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A Note From The Editor

Were Carl von Clausewitz alive today, or, more reasonably able to comment by some means on the Russo-Ukraine War, he would be well within his rights to say, "I told you so," as would Hans Delbrück. Why? Because Clausewitz defined Strategy as the use of engagements for the object of the war. As the Battle of Bakhmut rages, many feel compelled to comment on the Russian Army's actions as something derived from the "operational level of war," yet this is clearly a battle conducted via tactics for the aims of stategy. Those aims, as Delbrück would observe, are either annihilation or attrition and as many have stated, the Ukrainian defence of Bahkmut is to 'wear down the Russian Army." That is the literal meaning of attrition.

The only real insight the War in Ukraine is revealing to serious students of strategy is War does not change and warfare can change only slowly and never in ways that defy human comprehension.

Some readers could reasonably conclude that articles within this edition would challenge that view, but careful reading may suggest that is less certain than less careful reading might reveal. If you want a cast iron lesson from the current conflict, it should be this: time spent reading *On War* is never wasted.

There may also be the uncomfortable realisation that many of the pithy and simplistic observations of the US Reform movement of the 1970s and 80s are, as they did in 1991, mostly falling flat. Where is the decisive air power dimension to War this year? Where is the fast-moving manoeuvre warfare and so-called "combined arms" actions?

War is a product of politics, and Ukraine is showing this truth as clearly as possible in terms of the nature of the warfare observable, reflecting the political choices made by both sides. The fighting and bloodshed in Bahkmut is not an inevitable outcome of some objective truth about fighting in the 21st century. It is an outcome of political choices made by both sides, as emphasised by the report that the US Army advised the Ukrainians to abandon the town. Still, the political, not military, leaders of Ukraine said no. It is of little comfort to tell the cold, wet and wounded that they are fighting for a space on the map with little to no military value, but then what is "military value?" Such value can only come from its relevance to policy or politics. An officer of the Prussian Army of 1815 would see nothing in the current war that would make him think that mankind has evolved to such a degree that War was now somehow different.

William F. Owen
Editor, *Military Strategy Magazine*
May 2023

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A Strategist's Guide to Disruptive Innovation

James J. Wirtz - Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, USA

By U.S. Navy photo by Lt. Jessica Crownover, Public Domain, Wikipedia Commons

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Innovation, especially in peacetime, is a sticky problem for military professionals and scholars. There is a common misperception that most militaries most of the time are hidebound organizations that hold on to *well-loved* weapons, tactics, and modes of thought long after their expiration date. Nicholas Katzenbach's brilliant study, "The

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Horse Cavalry in the Twentieth Century," for instance, paints a compelling picture of a group of soldiers who would rather be shot off their horses than abandon their mounts in battle.[i]

Others have noted that militaries are rather busy in peacetime, experimenting with all types of new technology, "weaponizing" various science projects by integrating them into force structures.[ii] Carrier aviation, after all, did not miraculously spring into existence with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941; instead, it was the product of a thirty-year long process of experimentation and development.[iii] Nevertheless, as Colin Gray notes, there is no way that militaries can avoid the fundamental problem posed by innovation: "The challenge in peacetime is to guess just how well or poorly novel ideas on tactics and new equipment, and their meaning for operations, will perform in the only test that counts – on the battlefield."[iv] Only combat itself can provide an answer to what constitutes successful innovation.

"Disruptive innovation" is a concept that can produce hope or fear in the minds of strategists and force developers. Disruptive innovation is a novelty that fundamentally changes established battlefield relationships, force structures, and the very character of war itself, creating a war-winning advantage in a future conflict. In American military parlance and practice, the search for this so-called "silver bullet" focuses on the weaponization of new technologies that can provide a war-winning capability that cannot be countered, or at least cannot be countered quickly enough, in battle by an opponent.[v] From this perspective, disruptive innovation is a source of hope, providing a techno-strategic theory of victory, or as Hilaire Belloc put it, "Whatever happens, we have got the Maxim, and they have not."[vi]

Disruptive innovation, however, can also strike fear in the hearts of observers when it appears that the opponent is about to field its own silver bullet, stealing a march on our efforts. The recent commotion created within Western air and missile defense organizations about Russian and Chinese deployment of hypersonic weapons is a case in point.[vii]

This article offers a strategist's guide to the concept of disruptive innovation by describing four ways it is depicted by contemporary observers: The Silver Bullet, Diffuse Disruption, the Revolution in Military Affairs, and Acceleration. This brief survey explores how these concepts draw on different ideas about the sources of disruption, different visions of the scope and nature of disruption, and suggest different prescriptions about how militaries might go about gaining the benefits and avoiding the costs of disruptive innovation. Strategists need to be aware – different phenomena are often captured by the term "disruptive innovation."

The Silver Bullet

When observers consider disruptive innovation, they often focus on a new type of technology or weapon that provides a significant advantage in battle. These silver bullets come in several varieties. Many innovations are modest, unfold at the tactical level of war, and often prove to be only temporarily effective as opponents usually come up with countermeasures in short order. The simplest of innovations, however, can still have highly disruptive consequences. The Japanese modification of their aerial torpedoes to operate in the shallow waters of Pearl Harbor was something that the U.S. Navy did not anticipate, while it also emboldened Japanese planners to attack the U.S. Pacific Fleet at anchor.[viii] It is hard to imagine how a few wooden fins jury rigged to a torpedo could have a more disruptive impact on the course of history.

The German introduction of jet aircraft, cruise missiles (V-1), and medium range ballistic missiles (V-2) towards the end of World War II also had real "silver bullet" potential. Nevertheless, there were too few jet aircraft available to have much impact on the Allied air armada and the V-1 and V-2 required more potent (chemical? biological?) warheads to produce game changing political effects. This steady stream of profound technological innovation, however, did create real concerns in Washington, London, and Los Alamos that sooner or later the Germans would get around to developing that more potent payload (i.e., a nuclear weapon).[ix]

Silver bullets also can generate game changing effects at the operational level of war, which can produce enduring consequences for military organizations. Following the Battle of Midway in June 1942, the U.S. Navy terminated its battleship program, capping battleship procurement to the four Missouri-class battleships under construction and canceling the planned Montana-class battleship.[x] The aircraft carrier had become the new capital ship, aircraft had become the primary weapon at sea, and the rise of naval aviation ended the dominance of the "gun-club," the battleship admirals who ran the U.S. Navy. When disruptive innovation produces operational level effects, it is likely to also produce organizational consequences, upsetting bureaucratic pecking orders, career paths, and acquisition cycles. It is still too early to tell if the previously mentioned development of hypersonic bodies will produce disruption at a tactical or operational level of war, but their operational impact will shape their place in the annals of disruptive innovation. Ironically, "silver bullets" might be most lethal against the dominant weapons and organizations of the actors that deploy them, leading to a "Dreadnought effect".[xi]

Today, everything from autonomous vehicles to artificial intelligence, to 5G networks, to quantum computing, to genetic engineering is identified as a potential silver bullet, disruptive innovations that will provide a war winning

capability. The techno optimists who champion these innovations might in fact be correct, but there really is no way to be certain until these technologies are weaponized and tested in battle. Gray was a skeptic when it came to sightings of silver bullets that always seemed to be just over the technological horizon: "Time and again, during the past century excited advocates of military novelty have expressed unwonted faith in the ability of their favorite new 'toys' to upset the applecart of established strategic truth. To date, with the possible striking exception of nuclear weapons, such claims have been neither verified nor even found persuasive for very long."[xii] The silver bullet record is indeed mixed, but it remains a common way of thinking about disruptive innovation

Diffuse Disruption

The idea of disruptive innovation had its origins within corporate board rooms and business schools, not among military professionals or academics specializing in the study of war, peace, and international politics. The reason why these more commercially minded individuals gained this insight before their more military minded colleagues can probably be tied to a bias on the part of those who embraced traditional notions of strategy. For scholars of war and peace, the essence of strategy, war and politics is generally thought to be unchanging despite the myriad of contexts in which it unfolds. As one anonymous reviewer remarked, disruptive innovation might change the *character* of war, but it does not change the *nature* of war. That is, if we are to remain true to its Clausewitzian essence, war will forever remain an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will despite disruptive, or more mundane, innovation.

Business school professors and corporate executives suffer from no such bias. While the concept of a market – the convergence of buyers and sellers – remains constant, the existence and character of that market can be rather ephemeral. After all, a tulip bulb that costs a king's ransom to purchase might only fetch a penny when sold.[xiii] Markets can literally be here one day and gone the next, which is sort of akin to saying that war at sea might be here today and gone tomorrow. Diffuse disruption – the change of the ecosystem in which a market and business reside – might be a good way to capture the sometimes-prompt disruption caused by market transformation and collapse.

What happened to the filmmaker Kodak is probably the best-known example of diffuse disruption followed by disruptive innovation, although the history of Blockbuster (video rentals) and Nokia (flip phones) are often referenced in this regard. Most people associate Kodak with photography because its film dominated global markets for decades, but the firm's executives saw themselves primarily as a chemical company, that is, their primary purpose was to sell the chemicals used *to develop* the film they sold. They also worked in a highly complex "commercial ecosystem" where film sales and services were sold in a variety of venues (gas stations, camera stores, supermarkets, drug stores, etc.). Kodak did not directly sell film to consumers; other retailers sold their product. Kodak was well adapted to this complex commercial ecosystem, which was not particularly friendly to competitors.

Kodak executives were not caught unaware by the development of digital photography – a Kodak engineer invented the first digital camera in 1975. In fact, executives at Kodak developed accurate estimates of how long it would take digital photography to take hold and the technological hurdles that would have to be overcome before affordable digital cameras made it into the hands of consumers. Nevertheless, they consciously ignored digital photography because they believed Kodak, as a chemical company, had no role to play in the digital revolution.[xiv] By the turn of the century, Kodak's commercial ecosystem was collapsing. Other firms, which were not handicapped by Kodak's success and penchant for chemicals, embraced this diffuse disruption in the techno-commercial ecosystem. Disruptive innovation followed as digital cameras replaced film photography. Within a few short years, Kodak was no longer synonymous with corporate success, but was instead associated with corporate folly and myopia.[xv]

Kodak and the other firms that have fallen victim to diffuse disruption in their product ecosystems provide narratives to illustrate the darker aspects of disruptive innovation. No matter how successful, there is no guarantee that weapons, doctrine, or organizations might be rendered completely obsolete and superfluous by diffuse disruption, changes that are beyond the control of any country or military. There is also no guarantee that militaries that are currently dominant will embrace disruptive innovation, leaving it to newcomers to seize first mover advantages to weaponize new technology. Success today is no guarantee of success tomorrow. Or, as Robert Jervis often observed, "nothing fails like success."

The lesson from the Kodak experience is that organizations that enjoy success and mastery of their operational ecosystem will lack the corporate willingness and organizational ability to respond to diffuse change by engaging in disruptive innovation. Like Kodak, these organizations will see possibility of diffuse change on the horizon. There are ways to see these sorts of changes in the offing: The Gartner Hype Cycle tracks new technologies from the peak of expectations through the trough of disillusionment to either a plateau of actual performance to something truly disruptive.[xvi]

Revolution in Military Affairs

The origins of the concept – Revolution in Military Affairs – can be found in Soviet military writing about U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) programs intended to deter a Warsaw Pact attack or to defeat Soviet tank armies if they crossed the inner-German border. By the late 1970s, the Western allies were hard at work developing long-range weapons and the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance complexes needed to conduct distant attacks against staging areas, command and control nodes, and logistical systems deep behind the forward edge of the battle area (FEBA).[xvii] Programs such as NATO's Follow-On Forces Attack, the U.S. Assault Breaker and new types of doctrine (the U.S. Airland Battle Doctrine) were intended to cripple the ability of Soviet tank armies to conduct combined arms operations (that is to coordinate air, armor, infantry, artillery and air operations) by damaging their command and control, curtailing their logistics and preventing the coordinated flow of Soviet forces to the FEBA.[xviii] Think about stalled Russian tank columns on the road to Kiev in February 2022, only this time with A-10s actually in the air.

This new long-range precision strike capability and doctrine had its operational debut soon after the end of the Cold War in Operation Desert Storm, the coalition effort to eject Iraqi occupation forces from Kuwait. Following the rapid coalition victory in 1991, Russian observers noted that "integration of control, communication, reconnaissance, electronic combat, and delivery of conventional fires into a single whole was realized for the first time."[xix] For Russian strategists, a Military-Technical-Revolution was occurring, an assessment that was seconded in work undertaken by the Pentagon's Office of Net Assessment. In a 1992 analysis organized by Office Director Andrew Marshall, Andrew Krepinevich asserted that a Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) was underway, a revolution that reflected new weapons, a new way of operating and a fundamental transformation of war. The analyses produced by Marshall's office led to a lively debate as scholars advanced competing definitions and different assessments of the impact of the RMA.[xx] Krepinevich observed that future wars between major powers would be "increasingly dominated by the application of force at extended ranges to exploit the advantages of information dominance," and that reconnaissance-strike complexes would become common.[xxi]

Today, RMAs are said to occur when a new weapon, a new organization and a new way of war coalesce to create a disruptive change in the conduct and character of war itself.[xxii] As such, RMAs now appear to be relatively rare in the annals of military history. Nuclear weapons, the creation of the U.S. Air Force, and the even more specialized U.S. Strategic Air Command, and the shift from warfighting to deterrence as the primary mission of militaries in the nuclear age is generally agreed to constitute an RvMA. Other potential RMA candidates include the rise of carrier aviation, the mechanization of land warfare beginning in the interwar period through the Second World War, the emergence of Maoist People's War and the previously mentioned reconnaissance-strike complex introduced by the United States during the First Gulf War, although some have argued that the latter's revolutionary nature might be in the eye of the beholder.[xxiii] Nevertheless, the RMA concept is a well-known, albeit rarely occurring, type of disruptive innovation.

Acceleration

In 1965, Gordon Moore – one of the founders of Intel Corporation – suggested that for the near future, the number of transistors in an integrated circuit would double every two years.[xxiv] While this growth in computational power has recently begun to slow, the effects of "Moore's law" are now beginning to have an exponential impact in a host of scientific, technological, and commercial applications, leading to a situation known as "more than Moore."[xxv] These cascades of new technologies, applications, and operations often interact with effects produced by climate change and political-social developments to produce abrupt discontinuities that effect individuals, societies, and politics. Thomas Friedman calls this trifecta of change "acceleration," a situation in which disruptive innovations, or diffuse disruption for that matter, occurs with such frequency that it overwhelms the ability of individuals, organizations, societies, or governments to cope.[xxvi] Acceleration suggests that disruption is occurring at ever shorter intervals; before we can adjust to the last disruption, we are beset by another.

The threat of acceleration has been recognized by the Pentagon. According to the former Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral John M. Richardson, USN, "The pace of competition has accelerated in many areas, achieving exponential and disruptive rates of change. As this pace drives yet more unpredictability, the future is becoming more uncertain . . .. We cannot become overwhelmed by the blistering pace."[xxvii] The problem is that most governments and government agencies are completely overwhelmed by acceleration. It takes the U.S. Navy, for instance between a long-decade and thirty years to innovate, which amounts to an expensive way to guarantee future obsolescence. Change in the U.S. Navy, and most governments and government organizations, for that matter, is completely out paced by acceleration; the U.S. Navy can innovate and adapt, but it operates on "Navy-Time" -- it takes decades for it to

undertake fundamental innovations.[xxviii] Acceleration, is not solely about technology. It is about sociology and organizational behavior and our collective ability to adapt at a rate that keeps pace with the changes wrought by the information revolution. Individuals, organizations, governments, and societies are not winning this race.

Type Of Disruption	Cause	Impact
SILVER BULLET	Technology	Tactical/Operational -- Can Prompt Organizational Change
DIFFUSE DISRUPTION	*Changing Ecosystem*	Tactical/Operational/Strategic – Leads to Organizational Obsolescence
REVOLUTION IN MILITARY AFFAIRS	**Technology**	Change in Character of War
ACCELERATION	*Rapidity & Frequency of Change*	Creeping Tactical/Operational/Strategic Obsolescence

Disruptive Innovation

Conclusion

Although Colin Gray recognized the importance of technology and technological innovation in war, he would always quickly point out that technology does not replace, nullify, or transcend strategy. It is not my intention here to differ with Gray's judgment about the enduring relevance of strategy, although clearly the types of disruptive innovation presented in this essay all find their origins in some sort of scientific or technological innovation. The discussion thus tends to accentuate technology-led, high intensity warfare, which is largely the preserve of a small number of states.[xxix] Technology driven disruptive innovation, however, clearly creates new opportunities and dangers for strategists. The article also suggests that we are not lacking when it comes to innovation – we encounter several varieties of the phenomenon regularly and we are increasingly overwhelmed by waves of change. Strategists, then, must always be on the lookout for these varieties of disruptive innovation because they are usually accompanied by a failure of individuals, organizations, governments, or societies to adapt to change and to utilize the opportunities provided by innovation. The paradox here is that innovation creates heretofore non-existent capabilities, they are served to us on a silver platter; disruption occurs when most of us are unwilling or unable to seize those same opportunities.

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"At the summit, true strategy and politics are one."

—Winston Churchill[i]

Strategyformulationrequiresthefullengagement and involvement of political authority to bound

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policy effectively. Policy frames objectives, but the constant interplay of myriad forces create strategy. Strategy remains the mediating implement to connect national instrument (diplomatic, military, informational, economic) objectives to political ends. What has been described as an "unequal dialogue" is a quintessential factor in developing strategic ends (i.e., a nation's policy).[ii] In the U.S., elected leaders solicit input across the interagency and the military to determine the nation's ends, but ultimately, civilians make the final decision. The dialogue across the national security apparatus is both essential and, purposefully, unequal. This article argues the relevance and critical relationship of Carl von Clausewitz's theory of war with Cohen's unequal dialogue to illustrate how a republic can create an environment where strategy emerges from the interactive participation of its leaders. Historical and contemporary examples are woven throughout to support this argument.

Analyzing On War, Brodie describes Clausewitz's desire of statesmen to understand the language of war to ensure its proper execution.[iii] Expressed this way, it is political leaders, who must influence the direction of war. There has been a negative perception that political influence in war is wrong. Set the policy and let the generals fight the war some have said.[iv] If there are issues, military leaders have wrongly argued, it is the level of political influence to blame.[v] However, it is not the statesman's influence but the policy itself requiring a re-examination. This responsibility is not the statesman's alone; repeated attempts to divorce war from its political primacy have been costly. Take the experience of Vietnam, for example.

Books on Vietnam remind of this error where military professionals did not judge the true character of the war, articulate it to civilian decision-makers, and offer appropriate strategies to iterate on.[vi] Remembering this lesson, Casper Weinberger developed a doctrine aimed to guide future policy on war, to forever leave behind the specter of Vietnam.[vii] He argued that US forces should only be used to achieve clear policy objectives and he went so far as to make additional conditions that were not very Clausewitzian.[viii] Weinberger argued, and Colin Powell would later enforce, that military forces should not deploy without overwhelming force and the 'exit strategy' must be crystal clear.[ix] Powell, using this script, would later evoke this doctrine to argue against the use of military forces in Bosnia.[x]

Madeleine Albright pointedly asked, "What's the point of having this superb military that you're always talking about if we can't use it?"[xi] She was right, and if Clausewitz were alive, he would surely agree since strategy in practice requires a dialogue to inform policy. The U.S. military declaring ultimatums like the Powell doctrine betrays the very nature of war and ignores its political dimension. Dialogue and engagement are necessary to craft strategic options in which elected leaders decide upon. A wartime president, Abraham Lincoln, initially struggled with his military leaders to foster a challenging yet necessary dialogue.

Lincoln's longest-serving commander, General McClellan, was reluctant like Powell, to use the military. This aversion to act affected the overarching strategy to employ multiple simultaneous concentrations to strike against the Confederate Army.[xii] Lincoln once remarked, "if General McClellan did not want to use the army… [he] would like to borrow it."[xiii] Eventually, Lincoln found a suitable general in Ulysses S Grant and they maintained a healthy dialogue to manage the Civil War strategically. Lincoln lacked extensive military experience, but through self-study and discipline, he fought a war and saved the union.[xiv] Lincoln had an inquisitive mind, and he asked the hard questions, eliciting best military advice to inform policy and align strategic ends. Churchill struck a similar chord in World War II when handling his military leaders.

Churchill masterfully balanced politics and the interplay of conflicting forces. Churchill held steady through the chaos and friction of war, avoiding rigid plans and dogmatic process.[xv] He knew Clausewitz's timeless trinity and stirred his nation through its darkest hours. Clausewitz's trinity in war is a dynamic and unstable interaction of the forces of violent emotion, chance, and rational calculation on all sides.[xvi] In his maxims on war, Colin Gray explains that the rationale or reason is primarily associated with government and he argues this is "vitally significant" since policy is "shaped, reshaped, and driven by the dynamic verdicts of the battlefield."[xvii] This describes the reciprocal relationship between war and policy which requires a permanent dialogue across the enterprise to form strategy properly.

Churchill was ruthless with his "unsparing interaction with military subordinates about their activities." For example, he made difficult decisions to preserve a fragile alliance by ordering his generals to avoid civilian casualties in France from air bombardment.[xviii] Churchill decided not to use metal chaff to confuse German radar which would save bomber crew lives. He instead balanced risk and determined that it was more important to not give away these countermeasures in order to inflict greater damage on the Germans.[xix] This same level of restraint and wisdom was exercised in Bletchley Park whereas ships were sacrificed at sea not to give away the fact that the Enigma cipher code had been cracked.[xx] These political calculations and the audit of military judgment during war informed and improved strategy. It was not a detailed blueprint or fully laid out plan but rather a continuous dialogue that was not equal. It was strategy-making.

The unequal dialogue is unpacked and further codified in *Supreme Command* by Elliot Cohen.[xxi] He advocates for competitive views, which may be contentious but adheres to Clausewitz's dictum of civilian leaders' unambiguous final authority.[xxii] Churchill was criticized for his political interference in war, but Cohen argues it was necessary. British strategy benefited from the seemingly interrogative behavior and unequal dialogue. This was no easy feat, and Cohen illuminates Churchill's "unremitting attention and effort" to "absorb vast quantities of technical, tactical, and operational information" to make difficult but required decisions in war.[xxiii] Contemporary examples show where this dialogue went wrong, and generals may have abused their reputational power.[xxiv]

Years after the Bosnia debate on troop numbers, Colin Powell returned to the oval office to advise the nation's first black president.[xxv] Obama set out a series of strategy sessions designed to create the dialogue needed for a new reset of the nation's policy on Afghanistan. His national security apparatus had conflicting views, and Obama wanted Powell's advice. General Petraeus, on the other hand, influenced his agenda through the media and various back-channel interlocutors to support a decision to send more troops for his desired counterinsurgency campaign. Then-Vice President Biden crafted an alternative strategy with his national security advisor, Antony Blinken, to counter the McChrystal assessment and Petraeus troop surge, called "counterterrorism plus."[xxvi]

President Obama was leaning toward Biden and Blinken's strategy which would focus the military on targeting and eliminating terrorist vice the expensive nation-building and troop intensive counterinsurgency. The president was upset with the uniformed leaders backing him into a corner to send large numbers of troops. Powell told the president, "This is the decision that will have consequences for the better part of your administration. Mr. President, don't get pushed by the left to do nothing. Don't get pushed by the right to do everything. You take your time and you figure it out."[xxvii] With time and tremendous experience behind him, Powell finally found the value in the unequal dialogue with civilian masters. Unfortunately, with publicly popular generals driving a strong narrative, coupled with leaks to the public, Obama was led down a road where he decided upon a troop increase of 30,000.[xxviii]

The president placated the military leadership, but his direction was clear, the military was not to do counterinsurgency operations or nation-building.[xxix] Ignoring the president's political direction, generals continued to push their own agenda and mission creep set in. The military gravitated to counterinsurgency operations and more and more troops flowed into Afghanistan despite the initial intent to minimize a large ground presence. Ironically, it is President Biden who returned to office with a conviction to end the war in Afghanistan. Aside from the abrupt and chaotic withdrawal, much of the blame for this strategic failure in Afghanistan harkens back to multiple administrations and scores of military general officers. Strategy formulation suffered from the absence of an unequal dialogue.

Conclusion

The U.S. has entered the twenty-first century with key strategic failures to learn from. Indeed, it is vital for the republic to reflect and learn from these recent interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan to avoid repeated mistakes. Good strategic thinking and an unequal dialogue are needed to ensure the nation can prepare and strategize for the vexing challenges ahead. Historical case studies are useful to illuminate examples of where dialogue and strategic alignment did or did not work. The theoretical conventions of Clausewitz's theory of war and Cohen's unequal dialogue remain helpful to navigate the complexity of war and strategy in case studies. The reciprocal relationship between war and policy is essential to the conduct of war and strategy creation. It should be taught at more educational institutions. Leaders, especially in the military, need to subordinate egos and parochial matters to the nation's interests, and appreciate the unequal dialogue with elected civilians. They must marshal appropriate evidence to support their best military advice in this unequal dialogue, but when the policy direction is set, translate those ends into military strategy and win the nation's wars.

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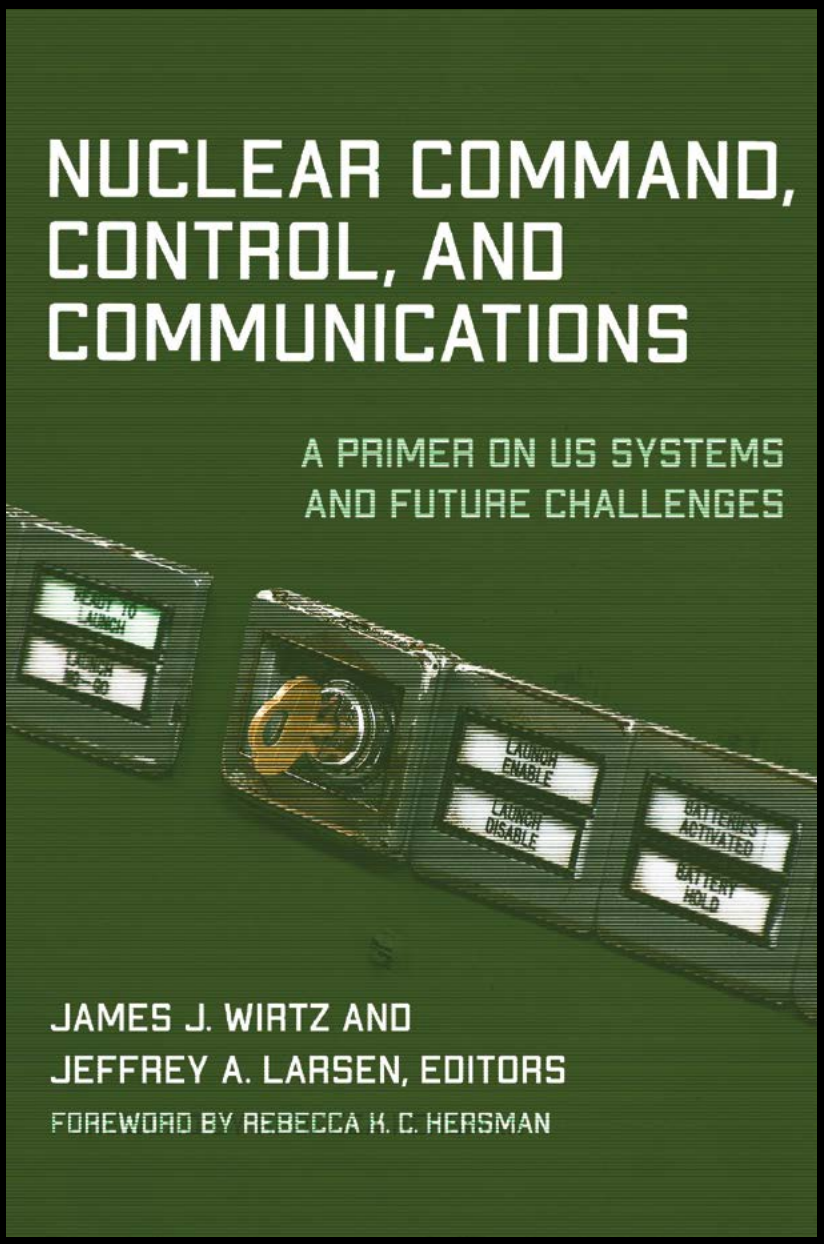

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Cold Wars, Grey Zones, and Strategic Competition: Applying Theories of War to Strategy in the 21st Century.

Peter L. Hickman - Strategist for the Director of the Air National Guard, USA

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In 1947 Bernard Baruch warned the United States "not to be deceived" by the post-WWII "peace." He described the emerging rivalry between the U.S. and the USSR as a "Cold War" that was not quite war but was also not quite peace.[i] Echoes of this concept of a Cold War are evident today in the somewhat ambiguous phrase "Strategic Competition" that the Biden Administration uses to describe relations between the United States and China.[ii] Though strategic competition is not a state of war, the rivalry between the U.S. and China is a precarious kind of peace in which both sides are also preparing for the possibility of future significant military escalation, major war, or even nuclear exchange.

U.S. foreign policy in the grey zone between war and peace has become the norm rather than the exception since Baruch's warning in 1947. Though the U.S. Congress declared war eleven times between 1812 and 1942,[iii] Congress has not declared war in the last eighty years despite nearly 100,000 U.S. battle deaths in that same period.[iv] The conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan are all frequently referred to as "wars," yet none drew a declaration of war from Congress. All are individually understood as instances of broader "wars"; the Cold War and the War on Terrorism. "Wars" on social ills further subsume the conceptually elegant definition of war as an "act of force to compel our enemy to do our will"[v] into an ill-defined aspiration to change a social or political status quo. Today's interest in "grey zone" conflict illustrates that even in foreign policy, the concepts of war and peace have lost saliency for describing political reality and are more likely to be seriously encountered in academic environments than in the practice of grand strategy.[vi] The normalcy of "military operations other than war" since the 1950s has even led some military leaders to try to remind American service members that war at the scale of World War II remains a possibility in the future and is not simply a thing of the past.[vii]

However, the apparent inapplicability of theoretical concepts of war and peace to current political reality is a feature rather than a defect of theory. In the words of Clausewitz, the point of theory is "to clarify concepts and ideas that have become, as it were confused and entangled."[viii] Likewise, Harold Winton writes that "theory's first task is to define the field of study under investigation."[ix] These acts of clarification and definition involve an irreconcilable conflict between synthesizing reality into useful models, which are finite, and the endless complexity of events as experienced in reality. Even in the early nineteenth century, when Clausewitz wrote *On War*, he acknowledged that war in practice "branches out in almost all directions and has no definite limits."[x] However, this paper will explore how theorists make trade-offs between thinking clearly about war and peace with accurate descriptions of endless complexity. When it comes to issues of war and peace, this choice often involves abstracting war as a distinct phenomenon with enduring, essential characteristics that can be identified and modeled across time. While sacrificing some descriptive accuracy, such abstraction and clarification of concepts provide powerful tools for understanding the entanglement of war and peace. These theoretical tools are as helpful today for understanding "strategic competition" as they were two centuries ago for understanding grand strategy in the Napoleonic wars.

Theory Provides Conceptual Clarity at the Expense of Descriptive Accuracy

Clausewitz grounds his theoretical approach with the concept of "absolute war," an abstracted form of war that provides an extreme point of theoretical reference for students of war theory.[xi] He does not suggest that this concept corresponds to wars as they are experienced in reality. Instead, "he who wants to learn from theory becomes accustomed to keeping that point in view constantly, to measuring all his hopes and fears by it, and to approximating it *when he can* or *when he must*."[xii] In the early nineteenth century, when Clausewitz wrote, war in practice was, at most, an "approximation" of the theoretical concept of absolute war.[xiii] Nevertheless, this theoretical form has value because it provides "a guide to anyone who wants to learn about war from books; it will light his way, ease his progress, train his judgment, and help him avoid the pitfalls of battle."[xiv]

Several other important theorists, familiar with war in practice, nonetheless develop abstract, theoretically elegant concepts of war. Jomini's "art of war" consists of enduring principles and rules that become a "means of almost certain success" among the "poetry and metaphysics of war."[xv] Nonetheless, he concedes that he cannot fully consider all the factors that influence the conduct of war without "deviating from my intention" and "enlarging too much the limits of this work."[xvi] Alfred Mahan draws principles from the "constant" and "permanent" lessons of history by limiting his theoretical scope to the "immense determining influence" of sea power upon world history, albeit in both peace and war.[xvii] Likewise, Julian Corbett seeks "clear conceptions and the exposition of the inherent relations of things" to enable effective collective action. However, his "clear conceptions" function at a level of abstraction that cannot accompany one on the battlefield.[xviii] In the aftermath of World War I, Giulio Douhet defined war as an industrial pitting of "populations directly against populations, nations directly against nations… which come to blows and seize each other's throats."[xix] Douhet's vision of industrial warfare was theoretically distinct from any other level of political interaction because, in his treatment, nations at war discard all concerns except the

single-minded struggle for survival or death.

The development of elegant, precise, and unentangled theories of war provides explanatory power for theorists interested in war in the abstract. In most cases, theorists acknowledge that theoretical pruning always leaves some descriptive power on the cutting room floor. For example, Corbett writes that his focus on sea power renders exploration of "primordial" political questions and conditions "unprofitable."[xx] Likewise, Jomini writes that military operations are often subject to important "political objective points" that appear "very irrational" in the context of a theoretical perspective focused on military considerations.[xxi] Finally, J.F.C. Fuller seeks to develop "a workable piece of mental machinery that will enable the war student to sort out military values" but acknowledges that "the fewer the parts of any machine, the simpler becomes its working."[xxii] He, therefore, develops a simple, if limited, theoretical tool that can be employed by policymakers deciding whether or not to launch the first strike while leaving aside the additional machinery that might shed light on how war and peace are less conceptually independent in reality.[xxiii]

Exploring the Entanglement of War and Peace in Strategy

The theorists cited above acknowledge that they must make trade-offs between explanatory power over time and descriptive accuracy in any instance. The theories of war discussed above sacrifice descriptive accuracy by developing elegant, abstract, and theoretically useful concepts that enable thinking clearly about war. Elegant theoretical concepts of war also enable theorists to explore the "entanglement" of war and peace in practice and better understand concepts like strategic competition, which take place between rigid theoretical boundaries of war and peace.

Clausewitz employed his theoretical ideal of "absolute war" to demonstrate the practical entanglement of the concepts of war and peace in reality.[xxiv] Clausewitz points out that "final victory" in war is meaningful only within the theoretically isolated concept of "absolute war."[xxv] Looking narrowly, Napoleon's conquering of Moscow and half of Russia in 1812 was a great victory. His failure to subsequently destroy the Russian army and secure his desired peace rendered the broader campaign a disaster. This expansion of scope illustrates how individual engagements, and any war in its totality, "are only of value in their relation to the whole."[xxvi] If particular engagements are only of value in relation to the whole war, then wars are only of value in relation to ongoing "political intercourse," which is "crowned" not by victory in a war but through securing a desired peace.[xxvii] However, for Clausewitz, a crowning peace is always aspirational because "even the outcome of a war is not always to be regarded as final. The defeated state often considers the outcome merely as a transitory evil, for which a remedy may still be found in political conditions at some later date."[xxviii]

Though Fuller developed a "simple machine" to understand war, he simultaneously emphasizes the fundamental entanglement of war and peace by crafting a theory of war that effectively has no peace portion of the dyad. Quoting William James, he writes, "every up to date dictionary should say that 'peace' and 'war' mean the same thing, now *in posse*, now *in actu*... preparation for war by the nation is the real war, permanent, unceasing; and that battles are only a sort of public verification of mastery gained during the 'peace' intervals."[xxix] Writing in the aftermath of WWI, Fuller's focus on economy of force was not limited to any particular war but was always partially oriented to the next war.[xxx] Fuller argues that war should be conducted based on forward-looking calculations of post-war power rather than the victory at hand. Therefore, the means of seeking today's victory should always consider tomorrow's preparations, and states should minimize destruction because "to kill, wound, and plunder is to destroy or debilitate a future buyer."[xxxi]

More recently, Colin S. Gray has explored the entanglement of theoretical war and peace by writing that "war and peace overlap in a fuzzy zone that is a world of both/and, rather than of sharp differences."[xxxii] For Gray, any "theory of war must also be a theory of peace, all the while it needs to develop analytical tools suitable to cope with conditions that are neither plainly of war nor peace, but rather are both."[xxxiii] In this sense, "warfare is not self-referential" but is always about the larger war *and* peace political context over time.[xxxiv] War and peace are *other*-referential and endlessly entangled, like the states who struggle through them in an endless pursuit of advantage.

The Art of Strategy *in posse*

As argued above, theories emphasizing the entanglement of war and peace offer insight into strategic competition. However, to better understand the nature of strategic competition, it is essential to understand strategy formation across repeated periods of war and peace, particularly the overriding fear of future entrapment.

Everett Dolman argues that when considered from an expansive theoretical scope, the international strategic environment is similar to an iterated prisoner's dilemma.[xxxv] In an open-ended, strategic game, Dolman describes strategy as "*a plan for attaining continuing advantage*" because "the strategist can never finish the business of strategy, and understands that there is no permanence in victory - or defeat."[xxxvi] Though final victory does lose conceptual salience across time, defeat in the form of imposition of another's political will, regime change, or even nuclear annihilation retains its salience as an

alarming danger. Moreover, this apprehension of future insecurity and strategic pursuit of future advantage is the fundamental driver of arms races, the Cold War, and 21st-century strategic competition.

Concern about such dangers is evident as far back as the Ancient Greeks. According to Thucydides, the Peloponnesian war began because Sparta feared the rise of Athenian power and decided that war would be preferable to the continued rise of that power.[xxxvii] Athens, for their part, refused to concede Sparta's relatively modest near-term demands because, according to Pericles, they would lead over time to "slavery."[xxxviii] Athens also launched the expedition to Sicily not because of an immediate threat but due to the potential future growth of Syracuse and the danger that they could one day join with the Spartans against Athens.[xxxix]

These three examples from Thucydides demonstrate great concern with an adversary reaching some future point of control beyond which no viable options exist for contesting the imposition of their will. This concern is similar to Sun Tzu's concept of being surrounded, and Clausewitz's description of a situation in which every possible change is "a change for the worse."[xl] Perhaps most succinctly, B. H. Liddell Hart describes it as a "psychological dislocation" that arises from a sense of being "trapped."[xli] Fundamentally, once an individual, army, or state has become trapped, they no longer have any means by which they can escape the imposition of an adversary's will. Therefore, Pericles's use of "slavery" seems not exaggerated but apt.

The implications for strategy are relatively straightforward if the overriding concern of states over time is to avoid becoming strategically trapped and, therefore, helpless in the face of an adversary's will. A military strategy must maximize options available to statesmen to achieve political ends.[xlii] "Their purpose is not to project violence, but to be prepared to do so, or in perfect terms, *to be able to do so.*"[xliii] For Clausewitz, this means creating conditions in which the "opponent either will not appeal to that supreme tribunal – force – or that he will lose the verdict if he does."[xliv] For Dolman, "every action of the master strategist should be intended to increase options, not eliminate them. For there is always another alternative waiting to be found."[xlv] In short, the role of (grand) strategy is to avoid any future entrapment and win the peace, "even if only from your point of view."[xlvi]

Strategic competition between the U.S. and China is precisely this kind of peacetime maneuvering to avoid future insecurity and risk of entrapment. The U.S. and China must consider the full range of future iterations of current strategic relationships. Some possible iterations may result in a trap for at least one state or even a "Thucydides Trap" for both.[xlvii] The threat of great power war and even the use of nuclear weapons looms over possible future iterations. The most impactful strategic decisions are available now. Both states seek to avoid the "supreme tribunal of force," maximize options, and seek advantage should the day come for a decision through force. Though the U.S. and China are not at war, the current "peace" is also war *in posse*, and both states strive to keep it that way while preparing for the worst.

As argued above, theories of war and peace that emphasize the entanglement of the concepts provide powerful tools for exploring the grand strategic context of strategic competition. However, it is worth noting that this increased explanatory power is purchased at the expense of the clarity of thought that Clausewitz found so valuable for the education of strategists. From the lofty heights of grand strategy, gazing across future iterations of war and peace, the strategist focuses on the economy of force and continuing advantage over time rather than the adversary fleet or winning air command.[xlviii] Such a grand theoretical sweep comes at the expense of clarity needed if war *in posse* becomes a war *in actu*, and Clausewitz's reassurance that defeat is never final gives way to Douhet's waves of bombers with their payloads of poison gas. After all, a focus on the economy of force and continuing advantage was likely on the minds of 18th-century princes of Europe just before Napoleon "ruthlessly cut through all his enemies' strategic plans in search of battle."[xlix] In hindsight, those princes might have wished for the simple clarity of theorists like Jomini, Mahan, or Douhet rather than the entangled complexity of Dolman or Gray.

Conclusion

Though the term Strategic Competition may suggest that the war/peace dyad is now insufficient for understanding the full range of strategic interaction, it is important to remember that clarity and abstraction are features rather than defects of theories of war. All theories must make tradeoffs in exchange for specific explanatory power. While some employ elegant concepts of dyadic war and peace, others explore the entanglement of such concepts. Though the latter enables a better understanding of phenomena like strategic competition in peacetime, it is important to remember that such theoretical choices may be drawbacks if competition becomes conflict.

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War's Logic

Strategic Thought and the American Way of War

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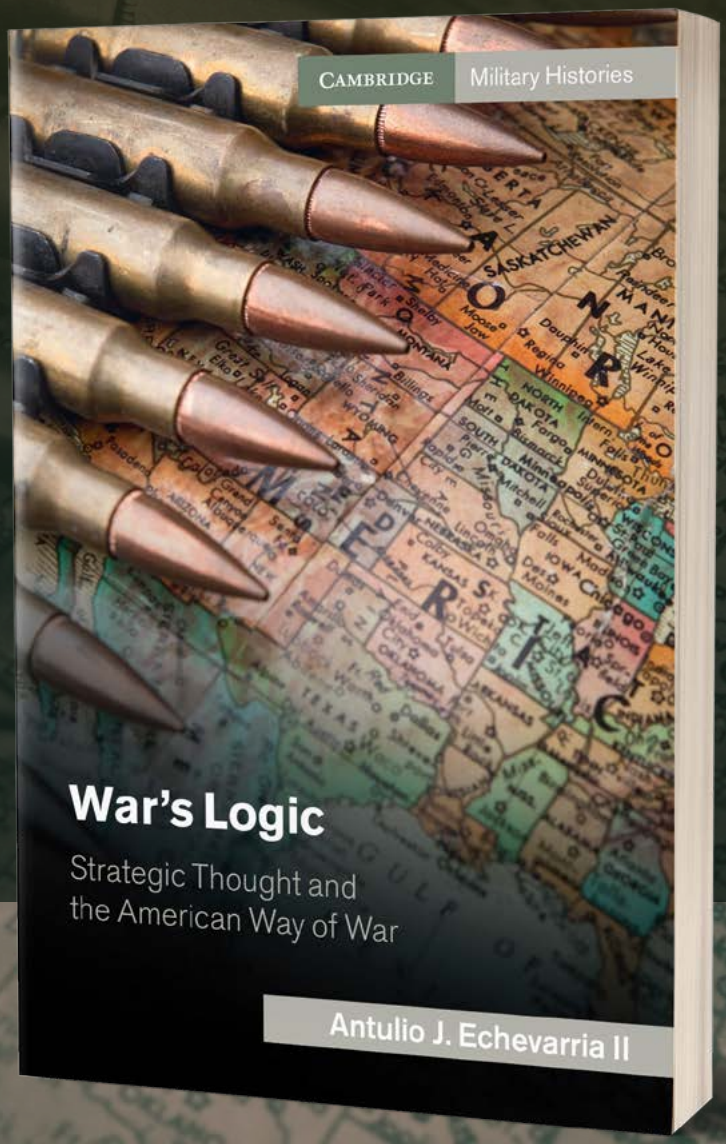

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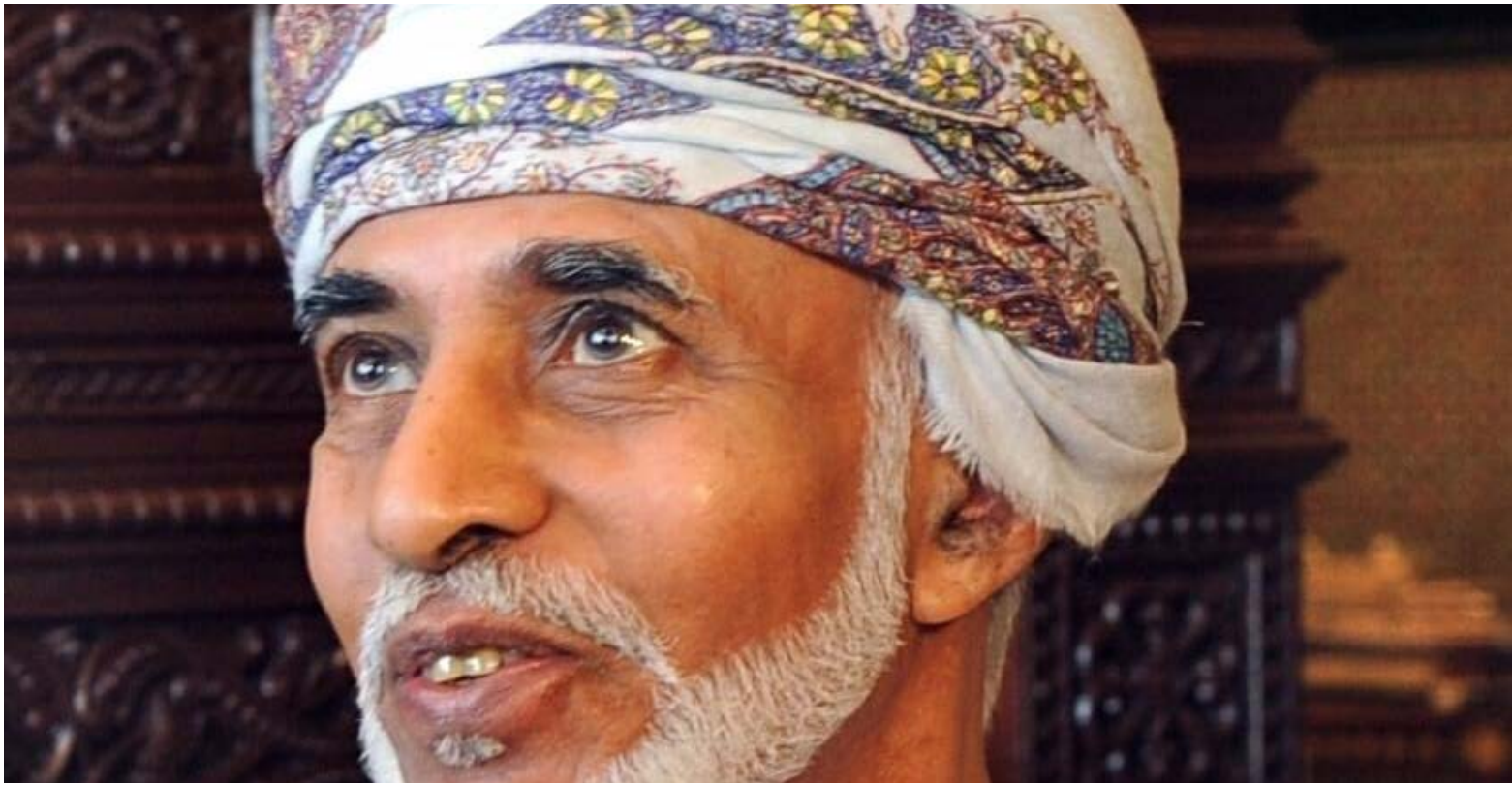
Securing Oman for Development: Sultan Qaboos Confronts his Enemies, 1970-1976

Simon Anglim - King's College London, Department of War Studies



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About the author

Dr Simon Anglim teaches in the Department of War Studies at King's College London. He is a military historian and commentator with a particular interest in land warfare, British defence policy and the British Army, Special Forces and the Sultanate of Oman, which he has visited seven times

Winning a war

Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said died on 10 January 2020, having ruled Oman just short of fifty years. His successor, his cousin Haitham bin Tariq, inherited a country viewed widely as a global success story, something nobody would have

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predicted when Qaboos overthrew his father, Sultan Said bin Taimur, on 23 July 1970. Oman then was an international pariah, poor, undeveloped, ruled by a medieval despot viewed widely as a British puppet; there were just two small hospitals in a country with a million people, two secular secondary schools and three miles of metalled road, all in or around the capital, Muscat. Outside the cities of Muscat and Salalah and British RAF bases at Salalah and Masirah, there was no running water or electricity across a country bigger than Great Britain and medieval diseases such as leprosy still ravaged parts of the interior. Most seriously, Oman faced a major insurgency with a ruler in denial about his culpability for it.

Move forward fifty years: by 2019, Oman's estimated GDP was just over $76 billion, it was ranked 67th richest country in the world and 21st highest oil producer (the UK is 30th); education and healthcare come free from the state and Oman has an average personal income approaching £46,000 per annum (the UK's was just under £37,000 for 2019). Oman is a member of the United Nations (UN) and Arab League, a founder-member of the Gulf Cooperation Council and a staunch Western ally on good terms with all its neighbours, including – uniquely – having sound working relationships with Saudi Arabia, Iran and Israel.

Defeating that insurgency started Oman on the path to this and what follows covers Qaboos's role in that victory. This matters now. On one level, there are historical events with global impact - had the insurgents won, the Cold War could have followed a radically different path and not just in the Middle East. On another, there are messages for 21st century strategists. As of 2022, we face a new Cold War with echoes of the old, including aggressive competition in key global regions incorporating subversion and use of proxy allies in so-called 'hybrid/liminal' attacks on Western allies and interests.[i] Moreover, the 'War on Terror' is not over and Allied performance in Afghanistan in particular indicates some considerable room for improvement in fighting it. So, careful study of possibly the most successful counterinsurgency in history might hint at good counterinsurgent practice, capacity building and repelling covert attack and the vital role of political leadership in hindering or enabling these.[ii]

How the war began

Muscat and Oman, as it was before 1970, was nominally independent but tied to the UK by a series of one-sided treaties going back to the early nineteenth century, intended to guarantee its place in the protective cordon around India and leaving the Sultans of Muscat reliant on subsidies from London, the British government in effective charge of Muscat and Oman's foreign, defence and fiscal policy, and the Sultan's small army officered largely by former British officers contracted directly by him and commanding mainly Baluchi troops. Sultan Said was determined to restore Oman's economic self-sufficiency and from acceding in 1932 ran an austerity programme like no other, leading to the perpetual poverty and deprivation outlined already.[iii] Thousands of Omanis – mainly young men – left the country seeking work elsewhere in the Gulf and were banned by Said from returning.

Many of this diaspora drifted into radical politics and it is unsurprising that Qaboos' early life was shaped by armed rebellions against his father. In the 1950s, with Saudi and Egyptian encouragement, tribesmen in the north rallied around Imam Ghalib bin Ali al Hinai, traditional religious leader of Oman's interior, seizing a large area of northern Oman and cutting off Muscat on the coast from areas being prospected for oil in the interior. It took four years and extensive British military aid to end this crisis, alongside a long-term agreement with London by which British Army officers on attachment held almost every command appointment above platoon level within the new, British-financed Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) the Commander, Sultan's Armed Forces (CSAF) being a serving British Army colonel.[iv]

The 1960s saw many in the diaspora coalesce around Imam Ghalib, now in exile in Saudi Arabia and the focus of rebellion shifting south to the province of Dhofar, a mountainous subtropical region inhabited by *Djebalis*, a people of African descent speaking a different language from the Arabs on the coast and traditionally viewed with suspicion by them. Said returned to his palace in Salalah, capital of Dhofar, following the Imamate uprising, from where he treated Dhofar as a personal fiefdom to be taxed ruthlessly, stimulus for new revolt. In 1962, the Dhofar Liberation Front (DLF) formed as a coalition between Dhofari separatists and former Imamate fighters with weapons and training supplied by the Saudis. The DLF's military backbone came initially from the Bait Kathir tribe under Sheikh Musalim bin Nufl, who in 1963-64 began attacks on oil facilities in Dhofar and the RAF base at Salalah, finding sanctuary in Saudi Arabia between each attack.[v] Said responded by building a barbed-wire fence around Salalah and banning entry to all *Djebalis*, bringing them in closer behind the insurgents.[vi] Convinced he could smash the DLF through terror alone, he ordered reprisals against villages in the vicinity of attacks – sealing up wells was one of the milder responses – and also forbad any emigration, leading to hundreds of disaffected young men instead joining the DLF.[vii] By the mid-1960s the DLF's armed strength was estimated at between 265 and 400, a large force for such a sparsely inhabited region, now recruiting from all over the diaspora and receiving regular donations of weapons and money from the Saudis and the Imam.[viii] Facing this, the SAF had, initially, 2,200 men in two infantry regiments, the Muscat Regiment and Northern Frontier Regiment (each around 600 men in theory, seriously understrength in practice) and an artillery troop, supported by three Piston Provosts of the Sultan of Oman's Air Force (SOAF – flown by British RAF pilots on attachment).[ix] The Army was woefully under-equipped,

still carrying elderly Lee-Enfield rifles, for instance, although among Said's last acts as Sultan were agreeing to buy FN FAL rifles and MAG machine guns from Belgium, raising a third infantry battalion - the Desert Regiment - and buying 38 British-made Strikemasters for the SOAF.[x]

The DLF established a base at Hauf, just across the border in the Aden Colony, and with the establishment of the Marxist-Leninist People's Republic of South Yemen (PRSY) following the British abandonment of Aden in November 1967, obtained a major external ally and sponsor steering their guiding ideology. The DLF fell rapidly under the control of Marxists loyal to Moscow or Beijing, renaming itself the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Arab Gulf (PFLOAG) and now aiming at a 'socialist', egalitarian and 'secular' (i.e., atheist) state throughout Oman before injecting the revolution into the Trucial Sheikhdoms, Bahrain and Qatar.[xi]

The Dhofar insurgency therefore became another front in the Cold War, a communist insurgency aiming to create a ring of pro-Soviet states around the periphery of Saudi Arabia, so threatening the world's biggest oil-producing regions and the Straits of Hormuz and all the major sea lanes running through them, sea lanes on which the economies of the UK, Europe and Japan depended absolutely at the time.[xii] With the latest Soviet and Chinese weapons, leaders trained in the USSR, Iraq and Bulgaria and by Chinese officers at Hauf, PFLOAG expanded, by 1970 having 2,000 hardcore regular fighters alongside 3,000 local volunteers.[xiii] Now numerically superior and better armed, PFLOAG outmatched the SAF tactically and by 1970 had uncontested control of the Djebel - the highlands running west to east across Dhofar - allowing unobstructed communication with Hauf and dominating all the land routes from Salalah, effectively putting it under siege.[xiv]

Said was obstinate as ever: when Brigadier John Graham took over as CSAF early in 1970, Said told him his main duty was destroying the 'bad people' on the Djebel - while refusing to commit more forces than already to actually doing so.[xv] Then, in June, insurgents attacked military facilities in northern Oman and a series of arrests in Muscat indicated that PFLOAG's networks were spreading to the capital. The final straw had hit the camel's back.

Qaboos, the Man

All strategists have an intellectual hinterland: Qaboos's was shaped by his relationship with the British and his father, blended with a powerful sense of *noblesse oblige*. Said sent Qaboos to England in 1957 aged sixteen, Qaboos' first trip outside Oman. After two years of sixth-form study, he spent two years at Sandhurst followed by a tour as a Second Lieutenant with the Cameronians in Germany before returning home on Said's orders in 1964. Kept under virtual house arrest near his father's palace in Salalah, Qaboos observed developments in Oman with horror, expressed to several Consul Generals and CSAFs when they were allowed to visit him, knowing they would report this back to London.[xvi] Worn out by four decades of Said's idiosyncrasies, Whitehall encouraged Qaboos to oust his father, leading to the events of 23 July 1970.[xvii] By the end of that day, Said had abdicated and was on a plane to London, never to return, following a brief gun battle at the Salalah palace in which Said was wounded and a palace guard killed.[xviii]

Qaboos proclaimed publicly that Said had 'departed' and that he was now in charge and dedicated to creating a modern state. This would be impossible without eradicating PFLOAG, a daunting challenge as they now had the essentials for any successful insurgency. Said's crass mismanagement provided the rebels a compelling 'story' winning support not only in Oman but across the Middle East and as far away as Moscow, London, and the UN in New York. More prosaically, PFLOAG had 2-3,000 well-trained and highly motivated fighters, an ostensibly inviolable sanctuary area in the PDRY and some powerful external sponsors. Qaboos dealt effectively with all these.

New Oman, new story

Said's removal changed Oman's story simply because it happened, his replacement by a young, charismatic, and humane new ruler giving Oman a sense of hope missing for generations. A week after the coup, Qaboos broadcast to the Omani people making possibly the most crucial announcement of his entire reign, that the country would henceforth be known as the Sultanate of Oman, a single country with a single sovereign authority – him - the same rights and duties for everyone and the divisions of the past left behind.[xix] This initiated a nation-building strategy with Dhofar as the main priority: the SAF's statement of intent – laid out by Brigadier John Akehurst in 1974 but reflecting what had been happening for some time - was 'to secure Dhofar for civilian development', a rare statement of a clear 'end state' from which actions for reaching it could be shaped.[xx]

Said's estranged brother, Tariq bin Taimur (father of Sultan Haitham) invited back from self-imposed exile (by the British, against Qaboos's wishes) and appointed Oman's Prime Minister, created the mechanisms for making this a reality. Qaboos and Tariq fell out over their respective roles, with Tariq leaving Oman again at the end of 1971 but in the interim, Tariq created the bases for modern ministries of health, education, justice, and the interior while pursuing some vital foreign policy aims.[xxi]

Most critical of these were joining the Arab League and the United Nations, so ending Oman's isolation and removing any remaining vestiges of support for the Imam while narrowing PFLOAG's range of external supporters and altering the perception of them away from freedom fighters

against a medieval despot to Soviet proxies challenging a legitimate Arab government. Just as important was winning the support of the two most powerful rulers in the Gulf, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and Mohamed Reza Pahlavi, Shah of Iran.[xxii]

Tariq's patient diplomacy paid off in October 1971 as the Arab League endorsed Oman's membership and the UN General Assembly did likewise with the PDRY being one of a small group of Soviet allies voting against.[xxiii] That same month, Qaboos met the Shah at the Persepolis Festival, a massive public celebration of 2,500 years of the Persian Empire which dozens of other heads of state attended also. In December, he flew to Tehran and signed a security agreement with the Shah by which Iranian troops and aircraft would deploy to Dhofar.[xxiv] December 1971 also brought the key summit in Riyadh between Qaboos and King Faisal, leading to Saudi diplomatic recognition for Oman and the end of any remaining Saudi support for the Imam.[xxv]

The means of strategy - the Sultanate's fighting strength

Money is the sinews of strategy, and Oman developed its fighting strength courtesy of escalating oil wealth. By 1973, the Sultanate was exporting 293,000 barrels a day, with exports for the year standing at 106 million barrels, rising to 320,000 barrels per day by 1980.[xxvi] This coincided with the fallout from the Yom Kippur War of October 1973, oil-producing Arab states plus the Shah punishing the USA and its allies in Europe for supporting Israel by raising the price of oil from $3 per barrel to $5. Although not participating in the embargo, Oman benefited, its oil eventually reaching a price of $12 per barrel where it stayed until 1977.[xxvii] The Sultanate concurrently deepened its ownership of its oil assets, having a 60% interest in Petroleum Development Oman by the end of 1974.[xxviii] With potentially vastly more to spend, at the end of 1970 Qaboos authorised a Development Department for Dhofar overseeing a civic action programme, the 'civilian development' part of the war aim.[xxix]

He also expanded his armed forces. By the end of 1970 a new formation, the Dhofar Brigade, was created under the command of a British brigadier overseeing all subsequent military operations in Dhofar.[xxx] A recruitment programme increased the SAF's size and the proportion of Omanis over the Baluchi mercenaries traditionally making up around half the army; alongside this, twelve UH-1 transport helicopters were purchased from the USA intended specifically at making forces in Dhofar airmobile.[xxxi] The subsequent campaign hinged on the Omani regulars of the Dhofar Brigade but the best-known Omani forces, at least from British narratives, were the *Firquats*. Qaboos announced a general amnesty for all insurgents in August 1970: among the first to defect was the senior PFLOAG commander Salim Mubarak, who proposed creating a home guard from other turned insurgents and locally recruited tribesmen from Dhofar, bringing local knowledge and cultural awareness to the SAF and recruiting previously alienated *Djebalis* into the war effort. Eventually some 1000 men were formed into twelve *Firquats*, each commanded by a British Army officer with a training team of NCOs, ostensibly part of something called the British Army Training Team (BATT) actually a cover name for soldiers from 22 SAS.[xxxii] Operations to clear the Djebel involved some hard fighting by *Firquat*/22 SAS alongside SAF regulars supported by SOAF Strikemasters – and the attrition of PFLOAG's fighting strength as their resources were gradually cut off is an oft-overlooked factor in their defeat. The UH-1s not only improved the SAF's mobility in the mountains but, alongside Iranian Chinooks and the sixteen Skyvans purchased later, enabled permanent SAF bases on the Djebel, increasing pressure on PFLOAG, securing the population from its retribution and allowing civilian development teams to work safely, demonstrating how things might change for the better under Qaboos – who reinforced the point personally with frequent visits to the front, a stark contrast with his reclusive father.[xxxiii]

Another boost came from allies. The Shah sent supplies from August 1972, sixty C-130s of the Imperial Iranian Air Force (IIAF) establishing an air bridge between Muscat and Salalah; nine AB-205 helicopters of the IIAF arrived at Salalah in February 1973 and a year later a squadron of F-5s were deployed at Thumrait, in the interior, followed by F-4 Phantoms in 1975, more fast air support for the SAF and a deterrent for the PDRY. The Imperial Iranian Army also deployed major ground assets, beginning with a special forces company in November 1972 followed by a Brigade of 2,000 troops, the Damavand Battle Group.[xxxiv] The supplies provided by the Shah plus the helicopters proved a major boost to logistics in the mountains while the Brigade gave Sultanate forces a mass they lacked previously, allowing them major offensives fortifying ground once secured.[xxxv] The Iranians featured prominently alongside the SAF in the four years of operations securing a series of fortified lines stretching north-south across the Djebel down to the Salalah Plain, breaking up insurgent-controlled areas and cutting them off from their base in Yemen.[xxxvi]

Qaboos' other great supporter was King Hussein of Jordan, who sent weaponry and training personnel from 1972 onwards while opening Royal Jordanian Army training facilities to the SAF. In 1975 a Jordanian Special Forces Battalion was deployed to Dhofar and Hussein gifted Qaboos with 32 Hawker Hunters for the expanding SOAF.[xxxvii]

Escalating to de-escalate – a headache for London

Alongside the counterinsurgency went bursts of cross-border conventional fighting as the PDRY tried to support their allies.[xxxviii] In 1972 the PDRY tried to relieve pressure on PLOAG forces in the western Djebel by bombarding SAF positions clearly inside Omani territory. Qaboos was so infuriated that he ordered a series of cross-border airstrikes on Hauf itself. Not only does this illustrate how far things had changed since Said's removal but provides a clear example of Qaboos driving the strategic agenda independently – the Strikemasters hitting Hauf were flown by British contract officers with the SAF, and London was horrified at their involvement in what was, potentially, a major escalation. However, the Yemenis were suitably intimidated – even asking the British ambassador to mediate - and it was shortly after the Hauf attacks that Qaboos signed his agreement with the Shah.[xxxix] While entirely speculation, Qaboos's demonstrating of decisive action independent of London may have swayed the Shah's decision to support him. By October 1975, Qaboos was sufficiently emboldened to authorise further strikes inside Yemen, responding to more cross-border shelling followed by PDRY troops crossing the border, the Jordanian-supplied Hunters hitting roads and artillery positions across a sweep of southern Yemen.[xl]

Payoff – and what it tells us

The PDRY's failed intervention marked the end of significant fighting. In November 1975 the final major insurgent base, just inside the border with the PDRY, was captured, and, although fighting continued sporadically for another year, the Dhofar Brigade commander, John Akehurst, was able to signal Qaboos, 'Your Majesty…Dhofar is now secure for civil development' - mission accomplished and a clear result for a clear strategy headed by a bold young ruler.[xli] This is where the real message for today's strategists lays, alongside some caveats. Distilling 'lessons' from past counterinsurgencies like Dhofar into tactical prescriptions covered by buzz-terms like 'hearts and minds' or 'government in a box' risks repeating mistakes made in Iraq and Afghanistan: buzzwords is all these things are unless context is considered, and they form part of a coherent strategy pursuing a realistic political settlement attractive to a majority of the population. Moreover, the means of strategy are everything: Oman's settlement was feasible thanks to growing oil revenues spent wisely on the country and its armed forces, strengthening Qaboos's hand and showing he meant what he said - and none of this could happen without the initial willingness to remove Said.[xlii] Perhaps the main message of Qaboos's victory is that clear-minded leadership, based in moral and physical courage, is a prerequisite for any successful strategy.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Miss Aiysha al Toubi, Dr Mark Baillie and Lt Colonel Sean Cronin-Nowakowski for their help with this paper.

References

[i] The author is deeply sceptical about the term 'hybrid warfare' but it is a useful tool in this case despite its growing overuse elsewhere. For the Current UK government's view on the current situation and how it plays out, see Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy (London: HM Government 2021), especially pp.10-11. Also based on conversations with serving British Army officers.

[ii] The author's KCL colleagues Geraint Hughes and Walter Ladwig argue on similar lines (with some qualifications) in Hughes, 'A "Model Campaign" Reappraised: The Counter-Insurgency War in Dhofar, Oman, 1965-1975', Journal of Strategic Studies Volume 32 No.2 April 2009, pp.272-273 and Ladwig, 'Supporting Allies in Counterinsurgency: Britain and the Dhofar Rebellion', Small Wars & Insurgencies Volume 19 No.1, March 2008, pp.62-63

[iii] For a good introduction to the history and politics of Said's reign, see Uzi Rabi, The Emergence of States in a Tribal Society: Oman under Sa'id bin Taimur 1932-1970 (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press 2011); refer also to Calvin Allen Jr and W Lynn Rigsbee II, Oman under Qaboos: From Coup to Constitution 1970-1996 (London: Frank Cass 2000) especially pp.1-33

[iv] See the closest to an official history of the Sultan's Armed Forces available in English, JE Peterson, Oman's Insurgencies: The Sultanate's Struggle for Survival (London: Saqi 2007), pp.63-182; refer also to the memoirs of the first CSAF, David Smiley, Arabian Assignment: Operations in Oman and the Yemen 1958-1961 and 1963-1968, (London: Leo Cooper 1975), pp.10-128; Hughes, 'Model Campaign', pp.278-279 The post of CSAF was later elevated to Brigadier, then Major-General.

[v] Jeremy Jones & Nicholas Ridout, A History of Modern Oman (Cambridge: CUP 2015) pp.137-138; Robert Alston & Stuart Lang, Unshook till the End of Time: A History of Relations between Britain and Oman, 1650-1970 pp.279-280; John Pimlott, 'The British Army: the Dhofar Campaign, 1970-1975', in Ian FW Beckett & John Pimlott, Counter-Insurgency: Lessons from History Second Edition (Barnsley, Pen & Sword 2011), pp.26-27

[vi] Alston & Lang, Unshook, pp.279-280

[vii] Jones & Ridout, Oman, pp.139-140; Hughes, 'Model Campaign', pp.279-280

[viii] Peterson, Oman's Insurgencies, pp.194-197

[ix] Ibid, pp.149-150; Pimlott, 'British Army', pp.27-28

[x] Alston & Lang, Unshook, p.283 The weapons were known of course, as the Self-Loading Rifle (SLR) and General-Purpose Machine Gun (GPMG) in British Army service. The Strikemaster is the armed version of the Jet Provost trainer and was to gain near-legendary status during the Dhofar War, being the main source of fast air support for SAF for prolonged periods.

[xi] Jones & Ridout, Modern Oman, pp.141-143; Peterson, Oman's Insurgencies, pp.217-219 Pimlott, 'British Army', p.29

[xii] The British Government were all too aware of this – see Hughes, 'Model Campaign', pp.277-278; Ladwig, 'Dhofar Rebellion', pp.63-64

[xiii] Alston & Lang, Unshook, p.283; Peterson, Oman's Insurgencies, pp.221-222

[xiv] Alston & Lang, Unshook, pp.282-283; Hughes, 'Model Campaign', pp.291-292

[xv] Alston & Lang, Unshook, p.256; Pimlott, 'British Army', pp.30-31

[xvi] See Nikolas Gardner, 'The Limits of the Sandhurst Connection: The Evolution of Oman's Foreign and Defense Policy 1970-1977', Journal of the Middle East and Africa 6:1, 2015, p.48

[xvii] Alston & Lang, Unshook, pp.258-259; Majid al Khalili, Oman's Foreign Policy: Foundation and Practice (Westport & London: Praeger 2009), p.64

[xviii] See Peterson, Oman's Insurgencies, pp.238-241. Said died at the Dorchester Hotel two years later, and is buried in Brookwood Cemetery.

[xix] Alston & Lang, Unshook, p.150 Many of my Omani friends believe that the creation of modern-style citizenship was the keystone of Qaboos's' whole political programme.

[xx] Pimlott, 'British Army, p.33

[xxi] Allen & Rigsbee, Oman under Qaboos, p.35; Alston & Lang, Unshook, p.150 Nephew and Uncle were eventually reconciled with Tariq returning to Muscat and becoming an informal advisor to Qaboos.

[xxii] Both close American allies and major oil suppliers to the USA and Western Europe. Since the British withdrawal from 'east of Suez' the Americans viewed the Shah as the main guarantor of their interests in the Gulf and along with the British were helping him use his oil wealth to build massive, well-equipped armed forces capable of controlling the Gulf and threatening the USSR's southern flank.

[xxiii] Al Khalili, Oman's Foreign Policy, pp.67-69

[xxiv] Ibid, p.77; Alston & Lang, Unshook, pp.153-155; The Shah's motives were probably not entirely selfless, as he was engaged in a territorial dispute with the Trucial Emirates over the islands of Abu Musa and the Lesser Tunbs, which his forces had occupied in November that year. Oman stayed neutral in this dispute, unlike almost every other Arab Gulf country, all falling in behind the Emirates. In 1972, the Shah proclaimed a strategy for Imperial Iran of establishing a 'security perimeter' stretching far into the Indian Ocean and incorporating adjacent areas of the Arabian Peninsula and the commitment to Dhofar might be

seen as part of this.

[xxv] Al Khalili, Oman's Foreign Policy, pp.72-73 It may be that Qaboos's visit to Riyadh had the indirect backing of Faisal's close ally, President Nixon, see Gardner', 'Limits', pp.50-51

[xxvi] Jones & Ridout, Modern Oman, p.157; Alston & Lang, Unshook, p.274

[xxvii] Jones & Ridout, Modern Oman, p.157. Imperial Iran had good relations with Israel so the Shah's motives were probably not entirely selfless here, either – Iran's oil revenues increased more than tenfold between 1972 and 1975 with a third of it spent on the armed forces.

[xxviii] Alston & Lang, Unshook, p.274

[xxix] Ibid, p.289

[xxx] Ibid, pp.35-36

[xxxi] Allen & Rigsbee, Oman under Qaboos, p.67

[xxxii] One of the best memoirs of the Dhofar War is Major General Tony Jeapes, SAS Operation Oman (Glasgow: HarperCollins 1980) a detailed personal account of the raising and training of the Firquats by a former CO of 22 SAS. See also Hughes, 'Model Campaign', pp.283-284

[xxxiii] Peterson, Oman's Insurgencies, pp.258, 261, 269, 275, 277; Hughes, 'Model Campaign', p.286; Pimlott, 'British Army', pp.37-38 Qaboos's mother, Sayida Mazoon, was a Djebali, giving him a close personal connection with the region and its people.

[xxxiv]

[xxxv] Hughes, 'Model Campaign', pp.287-288; Jones & Ridout, Modern Oman, p.156; Peterson, Oman's Insurgencies, pp.329-331 It is estimated the Iranians may have sustained between 500 and 1,000 killed in action during their four-year long deployment to Dhofar, several times the number suffered by other contingents.

[xxxvi] See Steven R Ward, Immortal: A Military History of Iran and its Armed Forces (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press 2009), pp.202-205

[xxxvii] For instance, see Peterson, Oman's Insurgencies, pp.245, 331, Hughes, 'Model Campaign', pp.284-285

[xxxviii] Ibid, pp.328-329

[xxxix] Alston & Lang, Unshook, pp.291-292

[xl] Ibid, pp.292-294; Peterson, Oman's Insurgencies, pp.290-293

[xli] Peterson, Oman's Insurgencies, p.373; Pimlott, 'British Army', p.41

[xlii] Pimlott, 'British Army', p.41

[xliii] Amusing comment from a conversation with an Omani friend: when told that Said knew several Shakespeare plays off by heart, he responded 'King Lear obviously wasn't one of them…'

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Will Artificial General Intelligence Change the Nature of War?

Ares Simone Monzio Compagnoni - London, England, UK

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About the author

Ares Simone Monzio Compagnoni is an architect and a UGVs analyst. He earned a MA in War Studies from King's College London and a MA in Architecture from the Polytechnic of Milan. He has worked extensively in architectural visualisation and is experienced in VR, real-time rendering, and computer vision programming.

Introduction

The idea of the immutability of the nature of war, as formulated by Clausewitz, is an article of faith that is constantly put to trial. The latest development in human history that can potentially change the nature of war is Artificial Intelligence (AI). In a recent article published in this magazine, Alloui-Cros argued that the nature of war will not change. [i] He based this conclusion on three points: AI is just a tool that compresses timeframes but is unable

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to make complex decisions, AI has human biases and is designed to solve human problems, and war is a human activity, and we will always have a choice to determine its course. Looking at the AIs that are currently available, he is probably correct and AI will not change what war is or break the trinity of passion, chance and policy that defines its nature. His conclusions are aligned with those of other scholars that discussed how military revolutions changed war. For example, Gray concluded that 'some confused theorists would have us believe that war can change its nature'.[ii] Echevarria investigated the relation between RMA, globalisation, and the nature of war and concluded that, although it is changing, the Clausewitzian framework remains 'more suitable for understanding the nature of war in today's global environment than any of the alternatives'. [iii]

On one hand, Alloui-Cros' article has merits because it recognized that Clausewitz's theory of war is still the point of reference for any discussion and updated to AI past conclusions on the effects of technological revolutions on the nature of war.

On the other hand, he did not consider if an AI with human-like capabilities, so-called Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), of whose capabilities far surpass human comprehension can falsify this theory. Vinge called this AI a 'singularity', a mathematical term used to label a point where a function degenerates and changes its nature becoming qualitatively different from what was before. Vinge concluded that 'it is a point where our models must be discarded and a new reality rules'.[iv] An AGI that far surpasses human capabilities is thus called a singularity because, once it appears, the past will not be a guide to forecast or understand the future. Some authors portrayed this possibility as the end of the world.[v] The implicit conclusion is that it is not worth studying what comes after because the AGI singularity will annihilate us. This position is disputable because if we have no way to know how this new reality will be, then it is impossible and equally useless to conclude that the singularity will destroy instead of saveing us. Furthermore, as Vinge argued in his seminal paper, as time passes, we should see the symptoms of the singularity advent.[vi] Hence it is worth studying how the nature of war will be altered by this new evolving reality. Alloui-Cros answered the question on AI and the nature of war for the reality we know. The purpose of this article is to add to this discussion by speculating what might happen to the nature of war when we approach the AGI singularity.

This essay is divided into three parts. Firstly, it will present the two conditions needed for an AGI to become a singularity: super-intelligence and consciousness. Secondly, it will try to answer if AI super-intelligence and consciousness could change Clausewitz's definition of war. Thirdly, once we establish that war is still organised violence for political aims, it will describe how AI super-intelligence and consciousness might influence Clausewitz's trinity of violence, chance, and politics. The conclusion is that the AI super-intelligence and consciousness have the potential to change the nature of war.

What is Artificial Intelligence?

AI researcher Micah Clark wrote that on 'a very personal and philosophical level, AI has been about building persons, is about "personhood"'.[vii] Current AIs are far from achieving personhood and can be better understood as highly optimised algorithms to solve narrow tasks but are poor at transferring these skills to new ones.[viii] Researchers are even in disagreement about whether a synthetic, conscious intelligence capable of performing humanly relevant complex cognitive tasks will ever emerge and eventually surpass human capabilities.[ix] Nonetheless, super-intelligence and consciousness are two steps that, if ever reached, could change war and its nature.

Super-intelligence

There is no consensus on the essence of human intelligence and even less so on super-intelligence.[x] It is still possible to adopt a working definition like the one proposed by Bostrom: 'any intellect that greatly exceeds the cognitive performance of humans in virtually all domains of interest' is super-intelligent.[xi] This can materialise as comparable human intellect capability but multiple orders of magnitude faster, or vastly more intelligent, or a combination.[xii] Initially, it would be a 'seed' AI capable of building a slightly better version of itself through recursive self-improvement. [xiii] AI researchers think that with sufficient skill at intelligence amplification, the system could develop new cognitive modules as needed, including empathy, strategic thought and political acumen.[xiv]

Social psychologists, however, have recognized that the mind, as something associated with a single organism, is an approximation of intelligence. In reality, the mind is social, and it exists inside social and cultural systems.[xv] Artificial Life (ALife) research can give us insights into how machines can organise societies with rules for trade and fight and act as social intelligence. ALife envisions the possibility of a society of AI that leads to their superior intelligence.[xvi]

Consciousness

An AGI might develop consciousness as a tool to optimise its overall reward function and might have characteristics significantly different from that of humans.[xvii] Philosophers and researchers disagree on what consciousness is and whether self-consciousness is necessary or just a particular sort of phenomenal consciousness.[xviii] In particular, the lack of bodily experience and biological motivations would realise a clear cartesian dualism of body-mind that would

question at its core the ability of AI to distinguish itself from the rest, care about itself and express intentionality.[xix]

The evolution of AI is not completely predictable, but we can expect increasing intelligence and some level of autonomy approaching consciousness to develop. We can explore its impact on war through these concepts.

Is it war?

Clausewitz's definition of war

The first question to answer is if war fought with and by AGIs is still war or a different type of interaction. In 'On war', Clausewitz introduces the concept (Begriff) of war as 'an act of violence (Gewalt) to force an opponent to fulfil our will'.[xx]

This definition comprises three elements: a) the violence, b) the purpose, and c) the social element.

a. For Clausewitz, the results of the application of violence are 'bloodsheds',[xxi] and the reciprocal element of war gives violence an escalatory quality without theoretical limits to its application.[xxii]

b. On the other hand, escalation is a potential outcome rather than a necessary one because the rational decisions of human beings should determine it.[xxiii] Military aims (*Ziel*) are thus constrained and judged in relation to the political purpose of the war (*Zweck*) and are only a component of the overall means (*Mittel*) available.[xxiv]

c. War is a relation between communities willing to resist and realise their political aims. It is a function of 'coalitionary aggression' and must happen between organised groups with a shared understanding of reality.[xxv]

a. Violence and AGIs

Handel highlights that for Clausewitz, victory without violence is an aberration in the history of warfare.[xxvi] In theory, it can be achieved by two methods, through manoeuvre,[xxvii] or as 'war by algebra', a clash resolved by comparing figures of each other's strengths.[xxviii] The Prussian general believed the first ineffective and the second impossible because of passion. By contrast, an AI commander might act as a perfectly rational entity and realise the 'war by algebra'. However, there are different combinations of this situation that are worth mentioning. If the AGI is under human control, the AGI evaluation might be overrun by a passionate human commander. Similarly, for the reciprocal nature of war, if the opponent is a human agent, the AGI might be forced to use violence to react to non-rational decisions. Conversely, if it faces another purely rational entity, or Huntington's Civil-Military relations concept remains valid, even when AGI is in charge of military operations, then an AGI commander might calculate that a battle or a war should not occur. Paradoxically, AGIs commanders might agree that the most efficient way to resolve a battle is to calculate the likely outcome and destroy their own resources based on this shared conclusion.[xxix] They would maintain valid the 'dominance of the destructive principle',[xxx] but would morph war and make explicit that it is an act of self-violence.

b. Purpose and AGIs

There must be a rational purpose for a conscious, and thus intentional, AGI to resort to war and violence or self-violence. If the AI does not have a freely chosen purpose and acts violently, if it goes 'rogue', then it is not war: it is an unnatural disaster. At the same time, it is unclear what a rational purpose would be for an AGI. Humans have biological motivations and emotions that connect these needs to our behaviours.[xxxi] It is unclear if an AI would have motivations or if some non-human motivations will emerge during their evolution. Minsky suggested that free will develops from a 'strong primitive defense mechanism' to resist or deny compulsion.[xxxii] If this is true, we can at least assume that a conscious AI will try to defend itself. Unfortunately, it does not clarify if an AGI will understand human motivations and how much value it will give to itself in relation to the rest of reality.

c. Social element and AGIs

An additional element to consider is that humans and AGIs might have different perceptions about what constitutes a violent act and its severity. Moreover, as humans, we might not be able to understand the thought processes of a super-intelligent being. This incomprehension of aims and means undermines the definition of war as a social institution: we do not wage wars on apes or cats, and similarly, AGIs will not have wars with us.[xxxiii] Interestingly, if AGIs develop their own society with norms and shared understandings, as ALife suggests, it means that they could potentially have AGI social wars waged for AGIs social motivations.

Overall, AGIs might not be interested in human wars unless they perceive them as threats. We will likely need a new word to identify these new social interactions. At the same time, war between humans with AGIs assistance is impossible to rule out, and it is thus essential to explore how its nature might change.

Does it change the nature of war?

What is the nature of war?

The nature of war is distilled into what Clausewitz called

the 'wondrous trinity'.[xxxiv] Its elements are a) violence, hatred, and enmity, b) the play of chance and probability, and c) the element of subordination of war to policy and reason.

a. Clausewitz identified two types of hostility: hostile feelings or animosity and hostile intentions. Hostile intentions are essentially political in nature, necessary for war to occur and can exist without hostile feelings.[xxxv] The latter is variable in intensity, and war would be an algebraic exercise if absent.[xxxvi]

b. Clausewitz states that war is the realm of probabilities. The unfavourable cases are caused by friction: moral and physical depletion (danger and exertion), and lack of knowledge and bad luck (uncertainty and chance).[xxxvii] Estimating the impact of these factors is a matter of judgement and approximation because the extremely high number of cases makes it impossible to calculate mathematically.[xxxviii] Human, limited cognitive capabilities force the commander to make 'good enough' decisions.[xxxix]

c. Clausewitz is adamant that war has a rational component and it is not 'something autonomous but always [...] an instrument of policy'.[xl] It is the job of the statesman and the commander to establish 'the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for nor trying to turn it into something that is alien to its nature'.[xli] They should do this while not clouded by hostile feelings and after having correctly judged the probabilities.

a. Hostility and AGIs

Superficially, a perfectly rational entity would not be influenced by feelings like hostility. As discussed, it is not clear if even conscious AGIs would have a purpose other than self-defence. Nonetheless, we can imagine that an AGI might see itself as so precious that any human activity is perceived as hostile. AGIs might thus exist in a state of constant AI-fear, defined as a hyper-rational passion that is very different from our biologically driven fear, and develop both hostile feelings and intent. A 'dehumanised perception' may facilitate violence and brutality and even extermination with the awareness of what it is doing.[xlii]

b. Chance and AGIs

A super-intelligence explosion will eventually become asymptotic with perfect knowledge and calculus, effectively realising a so-called 'Laplace's Demon'.[xliii] In theory, this entity would suffer almost no friction: it would immediately adjust to events and be relentless in its effort. This is the perfect realisation of war by algebra, and it is a vision incompatible with the trinitarian war. In practice, perfect knowledge is impossible because of nonlinear dynamics: it is impossible to eliminate mismatches between the representation of phenomena and their actuality.[xliv] Nonetheless, an AGI would suffer no friction compared to humans.

As Allen argued, when under humans' control, our fiat would only be a constraint and a weakness, and the centre of gravity (*Schwerpunkt*) will become the speed of action and the effect itself.[xlv] War with almost perfect knowledge would no longer be the realm of the military human genius and, as Van Creveld concluded, 'fighting does not make sense since it can neither serve as a test nor be experienced as fun'.[xlvi]

c. Policy and AGIs

The acceleration of almost frictionless military activities brings forward the issue of policy control over them. We assume that an aware and intentional AGI is always in control of its means and can mediate responses and escalations. The problem arises when humans can access the power of a super-intelligent but not-conscious AI. If you know that the enemy will relentlessly attack you, you must be ready to defend yourself relentlessly. This might just translate into a mindless acceleration of escalation and violence. The not-conscious AIs can be programmed to act within policy limits, but this still accounts for a diminished policy role after the conflict started.

Ultimately, investigating what could happen to the nature of war closer to AI super-intelligence and consciousness shows that there can be extreme cases where one or two elements of the trinity might collapse and become irrelevant. Unexpectedly, only passion might remain a constant element.

Conclusions

Alloui-Cros' article proved that even narrow AI will not change the validity of Clausewitz's theory. This article speculates that a super-intelligent and conscious AGI might. It appears that the interaction and conflict with and between super-intelligent conscious AGIs have the potential to be a novel social interaction with a Begriff different from that of purely 'human' wars. Following this logic, AGIs would not change the nature of war but an 'AGI-war' would have its own different nature. Nevertheless, 'human' war is unlikely to disappear, and the participation of an AGI nearing super-intelligence and consciousness has the potential to change its nature.

Brodie suggested that Khan's 'On Thermonuclear War' 'usefully supplements Clausewitz but [...] he does not in any way help to supplant him'.[xlvii] It is possible that, if an AGI emerges, and in anticipation of its super-intelligence and consciousness, we might need a further expansion of Clausewitz's theory, an 'On AGI-War'.

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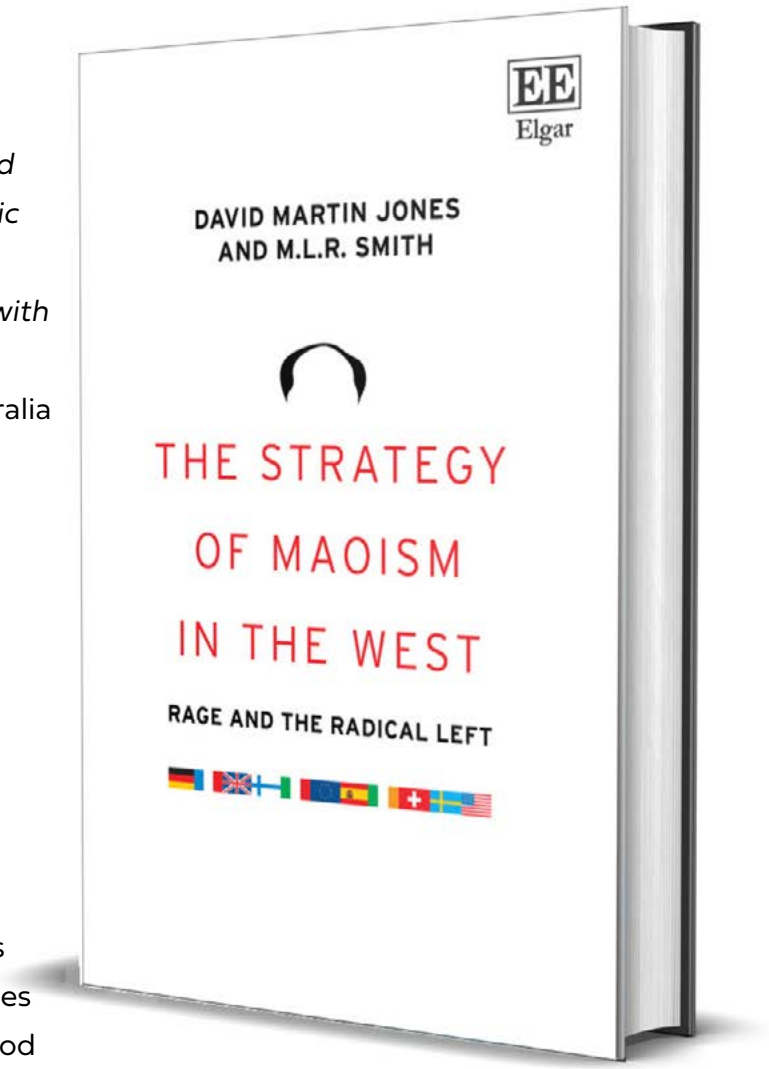

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What Should a Strategist Know and Do, and Why?

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Defining Strategy: Theory and Dimensions

Big, broad words that cover many specific situations ultimately pay the price for their notoriety. They collect meanings the way a windshield picks up grime, degrading visibility. Big common interest words become placeholders for people's many private understandings. Strategy is such a shapeshifting concept. For some, strategy is a definite course of action [i]; for others, a bag of tricks.[ii] Strategy can be tied to ideal goals, lacking bite, or can become a vague roadmap. Strategic education suffers enormously from these two semantic pitfalls. The premises, the expectations, and the skills associated with strategic thinking and doing are ambiguous, confusing, or lacking.

A good concept demands a sound definition. Definitions must be rigorously formulated, containing the necessary conditions that make the concept unique and unchanging in time and space.[iii] Furthermore, the conditions are not simple verbal crutches; they are the concept's core dimensions. These features should be turned into specific differentiating factors that give the concept individuality. Factors are not only theoretical; they should be employed in practice. Differentiating factors should be turned into competencies that can train anyone in any context. However, the differentiating factors need to be necessary and sufficient. Because of this, they should be derived from a theoretical model of international actor behavior.[iv] This model should flow from a core premise, grounding the factors. Only after proposing a model and deriving core dimensions can we advance specific learning objectives, competencies, and methods for training strategists.

Smith and Stone preceded us in the pages of this magazine by offering a dimensional definition of strategy.[v] The components of any good strategy proposed by them and relevant to our article include matching ends with means, interdependence in decision-making, and assumption of rationality. As shown below, the dimensions are validated by our process-based perspective and general theory. Other dimensions, however, such as Smith and Stone's call for moral neutrality,[vi] should be considered in a more nuanced way.

We propose that strategic practice and a set of necessary competencies should be anchored by a theory of international order that rests on three overarching assumptions. [vii] One, international actors aim to preserve or enhance their autonomy. Two, international norms or laws are the product of this desire. Norms prevent the stronger actors from imposing their will on the weaker while providing the former enough leeway to counter. Third, the balance of power periodically adjusted by conflict is intrinsic to the dynamic of international order [viii]. The theory predicts that strategy always creates net effects in the world, a perspective shared by Gray, as well, including in this magazine.[ix] Strategy is not a vague plan or description of ideal end states[x] but the aggregated means to change a specific state of the world to one's advantage. [xi] Strategy is a series of concatenated decisions that lead to effects that require more decisions.[xii] It is a means to change the world by working off effects-of-effects. These requirements demand that strategies should include a forward-looking, anticipatory perspective.

Strategy is also conducted against opposition, which often demands alliances. Thus, strategy is a network problem. To achieve the goals of containing or defeating adversaries while maintaining robust allies, strategies must be built on a solid foundation of strategic empathy with multiple partners or their second-degree partners.[xiii] This, however, is not a call to feel-good generosity. It is necessary to understand all actors from the perspective of their core values. Alliances are required to effectively counter the enemy's strengths and exploit its vulnerabilities while bolstering the strengths of allies. Identifying strengths and weaknesses of friend and foe requires an in-depth understanding and the ability to analyze the situation accurately. A critical outcome of this process is the alignment of means to the desired end-state, identifying the necessary trade-offs required to achieve the goals.

The World War II allied leaders, especially Churchill, displayed, for the most part, excellent strategic empathy. While Churchill had no illusions about Stalin's grand strategy and his status as a "enemy friend," he understood where and when interests converged. Continuing the British Lend and Lease program in 1942 when the British were hurting in North Africa was such a moment of strategic empathy.[xiv]

Strategy has a communicative aspect, as well. It should include both actions that can be disclosed and actions that need to remain confidential. Furthermore, a certain amount of pre-emptive misdirection of the adversary's perception should be included in any strategy, introducing an element of surprise to augment the results of one's actions. Finally, strategy should include an ethical dimension. However, ethics has two facets, one reflecting the values of each actor and the other global, human ethics. The challenge in formulating an ethical boundary around strategies is balancing the two. Ethics is an essential facet of any strategy if the results should be justifiable in the long run.

Strategic competencies

Returning to the core assumption of our theory, it is worth re-emphasizing that these necessary aspects of strategy are anchored by the fact that actors want to protect their autonomy and self-interest. Actors always aim to create

favorable net effects that enhance their position.[xv] However, working against opposition, strategic analysis, and empathy typically advise adopting a balance of power behavior that requires alliances and trade-off thinking.

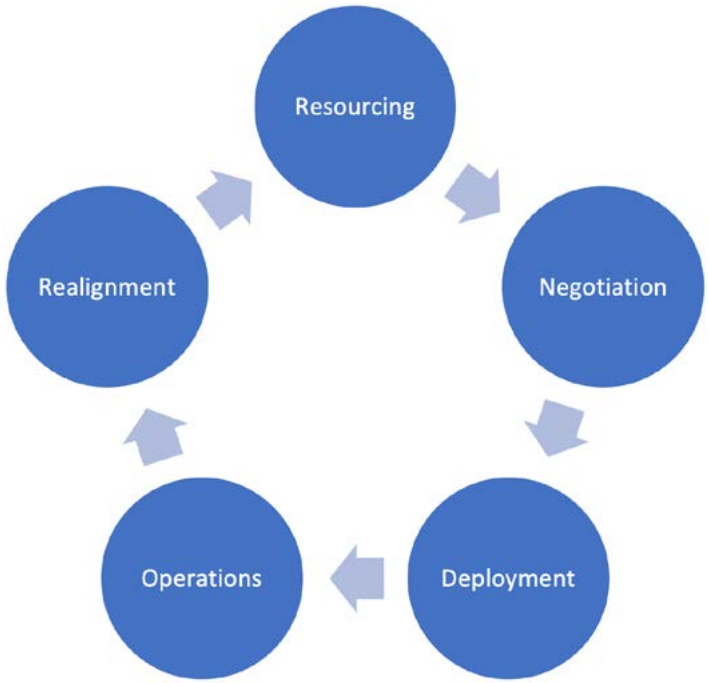
Building on these factors that give strategy identity, we propose that the necessary preconditions for any strategy can also be seen as competencies practiced by strategists, which all educators should employ as learning objectives and metrics for their strategy courses. Competencies, in this context, are "knowledge sets in action".[xvi] They combine theoretical with procedural knowledge demonstrated both in analytic and actional terms. From the theoretical perspective and the assumptions named above, we can propose a set of necessary and, within the context, sufficient competencies. These are:

1. Analytic thinking (discriminant definitory skills)
2. Systems thinking
3. Tradeoff optimization
4. Effects-of-effects iterative planning
5. Indirect thinking
6. Strategic Foresight
7. Strategic Empathy
8. Ethical balancing of interests

The eight competencies are derived from the realist theory of international relations already described.

1. Analytic thinking is deduced from the need to rigorously understand friend and foe before asserting autonomy, a core requirement of realist theory.
2. Systems thinking is demanded by the holistic nature of any strategic problem and the natural entanglements that surround any attempt to induce a net effect in the state of the world.
3. Tradeoff optimization is demanded by the need to balance our approach to influencing our friends' strengths and limiting their weaknesses while denying the strengths and amplifying the weaknesses of our enemies. According to our realist theory, the goal is, again, to maximize one's freedom of action and mastery of the environment.
4. Effects of effects planning result from the intrinsically dynamic nature of strategic action.
5. Indirect thinking is the product of selective communication and the misdirection of the enemy's attention.
6. Strategic foresight involves long-range anticipatory thinking and the ability to create a range of plausible futures derived from continuously updating assumptions and understanding the changing landscape.
7. Strategic empathy is derived from the need to understand both enemies and friends regarding their views and principles without giving in to identification with those views. The goal is to avoid wishful thinking.
8. Ethical balancing of interests refers to infusing the strategy and shaping its outcomes to satisfy the actor's values while keeping them balanced with fundamental, universal human values.

These strategic competencies are necessary and sufficient not only theoretically but practically. This is a cyclical process that follows a straightforward logic:



The first step of the strategic process involves resourcing, identifying the material and human factors that can be used to affect the needed change. Resourcing is not just a matter of identification but also of accounting and trading off one type of resource against another. In effect, resourcing is a type of budgeting requiring a solid understanding of economic and human resource principles. Naval powers, such as Venice, the British Empire, and later the United States, learned this lesson well, even when the war took them unawares, as was

the case for the attack on Pearl Harbor. Although caught on the wrong resourcing foot, fielding an insufficient carrier force in the Pacific, despite vast commitments, the US made up for this shortcoming with a vengeance. Starting the war with a dozen aircraft carriers, the US Navy finished it with over 100 and a completely different force structure.[xvii]

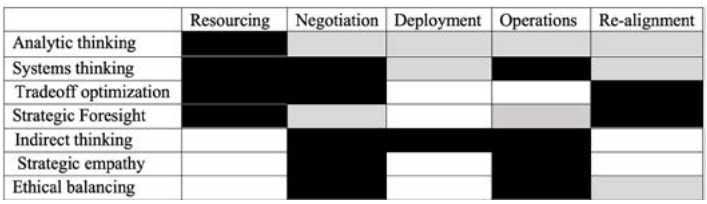
More than the nation's resources are needed for creating large-scale, grand strategy net effect changes in the world. Alliances and preventing counter alliances should be continuously negotiated. Domestic support should also be obtained via political negotiations. Thus, the must-have negotiation stage. Negotiations and alliance formation are distinct features of modern war, starting with the first global conflict, the Seven Years War (1757 – 1763), and its sequel, the American Revolutionary War, to the Great Coalitions that defeated Napoleon,[xviii] Hitler,[xix] or Saddam Hussein.[xx]

The strategic process continues with the deployment phase, within which the resources and assets are positioned for maximum effect. Deployment is not a mere logistics exercise. It is a strategic decision of its own, by which threats and inducements are used to funnel the adversaries' actions and facilitate future actions.

Competencies and the strategic process

Once set in place, strategic assets are put in motion to affect the net change necessary to achieve the strategic goals imposed by the policy in the operational stage. Momentary choices and thinking in terms of longer-term consequences are continuously balanced. Operations may take short or long periods; however, they are bound by the requirement to reach an expected result. Once this is achieved (or not), the strategist needs to reconsider the options that have opened and or that have been lost. The conclusions will help realign future policy and strategy goals. A new cycle of resourcing, negotiation, deployment, and operations will start, keeping the strategic process fresh and relevant.

An effective strategist stands out by using the right competencies at the right time in the strategic process. While strategic competencies are generic enough to be relevant in most contexts, their usefulness is maximized and employed in a particular order of priority. The strategic competency matrix below indicates which competency is most needed at a given stage of the strategic process.



The dark blocks indicate where each competency is primarily developed and utilized. Grey blocks indicate where a competency may be used, but it is not as essential. White boxes indicate stages where the competencies can be used "as needed." Across the board, we first notice that the competency most necessary and constantly present in the strategic thinking and doing process is systems thinking. Every phase of the strategic process should be imbued with the understanding that there are no local decisions or outcomes. All decisions have system-wide implications, and all outcomes will be impacted by how strategists employ systems thinking. Second, negotiation is the phase of the strategic process that necessitates the highest number of competencies. All grand strategies die or live by the strengths of the alliances and promises made (or deftly broken) to the adversaries. A good strategy needs to negotiate its terms by limiting the adversary's degrees of freedom.

Conclusions

This article proposes that strategy is a method, not a definite plan, to achieve a political goal: to create net effects in the international order that promote the interests of a given actor. The method uses tradeoff analysis to limit uncertainty. Policy defines strategic objectives, which are always relative to the aims of the opposing side. National self-interest drives all policies, which hinge on maximizing autonomy. When executing a strategy, nations aim to achieve their national goals while preventing any given country from becoming an overwhelming global ruler. Finally, while systematic and rigorous, strategies are not predictable in a deterministic way. Any given strategy does have a starting point and goal, but it can take multiple courses. These are imposed by the competitors' responses and the need to surprise the enemy. Feints, surprise, and deceit are necessary elements of a successful strategy. Because of this, it is worth repeating that a good strategy is not a recipe. It is a plan working against necessity with practicality while not forgetting to secure national survival primacy.

At the same time, this article points out that strategic thinking and doing can be rigorously defined as a set of competencies used in a prioritized manner within the five stages of the strategic process: resourcing, negotiation, deployment, operations, and re-alignment. These competencies refer to analytic and situation management abilities originating in theoretical knowledge: analysis, system thinking, tradeoff optimization, effects-of-effects planning and timing, indirect thinking, strategic empathy, and ethical balancing of interests. A matrix-based method suggests that the competencies should be used selectively within the five stages of the strategic process. Contextual needs determine the selection of the competencies.

In developing the matrix and the process, we did not simply state the obvious. The competencies we propose are rigorously developed from a specific realist strategic theory. They are parsimonious, covering only the essential requirements of sound strategic planning and action. The competitive nature of great power competition drives the strategic process. The strategic matrix is adapted to specific use, planning, and doing in adversarial conditions, avoiding generic coverage of all possible nuances of strategic engagement.

We should also distinguish between the strategic competencies defined above and strategic analysis. We know that strategic analysis writ large is a meta-theoretical approach derived from game theory[xxi] and public choice theory.[xxii] Its application to international relations is, ultimately, a particular case of a broader domain of inquiry. Thus, our theory, applications, and competencies may be seen as domain-specific applications of strategic analysis. Connecting them with higher-level theory might lead to more rigorous analytic methods for future strategists. After all, the human choice dilemmas identified by strategic analysis are revealed in crisper detail by the struggle for power in international relations.

The methods developed for defining and utilizing competencies in context should not be used dogmatically. The refrain of this paper is that strategy is not a recipe. Strategies require creative thinking and practical use of competencies to map variable means onto fixed ends.[xxiii] Using indirect thinking at the resourcing phase, by which false capabilities are touted and real ones hidden, can be a very appropriate means to gain strategic advantage. The only limit that can be imposed on strategic thinking and doing is staying true to its goals while following the original policy. Like a jazz musician, a good strategist can shift the tune and vary the register but should obtain the same predictable artistic effect.

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[xi] Gray, The Strategy Bridge.

[xii] Luttwak, Strategy.

[xiii] McMaster, Battlegrounds.

[xiv] Hill, “British Lend Lease Aid and the Soviet War Effort, June 1941 June 1942.”

[xv] Gray, The Strategy Bridge.

[xvi] Gervais, “The Operational Definition of Competency-Based Education.”

[xvii] Hone, “Replacing Battleships with Aircraft Carriers in the Pacific in World War Ii.”

[xviii] Parker, The Military Revolution.

[xix] Churchill, The Grand Alliance.

[xx] Rapp-Hooper, Shields of the Republic.

[xxi] Schelling, The Strategy of Conflict; Schelling, Choice and Consequence.

[xxii] Hanania, Public Choice Theory and the Illusion of Grand Strategy.

[xxiii] Elkus, “Beyond Strategy as a Means to an End.”

Clausewitz as a Practical Philosopher

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Edited by Andreas Herberg-Rothe

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