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Colin S. Gray and Infinity Journal
A Personal View

It would be all too easy to laud Colin Gray with his contribution to strategic theory by simply praising his work, but I will leave that to others. I cannot say I knew Colin well. Others knew him better than I, but we did talk and correspond, and *Infinity Journal* was born of his ideas. Indeed Colin provided the framework on which we built the publication and will continue to evolve it.

I came to know Colin Gray when, in 2005 I picked up a copy of *Another Bloody Century*, which remains one of his best works, albeit he believed it *not* to be one of his best. The dedication in *Another Bloody Century* reads, "To my daughter Tonia. May she live in a peaceful world, contrary to her father's expectations." Colin wrote with a purpose often absent today.

When I did meet Colin some years later, I cannot say the shuffling professor, dragging his shopping trolley of books around campus, immediately impressed me, but all doubts fell away once he started talking. I never found Colin arrogant, but he was perhaps naturally impatient, and highly competent. He offered a correction or alternative view with little recourse to ceremony and he was very ready to counter anything he saw as misleading, but never in way that could be described as impolite. Direct, maybe. It didn't matter if you had 'done stuff' or 'were somebody'. If you wanted to set forth about strategy or military science in general, you had better come to the table fully prepared.

An occasion that sticks in my mind was the Israeli Air Force Conference of 2011. Colin was on the "speakers table" during lunch on the first day. Sitting with him were various Air Power luminaries, especially from the US. One of the luminaries of US Air Power then told the table that the great thing about air power was that it was "inherently strategic." Colin had been almost silent up until this point, but he commenced with a seemingly innocuous utterance,

"if I may", then proceeded to explain how saying air power was inherently strategic was one of the stupidest things he had ever heard. After five minutes there was mixture of very red faces or wide grins depending on where you sat in terms of your beliefs about air power. The point wasn't about "strategy". It was about context.

As most reading this may know, Colin went on to address many deep seated beliefs about airpower, and the US Air Force paid him to do it, though some of those more transfixed by the glory of airpower may have found his words hard to read, not because his arguments were complicated but they certainly created discomfort.

While Colin was an "academic" he was one that most military men found easy to speak to. General Rupert Smith cited Colin in glowing terms to me, and General James Mattis called him the "most near-faultless strategist alive today." It is my understanding that Colin and James Mattis met while Mattis was the US Secretary of Defence. Safe to say few academics had the credibility Colin Gray did, with men in uniform and few had his track record of being "inside the tent" when it came to working on real strategic problems, especially as concerns nuclear weapons and defence policy in general.

Annoyingly, in my opinion, Colin was never really aware of what he did well. He was quite capable of writing just one passage or paragraph that would create real clarity and insight. It wasn't his great academic work which helped those who read him improve their understanding. It was his simple utterances and books he regarded as less than his best works that made the real difference. *Another Bloody* Century has already been mentioned. *War, Peace, and International Relations* is another stellar work, as is his concept of "Strategic History" which is perhaps his greatest contribution to education and to the teaching of strategy,

but one he was completely and utterly unaware of until Dr. A.E. Stahl reminded him of it in a quite hilarious email exchange. If we were to suggest that Colin created, best articulated, or even coined "Strategic History", which he did, it was of little interest to him.

Given his track record and prominence, it was hardly surprising then, that when A.E. Stahl and I sat in a Tel Aviv café, back in 2010 and decided the world needed a publication to inform and educate about the true meaning of strategy, the first email to be written in that moment was to Colin Gray. We must have got something right, although we got pretty beaten up along the way as Colin applied the odd course correction.

The last time I met Colin he was clearly not well. He wasn't doing well physically but his brain was still like a steel trap. I don't know if I sensed I wouldn't see him again, but I found myself pressing him on three points.

Firstly, did he, like me, still default to Clausewitz as the source of reason and common sense when it came to war, warfare, and politics, thus strategy? –so "if not Clausewitz, then who?" – and be aware, I was highly dismissive of Clausewitz until I started reading Colin Gray. It is deeply ironic that those who take a more academic approach to the study of Clausewitz almost never cite the Prussian with a deep understanding of Clausewitz in terms of practical application.

Secondly, was Strategy still inherently about the consequences of violence for political purposes?

Thirdly and lastly, did he think there was an "operational level of war."

On the first two, we were in broad and violent agreement. On the last he said I was asking the wrong question. If soldiers found it helpful, then it had merit, but as Colin often said, strategy can only be done in and as tactics, and as Clausewitz opined, the "Many readers will no doubt consider it superfluous to make such a careful distinction between two things so closely related as tactics and strategy because they do not directly affect the conduct of operations."

It may take some time for Colin to be actually appreciated for what he did. I never encountered any part of him even slightly interested in self-promotion. He wrote what he thought needed to be written, and not what he thought would sell. Where he was controversial, he was for honest reasons, and reputation formed no part of it. He was not an iconoclast, but he was ruthless with the received wisdom that permeates our field of endeavor.

How best then, to remember Colin Gray? His author bio in most of his books merely reads, "Colin S. Gray is Professor of International Relations and Strategic Studies, University of Reading." Well, if you read those words printed in a book, it means you're reading Colin Gray. Good enough.

William 'Wilf' Owen
Editor, *Military Strategy Magazine*
April 2020

A Note From The Editor

Why 'Military Strategy'? Because, the word strategy has become meaningless in all functional sense. In terms of what *Infinity Journal* aimed to do, nearly a decade ago, in the winter of 2010, as in educate and inform practitioners in the use of force for political objectives, we have so far failed.

How so? In simple terms everyone who could blog became a "strategist" and everything became about strategy. Policy became strategy. Campaign planning became strategy. Ideas became strategy. There is even "strategic policy", as ludicrous as that may sound.

Strategy became whatever the strategist wished to define it as, and those unable to justify their definition accused *Infinity Journal* of "defining strategy" as we wished. As we often pointed out, we did not define strategy. Clausewitz did, and he merely used the accepted terms of the time, which were replicated in British doctrine from the mid-19th century and well into the 20th. To claim "things have changed" is laudable but currently unproven and evidence free. If things have changed, how come the old stuff works so well and so consistently?

Clausewitz himself pointed out that the dividing line between Strategy and Tactics was thin-to-meaningless. You cannot talk about one, without a sound understanding of the other. Colin Gray has stated that Strategy can only be done in and as tactics. With this in mind, the change of renaming our publication is aimed at holding any definition of strategy as the being inextricably linked with the consequences of military action. This is upsetting to many, because the requirement for practical knowledge and understanding of how armed forces work tramples the abstract complexities, which many wish to chew on, and the political opinions they wish to pump.

That is not say that epistemology and the origin of ideas is not a vital part of strategic theory, and theory is required, but the reason it is required is because it finds expression in practice.

It is thus no mistake that many of the articles in this first edition of *Military Strategy Magazine* are written by those who have been "hands on" with practitioners or policy makers for the majority of their careers, but let us be clear. Background is no guarantee of insight or quality. For example, we have rejected at least two articles written by very senior officers on the basis that they failed to provide the level of insight we require. Likewise, one of the most insightful articles we have ever published was by a twenty-something techno-dweeb that had one of the keenest strategic minds we have ever encountered.

Infinity Journal had always struggled to find articles. Our requirement that all articles undergo a double-blind peer-review process probably hasn't helped, because the perception of something being "online" as opposed to "printed and mailed" is that everyone's opinion is equal. It is not. Knowing stuff still counts. Knowing more than someone else is still an advantage, despite the sophistry and intellectual posing of knowing how much you don't know.

Regardless, welcome to the first edition of *Military Strategy Magazine* (henceforth, *Military Strategy*). Read it, tell others about it, or rub the printed edition all over your chest just to find out what it feels like. We don't care. We have never chased an audience. We just continue with our objective to educate and inform those who find us useful. The changes from *Infinity Journal* to *Military Strategy* adhere to that tradition.

William F. Owen
Editor, *Military Strategy Magazine*
April 2020

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Nuclear Strategy – A Tale of Consequence

Colin S. Gray - United Kingdom

About the author

Dr. Colin S. Gray was Emeritus Professor of Strategic Studies at the University of Reading, U.K. He also served in the Reagan Administration for five years and was an adviser for the British Government for many years.

Dr. Gray passed away in March 2020, after a very long battle with cancer.

Nuclear strategy

It is tempting, perhaps seductive even, to believe that the awful innovation of the nuclear weapon comprises the real authority in the concept and the physical reality under discussion here. However, in time this belief is near certain to be proved incorrect. It is even possible that weapons development has attained an ironic near perfection of form, or at least effectively such, in the widening gyre of nuclear weapons seemingly of all dimensions and many specialized purposes; at least if we take as authoritative what the Russians are telling both themselves and us these days. Without necessarily doubting Russian sincerity about their technical military-nuclear prowess, however, there is ample ground for doubt concerning the strategic sense in the past decade of Vladimir Putin's apparently nuclear-

bent military achievements. The beginning of wisdom for us needs to be an urgent return to theoretical, conceptual basics. In the rather dubious team-like twinning of nuclear and strategy, it is really important not to allow oneself to become confused as to the relative significance of the noun and the adjective. It may well be that the nuclear weapon is certain to remain a permanent menace to the human race and our whole adventure in statecraft and its ancillary strategy, but I find such an attitude to be historically less than satisfying, true though it would appear to be from our current, but necessarily temporally limited perspective. I am not, at least not quite, saying that given time even the great nuclear revolution of the Twentieth Century will age into irrelevance, though I suspect it will be found less helpful in the future than it was for the half century following World War II. The principal reason why this is likely to be so will be readily locatable in what functions as the 'bible' of our subject, if, for once, in this instance I may be excused the exceptional irreverence in this instance. It is advisable, indeed necessary to turn to the pages of *On War* (of course), somewhat aware of the apparently permanent truth in Clausewitz. Also, we should be ready enough to understand and by and large accept reasonable evidence-based argument covering the whole unduly exciting passage of modern statecraft and strategy since his death in 1831.[i] The dominant argument in *On War* is to the effect that war must always be about politics. When this condition appears not to be authoritative, the use of force must be about some other condition or quality, though even that will likely have political meaning. Clausewitz theorized both about very great warfare and also small. We cannot know what sense, if any, he would have made of nuclear weapons for strategy, but he bequeathed the skeleton, at least, of one which remains relevant even for today. By far the most important argument in *On War* holds, then as now, that political purpose must always strive hard to control events. [ii] The great Prussian understood all too well that war and its warfare is an uncertain enterprise, and he witnessed and survived the appalling phenomenon of war as a gamble that may not pay out as it might.[iii] Indeed almost certainly he would have endorsed the characterization of war as chaos, the preferred 'call sign' of the outstanding U.S. Marines' general, James Mattis. It shouldn't have escaped the notice of readers of these pages of *Military Strategy* that our core topic here, nuclear strategy, is likely to prove notably unfriendly to the idea that warfare is a gamble. Nuclear warfare could be a product of policy error and prove to approximate more closely Jim Mattis' understanding of 'chaos,' than any recognizable semblance of an orderly plan. It is necessary to mention that even where orderly and apparently well prosecuted military plans are carried into action, war seems to have multiple ways to avoid discipline. Is it likely, we certainly should ask, that actual warfare with nuclear weapons would prove a different story to the entire grim machine of known history? – I suspect not, rather do I suspect that nuclear warfare today would resemble a larger and more consequential narrative than we have more than adequate grounds to suspect would be the most probable

case, were any of us to survive such a catastrophe. However, all may not be lost, despite serious grounds for occasional doubt to the contrary.

Strategic Common Sense

We need never to forget that the true meaning of strategy is consequence.[iv] Nuclear strategy is all about the consequences of tactical and operational choice with respect to the threat or use of nuclear weapons. Excellent seeming theoretical reasoning is critically and rather desperately short of empirical support. What, after all, do we really know about the military value of nuclear weapons as enforcers of political choices? Fundamentally, what do we think we know about both the threat and the actual use in war of these weapons? We may be tempted by the attractive promise of what could be understood, not unreasonably, as a pre-emptive surrender of strategy and statecraft by an adversary polity. However, we could not reasonably anticipate such a rational, almost moral, collapse on the part of an enemy. The political pressure to stand firm, at least briefly perhaps, would, very much sooner than later, fuel argument for holding the line and the like. Although the war machinery of a nuclear armed state will be the product of thousands, decisions to fight, or not, will always be the product of a very small number of people. Nineteenth Century Europe invented the practice of defense preparation in peacetime for the occasion of war. This phenomenon we have come to accept simply as strategic commonsense – we will be ready contingently for whatever security hazards erupt in the near future. This simply is prudent. All too easily understood, of course, we pay a price that could prove heavy indeed, in defense readiness. Prudent defense preparation might, quite easily, though inadvertently, assume a menacing character in the understanding of other states, with consequences in political choice that could be seriously adverse for the security of all interested parties, including ourselves.

Nuclear strategy in common with all strategy, is the result of notably human intentions and personal choice. Given the devastating consequences that must follow from the use of nuclear weapons, it is unlikely that unilateral advantage could be secured from their use. Probably, the politically more relevant question pertains to the sheer nerve of policymakers and strategists. Even if we were persuaded that a war might be won, which is to say conducted to a point where significant political advantage would be gained, the nuclear element in the judgment must dampen confidence in any conclusions as to policy. Of course, we could not turn to strategic commonsense for prudent guidance in such a situation, because intelligent statecraft ought not to have been in the dire condition that it was, repeatedly, in the truly dreadful Twentieth Century, now mercifully concluded. Arguably it is somewhat ironic that our nuclear evil is the product of a danger in scientific discovery and exploitation about which we did not know, indeed truly could not have

known. Though with mobilization and readiness times suitably adjusted, readers of this journal must notice that even though some flexibility in the mobilization, subsequent deployment and indeed use of nuclear forces on both sides is highly likely in principle, in practice nuclear crisis and war itself might well resemble 1914 rather closely. It may be prudent and just possibly militarily sensible to wage nuclear warfare only slowly and at a relatively low level of explosive possibility, but we cannot ignore the vital matter of critical context. Austro-Hungary, vitally assisted by Russian folly, created what became the near 'perfect storm' for statecraft that was Summer 1914.[v] Appalling though that certainly transpired to be, at least to become, it pales into near insignificance when it is compared with the possible, indeed probable, consequences of a truly strategic political crisis in the present or the future. Is there a modest seeming city in Eastern Europe, on the Baltic flank of NATO, just waiting to have its very own Sarajevo moment?[vi]

So, What Do We Do?

Over the course of the past decade the geophysically much reduced Russia of Vladimir Putin has sought some compensation in very high-end technology for the embarrassingly shrunken national geography and size of population. Of particular interest is the achievement of notable military success in ways that should help remarkably the vulnerability that was felt as a consequence of the great territorial and populous shrinkage effected under Mikhail Gorbachev.

It is no exaggeration to argue that contemporary Russia has enhanced greatly its military attachment to nuclear weapons. These have been accepted by the Russian military on a scale and with an apparent enthusiasm entirely alien to NATO. On the shallow evidence of words uttered, exercises conducted, and deployments apparently sometimes mobilized, the Russian armed forces of today and tomorrow are preparing for, indeed anticipating virtually all military activity to be conducted in an actively nuclear environment. Rather ironically, this shift towards nuclear dependency may well largely be the regretted consequence of a process of internationally competitive and generally technically successful arms procurement.

In an endeavour to prove some relevant, credible, and feasible answer to the fundamental question posed as the title for this section, I have selected seven items of political, indeed strategic, advice to take from this analysis. These are selected and chosen admittedly very much from a NATO perspective looking East. I have chosen these magnificent seven nuggets of political and indeed strategic advice according to the dominant need for depth and breadth of analysis.

1. Nuclear strategy must be considered a political subject to an even greater degree than is required of strategy in

all other contexts. Especially in regard to prospective nuclear matters, it is likely that the issue of political meaning may fall by the wayside and be all but lost to the force of relatively unfamiliar perils. It would be essentially important not to allow reasonable nuclear anxiety to overwhelm otherwise sensible policy and its politics.

2. It will be essential that Putin (indeed any Russian leader, or group) should be denied any credible sense of victory, political or strategic. There is plenty in Russian culture of both recent or distant vintage that feeds on our hopes that the partial Russian revival under the guise of a new surrogate Czar would be moved by self-interest to generosity in the course and particularly the consequences of nuclear happenings. Bearing in mind the dangers of some negligence, it will be necessary for a NATO still 'in the field' able and willing to resist, strategically to deny Moscow the policy and to be careful to deny Russia the conviction she actually had 'won' in actual warfare.

3. Russia's opponents (i.e. NATO) should be restrained in their public political enthusiasm for peace. Adaptively this could prove a 'killer' element in a likely weapon, and use control agreement that might have some political traction for a possible settlement. The toxic combination of popular democracy and nuclear menace expressed in provocative style do not comprise a combination in which any confidence could be placed; it would not constitute a promising opening for a textbook on statecraft and strategy, let alone strategy and diplomacy.

4. The conduct of conventional warfare, local or general in character must not be so executed as to come to risk compromising the mission integrity of so-called strategic forces. Probably above all else it is essential that neither Russia nor anyone else attains a truly competitive position in active warfare that could well tempt a bid for genuine nuclear dominance. The evident contemporary Russian enthusiasm for nuclear escalation in the event of conventional setback should be brutally and convincingly rebuffed unarguably, both by the deployment of suitably relatively low-yield weapons and also by convincing doctrinal argument about the mission integrity of strategic forces.

5. Nuclear operations against Russia in time of war ought to be conducted with great care to avoid needless intrusion into Chinese space, politically understood. It has to be expected that a nuclear exchange (or two) between Russia and NATO could hardly help but alarm Beijing, assuming, of course, that they had not secretly pre-arranged the military episode(s) at issue. A temptation to deal with the Chinese nuclear menace under the cover provided by a nuclear war with Russia that begins in Europe, should be prudently resisted as

needlessly dangerous in a context that already might be more perilous than any of our politicians and soldiers have ever confronted before.

6. As Imperial Germany demonstrated quite conclusively in 1918, it can be exceptionally difficult to hold public opinion resolute in the face of obvious and undeniable setbacks (e.g. defeated soldiers returning home). It would be unusually challenging to endeavour to persuade the wartime public (such as survive the initial round!) that any political outcome whatever would be advantageous when contrasted with a political settlement of almost any other character. Apparently robust domestic opinion may not be resilient in the face of severe and unanticipated military setbacks. It is hard even to imagine what a 'good news' story about nuclear war would look like!

7. In the design and prospectively the execution of NATO's nuclear policy and strategy it is truly vital to remember the deep, indeed the truly cultural attachment of Russians to the concept, as well as the reality of national physical geography. Modern Russia exists, and has survived because of this geography. No other polity has a geopolitical history at all like the Russian. While there is great strength in this geography, there is also potentially considerable vulnerability that NATO could and should plan to exploit in a case of severe strategic necessity.

Conclusion

If truth be told, as it must be here, no-one knows how to conduct a nuclear war, prudently or otherwise. It is probably not helpful to remind readers that when von Trupp reached the Marne in 1914, and indeed even when Rommel crossed the Meuse at Sedan on April 12-13, 1940, they did not and could not know whither the dynamics of war would take them. What matters above all else is that we all, especially our military planners, never forget that a decision to wage war is ALWAYS A GAMBLE and the historical record does not demonstrate that bold decisions for war initiation typically are rewarded with conspicuous success.[vii]

The hazards of nuclear strategy are too obvious to require emphasis; but a few facts of international strategic life do need recognition. It is important for the United States to be able to determine more closely the kind of strategic crimes that could be perpetrated. Ideas are needed for conceptual guidance in nuclear targeting; no matter how disagreeable

this may be, there really is no responsible alternative. If a nuclear war has to be waged, its conduct must be led by intelligent choices. Virtually no matter what the strategic circumstances would be, it is hard to imagine a context wherein American targeting choice would not matter. At the very least the United States must always be better served by purposeful targeting preferences rather than apparently near random strikes. Even if we are pessimistic about the relative value of the outcome, it should always be worth trying to secure an improved result.

Formidably challenging though the problems of nuclear strategy certainly are, there is at least one approach to the difficulties raised by nuclear strategy that can help us significantly if we employ it ruthlessly. I suggest that the whole complex subject of nuclear strategy should be organized in our minds, plans, and even our action, as a three-part problem. We can, and ought, to reduce nuclear strategy quite rigorously, to a 3-part problem or challenge and we need to exercise a conceptual discipline in order to deny the truly awesome physical possibilities undue authority over our thought and behaviour. Both at its core and in its core nuclear strategy comprises but three conceptually imperial ideas: war prevention, military action, and – most potently of all – consequences. These three contexts, pre-war, wartime, and post-war, capture the entirety of our subject.

It should come as no surprise for us to appreciate the third subject category, pertaining to the consequences of nuclear warfare, is the one of most important consequence. The consequential context of nuclear war would be extremely likely to dwarf in its significance the behaviour conducted both before and during a nuclear war. Probably it is valid to claim that thought and action about the possible, indeed the probable, context of actual nuclear warfare has nearly always focussed very understandably upon the challenge of war prevention, scarcely at all upon the difficulties near certain to follow as a consequence of actual nuclear use.

My suggestion in this article simultaneously to reduce our focus of concern to just three, war prevention, nuclear warfare itself, and post-war consequences, should encourage interest in the high, even supreme, importance of what I choose to consider the context of (future) consequences. The insistence here upon recognition of the conceptual, indeed the temporal also, unity of the subject of nuclear strategy should help people realize that (nuclear) crisis, warfare, and aftermath truly comprise a subject with a single, nuclear, narrative.

References

[i] Carl von Clausewitz, On War, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ Princeton University Press, 1976), especially p.81.

[ii] Ibid. That war of any kind must be regarded as an event pregnant with political meaning, was the core belief that underpinned, indeed provided, the meaning, to all the phenomena of which Clausewitz wrote.

[iii] The idea that war is really a gamble has failed to attract the attention it merits.

[iv] This idea is advanced and explored in my Theory of Strategy, (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 61-4).

[v] See Lukas Milevski, The West's East: Contemporary Baltic Defense in Strategic Perspective (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[vi] For an exceptionally fine study of the principal military events of 1914 and then of the campaign consequential from it, see Holger H. Herwig, The Marne 1914: The Opening of World War I and the Battle that Changed the World (New York: Random House, 2009).

[vii] For two excellent recent, albeit very different studies of the US challenge regarding nuclear weapons, see US Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Nuclear Posture Review, February 2018 (Washington, DC, USGPO, 2018); and Matthew Kroenig, The Logic of American Nuclear Strategy: Why Strategic Superiority Matters (Oxford University Press, 2018).

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The Problem of Stability: Military Strategy in a Non-Newtonian Universe

Antulio J. Echevarria II - U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA

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About the author

Professor Antulio J. Echevarria II is currently the Editor-in-Chief of the US Army War College Press, which includes Parameters. He is a graduate of the US Military Academy, the US Army Command and General Staff College, and the US Army War College. He holds a doctorate in modern history from Princeton University, and is the author of five books, including *After Clausewitz* (Kansas 2001), *Imagining Future War* (2007), *Clausewitz and Contemporary War* (Oxford 2007), *Reconsidering the American Way of War* (Georgetown 2014), and *Military Strategy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford 2017), *The Supreme Question: The American Way of Thinking about War from Alfred Thayer Mahan to John Warden* (Cambridge UP, forthcoming), as well as nearly one hundred articles and monographs on strategic thinking, military theory, and military history. He completed a NATO Fulbright Fellowship in 2000-2001 and was Visiting Research Fellow at Oxford University in 2011-12; he formerly held the US Army War College Elihu Root Chair of Military Studies.

The study of military strategy has expanded enormously in recent years. As a field, however, it has yet to revise one of its principal assumptions—that the nature of the environment in which it must operate is naturally stable. To be sure, much of today's strategic literature acknowledges the complexity of the contemporary world, along with its presumed volatility, ambiguity, and uncertainty. Yet this literature shows little evidence of having addressed the implications of that acknowledgement seriously. In short, it is paying lip service to what it claims are pervasive conditions but without modifying the way it approaches strategic problems. One critical reason for this failure is the general and seemingly persistent assumption the universe is essentially stable, or Newtonian, in nature, meaning that periods of instability are the exceptions rather than the rule and that we can, therefore, reasonably expect to impose order over chaos. The sciences of chaos and complexity, which became popular in the late 1980s and 1990s, have something different to say about that assumption. Beyond equipping the military strategist with new phraseology, these sciences suggest that instability, rather than stability, is the state of nature. This article explores the implications of that assumption.

I

Perhaps the salient example of stability in strategic thinking came during the Cold War, when the West's policymakers and military strategists devoted themselves to creating a stable strategic relationship with the Soviet Union. Strategic stability, not victory, was the goal of such prominent nuclear strategists as Bernard Brodie, Thomas Schelling, Albert Wohlstetter, and Herman Kahn, even if that stability might amount to a "balance of terror."[i] Concepts such as counterforce, countervalue, and mutual agreed assured destruction (MAAD)—however ironic or darkly amusing they might seem today—contributed to maintaining nuclear deterrence, and thus to strategic stability. The limited war theories of Robert Osgood and Henry Kissinger pursued a similar objective, that of preserving strategic stability by establishing a regime of conventions and norms by which hostile parties could wage armed conflict below the threshold of general war.[ii] The essential element in both nuclear strategy as well as limited war theory was that all parties would consent, either tacitly or explicitly, to avoiding actions that would suddenly and radically destabilize the global balance of power.

It is hardly surprising that the thinking of Brodie and his contemporaries should have centered on achieving and maintaining stability. Aside from its practical desirability, stability in the Newtonian sense went hand in hand with the educational experience of each of these Cold War theorists. For instance, a survey of physics textbooks published between 1910 and 1949, the formative educational years for Brodie and his colleagues, shows only 10% (2 of 19) mentioned nonlinearity, and neither addressed it in any

depth.[iii] The Newtonian model upholds equilibrium and stability as the state of nature; his classic laws of motion presuppose linear relationships and proportional causes and effects.[iv] The idea of a "clockwork universe," long associated with Newton, did not originate with him; rather it represented the collective perspectives of medieval and Renaissance thinkers who saw the universe as an intricately balanced and purposefully functioning mechanism, and who accordingly sought to discover its underlying laws.[v] Political philosophers from Plato to Jean Bodin associated stability with the natural order of things; Machiavelli's *The Prince* did not so much challenge that order as redefine it in realistic, perhaps cynical terms.[vi] The Hegelian dialectic—in which an idea and its contradiction interact in a manner that elevates elements of both to a higher plane—rendered dissention in reassuringly linear and thus progressive terms. Similarly, dialectical materialism portrayed class struggle and revolution as ways to arrive at a more equitable distribution of wealth, and thereby a more stable society. Likewise, modern liberalism accepted periods of instability as necessary for the ultimate stability that would come with the education, and eventual enlightenment, of one's citizenry. By the twentieth century, therefore, linearity and stability had become foundational, both in positive and negative respects, to Western thinking. All this is not to say instability was not acknowledged; only that it was treated as an impermanent disruption of the natural order, a necessary evil.

Since the late 1980s, however, awareness of the nonlinear aspects of the universe has become increasingly widespread. Popular works such as *Chaos* by James Gleick and *Complexity* by M. Mitchell Waldrop made the theories of chaos and complexity accessible to the general public, albeit in adulterated form.[vii] The core concepts of these theories, or simplified versions of them, and their associated terms, such as "complex adaptive systems," self-organization, nonlinearity, and emergent behaviors migrated into many disciplines, including the study of military strategy. Parties engaged in armed conflict were likened to complex adaptive systems because they could adjust to, and attempt to counter, each other's strategies. Some researchers went so far to describe war and warfare as complex adaptive systems because they continually transformed with the addition of new parties, as well as changing aims, weapons, and techniques.[viii] Armed conflict was described not just as a social activity in the Clausewitzian sense but as a self-modifying, living thing. War, many experts asserted, could not be understood, or theorized about, as a linear activity with logical branches and sequels. It had to be approached, as Carl von Clausewitz had attempted to do centuries ago, as a nonlinear phenomenon because it defied the rules of "proportionality" (whereby system inputs equal system outputs) and "additivity" (whereby the whole equals the sum of the parts) in addition to other characteristics of linear systems.[ix]

For many practitioners, the popularization of the sciences

of chaos and complexity vindicated Clausewitz's principal theories of war, particularly the concepts of friction and uncertainty. As the late Sir Michael Howard, veteran of the Second World War, once said in a conference setting, the key point he wanted to get across to policymakers and strategists with respect to Clausewitz's ideas was the debilitating influence of friction in war.[x] Others, military practitioners especially, saw in the theories of chaos and complexity revolutionary approaches to explaining the nonlinear aspects of armed conflict and sought to introduce the core concepts of these emerging sciences into professional military education.[xi] Claims that these theories amounted to another scientific revolution were exaggerated, however, because concepts such as nonlinearity were hardly unknown. They were as old as science itself. But nonlinear equations were difficult to solve; ergo, scientists tended to concentrate on those equations they could solve. The advent of the microchip, and its seemingly ever-increasing speed and processing power, made it progressively easier to tackle nonlinear equations.

II

To be sure, referring to chaos, complexity, and nonlinearity became fashionable in the late twentieth century. Nonetheless, when examined more closely, these sciences offer more than just catchwords to compliment the theories of a long-dead, nineteenth-century military philosopher. They assist us in describing that part of the universe that does not submit to the equilibrium-based laws of the Newtonian universe, the laws of proportionality and additivity.[xii] They shed light, in other words, on the non-Newtonian universe, a world that is just as old as, and coexists alongside, the clockwork universe ascribed (albeit loosely) to Newton and his predecessors. Importantly, in the non-Newtonian universe, instability, rather than stability, is the state of nature. Furthermore, instability is also more desirable than stability because dynamic, stressful environments can push organisms to the "edge of chaos," so to speak, where they may well reach their highest levels of creativity and productivity. Beyond that edge, however, creativity and productivity can decline rapidly.

Equally importantly, the non-Newtonian universe is much larger than its Newtonian counterpart. As mathematicians and other scientists have noted, most of the causal relationships in the physical world cannot be captured by linear equations. According to one mathematician, referring to natural phenomena as nonlinear is like defining most of the animal kingdom as "'non-elephant animals.'"[xiii] Indeed, we encounter nonlinear situations more often in our everyday lives than linear situations. But we "swag" our ways through them. Put differently, both the Newtonian and non-Newtonian models represent physically real portions of the universe, though these portions are not equal in scope. The issue, moreover, is not whether the laws of physics can be applied to political, social, religious, or economic affairs. Rather, the issue is one of assumptions: how we expect the world to behave, which is in turn the product of a constellation of assumptions about the nature of the universe.

If instability can be found more readily throughout the universe than stability, then the popularization of the nonlinear sciences must also expose much of Western thinking as too narrow for most of history. As shown earlier, the assumption that peace and stability represented the natural state of the universe underpinned much of the West's intellectual and cultural development. Admittedly, peace is a much more desirable state than conflict and war, which Western values portray as unnatural and disruptive of the state of nature. Nevertheless, if conflict is in some way inseparable from the state of nature, then Western society's foundational political philosophies and theories are not so much invalid as they are irrelevant to that portion of the world in which humanity conducts its affairs.

In a similar vein, the major implication for military strategy, as for strategy in general, is that expectations based on stability may run counter to the state of nature and, therefore, be unwarranted and unsustainable—at least within acceptable cost thresholds. This implication does not mean our expectations cannot be realized; only that, as a rule, they might cost more than they are worth. Every trained strategist understands strategy is easy to grasp in theory, but difficult to carry out in practice. Perhaps the principal reason that axiom is true is we have developed strategies appropriate for one universe, but we attempt to apply them to another, much larger one that is governed by more complex laws. Too often, for instance, political objectives are considered feckless unless they aim at achieving a long-term, durable peace. Yet such ends speak to the smaller of the two Newtonian universes, the one in which stability and equilibrium characterize the state of nature. Compounding the problem, however, is that any goal that falls short of achieving a durable peace can appear to be adventurous and unworthy of putting lives and treasure at risk. One of the problems in contemporary war, after all, is trying to decide how much to spend for unworthy goals. We are in some respects in an era of "post-heroic warfare."[xiv]

To illustrate this point with a counterexample—during the Cold War, the West's policymakers and strategists got lucky. Their strategic concepts, and indeed their general understanding of war, assumed stability could be achieved. This was an assumption that, as we have seen, applied only to a small portion of the physical universe. The Cold War strategists succeeded, nevertheless; nuclear war was averted. However, their success owed much to the fact that the Soviets also had nothing to gain from initiating a nuclear war and hence wished to avoid one.[xv] The USSR was a cooperative enemy, in other words, despite having been incompatible with the West ideologically. Its tacit and explicit cooperation in a series of nuclear arms agreements

created a space in which stability could develop, even when evidence of instability - "brushfire wars," revolutions, coups, and other crises - abounded. That space was small, indeed, compared to the larger one in which instability reigned, and it required the active cooperation of both parties to sustain it. Unfortunately, the West has few such cooperative enemies now.

Conclusions

Although the terminologies associated with complexity, chaos, and nonlinearity have become common in defense literature, the full implication of the theories behind these terms has not been examined. In a non-Newtonian universe, equilibrium, stability, and linearity are not representative of the state of nature. Therefore, military strategies (and grand strategies) based on Newtonian assumptions about the state of nature are less likely to succeed. In short, we run the very real risk of asking those strategies to accomplish too much, such as attempting to achieve long-term, durable objectives in volatile and ill-defined environments, to impose order on endemically chaotic situations, or to establish ways and means irrespective of possible, if undesirable, emergent behaviors on the part of an ostensibly neutral populace.

As both Nicholas Copernicus and Clausewitz realized, any major theory must demonstrate that it accords with the nature of the universe to which it is intended to apply.[xvi] But as we grapple with the implications of crafting and executing military strategy in a non-Newtonian universe, we must be prepared to address several important questions. Can we train military strategists to account for nonlinearity and uncertainty beyond the obvious technique of adding more resources? How will such strategies be "sold" to a public that will likely continue to think of stability as the only state of nature? Will algorithm-driven analytics help reduce the size of the non-Newtonian universe? What are the risks of attempting to do so? Will artificial intelligence increase or decrease uncertainty in the non-Newtonian universe?

Today, Western defense policy tends to drive strategy toward accomplishing the most in terms of political objectives with the least amount of resources. It is unreasonable to expect that to change—at least until the general assumption about the naturalness of stability yields to the equally defensible assumption that instability is also natural. This kind of intellectual and cultural reorientation will take time. For that reason, enterprising strategic thinkers ought to begin campaigning for just such a reorientation now.

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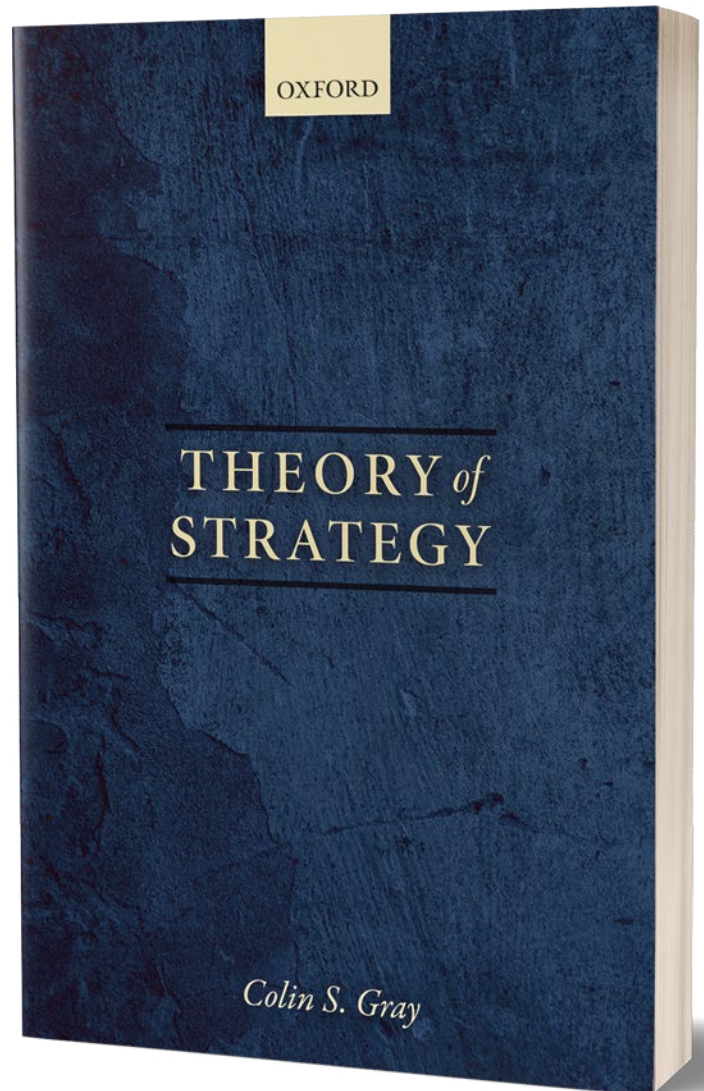
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Enunciating Strategy: How to Talk about Strategy Effectively

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Lukas Milevski is assistant professor at Leiden University, where he teaches strategy at the BA International Studies and MA International Relations programs. He has published two books with Oxford University Press: *The Evolution of Modern Grand Strategic Thought* (2016) and *The West's East: Contemporary Baltic Defense in Strategic Perspective* (2018).

Targeted killing, annihilation, and freedom—one commonality among these three is that each has been used to describe a strategy when appended the formulation 'strategy of'. Yet strategically this is in fact their only commonality, as otherwise they describe wholly different phenomena. Targeted killing is an operational method, annihilation is an effect to be gained through operations, and freedom is a potential desired political end goal of strategy. Why then was each combined with the 'strategy of' formulation? The latter was first uttered by George W. Bush at the Royal United Services Institute in London on 19 November 2003 and was subsequently picked up by scholars. Although Bush may perhaps be excused for the sloppy wording, overuse of a single formulation for describing strategy is indicative of the incompleteness of the strategic lexicon for thought and for theory, meant to be an aid to practice.

As the British maritime strategist Julian Corbett once

noted, in strategy "every man concerned must have been trained to think in the same plane; the chief's order must awake in every brain the same process of thought; his words must have the same meaning for all."[i] When a single linguistic formulation can describe such various phenomena as targeted killing, annihilation, and freedom, Corbett's communicative ideal is breached and it becomes impossible to anticipate what manner of phenomenon will follow. The attainment or failure of this communicative ideal within theory is unlikely to translate into success or failure in and at war. Nonetheless, it may be significant for the future development of strategic studies as a field. As Giovanni Sartori noted in arguing for a basic vocabulary of social science,

> We should not confuse the dynamics of *language* with the dynamics of *science*. Let us assume that a science has developed its vocabulary to a point at which its stabilization—not its eternal immobility—is taken for granted ... In such cases we see that the stabilization of the basic vocabulary has not obstructed, but indeed has favored, scientific growth ... By contrast, we social scientists invest more and more of our energies simply in *altering the cards*. If so, we are furthering not science, but sheer confusion. We are dismantling, rather than rebuilding, whatever cumulative or additive knowledge we have attained.[ii]

The inability to meet Corbett's communicative ideal even in theory suggests that strategic studies has yet to reach the growth phase which a relatively common basic vocabulary may underpin.

This article therefore proposes a set of formulations for strategy, each of which separately describes one particular facet of strategy, but which in aggregate may describe the fundamental whole of strategy. The article starts with three formulations for each part of the tripartite ends, ways, means (EWM) model of strategy. It then goes beyond that model to consider strategic effect, assumptions, conditions, political rationales, agents, allies, the enemy, time, and geography. Cross-referencing among these facets is inevitable because each forms a fundamental aspect of strategy.

Strategy of (ways)

The most common formulation, 'strategy of', is most suitable for describing strategy's ways, its most engaging element, which concerns action. What should the strategist do, how should he do it? In a certain perspective, which some consider to be its core element, strategy is way finding. That is, strategy is equivalent to ways, tactics to means, and policy to ends. Strategy thus comprises only one-third of the EWM model. Others take a broader perspective, that strategy is the full set of relationships among ends, ways, and means, rather than just one corner of that tripartite structure.

The perspective of strategy as wayfinding, whether as the only component of strategy or merely its most engaging, focuses on how to apply one's power effectively enough to overcome the enemy. Effectiveness is the first priority, for effectiveness leads to success. Only after effectiveness has been assured or achieved can the strategist begin thinking in terms of efficiency, or of conserving power while still achieving the same end result.

Effectiveness highlights the question of mutual adversarial interaction, one of the major sources of non-linearity in war. It is one of the sources of Edward Luttwak's paradoxical logic of war, embodied in the truism that a way which worked yesterday may not work today precisely because it worked yesterday and therefore the enemy will be on guard against it.[iii] Clausewitz also recognized this non-linearity in his wondrous trinity. One of the fundamental trinitarian forces upon war is "the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam". This is wayfinding, it is operational art, and Clausewitz associated it primarily with the commander and his army.[iv]

Within adversarial interaction, ways are the operational methods to which strategists resort when engaging their opponent. One may think of Soviet Deep Operations, or American AirLand Battle. Targeted killing is a way, whereas annihilation, for example, is not. Annihilation is an effect, something which is not (wholly) under the control of the strategist but is dependent upon the pattern of mutual adversarial interaction. Ways are therefore the primary purview and competence of military professionals, albeit necessarily overseen by politicians whose political perspective is the ultimate reason for and purpose of strategy.

Strategy with (means)

Beyond 'strategy of', the lexicon swiftly dries up. To discuss means, the formulation 'strategy with' is proposed. Means is perhaps the most controversial element of the EWM model of strategy. Clausewitz identified battle as the fundamental means of war and strategy: "fighting is the only possible means."[v] Strict neo-Clausewitzians follow this exactly, while others diverge. Arthur Lykke, the author of the popular EWM model, instead identified military resources. "*Means* refers to the military resources (manpower, materiel, money, forces, logistics, and so forth) required to accomplish the mission [defined as the military objective]."[vi] A useful compromise may be to think about means in terms of power—land power, sea power, air power, etc.

These distinctions matter. If means are tactics, then the strategist is not just a wayfinder but also probably in command of the battle itself, especially in Clausewitz's original context. Yet if means are the resources alone, the strategist does not necessarily have any authority over their

development. Raoul Castex, an interwar French naval and strategic theorist, commented upon the distinction between the development of resources and their use: "Properly speaking, preparations of this sort constitute naval policy, and their realm borders that of policy as a whole".[vii] Policy rather than strategy generates the resources, however influenced by strategic considerations policy may be. The danger of emphasizing resources, or to a lesser extent even power, as means is that the vital role of battle in strategy may be forgotten.

Nonetheless, there are also advantages to designating something other than battle as strategy's means. One of the key problems of strategy is the question of predictability: "Without believing in some measure of predictability, one cannot believe in strategic calculation."[viii] From this perspective identifying battle as the means is ill-suited, as all battles and their effects are not equal. This makes the strategist's necessity of anticipation much more difficult than it perhaps needs to be. Even Clausewitz recognized this when he refers to the "dubious fortune of battle."[ix] Yet resources are similarly ill-suited as means. This designation encourages lazy thinking, as if resources cause the effect, rather than what is done with them. Power, by contrast, occupies a middle ground between resources and battle. It is more than mere resources, for a power perspective must also encompass how those resources are combined and used through organization, training, doctrine, etc, all the way to tactics in and out of battle. Resources, power, and battle all occupy a single spectrum on which power occupies a flexible midpoint. Variations among types of power, whether land, sea, air, etc, reflect certain fundamental physical realities about how these forms of power interact and achieve effect. This allows a greater degree of predictability in theory without straining theory's relevance to reality.[x]

Strategy for (ends)

Strategic ends require their own formulation: 'strategy for' what purpose(s)? What is the strategist trying to change (or prevent from being changed) by going to war? Strategy's ends cannot be mere military objectives. Rather, the ends are the governing political goals. The idea of strategic ends has come under criticism in recent years: "'ends' don't really end".[xi] Or, as Everett Dolman has argued, "[t]he strategist can never finish the business of strategy, and understands that there is no permanence in victory—or in defeat."[xii]

Yet this is a misunderstanding of strategy, at least in a classical sense. Classically, strategy must end because it is inherently tied to war, which itself is an extraordinary state of affairs between or among belligerents who are seeking to impose their individual or collective wills upon their enemies. The violent use of military power to achieve political goals is not normal politics, but rather the recourse to which politicians resort once they believe that normal political ways and means will not achieve their desired

goals. Once the strategist successfully imposes the will of his political master, strategy ends. From a certain point of view, the whole purpose of strategy is to create a situation through use of force in which that use of force is no longer necessary. Strategy successfully practiced is inherently self-terminating because it brings about a condition in which it is no longer necessary. Politics continues forever, of course, which may in the future lead to a new necessity for strategy. Strategy will forever be relevant but will not always be actively practiced.[xiii]

'Strategy for' also encompasses the second great element of non-linearity in strategy, the currency conversion between the unlike phenomena of military force and political consequence, especially in the form of the enemy's revised behavior. Some political consequences are more linear than others; it is far easier to occupy a territory, an act which has political meaning, than it is to convince individuals or groups to change their behavior. The triangular EWM model is a somewhat nebulous triangle, specifically because there is no necessarily linear path from ways and means to the ends sought.

Strategy to (effect)

Although the tripartite EWM model has been elucidated, there are other aspects of strategy which require lexical clarification. Of these, the first is strategic effect, or the effect that the strategist wishes to achieve through the use of force. This concept is distinct from the ends to be sought. Ends, as noted, are non-linear because they fundamentally differ from military means. Effects, however, should be directly achievable through military operations even within the context of adversarial interaction and the enemy's perceptions and decision-making. Effects result from effective ways employing particular forms of power. Annihilation, one of the most popular examples of 'strategy of', is actually an effect. One does not have a strategy of annihilation, but rather a 'strategy to' annihilate the enemy. The distinction is vital as it relates to the limits of tactical and strategic agency in war; i.e. what is in the strategist's power to achieve against resistance versus what is primarily contingent upon enemy action or decision-making. Control is another effect which one may achieve through direct use of military force, by constraining the enemy's freedom of realistic action, even if the decision to take unrealistic action still resides with the opponent.

In a certain sense, effects may be the missing step in the nebulous triangle of EWM between ways and means on one side and ends on the other. This is not to say that the concept of strategic effect can transform the non-linear currency conversion, which is at the heart of strategy, into a linear and easily achievable process, but rather that it forces the strategist to consider the appropriateness of the effect desired in light of the ends sought. Why should annihilation, for example, compel the enemy to end his

resistance? What does annihilation enable the strategist to do unto his opponent such that the choice to come to terms is more reasonable? Such are the questions which strategists need to ask of their desired effects.

Ways and effects are intimately tied together: effects are the results of effective ways. Yet they are not interchangeable because effects, unlike ways, are ultimately conditional, based on adversarial interaction. One cannot characterize a strategy in advance by desired effect the way that one can describe a strategy by its operational ways. A strategist may choose to employ what is recognizably AirLand Battle without the performance actually being good enough relative to the enemy to produce the desired effect. History is replete with examples where generals sought annihilation, only for it not to be tactically possible or politically sufficient to bring the practice of strategy to a successful close.[xiv]

A special word is required here about deterrence, for it sits uneasily apart from this ends/effects distinction. Deterrence cannot be an end by default, as successful deterrence must be maintained for as long as the would-be deteree remains a security threat. Deterrence is an effect. However, one cannot deter. 'To deter' is grammatically correct but strategically incorrect; the choice to be deterred is made solely by the enemy in a way that it is not with regard to effects such as annihilation, which can be imposed on the enemy through successful tactical and operational performance. Deterrence is therefore a conceptual outlier.

Strategy supposing (assumptions)

Every strategy is underpinned by assumptions, a fact which is obvious when enunciated but which otherwise often passes without much comment. Some assumptions may be generic, about the overall utility of force or more specifically of certain types of force, or about the enemy, or oneself, or the context, etc. Often these assumptions are a result of cognitive biases. They affect strategy at every stage, from the political direction to the tactics, even to the design of weapons and equipment.[xv]

Because of their origins in cognitive biases, assumptions are generally not malleable. Although military professionals may be taught to identify their own assumptions in the context of military planning, the same is not true of their political masters who choose to employ strategy to achieve their goals. The result is that many of the most damaging assumptions in recent Western strategic performance have largely derived primarily from the political sphere, although one should note that Western militaries are responsible for their relative failure to challenge these assumptions.

Although assumptions are not changeable, the ability to identify one's own assumptions and how they underpin one's strategy is vital. Identifying assumptions allows the strategist to recognize at least some of the limits of the strategy as conceived and hence to identify potential conditions for strategic failure, particularly if reality does not align with assumptions and especially if the strategist is not prepared to adapt.

Strategy if (conditions)

Alongside and somewhat overlapping the idea of assumptions, every specific strategy in conception and practice is contingent upon a certain set of conditions particular to it alone. These are the conditions under which a chosen strategy is believed to be successful in practice. If these conditions are breached, the strategy may quickly become inapt unless the strategist adapts to the changing circumstances. By identifying the conditions for success, as with the identification of assumptions, the strategist can also recognize at least some of the conditions for failure. Conditions, being potentially military, political, economic, about oneself or about the enemy, about neutral behavior, etc, may pertain to any aspect of a conflict.

Many of the great strategic blunders of the twentieth century transgressed a strategy's conditions of success. Imperial Germany's unrestricted U-boat campaign during the First World War might have succeeded, but it was implicitly conditional on not upsetting neutral opinion to the extent that the United States would enter the war. Germany transgressed this condition, which ultimately resulted in its defeat. Germany once again transgressed strategic conditionality twenty years later, when its strategic performance while invading the Soviet Union was conditional upon the Soviet army really being as small as German leadership had assumed. It was not. In each case, Germany assumed conditions would hold even as they either ignored contrary evidence or actively imperiled those conditions.

When assumptions and conditions overlap is the moment when the strategist must truly think hard about the foundation of the conceived strategy. When assumptions are simultaneously also conditions for success, the strategist must strive to the ultimate to ensure that the assumptions do reflect the reality. Yet it remains true that assumptions are inherently extremely difficult to change even when vital to a strategy's conditions for success. Fred Charles Iklé observed the close connection between assumptions and conditions, noting that it is "commonplace in human affairs that men continue to labor on major undertakings a long time after the ideas upon which these efforts were based have become obsolete...Since one cannot constantly reexamine one's premises, it is easy to overlook a growing discrepancy between reality as it changes, and the old intellectual foundations of an ongoing policy."[xvi] Intelligence could have in principle informed the Germans that their strategy for defeating the Soviets was built on false hope, but Hitler was adamant that the Soviet Union was as strong as a rotting house. Intelligence may be good or bad,

correct or not, but such qualities often do not matter to the leaders who are convinced about their assumptions.

Strategy because (political rationale)

The choice to resort to armed force is a political decision, one which initiates strategy as an active process. As a political decision, it requires a political rationale, which may well be distinct from the end(s) which the strategist seeks to achieve through strategy. The difference between the two is encapsulated in an important aspect of the debate surrounding humanitarian interventions: the issues of motive and intent. Motive is *why* one wishes to act, whereas intent is *what* one intends to accomplish by acting.[xvii] The political rationale is the reason one resorts to force and to practice strategy.

The choice to practice strategy may represent one of three essential relationships with policy. The first is Clausewitz's somewhat hackneyed and abused phrase that war is the continuation of policy by other means. In modern thinking, this observation represents a straightforward discussion about the causation of war. Yet even within the theme of causation, simple continuation is not the only relationship between strategy and policy. As Hew Strachan observes, "[t]oday we too often use [Clausewitz's] normative statement about war's relationship to policy as though it applied to the causes of war, and so fail to recognize how often states go to war not to continue policy but to change it. The declaration of war, and more immediately the use of violence, alters everything."[xviii] Hence, the political rationale may require not explaining why war is a continuation of policy, but why it is worth changing policy to accommodate the unique phenomenon of war and how war may contribute toward the security and political prosperity of a polity. The final relationship between strategy and policy which the political rationale may have to explain is even more extreme than mere change: "[w]ar for a non-aggressor nation is actually a nearly complete collapse of policy. Once war comes, then nearly all prewar policy is utterly invalid because the setting in which it was designed to function no longer corresponds with the facts of reality."[xix] Here the political rationale is generally quite clearly defined—we are attacked, we must defend ourselves—but nonetheless the political rationale must still be made.

Political rationales and political ends are two sides of the same coin, firmly anchoring strategy and war within the greater stream of time in politics at both the causation and termination points. Rationales and ends generally reflect each other, through one of the three potential relationships between war and policy. In principle, albeit not necessarily in practice, direct continuation should be the most straightforward. The choice of strategy to change policy may be anticipated to be less linear, and the conduct of strategy as the failure of policy still less linear. As the relationship between policy and strategy becomes less direct, the ends become more flexible. The collapse of policy implies that any end state better than occupation is acceptable, although the range of achievable acceptable outcomes itself depends on the relatively effective or ineffective conduct of strategy. After all, lying between rationales and ends are means, ways, and effects—the main part of strategy itself.

Strategy by (agent)

For every strategy there is a strategist, or a conceiving and directing organization of some kind, not to mention other organizations whose task is to contribute to strategic performance. For the practicing strategist, this element is inevitably somewhat self-evident, but it is nonetheless an important issue. Strategic agency has two sides: conceptual authorship, or who conceived the strategy; and executive responsibility, or who is responsible for implementing it in practice. Up until relatively recently, by historical standards, conception and execution were often combined in a single person: an Alexander the Great, a Julius Caesar, or a Napoleon. Even in a more modern era, individuals sometimes sought to take on this dual role, as Hitler increasingly did during the Second World War.

The question of agency can be significant to strategic success or failure. Strategists may have specific strategic preferences, whether conceiving or executing strategy, as individuals or as organizations. Preferences may originate from individual cognitive biases, culture, or bureaucratic-organizational considerations or background, among myriad possibilities. Roman strategy against Hannibal under such a man as Gaius Terentius Varro resulted in the disastrous battle at Cannae. By contrast, Roman strategy under Quintus Fabius Maximus Verrucosus, whose strategy emphasized avoiding the battles which were Hannibal's greatest strength, favored a long war of exhaustion. Understanding the strategic preferences of individuals or organizations matters, as does ensuring that the person or organization is in the right position at the right time.

Strategy alongside (allies)

Alliances are closely tied with the question of strategic agency. Most Western strategy in the modern era has been and is conducted alongside allies, which adds a vital political dimension which raises myriad questions about virtually every other formulation of strategy already mentioned. Allies may bring specific means to the conflict and sometimes are requested to do so; or do so in the hope of strategically punching above their weight with the provision of a niche capability. Allies may have preferences or restrictions in strategic ways, such as rules of engagement which limit their ability to act in certain ways. In Afghanistan, Germany confined its effort largely to the north because it did not want to participate in actual fighting, while during the Second World War the United States and Britain had a long-

running dispute over the timing of the invasion of Europe and what to do in the meantime. Allies may bring with them new assumptions or political rationales which must be acknowledged. Tony Blair's great narrative leading up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003 concerned Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program, which compelled the United States to go to the United Nations at least to try for a new resolution.

The addition of every new political actor to a coalition or alliance, especially one carrying relatively significant weight, complicates the task of strategy because maintaining both political and strategic cohesion among partners becomes an increasingly important element within the politics of strategy. Often, smaller allies may seek to provide capability which they believe to be sufficient to acquire a voice at the table - input into actual strategy - or policy-making. It was for this reason that Britain tried strenuously and ultimately successfully to deploy a full armored division to Kuwait during the Gulf War, as the British believed that anything less would not allow them admission into the highest level discussions. A major aspect of the strategic discussion between Britain and the United States in 1943 and 1944 was the question of who would actually command the Allied Expeditionary Force into Europe and ultimately into Germany. For all that agency matters in a single strategic effort, it may be even more vital in a collective strategic environment, perhaps even acquiring significant political weight.

Strategy against (the enemy)

Discussion of the enemy is intrinsic to strategy, as strategy is inherently adversarial. For the strategist, the enemy matters in any number of ways, beyond banal pronunciations that 'the enemy has a vote'. Of course, the enemy has a vote—but how does this influence strategy? The strategist must tailor his work to the enemy, which is one reason why defense planning without an enemy is so difficult.[xx] Without an enemy, strategy becomes much vaguer both in overall conception and in more specific operational practice. The enemy provides something tangible against which to plan, rather than the predominant uncertainty often endemic to peace.

Beyond this tangibility, the strategist can learn about the enemy's weaknesses from the adversary himself, from his behavior. "If the enemy's actions can reveal his assumptions about what strategic ways he fears or values, the strategist should seek to exploit these in order better to achieve his ends."[xxi] Through the dimension of ways, the home of the adversarial interaction of war, the strategist engages with the enemy most directly. Within this interaction the strategist's chosen and implemented ways are tested through enemy fire and mutual adaptation to force and circumstances, to be found either effective or ineffective. If ineffective, they must be changed. If effective, this effectiveness must be safeguarded, with the question of efficiency a second priority.

The enemy is fundamentally the raison d'être of strategy—the enemy is created through political strife, which leads to the need to practice strategy, and the successful practice of strategy in turn removes the enemy through the effective employment of force, thereby self-terminating.

Strategy during (time)

Time is an unavoidable but often neglected aspect of strategy. It has multiple dimensions, which may complicate any strategic lexicon still further.[xxii] Time is neutral but not impartial, as strategists attempt to make what they wish of it; the same passage of time is of varying significance to various strategies. As the hackneyed insurgent saying goes, the counterinsurgents have the watches, but the insurgents have the time. Time is equally vital and malleable in conventional warfare. Sometimes its meaning is to ensure that the strategist has enough of it or the enemy not enough, for whatever purpose. Much of Hitler's strategy in the final year or so of the Second World War focused on buying time for his anticipated wonder weapons to be completed so that they could turn the tide. Yet even before the specific needs of practicing strategists are taken into account, all time is not equivalent. It is instead lumpy and uneven. Winter is not summer; Russia's winter is commonly credited with contributing to Russia's victories over Napoleon in 1812 and the Germans in 1941-2 and again 1942-43.

It is vital to consider time from various perspectives. The most common is instrumentality, usually for planning purposes: how much time does the strategist believe is required to defeat the enemy? How does the strategist weigh co-incidence/simultaneity versus sequence of actions? The adversarial perspective is again necessary even when considering time, as the adversary may weigh time differently and each side will seek to take advantage of time while preventing its enemy from doing so—as much as possible. The enemy's strategic performance is crucial to thinking about time. The political perspective is similarly important, especially when it clashes with and overrides the requirements of strategy. When this happens, it may be the fault of strategy, having taken longer than anticipated to succeed, or the fault of policy for demanding something unreasonable of strategy, or perhaps both. For strategy to be effective, it and politics must be temporally in sync.

Strategy in (geography)

Much like time, geography is fundamentally inescapable, but its strategic and political meaning varies with context and the strategist's perspective. Geography may affect strategy in two main ways. Most obvious and straightforward, geography affects the implementation of strategy as operations must take place in and across geography and

terrain. Germany's mobile warfare during the Second World War worked well in the confined geographical and geopolitical spaces of Poland, the Low Countries, and France, but it ultimately lost itself in Russia's expanses.

Less obvious but possibly more important is that geography conditions the way in which people think about strategy, both in specific conception and in overall conceptualization. As a set of strategic preferences, Basil Liddell Hart's notion of the British way in warfare is a product of Britain's geographical position apart from Europe. France or Germany could and would never have developed a similar notion, as they did not share the basic geographical detachment from the continent which defined Britain and the British way in warfare. Further, even the definition of basic strategic concepts, such as strategy or grand strategy, may be influenced by geography. The comparison among the classic naval and maritime theorists—the American Alfred Thayer Mahan, the British Julian Stafford Corbett, and the French Raoul Castex—demonstrates this point, as Castex never developed such an expansive notion of grand strategy as did his American and British counterparts. France's geography minimized the chances of such an expansive idea developing.[xxiii] This is not to suggest that geography *determines* concepts any more than it determines strategy or policy, but it is a perhaps under-appreciated influence on the foundations of our basic concepts of strategy.

Conclusion

Ways, means, ends, effects, assumptions, conditions, rationales, agents, allies, enemies: each of these facets is more or less integral to the conception and practice of strategy. Some may inevitably be grouped more tightly together with specific others, such as effects and ends (**strategy to, for**); ways, means, and effects (**strategy of, with, to**); conditions and assumptions (**strategy if, supposing**); ways, the enemy, and effects (**strategy of, against, to**); agents and allies (**strategy by, with**); or time and geography (**strategy during, in**). Yet, depending on the focus of discussion, any formulation may be connected with any other formulation as necessary. A fully described strategy may unfold group by group, formulation by formulation, and each may alter what came before or what might follow.

Combining the formulations, the reader gains a full sense of the identified strategy as well as readily indicated avenues for in-depth study or discussion. By giving a comprehensive lexicon to strategy, it allows the creation of a rudimentary strategic script—borrowing Sir Lawrence Freedman's concept—or "a way of thinking about strategy as a story told in the future tense", which all strategy ultimately is and must be.[xxiv] This set of formulations allows for such a story to be told and adapted to strategic circumstances: protagonists and antagonists may be identified; their motives, means, ways, intentions, and goals may be indicated; their beliefs and the limits of their designs explored. It enables a full narrative of strategy, one which may be understood in detail, for practitioners, yet also packaged for public consumption as a political narrative. If employed this full complement of formulations should improve our ability both to discuss and to think about strategy, by allowing strategists easily to identify elements missing from their strategic deliberations.

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When Resources Drive Strategy: Understanding Clausewitz/Corbett's War Limited by Contingent

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In recent years, the concept of war by contingent has gradually gained more

attention. Partially, this is due to the revival of the legacy of Sir Julian Corbett, but also because of states' desire to avoid costly all-out conflicts.[i] Corbett credited Clausewitz as the original mind who first described the phenomenon. In the maritime strategist's description, Clausewitz discovered a way of making war driven mostly by limited resources and conducted without much enthusiasm, attention, or political expectations. As finite means lead the strategy, this type of war-making possibly contradicted the Prussian theorist's understanding of politics' preeminent role in war — therefore, in Corbett's wording, it constituted "an anomalous form of hostility."[ii]

Readers of *On War*, however, might find it difficult to locate the exact quote, for Corbett also failed to cite the passage's precise location. The most popular translation of *On War* in English by Peter Paret and Michael Howard does not contain language close to this concept, either. The Note of 10 June 1827, published in the treatises preface, only announced Clausewitz's groundbreaking idea that war can be of two kinds but did not contain any hints to war limited by contingent. According to the Note, war could either seek to "to *overthrow the enemy*—to render him politically helpless or militarily impotent, thus forcing him to sign whatever peace we please," or to bargain and negotiate with the other side, for instance, "*merely to occupy some of his frontier-districts*."[iii] As this concept emphasizes the differences in political outcomes, today, we simplify the distinctions to war with unlimited objectives and war with limited objectives. The idea that war could be limited by contingent seemingly contradicts Clausewitz.

Despite the discrepancies, this is not another case of a scholar inserting his own ideas into Clausewitz's text, without any consideration for the original meaning. Corbett, in fact, seized on an unfinished and little-understood chapter of *On War*, an idea Clausewitz left incomplete and brilliantly interpreted it further. This article explores the historical and theoretical origins of the concept and argues that although it is a useful analytical tool when applied to modern conflict from Afghanistan to Iran, it is not without its pitfalls and requires careful considerations.

The Two Types of War

After Napoleon's defeat, the European statesmen gathered at the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815) faced a complicated situation, much like the diplomats in modern times encountered after the two world wars, in 1919 and 1945. They sought answers to the momentous question of how to restore the world order and avoid another conflagration. The Second Treaty of Paris (1815) renewed the alliance between Prussia, Russia, Austria, and Great Britain for twenty years, and included provisions for the great powers to continue gathering at conferences, to promote further peace and understanding. The development strengthened the new international order, as it created a diplomatic outlet

for future contradictions and crises.[iv] On the surface, the Vienna international order resembled the eighteenth-century balance of power. However, instead of being a naked competition between states, the new system emphasized obeying the rules and relied on intermediary gatherings to strengthen and uphold them. Napoleon was gone and the Bourbon dynasty restored in France, but throughout the 1810s and 1820s Europe repeatedly experienced the aftershocks of the French Revolution. Rebellions, unrests, and coup attempts in Spain, Portugal, Austrian dominated Italy, and the Ottoman Empire raised the question about how to intervene and prevent these crises from festering and turning into another potentially dangerous source of instability. In the early 1820s, for the most part, Great Britain successfully blocked Russian Tsar Alexander I's interventionist tendencies — it was one thing to seek to preserve peace and promote stability, but quite another to openly commit to a general principle of interfering in other countries' affairs. Yet the evolving crises in Naples, Piedmont, and especially in the politically torn Spain required limited operations to maintain the status quo.

Serving as Chief of Staff for the Rhine Command in Coblenz, in the new territories to the West Prussia had obtained, Carl von Clausewitz began his long-contemplated treatise on the changes in warfare after the French Revolution. Initially, the intention was to compose a field manual for the officer corps with chapters on battles, attacks, sieges, and the like.[v] Soon after, Clausewitz's ambitions grew. Observing the challenges of building post-Napoleonic Europe, one of the questions he pondered early on was what what would future conflicts look like. In the essay "On Progression and Pause in Military Activity" from 1818, Clausewitz wondered whether wars would continue to be fought with the Napoleonic era's "fierce intensity," or the conflicts would come to resemble once again the limited cabinet wars of the eighteenth century. He mulled over the question, too, of whether, after realizing the destructive potential of nations in arms, governments sought to curb the escalation of violence, and whether the deadly genie of all-out war could ever be put back in the bottle.[vi] Clausewitz contemplated even a third possibility for future wars, where the relationship between intensity and outcomes became skewed: "The rapid element of war clashing with the great military strength [could] produce wars that *are large-scale, but limited in their effect*, bloody *but not particularly decisive campaigns*. If influenced by it, governments and nations shall be more cautious in [their] decisions to go to war and more willing to settle for peace, the future will show."[vii] In the first years after 1815, Clausewitz had more questions than answers.

Napoleonic warfare had demonstrated war's escalating and destructive potential when, to defeat the enemy utterly, states committed mass armies and unlimited resources. As the post-1815 period revealed, however, other crises existed that did not require, even if it was possible, for the states to wage war in such an all-encompassing manner. From this line of thinking, Clausewitz's concept of war with limited

objectives emerged — as he wrote in the Note of 1827, this type of war could be conducted by occupying a neighboring province to use it as a bargaining chip on the negotiating table. Preoccupied with the Bourbon dynasty's continuing unpopularity in France and potential threads to Prussia, Clausewitz thought about this type of war mostly in the narrow context of the day. How could Prussia, the smallest of Europe's great powers, still economically recovering, and distrustful to its allies, could, in case of need, counter alone France's aggression.[viii] With the passage of time, however, the idea of war with limited objectives became a complex construct. In the published chapters of Book VIII, Clausewitz formulated two general ways war with limited objectives could be fought: either by "seizing a small or large piece of enemy territory or holding one's own until things take a better turn." The first one he named offensive war with a limited aim, and the second defensive war.[ix]

Another consequential change in Clausewitz's thinking is found in Book I, Chapter 1, the chapter bound to summarize for readers the essence of *On War*. In Section 11, he captured the groundbreaking idea of divorcing political and military objectives: "The political object—the original motive for the war—will thus determine both the military objective to be reached and the amount of effort it requires... Sometimes the *political and military objectives are the same*—for example, the conquest of a province. In other cases, the political objective will not provide a suitable military objective. In that event, another military objective must be adopted that will serve the political purpose..." Therefore, further in the section, Clausewitz concluded that military conduct could encompass "all degrees of importance and intensity"—starting on the high end of the scale with a war of extermination and ending on the lower one with a simple armed observation.[x] In other words, war with limited objectives included not only the occupation of a province but could be conducted in various other ways. Furthermore, theoretically, war with unlimited objectives could be fought with limited means, and vice-versa: war with limited objectives could be carried out with high intensity; although one should strongly question the wisdom of forcing the adversary to the negotiating table by waging war in an unrestrained manner, for the escalation of violence might lead the other side to adopt unlimited objectives.[xi] Most importantly, what distinguished the two types of wars were not the applied military means, but the pursued political objectives — one to defeat the enemy in order to dictate the peace, the other using military means to negotiate an emerging crisis or political interests.

By the time of Clausewitz's sudden death in 1831, Book VIII consisted mostly of draft chapters — the military theorist was still clearing his mind and wrangling with the complex problems of war planning.[xii] At the end of Chapter 6A, Clausewitz outlined a phenomenon he could not quite catalog and also found dangerously contradictory to the war theory he had developed: a type of war where the "interaction, the effort to outdo the enemy, the violent

and compulsive course of war, all stagnate for lack of real incentive. Neither side makes more than minimal moves, and neither feels itself seriously threatened." Almost shocked, Clausewitz wrote in the next passage that "all imperatives inherent in the concept of a war seem to dissolve, and its foundations are threatened."[xiii] Reading carefully On War, some eighty years later, Corbett seized on these observations and explored in-depth the phenomenon.

Clausewitz's Minimal Wars

Despite its imposing title "The Effect of the Political Aim on the Military Objective," Book VIII Chapter 6A is a very short text — only a page and a half in today's most popular translation by Paret/Howard. Therefore, it is fair to conclude that its passages were mere rough outlines for ideas Clausewitz planned to develop further.

The key to analyzing the chapter's meaning lies in the previous one. "The possibility that a military objective can be modified is one we have treated hitherto as deriving only from domestic arguments," Clausewitz wrote, adding that, "Still, as we argued in the second chapter of Book One (purpose and means in war), the nature of the political aim, the scale of demands put forward by either side, and the total political situation of one's own side, are all factors that in practice must decisively influence the conduct of war."[xiv] In other words, the political objective depended not only on the state's internal considerations and will to commit to war but also on a whole range of other factors interacting within a dynamic and evolving international system. The way states decided to go to war, how they chose to do that, and what resources they were willing to commit depended not only on their interests, but also on the adversary they were about to face, theirs and their adversary's place in the international system, and the overall political situation.

Without this explanation, Chapter 6A's initial discussion of coalition warfare appears perplexing. Read within the context of a complex negotiation between allies, Clausewitz simply observed that often states commit to action mainly due to alliance with another state(s), and less because their vital interests are at stake. Subsequently, their objectives and efforts are mostly limited, an observation that remains true today.[xv]

Other times, the dynamic interaction between the adversaries themselves produced a paradoxical de-escalation of violence. Clausewitz gave as an example the case where a state desired a relatively small concession from its adversary and consequently committed moderate resources. As in the enemy's eyes the desired concession was also somewhat limited, it followed the same path. However, after the initial clash, the state discovered that it had miscalculated — it was weaker than assumed, money and resources were running short, the aim was not crucial enough to keep the morale high. The state attempted to

keep the action going, hoping that perhaps things would change eventually. As Clausewitz colorfully described the situation: "Meanwhile, the war drags slowly on, like a faint and starving man."

In this case, the limited resources drove the limited nature of war, a circumstance that contradicts Clausewitz's advocacy of political objectives' preeminent role. Another of the key tenets in Clausewitz's theory also was war's natural tendency towards escalation, as adversaries inadvertently reacted to each other's growing commitment of force. But nothing in the described situation followed this pattern: "Thus interaction, the effort to outdo the enemy, the violent and compulsive course of war, all stagnate for lack of real incentive. Neither side makes more than minimal moves, and neither feels itself seriously threatened." On the surface, this paradox appeared to contradict war theory and threatened "all imperatives." Except, as Clausewitz wrote in a rather convoluted sentence, the conflict's logic still abided war's inherently political nature: the modest political objectives and the lack of short-term solution continued to dictate the modest application of force. They, the moderate political objectives, dictated, after all, why the two sides remained reluctant or unable to commit more resources. The military theorist named this type of conflict "minimal wars, which consist in *merely threatening the enemy*, with *negotiations held in reserve*."

Connecting Clausewitz's text to real historical crises, especially throughout 1820s when his correspondence with his wife Marie and best friend August Neidhardt von Gneisenau remains sporadic, is a problematic task. Nonetheless, the ongoing tribulations concerning the ailing Ottoman Empire clearly displayed the described pattern. In the early 1820s, a series of uprisings in Greece and in the Danubian Principalities of Moldavia and Walachia led to a prolonged Russo-Ottoman standoff. Suspecting direct Russian involvement in the unrests, the Sublime Porte sent troops to occupy the autonomous principalities marking the border between the two empires. It interfered with Russian trade through the Straights, mobs destroyed Russian properties in Istanbul, and in a grizzly public execution, the Ecumenical Patriarch Gregory V was hung from the main gate of the Patriarchate. After the initial anger and show of force, the Sublime Porte realized that it lacked strength to compel Russia to disengage from the Balkans. Furthermore, the Concert of Europe's concerns that a Russian victory might lead to the Ottoman Empire's demise— subsequently creating a vacuum where great powers vied for its territories—prompted only a restrained Russian response. The Russian army's unpreparedness and the anticipated difficulties of fighting a war on the Balkans limited, too, the military options. The fate of the orthodox Christians concerned St. Petersburg, but far less than its main interest of preserving the balance of power. For some time, the adversaries observed each other avoiding overtly provocative gestures. They even negotiated the limited Convention of Akkerman in 1826. The overall dynamic, gradually deescalated the situation, albeit also prolonging the crisis.

The fledgling Greek rebellion and fears of looming massacres—decried by the European press—prompted in 1827 a united Russian, British, and French intervention under the command of Admiral Edward Codrington. Organized as an international naval mission, in order to mitigate Ottoman suspicion, it aimed merely at blocking off the Ottoman-Egyptian fleet in the Ionian Sea and preventing the feared massacres. The warning gesture, however, was misunderstood and lead to the Battle of Navarino, where the allied navy destroyed the complete Ottoman-Egyptian fleet. Despite the cheerful mood throughout Europe, in his correspondence Clausewitz described Navarino as an accidental victory the allies could not capitalize on, making it a mere phase in the prolonged standoff.[xvi] Indeed, in the aftermath, the Sublime Porte closed the Straight to Russian ships, an act that ultimately led to the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-1829. Curiously, the last sentence of Book VIII, Chapter 6A suggests this development: "The art of war will shrivel into prudence, and its main concern will be to make sure the delicate balance is not suddenly upset in the enemy's favor and the half-hearted war does not become a real war after all."[xvii] After Navarino, the half-hearted Russo-Ottoman standoff indeed turned into a real war.

Corbett's War Limited by Contingent

When Sir Julian Corbett worked on *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (1911), he most likely read *On War* in the J.J.Graham's English translation from 1873. The words "war limited by contingent," however, appear nowhere in the translated text, nor linguistically resembles anything in the original German. Therefore, despite adding quotation marks to the term, it was Corbett who gave Clausewitz's idea the economic and memorable name.[xviii]

Corbett studied *On War* primarily from a maritime perspective. He found Clausewitz's concept of the two types of war based on the political objectives fascinating, and the interrelation between political and military objectives momentous. Nonetheless, Corbett criticized Clausewitz for paying no attention to sea power and its relation to control and conquest of landmasses. After all, as the maritime strategist observed, most of the great Prussian's ideas about war with limited objectives were less practical for continental Europe but could be successfully applied to navies and their ability to project power. Corbett even suspected that Clausewitz spent so long time mulling over his groundbreaking concepts, without much real progress, because he was testing them in the wrong domain.[xix]

Fascinated by war with limited objectives and combing through *On War*'s Book VIII to learn more about it, Corbett stumbled upon Chapter 6A. The phenomenon captured in the unfinished draft reminded him of type of war-

making he had observed in British history. In Corbett's analysis, Great Britain mostly relied on two types of limited operations: one aiming at the conquest of overseas colonies, and the other consisting of mainly operations along the European seaboard designed to disturb the enemy's plans or strengthening the hand of British allies. The most famous example of the latter were, of course, the actions of the Duke of Wellington and his Anglo-Portuguese forces supporting the Peninsular War. According to Corbett, "these operations were distinguished not so much by the nature of the object as by the fact that we devoted to them, not the whole of our military strength, but only a certain part of it which was known as our "disposal force."[xx] When the British navy delivered Wellington's moderate expeditionary army of 50,000 men to the Portuguese shores in 1809, the Peninsular theater was of no great value for London. The operation's main goal was to support and buildup the local resistance, diverge forces Napoleon otherwise needed in Central Europe, and create a constant strain on the French. Although the initial dynamic differed from the one described by Clausewitz, this still was a type of war-making mainly driven by limited resources that also dictated modest expectations for the possible outcomes.

Since Clausewitz had also touched upon coalition warfare in Chapter 6A, this reminded Corbett that engaging as an ally in a conflict could be also from a of war limited by contingent: "During the eighteenth century there had been a large number of cases of war actually limited by contingent — that is, cases where a country not having a vital interest in the object made war by furnishing the chief belligerent with an axillary force of a stipulated strength."[xxi] The mere circumstance of being the lesser ally, and not having the principle decision power, dictated engaging in such an opportunistic manner.

Exploring the concept further, Corbett realized that war limited by contingent tended to succeed when it was led in a deliberate manner. That is, the state that relied on it, from early on, demonstrated restraint in its expectations and remained coolheaded when dealing with both victories and defeats. In other words, Clausewitz's example, where two states simply stumbled into this type of war, due to faulty intelligence and unrealistic expectations, was the worst possible scenario. In it, guided by their limited means and captives of vexed circumstances, the states could easily lose sight of their objectives and drift into a prolonged and draining conflict with no clear chance for resolution. Therefore, once in a such situation, Clausewitz emphasized the need to rethink the new realities and let recalibrated political considerations take over the military conduct. Corbett, on the other hand, advised his readers on how to plan for and wage war limited by contingent consciously.

Following the same logic, the maritime strategist also came to the realization that war limited by contingent was actually *a method* of waging war. Hence, by definition, it could also be applied in both in war with limited and unlimited

objectives. Clausewitz's example of two states wishing to obtain only modest concessions suggested war with limited objectives. Corbett's example with the Peninsular War, however, demonstrated the other possibility. As part of the larger struggle to overthrow Napoleon, Wellington, in fact, fought a war with unlimited objective. Nonetheless, he did it with limited means, making the best of every opportunity, and patiently and relentlessly grinding on French resources and willpower. Corbett even singled out this specific type of war-making as specifically "British or maritime" form of war. It was characterized by "the application of the limited method to the unlimited form, as ancillary to the larger operations of our allies," mostly because Great Britain controlled the seas and could select a theater of war that could be truly limited.[xxii]

Furthermore, Corbett singled out the conditions when war limited by contingent tended to succeed. His analysis concluded that this occurred "when it approaches closely the true limited war — that is, as in the case of the Peninsula and the Crimea, where its object is to wrest or secure from the enemy a definite piece of territory that to a greater or lesser extent can be isolated by naval power."[xxiii] In other words, despite its promises, war limited by contingent could not be fought in every circumstance or theater. It required a careful selection of a limited or secondary theater of war, away from a dangerous concentration of significant adversary capabilities and possibilities to turn into an all-out war. Yet also a theater where lines of communications could be preserved, and resupply relatively easily conducted. Mostly, it required the realization that war limited by contingent was part of a broader strategy.

Applying the Concept to Modern Challenges

While Clausewitz only drafted the concept's theoretical outlines, Corbett advanced the possibility of waging war limited by contingent in a deliberate and potentially successful manner. His writings' practical lens and possibilities for understanding the phenomenon—and perhaps successfully pursuing it—is what makes Corbett's concept so compelling for today's realities.

As James Holmes of US Naval War College recently observed, Iran has been applying a similar method against the United States for some time, especially in its maritime strategy. Writing before the latest escalation following Qasem Soleimani's death, Holmes emphasizes that, due to its geographical position, Iran projects power on the cheap and seaward in the Strait of Hormuz and throughout the Persian Gulf. Using land-based missiles, aircraft, and speedboats, Teheran could keep US and its allies on edge. The fact that it could do so from a home territory, instead on faraway shores as Wellington once did, lowers even more the price of this type of war-making. Concerning the Iranian objective, Holmes concludes that "At most they can hope their opponents will tire of ceaseless struggle and

strike an accommodation on Iranian terms — or go away altogether."[xxiv]

The seeming de-escalation following the Soleimani's death also suggests that both sides—Iran and the United States—understand the need to preserve the balance Clausewitz spoke of and seek to avoid turning the half-hearted war into a real war. The exchange of blows will surely continue, but despite the heated rhetoric, neither adversary truly wishes to stumble into an all-out conflict. Both the United States and Iran rather aim at forcing the other side to change its behavior.

Corbett observed that throughout history, war by contingent was generally treated with contempt and even considered contrary to national interests.[xxv] It seemed a less than honorable way of waging war, Moreover, exaggerated promises of success could inadvertently lead the nation into a costly and prolonged conflict. Only with Wellington's success and the demonstrated possibilities which a skillful commander could exploit in a secondary theater has this type of warfighting gained recognition. Nonetheless, it is crucial to avoid idealizing the promises of war limited by contingent.

In his *Principles of Maritime Strategy*, Corbett spent significant time and energy in discussing the conditions of applying the method successfully. The modern way of life and technology seemingly eliminates the physical barriers of bringing war to the enemy's shores, that once upon a time, only the Royal navy could surpass. Air, cyber, and space domains allow selecting an impactful but isolated assault on enemy capabilities, without risking drawing an all-out answer or full destruction of the "disposable force." When targeting adversary's infrastructure via a cyber-attack, we ignore the need for traditional lines of communications and possibilities for resupply. Nonetheless, Corbett's insistence that the most important tenet when banking on war limited by contingent—that of envisioning it as only a pragmatic method within a broader political strategy—remains true. The Iranian strategy works because we can apply to it the principle Corbett cited over a hundred years ago: "Its value lay in its power of containing force greater than its own. That is all that is that can be claimed for it, but it might be all that is required."[xxvi]

Another endless modern conflict also reveals the dark side of war limited by contingent— precisely the one Clausewitz so fretted. Eighteen years after its start, the war in Afghanistan truly resembles the cartoonish image of a conflict slowly dragging on, "like a faint and starving man." Its course uncannily follows the hypothetical case Clausewitz outlined almost two centuries ago. After the initial success of toppling the Taliban, the United States and its allies came to realize that rebuilding Afghanistan into a modern nation and a complete defeat of the Taliban are objectives difficult to achieve—nor truly vital for United States' interests. The resources and will to continue the war efforts have dwindled. Just like the fictitious state in Book VIII, Chapter 6A, United States "does the best he can," hoping, against better knowledge, that somehow the outlook will eventually improve.[xxvii] As debates focus mainly on number of US troops to be pulled out or remain there, Afghanistan has truly turned into a war driven by resources and without a clear political perspective in sight. The pages of *On War* suggest the need for an honest reexamination of United States' interests, followed by scaled-down commitments, but also an open admission that the conflict might be a low-intensity prolonged operation paired with continuing negotiations with the Taliban. Yet, we should also admit that such a cleared-eyed strategy remains politically unacceptable in Washington.

The concept of war limited by contingent also grew out of Clausewitz's realization about the complex relationship between political objectives and military means and the conditions that required their séparation. It remains an idea yet to be anchored and widely promulgated in Western strategic thought and war planning. As the United States military enjoys enormous resources and technological superiority, the debates often focus on the means to be applied, primarily how to avoid high human cost, — and not on the desired outcomes. The technological superiority also blinds decision-makers and the broader public to the accurate scale of the political objectives: if the United States commits just a fraction of its capabilities, then surely the war must be limited. However, what is left out of this equation is how the other side perceives the attack. The goal of regime change, a war with unlimited objective, will most likely exert the adversary's bitter answer, next to requiring careful planning about how to rebuild the peace afterwards.

War limited by contingent has its own political logic, too. As by definition the emphasis is on modest resources, military planners might be even more prone to concentrate on them, instead of on politically objectives. Again, as both Clausewitz and Corbett insisted, this remains the least effective and error-prone way to wage war by contingent. Just because we have military capabilities and the possibilities to use them appear less costly, does not mean we should always apply them, as the impact might run against the war's political logic. The warning also touches upon building coalitions, as one of the original forms of this type of warfare. Again, the limited resources and the dominant power's preeminence in the decision-making process might blind potential allies to the political calculations and possible problems. To the German political elite and military, the occupation and rebuilding of Afghanistan has brought, for instance, many controversies, much polarization, and not a few publicly ended careers; while parts of the United States' military felt that the ally contributed below its capabilities. This is not an argument for avoiding coalition warfare but an emphasis on Corbett's insistence for a hard-nosed approach to it.

Both Clausewitz and Corbett wrote from the point of view of smaller but aggressive powers seeking to preserve

their interest against more populous nations with larger European territories. Therefore, when they discussed limited war, they focused on how Prussia and Great Britain could fight wars in the most advantageous manner. Modern readers, especially in western countries tired of seemingly endless wars, will futility seek advice on how to counter such types of operations. Seeing war limited by contingent for what it is, however, is undoubtedly the first step in finding the right answer.

The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not reflect the official position of the U.S. Air Force, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

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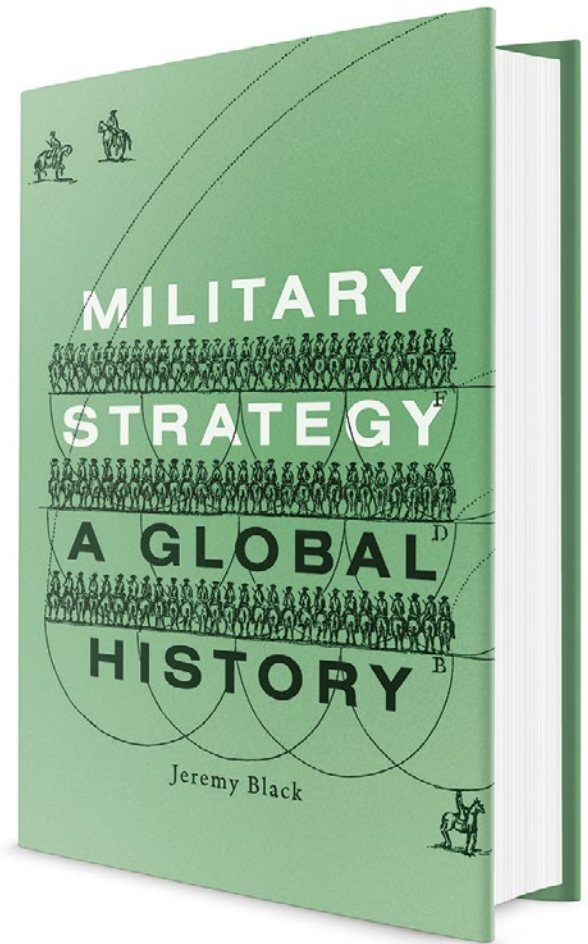
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Assimilation of Military Strategy in a Highly Politicized Environment: A Model

Shay Shabtai - Konfidas Cybersecurity, Israel

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Preface

Top military strategists operate today in a highly politicized decision-making environment. The latest book by Peter Bergen, named 'Trump and his Generals - The cost of chaos', is proclaimed to deal with "what happened when the unstoppable force of President Trump met the immovable object of America's national security establishment"[i]. According to several reports, top Israeli security officials opposed prime minister's Netanyahu intentions to strike in Gaza a few days before the September 2019 elections, and some of them suspected he operated out of political motivation[ii]. According to a 2018 survey[iii], "nearly 70 percent of Americans agreed to some extent that the country should defer to the military on whether to use force (strategy)", but the motives may be different: "Trump supporters may favor deference to the military because they are supremely loyal to this president…Trump opponents may favor deference to the military because they distrust this president's judgment". Strategic assessments become tools of the political debate, and sometimes categorized as 'facts' or 'fake facts' according to one's beliefs.

This phenomenon of military strategy being carried out in a highly toxic political environment is not new, and this article does not comparatively examine current decision-making processes to previous ones. But it seems that high ranking military strategists have to flex their cognitive muscles to the limit to manage their business in the stormy waters of this period. This article will try to define a model for their conduct.

The theory

Eliot Cohen declares that "[t]he issue of civil-military relations is one of the oldest subjects of political science."[iv]

Cohen's analysis starts with Carl Von Clausewitz, who stated, that "war is not merely an act of policy, but a true political instrument… The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose"[v]. "Strategy is the use of the engagement for the [political – S.S] purpose of the war". Therefore, the duties of the military strategist are to "define an aim for the entire operational side of the war that will be in accordance with its purpose… the series of actions intended to achieve it… must go on the campaign himself… allowing the general plan to be adjusted… in short, must maintain control throughout".[vi]

This concept designated 'the normative theory' by Cohen, emphasizes the separation between the political debate on defining the war's objectives and the strategic debate on achieving them in a synchronized operation consisting of tactical engagements. More than a century and two world wars later, Samuel Huntington reinforced this concept in his book, *The Soldier and the State*, when he stated that

"A strong, integrated, highly professional officer corps… immune to politics and respected for its military character, would be a steadying balance wheel in the conduct of policy", and therefore "serve with silence and courage in the military way."[vii]

In *War and Politics*, based on the analysis of USA's complex experience in Vietnam – among other examples, Bernard Brodie too concluded that the military should focus on military strategy, but from a different perspective. He quoted President Eisenhower, who experienced the challenge from both sides: "if we can make sure that all of our officers are growing up to understand the problem of the citizen and the citizen leaders as well as his tactics and strategy in the purely military field, then I say the generals ought to be, while subordinate to their commander-in-chief [the civilian President], running the war, rather exclusively."[viii]

Brodie summarizes that it is not possible to provide every General with the political experience gained through eight years of presidency, therefore Generals cannot free themselves from the military perspective of 'battle' and 'victory', and therefore "…the civil hand must never relax, and it must without one hint of apology hold the control that has always belonged to it by right."[ix]

The military's limited understanding of politics and not its military expertise is what requires them to be controlled and monitored by the political echelon.

Edward Luttwak too accepts the separation of the two professions, but from a perspective different from Brodie's. He determined, that "the derivation of rules of conduct, practical implications, or even a complete scheme of grand strategy, [must be left] to those who have powers of decision in a specific time and place."[x] In this situation the gap between public servants, who live in the paradoxical world of strategy, and elected officials, who live the linear world of political logic, is widened. "In any case, a conscious understanding of the phenomena of strategy is a great rarity among political leaders, whose talent is precisely to understand and guide public opinion, itself wedded to a commonsense logic that is very different from the paradoxical logic of strategy."[xi] But it is important to remember that in non-democratic regimes too, "… national interests emerge in a political process …"[xii] In this situation "it is not easy to devise harmonious strategic solutions that are actually superior to mere pragmatic improvisations." [xiii]

The military strategist's work is defined by paradoxical logic and is therefore required to work separately from the linear thinking of the political leaders. However, Luttwak's arguments lead to the understanding that there must be a dialogue between these two logics. Eliot Cohen argues that this was "an unequal dialogue – a dialogue, in that both sides expressed their views bluntly, indeed, sometimes offensively… and unequally, in that the final authority of the

civilian leader was unambiguous and unquestioned."[xiv]

In a special preface to the Hebrew version of Cohen's book, Shimon Peres argues that, "a political mistake can cause a military defeat, and a military defeat can cause a political failure. Separating the two is in practice impossible. Success is achieved in the un-demarcated area between policy and strategy."[xv]

However, Cohen understands that "[t]hat give and take exacted a real price, and by and large that price fell on the shoulders of the generals, who found themselves broken down by the strain of managing a war while in turn being managed by a civilian leader who treated military advice as just that – advice."[xvi]

Giora Iland, formerly Head of the IDF's Planning Directorate (J5) and later Israel's National Security Advisor, stated that "the only way to conduct a functional dialogue is a 'round table' of military officers and statesmen, discussing any political and military topic without hierarchy. Every participant in the debate has the right (in fact the obligation) to speak about every topic… The concept that each will focus only on his specialty – politicians on the political facets and generals on military operations is completely wrong… However, the final decision is hierarchical… it is solely in the hands of the political leadership."[xvii]

So, the top military strategist must participate in an open and sometimes heated dialogue with the political level, express his understandings based on his military professionalism and paradoxical strategic thinking, and than plan the military strategy and execute it to achieve the political goals put down by the decision makers. In reality, the manifestation of such behavior is very complex.
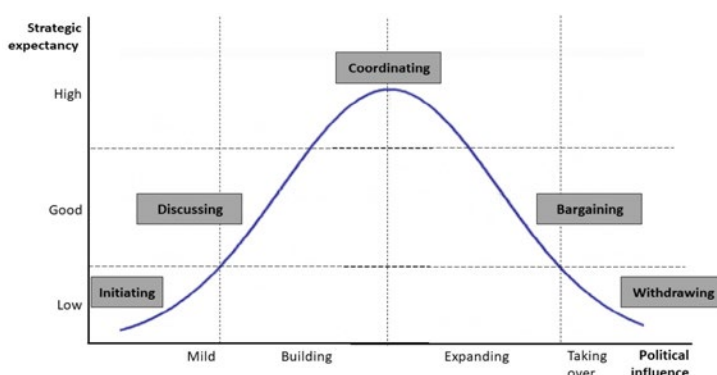
A model

Figure 1

In order to improve the debate on this complex behaviour, this article suggests a behavioural model for use by the military leadership. This is a qualitative model based on the personal situational assessment of the military strategist while debating with the political leadership. It assumes that there is a normal distribution between the political success and the political influences on the decision-making process. In other words, that to a certain point strategic performance improves the more there is a correlation between it and the political objectives – as per Clausewitz. However, beyond that point, the expansion and domination of a high level of politicization harms the planning and performance of strategy, reducing the actual achievements. An extreme historical example is Hitler's political domination of German strategy during the Second World War, which lead, some claim, to the failed battle of Stalingrad, and later to Germany's complete defeat.

The model assumes three levels of strategic performance to be assessed by the strategist:

a. Low Strategic Expectancy: A strategy the implementation of which harms or at best does not aid the achievement of national goals.

b. Good Strategic Expectancy: A strategy the implementation of which aids the achievement of national goals but not optimally or at costs higher than necessary.

c. High Strategic Expectancy: A strategy the implementation of which aids the achievement of national goals optimally while taking into account the totality of constraints and a well-attuned management of the actions vis-à-vis developments.

The model assumes four levels of political influence on policy that the military strategist can identify:

a. Mild Influence: The political decision-makers are generally indifferent to the issue and the strategy undertaken, tending to regard its influence on their policy as not significantly towards their policies and political standing.

b. Building Influence: The political decision-makers identify external and internal political opportunities or risks resulting from the strategic actions vis-à-vis the issue, and therefore deepen their involvement to influence relevant military decisions.

c. Expanding Influence: The political decision-makers see the issue as central to their ideological and political worldview and therefore as a major test to their political actions and status. Therefore, they increase their intervention in military decisions in ways that over-shadow and sometimes harm military considerations.

d. Taking Over: The political decision-makers identify a major political threat to them from the developing situation, and therefore enforce their positions on the military leadership without regard to strategic concepts and consequences.

After the military leaders have defined their understanding of the current strategic relevance and also the depth of the political influence, they can decide on the manner they wish to conduct the debate with the political leadership. The military leader has a choice of five possible modes of behaviour towards the political leadership:

a.   Initiating Mode: The military leader understands that the current strategy has a Low Expectancy, and that the political leadership is not sufficiently involved in the political aspects (Mild Influence). In this situation he can initiate a debate aimed at improving the strategic conduct.

b.   Discussing Mode: In cases the military leader identifies that the political leadership is interested in Building Influence, the focus and priorities of the political and military leaderships will strengthen the strategic expectancy in this issue.

c.   Coordinating Mode: In this mode the debate between the political and the military leaderships enables developing a strategy of high expectancy. The deep coordination between the two groups leads to a maximization of the external and internal political value and the military strategy relevant to that issue.

d.   Bargaining Mode: When the military leadership identifies that external and internal political considerations are reducing the expectancy of a particular strategy and therefore harming the optimal exploitation of the military tool-box and its modes of operation, the military leadership (assuming it is committed to professional principles) will conduct a deep and tough debate with the political leadership, that, in some cases, may overflow into the public media.

e.   Withdrawing Mode: When external and internal political considerations are reducing the probability of enacting a particular strategy, the military leader will be forced to withdraw from active debate with the political decision-makers, focusing on the tactical aspects of the military operation or perhaps even resign from his post.

A highly politicized environment can be managed in the Coordinating Mode, but it is definitely the main driving force for choosing the Bargaining and Withdrawing Modes.

Examples

In this last part, a few test cases of military strategists' conduct in a highly politicized environment will be examined according to the model.

Israel withdrawal from Lebanon (2000): Prime Minister Ehud Barak's determination to fulfil one of his major election promises to withdraw the IDF forces from southern Lebanon conflicted with the professional estimate of the military leadership, lead by Chief of the General Staff Shaul Mofaz, that such an action would harm Israel's strategic situation – allowing, among other threats, Hezbollah to operate within Israel proper. The withdrawal was finally conducted, while taking military risks, after certain modifications in the political aspects of the plan reduced some of the risks. In this event the military leadership estimated that the political leadership was in Expanding Influence Mode, and that there was a Good Strategic Expectancy and therefore responded by applying the Bargaining Mode.[xviii]

The Surge of American Forces in Iraq (2007): At the beginning of 2007 President Bush declared a new policy in the campaign to stabilize Iraq, based on a strategy of reinforcing American forces there and implementing an updated counter-insurgency doctrine. The new approach was developed by a combination of elements in the National Security Council, elements outside the military organization and a group of mid-level officers ('The Colonels'). To actualise the new concept Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and commanders of American forces in Iraq were replaced. In a meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 13th December 2006 it was made clear to the participants that for President Bush success in Iraq was a critical political necessity both externally and an internally, and that he was therefore Taking Over the strategic decision-making. Therefore, though there was a general belief that the new strategy had a Low Expectancy for success, they decided to respond in Withdrawing Mode and began to implement it. [xix]

Destroying Syria's Nuclear Reactor (2007): The debates on destroying the reactor developed into a sharp dispute between Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who pushed to strike the reactor immediately, and Defense Minister Ehud Barak, who supported a delay. sources describing the issue ascribe the differences of opinion to differences of internal political agendas of the two. In a consultation on the day of the strike, 5th September 2007, the IDF Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi and Mossad Chief Meir Dagan, supported the action, thus enabling the Prime Minister to finally decide in favour of the strike. It seems that the connection between the military leadership's assessment that this strategy had a High Expectancy within an Expanding Influence situation in the mind of Prime Minister, and therefore they acted in the Coordinating Mode.[xx]

Ending Operation 'Cast Lead' (2010): The IDF's operation in Gaza began on 27th December 2008. After an aerial operation followed by a ground operation in northern Gaza, the decision-makers deliberated whether to expand the ground operation to southern Gaza. This action would have led to cutting Gaza off from Egypt and surrounding the Hamas regime. Prime Minister Olmert, nearing the end of his term in office, was in favour of this action, whereas Defense Minister Barak and Foreign Minister Tzippi Livni were against it. The military leadership was also divided

between the Chief of Staff Ashkenazi who supported ceasing operations and the Chief of the Israel Security Agency and the commander of the IDF's Southern Command, who supported expanding the operation. Ashkenazi realized that this was a sensitive issue, because of the internal political and personal relationships, in which the politicians were in Taking Over Mode, and the expectancy of the military's strategic input being low and chose Withdrawing Mode to leave the decision fully in the hands of the politicians.[xxi]

Halting Israel's Preparations to Attack in Iran (2010): According to a number of sources, in the second half of 2010, Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak both supported a strategy of destroying Iranian nuclear facilities, whereas most of the Israeli government ministers who made up the 'Government Security Cabinet' were against this operation. The military leadership too, specifically IDF Chief of Staff Ashkenazi, Mossad Chief Dagan and Israel Security Agency Chief Yuval Diskin, were against this action for strategic reasons. At the end of a September meeting, following a debate which included the 8-minister core of the Security Cabinet and the military leaders, the Prime Minister, Defense Minister and military leaders were left alone in the room. The Prime Minister and Defense Minister ordered the military leaders to order the forces relevant to the operation to prepare to launch. Mossad Chief Dagan answered assertively that since the Security Cabinet had not authorized this, then the order was illegal. In a situation in which at least part of the political leadership was involved in Expanding Influence and creating a Good Strategic Expectancy, the military leadership chose to respond in Bargaining Mode, arguing that only if the two senior politicians convinced the other cabinet members to join the authorization to act in a debate in which the military's reservation were expressed, would the order to attack carry legal weight and be carried-out. [xxii]

Trump's Decision to Withdraw from Syria (2018): Trump pronounced a decision to implement his election campaign promise to withdraw all American troops from Syria back to the USA. Secretary of Defense James Mattis responded by resigning. His resignation letter stated the following reasons: "we cannot protect our interests... without maintaining strong alliances and showing respect to those allies... We must do everything possible to advance an international order that is most conducive to our security... and we are strengthened in this effort by the solidarity of our alliances... Because you have the right to have a Secretary of Defense whose views are better aligned with yours... I believe it is right for me to step down"[xxiii]. Secretary Mattis identified what he perceived as a political Take Over by the president, so that maintaining the current strategy he supported to have a Low Expectancy, and therefore chose a Withdrawing Mode and resigned.

Conclusion

In a highly politicized environment, the military strategist encounters a growing challenge to debate alternative strategies with the political leadership. The model presented in this article enables identifying the character of the challenge and the relevant mode of response for the military leader. The model requires further development, to validate its assumptions, and especially the normal distribution between the quality of the military's strategy and the depth of political involvement; elaboration of the different possible actions in the different modes of operation (for example: resignation, tactical focus or halting of strategic dialogue in the Withdrawing mode); and the analysis of more historical case-studies and simulations of possible future situations. However, it is already a base for improving thinking over the relationship between the political leadership and the military leadership.

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British Special Forces in the 2020s: Still A National Asset

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Introduction: an expanding force in a shrinking army

United Kingdom Special Forces (UKSF) is a tri-service command in the British armed forces which right now appears on the point of a major shift in direction. The past two decades have seen UKSF cooperate with US Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) in building what one UKSF officer of the author's acquaintance has called 'the greatest counterterrorist organisation in history', executing a global campaign of capture or kill strikes against al Qaeda and Daesh. This originated with US Defence Secretary Rumsfeld's Al Qaeda Network Execute Order of 2004, which authorised JSOC strikes against high value targets (HVTs) in twenty named countries, and escalated following the election of Barack

Obama in 2008. Under Obama, US strategy in the global war on terror shifted conspicuously away from the hallmark of the George W Bush administration, 'regime change' in terrorist-friendly countries, to a global counter-terrorist campaign utilising JSOC assets combined with drones, manned aircraft and local proxies to hit jihadi networks in Yemen, Syria, parts of Africa and, of course, Pakistan, the most famous strike being the killing of Osama bin Laden himself in April 2011. The UK has been the USA's active partner in this campaign: since 2015 up to fourteen Royal Air Force (RAF) fast jets and six Reaper Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs) have been striking at Daesh targets in Iraq and Syria and an admitted 86 British Army personnel have trained anti-Daesh forces in Syria.[i] From 2016 media reports indicated UKSF deployment also, although as usual the British government was cagey about this: for instance, when Sergeant Matt Tonroe became the first British soldier killed in action in Syria in March 2018, the official press release had him as from 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, his parent unit, even though a US Army Special Forces Operator, Master Sergeant Jonathan Dunbar, was killed by the same improvised explosive device, Tonroe's funeral took place at the Regimental Headquarters of 22 SAS at Hereford and most of the British media reported him engaged in a 'covert' operation to capture or kill a senior member of Daesh.[ii] This was also rather paradoxical, given that not only were US, French and other NATO SF deployed in Syria but this was acknowledged in official NATO reports. [iii] It was only in February 2019, in response to a Freedom of Information request about Sergeant Tonroe's death, that the UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) admitted that soldiers from UKSF were embedded with anti-Daesh forces in Syria; later that year a book by 22 SAS veteran Chris Ryan revealed they had carried out an aggressive mobile campaign, recalling the original SAS' operations in the Western Desert in World War Two, as they contested northern Iraq's deserts with the terrorists two years before.[iv] Previous disclosures hinted at further involvement in the war on terror, most prominently that made by King Abdullah of Jordan in 2016, who, while briefing members of the US Congress, reported that Jordanian SF were about to operate alongside "British SAS" in Libya and also potentially in Kenya as they prepared to strike at al Shabab in Somalia.[v]

This leads to the reported change in direction. July 2019 brought reports in the British media that UKSF were re-prioritising away from terrorism to dealing with the NATO alliance's most aggressive peer competitor, Russia, in particular that a new Special Operations Concept aimed specifically at dealing with some of the challenges coming from Russia had been forwarded from HQ UKSF for approval from the MOD. The Concept, as reported, shifted UKSF's focus away from counterterrorism towards counter-intelligence and counter-subversion, the guiding ethos behind this, according to "a senior officer", was "Right now you do nothing or you escalate. We want to expand that competitive space", further reports indicating it recommended deeper cooperation with the armed forces

and security agencies of friendly states under so-called "hybrid" or "grey zone" threat from the Russians.[vi]

At least one such report alleges the Concept is driven as much by budgetary concerns as by strategic imperatives.[vii] This seems plausible, given that since the 1980s, the principal function of the MOD has been budget management and its focus very much on the means of strategy rather than the ends. Consequently, the major landmarks in British defence policy over the past three decades have been a series of 'Strategic Defence Reviews' (SDRs) which were, essentially, reviews of defence expenditure resulting in sometimes swingeing cuts in spending and troop numbers falling consistently over this period.[viii] For instance, the British Army has fallen from a strength of just under 153,000 at the end of the Cold War in 1989 to a projected one, for 2020, of 82,000 and might struggle to reach even that thanks to problems with recruitment and retention.[ix]

Yet, throughout this period, UKSF have expanded noticeably, particularly since the 9/11 attacks in 2001 and, indeed, seem to have become invulnerable to the impact of contracting defence spending. In 2003, presenting a White Paper proposing amendments to the 1998 SDR – which cut the size of the Royal Navy and RAF - the then UK Defence Secretary, Geoffrey Hoon, promised increased investment in "intelligence gathering [and] network-centric capability (including enhanced Strike and Special Forces Capabilities)". [x] The 2015 SDR promised "We will more than double our planned current investment in Special Forces equipment to enhance their ability to operate and strike globally…and in particular to enhance their counter-terrorism capabilities", stating explicitly that their supporting air fleet would be updated – this from a government carrying out a stringent austerity programme and whose previous SDR, in 2010, cut Army numbers by several thousand.[xi] This was followed in 2017 the then Prime Minister, Theresa May, promising another £300 million to bring UKSF "up to strength" while other units were still being cut and a year later, the latest of the CONTEST series, which outlines the UK government's measures for dealing with terrorism, stated explicitly that £2billion would be invested in UKSF as part of a multi-agency strategy to "Step up our ability to deliver end-to-end degradation of terrorist groups and networks overseas" and just as explicitly that this would be focused on Syria and Iraq as part of the Global Coalition against Daesh.[xii]

The impact of this spending is highly visible. In 2009, the post of Director UKSF – the senior Army officer double-hatted as overall commander of British Special Forces and overseer of their doctrine, training and standards - was elevated from brigadier to major general, and the Director now presides over a sizeable all-arms force. At the core of UKSF are the British Army's 22 Special Air Service Regiment (22 SAS) and the Royal Marines' Special Boat Service (SBS), units similar in organisation, equipment and personnel selection procedures and performing the same broad range of tasks but each retaining some specialist capabilities, 22

SAS in land and airborne operations, the SBS in maritime and littoral. Both originated in the Second World War and were joined in the mid-2000s by two "new" Special Forces units with distinguished ancestry of their own. The Special Reconnaissance Regiment (SRR) was formed in April 2005 and is descended from 14 Field Security and Intelligence Company, which carried out covert surveillance in IRA-friendly parts of Northern Ireland during the "Troubles" from the 1970s to the 1990s.[xiii] The SRR's strength, organisation and operational role are all classified but it can be presumed it carries out a similar covert reconnaissance and surveillance role for UKSF, other military headquarters, MI5, MI6 and UK Government and it is believed to include female operators like 14 Company before it.[xiv] On strength the following year was the Special Forces Support Group (SFSG), a specialist airborne battalion formed from First Battalion, The Parachute Regiment (1 Para), three of its four Strike Companies incorporating a platoon from the Royal Marines and the fourth a platoon from the Royal Air Force Regiment's airborne No.2 Squadron, alongside specialist elements The Parachute Regiment's other three battalions do not have.[xv] Mirroring 75th Ranger Regiment in JSOC, SFSG carries out a broad range of tasks supporting 22 SAS, the SBS and SRR including fire support and quick reaction to enemy counterattacks. However, like the Rangers, they have executed strikes of their own against HVTs in Afghanistan, operations seeing The Parachute Regiment carry out its first combat jumps since the Suez crisis in 1956.

Although figures are classified, UKSF almost certainly number at least 2,000 people plus dozens of specialist vehicles and aircraft and have expanded conspicuously at a time when the rest of the British Armed Forces have shrunk and the Army now *aspires* to a strength of just over half what it was thirty years ago. The number of Special Forces officers rising to very senior positions is also noticeable, culminating in General Sir Mark Carleton-Smith, a former Commanding Officer (CO) of 22 SAS and Director UKSF being appointed as Chief of the General Staff in June 2018. Eight of his fifteen predecessors as CO 22 SAS and Director have subsequently reached three-star rank or above, the most famous being General Sir Peter de la Billiere, commander of British Forces in the Gulf in 1990-91, General Sir Michael Rose, first to hold the official title of Director UKSF before commanding the United Nation (UN) Protection Force in Bosnia in 1994-1995 and Lieutenant General Sir Graeme Lamb, Deputy Commanding General of the Multinational Force in Iraq from 2006 to 2007.[xvi]

It can be construed, therefore, that the UK Government values its Special Forces highly, almost certainly as one of those national military assets allowing the UK to "punch above its weight" globally into the 21st century. What follows discusses what UKSF may offer in return over the next decade whether or not the new Concept becomes doctrine and attempts to place UKSF, in their current form, in the wider context of Britain's pursuit of global policy aims as it appears to stand now and in a small range of plausible

futures. As to the 'so what', there are several reasons why this matters, the most obvious being that despite events since June 2016 – and probably now because of them - the UK will remain a global player as a key member of NATO and the UN and a close US ally whose armed forces come with some world-class specialist capabilities and no national caveats. The structure of Britain's armed forces, and how it uses them are therefore matters of global interest, even more so now, given that the "West", broadly defined, is challenged by a growingly assertive Russia, China and Iran. Moreover, at non-state level, the global jihadi movement is far from extinct and nor is Irish Republicanism, an internal security issue vexing the UK for 150 years now.

Where UKSF fit in

The paper adopts the broad view of strategy as how states or other actors pursue defence and security-based policy aims, which depends in turn on matching actual or potential opposition with one's own capabilities and resources. So, a sound start would be to clarify what part Special Forces play in this process. The answer is simpler than may be supposed: as the author has stated elsewhere, Special Forces are like any other military unit – they have a designated role for which they are trained, organised and equipped and their strategic effect hinges on them being used properly in this role.[xvii] This role is to carry out tactical actions producing strategic effect out of proportion to the amounts of personnel and equipment committed and, increasingly since 1945, doing so while leaving as light a physical and political footprint as possible in situations where committing larger forces may impact badly on policy, their country's standing in the world or the government's standing with its own people. The NATO definition of "special operations" is explicit about this: "Politico-military considerations may require clandestine or covert techniques and the acceptance of a degree of political or military risk not associated with operations by conventional forces."[xviii] So, a special operation ideally features high levels of precision, surprise and deniability, essential in situations where precisely focused effect is needed and casualties, collateral damage and political fallout must be kept to a minimum.[xix] Modern Special Forces are tailored for this kind of mission: they are agile and have reach, being maintained at very high states of readiness for deployment and are deployable anywhere their designated air transport can take them, far more quickly than most conventional forces. Personnel and selection procedures are tied closely to maintaining this capability: candidates for 22 SAS, the SBS and SRR must serve in the British forces for at least three years before applying to undergo the notorious 'Selection', which lasts for seven months and typically has a failure rate above 90%. Moreover, while any serving member of the British forces can apply, the bulk of successful candidates for 22 SAS traditionally come from a handful of elite infantry regiments – The Parachute Regiment and Foot Guards featuring prominently - while

the SBS recruits overwhelmingly from The Royal Marines. Candidates from these units will have endured prolonged and challenging recruit training and selection procedures to get into their original units before even attempting Selection and many will have done multiple operational tours also.[xx] Consequently, UKSF's ranks are filled with experienced soldiers showing approved levels of the determination, self-discipline, physical bravery and mental agility to complete challenging missions deep inside hostile territory.[xxi]

Tasks remain broadly as they were in the 1940s - surveillance and reconnaissance, support and influence, and offensive action against high value targets, all apparent in the histories of most Special Forces, UK and otherwise. [xxii] It can be construed that much of the surveillance and reconnaissance role now falls on the SRR, a unit formed, organised and equipped to carry out this kind of activity, freeing 22 SAS, the SBS and the Support Group to focus on offensive action along with influence and support, which involves, among other activities, waging warfare in enemy-held areas in cooperation with local forces and British and Allied airpower, either as covert surrogate for deploying the conventional 'green' Army in theatre or to ease their arrival. This overlaps the currently fashionable concept of 'remote warfare' and UKSF's interest in this will be covered below.

Their recent focus on influence and support operations in areas of geopolitical importance, combined with flurries of HVT strikes in those same areas, seems to have shaped how UKSF view their place in the world, identifying as they do as a national asset, their role rooted in the NATO definition of the strategic level of war – "The level of war at which a nation or group of nations determines national or multinational security objectives and deploys national, including military resources to achieve them."[xxiii] This comes close to what some might call "national" or "grand" strategy and when UKSF talk of hitting enemy centres of gravity and other high-value targets, one can presume they mean at global level. Indeed, British special forces since the beginning have insisted they should be employed "for strategic effect" and commanded at the highest levels, at theatre level or higher, and preferably via broad directives giving their commanders as much freedom of action as possible in reaching the objectives set them.[xxiv]

How, then, does this mesh with the UK's current defence, security and foreign policies? How they match perceived current threats might be a good place to start answering this question. The 2015 SDR defined four broad challenges to global security: terrorism, extremism and instability; the resurgence of state-based threats; technology, particularly cyber threats, and the erosion of the rules-based international order, which could cripple a consensual reaction to the other three.[xxv] Other documents corroborate this: the 2018 CONTEST paper stated explicitly that the threat from terrorism that year was far greater than when the previous edition came out

in 2011; its recommended response was based on the UK remaining committed to the global campaign against jihadi terrorism, including the "disruption" of "key senior leaders and networks" and "maintain[ing] our global reach to disrupt those that directly threaten the UK or UK interests". [xxvi] Terrorism is seen, therefore, as the most obvious and immediate threat, and the UK government rates it at the time of writing at "severe", the second highest on a scale of five and meaning "an attack is highly likely."[xxvii]

This points to one clear and obvious ongoing role for UKSF - counter-terrorism inside the UK. 22 SAS has each of its four squadrons rotating through the role of Special Projects Team, tasked with dealing with major terrorist incidents on UK soil, on a six-monthly basis, with a company each from the Support Group rotating through the support role; previous major incidents, such as the Iranian Embassy siege of 1980, indicate their deployment would be controlled at Cabinet level. However, first response to domestic terrorism has always been a police responsibility and, indeed, SCO19, the Metropolitan Police's armed response wing – whose Counterterrorist Specialist Firearms Officer unit cross-trains regularly with the Special Projects Team - are now seen as global leaders in domestic counterterrorism, passing on their skills via The ATLAS Network, an association of police tactical response units from all European Union countries plus Switzerland and Sweden and in 2016 the Home Office authorised them to select and train 600 new officers following a long hiatus. [xxviii] The threat from domestic terrorism is not going away any time soon, and dealing with it will remain a key UKSF role probably beyond 2030, one in which the SRR is likely to be particularly busy alongside UKSF's specialist police colleagues. However, as hinted already, UKSF's most salient role in dealing with terrorism appears to be taking the war back to the terrorists in their havens overseas, leading to one way in which UKSF's role might evolve and expand.

UKSF in small and remote wars

The "Global War on Terror" has produced two highly divisive "regime change"- themed interventions, in Afghanistan, at a cost of over 450 British dead, and Iraq, with 179 killed and many more maimed for life in both theatres and the strategic worth of both campaigns is dubious in the light of the kind of national governments and security situations they have created. Emily Knowles of the Oxford Research Group is probably not wrong in stating that "The controversy surrounding the 2003 decision to go to war in Iraq has cast a 'long shadow' over British foreign policy, and has had implications for parliamentary and public trust in the decision-making process surrounding the deployment of British troops", noting also the war-weariness the decade-long deployment in Afghanistan seems to have induced in the British public.[xxix] An obvious expression of this was the 29 August 2013 parliamentary vote rejecting

British military action against the Assad regime in Syria, identified explicitly by Alistair Burt, the Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa as indication of "public hesitation about the use of armed force"; that same year the MOD Commissioned a report discussing how to maintain military operations overseas despite this, recommending an increase in spending in UKSF almost certainly linked to the pledge for an extra £5 billion mentioned already.[xxx]

UKSF, in partial response, are showing an interest in the concept of "remote warfare".[xxxi] The term originated in the 2000s and is of major current interest to the aforementioned Oxford Research Group, a leftward-leaning British foreign policy think tank focusing on the causes of armed conflicts and alternative means to resolving them, and currently running a research programme on 'remote warfare' and its implications. The Group's core argument is rooted in the current political atmosphere: given a range of current political and social factors – particularly risk-averseness among the political class and distrust of politicians among the voting public, to which we can add shrinking defence budgets – and a real need to act against terrorists in their safe havens alongside pressure from allies, there is a strong incentive for Western governments to wage war by "remote" or "discreet" means instead of deploying large numbers of 'boots on the ground' with the level of political and military commitment and the risks that entails.[xxxii] . The most obvious of these 'remote' assets are airpower (including unmanned systems), Special Forces and proxy local 'partners' and the concept does provide a convincing rationale for why British governments expanded their SF capabilities while other forces were cut as given their salient characteristics, UKSF are, indeed, an excellent fit for "remote" operations as demonstrated recently in Iraq, Libya and Syria. Moreover, they have collective memory to draw upon: as with many fashionable military concepts, the term "remote warfare" might be new, but the assumptions and practices it encompasses are not: 22 SAS have carried out "remote" operations for almost sixty years, most obviously in the defeat of the communist insurgency in Dhofar, southern Oman, in the 1970s, cited often as their finest hour.[xxxiii] They deployed to Dhofar as "British Army Training Teams", there ostensibly to train the Sultan of Oman's Armed Forces but actually raising, training and then operating alongside *firquats*, local militias consisting partially of turned insurgents which proved highly effective at taking on the communist *adoo* in regions of the Dhofar mountains they had previously thought safe, supported from the air by British-made Strikemasters bearing the markings of the Sultan of Oman's Armed Forces but flown by RAF pilots on attachment.[xxxiv]

A likely future role for UKSF might, therefore, be in Dhofar-type support and influence operations in regions experiencing aggressive penetration by jihadi groups or state-based "peer competitors" and their proxies which may, in extreme cases, need to escalate into kinetic interventions of the type seen in Libya in 2011. In some circumstances

these would combine with HVT strikes as appears to be the case in Syria. There are hints on where this might happen: Daesh has been destroyed in Iraq and appears on its last legs in Syria, but the international jihadi movement has metastasised from region to region before and it is still likely that jihadis will seek to establish themselves in any weak, unstable or war-torn country where there is a Sunni Islamic dimension, a situation which might also attract the malevolent interest of Russia or Iran. It is probable, therefore, that UKSF will be involved in something having many characteristics of "remote warfare" somewhere else in the Middle East or Africa by 2030 and possibly over a prolonged period, so their interest in the concept seems justified.

UKSF and Peer Competitors

Whatever the interest in "remote warfare", it seems now that the most pressing issue facing UKSF is that outlined in the new Concept and the reorientation of mission types it might entail. Reports indicate that the Concept hinges on recent government priorities and UKSF's existing strengths and, as Mark Urban puts it, "continuing to provide more options for low-profile actions in places where overtly committing conventional troops would be difficult", the aim apparently being to neutralise Russian action before war breaks out.[xxxv] The context for this is obvious, a Foreign Office appreciation in late 2018 - almost certainly prompted by the Russians' assassination attempt on the former GRU officer, Sergei Skripal, and his daughter in Salisbury in March - identifying Russia as "a declining power that in increasingly willing to and able to use both traditional and new capabilities...to act as a disruptor in international relations", commending the UK government for its strong reaction to the Skripal episode while recommending it "continue to work closely with its allies to counter Russian disinformation campaigns and deter its hybrid warfare tactics [sic]", such as those used to seize Crimea in 2014 and which also proved very effective against British forces in Iraq when applied by Iran the decade before.[xxxvi]

The Russians are not unaware of their dubious chances of winning a conventional war with a US-led NATO and many see their use of so-called "hybrid warfare", with all the problems it poses in international law and the domestic law of liberal states, as a means of securing foreign policy aims without the risk of NATO invoking its Article V and armed hostilities breaking out.[xxxvii] Countering such a strategy successfully could therefore cripple swathes of their disruptive external policy and in this case, would involve mutating the counter-terrorist role at which UKSF have gathered so much experience over the past fifty years and much of the same tactical skill set. Reports on the Concept indicate the SRR would take the lead in covertly locating, tracking and monitoring the agents running and expediting the subversive networks on which "hybrid" operations hinge, perhaps on the soil of "a Baltic country or Africa".

[xxxviii] What follows is not covered in the public domain, but one option might be to develop a target list for "hard arrests" by local police, security forces or possibly even 22 SAS and the SBS with the aim of rupturing these networks as those supporting the insurgents in Baghdad were in the 2000s.[xxxix] Catching identifiable Russian agents engaged in "active measures" on NATO or other allied territory would no doubt provide enormous political capital, also.

Conclusions and Caveats

UKSF have been strategically astute over the past two decades, anticipating and working hard to match their political masters' priorities: when the global jihadi terrorist network was the main threat, they focused on HVT strikes and support and influence operations as part of the JSOC-led global counterterrorist campaign; with the emergence of state-based peer competitors using so-called 'hybrid' means, they now show an interest in counter-subversion. [xl] Given contracting government expenditure in the UK alongside post-Afghanistan, post-Iraq war weariness and diffuse and remote threats, pursuing security aims via combining technology with small numbers of highly-trained volunteers seems cost-effective politically also, so is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

The Oxford Group's objections to remote warfare – that it constitutes war 'on the cheap and under the radar' which empowers unpleasant local actors and aggravates political divisions on the ground – are mainly ethical and so belong in a paper different from one assessing strategy.[xli] However, David Betz's argument, that it constitutes an *ignis fatuus* for the strategically timid or inept does have some bearing here.[xlii] The 'remote' approach is applied all too frequently to conflicts of major geopolitical importance, and often seems to work initially – for instance, being key in toppling the Taliban, Saddam, and Gadaffi - only, in most cases, to see significant parts of those regions then collapse into terrorist-friendly 'black holes'. Indeed, remote operations seem to be developing a record of providing a highly effective means of reaching badly thought-out or sometimes downright inane policy aims, for instance 'stopping the killing' in Libya in 2011 or 'containing' Daesh, which so often give little indication of any desired end-state beyond 'It's the right thing to do'.[xliii] The current proclivity for remote war, including deployment of SF, might therefore present a telling example of a modern phenomenon pinpointed by Hew Strachan – the tendency of some service chiefs to recommend and pursue favoured operational models regardless of whether they match the stated policy aim or even if there is no clear aim at all.[xliv] This can be compounded if those models prove attractive

to the politicians as 'remote warfare' seems currently and there is, indeed, something of a record of UKSF cultivating the attention, if not the outright patronage of senior politicians going back at least as far as Mrs Thatcher; to cite one recent example, it is no coincidence that the number of infantry battalions to be cut under the 2003 Defence White Paper was reduced by one when senior Army officers at MOD approached Mr Hoon positing converting 1 Para into the UKSF Support Group.[xlv]

Moreover, the potential use of Special Forces in counter-subversive operations creates other risks, especially if UKSF assets deploy on the streets of British or European cities in search of hostile agents among their own civilian population or that of an ally.[xlvi] This is evident from recent experience: General Stanley McChrystal's campaign of HVT raids in Afghanistan and Iraq were certainly effective, particularly in Iraq, where they collapsed whole segments of the insurgent infrastructure; nevertheless, they were contentious, due to poor or non-existent cooperation with other forces and the political fallout from the killing, detention and intimidation of civilians by a foreign force which in the case of Afghanistan led to some very public complaints from President Karzai.[xlvii] The SRR's purported central role in the Concept suggests further issues, as the mere suspicion of "army spies" working alongside the police inside the UK raises hackles in the liberal media even without their alleged involvement in episodes such as the shooting dead of the innocent Brazilian electrician, Jean Charles de Menezes, misidentified by sources unknown as a jihadi terrorist, by Metropolitan Police officers at Stockwell tube station in July 2005. Mistaken identity notwithstanding, counterterrorist operations produce situations where operators have to decide to open fire in split seconds under ambiguous circumstances and often in front of witnesses, then face judgement from others who have never been in that situation.[xlviii] One well-known example of this was the Gibraltar 'incident' of March 1988 which, although the action by 22 SAS was strategically and tactically correct, resulted in an uncharacteristic show of panic from Mrs Thatcher, a lengthy public inquest in Gibraltar and a subsequent court case in which the families of the killed IRA members sued the British government (unsuccessfully); likewise, the de Menezes episode produced an investigation by the Independent Police Complaints Authority and a public inquest. Matters would reach new levels of complication were episodes like these replicated on the streets of Tallinn, Vilnius or Sofia: if the proposed Concept becomes doctrine then devising means of working with local police and security services and, in particular, allowing them to take the lead in any direct action would be critical, especially in peacetime.

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[i] https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmdfence/106/106.pdf, accessed 25 February 2019

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[iii] https://www.gov.uk/government/fatalities/sergeant-matt-tonroe-has-been-killed-in-action-in-the-middle-east; https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/sgt-matt-tonroe-sas-soldier-killed-in-syria-was-trying-to-kill-isis-chief-9mjqd92tv, both accessed 25 February 2019; Madeleine Moon, NATO Special Operations Forces in the Modern Security Environment – Draft Report to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly Defence and Security Committee, 4 April 2018, p.1

[iv] https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/world/sas-among-special-forces-fighting-in-syria-mod-admits-8sqzqj2ln, accessed 25 February 2019; Chris Ryan, The History of the SAS: As Told by the Men on the Ground (London: Coronet 2019) pp.331-333

[v] Randeep Ramesh, 'SAS Deployed to Libya since start of year, says leaked memo', Guardian 25 March 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/25/sas-deployed-libya-start-year-leaked-memo-king-abdullah Accessed 26 May 2019; See also Ryan, History of the SAS pp.335-336

[vi] Mark Urban, 'UK's special forces set for new Russia mission', BBC News 13 June 2019 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48624982 accessed 15 June 2019; Sebastien Murphy-Bates, SAS turn their attention to Putin: British Special Forces are secretly plotting to shift focus from ISIS to Russia in the wake of Salisbury Novichok attack', Mail Online 13 June 2019, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7138359/SAS-turn-attention-Putin-British-Special-Forces-plot-shift-focus-ISIS.html accessed 15 June 2019;

[vii] Urban, Op.Cit

[viii] See Christopher L Elliott, High Command: British Military Leadership in the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars (London: Hurst 2015), especially pp.77-80; Hew Strachan, The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective (Cambridge, CUP 2013), pp.24-25, 73-76

[ix] For an introduction to this issue, see Andrew Foxall and John Hemmings (Editors) European Security at a time of Transatlantic Uncertainty (London: Henry Jackson Society 2018), pp.9-10, 12 On the other hand, the withdrawal from EU defence structures which mirror those of NATO may eliminate some duplication of spending.

[x] Paragraph 1996 of Strategic Defence Review (SDR): A New Chapter (London: Ministry of Defence 2002)

[xi] Paragraphs 4.45-4.46 of National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom (London: HM Government 2015)

[xii] Megan Karlshoej-Pederson, 'The True Cost of Special Forces?' (London: Oxford Research Group 2018); CM 9608 CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism (London: HM Government 2018), Paragraphs 14, 140, 265, 270, 284 .

[xiii] For more information on 14 Company, see Mark Urban, Big Boy's Rules: The Secret Struggle against the IRA (London: Faber & Faber 1992), especially pp.35-49

[xiv] Reports put the SRR's strength as anywhere between 150 and 400.

[xv] Prior to 2005, infantry support for special operations was usually carried out on an ad hoc and temporary basis, for instance, the attachment of A Company of the then 1 Para to D Squadron, 22 SAS for Operation Barras in Sierra Leone in 2000. The creation of the Support Group was the brainchild of the then Assistant Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General David Richards; Richards had operational command over Barras but his aim seems almost as much to have been saving an infantry battalion from yet more cuts in manpower. See General David Richards, Taking Command (London: Headline 2014),

pp.195-198

[xvi] The post was entitled 'Director SAS' up to 1988. For a good introduction to General Lamb's role in Iraq, see Mark Urban, Task Force Black: The Explosive True Story of the SAS and the Secret War in Iraq (London: Abacus 2011)

[xvii] Simon Anglim, 'Special Forces: Strategic Asset', Infinity Journal Issue 2, Spring 2011, pp.16-20

[xviii] Quoted in Moon, 'NATO Special Operations Forces', p.4

[xix] Anglim, 'Special Forces', p.16

[xx] Members of The Parachute Regiment have been traditionally encouraged to apply by the Regimental hierarchy (Private Conversations) but Any serving member of the Royal Navy, British Army or RAF may apply. The SRR and some of UKSF's support units use somewhat revised forms of the Selection process

[xxi] Private Conversations, 2011-2019. The selection procedures undergone by SF candidates are often a good indicator of their designated roles and how they go about them. They might also be good cultural indicators, demonstrating a preference for a certain personality type deemed suitable for these roles, an argument against the proposition that any kind of unit, or any kind of soldier can carry them out.

[xxii] Private Personal correspondence with the author

[xxiii] NATO AAP-6, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Standardization Agency (NSA) Glossary of Terms and Definitions (English & French) (30 Nov 2008) – interestingly, this has disappeared from subsequent editions. Also from private conversations with the author, 2019. As a caveat, based on thirteen years of teaching the subject, the author is fully aware that there are as many definitions of 'strategy' as there are stars in the sky but this is the one UKSF seem to be working from, so it has been chosen for this paper, based on some private and confidential conversations.

[xxiv] The author is not exaggerating in saying this is a multi-generational issue in the UK – see Simon Anglim, Orde Wingate: Unconventional Warrior (Barnsley: Pen & Sword 2014) especially pp.157-159, 166-167

[xxv] Chapter 3 of OM 9161 National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom (London: HM Government 2015)

[xxvi] CM 9608 CONTEST Paragraphs 14, 140, 265, 270, 284 . The British Army also has, according to source, 400-1000 troops deployed in Afghanistan engaged in training and mentoring Afghan troops fighting the resurgent Taliban.

[xxvii] https://www.mi5.gov.uk/threat-levels , accessed 24 February 2019

[xxviii] Conversations with SCO19 officers, 2018-2019.

[xxix] Emily Knowles and Abigail Watson, Remote Warfare: Lessons Learned from Contemporary Theatres (London: Oxford Research Group 2018), p.7

[xxx] Ibid, pp.7-8

[xxxi] Private conversations in early-mid 2019

[xxxii] 22 Knowles and Watson, Remote Warfare, especially pp.1-3; David Betz takes traces the cultural roots of this in Carnage and Connectivity: Landmarks in the Decline of Conventional Military Power (London: Hurst 2015), especially pp.4-10

[xxxiii] The Oxford Group traces the origins of Remote Warfare to US and Soviet strategy during the Cold War period, and, rather more tendentiously, to British 'aerial policing' in the inter-war period. See Tom Watts and Rudrick Biegon, Conceptualising Remote Warfare: The Past, Present and Future (London: ORG 2019)

[xxxiv] For an excellent first-hand account of this by a former CO 22 SAS, see Tony Jeapes, SAS Operation Storm: Secret War in the Middle East (Barnsley, Greenhill 2005); see also John Peterson, Oman's Insurgencies: The Sultanate's Struggle for Supremacy (London: Saqi 2007), especially pp.246-247, 251, 267-268, 328

[xxxv] Urban, 'New Russia Mission'

[xxxvi] https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/ldintrel/250/250.pdf, accessed 25 February 2019

[xxxvii] This is put very succinctly in Major Brian W James, 'Sharpening the Spear of NATO SOF: Deterring Russian Hybrid Aggression through Network Targeting', in Frank B Steder and Leo Blanken (Editors), Countering Hybrid Warfare: The Best Uses of SOF in a Pre-Article V Scenario (The Combating Terrorism Exchange 2016), https://www.academia.edu/34094910/Countering_Hybrid_Warfare_The_Best_Uses_of_SOF_in_a_Pre-Article_V_Scenario pp.75–82

[xxxviii] Hawker, 'SAS troops set for Russia Missions'

[xxxix] As Major James argues, Ibid, pp.76-79

[xl] Official secrecy conceals how far the initiative came from above or below

[xli] For instance, see Abigail Watson, 'The Perils of Remote Warfare', https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2018/12/08/the_perils_of_remote_warfare_114012.html

[xlii] Betz, Carnage and Connectivity, pp.4–6

[xliii] Former UK Prime Minister David Cameron's blanket justification for a whole raft of policies, including the 2011 intervention in Libya and the EU Membership referendum of June 2016 which brought about his downfall.

[xliv] Strachan, Direction of War, pp.19-22

[xlv] The senior officers concerned are candid about this, too. See General Sir Mike Jackson, Soldier (London: Transworld 2007), pp.431-434; General David Richards, Taking Command (London; Headline 2014), pp.196-198

[xlvi] Anglim, 'Special Forces'

[xlvii] One retired senior British Army officer commented to the author that other British forces in area were particularly irate about the frequency with which they only heard about raids after they had happened. See also Gretchen Gavett, 'What is the Secretive US Kill/Capture Campaign?' Frontline, 17 June 2011 https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/what-is-the-secretive-us-killca/ accessed 6 July 2019; Azmat Khan, 'Night Raids: Disrupting or Fuelling the Afghan Insurgency?', Frontline, 17 June 2011, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/night-raids-disrupting-or-fueli/ accessed 7 July 2019

[xlviii] The author has personal experience of SCO19's Judgement Range, which gives trainee officers the chance to make these decisions under simulated conditions.

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