

CHAPTER 7

A SURVEY OF STRATEGIC THOUGHT

J. Boone Bartholomees, Jr.

A common language is the basis of any effective doctrine; people conversant in the doctrine habitually use words in the same way to mean the same thing. Such meanings may be unique to the doctrinal context even if the word has other non-doctrinal usages. Thus, the word passion used in a Christian context has an entirely different meaning than in secular usage. Similarly, doctrinal military terms, while hopefully used consistently by military individuals and organizations, may differ slightly (or even radically) in common usage. Strategy is such a word. Defining it is not as easy as one would think, and the definition is critical. Although strategy is commonly used in non-military fields—for example a business strategy or an education strategy—and a definition must be able to include such usage, this discussion focuses on the national security arena and particularly on grand strategy and military strategy. In that context, strategy has equal applicability for peace and war, although it is commonly associated more strongly with war. Surprisingly for such a significant term, there is no consensus on the definition of strategy even in the national security arena. The military community has an approved definition, but it is not well known and is not accepted by non-military national security professionals. As a consequence, every writer must develop his or her own definition or pick from the numerous extant alternatives. We will survey some of those alternatives.

Clausewitz wrote, “Strategy is the use of the engagement for the purpose of the war. The strategist must therefore define an aim for the entire operational side of the war that will be in accordance with its purpose. In other words, he will draft the plan of the war, and the aim will determine the series of actions intended to achieve it: he will, in fact, shape the individual campaigns and, within these, decide on the individual engagements.”¹ This is not satisfactory—it deals only with the military element and is at the operational level rather than the strategic. What Clausewitz described is really the development of a theater or campaign strategy. Historian Jay Luvass used to say that because Clausewitz said something did not necessarily make it true, but did make it worth considering. In this case we can consider and then ignore Clausewitz.

The nineteenth century Swiss soldier and theorist Antoine Henri Jomini had his own definition.

Strategy is the art of making war upon the map, and comprehends the whole theater of war. Grand Tactics is the art of posting troops upon the battlefield according to the accidents of the ground, of bringing them into action, and the art of fighting upon the ground, in contradiction to planning upon a map. Its operations may extend over a field of ten or twelve miles in extent. Logistics comprises the means and arrangements which work out the plans of strategy and tactics. Strategy decides where to act; logistics brings the troops to this point; grand tactics decides the manner of execution and the employment of the troops.²

This again is military only and theater-specific.

Civil War era soldier and author Henry Lee Scott had an interesting definition derived from the basic Jominian concept: “. . . the art of concerting a plan of campaign, combining a system of military operations determined by the end to be attained, the character of the enemy, the nature and resources of the country, and the means of attack and defence [*sic*].”³ This actually has all the elements we look for and states them as

a relationship that is more conceptually complex and satisfying than Jomini's. However, Scott still limits strategy to military endeavors and to theaters.

Military historian Basil H. Liddell Hart has another unique approach to the subject. He defines strategy as: "the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy." Also: "Strategy depends for success, first and most, on a sound *calculation and co-ordination of the ends and the means*. The end must be proportioned to the total means, and the means used in gaining each intermediate end which contributes to the ultimate must be proportioned to the value and needs of that intermediate end—whether it be to gain an object or to fulfill a contributory purpose. An excess may be as harmful as a deficiency." He is talking specifically about military strategy, and he thinks strategy is something akin to but different from grand strategy.

As tactics is an application of strategy on a lower plane, so strategy is an application on a lower plane of "grand strategy" . . . While practically synonymous with the policy which guides the conduct of war, as distinct from the more fundamental policy which should govern its objective, the term "grand strategy" serves to bring out the sense of "policy in execution." For the role of grand strategy—higher strategy—is to coordinate all the resources of a nation, or a band of nations, towards the attainment of the political object of the war—the goal defined by fundamental policy.

Hart goes on to say,

Grand strategy should both calculate and develop the economic resources and manpower of nations in order to sustain the fighting services. Also the moral resources—for to foster the people's willing spirit is often as important as to possess the more concrete forms of power. Grand strategy, too, should regulate the distribution of power between the services, and between the services and industry. Moreover, fighting power is but one of the instruments of grand strategy—which should take account of and apply the power of financial pressure, of diplomatic pressure, of commercial pressure, and, not the least, of ethical pressure, to weaken the opponent's will. . . . Furthermore, while the horizon of strategy is bounded by the war, grand strategy looks beyond the war to the subsequent peace. It should not only combine the various instruments, but so regulate their use as to avoid damage to the future state of peace—for its security and prosperity. The sorry state of peace, for both sides, that has followed most wars can be traced to the fact that, unlike strategy, the realm of grand strategy is for the most part *terra incognita*—still awaiting exploration and understanding.⁴

That is very close to modern doctrine, although the use of words is different. But Hart's entire exposition was really a means to get past all this uninteresting grand strategic stuff and on to his pet theory of the indirect approach—a technique of implementation that we will consider later.

Contemporary strategist Colin Gray has a more comprehensive definition. "By strategy I mean *the use that is made of force and the threat of force for the ends of policy* [emphasis in original]."⁵ The problem with that definition is that it is exclusively wartime and military. Gray ties himself down when he links the definition of strategy to force—in actuality he is mixing definitions of war and strategy.

The U.S. military has an approved joint definition of strategy: "The art and science of developing and employing instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and/or multinational objectives." Unfortunately, that definition only recognizes strategy as a national security function, and although it is significantly better than earlier definitions, it remains fairly broad. The explanation in the *Joint Encyclopedia* (on line) goes a little further: "These strategies integrate national and military objectives (ends), national policies and military concepts (ways), and national resources and military forces and supplies (means)." That is more satisfactory, although still focused exclusively on national security issues. However the joint definition of national military strategy shows that the joint community is divided or at least inconsistent on this subject. "National Military Strategy. The art

and science of distributing and applying military power to attain national objectives in peace or war.” That is a pure “how to” definition—at best a correlation of objectives with methods with the emphasis on methods. There is no consideration of or recognition of the importance of developing means; there is also no consideration of developing military objectives to accomplish national objectives. The encyclopedia’s further explanation on that term goes into the formal document of the National Military Strategy rather than the concept.⁶

The U.S. Army War College defines strategy in two ways: “Conceptually, we define strategy as the relationship among ends, ways, and means.” Alternatively, “Strategic art, broadly defined, is therefore: The skillful formulation, coordination, and application of ends (objectives), ways (courses of action), and means (supporting resources) to promote and defend the national interests.” The second definition is really closer to a definition of grand strategic art, but if one cut it off after “means,” it would be essentially the same as the first definition.⁷

In my own view, strategy is simply a problem solving process. It is a common and logical way to approach any problem—military, national security, personal, business, or any other category one might determine. Strategy asks three basic questions: what is it I want to do, what do I have or what can I reasonably get that might help me do what I want to do, and what is the best way to use what I have to do what I want to do? Thus, I agree with the War College that strategy is the considered relationship among ends, ways, and means. That sounds deceptively simple—even simplistic. Is it actually more than that relationship? Is there some deeper secret? I do not believe there is; however, the relationship is not as simple as it appears at first blush. First, a true strategy must consider all three components to be complete. For example, if one thinks about strategy as a relationship of variables (almost an equation but there is no equal sign) one can “solve” for different variables. Ends, which hopefully come from a different process and serve as the basis for strategy, will generally be given. If we assume a strategist wants to achieve those ends by specific ways, he can determine the necessary means by one of the traditional exercises of strategic art—force development. If a strategist knows both the ends to be achieved and means available, he can determine the possible ways. People, particularly military writers, often define strategy in exactly that way—as a relation between ends and means—essentially equating strategy with ways or at least converting strategy into an exercise of determining ways. That was the traditional approach of people like Jomini and Liddell Hart, who unabashedly thought of strategy as ways. That is also the typical short-term planning process that a theater commander might do. He cannot quickly change the means available, so he has to determine how to best use what is on hand to accomplish the mission.

Tests for Strategy

One can test a possible strategy by examining it for suitability, acceptability, and feasibility. Those three adverbs test each of the three components of strategy. Suitability tests whether the proposed strategy achieves the desired end—if it does not, it is not a potential strategy. Acceptability tests ways. Does the proposed course of action or concept produce results without excessive expenditure of resources and within accepted modes of conduct? Feasibility tests means. Are the means at hand or reasonably available sufficient to execute the proposed concept? A strategy must meet all three tests to be valid, but there is no upper limit on the number of possible solutions. The art becomes the analysis necessary to select the best or most efficient.

Of the three tests, suitability and feasibility are fairly straightforward and require no further explication. Acceptability, however, has some complicating features. The morality and legality of strategies is an obvious case in point—morality and legality vary widely by nation, culture, and even individual. But those

are not the only complicating features of acceptability. For example, Colin Gray talks about what he calls the social dimension of strategy “. . . strategy is made and executed by the institutions of particular societies in ways that express cultural preferences.”⁸ That is really an expression of the relation of the acceptability of a strategy to the Clausewitzian trinity. Beyond morality and legality, a truly acceptable strategy must fit the norms of the military, government, and people. Strategies that only meet the norms of one or two of the legs are possible if they are not in major conflict with deeply held norms of the other legs, but they must be achievable very quickly to avoid possibly disastrous conflict over acceptability. The U.S. invasion of Panama in 1989 is an example of this phenomenon. It was an invasion of a sovereign foreign nation justified by fairly innocuous (certainly not vital) political issues. That was against the norms of all three legs of the American trinity; however, the government had convinced itself that action was necessary, and the military agreed or at least obeyed orders. The potential glitch was the response of the American people. Initial reaction was the predictable support for troops being deployed in harm’s way. That support could have quickly turned into opposition had the operation not been extremely rapid and relatively casualty-free. Even though one might occasionally get away with violating norms, one cannot safely violate deeply-held norms even briefly. Thus, the United States has a norm against assassination (reinforced by a self-imposed presidential directive that adds a legal dimension). Our current mode of declaring that the people of an adversarial country are good but their leader is evil screams for a decapitation strategy executed by assassination. That will not happen. Beyond the question of legality, it would never pass the acceptability test of any of the trinitarian elements.

Categorizing Strategy

There are several ways to categorize strategies. One has a conceptual basis: strategy can be declaratory, actual, or ideal. Declaratory strategy is what a nation says its strategy is. Declaratory strategy may or may not be the nation’s true strategy, and the nation may or may not actually believe it. A good example is America’s declared two Major Theaters of War (MTW) strategy. For years the official (declared) strategy of the United States was to be able to fight two near-simultaneous MTWs; however, most analysts were convinced such a strategy was impossible to execute with existing means. Regardless, the United States must maintain some form of a two MTW strategy, despite recent modifications, as its declared strategy even if the administration determines that it does not have and is unwilling to buy the resources to execute the strategy. A nation with pretensions to world power cannot easily change or back down from long-declared strategies, and a declared two MTW capability provides some useful deterrent effect. Actual strategy addresses the difference between the declared strategy and reality. It asks the question, “Assuming the United States cannot execute its declared two MTW strategy, what is its real strategy?” That real strategy would be an actual strategy. An ideal strategy is what a strategist would prefer to do if he had unlimited access to all the necessary resources (both quantitative and qualitative). It is a textbook strategy and may or may not correspond to reality.

Another way, as mentioned briefly above, to categorize strategy is organizational or hierarchical. That is the method that talks about grand or national strategy at one level and theater, campaign, or operational strategy at another level. The term operational strategy is one historian Alan T. Nolan uses, but it is confusing, unnecessarily mixes terms, and is uncommon at best in the literature. We will omit it from further discussions, but it does highlight one significant issue. There is a basic theoretical question about the legitimacy of strategy at the operational level—we are purposefully mixing apples and oranges for no discernable gain in clarity, utility, or comprehension. While I personally oppose such usage, current U.S. military joint doctrine accepts it, and I will follow that doctrine.

Grand or national strategy is associated with actions at the state/national level. The U.S. Army War College defines it as “. . . a country’s broadest approach to the pursuit of its national objectives in the international system.”⁹ Good grand strategies include or at least consider all elements of national power. These are the means of grand strategy. One could develop a lopsided grand strategy that was purely military or purely economic, but that is not ideal even if some elements contribute only minimally to the final product. This broaches the subject of elements of power—a simple but useful way to classify or categorize power. Current U.S. military doctrine recognizes four categories of power available to a nation or strategist: military, economic, diplomatic, and informational. Other potential candidates include social/psychological, which was an accepted category until recently, and political. While political and diplomatic appear to be similar and are frequently used synonymously, I believe they are actually different. To me, political refers to the power generated internally or domestically, while diplomatic refers exclusively to power in the international arena—the ability to influence adversaries, allies, and neutrals. Political power is important for generating or sustaining support for the policy/strategy or popular will. Regimes with little domestic support (and thus little political power) have difficulty executing their international policies. Social/psychological power was very similar to political power in some respects, but also contained elements of informational power. Since its major components were subsumed in other terms, social/psychological power fell into disuse. In a war, the other elements of power (and the strategies developed for their employment) tend to support the military element; however, there is always a symbiotic relationship between the elements. Thus diplomatic strategy may support military strategy, but military success may be an essential precursor for diplomatic success. Similarly, economic strategy may be designed to provide military means, but the military capture or loss of economic assets may directly influence the effectiveness of the economic strategy. Additionally, different types of warfare emphasize different elements of power. For example, in a civil war, the political element becomes especially important.

Does (or should) one’s strategy necessarily change based on the type of war he is fighting? If strategy is a function of ends, then it ought to change or be different as the political ends change. The alternative view, however, is that destroying the enemy’s military force is always the best (to some theorists the only legitimate) objective for the military regardless of political goals. This gets to what Clausewitz called the supreme judgment about a war—its nature. “The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.”¹⁰ Based on the nature of the war, the military’s objective may or may not have anything to do with destroying the enemy’s military force. For example, one might have political goals that make avoiding battle at all costs, and instead maneuvering to seize specific locations, not only a viable but a desirable strategy. The strategist will only recognize this if he or she understands the nature of the war being waged, recognizes when that nature changes, and adapts strategy accordingly. The inclusion of potential changes in the nature of a war during its conduct raises another important question. If the nature of a war can change, then is not trying to shape that nature into a form that suits the strategist a legitimate strategic exercise? Is Clausewitz overlooking a useful strategic tool when he warns against trying to turn a war into something alien to its nature? Strategists should certainly try to control or influence the nature of a war as much as possible. The problem is when they fail to recognize their efforts have failed and persist in fighting the wrong kind of war. Thus, in the 1960s the United States might legitimately have tried to turn the Vietnam war into a conventional international war between North and South Vietnam—that was the war the U.S. military was best prepared to win. However, when that effort failed, the strategists should have recognized that fact and adapted to the true nature of the war they were fighting. Unfortunately, that did not occur until it was too late to win that war, and paradoxically, the nature of the war changed again in 1975, and the war became precisely the conventional international war the

United States had initially wanted.

Executing Strategy

Before we proceed, it is useful to address the issue of whether strategy is really necessary. It is certainly possible to conduct a war without a strategy. One can imagine very fierce combat divorced from any coherent (or even incoherent) plan for how that fighting would achieve the aims of the war—fighting for the sake of fighting. Alternatively, preemptive surrender is always an option for the state interested in avoiding strategic decisions; the only drawback is that preemptive surrender is incapable of achieving positive political objectives other than avoidance of conflict. Rational states, however, will always attempt to address their interests by relating ends with ways and means. Given the fact that they are fighting for some reason—that is, they have an end—there will be some (even if unconscious) design of how to use the available means to achieve it. Thus, while strategy may not technically be necessary, it is almost always present—even if poorly conceived and executed.

Next we need to consider a few potential ways to execute strategy. Knowing that strategy is a considered relation among ends, ways, and means is a necessary first step, but it does not help one actually do anything. Fortunately, hundreds of authors have given their thoughts on how to conduct strategy. Some are better than others. Most are “ways” determinations rather than comprehensive ends-ways-means analyses. Still, they are worth consideration. As a minimum a competent strategist should be aware of each.

Sun Tzu

The ancient Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu did not define strategy, but he offered pointers on its practice. At times, Sun Tzu can be so straightforward, he is simplistic. For example, the statement, “Victory is the main object of war” is not especially informative. One can make all the tortuous interpretations one likes, but the statement is blunt and obvious in its intent. That is not to say it is trivial—in fact, it is well for anyone involved with war to remember that the object is to win—it is just wrong as an absolute. The object of war is not victory, but as Liddell Hart says, “a better peace—even of only from your own point of view.” One can strive so hard for victory that he destroys the subsequent peace. Hart again says, “A State which expends its strength to the point of exhaustion bankrupts its own policy, and future. If you concentrate exclusively on victory, with no thought for the after-effect, you may be too exhausted to profit by the peace, while it is almost certain that the peace will be a bad one, containing the germs of another war.” Victory is certainly better than the alternative, but it cannot be the exclusive aim of war. I expound on that for two reasons. First, Sun Tzu should be treated like Jay Luvass recommended using Clausewitz—the fact that he said something only makes it worthy of consideration. Second, the fact that Sun Tzu is both an ancient and an Asian author does not mean he had all the answers or even addressed all the questions. There is a tendency to read volumes into fairly straightforward passages of Sun Tzu on the assumption that there must be something of deep significance behind each phrase of the book. In many (if not most) cases, the phrases actually mean exactly what they say. Sun Tzu was not saying that war is a political act when he said, “War is a matter of vital importance to the State”—reading the rest of the quote makes it quite apparent he was simply saying war is important and must be studied.¹¹ That does not need tortured interpretation to be significant.

It is commonplace to acknowledge that Sun Tzu advocated deception and winning without fighting. For example, he wrote, “For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.” Sun Tzu has become the intellectual father of a

school of warfare that advocates winning by maneuver or by psychologically dislocating the opponent. The ancient Chinese soldier might not be as pleased about that paternity as his advocates believe. Sun Tzu expended lots of effort explaining how to maneuver and fight. In some respects, he is very like Jomini (of all people). For example, Sun Tzu advocates attacking portions of the enemy with your whole force: “If I am able to determine the enemy’s dispositions while at the same time I conceal my own, then I can concentrate and he must divide. And if I concentrate while he divides, I can use my entire strength to attack a fraction of his.” Sun Tzu thought that the defense was the stronger form of warfare but that offensive action was necessary for victory. “Invincibility lies in the defence [*sic*]; the possibility of victory in the attack. . . . One defends when his strength is inadequate; he attacks when it is abundant.” He sometimes did incomplete analysis and thus provided advice that might be wrong depending on the circumstances. For example, Sun Tzu said, “To be certain to take what you attack is to attack a place the enemy does not protect.” It is easy to use that quote as an advocacy for Liddell Hart’s indirect approach. That is, attack where the enemy does not expect. The problem is that there is almost always a reason why the enemy does not defend a place, and it usually has to do with the limited value of that place. However, Sun Tzu was not setting up Hart. The line after the original quote changes the meaning of the entire passage: “To be certain to hold what you defend is to defend a place the enemy does not attack.”¹² We now have a statement on chance and certainty in war—that is, the only certain way to take a place is if the enemy is not there—not advice on the indirect approach. Nevertheless, Sun Tzu is known as the advocate of deception, surprise, intelligence, and maneuver to win without fighting.

Clausewitz

Clausewitz is generally more useful for his philosophical musings than his “how to” strategic advice. In that arena, much of what he preached was either commonplace or nineteenth century specific. The exceptions are three. First was his advocacy of seeking battle. This obviously sets him apart from Sun Tzu and many others, and Clausewitz is quite specific about his expectations of decisive battle. He wrote,

. . . the importance of the victory is chiefly determined by the vigor with which the immediate pursuit is carried out. In other words, pursuit makes up the second act of the victory and in many cases is more important than the first. Strategy at this point draws near to tactics in order to receive the completed assignment from it; and its first exercise of authority is to demand that the victory should really be complete.¹³

Next, Clausewitz originated the concept of attacking what he called the enemy’s center of gravity. The center of gravity comes from the characteristics of the belligerents and is “the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends. That is the point against which all our energies should be directed.”¹⁴ He offered several possibilities but decided that attacking the enemy’s army was usually the best way to start a campaign, followed by seizing his capital and attacking his alliances. The concept, which the U.S. military adopted almost verbatim until the most recent doctrinal publications, has caused interminable debate both in the active force and the schoolhouses. Tactically the U.S. military has always identified and attacked vulnerabilities—now, some dead Prussian is telling us that strategically we should attack strengths (for whatever else one might believe, it is clear that a center of gravity is a strength not a weakness). We thus see attempts to mix the two concepts and essentially do both.

Clausewitz’s final significant “how to” idea is the concept of the culminating point. “There are strategic attacks that have led directly to peace, but these are the minority. Most of them only lead up to the point where their remaining strength is just enough to maintain a defense and wait for peace. Beyond that point, the scale turns and the reaction follows with a small force that is usually much stronger than that of the

original attack. This is what we mean by the culminating point of the attack.”¹⁵ Although Clausewitz only discusses culmination in terms of the attack (his later discussion of the culminating point of victory is a different concept), modern U.S. doctrine also identifies a culminating point for the defense—essentially a breaking point.

Jomini

Jomini also gave modern U.S. doctrine several terms. He is much more specific in his “how to” analysis than Clausewitz. Jomini believed war was a science, and consequently one could discover by careful study rules about how it should be conducted. He offered the results of his study. Jomini is often criticized for being geometric—although such a depiction overlooks some aspects of his work, it is not totally unfair. Jomini was specific about how to plan a campaign. First one selected the theater of war. Next, he determined the decisive points in the theater. Selection of bases and zones of operation followed. Then one designated the objective point. The line of operations was then the line from the base through the decisive points to the objective point. Thus, the great principle of war “which must be followed in all good combinations” was contained in four maxims:

1. To throw by strategic movements the mass of an army, successively, upon the decisive points of a theater of war, and also upon the communications of the enemy as much as possible without compromising one’s own.
2. To maneuver to engage fractions of the hostile army with the bulk of one’s forces.
3. On the battlefield, to throw the mass of the forces upon the decisive point, or upon that portion of the hostile line which it is of first importance to overthrow.
4. To so arrange that these masses shall not only be thrown upon the decisive point, but that they shall engage at the proper time and with energy.¹⁶

Delbrück

Attrition, exhaustion, and annihilation are standard strategic categories, although *Joint Pub 1-02* does not mention them. The late nineteenth century German military historian Hans Delbrück made the distinction between exhaustion and annihilation. Attrition is sometimes used synonymously with exhaustion, but they are actually different. Annihilation seeks political victory through the complete destruction (often in a single battle or short campaign) of the enemy armed forces. Attrition seeks victory through the gradual destruction (by a long campaign or series of campaigns) of the enemy’s armed forces. Exhaustion seeks to erode the will and resources of the enemy nation/state rather than the armed forces. Recently, Russell Weigley has opined that, at least in his classic book, *The American Way of War*, he should have replaced attrition with erosion as a characterization of U.S. strategy. He believes the term is less confusing and actually better portrays certain aspects of American strategy. Erosion would be closer in meaning to exhaustion than attrition, except that—and this is only a tentative interpretation of Weigley’s brief and incomplete explanation of the concept—it would aim more directly at the political or governmental will than at popular support or resources.¹⁷ It is not clear how the term erosion fits into the paradigm, but it would seem to be either a new category or a sub-set of exhaustion. Regardless, Professor Weigley’s modification to the traditional categories of attrition, exhaustion, and annihilation is neither widely known nor accepted.

Hart

B. H. Liddell Hart had his own approach to strategy that has become famous as the indirect approach.

Strategy has not to overcome resistance, except from nature. *Its purpose is to diminish the possibility of resistance*, and it seeks to fulfill this purpose by exploiting the elements of *movement* and *surprise*. . . . Although strategy may aim more at exploiting movement than at exploiting surprise, or conversely, the two elements react on each other. Movement generates surprise, and surprise gives impetus to movement.¹⁸

Just as the military means is only one of the means of grand strategy—one of the instruments in the surgeon's case—so battle is only one of the means to the end of strategy. If the conditions are suitable, it is usually the quickest in effect, but if the conditions are unfavorable it is folly to use it. . . . His [a military strategist's] responsibility is to seek it [a military decision] under the most advantageous circumstances in order to produce the most profitable results. Hence *his true aim is not so much to seek battle as to seek a strategic situation so advantageous that if it does not of itself produce the decision, its continuation by a battle is sure to achieve this*. In other words, dislocation is the aim of strategy.¹⁹

Dislocation is produced physically by forcing the enemy to change fronts or threatening his forces or lines of communication. It is also achieved psychologically in the enemy commander's mind as a result of the physical dislocation. "In studying the physical aspect, we must never lose sight of the psychological, and only when both are combined is the strategy truly an indirect approach, calculated to dislocate the opponent's balance." Although Hart would be appalled at being compared with Clausewitz, this statement is similar to the Prussian's comment, "Military activity is never directed against material force alone; it is always aimed simultaneously at the moral forces which give it life, and the two cannot be separated."²⁰

Hart and his indirect approach have won a wide following among strategists. However, the issue of direct versus indirect is actually a smoke screen. The indirect approach is a tactical concept elevated to the strategic level, and it loses some of its validity in the transition. Strategically, it is sometimes (if not often) advantageous to take a direct approach. This is particularly true in cases when the contending parties have disproportionate power—that is, when one side possesses overwhelming force. In such cases, the stronger side invariably benefits from direct action. The concept of the indirect approach is also a downright silly notion when talking about simultaneous operations across the spectrum of conflict. Advocates will cry that I have missed the point. Hart seeks an indirect approach only because what he really wants is the mental dislocation it produces. I would counter that his real point was the avoidance of battle and winning without fighting. Surprise, which Hart acknowledges is how an indirect approach produces mental dislocation, is a tremendous advantage; however, designing strategies purely or even primarily to achieve surprise overlooks the rest of the equation—surprise to do what? Surprise for what purpose? If a strategist can accomplish his purpose in a direct manner, it might be more desirable than contending with the disadvantages inherent in achieving surprise. Nevertheless, the indirect approach is a recognized strategic tool that has tremendous utility if not elevated to a dogma.

Howard

Michael Howard postulated a strategic paradigm based on deterrence, compellence, and reassurance. Military power can deter other states from doing something, or it can compel them to do something. "Reassurance provides a general sense of security that is not specific to any particular threat or scenario." Pax Britannia is the best example. The British navy provided world-wide security through its control of the seas. That security translated into general peace.²¹ Howard proposes these as the broad categories of the

ways in which military force can be used. Although deterrence and compellence are widely accepted concepts, the addition of reassurance to create a general paradigm is not widely known or accepted.

Luttwack

Edward Luttwack talks about attrition and maneuver as the forms of strategy. For Luttwack, attrition is the application of superior firepower and material strength to eventually destroy the enemy's entire force unless he surrenders or retreats. The enemy is nothing more than a target array to be serviced by industrial methods. The opposite of attrition warfare is relational maneuver—"action related to the specifics of the objective." The goal of relational maneuver, instead of physically destroying the enemy as in attrition, is to incapacitate his systems. Those systems might be the enemy's command and control or his fielded forces or even his doctrine or perhaps the spatial deployment of his force, as in the penetration of a linear position. In some cases it might entail the attack of actual technical systems—Luttwack uses deception of radar rather than its deception or jamming to illustrate the final category.²²

Instead of seeking out the enemy's concentration of strength, since that is where the targets are to be found in bulk, the starting point of relational maneuver is the avoidance of the enemy's strengths, followed by the application of some selective superiority against presumed enemy weaknesses, physical or psychological, technical or organizational.²³

Luttwack recognizes that neither attrition nor relational maneuver are ever employed alone—there is always some mix of the two even if one or the other is decidedly dominant. Relational maneuver is more difficult to execute than attrition, although it can produce better results more quickly. Conversely, relational maneuver can fail completely if the force applied is too weak to do the task, or it encounters unexpected resistance. Relational maneuver does not usually allow "free substitution of quantity for quality." There is always a basic quality floor beneath which one cannot safely pass. Only after that floor has been exceeded will quantity substitutions be possible.²⁴

Luttwack also says that strategy is paradoxical.

The large claim I advance here is that strategy does not merely entail this or that paradoxical proposition, contradictory and yet recognized as valid, but rather that *the entire realm of strategy is pervaded by a paradoxical logic of its own*, standing against the ordinary linear logic by which we live in all other spheres of life (except for warlike games, of course).

He believes paradoxical logic pervades the five levels (technical, tactical, operational, theater strategic, and grand strategic) and two dimensions (vertical across levels and horizontal in levels) of warfare.²⁵

At the most basic level, Luttwack demonstrates both the presence and the desirability of choices in war that defy peacetime logic. His base example is the choice of an approach road to an objective. The alternatives are a wide, straight, well-surfaced road and a narrow, winding, poorly-surfaced road. "Only in the conflictual realm of strategy would the choice arise at all, for it is only if combat is possible that the bad road can be good *precisely because it is bad* and may therefore be less strongly held or even left unguarded by the enemy." Thus, commanders make choices contrary to normal logic because they produce valuable advantages—advantages arising directly from the nature of war. Like Clausewitz, Luttwack believes the competitive aspect of war, that it is always a competition between active opponents, is one of the defining aspects of war. "On the contrary, the paradoxical preference for inconvenient times and directions, preparations visibly and deliberately incomplete, approaches seemly too dangerous, for combat at night and in bad weather, is a common aspect of tactical ingenuity—and for a reason that derives from the essential nature of war."²⁶ Commanders make paradoxical choices primarily to gain surprise and thus reduce the risk

of combat.

To have the advantage of an enemy who cannot react because he is surprised and unready, or at least who cannot react promptly and in full force, all sorts of paradoxical choices may be justified. . . . Surprise can now be recognized for what it is: not merely one factor of advantage in warfare among many others, but rather the suspension, if only briefly, if only partially, of the entire predicament of strategy, even as the struggle continues. Without a reacting enemy, or rather according to the extent and degree that surprise is achieved, the conduct of war becomes mere administration.²⁷

Gaining surprise, therefore, becomes one of the key objectives of strategy. In fact, whole schools of strategy (Luttwack refers specifically to Hart's indirect approach) have been founded on the principle of surprise. The problem is that paradoxical choices—those necessary to achieve surprise—are never free or even necessarily safe because every “paradoxical choice made for the sake of surprise must have its cost, manifest in some loss of strength that would otherwise be available.” The choice itself may make execution more difficult (it is harder to fight at night); secrecy can inhibit preparations and is almost never total; deception may contain relatively cost-free elements (like false information leaked to the enemy) but as it becomes more sophisticated, complex, and convincing, it soaks up resources (units conducting feints are not available at the main point of contact). At the extreme, one could expend so much force gaining surprise that insufficient combat power remained for the real fight.²⁸

Obviously the paradoxical course of “least expectation” must stop short of self-defeating extremes, but beyond that the decision is a matter of calculations neither safe nor precise. Although the loss of strength potentially available is certain, success in achieving surprise can only be hoped for; and although the cost can usually be tightly calculated, the benefit must remain a matter of speculation until the deed is done.²⁹

All of this, of course, is complicated by friction, which Luttwack calls organizational risk. Also, acting paradoxically can become predictable. Thus, by 1982 in Lebanon the Israelis had established such a reputation for paradoxical action that they were unable to achieve surprise until they broke their established paradigm and conducted the obvious frontal attack down the Bekka Valley. Luttwack recognizes that some situations call for straightforward, logical solutions. “If the enemy is so weakened that his forces are best treated as a passive array of targets that might as well be inanimate, the normal linear logic of industrial production, with all the derived criteria of productive efficiency, is fully valid, and the paradoxical logic of strategy is irrelevant.”³⁰

While he has some interesting and valid points, especially in the details, Luttwack's insistence on the paradoxical nature of war is too broad a generalization. There is much that is paradoxical in warfare; however, if war were completely paradoxical as Luttwack asserts (his exceptions are too trivial to be significant), war would not yield to study. In fact, much of warfare—including its paradox—is very logical. In a sense, Luttwack's argument proves that proposition and refutes itself.

Van Creveld

Martin van Creveld's *The Transformation of War* is, according at least to the cover, “The most radical reinterpretation of armed conflict since Clausewitz.” He represents a segment of modern scholars that believe Clausewitz no longer explains why how, or by whom wars are fought. To Van Creveld, war is no longer a rational political act conducted among states—if it ever was. He points out that warfare waged by non-state actors dominated conflict in 1991 rather than the organized, political, interstate warfare between great powers that the international community seemed to expect (and Clausewitz seemed to predict). War is no longer fought by the entities we always assumed fought wars. The combatants in modern wars no longer

fight for the reasons we always believed. Finally, they do not fight in the manner we always accepted as standard.³¹

Modern war takes many forms—the Clausewitzian trinitarian form of war being one, but by no means the dominant one, of them. For Van Creveld, Clausewitz does not apply in any case that does not involve exclusively state-on-state warfare. Since he sees a resurgence of “Low-Intensity Conflict,” he believes war will be dominated by non-state actors. “We are entering an era, not of peaceful economic competition between trading blocks, but of warfare between ethnic and religious groups.” Current fielded military forces are irrelevant to the tasks they will likely face. Should the states in question fail to recognize the changed reality, they will first become incapable of wielding appropriate force at all and eventually cease to exist as recognizable states.³²

The nature of the participants dictates the nature of the reasons they fight. Because the participants are not states, they will not be fighting for state-like reasons. This follows logically from Van Creveld’s assertion that politics applies only to states—not a more broadly defined interest in a more broadly defined community. Non-state actors fight wars for abstract concepts like justice or religion. Frequently, groups feel their existence is threatened and lash out violently in response. In any case, reasons are highly individualistic and do not yield easily to analysis—especially analysis based on the inappropriate model of the Clausewitzian universe.³³

Finally, Van Creveld believes that Clausewitz did not understand how wars are fought—at least his assertion that they would tend naturally toward totality is wrong. He cites international law and convention, among other factors, as major inhibitors on the drift to totality in state-on-state war. More significant is his critique of strategy. Like Luttwak, Van Creveld sees strategy as paradoxical. He believes pairs of paradoxes define strategy. If the object of war is to beat our opponent’s force with our own, then we must design maneuvers to pit strength against weakness. Because war is competitive, our enemy is doing the same thing, and we must conceal or protect our weakness from the opponent’s strength. Thus, the essence of strategy is “. . . the ability to feint, deceive, and mislead.” Eventually one can work so hard on concealing that he and his side may be deceived—where the distinction between feint and main effort is unclear. Van Creveld also discusses the paradox in time and space, using the same argument as Luttwak that the shortest distance between two points may not be the straight line. Other paradoxes include that between concentration and dispersion (concentration is necessary to apply power, but concentration increases the chance of discovery) and between effectiveness and efficiency (the more economical, streamlined, or efficient a military organization becomes, the more vulnerable it is).³⁴

Perhaps uniquely in the field of strategic theory, Martin van Creveld has provided a critique of his own thesis. In a chapter of a book published in 2003, Van Creveld finds, not surprisingly, that in balance his earlier work, written in 1988-89, holds up very well. The Gulf War was an aberration—the outcome of which was almost preordained. Otherwise, “. . . the main thesis of *The Transformation of War*, namely that major armed conflict between major powers is on the way out, seems to have been borne out during the ten years since the book’s publication.” Conversely, non-trinitarian wars are on the rise and conventional forces do not seem able to bring them to satisfactory closure. “. . . [T]he prediction that history is witnessing a major shift from trinitarian to non-trinitarian war seems to have fulfilled itself and is still fulfilling itself on an almost daily basis.” He believes information warfare might be a wild card that could disrupt his predictions; however, on balance he sees information as advantageous to (or at least an equalizing factor for) non-state actors, and hence a confirmation of the trend toward non-trinitarianism. Thus, Van Creveld sticks with his criticism of Clausewitz and essentially every element of his original thesis.³⁵

Miscellaneous Alternatives

There are also whole categories we can only classify as miscellaneous, alternative, possibly-strategic concepts:

Sequential, Simultaneous, and Cumulative

This paradigm attempts to make distinctions between strategies based on whether the strategist is attacking objectives progressively, simultaneously, or in essentially random order. Thus, a typical sequential campaign would involve actions to gain control of the air, followed by efforts to defeat the enemy's fielded forces, and culminating in the attack or occupation of political objectives. A simultaneous campaign would include near-simultaneous attacks on each of those target sets. A cumulative strategy produces results not by any single action or sequence of actions but by the cumulative effect of numerous actions over time. A commerce raiding strategy is a classic example. The loss of a single ship is not especially significant; there is no need to sink ships in any order; while specific types of ships (like tankers) might be more valuable than others, the loss of any ship contributes directly to victory. The effectiveness of the strategy comes from cumulative losses over time.

Denial, Punishment, and Coercion

These are proposed replacements for attrition, exhaustion, and annihilation. They actually describe the ends of strategy (or perhaps a limited set of ways) rather than a complete strategic concept. Their utility is limited, and their acceptance as a group by the strategic community is minimal at best. Coercion, of course, is a recognized strategic concept on its own; it is just not commonly grouped with denial and punishment as paradigm.

Jones

Historian Archer Jones has a unique approach to strategy.

The object for military strategy used herein is the depletion of the military force of an adversary. The definition of political-military strategy, a companion term, is the use of military force to attain political or related objectives directly, rather than by depleting an adversary's military force. Of course, military strategy usually endeavored to implement political or comparable objectives but sought to attain them indirectly, by depleting the hostile military force sufficiently to gain an ascendancy adequate to attain the war's political goals.³⁶

Jones does not use attrition because of its association with a particular form of military strategy. Instead, he asserts that military force can achieve its objective of depleting the enemy through one of two methods. Combat strategies deplete the enemy by directly destroying his force in the field. Logistic strategies deprive the opponent of supplies, forces, weapons, recruits, or other resources. Either of these strategies can be executed in one of two ways. One can use "a transitory presence in hostile territory to make a destructive incursion," which Jones labels a raiding strategy, or one can conquer and permanently occupy significant segments of enemy territory, which he calls a persisting strategy. The two pairs—combat and logistics and raiding and persisting—define comprehensive strategy.³⁷

Jones then puts the factors into a matrix and uses them for all kinds of warfare—air, land, and sea. Air war, however, can really only be raiding because of the nature of the medium. This is a military only, ways only approach to strategy that works best as Jones applies it—in retrospect to analyze historical campaigns. The separation of a purely political strategy from military strategy based on whether or not the aim is depleting the enemy force is awkward to say the least. Jones has an interesting concept of "political attrition." This means that victory in battle raises morale and engenders optimism about winning in a reasonable time with acceptable casualties. Conversely, defeat in battle makes victory look less certain,

further away in time, and attainable only at high cost. He does not think that political attrition necessarily works in reverse—that is, you cannot store up good will during good times to tide you over during the bad times. (Although presumably you would start the bad times at a higher overall level of morale.) Elsewhere, Jones compares popular will to win with the classic economic supply and demand theory of elastic and inelastic demand.³⁸ That is a much less satisfying explanation. While perhaps of little use to practical strategists, Archer Jones' concepts are creative and not completely without merit.

Decapitation

An attractive recent suggestion is a strategy of decapitation where one targets specifically and selectively the enemy leader or at least a fairly limited set of upper-echelon leaders. Saddam Hussein is a favorite object of this approach, although recent strategic treatises like the *Quadrennial Defense Review* that used regime change as an evaluative factor, hint at a widening acceptance of the concept. A primary assumption, generally asserted without proof, is that the current leader (perhaps aided by a small group of accomplices) is the whole cause of the international dispute. A corollary assumption is that eliminating the current evil leadership will result in its replacement by a regime willing to grant the concessions demanded by the opposing state or coalition. There are several problems with this approach—most related to the validity of the assumptions. First, the assumption that the common people of a country are good and could not possibly support the policies of their evil ruler is (as a minimum) unproven in most cases and palpably false in many. Thus, decapitation will not solve the problem. Second, a potential follow-on regime can be either better than, about the same as, or worse than the current leadership. Hence, the odds of achieving one's policy objectives by decapitation are actually fairly poor. The old saw about contending with the devil one knows may be worn, but that does not make it any less worthwhile advice.

Boyd

U.S. Air Force Colonel John R. Boyd talks about the “OODA loop”—that is, the decision cycle of observation, orientation, decision, and action. The concept is derived from a fighter pilot in a dogfight. Like the pilot, a strategist wins by out-thinking and out-maneuvering his opponent; by the time the opponent decides what to do and initiates action, it is too late since you have already anticipated and countered his move or made a countermove that makes his action meaningless. One accomplishes this by possessing sufficient agility to be able, both mentally and physically, to act a step or more ahead of the enemy. Thus, the successful strategist always works inside his enemy's decision cycle.³⁹ This theory describes a way, and really is a new and unnecessarily complicated rephrasing of the ancient concept of the initiative. Initiative is not critical or essential, and alone it is not decisive. Robert E. Lee had tactical, operational, and even strategic initiative at Gettysburg and lost tactically, operationally, and strategically. However, initiative is a tremendous advantage—if Boyd's paradigm makes it more clear or obvious to the strategist, it has provided a service.

Warden

Another U.S. Air Force Colonel, John A. Warden III, translated his targeteering experience into a strategic theory, thus elevating the tactical process of allocating aircraft sorties to specific targets to a strategic theory. Warden views the enemy as a target array in five strategic rings; the innermost and most important is leadership. One can win by striking that inner ring so frequently and violently that the enemy is essentially paralyzed and never able to mount an effective defense. It is unnecessary to take on the outer and much more difficult target rings like the enemy's armed forces, although modern advances like stealth technology make simultaneous attack of the entire target array possible (instead of the traditional sequential attacks where one array had to be neutralized before proceeding to the next).⁴⁰ This is often considered an air power theory—and Warden uses it to push the decisiveness of air power—but the conceptual approach

has broader application. Its major drawback as a general theory of strategy is that it works best (if not exclusively) when one side has or can quickly gain total dominance of its opponent's airspace.

Underdog Strategies

There are also a number of alternative strategies that seem to be intended specifically for, or at least be most appropriate for, weaker powers or underdogs.

Fabian

Fabian strategies and variants: Quintus Fabius Maximus Verrucosus was a Roman general during the Second Punic War. He advocated avoiding open battle because he was convinced the Romans would lose, which they proceeded to do when they abandoned his strategy. Thus, Fabian strategy is a strategy in which one side intentionally avoids large-scale battle for fear of the outcome. Victory depends on wearing down (attriting) one's opponent over time—usually by an unrelenting campaign of skirmishes between detachments. Somewhat akin to a Fabian strategy is a strategy of survival. In that case, however, the weaker power does not necessarily avoid battle. Instead, one reacts to his opponent's moves rather than making an effort to seize the initiative. The object is to survive rather than to win in the classic sense—hopefully, sheer survival achieves (or perhaps comprises) one's political aim. This is a favorite alternative strategy of modern critics for the Confederate States of America. Scorched earth strategies are another variant of the basic Fabian strategy. The concept is to withdraw slowly before an enemy while devastating the countryside over which he must advance so he cannot subsist his force on your terrain. Attrition will eventually halt the attack—it will reach what Clausewitz called a culminating point—and the retreating side can safely assume the offensive. This is actually the addition of a tactical technique to the basic Fabian strategy and not a major new school of strategy.

There is a whole subset of doctrine under the general heading of strategies for the weak that advocates guerrilla warfare, insurgency, and/or terrorism.

Mao

Mao Zedong developed the most famous theory of insurgency warfare. His concepts, designed initially for the Chinese fight against the Japanese in World War II, have been expanded and adapted by himself and others to become a general theory of revolutionary warfare. Mao emphasizes the political nature of war and the reliance of the army on the civilian population, especially the Chinese peasant population. He advocated a protracted war against the Japanese; victory would come in time through attrition. He believed the Chinese should avoid large battles except in the rare instances when they had the advantage. Guerrillas should normally operate dispersed across the countryside and concentrate only to attack. Because the Chinese had a regular army contending with the Japanese, Mao had to pay particular attention to how guerrilla and regular operations complemented each other. He postulated a progressive campaign that would move slowly and deliberately from a stage when the Chinese were on the strategic defensive through a period of strategic stalemate to the final stage when Chinese forces assumed the strategic offensive. The ratio of forces and their tactical activities in each stage reflected the strategic realities of the environment. Thus, guerrilla forces and tactics dominated the phase of the strategic defensive. During the strategic stalemate, mobile and guerrilla warfare would compliment each other, and guerrilla and regular forces would reach approximate equilibrium (largely by guerrilla forces combining and training into progressively larger regular units). Mobile warfare conducted by regular units would dominate the period of strategic offensive. Although guerrilla units would never completely disappear, the regular forces would achieve the final victory.⁴¹ Mao has had an enormous impact on the field of revolutionary warfare theory.

Guevara

Ernesto “Che” Guevara de la Serna based his theory of revolutionary warfare on the Cuban model. He offered a definition of strategy that highlighted his variation of the basic guerrilla theme. “In guerrilla terminology, strategy means the analysis of the objectives we wish to attain. First, determine how the enemy will operate, his manpower, mobility, popular support, weapons, and leadership. Then plan a strategy to best confront these factors, always keeping in mind that the final objective is to destroy the enemy army.” To Che, the major lessons of the Cuban Revolution were that guerrillas could defeat regular armies; that it was unnecessary to wait for all the preconditions to be met before beginning the fight—the insurrection itself would produce them; and that the countryside was the arena for conflict in underdeveloped Latin America. Gradual progress through the Maoist stages of revolution was unnecessary—the guerrilla effort could not only establish the political preconditions of revolution but also win the war on its own. Parties, doctrine, theories, and even political causes are unimportant. The armed insurgency will eventually produce them all.⁴² That is incredibly naive and even dangerous as an insurgent strategic concept, but Che became very well-known pursuing it.

Terrorism

Although there is no outstanding single theorist of terrorism, it is not a new strategic concept. The theory behind terrorism is fairly straightforward. A weak, usually non-governmental actor uses random violence, often directed against civilian targets, to produce terror. The aim is to make life so uncertain and miserable that the state against which the terror is directed concedes whatever political, social, economic, environmental, or theological point the terrorist pursues. The technique has not proven particularly effective in changing important policies in even marginally effective states. It is, however, comparatively cheap, easy to conceptualize and execute, requires minimal training, is relatively safe since competent terrorist groups are extremely difficult to eradicate, and is demonstrably effective in gaining the terrorist publicity for himself and his cause.

Strategic Advice

There are also numerous advice books that give leaders and decisionmakers more or less specific advice about what to do or how to do it without necessarily offering a comprehensive strategic paradigm. Examples include Niccolo Machiavelli’s *The Art of War*, *The Discourses*, and *The Prince*, written to influence sixteenth century Florentine leaders and Frederick the Great’s *Instructions for His Generals*, the title of which explains its intent. Alternatively, there are collections of military advice culled from the writings of great soldiers like *The Military Maxims of Napoleon*. As historian David Chandler noted in his introduction to a recent reprint of that work, “The practical value of military maxims can be debatable. . . . Consequently the collecting of his [Napoleon’s] *obiter dicta* into any kind of military rule-book for future generations to apply is a process fraught with perils and pitfalls.” In a more modern vein, Michele A. Flournoy, ed., *QDR 2001: Strategy-Driven Choices for America’s Security*, is essentially an advice book that presents a specific strategic solution without developing an overarching strategic theory.⁴³ Advice books are often beneficial; however, their generally narrow focus and frequent bumper sticker quality limit that utility.

Deterrence

During the Cold War the nuclear weapons field developed its own set of specific strategies based on deterrence theory. Deterrence theory itself is a useful strategic concept. Conversely, concepts like mutual assured destruction, counterforce or countervalue targeting, launch on warning, and first strike versus

retaliation are terms of nuclear art that will retain some relevance as long as major nations maintain large nuclear stockpiles, but they no longer dominate the strategic debate as they once did. According to the Department of Defense, deterrence is “the prevention from action by fear of the consequences.”⁴⁴ It is altogether different from compellence where one is attempting to make another party do something. Theoretically, one party can deter another either by threat of punishment or by denial. Threat of punishment implies performing an act will evoke a response so undesirable that the actor decides against acting. Deterrence by denial seeks to avert an action by convincing the actor that he cannot achieve his purpose. In either case deterrence theory assumes rational decisionmakers with similar value systems. To be deterred, one must be convinced that his adversary possesses both the capability to punish or deny and the will to use that capability. Demonstrating the effectiveness of deterrence is difficult, since it involves proving the absence of something resulted from a specific cause; however, politicians and strategists generally agree that nuclear deterrence worked during the Cold War. It is not as clear that conventional deterrence works, although that concept has numerous advocates and is deeply embedded in modern joint doctrine.

Seapower

Mahan

There are also schools of single service strategies devoted to sea power or airpower. In the sea power arena, the most famous strategic theorists are Alfred Thayer Mahan and Julian S. Corbett. American naval officer Mahan wrote several books and articles around the turn of the twentieth century advocating sea power. Perhaps the most famous was *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1783*. Mahan developed a set of criteria that he believed facilitated sea power, but his major contribution was in the realm of the exercise of that capability through what he called command of the sea. To Mahan, oceans were highways of commerce. Navies existed to protect their nation’s commerce and interrupt that of their enemy. The way to do both was to gain command of the sea.⁴⁵ His study of history convinced Mahan that the powerful maritime nations had dominated history, and specifically that England had parlayed its command of the sea into world dominance. At the grand strategic level Mahan believed that countries with the proper prerequisites should pursue sea power (and especially naval power) as the key to prosperity. For Mahan, the essence of naval strategy was to mass one’s navy, seek out the enemy navy, and destroy it in a decisive naval battle. With the enemy’s navy at the bottom of the ocean—that is, with command of the sea—your merchantmen were free to sail where they pleased while the enemy’s merchantmen were either confined to port or subject to capture. Diversion of naval power to subsidiary tasks like commerce raiding (a favorite U.S. naval strategy in the early years of the republic) was a waste of resources. The key to Mahanian naval warfare was thus the concentrated fleet of major combatants that would fight for and hopefully win command of the sea. Ideally, that fleet would have global reach, which required secure bases for refueling conveniently located worldwide. Although Mahan’s theories actively supported his political agenda of navalism and imperialism, they contained enough pure and original thought to survive both the author and his age.

Corbett

British author Julian S. Corbett had a different interpretation of naval warfare. A contemporary of Mahan, Corbett saw British success not so much as a result of dominance of the sea as from its ability to effectively wield what we call today all the elements of national power. Corbett differentiated between maritime power and strategy and naval power and strategy. Maritime strategy encompassed all the aspects of sea power—military, commercial, political, etc. Naval strategy dealt specifically with the actions and maneuvers of the fleet. Like Mahan, Corbett saw oceans as highways of commerce and understood their

importance. However, he emphasized not the uniqueness of sea power but its relationship with other elements of power. For Corbett, the importance of navies was not their ability to gain command of the sea but their ability to effect events on land. He believed that navies rarely won wars on their own—they often made it possible for armies to do so. The navy's role was thus to protect the homeland while isolating and facilitating the insertion of ground forces into the overseas objective area. Neither command of the sea nor decisive naval battle were necessarily required to accomplish either of those tasks. Although Corbett admitted that winning the decisive naval clash remained the supreme function of a fleet, he believed there were times when that was neither necessary nor desirable.⁴⁶ His theories most closely approximate current U.S. naval doctrine.

Jeune Ecolé

Another school of sea power popular on the continent in the early 1880s was that of *Jeune Ecolé*. Its primary advocate was Admiral Théophile Aube of the French Navy. Unlike the theories of either Mahan or Corbett, which were intended for major naval powers, the *Jeune Ecolé* is a classic small navy strategy. Advocates claimed that a nation did not have to command the sea to use it. In fact, modern technology made gaining command of the sea impossible. And one certainly did not have to have a large fleet of capital ships or win a big fleet battle. Rather than capital ships, one could rely on torpedo boats and cruisers (later versions would emphasize submarines). The naval strategist could either use those smaller vessels against the enemy's fleet in specific situations like countering an amphibious invasion or more commonly against his commerce (to deny him the value of commanding the sea). Either use could be decisive without the expense of building and maintaining a large fleet or the dangers inherent in a major naval battle.⁴⁷ The *Jeune Ecolé* was an asymmetric naval strategy. It had a brief spurt of popularity and faded. Its advocates probably chuckled knowingly during World Wars I and II as submarines executed their pet theory without the benefit of a name other than unrestricted submarine warfare.

Airpower

Douhet

The basis of classic airpower theory—although paternity is debatable—is *The Command of the Air* published first in 1921 by Italian general and author, Giulio Douhet. Reacting to the horrors he saw in the First World War, Douhet became an advocate of airpower. He believed that the airplane could restore decisiveness that ground combat seemed incapable of achieving. It could fly over the ground battlefield to directly attack the enemy's will. Because of technical problems with detection and interception, stopping an air raid would be impossible. Big bombers with a mix of high explosive, incendiary, and poison gas weapons could target enemy cities. Civilian populations, which were the key to modern warfare, would be unable to stand such bombardment and would soon force their governments to surrender. Although civilian casualties might be high, this would be a more humane method of warfare than prolonged ground combat.

There were a few strategic dicta beyond that. First, a prerequisite for success was command of the air—a theory closely related to command of the sea. Command of the air granted one side the ability to fly where and when it desired while the enemy was unable to fly. Next, because the airplane was an offensive weapon, one gained command of the air by strategic bombardment—ideally catching the enemy's air force on the ground. There was no need for anti-aircraft artillery or interceptors. In fact, resources devoted to air defense or any type of auxiliary aircraft (anything that was not a large bomber) were wasted.⁴⁸ Douhet captured the imagination of early airmen with his vision of decisiveness through command of the air. Generations of later airpower enthusiasts continue to seek to fulfill his prophecy. Nuclear weapons were supposed to have fixed

the technological shortfalls that prevented airpower alone from winning World War II. That they were unusable made little difference. Precision guided munitions are the current mantra of the airpower enthusiast—they have finally made decisive air attack possible. There may actually be something to the precision guided munitions claim; only time will tell. Douhet's assertion of the futility of air defense proved wrong when radar made locating aircraft possible and fighters became capable of catching and shooting down big bombers. Douhet still has a major influence on airpower doctrine and is the father of all modern airpower theory.

Other Airpower Theories

Douhet may have been the father of airpower theory, but others followed him quickly. Most of the later airpower theorists worked on one or both of two primary issues that Douhet had first surfaced: the most efficient way to organize airpower, a debate generally about an independent air force, or the proper mix of fighters, bombers, and ground-attack aircraft. The debate about separate air forces was important but not a true strategic issue. Conversely, the issue of proper mix of aircraft got directly to the issue of the proper role of airpower. The early theorists presented a variety of views on the issue. William "Billy" Mitchell saw America's strategic problem as one of defense against sea-borne attack. A Douhet-like offensive air strategy was inappropriate. He also believed that aerial combat could provide effective defense against air attack. Thus he developed a strategy based on a mix of fighters and bombers. In terms of both the necessity of command of the air and the potential strategic decisiveness of airpower, Mitchell agreed completely with Douhet.⁴⁹

Another early airpower theorist was British Wing Commander John C. "Jack" Slessor. Slessor served a tour as an instructor at the Army Staff College at Camberley. His book, *Air Power and Armies*, is a collection of his lectures at the War College. Slessor was a believer in strategic bombing, but perhaps because of his audience, he also emphasized the relationship between airpower and ground operations. The first requirement was gaining command of the air. Next, airpower could interdict the enemy's lines of communication. Using airpower in direct support of committed troops (the flying artillery/close air support concept) was ineffective. Slessor did believe that both aspects of the air campaign could occur simultaneously—one did not need complete air superiority to begin interdiction. From the standpoint of the ground commander, supporting airpower was most effective in facilitating a breakthrough, in the pursuit, and in the defense.⁵⁰

Slessor's advocacy of interdiction was not, however, the only way one might approach the air-ground support issue. German Chief of Air Staff during the interwar years Helmut Wilberg was a pioneer in direct air-ground support. He wrote some of and edited and approved all of Germany's immediate post-war studies on air force operations. Those studies concluded that strategic bombardment did not work, but that close air support did. Thus, it is not surprising that unlike either the British or the Americans, the Germans developed a tactical air force oriented on close support of ground forces. The opportunity for Germany to develop a strategic air force or doctrine occurred during the tenure of Walter Weaver as Chief of Air Staff between 1934 and 1936. Weaver was a bomber advocate of the Douhetian ilk. However, when he died in an airplane crash in 1936, the Luftwaffe canceled Weaver's pet four-engine bomber development program and slipped comfortably back into its ground support doctrine.

Conclusion

Which of these approaches to strategy is the best? What is the approved solution? The answer is simple—there is no best solution. All the above have utility for specific purposes but are lacking as

generalizations on strategy. They tend to be: 1) war-oriented rather than general (i.e., military strategy rather than strategy in general); 2) too narrowly focused even within the wartime realm (that is, they address military-specific strategies rather than more general grand strategies and in some cases represent single service approaches); and 3) even in the military arena, are too focused on one aspect of a multidimensional problem (i.e., they attempt to skip the basic ends-ways-means relationship and go straight to the solution). They are generally concerned with the how while ignoring the what or why. The exception is nuclear strategy that always aimed at deterrence and clearly linked ways with means to achieve that end and the broad concepts like attrition, exhaustion, and annihilation. So, why present all these strategic concepts if they do not work? Remember that although none of the paradigms works as a generalization, each has merit in specific circumstances. The strategist needs to be familiar with each so he can select the best approach or combination of approaches for the situation he faces. In that respect, strategy is much like carpentry. Both are skills intended for solving problems. The carpenter uses a saw to cut, a hammer to drive, sandpaper to smooth, and myriad other tools depending on the need—there is a tool for every job. Similarly, the strategist needs to have a wide assortment of tools in his kitbag and be able to select the proper one for the task at hand. There is an old saying that if the only tool one has is a hammer, all problems look like a nail. That is as bad a solution in strategy as it is in carpentry.

Notes - Chapter 7

1 Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, ed. and trans. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 177.

2 Antoine Henri Baron de Jomini, *The Art of War*, G. H. Mendell and W. P. Craighill, trans. (1862, reprint The West Point Military Library series, Thomas E. Griess and Jay Luvass, eds. (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1971), 62.

3 Henry Lee Scott, *Military Dictionary: Comprising Technical Definitions; Information on Raising and Keeping Troops; Actual Service, Including Makeshifts and Improved Materiel; and Law, Government, Regulation, and Administration Relating to Land Forces* (1861, reprint The West Point Military Library series, Thomas E. Griess and Jay Luvass, eds. (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1968), 574.

4 Basil H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd edition (1954, reprint New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 335-6.

5 Collin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17.

6 U.S. Department of Defense, The Joint Staff, *Joint Publication 1-02, DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (hereafter *Joint Pub 1-02*), available at http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp1_02.pdf, 507, 357; U.S. Department of Defense, The Joint Staff. *Joint Doctrine Encyclopedia*, available at www.dtic.mil/doctrine/joint_military_encyclopedia/htm, 731, 542.

7 Robert H. Dorff, “A Primer in Strategy Development” in *U.S. Army War College Guide to Strategy*, Joseph R. Cerami and James F. Holcomb, Jr., eds. (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2001), 11; Richard A. Chilcoat, “Strategic Art: The New Discipline for 21st Century Strategists” in *ibid.*, 205.

8 Gray, 28.

9 Dorff, 12.

10 Clausewitz, 88-9.

11 Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Samuel B. Griffith, trans. (1963, reprint New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 73, 63; Hart, 366.

12 *Ibid.*, 77, 98, 85, 96.

13 Clausewitz, 267.

- 14 Ibid., 595-6.
- 15 Ibid., 528.
- 16 Jomini, 61-3.
- 17 Russell F. Weigley, "Response to Brian McAllister Linn by Russell F. Weigley," *The Journal of Military History* (Vol. 66 No. 2, April 2002), 531.
- 18 Hart, 337.
- 19 Ibid., 339.
- 20 Ibid., 339-41; Clausewitz, 137.
- 21 Michael Howard, "Lessons of the Cold War," *Survival* (Vol. 36, No., 4, Winter 1994-5), 165.
- 22 Luttwak, 92-3.
- 23 Ibid., 94.
- 24 Ibid., 94-5.
- 25 Ibid., 4, 87-91.
- 26 Ibid., 7.
- 27 Ibid., 8.
- 28 Ibid., 9-10.
- 29 Ibid. 10.
- 30 Ibid., 10-15, 17.
- 31 Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), ix.
- 32 Ibid., 57, ix.
- 33 Ibid., 125-156.
- 34 Ibid., 63-94, 119, 120-220.
- 35 Martin van Creveld, "The Transformation of War Revisited," in Robert J. Bunker, ed. *Non-State Threats and Future Wars* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 5, 7-14.
- 36 Archer Jones, *Elements of Military Strategy: An Historical Approach* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), xiii.
- 37 Ibid., xiv.
- 38 Archer Jones, *Civil War Command and Strategy: The Process of Victory and Defeat* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 35; Jones, *Elements of Military Strategy*, 201-4.
- 39 Boyd never published his OODA loop theory. It is available in John R. Boyd, "A Discourse on Winning and Losing," unpublished paper Air University document number MU43947 (August 1987). The best summary is David S. Fadok, "John Boyd and John Warden: Airpower's Quest for Strategic Paralysis" in *The Paths of Heaven: The Evolution of Airpower Theory* (Maxwell AFB, Alabama: Air University Press, 1997), 141-3.
- 40 John A. Warden III, "The Enemy as a System," *Airpower Journal* (Spring 1995), 41-55.
- 41 Mao Tse-Tung, *On Protracted War* (Peking, China: Foreign Language Press, 1960); Mao Tse-Tung: An Anthology of His Writings, Anne Fremantle, ed. (New York: New American Library, 1972).
- 42 Ernesto "Che" Guevara de la Serna, *Che Guevara on Guerrilla Warfare*, Introduction by Maj. Harris-Clichy Peterson, USMCR (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), 10; Ernesto "Che" Guevara de la Serna, *Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1961), 15.

- 43 Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Art of War*, Ellis Farnsworth, trans. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1965); Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses of Niccolò Machiavelli*, Leslie J. Walker, trans. (Boston, MA: Routledge and Paul, 1975); Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Luigi Ricci, trans., revised by E. R. P. Vincent (New York: New American Library, 1952); Frederick the Great, *Instructions for his Generals*, Thomas R. Phillips, trans. (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The Stackpole Company, 1960); *The Military Maxims of Napoleon*, George C. D'Aguilar, trans., with Introduction by David G. Chandler (1831, reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), 14; Michèle A. Flournoy, ed., *QDR 2001: Strategy-Driven Choices for America's Security* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2001).
- 44 See, for example, Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (1959, reprint Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971); *Joint Pub 1-02*, 156.
- 45 Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1783* (1890, reprint Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1970), 29-88, 25, 26.
- 46 Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (London: Longman, Green, 1911).
- 47 Theodore Ropp, *War in the Modern World* (1959, reprint New York: Collier Books, 1973), 208-9.
- 48 Giulio Douhet, *The Command of the Air*, Sheila Fischer, trans. (Rome: Rivista Aeronautica, 1958).
- 49 William Mitchell, *Winged Defense: The Development and Possibilities of Modern Air Power—Economic and Military* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1925).
- 50 John C. Slessor, *Air Power and Armies* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1925).