VOLUME 9, ISSUE 2

WINTER 2024

MILITARY STRATEGY MAGAZINE

Linking Ends and Means

Antulio J. Echevarria II

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Military Strategy Magazine
ISSN 2708-3071
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The IJ Infinity Group, Ltd.
Company number: 514895630
Bar Kochva 15/15
6342619
Tel Aviv, Israel
Website: https://www.militarystrategymagazine.com
Email: info@militarystrategymagazine.com

Publishing Co., **The IJ Infinity Group, Ltd.**

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Editorial

Over 90 days have passed since October 7th, 2023. The vagaries and program of academic publishing mean that nothing contained in this issue of *Military Strategy Magazine*, while excellent and demonstrative of the standard we wish to maintain, addresses the strategic elephant in the room in terms of October 7th.

It is hard to equate anything done on October the 7th as "strategic." Apologists for Hamas and the Palestinians will no doubt seek to gift the action with some strategic value, but that will always rely on altering the true meaning of the word "Strategy" to meaning nothing more than "I really want to Tweet or Blog about this." If we take Clausewitz's definition of Strategy as the use of engagements for the object of the war, then October 7th could be characterised as hammering nails into Jewish women's vaginas to create an Islamic Caliphate called Palestine. As Strategy can only be done as tactics, then what was the consequence of such tactics? Suppose the post-modern tendency wishes to assert that Hamas's success was in "the information space" or was primarily an "information operation" as in "propaganda". In that case, you can supposedly ascribe the same success quality to any event, including similar methods. The UK Ministry of Defence characterised Information Operations as "operationalising the truth," so here, the truth was available for all to see, recorded on Palestinian cell phones.

In one of his lesser-known utterances, Clausewitz asserted that the true purpose of warfare was to render the enemy powerless. To quote, "*That aim takes the place of the object, discarding it as something not actually part of war itself.*"

October the 7th was not strategic in any way we should understand the use of the word. Hamas's actions had political consequences, not strategic ones. They conducted a massacre of Israelis, mostly Jewish, but also Israeli Arab-Muslims and Israeli Arab-Druze, as well as foreign nationals, for the same reasons as people have always massacred Jewish people because they cannot blame themselves for their societal failures. Hamas was becoming irrelevant, thus frustrated, thus lashed out with no understanding of what the consequences would be. If you look at Gaza today in terms of the devastation inherent to the normal conduct of military operations under such conditions, then it must be assumed that Hamas knew this would occur. They planned to massacre and kidnap thousands of Israeli civilians, so they must have assumed that Israel would react in the way it did. No sane person could not have seen this response. In 2006, the Secretary-General of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, was surprised by the Israeli military response to what he thought was a minor raid, literally 50m across the border fence. Nasrallah was clearly not a student of history.

The warning here to every student of Strategy should be obvious, but to be clear do not assume all violent action with a supposedly political motive is somehow "strategic". Sometimes it's just stupid.

William F. Owen
Editor, *Military Strategy Magazine*
January 2024

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This article contributes to the debate concerning why NATO failed to deter Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. It first describes the deterrence policy and supporting strategy the West implemented; it then offers an alternative to the West's risk-averse approach to deterrence by replacing the traditional "cost-benefit" decision-calculus with one based on increasing the would-be aggressor's risks of failure and of suffering severe consequences.

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France's Opération Barkhane failed largely due to its focus on fighting against a tactic, i.e. terrorism, rather than developing a proper strategy to combat Islamic jihadist actors. It resulted in multiple coup d'états in West African and Sahel nations and the regional introduction of the Wagner Group.

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Strategic thinking is a skill that requires years of practice and application to hone and refine. Junior officers desiring to sharpen their thinking now in preparation for future positions should start by focusing on three enduring principles of military strategy that serve as the core of strategic thinking. However, understanding is not enough; they must also be familiar with the common pitfalls that arise when marrying theory to practice, to prevent stumbles in implementation.

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Scholars of International Relations posit that the future global landscape will be characterized by the dominance of multiple coequal power blocs, anticipating tensions among these blocs. This article endeavors to outline a cybernetic blueprint for a prospective international system structure capable of rendering war effectively unappealing and of fostering peaceful cultural entities.

Deterring War without Threatening War: Rehabilitating the West's Risk-averse Approach to Deterrence

Antulio J. Echevarria II - US Army War College

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Shortly after Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, defense scholars began asking why the West's approach to deterrence had failed. Some critics claimed the West never had an official deterrence policy regarding Ukraine, or at least not a consistent one; others maintained the United States and

To cite this article: Echevarria, Antulio J. II, "Deterring War without Threatening War: Rehabilitating the West's Risk-averse Approach to Deterrence," *Military Strategy Magazine*, Volume 9, Issue 2, winter 2024, pages 4-11.

the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) took military force "off the table" too soon, relying too much on the coercive power of sanctions.[i] In truth, the West had both a deterrence policy and a supporting deterrence strategy *vis-à-vis* Ukraine. US President Joseph Biden and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg reinforced the policy and the strategy by repeatedly warning Russia's President Vladimir Putin not to attack Ukraine. However, the West's approach was too risk-averse to succeed against a major power armed with military capabilities comparable to NATO's own. It attempted to deter war without threatening war, which in turn rendered it vulnerable to Russian deterrence. By attempting to minimize the risk of a major war, the West made the right call, even though it resulted in the failure of its own deterrence measures. The "value of the political object," to borrow Clausewitz's expression, did not warrant risking a potentially ruinous war.[ii] The question now is whether it is possible to rehabilitate the West's approach to deterrence without requiring NATO to act as irresponsibly with military force as did Putin's Russia.

This article does two things. First, it provides a detailed account of the deterrence policy and supporting strategy the United States and its NATO allies had in place to deter Russian aggression. Second, it offers a brief outline of a more consequentialist approach to deterrence, one Western leaders can adopt to rehabilitate their own risk-averse model, and thereby improve its prospects of success. A consequentialist model entails moving beyond the traditional "costs versus benefits" calculus to one based on "risks and consequences," where costs are defined as expenditures and consequences are defined as effects or results, such as tipping the balance of power by adding new members to an alliance.

Traditionally, the way to deter an actor was to ensure the costs of an action exceeded the benefits, thereby dissuading the actor from taking the action. But the costs an actor was willing to pay and the benefits it hoped to gain were often unknown. A risk-consequence model, in contrast, seeks to dissuade an actor by increasing the likelihood an action will fail and the certainty that severe consequences will follow.

To be clear, the West represents a community of responsible international actors and, therefore, has an obligation to act responsibly on the world's stage; hence, it needs a risk-averse approach to deterrence for situations in which it desires to deter an action, but its interests do not justify risking a major war. Unfortunately, the classic model of deterrence, which is based on intimidating without provoking, is not well suited for such situations since the line between intimidating and provoking is not necessarily known. Yet, if as Thomas Schelling noted, "international relations often have the character of a competition in risk taking," then the West surely needs to discover a remedy for its risk-aversion, otherwise it will find itself deterred by more bellicose major powers.[iii]

Of course, deterrence does not always work: no model can guarantee the dissuasion of major powers willing to take irresponsible or reckless risks to get something they want. In such cases, deterrence must yield to defense.

The US-NATO Deterrence Policy

For the purposes of this article, deterrence is defined as "measures taken to dissuade actors from pursuing certain actions."[iv] As per Schelling, these measures can be active or passive and typically include both threats and assurances, implicit and explicit.[v] The United States and NATO took at least three measures after 2014, in the wake of Putin's seizure of Crimea and parts of the Donbas, to deter further Russian aggression against Ukraine: (a) the establishment of the European Reassurance Initiative/European Deterrence Initiative, (b) granting Ukraine security force assistance through the Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP) and making it an Enhanced Opportunities Partner (EOP), and (c) a series of explicit threats and warnings to the Kremlin by high-level US and NATO officials as the crisis over Ukraine intensified.

"European Reassurance Initiative/European Deterrence Initiative." Regarding the first measure, a formal US deterrence policy known initially as the "European Reassurance Initiative" (ERI) did exist for Kyiv, even though Ukraine was not a member of NATO and, hence, did not enjoy the protection of Article 5 of the NATO Charter.[vi] US President Barack Obama established the ERI in 2014, allocating $1 billion USD to ERI as start-up funding in fiscal year 2015. In 2018, the ERI was renamed the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI), which made its purpose more explicit. US funding for the EDI reached a total of $29.7 billion USD by fiscal year 2022, or about $4.2 billion USD per year over seven years.[vii] Importantly, NATO trained more than 10,000 military personnel under the auspices of EDI.[viii] EDI also brought Ukraine's average annual military spending to just over $10 billion USD, an amount comparable to Ukraine's neighbor, Poland, which averaged $12 billion USD in defense spending per year from 2017 to 2021, and yet more than those of Norway and Finland, both of whom have traditionally taken the Russian threat seriously.[ix]

The funding levels for that period may seem low, but they were commensurate with the threat priorities the West had established at the time, namely, "gray-zone" or "hybrid" wars. NATO's 2017 *Strategic Foresight Analysis* went so far as to describe Putin's seizure of Crimea as evidence of an "evolution of hybrid warfare" and of a "paradigm shift in the use of power."[x] The "risk of major conflicts" had declined, while that of "hybrid warfare" and actions "short of major war" had increased.[xi] Academics, too, pondered the seeming demise of major war.[xii] No fewer than 900 books; 3,700 articles; and 780 reports were published on hybrid warfare between 2016 and 2022.[xiii] Against this backdrop,

preparing for a conventional war seemed unjustified. In hindsight, the West chose to invest in defending against threats from only one portion of the spectrum of conflict and was caught ill-prepared.

"Comprehensive Assistance Package" and "Enhanced Opportunities Partner." The second measure, enhancing Ukraine's defensive capabilities occurred via two NATO partnership-building programs. The first opened in the summer of 2016, when NATO created a "Comprehensive Assistance Package" (CAP) for Ukraine.[xiv] This package aimed at enabling Ukraine to "become more resilient, to better provide for its own security and to carry out essential reforms." National resilience, as events were to prove, became vitally important to Ukraine in 2022. To be sure, the CAP was also designed to encourage Ukraine to develop better "democratic oversight and civilian control of the security and defense sector." But such reforms were also prerequisites to NATO membership for Kyiv.[xv]

The second partnership-building program occurred in 2020, when Ukraine received the status of an "Enhanced Opportunities Partner" as part of NATO's Partnership Interoperability Initiative (PII). This program aimed "to maintain and deepen cooperation between Allies and partners who have made significant contributions to NATO-led operations and missions."[xvi] The UAF, readers will recall, participated alongside NATO forces in Kosovo and elsewhere. The EOP is a special status granted only to five other non-NATO states at the time: Australia, Finland, Georgia, Jordan, and Sweden. It, too, recognized Kyiv's intended political and military reforms and set the UAF on a course to achieve greater interoperability with NATO forces, which meant quality upgrades in equipment as well as closer military-to-military relations.[xvii] Both partnership programs, therefore, brought Kyiv closer to NATO, and enhanced its defensive capabilities and, by extension, its deterrence capabilities.

Threats and Warnings. The third deterrence measure consisted of a series of warnings by NATO's senior leaders and the Biden administration in the months before the Russian assault. On November 26, 2021, for instance, ahead of a meeting of NATO Foreign Affairs Ministers, Stoltenberg warned Russia of "costs" and "consequences" if it invaded Ukraine.[xviii] On December 7, 2021, December 30, 2021, and February 12, 2022, Biden spoke directly with Putin telephonically, warning the Russian leader of severe sanctions if he took military action against Kyiv. [xix] Similarly, US Vice President Kamala Harris issued a threat to Moscow on February 19, 2022, stating Washington intended to impose sanctions on those complicit in any military assault on Ukraine.[xx] Also, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken repeatedly announced the purpose of Washington's planned sanctions was to "deter Russia from going to war."[xxi] Likewise, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, added his voice to the administration's chorus of threats, while also dispatching more US troops to Europe to strengthen America's deterrence posture.[xxii] Shortly thereafter, NATO's intelligence communities began disclosing information about Russian military intentions, thereby sending another kind of warning. In fact, CIA Director William J. Burns flew to Moscow to deliver a personal warning from Biden, saying in effect: "We know what you're up to, and if you invade, there will be severe consequences."[xxiii] When high-level officials put their credibility on the line in this way, an informal policy is in place.

In sum, the West had established a formal policy of deterrence via ERI/EDI, which it augmented with at least two NATO partnership programs. As the crisis intensified, the West sent explicit threats and warnings to Moscow not to attack. These three measures add up to more than general deterrence.

The US-NATO Deterrence Strategy

As the threat of invasion grew, Washington converted its deterrence policy into a deterrence strategy. This strategy relied predominantly on deterrence by punishment, though it also included an important element of deterrence by denial. Punishment, defined as imposing unacceptable costs on an opponent, was to be meted out through an intense sanctions' regime, the West's most comprehensive such package to date.[xxiv] Denial, defined as increasing the likelihood an opponent's mission will fail, was to be achieved through the controlled release of critical intelligence concerning Putin's plan, thereby denying it a chance to succeed.[xxv]

Punishment. Sanctions aimed to weaken Russia's economic base by depriving it of critical technologies and markets, thus crippling its ability to wage war.[xxvi] The United States sanctioned some 1,705 Russian individuals; 2,014 entities; 177 vessels; and 100 aircraft.[xxvii] The European Council, for its part, adopted 11 packages of sanctions beginning in 2014 with Putin's hybrid war against Ukraine.[xxviii] In total, Moscow has suffered more than 13,000 sanctions—more than Iran, Cuba, and North Korea combined—for its military aggression against Kyiv.[xxix]

In theory, the effectiveness of sanctions depends on the ratio of economic power between those states executing the sanctions and those being sanctioned.[xxx] Ergo, the West ought to have enjoyed a significant advantage because Russia's economy was only the 11th largest in the world, with a gross domestic product (GDP) of $1.78 trillion USD, or 1.8% of the world's total output in 2022.[xxxi] Russia is the world's largest wheat exporter, second-largest natural gas producer, and third-largest oil producer, but its GDP is less than 7% of the US GDP and less than 15% of the EU's GDP. [xxxii] Experts boldly predicted the Russian economy would collapse within a matter of weeks or at most months, and recovery would take decades.[xxxiii] But the predictions

proved grossly optimistic as Russia's "fortress economy" weathered the storm of sanctions and shifted to a war footing with financial support from India and China.[xxxiv]

The West's overoptimism regarding the coercive power of sanctions—which has declined in recent decades due to overuse, mis-targeting, and countermeasures—indicates just how much it desired a low-risk solution to Russian belligerence.[xxxv] Also, historical evidence suggests sanctions tend to reshape security environments in unintended ways, perhaps provoking aggression rather than deterring it, since adversaries sometimes feel compelled to choose between living with a cap on economic growth or attempting to use force to remediate the situation.[xxxvi]

Denial. As mentioned, NATO repeatedly released credible intelligence to cause the Russians to abort their invasion. The Russians, unfortunately, proved either too stubborn, too inept, or too overconfident to comply. NATO also released other information ranging from the positioning of blood and other medical supplies closer to the front, signaling an attack was imminent, to the Kremlin's false-flag operations, designed to blame Ukraine for the war. NATO also disclosed information concerning Russia's planned "decapitation" strikes and its use of "kill lists" of key Ukrainian officials.[xxxvii]

Importantly, Biden and Stoltenberg held back a key denial measure, military force.[xxxviii] As Stoltenberg stated when asked about the possibility of establishing no-fly zones over Ukraine, "we are not part of this conflict, and we have a responsibility to ensure that it does not escalate and spread beyond Ukraine, because that would be even more devastating and more dangerous."[xxxix] Both leaders were roundly criticized for their reticence.[xl] But their call was the right one. Admittedly, NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), the spearhead of the NATO Response Force (NRF) could have deployed quickly to Ukraine with follow-on forces close behind. However, little evidence exists to suggest how such a move would have been received politically, given Ukraine's non-Alliance and non-democratic status; it was merely a "regime in transition."[xli]

To be sure, the United States could have acted unilaterally and deployed a "tripwire" force, consisting perhaps of elements of the 173rd Airborne Brigade and/or units from the 82nd Airborne Division. Yet research into the use of tripwire-forces suggests they seldom prevent an aggressor from seizing its objective and subsequently establishing a strong defensive position; nor do such forces necessarily incur enough casualties to induce the rest of an alliance to intervene. Rather, the forces sent to deter "must be sufficiently substantial to shift the local balance of power" to succeed.[xlii] Even with the authority the US executive possesses to deploy US military force, such a move would have run up against stiff criticism and probably failed to gain political support, since neither the US Congress nor the American public wanted to put US troops in harm's way during the crisis.[xliii] In any case, deploying military forces into Ukraine may have accelerated rather than deterred Putin's assault. As some experts believe, he was undeterrable on this issue and planned to overrun Ukraine quickly, presenting the West with a *fait accompli* it could only reverse with great difficulty, if it had committed forces.[xliv]

To summarize, the West's deterrence strategy was self-evidently risk averse. But it enabled the West to retain the "moral high ground" and to punish Moscow through sanctions and security force assistance to Ukraine without becoming involved in the conflict directly. Those types of measures can be replicated and serve as a model for a risk-averse, consequentialist deterrence strategy.

Rehabilitating a Risk-averse Deterrence Strategy

It is fair to say a combination of Russian deterrence and the West's risk-aversion contributed to the failure of NATO's deterrence strategy regarding Ukraine. Russia's "formidable" military likely dissuaded the West from deploying its own military power, a form of general deterrence. While Russia's military proved more inept than Western analysts anticipated, it could still inflict egregious casualties on NATO forces.[xlv] Determining precisely where the line is between Russian deterrence and the West's risk-aversion would be an interesting but ultimately academic exercise. For our purposes, it is only necessary to appreciate what these influences are and how they work.

Deterrence, like any military strategy, is reciprocal in nature. So, we should expect opposing sides to react to each other's actions. Admittedly, Russia was not deterred from invading Ukraine. But it may have been dissuaded from escalating vertically—to employing nuclear weapons—and from escalating laterally—to attacking one or more of Ukraine's neighbors. By the same token, NATO held back on establishing "no-fly" zones and delayed delivering some of its advanced warfighting capabilities, including the high mobility artillery rocket system (HIMARS) and dual-purpose improved conventional munitions (DPICMs) to Ukraine. So, while deterrence failed in one respect, it continues in others.

Russian Deterrence. Russian strategic deterrence (*sderzhiygnie*) aims to "restrain," "keep out," or "hold back" an adversary.[xlvi] Moscow's deterrence measures, including its military capabilities helped induce the West into a risk-averse deterrence strategy.[xlvii] Like Western militaries, the Russians also regard deterrence as a form of "coercion," forcibly making an actor do something it does not want to do.[xlviii] Also, the Russians view deterrence by "denial" and by "punishment" much the same as the West does. However, they place rather more emphasis on another category, deterrence by "intimidation," or by

inducing fear.[xlix] The West's fear of the Russian military may have declined due to its heavy losses, but hopefully it remains at a healthy level, as some reports expect Moscow to recover and try again.[l]

Consequential Deterrence. The West is already in "consequence mode," so to speak, as it considers what observations major powers, such as China, are drawing from NATO's failure to deter Russian aggression.[li] But the West currently lacks a clear definition and a practical theory around which to organize its efforts. By way of definition, if deterrence is "measures taken to dissuade actors from taking certain actions," then consequentialist deterrence is "measures taken to increase the rival's risks of suffering failure and negative outcomes, so it chooses not to take certain actions." By way of theory, consequentialist deterrence is based on the premise that aggressors ask themselves not what it will cost them to take a certain action, but rather what their chances of succeeding are if they take the action. Risk is simply a function of probability, specifically, the probability any number of negative outcomes will occur. Severe consequences, to reiterate, must also follow if the aggressor's intended action succeeds.

Obviously, we want to lower the risk to ourselves, while raising it for our rivals. One way to accomplish that is by transferring as much risk as possible to our rivals. Risk transfer can occur by arming our friends and partners through security force assistance and partnership programs, as NATO has done with Ukraine. We thus increase the adversary's probability of failure by strengthening our partners and do so without directly committing ourselves to go to war on their behalf. Our rivals would thus have to face the West's combined economic (and to some extent military) might, not just that of the party they wish to attack. We can also increase the negative consequences to our foe by, for instance, working to reduce its political power or influence, or by increasing its economic isolation. We can put such consequences into effect even if our rival's planned action succeeds.

Other consequentialist actions might include adding new allies, as NATO did with Finland and (soon) Sweden. Once NATO's production capacity for war material is revamped, it will be able to "make war without going to war" by extending the conflict as long as its proxies are willing and able to fight. In this way, it would have a viable response to aggression in situations where the "value of the political object" is decidedly not worth the risk of a major war. But NATO must go one step further and develop formal procedures for leveraging its proxy wars more consequentially, not only to tie down adversaries but also to showcase how such conflicts are shifting the global balance of power in a sense that puts the aggressor in a worse situation than the status quo ante.

Curiously, much of the literature on deterrence mentions the importance of risks and consequences in an actor's decision calculus. Yet, when explaining different types of deterrence theories, such as punishment or denial, the bulk of the literature inexplicably claims manipulating an adversary's perception of the "costs and benefits" of an action, making the former exceed the latter, is the core dynamic influencing an actor's decision calculus.

Admittedly, the relationship between costs and benefits is easy to explain, particularly to a readership conditioned by a free-enterprise culture. But using this frame of reference is unwise for at least three reasons. First, it does not amplify the pain a would-be aggressor would feel because costs—as expenditures of blood and treasure—are merely a subset of consequences—the effects of an action. Changing the core dynamic to "risks and consequences" prompts us to search for second and third order effects and appropriate ways to integrate them into our strategy; it gives us a broader and richer array of methods and means from which to choose to accomplish our purposes.

Second, it puts us at a disadvantage because autocratic regimes do not balk at costs the way, or to the degree, leaders of liberal democracies do. Democracies typically cannot outspend autocracies in blood, which we value more than treasure. Leaders of democracies must account for the lives of their citizens in a way that autocratic leaders do not.

Third, a cost-benefit framework often results in conflating costs and losses, particularly in political discourse. Costs reflect expenses in manufacturing, transportation, employment, maintenance, and so on. Losses occur because of accidents or military action. The USS Gerald Ford aircraft carrier cost the United States just under $14 billion USD to build; plus, $1 billion USD per year to maintain.[lii] Compare the cost of that vessel to the costs of the numerous anti-ship missile systems, which range from $40,000 to $3.5 million USD, capable of damaging or destroying it.[liii] Losing this vessel along with its crew in an accident or a combat mission would have severe psychological as well as physical ramifications for the United States and its allies. In a situation where an opponent owns a similarly costly vessel, a consequentialist deterrence strategy would leverage the psychological and material losses associated with that ship to exacerbate the "pain yet to come," as Schelling would say.[liv] In other words, a consequentialist deterrence strategy does not eschew costs or losses, but rather seeks to find ways to compound them to the detriment of an adversary.

The intention of this section has been simply to offer a brief outline of a definition and a theory of consequentialist deterrence. More work needs to be done to address the full extent of the theory's advantages and disadvantages.

Conclusion

The West's efforts to deter Russia from invading Ukraine clearly failed. But that failure provides an opportunity

to consider deterrence differently. After the Cold War, the West's "overmatch" in national power—diplomatic, informational, military, and economic—gave it a distinct advantage when deterring smaller states and violent non-state actors since it could accept the risk of war if deterrence failed, which sometimes did, and even if that failure resulted in an insurgency, as it often did. But the re-emergence of strategic competition among major powers has rebalanced the equation, making the West reluctant to risk going to war to deter aggression, except where it has firm alliance treaties in place, such as with Korea and NATO. The West can no longer count on achieving overmatch or brandishing it with confidence as it did against lesser threats. It needs another method to offset its risk-averse approach to deterrence without abandoning it altogether.

As it did during the Cold War, the West must learn to regard how it handles a crisis as either sending a signal to, or setting a precedent for, other potential foes. It must appreciate what consequences its rivals wish to avoid and ensure those outcomes are incorporated into its future deterrence strategies. The West must also realize the efficacy of the classic model of deterrence is eroding. Deterring war by threatening war is growing too risky. Developing a deterrence model based on manipulating risks and consequences, rather than simply costs and benefits, will help because it encourages applying pain across a broader spectrum. Regardless, deterrence, particularly against irresponsible major powers, can never be guaranteed.

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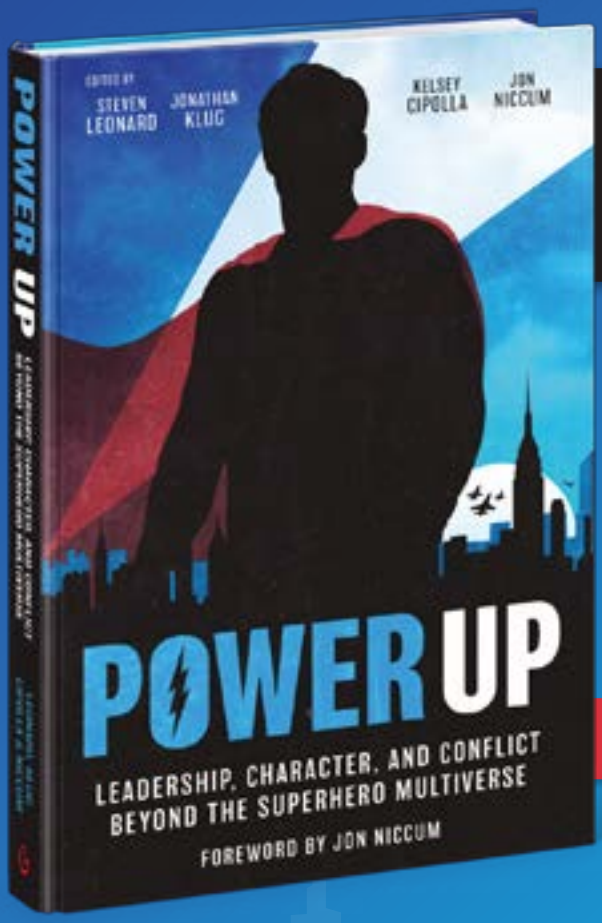

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Erich Ludendorff: Failed Strategist or War Visionary? Rereading Ludendorff in Light of the War in Ukraine

Zacarías Hernández - Spanish Army Headquarters

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To cite this article: Hernández, Zacarías, "Erich Ludendorff: Failed Strategist or War Visionary? Rereading Ludendorff in Light of the War in Ukraine," *Military Strategy Magazine*, Volume 9, Issue 2, winter 2024, pages 13-18.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Ministry of Defence or the Spanish Government.

Few military commanders in history have had such unbounded power as General Ludendorff at the end of World War I (WWI). He commanded an army of more than five million men and for a year was de facto dictator of Germany, eclipsing the Kaiser himself. However, his political or military power was never officially conferred and a few weeks after the Armistice he fled Germany, where his countrymen had previously proclaimed him their saviour, in fear for his life[i].

As Richard Tilley rightly points out in his article Erich Ludendorff: Successful Tactician, Failed Strategist: "*Ludendorff is a true paradox of military history. At his best, he revolutionized the tactics of World War I. At his worst, he failed to adapt to the political power his battlefield successes brought him and doomed his nation*"[ii]. It is difficult to say whether the entry of the United States into the war, with its massive military potential, would have left Germany any chance of finding a winning strategy at that stage of the war. However, the figure of Ludendorff and his thinking, beyond his role during WWI, regained special interest in the subsequent interwar period. His reflections become even more topical with the current return to great power competition and the possibility of large-scale conventional clashes, as we see in the war in Ukraine. His late works grappled with fundamental questions about the evolution of the character of war. His enduring insights stand the test of time because they address the universal nature of war.

The concept of Total War

"*In 1914 the War became universal and went from victory to victory until the final humiliation. Who was to blame: politicians or soldiers, Clausewitz or Schlieffen, Falkenhayn or Ludendorff*?" asked Raymond Aron[iii]. WWI, considered the first "total war", was from the beginning a great example of improvisation. The mobilization of the military, economies and societies as a whole was carried out without prior design, without precedent and without clear objectives[iv]. Although some thinkers came to foresee a long and hard war, they were not able to predict the full extent of its impact, which would allow it to be legitimately called a "total war"[v].

WWI came to be described as the "War to end all Wars" but provided only a short respite. As it ended, the world began to look to the future with the conviction that the Great Powers had not finished fighting each other. Ludendorff himself states in his work "The Coming War" written in 1930 that he was "*as certain as he was in 1912, that a world war would break out in the near future and bring about the destruction of the peoples and States of Europe*"[vi]. As Van Creveld rightly emphasises, this kind of military thinking gave rise to the question: how should we fight in the future?[vii] It is difficult not to draw parallels with Western armies which, after twenty years of conducting mainly stabilization operations, are now reassessing their capabilities and doctrine in view of a new geopolitical scenario in which conventional confrontations are a real possibility.

The horrors that the Great War had produced, with previously unimaginable numbers of casualties, led the military apparatus of the Western world to look back on 1914 with a single emotion: "*Never again, at least not in the same way!*"[viii]. In Ludendorff's own words: "*Four years of trench warfare had created apprehension about the nature of war in the minds of those who experienced it*"[ix]. Alternatives were being sought to the mass armies composed of infantry, whose lack of mobility had turned WWI into a nightmare. Advocates of mechanized units, air power or armies made up of elite professionals: Fuller, Douhet and Liddell Hart offered credible theories of a future in which war would be highly mobile. However, if anyone was able to predict the future evolution of war and the characteristics that the next war would have, it was Erich Ludendorff.

In his book "*Der Totale Krieg*", "Total War"[x], he recounts his own experiences in "*an emotional and intellectual odyssey to make sense of the defeat, both collective and personal, that the armistice of November 1918 signified*"[xi]. He defended the thesis that the new technologies of production, transport and communication had turned war into something more than military forces confronting each other on the battlefield, requiring for its realization all the forces of the nation, with the mobilization of all its human and material resources. The term "total war" was developed during the interwar period, born out of the discussion on the challenges, consequences and implications, both political and military, of civilian mobilization for war[xii]. Erich Ludendorff's book gave meaning to the term "total war".

Ludendorff vs Clausewitz

Ludendorff predicts that the Second World War (WWII), a term which of course he does not use, would be very similar to the first one and that it would be huge in scale and prolonged. The next war would demand that governments mobilised all their national resources. Already in WWI, even governments of democratic countries came very close to doing away with politics and bringing everything and everyone under their control[xiii]. Under the command of a dictatorial leader, in a militarised society, war plans would be integrated with national and international politics, economics, tactics and operational art.

He launches a direct attack on Clausewitz's work and openly declares that the author of "*Vom Kriege*" belongs in the past[xiv]. WWI had broken with all forms of warfare of the previous 150 years. The difference was not in the armies and navies, which fought each other in the same ways, but in the fact that the forces deployed were the most powerful in history. Unlike in the past, populations supported their armies with all their energy. For Ludendorff, the destruction of the enemy's armed forces no longer sufficed. It was difficult to distinguish between the armed forces and the people; the fighting on the fronts and at sea "*was joined by the struggle against the psychological and vital forces of the people, which it tried to dissociate and paralyse*".[xv].

Military and civilian technical developments, particularly those affecting public communications, had extended the battlefield to the entire territory of the belligerent countries. Not only armies, but entire populations would suffer the effects of war, in the form of economic blockades, bombings or enemy propaganda, as the next war would be total. For these reasons, "*by its very essence, total war can only be waged if the existence of the entire people is threatened and if they decide to take on the burden*" [xvi]. The importance of technological innovations is also found in Jünger, who considers WWI to be the most influential event of the era, "*the specific peculiarity of that great catastrophe is that in it the genius of war was blended with the spirit of progress*".[xvii]. Breaking out in an atmosphere of the cult of progress, WWI's influence on the warring parties was to be "*the real moral factor of this time, a factor with such subtle and imponderable radiations that not even the strongest armies can compete with them*"[xviii].

It is for this reason that Ludendorff advocated that politics should serve war. The transformation that politics and war had undergone would have to change the relationship between the former and military strategy: "*all Clausewitz's theories were to be replaced. War and politics serve the preservation of the people, but war became the ultimate expression of that people's will to live*" [xix]. A weak nation wracked by internal division could not survive in a hostile international environment. A total state provided essential preconditions for fighting a successful war. Total war thus involved the total mobilization of the total state in the pursuit of total political and strategic objectives. This inversion of Clausewitz's famous maxim represents a complete break with his thinking, with Ludendorff transforming "*war into the supreme test of peoples, into the verdict of history*"[xx]. As Jan Willem Honig rightly affirms, "*however horrific we might now think Ludendorff's product was, this was a coherent and seemingly practical concept of war that was adjusted directly to political demands*"[xxi]

He goes on to criticise Clausewitz because he believes that he does not reflect the need for "*mental strength in the people*", to whom the war demands a strong contribution from the first days of the war; "*it is necessary to strengthen the state of the soul and the warrior will at home; beware if they feel depressed! The longer the war lasts, the greater the dangers, the more obstacles there will be to overcome, and the more the army and navy will need to have their morale reinforced*"[xxii].

The evolution of the character of war

As economic hardship would be one of the main causes of demoralisation among the population, the dedication of all the nation's efforts to winning a war requires advanced economic planning by policymakers, which must be conducted during peacetime. Ludendorff acknowledged that Germany was neither economically nor financially prepared for war in 1914. Economic preparation for war would be essential for Germany because it would not have access to raw materials and international loans. The accumulation of raw materials and financial measures, such as preventing the withdrawal of money from banks, or the accumulation of foreign exchange and gold reserves, would be essential to sustain the future war effort. The transformation of peacetime industry into the war industry should be prepared, because in a "total war" the "*production of munitions and war materials in the largest conceivable quantities must be carried out*"[xxiii]. This requires not only raw materials, but also training and development of skilled manpower in quantity, which cannot be improvised once the fighting starts.

According to Ludendorff, the long duration of WWI had shown that the relationship between the mental cohesion of the population and the war economy was an important aspect of "total war". The lack of adequate measures in the preparation and execution of the war would make people face a harsh reality. "*The idea that strategy also comprises the preparation for war, even if it takes place in peacetime, does not exist before the inter-war period, when it was advocated by Ludendorff*"[xxiv].

For Ludendorff, the army on campaign is made up of the existing peacetime army plus the reserve and the territorial forces. He argues that despite the superior preparation of the German Army for WWI, it failed to win a quick victory, so the prolongation of the war forced the mobilisation of a large number of forces whose equipment and preparation had been ignored in peacetime. The improvement of the equipment available to the armies and their increasing technological complexity made the training of the non-permanent forces more complicated in the inter-war period, and this had to be taken into account for their preparation. "*Men and technology form the strength of an army*"[xxv], but despite the importance of technology in the next war, Ludendorff argues that men will always be the priority; the material is useless without man and it is man who has the strength to destroy the enemy.

Ludendorff advocates for a new type of leadership in armies. In the age of "total war", officers must become aware of the fundamental importance of popular support and

recognise the importance of discipline; they must therefore understand "*the particular character of the soul of the soldier and of the people*"[xxvi]. He accuses the former German officer corps of having disregarded the latter aspect, and he harshly attacks the received concept of honour at the time, "*the honour of an officer is to be at once a civic role model, an educator and a leader of his racial brothers in the struggle for the survival of the people...he must become a master of souls to be a true leader, otherwise the troops will not be able to cope with all the demands of total war*".[xxvii]. For Ludendorff "*training and equipment are the outward forms of an army's strength, but it is only its mental and moral constitution which give it the strength to answer the demands of total war*".[xxviii].

Regarding popular mobilisation, conscious of the mistakes committed by the Second Reich in 1914, Ludendorff correctly states that "*the people do not understand the meaning of wars of aggression. But they understand and accept the struggle for life, and easily see in a declaration of war a desire for aggression*"[xxix]. Jünger also states that the people's "*readiness to mobilise*" would be the decisive aspect in a war. Efforts of this kind require an appeal to a people's sense of identity. Mobilisation of large masses becomes easier the more their convictions are appealed to. In this sense, for Jünger, the best example of this in WWI was the USA, which with a democratic constitution was able to take very rigorous mobilisation measures, "*what mattered was not the degree to which a state was or was not a military state, but the degree to which it was able to effect total mobilisation*". [xxx]. Such measures could not have been taken even in a militarized state like Prussia.

For Ludendorff, all facets of the "total war" effort require the "*implementation of an omnipotent will, represented by the nation's military leader*"[xxxi]. Politics encompasses all the interests of a society as a whole. To this statement Raymon Aron points out that, in any case, if governments serve their vanity or ambitions rather than the state, the art of war will not improve them in this regard; an instrument, by definition, cannot become the teacher of the person who employs it; the state cannot be at the service of war. But Ludendorff replies that the state in our time cannot but be at the service of war[xxxii]. This fascination with the necessity of the dictator is shared by Ludendorff and Jünger, who also missed this figure in WWI, "*that dull fervour which burned in them [young Germans] for an inexplicable and invisible Germany was enough to make such an effort that it shook the people to their very marrow. What would not have been achieved if they had already possessed a leadership, a consciousness, a figure?*"[xxxiii].

Radical madness or war visionary?

"*Far be it from me to write a theory of war. I am, as I have often said, hostile to any theory. War is reality, one of the most serious realities in the life of the people*"[xxxiv], with these words Erich Ludendorff begins his work "Total War", written in 1935, a volume of 80,000 words in which, in addition to some of the ideas highlighted in this article, he deals with operational and tactical issues. His prejudices against Jews, Freemasons, Jesuits and Christians are present, although to a much lesser extent than in earlier works. In the inter-war period his political position became ever more radical, even scandalising Hitler. He broke away from all his former comrades and he lived in great solitude. His political activity would focus on the importance that the "supranational powers", as he referred to Jews, Freemasons and Christians, had played in Germany's defeat in 1918. Towards the end of his life he was greatly influenced by his second wife, Mathilde von Kemnitz, whom he married in 1925, embracing her anti-Christian faith in the "German understanding of God". (Deutsche Gotterkenntnis)[xxxv]. At the age of 70, he wrote his last two books, "Mein Militärischer Wedegang" y "Der Totale Krieg", in what appears to be "*a recovery of the clarity and efficiency that characterised him during the WWI*"[xxxvi]. Erich Ludendorff died on 20 December 1937 at the age of 72.

The vision of war described by Ludendorff in his book is the best prediction of what World War II would entail. His strategic and military thinking, although obscured by his extreme political radicalisation, surpasses that of other thinkers of the inter-war period who have left us with theories that fall short of the true strategic character of WWII. One example is the theory of Blitzkrieg, which, as Shimon Naveh rightly points out, served "*as a principal instrument in implementing an irrational and impossible strategy*"[xxxvii]. Ludendorff's "Total War" theory was put into practice two years after his death, to an extent and intensity that would have surprised him. As he predicted, one man, concentrating all political and military power, would lead the total German effort, but he was wrong to think he would be a Prussian General-in-Chief; he was an Austrian former corporal.

Some of Ludendorff's thoughts presented in this article sound like many of the lessons Western militaries are drawing from the war currently raging in Ukraine: energy security, economic sanctions, the importance of technology but above all of soldiers, the cult of progress, the need to maintain the morale of the civilian population, the importance of public communication and information, peacetime preparation for war, the need for industry to support the military effort, the need to mobilise society to provide the number of soldiers necessary to face a prolonged and violent war, etc. In a world in which great power competition and a return to conventional warfare is on the horizon, with countries with totalitarian systems calling the international order into question, perhaps now is the time for a re-reading of Ludendorff's work.

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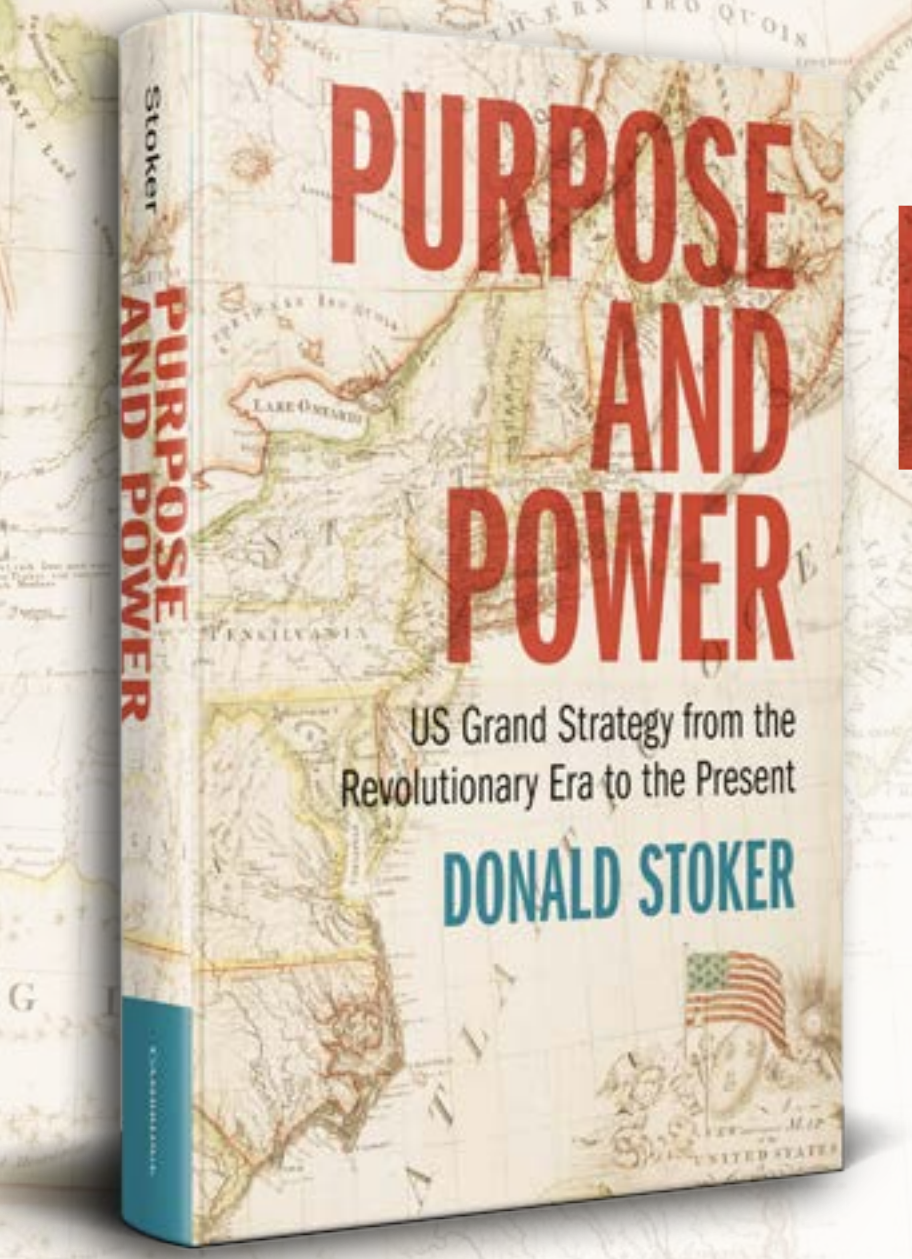

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How France's Lack of a Strategy in West Africa Indirectly Led to the Coups D'états

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The loosely termed War on Terror and the 2021 Ukraine-Russia war have increased Western concern about losing its influence in Africa. Akin to the post-colonial scramble for Africa between the Marxist Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China versus the Capitalistic West of the United States, United Kingdom and France, there is a growing concern about a new division between the West and the former East. Within Western Africa and the broader Sahel, military coup-d'états appear to sprout again despite some initial hopes of democratic norms taking

To cite this article: Beloff, Jonathan R., "How France's Lack of a Strategy in West Africa Indirectly Led to the Coups D'états," *Military Strategy Magazine*, Volume 9, Issue 2, winter 2024, pages 20-26.

hold that favoured Western interests. The current wave of coups is nothing new, as they are a historical mechanism of political power transitions within the region and much of the African continent.[i] However, the recent increase in the removal of governments by military leaders has raised new concerns by Western leaders. While not the only reason, a perhaps overlooked one is France's failed use of military forces to attempt to solve short-term instability in the Sahel from Islamic jihadists, which fostered long-term political instability and havoc in its regional relations.

History provides important context to the instability in the Sahel. However, France's recent failures in stabilising the region was its lack of a clear, defining public policy, which led to a muddled strategy when fighting the irregular Islamic jihadist forces. Unlike the Russian Wagner Group, which has a clear focus on attacking jihadists to gain control over resources, France's lack of clarity was its downfall in the region. Without the appropriate understanding of elements within Strategic Theory, France and other Western nations will likely commit similar errors in the future within the region, Africa, and the non-Western world. This research argues that the French's inability to have a clear policy and strategy led to its ineffectiveness in the region to establish peace. It first examines the historical context of the Sahel and West Africa to provide a picture of what has led to the coups. The underlying instability from Islamic jihadists led to French attempts in Operation Barkhane to quell the short-term instability. France fell victim to a strategy against tactics against terrorism, which is problematic and, as seen during the Vietnam War and the War on Terrorism, is doomed to fail and helped initiate the multiple coups and long-term instability in its sphere of influence.[ii] While the research does not argue this single-handedly is the cause for the rise of coup d'états in the region, it nevertheless played an important role.

A Brief Modern Historical Context of the Sahel:

France's initial colonisation of West Africa began during the reign of Napoleon III in present-day Senegal.[iii] By the second half of the 19th century, specifically the 1880s-1900s, a spur of colonisation within the region grew with trading posts and military camps scattered throughout the vast territory. The French secured these territories during the 1884 Berlin Conference, with Dakar being the region's capital. Unlike Algeria[iv], these territories were never intended to be absorbed adequately within France proper but remain a vital centre for French trade and prestige. Decolonisation in the late 1950s and early 1960s saw France's regional territories gain independence. France publicly established a neo-colonial system to keep the region under its sphere of influence. Paris would carefully control the region's economies, regional cooperation, and security.

Most notable in these forced cooperation agreements was the creation of the West African and Central African CFA franc, which would be used in either West or Central Africa but controlled by France. The currency was pegged to the French franc until it was connected to the Euro after France adopted the new currency. Monetary control over the currency was strictly done in Paris, with West African nations having little control over the valuation of the currency.[v] Additionally, West African nations were required to store their foreign cash reserves in France, which benefited the French franc. By 2019, regional nations gained monetary control over the West African CFA franc from France.[vi] France's control over the region's finances impacted West African nations' public policy in terms of military and security spending. The ability to influence these nations' finances also impacted their ability to craft public policy and, thus, the ability to conduct warfare.[vii] For much of the capitalist West, the system allowed the prevention of Marxist revolutions with military leaders often paid by the French to remain loyal within the socio-political and economic system. Throughout the post-colonial period, the region experienced multiple coup d'états, often with French intervention, as thousands of French soldiers were stationed there.

Despite the region's instability predating the September 11, 2001, attacks by Al Qaeda against the United States, the creation of the US-led War on Terrorism led to greater Western interest in combatting Islamic extremist groups within West Africa. Since 2013, multiple security missions have been deployed in the region. French forces under the overarching Operation Barkhane, operated between 2014 and 2022 attempted to dislodge Islamic jihadists and to train local military officials with new technologies and resources.[viii] Over 3000 French soldiers, trained in counter-terrorism tactics, were intended to help establish stability in many of these countries.[ix] Despite France's operation, the security situation within the region has not improved.

Within Mali, the establishment of the International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) came after the 2012 Salafist jihadist groups joined with the Tuareg political organisation. These groups held the policy interest of gaining political, economic and military control over the northern Azawad region.[x] Under Operation Barkhane, France committed its forces to Operation Serval in 2013 to help halt the irregular forces with only minor success by the time it concluded in November 2022.[xi] The European Union and the regional partner bloc, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), helped create the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to help defeat the Islamic jihadist groups and regain national security. However, the success of MINUSMA is questioned as it did not have the military mass and resources to secure the northern part of Mali properly, let alone the rest of the nation and was terminated by June 2023.[xii] One of the primary justifications for the 2021 coup was in response to the failures of the military intervention, especially of the French, to secure stability. Other regional countries

experience similar issues.

One of the long-term consequences of France's inability to quell the short-term instability of the Islamic jihadist groups is the rise of coups. The most recent of these coups at the time of writing is the July 2023 Nigerien coup.[xiii] Other regional neighbours also experienced recent coups, such as Mali in May 2021, Burkina Faso in January and later September 2022, and Guinea in September 2021.[xiv] Beyond West Africa, Chad, Gabon and Sudan have also witnessed military overthrows of governments.[xv] With the recent coups in Gabon, Niger and Mali, questions arise about what led to these political shifts. Numerous explanations, such as the disentrancement of democracy, corruption, family dynasties, as in the example of Gabon, and security, are to blame for the coups.[xvi] This last explanation is significant as France has contributed its military to fight against Islamic jihadists and irregular forces that have operated within much of the Sahel. It asks how France could not secure short or long-term stability despite its military prowess.

Niger is another example of how the 1500 French forces, along with US military advisors, trained local military actors to combat groups connected to ISIS and Al Qaeda.[xvii] Even with this military might, it was ineffective in stopping Islamic jihadists within their region of the Sahel.[xviii] Additionally, France withdrew its ambassador from the nation.[xix] The failures of the Niger government to provide security, even with the French and US military support, resulted in the July 2023 coup. Some initial indications were that ECOWAS would militarily intervene, but the Nigerian-backed plan never materialised.[xx] The north-eastern province of Sahel in Burkina Faso has also experienced Islamic fighters creating instability.[xxi] France's Army Special Forces Command deployed soldiers to Burkina Faso in January 2015 after the Ouagadougou terrorist attack that killed thirty people.[xxii] Beyond West Africa, French soldiers have also operated in Chad with similarly poor results.[xxiii] French failure to secure the Sahel, along with other issues, such as corruption and disenchantment with democracy, led to the military overthrow of many of these West African governments.

These coups led to the removal of French soldiers and, in some cases, foreign officials. These diplomatic losses are perceived as a humiliating withdrawal for France, which had colonised much of the region.[xxiv] Anti-French sentiment within Africa is nothing new, as seen through the writings of Frantz Fanon of French Algeria.[xxv] For current French interests, the failures have led to increased anti-French sentiment and the rise of military mercenary groups such as the Wagner Group.[xxvi] The Wagner Group has become an option for governments who view the mercenaries as having a clear strategy to impose their will on rebels and Islamic jihadists without consideration of Western constructs of wartime morals and ethics.[xxvii] For example, Burkina Faso's Prime Minister Apollinaire Kyelem de Tembela believed the Russian mercenary group would be the ideal actors to help provide security against jihadists.[xxviii] The increase in anti-French sentiments stems from a relatively unexplored subject: despite France's superior military might, it failed to stop insurgent forces in asymmetric wars throughout the Sahel.

Strategic Theory, Policy and War:

Prime Minister Tembela's reference to the Wagner Group introduces perhaps an underexamined element of France's failed counter-terrorism policies. At its core, this loose confederation of Islamic jihadist groups fought an asymmetric war against the superior French forces. M.L.R. Smith questions any definition of asymmetric warfare because of its vagueness in application but defines it as, "war between grossly unequal combatants."[xxix] This is important as it introduces the reality that the French misstep was how it underestimated its opponent and did not develop a proper strategy to combat these forces. Despite the best efforts of Operation Barkhane, its lack of a central policy of the goals led to confusion about how to count success. This is problematic as Jeffrey Hughes, and et al. describe its importance, "policy must ultimately determine the direction of war but must also adjust itself to what is possible with the means available."[xxx] Without the appropriate policy, a clear strategy is absent. As George Dimitriu notes, effective strategy stems from policy, which can be viewed as successful or not within the eyes of not just policymakers but also the public.[xxxi] The lack of a clear policy, and thus strategy, might result from the French perception of how the Islamic jihadists did not pose a serious threat to its state interests. As M.L.R. Smith suggests, "It possesses the capacity to insulate politicians, military planners and the wider public from the implications of certain military challenges because they are deemed low intensity and therefore of low importance, and thus not worth confronting with serious intent."[xxxii]

As witnessed in the anti-French protests, many of the public within the Sahel disapproved of the effectiveness of the French military in providing security. They questioned not the French forces' capabilities but their goals. The public rallies within much of the Sahel illustrated the population's disapproval as they saw a clouded discourse of a problem, the Islamic jihadists, and the proposed 'solution', which was ineffective.[xxxiii] Thus, the population began to speculate why the French forces were stationed in the Sahel, as there were no clearly defined French goals. The assumptions ranged from securing uranium deposits for French power plants to sustaining neo-colonialism.[xxxiv] This eventually led to Operation Barkhane's termination[xxxv] in November 2022. The need for a central policy for strategy is even more important for counterinsurgency as tactical success, as

seen in the case study of Vietnam and Alegria, does not necessarily lead to overall victory.[xxxvi]

While the French military force contains greater firepower and capabilities[xxxvii], the engagement with the population or, as Svendsen describes, 'people engagement' is essential for long-term success in combating the "mopping and rounding up terrorists/insurgents."[xxxviii] Instead, the French focused on the tactics of terrorism while ignoring the localised population's expressed concerns and insecurities. The French, akin to the United States during the ongoing War on Terrorism, dismiss how guerrilla or other non-conventional tactics do not constitute a category of war but rather a tactic.[xxxix] The French were relatively successful in combating these Islamic jihadist actors on the battlefield, but they could not string together these victories to achieve a larger strategic goal. There are also questions about how much the French forces were aware of local dynamics that instigated the rise of Islamic fighters. This follows M.L.R. Smith's notion of American ignorance of the Vietnamese environment, which led to greater support for the North Vietnamese communists over the US-allied South Vietnam government.[xl] The seemingly surprised French response to the coups and their troops' dismissal from the region indicates how they were not fully aware of how the population had become frustrated. It also explains the relatively popular coups in the region, with civilians hoping the coup d'états will result in greater security.[xli]

The Islamic jihadists did have a clear strategic goal which was to take much of the Sahel in Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and Sudan and create an Islamic state similar to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the early to mid-2010s. Their tactics of hit-and-run attacks and ambushes might be seen as horrific by Western commentators and human rights activists. However, this fosters two problems. The first is the notion of morality in war, which Colin Gray[xlii] and M.L.R. Smith[xliii] quite collectively dismiss. Morality is based on perceptions which are driven by cultural and situational factors. Thus, what is considered moral is purely a judgement by the observer.[xliv] Secondly, conventional militaries also utilise guerrilla tactics within irregular warfare.[xlv] Overall, if one accepts Clausewitz's famous "war is an instrument of policy"[xlvi], the loosely connected Islamic jihadist groups in the Sahel used irregular tactics in the hope of establishing an Islamic government. Their use of terrorism did produce significant fear within the population, which temporarily benefited in achieving their strategic goals.[xlvii] The Wagner Group and the military coup leaders dampened some of their successes as they had a more apparent strategic goal to focus on security issues, which had greater public support.

The Primary Lessons to be Learned:

Since the beginning of Operation Barkhane in August 2014, France's overall strategy to handle Islamic jihadists in the Sahel has been unclear. Its attempt to foster short-term peace at the expense of long-term stability failed to produce anything tangible for French interest and was a cause of the rise of coups in West Africa and the Sahel. The former French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drain proclaimed in 2014 how the operation would "prevent what I call the highway of all forms of traffics to become a place of permanent passage, where jihadist groups between Libya and the Atlantic Ocean can rebuild themselves, which would lead to serious consequences for our security."[xlviii] The intended goal of providing security to the vast region of West Africa from Islamic jihadists is not only vague but impossible without requiring a considerable number of troops[xlix] that the French could not viably provide. As Clausewitz writes, militaries must be aware of their supply capabilities to achieve their intended goals.[l] With roughly 3000 troops, France could never secure such a large region of Africa, especially when it was unclear what defines operational success. Nevertheless, the pressing issue rests on French perceptions of the conflict akin to past military interventions within the region. Based on the lack of a clear policy and strategy, it could be argued that the French fell victim to underestimating their opponent and not perceiving them as a serious military actor threatening their interests. M.L.R. Smith warns about this false sense of belief, "As Clausewitz above all recognised, the elemental truth is that, call it what you will – new war, ethnic war, guerrilla war, low-intensity war, terrorism, or the war on terrorism – in the end, there is really only one meaningful category of war, and that is war itself."[li]

The Wagner Group and the coup d'état governments appear not to be making the same mistake at the moment. While we might, through the context of the current Ukraine-Russia war, have negative opinions about the Russian private mercenary group, they are seen more positively within the Sahel. This primarily results from their ability to fight and assist government forces in combating Islamic jihadist groups. There is no doubt that their participation is mainly due to favourable financial contracts and access to natural resource deposits, but this should be seen as largely irrelevant as militaries are products of policies that benefit certain actors.[lii] While it is more traditional for these actors to be, as Clausewitz argues, the state is not limited to this political organisation but can also include rebel groups, revolutionaries and paramilitaries.[liii]

As regional history has shown, France will be back. While they have ceremonially left much of their military bases and operations in the Sahel, there is no doubt these nations will try to re-establish some sort of security relationship with

their former colonial power. France still holds economic and military resources, which few governments would turn away from. Even nations such as Rwanda, which has a very troubled relationship with France, re-established diplomatic and security relations.[liv] The major takeaway for France and other nations fighting in the War on Terrorism is to have a clear policy and strategy. France's lack of a clear strategy to combat Islamic jihadists resulted in neither short nor long-term stability or the furthering of French interests in the region. The failure to foster a military strategy is nothing new as seen in the Vietnam War or the current War on Terrorism. Greater attention to Strategic Theory is needed to understand and orchestrate African security policies.

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The human devastation of war and its impact on national fortunes makes it a serious endeavor worthy of significant consideration. Yet, too often, officers mistakenly believe they will begin thinking strategically once they are in a role that requires it. Unfortunately, for most people, strategic thinking requires years of practice and application to hone and refine. Thankfully, many theorists have sought to identify principles or concepts that can help guide leaders as they prepare to direct wartime efforts. Junior officers wishing to begin sharpening their strategic thinking before they are thrust into a position that demands it would be well-served by devoting their efforts towards understanding those tenets that endure throughout time and serve as core elements of military strategy. They include remaining focused on the political ends and the desired peace, concentrating forces

To cite this article: Ross, Cameron, "Principles and Pitfalls for the Budding Strategist," *Military Strategy Magazine*, Volume 9, Issue 2, winter 2024, pages 28-33.

and effort, and economizing force.

Of course, understanding is only the beginning. Seasoned strategists well-versed in these principles and with ample practice in attempting to apply them in war have found reality to be far more messy and complex than most theorists suggest. The simple fact is that war is unwieldy. Even if leaders start with sound strategic thinking grounded in enduring principles, there are still numerous reasons why effectively carrying out strategy is so challenging in a wartime environment, including many that are entirely out of leaders' control. Nevertheless, there are also recurring pitfalls that commonly plague strategists in marrying theory to practice—namely overreaching, confusing means for ends, and assuming a quick victory. Consequently, junior officers would do well to not only devote themselves to understanding the core principles but also the common mental traps and means for countering their pull. As such, this paper will provide an overview of both the principles and pitfalls for budding strategists who desire to grow in their thinking about the art of directing war. It seeks, if only slightly, to help light their way, ease their progress, and train their judgment for efforts that await them in the future.

Principle #1: Focusing on the political ends and desired peace

As a political instrument, war is meant to pursue political ends. Consequently, those ends must be at the center of a strategist's mind throughout the development of the military strategy. Carl von Clausewitz noted, "If we keep in mind that war springs from some political purpose, it is natural that the prime cause of its existence will remain the supreme consideration in conducting it."[i] While it seems obvious that a strategist should focus on the ends that the war means to attain, it is often easier said than done. For one, it can be hard to discern the political leader's aims for a war. The Afghanistan War, particularly after the initial operations to remove the Taliban from power, serves as a recent example of multiple administrations struggling to clearly articulate their desired political ends. As the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction noted in their 2021 lessons learned report, "the ends were murky and grew in number and complexity."[ii] An ongoing dialogue with political leadership is often required to ensure both sides are synchronized in their understanding of the goals and to reconcile what is desirable with what is possible.[iii] Moreover, the nature of war is such that its demands easily come to dominate strategists' time and thinking. Soon the very weight of maintaining a fighting force, planning objectives, discerning adversary intentions, responding to enemy movements, and coordinating actions across domains can overwhelm the attention of strategists so that the overarching objectives are lost in the noise and inertia. As Clausewitz highlighted, "Once it has been determined, from the political conditions, what a war is meant to achieve and what it can achieve, it is easy to chart the course. But great strength of character, as well as great lucidity and firmness of mind, is required in order to follow through steadily, to carry out the plan, and not to be thrown off course by thousands of diversions."[iv]

Having a clearly articulated definition of victory and a vision for the subsequent peace is the vital first step towards ensuring that war is directed toward its political ends. It serves several purposes. First, it helps strategists to determine the nature of the conflict, whether it should tend toward an absolute war or one with more limited aims. In this, strategists need to consider adversary intentions as well, for a nation seeking limited aims may be forced to fight a more total war due to adversary ambitions. Second, defining victory will inherently limit options and help determine the approach of the strategy. If victory is a better peace, it would be counterproductive to fight to the point of national exhaustion.[v] However, if victory is the destruction of a militant national regime like the Nazis, exhaustion may be an acceptable price for unconditional surrender. Finally, tangibly defining victory and the desired peace forces leadership to avoid the vagaries that typically guide wartime efforts. As Fred Charles Iklé notes, "Many wars in this century have been started with only the most nebulous expectations regarding the outcome, on the strength of plans that paid little, if any, attention to the ending."[vi] Again, it is easier said than done, and rarely will officers have full control over the strategic decision-making process. Nevertheless, in striving to clearly articulate a vision for victory and the subsequent peace, and then keeping that vision at the forefront of all wartime considerations, strategists have a better chance of directing the war towards fruitful ends.

Principle #2: Concentrate force and effort

With the political ends and victory as the foundation, the next enduring principle is to focus all force—moral, physical, and material—on the objectives most likely to produce those ends. Strategists must identify the key objectives that will lead to their vision of victory and then subordinate all other activities to those main actions. In short, a military must act with utmost concentration.[vii] Concentration can manifest differently at the various levels of war and across the domains of war. At the strategic level, it can consist of focusing national wartime efforts on the few critical actions that can achieve the preferred strategic ends, while at the tactical level, it can be amassing firepower on a specific point in the adversary's lines. Nevertheless, the heart of concentration is to focus a military's effort and force to create advantages and optimize chances for success.

In its logical ideal, all force would be directed at a single point to produce maximum effect. The more force is dispersed, the less its impacts, and the lower the chances it will achieve its ends. Thus, the goal is to focus efforts on the tasks that will most likely achieve the ends in order to

ensure the action has maximum effect towards victory. As J. C. Slessor put it, the whole art is to "select the correct objective at the time, namely that on which attack is likely to be decisive, or to contribute most effectively to an ultimate decision; and then to concentrate against it the maximum possible force…"[viii] However, concentration does not imply that strategists must throw all force directly at the primary objective—the impact can be amplified through creative employment. As B. H. Liddell Hart noted, commanders can magnify the effects of concentration when they direct it towards adversary weak points.[ix] At times, it is a matter of identifying an objective's weak points and directing your force at them; but at other times, a thoughtful approach can also manufacture weaknesses in adversary positions. In using purposeful dispersion, deception, and lines of operation that include alternative objectives, a strategist can force the adversary to disperse their strength. Doing so creates relative weaknesses that concentration can subsequently exploit.[x] In seeking to heighten the impact of actions and force, strategists should not only concentrate efforts on the elements most likely to prove decisive but also think creatively about how the approach can magnify the effect.

Principle #3: Economize force

If concentration serves to focus force on the critical objectives to maximize impact, the economy of force demands that a military not use any more force than necessary to be successful. War is a costly endeavor in both blood and treasure. Thus, it is axiomatic that an ideal war would use the minimum force necessary to achieve its political ends. Theorists capture the concept in a variety of ways. Clausewitz noted that the measure of genius is whether he can "manage a campaign exactly to suit his objectives and resources, doing neither too much nor too little."[xi] Liddell Hart stated that flawless strategy would consist of perfect coordination between ends and means.[xii] Sun Tzu captured the absolute ideal when he said that winning every battle is not the pinnacle of excellence, but rather subjugating the enemy army without fighting.[xiii] All of these touch on the self-evident truth that leaders should strive to achieve their ends using the least amount of force possible. Of course, it is near impossible to achieve in reality—the fog and friction of war, the limits of leader foresight, and the firmness of mind needed to carry out a plan despite endless diversions all conspire against perfect economy. Nonetheless, it is the ideal that strategists should seek.

There is an additional reason to economize force besides the fact that it increases wartime expenditures and reduces strength for the subsequent peace: excess force can also increase adversary resistance and make war termination more difficult. In this, war can become a vicious cycle where force begets force, with the cycle intensifying as the fighting intensifies. The more bitter the fighting, the more opposition resistance will harden and the more difficult it will be to achieve a negotiated settlement.[xiv] As it is, nations tend to make more stringent demands on settlements to end a war than they sought in negotiations before the war.[xv] That tendency is only exacerbated the longer a war continues because nations become increasingly seized by the desire to justify past sacrifices and to end a threat once and for all.[xvi] Moreover, as suffering increases among the population, government leaders feel a growing need to obtain a better outcome than a mere settlement.[xvii] In sum, the more deep-seated the conflict and enmity become, the more difficult it will be to find an exit from the fighting.[xviii] Therefore, it behooves leaders and strategists to minimize the use of force as much as possible to both reduce the toll that war exacts on one's nation and to diminish adversary resistance to preferred outcomes.

Pitfall #1: Overreach

While these principles are foundational to strategic thinking, there are several persistent pitfalls strategists succumb to when putting them into practice. The first is overreaching. As already discussed, war often takes on a life of its own. The sheer magnitude of the effort, the passions, the uncertainties, and the costs all serve to make war an unwieldy enterprise. One common result is that it can lead commanders to overreach after obtaining their objectives. As Clausewitz observed, the psychology of the attack is such that the momentum often causes commanders to overshoot their purpose and so fail to attain it.[xix] Iklé noted a similar phenomenon when he stated that "fighting often continues long past the point when 'rational' calculations would indicate the war should be ended…"[xx] Confidence arising from success on the battlefield combined with desires to justify the sacrifices of war and to irreversibly eliminate a threat can easily tempt leaders to seek just a little more. Thucydides captured this phenomenon in the Peloponnesian War when he noted that Athens continuously rejected moderate Spartan envoys as they "kept grasping at more."[xxi] He quotes Nicias as telling the Athenian assembly on the eve of their disastrous Sicilian campaign, "Your unexpected success, as compared with what you feared at first, has made you suddenly despise [Sparta and their allies], tempting you further to aspire to the conquest of Sicily."[xxii] The momentum of war makes it very difficult for leaders and nations to quit while they are ahead.

Two practices can go a long way toward counteracting the pull of overreach. First, recognizing that the temptation exists and acknowledging the difficulties it will present puts strategists on guard so that they might better recognize the

lure when the moment comes. It can also enable them to try and reduce the organizational and political factors that can make resistance more challenging. Second, returning to the first principle of war and having clear political ends that remain at the center of their efforts allows leaders to unambiguously know when they have reached their aims and it can guard against the creep of additional objectives.[xxiii] Operation Desert Storm offers an example where these considerations enabled American leaders to avoid the temptation of overreach. With the lessons of the Vietnam War on their minds, President George H. W. Bush and General Colin Powell focused on developing clear and attainable ends for the conflict, as well as a plausible exit strategy to prevent becoming trapped in an endless war. Despite intense domestic pressure to go beyond the original objective after initial successes and remove the Saddam regime once and for all, President Bush ended the war once the coalition liberated Kuwait.[xxiv] Unambiguous political ends coupled with a recognition of the temptations that war presents provided American leaders with antidotes to overcome the pull of overreach.

Pitfall #2: Confusing means with ends

Lack of clarity and focus on political ends can also enable a second pitfall when marrying theory to practice—allowing the military means to become the ends. Once the political ends are established, strategists seek to employ the military instrument to achieve those ends. However, in the effort devoted to managing the war, strategists often neglect the causal chain that delineates how the military means will produce the political ends. As Iklé observed, "the grand design is often woefully incomplete. Usually, in fact, it is not grand enough: most of the exertion is devoted to the means—perfecting the military instruments and deciding on their use in battles and campaigns—and far too little is left for relating these means to their ends."[xxv] Liddell Hart echoed these sentiments when he noted that, whenever war breaks out, the military aim "has been regarded as an end in itself, instead of as merely a means to the end."[xxvi]

To avoid this pitfall, strategists should not only prioritize the first principle in terms of maintaining focus on clear political ends but also regularly assess how their military actions will produce those ends. It helps to be as explicit as possible in outlining the causal chains between the actions and ends to avoid the tendency to accept vague and unformulated connections. Strategists can also build consistent checkpoints into their battle rhythm for reviewing political ends and the causal mechanisms that the strategy is relying on to produce them. Recurring and scheduled touchpoints help prevent the endless demands of war from diverting strategists away from their primary task of aligning ends and means, and they can help avoid the pitfall of conflating the two.

Pitfall #3: Assuming a quick victory

The final pitfall that strategists must be aware of when marrying theory to practice is the temptation to assume a quick victory. The hellish nature of war and the intense demands it places on a nation naturally create a desire to win quickly and minimize the damage. Further, the emotional shock of surprise attacks, like Pearl Harbor, leaves powerful impressions on the strategic imagination and intensifies hopes about the possibilities of a swift victory, even though they rarely result in a decisive win.[xxvii] These factors have all contributed to the stubborn persistence of the idea that a knockout blow could end the war before it became too destructive. Lawrence Freedman's history of the literature about future wars found two recurring themes along these lines: "First a growing appreciation of the difficulties of containing war so that its destructiveness could be bounded in time and space, and second, linked to this, a search for a form of decisive force that might inflict a knockout blow on an enemy and so end a war quickly and successfully."[xxviii] To explain why future attacks in the initial phases of war would be successful when they had rarely proved decisive in the past, most pointed to new technology or tactics.[xxix] Unfortunately, the search for the magic bullet continues, and the method for ensuring a confined, short, and decisive war proves elusive.

To avoid the trap, strategists should accept that war will likely continue long after the first strikes and devote time to preparing and planning for subsequent phases of the conflict. Recognizing these tendencies allows strategists to adjust accordingly and deliberately counter those thought processes when they arise. It is far better to prepare for surprise attacks and assume a war will continue longer than expected than to be caught unprepared when a war extends past the initial moves.

Conclusion

Junior officers who want to start sharpening their strategic thinking in preparation for their future roles as leaders should start by rooting themselves in the principles of war that endure across time and theorists, which include focusing on the political ends, concentrating force and effort, and economizing force. The interplay between those three principles allows strategists to maximize their creativity and the impact of the military instrument. However, good strategic thinking rarely survives first contact with the enemy. Thus, young officers must also become acutely familiar with the common pitfalls of overreach, conflating means for ends, and assuming a quick victory when they are marrying theory to practice. If not, stumbles in implementation may thwart otherwise sound strategic thought.

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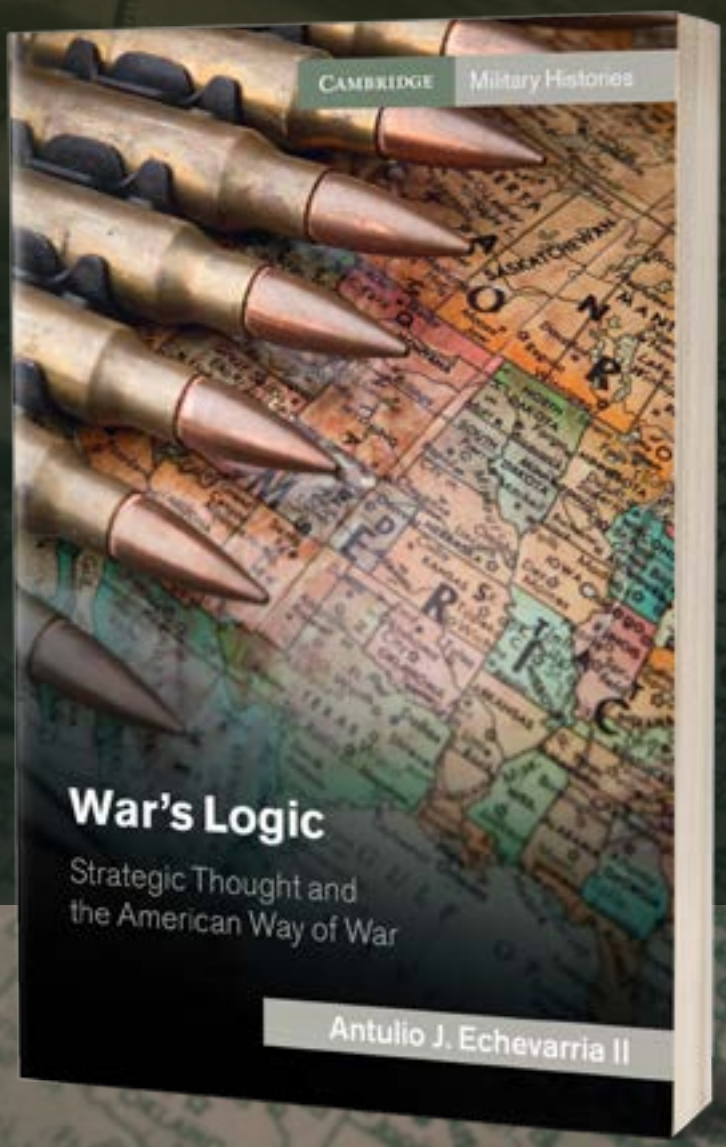

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Making Sound Strategy: Back to the Basics of Ends, Ways, and Means

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In the Fall 2022 edition of *Military Strategy Magazine*, M.L.R Smith provided a beginner's guide to understanding effective strategy making[i]. Smith's excellent article notes that "the fundamentals of strategy are not complicated because all of us are, at some intuitive level, strategic practitioners. It is about being *effective*"[ii]. But, while Smith is right that beginner strategists must focus on effectiveness, there is a step before we can worry about whether a strategy is effective – we must first ensure that it is 'sound'. This paper will introduce the concept of strategic 'soundness', by which we simply mean that all the basic component parts of a strategy are in place. It must, in short, have a clear and plausibly achievable desired outcome (or end), methods (or ways) that can

To cite this article: Moon, Giles, "Making Sound Strategy: Back to the Basics of Ends, Ways, and Means," M*ilitary Strategy Magazine*, Volume 9, Issue 2, winter 2024, pages 35-40.

plausibly achieve those ends, and sufficient military forces (or means) to plausibly achieve the outcome using the chosen methods. At first blush, some readers may think this point to be little more than common sense but, as we will see, it is oft forgotten even by the most experienced (or at least best paid) strategic practitioners, never mind beginner strategists. Numerous major operations over the last few decades have been launched with one of the strategic components missing, thus employing a strategy that wasn't merely ineffective once put into practice but was fundamentally unsound from the outset and thus had no prospect of success. Soundness provides a useful, and simple, conceptual tool for would-be strategists to ensure they are starting off on the right foot.

Soundness.

In introducing the concept of soundness, we must first be clear about what we mean when we describe a strategy as 'sound', and how soundness differs from efficacy. A strategy's effectiveness, as Smith notes, "can be evaluated according to one unimpeachable criterion: namely, did you succeed in achieving your objectives?"[iii]. Efficacy can thus only be assessed in retrospect; the strategy must be implemented and the resultant plans carried through to completion (or at least nearly so) before we can determine whether it is effective. Soundness, on the other hand, can be assessed in advance. A sound strategy is one that has the component parts in place such that it stands a chance of proving effective once implemented. A useful analogy is that of a racing yacht – an *effective* yacht is one that wins, something that can only be judged once the race has finished; a *sound* yacht is one that has a rudder, a decent sail, and is watertight. We know before the race even starts that the leaky yacht with a torn sail, or the one that has lost its rudder, cannot possibly be effective. The yacht simply isn't sound and thus stands no realistic prospect of success.

So too with strategy, although we need to work harder to identify the component parts. For that we can turn to Arthur Lykke and his 'ends, ways and means' framework. First proposed in 1989[iv], it has since become the dominant formulation for understanding and describing strategy in the American and British armies[v] and, while by no means uncontested, is almost certainly the most widely accepted conceptualization of strategy within the field of strategic studies. Even the great Colin Gray, towards the end of his life, seems to have accepted ends, ways and means (plus assumptions) as the component parts of his famous bridge[vi]. Ends, ways and means therefore provide a useful checklist of components that need to be identifiable in any given strategy for us to establish that it is sound. To wit: does it have clearly defined and plausibly achievable military objectives, or ends; does it have (to use Lykke's phrasing) military strategic concepts, or ways, that can plausibly achieve those ends; and are there sufficient military resources, or means, to plausibly achieve the objectives using the chosen concepts. We should note that the concepts and resources needn't guarantee success, not least because, as everyone's favourite Prussian reminds us, "chance [is] the very last thing war lacks."[vii] Likewise the objectives need not be definitely achievable – that can only be revealed once the strategy is turned into action. For a strategy to be sound, it is merely enough to identify that all three components *could* plausibly lead to success.

Several prominent authors have rightly decried the poor use that practitioners have made of the ends, ways and means framework. For example, Antulio Echevarria has lamented its use as a pseudo-scientific formula "as recognisable to modern strategists as…$E=MC^2$ is to physicists"[viii], with strategists acting as if the answer to constructing good strategy lies simply in balancing the equation, and forgetting that the creation of good (or effective) strategy is an art. Similarly, Jeffrey Meiser has bemoaned the Lykke model as "a crutch undermining creative and effective strategic thinking" [ix] because it is being used in the US as "a literal formula". David Ellery and Lianne Saunders, meanwhile, find ends, ways and means to be a caricatured understanding of a linear approach to strategy and "insufficient as a shorthand for the strategies needed for complex conflicts."[x] All of these critiques take aim not at Lykke's original concept but at the way in which it has been interpreted within the armed forces: a 'thick' interpretation in which the Strategy=E+W+M construct is seen by military strategists as a comprehensive formula that is not only necessary to ensure success, but sufficient on its own.

It is perhaps not unreasonable for military officers to have interpreted it thus, not least because "S=E+W+M" is literally the cover image on Lykke's original article. However, Meiser notes that the original utility of the 'ends, ways and means' model was simply as a method for avoiding an ends-means mismatch[xi]. Notwithstanding the poor choice of illustrations in his article, Lykke certainly seems to have intended his framework for only this more basic use. He saw the 'ends, ways and means' framework as a 'thin' concept; for Lykke it is a method to establish whether the three elements are roughly in balance and little more[xii]. The idea of 'soundness' reclaims ends, ways and means as merely a simple tool and provides something of a respite from the tyranny of formulaic "S=E+W+M" thinking. Despite the critiques of Echevarria and others, we needn't throw out ends, ways and means entirely; ensuring that a strategy is sound puts the three parts of Lykke's framework to good use as a set of criteria that are necessary for success but not, on their own, sufficient. Soundness therefore still leaves plenty of room for military strategy to be, as it always has been, 'the art of the general'. It is just as important to be clear about what soundness isn't as much as what it is. Soundness is no more than a checklist to ensure that a strategy has the rudimentary components in place for it to at least plausibly lead to success; it isn't science, it isn't comprehensive, and it certainly isn't a formula for victory.

Unsound strategies in the wild

So far, so intuitive. While this paper has introduced soundness as a novel concept, it should seem to most as little more than applying a new term to simple common sense. "Obviously", we hear the reader cry, "a strategy needs plausible goals, concepts that can plausibly achieve them, and sufficient resources to plausibly achieve the goals using the chosen concepts. How could a competent strategist possibly propose a course of action that excludes one of those three elements?" And yet the briefest look at the recent historical record shows that one or more of these elements is often absent. Western forces have repeatedly been deployed over the last few decades, in theatres including Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya without a well-defined and plausibly achievable goal, with concepts of employment that couldn't possibly achieve stated objectives, or with force numbers that are obviously grossly inadequate to achieve the mission.

A detailed discussion of *why* this happened is beyond the scope of this paper. We will have to content ourselves with a brief examination of the symptoms and save identification of the causes for another time. Nevertheless, we should provide a word of warning to any budding strategists: while the strategic errors seem obvious to us now, in the comfort of our academic armchairs, it is highly unlikely that the people involved in planning the campaigns in Afghanistan, Iraq, or Libya believed that they were going to war without a sound strategy in place. The key decision-makers will doubtless have been certain that they were embarking on an excellently planned campaign with a strategy that had clear aims, solid concepts, and adequate means. A combination of political considerations, miscalculations, and cognitive biases led strategists to think their strategies sound when they were anything but. There is no replacement for good judgement when assessing strategy, but human judgement is far from flawless. There is no easy resolution to this problem, so it is likely that well-meaning strategists (including, perhaps, readers of this journal) will make similar errors in the future.

No Ends - Afghanistan

The US's invasion of Afghanistan provides an excellent (and, given the recent final failure of the campaign in summer 2021, pertinent) example of a deployment that lacked clearly defined ends. It is obvious that the US's strategy in Afghanistan wasn't effective: any operation ending in a catastrophic withdrawal and the enemy becoming the government is unlikely to fulfil M.L.R Smith's 'unimpeachable criterion', but the problem is not only that the deployment didn't *achieve* its objectives but, worse, at the outset the intervention didn't even *have* clear objectives.

Crises are seldom the midwives of clear thinking, and it seems the invasion of Afghanistan in response to 9/11 wasn't well understood in the US system beyond a loose sense that Al Qaeda needed to be destroyed. Theo Farrell notes a "failure to clarify the war goals"[xiii], with "debate within the administration over the need to overthrow the Taliban"[xiv]. President Bush stated on 7 Oct 2001 that US operations were intended to "disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base…and attack the military capacity of the Taliban."[xv] This is an unambiguous statement of intent, but attacking the Taliban's military is an action, not an end, and leaves open the vital questions of the whether the Taliban should be removed and what comes next if they are. This confusion was reflected on the ground; General James Mattis's autobiography records disagreements between senior generals about what they were trying to achieve in Afghanistan and whether or not it was an invasion.[xvi] Farrell describes the problem succinctly: "In short, America went to war…without a common strategic vision for the military campaign"[xvii]. In other words, the US strategy in Afghanistan lacked the defined and plausible military objectives (ends) that are an essential component of a sound strategy.

It is worth, at this point, drawing a distinction between a deployment with an unsound strategy and a deployment that is astrategic. The two concepts, while superficially similar, are distinct. An astrategic actor is one that has no strategy at all and is simply reacting to situations as they arise with nothing to cohere individual actions into a wider plan. An actor employing an unsound strategy does have a strategy (or at least thinks they do), just one with critical flaws. Truly astrategic military deployments are vanishingly rare – almost all forces are deployed with at least some form of strategy in place even if that strategy is unsound. This is the case with the US in Afghanistan. The American military had a strategy of sorts, which was to attack Al Qaeda and the Taliban, and thus the deployment was not truly astrategic, but the lack of clarity in the US's objectives ensured that the strategy wasn't sound.

Inadequate Means - Iraq

If Afghanistan is an example of the US waging war without clear ends, Iraq is a war with insufficient means. While the true underlying motivations of the Iraq war are up for debate, the military end state was clear: remove Saddam Hussein and transition Iraq to democratic governance. The US also seems to have had concepts of employment (ways) for their troops that could plausibly achieve those ends. Where the US erred is in the means they chose to employ. General Eric Shinseki, then head of the US Army and prior commander of the NATO stabilisation force in Bosnia and Herzegovina, was asked how many soldiers would be needed to stabilise Iraq post-conflict and arrived at 400,000 based on the size of the NATO force needed in Bosnia, scaled up to match the population in Iraq[xviii]. This assessment

was endorsed by the Secretary of the Army[xix], himself a former Brigadier General, and reinforced by a RAND study (among others) that concluded that the correct number was around 526,000[xx]. Even the bullish General Tommy Franks felt that 250,000 would be needed[xxi].

In the event, political considerations ensured that only around 170,000 US and coalition troops were deployed to Iraq[xxii]. Once the invasion was complete and the occupation began, the total numbers deployed quickly fell below 120,000, far short of the scale of deployment identified as necessary by Shinseki and, at 7 deployed soldiers per 1000 inhabitants, only around 1/3 of the force ratio employed in Bosnia, Northern Ireland and Malaya[xxiii]. Note that for a strategy to be sound, the means employed need not guarantee success, it merely must be plausible that the resources could lead to success. The scale of the US deployment in Iraq fell short of even this generous criterion; the number of troops employed was too small and US forces were too thinly spread to achieve anything like stability, as was obvious to many analysts in advance of the invasion.

Poor Ways - Libya

Strategies with unsound concepts (or ways) are harder to spot than those lacking ends or means. It is easy to identify deployments without clear objectives, and history is replete with examples of wars where one side employed grossly inadequate means, but it is almost impossible to conceive of a military deployment where there are simply no concepts underpinning the employment of military forces. Save for the largely theoretical situation where forces are committed piecemeal into a fight without thought, we can always divine some kind of method behind the use of military force (even if in pursuit of an ill-defined goal). For a strategy to be sound, the concept must not only *exist*, but it *must plausibly be able to engender success*.

The US's failed 2011 intervention in Libya is an example of a strategy that was unsound because it employed obviously flawed concepts. The well-intentioned, UN sanctioned deployment[xxiv] rested on two assumptions. First, that the massacre of civilian troops by Muammar Gaddafi's forces could be averted if the Libyan opposition's fight against the government were supported by western airpower[xxv]. Second that, after defeating the government, the disparate armed groups would come together to create a peaceful legitimate government without western 'boots on the ground'. The first assumption was plausible; the second was not. In President Barack Obama's words, "wh*ile our military mission is narrowly focused on saving lives, we continue to pursue the broader goal of a Libya that belongs not to a dictator, but to its people…The transition to a legitimate government that is responsive to the Libyan people will be a difficult task. And while the United States will do our part to help, it will be a task for…the Libyan people themselves… With the time and space that we have provided for the Libyan people, they will be able to determine their own destiny.*"[xxvi] History bears few examples of multiple armed groups with competing aims simultaneously laying down their arms and moving to a peaceful coexistence without some form of external impetus. It is simply implausible that the US could cease their involvement in Libya following their limited air campaign and watch this process happen.

The idea that the US could get around the problems caused by inadequate troop numbers in Iraq by simply deploying no troops at all to Libya was fantasy, not strategy. According to a post-conflict RAND Study, "*Libya's most serious problem since 2011 has been the lack of security [which]… stems primarily from the failure of the effort to disarm and demobilise rebel militias after the war. Both international advisors and Libya's political leadership recognized the importance of rebel disarmament from the outset, but neither has been able to implement it. As a result, various types of armed groups control much of the country and the elected government is at their mercy.*"[xxvii] It further notes that "*The limited number of ground forces…greatly reduced the extent of control… that NATO and its partners could exert after Qaddafi was gone.*"[xxviii] This is not just a discovery that the strategy was ineffective with the benefit of hindsight; the flaws in the Libya strategic concept were so significant that there was no plausible prospect of achieving the desired outcome of a stable Libya. The strategy simply wasn't sound.

Conclusion

This brief paper has introduced the concept of soundness as a basic starting point for assessing a given strategy. Strategy is ultimately about achieving an objective, but a strategy's effectiveness can only be judged in retrospect once carried through. Soundness, however, can be assessed *a priori* by examining whether Lykke's three components of a strategy are in place: does the strategy have clear goals (ends) that are plausibly achievable, does it have concepts (ways) that could plausibly lead to the desired ends, and are there sufficient resources (means) allocated to plausibly achieve the goals using the chosen concepts. This concept is as simple as it first appears and may (perhaps should) seem remarkably like common sense, yet several of the most significant military deployments of the last few decades have been missing one of these critical components. Had those responsible for operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, or Libya ensured that their strategy was sound, disaster might have been averted. Soundness is therefore a useful, and simple, conceptual tool for strategy makers to use as a basic checklist to ensure the fundamentals are in place. 'The art of the general' determines whether a strategy is effective, but even the best general must start by ensuring their strategy is sound.

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—**Andrew Futter**,
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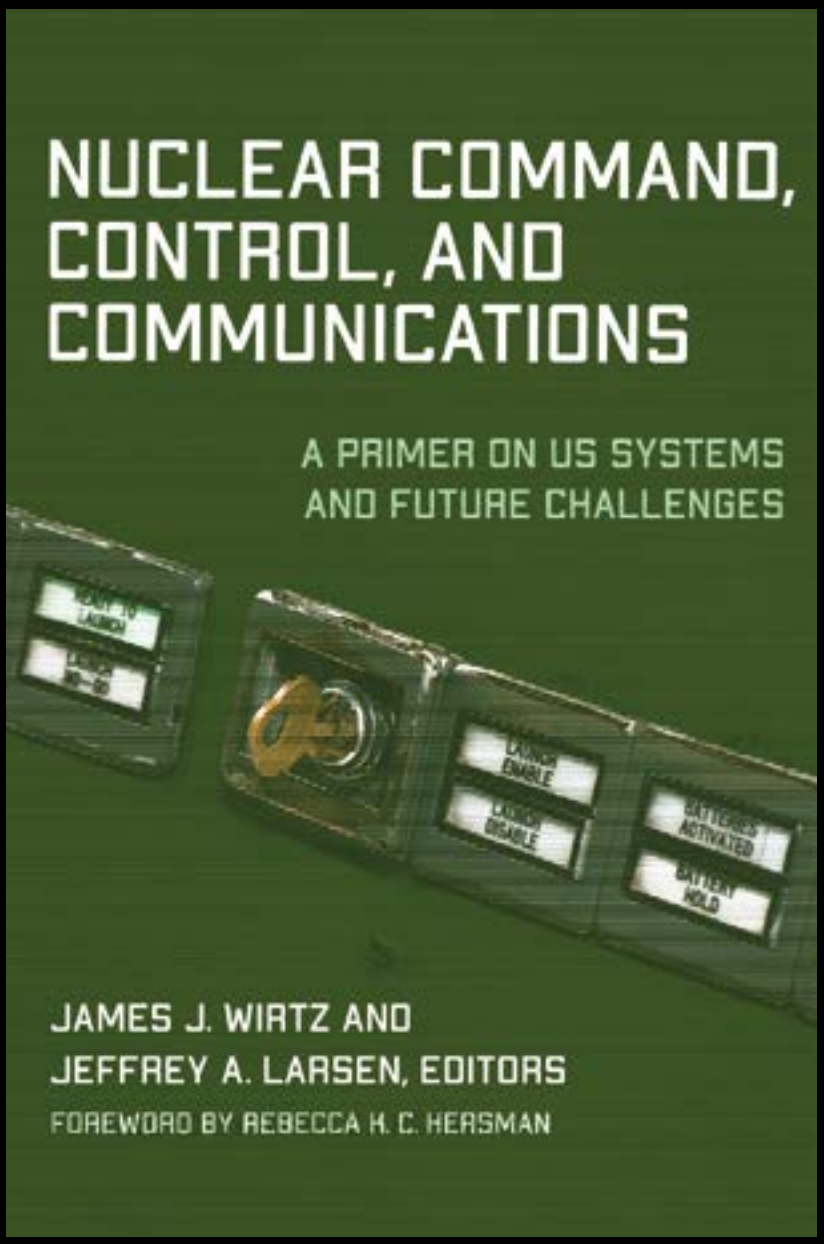

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Rule Guided Behavior and Violence – A Cultural Evolutionary Strategy to Foster Peaceful Cultural Entities

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To cite this article: Gabriel, Rainer, Mühlmann, Heiner, and Stojek, Nicolas, "Rule Guided Behavior and Violence – A Cultural Evolutionary Strategy to Foster Peaceful Cultural Entities," *Military Strategy Magazine*, Volume 9, Issue 2, winter, 2024, pages 42-47.

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A New World Order?

Although the evolving conflict in Ukraine had long been under observation, the actual Russian invasion and the onset of a war came as a surprise to most European politicians and observers.[i] Nevertheless, the escalation of the simmering conflict between Russia and Ukraine confirms a trend that has been forecasted in the field of International Relations for some time now: the decline of the Western-liberal influenced world order dominated by the United States as the hegemon.

Henry Kissinger defines world order as "the concept held by a region or civilization about the nature of just arrangements and the distribution of power thought to be applicable to the entire world."[ii] This world order was conceived as a system of universally respected legal codifications aimed at promoting global freedom, human rights, free markets, and democracy.[iii] From Kissinger's definition, it is evident that a certain ethnocentric element is inherent in any world order. Kissinger himself notes that while Western principles may be globally acknowledged, there has been no consensus on the application of these principles.[iv]

In retrospect, it can be observed that this interpretation underestimated the fault lines within the Western-influenced world order and the intensity of dissent regarding its fundamental principles. Alexander Dugin, also referred to as "Putin's Brain,"[v] characterizes American dominance as a global dictatorship and considers the development of a genuinely Russian political theory a matter of existential significance for Russia.[vi]

Zhang Weiwei, a political theorist from the rising Chinese power center, articulates his criticism of the Western-influenced world order more in line with Kissinger's thinking. He accepts human rights and democracy as universal values but emphasizes the diversity of their implementation.[vii] Nevertheless, doubts persist about whether Weiwei's semi-compatible view of the principles of the current world order finds consensus among China's political thinkers.[viii]

The discontent expressed to varying degrees about the American-dominated world order in recent decades has led to explicit reactions, such as anti-Western terrorism and the formation of an anti-Western bloc. The West is primarily accused of pursuing an imperial policy camouflaged in humanitarian slogans. Many people delegitimize the West, especially in countries that have experienced U.S. military interventions, by alleging double standards in humanitarian matters.[ix]

A widely embraced forecast that arises as a response to the fault lines of the current world order is the model of a so-called "multipolar order."[x] This order, whatever its precise configuration may be, will, as described by the German political scientist Herfried Münkler, consist of distinct power centers with accompanying spheres of influence, where specific cultural and legal norms will apply. The key challenge in this context will be to tolerate these spheres of influence without challenging them with universalistic rationale. Power ambitions within this system will be balanced through the competition among major powers and the political dependency of major powers on their vassal states.[xi]

In the words of Carl Schmitt, "Großraum" orders will emerge, featuring a prohibition on intervention by foreign powers.[xii] Anticipated conflict zones will be the border regions between each pair of "Großraum" orders. In these border regions, it is essential to establish cross-regional agreements to prevent the escalation of rivalry between the major powers. Münkler consequently suggests the creation of buffer zones for this purpose.

It is worth noting, therefore, that the concept of universalism is being questioned, and secondly, that the feasibility of an international order whose legal codifications cannot be consistently enforced is an illusion.

This article addresses the aforementioned challenges of the declining world order from a cultural theoretical perspective. This approach employs conceptual models of cultural evolution and system theory. The resulting

perspective aligns with the prediction of a future "multipolar" international order, whose political coherence is based on relative cultural homogeneities. The issue of conflict potential at the borders of these "Großraum" orders is discussed by expanding the relatively ineffective understanding of rules as purely legal codifications to a system-theoretical concept of rules. The aim is to design an order in which rules achieve an enculturating embodiment effect and may thus be capable of conditioning populations against warfare.

Rule-adjustment as a result of cultural evolution

Rules that organize the behavior of collectives are culturally relative order structures. The rules of Chinese culture - for example, the "Li System" - are different from the corresponding rules of European culture - for example, the "Decorum System".[xiii] Cultural regulatory work is mostly governed by legal systems. Examples of European legal works are the "Twelve Tables" of Roman Law, the "Corpus Iuris Civilis" (especially the "Codex Iustiniani") of historical Byzantine culture, and the "Civil Code" of modern German culture. Rule-adjustment is the result of cultural evolution. In the language of system theory, as laid down by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, one would say that: laws are results of allopoiesis (generation of a product by a producer).[xiv] "Li rituals" and "Decorum rituals" are results of autopoiesis (emergent results of evolutionary processes, growth through endogenous forces of growth, as in living beings).[xv]

This implies that from regular processes at the micro level – that is, from functionally interconnected interactions of elements – a global order gradually emerges over time. Within this order, functional elements and regulatory loops interact within and between levels (micro, meso, macro), thereby generating a complex systemic structure.

Models of cultural evolution describe cultures as transmission dynamics in which transmission units are transferred "vertically" and "horizontally".[xvi] "Vertical" refers to transmission from one generation to another, while "horizontal" refers to transmission between individuals living within the same generation.

During the early days of cultural evolution science, these transmission units were referred to as "cultural genes," akin to the "genes" in genetics, but later simply termed as "units" or "variants."[xvii] The German research group TRACE (Transmission in Rhetorics, Arts and Cultural Evolution) has proposed using the term "rule" as a concept for transmission units in the descriptive schemas of cultural transmission dynamics.[xviii] This concept of rules would encompass law rules, ritual rules, and uncodified regularities arising from cultural routines and imitative behavior.[xix]

"Transmission" implies storage in biological memories, i.e., in brains. Merely storing information in artificial memory carriers such as books, archives, and archaeological monuments is not sufficient. The process of memory storage in individual brains is also called "enculturation."

We refer to the hypothesis that there are three types of enculturation:

1. "complete and partial enculturation." This involves the storage of rules in declarative memories, representing consciously retrievable knowledge. A minimum of verifiable knowledge is essential in any culture.

2. There is "strong and weak enculturation." This refers to the storage of information in body memories, involving skills learned by the procedural memory, such as trained body movements in riding, driving, and playing the piano.

3. Finally, there is emotional enculturation, the storage of stress events in the collective emotional memory. This includes traumatic experiences in wars that shape later development as formative events.[xx] For example, anticipatory obedience can arise through this process.

Rules and Their Enforcement

The enforcement of certain rules is accomplished through the threat and use of violence. This is especially true for the enforcement of laws and the penalties prescribed by those laws. Rule enforcement can also be achieved through the attribution of honor and shame. In other words, rules that effectively influence behavior consistently follow a recognizable if-then structure. Penal laws that predict the loss of physical integrity and individual freedom as punishment influence deep-seated memory systems through imaginative embodiment and the emotional aspect of the threatened loss of fitness. In this manner, they foster the emergence of preemptive obedience.

The threat of punishment under the law and the violence announced for its enforcement are also referred to as the "state's monopoly on violence." Thomas Hobbes' discussions of the "Leviathan" reflect the state's right to extensive, potentially violent enforcement of the codified order.[xxi] This state monopoly on violence has two aspects: one is directed inward within the state. This involves the enforcement of laws by police and judicial personnel. This form of violent behavior is rule-governed because the laws precisely specify the violent penalties for various law violations.

The second direction of violence extends outward into the realm of interstate behavior. This form of violence is generated by armed forces, and its application is de facto unregulated, as clear if-then structures become unrecognizable in the "fog of war."[xxii] This unregulated

violence creates the domain of military strategy, as military strategy is made possible by the absence of rules. Due to the paradoxical logic of strategic behavior, wars are characterized by total unpredictability, strategic cunning, and the advantage gained through surprising the enemy.[xxiii]

According to prevalent cultural theories, the genesis of a system that gives rise to a culture begins with a stress event that requires cooperation among individuals (interaction of elements at the micro level, as mentioned above) to withstand existential threats. This cooperation represents the baseline and primary function of a culture.[xxiv] Consequently, this realm of violence provision, where the actors are states or states in the process of formation, claims the largest shares of the overall cultural output. This includes the allocation of financial resources and human labor.

The deployments of UN peacekeeping forces, for instance, in Rwanda, demonstrate that despite military presence, the international community often fails to effectively prevent wars and war atrocities. As a result, the legal systems of international law lack the required deep-seated incorporation into cultural memory systems due to their limited enforcement power and the absence of reality-based narratives capable of conditioning human behavior. They also fail to elicit the desired preemptive obedience that could influence a conflict-prone culture through a rule-based automatism with emotional memory activity. In other words, the "laws" of international law do not access the enculturation behavior of collectives, and there is no effective global Leviathan.

Reasons for the deficient enforcement of rules include the differing strategic and constitutional concepts among the member states of the UN Security Council. Due to culturally rooted disagreements, it becomes evident that even the UN cannot be a Leviathan, as coherent rule enforcement is unattainable.[xxv] Consequently, it can be asserted that when rules exist merely as formulations without influencing behavior, they remain pure codification, thereby lingering in a quasi-fictional stage.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that the decision-making power over the largest sphere of overall cultural activity, namely the realm of "military affairs and international strategy," is not subject to the control of rule-governed behavior. If we come to the assessment that this domain of decision-making cannot be governed by rules because in a strategic context, any rational argument can be undermined by the argument of the threat of violence in any situation, we are confronted with a fundamental philosophical experience referred to by the Greek predecessors of European thought as "Aporia." "Aporia" signifies an unanswered question that is not only unanswered so far but one that can never be answered.

Fire and Counterfire

The reality and existence of war can only be destroyed by superior force, much like wildfires that can only be extinguished by counterfire, or slavery that could only be abolished through costly wars against slave economy states.

The "counterfire" of war would be a league that is prohibited from taking sides with any of the belligerent states at the outbreak of war. This league would possess a highly deterrent military force and would declare war on all those engaged in warfare, both on each side of the conflict. Thus, each belligerent party would face not just one but two enemies. Such a league, established with the proclamation of "war against war," would introduce a rule that anticipates the principle of strategic and war surprise. In this way, the principle of rule-governed behavior would penetrate into the realm of strategy, which until now has been effectively governed by the principle of lawlessness or the suspension of all rules by the activation of the rule "war."

The influence of this league would divide into two strands. One branch of influence would affect the realm of military intervention and military outcomes. The second branch would target the conditioning of collective emotions and the deep embedding of collective memories to induce the emergence of anticipatory obedience.

The armed forces of such an anti-war league could be organized along the lines of the French Foreign Legion. By not being tied to a specific citizenship, the potential pool of recruits would be significantly larger compared to national armies in Europe, especially in larger states facing recruitment challenges. A supranational military force with a multinational recruitment base would also have the advantage of alleviating the loss aversion of European populations and simultaneously mitigating nationalist sentiments within the ranks.[xxvi]

War and Sovereignty

The generative principle of the lawlessness of war is the concept of state sovereignty. Sovereignty describes the right of a culturally defined population (state) to declare war on other populations of the same kind. The provision of reasons for such declarations plays primarily an internal role. This is because when two states are at war, it is typically impossible for neutral observers to prove which state is the aggressor. Consequently, both sides must be prohibited from waging war, and both should face penalties if they continue to engage in hostilities. This requirement would be essential in the buffer zones of a hypothetical "multipolar" order. A historical precedent for such a model, in which a sovereign Leviathan could achieve full embodiment effect, is the French Fronde.

The concept of sovereignty was developed during the

late 16th century in France by Jean Bodin in his book "De Republica".[xxvii] It was then adopted by the French kings Louis XIII and Louis XIV in the next generation. Based on the doctrine of sovereignty, France evolved into the first modern territorial state, initially in the form of an absolutist state, which fully consolidated under the reign of Louis XIV. Previously, during the time of Louis XIII, all aristocrats fought against the king and the enforcement of the sovereign state. The aristocrats collectively formed the party of the so-called "fronde." The "frondeurs" were the enemies of the sovereign state and the absolutist monarchy. Each aristocrat considered themselves de facto as a sovereign political entity and claimed the right to declare war on other aristocrats. These wars were mostly fought in the form of duels. The aristocrats were duel prone.

Louis XIII had a visionary minister, Cardinal Duc de Richelieu. He prohibited dueling by law and imposed the death penalty. Richelieu rigorously enforced this law, reminiscent of the abolitionist movement against slavery. He ensured that aristocrats who dueled were executed, often against the will of the king, who frequently argued that the condemned were his relatives.

Declaration of War

Applied to a "multipolar" order, this system would result in neighboring major powers agreeing on buffer zones that act as fences separating these major powers from each other. Three fundamental scenarios would emerge:

1. One major power declares war on another major power. Given the high opportunity costs, this case is considered unlikely.[xxviii] However, should it occur, national armies as well as the major power's supranational army would be authorized for war and the destruction of the opponent.

2. One major power declares war on a state within the buffer zone. In this scenario, the supranational armies of the neighboring major power would be authorized to indiscriminately destroy the forces of the buffer states as well as the invading forces of the major power.

3. Buffer states declare war on each other. The supranational armies of the neighboring major powers would indiscriminately annihilate the forces of the warring buffer states.

In this model, war becomes synonymous with annihilation, making it not only politically and economically unprofitable but also generating an embodiment with deep-seated effects in populations. War is equated with destruction, and thus, fitness loss. When there is nothing left to gain in war, and rules are enforced through massive violence in clearly defined areas, populations undergo a motivational imprint that makes sustainable behavioral change seem promising. [xxix]

The most significant challenge in this system would likely be the consequent neglect of moral sentiments that serve as justification for military interventions by foreign powers in the current humanitarian-oriented world order.

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ISSN 2708-3071

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