This course uses the traditional tools of history and theory to analyze the concept of grand strategy. The goal is to gain an in-depth understanding of grand strategies used in the past so as to inform US policy, or the policies of other countries, in the future. It is a foundational course for anyone who makes policy at the highest level and for those who advise or work for them. It is also vital for those who operate at lower levels of policy-making so as to fully understand the strategic implications of their work, now and in the future. This course is about the long view of statecraft, about using current means to achieve large ends.

Grand strategy is “policy in execution.” It is the highest and most complex level of strategy, involving all the resources of the state (political, cultural, military, economic, etc.), and integrating all the tools of the government (diplomacy, economic aid, military force, trade, and so forth) to achieve the objectives of policy.

This course will help prepare students for professional positions in public service, including in the executive or legislative branches of U.S. government at the federal (both military and civilian), state or local levels; private sector businesses dealing with public policy; non-profit organizations concerned with public policy; other governments; and international organizations. It is an advanced seminar which tackles the challenging task of building an effective grand strategy in both theory and practice. It will prepare students for positions that involve the development of effective national strategy and policy.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

Upon completion of this course, students will have gained a broad understanding of history, theory and strategy as it relates to making policy at the highest level. They will understand the importance of integrating a wide range of policy instruments, including economic, military, political, and diplomatic, into a balanced grand strategy that serves the national interest. Having analyzed numerous case studies of success and failure in the making and implementing of grand strategies, they will have a strong background and knowledge of best practices and classic pitfalls. Those who successfully complete this course will be well positioned to advise senior leaders, analyze strategic documents, write position papers on strategic issues, place current events within a broader historical context, and plan future priorities with an in-depth knowledge of grand strategy. (See also the specific learning objectives for each class topic and writing assignment.)

This is a required core course for the International Security Program. As such, it provides a foundation for your learning in the program and for many other courses. It has a heavy reading load.

---

Required Texts and Readings:
These books are classics in the field of security studies. Everyone who specializes in this or related topics should have them in their personal library. Please note the texts where a particular translation or edition is specified and ensure you obtain the correct one.


*The following case studies are available directly from the Harvard Kennedy School Case Program, for $3.95 each.*


--------

Hacker, Diane, and Nancy Sommers, *A Pocket Manual of Style*, 6th ed. New York: Bedford-St. Martin’s, 2011. [This is the standard style manual for use in Schar School course work. If you don’t have it or a similar style guide, you should buy it.]


[This short handbook has a wealth of practical information about how to engage effectively in the give and take of academic dialogue, whether in seminar discussion or written work. It’s not about grammar or paragraph structure or formatting footnotes. Rather, the authors focus on using research and evidence to argue effectively, by explaining templates that provide a path for students to meld their analysis with the views of others. The library (Arlington) has this book in the reference section – take a look.]

Journal articles, book chapters, and online resources listed in the course schedule below – on library e-reserve, article link provided, or posted on course Blackboard site, as specified.

Course Requirements
Graded work includes class participation, discussion questions, and three essays, the first two of 2000-2500 words each and the third of 2500-3000 words. **There will be no exams, but I reserve the option of conducting in-class quizzes if I perceive that a significant portion of students is coming to class unprepared.**

**Class participation:** Effective learning in a seminar requires you to come to class having read the assigned material, prepared to discuss its implications. Quality of participation is more important than quantity, but if you are consistently silent, showing little interest or engagement in the discussion, your participation grade will suffer. This graded element is, admittedly, very much a subjective, judgment call on my part. I do not make little tic marks or otherwise keep track of every comment you make. If, for whatever reason, you don’t have anything to offer for most of a class period, you won’t fail the course. But, I do expect everyone to contribute substantially and substantively throughout the course. If you’re concerned about your class participation, feel free to ask for my assessment at any time.

**Discussion questions:** In addition to participation in our seminar discussions, one or more students (depending on the number enrolled) will be tasked to prepare two or three questions for most class meetings. These questions should capture your ideas or main thoughts that arise from the readings for that day’s class. What is your reaction to the topic or a specific portion of the reading? Is there an overarching theme? What are the similarities and differences among the readings? In most cases, you will begin the evening’s discussion with these questions. Be prepared for follow-up comments from your classmates or me. If there are two or more students, you may want to compare notes or exchange emails about your approach before class, but this is not a requirement.

The schedule for discussion questions will be determined by random drawing on the first day of class. I’ll post the schedule on the course Blackboard site. You may swap dates if you wish, but you must notify me ahead of time that you’ve done so. **Email your discussion questions to me NLT 3 p.m. of your assigned date.**

**Essays:** The primary graded element is, of course, the analytical essays. I will evaluate them for content, quality of argument and logic, clarity, and writing skills. When writing your papers, pay careful attention to the basics of clear expression. Simple, direct language is always best. Readers should easily follow your reasoning. Support your argument with well-considered evidence. Reinforce your logic with well-thought-out transitions that highlight relationships among key ideas and provide an easily-followed roadmap.

Make sure you cite borrowed material appropriately. **Citations should be properly formatted per** the guidance in Hacker (beginning at p. 219; **Chicago/Turabian, also known as “notes/bibliography” format**). I prefer footnotes, but will accept endnotes. **Do not use in-text citations, such as the MLA or APA format.** If you use an automated program such as Zotero to manage your citations, you are still responsible for ensuring the formatting is correct. The “garbage in-garbage out” relationship is much in evidence with these tools, so careful proofreading is required.

**Include a cover page, with your name and an appropriate title for your papers.** Make sure the pages are numbered. **Essays are due at the beginning of class on the indicated due date. Submit both paper and electronic copies.**

Here are the specific requirements and topic options for each essay.

**Essay #1:** due xxxxx; 2000-2500 words.

Objectives: demonstrate the ability to summarize and draw conclusions based on close reading of assigned material; analyze the relevance of Thucydides; understand my standards for written work and the nature of the feedback you’ll receive.

Topic: identify 2 or 3 key ideas or themes from Thucydides that you think are relevant to current-day strategy making. Summarize the ideas or themes and explain their relevance.

**Essay #2:** due xxxxxx; 2000-2500 words.

Objective: demonstrate the ability to analyze and evaluate various aspects of strategic theory.
Topic option A: evaluate Machiavelli’s perspective on the role of morality and ethics in the conduct of statecraft. Assess the importance of these ideas for today’s strategist.

Topic option B: evaluate the relevance of Clausewitz’s “trinity of war” for today’s strategist.

Topic option C: analyze how nuclear weapons changed strategic decision making about the use of military power and draw conclusions regarding whether those changes remain in effect.

Essay #3: due xxxxx 2500-3000 words [note: increased length requirement]

Objective: demonstrate the ability to evaluate and synthesize strategic concepts.

Topic option A: Explain which of the major concepts (one or more) discussed in this course are most relevant to the current US strategic environment. (You may choose to write from the perspective of another country, if you wish.)

Topic option B: B. H. Liddell-Hart asserts that it is “essential to conduct war with constant regard to the peace you desire.” Has the US done this with respect to the “war on terror”? Explain your answer. (You may choose to write from the perspective of another country, if you wish.)

Topic option C: Some analysts argue that the best example of a true US “grand strategy” was the strategy of containment practiced throughout the Cold War. Consider whether you agree with this assessment; explain why or why not.

OR
Consider whether a similar strategy is necessary and appropriate given the US’s current strategic situation vis-à-vis China or Russia. Make sure you explain your reasoning and the general form such a strategy would take.

Course Evaluation:

- Class participation 15%
- Discussion questions 5%
- Essay #1 (due xxxxx) 25%
- Essay #2 (due xxxxx) 25%
- Essay #3 (due xxxxx) 30%

Discussion questions should be submitted by email NLT 3 p.m. on the assigned date.

Essays must be submitted electronically and in paper copy at the beginning of class on the due date.

Late work will be penalized one grade level (e.g., A to A-) for each calendar day or part thereof. Papers over a week late will receive a failing grade, but must be submitted to avoid a failing grade for the course. If you are faced with unavoidable circumstances that preclude submitting your work on time, let me know as soon as possible so we can work together to overcome the difficulty. Except in highly unusual or emergency cases, I will not give extra credit assignments or incomplete grades.

Evaluation Criteria

I will consider the following elements in evaluating your written work:

- Analysis that indicates both depth and breadth of critical thinking
- Clearly stated thesis, position, or recommendations
- Introduction clearly explains the topic or issue, states the thesis, and provides a roadmap for the argument or analysis
Conclusion effectively ties together the analysis or argument, identifies the implications of the analysis, and answers the “so what” question or motivates the reader to act. Convincing logic that is easy to follow. Reasons and evidence stated clearly and used effectively to support the argument. Well-structured paragraphs with clear topic sentences. Concepts and ideas clearly defined or explained, without digressions or irrelevancies that interrupt the flow of logic or distract from the analysis or argument. Transitions that effectively link ideas within and between paragraphs and the main points of the essay. Clear, concise language without needlessly complex or wordy sentences. Citations correctly used and formatted. Correct spelling, grammar, punctuation, word usage, and sentence structure.

Notice that half of these elements are focused on the analytical content of your essays and the other half on the clarity, precision, and correctness of writing. Sloppy writing is a sign of sloppy thinking. The most brilliant ideas in the world are useless if you cannot explain and express them clearly. Thus, the time you spend on revising, editing, and proofreading is just as important as the time spent on researching, thinking, and drafting.

General Course Policies

This course will be conducted primarily as a seminar, with several major lectures and case studies, and occasional group exercises. I may occasionally add a short lecture to ensure everyone understands important background information. The best seminars result from lively, but civilized and respectful, argumentative discourse (which is not the same as verbal fighting). This discourse is founded on the course material (hence the absolute necessity of effective preparation for class), but should also be drawn from your broader academic, professional, and personal backgrounds; outside reading; and your own creative and critical thinking.

Attendance: Effective learning in a seminar also depends on regular attendance. If you miss class you will miss important material, and your absence will affect the learning of your colleagues. However, I understand that unforeseen circumstances do arise. If you will be unable to attend a class, please let me know as early as possible. You are responsible for getting notes from colleagues for missed class periods. Second and subsequent absences will require make-up work to be submitted. Multiple absences, however unavoidable the circumstances, will affect your grade: it is not possible to earn higher than a “B+” in the course if you miss more than three classes.

If you anticipate arriving late because of traffic problems or other such hazards of living in the DC metropolis, you may notify me by text message to my mobile phone (number on the first page) or email. Please note, I leave my home for Arlington fairly early, so a text is the best way to contact me with late-breaking news.

Electronic Devices: Laptops or tablets are permitted for note taking, accessing readings, or in-the-moment research. Sitting in the back of the room staring at a screen and failing to participate in class is not. It goes without saying that it is both rude and unprofessional to be reading emails, texting, surfing the web for baseball scores, etc. during class. Phones should be muted and put away.

Academic and Professional Integrity

The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university, as well as the field of public policy, depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. That trust rests, in turn, on the assumption that we all adhere to appropriate standards of professional conduct, that we pursue excellence both collectively and individually, and that a strong sense of integrity guides all our actions.

An act of plagiarism strikes at the core of these values and, thus, the heart of the university and the Schar School of Policy and Government. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and is unacceptable.

Plagiarism is presenting another’s words or ideas as your own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another’s work. Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it
does to the person whose ideas are stolen. It is also wrong because it constitutes lying to your professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating; it can ruin your academic and professional career.

Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to avoiding plagiarism and, thus, to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is also necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

The faculty of the Schar School takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero-tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive a grade of “F.” This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the university. This dismissal will be noted on the student’s transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (e.g., F-1, J-1, or J-2), dismissal also results in revocation of the visa.

To help enforce the school policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the school subscribes. Faculty may submit student work at any time, without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. This school policy on plagiarism supplements the George Mason University Honor Code; it does not replace it.

Professor Wilhelm’s Addendum: Many plagiarism cases arise from sloppy note taking and hurried, last-minute work. Nevertheless, plagiarism is plagiarism, whether it was “accidental” or not. Similarly, ignorance of the rules is no excuse. A graduate student should be well-versed in the definition of plagiarism and the rules and formats for proper citations. If you are not, ask – before you find yourself in trouble. The best approach is to have a well-organized system of taking notes and keeping track of sources. There are multiple electronic resources available, but paper note cards and pens work just as well. The key is learning the requirements and sticking to whatever process works for you – and avoiding frantic cutting and pasting at three in morning the night before your paper is due. Remember, using the ideas, paraphrasing or summarizing material, or directly quoting the words of others without proper citation is plagiarism. When in doubt, cite.

Students with Special Needs

If you are a student with a disability and need academic accommodations, please inform the instructor and contact the Disability Resource Center at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through this office.
Class Topics

PART ONE: Foundations and Theory

1. Introduction and Course Overview
2. Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War I
3. Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War II
4. Niccolo Machiavelli’s Theory of Statecraft
5. Carl von Clausewitz, On War
6. Clausewitz II
7. Revolutionary Warfare: Sun Zi and Mao
8. Nuclear Strategy and the Theory of Deterrence
9. Strategists Using History

PART TWO: Case Studies in Grand Strategy

10. World War I and Woodrow Wilson
11. Franklin Delano Roosevelt and American Grand Strategy in World War II
12. The Cold War and Containment
13. Case Study: Vietnam
14. Every War Must End; But How?
Course Schedule and Assignments

Please note, while the list of required texts (above) is finalized, the specific reading assignments for each class (below) are subject to change. I’ll post the finalized syllabus on the course Blackboard site. It will be open to students registered for the course after the first of the year, before classes begin.

PART ONE: Foundations and Theory

C1. Tuesday, 22 January 2019; Introduction and Course Overview

Please come to class prepared to discuss the following question:

What is strategy?

Objectives:

Understand the basic structure of the course, its requirements, and overall objectives.

Understand the meaning of “grand strategy” and the relationship between tactics, operations, military strategy, and grand strategy.

Read:


[Both of these readings are introductions to edited volumes. As such, they include brief descriptions of the remainder of the books. We won’t be using any of that other material, but these chapters provide a good foundation for thinking about strategy.]
C2. Tues, 29 Jan 2019; Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War I

_The absence of romance in my history will, I fear, detract somewhat from its interest; but if it be judged useful by those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the understanding of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it, I shall be content._

_In fine, I have written my work, not as an essay which is to win the applause of the moment, but as a possession for all time._

Thucydides, _The Peloponnesian War_, (Book 1, paragraph 22, sentence 4)

The first part of our course tackles _The Peloponnesian War_, considered the finest narration of the ancient world and a timeless classic examining the concepts of history, theory, and strategy in the unfolding of a great systemic war. It is truly the first examination of “grand strategy” in war and peace, and demonstrates the practical consequences of leadership and policy making for the people of Athens and Sparta. The lessons of Thucydides have been studied by a vast array of statesmen and military leaders, ranging from our own founding fathers to President Harry Truman (who was fond of quoting from it). These lessons continue to be plumbed for parallels with more recent conflicts, with popular studies comparing the Peloponnesian War to the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, and actions after 9/11, for example. Knowing and understanding Thucydides’ great history is essential to every serious student of international security. We may debate the validity of specific modern-day analogies but one point remains clear: as Thucydides identified and described them more than two thousand four hundred years ago, the complex human experience of war and the significance of fear, honor, and interest in human affairs have remain unchanged.

**Objectives:**

Understand the reasons Athens and Sparta, who fought as allies against the Persians, chose to go to war.

Analyze the effects of politics, human passions, and chance on the course of the war.

Analyze both the strengths and weaknesses of the initial strategies of Athens and Sparta, and how their strategies changed as the war progressed.

**Read:**


Book 1, 3-85; especially the speeches

[Book 1 lays the historical groundwork for the Peloponnesian War. The two superpowers – Athens and Sparta – were firm allies in the Persian Wars against Xerxes, but within a short time the situation changed. Convinced of its moral superiority and benevolence, Athens expanded while Sparta watched with growing concern. As a maritime empire, Athens made itself virtually invulnerable by fortifying the city, while Sparta continued its traditional emphasis on honorable battle on land.]

Book 2, 89-107, 110-28; Outbreak of the War, Pericles’ Funeral Oration, the plague and the policy of Pericles

[When war comes, it is welcomed by much of Greece. Sparta and her allies see it as an end to Athenian domination, while the Athenians (prompted by Pericles) see it as an opportunity to unify Greece under their leadership. Pericles’ strategy is to wait out the inevitable Spartan attack behind the city’s fortifications. Though logical and successful, this plan soon proves unpopular among citizens eager to fight. Pericles takes the unusual step of rallying them with his famous funeral oration, laying out Athenian ideology and the reasons for war. When plague breaks out, Pericles is blamed and hauled before the assembly. He successfully defends his strategy but soon dies of the plague.]

cont. on next page
Book 3, 159-67, 175-84, 194-201; Revolt of Mytilene, The Mytilenian debate, Civil War in Corcyra

[Book 3 details many of the ethical and operational problems faced by both sides as the war drags on. The Mytilene debate is one of the most important dialogues in the work. Following the revolt of Mytilene (and its subsequent defeat), the Athenians argue about what should be done to the rebels. Cleon argues that the entire city is guilty and should be destroyed so as to demonstrate the power of Athens. Diodotus argues that such an action would further alienate tenuous allies. Diodotus wins (barely) in a classic display of realist versus idealist thought.]

Book 4, 223-46, 263-72, 279-85; Athens’ success at Pylos, Brasidas in Thrace, Brasidas captures Amphipolis

[Book 4 describes the tactical diversity that is beginning to affect the war. Although the Athenians were raiding with their fleet throughout the conflict, for the first time they stay and fortify an area in Spartan territory at Pylos. This brings about an immediate response. The Spartans attack and are defeated, resulting in the surrender of a small Spartan force. This outcome stuns both sides and emboldens the Athenians to continue the conflict, despite a generous armistice offer from the Spartans.]
C3. Tues, 5 Feb 2019; Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War II

We continue our study of Thucydides by examining the second phase of the war and the eventual Athenian over-extension into Sicily. During this period the role of personalities and human nature becomes increasingly important. Faced with a bloody stalemate, both sides are ready for peace; yet they begin fighting again almost as soon as they broker an agreement at Nicias. We follow the story through the invasion of Sicily and the dramatic ending of the book.

Objectives:

Analyze the influence of domestic political considerations and personalities on Athens’ ability to formulate strategy and wage war.

Analyze and critique the strategic logic of the Sicilian expedition.

Compare and evaluate the grand strategies of both major combatants.

Identify the reasons Sparta ultimately prevailed over Athens. Did Sparta “win”?

Evaluate the relevance of Thucydides for current day strategists.

Read:

Strassler, ed. *The Landmark Thucydides*. [required text]

Book 5, 309-16, 327-57; Peace of Nicias, Alliance between Athens and Argos, Battle of Mantinea, Melian Dialogue

[By the tenth year of the war both sides are ready for peace. Nicias brokers a treaty – but almost immediately after signing it, both sides work to undermine it. The treaty effectively changes nothing, causing many to ask why the war was fought in the first place. Young men in Athens, led by Alcibiades, clamor for renewed fighting. Conflict with revolting or resisting allies or non-aligned city-states continues. In the famous “Melian dialogue,” a neutral city state argues to the Athenians that they should not be required to join either side, prompting the classic realist response: “The strong do what they will and the weak do what they must.” As both sides maneuver, it becomes increasingly obvious that general war will soon break out again.]

Book 6, 361-79, 412-16; Launch of the Sicilian Expedition

[Although war has not officially resumed, the Athenian Alcibiades continually looks for opportunity. He finds it in Sicily. When the Athenian assembly is approached by a minor city-state looking for an alliance, Alcibiades convinces them to invade the island and “liberate” city-states under Syracuse’s influence. Nicias argues against this course, noting that operations in Sicily would be far away and that the peace with Sparta is fragile. Nicias loses this debate but, to his chagrin, is nonetheless voted to be one of three Athenian generals to lead a huge invasion fleet – which encounters difficulties from the start.]

Book 7, 427-78; Athenian disaster

[Accused of involvement in sacrilege, Alcibiades is summoned back to Athens for trial. He promptly defects to the Spartans and provides inside information about how to defeat the Athenians in Sicily and Attica. The Spartan intervention spells doom for the Athenians’ Sicilian expedition. Nicias, who argued against the expedition from the start, sees the situation clearly but also realizes he will be blamed if he returns in defeat. He hesitates, allowing the Spartans and Syracusans to muster forces for attack. In the subsequent naval fight and land battle, the Athenians are humiliated and destroyed.]

Book 8, 481-83; Reaction to Athenian defeat in Sicily
[The Athenians are stunned by the Sicilian disaster, with the loss of their fleet representing an almost complete reversal of fortunes. Regardless, they vow to rebuild the fleet and continue the war.]

Epilogue, 549-54; The end of the war

[Thucydides’ account ends in 411, six years before the end of the war. From other histories, we know that Athens recovered much of her naval strength, but is defeated by the Spartan admiral Lysander in 406. The Spartan alliance, bolstered by the support of the Persians (who are more than willing to humiliate the former victors of the Persian wars) closed on the city. Without a fleet, Athens can be successfully blockaded and starved out – so in the face of this threat, Athens surrenders. Considering the length of the war and the destruction suffered by both sides, the terms are relatively mild (for the time). Athens has to demolish its long walls and surrender most of its fleet. Sparta is supreme in Greece, but this supremacy is short-lived. The Greek city-states soon rebel against Spartan autocracy, aided by Persia which, in the long run, gains the most from the war, seeing the Greek Peninsula reduced to ruin. The Greek city-states limp along, drained of resources, in uneasy stalemate, and ripe for a conquest that ultimately arrives from Macedon.]
C4. Tues, 12 Feb 2019; Niccolo Machiavelli’s Theory of Statecraft

Following our examination of the Peloponnesian War, we take a great leap in chronology to dip our toes in the political and military philosophy of Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527). In addition to The Prince, his other often-studied works are The Art of War and Discourses on Livy, and he wrote many other political and historical works, as well as fiction, plays, and poems. The Prince is the work most often studied and quoted in modern times, and of course, is the source of the term “Machiavellian” as a negative characterization of politicians and [statesmen] and the notion that “the ends justify the means.” However, in the academic world, there is a fair amount of dispute about how Machiavellian Machiavelli really was.

Machiavelli is often considered the first political theorist of the modern world and at least a precursor to the realist school of international relations. He lived at a time of great change – in both domestic and international political circumstances, in technology (most relevantly to him, military technology), and in the means of building and maintaining economic power. Most of his political writing is an effort to understand and devise effective responses to these changes. In doing so, his first impulse was to put them in historical context, thus his emphasis on comparing the events of his day with examples from the past, and particularly, his reliance on the writings of Roman military leaders such as Vegetius and Tacitus.

We will consider the various ways to interpret the ideas in The Prince and whether Machiavelli was, indeed, a realist in terms of his political philosophy.

Objectives:

Summarize and analyze the main points of Machiavelli’s political philosophy as explained in The Prince.

Given Machiavelli’s ideas, consider whether there is a role for morality and ethics in the conduct of statecraft; and if there is, what that role might be.

Analyze the similarities and differences between Machiavelli’s ideas on military forces and their use and those practiced by Frederick the Great of Prussia.

Read:


[We will often rely on the essays in this classic text to provide historical context and background information, as well as summary and analysis of theories and events. Such is the case here. However, Gilbert focuses primarily on Machiavelli’s military thought. Make sure you compare Gilbert’s summary with Mansfield’s introduction and the broader political perspective of The Prince.]


Read entire text, including Mansfield’s introduction.

[This book is short, and Mansfield’s translation is relatively easier to read than some others. Even so, Chapters 1-11 on the various types of principalities and how they are acquired can, admittedly, be a bit tedious. Look for the main points Machiavelli makes about governance and controlling the population, and don’t worry about the details of the many historical examples he uses. Do note, however, how often he refers to the Romans as a model. Read the remaining chapters in depth and consider carefully Machiavelli’s thoughts on power and statecraft.]

Read the section on Fred, 91-105.

Next week we take another chronological leap, so read a portion of this essay as a bridge to our discussion of the theories of Carl von Clausewitz. As you read, consider the similarities and differences between Frederician warfare as described by Palmer and Machiavelli’s military ideas.
C5. Tues, 19 Feb 2019; Carl von Clausewitz, On War

As a total phenomenon its dominant tendencies always makes war a remarkable trinity – composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.

Carl von Clausewitz²

Clausewitz’s work was an enormous advance in the evolution of military thought, but it was not popular when first published. The very aspect of On War that made it unattractive to military practitioners also made it supremely important. Clausewitz was not content with providing a clear checklist of steps to follow to wage war more effectively, although at times he did hope to systematize war to some extent. He did not believe that such a checklist was possible because war was too complex and unpredictable to be reduced to formulas for success. Clausewitz wanted his book to reflect reality. Instead of prescribing how to wage war, he wanted to probe war’s fundamental nature and its place in the spectrum of human affairs. In so doing, he hoped to guide his readers – soldiers and statesmen alike – to a better understanding of war’s true essence and, thus, imbue them with the kind of holistic thinking that would help them solve the unique problems they would face in waging their own wars, regardless of time and place. In short, what we get from Clausewitz is a deepening of insight rather than a set of rules.

Clausewitz’s famous formulation of the “trinity of war” (quoted above) stipulates the essential elements of war’s nature. More than any other construct, it is the ultimate refinement of his theory of war. Clausewitz did not perfect this idea until late in his life, in 1827, and, as he acknowledged in two notes he left, he had only begun to incorporate it into On War, the revision of which was ended by his untimely death.

Clausewitz believed only Chapter One, Book One was in its final, refined form. This chapter, not surprisingly, is the clearest statement of his theory – the conceptual foundation upon which the entire revised work would have been based had Clausewitz lived to complete his life-long quest to lay out “the basic ideas that might bring about a revolution in the theory of war.” Thus, as you read On War, recognize that everything after the first chapter is in draft and has not been revised to the author’s satisfaction. This is the cause of much of the confusion about On War and the source of many of the book’s apparent contradictions (as well as of perpetual employment for a small but dedicated cadre of Clausewitz interpreters). It is also why quoting selectively from On War can be extremely misleading.

Nevertheless, time devoted to reading and, more importantly, thinking about Clausewitz’s “basic” yet revolutionary ideas – to comprehend, dissect, analyze, and critique them – is well spent. Clausewitz’s comprehensive understanding of war in all its aspects, as well as his influence on all the great strategic thinkers and practitioners since Napoleon, make careful study of On War essential to the understanding of grand strategy. The line of argument in many portions of On War is nuanced and multi-faceted so that no two people come away from reading Clausewitz with the same understanding of his meaning. The significance of his work is likely to evolve over time for the individual reader as well, based on changes in perspective and experience.

If you are reading On War for the first time, four techniques may help. First, begin by reading Peter Paret’s introductory essay (3-25; assigned), which provides the context for Clausewitz’s ideas, as well as the appropriate sections from Bernard Brodie’s “A Guide to the Reading of On War” beginning on page 641. Second, read the chapter subheadings before reading the main body of the text. They clearly outline the logic of Clausewitz’s thoughts. Third, after reading the text, read the introductory essay by Brodie (45-58) and see if you agree that Clausewitz’s concepts are eternal – as applicable in the 21st century as they were in the 19th. Last, let the book sit for a day or two, then reread Book One, Chapter One to ensure you thoroughly grasp Clausewitz’s concept of the “trinity.”

Objectives:

Understand the nature, purpose and conduct of war as presented in Clausewitz’s classic study of Western warfare.

Analyze Clausewitz’s theory of war and assess its applicability to the employment of the military instrument today and in the future.

Evaluate the relationship between war and politics from the perspective of grand strategy.

Read:


Also read the declaration of the levée en masse, bottom p. **141-top 142.**

[Clausewitz and his contemporaries were, in large part, reacting to the “shock and awe” of Napoleonic warfare. Read this essay to ensure you grasp the context surrounding and influences on his writing.]


Paret (intro essay), “The Genesis of On War,” **3-25.**

Book 1, “On the Nature of War,” **75-123.**

Book 2, Chap 1, “Classifications of the Art of War, **127-32.**


Book 2, Chap 3, “Art of War or Science of War,” **148-50.**

[As mentioned above, Book 1, Chap 1 is Clausewitz’s intended conceptual foundation. Chapters 2-8 address the major factors that make war what it is. Note that the first characteristic of war Clausewitz addresses is “the relationship of purpose and means.” In this course we examine the relationship between ends and means with respect to overarching national strategy. In military strategy, however, the means, and the consequences of their employment, are narrower. Reread paragraph 25, ”The Diverse Nature of War,” from Chapter One, Book One, and try to reconcile it with Chapter Two, Book One, “Purpose and Means in War.” Is Clausewitz contradicting himself, or merely elaborating on the same core concepts? Understanding the relationship between political and military objectives is fundamental to grand strategy.

Clausewitz also highlights the elements that “form the atmosphere of war, and turn it into a medium that impedes activity,” which he says “can be grouped into a single concept of general friction” (beginning of Chap 8). The concept of friction is vital to his analysis of the nature of war. In Chap 7 he asserts that it “is the only concept that more or less corresponds to the factors that distinguish real war from war on paper.” It is also one of the elements of his overarching theory that make it timeless.

We read only chapters 1-3 of Book 2 where he carefully parses the various elements that others have used to formulate theories of war as an art or science, the difficulties of forming a useful theory, and the proper role of theory for the strategist. Consider carefully the implications of the conclusions that he draws and whether you agree with him.]

Optional:


[Paret’s essay is an excellent introduction to On War. In it he examines Clausewitz’s basic ideas, his military career, and the impact his writings had both during his lifetime and in later years. Although somewhat duplicative of the intro essay that is assigned, you might find that it adds useful context to your understanding.]
C6. Tues, 26 Feb 2019; Clausewitz II

Theory then becomes a guide to anyone who wants to learn about war from books; it will light his way, ease his progress, train his judgment, and help him to avoid pitfalls … Theory exists so that one need not start afresh each time sorting out the material and plowing through it, but will find it ready to hand and in good order. It is meant to educate the mind of the future commander, or, more accurately, to guide him in his self-education, not to accompany him to the battlefield.

Carl von Clausewitz

Clausewitz's understanding of the nature of war was based on his own military experiences, his study of military history, and his profound appreciation for the social and political upheavals of Europe’s revolutionary era that had fostered a corresponding transformation in military affairs. As you read the material assigned for this class, remember that it was written before Clausewitz fully refined his theory of war as explained in Chapter One, Book One. Thus, you should do some interpolation as you go along. Try to apply your understanding of the evolution of his theory to what you read, based on his ultimate conception of the essence of war.

Objectives:

Same as C5.

Read:


- Book 3, Chaps 1-5, 177-89.

In Book Three, "On Strategy in General," note in the first chapter how Clausewitz defines strategy, the objectives of the engagement, and the critical role the military commander plays in determining strategic success. Much of chapters 2-5 focuses on the moral factors of war and, thus, offers plenty of food for thought.

Chapter 22 of book 7 addresses another of Clausewitz’s concepts that is well worth thinking about – the culminating point of military operations. Admittedly, we’re reading this chapter out of context, but it stands well enough on its own that we can profit by it.

We read book 8 in its entirety. It is rich in conceptual detail and depth of analysis. It is also, perhaps, the most difficult of the theory-focused sections of the work to absorb, so read carefully. And it might be useful to read in smaller portions of a couple of chapters at a time. (Of all the ‘unfinished’ portions, this is the one I most wish he’d had time to rewrite.) The title of the book (“War Plans”) is thoroughly misleading, at least in the context of modern usage. In the introduction, Clausewitz tells us he is returning to the problem of war as a whole, and its dominant aspect – pure strategy. He revisits the comparison between limited and unlimited war as well as the primacy of the political object. He also posits the existence of a strategic “center of gravity,” a much argued over and misunderstood idea. Think about whether you find this concept, which is essentially a metaphor, useful.


[This article provides a fascinating and somewhat unusual perspective on Clausewitz’s thinking. Beyerchen examines his ideas about war in the context of the operation of nonlinear systems. Do not be put off by references to nonlinearity, complexity, and chaos. Beyerchen writes and explains things clearly, and in the course of linking Clausewitz and nonlinearity does a fine job of summarizing and explaining Clausewitz’s key ideas. Read this as a “thought piece” – consider whether you find Beyerchen’s analysis convincing and, if so, the implications for the continuing relevance of Clausewitz.]
C7. Tues, 5 Mar 2019; Revolutionary Warfare: Sun Zi and Mao

War is a matter of vital importance to the State; the province of life or death; the road to survival or ruin. It is mandatory that it be thoroughly studied

Sun Zi

All warfare is based on deception. Therefore, when capable, feign incapacity; when active, inactivity. When near, make it appear that you are far away; when far away, that you are near. Offer the enemy a bait to lure him; feign disorder and strike him. When he concentrates, prepare against him; where he is strong, avoid him. Anger his general and confuse him. Pretend inferiority and encourage his arrogance. Keep him under a strain and wear him down. When he is united, divide him.Attack where he is unprepared; sally out when he does not expect you. These are the strategist’s keys to victory.

Sun Zi

We continue our study of the theory of war, focusing on the strategic thinking of Sun Zi and The Art of War, the first comprehensive military theory ever devised. The text was written sometime between 400 and 320 B.C. (The first known translation of The Art of War into a Western language appeared in 1722, thanks to a French Jesuit priest.) This was the Warring States era (403-221 B.C.), a time of revolutionary socio-political, economic, technological and military change in what is now China. Sun Zi’s life is shrouded in uncertainty: scholars do not even know for sure whether he actually existed or was a fictional compilation of several writers. If he existed, he was apparently an opportunist, shifting his allegiance among various rulers, getting by on his wits and the strength of his advice. His text, like so many other seminal texts in history, was a response to difficult times – times that demanded a “paradigm shift” in Chinese strategic culture and especially in the relationship between war and the state. Sun Zi’s illusion-free, anti-heroic prescriptions were arguably facilitated by the growing bureaucratization and increasing capacity to exploit manpower and materiel resources of these nascent Chinese states.

Like Thucydides, Sun Zi was an unsentimental realist, which gives his work resonance centuries later. He is also relevant to us for three reasons: 1) his importance as a source of inspiration for a variety of more recent thinkers, including Mao Zedong and Basil Liddell Hart; 2) his creation of a comprehensive theory of warfare based on indirection, rather than on an “industrial” strength-on-strength approach; and 3) his status (in some eyes) as a proto-chaos theorist who helped modern thinkers reacquaint themselves with the increasing diffusion and nonlinearity of war. The seeming simplicity of The Art of War is deceptive. There is depth of thought here, particularly when Sun Zi explores indirect ways to succeed in war. So, as you read, do not focus on each maxim individually; try instead to absorb Sun Zi’s concepts as a whole.

Sun Zi remains a vital source of wisdom for the modern strategist today; yet The Art of War is much less thoroughly studied and understood in the West than it is in many parts of Asia. While important in his native country, however, knowledge of Sun Zi and his writings is certainly not confined to China. Indeed, Sun Zi’s writings are even better known in Japan. In any case, his theories have been influential for centuries, throughout the world.

One notable fan of Sun Zi’s dictums was Mao Zedong, a more recent historical figure whose writings are widely accessible and more easily translated. This accessibility has led to a more detailed analysis and consideration of Mao’s thoughts on guerrilla warfare and insurgency, for example. But careful analysis of the words of both Sun Zi and Mao Zedong reveals the impact of the former on the latter. Central to Mao’s strategy was his ability to build a 100,000-man army that would only attack when strong and retreat when weak, for example.


Objectives:

Analyze Sun Zi’s theory of war and assess its applicability for those using military power today.

Comprehend the historical context during the time of Sun Zi.

Assess the applicability of Sun Zi’s theory of war in counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, conventional warfare, and special operations.

Comprehend the similarities and differences between Clausewitz’s and Sun Zi’s theories of war.

Assess the validity and relevance of “the indirect approach,” particularly in today’s security environment. Consider its applicability (or not) to on-going operations, and assess its value in planning future operations.

Read:


[SPRING BREAK 11-17 MARCH]
C8. Tues, 19 Mar 2019; Nuclear Strategy and the Theory of Deterrence

Behold, I am become death, the shatterer of worlds.

Robert Oppenheimer
paraphrasing the Bhagavad-Gita,
after witnessing the first nuclear explosion at Trinity, New Mexico,
16 July 19457

Everything that I have written is obsolete.

Bernard Brodie to his wife, upon reading a story about Hiroshima, 6 August 19458

Nuclear weapons led some theorists to believe the evolution of warfare had come to an abrupt halt, that their incredible destructive power made prior history, theory and strategy anachronistic. Seen from one perspective, nuclear weapons were the ultimate expression of industrial warfare—“just another bullet,” although uniquely deadly, with a justifiable place in the arsenals of the world. The countervailing *jus in bellum* argument characterized them as different *in kind* from any other weapon. Their indiscriminate nature, in other words, outstripped all possible justification for their use. This ethical argument received a realist’s boost in 1949 when the Soviet Union exploded its first atomic weapon. Thereafter, as the two superpowers raced to improve and enlarge their arsenals, as both sides perfected thermonuclear warheads with almost unimaginable destructive potential, as they moved from delivery systems that could respond within hours (manned aircraft) to land- and sea-based missiles that could strike within minutes, it became more and more apparent that they were holding hostage each other’s very survival.

As the mutually destructive heft of the two superpowers increased, the political leaders of both sides instituted tighter and tighter controls over their nuclear arsenals. Increasingly devoted to keeping the Cold War cold, especially after the frightening experience of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the two sides for the most part avoided direct confrontation. As the Soviet Union sought to enlarge its sphere of influence, the US countered with a strategy of containment, and both powers found themselves engaged in a series of limited “proxy” wars.

Uniformed strategists were ill-equipped to cope with this state of affairs. Their experience of total, industrialized warfare had “dumbed down” the problem of military strategy to that of a mere targeting exercise, or so Carl Builder and others have argued. (See *The Icarus Syndrome.*) When the political goal is total defeat of the enemy regime and state, the relationship between military operations and political objectives is clear-cut. The strategist seeks to connect battles and campaigns until the enemy signs the unconditional surrender papers. The post-war nuclear world, however, was an ambiguous one where enemies could not be overcome with straightforward military means—or at least not without the potential for your side to be destroyed in the process. Success (and survival) now depended on deterrence, which had a *negative* aim, i.e., to ensure that nothing happened. So, under the old paradigm you had “victory”; under the new paradigm, your capacity to deter was, essentially, mathematical:

\[
\text{(capability)} \times \text{(intent)} \times \text{(opponent’s perception of intent)}
\]

To cope with these confusing and troubling developments, a new generation of (mostly) civilian theorists stepped into the breach and created elaborate theories of nuclear deterrence and a fresh body of work on limited warfare. These civilian thinkers came to dominate the strategic discourse, especially in the US in the mid-twentieth century.

---

7 The Bhagavad-Gita is the Hindu holy book. Translation of this phrase, from Chapter 11, verse 32, is available at [http://www.bhagavad-gita.org/Gita/verse-11-30.html](http://www.bhagavad-gita.org/Gita/verse-11-30.html). Some people think the correct English translation is actually “I am become *time*, the shatterer of worlds.” Oppenheimer famously recalled these words in a retrospective NBC television documentary “The Decision to Drop the Bomb,” 5 January 1965. Some of those actually with him at the test site at the time remembered him saying only, “It worked.”

This class explores their ideas on deterrence, in both the classic sense, as developed in the 1950s and early 60s, and as the concept assumed different guises thereafter. We will also consider two new and particularly troubling areas of concern today, both related to proliferation. First, are nonstate actors who seek to use nuclear weapons (or other so-called weapons of mass destruction) deterrable? Do the elaborate state-centric deterrence theories and strategies developed in the Cold War actually apply to them, or are new concepts now necessary? Second, what is the role of bilateral concepts of deterrence in situations where there are multiple global and regional powers to deter? Are we on the verge of state use of nuclear weapons? What can and should the major powers and international institutions do to preclude such an outcome? Does the proliferation of nuclear weapons to new states undermine global stability?

Objectives:

Understand classical and current theories of deterrence and assess their applicability in today’s international security environment.

Analyze how nuclear weapons changed strategic thinking about warfare and the utility of military power.

Analyze the relationship between civilian and military leaders in the development of Cold War strategies and theories of deterrence.

Read:


[Freedman describes nuclear weapons as a problem in strategy (in this case, matching military means to political ends). Reviewing the evolution of nuclear strategy, he argues that even by the mid-1980s strategists had failed to conceive of a way to use nuclear weapons if deterrence failed without causing wholesale destruction.]


[Brodie is among the earliest civilian strategists to explore and understand the implications of nuclear weapons. This chapter is a cogent summary of his thoughts on their utility and their effect on decision making about conventional warfare.]

Gaddis, John Lewis. Strategies of Containment, Chapter 12, 380-91. [required text]

[We’ll read the bulk of this book for our later class on containment. This final, short, chapter is relevant to the question of whether a deterrent strategy is applicable in today’s security environment. Can a grand strategy comparable to containment be devised today? Is there a comparable U.S. grand strategy already?]
C9. Tues, 26 Mar 2019; Strategists Using History

All of us use past experience to guide our thinking about new problems and to help make decisions. In fact, using history in this manner is so common we seldom stop to think about how we do it or whether our historical analogies and comparisons are logical. The leaders who analyze issues and make decisions at the highest levels of government are no exception. Yet, when they try to use history, whether as they lived it or have studied it, to understand complex issues and decisions related to grand strategy, the methodologies they apply, coupled with the depth and breadth of their analysis, are critical to the outcomes they seek.

This class is focused on the practical uses of history by strategists. It is designed to illustrate the uses of history in decision making and to consider guidelines for achieving logically sound historical comparisons and analogies. We will refer back to the decisions of US leaders during the Korean War, Cuban missile crisis, and Vietnam War to analyze their use of historical analogies, then will do an in-class case study of the analogies used by the Bush administration leading up to and during the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The overall goal of our discussion is two-fold; first, to ensure you understand both the utility and the pitfalls of using history to guide strategy making, and second, to provide a methodology of historical reasoning that helps minimize the latter.

Objectives:

Understand the power and pitfalls of using historical analogies when making strategic decisions.

Analyze a historical case for its applicability to a current strategic problem.

Apply a well-reasoned methodology and think critically about historical analogies that are applied to current strategic problems.

Read:


Preface
Chap 3 (part), 34-48
Chap 5
Chap 6 (part), 91-6, 105-110
Chap 8
Chap 9 (part), 157-71
Chap 12 (part), 212-19
Chap 13
Chap 14

PART TWO: *Case Studies in Grand Strategy*

**C10. Tues, 2 Apr 2019; World War One and Woodrow Wilson**

*Should a war break out now, its duration and end cannot be foreseen. The largest powers of Europe, armed as never before, would take the field. None could be so completely defeated in one or two campaigns that it would declare itself vanquished and that it would have to accept the hard peace conditions imposed upon it. None would promise not to rise up again, even if only after years to renew the struggle. Such a war could easily become a seven years’ or a thirty years’ war. Woe to him who applies the torch to Europe, who is the first to throw the match into the powder cask.*

Helmut von Moltke (The Elder),
14 May 1890

*If any question why we died/ Tell them because our fathers lied.*

Rudyard Kipling (after learning that his son, Jack, had died on the Western Front, 1915)

World War I had as profound an impact on the evolution of modern warfare and Western military thought as the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars did – indeed, possibly even more. One of the legacies of the French Revolution was the cultivation of intense, militaristic nationalism throughout Europe over the remainder of the nineteenth century. This nationalism glorified the state as the embodiment of all that was admirable in its population and as an institution whose destiny, in turn, was to defend the reputation, courage, and honor of the nation, through warfare, if necessary.

The character of the wars that followed emerged from the very heart of that state. The economic fruits of the industrial revolution combined with militant nationalism and Social Darwinist philosophies to create a military capacity unprecedented in its intensity and scope. The industrial revolution had created the capacity to draft, train, mobilize, equip, transport, and supply mass armies – and the ability to reconstitute and resupply these armies while maintaining the livelihoods of the civilian population. In turn, militaristic nationalism glorified the state-nation and even viewed armed conflict as a normal, even preferable, tool of statecraft. At its most extreme, war was described as a form of “spiritual hygiene.” In the end, entire generations sacrificed themselves at the altar of national greatness and power.

As Michael Howard has pointed out (and von Moltke the elder had predicted fourteen years beforehand), the intensity of the violence that erupted in August 1914 was not unanticipated; but its scale dwarfed expectations. Able to discern the outlines of catastrophe but unable to grasp its long-term implications, the combatants threw huge numbers of troops into combat, pitting strength against strength for weeks, months, and eventually years. As early as December 1914, millions of casualties precluded any thought of a negotiated settlement: the only option was to press on toward a “victory” to justify the blood spilled and the treasure lost. Consequently, the nations of Europe spent the next three years searching for strategic, operational, and tactical solutions that would somehow break the stalemate. The end was ambiguous: the bleeding could certainly have continued, but political and societal-level exhaustion, particularly in Germany, brought an inconclusive armistice in 1918.

World War I is important to us for a host of reasons. Among these is the failure of decision makers and strategists to appreciate fully all the signposts pointing to the coming disaster. This failure gets to the heart of one of the themes of this course: the ability or inability to learn from history and experience, to develop strategic insight.

---

10 Some speculate that Kipling felt deep guilt at his son’s death, as he had pressured colleagues to get him a commission in the Irish guards despite Jack’s poor eyesight and young age (17). George Webb, “Foreword” to Rudyard Kipling, *The Irish Guards in the Great War*, 2 vols. (Stroud Gloucestershire UK: Spellmount, 1997), 9.
and judgment that transcends the immediate, the emotional, and the tactical. The ultimate question is whether European leaders should have seen World War I coming – and whether they could have done anything to prevent the war from taking its devastating trajectory. Just as important, when the war ended, should they have understood the fundamental weaknesses in the peace that they crafted?

Objectives:

Analyze the grand strategies of the major belligerents before and during the Great War in light of the strategic and military theories studied thus far.

Analyze how factors such as capabilities, force structure, resources, and processes of innovation affected the military strategies of each of the belligerents.

Evaluate the strategic leadership of political and military leaders at the time.

Analyze the impact of the First World War on European societies at the time, and since.

Analyze the reasons for the emergence of this kind of war within its historical context.

Read:


[Howard traces the seemingly paradoxical development prior to WWI of support for the military offensive, while leaders and scholars appeared to appreciate and understand the potential costs in lives that would result from advances in weaponry. He goes on to explain how tactics changed to attrition warfare when neither side could secure ground, and thus set the stage for modern industrialized powers to continue a grueling and costly conflict.]


[Geyer follows the transformation of a unified German strategy through multiple stages, from Schlieffen’s campaign of Gesamtschlacht led by military experts and designed to isolate war from political and societal influences, to the disaster at Verdun, described as a benchmark in the fragmentation of strategy, battle design and tactics, and finally culminating in the (Third) Supreme Command’s efforts that totally reversed the traditional strategic calculus relating ends to means. Read this portion on WWI for today’s class; you’ll read the sections on WWII for C11.]


[Gopnik reexamines some familiar themes from WWI through the pages of “revisionist” histories, focusing on Hew Strachan’s view that the war was tragic, but essentially fought for a good cause. He goes on to review the imperialistic goals, complex alliances and mobilizations that could not be stopped, incapable or unwilling leaders, political-military disconnects, moral justifications, and the perceived need for national cleansing of bourgeois attitudes that led to war. Gopnik closes by asking whether, given all the possible outcomes, the results could have been any worse and did the ends really justify the means?]

Rothenberg, Gunther E. “Moltke, Schlieffen, and the Doctrine of Strategic Envelopment.” In Makers of Modern Strategy, 311-25. [required text]

cont. on next page
Rothenberg examines the development of the Schlieffen Plan, described as a rigid, time-table driven operation to envelop and annihilate the French, then turn to the second front in the east. When the younger Moltke became chief of the general staff, he developed a new plan based on the original, but expanded to include the flexibility to pursue a double envelopment. Moltke’s version failed on the battlefield, and he was heavily criticized for “ruining” Schlieffen’s concept. But ultimately, the failure of Germany’s scheme lay in the chasm between political and military strategy development.


[This chapter describes Woodrow Wilson’s difficulties in devising peace terms at Versailles following World War One.]
C11. Tues, 9 Apr 2019; Franklin Delano Roosevelt and American Grand Strategy in World War II

National Socialist Germany wants peace because of its fundamental convictions. And it wants peace also owing to the realization of the simple primitive fact that no war would be likely essentially to alter the distress in Europe... The principal effect of every war is to destroy the flower of the nation.... Germany needs peace and desires peace!

Adolf Hitler
21 May 1935

This is a sad day for all of us, and to none is it sadder than to me. Everything that I have worked for, everything that I have believed in during my public life, has crashed into ruins. There is only one thing left for me to do: That is, to devote what strength and powers I have to forwarding the victory of the cause for which we have to sacrifice so much.... I trust I may live to see the day when Hitlerism has been destroyed and a liberated Europe has been re-established.

Neville Chamberlain
3 September 1939

Yesterday, December 7, 1941 – a date which will live in infamy – The United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan ... As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense.... With confidence in our armed forces – with the unbounded determination of our people – we will gain the inevitable triumph – so help us God.”

President Franklin Roosevelt
8 December 1941

Europe was materially and spiritually exhausted after the carnage of the First World War. Over thirteen million people had died in the four year conflict, a war that in the view of many accomplished nothing but a return to a corrupt and antiquated status quo. Disillusionment, revolution, isolationism, and anti-militarism were widespread in the war’s aftermath. Yet twenty years later Europe was on the brink of a new war that threatened to be even more destructive than the last. Why, after the carnage of the First World War, was Europe ready to do it again?

The origins of the Second World War are complex. The roots of conflict lay to some degree in the Treaty of Versailles, whose harsh terms fed a sense of betrayal in Germany that contributed to the rise of the Nazi party. Many experts (including Philip Bobbitt) have argued that Versailles was not a peace treaty at all, but rather a temporary interlude in an ongoing war between nations. Yet Versailles cannot be the only answer. The global economic depression of the interwar period created societal unrest and political radicalization. Italian fascism predated German fascism by over ten years. Japan’s increasing militarism was intensely cultural, based on the glories of a remembered (and some would argue invented) past, but it is also germane that economic depression struck Japan as early as 1922. Despite international abhorrence for war in 1918, even codified in the outlawing of war under the 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact, war was again seen as not only as necessary but in some cases desirable (or at least unavoidable) by 1939.

The war that came was one of paradoxes and extremes. While constrained to some degree by the Geneva conventions, it saw heretofore inconceivable violence against civilians as part of an organized strategy. Modern armies relied on high technology weapons, but the German Army, considered the most formidable in the world in 1939, depended as much on horses as on armor. It was a total war for unlimited objectives, actively promoted by ideologies in the pre-war period espoused by proponents apparently ignorant (or self-delusional) regarding the destruction that would result.
The subject of the Second World War is rich in lessons for the modern strategist and could easily encompass several courses. For our purposes, however, the following are important to consider.

1. Pre-war planning and the role of theory: By the early 1930s it was clear that war was a possibility in Europe. The rise of Italian and German fascism and Japanese imperialism actively promoted militarization and war as legitimate and healthy for the nation. In this environment the “peace” of the 1930s was an illusion. Japanese expansion into China began in 1931. The Germans and Soviets used the Spanish Civil War in 1936 as a laboratory to test weapons and tactics. And the Soviet Union attacked Finland in 1939. These conflicts were closely studied on all sides as illustrations of the “new” types of war that could be expected. During the inter-war period theorists such as Douhet, Guderian, and Liddell Hart attempted to reconcile the use of new technologies with the idea of “total” war in which civilians would play an important role in supporting — and suffering from — the war effort. In the United States, the Naval War College, Marine Corps planners, and Air Corps theorists made great strides in developing strategies and doctrine to achieve national security objectives, but none adequately addressed conflicting service concepts.

Military strategists in the inter-war period were in a difficult position. Rapidly evolving technology was the subject of intense debate, but actual application was difficult. Technology was viewed differently among the major powers and largely in accordance with their political ideologies. The tank, for example, was seen in Germany as a weapon of offense that could be used to break the deadlock of trench warfare. Western nations saw the weapon’s value but marginalized it — Britain and France, mired in defensive thinking, relegated it to infantry support as if it were a mobile pill box, while too many senior American officers viewed it primarily as a challenge to the tradition-bound horse cavalry arm. (Indeed, two young tank theorists, Majors Patton and Eisenhower, were personally disciplined by the Army Chief of Staff for writing articles, swiftly withdrawn, that argued for mass tank warfare.)

By 1939 the end result of interwar planning and theoretical argument was national strategies that were very different. Germany was committed to a doctrine of offensive, mechanized warfare (dubbed “blitzkrieg” by the press when put into action), relying on a revolutionary combined arms operational approach to achieve rapid mobile exploitation. France had spent years developing a comprehensive defense-in-depth centered on the fortifications of the Maginot line. Britain maintained a relatively small army expeditionary force, but had spent much time and money developing a large bomber fleet based on the offensive theories of Italian theorist Giulio Douhet, while focusing on the Royal Navy as its primary national strategic force. Japan, taking lessons from its operations in China, relied on the spirit of Bushido to drive its infantry and developed an extensive naval air arm for extended operations, while also suffering from a breakdown in governance that led to the military dominating national policy. Russia, hurrying in 1941 to catch up after years of Stalinist purges (which severely depleted its army of both expertise and initiative), eventually developed an armored force that would dominate the Germans with its size and effectiveness. And America remained largely isolationist, cutting Army funding during the Depression and for the most part delaying modernization (except in the Navy and the Air Corps).11

2. The onset of war: Much like the experience of Athens and Sparta, strategies were altered as the scope of World War II became apparent. France’s strategic reliance on defensive fortification was rapidly defeated by the outflanking German tank columns. All the combatants learned that reliance on strategic bombing as advocated by Douhet, Billy Mitchell, and other airpower thinkers was not adequate to defeat a powerful enemy, given the technologies available, while Britain also found that its surface navy was inadequate in the face of airpower. Stalin’s paranoia about the ideological reliability of his officer corps (enforced by frequent bloody purges during the 1930s) produced a mediocre leadership that broke and ran at the first attack of German panzers. Japan’s surprise attack at Pearl Harbor did not lead to America suing for peace but had the opposite effect, infuriating the nation and leading to massive mobilization for war. Even Germany, spectacularly successful in the early part of the war, continued to rely on Blitzkrieg tactics that became ineffective (especially in the vast reaches of Russia) as the Allies armed and adjusted, a fact that was obvious to all but Hitler (and his acolytes) who increasingly meddled in day-to-day operations.

3. Coalition warfare: World war meant coalition warfare on an unprecedented scale, but shared objectives did not necessarily lead to smooth relations. The much-vaunted American-British alliance is but one example. Even after Pearl Harbor, the overwhelming majority of the American public did not favor intervention in Europe, and the “Europe first” policy was widely questioned, referred to derisively as “Britain’s war” or “the war for Empire.”

The problems of coalition warfare were most evident in coordinating large scale military operations. The US service chiefs resented their more experienced but resource-starved British counterparts, while the latter viewed their new allies as well-intentioned amateurs, at best. This dissonance led to unnecessary losses, as exemplified in the refusal of the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Ernest King, to recognize the need to escort convoys in American coastal waters. (The convoy system had been “invented” and used successfully during WW I, but then had to be re-invented.) American and British air chiefs disagreed vehemently about the efficacy of daylight vs. night bombing, which led to duplication and wasted assets. By 1944 the United States had gained dominance in the coalition, begrudgingly acknowledged by the British as a reflection of their material superiority (vice operational skill, in many British minds). Stalin, ever paranoid about the West, never trusted his allies and conducted operations largely independent of them, confining “cooperation” to receiving Lend Lease and calling stridently for a second front.

Coalition problems were not confined to the Allies. The so called “Pact of Steel” was based solely on Germany and Italy’s shared fascist ideologies and driven by the personalities of their respective dictators. Japan, a signatory to the Pact, never cooperated to any significant degree with her allies. Operational coordination between German and Italian forces (as well as with the other states that contributed troops, such as Hungary) was notoriously poor. This weakness was exploited time and again by the Allies, as in Montgomery’s operations in Africa and Allied offensives in the Sicily-Italy campaigns.

It is noteworthy, however, that the Allies ultimately achieved a degree of cooperation at the level of grand strategy that eluded the fascist powers. This was accomplished largely through the forceful personalities of Roosevelt and Churchill, who clearly recognized the requirement for a combined effort and understood the need to ensure that military strategy properly supported national and coalition strategy – as demonstrated in their decision to launch the invasion of North Africa in 1942, in the face of opposition by their Chiefs of Staff. It should be noted that cooperation may not have occurred without the unique combination of talents of these two men. Pressures against it were enormous. As noted above, the respective military leaders of the allied powers were suspicious of each other at best. And, as elected leaders, Roosevelt and Churchill had to answer to political forces at home. Each was under constant scrutiny by political opponents, especially during the early stages of the war when the United States was technically neutral.

Even after 1941, when they openly faced a common enemy, there was a great degree of mistrust among the allied powers. Adding Stalin to the mix was disruptive. While Roosevelt and Churchill had cultivated a long-standing friendly relationship, Churchill disliked Stalin intensely and was constantly warning of Soviet expansionism. Stalin distrusted Western motives toward his country, a paranoia that was not entirely unjustified given Western intervention in the Russian Revolution and what he perceived as a delay in opening a second front. Roosevelt, a consummate politician, tried with little success to work as a buffer between the two. Nevertheless, early meetings between Roosevelt and Churchill, at Washington in 1941 and 1942 and Casablanca in 1943, were not simply expressions of political unity. Putting aside individual feelings, they managed to hammer out a grand strategy and agree on major strategic goals that effectively drove the course of the war – although translating grand strategy to military operations was a huge challenge.

4. War against civilians: While it is true that all of the major combatants planned for “total war” in the inter-war period (in the United States, for example, the Industrial College of the Armed Forces was formed in 1920 specifically to study and plan for national economic mobilization), the mass destruction and widespread killing of civilians that occurred during the war was not fully anticipated, despite Douhet’s theories and the example of the Spanish Civil War. The realization that civilians were integral to a nation’s ability to wage war and therefore were legitimate targets had been illustrated during WW I. Mao Zedong had theorized about the implications in the 1930s, but most Western strategists were slower to follow the logic to its obvious conclusions. Although atrocities had always been part of war, actions against civilians during the Second World War were ideologically rationalized and well organized. These ranged from imprisonment of suspected “enemies” (which occurred in all nations, including the United States) to organized wholesale slaughter such as the infamous “Rape of Nanking” and the Holocaust.
Militarily, loosely defined targets centered on “production” and, even more nebulously, “morale” were deemed legitimate objectives of unrestricted submarine warfare and the mass firebombing of cities, culminating in atomic explosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

5. Effects and the peace that followed: In the aftermath of the war, the global strategic environment quickly assumed a bi-polar state as the war-time alliance between the United States and Soviet Union devolved into acrimony, threat, and cold war. This Cold War between the new superpowers dominated world affairs for over 40 years. Militarily, although much of the war was “irregular,” doctrine for large-scale conventional warfare, significantly modified by the advent of nuclear weapons, dominated the strategies of the United States and Russia as they re-militarized and modernized their forces. Nuclear weapons and the will to use them became foremost in strategic thinking. Cold War strategists saw World War II as the “big war” – and were divided on whether World War III would be another big war, this time with nukes, or decided in a flash of atomic annihilation. The advent of the nuclear age also signaled unprecedented power for national leaders such as the US president, the sole decision-maker for launching potentially devastating weapons.

Objectives:

Analyze the unique nature of WW II as the culmination of industrialized warfare.

Evaluate the impact and importance of WW II as a “model war” for the American public and military.

Assess the impact of industrialized warfare and reliance upon technology on US military culture.

Analyze WW II as a case of coalition-based warfare.

Analyze the grand strategy of President Franklin Roosevelt.

Read:


[This reading comprises the last two sections of Geyer’s comprehensive review of German professional military thought from the pre-WW1 period until defeat in 1945. (You read the sections on WWI last week.) Geyer analyzes Hitler’s strategy, particularly its ideological foundations, and the inability or unwillingness of German senior officers to challenge it.]


[This is an analysis of coalition warfare. Matloff addresses the popular misconception that the Allies won through blunt application of mass production instead of a coordinated strategy. He suggests that while the Allies started the war with an immature strategy, by the end it was completely effective in the military sense. It was a hybrid strategy based on American directness, British caution, and Soviet bluntness.]

James, D. Clayton. “American and Japanese Strategies in the Pacific War.” In Makers of Modern Strategy, 703-32. [required text]

[James argues that the U.S. and Japan went to war in 1941 because their national strategies had become irreconcilable. The article provides rich detail on pre-war assumptions and the difficulties of changing strategy as the war progressed. The attack on Pearl Harbor, envisioned as leading to a negotiated settlement by the Japanese, failed miserably. American strategy focused on keeping China in the war and decisive defeat of Japan within the confines of the “Europe first” commitment.]
Gaddis, John Lewis. *Strategies of Containment*. [required text]
“Chapter One: Prologue: Containment before Kennan,” 3-23.

[This chapter describes Roosevelt’s strategic dilemmas during the war, the compromises he was forced to make, and the seeds of the US-Soviet confrontation following it.]

Chapter 15 “America Re-enters the Arena,” and Chapter 16 “Three Approaches to Peace,” 369-422.
[e-reserve]

[Kissinger describes the differing approaches of Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill and the implications for the peace settlement following the Second World War.]
C12. Tues, 16 Apr 2019; The Cold War and Containment

The Cold War emerged out of the Second World War, as two superpowers with very different ideologies developed spheres of influence amidst the postwar wreckage. Competition between the two, with their different economic systems, domestic government, and approaches to alliances, defined the next 45 years. At its most basic level, the Cold War was a fight over the legitimacy of the state, with one side devoted to democracy and free market capitalism, and the other to Communist Party rule and a controlled economy. Once the Soviet Union developed its own nuclear weapons, this bipolar relationship became literally a balance of terror, with each side easily able to obliterate the other in minutes. As a result, the era became characterized by indirect, “proxy” wars in the so-called Third World, in addition to a limited number of direct air engagements during the Korean War, various confrontations at sea, and the defining terror of the Cuban missile crisis. In this class we will examine the successes, failures, and evolution of “containment,” the grand strategy of the United States in the Cold War first proposed by George F. Kennan.

Read:

Gaddis, John Lewis. Strategies of Containment, Chapters 2-7, 24-234. [required text]

[Baddis presents the grand strategy of the United States, containment, as an evolving series of vacillations between strong point and perimeter defense.]

Bennett, Philip F. “Korea and the Thirties (B).” Harvard University Kennedy School of Government, Case C14-80-299, 1983. [required text]

Bennett, Philip F. “Korea and the Thirties (A).” Harvard University Kennedy School of Government, Case C14-80-298, 1983. [required text]

[The two parts of the Kennedy School case study on Korea are focused on the analysis and decision making of US leaders in reacting to the North Korean attack on the South, especially President Harry S. Truman. Part B is a summary of events prior to the attack which would possibly have influenced the perspective of decision makers, beginning in 1931 and ending in 1941 – so read that part first. Part A fills in the background events, provides details on Truman’s decision making process, and ends with his order to General MacArthur to commit US troops to the defense of the South.]


[Dobbs begins his book on the Cuban missile crisis with a description of US decision makers and their analysis of the situation during the first five days of the crisis, drawing from the many sources that have become available since the end of the Cold War.]
C13. Tues, 23 Apr 2019; Case Study: The Vietnam War

*America’s fatal error was to underestimate its foe. US policymakers casually assumed that the Vietnamese, rational beings like themselves, would know better than to stand up against the most powerful nation in the world.*

George C. Herring

*Every quantitative measurement we have shows that we are winning this war.*

Secretary of Defense
Robert S. McNamara

*You know, you never defeated us on the battlefield. That may be so, but it is also irrelevant.*

Exchange between US Army Colonel Harry Summers and a North Vietnamese colonel in 1975

The Vietnam War continues to be a key perceptual prism through which American leaders, journalists, and the public at large assess commitments of military power. Despite President George H. W. Bush’s declaration that with Operation DESERT STORM the US had “finally exorcised the ghosts” of that war, the legacy of Vietnam remains present in public discourse. It is reflected, most notably, in such questions as: What’s the political objective? What are the costs in blood and treasure? What are the risks of action and inaction? Are the American people supportive of the commitment? For how long and at what price? What’s the exit strategy? Implicit in these questions – whether posed in the context of Bosnia, or Somalia, or Kosovo, or Iraq – is the abiding fear of a “quagmire” and a “credibility gap.” Whether asked in media interviews, congressional hearings, or interagency debates, these questions also convey enduring concerns with costs disproportionate to potential gain; with fatal disconnects between policy and strategy; and with fissures between the people, their government, and their military – all a legacy of Vietnam.

What kind of war was Vietnam? Was it a civil war, an insurgency, or simply one of several Cold War clashes, best seen in the context of the East-West ideological struggle? Clausewitz teaches that “The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish . . . the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.” As basic as this principle is, American political and military leaders had trouble defining – and convincing others – as to the “kind of war” they were waging in Southeast Asia.

The US military, particularly the US Army, never effectively came to grips with the strategy of its enemy, focusing instead on the tactical elements of the fight. Most military leaders argued that US units should concentrate on defeating the North Vietnamese regulars (People’s Army of Vietnam – PAVN) who had moved to challenge them in the south, and that the guerilla war was a side show best left to Special Forces and South Vietnamese troops. They were confident that despite the fighting prowess of the PAVN, American advantages in firepower could attrit the North’s manpower until they could no longer sustain the fight. The result of this mindset is starkly illustrated by the well-known exchange between Colonel Summers and a Vietnamese counterpart quoted above. Focused on the battlefield, US commanders demanded more and more troops and other resources, using massive amounts of firepower to inflict casualties on this stubborn enemy who would not give up – giving little thought to the question of why all those battlefield victories were not “adding up” to political success for the nation.

Writing in 1973, Bernard Brodie concluded that “Vietnam is a story of virtually un-mitigated disasters that we have inflicted on ourselves and even more on others … The Vietnamese situation seems to have been peculiarly constructed to entice us deeper into the morass of error, and essential to that treacherous construction has been the puny quality of the opponent, against whom two Presidents have found it temperamentally beyond their powers to admit failure.” The cost of that failure was 58,000 American lives, 300,000 wounded, and 1,900 still officially listed as MIA. US allies killed in action included 4,407 from the Republic of Korea, 423 from Australia, 351 from Thailand, and 83 from New Zealand. In 1995, Vietnam announced it had lost 1.1 million troops killed and 600,000
wounded from 1954 to 1975, totals that included the Viet Cong guerillas in the south. They estimated that 2 million civilians had died in that same period. The US government estimate of the number of civilians killed in the bombing of the north is 30,000. Why the US failed in Vietnam and how can we avoid repeating the strategic errors that made success impossible are the subject of our discussion.

Objective:

Analyze US actions in Vietnam as an application of its Cold War grand strategy.

Read:

Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, Chapter 8, 235-71. [required text]


[This case summarizes the events, decisions, and strategic logic of US political leaders and policy analysts from initial US commitments in the 1950s to President Lyndon Johnson’s decision in 1965 to commit US troops to offensive combat operations.]


C14. Tues, 30 Apr 2019; Every War Must End; But How?

The object of war is to establish a better peace – even if only from your own point of view. Hence it is essential to conduct war with a constant regard to the peace you desire.

B. H. Liddell Hart\(^ {12} \)

It is the way in which a war is brought to an end that has the most decisive long-term impact.

Fred C. Iklé\(^ {13} \)

The process of war termination is often short-changed or even forgotten, and yet it is central to grand strategic thinking. We focus a great deal in our theoretical strategic frameworks on the question of objectives, usually arguing that they must be closely aligned with national interests if states are to initiate the use of force, i.e., go to war. Clausewitz also focuses on the theoretical importance of limited and unlimited objectives in On War; these are hardly new concepts. However, today’s topic, while intimately related to the fundamental strategic challenge of determining the objective in war, is much less often studied: how, when, and why do we end a war?

Ending a war is difficult, for many reasons – some having little to do with rational calculations of costs and benefits. Once blood has been spilled, it is hard to take the kind of antiseptic approach to ends and means that is at the core of strategic thinking. But war termination is difficult because of broader historical reasons, as well. Reflecting the changing nature of the state and the international context, war has evolved to a point where it is not the “on” or “off” phenomenon that it has been in some earlier eras. The questions we face are not merely well-defined issues related to changing (or disappearing) rituals of surrender, improving the military’s ability to handle “phase four” operations, enhancing the roles of civilian personnel, and supporting post-conflict stability and reconstruction — as important as all of those challenges are. The most important questions are even more fundamental. What is war? Is the purpose of war to create a better peace? What does peace mean today? How can we tell when “war” has ended and “peace” has begun? Is “stability” an objective that can be factored into a conflict before it is begun? And if stability becomes the goal in the wake of a conflict, how do we judge (or affect) the legitimacy of the state that is left behind?

Objectives:

Evaluate the relationship between war and peace in the 21st century and its practical implications for strategy and the use of military force.

Analyze the relevance of grand strategy for the current “Global War on Terrorism.”

Formulate a grand strategy for the United States (or any other nation), integrating all the instruments of power on the basis of the history, theory, and strategic concepts analyzed in this course.

Read:


---


\(^ {13} \) Fred Iklé, Every War Must End, 2d revised ed., with new preface (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), xvii.