tentative approach to committing and then employing the use of force create the perfect environment in which to train your enemy to advance their capabilities in an evolutionary manner. The insurgency in Helmand in particular, and in Afghanistan more generally, is in some ways a lesson in how not to progress a campaign. British soldiers were deployed to Helmand without a clear aim or a clear understanding of how the myriad of aims were to be achieved. [xix] This lack of political clarity led to military commanders who were unsure of with what they were tasked and a subsequent decision to not commit anything like the requisite number of troops to achieve a victory.

The British Royal Armoured Corps have a saying which has become a truism for using the power of a main battle tank: 'Clout, don't dribble'. An American variant of this was recently invoked by LGen (ret.) H.R. McMaster, formerly President Trump's National Security Advisor, recounting the 'rules of thumb' that his armoured cavalry troop had put to effect in the Battle of 73 Easting, a key engagement of the Persian Gulf War 1990-91: 'if it takes a toothpick, use a baseball bat—don't give the enemy a fighting chance—overmatch and overwhelm the enemy as quickly as possible.' [xx] The point here is not, as may be superficially supposed, simply to use the maximum force; it is rather a statement of the primacy of moral, or 'psychological', effects in battle and a reminder of the decisive importance of pursuing an enemy that has been shocked into incohesion all the way to his defeat.

McMaster cited the World War II American general Ernest Harmon, a key figure in the history of US armour, as the source of this inspiration, but he might as well have credited Ardant du Picq's classic battle studies. [xxi] In other words it is an old idea, rooted in military thought going back well over a century, at least, and in many ways an excellent maxim for the use of military force writ large. Imagine, then, if you wanted to create the best, most effective adversary you could. In the pursuit of this aim you could do a lot worse than to begin your campaign against this enemy with too few men and without a clear purpose. Your forces would be unable (through lack of numbers and through the opacity of the mission) to effectively adhere to the master principle of war: selection and maintenance of the aim. The force you employed would be faced with too many enemies to fight over too large a battlespace. A myriad of small, vicious fire fights would teach your rapidly learning adversary how you operated. [xxii]

Moreover, when and how you chose to end fights would teach this enemy how to exploit your habits to his own ends. Indirect fire and air delivered munitions are by their very method of delivery and greater target effect less discriminating than a person with a rifle or a grenade. Yet they have become a method by which military commanders can buy out the perceived risks of committing more men to the fight—ironically, in practice, out of a surplus of concern for casualties the liberal democratic state at war fights with weapons that are more destructive than they might otherwise. This is not a new story, by any means, but the 'destroying-the-village-to-save-it' dilemma continues in contemporary operations. One well-publicised example was the 2011 wiping out of the Afghan village of Tarok Kolache by 25 tonnes of rockets and artillery in order not to lose the 'momentum' of ISAF forces in the area. [xxiii]

Yet early on in the Afghan conflict the Taliban had worked all this out—they had evolved. Numerous, broadly independent Taliban commanders had learned the keys to tactical success, which in turn have led to success in the conflict. Those lessons were to initiate the firefight, absorb or deflect the initial storm of returning fire, and then maintain a harassing presence until the NATO-force ground commander was forced to use his lesser discriminating assets to make his ambushers take cover for a sufficient period to extract himself. The tactic very effectively demoralises—one sees this obviously in the myriad published veteran's accounts of the war, which share in common a progressive wearying bewilderment of soldiers and commanders by it. The young British officer Patrick Hennessey, for instance, recounted the following scene, the last phase of a contact that took the form outlined above, in this case terminated by the need to pull back to regroup and withdraw a casualty by helicopter:

"Pull back from the buildings we'd fought into and held for four torrid hours, pull back from the positions we'd charged through that morning and, with the overwatch of the British units on the high ground in the north who had done next to nothing all day, pull wearily all the way back to the start-line. Pull back over ground we'd lost a third of the company group taking. Pull back over ground we'd been shot and blown up by both enemy and our own side alike on, pull back in one steady, demoralised trudging hour over what it had taken us twelve to take. ...Martin summed pretty much everything up in his hilariously angry response to the repeated buzzing questions of the Number Two Company sentries. 'Amber 21 this is Amber 60A. I've just had the hardest day of my life. Fuck off and leave us alone. Out!'"[xxiv]

The tactic, it probably goes without saying, tends also to upset the civil population whose towns and crops are blasted in the apparently fruitless fighting.

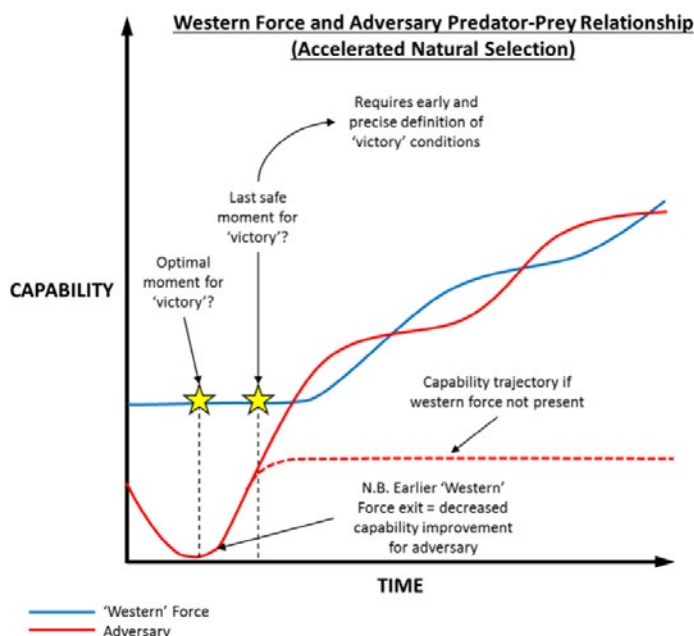


Figure 1: Western Force and Adversary Predator-Prey Relationship (Accelerated Natural Selection)

The classic insurgent 'judo throw' is to cause the government security forces to alienate themselves from the people by provoking them into blistering combats amongst the population. Whether or not this situation is avoidable is beside the point—the problem is that our tactics exacerbate the problem. The thinking has now pervaded the collective DNA of western forces, and a risk averse deployment posture is now the accepted norm. Overly restrictive force protection measures and insufficiently permissive rules of engagement at the start of an operation create this paradigm. The enemy forces and our own are locked in an adversarial predator-prey relationship that accelerates the evolution of both groups (see Figure 1). The analogy with nature is unavoidable and stark.

What the graph illustrates is the relative speed at which adaptation occurs. The adversary starts at a comparative disadvantage in capability terms (here capability can mean anything from equipment to tactics to numbers) and yet learns fast. This initial time window (the bottom left corner of the graph) is the opportunity for western forces to drive home their advantages and make significant gains. Indeed, should the political objective and strategy have been well enough crafted, the armed force will have achieved its aim and be on the way home before the lines cross, ideally at the point where the adversary's capability has been beaten to a nadir.

The UK's 2000 intervention in Sierra Leone in support of a beleaguered UN mission that had been working to restore peace in the country after a civil war, is a relatively good example. In that case, although there was a degree of lack of clarity in purpose in the Cabinet initially, the operation was ultimately well conducted and swiftly concluded—'mission creep' was avoided and the British public, with whom the operation had not registered highly, despite several sharp combats including one major engagement to rescue eleven soldiers of the Royal Irish Regiment who had been taken hostage by the Revolutionary United Front, was generally positive in its view of the war, or at least unperturbed by it. Prime Minister Tony Blair was very pleased.[xxv]

However, the longer the western force is in the fight the more opportunity there is for the adversary to adapt. Again, the Afghanistan war is a superb example. As one senior ISAF commander summed up the conflict in a 2010 interview, by which time the writing was already clearly on the wall, "We entered Afghanistan after September 11 for one limited reason—to get Bin Laden and punish those who attacked us and those who sheltered them. And then we just... stayed." [xxvi] Part of the problem is that smaller, less formal organisations are by their nature able to adapt more quickly; another is that anti-status quo insurgents are by definition highly incentivised to improvise, innovate, and adapt, whereas conventional armies are less so.[xxvii] This is magnified by the rate at which the less capable will be killed—a harsh but effective training regime.

The outcome is that after the initial period, the western force and the adversary are locked into a perpetual struggle with neither side able to seize an advantage significant enough to force a victory. This clearly plays to the strengths of the adversary, 'we have the watches, they have the time' as the saying goes. The population amongst whom the fighting occurs as well as the public of the intervening nations

becomes exhausted by the emotional effort required to sustain the conflict. This has been the leitmotif of the Afghanistan war for most of the contributing nations to ISAF. For example, a Canadian study concluded of the information campaign in support of the conflict that the 'government failed to connect on an emotional level [with Canadians]. As a consequence, they won some minds but too few hearts.' [xxviii]

An even more sobering indictment may be observed in the memoirs of Major General John Cantwell, an Australian officer with thirty-eight years of service encompassing three wars from Operation Desert Storm in 1991, through Iraq in 2006, and Afghanistan in 2010 where he headed the Australian contingent. He had been hospitalised afterwards suffering from post-traumatic stress, powered at root by a gnawing doubt:

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

Imagine a way of war that causes even the most senior commanders to worry 'what is the point?' to the point of hospitalisation—a way of war, moreover, which through one's own efforts leaves the enemy stronger at the end than at the beginning. Actually, there is no need to *imagine* such a thing.

Conclusion

The stabilisation orthodoxy which sees Western states intervening abroad militarily in pursuit of ends, almost always ill-defined, that military power has hardly a chance of effectuating has to be challenged. The problem, as we have discussed it so far, primarily in terms of tactics and strategy, is that it fatally compromises both, but especially tragically the latter. Time after time, governments paint themselves into a rhetorical corner from which no amount of 'strategic communications' can liberate them. When forced to confront the thorny issues, usually the 'why are we there?' question, or even worse it's 'is it worth it?' cousin, ministers tend to be vigorous—framing wars of choice as values-driven fights, even existential ones, that it is essential to win. The trouble is that Western publics on the whole do not buy such arguments anymore, if ever they did; moreover, they see the obvious disjuncture between self-evidently economy-of-force-driven operations and international political grandstanding and believe their eyes accordingly.

Notwithstanding any particular tactics, some would argue, the underlying causes of the 'infections' that give rise to the world's many heart-wrenching crises exist and need to be ameliorated. Be this as it may, though, the humanitarian impulse ought, frankly, as Palmerston would have urged, be questioned carefully before any action is undertaken. A key thing to ponder would be: who is responsible for it? Is

economic hardship, ethnic or sectarian disenfranchisement, or gender equality in this or that part of the world a matter of professional concern to the soldier?

In the current strategic context, for most Western armies the answer is a diffident 'yes'; the soldier as armed social worker, robust peacemaker, and stability provider is an image with which the most voters seem comfortable and that politicians are therefore happy to emphasise. Such beliefs are usually couched in terms of moral enterprise, but the reasons for it are equally, if not more, practical in their origin—the military is the one public institution that politicians can legally compel to go abroad and put life and limb at stake. Hypocrisy and ignorance, though, are at the base—do something, but make it cheap, is the demand.

A decade ago Sir David Richards, who had commanded British forces in Sierra Leone and later headed ISAF, but was then Britain's Chief of the General Staff, suggested in a speech that what we needed in order to face a strategic context of liberal interventions was a cadre of skilled colonial administrators. He deplored that,

"... in a desire not to be considered to be still colonial, I sense that we lost the mindset and skills across Government that our fathers and grandfathers instinctively understood and there was perhaps—and still is in some quarters—a reluctance to do anything that appeared to be colonial in nature." [xxx]

What Richards put his finger on here was an essential point, which may be readily observed with a short walk through the headstones of the British cemetery in Peshawar, Pakistan, or many other such dour monuments of empire dotted around the world—British, French, Russian, and Soviet for that matter. For the most part, the graves there are full of engineers and administrators, policemen and teachers, and often their wives and children, not soldiers. For all the sins of imperialism, at least its agents operated out of sufficient moral conviction to put their own lives on the line; whereas now we talk much of 'whole of government' solutions, we practice them hardly at all.

Passion is the 'neglected mainspring of war', as students of which we must never disconnect—as to do so would fly in the face of the understanding war as a 'total phenomenon' that Clausewitz enjoined us to possess. [xxxi] In our discussion of tactics and strategy and the reciprocal mutual learning that occurs between one's opponent and oneself we have never departed far from the moral dimension of strategy and warfare. This was a point one of our interlocutors, a British general of great experience in nearly all of the events we have cited thus far, was keen to stress. It is fitting to quote verbatim his assessment of our present liberal dilemma and how we got to it:

"The minute weapons of mass destruction were not found, Iraq gained a moral taint that simultaneously infected Afghanistan. Moral taint then led to the withdrawal of the popular mandate for either operation; withdrawal of the popular mandate led to a failure of political nerve, the impossibility of applying decisive force and an acute vulnerability to moral criticism. While we self-consciously limited both our aims and the

resources we would devote to their achievement, our enemies were able to endure and outlast us politically in an example of the strategic exploitation of asymmetric advantage. Liberal intervention is therefore a thin reed that requires quite specific conditions before it can be initiated... if it doesn't meet the conditions, do not do it. I regret coming up with a conclusion that perfectly exemplifies a political context suffused by risk aversion but that is where we are for now. Oh, for the simple verities of a war of national survival."[xxxii]

A moral impediment sits at the heart of this problem. War should be just, both *ad bellum* and *in bello*. Without a defined purpose it is almost a guarantee that constructing a moral case for intervention will prove at best Herculean. Even more problematic is that with this context, behaving in a manner consistent with the guiding principles of war, designed in part

to ensure that a brutal, violent undertaking is at least as swift resolved as possible will prove at best Sisyphean. Western forces enter any conflict with advantages. What they have lacked in the post-colonial era is the clarity of purpose and sheer will that only a sense of moral authority can deliver.

It is bad strategy and poor tactics to engage in conflicts that are doomed to failure from the outset—and immoral to boot. The object of war is the creation of a better peace, we are assured, for no other cause can justify the wilful infliction of suffering and death on others and sanctify our own losses. Consider, therefore, the post-conflict scenario. Your adversary has been taught a thousand tactical lessons—by you. If he has been paying attention, he has been also taught a seminal lesson in strategy. When you leave, who do you think is best placed to seize power in the ecosystem you have so profoundly shaped?

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- [xviii] David Mindell, *Our Robots, Ourselves: Robotics and the Myths of Autonomy* (New York: Penguin, 2015), p. 242.
- [xix] The authoritative and devastating account of this is in Theo Farrell's *Unwinnable: Britain's War in Afghanistan, 2001-2014* (London: Bodley Head, 2017).
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- [xxi] Ardant du Picq (John N. Greely, trans. and ed.), *Battle Studies*, reprinted in *Roots of Strategy*, Vol. 2 (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1987). Further on du Picq's thoughts and modern relevance are to be found in Robert Leonhard, *The Art of Maneuver: Maneuver Warfare Theory and AirLand Battle* (New York: Ballantyne, 1991), pp. 44-46.
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The No Comment Policy: Israel's Conflict Management Policy in an Uncertain Middle East

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On September 5th, 2007 Four F-15 and F-16 fighter aircrafts departed from separate Air Force bases in Israel. They followed the Western Coastline flying North, crossed the border with Lebanon, and headed East toward the Syrian-Turkish border. Using advanced stealth technologies, they blinded the Syrian radar, and at some point between 00:00 and 00:30 dropped 17 tons of explosives on what was suspected to be a nuclear facility located in the Deir ez-Zor Governorate, in the Far East of Syria. Shortly after, Israeli Air Force (IAF) pilots communicated the code word 'Arizona' back to Israeli headquarters, which indicated that operation 'Outside the Box' had been completed. Last March, after more than 10 years of silence and strict censorship, Israel admitted striking Syria's nuclear reactor.

This attack, and many others that followed it, were all part of a new policy employed by Israel, namely, the 'no comment' policy. Israel's no comment policy dictates that the security establishment refrain from claiming responsibility for or refusing to comment on attacks it has carried out. The policy was employed in order to strike a balance between Israel's need to hinder its enemies from acquiring tie-breaking weapons on the one hand, and its aversion to full-scale war on the other. So far, the no comment policy has proven highly effective for Israel, as in the vast majority of cases, missions were completed, and retaliation successfully averted.

The no comment policy is most effective when three specific conditions are in place: First, the enemy country has an interest not to engage in all-out war. Second, the no comment policy is particularly successful when employed in countries where freedom of the press is not protected, such that the leadership in both countries can control the

message conveyed to the public, often via censorship and suppression. As such, the leadership of the attacked state can order the local media to report false information while the aggressor state can enforce censorship and prevent incriminating information from being released. Finally, when the victim country or organization has its own interest in keeping the attack under wraps, usually due to a violation of international law. By promoting a narrative that nothing of importance had happened the attacked state averts investigation by third parties.

The aftermath of the IAF's destruction of the Syrian nuclear facility in Deir ez-Zor Governorate on September 2007 proved the efficacy of the no comment policy. Following the operation, for an entire month, no Israeli official agreed to provide a statement relating to the attack assuming that Syria, as well as its allies, Hezbollah and Iran, would use Israel's denial as an opportunity to avoid an unwanted war. On October 2nd, almost a month after the attack, the Israeli Military Censorship Department released the following statement: *'Aircrafts from the IAF attacked a target deep inside Syrian territory, on the night before 6 September'*.

The fascinating thing is that the Israeli Military Censorship Department released this statement one day after Bashar al-Assad was interviewed by the BBC and had stated that the Israelis bombed an *'unused military building'*. It seems that the Israelis were waiting to see whether or not Assad intended to react, and after he gave his statement, the Israelis understood that Assad preferred a narrative suggesting that the attack caused no significant damage.

Israel's response to the attack on the Syrian nuclear reactor was markedly different from its response to the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981. After Operation Opera, which destroyed the Iraqi nuclear reactor, the Israeli government, headed by PM Menachem Begin, immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. In a public speech covered by local and international media several days afterwards, PM Begin (1981) stated that *'the [Iraqi] atomic reactor has been destroyed, it's gone, and there won't be any others in the future... we took actions in order to save our nation, and more importantly, our children... a new era has begun, no more retaliation but preventive initiative, we will come for them... and will not wait for them to come to us'*. This attitude became known as the Begin Doctrine; Israel would not allow

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enemy states to develop WMD, and would work to prevent this eventuality, even at the cost of potential war.

The successful bombing of the nuclear facility in Syria strengthened Israel's confidence in its new policy, thus, it was expanded to target Iran and Sudan for the first time. In January 2009, Israel attacked Sudan, intercepting an arms convoy suspected of transporting Fajr-5 rockets with a 75-kilometer-range. The convoy was intercepted in the eastern part of Sudan while heading north near the Red Sea, close to the Egyptian border. As Michael Gordon and Jeffrey Gettleman pointed out in the *New York Times*, the attack was carried out by the IAF with the assistance of Israeli Special Forces who detected the arrival of the shipment in the Port of Sudan and tracked it on its way to the Egyptian border. Two months later, a U.S. official confirmed that indeed it was the IAF that had perpetrated the attack.

Israel, having grown even more comfortable with its new policy, then began to attack Hezbollah, an organization known for cruel retaliation. Israel started attacking weapon convoys in Lebanon and in Syria that were transporting 'game changer' weapons to the organization. According to Amos Yadlin, the then head of IDF Military Intelligence Directorate, examples of 'game changer' weapons were chemical weapons, Iranian Fateh-110 surface-to-surface missiles with a range of 200 km, Russian P-800 Oniks or 'Yakhont', a supersonic anti-ship missile with a range of 600 km, and the Soviet 9K37 also known as SA-17, medium-range surface-to-air missile system with a range of 22 km.

Weapons convoys were intercepted from the air, sea and land in Syrian and Lebanese territory, sometimes with the help of Special Forces on the ground. On January 31st, 2013 the IAF attacked an arms convoy in the Rif Dimashq Governorate of Syria. According to David Sanger, Eric Schmitt and Jodi Rudoren from *The New York Times*, U.S. officials confirmed that indeed it was the IDF that attacked, and that the convoy was transporting SA-17 anti-aircraft missiles from Syria to Hezbollah in Lebanon along with other weapons. On February 24th, 2014, as reported in foreign media, the IAF carried out yet another attack on a weapons convoy. The convoy, which was suspected of transporting advanced surface-to-surface missiles of Fateh-110 and SA-17, was attacked while in Lebanese territory, near the town of Baalbek in Beqaa Valley.

The Israelis perceived military bases as legitimate targets. According to Uzi Mahmaini and Flora Bagenal from *The Sunday Times*, on October 23rd, 2012 the IAF bombed the 'Yarmouk' military facility, located in south Khartoum, Sudan. The attack was carried out by two F-15 fighter aircrafts, each carrying two one-ton bombs and covered by four F-15 aerial combat aircraft. The squadron was accompanied by two CH-53 helicopters with fighters from the heliborne Combat Search & Rescue (CSAR) extraction unit, '669', and by a Gulfstream 550 jet aircraft, which carried advanced electronic warfare equipment that blocked Sudanese radar systems. The 'Yarmouk' military facility was suspected to be an Iranian-sponsored weapons factory built to enable the free movement of arms to Hamas in Gaza. The bombing targeted a group of 40 containers that were situated in the backyard of the factory.

Other type of operations identified with Israel's no comment

policy were assassinations. Assassination operations are generally a cooperative effort by the IAF, the IDF Special Forces and the Mossad. The Mossad, formally known as The Israeli National Intelligence Agency, is the dominant actor in this domain, and has been at the forefront of executing assassinations on behalf of the State of Israel since its establishment in the 1950s. Generally, Israeli officials do not claim responsibility for any Mossad operations. However, alleged assassinations carried out in the framework of the no comment policy differ from others in terms of the sheer number of executions carried out, the method of implementation and the fact that they target government officials. In addition, the no comment policy involved more extensive use of IDF Special Forces units.

On August 1st, 2008 U.S. files leaked by Edward Snowden, a former employee at the CIA who leaked classified NSA information, revealed that the Israeli Naval Commando unit, Shayetet 13, assassinated General Muhammad Suleiman. General Suleiman was Bashar al-Assad's top security aide who oversaw Syria's nuclear program and had orchestrated weapon transfers to Hezbollah in Lebanon. While the General was hosting a dinner party at his seaside villa in Tartous in Syria, snipers emerged from the sea and shot Suleiman multiple times in the head and neck, killing him immediately.

According to Duncan Gardham from *The Telegraph*, on January 18th, 2010 a Mossad hit team landed in Dubai using fake British, Irish, German and French passports. Their target was Mahmoud al-Mabhouh, who co-founded Hamas' military wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades. On January 19th, 2010 five hours after al-Mabhouh's arrival in Dubai, the hit squad broke into his room at the al-Bustan Rotana hotel and subdued and suffocated him before promptly leaving Dubai for various countries. In another case, according to a U.S. official, on January 31st, 2013 Hassan Shateri, an Iranian General of the Revolutionary Guards, was assassinated by the IAF while leading an arms convoy from Syria to Lebanon.

The no comment policy's role in assassination operations is best exemplified by the alleged Mossad's assassination campaign against Iranian nuclear scientists. From 2010 to 2012, there were five recorded assassinations of Iranian scientists, all of which occurred in Tehran. Masoud Alimohammadi, an Iranian physics professor, and Mostafa Ahmadi-Roshan, an Iranian nuclear scientist, were both killed by booby-trapped vehicles near their cars. Majid Shahriari, an Iranian nuclear engineer at the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, was killed by an assailant who attached a bomb to his car. Darioush Rezaeinejad, an Iranian nuclear scientist, was killed by an armed assailant riding by on a motorcycle. As Galetta from Springer pointed, Fereydoon Abbasi was the only scientist who survived the Mossad's attempt to assassinate him by jumping out of his car before an explosive device could be detonated.

The campaign against the Iranian scientists differed from previous Mossad led assassination campaigns in two ways. First, in the previous attacks, the tactics employed were highly unsophisticated, and their efficacy was low. For instance, in the 1950s, Israel carried out Operation Damocles that targeted scientists and technicians formerly employed in Nazi Germany who helped Egypt develop its rocket program. As pointed by Isser Harel, the then head of the Mossad, in his

book *The Crisis of the German Scientists*, the Mossad, then in its infancy, conducted an amateur campaign that primarily relied on letter bombs and abductions. Innocent civilians such as the scientists' secretaries and family members were injured upon opening the letter bombs, while the targeted scientists were largely unscathed. In the case of Israel's alleged campaign against the Iranian nuclear scientists, the Mossad used smart bombs and recruited agents to carry out the assassinations, ultimately yielding a remarkably high success rate.

Second, in the previous campaigns, assassinations were carried out directly by Mossad agents in neutral countries. For example, in the 1980s, according to various foreign and local sources, the Israeli Mossad targeted scientists and technicians who worked on Saddam Hussein's WMD projects in Iraq. In their book *Shadow Wars*, Dan Raviv and Yossi Melman reveal that the Mossad was instructed to launch a campaign of intimidation and, if necessary, assassination in order to drive the nuclear scientists from Iraq. On June 14th, 1980 a Mossad hit team assassinated Egyptian nuclear scientist Yahya El Mashad, who headed Hussein's nuclear program, in his hotel room in Paris. Ten years later, artillery expert Gerald Vincent Bull, who headed Hussein's 'superguns' program also known as Project Babylon, was assassinated outside of his apartment in Brussels. Nevertheless, during the Iran campaign, most assassinations were carried out in the heart of enemy territory by locally recruited agents.

Cyber warfare is also one of the main pillars of Israel's no comment policy, and unlike the military engagements discussed above, it constitutes a novel form of warfare in Israeli military history. In June 2010, a Belarusian computer security firm revealed a powerful cyberweapon that was used against Iran's nuclear systems for uranium enrichment. The cyber weapon later came to be known as the 'Stuxnet' computer worm. According to Edward Snowden, Stuxnet was developed cooperatively between the Israelis and the Americans and was the first of its kind. Unlike other computer viruses, the main feature of the 'Stuxnet' computer worm was not to hijack computers or steal information, but to reprogram commands given to the Iranian nuclear-enrichment centrifuges. It caused the centrifuges to spin too quickly and tear themselves apart, resulting in the destruction of nearly 1,000 of Iran's 6,000 centrifuges. The cyberattack severely delayed Iran's nuclear ambitions.

In September 2011, the lab of cryptogrammic and systems protection of the University of Budapest for Technology and

Economics revealed yet another computer worm that had infiltrated the Iranian nuclear systems, Duqu. The Duqu virus was not limited to Iranian nuclear systems. It was discovered in the computing systems of Iranian private companies, and in other countries including France, Britain and India. As pointed out by Boldizsar Bencsath, Gabor Pek, Levente Buttyan and Mark Felegyhazi from the Future Internet Journal, security experts from the American cyber security company Symantec concluded that the Duqu and Stuxnet worms were programmed by the same institution. However, while Stuxnet was designated to ruin command and control systems, Duqu was designed to steal information.

According to IDF Brigadier General and Former Commander of the Israeli Special Forces Directorate, *'in the past, [the IDF] waited for the next war, and in the meanwhile was constantly occupied with preparing for it... Israel's new conflict management policy forces the army to constantly use its muscles in a dynamic environment, during both war and peace times... the purpose of the policy is to postpone the next war as much as possible. The majority of the measures [taken] are unknown [to the general public], yet they involve tremendous efforts.'* Indeed, the no comment policy did not seek to defeat the enemy, but rather, to postpone the next large-scale confrontation by weakening Israel's opponents, preventing them from acquiring tie-breaking weapons and thwarting attacks-in-progress. To that end, Israel carried out air bombings, sabotage of military facilities and arms convoys, assassinations and cyber-attacks.

By evading responsibility for these attacks through the no comment policy, Israel sought to prevent countries and organizations from retaliating against Israel. While there were cases in the past where Israel employed such methods and did not claim responsibility for attacks, the no comment policy was particularly salient during the years after 2007 as a result of the growing preponderance of Hezbollah, the decline of nation-states in the Middle East following the Arab Spring, and Iran's nuclear program.

The no comment policy required Israel to maintain a delicate balance: While on the one hand, the attacked side may prefer not to engage in war with Israel, on the other hand, there is a limit to how many attacks a country or an organization can sustain without retaliating. On the surface, Israel's application of the policy achieved its desired outcome. The countries and organizations that Israel was compelled to attack over the years consistently took advantage of Israel's denial to avoid the need to retaliate time and time again.

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Operation PBSUCCESS: U.S. Covert Action in Guatemala

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President Truman spent a good portion of his presidency in a war against communism. The National Security Act of 1947 under Truman gave the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) authority to conduct covert action in addition to its stated intelligence and counterintelligence roles.[i] This enabled the U.S. government to undertake a covert role against worldwide communism.

Starting almost immediately in 1948, Truman began to use CIA in this capacity to influence foreign policy, without overt diplomacy or military strength, but through covert action campaigns. He sent CIA operatives behind the Iron Curtain where their mission was unsuccessful and the operatives were captured and executed.[ii] But he also sent operatives to Italy to engage in political covert action, influencing the Italian elections, which was by and large successful.[iii] The short history of covert action to this point was rather scanty but the newly instituted practice had promising future implications that only needed to be tested with a President who would exercise the newly created tools added to the foreign policy arsenal.

With a worldwide increase in communist activities toward the end of his presidency, offensive operations against and to deter communism were in action. Communism was one of the highest threats to U.S. interests and the Truman

Administration was determined to derail its actions abroad. The uncompromising Administration was fully dedicated to the fight against communism and they devoted significant energy to its execution. The planning had just begun and then Truman's presidency was over. America had a new President with the same newly enabled abilities to combat the communist threat as his predecessor. To his advantage, he would enter the office with a strong and formidable military background that made his ability to confront worldwide communist threats even more overwhelming.

It was in January 1953 that President Eisenhower was elected, with the promise to supply help to any country in order to deter and resist communism, while also protecting American interests from its aggressions. This campaign promise became a fundamental part of the newly elected President's stance on communism and one that would be tested from the very beginning of his tenure in office. Developments not too far south of the continental United States in Guatemala made communist actions too prevalent to ignore and an issue that President Eisenhower would tackle head on.

As a result of a popular revolution in Guatemala that started in 1944, Jacobo Árbenz was democratically elected as the president of the country in 1951 with a policy that Washington saw as in support of communism and in contrast to U.S. interests.[iv] Eisenhower knew firsthand of the aggressions of communism from his prior military career and tasked CIA with handling this development. Due to the concerning developments of the Árbenz government with regard to American interests, CIA was anticipating having to play a heavy hand and was lobbying on behalf of U.S. interests made that happen.

The new policies of the Guatemalan government under Árbenz proved extremely adverse for U.S. company United Fruit Company (UFC) which engaged in a highly effective lobbying campaign for the U.S. government to overthrow the Árbenz government. It was argued that the interests of UFC were no different from American interests overall and the U.S. government could not allow for such perceived communist developments to adversely impact American well-being abroad. Guatemala was forecasted by CIA and many ranking officials of the U.S. government to be on the verge of going "black" into the isolated abyss inflicted by communism. CIA officers in the Directorate of Plans believed that this marked

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a new threat where communists, for the first time, targeted a country in "America's backyard" for subversion with anti-access/area denial strategic implications. [v] Eisenhower saw no distinction between his own beliefs and the U.S. government assessment that was previously supported by President Truman during his term and thus authorized covert action to overthrow Árbenz in August 1953. The active measure approved by Eisenhower was codenamed Operation PBSUCCESS (replaced by the lesser effective Operation PBFORTUNE). It carried a \$2.7 million budget for "psychological warfare and political action" along with "subversion," among the other components of a small paramilitary war. [vi] PBSUCCESS was both ambitious and thoroughly successful as it marked the Agency's pinnacle point in the business of covert action.

On account of U.S. government desires and Eisenhower's own anti-communist convictions, it was planned that Árbenz would be deposed and hopefully replaced with an "acceptable" leader approved by Washington. [vii] Eisenhower believed that democracy in Guatemala was premature and Árbenz must be replaced with a moderate, authoritarian regime that was not susceptible to communist penetration. [viii] Pushed by Congress, Eisenhower was called to act on Árbenz on account of the administration's perceived complacency towards the leader and the need to obstruct communism infiltrating the Latin American countries. [ix] An American interest, United Fruit Company, served more or less as a representation of U.S. interests in Guatemala. For Eisenhower, any assaults on United Fruit Company, would be tantamount to an attack on the U.S. For Operation PBSUCCESS, Eisenhower viewed clandestine operations as an inexpensive alternative to military intervention. [x] PBSUCCESS was designated as a clandestine operation of psychological warfare and political action. Eisenhower saw a communist penetration of Guatemala and Latin American countries as a serious threat to U.S. interests, such that action was necessary, and a communist government in Latin America would not be tolerated nor would his leadership allow one to exist. [xi] [xii]

Following approval from Eisenhower, the National Security Council authorized PBSUCCESS as a covert action operation against Árbenz, giving CIA primary responsibility with coordination from the Department of State. [xiii] This covert operation's objective was to "remove covertly, and without bloodshed if possible, the menace of the Communist-controlled government of Guatemala." DCI Dulles established a temporary station (LINCOLN) to plan and execute PBSUCCESS. [xiv]

While psychological warfare and political action were the originally described means of execution for PBSUCCESS, assassination developed as an option on the table via a special request on 5 January 1954 for the liquidation of regime personnel. [xv] This assassination protocol was further described in a training manual that provided education in the art of political killing. [xvi] Assassination as a form of targeting was killed but then subsequently revived by Agency leadership because assassination might make it possible for (1) the army to take over the government or (2) high-level government official elimination may cause the country to collapse. [xvii] The Department of State, more times than one, promoted Agency-supported assassination. [xviii] Policy directives from Washington were ambiguous although the

removal of Árbenz from power was a foremost priority to the extent that consensus read that "Árbenz must go; how does not matter." [xix] None of the proposals recommended or even planned for assassination were ever implemented. [xx]

While assassination through CIA-trained operatives was never achieved, a Castillo Armas force supported by CIA was dispatched on 16 June 1954 to Guatemala City and successfully assumed the presidency on 27 June 1954 after over a week of the force's presence. [xxi] But the success did not come easily. Initial setbacks due to the rebels' failure to make any striking moves debilitated the insurgency effort. [xxii] CIA provided aircraft to provide aerial assault on the country at numerous locations in order to disorient the public, achieving psychological victory for the rebel forces. [xxiii] [xxiv] Causing little material damage, the aerial attacks led many citizens to believe that the insurgency was more powerful than it actually was, an example of the high potential of deception campaigns in psychological operations. To further confront the Guatemalan army, additional planes were requested by Castillo Armas. These requests were promptly authorized by Eisenhower. [xxv]

On the aforementioned date, Árbenz resigned his office and sought asylum in the Mexican embassy in Guatemala City upon which the newly emplaced Castillo Armas government allowed Árbenz to leave the country for Mexico where he was granted political asylum. [xxvi] While the Castillo Armas government successfully deposed Árbenz, Guatemalan military governments were favored until Castillo Armas was unanimously elected president. [xxvii] The new presidency was immediately recognized as the new government by the U.S. despite being internationally reviled. [xxviii] Both domestically and internationally, the U.S.-supported coup was described as a "modern form of economic colonialism." [xix] Reports of humanitarian issues propagated from the Castillo Armas government ensued for the decades following the coup. Nevertheless, the covert action objectives were satisfied even beyond their original calculations.

President Eisenhower did not allow communism to exist in America's backyard while fulfilling his campaign promise to aid any country to resist and deter the communist threat and to protect American interests from the threat of it. CIA was up to the challenge and distinguished itself as incomparably competent and professional in covert action planning as well as execution. Operation PBSUCCESS marked incredible success for the U.S. government's capability for political action and deception. CIA planners designed a plan in accordance with higher objectives and intents that were expertly executed by operators on the ground through their available agent networks. Support for the operation was maintained by President Eisenhower through to the very end of the covert action protocol and in concert with the contingencies that were not planned for but accomplished by the mission anyway—probably indicative of Eisenhower's military background.

Washington was steadfast that Árbenz had to be removed from power through any means necessary—even through assassination. Considered acceptable at the time, both from the perspective of Washington policymakers as well as those at CIA, assassination was classed as a political weapon to use in the struggle against communism and other political

threats. Two decades later, DCI William Colby prohibited any CIA involvement in assassination and subsequent Executive Order 11905 banned any U.S. Government involvement in assassination attempts.[xxx][xxxi]

The U.S. Government's act of foreign policy and CIA-mediated covert action represent one of the classic examples of the debate of Title 10 versus Title 50 of the United States Code. While Title 10 authorizes overt military involvement overseas, Title 50 specifically authorizes CIA to conduct covert intelligence activities and actions. PBSUCCESS was a cloudy area, although the majority of the planning was achieved via CIA, although military support was supplied. Even today, the distinction between Title 10 and 50 is grey at best. Through the National Security Council, Executive Branch, and smaller organizations in the Department of Defense and Intelligence Community, debate remains a forefront of concern in overseas policy and PBSUCCESS finds itself to be an example comparison time and again.

As a historical example that was supplanted as a marked success of American foreign policy and the high point of covert action, PBSUCCESS had larger implications for the U.S. Government's role in foreign action abroad. More specifically, it demonstrated to the world and American citizens what the U.S. Government would do and what it was capable of. Covert action programs persisted in the years following the Operation with rather great frequency and implications although PBSUCCESS was without a doubt the most successful of those undertaken. And while covert action remains a part of CIA's charter today and such programs do in fact occur, they do not have the gravity or implications of the golden age of covert action of the past century. Nevertheless, the worldwide seriousness of CIA was heightened immensely after the covert action in Guatemala. No longer was CIA known only as America's premier intelligence agency, it was one of the most powerful organizations on the planet. Even for countries that did not necessarily receive direct intervention on behalf of the American government, CIA's strength was showcased in Guatemala and that invariably made an imprint in the minds of many around the world.

At the same time as covert action's high success and almost invincibility was demonstrated, strategic thinking in terms of war was in the process of changing. While only a little while before this, CIA's mission was shared by the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) in what was the Army's Office of Special Services (OSS). The predecessor of both CIA and JSOC, OSS was responsible for intelligence gathering and covert action programs of which the latter was not formally stipulated until the National Security Act of 1947. Nevertheless, these responsibilities were shared by the military and, as such, the American way of war. There was no distinction between Title 10 and 50 as previously discussed. CIA involvement, as a civilian agency that reported only directly to the White House, was not an agency of war and neither were its activities. This

would be fine if it was sure that CIA had no involvement in covert action, although the pretense of plausible deniability only goes so far, and its understanding is eventually known in some way or form. Even if not unclassified or affirmed by the U.S. Government, the possibility exists and this changed the way of war for the United States.

What happened next however was more of a backtrack, although predominantly a result of PBSUCCESS's success and the failure of the covert action programs that followed. Covert action began to substitute for diplomacy, acting in some cases as the only form of foreign policy that was supplied by the U.S. Government. While successful in some regards, substituting covert action for diplomacy or overt military action is not a recipe for success and surely not a good formula for adequate foreign policy. It is probably contended, nevertheless, intelligence professionals believed as they still do that this backtrack was a good thing. The reason being, is that covert action has benefits but only when used in conjunction with diplomatic efforts and possibly overt military action. Intelligence and diplomacy are sometimes referred to as the stepchildren who aim to accomplish the same goal although through different means and sometimes at each other's cost. As the U.S. Government soon realized this, we grew less to rely on covert action through its successes but using it in conjunction with diplomacy and military action. After this, the Departments of State and Defense became a little more comfortable with CIA. But that does not mean that they are always all on the same page or have the same ambitions.

Amidst this all, Operation PBSUCCESS was a success for the U.S. Government both in terms of achieving success at foreign policy with plausible deniability and CIA-mediated action. The way of war in the American national security and foreign policy apparatus was forever changed. The role of covert action changed several times over the next few decades but the impending changes occurred as a cascading result of PBSUCCESS.

In sum, Operation PBSUCCESS was a success for CIA in that it demonstrated the Agency's quick and decisive ability to perform covert action like never before. Planners at the Agency operated without much higher guidance or many rules of engagement but knew how to accomplish the mission. Furthermore, President Eisenhower's strong will and temperament in the situation signified his strong convictions, leadership and promise to protect the U.S. at all costs. Covert action should never replace policy but the two should be coordinated well in order to create the best possible solution. In this case, policy was directly coordinated with covert action at the strategic level, albeit with rather minimal instruction at the operational level. The same is not true for many clandestine operations in administrations since. Operation PBSUCCESS demonstrated the U.S.'s place in the world as well as its capabilities—a strong mark of success for CIA.

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