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PEACE, AND STRATEGY

# TALK

COLIN S. GRAY



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*This book is dedicated to my research students, past and present.  
They have taught me more than I have taught them.*

*Contentious Thoughts on War and Peace*

War is the father of all things.

Heraclitus of Ephesus, 540–480 BC

In Italy for thirty years under the Borgias they had warfare, terror, murder, bloodshed—but they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and the Renaissance. In Switzerland they had brotherly love, 500 years of democracy and peace, and what did they produce? The cuckoo clock.

Harry Lime, in the movie *The Third Man*, 1949

I hold it as a principle that the duration of peace is in direct proportion to the slaughter you inflict upon the enemy. The harder you hit them, the longer they remain quiet.

General Mikhail Skobelev, 1881



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# Preface

*Fighting Talk* is an effort to meet a challenge that I set myself many years ago. Namely, could I present and explain the most serious matters of war, peace, and strategy in a format that would be much less dense and professionally forbidding than is usual? Whether or not I have succeeded only readers can tell me. Over the years many efforts have been made to offer menu cards with isolated nuggets of strategic wisdom for those needful of an express education. It seems that the market for “how to” manuals is always open. *Fighting Talk* may appear to be a book in that popular genre, but appearances are deceptive, in this case, at least. This is an accessible work, with only the essential minimum of scholarly apparatus, but it is not a dumbed-down guide to war, peace, and strategy. Perhaps I should hasten to add that it is not intended to be such.

There is nothing unique about a book of maxims. However, to the best of my knowledge I am the only contemporary working strategist to have attempted such a project. Maxims, principles, enduring truths, and the like are very much out of scholarly fashion. This is a pity because a predictable result of the current general disdain for maxims and principles is that many people are seriously undereducated in the basics of the natures of, and relations among, war, peace, and strategy.

The “Introduction” explains the structure of *Fighting Talk*. I must indicate here that each of the maxim essays opens and closes with a quotation. Those quotations are not intended to be decorative. They are integral to the stories told, the explanations offered, in the text. In virtually all respects, save only for intellectual content, the writing of *Fighting Talk* has been an experimental venture for this strategist. I have written many books on strategy, but never before have I striven to explain tersely the core realities—dare I say truths?—of strategic history, tied by the discipline of selected maxims. Most of the ideas in these forty maxims are well known, if not always well understood. It would be strange indeed were I able to write a book of wholly original maxims. How could allegedly eternal truths have evaded discovery for so long? The notion is, of course, absurd. But, I

do claim to have treated these ideas, the more and the less familiar, in a distinctive and coherent manner.

Although I have presented the claims in some of these maxims many times to many audiences, these essays are entirely original. They have all been written for this book. None have been published previously in any form whatsoever.

The subject reach of the maxims is so extensive that I cannot, in all honesty, follow the usual practice and acknowledge particular people as sources of inspiration. Perhaps I should cite Napoleon, whose *Military Maxims* probably sparked my interest in the first place. The choice of maxims has been the product of nearly forty years of experience as a strategy professional. However, I do wish to acknowledge the importance of my research students for the maturing of the ideas in *Fighting Talk*. Over the course of many years, my intellectual exchanges with graduate students have, I suspect been of greater benefit to me than they have been to them. I am greatly indebted to my doctoral students at the Universities of Hull and now at Reading, in Britain. They have kept me on my toes, and sometimes challenged me on verities that I claimed, but which, on close examination, were nothing of the kind. The lot of the professor, this professor at least, is not always an intellectually trouble-free one.

As usual, Barbara Watts has performed with exemplary skill at the demanding task of manuscript preparation. Thank you Barbara. And, also very much as usual, my family has supported, and with justice complained about, yet another of my book writing enterprises. Thank you Valerie and Tonia for tolerating such an obsessive husband and father. Valerie, I owe you an especial vote of thanks for your inspired labor on the index. Greater love hath no person.

Colin S. Gray  
Wokingham, UK  
October 2006

# Introduction: Getting the Big Things Right Enough

A maxim is “[a] general truth or rule of conduct expressed in a sentence.”<sup>1</sup> This book is founded on two propositions. First, there is a body of maxims on war, peace, and strategy which are both true and important. Second, these truths frequently are forgotten, or misunderstood, often with dire consequences. *Fighting Talk* is designed to provide much of what is intellectually essential for the education of a strategist. This mission may seem to be heavily in debt to the writings of Baron Antoine Henri de Jomini, Napoleon’s most famous and faithful contemporary interpreter.<sup>2</sup> Such an impression would be substantially, though not entirely, in error. Despite Carl von Clausewitz’s detestation of principles, let alone maxims, his is the prime inspiration for this venture.<sup>3</sup> The maxims presented and discussed here do not lend themselves to employment on menu cards as advice on “how to do it.” Rather are they explained for their value in aiding understanding of the nature of war, peace, and strategy.

The maxim format is unusual, to say the least. Also it may appear challenging to scholarly notions of sound professional practice. If these forty essays were intended to explore the nature of their subjects, then a scholarly objection would be in order. However, such is not their purpose. This is a work of exposition and explanation, not of argument. The maxims are not, at least should not be, controversial. I will argue for their significance, but not for their veracity. Indeed, it is true to claim that none of these forty maxims lend themselves to plausible denial. For examples selected at random, it is difficult to see how anyone could assert credibly that war is not a gamble, that war’s contexts are not all important, or that friction is of no account. This is not a book of interesting questions. By their very nature maxims are answers to questions. Therefore, this is a book of answers. It is also a highly personal work. The selection of maxims may be challenged, to which I can reply only that these are my choices and critics are at liberty to develop their own preferred list.

Lest there be any misunderstanding, this book is written so as to present this one strategist's view of the nature of his subject. The maxim mini-essay format was chosen for its ease of accessibility to readers. Exposed in these pages are the assumptions of a working strategist. Their meanings are explained, their significance is highlighted, and the perils of ignoring them are illustrated. If not quite unique, *Fighting Talk* at the least is unusual in laying bare the conscious assumptions about war, peace, and strategy, with which this strategist is armed. The essays are of necessity brief. But they are not, I hope, superficial as a consequence. They may not look scholarly, but an important reason why they can be terse is because they are the product of forty years of scholarly enquiry, policy oriented study, and policy relevant work. Typically, strategists use their assumptions without being aware that they are doing so. After all, we do not make a habit of dwelling upon uncontroversial matters. Policymakers and soldiers have to be most interested in the application of these maxims, rather than in the maxims themselves. They will want to know, for example, just how difficult, and why, it will be to make peace after war.

Maxims often are statements of what should be obvious. To attain maxim status, a claim must be much more than merely the opinion of one person. It is probably true to argue that although the forty items exposed here are the personal choices of the author, also, with a few exceptions, they are culturally revealing. They express the worldview of a strategic culture, that of an Anglo-American strategist. Many, perhaps most, of these maxims will be endorsed far beyond the author's culture zone. But in alien cultural contexts their interpretation may well suggest ideas and behavior at some variance from those preferred here.

These maxim essays comprise the building blocks of strategic theory, stripped of the usual scholarly paraphernalia, which can impede clarity. The intention is to cut to the chase, to focus upon the main plot. The book's format strictly requires me to do that. Contrary to appearances, perhaps, there is a story arc in these pages. This is not a jumble of mini-essays assembled almost at random. I hope that readers are able to appreciate the effort at intelligent design. The strategic worldview presented is coherent, and the essays are all complementary, indeed they are mutually reinforcing. Inevitably, in a few cases a measure of overlap and some repetition is unavoidable.

The maxims are organized into five clusters. The essays in Part I, "War and Peace" (Maxims 1–10), address different aspects of the most important subject for the strategist—the nature of war and the relationship between war and peace. Strategy is needed in both peace and war. War emerges out of a condition of peace, just as peace follows war. The strategist must always be on duty. If war is politics by other means, then politics can be war by other means, also. That thought is a little too neat, but it captures the core character of the relationship between rival polities. Part I tackles those larger issues of strategic history that drive the demand for the services of strategic thought and practice.



The maxims in Part II, “Strategy” (Maxims 11–21), move the story on from the contextual matters of war and peace in Part I, into the practical realm of strategic behavior. This behavior, with its many constraints, can only make sense when it is guided by the political considerations that were addressed in Part I. It is useful to conceive of strategy as the bridge between political intent and military power, or power more generally if the subject is grand strategy. That logic, indeed reality, is reflected in the book’s organization. The maxims on “Strategy” provide the vital bridge between the political focus of Part I, and the military concerns of Part III.

In Part III, “Military Power and Warfare” (Maxims 22–28), the searchlight shifts downward from the elevated heights of strategy to the pragmatic business of military performance. These essays are about “doing strategy”: operationally, tactically, and logistically. These maxims address warfare, the violent thread in the raw material of strategic history.

Having dealt directly with the core concerns of the strategist in Parts I—III, the book moves to enrich strategic education by some necessary contextualization. Specifically, Part IV, “Security and Insecurity” (Maxims 29–35), tackles some of the reasons why strategy is important. These essays explain what the strategist, at least this strategist, believes about the nature, dynamic character, and functioning of world politics.

Finally, Part V, “History and the Future” (Maxims 36–40), adopts the perspective of Fernand Braudel’s *longue durée*.<sup>4</sup> Its essays are designed to help strategists understand better the processes of historical change, some of the consequences of which are their daily professional focus. These essays are concerned particularly to provide guidance on the much-debated question of that ambiguous concept, progress. Do strategists contribute to humankind’s advance toward a state of world affairs from which war, though certainly not all violence, has been abolished? Or, must strategists continue to hold the bridge between politics and military power, as they have always done? Is there a master narrative to strategic history, one that registers and even guides us toward an ever more peaceful, and secure, future? Or, is strategic history a journey without an overarching purpose? In the latter view, favored by this strategist, history moves on to nowhere in particular. The best that the strategist can do is to provide navigational assistance so that our passage is as untroubled by politically motivated violence as it can be.

The maxims presented and explained here cannot be culture free. They have to reflect the author’s culture and the several contexts whence they derive. Nonetheless, strategy is an equal opportunity concept and practice. Different cultures think in ways at variance from some, at least, of the ideas raised here. However, I believe that there are few among these forty maxims to which strategists from a cultural space different from the author would not give their assent. This is to suggest that much of the general wisdom on strategy truly is transcultural. I must hasten to add that the interpretation of these maxims, and behavior to express such interpretation in action, will vary with local culture: public, strategic and military.<sup>5</sup>

I believe that these forty maxims have universal validity. But, it is not the purpose of this book to make an intellectually imperial claim. The starting point for this project is far more modest. I claim only that historical experience reveals to me the nature and functioning of strategy. This historically founded revelation lends itself for clarity in presentation to the mini-essay maxim format. Other people will have their own preferred list of maxims, while many will deny the utility, even the validity, of the concept of the strategic maxim. So be it. This book is a personal statement.

The substantive title of this Introduction, “Getting the Big Things Right Enough,” points to the heart of my purpose. It is my belief that understanding of these maxims should forearm politicians, soldiers, and the attentive general public, against many, probably most, of the fallacies that abound in contemporary debates about war, peace and security. Mistakes will always be made. But a strategic education led by the judgments in these maxims increases the chances that one’s errors will be small rather than large. They will be tactical and operational, rather than political and strategic. This means that the errors ought to be capable of being corrected because they fall in the area of implementation rather than purpose. Strategic success can never be guaranteed. It is hostage to the sense in policy, to the prowess of the military instrument, and to the quality of the dialogue between the two. It is out of that dialogue that sound strategy should emerge.<sup>6</sup>

# Part I

## War and Peace





# Maxim 1

---

## The Contexts of War Are All Important

[A]n understanding of war requires its contextualization. Military history exists in a context of other histories.

Jeremy Black, 2004<sup>1</sup>

Wars are not free-floating events, sufficient unto themselves as objects for study and understanding. Instead, they are entirely the product of their contexts. Their courses and outcomes must be influenced hugely by those contexts. But the contexts do not determine performance. Belligerents differ in the skill with which they play the hands they have, while chance can intervene to advance or retard cunning plans.

What are the principal contexts of war? They are seven in number. Maxim 1 asserts that every war has, indeed can and should be understood with reference to, these seven. Specifically, the seven contexts of war are political, social-cultural, economic, technological, military-strategic, geopolitical and geostrategic, and historical. All wars, of all kinds and in all periods, lend themselves to analysis by means of the toolkit containing these seven. They define all the essential characteristics of a particular armed conflict. Some readers may suspect that I am guilty of the scholar's vice of presenting the straight-forward and simple in as complex a manner as possible. Not only must I deny such a hypothetical charge, I must proceed to point that the seven contexts identified here are very much a short list among the many contexts of war. Underlying Maxim 1 is the thesis that war is always a very complicated project, and that the warfare captured selectively on CNN is only the tip of the iceberg insofar as presenting material that can yield understanding. The strategist knows that only with a grasp of the contexts of war are we able to explain and understand most of what is happening.

The political context within which a war is nested is literally the source of any and every conflict. This is not to claim that all wars have identical causes. But it is to assert that they are all waged for political reasons. If the reasons for organized

violence are not political, then we are not talking about war and warfare, but rather about something else. It may be criminal violence or even just violent hooliganism. It is only the political context, which is dynamic, that can provide meaning and purpose to war.

The social-cultural context is important in two respects: On the one hand, it is the agent for warfare. Although states and other political entities wage war, the war activity is actually performed by their societies, their communities. On the other hand, these societies are more or less distinctively encultured. With respect to the most relevant levels of analysis, we need to be aware of the connections, and sometimes the lack thereof, among general public culture, strategic culture, and military culture.

Next, every war has an economic context. Contrary to some popular opinion, economic motives for war have not been dominant historically, but, nonetheless, the conduct of war and preparation for it always is affected critically by the economic context for each belligerent.

Just as every war must have an economic context, so must it have a technological one too. The relative importance of technology will vary from war to war and from era to era. Clausewitz was able to ignore it in *On War*, because effectively it was stable in his lifetime. He died in 1831, and therefore narrowly missed witnessing the early impact upon military affairs of the industrial revolution. On balance, we can be grateful for the absence of a technological thread in Clausewitz's argument. Had he felt obliged to accommodate technological change in his theory of war, there would have been a severe danger of the book being dated as a consequence. It is a commonplace truth, though no less true for being commonplace, that it is not so much technology that is important, rather what matters most is the use made of technology.

All wars have a dynamic military-strategic context. This context manifests in two respects. First, and most obviously, there is always a balance or imbalance, a competitive relationship, between the military power of would-be, or actual, belligerents. Second, every war is located in the flow of history at a particular point that has distinctive referents in military science. Material progress is the norm, albeit one of limited significance because the enemy-to-be is likely to share an understanding of the contemporary state of military science. Exactly what each belligerent will choose, or be able, to make of the state of the art in military science, must vary with their social-cultural, economic, and military-strategic contexts, among others.<sup>2</sup>

Every war has a geographical context. It is useful to think of this context bifocally: in terms of geopolitics and geostrategy. Technological change assuredly has altered the detail and some of the meaning of the geopolitical and geostrategic context. But it has not, and cannot, effect the elimination of this context as a factor of importance.<sup>3</sup> Prophets for information age warfare led by cyber strikes, and by kinetic assault over long distances at possibly hypersonic speed, are prone to dismiss geography as yesterday's constraint. They are wrong. Primarily they err

not so much in misstating the ability of new weapons to conquer distance, and therefore time, but rather in their tendency to reduce the complexity of warfare to the servicing of targets. War and warfare are far more complicated than that.

Finally, every war has a historical context. It has a past, whence it has sprung, and its course, conduct, and outcome must have legacy value for the future. No war can be understood if one is ignorant of its historical context. That context, as interpreted by the belligerents, will go a long way to explain the belligerents' motivation and therefore the respective strengths of their commitments to the struggle.

It would be difficult, though, of course, possible, to exaggerate the significance of the seven contexts highlighted in this maxim. Inattention to any of these can have strong negative consequences. A major virtue of this maxim is the fact that it obliges strategists to consider war holistically, in the round. Strategists are far from immune to the risks of infection by an undue attraction to one or more of these contexts at the expense of the others. Because it is so difficult to wage war successfully, the strategist tends to be open to salespeople with catalogs offering a Philosopher's Stone. That is to say, the catalog promises products that answer the strategist's questions; allegedly, they can turn the base metal of a confusion of information into the pure gold of full comprehension. Recognition of war's multiple contexts helps immunize the strategist against getting captured by such fantasies.

In order to perform well, strategists do not need to specify a requirement for excellence in all contexts. But they do have to insist that since serious weakness in any of the seven contexts could prove fatal, at least a minimum level of competence is necessary in all areas. If one is conducting transcultural warfare, as the United States is doing currently in Iraq and Afghanistan, a lack of grasp of the social-cultural context of the conflict has the potential to be fatal.<sup>4</sup> Much of one's behavior, driven by the best of intentions, will prove futile, because it will not be likely to address the problems that matter most to the people that matter most, which is to say the local population.

The social-cultural context has been emphasized here because it has been, and remains, the prime area of strategic weakness in the behavior of the U.S. superpower. The trouble is that defense communities that know they are in difficulty are always open to seduction by the appeal of a panacea. Today, the panacea is cultural understanding. As yesterday, we can be sure tomorrow it will be technology again. As Major General Robert H. Scales, U.S. Army (ret.), has written, "[t]echnocratic solutions are in our strategic cultural DNA."<sup>5</sup>

The strategist inhabits a universe wherein complexity is authoritative. That is the fact. But, the practical people who must decide upon and do strategy are ever on the look out for shortcuts. It is not especially helpful to them if one emphasizes the complex relations among the seven most vital contexts of war. Strategy is a pragmatic enterprise. Officials and soldiers need solutions, not an understanding of complexity bereft of usable answers. As a consequence, strategy is eternally at

hazard to the siren call of the technological solution, the cultural fix, the promise of historical understanding, and so forth. Alas, the truth is that each of the seven contexts matter, albeit to differing degrees in each historical case. Historian Jeremy Black was granted the honor of making the first strike in this essay. He merits the last word also.

[I]n its fundamentals war changes far less frequently and significantly than most people appreciate. This is not simply because it involves a constant – the willingness of organized groups to kill and, in particular, to risk death – but also because the material culture of war (the weaponry used and the associated supply systems) which tend to be the focus of attention, is less important than its social, cultural and political contexts and enablers. These contexts explain the purposes of military action, the nature of the relationship between the military and the rest of society, and the internal structures and ethos of the military.

Jeremy Black, 2004<sup>6</sup>



# Maxim 2

---

## War Is About Peace, and Peace Can Be About War

[I]t is clear that war should never be thought of as *something autonomous* but always as an *instrument of policy*; otherwise the entire history of war would contradict us.

Carl von Clausewitz, 1832<sup>7</sup>

By definition, war is not an autarkic, self-referential, institution. To go to war is to enter into a political, and legal, relationship. The purpose of war, and therefore of the conduct of warfare, is always political. Since war cannot be justified strictly in its own terms, its meaning must derive from a policy logic, or impulse, external to itself.

The second part of the maxim is controversial in some quarters, though not among many strategists, one suspects. As peace of one kind or another must follow war, so war must follow a period of peace. These points, which are so obvious as to appear banal, indicate problem areas of profound difficulty. Maxim 2 is all about consequences and it penetrates to the heart of the very nature of strategy. The maxim states that in war one is fighting for peace. Not just any peace, but the kind of peace that makes the war worthwhile. It states also that in peace one is behaving strategically with a view to being able to succeed in a future war. Both halves of Maxim 2 assert quintessentially strategic relationships.

The logic in this maxim lightly conceals two kinds of transactions, both of which are extremely challenging. The first is that which is fundamental to the nature of strategy. Specifically, the statesman and the soldier need to employ, or threaten to employ, military power in order to achieve a desired political outcome. They do this through strategic effect. That is to say, through the effect of military threat or employment upon the course of events. By way of analogy, the transaction of military effort for a political return is akin to currency conversion in the absence of an established rate of exchange. How much military effort is required to coerce

an enemy into acquiescence, let alone surrender? Only experience will reveal the answer.

The second kind of transaction is at a level above the first one. The statesman needs to turn advantage in warfare into both success in war as a whole and, above all else, into leverage for the kind of peace that is sought. This is another case of currency conversion without an established rate of exchange. The maxim requires strategists to think deeply about war in time of peace, and to wage war with the requirements of the postwar context always in mind.

The difficulties that can impede practical obedience to the logic of Maxim 2 are truly legion. The prime challenge to strategists, however, is the need to think sequentially in two steps. In short, strategists must strive to understand the probable and possible consequences of their behavior, and then of the consequences of those consequences. And this is not to forget, as Maxim 16 insists, that “the enemy too has a vote.” To explain, in time of war strategists typically are preoccupied with the conduct of the conflict extant. It is hard enough to employ military force for its optimum, or even just sufficient, strategic effect upon the course of the war. But, it is harder still to pursue and plan to employ that strategic effect so that it can be cashed in the currency of a politically tolerable postwar order.

In times of peace, strategists tend to focus on the keeping of that peace, which is their primary official concern. Of course, war planning is conducted all but universally, but as an activity generally it is somewhat inhibited by policy guidance that can be less than helpful. The two parts of this maxim point to behavior that suffers from contrasting pathologies. The uncontroversial claim that war is about peace is apt to founder on the historical reality of overwhelming real-time military concerns. It is tempting simply to defer difficult political questions until the war is won. After all, only the verdict of the battlefield can determine which vision of postwar political order will be feasible. This is a mistake, but it is one with a long and undistinguished history.

As for the second part of the maxim, the malady to which it is most vulnerable is precisely the reverse of that outlined for the first part. While the strategist in wartime finds it difficult to escape undue capture by near-term military issues, the strategist in peacetime typically is bound, and sometimes gagged, by unrealistic political assumptions.

There is no escaping the implications of the fact that in our Western culture, or civilization, as in some others, peace is a value; it is not regarded instrumentally. Rather peace is seen as an end state with inherent, indeed overwhelming, merit. In principle, people prefer the formula of peace with security to peace alone. But, in practice, given the high contestability of the proper content of the vague concept of security, peace unadorned with qualifiers suffices as the desirable goal. The strategist must work with some assumptions that are either unduly neglected, as in the first part of this maxim, or that are so unpopular that they meet active resistance, as in the second part.

The significance of Maxim 2 could hardly be higher. It asserts that there is a war–peace–war continuum. Although this maxim does not make the belief explicit, in addition it rests upon the assumption that strategic history is irregularly cyclical, as peace succeeds war, and war succeeds peace, endlessly though irregularly. Also, the strategist knows that warfare is a universal phenomenon that is always underway in literally dozens of locations. Most warfare takes an irregular form, but politically motivated violence is as common in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, as war between great powers has become exceedingly rare. To refine that claim a little, one can argue that wars between nuclear-weapon states have been distinguished by their absence, thus far, at least.

In the West, we are not attuned culturally to think of war and peace as a continuum—as different phases of essentially the same phenomenon. Instead, our strategic worldview draws a conveniently sharp distinction between conditions of war and of peace. The Christian tradition of just war, with its heavy debt to St. Thomas Aquinas, has donated to us the principles, standards really, of *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello*, and *jus ad pacem*.<sup>8</sup> But, even when thickened by consideration of the international laws of war, one finds that just war theory, for all its arguable moral authority, does not contribute very helpfully to a grasp of strategic reality.

Maxim 2 does not quite obliterate the commonplace, let alone the legal, distinction between war and peace, but it does express a perspective that is close to such a view. Clausewitz, our intellectual master, insists that war is the conduct of policy (or politics) by other means. If we should fuse war and politics in one direction, why not in the other. Should not we claim that politics is war by other means? In the ideologies, or quasi-religions, of Marxism as malpracticed in the Soviet Union, and of German Nazism, the countries were always at war, though they did not always employ military violence. For both the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, peace did not have value per se. Indeed, quite the reverse was true for the Nazis, who gloried in warfare.<sup>9</sup>

This maxim does not claim a complete fusion of war and peace. But, it does assert that because of the intimate connections between the two conditions, the competent strategist must always perform for one with a regard for the implications of that performance for the other. Maxim 2 wages war against the fallacy of the last move. It expresses a worldview which holds that peace follows war and war follows peace in an endless, though irregular, cycle.<sup>10</sup> And the quality of strategic behavior in peace must have a critical impact upon the prospects for, and course and outcome of, future war. Similarly, the maxim insists that it is not sufficient merely to win a war, even to win elegantly. Belligerents do not fight simply in order to win as an end in itself. Victory, or just advantage, must be instrumental in the construction of the postwar order.

It is no small task to persuade westerners to think of peace and war as different phases of statecraft—distinctive, but essentially united and permanently connected. Prominent among the enemies of strategic wisdom are the worthy but

erroneous beliefs of those whom one can call optimist idealists. Because opposition to war per se is regarded by many people as a moral issue, the historically based logic of Maxim 2 is apt to be resisted. Optimist idealists want to believe that peace leads not to war, but rather to yet more peace. In this view, war, instead of leading to a peace that must provide the fuel for future war, is approached as another historical opportunity to slay the dragon once and for all. This is a noble view, and I empathize with it. However, it is contradicted by history, which is the only source of evidence on feasibility available.

Those who deny or neglect the strategic sense in Maxim 2 are at a grave disadvantage when they must deal with those who do not.

Theory cannot be accepted as conclusive when practice points the other way.

Charles E. Callwell, 1906<sup>11</sup>

# Maxim 3

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## It Is More Difficult to Make Peace than It Is to Make War

The war is over. Now the real fighting begins.  
Afghan proverb

Because war must be waged for the purpose of shaping the peace that follows, it poses all the difficulties of currency conversion explained in the discussion of Maxim 2. In its military dimension, war is relatively straightforward. The object of the exercise is to bend the enemy to our will.<sup>12</sup> This can be accomplished in two ways: physical control of the enemy's ability to fight, or by coercion, which leads the enemy to choose not to resist further. But even warfare, which is to say the military dimension of the conduct of war, is, or should be, permeated with political considerations. The tactical manner of its prosecution, and certainly the operational and strategic choices made, will have political meaning. And that political meaning is, after all, what the bloodshed and destruction of property inseparable from warfare is all about.

Maxim 3 addresses full frontally the challenge that reflects the very nature of strategy. Since strategy must convert one currency (military behavior) into another (political effect), Maxim 3 penetrates deeply into the jungle of difficulties for the strategist. The maxim does not assert that it is easy to wage war. Rather it claims only that making peace is the more difficult task. Maxim 3 is deliberately silent on the question of the importance of achieving military victory or at least a significant military advantage.

Of course there is a relationship between the course of military events and their political consequences. But that relationship is by no means straightforward, with advantage in one medium translating automatically into advantage in the other. It is far from unusual for a belligerent to win the warfare but lose the war: one thinks of France in Algeria, for example. In addition, even more to the point of this maxim, a belligerent may win the war, but lose the subsequent peace. Moreover,

to complicate matters much further, the maxim all but conceals a major reason arguing for its importance. Specifically, it postulates the standard elementary distinction between peace and war. But, in some cases in strategic history, with contemporary Iraq and Afghanistan as just two examples, a war believed to be concluded is rudely succeeded by a war after the war, which blights the anticipated peacemaking phase. In short, a state or coalition may defeat a regular enemy in a regular style of warfare, only to discover that a new phase of hostilities begins, which is characterized by irregular warfare.

Maxim 3, with its many implications, invaluable draws attention to the requirement for the closest cooperation between political and military authorities. Competent strategy is all but impossible in the absence of a continuous dialogue between policymakers and soldiers. In that dialogue, policy must be in the driver's seat, subject only to discipline by military feasibility. Maxim 3 suggests to this theorist that a war needs to be conducted: with a clear political mission; in such a manner that that mission is not compromised (e.g., in so brutal a fashion that postwar reconciliation is improbable); to a sufficiently favorable outcome that the enemy should be strongly motivated to seek peace; and flexibly and adaptively, since war is the realm of chance, uncertainty, and friction.<sup>13</sup>

Except for those rare historical instances when the policy goal and the military objective are united in a simple commitment to destroy an enemy, strategy and policy must always be contestable in the conduct of war. On the one hand, there will be legitimate argument over how much war should be waged. How limited should be the application of force in pursuit of limited political goals? On the other hand, there are likely to be ample grounds for dispute over the political goals sought. When a firm grip by policy is lacking, the dynamics of military action have a way of taking the lead. The result is what is known as mission creep, as a task of limited scope expands, almost naturally and inevitably, according to the logic of events on the ground, and essentially regardless of the original political purpose.

Behind Maxim 3 is the fact that excellence in warmaking is no guarantee of a comparable excellence in peacemaking. The two skills are quite different. The former requires military competence in the conduct of regular or irregular warfare, which are skills that can be taught. The latter, i.e., peacemaking, requires a skill set that is not taught. Politicians are expert at domestic politics, and a few of them will be knowledgeable about defense and foreign affairs. However, none of them can reach into their portfolio of skills and pull out international peacemaking. Domestic experience of conflict resolution can be useful, but the contexts for conflict at home and abroad contrast so sharply that domestic experience may provide a very unsound education in peacemaking after war. Every case is different. Often it is claimed that one can secure in a postwar peace settlement only what one's soldiers have bought with their blood and effort on the battlefield. There is merit in that dictum, but it is far from comprising the whole story.

The basis for the claim in Maxim 3 is that the object in war is to obtain a better peace, and not simply to win.<sup>14</sup> War, and warfare, is only an instrument of policy. So, those in charge of the higher direction of the conduct of war should always bear in mind that no matter how absorbing are the military issues of the moment, those issues ultimately must have political meaning, not just military ones. It should be needless to add that policy needs to be somewhat flexible and adaptive since war has a way of frustrating political intentions. It is a blunt instrument, and there are many reasons why cunning plans often go awry, not the least among which is the fact of an enemy with an independent will.

It would be difficult to overstate the significance of this maxim. Maxim 3 insists both that we never forget that war is about peace (see Maxim 2), and, more pointedly, that the making of peace is likely to be more difficult than the waging of war. It is a common, and somewhat understandable, error to assume that if one takes care of the fighting in an efficient manner, and the enemy is duly humbled, somehow the subsequent peace will all but take care of itself. Indeed, to go further, it is by no means unknown for professional soldiers to be less than fascinated by the political consequences of their military efforts. Some countries have dominant military cultures that insist upon a strict separation of the military profession from political life. The United States is a prime example.<sup>15</sup> In such a case, narrowly military soldiers can find themselves abruptly transposed from the military to the political sphere, when they are required to lead, or at least participate in, peacemaking negotiations.

Two leading classes of events that bear directly upon the core of the matter illustrate the importance of the claim in Maxim 3. First, there are occasions when complete military victory is secured. In such a superficially straightforward situation, one might assume that the politics of peacemaking could hardly be simpler. Alas, that is never the case. What was the policy that propelled one to war and what sustained the military effort? To defeat the enemy, of course. But, once beaten, what did one intend to do with the enemy? Eliminate geopolitically? Depress the ability to rise again for several generations? Punish, but then rapidly reincorporate the enemy as a useful member of that shadowy and largely fictitious body—the international community?

The second set of questions, additional to those of a straightforward unilateral kind just cited, comprise the principal challenges to dominant policy wishes. On the one hand, in a democracy there will always be the force of domestic opinion to consider. More often than not, a society that has just won a war in a militarily conclusive manner will not be in a generous mood. Policymakers seeking to negotiate a peace of moderation and reconciliation can be frustrated by their domestic political context.<sup>16</sup> More significant still are likely to be the demands of those other countries that either were allied stakeholders in the conflict just concluded, or who, because of their international weight and influence, cannot entirely be ignored. Maxim 3 should be understood as suggesting that the processes



of warmaking and peacemaking should proceed in parallel, though not necessarily temporally in step. During the shooting war, the warmaking naturally takes the lead. Though during that phase, plans and negotiations for the subsequent peace should be drafted and conducted. Once the shooting stops and there is a military outcome, the relation between warmaking and peacemaking is reversed, of course, with the latter taking center stage. One cannot quite claim that warmaking ceases to be relevant at the conclusion of the war. Often there is a need for further threats, and indeed action, because postwar disorder and even chaos will have to be addressed, and victorious allies are always liable to squabble over the spoils of victory.

Defeat of the enemy, though the *sine qua non* of peacemaking, has to be approached as only the essential step that enables the true purpose of the whole exercise of war. And that purpose, to repeat, is the construction of a better peace. Such a peace can only be founded upon the establishment of a stable arrangement of international order.

The character, especially the duration, of the war that was waged and the particular styles of combat chosen must influence the prospects for success in subsequent peacemaking. So, at least, the evidence of modern strategic history suggests strongly to be the case. That history suggests also that as one form of combat, on the battlefield, concludes, so another heats up, at the conference table. Through poor statesmanship, for example by acceding to the demands of allies who want their pound of flesh and more, a prudent concept for a new international order may be fatally compromised. It is necessary to note that when the needs of ongoing war are politically paramount, all kinds of political promises are apt to be distributed. But, when finally victory is secured, those expedient promises, IOUs, come due and can wreak profound damage whether or not they are honored. If they are honored regardless of the wider political damage they inflict, the peace settlement must be harmed. While, if they are denied, the disappointed ally will be vengeful and a source of disorder in the postwar world. Italy and Japan in the interwar period are prime examples.

Overall, Maxim 3 serves usefully to remind one that war is never, well hardly ever, a neat, self-sealing, episode in strategic history. The waging of war is delegated to trained professionals who, one assumes, know what they are doing, though not always why they are doing it, politically. But, the making of peace out of war is a vastly more difficult undertaking. There are few, if any, trained professional peacemakers, and the mission is much more complex, and inherently contestable both broadly and in detail, than is the conduct of warfare.

A successful exercise in peacemaking should persuade the defeated party to accept its defeat. If that goal is not achieved, yesterday's enemy is motivated to become tomorrow's enemy also. In order to integrate the defeated state or other entity into a stable international order, the terms of peace have to be moderate and that state needs to become a significant stakeholder in the postwar context.

For the results of victory to endure, they must be accepted as final by the defeated side, whose interests and concerns must be taken into account. The condition of peace must be such that they appear generous or at least reasonable to the loser. An enduring peace is therefore as reciprocal as everything else in war is.

Michael I. Handel, 2001<sup>17</sup>

# Maxim 4

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## War Works!—But Always Has Unintended and Unanticipated Consequences

Give war a chance.

P. J. O'Rourke, 1992<sup>18</sup>

Maxim 4 affirms the merit in the belief that war can solve problems that have proved resistant to other forms of pressure. Approached as a whole, both the bare two word claim and the heavy caveat, the inspiration for this maxim derives from Christian just war theory, modified by Carl von Clausewitz.

Just war theory licenses war, *jus ad bellum*, provided six criteria are met. The six criteria are just cause, legitimate authority, right intention, proportionality, likelihood of success, and, of most interest for this discussion, last resort.<sup>19</sup> Legitimate authorities, a contestable concept in an era of extensive irregular conflict, are permitted by long traditional church doctrine to resort to war when all other means of resolving a dispute have failed. The presumption of just war doctrine is that war works, notwithstanding the necessary evils it must entail. Clausewitz adds a valuable dose of strategic reality to the claim by insisting that war is the realm of chance and uncertainty.<sup>20</sup> He issues a powerful warning against overconfidence<sup>21</sup> but that argument is advanced only as a caveat, not as an intended showstopper.

Strategic history reveals that war does work to resolve particular problems. But, it shows also that in solving one problem it is as likely as not to create or promote others. And some of those others will not have been expected. The strategic rationale behind Maxim 4 could hardly be more simple or more important. Specifically, from time to time a political problem arises or erupts, which threatens to create disorder and acute insecurity. Examples are legion, but the contemporary cases of a nuclear-armed North Korea and a prospectively nuclear-armed Iran immediately spring to mind. In cases such as these, the evidence of experience suggests that the only way to redirect Iranian efforts and to divest North Korea of its nuclear assets, is to use force. There are many reasons why such a course of action would be undesirable. But, if the international community should decide

that it cannot tolerate nuclear weapons in the hands of those roguish polities, then really it has only one option, military action. And military action, uniquely, can work, which is not to downplay the heavy multidimensional costs of such behavior.

Maxim 4 asserts that there are some problems that simply do not yield to nonmilitary solutions. One is driven to the option of last resort, force. British and French statesmen in 1939 were in no need of further education on either the horrors of war or the tendency of the dynamics of war to burst the bounds of policy. After all, most of them had served in one capacity or another in “the war to end all wars,” which concluded on November 11, 1918. But, after Hitler’s invasion of the non-German territory of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, most politicians in Britain and France belatedly came to the reluctant conclusion that the Third Reich’s march of aggression could be arrested and reversed by only one means, war. War was the last resort and the only resort. The alternative was inaction, which would translate as a decision to donate Hitler a free hand in Eastern Europe, and probably, in due course, the initiative in the West also.

Although the caveat in this maxim provides a necessary qualification to the stark claim that war works, it should not be treated necessarily as posing a fully offsetting body of reasons to refrain from resort to war. There are occasions when a danger is judged so pressing that war’s downsides, predictable and otherwise, have to be accepted as potentially damaging entries in the cost column to set against the benefits. But, Maxim 4 serves to remind those who may need to be reminded that even when war works, it works at a price, and at a price that has to be paid in several currencies: blood, money, influence, honor or reputation. It is no accident that the use of force is classed by Christian doctrine as the last resort and not the first.

In the Western world, and most especially in the Old Europe of the European Union, it is commonplace to assert almost as an article of faith that war does not work, even can never work. The currency is held to be nonconvertible. How can political argument be resolved by force? All that war can decide is which party is the stronger militarily. In addition, the point is made that violence only begets more violence, in an endless cycle of futility. So, from this perspective, the maxim that *war works* is both false and dangerous. Unfortunately, the liberal critics are only half correct. Maxim 4 does advance a dangerous truth. Alas, the maxim is correct, as strategic history affirms at virtually every turn in its bloody course.

Some of the maxims discussed here almost defy cool analytical treatment because they touch hot spots in our moral consciousness. The flat insistence of Maxim 4 that war works is morally offensive to many people. Indeed, it is so offensive that it is denied intelligent consideration. However, this strategist is not thus inhibited. In fact, an important purpose of this book is to make explicit the assumptions that all too often are hidden behind political rhetoric and the jargon of experts. War is an instrument of policy. The threat and use of military power is a vital option for those who conduct what in Britain is called grand strategy and in the United States called national security strategy. Popular, and much elite,

distaste for war is an understandable, even praiseworthy, fact of our time. It is also, however, potentially dangerous if distaste metamorphoses into outright rejection. Let there be no ambiguity about the core merit of Maxim 4. War does work. Admittedly, it does not always work as intended, with the consequences that were predicted, but that is a reason to resort to force only with extreme care, not to reject the option altogether.

It is almost trivially easy to demonstrate from history the truth in the caveat within Maxim 4. Almost every war takes a course, has an outcome, and leads to consequences more or less unintended and unexpected. As Clausewitz explained, that is the very nature, the objective unchanging nature of war.<sup>22</sup> In company with France, on September 3, 1939, Britain declared war on Germany over the immediate issue of Germany's violation of Poland's frontiers. After nearly six years of war, Britain had exchanged its French alliance for one with the Soviet Union and the United States. The German menace was duly and necessarily crushed, but was replaced by a Soviet peril, and Poland was forcibly transferred from the Nazi empire to the Soviet one. Nonetheless, war, and only war, solved the problem of a rampaging Nazi Germany. If that Germany was to be stopped, there was no alternative to war.

On close examination, the belief, perhaps the counter-maxim, that war never solves anything, soon collapses under the weight of strategic history. One suspects that a good part of the problem that many people have in relating warfare to politics is that they have not understood the true pervasiveness of the former by the latter. If one holds to a worldview which regards war and politics as distinctive realms, then plainly one will be hard to convince that war can have any useful political meaning. But, if one has read and grasped the main thread in Clausewitz's argument, which insists that war is a political act, and military behavior really is political also, then all should be revealed to an open mind.

Maxim 4 lends itself to criticism by those who set, probably inadvertently, a wholly unrealistic test. The maxim only claims that war can and does decide important issues. It does not claim that typically war will solve all relevant issues definitively. The strategist knows that strategic history is cyclical and that the problems of today are very likely to return in the future, though dressed differently. Similarly, the strategist grants willingly that war is a blunt instrument of policy and that its own grammar and dynamics can subvert political intentions. But, to repeat, war can and does decide matters of the highest importance.

For a few examples: World War I decided that Imperial Germany would not dominate Europe; World War II decided that Nazi Germany would not establish an Aryan superstate in control of Europe, en route to world conquest; the war in Korea, 1950–1953, decided that the peninsula would remain divided; the war in South Vietnam, from ca. 1960–1975, decided that the two Vietnams would be united. In fact, it is hard to identify a war in modern times that failed to secure a decision, or decisions, worthy of note. Those decisions do not always, perhaps do not usually, truly solve problems, but they do serve in lieu of political resolution.

Of course, a decision by force of arms is distinctly second best to a decision by negotiated political agreement. But the strategist must deal with and explain the world as it is.

Those who reject Maxim 4 would deny the international system the possibility of resort to a literally essential tool of statecraft for the restoration of order, which is to say, war. It is true, to repeat, that once one rolls the iron dice of war one is in the realm of chance. But, the waging of war is by no means wholly a gamble. War is the realm of chance, *à la* Clausewitz, but it is not the realm of chance alone.

Battle is the raucous transformer of history because it also accelerates in a matter of minutes the usually longer play of chance, skill, and fate.

Victor Davis Hanson, 2003<sup>23</sup>

# Maxim 5

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## Peace and Order Are Not Self-Enforcing, They Have to Be Organized and Kept by Somebody

[N]ew world orders, as we have seen, need to be policed.  
Michael Howard, 2001<sup>24</sup>

International order requires a policeman or a policing mechanism. By order we mean a relatively stable condition of predictability in interstate relations. Order is incompatible with revolutionary behavior by states—behavior that would alter settled patterns of interaction. However, international order is not static. It is dynamic. It has to adjust for, and adapt to, the rise and fall of states and the eruption of sudden crises. Changes of some magnitude may not be accomplished smoothly. There will be a period of turbulence and international order could break down altogether for many years. In such cases, for example, those occasioned by the rise and then the return of Germany in the twentieth century, order has to be restored, indeed redesigned, by war. Paradoxically, order is a fundamental requirement for peace, but also it may have to be constructed and maintained periodically by war or at least by the threat of war. One could argue that war as an essential tool for order has been greatly weakened by nuclear arms. But, offsetting that logic is the historical reality, to date, that nuclear-armed states behave more circumspectly as a consequence of the great enhancement of risks that follows from their nuclear status.

Politics are about power, a generalization that is authoritative for both domestic and international contexts. Maxim 5 directs attention to power, that ever contestable concept, as the key to order and peace. It implies, by its silence on the subject, that peace is not the product of such formal international institutions as the League of Nations or the United Nations (UN). Such intended ventures in international cooperation are not bereft of all value by any means, but they can be useful enablers for order and peace only when the major state players decide that they wish to cooperate. The institution itself cannot take a lead in, let alone implement, a policy aimed at the restoration of order. From time to time, an



ambitious secretary general of the UN will behave as if he or she were the chief executive of a sovereign power, able to decide and act in a manner independent of the views of the most powerful states. That cannot succeed. The UN lacks the assets to behave like an important state. It is a reflection of its membership, and since that membership is now all but universal, it means all things to all people. The UN can play useful roles for international order: as a convenient venue for diplomacy, as a worthwhile legitimizer of disciplinary action undertaken against agents of disorder, and as a valuable set of brakes upon potential action by a great power that could create a risk of war with another great power. But, the UN itself is not a significant part of the answer to the challenge of maintaining, which can mean enforcing, international order.

Maxim 5 expresses the view that international order is a meaningful concept. It holds that order is not guaranteed by the natural play of, and among, the vital interests of states. So, it claims that order needs to be organized and kept through positive steps in policy by those with the power to do so.<sup>25</sup>

Strategic history reveals only two approaches to the maintenance of order with a record of success. They may be labeled as the imbalance of power and the balance of power methods. The first approach, the imbalance of power, requires a hegemonic principal. Donald Kagan advises that “[w]hat seems to work best, even though imperfectly, is the possession by those states who wish to preserve the peace of the preponderant power and of the will to accept the burdens and responsibilities required to achieve that purpose.”<sup>26</sup> Kagan’s formula allows for a coalition of states to play the forcible ordering role. But, there needs to be a leader. There has to be one state willing and able to bear the heaviest of burdens. It needs to be sufficiently powerful to be the natural and inevitable leader of the forces of order and capable, as a result, of generating confidence among its followers. The leading state is, in effect, the sheriff, or guardian, of world order.<sup>27</sup>

The second approach to world order tends to be chosen in order to prevent the operation of the first approach. Specifically, international order can be maintained by the functioning of a balance of power. The contemporary hegemonic world order, one can hardly say peace, policed by the United States, assuredly will be challenged and balanced by a rival, discontented, coalition of those unwilling to submit to American wishes or subscribe to American values. The balance-of-power approach to world order certainly works, as the forty-five years of the Cold War demonstrated. But, it does have its limitations. Should the balancers err in their statecraft, the balance can dissolve into a large war, one not excluding the use of nuclear weapons. Also, if world politics are dominated by a primary axis of rivalry, the rival coalitions will be reluctant to act against regional menaces, lest there should prove to be a powder trail to the balance-of-power context that lurks in the background.

The sense in the maxim should not be discounted because of the practical difficulties that are apt to impede its implementation. Maxim 5 states a truth of high significance that has pragmatic utility in its implications. Stripped to its

essentials, this maxim asserts that someone or something is needed to maintain order and keep the peace, sometimes forcefully. This ought to be a truism, but it is not, as debate after debate has revealed. What has been illustrated, over the invasion of Iraq in 2003, for example, is that many states are much less interested in international order, however defined, than they are in their own power and influence. Opposition to the U.S. invasion of Iraq had everything to do with a determination to rein in the American sheriff, in order to limit its global influence.

The non-American (and British) permanent members of the UN Security Council do not have the collective will or ability to take bold action on behalf of international order, but they can and do play a spoiler role. The Russian Federation, China, and France, generally prefer to be a part of the problem for world order, rather than contribute to solutions. The reason, to repeat, is because these states feel themselves more challenged by American hegemony than they do by international disorder.

The significance of Maxim 5 can be gauged by reflection upon the consequences of ignoring its judgment. The maxim claims that peace and order have to be organized and kept by somebody. However, what if there is no one ready and able to step forward to volunteer to undertake the heavy lifting for the international community? Or, what if there is such a state, but its domestic politics insist upon a general blessing by the UN and a specific license to take action issued by the Security Council, neither of which are forthcoming. A textbook case of this phenomenon can be predicted with reference to Iran and its not-so-secret nuclear weapons program. Unless the United States, or Israel, forcibly neutralizes that program, Iran will join the ranks of the nuclear-armed within a few years. The consequences for regional order in the Middle East could well be appalling. The trouble is that the international community, that shapeless body, prefers to live with a nuclear-armed Iran than to encourage the United States to take military action. States with such an attitude seek to exercise power, to restrain the U.S. guardian, without accepting the responsibility for the consequences of inaction.

The strategic logic and the historical evidence behind Maxim 5 bears only upon the core proposition, of course. Someone or something is required to maintain and defend international order. The maxim is not a license for ruthless hegemonism, and cannot be cited in support of any particular exercise in ordering or peace enforcement. The wisest of maxims can only be as useful as actual human agents in real historical contexts permit. Folly, incompetence, and sheer bad luck, can discredit a maxim unfairly.

There are periods in strategic history when international order is not greatly disturbed and so the sheriff's role is a light one. Indeed, it may scarcely need to be played at all. For example, in the 1920s France was militarily unchallengeable on the European continent. The dissatisfied, potentially revolutionary powers, Germany and Italy, were unable to challenge the new order, at least for a while. For another example, in the 1990s the United States could enjoy its unipolar moment, but it was less than obvious how that moment could best be employed.

Truth to tell: in that decade America became ever more prosperous at home, and was less than vitally interested in the largely irregular conflicts of the era that had erupted in the Balkans, in Africa, and around the periphery of the former Soviet Union. The American sheriff was ready for action, but lacked a policy, a context of pressing need, to direct its hegemonic power of both soft and hard varieties.

Today in Europe it is commonplace to criticize the United States for its unilateralism. It is argued, sincerely, that the use of force on behalf of international order should be employed only as the last resort and in the context of multilateral endorsement by the whole world community. This is a revival of the fallacy of collective security, albeit minus the obligation upon all to contribute to the common mission. The grand illusion thus propagated, yet again, is that the collectivity of states is capable of agreeing upon the taking of decisive action, on the rare occasions when that is obviously needed. In truth, the multilateralist view, or fallacy, ensures that international order will not be defended. It requires a consensus that will be impossible to achieve. The logic that follows from this reality is that, as Donald Kagan wrote, the preponderant power of a leading state and its close allies has to be usable to solve problems. There is no practical alternative.

Some conflicts pose such a grave threat to our broader interests and values that conflict intervention may be needed to restore peace and stability. Recent experience has underscored that the international community does not have enough high-quality military forces trained and capable of performing these peace operations.

President George W. Bush, 2006<sup>28</sup>

# Maxim 6

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## Not Only Polities, but Societies and Their Cultures Make War and Peace

Every culture develops its own way of war.  
Geoffrey Parker, 1995<sup>29</sup>

War is a social institution conducted by polities. Polities range from states to security communities that lack many of the standard features of statehood. What they all have in common, however, is an encultured society. Governments act on behalf of the communities that they rule. Virtually no matter how authoritarian the system of government, rulers must be attentive to the sentiments most popular in their society. Also, it is far more likely than not that rulers and those ruled in any system of governance will share a common cultural heritage.

Maxim 6 directs attention to the domestic contexts of strategic history. It is a repudiation of the scholarly theory known as neorealism. The neorealists, following the austere theorizing of Kenneth N. Waltz, who launched this particular vessel with his *Theory of International Politics* in 1979, deliberately exclude most domestic considerations from their theory.<sup>30</sup> Neorealism applies at the elevated level of the international system. It claims that behavior is driven strictly by calculations of power relations among states. The domestic differences between states are irrelevant. The logic of state action is a logic dictated by understanding of the distribution of power and its consequences.

This highly influential academic approach to international relations found some reflection in modern strategic theory, long predating 1979. Indeed, the three central pillars of American strategic thought, and practice, developed in response to the challenge posed by nuclear weapons, were decidedly neorealist in their most fundamental assumption. To explain: in the 1950s, the U.S. defense community invented and refined theories of nuclear deterrence, limited war, and arms control. These theories were elegant logical creations, but they all assumed that every government would see their merits, regardless of the uniqueness of their cultures. Modern strategic theory was thus developed on the assumption that all polities

would, or could be brought by education to, make the same rational choices when faced with common problems. One size in theory would fit all strategic actors, so the silent assumption presumed.

Maxim 6 claims that the theory outlined above is wrong. In fact it is so nonsensical to a historical mind that one wonders how apparently intelligent people could be persuaded that it provided a reliable guide for policy- and strategy-making. This maxim asserts with confidence that security communities, states and others, should not be regarded as black boxes whose social and cultural interiors are of no significance for behavior. Instead, the maxim claims that polities make decisions and act on the basis of an assessment of “fear, honor, and interest,” to resort to Thucydides.<sup>31</sup> And that assessment is, of necessity, an encultured one. For reasons attributable principally to a unique historical experience and a distinctive geography, societies as security communities approach political and strategic issues in more or less individual ways. Neoclassical realists, as contrasted with neorealists, acknowledge the importance of the distribution of power in the international system. But they, in this case we, insist that all decisions on policy and strategy are apt to have the distinctive flavor of a unique culture. Of course, there is much cultural commonality among societies that occupy some of the same cultural space. But, it is never safe to assume that people in other societies think as we do.

The significance of the message in this maxim could not be higher. For example, it alerts us to the possibility, or even probability, that an adversary will assess its interests and how best to defend them in ways that we do not expect. The maxim serves a potent warning to those who claim that nuclear deterrence is reliable, because understanding of the meaning of nuclear weapons is truly transcultural. Alas, nuclear weapons lend themselves to several theories of strategic utility, not simply the one, favoring stable deterrence, that has been standard in the West since the 1950s. As nuclear, and other weapons of mass destruction, spread around the world in the years to come, it will become ever more important to be alert to the influence of the local context upon policy and strategy for their roles and contingent employment.

The neorealist fallacy requires polities to act and react strictly according to the logic of power relations at the level of the international system. The strategic theorist, however, generally is well steeped in the domestic processes that produce defense policy, strategy, and decisions on force structure. Of necessity, all such behavior, everywhere, is made at home. It must always carry that label. Of course, the domestic processes will be influenced by threat stimuli from abroad, but even those exogenous contributions must be domesticated as they are interpreted by encultured defense officials and commentators.<sup>32</sup>

Defense policy and strategy is never determinable beyond argument by a superlogic that allegedly transcends variations in political and cultural differences. Policy and strategy will be influenced by the cultural preferences bequeathed by a community’s interpretation of its history as well as by its geopolitical-geostrategic context. But it will be shaped significantly by fiscal constraints. The weight of

defense burdens a society is content to carry depends critically on that vague but vital phenomenon, the public mood. This mood can shift suddenly and radically in response to events. For example, North Korea's invasion of the South in June 1950 so altered the American public mood that the purse strings were loosened to the extent of permitting a threefold increase in defense spending. A parallel case was the impact of 9/11, 2001, on a public mood that Congress shared. After 9/11, money flowed like water for defense, especially for any project that bore the label of homeland security.

Maxim 6 is a warning against ethnocentrism. When American strategic theorists, or those of any other country, assert that a common logic of rational choice serves to understand strategic issues, they are bound to fall into the trap of ethnocentrism.<sup>33</sup> Inevitably, that common logic is our logic. The rational choices we predict are our rational choices. It is necessary to highlight the important difference between rationality and reason.

Rational behavior is the norm in strategic affairs. Those of us who criticize rational choice as an approach to the understanding of the strategic decisions of alien societies, do not do so because we reject the notion of rationality. Far from it. Rather do we insist that the problem does not lie with rationality per se, but with its content. Rational statecraft has the character that its means and its ends are purposefully connected. Decisions are not taken wholly at random, by individual whim, or strictly because they have cultural or other appeal. Decision-making subject to control by such pathologies will have negative consequences that could prove fatal for the security of the community thus governed. It is the general rule that policymakers behave rationally. The underappreciated problem for international order and security is that a statesman can be perfectly rational, but wholly unreasonable, in our eyes, in that rationality. One need hardly emphasize the difficulties this fact can pose for a would-be deterrent. If the United States seeks to deter an adversary whose strategic culture is not understood at all well, it is likely to succumb to two fallacies. The first is the conviction that the American would-be deterrent and the foreign deterree share a common framework of strategic reasoning. The second error occurs when the adversary shows evidence of un-American strategic thought and behavior, in reaction to which Americans decide that they are dealing with an irrational foe. In fact, they are dealing with a rational, but unreasonable, one.

Maxim 6 is useful as a weapon to slay the nonsense of neorealism's black boxes. It claims that societies, and not only their governments, matter in the strategic thread to international history. In fact, the maxim alerts us to the reality that the people who constitute government cannot help but be encultured by their societal context. Culturalist analysis currently is popular in the American defense community. Experience in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the predicted challenge of deterring new nuclear weapon states, has brought home to scholars of strategy the critical importance of understanding and adjusting for cultural differences.

As with all sound ideas about strategy, Maxim 6 lends itself to misinterpretation. It states a necessary truth. Policy and strategy is made at home, and they have to meet domestic criteria of acceptability before they are unleashed upon the outside world. Serious strategic culturalist analysis recognizes that culture needs to be considered at three levels at least: public culture, strategic culture, and military culture. And these cultures will not always be in harmony. The maxim does not suggest that a polity will behave according to its domestic preferences regardless of external considerations. All that it claims is that each society or community has a more or less unique approach to strategic matters. For a helpful overstatement of the merit in Maxim 6, we can do no better than quote the wisdom of Sun-tzu, writing in approximately 400 BC. The subsequent quotation from Samuel P. Huntington is a most useful, albeit contestable, caveat.

Thus it is said that one who knows the enemy and knows himself will not be endangered in a hundred engagements. One who does not know the enemy but knows himself will sometimes be victorious, sometimes meet with defeat. One who knows neither the enemy nor himself will invariably be defeated in every engagement.<sup>34</sup>

My basic message is that American strategy and the process by which it is made must reflect the nature of American society. Earlier I criticized those who urged us to adopt a strategy that was at variance with the inherent character of American society.

Samuel P. Huntington, 1986<sup>35</sup>

# Maxim 7

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## Reason Reigns Over War, but Passion and Chance Threaten to Rule

Plans may be hatched by the cool and the calculating, but they are likely to be implemented by the passionate and the unpredictable.

Lawrence Freedman, 2006<sup>36</sup>

Clausewitz's theory of war postulates an inherently unstable relationship among passion, chance, and reason.<sup>37</sup> The highly variable and ever shifting relative weighting of influence among the three explains the outbreak and the course of an armed conflict. It is the genius of Clausewitz's trinitarian theory that it can accommodate almost any condition of dominance by one of the three elements, without damaging the integrity of the theoretical framework. Though obviously inspired by the Clausewitzian trinity, Maxim 7 develops the potential insight in his formula some way beyond the argument to be found in *On War*.

The maxim affirms the truism that policy or politics is sovereign over strategic behavior, not least over warfare. But it goes further than merely noting the relevance of passion and chance as the other necessary elements in the institution of war. Clausewitz did not equate passion, chance, and reason with, respectively, the people, the army, and the government. But he did assert the predominant connections just indicated. For the worthy purpose of accurate understanding, scholars have gone to great pains to distinguish between the Prussian's primary trinity of passion, chance, and reason and his secondary trinity of the people, the army, and the government.<sup>38</sup> As so often happens when registering a vital point, one overreaches. The secondary trinity is important albeit not as much so as the primary.

Maxim 7 claims that although war, and warfare, must be an instrument of policy, behavior governed by reason, that reason can be sidelined and even overwhelmed by the dynamics of warfare and the sheer chaos of combat. Clausewitz's theory of war is a brilliant contribution to our strategic education. That brilliance shines even more brightly when one appreciates just how subtle, flexible, and adaptable



is his trinitarian theoretical structure. He states that there are, and can be, no fixed relations among the three elements. The relations are inherently unstable. With that warning, Clausewitz alerts us to the fact that at times the course of a war will be driven more by the passion of enmity, or by the opportunities that an army and its commander are able to exploit, probably unexpectedly, than by policy or even by strategy.

Maxim 7 has a twofold significance. On the one hand, it reaffirms the essential truth in Clausewitz's trinitarian theory of war. It endorses that theory unreservedly. On the other hand, the maxim alerts us to the need to be as subtle in our understanding of the trinity as Clausewitz was in devising it. Most especially, we are enjoined not to assume that the formal structure of authority in war, which privileges reason, or policy, and the government, must explain what actually is most influential at any particular time in moving events forward. This point may seem elementary and obvious, but actually it is neither. Public opinion, which first became a factor in the conduct of modern war during the conflict in the Crimea in 1854–1856, can function to support or to oppose and even change policy.<sup>39</sup> In historical practice, Clausewitz's reason can descend to mere acquiescence in popular demands.

Similarly, although Clausewitz's trinity is firm in its assertion that reason is associated primarily with the government, his qualification of the claim is vitally significant. Policy can be, and frequently has been, shaped, reshaped, and driven by the dynamic verdicts of the battlefield. War is an instrument of policy, but the relationship is reciprocal. Policy should direct warfare, with strategy as the mediating, implementing agent. But, policy usually cannot know what it should ask for until it understands what is practicable. And that knowledge can derive only from the actual experience of warfare. So, in practice, policy typically is molded and adjusted so as to express intentions and goals that the army demonstrates to be achievable.

Clausewitz's potent trinity lightly conceals two common pathologies in war-making. Specifically, those are the literal domination of the reason in policy by passion alone as the directing agency, and the comprehensive takeover of policy by the perceived needs of warfare. The former problem raises issues fundamental to the nature of political systems. How responsive ought government to be to public opinion? The latter problem poses a challenge to the management of civil–military relations. It is unlikely that generals, beset by all the problems and responsibilities inseparable from the conduct of warfare, will be particularly attentive to the broad political meaning of their military behavior. For them, the military needs of the moment will be overwhelming. It has to follow that reason, in the form of policymakers, needs to conduct a permanent dialogue with chance and opportunity, which is to say with their soldiers. And in that dialogue there should be no room for doubt that the soldiers are subordinate to the civilians. It is, however, the duty of the soldiers to speak the truth to policymakers and inform them as to what seems to be possible and what is not. If policymakers are not convinced by what they hear, they can insist that the soldiers undertake

actions of which they disapprove. If the representatives of the military demur, they can be dismissed, retired, or otherwise removed from positions of responsibility.

Because war is so much the realm of chance, and its climate is so demanding, those who must conduct it and actually do it at the sharp end of the national spear must be allowed the possibility of influencing policy goals. Maxim 7 warns that that necessity frequently, even constantly, threatens to capture policy altogether. Instead of war serving policy, policy serves war. Up to a point, the latter development is a necessary truth. Policy in most of its dimensions does have to provide the means, as well as the higher direction, for the effective prosecution of warfare. The problem arises when the realm of policy neglects its duty to provide political guidance and meaning to the enterprise, and instead takes a back seat and permits the generals to wage such war as they are able in the manner they prefer. In that case, "policy" simply becomes synonymous with the accomplishments, or their absence, of the army. Policy is driven wholly by the logic of the course and outcome of combat.

The other pathology, wherein policy is shaped and even directed to reflect the passions of an engaged, or enraged, public, is a problem that has become acute in recent years. Because of real-time electronic media reporting, there are few places on earth where warfare can be conducted free from scrutiny and comment by the globalized media. The irregular warfare that is so prevalent today is a contest of political wills. It is waged tactically far more for its psychological impact than for its military consequences. It follows that the people are the battlespace. The people in question will be those in the country whose governance is in dispute, and also the people at home in the country that is intervening abroad, should the case in point be so structured.

Maxim 6 made clear that societies make war, not only their governments. It is both unavoidable and desirable that popular belief and emotion should be able to influence policy toward war and its conduct. This is not controversial. In a democracy, in particular, it is necessary that the public should develop an educated opinion about official performance. Manifest incompetence, changing military or political circumstances, or simply the perceived need for fresh ideas on how to prosecute the war could and should trigger public demands for a change of policy course and in policymakers. The difficulty arises when the public is not well educated about the warfare that is underway. It may well insist upon swifter positive results than the soldiers can deliver. There is always a risk that politicians will loosen their grip on policy when under sharp domestic criticism, will look for military scapegoats for apparent failure, and in effect will allow the wind of political sentiment to blow them off policy course. They may be blown so far off course that their only policy goal becomes the default option of a rapid exit from active hostilities.

Maxim 7 serves a vital role in affirming the very nature of war. It addresses war's most fundamental constituent elements and the unstable, but crucial, relations among them. The maxim reminds us of the potential power of public sentiment to influence policy and of the tendency of warfare to put policy under severe

strain. Warfare is a nonlinear and frequently chaotic activity which is not easily governed by the reason in the policy designs of statesmen. By attending closely, yet empathetically, to the perils flagged in Maxim 7, the strategist is able to employ Clausewitz's theory of war to its full potential as the superior guide for strategic education.

War is more than a true chameleon that slightly adapts its characteristics to the given case. As a total phenomenon its dominant tendencies always make 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 elements of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.

Carl von Clausewitz, 1832<sup>40</sup>

# Maxim 8

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## There Is More to War than Warfare

Warfare is the act of making war. War is a relationship between two states or, if a civil war, two groups. Warfare is only a part of war, although the essential part. Military history is the history of war, although it more usually concentrates on the history of warfare.

Peter Browning, 2002<sup>41</sup>

War and warfare are distinctive concepts and the distinction matters greatly. Typically, the two are employed interchangeably as a matter of literary convenience. Even strategists have been known to commit the same crime against understanding, albeit knowingly, which is less excusable than ignorance, *mea culpa*. War is a legal state between belligerents, at least it is in those sharply diminishing number of cases to which the international laws of war apply. War is also an institution in international relations, one that has systemic, indeed institutional, consequences for social life and practices domestically. It is the master organizing concept, with profound *de jure*, or at least *de facto*, implications for all manner of social and political behaviors.

In contrast, warfare refers narrowly to the actual conduct of war, principally in its military dimension. Some states have dominant strategic cultures that promote confusion about the difference between war and warfare. They tend to neglect the requirements of the former in the interest of achieving and exploiting excellence in the latter. The consequence of such a focus can be success in warfare, but defeat in war overall.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, harking back to Maxims 2 and 3, a dedication to warfare at the expense of warfare's context of war is bound to hinder the realization of warfare's purposes, which have to be political.

War has multiple contexts, as Jeremy Black insists persuasively.<sup>43</sup> It is not only about fighting, though that, certainly, is its unique, distinguishing feature. Whether wars are great or small, regular or irregular, ancient or modern, they all have deadly combat in common. Military force must have a political purpose, but coercion is

the method it is trained to apply in pursuit of that purpose. Coercion includes intimidation, but its mailed fist is designed to kill people and break things. It is surprising how many people, not excluding soldiers, choose to ignore this defining characteristic of military power.

Maxim 8 is, of course, a warning. It claims that belligerents need to wage war holistically. And because, to repeat, war has many dimensions, an unduly heavy concentration on the fighting will leave other dimensions short-changed. For example, when war is reduced to fighting, which is to say to warfare, the logistic, economic, political and diplomatic, and social-cultural contexts are likely to be neglected. Any of those dimensions, singly or in malign combination, can carry the virus of eventual defeat, virtually no matter how the army performs on the battlefield.

It should not be supposed that this discussion is at all dismissive of the significance of military prowess. If the army does not fight well, or well enough, it is difficult, and it may be impossible, to find adequate compensation by the employment at the grand-strategic level of other means in a belligerent's armory. Maxim 8 means exactly, and strictly only, what it says: There is more to war than warfare. This maxim is of great importance and its validity has been demonstrated repeatedly in strategic history.

It alerts us to the phenomenon of the belligerent that decides to fight, resting most, if not all, of its confidence in victory upon its anticipated competence in battle. When a belligerent approaches war almost exclusively as warfare, it is all but asking to be out-generalled by an enemy who fights smarter by waging war, rather than warfare alone. For example, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) waged war against the armed forces of the British crown from January 1919 until the truce of July 1921, entirely for political, not military, effect.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, many irregular belligerents fight in a manner and for a purpose that is classically Clausewitzian. War, and warfare, is an instrument of policy. Military action is initiated not for its military effect, which must be trivial in scale and inherent significance, but rather for its psychological and hence political consequences. An official, and regular, counterinsurgent force may believe that it is fighting well enough against insurgents. But, the insurgents typically will not be fighting to damage or even to demoralize the army. Instead, they will be waging warfare with the intentions of both shaking the political will of the government and reducing popular belief in the eventual success of the counterinsurgents.

Maxim 8 is of high importance because it explains why so many of strategic history's resorts to force have had consequences disappointing to their authors. When confronted with a political challenge, which may be either great or small, policymakers are apt to respond in ways favored by their public and strategic cultures. Most specifically, some cultures, the American, for a leading example, tend to approach strategic problems monochronically, employing one method at a time. War and peace, war and diplomacy, and war and politics generally are regarded as alternatives, not as continuous complements. This was the German

way of war, the American, and the Israeli way also. A complex problem is defined as one that mandates resort to war. And war is reduced to warfare. The pure, or extreme, variant of this approach was expressed with admirable clarity by Field Marshal Helmuth Graf von Moltke, the victor of the wars of German unification against Austria and France, who declared that when war begins, diplomacy, indeed all political matters, must take a back seat.<sup>45</sup> The principle was to the effect that once the politicians have decided upon war, the keys of the kingdom are handed to the military establishment. It is their mission to resolve through warfare the problems of the day that could not be solved satisfactorily by other means. War can have decisive effects, as was explained by Maxim 4. But, it does not always have the political effects that are most desired especially if the politicians are content to allow the soldiers to direct the warfare without benefit of serious dialogue with the world of policy.

With reference to the historical examples cited already, the strategic story is clear enough. In Ireland from 1919 to 1921, the British Army eventually held its own, and more, against the IRA, but the war was lost politically, psychologically, and morally. There could not be a military solution to what began as pure terrorism and evolved rapidly into at least an insipient insurgency. The Germans, it is generally acknowledged, were the A-team in warfare in the twentieth century. And yet they lost two world wars. In the German case, one is attracted to the ironic wisdom in a dictum expressed by Barry Turner, "Small scale failures can be produced very rapidly, but large-scale failures can only be produced if time and resources are devoted to them."<sup>46</sup> The German example is complex because of the differences between Imperial and Nazi Germany. However, in both world wars the German way of war failed because it approached its task too narrowly. It is a standard historical observation, for once correct, that Germany did not really wage war politically or strategically, but only operationally and tactically. To that familiar judgment one should add the comment that Germany did not wage war with overmuch regard to the logistic context either. For the finest fighting force on the globe to lose not one, but two, world wars within the compass of thirty-one years was truly remarkable. The most basic among the host of reasons for the German defeats is the sense in this Maxim 8. In both wars the German armed forces could not substitute sufficiently their undoubted skill and determination in fighting, for the lack of national advantages in the other contexts of war.

With its cultural, political, and legal insistence, upon a sharp division between military and political matters, the United States is vulnerable to seduction by the false promise of military solutions to political problems. In fact, the military strictly is able to solve only military difficulties. Whether or not American military success promotes political success depends upon the skill with which Americans perform at the elevated levels of strategy and policy. The actual fighting at the sharp end of war, which is to say tactically, where the dying is done, is only the means to a political end. And it will not be that unless American policymakers are educated in strategy and appreciate that all military action is pervasively political

in meaning and implications. It has to follow that although warfare has a grammar and dynamics of its own, it is wasted effort and sacrifice unless policy retains a grip on strategy.

The final example cited perhaps provides the starkest of strategic history's grim endorsements of the logic of Maxim 8. Israel has waged war as warfare repeatedly since its founding, and desperate war for survival, in 1948. Given the geostrategic implications of Israel's restricted and inconveniently shaped national territory, it is easy to understand why strictly military considerations have always taken pride of place in the Israeli approach to war and peace. When the geostrategic margin for national safety is so slim and therefore unforgiving, the military context cannot be demoted. However, even the most prudent of militarily hard-nosed realists cannot help but notice that although Israel has succeeded in most of the warfare it has conducted over the course of nearly sixty years, it has yet to win what must be called The War for regional acceptance in Palestine. In order to secure peace with security, as this book has observed already, the military victor requires the defeated party to accept its defeat. To date, Israel has lost all of its wars when that principle is applied.

Maxim 8 claims that to approach war as if it is synonymous with warfare all but guarantees political failure at worst, or at best, political disappointment.

In short, military history becomes an aspect of total history; not in order to "demilitarize" it, but because the operational aspect of war is best studied in terms of the multiple political, social and cultural contexts that gave, and give, it meaning.

Jeremy Black, 2004<sup>47</sup>

# Maxim 9

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## Policy Is King, but Often Is Ignorant of the Nature and Character of War

Once again: war is an instrument of policy. It must necessarily bear the character of policy and measure by its standards. The conduct of war, in its great outlines, is therefore policy itself, which takes up the sword in place of the pen, but does not on that account cease to think according to its own laws.

Carl von Clausewitz, 1832<sup>48</sup>

When politicians decide to resort to war they choose to depart from their area of expertise. Maxim 9 points to a structural problem with the decision to fight. Specifically, the policymakers who order the military machine into action will be less than expert, in fact they may well be deeply ignorant about, the military instrument to which they make appeal. This ignorance is likely to be multilevel. On the one hand, the civilian politician will not understand much about war in general. That is to say that he or she will have scant grasp of the truths and their implications, including the caveats, presented and explained in this book. On the other hand, the policymaker will certainly be poorly informed about the current state of the art and science of warfare. Since the character of every war is unique in the details of its contexts (political, social-cultural, economic, technological, military-strategic, geographical, and historical), the policymaker most probably will struggle to understand the character of the warfare that is unleashed. So, the civilian politician, legally in the driver's seat for policy, is likely to be challenged by a deficient grasp of both the nature of war as well as its contemporary context-specific character. When one adds to those difficulties the fact that war is always a gamble (see Maxim 10), even when it is conducted by the rare policymaker who proves himself or herself to be a gifted strategist, it is not hard to appreciate why Clausewitz's wisdom, as quoted above, lightly conceals a host of practical problems.

Maxim 9 affirms the primacy of policy, as it must. But, then it proceeds to cast doubt upon the sense in that primacy. The solution does not of course lie



in transferring final responsibility for the conduct of war to soldiers. Even if military professionals are genuinely expert in their grasp of war's general nature and specific character, though that cannot be assumed, they will be profoundly inexpert in their understanding of all of war's contexts except for the military-strategic. The solution has to lie in the conduct of that "unequal dialogue," of which Eliot Cohen has written eloquently.<sup>49</sup> Soldier and civilian policymaker must communicate all but continuously, and each will need to insist that the other pays due attention to that which is mandatory in the world of the other. However, policy must be the dominant participant in the dialogue. If it is not, the proper relationship between war and policy would be reversed.

Clausewitz did not devote space to the analysis of potential pathologies in civil-military relations. This is not really a criticism of the master, but it is necessary to point out that severe problems lurk close to, indeed in many cases are inevitable with, the relationship that he specifies. The quotation with which this essay opens, for example, provides a brilliant, capsule explanation both of the nature of the connection between policy and warfare as well as of the necessary distinctiveness of the two. What Clausewitz describes is beautifully presented, undoubtedly is correct, and yet is perennially challenged by the practice of warfare in history. *On War* is not wrong, but Maxim 9 asserts a major caveat which one dare not ignore.

Clausewitz anticipates the caveat expressed here, when he insists that the civilian policymaker should have some understanding of the military instrument he intends to use.<sup>50</sup> Quite so. The problem, of course, is that most politicians today have little understanding of military matters, while even their military advisers may well find themselves professionally challenged when called upon to provide reliable expert judgments.

Three reasons explain the latter point. First, the grammar of war may be moving so rapidly that the military profession lacks confidence in its grasp of what is and is not now possible. Second, war is a house with many rooms, to adopt a metaphor from T. E. Lawrence (of Arabia),<sup>51</sup> and even an excellent army is unlikely to be equally excellent in waging regular and irregular warfare, for example. And, third, the prudent military adviser will be alert to the near certainty of surprises by the enemy. That enemy will not content itself to be a passive object upon which our military machine can demonstrate its prowess at its own unhindered discretion.

The core of the message in Maxim 9 is to the effect that there is a structural tension inherent in the relationship between politicians and soldiers. Accepting the risk of inadvertent overstatement, one could argue that both sides of the necessary, if unequal, dialogue must be plagued by uncertainties. Policymakers will know, at least ought to know, what they want to achieve. But, often they will hesitate lest they be too definite and specific, pending clarification by battle of what the military instrument is able to deliver. For their part, soldiers require policy guidance, but more often than not that guidance will be seriously flawed, at least

from the soldiers' point of view. It will be unduly general, and it will probably contain contradictory elements, because the authors attempted to take account of a range of possible developments. Also, the guidance will be written in such a way as to anticipate, and divert blame, should the war not proceed satisfactorily. Just as the honest soldier usually will be uncertain about the capability of the military to get the job done, which is to say the job specified by policy, so the honest politician will harbor residual doubts about the wisdom of the policy course selected.

As so often in these essays, Maxim 9 directs attention to the difficulties of translating political judgment into effective warmaking and, no less troublesome, the problems inseparable from the attempt to threaten or apply force for political ends. This discussion picks up where Clausewitz leaves off. He tells us how things ought to be managed, and that is essential. It is necessary to understand the proper relationship between policy and warfare. But, once we have grasped *On War's* educational points in that regard, we are left, unaided further, to grapple with the practical challenge of somehow mastering the challenge of strategy in an actual historical context.

Maxim 9 is of high significance because, stated bluntly, it claims that civilian policymakers are apt to choose objectives whose military feasibility must be more or less uncertain. That uncertainty will stem from war's very nature. That is to say, uncertainty must be fuelled by war's climate, from the friction inalienably associated with its myriad activities, from the unpredictable working of the trinitarian relations among passion, chance, and policy, and by the choices made by the enemy. It is a historical fact, endlessly repeated, that policymakers committed strongly to their political desires are not easily deflected by military advice of a kind that they do not wish to hear. Somehow, the desirable is magically transformed by the politician's willpower into the feasible. What politicians want to work has to be made to work. And, one must hasten to add, professional soldiers are schooled to be practical people, problem solvers, and to be obedient servants of the state. In other words, responsible and sensible soldiers may register a protest against a mission for which the troops are not well prepared, but, ultimately, they will salute, say "yes, sir," and get on with the job as best they are able.

The American project in Iraq in 2003 illustrates every aspect of the meaning and implication of Maxim 9. Policy did not understand the full political implication of its primary goal of regime change. It was deeply ignorant of the sociology and anthropology of Iraq. The U.S. military establishment, to its credit, generally was highly skeptical of the plan for an invasion employing only minimal forces on the ground. But, it proved to be so clumsy in the conduct of post (regular) war stabilization operations that its approach to the war after the war, in other words to counterinsurgency, certainly poured oil on the flames.<sup>52</sup> It was not the politicians alone who failed to understand the character of the radically changed political context in Iraq. Most of the soldiers too, with their task rendered almost impossibly

difficult by U.S. policy errors, were ignorant of how to conduct themselves in a military and social-cultural context of irregular warfare.

The political object—the original motive for the war—will thus determine both the military objective to be reached and the amount of effort it requires.

Carl von Clausewitz, 1832<sup>53</sup>

# Maxim 10

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## War Is Always a Gamble

War is the Realm of Chance.  
Carl von Clausewitz, 1832<sup>54</sup>

Armies are trained to wage war and soldiers to fight. But, most armies spend very little time actually at war. Soldiers who look impressive on exercises in peacetime maneuver may well be good at soldiering, but how effective are they at fighting? Short of the event, one cannot know. Furthermore, because every war is unique, even recent combat experience cannot serve as a wholly reliable guide to military performance. When policymakers and soldiers refer reassuringly to that hardy standby, the calculated risk, they are either lying or are simply mistaken. The risks in a unique military challenge must always be literally incalculable.

So extreme are the hazards of war, so high the stakes, certainly for the direct participants and frequently for the societies they represent, that a quest for certainty, at least major risk reduction, is only sensible. That quest is essential and likely to deliver some success, but ultimately is doomed to fail. It is in the very nature of war for chance to rule. The fundamental reason why this has to be so is because of war's complexity. It has too many diverse, yet interacting, dimensions to be controlled reliably by the strategic gambler striving to reduce the risks. The more extreme the stakes the greater should be the effort to mark the cards in one's favor, yet the more difficult that must prove to be. Risk-free warfare is not an option.

The sources of uncertainty lie broadly in three areas: the enemy, ourselves, and what for want of a more elegant concept, we will simply call the unexpected. This maxim points to a necessary truth about war, albeit one that can be reduced by competent military husbandry. The least yielding dimension of war for the strategic gambler is, of course, the independent will of the enemy. We can control our actions up to that vital point where they first meet the foe, but beyond that prior calculation of expected advantage becomes guesswork.

The gamble that is war functions at two levels, military and political. Militarily, estimates of fighting power become ever more uncertain as the focus shifts from the tactical to the consequences of the tactical for the operational and then to the meaning of operational success or failure for the course of hostilities as a whole. As if that were not difficult enough, the subject of interest here is really war, not its actual conduct in warfare. The gamble can climb to heroic proportions when policymakers need to cash their winning chips from the warfare gaming table into the only currency that has meaning, the political.

A principal value, intellectually perhaps one should even say the joy, of the maxims in this collection is that they admit of few exceptions. To the postmodern way of thinking that is rank heresy. So be it. Maxim 10 tells us that a decision to go to war, or to resist, must entail the rolling of the iron dice. That is an all-occasion strategic truth. Its implications should be capable of being diminished, but alleviation, not removal, has to be the scope of practical ambition. When one goes to war, one chooses to take a walk on the wild side. The most attractive way to improve the odds on success is to strike by surprise, and then to keep the military and strategic initiative thus seized. In principle thereby you delete the independent will of the enemy from consideration as an unpredictable factor.<sup>55</sup> If the foe is just a hapless victim, a target set to be massacred from the air, or a confused and ill directed mass to be annihilated by maneuver into surrender, then indeed it would seem as if Maxim 10 would not hold. Alas, the truth in the maxim is more potent than is the potential in the rare exceptions cited. Whereas a successful surprise assault and a subsequent immaculate campaign of annihilation must remove the gamble, the securing of such a huge, paralyzing, advantage can only be achieved by the acceptance of extraordinary risk. Cunning plans with grand deceptions always require the acceptance of heart-stopping perils.

Policymakers and soldiers are pragmatic people, not philosophers. The truth they need, and therefore seek, is the truth that works well enough in practice. Such a need attracts the ingenious, the merely plausible, and—as often as not—the plainly incompetent. So heavy is the burden of responsibility for war and its conduct that it would be very strange were remedies for its risks not available in the marketplace of ideas. The merit in Maxim 10 is that it provides an impenetrable armor against wishful thinking. That redoubtable accomplishment is achieved by isolating an eternal truth from partial or even contingent truth. There are, and can be, no exceptions to the maxim that war is always a gamble. The significance of this maxim could hardly be higher. Only if policymakers choose to ignore it, or allow themselves to be persuaded by the purveyors of patent political, strategic, military, and now even cultural remedies for the hazard of chance in war, that they can beat it, must the direst danger ensue.

The line dividing banality from wisdom can be a fine one. A maxim is a general truth that nearly everybody knows, or knows about, but only rarely is it fully understood widely. Most defense analysis and military planning, as well as the acquisition of new equipment, the invention of new operational ideas, and the

organizations to give them effect, are, in effect, more or less worthy efforts to resist the impediments imposed by the enduring nature of war and warfare. As practical people, responsible officials have to be problem solvers. That is their function. Since the needs of government, as well as more personal considerations, fuel the engines of intellectual and other innovation, hardly ever is there a shortage of theories on offer as prospective solutions to the challenges of the day. What role must this maxim play?

Maxim 10, in common with most of the others, helps vitally to keep us in history, which is to say empirically grounded; indeed it insists that we must so remain. The very familiarity of the idea that war is the realm of chance breeds some contempt and almost inevitably inoculates policymakers against the influence that this truth ought to have upon their thinking. A maxim has a way of stating an unwelcome reality. Politicians do not want to be told or reminded that war is a gamble. Viscerally, at least, they know that. The understanding that they need is of ways to defeat, offset, or somehow evade the potency of the dictum. And they will never be short of advisors more than ready to encourage them to believe that hoary old maxims can be evaded or at least tamed if not falsified.

Contrary to appearances, perhaps, a set of maxims on war, peace, and strategy is not an idle academic product, the outcome of a liking for strategic philosophy. Instead, such a set has the most serious of all practical purposes as its root justification. Because necessarily practical-minded leaders must strive to secure some control over the recalcitrant nature, the very structure of an unruly strategic context, they are biased against recognition of the impossible. Great careers in politics and the military are not much assisted by fatalistic acceptance of apparently absolute limits. Happily, it is not the task of the theorist to discourage the quest for improved military and strategic performance, quite the contrary, in fact. Rather is the theorist's mission, at least with respect to maxims, to try to save the people of action both from themselves and from the seductive purveyors of the latest all but guaranteed way to win, and the like.

This discussion concerns a major truth and a minor one. The minor truth is that the risks, the chances, the uncertainties of war and warfare can be reduced. Competent and fortunate people and organizations toil productively to achieve just that benign result. The major truth, however, is that war is always a gamble. It is so complex, with its many dimensions, its nonlinearities, its sheer chaos, and the events that will not occur according to plan, that all significant risk can never be eliminated reliably.<sup>56</sup> There are many reasons why this should be so, today and in the future, as in the past, but by far the most potent among them is the inconvenient presence of an uncooperative, self-willed, enemy. Mountaineering also is a realm of chance fraught with deadly peril. But, mountains do not take active measures to frustrate human assault. Human behavior is different. The enemy is not an inanimate object to be manipulated at our convenience. As a general rule he will have choices. Those choices will not always be attractive to him, or even particularly effective. But, they will be likely to drive us off any pristine game plan

by means of which we had persuaded ourselves that we could take chance out of the venture.

A maxim serves as the voice of strategic conscience. It reminds leaders of major truths that they ignore at their peril. In an obvious sense it is not especially helpful for a policymaker to be told that war is always a gamble. But, one has to consider the context within which policy is made, and the pressures on all the action elements of officialdom to find workable solutions to awesome difficulties. In those circumstances it is literally crucial that the very nature of war not be slighted by harried and desperate people who want to believe that with the right plan the gamble in war can be placed on hold. Those who remember, understand, and inwardly digest Maxim 10 should not commit this potentially lethal error.

But planning for certitude is the greatest of all military mistakes.

J. C. Wylie, 1989<sup>57</sup>





# Part II

## Strategy



# Maxim 11

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## Knowledge of Strategy Is Vital: The Flame of Strategic Understanding Has to Be Kept Lit

Anyone who produces a book on strategy in this day and age may seem bold to the point of foolhardiness. No one today believes in strategic genius. Great strategists have been swept away by the cataclysm of two world wars and the pressure of day-to-day events: they have gone the way of the old coloured prints with their naïve simplicity and strong colours, pictures of an ancient civilization in process of disintegration.

General André Beaufre, 1963<sup>1</sup>

Maxim 11 is probably the most important of all the maxims presented and discussed in this book. It is certainly the most personal. The author regards himself as a strategist and is somewhat flattered to note that many other people agree with that job description. Obviously, this maxim cannot really be more important than are those deployed in Part I on the relationship between war and peace. However, this maxim's significance is elevated by the fact that its sense is not well understood. In point of fact, while people have no little trouble grasping the other concepts and functions that this text analyzes in abundance, though they can be baffled by the relations among them, strategy is in a class of difficulty all its own. This difficulty reveals itself in two dimensions. On the one hand, the meaning and purpose of strategy commonly is not comprehended securely. On the other hand, and in part as a logical consequence of the problem of understanding just cited, the difficulties that lie in wait for the strategist are truly awesome. Discussion of those difficulties is deferred to the essay that analyzes Maxim 12.

It is convenient, though unintentionally flattering to this author, to regard as a strategist anyone whose profession is either to do strategy in an executive capacity, civilian or military, as well as anyone who theorizes about, or advises government on, strategy. A country, or any other kind of security community, does not have need of many strategists. Indeed, it could be argued that although strategic debate worthy of the title requires a body of strategists encompassing different views, a community can afford only a single authoritative strategist, a single strategy, at least.

Maxim 11 rests upon the assumption, all too easily demonstrated to be valid, that strategy is poorly understood. Hence it is vital that the flame of strategic understanding should be kept alight.<sup>2</sup> Those few scholars and practitioners who may justly wear the badge of strategist with pride are akin to a priesthood. They are few in number, their subject is inherent extremely difficult, and the message to their security communities at large typically is imperfectly understood and even more imperfectly used as a basis for action. Why should this be so?

The core problem with strategy is that it is a virtual behavior; it has no material existence. It is an abstraction, though it is vastly more difficult to illustrate visually than are such other vital abstractions as, say, love and fear. What is strategy? Regarded narrowly in its military dimension, it is the bridge that connects the worlds of policy and military power.<sup>3</sup> It is strategy that interprets the meaning of policy for military power, and which must devise schemes for the threat or use of that power to serve the purposes of policy. In practice, the strategic function needs to be active constantly in time of war, or near-war, because policy should not ask of its military instrument accomplishments that are beyond its means. Similarly, military plans must be developed and executed only if they advance the goals of policy. In the process of dialogue that should occur on the strategy bridge, both the soldier and the civilian politician need to adjust their preferences so as to meet the demands of the other. But, a key function of the dialogue is to ensure that the spokespeople for policy and military power each respect the core integrity of the logic, or grammar, of the other.

For the sake of this discussion, it suffices to treat strategy strictly in its military guise. Maxim 20 deals explicitly with the much broader function of grand strategy. Clausewitz tells us that “[s]trategy [is] the use of engagements for the object of the war.”<sup>4</sup> This is admirable in its terse insistence upon strategy as an exercise in instrumentality. It is less admirable in that it is narrowly military and it confines strategy to time of war. This author’s adaptation of Clausewitz’s definition deals with the constraint of the wartime focus, but not with the other problem, that of its strictly military focus. My definition holds that “strategy is the use that is made of force and the threat of force for the ends of policy.”<sup>5</sup> The prime reason why one hesitates to broaden the definition of strategy is that when one discusses grand strategy, the use of all of a security community’s assets as instruments of policy, one is apt to lose sight of the issues distinctive to military power amidst the total items in the crowd of somewhat competing policy instruments. When one analyzes grand strategy, as one must, it is essential not to lose sight of the uniqueness of the military item in the polity’s toolbox.

Maxim 11 is a truth that serves to alert us to the permanent need for strategic thought and genuinely strategic behavior. As noted already, the reasons why strategy is so difficult are explained in Maxim 12. Suffice it to say for now that excellence in strategy is rare. That judgment applies to both honor rolls: the one for strategists as executives and the other for strategists as theorists. Works of lasting merit on the general theory of strategy are noticeable for their near absence

from library shelves. With respect to the strategist as theorist, the role with which this author is most familiar, he having played it for more than thirty years, there tends to be little direct official demand for his or her services. The reason is not because strategy is of little significance, but because most civilian officials and soldiers do not understand strategy well enough to know just how badly they are in need of its perspective. So few people are required to make strategy on behalf of their security community, and then they do so only episodically, that there is not a constant, let alone a heavy, demand for genuinely strategic expertise. Since the agenda of the preeminently practical realm of strategic studies is driven by the official strategic concerns of the period, even the very brief period, scholars are not much encouraged to think and theorize strategically.

Most of what passes for strategic analysis is really nothing of the kind. Strategic is employed widely as an adjective both to indicate a military focus as well as to claim an upgrade in significance for the product at issue. Strategic is a good descriptor. It is a word of power, a legitimizer. In practice, it often succeeds in securing some grade inflation for the study or idea being presented. To be fair, defense communities do recognize that strategy is important, though only rarely are they sufficiently persuaded as to the high dignity of its relative importance. In the United States, for example, periodically there is a flurry of alarm over the lack of high-quality strategic thinking behind the defense budget. Hearings are held in Congress and reports are issued in due course. In war after war, America demonstrates an acute strategy deficit. Sometimes this is noted, and again there is a small surge of intellectual activity as the official world expresses a need for strategy.<sup>6</sup> However, this occasional endorsement of strategy's significance does not long endure. The soldiers focus on their professional military duties, while the politicians exercise their skills in policymaking. The strategy bridge between the two worlds, the two cultures, generally is left only poorly guarded, if it is guarded at all. This condition holds until the next national crisis demonstrates the necessity for strategy yet again.

Maxim 11 asserts, unremarkably, that for strategy to be developed and debated there have to be strategists. While strategic genius arguably may more often be born than made, nonetheless a country cannot rely on its gene pool and military and political career structures to provide a natural strategic genius when he or she is most needed. It follows that the prudent polity should seek to educate at least a few people, civilian and military, to think strategically. This is difficult, as the next essay explains. But, no matter how difficult the mission of truly strategic education, the price of failure can be too high to be tolerable. The reason why is expressed pithily in the following quotation.

You may not be interested in strategy, but strategy is interested in you.

Anonymous

# Maxim 12

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## Strategy Is More Difficult than Policy or Tactics

When you're facing a counterinsurgency war, if you get the strategy right, you can get the tactics wrong, and eventually you'll get the tactics right. If you get the strategy wrong and the tactics right at the start, you can refine the tactics forever, but you still lose the war. That's basically what we did in Vietnam.

Robert Killebrew, 2006<sup>7</sup>

Maxim 12 means exactly what it says and no more. It does not claim that strategy is more important than policy or tactics, only that it is more difficult. The three levels of behavior addressed in this maxim are intimately interdependent. Choice of policy must guide strategy selection, while that selection cannot help but influence, or even direct, tactical practices. This interdependence is perfectly illustrated by the history of World War I. The overwhelming problem was political. Policy on both sides demanded decisive military victory, an outcome that strategy could not deliver at acceptable cost. The reason that strategy thus failed was because the operational and tactical options were so limited. If there is a tactical stalemate, as there was from 1914 until late in 1918, none of the higher levels of warmaking—operations, military strategy, grand strategy, and policy—are really of much consequence. They all have to be done tactically by the troops. If the troops cannot or will not perform, excellence at the higher levels must be irrelevant.

Each of the three levels of performance identified here are vital. If policy is unwise, even counterproductive, then competent strategy and tactics must be effort wasted. If tactics are superior, but strategy is misguided, as Colonel Killebrew suggested in the quotation that heads this essay, military success will have no very useful consequences. And lastly, for the focus of this essay, if policy is good enough and tactics are suitably adaptable the effectiveness of the entire enterprise will depend upon the quality of the chosen strategy. Recall that strategy

is the bridge that connects the policymaking function with the fighting and dying function performed by soldiers.

Because strategy generally is so ill-understood in comparison with the intellectual grasp that people have upon the meaning and purpose of policy and tactics, it is apt to be neglected. Moreover, when its meaning is explained it can sound so elementary a function that it appears to require no special talent for its performance. It is necessary at this juncture to revisit the function of strategy and the strategist. One must understand (1) that the strategist has to devise plans that bind military action, purposefully, to the pursuit of political goals, (2) that binding process is likely to require the strategist to negotiate in both directions, with policymakers and with soldiers, as each strives to maintain what they regard as the integrity of their behavior, and (3) that, overall, strategy is where policy meets the battlespace.

Policymaking and tactics are not easy, but they are activities for the performance of which there are skilled professionals, steeped in relevant experience. But strategy-making is not a professional skill of either the policymaker or the soldier. With much insight, as usual,<sup>8</sup> Clausewitz observes that at its higher levels the conduct of war and policy effectively fuse. That may be true, indeed it is true in that all of warfare should be regarded as political behavior conducted by violent means. But, in the modern heavily bureaucratized world, especially in countries whose laws and customs mandate the political separation of the soldier from the state, that fusion of which Clausewitz wrote is difficult or impossible to achieve in practice. When it is achieved the strategy bridge all but disappears as policymaking and warmaking are united, typically with catastrophic consequences. Today, certainly in Western democracies, there is no prudent alternative to the making of provision for strategists to hold the bridge that should connect policy with its military instrument. As guardian of the strategy bridge, it is the duty of the strategist to ensure that a disciplined dialogue is continuous between politicians and soldiers. The strategist, after all, has to devise schemes for the employment of military power that should satisfy political goals, but which, in order to do that, are also tactically and logistically feasible.

The reasons why strategy is difficult are not as well appreciated as they need to be, particularly by strategists. Three broad explanations penetrate generically to the evidential base for this maxim.

First, as explained previously, the strategist is in the business of currency conversion, in a context that lacks a stable rate of exchange. He or she must determine what kind of military threat or action, on what scale, should generate the strategic effect necessary to achieve political objectives. Since the most vital element in the equation is likely to be unknown, which is to say the will to resist on the part of the enemy, the strategist cannot really calculate, rather must guess. The exercise of force can stiffen resistance rather than suppress it, especially in irregular warfare.

Second, the strategist straddles the sociological, cultural, and professional frontiers that divide civilian politicians from soldiers. Even when everybody wishes

to cooperate, and when there is a bureaucratic process designed to facilitate, even ensure, cooperation, the divide between civilian and soldier still can be all but unbridgeable. If, as usual, one has recourse to Clausewitz, albeit with some expansion upon his point, one is reminded that at the level of strategy-making the logic of policy meets the grammar of war.<sup>9</sup> The policymaker may well require of the military what it cannot perform tactically. The military may wish to fight in ways in which it excels, and for tactical ends that it understands, but which carry little promise of securing a useful political return upon the investment.

Third, strategy is exceptionally difficult because it has dimensions that embrace every aspect of war preparation and warmaking. This author has defied the valuable logic of Occam's Razor, which holds that less is more, and has identified no fewer than seventeen such dimensions.<sup>10</sup> Clausewitz was far more of an Occamite, in that he specified just five elements of strategy: moral, physical, mathematical, geographical, and statistical.<sup>11</sup> Much more recently, Michael Howard was content to identify four dimensions to strategy: the social, the logistical, the operational, and the technological.<sup>12</sup> This author borrowed from Clausewitz an approach to understanding the complexity of strategy by clustering his seventeen dimensions into three categories: people and politics, "preparation for war," and "war proper." The second and third categories are directly Clausewitzian. The precise identity of strategy's dimensions is not important, provided everything of significance is encompassed in the framework for recognition and analysis. To complete this part of the discussion, it is necessary for the author to itemize his seventeen chosen dimensions. Category one, "People and Politics," comprises people, society, culture, politics, and ethics. Category two, "Preparation for War," comprises economics and logistics, organization (including defense and force planning), military administration (including recruitment, training, and most aspects of armament), information and intelligence, military theory and doctrine, and technology. Category three, "War Proper," comprises military operations, command (political and military), geography, friction (including chance and uncertainty), the adversary, and time.

The menacing encyclopaedism of this author's seventeen identified dimensions should not be permitted to obscure the central truth to Maxim 12.<sup>13</sup> Strategy is difficult, or worse, because weakness on any one, or several, of its many dimensions can have a fatal effect upon strategic performance overall. There is an abundance of ways in which strategic intentions can be thwarted. It is true to claim that, in principle, weakness on one or even several of strategy's dimensions can be offset by compensation granted by excellence elsewhere. That, however, is an abstract hope masquerading as a principle. Historically viewed, strategic performance usually falls short of official expectations, and it does so for reasons that cannot easily be remedied or offset. And, if the problem is lost time (see Maxim 17), strategic compensation is likely to prove impossible. To summarize, the strategic level of warmaking is by far the most challenging because there are just so many things, of different kinds, that can go wrong.



Failure to recognize, understand, and in some measure prepare against the warning in Maxim 12 is likely to guarantee strategic defeat. And if strategy fails, so does policy and so does its military instrument. However, fallibility at the strategic level certainly is not the sole cause of defeat in war, as Colonel Charles E. Callwell asserted plausibly more than a century ago.

Strategy is not, however, the final arbiter in war. The battle-field decides.

Charles E. Callwell, 1906<sup>14</sup>

# Maxim 13

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## Bad Strategy Kills, but So Also Do Bad Policy and Tactics

Errors in strategy can only be corrected in the next war.  
Anonymous

Choice of strategy can determine whether or not policy goals will be attainable. And that choice must provide the most vital of contexts for tactical behavior. Once the policy objectives have been chosen, strategy is the function that delivers the theory of victory. If the theory is inappropriate, then policy must fail and soldiers will die to no worthwhile purpose. Expressed thus, it is easy to see why the strategic level of performance in war, and indeed in statecraft more generally, is where feasibility largely is determined.

It is the role of strategy to translate a political goal into an achievable objective. If one is talking about military strategy, then the issue obviously is narrowly, though probably most vitally, focused upon the leverage of military power. Viewed more broadly, choices in grand strategy amount to decisions on the conduct of a conflict as a whole. Although all of the instruments of policy are important, when the issue of the day is one of military security, questions of military strategy will assume preeminent importance. The other tools of statecraft—diplomacy, propaganda, economic pressure, subversion, and so forth—must be regarded as supporting elements in a context that privileges military behavior.

In principle, policy must drive strategy, just as strategy must drive tactics. But, in historical practice, the relations among the political, strategic, and tactical levels of violent statecraft are not so neatly hierarchical. The strategist, standing guard on the bridge into the city, like brave Horatius in Lord Macaulay's epic *Lays of Ancient Rome*, is really the policeman for effective behavior at both higher and lower levels of warmaking. On the strategy bridge, the strategist must translate political desires into plans for their realization. If this cannot be done with confidence, the strategist is obliged so to indicate and in consequence to suggest that policy should be revised in a less ambitious direction.

Working downward, the strategy necessary to achieve political goals may well ask more of the armed forces than they are likely to be able to deliver. The strategist will try to select a theory of victory and a strategy for its execution that favors his or her country's (or other kind of security community's) strengths, and provides compensation for its weaknesses. But, there are always likely to be tactical constraints, both of certain and of probable-possible kinds.

To risk tautology, good strategy is strategy that should yield sufficient strategic effect to meet the often dynamic demands of policy. That all important strategic effect, the common currency earned by military behavior of all kinds, is generated by the effort, skill, and blood of soldiers in combat.

It would be a serious mistake to regard the strategist guarding the strategy bridge between politics and military power as a defender à l'outrance of some frozen Great Plan. The strategist does indeed have an all but sacred trust, but it is not to a static product. Instead, the strategist on his or her bridge is charged with ensuring that military assets are employed in ways ultimately conducive to the securing of a high political return on effort. The metaphor of the strategy bridge is chosen because it suggests the function of facilitating, indeed enabling, two-way communication, dialogue even, between politicians and soldiers. However, the strategist is not simply a traffic manager. On the bridge, of variable length and in many possible states of disrepair, the strategist must perform a currency conversion function. The dialogue between political desires and claims as to military feasibility have to be turned into a theory for action that should satisfy the realms both of politics and of the military. Bad strategy would be strategy that either could not satisfy political needs or places impractical demands on the troops and their assets for logistical support.<sup>15</sup>

Maxim 13 serves usefully to help deepen comprehension of the role of strategy and of the strategist vis-à-vis policy and tactics. Those who find themselves somewhat puzzled by the mystery of the duties of the strategist, as contrasted with the more obvious behaviors of policymakers and soldiers, should find enlightenment in this explanation of Maxim 13.

While every level of behavior is important—the political, the strategic, and the tactical—this maxim is intended to highlight the unique contribution of the strategic. The author has long taken a holistic view of war, and of peace also, but that perspective must not encourage an unduly casual appreciation of the function of strategy and the strategist. Of course, policy is the ultimate driver of behavior. It is the only source of meaning for the organized violence that is understood as war. And, of course, tactics are literally vital, because policy and strategy have to be done at war's sharp end. If the soldiers cannot perform adequately, it will not matter how brilliant the strategy that has been adopted in pursuit of political goals. The whole enterprise must fail.

The significance of strategy is demonstrated in every conflict, sometimes dramatically. For example, in 1812 and in 1941, Napoleon and Hitler, respectively, adopted a strategy, a theory of victory, that proved unsound. They both expected

to be able to defeat the Russian Army close to Russia's frontiers. Following that happy event, in 1812 the Tsar was expected to sue for peace, while in 1941 the Stalinist communist regime was anticipated to collapse. In both historical cases, the invading power, acutely conscious of the forbidding depth of Russian geography, chose a strategy that would deliver military, leading directly to political, victory in a matter of weeks or a few months. At the high point of German euphoria in July 1941, when they were seriously afflicted by the malady known as the victory disease, Germans believed that they had already won the war against the USSR in a mere five weeks. Conclusive victory was expected with supreme confidence within eleven to fourteen weeks, a period which was to include three weeks for rest and refit.<sup>16</sup>

For an example of more recent vintage, American strategic performance in Vietnam is a classic tale, abundantly populated with positive and negative lessons. When it was commanded by General William C. Westmoreland, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) did not lack a strategy for victory over the Vietcong and its often directing supporters in the North Vietnamese Army (NVA). But, unfortunately, MACV's chosen strategy was the wrong one. General Westmoreland committed the most fundamental of strategic errors identified by Clausewitz. He did not understand the character of the war into which he entered. As a consequence, he proceeded to wage it in the manner that he preferred and understood, rather than in ways appropriate to the local strategic challenge.<sup>17</sup> As was indicated in the quotation from Colonel Killebrew for Maxim 12, when the strategy is incorrect, no measure of tactical prowess is likely to suffice to stave off defeat. Competent tactical behavior in aid of largely irrelevant operational goals, directed by a false overall strategic appreciation, is a formula for failure. To balance the historical story somewhat, it is worth noting that the United States did prove itself capable of strategic learning in Vietnam, albeit on a timescale too late for the political tolerance of America at home. Strategy did alter with change in command at MACV in 1968. By 1969–1970, the U.S. Army and Marine Corps, and some elements of the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam), achieved what appeared to be a definitive victory in the counterinsurgency struggle against the Vietcong. It should be recalled that when Saigon fell in 1975, it did not succumb to anything resembling a popular mass insurgency. Rather did it fall to an old-fashioned invasion by regular conventional forces.

The strategist holding the strategy bridge can be either a vital component in the solution to a strategic problem or a major contributor to the problem itself. Intelligent policy and willing and able military forces can both be devalued to the point of frustration and even defeat by unsound strategy. To this day, recognition of the true importance of the strategic function continues to be inadequate. All too often, a country has bounded from policy into military action having paid scant regard to the vital enabling role of strategy. The gods of war will not be mocked.

Those who despise, ignore, or otherwise neglect strategy, invariably are required to pay a high price for their mistake.

When the goodman mends his armour,  
And trims his helmet's plume;  
When the goodwife's shuttle merrily  
Goes flashing through the loom;  
With weeping and with laughter  
Still is the story told,  
How well Horatius kept the bridge  
In the brave days of old.

Thomas Babington, Lord Macaulay, 1842<sup>18</sup>

# Maxim 14

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## If Thucydides, Sun-tzu, and Clausewitz Did Not Say It, It Probably Is Not Worth Saying

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 understanding 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, ca. 400 BC<sup>19</sup>

There are no new ideas in strategy. Instead, there is a stock of concepts of great antiquity, whose exact provenance is unknown and unknowable. Most generations produce a few scholars, former strategic practitioners, and popular writers who attempt to update the classics for a better fit with contemporary realities. But the results of their labors are invariably disappointing. At least, they have been disappointing thus far; one cannot speak for the future. Because strategic theory is so practical an enterprise, its ideas always need to be applied with the most careful attention to the details of the historical context. But, those ideas are as unchanging as their manifestation in practice can assume an exceedingly wide variety of forms. There is an eternal body of strategic lore, and the three works specified in Maxim 14 provide and explain nearly all of it.

Despite great differences in style, Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*, Sun-tzu's *Art of War*, and Clausewitz's *On War* comprise the essential trilogy for understanding strategy.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, people cannot be regarded as educated in strategy unless they are familiar, and more, with these books. To go further, it would be agreeable were one able to insist that the country's practicing strategist, or strategists, should be denied strategic responsibility unless they had mastered these texts. Their value was attested by the notably intellectual American soldier-strategist, General of the Army, George Catlin Marshall. When addressing an audience at Princeton University on February 22, 1947, the General, at that time Secretary of State,

said that he doubted “whether a man can think with full wisdom and with deep convictions regarding certain of the basic international issues today who has not at least reviewed in his mind the period of the Peloponnesian War and the Fall of Athens.”<sup>21</sup> And the only way in which that can be done is by studying the sole contemporary source on the subject, Thucydides.

Maxim 14 claims that this trilogy of classics contains all that one needs to know for a superior education in strategy. The background and purpose of each of the three authors—assuming that Sun-tzu was a single, real person—epitomize collectively the pragmatic nature of their concerns. Sun-tzu, writing in the China of the Warring States period (475–221BC) in ca. 400 BC, was an advisor to the Emperor, and may have been a practicing strategist himself. Thucydides, also writing in ca. 400 BC, was a somewhat disgraced Athenian general. Carl von Clausewitz was never trusted with the practice of strategy. But, he had known warfare at first hand since the age of twelve and was a professional intimate of Prussian and Russian strategists. None of these three writers were in any sense academics. They shared a devotion to truth, which is a prime scholarly virtue, but the truth they sought to convey was intended to be a truth useful in the world of war and peace, order and disorder. Despite the great differences in their books, they shared a common commitment to provide at least the basics of an education in strategy. Considered together, these three books constitute the strategic canon.

There have been many attempts to write strategic theory for today, but the more earnest the effort to modernize the story, the more certain has been its early intellectual demise. As a firm believer in the truth of Maxim 14, this author is not arguing that no improvement is possible upon the works of Thucydides, Sun-tzu, and Clausewitz. Rather the point is that thus far no one has succeeded. Every generation of strategic commentators and theorists contains a person or two of outstanding intellectual distinction. Moreover, such people can, and do, make useful contributions to strategic understanding. At the present time, for example, Edward Luttwak and Martin van Creveld merit honorable mentions.<sup>22</sup> However, it is no criticism of those highly talented theorists to say that their excellent work has only added ideas of modest-to-marginal value to the historical body of strategic lore. Luttwak’s writing on strategy per se has privileged the important consequences of the paradoxical nature of the subject. To explain, that which works well strategically today will not work well tomorrow, precisely because it worked well today. An attentive enemy will punish routine in strategic method. The German way of war in 1939–1945 proved unduly inflexible in operational and tactical conception, which means that the Russians and even the British learnt, albeit painfully, how best to counter it.

Martin van Creveld has been as bold in his theorizing as were the three classic authors. But, his radical efforts to rewrite strategic lore for a globalizing age, wherein states allegedly are fading in significance, has not found many adherents outside the ranks of liberal academe and journalism. This author finds his would-be revolutionary text, *The Transformation of War*, brilliant, stimulating, full of

insights, yet fundamentally wrong. Most especially is van Creveld in error in his criticism of Clausewitz as being no longer relevant for a postindustrial age that is witnessing the demise of that sixteenth-century invention, the modern state.

The most essential significance of the three strategic theorists specified in Maxim 14, apart from the obvious quality of their reasoning, lies in the timelessness of their strategic ideas. They can be improved upon, though probably more at the margins than in the body of their thoughts, but they cannot usefully be updated. By way of a modest and only apparent contradiction to that strong claim, every generation can, and indeed must, adapt and interpret the thoughts in the writings of Thucydides, Sun-tzu, and Clausewitz, to meet contemporary needs. It is only the generality of the strategic ideas in the three classics that saves them from utter irrelevance to the supremely pragmatic and ever changing world of the practicing strategist.

Maxim 14 is of great and obvious importance because it identifies the intellectual basis for a superior education in strategy. It may be the case that experience is the best teacher, but a novice strategist learning his trade in action is quite capable of losing his country. Strategic experience tends to be hard earned at a high price. To people relatively unfamiliar with strategic literature, Maxim 14 may seem to advance an extravagant claim. Can just three books, written in ca. 400 BC in Ancient Greece and in China, and in Prussia in the 1820s, really contain all that one needs to know, perhaps all that there is to know, about strategy and war? The answer to that not unreasonable objection based on ignorance is an uncompromising "yes." Of course, there is always room for improvement. Maxim 14 does not carry the implication that Thucydides, Sun-tzu, and Clausewitz wrote works that were perfect. All that it claims is that those three classics, considered as a complementary trinity, provide a good enough education in strategy for those willing and able to learn from their texts.

It is tempting to argue, as indeed this strategic theorist has from time to time, that Clausewitz's *On War*, alone, is sufficient for a sound strategic education. On balance, that claim is probably true, or true enough. However, Clausewitz should be augmented by the very different approaches to the subject adopted by Thucydides and Sun-tzu. The strategic canon praised in Maxim 14 is especially strong because of its diversity. To be specific, the three books were composed in such diverse contexts as ancient Greece, ancient China, and nineteenth-century Prussia. They take the form of a history (Thucydides), a comprehensive set of instructions, almost a "briefing" (Sun-tzu), and a philosophical tract (Clausewitz). And yet they tell the same tale in its strategic essentials. Thucydides is as detailed in his lengthy narrative history as Sun-tzu is parsimonious to the point of extreme brevity, while Clausewitz, alone among the three, is profoundly abstract. Each is strengthened in its capacity to educate by the existence of the others. Thucydides requires his readers to find the general truths of strategy, war, and peace, amidst the concrete details of his rich historical narrative. Sun-tzu provides full-frontal strategic truths, albeit often subtle ones, for policymakers and strategists who



need to receive their advice in nugget form. *The Art of War* is the ultimate in briefable strategic education. Clausewitz, in contrast, has to be read and re-read most carefully, in order to grasp his full meaning.

There are differences among the three classics of Maxim 14. How could there not be? But the differences are of only minor significance when compared with the weight of the substance of their agreement.<sup>23</sup> The basic reason for their fundamental agreement on so many matters is not at all mysterious. Each of them was writing about common and unchanging historical phenomena: war and strategy. This is a rare case of one theory fitting all circumstances. This essay closes with an aspiration of Clausewitz which parallels that expressed already in the opening quotation from by Thucydides.

It was my ambition to write a book that would not be forgotten after two or three years, and that possibly might be picked up more than once by those who are interested in the subject.

Carl von Clausewitz, ca. 1818<sup>24</sup>

# Maxim 15

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## The Strategic “Concept du Jour” Will Be Tomorrow’s Stale Left-Over, Until It Is Rediscovered, Recycled, and Revealed as a New Truth

You can’t keep a good, or bad, idea down. It is certain to return in another strategic debate

Traditional wisdom in Washington, DC

Maxim 15 alerts us to three features of strategic debate. First, it highlights the fact that usually there is a dominant idea; there can even be several such which may or may not be complementary. Second, it claims that the dominant idea of the moment, the “concept du jour,” will have only a temporary popularity. Third, the Maxim asserts, perhaps reassuringly, that allegedly big strategic ideas never die; they simply return to the library where currently tired or discredited concepts rest and recover, pending the recall to duty.

Because there are no new ideas in strategy, as was claimed in the essay on Maxim 14, it has to follow, logically, that all assertions of novelty, all pretensions to conceptual innovation, must be spurious. That harsh judgment is both true and untrue. It is true in that the body of strategic lore that can be accessed either indirectly through study of the writings of the classic theorists, or more directly by study of strategic historical experience, contains an effectively fixed and finite body of ideas. But, it is untrue in that the would-be strategist of today may well be unaware of many of the concepts and conceptual insights that lurk between the covers of the classics. Furthermore, that aspiring strategist might be ignorant of strategic history, except in its most prominent features, and even in those cases the knowledge is apt to be unreliable.

Rephrased, Maxim 15 claims that we have a powerful tendency to rediscover that which was never lost, but was only misplaced and forgotten and which probably should never have been lost or discarded in the first place. This maxim is a comment upon the rhythm of strategic debate in the international defense community. Strategic ideas rise and fall, appear and disappear, and then reappear in

slightly different form, according to the policy and strategic agenda. The maxim is not necessarily a criticism of contemporary strategists. Strategists are fortunate to be well equipped with a conceptual toolkit more than adequate for making sense of the challenges of the day. The reason why Maxim 15 is phrased in so negative, even cynical a fashion, is because the inevitable reappearance of more or less ancient strategic ideas frequently is touted either innocently, but wrongly, or fraudulently as innovation. And that ascription can really matter, for reasons that this essay explains. But, first, we must summarize the basic meaning of the maxim with reference to the context to which it applies.

Maxim 15 is pertinent to a defense community that has a defense debate worthy of the name. In part, that debate will be stimulated irregularly by external challenges of the actual, or more likely potential, threat variety. Also, in part strategic debate will be fuelled by the vested interests of military organizations and what one can fairly term their industrial infrastructure. Rephrased, commercial enterprises are always in the market for strategic ideas that appear to support demand for their products. In addition to the official consumers of strategic concepts, as well as the business people who need strategic ideas that seem to fit the capabilities of what is in their sales catalogues, there is today a cottage industry of dependent think tanks. This rent-a-theorist phenomenon is comparatively recent in historical terms. Indeed, it can be dated precisely to the late 1940s, with the creation of the RAND Corporation by and for the newly independent United States Air Force.<sup>25</sup> This is not the occasion to comment upon think tanks. Readers need to be aware that this author worked in an American think tank for seventeen years, and even founded two of his own. Maxim 15 points to a relationship that can be explained in terms of supply and demand. There is an irregular, but always forthcoming, demand for the products of strategic thought. The reason is governments are forever confronted with problems that require grand strategic attention and sometimes military strategic solutions.

Because it is accurate to understand the ebb and flow in the popularity of particular strategic ideas in terms of supply and demand, the relevant context is that of a highly competitive marketplace for concepts, theories, schemes, and cunning plans. There are literally hundreds, perhaps thousands, of defense experts, possibly strategic thinkers, competing for official, commercial, or other professional notice and more, in the intellectual marketplace. And success or failure in that marketplace translates into reputation, career, influence, and money. This is not to deny such solid virtues as patriotic duty and intellectual satisfaction. Also, one must not forget that the official demand for strategic conceptual assistance is healthy and natural. However, sometimes one is moved to wonder whether a poor concept, or an excellent concept that is contextually inappropriate, is to be preferred to no concept at all. It is well to remember that civilian officials and soldiers are not in the habit of asking for strategic conceptual help, unless they are compelled to recognize that they face a challenge beyond their intellectual competence. At least,

that is the straightforward explanation. As often as not, officials think they know what to do strategically, but they require the comfort of expert endorsement. Such endorsement can be politically useful in contested areas of policy.<sup>26</sup>

The significance of Maxim 15 lies in the fact that more often than not the strategic concept du jour is a highly bowdlerized version of a sound item of strategic lore. Sad to say, perhaps, typically neither the official customer nor the strategic thinker–supplier will be aware of the bowdlerization. Recent and contemporary strategic history reveals a succession of concepts du jour that were either coronations of the stupifyingly obvious, or were, indeed are, thoroughly unsound as professed and interpreted. Let us consider just a few of the concepts du jour of the past twenty years.

Competitive strategies made its appearance in the mid to late 1980s. It was an excellent idea, as it always had been. In the context of the contest with an obviously ailing Soviet Union, it was sensible to adopt strategies that yielded high leverage, given Soviet weaknesses. Next, the concept of the decade in the 1990s was RMA, or Revolution in Military Affairs. Stripped of scholarly paraphernalia and ambitious expectations, all that the RMA concept offered was the less than sparkling insight that from time to time there is a radical change in the character and conduct of warfare.<sup>27</sup> This particular high concept was not without all practical merit, but it carried some dangerous bacteria also. Specifically, it privileged discontinuity unduly, encouraged a technophilic U.S. defense community to (mis)place ever greater faith in the wonders of technology, and all but invited its devotees to ignore the true variety of the contexts and circumstances of warfare.

At present, strongly favored concepts include so-called Network-Centric Warfare (NCW) and Effects-Based Operations (EBO). These are unimpeachable ideas and, yet again, they always were. In practice, NCW and EBO refer simply to military best practice, as allowed today by new information technologies. Viewed in its essentials, NCW refers to the endeavor to be able to operate, including fight, as a network, with each individual cell so well interconnected that it shares a common body of battlespace information. In and of itself, EBO is a good idea, though it can hardly be judged profound. It does not take much reflection to produce the skeptical question, “shouldn’t all operations be conducted for the purpose of achieving some desired effects?” This question triggers another: “haven’t operations always been launched in pursuit of certain desired effects?” In other words, conceptually, EBO is almost banal. It is fairly sound, but blindingly obvious. Unfortunately though, EBO is not entirely sound, at least not as it has been interpreted and practiced recently. The official celebration of EBO as the concept du jour, in company with NCW, encourages a focus on those effects that can be calculated.<sup>28</sup> And all that can be calculated are strictly tactical effects. But, as the canon lore of strategy insists, tactics are of value only for their operational meaning, while operations can make no sense save with respect to strategy.

What has happened is that in honest ignorance on the part of their advocates, a succession of purportedly strategic concepts du jour have gained adherents,

popularity, and then official endorsement, based on a largely false promise of consequential superior military performance. Essentially mundane, albeit vitally important, eternal truths about best practice in warfare are purveyed to strategically needy and credulous officials. There will always be a market for new sounding ideas expressed in jargon and neatly acronymed. They come, they go, and they reappear in a slightly different guise in the future.

There are just three defenses against the usually false, at least exaggerated, strategic promise of the hot new concept du jour: common sense, experience, and a sound education in the lore of strategy, especially as provided in the timeless works of Thucydides, Sun-tzu, and Clausewitz (see Maxim 14).

In the kingdom of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.

Desiderius Erasmus, 1466–1536

# Maxim 16

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## The Enemy Too Has a Vote

No plan of operations extends with certainty beyond the first encounter with the enemy's main strength. Only the layman sees in the course of a campaign a consistent execution of a preconceived and highly detailed original concept pursued constantly to the end.

Helmuth Graf von Moltke, 1871<sup>29</sup>

By definition, “[w]ar is nothing but a duel on a larger scale.”<sup>30</sup> It is not a game against natural conditions, but rather against an enemy whose will needs to be bent to one's purposes. War's adversarial dimension is not merely an occasional inconvenience. It is not the case that from time to time the enemy's initiatives and reactions have to be considered, prevented, preempted, and countered. Instead, the duel is integral to the nature of war. Clausewitz expands on the simile of a duel by presenting a picture of a comprehensive full contact struggle for advantage. “Countless duels go to make up war, but a picture of it as a whole can be formed by imagining a pair of wrestlers. Each tries through physical force to compel the other to do his will; his *immediate* aim is to throw his opponent in order to make him incapable of further resistance.”<sup>31</sup>

In the absence of an enemy there can be no war. The presence of a self-willed foe is literally essential to the nature of war. As with many of the maxims gathered here, there are, and can be, no exceptions to the authority of this claim. The seeming obviousness of the maxim is matched only by its supreme importance and, perhaps strange to say, by the frequency with which its implications are ignored in practice.

Enemies not only define for each other what a war is about, their interactions of all kinds—political, military, social, cultural—comprise the engine of strategic history. What we have here is not simply a feature of war and warfare, but war's very meaning. War cannot be an autonomous activity, referring only to itself for its standard of performance. It follows that war, defined with no need for qualification

as a duel, can make sense solely with reference to how its course impacts on the relative power of the combatants.

Even though Maxim 16 is an eternal truth, recognition of that fact does not suffice to discourage ingenious, ambitious, and sometimes just ill-educated people from struggling against its toils. To explain, even if one grants reluctantly the necessity for an enemy, an agent ever liable to disturb one's well-crafted plans, still there should be ways to reduce the enemy's influence over events. This is an intelligent desire and one that must be pursued with energy and imagination. Moreover, it is far from a forlorn hope. Maxim 16 only states that the enemy too has a vote on the course of proceedings. It does not state that that vote has to be decisive or even especially influential.

The meaning of this maxim is crystal clear, as they all tend to be. War in its very nature is a duel. There has to be an enemy. The claim makes only the minimal demand that one not forget that war is not a game against an inanimate and inert adversary. The German Army and K2 are both lethal foes, but there is a qualitative difference between the two that matters and which can neither be eliminated nor even usefully reduced.

Why is it necessary to highlight a truth so obvious as the universal presence and potential for harm of an enemy? Surely, everyone knows that war is a duel? Well, in theory yes, but in practice belligerents frequently behave as if theirs is the only will that must drive history. As so often with these maxims, the power of the idea, its importance, lies not so much, if at all, in its basic logic. It would be strange if it were otherwise. Maxims expressing eternal truths valid for all occasions in all periods are hardly likely to be discovered, even rediscovered, today. The whole point of a maxim is that it compresses and distils the practical wisdom of the ages into a single sentence. There can be no eureka moment in such a context. Any claims for such most likely would need to invent some eccentric, even bizarre, item of would-be timeless advice.

The significance of a maxim, and none more so than number 16, lies not in an exciting novelty, but rather in its inherent importance. That importance is married to the frequency with which its very familiarity breeds, if not actual contempt, at least a practical disdain. Just as it is fundamental to recognize the role and significance of the enemy, it is scarcely less fundamental to accord the enemy the respect due. Moreover, one must hasten to add that the dividing line between a prudent respect for the enemy and a near paralysis of will brought on by an undue respect can be a fine one. Many a military leader has been over attentive to the implications of Maxim 16. One thinks of Major General George B. McClellan in the American Civil War, for a prominent example. As Clausewitz among many others noted, high command makes extraordinary demands upon character and will as well as upon intellect. The only answer to generals who take counsel primarily of their fears is to fire them. Leaders who hesitate, perennially, waiting for the enemy to show his hand, will be more than half beaten before even battle is joined. Since morale is the single most vital contributor to the fighting power

and military effectiveness of any army, lack of resolution, or of self-confidence, at the top, spreads like a pandemic through an army. A general who seems not in command, of himself, his intentions, and his will cannot hope to inspire his troops to take the most deadly of risks.

Maxim 16 has major significance in two respects: The first, generally the lesser of the two, is that it highlights the possibility, even probability, that the enemy's vote will be double or triple counted. In principle, if rarely in logistical practice, the enemy will have a wide range of choice. While one can hope to influence the enemy's choice, ultimately the decisions are sovereign. To restate the core meaning of the maxim, the enemy is an independent, albeit interacting, agent who we do not control, at least not yet. It is precisely to secure such control that we may choose to fight.<sup>32</sup>

The major significance of Maxim 16, however, lies not so much in its alerting us to the potentially dire consequences of the black hole of unknown and unknowable enemy choices. Instead, the prime peril lurking in the background to this truth is that we will try too hard to negate its authority in practice. War is about control, mental or physical, or both: that is the payoff. We know that we can control only our own behavior, though we recognize that our decisions and actions will need to be modified to meet enemy deeds or threats. However, even though we may acknowledge fully the contingent authority over events of enemy behavior, there still remains a night and day difference between the control we enjoy over our actions, as contrasted with that we can secure reliably over the behavior of the enemy. It follows, unsurprisingly, indeed inevitably, that the enemy assumes the role of victim, target, or object of our military designs rather than of co-equal duelist. This is not a criticism, it is simply the ways things are. This is the nature of warfare.

We know a great deal more about our capabilities, plans, and intentions, than we do about those of the enemy. Furthermore, it is our duty to impose our will upon that enemy. Unavoidably, and generally wisely, we devote the lion's share of our attention to what we intend to do to the enemy, rather than what he may choose, or even just be able, to do to us. In the absence of reliable knowledge of enemy intentions and capabilities, information possibly scarcely less mysterious to the enemy itself, we focus on what we do know ourselves. Everyone should be aware that war is the realm of chance (Maxim 10) and friction (Maxim 18), but those golden nuggets of timeless wisdom do not carry specific items of operational advice. So, sensibly enough, we struggle against the dangers that live in the nature of warfare and refuse to be paralyzed by fear and indecision. While there are no exceptions to the historical authority of Maxim 16, which holds that the enemy too has a vote, there are ample exceptions to a condition of moral paralysis fuelled by this dimension to war's very nature.

Unfortunately, Maxim 16 is so universal a truth, and so difficult to translate in an actual historical context into particular recommendations, that in practice it tends to be set aside. It is parked in the true, but not helpful, column. This author has



no little sympathy for those who are so caught on the horns of the dilemma. They know that the enemy has a vote, but they cannot predict how that vote will go, let alone what its consequences may be. In consequence, they concentrate on what they can strive to control, which are their own military and strategic initiatives. So all engrossing is the effort required to wage war, so high are the stakes, that it is asking too much to expect leaders of only moderate competence to play with deep insight on both sides of the game board.

However absorbed a commander may be in the elaboration of his own thoughts, it is sometimes necessary to take the enemy into consideration.

Attributed to Winston Churchill, 1874–1965<sup>33</sup>

# Maxim 17

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## Time Is the Least Forgiving Dimension of Strategy

[I]n war, time . . . is the great element between weight and force.  
Napoleon, 1809<sup>34</sup>

Strategy has many dimensions, most of which are well appreciated, for example, politics, people, society, culture. But time as a dimension is rarely discussed in any depth. Rather is it simply noted, and then the author rapidly moves on to more tractable matters. Maxim 17 does not claim that time is the most important of strategy's dimensions, to do so would be absurd. But it does point to a quality about time that is literally unique among all of strategy's dimensions. The maxim says that if time is misused in the realm of war, peace, and strategy, it cannot be recovered. This point may seem so obvious as to verge upon the banal, but strategic history shows all too plainly that there is nothing banal about the proper use of time in war.

As an elementary truth of physics, once time has passed it is gone, and with it have gone opportunities not seized or adventurous options that ought not to have been exercised. In fact, the more closely one investigates the temporal dimension to warfare of all kinds, the greater is the recognition of its importance. It warrants special attention as a factor for reason of its unique quality of inflexibility. Poor performance on every other dimension of strategy can, in principle, be corrected and improved. Indeed, it is helpful to think of warfare as a learning experience for both sides. Early mistakes are noted and not repeated; commanders who lack soundness of mind and body as well as the judgment that they need are replaced. But, time lost is gone forever. There is no magical way in which it can be recovered. In peacetime exercises and game scenarios are played out many times. In history, however, there is only one chance to use the stream of time. The Germans could not halt their invasion of France in August–September 1914 and try again. For a much more recent example, it is recognized today that the political future of

post-Saddam Iraq was mortgaged, perhaps fatally, by Allied errors committed in 2003 both during the invasion and in the immediately succeeding months.

Maxim 17 obliges us to think long and hard about time in its relation to war, peace, and strategy. Most especially, it suggests powerfully that time is, at least can be, a weapon. Time is rarely neutral. If it is not used wisely by one belligerent, it is likely to be a vital weapon in the enemy's arsenal.

The idea of using time as a weapon does not come easily to everyone. Most of the more familiar military quotations dealing with time are variants of the Napoleonic quotation with which this essay began. One is urged not to waste time, not to delay, and so forth. But, time employed as a weapon may need to be extended. Delay, even protracted delay, can be a strategic virtue. To protract a conflict need not be to waste time. It all depends on the character of the conflict and the respective strengths and weaknesses of the belligerents. Ideally, every belligerent would like to be strong enough to seek swift military victory by means of a decisive maneuver, which leads to the annihilation of the enemy's principal army. In practice, though, a much weaker belligerent may be able to avoid large-scale direct military encounters, which could only produce defeat. The most obvious examples, historically, have been in conflicts between maritime and continental powers. For example, one thinks of Britain and Napoleonic France and of Britain and Nazi Germany. Or, one could look for inspiration to the experience of the Roman Republic with its Fabian strategy of masterly inactivity in the face of an unbeatable Carthaginian army led by Hannibal. Two centuries earlier, Pericles had recommended a strategy of patience for Athens, one that would wear down the Spartans and their allies and deny them the decisive land battle that they sought.

Strategic empathy often is lacking in those who need it most. Asymmetric warfare or, more exactly, warfare between different kinds of belligerents, all but mandates careful study of the enemy's strategy. Such warfare is most likely to be irregular in character, and in that context time is an essential and potentially decisive weapon. Maxim 17 may seem to carry the implication that it is the loss of time that is strategically perilous, but that would be too narrow a reading. Properly interpreted, the maxim claims that time is a powerful weapon, one which, if abused, is apt to prove fatal. Strategic history tells us that there are times to make haste in order to seize a fleeting opportunity, but also that there are times to enforce delay.

The extraordinary potency of the temporal weapon frequently has been underappreciated. For a leading example, in irregular warfare, that between guerrillas and regular forces, time can actually be the prime weapon of the militarily weaker side. The insurgents may not aspire to win a military victory because the imbalance of military power is so extreme. But, more often than not an irregular belligerent is waging warfare in a quintessentially Clausewitzian manner. The irregulars can win only by triumphing over the political will, the psychological determination of the regular enemy not by decision on the field of battle. Irregular forces wage attritional combat against the steadiness of political purpose of their state enemy. The

real action in irregular warfare is not what it seems to be. The seemingly endless trickle of minor outrages, occasional large-scale ambushes and the like, is warfare conducted to attrit political will, not to inflict military damage. The leaders of a guerrilla army hope to outlast the patience, determination, and domestic political support of their regular enemy. The Anglo Irish War, so called, of 1919–1921 is a near perfect example of this phenomenon. The IRA (Irish Republican Army) did not win the war militarily, in fact it was beginning to lose by the summer of 1921. But, it remained undefeated in the field long enough to outlast the political will of British Prime Minister David Lloyd George's Liberal government.<sup>35</sup>

Time can be a decisive weapon that is chosen quite deliberately. For example, the British and French governments in 1939–1940—prior to the German offensive launched on May 10, 1940, at least—planned to conduct a long war, one wherein time should work strongly to their material advantage. London and Paris believed that in World War II, as had happened in World War I, the better resourced coalition must win in the end. Alas, strategic history ambushed that particular theory of victory. Often, though, the purposeful use of time as a weapon is the result of perceived necessity and not of strategic culture or careful advance planning. In 1940 after Dunkirk, Britain did not have a plausible theory of victory over Nazi Germany. Instead, and not for the first time in its history, Britain was able to exploit its insular geography for strategic advantage. So long as the Royal Navy (RN) commanded home waters, Hitler could not force a military decision in the West. The RN, plus the Royal Air Force, imposed delay. Germany could not prosecute the war effectively against Britain in 1940–1941, except by U-boat action. Churchill's strategy, if it can be so called, was to wait for something helpful to turn up. And that could only mean one, or both, of two possibilities. He was able to keep Britain in the war until, or rather in the hope that, the United States would join in. Also, he nurtured the hope that Hitler would make some fatal mistakes. The German invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, and Hitler's gratuitous declaration of war on the United States on December 11, 1941, were truly strategic gifts from the gods for beleaguered Britain.

Time may appear to be a neutral dimension to war and strategy. But, historical experience reveals that although it is equally usable by all belligerents, its meaning will tend to differ for each. Usually, one side will have less staying power than the other. And that staying power can be psychological and political as well as strictly material. If strategists do not appreciate the full relevance or potency of Maxim 17, their polities are likely to suffer severely as a consequence. A competent strategist must devise a strategy that co-opts time as an ally, rather than struggles against its unforgiving nature as an enemy.

This essay closes with a quotation from a popular history of an episode from World War II, which could have been designed to illustrate the force of Maxim 17. In 1943, the Germans planned to smash the Red Army in a climactic battle around Kursk. But, they delayed, and delayed, their offensive pending the delivery of their new, highly unreliable Panzer Mk Vs (Panthers) and Mark VIs

(Tigers). By the time Hitler was ready to strike, on July 5, the Soviets had been gifted more than two months advance notice. Marshal Zhukov used that time to construct no fewer than six defensive belts around the Kursk Salient and prepare an all but impenetrable combined-arms defensive system. Time, most emphatically, was not on Germany's side in 1943.

To the Russians, time was everything. The longer the delay before the Germans struck, the stronger would be the Russian defenses and the greater the number of reserve forces available.

Martin Caidin, 1974<sup>36</sup>

# Maxim 18

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## Friction Is Unavoidable, but Need Not Be Fatal

Everything in war is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult. The difficulties accumulate and end by producing a kind of friction that is inconceivable unless one has experienced war . . . Friction is the only concept that more or less corresponds to the factors that distinguish real war from war on paper.

Carl von Clausewitz, 1832<sup>37</sup>

In company with the “remarkable trinity” of violence and passion, chance and probability, reason, and the elements of “the climate of war”—danger, exertion, uncertainty, and chance—the concept of friction comprises the core of the Prussian’s theory of war and strategy. Friction is endemic to war’s objective, which is to say its permanent, nature. The quotation above is clarity itself. Friction is a compound concept embracing all the harassments, great and small, man-made as well as those occasioned by nature, which impede the smooth and efficient execution of planned behavior.

There are several reasons why the waging of warfare is especially prone to ambush by friction in many of its possible manifestations. First, warfare is among, if not actually, the most complex of human activities. To simplify, an army has so many moving parts, human and mechanical, to which now one must add nonmoving, but glitch-prone, electronic, that there is a great deal of opportunity for error, accident, and breakdown. Second, many armies, probably most, do not go to war for decades on end, and when they do few in their ranks will have firsthand experience of the stresses and strains of combat conditions. This inexperience will be a feature of those who provide policy guidance, those who conduct military planning, those who function as the logistical enablers, and those at the sharp end of it all who must kill people and break things. Third, it is in the nature of war as “a duel on a larger scale” to provide a context wherein friction is maximized. War is not waged against a neutral and disengaged nature, though

in some campaigns that actually is the principal challenge, but rather against a sentient, malevolent, and variably cunning enemy. Friction can be suffered as a result of stress and difficulties purposefully created or at least augmented by the foe. It is some consolation, as well as of some practical utility, to recognize that friction is suffered by all belligerents. That is not to deny that there are ways to minimize its potential for harm, a vital topic to which this essay will return.

The concept of friction is so obviously true to life that it is not at all controversial. Maxim 18 is not one of the contested claims in this collection. But Clausewitz's concept is as brilliant in its summary of the obvious as it is difficult to employ pragmatically. In a remarkable study, Barry D. Watts draws necessary attention to the objection "that the unified concept of a general friction [*Gesamtbegriff einer allgemeinen Friktion*] embraces so much of war that it does not provide a very precise instrument for analyzing the phenomena at issue."<sup>38</sup> In other words, having recognized the potential of friction to hamper military operations, so varied and unexpected will be its actions that in practice it is not a very useful concept. True, but beyond alleviation by planned measures. That is too pessimistic a view, but it is easy to sympathize with soldiers who find the genuinely dazzling concept of friction too nonspecific to be operationalized. On closer examination, however, it soon becomes apparent that most of warfare's friction is predictable in kind, though not, of course, in detail. Also, it is helpful to adopt a twofold attitude toward friction. On the one hand, we can strive to avoid the circumstances that would maximize its likelihood of occurrence. On the other hand, more usefully, we need to accept friction as being in the very nature of all human activity, warfare perhaps most of all, and be prepared to cope with it in whatever forms it appears to harass and hinder. Indeed, one can go further and, much as Maxim 17 claimed that time is a weapon, seek to develop practical ideas for imposing friction upon the enemy. We can add friction to our arsenal.

Maxim 18 merits an honored place in the strategic canon because it contains truth of the utmost importance that frequently is omitted from works of theory. It is not only the theorists who either forget about friction or deem it too mundane and imprecise a topic to deserve their attention. The practitioners of warfare also are inclined to shrug their shoulders at the prospect of friction. The concept, though unarguably valid, is found unhelpful. Since accidents happen and the unexpected, by definition, cannot be anticipated, what is the poor soldier to do with the concept?

To take the negative points just raised in reverse order, many, possibly most, of the practical difficulties in warfare that are covered by the idea of friction are unexpected only in precise detail. In fact, the more closely one examines the compound concept of friction with reference to a particular theater of operations, the more controllable its incidence and potential effects seem to be. There is no substitute for experience and common sense. If firsthand experience of the relevant style of warfare in the terrain at issue is missing, one must have recourse to the experience of others. This is one of the many reasons why familiarity with strategic and military history is essential. If one must fight in the desert, the friction imposed

by the environment will certainly include fine dust, which clogs engines unless they are well protected by high-grade filters. Or, if one is obliged by policy to wage mechanized warfare in a country that has few metalled roads, and whose highways turn to deep mud during the spring and fall rains, the friction that could cause immobility can be evaded by the use of tracked vehicles and air supply.

A competent army takes friction in its stride. It expects to be harassed, even metaphorically ambushed, by unanticipated difficulties. Soldiers need to be problem solvers. More to the point, they need to be able to solve problems, and adapt to the consequences of events that were unanticipated in detail. Maxim 18 implies that military operations should not by choice be planned and executed on the basis of minimal effort, in undue obeisance to that principle of war, "economy of force." Probably the most robust method for combating the ill effects of unavoidable friction is to be sure to command a reserve of resources. Do not launch an operation with exactly the number of helicopters required. In short, build in a healthy margin of spare capability to allow for error, accident, and anything else that could go wrong. An outstanding recent study of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 offers a judgment that is very much in line with the argument in this essay. Commenting upon the Russian climate, and its enervating and friction-filled consequences for the Wehrmacht, Geoffrey P. Megargee argues persuasively that "[t]he weather did not defeat the Germans: their failure to plan for it did."<sup>39</sup>

Friction is not really a problem in warfare. Problems can be solved. Instead, friction is a condition of the activity. This means that the prudent military establishment organizes, equips, trains, and behaves in action in ways intended to provide a buffer against many kinds of friction. For example, logistical mistakes will happen. But, they will only have disastrous consequences for operations if they have been totally unanticipated. Sometimes, a particular style in operations that is highly desirable for its military effectiveness when it works well is all but irreducibly friction-prone. A classic example is Napoleon's operational method of corps movement with his *Grande Armée*. The theory was that the *Armée* would march divided by corps, yet fight united. Often, indeed very often, vital corps were absent from the battlefield at the designated, let alone the unanticipated, time for climactic combat. To note that fragility in Napoleon's military method is not necessarily to criticize it. He calculated that the risks inseparable from corps organization and its necessary devolution of command were acceptable, given the more than offsetting benefits. His gamble did not always succeed, of course. One thinks of his plaintive cry at Waterloo, "où est Grouchy?" Had Grouchy's corps of 30,000 men been present on the battlefield, instead of unhelpfully herding Marshal Blücher's Prussians toward his British and other foes, Waterloo would probably have been a French victory.

Maxim 18 claims that friction happens, that it cannot be avoided, but that its consequences are substantially controllable. Its significance, therefore, lies in its function of reminding those who are inclined to draft plans for error-free, immaculate military operations, that "friction happens," to adapt from the familiar vulgar



bumper sticker message. In his “recasting of Clausewitzian friction” for contemporary conditions, Barry D. Watts concludes with an observation of exceptional merit.

Human limitations, informational uncertainties, and nonlinearity are not pesky difficulties better technology and engineering can eliminate, but *built-in* or *structural* features of the violent interaction between opposing polities pursuing incommensurable ends we call war.

Barry D. Watts, 2004<sup>40</sup>

# Maxim 19

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## All Strategy Is Geostrategy: Geography Is Fundamental

Geography had been taught for too long a time by men who failed to grasp that politics is destiny, and politics had been directed and also taught for too long a time by men who failed to grasp that land and sea spaces, too, are destiny.

Hans W. Weigert, 1942<sup>41</sup>

Maxim 1 affirmed the importance of war's seven principal contexts: the political, social-cultural, economic, technological, military-strategic, geopolitical-geostrategic, and the historical. Maxim 19 is of high significance because it emphasizes an enduring truth about war that often is ignored or even challenged. All of the contexts of war are permanently in play, a fact which applies no less to the geopolitical-geostrategic, than to the others. This maxim states the incontestable fact that strategy must always have geographical, and hence geopolitical and geostrategic, referents. Strategy is designed from the standpoint of particular geopolitical and geostrategic interests. As a general rule, it is composed on behalf of geopolitical units whose societies are encultured as products of histories that have been shaped critically by geography.

Geography, geopolitics, and geostrategy have long been out of favor by Western scholars of international relations and strategic studies. For the better part of sixty years, the geographical dimension to strategy has been unfashionable among the movers and shakers of advanced theory on war and peace. This has been unfortunate, because Maxim 19 did not cease to hold true just because it was suffering from a temporary, albeit lengthy, intellectual eclipse. What, exactly, does the maxim mean and imply? In summary form,

- all strategy must direct behavior in distinctive geographical environments;
- each of the five geographical environments—land, sea, air, space, and now cyberspace—has unique physical characteristics that dominate, not merely influence, what can be achieved in and from them militarily;

- security communities not only must wage war in geography, also they usually wage war about geography;
- even when a war is not primarily about contested geography, it must always have geographical referents, as noted already;
- the culture of policymakers and soldiers everywhere, which is to say their values, beliefs, habits of mind, and standard practices, are influenced pervasively by geography. The geography of their communities is the key to their histories, as interpreted: it has been the shaping force in those histories.

Maxim 19 risks ridicule because in addition to claiming a fundamental importance for geography, it dares to employ the term geostrategy. It is time to clarify the meaning of the key term. Geography per se, unadorned adjectivally, simply refers to the physical environment within which humans must function. To be almost stupefyingly obvious, all matters of war, peace, and strategy are contested and resolved, or left unresolved, within a particular geography or geographies. This elementary, even elemental, fact, is as important as it is frequently downplayed or ignored altogether. As geography, regarded holistically, is a dimension of war and strategy, so it has many dimensions of its own. The two of most concern for this essay are the political and the strategic. Saul B. Cohen's definition of geopolitics is as good as any, and better than most. He claims that geopolitics is about "the relation of political power to the geographical setting."<sup>42</sup> Should anyone doubt the salience of the geopolitical perspective, they should be educated rapidly by contemplation of the influence upon international strategic history of the geographical settings of its leading state actors.

Geopolitical analysis attracts controversy when it proceeds beyond the claim registered immediately above and is the fuel for theories of conflict. For example, the quotation that heads this essay, slightly adapted, asserts that geography is destiny. Although Weigert is making an important point that merits highlighting, it is also a damaging overstatement. Geopolitics was briefly fashionable in the early 1940s. In the United States in particular, it was believed that behind Adolf Hitler's drive for boundless conquest lurked the evil genius of general Karl Haushofer and his Munich school of *Geopolitik*.<sup>43</sup> In short, if one endorses uncritically and wholesale the proposition that "geography is destiny," one is in peril of endorsing a determinist view of history.

Many, probably most, critics of geopolitical theory, appear not to have ventured into the subject beyond superficial recognition of the association of German *Geopolitik* with the Third Reich, an association which was opportunistic on the part of the theorists. Hitler's drive for European, then ultimately world, domination, can be explained in its geopolitical and geostrategic dimension, but not as an attempt to realize geopolitical theory in practice.

The term, even the concept of, geostrategy often seems to be used for no better reason than to add gravitas to an argument. Geostrategy sounds serious and heavy-weight. In other words, the "geo-" is added strictly for decorative presentational

effect. This is not the purpose here, I must hasten to insist. Geostrategy is endorsed as a concept in Maxim 19 because it points to an abiding truth of great significance about strategy, about all strategy, that is.

This maxim claims that strategy must have geographical referents. It employs the tactical and operational effects of geographically specialized military forces to influence the course and outcome of a conflict. Every example of strategy, past, present, and future has to be geographically translatable. This is literally unavoidable. All military behavior must be ordered, executed, and exploited, in a geographical context. At a deeper level of analysis, the physical and political geography unique to each conflict must so influence the strategies of the belligerents that it is appropriate to consider those strategies as cases of geostrategy.

It is necessary for this essay to pull back a little, lest it invites misunderstanding. Maxim 19 does not claim that all strategy is only geostrategy. We have made some effort to insist that war, peace, and strategy have many—we have chosen seven—contexts, among which the geographical is but one. This maxim is not a claim for the hegemony of geography or geopolitics. All that it affirms is the enduring, yet oddly underappreciated, fact that all strategy has a geographical dimension. Indeed, so fundamental is the geographical context to conflict that the concept of geostrategy, though inviting misunderstanding, conveys effectively a most significant reality.

As noted already, geography suffered a near eclipse in strategic scholarship for many decades. This was because of its umbilical connection to theories of geopolitics, and hence, unjustly but all too understandably, because of the presumed Nazi association. Add to that already lethal potion the typically unjust taint of determinism—“geography is destiny”—and it is not hard to understand why strategic analysis today is badly in need of the authority of Maxim 19. Leaving aside the old *canards* of Nazi association and alleged determinism, the geographical dimension to strategy has seemed to many scholars to have diminished in significance, in some cases even to vanishing point, as a consequence of technological advance. Nuclear weapons that could conduct and conclude a war in hours, long-range ballistic missiles that can reach another continent in half an hour, and, most recently, electronic warfare at the speed of light all seem to many thoughtful people effectively to have retired strategy’s geographical dimension as a matter of much significance.

The thesis that technology has conquered geography is erroneous. Geopolitics were of fundamental importance to nuclear strategy during the Cold War. For forty years, in a context of mutual nuclear deterrence, the United States and NATO struggled to find a nuclear doctrine that could compensate for America’s physical distance from contested Europe. Moreover, most aspects of the nuclear force postures of the superpowers were decided, or at least influenced, by explicitly geographical considerations.

As for the recent argument that cyberspace is both everywhere and nowhere, and hence is extrageographical, one can only record a firm dissent.<sup>44</sup> Also, as a

last resort, one might try an appeal to common sense. Cyberspace and the further exploitation of the electromagnetic spectrum as cybberpower, has indeed arrived. But, it has arrived as yet another geographical environment for warfare. It is subject to physical constraints unique to itself, as are the other four geographies. Despite the exciting sound of the concept of cyberspace, the military reality is rather less dramatic.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, cyberspace has to connect people and machines in physical geography, be it on land, at sea, in the air, or in space. Warfare is not, and is unlikely ever to be, waged strictly in cyberspace. And even if it were, what would the conflict be about? Cyberweapons, in company with every other kind of weapon, can only be instruments of geographically influenced policy and strategy. The quotation with which this essay concludes points out the significance of geography for Germany's High Seas Fleet in World War I.

Nothing could be achieved in the North Sea while Britain's geographical position enabled the Royal Navy to control its exits. Geography, not numbers of ships, was the nub of naval strategy.

Hew Strachan, 2001<sup>46</sup>

# Maxim 20

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## Strategy Is Not Wholly Military

[T]he role of grand strategy—higher strategy—is to co-ordinate and direct all the resources of a nation, or band of nations, towards the attainment of the political object of the war—the goal defined by fundamental policy

B. H. Liddell Hart, 1967<sup>47</sup>

While the core concern and expertise of the strategist lies with the purposeful threat, or actual use, of force, there is much more to strategy than the direction of violence. Between the realms of policy and military strategy resides what in Britain has long been known as grand strategy and in the United States as national security strategy. Definitions are essential in this instance because an indeterminacy of categories is both commonplace and capable of leading to serious errors in practice. The problem is twofold: Policy is confused with grand strategy, and grand strategy is confused with military strategy. It is because of this confusion that the message in Maxim 20 is so important. The problem is partly linguistic. Scholars, commentators, and policymakers do not refer to grand strategy. Instead, they speak only of strategy, a concept which, unmodified, carries a heavily military meaning. Sometimes, strategic discussion plainly encompasses topics more extensive than the threat or use of force, but people have difficulty navigating in the no-man's land that should be organized by grand strategy.

The logic of the Liddell Hart quotation, which heads this essay, is really unarguable. The difficulty lies in actually doing it. Maxim 20 points to the need for the conduct of war as a fully joined-up enterprise. Grand strategy refers to the employment of all the assets available to a belligerent, a state, or any other kind of security community in pursuit of a common political goal. The military instrument is only one of those assets, albeit usually the most important. To remind people of the crucial significance of grand strategy is to risk muddying the water of understanding. If grand strategy is underrecognized as a vital level of performance in the conduct of war and peace, the obvious consequence is that policymakers and

other opinion leaders are inclined to interpret the implications of policy unduly in military terms. When grand strategy is missing from the action, the great chain of choice and action moves simply from policy to strategy, meaning military strategy, down to operations and tactics.

Strategists themselves are not entirely innocent, one must hasten to add. The theoretical literature on strategy as military strategy is not exactly voluminous, but it is ample in comparison with the quality of insightful writings on grand strategy. Boundary problems are severe. Scholars have complained, not without some reason, that the true subject for strategic thought and behavior is security. The consequent boom in security studies since the early 1990s reflects the recognition of the truth in Maxim 20, but it went much too far. The study of security in Western universities is so inclusive that military security, usually referred to as strategic security, is treated simply as one area among many.<sup>48</sup> The military dimension is demoted, sometimes all but out of sight. Whether or not that is prudent, people must judge for themselves. What is certain, however, is that the small community of strategic thinkers accepts an obligation to maintain and develop a strategic understanding that has military behavior as its defining feature.

Maxim 20 requires strategists to broaden their vision beyond the military, but not to the point where they lose military-strategic focus altogether. The strategist studies and practices—though very few of us are entrusted with the actual making of strategy—the threat and use of force. That is the mission. Because strategy for warfare has to entail the threat to inflict, or the actual infliction of suffering, death, and destruction as means to influence the will of an enemy, the subject is not automatically popular. In this age of political correctness, and in the context of the dominance of traditional liberal values in universities (which are often applied illiberally), the flame of strategic knowledge can sink very low. This maxim simply points out that military strategy should be developed and applied in the context of the development and application of strategy for the use of other, nonmilitary, assets, as and when appropriate. The prevention and, if need be, the conduct of war must not be approached as purely military enterprises. That is all that Maxim 20 claims. It is a modest, indeed an unarguable, position to affirm. But, all too often, policymakers reach for the gun without considering their strategic challenges holistically.

It may be necessary for this essay to make plain the fact that the strategist, faithful to a military focus, is not at all hostile to the theory and practice of employment of the other instruments of power. The political–diplomatic, economic commercial, social–cultural, intelligence and subversive, and propaganda assets of a polity can all be essential team players in the conduct of peace and war. All that the strategist insists is that the military dimension must not be neglected. Two practical difficulties are especially prominent.

First, just as it is inherently difficult to translate military power and behavior into political gain, so is it even more challenging to manipulate all of the assets of the security community for political advantage. The task is highly complex,

even when there is good will amongst the human agents for each of the assets in question. The trouble is that such goodwill frequently, indeed quite regularly, is distinguished by its absence. This fact points to the other difficulty.

Second, by definition, grand strategy requires a holistic approach by somebody or, more likely, some committee and its staff, and it needs constant coordination. It can be difficult enough making a reality of combined-arms and joint warfare. With that fact in mind, consider the problems that must obtain when a polity's diplomacy, economy, intelligence services, cultural institutions, and mass media, for leading examples, have to be married to a military effort for synergistic benefit. Also, it is not only military strategy that should be the subject of a constant unequal dialogue, in that case between politicians and soldiers. Grand strategy too, indeed preeminently, needs to be open to revision in response to the course of events.

On the one hand, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of dialogue both between soldiers and policymakers over military strategy and among the representatives of all the relevant assets of the polity over grand strategy. But, on the other hand, neither military nor grand strategy should be lightly shifted in unduly swift reaction to contemporary events. Although grand strategy is strictly instrumental and must not be confused with policy, at any one time it is near certain to bear some enduring characteristics. To note a feature of strategic history that goes beyond the scope of this maxim, many countries have had distinctive and identifiable grand strategies that persisted in key respects for centuries. One thinks, for example, of the centuries-old British commitment to maintaining the balance of power in Europe by means of joining or supporting, or actually creating, the second strongest power or coalition.

Grand strategy undoubtedly is so close to policy that the two can seem indistinguishable. There is merit in Clausewitz's rather more limited, highly apposite claim that "at the highest level the art of war turns into policy."<sup>49</sup> Nonetheless, it is essential that strategy of any kind, including the grandest, should not be confused with policy.<sup>50</sup> Maxim 20 should serve to remind those who might otherwise forget that for the conduct of peace and war the state has many assets with instrumental value. Only if a conscious effort is made to approach the challenge of the day holistically, with a truly grand strategy, will a state be able to leverage its strengths and compensate for its weaknesses. Every war should be studied, or conducted, grand strategically. If Maxim 20 were not true, belligerents would be able to conduct wars strictly as warfare. The history of a conflict would be synonymous with its military course and outcome. Such an absurd notion would detach military strategy, operations, and tactics from their dynamic domestic political, diplomatic and economic, social-cultural, contexts.

There is a large class of armed conflicts, those of an irregular character, wherein military strategy is decidedly subordinate to political strategy. In guerrilla warfare, neither side typically is able to secure military victory. Recognizing this condition, both belligerents design and execute military strategy not for its military value, but rather for its political utility. This is simply an extreme example of the permanent



truth in Clausewitz's dictum "that war is not a mere act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political activity by other means."<sup>51</sup>

Maxim 20, which holds that "strategy is not wholly military," is strongly supportive of, and complementary to, Maxim 8. That maxim, it may be recalled, claims that "there is more to war than warfare." Finally, the truth in Maxim 20 is attested convincingly in the content of the classic works of the three most distinguished writers on strategy of all time: Thucydides, Sun-tzu, and Clausewitz (see Maxim 14). None of these authors wrote narrowly only about military strategy. Thucydides and Sun-tzu wrote, in effect, about grand strategy, while Clausewitz was careful to nest his military focus in its political and psychological contexts.

Above all, any scheme of grand strategy will require coordinated action in diplomacy, propaganda, secret operations, and the entire economic sphere, as well as in military policy. Even if there is no elected parliament to challenge the executive and its scheme of grand strategy, even if there are no interest groups capable of opposing the required policies, the highly diversified bureaucratic apparatus of modern states is itself a major obstacle to the implementation of any comprehensive scheme of grand strategy.

Edward N. Luttwak, 2001<sup>52</sup>

# Maxim 21

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## The Impossible Is Impossible; It Is a Condition, Not a Problem for Which a Solution Has Yet to Be Found

For very understandable reasons much of the debate about Afghanistan centres on the need for a significant increase in the number of NATO combatants. But there is also an equally urgent need for a debate about strategy.

NATO, and in particular, British troops, are attempting to defeat the Taliban while at the same time preventing the poppy crop ending up as an illegal drug on the streets of Europe. As the policy is one of destroying the crop that is the main source of income for Afghan farmers, it cannot be too great a surprise that there is a lack of enthusiasm on the ground from locals.

Frank Field, MP, September 6, 2006<sup>53</sup>

It would be a challenge to exaggerate the importance of Maxim 21. As the author of a recent book on the strategic history of the past two hundred years, this author is thoroughly persuaded that belligerents very often demand the impossible of their armed forces.<sup>54</sup> Before logicians and historians smelling determinism rush to assault the claim in this maxim, it is necessary to provide a common sense explanation. Few indeed are the future historical developments that are literally impossible. But some missions or tasks are so difficult that reasonable people who are tolerably well informed should have no hesitation in declaring that they fall in the category of mission impossible. This does not mean, to repeat, that success is absolutely unattainable. Rather is the judgment that success is so improbable, or if possible at all could be secured only at hugely disproportionate cost, that the mission should be abjured.

Maxim 21 derives its authority from a strategic historical record overpopulated with tasks that ought not to have been attempted in the first place. Or, for a modest but realistic revision, that record is replete with cases of strategic endeavors that should have been closed down promptly, once the true scale of the practical impediments to success were revealed by events. Maxim 21 should not be understood as a claim from hindsight. It is not meant to imply that the losing side

necessarily had to lose in all cases. The maxim does not speak with a presumption of superior knowledge, which is to say with hindsight, ever the historian's reliable friend. Instead, it only claims that there are many instances in strategic history, past, present, and one can be confident, future, wherein the prospects for success should have been assessed at the time as being too low to warrant the costs and risks of the attempt. Just because Clausewitz argued that "war is the realm of chance," it does not follow that war's outcome is a random conclusion. It is not. Objectively better armies make much of their own good luck, and are able to cope with bad luck, and friction, in ways that objectively inferior armies cannot.

Maxim 21 is significant because it challenges unwarranted, let alone blind, optimism. It should plant at least a seed of healthy doubt in the minds of otherwise overconfident policymakers and soldiers. They may need to be educated as to their limitations. As we have noted already, great powers are vulnerable to the malady known as the victory disease. Having defeated France in six weeks in May–June 1940, a task that they could not accomplish in four and a half years in World War I, the Germans believed that they could accomplish anything. Strategy is all about correlating military means with policy ends. In 1941, the Germans could not even conceive of the possibility of defeat. Their supposedly superior way of war, and the real and imagined weaknesses of the Soviet enemy, guaranteed victory. They were wrong, of course. Whether or not the attempt to conquer the Soviet Union was mission impossible is literally unknowable. But, some of the problems that were to blight the Nazi invasion most definitely were knowable at the time. The weather, the terrain, distance, and reasonably accurate estimates of the enemy's order of battle and ready reserves, and his military production capacity, were all capable of appreciation, albeit with difficulty in the latter cases. But, if one is firmly convinced of one's military superiority, logistic problems potentially lethal to swift success are simply ignored. The German way of war had as its centerpiece an all but mystical faith in the operational concept.<sup>55</sup> It was the failure of that concept in 1914 at the Marne that condemned the country to four and a half years of strategically futile sacrifice.

There are many occasions when it is far from obvious whether or not a particular task is strategically feasible. For a historical illustration, in 1982 the British Government could not be certain that the military power it could project far into the South Atlantic would be capable of ejecting the Argentines from the Falkland Islands. It was not mission impossible, but it was recognized at the time to be a military mission wherein the difference between success and failure would balance as it were on a knife edge. The reasons for the British decision to send an expedition to retake the Islands had everything to do with the risk-taking propensity of the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and what she believed to be political necessity. The military arguments were in balance at best.

The British in 1982 provide an example of mission possible but highly risky. The loss of a single aircraft carrier would have sunk the whole enterprise. London most certainly was not overconfident.

Maxim 21 yields a vital truth to those who are convinced that they can accomplish anything. The can-do spirit animated by the familiar saying “the difficult we do immediately, the impossible takes a little longer” is alive and well today. Sad to report, the people most in need of education as to the truth of Maxim 21 are the very people who are deaf both to its logic and to the mountain of historical experience on which it is founded. Nonetheless, it is essential that a collection of strategic truths, such as the forty in this book, should include the assertion that there will always be some missions that should not be attempted, almost no matter how attractive the prospective gains from anticipated success.

As a strategist, this author tries never to forget that his is a practical profession. Strategy that does not work may or may not be bad strategy. But, strategy that cannot plausibly work has to be bad strategy. And such bad strategy is, in the admittedly skill-biased view of this strategist, an offense against professional standards. It should be needless to say that strategy in action, be it good or bad, almost invariably has consequences in suffering, death, and damage, as well as in politics.

The world is well populated with optimists who, despite historical evidence to the contrary, persist in believing that nothing is truly impossible. Given time and extraordinary circumstances, they are probably correct. For example, in less than two generations after 1945, both Germany and Japan shed their societal militarism and became, in effect, postmilitary societies. Such developments would have seemed impossible to reasonable observers in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Those instances of enforced cultural transformation demonstrate that if historical shock is sufficiently traumatic, anything is possible. But, the admittedly negative examples of the Axis transformations do not invalidate Maxim 21. There are strategic tasks of such inherent difficulty, not to mention the difficulties that flow from errors of strategic commission, that they ought not to be attempted. Moral outrage, sincerity of intention, and even—to stretch a point—excellence in design can none of them evade the authority of the rule that the impossible truly is impossible.

The quotation which heads this essay explains, in part, why NATO’s mission in Afghanistan is, and has to be, a forlorn hope. Counterinsurgency is all about protecting people, their livelihood, and their expectations for the future. By seeking to destroy the heroin-based economy of the country, without offering attractive alternatives, NATO is condemned to fail. For the other leading contemporary example of mission impossible, one must cite the ill-judged mission to transform the highly artificial state of Iraq into a lonely beacon of democracy in the Arab world. It cannot be done. The fact that to us it would be a desirable outcome to the military intervention is simply irrelevant. The job is not doable. Great powers need to learn and take to heart the message of Maxim 21: the impossible is impossible.

The following quotation from America's *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* of 2006 offers this classic example of an impossible mission masquerading as a practical enterprise:

Victory [over terrorist networks] will come when the enemy's extremist ideologies are discredited in the eyes of their host populations and tacit supporters, becoming unfashionable, and following other discredited creeds, such as Communism and Nazism, into oblivion. This requires the creation of a global environment inhospitable to terrorism. It requires legitimate governments with the capacity to police themselves and to deny terrorists the sanctuary and the resources they need to survive. It will also require support for the establishment of effective representative civil societies around the world, since the appeal of freedom is the best long-term counter to the ideology of the extremists.<sup>56</sup>

What is identified in those words as necessary will be so long in coming that it is, in effect, an impossibility, at least from the perspective of policy and strategy today.

"It seemed like a good idea at the time" is the epitaph of human actions.  
Bruce Fleming, 2004<sup>57</sup>



## Part III

# **Military Power and Warfare**





# Maxim 22

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## People Matter Most

True revolutions happen, above all, in the minds of men.  
Ralph Peters, 1999<sup>1</sup>

Theories of strategy, doctrines of war, arguments about revolutions in military affairs all tend to be noticeably light in the attention that they pay to the human dimension. Two generations of nuclear age strategists devised and fine-tuned an elegant exercise in rational choice, an endeavor that blossomed as the theory of stable mutual deterrence. Only two elements were missing from the conceptual edifice constructed: empirical evidence and some plausible treatment of the human agency which must work the rational intellectual systems that had been hammered out so rigorously.<sup>2</sup> In fact, wherever we look in modern strategic and military analysis, human footprints are far fainter that they should and need to be. Hence, the necessity for Maxim 22. The ever quotable Ralph Peters is all too correct in the words that I borrow above. “War, peace, and strategy” is about people. Moreover, these large and perilous undertakings are always about people, first and last. Of course, they are not only about the human dimension, but the role of human agency is absolutely fundamental. It is pervasive at all levels of conflict, from the tactical to the political. And the significance of the human element is quite impervious to changes in the technological, social-cultural, or any other of war’s major contexts. In addition, lest the human dimension suffer undue homogenization, individuals can make a truly vital difference in war, peace, and the execution of strategy. This is the meaning of Maxim 22. Notwithstanding the vast and really untraceable complexity of the workings of war, peace, and strategy, by far the most, important among their dimensions is the human. This has always been the case. It is true today, and no grand design for the transformation of military power or no radical change predicted in the character of war can alter the eternal merit in this dictum.

It is important that Maxim 22 should not be misunderstood. Clausewitz is secure. The claim that people matter most does not contradict the Prussian’s

canon. War is an instrument of policy. Organized violence must serve political purposes. That instrumental view is as safe in logic and sacred in sound respect, as sometimes it can be challenged in practice when war itself takes the driver's seat and dictates state policy to serve its own needs. Nonetheless, whenever we probe into the sources and functioning of war, peace, and strategy, there is no evading the influence of people, including individuals. Given the wide variety among people and the need for purposeful collective behavior through rational organizations, military and other, it is not hard to see why individual humans have a way of fading from analytical view. A rash individual or two, acting for reasons known only to themselves, and not always then, have the potential to embarrass many an impressive theory of statecraft and strategy. Usually, we are obliged as a matter of prudence and sheer feasibility to play the averages after the fashion of a superior tennis player. Our incentives to probe deeply into the human dimension of war and peace tend to be easily resistible, unless, that is, we write as journalists and look for colorful stories. The problem is that in our generally sensible desire to avoid being diverted from great issues into a human plot, we may in fact forget that the human dimension really is the plot. At the very least, it is a plot that must be granted its due significance, along with the political.

Military effectiveness is the product of many elements: leadership, for one example, training, confidence in equipment, logistical competence, for others. But the most significant contributor by far to prowess in battle is morale. It is the will to win, or at least the will to resist and to sell one's life dearly. This very human element lies at the core of the worth of an army as an instrument of high policy. Soldiers need to believe in themselves, their comrades, and their leaders. However, morale is not a quality that an army can buy directly by new weapons or infuse reliably by exhortation and propaganda. Morale can be strong for a variety of reasons, including a self-confidence based on past accomplishment, the comradeship of common peril and suffering, trust in leadership, some disdain for the enemy, belief in a cause, and many others. As a general rule, though, high military morale is the product of a sense of military excellence.

How much does it matter? It is no exaggeration to claim, to repeat, that morale is the single most important contributor to military success. Maxim 22 reminds us that although war, peace, and strategy are prosecuted to advance the interests of a state or other polity, and the arguments about policy and strategy will probably be quite rarefied, ultimately nothing effective can occur without the effective agency of people. People wage war and implement strategy. And strategy is nothing in and of itself. It is only the bridge connecting the world of tactical engagement with that of political purpose. In short, war can only work if there are people willing and able to risk their lives under orders. If morale is relatively low, with many soldiers far more concerned to survive to the end of hostilities than they are to speed military events to a close, then leaders will need to seek to find and exploit sources of compensation. In North-West Europe in 1944–1945, for example, the Anglo-American–Canadian Armies were not exactly overfull of eager warriors,

people desperate to come to grips with the Germans. Allied generals recognized this general reluctance to take what the soldiers regarded as gratuitous risks and, as a consequence, they tended to make only modest demands of their men. The Germans often were puzzled by the lack of energy and imagination shown by their Western adversaries. The prime reason was simply that those Western armies were composed of soldiers who were willing to serve and do their duty, at least minimally, but were not prepared to behave boldly and risk their lives in a campaign that they regarded as headed for inevitable victory anyway.<sup>3</sup>

How significant is Maxim 22? As with all of these dictums, its very simplicity and familiarity is apt to conceal a profound truth that armies and policymakers underrate at their peril. Clausewitz explains why the human dimension comprises the soul of an army, to quote General Sir Ian Hamilton.<sup>4</sup> The military object in war is not to defeat the enemy, though typically that must be the instrumental goal. Instead, the object is to persuade the enemy that he is beaten. In almost all cases, there is no military or other merit in destroying enemy forces, massacring his troops as an end in itself. How can this be so? Because, as we quote several times, “[w]ar is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will.”<sup>5</sup> Some enemy formations will surrender after showing a strictly token resistance, or if one is unlucky, the enemy may comprise a Luftwaffe paratroop division that would not surrender at Cassino, virtually no matter how high its casualty rate. But, both extremes make the same point. People matter most.

Clausewitz revealed the eternal structure of this topic.

If you want to overcome your enemy you must match your effort against his power of resistance, which can be expressed as the product of two inseparable factors, viz. *the total means at his disposal* and *the strength of his will*. The extent of the means at his disposal is a matter—though not exclusively—of figures, and should be measurable. But the strength of his will is much less easy to determine and can only be gauged approximately by the strength of the motive animating it.<sup>6</sup>

Since the 1970s, with John Keegan’s path breaking study of *The Face of Battle*, the human dimension to warfare has attracted more notice than used to be the case, though not among strategic theorists.<sup>7</sup> The weakness in face-of-battle and what-it-was-like individual stories is that inevitably they have the unfortunate consequence of implying, if they do not actually claim explicitly, that strategy does not much matter. The reality of war is the individual’s experience of battle, at least of military life. There is an obvious sense in which the Keegan perspective is valid. Strategy has to be done by people, preferably by people not unduly unwilling, if not actually eager. However, the face of battle is not what war is about. In fact, a heavy focus on this aspect of the human factor in warfare risks overvaluing that factor. After all, warfare is not usually undertaken for the purpose of testing manhood and other cultural values. Rather must warfare serve political ends. The people that Maxim 22 insists matter most in war, matter for their central contribution to the whole dangerous enterprise. And the strength of their will to fight is the key variable.

Belatedly, the U.S. Armed Forces, the most technologically obsessed of all the world's militaries, has come to recognize the power of culture in recognition of the vital significance of people as contrasted to machines and doctrines. People's behavior is always influenced, sometimes is driven, by the deep-rooted attitudes, beliefs, and habits of mind that we call cultural. Since war and peace is really a mind game, the significance of Maxim 22 is all too easy to highlight and illustrate. Western deterrence theory may demonstrate irrefutably why a rational enemy leader ought to be deterred. But what if that culturally alien leader is rational according to his or her own, at least own society's, definition of suitable policy goals. The leader may be rational, strictly speaking, but not reasonable according to the logic of American deterrence theory.

Historically, good men with poor ships are better than poor men with good ships; over and over again the French Revolution taught this lesson, which our own age, with its rage for the last new thing in material improvement, has largely dropped out of memory.

Alfred Thayer Mahan, 1892<sup>8</sup>

# Maxim 23

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## Military Power Is Trumps in Politics

The unarmed rich man is the prize of the poor soldier.  
Niccolo Machiavelli, 1521<sup>9</sup>

Politics is about power and international politics is about the relative distribution of power among security communities. Politicians everywhere profess career motivation comprising everything except the joy of holding and wielding power. They should not be believed. Power is sought by human beings both individually and collectively as an end in itself. That is a deliberate slight overstatement, but it exaggerates only at the margin. Maxim 23 can be read to offer an implicit challenge to the Clausewitzian dictum that “*war is only a branch of political activity . . . it is in no sense autonomous . . . war is simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means.*”<sup>10</sup> When warfare becomes the dominant modus operandi, the relationship between means and ends that defines rational behavior is apt to be turned on its head. Political means can be driven by military ends. Strategy would be at work, but political purposes and military power would have exchanged positions on the banks connected by the strategy bridge.

This maxim rests on the claim, as noted already, that politics is about power, and it asserts that military force is the ultimate form of power. This assertion applies both to domestic and to international politics. Maxim 23 does not seek, foolishly, to deny the authority of the political over the military. Nor does it claim that military success alone can substitute reliably for long for political consent. If there is to be a lasting peace based upon a stable political order after a war, it is essential that the defeated society accepts both the political fact of its defeat and the new order of power relations that is imposed or negotiated.

The purpose of this maxim is to ensure that substantially debellitized societies, those wallowing fairly contentedly in a globalized prosperity, do not forget how fragile their good times may prove to be. Because many, indeed most polities, do not often face domestic or external problems that require military strategic

solutions, they tend to forget about the military dimension to their security. That security can come to seem to be gifted by providence as a reward for their virtue. They may even be able to persuade themselves that military power is of sharply declining relevance to the conduct of politics and that it is little more than an artifact, a legacy, from more primitive times, at least in their privileged neighborhood. The best advice one can offer to such people is that they would do well to read about the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century AD. The Western Empire fell not because of domestic corruption or because of the harmful impact of Christianity, but rather because of its fairly sudden inability to meet the military challenges of the period.<sup>11</sup>

When barbarians and other rogues threaten, time and again it has been found that there is no substitute for military power. Most emphatically this is not to claim a superiority for military over political considerations. The point, rather, is simply that not all political menaces will yield to political means. Diplomats need to be backed by rough men with swords as well as by elegant phrasemakers and the inventors of cunning political schemes. The maxim does not assert any primacy for military power. It is entirely consistent with the view that politics, or diplomacy, should be the first line of defense, internationally and domestically. Furthermore it is broadly, though far from slavishly, in agreement with the sixth and suitably final one of the traditional criteria for *jus ad bellum* in Christian just war theory. The sixth criterion requires that the resort to force should be taken only in the "last resort," admittedly a contestable concept if ever there was one.

Maxim 23 expresses both a truth of global domain and one that persistently through the centuries has been all but forgotten by societies that have not wanted to remember and honor it. The predictable result has been that societies generally satisfied with their economic condition in particular have tended to take their crucial security context for granted. That context enables prosperity to advance unharassed seriously by have-nots, or more accurately, by those who have-less and want more. There have been many popular explanations for an era of relative peace and prosperity, ranging from divine favor, through economic interdependence, to cultural convergence. Whatever their several merits, no theory to date has survived exposure to the return of tough times. One has to beware of maxims that proffer good advice for an undemanding political context. Strategists are obliged to select their working maxims for bad, rather than benign, security weather.

Maxim 23 is significant primarily for two reasons. First, as indicated, it conveys a message, tersely and bluntly, to societies that are wont to forget the military dimension to their security. In fact, they may well come to believe that their security has ceased to have any meaningful military dimension at all. Such a belief is commonplace today in EU-Europe, with the exception of the former Soviet satellites, of course. Even the problem of Islamic and other terrorism is held widely to be essentially economic, cultural, and political rather than military. There is some merit in that perspective, but it does rest ultimately upon the illusion that their cozy EU-European world has moved beyond the primitive and barbarous

reach of strategic history. Democracies are especially vulnerable to the fallacy that this time in history, military threats either do not exist or can be contained and controlled by nonmilitary means.

Two examples can tell the story. Consider the extraordinary popular faith that was placed in disarmament diplomacy in the 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>12</sup> For a more recent case, note the persisting conviction in EU-Europe that Iran's contemporary, but long-standing, drive to become a nuclear-weapon state can be diverted and arrested by economic seduction rather than by threats. It is a general truth, which is why it is here present as Maxim 23, that from time to time domestic and international order and security can be maintained or restored only by military means. That is not a demotion of the political. What it claims is that the policymaker, occasionally and hopefully reluctantly, has no prudent choice other than to reach for his gun and, if necessary, use it.

Not all political problems yield to purely political means of solution. Recall that the most authoritative justification for the resort to force is the argument that there is no other available way to solve a problem that cannot be ignored. It is a fallacy to believe that war never solves anything. War does solve problems, though admittedly not reliably, and not without creating other problems. But, if any reader of these maxims subscribes to the mistaken belief that war is always futile, let him or her ask a German or Japanese whether war can have conclusive consequences. When politics fail to resolve a conflict, policymakers have to decide whether they will choose to live with an unsatisfactory context or whether they should resort to force to improve that context. Japan in 1941 is an example of outstanding clarity of a modern polity that found itself bereft of tolerable options short of war. Or, one could cite Egypt and Syria in 1973, when they decided to resort to war not so much in the hope of defeating Israel in battle, but rather for the purpose of effecting a radical change in the political context of their conflict with Israel. It should be needless to add that the hardest task is usually the conversion of a war's strategic outcome into the currency of a stable and peaceful international order.

At the beginning of this essay, a claim was made to the effect that Clausewitz's master principle about the necessity for dominance by the political over the military is by no means evidentially secure, historically. Without denying the correctness of the Prussian on the role of politics over organized violence, or warfare, it is a highly significant fact to record that the use of force quite regularly changes the political context, indeed usually it is intended to do so. In practice this can mean that the course of warfare drives politics, rather than vice versa, as the famous dictum insists must be true. When the ebb and flow of warfare changes political realities, as it must, the logic of policy will tend to be less in command than theory and prior political intention and expectation require.

Maxim 23 conveys the elementary, even elemental, message that good times, prosperity, a soundly based sense of security, and a stable future for international and domestic order have to be defended. There have always been, and will always be, security communities great and small, including very small indeed (e.g., a

terrorist group or an insurgency movement), willing and variably able to use force in order to improve their relative power positions. There are some threats that must be met by a military response. Not by such a response alone, but by a set of defenses that include a prospectively effective military option. The essay closes with two pertinent quotations from the pen of Michael Howard.

The ultimate test of national independence remains in the nuclear what it was in the pre-nuclear age: whether people are prepared to risk their lives in order to secure and preserve it.

Michael Howard, 1964<sup>13</sup>

I do not myself believe in any simple “lessons of history,” and I have learnt to mistrust historical analogy as a lazy substitute for analytic thought. But there are certain recurrent patterns of power of imperial expansion in the past that have been too persistent to be ignored. I know of few occasions when small, wealthy and militarily weak states, involved in political rivalry with large and powerful neighbours on their frontiers, have retained their autonomy for very long.

Michael Howard, 1980<sup>14</sup>



# Maxim 24

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## Military Excellence Can Only Be Verified by Performance in War

Very pretty, Colonel, but can they fight?

From the script of the movie, *The Dirty Dozen*, 1967

Maxim 24 is true enough to be included in our first team of important items of cannon lore, though it does need to be thickened with a few significant caveats. As to its basic meaning, that is pretty well self-evident. Armies exist primarily for the purpose of fighting. The most core of the core competencies required of them is that they have to be able to kill people, break things, and occupy territory. Of course, they must only do so as directed by strategy in obedience to political direction.

An army may pass many contented years doing soldiering in peacetime without firing a single round in anger. In the absence of real-world tests of its fitness for purpose, an army is obliged, *faute de mieux*, to assess its competence only against itself or occasionally against elements of the army of an ally or two in well-choreographed exercises. This is not a criticism. When the experience of actual warfare is not available, an army has no choice other than to simulate combat conditions. Historically, armies have varied widely in the rigor and vigor of their peacetime training. Traditionally, this was a cardinal strength of the German army. For example, there were many reasons why the Wehrmacht defeated the French and British armies in six weeks in May–June 1940. But, the unmistakable superiority of German military training alone was a campaign winning advantage.

This maxim states a vital eternal truth. Armies show their true mettle only in warfare. Nearly all armies have ceremonial functions. They are a focus for national pride and a sense of unity and historical continuity. Also, they may have significant domestic roles, ranging from internal security, aid to the civil power as it is known in Britain, to disaster assistance and national development. With only the most

trivial of exceptions armies are globally ubiquitous. Machiavelli was correct when he wrote the following:

Many other cities [other than Sparta and Rome] have been disarmed and have been free less than forty years; for cities have need of arms, and if they do not have arms of their own, they hire them from foreigners, and the arms of foreigners more readily do harm to the public good than their own.<sup>15</sup>

Machiavelli is, of course, prescribing for a political context of city states, and he is advocating taking a bold step backward to the model of the Roman Republic with its amateur army of citizen-soldiers. However, he affirms the key principle that all polities require an army.

There is an irony inseparable from the meaning of Maxim 24. The longer a society enjoys the blessings of peace, the longer must it be since its soldiers practiced their profession. To repeat, the distinctive, indeed the unique competence of an army, resides in its ability to coerce by the threat or the exercise of force. Professional skills of all kinds can only be honed to a condition of excellence, and verified to be such, through frequent practice. Most armies lack the opportunity to improve by experience in war. They are ordered to fight only very occasionally. Also, the wars and the warfare to which armies are committed by their political owners may well not be of a kind for which they have been well prepared. This can be a source of doubt about the reliability of the claim in Maxim 24.

Military excellence is a matter of context as well as of objective military virtues. One size in military excellence will not fit all contexts of military challenge, strategic need, and political demand. An army may well be excellent in the conduct of a particular mode of warfare, yet almost wholly ineffective in another. To cite two examples from recent American experience. Both in Vietnam in the 1960s and in Afghanistan and Iraq in the 2000s, the U.S. Army demonstrated its manifold strengths in the waging of regular conventional warfare. Unfortunately, the enemies in question, in all three cases, were not of a regular conventional kind. Because war is in its very nature a competitive activity, judgments on military excellence have to refer to actual or prospective performance against self-willed opponents. An army cannot be excellent in the same way that a painting may be judged beautiful. An army has to earn its keep as an instrument of policy only in relation to its ability to meet the strategic demands placed upon it.

If strategic history teaches anything it is the virtue of, indeed the necessity for, military adaptability. Maxim 24 has to be understood to require verification of adaptability in military performance. Time after time, highly potent military machines have run out of steam and ideas when they were obliged to wage warfare in conditions for which they were not prepared. Dennis E. Showalter corrals the point perfectly with a telling comment on German military performance in the Soviet Union in 1941.

A concentration on the near future [in the 1930s and 1940-1] left Germany's soldiers neither the time nor the inclination to consider any changes except those they predicted. As had been the case in 1914, the army found itself forced to revert to increasingly random improvisations when its original bag of tricks emptied in the autumn of 1941 somewhere between Smolensk and Moscow.<sup>16</sup>

General Rupert Smith reinforces the point made here about the relevance of context and the necessity for military adaptability. The general states that

I am not raising the old cry of armies preparing for the last war. Indeed, armies do not prepare for the last war, they frequently prepare for the wrong one—if for no other reason than that governments will usually fund only against the anticipated primary threat as opposed to risk, and the adversary will usually play to his opponents' weakness rather than strength.<sup>17</sup>

The General is too generous to his profession. Although he is surely correct in pointing to budgetary constraints, also one needs to recognize the powerful pull of distinctive military culture. Military institutions prepare to fight in the manner that they prefer, unless strategic circumstances or orders from above, which is to say from politicians in the latter case, command otherwise. However, armies do not always succeed in adapting well enough to the terms of combat in a nonfavored mode of warfare. Also, it is one thing for policymakers and even very senior military officers to demand radical change in the way a war is being waged; it is quite another for an army to be able to effect such a shift in short order under fire. In the 2000s, the U.S. Army has demonstrated that it is far from excellent in the waging of warfare against irregular enemies. To its credit, that Army has recognized its incompetence in irregular warfare in Afghanistan, Iraq, and prospectively elsewhere. Although such recognition born of undeniable negative experience is the necessary first step to reform, in and of itself it carries no guarantee that effective change will be institutionally feasible.

Actual warfare may be likened to a field test of a novel piece of complex machinery. Will it work in practice? In the case of Maxim 24, though, the field for the test in question contains enemies committed to the attempt to ensure that the military machine does not work as intended. Because of the complexity of war and the dominance of its many contexts over the course and outcome of hostilities, it has to be perilous to judge the military quality of an army from its performance in any specific conflict. Every war is different. Nonetheless, to balance the argument, there are well-attested military virtues that, if well represented in the army under examination, enhance or even maximize the prospects for success. For just one example, as this book keeps insisting morale is the most important of military qualities. Its state determines how hard the soldiers will fight, or whether they will fight at all.

To close this essay on a positive note, military excellence is not an absolute quality. Instead, it is a range of effective behavior and it should be assessed only in

historical context. How excellent does an army need to be? After all, the reasons why an army would be judged less than excellent by some panel of Omniscient Strategic Persons, must also apply to the enemy, albeit with some differences of detail. One hesitates to say this, but because war by definition is a duel, friendly forces are not required to be excellent, though that is an appropriate ambition. Rather do they need to be good enough to win or at least not to lose. The excellence required is the ability to adapt well enough to unexpected circumstances.

The closing quotation to this essay provides contemporary illustration of the basic sense in Maxim 24. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) have enjoyed a generally iconic reputation for military excellence, notwithstanding some contrary evidence in 1973 and 1982. However, the audit of war in southern Lebanon in the summer of 2006 demonstrated beyond a reasonable doubt that that reputation is not entirely merited at least not at the present time.

The next essay, Maxim 25, moves the argument forward to consider the strategic utility of military excellence.

Hezbollah's battle-hardened guerrilla fighters put up an unexpectedly stubborn resistance during the war, fighting Israeli troops to a standstill in the hills and valleys of the deep south and preventing the Israeli government from reaching any of its stated goals.

Nicholas Blandford, 2006<sup>18</sup>

# Maxim 25

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## Military Excellence Cannot Guarantee Strategic Success

Americans—not unlike many of their European counterparts—considered war an *alternative* to bargaining, rather than part of an ongoing bargaining process, as in the Clausewitzian view. Their concept of war rarely extended beyond the winning of battles and campaigns to the gritty work of turning military victory into strategic success, and hence was more a way of *battle* than an actual way of war. Unfortunately, the American way of battle has not yet matured into a way of war.

Antulio J. Echevarria II, 2004<sup>19</sup>

Maxim 25 claims that military and strategic excellence are not synonymous. It points to the zone of interaction between military behavior and strategic consequences as being one fraught with difficulties. The primary value of this maxim is to remind people, especially policymakers and soldiers, that combat is only the raw material with which the conduct and outcome of a war is shaped and made. Of course, the fighting is of crucial importance, but in and of itself it is without political meaning. To connect military behavior in battle with policy purpose there is, or there should be, what this theorist calls the strategy bridge. If that bridge is absent or in poor repair, politics and warfare are almost certain to be disconnected.

The subject of this maxim is strategy, not the value of military excellence. The latter topic is the subject of the next essay, Maxim 26. Strategy is inherently very hard to do well, just as many people find it extremely difficult to understand. Nearly everyone agrees with the proposition that strategy is important, but beyond that bare acknowledgement silence tends to follow. The meaning and character of politics and policy are readily comprehended, as is actual warfare in its several forms. It is an elementary matter to grasp the point that combat of any and all kinds is the realm of tactics. The operational level of war creates more of a challenge to comprehension, because it involves a judgment about the conversion of one

military currency into another. Specifically, operational skill, or art as it is often called, has to plan and employ combats in order to secure typically extensive military goals. Operations are about campaigns. They are about the use of battles, great and small, to advance campaign success.<sup>20</sup>

Maxim 25 addresses the level above the military operational, which is to say the strategic. The strategist must plan and employ operational level military results for the purpose of promoting the defeat of the enemy. To the strategist all of the fighting, considered both tactically and operationally, is strictly instrumental. This is not to demean the significance of combat, as is explained in the next essay. But, it is to affirm that strategic success, hopefully promoting political success, is not by any means the inexorable consequence of competence in combat.

To appreciate the full meaning and implications of Maxim 25 requires the development, perhaps the acquisition, of a consequentialist mindset. Strategy is all about consequences. This is one of the reasons why it is so difficult to do well; indeed it is a reason why some countries seem to have trouble doing it at all. The strategist's best friend is the question, "so what?" Often in warfare, armies are allowed to fight in a way that they prefer and possibly in a manner at which they excel. But, if the operational, or campaign, level of command is weak, or if higher strategic direction is missing or vague, the fighting will be wasted effort. The claim that is key to the significance of this maxim is to the effect that there is no necessary proportionate connection between excellence in combat and strategic benefit. Combat virtue does not inevitably bring due strategic reward.

The significance of this maxim could not be higher. After all, it asserts the possible futility even of military excellence should combat behavior not be guided appropriately toward securing effects that strategy identifies as vital to success in war as a whole. As so often one must, it is necessary at this juncture to reintroduce a familiar Clausewitzian argument. *On War* advises that "[t]he 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 demands of policy, which vary with the nature of the motives for war and of the situations which give rise to them] 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."<sup>21</sup> A little earlier, Clausewitz argued that "[t]he political object—the original motive for the war—will thus determine both the military objective to be reached and the amount of effort it requires."<sup>22</sup> He proceeds to explain that in historical reality, rather than in the realm of abstract logic, the relationship between policy and military effort is distinctly variable. For example, if aroused to anger a society may insist upon waging a great deal more warfare than the original political motive would appear to warrant.

The Clausewitzian point registered above tells us about the proper source of the character and content of strategy. In short, strategy needs to match "the kind of war on which they are embarking." Invariably, even armed forces of outstanding competence will not be uniformly excellent in the conduct of all kinds of warfare

in all contexts. Military excellence is never fully comprehensive. To illustrate the meaning of this maxim, it is useful to note the strategic experience of modern Germany and the United States. Neither country has exactly shone at strategy, though each, for a while at least, was in general international estimation, an exemplar of military excellence.

Because of its vulnerable national geography and its relatively scarce resources, Prussia, Imperial Germany, and then Nazi Germany all but neglected entirely the strategic level of war. Instead, it was the German way of war to seek to win swift and decisive military victory by means of rapid maneuver.<sup>23</sup> Operational art would deliver victory by annihilating the enemy's army and, as a necessary consequence, the war would be over. When the all important operational concept was faulty, possibly because of tactical or logistical failings, Prussia–Germany was baffled and in the deepest of trouble. The situation just described in the abstract is precisely what happened to German arms in France in 1914 and in Russia in 1941.<sup>24</sup>

With respect to the United States, it is probably accurate to maintain that it has underperformed strategically for exactly the opposite reasons to those that repeatedly blighted German performance. Germany was geographically exposed in the center of Europe and short of resources relative to its enemies. The United States, by contrast, has been and remains geographically secure—at least with respect to all threats save the long-range missile and the terrorist—and abundantly resourced for warfare of all kinds. However, of recent decades the United States has demonstrated that strategic performance can be impaired by material overendowment, as well as by under endowment, as in the German case. Americans wage a rich person's style of warfare. This style privileges firepower and the exploitation of expensive machines of all kinds and it is more than generously supported logistically. But, when the ferociously effective American killing machine finds itself locked into a war where firepower and machines are at a heavy discount, it is apt to be strategically lost.

Three times in the past forty years, the United States has waged warfare with forces that were militarily excellent in their preferred way of war but which could not perform well enough in the kind of warfare that the enemy imposed. The historical cases are Vietnam from 1965 to 1973, Afghanistan from 2001 to the present, and Iraq from 2003 again to the present. A wealthy country like the United States is always vulnerable to the fallacy that victory in battle achieved by the application of overwhelming regular strength can meet any serious policy demand. There is no need to think strategically. Win battles and that must have decisive strategic effect. Period. That has been Plan A. But, in common with the Germans in 1914 and 1941, with the Schlieffen Plan and the Barbarossa Plan, when Plan A fails there is no Plan B ready to guide a process of emergency adaptation.

Maxim 25 means that armed forces need to be fit for purpose, as the current jargon puts it. They have to be sufficiently adaptable to be fit for a variety of purposes as mandated by a range of strategic challenges. The concept of military

excellence is always in danger of leading its devotees into autarkic error. The notion of excellence is all but meaningless in the absence of contextual reference.

The French sought to resolve the issue of strategic leadership, and much else, through a revolution fueled in part by the manifest strategic incompetence that their monarchy had displayed in the Seven Years' War. The paradoxical result was a disastrous twenty-two years' struggle against most of Europe and a dictatorship whose protagonist, Napoleon, incarnated operational brilliance—and strategic lunacy.

MacGregor Knox, 1994<sup>25</sup>



# Maxim 26

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## Victory in Battle Does Not Ensure Strategic or Political Success, but Defeat All but Guarantees Failure

Prolonged periods of peace make it increasingly difficult for military institutions to focus on their business: the waging of war.

Williamson Murray and MacGregor Knox, 2001<sup>26</sup>

Maxim 26 is especially important in the context of these essays because so many of the maxims emphasize the political dimension of warfare that there is some danger that the core nature of the activity may fade unduly from attention. “*War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will.*”<sup>27</sup> Notwithstanding his insistence upon the supremacy of political purpose in war, Clausewitz was properly respectful of the distinctive dynamics of military behavior. For example, having stressed that political purpose “will remain the supreme consideration in conducting it [war],” he proceeded to explain further, as follows:

That, however, does not imply that the political aim is a tyrant. It must adapt itself to its chosen means, a process which can radically change it [the political purpose!]; yet the political aim remains the first consideration. Policy, then, will permeate all military operations, and, *in so far as their violent nature will admit*, it will have a continuous influence on them.<sup>28</sup>

For another example, in a justly celebrated sentence Clausewitz contrasts the logic of policy which must explain war, with the unique nature and character of warfare itself. “Its grammar, indeed, may be its own, but not its logic.”<sup>29</sup> Clausewitz was answering the question he had posed: “Is war not just another expression of their thoughts [peoples and governments], another form of speech or writing?” For the purposes of this essay, it is necessary to focus on what the master theorist calls the grammar of war rather than the political logic that should direct it.

Maxim 26 requires some explanation and discussion beyond the obvious. Its validity can be challenged by those who would point to wars of an irregular kind

wherein military victories are both few and far between and allegedly are irrelevant, given the asymmetries between the belligerents. For example, the U.S. Army was proud to assert the contestable claim that it never lost a tactical engagement in Vietnam. Almost petulantly, the Army would insist that it won its war, at least at the level of warfare in which it engaged. The following is a noteworthy exchange between Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., then Chief of the Negotiations Division, U.S. Delegation, and Colonel Tu, Chief of the North Vietnamese Delegation, on April 25, 1975, in Hanoi:

“You know you never defeated us on the battlefield,” said the American Colonel.

The North Vietnamese Colonel pondered his remark a moment. “That may be so,” he replied, “but it is also irrelevant.”

These words provided a telling epigraph to the first chapter of Summers’ much celebrated, albeit controversial, study of U.S. performance in Vietnam, *On Strategy*.<sup>30</sup> The chapter is titled “Tactical Victory, Strategic Defeat.” Colonel Tu was correct. Victory and defeat can have different meanings in irregular, as contrasted with regular, warfare. His comment reaffirmed the merit in a famous dictum of Mao-Tse tung:

The strategy of guerrilla warfare is manifestly unlike that employed in orthodox operations, as the basic tactic of the former is constant activity and movement. There is in guerrilla warfare no such thing as a decisive battle.<sup>31</sup>

Maxim 26 appears to be contradicted empirically by the experience of Vietnam. But, that is not really so. There is no doubt that irregular wars are rarely concluded by a military decision. They are contests of political will and endurance, with the allegiance of the general public comprising the true battlespace. In the case of foreign intervention, as in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq, the political battlespace includes both local allegiance and the tolerance of the public of the intervening state. In the latter regard, the course of the fighting can have a major effect upon the level of popular support. Most especially is that true with reference to casualties. This maxim does not seek to deny the primacy of the political, such an effort would be absurd, but rather to counter any unduly casual dismissal of the significance of the fighting. It is not quite true, perhaps one should say it is not true enough, to maintain that because irregular war is a contest of political endurance, tactical performance essentially is irrelevant.

It is a general truth to hold that irregular wars cannot be won tactically and that the real contest is between the respective strengths of the belligerents’ wills to persist. But, it is not a general truth to proceed to assert that, therefore, the outcomes to actual combats are of no importance. There will be cases wherein a belligerent can win a war despite a long succession of tactical failures, as in Vietnam. However, this does not warrant elevation to the status of a general

principle. An army, especially a guerrilla force, that persistently loses in the field is certain to suffer crises of morale and serious losses of experienced cadres and equipment. More to the point, the general public should begin to perceive the irregular fighters as losers. It is a rule of strategic history that prudent folk are apt to drift to the support of winners, actual or confidently anticipated. Furthermore, there should be no need to emphasize here the importance of maintaining morale in the ranks of the regular army. These points do not in any way diminish the truth in the first part of Maxim 26: “victory in battle does not ensure strategic or political success.”

This complex and controversial maxim is included here because armchair strategists and others are inclined to suffer from the virus of oversophistication, a malady which produces distinctive pathologies. This armchair strategist is well versed in the problems. *Mea culpa*, at least occasionally. Because war is a political instrument and the conduct of warfare needs to be permeated with political considerations, it is all too easy to demote the actual fighting, tactical behavior, way below the measure of its true significance. There is a long-standing item in the lore of war, which holds that belligerents can only gain politically what they have earned by blood, treasure, and skill on the battlefield. This historically well-supported maxim has not been presented formally here, but it certainly could have been. It is contested by the contradictory proposition that sometimes states win wars, but manage to lose the peace that follows. The French were justified in believing that that was their political and strategic condition after World War I, while Britain was no less correct in discerning national defeat in the great victory of 1945. However, those were not cases wherein military victory or defeat was really of no consequence. It mattered enormously to France that it should not lose the Great War, as it did to Britain not to fail against Nazi Germany.

Maxim 26 can be understood as an expansion upon, rather than a caveat to, the mighty truth that war is an instrument of politics. In regular warfare, military defeat is all but certain to translate into political failure. There have been exceptions, for example, when Egypt succeeded in using its defeat in 1973 to kick-start a diplomatic process that ultimately developed to its advantage. Even in irregular warfare, although the contest usually cannot be decided by military action, a pattern of tactical defeat is likely to have seriously adverse military and political consequences. In short, military defeat matters. Any assumption to the contrary is imprudent, dangerous, and most probably wrong. The facts that there are apparent exceptions to the message of this maxim, and that irregular and regular warfare differ radically in their terms and dynamics, should not mislead one into a tactical indifference. Military defeat matters.

King Agamemnon answered crisply, “Tactics, my noble Menelaus. That’s what we need now, you and I both, and cunning tactics too.”

Homer, ca. 800 BC<sup>32</sup>

# Maxim 27

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## There Is More to War than Firepower: The Enemy Is Not Just a Target Set

It is a fundamental mistake to see the enemy as a set of targets. The enemy in war is a group of people. Some of them will have to be killed. Others will have to be captured or driven into hiding. The overwhelming majority, however, have to be persuaded. They must be persuaded not merely of the shocking awfulness of American power, but of the desirability of pursuing the policies the U.S. wishes them to pursue.

Frederick W. Kagan, 2003<sup>33</sup>

Maxim 27 strikes no fewer than four blows for strategic truth. First, it warns against the error of reductionism, in this case reducing the waging of war to the application of firepower. Second, it implies criticism of a technological style in warfare. Third, it suggests that there are limits to the value of firepower in war. And fourth, it claims that the enemy needs to be understood and fought in ways additional to the delivery of high explosives. This simple seeming maxim thus bears a heavy and multifaceted message for the strategist.

Rewinding a little from the extensive claims just registered, the essential meaning of Maxim 27 and the reason for its inclusion in this collection are easy to explain. There is a view of warfare, which frequently is confused with a view of war as a whole, that equates firepower with both warfare and war. Such a perspective cannot help but regard the enemy and its assets as a dehumanized target set. This view has long been a dominant characteristic of what has been termed the American way of war.<sup>34</sup> It is a way that privileges machines over people. Through the exploitation of technology it seeks to minimize American, while maximizing enemy, casualties, and it accepts as an unavoidable necessity the infliction of collateral damage on innocent bystanders. Technology in massive quantity is king of the battlespace, most especially in the form of firepower of all kinds. While this perspective can be traced to the American strategic context in the nineteenth century, more recently its provenance is plain to read in the theory of strategic air

power. America is the world's first Air Power, worthy of the title, and air power is the cutting edge of U.S. military capability.<sup>35</sup> What is the strategic worldview of the air person? In effect, he or she sees the world as akin to a dartboard. After all, the primary combat function of air power, once it has secured its own freedom of action in the air, is to drop things on people and objects on the ground or at sea. The people and objects are, strictly speaking, targets. They are faceless, motiveless, distant and may not even be seen at all. The greatest of all air theorists, Italian General Giulio Douhet, penetrated to the heart of the matter as follows:

[A]s a matter of fact the selection of objectives, the grouping of zones, and determining the order in which they are to be destroyed is the most difficult and delicate task in aerial warfare, constituting what may be defined as aerial strategy.<sup>36</sup>

It may well be a difficult and delicate task to select targets and then decide on the order of their destruction, but even so it is a gross reduction in the true complexity of war.

Maxim 27 criticizes a perspective on war that attempts to reduce the whole confused and bloody enterprise to a science. If one can relate targets destroyed or damaged to strategic, then political, consequences, one would indeed transform the art of war into the science of war. If the damage that needs to be inflicted for victory can be identified, so also can the number of sorties and the weight and character of ordnance necessary to wreak the damage. *Ergo*, nearly all of war's messy uncertainties vanish. Needless to say, perhaps, such a view is nonsense. But, it has always lurked more or less explicitly in the belief structure of true believers in victory through air power.

The firepower approach to warfare is uninterested in the culture and politics of the enemy. From World War II until today, those who view warfare and what passes for strategy essentially through a bombsight or via the barrel of an artillery piece have shown an almost mystical faith in the coercive potency of mechanized death and destruction. BDA (bomb damage assessment) can be calculated, or guessed, and tidy would-be scientific minds will happily calculate the percentage of enemy targets, or value, destroyed or neutralized. But, dare one ask, what does that mean? Does the enemy's will to resist decline in reliable proportion to the increase in damage suffered? Indeed, what is the connection between targets destroyed and damaged and strategic effect? And there is always that nagging suspicion that J.C. Wylie trumps the firepower theory of victory with his persuasive claim that "[t]he ultimate determinant in war is the man on the scene with the gun. This man is the final power in war. He is control."<sup>37</sup>

Maxim 27 singularizes firepower in particular and technology in general by extension. The reason for that choice of focus, admittedly, is the strength and persistence of the U.S. military's love affair with machines and, naturally, the prominence of that military in global strategic history at present. A different variant of the maxim could have been written sixty-five years ago with Germany

principally in mind. In that case the reductionist error highlighted would have been an undue faith in operational maneuver. Moscow 1941, Stalingrad 1942, and Kursk 1943 demonstrated the limits of operational maneuver as one's dominant theory of success in land warfare.

All maxims have to be interpreted intelligently. Maxim 27 does not criticize firepower *per se*. To do so would be ridiculous. All of warfare is an orchestrated combination of firepower, maneuver, and shock. Rather is the maxim critical of an approach to warfare that relies too heavily upon firepower. More generally, it is suspicious of a way of war that rarely rejects a new machine. Societies develop their military institutions and imbue them with a culture reflecting their particular character. America is a high-technology society whose citizens are habituated almost from the cradle to look to machines to work for them. The law of the instrument applies. Soldiers use what is available, whether or not it is well suited to the character of the struggle of the day. As much to the point, a high-technology society with a necessarily high-technology military machine should be good at waging high-technology combat.

The problem is that not all wars and conflicts can be won by the prompt delivery of massive firepower, no matter how accurately delivered. There are conflicts, especially those of an irregular kind, where the operative principle ought to be minimum force, not maximum firepower. If one was seeking to massacre Warsaw Pact armored fighting vehicles in Northern Germany and Poland in phase one of World War III, the attitudes of bystanders were of little concern. But, if the enemy is an elusive guerrilla fighter-come-terrorist in Iraq or Afghanistan, the attitudes of civilian bystanders is exactly what the warfare is all about.

Mass application of firepower, as in Korea and World War II, was felt to be the most efficient method of generating an enemy body count while minimizing U.S. casualties [in Vietnam]. Large search-and-destroy sweeps were carried out in an attempt to find the enemy. When guerrillas were located, the infantry took cover while massive firepower support attempted to destroy the insurgents. As General Dupuy noted, if "you just wanted to analyze what happened in Vietnam you'd say the infantry found the enemy and the artillery and the air killed the enemy." When General Westmoreland was asked at a press conference what the answer to insurgency was, his reply was one word: "firepower."

Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., 1986<sup>38</sup>

# Maxim 28

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## Logistics Is the Arbiter of Strategic Opportunity

Amateurs study strategy, professionals study logistics.  
Omar Bradley, 1893–1981<sup>39</sup>

Logistics is the science of supply and movement. It is not an optional extra. Logistics is what enables an army to fight, or, if need be, avoid fighting. Maxim 28 is no exaggeration. To seize a strategic opportunity in any historical period and in any kind of warfare, military leaders must be able to move and supply their combat forces. Period. Brilliant strategic conceptions are strictly moot, which means they are not brilliant at all, if the troops are unable to do it materially. Admittedly, morale is more important than logistics, but logistical incompetence or misfortune cannot help but have adverse consequences for morale and discipline. This maxim makes the wholly unremarkable claim that the quality of logistical performance can, and typically does, determine whether strategic opportunities truly are opportunities. Strategy is a pragmatic business. While the operational and especially the strategic conceptions of commanders are vitally important, their fate must depend critically upon their practicality. And logistics lies at the core of practicality in warfare. That which is logistically infeasible is, ipso facto, strategically infeasible also. But, that common sense, indeed necessary, truth conceals much space for argument.

Is logistical feasibility truly a science? Cannot hungry soldiers substitute fighting spirit, or even just the courage of desperation and hope, for absent calories? Moreover, do not competent, and better, armies master the art, not the science, of improvisation? In short, is not the claim that logistical feasibility arbitrates upon strategic issues misleading? Surely, in historical practice the so-called science of logistics translates into a wide range of tolerable, if often unwelcome, compromises with the optimally desirable? These and related questions are important and do point to the need to approach the logistical dimension of warfare broadly. But, that granted, the maxim is undoubtedly true as stated. Those who have despised

logistics and logisticians have frequently come to serious grief, as this essay will illustrate.

Given the truly comprehensive material domain of logistics, it is worth drawing a useful distinction between logistical failure on the small as contrasted with the grand scale. The former occurs in all armies nearly all of the time. Regular armies have trained logisticians, while irregular forces have self-educated counterparts of those regulars, and they cope with logistical difficulties by a combination of substitution and austerity. Such difficulties are one of the core problem areas to which Clausewitz referred in his concept of friction. But, there is another scale of (logistical) failure that must threaten the practicality of an entire campaign or even a war as a whole. In that case, the scope of the failure is so great and militarily limiting in its consequences that no amount of logistical wizardry by the experts, or belt-tightening at the sharp end, can provide adequate compensation. There are boundaries to improvisation. Or, so this author believes, based upon the balance of the evidence of strategic history. However, there is another point of view.<sup>40</sup>

Note that Maxim 28 itself is strictly neutral on the issue of the elasticity of claimed logistical necessity, as scientifically calculated. All that the maxim affirms, noncontroversially, is that logistics is, *inter alia*, what enables armies to function as armies. Strategic historical practice has shown a wide range of military attitudes toward logistics. At one extreme, there is a British Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery or an American General George B. McClellan, who are extremely risk-averse and will not move until every possible material advantage has been accumulated. One must add, that in the case of McClellan he would not move boldly even then, which was why he was dismissed in November 1862 after the drawn battle of Antietam. McClellan was not the leader to turn a partial success into a rout of the foe. He was a superb organizer and trainer of troops, but as a fighting general he lacked ruthlessness and a willingness to take risks, even well-calculated ones. Montgomery was deliberate, even slow to a fault, in his generalship, with the sole curious exception of his endorsement of the abominable Arnhem plan (Operation Market Garden) in September 1944.<sup>41</sup> But, he never lost a battle, in part because he respected the combat and operational skills of the Germans and in even greater part because he was determined to give his manpower-short British imperial forces every possible material advantage. It is probably worth mentioning that Montgomery learnt his trade as a military professional working on the staff of General Herbert Plumer in 1917 and 1918. Plumer's were the safest pair of hands among the Army commanders in the British Expeditionary Force. He waged warfare in a thoroughly logistical manner, if one may so express it. Risk was minimized, one cannot say eliminated, by meticulous planning and the maximum exploitation of material superiority.

McClellan and Montgomery, notwithstanding the military successes of the latter, represent the pathology of a logistical approach to warfare. In practice, most American and British military commanders over the past hundred and fifty years have adopted such a style. The reason is largely geographical-cum-geostrategic,



while in the U.S. case it has been attributable also to an abundance of resources, once mobilized. If British and American military leaders were not logistically gifted, or at least logistically well served by their staffs, they could not fight at all. The British and the Americans are compelled by geography to wage an expeditionary style of war, typically over enormous distances. The conquest of space is the first requirement for Anglo-American strategists. Even when Americans fought at home, both in the regular struggles of the War of Independence (1775–1783) and Civil War (1861–1865), and in the more than two centuries of irregular combat against native tribes, logistics was fundamental as the enabler of any and all campaign designs. The sheer scale and undeveloped character of North American terrain meant that American generals needed to cope with geography if they were to cope with the enemy. And geography, or nature, was usually less forgiving, less prone to making helpful errors, than was the foe. Some leading historians of the Civil War, for example, argue that “all three branches of the art of war—logistics, strategy, and tactics played crucial and interrelated roles in the Civil War, but more or less their relative importance was in that order.”<sup>42</sup> Union strategy was not just enabled by logistics, which is a necessary truth, rather was it shaped and even dominated by it. As a general observation, it is commonplace and plausible to argue that the United States, as a very wealthy country long accustomed to the necessity to project power over great distances in all environments, has waged the style of warfare that matches its character and advantages. The American way of war is a way whose trademark is logistical excellence even beyond the point where such excellence slides into enervating excess. One can have too much of a good and necessary thing, even logistics.

Rear Admiral Henry E. Eccles, USN, is justly famous for coining, at least popularizing, the vivid concept of the “logistic snowball.”<sup>43</sup> His thesis, which empirically is exceedingly well founded, holds that unless a tight grip upon it is maintained, logistical provision for the forces of a wealthy belligerent like the United States will grow ever larger, like a snowball rolling downhill. Eventually, to add another metaphor, an army can all but choke on a logistic superfluity. Logistical affluence means a huge footprint in the combat theater, a fact made manifest in large dumps of equipment, food, ammunition, spare parts, and whatever else the American fighting person and nonfighting person both needs and expects to receive. Logistical plenitude is both a great enabler of strategic opportunity and a no less great constraint. Armies that are logistically well blessed tend to find that their tooth to tail ratio is unfavorable compared with that of a logistically austere enemy. Admittedly, American armies should have outstanding sustainability in combat. But those armies perennially have been short of actual fighting men. When one examines American troop strengths in war after war, one discovers that American generals have been perennially short of maneuver battalions. Logistical affluence ought to be the arbiter of many strategic opportunities, but in practice the bad news of the good news is that such affluence tends to be bought at the price of the fighting power for which combat soldiers in large numbers are needed.

At the opposite end of the spectrum of attitudes toward logistics, one finds the German example. For understandable reasons, geostrategically vulnerable and relatively poorly resourced Prussia–Germany developed and practiced a dominant way of war that was close to dismissive of predictable logistical difficulties. Germans reasoned that they needed to win their wars quickly, which meant by decisive annihilating maneuver. For short wars with that character logistical problems could be ignored, endured, and alleviated by improvisation. The Great German General Staff, the most professional body of its kind in the world for the better part of a century, devised first the all important master operational concept for a campaign, and only subsequently did they conduct their logistical planning.<sup>44</sup> While the Schlieffen–Moltke Plan as executed in 1914 was a logistical impossibility, Operation Barbarossa of 1941 was logistically practicable only if (a) the bulk of the Soviet armies could be trapped in great encirclements close to the frontier and (b) the defeat of those armies produced the prompt collapse of the Soviet regime. If those assumptions were false, then logistics would triumph over operational concept, especially when that concept failed in action on the road to Moscow. In neither world war could German excellence in warfare compensate adequately for a lack of strategic competence, insufficient operational adaptability, and massive logistical shortfalls.

Logistics is not the sole arbiter of strategic opportunity, but arbiter it most certainly is.

The more I have seen of war the more I realize how it all depends on administration and transportation (what our American allies call logistics). It takes little skill or imagination to see *where* you would like your army to be and *when*; it takes much knowledge and hard work to know where you can place your forces and whether you can maintain them there. A real knowledge of supply and movement factors must be the basis of every leader's plan; only then can he know how and when to take risks with those factors; and battles and wars are won only by taking risks.

Archibald Wavell, August 13, 1944<sup>45</sup>

# Part IV

## **Security and Insecurity**



# Maxim 29

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## Bad Times Return

At the end of every war since the end of the eighteenth century, as had never been the case before, the leading states made a concerted effort, each one more radical than the last, to reconstruct the system on lines that would enable them, or so they believed, to avoid a further war . . . These initiatives are as characteristic and distinctive of the operation of the system as are the dynamics of its wars. So is the fact that they all came to nothing.

F. H. Hinsley, 1982<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps one should never say never. However, the 2,500 years of accessible strategic history provides an unanswerable record of bad times returning. So, to date, Maxim 29 is a well-revealed truth. Naturally, “bad times” is a somewhat, though only somewhat, subjective concept. It invites the comment that “I know them when I feel and see them.” Plainly, badness is a spectrum. The maxim is phrased deliberately in the vernacular, because more scholarly wording would both lose some of the force of the claim and could not help but simply substitute one opacity and contestable quality for another. For example, definition of an insecure environment is no more useful as an explanatory tool than is the concept of bad times. Obviously, bad times emerge and mature, ebb and flow, along a spectrum. Also, many historical cases of bad times are either not bad at all for some societies, while their degree of badness must vary even among those most intimately involved in the unpleasant process and events at issue.

Bad times are understood here to refer to a context of political instability, of disorder, primarily among states, of sufficient seriousness as to render the prospect of a great multinational conflict a plausible possibility. In addition, thinking of contemporary and future contexts, bad times can refer to nonstate conflicts that are genuinely transnational. For the leading example, the intrastate warfare in Iraq today potentially has implications for the balance of power in the whole of the Middle East.

Maxim 29 is a flat rejection of the concept of benign transformation in human security affairs. It rejects as fundamentally sadly flawed the proposition that we humans are slowly, if irregularly and with setbacks, making progress toward a more stable, less disorderly, less war-prone world order. The maxim follows Hinsley's judgment in the quotation that opens this essay. There has been a distinct pattern over the past two hundred plus years of popular, as well as some supposedly expert, hope that "this time we can and will do better" to construct a better, more peaceable international order. Hinsley is unduly censorious. After all, a gap of a century between great European wars, 1815–1914, might well be regarded with some justice as a considerable achievement. There were wars aplenty in the nineteenth century, but right up to 1914 reference to The Great War meant The Great War with France (1792–1815). Also, even the much-maligned League of Nations created by the Versailles Treaty of 1919 was not entirely bereft of merit. And a similar judgment applies to the United Nations. But, as an overall comment, and to focus on the forest and not the trees, it would be hard to argue convincingly against the merit in Maxim 29.

The maxim begs for explanation. Why have bad times always returned, even after a century waiting in the wings to ambush the few most responsible as well as millions of innocent victims? The answer lies at two levels of closely interconnected analysis. The subject of this discussion is nothing less than the causes of war, an area of enquiry upon which immense scholarly effort has been expended over the past hundred years, though to no very useful consequence, alas. The causes of individual wars are researchable, but the causes of war as the target of assault by a general theory of war are not. Each case is too richly individual. But, that is not to argue that each case of war causation lacks qualities common to them all. To state the empirically founded general theory behind Maxim 29 directly, bad times always return eventually because we are human and our human nature has not changed in 2,500 years. We are genetically programmed to be motivated to fight for what the Athenian general Thucydides identified in ca. 400 BC as one or more of three principal very broad reasons: fear, honor, and interest.<sup>2</sup> Those are what all wars, regular and irregular, high technology and low, are about. And they are about them because human security affairs, individual or collective for communities, are conducted by humans, of course. If this sounds simple, it is. But it is not simplistic. Any and every conflict can be analyzed with reference to the Thucydidian triad. Would-be benign transformers should spend less time and effort trying to build institutions and establish norms of better behavior. Instead, pragmatic thought about the uses that might be made of a protracted effort to arrest the good times–bad times cycle with the Greek's profound, simple seeming insight, might register some useful gains for world order.

The strategist is almost by definition a pessimist, at least a realist in the sense that he or she is basically skeptical to the point of disbelief in the feasibility of lasting progress in human security affairs. But if one lowers one's sights and approaches the good times–bad times historical cycle pragmatically, two kinds of

success are attainable. A strategist can, indeed should be, optimistic, first, over the possibility of delaying the onset of the next severely troubled era. Second, it ought to be possible to raise the prospect of that next period of bad times being nowhere near as bad as it could be. Those objectives will sound unduly modest to many of a transformist persuasion. Yet, in practice, success in the two respects cited could have profoundly benign consequences. Of course, the fundamental weakness in this approach is that it rests on the assumption that bad times return. We strategists take Maxim 29 to be a proven fact of inestimable unwelcome significance, which is why it is among this body of items of cannon lore. Those who cannot accept the history, logic, and prediction of Maxim 29 are, ipso facto, rejecting strategic thinking and its reading of 2,500 years of human experience.

Technologies come and go, but the primitive endures . . .

In this age of technological miracles, our military needs to study mankind.

Ralph Peters, 1999<sup>3</sup>

# Maxim 30

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## There Are Always Thugs, Villains, Rogues, and Fools Out There, as Well Some in Here, Who Mean Us Harm

In war, they send for the hard men and bury the consequences wholesale.  
Dennis Showalter, 2005<sup>4</sup>

Maxim 30 provides a colorful reminder of the fact that many of the world's political and military leaders, or leading elites, bear little relation to the quality of person dominant in most textbooks on international relations and strategic and security studies. This maxim thickens the emphasis placed in these essays upon the human dimension to war, peace, and security. The business of international security is conducted, as it has always been, by people of all personality types and with every character flaw imaginable. Those so flawed as to be obviously dangerous both at home and to others abroad generally self-destruct or are forcibly removed by alarmed subordinates. But such leaders can cause tremendous harm before they are put down by one means or another. This maxim is a necessary reminder of the variety of human actors on the global strategy and security stage. It has significant implications for policy and strategy choices (see the discussion of prudence in the essay on Maxim 32).

Transcultural empathy is notoriously difficult to achieve.<sup>5</sup> Especially is this so when the alien culture in question obviously tolerates, even rewards, behavior that Western liberal democracies deem venal, brutal, or otherwise wholly unacceptable on ethical grounds. Many undoubtedly corrupt foreign leaders run countries wherein corruption is not only rife, it is systematized, quite normal, and is expected by all. However, as a pragmatist the western strategist is not interested in the radical moral improvement of alien societies and their modes of governance, unless, that is, their bad behavior is judged a threat to our national or to international security.

The United States has not been short of presidents who did not match up to the highest standards of political or personal probity. But it is almost certainly reliably true that a democratic system of government which is investigated permanently



by an uncensored media could not be led, at least not for long, by genuine thugs, villains, and rogues, though fools are another matter entirely. Alas, much of the world is not blessed with a political system that provides potent checks and balances to curb either dysfunctional or morally outrageous leadership. Britain's new Labour Government announced soon after its election in 1997 that it would pursue an ethical foreign policy. This meant that it would be willing to intervene abroad to save persecuted people from the tyranny, and worse, of their own government. Kosovo in 1999 was a classic example of this policy in action. What was not explained in the speeches that outlined the domestically popular policy criteria and duty was that Britain would take action only when the evil doers were weak and could be expected to be taught the errors of their ways quite cheaply. Thuggish Russian behavior in Chechnya was never on the British ethical foreign policy agenda, any more than was brutal Chinese treatment of domestic critics.

9/11, 2001, served to remind many western commentators, and others who were inclined to adopt a high moral tone, that not all thugs, villains, and rogues are enemies of regional and world order. In the first place, simply as a practical matter, there are too many such people, controlling too many countries of importance to us, for any attitude other than tolerance to be sensible. In fact, thugs and villains are described in quite other ways when their services are found necessary for our security. One thinks immediately of Pakistan, as well as Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The strategist must deal with the world as it is. He or she should reject tasks that are both impossible to perform and are of little, if any, and possibly even negative, worth for our security. To adapt a famous cynical saying of President Harry Truman, the people who fit the description in this maxim may well be "our thugs, villains, rogues, and fools." Ethicists will condemn collaboration with morally objectionable foreign polities, but we have no practical choice other than to work for security with the human material available. Just so long, that is, as we remember at all times that the behavior of our friends and allies of convenience is directed by a somewhat different weighting in the mix of motives to that acceptable in our society.

By far the most dangerous political leader in the small gallery presented in Maxim 30 is the fool. Fools are far more likely to commit errors of a kind that result in wars or at least a high measure of regional disorder, than are thugs, villains, and rogues. The triad just cited may be rational statespersons, which is to say people who purposefully seek to relate means to ends. In addition they may well function strategically, which is more than can be said for all of the recent political leaders in the Atlantic Alliance. The strategist is challenged severely when the troublemaker is an uneducable fool. Deterrence could be irrelevant in such a case, because the foolish foreign leader may not believe in the latent or explicit threats we issue, or, just possibly, may not care whether or not we execute them. For a classic historical example of a dangerous fool in a position to do untold damage to international security, one can cite the case of Kaiser Wilhelm II of Imperial Germany. Alone, he was not responsible for World War I. But,

undoubtedly, in the years preceding the catastrophe, and then during the crisis itself in July 1914, the Kaiser personally had a wholly destabilizing effect upon European security. And the problem was not only that his desire for a place in the sun for Germany was vague but menacing. The real difficulty was that he was a fool. He made mistakes because of ignorance and, even more, because of personality pathologies. Unfortunately, the array of world leaders always contain some thugs, villains, rogues, and fools.

Why does this matter? It can be difficult for western liberals, in particular, to deal constructively with the representative of foreign cultures who are not only educated into the observance of alien standards of public and private behavior, but who also bring their personal characteristics to the bargaining table. The strategist knows that he or she will not always be seeking to achieve strategic effect by coercing or bribing wholly rational, let alone reasonable, people. In addition, some political and military leaders will be alcoholics, regular drug takers, clinically paranoid, or manic depressive, among a host of maladies. This is the real world of strategic history. This is the world with which these maxims must equip liberal westerners to cope. Strategic history has never been, is not, and will never be, a morality tale (see Maxim 33).

Nice guys finish last.

Popular American saying

# Maxim 31

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## Superthreats Do Appear

The bane of stable international systems is their near total inability to envision mortal challenge.

Henry Kissinger, 1994<sup>6</sup>

Threats, dangers, risks are standard fare in the offerings from professional strategists to politicians and the public. There is a sense in which threat and peril is our business, much as disease is the business of the medical profession. But the superthreats of Maxim 31 are threats far beyond the ordinary. They are akin to the pandemic. Both security superthreats and pandemics are known to occur, but they do so only rarely. Indeed, they happen so rarely that people forget just how different they are from normal threats and normal outbreaks of infectious diseases. Moreover, the superthreat may well not announce itself as such until its behavior reveals even to the most skeptical among us that this particular phenomenon truly is different from the norm.

What is a superthreat? There is no literature or theory extant to help us. We are obliged to resort to common sense and historical experience. Threats, one might object, are a matter of perception and interpretation. One person's threat is another's (a) plea for help, (b) prelude to negotiation, or (c) strong suggestion that our policy could be deemed aggressive. This strategist rejects such relativist sophistry, at least as a general rule. Threats, though necessarily to a degree subjective, do not simply exist in the eyes of the beholder. They do have objective features that can be heard, photographed, and monitored in action. It is useful to conceive of a spectrum of intensity of threat. The spectrum ranges from some slight menace to a minor interest of the polity, all the way to a threat to the polity's physical or political, or both, existence. While the threat spectrum is in theory continuous, in practice it has discontinuities. For the limited purpose of this discussion of Maxim 31, it suffices to assert that at the high danger end of the spectrum there is a category

of threats of such extraordinary menace that the imprecise, but graphic, descriptor *super*, is appropriate. Pick your preferred adjective. The point to emphasize is that there are normal and there are, very, very rarely, abnormal threats. The very rarity of the superthreat is a good part of the problem in both recognizing it for what it is, and then in attempting to cope with such an unfamiliar class of challenge.

History casts some much-needed light on the superthreat phenomenon. The Huns in the fourth and fifth centuries AD were just such a threat. By their actions, directly and indirectly, they set in train the course of strategic events that brought the Western Roman Empire to a close.<sup>7</sup> Genghis Khan's Mongols in the thirteenth century had superthreat potential, though they were constrained both by domestic politics and, scarcely less notably, by logistics. Horse armies eat a lot of grass. Grass grows seasonally and is highly irregular in its extensive availability in peninsular Europe. The Mongols were extraordinarily formidable, but once they approached central Europe, with its mountains and forests, they were out of their natural element.<sup>8</sup>

More recently, the First French Republic and then Napoleon's French Empire were both superthreats to the existing international order. Initially, the menace was perceived to be ideological and political as well as military, but the threat rapidly took the familiar form of domination by conquest. France's enemies, which included virtually the whole of Europe, came to realize, belatedly, that the French threat was effectively boundless. This was fatal for any prospect of a lasting peace. By 1814, Europe appreciated that diplomatic business could not be conducted with Napoleon. His word was worthless. Every peace treaty was broken, every period of peace was but a time of preparation for the next French lunge for gain and glory. So, Napoleonic France had to be put down.<sup>9</sup>

More recent still, Nazi Germany virtually defines what Maxim 31 means by a superthreat. It was both exceptionally powerful among states, and it was led by a person who, in common with Napoleon, accepted no practical limits to his ambition. Again, diplomatic business could not be done with Adolf Hitler, save as a matter of temporary tactical expediency. He respected no promises given, no treaties signed, indeed he respected nothing except his vision of a Europe dominated by a monoethnic, monocultural Aryan Germanic superstate.

For a final historical illustration, the emergence of al Qaeda in the 1990s, and its propaganda of the misdeed on September 11, 2001, was a new character of terrorism. Violent Islamic fundamentalism has a history as old as the religion itself, but in modern times nothing like al Qaeda had wrought mayhem, certainly not on a world stage. It is more likely than not that al Qaeda's superstatus will not long endure. It has several seriously debilitating weaknesses.<sup>10</sup> But, there is no denying the fact that in the wake of 9/11 al Qaeda came to define what one means by a superthreat.

In order to bring some rigor into the meaning of Maxim 31, it is helpful to specify criteria for a superthreat. Such a threat (1) must be uniquely substantial in

the contemporary metrics of menace, (2) must appear as a historical discontinuity, even if it emerges only gradually, (3) must be unfamiliar in character to those who conduct normal security business, and (4) must pose a threat not just to the stability of the current international system, but also to the very existence of that system. Overall, the superthreat comprises both quantity and quality. It is capability times intention, as are all threats. The trouble is that capability does not always speak for itself. A program of rearmament need not betoken aggressive purposes. Despite some of the simplistic nostrums of arms control, arms are not the challenge. It is the people and the politics behind the arms that are all important.

Maxim 31 is noteworthy because it alerts us to the historical reality of a recurrent, though fortunately rare, class of danger. States do not prepare against the appearance of a superthreat. Why not? Because by its nature the superthreat is so unusual that responsible and respectable officials and politicians, people who take pride in the soundness of their judgments, are all but programmed to dismiss the possibility. As a rare historical event, the superthreat almost defies prediction. From a pragmatic point of view, even if a case can be made for the probable imminence of a superthreat, the consequences of being wrong are likely to be self-detering.

Nothing is certain until it actually occurs. There is always some reason to hope that what could prove to be a superthreat is really nothing of the kind. Perhaps it will go away. Perhaps someone else will deal with it. The superthreat spotter, if in a position to move policy in step with his or her strong suspicions, is trapped by the logic of the situation. After all, once one has decided that a superthreat is approaching, one can hardly return to business as usual. There is a moral as well as a practical obligation to do something about the anticipated danger. And since that danger is in the super category, the necessary action can hardly be other than profoundly disruptive, socially and politically, as well as exceptionally expensive. And, lest we forget, there is always the possibility that one is wrong. Or, there is the possibility that one would be wrong, but that as a direct consequence of sounding the tocsin, a superthreat is in fact conjured into being as the object of suspicion reacts to its designated status as supermenace. It is not hard to appreciate why the people who conduct national and international security affairs, who deal with normal problems in normal ways, are powerfully disinclined to sound the alarm. If one shouts that the barbarians are coming, one is obliged to try to do something about it.

Superthreats do not usually reveal their true character until it is too late for normal statecraft to take effective preventive measures. It follows that the forces of international order are condemned to play catch up, if they can. So it was with Nazi Germany, and the result was touch and go until the Summer of 1943. So it is also with al Qaeda and its violent associates. The threat grew, matured, and made itself unmistakably manifest, well before Western statecraft was willing to believe what some of its intelligence agencies were trying to tell it. International order and

civilized values are perpetually at risk to the systemic menace that is not defined as such until far too later. There is no good reason to believe that statecraft will be any more prescient and effective in coping with the superthreat in the future than it has been in the past. We stand warned. Heed Maxim 31.

The peaceful and tolerant democracies of Western Europe were utterly baffled by the fanatics of Germany.

Gregor Dallas, 2005<sup>11</sup>

# Maxim 32

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## Prudence Is the Supreme Virtue in Statecraft and Strategy

To be prudent is to act in accordance with the particular situation and the concrete data, and not in accordance with some system or out of passive obedience to a norm or pseudo-norm; it is to prefer the limitation of violence to the punishment of the presumably guilty party or to a so-called absolute justice, it is to establish concrete accessible objectives conforming to the secular law of international relations and not to limitless and perhaps meaningless objectives, such as a “world safe for democracy” or a “world from which power politics will have disappeared.”

Raymond Aron, 1966<sup>12</sup>

A prudent person is one who is careful to avoid undesired consequences from behavior. Following the logic of that dictionary definition, the prudent Strategic Person is exactly who one needs to be on the receiving end of a deterrent message. Modern deterrence theory, indeed the whole corpus of modern strategic theory as it was invented and developed in the 1950s and 1960s, postulated strategic behavior that would be prudent. Not unreasonably, prudence and rationality were equated.

Maxim 32 expresses the core of the strategist’s creed, though certainly not the core of the strategist’s knowledge of the history of statecraft and strategy. French philosopher and sociologist, Raymond Aron, contrasted prudence with “idealist illusion.” The problem with idealist illusion is that it does not work. Statesmen build sandcastles instead of robust institutions, and they confuse the sincerity and nobility of their intentions with that which is feasible. That particular pathology afflicts statesmen of all persuasions. Adolf Hitler imprudently confused the somewhat vague objectives pursued by his will with what was possible. Admittedly, determination and strength of will can be vital, but there are goals that even a modestly prudent risk aversion warn to be well out of reach.

The prudent strategist is alarmed by a policymaker who is so fixated upon desirable goals and their anticipated benefits that risks are not properly assessed.

This is a familiar phenomenon. Maxim 32 is relevant to a great deal of statecraft, though the focus here, of course, is on the military-strategic. One might think that this maxim is so obvious as scarcely to need elevation and celebration. Not so. The sense in the maxim is violated in practice all the time and, occasionally, such violation has lethal consequences for international political stability, order, and peace.

The armed forces of some countries have careful personality reliability tests for people whose military responsibilities offer scope for truly dangerous deviant behavior. People involved in the care, maintenance, and contingent operational delivery of nuclear weapons are prime candidates for psychological and other medical tests, for an obvious example. However, politicians are not subject to the personality checks that can be routine for the military. This author has expanded Maxim 32 to embrace the strategist as well as the statesman. The latter was the subject of Aron's dictum. My concern, though, is far more with the policymaker than it is with the strategist. Politicians do not have to jump the same kind of fences as do soldiers to progress in their careers. But, one needs to be careful to note that there are several routes to the top of the greasy poles in politics and the military. Many countries do not share the Anglo-American tradition of an apolitical military profession. A prudent soldier probably would not launch a coup, thereby short-circuiting the normal promotion mechanism, unless, of course, he had excellent reason to believe that he was about to be purged. For example, one thinks of General Pervez Musharraf, the dictator of Pakistan.

The reason why Maxim 32 is so important is both because it carries a truth that is insufficiently recognized and because that lack can have dire consequences. Clausewitz famously warned of the uncertainty and risks of war; indeed he likened war to a game of cards.<sup>13</sup> War is the realm of chance, so the great man claims all too persuasively. We know that statesmen and strategists should be prudent. That is to say they should be risk-averse, especially in matters of war and peace and particularly in situations that have a powder trail leading to nuclear arsenals. But, are they risk-averse? Are they, in fact, right across the spectrum from being all but paralyzed by risk to being a risk junkie, a leader who thrives on excitement and is a gambler by nature. It has long been believed, hoped perhaps, that the advent of nuclear weapon status has a sobering effect on the statecraft of countries and their leaders. Many nightmarish predictions of the consequences of Chinese, Israeli, Indian, and Pakistani nuclear arsenals have been shown by history to have been considerably exaggerated, thus far.

Western strategists concluded many years ago that, contrary to fears early in the nuclear age, nuclear weapons have political utility only as instruments for defense. This is a comforting conclusion. One hopes it is well founded. A small but potentially deadly chink in the logic is that an imprudent nuclear-armed political leader might genuinely fear for the security of his regime and, as a consequence, strike preventively for impeccably defensive reasons. When one considers strategic history, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that probably more wars have been



begun out of fear and anxiety, than out of lust for gain. Yet again, we must recall Thucydides, with his judgment that the principal motives in statecraft and for war, are “fear, honor, and interest.”

Directly stated, imprudent policymakers are dangerous. If they happen to command nuclear weapons, they are likely to be dangerous to a historically exceptional degree. Imprudent strategists are also dangerous, though the extent of their potential for harm should be disciplined both by operational, tactical, and logistic feasibility, and by the political direction to which they ought to be subject. Note the necessary conditionality in that statement. Since nuclear proliferation is unstoppable, as North Korea has demonstrated recently and as Iran will demonstrate before many years have passed, Maxim 32 becomes ever more salient to statecraft. Western strategic theorists and defense analysts, people like this author, are so used to the extreme care and caution with which nuclear weapons are both handled physically and treated doctrinally and strategically, that any other model of nuclear-armed behavior is utterly alien. But, as nuclear weapons spread to countries with regimes that are culturally as well as politically impenetrable to one’s confident assessment, there will be no basis for assuming that our standard of prudence for the nuclear-armed must be the only one. It is a frightening thought.

We expect statesmen to be prudently risk-averse, especially once they are nuclear-armed. But, what if a new proliferant is led by a political adventurer, or perhaps a political or religious fanatic who is not at all risk-averse. Such a person may be sufficiently intelligent and well informed as to have noticed that the world community, that idealist fiction, is reluctant in the extreme to take action against those who are nuclear-armed. The nuclear-armed gambler, bent on wielding the weapon as a menace for gain, might even believe with some justification that everybody else’s extreme nuclear risk-aversion, translates his or her exciting behavior into prudent measures.

One must take heed of this maxim, lest one forgets that world politics is not run by uniformly prudent people. The more important the role of deterrence in one’s strategy, the more vital is it to recognize the wide variety of individual human, and group, attitudes toward risk.

We have not contrasted *prudence* and *idealism*, but prudence and idealist illusion, whether that illusion is juridical or ideological.

Raymond Aron, 1966<sup>14</sup>

# Maxim 33

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## Strategic History Punishes Good Intentions

Strategic studies seeks to present an amoral analysis of military affairs. By doing so, we can objectively assess actions and/or individuals that as moral beings may cause us concern. In the search for best practice in strategic affairs we can, and should, be able to disentangle moral judgements from strategic ones.

David J. Lonsdale, 2004<sup>15</sup>

Contrary to appearances, perhaps, Maxim 33 does not claim that moral issues are unimportant. A moral advantage can prove decisive in war. What Maxim 33 asserts indirectly with high confidence is that statecraft should not be guided primarily, or even significantly, by a desire to do the right thing in moral terms. When that occurs, the strategist is likely to be condemned to attempt a mission impossible. The moral compass is important, but it cannot be trusted to chart a prudent course for policy and strategy. Why not? Because strategy, as we keep emphasizing, is quintessentially a pragmatic undertaking. The strategist must match means with ends and is obliged to focus upon consequences. Policy decisions that turn upon the force of the moral argument for action, or perhaps upon the force of public opinion, inherently are detached from strategic reasoning. A policy driven by moral outrage is always at risk of capture by rabble-raising opinion leaders, who can conjure up an endless series of outrages of the week. If one were serious about setting the world to rights, one would be condemned both to endless warfare as well to humiliating failure. And the certain consequence of such failure would be a public reaction of never again.

Politics, domestic and international, is not a morality tale. Politics is about power: who has it, how to get it and keep it, and what to do with it. It is not about doing good or being right in some ethical sense. States do not often go to war for moral reasons. Statesmen are obliged to protect the vital interests of their

community, and those interests do not include the enforcement of justice, or the punishment of evil, both as culturally determined, naturally. The world is awash with injustice. Brutal regimes exist aplenty and they always will. If a government declares that it intends to pursue an ethical foreign policy, as did the new Labour Government of Tony Blair in Britain when it came into office in 1997, it sounds, and indeed is, naïve and is certain to be guilty of hypocrisy.

No matter how astrategic an ethical foreign policy may aspire to be, it is only through strategy that noble aspirations to do good can be translated into effective action. In other words, strategy is the necessary bridge between policy and military power, whatever the policy motives may be. Strategy has to be a practical project. There is a sense in which most, if not quite all, people have what they could defend as good intentions. But, those intentions are simply empty rhetoric pending a strategic appreciation. What can be done to realize the intentions of a morally guided policy? When one descends from windy declarations of the desirable to the much more challenging realm of feasibility analysis, the zone wherein ends are connected purposefully to means, one is in the hands of the strategist: at least one ought to be. States are quite capable of embarking upon quixotic ventures, crusades, for virtue as they define it, regardless of strategic calculation.<sup>16</sup>

Maxim 33 is a warning against the peril that lurks in the ever present moral dimension to political, and even strategic, debate. This strategist can attest from personal experience that it is all but impossible for strategy and ethics to engage in a meaningful dialogue. The ethicist and the strategist inhabit two different worlds, hold to different fundamental assumptions, and lack sufficient common ground to be able to communicate intelligently with each other. A moral argument cannot be defeated by a strategic one. All that a strategist can do is to point out that what the policymaker sees as a moral imperative for action must be doomed to fail in practice. Moral crusaders are dangerous. There are many sources of moral authority upon which the crusading personality can call. Religion, international law, and human rights are prominent among them. It is perhaps sad, but it is true, to have to claim that no polity's truly vital interests are endangered by moral turpitude abroad. There may be an occasional exception to that generalization, there usually is. But, the odd exception proves the rule. Hard-headed statecraft cannot afford to expend scarce resources in order to advance national interests that must be classified as belonging strictly in the lowest tier of significance. To clarify, there are four categories of national interests: (1) survival interests, (2) vital interests, (3) major interests, and (4) other interests. Only categories one and two have to be protected by military means. Category three might occasionally warrant a modest military effort; while category four, virtually by definition, hardly ever should be the cause of muscular statecraft.

Statecraft and strategy is surrounded by much noise and some fury from public debate. And that debate frequently is suffused with moral judgments. But, statesmen and strategists have to function as consequentialists, they must calculate and

compare as best they are able the probable benefit of action in relation to its estimated costs.<sup>17</sup> Also, the educated strategist knows that war is the realm of chance and that the virtue of one's cause offers no protection against disaster.

The key problem to which Maxim 33 refers, albeit not explicitly, is that moral imperatives are inherently innocent of strategic content. Moreover, their presumed virtues are apt to sideline strategic assessment. In practice, even naïve do-gooders have no choice other than to bow to strategic logic. At least, one asserts that as a general truth while recognizing that exceptions do occur. Recall Maxim 21 on the impossible being impossible. One can never wholly discount the potency of self-deception. Politicians who are tough and even cynical in their domestic practices are capable of believing that even though they cannot remake their own society they can reform and transform countries, even regions, abroad.

Once a politician has been captured by a powerful idea for the betterment of the human race, he or she is likely to be less than friendly to strategic advice which points out the impracticality of taking action to advance that idea in practice. Apparent hypocrisy is inevitable. Military intervention for humanitarian reasons, for example, is advocated, and even undertaken, in failed states or in states that are too weak to resist. But, there is no humanitarian intervention in Chechnya to discipline Russian oppression, and one should not hold one's breath waiting for anyone to intervene in Tibet on behalf of a culture that Beijing is striving hard to eliminate. In other worlds, in practice even sincere moralists find that they are compelled to restrict their crusading to easy victims. In moral terms, such a pragmatic discriminator is indefensible.

The moral crusader is a menace. He or she simply does not understand how international politics works. Every polity, bar none, invokes moral arguments when they are useful. But, there are few instances in history worthy of note when important decisions on war and peace were taken primarily for moral reasons. Motives are always mixed. For example, medieval historians today are busily debating the unanswerable question of how significant was the religious motive among the European crusaders? Similarly, one can dispute the moral versus the strategic motives that led the United States to declare war in 1917.

Despite protestations of virtue, which are never in short supply, statesmen always have political and strategic impulses for action as well as moral ones. However, Maxim 33 is useful because it reminds us that cynics can be misled when they assume that policymakers take decisions for typical reasons of state, and then decorate those decisions with moral justification. From time to time the impulse to take action is essentially moral, in that it reflects the strong moral beliefs of key people and the political and strategic reasons advanced are the cover story.

Moral impulse, ethical imperatives, a commitment to spread virtue; these are dangerous phenomena. If undisciplined by strategic calculation and behavior they are more than just dangerous, they are well nigh certain to lead to disaster. To repeat, statecraft and strategy are not a morality tale. Right does not triumph over

might because it is right. It should, but 2,500 years of accessible history tells us unequivocally that it does not. History also tells us that crusaders tend to be so impressed with the merit in their moral mission and in their virtue in its pursuit that they can be all but indifferent to the means that they employ. If the ends are transcendently desirable, any and all means will be sanctified thereby. The so-called conviction politicians are a threat to stability and good, if sometimes unjust, order, and therefore to peace.

Some view strategic analysis as a method for legitimating conflict or for the justification of immoral conclusions rather than as a technique for analyzing a subject matter.

Morton A. Kaplan, 1973<sup>18</sup>

# Maxim 34

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## Defense Costs Are Certain, but Security Benefits Are Uncertain and Arguable

Foreign intentions provide us cues for our defense efforts only when they are clear-cut and either conspicuously friendly or plainly warlike.

Bernard Brodie, 1959<sup>19</sup>

The quotations that bookend this essay are borrowed gratefully from an outstanding chapter in an outstanding book by the greatest American strategic thinker of the twentieth century. In his 1959 classic, *Strategy in the Missile Age*, Bernard Brodie went to considerable trouble to remind his readers that strategy is an economic subject. It is not only an economic subject, of course, but if the economic story cannot sustain the preferred strategy, the strategy must be amended or abandoned. Thus far in these essays care has been taken to lead the argument with Clausewitzian logic. Politics is master and military power is servant. However, politics is only the master of strategy it can afford. And how much it can afford is both an economic and a political question. A country as wealthy as the United States is in the habit of proclaiming that it can and will afford whatever is necessary for national security. But, how much is that? And how can one know? Maxim 34 is a necessary reminder that the intellectually tidy world of strategic theory and defense analysis is normally beset by profound uncertainties. Threats are uncertain and so are the most appropriate responses. This maxim reminds us that strategy's pragmatic nature, a feature to which reference has been made several times already extends to its economic feasibility.

Strategic ideas and defense analysis ultimately find themselves embedded in plans and military capabilities and then will be applied, or misapplied, for deterrence or in actual warfare. But, between ideas and capabilities there is fairly hostile jungle to traverse. This jungle is called by several names, but the policy process or the defense budgetary process will suffice for our purpose. The point is that the rational world of the strategist is dominated in practice, in a democracy at least, by the astrategic machinations of domestic politics. When it comes to the defense

budget, neither the executive nor the legislative branches of government function with their eye on the ball of strategy. Instead, defense expenditure is keyed to almost every influence other than the strategic. Institutional clout, regional political influence, fashionable nostrums but not strategy. This is a fact, not really a complaint.

It is hard to develop a coherent strategy if a coherent policy is lacking. And, to be fair, it is difficult to decide upon a coherent policy if the information necessary for the construction of such a policy is missing. Brodie's apposite words in the quotation above made the point. Only when threats are unmistakably present or absent can one develop a particular defense policy and strategy with high confidence. When threats are potential rather than realized, or, as with transnational terrorism, do not slot neatly into a category that can be met principally by military power, the strategist is in trouble. And that trouble is both professionally substantive and domestically political.

It is helpful to step back briefly from some of the intellectually strategic argument in order to remind ourselves of a fact of democratic political life so basic that we strategists have been known to neglect it. Specifically, everything that consumes the attention of the strategist can only work pragmatically if, somehow, it finds its way into the defense budget. Of course, different countries have policy processes that are distinctive in detail. Nonetheless, every polity faces an identical challenge. It has to decide year by year, or on some rolling cycle of perhaps three or five years, how much to spend on defense. In time of total war the challenge goes away. The country spends everything it has, and in addition a great deal that it has not, so that it can survive. But, for most countries, most of the time, there is no reliable way to determine how much should be spent. That is a fact. It happens to be a fact, though, which needs to be concealed from as many people as possible. After all, if one is proposing to spend, say, \$527 billion in fiscal year 2007, there is a political and perhaps a moral obligation to spend it wisely. But, what is wise? And how can one know? What everyone knows is that officials are requesting \$527 billion. That is certain. The other side of the ledger, the benefits expected to accrue, is necessarily profoundly vague.

Maxim 34 points to a vital fact. The dice are loaded against prudent defense provision. Since all humans engage in varieties of cost-benefit analysis, no matter how crudely, the officials that defend the budget present a certainty of economic pain and a deep uncertainty of security benefit. They are literally unable to demonstrate that any particular benefit assuredly must flow from the expenditure on defense functions. Since many people are insufficiently aware of the extent to which defense planning has to be an exercise in guesswork, officials are almost obliged to pretend to a knowledge that they cannot have. If one goes before a congressional committee in order to ask for \$527 billion in defense outlays, the burden of proof is squarely on one's shoulders. Truly honest testimony would probably be unwise. The facts are that the country has to have a defense establishment, and that that establishment comprises a guess as to what should be adequate to meet the

demands placed upon it by foreign policy. Sophisticated methodologies of defense analysis abound.<sup>20</sup> But, although officials do their best to turn the art of defense preparation and strategy into a quantifiable science, if only to reassure themselves, the fact of an irreducible ignorance about the future cannot be totally hidden.

Unfortunately for confident defense analysis, security cannot be purchased directly. In common with love, security is a feeling, it is a perception. It is also an objective condition, but there is no way of gauging that reliably. Furthermore, to risk adding undue complexity, a society needs to discover how much insecurity it is willing to tolerate. Security and insecurity coexist on a seamless spectrum. A country can learn to live with more insecurity. By spending a lot more money on defense it may try to reassure itself that it has behaved as prudently as possible, but there can be no certainty that that expenditure will reap a security harvest.

More often than not, a defense budget functions like an insurance policy. A heavily taxed society is likely to be insufficiently grateful that it has not needed to collect on the policy. But, the very fact of noncollection inspires skeptics to question the value for money in the defense budget. “What has our ICBM force done for us recently?” —is the kind of challenge that can be difficult to meet when it is issued by a person who is not empathetic to the lessons of strategic history. Or, for a contemporary British defense issue, how does a British strategist persuade his society’s legislators that Britain will be more secure in the twenty-first century with, rather than without, a timely replacement for the *Trident* nuclear missile force?

The political playing field is not, and cannot be, level for arguments about the burdens of defense expenditure. The costs are certain, indeed they are habitually underestimated, while the benefits to security are inalienably problematic.

Strategy wears a dollar sign.

Bernard Brodie, 1959<sup>21</sup>



# Maxim 35

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## Arms Can Be Controlled, but Not by Arms Control

The permanent paradox of arms control is that it is either impossible or unimportant.

George F. Will, 1990<sup>22</sup>

With this maxim I break ranks with many, probably with most, of my fellow strategists. Since I published a book in 1992 with the unsubtle and uncompromising title, *House of Cards: Why Arms Control Must Fail*, there has been ample time for wiser colleagues to persuade me of the error of my conviction.<sup>23</sup> They have failed to do so. This does not mean that my maxim is sound, but it does suggest quite strongly that it well may be. If it is not, the reasons for its falsity, logical or empirical, have yet to be advanced to my satisfaction.

Maxim 35 is supported abundantly both by strategic and political logic and by historical evidence. It means that the feasibility of arms control is determined by its political context. That is hardly a startling point, since preparation for war and warfare itself must be an expression of political intention. The maxim draws the obvious conclusion that states in conflict, or who anticipate being in conflict, will not agree to limit their armaments. In contrast, when states cease to fear the outbreak of war, indeed when some approximation to a political peace emerges, agreements to control arms suddenly become negotiable. The entire modern history of efforts to control armaments by negotiated agreement, from the 1920s to the present, supports the claim in Maxim 35. For example, during the Cold War arms limitation agreements that actually would have limited arms in significant ways were impossible to negotiate. The reason was because both superpowers treated the SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) and then START (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks) processes as instruments of competitive endeavor. The ABM Treaty of 1972 was an apparent exception to the logic of Maxim 35, but we know for certain today what some of us suspected at the time. The Soviet Union agreed to prohibit the deployment of nationwide antimissile defense because it was aware

that it was far behind in the technological competition to develop such weapons. In other words, Moscow signed the ABM Treaty in 1972 in order to slow down or arrest American progress in the ABM field.<sup>24</sup>

During the interwar years, disarmament was feasible and was achieved when it was not needed, at the Washington Conference on the Limitation of Naval Arms in 1921–1922. With great difficulty, the terms of the naval arms control regime were extended beyond capital ships with the London Treaty of 1930. But, as the political climate deteriorated sharply in the 1930s, the structure of negotiated limitation collapsed. Japan announced in 1934 that it would leave the regime in 1936. Also, the great and long anticipated World Conference on Disarmament of 1932–1934, organized under League of Nations auspices and promised since 1919, proved a complete failure. The new Nazi Germany promptly left the Conference and the League in 1933.

The logic of Maxim 35 is inexorable and inescapable as well as being verified by an abundance of uncontradicted historical evidence. As journalist George F. Will expressed the matter in the words quoted at the head of this essay, arms control and disarmament is either unimportant or impossible to secure. It is necessary to go back to basics in order to grasp why Maxim 35 has to be true. What the maxim claims, in effect, is that the whole arms control and disarmament enterprise, an effort that has consumed countless hours of effort by thousands of people since 1919, has been utterly futile. Moreover, it had to be futile. It could not possibly succeed.

If arms control is the forlorn hope that Maxim 35 asserts, why has it survived for so long in the policies of governments, the schemes of experts, and the hopes of well meaning people? Can so many people have been wrong? Alas, the answer is yes, they have been in error. But, wherein lies the error? In fact there are two layers of mistakes that render arms control, and disarmament—the latter being the generic term favored prior to the late 1950s—futile, but not altogether harmless.

First, the theory of arms control depends for its presumed relevance to peace and security upon a fundamentally flawed understanding of the causes of war. Thucydides specified “fear, honor, and interest,” not “fear, honor, interest, and armaments.” Why do wars occur? Unless one has a persuasive empirically founded theory to answer this question and unless that theory allots a significant role to armaments, disarmament and arms control must be addressing the wrong issue. If wars are caused by fear, honor, and interest, it has to be the case that arms are simply an expression of those concerns. Arms are a symptom of political hostility, they are not its cause. One need not be a trained logician in order to appreciate that armaments, including a competition in armaments, are a dependent variable. They depend upon the temperature of the political context of interstate relations. In short, if one seeks to abolish, or at least reduce the incidence of, war, the only useful target for assault are the political beliefs and policies that generate competitive armaments not the weapons themselves.

Second, even if arms control and disarmament addressed a sound theory of war causation, which, as we have shown, it does not, it suffers fatally from a second layer of fallacies internal to its own logic. The modern theory of arms control, as contrasted with the ancient idea of disarmament, was invented, literally, on an airport bench by Thomas C. Schelling in the late 1950s.<sup>25</sup> The new theory was elegant, persuasive, and wrong. This was unfortunate because it has been accepted worldwide as authoritative. A global arms control community was created, and although arms control itself has been close to a practical irrelevance the community of its devotees has prospered mightily. The elegance of Schelling's logic was breathtaking in its simplicity. The function of arms control is to secure some measures of control over the armaments of potential enemies. This was a radical proposition. It eschewed the old and discredited notion of disarmament. Instead, nuclear-age arms control would achieve limited technical agreements between antagonistic states for the purpose of rendering their competition and rivalry somewhat safer.

Unfortunately, the logic of the theory was wrong. It was arguably correct in claiming that enemies or potential enemies were the states in need of arms control. At least, it would be correct were arms an important cause of war, which they are not. But, the theory simply ignored the empirical, logical, and common sense point that the state pairs in need of arms control medicine or surgery are unable to achieve it precisely because they need it. And the more urgent the presumed need for an arms control dampener upon an interstate rivalry, the more difficult it must be to attain. So, the trouble with the theory of arms control is that it is incorrect. Moreover, it is demonstrably wrong from the historical experience of every decade since the 1920s. In the immortal words of Colonel Charles E. Callwell, writing in 1906, and already quoted in this book: "Theory cannot be accepted as conclusive when practice points the other way."

To conclude on a positive note, arms can be controlled. Indeed, they are controlled effectively in most places most of the time, though not by negotiated measures of arms control or as a result of the informal influence of an arms control process. In historical practice, arms are controlled by policy, strategy, economics, and, let us not forget, by calculation of consequences. In other words, arms can be controlled by the workings of deterrence.<sup>26</sup> Maxim 35 affirms the need to, as well as the feasibility of, controlling arms, but it directs us not to seek assistance from the means and methods of arms control. To the contestable degree to which arms themselves are a problem for order, peace, and security, the answer, if such is possible, lies in politics. It is the cause that has to be addressed, not the symptom.

It is the greatest possible mistake to mix up disarmament with peace. When you have peace you will have disarmament.

Winston S. Churchill, 1934<sup>27</sup>



# Part V

## **History and the Future**



# Maxim 36

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## Nothing of Real Importance Changes: Modern History Is Not Modern

There is no “modern” world. As future crises arrive in steep waves, our leaders will realize that the world is not “modern” or “postmodern” but only a continuation of the ancient—a world that, despite its technologies, the best Chinese, Greek, and Roman philosophers would have understood, and known how to navigate.

Robert D. Kaplan, 2002<sup>1</sup>

Maxim 36 is an explicit claim for the unity of all of history. Given the focus of these maxims, this claim asserts that there is an essential unity to strategic history. Those strategists who also teach, this author for one, are constantly assailed by research students who want to study the most contemporary of topics. They seek relevance and the excitement of a still dynamic story. Also, they expect their research and writing to be more marketable if it addresses a topic that is still live in the minds of potential employers and publishers. The choice of contemporary research topics is rational on career grounds, but often it is accompanied by some prejudice against the study of the past, especially the distant past. It may be a hopeless mission, but Maxim 36 challenges the near universal conviction that relevance, that magical quality, is related directly to historical distance. The closer the events in question, the more relevant, the more useful, the scholar’s cogitations must be.

The well-educated strategist knows that the grand strategy of Alexander the Great provides object lessons for all time.<sup>2</sup> That judgment also applies to the revolution in military affairs that he carried through as well as to his counterinsurgency campaign in what today is Afghanistan. What Maxim 36 means is that statecraft and strategy, at their cores, have not changed over millennia. If one seeks strategic instruction, there is no particular reason to focus upon Iraq or Afghanistan in the 2000s, any period of strategic history might provide what is needed. Of

course, there is the discipline imposed by evidence or its lack. Many inherently interesting historical cases of, say, irregular warfare and counterinsurgency must be approached with extreme caution by the scholar because of the shortage of reliable sources.

In point of fact, from the perspective of the strategic educator there is a major advantage in pointing students and others toward temporally distant episodes. The would-be strategist is less likely to bring unhelpful cultural baggage to the examination of medieval or ancient cases of strategic behavior, than he or she would to contemporary affairs. It is true to claim that the major implication of Maxim 36 is generally under-recognized, if it is recognized at all. Specifically, one can learn about statecraft and strategy from any period, and there is no real advantage in seeking instruction from modern, as opposed to historically distant, times. It may well be true to argue that many strategists, in addition to the consumers of their professional expertise, regard strategic history almost wholly as a subject of occasional recreational interest. Skirts and sandals are fun to watch in movies, and offer some colorfully brutal examples of human unpleasantness. But, the strategic deeds and misdeeds of the ancients, or even the fairly modern, typically are not regarded as a serious source of evidence for strategic instruction. This attitude is as prevalent as it is a serious error.

To illustrate the point just made, this strategist recently conducted a study of the irregular warfare waged by the Irish Republican Army against the forces of the British crown from January 1919 to July 1921.<sup>3</sup> The contemporary context for this study was dominated by the deteriorating situations in the irregular wars well underway in Iraq and Afghanistan. My study of a war concluded, at least for a while, eighty-five years ago, closed with a list of lessons that were relevant in almost every respect to the challenges posed by irregular and asymmetrical warfare in the 2000s. If the Roman-style counterinsurgency portrayed in the contemporary history by Flavius Josephus seems alien in its brutality,<sup>4</sup> compare Roman methods with those of the Germans in their antipartisan warfare in Russia. Or, for a yet more recent example, the Russian style of counterinsurgency in Chechnya in the 1990s and today would not appear strange to a Roman soldier.

Maxim 36 is important because if it is resisted one cuts oneself off from the educational potential of the treasure trove of all premodern strategic experience. Not only would that be a great loss, a self-inflicted impoverishment, it would also be a mistake. The major subjects of these maxims war, peace, strategy, and security, effectively are timeless in the problems and opportunities they present. It need hardly be said that nearly all of the detail will differ through time. However, the necessity to respect the unique features of a particular conflict and the uniqueness of its contexts is not required only of those who range extensively through the centuries. When strategists strive to find valid lessons, or perhaps just plausible generalizations, from a handful of recent conflicts, they too are obliged to honor the distinctive detail of each.



There may be some sense in the concept of modern history, though one suspects that different groups of cultures, perhaps civilizations, if asked, would suggest different breakpoints in historical chronology. This strategist finds that the more closely he examines the periods immediately antecedent to the standard cut-off dates, or even periods, the less convincing are the erstwhile neat eras and periods that used to mar our history texts. History, like the passage of time itself, is really seamless. This mundane observation is offered in minor support of the claim in Maxim 36. Historians may find it expedient to label centuries by one characteristic or another, but the truth is that what changes over time is far less significant than what remains the same. That is a contestable statement, and no doubt some readers will dash to locate a red pen.

To explain, almost everything visible, and much that is not, is in a near constant state of change. Material advance and shifts in culture have moved at different speeds both over time and in different locations. But, move they most certainly have. Maxim 36 does not claim that nothing really changes. Instead, it insists only that the most important features of statecraft and strategy do not change. Just as one should not make too much of the distinction between regular and irregular warfare,<sup>5</sup> so also one should be careful not to overstate the differences between, say, the First Crusade of 1095–1099 and the U.S. led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and its consequences. For all their glaringly obvious differences, both historical episodes were cases of statecraft, strategy, and war. Notwithstanding the legion of contrasts between them, both reveal the nature of statecraft, war, and strategy. At that elevated level of conflict the distinctiveness of the historical context is really of little, if any, significance. The human actors in the eleventh and the twenty-first centuries both confronted challenges that were identical in nature, even though they were a light year apart in their characteristics.<sup>6</sup>

Maxim 36 is valuable not only because it invites us to explore the whole of accessible strategic history. In addition, by insisting upon the enduring natures of statecraft, war, peace, and strategy, it aids understanding of those crucial behaviors.

The quotation from Eliot A. Cohen with which this essay concludes is characteristically perceptive in its condemnation of what it calls “myths of stability” and in its insistence upon a quest for historical discontinuities. Cohen is correct. Happily, Maxim 36 endorses no “myths of stability,” and it is wedded firmly to the historian’s appreciation of the scope and depth of change. But, the maxim can be read as a caveat for the strategist against allowing the “historical mind” to be so enamored by the wealth of evolving detail that it neglects to notice the generic familiarity of the challenges posed by war, peace, and strategy.

The strategic mind makes another use of history that is even more worrisome to the historical mind when it proclaims the doctrine of historical permanence—the belief that “some things just don’t change.” In this respect, American strategists sometimes seem to believe in what their old enemies the Soviets called “permanently operating

factors”—the enduring verities, the kind of thing that the government official who told me “Americans can’t do national-building” was falling back on—which, as a historical statement, makes about as much sense as saying “Americans can’t take casualties.” The historical mind has little use for such blanket appeals to historical certainties. It looks for continuity but even more so discontinuity; it believes in evolution and change; it is in many ways the *enemy* of myths of stability, not its proponent.

Eliot A. Cohen, 2005<sup>7</sup>

# Maxim 37

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## History Can Be Misused to “Prove” Anything, but It Is All That We Have as a Guide to the Future

[T]he only empirical data we have about how people conduct war and behave under its stresses is our experience with it in the past, however much we have to make adjustments for subsequent changes in conditions.

Bernard Brodie, 1976<sup>8</sup>

In his last book, *War and Politics*, Bernard Brodie lamented the lack of historical knowledge among his fellow American strategists:

Thus, where the great strategic writers and teachers of the past, with the sole and understandable exception of Douhet, based the development of their art almost entirely on a broad and perceptive reading of history—in the case of Clausewitz and Jomini mostly recent history but exceptionally rich for their needs—the present generation of “civilian strategists” are with markedly few exceptions singularly devoid of history.<sup>9</sup>

Because of the strategic novelty of nuclear weapons, it is perhaps understandable that most of the more influential of America’s modern strategic thinkers should not be people steeped in the fruits of historical scholarship. For many years after 1945, indeed to an increasing degree in the 1950s and 1960s, it seemed to many, probably most, people that pre-nuclear strategic history was all but entirely irrelevant as a potential source of enlightenment upon contemporary problems. The nuclear revolution was held to have altered statecraft, strategy, and the meaning of war, beyond proper recognition. On that logic, it had to follow that useful history really began in 1945.<sup>10</sup>

Attitudes toward pre-nuclear strategic history began to change in the 1980s and even more in the 1990s with the end of the Cold War and the consequent sharp drop in nuclear menace. However, history remains a somewhat beleaguered island of knowledge in a sea of ignorance about the past. The United States has a

defense community that is exceptionally challenged historically. The reasons are primarily cultural. America is a forward-looking, optimistic country, not inclined to seek inspiration from the past, even its own. Also, as the products of a strongly technological society American defense analysts and strategists typically are more attracted to machines than to ideas, let alone to ideas that have an ancient provenance. In America, the first new nation as a cliché asserts, it is the new that has authority, not the old. For these and other reasons, as Brodie observed few of the American strategists of his generation were historically well educated.

The lack of historical expertise among the first generation of American strategic theorists of the nuclear age had some unfortunate consequences. Most specifically, the new field of strategic studies in the 1950s and 1960s was developed more as a science, perhaps one should say a pseudoscience, than as an art, as one of the humanities. This strategist writes with firsthand knowledge of the theorists of that era and of their work and its consequences. The core achievements of modern strategic theory, each secured for the practical purpose of informing U.S. policy and strategy, comprised theories of deterrence, limited war, and arms control. None among that theoretically narrow and elegant trinity drew noticeably upon historical evidence earlier than that to be gleaned from the Korean War of 1950–1953.<sup>11</sup>

Maxim 37 points to the sad fact that strategists innocent of a serious historical education are, by default, trapped inescapably in the present. Consider the situation of a strategist who disdains historical knowledge. Since the past is dismissed as irrelevant, with conditions more or less remote from those now extant, the strategist is left to contemplate what must be done in the light of his or her understanding solely of today and tomorrow. Unfortunately, but irreducibly, tomorrow is a blank. It has not happened. It can be the subject only of guesswork. But, guesswork founded upon which assumptions? And whence are those assumptions derived. The answer can only be today. If the past is rejected because, in the words of Edward Gibbon, “history . . . is indeed little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind,”<sup>12</sup> while the future has literally nothing to offer, the strategist is trapped in the present. This means that strategic thought and behavior must rest only upon the analysis and insight that can be gleaned from contemporary contexts. However, those contexts are ever shifting. The circumstances of today probably offer a poor guide to those of tomorrow. To illustrate this vital point, consider the likely performance of strategists in every decade from the 1900s until today, striving to predict the near to medium term future from the standpoint of their todays (1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, and so on). It is readily apparent that what can be called presentism is near certain to result in highly imprudent decisions and actions.

Of course, the argument in the previous paragraph is an exaggeration, albeit one to make a necessary point. In practice, even strategists who are not historically educated and are more than mildly skeptical of history-based advice are apt to

reach for the comfort of some historical support when it suits them. In addition, there are strategists who are truly ill-educated historically, but are unaware of the fact and instead are intensely respectful of such nuggets of convenient purported historical truth as they grasped at an impressionable age. Such people are dangerous. To them, their limited understanding of, but often tenacious hold upon, some alleged historical lesson can have dire practical consequences. The supposed lesson of Munich 1938, that appeasement is always fatal, is a classic example of this phenomenon.<sup>13</sup> Historian Michael Howard reveals a sad reality about historical knowledge when he explains that

[h]istory, whatever its value in educating the judgement, teaches no “lessons,” and the professional historians will be as sceptical of those who claim that it does as professional doctors are of their colleagues who peddle patent medicines guaranteeing instant cures. The past is infinitely various, an inexhaustible storehouse of events from which we can prove anything or its contrary.<sup>14</sup>

He is surely right, which is why it is a mistake to look for actionable lessons in detail from historical experience. But, the facts that history is apt to hide its secrets until they are too old to be useful and that it lends itself to different honest interpretations cannot stand as the last word on the value of history to the strategist. Recall the wise words of Bernard Brodie with which this essay began: “[t]he only empirical data we have about how people conduct war and behave under its stresses is our experience with it in the past . . .” History is all we have by way of evidence upon which to rest strategic thought for the present and the future. The answer to poor history is better history, not no history.

The facts that the several contexts within which the strategist must function are nearly always in motion, and that over time they are radically transformed, does not invalidate the logic of Maxim 36. Recall that that maxim insisted upon the continuity in important structural features of strategic history. It claimed that there is an enduring nature to such key behaviors as strategy, policy, and warfare. It follows, at least it is crystal clear to this strategist that it follows, that the total strategic experience of the human race, insofar as it is accessible to us, should be examined and exploited for whatever benefit may be secured thereby. Arguments to the contrary are wholly unconvincing. Specifically, there is no merit in the claim that history’s abundance of discontinuities renders the past too different from today for its course to have any contemporary relevance. At least, there is no merit in the claim if it extends to strategy and policy. In its nature and structure strategy today is the same as it always has been. Also, the certainty that many alleged lessons of history do not warrant coronation as such is no argument against studying history intelligently. Just what that can mean is well indicated in the quotation from Geoffrey Till with which this essay concludes. I am moved to confess that I am less frightened by the idea of lessons from history than are most historians.

But, this weakness on my part is probably attributable to my background as a social scientist.

The chief utility of history for the analysis of present and future lies in its ability, not to point out lessons, but to isolate things that need thinking about . . . History provides insights and questions, not answers.

Geoffrey Till, 1982<sup>15</sup>

# Maxim 38

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## The Future Is Not Foreseeable: Nothing Dates So Rapidly as Today's Tomorrow

It is impossible to predict the future, and all attempts to do so in any detail appear ludicrous within a few years.

Arthur C. Clarke, 1962<sup>16</sup>

Maxim 38 expresses what this strategist considers to be an incontestable truth. Nonetheless, there are two reasons why so apparently uncontentious a claim, actually a double claim, is worthy of maxim status. First, many people forget that the future is not predictable, a failing that can have dire consequences. Second, the truth in the maxim does not excuse us from the duty of trying to cope with an unknown and unknowable future. Since their profession is a pragmatic one, strategists have no choice other than to cope with their unavoidable ignorance as best they may.

Superficially contrary to the argument just advanced, the future is indeed foreseeable. As these essays have suggested in maxim after maxim, the historical continuities in statecraft and strategy are impressive to the point of being compelling. At a high level of generality, there is good reason to believe that the twenty-first century will resemble previous ones. There will be wars and rumors of wars, warfare will be both regular and irregular, regional and international order will be fragile, challenged, unstable, and liable to collapse. Also, of course, strategists around the world will ply their trade for the national motives identified for all time by Thucydides: fear, honor, and interest. In short, to quote the title of a recent book by this strategist, the twenty-first will be *Another Bloody Century*.

This author is constantly amazed by the ease with which policymaking politicians, supposedly expert commentators, and deeply professional officials, allow the phrase, “the foreseeable future” to slip off their tongues. Are they ignorant of the fact that the future is not foreseeable? Do they have access to crystal balls unavailable to we mere mortals? Or, more likely, are they so much in the habit of peering through the fog into the future that they have persuaded themselves

that they can defy the laws of physics? Perhaps, if one is charged with making preparation for the future it is essential to one's mental and emotional health to believe that that which will occur has been foreseen.

Although nothing in detail is, or can be, known about the future, it would not be accurate to claim that the future is a book with totally blank pages. After all, when we are obliged to guess about the twenty-first century we do have 2,500 years of human experience more or less available to discipline our predictions. Radical discontinuities do occur, but not in human behavior. Historians, and especially social scientists, are wont to discover breakpoints, tipping points, strategic moments, and the like. But, somehow, statecraft and strategy and their frequent expression in warfare of several varieties always feature. It is just possible that the future could be different. Perhaps our contemporary theorist advocates of a global communitarian future will be proved correct, and the human race will at last discard violence as an instrument of political communication.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps. However, it would be well to recall the advice of Maxim 32 that prudence is the supreme virtue in statecraft. One might gamble with one's own life and property, but as a statesman or strategist one should not do so with the lives and property of the society as a whole.

Maxim 38 poses a double challenge. On the one hand, there is the truly daunting problem of providing prudently against, and for, a future that is unknowable in detail. On the other hand, scarcely less difficult, it is necessary to reeducate people, including many supposed experts, into recognizing that their foreseeable futures are nothing of the kind. Since reputations, egos, and money in large quantities are involved, the deconstruction of settled beliefs about the future can be no easy task. For example, at present it is conventional wisdom in the American and British defense communities to believe that the future of warfare will be dominated by irregular and highly asymmetrical enemies. The strategic rationales for this belief are not especially compelling. In fact, the conviction that future warfare will be irregular rests upon nothing much more solid than the expedient and comforting assumption that tomorrow will be like today only more so. This is a prime illustration of what this strategist means by the error of presentism. The point is not that the belief in a nearly wholly irregular future to warfare is wrong. Rather is it that no one knows for certain, or even with evidence warranting a high measure of confidence, that it is correct.

Contrary to the thrust of the essay thus far, now it is essential to explain that the reasoning behind Maxim 38 is actually, if paradoxically, intended to be positive and constructive. First, one has to clear away the dead wood of unsound assumptions and presumptions of knowledge about the future that are unwise and even dangerous.

Ignorance about the detail of future history is simply a condition for doing business in statecraft and strategy. It is the unavoidable historical context. Moreover it is a context, technically always empty, that is not a force of nature immune to manipulation by humans. Rather it is a complex of contingencies and conditions



that we can help shape. It is worth noting, though, that those who aspire to shape the future so that it evolves in ways more to their liking are always liable to be punished for the sin of pride by being ambushed by the merciless workings of the law of unintended consequences. One saves Europe from the Nazi scourge only to facilitate the replacement of that scourge with yet another scourge. So, what can be done?

The strategist confronting the unforeseeable future has to honor two virtues above all others: prudence and adaptability. The necessity for prudence has already been explained in the essay on Maxim 32. Strategists must strive for adaptability in the capabilities they prepare against the future so that their societies are not hostage to the merit in a dominant prediction that future events falsify roundly. For example, in 1939–1940 French strategists predicted and planned for a long war, which of course they expected to win. The French and British Empires out-resourced Nazi Germany comfortably. The assumption of a long victorious war of material was sunk first by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 23, 1939, which allowed Germany access to the raw materials of the USSR. But, more deadly still, the long war prediction was falsified by German operational and tactical prowess, which imposed defeat on France in only six weeks in May–June 1940. The obvious lesson is that no matter how profound one’s belief in a dominant strategic scenario, it is prudent to take out at least minimum effective insurance against the possibility that history could spring a major unpleasant surprise.

Maxim 38 means that the strategist as defense planner should follow the golden rule of minimum regrets. The goal cannot be to make error free predictions about the future. Instead, it is to make only relatively minor mistakes. Excellence for a strategist looking forward is to make no fatally irretrievable errors: to make no mistakes of the kind for which no ready compensation can be found. Should this sound difficult to the point of near impossibility, then the essay has succeeded in explaining accurately the challenge of having to cope with an unforeseeable future.

We judge the unknown to be unlikely.

S. Douglas Smith, 2004<sup>18</sup>

# Maxim 39

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## Surprise Is Unavoidable, but Its Effect Is Not

The bombardment and “wire-cutting” began on May 21<sup>st</sup> [1917], were developed on May 28<sup>th</sup>, and culminated in a seven days’ intense bombardment, mingled with practice barrages to test the arrangements. The consequent forfeiture of surprise did not matter in the Messines stroke, a purely limited attack, in contrast to that at Arras, when it had been fatal to the hope of a break through. For although there was no surprise there was surprise effect—produced by the mines [19 of them] and the overwhelming fire—and this lasted long enough to gain the short-distanced objectives that had been set. The point, and the distinction between actual surprise and surprise effect, are of significance to the theory of warfare.

B. H. Liddell Hart, 1972<sup>19</sup>

Maxim 39 is a close complement to Maxim 38. Recall that the previous essay claimed that the future was not foreseeable in detail. It proceeded to suggest that notwithstanding the popularity of the foolish concept of the foreseeable future, it is possible to take prudent measures to limit some of the damage that could be suffered as a result of one’s ignorance. Adaptability was identified as a most desirable quality in one’s strategy, grand strategy, and of course in the capabilities that strategy would employ. In minor key, Maxim 39 proffers the unremarkable claim that frequent surprise is par for the course in statecraft and strategy. Not only do those vital behaviors exist, indeed they are shaped to succeed, in a highly competitive context. In addition, they are always at risk to the play of contingency. In major key, the maxim makes a claim that, if not remarkable, is certainly profoundly important. The distinction between surprise and surprise effect is not as widely or deeply appreciated as it should be. Its pithy presentation in maxim form renders misunderstanding unlikely, at least one would hope that that is the case.

This maxim is fatalistic about the occurrence of surprise, though that does not imply indifference toward its reduction. There is no intention to imply that intelligence gathering and analysis is unimportant. Rather the maxim simply states the

unchallengeable historical fact that surprise happens. It happens frequently. It is not always unwelcome, but even when it is it will rarely be of such a menacing character as to threaten national security profoundly. The maxim should be interpreted as meaning that despite one's best efforts to collect and interpret intelligence of many kinds, surprises will happen. Of necessity, it follows that the challenge is not to achieve a surprise-free context for policy and strategy because that is literally impossible. Instead, the rule of prudence leads us to try to ensure that the effects of surprise do as little harm as possible. It is crucial to appreciate that surprise itself is without value. It is the surprise effect that unravels the mind of a military commander, the will to fight of an army, or the determination of a government to persist on a difficult policy course. While there is nothing to be done about the occurrence of some surprises, there is a great deal that can be done, in advance, to combat their effects.

Since this maxim concedes surprise as being in some measure unavoidable, it may seem odd, paradoxical even, to claim that one can plan intelligently to cope with its consequences. It may be helpful to point out that the surprise of interest to statecraft and strategy can appear in at least four principal forms: (1) political, (2) strategic, (3) operational, and (4) tactical. To illustrate the distinctions, consider the Allied invasion of France on June 6, 1944, D-Day. Political surprise was not relevant. Strategic surprise was not achievable; the Germans knew the Allies were coming. But, the invaders succeeded magnificently in securing both operational and tactical surprise. The Germans were deceived as to the geographical target of the invasion, Normandy, and they did not know until the troops went ashore that June 6th was the magic date. That date should have been the 5th, but a Channel storm compelled General Eisenhower to order a twenty-four hour postponement.

From the German perspective, the long anticipated invasion posed the two sets of problems outlined already in this essay. They needed to deny the Allies the benefits of surprise (operational and tactical), but if need be strive to ensure that such surprise as the Allies did achieve should not have a lethal effect on Germany's ability to hold both the Western Wall and its continental hinterland. The German solution to the challenge of Allied surprise effect was to mass a mobile panzer reserve in a location sufficiently central as to be adaptable to the play of contingency. In other words, the Germans needed to be able to respond flexibly to events, given that the Allies would have seized the initiative in their choice of landing area. In practice, German commanders in the West could not agree on where the panzer reserve should be held, or on the related matter of the timing and character of the massed armored counterattack. And then there was the wild card of the requirement for the Fuhrer's approval of any decision to move those vital divisions. To conclude this historical illustration of concept, one records that the Allies secured sufficient surprise effect to achieve a firm, if shallow, lodgment in Normandy. But, that effect was insufficient either to defeat, let alone rout, the German defense in the region, or to preclude punishing counterattacks.

Maxim 39 should not be read as an elevation of surprise, or surprise effect, to master status. Surprise is simply a condition; it is a stage set. When one talks about surprise effect, as here, it is important to recognize that one is only employing a concept. Until that concept is given historical detail, it is simply an idea. Surprise effect has no inherent value. Its consequences must always be specific to the particular historical context. To illustrate the point, consider the probable course of a hypothetical Allied invasion of Northern France in 1942 or 1943, the contemporary strategic preference of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. Had even strategic, operational, and tactical surprise been secured, the surprise effect could not possibly have been anywhere close to sufficient to achieve a major military victory. The invasion would have failed, despite all the advantages of multilevel surprise, because it would have lacked sufficient military muscle. The Allies were not strong enough in 1942–1943 to defeat the German Army in continental warfare. Surprise is very well worth having, because its effects can enable a belligerent to seize and hold the initiative, at least for a while. But, in most cases surprise effect does not offer adequate compensation for serious material deficiencies. A surprised enemy will recover if it is not promptly unraveled decisively.

Maxim 39 identifies both a challenge that cannot be avoided and one wherein the peril is largely controllable. To be specific, surprise happens, period. But, whether or not the effects of that surprise disable belligerents politically, psychologically, or militarily is largely beyond the control of the attacker. This is one among several reasons why a strategy that relies upon surprise and its anticipated effects is always a high-risk venture, adventure perhaps.<sup>20</sup>

The only answer to the problem of surprise effect is to be adaptable and flexible over a range of plausible, and some implausible but potentially deadly, threats. What the strategist struggles to prevent is the enthronement of the kind of official strategic certainty which precludes the development of strategic and military postural flexibility. For a contemporary example, the U.S. defense community needs to avoid choosing between regular and irregular warfare as its dominant mode. It has to try to excel at both and, indeed, to attempt to achieve some fusion of the two in its way of warfare. The twenty-first century will reveal strategic challenges of both kinds. If a country decides to focus only upon a relatively narrow band of threats, it is all but inviting adaptive enemies to generate surprise effects that could wreak maximum damage.

The quotation that concludes this essay is almost painfully apt to the recent, and perhaps current, U.S. condition. Consider the strength of the quotation in the light of the on-going American commitment to a high-technology, information-led RMA (revolution in military affairs).

Just when we found the answer, they changed the question.

Anonymous

# Maxim 40

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## Tragedy Happens

The Romans fought to destroy the enemy army and end its capacity ever to fight them again.

Adrian Goldsworthy, 2002<sup>21</sup>

“Delenda Carthago”—Carthage is destroyed—was a tragedy for what had been the greatest trading empire of the Mediterranean world in the third century BC. But, it was a necessary triumph for the rising empire of Rome.<sup>22</sup> Tragedy through war at the societal and state level is usually distributed unevenly among belligerents; sometimes that distribution is grossly unbalanced. For example, in 1945 Germany, not only its armed forces, was effectively destroyed. Its very existence politically had ceased, and its extensive urban landscape was a sea of rubble. In sharp contrast, the Western leader of the somewhat misnamed Grand Alliance, the United States, was all but untouched at home and had been strengthened by its waging of what in American folk memory came to be known as the “good war.” Plainly, the war was not at all good for the Germans, or the Poles, or indeed any European society, with the probable exception of Switzerland and Sweden, who prospered as useful neutrals. At the level of high politics, tragedy is defined by one’s political affiliation or sympathy; it is subjective. One society’s tragedy is another’s opportunity for greatness. At least, this was the story of Carthage and Rome and briefly of Athens and Sparta. However, if one lowers one’s gaze to the human level, to encompass the individuals who actually make history, warfare always must have some tragic consequences. Whether one’s country wins, loses, or enforces a stalemate, people die and are injured. Before 1914, the conditions that provided the typical physical context for warfare were so rough and unhealthy that the majority of casualties were not suffered in battle. Disease and hardship claimed more lives than did the enemy’s weapons. So, at the human level the strategist’s principal focus, which has always been upon warfare, cannot help but include a multitude of small but total tragedies for individuals and their families. Strategists perform in a tragic

profession. The fact that the profession is essential does not alter the fact of human tragedy.

With his 1976 book, *The Face of Battle*, John Keegan all but wrenched attention from presidents, kings, generals, and other strategists, and instead descended into the mud and the snow to examine what it was like to be a fighting man.<sup>23</sup> What was the actual experience of battle? Strategists are apt to be less than eloquent on the subject of the performance required by the people who must do strategy. And strategy does have to be done. Strategy as strategy is simply a plan, perhaps an idea. It is brought to life, for good or ill, by operational art and by tactics. And tactics refer to the behavior of men under fire, or under attack by axe-wielding Germanic barbarians, or facing a hoplite phalanx nearly identical to their own.<sup>24</sup> This book of essays has made a strong statement for the vital importance of people, real people, individuals even. Recall Maxim 22, “people matter most.” But, nonetheless, this strategist is worried lest he has repeated a cardinal strategists’ error and failed to allow the human dimension to war, peace, and strategy its proper due. It is worth noting that when a group of strategic planners are unduly besotted with the brilliance of their operational concepts, the consequences are certain to be tragic for many soldiers. The classic example of this phenomenon in recent strategic history was the systemic logistical deficiencies that were fatal for the prospects for success of Germany’s Ostheer, its Eastern Army in Russia from 1941 to 1945.<sup>25</sup>

The strategist is by profession the bearer of bad news. Indeed, he or she can claim accurately that bad news is his or her business. Societies that have no call for experts in the threat or use of military force have no need for strategists. Of course, they might decide as a matter of elementary prudence to employ a strategist or two, just in case. Strategists are attracted to the rule from the world of medicine, first, do no harm. Unfortunately, they cannot be certain that such an agreeable innocence is feasible. Not only might the strategist perceive or anticipate a threat that did not exist prior to its designation as such, but also the strategist’s grand designs for the employment of force are always liable to prove ill-conceived. The strategist does not struggle primarily against a passive, unreacting nature, but rather to overthrow the will and possibly the might of an active and uncooperative enemy. It follows that the strategist both deals in, and can be significantly responsible for, tragedy. Given the contemporary universal dominance of political leadership over professional strategists, be they military or civilian, one can insist with justice that the responsibility for the results of strategy rests with those who adopt it, order it done, and actually direct those who must do it. However, this strategist does accept some modest measure of responsibility for the practical consequences of his strategic ideas, at least to the limited extent that they have some real-world influence.

Since 1919, many people of goodwill, if unsound convictions, have believed that the study of war, peace, and strategy should be directed for the sole purpose of finding a way to terminate the strategic dimension of history altogether. In that

perspective, the scourge of war is the overriding problem, not, as Maxim 11 in this book insists, the difficulty of keeping the flame of strategic understanding alight. In point of fact, and as this strategist can attest from unpleasant first-hand experience, it is not uncommon for the professional strategist to be identified as a part of the problem of war, not the solution. For the record, I must say that from time to time I have considered this accusation seriously, but, unsurprisingly perhaps, I have yet to find it well founded. It may be flattering to toy with the thesis that we strategists rule the world, but the truth is that we are but the servants of our societies in a world that, alas, has always had need of our services. Furthermore, we strategists are entirely unconvinced that world history is marching inexorably toward a warless condition.

It is the duty of the strategist to cope with tragedies on the larger scale that he or she could not prevent and to look for practical ways to turn a tragic situation around. It follows that the strategist should feel obliged to explain to his or her political masters and other opinion leaders as well as to the society's soldiers that tragedy on the large economy scale does happen. Moreover, although every human-made tragedy is in theory avoidable, in practice usually it is not. Could the Holocaust have been prevented? Yes, of course it could, in principle. But, it could not be prevented given the actual contingent course of history in the 1930s and early 1940s. October 1962 very nearly witnessed the kind of tragedy that might redefine the concept. The Cuban Missile Crisis was appallingly dangerous and could, quite easily, have ended tragically, both for all concerned as well as for very many who were not directly concerned at all.

The strategist must both do his or her best to improve strategic competence on the part of the society that is served thereby, but in addition that society needs to be reminded that truly awful, even tragic, to employ the deliberately value laden concept of Maxim 40, events do happen. The U.S. effort in South Vietnam was a noble cause, as many of its American critics were honest enough to recognize, belatedly, when they witnessed Hanoi's murderous behavior in victory. And yet, for a host of reasons, that noble cause concluded tragically both for the South Vietnamese and for Americans. Nazi Germany's was not a noble cause, at least not in the view of this strategist, but it was undoubtedly tragic both for Germans of all political persuasions as well as for Germany's victims, foreign and domestic.

The U.S. and British intervention in Iraq in 2003 has turned into a tragedy, no matter what the ultimate outcome will be. It is essential for people, and especially for the citizens of a superpower, to understand that tragedy happens. It is not always avoidable. Good intentions, a presumption of divine sanction, and American willpower and know-how, none of these are reliable as tragedy precluders. The professional strategist is not generically pessimistic over the prospects for tragedy at the societal and state level, though he or she certainly is with respect to the fate of individuals, as noted already. But, the strategist is pessimistic, perhaps realistic,

over the all too healthy future for contexts that will surely produce their historical norm of tragic happenings.

From 1929, when the Gulag began its major expansion, until 1953, when Stalin died, the best estimates indicate that some eighteen million people passed through this massive system. About another six million were sent into exile, departed to the Kazakh deserts or the Siberian forests. Legally obliged to remain in their exile villages, they too were forced labourers, even though they did not live behind barbed wire.

Anne Applebaum, 2004<sup>26</sup>



# Afterword: Cannon Lore

This text concludes by stating five fairly bold claims:

First, even if some readers are uncomfortable with the concept of a maxim, still they should have found the content of the forty essays offered here in explanation well worthy of reflection. The content could hardly be more central to the vital subjects of war, peace, and strategy. Even theorists and practitioners who consider themselves strategically literate to a high degree, ought to have discovered some skeins of logic, some connections, and perhaps some caveats, that struck themes both true and useful. Such, at least, is my sincere hope.

Second, I wish to reemphasize a claim made in the Introduction. As promised there, the maxims reflect and express a truly coherent worldview. As a consequence, they comprise a holistic story, just about the entire plot of statecraft and strategy. Repeatedly through the course of this text, succeeding maxims complement each other, as indeed they should. This may be a book of forty essays, but it is, nonetheless, a book, and not just a collection of items.

Third, each of the maxims deployed and explained here enjoys authority because it meets four critical tests: (1) empirical, which is to say historical accuracy, (2) logical integrity, (3) common sense, and (4) practical utility. The maxims seek to convey not only knowledge, but useful knowledge. Strategy is a practical pursuit.

Fourth, despite the woodlands that have been sacrificed to purportedly strategic writings, in fact there is little worth reading by way of a general theory of strategy. In a very modest way, this book of essays is a contribution to that slim but essential literature.

Fifth and finally, strategy is a pragmatic undertaking and it is made and remade in a process. This process can be so arduous, and the necessary compromises can be so contestable, that the participants, the strategy-makers, lose sight of the fundamentals that should help guide them. The forty maxims on war, peace, and strategy discussed here may help the world of practice by serving as readily accessible reminders of what is most important in the nature of their subject.

The last words in this book are provided by an eighteenth-century Marshal of France, Maurice de Saxe. The first sentence of the Preface to *My Reveries upon the Art of War*, written in 1732 was as follows: “This work was not born from a desire to establish a new method of the art of war; I composed it to amuse and instruct myself.”<sup>1</sup>

# Notes

Because this book is not organized into chapters, the notes are numbered continuously for each of the five parts and separately for the Introduction and the Afterword.

## INTRODUCTION: GETTING THE BIG THINGS RIGHT ENOUGH

1. Judy Pearsall and Bill Tumble, eds., *The Oxford English Reference Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 893.
2. Antoine Henri de Jomini, *The Art of War* (London: Greenhill Books, 1992).
3. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976).
4. Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1976).
5. I have reviewed the current debate about strategic culture in “Out of the Wilderness: Prime-time for Strategic Culture,” *Comparative Strategy* 26 (January–March 2007). Also see Lawrence Sondhaus, *Strategic Culture and Ways of War* (London: Routledge, 2006).
6. See Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: The Free Press, 2002).

## PART I: WAR AND PEACE

1. Jeremy Black, *Rethinking Military History* (London: Routledge, 2004), 243.
2. See Emily O. Goldman and Leslie C. Eliason, eds., *The Diffusion of Military Technology and Ideas* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).
3. I explain the persisting significance of geography in my essay “Inescapable Geography,” in Colin S. Gray and Geoffrey Sloan, eds., *Geopolitics, Geography and Strategy* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 161–177.
4. See Montgomery McFate, “The Military Utility of Understanding Adversary Culture,” *Joint Force Quarterly* no. 38 (3rd Quarter, 2005): 42–48.
5. Robert H. Scales, “Clausewitz and the World, IV,” *Armed Forces Journal* (July 2006): 17.

6. Jeremy Black, *War and the New Disorder in the 21st Century* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 163–164.
7. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 88 (emphasis in the original).
8. Roughly translated: *jus ad bellum* refers to a decision to wage a war that is just; *jus in bello* means to wage war justly; while *jus ad pacem* refers to the design and execution of a just peace. A. J. Coates, *The Ethics of War* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1997), is an outstanding discussion of just war theory.
9. See Richard Bessel, *Nazism and War* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004).
10. Matthew Hughes and Matthew S. Seligman, *Does Peace Lead to War? Peace Settlements and Conflict in the Modern Age* (Stroud, UK: Sutton Publishing, 2002), is useful.
11. Charles E. Callwell, *Small Wars: A Tactical Textbook for Imperial Soldiers* (London: Greenhill Books, 1990), 270.
12. Clausewitz, *On War*, 75.
13. *Ibid.*, 104, 119.
14. B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy: The Indirect Approach* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), 366.
15. The classic treatment is Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (New York: Random House, 1964). For a powerful revisionist view, see Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: The Free Press, 2002).
16. For example, the statesmen who constructed the Versailles settlement of 1919 were very much the prisoners of their domestic publics. When criticizing that effort to shape a lasting peace, one must not forget that fact.
17. Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought*, 3rd ed. (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 197–198.
18. P. J. O'Rourke, *Give War a Chance: Eyewitness Accounts of Mankind's Struggle Against Tyranny, Injustice and Alcohol-Free Beer* (New York: Grove Press, 1992).
19. See Michael Howard, "Temperamenta Belli: Can War Be Controlled?" In Howard, ed., *Restraints on War: Studies in the Limitation of Armed Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 1–15.
20. Clausewitz, *On War*, 101.
21. See Dominic D. P. Johnson, *Overconfidence and War: The Havoc and Glory of Positive Illusions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).
22. Clausewitz, *On War*, 85.
23. Victor Davis Hanson, *Ripples of Battle: How Wars of the Past Still Determine How We Fight, How We Live, and How We Think* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 14.
24. Michael Howard, *The Invention of Peace and the Reinvention of War* (London: Profile Books, 2001), 124.
25. Two exceptionally fine studies of international order are Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); and Ian Clark, *The Hierarchy of States: Reform and Resistance in the International Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
26. Donald Kagan, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 570.
27. See Colin S. Gray, *The Sheriff: America's Defense of the New World Order* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2004).

28. George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, March 16, 2006), 16.

29. Geoffrey Parker, "Introduction: The Western Way of War," in Parker, ed., *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare: The Triumph of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2.

30. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1979). A convenient confrontation between neorealist and culturalist approaches is presented in John Glenn, Darryl Howlett, and Stuart Poore, eds., *Neorealism Versus Strategic Culture* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004).

31. Thucydides, *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to The Peloponnesian War*, edited by Robert B. Strassler (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 43.

32. See Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Ch. 5.

33. See Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (London: Croom Helm, 1979).

34. Sun-tzu, *The Art of War*, edited and translated by Ralph D. Sawyer (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 179.

35. Samuel P. Huntington, *American Military Strategy*, Policy Papers in International Affairs 28 (Berkeley, CA: Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1986), 33.

36. Lawrence Freedman, *The Transformation of Strategic Affairs*, Adelphi Paper 379 (Abingdon, UK: Routledge for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2006), 36.

37. Clausewitz, *On War*, 89.

38. See Edward J. Villacres and Christopher Bassford, "Reclaiming the Clausewitzian Trinity," *Parameters* 25 (Autumn 1995): 9–19.

39. The invention and exploitation of the electric telegraph gave birth to the modern war correspondent. For the first time in history, people back home were informed very soon after events had happened and could decide whether praise or blame were the order of the day. The situation today, with the electronic media monitoring military behavior in real-time, is analyzed well in Freedman, *Transformation of Strategic Affairs*, Ch. 5.

40. Clausewitz, *On War*, 189.

41. Peter Browning, *The Changing Nature of Warfare: The Development of Land Warfare from 1792 to 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2.

42. See Samuel J. Newland, *Victories Are Not Enough: Limitations of the German Way of War* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, December 2005); and Robert M. Citino, *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005).

43. Black, *Rethinking Military History*, 19.

44. See Charles Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland, 1919–1921: The Development of Political and Military Policies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

45. Helmuth von Moltke, *Moltke On the Art of War: Selected Writings*, edited by Daniel J. Hughes (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1993), 44–47.

46. Barry Turner, quoted in Isobel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 3.

47. Black, *Rethinking Military History*, 19.

48. Clausewitz, *On War*, 610.

49. Cohen, *Supreme Command*.

50. Clausewitz, *On War*, 608.

51. T. E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph* (New York: Anchor Books, 1991), 191–192.
52. See Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006); and Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: the Penguin Press, 2006).
53. Clausewitz, *On War*, 81.
54. *Ibid.*, 101.
55. This appealing option is explained admirably in James J. Wirtz, “Theory of Surprise,” in Richard K. Betts and Thomas G. Mahnken, eds., *Paradoxes of Strategic Intelligence: Essays in Honor of Michael I. Handel* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 103.
56. See Colin S. Gray, *Strategy for Chaos: Revolutions in Military Affairs and the Evidence of History* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), Ch. 4–5.
57. J. C. Wylie, *Military Strategy: A General Theory of Power Control* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1989), 72.

## PART II: STRATEGY

1. André Beaufre, *An Introduction to Strategy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), 11.
2. See Carl Builder, “Keeping the Strategic Flame,” *Joint Force Quarterly* no. 14 (Winter 1996–1997): 76–84; and Hew Strachan, “The Lost Meaning of Strategy,” *Survival* 47 (Autumn 2005): 33–54.
3. See Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Ch. 1.
4. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 128.
5. Gray, *Modern Strategy*, 17.
6. For evidence of a recent spike of interest in strategy, see Anthony D. Mc Ivor, ed., *Rethinking the Principles of War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005). It is important to note, however, that this excellent book, and the seminar series associated with it, was very much the personal product of the vision of an outstanding sailor, Vice Admiral John C. Morgan, USN. It was not the result of a broad official institutional commitment to strategic education.
7. Colonel Robert Killebrew, quoted in Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: the Penguin Press, 2006), 195.
8. Clausewitz, *On War*, 607.
9. *Ibid.*, 605.
10. Gray, *Modern Strategy*, Ch. 1.
11. Clausewitz, *On War*, 183.
12. Michael Howard, “The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs* 57 (Summer 1979): 975–986.
13. Some readers may be pleased to learn that I intend to reduce my seventeen dimensions of war and strategy to a far more manageable number. In a book that I am currently researching on the theory of strategy, a much shorter listing will make its belated debut.
14. Charles E. Callwell, *Small Wars: A Tactical Textbook for Imperial Soldiers* (London: Greenhill Books, 1990), 90.
15. I develop the idea of the strategy bridge in my book, *Strategy and History: Essays on Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2006), 1–13.

16. Geoffrey P. Megargee, *War of Annihilation: Combat and Genocide on the Eastern Front, 1941* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 26.
17. Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), is a powerful indictment.
18. Thomas Babington, Lord Macaulay, *Horatius Keeps The Bridge* (London: Phoenix, 1996), 27.
19. Thucydides, *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to The Peloponnesian War*, edited by Robert B. Strassler (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 16.
20. Sun-tzu, *The Art of War*, translated by Ralph D. Sawyer (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994); Clausewitz, *On War*.
21. General George Catlin Marshall, quoted in Paul A. Rahe, "Thucydides as Educator," in Williamson Murray and Richard Hart Sinnreich, eds., *The Past as Prologue: The Importance of History to the Military Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 99.
22. Edward N. Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001); Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1991).
23. See Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought*, 3rd ed. (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 3.
24. Clausewitz, *On War*, 63.
25. See Bruce Smith, *The RAND Corporation: Case Study of a Nonprofit Advisory Corporation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966); and Colin S. Gray, *Strategic Studies and Public Policy: The American Experience* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982), Ch. 3. A highly critical view pervades Bruce Kuklick, *Blind Oracles: Intellectuals and War from Kennan to Kissinger* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).
26. I discuss the several uses of expert advisors in my *Strategic Studies and Public Policy*, Ch. 11.
27. See Andrew F. Krepinevich, "Cavalry to Computer: The Pattern of Military Revolutions," *The National Interest* no. 37 (Fall 1994): 30–42; MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray, eds., *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300-2050* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Lawrence Freedman, *The Revolution in Strategic Affairs*, Adelphi Paper 318 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998).
28. Milan Vego, "Effects-Based Operations: A Critique," *Joint Force Quarterly* no. 41 (2nd Quarter 2006): 51–57, is devastating.
29. Helmuth von Moltke, *Moltke on the Art of War: Selected Writings*, edited by Daniel J. Hughes (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1993).
30. Clausewitz, *On War*, 75.
31. *Ibid.* (emphasis in the original).
32. *Ibid.* and J. C. Wylie, *Military Strategy: A General Theory of Power Control* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1989).
33. Robert D. Heinl, Jr., *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1966), 102.
34. Napoleon, quoted in Peter Paret, "Napoleon and the Revolution in War," in Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy: from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 134.
35. See M. L. R. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland? The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement* (London: Routledge, 1995), Ch. 2.

36. Martin Caidin, *The Tigers Are Burning* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1974), 28.
37. Clausewitz, *On War*, 119.
38. Barry D. Watts, *Clausewitzian Friction and Future War*, McNair Paper 68, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 2004), 77.
39. Geoffrey P. Megargee, *War of Annihilation: Combat and Genocide on the Eastern Front, 1941* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 103.
40. Watts, *Clausewitzian Friction and Future War*, 78.
41. Hans W. Weigert, *Generals and Geographers: The Twilight of Geopolitics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942), 4.
42. Saul B. Cohen, *Geography and Politics in a Divided World* (London: Methuen, 1964), 24.
43. Holger H. Herwig, "Geopolitik: Haushofer, Hitler and Lebensraum," in Colin S. Gray and Geoffrey Sloan, eds., *Geopolitics, Geography and Strategy* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 218–241, is excellent and breaks new ground in understanding.
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45. Bruce Berkowitz, *The New Face of War: How War Will Be Fought in the 21st Century* (New York: The Free Press, 2003), presents a thoughtful case for the potency of cyberpower. His argument is considered critically in Colin S. Gray, *Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), 313–328.
46. Hew Strachan, *The First World War, Vol. 1: To Arms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 439.
47. B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy: The Indirect Approach* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), 335–336.
48. See Terry Terriff and others, *Security Studies Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).
49. Clausewitz, *On War*, 607, a claim repeated on 610, when the author argues that "[t]he conduct of war, in its great outlines, is therefore policy itself, which takes up the sword in place of the pen, but does not on that account cease to think according to its own laws."
50. See Strachan, "The Lost Meaning of Strategy."
51. Clausewitz, *On War*, 87.
52. Luttwak, *Strategy*, 260.
53. Frank Field, MP, Letter to the Editor, *The Daily Telegraph* (London), September 16, 2006: 23.
54. Colin S. Gray, *War, Peace, and International Relations: An Introduction to Strategic History* (London: Routledge, 2007).
55. Megargee, *War of Annihilation*; and Robert M. Citino, *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005), are both first rate.
56. Donald H. Rumsfeld, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2006), 22–23.
57. Bruce Fleming, "Can Reading Clausewitz Save Us from Future Mistakes?" *Parameters* 34 (Spring 2004): 76.



### PART III: MILITARY POWER AND WARFARE

1. Ralph Peters, *Fighting for the Future: Will America Triumph?* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1999), 18.

2. See Keith B. Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence and a New Direction* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2001).

3. Max Hastings, *Armageddon: The Battle for Germany, 1944–45* (London: Macmillan, 2004), 392. Hastings provides ample evidence in support of the claim that in order to minimize casualties the Western armies proceeded cautiously to a fault. It is necessary to note that casualties were heavy anyway. The German army, though far from being at its best in 1944–1945, always exacted disproportionate losses on its enemies.

4. Ian Hamilton, *The Soul and Body of an Army* (London: Edward Arnold, 1921).

5. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 75 (emphasis in the original).

6. *Ibid.*, 77.

7. John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976).

8. Alfred T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793–1812* (Boston: Little Brown, 1892), I: 102.

9. Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Art of War*, translated by Henry Neville (Minneola, NY: Dover Publications, 2006), 162.

10. Clausewitz, *On War*, 605 (emphasis in the original).

11. See Arthur Ferrill, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: The Military Explanation* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986); and Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (London: Macmillan, 2005).

12. One of the best studies of the interwar years comments that “[i]t [disarmament] was the philosopher’s stone which would turn base metal into gold.” P. M. H. Bell, *The Origins of the Second World War*, 2nd ed. (Harlow, UK: Longman, 1997), 103.

13. Michael Howard, *Studies in War and Peace* (London: Temple Smith, 1970), 209.

14. Michael Howard, *The Causes of Wars and Other Essays* (London: Counterpoint, 1984), 132.

15. Machiavelli, *The Art of War*, 21.

16. Dennis E. Showalter, “Military Innovation and the Whig Perspective of History,” in Harold R. Winton and David R. Mets, eds., *The Challenge of Change: Military Institutions and New Realities, 1918–1941* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 229.

17. Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2005).

18. Nicholas Blandford, “Defiant Hezbollah chief returns for ‘victory rally,’” *The Times* (London), (September 23, 2006), 52.

19. Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Toward an American Way of War* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, March 2004), v (emphasis in the original).

20. See Edward N. Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), Ch. 7.

21. Clausewitz, *On War*, 88.

22. *Ibid.*, 81.

23. See Robert M. Citino, *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years’ War to the Third Reich* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005).

24. On 1914, see Hew Strachan, *The First World War, Vol I: To Arms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Ch. 3; and David Stevenson, *Cataclysm: The First World War as*

*Political Tragedy* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), Ch. 2. On 1941, see Horst Boog and others, *Germany and the Second World War, Vol. 4: The Attack on the Soviet Union* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); and Evan Mawdsley, *Thunder in the East: The Nazi-Soviet War, 1941–1945* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), Part 1.

25. MacGregor Knox, “Conclusion: Continuity and Revolution in the Making of Strategy,” in Williamson Murray, Knox, and Alvin Bernstein, eds., *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 616.

26. Williamson Murray and MacGregor Knox, “Conclusion: the Future Behind Us,” in Knox and Murray, eds., *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300–2050* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 191n51.

27. Clausewitz, *On War*, 75 (emphasis in the original).

28. *Ibid.*, 87 (emphasis added).

29. *Ibid.*, 605.

30. Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982), 1.

31. Mao Tse-tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, translated by Samuel B. Griffith (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), 52.

32. Homer, *The Iliad*, translated by Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 277–278.

33. Frederick W. Kagan, “War and Aftermath,” *Policy Review* no. 120 (August–September 2003): 27.

34. See Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York: Macmillan, 1973); and Anthony D. Mc Ivor, ed., *Rethinking the Principles of War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005), Part 1.

35. See Eliot A. Cohen, “The Mystique of U.S. Air Power,” *Foreign Affairs* 73 (January/February 1994): 109–124.

36. Giulio Douhet, *The Command of the Air* (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 50.

37. J. C. Wylie, *Military Strategy: A General Theory of Power Control* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1989), 72 (emphasis in the original).

38. Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 197.

39. Omar Bradley, quoted in Thomas M. Kane, *Military Logistics and Strategic Performance* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), xiv.

40. See the sparkling case studies in Martin van Creveld, *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

41. Acting thoroughly out of character, Montgomery approved the plan to use airborne forces to seize a series of key bridges, concluding with the bridge over the Rhine itself at Arnhem. The plan was to pass the armor of XXX Corps up a single road and over the bridges for a narrow thrust into Northern Germany. There were so many weaknesses in the grand design for this adventure that the historian is challenged to know which to emphasize. Suffice it to say that Operation Market Garden was a bad operational conception that was incompetently executed. As always, the price of failure was paid by the men at the sharp end.

42. Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, *How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press 1983), 720.

43. Henry E. Eccles, *Military Concepts and Philosophy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1965), 83–89.

44. See Geoffrey P. Megargee, *War of Annihilation: Combat and Genocide on the Eastern Front, 1941* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 26.

45. Archibald Wavell, *Speaking Generally: Broadcasts, Orders and Addresses in Time of War (1939–43)* (London: Macmillan, 1946), 78–79 (emphasis in the original).

#### PART IV: SECURITY AND INSECURITY

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2. Thucydides, *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to The Peloponnesian War*, edited by Robert B. Strassler (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 43.

3. Ralph Peters, *Fighting for the Future: Will America Triumph?* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1999), 171–172.

4. Dennis Showalter, *Patton and Rommel: Men of War in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Berkeley Caliber, 2005), 405.

5. See Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (London: Croom Helm, 1979); Anja V. Hartmann and Beatrice Heuser, eds., *War, Peace and World Orders in European History* (London: Routledge, 2001); and Hans-Henning Kortüm, ed., *Transcultural Wars from the Middle Ages to the 21st Century* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006).

6. Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 133.

7. Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (London: Macmillan, 2005), is persuasive in identifying the Huns as the most significant reason for the demise of the Western Empire.

8. See David Morgan, *The Mongols* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986); and John Mann, *Genghis Khan: Life, Death and Resurrection* (London: Bantam Books, 2005).

9. See Paul W. Schroeder, “Napoleon’s Foreign Policy: A Criminal Enterprise,” *Journal of Military History* 54 (April 1990): 147–161.

10. See Audrey Kurth Cronin, “How al-Qaida Ends: The Decline and Demise of Terrorist Groups,” *International Security* 31 (Summer 2006): 7–48.

11. Gregor Dallas, *Poisoned Peace: 1945—The War that Never Ended* (London: John Murray, 2006), 34.

12. Raymond Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1966), 585.

13. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 86.

14. Aron, *Peace and War*, 585 (emphasis in the original).

15. David J. Lonsdale, *Alexander: Killer of Men. Alexander the Great and the Macedonian Art of War* (London: Constable, 2004), 3.

16. An enthusiasm to establish democracies where they have never functioned before has been an important motive driving U.S. and British policy in the Middle East of recent years. There is a set of strategic rationales for this endeavor, but it would be an error to be unduly cynical. The Bush White House and the Blair 10 Downing Street have been convinced that democracy is right for all people everywhere.

17. See my essay on “Force, Order, and Justice: The Ethics of Realism in Statecraft,” in Colin S. Gray, *Strategy and History: Essays on Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2006), 170–181.

18. Morton A. Kaplan, ed., *Strategic Thinking and Its Moral Implications* (Chicago: Center for Policy Study, University of Chicago, 1973), 13.

19. Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959), 378.
20. See Richard L. Kugler, *Policy Analysis In National Security Affairs: New Methods for a New Era* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press for the Center for Technology and Security Policy, 2006).
21. Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age*, 358ff.
22. George F. Will, "Arms Control Irrelevance," *The Washington Post* (May 27, 1990): B7.
23. Colin S. Gray, *House of Cards: Why Arms Control Must Fail* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).
24. See William E. Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 436n25.
25. See Thomas C. Schelling, "From an Airport Bench," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 45 (May 1989): 29–31.
26. See Colin S. Gray, *Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), 357–368.
27. Winston S. Churchill, *The Gathering Storm* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 92.

## PART V: HISTORY AND THE FUTURE

1. Robert D. Kaplan, *Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos* (New York: Random House, 2002), vii.
2. See David J. Lonsdale, *Alexander: Killer of Men. Alexander the Great and the Macedonian Art of War* (London: Constable, 2004).
3. Colin S. Gray, *The Anglo-Irish War, 1919–21: Lessons from an Irregular Conflict* (Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, October 2006).
4. Josephus, *The Jewish War* (London: Penguin Books, 1959).
5. In the report on its annual conference (rebranded as the "Global Strategy Review") in September 2006, the International Institute for Strategic Studies informs us that its conference break-out group on "Counterinsurgency: Lessons Learned and Unlearned," reached the same conclusion as has this author. Apparently "[t]he group discussed the need to discard the distinction between conventional war and counterinsurgency, and the need to see the campaign as a whole, with conflict resolution often proving to be more costly and complex than the initial combat phases." Plainly, great minds think alike. *IJSS News* (Autumn 2006): 3. Also, see Gray, *Another Bloody Century* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), Chs. 5–6.
6. Those skeptical of my claim for the enduring educational value of the strategic experience of the 1090s are recommended to read John France, *Victory in the East: A Military History of the First Crusade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
7. Eliot A. Cohen, "The Historical Mind and Military Strategy," *Orbis* 49 (Fall 2005): 582 (emphasis in the original).
8. Bernard Brodie, in Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 54.
9. Bernard Brodie, *War and Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), 475.
10. For an assault upon the prejudice against pre-nuclear experience, see Colin S. Gray, *Strategy and History: Essays on Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2006), Ch. 1, "Across the nuclear divide—strategic studies, past and present."

11. See Colin S. Gray, *Strategic Studies and Public Policy: The American Experience* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982).
12. Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, edited by J. B. Bury (London: Methuen, 1909), I: 84.
13. See Jeffrey Record, *Making War, Thinking History: Munich, Vietnam, and Presidential Uses of Force from Korea to Kosovo* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2002).
14. Michael Howard, *The Lessons of History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 11.
15. Geoffrey Till, *Maritime Strategy and the Nuclear Age* (London: Macmillan, 1982), 224–225.
16. Arthur C. Clarke, *Profiles of the Future: An Enquiry into the Limits of the Possible* (London: Gollancz, 1962).
17. For the communitarian vision, see Amitai Etzioni, *From Empire to Community: A New Approach to International Relations* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). With some regrets, I rain on Etzioni's parade in my article, "Sandcastle of Theory: A Critique of Amitai Etzioni's Communitarianism," *American Behavioral Scientist* 48 (August 2005): 1607–1625.
18. S. Douglas Smith, book review, *Naval War Review* 57 (2004): 147.
19. B. H. Liddell Hart, *History of the First World War* (London: Pan Books, 1972), 325.
20. See James J. Wirtz, "Theory of Surprise," in Richard K. Betts and Thomas G. Mahnken, eds., *Paradoxes of Strategic Intelligence: Essays in Honor of Michael I. Handel* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 101–116.
21. See Adrian Goldsworthy, *Roman Warfare* (London: Cassell, 2002), 81.
22. Adrian Goldsworthy, *The Fall of Cathage: The Punic Wars, 265–146 BC* (London: Cassell, 2003).
23. John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Viking Press, 1976).
24. See J. E. Lendon, *Soldiers and Ghosts: A History of Battle in Classical Antiquity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005); Victor Davis Hanson, *Why the West Has Won: Carnage and Culture from Salamis to Vietnam* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001); and John A. Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003).
25. See Martin van Creveld, *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), Ch. 5.
26. Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History of the Soviet Camps* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 4–5.

## **AFTERWORD: CANNON LORE**

1. Maurice de Saxe, "My Reveries upon the Art of War," in Thomas R. Phillips, ed., *Roots of Strategy: A Collection of Military Classics* (London: John Lane the Bodley Head, 1943), 100.



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