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MILITARY STRATEGY MAGAZINE

Military Strategy Magazine (MSM), previously Infinity Journal, is a privately funded strategy journal, founded in London and based out of Tel Aviv, Israel.

A Note From The Editor

It would be negligent in the extreme if this editorial was not to comment on the War in Ukraine which resulted from the Russian invasion on the 24th of February. The really interesting thing to comment on would be that by the 30th of February it was evident that the Russians were not going to capture Kyiv with ease, or indeed overrun of all Ukraine within the few days that many military experts had asserted.

War has a way of not conforming to men's expectations in the same way that politics often reveals unexpected outcomes, such as a BREXIT or the election of Donald Trump and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Betting on horse racing is a more certain form of skill than betting on the outcome of major or even minor armed conflict.

So what?

Prediction is a fool's game, yet predictions run wild in the swamp of international relations expertise currently extant where writers tell us what will happen and what we all should do to make it happen or to change it. Worse still was the failure of the same community to have an accurate understanding of Russian military capability in terms of being able to explain success and failure, which at the time of writing it still clearly has not. The failures are variously attributed to "cheap Chinese tires" which are presumably the same tires driving Chinese trucks all over China, to corruption, to "Putin's inner circle" lying to him.

Very little attention has been paid to the actual time and space problems inherent to the practical aspects of military strategy. In short, almost all extant commentary has lacked the lens and context that classical military strategic understanding contains, even including Jomini's thoughts on how close a capital city is to the enemy's border. Russia's conduct to date may well have sound reasons not obvious to anyone but themselves, but the failure to close the Ukrainian western land borders seems odd as does an overall effort not to isolate Kyiv prior to any attempted capture. If Russia really does view the operational level as providing the bridge between strategy and tactics, then the bridge fell very early in the process.

Thus, the readers of *Military Strategy Magazine* live in interesting times, not because the War in Ukraine provides evidence of the realities of military strategy but because it demonstrates what little wisdom real leaders seem to apply to real decisions. Yes, if the war was only going to last three days as Russia kicked in the door and the whole rotten structure would come crashing to paraphrase Hitler's 1941 prediction on the Soviet Union, then any plan, however, ill-conceived should have worked. Conversely, any bad and poorly executed plan can be stymied by any reasonably determined effort, skilled or not.

The war now in progress has far from run its course but students of military strategy should hold back from attempting to be those standing on the shoulders of giants in order to see further when little is being done well, thus the giants may be entirely absent.

William F. Owen
Editor, *Military Strategy Magazine*
May 2022

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This article revisits an argument made almost two decades ago which called for the US Army to revise its way of thinking about war. Instead of seeing wars as battles writ large, the US Army—as the chief US proponent for land operations—needed to update its doctrine to emphasize not just winning battles, but how to convert battlefield outcomes into policy successes. Some modest progress has been achieved since the original argument was made, but more work remains.

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Belligerents in war often form battlefield coalitions, deploying their forces to fight side-by-side in battle, in the hope of increasing their chances of military victory and strategic success. Not all battlefield coalitions are created equal, however. Battlefield coalitions in which partner forces have not recently fought together in combat often struggle to cohere and perform effectively. Strategists should accordingly plan for significant inefficiencies when going to war alongside unfamiliar partners.

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While wargaming as a professional tool has experienced a much-needed resurgence in the past few decades, its value as an experiential learning tool remains underutilized. This is especially so in the case of civilian students aspiring to national security careers whose training at universities comes overwhelmingly from theoretical approaches. Wargames offer the opportunity to train the minds of would-be national security practitioners by simulating real-world military campaigns, international crises, and more, assisting the next generation of strategists.

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Baptiste Alloui-Cros

Strategic thought has been endowed with an abundant literature on principles of war. Their influence largely permeates the making of military doctrines and our perception of war, and yet, no consensus has ever been reached on what exactly constitutes them, or why they are useful. This article explores why we still produce principles of war, what they are for, and under which conditions they can actually be useful to the strategist.

The Strategy of the Mind: Maoism and Culture War in the West

David Martin Jones and M.L.R. Smith

Photo 32858264 / Mao © Imran Ahmed | Dreamstime.com

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The political condition within Western societies has, in recent years, increasingly been cast in terms of a 'culture war' between radically opposed value systems: between those that want to preserve a pluralistic society where the right to freedom of expression is upheld against those who believe that society should be protected from offensive behaviours and 'hate-speech', which are embedded within systems of structural discrimination and oppression.

What has this condition got to do with the ghost of the Chinese communist leader Mao Tse-tung? More than one might think. The legacy of Mao's struggle for power in China, and his strategic formulations for winning power, casts a long – and little

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understood – shadow over contemporary political conduct in the nations that constitute the liberal-democratic West. Of all the strands of modern political theorising that may be said to influence current Western political conduct, it was Mao, above all, who articulated and put into practice ideas of so-called cultural warfare. Key to the idea of culture war is the understanding that the space to be conquered to gain and retain power is not necessarily the physical battlefield but the intangible sphere of the mind. The Maoist conception of the strategic utility of the mind, and its capacity to be moulded towards the waging of cultural warfare, presents some interesting challenges to traditional Western notions of strategic formulation, as this essay will endeavour to show.

Discerning the Strategic Dynamics

Although the notion of culture war is not new, its salience has heightened since 2016, and turned into actual violence in the United States and the UK in May/June 2020. The death of George Floyd at the hands of police in the US city of Minneapolis was the immediate cause of the violence. Arguably, however, it was the long-term consequence and logical escalation of forces that had been brewing in US and UK polities for the better part of six decades.

The manifestation of the culture war took the form of riots and civil disturbances across US cities, as well assaults upon public statues, heritage sites and icons. In non-violent form culture war continues in the felt need to 'decolonise' the alleged structures of oppression, from the secondary and tertiary curriculums of schools and universities to libraries, health services, the police, the armed forces, and to just about everything.

The motive towards cultural iconoclasm and the impetus to destroy an inconvenient past is something that should concern strategic theorists. After all, the role of strategic theory is to render explicit what is implicit in our social surroundings by identifying the purpose and the means that impel political actors towards actions that seek to fulfil ideological goals.[i] Yet few analysts, have sought to uncover the strategic dynamics at work in the culture war currently convulsing Anglophone institutions.

Looking at the philosophical creed that seeks confrontation with the Anglo-American liberal democratic project, we see the work of the radical Left, a broad movement dedicated to advancing notions of social egalitarianism that ultimately has no interest in the preservation of the existing structures of society. Unlike the constitutional or social democrat Left, the radical Left does not accept the legitimacy of the current capitalist democratic order. It is prepared to engage with the structures of that order to exploit its fault lines and expose its weaknesses with a view to overthrowing it.

How to advance towards the new social order has seen radical Left theorists develop a profound interest in matters of strategy, often attending carefully to the methods necessary to bring about the conditions for revolution. The strategy of cultural warfare on the part of the contemporary radical Left comprises an amalgam of many different strains of thought, from Vladimir Lenin to Antonio Gramsci, to Herbert Marcuse. However, this essay focuses on the underappreciated influence of Mao Tse-tung's thinking on the strategy of cultural warfare in the West.

Maoist ideas of revolutionary war have filtered into Western political discourse ever since the late 1930s when Chinese communist forces, holed up in the caves of Yenan in the remote Shensi province after the Long March, attracted the attention of sympathetic American journalists, like Edgar Snow and Anne Louise Strong, eager to broadcast Mao's struggles to the wider world. During this period Mao and his acolytes scrutinised the failures of former Communist strategy, extending back to the 1920s, which had initially sought to stimulate revolution through urban uprisings, before being forced out of its Kiangsi Soviet and onto the Long March in 1934/35. It was in Yenan that Mao and his comrades cultivated their vision of the revolutionary persona necessary to withstand the rigours of long-term political struggle.

The victory of the communists in 1949, but especially the impact of the Cultural Revolution after 1966, drew further Western adherents, who were attracted to Maoist ideas of revolutionary purification. Mao's thinking had a particular impact upon a generation of French intellectuals that, in part, constitute what is often termed the New Left – Alain Badiou, Jean Baudrillard, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, among others. The New Left looked to sources of inspiration like Mao to reinvigorate communist thinking from its moribund condition following the revelations of Stalinist excesses in the Soviet Union. Largely via their reflections, Maoist ideas of cultural struggle arrived upon the shores of American campuses in the late 1960s. And never left.

Dissecting the direct and indirect intellectual influences of Maoist thought on Western radicalism reveals, as this essay discloses, a very different construction of the strategic realm than that which has traditionally constituted the basis of Western political conduct.

Maoist Thought Confronts Western Strategic Formulation

The principal difference in strategic approach resides in the Maoist conception of the self and its manipulation as a latent source of power. As Philip Short wrote: 'Stalin cared about what his subjects did (or might do); Hitler, about who they were; Mao cared about what they thought'.[ii] How the mind could be moulded towards revolutionary ends was to become highly influential upon the theorists of the New

Left.

In contrast to liberal-democratic notions of the individual self and its autonomy, Maoist thought devotes considerable attention to addressing how to break down the barriers between the interior and external worlds in a manner that undermines established Western understandings of politics to a degree often overlooked in appreciations of strategic formulation. In that regard, Maoist ideas open up possibilities little understood either among scholars of strategy or mainstream political practitioners.

Strategy can be understood as the endeavour to relate means to ends: the use of available resources to gain defined objectives,[iii] encompassing the attempt to maximise interests with available resources.[iv] Actions are thus consciously intended to have utility. They are intended to achieve goals and therefore are constructed with a purpose. Strategy is, then, an inherently practical subject, concerned with translating aspirations into realisable objectives. Strategy, as Colin Gray explained, functions as the 'bridge' between tactics, that is, actions on the ground, and the broader political effects that they are intended to produce.[v] From this perspective, we can analyse the challenges and possibilities that Maoism poses for strategic conduct in a Western liberal democratic setting.

Strategy as objectively observable

The conception of strategy as a goal-orientated enterprise thus delineates a pragmatic concern with realising tangible objectives with available means. In its intellectual and operational manifestations, therefore, strategy concentrates on practices as physically observable phenomenon. Strategy is revealed and evaluated in relation to material facts, acts and outcomes: political mobilization, armed clashes, organised violence, plans, battles, campaigns, victories and defeats. Simply put, a successful strategy can usually be gauged by real world effects that are clear and demonstrable: objectives achieved, battles won, victories secured.

Strategy as a method of completion

Focusing on achieving empirically observable outcomes, strategy, as traditionally conceived, has little to say about the mind: the sphere of the self of private thoughts, reflections and beliefs. Strategy, conventionally understood, is about transforming an idea – a desire to achieve an objective – into reality. Strategy, in this sense, is a movement from inception to completion. The desire for completion, winning in war or attaining any other goal, reflects the wish to make something final, that is, to reach a definitive end that will be hard to question or undo. Moreover, a physically observable aftermath demonstrating the achievement of aims validates that final completion. Where the aim might arise in the individual or collective consciousness is something in which the study of strategy has evinced little interest.

The political distinction between war and peace

This conception of strategy as something that is focused on achieving tangible outcomes also reflects the clear distinction often drawn in Western political thought between the state of war and peace. Although, of course, professional thinkers on strategy, military planners and policy makers, do not see strategy as simply a wartime activity, the point is that the liberal conception of war is regarded as a largely negative consequence of the public breakdown of civil or inter-state relations, requiring a decision to be reached through force of arms.[vi] By contrast, 'peace' is war's antithesis – the absence of fighting – and an altogether more preferable state of affairs.

Indifference to the private sphere

Yet where 'fighting thoughts' come from in the first place is rarely, if ever, examined in Western strategic discourse. This dichotomy itself reflects understandings in Western philosophy concerning the self. Modern philosophy begins with René Descartes' mind-body dualism and the method of doubt.[vii] Seventeenth century liberal thought gradually came to treat the mind as an internal sphere free from the legal and confessional controls imposed on external behaviour (the Catholic Church was very happy to examine men's souls as was the Puritan version of election). This was for seventeenth century materialists a function of the body, whether it was the arm that threw the stone or the mouth that uttered an insult.

This mind-body dualism in Western thought over time came to delineate, at least in England, the separation of the private from the public realm, which in turn established the grounds of social contract theory and the 'cultural inheritance' of Western liberalism. Through a series of unintended consequences, it enabled a more liberal and rationally enlightened polity to develop. In essence, so long as subjects acknowledged their temporal allegiance to the constitutional monarch or the republic, the state would not seek to look into men's souls.

Over time, the *quid pro quo* of outward conformity in return for the state's indifference to the private beliefs of its subjects enabled a political language and practice of individualism. Inexorably, the idea of the liberal democratic state as a container of individual legal rights, including the right to free speech and dissent became normalised.

Although the concept of the private self was to be challenged by the growth of the administrative state and totalitarian ideologies during the twentieth century, the notion of the self-regarding autonomous individual – endowed with the vote and a right to political participation – remained the foundational condition of the Western liberal polity.

The Concept of Universal Struggle

In contrast, Mao sought control of the mind collectively and individually for the purposes of creating revolution. His strategic novelty in this respect resides in the challenge posed to notions of finality and completion in Western strategic discourse. For Mao, there was no endpoint, no single decisive victory, only endless struggle; a condition embodied in the phrase often ascribed to Mao (and Leon Trotsky) of 'permanent revolution'.

Mao elaborated his thinking about the ceaseless nature of struggle in *On Contradiction* (1937). He asserted that the 'interdependence of the contradictory aspects present in all things and the struggle between these aspects determine the life of all things and push their development forward'. For Mao, 'contradiction exists universally and in all processes, whether in the simple or in the complex forms of motion, whether in objective phenomena or ideological phenomena'.[viii]

The implication of Mao's ideas were that the interior realm of thought and belief was a site of contestation, and constituted the key to revolutionary progress because 'Contradiction is universal and absolute, it is present in the process of development of all things, and permeates every process from beginning to end'. 'The old unity with its constituent opposites', Mao continued, 'yields to a new unity with its constituent opposites, whereupon a new process emerges to replace the old. The old process ends and the new one begins. The new process contains new contradictions and begins its own history of the development of contradictions'.[ix]

Mao's thinking about the universal struggle of contradictions confronts Western strategic understandings about the separation of the physically observable from the intangible. Mao was not, however, the first to make the connection between the material and the intangible elements of strategy.

Did Clausewitz Get There First?

Carl von Clausewitz is perhaps the one figure in the Western strategic tradition to challenge the notion of strategic completion. Clausewitz's notion of the trinitarian theory is often associated far more with the 'passions' than the mind.[x] However, there are intimations, albeit somewhat inchoate, that he intuitively grasped the inherent power of the interior realm. In a short and under-analysed passage in *On War*, he observed: 'The result in war is never final'. He continued: 'even the outcome of a war is not always to be regarded as final. The defeated state often considers the outcome merely a transitory evil, for which a remedy may still be found in political conditions at some later date'.[xi]

What Clausewitz may or may not have meant by this passage is rendered opaque by the lack of much in the way of further elucidation. Consequently, we are, like quite a lot of Clausewitz's incomplete thoughts, left to infer what he might have been hinting at or 'read in' what we – that is, Clausewitz's modern interpreters – wish to see. Clearly, he was writing about his own experiences in the Napoleonic wars where the defeat of his beloved Prussia in 1806, did not turn out to be final. Likewise, the defeat of Napoleon in 1814 following the Battle of Paris did not turn out to be conclusive but arguably was in 1815 after the Battle of Waterloo. Nevertheless, Clausewitz's theoretical point is that the seeds of resistance are always present that might one day disturb or overturn the status quo. This holds true even in instances where no further attempt is made to violently contest the political conclusion in war. For example, the defeat and dismemberment of Germany after 1945 may have been categorical, but it did not stop Germany from re-uniting in 1990. In politics, all is change: and the political conditions wrought even by resounding victories or defeats are always, and can only be, provisional.

Thus, although Clausewitz did not enlarge upon his observation, it intimated that he, like Mao, considered that the conduct of war was not reducible to physical phenomena, but entailed an interior dimension that is obscured by the strategic focus upon the construction of visible means to reach a terminating point where fighting stopped, and peace began. Clausewitz's other famous aphorism, that 'war is a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means',[xii] also implied that war is simply the overt expression of different interests generated by the internal clash of popular passions. Politics, in this rendition, is the sublimation of a continuous struggle made manifest.

In stating that the result in war is never final, Clausewitz contests conventional expectations that war and strategy is only about clinical endings and beginnings. War begins in the mind and does not necessarily cease with declarations of victory or defeat. Clausewitz infers that decisive outcomes in war are, in fact, inherently uncertain, unstable, and indeed may contain unresolved *contradictions* that could see war recur as a consequence of continued mindful resistance to the status quo. Internal resistance may at some point break out into open physical violence once more. For that reason, the results in war remain impermanent because they create, to paraphrase Mao, new conditions and therefore new contradictions in which conflict can arise.

Political Power Grows Out of the Mind, Not the Gun

Clausewitz's reflections on the philosophical origins and purposes of war present intriguing parallels with Mao's writings on the unity of opposites and the perpetual struggle between contradictions. It may be of some interest that there remains a continuing historical debate as to whether Mao might have read and been influenced by Clausewitz.

[xiii] Pondering Clausewitz's potential influence on Mao it is possible to contradict his oft-cited maxim that 'political power grows out of the barrel of a gun'.[xiv]

Mao undoubtedly approved of revolutionary violence 'whereby one class overthrows another'.[xv] 'Only with guns can the world be transformed', he wrote.[xvi] His injunction about power growing out of the barrel of a gun was, though, issued principally in order to reiterate the necessity of retaining political control over the means of violence as the following sentence reminded his audience at the Sixth Plenary Session of the Communist Party's Sixth Central Committee in November 1938: 'Our principle is that the Party commands the gun, and the gun must never be allowed to command the Party'.[xvii]

In fact, if we accept that there is an overlap between Clausewitz's thinking about the result in war never being final and war as a continuation of politics with Mao's contentions regarding the continuous struggle between contradictions, then it suggests, logically, that political power does *not* only grow out of the barrel of a gun, as a Mao's phrase might suggest, but rather that it grows out of the passions, fears, and moral beliefs held within the minds of individuals. This reading, moreover, would seem to fit more accurately with Mao's understanding of the cognitive sources of revolutionary struggle, as stated in his 1937 tract, *On Practice*, where he maintained: 'Cognition starts with practice and through practice it reaches the theoretical plane, and then it has to go back to practice'.[xviii]

Mind Control

Given Mao's interest in unlocking the revolutionary potential of collective action, it followed that controlling the mind was the key to unleashing the power of mass resistance. Maoist ideas opened the strategic possibility of exerting control over the private sphere as a tool of struggle and revolt. Mao's ruminations on how the interior world could be instrumentalised towards revolutionary emancipation offer a systematic philosophy of the human mind as both perfectible and perfectly malleable. The Maoist conception proceeds methodically from the assumption that under capitalism and imperialism the mind is polluted by cultural accretions requiring permanent rectification and purification if the collective will of the masses is to be made strategically useful.

Maoism seeks purification for a purpose, to make control of the interior realm strategically instrumental. Mao emphasised that the final stage of cognition was 'the leap from rational knowledge to revolutionary practice'. Having 'grasped the laws of the world', Mao stated, 'we must redirect this knowledge to the practice of revolutionary class struggle and national struggle'.[xix] The imperative for revolutionaries in this respect was, first and foremost, not to wage violent struggle, but to 'reconstruct their own subjective world, that is, to remold their faculty of knowing; and to change the relations between the subjective and external worlds'. Finally, he added: 'When the whole of mankind of its own accord remolds itself and changes the world, that will be the age of world communism'.[xx]

What Mao Should Be Remembered For

When analysts consider Mao's contribution to strategic thought they tend to focus on his three-stage theory of people's war to win power. Arguably, though, his most original and influential contribution lies in his understanding of the latent power that can be instrumentalised through mind control. As Apter and Saich state, Mao's goal 'was nothing less than the generating of new modes of power: the power of discourse'.[xxi]

Tracing the evolution of Maoism in the West, it is possible to perceive how 1960s radicals began to redirect their thinking towards Mao's ideas on cognition and the generation of 'alternative' modes of power. As disillusion with the armed struggle set in during the early 1970s, radicals moved to embrace other methods. As Collier and Horowitz noted of the Maoist inspired Black Panthers: 'The Party no longer seemed to believe now that power grew out of the barrel of a gun but from community organizing'.[xxii] By adopting such means, the Panthers were not abandoning Mao's tenets but rather moving towards his position on cognition as a means to elevate the revolutionary spirit by reshaping the external environment.

As the era of violent 'direct action' subsided in the course of the 1980s, Maoist ideas of social control and thought reform gained currency in activist circles. Bill Tupman, a Marxist scholar explained in 1991: 'The young revolutionary has only the one place to run to. Maoism gives people something to do: Trotskyism was about waiting around and selling newspapers. I see it coming back in a big way'.[xxiii] Channelling the Maoist appeal to 'do', finds its expression across the modern campus Left with academics asserting that universities should act 'as missionaries, teaching new ideas' that 'enable active citizenship and even inspire some to take up activist roles'.[xxiv]

The instrumentalization of the socially re-constructed mind toward activist roles, and committed towards waging cultural warfare, is pure Maoism in action. In its applied 'critical theory' guise, it focuses on 'controlling discourses, especially by problematising language and imagery it deems theoretically harmful', in a manner that leads to the scrutiny, rectification and policing of thought.[xxv] This social activist mindset percolates from the universities to the wider professional and business world beyond. From schools to media services, to multinational corporations, 'Organizations and activist groups of all kinds announce that they are inclusive, but only of people who agree with them'.[xxvi] In his 1937 tract, 'On the correct handling of

contradictions', Mao explained how to address incorrect, 'non-Marxist', ideas. 'As far as unmistakeable counter-revolutionaries and saboteurs of the socialist cause are concerned, the matter is easy, we simply deprive them of their freedom of speech'.[xxvii]

Conclusion: Harnessing the Power of the Private Sphere

Obviously, the notion of culture wars and the impact of Mao's thinking on contemporary political practices in the West is a vast subject, and at best one can only draw attention to its general contours in a brief essay such as this. This short article has therefore sought to illustrate how the all-pervasive thought and language policing within public and private institutions in evidence across the Anglosphere attests to the little understood influence of Maoist strategic ideas. His proto-constructivist writings on how perceptions of the exterior world can be re-ordered by changing one's subjective cognition may be found in any number of contemporary social science texts in Western academic literature, and which in many other respects provides the fuel for culture war. Whether or not one regards these developments as a progressive good, the ideas regarding the harnessing of the power of the internal sphere as a latent realm of power represents Mao's most innovative contribution to strategic thought, more so than his writings on guerrilla warfare. Certainly, it represents his most enduring influence on the post-modern West.

Whatever else Maoism may be in a Western setting, it repudiates the liberal understanding of politics, which draws a separation between the personal and the political. Maoist understandings of the private sphere reject this view and hold that the un-curated mind is a barrier to social transformation and needs to be sanitised of all impurities. Politicising the private realm is precisely what Maoist strategic conduct aspires to. Mao made no secret of his aversion to liberalism. He despised its civility, its willingness to hear 'incorrect views without rebutting them', and its latitude for permitting 'irresponsible criticism in private'.[xxviii] Whatever one's viewpoint on contemporary political and cultural developments, there should be few illusions, Western Maoism seeks to eliminate the liberal-democratic conception of the West.

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The Persistence of America's Way of Battle

Antulio J. Echevarria II - U.S. Army War College

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About the author

Dr Antulio J. Echevarria II is a Professor of Strategy and the Editor in Chief of the US Army War College Press, which includes Parameters. He formerly held the Elihu Root Chair of Military Studies and has published extensively on strategic thinking, including *War's Logic: Strategic Thought and the American Way of War* (Cambridge 2021).

This article revisits an argument that appeared nearly twenty years ago in two publications: a short monograph entitled Toward an American Way of War (2004) and in a book chapter, "Transforming America's Way of Battle: Revising Our Abstract Knowledge" (2005).[i] Each of these publications argued America did not yet have a way of war; instead, it had a way of battle. This distinction is an important one; for, at the time, the United States had difficulty thinking about armed conflict as more than a series of battles aimed at destroying an opponent's military might. Once that destruction was accomplished, victory was expected to follow in the form of an enemy's capitulation or by granting any number or type of concessions. This manner of thinking typifies a way of battle. It assumes winning battles suffices to win wars. Whereas a way of war means having the ability and the inclination to view an armed conflict not only militarily but also politically and in socio-cultural terms. The assumption that winning

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battles suffices to win wars is a risky one, and it has plagued American strategic thinking since at least the Vietnam War. As that conflict shows, winning battles or engagements does not necessarily equate to accomplishing one's political objectives. Instead, closing the gap from battlefield victory to policy success can prove quite difficult, especially within the context of a modern limited war. It is simply much more difficult to achieve "compellence" in a modern limited conflict in which the belligerents, or their allies, are armed with nuclear weapons.

Two major campaigns and nearly two decades later, it is worth asking whether America has found its way of war, or whether it still has a way of battle. Unfortunately, the answer is its way of battle persists. Integral to answering that question, however, was another, underlying one: whether the US Army—which is charged with winning America's wars—has succeeded in transforming its way of battle into a way of war. The answer, again, is negative. Obviously, the US Army's doctrine does not exist in a vacuum. It is a subset of the body of doctrine that applies to the entire US Joint community in which the US Army has a strong and influential voice. Some of the observations that follow would certainly apply to US Joint doctrine; however, the focus in this article is on the US Army's share of America's warfighting doctrine. The principal reason for this focus is that many of the activities necessary to transform battlefield victory into policy success transpire on land, which is the US Army's responsibility. Getting the US Army's doctrine right is, thus, an essential first step in driving the larger process of doctrinal reform for the US Armed Forces; it will also strengthen the linkages between the US Army's claim to be a profession and its corpus of professional knowledge. As a profession, the US Army is responsible for cultivating and disseminating the bulk of the professional knowledge that pertains to land combat.

The US Army is not necessarily representative of other Western militaries either in size, organization, or culture. Yet it enjoys considerable influence among those (and many non-Western) militaries, as do its doctrinal publications. Furthermore, many of America's allies and strategic partners have adopted the spirit, if not the letter, of US Joint and US Army doctrine to minimize friction when conducting multinational operations. The perspectives the US Army holds with respect to armed conflict may differ less than one might expect from those of other armies. Ergo, while this article examines America's way of battle as it is manifested in US Army doctrine, much of what it says may apply just as well to other states and their ground forces.

I. Doctrine as the US Army's Professional Knowledge

The major doctrinal publications of the US Army not only provide officially sanctioned guidelines they also offer a basis for how the US Army defines itself as a "Profession."[ii] According to the US Army's own definition, professions possess a special expertise that enables them to perform vital services for the societies to which they belong. Professions "focus on generating expert knowledge," and that body of knowledge enables members of a profession to apply that expertise to new situations.[iii] Just as lawyers and physicians apply their expertise to new cases, military professionals apply to their unique expertise to new strategic situations requiring the management of violence. For reasons that are unclear, the US Army has deliberately excluded concepts and concept development from its definition of professional knowledge; the US Army's network of doctrinal publications is, therefore, the repository of its expert knowledge. The members of the US Army must master that knowledge, or at least the portion of it which pertains to their individual branches and ranks, to be considered legitimate professionals. The state of a military organization's doctrine, therefore, is critical to its status as a profession. If its doctrine is fundamentally flawed, its status as a profession will be dubious—unless it subscribes to a different definition of a profession.

The US Army owns and updates literally hundreds of doctrinal publications. The list below, however, identifies those publications most crucial to the conduct of war. The hub of these publications is *FM 3-0 Operations* (2017). It is the US Army's authoritative statement regarding the conduct of military operations, and it is the base document for such publications as *FM 3-07 Stability* (2014) and *FM 3-24 Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies* (2014).

- Army Doctrine Publication ADP 1 The Army (2019);
- Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 1-01 Army Doctrine Primer (2019);
- ADP 3-0 Operations (2017);
- ADP 6-22 Army Leadership and the Profession (2019);
- Field Manual (FM) 3-0 Operations (2017);
- FM 3-07 Stability (2014);
- FM 3-24 Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies (2014);
- FM 3-24.2 Counterinsurgency Tactics (2009);
- Strategic Document 01, Chief of Staff of the Army Paper 01: Army Multi-Domain Transformation (2021);
- Strategic Document 02, Chief of Staff of the Army Paper 02: Army in Military Competition (2021);
- Army's Multi-Domain Task Force (2021).[iv]

II. Essential Observations

Space limitations do not permit an extensive discussion of each of these documents; hence, this section presents only essential observations. The first of these concerns FM 3-0. Given the central role FM 3-0 plays in the US Army's fighting doctrine, it ought to convey a conceptual understanding of a way of war. To its credit, it contains several statements suggesting a general awareness of a way of war, such as: "Tactical success wins battles, but it is not enough to win wars."[v] But FM 3-0 assumes the nature of battle is the same as the nature of war, and it describes the conduct of operations based on that assumption. Section III below defines the difference between the two in more detail.

As graphic evidence of this battle-centric perspective, we have the oft-maligned Joint Operations Phasing Model (see Fig. 1) [KL1] also known as the "Sand Chart," which clearly emphasizes Phase III "Combat Operations" as the most important of the phases. While the model holds true for some cases, it is more atypical than typical of the situations the US Army is frequently tasked to resolve. Figure 1 shows a dark-blue line indicating the reality that many opponents, recognizing US superiority in Phase III, have "backloaded" their resistance efforts into Phases IV and V; in this way they can employ small, militia-type organizations more effectively. The light-blue line indicates the relative degree to which information operations and other condition-setting measures have increased in importance to the goal of "dominating" the situation. This rendition of the Sand Chart is now under revision. But it is unclear how much it will be changed. Instead of depicting an ideal case, US Army and US Joint doctrinal publications should show multiple cases and thereby downplay the traditional assumption that dominance is typically achieved through battlefield victories.

In addition, FM 3-0 stresses the centrality of the tenets and principles of the concept of AirLand Battle (agility, initiative, depth, and synchronization), which characterized the US Army's operational doctrine through most of the 1980s and 1990s. These battle-centric tenets and principles were successfully applied in the annihilation of Saddam Hussein's forces during Desert Storm. But one decade later, in the aftermath of the rapid collapse of Saddam Hussein's regular forces, these principles proved insufficient for the extensive counterinsurgency campaigns US military forces and their coalition partners had to conduct in Iraq and Afghanistan. Hence, counterinsurgency principles had to be rediscovered and reintroduced to America's military leadership, which in turn sparked considerable controversy.[vi] Unfortunately, battle-centric perspectives of this sort generally focus on only one type of military "grammar" at a time (where grammar is a given set of principles) and tend to want to refine that grammar to perfection, often doing so without considering policy's logic which may require alternative grammars. Whereas Clausewitz famously said war has its own grammar but not its own logic, battle-centric perspectives tend to reverse that precept, allowing military grammar to drive policy's logic.

The principles and tenets of AirLand Battle have definite merit and reincorporating them into FM 3-0 was hardly wrong-headed. But the US military ought to have had an opportunity to debate their limitations and constraints, and to have had the resultant caveats incorporated into the latest doctrine. For example, encouraging battlefield commanders to take initiative invariably means accepting the possibility that they will have to act without, or contrary to, political guidance, especially because the speed of combat in the twenty-first century is too fast for centralized control. That possibility, in turn, means some loss of political control over military operations will likely occur, particularly because political processes can be complicated and require time—and thus policy changes can arrive too late. One of the differences between a way of war and a way of battle is the former acknowledges the potential political and/or sociocultural implications of applying a given principle or tenet. Thus, the US Army's expert knowledge must follow suit and discuss the potential political and sociocultural tradeoffs that might come with applying a specific military grammar.

The 2017 edition of FM 3-0 has the appearance of having been rushed into publication. Perhaps it was. After all, interest in strategic competition has been increasing since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014, and the seemingly rising possibility of a major conflict with Russia or China, or both. Hence, the US Army (among others) may well have updated FM 3-0 and other doctrine, albeit hastily, to signal it was still conceptually prepared for large-scale operations. Yet the signal it sent has not been deconflicted with messages sent by the emerging guidance on "Multi-Domain Operations (MDO)" and "All-Domain Operations (ADO)," which is moving the US military toward different principles.[vii] Even if FM 3-0 (2017) is only an interim publication intended to reorient the US Army toward large-scale operations, the publication's battle-centric focus is worth noting so follow-on publications can avoid the error.

The second doctrinal publication this article considers is *FM 3-24 Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies* (2014). The previous edition of FM 3-24 appeared in 2007/08 with great fanfare. It was intended to assist the US Army and US Marine Corps in reorienting intellectually from how to achieve success in large-scale, force-on-force operations to how to defeat insurgencies. Regrettably, FM 3-24 is not well synchronized with FM 3-0 (or ADP 3-0) which, again, may be a function of the hasty, interim nature of FM 3-0. Indeed, FM 3-24 and FM 3-0 read as if they were written by authors from two different armies, each completely isolated from the other. FM 3-24 does, unfortunately, share an important similarity with FM 3-0, namely, its lack of appreciation for the political and sociocultural implications of the concepts it describes; for instance, it sheds little light on the fact that counterinsurgency campaigns essentially amount to wars of

exhaustion that can transcend administrations, sap political will and resources, and compromise political agendas such as President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society Program in the 1960s, nearly as much as large-scale operations. They are often characterized as low-intensity conflicts, but they are rarely low-intensity efforts.

Furthermore, FM 3-24 fails to make use of recent academic research on insurgencies and counterinsurgencies. An example includes *Small Wars and Big Data* by Eli Berman and Jacob Shapiro.[viii] Admittedly, keeping up with academic research can be difficult, particularly when it deals with topics as controversial as the debate over the effectiveness of counterinsurgency methods proved to be. The research itself, if conducted properly, requires time. Publishing the results of the research, regardless of the outlet, requires yet more time, and academic findings can often be refuted or inconclusive. Moreover, the falsifiable hypothesis, a scientific method made popular by Karl Popper in the 1950s and 1960s, only arrives at a defensible answer or answers by systematically reducing the population of plausible answers to as few as possible.[ix] As scholars are aware, that approach, while better than its antecedent, positivism which relies heavily on induction, is not foolproof. Falsification itself has limitations rooted in our ability to identify the population of plausible answers with confidence. Despite such difficulties, and the fundamental problem of understanding what knowledge is and how we obtain it, the US military must actively engage academic research and incorporate it into its body of expert knowledge. The expert knowledge of military professionals, which is essential to the direction of wars, serves too important a function not to do so.

In addition, *Insurgencies and Countering* Insurgencies, FM 3-24 does not describe how to initiate an insurgency against an adversary such as Russia or China, despite suggesting such in its title. The rationale for this omission is that instigating an insurgency is not a mission for the US Army or the US Marine Corps, but rather for US Special Forces. However, this justification is unacceptable as it leads to yet another "knowledge stovepipe," which only serves to reinforce the seams and boundaries in US (and other Western) military structures that so-called hybrid warfare and gray-zone operations have sought to exploit. Moreover, Western militaries will seldom have enough special forces to accomplish such missions on the scale likely required in a major conflict. Hence, responsibility for, and knowledge of, such missions must be broadly shared with general purpose troops. It should be self-evident, moreover, that learning how to initiate an insurgency goes a long way toward educating military professionals how to defeat one.

III. Defining Battle versus War

US Army doctrine essentially defines war as battle writ large. While progress toward a more holistic definition of war has been made in the US Army's recent doctrinal publications, the earlier battle-focus remains strongly evident throughout. ADP 1-01 (2019), for instance, defines war as "socially sanctioned violence to achieve a political purpose."[x] This is an instrumentalist definition, which relates to war's larger utility, and it provides a useful, if problematic, starting point. Armed conflict in the current strategic environment remains a social activity involving the use of violence to achieve a political purpose; however, it is increasingly less true that war is "socially sanctioned." Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 is a case in point. It was not sanctioned by any responsible member of the international community, nor by those portions of the Russian public which protested it. What's more, evidence suggests attitudes about whether war is ever a legitimate recourse have been shifting toward the negative for some time.[xi] As a minimum, the wording in ADP 1-01 must be modified. But more importantly, the expert knowledge of the US military profession must be adjusted to accommodate the growing belief that resorting to force is not necessarily a legitimate course of action; ergo, military personnel may find it increasingly difficult to recommend certain courses of action or to claim professional status at all.

In contrast to ADP 1-01's attempt to provide an instrumentalist definition, ADP 6-22, C1 (2019) offers an experientialist definition by referring to war as a "lethal clash of wills and an inherently human endeavor that requires perseverance, sacrifice, and tenacity."[xii] This definition resembles that found in ADP 3-0 (2017), which states war is a "chaotic, lethal, and a fundamentally human endeavor … a clash of wills fought among and between people." It goes on to say, "All war is inherently about changing human behavior … by force of arms." And it stresses the fact that "human context," as influenced by culture, economics, and history, is critical to understanding an enemy's will.[xiii] These reflect experientialist definitions, meaning they highlight what it feels like to be engaged in battle, rather than war.

Obviously, armed conflict can be both an instrument capable of being used by political leaders in multiple ways and a uniquely dangerous and debilitating experience for those directly involved in the fighting. The point, therefore, is that the US Army's professional knowledge should give equal time to both definitions, as both do capture essential and salient characteristics of armed conflict. Military personnel must understand they are instruments of the political regimes to which they belong, their efforts might not be socially sanctioned and may instead be roundly condemned, and the judgment of all concerned will be affected by fear, the fog of uncertainty, and other sociocultural forces.

IV. Conclusions

Even after nearly twenty years and two major campaigns, the US Army still has a way of battle rather than a way of war. That is not to say the US Army, or its partners in

the US Joint community, want war. Instead, it means the US Army's doctrine does not yet reflect a broader view of armed conflict. If some of the US Army's senior leaders have such a view, they did not acquire it by studying the expert knowledge of their profession. Instead, they acquired their views despite what their doctrine says, not because of it. Winning battles and destroying an enemy's military might can prove necessary in any conflict; however, the assumption that battlefield victories suffice to win wars can result in prolonging conflicts unnecessarily, increasing human suffering beyond what is bearable, and delaying or seriously undermining the accomplishment of national security objectives.

The US Army's operational doctrine avoids explaining how different political and socio-cultural contexts can affect military operations and the principles and tenets that govern them. This oversight must change. The US Army profession deserves, indeed is owed, a more robust discussion of the relationship between military operations and political and sociocultural conditions. In its current state, the US Army's operational doctrine is not performing its function as a corpus of expert knowledge. Not only does it still retain its bias toward battle rather than war, it also is at times highly subjective in nature due to the fact that "lessons learned" in one conflict are not necessarily transferable to another, and due to the military's tendency to modify knowledge to protect individual and institutional interests. But the more subjective it is, the less generalizable it is. The tendency to modify knowledge is also to be expected in an institution that actively identifies itself as artists rather than scientists, and its vocation as an art rather than a science. It is not clear the US Army (or any military institution in general) understands the difference between art and science; for it thinks of the latter as a search for fixed formulae and predictive doctrines.[xiv] Science, in fact, is little more than the use of the scientific method, rather than guesswork or superstition, to gain knowledge or to solve problems. If it wishes to preserve its status as a profession, the US Army would do well to acknowledge its debt to the scientific method and avoid placing its faith in superstition or guesswork. In fact, so many of the processes the US Army uses in its missions—from after action reviews to the military decision-making process—derive from some form of the scientific method. The search for fixed formulae and predictive doctrines do not capture the entirety of science, and instead stem from specific scientific fields, such as physics which rely on equations to transmit knowledge, and these simply should not be applied to dynamic activities like armed conflict. In sum, the US Army and the larger Joint community require a more objective process for generating, correcting, and updating professional knowledge.

Regrettably, if the US Army's Professional Knowledge is foundationally weak, then by its own definition its status as a profession is also weak—unless it changes that definition.[xv] Its contract with the American public is predicated on trust that it will school itself properly to perform essential tasks, not unlike the medical and legal professions. Unfortunately, a flawed foundation of professional knowledge means the US Army is internalizing flawed ideas, which means the public's trust is misplaced. This problem does not mean the US Army's operational doctrine must be perfect. The professional knowledge of lawyers is not perfect; nor is that of the medical profession. But both can be corrected through accepted processes.

In sum, the US Army has three choices. First, it could do nothing and continue to muddle through with a way of battle, allowing itself and America's national leadership to struggle in complex conflicts which do not fit neatly into a battle-centric framework. Second, it could retain its way of battle and its status as a profession by finding a different model of a profession, one that does not require the US Army to have a body of expert knowledge or which defines it differently, possibly outside doctrine. As a final option, the US Army could choose to revise its way of battle, moving it toward a way of war, and thereby preserve its status as a profession according to its current definition. The latter is the better choice for the US Army and for the public it serves.

V. Recommendations: Toward a Way of War

If the US Army opts for the latter choice, it should take the following steps. First, it should require its doctrine writers to identify, consistently and explicitly, the basic political and socio-cultural assumptions underpinning operational doctrine. This step is not meant to punish or unduly burden doctrine writers, but rather to require them to ask the questions necessary to identify those assumptions before, or while, they begin writing. This will not be an easy process at first. But it will lead to clearer expert knowledge and to a better understanding of the conditions under which the doctrine may be reliably considered valid.

Second, the US Army (and ultimately the US military) needs to develop a rigorous process for determining what elements of its operational doctrine can be verified objectively, and what must be accepted on faith. In every profession, some room must exist for the testing of unproven concepts, particularly when novel technologies appear or when unexpected sociocultural situations develop. Otherwise, it is difficult to encourage innovation and to develop new techniques and new knowledge. The US Army's doctrine will, in fact, fail to keep pace with a rapidly changing strategic environment, characterized by technological and sociocultural changes, if it adheres only to proven concepts. While military doctrine should consist of proven and unproven concepts, the ratio between the two must not damage the credibility of the military as a profession.

Third, the US military must educate itself to distinguish between verifiable knowledge and articles of faith. As stated above, it clearly needs both. But it must understand the

limitations of each. Unfortunately, academe may avail little in this regard, though partnering with it is essential. Most of academe will pursue knowledge for its own sake, not for the purpose of improving military practice. Thus, academe will typically generate knowledge according to a timeline that may be largely independent of strategic necessity.

The last step may well be the most difficult one. The US Army in coordination with the rest of the US Joint community must develop a defensible theory of knowledge. To be sure, little agreement exists among philosophers, epistemologists, and others who have studied the nature of knowledge and how humans come to know what they know. Nonetheless, if the US Army desires to be a profession and if cultivating a body of expert knowledge is a prerequisite to having a legitimate claim to being a profession, then the US Army (and eventually the entire Joint community) must decide what expert knowledge is and how to represent it in its doctrine. This need not be a complicated, philosophical definition. But the US Army needs to give thought to it and to dedicate resources to it, perhaps through a series of symposia. A practical, defensible definition may be all that is necessary to prevent the US Army from confusing knowledge with articles of faith and war with battle.

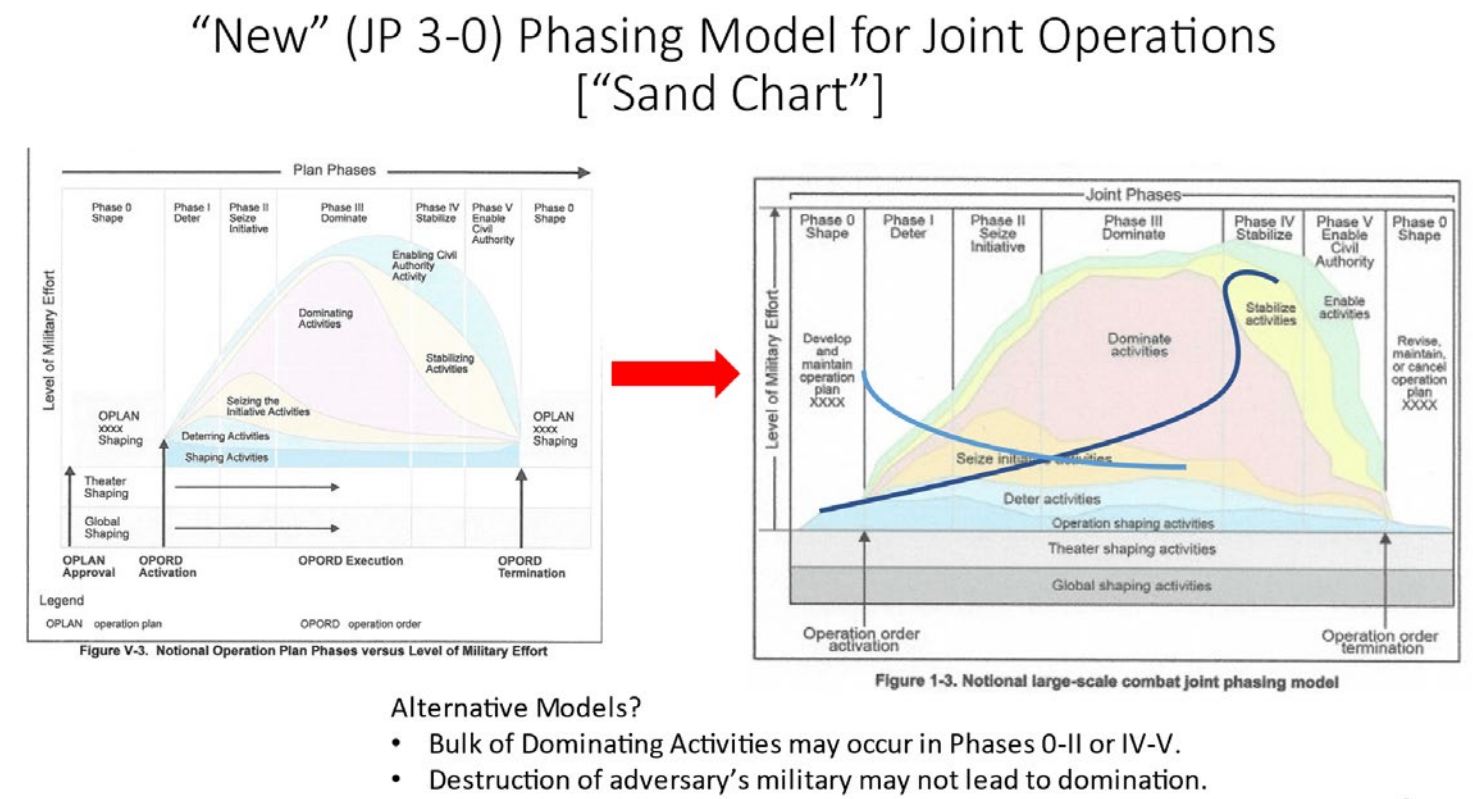

Figure 1

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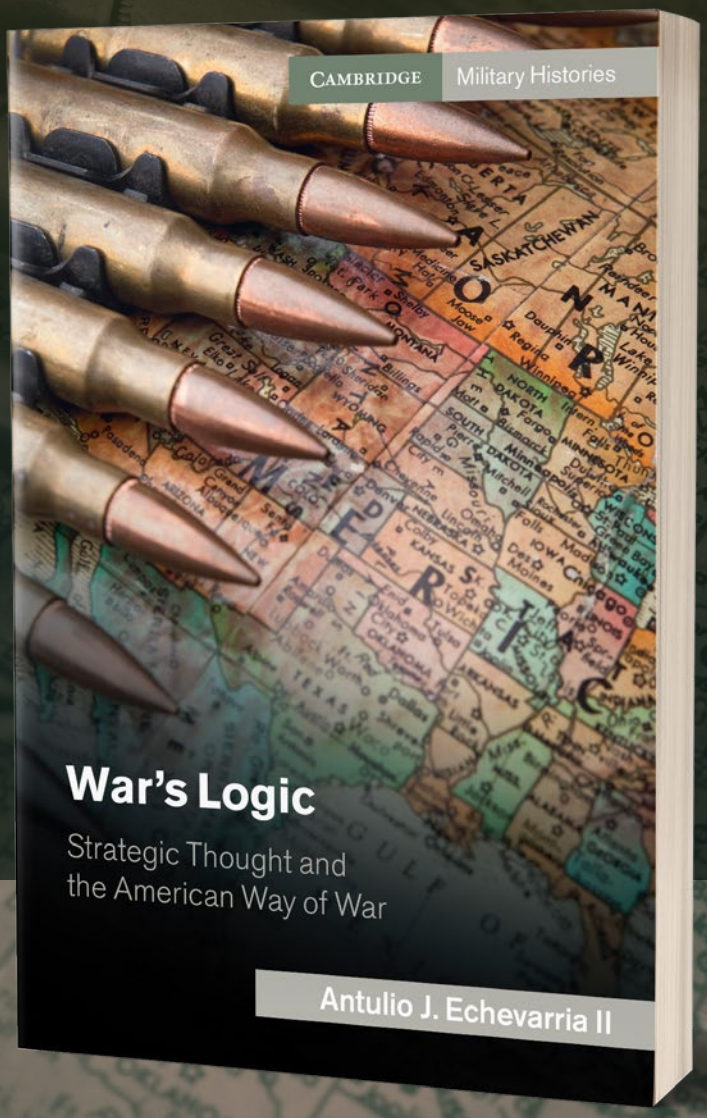
War's Logic

Strategic Thought and the American Way of War

Antulio J. Echevarria II



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Flexible Response and Integrated Deterrence at Sea in the 21st Century: Implications for the U.S. Navy

James A. Russell - Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California

USS Gerald R. Ford, US Navy, Public Domain

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Is there a relationship between what senior U.S. officials today call "integrated deterrence" with Western strategy from an earlier era known as Flexible Response developed by NATO in 1967 to address the military threat posed by the Soviet Union and Warsaw Treaty Organization to Western Europe? There is a distinctive intellectual genealogy between these terms, which require strategists and policy makers to examine the implications for 21st century maritime strategy and naval power.[i]

Deterrence is Back...

Deterrence is back as a United States (and U.S. Navy) strategic priority – referred to in the current context as something called "integrated deterrence." According to U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin: "...integrated deterrence means using every military and non-military tool in our toolbox, in lock-step with our allies and partners. Integrated deterrence is about using existing capabilities, and building new ones, and deploying them all in new and networked ways... all tailored to a region's security landscape, and in growing partnership with our friends."[ii] In separate remarks, Undersecretary of Defense (Policy) Colin Kahl, has emphasized the following additional elements of the integrated deterrence concept: (1) the integration of military and non-military instruments across governments; (2) making critical infrastructures more resilient in the face of disruptive attacks – attacks meant to slow coming to the aid of US allies; (3) deny the enemy the ability to realize short, fait accompli type scenario attacks on key allies.[iii]

In April 2021, Austin emphasized that "the cornerstone of America's defense is still deterrence, ensuring that our adversaries understand the folly of outright conflict."[iv] Austin called for "the right mix of operational concepts and capabilities—all woven together and networked in a way that is so credible, flexible, and formidable that it will give any adversary pause."[v] This integration, as noted by Austin, must occur across the domains of conflict: land, sea, air, cyber, and space—knocking down barriers to organizational cooperation along the way. Austin emphasized that integrated deterrence also must be based on four additional elements:

- Must exist across platforms and systems that are not stove-piped; and which do not depend on a single service.
- Ensuring that capabilities like the global positioning system can continue even if it is attacked with missiles, cyber tools, or space-based weapons.
- Employing cyber effects in one location to respond to a maritime security incident hundreds of miles away.[vi]
- Integrating networks with U.S. allies and partner nations.[vii]

The Navy faces a number of challenges as it seeks to reacquaint itself with concepts like deterrence, escalation dominance, and the complex relationship between weapons across warfare domains. Although these concepts and relationships were used extensively to guide strategy during the last century, today they must be applied to new challenges, new technologies, and wholly different political settings than the ones that animated peer competition during the Cold War. In short, the Navy needs an intellectual revolution as much as it needs different planning mechanisms, war fighting concepts, new weapons, and different platforms as it searches for ways to address the multifaceted challenges of deterrence and warfighting across the global commons. To move forward, the Navy should examine its experiences from 60-odd years ago to help the institution build momentum for an intellectual revolution to address current challenges.

Back To Basics

What is deterrence, exactly? In their landmark book Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice, Alexander George and Richard Smoke offered up the general proposition that remains valid: "In its most general form, deterrence is simply the persuasion of one's opponent that the costs and/or risks of a given course of action he might take outweigh the benefits." [viii] Hence, the objective of deterrence is to shape the decision making of a particular state to reduce the incentives for that state to act, and/or use force to achieve political objectives. The end result of deterrence is that no action is taken—most particularly the use of force. The concept of deterrence has been a centerpiece of U.S. strategy and defense policy in the post-World War II era that gathered momentum with the advent and spread of nuclear weapons.[ix] As an intellectual construct, the intuitive appeal of deterrence was and remains obvious, particularly as the nuclear states operationalized the capacity to build and field thermonuclear fusion weapons—the use of which would have ensured destruction on a scale that could scarcely be imagined. After all, what state would seek to start such a war, the costs of which could entail the destruction of significant portions of humanity, including the state that initiated the war?

As noted by George and Smoke, navies have historically played a strong role in deterrent strategies in which the deployment of naval forces to trouble spots became a ritualized response to a crisis in which the size of the squadron/force deployed to the trouble spot became regarded as an index of the commitment of the deploying power.[x] Thus, these deployments became instrumental in the political signaling process upon which deterrence also rests, since the actors involved in the deterrence bargaining framework must also perceive that the threat to act is credible.[xi]

Scholars subsequently modified these basic concepts of deterrence, segregating deterrence strategies into two approaches: (1) deterrence by denial; (2) deterrence by punishment.

Deterrence by denial seeks to make it extremely difficult if not impossible for a foe to achieve their objectives through the use of force. The foe, in this case, would thus perceive that the costs of action would be too high to justify the use of force.

Deterrence by punishment threatens a foe with a series of potential consequences across a wide spectrum of military and political actions that can include escalation to nuclear weapons, political steps such as sanctions, and other political steps to raise the costs of action to a foe contemplating using force.[xii]

Other strands of the deterrence literature address adversary calculations in circumstances short of nuclear war. Indeed, there is rich literature on conventional deterrence,[xiii] which is a closely related cousin to nuclear deterrence literature. In the post-Cold-War era, scholars created yet another strand of this literature called cross domain deterrence that applied deterrence concepts to changed strategic and military circumstances. In the modern era, advanced militaries conceptualize military operations across various domains: land, space, cyber, maritime surface and subsurface, and in the skies. These operations, it is thought, potentially blur the Cold War-era distinctions between the levels of war: strategic, operational, and tactical that once were defined at the strategic level by nuclear weapons. Added to this mix must be digitized and proliferating weapons technologies that have increased accuracy and destructive power that can be delivered at ever greater distances. A fundamental idea in this literature is that it is possible to affect adversary behavior by threatening action in one domain to deter potential use by an adversary in another domain.[xiv]

Flexible Response and the Navy

What does all this have to do with the Navy and Flexible Response? Historically, the Navy is no stranger to deterrence. During the Cold War, the U.S. Navy provided a vital part of the nation's nuclear deterrent through the eventual deployment of ballistic missiles in the Polaris class nuclear-powered submarines. These platforms were invulnerable to attack, thereby preserving the nation's second-strike capability and stabilizing the nuclear balance of terror.[xv] In addition, the U.S. Navy played an instrumental role in operationalizing the doctrine of Flexible Response on the high seas. If required, the Navy could draw upon nuclear bombs, shells fired from large caliber guns, depth charges, anti-submarine torpedoes and rockets, surface to air missiles, and sea-launched cruise missiles to preserve escalation dominance over its Soviet foe. During the Cold War, approximately 20 percent of America's nuclear arsenal was at sea on an annual basis.[xvi] The Navy deployed its nuclear arsenal in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Mediterranean until President George H. Bush ordered these weapons removed from Navy ships in 1991.

Conceptually, Flexible Response posited a direct relationship between nuclear and conventional weapons knitted together as a "seamless web." That seamless web consisted of conventional weapons, short range tactical nuclear weapons (first deployed to Europe in 1953) all the way up to and including strategic nuclear missiles based in the United States and Europe. These weapons fit within an alliance framework that sought to build up and deploy conventional forces along the inter-German border to protect Europe from a Soviet invasion. In 1956, the alliance agreed on massive retaliation as its strategy in NATO military document MC 14/2,[xvii] thereby linking the conventional and nuclear components in an integrated allied military strategy built on the deterrent value of nuclear weapons. The initial idea was to hold the Soviet advance long enough and as far forward as possible until nuclear retaliation, becoming known as the "tripwire" strategy. Flexible response evolved out of these circumstances and a robust debate at the time about limited war, reflecting a general unease with reliance on massive retaliation and the prospect of armed confrontations in places where it was unclear what role, if any, could be played by nuclear weapons.

In the early 1980s and under the leadership of Navy Secretary John Lehman, the Navy asserted its direct warfighting role against the Soviet Union with the *Maritime Strategy* that focused on defending alliance supply lines across the Atlantic Ocean, bottling up the Soviet northern fleet along the GIUK gap, and undertaking land- and sea-based operations against the Soviets on the Kola Peninsula. While NATO always remained lukewarm to these ideas, the maritime strategy became an important *raison d'etre* for the United States Navy in carving out a discrete and concrete Cold War-era war-fighting mission that had powerful nuclear and conventional components.[xviii]

In retrospect, the 1980s represented a high-water mark for the U.S. Navy in terms of connecting the service to a war that, at its height, could have included nuclear weapons launched from its ships, aircraft, and submarines across a spectrum of conflict. After the end of the Cold War, however, the Navy's connection to U.S. defense strategy languished as attention shifted to various regional crises across the Middle East and South Asia, which culminated in the land wars in Iraq and Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks.

With the removal of a principal adversary on the high seas, navies have not been the primary weapon of developed states. Instead, the developed states turned their focus to policing or nation building operations on land in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Sahel as well as coping with the

disintegration of states like Libya, Syria, and Yemen. Global navies, including that of the United States, have continued to focus on areas outside of high-intensity wars with such activities as counterpiracy, disaster relief, disrupting the trade in illegal drugs, and rescuing refugees. While the U.S. Navy has participated in various strike operations in the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan, its tasks in or related to war on the high seas have become obscured simply because the high seas thankfully have been free of large-scale political violence. With this retreat from warfighting missions has also come a retreat from important strategic concepts such as deterrence.

Yesterday, All My Troubles Seemed So Far Away…

The bygone era of Flexible Response is, well, bygone. From the Navy's perspective, what are the similarities and differences between integrated deterrence and flexible response? While both ideas appear in strikingly different strategic circumstances of near-peer competition, there are important strands of continuity between these ideas. Flexible Response appeared as a backlash to the Eisenhower administration's doctrine of Massive Retaliation. Some argued that this doctrine reduced America's flexibility in dealing with situations short of all out nuclear war.[xix] The United States needed to address Soviet and/or communist adversaries short of this unlikely circumstance, as spelled out in Maxwell Taylor's book *The Uncertain Trumpet* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960). President Kennedy agreed with this perspective and emphasized war-fighting capabilities across the spectrum of combat.

Today's emphasis on integrated deterrence arise due to a perceived shortfall in the ability of the United States to address "grey zone" or so-called hybrid war in which adversaries are drawing upon military or paramilitary instruments in situations short of all-out war to achieve political objectives. China's "grey zone" tactics across the South China Sea is one example of this phenomenon, in which so-called Chinese fishing vessels and coast guard ships are being used as political instruments to push dubious territorial claims in places like the Scarborough Shoals and elsewhere.

A second important similarity between these approaches is their shared recognition that multi-domain operations are a characteristic of the battlefield and an object of deterrence strategy. Both approaches envision deterrence functioning across battlefield wartime domains. Flexible Response envisioned a "seamless web" of combat integration meant to present an imposing mix of capabilities to deter the opponent and, if necessary, control escalation in conflict by having the ability to trump the opponent's response at any level. Flexible Response clearly linked conventional and nuclear weapons, envisioning the use of nuclear weapons across a range of tactical scenarios. During the era, America's forces were equipped with various types of tactical nuclear weapons that formed part of an escalation sequence that included intermediate- and intercontinental range nuclear missiles.[xx] In the escalatory sequence, nuclear weapons served as the vital escalation firebreak in which there was a clear political and military difference between conventional and nuclear weapons on the escalation ladder.

Bearing these similarities in mind, there also are important differences between Flexible Response and integrated deterrence. At the top of the list must be the 21st century's changed geopolitics. Integrated deterrence clearly is directed at China and, to a lesser extent, Russia, on the Eurasian land mass. Unlike the era of Flexible Response where NATO sought to protect its member state territories from invasion, the objectives of integrated deterrence are less well defined. All that really can be said is that the Indo-Pacific constitutes a vast maritime domain that make navies a principal feature of any deterrence framework. In addition, the political circumstances present in Europe that undergirded Flexible Response are absent in the Indo-Pacific. Other than the Indo-Pacific's loosely configured Quadrilateral Security Dialogue comprised of the United States, Australia, Japan, and India, there is no collective defense organization in existence. Persistent fractious regional relations prevent the development of a unified threat perception to drive collective planning to develop shared understandings of strategic problems.

There are other important differences. While both integrated deterrence and Flexible Response envisioned a seamless deterrent web, today's "web" is much more complex due to a wider number of weapons available for use. The nature of weapons today applied across domains for advanced militaries suggests that distinctions between escalation levels can be blurred and, in tandem, involve a more complex targeting environment available in the different warfare domains. Cyber and space operations, for example, offer up the possibility of decapitating military strikes to cripple critical command, control, communications, and intelligence nodes – thereby blinding an enemy – without kinetic physical destruction. Cyber weapons also can be used against critical civilian and military infrastructure. In some respects, this aspect of multi domain operations returns us to debates of the 1950s about mutual and myriad vulnerability points between adversaries in what was then called the balance of terror. During the 1950s, Albert Wohlstetter analyzed the vulnerability of the Strategic Air Command's 16 bases and its small number of nuclear weapons storage depots. He concluded that these vulnerable targets created incentives for pre-emptive strikes – incentives that inherently destabilized the balance of terror.[xxi] Such a calculus clearly remains relevant on today's battlefields in which multiple targeting vulnerabilities are as problematic today as they were when Wohlstetter grappled with these issues 60 years ago.

Changing weapons technologies constitute another source of escalation instability in cross-domain operations. The

preceding discussion of cyber weapons illustrates a central point: 21st century non-nuclear weapons have the potential to be used individually and in combination in ways that can blur the distinctions between the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war. Moreover, states like Russia also have fielded a new generation of lower yield tactical nuclear weapons that are intended for battlefield use.[xxii] These weapons further erode the distinction between conventional and nuclear weapons and the implied escalation ladder based on the destructive power of nuclear weapons.

Moreover, the accuracy, destructive power, and ever-increasing ranges of weapons give actors the ability to disable strategic level enemy targets. Hypersonic missiles boast the capability to hold a wide range of targets at risk with limited warning time that also pose great difficulties for missile defense systems. These weapons also raise difficulties for those on the receiving end, due to the possibilities that these weapons could carry a nuclear payload. Such a scenario raises the specter of launch on warning uncertainties for the state being attacked, presenting a profound escalation risk in war.

Lastly, the U.S. Navy must confront the wider impact that integrated deterrence and cross domain operations could have on wartime operations at sea.[xxiii] Any form of deterrence depends on the credibility of the actor seeking to deter its adversary. As previously noted, actor credibility is a function not only of political commitment but of military capability. To preserve credibility, the Navy will need to equip and train itself for cross-domain operations that may render traditional ideas of a war at sea irrelevant. A 21st century war at sea almost certainly will look dramatically different than the kind of war envisioned during the Cold War and the force structure that evolved out of World War II.

During World War II and the Cold War, the Navy sought to control the oceans for the purpose of conducting strike operations ashore and, in combination, to move land forces to and from the war while keeping those forces re-supplied. The Navy postured itself to fight across the three distinct maritime domains: surface, subsurface, and in the air. The aircraft carrier served as the central platform for power projection, with its airplanes used for strike operations on land and at sea. Cold War-era battles at sea were envisaged as a variation on the Navy's experiences in the Pacific during World War II. Today, however, aircraft carriers and their supporting fleets have lost their unrestricted maneuver space off enemy shores and are out-ranged by a variety of accurate, shore-based missile systems as embodied in China's DF-series of anti-ship missiles. It is unlikely that a 21st century naval war in the Indo-Pacific will involve a re-enactment of the Leyte Gulf – the largest naval battle of World War II.

Instead, 21st century cross domain operations may see the Navy become more of an enabler of operations and capabilities rather than the principal instrument responsible for prosecuting them. Sea control and power projection may look dramatically different in a multi- and cross-domain war. Surface fleets will almost certainly need more autonomous systems drawing upon artificial intelligence to enable ongoing reloads of kinetically based weapons across various domains. Instead of delivering strike operations on land, carrier air wings may be used to provide route security for autonomous systems delivering long-range payloads on a wide-ranging maritime battlefield.

Conclusion

This analysis concludes that Flexible Response provides a sound point of departure for the Navy to think through the implications of integrated deterrence and the multi-domain concept of operations that operationalizes integrated deterrence. Flexible Response envisaged a seamless web of conventional and nuclear capabilities knitted together by an escalation ladder that sought to convince the opponent against taking action. Integrated deterrence presents a variation on the basic premises of Flexible Response, but adds multiple layers of complexity across different warfare domains with newer weapons technologies that address the 21st century's changed political and strategic circumstances.

The Navy faces significant challenges in adjusting to integrated deterrence. The Navy today is the least joint of all the US military services, yet the requirements of integrated deterrence require a greater degree of "jointness" than ever before. Moreover, integrated deterrence also calls for changes in the way the service organizes, equips, and trains itself to support a multi-domain war. Yet here again, the lessons from the era of Flexible Response could prove instructive. The 1960s saw the Navy introduce new families of weapons aboard ships and submarines and integrated itself into national-level command plans for nuclear operations. The Navy took these dramatic steps in the 1960s and could do so again today.

In an earlier era, the Navy embraced the requirements of Flexible Response – equipping and training the fleet with new weapons for a wide range of wartime scenarios. We are just at the beginning of fleshing out concepts like integrated deterrence and determining what it may mean for force structure and operations. The suggestion in this essay is that it calls for nothing less than an intellectual revolution to conceptualize integrated deterrence and, in tandem, operationalize the ideas with plans, policies and programs. That revolution must start – the sooner the better.

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Practice Makes Perfect for Battlefield Coalitions

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US Special Forces and Northern Alliance, November 2001, Public Domain

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Successful strategies effectively use force, directly or indirectly, to secure and advance broader political objectives. While it is not always necessary to achieve military victory over the adversary to succeed strategically—for example, Henry Kissinger famously noted that the guerrilla wins as long as he does not lose—it is often required.[i] Recognizing the importance of military victory for attainment of strategic goals, belligerents often form "battlefield coalitions," or groups of officers, troops, and materiel brought together by multiple distinct political communities for the purpose of

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jointly waging combat in the same operational battlespace. That is, in the hope of increasing their chances of military victory, they deploy their forces side-by-side with those fielded by a partner and the combined formation then works in concert at the operational and tactical levels of war to defeat the adversary in discrete battles.

Battlefield coalitions have been a relatively common phenomenon since the turn of the twentieth century and are growing increasingly frequent. Examining new data that we have collected on 492 major battles fought during 62 interstate wars waged between 1900 and 2003, we found that nearly one quarter of all belligerent sides were battlefield coalitions. After the end of the Cold War, over half of all belligerent sides that fought such battles were battlefield coalitions. Crucially, these groupings were effective: they won almost 54% of their engagements while militaries fighting battles without partners emerged victorious only 45% of the time.[ii] Broadly, fighting as part of a battlefield coalition appears to be a strategically wise decision.

Not all battlefield coalitions are created equally, however, and not all offer the same promise of strategic success. In particular, when battlefield coalitions are comprised of forces who have not fought together before, they are considerably less likely to succeed in combat. Battlefield coalitions in which at least two partner forces had not fought a major battle together in the past 25 years won only 40% of the time; battlefield coalitions in which at least two partner forces had fought at least one major battle together in the past 25 years won nearly 60% of the time.[iii]

In this article, we report the findings of our research into the performance of battlefield coalitions that have and have not fought before in more detail. We also argue that a primary reason why green battlefield coalitions are likely to struggle to fight together effectively rests in political and strategic differences that manifest in competitions over command authority, using the case of British and French combined operations in the opening days of World War I as an illustration. For strategists, our findings should be disquieting. For example, especially as the United States and its partners consider potential conflicts with powerful adversaries in the Indo-Pacific and elsewhere, the lure of battlefield coalitions will be difficult to resist. Because those battlefield coalitions are unlikely to have experience fighting together in recent major battles, however, they may prove less useful—or at least more onerous—than anticipated. To maximize the likelihood that battlefield coalitions are a boon rather than an obstacle to the pursuit of strategic goals, planners must approach their formation and use with open eyes and a willingness to deviate from preferred plans and doctrinal approaches when necessary.

Fighting Together, Fighting Alone

Battlefield coalitions are formed by members of alliances and wartime coalitions, though they are distinct from both of those forms of collectives. Alliances are "written agreements, signed by official representatives of at least two independent states, that include promises to aid a partner in the event of military conflict, to remain neutral in the event of conflict, to refrain from military conflict with one another, or to consult/cooperate in the event of international crises that create potential for military conflict."[iv] They are collectives that can comprise only states, and are formalized through written agreements making promises about future contingencies. Wartime coalitions, by contrast, are "group[s] of states that coordinate military activity during a war, regardless of the nature of the pre-war relationship."[v] They may comprise states, non-state actors, or both and are typically collectives of convenience formed to combat a current adversary. Crucially, in neither case are members obligated to deploy their forces to fight side-by-side with those fielded by partners. In some cases, allies and wartime coalition partners do take that next step and form collectives that cooperate at the operational and tactical levels of war; for instance, the many contributors to the United Nations Command fighting during the Korean War often did so. In other cases, however, allies and wartime coalition partners keep their forces separate; the Soviet forces fought no meaningful battles alongside American and British troops during World War II, and the Allies experience has been replicated in many other wars.

The reasons why some alliances and wartime coalitions deepen their cooperation and form battlefield coalitions are myriad, complex, and idiosyncratic. There are a number of factors that incentivize cooperation at the operational and tactical level, including that doing so allows for greater resource pooling, aggregation of larger numbers of troops, enforced burden sharing, and the opportunity to exploit comparative advantages by assigning specialized troops to tasks in which they are likely to be most effective. However, there are also a number of factors that could disincentivize creation of battlefield coalitions, including disagreement among the partners about the precise political and strategic aims to be pursued; the necessity for all contributors to sacrifice some degree of operational authority and autonomy; difficulties in establishing functional command and control arrangements; insufficient levels of interoperability in personnel (skills, language capabilities), weapons platforms, communications equipment; and logistical challenges in bringing together the combined force and sustaining it for the duration of the engagement.

How individual alliance and wartime coalition members weigh the costs and benefits of working more closely with their partners and forming battlefield coalitions is thus likely to be influenced by a wide range of political, strategic, operational, tactical, and other factors that defy easy categorization or assessment. The variable ways in which the different incentives and disincentives are weighed are reflected in the diversity of battlefield coalitions that fought together during the twentieth century: there is no

clear driver of the formation of such groups. For example, one might expect that having an especially powerful partner that could assume many of the transaction and coordination costs of forming and sustaining a coalition might make such groups more likely.[vi] In fact, superpower participation does not seem to be that important; the United States contributed forces to only about 34% of all battlefield coalitions that fought between 1900 and 2003, and only about 39% of all battlefield coalitions that fought after the end of the Cold War. Similarly, one might think that democracies are especially cooperative and likely to form battlefield coalitions.[vii] However, less than 50% of battlefield coalitions that fought since the turn of the twentieth century included any forces fielded by democracies.[viii] Treaty commitments are another potential explainer, as pre-existing agreements to fight together would allow partners time to work through many of the organizational and logistical problems that inhibit the creation of battlefield coalitions. Yet less than 40% of all battlefield coalitions that fought since 1900 included at least two members that had previously concluded a written agreement to come to one another's defense.[ix] Sovereignty status also does not seem to matter, as approximately 40% of all battlefield coalitions included forces fielded by at least one non-state actor. There is little to unite the 228 battlefield coalitions that fought between 1900 and 2003 other than the fact that the leaders of the forces engaged collectively decided that fighting together would offer them a better chance of victory—of securing strategic ends—than fighting alone.

Experience Matters

Even if the belligerent partners forming battlefield coalitions are correct that fighting together improves their odds of victory, that assessment alone does not guarantee success. While battlefield coalitions have outperformed forces fighting alone, winning 54% of the time since 1900, another way to view their performance is that they still lose nearly half of their battles. Crucially, hidden within that aggregate figure is the performance of a particular set of battlefield coalitions that systematically underperform others: those comprised of forces fielded by partners that have not recently fought a major battle together. As noted earlier, these inexperienced battlefield coalitions won only 40% of their engagements since 1900 while those with members who had fought major battles together in the past 25 years won nearly 60% of their fights.

The relatively poor performance of inexperienced battlefield coalitions is reflected in many different types of groupings, as depicted in Table 1. For example, among battlefield coalitions with two members that had previously concluded a written agreement to come to one another's defense, collectives with prior fighting experience won 60% more battles than those that did not. Examples of battlefield coalitions with such agreements that performed well in battle include the Entente in World War I, Serbia and Montenegro during the First Balkan War, and, more recently, the United States and several of its partners during Operation Anaconda in Afghanistan. Similarly, among those battlefield coalitions that enjoyed a manpower advantage over their adversary, groups with prior collective fighting experience won approximately 45% more of their battles than inexperienced groups. Such experienced, successful groups include the United States and its European partners throughout the Boxer Rebellion, the Axis in early battles in North Africa, and Tanzania and the Ugandan National Army in their battles against Uganda in the late 1970s. Even among those battlefield coalitions that were outnumbered by their adversaries, having prior collective fighting experience increased their chances of victory by more than 50%. Outnumbered, experienced battlefield coalitions that won their fights are those like the United States and the United Kingdom at Salerno during World War II, the United Nations Command in several battles during the Korean War, and Cuba and the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) in a number of battles fought in Angola in 1975. A similar story can be told about the vast majority of other battlefield coalitions, no matter how they are grouped.

The only two types of battlefield coalition for which prior collective fighting experience did not improve belligerents' odds of success: those including American forces and those comprised of forces drawn exclusively from democracies. These types of battlefield coalitions won much more often than they lost throughout the twentieth century but, crucially, they were rare. As noted above, battlefield coalitions including American forces comprised only one third of all such groupings and those including forces drawn only from democracies were only one fifth of the total. The vast majority of battlefield coalitions that fought major battles during interstate wars waged in the twentieth century were much more likely to win if at least two of their members had fought together before. Just as significant is that past performance does not guarantee future success.

			Win Rate	
			Without Prior Fighting Experience	*With Prior Fighting Experience*
Battlefield Coalition Type	US Participation	*Yes*	83% (*n* = 12)	86% (*n* = 66)
		No	29% (*n* = 48)	40% (*n* = 102)
	Regime Type	*Democracies Only*	75% (*n* = 4)	70% (*n* = 41)
		Democracies and Non-Democracies	53% (*n* = 17)	80% (*n* = 46)
		Non-Democracies Only	31% (*n* = 39)	40% (*n* = 81)
	Treaty Obligations	*Yes*	43% (*n* = 14)	69% (*n* = 71)
		No	39% (*n* = 46)	51% (*n* = 97)
	Sovereignty Status	*States Only*	38% (*n* = 26)	66% (*n* = 112)
		At Least One Non State Actor	41% (*n* = 34)	43% (*n* = 56)
	Manpower Advantage over Adversary	*Yes*	45% (*n* = 38)	65% (*n* = 100)
		No	32% (*n* = 22)	49% (*n* = 68)

Table 1: Battlefield Coalition Performance, 1900-2003

Explaining the Impact of Experience: The Entente

Why is it that prior collective fighting experience matters so much for increasing battlefield coalitions' ability to win their engagements and advance larger strategic interests? The reasons are myriad, but many are rooted in the difficulty of coordinating combined military action. Consider the experience of British and French forces as they worked to form and employ multiple battlefield coalitions during the opening months World War I. This is a situation in which one might expect relatively smooth and effective cooperation: both states contributing forces were great powers fighting a potentially existential war against another great power; the political leadership of the partners had signed the *L'Entente Cordiale* in 1904 and initiated military consultations after the first Moroccan crisis in 1905; the militaries themselves had deployed forces to fight alongside one another in multiple battles during the Boxer Rebellion only fourteen years previously; and the ground troops employed were relatively similar in terms of quality and skill, if not number.

[x] Nevertheless, there was still considerable friction within the coalition that nearly undermined their initial collective fight in the First Battle of the Marne and, while dampened, was still not fully resolved nearly three months later when the First Battle of Ypres marked the end of the "Race to the Sea."

The roots of the Anglo-French problems may be found in their similar, but not identical, strategic aims. While both belligerents sought to thwart the German offensive and push the Kaiser's forces back out of French and Belgian territory, the British also sought to preserve their relatively small continental force because they both lacked reinforcements and needed men to defend imperial outposts around the globe. As Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War for Britain, put it in his orders to Sir John French, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force: "the numerical strength of the British Force and its contingent reinforcement is strictly limited, and with this consideration kept steadily in view it will be obvious that the greatest care must be exercised towards a minimum of losses and wastage."[xi] The logical consequence of this concern was that the British insisted on maintaining an extreme degree of autonomy in their coordinated operations with their coalition partners. In his orders to Sir John French, Kitchener continued, "I wish you distinctly to understand that your command is entirely an independent one, and that you will in no case come in any sense under the orders of any Allied General."[xii] This British perspective differed significantly from that of the French, and particularly Joseph Joffre, the Commander-in-Chief of French forces on the Western Front, who believed that he possessed authority to command all Entente troops in the theatre.[xiii]

This disagreement over who had operational command authority, and for what purposes, resulted in a drawn-out negotiation between the battlefield coalitions partners about where the British would be positioned in the Entente's planned counter-offensive along the Marne in early September 1914. Especially because the British had just been mauled by the Germans during the battle at and retreat from Mons, Sir John French was obstinate in his insistence on both avoiding exposure in the upcoming operation and ensuring his ability to withdraw his forces if necessary. The dispute featured multiple French entreaties not only to the British commander, but also to Kitchener and others in London; multiple visits by Joffre to Sir John French's headquarters during which he pleaded for British cooperation with his plan; and, ultimately, significant last-minute adjustments to the position of discrete units along the line.[xiv] The coalition partners' bickering delayed the offensive and allowed the Germans more time to establish their defensive lines.[xv]

Once the Marne offensive began, British and French forces worked well together, in large part because Sir John French willingly subordinated himself to Joffre for the duration of

the battle. The requirements of combat forced the British commander's hand, as he himself noted: "the situation demanded the utmost care and watchfulness, as everything depended on the timing of [Entente] movements, the utmost measure of mutual support, and the most vigorous and continuous attacks."[xvi] Sir John French's subordination was temporary, however, and the British commander resumed his insistence on full command authority over his forces after the battle; in this, he was backed by Kitchener. [xvii]

Ultimately, the Entente worked toward a solution for coordinating their battlefield coalition operations by adopting a split command authority. On 10 October, Joffre sent a message to Entente commanders noting "it is essential, for coordinating the operations, that all the English troops be put under the sole command of Marshal French. For our part, all the French troops operating in this region have been put under the orders of General Foch who acts in conjunction with Marshal French."[xviii] This dilution of command authority—anathema to modern military forces—was necessary to facilitate effective battlefield coalition operations executed by differently motivated partners. General Henry Wilson, the British second-in-command, described its effect at the First Battle of Ypres, noting "I am spending a good deal of time these days with Foch on this curious hill on the way between Ypres and St. Omer. We have got our troops so much mixed up with his that no order can be issued without the other's approval etc. I think we are going to beat this attack with the aid the French have given us."[xix] The hard-won experience in learning how to plan and coordinate combined operations on the Marne paid off for the Entente battlefield coalition at Ypres.

The Future Case of Missing Experience

Strategic success often requires military victory. Military victory, increasingly, requires multiple belligerents working together in combat to defeat a common foe. Whether or not those partners have had recent previous experience fighting together in combat had a significant impact on their chances of combat success throughout the twentieth century. The Entente's travails in the fall of 1914 underscore the point—the partners held similar strategic preferences, had fought together relatively recently, had even more recently begun military coordination, and employed forces that were quite similar, but they still struggled to efficiently and effectively carry out combined operations until they had, through trial and error, identified the proper balance of authority and effort needed in the war.

These findings should be unsettling for contemporary strategists. The United States, in particular, would benefit from considering the French experience in World War I when considering potential operations in the Indo-Pacific. Its partners there are likely to be similar to Britain in at least two ways: their strategic objectives are likely to diverge from American goals, at least in part, and they are likely to be especially concerned about the danger in which their forces are placed. They will also likely differ from Britain in important ways that introduce additional coordination complications insofar as they struggle with interoperability in personnel (skills, language capabilities), weapons, and communications. United States military doctrine governing multilateral doctrine exhibits a strong preference for unity of command, ideally under American leadership.[xx] As Joffre learned through experience, attempting to impose such arrangements on resistant, or incapable, partners may undermine combined efforts. That the system worked as well as it did during the First Battle of the Marne was a result of Sir John French's willingness to subordinate himself completely during combat—a choice that no contemporary commander should assume a partner military officer will make. Deviating from doctrinal preferences may be necessary to make future battlefield coalitions work, especially when losses in early engagements may be strategically crippling.

Multilateral exercises of the sort that are routinely carried out by American and partner forces are undoubtedly useful in helping to prepare combined forces for potential future engagements in which they will be required to coordinate combat operations. They cannot replicate true combat experience, however, especially for battlefield coalitions. In service of broader strategic interests, planners would accordingly be well-served to anticipate breakdowns in established coordination systems and prepare to operate through doctrinally uncomfortable alternatives.

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[iii] To determine whether battlefield coalition partners had prior experience fighting together, we examined the historical record as represented in Belligerents in Battle to determine whether at least two members of the group in question had fought together in either a) a major battle during an interstate war in the past 25 years, b) one major battle in the current interstate war, or c) at least three major battles during the current war. To calculate these statistics, we used a simple binary measure of whether battlefield coalition partners met any of these conditions or not and then tested their winning percentages. The reported win rates, and the difference between them, is statistically significant at the $p = 0.01$ level.

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[xi] John French, "1914," n.d., Chapter 1.

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[xv] Doughty, Pyrrhic Victory, 90, 96; Barbara W. Tuchman, The Guns of August (New York: Ballatine Books, 1994), 521.

[xvi] French, "1914," Chapter 6.

[xvii] French, Chapter 7; Lord Herbert Horatio Kitchener, "Telegram, Kitchener to French," October 11, 1914, PRO 30/57/49, The National Archives, Kew, London.

[xviii] Marshal Joseph Joffre, "Communique, Joffre to French and Foch," October 10, 1914, PRO 30/57/49, The National Archives, Kew, London. Translation provided by Dr. John T.S. Keeler.

[xix] Elizabeth Greenhalgh, Foch in Command: The Forging of a First World War General (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 68.

[xx] See, for example, Joint Chiefs of Staff, "JP 3-16: Multinational Operations" (Joint Chiefs of Staff, March 1, 2019), xii, II–4, II–5. North Atlantic Treaty Organization doctrine, which is heavily influenced by American preferences, exhibits a similar preference; see North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "AJP-3: Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations, Edition C, Version 1" (NATO Standardization Office, February 2019).

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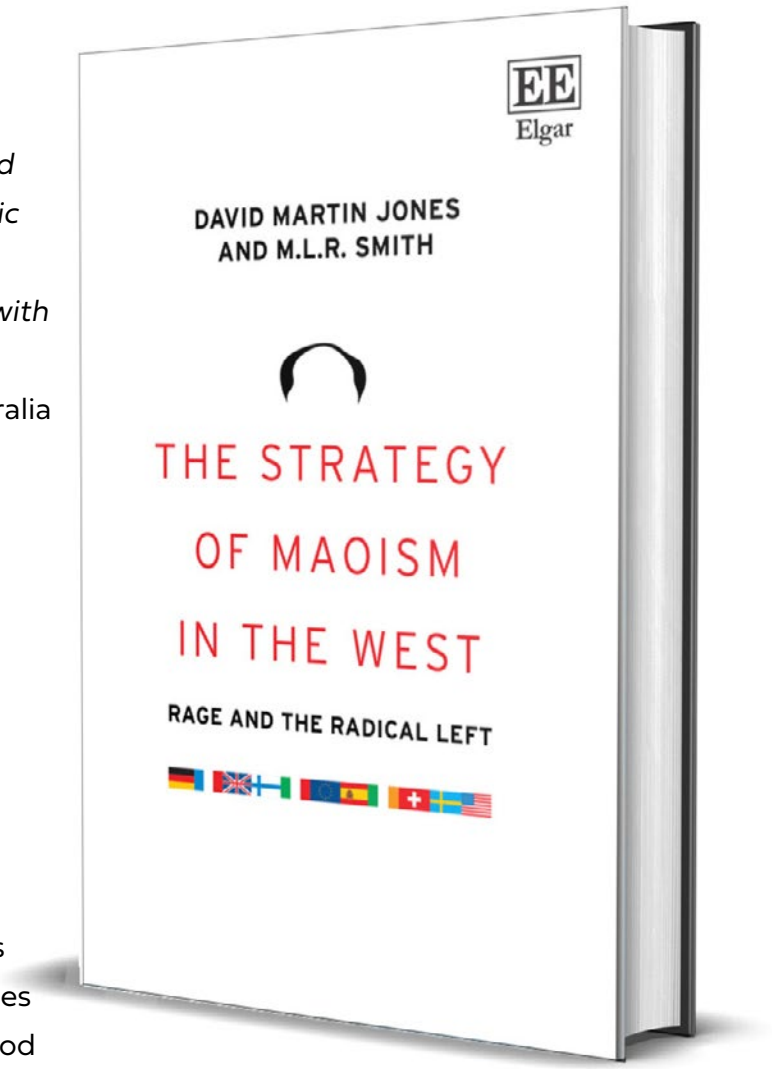

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Towards Better Civilian Strategic Education: A Case for Tabletop Wargames

Benjamin E. Mainardi - Center for Maritime Strategy

US Marine Corps War College (April 2019), Public Domain

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Recently, it has become commonplace to hear arguments that the United States military ought to place a greater emphasis on incorporating wargaming into its professional military education programs, so as to better prepare future military leaders for the challenges of the twenty first century.[i] Of course, critics have acutely identified issues with the preexisting practice of wargames and their value as planning tools; notably, that participants often fail to connect the military action with political considerations or objectives and that wargames are seldom able to simulate the realities of combat situations. The fact remains; however, that wargaming already has a long history of use by the armed services and continues to be a significant aspect of crafting operation plans and strategic

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futures. What is most interesting about the wargaming discourse, however, is the comparatively minor presence of arguments for incorporating wargaming into the education of civilian foreign policy and national security practitioners. This is especially confounding when one considers that it is civilians who occupy the chief roles in defining the political ends, directing the strategic ways, and approving the military means of national security policies.

The education of upcoming foreign policy practitioners and national security strategists is a subject of great interest, importance, and debate. Overwhelmingly, it occurs in the political science and international relations faculties of civilian universities. For students, what an undergraduate foreign or national security policy education looks like is largely an amalgamation of abstract theories, primarily those of the international relations field; historical case studies, mostly cherrypicked from the last two centuries of European history; the strategic canon of Clausewitz and Machiavelli, among others; perhaps a foreign language; and, for some, statistical trend analysis. This is a rather problematic way of educating some of the most important practitioners within their fields, producing graduates of disparate quality in strategic thinking capacity; an issue which has been brought up repeatedly throughout the years across a variety of disciplines in what might be considered a wider debate over the atrophy of degree programs in practicality and critical thinking development.[ii] The question of what an undergraduate education, in this case international relations and affiliated programs, truly equips students to do is one of growing significance yet remains somewhat elusive. While the application of strategic concepts and international relations theory in an academic setting likely helps to develop one's general analytical skills, its ability to truly instill an understanding of the practice of statecraft, much less the utility of military operations and the practice of war more broadly, is rather questionable.

Enter the tabletop. That tabletop games can be effectively used to enhance learning in a variety of disciplines is a well-understood and empirically founded concept.[iii] Perhaps more intriguingly, however, is the fact that board games have long played a role in crafting the strategic mindsets of statesmen, from the Mesopotamian *Royal Game of Ur* (created ca. 2600–2400 BC) to classical China's *Go* (possibly created ca. 2300 BC, but first referenced ca. 550 BC).[iv] And yet, despite the contemporary world's near-unparalleled access to such board games, their usage in the education of the ever-increasing bureaucracy of statesmen and ostensibly "strategic" thinkers is underwhelming.

For their part, many national security practitioners are likely aware of the long history and current usage of wargaming in simulating conflict and geopolitical risk, from Prussia's nineteenth century *Kriegspiel* to that of the United States Naval War College. What is both fascinating and baffling, however, is the scant presence of game-based simulation in national security or foreign policy education at the university level despite its prevalence in the professional world as both formal tools of analysis and informal enhancers of relevant skills. While some civilian graduate programs offer wargaming extracurriculars and classes, such as those at Georgetown University and King's College London, it is seldom a core component of the aspiring statesmen's education. There are many reasons for this conspicuous absence, varying from the increasing over-emphasis on quantitative methods over the qualitative development of the mind in the social sciences, the resistance of some administrators and academics to a historically stigmatized hobby as well as the more concrete concerns for implementers of access and time requirements.

Operationalizing the Term "Wargame"

It is worthwhile to distinguish what is and is not a wargame. This is, of course, a contentious subject and increasingly so, as simulations passed off as wargaming and its associated concepts, such as red teaming, have proliferated to fields outside of the defense sector. This article's usage of the term wargame aligns with that of Dr. Peter Perla's, doyen of the American professional wargaming community. As Perla has long argued, broad definitions of what wargames are undermines the efficacy of their application and understanding of how they ought to be used.[v] At their core, wargames are simply that, *games* that simulate an aspect of war.

Wargames themselves are not yet another analytical method to produce quantitative results that can be extrapolated into trends. Wargames are not real, and as such, they should not attempt to rigorously reproduce the realities of combat, logistics, and other factors integral to the actual experience of war. In this way, professional "wargaming" by modeling and simulation methods is more akin to veneered operations research and systems engineering than *wargaming*. Rather, true qualitative wargaming provides a contextualized, albeit abstracted, and often competitive environment that forces human players to make decisions. The value of such a wargame, especially for civilians, is in its role as a human-centric social activity that requires critical thinking and specialized skills in which players show their knowledge by doing, making the kinds of choices that they seldom would have the opportunity to do elsewhere. Thus, in the context of civilian education, likely the most valuable wargames are those that emphasize the strategic level of war and international relations with secondary interest in operations and tactics.

Diplomacy, the Quintessential IR Game

Some institutions have already begun experimenting with tabletop games as supplements to their international relations and security education curricula.[vi] This is

perhaps most notable in the case of the widely acclaimed game, *Diplomacy* – an alleged favorite of Henry Kissinger.

For the unfamiliar, *Diplomacy* is a tabletop game created by Allan B. Calhamer, a Harvard alumnus whose inspiration was drawn from study of the Congress of Vienna system, the First World War, and the card game Hearts.[vii] The game is set in the years preceding the First World War with players taking the role of one of seven great powers (i.e., Austria-Hungary, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, and Turkey).[viii] Unlike the Great War, however, there are no preexisting alliances. The object of the game is to achieve dominance by controlling 18 of 34 "supply centers," after which a player is presumed to have gained control of Europe.[ix] This is achieved by maneuvering one's armies and navies around the board to outflank and eliminate your rivals by conquering their territory. However, the driver of the game, as its namesake suggests, is negotiating and aligning oneself with other players in achieving your objectives. A coalition of one or more players may collectively negotiate to end the game in place of an individual victory.

The beauty of *Diplomacy* is in its abstractness. Its rules are simple and limited. Additionally, there are no chance elements, aside from starting faction, and no rules variation between players. As such, the primary driver of play is social interaction and, in turn, negotiation. By approximating the anarchic world made famous by Kenneth Waltz, it encourages the kind of self-help security-oriented foreign policy and deception the realist school asserts are characteristic of historical international orders.[x] The benefits of *Diplomacy's* limited variation and simple mechanics are that it emphasizes considerations of player psychology, decision making, and objective-driven negotiation. These phenomena are certainly studied in any international relations curriculum worth its salt, but students seldom have the opportunity to engage in their active practice. Doing so helps hone one's "mental muscles" in the context of strategic logic. Its efficacy as a learning tool, albeit with some modifications for teaching purposes, has been noted in several recent articles and studies.[xi]

Furthermore, on a less theoretical note, *Diplomacy* is an easily accessible game. It can be played online for free or purchased in tabletop format for generally around $29.99 at retail stores. In a single session, players can finish a game in around four hours, depending how disciplined they are in their correspondence with one another. Likewise, *Diplomacy's* simple ruleset of only 24 pages presents a low barrier of entry for new players, making it an ideal introduction to strategy board games.

While *Diplomacy* simulates many of international relations theory's most well-known concepts (e.g., deterrence, security dilemmas, zero-sum negotiation, an anarchic international system), it has significant shortcomings as well. It operates more on the level of operations than strategy and, as such, does not teach its players to utilize a variety of resources in pursuit of state-specific objectives (i.e., ends, ways, and means) – the essence of strategy. Nor does *Diplomacy* exemplify one of the most fundamental aspects of warfare, the unknowns and characteristic variability of warfighting. Perhaps most importantly, however, it suffers from a common ailment of similar abstract strategy games, the prominence of dominant strategies. What this means for an observer attempting to derive meaning from the play of *Diplomacy*, is that as a player becomes more experienced and familiar with the game, the novelty of negotiation and maneuver diminishes. Of course, one could argue that players' realization of dominant strategies is demonstrative of their learning and the cultivation of the strategic thinking skills.

A Higher Strategic Standard?

A tabletop game which serves to simulate an international system more comprehensively, demonstrates variability in strategic cultures and military capabilities, and encourages players to pursue widely varying objectives would be of much use in supplementing international relations and security studies education. One such tabletop game that fulfills many of these lofty goals is *Twilight Imperium* (4th Ed.). In contrast to an operational or tactical level wargame or an abstract strategy game like *Diplomacy*, *Twilight Imperium* is a rather holistic simulation of statecraft. It operates on the plane of grand strategy in which players seek to utilize a number of differing state resources and capabilities in pursuit of a variety of objectives, most being available to all players, but player-specific objectives are likewise integral to success in the game. This is distinctly a simulation of ends, ways, and means in the context varying strategic priorities.

Whereas *Diplomacy* abstractly attempts to present a uniformly balanced world, *Twilight Imperium* deliberately presents a widely asymmetric environment in which players take on the role of factions that vary significantly from one another in playstyle. Thus, it intrinsically simulates the essence of differing strategic cultures and encourages playstyles which abstract concepts of asymmetric warfare and soft power generally not found within the same kind of game. Most importantly, however, the course of play in *Twilight Imperium* is a simulation of the five fundamental elements of strategic logic and decision making – analysis of a strategic situation, defining ends, developing means, designing and executing ways, and assessing the costs and risks of the chosen strategy.[xii] Players win in *Twilight Imperium* by completing a series of objectives (ends) that have well-outlined requirements (means) and are achieved through varying actions (ways). The competitive environment created by the presence of other human players enhances risk analysis by introducing non-controlled potential costs dependent on how players act and react. In these ways, *Twilight Imperium* achieves what *Diplomacy* does not, a game forcing players to use strategic

logic applying ends, ways, and means in a setting that, due to its dynamic environment and asymmetries, prevents dominant strategies.

Twilight Imperium's greatest drawbacks lay in a rather substantial barrier of entry. The tabletop format of the fourth edition costs $149.95, and another $99.95 for its expansion. While this is not much more than many undergraduate courses force their students to spend on textbooks, by no means is it an insignificant cost. Luckily, this can be mitigated through the use of Tabletop Simulator available online for only $19.99. In terms of actual play, *Twilight Imperium* inevitably has a much greater body of rules literature. The standard ruleset runs only 24 pages, the same as *Diplomacy*, however, an additional expansion rulebook and several rules references bring the count to over 122 pages.[xiii] Again, not a major requirement for social science students who should be reading much more in their courses already, but a not insignificant one considering most students are likely unfamiliar with many board game concepts. Most significantly though, its utility as a classroom tool is diminished by its long playtime; an average playthrough of *Twilight Imperium* may take anywhere from eight to twelve hours.

Barriers to Play and a Success Story

Arguably the greatest hurdle to incorporating wargaming into an academic program is the question of time. Indeed, the opportunity cost in time spent conducting a wargame is among the professional community's greatest concerns as well. When professors are often already hard-pressed to instill the existing literature relevant to their course topics, the addition of a tabletop game, especially one which may necessitate up to twelve hours to complete, is a tall order. This issue is only exacerbated by the general unfamiliarity of most academics in the execution of wargames, whether hobby or professional.

With these barriers to practical implementation in mind, one must wonder how likely widespread implementation could truly become. Observing the key enablers of success from institutions notably utilizing wargaming may help shed light on solving these dilemmas. Georgetown University's wargaming initiative has proliferated since its founding in 2018. Its success relies on a combination of key elements: incremental development, university administrator support, partnerships with commercial industry and professional sponsors, and adapting to incorporate online as well as tabletop platforms.[xiv] Ultimately, the initiative has produced a robust network of credit bearing courses, wargaming labs, a wargame library, and student societies that further the mission of the university's Security Studies Program. Certainly, its wargaming initiative is worthy of review by those interested in bringing the medium to their institution.

Conclusion

Of course, the shortcomings of wargaming have been extensively explored.[xv] Rightfully so, critics of wargaming as a *professional* tool often target the disconnect in wargames' ability to simulate reality, relying on mechanics that abstract real-world factors too far to be useful in making policy decisions (e.g., dice rolling as a simulation of Clausewitzian friction). In contrast, as an educational tool, one of the greatest shortcomings of wargames is likely the potential for students to develop a misunderstanding of why choices that were made in history occurred instead of the potentially more optimal decisions that were made in the play of their game, aside from the concerns of practicality in time and resources. This issue can partly be circumvented by using games that take place in a realistic future or do not utilize historical settings, such as *Twilight Imperium*, but doing so carries its own concerns. Perhaps none more notably than an even greater need for briefing, debriefing, and post-game analysis to identify the shortcomings of player's considerations in their decision-making as well as to reinforce learning of desired concepts as demonstrated in the play of the game. In all fairness, similar concerns are expressed regarding the practice of *professional* wargaming as well.[xvi]

Wargames are an experiential supplement to, not a replacement for an educational curriculum. Intellectual examinations in the trends and nature of the international security environment and the application of military force are certainly valuable in building a base of knowledge from which decision makers may draw upon. It remains, however, that students of international relations and security studies remain almost entirely divorced from the practice of their subject matter if they do not have prior foreign service or military experience. By the time many graduate, not including outside internship experience, the only application of their knowledge is likely in the writing of essays which do not necessarily demonstrate one's real critical thinking capabilities. This is gradually changing through programs like Hacking for Defense, but civilian students' education in national security affairs and war remains largely conceptual not practical, a reality that ought to alarm given the enormous significance of the positions such students may go on to occupy.[xvii] The value of wargames is precisely in resolving this disconnect by allowing students to utilize the models they learn about in their courses, applying the elements of strategic logic in contextualized environments thereby demonstrating their capacity for critical thinking and decision-making.[xviii] As such, in a field that all too often relies on written abstraction and theoretical arguments in educating its upcoming practitioners, wargames are of unique value in filling a much-needed experiential learning and skill demonstration gap. The opportunity to enhance the crafting of strategic mindsets for future foreign policymakers and national security practitioners is one which cannot be disregarded.

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[ix] Ibid.

[x] See: Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979).

[xi] Arnold, "Where's the Diplomacy in Diplomacy? Using a Classic Board Game in 'Introduction to International Relations,'" 162–66; Bridge, and Radford, "Teaching diplomacy by other means," 423-437; Asal, V., I. Miller, and C.N. Willis, "System, state or individual: Gaming levels of analysis in international relations," International Studies Perspectives 21, no. 1 (2019): 1–11; Rittinger, E.R. "Inspiring students to think theoretically about international relations through the game of diplomacy". Journal of Political Science Education 16, no. 1 (2020): 41–56; Mattlin, "Adapting the DIPLOMACY board game concept for 21st century international relations teaching," 735-750; Mattlin, Mikael. "Anarchy is What Students Make of It: Playing Out Wendt's Three Cultures of Anarchy." Journal of Political Science Education (2021): 1-10.

[xii] A National Security Strategy Primer, ed. Steven Heffington, Adam Oler, and David Tretler (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019), 1-4.

[xiii] Calhamer and Johnson, The Rules of Diplomacy, 1-24; "Twilight Imperium Fourth Edition," Fantasy Flight Games, https://www.fantasyflightgames.com/en/products/twilight-imperium-fourth-edition/.

[xiv] The development of the Georgetown University wargaming program is well-outlined by Sebastian J. Bae in "Establishing a Wargaming Insurgency at the University," The Forge (2020).

[xv] Unethical Professional Wargaming: "make your wargame say what you want it to say," ed. Stephen Downes-Martin (US Command and General Staff College and The CGSC Foundation, 2021).

[xvi] See: William F. Owen, "Unethical Wargaming: Let us be Incompetent!," 95-102. In Unethical Professional Wargaming: "make your wargame say what you want it to say," ed. Stephen Downes-Martin (US Command and General Staff College and The CGSC Foundation, 2021).

[xvii] For more information about the Hacking for Defense Program, see: "About the course," Hacking for Defense, https://www.h4d.us/about-h4d.

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What is the Utility of the Principles of War?

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US soldiers, Baghdad 2007, Public Domain

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In the preface of 'Mes Rêveries', Marshal Maurice de Saxe states the following: [i]

> "War is a science so obscure and imperfect that custom and prejudice confirmed by ignorance are its sole foundation and support; all other sciences are established upon fixed principles… while this alone remains destitute."

However, this belief is a stand-alone in the Age of Enlightenment, a time in which it was commonly believed that war, just like any other domain, must surely obey some laws and scientific principles. Besides, this quest for the principles of war did not spare other eras. From Sun Tzu and Xenophon to Fuller and Foch, an abundant literature in strategic thought offers various perspectives on what these principles might be and how many can we account for.

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One can wonder, however, what utility these principles have for the strategist when there are so many. Indeed, no two wars are alike, and in the absence of fixed principles of war, the precepts provided by some famous strategic thinkers in an older era within a completely different context would hardly seem to have any relevance in a present-day conflict.

Then why are we still producing principles of war and what are they for? How can they be of any use to the strategist?

I argue that while there are no fixed principles of war but rather an infinite multiplicity of principles, depending on the era, author, strategic culture and context; it is neither their number nor even their content that matters most.

The utility of the principles of war lies in their *confrontation* with one another, fostering innovation. Their strength, indeed, is conditional, and "they are only useful once we understand how relative they are".[ii]

Consequently, they are mostly ways for the strategist to *feed his intuition*. They allow him to internalize features, deepen his expertise and improve his judgement. But the strategist needs to be aware of the relativity of those concepts and understand what their practical assumptions are. Thus, it is all about how these principles are delivered and how they are understood.

In this essay, I first look at the principles of war themselves, where they come from and how they are reflective of different understandings of war. Then, I argue that only their confrontation with one another can lead to a useful reflection for the strategist. Finally, I show that this phase of internalization of knowledge into the strategist's own intuition is what is really at stake regarding the principles of war, since strategy is, first and foremost, an art of synthesis.

The Principles of War

The search for principles governing the phenomenon of war is a long historical journey. We can dissociate, however, different approaches depending on one's understanding of the nature of war. One of these approaches is to consider war as a science, obeying a clear set of laws and fixed principles. Principles, in this case, are axioms that act as general laws and rules, applicable to any conflict. This approach was especially fashionable during the 18th and 19th centuries, starting with the works of French marshals such as the marquis of Puységur, Folard, Joly de Maizeroy and Guibert.[iii] War was then sometimes merely considered as a branch of applied physics and mathematics. This perspective on war reached its pinnacle with the works of the Welsh general Henry Lloyd and Prussian theorist von Bülow[iv], aiming to completely erase the role of chance and hazard in the conduct of warfare. Jomini, although moderating their excesses, would greatly inspire himself from these theories by presenting war through a geometrical lens and believing in fixed principles.[v]

The legacy of these authors goes a long way, and the quest for a scientific understanding of war remained an attractive idea. Indeed, in 1926, British officer J.F.C Fuller categorized nine principles of war that highly influenced the current military doctrine of the United States[vi] and the United Kingdom[vii] : objective, offensive, mass, economy of force, maneuver, unity of command, security, surprise, and simplicity.[viii] In France, Marshal Foch posited three principles that are still constitutive of the French military doctrine: concentration of force, economy of force and freedom of action.[ix]

But these principles are, in many aspects, arbitrary. Fuller's own principles went from six, to eight, to nineteen, to nine over the years. Despite some consistency from one country to another, these disparate principles simply reflect a particular understanding of the world and most importantly in the case of doctrines, a specific strategic culture.

For instance, Chinese principles of war differ considerably from western ones. Relying on the works of two PLA colonels, Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui,[x] its doctrine puts considerable emphasis on alternative methods to conventional confrontation. It also relies on a Confucian strategic culture which puts typical emphasis on indirect approaches to a problem.

Consequently, principles of war are never fixed, and their refinement is continuous. They always depend on a certain understanding of war situated within a specific context. Principles of war devised by Brodie, Sokolovski or Morgenthau regarding nuclear warfare obviously differ from principles of war devised by Mao Tse Tsung for revolutionary warfare. The same goes for Liddell Hart's principles for indirect warfare or Ludendorff's principles for total warfare.

New phenomena such as conflicts in the cyber domain, outer space, the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and hybrid warfare potentially call for new principles which do not make previous principles of war irrelevant, but simply account for a change in context.[xi]

In that way, Robert Leonhard fails to understand, while making a very interesting suggestion of new principles for the information age[xii], that principles of war are nothing else than a demonstration that, as Clausewitz stated, 'war is a chameleon'.[xiii] The introduction of new principles is useful not because they are better than older ones – after all, they are subject to the same biases and arbitrariness – but because the contrast they bring with the older ones is thought-provoking. Most importantly, it is not stubborn adherence to the principles that makes them useful and helpful. Adhering to fixed principles would likely reduce the engagement of the strategist with other principles and partially blind his understanding of war. I shall now argue

why the utility of these principles lies in their confrontation.

Confronting principles and the essence of strategy

If strategy shall be considered as a science, then it can only be "a science of accident" according to the Aristotelian sense of the term.[xiv] It means strategy is entirely dependent on the context and the project it serves. As a theory of action, strategy combines every available idea to arrive at concrete conclusions. Consequently, it is the creative confrontation of ideas that allows the strategist to devise innovative ways to reach his goals. This is why French general V. Desportes calls strategy "the art of synthesis".[xv]

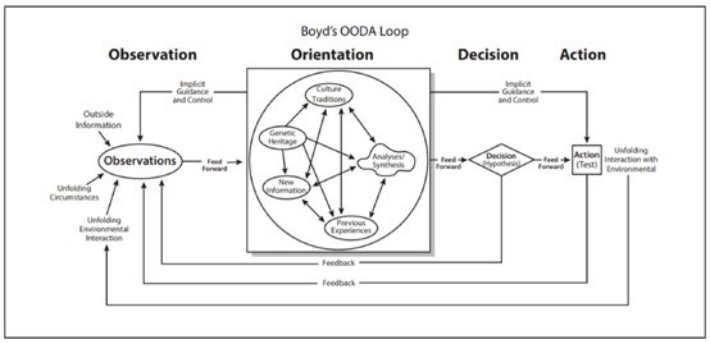
Principles of war are useful ways to frame general concepts, ideas and features regarding the nature and conduct of war. But because strategy is all about contexts, it does not stand any universal truth. This is why the strategist cannot make use of a single set of principles of war, since they will never accurately account for the particular context of the war he will have to lead. He must confront various sets of principles; understand the tensions between them and what kind of conclusions they lead to. There is no systemic way to do it, and these confrontations will yield different conclusions for every individual. Indeed, "our knowledge and understanding of warfare is a science, but the conduct of war itself is largely an art."[xvi] Confronting principles leads to innovative thought. Principles are thus mostly pretexts for discussion and creative thinking. Since strategy is an art where one must constantly come up with new ideas and solutions to new problems, principles of war constitute a very efficient intellectual tool in times of peace to think about these problems.

But the strategist does also make use of theoretical principles whilst conducting war. Chess, as a strategy game whose nature as a science or an art was long debated, is a perfect example of this. Our knowledge and understanding of the game of chess can be considered as a science but playing a good game of chess is definitely an art. Chess principles are numerous, and they evolve over time as we understand the game better, for instance thanks to AIs such as AlphaZero.[xvii] Throughout the course of a game, these theoretical principles come in and out of use. But it is not the player who has picked the best set of principles before entering the game who wins, but rather the one who is able to confront them through the course of the game and follow the ones most adapted to the situation on the board. Indeed, there are times when two good general principles, such as keeping a healthy pawn structure or developing pieces on active squares, come into conflict and the player must choose between them. By confronting them according to the unique necessities of the situation, he can make the right choice. In the conduct of war, the same thing happens. For instance, Fuller's principles are interesting, but because resources are always limited it is never possible to maximize all of them: you have to make trade-offs. It is only by confronting the principles according to the situation on the ground that the strategist might be able to make the best decisions. All the value of the principles of war comes from this confrontation.

The form to leave the form: Internalization & Intuition

This essay so far has focused on the necessity of confronting principles in order to make use of them in actual action. But it must also take into account that in the conduct of a war, the time available to make a decision is extremely limited, and this process of confronting principles has to be quick. Principles, for this reason, were quickly ruled out as an efficient tactical device for US military personnel, and the top brass moved instead toward processes and systems of system analysis in order to teach decision-making to its military commanders.

The example of the OODA loop, developed by US Air Force colonel John Boyd, is a good instance of these methods. [xviii] It aims to unify the contextual character of warfare and the need to act quickly with the theoretical tools the strategist is provided with and its own singularity. The OODA loop consists of a phase of observation (context), orientation (theory + singularity), decision and action.



In this loop, we can posit that principles of war are still part of the elements in the 'orientation phase' that will lead the strategist to a synthetic assessment of the situation so that he can make a decision. They are being internalized into a large number of components that together constitute the strategist's intuition. It is this internalization process that ultimately matters in order to assess the utility of principles of war. Indeed, as long as those remain distant theoretical concepts, they will never be truly taken into account in the orientation process. In 'The Art of Learning', chess master and martial art champion Josh Waitzkin suggests that a central aspect of high-level performance success is to be able to internalize complex knowledge and principles deeply enough so that one can access it without thinking about it.[xix] It then becomes part of one's intuition and can thus be used effectively and efficiently in any context. He calls this process of internalization into intuition 'to learn

the form to leave the form'.[xx] Principles of war are no different: we learn about them to leap away from them.

Principles of war can hardly be useful to the strategist if he cannot have a practical grasp of them first. The problem is that at times of peace, there is no way to really experience the true utility of these principles and get a natural understanding of them. This is why it matters all the more to actively place principles in confrontation with each other, instead of simply learning how they apply in theory one after the other. The fact of thinking about these principles, why one sounds more appealing than another, confronting them while analysing a historical or fictional situation, or even better, using them directly while playing wargames, allows for a more intimate understanding of them and of their potential uses. This is a very personal process, and it requires an active engagement before these principles can be internalized and be used in a practical situation. Thus, I assert that doctrines are not of any use if they remain abstract references and distant guides for action. They are only useful when put in comparison with each other, especially with a potential adversary. To quote German historian Hans Delbrück, "since everything is uncertain and relative in times of war, strategic actions cannot come from doctrines, they come from the depth of one's character".[xxi]

Ultimately, principles of war are what we make out of them. Some principles will have greater resonance in some minds than others. Blind adherence to any set of principles will lead to the worst results. What matters is not their content, but the thoughts and reactions these principles provoke. As such, they can be an excellent starting point for deeper intellectual investigation of some features of war, and eventually improve one's natural understanding of the conduct of war. Once internalized, they can prove to provide a useful unconscious mental framework in order to find creative solutions to a specific problem. Their whole point, in the end, is to provide the strategist with a better-nuanced intuition when the time comes to make difficult decisions.

Conclusion

This essay started with a quote from Maurice de Saxe, implying that no principle of war can truly be defined. This is true from a logical point of view, since strategy, being always concerned with contexts, cannot stand any universal law. However, it does not mean principles of war are useless.

They are always shaped according to one's perception of the nature of war, strategic culture and understanding of a certain context. When confronted with one another, these principles are great ways to generate critical and creative thinking about deep features of war, and allow strategists a better grasp of what strategy is all about: the combination of means and ideas to reach a certain goal.

Discussing, comparing, and contrasting these principles allows for their progressive internalization into intuition as a useful framework for actual decision-making. This process of internalization is essential in order to be able to readily draw inspiration from these principles, but also to leap away from them when they seem irrelevant to the current situation. In that sense, world chess champion Garry Kasparov was accurate in saying that 'rules are not as important as their exceptions' – but it takes a deep understanding and internalization of the rules in order to spot these exceptions.

This relative utility of principles of war, and the fact that conducting warfare is all about continuously breaking these rules when necessary, is perhaps the reason why Napoléon never made a formal list of the principles behind his understanding of the art of war. He encompassed, however, the importance of imagination. And it is also by imagining new principles for new contexts that, eventually, we develop a better awareness of the strategic issues of tomorrow and how we can work our way through them.

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