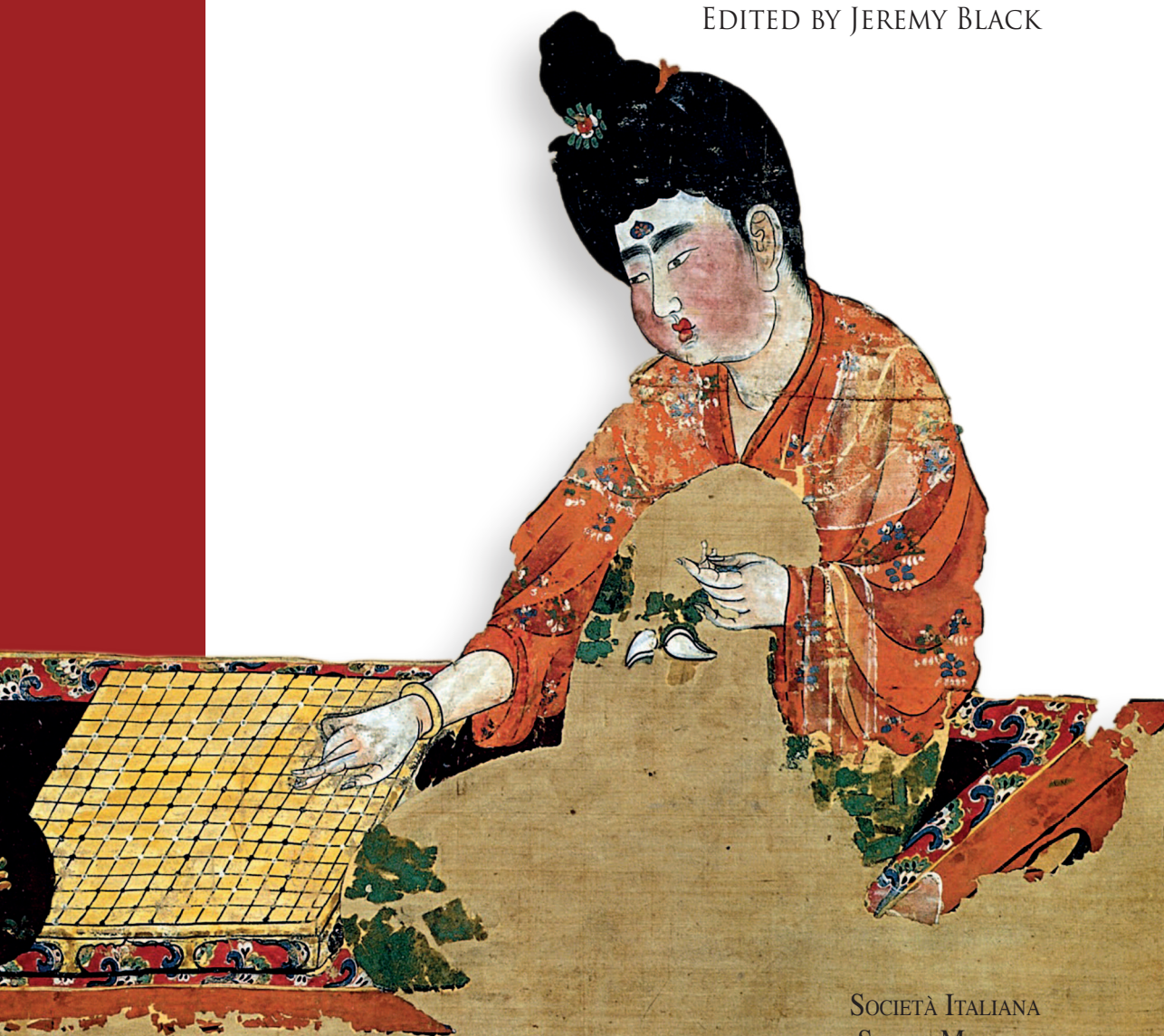


The Practice of Strategy

A Global History

EDITED BY JEREMY BLACK



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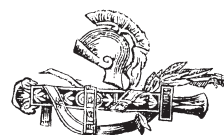
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L'expérience historique a favorisé la prise de conscience théorique. La raison, effectivement, ne s'exerce pas dans le vide, elle travaille toujours sur une matière, mais Clausewitz distingue, sans les opposer, la conceptualisation et le raisonnement d'une part, l'observation historique de l'autre.

R. ARON, *Penser la guerre*, 1976, I, p. 456

Fondata nel 1984 da Raimondo Luraghi, la Società Italiana di Storia Militare (SISM) promuove la storia critica della sicurezza e dei conflitti con particolare riguardo ai fattori militari e alla loro interazione con le scienze filosofiche, giuridiche, politiche, economiche, sociali, geografiche, cognitive, visive e letterarie. La collana *Fvcina di Marte*, dal titolo di una raccolta di trattati militari italiani pubblicata a Venezia nel 1641, affianca la serie dei Quaderni SISM, ricerche collettive a carattere monografico su temi ignorati o trascurati in Italia. Include monografie individuali e collettive di argomento storico-militare proposte dai soci SISM e accettate dal consiglio scientifico.

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Strategy
A Global History

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On the cover:

Chinese Woman Playing Go. Color on silk, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region Museum. Unearthed at the Astana Graves in 1972 from the tomb number 187. The tomb also contained a copy of the book “Tian Bao San Zai” dated to the year 744. Image from z Hong Guo Ancient Calligraphy and Painting Appraisal Group. 1997. Zhongguo Huihua Complete Works Zhongguo Art Classification Complete Collection. Beijing: Wenwu Publishing House, Volume 1. Wikimedia Commons.

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To Prabhu Kashap in friendship

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Strategic Practice, an Introduction

JEREMY BLACK

Most writing on strategy deals with theory, or what presents itself sometimes as military science. Indeed much of it in effect is a meditation on Clausewitz and a search for alternatives, including, sometimes, the author of the piece in question. Such work has its interest, notably for intellectual thought, and its value as a source and means of reflection. Nevertheless, the extent to which strategic theory or science offers much as a guidance to what choices are made and how they are implemented is problematic. Indeed, this argument rests more on assertion than hard evidence. The classic medieval example of this is the frequent assertion that medieval commanders were influenced by Vegetius, the late Roman writer. Vegetius was much copied (by monks), but there is no evidence that he was read by generals.¹

That commanders, in the age of staff colleges, were lectured to about strategic issues and read theorists does not establish that they were influenced by them. Instead, there could have been ‘confirmation bias’ in some form or other, both in terms of commanders finding support for what they wanted to do and because they could believe it appropriate to cite theorists. Moreover, theorists could seek to argue for their influence, as with Basil Liddell Hart and his claims for his influence with regard to German *blitzkrieg* in 1939-41 and to Israeli methods in 1956 and 1967. That, however, did not establish such influence, and indeed there has been considerable scepticism about Liddell Hart’s claims. This scepticism is well justified. It could well be repeated for other commentators and commanders in the past for whom, however, evidence is limited other than in the shape of chronological proximity.

Theory and its influence in the age of staff colleges is one matter for then the institutional, political and weight of general staffs and their methods of pre-

1 Richard Abels and Stephen Morillo, ‘A Lying Legacy? A Preliminary Discussion of Images of Antiquity and Altered Reality in Medieval Military History,’ *Journal of Medieval Military History*, 3 (2005), pp. 1-13, and Morillo, ‘Battle Seeking: The Contexts and Limits of Vegetian Strategy,’ *ibid.*, 1 (2002), pp. 21-4.

scription became significant. To be influential, the military had to demonstrate that it could calculate the incalculable, and the same has to be said of civilian strategists.

Yet, while commanders are trained by experience and not by lectures, theory is not a mere abstraction with no relation to experience. Indeed, between theory and practice, there is a relationship which produces the knowledge of war that is codified and applied in concepts, doctrines, procedures and planning. And, while this is not apparent in the important, even dominant, popular side of the subject,² military history to a degree is precisely a theory, science or at least assessment of war practice, including a critical assessment of strategic visions and theories as well as decision-making. Thus, historical interpretation is in part a theory of various strategic experiences of the past. In its original meaning of the 1770s, strategy meant generalship, or the ‘art’ of the general, which was a theorisation of practice.

How about the prior situation? Then military theory as a defined topic, specifically concerning what would now be seen as strategy, may well have been limited in scope and content, and not least because there was scant use of a vocabulary that approximates to what would later be seen as strategy. At the same time, as a caveat to this discussion, and that even for recent times, there is no “Ur” or fundamental state of, or for, strategy, and thus no one description of it; and that is so whether or not we are considering theory or practice. Instead, there are significant variations, with a variety of factors, contexts and spheres, the words all have differing connotations, at play. Some overlapped, including chronological, cultural, religious, political, ideological and service, elements or axes of strategy.

These variations do not prevent discussion in terms of strategy and theory, but they underline how difficult it is to argue with reference to precise categories. Indeed, readers will notice contrasts in content, categorisation and tone between the contributions in this volume. Such contrasts reflect the correct situation, one that is framed by the specifics of particular military cultures, rather than the idea of an axiomatic *a priori* set of determining definitions. The pursuit of such definitions has been one of the major mistakes of part of the literature on strategic theory, and is more generally symptomatic of a fascination with philosophy, and philosophy of a certain type, than with the porosity of usage and, even more, categorisation in the past, the latter helping establish the basis for usage. Indeed, one aspect of engagement with classic strategic theory, whether or not

2 Jeremy Black, *Histories of War* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2024).

discussed in scientific terms or presented accordingly, is that it does violence to the past by seeking to reduce it to precisions and thus quasi-mathematical prediction, including proscriptive rules. The search for principles of war, whether or not expressed in terms of a geometric theory, or what Clausewitz contemptuously termed ‘methodismus,’ is unhelpful.

This search is a major problem whatever the source of this pursuit. For long, the affirmation of determining definitions was an aspect of a Westernisation in the sense of an application of a Western matrix of knowledge. This was (and continues to be) suspect intellectually and historically, but, nevertheless, remains highly significant, for the universal validity of categories is a central aspect of Western intellectual thought. This notion is more particularly the case with progressivist thought based on the idea of the diffusion of best practice.

In contrast, strategic theory should address the latent imprecision and variations of thought and related conceptualisations. Furthermore, the study of strategic practice represents an engagement with the realities of the past in their range, variety and conceptual imprecision. It is the very extent of the latter that makes strategy workable as a concept; for, if any human phenomenon is handled in a too precise a fashion, it becomes of limited value and applicability. This can be seen for example in attempts to establish clear distinctions between strategy and policy, or between the strategic and operational dimensions. So also with employing such a pattern of classification-markers in order for example to differentiate periods of time or types of military activity, as with essentials of eighteenth-century strategy, naval strategy or insurgency strategy, and so on. This is the case whether we are looking at strategic theory or strategic practice. This approach is that of Middle-Platonist essentialism (the description of stages leading to the one ‘true state’), one turned into the easy practice of Neo-Platonism. However, the argument that there is a true state inevitably confronts difficulties when contrasting examples and trajectories are emphasised. In that, as in much else, there is a similarity with Social Darwinism.

This point about the friction of application can be taken further to consider the looseness of theory. In practice, theory was and is generally understood and/or applied in terms of particular circumstances, such that practice created and creates theory. That is an accurate critique of some aspects of theorisation but it is necessary from the outset to emphasise the contingent, conjunctural and indeterminate. Clausewitz set the content and tone by underlining the fog of war and the resulting incalculability of outcomes. He also stressed the latent irrationality or paranoia inherent in the situation of conflict. Situational awareness is

overwhelmed by a range of factors and contexts.

Nevertheless, with regard to practice creating theory rather than simply being the fiction that affects it, there is a point here about the direction of influence, one analogous to other systems of belief and thought. Influence in general is more frequently asserted than demonstrated. That, however, is scarcely surprising given the difficulty of proof of linkage or indeed lineage: citation can demonstrate not influence in ideas but affirmation through selected authority. During conflict, reason is affected by the rapidly sequential (if not well-nigh simultaneous) combat-induced receptivity of neural inputs that can affect the ability to make cognitively sound decisions. This phenomenon strains the capability of any historian to recapture accurately all the multi-dimensionality of what goes on in this situation.

Theory might have been better understood, and still should be, in terms of the application of example. In this case the dataset was (and is) being not the writings of those seen, notably by themselves, as theorists, but rather the past. Thus examples from history were and are deployed, whether Schlieffen employing Cannae or the modern use as mental props of episodes such as ‘Munich’ or ‘Suez,’ ‘Vietnam’ or ‘Iraq,’ with the usage, however, itself contestable, rather than being the fixed lesson that is intended. ‘Syria’, ‘Ukraine’ or ‘Taiwan’ will gain traction as a result.

The apparent lessons of the past are highly subjective. Indeed, this is already the case with the Ukraine war of 2022-23 which is being used to support all sorts of interpretations about the nature of modern warfare. In contrast, an analysis showing that that conflict has had several stages would be more pertinent as, even more, would a contextualisation in terms of the range and variety of modern warfare. This dilemma always leads back to the problem of over-simplification and the falling back upon encapsulated, arbitrary labels, which are the moral and structural hazards for any historian.

This point includes the idea of strategic culture, one that can be seen as a branch of strategic theory, with all the weaknesses to which the latter is prone. Thus, there has been a tendency to treat countries as having specific, geographically-linked and distinctive theories and practices even though there is much evidence, as in China, of variations in both theory (not least in the sense of tasks) and practice.

Through apparent ‘lessons’ established memories and readings were shaped as what has been termed strategic culture, and that process represents the prime format of strategy. It is one in which strategic questions, indeed theses, lend

themselves to particular circumstances, and, in turn, accounts of the latter serve to establish general points. The role of history is explained and institutionalised in specific countries and within individual militaries; and sometimes in a contradictory fashion to that of the other combatants. This situation underlines the fragility of theory as a guide, as opposed to as a literature in which generalities can preside, many of them inherently vacuous whatever their interest.

If readings of the past, indeed often from the past, are the most potent aspect of theory, these readings are moulded by the exigencies of strategic practice in the moment. Key determinants include whether the power in question is the aggressor or the recipient, and, domestically, whether the perspective is insurrectionary or counter-insurrectionary. The latter point needs underlining, although much of the literature of strategic theory follows a classic pattern of focusing on international conflict. That approach, however, underplays the role of insurgencies. This is not only true of conventional strategic theory, but also of the discussion of strategic practice.

Whatever the task, there are the strategic issues for states and militaries of prioritisation and the related question of allocation, both of resources and of precedence in time-sequences. The nature as well as content of planning is a key element of strategic practice.

Readers are invited to turn to the essays. They should be read as a whole, but each also represents an important aspect of military history and can be read in isolation, which, indeed, is the frequent practice with collected works. For convenience, and due to the impact of the example of the past, the organisation is chronological. Yet, and this point is more generally true, that does not inherently demonstrate a pattern of influence, still less causation. The common theme is that strategy is, as it was always, too important to be left primarily to discussion in terms of theory and or science. Indeed, strategy is essentially the rationalisation, at the time or subsequently, of an events-based practice. As an instance of methodological contrasts, practice is more clearly intuitive and specific, and not deductive. That situation helps explain why strategy can involve a process or goal of rationalisation, and with exigencies, vocabularies and rhetoric accordingly. Indeed, strategy therefore is inherently political in that this rationalisation is a political process, whether or not politics extends to the rivalries of the individual services. As is frequently forgotten, generals are politicians in uniform, although they are only apt to see themselves as such in authoritarian states.

Yet, the military investment in particular views greatly affects their account of military history and this can be highly misleading. *Victory to Defeat. The*

British Army 1918-40 (2023) by Richard Dannatt and Robert Lyman provided a questionable account which was presumably influenced by Dannatt having been Chief of the General Staff (head of the army) from 2006 to 2009.

As a separate point, prior strategic choices and operational methods can face difficulties in being adapted both to the enemy and to events, as the Russians showed against Ukraine in 2022. As a result, an events-based practice or emergent strategy provides more flexible possibilities. Again, this situation should be reflected in the discussion. The events-based practice is not simply a matter of the military contingencies, but includes the political contexts and circumstances that are central to peacetime preparations and warfare itself, ranging from alliance-dynamics to domestic resolves.

More generally, strategy, if understood as the relationships between ends, ways and means in power politics, is not necessarily military, as the use of diplomatic strategy as a concept indicates. That point does not mean that strategy should not be discussed with reference to war but simply that military factors are not the only ones at play. Indeed, as strategy is involved in both goals and means, there is a wide range of culturally contingent factors that should be under consideration, not least that of the criteria of success, both at the time and subsequently, that are to be adopted.

One of the major problems in conceiving and executing strategy is how best to claim and communicate success. This claim then becomes the first draft of history, for the present becomes the past, while the presentation of the past becomes a key way of trying to influence the present, not least by establishing norms and filling out rhetoric. The exemplary account of success then becomes the directed past which plays through into the battlefields of military history. These see plenty of rhetoric and facile discussion alongside the cooler analysis of scholarship.

Repeatedly, however, instead of an exposition in terms of the values of the past, their explanation, instead, is readily asserted in an anachronistic fashion in terms of those of the present; not least with countries and militaries the clear-cut building blocks, and leaders given marks for skill. Applying the past to the present, is a related issue. Historians, but, even more, other commentators, are apt indiscriminately if not unconsciously to shift back and forth from one to the other. Synthesised accounts are also encouraged by the fields of memory studies and post-memory history. Moreover, in asserting some sort of pattern, the notion of variety, let alone the practice of caution, are not ones that are easily part of this equation or of the broader discussion. Instead, there is an aggregation in

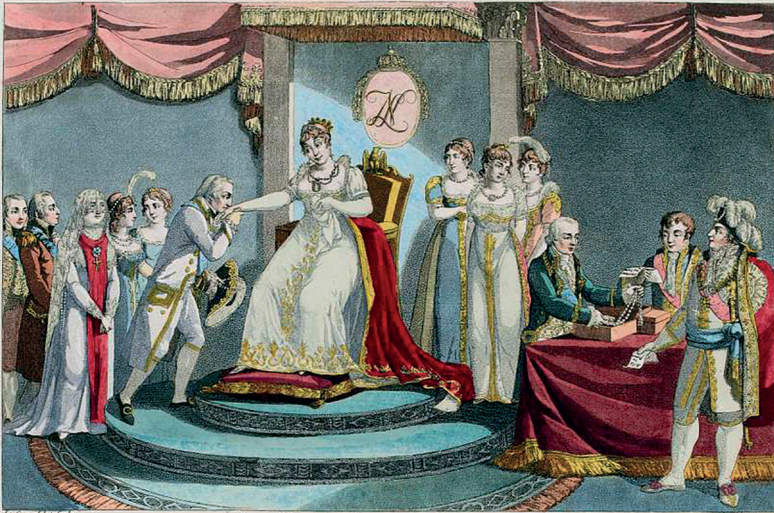
achievement and experience, and notably so in approaching the past in current terms, as in labelling periods revolutionary, and yet without due reference to differing views at the present. Military writers tend to be particularly reliant on assertion.

Much current writing, both historical and addressing the present, but conspicuously not this collection, focuses on the West, and does so to such an extent that Western commentators and the Western public frequently fail to appreciate the strategic assumptions and values, and hence strategies, of non-Western opponents or those of the past. This is foolish as goals, means and contexts (materials and cultural) are the parameters within which strategy as an analytical category was formulated and must be evaluated.

In contrast, the absence of that asymmetry of understanding is a key feature of this collection. It is not the only approach for, by its very nature, strategic practice evades the overall clarity sought in some of the discussion of strategic theory. However, this collection offers contributions by leading scholars who, individually, present important assessments and, collectively, provide a significant assessment of the subject.

16 Mars 1810

N° 1



Remise de S.M. Impériale Marie Louise d'Autriche à S. A. le Prince de Neuchâtel

Le 16 Mars 1810, S.M. l'Impératrice, après avoir quitté ses habits de voyage à Altona, se rendit avec tout son cortège, vers deux heures après midi, dans une baraque qui en avait construit à une lieue au delà de Braunsau, et destinée à la cérémonie de la remise.
Après que chacun eut pris sa place et que le Prince de Neuchâtel, commissaire de S.M. l'Empereur des Français et M. le comte de Lahr-de, faisant l'office de secrétaire de la remise, furent introduits ainsi que toutes les personnes faisant partie du cortège des deux souverains, le Prince de Neuchâtel se présenta à l'Impératrice et lui demanda la permission de lui faire la main en prenant congé d'elle. S.M. la lui accorda ainsi qu'à tous les membres et dames de son cortège qui l'avaient accompagnée depuis Vienne. Sa Majesté ne put recevoir ses lettres. Pendant cette cérémonie, les secrétaires Autrichiens et Français se tenaient l'un des perrons et jouaient de l'Impératrice.

Paris chez la Citoyenne, chez Moitteux, N° 10.
G. 32191

Remise de S.M. Impériale Marie Louise d'Autriche à S. A. le Prince de Neuchâtel, engraving, 1810, Musée Carnevalet, Histoire de Paris, CC-PD.

Grand Patterns of Strategy, old and new

BEATRICE HEUSER and ISABELLE DUYVESTYEN

We have been invited to contribute a chapter to this work on the basis of our editorship of a two-volume work on the *History of Strategy* that is due to appear with Cambridge University Press. Meanwhile, Jeremy Black, who was on our advisory board, proposed us to join this online collection covering similar ground. We are drawing on the fifty-odd contributions in those two volumes in the present chapter, and want to express our gratitude to our own contributors. Rather than duplicating our own conclusions in those volumes, however, in the following, we will take a fresh approach. We shall home in on only two particular dimensions of strategy, one a tool, the other a key consideration that changed fundamentally over time. Both demonstrate both continuity and change in the history of strategy.

Constant Dimensions of Strategy-Making

For millennia, thinkers on war have pondered its particular manifestation as a function of different cultures, different particularities of the polities waging it. They have attributed particular “ways of war” to conditions of weather and the lie of the land, to the temperaments of particular peoples, or to the political constitutions of the polities engaged in war. Clausewitz who merely picked up on earlier writings is the one most frequently quoted on this topic, as he noted that each period, each people had its own particular way of waging war.

There are some longer-term constants, however, ever-present in the conduct of war, and in strategic decisions on how to wage war. In our two-volume work on the strategies of different rulers and polities over time and around the world, we have defined strategy, following Kimberly Kagan, as the setting of a ruler’s or a government’s objectives and of prioritising among them in order to allocate resources and choose the best means to prosecute a violent engagement.¹ In this

1 B. Heuser and I. Duyvesteyn: “Introduction”, in B. Heuser and I. Duyvesteyn (eds): *The Cam-*

process of strategy making – usually revolving around the prioritisation of the allocation of finite resources – there are a number of dimensions which, implicitly or explicitly, have to be taken into account. Across time and space, we note the continued significance of geography, the population and material resources, as well as allies and decision-making processes.

Debating the Dimensions of Strategy

Very simply, the dimensions of strategy should begin, as already noted by authors of Antiquity, with *geography*. They will include *demography*: not only the size of a population, but the *proportion* of it that is available to wage war, also its *skills*. They will also include other *resources*, *money* (the famous “sinews of war”) and *military means* available. They will also include *how strategy is developed*, and whether it has the support of the polity that is to apply it.

Consider the following famous speech attributed to the Athenian leader Pericles by the author of the great history of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides. Pericles was making the case that Athens would prevail in war against Sparta given what land (and sea) Athens controlled (geography), the ships it had (resources), and the seafaring skills of its population (demography).² The Spartans, he argued, were mainly farmers who could not afford to be absent from their homes from long, and lacked seafaring *skills*, highlighted by this first passage.

For our naval skill is of more use to us for service on land, than their military skill for service at sea. Familiarity with the sea they will not find an easy acquisition. ... is there any chance of anything considerable being effected by an agricultural, un-seafaring population, who will besides be prevented from practising by the constant presence of strong squadrons of observation from Athens? ... seamanship, just like anything else, is a matter of art, and will not admit of being taken up occasionally as an occupation for times of leisure; on the contrary, it is so exacting as to leave leisure for nothing else.³

There were not the *resources*, the public funds – no accumulation of state capital – to hire mariners to man a fleet.

bridge History of Strategy vol. 1 (CUP, expected 2024); see K. Kagan: “Redefining Roman Grand Strategy”, *The Journal of Military History* Vol. 70 No. 2 (2006), p. 348.

2 R. Konijnendijk: “Ancient Greece; Strategy of the City States (500-400BCE)”, in Heuser and Duyvesteyn (eds): *The Cambridge History of Strategy* vol. 1.

3 This and the following excerpts are taken from Richard Crawley’s translation, Thucydides: *The Peloponnesian War* (London, J. M. Dent; New York, E. P. Dutton. 1910), Book I.140-145.

Even if they were to touch the moneys at Olympia or Delphi, and try to seduce our foreign sailors by the temptation of higher pay, that would only be a serious danger if we could not still be a match for them by embarking our own citizens and the aliens resident among us. But in fact by this means we are always a match for them; and, best of all, we have a larger and higher class of native ... sailors among our own citizens than all the rest of Hellas.

(In fact, he doubted that Athens' foreign sailors would allow themselves to be bribed.) Nor indeed did Sparta have the money to construct fortifications in Attica, the land around Athens, to threaten the city state.

"Besides," he noted, "they have not command of the sea." *Geographically*, Athens had great advantages as a coastal city-state commanding many islands in the Aegean onto which the Athenians could withdraw and from which they could be supplied by sea. If the Spartans

march against our country we will sail against theirs, and it will then be found that the desolation of the whole of Attica is not the same as that of even a fraction of Peloponnese; for they will not be able to supply the deficiency except by a battle, while we have plenty of land both on the islands and the continent. The rule of the sea is indeed a great matter. ... Suppose that we were islanders; can you conceive a more impregnable position?

And given Athens' strong navy, the Spartans could "never prevent our sailing into their country and raising fortifications there, and making reprisals with our powerful fleet." Indeed, given Athens' naval superiority, the Spartans, "with a small squadron ... might hazard an engagement, encouraging their ignorance by numbers; but the restraint of a strong force will prevent their moving, and through want of practice they will grow more clumsy, and consequently more timid."

Finally, said Pericles, the Spartans needed to rely on their allies, but lacked "the single council-chamber requisite to prompt and vigorous action, and the substitution of a diet composed of various races, in which every state possesses an equal vote, and each presses its own ends, a condition of things which generally results in no action at all." In other words, their *collective decision-making processes* sucked.

Having passed review all these dimensions of strategy – geography, the respective human resources and their skills, treasure, allies and decision-making processes, Pericles suggested the following strategic guidelines:

Dismissing all thought of our land and houses, we must vigilantly guard the sea and the city. No irritation that we may feel for the former must provoke us to a battle with the numerical superiority of the Peloponnesians. A victory would only be succeeded by another battle against the same superiority: a reverse involves the loss of our allies, the source of our strength, who will not remain quiet a day after we become unable to march against them. We must cry not over the loss of houses and land but of men's lives; since houses and land do not gain men, but men gain them.⁴

In other words, he recommended that Athens should, if necessary, temporarily cede territory and let the Spartans lay their land to waste, rather than risk a land battle. Here, then, a complex strategy put forward, even in the Fifth Century BC, considering all the dimensions of strategy named above, to build a sophisticated plan. What more evidence is needed to prove that strategic thinking existed, a good 1300 years before the term strategy was used in a modern sense by the Byzantine Emperor Leo VI round AD 900?⁵

Further dimensions of strategy were identified even by classical authors. One of them, resonating in the last part of Pericles' speech quoted about, was articulated more fully in much later times. It concerns the constitution of the polities at war, and how this constitution would influence strategy-making. Was it a tyranny with little concern for the lives of its subjects? Was it a republic governed in the interest of its citizens?⁶ It is noteworthy, however, that in the Peloponnesian War which was cast in the account of Thucydides as a conflict between two political systems, the Spartan monarchy vs. Athenian democracy, speeches were made in both polities to rally the citizens to the cause. Only, in Athens, on several occasions Thucydides recorded speeches made for and against strategic decisions. On both sides, the consulted citizens took a vote; on the Spartan side, however, the decision was taken "by acclamation" not by vote.⁷

The very decision-making, the strategy-making process would thus depend on a polity's constitution, whether formally fixed or observed by tradition and practice. Interestingly, however, we have evidence of debates even in all but the most brutal dictatorships.⁸ To give just one random non-European example, on

4 Thucydides: *The Peloponnesian War*, Book I.140-145.

5 Beatrice Heuser: *The Evolution of Strategy* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), chapter 1.

6 We find this idea in Guibert's *General Essay on Tactics* and in Henry Lloyd's reflections on his experience of the wars of the mid-18th century.

7 Thucydides: *The Peloponnesian War*, Book I.87

8 Lawrence Freedman, *Command in War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2022).

the eve of the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 against a combined army of Byzantines and Armenians, the Seljuk sultan Alp Arslan

assembled those possessed of judgement from amongst the men of war, of administration and care for the Muslims and insight into the consequences, and he sought their counsel about how to achieve correctness of judgement. They consulted amongst themselves for a short while. Then their opinion was agreed on meeting [the enemy in battle].⁹

Thus the account of the account of the Andalusian counsellor Al-Turtushi, written half a century after the battle. Other than telling us that there was *consultation*, resulting in the agreement to go to battle, however, we are not told what their agreed strategy was, although we read that the Muslim forces homed in on the Byzantine emperor's tent, arrested him, spread the fake news that he was dead and thus decapitated the enemy forces, so to speak.¹⁰

Was Thucydides a fluke, a one-off, given that so many works on strategy may quote him, but then fast forward to Machiavelli and the Renaissance? We found that this was not the case, even though later authors may have expressed things differently, sometimes with other dimensions in mind that seem less relevant or even irrelevant to us today. These would include, as in our examples below, the spiritual dimension of a war (as in the crusades, that had the purpose of cleansing crusaders of their previous sins by making the sacrifice of the long and dangerous pilgrimage that a large proportion did not survive), or the court rivalries that found their expression in the elite debates about how to proceed (the latter are of crucial importance even today and should be considered much more).

Turning, then, to our next example, *geographic* and *political* considerations were also at the heart of a debate about which strategy to adopt in a medieval monarchy, that of France, when King Louis IX embarked on the Seventh Crusade.¹¹ Instead of taking the direct route to the Holy Land, Louis and his barons first turned in at Cyprus, a friendly Christian kingdom. But from there, again, the French crusaders did not head East for Jaffa or Acre, but South, for the Sultanate of Egypt, which from the South dominated the Holy Land. In late 1249, Sire de Joinville tells us, after his barons had successively disembarked in

9 Translation by and in Carole Hillenbrand: *Turkish Myth and Muslim Symbol: The Battle of Manzikert* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 28.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 29-31.

11 Sophie Ambler: "Strategies in Latin Christendom, c. 1000-1500", in Heuser and Duyvesteyn (eds): *The Cambridge History of Strategy*

Damietta, including eventually the Count of Poitiers,

The king summoned all the barons of the army to decide in what direction he should go, whether to Alexandria or to Cairo. The good Count Pierre of Brittany, as well as the majority of the barons, agreed in advising him to go and besiege Alexandria, because that city had a good harbour, where the ships bringing food for the army could land their supplies. But the Count of Artois [the king's brother] was of a contrary opinion, maintaining that he would never agree to their going anywhere except to Babylon,¹² because it was the chief city of the kingdom of Egypt, and if you wished to kill the serpent, you must first of all crush its head.

Thus here we find the geographically and thus logistically preferable option touted by one side, the seizing of the capital – like the decapitation of the enemy leadership practised by Alp Arslan at Manzikert another example of going for a *centre of gravity* as defined centuries later by Clausewitz¹³ – by the other, with the aim of crushing the enemy's political centre. “The king rejected the barons' advice in favour of his brother's.”¹⁴ Thus the host set out for Cairo, but on the way met their nemesis at Mansoura, where they were defeated by the sultan's army while attempting to take and hold this strongpoint en route to Cairo. This was the turning point of the Seventh Crusade, leading to the withdrawal of the crusaders' army.

While in the previous example, the king seems to have decided against the majority among his counsellors, perhaps swayed by his brother's argument, perhaps merely by the fact that it was his brother, we find another French monarch and his counsellors operating more subtly four centuries later. The example is that of the decision as to whether or not to prolong a campaign and seek battle was taken by Louis XIV of France.¹⁵ After a very successful start in one of his wars with Spain pushing into Flanders in 1676, Louis XIV at the head of his army had to decide whether to seek battle or not. His own forces were superior to those facing him, even though the contingent under the Duke of Orleans had not yet reached him.

The marshals de Schomberg, Humières, la Fueillade, Lorges, etc. gathered their horses around the king, along with some of the most dis-

12 What was meant was Cairo.

13 Carl von Clausewitz : *On War*, ed. & trs. by Peter Paret and Michael Howard (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1976), Book VIII.4.

14 Joinville : *Vie de Saint Louis*, Jacques Monfrin (ed.), (Paris : Garnier, 1995), para 183, p. 254f.

15 Jamel Ostwald : “The Strategies of Louis XIV”, Heuser and Duyvesteyn (eds): *The Cambridge History of Strategy*

tinguished among the generals and chief courtiers, to hold a sort of war council. The whole army was crying out for battle, and all these gentlemen could see what was required, but the King's presence was preventing them [from speaking frankly], and even more so [his chief minister] Louvois, who knew his master, and who had been talking for two hours when it began to look as if things might come to a head. Louvois, in order to impress the company, spoke first, as a rapporteur, to argue against giving battle. Marshal d'Humières, his close friend and dependant, and Marshal de Schomberg, who was very obliging to him, agreed with him. The Marshal de la Feuillade, out of step with Louvois, but a favourite who knew no less well what opinion to take, after a few prevaricating remarks, concluded as they did. [Marshal] de Lorges, inflexibly committed to the truth, concerned for the glory of the King, sensitive to the good of the State, ill-favoured by Louvois ... opted with all his might for the battle, and he argued so fervently for it that even Louvois and the marshals remained without reply. The few men of lesser rank who spoke afterwards dared to displease Louvois even less; but unable to weaken the reasons of Marshal de Lorges, they only stammered. The King, who listened to everything, again noted the opinions, or rather simply [counted] the voices, without repeating what had been said by each one, then, with a word of regret at seeing himself held back by such good reasons, and of the sacrifice he was making of his desires to what was of benefit to the State, turned back, and there was no further question of battle.

The Duke of Saint-Simon claimed cynically, however, that the true reason why the King wanted to break off the campaign and return to Versailles was that he longed to return to his mistress, Mme de Montespan.¹⁶

Again, we have evidence here of deliberations, only in this example, unlike those reported by Thucydides and by Joinville, Saint-Simon does not go through the pros and cons presented by the respective sides, but contents himself to tell us about the unspoken reasons for the king's decision, his relief veiled by pretended regret, supported by those whose interest in the king's favour was greater than their interest, Saint-Simon implies, in the best outcome for their country.

Interests, of course, and thus war aims would differ, depending on who was involved in strategy-making. If a war was being fought exclusively about the inheritance rights of medieval or early modern European princes, these would generally wish to expose their own populations to danger as little as possible,

16 MM. Chéruel et Ad. Regnier Fils (eds.) *Mémoires de* [Louis de Rouvroy, duc de] *Saint-Simon*, vol. 12 (Paris : Librairie Hachette, 1887), p. 6f.

to keep them productive, paying their taxes, so that largely professional armies could be paid and provisioned. The armies would be largely professional if they were employed for expeditionary war, rather than for territorial self-defence. The *Heerbann* or *Arrièreban* in which peasants of fighting age were called up to fight for their lord and prince generally applied only to the defence of their own country. If the war was one of collective self-defence against large-scale foreign invasion, especially when the foreigners were pagans or Muslims – Huns, Goths, Saxons, Vikings, Arabs, Turks – who had no inhibitions about massacring Christians or carrying them off as slaves, or if an *ideological* element came in – initially, religion or confession, later political ideologies – the population itself were directly involved and motivated. (It was only such conflicts that Clausewitz imagined when in his secondary “trinity” he articulated the assumption that the conduct of war would be influenced by government, the armed forces, and the emotional involvement of the people.¹⁷)

Quite late on, authors began to identify *technological innovation* as having a strong bearing on strategy. What we now think of as the technological revolution introduced by gunpowder was not recognised as such by the majority of authors of the 15th to 17th centuries.¹⁸ Then, of course, things speeded up considerably from the second half of the 19th century, and there is consensus that the invention and use of nuclear weapons dramatically changed the world in an unprecedented way.

The use of tools other than battle in the pursuit of dynastic or collective polity interests also goes back to the beginnings of recorded history. Naval blockades or sieges aiming to cut off an enemy from resources and imports (often consisting of vital food supplies) or battles resulting from attempts to break out of blockades were among the earliest forms of naval warfare, as the Pericles speech suggests. Scorched earth tactics – burning the enemy’s harvests – were widely practiced, and it became one of the earliest international conventions, often ignored but nonetheless found in many cultures, to abstain from burning fruit trees as this would not just affect the following months but would affect later generations.¹⁹ The opposite strategy – buying off attackers – was practised as well throughout history, the most widely known example being the protec-

17 Clausewitz: *On War*, Book I.1.

18 Beatrice Heuser: “Denial of Change: the Military Revolution as seen by Contemporaries”, in Mauro Mantovani (ed): *International Bibliography for Military History*, No. 32 (Leyden: Brill, 2012), pp.3-27.

19 See for example in the Hebrew Bible: Deuteronomy 20:16-20.

tion money paid by the native populations of Britain to the Vikings, referred to “Danegeld”, and the many presents made by East Roman rulers to would-be aggressors (which unfortunately often had them come back for more).

Many non-kinetic tools strategy have a long history and persisted; others changed or even disappeared, replaced by new dimensions. It is worth stressing that not even geography or climate are perpetual. Many harbours of Antiquity or of the Middle Ages have silted up, new ones have been constructed, changing key access points for navies and the need to defend them. Climate change has accelerated catastrophically in our own times, and the consequences of the melting of the Arctic and the opening of the Arctic sea route to shipping around the year are affecting strategies as we write, but fluctuations in climate at various points allowed armies to attack over frozen lakes, bays or rivers. Geographic obstacles still stand in the way of land and sea forces, but have been mitigated by the constructions of canals such as those at Suez or Panama, or the Baltic-North Sea Canal (the sole purpose of which was military), and they can at some expense be overcome by airlift.

In the following we want to focus on two examples, one of a particular practice of strategy that has disappeared, the other one that has come into being only in the 19th century.

Example 1. Dynastic Marriages as a defunct tool of strategic practice

Dynastic marriages as a tool of conflict-oriented statecraft, but also as a part of military strategic practice go back to Antiquity. Dynastic marriages were made for the purposes of securing allies over a longer period of time, or to end wars and ensure a lasting peace. They took mainly two forms, one of which was more suitable to strategy-making than the other. That more suitable presupposed that above all the recipient ruler was polygamous. In this case, a princess or aristocratic girl or young woman would be given to a ruler as a gift, much like a good horse or jewellery or particularly well-crafted and decorated sword or set of armour.²⁰ The Hebrew Bible brags that King Solomon had a harem of 700 wives and 300 concubines, mostly presents made to him. (He went against Jewish law in keeping them as Jewish law forbade intermarriage with foreigners.)²¹ While the Achaemenid dynasty that ruled Persia did not follow

²⁰ See for example, Mesut Uyar: “Strategies of the Ottoman Empire”, in Duyvesteyn & Heuser: *The Cambridge History of Strategy*, Vol. I

²¹ 1 Kings 11.

this practice,²² Alexander III of Macedon, who brought this first Persian Empire to its end, married Parysatis and Stateira (Barsine), daughters of the last two Achaemenid rulers, at the mass wedding ceremony he arranged at Susa to cement the union between his Macedonian and Greek officers and the Persians.²³ In Han period China (206 BC-220 AD), Han princesses were sent to the rulers of client states as brides to keep the peace,²⁴ a practice that would be continued under the following dynasties.²⁵ Once the Romans had overthrown their early kings, they scorned dynastic marriages as un-republican, and it was thus that their relationships with Egyptian Queen Cleopatra VII were black marks against both Caesar and Mark Antony that contributed to turning many against them. This attitude continued even under the principate: Roman emperors were not to marry foreigners. According to Suetonius, Emperor Titus loved and promised marriage to the Syrian Hasmonean Queen Berenice, but was persuaded to send her away from Rome as public opinion would not tolerate it.²⁶

It mattered little whether the young woman in question came from a monogamous culture, as Byzantine princesses would find when they were gifted to Muslim potentates when their fathers saw this as preferable to warfare. Their influence (or lack of it) on the recipient side would generally be a function of the host nation culture, not of that from which they came.²⁷

The second category often turned out to be highly problematic: here, the young women – and sometimes young men, as in the case of the marriage of the Habsburg scions Philip the Handsome and his son Maximilian I, or several German princes of the 19th century – were married off to heirs of other dynasties with a clear recognition that a (mainly male) child that might spring from that marriage would have succession rights. The reasoning behind this was interesting: it was both the symbolic merger of dynasties to secure a lasting peace and a

22 John Hyland: “Teispid and Achaemenid Persia (c. 550-330 BCE)”, in Duyvesteyn & Heuser: *The Cambridge History of Strategy*, Vol. I Ch. 3.

23 Andrew Fear: “Philip II, Alexander III and the Macedonian Empire”, in Duyvesteyn & Heuser: *The Cambridge History of Strategy*, Vol. I Ch.5.

24 Peter Lorge: “Beyond Sunzi: Military Strategy in China to the 3rd Century CE”, in Duyvesteyn & Heuser: *The Cambridge History of Strategy*, Vol. I Ch. 2.

25 David Graff: “Chinese Imperial Strategy, 180-1127 CE”, in Duyvesteyn & Heuser: *The Cambridge History of Strategy*, Vol. I Ch.7.

26 “Titus reginam Berenicen, cui etiam nuptias pollicitus ferebatur, statim ab Urbe dimisit invitam.” (Suet. Tit. 7.2).

27 Georgios Chatzelis: “Byzantine Strategy (630-1204 CE)”, in Duyvesteyn & Heuser: *The Cambridge History of Strategy*, Vol. I, Ch.12.

gamble on the fertility of the couple and any other couples close to succession.

On the Indian Subcontinent, the Gupta rulers were monogamous, or at most had two wives. Marriages in both directions – accepting a princess from an allied polity as a wife or giving princesses to an ally in marriage – were an important part of their strategies. Chandragupta I married a princess from the Licchavi clan in the Himalayas, raising his political status. The wedding cemented an alliance that would enable him to deter and then conquer other immediate neighbours. Their son succeeded his father to the Gupta throne, who in turn was succeeded by his son Chandragupta II, who in 395 married his daughter to Rudrasena II, ruler of the neighbouring Vakataka. Here we see an early example of what such politically arranged marriages in monogamous dynasties could lead to. Rudrasena II relinquishing his own father's religion, the worship of Shiva, and instead embracing the worship of Vishnu, the religion introduced to his court by his wife. Then when Rudrasena died relatively young, his Gupta queen became the regent and shaped Vakataka foreign policy in tune with Gupta interest.²⁸

Byzantine rulers turned their marriage politics into a fine art. Together with the spread of Christianity, which brought along the cult of Jewish kingship to tribal leaders who quickly recognised its benefits, Byzantine princesses given in marriage had a civilising mission. They would normally arrive along with a small court of theologians and scholars, with craftsmen, presents and fineries that would make local craftsmen marvel and seek to emulate them. Thus the Slav and Germanic families into which the princesses married would get a whiff of Roman civilisation which had long vanished or had never existed in the lands they ruled, with copies of Romano-Byzantine churches springing out of the ground from Muscovy to Cologne, with ivories, icons, sculptures and manuscript illuminations, and with imperial clothing and rituals copied on the court of Constantinople.²⁹ Elegantly and with little or no bloodshed, barbarian rulers would thus become sons-in-law of Byzantine emperors, be given honorary titles such as Caesar, and with their increasingly civilised polities would be harnessed to the cause of the defence of the Byzantine Empire and Byzantine interests.³⁰

In the Occident, marriage politics also had an element of Christian mission

28 Kaushik Roy: "The Gupta Empire: 319-544 CE", in Duyvesteyn & Heuser: *The Cambridge History of Strategy*, Vol. I, Ch. 9.

29 Chatzelis: "Byzantine Strategy (630-1204 CE)".

30 Edward Luttwak: *The grand strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

attached to it in the Early Middle Ages – a number of Christian princesses exported Christianity when they were married off to pagan tribal chiefs, an early and much celebrated example being the marriage of Frankish chief Clovis to Clothilde, a Christian Gothic princess, with whom he founded the Merovingian dynasty. Clothilde persuaded him to convert to Christianity, with the famous wager that he would do so if he won a victory against the pagan Alemanni, which he did at the very end of the 5th century. As this was the brand of Christianity that was favoured by Rome at the time, Clovis became the champion of the papacy, and acquired for France the claim to be “the oldest daughter of the Catholic Church”, and indeed to have a claim to leadership of Christendom – later transformed into the *mission civilisatrice* of bringing human rights and other aspects of modern civilisation to the rest of the world, and within Europe, the claim to leadership seen until this day. Not always exercised peacefully – French leadership of the crusades was engineered by Pope Urban II in 1095 precisely by appealing to the traditional claim to such leadership going back to Clovis – it has in any case been a key dimension of French strategy. France’s seat among the permanent five great powers in the UN Security Council ultimately stands in the tradition of this claim to leadership.

To illustrate how such dynastic marriages were seen as instrumental to cementing peace but also alliances against common enemies, here one example. In 1501, two toddlers, both only a year old, were engaged to each other by their parents. One was Claude, daughter of Valois King Louis XII of France and Anne of Brittany. The other was Charles, heir to the throne of Spain, who would later also become Holy Roman Emperor as Charles V. The baby bride’s young mother organised a big banquet to celebrate this event, quite a daring wager on fate, as she had already lost her four previous children in their early infancy.

An eyewitness recorded the entertainment that was provided at the banquet in Lyon, a dance full of political symbolism. Three couples of dancers performed – one dressed in the French fashion of the day, one in the German fashion (baby Charles’s father was a Habsburg prince), one in a distinctive Italian fashion. The three couples were suddenly joined by a further, single dancer of fierce mien, dressed up to look foreign and rich. He tried in turn to abduct each of the three ladies, but was repelled, and eventually retreated angrily. “This alien is to be understood as the Grand Turk, who at the time menaced France, Spain, Germany and Italy. And the couples of dancers ... were supposed to signify the unity, peace and agreement between the said countries, which were to be joined together so tightly by the strength of the marriage contract that ... the Turk will

not gain power over them.”³¹ Unfortunately for Europe, the engagement contracts were later dissolved, each child later marrying somebody else, setting the Habsburgs and the Valois (later the Bourbons) on a conflictual path of dynastic rivalry and wars of succession which would only end in the early 19th century.

But the opposite could also happen. The very wars of succession between the French Bourbons and the Spanish Habsburgs that took place in the second half of the 17th and the early 18th century were based on inheritance claims derived from marriages between Spanish princesses and future French kings. These marriages had been made, again, with the intention of cementing peace between the two great families of Europe. But the roulette of fertility (and the in-breeding of the Habsburgs who at various stages thought it wiser to keep their weddings within their family, leading to high infant mortality and then sterility in the last two generations of the Spanish Habsburgs) turned just these intentions upside down, leading to new wars.

Famously that was also the case with the late medieval marriages between the scions of English and French royal families: the Hundred Years’ War was the outcome of succession quarrels resulting from such marriages, as were later English claims to the French throne which was not formally abandoned until the end of the 18th century, even if it had long become a mere matter of ritual restatement without any political consequence attached. While the Salic law was interpreted to preclude the succession of women to the French throne itself, French kings happily claimed lands outside France inherited by their wives, thus progressively increasing the French crown domain by marriage or war of succession, if they encountered opposition. It was a serious blow to the French ruling Valois dynasty when Eleanor, heiress to Aquitaine, decided to divorce her monkish husband Louis VII of France and took with her all her lands which she brought to her second family with Plantagenet King Henry II of England. These lands, and Norman lands adjacent to the French royal domains that Henry had inherited, would be at the heart of the Hundred Years’ War, along with the direct claim to the French crown made by Plantagenet kings in a variant interpretation of the Salic Law (that women might not rule, but that their sons could inherit the claim to the throne).

By and by the dangers of such claims to thrones becoming a cause for war

31 Georges Doutrepoint & Omer Doutrepoint (eds.): *Chroniques de Jean Molinet* (Bruxelles 1935), Vol. II, p. 486f., cited in Dieter Mertens: „Europäischer Friede und Türkenkrieg im Spätmittelalter“, in Heinz Duchhardt (ed.): *Zwischenstaatliche Friedenswahrung im Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1991), p. 88f.

were recognised. The turning point arguably came when the Spanish War of Succession was ended in 1714 with the Peace of Utrecht: on the one hand, a French (Bourbon) prince was made the new king of Spain, but on the other, his grandfather Louis XIV renounced any claim to succession to the Spanish throne should his grandson's line die out. While the 18th and 19th century still saw dynastic marriages and the curious decision by newly created states – Greece and Rumania among them – to import foreign princes to be their rulers, dynastic succession wars gradually died out. The last among them were the Carlist Wars in Spain (1833-1876), in which rivalling claims to the succession to the French throne engendered civil war. Marriages between royal dynasties and aristocratic families continued to take place across state boundaries, but increasingly, nationalism spread as an ideology, carrying the assumption that land and the populations on it could no longer become the property of another country when the accident dynastic (in) fertility came to play. Royal domains were increasingly seen as national property, and thus linked in perpetuity to one nation or the other. And while European royalty continued to have a high percentage of “foreign” marriages, arranged marriages between dynasties increasingly gave way to love matches. Dynastic marriages to cement peace or alliances, or as legal underpinnings of war aims, are a tool of strategy that has disappeared from the modern world.

Example 2. Access to fuel as a new dimension of strategy

By contrast, technological developments made a different aspect of strategy extremely important: securing access to fuel, that with the invention of the steam engine and the industrial revolution became a vital resource of warfare. Unlike the eternal need to access food, for millennia, access to fuel played no role. From prehistory until the Industrial Revolution, armies relied on men's and animals' muscle power, and at sea, wind power for locomotion. Whether it was soldiers marching or cavalry, all that was needed in terms of consumption was to keep men and beasts fed and watered, and at best wood or other combustibles for a camp fire. When ships were driven by muscle power operating oars, or wind, all that was needed was food and water to keep the crew alive.

It was only with the invention of the steam engine that muscle power and wind were replaced by steam at sea and on land, where trains began to be used in the mid-19th century to transport soldiers. Not only did both revolutionise movement, making it faster and more calculable. They also created the need to stock coal and later diesel fuel along railway lines and sea lines of communica-

tion, and they turned parts of the world where these resources were found into areas of extreme importance to command strategically.

At the same time, coal, which had of course already been used previously for both domestic and industrial consumption, began to be of essence not only to keep the exploding populations of industrialised countries warm: congregated in sprawling towns, they could no longer rely on local supplies of firewood. The factories themselves, multiplying and expanding, required ever more coal and then later fuel oil, unless they were mills using waterpower. The latter could supply only limited energy until the large-scale introduction of electricity gained from dams. Crucially, while armies used horsepower even in the Second World War and soldiers are expected to march long distances even today, navies had become fully reliant upon coal and fuel oil by the end of the 19th century.

Henceforth, steam-powered ships needed to refuel. And for trading powers, this meant that access to coal and fuel depots became essential, indeed became a need over which wars might be waged. Just as the militarily-backed colonial expansion of the Netherlands, Britain, and France followed trade interests, the need for military bases along the way to distant colonies grew, triggering further imperial wars of conquests if rights of access were not granted amicably by treaty.

The sources of coal and oil also became strategic assets that were fought over. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71 ended with the cession of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany, ostensibly because the populations spoke a German dialect, but also in view of the coal fields and industry of those areas. By the time of the First World War, the control of the coal fields clustering along the French, Belgian, Luxembourg and German shared frontiers was an important *enjeu*, as was that of the Rumanian oil fields in the Second World War, by when only a fraction of oil and gas fields around Europe and in the Middle East and North Africa that are known today had been discovered let alone begun to be exploited systematically.

Ever since, calculations about dependence on coal and increasingly, oil and gas have had to be factored into strategy making in the context of cold and hot wars. Persia was brought under US influence in the 1950s to ensure access to its oil and to deny it to the USSR, a rival bidder for influence. The interest taken by European powers in tensions and wars in the Middle East in the 1960s and 1970s were greatly increased by the direct effects these had on oil prices in the rest of the world, thus including Europe. The oil producing countries could co-ordinate themselves to put pressure on oil importers with the non-ki-

netic strategic tool of export reductions and price increases, as the Oil Crisis of 1973/74 demonstrated so vividly.

Oil was also central to the three wars involving Iraq, starting with the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88.³² While the three wars had multiple causes, the presence of the largest oil reserves in the world and the access to them is of pivotal importance to understand their outbreak and dynamics. The reliance on oil informed many of the choices made in the 1980s, the Western response to the occupation of Kuwait in 1990 and the US-UK decision to intervene in 2003. The 1980-88 war between Iran and Iraq could be explained by unresolved territorial issues, as well as the threat Saddam Hussein perceived as emanating from the new Shite leadership of ayatollah Khomeini. Furthermore, there is evidence that Hussein wanted to capture a specific region, Khuzestan, with large oil reserves.³³ In the 1990s, the occupation of Kuwait even more dominated by a resource logic. Iraq owed Kuwait – again a country with huge oil deposits – substantial amounts of money, that were lent during the preceding war. Moreover, the perception that Kuwait contributed to overproduction of oil which depressed the price Iraq could obtain for its primary commodity export, also played a role, as did the access to the best harbour on the Persian Gulf which could further facilitate the export of oil. In the joint American-British invasion of 2003, ostensibly based on a false claim that Iraq was producing weapons of mass destruction, as well as unfinished business with Saddam Hussein from the previous war, access to oil also played a role.

Given the chronic instability of the Middle East, it was debated in France in the early 1990s whether being barred from access to vital resources – i.e. oil – was something that might be met not only with armed force but even with nuclear weapons; in the end, only the protection of access routes to France was listed in France's White Book on Defence as such a vital matter to protect, along with "the free exercise of our sovereignty, the integrity of our national territory".³⁴

To reduce dependency on the unstable Middle East, European countries after the end of the Cold War sought to multiply their energy sources, only to create their next great dependency, this time on Russia. Putin adroitly used this strategic tool vis-à-vis the EU countries. The deals for oil and gas exports proposed by Moscow were so attractive that particularly Germany fell for this,

32 Ahmed Hashim, 'The Three Gulf Wars and Iraq', in: Duyvesteyn & Heuser: *The Cambridge History of Strategy*, Vol. II.

33 Hashim, 'The Three Gulf Wars and Iraq', 491.

34 *Livre Blanc sur la Défense* (1994), pp. 56-57

successive governments under Angela Merkel gambling on relations with Putin's Russia remaining amicable even after Russian forces embarked on wars in Russia's vicinity, first against Georgia in 2008, then, with unmarked forces, against Ukraine from 2014. No plan B for alternative energy supply existed in Germany before the unsuccessful attempt by Merkel's successor Olaf Scholz on 15 February 2022 to dissuade Putin from launching a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which began nine days later. A substantial price of its support for Ukraine has since been paid by the EU countries in the form of the subsequent boycott of Russian oil and gas.

Nuclear energy has wrought change – it provides an alternative to dependence on the regular import of oil and gas. France for one has embraced this alternative, while scepticism about the safety of reactor technology and the long-term storage of the radioactive waste led to the closing of nuclear power stations in Germany around 2020, just as the switch to non-polluting energy sources became internationally agreed policy in a series of global conferences aiming to stem or mitigate climate change. However, the reliance on other states for nuclear fuel, uranium in particular, simply substitutes one dependency, oil and gas, for another, nuclear reactor fuel, uranium. The military coup in Niger in the summer of 2023, raised fears about access to the resource, as the country is the second-largest supplier of uranium to France. The same arguments could be raised for access to rare earth minerals, the components of batteries for cars and mobile phones. It is hard to image war in the near future without mobility and communication, witness the present conflict in Ukraine.

Conclusion

While an overview of the *longue durée* of the practice of strategy demonstrates a significant set of constants, change and discontinuity is also of great importance. We can trace a tool of strategy – a tool of forging alliances and of concluding peace – over centuries, and yet it has disappeared entirely in our modern world, going along with the transformation of societies: that of dynastic marriages.

Geography itself, the population and its skills, material resources, as well as allies and decision-making processes, all remain perennial features of strategic practices. And yet even hard geographic facts – Japan's island nature, for example – changed in importance, along with changes in technology. Thus with the naval and aviation means of the 20th century, Japan was able to launch an attack on the far-away American island of Hawaii, and the USA, in turn, could

fight, defeat and occupy Japan thereafter. We have also illustrated the quite sudden appearance very late in human history of a crucial dimension of strategy, namely the need for fuel, from coal to oil to uranium. Thus a resource, linked directly to geography, can fundamentally transform the importance of territorial possessions, both in terms of access to fossil fuels and to the control (preferably through possession) of secure ports where these could be stocked. Presently, we are experiencing another transition in the context of the climate crisis, an impending move away from fossil fuels towards environmentally sustainable fuel. The shape of this transition for the practice of military operations is still too early to assess.

It becomes apparent that, however modern Pericles' speech seems to us, many factors influencing strategy-making have changed over time. There are some lasting intangible dimensions of strategy-making that endure, such as the utility or indeed necessity of consultation and collective deliberations of some sorts, or the benefits that can be derived from achieving strategic surprise, as Hamas did in its attack on Israel on 7 October 2023. Other than that, it is worth remembering that strategy is a product of its particular technological, geographical, economical and socio-political circumstances. This should make us cautious about thinking of strategy in terms of a set principles that can be applied in all eternity.

Escalation Dominance in Antiquity

MICHAEL J. TAYLOR¹

The notion of “escalation dominance” was the product of Cold War nuclear deterrence theory, which considered how hegemonic powers (particularly the United States and the Soviet Union) might progress up a ladder of capacities until they arrived at a full-blown thermonuclear exchange.² The concept is nonetheless useful for considering the actions of pre-modern empires.³ This essay focuses on escalation dominance against subject and subaltern peoples of imperial states, and largely eschews peer-rival conflict, given that by definition peer rivals were roughly matched. Empires are defined as states and societies that controlled both the internal and external policies of other subordinated states and societies.⁴ While escalation dominance is a modern, etic term here imposed on ancient actors, the powers examined exhibited conscious ideologies of dominance, from images of Achaemenid king confidently looming over a row of bound captives at Behistun, to victory celebrations such as the Roman triumph, to the encomium of the poet Vergil that Rome had a divine mission “to spare the conquered and wage war against the proud.”⁵

Escalation dominance could be strictly quantitative: bringing to bear more raw resources: men, money, ships, supplies, etc. This was the most basic strategy for

1 State University of New York at Albany.

2 The concept is especially associated with Herman Khan, *On Escalation*. New York: Praeger, 1965.

3 Edward Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1976 pioneered the application of modern strategic jargon to the ancient world, although provoking substantial doubts that ancient thought patterns mirrored modern strategic bureaucrats, e.g. Susan Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. In defense of ancient strategy, see recently Everett Wheeler, “Methodological Limits and the Mirage of Roman Strategy: Part I *Journal of Military History* 57 (1993):7–41, Kimberly Kagan, “Redefining Roman Grand Strategy.” *Journal of Military History* 70 (20016): 333–62 and James Lacey, *Rome Strategy of Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022.

4 Following the basic definition of Michael Doyle, *Empires*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986.

5 Veg. *Aen.* 6.853; *parcere subiectis, et debellare superbos*.

large empires, who had access to larger territories of recruitment, and far greater fiscal and material resources with which to pay, equip and supply their forces.

But quality also mattered, as ancient empires could leverage superiority in equipment, tactics, mobility and logistics, organization and leadership. For the ancient world, mobility at the tactical level largely meant horse cavalry. Strategic mobility relied both on draft animals to carry armies' baggage (horses, mules and donkeys), as well as infrastructure, particularly roads. Strategic mobility by sea required transport ships, but also sufficient naval supremacy to ensure their safe arrival. Equipment and tactics served as force multipliers that increased the lethality of mobilized personnel. In the ancient world, this involved the deployment of heavily armored infantry and cavalry to the battlefield, often with heavier equipment supporting more complex tactics, for example the Macedonian pike phalanx and Roman manipular legion.⁶

Professionalism and institutional organization could also provide qualitative dominance. Empires, thanks to superior resources, had the ability to maintain standing units, although in many instances these were still supplemented by part-time troops. Professional soldiers in standing units, through a combination of extended training, long term experience, and the social cohesion, might enjoy substantial advantages in combat even in the face of similarly armed and organized levies or militia forces.

This chapter looks at differences in how ancient imperial states structured escalation dominance, including where these strategies fell short. We begin with the first great world empire, the Achaemenid Persian empire, proceed to the smaller *polis*-based empires of Classical Athens and Sparta, and next to the western imperial republics of Carthage and Rome. The Roman empire during the principate is often taken as an ideal type of pre-modern empire. Finally, the paper concludes by examining the failure of Roman escalation dominance in the late fourth and fifth centuries AD.

The Achaemenid Empire

The Achaemenid empire (c. 550-331 BC) ruled a vast domain, stretching at its greatest extent from the Indus river to Macedonia, and incorporating areas that had previously been home to sizable kingdoms: Lydian Anatolia, Babylonian Mesopotamia, and pharaonic Egypt.

6 Roman manipular legion: Michael Taylor "Roman Infantry Tactics in The Mid-Republic: A Reevaluation." 63 (2014), 301–21.

Achaemenid kings maintained a modest standing force, misnamed by the Greeks as the *Athanatoi* or “Immortals” (the Persian name may in fact mean something closer to “Companions.” These consisted of 10-12,000 infantry and several thousand cavalry, considered “Immortal” to Greek observers precisely because the unit was kept at a constant strength even as individual soldiers died or transferred out.⁷ The Immortals accompanied the king in battle and at times engaged in combat, but may have primarily functioned as a palace guard, as Michael Charles has argued.⁸ By the fourth century BC, the Immortals ceased to be mentioned in Greek sources, including in the defense against Alexander. The unit may have been disbanded, although it is possible that they had simply shed their field functions and now served exclusively as a palatine force.

In the fifth century BC, at least, this sizable guard was indeed an internal escalation dominance strategy around the king’s own person, to defend against armed coups. In this, they functioned as the similarly sized Praetorian Guard in Imperial Rome. On the whole, however, this professional cadre was not a key aspect of Achaemenid escalation dominance. There is no evidence that the Immortals enjoyed any specialized training or tactics, and even when attested in combat zones they only accounted for a small minority of multi-ethnic Persian field forces.

While hardly unarmored, and capable of close combat, Persian ethnic infantry do not emerge as a tool of escalation dominance.⁹ By the fourth century, the Achaemenids were making substantial use of heavily armored Greek hoplites drawn from the Aegean periphery. When the cadet prince Cyrus the Younger sought to overthrow his brother Artaxerxes in 401 BC, he launched an assault with an army built around thirteen thousand Greek mercenaries. While Cyrus was killed in combat at Cunaxa, the heavily armored mercenaries won their portion of the battle, and Artaxerxes had no immediate capacity to annihilate them, instead killing their commanders through treachery and then harassing them out of the empire. The inability of the Achaemenid government to wipe out these troublesome mercenaries, who famously escaped to the Black Sea, can be seen as a conspicuous failure of Achaemenid escalation dominance. Lack of heavy

7 Hdt. 7.83.

8 Michael Charles, “Immortals and Apple Bearers: Towards a Better Understanding of Achaemenid Infantry Units.” *Classical Quarterly* 61 (2011), 114–33.

9 Achaemenid infantry were capable of closing in close combat, see Roel Konijnedijk, “Neither the Less Valorous nor the Weaker: Persian Military Might and the Battle of Plataea.” *Historia* 61 (2012), 1–17.

infantry capacity may have frustrated Achaemenid attempts to reconquer Egypt during much of the fourth century against Greek mercenaries in the service of the rebel pharaohs.

The Persians had a reputation for excellence in heavy cavalry, and we have an artifact that celebrates the dominance of Persian cavalry over more lightly armed frontier peoples.¹⁰ The Alticulak sarcophagus shows a heavily armored Persian horseman. He hunts down an unarmored Mysian peltast, armed only with a small shield and javelins, stabbing his victim through the eye with his lance. The scene on the opposite side of the sarcophagus shows a mounted hunter slaughtering beasts.¹¹ We should remember that many of the routine threats to Persian frontiers were not battalions of Greek hoplites or Macedonian phalanxes, but lightly armed peoples like the Mysians, engaging in raids and low-scale rebellion, but no match for a heavily armored Persian knight.

Ultimately, however, the Persians' escalation dominance was quantitative, based on aggregating the numerous resources of the Great King's vast realm. Greek histories, likely riffing off Achaemenid propaganda, described Persian armies that numbered in the tens of thousands, so large that they drank rivers dry as they passed.¹² While such hyperbole is frustrating to modern military historians, this is exactly the sort of thing the Persian king wanted people on the periphery to believe.

This quantitative superiority was undergird by substantial logistical and administrative infrastructure, not simply a road system, but a network of supply depots and way-stations, replete with the administrative personnel and beasts of burden to facilitate the movement of troops and supplies across the empire the achieve local escalation dominance over any threat.¹³

Persian kings stockpiled enormous quantities of bullion, so that Alexander reportedly captured as much as 180,000 talents (c. 5000 tons) of bullion.¹⁴ As

10 For a nuanced view of Achaemenid cavalry, see Christopher Tuplin, "All the King's Horse: In search of Achaemenid Persian cavalry." *New Perspectives on Ancient Warfare*, edited by M. Trundle and G. Fagan, Leiden, Brill, 2010, 100-182.

11 John Ma, "Mysians on the Çan Sarcophagus? Ethnicity and Domination in Achaemenid Military Art." *Historia* 57 (2008): 243-54.

12 E.g Hdt. 7.61-95.

13 For one aspect of Persian logistics, a camel corps, see recently Rhyne King, "'Camels of the King' between Persepolis and Bactria." *Kār-nāmag ī Pārsa: Studies from the Persepolis World Heritage Site*, 2023, 129-142.

14 Strab. 15.3.10. For the wealth appropriated by Alexander, see Frank Holt, *The Treasures of Alexander the Great*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

a practical strategy, this ensured that Persian kings could afford to field enormously large armies indefinitely, and no internal rival could hope to manage to outspend the Great King's payroll, while collaborators could expect to be richly rewarded. Persian monetary subsidies, including paid out at various times to both Athens and Sparta as Persian interests required, also proved a potent diplomatic weapon for structuring Achaemenid frontiers.¹⁵

Persian expeditionary forces had easily subdued Macedon in the 490s BC, with the Macedonian king Alexander I offering earth and water as a gesture of submission. "Greeks in brimmed hats"—the Persian term for Macedonians in their *karausia*—appear offering tribute at Persepolis. Persian suzerainty over Macedonian seems to have fallen away after the defeat of Xerxes invasion at Salamis and Platea. But it was not until the reign of Philip II that Macedonia transformed into a "shadow empire" on the Achaemenid periphery, engaging in a host of state building and internal strengthening reforms both inspired by and in reaction to the looming mass of Persia.¹⁶

Persia initially does not seem to have closely followed developments in its former province, although Persian power, shaken during the fourth century BC, was actually on the upswing around the time of Chaeronea, with the reconquest of Egypt completed by 339 BC. The arrival of Philip's expeditionary force into northwestern Anatolia in 336 presents us with a relatively clear view of the Achaemenid escalation ladder. Darius III—himself a recent usuper—first response was to hire Greek mercenaries and supplement his satrapal force in northwestern Anatolia. Alexander's victory at Granicus in 333 BC, which shattered the regional satrapal army, forced the next step on the ladder: Darius himself assembled a royal army, leveraging the fiscal and logistical resources of the empire to generate a massive host that even setting aside Greek exaggerations likely outnumbered Alexander's army several times over. But the hastily levied troops for all their numbers lacked two attributes of the Macedonians. The Macedonian army, while technically a peasant levy, had been in the field continuously since the reign of Philip II, making it a professional caliber force. Furthermore, the special tactics and long pikes of the Macedonian phalanx acted as a potent force multiplier, negating Achaemenid numerical superiority as these withstood on-

15 John Hyland, *Persian Interventions: The Achaemenid Empire, Athens and Sparta, 450-386 BCE*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2017.

16 For the concept, Thomas Barfield, *Shadow Empires: An Alternative Imperial History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023, although curiously not considering Macedonia as a prime example of the book's eponymous phenomenon.

rushing Achaemenid infantry while Alexander struck with his heavy cavalry.¹⁷ With royal armies decisively defeated at Issus and Gaugamela, the doom of the empire was sealed.

Persian escalation dominance strategies were ultimately quantitative, leveraging the size and scope of the empire to overwhelm and overawe. But the reliance on brute quantitative dominance made the empire particularly vulnerable to the peculiar contingency of an invading army emerging out of a former province that while far smaller and poorly funded, was better equipped, drilled, trained and led.¹⁸

Athens:

In the 480s BC, the recently established democracy in Athens constructed a large fleet of trireme warships, ostensibly to deal with the regional island rival of Aegina, but with the looming Persian threat in mind. This fleet, manned by the politically empowered lower class (*thetes*) defeated the Achaemenid invasion fleet at Salamis. In 478 BC, the Athenians assumed formal leadership of the anti-Persian coalition. In the process, Athens undertook what Thucydides describes as a conscious program of escalation dominance over coalition members and freshly liberated cities. Athens encouraged its allies to provide financial contributions instead of ships and crews; the money then funded Athenian ship construction and the pay for citizen rowers.¹⁹ The result was the atrophy of allied navies while improving the strength and readiness of the Athenian fleet. The coalition hardened into an empire (*arche*; “rule”), with contributions formalized into tribute, which was first stored on the island of Delos, before the treasury was shifted to Athens itself in 454 BC. The Athenian navy, often with considerable brutality, enforced Athenian dominance upon the Aegean, and allowed Athens to punch well above its weight as a city-state, competing not simply with rival *poleis* such as Spartan and Thebes, but against the Achaemenid empire, upon which it inflicted a severe defeat at Eurymedon in the 460s BC.

Athens had a large hoplite army, with 13,000 available for active service

17 For an overview of the Macedonian army, Nicholas Sekunda, “The Macedonian Army.” *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, edited by J. Roisman and I. Worthington. Malden, Blackwell, 2010, 446–71.

18 Problems with funding: Arr. *Anab.* 7.8.6. For Alexander’s leadership, see John Ma, “Alexander’s Decision Making as a Historical Problem.” *Revue des Etudes Militaires Anciennes* 6 (2013), 113–25.

19 Thuc. 1.19, 99.3.

in 431 BC.²⁰ The record of the army against peer rivals was mixed: during the Peloponnesian War the Athenians lost pitched hoplite battles at Delium and Mantinea, while its hoplite force in Sicily was annihilated. However, writing in the mid fifth century BC, the anonymous tract known as the Old Oligarch, a fierce critic of the democracy, saw Athens' hoplite force primarily as a tool for escalation dominance over the subaltern islands of its empire:

But the Athenian hoplite force, which has the reputation of being very weak, has been deliberately so constituted. They consider that they are weaker and fewer than their enemies (i.e. Sparta and Thebes), but they are stronger, even on land than such of their allies as pay the tribute, and they think their hoplites sufficient if they are more powerful than their allies.²¹

Pericles would have agreed with this assessment (and it is much debated whether the Old Oligarch wrote prior to, during, or after the Peloponnesian War).²² Pericles did not think it wise for Athenian hoplites to try and confront Sparta and her allies on land in pitched battle. But so long as the navy held the seas, and the Athenians themselves were protected by the Long Walls which ran from the city-center to the port of the Piraeus, Athenian hoplites could devote themselves to the task of crushing any island that dared rebel. Athens only lost the war when the Persians funded the construction of a rival Spartan fleet, which finally defeated the Athenian navy at Aegospotami in 404 BC and compelled the city's surrender. While Athens was subsequently able to overthrow the Spartan backed junta imposed upon, restore its democracy and rebuild its fleet, it never again achieved the escalation dominance, and imperial control that came with it, over Aegean allies that it had enjoyed during its Golden Age in the fifth century BC.

Sparta

Sparta's hegemonic position in the Peloponnese and beyond owed to its domination of Messenia, in the southwestern portion of the peninsula, and the resources extracted from the region's serf-like helots. These serfs, who also could be found on estates in Lakonia, provided Spartiates with the surplus to maintain their idiosyncratic lifestyle. Lakonia was also home to subaltern communities of

²⁰ Thuc. 2.13.6.

²¹ Old Oligarch *Ath. Pol.* 2.1 (after LCL).

²² For the debate about the dating of the Old Oligarch, see J.L. Marr and P.J. Rhodes, *The 'Old Oligarch': The Constitution of the Athenians Attributed to Xenophon*. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2008 3-6, who favor a composition date early in the Peloponnesian war (c. 420s) and in response to recent events.

perioikoi, who were required to provide troops to the Spartan army, but had no say in the governance of the Spartan state. Even the *polis* of Sparta proper had a seething underclass of sub-Spartiate statuses: *hypomeiones*, *neodamodeis* and *mothakes*; these could serve in the Spartan army and even obtain some rank, but were denied full citizenship rights and equal political participation.

Sparta's escalation dominance was fundamentally qualitative. The labor of Messenian helots allowed for full Spartiates (the *homoioi*, or "peers") to exist as a leisure class, and to devote their time and energies to both military training and primary group bonding. There is nothing to suggest that Spartan military training was particularly sophisticated, but even a modicum of drill provided advantage over the raw militia forces of rival *poleis*.²³ The intense socialization of *homoioi*, first through the brutal hazing of the *agoge* and subsequently through the sociability of the *sysitia* further enhanced the cohesion of Spartan units on the battlefield.

But the limited number of Messenian *kleroi* placed a hard limit on the number of *homoioi*. Furthermore, while the initial "Lycurgan" reforms (in reality a series of interlocking reforms over the eight and seventh centuries, rather than the gift of a single lawgiver) aimed to expand political access and military service to a broad hoplite caste, perhaps even peaking at around 8000 *homoioi*, the trend by the fifth century was for that class to shrink back down to a narrow cadre, so that by the mid-fourth century there were less than a thousand full Spartiates.²⁴ Joshiah Ober and Barry Weingast have aptly described the "Spartan game": The Spartans had a perverse incentive to kick Spartiates deemed morally unworthy out of the system due to poverty, failure in battle or washing out of the *agoge*. Once ejected, their share of the finite number of Messenian *kleroi* could be distributed among the remainder: making the *homoioi* smaller and more morally exclusive enriched individual Spartiates even as it weakened their collective military power.²⁵

Spartan dependence on Messenia, and the miserable conditions of the Messenian helots, meant that the Spartans were required to devote considerable en-

23 For the fundamental lack of sophistication of Greek tactics, see Roel Konijnendijk, *Classical Greek Tactics*. Leiden: Brill, 2018; the Spartans were very much the one-eyed men in the land of the blind.

24 On the collapse of the Spartiate class, see Timothy Doran, *Spartan Oliganthropia*. Leiden: Brill, 2018.

25 Joshiah Ober and Barry Weingast. "The Spartan Game: Violence, Proportionality and Collapse." *How to do things with History: New Approaches to Ancient Greece*, edited by Danielle Allen, Paul Christesen and Paul Millett. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017, 161–84.

ergies to the perpetual control of the region. Every year the Spartans ritually declared war on the helots, who were terrorized and murdered by furtive Spartan youths, dispatched as an institution known as the *kyrpteia*.²⁶ The Spartans maintained a curious religious taboo which forbade them from deploying outside of Lakonia during the Doric festival to Apollo Carneus held at the end of summer. The Carneia taboo functioned as a sort of religiously enforced strategic doctrine: Sparta needed the bulk of her forces in the Southern Peloponnese to continuously dominate its subjects, which hampered the ambitions of various kings and regents to project power beyond. Nor were the helots the only group capable of revolt: in 401 BC, shortly after the Peloponnesian War, the Spartans narrowly averted a conspiracy by a sub-Spartiate officer named Cinadon, who had organized a group of sub-Spartiates, *perioikoi* and helots with plans to overthrow the shrinking class of Spartiate estate holders, with the goal, he claimed before his execution, that “he might not be inferior to anyone in Sparta.”²⁷ Cinadon reportedly attempted to recruit followers by taking them to the agora, and noting the presence of a mere forty Spartiates in addition to the kings, ephors and members of the *gerousia* (Council of Elders), and then estimated the simultaneous presence of four thousand non-Spartans; it was increasingly difficult for so few to oppress so many.²⁸

The Spartans with their shrinking numbers by necessity relied on their underclasses militarily. *Perioikoi* served as hoplites with the Spartan army. It is possible that heavy infantry service purchased some breathing room from Spartan oppression: a recent study has suggested that perioikic communities enjoyed considerable local autonomy.²⁹ But even the helots were conscripted into Spartan service. Herodotus reported that at the decisive Battle of Platea in 479 BC there were seven helots for every Spartan.³⁰ To prevent revolution, the Spartans largely seem to have kept the helots as light infantry, although it is not impossible that helot ranks added depth to the Spartan phalanx, as Patrick Hunt has argued.³¹

When small numbers of helots were fully equipped and trained to fight as

²⁶ Plut. *Lycurgus* 28.

²⁷ Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.4-11, after LCL.

²⁸ Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.5.

²⁹ Gabriel Bernardo, “Spartan Smart Power and the *Perioikoi*.” *Ancient Society* 52 (2022): 35–67.

³⁰ Hdt. 9.10.1, 28.2, 29.1.

³¹ Peter Hunt, “Helots and the Battle of Platea.” *Historia* 46 (1997): 129–44.

hoplites on their own right by the Spartan general Brasidas, it was rumored that the Spartans murdered these men upon discharge. Thucydides, at least (hardly a credulous figure) believed that the Spartans were willing and capable of assassinating two thousand helot hoplites, whose numbers may have approached the population of full Spartiates, and therefore severely jeopardized Sparta's already fragile escalation dominance.³² Spartan knew from its own collective memory that a Messenian revolt could be dangerous, with memories of a difficult revolt in the seventh century, and more historical experience with a revolt in the 460s BC, which erupted after an earthquake caused heavy casualties in Sparta.

Sparta was finally beaten by the Thebans at Leuctra in 371 BC. Theban policy following the victory was notable: a Theban army under Epaminondas invaded Messenia and liberated the helots. More importantly, the Thebans underwrote the construction of a new *polis* center for the Messenians, surrounded by a formidable circuit of modern walls, specifically constructed to house a novel military technology, the catapult. Sparta, which had never developed an effective siege capacity, would never achieve escalation dominance over Messenia again.

The Hellenistic World:

Alexander the Great conquered the Achaemenid empire and then drank himself to death in 323 BC. After over fifty years of civil war between his generals, three major successor dynasties solidified into a relatively stable international system, divided between the Ptolemies ruling Egypt, the Antigonids situated in the Macedonian homeland, while the Seleucids lorded over a vast domain that at its peak stretched from Anatolia to the Hindu Kush.

Hellenistic kings had enormous resources at their disposal, and the age was characterized by military novelty and gigantism, most aptly illustrated in the naval sphere, where the Ptolemaic dynasty constructed ever larger polyremes, including a wildly impractical "Forty," a virtually undeployable monstrosity with forty banks of oars. William Murray has noted that large polyremes such as sixes, sevens and nines did have a tactical value, as they could serve as naval siege platforms, potentially an asset for a ruler claiming hegemony over the many islands of the Aegean.³³ The showy if impractical mega-ships, however,

32 Thuc. 4.80; for discussion see B. Jordan "The Ceremony of the Helots in Thucydides IV 80." *L'Antiquité Classique* 59 (1990):37–69.

33 William Murray, *The Age of Titans: The Rise and Fall of the Great Hellenistic Navies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

embodied the dynasty's capacity for escalation dominance, not dissimilar to the Soviet parade of nuclear missiles on May Day, a warning to would be defectors and opponents of the extraordinary resources and technological capabilities kings could bring to bear against them. A similar showy logic lay behind war elephant herds and scythed chariots fleets. The war elephant virtually became the emblem of the Seleucid dynasty, who had access to Indian elephants.³⁴ The Ptolemies, desperate to catch up, undertook massive campaigns of elephants hunting along the Red Sea.³⁵ The Hellenistic kings fully adopted the ideology around war elephants inherited from Indian dynasts, where elephants were strongly associated with royal might and majesty.³⁶

More practically, the qualitative superiority of the Macedonian pike phalanx was at the center of escalation dominance strategies. Antigonid Macedonia, still mustered the levy of ethnic *Makedones*, with the ability to handily beat any Greek army composed of either traditional hoplites or *thureophoroi* armed with a new Celtic style shield.³⁷ A meaningful challenge to Macedonian hegemony required retooling to fight with Macedonian pikes and bowl shields. Sparta, for example, under Cleomenes III attempted to reassert its position in the Peloponnese in the 220s, forming its own pike phalanx roughly 6000 strong (including 2000 freed Laconian helots), only to be beaten by genuine article at Sellasia in 222 BC.³⁸

The Hellenistic kingdoms inevitably recruited ethnic contingents from their conquered populations, including heavy cavalry, and these in some instances formed the majority of Hellenistic forces. But the pike phalanx was the basis for escalation dominance over all subaltern contingents. Back in Macedonia proper, the pike phalanx was conscripted from the ethnic Macedonian population. In the diasporic Ptolemaic and Seleucid empires, pikemen were recruited from settlers, who owed a military obligation in exchange for their homestead plot (*kle-*

34 Seleucid ideology: Paul Kosmin, *Land of the Elephant Kings*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014; for the Seleucid army see Bezalel Bar Kochva, *The Seleucid Army: Organization and Tactics on the Great Campaigns*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

35 For Ptolemaic elephant hunts, and their relation to military readiness, see Johnston 2020:128-130.

36 Michael Charles, "Elephants, Alexander and the Indian Campaign." *Museion* 10 (2010): 327-53.

37 For the Antigonid Macedonian army, see Miltiades Hatzopoulos, *L'organisation de l'armée macédonienne sous les Antigonides*, Paris: De Boccard, 2001.

38 Plut. *Cleom.* 11.2, 23.1. Similar reforms are attested in the Achaean league under Philopoemen in the 180s, Plut. *Philopoem.* 9.2.

ros). Only a few of these settlers were descended from ethnic Macedonians or Alexander's veterans; most seem to have been discharged mercenaries of Greek or Aegean origin. All were lumped together under the pseudo-ethnic "Macedonian" to describe heavy troops with a special relationship to the ruling dynasty.³⁹

One problem for every kingdom was that the number of Macedonians was finite, although it might be expanded through focused settlement initiatives (such as intensive Ptolemaic settlement in the reclaimed Fayum in the the third century BC). But it was virtually impossible to settle and establish new "Macedonians" quickly in response to a military emergency. In 217 BC, the Ptolemaic dynasty faced a crisis, an invasion by the Seleucid king Antiochus III, a peer rival who brought a large 68,000 man army, which included roughly 30,000 pikemen.⁴⁰

The Ptolemaic army had not fought a major theater war in a generation. The king's energetic ministers quickly mobilized and reorganized the cleruchic force and hired every foreign mercenary they could. Needing more troops, however, a decision was made to enroll 20,000 Egyptian soldiers and equip and drill them as heavy Macedonian style pikemen. For the Ptolemies, mobilizing native Egyptians was hardly novel: large numbers of Egyptians had served the dynasty as rowers, marines and as paramilitary and police forces known as *machimoi*. But up until now the settlers fighting in pike phalanxes enjoyed qualitative dominance over native Egyptian troops.

The 20,000 Egyptian phalangites, drilled over a period of three months, performed magnificently. At the Battle of Raphia, their numbers, when combined with the "Macedonians" outnumbered the pikemen of the Seleucid invaders, winning not only battle, but the entire Fourth Syrian War. But sacrificing the escalation dominance of the settler class came at a cost, at least according to the analysis of the historian Polybius, who suggested that their role in the victory gave the Egyptians the confidence to rebel against their overlords (107.1-3, Paton), a revolt that lasted nearly twenty years, made the dynasty vulnerable to further Seleucid predation, and was only quashed with great difficulty and significant concessions:

1 As for Ptolemy, his war against the Egyptians followed immediately on these events. 2 This king, by arming the Egyptians for his war against

39 For the military manpower of the Hellenistic kingdoms, see Taylor 2020:. For the Ptolemaic army, see Christelle Fischer-Bovet, 2014. *Army and Society in Ptolemaic Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014 and Paul Johnstono, *The Army of Ptolemaic Egypt*. Yorkshire: Pen and Sword, 2020.

40 Polyb. 5.79.2-13.

Antiochus, took a step which was of great service for the time, but which was a mistake as regards the future. 3 The soldiers, highly proud of their victory at Raphia, were no longer disposed to obey orders, but were on the lookout for a leader and figure-head, thinking themselves well able to maintain themselves as an independent power, an attempt in which they finally succeeded not long afterwards.

Here Polybius articulates a theory of escalation dominance, although in many ways assigns it less a tactical than a moral quality. His analysis is not necessarily precise: while he implies that the confident Egyptian phalangites revolted immediately after the battle, an inscription from Edfu places the revolt a decade later, in 207 BC, although it is still entirely possible that many veterans of Raphia were indeed involved.⁴¹ But Polybius is perhaps correct that much of the potency of escalation dominance exists within the imagination. For Polybius, Egyptian revolt had been up until now tamped down not because Macedonian phalanxes routinely trounced natives, but because the Egyptians, even those with military training and experience, themselves believed that this would indeed be the most likely outcome of a hypothetical face-off. Fighting as a phalanx themselves destroyed the mirage of dominance.

Carthage:

The city of Carthage saw one of the most spectacular failures of escalation dominance in the 240s BC, which nearly snuffed out the city itself. Carthage was a colonial enterprise, with Punic speaking settlers perched upon indigenous Libyan and Numidian populations of the Maghreb. Carthage by the third century BC lacked the ability to raise large citizen armies, although it maintained an effective civic cavalry force, and some citizens crewed the fleets.⁴² For its foreign wars in Sicily, Carthage relied on a combination of Libyan conscripts, Numidian auxiliaries and foreign mercenaries hired from across the Mediterranean. The result was that Carthage possessed neither a qualitative nor a quantitative escalation dominance over its Libyan and Numidian troops. Rather than a strategy of escalation dominance, Carthage practiced strategies of division and balance. Libyan troops were deployed abroad in large numbers into imperial space, where they were reliant on Carthaginian seapower and logistics. Mercenaries hired from Spain, Gaul, Italy and Greece potentially balanced against

41 For the Egyptian revolt, see Brian McGing, "Revolt Egyptian Style. Internal Opposition to Egyptian Rule." *Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete* 42 (1997), 273–314.

42 Carthaginian citizen cavalry: Polyb. 6.52.3.

African contingents. Perhaps the best attempted balancing comes during the Second Punic War, when Hannibal, in command of a large army in Spain, dispatched Spanish troops to garrison the African homeland, while leaving Libyan and Numidian troops in Spain or taking them with him in his Italian expeditionary force.⁴³ A garrison recruited from the Metagonian towns in Libya was also sent to Carthage, where Polybius explicitly states these soldiers doubled as hostages for the good behavior of their communities.

Despite the tenuous nature of Carthage's escalation dominance, Carthage exploited its Libyan population intensively. During the First Punic War, Libyan peasants handed over half of their harvests as taxes and tithes, while war taxes on subordinate Libyan cities were doubled and collected with severity.⁴⁴

Libyan revolts are attested in 396 and 378 BC.⁴⁵ At least one Numidian chieftain defected to the Syracusan general Agathocles when he invaded North Africa in 310 BC. In 241 BC, the Romans sank the last Carthaginian fleet and compelled surrender in the First Punic War. Carthage withdrew its army from Sicily, a combination of foreign mercenaries and Libyan and Numidian contingents. Lacking money to pay their demobilized army, the Carthaginian government moved them to a camp outside of Hadrumentum, far from the city, holding them as funds for discharge could be arranged. The delayed pay prompted a mutiny of mercenaries, who made common cause with the Libyans in the army; the balance of forces the Carthaginians traditionally relied on was shattered. The mutiny quickly metastasized into a broader Libyan revolt that threatened the very existence of the city itself.⁴⁶

In desperation, the Carthaginians mobilized their civic cavalry corps, supplemented it with hastily trained infantry, and hired new mercenaries, placing this army under the command of Hamilcar Barca, the father of Hannibal. A Numidian chieftain, Naravas, flipped his loyalty back to the city in exchange for a marriage alliance with Hamilcar's daughter.⁴⁷ The mutineers and rebels were finally defeated after a brutal and treacherous war. Hamilcar executed captured rebels

43 Polyb. 3.33.8-15.

44 Polyb. 1.72.2-3.

45 For Libyan revolts, see Hill, Andrew. 2023. *The Libyan Wars: Crisis, Climate and Conflict in Carthaginian North Africa*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Trinity College Dublin.

46 For the Truceless War, see Dexter Hoyos, *Truceless War: Carthage's Fight for Survival, 241-237 BC*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

47 Polyb. 1.78.1-11. For marriage alliance as a strategy for Carthaginian generals, see Taylor 2023: 42-43.

by stomping them to death with his war-elephants, a grisly symbolism that harnessed one of the few genuine mechanisms of escalation dominance Carthage had left at its disposal.⁴⁸ Indeed, the city's war elephant herd proved quite useful in spearheading Carthaginian cavalry charges against rebel positions. But the war had been a razor close call, largely owing to the fact that Carthage lacked a clear-cut strategy of either qualitative or quantitative escalation dominance over its subaltern populations.

The Roman Republic

After the Roman victory over a confederation of Latin city-states in 338 BC, Rome established a system that would structure the city's subsequent dominion in Italy. Most defeated Latin communities were annexed into the Roman state, but unlike Sparta's conquered Messenians, the annexed Latins were made full Roman citizens; this imposed the burdens of military service in the legions and the payment of the war tax (*tributum*), but brought with it the political rights of voting in Roman elections, and for elites, seeking high office in the city, as well as a variety of privileges under Roman law. Co-option was here an alternative to escalation dominance that few other Mediterranean city-states managed.

Other annexed communities were given a sort of half-way citizenship, which by the first century BC was dubbed the *civitas sine suffragio* "citizenship without the vote".⁴⁹ These suffered conscription and taxation, but enjoyed the legal privileges of Roman citizens, particular *commercium*, the ability to make contracts under Roman law, and *conubium*, the ability to contract a law marriage with another Roman citizen. *Cives sine suffragio* retained autonomous political structures in their home communities; for example Oscan Capua still elected two Oscan speaking magistrates known as *medicces*. The *civitas sine suffragio* may have initially been imposed on many conquered communities as a punishment, given the burdens it imposed, although a number of peoples granted the status were subsequently promoted to full citizenship: for example the Sabines were annexed in 290 and promoted in 268, whereas the Picentines were promoted to full citizenship in 241. *Cives sine suffragio* served within the legions,

48 Polyb. 1.82.2.

49 For the assignment of *civitas sine suffragio* as a means of exploiting defeated communities through both conscription and taxation, see James Tan, "The *dilectus-tributum* system and the settlement of fourth century Italy." *Romans at War: Soldiers, Citizens and Society in the Roman Republic*, edited by Jeremy Armstrong and Michael Fronda. London, Routledge, 2019, 52–75.

although the exact details of their recruitment are vague.

Rome also founded colonies across Italy, established strategic places, these also provided a “safety valve” against land hunger and social strife in the city. The Roman colonists who settled these new communities gave up their Roman citizenship, but they and their descendants enjoyed a package of citizen rights, the *ius Latinum*. This included the right of *commercium* and *conubium* with Roman citizens, and even the right to vote in Roman elections if present in the city on an election day.

This schema mattered because Rome largely exploited its Italian allies through conscription.⁵⁰ Italian communities paid no direct tribute to Rome, but instead supplied contingents for the Roman army. The standard Roman field army of the period consisted of two citizen legions, 4200 strong, and two wings (*alae*) of equal or greater strength. Up to two thirds of the cavalry was Italian. The historian Polybius recounts an assay of available manpower the Romans conducted in response to a looming Gallic invasion.⁵¹ It reported that there were 325,000 Romans available for service, alongside some 450,000 Italians. Overall, Rome was outnumbered by *socii*. Qualitatively, Roman and Italian soldiers were virtually identical. The soldiers in both Roman legions and Italian cohorts were non-professional militiamen. Both Roman and Italian soldiers were equipped in an increasingly homogenized panoply and fought using manipular tactics.⁵² The Romans had no advantage in terms of professionalism, equipment, tactics or numbers over their own heavily militarized subjects.

The various statuses helped to parse the *socii* by dividing them with various privileges. The Latins proved especially loyal to Rome. Not a single Latin colony defected to Hannibal. Only two Latin colonies rebelled subsequently, Fregellae in a solitary protest in 125 BC, and Venusia, which joined the Italian rebels during the Social War. Rome also benefited from the fact that many Italian communities had local and regional rivalries that impeded unified resistance to Rome. Indeed, as Michael Fronda has shown, during the Hannibalic war, the fear that Rome might be displaced by new regional hegemonies closer to home,

50 For Roman manpower and its strategic impact, see Michael Taylor, *Soldiers and Silver: Mobilizing Resources in the Age of Roman Conquest*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020.

51 Polyb. 2.24; The most complete study of Roman military mobilizations remains P.A. Brunt, *Italian Manpower*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.

52 Michael Burns, “The Homogenisation of Military Equipment under the Roman Republic.” *Digressus* (Supplement 1, Romanization?) 2003 60-85; Michael Taylor, “Etruscan Identity and Service in the Roman Army.” *American Journal of Archaeology* 121 (2017), 275-292.

particularly Capua and Tarentum, prompted some Italian communities to prefer the more distant hegemony of Rome after both Capua and Tarentum rebelled and sided with Hannibal.⁵³

The ethnic and linguistic diversity of Italy, worked in Rome's favor. While there were more Italian males than citizen males, Rome's citizen population outnumbered that of every other ethnic group: 325,000 citizens to 77,000 Samnites, 80,000 Latins and 50,000 Etruscans, 33,000 Lucanians. Indeed, the series of enfranchisements taken over the late fourth and early third centuries BC represented a sort of de facto escalation dominance strategy, making Rome by far the biggest civic body in both Italy and the Mediterranean, and able to beat any Italian city or ethnic league on its own.

While the majority of Roman armies consisted of Italian allies, Rome did not field large formations from any one allied state. Whereas the standard citizen legion consisted of 4200 infantry and 300 cavalry (often increased to 5200 infantry for major campaigns), the largest unit drawn from a single Italian community was a cohort of roughly 400-500 men. Each cohort had their own commander, who were often local elected magistrates commanding their own troops. Ten cohorts from different communities were grouped together to form an *ala* ("wing"), which was overseen by Roman *prefecti sociorum* (prefects of the allies) appointed by the consul. Unlike legions, which were numbered based on the order they were raised, *ala* were simply described by their relative position in battle and in camp: the *dextera* and *sinistra*—the right and left.

Each consular army had two *alae* that could be maneuvered like a legion, but which lacked any sense of ethnic solidarity or even corporate identity. But even so, with Italians accounting for over half of Rome's military manpower and two-thirds of its available cavalry, Rome exercised its dominion with kid gloves. Italian troops were largely given equal shares of loot, and Italian soldiers were enrolled in Roman colonial foundations. Building projects like the temple of Fortuna Primigenia in Praeneste and the great Samnite sanctuary of Pietraboddonete suggest Italian communities benefited from the wealth of the empire. Furthermore, as Bret Devereaux argues in a forthcoming book, the Romans took the collective security aspects of their system very seriously, rushing to fight invaders such as Pyrrhus, the Gauls and Hannibal on the frontiers of Italian communities, when in each instance there might have been immediate

53 Michael Fronda, *Between Rome and Carthage: Southern Italy during the Second Punic War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

advantage to be gained from trading Italian space for Roman time.⁵⁴

But by the second century BC, with Rome ascendant across the Mediterranean, a thread of hegemonic severity crept into Rome's treatment of allied communities. By the end of the second century, Roman citizens were largely immune from flogging and arbitrary execution, while such punishments were still inflicted upon Italian troops.⁵⁵ Furthermore, attempts at agrarian reform, especially by the Gracchi brothers, impacted Italians, who often farmed or rented tracts of public land. This *ager publicus* had often had been mulcted from Italian communities during the initial conquests, but de facto returned to them as the Italian estate holders were allowed to continue their occupation, perhaps with the payment of a nominal rent. Under the Gracchi, this land was now subject to redistribution.⁵⁶ With the privileges of Roman citizenship rising, along with the stakes of Roman politics, at least some Italian communities sought citizenship rights.

In 91 BC, these tensions exploded into the Social War (i.e. the war of the *socii*, or the allies).⁵⁷ Our sources for the conflict are poor, but the conflict proved an extraordinary threat to Rome, which now had to fight its own heavily armored allies, who used identical tactics and could deploy superior cavalry. Rome won, but only through extraordinary concessions, granting full Roman citizenship to the allies, firstly to keep wavering communities on the Roman side (especially the Latins), then to encourage rebels to return to the fold, and finally as a prize granted even to the defeated holdouts. During the Roman republic, Rome's tenuous escalation dominance had come with enormous benefits; Italian manpower allowed Rome to achieve hegemony over the Mediterranean. But the military power of the Italians required Rome to exercise a light touch, and when this failed, the military power of the Italians forced Rome to concede an equal partnership in empire.

54 Bret Devereaux, *Arms and Men: Why the Romans Always Won*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming.

55 e.g. Sall. *Iug.* 69.3.

56 Saskia Roselaar, "Between Rome and Italy Hegemony, Anarchy and Land in the Late Second Century BC", *Empire, hegemony or anarchy? Rome and Italy, 201-31 BCE*, edited by Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp, Sema Karataş, Roman Roth. Stuttgart, Franz Steiner, 2019, 146-164.

57 Christopher Dart, *The Social War, 91-88 BCE*. London: Routledge, 2014.

Early and High Empire

Following the Social War, a series of brutal civil wars destroyed the republic. With his victory at Actium in 31 BC, Octavian, the adopted son of Julius Caesar, was the last warlord standing; in 27 BC he instituted a constitutional settlement that entrenched his position as the effective commander of the entire Roman army, and changed his name to Augustus. The new emperor swept away the last vestiges of the Republican citizen militia.⁵⁸ After discharging tens of thousands of veterans, he maintained twenty-eight of his civil war legions as a standing professional army, roughly 150,000 strong. Roman soldiers were now required to serve sixteen years (soon raised to twenty), and were rewarded a retirement bonus upon the completion of service from a special fund (*fiscus*) established by the emperor. Organized into standing units, the professionalism of the imperial army soon became a central facet of its escalation dominance over internal and external threats. The historian Josephus, himself a defeated rebel, marveled at the high readiness of the professional army that had crushed his militia forces, noting that one might consider “their drills bloodless battles, and their battles blood-drenched drills.”⁵⁹ Roman professionalism and resources extended beyond pitched combat; indeed one problem with the effectiveness of their army was that rebels and rivals often demurred from risking open battle. The Roman facility at siege warfare, already well apparent by the Late Republic, provided a final form of escalation over even the most well fortified opponents, perhaps best documented during the Jewish war with sieges as Jotapata, Jerusalem and the Masada.⁶⁰

Yet these citizen legions were only half of the imperial army. The other half were now recruited from non-citizens in the provinces, the *auxilia*.⁶¹ While non-Italian auxiliary troops had been recruited in small numbers during the Republic, in the empire provincial auxiliaries effectively assumed the role of the Italian *socii* had served prior to the Social War.⁶² Despite minor differences in weapons and armor, auxiliaries basically fought with similar equipment as

58 Kate Gilliver, “The Augustan Reform and the Structure of the Imperial Army.” *A Companion to the Roman Army*, edited by Paul Erdkamp. Malden, Blackwell, 2007, 183-200.

59 Joseph. *BJ* 3.75.

60 For Roman siege capabilities, see Josh Levithan, *Roman Siege Warfare*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013.

61 For the auxiliaries, Ian Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces: The Roman Auxilia and the Making of Provincial Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

62 Jonathan Prag, “Auxilia and Gymnasia: A Sicilian Model of Roman Imperialism.” *Journal of Roman Studies* 97 (2007): 68–100.

Roman legionaries. Auxiliaries were likewise highly trained and experienced professionals who served for longer terms than the legionaries, with 25 year enlistments. Auxiliaries also provided the majority of the cavalry; there were perhaps 50-60,000 auxiliary cavalymen by the high empire. Each legion only had 125 citizen cavalry attached, so that the peak of 33 legions during the Severan era only contained 4,125 cavalymen. The Roman citizen legions therefore had little in terms of quality or quantity over non-citizen auxiliaries, even if many of these during the early empire were recruited from recently conquered or annexed regions.

As with the *socii*, one way the legions maintained an element of escalation dominance was through tactical organization and the very diversity of the auxiliaries. As with the Republic, imperial legions had a paper strength over 5000 strong.⁶³ A standard auxiliary infantry cohort had a strength of 512, although there were a limited number of milliary cohorts with a paper strength of 1024. Still, if any single cohort mutinied or rebelled or followed a rogue commander, it could be handily crushed by the nearest legion. As with the *socii* before, the ethnic diversity of the auxiliaries was also used to parse them. Auxiliaries were drawn from single tribal ethnicities, and there is evidence that they continued to recruit from their ethnic homelands even after they were stationed abroad.

A serious auxiliary revolt did break out in AD 69. As civil wars raged following Nero's overthrow and suicide, various imperial hopefuls, including the commander of the Rhine legions, Vitellius, who marched on Rome. In the vacuum he left behind, Batavian cohorts, led by the officer Julius Civilis, rebelled. Civilis, a Roman citizen, played up his Germanic heritage, dying his hair red and consulting a Germanic prophetess named Velea. The revolt spread into Gaul, with several Gallic auxiliary commanders joining the rebellion, including Julius Classicus, the commander of a Treveran cavalry regiment. The escalating revolt of the auxiliaries demonstrated the fragile escalation dominance the Roman army maintained over its auxiliaries. Two legions were besieged in Xantern, and the entire German frontier briefly wobbled towards collapse.

Ultimately, however, Rome crushed the Batavian revolt with the simple method of shifting troops from the large standing army to deal with what remained a regional revolt; this was made possible by the conclusion of the civil war. The ultimate winner, Vespasian, quickly focused on restabilizing the Rhine frontier, dispatching nine legions to crush the revolt in 70 AD. The scale of

63 Jonathan Roth, "The Size and Organization of the Roman Imperial Legion." *Historia* 43 (1994): 346-62.

imperial resources was, as with Achaemenid Persia, a pathway of escalation difficult to match. Civilis, even with his hair dye and priestess, could not recruit Germanic allies with the same ease that Vespasian could transfer legions. Indeed, the emperor handily crushed Civilis' revolt as Roman forces simultaneously renewed efforts against the Jewish rebels, which culminated in the siege and capture of Jerusalem the following year.

Nonetheless, Vespasian and his successors took steps to further limit clout of auxiliary units. A new policy emerged where units were deliberately posted away from their homelands. The Batavian revolt had been dangerous precisely because a mutiny of Batavian cohorts could escalate into a broader crisis even beyond the frontier.⁶⁴ Perhaps more effective however, was an older policy of granting citizenship to auxiliaries who completed twenty-five years of service; until the early second century AD retired auxiliaries also received citizenship for their wives and children. Auxiliary cohorts were increasingly full of either men who were already citizens, or those who hoped to become so.

The Late Roman Empire

By the early fourth century AD, the configuration of Roman military power had changed. The distinction between legionary and auxiliary remained in unit lineages, but now that citizenship had been granted to all inhabitants of the empire since 212 AD, it no longer rested upon legal status. But the Romans struggled to maintain their superiority over peoples living on the frontiers of the empire, in part because the empire increasingly drew on "barbarian" populations living on the far side of the Rhine and Danube as a source of military manpower. Since the third century AD, frontier peoples had become more politically, economically and militarily sophisticated, in part as Germanic aristocrats flitted across both sides of the frontier, serving in the Roman army and then returning with Roman coins in their purses and experienced in Roman institutional practices.

But the Roman army remained its own greatest threat. Civil wars, combined with external invasions, nearly destroyed the empire in the third century AD, and similar circumstances would eventually implode the western empire two

64 On the Batavians in Roman military service, see Nico Roymans, *Ethnic Identity and Imperial Power: The Batavians in the Early Roman Empire*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004 and T. Derks, and H. Teitler, "Batavi in the Roman Army of the Principate: An Inventory of Sources." *Bonner Jahrbücher* 218 (2019), 53–80.

centuries later.⁶⁵

By the fourth century AD, the Roman army was split between frontier troops (*limitanei* and *ripenses*) directly posted along frontier lines, and mobile field armies (*comitatenses*) distributed throughout the empire and largely stationed at some distance from active frontiers. This force structure embedded a rather explicit escalation ladder. Small threats, like a raiding party of dozens or even hundreds of warriors, would be dealt with by the *limitanei*.⁶⁶ More significant incursions which punctured through into the provinces could be countered through the deployment of a field army, often under the personal command of an emperor.

The system could account for multiple threats only through the multiplication of emperors, and the system had evolved in tandem with a new political arrangement. The emperor Diocletian, after conniving his way to power in AD 284, picked three colleagues to share his rule, a novel arrangement known as the tetrarchy. Diocletian's system rested in no small part on his own personal charisma and his ability to subordinate his own colleagues, and the tetrarchy collapsed into civil war following Diocletian's retirement. But the notion of multiple emperors as a necessity to rule the Roman empire stuck. After Constantine achieved sole rule in AD 324 after nearly two decades of civil war, he promoted his adult sons, and later his nephew Julian, to imperial rank. While these brothers eventually warred amongst each other after their father's death, joint rule would prove the norm going forward, with only brief exceptions for the reigns of Julian and Theodosius. Joint rule was simultaneously chronically destabilizing yet increasingly necessary. The now established expectation that the emperor personally lead armies in major campaigns effectively required multiple emperors to deal with so many simultaneous threats.

This created a potential coordination problem if emperors could not work together when faced with a threat that required combing the joint resources of the empire. Such was the case in AD 378 when the eastern emperor Valens faced a Gothic rebellion.⁶⁷ The Goths had not entered the empire as invaders. Rather, they were refugees who had been admitted into the empire in hope they would

65 For the Late Roman Empire, see David Potter, *Rome at Bay, AD 180-395*. London: Routledge, 2004.

66 Benjamin Isaac, "On the Meaning of the Term *Limes* and *Limitanei*." *Journal of Roman Studies* 78: (1988), 125-47.

67 For the Gothic wars, see Michael Kulikowski, *Rome's Gothic Wars: From the Third Century to Alaric*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

supply recruits to the army, and rebelled after suffering hideous treatment by Roman officials. The metastasizing rebellion required not only the mobilization of the *comitatenses* personally commanded by Valens, but also reinforcements from the west personally commanded by the western emperor, Valen's nephew Gratian.

As we have seen, the ability to shift and concentrate troops was the most basic mode of escalation available to large empires. Technically the Roman empire remained a united front, but the personalities of the emperors, ensconced in separate courts, proved a significant impediment to united action. Valens, who had ruled for over a dozen years and had a career as a military officer, did not wish to share the glory with his nephew, who had been elevated to the purple by his late brother when he was only seven years old. Impatient with his young colleague's delayed arrival, and flattered by his officers that he could beat the Goths himself, Valens attacked the Goths with only his own field army.⁶⁸ This personal resentment proved disastrous, resulting in his death and the annihilation of his army.

The Battle of Adrianople was not the immediate end of the Roman empire. But it marked a permanent loss of escalation dominance over an internal population. The victorious Goths enjoyed sufficient numbers and social organization to repel subsequent attempts to defeat them, although the emperor Theodosius managed to hem them into a marginal reservation in the Balkans. Gothic nobles were granted Roman military commissions, and Gothic warriors were in theory part of the Roman army. Nor was this merely a diplomatic fiction, as Gothic troops played an important role in Theodosius' victory at the Frigidus River in AD 395. But the Roman state lacked the ability to dominate the Goths by force, as the Goths were now an even match for a Roman comital field army. Starting in 401, the Goths under a new king Alaric launched the first of a series of incursions into Italy, designed to force concessions. While the Roman general Stilicho sometimes managed to repel Alaric, he proved unable to defeat him. Stilicho's execution amidst a bout of courtly intrigue encouraged Alaric to invade Italy in 408, demanding appointment as *magister militum*. While Alaric largely envisioned himself as operating within the Roman imperial system, suffice it to say he wielded extraordinary power viz a viz the state. No Batavian cohort commander in the first century AD would have been in a position to make such exorbitant demands. The situation culminated in 410 AD, when Alaric sacked Rome, and carried off with the loot the emperor's sister, who married his successor Athaulf. Even as the Goths wandered, often starving, the Roman state was

68 Amm. Marc. 31.12.7.

unable or unwilling to defeat them; they finally settled in Aquitaine, effectively annexing Roman territory and emerging as an independent kingdom by the AD 450s. Similarly the Vandals, who along with several other tribes crossed the Rhine in 406 AD, were recruited by the self-proclaimed emperor Contantine III, and subsequently crossed into Africa on the contrivance of the rogue *magister militum* Bonifatius, before they took control of the territory themselves.⁶⁹

The loss of escalation dominance was itself a symptom of deeper problems with the late Roman state: child emperors, a multiplicity of fragmented courts and power centers, including the ascendant Church, and possibly a cooling climate less favorable to an extractive agrarian empire.⁷⁰ But just as a high fever can kill a patient, the loss of escalation dominance doomed the western empire, as by the middle of the fifth century AD the armies of the central state no longer were capable of defeating armed barbarian contingents that were increasingly shedding any pretense of fealty to weak emperors and a fragmented central state.

Conclusion:

This survey of various strategies of escalation dominance employed by western Eurasian empires—and their varying successes can produce no firm conclusions, but some final observations are in order. Firstly, it is notable the extent that technology in antiquity played a limited role in practical escalation dominance, even as flashy special weapons like war elephants, scythed chariots and supersized polyremes were used to advertise the escalation dominance of their possessors. Most imperial states practiced a mix of qualitative and quantitative strategies. Strictly qualitative strategies tended to work poorly, with the Spartans being the most salient example of pinning their escalation dominance on the excellence of a dwindling pool of aristocratic warriors. Athens too, while better resourced demographically and fiscally than Sparta, hinged its escalation dominance on the superiority of a single military institution, its navy, and its power was shattered by a single defeat. Carthage represents the unusual case of an imperial state lacking obvious mechanisms of escalation dominance, beyond

69 On the role of fifth century usurpers in encouraging and facilitating the movement of barbarian migrants, see Kulikowski 2000. For the career of Bonifatius, see Jeroen Wijnendaele, *The Last of the Romans. Bonifatius: Warlord, and comes Africae*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

70 Child emperors: Meagan McEvoy, *Child Emperor Rule in the Late Roman West, AD 367-455*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Climate: Kyle Harper, *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease and the End of an Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.

using its fiscal resources to recruit armies sufficiently divided along ethnic lines that no one contingent posed a threat; it was a risky strategy that courted ruin during the Truceless War and made Carthage vulnerable to hostile expeditionary forces such as those led by Agathocles and Scipio.

During the Republic, Rome took the seemingly risky step of maintaining no qualitative escalation dominance over defeated Italian peoples, instead mobilizing them to fight in Roman armies using the same weapons and tactics as citizen troops. A strategy of inclusion, however, provided Rome with a citizen body far larger than any un-enfranchised Italian group, while Italian military units, the cohorts, were deliberately kept far smaller than citizen legions. Even so, the tenuous nature of Roman escalation dominance meant that Rome ruled its Italian subjects with a light touch. In the principate, the Roman army enjoyed decisive qualitative and quantitative escalation dominance through a large professional army. This army made substantial use of non-citizen auxiliary troops, which accounted for roughly half the force and fought with similar weapons and tactics. The so-called barbarian invasions of the fifth century represented a failure of escalation dominance, as Germanic military units, organized along ethnic lines and commanded by native kings, were sufficiently strong enough to establish themselves as independent kingdoms against the weak western state.

Two trends are worth noting. The first is division. Escalation dominance worked best when empires were able to keep subjects divided through diplomatic, political and institutional means. This often involved harnessing ethnic divisions already present in multi-ethnic domains. For Athens, the Athenian navy cruised between the subject communities of its nesiotic empire. The assignation of different status to various peoples, best attested in Rome but likely also present in Carthage, further cracked any potential solidarities between subject peoples.

But the most robust empires benefited from political and institutional strategies of inclusion, in contrast to empires with exclusive practices and ideologies, which proved exceptionally brittle. Sparta in particular paid the price for its parochial social order. But core populations of empires frequently proving insufficient to dominate the whole, from the modest Persian and Median contingents in Achaemenid armies, to the limited pool of “Macedonian” phalangites in Hellenistic armies, to the miniscule citizen contingents of Carthage. Rome in many ways was unique in using inclusion to promote escalation dominance, creating a large citizen body during the Republic, and during the empire granting citizenship to discharged auxiliaries and their families, until the enfranchisement

of all in AD 212. Rome in all periods was an exploitative tributary empire, but paradoxically, mechanisms of inclusivity and incorporation undergird the effectiveness and endurance of its escalation dominance.

Powers in the Western Mediterranean

A Strategic Assessment in Roman History

GIOVANNI BRIZZI

Professor Emeritus, Bologna University.

How many Mediterraneans are there in the world? Franco Cardini has rightly observed that the Mediterranean «is not a word, it is not a name or a definition; it is a non-definition»; so that, in the end, Mediterraneans are all those seas - the one between China and Japan, the one between the Indian subcontinent and the Horn of Africa, as well as the universe gathered in a crescent around the Caribbean Sea... - included between lands where, not by chance, great civilisations have developed. True; and, however, are they all really the same? Allow me, with respect to my friend Franco, to suggest another term, Greek this time, which, referring to the very first sea voyages, underlines a very precise difference: that of *periplous*. Through the presence of the initial preposition *peri*, this notion implies the circular character and the return upon itself of navigation, so to speak, completed and perfect, which ideally took place following the coastline, travelled all the way back upon itself, and thus emphasises the basically totally closed nature of the mirror we are talking about. None of the other seas possess such an intimate and exclusive character, all of them having, at least, a dimension projected outwards that, quite unlike the narrow 'regards' established by Hercules (and opened wide by him: in the myth, the Mediterranean was originally closed...), suggests at least the possibility of an escape *in apertum* with respect to this 'mestizo courtyard' that is nothing other than the 'frog pond' of a famous Platonic definition.

All around Braudel's 'liquid continent' the tenants of its shores huddled for centuries, until recent times, united and at the same time divided by age-old grudges, rooted in memory: «Turks, Spaniards, Berbers, French, *Moriscos*, Jews, Moors, Venetians, Genoese, Florentines, Greeks, Dalmatians, Albanians, renegades, corsairs». In 'our' (I am, reluctantly, borrowing the term, pointing out that I have no subtexts whatsoever to propose nor do I want to insinuate any ambiguous reference...) Mediterranean thalassocracies, when there were any, were mostly ephemeral and above all partial, always: the Byzantine one, for example, was limited by the Arab, Muslim one, and later the Venetian one

could never completely rid itself of the cumbersome Genoese presence, while the Spanish Power always had to contend in these waters with the Crescent and even with the Lion of St. Mark.

So also in ancient times, before Rome, this sea long lacked a single master. More or less lasting, the powers that contested its dominion were in fact almost always only partial. Thucydides' *archaiology*, in fact, records a series of as many as twelve successive thalassocracies, only two of which concern the world outside of Hellas, namely Persia and Carthage. As for Diodorus, he counts as many as seventeen between the siege of Troy and the Persian wars; although his list, which probably depends on the 1st century BC chronographer Castor Rhodes, is not the same. Castor of Rhodes, is generally considered to have no real historical value. Although the list of thalassocracies compiled in the course of the 5th century is completely independent from that of the succession between empires, which moreover never takes into account the Greek powers even after their victory over the Persians, the Greek world remains bound to the notion of *pontos*, the high and open sea therefore, with «its nature of passage, of intermediary, of connecting element». Thus, as has been aptly observed, «the idea that domination of the sea is the fundamental prerequisite of any political power is not only and only a Thucydidesian invention, since there is already in Herodotus (3.122) a notion of the thalassocracies of Minos and the Greek Polycrates».

The only one of these realities that we will briefly deal with here before turning our attention to Rome, however, will be that of Carthage, on the western sea; a mirror, that of the Tyrrhenian Sea, which for centuries saw the imposition of the Punics' albeit 'reluctant' imperialism and their instead conscious thalassocracy, the fundamental instrument through which, according to a logic not unlike that of the Greeks, they sought to acquire, manage and preserve their dominion. Founded, according to tradition, by settlers from Tyre towards the end of the 9th century, the Libyan city was born not as a bridgehead towards the last West or the end of the Maghreb, a role that appears to have been reserved for the most ancient centres, Gades (Cadiz), Lixus, Utica, nor as a trading point or seat of a real commercial agency, but as a scolta protecting a bundle of vital routes, along the route that led from Tyre to the mineral deposits discovered in southern Spain

With the loss of political freedom for the metropolis Tyre and for the whole of Phoenicia and, at the same time, with the disappearance of the civilisation of Tartessos, in the south of the Iberian peninsula, which had long fuelled the trade especially in metals with the East, Carthage began to think of uniting under its hegemony the sister realities of the West, taking the place of a motherland that

was now remote and powerless. This situation is underlined by a passage, albeit referring to a much later age, by Aristotle: «Men...no longer associate simply to form a defensive alliance against all forms of injustice, and even less only with a view to trade and business relations with one another; for, in this respect, the Tyrrhenians and Carthaginians, as well as all those peoples who are bound together by trade treaties, would be like citizens of a single state. Now, it is true that among them there are conventions regulating imports, treaties prohibiting mutual injustices, and alliances made official in writing'. Although light years away from the much more solid bonds later put in place by Rome for its federation, and especially from the emergence of an authentic common *civitas*, this system nevertheless suggests the existence of a true Punic *commonwealth*.

Although not without some significant harshness (the hegemonic city intervened to repress, at times, not only external violators, but also rebellious allies and tributaries), the union of the Phoenician West under Carthage must have been facilitated by the defensive instincts of the single centres, isolated within not always friendly contexts, and by the opportunity of the moment; and it was achieved, normally without excessive violence, at least among the Phoenician colonies, seeking at length to respond, above all mercantile in character. In this sphere, however, Carthage often aimed to achieve monopoly conditions: at the height of power, the city did not hesitate to control the shores of the western Mediterranean with a sometimes ruthless harshness. According to Eratostenes ships that came too close to Sardinia or the Pillars of Hercules were pitilessly sunk; and the expression *Tyria maria*, passed into proverb, has been explained with the fact that *Tyro oriundi Poeni adeo potentes mari fuerunt ut omnibus mortalibus navigatio esset periculosa*.

Decisive for exercising an effective and conscious thalassocracy over that stretch of water was the control eventually exercised over at least part of the two major islands. As for Sardinia, it had been touched centuries earlier by a vast process of colonisation by the Phoenicians: Sulki and Tharros, which had arisen in the 8th century, had been followed during the following century by Carales, Nora and Bithia, and the occupation had then extended to the northern coasts, where Olbia had been born. The island, however, finally entered the Carthaginian orbit. If the remains of Antas show a profound ideological-religious penetration, the findings of Monte Sirai document a growing military presence that, at the time of Carthage's greatest expansion, extended to the point of effectively controlling a large part of the island: archaeology has revealed a long and continuous series of fortresses that, from the heights of Padria to the area of Muravera, cut Sardinia diagonally, assuring the Punic full control. The

island was valuable in itself: extensive and populous, fertile and rich in mines, especially silver, it was for a long time perhaps the most important of Carthage's overseas dominions; which, in order to maintain control, sought to establish an acceptable form of symbiosis with the different ethnic groups that populated it. What seems to have succeeded with the indigenous peoples: between the 5th and 3rd centuries, during a second colonial period, Sardinia gradually opened up to the flow of people coming from North Africa and heading towards regions untouched by the previous colonisation. This phase, more properly Punic, was capable of involving a large part of the same Nuragic *elites*; while from Carthage, almost all the original Phoenician nuclei ended up detaching themselves, dissatisfied with the modalities of its dominion; a decision that would have had heavy repercussions on their choice of camp, systematically favourable to the Romans at the time of the invasion of the island. For a long time, however, Sardinia constituted both a pivot for the management of the routes in the upper Tyrrhenian Sea and an *antemurale* against the interference of those who, along those routes, aimed to fit in; such as the Phoenicians or the Etruscans (and the Romans...), who at different times were carefully removed from it.

At the same time, Carthage had gradually begun to take an interest in Sicily. It was vital for the city to control at least the western tip of the island, between Trapani and Cape Lilybaeum; which, not even 150 kilometres from Cape Bon, constituted the second focal point from which to watch the Strait of Sicily. Add to this the fact that occupying at least this portion of the island would have allowed Carthage to close its routes in a circular fashion and control all its traffic in the western sea.

Their penetration into Sicily had begun, according to Thucydides, in ancient times, even before the Greek presence was firmly established there; and it had continued at first under the sign of a certain prudence: 'the Phoenicians also came to settle on the coasts of Sicily. They took possession of a number of promontories and islets in the vicinity to trade with the Sicilians. But when the Greeks began to land on the island in large numbers, they evacuated most of their settlements and regrouped at Mozia, Solunto and Palermo, close to the Elymians, on whose alliance they could count'.

Later on, however, as Carthage's power grew and its interests in Sicily increased, the encounter between the two realities gradually became first a confrontation, especially with the Greek cities in the centre and east of the island, Agrigento and Syracuse in particular, then a real clash. This led to war. On the field of Imera, the forces of Terillus, tyrant of the city, and those of the allied

Carthage opposed the armies of Teron of Agrigento and especially of Gelon of Syracuse, who aimed at achieving hegemony over the entire island. Herodotus first, and Diodorus Siculus later, propose a version of an episode that, according to them, occurred at the same time as the Athenian victory at Salamis. Recently re-examined, this perfect synchronism, which tends to configure a sort of western projection of the clash that took place in the east between the Greeks and the barbaric Persians, has in fact turned out to be an elaboration of Syracusan political propaganda.

Be that as it may, even after the disastrous defeat, which saw the ritual suicide of Hamilcar, commander-in-chief of the Punic army (and, even more so, the increasingly widespread use of mercenary troops by Carthage), there is no evidence of any concessions to the Greek powers by the Carthaginians; instead, they managed, in spite of everything, to maintain their positions by paying a tribute of 2,000 talents. Imilcone, son of the fallen Hamilcar at Imera, even managed to conduct some victorious operations against the Dinomenids, the *tyrannoi* clan that would rule Syracuse until 460.

Having by now consolidated its control over Phoenician Sicily and in particular Mothia, Carthage left a degree of autonomy to its sister cities, which it allowed to continue to mint money until the end of the 4th century BC, when it gradually tightened its control. However, the Libyan city seemed by then to be able to gradually take control of the island. The two great expeditions of 409 and 406 inflicted appalling damage on the Siceliot Greeks, destroying Selinunte and that Agrigento which Pindar had described as the most beautiful of mortal cities, as well as Gela and Camarina in the south and Imera in the north. More generally, if the successes reported by Hannibal of Giscone resulted in the confirmation of Punic hegemony over western Sicily in a treaty of 405, the victory reported at Cape Kronion, perhaps near Palermo, by Imilcone son of Magone forced Dionisio of Syracuse to cede a large portion of territory to the Punic, which included the Greek Selinunte, Heraclea Minoa and Terme, accepting the border of the Halykos river. The Syracusan tyrant resumed the war; but he died before he could drive the Punic from Sicily. With them his son concluded a peace treaty; and the boundary that left the Punic almost a third of the island was later confirmed in 373.

By then, a very precise physical border had been established in Sicily, delimiting the possessions of the Carthaginians and those of the Greeks. Starting with the treaty of 373, the foundations were probably laid for an *epikráteia*, a definitive Punic territorial possession on the island. It was a dominion that not

even the campaigns first of the Corinthian Timoleon (344-337), then the long victorious campaigns of Agathocles (317-289), who went so far as to threaten Carthage itself, succeeded in shaking off: the treaty of 306 finally ratified Carthaginian control over those territories.

The strategy adopted in western Sicily was to combine territorial possession with agricultural exploitation of the land; which, entrusted to groups of Libyan immigrants, ended up giving the landscape an African-type layout. This was while new fortified centres arose, such as the second Solunto and the powerful Lilybaeum. Carthage was now consolidating and organising its territorial dependencies, not only in Africa, but also in Sardinia and Sicily. It remained, however, as powerful as it was, a city-state; and it persisted, a serious limitation to its strength, a political structure that seems not to have provided access to full citizenship for anyone who was not a native.

And Rome? The Tiber city remained linked to Carthage for a long time, and was at first allowed to join some of its initiatives. The first treaty with the Punic (509 B.C.) allowed it, it seems, to push overseas in tow of the Libyan power. If at a time presumably before the end of the 4th century -date in which Theophrastus writes that news- the *res publica* sent, it seems, a squadron of twenty-five ships to Corsica, according to Diodorus Siculus in the year 378/7 (Livian 386) Rome would have also tried to found a colony in Sardinia, perhaps the *Pheronia polis* whose trace is preserved in a late Ptolemaic toponym. Undoubtedly first promoted in the shadow of the Ceretan maritime power, in turn a friend of Carthage, these initiatives then continued with the Romans as direct protagonists; with limits eventually made much tighter by a Punic State that became increasingly jealous on the occasion of the second treaty.

What prompted Rome to seek a new treaty was the renewal of Syracuse's hegemonic policy; it resumed its attacks towards the Etruscan and especially the Latian littoral, extending them until the critical moment of 349 Varronian. Although Livy speaks of a clash -doubtful, but not impossible- that would have occurred between Gauls and Greeks at the mouth of the Tiber, the action of a Celtic horde, operating from the area of the Alban Hills (and thus from Latin bases...), was instead probably coordinated with that of a Syracusan fleet cruising offshore: the Senones from the Ancona area had in fact been Syracuse's *longa manus* since 386, in the sector between the Marches and Latium and beyond... The primary target of the threat, however, was no longer Caere, as at the beginning of the century, but Rome itself; which, having risen from the destruction it had suffered in 386, had gained a pre-eminent role against the

Etruscan city itself. It was on this occasion, in 348, that Rome, in route with the Latins and in need of help against the threat of an attack from the sea by the Greek fleet (and unable to fight on the sea as the Greeks were imbued on land) concluded the second treaty with Carthage. The victory of the consul of 345 B.C., L. Furio Camillo, against the Gauls eliminated the danger on land; and, shortly afterwards, the action taken together in Sicily by the forces of Carthage and the tyrant Iceta of Leontini also forced the Syracusan naval force to retreat. Drawn up under conditions of necessity, this second pact did, however, result in a significant tightening of the clauses restricting Rome's movements and trade in the Punic area: in addition to Sardinia, they were now essentially barred from Africa, except for Carthage.

In the meantime, however, Rome was hesitantly approaching the sea. The year 338, the same assigned by tradition to the conclusion of the great Latin war, is also said by some to have seen the first victory by sea over the Volscians and the Latins themselves : as proof of the event it is recalled that *naves Antiatium partim in navalia Romae subductae, partim incensae, rostraque earum suggestum in foro exstructum adornari placuit, rostraque id templum appellatum* . But how were the rostrums later placed to decorate the orators' tribune in the Forum? As has been observed , the first naval triumph recorded in the Fasti is that of Caius Duilius; and the entirely new nature of the event gave the celebration of the victory at Mylae absolutely special characteristics . No mention whatsoever, however, is found in the chroniclers; who, in the case of Menio, do not record a naval victory at all. Could it not be that the Romans 'simply managed the matter... by land' , and that the rostrums then affixed to the *suggestum* in the forum were taken from ships captured in the port of Anzio at the end of a successful land operation? Such, indeed, would have always been their prevailing orientation afterwards...

Moreover, while an even more important stage along the same route marked the year 326, with the conquest of Neapolis, here too the Roman fleet is conspicuous by its absence . Handed over to the consul Publius Philo, who was besieging it, by the demarchs Carilaus and Nymphnion, *principes civitatis* and exponents of a local aristocracy favourable to Rome, the Greek Neapolis offered the *res publica* an inestimable series of advantages on the sea. A firm and in itself almost impregnable base, in an excellent position to control the south, Naples ensured important port facilities, a great shipbuilding industry, expert sailors; so that, in exchange for the commitment to patrol the coast, it was guaranteed full autonomy, territorial integrity, the maintenance of its own currency, *asylum* for exiles from Rome

A well-defined system of naval logistics now came into being for the first time, and what had hitherto been, so to speak, only a floating, embarked section of the army seemed to take on a physiognomy of its own from this moment on. In 311, the *duumviri navales* were set up, tasked with looking after a group of ships that were permanently operational and therefore to be constantly attended to even during the idle winter months, ensuring their necessary maintenance. This was the first real fixed nucleus of the navy for the *res publica*, which was perhaps stimulated to further strengthen itself, later on, first by the disaster that the squadron sent (282 BC) met with in the waters of Tarentum, then by the ‘courtesy visit’, at the time of the war with Pyrrhus (278 BC), of the Punic admiral Mago, who exhibited in the waters of Ostia a fleet of one hundred and twenty warships. What certainly impressed the senate was the pressure that the guest ‘was able to exert, and indeed did exert on the subsequent negotiations’; but perhaps also the memory of how much it had cost, in political terms, to have needed Carthaginian naval support in the past. Certainly, it is permissible to doubt the Polibian report about the Punic quinquereme which, having run aground, was taken and ‘copied’ by the Romans. Perhaps taken from Fabio Pittore, the episode could in fact trace, backdating it, another one, later and decisive for understanding the turn in favour of Rome during the last phase of the first conflict: the running aground of a very modern tetrera under Lilybaeum, which allowed the capture of the ship of the blockade-breaker Hannibal Rodius (an event to which we will return...), contributing shortly afterwards to a definitive change in the fortunes of the war. Even if the assertion according to which only sixty days were needed to build Duilius’ ships, while controlling not only the shipyards of Ostia but also those of Neapolis and Taranto, seems certainly excessive, Rome by this time certainly had the knowledge (including the technique of prefabricated construction) and the equipment of the Italian *socci navales*, necessary to accelerate the work times and the production rhythms of the *res publica* to the maximum.

Compared to Carthage, its particular political structure gave Rome an inestimable advantage. Composed initially of citizens, reportedly rather proud of their war merits to the point of wearing as many rings as there were military campaigns in which they had participated, the Punic armies were gradually supplemented by units of allies and tributaries; and then, to an increasing extent, by mercenaries. Contingents of this type were present until the second half of the 6th century, when Mago enlisted them in large numbers, perhaps thinking that foreign troops were better prepared to second his personal ambitions for power. And certainly strong units of mercenaries took part in the Battle of Imera (480

BC), when Hamilcar's army fielded Iberians, Elisicans and Ligurians in addition to the citizens and subjects of Carthage.

The path was marked out: as is customary in more prosperous states, enlistment for mercedes steadily increased until, from the 3rd century onwards, the overseas presence of citizens was reduced to senior officers only. Coercing the internal balance of Carthage, severely limiting its strategic possibilities, was a particular mentality. The direct and very close link that had always existed in the Greek city-states and Rome between political rights and military duties, whereby the popular assemblies in fact framed the civic army called upon to express itself politically, was a fact long unknown in Carthage, and in any case substantially ruled out the employment of civic militias in overseas lands .

This entailed a different attitude towards war, the root cause of which is perhaps to be sought in the Libyan city's distinct mercantile vocation: thus, it has been said, 'military adventure was not among those that seduce a people devoted rather to navigation and commerce' ; and warlike activity pursued for the mere sake of chance seems to have been long out of the Punic's reach. Carthage intimately hoped that wars 'were short-lived, and resigned itself, without giving itself too much thought, to ending them in defeat when fortune did not favour it [...]. A single city, however populous, could not provide the armies that this policy of conquest would need without exhausting itself. It was impossible to tear citizens away from their families, their trade, their interests, to expose or sacrifice their lives in frequent and distant expeditions. It would have meant destroying the trade and industry that was to be developed by opening up new markets to them. It was a tendency that made war 'ancillary' to the economy; and, as we have said, it conditioned Carthage's imperialism to the point of making it hesitant and ready to give up . This very particular weakness, political well before military, would fatally condition the African city from the very first clash with Rome.

With the extraordinary creation of an early embryo of law, centred on the acceptance of the 'pre-statal' value of *fides* and the complex of *iura*, of rules, that structured it, customary norms shared by an ever-increasing number of gentile *clans*, Rome had succeeded in coagulating the understandings of the aristocracies of Italy, especially the Tyrrhenian. The Roman state that had emerged had extended the *civitas* both by deducing civic tribes on territories confiscated from the enemy, and above all by elaborating and spreading the form of the *municipium sine suffragio*; and it had thus enormously increased the pool of citizens that could be recruited into the legions. At the same time he had secured the loyalty

of *elites* who sent their exponents to join the fasces in Rome itself and to be included as *consortes imperii*, sharers of power, in the senate of the *res publica*. If at that time in Sicily this form of symbiosis was obviously not yet conceivable in any way, the solidity and reliability of the values proposed by Rome nonetheless made the choices of the Siceliotes habitually lean on its side during the first conflict with Carthage .

As for the *socii italici*, the *foedera* with Rome, relating to different moments and political conditions, could obviously not respond to a homogeneous category. Thus, there were some that, either because of the particularly favourable conditions established by the Urbe with regard to the interlocutors, or for propagandistic or diplomatic reasons, were defined as *aequa*, such as the treaty with Camerino, the one with Heraclea, perhaps the one with Naples. Almost always, however, among the clauses of great importance was the one by which Rome required its *partner* to have the same allies and the same enemies as the *res publica*; and, with that, decreed its inferiority status. Concluded with one and the same power, Rome, around which, as has been said (Lübtow 1955), the Italic statelets were placed «like planets in relation to the sun», these *foedera* constituted the structure that, habitually called the Italic confederation, was in fact «merely an agglomeration of bilateral treaties of various forms between Rome and individual Italian tribes and cities» . Although they differed from one another, the relations between the *res publica* and its Italic allies therefore essentially corresponded to a single category, that of *societas-symmachia*, normally established by means of a perpetual *foedus*; a condition that imposed the constant supply to Rome of contingents in arms, which could be increased if necessary. The *foedera* thus represented the source of the relevant military obligations ; obligations that, it seems for the first time on the eve of the great Gallic invasion of 225, were codified through the *formula togatorum*. Conceived perhaps simply, at first, as the official roll of the Italic communities linked to Rome by a *foedus*, this list was later transformed into a veritable military register, which counted, according to the figure, albeit incomplete and imprecise, provided by Polybius , the forces - an immense total - that could be mobilised people by people in the event of *tumultus*, of global conscription, and the maximum size of the contingents to be provided to Rome for each of the allies. Separate and problematic remains the category of the so-called *socii navales*, who also operated and had great weight in the war for Sicily , probably bearing a large part of the losses at sea.

When, from 261 onwards, it was forced to face, in the waters surrounding the island, the strongest and most experienced of the military navies of the time, the *res publica* therefore surpassed Carthage both in its mentality and in the im-

mense potential resources at its disposal. If the fledgling Roman *armada under the* command of Consul Caius Duilius won an important victory on its first real impact in the waters of Mylae-Milazzo (260), it was probably facilitated by the presumption of the Punic, who ‘full of contempt for the inexperience of the Romans, they all moved with their bow to the enemy, as if they were going for a sure booty and it was not even worth taking sides in battle’, more uncertain and in any case not decisive was the outcome of a second clash near Tindari. But what is most surprising is the third, immense fact of arms that occurred four years later (256). In the waters in front of Cape Ecnomo, near Finziade (Licata), the two most numerous and powerful fleets that had ever ploughed the Mediterranean, perhaps not only the western Mediterranean, faced each other. Certainly, the figures provided by Polybius appear disproportionate, as he speaks of 330 Roman ships against Carthage’s 350 and a total embarked force of 300,000 men. But even if one were to logically downgrade this figure, as Tarn and especially De Sanctis rightly did in my opinion, to 230 and 250 ships respectively, one is still talking about an epoch-making clash. Attempting an exact count of the number of men engaged seems impossible, since a number of often unanswerable questions have to be answered first. How much of the respective armies was made up of quinqueremi-pentère, the symbol-ships of the First Punic War, and how much of triremes or other smaller vessels? How large was the normal crew of a quinquereme? Calculating at 300-320 men the normal crew of a Punic pentera, I believe that a not implausible, though largely random, estimate of the forces fielded at the time by the African city could range between 65 and 80 thousand men, though I would tend towards the lower figure. A little more, perhaps, for the fleet of the *res publica*, though fewer ships. The boarding tactics chosen by the Romans (and the wider and more massive outline of their hulls...) provided ‘officially’ for 120 naval infantrymen per first-rate vessel. Although, in all likelihood, having planned to land Regulus in Africa, the consuls must have already taken on board the troops, legions and *socii*, and must logically have distributed them among the battleships, assigning them to the appropriate task of embarked infantry, the Roman crews were, as a rule, more numerous. One can therefore essentially agree with De Sanctis when he states that the battle of Ecnomus was ‘one of the largest and fiercest battles that history remembers, in which perhaps one hundred and fifty thousand, certainly no less than one hundred thousand men took part’. More certain are the figures of the Roman victory, which speak of thirty Punic vessels sunk and, absolutely significantly, of sixty-four captured, evidently by boarding, against the loss of twenty-four Roman ships only

Despite the fact that it had equipped itself, and certainly not without success, with a strong navy of war, Rome remained an essentially terrestrial power. It was so at the beginning, when it oriented the ways of the conflict towards transforming battles on the sea into close encounters between embarked infantry; and, although for a long time (and perhaps unexpectedly...) victorious on the sea, even after the triumphs of Mylae and Ecnomo, it decidedly returned to that vocation later. At the first loss of certainties that were evidently not fully consolidated, the *res publica* seemed to be seized by a discouragement that was unusual for it. The discrimen was constituted by the disaster of Drepana in 249, the first and ultimately only real naval defeat suffered during that conflict. Here, as has been said, 'the slowness of the Roman ships', which in the previous clashes 'had not prevented victory', became 'a decisive factor in the defeat': in this case, as Polybius points out, although other factors were also influential, such as the shrewd manoeuvre of the Punic Admiral Aderbale and the unpreparedness of the hastily recruited crews, it was above all the heaviness and slowness of the Roman boats that proved decisive.

Now to the inexperience of admirals who, apparently excellent commanders, were however clumsy as sailors, capable of thwarting their victories by often running into - as at Camarina (255) or Cape Palinuro (253)- fearsome luck that destroyed entire fleets, had been added, heralded by the repeated violations of the blockade on Lilybaeum, the evident superiority of a slimmer and faster Punic ship, which was therefore almost always able to evade the boardings of the slower and more massive Roman hulls, rendering the action of the ravens useless, which could no longer constitute a surprise. Being able to return to the favoured *periplous* and *diekplous* manoeuvres at which they excelled, Carthaginian seafaring skill once again became decisive.

Marking a second and decisive turning point in the course of the conflict is the story of Hannibal Rodius. In fact, this Punic privateer's very fast ship proved capable at first of repeatedly breaking the Roman blockade around Lilybaeum and of entering and leaving the harbour of the besieged square, almost defiantly mocking the hunt of the Roman squadrons and holding its own 'with a single ship against the entire enemy fleet'; worse, with its successes it soon encouraged the dangerous emulation of other violators, whose initiatives even risked compromising the siege. The Romans finally succeeded in capturing the corsair only thanks to a stroke of luck. A Punic vessel 'of admirable workmanship' ran aground on a shallow seabed and could be salvaged and rearmed by embarking naval infantrymen. Seeing himself pursued by a ship he evidently knew and whose speed he had reason to fear, Hannibal attempted to escape; but in vain.

Reached, he was overpowered and captured; and his ship, like the one the Romans had already set up against him, then served to intercept those who tried to enter Lilybaeum again. Even more so, that nautical technology was eventually used to resurrect the Roman navy, ultimately victorious at the Egadi.

The specimen capable of single-handedly defeating the entire Roman fleet was therefore evidently not the only one, if it is true that, by employing the captured vessel, the pursuers were able to have a manoeuvrability and speed at least equal to its own, so as to be able to catch up with it. In the latter case it was, according to the explicit testimony of Polybius, a tetrera, just as the ship of the Rhodius was probably a tetrera: if it had been a quinquereme, in fact, it would hardly have been able, given the greater height of the hull, to be boarded by a ship with much lower sides. The nickname Rodio, which the daring Punic captain bore, has also led one to think that Rodia was, in fact, the naval technology that, for an albeit brief period, restored Carthage's supremacy on the sea. Thanks to the double sloping oar rowers, known as *sensile* rowers, the tetrera rodia was no more than four metres wide: it was therefore slimmer and more streamlined than any Roman ship, and it was much faster because the two rowers per oar gave it both more power and greater thrust. Another new weapon available to this type of ship could have been the lowered rostrum, also adopted by the Rhodians, which was capable of striking below the waterline and would have further enhanced the resurgent Carthaginian ability in ramming manoeuvres. Be that as it may, after Drepana there was - it has been said - 'a substantial', albeit momentary, 'collapse of the Roman naval system'. When the fleet of Junius Pullo, which was already avoiding contact with the ships of the Punic Cartalon, was destroyed by a new, terrible storm, which spared according to Diodorus only two ships (249/48), Rome, exhausted, decided to give up conducting large-scale naval operations; and retained apparently only a fleet to protect the Italic littoral, granting individual hulls to private individuals to conduct a race war, the only offensive activity of which it then felt up to.

Less than seven years elapsed between the momentary retreat of the *res publica* from the sea and the final triumph of Lutazio Catulo in the waters of the Egadi; so we are led to wonder what on earth could have given the war such a sudden and radical new turn. In order to reconstruct the last episode of the war, we can rely above all on Polybius; the brief accounts of Diodorus and Eutropius, which only report the size of the opposing fleets, are much less valuable, while the hints of Zonara and Orosius are entirely superficial.

Lutazio Catulo arrived in Sicily at the head of an imposing and largely new

armada - Polybius speaks of two hundred quinqueremi of the latest design , while Diodorus attributes to the consul three hundred «large ships» and as many as seven hundred transport ships - to the fitting out of which private financiers had contributed, to be reimbursed by the State once victory had been achieved . The momentary inertia of the Carthaginians, who only managed to gather and send an adequate fleet at the beginning of the following spring, also allowed Catulus to conveniently house his ships between the port of Drepana and the creeks around Lilybaeum and to properly train the crews.

Far less prepared in the circumstance were the officers and crew under Annone's orders. When, after calling at the 'Sacred Island' , the latter took to the sea bound for Mount Erice, then the base of Hamilcar Barca, to resupply him and get rid of the merchant ships he was escorting , Catulus, knowing his adversary's intentions, moved to intercept him and managed to catch him by surprise *in the open* when the Punic still had the merchant ship in tow. The clash ended in a complete Roman victory. Basically similar totals are reported by Polybius , who speaks of fifty Punic vessels sunk and seventy captured; and Diodorus. According to Siculus, who also notes the losses on the Roman side - as many as eighty ships, thirty destroyed and fifty damaged - Annon's fleet had twenty vessels sunk 'with all hands' and lost a total of one hundred and seventeen .

What were the factors that reversed the course of the war? It has been said of the battle at the Aegates that it was, in essence, a successful ambush ; and I believe that this aspect can hardly be underestimated, since the Punic ships, surprised on the way, were forced to divide themselves between the task of protecting the merchantmen under escort and the need to defend themselves against attackers who were completely free to manoeuvre.

For some time obsolete and therefore seriously vulnerable, Roman vessels were probably now the product of an entirely new technology, adapted 'on the model of the ship of Rhodium' . For the two hundred newest ships, the Romans had, according to Polybius , 'changed the system of construction', leaving 'everything heavy except what was needed for a naval battle' . These ships, however, were quinqueremi, not quadriremi; quinqueremi that have been not wrongly called superquinqueremi because they were made by adapting the technology of the quadrireme rodia , but in such a way as to create 'a hull of a new conception', which benefited from solutions taken and then adapted 'from another kind of ship' . Thus, a vessel was born that was more powerful and at the same time faster than its model. Did Syracusan science and shipbuilding (Archimedes?) come to the rescue of the *res publica* by favouring the realisation of such a nautical masterpiece? It could be.

In any case, the ultimate mood was now reversed: it was now the Punic who, although still 'out of ardour and pride... ready to fight...', on a rational level could not find solutions'; in particular 'they were... no longer able to supply troops in Sicily, since their enemies dominated the sea'. Would it therefore have been the new, unassailable Roman technology that disanimated Carthage, generating among its citizens the sense of powerlessness that finally drove them to surrender? Again, I certainly believe that this factor contributed at least in part to the victory of the *res publica*.

And, however, it is certainly also true that not all the Punic fleet had been lost and that, in any case, the efficient maritime technology of the African city had not been affected in the slightest: in the name of its particular doggedness, the opinion that the fight could and should have been continued, *Siciliam nimis celeri desperatione concessam*, was, among others, Hamilcar Barca. I therefore believe that at least one further, and perhaps even the most important, concause must be identified for the Punic surrender. Starting from the small number of Carthaginian prisoners reported by Diodorus, ten thousand in all, Thiel believes that the outcome of the clash at the Egadi was determined by the fact that the Punic ships were 'undermanned as well as ill-manned'. It has been replied to him, not without foundation, that while he 'assumed that the Punic ships were *penteri*... it is probable that a not insignificant part of the Carthaginian fleet was made up of the new Rhodian *quadriremi*'. This is certainly also possible, although the ten thousand captured Carthaginians mentioned in the Greek source would still seem to be a rather small booty for almost a hundred captured ships. There is no doubt, however - and it is Polybius himself who is categorical in this regard this time - that they were in the circumstance 'ill-manned', so that a question arises: was this lack of efficiency due to a simple lack of training or should it instead be ascribed to the fact that Carthage had by then scraped the barrel, reducing the wine to the dregs? So Roman superiority did not, or at least did not only translate into a technological leap, in respect of which the imbalance, although serious at the time, was not entirely unbridgeable, but also into a demographic one?

To certify what has been said, let us start from a figure, debatable as it may be but undoubtedly very significant: the figures provided by Polybius regarding the costs of the war. According to the Achaean historian, compared to the five hundred vessels lost by the Punic, seven hundred Roman vessels were destroyed by the enemy in combat and, above all, sunk due to the repeated disastrous misfortunes suffered by the fleets of the *res publica*; and for both sides, these were always *quinqueremi* or *penteri*. Of course, the balance sheet has been reviewed

in detail by numerous authors, starting with De Sanctis, Thiel and Walbank; but the figures proposed still range between 600 and 694 ships for the *res publica*, between 450 and 490 for the African *polis*. Impressive figures indeed.

Herein lies, in my opinion, the key to the problem; which refers us to a further different calculation, that of the very high price paid in human lives by the two contenders. Of course, the actual extent of these losses is, as usual, destined to remain debatable and in any case uncertain. We know that, in spite of Polybius' assertion, on both sides not all the units deployed were quinqueremes; however, we are completely unaware of the proportions and composition of the smaller ships. Equally unknown is the number of sailors who, having sunk their ship, perished in the waves; or, and the situation does not change much in terms of the effects on the course of the conflict, taken prisoner, they did not return home until at least the end of the war, making themselves unavailable for the continuation of hostilities. It is certain, however, that the level of casualties must have been very high: battles at sea are still particularly cruel today, and even more so in ancient times, when the means of escape on battle ships were almost non-existent. But even if we were to set the number of penterea at forty per cent of the fleet only, and count the rest among the lesser ships; even if we were to absurdly assume that fifty per cent of the crews somehow managed to escape, we would still arrive at the entirely conservative estimate of 75/80,000 Roman victims against more than 50,000 on the Punic side. He is therefore right who argues that 'the difficult appears to be in assembling the crews rather in building the ships'.

To this must be added another, unavoidable factor. 'Of extreme interest,' said, 'is the observation, handed down to us by the ancient sources, that while the Carthaginian armies were composed of mercenaries hired in the various regions of the Mediterranean, the crews of the ships were made up exclusively of Carthaginian citizens. Certainly burdensome even for Rome, which compared to the enemy would have suffered even forty per cent more losses, the sacrifice was, for the *res publica*, in the end bearable: in its case the cost in human lives fell largely and perhaps prevalently on those *socii* who provided an important contribution both for the formation of the crews and for the composition of the embarked infantry. Quite different was the case with Carthage: the African city remained a *polis* and, in the name of the founding assumption mentioned above, it ultimately found it impossible to sustain such an effort.

As a comment and at the same time as a stimulus for further reflection, let us quote in full a paragraph, explicitly from Polybius:

«But then, it will be asked, why today, when they are now definitively the lords of the world and are a hundred times more powerful than they were then, are the Romans unable to provide crews for so many ships and to take to the sea with such mighty fleets? The reasons for this state of affairs will become clear when we come to deal with the Roman constitution».

The Achaean historian's answer has not come down to us; so we may be tempted, perhaps not without a certain display of intellectual pride, to propose here one of our own. As has been keenly observed, 'at the very outset of his history P. was awake to signs of deterioration at Rome after her acquisition of world dominion, i.e. after 167'. Deterioration only political, however. Polybius would have come to know neither the response given by the Urbe some seventy years after his time to the phenomenon of pirates, nor the ultimate triumph of the western navy over the mammoth fleets of the East at the time of Actium (31 BC).

Of the overwhelming naval power exhibited a century earlier against Carthage in the time of Polybius, Rome had by then retained just enough to maintain its dominance unchanged during the Second Punic War, when, perhaps also because it was now aware of its unassailable inferiority on the sea, Hannibal chose to attack it by land and undermine its structures in Italy, relying on its unreachable tactical supremacy and its much more easily sacrificed mercenary troops. The *res publica* was then able to easily overwhelm the Syrian navy with the help of the Rhodians. But in reality, already in the aftermath of the second and even more frightening Punic nightmare, the dominant theme in the debate that had prompted it to act had become another, that of *metus*, of fear, which had profoundly influenced the entire Roman geopolitical line. At the time of the clash with Philip V of Macedon, which was foreseen as inevitable, the dilemma proposed by the consul Sulpicius Galba to the committees concerned the choice of the theatre of operations, i.e. whether to have war and enemy at home again, with all the inevitable consequences that this would entail, or to export offensive and risks to the opposite camp. Although without foundation, the spectre of a new invasion of Italy was successfully waved by Galba first against the Macedonian sovereign; and perhaps in this case «being safe from aggression...», which was certainly «the sincere aspiration of the most numerous», also constituted «the cloak under which the less numerous and more powerful covered the others and in part perhaps themselves with their own lust for war». Unquestionable, however, remains the explicit presence and the powerful drive (and not only on the masses...) of the *metus*, of fear; which was then exasperated beyond

all limits, up to the «psychose antiochique», by the landing of Syriac weapons in Greece (and, perhaps above all, by the presence of Hannibal at the court of the Seleucid sovereign...), until it constituted the decisive argument capable of dragging Rome into real preventive wars against the main Hellenistic powers.

In this climate, maritime supremacy served above all to free the eastern waters from the fleets of others, favouring the overseas passage of the legions; who then carried out the main action perfectly on their own, triumphing *in acie* at Cinoscephale and Magnesia. The «cauchemar des coalitions», the suspicion of possible alliances between Macedonia and Syria, the constant fear of hostile landings in Italy was then answered both by disarming the fleets of others - of Carthage and Macedonia, Syria and (not without ingratitude...) in fact even Rhodes - and, finally, by establishing against the surviving threat (?) of Philip and Perseus a series of colonies along the axis of the Via Aemilia and giving birth to Italy's first real political boundary by land, the Apennines, with the birth of a structure that anticipated, in its various components, the future *limites* of the empire. So, again, the increasingly pronounced ability of the *res publica* to solve the problems proposed by the sea with operations 'by land'?

Although necessarily supported by an important naval squadron, necessary to block the African city from the sea, the multi-year campaign that finally led to the destruction of Carthage (146) was once again based on predominantly land-based operations. Undertaken shortly before the middle of the second century, the creation by the Punic of the great round military port, the encampment of which is still clearly visible today on the Tunisian coast, had inevitably created suspicion and apprehension in Rome. In open violation of the limits imposed by the treaty of 201, which granted Carthage possession of no more than ten battleships, the nascent facility was designed to accommodate as many as two hundred and twenty according to Appian, no less than one hundred and seventy according to archaeological evidence; and it was inevitably destined to arouse the doubt that its birth was a prelude to the resurgence of a Punic thalassocracy. The reawakening of that fear then produced the most celebrated, hysterical and terrible of reactions: Rome medicated the *metus Punicus* by deciding to mercilessly repress the Carthaginian dream and starting the cruellest of preventive wars, ending with the destruction of Carthage itself.

Could it therefore be said that the only great ancient thalassocracy in the western sea, animated however always by an irresolute or 'reluctant' imperialism, was first defeated, then overwhelmed and finally inexorably obliterated by an enemy whose imperialism was perhaps initially defensive, but always fright-

eningly resolute, while its maritime vocation remained constantly unresolved? After destroying Carthage and averting the last possible threat from the sea, Rome plunged back into what Thiel admirably described as its ‘traditional and almost innate maritime lethargy’, settling into a torpor during which it allowed Mediterranean pirates, useful suppliers of servile labour for it, to dominate effectively, essentially undisturbed, around the entire Mediterranean for some eighty years. When she decided to wake up, the ‘sleeping beauty’ first wiped out the piratical phenomenon in a very short time, with Pompey; then she humiliated the elephantine eastern fleets with Marcus Agrippa at Actium, and finally closed the circle of lands around the inland sea with the conquest of Egypt. As in the case of Anzio and the Volscians, but now on an ecumenical scale, Rome had acquired control of the entire Mediterranean ‘periplus’, unifying that ‘*orbis*’ of which it was then always proud.

How do sailors do it in Rome? Actually, in these pages the question has not been answered at all. It could perhaps only be asked of Marcus Agrippa, the only seaman who, as far as I know, was publicly portrayed in the guise of Neptune. For my part, I tried to answer another question: how do admirals do it in Rome? They win on the sea, but sometimes ruin everything in their uncomfortable capacity as sailors. Until the moment when the City, which only really had a fleet in the presence of epochal moments and challenges such as the confrontation with Carthage and the pirates, overturns the unitary idea as conceived by the Greeks: the sea remains, of course, *pontos*, a link and intermediary for them too, but what really unites it all is the ideal circle, the ring that frames the Mediterranean, making it a sea truly entirely comprised ‘between the lands’ and, compared to other distant Mediterraneans, a sea without real alternatives.

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A kind of strategy: Carthage's confrontation with Roman soft power during the First Punic War

CLAUDIO VACANTI¹

A (not) long-awaited war

In 264 BC,² a strategic earthquake shook the city of Messina, whose consequences, in terms of human lives were no less tragic than those of the real one in 1908.³ Beyond the casualties, the First Punic War profoundly changed the Sicilian political order.⁴ For Roman grand strategy, the term “revolution” is used,⁵ whereas for its Carthaginian counterpart, “continuity” is the keyword.⁶ In fact, the foundations of the Phoenician colony’s macro strategy remained stable during the many years that the “war for Sicily”, as the ancient sources call the

1 Università degli Studi della Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli” Dipartimento di Lettere e Beni Culturali.

2 All dates are BC, unless otherwise indicated.

3 For the First Punic War, the estimated casualties among the Roman legionaries, based on the figures explicitly recorded in the sources, were in the region of 45,000 (L. Loreto, *La grande strategia di Roma nell'età della prima guerra punica (ca. 273–ca. 229 a.C.)*. *L'inizio di un paradosso*, Napoli: Jovene 2007, 212), plus approximately 100,000 men serving in the navy (Diod. 23.15.4), which lost between 600 and 840 ships (700 according to Polyb. 1.63.6; 500 according to W. W. Tarn, “The Fleets of the First Punic War”, *JHS*, 27 (1907), 48-60, 59; 600 according to J. H. Thiel, *A History of Roman Sea-Power before the Second Punic War*, Amsterdam: North-Holland 1954, 94, and F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, I, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1970, 128; 840 according to Loreto, *La grande strategia*, 210-212). To these casualty figures should be added those for the Punic army and navy, although the scant information in this respect available in the sources does not allow them to be estimated in a systematic or statistically significant way. We do not, of course, know the number of “civilian casualties” – a problematic distinction in the Greek and Roman sources.

4 On the island’s political and administrative structure, see A. Pinzone, *Provincia Sicilia: ricerche di storia della Sicilia romana da Gaio Flaminio a Gregorio Magno*, Catania: Del Prisma 1999; C. Soraci, *La Sicilia romana*, Roma: Carocci 2016.

5 Loreto, *La grande strategia*.

6 L. Loreto, “La convenienza di perdere una guerra. La continuità della grande strategia cartaginese, 290–238/7 a.C.”, in Y. Le Bohec ed., *La première guerre punique. Autour de l'oeuvre de M.H. Fantar*, Lyon: De Boccard 2001, 39-105.

First Punic War, lasted,⁷ albeit with a difference in the final stages of the conflict: as of 249 Carthaginian strategic practice deviated from its course – not very significantly in appearance, its ultimate “port of call” changed radically in the course of a generation.

Regardless of whoever decided to intervene in Messina – a majority of the Senate or *comitia*⁸ – and which pressure groups influenced this decision – Campanian *gentes*, Italic *mercatores* or the Roman “middle classes”⁹ – the 244-year friendship between Rome and Carthage ended abruptly in 264. The treaties between the two cities had been exceptionally long-lasting for several reasons.¹⁰

7 Polyb. 1.63.4, followed by App. Lib. 3, does indeed refer to *περὶ Σικελίας πόλεμος*.

8 A majority of the Senate was suggested by F. De Martino, *Storia della costituzione romana*, II, Napoli: Jovene 1954, 241, n. 6 (2nd ed., 278, n. 6). Along the same lines, A. M. Eckstein, *Senate and General: Individual Decision Making and Roman Foreign Relations, 264-194 B.C.*, Berkeley - Los Angeles - London: University of California press 1987; A. Pinzone, *Storia ed etica in Polibio. Ricerche sull'archeologia della prima punica*, Messina: Samperi 1983, 15 ff. This hypothesis has since been debunked: B. D. Hoyos, “Polybius’ Roman οἱ πολλοί in 264 B.C.”, *LCM*, 9 (1984), 88-93; G. Brizzi, “Cartagine e Roma: dall’ intesa al confronto”, in C. Bearzot et al. eds., *L’equilibrio internazionale dagli antichi ai moderni*, Milano: Vita e Pensiero 2005, 29-57; Loreto, *La grande strategia*, 32.

9 On the complex and intensely debated question of the cause of the war and the responsibility for the decision to accept the Mamertines’ *deditio*, see at least Thiel, *A History of Roman Sea-Power*, 135; K. E. Petzold, *Studien zur Methode des Polybios und zu ihrer historischen Auswertung*, München: Beck 1969, 168-169 and 177; G. De Sensi Sestito, *Gerone II. Un monarca ellenistico in Sicilia*, Palermo: Editrice Sophia 1977, 72-77; W. V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1979, 111-114, 167, 172, 182-190; F. P. Rizzo, “La prospettiva ‘diodorea’ sugli inizi del primo conflitto punico”, in ΦΙΛΙΑΣ XAPIN. *Miscellanea di Studi Classici in onore di Eugenio Manni*, Roma: Bretschneider 1980, 1899-1920 and 1912 ff.; Pinzone, *Storia ed etica*, 32 ff.; W. Huss, *Geschichte der Karthager*, München: Beck 1985, 216-222; Eckstein, *Senate and General*, 74-83; B. D. Hoyos, “A Forgotten Roman Historian: L. Arruntius and the ‘True’ Causes of the First Punic War”, *Antichthon* 23 (1989), 51-66; R. Marino, “*Bellum iustum* tra finzione storiografica e realtà politica. Il caso della Prima Punica”, *Kokalos* 42 (1996), 365-372; J. F. Lazenby, *The First Punic War*, London: UCL Press 1996, 31-42; B. Dexter Hoyos, *Unplanned Wars: The Origins of the First and Second Punic Wars*, Berlin - New York: De Gruyter 1998, 17-66; F. Hinard, “À Rome, pendant la guerre de Sicilie (264-241 a.C.)”, *RSA* 30, (2000), 73-89; Y. Le Bohec, “Géostratégie de la première guerre punique”, in Le Bohec (ed.), *La première*, 107-118, 107-109; B. Bleckmann, *Die römische Nobilität im Ersten Punischen Krieg*, Berlin: Akademie 2002, 57-112; A. M. Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy, Interstate War and the Rise of Rome*, Berkeley - Los Angeles - London: University of California Press 2006, 164-167; Loreto, *La grande strategia*, 9-43; E. Zambon, *Tradition and Innovation: Sicily between Hellenism and Rome*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner 2008, 200-207; F. Russo, “Il concetto di Italia nelle relazioni di Roma con Cartagine e Pirro”, *Historia* 59 (2010), 74-105, 74-87; B. D. Hoyos, “The Outbreak of War”, in B. D. Hoyos ed., *A Companion to the Punic Wars*, Malden (Mass.): Blackwell 2011, 131-148.

10 Of the great modern powers, perhaps only the United States and the United Kingdom can

Both in 508/7 and 348, thanks to its diplomatic skills Carthage had perfectly understood Rome's primary interests, while having had the ability to impose its own demands.¹¹ In 278, when King Pyrrhus of Epirus began to pose a threat to the Punic status quo in Sicily and Roman expansion in Italy, the Carthaginians offered the Romans a military alliance – the presence of 120 Punic ships off Ostia demonstrated the extent of their commitment and perhaps also the fact that it was an offer that the Romans could not refuse.¹²

In terms of the *longue durée*, the Tyrrhenian Sea was an area jointly controlled by the two powers. For Carthage, it served to safeguard its trade routes, and for Rome, it helped to maintain and increase its control first over Latium and then over the peninsula as a whole.¹³ But it was not a bipolar system¹⁴ – other geopolitical actors had opposed them more or less energetically over the centuries. On the Tyrrhenian sector, both the wars against Syracuse and the Samnite Wars served Carthage and Rome as testing grounds for their strategic practices

pride themselves on such good relations and long-lasting treaties, although the Paris Agreement of 1783 – in this regard, see J. Black, *British Foreign Policy in an Age of Revolutions, 1783–1793*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1994, 11-20 – was interrupted by the Anglo-American War of 1812, while that of Ghent on 24 December 1814 – of which a very interesting interpretation is offered by A.T. Mahan, “The negotiations at Ghent in 1814”, *AHR* 11 (1905), 68-87 – did not prevent the territorial disputes that led to the Oregon Treaty of 1846.

- 11 On this subject, see C. Vacanti, “Trattati/ritratti. Prospettiva romana e prassi internazionale nei primi due trattati tra Roma e Cartagine”, *IncidAntico* 17 (2019), 169-198.
- 12 This third pact is explicitly established by Polyb. 3.25.1 at the time when Pyrrhus arrived in Italy, a date compatible with that provided in Livy's *Periochae* (Liv. Perioch. 13) in which, regarding the renewal of a treaty, there is reference to the arrival of 120 ships, led by Magon, in Ostia to offer Carthaginian support following the Battle of Asculum in 279, an episode recounted in Iust. 18.2.1. and Val. Max. 3.7.10. The date is accepted by many scholars, such as Huss, *Geschichte*, 211, and B. Scardigli, *I Trattati romano-cartaginesi*, Pisa: Scuola normale 1991, 188. On the long-standing issue of the historicity of the so-called Treaty of Philinus, see the very different views of Scardigli, *I Trattati*, 129-162 (pro) and L. Loreto, “Sui trattati romano-cartaginesi”, *BIDR* 98-99 (1995-1996) 779-821, 806-816 (*contra*). Polybius denies the existence of such a treaty, which is decisive because of the value of his eyewitness account, for more on which see N. Wiater, “Documents and Narrative: Reading the Roman-Carthaginian Treaties in Polybius' Histories”, in N. Miltsios and M. Tamiolaki eds., *Polybius and His Legacy*, Berlin - Boston: De Gruyter 2018, 131-165; C. Vacanti, “Per una palingenesi del primo trattato romano-punico”, *Quaderni Lupiensi di Storia e Diritto* 10 (2021), 41-98.
- 13 See Loreto, “La convenienza”; C. Vacanti, “Roman fears, the Punic way and the Sicilian contribution: the war for Sicily in its first stages (264–263 BC)”, in M. Jonasch ed., *The Fight for Greek Sicily: Society, Politics, and Landscape*, Oxford: Oxbow 2020, 297-326.
- 14 For this period, Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy*, believes that there was a multipolar context of interstate anarchy. A unipolar moment as of 188, on the other hand, has recently been suggested by P. L. Brisson, *Le moment unipolaire Rome et la Méditerranée hellénistique (188 - 146 a.C.)*, Quebec - Paris: Éditions Hermann 2022.

– as the Punic city had developed its commercial empire in several Mediterranean regions, it evidently also had others.¹⁵ In any case, it can be claimed that the treaties reflected – and had helped to strike – a geopolitical balance that made confrontation unthinkable, not of course in theoretical terms but in those of macro strategic integration. The archaeologically attested¹⁶ trade relations between the Roman *Großraum*, especially Campania and the Punic eparchy, were both a corollary and guarantee of this alliance. Two maps (IA and IB) can help to visualise this situation from both Roman and Carthaginian perspective.

Therefore, Rome’s decision to intervene in Messina set the stage for a change of strategy not only *du côté de Rome* but also *du côté de Carthage*. The alliance between the two cities was not only the result of two complementary macro strategies but also the reason behind specific strategic practices. Perhaps more true for Rome, given the scattered dominions of the Carthaginian Empire, this necessarily influenced the operational and tactical aspects of both armies.¹⁷ The Carthaginian mercenary recruitment pool, one of whose hubs was in Italy, is an example of this.¹⁸ Another is the Roman decision not to maintain a sizeable battle-ready fleet and therefore not to have a naval presence – even owing perhaps to its inability to conceptualise it fully.¹⁹ Evidence of Rome’s lack of preparation for a conflict in Sicily is the mixture of disbelief and confidence²⁰ with which Carthage reacted when Ap. Claudius Caudex crossed the Strait of Messina, recorded in several sources.²¹ The Punic city, however, initially reacted in a strategically traditional fashion to the Roman invasion.

15 Loreto, “La convenienza”; Vacanti, “Roman Fears”.

16 C. Vacanti, “‘Sciacquarsi le mani nel mare’. Flussi commerciali tra Sicilia e Campania e le razzie di Amilcare Barca durante la I Punica”, in A. Manni - G. D. Merola eds., *Atelier: organizzazione produttiva e rapporti commerciali nel mondo Romano*, Napoli: Jovene forthcoming.

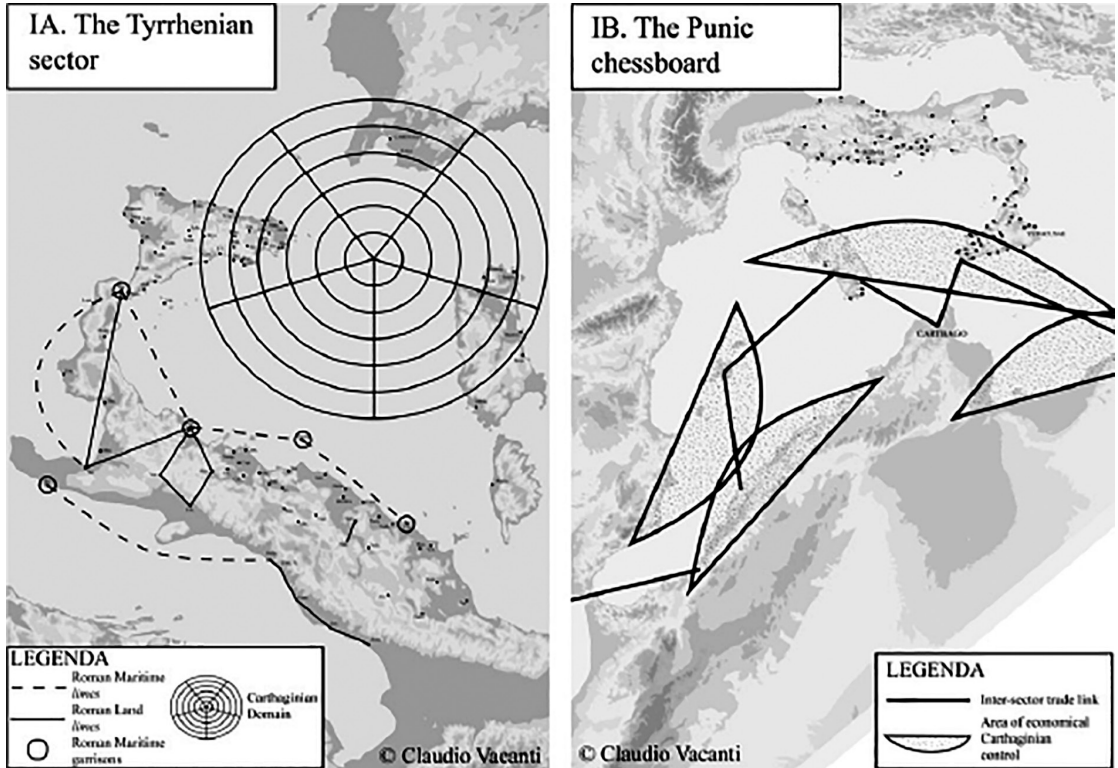
17 With respect to the relationship between grand strategy and tactics, see Loreto, *La grande strategia*, 6-7 and 51-52.

18 Regarding the city of Neapolis as a recruitment centre for the Campanians, see G. Tagliamonte, *I figli di Marte. Mobilità, mercenari e mercenariato italici in Magna Grecia e Sicilia*, Roma 1994, 154, a hypothesis that is, however, qualified by A. C. Fariselli, *I mercenari di Cartagine* (La Spezia 2002) 293-294, referring to other mercenary hubs of Carthage.

19 On the general inability of Roman grand strategy to “*pensare il mare*” during the First Punic War, see Loreto, *La grande strategia*, esp. 67-68.

20 Diod. 23.2.1 (= *Excerpta de sententiis* 254, pp. 347-348). See *infra* n. 23.

21 The essence of the Carthaginian discourse, in a more elliptical form, also appears in a fragmentary passage from Cassius Dio (11.43.9), in the *Excerpta de sententiis* (*Excerpta de sententiis* 116, 440 Boissevain) and in the Epitome of Zonaras (8.9.1 = 2.197.29-31 Dindorf). As to its meaning, see Vacanti, “Sciacquarsi le mani”.



Steady as she goes

Carthage's political reaction was to form an alliance with Syracuse, less unexpected than our hindsight bias might suggest. Indeed, the Punic city had already used shifting alliances with the Greek colonies of Sicily. At the first Battle of Himera, the Greek city of Akragas fought on Carthage's side.²² After all, in the first treaty with the Syracusan tyrant Dionysius I in 405/4, Carthage acted, obviously for its own benefit, as guarantor of the autonomy of Sikel centres and some Greek cities against Syracusan hegemony.²³ Additionally, in the troubled

22 On how Carthage fully exploited the rivalry between Syracuse and Akragas, see S. Mazzarino, *Introduzione alle guerre puniche*, Catania: G. Crisafulli 1947, 51-53. For the battle, see the contributions in this regard in volume 59 (2022) of the journal *Kokalos*.

23 Diod. 13.114. See P. Anello "Il trattato del 405/4 a.C. e la formazione della eparchia punica di Sicilia", in *Kokalos* 32 (1986) 115-180. For the alternate use of the terms Eparchia/Epikrateia: A. Dudziński, "Epikrateia, Eparchia and a Description of the Carthaginian Presence in Sicily", *Philologia Classica* 16, 1 (2021), 4-17. For an overview of Carthage's war against the Si-

years after Agathocles' death Carthage had backed Akragas against Syracuse.²⁴ Accordingly, the African city did not hesitate to ally itself with one of its traditional enemies – besides, why should it have balked at the idea?

The strategic objective was twofold. The first was to make the Syracusans act like the Romans; in other words, to leverage their military resources, specifically, their land forces, to eliminate the sole Roman beachhead in Sicily, while using their naval superiority to cut off their supplies. The expression used in 264 by the Carthaginian ambassadors – μή τηροῦντες τὴν φιλίαν οὐδὲ νίψασθαι τὰς χεῖρας ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης τολμήσουσιν, that is, “if it had not been for their alliance, they would not have even dared to wash their hands in the sea”²⁵ – shows that the key aspect of the Punic response to the Roman invasion was already clear before the war began.

That reaction appears to have involved the implementation of an action plan which already formed part of the Punic national security strategy. Without going so far as to claim that such a plan was actually housed in the archives of the Carthaginian *Šuphetim* (or, better said, in the Carthaginian Senate),²⁶ the Punic response does indeed seem to have been both instinctive and strategic, a standard measure in its macro strategic arsenal. Despite its centuries-long (almost) “spe-

cilian Greeks: D. Hoyos, *Carthage's Other Wars: Carthaginian Warfare Outside the "Punic Wars" against Rome*, Yorkshire - Philadelphia: Pen & Sword 2019.

24 See Loreto, “La convenienza”, 53-54; Zambon, *Tradition*, 15-69; Vacanti, *Guerra per la Sicilia e guerra della Sicilia. Il ruolo delle città siciliane nel primo conflitto romano-punico*, Napoli: Jovene 2012, 4-5.

25 Diod. 23.2.1 (= *Excerpta de sententiis* 254, pp. 347-348): Ὅτι Φοίνικες καὶ Ῥωμαῖοι ναυμαχῆσαντες, μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα εὐλαβοῦμενοι τὸ μέγεθος τοῦ προκειμένου πολέμου, διεπρεσβεύσαντο πρὸς τὸν ὑπάτον περὶ φιλίας, πολλῶν δὲ λόγων ῥηθέντων καὶ τραχυτέροις λόγοις χρωμένων πρὸς ἀλλήλους, οἱ Φοίνικες θαυμάζειν ἔφρασαν πῶς διαβαίνειν τολμῶσιν εἰς Σικελίαν Ῥωμαῖοι θαλαττοκρατούντων Καρχηδονίων· φανερόν γάρ εἶναι πᾶσιν ὅτι μὴ τηροῦντες τὴν φιλίαν οὐδὲ νίψασθαι τὰς χεῖρας ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης τολμήσουσιν. “The Phoenicians and Romans had fought at sea and after that, worrying about the magnitude of the impending war, they [the Phoenicians] sent ambassadors to the consul to negotiate peace. After making many speeches and exchanging sharp words with each other, the Phoenicians said that they marvelled at how the Romans dared to come to Sicily while the Carthaginians controlled the sea; for it was evident to all that, if it had not been for their alliance, they would not have even dared to wash their hands in the sea.” For this and the other Greek passages, the translation is mine.

26 On the role of the suffètes, see M. J. Taylor, “Generals and judges: command, constitution and the fate of Carthage”, in *Libyan Studies* (2023), 1–8, who does not, however, take into account the fact that the military operated outside the Carthaginian state and constitution, a point demonstrated by L. Loreto, “I processi ai generali a Cartagine”, in M. Sordi ed., *Processi e politica nel mondo antico*, CISA 22, Milano: Vita e Pensiero 1995, 107-128.

cial relationship” with Rome, there is nothing to indicate that the Carthaginians had not contemplated a specific action plan in the event that the *Urbs* attacked Sicily – in the 1920s, in a political climate that was in some ways similar, the United States had no qualms about conceiving such a plan,²⁷ while the British Empire, even in the absence of a formal plan, made explicit references to the possibility of an Anglo-American war in its 1919 memoranda on future naval requirements.²⁸

Carthage was probably prepared to react to any Roman aggression in a comprehensive and forceful fashion: launching land attacks against bridgeheads, together with local allied forces, if possible, and cutting off reinforcements and supplies arriving from the continent with its own naval forces. Therefore, the situation arising in 278 with Pyrrhus was reversed. At the time, as already mentioned, Carthage had made a military alliance with Rome under whose terms and conditions both the Roman legions and the Punic fleet, perhaps even with joint amphibious operations, attacked the king of Epirus.²⁹ After Pyrrhus, answering the call of some Sicilian cities,³⁰ had swiftly conquered the Punic eparchy, the Carthaginians withdrew to Lilybaeum, their main Sicilian fortress, from where they attempted to win time with overtures of peace to the Epirot,³¹ while counting on two factors: the exhaustion of the resources at Pyrrhus’ disposal and the assurance that Rome would not negotiate a separate peace.³² As the Sicilian allies were gradually becoming increasingly more reluctant to subsidise the prolongation of the war with Carthage, the city of Latium contributed to Pyrrhus’ “recall” to Italy by continuing to exert pressure on Tarentum. With the victory at Beneventum in 276, the Roman-Punic Restoration was sealed. In 264, therefore, Syracuse would act in precisely the same way as Rome had fifteen years before

27 On the plans that the United States drew up against Canada between 1892 and 1935, in the event of a war with the British Empire, see most recently, with previous bibliography, M. Leofrigio, “War Plan RED/CRIMSON”, in V. Ilari ed., *Future Wars. Storia della distopia militare*, Milano: Acies edizioni 2017, 397-410.

28 For an analysis of British strategy in the event of such a war, based on the evidence submitted to the Government’s Capital Ship Committee in early 1921 and the Admiralty documents prepared during its sessions, see C. M. Bell, “Thinking the Unthinkable: British and American Naval Strategies for an Anglo-American War, 1918-1931”, *The International History Review* 19, 4 (Nov. 1997), 789-808, esp. 791-792.

29 Loreto, “Sui trattati”, 820.

30 Plut. Pyrrh. 22.2. Diod. 22.7.3 seems to refer only to a Syracusan embassy. See Zambon, *Tradition*, 76-81; Vacanti, *Guerra per la Sicilia*, 6-7.

31 Diod. 22.10.5-6; Plut. Pyrrh. 23.2.

32 Vacanti, *Guerra per la Sicilia*, 8-10.

by strategically engaging the invader's forces in a war of attrition.

The second aim of the alliance with the Sicilian city was to discredit Rome in the eyes of Syracuse itself, the Sikeliotes and the Italiotes. The "continental" Syracuse-Magna Graecia coalition that Pyrrhus actually wanted to promote was a strategic *cauchemar* for Carthage even with different geopolitical actors. In other words, an alliance between Syracuse and Rome had to be avoided at all costs.

From this point of view, the Punic city's prospects were excellent. In an attempt to use the appropriate means of public diplomacy, perhaps on the eve of the armed conflict with Syracuse otherwise unidentified Roman ambassadors must have referred to the *fides* of their city judging by the reply of the new ruler of the city of Arethusa. Hiero II was scornful of the Romans' blathering on about *pistis* – θρυλλοῦντες τὸ τῆς πίστεως ὄνομα – employing the Greek term for the Latin *fides*.³³ It could then rely on the political cunning of the king of Syracuse and his elites, who were familiar with the tortuous paths of Hellenistic politics. In addition, for Carthage the alliance with Syracuse probably served another purpose, namely, to show Rome in a bad light to the bickering members of the Hellenistic club.³⁴ The specific aim of painting the new geopolitical actor as a parvenu in the Western Mediterranean was to prevent Rome from obtaining the diplomatic go-ahead or even support from the chancelleries of Macedonia, Egypt and Syria, as had occurred Pyrrhus's crusade in defence of the Greeks.³⁵

33 Diod. 23.1.4: πρὸς δὲ τὸν Ἰέρωνα καὶ Καρχηδονίους πρέσβεις ἐξέπεμψε περὶ διαλύσεως τῆς πολιορκίας, προσπηγγέλλετο ... δημογορεῖν δὲ πρὸς Ἰέρωνα πολέμῳ μὴ ἐπιβήσεσθαι. ὁ δὲ Ἰέρων ἀπεκρίνατο διότι Μαμερτίνοι Καμάριναν καὶ Γέλαν ἀναστάτους πεποικότες, Μεσσηνὴν δὲ ἀσεβέστατα κατειληφότες, δικαίως πολιορκοῦνται, Ῥωμαῖοι δὲ, θρυλλοῦντες τὸ τῆς πίστεως ὄνομα, παντελῶς οὐκ ὀφείλουσι τοὺς μαιφόνους, μάλιστα πίστεως καταφρονήσαντας, ὑπερασπίζειν: εἰ δὲ ὑπὲρ ἀσεβεστάτων τηλικούτων ἐπαναιροῦνται πόλεμον, φανεροὺς ἔσεσθαι πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ὅτι τῆς ἰδίας πλεονεξίας πρόφασιν πορίζονται τὸν τῶν κινδυνευόντων ἔλεον, τὸ δὲ ἀληθὲς Σικελίας ἐπιθυμοῦσιν.

34 G. De Sanctis, *Storia dei Romani*, III, 1, Firenze: La Nuova Italia 1967², 90-91 (1st ed. III/1-2, Torino: Bocca 1916) conjectures that Rome's conquest of Syracuse would have provoked an armed conflict with the Egyptians. More prudence is expressed on the part of Loreto, "La convenienza", 44. As to the assumption that Egypt remained neutral during the First Punic War: F. P. Rizzo, "La Sicilia tra Roma e i regni ellenistici. Linee di sviluppo storico e prospettive di ricerca", *Seia* n.s. 6-7 (2001-2002), 15-41, 25.

35 According to Iust. 17.2.13-14, Ptolemy Ceraunus had provided 5,000 infantrymen, 4,000 horsemen and 50 elephants on a loan basis for two years. Antiochus had contributed with money and Antigonos had supplied the necessary transport ships. Different figures are reported by Plut. Pyrrh. XV, who, however, makes no mention of Ptolemy. See Vacanti, *Guerra per la Sicilia*, 2-4.

The inconclusive clashes with the Syracusan and Punic armies and the unsuccessful raids on Echetla, in the domains of the Arethusian city,³⁶ were therefore a strategic success for Carthage. Accordingly, the fact that Ap. Claudius was not awarded a triumph could not be blamed, at least not solely, on the political disputes among the Roman aristocracy.³⁷

Soft (but still) power

In 263, Carthage suffered a sudden and catastrophic setback, in the etymological sense of the Greek word *καταστροφή*. After conquering Adranon, a minor city in north-eastern Sicily, the Roman legions led by the new consul M. Valerius Maximus³⁸ were besieging Centuripae when they received an embassy from Halaesa and several other Sicilian cities.³⁹ Albeit providing slightly different figures, the sources agree that eastern Sicily, in addition to the western cities of Halyciae and Segesta, went over to the Romans; an extraordinary achievement from both a strategic and political point of view.

On closer inspection, this turning point cannot be explained by the military successes that the city of Latium had achieved hitherto. As I attempted to show

36 Polyb. I 15, 10. Diod 23.3 also reports Roman losses. Indeed, the preferred reading is *τὴν Ἐχέτλαν ὁ ὕπατος ἐπολιόρησε*, proposed by Holm and accepted in the edition of F. R. Walton, *Diodorus of Sicily*, XI, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1957, although rejected in that of P. Goukowsky, *Diodore de Sicilie. Bibliotheque historique fragments*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres 2006, II, 97, n. 52, who, following F. Vogel - K. T. Fischer (ed.), *Diodori bibliotheca historica*, Leipzig: Teubner 1888-1906 (ed. stereotyp. Stuttgart, 1964-1969), prefers *τὴν Αἴγεσταν*, despite the fact that this would imply accepting such a westward incursion at this stage of the conflict, to which there is no reference in other sources. J. Gómez de Caso Zuriaga, "264-263 a.C.: la campaña de Ap. Claudio en Sicilia", *Polis* 15 (2003), 77-103, who dismisses the Polybian account of the attack on Syracuse, is more inclined to believe the historicity of Appius Claudius' assault on Echetla.

37 For Bleckmann, *Die römische Nobilität*, 80-81, the consul's attack on Syracuse – for the reconstruction of which the scholar contends that Cassius Dio-Zonaras' version is better – would have been dictated by Appius Claudius' desire to achieve the long-awaited triumph and booty and to make peace with Hiero. The German scholar (82-84) also thinks that the failure to award the consul a triumph was due to a dispute with the Senate, which is contrary to the view held by Loreto, *La grande strategia*, 41-42, ns. 103-106.

38 As to the possibility that both consuls were sent to Sicily, but only M. Valerius Maximus was given command of the legions, see M. Bellomo, *Il comando militare a Roma nell'età delle guerre puniche (264–201 a. C.)*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner 2019, 93-94, who is of this mind.

39 Diod. Sic. 23.4.1. On Halaesa, see M. Costanzi ed., *Halaesa, du site à la cité, de la cité au site*, Pisa-Roma: Fabrizio Serra 2023.

in 2012, the reason behind Rome's success was the fact that it possessed an extremely useful instrument: soft power.⁴⁰ As is widely known, the term was coined by Joseph S. Nye Jr. in 1990 to demonstrate that the United States was not in decline thanks to a third dimension of power, specifically, the soft sort.⁴¹ Soft power allows states to achieve their goals in world politics by encouraging other countries to follow suit.⁴² By co-opting instead of forcing, soft power is actually based on the ability to engage others and to shape their preferences, its main instrument being political values.

For Rome, beyond the alleged kinship ties linked to the Trojan legend⁴³ – exploited more by the Elymian city to cement its status as Rome's friend – the virtue of *fides* was the chief soft power resource.⁴⁴ Corresponding only partially to the Greek πίστις, it functioned in communities to which the Romans felt related – Latins, Campanians and Etruscans – and was recognised as a feature inherent

40 Vacanti, *Guerra per la Sicilia*, 28-44.

41 See J. S. Nye Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, New York: Basic Books 1990. The concept, which has since become a category of interpretation commonly used by scholars and politicians, was reviewed by J. S. Nye Jr., *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002, in which the American scholar warned his countrymen against excessive triumphalism. The most comprehensive and specific treatment, however, is to be found in Nye, *Soft Power*.

42 See Nye, *Soft Power*, 5: "A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries – admiring values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness – want to follow it."

43 For the importance of Aeneadic legend and Italic *homophylia* during the First Punic War, see most recently, with previous bibliography, F. Battistoni, *Parenti dei Romani. Mito troiano e diplomazia*, Bari: Edipuglia 2010, 113-127; J. Prag, "Tyrannizing Sicily: The Despots Who Cried 'Carthage!'", in A. Turner - K. O. Chong-Gossard - F. Vervaeke eds., *Private and Public Lies: The Discourse of Despotism and Deceit in the Graeco-Roman World*, Leiden-Boston: Brill 2010, 51-71, esp. 68-71. The use of kinship diplomacy is, after all, well attested for the cities of Sicily as of at least the fifth century: R. Sammartano, "Magnesia sul Meandro e la diplomazia della parentela", *Hormos* n.s. online 2 (2008/2009), 111-139.

44 A prerequisite of public and private relations, deified according to tradition by Numa, linked to the college of *fetiales* in charge of guarding *fas*, ratifying *foedera* and declaring war, *fides* was also a prerogative of *bellum iustum*. For a discussion on *fides*, see G. Brizzi, *Il guerriero, l'oplita, il legionario*, Bologna: Il Mulino 2002, 35-43. For some fundamental studies in this regard: G. Freyburger, "*Fides*" *Étude sémantique et religieuse depuis les origines jusqu'à l'époque augustéenne*, Paris: Les Belles lettres 1986; K. J. Hölkeskamp, "Fides - Deditio in fidem - dextra data et accepta: Recht, Religion und Ritual", in Chr. Bruun ed., *The Roman Middle Republic. Politics, Religion and Historiography c. 400-133 B.C.* Papers from a conference held at the Institutum Romanum Finlandiae (Rome, September 11-12, 1998), Roma: Institutum Romanum Finlandiae 2000, 223-250.

to Roman politics.⁴⁵ This can be seen not only in Hiero's speech quoted above.

In the course of Roman expansion in Italy, *fides* had in fact been a powerful means of drawing Magna Graecia cities into its orbit.⁴⁶ Thanks to this virtue, shortly after the death of Agathocles, in about 285, the city of Thurii had turned to Rome for support against the Lucanians.⁴⁷ In the same vein, a didrachm of Locri, dating from 282,⁴⁸ with the head of Zeus on the obverse and the figures of ΠΩΜΑ seated and ΠΙΣΤΙΣ crowning her – a ceremony in which the latter transfers the value of which it is an expression to the city⁴⁹ – on the reverse, gives an iconographic account of the spread of Roman *fides* in Magna Graecia precisely at the time of Thurii's request for help. Rome was the power chosen by Thurii when, in need of assistance, it was considered to be trustworthy, to wit, worthy of πίστις/*fides*. The aura of power emanating from Roman hard power also played a very important role.⁵⁰ Indeed, these two aspects of power can sometimes reinforce each other. Hard power can also be compelling: instead of joining forces to limit the power of a stronger opponent, weak states may be tempted to jump on the bandwagon of a powerful country, especially when it also employs a great deal of soft power.⁵¹

45 On that relationship, see S. Calderone, *Pistis-fides: ricerche di storia e diritto internazionale nell'antichità*, Messina: Università degli studi di Messina 1964, who believes that *fides* did not originally express the bilateral relationship represented by the Greek πίστις, but the victor's unequivocal renunciation of the right to annihilate vanquished peoples and cities, a right derived from victory itself. For the scholar, at the very beginning of the third century the relationship between Rome and the cities of Southern Italy enhanced the ethical aspect of *fides*.

46 C. Vacanti "Pensare l'Italia, progettare Roma. Hard power, suasion, soft power: i tria corda della grande strategia romana tra III guerra sannitica e I guerra punica", *Atene&Roma* n.s.s. 9, 3-4 (2015), 129-162; C. Vacanti, "Per un atlante geopolitico della Repubblica romana. Italia e Magna Grecia tra II sannitica e I punica", *IncidAntico* 14, 2 (2016), 263-293.

47 Liv. *Perioch.* XI: *res praeterea contra Vulsinienses gestas continent, item adversus Lucanos, contra quos auxilium Thurinis ferre placuerat*. As rightly noted by G. De Sanctis, *Storia dei Romani*, II, Firenze: La Nuova Italia 1960², 356, n. 90, help is confirmed in Plin. Nat. 34.32: *Publice autem ab exteris posita est Romae C. Aelio tr. pl. lege perlata in Sthennium Stallium Lucanum, qui Thurinos bis infestaverat. ob id Aelium Thurini statua et corona aurea donarunt*. On the traditional rivalry between Lucanians and Thurini, see L. Cappelletti, *Lucani e Brettii. Ricerche sulla storia politica e istituzionale di due popoli dell'Italia antica (V-III sec. a.C.)*, Frankfurt am Main - New York: Lang 2003, 1-25.

48 On the coinage, cf. M. Caccamo Caltabiano, "Nota sulla moneta locrese Zeus/Roma e Pistis", in E. Livrea - G. Privitera eds., *Studi in onore di Anthos Ardizzoni*, Roma: Edizioni dell'Ateneo e Bizzarri 1978, 99-116.

49 As contended by Caccamo Caltabiano, "Nota sulla moneta", 105-107.

50 See Vacanti, "Pensare l'Italia".

51 For this relationship, see Nye, *Soft Power*, 5-11 and 25-32; J. S. Nye Jr., *The Powers to Lead*,

In 263, the Sicilian cities made the same choice, with immediate geopolitical consequences. Flanked by its new allies, the Roman army marched on Syracuse. Hiero's caustic jab at Roman *fides*⁵² the year before did nothing to reassure the Syracusans: according to Diodorus,⁵³ it was their apprehension – which deepened when they saw the allied forces of other Sicilian cities marching alongside the legions⁵⁴ – to which should be added the climate of anti-Carthaginian crusading that can be clearly perceived in Theocritus' coeval Idyll XVI,⁵⁵ that prompted the king to change tack.

The Carthaginian reaction was similar to that at Ostia in 279: the Punic fleet hove into view off the coast of Xiphonia, located in the middle of the Syracusan kingdom not far from the capital, ready to come to the king's rescue⁵⁶ – attempting, as off the coast of Lazio 15 years earlier, to make him an offer that he could not refuse. In vain, as can be seen from a map of the geopolitical situation in 264 and in 263 illustrating the turning point at Centuripae (IIA and IIB).

From this perspective, the trial and conviction of Hannibal, in all likelihood the military governor of the Punic eparchy, in 264 or 263, can be explained not so much by the evacuation of Messana on the arrival of the Romans, perhaps in an attempt to achieve a peaceful resolution to what was not yet full-blown conflict, but more probably by the lack of progress in the war.⁵⁷ Carthage's reaction was, however, again in keeping with its traditional strategy.

During the next three years, the war was fought on the same front line as the Carthaginian-Syracusan wars. The information available in the sources does not

Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008, 37-44. J. S. Nye Jr., *The Future of Power*, New York: Public Affairs 2011, developed the concept of smart power, which basically involves the effective combination of its soft and hard aspects. Doubt has been cast on the real effectiveness of the exclusive use of soft power in American foreign policy: C. Gray, *Hard Power and Soft Power: The Utility of Military Force as an Instrument of Policy in the 21st Century*, Carlisle: US Army War College Press 2011.

52 Diod. 23.1.4. See *supra*.

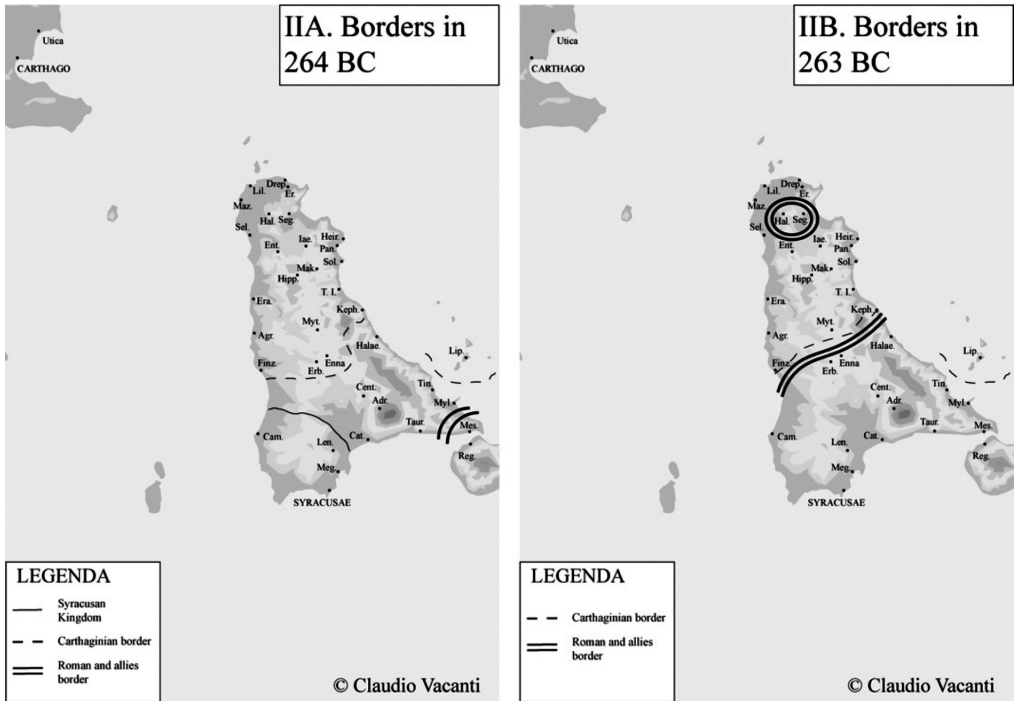
53 Diod. 23.4.1.

54 See Vacanti, *Guerra per la Sicilia*, 23-25.

55 See Vacanti, *Guerra per la Sicilia*, 25. On the Idyll, which the Syracusan poet wrote in Egypt, probably in about 275, see De Sensi Sestito, *Gerone II*, 22; K. Gutzwiller, "Charites or Hiero. Theocritus' Idyll 16", *RhM* 126 (1983) 212-238; L.-M. Hans, "Theokrits XVI. Idylle und die Politik Hierons II von Syrakus", *Historia* 34 (1985), 117-125; Loreto, *La grande strategia*, 118-119, with n. 162.

56 Diod. 23.4.1: τούτων πραττομένων κατέπλευσεν Ἀννίβας μετὰ ναυτικῆς δυνάμεως εἰς τὴν Ξιφωνίαν βοηθήσων τῷ βασιλεῖ· μαθὼν δὲ τὰ πεπραγμένα ἀνεχώρησε.

57 Polyb. 1.11.5; Zon. 8.9.4. See Loreto, *I processi*, 110.



allow us to reconstruct the Roman-Punic offensives and counter-offensives in any great detail. After the Romans had captured Akragas in 262, the following can be gleaned from a Polybian passage,⁵⁸ elliptical as per usual in the narrative of the First Punic War:⁵⁹ (1) the Carthaginian fleet and its ability to convey its power certainly continued to play an important role; and (2) Roman suasion and soft power, in addition to being persistently used on its chief allies, Syracuse *in primis*, also continued to have an effect on other cities, probably minor ones, in the interior.

58 Polyb. 1.20.6: ἐν γὰρ τοῖς ἐξῆς χρόνοις, κατεχόντων αὐτῶν ἤδη τὸν Ἀκράγαντα, πολλαὶ μὲν πόλεις προσηθροῦντο τῶν μεσογαίων τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις, ἀγωνιῶσαι τὰς περὶ τὰς θάλασσας δυνάμεις, ἔτι δὲ πλείους ἀφίσταντο τῶν παραθαλαστίων, καταπεπληγμένοι τὸν τῶν Καρχηδονίων στόλον. “In the following period, in fact, when they occupied Akragas, many inland cities switched to the Romans, fearing their land forces, but an even greater number defected among those placed on the sea, intimidated by the Carthaginian fleet.”

59 On the meaning and structure of the Polybian προκατασκευή, which includes the first two books of his *Histories*, see H. Beck, *Polybius' Roman prokataskeuē*, in B. Gibson - T. Harrison (ed.), *Polybius and His World: Essays in Memory of F.W. Walbank*, Oxford 2013: 125-142, with an earlier bibliography.

The consequences of the political *bouleversement* of the Sicilian cities and Syracuse, however, went beyond the acquisition of territory. After the capture of Akragas in 262, Rome decided to implement a shipbuilding policy. In this respect, Syracuse's role was crucial not only, perhaps, in the decision to adopt it, but also in providing crucial technical know-how for both the construction of the first "heavy" Roman quinquerems⁶⁰ and for equipping them with the *corvus*.⁶¹

The Battle of Mylae in 260 demonstrated that whereas Carthage had failed to "Romanise" Syracuse, "using" its land forces against the new enemy, Rome had succeeded in "Punicising" the city by leveraging its naval capabilities. Be that as it may, Carthage did not change its strategy. As had occurred in the wars against Syracuse, it demonstrated its ability to cope with a Roman-Syracusan attack. There was nothing new in its conduct of the war against Rome. Offensives and counteroffensives followed one another until 254, the year in which things changed when the Roman legions landed in Africa.⁶² Not only because of the obvious danger to Carthage itself but also because at the Battle of Cape Ecnomus Rome had left no room for doubt that it was now tactically and operationally on par with Carthage as far as naval technology was concerned.⁶³

Evidently, not only the heart of the empire was at stake but also the arterial system on which Punic wealth was built and which provided the lifeblood to its military apparatus. Indeed, as Carthage had already been attacked in Africa by Agathocles a generation earlier, it seems fair to assume that the Syracusans would have played an important role in the strategic conception and operational planning of the Roman offensive.⁶⁴ In 310, the initial Carthaginian response was to reach a settlement with the enemy and then to defend the city by all means.⁶⁵ In 255, Carthage also resorted to hiring Greek mercenaries, as was the case of

60 Vacanti, *Guerra per la Sicilia*, 63-70.

61 Vacanti, *Guerra per la Sicilia*, 70-75.

62 Regarding the goal of the Roman expedition, see Loreto, *La grande strategia*, 272-273. Regardless of the real goal, the Carthaginians perceived the danger.

63 This does not belie the observations made by Loreto, "La convenienza", 75-81, namely, that the Carthaginians did not lose their naval supremacy after Ecnomus and the Aegates. The tactical success of Ecnomus, acknowledged by Loreto, "La convenienza", 80, was precisely the result of that technological balance, which does not imply superiority in the strategic deployment of naval forces.

64 Vacanti, *Guerra per la Sicilia*, 51 and 148-149.

65 On Agathocles' expedition to Africa, see S. N. Consolo Langher, "Agatocle in Africa: aree operative ed implicazioni politiche dallo sbarco alla pace del 306 a.C.", *Messana* 13 (1992), 19-77. On the Mediterranean dimension of Agathocles' power: S. De Vido, "Il figlio del vasaio. Agatocle re in Sicilia", *RSI* 125 (2023), 183-200.

Xanthippus.⁶⁶ The defeat of Regulus was certainly a success⁶⁷ but the main challenge now was to safeguard its own trade routes.⁶⁸ The Punic city had to find a different answer to the one that had led to the disaster at Ecnomus.

Drepana, 249

When in 255 the Roman fleet bringing Regulus' defeated army back home was destroyed by a storm off Camarina, Rome did not change its Sicilian strategy and continued to deploy a large battle-ready fleet.⁶⁹ In 254, the year after the debacle, Panormus was conquered, while five cities in the vicinity, Iaetia, Tindarys, Solus, Petra and Enattara, defected to the Romans⁷⁰ – another result of the combination of suasion and soft power. A year later, Roman ships in Syrtis launched an offensive against the Punic sea lanes,⁷¹ and in 252 Lipari was captured.⁷² Carthage's worst strategic nightmare was in fact at risk of coming true. In 250, Carthage attempted to retake Panormus with a major land offensive covered by the fleet.⁷³ It turned out to be a fiasco that Roman propaganda fully exploited on the occasion of the famous triumph of L. Caecilius Metellus when, for the first time, elephants captured from the enemy were paraded.⁷⁴

66 As to Xanthippus, a Lacedaemonian mercenary (Polyb. 1.32-34 and Diod. 23.13, 23.14, and 23.15.7; Front. Strat. 2.11) or the leader of a company of mercenaries – certainly not an auxiliary sent from Sparta (App. Lyb. 3; Eutr. 2.21.4), a general with full powers (Zon. 8.13) or even a Lacedaemonian king (Oros. 4.9) – see G. Brizzi, “Amilcare e Santippo. Storie di generali”, in Y. Le Bohec ed., *La première*, 29-38, who reconstructs his tactical contribution to the Carthaginian army and his theoretical legacy to Hamilcar and subsequently to Hannibal. See also D. Dantas, “Xanthippus of Laecedeonia: a foreign commander in the army of Carthage”, *Cadmo* 26 (2017), 141-157, who does not appear to have read Brizzi's paper or the works of Loreto and Hoyos.

67 Regarding the tactical aspects of the victory over Regulus, see Brizzi, “Amilcare”.

68 Notwithstanding the fact that the Romans did not pursue – or were not yet able to conceive – this goal, as held by Loreto, *La grande strategia* 65-68.

69 Polyb. 1.38.5-7 reports the construction of a Roman fleet of 220 ships that joined the 80 vessels that had managed to ride the storm off Camarina in Messina the following year (254).

70 Diod. 23.18.5. Of these cities, the identification of Petra (more on which in M. I. Gulletta, “Petra”, in M. A. Vaggioli ed., *BTCGI*, XIII, Pisa-Roma: SNS-EFR 1994, 494-498) and Enattara (more on which in G. Nenci, “Enattara”, in G. Nenci - G. Vallet eds., *BTCGI*, Pisa-Roma: SNS-EFR, VII, 1989, 180) is still uncertain.

71 See Polyb. 1.39.1-6; Diod. 23.19; Eutr. 2.23; Oros. 4.9.10; Zon. 8.14.6.

72 Polyb. 1.39.13.

73 Polyb. 1.40. See Vacanti, *Guerra per la Sicilia*, 136-138.

74 The number of elephants varies depending on the source: 60 according to Diod. 23.21; 120 according to Liv. Per. 19; 138 according to Dion. Hal. AR 2.66.4; 120 or 142 according to Plin. NH 8.16. The elephant later became the family emblem stamped on coinage: K.-J. Höl-

Shortly thereafter, Rome also managed to re-conquer Akragas, previously seized by Carthalo at some time or another.⁷⁵ Therefore, for Carthage it was a repeat performance of what had already occurred under Pyrrhus. Only one major stronghold belonging to the Punic eparchy continued to hold out in the westernmost point the island: Lilybaeum, flanked by the port of Drepana and the system of fortifications around Eryx.⁷⁶ Unlike in the case of Pyrrhus, however, the Romans could now count on the unconditional support of Syracuse and the Sicilian cities – Greek and non-Greek, alike.⁷⁷

Thanks to the Syracusan ships, naval bases and dockyards,⁷⁸ Rome obtained a fleet on par with its Carthaginian counterpart from a tactical and operational point of view, which it also used to transport troops across the Sicilian Channel, to patrol its own coasts and, above all, to launch joint attacks with the army, as had occurred at Panormus in 254, and to threaten the Punic sea lanes, as in Syrtis in 253. For its part, Carthage had to take action.

In 249, the Romans, bolstered by the vital supplies with which Hiero II had self-servingly provided them, continued to besiege Lilybaeum despite the losses and the epidemics decimating their ranks. After unsuccessfully attempting a naval blockade of the city, the consul Ap. Claudius Pulcher decided to attack the Carthaginian fleet located in nearby Drepana. It was a colossal disaster.⁷⁹

keskamp, *Libera Res Publica. Die politische Kultur des antiken Rom- Positionen und Perspektiven*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner 2017, 284-285.

75 Diod. 23.18.2.

76 On the fortifications of Lilybaeum, see E. Caruso, “Le fortificazioni di Lilibeo: un monumentale esempio della poliorcetica punica in Sicilia”, in C. Ampolo ed., *Guerra e pace in Sicilia e nel Mediterraneo antico (VIII-III sec. a.C.). Arte, prassi e teoria della pace e della guerra. Atti delle Quinte giornate di studi sull’area elima e la Sicilia occidentale nel contesto mediterraneo* (Erice, 12-15 ottobre 2003), Pisa: Edizioni della Normale 2006, I, 283-306. On Eryx: A. Filippi, “La prima guerra punica. Insediamenti fortificati sul Monte Erice, Monte Cofano e nell’isola di Marettimo”, in C. Ampolo ed., *Guerra e pace*, I, 307-313. For Trapani and its harbour: A. Filippi, *Un antico porto nel Mediterraneo*, Erice: Il Sole 2005. On Punic fortifications during the First Punic War: E. Caruso, “Les fortifications de la Sicile Occidentale et dans la chôra de Sélinonte”, in M. Costanzi - M. Dana eds., *Une autre façon d’être grec: interactions et productions des Grecs en milieu colonial. Another Way of Being Greek: Interactions and Cultural Innovations of the Greeks in a Colonial Milieu*, Leuven - Paris - Bristol: Peeters 2020, 281-308. A seminal work on the urban centres of western Sicily is S. De Vincenzo, *Tra Cartagine e Roma. I centri urbani dell’eparchia punica di Sicilia tra VI e I sec. a.C.*, Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter 2013.

77 On the lack of support given to Pyrrhus, see Vacanti, *Guerra per la Sicilia*, 59-154; 3-13.

78 Vacanti, *Guerra per la Sicilia*, 109-114 e 115-119.

79 Polyb. 1.49-51; Diod. 24.1.5; Eutr. 2.26.1-2; Oros. 4.10.3.

Drepana was an ancient Trafalgar not because of the number of ships lost by Rome compared to the number of ships at its disposal⁸⁰ – contrary to what would happen in the age of the great sailing ships, the loss, albeit massive, of a fleet did not jeopardise a state's maritime power, since ancient sea power depended primarily on the infrastructure required for shipbuilding and the immediate availability of raw materials⁸¹ – but because the Carthaginians had regained tactical-operational naval superiority for the first time since 260. The reason behind this was not just technical innovation but also the ability to use it. Despite the fact that there is no news of the previous employment of a new type of Carthaginian ship or of plans for its design and construction, there is evidence of its use and effects at Drepana. The Carthaginians did in fact equip themselves with new Rhodian-type quadrirèmes which, alongside the heavier quinquerems, improved the tactical capabilities of their fleet.⁸²

SNAFU at Aegates

After regaining its tactical-operational naval superiority of old, from 249 to 241 Carthage decided to go on the offensive. But this offensive did not form part of its usual strategy and nothing is known about who devised it. If it was Admiral Carthalo who had steered the new course (or better said, had explored its possibilities), it was Hamilcar Barca, the new young Carthaginian plenipotentiary of Sicily, who fine-tuned and resolutely implemented it. The facts are briefly as follows:

1. According to Polybius, the Romans withdrew from the sea in 249, after the disaster at Drepana.⁸³ In 248, Carthalo launched a raid on the Italic coast to divert the attention of the consuls away from the siege of Drepana, to ravage the land and to capture cities. The attempt failed due to the

80 The number of ships lost, according to the reconstruction by De Sanctis, *Storia dei Romani* 1967², III, 1, 168, n. 67, reviewed by Loreto, *La grande strategia*, 63, n. 73, 203, n. 25, 211, ns. 45-46, was between 170 and 180, far greater than the 93 ships captured according to Polybius.

81 Loreto, "La convenienza", 76-77; L. Loreto, *Per la storia militare del mondo antico. Prospettive retrospettive*, Napoli: Jovene 2006, 118-125. As to a Carthaginian naval effort just as great as Rome's, but with figures differing from those offered by Loreto, *La grande strategia*, 213-216, and without reflecting on the nature of sea power in the ancient world, see B. C. Devereaux, "Strategy and Cost: Carthaginian Naval Strategy in the First Punic War Reappraised", in *Historia* 69, 4 (2020) 469-481.

82 See Vacanti *Guerra per la Sicilia*, 75-87, with previous bibliography.

83 Polyb. 1.55.1-2.

intervention of the urban praetor.⁸⁴

2. Barca, appointed στρατηγός τὰ κατὰ τὸν στόλον in 247,⁸⁵ continued to launch naval raids on the Italic coast, first against Locris and Brutium.⁸⁶ After occupying a fortress on Mount Heirkte (present-day Monte Pellegrino in the vicinity of Palermo),⁸⁷ he used it as a base from which to harry Cumae.⁸⁸

The new Carthaginian strategy pursued two goals: firstly, to relieve the pressure on Lilybaeum and Drepana; secondly, to undermine Roman soft power through *Ermattung*.⁸⁹ To assail the port of Cumae was to assail Capua, one of Rome's main production centres, and to damage the entire Roman-Campanian economy, as the Punic merchants who had traded its goods in peacetime well knew.⁹⁰ In light of the fact that the ancient sources record a Punic attack on Italic soil, those against the new Sicilian *socii et amici*, Syracuse *in primis*, must have been much more numerous, as evidenced by the amphibious operation against the Sicilian fort near Messina or *Italion*.⁹¹

84 Zon. 8.16.1: ὁ οὖν Καρθάλων πολυτρόπως ἐπιχειρήσας κατ' αὐτῶν, ὡς οὐδὲν ἦνυσεν, εἰς Ἰταλίαν ὄρμησεν, ἵν' οὕτω τοὺς ὑπάτους μεταγάγη ἐκεῖ ἢ τέως τὴν χώραν κακώσῃ καὶ πόλεις αἰρήσῃ. ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἐνταῦθά τι αὐτῷ προεχώρησε· τὸν γὰρ στρατηγὸν τὸν ἀστυνόμον μαθὼν πλησιάζοντα, εἰς Σικελίαν ἀνέπλευσεν. Oros. 4.10.4: Anno etiam consequenti classis Punica in Italiam transitit eiusque plurimas partes longe lateque uastauit.

85 Polyb. 1.56.1.

86 Polyb. 1.56.3.

87 C. Vacanti "Operazione Heirkte. Monte Pellegrino e la campagna di Amilcare Barca in Sicilia (247-244 a.C.)", in *Nuova Antologia Militare* 1, 2 (2020) 31-69.

88 Polyb. 1.56.10.

89 As is well known, the term *Ermattungsstrategie* was coined by Hans Delbrück to refer to the strategy of attrition aimed at defeating opponents by driving them to exhaustion: see H. Delbrück, *Die Strategie des Perikles Erläutert durch die Strategie Friedrichs des Großen. Mit einem Anhang über Thucydides und Kleon* (Berlin 1890), 10-12 and *passim*.

90 In this respect, see Vacanti, "Sciacquarsi le mani".

91 Diod. Sic. 24.6: Εἰς δὲ τὸν Λόγγωνα Κατάνης φρούριον ὑπῆρχε, καλούμενον Ἰτάλιον. ὅπερ πολεμήσας Βάρκας ὁ Καρχηδόνιος (Exc. Hoesch. p. 508 W.). Its subsequent location in relation to the Roman assault reported by Diod. Sic. 23.20 (Exc. Hoesch. p. 505-506 W.) suggests that the analepsis of the siege of Ε<ι>ρκτή, assumedly referring to the same campaign, nevertheless predates Hamilcar's assault on the fort. The identification of *Italion* is uncertain, although the information available in the sources suggests that it was located in the area of Catania: see Loreto, *La grande strategia*, 256 and 271, who believes that it was the Roman point of disembarkation/embarkation in 263, while speculating that it was captured by Barca; Lazenby, *The First*, 148. Instead, Hoyos, *Hannibal's Dynasty: Power and Politics in the Western Mediterranean (247-183 BC)*, London - New York: Routledge 2003, 13 and 238, n. 10, assumes that it stems from an error in the tradition of the name of Catania and believes that

Heirkte, a new military port a few kilometres from Panormus, was like an “upside-down” Sphacteria – an idea coming from the “Lacedaemonian” teachings of Xanthippus or from the fear that the Romans, following Pyrrhus’ example, could better protect Heirkte?⁹² In any case, Roman soft power was more than a match for the new Carthaginian strategy and the extremely violent attacks that Rome launched against the Punic fortress on Monte Pellegrino did not significantly diminish the strategic pressure on Lilybaeum. In addition, the provisions and supplies provided by the Sicilian allies⁹³ made the *Ermattung* strategy less effective, to the point that Hamilcar decided to move to Eryx.

Notwithstanding his excellent tactical and operational skills, Barca adopted a similar but equally ineffective strategy.⁹⁴ Hiero II and other allies continued to forage for the Romans, while Roman privateers successfully attacked Punic ports and shipping.⁹⁵ Encouraged by the progress of the privateer war,⁹⁶ the Romans decide to build a new fleet⁹⁷ with state-of-the-art ships that with the help of cutting-edge Syracusan shipbuilding techniques placed them on the same tactical footing as the Carthaginians.⁹⁸

it might have been Longane near Messina: as to this stance, however, the counter-arguments deployed by Loreto, *La grande strategia*, 272, n. 16, are sufficient.

- 92 On Xanthippus’ possible influence on the tactics used by Barca in Bagradas, see Brizzi, “Amilcare”. For Sphacteria, the source is Thuk. 4.3-23; 26-41. With respect to the operational aspects of the confrontation in Sphacteria: J. F. Lazenby, *The Peloponnesian War: A Military Study*, London - New York: Routledge 2004, 67-79, with previous bibliography.
- 93 An example is the siege of Lilybaeum in 249: Polyb. 1.55.4. On the Sicilian allies’ contribution to supplying the Romans, see Vacanti, *Guerra per la Sicilia*, 127-134.
- 94 Hamilcar’s military operations in Sicily certainly had all the trappings of large-scale guerrilla warfare, as suggested by Loreto, *La grande insurrezione libica contro Cartagine del 242-237 a. C. Una storia politica e militare*, Roma: École Française de Rome 1995, 147 and 171; Yann Le Bohec, *Histoire militaire des guerres puniques*, Monaco: Editions du Rocher 1996, 98-99; Loreto, “La convenienza”, 90; Brizzi, *Amilcare*, 36-37. It was, however, a truly major military campaign, combining the navy and considerable ground forces: see Vacanti, *Operazione Herikte*. On Hamilcar’s presence in Eryx and the Battle of the Aegates, I am currently writing a paper.
- 95 Zon. 8.16.3-4. To which must be added the account of the attack on a Carthaginian merchant convoy off the *Aegimures* Islands appearing in Flor. 1.18.30, which is doubted by, among others, Bleckmann, *Die römische Nobilität*, 170, n. 4 and 209, n. 3, but which should instead be linked, as Loreto, *La grande strategia*, 227, notes, to other Roman privateer operations.
- 96 Zon. 8.16.8.
- 97 Polyb. 1.59.1-8.
- 98 On this new fleet and Hiero’s role in its construction, see Vacanti, *Guerra per la Sicilia*, 87-102. My hypothesis of the presence of new Roman “super-quinquerems”, perhaps of a smaller tonnage than the earlier ones and with a Rhodian-type oarlock, might have been confirmed

Perhaps due to the priority that they gave to defending the African coast, the Carthaginians did not expect the arrival of the new fleet and much less the new ships.⁹⁹ Admiral Hanno's response was perfectly in keeping with both the dictates of Carthaginian strategy since 249 and the Punic admiralty's tactical-operational manual: before engaging the Romans in battle, he tried to reach Hamilcar's army¹⁰⁰ to land provisions and embark Barca's veterans as marines, with an eye to preventing the enemy from foraging around Lilybaeum, Drepana and Eryx, thus continuing to implement the *Ermattungsstrategie*. It was the classic "situation normal: all fucked up". And the reason for Hanno's condemnation must be sought, as with Hannibal's at the beginning of the war, in the failure of his tactical-operational strategy.¹⁰¹

In 241, the Battle of the Aegates¹⁰² marked the end of the conflict for two reasons. The first was that Drepana had been an ephemeral, perhaps unrepeatable Trafalgar. With the new strategic naval parity, even if the Carthaginians had beaten the Romans at sea, they would not have achieved what they had been incapable of doing after the victory at Drepana in 249. The second was the fear that the Romans, with their new fleet, might follow in the footsteps of Atilius Regulus and/or continue, on a larger scale, now not only with privateers, but its attacks against the Carthaginian trade also routes. In this sense, it can be claimed that Carthage did not lose the war,¹⁰³ that is, it preferred a peace that did not lead to the loss of its most valuable asset: those trade routes. The blow was hard for many reasons, not least because of the outbreak of the Mercenary War, or the Libyan Insurrection as it should be called, shortly afterwards.¹⁰⁴

The strategic practices adopted in the final years of the war for Sicily, striking at the allies to force them to abandon Rome, was perhaps Hamilcar's main legacy¹⁰⁵.

by the discovery of relatively small rostrums in the sea around the Aegates Islands, more on which J. G. Royal – S. Tusa eds., *The Site of the Battle of the Aegates Islands at the End of the First Punic War*, Roma - Bristol: L'Erma di Bretschneider 2020.

99 Polyb. 1.60.1.

100 Polyb. 1.60.2-3.

101 Zon. 8.17.3.

102 Polyb. 1.61; Diod. 24.11.1; Flor. epit. 1.18.131-145; Eutr. 2.27.2; vir. ill. 41; Oros. 4.10.6-7; Zon. 8.17.1-2.

103 Loreto, "La convenienza", 96-101.

104 Loreto, *La grande insurrezione*.

105 Further research on the earlier relations between Rome and Carthage could tell us more about Punic strategic practices, the subject of a paper I am preparing.

Strategy in a Different World of War: Strategic Practice in Medieval Europe and the Middle East.

by JOHN FRANCE,

Professor Emeritus, Swansea University.

Across the medieval period three civilizations sat around the Mediterranean, all to a degree the heirs of Rome and Persia. But these were rarely political unities. East Rome, Byzantium, claimed to be Roman, yet after the 6th century its Greek speaking elite ruled over a *mélange* of peoples, not all of whom accepted its “Orthodox” Christianity. In the 7th century the Arabs created an Islamic empire, but it was at best an uneasy composite of ancient political entities. The former western Roman empire was dominated by petty kingdoms with “tribal” origins, having little in common except an allegiance to Roman Christianity. These were all violent and dynamic societies which changed radically over time. Yet in certain basic ways they were all prisoners of dominantly agricultural economies and their limited technology, and so confined in their strategic choices. Our word strategy is derived from the Greek *strategos* meaning a general. It is interesting that “stratagem” is used in English to mean a trick of war - for which we might also use the term tactic. The one leads into the other rather easily. However, when we use the term strategy it suggests a cerebral process in making war, perhaps rooted in long-term considerations, rather than a series of *ad hoc* responses to situations.

In the west the term was first articulated by Count Guibert in his *General Essay on Tactics*. But as Heuser has shown, it was perfectly possible to have strategy without the word.¹ Until recently the idea that strategy could be discussed in connection with medieval warfare, would have aroused derision. Writing in the *Cambridge Medieval History* A.H. Thompson remarked that “European warfare in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries shews (*sic*) a somewhat bewildering vari-

1 Jonathan Abel, *Guibert's General Essay on Tactics*. Leiden: Brill, 2021; Beatrice Heuser, *The Evolution of Strategy*. Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 5.

ety of practice behind which lies no constructive idea.”² For most of the period the only general work on the art of war was that of the 4/5th century Roman Vegetius.³ Its use by soldiers was probably for long very limited, and it has little to say about strategy or tactics.⁴ But views like Thompson’s were underpinned less by the absence of written reflection on war than the simple fact that at first sight so much conflict appeared pointless, indecisive and lacking in focus. The key to grasping the nature of medieval strategy lies in understanding the nature of the polities, societies and economies which gave rise to warfare.

The Roman Empire generated military literature because it had a literate upper class who were for long expected to serve the state in war as in peace. Even after they were replaced by professionals the army occupied such an important place in imperial affairs that all prominent in the state had to take an interest in it. Luttwak suggested that the empire formulated a “Grand Strategy”: under the Julio-Claudians it managed its defence via peripheral clients; later a preclusive policy prevailed; ultimately defence in depth was adopted.⁵ However, in 363 the Emperor Julian (361-63), (in Luttwak’s period of defence in depth) attempted to conquer Persia because, as one who knew him says:

... he was tired of inactivity and dreamed of clarions and battle; and ... he burned to add to the tokens of his glorious victories the surname Parthicus.⁶

This bespeaks a more personal form of decision-making rather than the institutional model suggested by Luttwak.

The Roman empire had a thriving economy which enabled it to collect taxes that sustained a standing army. In the 5th and 6th centuries various ‘tribes’, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Lombards etc, crossed into the western Roman Empire. These were groups of opportunists, each following a successful leader whose identity and culture they adopted. Their strategy was to offer to protect

2 *Cambridge Medieval History* 6 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911-36, 6:796 quoted by John Beeler, “Towards a Re-Evaluation of Medieval English Generalship,” *Journal of British Studies* 3 (1963), p. 1.

3 Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus, *De Re Militari*. tr. as *Epitome of Military Science*. Edited by N. P. Milner, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993.

4 Christopher Allmand, *The ‘De Re Militari’ of Vegetius. The Reception, Transmission and Legacy of a Roman Text in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

5 Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire. From the First Century AD to the Third*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1976.

6 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*. Edited by John C. Rolfe 3 vols. Heineman, 1935-40, 1: Book 22, Chapter 12.2.

the empire (or parts of it) in return for a share of its wealth, but as the structure of the western empire collapsed in the 5th century they found themselves in charge of sections of its territory.⁷

Very few of these peoples, who were essentially armies made up of warbands, had any real tradition of government: an exception was the Ostrogothic regime of Theoderic (493-526) in Italy. However, an attempted reconquest of Italy by the Eastern Empire, followed by a Lombard invasion shattered its administration.⁸ In Britain, violent resistance to “Anglo-Saxon” attacks left a network of small statelets, some native, some Germanic.⁹ In western Germany and northern France a series of competing “Frankish” polities arose, while the Burgundians ruled in the south-east and the Visigoths in the south-west.¹⁰ Disruption of the economy and the machinery of tax collection undermined the Roman method of payment by taxes. Instead the soldiers were simply given land directly as a means of payment because it was the primary form of wealth.

Great men around the king were rewarded on a scale far above their petty followers. These soldiers originally formed an ethnic military elite, but as they married into native families soldiering was increasingly linked to landholding, while retaining immunity from taxes, military function and social status. Major landowners were, therefore, military leaders, and also competed at the royal court to acquire governmental positions like that of Count. In this way society became militarized, and by the 7th century nobles, like kings, claimed power by right of descent, and achieved a near monopoly of high Church office, so that their status resembled the sovereignty which kings claimed for themselves.¹¹ Kings had to negotiate on important matters with these powerful subjects, a situation which complicated the development of strategy and, even more, our

7 For the idea of ethnogenesis see Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*. Trans T.J. Dunlap. Berkeley: University of California, 1988.

8 Matthew Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe 300-900*. London: Routledge, 2007, pp. 241-46.

9 Max Adams, *The First Kingdom*. London: Apollo, 2021.

10 Patrick J. Geary, *Before France and Germany. The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

11 The economic basis of this process is outlined by Paul Fouracre and Richard A. Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France. History and Hagiography 640-720*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996, pp.1-10 and its military consequences discussed by Guy Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the barbarian west, 450-900*. London: Routledge, 2003, which he summarizes in “Conclusion-militarisation: process or discourse.” In Ellora Bennett, Guido M. Berndt, Stefan Esders and Laury Sarti (eds), *Early Medieval Militarisation*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021, pp.331-345.

ability to perceive strategy in action.

The Franks were a very numerous people split into a number of political units which were welded into one by Clovis (481-511). In 486 he made an alliance with other Frankish kings and conquered the last Roman outpost at Soissons under Syagrius, and, probably in 497, reduced the *Alemanni* to subjection at the battle of Tolbiac. The Thuringians and Bavarians, under their Agilolfing dukes, also succumbed to this formidable figure, and the Burgundians too. He then used his prestige to eliminate rivals for Frankish kingship:

One day when he called a general assembly of his subjects, he is said to have made the following remark: ‘How sad a thing it is that I live among strangers like some solitary pilgrim, and that I have none of my own relations left to help me when disaster threatens!’ He said this not because he grieved for their deaths, but because in his cunning way he hoped to find some relative still in the land of the living whom he could kill.’¹²

But his greatest triumph, the conquest of the Visigothic kingdom of Aquitaine at the battle of Vouillé in 507, was carefully prepared.¹³

He knew many Visigoths were establishing themselves in Spain, persuaded the Burgundians to join his army, and concluded an agreement with the eastern emperor Anastasius (491-518) whose fleet attacked Italy to distract Theoderic. Shortly after, his alliance with Byzantium was cemented when the Emperor Anastasius granted the status of honorary consul.¹⁴ This was surely strategic thinking and implementation of a very high order.

In the following centuries Merovingian kings habitually divided their lands amongst their sons, giving rise to Neustria, Austrasia and Burgundy, with the rulers of all three having a share of Aquitaine. This confusing situation with kings as rivals, and warlords feeling free to switch allegiances, means that it is difficult to conceive of strategy, or even to recognise one, especially as our sources are so opaque. Sigebert III (633-56) of Austrasia acceded as a child and there was great rivalry amongst the nobles to be Mayor of the Palace controlling access to the king. In 640 Grimoald engineered a war against the rebellious Radulfus duke of Thuringia. However, many in the army refused to fight because “this battle was undertaken without due council”, with the result that Radulfus was victorious, killing many of his enemies, while the 11 year-old

12 Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*. Translated by Lewis Thorpe. London: Penguin, 1974. p.158.

13 Geary, *Before France and Germany*. pp.82-88.

14 *Ibid.* pp.86-87.

king sat weeping in his saddle.¹⁵ This all happened during a minority which witnessed bitter rivalry for control. So which faction made the decision, and was it simply reactive or was there a concern to maintain the empire established by Clovis? And how significant was it because the matter is not mentioned by the author of the *Liber Historiae Francorum*?¹⁶

Things become somewhat clearer with the triumph of a new ruling house amongst the Franks. The Merovingian kings, for all their divisions, had maintained the unity of the Franks. Violent factional struggles culminated in the rule of Charles Martel (718-41) as Mayor, who for much of his reign dispensed with a ruling Merovingian.¹⁷ His son Pepin (741-751-768) formally deposed the last Merovingian and himself ruled as king, passing on his dominions to his son, Charlemagne. The Franks became militarized, just as the European economy recovered and new means of exploiting the peasants arose. But the upheavals in the Frankish heartlands enabled, even justified, rulers in Germany east of the Rhine, in Burgundy, Provence and Aquitaine, in seeking autonomy. Aquitaine was not fully reabsorbed until the reign of Charlemagne.¹⁸ By uniting the Franks and reasserting their rule over peripheral areas the Carolingians made the Franks the most powerful force within the old western empire.

Visigothic Spain always lacked strong kings, and in 711 it was swept away by an invasion of North African Arabs and Berbers, leaving tiny Christian enclaves in the north.¹⁹ The situation in Gaul was highly inviting because Eudo duke of Aquitaine, although a Frank, resisted Charles Martel whose regime was comparatively new. In 733 the Governor of Spain, ‘Abd ar-Rahman, launched a raid into Aquitaine defeating Eudo on the Garonne. Eudo called upon Charles Martel who defeated the raiders in battle near Poitiers and killed their commander.²⁰ This has often been dismissed as a mere raid, but that is to misunderstand medieval warfare. Raiding was, in itself, a strategy. The medieval economy was essentially agricultural, with limited productivity, so the margin of surplus was

15 “hoc prilio sine consilio initum est” in “Chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii Scholastici Liber IV” . MGH SS Rer. Merov. 2: 164-65, Translated by J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Fourth Book of Fredegar and Continuations*. Westport CT: Praeger, 1981, pp.73-74.

16 *Liber Historiae Francorum*, partially translated in Fouracre, and Gerberding. *Late Merovingian Franc.* pp.87-88.

17 Paul Fouracre, *The Age of Charles Martel*. London: Pearson, 2000.

18 *Ibid.* 79-120.

19 Roger Collins, *Early Medieval Spain. Unity in Diversity 400-1000*. London: Macmillan, 1983, pp.87-143, 144-80.

20 *Ibid.* pp. 251-52.

very small. Loss of food could have disastrous results, for transporting bulk essentials was difficult. An attacker could feed his army and inflict sufficient damage to force the defender to negotiate or surrender. Above all, raiding called into question the legitimacy of a ruler which ultimately rested on his ability to defend his people. And defeat in battle was seen as a judgement of God. If Charles had been defeated there would most likely have been fragmentation in the Christian north, and the consequences might well have been the same as in Spain in 711. Raiding and destruction were the vital strategy in medieval warfare, and had indeed been recommended by Vegetius:

It is preferable to subdue an enemy by famine, raids and terror, than in battle where fortune tends to have more influence than bravery.²¹

Italy was rich but divided. The Lombards ruled the north, but the power of their kings had fluctuated considerably, and only revived after about 700. Even then the Lombard duchies of Spoleto and Benevento were only intermittently subject to them. It was only by 751 that Byzantine Ravenna was finally absorbed, and imperial authority confined to Apulia and Calabria. After 700 the Lombard kings pursued a strategy of attempting to absorb Rome. This brought them into collision with the popes who understood that Byzantium, preoccupied with eastern affairs, could not protect them. The Franks quickly emerged as the alternative guardians of the Holy See.

When Pepin III deposed the Merovingians he received papal support. For this spiritual blessing there was a temporal price; protection of the lands of St Peter against the Lombards. Pepin rather reluctantly agreed, and invaded Italy twice. This connection with the papacy also reinforced the close relationship between the Carolingians and the Frankish church which had already emerged. Consolidation of the new regime was essential, and this was intimately bound up with successful war which could enlist the great lords and their military followings in the Carolingian cause. After quashing the last vestiges of Aquitanian resistance, Charlemagne's (768-814) first great expedition had precisely these strategic ends in view. The Saxons to the east were nominally subject to Frankish overlordship, but they had profited from the Carolingian rise to escape that dominion and to extend their lands westward. Charlemagne was able to lead his men deep into Saxon territory:

he proceeded as far as the Irminsul, destroyed this idol, and carried away the gold and silver which he found.²²

²¹ Vegetius, p.108.

²² "Royal Frankish Annals", in *Carolingian Chronicles*. Edited by Bernard W. Scholz and Bar-

A great and profitable victory was just what the Franks wanted, and the destruction of the pagan shrine pleased the church. Before this expedition “the Lord King Charles held an assembly at Worms” - Charlemagne’s strategy was to wage successful war, but in consultation with his great men who controlled local administration and substantial military resources.²³

When, in 773, Pope Hadrian I (772-95) appealed for aid against the threat to Rome by Desiderius king of the Lombards (756-774), Charlemagne agreed only after a long process of consultation. The army crossed the Alps in two sections, via the Mont Cenis and Great St Bernard passes. Desiderius fell back on his capital, Pavia, which the Franks besieged while Charlemagne went to Rome. On his return, Pavia fell and Desiderius was deposed, Charlemagne assuming the Iron Crown of the Lombards. The capture of Pavia was significant because it revealed the expertise of the Franks. In the wars between the Merovingians siege was rare,²⁴ but Charles Martel used quite elaborate methods to capture Avignon in 737 in his conquest of the south.²⁵ Medieval warfare is dominated by three modes - nobody had ever doubted how ferocious the Franks could be in raiding and battle, but now clearly siege was well within their capacities, and it was a strategy of siege which would dominate the long wars with the Saxons which followed.²⁶

The Italian involvement enabled the Saxons to revolt. The year 775 saw a savage campaign in Saxony which apparently reduced it to subjection with the planting of Frankish forts in strategic points like Eresburg. However, revolt in Italy forced the king to campaign there, and the Saxons revolted again. This pattern of success undone by revolt elsewhere could easily have been perpetuated, but Charlemagne conciliated the great nobles of Italy while planting Franks in key locations. In 781 he made his son, Pepin, king of Italy and the Lombards later contributed to his armies.²⁷ By contrast, against the Saxons Charlemagne

bara Roger. Michigan: Ann Arbor, 1972. Year 772, pp. 48-49.

23 John France, “The Composition and Raising of the Armies of Charlemagne,” *The Journal of Medieval Military History* 1 (2002), pp. 61-82.

24 Halsall, *Warfare and Society*, pp. 136-37 and 177-214.

25 *Fredegar*, p.92.

26 I would like to acknowledge my debt to Professor Bernard S. Bachrach whose extensive writings first cast serious light on this aspect of Frankish warfare.

27 Matthew Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Europe 300-900*. London: Routledge, 2007, pp. 409-10. As late as the 12th century the nobles of Piacenza claimed descent from either Frankish or Lombard forebears: Pierre Racine, *Plaisance du X^{ème} à la fin du XIII^{ème} siècle*. 3 vols Paris: Diffusion, 1979-1980, 2:750-54.

pursued a strategy of ruthless repression. They had no single government and although the Franks won victories and concluded treaties, it was very difficult to hold them in sustained subjection. In the end a series of winter campaigns in 785-6 broke their resistance, while forcible conversion, relocation of troublesome groups and the planting of strong fortifications consolidated Frankish control. But this kind of war was not profitable, and it can be no coincidence that major conspiracies broke out against Charlemagne at this time.²⁸ The process was complicated by Charlemagne's venture into Spain in 778 when he allied with the Caliph of Baghdad against the new Umayyad regime in Spain. This produced a major defeat at Roncevalles, precipitating a serious internal crisis.²⁹

Charlemagne's strategy was supported by careful planning. He attacked the Saxons with more than one force, as in 784 when he operated with one army and his son with another. In his campaigns against the Avars in the 790s this strategy became highly developed. This steppe people were fast-moving raiders settled in the great Hungarian plain. Charlemagne projected the construction of a canal between Rhine and Danube to supply his armies in their assault on this area. This failed, but in 791 two armies marched along the north and south banks of the Danube to attack the Avars, and in 794 similar attacks reduced a Saxon revolt. In 796 armies from Germany and Italy overwhelmed the Avars.³⁰ This scale of operation was made possible by a careful attention to logistics. Supplying an army was always difficult in medieval conditions because transport was limited, roads were poor at best, and often impassable to carts. The preservation of food-stuffs was problematic. Charlemagne did his best to overcome the problem. A letter of 806 to Fulrad abbot of St Quentin emphasizes this:

You are to come with your men to the aforesaid place equipped in such a way that you can go from there with the army to whatever place we shall command – that is with arms, implements and other military material, provisions and clothing. Each horseman is to carry shield and spear, long-sword and short-sword, bow quivers and arrows, and your carts are to contain implements of various kinds – axes and stone-cutting tools, augers, adzes, trenching tools, iron spades and the rest of the implements which an army needs. And provisions in the carts for three months following the assembly, weapons and clothing for half a year. And this we

28 P.D. King (ed.), *Charlemagne. Translated Sources*. Lancaster: University of Lancaster, 1987 pp.154-55 reveals complex motives for this plot, but emphasises its seriousness.

29 For the battle and its context see Xabier Irujo, *Charlemagne's Defeat in the Pyrenees: the battle of Rencesvals*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021, and for its consequences, pp. 121-37.

30 *Carolingian Chronicles*, pp.69-75.

command in absolute terms, that you see to it that whichever part of our realm the direction of your march may cause you to pass through you proceed to the aforesaid place in good order and without unruliness, that is you presume to take nothing other than grass, firewood and water.³¹

In tandem with this Charlemagne tried to prevent his enemies enjoying access to Frankish technology, ordering merchants “not to take arms and coats of mail to sell.”³²

This concern with organization was of a piece with Charlemagne’s broader overall strategy of systematising government, insisting on written record, in alliance with the church.³³ When the pope conferred upon him the title of Emperor it enhanced his legitimacy and granted a towering status. Waging successful war guaranteed the security of his regime because it attracted the support of great men. The scale of his wars makes it possible to see not merely the emergence of a strategy, but also the implementation of it. It has been suggested that after about 800 Charlemagne reverted to a defensive posture, recruiting larger less mobile armies by a form of conscription. But he seriously contemplated an attack on Denmark which was made redundant by events in that kingdom, and on the frontier marches he expected his marquises to be aggressive.³⁴

But the foundation of his success was personal skill and charisma, which his son, Louis the Pious (814-40), lacked. This resulted in the break-up of the empire which was divided between East and West Francia and a Middle Kingdom.³⁵ Faced with external attack from the Vikings Charles the Bald (843-77) of West Francia confronted them in battle and siege, but their agile warbands simply dissolved, only to come again.³⁶ He was prepared to buy them off, and exploited their divisions with some success. But his attempts to prevent attack by fortifications, particularly bridges, was not very successful.³⁷ By contrast Alfred of Wessex (871-99) enforced a regular rotation of troops to man a network of

31 *Charlemagne to Abbot Fulrad, April 806* in King, *Charlemagne*, p. 260.

32 *Capitulary of Aachen* (811), in King, *Charlemagne*, p.264.

33 On which see Rosamund McKitterick, *Charlemagne. The Formation of a European Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

34 The case for this was made by Timothy Reuter, “The End of Carolingian Military Expansion.” In Peter Godman and Roger Collins (eds), *Charlemagne’s Heir. New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814-40)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp.391-405. But see France, “The Composition and Raising of the Armies of Charlemagne,” p.80.

35 Roger Collins, *Early Medieval Europe 300-1000*. London: Macmillan, 1991, 290-312.

36 Simon Coupland, “The Carolingian Army and the Struggle against the Vikings”, *Viator* 35 (2004), pp.49-70.

37 Janet L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald*. London: Longman, 1982 offers a balanced assessment.

fortified *burhs* whose resistance was supported by his field army. This systematic strategy was elaborated by his successors and provided them with a strong base from which to reconquer the lands of the Midlands and North conquered by the Vikings.³⁸ Charles the Bald had more enemies than Alfred - notably his own family, and a vast area to rule. But his strategic response was enormously complicated by internal factors. In 859 the Annals of St Bertin recorded the following sequence of events:

‘The Danes ravaged the places beyond the Scheldt. Some of the common people living between the Seine and the Loire formed a sworn association amongst themselves and fought bravely against the Danes on the Seine. But because their association had been made without due consideration, they were easily slain by our more powerful people.’³⁹

In 864, by the Edict of Pîtres Charles the Bald prohibited the building of private fortresses and forbade great men from preventing soldiers from travelling to the royal host. Great men were making him dependent on their military retainues. Because the Vikings were not yet an existential threat nobles had little need to rally to the king. In the next generation kings found rather more support in this fight but only spasmodically. By contrast, and despite some resistance, Alfred was able to persuade his great men of the need to work with him. This was the iron logic of lordly consultation of the kind we have seen working even under Charlemagne. It was an immensely complicating factor in the elaboration of strategy.

In eastern Francia the Saxon kings were forced to accept the virtual autonomy of the German dukes and high aristocracy.⁴⁰ But they faced a formidable enemy to the east, the Magyars, of what is now Hungary. They were steppe people whose raids ravaged the German lands, into eastern France and northern Italy. Henry the Fowler (918-36) was barely recognized as king by the other dukes, and perforce paid tribute to the Magyars. But he used the time bought to stud his Saxon duchy with fortifications, and established a cohort of heavily armed cavalrymen. In 932 he ended the tribute and in 933 crushed a great Magyar attack at the battle of the Riade. His success and the ability of his successor, Otto

38 Ryan Lavelle, *Alfred's Wars. Sources and Interpretations of Anglo-Saxon Warfare in the Viking Age*. Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010; John Baker, and Stuart Brookes, *Beyond the Burghal Hidage. Anglo-Saxon Civil Defence in the Viking Age*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

39 Janet L. Nelson (ed.), *The Annals of St-Bertin*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991, p.89.

40 John B. Gillingham, “The Kingdom of Germany in the High Middle Ages, (900-1200)”. Historical Association Pamphlet G77, London, 1971.

I (936-73) persuaded the high aristocracy to support the monarchy, and in 954 Otto crushed the Magyars at the battle of Lechfeld.⁴¹

Victory in war rallied the nobility to the cause of the Saxon dynasty and opened the way for expansion into middle Europe. Eastward expansion, securing domination over the peoples of middle Europe by planting fortresses and settlers is a well-known phenomenon.⁴² But Otto I, concerned that an Italian kingdom could threaten southern Germany, claimed the Lombard crown for himself and went on to become Roman Emperor. The imperial coronation provided prestige and legitimacy, but it enmeshed the German monarchy in the affairs of southern Europe.

By contrast, the French monarchy was weakened by a century of struggle between the Carolingians and the house of Capet.⁴³ When the latter emerged victorious in 987 their position was so weakened that by the 11th century they were forced to adopt a strategy of working with the great nobles because, “The age of kings seemed to have passed and that of princes to be the future.”⁴⁴ It is not often that we can understand the strategic thinking of princes, but an exception is provided by the counts of Anjou with their fortress strategy. A great wave of castle building, commencing just as the Viking tide subsided in the 940s, was occasioned by the conflicts between princes and within principalities, as the high aristocracy were freed from royal dominance. Castles were not merely defensive. Fulk Nerra count of Anjou built a great principality in the Loire valley by planting castles to protect his own lands and threaten those of his neighbours.⁴⁵ The year 1066 is famous in English history but it was also a turning point for the French monarchy when a vassal, the duke of Normandy, acquired the English kingdom. But the great princes of France were not anxious to see the weak authority of the Capetians replaced by the dominance of the Anglo-Norman monarchs. As a result, the Capetians could play them off against one another.⁴⁶

But the most strategically literate power in western Europe was the papacy. Papal strategy centred on preventing any single power from dominating the

41 Charles R. Bowlus, *The Battle of the Lechfeld and its aftermath, August 955. The End of the Age of Migrations in the Latin West*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006.

42 David Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany*. Woodbridge: Boydell, 2014.

43 John France, *Medieval France at War. A Military History of the French Monarchy, 885-1305*. Leeds: ARC Humanities Press, 2022, pp.31-33.

44 Jean Flori, *L'idéologie du glaive: préhistoire de la chevalerie*. Geneva: Droz, 1983, p.168.

45 Bernard S. Bachrach, “The Angevin Strategy of Castle Building in the Reign of Fulk Nerra, 987-1040,” *American Historical Review* 88 (1983), pp. 533-60.

46 France, *Medieval France at War*, p.71.

Italian peninsula and thereby threatening its independence. In the 11th century the power of the German kings as emperors seemed threatening to papal development and was balanced by papal alignment with the Normans who had settled in the south, displacing the last vestiges of Byzantine power in Apulia and Calabria. But the papacy's vision was much wider than seeking freedom of action in Italy.

In 1095 Urban II (1089-99) launched a great expedition to assist the Christians of the east and to free Jerusalem from Islamic dominance. For the pope this was undoubtedly part of a strategy to reverse the dominance of Islam in the Mediterranean world. More immediately, it was a response to the weakness of the Byzantine empire which had been damaged by the Turkish conquest of Anatolia. But the assertion of papal concern was a challenge to the western emperor's power in Italy and a claim to authority over all Christians including those of the East.

In the early 7th the rival tribes and cities of Arabia were united by the preaching of Muhammad and inspired by his religious teaching. At Yarmuk in 636 they inflicted a crushing defeat on the Byzantines, forcing the emperor Heraclius to evacuate Syria, and opening the way for the conquest of Egypt and North Africa. Sasanian Persia resisted longer, but by 651 it has collapsed and submitted to the rule of the Caliphs. The early Caliphs concentrated military settlements, sometimes in new places like Basra in Iraq, sometimes in cities like Damascus. In this way the Islamic soldiers and their families could form an Islamic environment and dominate the hinterland. It was only over time that the wider countryside became Islamicized. Simultaneously they inherited from the Persian and Roman empires a tradition of bureaucratic government centred on cities, collecting taxes and paying armies.

Under the Umayyad Caliphate (661-751) the expansionary strategy continued into the southern steppe, India, and Spain. It was a strategic necessity for the dynasty had to prove itself in war against the religious enemy - Christian Byzantium. The scale of what was possible is revealed by the two major sieges of Constantinople. In the second of these (717-18) a carefully prepared land and sea assault was repelled only with great difficulty. In 751 The Abbasid dynasty overthrew the Umayyads, moving the centre of gravity eastwards to Baghdad where the influence of Persia was ever more notable, and war with Byzantium less of a priority.

But the Islamic empire decayed and provinces broke away so that the central characteristic of Islam, the unity of spiritual and secular power in the person of the Caliph, was replaced by secular rulers in the provinces who accepted

Caliphal religious but not temporal authority. A crucial reason for this decay was military. From the late 9th century the Caliphs recognised the exceptional skill of Turkish horse-archers from the steppe lands. As *Mamluks*, slaves of the Caliph, they were reliable because they stood outside the political system. But they were very expensive and as they settled into life in the Caliphate they became enmeshed in court factions, seeking ever to increase their wealth. In this way court factional struggles became military confrontations and the cost of the army became unbearable. As the Caliphate disintegrated the rulers of the provinces established military followings, usually centred on Turks, but when larger forces were needed had to rely on subordinates of uncertain allegiance, allies and mercenaries.⁴⁷ In 969 the Shia Caliphate of the Fatimids had established itself in Egypt and had great influence in Syria offering an alternative Caliphate. Its had a standing army, but its leaders became aligned with court factions.⁴⁸

All this radically changed the strategy of the Byzantine Empire. Deprived of the rich African provinces by the Islamic conquest, it was no longer able to maintain a huge centrally paid army. Instead, the empire created militia forces based on local areas, *themes*, which could hold fortifications and harass enemy raids and form a tripwire against major assaults, calling for aid from the small central forces at Constantinople, the *tagmata*, which gathered additional troops coming to their aid. In the tenth century as the Caliphate weakened, the empire captured Antioch and thrust into Syria. This new aggression produced a mercenary army which displaced the former thematic structure. But Byzantium could not focus on an eastern strategy, and after 976 became enmeshed in war in the Balkans culminating in the seizure of Bulgaria.⁴⁹ North Syria, therefore, became a flashpoint where the new Shia power of Egypt driven by its universalist pretensions as the centre of Islam, met the divided Sunni north and the Christian empire.

This uneasy stasis was destroyed by the entry of a new people. Islamic contact had gradually converted the Turks of the southern steppe, and this inspired leading families to construct new polities on Islamic models. The Seljuk family amassed a great following, invaded Persia, and, under Tughtigin, in 1055, seized Baghdad in alliance with the many Turks already serving there. As Sultan

47 Hugh Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs. Military and Society in the Early Islamic State*. London: Routledge, 2001.

48 Yaacov Lev, *State and Society in Fatimid Egypt*. Leiden: Brill, 1991.

49 John W. Birkenmeier, *The Development of the Komnenian Army: 1081-1180*. Leiden: Brill, 2002, pp.27-55; Paul Stephenson, *The Legend of Basil the Bulgar-Slayer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Tughtigin became the protector of the Caliph and in the cause of Sunni orthodoxy clothed expansionism in a religious drapery. Accompanying the Seljuks, but by no means subject to them, various Turkish tribes drove into Byzantine Anatolia. The Emperor Romanus IV (1068-71) tried to force the Sultan to curb these raiders, but in 1071 his army was defeated at Manzikert and the quarrels of Romanus' successors enabled various Turkish princes to take over Anatolia, including a dissident Seljuk family who eventually ruled a Sultanate from Nicaea and Iconium and had pretensions to displace their relatives in Baghdad. The Baghdad Sultans' main strategy was to attack Egypt and by the 1080s they had driven into Syria and Palestine, but the death of the Sultan Malik Shah (1072-92) produced a succession struggle of unusual bitterness and length.⁵⁰

The Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Comnenus (1081-1118), struggling to reconquer Anatolia, needed western soldiers. In 1095, mindful of the chaos in the Seljuk empire, he asked Urban II (1089-99) to appeal for mercenaries, and this crystallized the pope's ideas and ambitions. Ideas of holy war, vague and confused, already existed in Europe, but Urban offered a clearly understandable directive, promising remission of sin for all who undertook the journey:

'Whoever for devotion only, not to gain honour or money, goes to Jerusalem to liberate the Church of God can substitute this journey for all penance.'⁵¹

In this way papal supremacy was asserted by launching western soldiers into the Middle East in what may be called salvation through slaughter.⁵² This strategy was one of the great determinative factors in the history of the medieval world. Over centuries it was implemented with great consistency, force and skill, playing upon the hope of eternal salvation of western Christians in general, and major kings and leaders in particular.

The strategic foundation for the First Crusade's seizure of Jerusalem and creation of western states was the fragmentation of the Seljuk empire into Turkish principalities and hostility between them and Fatimid Egypt. The Turkish princes were not popular with their Arab subjects, and resented interference from

50 Andrew C. Peacock, *The Great Seljuk Empire*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015, pp.20-123.

51 R. Somerville. *The Councils of Urban II. 1: Decreta Claramontensia*. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1972, p.80. Translated by Jonathon Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*. London: Athlone, 1996, p.29.

52 John France. "Cutting the Gordian Knot. Urban II and the Impact of the Council of Clermont." In Gregory E.M. Lippiat and J.L. Bird (eds), *Crusading Europe. Essays in Honour of Christopher Tyerman*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2019, pp. 73-92.

Baghdad, which was in any case only occasional. In response the notion grew of themselves initiating *jihad* to unite their followers against the westerners. This culminated in the rule of Saladin who united Egypt, Syria and much of the Jazira and in 1187 recaptured Jerusalem. This strategy also solved tactical dilemmas. The western states were anchored by fortified cities, but besieging them was difficult in the face of a powerful field army whose strike force was the heavily armoured and armed knights who fought in in close-order. The steppelands and the countryside of the Middle East facilitated the raising of masses of light horses, virtually ponies, which the Turks rode unleashing sleet of arrow and manoeuvring to tempt heavy horsemen to break formation, charge and be massacred as their mounts became exhausted.⁵³ But in the end battle was decided by edged weapons in personal confrontations. The Turks always had some heavy cavalry, but through the extent of his dominions Saladin increased the number of heavily armed *tawasim* in his army, and eventually he triumphed at the battle of Hattin.⁵⁴ But Saladin's success largely rested upon his charismatic personality and his heirs, the Ayyubids, were divided amongst themselves with one faction ruling Syria and the other Egypt.

This opened the way for a new crusader strategy, of playing upon the resulting divide between Syria and Egypt. The Fourth Crusade was intended to attack Egypt. The Fifth Crusade (1213-21) seized Damietta and threatened Cairo, only to fail. In 1229 the Emperor Frederick recovered Jerusalem by diplomacy and the "Crusade of the Barons" (1239-41) repeated this feat. Louis IX of France seized Damietta in his crusade (1248-54) but was ultimately defeated.⁵⁵ The Egyptian strategy showed that western soldiers understood and thought about

53 *Itinerarium peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi*. In William Stubbs (ed.), *Chronicles and Memorials of the Reign of Richard I*. 2 vols. London: Rolls Series 38, Longman, 1864, 1: 247. Translated by Helen Nicholson, *Chronicle of the Third Crusade*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997, p. 234.

54 William of Tyre, *Historia Rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum* ed. Robert B.C. Huygens. Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis 63A. 2 vols. Tournhout: Brepols, 1986. English translation by E.A. Babcock and A.C. Krey. *A History of the Deeds done beyond the Sea*. 2 vols. New York: Columbia, 1943, 2: Book 21: Chapter 23.

55 Donald Queller and Thomas F. Madden, *The Fourth Crusade*. 2nd edition. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997; James M. Powell, *Anatomy of a Crusade 1213-1221*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986; David Abulafia, *Frederick II. A Medieval Emperor*. London: Pimlico, 1992, pp.164-201; Malcolm Lower, *The Baron's Crusade. A Call to Arms and its Consequences*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005; Jean Richard, *The Crusades c.1071-c.1291*. Translated by J. Birrell. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp.338-56.

the problems of crusade so that it superseded the earlier “dash to Jerusalem” which had become outmoded by the rise of powerful (if divided) monarchies in the Middle East.

The elite established by Saladin and the Ayyubids were slave soldiers, *Mamluks*, who overthrew his descendants in 1250 to establish a military regime over Egypt and Syria whose leaders chose a Sultan from amongst themselves. They faced formidable enemies: the crusaders centred on Acre and the Mongols who had established their Il-Khanid regime in Persia and sought domination over the whole Middle East. They too came to depend on more heavily armed and armoured soldiers.⁵⁶ Mamluk strategy turned on the creation of a standing army of very well-equipped cavalry, and after defeating the Mongols at Ain Jalut in 1260 they aimed to hold Syria and parts of eastern Anatolia against the Mongols. The Mamluks emphasized their Islamic credentials, destroying crusader Acre in 1291. The war against the Il-Khanids absorbed their energies till the peace settlement of 1323.⁵⁷

The collapse of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1291 did not end crusading. The popes persisted in seeking to create alliances to reconquer the Holy Land, but the European monarchies had local preoccupations, and crusading was extremely expensive. The Byzantine Empire recovered Constantinople in 1204, but the papacy pursued its recovery by force or diplomacy until its weakness became patent in the 14th century. By that time a new power was arising in Anatolia, the Ottoman Turks, and the papacy’s strategy became essentially defensive with alliances involving lesser powers, like Venice, Genoa and Cyprus. But these “Holy Leagues” lacked backing from European monarchies, and members had strong trading interests in Egypt and the Ottoman territories, so their efforts were spasmodic. After 1386 the Ottomans created a regular army based on heavy cavalry (*sipahis*) and a highly disciplined infantry - the *janissaries* who were soon equipped with firearms.⁵⁸ In 1453 Constantinople fell to the

56 John M. Smith, “Mongol Society and Military in the Middle East: Antecedents and Adaptations.” In Y. Lev (ed.), *War and Society in the Eastern Mediterranean 7th-15th Centuries*. Leiden: Brill, 1997, pp. 249-66.

57 Christopher Tyerman, *God’s War. A New History of the Crusades*. Harvard: Belknap, 2006. pp. 814-22; Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks. The Mamluk-Il Khanid War 1260-81*. Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilisation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

58 John France, “Philippe de Mézières and the Military History of the Fourteenth Century.” In Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Kiril Petkov (eds), *Philippe de Mézières and His Age. Piety and Politics in the Fourteenth Century*. Leiden: Brill, 2012. pp. 282-94.

Ottomans, partly because they adopted the latest developments in artillery. They pursued an expansionist strategy, annexing Egypt in 1517 and Cyprus in 1571. Their strategy of penetrating the Danube valley only ended with the failure of the siege of Vienna in 1683. Perhaps their greatest failure was against Persia which defied all their efforts at conquest.⁵⁹

The papacy used the crusade to pursue its strategy elsewhere. In the Baltic German ecclesiastics had long been interested in converting the pagans of the area, while German merchants were anxious to dominate the trade in furs and northern goods. Innocent III (1198-1216) sanctioned crusades in their support, largely for fear of native peoples being converted by Orthodox from the Russian states.⁶⁰ This produced an appallingly savage war of conquest with horrors committed by all sides. In what is now Lithuania, which became a well-organized pagan state, the conflict continued into the 15th century. The Teutonic Order of monk-knights was enlisted by the interested parties and sanctioned by the papacy as the main agency for conquest in the area. Superior technology enabled the settlers to use sailing vessels to push their settlement down the rivers, while planting castles manned by crossbowmen.⁶¹ The conquest and conversion of northern Europe was the product of a convergence of strategies pursued by ecclesiastics, merchants and soldiers. The decisive factor was the Teutonic Order's desire to establish a real purpose after the collapse of Jerusalem in 1291. In the centuries which followed they created an *Ordenstaat* which lasted until the 16th century and gave the Order purpose and unity.⁶²

The breadth of the papacy's aims obliged it to formulate strategies and the centrality of its position means that we can see that formulation and judge its success because of the volume of sources. We are much less informed about the thinking of others, but we can see strategic thinking at work, especially as political units became more complex. In 1124, when his duchy of Normandy was under threat from the kingdom of France, Henry I of England (1100-35) allied with Henry V of Germany (1099-1125) whose lands lay to the east French territory. Richard of England (1189-99) similarly called in the aid of German and

59 Stephen F. Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

60 Erik Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades*. London: Penguin, 1997.

61 *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*. Translated by James A. Brundage. Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1961. For a study see Marek Tamm, Linda Kaljundi et al (eds), *Crusading and Chronicle Writing. A Companion to the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*. London: Routledge, 2016.

62 William Urban, *The Teutonic Knights*. London: Greenhill, 2003.

Flemish powers to protect Normandy. It was partly the absence of such alliances that resulted in King John (1199-1216) losing Normandy in 1204. However, by 1214 he had reverted to the earlier strategy in an alliance with Germany and the Flemish principalities which, however, was defeated at Bouvines in 1214.⁶³

Only rarely can we see strategic thinking at a lesser level. In 1184 an alliance of the Count of Flanders, the duke of Brabant and the archbishop of Cologne invaded the country of Hainaut. Count Baldwin V of Hainaut, faced with overwhelming odds, did not challenge in battle but ordered his men to devastate the countryside and withdraw into their castles, encouraging them by saying:

Take comfort and be strong, because our enemies will withdraw at some time and leave our lands to us, because they cannot take the lands with them.⁶⁴

This is the essence of the fortress strategy so common across the medieval west. Commonly ravaging was a response to the strength of fortresses, because siege demanded careful organization. In this case the alliance fell apart quickly because each leader had his own reasons for fighting. Underlying the failure of this and, indeed, of many strategies, is the simple fact that big armies usually depended on agreement amongst people who enjoyed a huge amount of autonomy. At Bouvines the French king had a group of leaders well used to working together during a long period of war, and they defeated a coalition which had gathered only days before the battle. In 1185 a coalition of independent forces with different objectives had no clear strategy once the Count of Hainaut showed determination to resist. Charismatic leadership, such as that of Duke William at Hastings, or Richard Lionheart could, on occasion, meld a gathering of forces into a whole and thereby create the coherence which made strategy possible, but it tended to be a passing thing. In its absence raiding and harassing, building castles and burning others where possible, was the general strategy, though it seems very strange to modern eyes.

In the 13th century the wealth of Europe and the competence of government increased. In France a kind of military consensus arose which created an obligation on all the (more or less) noble to fight in an army dominated by heavy cavalry which was reckoned the best in Europe. Although service was still largely

63 John France, "The Battle of Bouvines 27 July 1214." In Gregory L. Halfond (ed.), *The Medieval Way of War. Studies in Medieval Military History in Honor of Bernard S. Bachrach*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2015, pp. 251-72.

64 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*. Translated by Laura Napran. Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005, p.95.

by retinue, by the end of the thirteenth century quotas of knights were fixed for all great nobles, and even for the numbers of infantry owed by some cities. At the same time an increasing dependence on crown finance created a new degree of control by the monarchy.⁶⁵ The Spanish kings were able to count on strong support as long as Islam was seen as a threat, but aristocratic autonomy reasserted itself as that menace disappeared.⁶⁶ Germany was convulsed by civil war and its monarchs became dependent on the resources of their own lands. In England kings faced strong objections to the obligations of knighthood.⁶⁷

Yet it was in England that a real sense of strategic development grew. After the failure of Edward I's attempt to conquer Scotland the north became a militarized and devastated zone in which the value of the longbow for self-protection became evident. It came to be recognized that although men-at-arms, on foot or horse, were the core of any army, massed bowmen could erode an attacking enemy severely. At the same time Edward had devised administrative methods of raising foot-soldiers which enabled military leaders to select good archers and to gather them with men-at-arms in companies accustomed to working together. Early in the reign of Edward's III this system led to a number of victories in battle over Scots who attacked English armies. This produced a shift away from battle-avoiding tactics so characteristic of earlier centuries. This tactic worked best on the defensive, producing a strategy of provoking the enemy to battle, but simultaneously standing on the tactical defensive. In 1346 Edward led his army in an aggressive raid through northern France, drawing the French army into battle at Crécy where the combination of dismounted men-at-arms and bowmen destroyed the French army.⁶⁸

In 1356 it was just such a large-scale raid, a *chevauchée*, that provoked the French army into battle at Poitiers which was a signal success for Edward's son, the Black Prince. When the companies became too expensive, Edward was happy to see them destroying the French countryside by ravaging on their own account. But this strategy of aggressively threatening the enemy then standing battle in a defensive position was nullified once the French under du Guesclin came to terms with English methods. In 1415 a lack of firm command once

65 France, *Medieval France at War*, pp. 209-14.

66 Samuel A. Claussen, *Chivalry and Violence in Late Medieval Castile*. Woodbridge: Boydell, 2020.

67 Michael R. Powicke, "Distrain of Knighthood and Military Obligation under Henry III", *Speculum* 25 (1950), pp.457-70.

68 Michael Livingston and Kelly Devries, *The Battle of Crécy*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015.

more gave victory to the English at the battle of Agincourt. Two years later Henry conquered Normandy and was recognised as heir and regent of France by 1420.⁶⁹

It has been argued that the Norman campaign of 1419-20 saw the beginnings of an artillery revolution which shortly after became especially clear in the campaign against Maine, so that by the mid 1420s «garrisons were starting to surrender ‘because the besiegers’ guns made their position indefensible.»⁷⁰ It is certainly the case that the castle strategy, exemplified so notably by the Count of Hainaut’s war of 1184-85, was becoming harder to pursue in the face of the new cannon. And by the middle of the fifteenth century cannon were becoming agile enough to be used in the field, contributing to the defeat of the English at Castillon in 1453.⁷¹ In the 1420s Jan Žižka led the Czech rebels against German rule, and developed the *Wagenburg*, cannon and infantry placed in wagons drawn in a tight formation. This formation, much copied by the Ottomans, compensated for the vulnerability of infantry and the slow loading of cannons.⁷²

The Later Middle Ages clearly witnessed enormous changes in warfare, and this was reflected in a new literature.⁷³ In 1302 the chivalry of France were defeated at the battle of Courtrai.⁷⁴ English armies, heavily infantry in make-up, enjoyed some great triumphs. Swiss, and later German Landknechts, deployed pikes in mobile and disciplined formations to such an extent that well into the 16th century they were widely used as mercenaries. But infantry on their own were relatively slow moving. And in any case it was difficult to form coher-

69 Richard Vernier, *The Flower of Chivalry: Bertrand du Guesclin and the Hundred Years War*. Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003; Anne Curry, *1415 Agincourt. A New History*. Cheltenham: History Press, 2015.

70 Clifford J. Rogers, “The Military Revolutions of the Hundred Years War,” *Journal of Military History* 57 (1993), p. 266.

71 David Grummitt, “Castillon, Siege and Battle of.” In Clifford Rogers (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Military Warfare and Military Technology*. 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 1:335-36.

72 Howard Kaminsky, *A History of the Hussite Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967; Gábor Ágoston, “Behind the Turkish War Machine: Gunpowder Technology and War Industry in the Ottoman Empire, 1450-1700.” In Brett Steele and Tamera Dorland (eds), *The Heirs of Archimedes: Science and the Art of War through the Age of Enlightenment*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005, pp.101–33.

73 A very notable example is Christine de Pizan, *Book of Deeds of Arms and Chivalry*. Charity C. Willard and Sumner Willard (eds), Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State, 1999.

74 Jan F. Verbruggen, *The Battle of the Golden Spurs (Courtrai, 11 July 1302)*. Ed. K. Devries and translated D.F. Ferguson. Woodbridge: Boydell, 2002. n

ent armies. The English kings relied on noble subcontractors. In France the *ordonnance* of Montil-lès-Tours on 28 April 1448 established that each village should provide a well-armed and armoured archer. This had mixed success but the sustained search for permanent infantry also had poor results, and Swiss mercenaries were regularly employed.⁷⁵ However, after 1445 the *Compagnies d'ordonnance*, standing forces of heavy cavalry, formed the core of a regular paid army.⁷⁶ Even so it was only a core and the monarchy relied on a range of intermediaries to raise troops. The groping of the French monarchy towards a regular military establishment was hardly strange in an age of rapid and confusing change. Gunpowder weapons could be deadly and had an obvious potential in siege, as Henry V's campaign in Normandy had shown. But they were very heavy and clumsy. The duke of Burgundy invested massively in a great artillery train, but in 1476-77 after a series of battles he was defeated and killed by well-disciplined Swiss infantry armed with halberds, essentially spears.⁷⁷ Personal gunpowder weapons, notably the arquebus, developed only towards the end of the fifteenth century.

It has often been remarked that the Middle Ages produced no great captains. But European war leaders only had the resources of small states which were fragmented and relatively poor. They had to rely on intermediaries who had to be persuaded and whose obedience was inevitably conditional. Moreover, they owed their status to social position and had other preoccupations. And they operated in an environment sown with strong fortifications against which they had only the most limited devices. In the richer Middle East rulers held fragmented polities and had to negotiate even to raise an army. The Mamluks of Egypt alone established a standing army, but their military republic was unstable. It is no accident that the best-known soldiers of the period were Richard I and Saladin because they acted in the very particular theatre of the crusades. As wealth increased in the Later Middle Ages the range of possibilities open to commanders, and the sheer expense of all of them, presented severe problems to the formulation of any coherent strategy. The fluidity of new developments and the evident rising costs meant that generals continued to grapple with their enemies in what seems to us a very crude way. Out of this confusion systematic strategy emerged only slowly and irregularly.

75 David Potter, *Renaissance France at War: Armies, Culture and Society 1480-1560*. Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008, pp. 102-05, 105-12.

76 Ibid. pp. 70-85.

77 Robert D. Smith and Kelly Devries, *The Artillery of the Dukes of Burgundy*. Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005. pp. 186-202.



Pope Urban II preaching the Crusade at the Council of Clermont in 1095. Miniature by Jean Colombe, in Sébastien Mamerot, *Les passages d'outremer* Fr.5594, f.19r (ca. 1474), Bibliothèque Nationale de France. CC-PD.

Ukrainism of *Mālum Discordiæ*: Strategy of War and Growth.

Setting up the strategic scene.¹

by VLADIMIR SHIROGOROV

ABSTRACT. The rise of a latent nation is an upsurge that yields at once a social constitution, political regime, ideological pivot, and military structures of a prepared nation as if from nowhere. This moment of emergence is thus not spontaneous, a resulting vector of multidirectional chances, but is the result of a strategy. It has its foundation in the social-military groups eager for nationhood, and its center of gravity, external and internal axes, political and territorial objectives. Its military agenda is critical because the rise of a latent nation is invariably born of civil war. The strategy of a latent nation's consolidation and appearance on the scene sums up all of these components. The emergence of Ukraine is an entire example of this strategy, with its assembling of strategic components into nationhood. However, what was once assembled might also be dismantled. Rival strategies opposed the consolidation of Ukraine in this way. The emergence of Ukraine is thus a classic of strategic learning and an edge where historical studies weld the present and future.

KEYWORDS: STRATEGY, UKRAINE, WAR, NATIONHOOD, POLAND, MUSCOVY, OTTOMAN EMPIRE, EXPANSION.

Scholars and military authors address strategy as the supreme warcraft of states with a clear center of political decision-making, military structures, and leadership. The strategy of the polities in their inception, latent formations with hidden decision-making centers and fluid leadership is an unexplored perspective. If the strategy of such latent nations had been studied in a more timely fashion, the maverick behavior of upstart nations in the post-Cold War scene would not have been so shocking for the social sciences as it turned out to be. The 20th century closed with a period of massive ascension of nations that is very different from the state-formation of “classic” historical sociology. The

¹ The current essay is a chapter from its author's work, *Strategies of Ukrainian War, 1400–1800* that is yet to be published.

“classic” nation is the product of the continuous bargaining of the rulers, elites and armies of the respective territorial polities possessing sovereignty. What about the emergence of a ripe nation that did not have any political organization, military structures, or experience of self-rule before? The rise of Ukraine was one of the most stunning phenomena of this kind, but it has not been studied in the strategic context. What were the agents that created it? Who were the actors? Did they have any strategy and control over Ukraine’s emergence or were they merely hurled along by the whirlwind of chance? The answers to these questions remind us of Europe’s past in thinking over the present and future.

No Ukraine existed in any form, neither as a nation, an ethnic-political entity with territorial sovereignty, nor a concept in the thoughts and actions of rulers and military leaders until the call of history came at the turn of the 16th to the 17th centuries. It was a call that combined particular conditions and urges of the civilizational upheaval in the Early Modern Period. The military revolution, the process of the social and political changes interacting with the transformation of warfare due to the spread of firearms and the growth of special military organization, was one of the principal drivers of this upheaval. The new epoch brought about a new political and military vision. Ukraine emerged first as a complex of strategies, then as a geopolitical concept, and then as a proto-nation. However, the upheaval witnessed not only the beginning of the oncoming epoch but also the closing of the preceding one.

*I. CIVIL WARS, THE RECEDING OF LATE MEDIEVAL
AND THE EMERGENCE OF EARLY MODERN STRATEGIES.*

The Late Medieval Epoch in Eastern Europe shut down with the flurry of civil wars that swept across the subcontinent from its south to the north. They were disguised in the Medieval wrappers of dynastic quarrels but, nevertheless, they were full-scale civil wars that dramatically changed the states and societies involved. The upsurge of civil war in Eastern Europe and adjacent Asia Minor and Scandinavia started with the Ottoman Interregnum in 1402 to 1413 and continued with the Disintegration of the Golden Horde (also the Ulus Jochi and Kipchak Khanate) in 1419 to 1437. The latter event entwined with the Dynastic War in the Grand Principality of Moscow and Vladimir (historiographical Muscovy) from 1425 to 1450 and the Dynastic War in the Grand Principality of Lithuania and Rus (historiographical Lithuania) from 1432 to 1440. The civil war between the theocratic government of the Teutonic Order and the secular social estates of its state, *Ordenstaat*, continued from 1454 to 1466. The estates allied with the

Kingdom of Poland and the conflict is named in historiography as the Thirteen Years' War. The civil war unfolded as a Swedish rebellion for independence in the United Kingdom of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden (the historiographical Kalmar Union). It remained permanently tepid in the 15th century but had one of its hottest episodes following the Danish assault on Stockholm in 1471. Civil wars put an end to the Medieval military strategies of peoples and states and pushed them towards those that characterized the Early Modern Period.²

The collapse of the Golden Horde's hegemony strategy. The Wild Field.

The civil wars in the Golden Horde, Lithuania, and Muscovy were the most productive for the new strategic situation and emergence of the new strategies. In the 14th century, the rulers of the Golden Horde achieved the subjugation of the peripheral polities to their utmost will by establishing the Golden Horde's military domination in the surrounding area. The hegemonic strategy of the Golden Horde vanished with the decomposition of its mighty military body. It brought about a power vacuum in Eastern Europe,³ transferring the close-end strategies of its states and social groups from the constraints imposed by the position of the Golden Horde's rulers to the open-ended strategies of "nothing is impossible" given accurate planning and adequate accumulation of resources.

The civil war in the Golden Horde of 1419 to 1437 was fought by the territorial clans that reproduced the Golden Horde's central power structures locally. The establishment of the Crimean Khanate by Haci Geray at the beginning of the 1440s and the Kazan Khanate by Ulugh (the Major) Muhammad at the end of the 1430s belonged to this novel strategic vision. Both of them switched to "think global, act local"⁴ paradigm avoiding engaging in war over the Golden Horde's unity. Their projects in the Crimean and Kazan Khanates developed spectacularly. Haci Geray and Ulugh Muhammad's focus on the local khanates in the opposite, south-western and north-eastern corners of the former Golden Horde's area manifested the new strategies of the post-Mongolian social-military groups and confirmed that a new strategic epoch was coming to the southern half of Eastern Europe. The civil war transformed the Golden Horde into a pack of sovereign entities, an abnormal arrangement for the Western Eurasian

2 The current author describes the strategic situation in the 15th century according to his work, *War on the Eve of Nations*, and avoids further references to it and its sources here.

3 The current author is obliged to Brian L. Davies for the "vacuum of domination" concept that is explicit in his work *Warfare, State and Society on the Black Sea Steppe*.

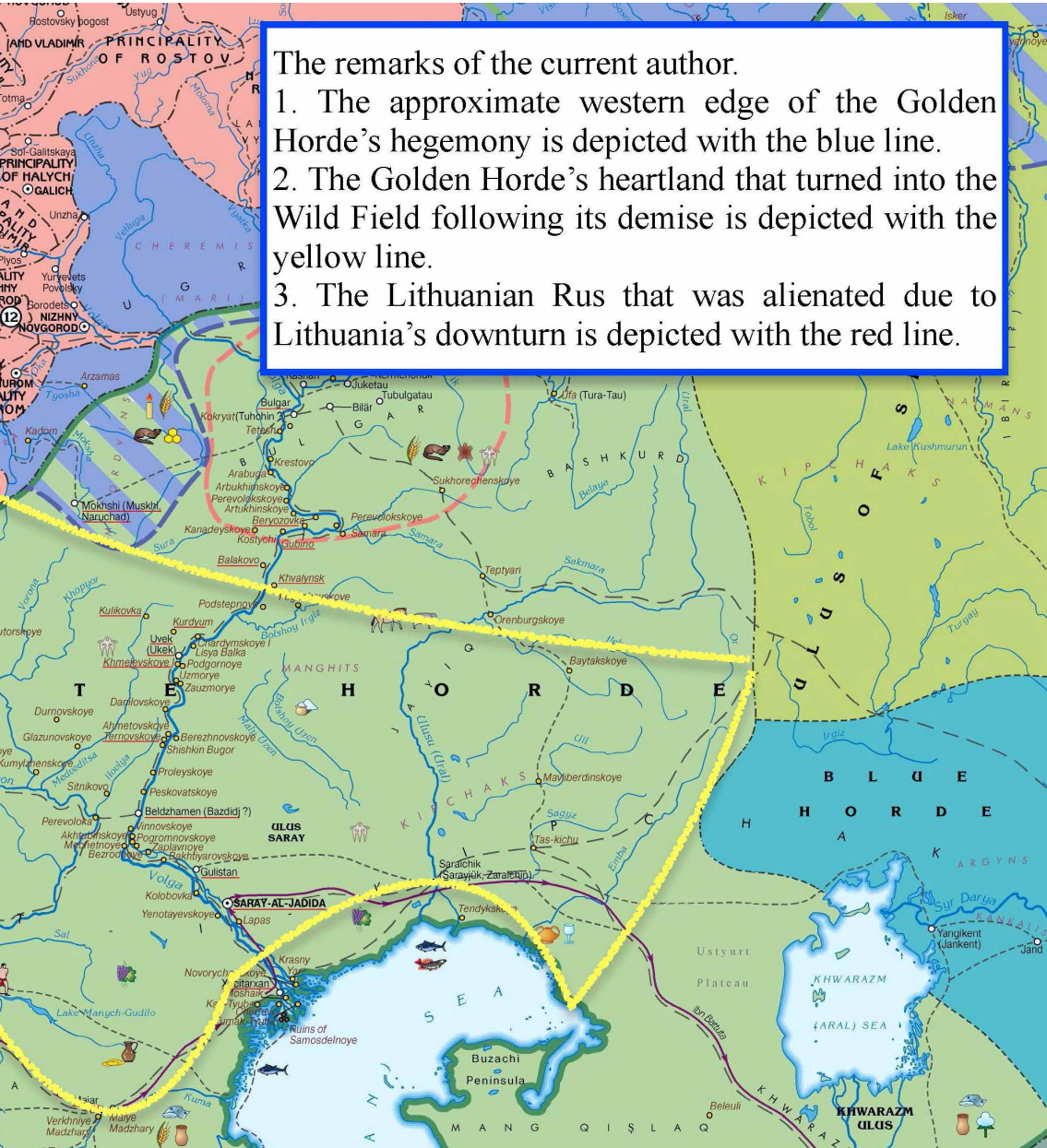
4 A phrase from Akio Morita, Sony's co-founder.



Map 1. The collapse of the Golden Horde and downturn of Lithuania. The background map “The heyday of the White Horde under Uzbeg Khan. 1312–1341,” by Andrey Astaykin, is reproduced by his courtesy. *Atlas Tartarica*, Kazan, Moscow, and Saint-Petersburg, Intergroup, 2020, pp. 222–23. The remarks of the current author.

The remarks of the current author.

1. The approximate western edge of the Golden Horde's hegemony is depicted with the blue line.
2. The Golden Horde's heartland that turned into the Wild Field following its demise is depicted with the yellow line.
3. The Lithuanian Rus that was alienated due to Lithuania's downturn is depicted with the red line.



steppes. These included Astrakhan, Crimean, Kazan, and Siberian Khanates, and the Grand Horde (*Ulug Orda*), the principal Golden Horde's successor. Its confrontation with the Crimean Khanate followed in the last third of the 15th century. The Grand Horde declined rapidly and ultimately merged with the Crimean Khanate in 1501 to 1502. The Grand Horde's western nomadic entities, *uluses* were herded by the Crimeans inside the Crimean Peninsula and the Black Sea steppes close to it, while its eastern *uluses* comprised the self-styled Nogay Horde. The Grand Horde's collapse meant that the post-Mongolian hegemony over Eastern Europe ceased to exist.

The Golden Horde's successors shrank to the East-European periphery of the Black Sea, Azov Sea, and Caspian Sea coastal steppes, and forest steppes between the river Volga and Ural Mountains. Despite being the strong regional powers, they were dwarfs compared with the Golden Horde's waned might. The former nomadic heartland of the Golden Horde stretched from the Middle Dniester in the north-west to Middle Volga in the north-east, to the Black Sea, Azov Sea, Caspian Sea and the Caucasus in the south. In the Golden Horde's hegemonic age, it was packed with the roaming *uluses*, spotted with their hibernation stations, traversed by the caravan roads, and linked by the commercial towns. Now it became practically a desert, a no man's land. Achieving the name the Wild Field, (*Dzikie Pola* in Polish, *Dikoye Pole* in Russian, *Dike Pole* in Ukrainian), it became the lodestone of the strategic gravitation that reshaped Eastern Europe.⁵

The Crimean Predation strategy.

The memory of the Golden Horde's hegemony motivated some of its successor states' ambitions to declare their superiority over their neighboring non-successor polities and demanding that they submit in territorial disputes, deliver a tribute, and assume a humble role in diplomatic relations. The Grand Horde, Crimean and Kazan Khanates displayed these ambitions but after the demise of the former caused by the Crimean Khanate and Muscovy in the last two decades of the 15th century and the subjugation of the latter by Muscovy in 1487, they fell out of the game. The Golden Horde's strategic succession was arrogated by the Crimean Khanate. However, it was not able to follow the Golden Horde's hegemonic strategy due to its incomparably lower resources, absence of clear

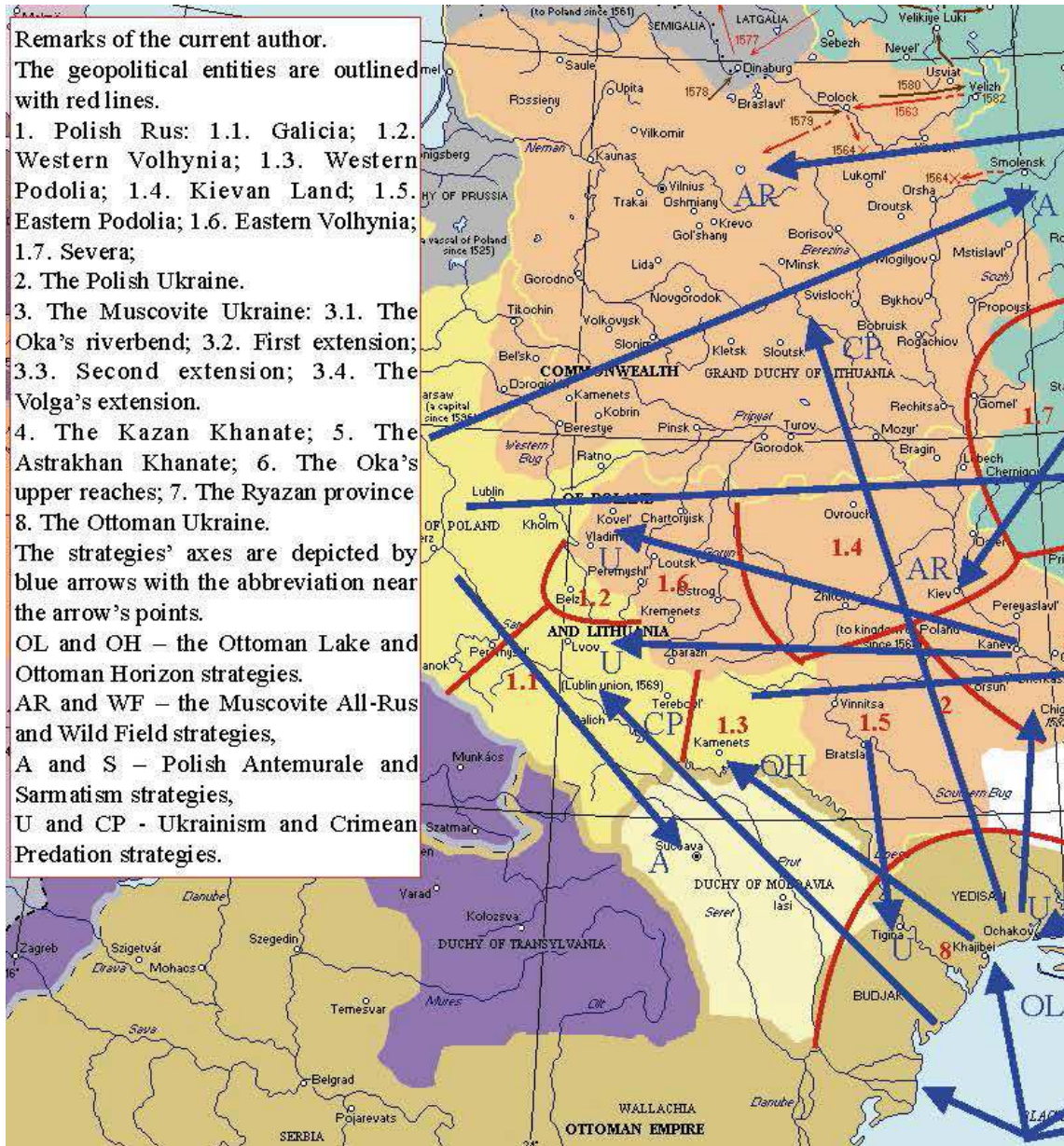
5 The geographical denomination "Wild Field" or "Wild Steppe" first appeared in *The Disturbed State of the Russian Realm* by Conrad Bussov, a Saxonian mercenary in the Muscovite service, who authored it in the 1610s.

military superiority over its neighboring states, its peripheral position to the former Golden Horde's steppe heartland, and the deterioration of its status after its submission to the Ottoman Empire in the late 1470s. The Crimean khan Mengli I Geray was the transitional figure who employed the Golden Horde's hegemonic strategy while looking for something new. He devastated Lithuania for twenty-five years after the sacking of Kiev⁶ in 1482 and brought his raiders to the Baltic in 1500. However, he was not able to break Lithuania completely. The Crimeans assisted the Moldavians in destroying the Polish army in Kozmin Forest in Bukovina in 1497, looted Galicia and Lesser Poland, and raided across Poland to Prussia but they did not deter Poland from slowly merging with Lithuania. The desperate Lithuanian victory of Prince Mikhail Glinisky (Michał Gliniński) at Kletsk (Kleck) in 1506 turned the tide for the Lithuanian recovery. Glinisky revealed the weak point of the Crimean operational pattern, the base camp from which the Crimeans ravaged the surrounding territory and where they collected their spoil and captives. Normally the Lithuanians opposed the Tatars defensively distributing their forces over the fortified places. Glinisky collected them together and attacked the Crimean base camp. Besides the gentry levy he aptly deployed the mercenary shock cavalry and infantry with firearms in wagon-camp. Glinisky smashed the Crimeans between their shock and fire. After the battle of Kletsk, the Golden Horde's hegemonic strategy no longer worked.

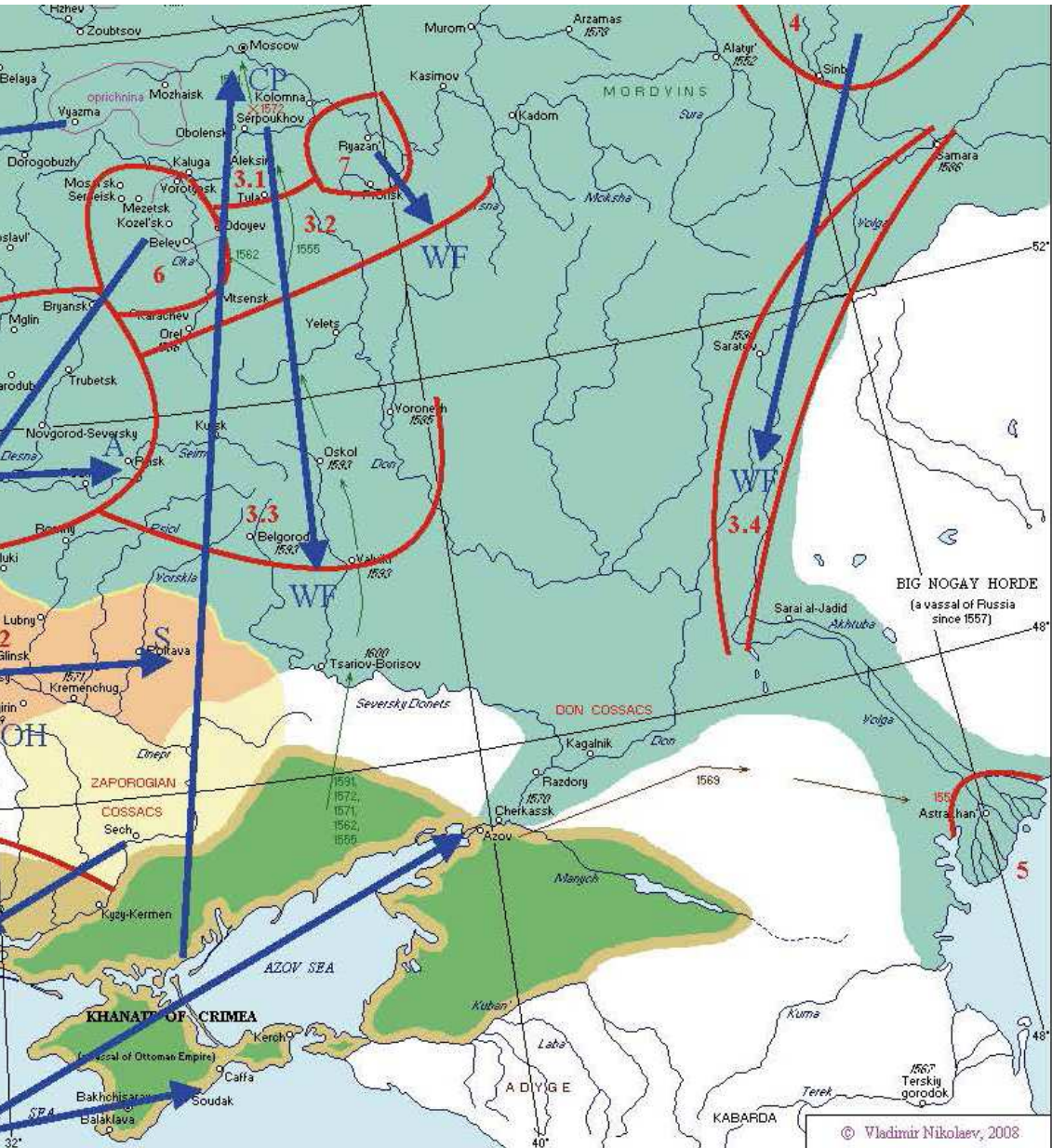
Following their negative experience, the rulers of the Crimean Khanate elaborated a new strategy which had different objectives, principles and means. Its inception was bound with the rearrangement of the western and central Wild Field by Khan Mengli Geray in the 1590s, and it matured with the complex of social and military reforms that Khan Sahib I Geray carried out in the 1530s to the 1540s.⁷ Mengli Geray structured the Wild Field into four radiating sections, controlled by the raiding hubs at its sea edge. In the Wild Field's west was the Bucak Steppe, close to Akkerman (Belgorod, Cetatea Alba), the port fortress at the Dniester mouth. In the Wild Field's middle was the port fortress Ochakov (Ochakiv, Ozü-Kale) at the rivers Dnieper's and Southern Bug's joint gulf and the fortress Perekop (Or-Kapu) on the isthmus connecting the Crimean Peninsula to the mainland. In the Wild Field's east was Azov (Azak, Tana) at the mouth

6 It is Kyiv now. The current author sticks to the traditional Anglophone historiographical spelling.

7 The current author describes the military changes and social transformation in the 16th century according to his essay "Quo Vadis? The Military Revolution in Eastern Europe," and avoids further references to it and its sources.



Map 2. Strategies in Eastern Europe, 16th century. The background map “East Europe in the Second Half of the 16th century” by Vladimir V. Nikolaev is reproduced by his courtesy, <https://historyatlas.ru>. The remarks of the current author.



of the river Don in the Azov Sea. Mengli Geray's sections of the Wild Field were interconnected by the smaller forts at the communication's bottlenecks such as the crossings of the large rivers, like the Dnieper, marching watersheds, etc. Controlling them the khan was able to manoeuvre his forces in the steppe, strike in whatever direction he planned, and fall back to them in case some army dared to move across the Wild Field's vastness. The Wild Field's strip along the Northern Black Sea coast was the territory used to accommodate the allied nomadic *uluses* that the Crimean khans increasingly imported from the Nogay Horde.

Mengli Geray's rearrangement of the Wild Field turned it into the launchpad of Crimean power projection and the defensive damper which was insurmountable to the khanate's enemies besides the nomadic hordes bursting from the east, over the river Volga. The Crimean Khanate looked to control the crossing of the Volga as well but failed due to the Muscovite contender. The new Crimean strategy did not require East-European hegemony or political domination over the neighboring states, but required situational military superiority to gain human captives, spoil, and tribute, and prevent the victims from daring to seek revenge. The kind of balance between the capabilities of the main East-European contenders, Poland, Muscovy, and later the Ottomans, was the preferable pattern for this strategy and the Crimea did its best to maintain it. It was a strategy of predation. In the 1530s to the 1540s, Khan Sahib I Geray finished the transformation of the Crimean society of nomadic pastoralists into a society of military settlers dedicated to war with an economy based on the slave trade, contributions, and Ottoman subsidies for military service. It was the social ground of the Crimean Predation strategy, its center of gravity and economic basis. The mobilization, structure, weaponry, tactics and operational planning of the Crimean army, and the political organization of the khanate were transformed accordingly. The rule of the khan was strengthened, the clan frame of the khanate was formalized and subdued to him, the clan militia became more disciplined and the standing core of the army, khan's household cavalry and infantry with firearms was established. It was not a structure for the occasional trans-border pillage but for large long-range operations.

The Ottoman Lake strategy.

The Northern Black Sea coast became the main area of Ottoman expansion, another strategy which was emboldened by the collapse of the Golden Horde. Following their landing in the Crimean Peninsula in 1475, the Ottoman am-

phibious forces under Gedik Ahmed Pasha captured Kaffa and other Genovese colonies on the peninsula's southern coast, including the principality of Theodoro (Mangup) in the Crimean hinterland, and Azov at the mouth of the river Don in the Azov Sea. The Ottomans launched this expedition not only because they mastered the new amphibious tactics that provided them with long-range seaborn operational capabilities,⁸ but the Ottomans carefully tested if the former hegemony of the Golden Horde was guarded by the Grand Horde. They avoided confronting its khan Ahmed when he invaded Crimea in 1476 and placed Janibek, his son or nephew, to govern it. The Ottomans soon found that Ahmed was unable to maintain control over Crimea against the opposition of the Crimean Tatar clans and the sabotage of Hacı Geray's sons. In 1478, Sultan Mehmed II Fatih, the Conqueror, released one of them, Mengli Geray from exile and appointed him the khan of the Crimea. The experiment ran smoothly providing the Ottomans with their most adamant ally for the next three hundred years and inspiring their strategic conclusions in the Northern Black Sea region.

One of them was evident. If the Grand Horde had been unable to maintain its sovereignty over the Crimea, it would have ceded all other coastal locations to which the Ottomans might have projected their power amphibiously. In 1484, Sultan Bayezid II launched the joint operation of the Ottoman overland and amphibious forces and captured the fortresses of Akkerman at the Dniester's mouth and Chilia (Kiliia, Kili) at the Danube's delta then held by Moldavia. The Ottomans looked to seal the estuaries of the major rivers flowing into the Black Sea with their fortress towns turning it into the Ottoman Lake.⁹ The Ottoman Lake strategy was an affiliate of the "Ottoman World," a construction with its particular geopolitical vision, military structures, political constitution and social regime that had been in the making since the middle of the 15th century.¹⁰ The Mediterranean and Hungarian strategic obsessions were its feature and the Hapsburgs soared as the arch-enemies in the Ottoman World strategy. This strategy belonged to the Ottoman social groups and leadership of the "classic

8 The current author describes amphibious warfare in the 15th and 16th centuries according to his essays "A True Beast of Land and Water" and "Albuquerque at Malacca, 1511; Yermak in Siberia, 1582," and avoids further references to the essays and their sources here.

9 The "Ottoman Lake" is well-established strategic definition, see: KOŁODZIEJCZYK, "Inner Lake or Frontier?" KORTEPETER, "Ottoman Imperial Policy;" OSTAPCHUK, "The Human Landscape;" PILAT, "Dynastic Conflicts, Alliances."

10 The "Ottoman World" is a historiographical cliché that suits well as a label for this strategy. See for example: GOFFMAN, *The Ottoman Empire*; KÁRMAN and PÁUN, *Europe and the "Ottoman World"*; WOODHEAD, *The Ottoman World*.

age,” the provincial *timariot* military class receiving rent from the peasantry organized in *chift-hane* household farms, and the palace slave *kapıkulu* troops, janissary infantry and *sipahi* cavalry. The former presented the mailed cavalry mass of the Ottoman army, and the latter was its professional core adept with firearms and tactics revolving around the wagon-camp, *tabur*. The officeholders belonging to the same *kapıkulu* class became the Ottoman strategists. Their career was based on palace education and sultans’ favoritism. It did not provide them with an alternative strategic vision outside the Ottoman World strategy.

There was nothing gorgeous for the Ottoman World strategy in the south of Eastern Europe, no West-European Renaissance, Arabian Islamic heritage, Catholic ecumenism, and Byzantine-Roman legacy, the entities with which the “classic” Ottomans competed and the values for which they fought. The Northern Black Sea steppes had neither the agricultural lands and peasants to spread the “classic” Ottoman social constitution nor slaves to recruit the *kapıkulu* class. They were far away from the Ottoman World strategy’s center of gravity, the “classic” social-military groups in Western Anatolia and the Balkans. The Ottoman Lake strategy remained a technical geopolitical solution, an outcast of the Ottoman World strategy. All of the valuable Black Sea coastal and close inland riverine locations were taken over by the Ottomans. On capturing them, the Ottomans relaxed. They bestowed the Wild Field to the Crimeans. The Ottoman Lake and Crimean Predation strategies did not contradict each other. Both of them exploited Eastern Europe’s vacuum of domination which was produced by the collapse of the Golden Horde and aggravated by the downturn of Lithuania.

The zone transitoire.

Before its Dynastic War in 1432 to 1440, Lithuania was the mightiest state of Eastern Europe alongside its hegemon, the Golden Horde. Utilizing the Golden Horde’s protection in exchange for disciplining and tributing Ruthenians,¹¹ Lithuanian rulers collected most of the pre-Mongolian Rus while always recognizing the superior sovereignty of the Golden Horde. Lithuania annexed all of Western and most of South-Western Rus,¹² besides Galicia (Halychyna) and Western Volhynia (Volyn) which had belonged to Poland since the second third

11 “The Ruthenians” is the Latinized historiographic denomination for the East Slavic people within the Lithuanian and Polish states to differentiate them from the Russians of Muscovy.

12 This is the historiographical construction for the territories of Rus under Polish and Lithuanian control, while the Western Rus composes present-day Belarus and South-Western Rus is mostly within present-day Ukraine.



Fig. 1. The clash at the river Vorskla between the Lithuanian wagon-camp equipped with early firearms of Grand Prince Vitovt and the Golden Horde's mounted bowmen of Emir Edigu in 1399 became the strategic event that burst open the south of Eastern Europe to transformation. *The Russian Illustrated Anthological Chronicle, the Second Osterman's Volume*, Moscow, the 16th c. The library of the Russian Academy of Sciences, JI. 614. Courtesy of Runivers, Russia, www.runivers.ru

of the 14th century. Under Lithuanian domination, Western Rus and South-Western Rus had a spectacular revival in the last third of the 14th to the first decades of the 15th centuries. The actual boundary of Lithuania moved south to the upper Dniester and upper Southern Bug, incorporating all of Podolia and the Kievan Land on the Middle Dnieper's right bank, and the river Sula incorporating all of Severa (Siveria), an ancient territory on the Middle Dnieper's left bank. Lithuania and the Golden Horde developed some kind of a symbiosis sharing the common interests and mutual influence. The emigration of the Golden Horde's khan Tokhtamysh to Lithuania in 1398 was the summit of this symbiosis. The collapse of the Lithuanian grand prince Vitovt (Witold, Vytautas) at the hands of Emir Edigu (Yedigey) in the battle at the river Vorskla in 1399 while attempting to restore Tokhtamysh manifested its turn to decline.

The Lithuanian Dynastic War was an open-stage civil war in which the intervention of foreigners prevailed over the efforts of the domestic parties. The Golden Horde became the most important interventionist power together with the Polish Kingdom. The Lithuanian Dynastic War was fought over Lithuania's structure of power, positions of the different power groups, and international strategy. Although its parties were ethnically and religiously mixed, their split looked clear-cut. The party of Lithuania proper¹³ relied on the Lithuanian Catholics and promoted the merger of Lithuania with Poland by implanting the Polish social constitution and political structures. The opposite party of Lithuanian Rus relied on the Orthodox Ruthenian population of Lithuania. It promoted Lithuanian independence and separation from Poland with the preservation of the native social constitution and political structures. The Polish interventionists supported the "Lithuanian" party, and the Golden Horde interventionists supported the "Ruthenian" one. The Golden Horde forces, first under Ulugh Muhammad at the river Murafa in 1432 and then under Sayid Ahmed at the location of Krasnopol (Krasnopil) in 1438 inflicted severe defeats on the Polish interventionists. But they were unable to prevent the Polish corps from destroying the troops of Lithuanian Rus in the battle of Wilkomierz in 1435. The latter became decisive. Svidrigailo (Świdrygiełło), the Lithuanian grand prince according to the "Ruthenian" version, succumbed. Sigismund (Zygmunt) Kejstutowicz, the grand prince according to the "Lithuanian" version, triumphed, although only to be assassinated by the Orthodox Princes Czartoryski in a dashing assault on his residence in the Troki island castle in March 1440.

Being deprived of the clear victory for one of the civil war's parties, Lith-

13 Lithuania proper is the current author's definition of the ethnically Lithuanian territory of Lithuania.

uania straggled behind. The country was arrogated by the group of oligarchs that walked the middle way. They divided it between Lithuania proper under the control of the Lithuanian Catholic administrative magnates who presided over the offices of the whole realm, and Ruthenian Orthodox princely magnates who took over the Lithuanian Western and South-Western Rus. The Ruthenian Orthodox magnates did not have an access to the central offices in Lithuania but enjoyed hereditary territorial possessions with some sovereignty. The bipartisan political arrangement was the center of gravity of the Lithuanian survivalist strategy that reigned after the civil war. The Polish annexation of Western Podolia utilized the Lithuanian weakness in the 1430s and exemplified Lithuania's sharp strategic decline. The Ruthenian princely magnates continued allying with the Golden Horde's fragments, first the horde of Sayid Ahmed and then the Crimean Khanate of Haci Geray, but the Lithuanian administrative magnates firmly sided with Poland. After the Dynastic War, the Lithuanian social, political, and military structure solidified until the early 1480s, while its neighbors, Poland, Muscovy, and the Crimean Khanate changed feverishly. The domination of the Polish and Tatar interventionists in the Lithuanian Dynastic War blocked the development of the domestic military and political structures that civil wars often provided. The Lithuanian paralysis became the second critical factor causing the vacuum of domination in Eastern Europe, after the segmentation of the Golden Horde and the shrinking of its successors to its former heartland's periphery.

The Golden Horde's successors supported Lithuanian independence against the Polish grab but they lost at the beginning of the 1480s when the Polish king and Lithuanian grand prince Casimir IV purged the oppositional Ruthenian magnates and appointed to the offices in Lithuanian Rus his loyal Catholic Lithuanians. The devastation of Lithuanian Rus constituted the Crimean reaction to the change in the balance of power between the Lithuanian parties. It looked fatal for Lithuania as it was hit very hard. Its southern provinces, Eastern Podolia and Kievan Land south of Kiev actually ceased to exist, all of their villages and towns were repeatedly sacked and burned, and perished, and only a few forts like Kaniv, Cherkasy, and Bratslav (Braclaw) revived after being destroyed, and Kiev was rebuilt as a small borderland fort. It was a desolated frontier while the real border of Lithuania rolled two to three hundred kilometers north where the population under Lithuanian authority clung to the fringe of Polesie, the Woodland, a giant region of forests, rivers, and swamps expanding north of Kiev and Lutsk, the capital of Eastern Volhynia. Kiev became the ultimate southern point of settled lands in Lithuanian Rus, while Eastern Volhynia became the Lithuanian stronghold against the Crimean onslaught, the desperate prey of Crimean predation and a bloody battlefield. After the Lithuanian symbiosis with the

Golden Horde fell apart, Lithuania lost hold of the strategy that had provided its ascension and greatness. Its very survival was jeopardized.

The large territories which were ruled by Lithuania, its Western Rus and South-Western Rus, became available for takeover, and Lithuania as a whole seemed ready to be grabbed. Now all of the southern half of Eastern Europe, uniting the former heartland of the Golden Horde and Lithuania's Rus and stretching from Polesie, and the river Oka in the north to the subcontinent's natural limits of the Black and Azov Seas and Caucasus in the south, were available to the most daring, skillful and lucky strategists. It was the transitional zone, the giant reservoir of opportunities for territorial aggregation, investment and extraction of resources, and social and military experimenting. It also became the area of strategic engagements for the East-European contenders to clash with one another over military superiority and political domination, and perhaps hegemony over the subcontinent. It was this perspective that brought about imperial Poland and Muscovy, fed the Ottoman Empire's and Swedish expansionist ambitions and inspired Ukraine's emergence. It was the terrain on which the military efforts of the consolidating nations of Eastern Europe were projected and most of the new fighting practices learned. The military changes launched the new social structures, political institutions and strategic patterns. In Eastern Europe, the competition between the states, their emergence and survival significantly depended on their ability to learn and master innovations that sprang up in the *zone transitoire*.

The Antemurale Christianitatis strategy of Poland.

The transitional zone that comprised most of Eastern Europe following the melting away of the Golden Horde's hegemony and the Lithuanian downturn set the stage for Poland's and Muscovy's ambitions. Poland and Muscovy were the fresh centres of military vigour adjacent to the transitional zone, respectively, its north-western and north-eastern sections. In the second third of the 15th century, Poland mostly completed its preceding strategy of unification of the ethnic Polish lands creating a state with a huge economic, demographic, and military potential that needed a national myth and strategy to be employed. During the civil war between the Teutonic Order's theocratic government and secular estates in 1454 to 1466, Poland intervened on the side of the latter regaining the former Polish lands at the Baltic and vassalizing the stump of the Teutonic Order in Prussia. The Polish strategic potential became free for another commitment.

While opposing the Teutonic Order, the Poles did not miss the strategic opportunities that the vacuum of domination in Eastern Europe proposed to them

in the subcontinent's gaping *zone transitoire*. First, they wrestled over Galicia and Western Volhynia which were a part of the Golden Horde's Rus dominion, the Grand Principality of Galicia and Volhynia, in the second third of the 14th century while the Golden Horde was engulfed by succession troubles. The acquisition created Polish Rus. Second, the Poles utilized Lithuania's inner instability imposing the Catholic religion on its pagan population and concluding with it the Unia of Krewo (Kreva) in 1385 that declared the merger of Lithuania to Poland. Third, the reforms of Casimir III and Louis I of the Anjou dynasty transformed the Polish nobility, consisting of the magnates, *magnateria*, and broad nobility, *szlachta*, into the exclusive social-military group that monopolized the political structures of Poland under the name *Corona Regni Poloniae*. It became the social base and center of gravity of all Poland's strategies until its Partitions and cancellation at the end of the 18th century. And fourth, but not least, opposing the Teutonic Order, the Poles learned a lot from the same Teutons, who were the most technocratic government in Europe.

The Poles adopted the Teutonic dedication to the struggle against the infidels as the strategic imperative. The Poles converted the Lithuanians to Catholicism and arrogantly considered the merger of Lithuania to Poland and the change of the Lithuanian social constitution to the Polish one as a necessity for their souls' salvation. They moved to rebaptize the Orthodox Ruthenians who composed the majority of the Lithuanian population and assimilate their elite. They also looked with disdain on other Orthodox Russians further east, in Muscovy, who took advantage of the same power vacuum in Eastern Europe to subjugate the multiple principalities and republics of North-Eastern Rus and raced into ramshackle Lithuania to tear it apart until the Poles claimed it completely. Poland also turned against the Crimean Khanate which assaulted Lithuania disturbing its reshaping. Poland was alarmed by the Ottomans occupying the West-Northern Black Sea coast and Orthodox Romanians, who were sponsored by Hungary to migrate to the lands between the rivers Prut and Dniester. The migrants ousted the local Golden Horde's lords and established their principality, Moldavia. All these strategic warnings composed the Polish Early Modern strategy of the Christian Bullwark, *Antemurale Christianitatis*. Its ideal objectives consisted of taking over Lithuania, rolling back Muscovy, sealing the Crimea, subjugating Moldavia and throwing the Ottomans back to the sea. The initial Polish experience of the *Antemurale* strategy was more negative than positive. The expeditionary king Władysław III was killed and defeated together with his Crusading retinue and Hungarian army by the Ottomans at Varna in 1444. The grandiose Polish army under King John I Albert (Jan I Olbracht) was destroyed

by the Moldavians with Ottoman and Crimean assistance in the Kozmin Forest in 1497. The Crimeans and Ottomans devastated Galicia and Lesser Poland in 1498 to 1500, and the Muscovites under Prince Daniel Shchenya gained a stunning victory over the Lithuanian army and Polish corps at the river Vedrosha in 1500 capturing the Lithuanian grand hetman Konstanty Ostrogski (Konstantin Ostrozhsy) and grabbing a third of Lithuania.

The *Antemurale* strategy was mostly laid out in preparations for the latter two ventures by the Polish king John I Albert, Lithuanian grand prince Aleksander, and their dominative younger brother Cardinal Frederick. The brothers were inspired by their influential Italian home tutor Filippo Buonaccorsi aka Callimachus. Their operational planning emphasized three objectives. The first was to occupy Moldavia, oust the Ottomans from Chilia and Akkerman, and create the Black Sea coastal foothold to advance into the Balkans, and was assigned to the Poles. The second objective was assigned to the Lithuanians, it consisted of taking over the Black Sea shore from Dniester's mouth to the Crimean isthmus, providing the conditions to overrun the Crimea and occupy its Ottoman southern coast. The third objective was a joint responsibility and concerned the rollback of Muscovy to its position according to the seminal treaty of 1449 between King Casimir IV and Grand Prince Vasily II which claimed the Smolensk principality and petit principalities of the river Oka's upper reaches being the Lithuanian possessions. In 1497 to 1503, the operational design failed but the Poles did not drop the *Antemurale* strategy in the hope of improving their capabilities to move ahead. They thought a lot and realized that the strategy needed its tools, including adequate resource mobilization, a strong army, sharp tactics, an effective operational art and a correct layout of aims.

In the 1490s, the Poles sharpened their military structure of mobilization, operational planning and field command under the office of the grand hetman and established the standing corps of the southern border defence, the *Obrona Potoczna*. They also built up strong provincial levies in the Polish Rus by attracting the *szlachta* from all over Poland and accomplished its hectic fortification. In the first decades of the 15th century, Poland gained some important successes against the Crimeans at Wisniowiec (Vyshnivets) in 1512 under Mikołaj Kamieniecki and the Muscovites at Orsha (Orsza) in 1514 under Konstanty Ostrogski. The Poles had Lithuanian support in the first case and supported the Lithuanians in the second. Kamieniecki and Ostrogski elaborated on the *Old Polish* tactic, the deployment of assault cavalry and infantry with firearms in the wagon camp against the Crimean and Muscovite light and mailed horse. It became the tactical basis of the *Antemurale* strategy. The *Lwów Rule*, an operational



Fig. 2. Filippo Buonaccorsi aka Callimachus, a Jagellonian home tutor, carved and glued the Polish *Antemurale* strategy for his royal pupils. A fragment of the memorial plaque in the Dominican Church, Cracow, Poland. A photo by Ludwig Schneider. CC BY 3.0, Wikicommons.

design combining the border defence corps, provincial levies, and fortresses in depth was introduced by the Polish *Sejm* in 1520. It underlay the southward defensive vision of the *Antemurale* strategy. In 1531 and 1535, the Polish army under Grand Hetman Jan Amor Tarnowski ventured to Moldavia and Western Rus where he gained major victories in the respective battle of Obertyn against the Moldavians and the taking of Starodub from the Muscovites. Tarnowski was a profound military thinker and his ventures underlined two external axes of the *Antemurale* strategy, to Western Rus and Moldavia, while the merger of Lithuania was its main internal commitments. However, neither the *Lwów Rule* nor Tarnowski's discourse concerned the southern part of Lithuanian Rus and the frontal section of the Wild Field, the territory where Ukraine was already embryonic.

The All-Rus strategy of Muscovy.

The Muscovite Dynastic War in 1425 to 1450 was overly destructive and at the same time, it demonstrated some maturity on the part of Muscovy and the completion of its initial strategy of emergence. Its pinnacle was the control over the legacy of the Grand Principality of Vladimir, the senior seat in the North-Eastern Rus. Control over it had four strategic consequences. First, the possession of the Vladimir Grand Principality's seat upgraded the Muscovite princes to the level by which only the Golden Horde was their overlord. Second, they secured control over the resources of North-Eastern Rus' most populated and best-protected heartland. Third, they obtained upper sovereign claims over two other grand principalities of North-Eastern Rus, Tver and Ryazan, and the Republic of Novgorod, the richest of the post-Rus states. Fourth, the seat of the Vladimir Grand Principality had some sovereign claims over the lands of pre-Mongolian Rus that were merged with Lithuania and annexed by Poland. The claims were provided by either the Muscovite princes' seniority in the Rurikid dynastic count or as a Mongolian favour to their ancestors. It pushed ahead the formation of the new Muscovite strategy.

The Dynastic War was fought between two branches of the Muscovite Dynasty. The Golden Horde intervened in it as well as the Novgorod Republic, Tver Grand Principality, and Lithuania. The Muscovite Dynastic War was fought mainly by the domestic forces, and some important innovations were implemented by its victor, Grand Prince Vasily II the Blind. The transformation of his household, a mixture of administrators, political allies, and hiring magnates with their bands into the household cavalry regiment was one of them.

And the layout of the new Muscovite strategy was another. It was the strategy of All-Rus, claiming Muscovite sovereignty over all of pre-Mongolian Rus. The grand prince's household cavalry became its main tool. The implementation of the new strategy started with the subordination of the Novgorod Republic following Muscovy's landslide victory at Rusa in 1456. Muscovy exploited its strategic superiority establishing its direct rule over all of North-Eastern Rus. The Novgorodian social constitution and its military structures were destroyed. A novel initiative was introduced, with the gentry serving for land allotment, *pomestje* and being organized in territorial cavalry companies. The new social group merged with the traditional martial estate of the hereditary landowners composing the Muscovite territorial nobility, the social-military group that Richard Hellie calls the middle service class.¹⁴ It became the mobilizational base of the Muscovite army, the social foundation and center of gravity of the All-Rus strategy which was laid out by Grand Prince Ivan III.

The warfare style of the Muscovite army of the territorial nobility became the tactic and operational planning behind the All-Rus strategy. It consisted of the mailed cavalry professing the attack at home after the bow-shooting and diversionary skirmishing. If a siege against the enemy fortress was planned, the cavalry army was followed by a formidable siege train. The bombardment of the enemy fortress preceded its being stormed by the dismounted cavalrymen, Muscovite universal soldiers. The Muscovite operations explored the enemy's territory using large-scale raids and warfare manoeuvres that might be turned into a decisive clash if the Muscovite commanders believed in their situational superiority. Employing this tactic and operational pattern, the Muscovite armies gained considerable success in the last quarter of the 15th century. Muscovy defended its sovereignty against the Grand Horde between 1470 and 1480. In the 1480s to the 1490s, Muscovy spread its rule over the petit principalities of the river Oka's upper reaches and eastern part of the Smolensk principality around Vyazma. It also annexed Tver Grand Principality. The doctrine of All-Rus was internationally presented by Muscovite diplomacy. The All-Rus strategy became the invariable imperative of Muscovite military planning, build-up, and war.

Muscovy prioritized Western Rus, as it was rich, densely populated, comparatively secure, and religiously and ethnically similar to Muscovy, presenting a fertile ground to expand the Muscovite social constitution. Western Rus became the external axis of the All-Rus strategy. In the 1500s, Muscovy moved on Severa and gained it from Lithuania suppressing the fortresses with its formidable

14 HELLIE, *Enserfment and the Military Change in Muscovy*.

artillery. Muscovy also pressed the Lithuanian Smolensk and Polotsk provinces further west but was stopped by Poland's head-to-head advance due to its *An-temurale* strategy and the intervention of the Baltic Livonian Order under its *landmeister* Wolter von Plettenberg. The *landmeister* was the first Central European strategist who understood the perilous nature of the Muscovite All-Rus strategy for the regional balance. Plettenberg was the first to counter Muscovite ambitions using the imported West-European capabilities. His field artillery, mercenary heavy cavalry and *landsknecht* pike and shot formations dwarfed the Muscovite army at the river Seritsa in August 1501 and equaled it at Lake Smolino in September 1502. The tactic and operational pattern of the Muscovite cavalry army stumbled. The *landmeister* masterminded the undercutting of its modernization by blockading Muscovy's communications with Western Europe preventing it from importing the advanced weaponry and technologies. No other strategic tools were invented to be deployed against the Muscovite All-Rus strategy until the beginning of the 18th century. The Baltic link to Western Europe was recognized as a chokepoint of the All-Rus strategy. The conflict was fought in Pskov Republic, the Muscovite North-Western dominion, and in Livonia,¹⁵ and it supplemented the All-Rus strategy with an auxiliary Baltic axis.

Poland and Lithuania followed Plettenberg's example, deploying the Czech mercenary infantry under its reputed captain Jan Bogumil Čirnin that had managed to keep Smolensk and other East-Lithuanian fortresses in 1501 to 1503 when the Lithuanian army was a wreck. In 1508, the Polish professional troops under Field Hetman Mikołaj Firlej repelled the Muscovite advance from the town of Orsha. At the same time, Ostrogsky suppressed the pro-Muscovy revolt of the Ruthenian magnates under Prince Mikhail Glinsky in Western Rus forcing him to flee. Nevertheless, Smolensk was annexed by Muscovy in three sieges one after another under Grand Prince Vasily III and Glinsky in 1513 to 1514. Following Glinski's advise, Vasily III enlarged his siege train to gain Smolensk. He also first time deployed the infantry with firearms which was the conscripted urban militia. Western Rus, the Muscovite objective, was open to a booming Central Europe where Muscovy fished out the allies to its All-Rus strategy among the Polish antagonists. In September to October 1517, the Muscovites repelled the Lithuanian and Polish advance on Oepochka before moving on to Polotsk in July 1518, acting in concert with Albert of Prussia (Albrecht von Brandenburg-Ansbach), the grand master of the Teutonic Order. Albert launched the *Reiterkrieg*, War of Riders against Poland fearing Polish hegemo-

15 Livonia is Estonia and Latvia nowadays.



Fig. 3. Mikhail Glinsky, a great soldier, mercenary and defector, completed the All-Rus strategy matching his niece Elena to Vasily III. An engraving by Yu. Baranowski after the painting of N. Nevrev. The magazine "Niva", publishing house A.F. Marx, St. Petersburg, Russia, 1888. Runivers' collection, www.runivers.ru.

ny in the same way as Plettenberg feared the Muscovite one. The alliance of the Teutons and Muscovites was supported by the Holy Roman emperor Maximilian I Hapsburg. Poland and Lithuania coped with the challenge by deploying their superior resources. They repelled the Muscovites from Polotsk and bought out Albert by legitimizing his conversion of Teutonic Eastern Prussia to a hereditary dukedom. Some kind of equilibrium between the Muscovite All-Rus and *Antemurale* strategies and capabilities in Western Rus followed.

Vigorously advancing into Western Rus, Muscovy avoided the commitment in the Wild Field keeping it to a tiny strip of borderland along the southern bank of the river Oka's middle range, while its northern bank was the Muscovite shell against the threat from the steppes. It was the terrain where the Muscovites rebuked the first Crimean attacks in 1507 and 1512 when the khanate sided with Poland to oppose the Muscovite All-Rus strategy. The Muscovite design worked well, and Muscovy managed to continue its westward advance while being de-

fensive to the south. Muscovy digested the petit principalities of the Oka's upper reaches and Severa until the 1520s, implementing its administration and social constitution. At the same time, it digested the Ryazan Grand Principality at the Oka's lower reaches depriving its dynastic rulers of their sovereignty. The Muscovy's slowness is explainable by the All-Rus strategy that dictated remaining in stationary defense dealing with the Wild Field to which both Severa and Ryazan Land lay in close proximity. The Wild Field, the depopulated desert of unmanageable scale, mystical peril and daily dangers, was alien to Muscovy in the same way as it was alien to Poland. Both *Antemurale* and All-Rus strategies feared the Wild Field which could become an enemy of doomsday dimensions just as it had once when it produced the Mongols. Similar to Poland, Muscovy kept as far away from the germinating Ukraine as opportunity afforded.

None of the East-European Early Modern strategies that emerged in the last third of the 15th to first third of the 16th centuries treated the enormous *zone transitoire* in the subcontinent's south as some integral entity. All of the emerging states of Eastern Europe, its growing centres of political ambitions and military power were busy elsewhere. Poland viewed the merger of Lithuania and the rollback of Muscovy as being part of its devotion to the defence of Christian Europe. Muscovy moved to resurrect pre-Mongolian Rus and grab Lithuanian Western Rus as its own. Both of them treated Lithuanian Rus as a prospective part of their national territory refusing it any self or distinction. They sought the Wild Field, the former Golden Horde's nomadic heartland, as being too desolated and perilous to enter. Poland and Muscovy feared it and fenced themselves off from it. The Ottoman Empire ecstatically drove to the South-Central Europe and Mediterranean considering the Wild Field as a wasteland of which only the Black Sea and Azov Sea coast had value as the brink of the Ottoman Lake. The Crimean Khanate, a Golden Horde's successor, degraded the Wild Field to the level of a terrain for stalking its northern neighbours. It treated Lithuanian Rus, another part of the *zone transitoire*, as a hunting ground for its predation. The Ukraine, a geopolitical entity, did not exist for them. *Škráina*, as the local tongues called it, constituted the outskirts of nowhere.

II.ŠKRÁINA, THE UKRAINE, UKRAINE. THE STRATEGIC FORMATION.

Muscovy and Poland continued to bully each other over Lithuanian Western Rus with their All-Rus and *Antemurale* strategies until the end of the 1530s when they clashed head-on in the Starodub War. Its outcome manifested a kind of strategic balance between them that could not have been swayed if their con-

test had remained in Lithuanian Western Rus. However, it was not. The war over the East-European *zone transitoire* was multipolar and other powers entered it as guided by their respective strategies. They duly wrecked the scene of the All-Rus versus *Antemurale* duel.

The formation of the Crimean Predation strategy continued in the 1510s when the khanate dropped its quarter-century Muscovite loyalty and switched to pragmatic siding with either Poland and Lithuania or Muscovy depending on its current priorities. In the 16th century, Poland and Lithuania suited it better while Muscovy was an irritant with its eastward ambitions on the Kazan Khanate and Nogay Horde. The Crimeans continued to ravage Polish and Lithuanian Rus for spoil and slaves while turning their hammer strikes against the Muscovite military potential. In 1519, the Crimean raiders under Bahadır Geray inflicted a major defeat on the Polish and Lithuanian forces in Sokal at the border of Galicia and Volhynia spreading havoc over both provinces. Then, the Crimean pendulum swung to Muscovy. In 1521, the joint Crimean and Kazan army under Khans Mehmed I Geray and Sahib Geray broke through the Muscovite defences on the Oka's bank at Kolomna, swept aside the Muscovite duty troops and rushed to Moscow. Moscow held out, but its vicinity was devastated. Mehmed I Geray withdrew fearing the Muscovite reserves, and in 1523 he was killed, together with Bahadır Geray, by the Nogay saboteurs. But the peril of the deep thrust of the Crimeans demanded a more stable and permanent solution. Although the prime responses of Poland and Muscovy were equally conservative, they also paid some attention to the new developments on the frontier.

The cossackdom emerged and alienated.

The inception of Ukraine, the proto-nation in the Early Modern Period, took place in Lithuanian Ukraine, a region that was forming a century after the Crimean devastations of the Kievan Land and Eastern Podolia in the 1480s. Some parts of Polish and Lithuanian Rus were sometimes called *Źkráina* by the local tongues, however, it was not their ethnic or political designation but their geographic feature as being an outskirt. The territory of Ukraine emerged not as the transformation of Polish and Lithuanian Rus but as a novel formation in the “grey zone” between the settled fringe of Polesie and the Wild Field that rolled onto the Northern Black Sea and Azov Sea shores south of the rivers Sula and Upper Southern Bug. Most of the Kievan Land and all of Eastern Podolia composed the “grey zone” which was from two hundred to three hundred kilometers deep. It was devastated by the Crimeans in the 1480s, and when the Lithuanian

authorities turned to restore the provinces in the 1490s, there were no normal troops to garrison their administrative centres. The Lithuanian traditional forces consisted of the gentry levy, urban militia, and magnate bands, none of which the Crimeans spared from destruction. The peasant population to support the gentry and garrisons was then wiped out.

No solution was introduced until the 1490s when the Lithuanian centralization and military reforms launched by Casimir IV bore some fruit. The modification of Lithuania's conservative military arrangement was one of them. The groups of survivors in Eastern Podolia and the Kievan Land belonged to the lower martial estate of the *slugi* that flourished in Eastern Podolia and the Kievan Land under the governance of Prince Olelko (Aleksander) and his son Simeon Olelkovich, Ruthenian Gediminids, in 1442 to 1470. The *slugi* performed service for the land allotments for family cultivation, were subjects of their lord's justice and were non-nobles. They were similar to peasants but with military obligations. The *slugi* composed up to a third of the provinces' male population and most of the militia. They managed to survive due to their fighting skills, their ability to withstand the Crimean depredation, rudimentary command organization and social cohesion.

The *slugi* were experienced warriors and the Lithuanian governors of the Kievan Land and Eastern Podolia started to hire them for the garrison service together with the Tatar migrants. The hirelings adopted the proverbial Tatar name for a free warrior, *kazak* which is spelled cossack today.¹⁶ The resurgence and re-forging of the *slugi* into the cossacks unfolded without any legislation about the latter's social status, it was the tradition and self-assertion which the cossacks and their masters obeyed. The remuneration for the cossack military service was initially different from the *slugi*'s land allotment as it consisted of money and a kind stipend because the farming lands in Eastern Podolia and the Kievan Land did not have any value after being incessantly ravaged by the Tatars. The tribute-exempt status of the cossacks was born from the beginning as a condition of contract between the Lithuanian administrators and Tatar emigree bands.

The *slugi* were processed into the cossacks by the Crimean depredation; it was their mutation period. Unlike the Polish *szlachta* and Ruthenian *boyars*, the cossack social-military group was not restricted by the origin and property census but open to everybody who took military service. The egalitarian and in-

16 The traditional spelling of the "cossack" requires a capital letter as in an ethnic name; the current author uses the first lowercase letter to emphasize the cossacks' nature as a social-military group.

clusivist self-consciousness of the early cossacks became the social foundation on which other pillars of an emerging Ukraine strategy rested. The emergence of the cossackdom¹⁷ was not integrated into some new strategy that the Lithuanian rulers forged after their former design of symbiosis with the Golden Horde collapsed. Instead, Lithuania professed a primitive survivalism, a random heap of giving up to the Polish merging and ad hoc proud stance. Lithuania's strategic chaos caused its bisection and cancellation at Lublin Unia *Sejm* in 1569. The rise of cossackdom was something different.

In 1493, the band of the Ruthenian and Tatar hirelings launched the successful Tatar-style raid to the Crimean forts Ochakov and Tiagin in the Lower Dnieper under the administrator, or *starosta*, of fort Cherkasy Prince Bogdan "Mamay" Glinsky and the Crimean emigree prince Uzdemir. It was the moment when for the first time they were referred to as the cossacks by Khan Mengli Geray. The Cherkasy cossack bands robbed the Muscovite, Moldavian, and Crimean embassies, and merchant caravans. Glinsky was promoted to develop his experience from godforsaken Cherkasy to rich and central Putivl in Severa, however at a bad time. In 1500, Putivl was stormed and annexed by Muscovy and Glinsky perished in Muscovite captivity after being sentenced for his brigandage. The idea, however, survived.

The proto-cossacks stayed low-profile in a few Kievan and East-Podolian castles until Ostap (Yevstafy) Dashkevych was appointed *starosta* of Kaniv in 1508 and Cherkasy in 1514. Being a middle-level Lithuanian commander, Dashkevych was captured by the Muscovites in the battle at Mstislavl in November 1501 and did his time in captivity together with Konstanty Ostrogski. Like Ostrogsky, he entered the Muscovite service and defected in 1508. Ostrogsky acted as patron for his promotion. Kaniv and Cherkasy were small forts surrounded by wilderness, and Dashkevych was short of funds in his forlorn offices. He counted the cossacks of Kaniv and Cherkasy as taxable townfolk distributing lands to them for the family cultivation, fishing and hunting slots as remuneration for their military service. He also paid attention to wildlife exploiters below the Dnieper rapids.

It was a community of hunters and fishers who remained stealthy so as not to flash in the Tatar's eyes. They hid in the impenetrable marches and maze of channels covered with dense bushes and reeds. Saving on travelling from their residence locations in Kaniv and Cherkasy, they arranged the makeshift

17 The current author applies the denomination cossackdom to the totality of the different kinds of cossacks in Lithuanian and Polish Ukraine.

winter lodgings, or *zimovnik*. Dashkevych registered and taxed the vagabonds. He encouraged them to brigandage in the steppes promising protection against the Tatar's revenge for a share of booty. He started to title the vagabonds as Below-the-Rapids, Zaporozhian, cossacks, being non-subjects of Lithuania, to divert accusations of sponsoring their activity. Soon Dashkevych managed to establish a kind of permanent camp, or *kosh*, for the Zaporozhians. He also introduced the handgun to them as a superior weapon for dealing with the Tatar mounted bowmen. Dashkevych gained some recognition from the Crimeans for taking part in their assault on Muscovy. In 1524 he felt himself sufficiently strong to launch the joint riverine and overland expedition to Ochakov together with the Ruthenian magnates under Konstanty Ostrogski. In January 1527, Dashkevych masterfully commanded his cossacks in the battle of Olshanytsia near Kaniv fighting under Ostrogsky. Besides the East-Volhynian *boyar* levy, the Lithuanian army was composed of the Ruthenian magnates' private troops consisting, similarly to Dashkevych's band, of the cossack hirelings. A kind of strategic alliance between the Ruthenian magnates and the cossacks, two consolidating social military groups of Lithuanian Rus' frontier, was in the making.

Dashkevych attacked Ochakov again in 1528 together with another forefather of the cossackdom, Przeclaw Lanckoroński aka the Heartful Pole, the *starosta* of Khmilnyk (Chmielnik) in Western Podolia. Although Dashkevych's and Lanckoroński's cossack organizations were similar, they were also substantially different. Lanckoroński recruited the freeman militia in the Polish Western Podolia where one of the most efficient Polish provincial *shlachta* levies functioned. The cossack bands were subservient to the levy. The local peasantry was rigidly enserfed and forbidden to think about turning to cossacking.¹⁸ Western Podolia, as well as all of the Polish Rus, was a dead-end for the cossackdom because the social niche for the cossacks in the rigid Polish constitution was too restrictive. External expansion from Western Podolia was impossible due to its bordering Moldavia, an Ottoman protectorate. The position of Dashkevych's cossacks, however, was striking different. Dashkevych brought up his cossacks in the Kievan Land which was scarcely populated and lacked a strict social regime. The nobility was almost non-existent there and competition over the military trade was absent. The Lithuanian social constitution was loose, the cossacks were thus free to develop their military organization. Unlike the Lithuanian serf norm, the local peasants were more like military settlers, undivided

18 The current author is obliged by this precise verb to DUNNING, *A Short History of Russia's First Civil War*, 54



Fig. 4. Ostap Dashkevych aimed the strategic emergence of the Ukrainian cossackdom. An imaginary portrait by Jan Matejko, 1874, the Silesian Museum in Katowice, Poland. The public domain, Wikicommons.

from the cossacks. The peasant cossacking admixture to the cossacks was very important because it constituted the mass egalitarian foundation of the Polish Ukraine's strategy when it emerged. The Kievan Land had an open border to the no man's land forest-steppe, which was ripe for expansion. The development of the two initial cossackdoms, Polish and Lithuanian, diverged. Lanckoroński's cossacks remained the recruiting pool for the Polish troops and garrisons, as plain military hirelings, while Dashkevych's cossacks joined the recolonization of the Kievan Land as its main fighting force and developed into a well-shaped social-military group.

In 1535, Dashkevych led a corps of 3,000 cossacks at the Muscovite fortress Starodub which was mine-breached, stormed and sacked under Jan Tarnowski. For his ventures, Dashkevych mobilized bands of the cossacks that increased without any expense. This magic attracted the attention of the cash-strapped King and Grand Prince Sigismund I the Elder. Dashkevych proposed to him to establish a 1,000 to 2,000 cossack militia in the Lithuanian Rus' provinces. Sigismund promoted the plan to the Lithuanian magnate Council, *Rada*, and the *Rada* rejected it based on their fear that the cossackdom might have become a Ruthenian Orthodox military organization allied with the Ruthenian magnates that would have shifted the balance of power in bipartite Lithuania. The king invited Dashkevych to present his ideas at the Polish *Sejm* in Piotrków in 1533. The presentation was applauded but no decisions followed. Dashkevych's proposals were not compatible with the social principle of the *Antemurale* strategy.

The *szlachta* was the only human bulwark of Christianity. No other social groups were permitted to hold this honour and those "schismatic" "mongrel" cossacks in particular. The *Rada* and *Sejm* did not believe in the fighting capabilities of the cossacks and did not want to constitute to royal service a social group of unclear origin and status. Introducing the special taxes that the initiative required was also something they did not want at all. Probably at the moment the conservative Lithuanian magnates and Polish *szlachta* were right, as the cossacks then lacked both the social cohesion and fighting worth for such a grand undertaking. They were not of strategic value. The emerging cossackdom was not integrated into the Polish *Antemurale* strategy which remained unchanged and unchallenged until the 1570s. The cossack's actions were not bridled to the Lithuanian and Polish operational plans and remained instead under the initiative of the local administrators and commanders, and increasingly the self-made leaders of the cossack free bands that coagulated in the fermentation of the colonization and frontier warfare. The bands lacked their strategy only because their clustering was insufficiently dense and permanent but it intensified feverishly.



Fig. 5. Przeclaw_Lanckoroński, a picturesque forerunner of the cossackdom's Polish deadend. An imaginary portrait by Jan Matejko, *The Prussian Homage*, a fragment, 1882, the National Museum in Cracow, Poland. The public domain, Wikicommons.

The magnate-cossack alliance. Pre-strategy of colonization

Until the sharp change came in the balance of forces in the forest steppes of the “grey zone”, agricultural recolonization could not be the common strategy of the Ruthenian elites and people of Lithuanian Rus. The best agricultural lands in the world were in abundance but they were forbidden. It was necessary to push away or as a minimum weaken the Tatar presence for colonization to take root. The distributed defence across the frontier only helped a little bit because its primitive forts lacked firearms and were not in positions to dominate

the terrain but stayed to shelter survivors. Another problem was the harshness of Lithuanian serfdom introduced by Sigismund I's Italian wife, Queen Bona Sforza d'Aragona in 1533 and legislated in the 1549 and 1557. The peasants could neither move outside their lord's holdings nor run their farms as they were deprived of any property rights and bound to till the lord manors, or *folwarks*. The colonization of the new lands could only have been run by the lord-entrepreneurs. Colonization by the run-away serfs was impossible because the Tatars captured or killed everyone outside the castles' protection, and destroyed the peasant communities. Being the mighty social filter, the Tatar depredation allowed the chance of survival only to the social groups which were skilled and determined to fight. Besides, the Tatars were well aware that the deserted buffer territories were their best shield against the vengeful armies of their neighbors. The predatory Tatar strategy of man-hunting cojoined their security strategy.

The situation seemed like a dead-end, and at the same time, it presented an opportunity for the strategic consent of Lithuanian Rus' society. If the lords had provided the necessary armed defence and economic organization for colonization, the peasantry would have entered into it with enthusiasm. Only the magnate lords were able to provide these conditions, as the minor lords did not have the necessary resources. The Lithuanian grand prince and Polish king Sigismund II Augustus granted the giant landholdings in the Kievan Land and Eastern Podolia to the Ruthenian princely magnates attracting them with their private forces, resources and peasants to reconstruct the provinces. Prince Konstanty Wasyl Ostrogski (Konstantin Vasyly Ostrozhsky), Konstanty Ostrogski's son and Jan Tarnowski's son-in-law, was appointed the Kievan governor in 1559. He copied the East-Volhynian castle-based arrangement in the Kievan Land and Eastern Podolia. The Ruthenian princely magnates brought from Eastern Volhynia and Western Rus many of their *slugi* to Kievan and the East-Podolian wilderness arranging them as the cossacks in their private bands. The cossacks became the main manpower to rebuild and garrison the grand prince and magnate's castles. The magnates tamed the self-styled cossacks and went "cossacking" at the head of their bands. The cossacks softened the Crimean military domination in the forest-steppes by randomly attacking the Crimean forts, nomadic stations, and the raiding parties returning from Lithuania and Poland with spoils and slaves. The erosion of the Crimean military domination thus unsealed the frontier for colonization, which established the social alliance between the Lithuanian magnates and cossacks as the new Lithuanian strategy's center of gravity. The cossackdom was bound to colonization through the cossack service to the magnates who controlled the peasant migration.



Fig. 6. Prince Konstanty Wasyl Ostrogski laid out the Lithuanian pre-mortem strategy, the colonization, Orthodoxy, cossackdom. A portrait by Teofil Kopystynsky, 19th c., the Lviv Historical Museum. The public domain, Wikicommons.

Both the authorities and magnates, which was the same in Lithuania, urgently encouraged the cossackdom without much thought about the consequences. At the end of the 1560s, the private troops of the magnates Ostrogskis, Wiśniowieckis, Koreckis numbered around 1,000 cossacks. A similar number was recruited by the provincial governors, fortress castellans, and district administrators. From three to four thousand cossacks composed the garrisons of the frontier forts, such as 250 cossacks living in Cherkasy in 1552, around 60 percent of the town's population, with the same ratio in Vinnytsia (Winnica) and Bratslav. Around 2,000 Zaporozhian cossacks lodged below the Dnieper rapids. All around there were about 10,000 cossacks in the Western and South-Western Rus in the 1570s.¹⁹ The reservoir of cossackdom, the number of the cossacking elements which did not ask for recognition of authorities and magnates made the number ten times higher. They lived among the peasants and townsfolk keeping the cossack way of life, captured virgin lands for their cultivation, hunting and fishing, and fought against the Crimean raiders and ventured occasionally to loot the Crimean nomadic stations. They possessed the firearms and were trained in techniques to counter the Crimean mounted bowmen. They gathered in local bands with elective leaders and were open for hireling service to any paymaster.

In 1563, maverick Ruthenian Prince Dmitry Wiśniowiecki vacated the Muscovite service to make an attempt on the Moldavian seat with his cossack band but was captured by the Moldavians, handed over to the Ottomans and legendary hooked by his rib to a rock over the Bosphorus like a cossack Prometheus. In the spring of 1574, the Moldavian *hospodar* John Voda the Fierce (Ioan Vodă cel Cumplit) destroyed the Ottoman, Bucak Tatar and Wallachian forces near the town of Focșani fighting with the composite army of Moldavian court troops and peasant militia, and Ukrainian cossack mercenaries. In June 1574, the Ottomans managed to capture John Voda whom they torn apart by tying his legs and hands to camels pushed in opposing directions, and his mercenary cossacks whom they impaled. However, supporting John Voda from the sea, in April to June of 1574, the Zaporozhian cossacks attacked the offshore Ottoman marine transports on their way from Kaffa and ravaged the suburbs of Akkerman. The Ottomans were shocked by these extraordinary marine and amphibious assaults because their Ottoman Lake strategy treated the Black Sea as secure waters. Now it was not a "chaste and innocent maiden whom no one could dare to harm."²⁰ The maiden was instead cruelly raped and robbed by the Zaporozhians.

19 PLEWCZYŃSKI, Marek, "Kozacy w walkach z Moskwą," 57–58; ЩЕРБАК, *Українське козацтво*.

20 KORTEPETER, "Ottoman Imperial Policy and the Economy of the Black Sea Region," 109.

Since 1583 the series of the cossack attacks on Moldavia by overland and North-Western Black Sea coast by water looked like a well-coordinated pincer action. It demonstrated that the Ottoman Lake strategy was compromised and some opposite strategy had strengthened to break it.

Ostrogski obtained enormous estates for himself, resettled thousands of the peasant families from his East-Volhynian estates to Eastern Podolia and the Kievan Land and founded the private towns Bila Tserkva on the Dnieper's right bank and Pereiaslav on the left. By the 1590s he had a holding of 1,300 villages, 100 towns and 40 fortresses. Ostrogski's private army numbered around 2,000 men, equal to the royal border defence corps.²¹ The Ostrogskis were probably the wealthiest magnates but they were not alone in this prosperous cohort. In 1620, Prince Jeremi Wiśniowiecki had 230,000 subjects and Prince Stanisław Koniecpolski had 120,000 subjects in their holdings.²² From one point of view these data underline the economic and social potential of the Ruthenian magnates, and from another perspective they demonstrate the success of the colonization. In the middle of the 16th century, there were around 4,400 peasant households in the Kievan Land and Eastern Podolia, and at the end of the first quarter of the 17th century, there were around 92,000 of them. It was a growth of more than twenty-fold in seventy years.²³ By the 1640s, in Eastern Podolia and the Kievan Land respectively, there lived 450,000 to 500,000 and 500,000 to 550,000 men with 300 bigger and middle-size settlements, although a hundred years before only a few thousand inhabitants had been packed in the dozen ramshackle castles there.²⁴

After the recolonization spread in the second half of the 16th century, the name Ukraine received its geographical denomination defining Eastern Podolia and the part of the Kievan Land which were then being colonized. Lithuanian Ukraine became the area distinctive from both the Wild Field, no man's land further south, and Lithuanian and Polish Rus to the north and west, which preserved the denotation Rus.²⁵ It was also called "the Ukraine of Towns". In the middle of the 17th century, there were from 1,000 to 1,200 fort towns across Polish Ukraine which contained up to 20 percent of its population.²⁶ The Polish and Lithuanian territories north and west of the Kievan Land and Eastern Podolia

21 DAVIES, *Warfare, State and Society on the Black Sea Steppe*, 3–4.

22 СМОЛІЙ, СТЕПАНКОВ, *Українська національна революція*, 68.

23 SERCZYK, *Na dalekiej Ukrainie*, 151–52.

24 СМОЛІЙ, СТЕПАНКОВ, *Українська національна революція*, 69.

25 ЛЮБАВСКИЙ, *Обзор истории русской колонизации*, 335.

26 СМОЛІЙ, СТЕПАНКОВ, *Українська національна революція*, 70.

were not addressed as Ukraine until later in the 19th century, and this differentiation is important for strategic studies.²⁷

The Lithuanian colonization had the sprouts of a strategy in formation. It was the strategy to seize the peripheral and transborder territories of the Kievan Land and Eastern Podolia and convert them into the colonized frontier, the Ukraine, with particular new social and military arrangements different from the constitution of the old settled Lithuanian Rus. The Lithuanian interaction with the Tatars was defensive, and the emerging Ukraine changed it to the strategy of offence, the violent enforcement of the territorial niche and military space for colonization. It was a strategy of local actions but without a horizon. Glinsky, Dashkevych, and Ostrogsky's ventures directed its military axis against Ochakov which was a growing Ottoman power hub in the West-Northern Black Sea region. Colonization produced the special composition of the forces, including the pattern of their deployment, the mode and objectives of their operations, their tactical model, fighting technique and an adhesion to particular weaponry, namely handheld firearms. It also created the social forces which were interested in the result of the colonization's unfolding and were involved in its strategic decision-making. The colonization did not become the strategy of Lithuania due to the subsequent annexation of Lithuanian South-Western Rus by Poland according to the Lublin Unia of 1569. The merger of Lithuania to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth²⁸ with the cancellation of its statehood broke the strategic maturing of the colonization.

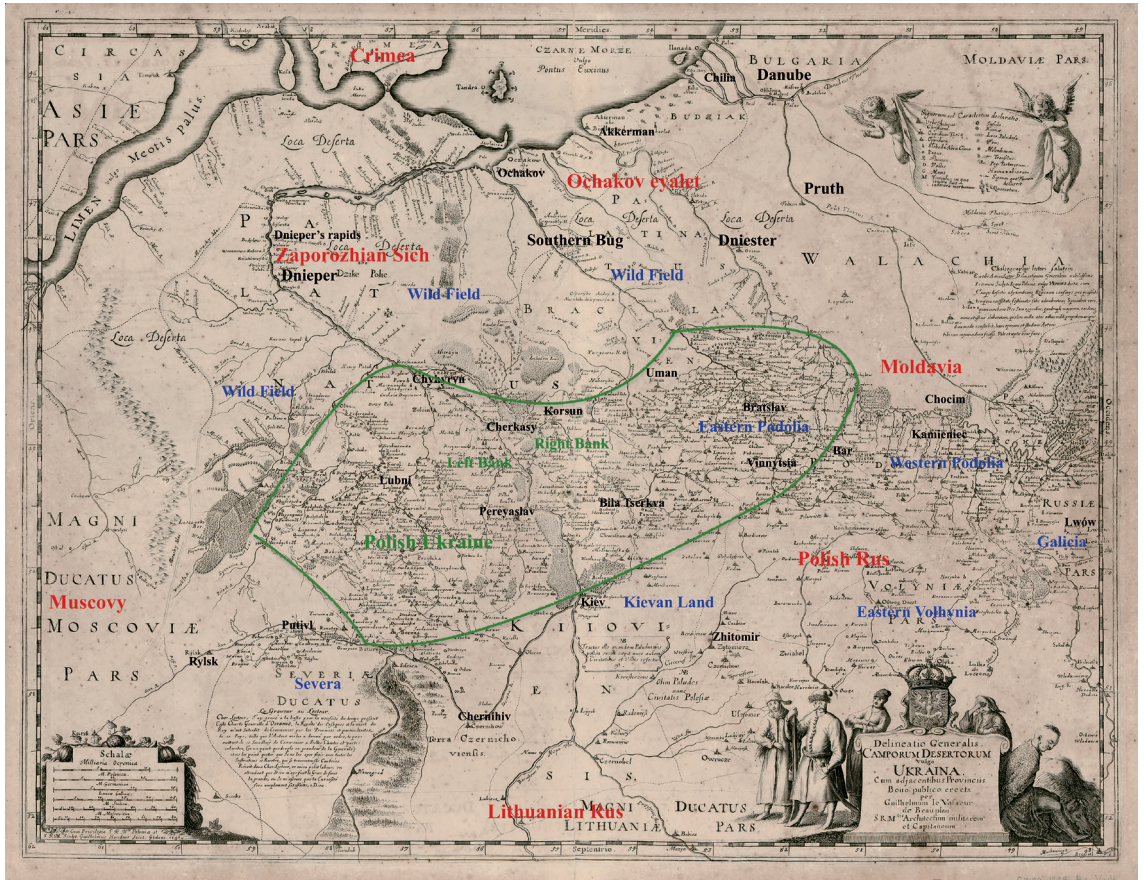
Polish Ukraine and the advance of the Sarmatism strategy.

Sarmatism embodied the ideological and cultural self-consciousness of the Polish nobility in its composition of the low and middle gentry, *szlachta*, and upper magnates, *magnateria*. Sarmatism laid out all the key principles of the Commonwealth's social constitution, political regime, and military arrangements. It is now well-researched and presented to the public as a cultural phenomenon of the Baroque epoch.²⁹ However, Sarmatism also produced a specific strategic vision that is revealed much less often.

27 The historiography normally avoids it; see the bestsellers: PLOKHY, *The Gates of Europe*; PLOKHY, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations*; SNYDER, *Reconstruction of Nations*.

28 The current author uses a shortened form "the Commonwealth" without the definition "Polish-Lithuanian" in this essay to be more concise.

29 See: CYNARSKI, "Sarmatyzm – ideologia i styl życia;" CYNARSKI, "The Shape of Sarmatian Ideology;" ЛЕСКИНЕН, *Мифы и образы Сарматизма*.



Map 3. The Polish Ukraine in the first third of the 17th century. The background map “General Depiction of the Deserted Plains, Commonly Identified as Ukraine, Together with its Neighboring Provinces (Gdansk, Poland, 1648)” by Guillaume Le Vasseur de Beauplan. The map is south-up oriented. The public domain, Wikicommons.

The remarks of the current author.

The Sarmatism strategy emerged in the last third of the 16th century. A concept of the *Rzeczpospolita*, the “Republic of Nobles’s” social constitution and political regime in the Commonwealth was consolidated at the same time. It was closely tied to the *Antemurale* strategy. The Lublin *Sejm* of 1569 witnessed the implementation of the Polish *szlachta*’s program of their self-emancipation before and against the royal power that was promoted by the movement of the Rights’ Execution, *Egzekucja Praw*. However, since the first Free Election of the Polish king, *Wolna Elekcja* in 1573, the group of “new magnates” which

still awaited its students achieved political domination obscuring the *szlachta* “democratic” institutions. Chancellor and Grand Hetman Jan Zamoyski, an outstanding figure of Polish history impersonated the “new magnates.”³⁰ The “new magnates” represented the specific territorial location, position in power and strategic vision that outlined the Sarmatism strategy.

Like Zamoyski they were mostly the scions of the Polish middle *szlachta* resettled to Polish Rus, Galicia, Western Volhynia, and Western Podolia. The successful figures of the Polish migrant *szlachta* formed a group of administrative magnates who increased their wealth and power gaining provincial offices and positions of control over the royal estates. In the first half of the 16th century the new faction of the “administrative magnates” completely took over the provincial offices and military command in Polish Rus. They administered the Polonization and fortification of Polish Rus at the same time as using the provincial offices for familial enrichment. They also subordinated the only Polish standing forces, the corps of the southern border defence to their corporative interests. By the Lublin Unia of 1569, they were ready and eager to take over Lithuanian Rus. The annexation of Lithuanian South-Western Rus to the Polish Crown was the first glimpse of the Sarmatism strategy’s aggressive colonialist stance.³¹ Following the annexation, the augmented Polish Rus contained six provinces, consisting of the former Polish Rus of Galicia, Western Volhynia and Western Podolia, and the former Lithuanian Rus of Eastern Volhynia, Eastern Podolia, and the Kievan Land. After the Deulino Truce of the Commonwealth with Muscovy which was concluded in December 1618, a major part of Severa was annexed to Polish Rus. Lithuanian Ukraine, a colonized annex of former Lithuanian Rus composed Polish Ukraine.

The administrative magnates of Polish Rus moved to the offices in new provinces gaining more wealth and power. Soon they started to cooperate with the local Ruthenian princely magnates who were attracted by the prestige and properties presented to them. The two groups got together and managed to share power in Polish Ukraine. The Polish military shield suited the aggrandisement of the Ruthenian princely magnates’ wealth. A kind of dictatorship that the Polish Rus’ magnates established over the Commonwealth during the later stage

30 For studies on this group concerning Zamoyski, see: BOBICESCU, “Tyranny and colonization,” URBANIAK, *Zamoyszczycy bez Zamoyskiego*. After his death, historiography lost the group’s trail.

31 There is a vivid discussion in the Polish historiography on this matter, see: GRALA, “Was Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth a Colonial Power?”



Fig. 7. Jan Zamoyski authored the Sarmatism strategy and consolidated the Polish Ukraine magnates. A portrait with his deeds by an unknown painter, between 1775 and 1800, the National Museum in Cracow, Poland. The public domain, Wikicommons.

of the Livonian War in 1579 to 1582 prevented any social competitors from challenging the Lithuanian princely magnates' grandeur. The dictatorship was ruled by Zamoyski and his clientele of Polish Rus' magnates who were a highly gifted stock including such names as Stanisław Żółkiewski, one of the best Polish tacticians ever. King Stephen Batory favoured Zamoyski's grip on power by vesting him and his clients with the top royal offices and providing the royal army for their political policing against the uproar of the Polish *szlachta*. Zamoyski's dictatorship created the conditions for the regime that had some features of the fiscal-military state, and with the formation of a mighty standing army. It was very aggressive to those outside.

The Polish Rus' magnates imposed their clan's strategic priorities on the Commonwealth that first lay in enlarged Polish Rus and the Polish Ukraine. They forged the Sarmatism strategy and implemented it. They insisted on lifting the restrictions on the Polish colonization of the Dnieper's left bank in the Yam Zapolye Truce of January 1582 with Muscovy that closed the Livonian War, and prepared for the complete annexation of Muscovy in the later years of Stephen Bathory's reign. In 1589 to 1595, Zamoyski utilized the Commonwealth standing army achieving the reconfiguration of the power relations between the Commonwealth and Ottomans and Crimeans. In 1589, the Crimean raiding parties attacked Podolia probably to prevent the Commonwealth from siding with the Hapsburgs in the ongoing conflict in Hungary and the Danubian principalities. The Polish forces inflicted heavy losses on them, up to 7,000 men, but the province was not saved from devastation.³² In 1590, a large confrontation was presumed; the *Sejm* was impressed by the vehement Zamoyski's speeches, introduced heavy wartime taxes, and delegated extraordinary powers to him. Zamoyski expected the Ottoman assault on Kamieniec (Kamianets), the strongpoint of the Polish Western Podolia, and marched the army to engage the Ottomans but the invasion did not come. In August 1595, Zamoyski entered Moldavia with 7,200 regulars and confronted a more than 20,000-strong Crimean army under Khan Kazi Geray.³³ The khan invaded Moldavia to fulfil the Ottoman design of eliminating the principality and establishing a plain province in its place. In October 1595, Zamoyski withstood the Crimean odds at Cecora (Țuțora) and bargained with the khan to drop the Ottoman plan.

The subsequent settlement brought two important gains to the Commonwealth. First, the utmost sovereignty of the Crimean Khanate over Polish Rus,

32 KORTEPETER, "The relations between the Crimean Tartars and the Ottoman Empire," 225.

33 MILEWSKI, "Campaign of the Great Hetman Jan Zamoyski in Moldavia," P.II, 61–63.

which was projected from the Golden Horde's hegemony, was cancelled. The Commonwealth obtained the right to settle and fortify the lands in the Wild Field which it considered unclaimed. At the beginning of the 1590s, the Polish king Sigismund III Vasa, Zamoyski's appointee, declared himself the full sovereign of Polish Rus. The *szlachta's* legislative, the *Sejm*, assigned the king with the function of distributing the no man's land in the Polish Ukraine between themselves. Second, Zamoyski managed to preserve the nominal status of Moldavia as a principality and bring Ieremia Movilă, his client, onto its throne. Movilă immediately declared himself an Ottoman subject and bribed the Istanbul rulers to confirm him on the throne. In 1600, Movilă was briefly expelled by the ambitious Wallachian *voivode* Michael the Brave (Mihai Viteazul) but Zamoyski restored him. Then he chased Michael the Brave from Wallachia installing Ieremia Movilă's brother Simion on its throne. Zamoyski disciplined the Danubian principalities with the Ottoman's consent not only against the Habsburgs but also against the Ukrainian cossacks who composed the core of the rebellious *voivode's* army.

Zamoyski's ventures in Moldavia in 1595 and 1600 were not situational turns but reflected his strategic commitment. The Sarmatism strategy that he formed adopted the Polish *Antemurale* strategy of adhesion to Moldavia as its axial external direction. While being in the Polish hands, Moldavia was a strategic cornerstone of the Christian Bulwark from the Black Sea to the Baltic Sea on which the *Antemurale* toiled. Otherwise, Moldavia was an Ottoman-Crimean foothold with access to the old Polish Rus of Galicia, Western Podolia, and Western Volhynia, which remained the principal powerbase of the Polish Rus magnates despite all their colonization acquisitions in the Polish Ukraine. Polish Rus was the region where they implemented the Sarmatism's social regime and built up the Sarmatian military forces of the standing border defence corps and the *szlachta* levy. Total control over Polish Rus was the social and political principle of the Sarmatism strategy. Moldavia was thus treated as its mandatory external component.

The 1590s was the decade when the Ottomans and Crimeans were engaged in the onerous Long War (1593–1606) against the Hapsburgs in Hungary and the Balkans, and the Crimean Khanate struggled against the perilous Muscovite onslaught on the steppes which had unfolded since the second half of the 1580s. They were unable to commit adequate forces to counter the Commonwealth's rush to colonization or break Zamoyski's design on Moldavia. They accepted Movilă and the Polish right to propose the *hospodar* for the sultan's appointment. Moldavia did not, as some scholars believe, become the Commonwealth-Otto-

man condominium, as the Ottomans considered it their tax province with a native administration while the Poles viewed it as a sovereign principality, and their vassal. The two approaches did not have a common point and control over Moldavia was determined not by some Commonwealth-Ottoman's dominium rules but the situation on the ground. This situation required non-stop intervention in Moldavia if the Polish Rus' magnates were to count on a measure of influence there. The Moldavian axis thus became the principal external commitment of the Sarmatism strategy for another hundred years until the Sarmatism lost its push.

The unbridled colonization that was thus launched over Polish Ukraine displayed the Sarmatism strategy's aggressive nature. If the annexation of Lithuanian South-Western Rus belonged to the *Antemurale* strategy, strengthening the edge of European Christianity's bulwark, the colonization of the 1590s became the offensive over the bulwark. The extensive lands in the Wild Field that were being colonized had not belonged to Christian Europe since the collapse of Rus in the second third of the 13th century and some of them had never belonged to it. It was not surprising that most of the acquired lands were either distributed to the group of the Polish Rus' office magnates or grabbed by the Ruthenian princely magnates. A couple of generations after the Lublin Unia of 1569, the Polish Rus' office magnates and Lithuanian Rus' princely magnates melted together into the political party and social group of the Polish Ukraine magnates which was united by the joint colonization venture. Zamoyski, the leader of their party and virtually the Commonwealth's dictator was a fervent colonizer himself, accumulating an enormous number of possessions with 80 towns and 800 villages by 1600.³⁴ Their political weight prevailed in the Commonwealth until the end of the 17th century and the Polish Ukraine magnates managed to shift the main strategic imperatives of the Commonwealth from its *Antemurale* commitments in the north of Central Europe to the south of Eastern Europe and prioritize the Polish Ukraine. They transferred the Commonwealth's resources to pursue the strategic objectives in this region of which colonization was the absolute priority. Some kind of "Ukrainization" of the Commonwealth's geopolitical thinking followed. Being incepted as the local variation of the *Antemurale* strategy, the Sarmatism strategy matured becoming the major factor that determined the strategic situation of the Commonwealth as a whole.

The Sarmatism strategy that the Polish Ukraine magnates imposed on the Commonwealth included many of the social, political, and military components and features of the *Antemurale* strategy. It was closely bound to the *Egzekucja*

34 ANDERSON, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, 286.

Praw movement and the *Wolna Elekcja* political regime that favoured the formation of a segregated and arrogant social-military class of *szlachta* with its most powerful layer of the magnates, on one hand, and oppressed peasantry of serfs terrorized to misery, on another hand. The Sarmatism's concept of the alleged ancient conquering of peasant locals by the upper Sarmatian warriors allowed them to be unrestricted in their violence to discipline the peasants. The massive Protestant dissidence of the *szlachta* in the second third of the 16th century and then their return to ardent Catholicism with the Counter-Reformation in its last third increased the *szlachta*'s intolerance of the lower classes in Polish Rus and the Polish Ukraine that remained Orthodox. The Sarmatism strategy turned against the Ruthenian Orthodoxy which was the ideological pivot of Ruthenian self-consciousness. The Brest Unia was played in 1596 to subordinate the Polish and Lithuanian Orthodox Church to the Catholic hierarchy. It was not a concept of Christian thinking, as it is sometimes depicted, but a social trick by the Polish Ukraine magnates. It made manifest the Sarmatism strategy's harsh ideological stance.

The Polish Ukraine magnates invited the lower *szlachta* from the Polish heartland to resettle in the Polish Ukraine and allotting them with the lands. A large migration of the *szlachta* followed mainly from Western Volhynia and Mazovia. The migrant *szlachta* was clustered into the large social networks *sqsiedztwo* dominated by the magnates to whom the *szlachta* were the upper "clerks," the estate administrators, and "servicemen," lower managers and enforcers, recruited for remuneration in the form of the land lease.³⁵ They enserfed the local peasants and brought in their serfs. This system bound the Sarmatism strategy to its social base turning it undivided from the *shlachta*'s social domination and alien to any other social constitution. The migrant *szlachta* was subservient to the magnates and their arrival tightened the control of the Polish Ukraine magnates over the colonized territories. The migrant *szlachta* became the social foundation of the Sarmatism strategy in the same way that the Polish Ukraine magnates were its political and military leaders. The pair of them was the center of gravity of the Sarmatism strategy. The social position for the cossacks of the Polish Ukraine simply disappeared. At their best, they might have hoped for a social niche as military hirelings like their colleagues in old Polish Rus. But the Ukrainian cossacks already outgrew the status of despised marginals and vagabonds. They possessed social cohesion and military organization, had the arms and had learned the tactics to support their social aspirations which were tightly bound now with the Orthodox religious issue.

35 MCLEAN, "Patrimonialism, Elite Networks," 93–94.

The Muscovite Ukraine's strategy of formation.

The river Oka's fortified bank, *Bereg*, became the first defensive edge of Muscovy against the invasions of the Golden Horde's successors from the last third of the 15th century. It was prearranged to station the duty cavalry corps and fortified. The *Bereg* became the first regular deployment of the Muscovite tactic of infantry with firearms after its appearance in the sieges of Smolensk in 1513 to 1514. The *Bereg* brought the concept of a stable frontier in the Muscovite strategic thinking where an invasion might have been intercepted with a predictable positive outcome and repelled without damage to the Muscovite heartland. This defensive strategic idea was integrated into the All-Rus strategy with its westward commitment. It counted on not only the Oka's bank as the main defensive line but also some forefront periphery, initially situated in the Oka's riverbend. The Oka flows mainly from west to east for 100 kilometers south of Moscow from Serpukhov to Kolomna, while its western upper range bends sharply to the south-west and its eastern lower range bends sharply to the south-east. The fortress towns of Kaluga to the west and Pereyaslav (later Ryazan) to the east stay at the extremities of this riverbend with around 200 kilometers between them with the fortress town Tula in the middle. In the 1520s to 1530s, the towns on the Oka's riverbend were refortified and stone fortresses were erected at critical approaches like Tula and Zaraysk. At the same time the key towns to the west of the Oka's riverbend, like Putivl in Severa, and to the east of it, like Pronsk in Ryazan province, were refortified as well. The Muscovite integration and fortification of its borderland did not contradict the All-Rus strategy because the borderland belonged to Rus and its strategic value was defensive and supported the commitment to a strategic westward offensive.

The changes occurred since the 1520s. In 1505 the Kazan Khanate dropped its vassalage to Muscovy which had been established in 1487 and a fierce confrontation between the two powers followed. It was aggravated by the transfer of the Crimean Geray dynasty to Kazan after the House of Ulugh Muhammad died out. The unification of the Kazan Khanate to the Crimea looked plausible and the Muscovite government launched two large amphibious expeditions to Kazan, in 1524 and 1530. Both expeditions failed to overrun Kazan but three important operational, tactical, and fortification related innovations were tested and learned which provided the ground for deviation from the conservative All-Rus strategy. First, preparing for the expedition of 1524 the Muscovite troops captured the town of Mari tribes at the mouth of the river Sura to the Volga and established a fortress, Vasilsursk, moving the Muscovite launchpad 150 kilome-

ters, a third of the distance, from the Muscovite stronghold on the Volga, Nizhny Novgorod, to Kazan. Second, in 1524 the Muscovite's amphibious troops on landing erected the earth-wooden fort, *ostrog* which was defended by the artillery and infantry with firearms. It was a fast and effective technique to secure control over the terrain while under enemy attack.

The third lesson was that in 1530 the Muscovite troops deployed the wagon-camp array, *oboz*, while advancing on Kazan. It was the array that functioned in Eastern Europe in a similar way to the massive pike formations used in Western and Central Europe that provided the defensive edge to the infantry with firearms against the enemy cavalry attacking at home. Now the Muscovite forces might have challenged the combat domination of the Crimean and Nogay forces in the forest steppes by marching and fighting in the wagon-camp array, controlling the terrain with provisional earth-wooden forts, and arrogating the territories by constructing the new towns. Claiming the territories of the former Golden Horde's heartland was no longer a problem. The innovations were applied soon after Muscovy dealt with some troubles during Tsar Ivan IV's orphanhood simultaneous to its decisive onslaught on Kazan in the late 1540s to the early 1550s. Being obscured by the overwhelming conquest of Kazan, the novel Muscovite strategy was subtly incepted. It was more a case of labor and sweat than fighting and blood.

After the struggle for Kazan was over, the new struggle over the Astrakhan Khanate started. Unlike the Kazan Khanate, it was located far away from the Muscovite heartland across 1,000 kilometers of open steppe, the terrain where the Muscovite forces remained inferior to the nomadic troops. However, during almost a hundred years of confrontation with Kazan, the Muscovites accumulated unrivalled amphibious capabilities and they now applied them on the river Volga from Kazan to the fortress Astrakhan at the Volga's delta in the Caspian Sea. Astrakhan was overrun in 1554 to 1556. In June 1555, the elite corps led by a Muscovite military ideologist Ivan "the Major" Sheremetev fought a two-day inconclusive battle against the odds facing the whole Crimean army under Khan Devlet I Geray at Sudbishchi, 180 kilometers south of Tula. The Sudbishchi battle confirmed the reliability of the earth-wooden fortifications under the assault of the nomadic armies when a relief force was not far away. The technique might have protected the large swathes of forest steppe against the Tatar's devastation and therefore to render it cultivated and colonized.

The lessons of the amphibious operations against the Astrakhan Khanate and the Sudbishchi battle became the operational and tactical ground of Muscovite

territorial expansion into the Wild Field. The strategy utilized the formation of the defensive districts of the smaller forts around the central fortress towns garrisoned with sufficient troops to relieve them in case of attack. The defensive districts were located on the terrain protected by natural barriers, such as forests, rivers, ravines, and swamps. The construction of the new fortress towns at the edge of the Muscovite borderland to the Wild Field started with the foundation of Mikhaylov to the east of Ryazan in 1551. Shatsk was founded in 1553, further east in the Meshchera region blocking the Shatsk Gates, a natural steppe corridor between barrier forests from the Wild Field to the Ryazan province. In 1554, Dedilov was built 35 kilometers south-east of Tula and in 1555 Bolkhov was built a 160 kilometers south-west of Tula, linking it respectively to the growing fortified districts defending the Oka's lower reaches and the Oka's upper reaches. In 1557, the former was strengthened with Ryazhsk and the latter was strengthened with Novosil in 1563 and Oryol in 1566. Tula in the center of this strategic construction was supported by Kropivna at the beginning of the 1560s. Epifan and Dankov were founded in 1566 and 1568 linking Ryazan's and Tula's respective fortified clusters.

Soon the Muscovite government started to connect the new and old towns of the frontier with the ranges of logjams, stockades, ditches, and other handmade barriers combining them with the natural obstacles to block the penetration of the Crimean cavalry and to herd it to the fortified positions to be destroyed by the troops with firearms. It was the Abatis Line, a large complex that was not finished until the 1590s but that started to function partially in the 1560s. The central range of the Abatis Line near Tula enabled the permanent defence of a 100 kilometer-deep strip of land at the Oka's riverbend. Its western and eastern ranges advanced from 200 to 300 kilometers ahead protecting much bigger territories in the Oka's upper and lower reaches. Both regions were desolated by the incessant Crimean and Nogay raiding but boomed after gaining relative security. They attracted a massive amount of migration from the Muscovite heartland.

The government needed to garrison and colonize the borderland. It transferred to the new towns some nobles and allotted estates to them but they turned too poor to match the requirements of the cavalry service. Besides, defending the towns required not just the cavalry but infantry with firearms to destroy the Crimeans and Nogays at the ramparts or to set firetraps among the natural and artificial barriers. In the absence of the town communities, the government could not recruit the urban musketeers as they had in the heartland. It fell instead to the free military laborers who were well-represented in the frontier and called the cossacks. The Muscovite army needed the infantry and mounted arquebusiers,



Map 4. The Muscovite Ukraine, first extension. The background map in Russian “The Settlements adjacent to the Abatis Line,” ЯКОВЛЕВ, А. И., *Засечная Черта Московского государства в XVII веке*, Москва, 1916.
The comments of the current author.

so the Muscovite military chancery recruited, armed and trained the cossacks *en masse*, often turning a blind eye to the origin of the fugitive peasants and townfolk who abandoned their communities to escape oppressive taxes and duties. Thousands of cossacks participated in the military campaigns of Ivan IV’s reign, such as the taking of Kazan in 1552 and Polotsk in 1563. They were universal cavalry and infantry soldiers whose main weapon was the firearms. The government arranged the frontier cossacks as military settlers serving for a salary and household lands. Not all the new military settlers were specified as service cossacks, but some were enlisted under different names. However, their social position and military functions were similar to the cossacks’. A new large service group began to form but it was unclear in the late 1550s to early 1660s if it would confine itself to its craft or grow to achieve a social position and form own strategic interests.

Simultaneous to the construction of the new fortress towns, the Muscovite forces launched a series of operations to use the space in the Wild Field for the new colonizing districts and keep the Crimeans at bay while they obtained their fortified mainstays. These operations formed the planning that underlay the Muscovite Wild Field strategy, a combination of Jeremy Black's "choices between battle, siegecraft and raiding."³⁶ In 1556, the Muscovite amphibious forces under Mikhail "Djyak" Rzhevsky attacked the Crimean forts Ochakov and Aslan (Islam)-Kermen (Kakhovka) at the Lower Dnieper repelling the Crimean pursuers with their firepower. In the same year, the Don cossacks, a free host emerging in the lower Don, were encouraged and supplied by the Muscovite government to launch their first long-range amphibious operation to assault the fortress Kerch in the Crimea. In the autumn of 1556, the Lithuanian administrator of Cherkasy Prince Dmitry (Dimitr, Dmitro) Wiśniowiecki (Vyshnevetsky), aka Baida of the Ukrainian lore, entered Muscovite service with the group of Cherkasy cossacks and successfully stormed Islam-Kermen. He also established the fort on the island Khortitsa below the rapids which became a magnet for the Zaporozhian cossacks who joined his ventures. In 1557, the field forces of the new Muscovite frontier districts, which were composed of its garrisons' manoeuvrable units, advanced far into the Wild Field and were deployed at the rivers Bystraya Sosna and Seim, 300 kilometers south from the fortress towns that were being constructed.

The Muscovite performance in the frontier campaigns in 1556 to 1557 was fresh and bright. It relied on the new organizational structure and tactical capabilities of the troops. The frontier's field troops and garrisons were round-the-year forces. The infantry with firearms was their prime component, and embodied the tactics of combat in the field fortifications and amphibious assault. The Muscovite operational plan of 1556 to 1557 demonstrated that a new strategy had started taking shape in the Wild Field that was different from the previous All-Rus strategy. The Wild Field was neither Rus nor its extension. Other kinds of troops carried the campaign than the traditional gentry cavalry. They had mastered a different form of weaponry, firearms rather than cold steel, and they professed another tactic while keeping up with the fast pace of the gunpowder revolution. The new operational design worked reliably and it was continued. The fort Psyol was erected at the Dniiper two hundred kilometres south of Putivl in the winter of 1556 to 1557 to be a springboard for the amphibious operations against the Crimea. In 1559, Wiśniowiecki and a Muscovite commander Ignaty

36 BLACK, Jeremy. *Military Strategy*, 14.

Veshnyakov attacked Azov by the Don, and Daniil Adashev, a brother of Ivan IV's favorite strategist Aleksey, attacked the Crimean possessions in the Lower Dnieper and North-Western Crimea from Pszol by the river and sea. In 1560, the Muscovite Ukraine's field forces advanced to the river Bystraya Sosna to shield the fortification works while Wiśniowiecki attacked Azov and Crimea from the North Caucasus with a 5,000-strong riverine corp.

However, in 1563 Ivan IV brought the aggressive operational plan of the Wild Field strategy to a sudden end. The fort Pszol was abandoned. Partly his decision was based on the deficit of troops due to escalation in the Baltic and Lithuanian theatres of the Livonian War. However, another strategic consideration that is not explored by scholars is also possible. The conservative defensive operational plan of the frontier deployment was drafted in 1565. It covered Severa and Oka's upper reaches, the Ryazan province, Oka's riverbend with Abatis Line and *Bereg*, and the new fortress towns to the south and south-east. Together they composed Muscovite Ukraine, which was now officially defined as such.³⁷ It was administered separately from the Muscovite heartland, and had its particular administrative structure and specific troops which composed the separate operational array. The first extension of the Muscovite Ukraine in the 1550s to the 1560s shaped the old borderland. The influx of qualified military personnel strengthened it, and siding with the Moscow court parties encouraged its self-consciousness and political myth. The tsar believed that the formation of the Muscovite Ukraine was completed and the continued aggressive stance became a waste of resources. He viewed the demarcation line between the Muscovite and Crimean zones in the Wild Field at the river Seim where the Muscovite scouting service was established in February 1571. The strategic sandwich of the Muscovite Ukraine looked formidable. It was composed of 200 kilometers of unfortified Wild Field for scouting and manoeuvres by the field troops, followed by 200 kilometers of the newly constructed towns, the Abatis Line and 100 kilometers of the fortified Oka's riverbend with the *Bereg* defensive line in the rear. No urge for further expansion was evident, so the reasoning was that a pause to digest the gains was necessary.

37 Some scholars do not treat the Muscovite Ukraine as a separate entity with distinctive features, see: KHODARKOVSKY, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*; RIEBER, *The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands*. While other scholars discern it, see: DAVIES, *State Power and Community*; DAVIES, *Warfare, State and Society*; ЗАГОРОВСКИЙ, *Белгородская Черта*; ЗАГОРОВСКИЙ, *История вхождения центрального Черноземья*; and especially DUNNING, *A Short History of Russia's First Civil War*; and STEVENS, Carol B., *Soldiers on the Steppe*.

The formation of the Wild Field strategy.

The tsar was right concerning the situation of the early to middle 1660s. However, he was wrong in the broader sense. In 1569, the Crimean army took part in the Ottoman amphibious and overland expedition to Astrakhan that was dwarfed by the efficiency of the new Muscovite fortress and amphibious tactics on the Volga. The Ottoman attempt to spread their Ottoman Lake strategy from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea failed. Now it became clear that if the Muscovites established themselves somewhere, it would have been rather hard to dislodge them. The Ottoman seashore fortresses at the mouths of the East European rivers, a mainstay of the Ottoman Lake strategy, were endangered by the amphibious attacks of the Muscovites. The Ottoman Lake strategy required modification. At the same time, the Muscovite expansion into the Wild Field and the establishment of Muscovite Ukraine demonstrated that the operations of the Crimean army had become inadequate against the Muscovite's new capabilities.

The new Crimean operational planning was a dire necessity. The Crimean ruling elite saw Muscovite Ukraine as an immediate danger to the very existence of the Crimean Khanate. In May 1571, the khan used the Muscovite withdrawal from its deployment of the Muscovite Ukraine's troops to the forefront positions in the Wild Field. While leading the fully mobilized Crimean cavalry, Devlet Geray circumvented the densely fortified districts of the Muscovite Ukraine via its southwestern fringe. He tricked the Muscovite duty corps at the Oka and the tsar's guard from joining against him and rushed to Moscow. He broke the Muscovite cavalry at the city's ramparts and stormed the outer wooden walls of the city causing a conflagration that burned down a major part of it. He turned back fast, again not across Muscovite Ukraine but bypassing its fortified central part via its eastern fringe at Ryazan. It was a sound Crimean victory, both military and psychological, but it did not change the Crimean strategy. It was a chance which switched to mischance in July to August of the next year when the Crimean army was annihilated in the location of Molodi by the river Lopasnya. A major part of the Muscovite army in the battle consisted of Muscovite Ukraine's forces, including the service cossacks and fortress musketeers who employed their firearm tactics to great effect.

The battle of Molodi undercut the Crimean potential for two decades. The only Crimean lesson from Devlet Geray's expeditions was in finding another trail for their incursions, the Kalmius Trail to the east of the traditional Izyum Trail that now ran head-on at the Muscovite Ukraine's fortified core. The Muscovite experience of doom and recovery of 1571 and 1572 respectively are normally described as a side event of the Livonian War in its western and



Fig. 8. Tsar Feodor I, allegedly insane, released the Muscovite Ukraine's drive into the Wild Field. The anthropological reconstruction of V. Gerasimov. The public domain, Wikicommons.

north-western theatres. However, considering their magnitude and their consequences, the Livonian War was their side event. The strategic situation unfolding in 1569 to 1572 was a wake-up call for Muscovy. The Crimean invasion of 1571 demonstrated the steadiness of the Muscovite Ukraine's core and the weakness of its periphery as the protector of the Muscovite heartland. The defence needed reconfiguration and depth, and the duty troops needed the space for manoeuvre. At the same time, the Muscovite government which was dominated by Chancellor Andrey Shchelkalov was desperately looking to maintain the Muscovite army while the Muscovite forces were depleted by the Livonian War and the Muscovite traditional military organization, which was based on the nobility's territorial cavalry, was heading towards collapse. Shchelkalov also looked for new sources of the treasury's revenue which was shrinking with the degradation of the Muscovite heartland's economy. Shchelkalov was a statesman with ambitious views, and he designed to combine the solution of both issues by capitalizing on the strength of Muscovite Ukraine that had demonstrated its stunning military, demographic and economic growth. Muscovy restarted the expansion of its own Ukraine as soon as it had disengaged itself from its Livonian commitment.

Shchelkalov's government decided to move Muscovite Ukraine another 300 kilometers south and southeast on the fertile soils of the Wild Field. In 1584, the Muscovites launched a large diplomatic and military endeavour in the steppes promoting Murad Geray to the Crimean throne, one of the sons of Khan

Mehmed II Geray who was sacked and slain by the Ottomans, against the Ottoman appointee Islam II Geray. While the Crimea was pushed out of the game, the Muscovite fortress towns mushroomed in the Wild Field on the site of the former scouting stations. The fortress towns of Livny and Voronezh were established in 1583. Yelets was erected in 1592, and its garrison was composed of the main recruiting resource of the Muscovite Ukraine, the relatives of the service cossacks, fortress musketeers, and petty gentry of the existing towns. After the Crimean Khanate's last break to Moscow was defeated at Kolomenskoye in 1591, the push to the south gained its momentum. Belgorod and Oskol were constructed in 1593 and Kursk was rebuilt in the same year after being forlorn for three centuries. Valuyki, first a garrison camp and later a fortress town was built at the same time. In 1599, Tsarev-Borisov was erected far in the steppe without the direct link to other new fortress towns as an element of the next push to the steppes that was postponed for 50 years by the oncoming Time of Troubles, destructive civil war in Muscovy in 1604 to 1613. Bogdan Belsky, the founder of Tsarev-Borisov was Ivan IV's favourite strategist, the tsar's opponent in the legendary chess party with poisoned figures just before his death. The attention of such top courtiers as Shchelkalov and Belsky to the Muscovite Ukraine manifested its strategic maturity. No biographical or prosopographic study of the Muscovite statesmen and commanders connected to the foundation of the Muscovite Ukraine exists, although their position turned out to be decisive for the Muscovite's destiny in the subsequent Time of Troubles.

In the easternmost part of the Muscovite Ukraine along the middle and lower Volga, the chain of the fortress towns was established in the later 1580s, Samara in 1586, Tsaritsyn in 1588, and Saratov in 1590. They connected the isolated Astrakhan with the Kazan province and brought a 1,000-kilometer range of the steppes and forest steppes within reach of agricultural cultivation. The stone fortress was erected in Astrakhan with the materials symbolically excavated from the ruins of the former Golden Horde's capital Saray nearby. Ufa was founded 500 kilometers further east in 1586 virtually shutting the Ural – Caspian “gate” of the Eurasian Steppe from Inner Asia to South-Eastern Europe. Besides the large fortress towns, a number of the smaller forts, fortified positions, and block-houses were built for the district's defence, deployment of the field troops, and sheltering of the agricultural population. The colonized districts were formed around the new fortress towns.

From 1582, the new pattern of the Muscovite army's deployment in the southern borderland was introduced, with the Ukrainian Array, *Razryad* alongside the former *Bereg* Array on the river Oka's northern bank. The army's corps were

advanced from a 100 to 200 kilometers south, and Tula, the central stronghold in the Oka's riverbend became the coordination centre of the new deployment. In 1599, the Muscovite field deployment in the frontier moved to the south one range ahead. The former duty corps of the Muscovite heartland moved from the Oka's *Bereg* to the central line of the Muscovite Ukraine, between Tula, Epifan, and Dedilov, while the field troops of the Muscovite Ukraine advanced to its south-western edge, the line between Oryol, Novosil, and Mtsensk. It was a defensive deployment, similar to the former *Bereg* Array, not static but of an agile nature. The Muscovite Ukraine was the operational theatre consisting of the tactical districts, clusters of the smaller forts around the main fortress and the prepared field positions. At the turn from the 16th to the 17th centuries it seemed sufficient for its existence.

The black soil of the Muscovite Ukraine was much more productive than the poor soil of the heartland, and the government found potential migrants in abundance. Muscovite Ukraine's vastness attracted the petty gentry, military veterans, fugitive peasants and town marginals. Tens of thousands of the commissioned and contracted cossacks had fought the Livonian War with the tsarist army, and after the tide of war lowered in the early 1580s, they looked for decent employment for which Muscovite Ukraine was the only large opportunity. The Muscovite Ukraine's pattern of military colonization suited them. Some of the service cossacks were the established bands, *stanitsas*, that roamed in the uninhabited forest steppes further south wintering in the frontier towns. The *stanitsas* were headed by their elected *atamans* and had their own arms and equipment. The importance of these cossack bands increased in the 1570s when the tsarist government started to hire the Don and Volga cossacks to the army. However, most of the service cossacks were migrant freemen from the Muscovite heartland who were commissioned for military service with little attention to their origin, issued with arms and subordinated to the appointed leaders.

The fortress musketeers and gunmen were allotted the service lands on being recruited, similar to the cossacks. Many of the latter were also enrolled to the service as musketeers and gunmen. They did not become members of the urban service class like their colleagues in the Muscovite heartland, but preserved their cossack mind. Some cossack groups were emancipated to noble status and granted estates. Most of them cultivated their tiny lots with their families without serfs. They did not turn aristocratic but remained cossack in their social behaviour and military skills. The petty gentry which became unable to report to the muster with the required cavalry arms, equipment, horses and fighting retainers adapted their service to use the handheld firearms mounting for marching

and dismounting for combat, like the later dragoons. It was the cossack fighting technique. The cossack-like petty gentry composed the majority of the noble corporations in Muscovite Ukraine's towns where they existed. The way of life of the state peasants like those in Severa was similar to the service cossacks' arrangement as they were taxed in money and kind in peacetime but in wartime they were conscripted to the troops.

The service cossacks became the new large social class, some parts of which received the service positions of other groups but did not change their own social position. Most of the population of the Muscovite Ukraine, tens of thousands of people by the end of the 16th century, consisted of the cossacks, turncoat cossacks and disguised cossacks, or those who were similar to the cossacks. Due to natural growth and continuing migration, the strata grew fast. All kinds of servicemen in the Muscovite Ukraine tended to converge into one large social-military group of settlers affiliated with military service, firearms, expansion and colonization. The social constitution of the Muscovite Ukraine was turning out to be strikingly different from that found in the Muscovite heartland. It became the center of gravity of the Wild Field strategy.

Unlike the first extension of the Muscovite Ukraine in the 1550s and 1560s, which covered the borderlands where some rare Russian population and some Muscovite outposts existed before, the second extension of the Muscovite Ukraine in the 1580s and 1590s claimed the territory in the Wild Field which had been Rus only in the fabulous flashbacks to the pre-Mongolian epoch or never at all. Nothing existed in that realm before the establishment of the Muscovite Ukraine's fortress towns. Nobody survived there as it was a sterile space for experimentation, vacuum-cleaned by the nomadic bloodsucking of population. The Wild Field strategy laid it out to the Muscovite Ukraine as a *tabula rasa*, a barren terrain where the new social structures, administrative regimes and military order might have been introduced, implemented or rejected without any restrictions. It was an experiment in its purest form to implant military-social structures. The *tabula rasa* social principle of the Wild Field strategy turned the Muscovite Ukraine into a dynamic society of ongoing experimentation characterized by the novel social-military structures which were generated onsite, invented by the Muscovite rulers or imported and implanted.

The government was not able to impose rigid control over the migration to the Muscovite Ukraine. In the 1560s to the 1590s a large part of the population of the Muscovite heartland moved to the borderland and frontier where security had been substantially approved. This migration hurt the economic situation, the area's demographics, and the military potential of the Muscovite heartland.

It reduced the capabilities of the traditional Muscovite troops of the nobility's cavalry and urban infantry, musketeers. The decline of the traditional type of troops became the main factor of the Muscovite's weak performance at the end of the Livonian War. The new Muscovite provinces had fantastic growth potential, as their economic and social development was vibrant but it fell out of governmental control. The government could not take advantage of it, and make good the losses in the declining heartland. This setback determined the negative position of the political and social leaders of the Muscovite heartland in relation to Muscovite Ukraine which came to be treated as a vile swelling that needed to be put under the knife.

The administrative pattern of the heartland did not function in the frontier. There was none of the social tradition that the ancient provinces of Muscovy had. Without the decent communities of the nobles and townsfolk, the Muscovite model of self-administration did not work. Some other model was needed to run the civil affairs in the frontier districts and it was natural to assign them to the central fortress' commandant, *voyevoda*. The model was implemented in occupied Livonia in the 1560s to the 1570s and looked reliable. The composite military-civil command-administration was born, a specific structure that was far from being the normal Muscovite constitution of the social estates. However, it was effective in the frontier due to the commandant's dictatorial power over resource mobilization and allocation. The particular social-military constitution of Muscovite Ukraine and its special military-civil regime became the fundamental principle of the new strategy that developed with its advance into the Wild Field.

The military structures and social constitution of the two parts of the Muscovite Ukraine, its old borderland and new frontier, were similar, and their political sympathies coincided. In the pre-civil war coagulation of the parties at the end of the 16th century, the frontier joined the borderland transforming the Muscovite Ukraine from a geographical region into a quasi-polity with its distinctive interests, particular social-military organization and strategic ambitions. The formative decades of this creature were too short to establish its social principles strategically and in relation to its parental Muscovite heartland. Did it turn either to remain separate or adopt the social constitution of the heartland and change itself accordingly? Or did it dare to reverse its subordination, take control over the heartland and change it according to its ideals? Nobody could judge. But the shift of potential between the Muscovite heartland and Muscovite Ukraine that had become evident by the end of the 16th century, with a heavy crisis in the former and boom in the latter, predicted that some clash between them was brewing.

If the first extension of Muscovite Ukraine might have been reasoned by the

defence of the Muscovite heartland, the second extension was expansionist. It was the bold strategic push from 300 to 500 kilometers south and south-east that doubled Muscovy of Ivan IV's bequest and tripled it counting Ivan IV's conquest of the Kazan khanate and Muscovite Ukraine's first extension in the 1550s to 1560s. Muscovite Ukraine grew past its initial commitment to being a damper securing the Muscovite heartland from Crimean and Nogay invasions. It obtained its geopolitical vision and strategic commitment. The Muscovite Wild Field strategy took shape. Its pattern of expansion was evident and the special operational planning underlay it. However, its final objectives were not clear yet. Robert Kerner gives them the title the *Urge to the Sea*³⁸ but the Black and Azov Seas were another 1,000 kilometers from the edge of Muscovite Ukraine. Were the Muscovite strategists sufficiently daring in their vision? How many extensions of the Muscovite Ukraine did they presume? What were its final limits and the axial direction of its expansion in their imagination? The Muscovite Wild Field strategy was not as explicit as the All-Rus strategy or as rhetorical as the Polish *Antemurale* strategy. It was a strategy of action.

The Market of Violence Strategy.

It took almost a decade for the Crimean Khanate to recover its striking potential after the Molodi disaster in 1572. In the 1580s it was spent by the Ottomans in their war against the Iranian Safavids in the Transcaucasia. When the khan Mehmed II Geray wavered, the Ottoman commander, *serdar* in Transcaucasia, Özdemiroglu Osman Pasha marched with his mercenary, *sekban* and *sarica* army across the Caucasian passes and the North-Caucasian Kuban Steppe, set burning by the Terek cossacks, and crossed on foot the completely frozen Strait of Kerch to the Crimea. He joined the Ottoman grand admiral of the fleet, the legendary *kapudanpasha* Uluç-Kiliç Ali who landed at Kaffa and overthrew Mehmed II Geray in 1584. The khan fled via a cart being too fat to ride, and was chased and strangled. Islam II Geray was installed although he was widely despised in Crimea for being not a warrior but a mystic *sufi dervish* of the order *tarikah* Mevlevi. Özdemiroglu Osman Pasha finished the transformation of the Crimean Khanate in a few months of his grand vizierate in July 1584 to October 1585. Crimean sovereignty was annulled and the name of the Ottoman sultan was proclaimed as the sovereign of the Crimean Khanate in the Muslim Friday sermon, the *khutbah*. The status-obsessed Muscovites stopped to title the khan "a free man" since he became an Ottoman subject. The self-rule of the khanate was changed to be

38 KERNER, *The Urge to the Sea. The Course of Russian History.*

characterized by close Ottoman supervision over its affairs. Özdemirolu Osman Pasha's change of the khanate's status and the pattern of its integration into the Ottoman Empire predicted the radical shift of the Ottoman strategic position in the Northern Black Sea region. Özdemirolu Osman Pasha prepared to march on Poland and sweep through colonized Ukraine with its power-hungry magnates and blood-thirsty cossacks. He worked on the conversion of the Crimean Khanate into the launchpad of the new Ottoman grand design on the Northern Black Sea region developing the new Ottoman strategy instead of the bankrupt Ottoman Lake strategy and integrating the fading Crimean Predation strategy in it. But Özdemirolu Osman Pasha died storming Tebriz in October 1585.

In 1588, Islam II Geray died and Kazı II Geray aka Bora, the Tempest, a former fighting comrade of Özdemirolu Osman Pasha in the Transcaucasia was installed as khan. After his flight from the Safavid captivity in 1585, Kazı Geray lived in the Istanbul suburb of Yanbolu and befriended Sultan Murad III. Spending four years as a Safavid prisoner, first in the ancient Assassins' castle Alamut and then at the Safavid court in Qazvin, Kazı Geray learned prestigious Persian, refined his verse-making skills, befriended the heir Hamza and was engaged to one of blind Shah Mohammad Khodabanda's daughters. He also obtained the wider geopolitical vision of the quadrangle of the Polish-Lithuanian, Muscovite, Ottoman-Crimean, and Persian affairs. From Özdemirolu Osman Pasha the khan adopted the understanding of the pivotal function of the Ukrainian issue in this strategic layout.

When Khan Kazı Geray ascended to the throne he was appalled by the unbearable strategic situation into which the Crimea had been chased by the Muscovite expansion of the fortress towns in the Wild Field and Polish magnate-dominated and cossack-infested Ukrainian colonization. From the second half of the 1580s, the Crimeans started feeling themselves slowly strangulated. Kazı Geray believed that it was still possible to deal with the Muscovite encroachment by a decisive strike and it was felt that Devlet Geray's overwhelming raid to Moscow in 1571 could be replicated without his arrogant mistake in exploiting Lord's chance twice. The Muscovite tsar Feodor I, while allegedly being insane but guided by his gifted brother-in-law Ruler Boris Godunov, congratulated Kazı Geray on his ascension wishing that he would save the Crimea from the Dnieper and Don cossacks. Kazı Geray made a face as if he did not recognize the threatening hint, complimented the tsar and titled the ruler, while of a humble origin, his "brother". Under this pen-friendly smoke-screen the khan mobilized his horde and coordinated his actions with the Swedish king John (Johan) III whose conflict with Muscovy in Livonia resumed in 1590.

In January 1591, the khan arrested and robbed the Muscovite ambassador in the Crimea, Ivan Bibikov, and in June–July 1591 the mobilized Crimean army of numbers exaggerated in the Muscovite chronicles of up to 150,000 men, broke head-on through Muscovite Ukraine’s fortress districts and Abatis Line to Moscow. Despite the khan’s play, the invasion did not surprise Godunov who received a warning from the Muscovite Ukraine’s reconnaissance. Godunov opposed the Crimeans in Moscow’s suburbs at the village Kolomenskoye. His army not only included the Muscovite heartland’s depleted cavalry but also Muscovite Ukraine’s troops timely withdrawal to the main position with their well-trained infantry and mounted musketeers. They were deployed in the giant *gulyay-gorod*, a mobile wagon-camp strengthened with abundant artillery. The khan had some success in the cavalry melee on the first day of the battle but in the following dusk, the Muscovite German-style mercenary cavalry managed to press the Crimeans in between the heavy guns of Moscow’s ramparts and the oncoming wagon-camp which shot the Crimeans at point-blank range. The Crimeans were broken and flew; the Muscovites chased them. Kazi Geray was wounded, and only a third of his army returned. When the khan’s envoy arrived in Stockholm for the negotiated remuneration, the Swedes refused to pay it because “gold goes only to winners.”

It was the utmost disaster for the khanate. The demarcation line between the Muscovite Ukraine and Crimean Khanate moved 300 kilometers further south from the river Seim where it was envisioned by Ivan IV and opposed by Devlet Geray, to the lower reaches of the river Seversky Donets. Now the Muscovite expansion into the Wild Field was restricted only by the speed with which Muscovy was able to digest the forest steppes converting them into an agricultural heaven stripped by the fortified lines and spotted by the garrisoned fortress towns. Sincerely or falsely Kazi Geray asked the tsar, who was Boris Godunov then, to appoint him ruler of the Muscovite Ukraine. The project failed; the truce was negotiated in 1593 but not in Bakhchisaray, as it was established before, but in Livny, a fresh fortress town in the Muscovite Ukraine, by Prince Andrey Khvorostinin, one of its outstanding military leaders. It was clear that the Muscovite Wild Field strategy had turned the strategic situation in the south of Eastern Europe topsy-turvy. It halved the Wild Field, a damper that served as the Crimean launchpad to invade Muscovy and that had protected the khanate against Muscovite retaliation. The Crimeans panicked. During the peace negotiations in Livny they condemned Muscovy for scheming against Crimea using the same design that they deployed against the Kazan Khanate in advancing the fortress towns to the Crimean heartland to smash it. The Crimean fears were



Fig. 9. Khan Kazı Geray dreamed the new Crimean and Ottoman strategy in the Ukraine while doing time in the Safavid captivity. Dal Mehmed Çelebi (Asafi), *Seaatname*, Istanbul, 1586. The public domain, Wikicommons.

well known in Istanbul where the Ottoman strategists thought them over one way and another looking for some leverage against the Muscovite Wild Field strategy.

The Crimean Predation strategy needed to be upgraded but its resources were dwindling and its area was shrinking. On this slippery ground, Kazı Geray engineered a new strategy which was not dominant in relation with the surrounding powers anymore but was still predatory. The khan reimagined the Wild Field as the market of violence.³⁹ It was the whirlpool of the collective predation of the Tatar and free cossack bands over the surrounding settled peoples, the Muscovite Ukraine, Polish Rus and Polish Ukraine, Moldavia, Wallachia, Transylvania, Hungary, the Transcaucasia, and, why not, the Ottoman Empire itself? The integrated slave-hunting and slave-trade system of the Northern Black Sea region became the center of gravity of the Market of Violence strategy. The Ottoman Long War against the Hapsburgs in 1593 to 1606, with its unlimited prospects of looting, presented a great opportunity for it to unfold. However, the Market of Violence strategy was not a solution to rely on. It was a provisional palliative.

*The Ottoman Horizon strategy.*⁴⁰

In January 1593, warmonger Koca Sinan Pasha, a frontier expert who led the Ottoman army in its reconquest of Yemen in 1569 to 1571 and Tunis in 1574, and also in the Transcaucasian offensive in 1579 to 1583, was appointed the grand vizier for the third time. Being a jealous personal rival of Özdemiroglu Osman Pasha and a sceptic about the Crimean's fighting capabilities he shared Özdemiroglu Osman and Kazı Geray's analysis of the Ottoman-Crimean strategic situation in the south of Eastern Europe. In June 1589, while grand vizier the second time, Koca Sinan Pasha upgraded the military district or *sancak* of Bender to the status of a province or *eyalet*. The move manifested some new vision of the North-Western Black Sea region aside from its coastal interpretation in the Ottoman Lake strategy. Bender was a riverine port fortress located 100 kilometers upstream of the Dniester from its gulf mouth. It was arrogated by the Ottomans in 1538 from Moldavia and bordered Polish Western Podolia, Lithuanian Eastern Podolia and the Wild Field.

39 See an application of this definition to the south of Eastern Europe: BÖMELBURG, "Introduction and Commentary."

40 It is the current author's paraphrasing of the proverbial title of Jason GOODWIN' *Lords of the Horizons*. It suits as a label for this strategy.



Fig. 10. Koca Sinan Pasha, the Ottoman frontier expert, who moved ahead the Ottoman Horizon strategy. Georg GREBLINGER, *Wahre Abbildungen der Türckischen Kayser und Persischen Fürsten*, Frankfurt, Johann Ammon, 1648, Universität Münster.

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In 1589, Koca Sinan Pasha called for a radical solution to the Polish and cossack issues by carrying out decisive military operation against Polish Rus and the Polish Ukraine. The bridges for the invasion army to cross the Danube were in construction when Koca Sinan Pasha was ousted by a palace coup in Istanbul. Bender was the launchpad for the prospective Ottoman invasion and Kamieniec, the Polish West-Podolian stronghold was expected to become its objective while the Moldavian fortress Chocim (Khotyn) at the key Dniester crossing between Moldavia and Podolia looked like being a chokepoint in the confrontation. It was the axis of the new Ottoman strategy in the North-Western Black Sea region that was being formed. In April 1593, Koca Sinan Pasha increased his effort. The imperial resident in Istanbul, Friedrich von Kreckwitz, reported the sultan's decree to establish during the oncoming summer the new province, *eyalet*, between the major rivers Dnieper and Dniester consisting of the Black Sea coastal *sancaks* of Chilia, Akkerman, Ochakov, and the *eyalet* of Bender. It also included the important port Haġibey (Hacibey, now Odesa). Ochakov was declared the new *eyalet*'s centre. While being the Crimean raiding hub at the joint Dnieper's and Southern Bug's Gulf, Ochakov was transferred from the Crimean to Ottoman authority in 1528. From a small fortified outpost, Ochakov was rebuilt as the fortress town, suitable for the colonization of its surrounding territory.

The new province was the vast coastal region from Moldavia and Walachia to the Crimean steppes at the lower Dnieper and Polish Podolia. With its fortress ports, the Ochakov *eyalet* controlled the key geographical locations of the North-Western Black Sea shore, the mouths of the major southward rivers Dnieper, Southern Bug, Dniester, and the Danube with their widespread tributary networks, and the Black Sea's mouths of a dozen smaller rivers. The Dniester, Dnieper and Southern Bug were the communication avenues of the south of Eastern Europe flowing from Polish and Lithuanian Rus, traversing the Polish Ukraine and crossing the Wild Field. They were the axial directions where the Ochakov *eyalet* faced the challenge of Polish colonization and the cossacks. The control of the Black Sea and the river mouths provided the Ottomans a logistical edge over all other pretenders entering the contest over the Northern Black Sea region. In the armed conflict, the Ottomans were able to easily move their troops and supply from one river bassine to another via the sea connection. In peacetime, the Black Sea integrated the region with the Ottoman Empire's main Balkan and Anatolian body as the smoothest communication hub.

The new *eyalet* had the vast agenda of supervising the West-Northern Black Sea steppes while the South-Crimean *eyalet* of Kaffa supervised the Crimean

Peninsula, and the *sancak* of Azov supervised the North Caucasus and steppes between the Azov Sea, Black Sea, Caspian Sea, and the Caucasus. The vast and diverse commitments of the new *eyalet* required a volume of the economic resources and military forces that its territory was not able to provide due to its frontier location. The solution to this problem was found in the traditional Ottoman way, tested in the Balkans and Hungary long ago. The more developed *sancak* of Silistre (Silistra or Silistria) to the south was assigned to the Ochakov province. It possessed the economic and military resources of the historical region Dobrudja (Dobruca) in the lower Danube from its delta to Bulgarian Varna. The *eyalet*'s governors, *beylerbeys* were often addressed as the Pashas of Silistra although Ochakov and Bender were the chokepoints of the *eyalet*'s strategic commitment.

Ochakov *eyalet* countered the cossack danger that escalated from day to day. It also supervised Moldavia. In 1594, following the Moldavian *hospodar* Aron the Tyrant (Aron Tiranul) defection to the side of the Hapsburgs in the Long War of 1593 to 1606, the cancellation of the Moldavian principality and its conversion to a plain province was conceived by Koca Sinan Pasha and promoted by Serdar Ferhad Pasha who replaced him in the office in February 1595. Serdar Ferhad Pasha fought in Transcaucasia under both Özdemiroglu Osman Pasha and Koca Sinan Pasha. The sultan's decree on the cancellation of the principality status of Moldavia and Walachia followed in May 1595. It was a design diverging from the previous Ottoman Lake concept of coastal possessions surrounded by the tributary states.

All of the three reformers of the Ottoman Northern Black Sea strategy, Özdemiroglu Osman Pasha, Koca Sinan Pasha, and Serdar Ferhad Pasha were not typical Ottoman strategists of the 16th century, namely harem-connected minions obsessed with the Mediterranean and Hungarian confrontation against the Hapsburgs. They were of different stock. All of them made their respective careers far from the Istanbul palace, sultans' retinue, or harem. They were frontier commanders who ascended as military men. Özdemiroglu Osman Pasha, a Transcaucasian *serdar* of Egyptian Mamluk origin came to power by storming the sultan palace with his mercenary bands, *sekbans* and *sarica* in 1584. He laid out the pattern of military-enforced ascension to the grand vizier office. Terrorizing the sultans, their retinue and harem became the Ottoman way to power in a row with palace favouritism. Özdemiroglu Osman Pasha unleashed the epoch when the Ottoman magnates' private retinues composed of the *sekbans* and *sarica* mercenaries became the prime instruments of the central and provincial power struggle. This new generation of Ottoman leaders has been researched far

less than the palace aspects of Ottoman politics, the dynasty and mutinies of the palace troops. What was the career path that pushed them upward? What were their imperatives?⁴¹ They are mostly obscure, however, the new generation of Ottoman leaders brought in another strategic vision of the empire's priorities. The "classic" Mediterranean and Hungarian "Ottoman World" was fading and a new world of multi-theatre confrontation was advancing. It required new strategies including the reconfiguration of the empire's North-Western Black Sea vision.

The *sekbans* and *sarıca* mercenaries, who were introduced to Ottoman warfare by Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha, became absolutely necessary to it. They provided it with the numbers of infantry with firearms required which were indispensable in the distributed warfare in Transcaucasia against the Safavid's light Turkoman *kızılbaş* cavalry and the head-on confrontation with the Hapsburg's *landsknecht* pike-and-shot formations in Hungary. They were also vital for the garrison service against the Zaporozhian amphibious raiders infesting the Black Sea littorals and Ukrainian cossacks attacking Moldavia. In 1577, from 300 to 1,000 of the Ukrainian cossacks penetrated Moldavia and participated in the popular rebellion against the abuses of *Hospodar* Peter VI the Lamé (Petru Șchiopul).⁴² They were led by Ivan Pidkova, the Horseshoe, a legendary strongman who was prized for being able to jaw the edge of a full barrel of wine with his teeth and overturn it on his head. The cossacks chased Peter VI from his capital and Pidkova acclaimed himself the *hospodar*. However, Peter VI sought the assistance of the adjacent Ottoman district commanders, *sancakbeys*, who pressed the cossacks out of Moldavia. Pidkova was executed by the Polish king Stephen Bathory, a former Transylvanian *voivode* and Ottoman subject, in Lwów, to please an Ottoman envoy. However, Pidkova's brother Aleksander reassembled the cossacks and returned to Moldavia. In the battle of Jassy in 1578, he was defeated by the 1,000-strong Ottoman corps assisting Peter VI. It consisted of the provincial cavalry, *timariots* of the adjacent Silistra *sancak*, which made up one third, and another two-thirds were the *garip yigit*, predecessors of the *sekbans* and *sarıca*, hired in the Ottoman districts nearby.⁴³ They mastered the firearms and were indispensable against the cossacks each acting as the other's copycat. This fighting episode demonstrated that the Otto-

41 See the setup of the discourse and on-case explorations in BÖREKÇİ, "Factions and Favorites," TEZCAN, "Searching for Osman."

42 ЧУХЛІБ, *Козаки та Янычари*, 14; ЗАМЛИНСКИЙ, *Гетьмани України*, 77; MILEWSKI, "From Świerczowski to Wallachian Expedition of Jan Zamoyski," 221.

43 OSMANLIOĞLU, "Some New Findings," 21–22.



Fig. 11. Özdemiroglu Osman Pasha crossed on foot the completely frozen Strait of Kerch to the Crimea forerunning the novel Ottoman design on the Northern Black Sea region. Dal Mehmed Çelebi (Asafi), *Seccatname*, Istanbul, 1586. The public domain, Wikicommons

man strategy in the North-Western Black Sea region had obtained the support of another social-military group other than *timariots* and *kapıkulu*. The transformation of the Ottoman Lake strategy to something new was expected.

Besides being the sultan troopers and personnel of the magnate bands, the *sekbans* and *sarıca* were also the *Celali* rebels who roamed Anatolia sacking the population, extorting tribute, looting and destroying. In all their three incarnations, they were a product of the diffusion of the firearms that determined their fighting properties, shaped their organization, and their agenda. They were the new commoner social-military group which was looking for the proper position corresponding with its fighting potential. They were eager to repeat the way of the “classic” Ottoman social groups of the *timariots* and *kapıkulu* that obtained their positions according to their fighting potential in the period of the empire’s emergence. This new group is not adequately researched as the probable destiny-changer of the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁴ Many of the Ottoman politicians who advanced on the scene in the 17th century were associated with the *sekbans* and *sarıca* or *Celali* social group, and they reshaped the Ottoman North-Western Black Sea strategy accordingly. The future of the North-Western Black Sea region became closely tied with the position of this social group in Ottoman society and the political position of its leaders. It was the center of gravity of the Ottoman Horizon strategy, although a shaky one. This critical dependence on outside factors sometimes tremendously empowered the Ottoman strategy in the region but more often it looked being its Achilles heel.

In the North-Western Black Sea region, the Muslim commoners with firearms became the main personnel of the local garrisons and forces being disguised under multiple Ottoman nicknames. They also became an armed wing of Ottoman Northern Black Sea colonization. The “classic” Ottoman social-military arrangement of *timariot* lords and *chift-hane* peasants was impossible there in the absence of the cultivated lands. The colonization developed in two forms, through free Muslim Turkic farming and urban activity, and large slave-tilled manors, *çiflik*s which were shaped to meet the gargantuan demand of the Istanbul megapolis. The latter arrangement dominated, there were 193 *çiflik*s only in three sub-districts, *kazas* of Akkerman, Chilia, and Bender in 1570, mostly on the lower Dniester’s right bank. Some of them belonged to the Ottoman court magnates, high-ranked military and officials.⁴⁵

44 However, see the relevant discourse in TEZCAN, *The Second Ottoman Empire* where the author juxtaposes the dynamic *sekbans* and *sarıca* to conservative *kapıkulu* palace troops and officialdom becoming an egotist political class.

45 VEINSTEIN, “Les ‘Çiflik’ De Colonisation,” 184, 195–97, 206–207.

The establishment of the Silistra-Ochakov *eyalet* represented the changing Ottoman grand design of their northward frontier and it was not self-restrained and static anymore but expansionist and colonization-charged. According to the new vision, it was rooted in the Danube's delta, rested on the North-Western Black Sea coastal possessions, rolled northward along the major rivers of the Black Sea affiliation, and was flanked by the protectorate Moldavia to the west and Crimean Khanate in the east. The Crimean Khanate was integrated into this vision as the guardian of the open-end northeastern horizon. The Ottomans' new grand design on Eastern Europe slowly changed the decrepit Ottoman Lake strategy and dragged them into the most vibrant, resourceful and perilous East-European region, the Ukraine. It was not amorphous or less ambitious than the grand designs of other East-European expansionists, the Commonwealth and Muscovy, and it caused the Ottomans to collide with them over the Ukraine.

The Ottoman Horizon strategy is overlooked by Ottomanist scholars for whom the Ottoman strategy revolved around the Ottoman-Hapsburg stalemate in South-Central Europe, to which the Low Danubian perspective was a peripheral signal.⁴⁶ However, the south of Eastern Europe became the Ottomans' prime agenda during the 17th century until it was sacrificed by the Istanbul masters for the Ottoman Empire's survival following its collapse at the hands of the Holy League in 1683 to 1697. Ottoman Ukraine,⁴⁷ a scholarly disdained entity, demonstrated its stamina until the end of the 18th century when the defenders of Ismail and Ochakov were bayoneted to the last man on the ramparts and the Crimea was annexed by the Russian Empire. Neither the Ottoman history nor the history of Eastern Europe can be understood without this huge strategic phenomenon of unrivalled destiny-making importance.

The centres of gravity of the Early Modern strategies, the social-military groups in their foundation, determined their inertia. At the same time, the strategies depended on the competitiveness of the tactics and operations that the troops of their social-military groups professed. Since the last third of the 15th

46 While other Ottoman frontiers are studied intensively. See for example: ÁGOSTON, "Ottoman conquest;" STEIN, *Guarding the Frontier*; TRACY, *Balkan Wars*; PEACOCK, *The Frontiers of the Ottoman World*.

47 The Ottoman territory between the Dniester and Southern Bug, and sometimes all of the Ottoman possessions between the Danube and Dnieper had the name "The Khan's Ukraine," *Khanska Ukraina* in Ruthenian and Moldavian documents. The later Ottoman gains in Western Podolia had the name "Ukrainian *Vilayet*"; see: СЕРЕДА, *Османсько-українське степове порубіжжя*, 97–98.

century, the fast and unpredictable changes reshaped the comparative fighting capacity of the different kinds of troops. The Polish Sarmatism, Muscovite Wild Field and Ottoman Horizon strategies came together with the appearance of the troops with fighting capabilities that were unseen before. Besides the stunning tactical results, their operational performance brought the much longed for geopolitical comprehension of the south of Eastern Europe as the integrated strategic region, the terrain of unified warfare from the lower Danube to lower Volga, and from Kiev and Tula to the Black Sea, Azov Sea and Caucasia. This was the Ukraine, a geopolitical entity into which the great states of Eastern Europe projected their new strategies looking for their aggrandizement. They did not consider the geopolitical Ukraine to be their facultative engagement anymore but regarded it as their prime commitment. At the same time, the power projection of the East-European great states, Muscovy, the Commonwealth and the Ottoman Empire had unexpected consequences. The formation of their specific entities in the geopolitical Ukraine was outstanding. The Polish Ukraine, Muscovite Ukraine, and Ottoman Ukraine were not the extensions of the Polish, Muscovite, and Ottoman heartlands: they had their particular social constitutions and military compositions. They also obtained their leaders, partly integrated with the master-states' elites and partly separate but always self-minded. The Polish Ukraine was the most challenging of the Ukrainian creatures because it split into two social-military levels. The upper of which was cohesive with the Commonwealth, while the lower one was fervently hostile to it. It was this hostility that drove it towards creating a separate nation, Ukraine.

III. UKRAINISM UNLEASHED.

The Lublin Unia of 1569 which transferred the Lithuanian South-Western Rus and the Lithuanian Ukraine to the Polish Crown, became an act of major importance for the Ukrainian cossackdom. First, the Grand Principality of Lithuania and Rus, as it was titled, at last acknowledged some Rus, meaning the Ruthenian Orthodox community, as its "second nature." In Poland, the separate interests of Ruthenians were not recognized at all. The Polish legalist movement *Egzekucja Praw* bulldozed the regional, ethnic, religious, etc. entities in favor of the social uniformity of *Rzeczpospolita* after the Polish pattern. The former Lithuanian Ruthenian estates, communities and elements, if they dreamed about some self-rule and recognition, had nothing to dream about in Poland. There was also no niche for the cossacks as a social-military group in its rigid social frame.

The cossacks might have been arranged as a registered service group on the governmental payroll. In 1572, the king established the cossack register of 300

men adopting for them the name of the Zaporozhian cossacks although they did not have anything in common with the real freebooter Zaporozhians lodged below the Dnieper rapids. Establishing the register, the royal power looked to recruit sufficient manpower to garrison the royal castles and divide the Zaporozhian freebooter cossacks from the loyal stock who were enrolled on the register. Stephen Bathory's *Charter with Lowlanders, Postanowienie z Niżowcy* of 1578, did not legalize the cossack socio-military group as well. The Polish Crown was not a sovereign monarchical seat but a community of the *szlachta*. Unlike the Lithuanian *boyars* the Polish *szlachta* and its military organization, the levy was capable of performing the military tasks that gave a reason for the cossacks' existence in Lithuania, such as the steppe patrolling, chasing the Tatar raiders and policing the colonized Ukraine. If not for the colonization, Poland did not need the cossacks at all. It thus treated the cossackdom as a pool of the commoner military hirelings, *pacholki*, a habitual non-noble component of the military manpower without any special social position. It was a precipice between the status of *pacholki* which was vested on the cossacks by the Polish government, and their self-declared status as a *lytsar* (Pol. *rycerz*), a knight signifying a martial professional of the lord class. It took some time until both sides apprehended this discontent and when they recognized it in the 1580s, animosity between the cossackdom and Polish Crown grew into outright total war with each other's extermination at stake.

The cossackdom's rise and split.

The cossackdom needed to comprehend its potential, obtain a workable organization and learn the effective tactics to wage a war against the Polish Crown. It needed to achieve this by outlining the strategy for their Ukraine. The Commonwealth's participation in the Livonian War became the cossackdom's training ground. It was also the place of strategic lessons for the cossacks, the school where they found themselves among the Polish *Antemurale*, Muscovite All-Rus, Swedish *Dominium Maris Baltici*, and Crimean Predation strategies. Until the election of Stephen Bathory to the Polish throne in 1576, Polish participation in the Livonian War was limited. The results of Lithuanian fighting against the Muscovites and Swedes were mostly deplorable until 1566 when the Lithuanian grand hetman Grzegorz Chodkiewicz promoted his son-in-law Roman Sanguszko (Sangushko) to the position of field hetman. Both of them were Orthodox Ruthenian magnates and turned to the Lithuanian Ukraine's experience for some remedy. The transfer of the army from the gentry levy to a professional composition, from the skirmishing cavalry to infantry with firearms looked like a solution.

Sanguszko recruited the Podolian, East-Volhynian, Kievan, and Western Rus cossacks and cossacking elements to garrison the castles that Lithuanians held on to against the Muscovite and Swedish grab in Livonia, and to compose the field corps fighting against the Muscovites in Lithuanian Western Rus. Sanguszko operated it with stunning success. His exploits uplifted the cossack fighting capabilities from banditry to the level of major engagements, and large-scale operational warfare against a strong well-organized enemy. They improved the cossacks' cohesion and morale. They demonstrated that the cossack-style army was adequate to oppose the Muscovy's All-Rus strategy repelling its grab on Lithuanian Western Rus. It also compromised the Polish *Antemurale* strategy because the transformation of the social and military structures of Lithuania to the Polish model, which the Lithuanian Catholic magnates promoted, appeared not to be necessary for Lithuania's survival.

After the ostracism of Dmitry Wiśniowiecki, King Sigismund-Augustus allotted the district offices of the cossack centers, Cherkasy and Kanev, to his brother Mikhail in 1559. Baida's successor petitioned the king to absolve his staff who were either highly useful or harmful depending on how to treat them, and the king granted them his pardon. The amnesty charter of Sigismund-Augustus became the first written recognition of the cossack's special status. In 1578, King Stephen Bathory confirmed Wiśniowiecki as the head of the cossack register legalizing it with 500 to 600 salaried jobs⁴⁸ to garrison the royal castles. However, there were around 4,000 candidates who did not find their place on the register.⁴⁹ Stephen Bathory deployed military hirelings named the cossacks in his operations against Muscovy in 1579 to 1582 at Polotsk, Velikiye Luki, and Pskov in Western and North Western Rus. Only in Volhynia did his agents hire 2,500 of them.⁵⁰ They also composed a bulk of the auxiliary and diversionary forces like 14,000 cossacks under Ruthenian magnate Filon Kmita in 1580. Kmita led a 1,700-strong corps to Smolensk, was chased and defeated by the Muscovites while distracting them from the main thrust by Stephen Bathory.⁵¹

Kmita's raid showed that the cossacks had learned a tactical array for their overland operations, including a wagon-camp modelled after the Ottoman *tabur*, Crimean *kosh*, and Polish and Muscovite *oboz*. The cossack wagon-camp, *tabor*, was primarily defensive and static unlike more mobile offensive Ottoman,

48 Винар, *Козацька Україна*, 167.

49 Щербак, "Запровадження козацьких реєстрів," 10.

50 Троневич, *Волинь в сутінках Української історії*, 84.

51 Kupisz, *Polock 1579*, 103; Новодворский, *Борьба за Ливонию*, 140.

Polish, Crimean, and Muscovite formations. The cossacks did not deploy the special fighting wagons of strengthened design with cover for the personnel and loopholes to shoot. Instead, they utilized the usual peasant carts laying them on their side after unbridling the horses with the thills projected outright like a barrier or filled the carts with earth to make an improvised rampart. The resulting position was hard to approach and storm, and was a perfect tactical anchor but it was completely unmovable. Many of the cossacks' engagements were lost due to this cumbersome tactic which also restricted the cossacks' operational capability. However, the cossack *tabor* turned out to be perfect for the deployment of the cossacks' aptness with handheld firearms and their tenacity. It was the tactical deployment that enabled the strategy of the cossackdom of the colonized Ukraine.

The registered cossacks were legally exempt from the fiscal and labor obligations to the state authorities and in fact also to the private lords if they resided on the lords' lands. It was an opportunity to settle on the best land ignoring if it was somebody's property. The peasantry and townsfolk were eager for cossack status but lacked it. As for the authorities and legists in the day-to-day life, it was obvious that the privileged status of the cossacks was grounded in their military service. It enabled their status unlike the much higher status of the nobles, which was strictly hereditary. Unlike the noble status that was genealogically registered, no registration of the cossack status existed; it was like a self-assertion and social acceptance of who is a cossack and who is not. The mass of men grew up looking to pursue a military vocation to upgrade their social status to the cossacks, obtain the best lands and push aside their nominal lords. However, the military service in the royal register was available only for a small amount of the cossacks. And the military service with the magnates who despised the cossacks, Orthodox Ruthenians, as an ugly substance standing between the humans, Sarmatian-blood nobility, and cattle, was rather unpredictable. The magnates tended to change the cossacks to migrant *szlachta* whenever possible. The service with the freebooter Zaporozhian cossacks was not a form of social elevation. The Zaporozhian way of life without the families, totally dedicated to war, was extreme, socially marginal, and risky to self-sacrifice. It was a militaristic dead-end.

The absence of proper military service became like a social dam across the swelling torrent, and soon the mass of cossacking elements dared to take their future into their own hands. They declared themselves the cossacks, organized themselves and elected their leaders. They looked for a war if the royal authorities and the magnates were unwilling or unable to propose one to them. The *druzhina*, comradery or band, became the organization of the cossacking elements,

and self-styled cossacks. The ambitious figures from the registered cossacks and magnate retinues became their leaders. The *druzhynas* learned to coalesce into proto-armies of a few thousand men. Mark Charles Fissel makes “assumptions [...] that proto-national polities provided structures within which military revolutions flourished.”⁵² It was the *druzhina* in the Ukrainian cossacks’ case.

By the 1590s, colonization brought the particular integration of the Polish Ukraine. The cossackdom became its self-minded mainstay opposing the authorities. At the same time, it split. The cossacking component of the colonization, the self-styled Ukrainian cossacks separated from two other cossack components, the registered cossacks and Zaporozhian cossacks. The Ukrainian cossacks had a lot in common with them in their social background, style of life, way of war, and socio-political interests but they had a lot of differences as well. The fusion of the cossacking elements with the colonizing peasantry and town-folk of the Polish Ukraine was their feature. The self-styled cossack *druzhinas* became their organization which was rather different from both the Zaporozhian *kosh* and the royal register. The Zaporozhians’ tactical skills of amphibious warfare with their light oaring-sailing vessels, *chaika*, required special riverine conditions and were exclusively offensive. The Zaporozhians established their fortified camp on the island Tomakivka and were officially banned from the Polish Ukraine. The registered cossacks were a garrison stock, a tactical police force with defensive functions. They were restricted to some royal castles and unwelcome over the Polish Ukraine. The Ukrainian cossacks adhered to the wagon-camp tactic, the universal offensive and defensive solution for land warfare. They resided everywhere in the Polish Ukraine and rolled around asking nobody’s permission. If the registered cossacks and Zaporozhians represented in the political life only themselves, the Ukrainian self-styled cossacks represented the Ruthenian Orthodox “Commonwealth” of the Polish Ukraine. The Ukrainian cossacks and not the Zaporozhians or registered cossacks became the driver of the Polish Ukraine’s consolidation and the laboratory of its strategy.

The Ukrainism strategy’s center of gravity

In 1590, the cossack constitution was implemented by the Seim’s legislation and two royal decrees. They declared the cossack register as the only legal form of cossack status and ordered the appointment of the *szlachta* leaders to the cossack units. The government needed the *szlachta* naturalized with the cos-

52 FISSEL, “From the Gunpowder Age Military Revolution,” 341.

sacks and it allotted lands to the *szlachta* commanders near the ruined fort of Trakhtemiriv (Trechtymirow) between Kiev and Kaniv which was regarded as a cossack reservation. Krzysztof Kosiński, a poor nobleman from Podlasie, was among them. Kosiński commanded the cossacks, blocking the Dnieper crossings against the Crimeans in 1586 and was appointed to organize the cossacks against the impending Ottoman-Crimean invasion at the end of 1589 to the beginning of 1590.

The decree of July 1590 ordered the register of 1,000 men but the treasury booked 3,000 men, 1,000 fully legal men and 2,000 quasi-legal, with the one-third of salary.⁵³ The actual volume of the cossacks exceeded both registers, but it amounted to tens of thousands of cossacking elements who considered their cossack status as intrinsic to them without any need for a register. The *Sejm* prohibited the cossack raids on the Ottoman and Crimean targets and decreed to chase the perfidious Zaporozhians from their camps below the Dnieper rapids, garrisoning them with the registered cossacks. It also ordered forcing the cossacking elements into the peasantry by the registered cossacks. The *Sejm* allowed the king to distribute the lands in the colonized Ukraine to the *szlachta* as a measure against their free colonization that produced the cossacking elements. The *szlachta's Rzeczpospolita* declared a civil war against the colonizing cossacks appointing the registered cossacks to oppress their kin. It was the design of the "cossackization" of the conflict between the cossacks and the Commonwealth which did not work because the conflict had not a policing but strategic scale.

A confrontation between the Polish government and the cossacks came immediately. It had two legal causes. First, the treasury did not pay the registered cossacks their fee. Second, the lands allotted to the *szlachta* commanders of the registered cossacks were grabbed by the magnates, East-Volhynian governor Janusz Ostrogski and *starosta* of Cherkasy and Kaniv Aleksander Wiśniowiecki. The latter was an eager colonizer and founder of the towns Korsun and Chyhyryn on the Dnieper's right bank. The date 1590 was the year of his triumph because Sigismund III and the *Sejm* issued the privilege granting him the territory adjacent to the river Sula on the Dnieper's left bank as hereditary property. It was an enormous wasteland with unlimited colonization capacity, and the grant vested Wiśniowiecki the freedom to lay out the borders of his holdings on his own and so establish the towns, villages, churches, mills, and ponds unrestrictedly. Wiśniowiecki founded Lubni (Łubnie) on the left bank and

53 Леп'явко, *Козацькі війни*, 47–48

launched an empire without horizons. If the colonization of the Polish Ukraine on the Dnieper's right bank, in the Kievan Land and Eastern Podolia followed the Polish royal administrative pattern, the Dnieper left bank's colonization was the magnate's *laissez-faire*. No royal authorities existed there.

Ostrogski and Wiśniowiecki were Orthodox Ruthenians by birth but both of them were effectively Polonized and were turned to ardent Catholicism by the Jesuits. They did not pay attention to the despised petty *szlachta* at the head of the registered cossacks and kicked Kosiński out of his lands. Kosiński fled to the Zaporozhian camps below the Dnieper rapids. Some registered cossacks supported him and turned to brigandage under Yakiv Osovsky. They joined the cossacking *druzhinas* and looted as far as Bobruysk (Bobrujsk) and Slutsk (Słuck) in Lithuanian Western Rus. In 1591, the cossacks' marauding intensified and King Sigismund III hurried to send the salary arrears to the registered cossacks, however, the arrears increased faster than the government paid them. Kosiński returned to the colonized Ukraine from the Zaporozhian camps, captured the small fort Pików (Pikov) near Vinnytsia in Eastern Podolia, united the mutinous registered cossacks, Zaporozhians and cossacking bands, and led them to Bila Tserkva and Pereiaslav in Ostrogski's holdings and Korsun in Wiśniowiecki's holdings. They captured the towns collecting contributions from the townsfolk and terrorizing the *szlachta*. The oldish Prince Konstanty Wasyl Ostrogski, whom his pupils the cossacks threatened to kill, narrowly ransomed his life in Pereiaslav.

All of the human refuse of the Polish constitution on the cossacks of 1590 came together. It was the social-military formula of the stunning strategic prospect. While titling himself the superior hetman of the cossackdom, Kosiński obtained an oath of fidelity from the dwellers of the royal towns of Chudniv, Kaniv, and Cherkasy. The cossack bands swept colonized Ukraine from the Polish *szlachta* and its authorities and installed the local cossack self-rule. They relieved the peasants of taxes and abolished the labor duty in the lords' farms, and magnate trade monopolies. The program of internal consolidation of the cossacks' Ukrainian quasi-polity was running full-steam. Kosiński also dispatched letters to the Muscovite ruler Boris Godunov and the German emperor Rudolf II proposing the alliance against the Ottomans and Crimeans.

Soon the southern part of the Kievan Land and Eastern Podolia fell under Kosiński's control. Kosiński was preparing to march on Kiev and sit there like a prince of the Polish Ukraine. At the same time, his troops did not penetrate deep into either Polish Rus, the old Polish provinces of Galicia, Western Pod-



Fig. 12. Krzysztof Kosiński established the Ukrainism strategy's main internal principle, Ukraine's self-control by its particular social structures. The Ukrainian stamp is in the public domain. Wikicommons.

olia, Western Volhynia, or the new Polish province of Eastern Volhynia. The social-military constitutions of the Polish and Lithuanian Rus were substantially different from that of the Polish Ukraine, and the balance of the military force between the two entities was not yet in favor of the latter turning aggressive. Nevertheless, a quasi-state was born, a kind of proto-Ukraine. Its particular social constitution became its first value and the first principle of an emerging strategy of Ukrainism.

Despite the declared animosity to the Commonwealth's social structure, proto-Ukraine was modelled after the Commonwealth with an upper-level socio-political position of the martial estate, but cossacks instead of *szlachta*. An elected head, the all-cossacks' hetman instead of the *szlachta*'s king, was installed. The hetman exercised the quasi-polity's domestic and international sovereignty while being supervised by the cossack commanders and elders, the *starshina*, like the Polish Council, the *Senat*. The cossacks' gatherings, overall Assembly,

the *Rada*, and local circles, the *krugs*, changed the Polish *Sejm* and *seimiks*. The similarity was striking but one feature of the new political creature corrected it radically. It was an absence of any fence between the cossacks and the mass of population, peasantry and townsfolk. Nothing similar to the *szlachta*'s hereditary segregation existed for the cossacks. There were tens of thousands of cossacking elements coming from the mass population and considering themselves cossacks because they possessed firearms, entered the *druzhinas* and elected their leaders, refused to subordinate to authorities, pay taxes and perform duties to the lords. This fluid structure was open to membership, power lift and wealth accumulation by the cossacking upstarts. It was the frontier egalitarian principle of the cossacking movement that created a social cohesion unseen in stratified Late Middle Age society. The consolidation of Kosiński's hetmanate manifested the main internal principle of the emerging Ukrainism strategy that was the Polish Ukraine's self-control over itself, and absolute domination of its specific social institutions and social relations. It was the construction that excluded the magnates and *szlachta* with their violent lordship over the enserfed peasantry and political monopole. It declared null the social institutions and relations that were imported into the Polish Ukraine from Poland.

The Ukrainism strategy became a kind of strategic reaction of the Polish Ukraine to the Sarmatism strategy. The Ukrainism and Sarmatism coupled the pair of strategic actions and counteractions that determined the development of the Polish Ukraine from the late 16th to the late 17th centuries. The dizzy speed of this creature's coming of age shocked the Polish authorities. The strategy to restrict and subjugate the Polish Ukraine was elaborated by the appalled king and his major co-ruler Zamoyski. It was based on counterposing the Polish Ukraine to Polish Rus. While discussing the Ukrainism strategy in its embryo years, it is important to nail the recognition of their difference which appeared in the royal decree of January 1592. All further struggles of the different states to reduce the Polish Ukraine to submission were based on its segregation from Polish Rus, and all further Ukrainian strategies of consolidation were based on the merger of Polish Rus, and the transformation of Polish Rus according to the Ukrainian socio-military-political pattern. Nothing new was invented in this strategic juxtaposition until the 21st century. Kosiński did not lay out the cossackdom's strategy on Polish Rus but Ukraine's opponents already presumed what was going on.

Kosiński's cossackdom was treated by the autumn *Sejm* of 1592 as a rebellion. In January 1593, Sigismund III summoned the *szlachta* levy of Eastern Volhynia, Eastern Podolia, and Kievan Land. The royal authorities and magnates recruited the infantry in the heartland of Poland and Transylvania to fight

the cossack infantry in their wagon-camp. The governmental forces concentrated at Kostiantyniv in the Ostrogski's holdings at the border of Eastern Volhynia and Eastern Podolia under Janusz Ostrogski. Kosiński gathered his followers in another of Ostrogski's town, Ostropil, forty kilometers east. When Janusz Ostrogski and Aleksander Wiśniowiecki moved on him, Kosiński retreated around eighty kilometers further east behind Chudniv to the village of Piatka where Ostrogski overtook him at the end of January 1593. Both sides had around 4,000 to 5,000 men and they both arrayed the wagon-camp of carts manned with the infantry, but Ostrogski had stronger cavalry due to the *szlachta* levy at his disposal. Kosiński had stronger infantry, and the battle-hardened Zaporozhians reputed for their high rate of musketry fire were at the core of it.

The course of the Piatka battle became the pattern of most of the cossacks' clashes with the Commonwealth's forces to the end of the 17th century. The attack of the levy's shock cavalry on the wagon-camp failed at the barrier of carts under the hail of the cossack bullets, and Kosiński's cossacks slowly advanced on Ostrogski's position. However, the prince grasped their wagon camp's disorder and exploited it charging home with 500 of his private professional troops that he held in reserve. They broke into the wagon-camp. Kosiński's cossacks wavered, panicked and ran. In deep snow, Ostrogski's horsemen chopped down the cossack footmen. Around 2,000 to 3,000 were slain.⁵⁴ A small party of cossacks managed to flee and hold up in the village's local fort where they were besieged.

A week later, the survivors negotiated a pardon and treaty confirming their submission. The treaty became the pattern of the Commonwealth's agreement with the rebellious cossacks for the long term, to the end of the 17th century. The cossacks' obligations included the removal of Kosiński from the hetmanate, meaning the dismantling of this quasi-statal structure, and loyalty to the king. Besides these two principal clauses, the Zaporozhians waived building up their camps below the Dnieper rapids and carrying out raids into any foreign territories including the previous Ottoman and Crimean targets. The registered cossacks waived lodging without permission in Ostrogski's, Wiśniowiecki's and other magnates' holdings. They promised to give up the runaway serfs. The registered cossacks obliged to provide their military service to the king on his order and not contract to the service of other sovereigns without the king's permission. Kosiński surrendered to the goodwill of Prince Ostrogski the Elder. With his goodwill or not Kosiński and his retinue were slain and the victory

⁵⁴ SERCZYK, *Na dalekiej Ukrainie*, 91.

over the cossacks was glorified by the Ostrogskis' court poet Simon Pekalid: "[S]carlet blood leaked from the heaps of the massacred Zaporozhians, their agonizing moans of pain saturated the air."⁵⁵ There is also a version that Kosiński survived and moved to the Zaporozhian camps below the Dnieper rapids where he recuperated and sieged Cherkasy with Aleksander Wiśniowiecki inside in the following spring of 1593. He was invited by Wiśniowiecki to negotiate, but was captured while drunk and cemented alive in a pillar of some Catholic cloister. If the second version is true, Kosiński became the pillar not of the shaky Catholic construct in the Polish Ukraine but the robust edifice of the Ukrainism strategy.

The Piatka battle was glorious indeed, Janusz Ostrogski cracked the cossack *tabor*, an unthinkable deed, and he merited a couple of verses. However, it was a mere tactical achievement. The social roots of the Ukrainism strategy were not ploughed off and its seeds were not burned. Soon the Commonwealth's chance to uproot the cossackdom and extinguish the Ukrainism strategy was lost irretrievably since it had obtained its external objectives.

The external objectives of the Ukrainism strategy.

The next major leader of the Ukrainian cossackdom, Severin (Semeriy) Nalyvaiko was instigated by the agents of the Christian Holy League, the alliance that the Roman pope Clement VIII (Hypolit Aldobrandini) and the Hapsburgs built against the Ottoman Empire. The major regional powers dragged the Ukrainian cossackdom into their struggle by feeding Nalyvaiko's strategic revelations. Nalyvaiko obtained his fighting reputation by commanding the band of cossacks under Janusz Ostrogski in countering the uprising of Kosiński. It was probably him who led the charge at the home of the Ostrogskis' reserve in the battle of Piatka which smashed Kosiński's wagon-camp. It is also possible that Nalyvaiko, a mercenary as he was, executed the young prince's order to massacre Kosiński and his retinue at a road station while they rode to meet cossack-lover Prince Ostrogski the Elder to be forgiven. However, Nalyvaiko turned to cossacking from his service with the Ostrogskis' household as he recognized the potential of the self-styled cossacks that surfaced under Kosiński. It was the social-military group that royal and magnate repression was unable to exterminate and whom their "carrot and stick" persuasion could not tame due to the fundamental interests of the social classes of which the self-styled cossacks were the armed wing, namely the colonizing peasantry and townsfolk.

55 PEKALIDIS, *De bello Ostrogiano*.



Fig. 13. Severin Nalyvaiko authored the axes of the Ukrainism strategy to Polish Rus and Ottoman Ukraine. The Ukrainian stamp is in the public domain. Wikicommons.

After vacating the Ostrogskis' service in the spring of 1593, Nalyvaiko settled in Bratslav where he was contacted by the agents of the Holy League operating in the Polish marches in the middle of 1593 to the middle of 1594. They were one petty Polish courtier Stanislas Chłopicki (Clopiski), the Croatian priest Aleksandar Komulović (Allessandro di Comolo), and an imperial diplomat Erich Lassota von Steblau. Chłopicki appeared at the Habsburgs' court performing as the leader of the 10,000-strong cossack host which he proposed to move against the Ottomans. He gained a lot of compliments with some money, banners of honour, and recommending letters to the surrounding potentates. In the middle of 1593, Chłopicki looked in Polish Rus and the Polish Ukraine to search for the cossack host that he had promised. Aleksandar Komulović was travelling in the spring-summer of 1594 over Poland with the Papal funds ready to contract whoever was willing to fight the Ottomans. While acting as apostolic legate, *nunzio apostolico* in Poland and Silesia in 1588 to 1589, Clement VIII was acquainted with the cossack issue and never lost sight of this captivating factor from his deliberations. Komulović visited Bratslav where he found the cossacks

in abundance and Nalyvaiko eager to lead them. Lassota travelled across Western and Eastern Podolia, the main region of the colonization movement, and resided for more than a month in the Zaporozhian camps below the Dnieper rapids. One after another they contracted Nalyvaiko to block the march of the Crimean army to the Hungarian theater of the Long War that was expected in the late spring to early summer of 1594.

Nalyvaiko was an early bird. He started bombarding Zamoyski and Sigismund III with his letters in the early spring of 1594 proposing to establish the polity-host in the colonized Ukraine with himself as its prince, then join the Holy League and attack the Ottomans and Crimeans. Nalyvaiko's proposal contradicted everything that Zamoyski, virtually the Commonwealth's dictator, professed, and that the king had displayed while being under his supervision. Field Hetman Żółkiewski who operated in the Polish Ukraine managed to catch Chłopicki and imprisoned him for his funding of Nalyvaiko. Nalyvaiko was not answered by the king and chancellor and he started to act on his own, exploiting the structures of Kosiński's hetmanate that was declared null but not irretrievably so. With the pope's and Hapsburgs' gold, banners of honor and promises, he gathered the self-styled cossack bands around the core of mercenaries with whom he served the Ostrogskis. Nalyvaiko attracted to his operations the registered cossacks under their captain Jan Oryszowski (Ivan Oryshevsky) and Zaporozhian cossacks under their *ataman* Grigory Loboda. In late April 1594, Nalyvaiko appeared at the Ottoman fortress of Bender in the Lower Dniester with an awesome host of 12,000 to 14,000 cossacks.⁵⁶ The cossacks sacked the important market town of Orhei on the Dniester's right bank and overran the Ottoman strongpoints on the Dniester's left bank, the villages of Iagorlik and Parkani. They marauded and burned the stations and magazines with food and forage diligently prepared by the Moldavian *hospodar* Aron for the Crimeans, scorching their expected marching rout along the Dniester. However, Nalyvaiko was unable to take or harm Bender, a key point of the Crimean passage, due to the proper siege artillery and skills that he lacked.

He also lacked time. Another Holy League mercenary, Zaporozhian *ataman* Bohdan Mikoshynski attacked the Dnieper crossing at Ochakov amphibiously on land and water with 50 *chaikas* and 1,300 men, a week or two before Nalyvaiko's assault on Bender. Eight Ottoman galleys, *kadirga* and 15 smaller battleships guarded 150 transport vessels that were ferrying more than 25,000

56 Леп'явко, "Українське козацтво у міжнародних відносинах," 336.

Crimean warriors and 100,000 horses.⁵⁷ The Ottomans swept the Zaporozhians off, and the Crimeans crossed into the Southern Bug-Dniester watershed and raced upstream along the Dniester's left bank under the seasoned campaigner Khan Kazı Geray. The Crimeans crossed to the Dniester right bank at Bender and marched north over Pokutia (Pokucie), the Moldavian-Polish disputed Wedge Land between the rivers Dniester and Prut, a tributary of the Danube. Then they crossed Galicia, pushed aside the Commonwealth's border defence corps under Żółkiewski, tricked the army under Zamoyski and passed via the mountain Carpathian trails to Transylvania, their destination. Nalyvaiko's host was chased and destroyed on the Dniester crossing by the Moldavian, Crimean and Ottoman troops. Between 1,000 and 3,000 of the cossacks perished, while Nalyvaiko narrowly escaped.⁵⁸

The pope and the imperial-sponsored cossack trap for the Crimeans did not work. However, neither the highly shrewd Komulović and Lassota, nor their masters, the inquisitionist Pope Clement VIII and the demented Emperor Rudolf II were disappointed. They recognized the prospects of sourcing the cossack potential which was demonstrated by Nalyvaiko. Komulović and Lassota explored the high mobilizational capacity of the cossacks and their ability to learn to use advanced weaponry and tactics quickly. Komulović and Lassota established a channel to hire thousands of the cossacks, in their ready-made bands, for the Wallachian army of the *voivode* Michael the Brave, the Ottoman appointee who switched sides in October 1494 to become the most capable ally of the Hapsburgs ever. The cossack recruiting was ten times cheaper than the mercenaries in Germany and Italy were.⁵⁹ The cossack manpower and fighting skills, hired with the Hapsburg's funds, provided Michael the Brave with stunning victories over the Ottomans. With 16,000 of the cossacks and some hundreds of other mercenaries, Michael the Brave destroyed the Ottoman Rumelian army of Ibrahim Pasha in January 1595.⁶⁰ In August 1595, he defeated the main Ottoman army under Koca Sinan Pasha at village Călugăreni. In October 1595, Michael the Brave annihilated the army of Koca Sinan Pasha at the crossing over the Danube near Giurgiu. The much-hated corps of *akıncı* raiders was completely exterminated in their tens of thousands to never recover. The cossack warfight-

57 MILEWSKI, "Campaign of the Great Hetman Jan Zamoyski in Moldavia," 274; ЛЕП'ЯВКО, *Козацькі війни*, 110.

58 ЛЕП'ЯВКО, *Козацькі війни*, 119–20.

59 ЛЕП'ЯВКО, *Козацькі війни*, 115–16.

60 IOSIPESCU, "Autour du Khanat Tatare de Crimée," P. II, 175.



Fig. 14, 15. Michael the Brave was a great visionary for the Ukrainian cossacks, and a figure of a puppet show for the Polish Ukraine magnates. The Ukrainian (left) and Polish (right) posters of the Romanian film “Mihai Viteazul,” directed by Sergiu NICOLAESCU in 1970, the current author’s collection. The film’s footage: www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJWXc0jW46Q

ing potential also fed Michael the Brave’s breathtaking idea of “Great Romania” that he implemented, although for a short period, bringing together under his rule the Danubian principalities of Transylvania, Walachia and Moldavia in October 1598 to September 1600.

After being chased from Moldavia in June 1594, Nalyvaiko nevertheless repeated his expedition there in October 1594 to February 1595, participating in the taking of Ismail in December 1494 and the siege of Bender under the Moldavian *hospodar* Aron. Then, after spending his May vacations in Bratslav, Nalyvaiko marched to serve with the Walachian and Transylvanian armies acting in concert with the Hapsburgs in Hungary. The cossacks recruiting to them was bargained by the registered cossacks’ captain Oryszowski with the Transylvanian *voivode* Sigismund Bathory in the Karlsbad (Karlovy Vary) spa resort in January to February 1595.

Probably, it was not the disciplined German infantry of Hapsburgs, as many historians believe, but the cossack bands which were brought onsite by Si-

gismund Bathory that broke the orderly array of the Holy League's army in the decisive mega-battle of the Long War at Keresztes (Mezőkeresztes) in October 1596. They rushed to loot the abandoned Ottoman camp and set up the victorious Holy League's army under the counterstrike of the rallied Crimean cavalry, and not of the Ottoman camp-followers as many historians affirm following a chronicler İbrahim Peçevi. The Holy League's stunning victory turned into a miserable defeat. The reading of the Keresztes battle in its decisive point and moment as the cossack-Crimean duel and not as the comparison-in-combat of the Ottoman-Hapsburgs warfare capabilities explains its outcome much better than the habitual scholarly deliberations.



Rumuński film kostiumowy
Reżyseria: Sergiu Nicolaescu
W rolach głównych:
Emmeric Schäffer,
György Kovács,
Anza Pellea,
Irina Gardescu
Produkcja:
Bucuresti

While participating in Michael the Brave's ventures and other campaigns of the Long War, the cossacks learned the most advanced infantry tactics with firearms which was professed by the imperial army and its German and Italian mercenaries, trained in the Italian Wars, French Religious Wars and the Dutch War of Independence. Everywhere and always the cossack-based troops of Michael the Brave demonstrated superior firepower, steadiness and bravery in their charging. The Ottoman chronicler Selaniki Mustafa's proverbial conclusion on the Ottomans' inability to "withstand the musketeers from Transylvania,"⁶¹ probably referred to the cossack units. The cossacks adopted Michael the Brave's aggressive warfare style of unfolding the tactical achievements into the operational destruction of the enemy and the grand strategic design. Their training with Michael the Brave helped the Ukrainian cossacks to make the

61 ÁGOSTON, *The last Muslim Conquest*, 316.

Ukrainism strategy visible and assertive in the Northern Black Sea theater at the turn from the 16th to the 17th centuries.

Not only ravaging but clearing out the Ottoman possessions secured the Ukrainism's objective in Nalyvaiko's ventures. The cossacks indiscriminately marauded Christians and Muslims, however, their looting had more meaning than normal mercenary license. Nalyvaiko and his cossacks at the same time pursued the interests of Ruthenian colonization. They put to the sword and brought into slavery the Muslim Turkic colonizers, burned their properties and destroyed their agriculture in the frontier contact zone of the Dniester-Southern Bug watershed between the Ottoman Bender district and Polish Eastern Podolia. It was one of the first examples of the Ukrainian colonizing ethnic cleansing, a fierce stretch of the territorial pocket for the formation of the Ukrainian nation. There was nothing special in its cruelty in the Early Modern Period; most of the European emerging nations established their nationhood in the same way. However, after the Ottoman Medieval paradigm to suppress and tax instead of through extermination and devastation, it was a fresh hell.

Bender and Ochakov, although the objectives of the different subdivisions of the Ukrainism strategy's proponents, the Ukrainian cossacks and Zaporozhians respectively, emerged as its axial directions. The difference was determined by the different tactics that the two cossack parties professed and their different operational capabilities. The Ukrainian cossacks' wagon-camp, the *tabor* of the infantry with firearms, was a deployment of an overland tactic. Bender was an attainable target for them. The Zaporozhian amphibious tactic worked against the coastal targets like Ochakov. While being the main strategic centres of the Ottoman Ochakov *eyalet*, Bender and Ochakov were the strongholds of the Ottoman Ukraine. They needed to be choked to prevent its expansion. The Crimean Khanate's survival more and more depended on the Ottoman power projection to the Northern Black Sea region, so choking Bender and Ochakov critically weakened it. The Ochakov-Bender bifurcated strategic axis was an early invention of the Ukrainism strategy, co-authored by Nalyvaiko. The Polish Sarmatian strategists, haters of the Ukrainian cossacks, abhorred his strategic revelation remaining attached to the Moldavian axial direction of the *Antemurale* strategy that they adopted for their Sarmatism. But the Muscovite strategists attentively picked it up when their turn to oppose the Ottomans and Crimeans in the North-Western Black Sea region came in the last third of the 17th century. They used Nalyvaiko's accurate revelation to oust the Ottomans from it and cancel the Crimean Khanate completely.

The Ukrainism strategy's attitude to Polish Rus.

While recuperating between his first and second Moldavian expeditions in the summer of 1594, Nalyvaiko roamed across Eastern and Western Podolia, and the eastern Galicia. He visited Bar and Terebovlya extorting food, horses and carts from the peasant communities, and ravaged the possessions of *szlachta*. He paid a visit to Husiatyn where he broke into the castle of Marcin Kalinowski, a model magnate. Kalinowski killed Nalyvaiko's father in a dispute over some strip of land. Now Nalyvaiko invented himself as a model cossack leader, a "good rebel," faithful servant to the king and patria who was forced to revolt by a bad magnate's greed and unpunished crimes. Many of the cossack leaders, including the Ukrainian father-of-the-nation Bohdan Khmelnytsky, followed this legendary model after Nalyvaiko. Nalyvaiko's roaming and ravaging were not without a purpose. The cossacks believed that they were the only decent martial class in the colonized Ukraine, and they fought to not allow any other martial class, like the *szlachta*, to settle, possess estates, and take tribute from peasants here. The cossacks did not consider the Polish migrant *szlachta* or Polonized Ruthenian *boyar szlachta* to be members of the emerging society of the colonized Ukraine. It was the implementation of the Ukrainism strategy's ethnic-religious-social cleansing, yet milder; a forerunner of much harsher times.

Zamoyski attentively observed the cossacks' Danubian expeditions threatening them with heavy repression in case they provoked the Ottoman invasion in Moldavia. When the chancellor decided that the potential use of the cossacks' force was not worth suffering their debauchery, he moved to suppress them. After Nalyvaiko and his men returned from the Danubian theatre in September 1595, they found that their bases in Eastern Podolia were occupied according to the order of Zamoyski by the border defence corps under Żółkiewski. Nalyvaiko reacted to discomfort by marching to Lutsk (Łuck), the East-Volhynian provincial capital, heartland of the Ruthenian princely magnates, where he extorted a huge contribution from the town and Catholic bishop, and ravaged the area. Vengeful Nalyvaiko also attacked Zamoyski's latifundia in Western Podolia, Shargorod. Then he raided the nest of the Polish Rus magnates, party of Zamoyski, Zamość and Sambor. Zamoyski rushed to save Zamość, his baroque creature, and Nalyvaiko moved to Lithuanian Rus occupying Slutsk (Słuck). His attempt to raid the residence at Nesvizh (Nieśwież) of the Radziwiłłs, a leading Lithuanian magnate family, was cut short by the firepower of their household troops. However, he did not turn to his native Polish Ukraine, but to Bobruysk (Bobrujsk) and Mogilev (Mohylew) in the Lithuanian Rus. Nalyvaiko, a skillful artilleryman, was dragging the guns from everywhere.

The unexpected geographical somersault of Nalyvaiko from his native Polish Ukraine to the Polish and Lithuanian Rus brought to life one of the most important objectives of the Ukrainism's strategy, the colonized Ukraine's control over Polish Rus consisting of Galicia, Eastern and Western Volhynia, and Western Podolia. Everywhere in Polish Rus, and as far north in Lithuanian Rus as Minsk and Vitebsk, the roaming Ukrainian cossack bands called up to their ranks all cossacking enthusiasts, marginals, runaway serfs and derailed *szlachta*. The Poles denoted them as *lotrostwo*, rogues or riff-raff. The indiscriminate calling up to cossackdom matched the Ukrainism strategy which treated Polish Rus not as a composition of the social groups that worth to be respected but as a mess of asocial individuals. They became of some value only if they entered the cossackdom where all beginners, like everybody in the frontier, start from scratch, equal and naked. "Ukraine-Rus," the Ukrainism strategy's center of gravity was established, "the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends."⁶² This was not just the below-the-rapids Zaporozhians and royal registered cossacks but the self-styled cossacking *druzhinas* of Nalyvaiko who embodied this fundamental principle.

While cossacking, Nalyvaiko continued laying out his concept of Ukraine in his letters to the Polish rulers. The creation of a cossack quasi-polity in the territory between Dniester and Dnieper was its central idea. All other Nalyvaiko's ideas, social, political and military were expressed in his actions. The Polish political thought of the time was full of different projects, akin to Nalyvaiko's, that were discussed in the king's entourage and *szlachta*'s legislative, the *Sejm*. Two of them were particularly similar, Jan Zamoyski's speech at the *Sejm* in 1590 in the tight air of the impending Ottoman invasion, and a memorandum from the Catholic bishop of Kiev Józef Wereszczyński. Like Nalyvaiko's petition, Zamoyski's plan was geopolitically focused on the Dniester-Southern Bug watershed and Wereszczyński's memorandum was devoted to the cossacks, although it was focused on the middle Dnieper. All three of them viewed the frontier as the chain of fortresses and districts of the regular units, staffed with the cossack settlers.

The king and Zamoyski's reaction to Nalyvaiko's escapades was fiercely negative. The king and chancellor quarreled and cursed each other in public as "tyrant" and "usurper" respectively, but in the case of Nalyvaiko they were unified as never. The king called up the levy of the Lithuanian *szlachta* which was disturbed by Nalyvaiko's manoeuvres in Western Rus, and Zamoyski moved his closest accomplice Żółkiewski against them with the border defence corps.

62 CLAUSEWITZ, *On war*, 595–96.

Together they arranged the funds to build up the additional professional corps of 4,500 cavalry and 2,000 infantry. Sigismund III demanded “the extermination of that scum” and Zamoyski called for the terrorizing of the cossack families and villages “to tear up their roots.”⁶³ Only the cossack-lover Ostrogski the Elder remained alien to this anti-cossack psychosis, as the old prince abstained from chasing Nalyvaiko, his former pupil, and repressing the cossacks, the mainstay of his cherished colonization.

Żółkiewski confirmed his reputation as a fast and unpredictable operational leader. In February 1596, he surprised some of Nalyvaiko’s bands in their winter quarters near Vinnytsia and burned them, daring to a shoot-out barricading in the village, right in among the cottages. And when Nalyvaiko moved to alert and assemble his forces, Żółkiewski ambushed him at the forest trail capturing his wagons and guns. Nalyvaiko escaped to Korsun, and Żółkiewski chased him. At the beginning of April, Nalyvaiko managed to trick and destroy Żółkiewski’s vanguard at Hostrii Kamin near Bila Tserkva. Then he withstood the assault of Żółkiewski’s main forces. The cossacks managed to march downstream of the Dnieper being pursued by Żółkiewski, but in Kaniv the Zaporozhian flotilla helped Nalyvaiko to disengage and ferried him across the Dnieper to Pereiaslav and harassed Żółkiewski’s crossing attempts. Nalyvaiko lodged in Pereiaslav recuperating and Żółkiewski preyed on him nearby complaining that “all of Ukraine turned cossacking.”⁶⁴

When at the end of May 1596, the cossacks moved from Pereiaslav, their army of around 6,000 men was overburdened with their families and possessions that they brought with them when escaping the Polish terror. Bila Tserkva and Pereiaslav belonged to the Ostrogskis, and it was where most of Nalyvaiko’s followers originated. Żółkiewski with the standing border defence corps and magnate forces, 5,000 men in total, crossed the Dnieper and caught up with them after they crossed the river Sula near the town of Lubni.⁶⁵ At the small river Solonitsa he managed to envelop Nalyvaiko. The cossacks stopped and strengthened their wagon-camp with the earthen fortifications. After a couple of weeks of siege, Żółkiewski put the cossack wagon-camp under fierce artillery barrage. The cossacks tried to break from their doomed position but were either destroyed or surrendered. Most of the cossacks were massacred and captured, and only 1,000 managed to escape. Among the victor’s spoil, there were the banners of honor granted to the cossacks by Emperor Rudolf II, Archduke

63 Леп’явко, *Козацькі війни*, 194–95.

64 Леп’явко, *Козацькі війни*, 192.

65 Голобуцький, *Запорозьке казачество*, 141–42; Леп’явко, *Козацькі війни*, 208–209.

Maximilian and *Voivode* Sigismund Bathory for their exploits in Hungary and the Danubian principalities against the Ottomans and Crimeans. It meant that Żółkiewski destroyed the cossack host that fought in the Hapsburgs' service in the Long War. Nalyvaiko was captured. After presenting him to Zamoyski in Lwów, Żółkiewski brought Nalyvaiko to the king in Warsaw, where he was tortured and quartered in April 1597. The cossacks believed that he was roasted alive in the brazen bull like first Christian martyrs were soundly confessing his Ukrainism strategy. Żółkiewski was rewarded with vast lands on the Dnieper's left bank from the Sula to Muscovite frontier, a symbolic prize for his wresting of colonized Ukraine from the cossackdom's grip.

Nalyvaiko's *epopée* did not add much to the social pillar of the Ukrainism strategy as it was cemented by Kosiński but had established its geopolitical pattern. The “[p]erceptions of space are particularly significant for new states as they seek to define their interests.”⁶⁶ The takeover of the colonization's demographic source, Polish Rus, and its subjugation to Polish Ukraine's control became the external principle of the Ukrainism strategy. At the turn of the 16th to the 17th centuries the nobility of Polish Rus and Lithuanian Rus almost totally converted from the Orthodox belief to the Catholicism. The trend was enhanced by the Unia of Brest in 1596 subjugating the Orthodox hierarchy to the Catholic Church. The renegading of the elites to another religion and culture, their dissociation from the commoner Ruthenian society and their adhesion to the hostile Sarmatian myth cleared out the Ruthenian leadership for the newcomers. The cossacks aimed to take apart the social and political structures of Polish Rus and re-establish them according to their alternative ideal of the Polish Ukraine. The Ukrainism strategy of reversing the subordination of a colony to the metropole was outstanding, and became its feature. It was a thrilling vision and hard agenda but not unachievable with the resources and vigour that the Polish Ukraine discovered in itself. Nalyvaiko could be titled an author of the Ukrainism strategy's external perspective in the same way as Kosiński could be titled an author of the Ukrainism strategy's domestic vision, two attitudes that presumed each other and thus were undivided.

The Ukrainism was a flower of strategy, and it is fascinating to see how it burst into blossom from a tiny bud on a thin sprout to a vigorous looker on a mighty stem. The Ukrainism strategy developed on the still smouldering ruins of the Eastern Podolia and Kievan Land of Lithuania where some social and territorial groups survived adapting to the Crimean's devastation by inventing the

66 Black, Jeremy, *Geopolitics and the Quest for Dominance*, 6.



Fig. 16. Stanisław Żółkiewski, an outstanding tactician and operational leader, was one of the first commanders who confronted the potential of the Ukrainism strategy. A portrait by an unknown painter, the 17th c., the National Museum in Cracow, Poland. The public domain, Wikicommons.

cossack way of life which integrated their former traditions and new structures with the diffusion of firearms and growth of a professional military organization. The resulting social constitution was egalitarian, inclusivist, and militaristic. The Ukrainism strategy cherished this arrangement as the Polish Ukraine's native social constitution considering it intrinsic and perfect. It insisted on the political monopoly of this constitution's mainstay, the cossackdom, over the Polish Ukraine and promoted the purge from the Polish Ukraine of any competing social groups. The egalitarian militaristic ideal was the social foundation of the Ukrainism strategy, and the power monopoly of the cossackdom over the Polish Ukraine became its first internal political objective.

The Ukrainism viewed Polish Rus' conversion to the Polish Ukraine's pattern as being natural due to its ethnic, religious, and cultural similarity to the Polish Ukraine. It neglected Polish Rus's social difference as being the product of Polish oppression and assimilation. The takeover of Polish Rus and its "liberation" from the Polish "implants" became the first external objective of the Ukrainism strategy. It was a true revolutionary program because Polish Rus' society was very different from cossackdom's ideals. It was not egalitarian, inclusivist, and militaristic, but was a society of segregated elite and oppressed commoners, which ostracized marginals and imposed the hereditary elite's monopoly over the military. It was the powerbase of the cossackdom's archenemy, the Polish Ukraine magnates with their Sarmatism strategy and position to channel the resources of the Commonwealth's heartland to their selfish purposes. "[R]evolutions are carried on in an atmosphere of secrecy, betrayal, and deception."⁶⁷ However, the actions of the Ukrainism and Sarmatism's bearers display their mutual stand clearly without doubts. They raced to civil war eager for the opponent's extermination.

IV. QUI EST INIMICUS TUUS? AN AFTERWORD.

The disintegration of the Late Medieval model of the Golden Horde's hegemony in Eastern Europe produced a perilous power vacuum that became at once a stunning prospect. The states of the region turned to make up their strategies to counter the danger and exploit the available chances. They produced strategies that were determined by their respective social constitution, political regime, ideology, and military structures. It was not surprising that their first reaction was conservative in fencing off the Wild Field, the Golden Horde's deserted heartland, and its decrepit satellite Lithuania. The Ottoman Empire dared to oc-

67 SHY and COLLIER, "Revolutionary War," 818.

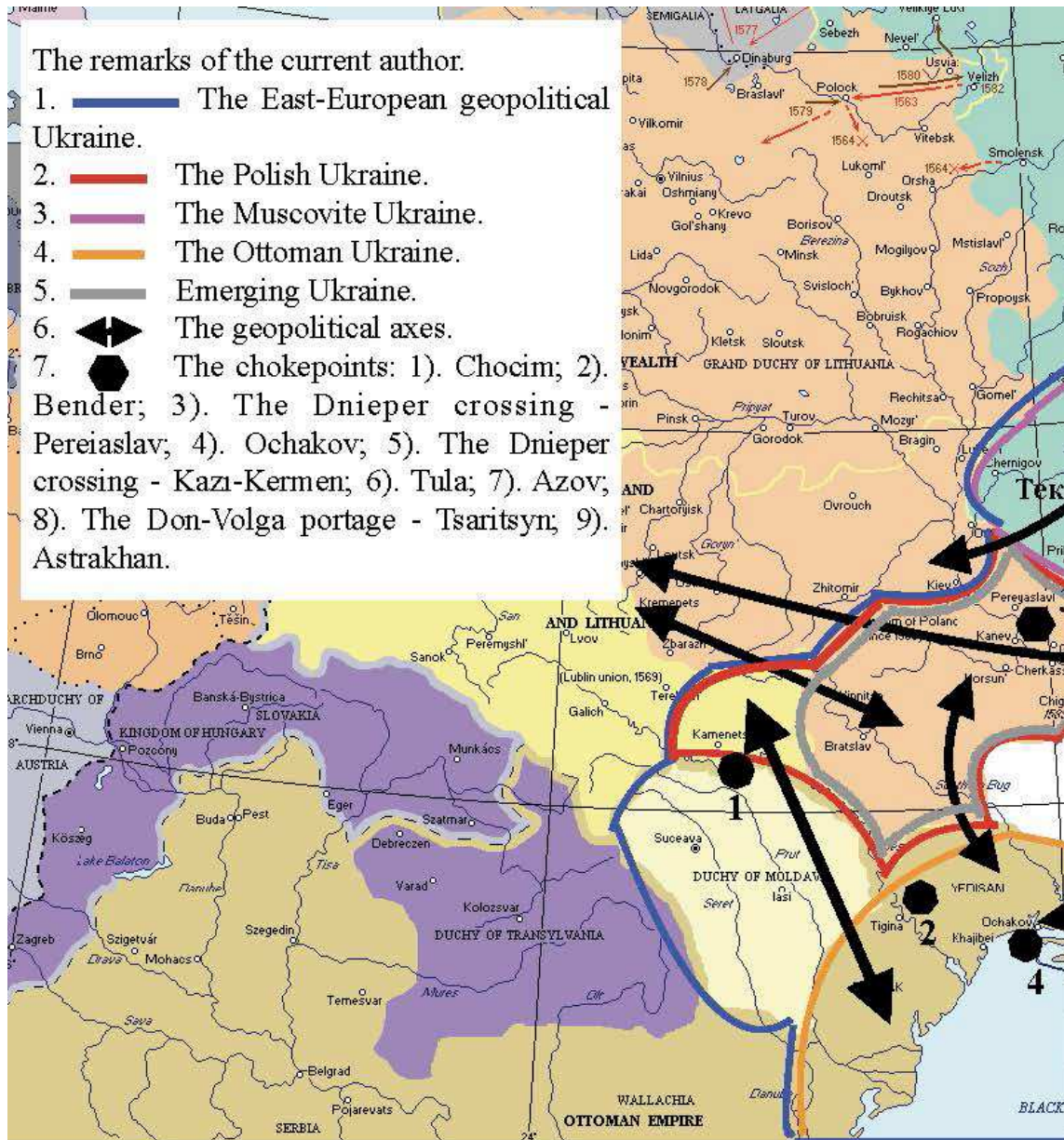
copy the Golden Horde's seaside periphery. Muscovy and Poland moved to annex the ruins of Lithuania. And the Crimean Khanate rearranged the Wild Field as the launchpad to prey on Rus. The Polish *Antemurale*, Muscovite All-Rus, Ottoman Lake, and Crimean Predation strategies were laid out and practised. They viewed the south of Eastern Europe as fragments while neglecting its wholeness. However, the life cycle of these strategies was short; only a century.

The new strategies rearranged the nation's political and military situation. The formation of the Polish Sarmatism, Muscovite Wild Field, Ottoman Horizon, and Ukrainism strategies demonstrated that the notion of a strategy is not merely an action of rulers in relation to resource allocation for war and the prioritization of targets. Strategy is a more complex and long-term matter. It has its social foundation and principles, internal and external objectives, and a geopolitical axis. It also has a special underlay of an operational pattern that is grounded in the composition, weaponry, and tactic of forces. Strategy lives longer than a group of decision-makers in power, as it repeats the life-cycle of its fundamental components.

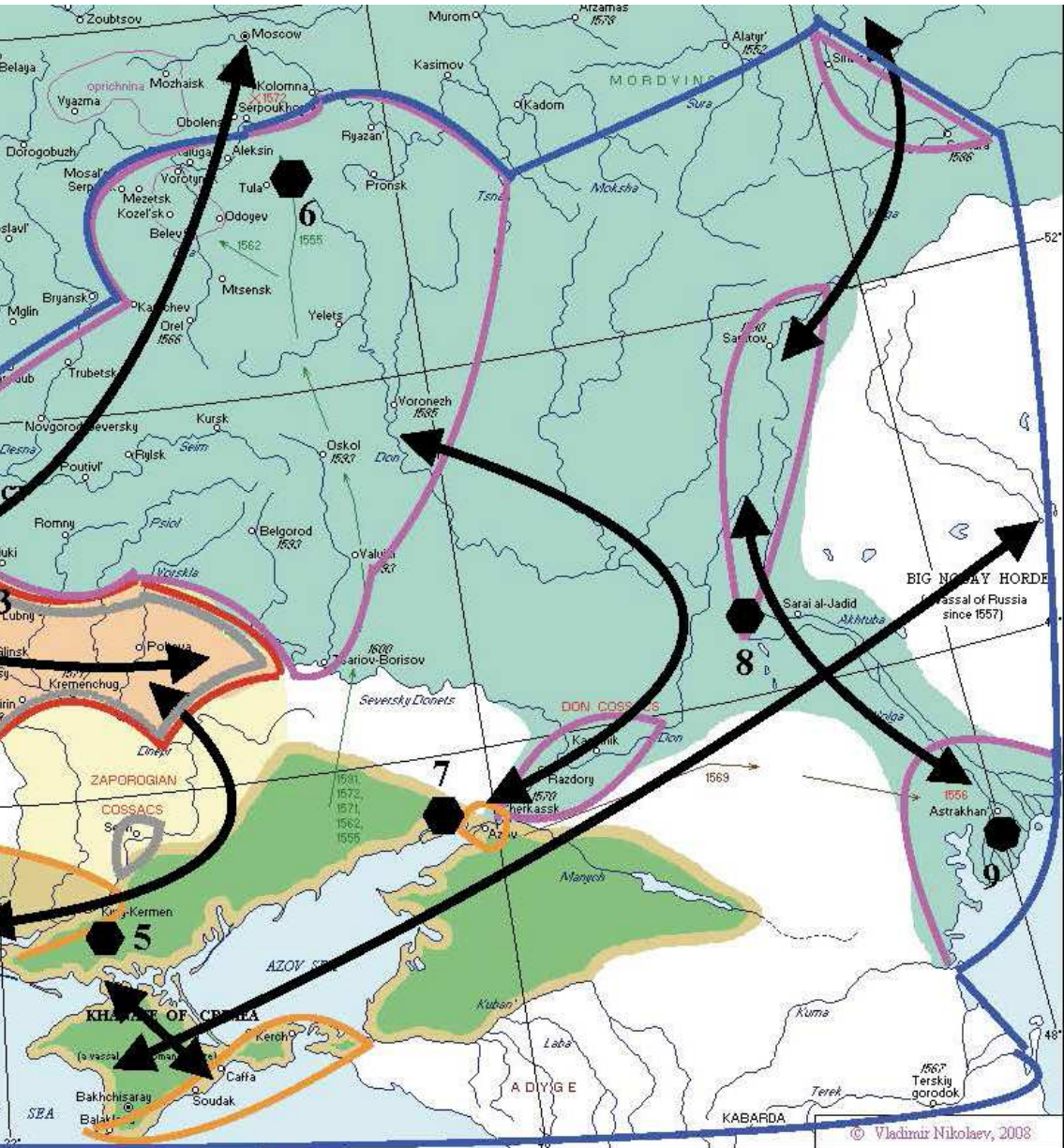
The dynamic of the Early Modern Period enabled the East-European states to change themselves according to their new strategic perspectives. They established the new pattern of the resources' extraction, allocation, and control. The transformation of warfare became the most evident component of the new strategies. It was the upgrade that David Parrot views as the need "to keep armies in being for decades." "Ever-more protracted warfare"⁶⁸ enabled the operational planning that made strategy truly practicable. The new operational capabilities of the troops consolidated the Ukraine as a unified geopolitical entity. The revelation changed the strategic situation and priorities of all of the states presented in Eastern Europe. Their strategies overlap in the Ukraine as they moved to compete over the Ukraine in its wholeness. The operational axes of their offensive were thus determined, and the contender's chokepoints were attacked.

However, the main strategic conflict in the East-European Ukraine was not an interstate one by the beginning of the 17th century. It developed between the social-military groups in the foundation of the new strategies. The Commonwealth assigned the colonization of the Polish Ukraine to the magnates. But it was labored and defended by the cossacks, a self-made corporation of handgunners. They opposed the Commonwealth's magnate regime in an inevitable civil war. Muscovy assigned its frontier to the emerging military bureaucracy. But the advance of the Muscovite Ukraine was labored and fought over

68 PARROT, *The Business of War*, 153.



Map 5. The East-European geopolitical Ukraine with its strategic axes and chokepoints, national Ukraines, and emerging Ukraine by the end of the 16th century. The background map “East Europe in the Second Half of the 16th century” by Vladimir V. Nikolaev is reproduced by his courtesy, <https://historyatlas.ru>. The remarks of the current author.



by the class of hireling handgunners, of service cossacks. They challenged the Muscovite bureaucracy in the ongoing civil war. The Ottomans employed the commoner handgunners in their Northern Black Sea Ukraine, who were similar to the bands that unfolded civil war against the Ottoman elites in the Anatolian heartland. The new cycle of civil wars in the south of Eastern Europe was inevitable due to the polarization of the heartlands and frontiers against each other. It was like the eve of a thunderstorm with high voltage condensing between sky and ground. The oncoming civil war opened four different strategic prospects to the frontier entities of the East-European Ukraine. First, there was a chance to become a separate nation. Second, there was an option to merge with the metropole heartland into a novel symbiosis. Third, there was an opportunity to overrun and subjugate the heartland. And fourth, there was a danger of being smashed into submission and uniformity with the heartland. All of the Ukrainian strategies, the Muscovite Wild Field, Polish Sarmatism, Ottoman Horizon, and Ukrainism strategies, contained these prospects.

This was the burning agenda for the Ukrainism strategy due to its ownership and leaders, and also its enemy. Ownership of the strategy is its key feature,⁶⁹ while leadership is the strategy's centre of gravity.⁷⁰ The Ukrainism strategy belonged to the self-made social-military group of the Polish Ukraine, the cossackdom. The outcast marginals were its leaders. They were abhorred and alienated by the Commonwealth's elite of the magnates and *szlachta*. Other Ukrainian strategies, the Polish Sarmatism, the Muscovite Wild Field and Ottoman Horizon strategies, were shared by the factions of the ruling elites and frontier social-military groups. The Ukrainism and Sarmatism strategies had the same commitment, namely Polish Rus and the Polish Ukraine, and they had nothing in common. They excluded each other presuming the extermination of the respective rivals' political structures and social-military groups. The antagonism of the Ukrainism and Sarmatism strategies is a clear expression of the aggressive, warmonger nature of strategy. The "enemy-making," perception and targeting of the enemy is the pinnacle of strategy, and constitutes its conceptual pivot to which the geopolitical and military axes are addendums. The confrontational nature determines strategy's inner structure and outer dynamic. Both the Ukrainism and Sarmatism strategies were socially grounded, politically radical, ideologically aggressive, and military offensive strategies. They called for a war of which there was only one outcome, either Ukraine or naught.

69 BLACK, *Military Strategy*, 19.

70 HANDEL, *Masters of War*, 44.

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Painting by the Mughal court artists Tulsī the Elder and Jagjivan from the Akbarnama (Book of the Moghul Emperor Akbar, 1592/95) depicting the Moghul army, led by general Shuja'at Khan, pursuing in 1565 the rebel ex-vizier Asaf Khan on the River Ganges in North-East India. Victoria and Albert Museum (wikimedia Commons).

War, Strategy, and Environment on South Asia's Northwestern Frontier, 1000-1800

PRATYAY NATH

In the late twentieth century, the Dutch Indologist Jan Heesterman suggested that the driving force of South Asian history had been the repeated conflicts between nomadic and sedentary societies and the desire of these mutually dependent spheres to expand into each other.¹ He suggested that far from cordoning off the nomadic realms from the agricultural world of South Asia, the two spheres existed side by side within the subcontinent. They were separated by a porous zone of separation – ‘a ragged and shifting internal one’, which Heesterman called the ‘inner frontier’.² Heesterman’s student Andre Wink and their student Jos Gommans have carried these ideas forward since the 1990s. They have both written extensively on the frontiers between the nomadic and sedentary realms as well as the polities that emerged as a result of the interactions between these them. They have introduced to South Asian historiography the category of post-nomadism, which in turn has nuanced our knowledge on these political cum ecological interactions greatly.³

1 J.C. Heesterman, ‘Warrior, Peasant and Brahmin’, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 29, no. 3, 1995, pp. 637-654. See pp. 644, 646.

2 J.C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship and Society* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 170-171.

3 Relevant works of Wink include Andre Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, vol. I: *Early Medieval India and the Expansion of Islam 7th-11th Centuries* (Boston and Leiden: Brill, [1990] 2002), especially pp. 109-218; Andre Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, vol. II: *The Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquest 11th-13th Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), especially pp. 111-149, 182-264; Andre Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, vol. III: *Indo-Islamic Society 14th-15th Centuries* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), especially pp. 79-96, 119-169; Andre Wink, ‘Post-Nomadic Empires: From the Mongols to the Mughals’, in Peter Fibiger Bang and C.A. Bayly (eds), *Tributary Empires in Global History* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 120-131. Important works on the subject by Gommans include Jos Gommans, ‘The Silent Frontier of South Asia, c.1200-1800’, *Journal of World History* 9 (1998): 1-23; Jos Gommans, ‘The Eurasian Frontier after the First Millenium AD: Reflections along the Fringe of Time and Space’, *The Medi-*

The northwestern frontier of South Asia featured prominently in these discussions, most so in the works of Gommans. Since 1994, but especially between 1998 and 2007, he wrote a series of articles that offer his key reflections on the history of nomadic-sedentary interactions across this frontier.⁴ Here he argues that since the beginning of the second millennium CE, South Asia got closely integrated to the Central Eurasian arid zone. Due to increased demographic pressure in this arid zone and their military proficiency based on the use of mounted archery, nomadic communities started making inroads deep into South Asia across its northwestern frontier. This resulted in periodic nomadic incursions on the one hand and post-nomadic state-formation in South Asia on the other. Around the same time as Gommans was publishing these articles, Wink used the same framework to write the history of nomadic armies and sedentary states in South Asia between the seventh and fifteenth centuries. Together, their use of the lens of nomadic-sedentary interactions has helped us understand better a history that was conventionally studied in terms of the political conflict wrought by Muslim invaders in an erstwhile Hindu India.

The present chapter surveys this history for the first eight centuries of the second millennium CE in terms of war and strategy of both the armies invading Hindustan (during the period under study, this referred to the North Indian plains) across the northwestern frontier as well as North Indian states seeking to defend themselves. The aim is to provide a cogent overview of the political and military events during this period. Hopefully this will facilitate more thematic analysis on the subject in the future; for now, it seems worthwhile to compile this long history in one place. After a discussion of this history in five sections, I analyse specifically the environmental dimensions of these military campaigns across the frontier in the final section. The conclusion offers my views on what remained constant and what changed in terms of strategy on the frontier through these eight centuries. As for sources, I have relied on contemporary sources only for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which falls within my ambit of expertise. For the rest, I have relied on the works of other scholars.

It needs to be mentioned at the outset that the northwestern frontier was not a border in the modern sense. This is because countries as territorial units did not exist during the centuries under discussion. The frontier was in effect a region. This region kept on shifting between modern Afghanistan, Pakistan, and west-

eval History Journal 1, no. 1 (1998): 125-145; Jos Gommans, 'Warhorse and Post-Nomadic Empire in Asia, c. 1000-1800', *Journal of Global History* 2, no. 1 (2007): 1-21.

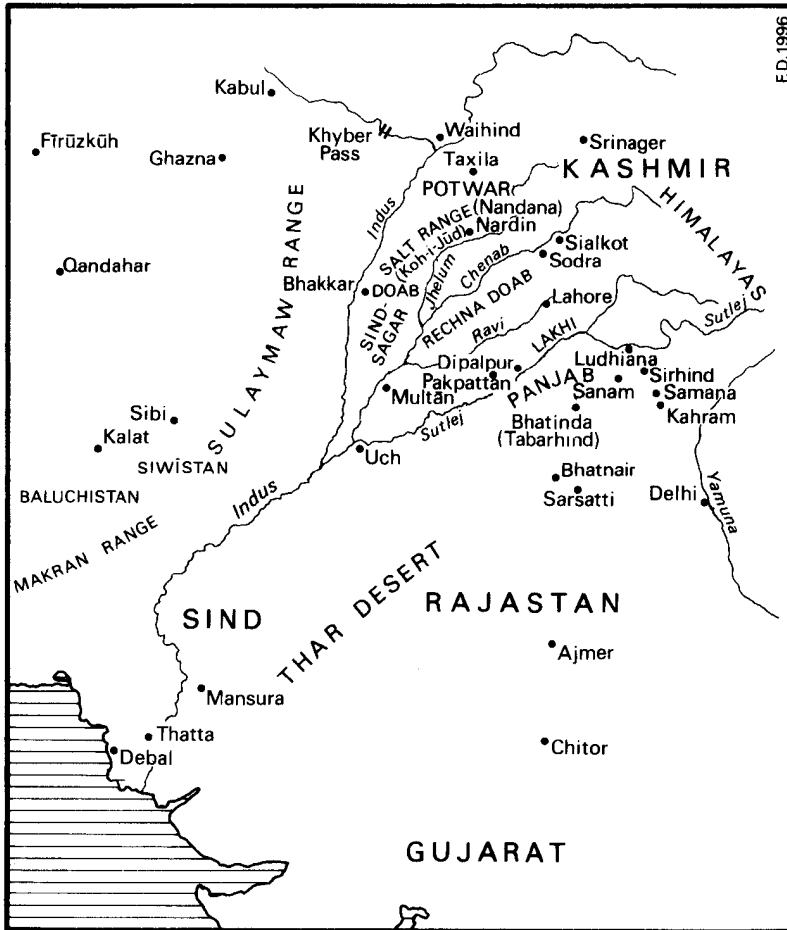
4 These essays have now been published together in the volume Jos Gommans, *The Indian Frontier: Horse and Warband in the Making of Empires* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018).

ern India, depending on the changing political geography of the area. We need to see the frontier not as a line that separated India from the outside world, but as a part of a political continuum stretching from North India in the east to Iran in the west and Central Asia in the north. There was no sense of the internal and the external as they exist today; rather, this entire area frequently had the character of a borderland between these three world regions. Yet, there were phases as under the Ghaznavid rulers of the tenth through the twelfth centuries and the Afghan empire of Ahmad Shah in the eighteenth century, when parts of this borderland emerged as the heartland of expansive polities. Because of these complexities, we have to approach the question of the frontier with caution.

Geographically, the northwestern frontier presented a complex topography. In the west, today's Afghanistan presents an arid assemblage of rugged hills, ravines, and defiles along with fertile valleys, grasslands, and deserts. To the east, this is separated from the north-south aligned Indus Basin by a system of mountains that run from the Hindu Kush in the north to Baluchistan in the south. The Indus originates in Tibet and flows across the entire length of modern Pakistan to drain into the Arabian Sea. Its northern sector is dominated by the massive Punjab Plains. Drained by the Indus and its five major tributaries and bordered by Kashmir and the Himalayan foothills on the north, the Punjab also comprises the westernmost sector of the vast North Indian plains. South of the Punjab, the Indus drains the arid plains along a narrow basin. To the east, this Lower Indus Basin is bounded by the Rann of Kachchh in Gujarat and the Thar Desert in Rajasthan. The Punjab, on the other hand, merges into the plains of the Indo-Gangetic Divide to the east, which ultimately open up to the Gangetic Basin further east. On the whole this expansive northwestern frontier region has historically served as a zone of environmental transition between more arid Iran and Central Asia, and more humid South Asia. In other words, it functions as an environmental frontier as well.⁵

The environmental complexity of the region is complemented by a highly diverse demographic distribution. Throughout the period under study, Afghanistan, Sind, and Baluchistan housed large nomadic communities. The various Afghan tribes resisted political overlordship by state powers, hence disciplining them became an integral part of the strategy of any polity seeking to control Afghanistan. Similarly, state powers had to manage the pastoralist Ghakkars in Punjab. In the Punjab Plains and the Indo-Gangetic Divide, one major pastoral community was the Jats, who slowly though not irreversibly shifted to agriculture in course of the eleventh through seventeenth

⁵ Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. I, 109-218; Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. III, 82-89.



Map. 1. The Northwestern Frontier of South Asia at the time of the Delhi Sultanate
 Source: Andre Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, vol. II: *The Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquest 11th-13th Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 236.

centuries.⁶ Punjab and the Indo-Gangetic Divide also housed large sedentary communities who were a source of agrarian revenue to North Indian states. Just like the environmental factors, all these communities made sure that the clashes between invaders from beyond the northwestern frontier and North Indian states did not occur in a vacuum; rather, these clashes unfolded in constant negotiation with the environmental and demographic complexities of the region.

6 Chetan Singh, 'Conformity and Conflict: Tribes and the 'Agrarian System' of Mughal India', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 25, no. 3 (1988): 319-340.

Ghaznavid and Ghurid Invasions

In the mid-tenth century, Alptigin, a Turkish mamluk commander of the Samanid Empire, carved out a semi-independent area of influence around Ghazni. From this, originated the Ghaznavid Empire that dominated Afghanistan and the neighbouring areas during the tenth and the eleventh centuries. When Ghaznavid power arose, Hindu Shahi kingdoms dominated eastern Iran, the Kabul area of Afghanistan, and the Punjab Basin. Since the fourth decade of the tenth century, Ghaznavid strategy focused on gradually dislodging them through regular raids and bringing the lands up to the Indus under their control. Between 933 and 963, Ghaznavid armies overran the Lamghan area in eastern Afghanistan and the Multan area in the central part of the Punjab Basin. They allied with the Afghan communities that dominated eastern Afghanistan on behalf of the Hindu Shahis. In the late 970s, Ghaznavid armies captured Bust, Qusdar, and Qandahar in southern Afghanistan. From here, they extended eastward and seized possession of most lands up to the Indus by the early 990s.⁷ From this point till the early twelfth century, most of Afghanistan centred on Ghazni served as the Ghaznavid political heartland from which armies launched their regular invasions eastward into North India. It also served as the homeland of these invaders, where most of the armies would return to after the raids.

Next, the Ghaznavids focused on overrunning the Punjab Plains. In the early eleventh century, they dislodged the Hindu Shahi ruler Anandapala from Kabul, who then fell back upon Lahore. In the face of renewed Ghaznavid pressure, he eventually fled northward to Kashmir in 1006. Andre Wink identifies him as an important figure in a political confederacy of rulers whose kingdoms stretched across the Indus Basin from the Punjab to the Sind. Following his lead, several other rulers of Multan and other parts of the Punjab also fled to Kashmir. With their strategy revolving around penetrating the Punjab Plains to ultimately reach Hindustan, the Ghaznavids were happy to not interfere in the distant and mountainous region of Kashmir.⁸ The raids into the Punjab gained momentum under Mahmud, who had ascended the throne of Ghazni at the close of the tenth century. At the beginning of the eleventh century, his forces captured Peshawar,

7 Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. II, 126-129. For a focused analysis of the Ghaznavid polity, see C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran 994-1040* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1992); Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids: Splendour and Decay: The Dynasty in Afghanistan and Northern India, 1040-1186* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1992).

8 Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. II, 121-123.

Waihind, followed by Bhatinda, Bhatnair, Sirsa, and Abahr in 1004-05.⁹ Aside from the Hindu Shahis, they also attacked the Ismaili polities in the area in 1006, 1008, and 1010 and invaded Nagarkot in 1008. The capture of Narayan near Alwar and Nandana gave them access directly into the Ganga-Yamuna Doab.¹⁰ Lahore was eventually captured during Mahmud's reign. Since then, the Ghaznavids transformed this city into a major base in the Punjab. In 1039, Mahmud's son suggested the shifting of the Ghaznavid capital to Lahore. Although this did not happen, Lahore continued to be an important Ghaznavid base. With the dynasty losing Afghanistan and Khurasan to the Saljuqs in the mid-twelfth century, Lahore and nearby areas in the Punjab became the main Ghaznavid holdings.¹¹

For the Ghaznavid armies, the Punjab Plains were a conduit to the far more fertile and richer parts in Hindustan. Since the early eleventh century, their strategy centred on targeting the towns of these parts, sometimes repeatedly. In 1011, their armies raided Thanesar, followed subsequently by Mathura, Kanauj, and Manjhawan. Raiding the temples of these places became a major source of plunder for them. Already having crossed the Yamuna during this campaign, subsequent Ghaznavid armies penetrated deeper and crossed the Ganga too. In Central India, they seized Gwalior and Kalinjar in 1022-23 from the Chandela rulers and repeatedly raided the temple of Somnath in western India afterwards.¹² In 1030-31, an army under Sayyid Salar Masud Ghazi led an abortive eastward attack on Awadh, followed by another invasion in 1033. The more successful second campaign enabled the Ghaznavid army to plough its way through the Gangetic Basin and raid Benaras.¹³ Under the descendants of Mahmud, the Turks led more raids into the Gangetic Basin and Central India periodically between the 1060s and the 1110s. These attacks into Hindustan abated for some decades in the twelfth century, as first the Saljuqs and then the Ghurids increasingly prevailed over the Ghaznavids.

By 1040, the Ghaznavids started losing territory in their homeland to the emergent Saljuq power in Khurasan and Iran. Ghaznavid rulers maintained a relatively circumscribed existence in eastern and northern Afghanistan and Punjab for another one hundred years. They eventually gave way to the Ghurids, a

9 Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. II, 129.

10 Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. II, 130.

11 Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. II, 129-134.

12 Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. II, 131.

13 Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. II, 132-133.

Tajik or eastern Iranian dynasty from the Afghan highlands.¹⁴ Alauddin Jahansoz of the emergent Shansabanid house of Ghur seized and destroyed Ghazni. With a Saljuq mandate, he extended his control over Tukharistan, Bust, Zamindawar, Bamiyan, and eastern Iran. Ghazni was eventually revived, and it became the base of the later Ghurid sultan Ghiyasuddin's brother Muizzuddin. While much of Afghanistan and eastern Iran remained divided among the members of the Shansabanid clan, the incursions into Hindustan occurred under the leadership of Muizzuddin as an extension of his princely appendage in Ghazni.¹⁵

Like the Ghaznavids before them, the Ghurids wanted to reach North India. However, with Ghaznavid rulers still present in Lahore and other parts of the Punjab, Muizzuddin Muhammad of Ghur initially sought to find an alternate route. In 1175 and 1178, he tried to open a southerly route from Afghanistan to Hindustan via the Lower Indus Basin and Gujarat.¹⁶ Failing to achieve this, his troops switched strategy and overran the Indus Basin and Punjab Plains. They gradually seized Peshawar, Debal, Makran, and Sialkot, thereby gaining command over almost the entire Indus Basin. Ghaznavid Lahore fell in 1186 and Muizzuddin installed a Ghurid governor in the city.¹⁷ This command over the Indus Basin and forward stations in the Punjab Plains gave Muizzuddin ample opportunity to push his armies further eastward. This is what brought them in conflict in the Indo-Gangetic Divide with the forces of the Chauhan Rajputs, who controlled the region between Delhi and Ajmer.

Followed by a defeat at Tarain near Thanesar in 1191, the Ghurid armies managed to reverse their fortune the next year by beating the Chauhan Rajput king Prithviraj and capturing the strategically located city of Delhi.¹⁸ This gave them direct access into the Gangetic Basin. In 1193, they defeated the Rathors of Kanauj and Benaras in the Gangetic Basin and occupied these territories. They seized Bayana near Agra in 1195-96, followed by Gwalior. Ghurid armies captured Nahrwala in Gujarat in 1197, Badaun and Katehr in the western Gangetic Basin in 1197-98, Kanauj in 1198-99, and Kalinjar, Mahoba, and Khajuraho in Central India in 1202-03. Badaun acted as the launchpad for further eastward campaigns of conquest against Awadh, Bihar, and Bengal down the Gangetic

14 Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. II, 134.

15 Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. II, 140-141.

16 Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. II, 143.

17 Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. II, 143-144.

18 Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. II, 144-146.

Basin in the early years of the thirteenth century.¹⁹

There was a distinct difference in the strategy adopted by the Ghaznavids and the Ghurids. The Ghaznavid invasions of North India were mainly aimed at aggrandizing their holdings in their political heartland in Afghanistan. This is clear in the targets and actions they chose from the very beginning. In most cases, they looted temples and sacked cities, taking the riches back to Ghazni. Their conquests in the Punjab were more of an outcome of these campaigns than a preliminary objective. Once they occupied this area, it became a launchpad of raids further eastward. On the other hand, the Ghurid forces were much more interested in conquering their way eastward from Afghanistan. Nothing demonstrates this more than the Delhi sultanate which emerged out of these large-scale territorial conquests. However, soon after they assumed control of large parts of Hindustan, a new threat emerged on their northwestern frontier.

Mongols and the Delhi Sultanate

With the foundation of the independent Delhi sultanate around 1206, the spatial configuration of the region changed drastically. Delhi, once a frontier outpost for the Ghurid sultanate, was now the centre of a new polity based in Hindustan. Afghanistan, earlier the homeland of the Ghurid invaders, now became a distant land, one that soon came to be controlled by new powers. Between Afghanistan and Hindustan, the Punjab Plains and the Indus Basin stood as an expansive frontier region. The Mamluk Turks and their armies now had to defend this frontier against new invaders. Since the 1220s, the Mongols of Chinggis Khan and his descendants began to make their way towards North India. Following Chinggis Khan's death in 1227, the raids mainly owed to the Mongols settled in Khorasan, Central Asia, and Afghanistan. These raids continued at least till the third decade of the fourteenth century.

As Peter Jackson argues, a variety of factors motivated these invasions. The lure of slaves in large numbers as well as the increasing wealth of the Delhi sultanate served as major incentives. Horses might have been important among the loot for the parts of Punjab rich in pasture and known for horse-rearing. Some of the invasions might have been a part of seasonal migrations of the nomadic Mongols, whereby entire armies of men, women, and children made annual raiding expeditions into Hindustan.²⁰ The presence of rival Mongol powers in

19 Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. II, 146-148.

20 Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History* (Cambridge: Cambridge

Turan and Iran made attacking Hindustan a more suitable alternative than clashing with them.

During this period, the Chaghadayid Mongols remained firmly entrenched in Central Asia and the Ilkhanid Mongols in Iran. Afghanistan remained a contested territory between them. Parts of it sometimes remained under the direct control of one of these groups, while at other times they exercised control through client rulers. Since the 1290s, the Chaghadayid Mongols started bearing down on the Afghan and the Punjab regions as their armies moved increasingly south of the Oxus. By the close of the thirteenth century, their armies established themselves in Afghanistan and from there bore down upon Iran in the west and the Punjab Plains in the southeast.²¹ In the early fourteenth century, the Afghan region came to be hotly contested between the Ilkhanid Mongols of Iran and the Chaghadayid Mongols of Central Asia. The Ilkhans initially threatened Chaghadayid control over Khurasan and Afghanistan. But a reversal of political fortunes helped a revival of Chaghadayid overall control in these parts. Still, occasional Ilkhanid attacks like the one in 1326 ravaged Kabul, Zabulistan, and Ghazni.²² At the same time, increasingly regular offensives from Multan and Lahore by sultanate commanders like the future sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq also started threatening Mongol control over Afghanistan.²³

The primary strategy of Mongol forces from Central Asia or Afghanistan was to dominate the Punjab Basin. In 1223-24, Mongol forces directed their attacks against Nandana, Lahore, and Multan.²⁴ In 1238-39, they devastated parts of Kashmir.²⁵ They captured Lahore in 1241 and Multan in 1245-46.²⁶ During the 1240s, Mongol inroads into the Punjab became an annual events in spite of defensive arrangements of the sultanate.²⁷ The campaigns of 1252 helped them push the frontier between their realm and the Delhi sultanate eastward as they conquered Lahore, Kujah, and Sodra. The sultanate also lost Sind around

University Press, 1999) 235-237.

21 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 217-220.

22 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 226-227.

23 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 229.

24 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 104.

25 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 105.

26 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 105-106.

27 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 106.

this time.²⁸ In 1257-58, Mongol troops captured Uchch and Multan.²⁹ Tributary rulers of the Mongols controlled Binban, the Salt Range, and the middle and upper reaches of the Indus.³⁰ By the late 1250s, Mongol control extended further eastward up to the river Beas. The 1260s saw more attacks deeper into the Punjab by the Neguderi Mongols.³¹ Even when the sultanate recaptured and held on to some of the forts like Lahore, the adjoining countryside still fell prey to Mongol raids, as it happened in 1287.³² In 1297-98, such an attack ravaged the Punjab up to Qasur.³³ Punjab was also devastated around 1328-29 as a result of the major invasion by Tarmashirin Khan. Chaghadayid Mongols under him ravaged a large area in Lahore, Samana, and Indri, before attacking western parts of the Gangetic Basin.³⁴ Overall, these attacks on the Punjab deprived the Delhi sultanate of resources it could have otherwise claimed and also threatened the security of its political heartland.

By the close of the thirteenth century, two tendencies become visible in these Mongol attacks towards Hindustan. Firstly, with the sultanate firmly in command of the Gangetic Basin, its armies started venturing southwestward first into today's Rajasthan and Gujarat, and later into peninsular India. Secondly, from this time onward, we see regular incursions into the Punjab by the Central Asian Mongols. What is distinctly recognizable as a strategy that these Mongols adopted is that they would mount invasions when the main sultanate armies would be away from the Delhi area on campaigns elsewhere in India.

While the Punjab Plains bore the brunt of the Mongol attacks, the latter often found its way further into Hindustan. The prime target beyond the Punjab was Delhi, the capital of the sultanate. This was the case with the attack towards Delhi by Mongols under Qutlugh Qocha in 1299-1300 and those under Tara-ghai in 1302-03.³⁵ For the invaders, blockades of Delhi like the one in 1302-03 was compounded by keeping sultanate garrisons in cities of the Punjab like Multan, Dipalpur, and Samana engaged so that they could not send reinforcements to the capital. On this particular occasion, assuming control of the Yamu-

28 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 113.

29 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 113.

30 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 113.

31 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 117.

32 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 117-118.

33 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 221.

34 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 232.

35 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 221.

na crossings to the east of the capital allowed the Mongols to prevent sultanate reinforcements reaching Delhi from the Gangetic Basin as well.³⁶ Similarly in 1305, another invasion that overran the Punjab, plundered its way to the east first along the Himalayan foothills and then further eastward across the Ganga into Awadh, Amroha, and Badaun in the Gangetic Basin.³⁷ On another occasion, Mongol invaders entered the sultanate realms near Multan and made their way first into Kuhram and Samana, and then southward to Nagaur.³⁸ With the Punjab Plains and adjoining areas overrun regularly in this way, the strategy of the Delhi sultans prioritised defending the capital city of Delhi. This was especially true during the early fourteenth century, when the attacks by the Central Asian Mongols greatly threatened the city. Sometimes the sultanate forces adopted a proactive stance and marched out of the capital to meet the invaders to the north of the city, as in 1299-1300. At other times, sultans would adopt a more defensive posture and garrison the city itself waiting for a fight, as in 1302-03.³⁹

Sometimes, there would be a domino effect of Central Asian or Iranian powers attacking the rulers of the northwestern frontier region, who in turn would lead incursions towards Hindustan. For instance, when Mongol armies defeated Hasan Qarluq, the rulers of the area around Ghazni and Binban, he made his way eastward and attacked Uchch and later Multan.⁴⁰ Another case in point was a branch of the Mongols called the Negüderis, who – beaten by other Mongols – invaded the area between Ghazni, Multan, and Lahore in the 1260s.⁴¹ Their insertion between Hindustan on the one hand and Turan and Iran on the other was favourable for the sultans, as their holdings effectively became a buffer for the North Indian polity. Peter Jackson points out that in shielding Hindustan from the Mongols in Iran, the Kartid polity of Herat and the semi-autonomous polity of Sistan added to the contribution of the Negüderis.⁴² But this also complicated the situation more. As Jackson highlights, the Negüderi attacks on the Punjab at one point might have been triggered by the Kartid capture of Qandahar, which lay close to Negüderi territory.

The strategic posture of the Delhi sultans towards these invaders varied de-

36 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 223.

37 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 227.

38 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 228.

39 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 221-222.

40 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 105.

41 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 115.

42 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 121.

pending on the seriousness of the Mongol threat, the political situation in Hindustan, and the military ambitions of the sultans. In several instances, they adopted an aggressive stance. The operations of Iltutmish against the troops of the Khwarazmshah gave the sultanate the control of several forts including Gujarat, Nandana, Sodra, and Siyalkot between the Jhelam and the Ravi in the Punjab.⁴³ Balban led his forces up to the Indus to counter Mongol invaders in 1246-47.⁴⁴ In 1252, Mahmud Shah led his forces to Sind via Lahore to repel Mongol attacks in the area.⁴⁵ Under Muhammad bin Tughlaq, the sultan's armies for the first time mounted a major offensive against the Mongols. Soon after 1324, he took up station in Lahore as his armies seized Kalanaur and Peshawar.⁴⁶ An aggressive cultural strategy that Muhammad deployed shortly after this military advance was to woo scholars, bureaucrats, and soldiers from Turan to Hindustan. This bore fruit. Contemporary texts record that since the middle of the 1330s, Mongols of various occupation started streaming into the Delhi sultanate.⁴⁷ The soldiers among these immigrants strengthened the sultanate armies greatly.

In some cases, as with the Mongol attack on Sind and Multan in 1257, the sultans actively avoided conflict with the invaders and allowed their troops to overrun the Lower Indus Basin.⁴⁸ The sultanate would periodically also repair the fortifications in the Punjab to strengthen its defenses against the Mongol invaders. Immediately after the major invasion of 1302-03, for instance, Alauddin Khalji had the fortresses of Kaithal and Hansi repaired.⁴⁹ In these conflicts, towns like Lahore, Multan, Sunam, and Samana repeatedly emerged in importance, both as targets of Mongol attacks as bulwarks of sultanate defenses. Several rulers, including Ghiyasuddin Balban, Jalaluddin Khalji, and Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq emerged as strong military commanders early in their lives through their service against the Mongols on the northwestern frontier.

After the 1330s, there was an abatement of the Mongol incursions. However, peace on the northwestern frontier did not last long. It was ultimately undermined not by the Mongols, but by the Turkish warrior-conqueror Amir Timur at the close of the fourteenth century.

43 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 112-113.

44 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 106.

45 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 111.

46 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 231.

47 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 233-234.

48 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 112.

49 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 223-224.

Timurid Invasions and Afghan Sultanates

Timur made Samarqand and other areas of the southern part of Central Asia the centre of his new empire. In the footsteps of Chinggis Khan, he built a vast empire comprising Central Asia, Iran, Iraq, and other parts of West Asia in course of the second half of the fourteenth century. Following initial conquests in Afghanistan on his eastern frontier, Timur made over to his grandson Pir Muhammad the regions of Kabul, Ghazni, Qandahar, and Qunduz. One of Timur's strategic aims was to attack North India. With this in mind, he gave his grandson the mandate to expand eastward. Accordingly, he led his armies across the Indus in 1397, and seized the towns of Uchh and Multan by the next year. Timur joined him there later that year. He sent his main force into North India via Dipalpur and Samana. He led a smaller force to seize and sack Bhatner and Sarsati, before rejoining his army. This combined force defeated the army of the Tughlaq sultanate near Delhi in 1398. As his forces sacked the Tughlaq capital, sultanate forces withdrew into the Gangetic Basin and towards Gujarat. Timur's armies advanced eastward, seized Mirat, and attacked Hardwar. From there, he wheeled westward along the Himalayan foothills to the north of the Punjab Plains, attacking Jammu in 1399.⁵⁰

Like the Mongol invaders before him, Timur showed no desire to have permanent conquests in Hindustan. The incursions into the Punjab Plains and the Indus Basin came as projection of power from Afghanistan. His entire strategy focused on using these expeditions to launch a campaign against the capital of the Delhi sultanate and neighbouring areas. The sack of several towns including Delhi provided him with the immense riches he must have had hoped for. Peter Jackson argues that the reason for Timur's greater success compared to the Mongol armies during the previous two centuries was twofold. Firstly, he was aided by the considerably greater riches of his empire. His violent campaigns had generated considerable wealth as spoils and tribute in Iran and Central Asia. They had also given him much resources and manpower, which he had welded into a formidable army.⁵¹ Secondly, while the Mongols had faced determined resistance from a powerful Delhi sultanate, Timur benefitted from the weakening of the sultanate in course of the second half of the fourteenth century. During this period, the large territories of the Delhi sultanate had given rise to breakaway regional states in different parts of South Asia, leading to as much of

50 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 313-314.

51 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 314.

a diminution of the sultanate's authority as its resources.⁵² Simon Digby argues that this led to a steady depletion in the sultanate's valuable military resources, especially the number of its horses and elephants. All this made the sultanate much more vulnerable to invasions than it had been earlier.⁵³

Following the death of Timur in 1405, his descendants divided his large empire among themselves. Meanwhile in South Asia, the Tughlaq sultans were succeeded in Delhi first by the Sayyids and then in 1451 by the Afghan Lodis. This was the period of Afghan ascendancy in North Indian politics. Afghans had been serving in the armies of the Turkish invaders and then the Delhi sultans since the eleventh century. Through much of the fifteenth century, the north-western frontier saw a steady stream of Afghan groups, many of whom had been erstwhile horse traders, to South Asia in the search of military employment. The Lodis featured among these military immigrants. Several Lodi chieftains served in the Punjab region under the Sayyid sultans. In 1441, Bahlul Lodi mobilised an army of Afghans, Mongols, and Indian troops to take over the control of Punjab before seizing the throne of Delhi in another ten years. During his rule and also that of his successors, Afghanistan became closely integrated to the North Indian political landscape. Unlike the past few centuries, this owed less to invasions and had more to do with a steady migration of Afghan groups in search of livelihood in the Lodi sultanate of Delhi as well as other parts of North India. Lodi strategy revolved around encouraging this migration and welding this immigrant manpower into a sort of Afghan confederacy that would rule North India under a Lodi sultan.⁵⁴

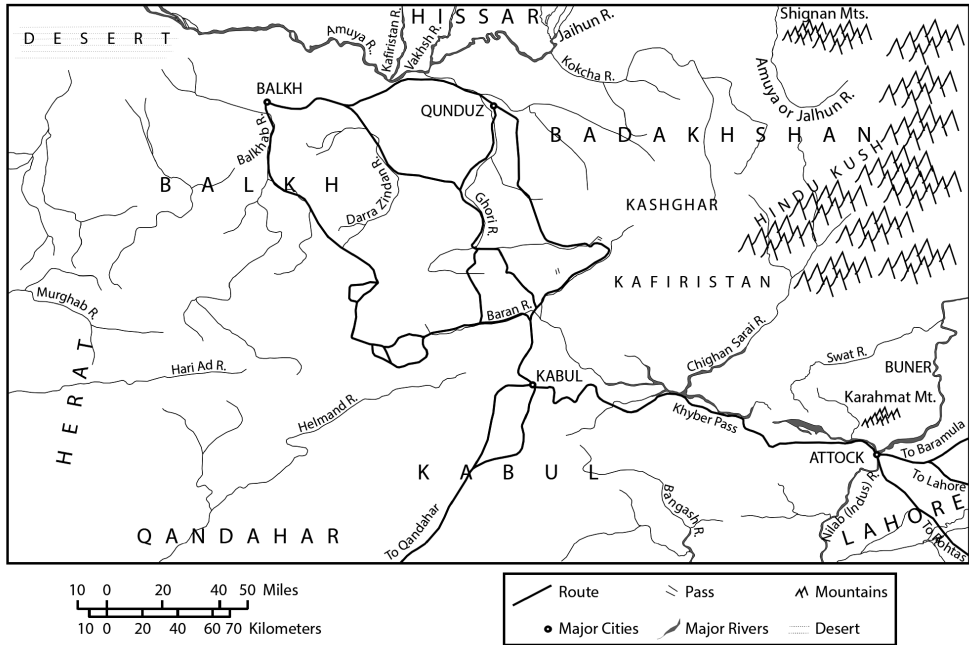
Meanwhile, it was in the post-Timurid milieu of Transoxiana that the future founder of the Mughal dynasty Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur was born in 1483. He was a direct patrilineal descendant of Timur. He lost control over his erstwhile patrimony in modern Uzbekistan because of fraternal rivalries among Timur's descendants and the hostile Uzbek groups. Driven out of his homeland, he captured the city of Kabul in 1504.⁵⁵ For the next two decades, he ruled over

52 Simon Digby, 'Before Timur Came: Provincialization of the Delhi Sultanate through the Fourteenth Century', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 47, no. 3 (2004): 298-356.

53 Simon Digby, *War-Horse and Elephant in the Delhi Sultanate: A Study of Military Supplies* (Oxford: Orient Monographs, 1971).

54 Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. III, 134-138.

55 Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, *Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, translated, edited, and annotated by Wheeler M. Thackston (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 167-169



Map 2. Kabul and Its Environs under the Mughal Empire

Source: Author, based on Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire: Political and Economic Maps with Detailed Notes, Bibliography and Index* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), 1A and 1B. Note: Map for representational purposes only

Kabul as a Timurid prince and remained invested in war and politics in the erstwhile Timurid lands in Transoxiana. Much of the Afghan region and the Punjab Plains continued to separate him from Hindustan. A large part of his strategy in his Kabul years centred on disciplining and plundering the Afghan tribes of the region. This helped him raise resources for his growing armies and gain control over the important roads connecting Kabul with other parts of Afghanistan.⁵⁶ He captured Qandahar in 1507 and Bajaur in 1519, followed by extensive campaigns against the Dilzak and Yusufzai Afghans.⁵⁷ In 1519, he crossed the Indus eastward and captured Bherah in the Punjab. This was the first of his several campaigns into the Punjab Plains, which ultimately led up to his victorious battle against the forces of the Lodi sultanate on the plains of Panipat

56 Stephen F. Dale, *The Garden of Eight Paradises: Babur and the Culture of Empire in Central Asia, Afghanistan, and India (1483-1530)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 195-200.

57 *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 258-264, 269-274; Dale, *The Garden of Eight Paradises*, 291-294.

in the Indo-Gangetic Divide in 1526. On this final journey, his army proceeded along the main highway through the Khyber Pass, across the Indus, then close to the Himalayan foothills via Sialkot. He moved through the Punjab via Lahore and Ambala before reaching Panipat. The victory at Panipat against the Lodi armies in 1526 gave him control over Delhi and Agra.⁵⁸

Suddenly, the Timurid prince's control extended from Kabul in the north to Agra in the south. From this point onward, his strategy centred on expanding his control over Hindustan. Over time, this would make Kabul, his primary base for the last two decades, a frontier outpost in relation to his new conquests. This mirrored the case of the Ghurids some three centuries back. Babur made forays into central, western, and eastern India, fighting off Afghan groups eager to push the Mughals back. At his death in 1530, his dominions were distributed among his four sons, with Humayun in command of Hindustan and Kamran in control of Kabul and its surroundings. Separating the realms of the two brothers, the Punjab Plains effectively came to comprise a frontier zone. During the 1530s, Humayun campaigned intensely in North India, pushing the limits of Mughal authority towards the west and east by means of his military victories in Gujarat and Bengal respectively. However, it was once he was defeated by the Afghan chieftain Sher Khan Sur in 1539 and 1540, that the reality of the Afghan region having become a frontier of his dominions truly sunk in. Denied refuge beyond the Indus by Kamran in the face of the Afghan resurgence that drove him out of Hindustan, Humayun ended up finding shelter at the court of his political rival Shah Tahmasp of Iran.

Upon his return from the Iranian court with Safavid reinforcements, Humayun set about recreating his lost empire. As in the case of his father, the conquest of Hindustan had to start with the control over Afghanistan. Accordingly, he captured the strategic fortress of Qandahar and the political centre of Kabul in 1545, and then Badakhshan in 1546.⁵⁹ Stretched between these two major towns, the Afghan region once again became the Mughal base as he looked for an opportunity to cross into Hindustan and retake his lost dominions. He succeeded in this in 1554-1555, when his armies marched across the Punjab Plains, taking Peshawar and Rohtas on the way. Next, he seized Delhi, taking advantage

58 *Baburnama*, trans. Thackston, 319-327; Dale, *The Garden of Eight Paradises*, 321-332.

59 Gulbadan Begum, *The History of Humāyūn or Humāyūn-Nāma*, ed. and trans. Annette Susanah Beveridge (Delhi: Low Price Publications, 2006), 175, 177-178; Abul Fazl, *Akbar-nāma*, ed. Maulawi Abdur Rahim, 3 volumes (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873-87), vol. I, 228-235, 238-245; Ishwari Prasad, *The Life and Times of Humayun* (Bombay, Calcutta and Madras: Orient Longman Ltd, 1955), 275-87.

of the absence of the main army of the Afghan commander turned Hindu king Himu from the area.⁶⁰ Humayun's accidental death the next year put the young Akbar on the Mughal throne. With the defeat of Himu's army at Panipat (1556) and re-establishment of Mughal rule over Delhi and Agra, the Mughals found a foothold in Hindustan once again.

Mughals, Safavids, and Uzbeks

Akbar inherited from his father in 1556 a stretch of territory extending across the Punjab and the Indo-Gangetic Divide. From this he expanded the Mughal dominions to cover most of the North India in course of his rule for half a century. Humayun's other son Mirza Muhammad Hakim – only two years old at the time of his father's demise – was allotted Kabul and neighbouring areas on the Indus Basin. As in the case of Humayun and Kamran, the Punjab Plains once again came to comprise the frontier region between Akbar and Hakim. While Akbar initially sought to manage Kabul by posting his loyalists there in positions of authority, an increasingly independent-minded Mirza Hakim started undermining him. As the Mirza Hakim grew older, he came to pose a threat for Akbar by the mid-1560s. In the tussle between the two half-brothers, the Punjab Plains often emerged as contested territory. Hakim annexed these parts to his dominions in 1566 but retreated the next year, while Akbar moved there himself with his court to make his presence felt in the 1580s. It was not until Hakim's death in 1585 that Akbar was able to annex Kabul and its surrounding Afghan areas, thereby pushing the frontier northward once and for all.⁶¹

This inaugurated the long and ultimately unfinished process of the Mughal integration of the Afghan region into the empire using the Punjab Plains as the springboard. Akbar coordinated this massive project of frontier pacification himself from Lahore, where he remained based for more than a decade in the 1580s and 1590s. Clashes between imperial forces and the Afghan communities of the area were frequent from this point on through the seventeenth century. Mughal strategy under such circumstances centred on controlling the roads that passed through the region and the fortified locations that gave them the command over these roads. This was crucial for both maintaining the Afghan outposts from North India and for keeping the overland trade between the Mughal Empire on

60 *Akbar-nāma*, ed. Rahim, vol. I, 340-343; Prasad, *The Life and Times of Humayun*, 340-350.

61 Munis D. Faruqi, 'The Forgotten Prince: Mirza Hakim and the Formation of the Mughal Empire in India', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 48, no. 4 (2005): 487-523, see pp. 494-500.

the one hand and Iran and Central Asia on the other flowing unabated. However, the repeated conflicts often robbed the Mughals of this control and triggered more military action to secure it. Overall, the Mughals were able to maintain their hold over the main highway from Lahore to Kabul most of the time. This enabled them to use Kabul as a launchpad for a power projection into Central Asia. This entailed the brief conquest of Balkh and Badakhshan as a part of emperor Shah Jahan's design of recapturing the Timurid homeland in Transoxiana in 1645-47. As I have argued elsewhere, military, logistical, and environmental difficulties foiled this plan and in the end the campaign was a costly failure.⁶²

Meanwhile, centring on Qandahar, the southwestern flank of Kabul remained precarious. The Safavids – anxious to control this strategic fortress that separated their realm from the Mughal Empire – had already seized it shortly after Humayun's death. In 1595, the Safavid governor of the fort defected to the Mughals. Between these two events, the Mughal frontier to the southwest of Kabul had revolved mainly around the Indus, first with Multan and later also with Bhakkar serving as the bulwark of imperial defense. In this context, the capture of the fort of Sibi near Quetta on the road connecting Multan with Qandahar in 1594-95 marked a significant extension of the frontier. The imperial chronicler Abul Fazl reflected on this by observing how it extended Mughal authority towards Qandahar, Kachh, and the Makran coast.⁶³ The capture of Qandahar in 1595 pushed the frontier further westward.⁶⁴ However, the fort changed hands repeatedly in the next half a century, with the Safavids finally seizing it in 1648-49. The Mughals launched three sieges to recover it in 1649, 1652, and 1653, but all of them failed.⁶⁵ This effectively brought the frontier back to the outposts of the Pishin-Quetta-Dadhar-Sibi belt in today's Pakistan, reinforced by the imperial cities of Multan and Bhakkar in the Indus Basin.⁶⁶

Just like the Safavids always threatened Qandahar, the Uzbeks cast a long shadow over Kabul, resulting in occasional predatory attacks like Nazr Muhammad Khan's raid on the city in 1628.⁶⁷ The precarity of both the cities was exac-

62 Pratyay Nath, *Climate of Conquest: War, Environment, and Empire in Mughal North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019), 99-108.

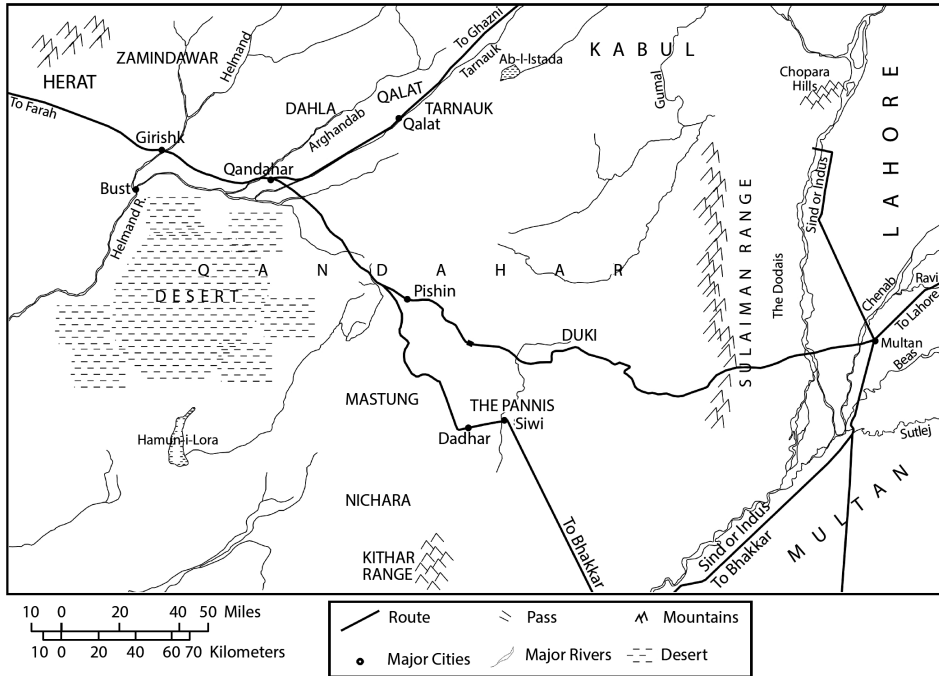
63 *Akbar-nāma*, (ed.) Rahim, vol. III, pp. 666.

64 *Akbar-nāma*, ed. Rahim, vol. III, 668-669

65 Nath, *Climate of Conquest*, 91-99.

66 Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire: Political and Economic Maps with Detailed Notes, Bibliography and Index* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), 2A-B.

67 M. Athar Ali, 'Jahangir and the Uzbeks', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 26, part II (1964): 108-119.



Map 3. Qandahar and Its Environs under the Mughal Empire

Source: Author, based on Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire: Political and Economic Maps with Detailed Notes, Bibliography and Index* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), 2A and 2B. Note: Map for representational purposes only

erbatd further by the fact that they could be reached from the Mughal political heartland in Hindustan mainly by overland routes that spread over extremely rugged terrain and areas that were inhabited by communities whose loyalty to the empire could not be taken for granted. Hence while outposts behind Kabul and Qandahar on the road from Hindustan were doubtless important, a great deal of pressure also fell on the imperial cities in the Indus Basin and the Punjab, including Lahore, Multan, and Bhakkar. Thankfully for the Mughals, they had a tight hold over the Punjab Plains for much of the period between the late-sixteenth and early-eighteenth centuries. Lahore remained an important imperial city where all the four emperors of this period spent a good deal of time. This helped with the consolidation of power in the Punjab Plains, so much so that the region became a part of the imperial heartland. The hold over Lahore in specific and the Punjab also facilitated expansion of imperial authority into Afghanistan, Kashmir, and Sind.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Reflecting on the strategic location of Lahore, the Italian traveller Niccolao Manucci called it

Mughal strategy to control the northwestern frontier had three key elements. Firstly, the state attached a great deal of importance to maintaining a large network of routes of communication that connected different areas. This facilitated both the overland commerce that benefited the imperial economy and the military traffic that helped the state secure and expand its territories. The nature of investment did not quite take the form of building paved roads; instead, it took the form of producing other infrastructural elements like roads, bridges, rest houses, and garrison towns to keep things moving.⁶⁹ Long-term control over routes rested in the state's ability to command fortified locations. To this end, the Mughals relied on the string of fortresses and garrison towns they inherited from past polities and new ones that they constructed.⁷⁰ On the one hand, these forts allowed Mughal forces to exert authority over the surrounding areas, while on the other they enabled them to monitor the roads on which they stood. A third element in Mughal frontier strategy involved controlling the various communities living in the region. As mentioned earlier, the northwestern frontier presented an arid ecology. Although the Punjab also housed some pastoral communities, it was the hills and defiles of the Afghan region further west where nomadic communities thrived in particular. While the Mughal state always threw its weight behind agriculturalists, it had to successfully manage the nomadic groups in order to maintain its authority over the region and keep the Lahore-Kabul corridor safe for soldiers and traders. Here its success varied widely. Although it was able to find allies among the Ghakkars and the Baluchis, Mughals faced a hard time with the various Afghan tribes. While some Afghans did submit to the empire, these alliances often proved to be unstable; others, on the other hand, rejected Mughal authority altogether and fought the imperial forces regularly among the mountains of the region.⁷¹

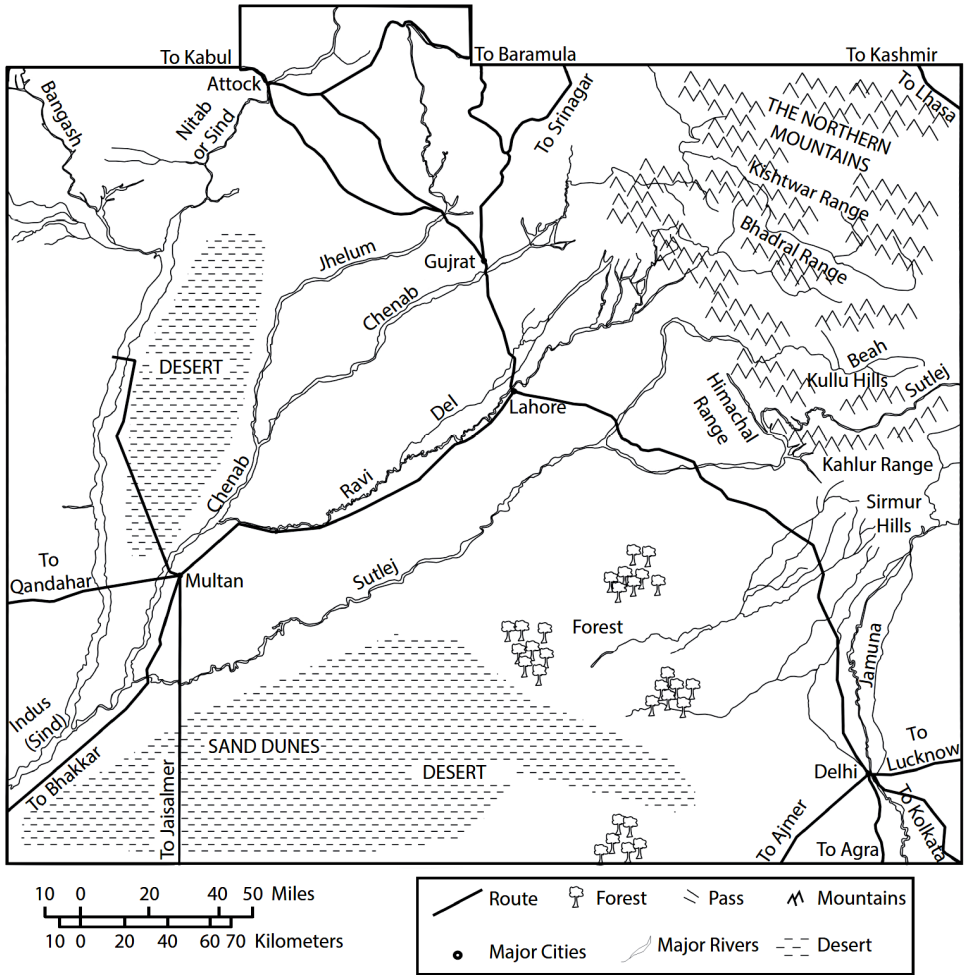
All in all, the Mughals were able to integrate the Punjab Plains firmly into their sphere, but they failed to establish lasting control over the Afghan region which continued to be a troubled borderlands for them. At best, the control over

'the key to the kingdoms of Kabul, Balkh, Tartary, Kashmir, Persia, Baloches, Multan, Bhakkar, and Tattah'. Niccolao Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, trans. William Irvine, 4 vols. (Delhi: Low Price Publications, 2005), vol. II, 174.

69 For the role of roadbuilding in the Mughal imperial project, see Nath, *Climate of Conquest*, 172-176.

70 For a discussion on garrison towns under the Delhi Sultanate, see Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. II, 212-264. Many of these towns grew in size and importance under the Mughals. For the role of forts and towns on the Mughal northwestern frontier, see Nath, *Climate of Conquest*, 177-182.

71 Nath, *Climate of Conquest*, 192-199.



Map 4. The Punjab Plains under the Mughal Empire

Source: Author, based on Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire: Political and Economic Maps with Detailed Notes, Bibliography and Index* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), 4A and 4B.

Note: Map for representational purposes only

roads, forts, and allies produced a stable frontier that connected the Mughal Empire with the Safavid and Uzbek realms. At worst, the Afghan region turned into a volatile area of war, insurgency, and military operations. By the early eighteenth century, however, this configuration was set for another major change.

Afsharid and Abdali Invasions

The first few decades of the eighteenth century saw both the demise of the Safavid Empire in Persia and the increasing weakening of the Mughal Empire in South Asia. Following the fall of the Safavids in 1722, Nader Shah founded the short-lived Afsharid Empire in Iran. He established himself in Iran before beginning his eastern campaign into Afghanistan and Hindustan in 1736. His invasion of Hindustan in 1739 was a straightforward campaign, mounted from his newly acquired bases of Qandahar and Kabul in Afghanistan. His 80,000-strong army was a highly mobile one, mostly mounted, including both traditional cavalry, several thousand mounted musketeers, hundreds of camels mounted with swivel guns, and wheeled cannons. The first part of his strategy was to establish himself in the Afghan region. To this end, the first target in 1736-37 was Qandahar. His army blockaded and eventually seized the fort after a long and difficult siege.⁷² From there, he took the usual route through Ghazni and seized Kabul from the Mughals.⁷³ The control over both Kabul and Qandahar left Nader Shah in firm control of most of Afghanistan.

The following part of his strategy involved making a decisive raid into Hindustan. He travelled eastward from Kabul to North India along the main highway through Jalalabad and the Khyber Pass.⁷⁴ Having seized the forts of Peshawar and Lahore in the Punjab on the way, he advanced towards Delhi through Ambala and Thanesar. He defeated the Mughal army under emperor Muhammad Shah on the fields of Karnal and then proceeded southward to sack Delhi in 1739.⁷⁵ His army struggled to carry all the plundered wealth back across the full rivers of the Punjab and made its way to Kabul only slowly and with great difficulties.⁷⁶ From there, Nader Shah led a campaign southward to Sind to subdue a recalcitrant chieftain, and then travelled westward to Kandahar.⁷⁷

While in Sind, he tried to open a new route across South Asia's northwestern frontier, much like Muizzuddin Muhammad Ghuri had done in the twelfth

72 Laurence Lockhart, *Nadir Shah: A Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources* (London: Luzac & Co., 1938), 112-121; Michael Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia: Nader Shah from Tribal Warrior to Conquering Tyrant* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 181-86.

73 Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 123-125.

74 Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 125-128; Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia*, 187-190.

75 Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 128-153; Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia*, 193-215.

76 Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia*, 215-216.

77 Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 154-162; Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia*, 216-217.

century. As mentioned above, Muizzuddin wanted to bypass rival polities on the regular route connecting Delhi with Kabul through Punjab. Instead, he sought to find an alternate route connecting his base in Ghazni with Hindustan through the Gomal Pass, Sind, and the deserts of Gujarat. However, the desert proved to be much more difficult to cross than what Muizzuddin had imagined and consequently he had to let go of this plan.⁷⁸ With similar intentions of forging an alternate and perhaps more direct route, Nader Shah wanted to pierce the frontier with a sea-route that would connect his possessions in Iran with his new acquisitions in Hindustan. With this intention, he ordered a land army from Fars to meet him in Sind from Iran, while another army would come by the sea along the coast. This was to imitate the campaign of Alexander into India in the fourth century BCE. The expedition too, however, ended in disaster because of logistical difficulties and military challenges in the Makran Desert. Nader Shah had to abandon his plan.⁷⁹

With Nader Shah's death in 1747, one of his Afghan commanders named Ahmad Shah founded the Abdali dynasty in Qandahar.⁸⁰ His engagement with South Asia's northwestern frontier was much more intense than it had been for Nader Shah. This had to do with the greater proximity of the domains of the former in Afghanistan compared to that of the latter in Iran. It was also a result of Ahmad Shah's overall strategic vision that reserved a more important place for Hindustan. This is reflected by the fact that he led nine expeditions there between 1747 and 1767. During most of these campaigns, his armies used the direct highway connecting Kabul with Delhi through Jalalabad, Peshawar, and Lahore. His primary strategic objective was to keep his Afghan possessions secure, bring the Punjab Basin under control, and expand his domains as eastward as possible from there. Through most of this period, Qandahar, Ghazni, and Kabul remained under his control.⁸¹ East of Kabul, Jalalabad and Peshawar served as important advance bases. Between 1749 and 1751, Abdali forces secured the western flank of their Afghan possessions by conquering Herat.⁸² Yet, Ahmad

78 Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. II, 143.

79 Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia*, 217-218.

80 For political culture, textual traditions, and legitimacy of Ahmad Shah Abdali, see Sajjad Nejatie, 'The Abdālī-Durrānī Confederacy and Its Transformation under Aḥmad Shāh, Durr-i Durrān', Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Toronto, 2017.

81 Jonathan L. Lee, *Afghanistan: A History from 1260 to the Present* (London: Reaktion Books, 2018), 118.

82 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 123.

Shah faced repeated rebellions here, like those in 1748, 1761, 1762.⁸³ Control over the Afghan heartland also entailed period clashes with various local communities, like that with the Tokhi Ghilzai in 1747.⁸⁴

Following the stability of the seventeenth century, the Punjab Plains once again became a contested frontier region during the period under study. This is best reflected in how Lahore, the most important city, constantly changed hands between the Mughals, the Afghans, and the Sikhs. Ahmad Shah sacked and captured it during his very first campaign of 1747-48.⁸⁵ However, as soon as he departed for Qandahar in 1748, the governor switched sides and joined the Mughals.⁸⁶ As the Abdali ruler returned later that year, the governor of Lahore negotiated with him. He retained Lahore by making over to him all land north of the Indus as well as the revenues of the Chahar Mahala area.⁸⁷ The failure to remit this revenue caused Ahmad Shah's third expedition in 1752. This time, his armies sacked Lahore, and forced the Mughal emperor to cede to him partial sovereignty over the Punjab bastions of Lahore and Multan. His armies also established themselves in Multan, overran Kashmir, and occupied the city of Srinagar there.⁸⁸ The Mughals subsequently took Lahore back, only for it to be recaptured by Ahmad Shah in 1756.⁸⁹ Once the Abdali armies had moved back to Afghanistan in 1757, the Sikhs collaborated with the Marathas to challenge the Afghan garrisons in the Punjab, seized Lahore, and plundered Sirhind.⁹⁰ Ahmad Shah took Lahore back in 1760, warded off the Sikhs, and defeated the Marathas repeatedly, most notably in the so-called Third Battle of Panipat in 1761.⁹¹ Yet, the Sikhs once again recaptured Lahore and with it much of the Punjab Basin once the Abdalis turned back later in 1761.⁹² The very next year, they abandoned the city in the face of a renewed Afghan invasion.⁹³ As the Afghans withdrew later in 1762, the Sikhs again overran Punjab. They attacked the Afghan garrisons in Sirhind and Jalandhar, and seized Lahore, Multan, Malerkotla,

83 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 122, 128, 129.

84 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 118.

85 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 121.

86 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 122.

87 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 123.

88 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 123.

89 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 124.

90 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 126.

91 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 126-127.

92 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 128.

93 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 128.

Morinda, and Rohtas, and carried the offensive till Dera Ghazi Khan and Dera Ismail Khan on the Indus.⁹⁴ Following a temporary retreat in front of a renewed Afghan offensive in 1764-65, the Sikh armies occupied Lahore in 1765.⁹⁵ Ahmad Shah regained the control of the city briefly in 1766, only to see the Sikhs capture it permanently the next year.⁹⁶

Sikh strategy to contest Abdali domination in the Punjab also involved other means. Time and again, Sikh forces harassed retreating Abdali forces as they made their way through the Punjab towards the Khyber Pass. This was true for their invasions in 1757, 1761, 1764, and 1765. In retaliation, Afghan forces targeted Sikh communities and settlements like Kartarpur and Amritsar. They sacked Amritsar three times (1757, 1762, 1764) and besieged it another two times (1762 and 1766-67).⁹⁷ By the mid-1760s, Sikh armies started attacking the supply lines of Ahmad Shah Abdali as his armies marched through the Punjab.⁹⁸ By the end of Ahmad Shah's two decades worth of campaigning in the Punjab, the only major places his empire commanded were Peshawar to the west of the Indus, Dera Ghazi Khan and Dera Ismail Khan on the Indus, and Multan to the east of the Indus. By the middle of the 1760s, it was the Sikhs, not the Afghans, who controlled most of the Punjab Basin. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Sikhs would build their own empire centred on the Punjab.

East of Lahore, Afghan operations were more limited.⁹⁹ Sirhind served as an advance post for campaigns towards Delhi, as in 1748 and 1756-57.¹⁰⁰ East of Sirhind, Karnal and Panipat proved to be important centres coveted by the invaders in the Indo-Gangetic Divide, as in 1756-57.¹⁰¹ An agreement outside Delhi in 1757 made Ahmad Shah the de facto ruler of the city, although the Mughal emperor continued nominally.¹⁰² The Afghan forces captured and plundered the Mughal capital city. In the coming months, the Afghan armies moved out of Delhi to the east and south. They invaded and ransacked several towns like

94 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 129.

95 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 130.

96 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 129-130.

97 See for instance Lee, *Afghanistan*, 126, 128, 129, 130.

98 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 130.

99 For the spatial configuration of Afghan power in North India in the times of Ahmad Shah Abdali, see Neelam Khoja, 'Sovereignty, Space, and Identity: The Politics of Power in Eighteenth Century Punjab', Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Harvard University, 2018.

100 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 122, 124.

101 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 124.

102 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 124.

Mathura, Vrindavan, and Agra in the Gangetic Basin.¹⁰³ This extensive campaigns to the south and east of Delhi were never revived again. In 1767, Ahmad Shah wanted to march to Delhi from the Punjab, but logistical concerns prevented this.¹⁰⁴

Environmental Challenges in Crossing the Frontier

As mentioned in the introduction, the northwestern frontier marks an area of transition between the arid zone of Central and West Asia on the one hand and the humid zone of South Asia on the other. As such, the question of negotiating environmental factors during the crossing of this frontier by the various armies discussed in this chapter is a crucial issue and calls for some focused discussion. Wink points out that on the whole, the northwestern frontier of South Asia remained closely connected with the world of pastoral nomadism of Central Asia. This explains the repeated invasions by nomadic and semi-nomadic armies during the eight centuries under study. But at the same time, the environment of South Asia – with its warm and humid climate as well as lack of extensive pastures – has historically not supported full-scale pastoral nomadism for large groups. This is why nomadic invasions like those by the Mongols that came up to Delhi had to withdraw shortly thereafter and remained limited in their adventures further eastward or southward. This resonates with Peter Jackson's suggestion that the Mongol attacks failed because of the lack of good pasture that could feed the numerous horses of their armies and the hot summer weather which was generally unsuitable for their cavalry forces.¹⁰⁵ Wink argues that in order to build permanent polities in South Asia, nomadic invaders had to give up pastoral nomadic tendencies and adapt to the environmental peculiarities of the subcontinent; in other words, all the polities they created in South Asia were essentially post-nomadic.¹⁰⁶ The discussion in this chapter bears this out. All the major polities that emerged out of these invasions, most notably the Delhi sultanate and the Mughal Empire, were post-nomadic polities.

Beyond these broad strokes, there is a need to study the nuances of the environmental negotiations these campaigns entailed. The question of food for

103 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 124-125.

104 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 130.

105 John Masson Smith, Jr. 'Mongol Armies and Indian Campaigns'. URL: <https://www.mongolianculture.com/MONGOL-ARMIES.htm>, accessed on 15 December 2023.

106 Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. III, 93-94, 125-126.

man and beast in the course of campaigns, for instance, is directly linked to the role of ecology. The Afghan region was arid and inhospitable to large armies on the march, especially in terms of food and fodder. Hence armies operating in the area had to be careful in making arrangements for their logistics. Marching from Girishk to Qandahar in early 1737, for instance, Nader Shah's army was slowed down by the need to procure fodder for its largely mounted forces. With very little local availability, the army relied on the Haraza community of the area for the supply of fodder.¹⁰⁷ Campaigning Mughal armies in Qandahar seriously struggled for food during the sieges between 1649 and 1653. They carried the bulk of their supplies with them from Hindustan; beyond this, they relied on local zamindars and garrisons for supplements.¹⁰⁸ Still, these armies started running out of food and fodder during all the sieges by the onset of winter around September.¹⁰⁹ One Mughal chronicler mentions that the main reason for the abandonment of the second siege was that the imperial army had already started facing scarcity of food.¹¹⁰ Having emerged out these regions, polities like the Ghaznavids or the Abdalis might have been better equipped to handle these situations; but these conditions made it difficult for post-nomadic armies from Hindustan to cross the northwestern frontier. Within North India, campaigning armies could avail the services of itinerant grain merchants called the Banjara since at least the twelfth century. This greatly aided the logistics of armies operating within as well as coming into North India.¹¹¹ However, the fact that these merchants did not operate in the Afghan region made logistics a major concern especially for the armies from North India, used as they were to relying on Banjara services.

Climate could pose other challenges. The North Indian plains could often heat up quickly in summer and cause great distress to armies, especially those invading these parts from the west and hence would be new to these conditions.

107 Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia*, 181.

108 See for example Riazul Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations: A Study of the Political and Diplomatic Relations between the Mughal Empire and Iran* (Teheran: Iran Culture Foundation, 1970), 330, 361, 375.

109 See for instance Inayat Khan, *Mulakhkhaṣ-i Shāhjahān-nāma*, ed. Jameel-ur-Rehman (New Delhi: Embassy of Islamic Republic of Iran, 2009), 518-519, 548, 571.

110 Muhammad Salih Kambu, *ʿAmal-i Šālih*, ed. Ghulam Yazdani, 3 vols. (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1923), vol. III, 148-149.

111 Irfan Habib, 'Merchant Communities in Precolonial India,' in James D. Tracy (ed.), *The Rise of Merchant Networks: Long Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 371-99; Nath, *Climate of Conquest*, 148-151; Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. II, 142.

The Mongol armies, with their Central Asian troops and horses, were particularly wary of this heat. Keen to avoid the summer and monsoon months, they had to limit their campaigns into North India to the limited window of the winter months from October to February.¹¹² This also suited their need for shuttling between summer pastures in the highlands of Ghazni and Ghur in Afghanistan and winter pastures in and around the Punjab Plains. As Jackson argues, this created a pattern of seasonal mobility of Mongol armies on the northwestern frontier.¹¹³ It was to escape this heat of the plains that Nader Shah's army diverted from the main highway and travelled close to the Himalayan foothills on its way back from Delhi in 1739.¹¹⁴ In 1757, Ahmad Shah Abdali's troops suffered with the outbreak of summer coupled with a shortage of supplies.¹¹⁵

As if to mirror this situation, North Indian armies often struggled with the cold weather of the Afghan region. The fact that future Delhi sultan Ghazi Malik Tughlaq managed to invade Mongol holdings in the Afghan region in the winter months probably owed to his own origin in these parts and hence his familiarity with these conditions. But a few generations after their migration into Hindustan, the Mughals struggled when they went back to this area in the mid-seventeenth century. Just like the Mongols avoided the summer months in North India due to the heat, the Mughal armies avoided the winter months in Afghanistan for their campaigns because of the snows and the cold temperatures. Severe winter conditions impacted a reconnaissance missions the Mughals sent towards Balkh in 1645. The onset of the cold weather and snowfall caused the death of several people and animals. Those who survived had to cope with extremely challenging conditions.¹¹⁶ The beginning of winter spelt disaster for another army returning from Balkh and Badakhshan two years later. Even as a part of the army under prince Aurangzeb returned to Kabul, another part was caught in a snowstorm. Troops and animals endured great hardships in the cold and the snow, which claimed a heavy toll in terms of life and property.¹¹⁷ Roads connecting Kabul and Qandahar to North India would also often get blocked with

112 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 221; Masson Smith, Jr. 'Mongol Armies and Indian Campaigns'.

113 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 106, 236.

114 Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia*, 215

115 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 125

116 Abdul Hamid Lahori, *Bādshāh-nāma*, eds. Maulawis Kabiruddin Ahmad and Abdul Rahim, 2 vols. (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1867-1868), vol. II, 466.

117 *Shāhjahān-nāma*, ed. Rehman, 478-9, 478-480.

snow every winter.¹¹⁸ This forced Mughal armies to go to Afghanistan only after the snow melted in spring and return before snowfall started again at the end of autumn. Removing snow from the path became a logistical headache for Mughal armies proceeding to Balkh.¹¹⁹ As I have argued elsewhere, this temporal limitation severely affected the operational capabilities of Mughal armies and contributed greatly to their debacles in Balkh (1646-47) and Qandahar (1649, 1652, and 1653). In Qandahar, the threat of and the panic around the onset of the winter is frequently mentioned by contemporary chroniclers as they explain the withdrawal of the three sieges.¹²⁰

The rivers of the Punjab Plains posed a significant hurdle that armies crossing the northwestern frontier had to negotiate, whichever direction they might be going in. It is tempting to think that this substantial river system acted as a natural frontier, separating Hindustan from Iran or Central Asia. This was, however, not true. As we saw earlier, armies crossed these rivers frequently to make their way to either side. Yet, the specifics of the campaigns reveal the challenges they faced. Generally, armies would either cross these rivers at fords, which was possible especially during the dry winter or summer months. Forging misadventures could, however, result in great accidents. In 1757, an Abdali Afghan army under Sardar Jahan Khan and Timur Mirza tried to ford the Chenab and the Ravi in haste while fleeing a Sikh army. Things went wrong and many men and much baggage drowned in the rivers.¹²¹ In 1765 another Abdali army, this time under Ahmad Shah himself, miscalculated a ford on the same river. In the resultant accident, thousands of Afghan soldiers were either swept away or were drowned.¹²² If fording was not possible for whatever reason, armies would build temporary bridges, most often by arranging boats laterally next to each other. This was generally a common way of crossing rivers, but there are instances of accidents here too. On Nader Shah's return march from Delhi to Kabul in 1740, his troops tried crossing the Chenab over a bridge of boats. The bridge, however, gave way, drowning thousands.¹²³ A final option would be to ferry the troops and supply on boats. This was a slow and arduous option, ill-suited during fast campaigns. When a Mughal army under Akbar came upon the Indus in 1585, it tried

118 See for example *'Amal-i Šālih*, ed. Yazdani, vol. II, 574.

119 *Shāhjahān-nāma*, ed. Rehman, 412; *Bādshāh-nāma*, eds. Ahmad and Rahim, vol. II, 503, 513; *'Amal-i Šālih*, ed. Yazdani, vol. II 474.

120 See for example *Shāhjahān-nāma*, ed. Rehman, 518-519, 548, 571.

121 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 126.

122 Lee, *Afghanistan*, 130.

123 Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 156.

to build a bridge of boats over it. This having failed because of the width and torrent of the river, the entire army was ferried across in around eighty boats. Soldiers built about half of them, while they procured the remaining half from the local Hazara population.¹²⁴

The diverse topography of the northwestern frontier also moulded the course of campaigns. The presence of a desert in the Makran area prevented it from being used as a regular route from Iran or Afghanistan to Sind, as Nader Shah realised in 1740.¹²⁵ The large Thar Desert in Rajasthan and the Rann of Kachchh in Gujarat similarly prevented large armies from crossing them, as the Ghurid armies realised in 1175 and 1178.¹²⁶ As a result, the Punjab Plains emerged as the main transitory zone between North India and Afghanistan. To the north of Punjab, Kashmir served as an area of refuge for many escaping from the Punjab, like the Hindu Shahi kings in the face of Ghazvanid invasions in the eleventh century.¹²⁷ This was due both to its geographical location and to its mountainous terrain. It was, however, the Afghan region that presented the most challenging terrain to outside powers. The various Afghan tribes of the region fully exploited their familiarity of these hills and defiles to resist imperial expansion. The Mughals bore the brunt of this through much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As imperial troops would advance especially into the narrow passes, hostile Afghan groups would take up position on top of hills. From there, they would attack the troops by either riding down on them or by rolling down stones from great heights. These attacks decimated Mughal armies on multiple occasions.¹²⁸ They also had a hard time transporting their troops and artillery over this uneven terrain. During their campaigns in Qandahar and Balkh, armies would often need to be preceded by a corps of pioneers, who would have to level the ground and prepare a path in advance. The difficulties of overland transport prevented the Mughal army from bringing much artillery from North India to the first siege of Qandahar (1649).

Finally, the environmental transition across the northwestern frontier had major implications for the animal economy of armies. The success of campaigns,

124 *Akbar-nāma*, ed. Rahim, vol. III, 353-354; Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Ṭabaqāt-i Akbarī*, ed. Brajendranath De, 3 vols. (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1931), vol. II, 359-360; *The Commentary of Father Monserrate on His Journey to the Court of Akbar, 1580-1582*, trans. J.S. Hoyland (New Delhi and Chennai: Asian Educational Services, 2003), 121-126, 134-135.

125 Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia*, 217-218.

126 Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. II, 143.

127 Wink, *Al-Hind*, vol. II, 121-123.

128 See for instance *Akbar-nāma*, ed. Rahim, vol. III, 484-5.

especially if campaigning armies were looking for long-term occupation, depended on adapting to these variations and adopting the animals better suited for the environmental zone in question. In the arid zone of West and Central Asia, horses flourished. They served as the backbone of the livelihood of pastoral nomads like the Mongols. The two-humped Bactrian camel served as an important beast of burden among the steppes and cold deserts of Central Asia, while its one-humped counterpart (dromedary) dominated the hot deserts of Rajasthan and West Asia.¹²⁹ Both were central to military logistics in the arid zone. In contrast, the backbone of military logistics in most of South Asia aside from its dry western parts was cattle. Raised almost all over the subcontinent, oxen were used in packs to carry loads much more than with carts, which struggled over the uneven roads of these times¹³⁰. The warm and humid climate of South Asia as well as its lack of extensive pastures offered poor conditions for the breeding of horses. Historically, South Asian polities have imported warhorses from Central and West Asia.¹³¹ This put powers of the latter regions automatically at an advantage in terms of equestrian resources. South Asian powers often tried to make up for this disadvantage by recruiting more and more elephants.¹³² The ample forests of medieval and early modern South Asia housed elephants in large numbers. Elephants were crucial in the transport of heavy luggage like artillery since the sixteenth century. They also served as a vital beast of burden for carrying back the riches that invading armies gathered through plunder.¹³³ The kind of transformation towards post-nomadism that Wink talks about as a consequence of armies with a nomadic past conquering their way into North India is distinctly visible in the case of the Mughals. Having arrived in Hindustan primarily as mounted warriors accustomed to taking plunder in sheep in the arid areas of Central Asia and Afghanistan, their armies deployed an increasing number of elephants and cattle in their campaigns in course of the sixteenth century as they transformed into a post-nomadic polity. They changed into sedentary

129 Gommans, 'The Silent Frontier of Asia', 12-13.

130 Gommans, 'The Silent Frontier of Asia', 13-14.

131 Jos Gommans, 'The Horse Trade in Eighteenth-Century South Asia', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 37, no. 3 (1994): 228-250.

132 Half a century ago, Simon Digby explained the rise and fall of the Delhi Sultanate in a slim but elegant monograph, focusing especially on the sultanate's changing use of horses and elephants during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Digby, *War-Horse and Elephant in the Delhi Sultanate*.

133 For instance, Nader Shah used several hundred elephants in addition to horses, camels, and mules to transport his spoils from Delhi back to Afghanistan. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, 154.

ways so much that a return across the frontier to the Central Asian theatre of Balkh left them helpless against Uzbek mounted archers in the mid-seventeenth century.¹³⁴ Crossing the frontier was no casual matter.

Conclusion

Returning to the question of strategy, what is clear from the above discussion is that strategies of power constantly changed during the long period under focus. There was a diversity of motives behind the various invasions. Some of the invaders like Mahmud Ghaznavi, Amir Timur, and Nader Shah conducted raids in North India to aggrandize their kingdoms in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Iran respectively. Others like the Ghurids and the Mughals conquered North India and settled down in their new conquests. Religion is undoubtedly an important category to understand some of the actions and perceptions of both the invaders and defenders, but it is not the only one. There were Hindus and Muslims on the sides of both the invaders and defenders; religious impulse did not drive the actions of either of these sides uniformly or entirely.¹³⁵ While religion did provide a meaningful sense of difference occasionally, leading to specific acts of destruction or conversion, slaves and material riches were major attractions that drove invaders like the Ghaznavids and Mongols towards Hindustan. In some cases, war and devastation in Central Asia or Iran pushed invaders across the frontier looking for better places to settle down, as in the case of the Timurid kings Babur and Humayun. Ideologies of world domination provided powerful incentives to conquerors like Chinggis Khan and Amir Timur. Strategies that these invaders adopted emanated as much for these goals as from the political and military situation in North India.

How much of these strategies remained fixed through the eight centuries we have surveyed, and how much of it kept changing? Based on the previous discussion, the common threads seem to have mainly emanated from the geopolitics and environment of the region. The aridity of Afghanistan always pushed major powers occupying it to look for resources elsewhere. The rich agricultural

134 *Bādshāh-nāma*, eds. Ahmad and Rahim, vol. II, 688-692, 704-705.

135 Some of the recent research that drives this point home include Finbarr Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009); Richard M. Eaton and Phillip B. Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture: Contested Sites on India's Deccan Plateau, 1300-1600* (Oxford University Press, 2014); Audrey Truschke, *The Language of History: Sanskrit Narratives of a Muslim Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021).

plains and settlements of the Punjab and the Indus Basin provided an immediate attraction to the east. Dominating these parts enriched invaders in terms of resources and enabled them to carry out further expeditions eastward. However, the fact that North Indian states would be equally interested in dominating the Punjab Plains both for economic and security reasons made this a contested space. As a result, the towns of the Punjab and the Indus Basin changed hands frequently during the period under study. Ever since Delhi gained political prestige since the early thirteenth century, the city started becoming a target for invading armies as in the cases of the Mongols, Timur, Nader Shah, and Ahmad Shah Abdali. Invaders interested in both raiding and conquering Hindustan, seizing or sacking Delhi became an important political act. The control over Delhi opened up access to the economically prosperous Gangetic Basin, which was a lucrative destination for invaders interested in both raiding and settling down. It also opened up the routes to central and western India, whose towns presented potential targets especially for raids, as in the case of the Ghaznavids. All powers had to negotiate the various environmental conditions across the northwestern frontier. The previous section highlights the fact that many of the challenges environment posed remained unchanged over many centuries. Beyond this, the immediate strategies kept on changing over time depending on the political realities and military techniques of the times as well as the priorities of both the invaders and the defenders.



The French Jesuit Joseph-Marie Amiot S. J. (1718-1793), official translator of Western languages for the Qianlong Emperor, and the Author of a French commented translation of the , published in 1772 in Paris and titled *Art militaire des Chinois, ou Recueil d'anciens traités sur la guerre , composés avant l'ère chrétienne, par différents généraux chinois*. Painting, circa 1790, by unknown author. Reproduction in Alain Peyrefitte *Images de l'Empire Immobile*. (Common Wikimedia). A better portrait here <https://brill.com/display/book/9789004416215/front-7.xml> (The original is in the collection of the Amyot family; this copy was made at the end of the nineteenth century. Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France, MS 1515, fol. 3).

Imperial Chinese Strategy, A Play in Three Acts

PETER LORGE

Chinese strategy was never a static intellectual framework, either in its interpretation or its application. The most important strategic texts were written during the Warring States Period (475-221 BCE), along with the other great classic works of Chinese thought like the *Analects* of Master Kong (Confucius). The context of the Warring States Period, however, was quite different from most of the conditions during China's imperial period, from the founding of the Qin dynasty in 221 BCE to the fall of the Qing dynasty on 12 February 1912. While there were a few points during those two thousand years when multiple states competed with each other in a somewhat balanced fashion, notably the Period of Division (220-581 CE) and the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period (907-960), the geo-strategic conditions did not usually accord with those under which classical texts like Sunzi's (Master Sun/Sun Tzu) *Art of War* were composed. Moreover, the strategic problems facing larger, centralized empires changed over their lifecycle. The necessary strategies of creating an empire were very different from those needed to maintain one or those needed as it collapsed.

Imperial Chinese strategy can thus be seen to play out in three acts: conquest, maintenance, and collapse. Obviously, the difference between maintenance and collapse are much clearer to the historian than to the participant at the time, and the conquest strategy of one dynasty overlaps with the collapse strategy of the incumbent regime, but even so there were important changes that occurred as collapse began to seem likely. Despite this very long and literate history of the rise and fall of dynasties, there was not a commensurate strategic literature linked to these different phases of dynastic life. The tradition of strategic texts functioned independently of the changing political and military circumstances, and, to the extent that it directly affected military planning, was adapted to the particular context its readers were experiencing. A planner did not switch texts when he understood the situation to be different. Sunzi was equally relevant in good times and bad.

China's strategic tradition in the imperial period was classically focused. The most important strategic texts were written in the Warring States period, and much of their historic and intellectual basis harked back, if often only rhetorically, to earlier periods. There were very few influential strategic or military texts written during the imperial period that were not strongly based in the classical tradition. The 11th century forgery, the *Tang Taizong-Li Jing Questions and Replies*, which drew its legitimacy at least in part from the actual *Li Jing's Art of War* from the 7th century, was included in the compiled work later known as the *Seven Military Classics*. There were other strategic works composed in the imperial period, but they remained quite marginal.

Since the corpus of texts was functionally established before the imperial period, and those works were composed or compiled in a very different strategic milieu than that of the imperial period, subsequent thinkers adapted the classical tradition through the medium of commentary.¹ Sunzi was, and remains, the most extensively treated text, with the other six texts in the *Seven Military Classics* receiving more commentaries after being grouped together in the late 11th century.² In addition to adapting pre-imperial strategic texts to the new imperial reality, the commentaries also revealed significant problems in understanding the original meaning. Commentators offered three different sorts of explanations of passages that they believed required further clarification. The simplest was antiquarian explanations of the meanings of certain terms. This was followed by explications or interpretations of the meaning of otherwise ambiguous passages. Finally, commentators offered accounts of particular battles or events to show the concrete manifestation of a strategy. Although the commentators were often aware of earlier commentators, they frequently disagreed with the meaning of passages. Two thousand years of study deepened the understanding of the Sunzi without ever producing agreement.

Despite this longstanding tradition of reading and commenting upon strategic texts, those texts were seldom cited during court discussions or even in councils of war.³ Educated statesmen were far more likely to cite famous historical events or more general works of the classical tradition to argue their

1 The most complete rendering of Sunzi with a large portion of the commentaries from the 13th century collection is Sun-tzu, John Minford (trans.), *The Art of War*, New York: Penguin Books, 2002.

2 For the creation of the *Seven Military Classics* see Peter Lorge, "The creation of the *Seven Military Classics*," *War Studies*, Vol. 1 (2024), forthcoming.

3 Peter Lorge (ed.), *Debating War in Chinese History*, Leiden: Brill, 2013.

proposed strategies than specialized military texts. Generals mostly argued in practical, immediate terms without reference to any textual traditions. It is only in later novels, written down by educated men without experience of war, that sophisticated discussions of strategic texts play a role. Abstract strategic thinking was not persuasive at court, where concrete problems confronted a ruler and his officials.

In China, most emperors had no experience of war, and were not expected to take part in campaigns. Founding emperors, of course, were always men of war, and sometimes their immediate successors, but imperial Chinese political culture discouraged emperors of established dynasties from participating in wars. Non-Chinese emperors from steppe groups were more directly involved in wars and actual military activities, but even for many of them real exposure to campaigning declined over the course of a dynasty. The late Qing Manchu emperors were as unaccustomed to fighting as any Chinese emperor. Long periods of peace not only diminished the effectiveness of imperial armies, but also the reasons for an emperor to involved himself with the military.

The natural trajectory of a stable, peaceful dynasty created the recognizable pattern of the dynastic cycle. A dynasty was founded in martial vigor before gradually declining in power until a new, vigorous polity arose to overthrow it. The practical aspects of strategy followed this trajectory, as did the orientation of the emperors and their courts. The strategies appropriate for conquest were not appropriate for a stable peaceful empire. For established dynasties the most challenging strategic problem was how to maintain power. Was a threat, whether internal or external, serious enough to warrant significant military and political changes, or could it be dealt with through the existing institutions. And if a threat continued to grow beyond the capabilities of the status quo policies could changes be carried out quickly enough to prevent collapse. Finally, when it became clear that the dynasty was in irreversible decline, what should individual military and political actors do? Once the imperial authority could no longer maintain the existing power structure elites from all stations, from high to low and central to local had to maneuver top preserve their own power and privilege.⁴

4 For the late Song dynasty see Richard L. Davis, *Wind Against the Mountains*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996. For the Ming-Qing transition see Lynn Struve, *Voices from the Ming-Qing Cataclysm: China in Tigers' Jaws*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

Strategies of Conquest

In retrospect, strategies of conquest seem obvious and logical. A military leader of some kind, whether a bandit, rebel, or member of the existing elite decides to conquer the entire empire: “Under Heaven” or implicitly “All Under Heaven” *Tianxia* 天下. He, and it was always a man, attracted military followers and then civil, educated men to support his movement. It was usually a sign of his shift toward seeking the “legitimate” end of complete conquest that he began to listen to his educated non-military advisors. The addition of these educated advisors was a sign that the would-be conqueror was no longer just a bandit or someone seeking only material gain. Even though conquerors continued to spend the majority of their efforts on military affairs when establishing their new political regime, civil advisors provided a longer-term perspective.

The importance of civil advisors for Chinese dynastic founders is sometimes seen as a peculiarly Chinese practice. While it is true that these sorts of advisors are far more prominent in Chinese accounts of dynastic founding than in Western accounts, it is also true that the historical traditions of describing dynastic foundings in China have emphasized civil officials from very early on. Partly this is due to the long Chinese tradition of history-writing by civil officials who liked to stress the role of civil officials in the founding of dynasties. The inclusion of those officials’ activities in the standard histories meant that later standard histories also included civil officials’ activities in subsequent histories. It may well be that the awareness of the role of civil officials in China is a historiographical artifact. Western accounts of the rise of a new king or emperor do not usually include the non-military officials that facilitated those political and military successes. Of course, civil functionaries were the critical logistical facilitators that made large-scale and wide-ranging warfare possible. Civil officials were a strategic resource beyond political and campaign advice.

The basic strategic model for a Chinese empire was established by the first empire, that of the Qin dynasty (221-207 BCE). Unlike the previous feudal dynastic model, where a single king 王, Heaven’s Son 天子, held spiritual power over a collection of regional lords who exercised temporal authority in their designated fiefs, the new imperial system established an emperor 皇帝 exercising spiritual and temporal power over all the Sinitic polities. Power was centralized, and officials were appointed by that central authority to govern at all levels. Military power was also centralized, with soldiers drawn from the male farming population as needed. The practices of the Warring States period carried over into the imperial period with the critical difference that there was only one court

and one government to whom the population owed its loyalty and labor.

In order to achieve this centralization, the strategy of empire had to shift to an ideology that rejected any brake on the central ruler's authority, and any military force outside the control of the central ruler.⁵ Whereas under the previous Zhou system the king was supposed to have a stronger army than any individual lord, his army was not stronger than all of the lords combined. There was thus a balance of military power under the Zhou system where the King had to maintain the support of most of his subordinate lords to be safe. If enough turned against him, they could muster a more powerful army. The Zhou king as Heaven's Son also claimed paramount spiritual power through possession of Heaven's Mandate 天命. This mandate to rule was held by the Zhou royal house in the person of the king. Over time the Zhou rulers lost even their limited temporal power but retained spiritual power.

Well after the Zhou King became a figurehead, and other lords claimed the title first of "hegemon" and later king in their own right, warfare at the strategic level was still limited. The lords did not seek to overturn the Zhou system, and seldom expected or planned to destroy completely their rivals. The large states did gradually destroy the smaller ones, eventually consolidating into seven large states. This historical process of military consolidation led up to the ideological shift toward seeking a centralized state. At least at present, it is unclear if the idea of centralization evolved out of the geopolitical reality of the late Warring States period or stimulated it. Did the strategy of destroying the smaller states lead to destroying larger states, or was there a separate strategic intellectual jump that then made it possible to think of total victory and unified political authority?

Of the many schools of thought that flourished in the Warring States period, the Legalists 法家 were the most strongly identified with the rise of the Qin state. In reality, most of the states pursued similar policies to exploit the material and manpower resources of their territories to produce military power. Farmers were drafted for military service, rewarded for success in battle, and severely punished for failure. Government bureaucracies developed to identify, manage, arm, and transport tens of thousands of men. Professional generals commanded these vast armies that might exceed a hundred thousand soldiers. Hereditary rulers presided over a court and government staffed by literate bureaucrats. The main function of the government was war, and the needs of war drove the development of government.

5 Yuri Pines, *Imagining Empire*, University of Hawaii Press, 2009.

Once the remaining seven large states of the Warring States period began their existential struggle for supremacy, rather than just relative advantage, over their peers, strategy became the straightforward campaign to conquer everyone else. The Qin state gradually destroyed its rivals in battle over decades of unrelenting warfare. Its rivals struggled to formulate an adequate military response to the Qin. The other states recognized that they were collectively stronger than the Qin, but they could not create the stable alliances necessary to defeat the Qin. This sort of story would play out repeatedly over the next two thousand years and was not unique to China. A rising power developed its military while trying to keep opposing powers from uniting.

The success of the Qin dynasty was never certain and the strategic problems of the seven states were as much ideological as material. Because the states grew out of centuries of constant fighting, they reasonably perceived any alliance as temporary. Since every ruler wanted to be paramount and was disinclined to accept a subordinate role, they were unprepared to establish a lasting power structure without themselves as the preeminent authority. Repeated attempts to create alliances collapsed on the battlefield or were undermined by efforts to weaken rivals in the face of Qin aggression. A standard strategy was to maneuver a rival into a fight with another state in the expectation that both would be weakened by the campaign. Of course, during most of the Warring States Period strategies were cautious to avoid overcommitment that would leave a state exposed.

In material terms the costs of complete conquest and the subsequent increase in resources had to be balanced against the short-term losses that would leave a state temporarily vulnerable. The cautious limited warfare of the Warring States Period was partly due to fears of being attacked by the other states after a major military effort. Qin's aggressive campaigns overwhelmed that limited approach by accepting a higher level of risk to achieve much greater returns. Once those risks began paying off in not only increased resources but also increased political intimidation the other states struggled to reestablish the status quo equilibrium that underlay their entire geostrategic worldview. Temporal unification moved from an abstract possibility into a realistic goal.

The accelerating Qin conquest broke Warring States Period strategy. Even after the conquest of Han in 230 BCE followed by Zhao in 228 BCE the remaining states were unable to unify or otherwise formulate an effective way to counter Qin. They could fight Qin forces and hope to win on the battlefield, but even when they were successful it did not change the trajectory of the larger

war. They were opposing an unlimited war strategy with a limited war strategy and steadily losing ground (literally). Qin strategy continued to succeed even though its armies did not always win and even suffered significant setbacks. The remaining states struggled to maintain loyalty and cohesion as it began to seem likely that the Qin would eventually win. Finally, in 221 BCE the last state, Qi, surrendered. The ruthless and relentless pursuit of unification through war ended the Warring States Period and initiating two millennia of imperial governments of China.

War was indispensable in creating the empire, but successful founding emperors knew that there was a critical political component to the process of conquest. Strategy was aimed at convincing local and regional powerholders to transfer their loyalty to the would-be conqueror. Simple moral suasion was the ideal instrument for obtaining loyalty, and although it was often written into the account of conquest after the fact, it was never an operational strategy. Most often initial nominal loyalty was obtained by the direct use of force, or the threat of force accompanied by an appeal to self-interest. Powerholders had to evaluate which way the military winds were shifting in order to join the winning side. Very few elites were willing to sacrifice themselves for a clearly losing side. Commoners had nothing political at stake in a war of conquest beyond simple survival.

Wars of conquest were therefore struggles to convince powerholders that one was going to win. Joining the winning side would allow for preserving one's power, but choosing wrong was likely disastrous. This also speaks to the limits of the power of any imperial government at the local level. Changes of dynasty absent the actual presence of large armies in an area seldom changed local power dynamics. Arguably, most local power dynamics remained unaffected by changes in imperial government. Imperial authority could reach down into local areas but seldom did so. The government's goal was to exert as much influence as possible with the least amount of direct application of force. Ideally, a full measure of taxes and manpower could be extracted without close supervision or sending in troops. The actual level of supervision and troops varied as conditions on the ground changed. It was better to accept some taxes and limited disturbances with little supervision or force, than expend lots of resources attempting to have complete control.⁶

6 Ruth Mostern, *Dividing the Realm in Order to Govern*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011, is the best account of an imperial government's trade-offs between the cost of supervision and the extraction of taxes and keeping the peace.

Loyalty was not a black or white decision and a conqueror had limited military resources with which to tilt powerholders in his direction. He needed to use the minimum necessary force to obtain enough authority in an area without exhausting himself. A local or regional powerholder was similarly balancing the amount of authority and resources he had to concede to a would-be conqueror against his own military resources. The Qin conquest had concentrated force against the respective ruling houses of the major states by seizing cities but sought to enlist local powerholders. Regional conquests forced local elites to choose sides when confronted by an invading army. A ruler had to balance defending specific parts of his territory and the elites located there against the needs of his entire state. Local elites militarily unsupported by their ruler saw little reason to remain loyal. Not only was it futile, but their ruler had also failed in his side of the loyalty for protection bargain. A lord who could not protect you was not deserving of loyalty.

This contest between centralization and decentralization played out constantly in imperial Chinese history. The Qin dynasty was highly centralized, but in the struggle to succeed the Qin it was not clear whether the territory of the Qin empire would be controlled by a new centralized dynasty, revert to its earlier multistate system, recreate the Zhou dynasty system, or manifest something new. Initially a southern aristocrat, Xiang Yü, emerged as the most powerful military figure in the struggle for dominance, but Xiang Yü was ambivalent about reestablishing a centralized system. Xiang Yü seemed interested in becoming Hegemon rather than Emperor, which would recreate a multistate organization with himself as dominant warlord.

Liu Bang, the man who would defeat Xiang Yü and found the Han dynasty, was quite clear that he wanted to be emperor over a centralized state. Liu Bang could not, however, both win the wars of conquest and create a fully centralized state. He was forced to grant feudal demesnes to his generals and family members to win over and keep their support. If the ideology of empire had changed with the Qin conquest, many elites retained an interest in a feudal dispersal of government authority. Some families retained the memory of their titles and landholdings, and others, newly risen with the fall of the Qin, sought to be rewarded with officially recognized hereditary control of lands and people. Hereditary demesnes were a longstanding form of power that were far more attractive than the opportunity to serve as a bureaucratic at the ruler's pleasure.

The first Han emperor therefore initially conceded the need to re-feudalize his new empire to secure his position. Once the Han empire was stable, how-

ever, he began to chip away at the new feudal demesnes on whatever pretexts he could find. Liu Bang spent the remainder of his rule putting down rebellions against the central government instigated, in part, by his policies of recentralization. He tried, not always successfully, to pick off individual demesnes and prevent any coalitions or simultaneous uprisings. Having centralized power his strategy, and that of subsequent Han emperors, became limited. War became a status quo tool focused on tamping down disorder. Military power had to be restrained and military prestige concentrated in the person of the emperor.

Later dynasties followed similar strategies of conquest, though they were not all exactly the same. The Han dynasty founding inherited the possibility of a centralized government balanced against returning to something like the Zhou system of dispersed temporal authority with a spiritual center. Although the ideology of centralized government became the orthodox view within a century or so of the Han founding, real power between center and region and even locality varied over time and space. The rhetoric and rituals of imperial China seemed, and were often presented as, consistent over time. Military, political, and institutional relationships on the other hand varied as a result of the process of conquest and subsequent challenges.

No one was able to unify China between the Han dynasty and the Sui dynasty (581-618). The goal of a unified empire remained just out of reach for three and a half centuries. The Sui proved short-lived like the Qin and gave way to the Tang dynasty (618-907). Like that of the Sui and many of its northern Chinese predecessors, the Tang ruling family was a hybrid Chinese-Türkic aristocratic clan. The Tang founding was the product of internal conflicts within the Sui with the Li family winning out. Several aristocratic groups continued to dominate the central Tang government while maintaining strong regional bases outside the capital. Similar to the need during the Han dynasty founding to distribute power, the Tang founding left in place significant regional powers. In the case of the Tang, however, those regional powers also staffed the imperial central government.

The next major dynasty, the Song (960-1279) was created by a series of campaigns to conquer the individual states that formed after the end of the Tang. Instead of an internal struggle among a self-identified and intermarried aristocratic ruling class, the Song conquest required decades of campaigns to defeat separate states, some of which also claimed to be empires ruled by an emperor. Even the small states resisted Song authority until the direct application of military force breached their capital cities. The Song founder's strategy was

opportunistic. He seized opportunities to overthrow states when circumstances provided him an advantage rather than having a strict predetermined plan. At the same time, he provided every incentive for the rulers and officials of the states he was attacking to surrender.

The Mongol conquest of China leading to founding of the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) as a Chinese-style dynasty cannot be properly understood without the preceding two northern steppe regimes, the Kitan Liao and the Jurchen Jin. The Kitan had consolidated as a steppe regime after 916 and dabbled in northern Chinese politics, supporting several states before directly invading in 946. Having captured the capital city of Kaifeng and renaming themselves as the Liao dynasty in 947, they were forced to withdraw north and abandon most of north China. They did retain a small, strategic piece of territory around modern Beijing mostly populated by Chinese subjects. The Kitan Liao made a covenant with the Song in 1005 establishing peace and keeping that strategic territory.

The Jurchen rose as a subject population of the Kitan. In order to throw off the authority of the Kitan court, the Jurchen allied themselves with the Song. After a dispute with the Song about the division of spoils and territory after the Kitan were defeated, the Jurchen invaded north China, ultimately capturing the Song capital of Kaifeng, the Song emperor, and his retired predecessor. Jurchen strategy then shifted toward trying entirely to destroy the Song. They failed in this but retained control of north China. When the Mongols arose initially subject to Jurchen authority they followed a similar path, allying with the Song regime that remained in southern China. The Mongols overthrew the Jurchen and took control of north China. They were willing to let the Song retain authority over its territory in exchange for submission to the Mongol Khan and all that it entailed. The Song rejected that, but it took the Mongols another fifty years to destroy completely the Song.

The Ming dynasty began its development in the rebellions that destroyed the Yuan. Some of those rebel groups, like the one which would eventually be taken over by Zhu Yuanzhang, the Ming founder, were originally religiously motivated. Zhu, like all successful dynastic founders was ably assisted by a group of effective, loyal generals. He defeated all of the other regional powers one by one to unify most of the Chinese territory formerly held by the Yuan. The Ming was unique among the major dynasties in starting in the south and moving north, something that would not be repeated until Chiang Kai-shek's Northern Campaign in 1928 (though Chiang's success was both less complete and much shorter lived). Although Zhu preferred an active defense into the steppes, the

actual Ming northern border was not much further north than that of the Song. It did crucially hold the territory around what would become Beijing, which the Song had not captured. Under Zhu Yuanzhang, however, the main Ming capital was in the south, at Nanjing. It was only moved up to Beijing under his son and successor, the Yongle emperor.

The last imperial dynasty, the Manchu Qing, was a northern steppe force that enlisted steppe people like the Mongols as well as Chinese to invade the Ming through the Great Wall. The Ming was simultaneously beset by rebellions, but it had not been effective in suppressing the mounting threat of the Manchus. A Ming army defending the border against the Manchus concluded that the only way to defeat the rebels who had captured the capital Beijing was to bring in the Manchus. The Manchus were therefore able to liberate Beijing from the rebels, overthrow a weakened Ming regime, and take control of China. Manchu strategy was unchanged by the turn of events, the rebellions and Ming internal politics simply made it easier. The Ming was conquered by a relatively small army that struck at the Ming army and government institutions.

Strategies of Maintenance

An established imperial dynasty regarded war in very limited terms. Some gains in territory might be considered and even successfully carried out, but the cost-benefit analysis often argued against anything large-scale. The most important strategic goal was maintaining imperial “majesty” or as the term *wei* is frequently and less felicitously translated “awesomeness.” This might seem to be an abstract and unimportant idea but understood as the sort of forceful presence that dissuaded challengers to imperial power it was quite practical. It was critical that no local strongman or external group imagine that it was possible to threaten the existence of the imperial government. One might raid and steal, but the government’s authority could not be challenged without a harsh response. The majesty of a government was critical, fragile, and imaginary. If those ruled believed in a government’s authority, then it existed without the direct application of force.

A second limiting factor for strategies of maintenance was the very real threat that the military itself posed to the government. Established dynasties often struggled to find competent generals. Education and training in peacetime seldom produced good battlefield commanders, let alone effective soldiers. Even men descended from military families could not substitute family traditions for actual experience. Consequently, dynastic governments struggled to respond

to military threats after even a few decades of peace. The difference between a dynasty that survived a new threat and one that did not was often how fast it was able to renew its military after a period of peace.

The structural problem of finding good generals was then compounded by the problem of keeping military leaders loyal to the emperor and the dynasty. Some generals might be loyal to the dynasty and not the emperor. It was also possible for a general to be ineffective on the battlefield but remain a threat to the dynasty he was supposed to serve. High-ranking generals were naturally drawn into political struggles at court, and it was important to manage their relationships with the imperial family and the bureaucracy. A dynasty could not function without a military, but the military was always at least a latent threat to the dynasty.

All of these factors argued for an established dynasty to favor limited war strategy. War was no longer necessary for creating the dynasty or its territory, but a failed application of force could undermine a ruler's majesty. While winning a war boosted a ruler's majesty, it also created at least a political threat in the form of a successful general or generals. Winning generals had to be rewarded, satisfied, marginalized, and kept available in case of further need. Chinese emperors of established dynasties did not go on campaign themselves, so they could not demonstrate personal battlefield competence. They were not supposed to be military men making them vulnerable to actual generals who commanded armies in the field. On the other hand, they were never endangered by being on the battlefield, with a few notable exceptions. The Zhengtong Emperor of the Ming dynasty was captured by the Mongols at the Battle of Tumu in 1449 after he had been convinced to go on a border campaign. Tumu was dramatic proof that even a political stunt to gain some military majesty that wasn't even imagined as a significant campaign could result in near disaster with the emperor present.

Just as gaining the loyalty, however tenuous, of local powerholders, government officials, and generals was necessary to create a dynasty, maintaining that loyalty was necessary to maintaining it. The concerns of an established dynasty with respect to loyalty were somewhat different. In an established dynasty elites and powerholders usually had a direct interest in maintaining the status quo. They were inherently biased toward supporting the dynasty that kept them in power as long as that dynasty seemed likely to do so. They still required further inducements to remain loyal, which were supplied ideologically since the Han dynasty by the insistence on training educated elites in *ruism* (Confucianism).

Ruism taught elites to be obedient and loyal to their parents and their ruler. All educated men were brought up studying *ruist* works and knowledge of those works was a prerequisite to employment by most imperial governments after the 8th century if not earlier.

Of course, very few generals were literate or trained in the *ruist* classics. Military men were perceived by the civil elite to be inherently unreliable because of their lack of moral cultivation. Moreover, military books including works on strategy were believed to promote rebellious inclinations. Until the late 11th century, the private ownership of works on strategy was prohibited. Ownership of such books, if discovered, was *prima facie* evidence of rebellious thoughts. These works still circulated in some fashion before the 11th century, and some educated men wrote commentaries on works like Sunzi, but they were not widely read. Strategy as a practice among generals and officers would have been even less tied to books. Strategy was an esoteric practice understood by very few, though in at least one case, that of Zhang Liang, was supposed to have learned through the transmission of a secret strategic text.

Some successful generals like Li Jing in the Tang dynasty did write works on strategy. Li Jing had been an important general in the founding of the Tang so his strategic perspective seemed based in practical experience. Parts of his original text were retained in a later manual on administrative practice, and then an early 11th century text used Li Jing's reputation and that of the second Tang emperor, Tang Taizong, who had also been a skilled general to lend itself credibility. One of the reasons that the 11th century book was obviously a fake was that the fragments of Li Jing's actual work were well known. The forgery, for want of a better term, was likely produced for the developing 11th century military academy and its related military exam system. Strangely, the forgery was included in the military canon that was eventually produced for that military education system. The canon, which was later referred to as *The Seven Military Classics* was primarily composed of books attributed to the Warring States Period, one Han dynasty work, and an 11th century fake claiming to be a 7th century book.

Song dynasty China in the 11th century was, if not a time of complete peace, a century in which large wars were intermittent, none of which threatened the dynasty's survival. It was under these circumstances that the intellectual study of strategy became of interest to the government. It naturally turned to Warring States Period strategic books. Since the Warring States Period military texts were limited war texts, it was in relatively peaceful times of established dynasties that there was great interest in those texts. The Song government was not

particularly interested in expanding its territory, though that would have been a positive development, but rather in maintaining its empire. Once the founding generals had died off and the empire had been at peace for almost thirty years reasonable civil officials began to argue for promoting military education.

The goal for the Song military education system was to produce loyal, effective generals through intellectual training. Although a certain measure of basic physical skills like archery and horseback riding were also tested, the main debate centered on which books officers should study. Song officials fundamentally believed in the power of books, both to substitute for experience and to change behavior. Books on strategy were therefore banned in the early Song because they were perceived to promote rebellion and make rebels more effective. The creation of a military curriculum over the course of the 11th century required a mental shift from seeing military texts as disruptive of order to seeing them promoting dynastic stability.

Dynastic maintenance was not always fully successful and caused many significant changes in the institutions and societies. Maintenance in the face of new threats or the culmination of old structural problems required a dynasty to change. The act of changing dynastic institutions ran directly counter to deeply inculcated *ruist* norms of continuing a founder's policies unaltered as a matter of filial piety. Dynasties that survived near death events, and it is possible to argue that all of the major dynasties that lasted more than fifty years with the exception of the Ming dynasty did so, were politically and militarily transformed in the process. Their strategic calculus was reevaluated in order to respond to the problems they faced.

The Han dynasty struggled to maintain its northern border against Xiongnu confederations but was actually briefly overthrown by Wang Mang's internal rebellion. Wang was a Han official who used the existing system to overthrow the ruling house. The ruling family regained control by enlisting the armed forces of local powerholders. The new emperor, who was a distant relative of the deposed emperor, abolished the military institutions that the Han dynasty had inherited from the Qin dynasty and earlier, Warring States Period, practice. Later commentators in the 20th century would attribute the "demilitarization" of Chinese culture to these specific changes. Although that extreme view was nonsense, the differences in practice and culture were profound. Where up until that time every adult male farmer expected to serve in the militia and receive some military training, afterward most farmers no longer provided military service. The Han dynasty would go on to last another two centuries with those changes.

In the Tang dynasty the garrison-militia system (*fubing*), which once again required military service of all adult males in the farming population and grew out of the preceding Northern and Southern Dynasties Period (420-589), allowed the conquest and consolidation of the Chinese empire under the Li family. The requirements of border defense led to a gradual shift of standing military commands under non-Han Chinese generals. Political complications undermined relations between the border generals and the central court, leading to the An Lushan Rebellion (755-763). The central court was forced to concede considerable power to regional strongmen in order to regain the capital and overthrow the rebellion. Although the emperor's authority was never quite the same after reestablishing the control, even the authority he did regain would not have been possible without accepting that radical changes were necessary during the crisis.

The Song dynasty also faced an existential crisis in 1127 when the Jurchen Jin army captured the capital, Kaifeng, along with the emperor and retired emperor. For several years it was not clear that the dynasty would survive, but by ceding control initially to several generals who had emerged in the chaotic warfare the situation was stabilized along the Huai and Yangzi rivers. The Song military was completely transformed by the struggle, and all of the principles of civil-military authority were overturned. These changes were necessary for survival in an existential struggle. The emperor was subsequently able to reclaim a small portion of his previous control over the military. Nevertheless, the dynasty survived another century and a half after losing north China.

The Ming dynasty did not suffer a massive collapse or rebellion like those of the Han, Tang, and Song, but it did have a civil war shortly after the first emperor died that dramatically reshaped Zhu Yuanzhang's original defensive system. Zhu had two fundamental military policies for securing the empire. One was to make the army into a hereditary class assigned its own lands. This was supposed to ensure a continuous supply of soldiers as needed at little cost to the state. The second policy was posting all of his sons, except the Heir-Apparent, to border commands. The sons on the border were supposed to defend the empire by an active engagement with the steppe. When the Heir-Apparent died, however, and his son was designated to succeed Zhu Yuanzhang, the sons posted to the border became restive. After a civil war overthrew the designated successor, and Zhu Di, the future Yongle emperor, took over, the capital was moved to Beijing, and the original system of border commands changed. Clearly, having imperial princes with significant military power under their command was a threat to the throne.

The Qing also did not suffer an existential rebellion or collapse in the mid-point of its rule. It was less fortunate in the 19th century, when it was assailed by Western powers which contributed to the massive Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864). The Taiping claimed to be Christian and for a time enjoyed great military success. Qing armies initially failed to deal with the Taiping just as they had the Western powers. This crisis did convince the court to break many of its standing policies and allow regional Chinese armies to be organized under high-ranking Chinese officials. These forces recruited and trained outside of the Qing military system were able to defeat the Taiping and led to some early efforts to reinvigorate the increasingly moribund Qing state. It was not to be, however, as the many interests that those reforms threatened worked hard to slow, limit, or redirect them. The Qing response to the Taiping was a great example of a missed opportunity that might have preserved the Qing state. Once the crisis was over, the Manchu elites in particular wanted to regain their former control.

Strategies of Collapse

At some point in a dynasty's history a confluence of events ended its political authority. Dynastic collapse is often attributed to a single factor but whatever is usually held up as the proximate cause of dynastic failure masks longer term trends both within an empire and outside of it. Many of the most important developments in the rise of the Mongols, for example, took place considerably before the surrounding polities perceived a new and significant threat. Many of the failures within existing dynasties were longstanding problems that had either gone unrecognized or were not addressed.

Strategically, the critical problem for a dynasty in collapse was recognizing that its military problem had transformed from a limited war to an unlimited or existential war. By definition, an overthrown dynasty failed effectively to address fundamental problems within its system and to respond to an external threat. This was not necessarily an absolute failure, and a dynasty could also fall purely from internal problems. The Song dynasty had a partial collapse in 1127, losing north China but remaining very much alive and functional for another century and a half in the south. For their part, the Mongol Yuan dynasty fell because of internal rebellions compounded by factional struggles rather than an external actor.

The Yuan emperor was not willing to make the changes necessary to survive. He recalled Chancellor Toqto'a from the field when he was on the verge of successfully destroying the rebels because of political fears. Whether or not those

fears were fully justified, the survival of the dynasty should have taken precedence during the crisis. Recalling Toqto'a may have avoided the Chancellor threatening the emperor's political control; it certainly led to the failure of efforts to suppress the rebellion. It also demoralized one of the main military forces defending the dynasty. By opting to try to maintain the status quo politically, the Yuan emperor inadvertently chose the path of collapse over maintenance. Toqto'a's fall from power led to a more general collapse. Once the dynasty's stability and authority appeared to be failing anyone with any power had to begin to contemplate their own survival. Loyalty would no longer produce benefits.

The Qing dynasty (1644-1912) faced a similar problem of political evolution or extinction. Beset by internal and external problems, not the least of which was encroaching Western imperial powers, the Dowager Empress Cixi realized that any significant government and military reforms would threaten her power. Although she was not solely responsible for the Qing's collapse, her political circumstances in the 50 years before her death in 1908 contributed heavily to the dynasty's resistance to necessary changes. Her strategy of maintenance deteriorated into a perhaps unknown to her strategy of collapse. Given that the Qing had not fallen when she died in 1908, she may well have considered herself a success. The dynasty itself was not so fortunate.

An interesting aspect of the Qing collapse was that it was not replaced by an imperial government, thus ending the imperial period of Chinese history. The ruins of the Qing looked very much like the ruins of other dynasties, and some of the causes of its collapse were also the same. Increasing regional power drawing away from the central government coupled with estrangement of the population from the empire as a whole limited the imperial government's ability to respond to threats. The Qing empire was not only not equivalent to a unified nation-state, but its different parts were also put into active contention with each other to protect the emperor's unifying authority. Qing political strategies of limiting internal and external military power left the dynasty unable to respond to European incursions. Moreover, as a Manchu imperial house ruling over a mostly Chinese population the Qing government had always been vulnerable to any large accretion of military power outside of Manchu hands.

Fundamentally, the Qing dynasty pursued a limited strategy until its very end because to have done otherwise would have likely transformed the very nature of the dynasty. Many Qing statesmen, Manchu and Chinese, understood this basic problem, and they struggled to formulate a program of reform that would have kept the original relationships of power in place. Some, particularly Chinese

statesmen and elites, actively sought to use the need for reform as a path to reorganizing the state and the Manchu-Chinese power relationship. Those reformers were actually loyal to the Qing empire while advocating for changes that would have made it almost unrecognizable beyond retaining the Qing emperor.

Too many interests were threatened by a change in strategy that would have saved the Qing. The survival of the dynasty in some form was sacrificed to clinging to the status quo, or a slightly reformed status quo. The Qing strategy of collapse was the final act of the final imperial dynasty. Like its predecessors, it came to an end because it could not formulate or adopt the necessary strategy to maintain itself. A successful strategy would have required too much change for the government and the elites in society to accept. Their personal interests clashed with loyalty to the dynasty. Local and regional power was easier to maintain in the face of change and support for the dynasty too costly.

Emperors and statesmen obviously did not consciously choose strategies of collapse. They imagined that they were choosing strategies of maintenance, balancing the need to bring resources to bear to solve a problem against the possibility that the response to a problem might itself undermine the status quo. In retrospect, strategies of collapse often seem to play out in court politics, where internal struggles took priority over problem-solving and the rapid marshalling of military force. Emperors and high court officials were distant enough from the real problems affecting the empire that they often saw the issues purely in terms of court influence. Particularly after a century or more of stability it was difficult to imagine how quickly a dynasty's fortunes could decline. Officials became complacent and lacked urgency in their response to growing threats. Palace-born emperors never faced critical problems and were raised to rule over a stable regime. They relied entirely upon their officials to inform them of problems and suggest policy solutions.

As a dynasty entered its final phase of collapse powerholders, elites, officials, and the emperor mentally shifted from dynastic preservation to self-preservation. Some emperors even considered the interests of their subjects and how their own capitulation might save commoners from death or pillage. The last Ming emperor hung himself on Coal Hill behind the palace as rebels entered Beijing, though if the current marker for that incident is accurate, at the bottom of the hill is a better description. The last Qing emperor had an even stranger post-imperial life, ending as a caretaker/resident of his former palace under the new Chinese Communist regime.⁷

7 Henry Pu Yi, Kuo Ying Paul Tsai (trans.), *The Last Manchu: The Autobiography of Henry Pu*

Conclusion

Imperial strategy had a few basic principles that presented themselves in very different processes over the course of a successful dynasty's history. The concerns of a founding emperor were different from those of a palace-born emperor. Palace-born emperors faced dramatically different circumstances during their reigns and their ability to cope with those problems was always chancy. Some palace-born emperors proved equal to the occasion and others did not. Since they had not achieved their positions by any other qualification than relationship to the previous emperor, their abilities were unknown and untested until there was a crisis. Very few of those emperors had the temperament, training, and experience effectively to manage their households, officials, and governments. Some were fortunate not only in their personalities but also their close officials and were able to respond effectively to problems. Some were not so fortunate, and others faced problems whose solutions they were unwilling or unable to carry out.

The basic problem of empire was loyalty and how to obtain enough of it spread across a vast territory. Creating an imperial dynasty required the harsh application of military force over several decades. Dynasties were not formed in a month or a year, or by a single or even small series of climactic battles. Wars, campaigns, and battles had to be won, but deeper structures of power also had to be created. The strategy of empire creation rested not only on the will, ideology, and ability to apply overwhelming military force against a series of opponents, but also on the careful selection and sequencing of those opponents to maximize the political effects of force and minimize its costs. Empire creation did not stop at successful military campaigning. It was just as important gradually to shift strategy to one of empire maintenance. A regime that could not manage the transition, or mistimed it, would either rapidly collapse from too much concentration on military effects or not achieve stability from turning away from force too soon.

Once sufficient force had pushed the boundaries of the empire to a stable point, the strategy of maintenance had to limit war to preserving the status quo. Internal control balanced the costs of policing against the returns of taxation. Spreading ideology and providing sufficient incentives to give elites a stake in the new political order was far cheaper and safer than the regular and extensive use of force. But the strategy of maintenance also had to be able to respond to existential threats when they arose and cast aside limitations when needed.

Yi, The Last Emperor of China, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1967.

Where the Han, Tang, and Song dynasties all faced existential moments that nearly destroyed the regimes until they adopted radical methods allowing significant change, the Mongol Yuan dynasty did not. Because the Yuan emperor was not willing to prioritize regime survival over preserving the internal political status quo, he undercut his army's ability to eliminate a mortal threat.

Imperial Chinese dynasties were bureaucratic institutions designed to instantiate a fixed order in the face of disorder and change, but they were created by strategies of total or unlimited war designed to overthrow the status quo. Imperial Chinese strategy therefore required a calibrated shifting between unlimited and limited war that traded off risk and chaos against safety and stability. Anytime the strategy shifted toward unlimited warfare the existing order would be disrupted and that change threatened those in power. Powerholders had to decide if a threat was so great that it warranted the risk of unlimited warfare. Imperial regimes sometimes imagined that they were strongly supported by a base of loyal subjects, but ordinary people were more concerned with safety and elites had interests that transcended dynasties.

Perhaps the reason that the most significant writings on military strategy during the imperial period were commentaries on Sunzi was the fundamental orientation toward specific problems at court rather than abstract theorizing about war. The written tradition of strategy was a part of the educated, civil-oriented culture of texts, rather than field generals. Battle and campaign accounts were part of the standard histories written by official government historians. War was not a separate field of discussion, and an interest in strategic texts was inherently suspect. Imperial Chinese strategy was too important to be left entirely to generals because ultimately any successful strategy went beyond battles, campaigns, and wars.

Spanish Grand Strategy

c. 1479/ 1500-1800/ 1830

CHRISTOPHER STORRS

Introduction

For Michael Roberts, author of the concept of an early modern Military Revolution, tactical transformation facilitated a revolution in strategy,¹ nowadays often termed “grand” strategy, although not all historians are happy with this refinement.² But what is strategy? Carl von Clausewitz defined strategy very succinctly as the use of the engagement for the purpose of the war.³ Rather more amply, for David Chandler grand strategy was a “level of warfare [which] relates to the formulation of policy and of realistic war aims, the creation and maintenance of alliances and the overall organisation of countries for waging successful war”.⁴ Even more broadly, Edward Meade Earle defined grand strategy as “that which so integrates the policies and armaments of the nation that the resort to war is either rendered unnecessary or is undertaken with the maximum chance of victory”.⁵ This fuller definition is clearly most applicable to the nation states of the post 1800 era but if we substitute the words crown, dynasty and/ or monarch for nation we might find the definition a helpful one in approaching strategy in pre 1800 ancien regime Europe, including Spain. Most policy mak-

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- 1 Michael Roberts, ‘The Military Revolution 1560-1660’, in Roberts, *Essays on Swedish History*, Macmillan, London, 1967, pp.195-225
 - 2 Cf Robert Frost’s critical review of John P. Le Donne, *The Grand Strategy of the Russian Empire, 1650-1831*, OUP, Oxford, 2004 in *English Historical Review*, 121 (2006), pp. 849-51. I see little difference in essence between the two terms, although it might be argued that the larger the polity the more “grand” the strategy; thus the global Spanish empire might have a grand strategy whereas the smaller and more confined duchy of Savoy might pursue a mere strategy.
 - 3 Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton UP, Princeton, 1976, p. 207
 - 4 David Chandler, *Dictionary of the Napoleonic Wars*, Wordsworth, Ware, 1999, p. 176
 - 5 Edward Mead Earle, *The Makers of Modern Strategy*, Princeton UP, Princeton, 1943, p. viii, cited in James D. Tracy, *Emperor Charles V, Impresario of War. Campaign Strategy, International Finance and Domestic Politics*, CUP, Cambridge, 2002, p. 20.

ers, including the Spanish monarchs and their ministers c. 1500-1800, have a strategy, or strategies, in the sense of routes – peaceful or otherwise - whereby they hope to achieve (foreign policy) goals. This means that those seeking to understand (grand) strategy must also be aware of that bigger canvas, the larger goals which strategy is intended to achieve, and of the alternative strategies available to those policy or strategy makers.⁶ Strategy was always a matter of choices, reflecting clashes of interests, opportunities, pressures and priorities and of course changes in the international situation, all constituents of, or influences on what might be termed “strategic culture”.⁷

Spanish strategy has, not surprisingly in view of Spain’s dominant presence in early modern Europe (and beyond) attracted much comment. For Paul Kennedy, seventeenth century Spain was a classic early example of “strategic overstretch”, too few resources stretched across too many commitments.⁸ There is something in that, most historians of Habsburg and Bourbon Spain subscribe to that broad view, but we need to consider the changing character of the overstretch. Historians have explored the grand strategy of the first three Spanish Habsburgs: Charles V,⁹ Philip II,¹⁰ Philip III,¹¹ and (although not under that heading) Philip IV.¹² But there are few dedicated studies of Spanish grand strategy for the following century and more, no doubt reflecting a historiographical cliché which sees Spain as no longer a major power after 1659 (below). But even in decline states must have survival strategies, whereas in reality Spain

6 Beatrice Heuser, *The Strategy Makers. Thoughts on War and Society from Machiavelli to Clausewitz*, Praeger Security International, Santa Barbara, Denver and Oxford, 2010, pp. 1-20.

7 John A. Lynn, *Battle. A History of Combat and Culture From Ancient Greece to Modern America*, Westview, Cambridge, MA, 2003, p. xx

8 Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers. Economic Change and Military Conflict 1500 to 2000*, Unwin Hyman, London, 1988, p. 31-72.

9 Aurelio Espinosa, ‘The Grand Strategy of Charles V (1500-1558): Castile, War, and Dynastic Priority in the Mediterranean’, *Journal of Early Modern History*, 9 (2005), pp. 239-83.

10 Geoffrey Parker, *The Grand Strategy of Philip II*, Yale UP, New Haven, 1998, pp. 1ff.

11 Paul Allen, *Philip III and the Pax Hispanica 1598-1621. The Failure of Grand Strategy*, Yale UP, New Haven, 2000.

12 Eberhard Straub, *Pax et Imperium: Spaniens Kampf um seine Friedensordnung in Europa zwischen 1617 und 1635*, Ferdinand Schoningh, Paderborn, 1980; John H. Elliott, *The Count-Duke of Olivares: The Statesman in an Age of Decline*, Yale UP, New Haven, 1986. Invaluable, too – and for the entire Habsburg era - are many of the conference papers in Enrique García Hernán and Davide Maffi, eds, *Guerra y Sociedad en la Monarquía Hispánica. Política, estrategia y cultura en la Europa moderna (1500-1700)*, 2 vols., Laberinto/ CSIC/ Mapfre, Madrid, 2006.

remained a major – a global – power throughout the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In exploring this large topic over a period of little short of 400 years, I adopt a largely narrative approach as the best means of bringing out both the enduring and the more transient influences on strategy, including that of individual monarchs, and the changing (and not simply evolving) strategic environment: Europe and the world, and Spain's place in them were very different in 1470, 1570, 1670, 1770 and 1830.

1470-1520: Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic Kings

Spain did not have a single, grand strategy before c. 1470 for the simple reason that Spain did not exist as a single political entity.¹³ Instead the Iberian peninsula was divided into a number of independent states – Aragon (including Naples, Sardinia and Sicily), Castile, Granada, Navarre, and Portugal – pursuing various strategies to achieve their own goals, often against each other. Perhaps most important, not least in looking to the future were the potentially contradictory strategies of the crown of Aragon, directed towards the Mediterranean, Italy and even further east, and of the crown of Castile, facing (beyond Iberia) the Atlantic and north-west Europe, in part because English and French intervention during the Hundred Years War had drawn Castile into their struggle.¹⁴

The unification of Aragon and Castile with the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile (the Catholic Kings), an essentially dynastic union, ensured greater unity of strategic direction. Following the surrender of the kingdom of Granada in 1492, a triumph of diplomacy as much as of arms, completing the Christian Reconquista of Muslim Spain, the monarchs invested in the voyages of exploration of Christopher Columbus that initially secured for Spain new possessions in the Caribbean and an entirely new – if at this stage largely embryonic - strategic challenge in and across the Atlantic. More traditional, Aragonese, interests outside Iberia, loomed larger and were maintained with the conquest of Naples c. 1500, expelling the French, such that the new Spain would henceforth remain entrenched in, and sensitive to threats to its position in Italy. Success in Italy was both a military and a diplomatic triumph, including a policy - strategy - of marriage alliances intended to restrain the French king: with the Austrian Habsburgs and English Tudors: the Catholic Kings' eldest

13 For what follows, unless otherwise indicated, see John Edwards, *The Spain of the Catholic Monarchs 1474-1520*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2000; Miguel Angel Ladero Quesada, *La España de los Reyes Católicos*, Alianza, Madrid, 1999.

14 Jonathan Sumption, *The Hundred Years War*, Faber, London, 1990-2023.

daughter, Juana married Philip, son of the Holy Roman Emperor, Maximilian of Habsburg,¹⁵ while another daughter, Catherine “of Aragon”, married prince Arthur, son and heir of Henry VII of England and - following Arthur’s early death - the future Henry VIII.¹⁶ Isabella also sympathised with those who wished to prevent an Islamic invasion from north Africa across the narrow straits of Gibraltar like that which had facilitated the earlier Muslim conquest of Iberia, and which - emphasising the link between internal and external policy- might find a fifth column in conquered Muslim Granada. For this reason she supported efforts to establishing Spanish outposts along the north African coast (Melilla, 1497; Oran, 1509), a feature of Spanish strategy throughout the early modern era which has been largely overshadowed by an interest in Spain’s European and American expansion. However, and indicative of the extent to which strategy was always matter of internal debate, Ferdinand, although he was not hostile to expansion in Africa but gave greater priority to Italy.¹⁷ Within Iberia, following Isabella’s death (1504), Ferdinand also secured – conquered- Spanish Navarre (1512).¹⁸ The acquisition of Navarre was another means to fend off France, Aragon and Castile being vulnerable to invasion at both ends of the Pyrenees – through Navarre and the Basque Country in the west and through Catalonia in the east – a vulnerability which would loom large in Spanish strategic thinking down to 1700 and beyond. Spain also continued to face a strategic challenge in neighbouring, independent Portugal. Nevertheless, within little more than a generation the Catholic Kings had transformed the strategic horizons of Spain, with only minor “overstretch”.

15 Jorge Antonio Urosa Sánchez, ‘El tratado de Blois de 1505 como fundamento de la razón de Estado en la estrategia de Fernando el Católico’, *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español*, 87 (2017), pp. 377-413.

16 Edwards, *Spain of the Catholic Monarchs*, p. 250-51

17 John H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain 1469-1716*, Arnold, London, 1963, p. 53-56; Juan Laborda Barcelo, ‘Las campañas africanas de la Monarquía Hispánica en la primera mitad del siglo XVI. Vélez de la Gomera. Un nuevo tipo de guerra’, in Garcia Hernán and Maffi, *Guerra y Sociedad*, 1, pp. 103-20; Espinosa, ‘Grand Strategy of Charles V’,

18 Alfredo Floristán Imízcoz, A., *El reino de Navarra y la conformación política de España (1512-1841)*, Akal, Madrid, 2014.

1520-c.1560: Charles I and V¹⁹

Dynastic accident, i.e. the death of the son, Juan, of the Catholic Kings and the inheritance of their Spanish and other dominions by their daughter, Juana and her husband (Philip I) and then, following Philip's death (1506) by Juana's infant son, Charles (Charles I in Spain), further transformed the strategic landscape for Spain. Charles inherited from his father a bloc of lands in the Low Countries, which Charles would consolidate, adding further territories to what would be known for the next almost 200 years as Spanish Flanders, and a claim to the Burgundian inheritance of his paternal great grandfather, the last duke of Burgundy (d. 1477), which added to the existing antagonism between the Spanish monarchy and the kings of France, the main beneficiaries of the collapse of the Burgundian state, and who also continued to challenge the Spanish presence in Italy until 1529. In addition, in 1519 Charles inherited from his grandfather, Maximilian, the Habsburg hereditary lands in central Europe, to which would be added in 1526 what remained of Hungary after the Ottoman conquest, and was elected Holy Roman Emperor (Charles V) in succession to Maximilian, bringing new responsibilities in central and eastern Europe. Charles' commitments in Germany were added to and complicated by the Protestant Reformation which split western Christendom between Protestant and Catholic. Charles championed Roman Catholicism for both personal and practical, pragmatic, political reasons and in 1547 led an army (comprising men from other parts of his many realms, including Spain) which defeated the German Protestant Schmalkaldic League at the battle of Muhlberg. Charles the Christian warrior – even crusader – also continued the Catholic Kings' strategy in the Mediterranean, leading a successful attack on Tunis in 1535 and an unsuccessful one on Algiers in 1541.

Spain's strategic commitments across the Atlantic expanded following the conquest of New Spain (Mexico) by Hernan Cortes (c. 1520) and that of Peru by the Pizarro brothers (c. 1535) These were the prelude to a broader Spanish conquest of much of north, central and south America which, although far from complete by 1550 – or by 1600, or even 1700 – generated an accelerating volume of resources (gold, later silver, later tax revenues) as the century advanced and which would help Spain's monarchs pursue their strategic goals in Europe and elsewhere. By the same token those monarchs would have to consider how best to ensure that the empire and its resources were kept in Spanish hands and

19 For what follows, cf Tracy, *Emperor Charles V*, William Maltby, *The Reign of Charles V*, Palgrave, 2002, Geoffrey Parker, *Emperor: A New Life of Charles V*, Yale UP, New Haven, 2018; and Espinosa, 'Grand Strategy of Charles V'.

protected against foreign interloping.²⁰

These expanded territories and commitments influenced the development of a defensive/ offensive system of regiments or tercios stationed in the non-Spanish European territories and of galleys and galleons at sea²¹, although by the time of Charles's abdication in 1555 this system was still largely embryonic; there was as yet for example no permanent "Army of Flanders". A largely defensive use of this system, one primarily associated with the duke of Alba was worked out, and which influenced Spanish strategic thinking down to 1700.²² In Italy, Charles frustrated French efforts to challenge militarily Spanish pre-eminence, and benefitted from an alliance with the republic of Genoa from 1528, which for the next hundred years or more enhanced Spanish seapower in the Mediterranean and facilitated its ability to move money and men between its various dominions beyond Spain. Charles also depended on networks of clientage with princely Italian families, including the dukes of Mantua, Parma, Savoy and Tuscany, who found marriage partners and opportunities for employment within Spain and its empire.²³ Less helpful was the breakdown of the alliance with England, one of the pillars of Spanish strategy since c. 1485, following Henry VIII's breach with Rome and his divorce of Charles V's aunt, Catherine of Aragon.²⁴

Charles V did not have a narrowly Spanish strategy, pursuing narrow Spanish goals or interests: Charles' strategy was much broader in its geographical scope and religious universalism. But Charles's abdication, which was arguably the act of a prince who felt he had failed to achieve his goals, a failure largely attributable to strategic "overstretch", crucially shaped Spain for the rest of the Habsburg era, reconfiguring yet again Spanish strategy. Charles' son and heir, Philip II, was not elected Holy Roman Emperor (an office to which Charles'

20 John H. Elliott, *Empires of The Atlantic World. Britain and Spain in America 1492-1830*, Yale UP, New Haven, 2006

21 Philip Williams, *Empire and Holy War in the Mediterranean. The Galley and Maritime Conflict between the Habsburgs and Ottomans*, Taurus, London, 2014.

22 Davide Maffi, *Los últimos tercios. Los ejércitos de Carlos II*, Desperta Ferro, Madrid, 2020, p. 102-3.

23 Michael J. Levin, *Agents of Empire: Spanish Ambassadors in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, Cornell UP, Ithaca, 2005; Manuel Herrero Sánchez, Yasmina Rocío Ben Yesséf Garfia, Carlo Bitossi, and Dino Puncuh, eds, *Genova y la Monarquía Hispánica (1528-1713)*, 2 vols, Societa Ligure di Storia Patria, Genoa, 2011; Angelantonio Spagnoletti, *Le dinastie italiane nella prima età moderna*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2003; Thomas J. Dandeleit, and John A. Marino, eds., *Spain in Italy: Politics, Society, and Religion, 1500-1700*, Brill, Leiden, 2007.

24 John Guy, *Tudor England*, OUP, Oxford, p. 116-53.

brother, Ferdinand, was elected), such that Spain was no longer formally responsible for the defence of the Empire. Charles also passed the core Habsburg territories in central and eastern Europe (Austria, Bohemia, Hungary) to his brother and the latter's heirs. Having said that, successive Spanish Habsburgs retained a strong sense of a dynastic bond, one periodically reaffirmed by inter-marriage between the two branches, and as the senior partner (because of their global resources) in the family alliance they retained a degree of commitment to the Austrian Habsburgs, and to maintaining their position in those areas.²⁵ To Philip passed not only Spain (Aragon and Castile) but also Flanders, (including Luxembourg and Burgundy or Franche Comte) and the Italian territories, to which Charles had added the duchy of Milan – which would become by 1600 a crucial strategic hub of Spain's entire European system²⁶ – and the so-called Tuscan garrisons or ports, a crucial staging post between Spanish Sicily and Spanish Naples on the one hand and Spanish Milan on the other hand and which also facilitated intervention in central Italy.²⁷

c.1560-1621 Philip II and Philip III

Philip II's empire and strategy, was more clearly Spanish, Atlantic and global than that of his father. Philip's accession is widely thought of as inaugurating a century of Spanish hegemony, between the peace of Cateau Cambresis (1559), which ended the cycle of wars between Spain and France dating from c.1494, and that of the Pyrenees (1659), and is sometimes referred to as a *Pax Hispanica*.²⁸ There is some justification for the latter label; there was no obvious single rival to Spain, certainly in western Europe, for most of that period. However,

25 Bohdan Chudoba, *Spain and the Empire 1519-1643*, Chicago UP, Chicago, 1952; Istvan Kenyeres and Geza Palfy, 'Hungarian Border Defence and the Habsburg Financial and Military Transformation of the 16th Century', in William Godsey and Petr Mata, eds, *The Habsburg Monarchy as Fiscal-Military State. Contours and Perspectives 1648-1815*, OUP, Oxford, 2022, p. 104-23.

26 Pablo Fernández Albaladejo, 'De "llave de Italia" a corazón de la Monarquía', in *ibid*, *Fragmentos de Monarquía*, Alianza, Madrid, 1992, pp.185-237; Mario Rizzo, 'The hub of the system. Discussions and perceptions regarding the geopolitical role of Milan in the 16th century', *Pedralbes*, 41, (2021), pp. 39-89.

27 Maria J. Rodríguez-Salgado, *The Changing Face of Empire. Charles V, Philip II and Habsburg Authority, 1551-1559*, CUP, Cambridge, 1988; Franco Angiolini, 'I presidios de Toscana: cadena de oro e llave y freno de Italia', in García Hernán and Maffi, *Guerra y Sociedad*, 1, pp. 171-88.

28 Matthew S. Anderson, *The Origins of the Modern European State System 1494-1618*, Pearson, Harlow, 1998.

even hegemonic states face challenges and Spain still had to juggle resources and to prioritise. Whether Philip II had a (grand) strategy, or system, or vision which determined priorities, has been debated, H.G. Koenigsberger suggesting that Philip did not,²⁹ Geoffrey Parker arguing that he did, but that it failed. Philip's failure – which we should not exaggerate – like that of his father (although not in exactly the same way) owed a great deal to strategic overload, and a want of sufficient resources to meet all his competing strategic commitments, although Philip's failure owed something, too, to how he pursued his strategy – above all his micromanagement, to use a rather anachronistic term – a setback to some extent compensated by Philip's supposedly “Messianic” way of thinking.³⁰

Crucial to Spain's performance was the fact that France, the greatest challenge to Spain in western Europe between 1494 and 1700 was effectively neutralised between 1559 and 1598 even down to c. 1630, by a succession of religious wars, in part in reality the result of a sustained succession crisis which in the 1590s tempted to Philip to intervene militarily in France.³¹

By 1560 the resources reaching Spain from the Indies were of growing importance – although we should not exaggerate their contribution to royal revenue – and their defence necessitated additional measures. Philip organised from the 1560s regular convoys between Spain and the Americas, the flota and the galeones.³² He also acquired the Philippines in the east Indies. This extension of the Spanish global presence brought new strategic opportunities and challenges, including a suggestion from the governor of the Philippines that the king intervene in mainland China.³³ Fortunately perhaps given his other commitments, Philip resisted the temptation. In 1580-81 Philip secured – by a combination of dynastic right, military intimidation and promises to respect the country's distinctive identity and institutions, the crown of neighbouring Portugal, with its overseas territories – in Africa, America (Brazil)) and the East Indies which meant that his was even more emphatically an Atlantic and global empire. But once again, additional territories meant added strategic challenges, a Portuguese

29 Helmut G. Koenigsberger, 'The Statecraft of Philip II', *European Studies Review*, 1 (1971), pp. 1-22; and in *ibid.*, *Politicians and Virtuosi*, Hambledon Press, London, 1986, pp. 77-96.

30 Parker, *Grand Strategy of Philip II*.

31 Robert J. Knecht, *The Rise and Fall of Renaissance France 1483-1610*, Fontana, London, 1996

32 Clarence H. Haring, *Trade and Navigation between Spain and the Indies in the Time of the Hapsburgs*, Harvard UP, 1918; John Lynch, *Spain under the Hapsburgs, 1: Empire and Absolutism 1516-1598*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1981, p. 155-75

33 Parker, *Grand Strategy of Philip II*, p. 8.

rival – or pretender- finding support in an England which was increasingly anxious about Spanish power.³⁴

In Europe, in Italy Philip benefitted from a so-called Pax Hispanica underpinned by the presence in Milan of Spain's Army of Lombardy, a military road via Finale in Liguria supplying Milan from Naples and Sicily via the Tuscan presidios. As before, marriage alliances with the independent princely families and job opportunities in Spain's extensive empire ensured that many of those families looked to the Spanish Court for advancement: Philip's daughter, Catherine, married Charles Emanuel I of Savoy while Philip's nephew, Alessandro Farnese duke of Parma commanded the Army of Flanders and would have led the invasion of England in 1588 (below).³⁵

Co-operation with the Italian states was also founded on the continued need to collaborate against the threat posed to coastal populations throughout the eastern Mediterranean (and beyond) by the Ottoman Turks and their allies the north African corsairs. In the 1560s this involved Philip II in a number of operations in north Africa, the relief of Malta (1565) and the creation of a christian Holy League, which included the republic of Venice and which triumphed over the Ottomans at the battle of Lepanto in the Aegean in 1571. In part this strategy was influenced by domestic concerns, i.e. the possible link between the Ottomans and a morisco fifth column within Spain, hence the distribution throughout Castile of moriscos from Granada after the abortive morisco revolt of 1568-70. Lepanto was testimony, inter alia, to the growth of Spanish seapower, essentially galleys in the Mediterranean, which remained a strategic concern of Philip and his ministers. However, further operations in north Africa and the Mediterranean were effectively halted – demonstrating the extent to which a prince's strategy was often determined by external players and forces - by the preference of the Venetians (for whom alliance with hegemonic Spain was always difficult) for peace with the Turks, by the Turks' preoccupation with strategic challenges in their own backyard in Asia, and for Philip's need to deal with pressing challenges in western Europe.³⁶

34 Lynch, *Spain under Habsburgs*, 1, pp. 322-30.

35 Spagnoletti, *Le dinastie italiane*.

36 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, English translation, Fontana, London, 1975; Philip Williams, 'The Strategy of Galley Warfare in the Mediterranean (1560-1620)', in García Hernán and Maffi, *Guerra y Sociedad*, 1, pp. 891-920; A.C. Hess, 'The Moriscos: An Ottoman Fifth Column in Sixteenth-century Spain', *American Historical Review*, 74 (1968), pp. 1-25; A.C. Hess, *The Forgotten Frontier: A History of the Sixteenth Century Ibero-African Frontier*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1978.

By the 1570s Philip faced a growing problem in North West Europe. Philip had married his aunt, Mary I of England, renewing the Anglo-Spanish alliance,³⁷ but on Mary's death and the succession of her half-sister, Elizabeth I, England slipped out of the Spanish orbit. Philip became involved in plotting to place Elizabeth's cousin, Mary, queen of Scotland, on the English throne.³⁸ This British difficulty could not be separated from a new challenge in Spanish Flanders. There, Philip's preoccupation with the spread of Protestant heresy, his very different approach to government from that of his father and a desire for the greater integration of those territories and their closer control from Madrid (Philip's permanent residence from 1561) triggered a crisis which culminated in widespread disorder in 1566.³⁹ This prompted a debate in Madrid about how to respond, hawks led by the duke of Alba, doves by the prince of Eboli, as Spanish ministers articulated the first version of what would become a multi-faceted and adaptable Spanish "domino" strategy: if Spain did not end the revolt it would encourage subversion elsewhere in the empire; in another version of that strategy, it was argued that the war in Flanders acted as a brake on France, ensuring that Spain itself was free from invasion.⁴⁰ Philip decided to despatch to Flanders troops which would provide a permanent force there, what would become known as the Army of Flanders, and to ensure that Flanders paid for itself. With the sea route from Spain to Flanders threatened on all sides,⁴¹ these troops were sent from Milan, along what would be the most important Spanish military artery, the "Spanish Road" passing from Spanish Lombardy to Spanish Flanders via the duchy of Savoy, the Empire, Spanish Burgundy and Spanish Luxembourg. The precise route shifted with the changing international situation but until it was closed for good during the Thirty Years War (below) the "Road" was one of Spain's key strategic concerns.

Spain briefly lost complete control of "Flanders" in the late 1570s as the revolt spread, aided by army mutinies triggered by funding problems exacerbated

37 Glyn Redworth, 'Matters Impertinent to Women': Male and Female Monarchy under Philip and Mary', *English Historical Review*, 112 (1997), pp. 597-613; Guy, *Tudor England*, p. 226-49.

38 John Cooper, *The Queen's Agent. Francis Walsingham at the Court of Elizabeth I*, Faber, London, 2012, pp. 56-9.

39 Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt*, Allen Lane, London, 1977; Geoffrey Parker, *Spain and the Netherlands 1559-1659*, Fontana, London, 1979.

40 Geoffrey Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567-1659. The Logistics of Spanish Victory and Defeat in the Low Countries Wars*, CUP, Cambridge, 2nd ed. 2004, p. 109.

41 Parker, *Army of Flanders*, p. 49.

by competing strategic commitments,⁴² but Parma's reconquest of the southern provinces in the 1580s worried England, which not only gave support to both the rebel provinces and to the Portuguese pretender but also attacked the Spanish Caribbean. In response, Philip devised the most ambitious project of his reign, a combined operation in which – in its final form – a fleet from Spain, with troops on board would also collect units of the Army of Flanders and transport them across the North Sea to conquer England. This remarkable project, the “Armada” of 1588 failed,⁴³ but did not put an end to Spanish plans for the conquest of England - in 1596 Philip launched a third armada against England⁴⁴ - along with intervention in Ireland where Elizabeth faced a long-running war native revolt.⁴⁵ It is also important to note that following the Armada of 1588, Philip established for the first time a permanent fleet for the defence of the Atlantic, the Armada del Mar Oceano, a response in part to closer reflection on strategic priorities and needs, one with important domestic repercussions. In 1590 the Castilian Cortes, whose role had been enhanced in recent decades in large part because of the cost of Philip's wars and the need for more tax revenues (the Indies never supplied all that was needed), approved the first grant of the millones taxes, what would become one of the pillars of royal revenue for the rest of the Spanish ancien regime.⁴⁶ The foundation of the new force was also part of what has been termed Spain's “turn to the sea” from c. 1590.⁴⁷

But already, well before Philip II's death in 1598 strategic overload was apparent, although we need to beware of exaggerating Philip's failure: he faced rebellion, he was at war, Spain's coasts were vulnerable, but Spain was spared invasion, its main fighting forces operating outside Iberia, in Flanders and Italy.

42 Parker, *Dutch Revolt*; Parker, *Army of Flanders*.

43 Garrett Mattingly, *The Armada*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1962; Colin Martin and Geoffre. Parker, *The Spanish Armada*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1988; Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, F. *The Spanish Armada: The Experience of War in 1588*, OUP, Oxford, 1988; Parker, *Grand Strategy of Philip II*.

44 Edward Tenace, ‘A Strategy of Reaction: The Armadas of 1596 and 1597 and the Spanish Struggle for European Hegemony’, *English Historical Review*, 118 (2003), pp. 855-882.

45 Allen, *Philip III and the Pax* p. 257; Enrique García Hernán, *Irlanda y el Rey Prudente*, Hermes, Marid, 2000-2003.

46 Charles Jago, ‘Habsburg Absolutism and the Cortes of Castile’, *American Historical Review*, 86 (1981), pp. 307-26; Albert W. Lovett, ‘The Vote of the Millones (1590)’, *The Historical Journal*, 30 (1987), pp. 1-20.

47 Christopher Storrs, ‘Fleets and States in a Composite Catholic Monarchy: Spain c. 1500-1700’, in J. D. Davies, Alan James and Gijs. Rommelse (eds), *Ideologies of Western Naval Power, c.1500–1815*, Routledge, London, 2020, pp. 85-105.

Philip himself began a process of retreat, concluding peace with Henry IV of France (Vervins, 1598), taking care to preserve the “Spanish Road” through Savoy.⁴⁸ He also granted Flanders to his eldest daughter, Isabella and her Austrian Habsburg husband, Albert, in an attempt to resolve the problem there. But it was left to Philip’s son, Philip III (1598-1621) to continue the winding down of commitments, concluding peace with England (1604) and a twelve year truce with the Dutch rebels (1609), which, according to Paul Allen was a distinctive new version of grand strategy: Philip III would have concluded a peace but for two issues – access to the Indies and, indicative of the continuing influence on strategy of religious issues, the toleration of Catholics in the Dutch republic - which proved impossible to resolve such that only a truce was possible.

But this did not mean that Spain was at peace, instead there were renewed operations in the Mediterranean, in north Africa,⁴⁹ in what might be termed a turn - or return -to the Mediterranean”, while the Pax Hispanica in Italy was breached when the duke of Savoy seized the duchy of Monferrat adjacent to Milan, triggering a brief war with Spain (1613-17); the episode helped inspire a plot (1618) by the Spanish ambassador to Venice and the viceroy of Naples to overthrow the republic, demonstrating the extent to which diplomats and viceroys might independently seek to secure Madrid’s strategic goals.⁵⁰ At the same time, Spain continued to provide financial and military aid to the Austrian Habsburgs against the Ottomans and their other enemies.⁵¹ More to the point, although for some – at the time and subsequently - the death of Philip II was a sort of symbol of the end of an age of Spanish hegemony, in reality Spain remained dominant and a global player under Philip III with a great many – arguably still too many - strategic commitments.

48 José Luis Cano de Gardoquí, *La cuestión de Saluzzo en las comunicaciones del Imperio Español, 1588-1601*, Universidad de Valladolid, Valladolid, 1962; Antonio Bombin Pérez, *Los Caminos del Imperio Español*, Universidad de Valladolid, Valladolid, 1974.

49 Manuel Rivero Rodríguez, ‘Monarquía Católica o Hispánica? Africa o Levante: la encrucijada de la política mediterránea entre Lepanto (1571) y la anexión de Larache (1618)’, in Porfirio Sanz Camañes, ed., *La Monarquía Hispánica en Tiempos del Quijote*, Silex, Madrid, 2005, pp. 593-613; Luis Salas Almela, ‘Las paradojas financieras del abastecimiento de Larache y Mamora: presidios, logística militar y aristocracia, 1611-1635’, *OHM: Obradoiro de Historia Moderna*, 30 (2021), pp. 219-47.

50 Geoffrey Parker, *Europe in Crisis, 1598-1648*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2001, pp. 112-16; John J. Martin, ‘The Venetian territorial state: Constructing Boundaries in the Shadow of Spain’, in Dandeleet and Marino, *Spain in Italy*, p. 246

51 Allen, *Philip III and the Pax*, p. 157

1621-59/65 Philip IV

The reign of Philip IV witnessed a resurgence of an older version of Spanish “grand strategy”. Philip’s accession coincided with remarkable new and closely related strategic challenges for Spain. On the one hand, the outbreak in central Europe in 1618 of the Thirty Years War threatened the position of the Austrian Habsburgs and with it the “Spanish Road” at a time when the latter was soon to be needed, because the truce with the Dutch republic was about to expire in 1621 and some (not all) believed it had been disastrous – strategically – in that the Dutch position strengthened while that of Spain had weakened; in a new variant of the “domino” strategy, the war must be renewed, otherwise Spain would lose its overseas possessions,⁵² although the objective – as Jonathan Israel has emphasised – was no longer to reimpose Spanish sovereignty.⁵³ Accordingly, In 1618 the governor of Milan seized the Valtellina, a strategically important link between Milan and Austria, to secure the “Spanish Road”, and Spanish troops were sent to shore up the position of the Emperor.⁵⁴ The war against the Dutch was fought not only as before in the Low Countries but also, unlike before, on a much wider front, including across the Atlantic, where the Dutch made inroads into Brazil. The war also took on a new form with Spain waging economic war – a new type of strategy – against the Dutch, in the form of the so-called Almirantazgo, a ban on Dutch trade with Spain and its dominions which proved remarkably effective.⁵⁵ The Spanish intervention in Germany and initial successes of the Emperor helped ensure that in the late 1620s the new Spanish strategy

52 Parker, *Army of Flanders*, p. 111; Philip Brightwell, ‘Spanish Origins of the Thirty Years War,’ *European Studies Review*, 9 (1979), pp. 409-31; Philip Brightwell, ‘Spain and Bohemia: The Decision to Intervene, 1619’, *European Studies Review*, 12 (1982), pp. 117-141; Philip Brightwell, ‘Spain, Bohemia, and Europe, 1619-21,’ *European Studies Review*, 12 (1982), pp. 371-399; Margarita S. Sanchez, ‘A House Divided: Spain, Austria, and the Bohemian and Hungarian Successions’, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 25 (1994), pp. 887-903.

53 Jonathan Israel, ‘A Conflict of Empires: Spain and the Netherlands 1618-1648’, *Past and Present*, 76 (1977), pp. 34-74; Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic and the Hispanic World, 1606-1661*, OUP, Oxford, 1982; Jonathan Israel, ‘Olivares, the Cardinal-Infante and Spain’s strategy in the Low Countries (1635-1643): the road to Rocroi’, in Richard Kagan and Geoffrey Parker, eds, *Spain, Europe and the Atlantic World: Essays in honour of John H. Elliott*, CUP, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 267-95

54 Parker, *Europe in Crisis*, p. 143

55 Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, ‘El Almirantazgo de los Países Septentrionales y la política económica de Felipe IV’, *Hispania*, (1947), 272-90; Elliott, *Count-Duke of Olivares*, pp. 161-2, 216-18.

briefly embraced the Baltic.⁵⁶ [But Philip IV allowed himself to be drawn into a war over the duchy of Mantua, on the grounds that its new duke might threaten Milan, thus opening a new theatre in Italy.⁵⁷ Following the Swedish intervention in the Thirty Years War, Philip IV's brother, the cardinal Infante was despatched from Milan to Flanders along the Spanish Road, to achieve what was perhaps Spain's last great military success, at Nordlingen (1634).⁵⁸

But the strategic challenge was shifting. The recovery of France from the difficulties of the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and the determination of Louis XIII and Richelieu to obstruct the Spanish Habsburg which initially took the form of indirect intervention, aiding Spain's allies, but in 1635 France declared war on Spain.⁵⁹ Historians now qualify the French success,⁶⁰ but the intervention was problematic for Spain as it was fighting a war on many fronts at a time when its economy was contracting and the war was interrupting the flow of resources for the crown from the Indies. Castile, for long the heart and paymaster of the polity, was particularly badly hit. There had long been talk in Madrid about the need to have the non-Castilian territories contribute more, relieving Castile. Philip IV's chief minister, the count-duke of Olivares sought to make a reality of such projects, in a project - the "Union of Arms" - which aimed to ensure a fairer distribution of the burden of supply of troops and funds (and ships) across the empire.⁶¹ The project was more successful in the long-term than is often acknowledged, but unfortunately, and in part due to Olivares' heavy-handed implementation of it the project proved counter-productive in some territories, with disastrous strategic consequences. In 1640, the Catalans, whom Olivares hoped to bounce into fuller mobilisation against France, instead revolted (and briefly put themselves under the French king). At the end of that same year the duke of Braganza, whose family had a rival claim to the throne of

56 John H. Elliott, 'Spain and the war', in Geoffrey Parker, ed., *Thirty Years War*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1987, p. 107.

57 Robert Stradling, 'Prelude to Disaster: The Precipitation of the War of the Mantuan Succession, 1627-29', *Historical Journal*, 33 (1990), pp. 769-85; reprinted in Stradling, *Spain's Struggle for Europe 1598-1668*, Hambledon Press, London, 1994, pp. 51-68.

58 Parker, *Army of Flanders*, p. 66-67.

59 Robert Stradling, 'Olivares and the Origins of the Franco-Spanish War, 1627-35', *English Historical Review*, 101 (1986), pp. 68-94; reprinted in Stradling, *Spain's Struggle for Europe*, pp. 95-120

60 Parrott, D., 'France's War against the Habsburgs 1624-1659: the Politics of Military Failure', in García Hernán and Maffi, *Guerra y Sociedad*, 1, pp. 31-48

61 John H. Elliott, *The Revolt of the Catalans. A Study in the Decline of Spain (1598-1640)*, CUP, Cambridge, 1961; Elliott, *Count-Duke of Olivares*.

Portugal to the Habsburgs, proclaimed himself king, inciting revolt there. The duke exploited various Portuguese grievances with rule from Madrid, including a heavy tax burden, infringement of its distinctive status, and Spain's failure to defend Portugal's overseas territories – most notably but not only Brazil - from the Dutch.⁶² These revolts added new theatres to a war (or wars) already being fought on too many fronts by Spain, creating new dilemmas in respect of prioritisation,⁶³ while to fight the rebels Philip IV and his ministers put more pressure on their remaining territories only to provoke brief revolts elsewhere, notably in Naples (after Castile and the Indies the most important territory in terms of supplying resources for war) and Sicily.⁶⁴ These conflicts and open war with France had further important strategic consequences. The "Spanish Road" to Flanders was cut when the French seized Breisach in 1638), such that the Army of Flanders could only be supplied from Spain by sea. Unfortunately, in 1639 a substantial naval force carrying troops from Spain to Flanders was destroyed off the English coast at the Downs by the Dutch.⁶⁵

Spanish strategic priorities were complicated once again, although Jonathan Israel has challenged the widely held view that from 1635 for the Spanish Court the struggle against France took priority over that against the Dutch.⁶⁶ In 1636 the Army of Flanders invaded northern France, demonstrating France's vulnerability. But it failed to reach Paris on that occasion and in a later incursion in 1643 suffered what is widely regarded as a turning point in Spain's hegemonic career - a disastrous defeat at Rocroi.⁶⁷ This was by no means the end of the war against France, to which was added from 1654 Cromwell's England, in a conflict which mixed religious/ ideological elements with commercial and political ones. The English seized Jamaica (their success in part due to Spanish neglect of the defence of that island which in turn reflected Madrid's other strategic priorities).

62 Rafael Valladares, *La Rebelión de Portugal 1640-1680. Guerra, conflicto y poderes en la monarquía hispánica*, Junta de Castilla y Leon, Valladolid, 1998.

63 Raquel Camarero Pascual, 'La Guerra de Recuperación de Cataluña y la necesidad de establecer prioridades en la Monarquía Hispánica (1640-1643)', in García Hernán and Maffi, *Guerra y Sociedad*, 1, pp. 323-57

64 Rosario Villari, *La rivolta antispagnola a Napoli. Le origini 1585-1647*, Laterza, Rome and Bari, 1976; Helmut G. Koenigsberger, 'The Revolt of Palermo in 1647', *Historical Journal*, 8, (1946), pp. 129-44

65 Parker, *Army of Flanders*, p. 68, 220.

66 For Jonathan Israel, 'Olivares, the Cardinal-Infante and Spain's strategy', the shift occurred c. 1640.

67 Parker, *Army of Flanders*, p. 15-16, 221-22

The Caribbean was no longer a Spanish lake.⁶⁸

Philip IV and his ministers sought to exploit the domestic difficulties of the French monarchy during the so-called Fronde, but failed to nail their advantage with a peace and - although free from 1648 onwards of the struggle against the Dutch (whose independence was recognised as part of the broader peace settlement which ended the Thirty Years War) - the war against France (and England) continued, badly for Spain. In 1659 Philip IV finally made peace with Louis XIV, the peace of the Pyrenees, which is widely regarded as marking the end of Spain's era of hegemony.⁶⁹ The Spanish strategic thinking behind the peace included the fact that, with the (defensive) struggle against France (and England) over, Philip could take the offensive against the Portuguese, still (unlike the Catalans, who had returned to Spanish obedience in 1652) in revolt. Unfortunately for Philip, the Portuguese continued to receive aid from their erstwhile allies, France (and England); successive military defeats in Portugal thereafter meant that Philip's efforts to reconquer the country had failed by the time he died in 1665.⁷⁰

1665-1700 Carlos II

Under Carlos II, the last Spanish Habsburg – in fact since 1659, even 1648 - Spain's position and strategy were transformed.⁷¹ The concern now was conservación – retention - of territory and reputation, although these had long been concerns of a beleaguered Spanish Court⁷². Paradoxically, however, Spain's

68 Porfirio Sanz Camañes, *Los Ecos de la Armada (1585-1660). España, Inglaterra y la estabilidad del Norte (1585-1660)*, Silex, Madrid, 2012; Barry Coward, *The Cromwellian Protectorate*, Manchester UP, Manchester, 2002, pp. 132-36

69 Derek McKay and Hamish M. Scott, *The Rise of the Great Powers 1648-1815*, Longman, Harlow, 1983, p. 7

70 Robert Stradling, *Philip IV and the Government of Spain, 1621-1665*, CUP, Cambridge, 1988; Lorraine White, 'Strategic Geography and the Spanish Habsburg Monarchy's Failure to Recover Portugal, 1640-1668', *Journal of Military History*, 71 (2007), pp. 373-409; Antonio Eiras Roel, 'Introducción: Las Juntas del Reino de Galicia y la Política Fiscal de 1655 a 1665', in *Actas de las Juntas del Reino de Galicia, vol. VII: 1655-1665*, Xunta de Galicia, 1999, pp. 9-52.

71 For what follows unless otherwise indicated, see Christopher Storrs, *The Resilience of the Spanish Monarchy 1665-1700*, OUP, Oxford, 2006. Carlos II (born in 1661) succeeded as a minor, reaching his majority in late 1675, his mother, Mariana governing as Regent from 1665; see Silvia Z. Mitchell, *Queen, Mother, and Stateswoman. Mariana of Austria and the Government of Spain*, Penn State UP, University Park PA, 2021.

72 John H. Elliott, 'A Question of Reputation? Spanish Foreign Policy in the Seventeenth Century', *Journal of Modern History*, 55 (1983), pp. 475-83.

strained circumstances and loss of hegemony, worked to Spain's advantage, above all because Spain was no longer considered a threat; instead, it was increasingly seen elsewhere as needing support, against the new threat posed by Louis XIV: the French bombardment of Genoa (1684) contributed to a longer-term weakening of relations between the republic and Spain.⁷³ Spanish diplomacy ably and successfully exploited this fear of France to achieve many of Spain's strategic goals. In 1667-68, in part mobilised by Spain, England, the Dutch republic and Sweden intervened in the so-called War of Devolution (1665-68) to oblige Louis XIV to curtail his conquest of Spanish Flanders. At the same time, the Spanish Court was obliged to abandon hope of reconquering Portugal, whose independence was acknowledged in 1668, recreating the Iberia of 1580, in line with what one historian has called a – debated – policy of “appeasement” intended to reduce overstretch.⁷⁴ The War of Devolution reflected a remarkable “strategic revolution”, the transformation of relations between the Dutch republic and Spain, the former now aiding the latter, for fear of Flanders falling to the French, a fear the Spanish Court exploited throughout the reign, threatening to abandon Flanders as of less concern to Spain than was Italy; but they never did give up Flanders.⁷⁵ In Louis XIV's “Dutch War” (1672-78) the Governor of Flanders led a Spanish intervention on behalf of the Dutch republic, while Dutch naval power was deployed to prevent Louis XIV exploiting the revolt of Messina (Sicily) against rule from Madrid, a revolt which in many respects turned the Spanish empire – strategically speaking – on its head, men and money being deployed south rather than north.⁷⁶ Relations between Spain and England were also transformed, to Spain's advantage in Europe and across the Atlantic.⁷⁷ In the Nine Years War or War of the League of Augsburg (1688-97)

73 Herrero Sánchez et al, *Genova y la Monarquía Hispánica (1528-1713)*.

74 Robert A. Stradling, ‘A Spanish Statesman of Appeasement: Medina de las Torres and Spanish Policy, 1639-70’, *Historical Journal*, 19 (1976), pp. 1-31; reprinted in Stradling, *Spain's Struggle for Europe*, pp. 147-76.

75 Manuel Herrero Sánchez, *El Acercamiento Hispano-Neerlandés (1648-1678)*, CSIC, Madrid, 2000.

76 Luis Ribot, *La Monarquía de España y la Guerra de Mesina 1674-1678*, Actas, Madrid, 2002; Maria del Pilar Mesa Coronado, *Las Fuerzas Terrestres del Reino de Sicilia (1665-1700)*, Societa Italiana di Storia Militare, 2023.

77 Carmen Maria Fernández Nadal, ‘Guerra, comercio y diplomacia. Las relaciones de amistad y enemistad entre Londres y Madrid (segunda mitad del siglo XVII)’, in Enrique García Hernán and Davide Maffi, eds., *Estudios sobre guerra y sociedad en la Monarquía Hispánica: guerra marítima, estrategia, organización y cultura militar (1500-1700)*, CSIC, Madrid, 2017, pp. 331-354.

Spain was a leading member of the Grand Alliance which obliged Louis XIV to agree a compromise peace, suggesting that Spain was by no means as devoid of military and other resources as the historiography of Spain's seventeenth century decline implies.⁷⁸ The decision of the duke of Savoy to abandon Louis XIV in 1690 and to join the Grand Alliance against him, transforming the strategic landscape in southern Europe - and arguably in Europe as a whole - to Louis' disadvantage owed much to the duke's perception of the possibilities opened to him by the mobilisation of the resources of Spanish Italy.⁷⁹ Furthermore, despite frequent defeats and losses of territory - including Franche Comte, lost for good in 1674, and Luxembourg, lost in 1684 but recovered in 1697 in the peace of Ryswick - at Carlos II's death in 1700 Spain's European and global empire was very largely intact, a remarkable triumph of a stubborn determination to conserve and of an associated strategy heavily dependent on diplomacy.⁸⁰ It is not entirely surprising, then, that for most of the life of the king - whose two marriages failed to produce an heir - it was the succession to that vast collection of territories, not the threat that they posed, which preoccupied that generation of European politicians.

1700-1746: Philip V

The accession of the first Spanish Bourbon, Philip V in 1700, summoned by Charles II's will, triggered the War of the Spanish Succession, the "Great War" of the first half of the eighteenth century.⁸¹ Philip won the struggle for Spain and Spanish America by 1713 but had lost virtually all of the extra-Iberian European territories which he had inherited, along with Gibraltar and Menorca: Flanders, Milan, Naples, Sicily, Sardinia, the Tuscan presidios, Menorca, losses which suggest the validity of Habsburg "domino" strategy" (above). Most of these lost territories fell to Philip's rival for the Spanish throne, the Austrian Habsburg Emperor Charles VI ("Charles III" of Spain), who had not made peace with Philip in 1713-14 (and would only do so in 1725). Thus, one strand in Spanish

78 Maffi, *Los últimos tercios*.

79 Christopher Storrs, *War, Diplomacy and the Rise of Savoy 1690-1720*, CUP, Cambridge, 1999, p. 59-60.

80 Christopher Storrs, 'La diplomacia española durante el reinado de Carlos II: una Edad de Oro o quizá de Plata', in Porfirio Sanz Camañes, ed, *Tiempo de Cambios. Guerra, diplomacia y política internacional de la Monarquía Hispánica (1648-1700)*, Actas, Madrid, 2012, pp. 21-53

81 For what follows, unless otherwise indicated, see Christopher Storrs, *The Spanish Resurgence 1713-1748*, Yale UP, New Haven, 2016

(grand) strategy after 1713 was the unfinished succession struggle. Across the Atlantic, Philip had been obliged to make important concessions in Spanish America, notably the grant to Britain of the lucrative slave supply contract, the *asiento de negros*, and the so-called “permission ship”, the first breach of the restriction of the right to trade directly in and with Spanish America to Spanish subjects.⁸² Finally, preoccupied by the struggle in Spain, Philip had been unable to defend his north African inheritance. Ceuta, a Portuguese garrison retained by Spain after 1668, was besieged from 1694 by the Moors, who had conquered Oran in 1708.

These developments shaped Spanish strategy in the generation after 1713 in various ways. For one thing the loss of territory inside and outside Spain created a new strategic configuration. Menorca and Gibraltar were no longer strategic advantages but potential threats. More important, Philip V was by no means resigned to the losses sustained and concessions made during the war and peacemaking. On the contrary, he was determined to overturn the Utrecht settlement. For many historians Philip’s foreign policy after 1713 was shaped by his second wife, Isabel Farnese, who - since Philip had sons by his first wife who would succeed before her own sons - sought to pursue her own dynastic claims in Italy - on Parma, Piacenza and Tuscany - to provide a refuge for herself in widowhood if need be and to ensure her sons had thrones of their own. Isabel certainly did have great influence, and did want to provide for herself and her children,⁸³ however Philip determined policy, and was preoccupied with more than just the territories which interested his consort in Italy. Whatever the inspiration, whereas Carlos II and his ministers sought to maintain the status quo, Philip wished to upset it; for the next generation, Spain posed one of the greatest threats to peace in Europe.

While Philip sought to restore the inheritance entrusted to him in 1700, his revanchism and strategy focused on the Mediterranean – Italy and north Africa - the Caribbean and the Atlantic. What is striking is the absence of Flanders. Philip did have hopes of securing a foothold in Flanders, including initially in the peacemaking in 1713 by securing – without success - a sovereignty there for the *princesse des Ursins*. Thereafter Philip also maintained links with the Flemish elites, maintaining a Walloon Guards regiment. But Philip would not pour men

82 Geoffrey Walker, *Spanish Politics and Imperial Trade, 1700-1789*, Macmillan, London, 1979, pp. 67-73.

83 Edward Armstrong, *Elisabeth Farnese, ‘The Termagant of Spain’*, Longman, London, 1892.

and money into Flanders as his Habsburg predecessors had done.⁸⁴

Otherwise Philip was pursuing strategic goals familiar to those of Habsburg Spain. Thus, the defence of the Indies was a clear – and understandable – priority given the continued importance of the Indies to the royal finances and the Spanish economy. This priority was reflected in fact that following the reorganisation of the navy by Jose Patino (d. 1736) the squadron based at Cadiz was always the largest of the three units of the fleet (the others were based at Ferrol and Cartagena). The creation of the viceroyalty of New Granada in 1739 reflected the same strategic concerns.⁸⁵ As for Italy and Africa, they had both been part of Philip's inheritance which he felt he must recover. Africa didn't particularly interest Isabel Farnese, but Philip was very conventionally pious and although he waged war on Christians in Europe – Catholics and Protestants – there is a sense in which he was a crusader against Islam in the western Mediterranean. In that sense at least, Philip's grand strategy had a strong ideological – even religious – element. This was reinforced by some practical concerns. His ecclesiastical revenues were authorised by the Pope in part to fund the struggle against Islam in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, Oran and Ceuta offered a counterweight to British Gibraltar. To some extent, too, Philip, was responding – choosing to respond – both to a more assertive Islam and to the opportunities offered in the divided polities of north Africa. Finally, as before 1700, the Islamic threat was one which was felt by many of Philip's subjects. Spain's Levant coast – Catalonia, Valencia, Murcia, Andalucia – but also the Atlantic coast as far as Galicia – continued to fall victim to Islamic raids. Here then was a domestic constituency which would support Philip's strategy in north Africa, the presidios there often described as a Christian “bulwark” against another Moorish invasion of Spain itself.

In 1717 an expeditionary force conquered the island of Sardinia. The following year, another expeditionary force invaded Sicily. This proved too much for some of the other powers who in the so-called War of the Quadruple Alliance (1718-20) obliged Philip to evacuate both islands. In contrast, at the end of 1720 Spanish forces finally relieved Ceuta. Philip could not realise his dreams of

84 Manuel Castellano García, *Gran Bretaña y la Paz Española de Utrecht*, Abatros, Madrid, 2022

85 Francisco Eissa-Barroso, and Aynara Vazquez Varela, eds., *Early Bourbon Spanish America. Politics and Society in a Forgotten Era (1700-1759)*, Brill, Leiden, 2013; Francisco Eissa-Barroso, *The Spanish Monarchy and the Creation of the Viceroyalty of New Granada (1717-1739). The Politics of Early Bourbon Reform in Spain and Spanish America*, Brill, Leiden, 2016; Allan J. Kuethe and Kenneth Andrien, *The Spanish Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century. War and the Bourbon Reforms, 1713-1796*, CUP, Cambridge, 2014.

further conquests in north Africa, but this was not the end of his military adventures. A brief war with Britain in 1727, and an abortive siege of Gibraltar, was patched up in 1729 (treaty of Seville) and followed in 1731 by a joint Anglo-Spanish expedition to Italy which installed one of Philip's sons, Don Carlos (later Charles III of Spain) in Parma and Tuscany. The following year another expedition finally recovered Oran. Thereafter, Spanish military intervention centred on Italy. In 1733, Philip sent yet another expeditionary force to Italy to exploit Habsburg difficulties in the War of the Polish Succession (1733-35/38). That force conquered Naples and Sicily which were then given to Don Carlos. Following the conclusion of the Polish succession struggle, Philip's efforts to restrict British activities in the Indies triggered (1739) what we know as the War of Jenkins Ear but – in part because of the British inability to build on initial success in the Caribbean – Philip was able to enter the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48) and to again exploit Austrian Habsburg difficulties in Europe. He almost succeeded in rebuilding Spanish Italy, Spanish forces briefly occupying Milan in 1745-6. It proved too good to last, but at the peace, another of Philip's sons, Don Felipe was installed in Italy as duke of Parma and Piacenza.⁸⁶

The success of Spanish grand strategy between 1713 and 1748, depended in part upon a remarkable enhancement of the effectiveness of Spanish arms as instruments of aggression. Contemporaries were especially impressed by the revival of Spanish seapower after 1713.⁸⁷ But the same was true of the army and of the finances. These were underpinned by a reformed government machine and associated too with the greater integration of the territories of the Crown of Aragon into the Spanish polity following the suppression of their distinctive status of those territories during and after the war of succession. More troops were quartered in and more revenues extracted from Catalonia, for example, than before 1700.

But Spanish grand strategy did not operate in a vacuum. The ultimate failure of intervention in Italy between 1717 and 1720 owed much to Spain's isolation, and to an unusual co-operation between Britain and France. This entente, which was in part due to Philip's ambitions on the French throne (should the young Louis XV die), lasted throughout the 1720s. However, the Anglo-French entente broke down in 1731, enabling Philip V to secure the first of a succession of French alliances – or Bourbon Family Compacts – which contributed enor-

⁸⁶ McKay and Scott, *Rise of Great Powers*, pp. 94-176

⁸⁷ Cf Jeremy Black, 'Anglo-Spanish Naval Relations in the Eighteenth Century', *Mariner's Mirror*, 77 (1991), pp. 235-58

mously to Philip's success in the Polish and Austrian succession conflicts and which would underpin – intermittently- Spanish grand strategy down to 1789.⁸⁸

Success also owed something to the presence in the former Spanish territories of populations which still felt bound to Spain and/or where new rulers had triggered new resentments. Nor should we ignore the domestic constituency in Spain for Philip's Mediterranean strategy. There were many exiles in Spain who had fled there as Spanish Italy (and Spanish Flanders) collapsed but who sought to return home.⁸⁹ Other groups and interests in Spain might also back a forward strategy in Italy. There was substantial support, too, for the defence of Spanish America against an aggressive, Protestant Britain.

But domestic support could not be taken for granted and foreign alliances came at a price, one which complicated strategic concerns. To secure peace and alliance with Charles VI in 1725, Philip was prepared to allow the Emperor's Ostend Company privileged access to Spanish America. The Austrian alliance was short-lived, such that the Ostend Company did not secure the promised benefits, but Philip – despite resenting the British presence in the Indies - was also ready to make concessions to the British in 1729 to secure support its co-operation in installing Don Carlos in Parma and Tuscany in 1731-2. This sacrifice of Spanish commercial interests to ensure success in Italy was not always popular in Spain, where support for a strategy more clearly centred on securing Spain's exclusive enjoyment of its American territories to some extent represented an alternative to Philip's Mediterranean strategy. This was one element in the emergence of what has been called a "Spanish party", centred on the heir to the throne, the future Ferdinand VI.⁹⁰ The granting of Naples and Sicily to Don Carlos in 1734-5, and above all the efforts on behalf of Don Felipe in the War of the Austrian Succession exacerbated these divisions, not least because Spain's resources were apparently diverted, even wasted on behalf of Isabel Farnese's children and used to reduce - not to conserve - Ferdinand's Spanish inheritance.

88 McKay and Scott, *Rise of Great Powers*; Jeremy Black, *The Collapse of the Anglo-French Alliance 1727-1731*, Alan Sutton, Gloucester, 1987.

89 We know a great deal about the exiles from Spain in Austrian Habsburg former Spanish Italy due to the splendid work of Virginia Leon, but little about the Flemish and Italian exiles in Spain.

90 Teofanes Egido López, *Opinión pública y oposición al poder en la España del siglo XVIII (1713-1759)*, Universidad de Valladolid, Valladolid, 2nd edition, 2002)

1746-88: Ferdinand VI and Charles III

The unease with Philip's Italian strategy scarcely influenced policy or strategy while Philip reigned but triumphed after his death.⁹¹ Ferdinand VI (1746-59) and his queen had little affection for Isabel Farnese and her children and were not particularly interested in Italy. Reflecting this disinterest and growing disenchantment in Spain with the French alliance, Ferdinand prioritised Spanish America, and better relations with Britain. Madrid's abandonment of an aggressive strategy centred on Italy helped to facilitate the "Diplomatic Revolution" of 1756 and the remarkable peace in Italy for the next generation, while Ferdinand kept Spain out of the Seven Years War.

The accession of Ferdinand's half-brother, Charles III (1759-88) meant yet another shift in strategic focus and execution.⁹² Charles III worried about the shift in the balance of power consequent on Britain's success against France in the Seven Years War and was fearful of the consequences for Spain's own empire. He was also irritated by British depredations in the Americas. Charles renewed the Bourbon Family Compact with France and entered the Seven Years War, also invading Portugal.⁹³ The intervention proved disastrous, the British conquering both Havana and Manila. Both of these were returned at the peace (1763), in return for the cession of Florida and all Spanish territory east of the Mississippi Spain securing Louisiana from France as compensation.⁹⁴ The revelation of the vulnerability of Spain's American empire shaped Spanish strategic thinking for the rest of Charles III's reign, and more emphatically than under Ferdinand VI. Spanish policy makers had not lost all interest in Italy, or in Africa – witness the disastrous expedition against Algiers in 1775⁹⁵ – but the defence

91 For Ferdinand VI, unless otherwise indicated see John Lynch, *Bourbon Spain 1700-1808*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1989, José Luis Gómez Urdañez, *Fernando VI*, Arlanza, Madrid, 2001, Cezary Taracha, 'El Marqués de la Ensenada y los servicios secretos españoles en la época de Fernando VI', *Brocar*, 25 (2001), pp. 109-122, and Diego Tellez Alarcia, *Ricardo Wall. Aut Caesar, aut nullus*, Ministerio de Defensa, Madrid, 2008).

92 For what follows, see Lynch, *Bourbon Spain*, Roberto Fernandez, *Carlos III*, Arlanza, Madrid, 2001, and Stanley J. Stein and Barbara H. Stein, *Apogee of Empire. Spain and New Spain in the Age of Charles III, 1759-1789*, Johns Hopkins UP, Baltimore, 2003.

93 Miguel Angel Melón Jiménez, *España en la Guerra de los Siete Anos. La Campaña Imposible de Portugal y el Ejército de Prevención (1761-1764)*, Silex, Madrid, 2022.

94 Lynch, *Bourbon Spain*; Oscar Recio Morales, *Alejandro O'Reilly, Inspector General. Poder militar, familia y territorio en el reinado de Carlos III*, Silex, Madrid, 2020.

95 Lynch, *Bourbon Spain*; Recio Morales, *Alejandro O'Reilly*; Paulino García Diego, *Jano en Hispania una aproximación a la figura y obra de Jerónimo Grimaldi (1739-1784)*, CSIC, Madrid, 2014.

of Spain's position across the Atlantic remained the priority, as other European states sought to establish themselves there. The Spanish Court was increasingly anxious about Russian interest in North America and sought to colonise/ defend the Pacific coast, by means of missions, new bases and presidios.⁹⁶ Further south, in 1770 during the confrontation with Britain over the Falkland islands, which the count of Aranda described as the key to South America, Spain was prepared for war only to be let down by the French Court.⁹⁷ There was confrontation with Portugal in South America.⁹⁸ Charles III took advantage of the American War of Independence to strike at Britain from 1779, reaffirming the French alliance, aiding the rebel colonists to secure independence, mounting an abortive invasion (with the French) of Britain itself, and an equally abortive siege of Gibraltar.⁹⁹ Charles recovered Florida and Menorca at the peace (1783); he also overhauled the administration of Spain's American dominions and opened up trade within the empire to his subjects on both sides of the Atlantic (but still excluding direct foreign access), further strengthening Spain's fleet, and with it Spain's overall strategic position.¹⁰⁰

1788-1833: Charles IV and Ferdinand VII.

On the accession of Charles IV Spain's overall strategic position was good. A well integrated well-defended empire in a western Europe in which Spain might hold the naval balance. The outbreak of the French Revolution and French revolutionary wars dramatically re-shaped Spanish strategy. For one thing, France was initially no longer a dependable ally, witness The Nootka Sound crisis (1790) another confrontation with Britain in North America in which France failed to help Spain.¹⁰¹ But it also re-centred Spanish policy/ strategy in the

96 Warren L. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire: Spain and the Pacific Northwest, 1543-1819*, Yale UP, New Haven, 1973; David Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America 1513-1821*, Yale UP, New Haven, 1992; David Weber, *Barbaros: Spaniards and their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment*, Yale UP, New Haven, 2005; Garcia Diego, *Jano en Hispania*.

97 Paulino García Diego, 'La estrategia española en el Atlántico sur; la crisis de las Malvinas (1764-1774)', *Revista de historia naval*, 32 (2014), pp. 9-26.

98 Dauril Alden, 'The Undeclared War of 1773-77: The Climax of Luso-Spanish Platine Rivalry', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 41(1961), pp. 55-74

99 Kuethe and Andrien, *Spanish Atlantic World*, p. 301-3

100 Kuethe and Andrien, *Spanish Atlantic World*; Rafael Torres Sánchez, *Historia de un Triunfo. La Armada Española en el Siglo XVIII*, Desperta Ferro, Madrid, 2021.

101 John M. Norris, 'The Policy of the British Cabinet in the Nootka Crisis', *English Historical Review*, 70, (1955), pp. 562-80; Cook, *Flood Tide*; Freeman M. Tovell, *At the Far Reaches of Empire. The Life of Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra*, University of British Columbia

direction of Europe. In 1792 the Spaniards abandoned Oran, but continued to occupy Ceuta and Melilla and in 1793 Spain joined the First Coalition against revolutionary France, dynastic loyalty and fear of revolutionary contagion trumping other considerations in determining strategy,¹⁰² only to make a separate peace with republican France in 1795, reflecting a sense that Britain was the more fundamental threat to Spain's global empire and amid continuing debate at Court over strategy and alliances.¹⁰³ In 1796 Spain allied with France, the evolution of Spanish foreign policy and strategy between 1789 and 1808 was – arguably – still largely driven by Spanish America as they had been since 1748 and by concern about the threat posed by Britain, only to result in the two naval disasters of Cape St Vincent (1797) and Trafalgar (1805).¹⁰⁴ The immediate strategic consequences of defeat at sea and the effective destruction of Spanish seapower were obscured by the fact that between 1808 and 1814 “patriot” Spain and Bonaparte Spain were primarily focused on the struggle within Spain itself, for and against Ferdinand VII and Jose Bonaparte, but was soon apparent after 1814 when the main concern of the restored Ferdinand VII was to counter the developing independence movement in Spanish America.¹⁰⁵ The task proved too great for an impoverished Spain (now largely deprived of its American revenues), its resources, arms and diplomacy. By 1830 all that remained of Spanish America and the global empire were Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines and a few isolated outposts in north Africa. A poorer, weaker Spain could not achieve its narrower strategic goals in a version of overstretch very different from that which had challenged Philip II 250 years earlier.

Press, Vancouver, 2008; Olga Volosyuk, ‘La política exterior de España (1789-1793) según los diplomáticos rusos’, *Investigaciones Historicas*, 18 (1998), pp. 123-138.

102 Richard Herr, *The Eighteenth-Century Revolution in Spain*, Princeton UP, Princeton, 1958; Teofanes Egido, *Carlos IV*, Arlanza, Madrid, 2001; Stanley J. Stein and Barbara H. Stein, *Edge of Crisis. War and Trade in the Spanish Atlantic, 1789-1808*, Johns Hopkins UP, Baltimore, 2009.

103 Herr, *Eighteenth Century Revolution*, p. 359-60; Hamish M. Scott, *Birth of a Great Power System 1740-1815*, Pearson, Harlow, 2006, p. 269-70

104 Roger Knight, *The Pursuit of Victory. The Life and Achievement of Horatio Nelson*, Penguin, London, 2005; Torres Sanchez, *Triunfo*.

105 Charles Esdaile, *The Peninsular War*, Penguin, London, 2002; John Lynch, *The Spanish American Revolutions, 1808-1826*, Norton, New York, 2nd ed., 1986; Rodriguez O, *The Independence of Spanish America*, CUP, Cambridge, 1998; Anthony McFarlane, *War and Independence in Spanish America*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2014; Stanley J. Stein and Barbara H. Stein, *Crisis in an Atlantic Empire. Spain and New Spain, 1808-1810*, Johns Hopkins UP, Baltimore, 2014; Emilio La Parra López, *Fernando VII. Un rey deseado y detestado*, Tusquets, Barcelona, 2018.

Conclusion

Spanish strategy changed considerably between c. 1470 and 1830 as did its territorial configuration, individual monarchs responding in different ways to changes and challenges in their strategic environment, and themselves helping to re-shape the latter. In what might be thought of as a strategic kaleidoscope, certain priorities were ever present, although arranged differently at different times: defence, reputation and conservation (under Philip V the reconstitution of his inheritance, throughout the eighteenth century the recovery of Gibraltar.) Strategy – war or peace, the prioritisation of this or that theatre, and so on - was always matter of debate, primarily because, above all at the empire's height, c. 1580 and c. 1780 but not only then, there were never enough resources to meet all commitments and each approach, commitment or theatre had its lobby, including on the one hand those around the monarch seeking to oust the proponent of one particular policy or strategy and – far distant - the inhabitants of provinces in the firing line. That shortfall was one very good reason why at some moments diplomacy was the preferred strategic instrument rather than arms (army or navy), or even commercial embargo. The negative verdict on Spain's grand strategy of most historians is too pessimistic a conclusion respecting an empire which went through various iterations, faced numerous challenges and devised a strategy or strategies which ensured the global polity survived – thrived - for almost three hundred years before collapsing within just thirty, Spain's overstretch across numerous theatres diverting enemies from any one theatre, not least Spain itself, and also making Spain an attractive ally.

Confronting Russia at Sea: the long view (1700-1919)

How to deter or defeat Russia –
the maritime historical experience.

By ANDREW LAMBERT

Although Anglo-Russian conflicts have been relatively rare persistent cultural, political and economic hostility has exercised the minds of British statesmen, service leaders and intelligence chiefs for more than 300 years, and generated a significant body of scholarship. This literature has largely failed to comprehend the essentially asymmetric nature of Anglo-Russian conflict, effectively confined to the maritime margins of the Russian Empire, contests between land and sea powers, both attempting to exploit their strengths against the enemy's weakest points. Anglophone literature has emphasised Russian strength, under-estimating the impact of British maritime power in securing vital British interests in Europe or Asia. Attacking Russia's fragile economy, threatening its maritime flanks, and building coalitions to maintain the *status quo* enabled Britain to limit Russian expansion, and occasionally roll it back – notably in 1856 and 1919. Those tasked with shaping western responses to the current conflict in the Ukraine should not be misled by the limitations of existing analysis of Anglo-Russian strategic relations, and the occasional wars that punctuated them. Seapower worked.

If there was never any prospect of a Russian army landing in Britain, or a British army marching to Moscow, for much of this period the Royal Navy had the capacity to threaten St. Petersburg/Petrograd/Leningrad, the Imperial capital, and a critical industrial centre of the Soviet Union, destabilising the empire, and wrecking the economy, threats that significantly impacted Russian strategy and policy.

It will be useful to begin by highlighting the continuities that shape and inform current Russian policies and actions. Putin's invasion of the Ukraine was only a surprise for those unaware of past practice, and the profoundly different

ideas and values that shape the Russian world view. Russia has consistently refused to recognise the Ukraine as a sovereign state, or the decision to leave Russia. The seizure of Crimea in 2014 and the current conflict are reactions to the loss of control over strategic territory.

The Russian Federation is an empire, not a state, it rules over many populations that are not Russian, both directly and indirectly. The 2022 invasion was prompted by Ukrainian attempts to join 'the west', and widespread protests in Minsk that followed the 2021 Byelorussian Presidential 'election'. Russian rhetoric about 'colour revolutions' emphasises this anxiety. Losing Ukraine and Byelorussia to the 'West' would seriously weaken Russia, and expose the ethnic Russian heartland to western influences.¹ From Putin's perspective the 'special military operation' is a defensive measure to improve Russia's security, and recover a lost province.

The deep history of Russia matters. Russia does not share the experiences, beliefs and values of Western Europe: it was shaped by very different forces. Two centuries of domination by the Mongol Golden Horde left Muscovy with a violent, arbitrary, absolute political system in which Russian rulers owned the country, along with everyone and everything in it, as personal rather than state property, and were free to dispose of it as they pleased. The Prince of Muscovy, a Mongol Client, extracted resources from the Russian people for his masters. When the Mongol regime collapsed the Prince became the Czar and continued to treat his subjects as slaves. There was no legal distinction between the ruler and the country: the autocrat was Russia and had no reason to consider the interests of the people. His power was reinforced by close ties to the Orthodox Church, which shared the sense of existing in a hostile world, while providing the people with a second focus for their loyalty. A service nobility of major landowners emerged to oversee and direct the imposition of imperial rule, without sharing political power. The current regime allows individuals to acquire great wealth, but they remain privileged servants of the state. The so-called 'oligarchs' do not have a separate political identity outside the regime. The idea that they could 'influence' Russian policy is unfounded, they are Putin's creatures, not his partners. The only decision-maker in Russia is the autocrat. There is a history of removing incompetent or ineffective autocrats, Peter III, Paul I, Nicholas II and Khrushchev were removed from power when their actions weakened Russia.

The autocratic political model was reinforced by rapid expansion, empire

1 It is important to stress that the People's Republic of China is also an empire, both regimes have an autocratic political model that can be traced back to the rule of Mongol warlords.

legitimised autocracy, while foreign conflicts provided a succession of ‘others’ against whom a Russian identity could be defined. Russia remains an empire, rather than a nation-state, and empires are ruled by autocrats.² Russian leaders consider democracy a source of weakness, arguing the Czar’s concessions in 1905 led directly to the 1917 Revolution.³ Modern Russians are told that the only political alternatives are autocracy or chaos. The component parts of the empire have little tradition of political engagement, which has made it relatively easy for past and present regimes to de-legitimise critics as unpatriotic.

Challenging the narrative of Russian imperialism should be a significant element in western responses to the current conflict. Russia is attempting to re-impose imperial rule over an independent, internationally recognised sovereign state on the basis of ‘fake’ history.

Russia, seapower and vulnerability.

While invading Russia has long been recognised as a serious military blunder Russia was, and remains, vulnerable to asymmetric pressure from the sea. When Russia acquired a Baltic coast Britain, which depended on Baltic naval stores for naval and commercial shipping, deployed battle fleets into the enclosed sea, to threaten Russian trade and ports, create regional coalitions and maintain a balance of power. Continental expansion was countered by maritime dominion, despite the profound imbalance of military force, because Russia could not compete at sea. Peter the Great deliberately rejected the progressive inclusive political and economic model that defined seapower states.⁴ He recognised political plurality would threaten the coherence of his empire. To counter that threat he erected powerful defences against sea based strategies, information flows and political ideas. Russian and Soviet navies have consistently focussed on coast defences against both hard and soft power, defences that extended into the Norwegian Sea in the era of Polaris submarines. Alongside the defensive reflex, coastal fortresses, coastal fleets and censorship, Russia attempted to limit

2 Richard Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and its Critics: A Study in Political Culture*. Yale University Press New Haven 2005 p.182 see the conclusion pp.179-85 for a succinct assessment

3 Pipes pp.138-41

4 Andrew Lambert, *Seapower States*. Yale, London 2018: see chapter seven for Russia and the sea.

Andrew Lambert ‘Russia and some principles of maritime strategy’ in Andrew Monaghan and Richard Connolly eds. *The Sea in Russian strategy*. Manchester University Press 2023 pp.33-53

strategic and economic risk by securing the entrances to the Baltic and Black Seas. During the reign of Czar Nicholas I (1825-55), an ardent nationalist admired by Putin, Russia attempted to exclude non-riparian naval powers from the land-locked Baltic and Black Seas by legal and diplomatic means. When those attempts were blocked by British diplomacy and deterrence he planned amphibious operations to secure the Danish and Turkish narrows.⁵

Failure to control the oceans and the adjacent seas left Russia exposed to defeat in a succession of limited maritime conflicts, including the Anglo-Russian conflict of 1807-11, the Crimean War, 1854-56, the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-05, and the 1919 Wars of Independence in the Baltic. In all four cases agile maritime powers exploited strategic asymmetry to out-manoeuvre relatively static Russian forces, emphasising sea-based power projection and economic pressure. Russia accepted defeat because economic ruin and domestic political instability challenged the legitimacy of the regime and the imperial model. While the Soviet collapse of the late 1980s reflected similar systemic problems, the regime being unable to counter a powerful maritime/economic threat, the opponent was a continental military peer competitor, not a seapower.

Russia has long depended on exporting relatively bulky products to maintain economic stability, defence spending and national security. This has been a critical vulnerability in periods of crisis and conflict with powerful maritime/ naval rivals, and the problem persists. Contemporary Russia cannot function as a major power without export revenues, but those revenues leave it vulnerable to sanctions, and changing patterns of consumption in an age of ecological stress. British analysts understood Russian and Soviet fleets were developed to neutralise threats to the land, not to command the seas, or threaten western sea communications.⁶ Russian naval power is tied to homeland defence, a fortress at sea, not a sea control asset.

Russia takes a very different view of power and politics to the west: Russians do not recognise a distinction between strategic and economic competition, both are run by the state, and have the same object, enhancing Russian power. The primary instruments of Russian strategy are not military forces. There is little interest in learning from western strategists, although they are occasionally cited

5 Bryan Ranft & Geoffrey Till *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*. Macmillan, London 1983 (henceforth Ranft) pp.55-6, 177-80.

6 Robert Herrick *Soviet Naval Strategy* 1968 p.143, cited in Ranft & Till 1983 p.9. Michael McCwire 'Soviet Naval Programmes' in Paul J Murphy *Naval Power in Soviet Policy*. United States Air Force 1978 p.100.

to support Russian arguments. Late Imperial Russia used British Admiral Philip Colomb's book *Naval Warfare* of 1891 to understand British/western maritime strategy. Colomb's programmatic text, developed to educate British naval officers, culminated with the projection of power against Russia in the Crimean War.⁷ The impact of these ideas can be traced in pre-1914 Russian plans for the defence of the Gulf of Finland by shore batteries, minefields and a battlefleet configured for long range fire.⁸ Russian naval weakness offers a strategic opportunity.

Asymmetry: Seapower and strategy against Russia

In 1911 Julian Corbett declared that seapower had limited utility in wars against other major powers.

‘Since men live upon the land and not upon the sea, great issues between nations at war have always been decided, except in the rarest cases – either by what your army can do against your enemy's territory and national life, or else by the fear of what the fleet makes it possible of your army to do’.⁹

His purpose was to stress that Britain, an ocean-dependent seapower, was obliged to understand what those ‘rarest cases’ were, and how to generate the necessary strategic threat. The following 300 pages of *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* distilled two decades of historical and strategic analysis into a ‘British Way of War’.¹⁰

The critical building blocks of maritime/economic power must be developed in peace time, across all departments of government. In the first decade of the twentieth century Britain used diplomacy, international law and overt demonstrations of power to shape the wider context of a future naval war. At the time Corbett was writing the primary purpose of those measures was to secure access to the Baltic, a region of immense strategic and economic importance to Imperial Germany, Britain's short-term rival, and Imperial Russia, the long term imperial rival and not infrequent adversary across the preceding two centuries.

7 Herrick made this point in 1968.

8 Commonly known as ‘Peter the Great's Naval Fortress’

9 Julian Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*. London, Longman 1911 p.14.

10 see: Andrew Lambert, *The British Way of War Julian Corbett and the Battle for a National Strategy*. London, Yale 2021 for the development of a specific national strategic concept, and its (mis)application in the First World War,

Between 1713 and 1919 British governments worked to preserve or enhance a maritime legal regime that supported economic warfare against continental military powers. Policy-makers understood this asymmetric leverage would be critical to Britain's great power status, diplomatic influence and alliance value. They worked hard to shape maritime belligerent rights regime, including the right to stop and search neutral merchant ships on the high seas. Corbett played a critical role in that process, enabling Britain to use maritime economic warfare effectively in the First World War, and to preserve that legal system into the Second.¹¹ British Governments used their political capital at major peace conferences to shape this process. In 1814-15 Britain refused to discuss maritime belligerent rights with the United States, France or Russia at peace conferences in Ghent and Vienna. In 1856 Britain countered American demands to relax those rights by linking them with the abolition of privateering, the licensing of private merchant vessels to act as commerce raiders. This minimised the legal threat to British merchant shipping. When Russian armed merchant ships seized British merchant vessels on the high seas in 1904 this legal regime ensured they were restored.¹² That positive legal position collapsed when Britain ceased to be a Great Power. In the absence of another seapower great power the evolution of the law of the sea has tended to reflect continental priorities, to the detriment of maritime strategy.

The key to the effective application of sea-based economic pressure short of war has always depended on understanding the economic relationship between the powers involved. This was especially important for relatively small maritime states that rely on strategic imports, which may be sourced in the state to be blockaded. If the blockading state depends on goods or materials sourced in the state it seeks to blockade it has to find alternative sources or adjust the blockading method to facilitate that trade. The long history of Anglo-Russian economic warfare provides several examples of such adjustments.

While blocking imports has been useful, notably for advanced weapons and technologies, Russia has always depended on exporting large volumes of relatively low value products to sustain state activities, making export denial significantly easier and more effective than blocking imports.

Although Britain and Russia were frequently at odds over the Baltic, the Black Sea, Central Asia, the Far East and the balance of power in western Eu-

11 Lambert *British Way*. pp.352-8

12 Julian Corbett. *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War 1904-1905*. ed. John Hattendorf & Donald Schurman, USNIP Annapolis 1994. Vol. II pp.15-9 .

rope, these clashes rarely resulted in conflict because British Governments pre-empted Russian attempts to deny the Royal Navy access to the Baltic and Black Seas and withhold strategic resources as a means of coercion, often at significant cost, to secure access and remove the risk of dependency. For two hundred years dispatching fleets to the Baltic enabled Britain to limit Russian regional hegemony.

Russia did not have access to a major sea until 1700, only acquiring useful ports in the Black Sea sixty years later. Economic warfare was a low priority for a state with ample domestic resources, tempered by an interest in imported technology.¹³ Dramatic bursts of Russian expansion often provoked negative reactions among other major powers, including coalitions between major powers and regional states to reduce risk. British views of Russia changed as the Czar marched westward, seizing territory involved in supplying naval stores. By 1716 Russian troops were quartered in Mecklenburg, for a projected invasion of Sweden that would enable Russia to dominate the Baltic, and the naval stores trade. This focussed British attention. British diplomats brokered a peace between Sweden and her western enemies, removing Russian troops from Mecklenburg. Attempts to create a coalition to roll back Russian conquests faltered in the face of regional war weariness, and domestic political turmoil. Russia reduced Sweden to a second rank power, and dominated the other Baltic powers – Poland, Prussia and Denmark.¹⁴

However Britain maintained its regional interests by deploying powerful naval forces, putting pressure on the Russian economy and prompting the removal of the Imperial capital to Moscow for a period in the early 18th century, a move that reflected the cultural challenge and strategic risk created by St. Petersburg.¹⁵ Russians did not see the sea as a theatre of identity and expansion, as the Dutch and English did, but as an alien, apocalyptic wasteland.¹⁶

Russia's response to western liberal ideologies has been negative, a reality emphasised more than a century ago by Russian historian, Vasily Klyuchevsky (1841-1911). As Paul Dukes observed: 'the closer Russia had drawn together

13 Jeremy Black 'Russia's Rise as a European Power, 1656-1756' in Paul Dukes ed. *Russia and Europe*. Collins and Brown 1991, pp. 69-83. Dating to a period when the future of post-Soviet Russia remained unknown – the sober and sophisticated historical assessments in this book provide rewarding comparisons with the latest reporting and political science analysis.

14 Black pp.81-2.

15 Black p.83

16 Lambert *Seapower States* p.254

with western Europe, the more difficult it had become to establish the manifestations of popular freedom'.¹⁷ Russia signally failed to match western levels of economic and technological development, outside some defence sectors, because it remained an autocratic state obsessed with war, fearful that western ideas, including the rule of law and political accountability, would weaken the regime. As Klyuchevsky observed progress, of sorts, was made by revolution rather than reform.

In the first half of the nineteenth century Russian Foreign Secretary Count Nesselrode, a German, recognised the importance of economic growth and working with Europe, but lost the battle to shape Imperial policy under Nicholas I to nationalists, whose influence sparked the Crimean War. The nationalists saw Britain's focus on trade as a weakness, and blocked measures to reduce tariff barriers.¹⁸

There is nothing new:

In the early eighteenth-century Britain and Russia moved from the margins of the European state system to become great powers. Russia's Eurasian resource base and expansive military power secured a contiguous land empire ruled from a new Imperial capital, subordinated to the interests of the regime, and controlled by the largest army in Europe or Asia. The new Russian Navy prompted western intelligence gathering and analysis of Russian naval activity that has persisted through periods of growth and decay.¹⁹ It reflects the persistence of a land-based, Russian challenge that could only be countered from the sea. As a relatively weak power Britain needed intelligence on Russian ships, forts and ports, regional navigation and economics to plan effective sea-based counter-measures. No serious consideration was ever given to British military activity beyond the Russian coast: British methods were necessarily limited and maritime. When London's search for regional allies to roll back Russian expansion faltered in the 1720s it worked round the threat to naval supplies and dispatched more intelligence gatherers.

17 Paul Dukes Klyuchevsky and *The Course of Russian History*; in Paul Dukes ed. *Russia and Europe*. Collins and Brown 1991 pp. 108-115 at p.112

18 Harold N. Ingle, *Nesselrode and Russian Rapprochement with Britain, 1836-1844*. University of California Press, Berkeley 1976.

19 For early 18th century espionage, reported and analysed by a late 19th century naval intelligence leader see Captain Cyprian Bridge, 'Introduction' *The Russian Fleet under Peter the Great*. London, Navy Records Society, 1899.

Despite the threat of war business continued unabated, both sides finding it convenient to avoid open hostilities. The death of Czar Peter in 1725 removed the driving force behind Russian expansion, and naval power. Trade continued, the British state exploiting maritime, economic and naval power to balance the European state system and shape an extra European empire of trade. The flash-points in the long-term Anglo-Russian interaction concerned trade, access to enclosed seas, and the European Balance of Power. Avoiding open war worked well until the late 1780s, when Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger pursued alternative sources of shipbuilding supplies beyond Russian control. The Second Partition of Poland and the Russian seizure of the Ottoman Black Sea port of Ochakov removed an alternative source and a route to the wider world, while Russia began selling naval stores to France. Hoping to change Russian policy Pitt mobilised a Baltic fleet in 1791, but Russian funded Members of Parliament obliged him to back down.²⁰ However, the need to restrain Russian action would recur within a decade, when much of the intelligence gathered for the projected 1791 expedition would be turned to good use.

In 1800 Czar Paul created an 'Armed Neutrality of the North', with Denmark, Prussia and Sweden, neutral powers engaged in the naval stores trade, demanding Britain abandon the legal regime used to stop and seized neutral merchant ships on the high seas carrying naval stores to France, or French colonial produce from the West Indies to France. This was the basis of British strategy in an ideological total war against Revolutionary France. Britain's survival depended on denying France the naval stores it needed to challenge British sea control, and potentially invading Britain. Paul was also anxious to acquire Malta, to attack Ottoman Turkey from the both the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. To enforce his demands Paul halted trade with Britain, and seized British merchant ships in Russian harbours, many loaded with naval stores. He expected Britain would back down. Well aware that compromising with the Czar would oblige Britain to accept French peace terms the Government sent a fleet to the Baltic in the spring of 1801, before the winter ice in the Gulf of Finland broke up. Chief of Staff Admiral Sir William Young had gathered regional intelligence in 1791. Well aware that the Armed Neutrality was a Russian project, and the naval stores embargo threatened Britain's ability to sustain the existential struggle against Revolutionary France Nelson secured unfettered access to the enclosed sea at the Battle of Copenhagen in 1801, before hastening on to the

²⁰ Philip MacDougall, *The Great Anglo-Russian Naval Alliance*. Boydell, Woodbridge, 2021 pp. 212-5.

Russian ports. Recognising the economic consequences of breaking with Britain, elements within the Russian elite removed Czar Paul and re-opened trade.

With the mission complete Nelson secured new charts of the Baltic Narrows, which proved critical in 1807 when Copenhagen was seized. It should be stressed that using the fleet, in peace or war, to secure access the Baltic had been a commonplace of English/British operations since Cromwell's regime in the 1650s. Fleets in the Baltic restrained Russian aggression and prevented St. Petersburg from using the supply of naval stores to hold Britain to ransom. This required constant adjustments as the Baltic balance of power shifted.

The successful naval response to Russia's embargo set a precedent. When Russia became an ally of France, joining Napoleon's economic embargo of British trade, the 'Continental System' in 1807, the Czar elected to continue the trade in naval stores, despite officially being at war with Britain. The two powers conducted a largely bloodless quasi-war, reducing the impact of Napoleon's 'System'. Russia blocked French imports, allowed Britain to acquire naval stores, and imported colonial goods from British suppliers. Alexander understood that Russia could not function within Napoleon's 'System', because it would cut major source of income that kept the Russian economy liquid, and 'undermine the financial and economic bases of Russia's position as an independent power'. He feared Napoleon would create a powerful Polish state and, in alliance with Austria, push Russia out of Europe. Russian statesmen were equally concerned to deny Napoleon control of the Baltic coast, which would close their export trade.²¹ When Napoleon demanded Russia live up to its' commitments the Czar refused, accepting the risk of war with Napoleon rather than entering an economic struggle with Britain.

Russian trade was unusual: orders were made in the autumn, accompanied by payment, with delivery made the following summer. These pre-payments kept the economy liquid, and enabling landowners and suppliers to pay their taxes, without which the state would quickly run out of cash. In 1807-12 Russia had no alternative sources of capital, lacking significant domestic reserves. Land and serfs, not capital, constituted the basis of Russian wealth. The Russian economy was predominantly agricultural, strikingly different to the British capitalist model.

The collapse of Napoleon's Empire left Russia the dominant continental power. British ministers were anxious to prevent the Czar Alexander I from dic-

21 Dominic Lieven, *Russia against Napoleon*. Viking, New York 2009 pp.100, 358-9.

tating a peace that brought Russian power and influence into Western Europe. In mid April 1814 Alexander made his ambition explicit, reviewing 120,000 Russian troops on the Champs de Mars in Paris. Britain responded by staging a Royal Fleet Review at Spithead, inviting the Czar, with his Austrian and Prussian allies before the month was out. The British emphasised the asymmetric challenge of British seapower, a message reinforced by the Czar's visit to London, where he found ample evidence of prosperity and technological prowess.

To ensure Britain could block Russian aggression, in Europe and Asia, Foreign Secretary Castlereagh developed alternative sources of naval stores in Canada, adjusting colonial tariffs to stimulate production. He believed the only threat to British interests came from an alliance of France and Russia, the second and third ranking naval powers of the era, and laid down the principle that the Royal Navy should be equal to both.

Aware the basis of British power lay in the control of maritime communications for economic warfare Castlereagh refused to allow maritime belligerent rights to be discussed at Vienna, or in the Anglo-American negotiations in Ghent, echoing the British position in 1801. Wartime experience had enhanced the Royal Navy's ability to dominate the Baltic, blocking Russian attempts to dominate the region. As the prospect of an Anglo-Russian conflict over Ottoman Turkey loomed in 1833 Denmark and Sweden jointly declared neutrality. In a war the Baltic Narrows would remain open to British warships. Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston declared: 'This is all we want'. He had good reason to celebrate. Industrial technology was rapidly altering the balance of economic advantage between Britain and Russia, while steam powered warships significantly enhanced the ability of fleets to attack shore defences.²² In the 1830s Russian anxieties about the Royal Navy in the Baltic reflected their fear of a Copenhagen (1807) style attack on St. Petersburg.²³ The defences of Cronstadt were reinforced. At the same time liberalism, nationalism and political inclusion challenged the Russian imperial regime, which increased censorship and the destruction of books and newspapers.²⁴ Autocratic rule limited Russian industrialisation after 1815, leaving the economy tied to agriculture and basic exports, lagging far behind Britain and the west. The resulting weaknesses would

22 Andrew Lambert "'This Is All We Want": Great Britain and the Baltic Approaches 1815-1914.' In Sevaldsen, J. ed. *Britain and Denmark: Political, Economic and Cultural Relations in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Copenhagen 2003. pp.147-169.

23 Ingle *Nesselrode* pp.60-1.

24 This was obvious in the 18th century. MacDougall p.70.

be brutally exposed by the Crimean War, when the polished façade of Russian military power collapsed, prompting costly modernisation programmes for the army and navy.

The Crimean War, 1853-56.

After a period of diplomatic tension, sparked by Franco-Russian disputes about access to Christian shrines in Palestine Czar Nicholas I demanded a protectorate over the Ottoman Sultan's Christian subjects, one third of the population, occupying the provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia (modern Romania) to enforce the demand. The British response reflected their desire to retain access to the profitable Ottoman market. If Russia secured Istanbul British merchants would be excluded. They were not concerned by the Russian Black Sea Fleet. Despite international condemnation the Czar refused to evacuate the provinces. The Sultan declared war in October 1853, Britain and France joined in March 1854 timed to coincide with the break up of sea ice in the Gulf of Finland. Economic warfare, including fiscal measures, quickly broke a Russian economy that relied on advance sales of bulky materials, and the cheap transport provided by British merchant shipping. Bankruptcy brought Russia to make peace. In 1853 Russian exports to Britain stood at 68 million roubles, by 1855 they had fallen to 0, while total exports collapsed from 143 million to 40, with grain exports falling by 90%.²⁵ Russia was unable to exploit British dependence on Baltic naval stores and grain because Britain had long since minimised dependence on Russia supplies.

²⁵ Mitchell, B. R. *European Historical Statistics*. 2nd edn. London 1980 pp. 360, 511, 580, 610, 750, 735.

1854-55 economic warfare:

RUSSIA: FINANCE, REVENUE AND TRADE, 1853-1857.

	Expenditure Million Paper rubles.	In- come Total	In- come Cus- toms	In- come (Ex- cise)	In- come (Di- rect Tax)	Over- all Trade Imp. Exp.	Grain Export Thou- sand metric tons.	Trade with Brit- ain Imp. Exp.	Trade Ger- many Imp. Exp.
1853	313	220	28	82	48	102 - 148	2,556	28 - 66 mi. ru- bles.	22 - 16
1854	384	213	20	77	46	70.4 - 65.3	637	9 - 12	24 - 20
1855	526	209	18	81	47	72.7 - 39.5	145	1 - 0	43 - 18
1856	619	232	30	91	51	123 - 160	1,713	22 - 64	41 - 23
1857	348	241	36	92	55	152 - 170	1,770	39 - 72	38 - 22

This limited conflict was waged along the Russian littoral. The key operational targets were Russian naval bases; their destruction secured Turkey, the Bosphorus and the Baltic Straits, and enabled the primary strategy, economic warfare conducted by naval blockade. When Russia agreed to peace, in December 1855, it was structurally insolvent. It also faced a strategic threat to the capital city, St. Petersburg.

In 1855 the allied navies deployed advanced land attack capabilities, using long-range weapons and armoured warships to overpower Russian anti-area access denial (A2AD), based on forts and submarine minefields. The new capability had been highlighted in British propaganda that detailed the scale and power of the new coast assault fleet being built to attack Cronstadt and St Petersburg. In 1856 bankrupt, defeated Russia faced an existential, escalatory threat to the imperial capital, the symbol and centre of the autocratic Eurasian military empire. Austria and Prussia, the critical neutral powers, urged Russia to accept the allied peace proposals. It did so in February 1856 – just before the Baltic ice melted, exposing St. Petersburg.

The Crimean War was won in the Baltic, where strategic threat, economic blockade and an expanding coalition, Sweden joined the allies in November 1855, not only obliged Russia to abandon its claims against the Ottoman Empire, but also ended its dominance of the northern sea. The asymmetric advantage of sea power enabled the allies to neutralise Russia's enormous army, striking key targets, while holding many more at risk from the sea. The Baltic Fleet tied 300,000 first class Russian troops to the region, despite the allies only deploying 10,000 soldiers in the theatre for two months. Threatening St. Petersburg would undermine the prestige that sustained the regime and the empire.²⁶ The Crimean War shaped Russian understanding of war long into the Soviet era. In 1927 strategist Aleksander Svechin highlighted the vulnerability of Leningrad to an amphibious attack, calling it 'the Sevastopol of a future war'.²⁷ He explained:

It would have been much better for Russia to fight the Anglo-French, who were afraid to penetrate Russian territory, not so close to the shoreline, but the importance of Sevastopol, the base of the Black Sea Fleet, compelled us to engage in battle at the very edge of the water, where the enemy had most advantageous lines of communication and we had the worst. Leningrad could play the same role in the future. The abundance of vital geographic points in the west, such as large cities and industrial centres, makes strategy inflexible in the extreme...²⁸

By contrast the British memory of a 'Crimean' War, focussed on a costly, chaotic land campaign, hampered serious strategic analysis, as Julian Corbett realised in 1911.²⁹ Although his attempt to develop sound strategic principles for another Anglo-Russian conflict would be overtaken by events, he recognised the maritime core was consistent with British practice.

The impact of defeat, 1856-1914:

Although the Crimea had been a limited war, the nature and scale of the defeat shattered the powerful sense of Russian exceptionalism and self-confidence that had endured since 1812. In a desperate attempt to shore up imperial

26 Andrew Lambert *Crimean War*.

27 Aleksander A Svechin, *Strategy 2nd edn*. East View, Minneapolis 1992. see Kent D. Lee's editorial introduction for the Post Cold war context of the American edition.10-11

28 Svechin p.159 see p.13 for the logistical problem incurred by attempting to hold an exposed coastal position.

29 Andrew Lambert 'Thinking about Seapower' *The Naval Review* Vol. 110 no.3 2022 pp.311-18.

autocracy and recover great power status fundamental aspects of the old empire were radically restructured over the next two decades, beginning with a root and branch reconstruction of the economy, although it remained under state control. Ending the serf system provided manpower for industrialisation and the army.³⁰ The need for strategic railways boosted iron production, and encouraged foreign investment, resulting in increased production of coal, iron and steel. These industries were encouraged by tariff protection. Railways and river steamships extended the exploitation of natural resources, from oil and timber to grain.³¹ The limited domestic capital supply forced Russia to seek foreign investment for capital projects. The state guaranteed foreign investments, paying dividends in foreign currencies, rather than unstable paper roubles. Strategic imperatives prevailed over economic opportunities. As Richard Connolly noted, Russia's political economy has been defined by 'an excessive focus on security, a dominant state, and a weak market'.³² Economic weakness and outdated industries saw Russia defeated by advanced nations, and the collapse of the both Czarist and Soviet empires.

Post Crimean economic policy emphasised exports, which only increased Russia's vulnerability to economic pressure. Conservative monetary policy maintained stability until 1877, when costly imperial wars dramatically increased the money supply - and inflation. Economic and industrial policy was shaped by a state focussed on internal stability and external security, restricting consumer demand by punitive levels of taxation.³³ States that rely on low value bulk exports are vulnerable to the loss of access to maritime transport.

While these developments brought Russian into the global economy, the new exports oil and grain, replacing naval stores and fibres, had to compete with more efficient market-based American output. This reduced profits, while dividend payments on foreign loans consumed any trade surpluses. The dramatic growth of the economy led Halford Mackinder to anticipate Russian land pow-

30 Joseph Bradley, *Guns for the Tsar: American Technology and the Small Arms Industry in Nineteenth Century Russia*. Northern Illinois University Press 1990 for modern rifles and machine tools.

31 Arcadius Kahan (ed Roger Weiss) *Russian Economic History: The Nineteenth Century*. University of Chicago Press 1989 pp.1-28.

32 Richard Connolly: *The Russian Economy: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP 2020.p.11 This penetrating study should be required reading for anyone attempting to comprehend the current crisis.

33 Kahan *Russian* pp.30-9, 91-2, 99.

er would ultimately overpower Britain's global maritime position.³⁴ In reality his 1904 'Heartland' thesis was little more than pseudo-scientific Russophobia, generated to justify Imperial Federation.³⁵

In 1914-18 Britain was able to replace Russian grain and oil, much as it had overcome exposure to Russia's near monopoly of the naval stores trade in the eighteenth century. Long term economic planning enabled Britain to avoid the political risk of resource dependence; ensuring economic blockade remained an effective mechanism for restraining Russian aggression, as part of a wider maritime strategy. By contrast in 1914 Russia found it very difficult to replace British coal in St. Petersburg power stations.

Another consequence of the Crimean defeat was the decision to rebuild the Russian navy as a coast defence force, exploiting new iron and steam technologies, mines and long-range shore-based artillery to enhance the defence of the Gulf of Finland and St. Petersburg. This remains the core mission of the Russian Navy.³⁶ Russian Fleets only become strategically offensive to support military advances.

By 1914 the entrance to the Gulf of Finland had been secured by 'Peter the Great's Naval Fortress', combining mine barriers, shore based artillery and a battlefleet designed to provide long range artillery support. Key elements of this system were lost in 1918-19, reducing Russia's Baltic coastline to less than 200 miles, leaving Leningrad exposed to sea-based threats.

This defensive impulse reflected the reality that between 1856 and 1904 Russia was Britain's most likely Great Power opponent, shaping war plans and the development of economic warfare. Russia advanced overland into Iran, Central Asia and China, securing territory and closing access to regional trade. Britain responded to Russian invasions of Turkey and Afghanistan in 1878 and 1884 by threatening direct naval action in the Baltic, to be followed by economic warfare, exploiting British submarine telegraph networks for command and control. Russia backed down on both occasions.

While the threat to deploy major fleets into the Baltic secured British inter-

34 Brian Blouet, *Halford Mackinder: A Biography*. Texas, College Station 1987 p.141 reported on 6 October 1900. William H Parker, *Mackinder: Geography as an aid to Statecraft*. Oxford University Press 1982. Bernard Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social Imperial Thought 1895-1914*. London 1960 esp. pp.166-176.

35 Halford John Mackinder 'The Geographical Pivot of History' *The Geographical Journal* 1904 vol. 23

36 Ranft p.153.

ests it also prompted further expenditure on Russian forts and coast defence warships. It also revived Russian interest in legal, diplomatic and strategic tools to close the Baltic to British warships. In 1907 Russia and Germany, members of the rival European Great Power alliances, concluded the Treaty of Björko to deny non-riparian warships access to the Baltic – a measure British governments had countered with considerable violence at Copenhagen in 1801 and 1807. On this occasion Admiral Sir John Fisher ensured the diplomats understood the strategic imperative. Fisher, who had served in the Baltic in 1855, and acted as Chief of Staff to the 1878 and 1885 Baltic fleets, recognised it as the obvious location for deterring Russia and Germany.³⁷ Denmark rejected the Treaty, well aware it would get no more support from the new allies than it had from their Russian and Prussian precursors in 1801.³⁸

The same exclusionary logic shaped Russian policy at the Turkish Narrows. Late nineteenth century Russian advances in Central Asia and Persia were driven by a desire to secure the Turkish Narrows against British fleets, to prevent a recurrence of Crimean catastrophe. In 1881 General Skobelev, conqueror of Turkestan, declared: ‘To my mind the whole Central Asia Question is as clear as daylight. If it does not enable us in a comparatively short time to take seriously in hand the Eastern Question, in other words, to dominate the Bosphorus, the hide is not worth tanning’.³⁹ Clearly Skobelev understood asymmetric strategic leverage. So did the British: three years later they responded to Russian violations of the Afghan border by assembling a ‘Baltic’ fleet. Russia backed down before the fleet left Portsmouth.

It was no coincidence that the Royal Navy hired Julian Corbett to analyse the Russo-Japanese War. Corbett explained how Japan, a continental-imperial power, had used maritime strategy to defeat Russia in a relatively brief limited war. The conflict had much to teach British strategists.⁴⁰ It also supported Mah-

37 Lambert ‘“This Is All We Want”, pp.147-169.

38 Andrew Lambert ‘Part of a Long Line of Circumvallation to confine the future expansion of Russia’ Great Britain, and the Baltic 1809-1890; in Rystad, Bohme & Carlgren eds. *In Quest of Trade and Security: Baltic in Power Politics 1500-1990. vol. 1 Lund University Press 1994 pp.297-334.*

39 Jennifer Siegel, *Endgame: Britain, Russia and the Final Struggle for Central Asia*. I B Tauris, London 2002 p.3 The quote was used by British statesman Lord Curzon in a 1892 study of Russia and Central Asia.

40 Julian Corbett, *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War, 1906-1905*. printed but not published by the Admiralty 1914-15. Published Naval Institute Press Annapolis MD 1998. ed Donald Schurman and John Hattendorf.

an's argument that the best method of defeating Russia was to draw it onto the coast.⁴¹ While many assumed the Russo-Japanese war had been too short for economic warfare to take effect war-related economic instability led to internal unrest and economic stress, obliging the Czar to make political concessions. Corbett's book appeared in 1914, just as a very different conflict began: few bothered to read it.

Redrawing the Baltic Map - 1919.

The First World War exposed the critical weaknesses behind the façade, weaknesses the democratic regime of 1917 could not address. The Bolshevik Revolution secured control of the country, at the cost of a humiliating peace with Germany, ceding Poland, Lithuania, Courland, Livonia and Estonia to Germany, and removing Russian troops and warships from Finland. The Bolsheviks sacrificed any hope of western sympathy by leaving the war, appropriating of foreign investments, assets and industries, and calling for a communist world revolution.

In 1919 Britain exploited post-war chaos to weaken Russia. In the critical Baltic theatre naval forces supported local independence movements, depriving Russia of almost all of its' pre-1914 Baltic coast. The new regional map also created a 'buffer zone' between Bolshevik Russia and defeated Germany, which were considered the most likely threats to the Versailles system. It also placed most of the ports that handled Russian exports in foreign hands – forcing the Bolsheviks to deal with capitalism.

British policy options were limited by post-war exhaustion, domestic opposition to a new conflict, differences among the victorious Great Powers, and the reluctance of Sweden and Denmark to act. The British Cabinet and the Supreme War Council at Versailles devoted little time to the Baltic: it remained a sideshow in discussions focused on restraining Germany and establishing a League of Nations. The other victorious powers effectively left the Baltic to Britain. French warships helped blockade Germany, and occasionally engaged German troops in the Baltic States, while American ships protected food aid, and kept a close watch on British actions.⁴² Prime Minister Lloyd George sup-

41 Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Problem of Asia and its effect on International Policies*. Sampson, Low. London 1900, which anticipated Svechin 's analysis by a quarter of a century.

42 William N. Still Jr, *Victory without Peace: The United States Navy in European Waters, 1919—1924*. Naval Institute Press, Annapolis MD 2018 pp.25, 93-5, 158-62

ported Polish independence, and weakening Russia, but expressed little interest in the Baltic States. He was anxious to avoid significant cost in lives or economic opportunity. He was not prepared to fight to overthrow the Bolshevik regime. Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour, a veteran of pre-war Anglo-Russian tensions, was similarly cautious. He advised sending a small naval force to show the flag and exert influence, without a binding commitment to support the new states, or 'White' Russian forces in the Civil War. His policy prevailed.

In the absence of a clear statement of allied or national aims British policy remained contingent, a reality reflected in the evasive, imprecise instructions issued by the Foreign Office. This left the operational naval commanders, junior Rear Admirals, to address complex, volatile situations with limited forces. The Admiralty urged the Government to provide a larger force, and more specific orders – without success.⁴³

Existing accounts of British policy in the Baltic in 1919 minimise or ignore the impact of sea power on Soviet decision-making, preferring to chase rich paper trails of diplomatic and military dead-ends.⁴⁴ Britain exploited this opportunity to weaken Russia, and reduce the threat to its political, economic and cultural interests.⁴⁵ Policy-makers in the Cabinet, the Foreign Office, War Office and Admiralty made strikingly realistic assessments of the medium to long term possibilities. While Finnish independence might be a permanent change to the regional balance, the Baltic States and Poland were likely to rejoin a revived Russia, even if they provided a temporary buffer zone – analysis confirmed by the events of 1939-1940.

The skilful and aggressive use of naval forces, providing weapons and fire support for ground operations, blocked Soviet attempts to recover the Baltic States, while Finnish bases enabled British aero-naval forces to strike Cronstadt on August 18th. This success, which reinforced the threat to Petrograd, prompted

43 John R Bullen 'The Royal Navy in the Baltic 1919' unpub. Ph. D thesis Kings College London 1983. pp.225-238

44 Stephen Roskill *Naval Policy between the Wars vol.1 The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism, 1919-1929*. London, Collins, 1968 pp.143-54. this effective distillation of British naval policy and operations, critical of non-committal government policy, expanded by Bullen p.16. See Richard K. Debo, *Survival and Consolidation: The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, 1918-1921*. McGill-Queens University Press, Toronto 1992 p.119 for the diplomatic impact of British naval operations in the Baltic.

45 Esa Sundbäck, *Finland in British Baltic Policy: British political and economic interests regarding Finland in the Aftermath of the First World war, 1918-1925*. The Finnish Academy of Sciences and letter, Helsinki 2001 pp.13-9

Lenin to propose peace talks to Finland and the Baltic States. On the 20th Lenin informed a journalist, working for the left-leaning *Manchester Guardian*, that the Soviets would recognise their independence. Although the Soviet Defence Council ordered a division from Turkestan to reinforce Petrograd on August 27th it concluded the city could not be held by military means. It would be secured by political concessions.⁴⁶

Churchill's public discussion of a 14-power alliance to crush the Bolshevik regime increased the pressure on Moscow, which had no troops to spare, and no reason to expect early victories elsewhere. On August 31st Moscow radio broadcast an official peace proposal, offering Estonia sovereign independence. The Soviets offered similar terms to Finland, Latvia and Lithuania on September 11th; a move delayed by the need to settle with Poland. The Baltic States crafted a joint statement of purpose, and talks began in the Estonian city of Dorpat (Tartu). Soon after that the British shifted focus to removing German forces from the Baltic States and reviving regional trade. On September 24th a Cabinet discussion of Baltic policy concluded Britain would not guarantee the independence of the Baltic states or provide further military aid and loans. Responsibility for making peace 'must rest with the Baltic provinces themselves'.⁴⁷ This released the Baltic States to negotiate with the Bolsheviks.⁴⁸

However, the Royal Navy closed the campaign by making a powerful demonstration of its ability to project power. In late October the 15 inch (380mm) gun armed monitor HMS *Erebus* bombarded Soviet forts at Grey Horse and Krasnaya Gorka, critical to the defence of Petrograd. The message was obvious and potent. The lack of a Soviet response indicated an anxiety to continue the peace talks at Dorpat or provoke the British. A fortnight later *Erebus* removed German troops from Riga with another heavy calibre bombardment, before returning to the United Kingdom. In the spring of 1920, a naval 'presence' mission was conducted by the battle-cruisers *Hood* and *Tiger*, *Hood* was the largest warship in the world. These ships, the ultimate embodiment of British power, were never intended to apply that power in the shallow, rock strewn Gulf of Finland. The Royal Navy's Baltic squadron was withdrawn in 1921, but Britain sent an

46 Richard K. Debo, *Survival and Consolidation: The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, 1918-1921*. McGill-Queens University Press, Toronto 1992 p.127

47 Debo pp.128-31 U Richard H. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations 1917-1921*. Vol. II Princeton University Press 1961 pp.254-5, 273 & 289. Ullman makes few references to the Royal Navy and offers two dates for the attack on Cronstadt – which suggests he considered the sea to be unimportant, taking naval detail from Geoffrey Bennett's *Cowan's War*.

48 Ullman 2 pp.279-81

annual naval squadron into the Baltic until the late 1930s, bolstering regional states against the Soviet threat.

In 1940 Britain anticipated aiding Finland against the Soviets, before the Fall of France changed the geo-strategic landscape. Acutely aware of the vulnerability of Leningrad Stalin exploited the war in Western Europe to recover key defensive positions in Finland and re-occupy the Baltic States, recovering the heavy gun batteries at Hango Head and in Estonia ahead of a German invasion.

While Russia has rarely been defeated on the battlefield, demonstrating astonishing resilience in major conflicts across the past 350 years, it has been defeated by maritime strategies that exploit economic weakness, domestic instability and asymmetric threat. Anglo-Russian relations need to be understood in a wider context. It was no accident that Russian expansion in Asia at the dawn of the twentieth century prompted Mahan and Mackinder to develop geopolitics.

Historically Russia, a large land empire, has faced land-based military threats from the east, south and west. Britain has been more concerned with upholding stability and preserving trade, balancing against hegemonic ambitions. Today Russia and the West are still grappling with the strategic potential of economic asymmetries: Russia has taken a long-term approach, symbolised by German dependence on Russian hydrocarbons, but this advantage has already disappeared, while Western counter-measures slowly degrade the Russian economy, despite Russia finding alternative markets for oil and gas. This is consistent with historical Britain practice, where coalition, maritime, economic and legal measures have minimised the need for direct military engagement. It is ironic that the Crimean War, resolved by maritime economic pressure, is remembered for futile cavalry charges, administrative incompetence and nursing.

Conclusion:

Although Britain is no longer a Great Power it retains many assets that enable effective responses to Russian aggression, as part of a coalition. Economic sanctions would degrade Russia's ability to fund the invasion, while international law can deny it access to the civilised world, while effective strategic postures should be put in place to ensure Russia understands that any attempt to expand the conflict would meet the overwhelming force of a grand alliance. Once those positions have been secured Britain can focus on applying pressure to Russian vulnerabilities.

Principles for a quasi-war against Russia:

1. This paper has a working assumption that any conflict between Russia and a 'western' coalition would remain limited. Current western alliance structures are sufficiently robust to ensure that the use of nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction would escalate any conflict in which they were used, while contemporary surveillance capabilities make it highly unlikely such use could be plausibly denied. President Putin's decision to publicly raise the issue in 2022 may be a sign of weakness, reflecting the relative failure of the conventional Russian invasion of the Ukraine.
2. Any response to Russian military aggression must emphasise the asymmetric advantages of the western alliance. Any military action on land should be essentially defensive: denying Russia any strategic gains. Entering the internationally recognised territory of Russia, (which does not include the so-called breakaway 'republics' of the Donbas, or the Crimea), would engender long standing Russian narratives about western invasion, potentially solidifying support for the current regime, and undermining the impact of alternative measures that have always been more effective in disciplining Russian aggression. Land and tactical air forces should be restricted to defensive tasking within NATO or allied territory, limited to the expulsion of Russian forces. Invading Russia, for whatever reason, has long been understood to be a grand strategic blunder of the first order. Modern western armies do not have the manpower, mobility or the open, permissive rules of engagement that enabled the Mongols to conquer and subjugate Russia, while every mile hostile forces advance into Russia only serves to reinforce support for the regime and confirm a long-standing victim narrative.

The lesson of history is clear: invasions of the Russian heartland, however powerful, consistently fail in the face of national resistance. It is striking that no British troops were ever more than eight hours march from the sea during the 'Crimean' War. When their French allies urged advancing inland to pursue and defeat the Russian army British Generals had the wisdom and courage to refuse.

3. Russia has been invaded from all directions, and by many states, some of them, including Britain, more than once. The resulting 'victim' narrative remains central to Russian nationalism, as it has been since the creation of the Muscovite state, used to persuade Russians that brutal autocratic regimes are

essential to their survival in a dangerous world of hostile states. This narrative conveniently ignores the reality the primary driver of anti-Russian sentiment since 1700 has been Russian aggression, including large scale ethnic cleansing, the persecution of minorities and imposition of 'Russian' identity across a vast multiethnic empire, along with a pattern of external behaviour in peace time that has included state subversion, targeted killings in foreign countries and systemic espionage. The high ground that those facing Russia must hold in the 21st century will be moral, rather than tactical.

4. British experience of across the past three hundred years suggests Russian aggression can be countered using the asymmetric advantages of maritime strategy and avoiding large scale military operations. The most effective contributions Britain made to resisting Russian aggression have been maritime and economic attacks on Russia's sinews of war, the weakest link in Russia's strategic power. The 'limited' Crimean War of 1854-56 was resolved by effective coalitions, economic pressure, technological superiority and maritime offensive operations.
5. Past successes have been based on long-term preparation, including establishing legal and diplomatic constraints, along with alliances or coalitions to uphold them, while conducting a sustained, thorough analysis of Russia's strengths and weaknesses, to identify the pressure points where maritime and economic power can be used to counter military strength and the diplomatic leverage of resource dependency.⁴⁹ This approach has been highly effective in the past, Identifying Russia's core weaknesses, and how to exploit them without requiring unnecessary or excessive costs/sacrifices for potential opponents, provides asymmetric leverage.
6. This strategy depends on robust legal regimes to punish Russian aggression through internationally recognised jurisdictions. Since the Anglo-Russian crises of the 18th/19th centuries the balance of legal advantage has shifted away from maritime freedom towards the extension of continental control over what was hitherto regarded as the 'high seas', or in Mahan's phrase 'the great common'. Western liberal nations have compromised the single most effective non-kinetic tool in their collective armoury, economic warfare/

⁴⁹ The RUSI report on early August 2022 highlighting Russian dependence on imported technology for key weapon systems is a striking example of a repeating pattern of technology dependence.

sanctions. That the initiative for these changes, down to UNCLOS II, was taken by the United States, emphasises the reality that the USA is a naval, rather than a maritime power, viewing the ocean as a vector for delivering strategic effect on land, rather than the medium across which global economic power flows, where the control of communications, to cite Corbett, is critical to the survival of medium powers, but it has also, historically speaking, been the source of their strategic advantage.

7. The current Russian Federation is an autocratic, imperial regime, a revival of the pre-1917 empire, not an updated version of the Soviet Union, which is widely viewed as a failed experiment. Contemporary Russian strategic thinking is based on work from the imperial era, rather than western or Soviet texts.⁵⁰ Putin's choice of Palace decor, the imperial uniforms of his 'Guards' and the recycling of heroic nationalist names, notably on new ballistic missile submarines, speak to this imperial revival. In Russian political thought autocracy is the obvious political system to rule an empire, Ultimately Russian international behaviour is imperial, driven by the same perception of external threat that has been used to justify autocratic rule throughout Russian history.
8. Long term planning, a 'corporate' memory, and constant attention to the key issues are essential preparations for employing a maritime strategy, in an environment actively shaped to deliver the necessary legal and diplomatic support for sanctions, or war. To be effective deterrence must be clear, and consistent across alliances.

50 Ofer Fridman, *Strategiya: The Foundations of the Russian Art of Strategy*. Hurst, London 2021 pp.1-17

“New Paths to Wisdom”: Clausewitz – From Practice to Theory.’*

T. G. OTTE

The inclusion of Carl von Clausewitz in a collection of essays on strategic practice may well raise a quizzical eyebrow or two. Much of the extant literature in the field, after all, tends to prioritize strategic theory. Often it is refracted through a Clausewitzian lens either to prove the essential correctness of the Prussian general’s *obiter dicta* or, conversely, to assert their redundancy, as if his writings were a form of ‘Holy Scripture’ that demanded the most meticulous exegesis. This circumstance itself reflects Clausewitz’s reputation as one of the foremost theoreticians of war. His introvert and introspective personality (- he was prone to bouts of depression -), his unfulfilled career (- he never attained promotion to a higher position of command -) and the disjointed and disparate nature of his *oeuvre*, almost all of it published posthumously, lend themselves to such a view. To complicate matters especially in the anglophone world, the notion of a scholar-soldier, a philosopher-general, as one Cambridge philosopher once commented, ‘defeats the Anglo-Saxon imagination.’¹

Clausewitz never commanded an army in the field; yet he was not without extensive personal experience of combat and senior staff work. As a thirteen-year old cornet he took part in the siege of French-occupied Mainz in 1793 and later in the year in the Rhine campaign in which a small Prussian force fought the numerically superior *Armée de la Moselle* to a standstill at Kaiserslautern. Over a dozen years

* The extant Clausewitzian literature is vast. For reasons of space alone I have sought to limit references. Wherever possible I have used Clausewitz’s work in the original German, in case of *On War* the standard edition by Werner Hahlweg *Vom Kriege: Hinterlassenes Werk des Generals Carl von Clausewitz* (Bonn, 19th ed. 1980). *On War*, ed. by M. Howard and P. Paret (Princeton, NJ, 1976) offers the best English translation, but the editors’ rendering reflects their own particular concerns. I am therefore giving my own translation, albeit one guided by Howard and Paret. All references to this work are to both editions.

1 W.B. Gallie, *Philosophers of Peace and War: Kant, Clausewitz, Marx, Engels and Tolstoy* (Cambridge, 1978), 37.

later, he experienced the catastrophe of Jena, the complete rout in October 1806 at the hands of Napoleon Bonaparte that brought the Prussian state to its knees and left its continued existence to the whim of the victorious emperor. Clausewitz's own grenadier battalion did not surrender at Jena but fought a protracted and bloody retreat which eventually - and inevitably - ended in defeat on the marshy banks of the river Uecker North of Berlin, followed by captivity in France.

In 1812, now a lieutenant-colonel in the Imperial Russian army, he served as quartermaster-general in General Fedor Petrovich Uvarov's cavalry corps that fought at Borodino, and then occupied a senior staff position in the Russian main army. During the spring campaign of 1813, still in Russian service but now attached to Field Marshall Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher's Prussian corps, he was in the thick of the battle of Gross-Görschen, 'with the sabre in his fist' and sustaining minor bayonet injuries to his head and neck.² In the autumn of that year, he was attached to the allied corps under Ludwig Georg von Wallmoden-Gimborn that tied down Louis-Nicolas Davout's army in North Western Germany in a campaign that combined older precepts of manoeuvre warfare with the new 'small war' concept, on which Clausewitz himself had lectured at the Prussian *Kriegsakademie* in 1810-11. During *les cents jours*, now returned to the Prussian fold as chief of staff of III Corps, he drew up the plans for the Ligny and Wavre campaign in June 1815 which, like the 1813 manoeuvres in Northern Germany, diverted significant numbers of troops from Napoleon's main army.

His early death during the cholera epidemic of 1831/2 that also claimed the lives of Goethe and Hegel denied him the senior command post to which he clearly aspired. But already before then his career had been checked repeatedly by the deep suspicions which senior figures at the Potsdam court or in the army entertained towards the 'Jacobin' Clausewitz. There was, reported the British envoy to Prussia in 1816, 'not that confidence in his [Clausewitz's] being wholly free from revolutionary views.'³ Prince William of Prussia, the future German emperor, whom

2 Clausewitz to Marie von Clausewitz, 3 May 1813, K. Linnebach (ed.), *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen und Tagebuchblättern* (Berlin, 1917), no. 146. This is not the place for a detailed biographical account. There is no proper modern biography. The standard works are: C. Schwartz, *Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz* (2 vols., Berlin, 1878); W. Hahlweg, *Carl von Clausewitz: Soldat - Politiker - Denker* (Göttingen, 2nd 1969); R. Parkinson, *Clausewitz: A Biography* (London, 1970); W. von Schramm, *Clausewitz: General und Philosoph* (Munich, 1982 (pb)); and D. Schössler, *Carl von Clausewitz* (Reinbek, 1991). Of these Schwartz and Parkinson are the least satisfactory. Friedrich Meinecke's character sketch of Clausewitz offers some acute observations, id., *Das Zeitalter der deutschen Erhebung, 1795-1815* (Göttingen, 6th ed. 1957), 72-74.

3 Rose to Castlereagh (no. 116), 9 Nov. 1816, The National Archives (Public Record Office), Kew,

Clausewitz had tutored as a boy, was wont to refer to him as 'Mr. Clausewitz'.

Clausewitz, then, was not some schoolmasterly theoretician without practical military experience. As the following seeks to show, his efforts to grapple with the intellectual challenges posed by the phenomenon of war and the demands of strategy were infused with reflections on his own active service experiences and with insights derived from studying the wars of the past as much as those of his own times.

Inevitably, attempts to appreciate the practice-theory nexus in Clausewitz's work are complicated by the fragmentary nature of much of his writings, including his *magnum opus Vom Kriege (On War)*. It may well be, as Raymond Aron has suggested, that the general's teachings 'will always remain obscure.'⁴ But ambiguities can usefully be reduced by consulting his miscellaneous other writings and by giving due consideration to their contexts and the involved genesis of *On War*. Without such sifting and contextualizing Clausewitz may well be condemned to remain a somewhat cloudy, slightly metaphysical theoretician - and that would be a profound misreading.

* * *

Already his earliest campaigning experiences impressed upon Clausewitz that war was not subject to immutable rules. When the *ancien régime* armies invested Mainz, following the precepts of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century siege warfare, they faced a new type of soldier, as he later reflected in the work on which his historical reputation has come to rest: 'War was suddenly again the people's affair, a people of thirty million, all of whom considered themselves citizens [*Staatsbürger*][...] With popular participation in war the full weight of the nation, as opposed to cabinets and the army, was thrown into the balance.'⁵

In 1793 the allied armies also encountered a different type of combat, fought by light infantry, and often operating in attack columns rather than the familiar linear formations strung out across the battlefield and manoeuvring slowly into position. These new tactics were not entirely the product of the revolution, but had steadily evolved from French staff ideas since the late 1770s.⁶ Their impact was neverthe-

FO 64/120. Such views dashed Clausewitz's hopes of being appointed envoy to Britain. His wife's mother, Sophie Gomm, was the daughter of the British consul at St. Petersburg and embassy secretary at The Hague, and an aunt to a British field marshal, Sir William Maynard Gomm, V.E. Bellinger, *The Woman Behind the Making of On War* (Oxford, 2016), 21.

4 R. Aron, *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War* (New York, 1983), ix.

5 *Vom Kriege*, VIII 3B, 970-1; *On War*, 592.

6 For a detailed discussion of this see R.S. Quimby, *The Background to Napoleonic Warfare: The*

less dramatic, the more so since they ran in parallel with mobilizing now highly politicized popular masses. For Clausewitz it was the revolution, not its Napoleonic apogee, that changed the nature of war. As he observed in a biographical sketch of his mentor and patron, Field Marshal Gerhard von Scharnhorst:

The old type of warfare had collapsed in the Revolutionary Wars. As the times and the political circumstances had changed, its form and means had become unsuitable With their revolutionary means the French had dissolved the old instrument of warfare as in acid. They released the terrible element of war from its old diplomatic and financial constraints. It now marched on with brute power, pushing in front of it a vast mass of forces; and one saw nothing but debris of the old art of war on one side and incredible successes on the other, without being able to discern a new system of warfare, that is new paths of wisdom [*neue Wege der Klugheit*], new positive forms of utilizing military forces.⁷

This new military-political phenomenon was a constant point of reference for Clausewitz; and it was an important stimulant for his slowly maturing thoughts on strategy and war: in clearing away the ‘debris’ of now redundant war theories he hoped to open up ‘new paths of wisdom’. As he noted with a fine sense of self-deprecation, such an endeavour was rooted in ‘my nature ... which always drives me to develop and systematize.’⁸ It was this ironic self-awareness that marks out Clausewitz as ‘genuine, if not great, philosopher.’⁹ No less important, he sought to discover those ‘new paths of wisdom’ for practical purposes, to find ‘new positive forms of utilizing military forces.’ Practice, in fact, was the lodestar in Clausewitz’s thinking about war. A new theory had to meet the intellectual challenge posed by the revolution and, simultaneously, accommodate the realities of the new type of warfare.¹⁰ This was his ultimate object. It was also his most immediate and profound problem: how to reconcile theory and practice, conceptualization and lived experience.

Theory of Military Tactics in Eighteenth-Century France (New York, 1957).

- 7 ‘Charakteristik Scharnhorsts’ (c. 1814-7), H. Rothfels (ed.), *Carl von Clausewitz: Politische Schriften und Briefe* (Munich, 1922), 129-30; see also D. Schössler, ‘Revolutionäre Praxis und Theorie: Der modern Konflikt bei Clausewitz’, M. Kaase (ed.), *Politische Wissenschaft und politische Ordnung* (Cologne, 1986), 413-14.
- 8 ‘Vorrede’, *Vom Kriege*, 175; undated note by Clausewitz, c. 1818, *On War*, 63.
- 9 The pertinent observation by Gallie, *Philosophers*, 42.
- 10 W. Hahlweg, ‘Clausewitz und die Französische Revolution: Die methodische Grundlage des Werkes “Vom Kriege”’, *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* xxvii, 3 (1975), esp. 242-43; and further E. Vollrath, ‘“Neue Wege der Klugheit”: Zum methodischen Prinzip des Handelns bei Clausewitz’, *Zeitschrift für Politik* xxxi, 1 (1984), 53-76.

It is important to note that the point of departure for Clausewitz's efforts to solve the theory-practice problem was his own experience and that of his generation, but also the type of experience that only history can convey. His understanding of practice was one rooted in the past; and without such historically saturated understanding the framing of any theory of war was impossible. The systematic study of the past not only generated empirical data, it also allowed for generalizations to be made across time and fundamental truths about the use of organized physical violence by governments to be revealed. In its aspiration this was a search for the timeless realities of war, and to a considerable extent it reflected contemporary philosophical ambitions and modes of thought. The emergence of similar ideas may not, of course, be connected and may, in fact, have occurred independently. Even so, it is now widely accepted that Clausewitz, like most of that generation of Prussian reformers, felt a strong affinity with advanced philosophical ideas.¹¹ Although much given to solitary pursuits and in essence an autodidact, as a young lieutenant, between 1801 and 1804, Clausewitz attended Johann Gottfried Kiesewetter's lectures on logic and mathematics at the *Kriegsschule*, the creation of his mentor Scharnhorst and a forerunner of the famous War Academy, and these left a mark on the young officer. A disciple of Immanuel Kant, Kiesewetter was no original thinker, but he was a shrewd pedagogue and a successful populariser of Kantian philosophy. Clausewitz, in fact, used his guide to Kant's logic when tackling the knotty theory-practice problem.¹²

Such external stimuli were important for Clausewitz's intellectual development.¹³ As a member of Scharnhorst's *Militärische Gesellschaft* (Military Society) he became acquainted with other reform-minded officials; and in the *Tugendbund* (League of Virtue), a patriotic circle of Berlin intellectuals and university professors, he rubbed shoulders with such eminent intellectual figures as the theologian and philosopher Friedrich Daniel Schleiermacher. The latter's influence on Clausewitz's thinking has been largely ignored by scholars and repays closer examination than

11 Still useful, W. Wagner, *Die preussischen Reformer und die zeitgenössische Philosophie* (Cologne, repr. 1956).

12 W. Hahlweg, 'Philosophie und Theorie bei Clausewitz', U. de Maizièrè (ed.), *Freiheit ohne Krieg?: Beiträge zur Strategie-Diskussion der Gegenwart im Spiegel der Theorien von Carl von Clausewitz* (Bonn, 1980), 327-28; also P. Paret, *Clausewitz and the State* (Oxford, 1976), 69. For Kiesewetter's work on logic see especially his *Grundriss einer reinen allgemeinen Logik, nach Kantischen Grundsätzen* (Berlin, 1791).

13 For a general discussion see P. Paret, 'A Learned Officer among Others', id., *Clausewitz in His Time: Essays in the Cultural and Intellectual History of Thinking about War* (New York and Oxford, 2015), 18-76.

can be given here. Certainly, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics as a guide to understanding left traces in his own approach. Central to Schleiermacher's hermeneutical method was the idea of a dialectical relationship between all being as a freely developing force and the external conditions within which this development takes place. Thus, any given language shapes the articulation of an idea; and, conversely, through the process of articulating the idea, language itself is influenced.¹⁴ All of this had a bearing on Clausewitz's own slow groping towards 'new paths of wisdom'.

Whatever influence other thinkers may have exercised on Clausewitz's ideas, and however fascinating charting such intellectual cross-fertilization might be, ultimately it was Clausewitz himself who fashioned them into an edifice of his own original design. One of the preparatory studies for *On War*, most likely written between 1809 and 1812, is suggestive of his concept of theory. In it he developed a damning critique of contemporary war studies. These were marked by a 'lack of philosophical spirit, consequently an often badly inconsequential construction of the whole, insufficient justification of individual principles and rules, petty views often to a high degree pedantic.' To form a proper theory of war more was required than the 'simple stringing together of individual experiences.' Instead, '*raisonniren*' ('reasoning') was needed, that is, 'to draw conclusions, to derive new principles *from experience*.' To lend such efforts the necessary cogency they needed to be presented in the right form. Form and substance, he noted, were 'elementary concepts of logic Every educated man knows that a formal truth is the *conditio sine qua non* of all truth, and that it can only exist in the right form.' If insufficient attention was paid to this, individual elements might be intelligible but 'the whole idea will be incomprehensible.'¹⁵

To overcome the perceived shortcomings of contemporary theories of war and strategy Clausewitz distinguished between 'material' and 'formal' truth. One of the defining characteristics of truth, he observed, was 'that it is not subject to subjective changes.' He defined 'material' truth as 'a corresponding between the idea and the subject it presents.' By contrast, a 'formal' truth described the degree to which an idea corresponded with the laws of logic. These, of course, 'are the same for all

14 F.D.E. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik: Nach den Handschriften neu herausgegeben*, ed. H. Kimmmerle (Heidelberg, 2nd ed. 1974), 56 and 767-7 *et passim*; for a succinct introduction, see A. Bowie, 'The Philosophical Significance of Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics', J. Mariña (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Cambridge, 2005), 73-90.

15 'Über den Zustand der Theorie der Kriegskunst', W. Hahlweg (ed.), *Carl von Clausewitz: Schriften - Aufsätze - Studien - Briefe* (2 vols., Göttingen, 1966-90) i, 25, 28-9 (my emphasis). As Hahlweg has shown, the years 1808-12 marked the middle period in the genesis of *On War*, id., 'Das Clausewitzbild einst und jetzt', *Vom Kriege*, 34-5.

people; consequently, logical truth must also be the same for all people.' From this he deduced that '[a]ll concepts and ideas ... which can occur in the theory of the art of war, must be recognized by all who study them, provided they have not infringed upon either material or logical truth.' Further, taking this argument to its logical conclusion, 'an agreement must emerge between the various concepts and ideas' so that, ultimately, '[t]he greater this agreement ... the more perfect one may pronounce the theory.'¹⁶ All of this speaks to the theory-practice problem at the heart of Clausewitz's writings. Two points stand out. The demand for precision of language and concision of argument aside, Clausewitz also stipulated a formally correct method of analysis. In the process of forming a theory formal and material truth had to correspond: a theory was the more correct, the more closely it approximated reality. Already in his '*Strategie von 1804*', not published until 1937, Clausewitz underlined that the student of war, if he 'started with simple ideas and adhered to these, regardless of the eventual outcome, then ... his understanding will gain greater precision, clarity and concision, and he will do what theory ought to do and can do.'¹⁷

The 1804 essay occupies a central place in the genesis of *On War*, containing many of the key ideas of his later writings. Its focus was on the relationship between means and objectives. There was no abstract rule, Clausewitz suggested, that prescribed a particular course of action in war. Much depended on the individual commander's ability, his assessment of the conditions under which he had to operate, and his - ultimately intuitive - understanding of the given situation. The primary object of war, however, was political: 'The political object of war may be of a dual kind: either to annihilate completely the enemy, to destroy his existence as a state, or to impose peace terms on him. In both cases it has to be the aim to paralyze the enemy's forces that he either cannot continue the war at all or not without endangering his whole existence.'¹⁸

Clausewitz's preliminaries of 1804 prefigured the central lines of argument of *On War*, especially in so far as the means-ends relationship and the destruction of the enemy's military capabilities were concerned. But the essay also touched on the theory-practice problem. All of the ideas limned in this sketch were 'easily comprehensible', he suggested, 'but it requires a higher degree of practice [*Tätigkeit*]

16 'Zustand der Theorie', 33-34. The influence of Kant is obvious, see *Kant Werke*, i, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, ed. W. Weischedel (10 vols., Darmstadt, 1983), 98-99.

17 'Strategie aus dem Jahre 1804', W. Hahlweg (ed.), *Carl von Clausewitz: Verstreute kleine Schriften* (Osnabrück, 1979), 29. The essay was first published by Eberhard Kessel in the 1930s, id. (ed.), *Strategie aus dem Jahre 1804, mit Zusätzen von 1808 und 1809* (Hamburg, 1937).

18 'Strategie aus dem Jahre 1804', 20.

to apply them successfully; just as practice is the great secret that makes theory practicable.’ By Clausewitz’s own standards, this was a brief sentence. Its effect, however, is explosive, revolutionary even. Kant, who died in that year, still looked to the art of judgment to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Hegel was about to postulate that the idea was constitutive of reality, that is that reality was constructed with reference to that idea. For Clausewitz *Tätigkeit* (practice) was the fundamental criterion of truth.¹⁹ Whereas other late eighteenth-century writers, such as Georg Heinrich von Berenhorst or Dietrich Adam Heinrich von Bülow, insisted on quasi-geometric formulae and pseudo-rationalist notions of automaticity, he stressed the rationality of means and ends as the central aspect of all war-related elements. This, too, was eminently practical, as Clausewitz noted with unusual elegance of expression: ‘Tactics is the study of the use of armed forces in battle, strategy the study of the use of individual battles for the objective of the war.’²⁰ Battle, whether actually fought or merely indicated, was central to his theory of war: ‘Everything in war rests on the battle that has either happened or that has been planned by one party, or even merely threatened [*vorgespielt*]. The battle, then, is to strategy what money is to a bill of exchange ... [H]e who has no funds can draw no bill, and he who does not understand to battle may well exhaust himself in manoeuvres without the slightest success.’²¹

This is not the place to examine in any breadth the genesis of Clausewitz’s main work. It will suffice to touch briefly on two further essays of 1809, both of them relevant to the topic of the theory-practice problem in Clausewitz’s work. Tactical successes, he suggested, furnished strategy with the building blocks needed for a campaign, but it had to assembled them with a view to attaining the political objects of the war. Precisely ‘in these two points a real theory [*eigentliche Theorie*] may perhaps be altogether impossible. It can develop its insights only from objective facts, and it can only from the objective facts envelope material objects in cer-

19 More divided Clausewitz from Hegel than is often assumed, see A. Herberg-Rothe, *Das Rätsel Clausewitz: Politische Theorie des Krieges im Widerstreit* (Munich, 2001), 108-11.

20 ‘Strategie aus dem Jahre 1804’, 33. Exemplary also Clausewitz’s searing critique of Bülow’s concern with the angles of operations in relation to their operational basis, ‘Bemerkungen über die reine und angewandte Strategie des Herrn von Bülow’ [1805], Hahlweg (ed.), *Kleine verstreute Schriften*, 68-82. His dismissal of previous writers was nevertheless perhaps unduly harsh, see the recent study by A. Kuhle, *Die preussische Kriegstheorie um 1800 und ihre Suche nach dynamischen Gleichgewichten* (Berlin, 2018).

21 ‘Strategie aus dem Jahre 1804’, 33. No wonder that Marx and Engels responded warmly to the incipient materialism in Clausewitz’s argument; suggestive, C. Ancona, ‘L’influenza del “Vom Kriege” di Clausewitz sul pensiero marxista da Marx a Lenin’, *Rivista Storica del Socialismo* viii, 25-26 (1965), 129-54.

tain laws; and yet the subjective character of a commander and the effect of moral factors [*moralische Grössen*] appear invariably in the chain of the most significant causes.' In so far as the combination of engagements and battles was concerned, he accepted certain limits of rationality: 'There will remain some scope for (non-systematic) *raisonnement*, in so far as individual calculations are concerned which may suggest a perspective and may lead on to the correct path.'²²

A second essay of June 1809, one of the few to be published in Clausewitz's lifetime, casts into sharper relief his thinking about theory and practice. It took the form of an anonymous letter to the philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte in response to his treatise on Machiavelli. In it he suggested that the art of war had atrophied since the Florentine thinker's days into 'petty craftsmanship (*kleinliches Handwerkswesen*).' True warlike spirit meant 'utilizing the capabilities of every single individual in the army and instilling in him a warlike attitude so that the fire of war glows in every part of the army and that there is not just a vast quantity of dead coal.' Eighteenth-century writers had sought to 'form the whole into an artificial machine', in which process 'the moral forces are subjected to the mechanical ones, ... that are meant to defeat the enemy by purely formal means alone.' Recent conflicts - Clausewitz cited the American insurgency of the late 1770s and the wars of the French revolution - had shown, by contrast, that 'one will gain immeasurably more through the revival of individual forces than through artificial forms.'²³ The concern with individuality, of course, was central to post-Enlightenment thought, and Clausewitz's ideas reflected the nascent Romantic cult of the genius, especially in his treatment of the innate capabilities of the commander.²⁴ More fundamentally, the letter to Fichte indicated the political and social contexts within which Clausewitz sought to locate all discussions of war and strategy.

Gentle readers who have persisted with all of the above may well be tempt-

22 'Strategie aus dem Jahre 1809', Hahlweg (ed.), *Verstreute kleine Schriften*, 58 and 61; F.C. Spits, *De metamorfose van de oorlog in de 18e end 19e eeuw: Tien historische studies over oorlog, strategie en legervorming* (Assen, 1971), 93-103 *et passim*.

23 'Ein ungenannter Militär an Fichte, als Verfasser des Aufsatzes über Machiavelli', 11 June 1809, W.M. Schering, *Carl von Clausewitz - Geist und Tat: Das Vermächtnis des Soldaten und Denkers. Eine Auswahl aus seinen Werken, Briefen und unveröffentlichten Schriften* (Stuttgart, 1941), 74-81. For Fichte on war see H. Münkler, "'Wer sterben kann, wer will denn den zwingen': Fichte als Philosoph des Krieges", id. and J. Kunisch (eds.), *Die Wiedergeburt des Krieges aus dem Geist der Revolution* (Berlin, 1999), 241-59; for his influence on Clausewitz, Wagner, *Die preussischen Reformer*, 144.

24 For an in-depth study of the cult of the genius in German thought and literature see J. Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens in der deutschen Literatur, Philosophie und Politik, 1750-1945* (2 vols., Darmstadt, 1985).

ed to conclude that a critique of Clausewitz as a woolly philosopher is justified after all. They should resist that temptation. Clausewitz's notion of theory was grounded in practice; and the foundation of any attempts at framing a theory of war, by which he meant a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, had to be the study of past practices. 'And how does one give to the mind its proper form?', he asked, only to provide the answer himself: 'Through the continual study of history!' And to remove any doubt, he affirmed that '[w]e have the utmost respect for the continual study of historical scholarship.'²⁵ The careful examination of the past was the principal driving force behind Clausewitz's mature theorizing. The past was not, however, simply a quarry from which theoreticians could obtain the building materials needed for their abstract edifices. For Clausewitz all theory, in its proper form, originated in history, and history had to be the constant point of reference for it. If his principal analytical purpose was to study the phenomenon of war in all its manifestations, his methodological approach to studying the past was, in essence, descriptive. All too often modern Clausewitz studies prioritize the sheer scale and the inordinate complexities of *On War* over his other writings. A considerable portion of that body of work consists of no fewer than 130 historical studies, ranging from aspects of mediaeval warfare to the campaign in France in 1815.²⁶ This material furnished Clausewitz with the data required for his theoretical synthesis. Their chronological breadth underlines the fact that he was not at all exclusively concerned with Napoleonic warfare and its effect on the contemporary conduct of war. His frequent references to earlier campaigns, in fact, underscored his real intellectual - and practical - aim: to break the Napoleonic mould in order to reveal the true essence of war as a social phenomenon. Clausewitz's historical studies were the bedrock on which his refutation of the mechanistic theories of the eighteenth century rested. He was scathing of attempts to construct systems of 'pure' military thought. To his mind, these lacked intellectual coherence, were insufficiently grounded in the realities of war, and tended towards the pedantic - and 'some of it was no more than a trifle [*Spielerei*].'²⁷ In contrast to their deductive methods, Clausewitz worked inductively, from the concrete human material to a general theory. War, he stated,

does not belong to the realm of the arts and sciences but in the realm of social existence. War is the conflict of major interests, which is resolved by

25 'Strategie aus dem Jahre 1804', 61; also 'Zustand der Theorie', 30.

26 Seven of the ten volumes of Clausewitz posthumously published works contain histories, *Carl von Clausewitz: Hinterlassene Werke* (10 vols., Berlin, 1832-37); see also P. Kondylis, *Theorien des Krieges: Clausewitz - Marx - Engels - Lenin* (Stuttgart, 1988), 65.

27 *Vom Kriege*, III. 15, 403; *On War*, 214.

bloodshed ... [W]ar is not an exercise of the will directed against inanimate matter, as is the case with the mechanical arts, or against animate yet merely suffering and yielding matter, as is the case with the human mind and emotions in the fine arts, but rather against a live and *reacting* object.²⁸

Its human dimension made war incalculable, Clausewitz concluded that it was best seen as a 'practical art.' All theory had to be grounded in historical experience: 'The more I reflect on [the principles of strategy], the more I am convinced that theory cannot formulate abstract maxims; but not because the matter is too complicated, but because one would succumb to triviality.'²⁹ Considerations of practical experience, then, were indispensable to any kind of war studies. One of the draft prefaces to *On War* underlined Clausewitz's intellectual commitment to rigorous practice-based analysis: 'No logical conclusion has been avoided; but whenever the thread became too thin, I have preferred to break it off and go back to the relevant phenomena of experience.' To illustrate its significance he reached for a horticultural analogy: 'Just as some plants bear fruit only if they do not shoot up too high, so in the practical arts the leaves and flowers of theory must not be allowed to grow too tall but be kept close to experience, their proper soil.'³⁰

In his approach to studying the past Clausewitz broke new ground. In some respects, it may be argued that he anticipated, at least partially, Leopold von Ranke's historicism. It was wrong, he suggested in one of his earlier writings, 'to attribute to individuals what is founded in the circumstances of their own times.' Past phenomena had to be understood within the context or 'conditions of their times [*Zeitverhältnisse*].'³¹ As Ranke was to do later, he emphasized the distinctiveness of different historical epochs. Their succession, each reflecting specific customs and ideas as well as - this a nod to Johann Gottfried Herder - the 'spirit of nations' thus constituted history. These epochs, Clausewitz argued in an unfinished study of the Thirty Years' War, could only be understood within the context of their own times and on their own terms, and ought not to be judged by present-day values or ideas. 'He who is completely submerged in the ideas of his own times', he warned, 'will tend to regard only what is new as best; it is impossible for him to perform the extraordinary.'³² Here again, practice - and action - were central to Clausewitz's

28 *Vom Kriege*, II, 3, 303; *On War*, 149.

29 'Strategie aus dem Jahre 1804', 71.

30 'Vorrede', c. 1816-8, *Vom Kriege*, 184; *On War*, 61.

31 'Historisch-Politische Aufzeichnungen 1807-8', and 'Felzugspläne Friedrichs des Grossen in den ersten Schlesischen Kriegen', Rothfels (ed.), *Schriften und Briefe*, 54 and 200.

32 'Ansichten aus der Geschichte des Dreissigjährigen Krieges', as quoted in H. Rothfels, *Carl von Clausewitz: Politik und Krieg. Eine ideengeschichtliche Studie* (Berlin, 1920), 61-62; for his

thinking. Only by placing one's own ideas into a wider historical context was the commander, having studied past conflicts, able to act independently in the here and now. In a sense, historical understanding was thus the essential precondition – to paraphrase Kant – for the commander's release from the tutelage imposed by contemporary orthodoxies.³³

Clausewitz returned to this point on a number of occasions: 'the principles of the art of war react immediately with the prevailing circumstances with which they make even the slightest contact', he observed in a study of the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus.³⁴ The distinctiveness of each epoch also extended to the conduct of war: 'every age had its own kind of war, its own limiting conditions, and its own biases.' From this he concluded that 'the events of every age must be judged in light of its own peculiarities.' This had epistemological and intensely practical implications, and he stipulated a form of 'applied history': 'only he who has placed himself in the situation of past times can understand and appreciate the commanders through an acute perception of the larger circumstances.'³⁵

This was a conclusion Clausewitz reached later in his life during his *vita contemplativa* as director of the *Kriegsakademie* after 1816. In an unfinished essay of the early 1820s on the 'Umtriebe' (agitations) of those years, he ridiculed romantic-revolutionary enthusiasms for the constitutions of antiquity, 'which no-one could understand after 2-3,000 years.'³⁶ The same did not hold true of the history of war. Here '[t]he study of history ... has convinced me that one will find military events in all epochs, which in terms of theoretical insight, are just as valuable as the most impressive campaigns of our century.'³⁷ It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Clausewitz was not entirely consistent in his historical thinking on this point – if ancient political systems were beyond modern comprehension, why

views on national character as a force in history and politics, see 'Die Deutschen und Franzosen [1807]', id. (ed.), *Schriften und Briefe*, 35-50; for Herder still the best introduction, I. Berlin, *Three Critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder* (London, 2000), 168-242.

33 See I. Kant, 'What is Enlightenment?', L.W. Beck (ed.), *Kant: On History* (New York, repr. 1988), 3.

34 'Betrachtungen über Gustav Adolphs Feldzüge von 1630-32', *Clausewitz Hinterlassene Werke* ix, 8. Here he anticipated the concept of 'friction' as developed in *On War*.

35 *Vom Kriege*, VIII. 3B, 973; *On War*, 593. Intriguingly, Clausewitz anticipated R.G. Collingwood's twentieth-century definition of history as a re-enactment of the past, *The Idea of History* (Oxford, 1961 (pb)), 282-302. Later nineteenth-century instructors at the *Kriegsakademie* followed a similar approach, at least in aspiration, see B. Schwertfeger, *Die grossen Erzieher des deutschen Heeres: Aus der Geschichte der Kriegsakademie* (Potsdam, 1936), 85-6.

36 'Umtriebe [1819-23]', Rothfels (ed.), *Schriften und Briefe*, 166.

37 'Taktische Rhapsodien', as quoted in id., *Politik und Krieg*, 162.

were the wars of that period not? Nevertheless, there was something relativist and flint-hearted in Clausewitz's thinking. '[E]verything in this world', he noted, 'is subject to change', and not even religion was a source of consolation, for everything contained within it the seeds of its own decline and destruction.³⁸ In fact, the absence of religious beliefs and a tendency to view human life exclusively through the lens of power relationships are the two corollaries of Clausewitz historical relativism. In one of his last writings, in fact, he refuted all moralizing about the past, stressing instead the need for a 'historico-political perspective' focused on power politics.³⁹

For all his emphasis on the peculiarities of the past Clausewitz did not rule out the possibility of formulating generalized theories of war. On the contrary, though the forms of warfare were subject to continual change, the essence of war was not – and this was clearly intelligible for the analyst. The key to understanding this problem is to be found in Clausewitz's insistence that 'war is only a branch of political interactions [*politischer Verkehr*]; that it is nothing autonomous.' Only if the wars of the past were seen in their proper political contexts, as a form of 'political interaction', 'only then can we see that all wars are things of one kind [*einer Art*].'⁴⁰ In this sense, Clausewitz's theory, then, is simultaneously monistic and relativist without, as Hans Rothfels observed, becoming rigidly dialectical or artificial.⁴¹ Indeed, Clausewitz elucidated on the nature of war as an extension of politics by stressing that 'political interactions do not cease because of the war, nor are they changed into something fundamentally different; but that, in their essence, they continue, whatever means [war] employs.' War might have 'its own grammar ... but not its own logic.'⁴² Once that logic is understood, the evolving grammar of military conflict is also easily grasped.

Clausewitz's famous definition of war as a political instrument has given sus-

38 'Umtriebe', 155, and 'Aufzeichnungen aus den Jahren 1807/8', id. (ed.), *Schriften und Briefe*, 51-52; see also T.G. Otte, 'Educating Bellona: Carl von Clausewitz and Military Education', G.C. Kennedy and K. Neilson (ed.), *Military Education: Past, Present and Future* (Westport, CT, 2002), 19-21.

39 'Die Verhältnisse Europas seit der Teilung Polens [1831]', *Schriften und Briefe*, 223; also Kondylis, *Theorien des Krieges*, 67.

40 *Vom Kriege*, VIII, 6B, 990 and 992; *On War*, 605. The affinity to Schleiermacher's ideas is very apparent, see A. Gat, *The Origins of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to Clausewitz* (Oxford, 1991 (pb)), 192.

41 Rothfels, *Politik und Krieg*, 162.

42 *Vom Kriege*, VIII 6B, 991; *On War*, 605 and 606. The parallel with Schleiermacher's ideas of understanding reality as a form of all-embracing grammatical interpretation is striking, Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik, passim*.

tenance to generations of students of strategy. It lies outside the remit of this essay to limn Clausewitz's ideas on politics. Nevertheless, his dual usage of 'politics' ought to be noted here. He made a distinction between 'subjective' and 'objective' politics, the former denoting political interactions or policies of individual political actors or institutions within a given political framework. By 'objective' politics he meant 'simply the trustee for all ... [state] interests against other states.'⁴³ Implicit in his definition of war as 'nothing but continued state policy with other means', then, was an assumption that the use of military force had to be guided by a clearly understood concept of the national interest.⁴⁴ Success in war 'requires a comprehensive understanding of the higher affairs of state [*die höheren Staatsverhältnisse*]. The conduct of war and politics coalesce at this point, and the commander simultaneously becomes the statesman.'⁴⁵ Politics and strategy, then, were dialectically linked. War as 'continued state policy' was more than guidance by political leaders. Rather it meant guidance by a political élite which had an agreed concept of the national interest, but which in turn reflected the nature and the limitations of war as an instrument of state policy. Clausewitz's writings were intended to serve this dual purpose: to educate military commanders in the art of war and to sharpen politicians' appreciation for the uses and misuses of military force for political aims.⁴⁶

All of this is relevant to the theory-practice problem in Clausewitz's strategic thought. With his emphasis on the primacy of politics he was able to bridge the apparent divide between the two. Yet he took the argument one step further. Inherent in his relativism, and a logical corollary to it, was the understanding that the study of the past might yield empirical data, but that it could not produce normative guidelines for action. For Clausewitz history was not *magistra vitae*: 'If history offers up no formulae, it does provide, here as everywhere else, an *exercise for judgment*.'⁴⁷ A proper theory of war, then, had to be historically informed; and because it was rooted in history, defined as the study of past practice, it had to be

43 *Vom Kriege*, VIII 6B, 993; *On War*, 606. This was first pointed out by E. Kessel, 'Doppelpolitische Strategie: Eine Studie zu Clausewitz, Delbrück und Friedrich dem Grossen', id., *Militär-geschichte und Kriegstheorie in neuerer Zeit: Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, ed. by J. Kunisch (Berlin, 1987), 149. The problem is partly one of semantics as the German *Politik* can mean both policies and politics in English.

44 'Nachricht', 10 July 1827, *Vom Kriege*, 179; *On War*, 69; A. Gat, 'Clausewitz's Political and Ethical World', *Political Studies* xxxvii, 1 (1989), 103-4.

45 *Vom Kriege*, I 3, 250; *On War*, 111.

46 Gallie missed this crucial point when he observed that the work 'was primarily written for military men', id., *Philosophers*, 61.

47 *Vom Kriege*, VI 30, 858; *On War*, 517.

strictly descriptive and forego all prescriptive aspirations. This was no sophistry but of fundamental importance to Clausewitz's analysis of war. For it establishes the intellectual context for his emphasis on 'friction' as the central element of 'real' war. As military conflict was the clash of two armed wills, '[a]ction in war means movement in a resistant element. Just as one is little able to perform in water the most natural and movement, walking, so in war it is difficult with normal efforts to achieve even moderate results.'⁴⁸ Friction and the practical significance of moral factors made all action in war principally incalculable. This understanding of the incalculability of the fundamental factors which shaped all war-like action underpinned Clausewitz's conceptual approach to the study of war. The combination of friction and moral factors created uncertainty. In one of his internal general staff memoranda Clausewitz explained that 'the realm of possibilities, and the sequence of consequences created by one act are infinitesimal, and the ultimate result ... can never be anticipated by the human mind.'⁴⁹

To illustrate this point Clausewitz used a number of similes. In war all action occurred 'in the merest twilight, which aggravatingly like fog or moonlight, not seldom gives things an exaggerated size or grotesque appearance.' Given such distortions of perspective and perception, war was 'the realm of uncertainty; three quarters of the factors on which action in war is based lie shrouded in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty.'⁵⁰ In consequence, any guidelines for action could not but be flawed because, as in war, so '[i]n the realm of politics there is no certainty; instead one has to be content with a greater or lesser degree of probability.'⁵¹ For Clausewitz a theory of war could have no practical utility if it 'turned into an unthinking [*geistlos*] application of theory.' The aptness of any insights it might offer depended entirely on the circumstances of the given case. They could never constitute 'laws and norms.' Instead, their utility for commanders could be 'only ... as *propos* [*Anhalt*] to judgment.'⁵² The only cognitive prerequisite for (successful)

48 *Vom Kriege*, I 7, 263; *On War*, 120; see also B.D. Watts, *Clausewitzian Friction and Future War* (Washington, DC, 1996), 27-36.

49 'Ueber die künftigen Kriegs-Operationen Preussens', Hahlweg (ed.), *Clausewitz: Schriften* i, 78; further E.A. Nohn, "'Moralische Grössen" im Werk "Vom Kriege" und in einem ungezeichneten Beitrage zur "Neuen Bellona" des Jahrgangs 1801', *Historische Zeitschrift* clxxxvi, 1 (1958), 35-64.

50 *Vom Kriege*, II 2, 289, I 3, 233; *On War*, 140 and 101. For a detailed discussion of this aspect see K.L. Herbig, 'Chance and Uncertainty in *On War*', M.I. Handel (ed.), *Clausewitz and Modern Strategy* (London, 1986), 95-116.

51 'Der Feldzug von 1813', *Clausewitz Hinterlassene Werke* vii, 308; 'Politisches Rechnen', Rothfels (ed.), *Schriften und Briefe*, 66.

52 *Vom Kriege*, II 5, 315; *On War*, 157-8.

action in war, then, was the military commander's 'sensitive tact of judgment, derived from his native intelligence and developed through reflection.'⁵³

Clausewitz offered an ingenious solution to the theory-practice problem. It lies in his argument that a theory of war could only ever be contemplative, but never normative. The rigorous intellectual exercise involved in studying history, and past wars in particular, may help to prepare the commander for action in war in a general sense. But such studies could not prescribe 'correct' forms of action. A military dogma, 'a positive doctrine, that is an instruction for action', Clausewitz argued, was unrealistic and hence an impractical endeavour.⁵⁴

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To view Clausewitz as a theoretician of war is to mistake the modern meaning of the term 'theory' for his use of it. To him it represented the sustained analytical attempt at understanding a complex social and political phenomenon, his terminological usage reflecting contemporary, that is, late- or indeed post-Enlightenment intellectual ambitions and sensibilities.

For all his often convoluted language, there was nothing abstract about Clausewitz's writings. On the contrary, his approach to the study of war was, in essence, historical. The theory-practice nexus was central to his intellectual programme. But he thought his way from practice, past and present, to a theory of war and strategy. As has been shown here, theory consisted, and was the result, of the application of examples. This historical sensibility led Clausewitz to appreciate the distinctiveness of different epochs, each with its own characteristic type of warfare.

The same, of course, applies to his own work as well. It was the product of specific historical and cultural circumstances and experiences. To appreciate this context does not render Clausewitz redundant as an analyst of war and strategy. If anything, his emphasis on the importance of a sceptical mindset, independent but historically trained judgment and a deep appreciation of specific contexts makes him more relevant to modern debates about strategy. Properly understood, Clausewitz the practice-focused philosopher of war can still serve as a healthy antidote to the pseudo-precision of political science-derived strategic theories.

53 *Vom Kriege*, III 14, 401; *On War*, 213.

54 *Vom Kriege*, II 2, 290; *On War*, 140-1.

«Vaincre la mer par la terre»

Trade war, war on trade, war on neutrals 1793-1815

By VIRGILIO ILARI

In 1763 Britain seemed to be at the height of power¹. Twenty years later it had lost more than half of its colonies in North America², but had withstood, alone against the world, the maritime clash with France and Spain and the strategic embargo of the Baltic Powers promoted by Catherine II in 1780³, retaining India, Canada and Gibraltar and containing the United States. Louis XVI's was a Pyrrhic victory. In addition to the revolutionary contagion, the great French naval rearmament caused a devastating financial crisis. Added to this was the crisis in the textile and steel industries caused by the 1786 trade treaty which, to stop British smuggling, reduced tariff barriers and banned the export of French silk. On the other hand, the American trade crisis, with the Tonnage Act of 1789, prevented the Franco-American agreement. The contradictions exploded in 1793 and the unexpected outcome of the titanic battle was the enduring British revenge, with the humiliation of the former rebels, the conquest of South

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- 1 Samuel Madden (1686-1765), *The Reign of George VI 1900-1925. A Forecast Written in the Year 1763*, Republished, with Preface and Notes, by C. Oman, Printed for W. Nicoll in 1763, Reprinted by Rivingtons, Covent Garden, W. C., in 1899.
 - 2 T. H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence*, Oxford U. P., 2005. Jeremy Black, *George III: America's Last King*, Yale U. P., 2006.
 - 3 By depriving the British fleet of Baltic hemp and Scandinavian conifers used for sails and masts, the embargo encouraged the exploitation of the forests of Lower Canada (Quebec), which was thus colonized. Johann Eustach von Görz, *The secret history of the armed neutrality*, J. Johnson and R. Folder, London, 1792. Carl Bergbohm, *Die bewaffnete Neutralität 1780-1783. Eine Entwicklungsphase des Völkerrechts im Seekriege*, Puttkammer & Mühlbrecht, Berlin 1884 (Dorpat, Universität, Dissertation, 1883). James Brown Scott, *The Armed Neutralities of 1780 and 1800, A Collection of Official Documents*, New York, Oxford U. P., 1918. H. H. Volkovitinov, *Rossiya otkryvayet Ameriku, 1732-1799*, M., *Meždunarodnye otnošenija*, 1991 [glava IV «Vooružennyj Neutralitet, i predloženiye mirnogo posredničestva (1780-1781)»]. Leos Müller, «Svensk sjöfart, neutralitet och det väpnade neutralitetsförbundet 1780-1783», *Sjuttonhundratals*, 2012, pp. 39-58.

American trade, the subordination of France, the direct or indirect control of all maritime routes and inland seas from the Baltic to the Indian Ocean.

The “wars of the French Revolution and Empire” were the last phase of the “second hundred years war”⁴, as well as the true “first world war”⁵ of contemporary history. Not because they were fought outside Europe: the previous ones had been too. But because economic warfare, violating since 1793 the limits set in 1713 by the Treaty of Utrecht, exacerbated the social stress and precluded neutrality. Such radical “anti-neutrality” was fully perceived and discussed at the time⁶. French propaganda accused Britain of the systematic violation of neutrality⁷; the British retorted denouncing “war in disguise”⁸.

It was an all-out conflict, a new “war by other means” instead of the classic “duel on a larger scale”. The old mercantilist “trade war” turned into an unrestricted “war on trade”,⁹ aimed at the enemy’s production system and social consensus. This intensification was the swan song of the old “privateers’ war”, flanked and then replaced by improved forms of blockade and smuggling on

4 J. R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, 1883.

5 Paul Fregosi, *Dreams of Empire: Napoleon and the First World War, 1792-1815*, Hutchinson, 1989. A. D. Harvey, *Collision of Empires: Britain in Three World Wars, 1793-1945*, Bloomsbury Academic, 1992.

6 The concept is from Louis-André Pichon, *De l’Etat de la France sous la domination de Napoléon Bonaparte*, 1814. Marcel Dunan, «Un Adversaire du système continental», *Revue des études napoléoniennes*, 7, 1, 1915, pp. 262-75.

7 *Mémoire sur la conduite de la France et de l’Angleterre à l’égard des neutres*, Paris, Galland, 1810 (attributed to Claude-François-André d’Arbelles or to Charles Louis Lesueur). It is no coincidence that in 1793 and 1802 two different translations appeared (in The Hague and in Paris) of the famous treatise by Giovanni Maria Lampredi *Del Commercio dei popoli neutri in guerra* (Florence, 1788), who defended the right of neutrals against the anonymous pamphlet (authored by his friend Ferdinando Galiani) *De’ doveri dei principi neutrali verso i principi guerreggianti e di questi verso i neutrali* (Naples, 1782). See Gianfranco Miglio, *La controversia sui limiti del commercio neutrale fra Giovanni Maria Lampredi e Ferdinando Galiani ed i ‘Theoremata juris publici universalis’*, Milan, ISPI, 1942.

8 James Stephens, *War in Disguise, or the Fraud of the Neutral Flags*, London, Withingham, 1805 (reprint 1917); Gouverneur Morris, *An Answer to War in Disguise or, Remarks upon the New Doctrine of England, concerning Neutral Trade*, New York, Riley & Co., February 1806. Éric Schnakenbourg, *Neutres et neutralité dans l’espace atlantique durant le long XVIIIe siècle (1700-1820). Une approche globale*, Bécherel, Éditions Les Perséides, «Le Monde Atlantique», 2015.

9 Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*, 1890; Id., *The Influence of Sea Power Upon the French Revolution and Empire 1793-1812*, 1897, sp. vol. 2, Ch. XVIII, «The Warfare Against Commerce», pp. 265-357; Id., *Sea Power in Its Relations with the War of 1812*, 1905 (2 voll.), all published at Boston, Little, Brown & Coy.

a continental scale. This change of warfare penalised the nascent bourgeoisie, thus eroding the Napoleon's main basis of consensus. As Alfred Thayer Mahan has written,

“In the effort to bring under the yoke of their own policy the commerce of the whole World, the two chief contestants, France and Great Britain, swayed hack and forth in deadly grapple over the vast arena, trampling underfoot the rights and interests of the weaker parties; who, whether as neutrals, or as subjects of friendly or allied powers, looked helplessly on, and found that in this great struggle for self-preservation, neither outcries, nor threats, nor despairing submission, availed to lessen the pressure that was gradually crushing out both hope and life. The question between Napoleon and the British people became simply one of endurance (...) Both were expending their capital, and drawing freely drafts upon the future, the one in money, the other in men, to sustain their present strength. (...) In December, 1812, (the Empire) was shattered from turret to foundation stone; wrecked in the attempt «to conquer the sea by the land». The scene was shifted indeed. Great Britain remained victorious on the field, but she had touched the verge of ruin”¹⁰.

War on trade in the Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Baltic (1793-1801)

In the first phase (1793-1801) of the conflict, the main front of the war on trade was, as in the previous wars, the Atlantic. With the orders in council¹¹ of 8 June and 6 November 1793, Britain reinstated the embargo that had paralyzed French trade with the West Indies thirty years earlier, extending it to neutral ships, subject to inspection and seizure of French goods (thus violating the principle, established in 1713 by the Treaty of Utrecht, that «le pavillon couvre la merchandise»)¹².

However, France counted now on the United States, whose ships were excluded from the embargo decreed on May 9, 1793 against Britain. Indeed, the French ambassador in Philadelphia enlisted American privateers to attack British trade and organized an expedition against Spanish Louisiana, to reopen the navigation of the Mississippi River, blocked by Spain in 1784. The European war was also the first battleground between the pro-British Federalists and the pro-French Democrat-Republicans, led respectively by Treasury Secretary Al-

10 Mahan, *The Influence ... Upon the French*, cit., II, pp. 199-200.

11 Sovereign orders issued in privy council.

12 Silvia Marzagalli, in Ead. et Bruno Manot (dir.), *Guerre et économie dans l'espace atlantique du XVIIe au XIXe siècle*, P. U. de Bordeaux, 2006, pp. 375 ss.

exander Hamilton and Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson.

In line with Hamilton, President Washington proclaimed neutrality on 22 April 1793, applied in a “friendly and impartial” manner.¹³ Signing himself “Pacificus”, Hamilton asserted the constitutional and international legitimacy of neutrality, countenanced instead by George Madison (“Helvidius”). On 19 November 1794, a ten-year treaty of friendship, commerce and navigation with Britain followed, albeit fiercely contested by the Jeffersonians who delayed its ratification until 19 February 1796.

This increased tension with France, not least because of the American refusal to continue paying to the Republic the debt incurred with Louis XVI. On 18 November 1794, France in turn suspended the observance of the neutral flag and on 2 July 1796 proclaimed that it would apply the same treatment that neutrals accepted from the British. From March 1796 to February 1797, French privateers preyed 316 American ships with British cargos or routes. To ease the tension, in July an American delegation arrived in Paris, but the mission was compromised by the demand for a bribe by Foreign Minister Talleyrand. At the time, it was tolerated in Europe, but in America it caused a scandal and when (in April 1798) President Adams informed Congress of this, the “Quasi-War”¹⁴ followed, an undeclared conflict fought mainly in the West Indies and concluded, after serious losses on both sides, with the Convention of Mortefontaine (30 September 1800).

The economic warfare was also influenced by the continental events of 1795-97 (capture of the Dutch fleet, imprisoned in the ice, by the French cavalry; separate peace of Prussia, Spain, Sardinia; French landing plans in Britain; Franco-Spanish alliance; sister republics in Holland, Switzerland and Italy). The Austro-French partition of Venetian dominions and maritime tools (17 October 1797) germinated Bonaparte’s «gigantic ambition»¹⁵ to «win the sea by land»¹⁶,

13 The United States did not feel bound by the defensive alliance of 6 September 1778, because it was France that declared war on 1 February 1793. Washington also blocked the Mississippi expedition, and the French ambassador was recalled home.

14 Harlow Unger, *The French War Against America: How a Trusted Ally Betrayed Washington and the Founding Fathers*, Hoboken (NJ), John Wiley & Sons, 2005.

15 See Adolphe Thiers, *Histoire du Consulat et de l’Empire faisant suite à l’Histoire de la Révolution française*, Paris, Paulin, 1847, VI, pp. 218, 224, 457.

16 The expression occurs in Napoleon’s letter of 3 December 1806 to his brother Louis, King of Holland. Cfr. *Recueil de discours français: extraits des annales des concours généraux: période de 1831 à 1879: matières et développements*, Paris, Delalain, 1879, p. 250: «Pour mettre fin à ce duel, il nous faudra vaincre la mer par la terre: c’est là, citoyens Directeurs, la part-

using the Peninsula as a bridge and the Ionian Seas and Malta as steppingstones towards Turkey and Egypt.

In this first phase, the grand idea was to replace the direct strategy of landing in Britain envisioned by the Directory, with the indirect attack on communications with India, the base of British global power. And if the Republican navy could not fully sustain its squadron in the Indian seas, a new Alexander could conquer the Central Asian land route. Made possible thanks to the Italian merchant fleets and the treasure of the Order of Malta, the Eastern expedition was defeated at Abukir (1 August 1798), causing Turkey and Russia to enter the war, the Austrian revanche and the fall of the Italian republics. The resistance of the *Armée d'Orient* and the withdrawal of Paul I from the Second Coalition gave the First Consul the hope of being able to resume his Eastern strategy with the Russian support. It was Nelson again who made this variant fail as well: not by the Mediterranean, but hastily by the Baltic.

The war had in fact shifted trade to neutral northern ports, where it was guaranteed by the Anglo-Danish-Swedish convention of 27 March 1794 and the Anglo-Russian treaty of 21 February 1797. Reacting to the Royal Navy's claim to control neutral ships even if they travelled in escorted convoys, on 27 August 1800 emperor Paul invited Sweden and Denmark to restore the League of armed neutrality of twenty years earlier, and in October, to induce Britain to recognize the sovereignty over Malta offered to him by Bonaparte,¹⁷ he ordered the seizure in the port of 300 British merchantmen and the internment of the crews. On 14 January 1801, Britain responded by seizing Swedish, Danish and Russian ships in turn and on 19 March the British squadron, (vice) commanded by Nelson, was at the entrance of the Kattegat. On 23 March, Paul I was assassinated in a palace coup supported by all social sectors interested in trade with Great Britain¹⁸. At any rate, on 2 April, Nelson set a harsh example in Copenhagen, and of course the new emperor Alexander I hastened to undo his father's provisions.

ie de notre tâche qu'il nous reste à accomplir, et, croyez-moi, ce n'est pas la moins rude. Il a fallu cent ans à Rome pour abattre Carthage».

17 Carmelina Gugliuzzo, «I russi nel Mediterraneo: l'Affaire de Malta», in Luigi Mascilli Migliorini e Mirella Mafrici (cur.), *Mediterraneo e/è Mar Nero. Due Mari tra età moderna e contemporanea*, Napoli, ESI, 2012, pp. 163-182.

18 V. Ilari, «Napoleone e la spedizione indiana di Paolo I», *Rivista Italiana di Studi Napoleonici*, I, 2, dicembre 2020, pp. 275-292.

From War to Trade to the Continental System (1803-1806)

Frozen by the Peace of Amiens (25 March 1802), the Anglo-French war resumed following the failure of the British evacuation of Malta. On 17 May 1803, six days before the declaration of war, the British seized French and Dutch ships in port, confiscating 200 million worth of goods. Napoleon retaliated on 3 June, decreeing from Milan the seizure of British goods¹⁹ and liquidating Louisiana, recovered three years earlier from Spain but having become useless once Haiti was lost [the Louisiana (preclusive) Purchase was the first decisive act of economic warfare in American history after the Boston Tea Party].

The resumption of war struck at the heart of the French financial recovery, based on the newcomer Bank of France²⁰. The financing of the military supplies, contracted out to a single trading company purposely created in 1803 by the unscrupulous speculator Gabriel-Julien Ouvrard, was in fact guaranteed by the Mexican revenues, equal to 71 million piastres, which Spanish Prime Minister Godoy had agreed to pay monthly to the Bank of France in order to remain neutral. But in October 1804 British cruisers preyed the ships carrying the Mexican treasure, and in December Britain declared war on Spain. Ouvrard then tried to get the bullions transported by British ships, and in May 1805 he signed an agreement with the two British banks (Hope & Co. and Barings) which had negotiated the sale of Louisiana. But by October nothing had come of it, and after an attempt to survive by exchanging drafts re-discounted by the Bank of France, in November the members of the *Compagnie des Négociants réunis* declared themselves in a state of pre-bankruptcy with a debt of 141 million francs, causing a series of bankruptcies and affecting the Bank of France, whose reserves had already been reduced to just 1.5 million on the eve of Trafalgar; and the issue of paper money produced inflation. On 27 January 1806, the minister of the treasury Barbé-Marbois was replaced by Mollien, and in February, under threat of arrest, Ouvrard was forced to guarantee the Spanish debt, which had risen to 60 million, in exchange for the chimerical American gold²¹.

19 Already the Council of Five Hundred, by the law of 10 Brumaire V (31 October 1796), had ordered the compulsory reporting and precautionary seizure of British industrial products held by private individuals.

20 Charles Ballot, «Les Banques d'émission sous le Consulat», *Revue d'études napoléoniennes*, 1915, 2, pp. 289-323.

21 Otto Wolff, *Die Geschäfte des Herrn Ouvrard*, Frankfurt a. M., Rütten & Loening Verlag, 1932, pp. 100 ss. («Der mexikanische Silberschatz»). Louis Bergeron, *Banquiers, négociants et manufacturiers parisiens du Directoire à l'Empire*, Paris, Mouton, 1978, pp. 147-166. Martin Robson, *Britain, Portugal and South America in the Napoleonic Wars: Alliances and*

The direct trade of the neutrals with the French colonies was only restricted by the British from August 1805 onwards, but with the threat of landing having vanished at Trafalgar (21 October), Britain notified the neutrals (16 May 1806) that the entire coast from Elbe to Brest was under blockade. The replacement of the direct blockade of single coastal points with the indirect blockade of the entire northern coast of the Continent [which implied the control of the neutrals in the open sea, abusing the right to blockade and violating the principle of freedom of the seas] was, moreover, obliged by Napoleon's lightning transformation of the static *Armée d'Angleterre* into the manoeuvring *Grande Armée* of Austerlitz (2 December, 1805) and of Iéna (14 October 1806).

In September 1806 Napoleon planned the occupation of Portugal, preceded by the landing of 9,000 men in Brazil to prevent the Portuguese court and fleet from fleeing. But on 9 November, back down to earth, he wrote from Berlin to his brother Louis, king of Holland, to explain to his ministers that «il faut reconquérir les colonies par terre, puisque nous sommes si impuissants par mer».²² Two weeks later, on the 21st, the famous "Berlin decree" declared the British Isles and Dominions in a state of blockade: a ban on trade and communications was also imposed on the neutrals. Goods and any property of British private individuals, declared to be predatory, were confiscated, and half of the proceeds from the confiscations was destined to indemnify private individuals for the losses suffered as a result of enemy's seizures.²³ Two days later, on the 23rd, Napoleon wrote to the governor of Paris, Marshal Junot, that the struggle with Britain was a matter of life and death and to convince the ladies to drink chicory and Swiss tea and to stop talking about Madame de Staël.

During the 18th-century Britain's public debt had grown 28-fold, while the value of land had only doubled, and exports tripled. Moreover, by favouring industry at the expense of agriculture, Britain had increased its dependence on

Diplomacy in Economic Maritime Conflict, I. B. Tauris, 2010, p. 87. See Georges Weill, «Le financier Ouvrard», *Revue Historique*, vol. 43, N. 127, 1918. Arthur Lévy, *Un grand profiteur de guerre sous la Révolution, l'Empire et la Restauration: G. J. Ouvrard*, Paris, 1929, 94. Jean-Pierre Sarrazin, *Gabriel Julien Ouvrard*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2014.

22 *Correspondance de Napoléon I publiée par ordre de l'Empereur Napoléon III*, Paris, de l'Imprimerie Nationale, 1863, T. XIII, N. 11217, p. 621.

23 Formally, the decree was presented as a reprisal against the British "enormous abuse" of the right of blockade (limited to the single land or sea places actually invested by sufficient forces) and of conquest (limited only to the enemy's public property, to the exclusion of private property). On the legal justification see Ferdinand de Cornot de Cussy (1795-1866), *Phases et causes célèbres du droit maritime des nations*, Leipzig, F. A. Brockhaus, 1856, vol. 2, pp. 234-275.

international trade, no longer just food (cereals) but also industry (raw materials). The French counter-blockade was therefore of double significance. On the one hand, it inflicted on the enemy hunger, overproduction, inflation, a fall in purchasing power and social unrest. On the other hand, it imposed a protectionist and autarkic turn to the European economic system, favouring the economic and technological development of French industry, especially textiles, and the creation of a continental Lebensraum economically dependent on Paris.

But would it have worked? The closure of the ports to British trade had also been proclaimed in 1756 and 1793, and already imposed on the sister republics and allies, but it had always been violated or circumvented with triangulations. The social mores were too soft and the Hexagon, although revalued by astronomical cartography, still too small to support the Colbertian state. But now the imperial plutocracy controlled the entire continent directly or indirectly, and the administrative state donated by the Goddess Reason was able to provide infrastructure, financing, monetary stability, legal protection and autarchic raw materials alternative to colonial goods. Thus, beet and chicory replaced cane sugar and coffee, merino grazing was promoted to replace cotton with wool, and new indigenous systems (such as mechanical flax spinning) replaced British machinery (which could no longer be replaced or repaired for lack of spare parts).

As for counter-blockade, it was too serious a matter to be left to the admirals, who were only capable of catching them as soon as they put their noses outside the ports. Outside the walls, a swarm of privateers to attack enemy commerce in the old Jean Bart manner; on the walls, the navy declassified as coastguard to stop smuggling and protect convoy caboose from tower to tower (i.e. the commercial use of the coasts, more vital, before the railways, than the secondary roads and river branches). Finally, behind the walls, the new army, the *Armée de l'intérieur*, made up of customs officers, gendarmes, policemen and courts, to enforce the decree (the elephantine apparatus did not cost that much, as it paid for itself, extorting offenders).

The first phase of the System (1807-1808)

In 1807 French imports fell to 11 million francs from 65 million in 1805, while the decline in exports was smaller (from 350 to 265 million). But the damage to British exports was mitigated by their increasing differentiation. In 1802 continental Europe, with 80 million consumers, absorbed 55 per cent of them, but by 1806 the share had already fallen to 25, equal to a third of British industrial production. In addition, Napoleon's control of the continental coasts

and ports was uneven²⁴ and did not stop British smuggling, which was especially active from the Mediterranean; on 31 December, the British negotiators obtained the renewal of the treaty of Amity with America; and the Order in Council of 10 January 1807 in turn forbade neutrals from all trade with the Continent, declaring offenders and looked on as a prize.

But in 1807 Atlantic trade became complicated and the Continental System extended from Riga to the Tagus. The US president was now the hostile Jefferson, who in March torpedoed the ratification of the Treaty of Amity because of the British failure to refrain from the «impressment» (forced enlistment of a share of the crew) systematically imposed on American merchant ships.²⁵ Already on 25 January, from Warsaw, Napoleon had extended the blockade to Prussia and Hanover; on 7 July, with the Treaty of Tilsit²⁶, Russia also entered the Continental System. On 28 August the counter-blockade was also tightened in Holland and on 19 September French privateers were allowed to attack the neutrals. Furthermore, British expeditions to Spanish South America were humiliated at Montevideo and Buenos Aires²⁷.

The Canning government, however, soon became aware of the secret articles of the Peace of Tilsit, which provided for the surrender of the Danish and Portuguese fleets to France, that it could use them for landing in Britain. Thus, overwhelmed by land and sea and subjected to an intense bombardment (16 August - 5 September), Copenhagen had to give in and surrender the fleet to the British squadron. Censored by the opposition in the British Parliament, the action caused Napoleon an outburst of anger similar to that provoked in 1801 by the news of Paul I's assassination. On the other hand, with the Treaty of Fontainebleau of 31 October, Denmark joined the Continental System and was then the only ally to apply it strictly. In November it was Portugal's turn, occupied by French troops, but the Portuguese fleet and the Russian squadron interned in the Tagus had time to sail for Britain, while the transfer of the Portuguese court

24 Albert Réville, «La Hollande et le roi Louis Bonaparte», *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, juin-juillet 1870, vol. 87, pp. 513-552 ; 845-883 ; vol. 88, pp. 5-43.

25 The Royal Navy requisitioned a total of ten thousand American sailors. Despite the incident of 22 June 1807 (HMS *Leopard's* attack on the USS *Chesapeake* in search of alleged British deserters) Jefferson preferred to avoid war.

26 E. Tarle later considered the Peace of Tilsit one of the “three great catastrophes” along with the Peace of Westphalia and Versailles (*Tri katastrofy*, Izdatel'stvo Petrograd, 1923).

27 However, the sale of the British manufactured goods that arrived at the troop's end, which were of a much higher quality than the local ones, produced a lasting dumping effect, favouring British economic penetration in the Rio de la Plata.

to Rio de Janeiro safeguarded Anglo-Brazilian trade. Almost a third of British exports to Europe went through Denmark. After Tilsit they dropped by a further 20 per cent, and Lancashire mills ran out of raw materials, although the good harvest of 1807 compensated for the lack of wheat imports.

With an extreme decision, Britain then adopted the principle “no trade except through British ports”. The Order in council of 11 November 1807 [supplemented by seven others of 25 November] put in effect the previous one of 10 January, forbidding neutrals (primarily Americans) all trade with ports (continental and colonial) closed to British goods [and therefore declared enemies], unless they first called at an British port. Ships that did not comply voluntarily could be intercepted and diverted to an British port for investigation and taxation of up to a quarter of the cargo and plundered in case of resistance. Furthermore, the export of continental goods was declared illegal and looked on as a prize. However, a limited supply of colonial goods was allowed to the neutrals.

Napoleon reciprocated with the “Decree of Milan” of 17 December, declaring enemies and looked on as a prize the neutral ships that complied with the British imposition. Worse for both belligerents, however, was the American Embargo Act of 22 December 1807 (with the Supplement of 12 March 1808), which banned all maritime and land exports under penalty of confiscation of goods, plus a fine of USD 10,000 for each infringement (even if merely suspected), albeit with a waiver at the President’s discretion. The embargo (which was highly unpopular in the United States and especially in New England whose economy was largely dependent on trade with Great Britain) was largely ignored²⁸, but Jefferson’s intent was to develop national industry enforcing the dependence of European industries on American raw materials²⁹. The French reaction (Bayona decree of 17 April 1808) was short-sighted: since the American government had banned its ships from European waters, those that reached them were considered smugglers and looked on as a prize even if they had not been subjected to British visits. Instead, the British Parliament relaxed the regime of controls in favor of the Americans (23 June 1808).

Meanwhile, with the insurrection in Madrid (May) and the landing of the future Duke of Wellington in Portugal (August), Napoleon’s “Spanish ulcer” began, which not only sent the military cost of the Continental System skyrocketing, but reopened trade with the Spanish colonies to Britain, while the Atlantic

28 Peter Andreas, *Smuggler Nation: How Illicit Trade Made America*, Oxford U. P., 2013. Edgar Stanton Maclay, *A History of American Privateers*, New York, Appleton, 1899.

29 Louis M. Sears, *Jefferson and the Embargo*, Durban (NC), Duke U. P., 1927.

was now off-limits to France. Half of the last 12 vessels sailed in the summer from Bordeaux for the last French colonies were captured, and in October Admiral Cochrane put the blockade on the French Leeward Islands.

«*The Great Imperial Smuggler in the Tuileries*»³⁰ (1809-1810)

At the beginning of 1809 the effects of the trade blockade began to become untenable. On 1 March, shortly before leaving the presidency, Jefferson signed the Non-Intercourse Act, which allowed American trade with neutral ports to resume. Pressed by the cries of pain of farmers and merchants and the sharp fall in customs revenue, Napoleon issued a confidential circular on 14 April envisaging to concede case by case and under his own signature some licences to export foodstuffs (cereals, legumes, dried fruit, jams, wine and brandy) to Great Britain, provided that wood, hemp, iron and quinine were imported and a tax of 600/800 francs paid. Paradoxically, it was precisely French cereals (together with peace with Turkey) that saved Britain from the famine caused by the bad harvest of 1809, while deprived France of a food reserve that would have been precious in the famine of 1811.

In turn, with an order in council of 26 April, Great Britain limited the blockade to French, Dutch and northern Italian ports only (thus excluding the Neapolitans, who were at that time affected by the Anglo-Sicilian expedition). Moreover, on 24 May it allowed American ships to trade with Holland, thus increasing the contrast between Napoleon and the King of that country, his brother Louis, who was later recalled to Paris, incorporating Holland into the Empire. With imperial decrees of 4 December and 14 February 1810, export under licence was extended to oil, textiles, iron and cotton: 350 licences were granted for these products, worth 10 million export and 6 import.

Reacting to the closure of American ports to French ships, the Rambouillet decree of 23 March 1810 declared that American ships were looked on as a prize³¹. The U. S. Congress responded with Macon Bill No. 2 of 1 May, which

30 Archibald Alison (1757-1839), *History of Europe From the Commencement of the French Revolution in 1789 to the Restoration of the Bourbons in 1815*, Edinburgh - London, Blackwood Cadell, 1837, VI, p. 361. Katharine F. Doughty, «Two Blockades: 1806 and 1915-16», *The Empire Review and Journal of British Trade*, London, Macmillan, XXX, 1917, pp. 317-322.

31 In total, there were 6,479 complaints against the French government concerning about 2,300 American ships. Listed in Greg H. Williams, *The French Assault on American Shippings 1793-1813. A History and Comprehensive Record of Merchant Marine Losses*, Jefferson, McFarland & Co, 2009 (courtesy by Paolo Coturri).

eased the embargo against the belligerents for three months, promising to lift it for those who pledged to respect the American flag. On 6 July, Napoleon facilitated exports to America³² and with the Trianon decree of 5 August allowed the importation of American or colonial products, but with duties differentiated according to origin, but double or even six times as high as in 1806. Albeit personally sceptical, the new president Madison publicly accepted the French opening, thus increasing the tension with Britain.

In Continental Europe, however, the French satellites was disconcerted by the imperial decrees of 3 and 25 July, which reserved to French shipping the 'export under license' and to French wholesalers the distribution of all extra-continental goods, furthermore, submitting to imperial authorization any European port movement. Obligated to buy finished or semi-finished products in France at a high price and to pay heavy export duties, the satellites reacted with a sort of custom guerrilla, as far as they could³³. Therefore, in July 1810 Holland was annexed³⁴ and the Vice-Kingdom of Italy threatened³⁵. But Sweden, although governed by Marshal Bernadotte, continued to refuse to implement the counter-blockade. The high custom duties further encouraged smuggling and money laundering, carried out by the same imperial privateers and customs officers, as well as the falsification of licenses and the generalized corruption of consuls, policemen, courts, and high commissioners, such as the chargé d'affaires in Hamburg Louis-Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne.

Napoleon himself turned to encourage smugglers across the Channel, allow-

32 Since the United States did not accept the reciprocity in trade required by the French licenses, Napoleon decreed that exports to America could be authorised without conditions (by simple "permission"). On the Trianon decree, see letter from Foreign Minister Champagny to Ambassador Armstrong, 5 August 1810

33 Roger Dufraisse, «Politique douanière française, blocus et système continental en Allemagne», *Revue du Souvenir Napoléonien*, No. 389, juin-juillet, 1993, pp. 5-24.

34 Johan Joor, «Le système continental et sa signification pour le Royaume de Hollande», in Annie Jourdan (Ed.), *Louis Bonaparte: Roi de Hollande*, Paris, 2010, pp. 131-44. Id., «Significance and Consequence of the Continental System for Napoleonic Holland, Especially for Amsterdam», in Aaslestad, *cit.*

35 In addition to Tarle's fundamental work [*Ekonomičeskaja žizn korolestva Italii v tsarstvovanii Napoleona*, Yuriev, 1916 (= *Sočinenaja*, IV, pp. 9-312), translated in French (*Le blocus continental et le Royaume d'Italie. La Situation économique de l'Italie sous Napoléon I*, Paris, Félix Alcan, 1928) and Italian (*La vita economica dell'Italia nell'età napoleonica*, Torino, Einaudi, 1950)] see Marcel Dunan, «L'Italie et le Système continental», *Revue de l'Institut Napoléon*, T. 96, 1965, pp. 176-192 and Alexander Grab, «The Kingdom of Italy and the Continental Blockade», in Aaslestad, *cit.*

ing 300 of them to turn Gravelines into a “smuggler city”³⁶. But elsewhere it was the British navy that supported smuggling, based on emporiums established on the small islands - Heligoland, Ponza, Lissa - close to the coasts, to invade the continental market with superior quality goods at dumping prices and suck up capital. In October 1810, the French-Italian squadron in the Adriatic carried out a first expedition against Lissa and Italian troops occupied the bailiwicks of Canton Ticino, another smuggling centre.³⁷ In December French troops occupied Westphalia and North-West Prussia, seizing huge quantities of British goods found aboard neutral ships, some burned in the square, some sold to finance the next military campaigns.

The licensing system did not, however, prevent a cascade of bankruptcies of commercial enterprises, banks and industries, which threw thousands of workers into the streets. In Leghorn, all activity ceased, in Bordeaux traffic fell to one fifth, throwing one seventh of the population into destitution³⁸. Moreover, once they left, most ships never returned, swelling the British merchant fleet. In 1811, bad weather caused a very serious famine and the price of bread skyrocketed. On 24 March 1812, the emperor decreed the free daily distribution of two million nutritious soups «à la Rumford», but these were based on pulses, which were impossible to find out of season.

The profound contradiction of Napoleonic economic warfare emerges here. The empire rested on the consent of the nascent bourgeoisie to the plutocratic regime created by Napoleon. Enriched by the plundering of national goods and military supplies and guaranteed by the gendarmerie and the ultra-liberal *Code Civil*, the bourgeoisie did not agree to pay the price and began to wait for liberation. As Count Mollien wrote in his *Memories*³⁹,

«Si l'on considère la durée de cette mesure politique que Napoléon appelait le système continental, son époque, les désordres qu'elle apporta dans les habitudes et les fortunes du commerce, on doit la regarder comme le plus extraordinaire de tous les coups d'Etat qui aient été jamais tenté; et l'on ne sait ce qui doit le plus étonner, de l'audace de la combinaison, ou de la résignation, de la soumission de tous les intérêts qui en souffraient».

36 Gavin Daly, «Napoleon and the “City of Smugglers”: 1810–1814», *The Historical Journal*, vol. 50, No. 2, July 2007, pp. 333–52.

37 Bernard de Céréville, *Le Système continental et la Suisse 1803-1813*, Lausanne, Impr. Georges Bridel, 1906, on which see v. Marcel Dunan, «Napoleon et les cantons suisses», *Revue des études napoléoniennes*, 2, juillet-déc. 1912, pp. 190-218.

38 According to Pierre Branda, only 561 ships left Bordeaux in five years (171 for neutral ports and 390 for America), equivalent to the traffic of a single normal year.

39 Comte Mollien, *Mémoires d'un ministre du Trésor public, 1780-1815*, III, p. 318.

The Seven British Vessels That Saved Russia (1811-1812)

A month after the annexation of Holland, in a letter of 17 September 1810 to the Minister of the Navy, Napoleon surprisingly returned to the idea of landing in Britain. At that time the Royal Navy had three times as many French vessels (125 against 37): but the emperor raved about having 104 in a year and a half to concentrate in the Channel ports and to rearm the Boulogne flotilla in order to land 42,000 men with 3,000 horse and 120 pieces. In 1811 he planned to land in Ireland. A true strategic plan, as Nicola Todorov now claims?⁴⁰ Or rather a large-scale diversion, analogous to the one over the Strait of Messina⁴¹, to induce the enemy to empty, if not to evacuate, the Iberian Peninsula and close the match with the Cadiz government?

The fact remains, however, that it was the obstinacy to maintain the Continental System that led to the fatal decision to invade Russia, even though Great Britain had offered France to reopening trade in April 1812. The aim, disproportionate to the unprecedented deployment of forces, was simply to force Alexander to close the ports to neutrals.⁴² The primary target was therefore obviously Riga:⁴³ the French offensive had to be supplied from the Baltic, going into the heart of Russia up the great rivers, first and foremost the Daugava (Dvina). For this purpose, three thousand large gunboats, assembled for the landing in Britain are transferred from the French Channel ports to the Hanseatic ports in order to enter the Baltic through the Eiderkanal (from Tönning to Kiel). But on the Baltic side of Denmark there are seven British vessels: without bases in the Baltic,

40 Nicola Peter Todorov, «Vaincre la mer par la terre. La pensée géographique et maritime de Napoléon», in Philippe Boulanger et Philippe Nivet (dir.), *La géographie militaire de la Picardie du Moyen Âge à nos jours*, Amiens, Encrage, 2006, pp. 69-78. Id., «Le redressement naval de Napoléon de 1810 à 1813 et la géographie maritime de l'Europe», *Cahiers du CEHD Géographie et Géographie historique*, n° 36 (2008), pp. 137-170. Id., *Moskau oder London? Napoleons Landungsprojekte auf den britischen Inseln nach Trafalgar von 1806 bis 1813*, Hamburg, Tredition GmbH, 2013. Tredition, 2013. Id., «La géographie des ressources forestières et les ambitions navales de Napoléon après Trafalgar: l'exemple du bois de chêne», *Revue de Géographie Historique*, 2014. Id., *La grande armée à la conquête de l'Angleterre. Le plan secret de Napoléon*, Vendémiaire, 2016.

41 In 1811 the diversion over Sicily was just concluded, to great disappointment of Murat, who had taken it seriously.

42 Evgenij N. Ponasenkov, «Ekonomičeskie predposylki krizisa til'zitskoj sistemy v Rossii (1807-1812 gg.) i pričiny vojny 1812 g.», in L. I. Borodkin (Ed.), *Ekonomičeskaja istorija*, M., vol. 8, 2002, pp. 132-140.

43 Anita Čerpinska, «Riga Export Trade at the Time of the Continental Blockade (1807-1812)», in Aaslestad, *op. cit.*

they arrive every summer to encourage Bernadotte's Sweden and block Russian ports. Their cruises are enough to convince Napoleon to modify the original plan by replacing the gunboats with a land siege park of 130 heavy guns, laboriously set off through rivers, canals and horse-drawn convoys: it will end up uselessly parked 15 km from Riga and narrowly escape a daring Russian foray. Riga is safe, and Napoleon is lost. He absurdly sets out towards Moscow, the wrong capital, sucked in by the unwitting Russian high command, which only is desperately retreating, not by choice, but by paralysis of decision-making. In the end, for the second time after Egypt, Napoleon abandons the army to catastrophe to rush to Paris to secure power.

Instead of retaking Alexander, Napoleon lost Sweden⁴⁴, then Prussia, Poland, half of Germany, Austria and even Murat's Naples⁴⁵. The Russian Patriotic War was prolonged into "the wars for the liberation of Europe" (*Befreiungskrieg, vojny za osvobozhdenie*) and ended with the Allied double entry in Paris, in April 1814 and in June 1815.

It should be noted that Napoleon could not exploit Britain's parallel engagement against the United States. Relations between the two countries had deteriorated further in 1811, with the polemics of the pro-British American Secretary of State Robert Smith against President Madison, and the Little Belt incident (a British sloop attacked by American units). On 16 June 1812, while Castlereagh announced to Parliament his intention to revoke the 1807 orders in council, Congress approved the declaration of war. Slow communication and mutual distrust made the hostilities irreversible, and they continued long after the signing of the Peace of Ghent on 23 December 1814⁴⁶.

44 August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767-1845), *Sur le système continental par rapport à la Suède*, Hambourg; Londres, Schulze et Dean, 1813 [an English translation, titled *Appeal to the Nations of Europe against the Continental System Published in Stockholm, by Authority of Bernadotte, in March 1813*, was published in London and Boston in 1813 under the name of Madame de Staël Holstein].

45 V. Ilari, «La vera storia del 'Mahan italiano'», in *Quaderno Sism 2014 Naval History*, pp. 427-432.

46 See Mahan, *Sea Power in Its Relations with the War of 1812*, Boston, Little, Brown & Coy., 1905 (2 voll.). Andrew Lambert, *The Challenge. Britain against America in the Naval War of 1812*, London, Faber and Faber., 2012; Jeremy Black, *The War of 1812 in the Age of Napoleon*, University of the Oklahoma Press, 2014.

The role of the Mediterranean Fleet in Napoleon's defeat

The failure of the counter-blockade and Napoleon's defeat were, however, also determined by the shrewd employment of the Mediterranean Fleet, with an average of 80 ships and 50,000 sailors and soldiers between Gibraltar, Malta, Messina and Cephalonia, half of all nations, which for nine years intrepidly held an immense front, from Cadiz to the Bosphorus, relentlessly pounding the coasts of the three major peninsulas (Iberian, Italian and Balkan).

The second phase of the Anglo-French conflict thus became essentially a long economic and subversive war of attrition of the Napoleonic 'Festung Europa', where the Ruler of the Waves does not seek decision in a single shock but in the cumulative medium-term effect of multiple factors, triggered by a myriad of military micro-interventions.⁴⁷ In the first phase of the war, the sorties of the Toulon squadron had provoked three major battles, but after Trafalgar, the French navy could barely replenish the Ionian Islands, while the main commitment of the British Mediterranean Fleet was to control ports, block sea trade and support privateers, smugglers, spies and partisans. Maritime power was therefore employed as an instrument of economic and political warfare, whose main objective is to undermine the social consensus and legitimacy of the enemy.

Although tiny and obsolete, the small Italian navies⁴⁸ paradoxically turned out to be indispensable in fighting the type of 'peripheral'⁴⁹ or 'hybrid'⁵⁰ warfare with which France and Britain faced each other in the central Mediterranean. In the first phase of the conflict, sub-coastal and amphibious operations, which the British had largely experimented in North America, mainly concerned Liguria. In 1799 they were decisive for the Sanfedist reconquest of the Kingdom of Naples and for the success of the Tuscan and Ligurian insurrections. From 1806 onwards, however, seaborne raids became prevalent, combined with rapid and deadly cruises by men-of-war or frigates and a shrewd exploitation of intelligence, sabotage, and smuggling opportunities offered by some small islands facing the enemy coasts (Capri, Ponza, Gorgona, Lissa) which the enemy could

47 Roger Knight and Martin Wilcox, *Sustaining the Fleet, 1793-1815: War, the British Navy and the Contractor State*, Boydell Press, 2010. Roger Knight, *Britain Against Napoleon: The Organization of Victory, 1793-1815*, Penguin UK, 2013.

48 See Ilari and Crociani's trilogy on Napoleonic Italian navies (Acies, 2015-2017).

49 Bruce A. Elleman, S.C.M. Paine, *Naval Power and Expeditionary Wars: Peripheral Campaigns and New Theatres of Naval Warfare*, Routledge, 2010.

50 Williamson Murray, Peter R. Mansoor, *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present*, Cambridge U. P., 2012.

neither interdict nor garrison and which the privateers (Sicilians, Sardinians, and exiles from Napoleonic Italy) transformed into as many free harbours.

Forced onto the defensive, France and its Italian satellites established (albeit along the Tyrrhenian coast) a quite efficient mix of old anti-Saracen towers and small forts with guns and optical telegraph, brown water patrolling flotillas, and a sortie force represented by the privateers (French, Corsican, Ligurian, Tuscan, Neapolitan, Venetian). Incidentally, the Napoleonic Wars were the climax and at the same time the swan song of privateer warfare⁵¹.

First the entire Tyrrhenian coast, and then also the two shores of the Adriatic were thus constantly kept in a state of siege and alert, looting not only the financial and human resource of the enemy, but above all the internal consensus. Extended also to the western coast of Spain⁵², brown water operations became a typical component, together with guerrilla warfare, of what we could call “Peninsular Warfare”⁵³, paraphrasing the way in which British historiography has

51 According to Mahan (pp. 205-06) the damage of the French privateers was very limited (2 or 2.5% of the traffic), thanks to the system of large convoys (200 and up to 1,000 ships) escorted. The protection tax established by the Convoy Act of 1798 yielded £1.3 million in the first year, while the ship-owners gained from the drop in insurance. Instead, from 1793 to 1800, France lost 743 privateers and 273 cruisers with 40,000 sailors. Other estimates, however, reduce the losses of privateers to 28% and raise the losses of British merchantmen to 11,000 in 19 years of warfare, an average of 600 per year, more than the losses suffered during the American War of Independence (3,386 in 7 years) and the wars of the Austrian Succession (3,238 in 10 years) and Spanish Succession (3,250 in 14 years). Napoléon Gallois, *Les corsaires français sous la République et l'Empire*, Le Mans-Paris, 1847, 2 voll. Ulane Bonnel, *La France, les États-Unis et la guerre de course (1797-1815)*, préface de Marcel Dunan, Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1961. Patrick Crowhurst, *The Defense of the British Trade, 1689-1815*, 1977; Id., *The French War on Trade: Privateering, 1793-1815*, Scholar Press, 1989 (courtesy by Roberto Barazzutti). Michel Vergé-Franceschi, Antoine-Marie Gentili, Jean-Baptiste Lantieri, *La guerre de course en Méditerranée (1550-1830)*, Presses de l'Université Paris IV-Sorbonne, 2000. Jean Martin Lemnitzer, *Power, Law and the End of Privateering*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Silvia Marzagalli, «French Privateering during the French Wars 1793-1815», in Bruce A. Elleman and S. C. M. Paine (Eds.), *Commerce Raiding: Historical Case Studies, 1755-2009: Economic Warfare, Maritime Security, and Military Escalation*, NWC Press, Government Printing Office, 2014, pp. 41-56. See Christina Gathmann and Henning Hillmann, *Commerce and Crime: States, Property Rights, and the War on Trade, 1700-1815*, Stanford University, s. d. (online October 2014).

52 V. Christopher David Hall, *Wellington's Navy: Sea Power and the Peninsular War, 1807-1814*, Chatham, 2004.

53 V. Ilari, «Seapower and Insurrection: The Peninsular Warfare during the Napoleonic Wars», in Alexandre Vautravers e Matthew Goulding (Eds), *Counterinsurgency. Security Forum 2011*, Geneva, Webster University, 2012, pp. 30-40.

baptised the Spanish and Portuguese campaigns. Indeed, the use of maritime power to destabilise the enemy through a mix of insurrection and economic warfare was applied first to the Italian peninsula, then to the Iberian peninsula and finally to the Balkans.

British maritime power interdicted the Atlantic to continental trade and made the Mediterranean routes themselves increasingly unsafe and expensive, progressively restricting navigation to simple cabotage along the coasts of the Empire and its satellites. The high draught of the hulls, the modest range of the cannons and the inaccuracy of the broadside fire against tiny, fixed targets made vessels and frigates unsuitable for inshore operations, but their agile lifeboats could still carry out raids, boardings and simple captures. More frequently, the protagonists of the clashes were the sloop-of-war, the gunboats, the small corsair sailing ships, the armed merchant ships and the hundreds of old towers from the 15th to 17th centuries along the Christian coasts of the Mediterranean, reused for the protection of cabotage, exercised in convoys and ‘from tower to tower’ to reduce the risk of enemy attack.

Made up almost entirely of “minor operations”, this type of warfare was neglected by the old 19th-century “naval history”, which focused on the great and glorious battles, without considering that these, like surgical operations, are made to remedy (or prevent) an otherwise unbearable situation, namely the attrition caused by the continuous employment of enemy naval force. As later taught us Julian S. Corbett, the primary task of fleets is not to neutralise each other, but to attack or defend traffic. It is not the battles that determine peace, but the exploitation of the freedom of action secured by victory. Lepanto did not decide anything because the Holy League broke up soon afterwards; Trafalgar was only decisive thanks to the daily and thankless sacrifice of Nelson’s successor, Sir Cuthbert Collingwood, whose work, between 1805 and 1810, was highlighted in 1957 by Piers Gerald Mackesy.⁵⁴

54 *The War in the Mediterranean, 1803–1810*, Harvard U. P., 1957. This crucial period, in which the Mediterranean Fleet (Collingwood) and the Baltic Squadron (Saumarez) turned the Continental Blockade to their advantage in order to wear down Napoleon in the Iberian and Italian Peninsulas, push him into the catastrophic Russian campaign and alienate him from the consensus of the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, was the subject of an excellent historiography, including, after Mackesy, Desmond Gregory, *Sicily: The Insecure Base: A History of the British Occupation of Sicily, 1806-1815*, Associated U. P., 1988; Christopher Hall, *Wellington’s Navy. Seapower and the Peninsular War 1807-1814*, Chatham Publishing – Stackpole Books, London – Pennsylvania, 2004; Tim Voelcker, *Admiral Saumarez versus Napoleon. The Baltic 1807-1812*, Woodbridge (Suffolk), Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2008. David John Raymond, *The Royal Navy in the Baltic from 1807-1812*, Electronic Thesis, Florida State

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The failure of the Continental System, already predicted in 1809 by the Genevan liberal François d'Ivernois (1757-1842),⁵⁵ offered a strong argument for free trade, without however undermining the vast resilience of French mercantilist and protectionist thought⁵⁶. It is no coincidence that the first specific monograph, from 1837, attributes the development of French industry to the Continental System.⁵⁷ On the other hand, the first specific studies of economic and commercial history are liberal in character. For those prior to 1910, now forgotten, see the excellent bibliography of Marcel Dunan⁵⁸. The first and perhaps the best of the following ones, published in 1913 in Moscow by the great military historian Evgenij Tarle and never translated, has unfortunately remained ignored due to the language,⁵⁹ while far more influence had the books by Melvin

University, 2010.

- 55 d'Ivernois, *Effets du blocus continental sur le commerce, les finances, le crédit et la prospérité des Isles Britanniques*, Londres, J. V. G. Vogel, 2e éd. revue, corrigée et augmentée, 1809. On the title page bears the famous mocking verse «*Votre blocus ne bloque point / Et grâce à votre heureuse adresse / ceux que vous affamez sans cesse / ne périront que d'embonpoint...*».
- 56 D. Todd, *Free Trade and Its Enemies in France, 1814-1851*, Cambridge U. P., 2015.
- 57 S. [Jules] Millenet, *Le système continental et les anglais*, Paris, Firmin Didot Frères, 1837: «sans les décrets de Berlin et de Milan, sans ce moteur irrésistible de l'industrie continentale du XIX siècle, la France n'eût jamais atteint, sous ce rapport, le point de hauteur et de prospérité où elle est maintenant parvenue».
- 58 Marcel Dunan, «Le Système continental. Bulletin d'histoire économique 1900-1909», *Revue des études napoléoniennes*, 3, janvier-juin 1913, pp. 115-146. The first two were «Continental System» by F. Bulau in Carl von Rotteck u. Carl Welcker (Hrsg), *Encyklopädie der Staatswissenschaften*, Altona, IV, 1837, pp. 3-13 and *Die Kontinentalperre in ihrer ökonomisch-politischen Bedeutung. Ein Beitrag zur Handelsgeschichte*, Stuttgart, Cotta, 1850, by Wilhelm Kiesselbach, a «organic intellectual of Bremen's elite» quoted by Marx (Lars Maishak, *German Merchants in the Nineteenth Century Atlantic*, Cambridge U. P. 2013, p. 97). Among the later works cited by Dunan are the monographs by the liberal economist Michel Chevalier (1806-1879) and the historian Jean-Pierre Clement (1809-1870) on the *Système Protecteur*, published in 1852 and 1854, as well as the cited essay by Mahan and an article by M. J. H. Rose («Napoleon and English», *The English Historical Review*, 1893, pp. 704-725). Chevalier's attack on protectionism was challenged by Henry Charles Carey (1793-1879), Lincoln's economic advisor (*The French and American tariffs compared; in a series of letters addressed to Mons. Michel Chevalier*, Philadelphia, Collins, 1861). Purely chronological Albert Sorel (1842-1906), *L'Europe et la Révolution française*, t. VII: *Le Blocus continental - Le grand Empire 1806-1812*, Paris, Librairie Plon, 4^e ed., 1904, pp. 102-148 («Le décret de Berlin»), 230-37 («Le décret de Milan»).
- 59 Evgenij Viktorovič Tarle (1874-1955), *Kontinental'naya blokada. Issledovanija po istorii promyslennosti i vneshnej torgovli Frantsii v epokhu Napoleona*, M., 1913 (=Tarle, *Sočinenija*, III, Akademii Nauk, M., 1958). «Deutsch-französische Wirtschaftsbeziehungen zur Napoleons Zeit», *Schmollers Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft im Deutschen Reich*, vol. 38, 1914, pp. 167-212. «Napoléon et les intérêts économiques de la

(1919),⁶⁰ Heckscher (1922),⁶¹ Dunan⁶² and de Jouvenel (1942),⁶³ L'Huillier (1952),⁶⁴ and especially the doctoral thesis (1958) of the British economic historian François Crouzet⁶⁵. Later, studies were developed on the real application of the Continental System, both in general⁶⁶ and in the various regions of the Empire, namely the North Sea, France and Italy⁶⁷ and the theme was once again addressed in the framework of broader studies

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60 Frank Edgar Melvin, *Napoleon's Navigation System: A Study of Trade Control during the Continental Blockade*, University of Pennsylvania, 1919, repr. New York, 1970. Melvin (1881-1947) was later professor of history at the University of Illinois.

61 Eli F. Heckscher, *The Continental System: An Economic Interpretation*, Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, 1922 (Cosmo, NY, 2006). Heckscher (1879-1952) was a Swedish economist.

62 Marcel Dunan, *Napoléon et l'Allemagne: le système continental et les débuts du Royaume de Bavière, 1806-1810*, Paris, Plon, 1942. Id., «Napoléon et le système continental en 1810», *Revue d'Histoire diplomatique*, 61, janvier-avril 1946, pp. 71-98. Dunan (1885-1978) was later Director of the Institut d'Histoire de la Révolution française (1946-55) and President of the Institut Napoléon (1947-74).

63 Bertrand de Jouvenel (1903-1987), *Napoléon et l'économie dirigée. Le Blocus continental*, Bruxelles, La Toison d'or, 1942.

64 Fernand L'Huillier (1905-1997), *Étude sur le Blocus continental*, P. U. F., 1952.

65 François Crouzet (1922-2010), *L'économie britannique et le blocus continental*, Paris, 1958, 2 vols., 949 p. 2e ed. (avec introduction pour mise à jour), Paris, Economica, 1987, CXIV-949 p. Id., *De la supériorité de l'Angleterre sur la France. L'économie et l'imaginaire, XVII-XXe siècles*, Paris, Perrin, 1985, 1999. Cédric Couteau, *La France, l'Angleterre et le blocus continental*, Anovi, 2002.

66 Pierre Branda, *Le Prix de la gloire: Napoléon et l'argent*, Paris, Fayard, 2007. Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, «Trading with the Enemy: Clandestine Networks during the Napoleonic Wars», *Quaderni Storici*, 143, 2013, pp. 541-65. Silvia Marzagalli, *Les boulevards de la fraude: le négoce maritime et le Blocus continental, 1806-1813. Bordeaux, Hambourg, Livourne*, P. U. du Septentrion, Villeneuve d'Ascq, 1999.

67 Anthony Nicolas Ryan, «Trade with the Enemy in the Scandinavian and Baltic Ports during the Napoleonic War: for and against», *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12, 1962, pp. 123-40. Id., «Trade between Enemies: Maritime Resistance to the Continental System in the Northern Seas (1808-1812)», in Arne Bang-Andersen et al. (Eds.), *The North Sea: A Highway of Economic and Cultural Exchange*, Stavanger, 1985. Jean Mistler, «Hambourg sous l'occupation Française: Observations au sujet du Blocus continental», *Francia: Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte*, 1, 1973, pp. 451-66. Geoffrey Ellis, *Napoleon's Continental Blockade: The Case of Alsace*, Oxford, 1981.

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- 68 Lance E. Davis and Stanley L. Engerman, *Naval Blockades in Peace and War: An Economic History since 1750*, Cambridge U. P., 2006, pp. 25-52 («Britain, France and Napoleon's Continental System, 1793-1815»). Silvia Marzagalli, «Napoleon's Continental Blockade: An Effective Substitute to Naval Weakness?», in Bruce A. Elleman and S. C. M. Paine (Eds.), *Naval Blockades and Seapower Strategies and Counterstrategies, 1805-2005*, Routledge, London, 2006, pp. 25-34. Wade G. Dudley, «The Flawed British Blockade, 1812-1815», *Ibidem*, pp. 35-45. Brian Arthur Woodbridge, *How Britain Won the War of 1812: The Royal Navy's Blockades of the United States, 1812-1815*, Boydell Press, 2011.
- 69 Marzagalli, «French Privateering during the French Wars, 1793-1815», in Bruce A. Elleman and S. C. M. Paine (Eds.), *Commerce Raiding. Historical Case Studies, 1775-2009*, NWCE Newport Papers No. 40, 2009, pp. 41-56; Kevin D. McCranie, «Waging Protracted Naval War: U.S. Navy Commerce Raiding during the War of 1812», *ibidem*, pp. 57-72.
- 70 Patrick Karl O'Brian, «The Impact of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1793-1815, on the Long-Run Growth of the British Economy», *Review* 7, 1989, pp. 335-95. Erik Aerts and François Crouzet (Eds), *Economic Effects of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, Leuven, 1990. Kevin H. O'Rourke, «The Worldwide Economic Impact of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1793-1815», *Journal of Global History*, 1, 2006, pp. 123-49. Guy Lemarchand, «Face à la France révolutionnée : l'économie britannique dans les guerres de la Révolution et de l'Empire», *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, N. 349, juillet-septembre 2007, pp. 129-158. Pierre Branda, «Les conséquences économiques du blocus continental», *Revue du Souvenir Napoléonien*, N. 472, septembre-octobre 2007, pp. 21-30. François Crouzet, *La guerre économique franco-anglaise au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris, Fayard, 2008. Katherine Aaslestad, «The Continental System and Imperial Exploitation», in Philip Dwyer and Alan Forrest (Eds.), *Napoleon and the Empire*, Basingstoke, 2007, pp. 114-32. Ead., «Lost Neutrality and Economic Warfare: Napoleonic Warfare in Northern Europe, 1795-1815», in Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (Eds.), *War in the Age of Revolution, 1775-1815*, Cambridge U. P., 2010, pp. 373-94. Silvia Marzagalli, «Was Warfare necessary for the functioning of Eighteenth-century colonial systems ? Some Reflections on the necessity of cross-imperial and foreign trade in the French case», in Cátia Antunes and Amelia Polónia (Eds), *Beyond Empire, Global Self-Organizing, Cross-Imperial Networks, 1500-1800*, Leyde, Brill, 2016, pp. 253-277. Ali Laïdi, *Histoire mondiale de la guerre économique*, Perrin, Paris, 2016 (ch. 18, «Le Blocus continental», pp. 305-324 e nt pp. 518-19).
- 71 Patrick Karl O'Brian, «The Impact of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1793-1815, on the Long-Run Growth of the British Economy», *Review* 7, 1989, pp. 335-95. Erik Aerts and François Crouzet (Eds), *Economic Effects of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, Leuven, 1990. Kevin H. O'Rourke, «The Worldwide Economic Impact of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1793-1815», *Journal of Global History*, 1, 2006, pp. 123-49. Guy Lemarchand, «Face à la France révolutionnée : l'économie britannique dans les guerres de la Révolution et de l'Empire», *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, N. 349, juillet-septembre 2007, pp. 129-158. Pierre Branda, «Les conséquences économiques du blocus continental», *Revue du Souvenir Napoléonien*, N. 472, septembre-octobre 2007, pp. 21-30. François Crouzet, *La guerre économique franco-anglaise au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris, Fayard, 2008. Katherine Aaslestad, «The Continental System and Imperial Exploitation»,

Blockade on Russia⁷². Furthermore, in 2011 the theme was the subject of an important international conference in Amsterdam.⁷³ It should be noted that Silvia Marzagalli's 140 contributions represent perhaps two-thirds of the recent bibliography on the subject.

in Philip Dwyer and Alan Forrest (Eds.), *Napoleon and the Empire*, Basingstoke, 2007, pp. 114–32. Ead., «Lost Neutrality and Economic Warfare: Napoleonic Warfare in Northern Europe, 1795–1815», in Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (Eds.), *War in the Age of Revolution, 1775–1815*, Cambridge U. P., 2010, pp. 373–94. Silvia Marzagalli, «Was Warfare necessary for the functioning of Eighteenth-century colonial systems? Some Reflections on the necessity of cross-imperial and foreign trade in the French case», in Cátia Antunes and Amelia Polónia (Eds.), *Beyond Empire, Global Self-Organizing, Cross-Imperial Networks, 1500–1800*, Leyde, Brill, 2016, pp. 253–277. Ali Laïdi, *Histoire mondiale de la guerre économique*, Perrin, Paris, 2016 (ch. 18, «Le Blocus continental»), pp. 305–324 e nt pp. 518–19).

72 Patrick Karl O'Brian, «The Impact of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1793–1815, on the Long-Run Growth of the British Economy», *Review* 7, 1989, pp. 335–95. Erik Aerts and François Crouzet (Eds.), *Economic Effects of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, Leuven, 1990. Kevin H. O'Rourke, «The Worldwide Economic Impact of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1793–1815», *Journal of Global History*, 1, 2006, pp. 123–49. Guy Lemarchand, «Face à la France révolutionnée : l'économie britannique dans les guerres de la Révolution et de l'Empire», *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, N. 349, juillet-septembre 2007, pp. 129–158. Pierre Branda, «Les conséquences économiques du blocus continental», *Revue du Souvenir Napoléonien*, N. 472, septembre-octobre 2007, pp. 21–30. François Crouzet, *La guerre économique franco-anglaise au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris, Fayard, 2008. Katherine Aaslestad, «The Continental System and Imperial Exploitation», in Philip Dwyer and Alan Forrest (Eds.), *Napoleon and the Empire*, Basingstoke, 2007, pp. 114–32. Ead., «Lost Neutrality and Economic Warfare: Napoleonic Warfare in Northern Europe, 1795–1815», in Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (Eds.), *War in the Age of Revolution, 1775–1815*, Cambridge U. P., 2010, pp. 373–94. Silvia Marzagalli, «Was Warfare necessary for the functioning of Eighteenth-century colonial systems? Some Reflections on the necessity of cross-imperial and foreign trade in the French case», in Cátia Antunes and Amelia Polónia (Eds.), *Beyond Empire, Global Self-Organizing, Cross-Imperial Networks, 1500–1800*, Leyde, Brill, 2016, pp. 253–277. Ali Laïdi, *Histoire mondiale de la guerre économique*, Perrin, Paris, 2016 (ch. 18, «Le Blocus continental»), pp. 305–324 e nt pp. 518–19).

73 Katherine B. Aaslestad and Johan Joor (Eds.), *Revisiting Napoleon's Continental System: Local, Regional and European Experiences*, Palgrave, Macmillan, 2014. The book includes 13 essays in 4 parts: I «The Historiography and Origins of the Continental System» (Annie Jourdan, Alexandre Tchoudinov, Pierrick Pourchasse); II «Regional Approaches to the Practice and Consequences of the Continental System» (Silvia Marzagalli, Alexander Grab, Robert Mark Spaulding), III «Adapting to Economic Warfare: New Networks and Illicit Trade» (Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, Jan M. Witt, Bård Frydenlund, Michael Rowe); IV «Urban experiences» (Alan Forrest, Hilde Greefs, Anita Čerpinska, Johan Joor).

NAPOLEON AND CAESAR: COMPARING STRATEGIES

IMMACOLATA ERAMO

Throughout his life, even more so than during his military career, Napoleon looked to the models of the past: above all Alexander, and Caesar. He came to know and love Alexander mainly through the translations of Plutarch's *Life*, just as he considered Caesar not as a model, but as his predecessor.¹ All the complexities of Napoleon's relationship with Caesar lie in this difference.²

Napoleon was familiar with Caesar's deeds from his school years at Brienne-le-Château, where he translated parts of the *Commentarii*. Napoleon's interest was a part of his passion for ancient history and was fuelled during his political and military experience by the ambition to find patterns of behaviour and paradigms of comparison in the examples of the past.³ However, it was

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- 1 Plutarch's *Lives*, which Napoleon read in the French translation by André Dacier (*Plutarque. Vies des hommes illustres*, traduites en français avec des remarques historiques et critiques par M. Dacier, nouvelle édition revue et corrigée, Paris, Robin, 1778) were among his favourite readings: J.-O. Boudon. "Napoléon et l'hellénisme", *Anabases* 20 (2014), 33-39. Regarding the example of the great ancient generals see Napoleon's reflections collected by B. Colson, *Napoleon on War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2015, 111-112 (*Napoléon. De la guerre*, Paris: Perrin 2011). On Alexander: D. Amendola, "Tra imitatio ed aemulatio. Bonaparte e la «geo-historiographie d'Alexandre»", *FuturoClassico* 8 (2022), 6-85, with bibl.
 - 2 L. Canfora, *Giulio Cesare. Il dittatore democratico*, Roma-Bari: Laterza 1999, xi-xiii; L. Polverini, "Imitatio Caesaris. Cesare e Alessandro, Napoleone e Cesare", in A. Barzanò et al. [ed.], *Modelli eroici dall'antichità alla cultura europea. Bergamo, 20-22 novembre 2001*. IV, *Alle radici della casa comune europea*, Roma: «L'Erma» di Bretschneider 2003, 403-408.
 - 3 See T. Lentz, *Napoléon*, Paris: Le Cavalier Bleu 2001, 29-33; B. Colson, "Napoléon et les stratégies de l'Antiquité", *FuturoClassico* 8 (2022), 179-200. On the valorisation of history during the French Revolution see M. Raskolnikoff, *Histoire romaine et critique historique dans l'Europe des Lumières. La naissance de l'hypercritique dans l'historiographie de la Rome antique*, Rome: École Française de Rome 1992; A. Giardina, "Dalla Rivoluzione francese alla prima guerra mondiale: miti repubblicani e miti nazionali", in A. Giardina, A. Vauchez (edd.), *Il mito di Roma. Da Carlo Magno a Mussolini*, Roma-Bari: Laterza 2000, 117-159; D. Di Bartolomeo, *Nelle vesti di Clio. L'uso politico della storia nella rivoluzione francese (1787-1799)*, Roma: Viella 2014; A. Giardina, "Napoleone e le eredità imperiali", in: L. Norci Cagiano, A. M. Scaiola (ed.), *Napoleone, i Bonaparte e Roma*, Roma: Tab 2023, 15-59.

mainly the last days of his exile that firmly convinced him to live a parallel life with the Roman general. On the island of St. Helena, Napoleon wished to create a true σύγκρισις between his own life and military experience as a general and that of Caesar,⁴ as he was convinced to be not only an imitator of Caesar, but his heir⁵. This relationship often resulted in a feeling of competition and rivalry⁶. Therefore, Napoleon approached the in-depth reading of Caesar's *Commentarii* and conceived the *Précis des guerres de César*, a small work made up of 16 chapters. This book was published 15 years after his death by Louis Joseph Marchand, his chamberlain and executor of his will, by the publisher Gosselin of Paris, in a moment of full rehabilitation of his memory desired by the enlightened King Louis Philippe I.⁷

Marchand's introduction to the *Précis*, as well as the *Cahiers* of Henri-Gatien Bertrand, the Grand maréchal du palais who kept all of Napoleon's manuscripts, tell how the Emperor read the *Commentarii* and how he elaborated his reflections, sketching the portrait of an Emperor who continued to think lucidly and obsessively about past and recent questions of war, despite the unproductive days of exile.⁸

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- 4 «Ce même soir [2 April 1821], relevant le grand maréchal, je dis à l'Empereur que l'on apercevait une comète : "Ah ! Me dit-il, ma mort sera marquée comme celle de César"»: L. J. Marchand, *Mémoires de Marchand*, éd. par J. Bourguignon et H. Lachouque, Paris: Tallandier 1985, II, 294.
- 5 F. Gundolf, *Caesar. Geschichte seines Ruhms*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1968, 255-264.
- 6 «On trouve que Napoléon a donné 60 batailles, Cèsar n'en avait livré que 50»: E. de Las Cases, *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, Paris: Garnier Frères 1961, II, 256.
- 7 Regarding the genesis and characteristics of this work: I. Eramo, "Leggere Cesare a Sant'Elena. Il *Précis des guerres de César*", *FuturoClassico* 8 (2022), 155-182, which is the first part of a commentary on Napoleon's *Précis*.
- 8 Napoleon, *Précis des guerres de César*, écrit par M. Marchand à l'île Saint-Hélène, sous la dictée de l'empereur, suivi de plusieurs fragmens inédits, Paris: Gosselin 1836, 10-13; M.H.G. Bertrand, *Cahiers de Sainte-Hélène. Journal 1816-1817*, manuscript déchiffré et annoté par P. Fleuriot de Langle, Paris: Albin Michel 1959, 252. On Napoleon's working method: Ph. Gonnard, *Les origines de la légende napoléonienne. L'œuvre historique de Napoléon à Sainte-Hélène*, Paris: Calmann-Lévy 1906, 46-63; M.R. Poignault, "Napoleon I^{er} et Napoleon III lecteurs de Jules César", in R. Chevallier (éd.), *Présence de César. Actes du Colloque des 9-11 décembre 1983. Hommage au doyen Michel Rambaud*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1985, 330-331; see also M. Rambaud, *L'art de la déformation historique dans les Commentaires de César*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres 1966, 56-57. The great success of the *Précis* is testified by the number of French re-editions and translations into other languages, on which see vd. C. Prévot, "Napoléon en exil à Sainte-Hélène. 1^{ère} partie : le temps de l'exil", *Napoleonica* 11 (2011), 37-38 and Eramo, *Leggere Cesare a Sant'Elena*, 158-159.

At St. Helena, in the early months of 1819, Napoleon read the *Commentarii* aloud in the evenings and commented on them with his generals. He then dictated his remarks to Marchand, in such a rapid manner that the chamberlain perfected a system of shorthand allowing him to follow the flow of words the Emperor uttered; he also kept a supply of sharpened pencils with him so as not to lose time and the thread of Napoleon's thoughts. The speech was quick and focused, the words were clear and well defined, so that everyone could see that the Emperor was truly engrossed in those reflections. Marchand writes that Napoleon used to wake him up in the middle of the night to dictate his observations, then demand to have the notes ready in the morning, when he woke up, to review and correct them.⁹ The picture outlined by Marchand gives us a clear idea of how much importance Napoleon gave to this work, which become for him a kind of *viaticum* that would accompany him to his death:

C'est ainsi que les notes sur les Commentaires de César m'ont été dictées entièrement et presque constamment dans de longues insomnies, «où le travail», disait-il, «apportait de l'adoucissement à ses souffrances, et jetait quelques fleurs sur le chemin qui le conduisait au tombeau».¹⁰

Marchand's daily activity on the notes he took while listening to Napoleon's reflections allowed the work he was completing to take on the logical and rational order which became the structure of the *Précis* once published. The 16 chapters follow the composition of the Caesarian *corpus*: the first eight concern the *Bellum Gallicum*, chapters 9-11 the three books of the *Bellum civile*, chapters 12-13 deal with the *Bellum Alexandrinum*, chapter 14 the facts of the *Bellum Africum* and chapter 15 those of the *Bellum Hispaniense*. The sixteenth chapter is all about the last months of Caesar's life, his planned expedition against the Parthians and the Ides of March. In each chapter, the opening paragraphs highlight the facts of Caesar's campaigns that Napoleon finds most interesting, based on the data he gathers from time to time, even in an extemporaneous and disorganised manner. The last part of each chapter contains the *Observations*, which summarise Napoleon's critical remarks and are mainly substantiated by the constant comparison between ancient and modern military art.

The reflections Napoleon articulates about Caesar's campaigns and his own writing are clear, simple, concise and without adornment, they almost seem to imitate the style of the work they are commenting on. Moreover, they do not

9 L. J. Marchand, *Mémoires de Marchand*, II, 236; Bertrand, *Cahiers de Sainte-Hélène. Journal 1816-1817*, 252.

10 Marchand, *Préface: Napoleon, Précis*, 9.

make value judgements on each person, carefully avoid venturing into political evaluations of specific issues (except the last chapter), and above all focus on military aspects, which are addressed with a lucid and rigorous eye. Napoleon's approach to Caesar's campaigns is that of one who considers himself to be a superior general to his Roman predecessor since he has gained more experience and because he feels he is living in a time when warfare is more evolved and specialised.

The Emperor's interest in the *Commentarii* is exquisitely military and factual in nature and is more tactical than strategic. He observes details rather than scenarios, and focuses on troop numbers, days of march, distances, sizes, dates and above all places and locations. Such data allows for a close and constant comparison with the present and ends up enhancing his own military abilities, without however diminishing the value of his predecessor. This careful evaluation of military data inevitably leads Napoleon to elaborate perplexities or even open criticism of certain logistical choices or tactical designs of the Roman general.

It is precisely this which happened at the Battle of Ruspina (4 January 46 BC). Summarising the course of this battle, Napoleon says that Caesar was attacked strongly and struggled to retreat back to his camp, which he only managed to do late at night. He finds the reasons for this difficulty in the tactics of Labienus, who used the Numidian way of combat, consisting of deploying a large number of horsemen and excellent light infantry with archers. Labienus' troops peppered Caesar's infantrymen with javelins, and each time Caesar's men tried to attack, their enemy immediately scattered, moving away quickly and returning to the charge once the infantrymen had regained their place in the army's ranks. Caesar's horsemen could not fight against the enemy either, because they were surrounded by the light troops who slaughtered the horses with their throws.

Napoleon calls this tactic «disturbing» and reasons with the use of paradoxes: if Labienus' heavy infantry had been as good as his light infantry, the outcome of the battle would have been different: Caesar's success would have been doubtful and victory difficult. Napoleon clearly refers to the final outcome in which, as we will see, although in a situation of obvious difficulty and inferiority, Caesar managed to get the better of his adversary.¹¹

Ultimately, according to Napoleon, Caesar came off worst against Labienus, who applied the same tactics used by the Parthians against Crassus at Carrhae

11 Napoleon, *Précis* 14.4: «Cette manière de faire la guerre était inquiétante: si les légions de l'ennemi étaient aussi bonnes que son infanterie légère, le succès de cette guerre serait chanceux et la victoire difficile».

in 53 BC, which consisted of attacking the opposing army made up mainly of heavy infantrymen with a large number of throwing weapons.¹² Indeed, the Parthians were:

Droits, dispos, aussi braves qu'intelligens, sachant se soustraire à la poursuite du pesamment armé, mais retournant l'accabler de ses traits aussitôt qu'il avait pris son rang dans la légion. Quelque imparfaites que fussent alors les armes de jet, en comparaison de celles des modernes, lorsqu'elles étaient exercées de cette manière, elles obtenaient constamment l'avantage.¹³

Napoleon states that Caesar had the worst of it «quoi qu'en dise l'historien des guerres civiles». He therefore takes a critical attitude towards the author of the *Bellum Africum* – whom Napoleon believes to be Caesar himself –, in his eyes guilty of reticence with regard to what he considers to be a defeat to all intents and purposes.¹⁴ Indeed, as we will see, the author of the *Bellum Africum* does not speak of Caesar's defeat at all, or at least of a losing position; quite the contrary, he states that Caesar was skilful in driving back his enemy by inflicting losses upon them (*his rebus gestis ac procul hostibus repulsis convulneratisque*) and then retreating, in perfect tactical order, to his camp (*ad sua praesidia sese, sicut era instrucrut, recipere cepit*).¹⁵

Napoleon's misgivings, although not supported by tactical or strategic explanations, were not entirely unfounded. Suffice to say that even an experienced military historian like Hans Delbrück questioned the account of the final stages of the battle of Ruspina given by the author of the *Bellum Africum*. He was certainly influenced by Appian's account, according to which Caesar did not suffer a heavy defeat only thanks to his good luck, since his adversaries suddenly retreated from battle, just as they were about to win.¹⁶ Assuming that Appian's version is not fully convincing either, as it refers to inaction or an inexplicable

12 On the Battle of Carrhae see G. Traina, *La resa di Roma. 9 giugno 53 a.C., battaglia a Carre*, Roma-Bari: Laterza 2010, 66-72; G. Brizzi, *Roma contro i Parti. Due imperi in guerra*, Roma: Carocci 2022, 41-51.

13 Napoleon, *Précis* 14.6.

14 On the composition of the *Bellum Africum* see Canfora, *Giulio Cesare*, 396-398; L. Loreto, *Pseudo-Cesare. La lunga guerra civile. Alessandria, Africa, Spagna*, Milano: RCS 2001, 7-41; J. F. Gaertner, "The Corpus Caesarianum", in L. Grillo - C. B. Krebs (edd.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Writings of Julius Caesar*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2018, 268-271.

15 *B. Afr.* 17.2.

16 *App. civ.* II, 400 τὸ μὲν ἄλλο μέρος τῆς Καίσαρος τύχης ἔργον ἐφαίνετο κρατησάντων ἂν, ὡς ἐδόκει, τῶν πολεμίων ἄφνω τὴν μάχην ὑπὸ τῶν νικόντων διαλυθῆναι.

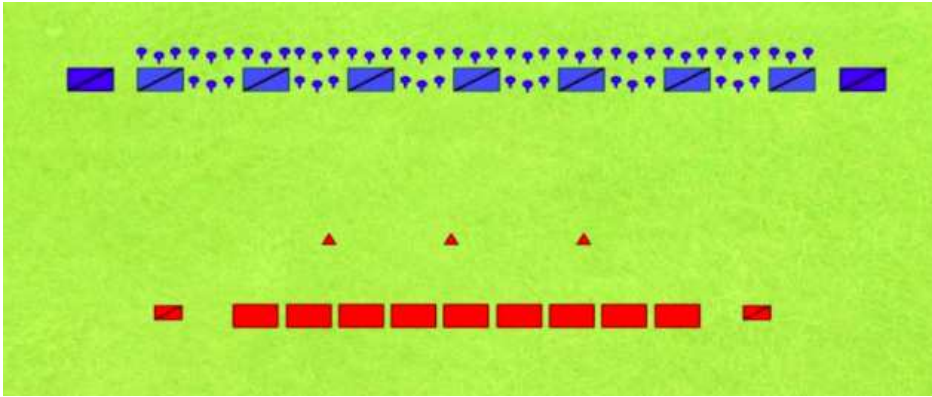
arrest of Labienus, Delbrück himself seeks a justification in the very logic of the *Bellum Africum* narrative and finds it through a comparison with Xenophon's *Anabasis*, where he believes the same happened. Indeed, he thinks that the only real achievement of Caesar's army was to hold out until nightfall – which did not require much effort, since the battle was fought in winter – and then immediately return to the camp, which was only 3,000 steps away (or approximately 4.5 kilometres). During these activities, Caesar demonstrated all his relational skills, keeping the troops united, compact and in order and preventing them from dispersing because they were disoriented or frightened.¹⁷

Delbrück's reading was rightly questioned by Georg Veith, who reproached him for not taking into account the main source of these facts, namely the *Bellum Africum*.¹⁸ Although the author emphasised Caesar's counterattack by giving it greater importance than it was really worth, according to Veith his account was nevertheless reliable, being the work of an eyewitness and not an arbitrary invention: an officer who fought the battle he describes first-hand surely knows more about it than a professor writing in Berlin 2000 years later! It was, in his view, necessary to divide the action into two moments. The first – on which Napoleon focuses his attention – resulted in Caesar's retreat by night, and the second consisted of his counterattack. Caesar's counterattack legitimately finds its place in this two-stage division. This could not take place in the early stages of the battle, as Delbrück polemically claimed, but only as a response to the adversary's attack, to be carried out at an advanced stage of the battle and in a position of inferiority. Caesar then launched the counterattack at the right moment, when the adversary had contracted the front to such an extent that a sudden counterattack was able to break it in two. This detail highlighted by Veith is important in order to understand the dynamics of Ruspina's tactical operations. Indeed, as Veith argues, Appian's account cannot be considered a reliable source – or at least more reliable than the *Bellum Africum* – because Appian summarises greatly, highlighting only one moment of the battle phases, that of the retreat. Cassius Dio's account is also somewhat misleading in its summary, as he merely states that the cavalry of Petreius and Labienus repulsed Caesar's infantry with the help of the Numidians. While the Roman infantry was in a state of great confusion, the Numidians killed many soldiers in hand-to-hand combat.¹⁹

17 H. Delbrück, *Geschichte der Kriegskunst im Rahmen der politischen Geschichte*, I, *Das Altertum*, Berlin: Stilke 1900 (Engl. transl. *History of the Art of War*, I, Lincoln-London: University of Nebraska Press 1990, 557-558).

18 G. Veith, *Antike Schlachtfelder. Bausteine zu einer antiken Kriegsgeschichte*, von J. Kromayer. III,2, *Afrika*, Berlin: Weidmann 1912, 785-789.

19 CDio 43.2.2. τῆν τε ἕπρον αὐτοῦ μηδέπω καλῶς ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης ἐρρωμένην ἐς τοὺς



Battle of Ruspina (46 BC), first stage

If one reads the account of the battle in the *Bellum Africum* carefully, stripping it of all the obvious propagandistic forgeries (such as the emphasis on the numerical disparity of the two armies)²⁰, one can eventually verify that it is largely a balanced and credible account, as on the one hand it emphasises the effective strategy by Labienus which forced Caesar to retreat, and on the other hand Caesar's extraordinary tactical flexibility.

Labienus deployed a very long formation, with horsemen interspersed with Numidians in light armor and archers on foot; they were so packed together that from far away they looked like infantry forces; large units of cavalry were deployed on the wings.²¹ Caesar however deployed an *acies simplex*, the most

πεξούς τοίς Νομάσι κατήραξαν, καί συνταραχθείσης πρὸς τοῦτο τῆς ἀσπίδος πολλοὺς μὲν αὐτῶν ἐν χερσὶν ἀπέκτειναν, πάντας δ' ἂν καὶ τοὺς λοιποὺς ἀνειληθέντας ἐπὶ μετέωρόν τι ἐξέκοψαν, εἰ μὴ ἰσχυρῶς ἐτρῶθησαν.

20 Caesar's army consisted of thirty cohorts, two thousand horsemen and one hundred and fifty archers, Labienus' army of 1,600 Gauls and Germans cavalrymen, eight thousand Numidians, plus Petreius' 1,600 horsemen, more than five thousand infantrymen and lightly armed soldiers, archers, slingers and unmounted archers (*B. Afr.* 12.3 *quorum omnino numerus fuit XXX cohortium cum equitibus CCCC, sagittariis CL*; 19.4 *Labienus cum equitibus Gallis Germanisque MDC, Numidarum sine frenis VIII milibus, praeterea Petreiano auxilio adhibito equitibus MDC, peditum ac levis armaturae quater tanto, sagittariis ac funditoribus hippotoxotisque compluribus, etc.*).

21 *B. Afr.* 13.1 *Hostes interim, quorum dux erat Labienus et duo Pacidei, aciem derigunt mirabili longitudine non peditum, sed equitum confertam, et inter eos levis armaturae Numidas et sagittarios pedites interposuerant et ita condensaverant ut procul Caesariani pedestres copias arbitrentur; dextrum ac sinistrum cornu magnis equitum copiis firmaverant. For the exact reconstruction of battle operations see K.A. Raaflaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar. The Complete Works. Gallic Wars, Civil War, Alexandrian War, African War, and Spanish War*, New York: Pantheon 2017, 552-556 and Loreto, *Pseudo Cesare. La lunga guerra civile*,*

suitable formation for the small number of troops at his disposition, with archers in front and cavalry on the wings, to avoid being outflanked by enemy cavalry. Indeed, he thought that Labienus' army, as dense and crammed as it was, was only infantry and therefore he faced a battle of infantrymen.²²

After an initial phase in which both sides were on the alert, waiting to see what the other would do, Labienus' cavalry was deployed and spread out, partly by occupying the surrounding hills to prevent the Caesarians from taking refuge there, and partly by directly provoking Caesar's cavalry to thin out and then surround them.²³

Caesar's cavalrymen resisted with difficulty, not only because they were outnumbered (there were only 400 cavalrymen), but also because they were exhausted by the fatigue of the crossing.²⁴ As the centre of both sides began to engage in battle, suddenly lightly armed Numidian infantrymen and horsemen advanced from Labienus' compact deployment and attacked the front of Caesar's army with javelins.²⁵ At this point, the cavalry retreated, as they were attacked by Caesar's soldiers, the infantry resisted until the horsemen returned to the charge to provide reinforcements.²⁶

Chaos broke out in Caesar's army, as infantrymen were hit in the open flank by the Numidian arrows as they tried to chase the horsemen away from the insignia, failing to hit them with their javelins.²⁷ Caesar, realising the new kind of combat and observing the disorder that reigned in the ranks of his men, or-

409-414.

22 *B. Afr.* 13.2 *Interim Caesar aciem derigit simplicem ut poterat propter paucitatem; sagittarios ante aciem constituit, equites dextro sinistroque cornu opponit et ita praecipit ut providerent ne multitudine equitatus hostium circumvenirentur: existimabat enim se acie instructa cum pedestribus copiis dimicaturum.*

23 *B. Afr.* 14.1 *subito adversariorum equitatus sese extendere et in latitudinem promovere collesque complecti et Caesaris equitatum extenuare simulque ad circumeundum comparare se coeperunt.*

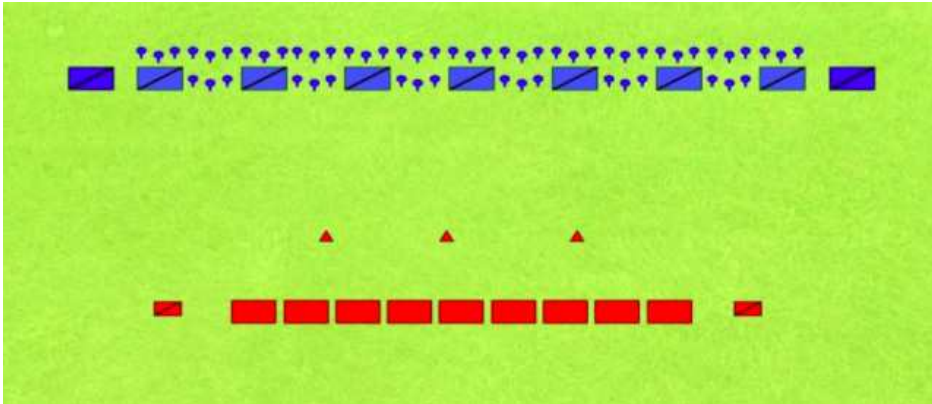
24 *B. Afr.* 14.2 *Caesariani equites eorum multitudinem aegre sustinebant. B. Afr.* 18.4 *Caesarisque equites iumenta ex nausea recenti siti languore paucitate vulneribus defatigata ad insequendum hostem perseverandumque cursum tardiora haberent, etc.*

25 *B. Afr.* 14.2 *Acies interim mediae cum concurrere conarentur, subito ex condensis turmis pedites Numidae levis armaturae cum equitibus procurrunt et inter legionarios pedites iacula coniciunt.*

26 *B. Afr.* 14.2 *Hic cum Caesariani in eos impetum fecissent, illorum equites refugiebant. Pedites interim resistebant, dum equites rursus cursu renovato pedibus suis succurrerent.*

27 *B. Afr.* 15.1 *pedites enim, dum equites longius ab signis persequuntur, latere nudato a proximis Numidis iaculis vulnerabantur, equites autem hostium pilum militis cursu facile vitabant.*

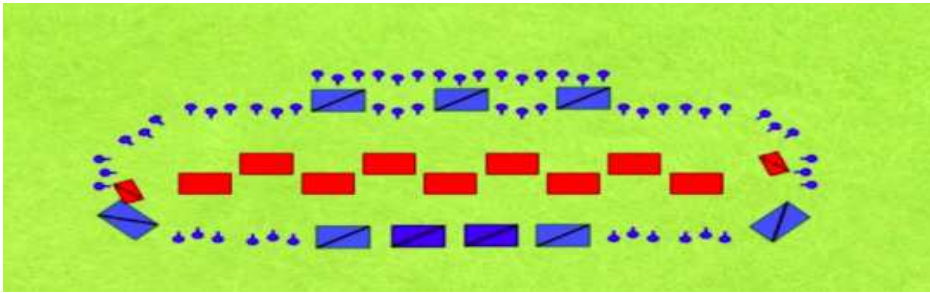
dered that no soldier should stray more than four feet (one metre) from the insignia.²⁸ In the wings, the attacks of Labienus' cavalry became more and more pressing on Caesar's horsemen, who were outnumbered, exhausted and with wounded horses.²⁹ They were forced to retreat, and Caesar's legionaries were surrounded by the enemy cavalry, pressing and forcing them to move into narrow spaces.³⁰ All the Roman soldiers, and especially the recruits, were terrified and searched for Caesar with their eyes while they could do nothing but dodge enemy arrows.³¹ At this moment, Caesar clearly understood the tactical plan of his enemies and devised an ingenious expedient, which has been variously reconstructed by scholars, but which is quite clear if one reads the account of the *Bellum Africum* carefully.³²



Battle of Ruspina, second stage

- 28 *B. Afr.* 15.1 *Caesar novo genere pugnae oblato cum animus adverteret ordines suorum in procurrendo turbari [...] edicit per ordines nequis miles ab signis IIII pedes longius procederet.*
- 29 *B. Afr.* 15.2 *Equitatus interim Labieni suorum multitudine confisus Caesaris paucitatem circumire conatur: qui equites Iuliani pauci multitudine hostium defessi equis convulneratis paulatim cedere, hostis magis magisque instare.*
- 30 *B. Afr.* 15.3 *Ita puncto temporis omnibus legionariis ab hostium equitatu circumventis Caesarisque copiis in orbem compulsis intra cancellos omnes coniecti pugnare cogebantur.*
- 31 *B. Afr.* 16.4 *Omnium tamen animi in terrorem coniecti, et maxime tironum: circumspicere enim Caesarem neque amplius facere nisi hostium iacula vitare.*
- 32 A. Domaszewski, *Die Fahnen im römischen Heere*, Wien: Gerold 1885, 1-4; E. Stoffel, *Histoire de Jules César. Guerre civile. II, De la bataille de Pharsale à la mort de César*, Paris: Imprimerie Nationale 1887, 112-117, 284-289; Veith, *Antike Schlachtfelder*, 784-790, 861-864; T. Steinwender, "Ruspina", *Klio* 17 (1921), 204-220, with a summary of previous interpretations; S. Gsell, *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord. VIII, Jules César et l'Afrique. Fine des royaumes indigènes*, Paris: Hachette 1928, 68-73; Loreto, *Pseudo-Cesare. La lunga guerra civile*, 409-414.

Caesar's army was completely surrounded: on the front by lightly armed Numidian infantrymen with horsemen, on the sides and behind by Labienus' horsemen; moreover, in the confusion that had arisen, the units had lost their *eutaxia* and were all crammed together. At this point, Caesar stretched the formation as far as possible by arranging the cohorts in an alternating and inverted formation, *i.e.* in such a way that alternately the soldiers of half of the cohorts would make a 180-degree turn, thus finding themselves with their backs to the others so that one would be facing the insignia, and the other behind. The shoulders of each cohort were thus protected diagonally by the lateral cohorts placed in parallel.³³



Battle of Ruspina, final stage

In this way, Caesar was able to break the main axis of the enemy ellipse with his wings, attacking from within with infantry both sections of the ellipse which he had separated from each other by his horsemen. Many aspects of this manoeuvre remain unclear, especially the timing; indeed, it is not at all clear whether the lengthening of the battle line and the breaking of the ellipse preceded the two-front formation, as some scholars believe.³⁴ One thing is clear: Caesar's men managed to execute a complicated double manoeuvre at a particularly confused moment of the battle. It was so easy for Caesar to put them to flight launching arrows and avoid advancing further for fear of surprise attacks. Therefore, Caesar repulsed Labienus' army and was able to retreat to his camp.³⁵

33 *B. Afr.* 17.1 *Caesar interim consilio hostium cognito iubet aciem in longitudinem quam maximam porrigi et alternis conversis cohortibus ut una post, altera ante signa tenderet, etc.*

34 Gsell, *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord*, 71.

35 *B. Afr.* 17.1-2 [...] *ita coronam hostium dextro sinistroque cornu mediam dividit et unam partem ab altera exclusam equitibus intrinsecus adortus cum peditatu telis coniectis in fugam vertit neque longius progressus veritus insidias se ad suos recipit. Idem altera pars equitum peditumque Caesaris fecit. His rebus gestis ac procul hostibus repulsis convulneratisque ad sua praesidia sese, sicut erat instructus, recipere coepit.*

Unfortunately, Napoleon was unable to grasp the ingenious tactical skill that Caesar demonstrated at Ruspina, and the surprise effect it had on his enemies. He only recorded the outcome, *i.e.* Caesar's retreat, disregarding the fact that if Caesar had not retreated, the battle would have resulted in a complete rout of the Roman army.

Numbers in the *Commentarii* are almost an obsession for Napoleon: he comments and discusses them, even problematically, when necessary, time after time. He never underestimates the importance of numerical disparity in the battles of the ancient world and consequently appreciates the value of those who overcome many by fighting with few. At the same time, however, he sometimes points out with disappointment the way in which his source manipulates data for the purposes of propaganda. His judgement is constantly based on a comparison with the experience of modern war, for which he emphasises how the use of firearms has made the issue of numerical disparity completely irrelevant.³⁶

A particularly noteworthy example of Napoleon's approach to this data is his commentary on Caesar's first campaign in Gaul in 58 BC against the Helvetians. According to records written in Greek and found in the Helvetian camp after the battle of Bibracte, which counted 368,000 units, the enemy in arms was 92,000.³⁷ Caesar had only six legions, four of veterans (VII, VIII, IX, and X) and two (XI and XII) recruited in Cisalpine Gaul.³⁸

Napoleon considers this data to be false: if the Helvetians who returned home numbered 130,000, they did not lose 230,000 men, because many took refuge in the cities of Gaul and settled there, while many others returned later.³⁹ Napoleon's calculation is based on the numbers provided by Caesar himself: 368,000

36 See, *e.g.*, Napoleon, *Précis* 15.4 «À la bataille de Pharsale, César a perdu 200 hommes; à celle de Thapsus, 50; à celle de Munda, 1000; tandis que ses ennemis y avaient perdu leurs armées. Cette grande disproportion de pertes dans des journées si disputées entre le vainqueur et le vaincu, n'a pas lieu dans les armées modernes, parce que celles-ci se battent avec des armes de jet, et que le canon, le fusil, tuent également des deux côtés, au lieu que les anciens se battaient avec l'arme de main jusqu'à la victoire».

37 Caes. *Gall.* 1.29 *In castris Helvetiorum tabulae repertae sunt litteris Graecis confectae et ad Caesarem relatae, quibus in tabulis nominatim ratio confecta erat, qui numerus domo exisset eorum, qui arma ferre possent, et item separatim pueri, senes mulieresque. [...] ex his, qui arma ferre possent, ad milia XCII. Summa omnium fuerunt ad milia CCCLXVIII.*

38 Caes. *Gall.* 1.7.2; 1.10.3; 1.24.2.

39 Napoleon, *Précis* 1.5: «De ce que les Helvétiens étaient 130,000 à leur retour en Suisse, il ne faudrait pas en conclure qu'ils aient perdu 230,000 hommes, parce que beaucoup se réfugièrent dans les villes gauloises et s'y établirent, et qu'un grand nombre d'autres rentrèrent depuis dans leur patrie».

was the number given in the Greek-written records found by Caesar in the camp of the Helvetians in the aftermath of the battle of Bibracte. Caesar also indicates the detail of this number: 263,000 Helvetians, 36,000 Tulingi, 14,000 Latovici, 23,000 Raurici, 32,000 Boi⁴⁰. 130,000 was the number of those who were saved after the battle of Bibracte, 110,000 those who managed to return home.⁴¹

Napoleon's reasoning is not quite right, since Caesar referred to the migration of the Helvetians as a whole and not to the number of participants in the battle, who were only 92,000.⁴² However, Napoleon is also perplexed as regards this number. Indeed, he believes that the number 90,000 reported by Caesar (actually 92,000) was equal to a quarter of the population: a proportion he considers too high. According to Napoleon, the Helvetians could at most count on 60,000 men for the battle of Bibracte, because 30,000 from the canton of Zurich had been killed or taken prisoner at the crossing of the Saône.⁴³

Napoleon reasons with precise figures, which, however, Caesar does not provide at all. Indeed, he reports having reached the Saône when the Helvetians had already ferried three quarters of their troops. Therefore, he made a surprise attack on those who had not yet passed through (about 13,000 soldiers, a quarter of the total), many of whom were killed, with others fleeing and hiding in the woods.⁴⁴ Regarding the size of Caesar's army, Napoleon states that it consisted of 6 legions and many auxiliary troops and correctly reports data which is not immediately obvious but can be deduced from the evidence of the recruitment of the legions and the description of their tactical disposition during the battle.⁴⁵

40 *Caes. Gall.* 1.29-2-3 *Quarum omnium rerum summa erat capitum Helvetiorum milia CCLXIII, Tulingorum milia XXXVI, Latobicorum XIII, Rauracorum XXIII, Boiorum XXXII; ex his, qui arma ferre possent, ad milia XCII. Summa omnium fuerunt ad milia CCCLXVIII.*

41 *Caes. Gall.* 1.26.5 *Ex eo proelio circiter hominum milia CXXX superfuerunt eaque tota nocte continenter ierunt.* 1.29.3 *Eorum qui domum redierunt censu habito, ut Caesar imperaverat, repertus est numerus milium C et X.*

42 *Caes. Gall.* 1.29.2. See *supra*.

43 Napoleon, *Précis* 1.5 «Le nombre de leurs combattans était de 90,000 : ils étaient donc, par rapport à la population, comme un à quatre, ce qui paraît très-fort. Une trentaine de mille du canton de Zurich avaient été tués ou pris au passage de la Saône. Ils avaient donc 60,000 combattans au plus à la bataille».

44 *Caes. Gall.* 1.12.2-3 *Ad eam partem pervenit quae nondum flumen transierat. Eos impeditos et inopinantes adgressus magnam partem eorum concidit; reliqui sese fugae mandarunt atque in proximas silvas abdiderunt.*

45 *Caes. Gall.* 1.24.2-3. *Ipse interim in colle medio triplicem aciem instruxit legionum quatuor veteranarum; in summo iugo duas legiones quas in Gallia citeriore proxime conscripserat et omnia auxilia conlocavit.*

Although Napoleon's compulsive attention to numbers makes him an overly strict censor of the soundness of Caesar's account, his observations frequently hit the mark. Indeed, in the case of the campaign against the Helvetians, the sources present completely conflicting figures. Strabo speaks of 400,000 casualties and 80,000 survivors; Plutarch of 190,000 soldiers out of 300,000 men; Appian of 200,000 fighters, of whom 80,000 fell; Polyenus of 300,000 men, of whom as many as 200,000 fought; Orosius of a total of 157,000 men, of whom 47,000 fell and 110,000 returned to their own lands.⁴⁶ The numbers given by the moderns are still different, some of which greatly overstate Caesar's figures, others accommodate them, albeit with a few adjustments.⁴⁷

Being all caught up in his obsession with numbers and data, Napoleon failed to grasp other, albeit important, elements of Caesar's choices; for example, he did not fully understand Caesar's strategy and interpreted as sluggishness what was in fact a well-determined strategic choice. The Helvetians asked Caesar to pass through Cisalpine Gaul. Caesar delayed in giving them an answer and then delivered a negative response in order to have plenty of time to recruit the legions and build a ditch and rampart.⁴⁸

Napoleon did not fully understand Caesar's moves in that campaign nor the motives of the Helvetians, as Emmanuel de Las Cases writes in the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*:

L'Empereur disait encore qu'il trouvait dans Rollin, dans César même, des circonstances de la guerre des Gaules qu'il ne pouvait entendre. Il ne comprenait rien à l'invasion des Helvétiens, au chemin qu'ils prenaient, au but qu'on leur donnait, au temps qu'ils étaient à passer la Saône, à la diligence de César, qui avait le temps d'aller en Italie chercher des légions aussi loin qu'Aquilée, et qui retrouvait les envahisseurs encore à leur passage de la Saône.⁴⁹

46 Strab. 4.3.3, C 193; Plut. *Caes.* 18.1; App. *Celt.* fr. 1.3; Polyen. 8.23.3; Oros. 6.7.5.

47 T. Rice Holmes, *Caesar's Conquest of Gaul*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1911², 237-242; C. Pelling, *Plutarch. Caesar*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011, 219-224. For an examination of the data see D. Henige, "He came, he saw, we counted: the historiography and demography of Caesar's gallic numbers", *Annales de démographie historique* 1 (1998), 217-218; N. Barraudon, "Le sort des migrants conduits par les Helvètes au début de la guerre des Gaules (année 58 avant J.-C.)", *HiMA* 7 (2018), 33-46; see also Canfora, *Giulio Cesare*, 114-116.

48 See M. Rambaud, *L'art de la déformation*, 112-115. For the chronological order of these operations: J. Thorne, "The Chronology of the Campaign against the Helvetii: A Clue to Caesar's Intentions?", *Historia* 46.2 (2007), 27-36.

49 E. de Las Cases, *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, I, Paris: Garnier Frères 1960, 460. See also Eramo, *Leggere Cesare a Sant'Elena*, 171-172.

To understand Caesar's text, Napoleon uses Charles Rollin's *Histoire Romaine* (obviously in Crevier's reworking), which, however, does not always seem to merit his trust:

J'en suis fort content. Je viens de faire les campagnes de César. Cela est parfaitement rendu dans Crevier, avec beaucoup de sagesse, mieux que dans les *Commentaires*. On voit qu'il a feuilleté tout ce que l'on savait là-dessus. Rollin et Crevier sont deux bons ouvrages, élémentaires. Que de recherches et de livres il faut lire avant d'arriver à toutes les notions comprises dans ces ouvrages. Rollin et Crevier sont des hommes de lettres sages, instruits, qui ont rendu un véritable service à la jeunesse. Le style de Crevier me paraît trop difficile : il y a trop de tropes. Mais la langue française est si difficile ! Il faut toujours jouer avec elle, employer des figures (de style). Il est vrai que j'ai un style si opposé à celui-là que je suis porté à juger sévèrement – et à fort peut-être.

L'Empereur ajoutait qu'il était aisé de voir, du reste, qu'il y avait lacune chez les auteurs anciens dans cette époque de l'histoire ; que tout ce que nous en présentaient les modernes n'était évidemment formé que de grappillage. Puis il revenait sur les reproches déjà faits au bon Rollin et à son élève Crevier: ils étaient tous deux sans talent, sans intention, sans couleur⁵⁰.

In addition to Rollin-Crevier's *Histoire romaine*, Napoleon recourse to other sources, first and foremost Plutarch's *Life of Caesar*, from which, for example, he deduces that Caesar reached Geneva in eight days on hearing the news of the Helvetians' displacement, a fact completely absent in the *Commentarii*.⁵¹

This is not the only case in which the *Commentarii* test the patience of the restless emperor. An in-depth comparison of Napoleon's summary with Caesar's text clearly shows that the Emperor read the *Commentarii* voraciously,

50 M.H.G. Bertrand, *Cahiers de Sainte Hélène. Journal 1818-1819*, Paris: Albin Michel 1959, 343-344; Las Cases, *Mémorial*, 459. See also B. Hemmerdinger, "Nota di lettura", in *Napoléon. Précis des guerres de César*, Napoli: Jovene 1964, xi-xii. On the composition, characters and fortune of the *Histoire romaine depuis la fondation de Rome jusqu'à la bataille d'Actium*, sixteen volumes published between 1738 and 1748, see M. Raskolnikoff, *Histoire romaine et critique historique dans l'Europe des Lumières. La naissance de l'hypercritique dans l'historiographie de la Rome antique*, Rome: École Française de Rome 1992, 499-509.

51 *Précis* 1.2: «César, qui venait d'être investi du gouvernement des Gaules, accourut en toute diligence, arriva le huitième jour à Genève»; 1.4: «César mit huit jours pour se rendre de Rome à Genève». See Plut. *Caes.* 17.5 συντόνος δ' ἤλαυνεν οὕτως, ὥστε τὴν πρώτην ἔξοδον ἀπὸ Ῥώμης ποιησάμενος ὀγδοαῖος ἐπὶ τὸν Ῥοδανὸν ἐλθεῖν. On the route of Caesar: Pelling, *Plutarch. Caesar*, 215-216; K.A. Raafaub-J.T. Ramsey, *The Chronology of Caesar's Campaigns*, in Raafaub, *The Landmark Julius Caesar*, 133-134; J. Thorne, "Narrating the Gallic and Civil Wars with and beyond Caesar", in Grillo-Krebs, *The Cambridge Companion to the Writings of Julius Caesar*, 309-312.

obsessively focusing on technical data, especially logistical information and figures. He made appropriate and sometimes brilliant observations in this regard, but neglected the general strategic aspects, showing that he did not fully understand Caesar's plans, intentions and ambitions.

Let us take the case of the two expeditions to Britain as an example.



Caesar's first expedition to Britain (55 BC)

Napoleon summarises the facts of the first expedition (55 BC) in an essentially correct manner. He says that from the Rhine Caesar reached the port of Boulogne where the fleet of Vannes had arrived.⁵² Here he embarked two legions, the VII and X, on 80 transport ships and a few galleys, then gathered the cavalry in the port of Étape and embarked them on 18 large cargo ships. He set off at 10 in the morning, and when he reached the coast of Britain he found it to be too steep, so at around at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, when the tide was favourable, he lifted anchor and landed on a flat beach three leagues away. The natives tried to prevent him from disembarking, but in vain. The king of the Atrebates Commius (Napoleon calls him «roi d'Arras»), who Caesar had previously sent to

⁵² Napoleon, *Précis* 4.3.

test the Britains' intentions, was firstly arrested and imprisoned, and then freed in order to be an ambassador to Caesar for the frightened Britains, obtaining peace in return for hostages. The 18 ships which transported the cavalry arrived 4 day later, but they were unable to land since they were surprised by a violent storm and lost in the Ocean. During the new moon, Caesar's camp was flooded by large tides and his ships were damaged. The sight of this misfortune and at the same time the calculation of the small number of Caesar's forces induced the natives to regain courage, unite among themselves and attack Legion VII by surprise. Only the intervention of the other legion, the X, succeeded in freeing it. A few days later the Britain launched another violent attack against Caesar's camp but were repulsed. Caesar then decided to return to Gaul a few days before the equinox. The failure of this expedition provoked the derision of Roman political adversaries; nevertheless, the Senate decreed 20 days of public prayers.

Napoleon, as we have seen, records the numbers precisely, so he reports exactly the sum of the cargo ships on which Caesar had the legions embarked (eighty and eighteen).⁵³ He then keeps in mind the troop movements, so he immediately identifies the two legions embarked in the VII and X;⁵⁴ and above all, he immediately grasps the logistical layout, which attracts his attention the most. Not only he immediately identifies the landing point in the cliffs of Dover on the base of Caesar's description, but he also recognises the place where Caesar embarked his cavalry and which Caesar does not mention. It was a port 8 miles away from Vannes, where the cavalrymen were embarked because they could not reach the port of Vannes due to unfavourable winds.⁵⁵ He is also very precise in indicating the days the 18 ships took to reach the shores of Britain.⁵⁶

53 *Caes. Gall.* 4.22.3-4 *Navibus circiter LXXX onerariis coactis contractisque, quot satis esse ad duas transportandas legiones existimabat [...]. Huc accedebant XVIII onerariae naves, quae ex eo loco a milibus passuum VIII vento tenebantur quo minus in eundem portum venire possent: has equitibus tribuit.*

54 *Caes. Gall.* 4.25.3 *Atque nostris militibus cunctantibus, maxime propter altitudinem maris, qui X legionis aquilam gerebat, etc.;* 4.32.1 *Dum ea geruntur, legione ex consuetudine una frumentatum missa, quae appellabatur VII.*

55 See *Caes. Gall.* 4.22.4, on which *supra*. The identification of this port (probably *Portus Itius*, which Caesar mentions in his account of the expedition the following year: *Gall.* 5.2.3; 5.5.1) is one of the most controversial issues; see A. Garzetti in A. Pennacini (ed.), *Gaio Giulio Cesare. Opera Omnia*, trad. di A. La Penna e A. Pennacini, comm. di M. Faraguna, A. Garzetti e D. Vottero, Torino: Einaudi-Gallimard 1993, 1044 n. 5; C. Bettini, *Oltre il fiume Oceano. Uomini e navi romane alla conquista della Britannia*, Roma: Laurus 2016, 181-202.

56 *Caes. Gall.* 4.28.1 *His rebus pace confirmata, post diem quartum quam est in Britanniam ventum naves XVIII, de quibus supra demonstratum est, quae equites sustulerant, ex superiore portu leni vento solverunt.*

However, Napoleon's reconstruction is not without errors. For example, he makes a mistake in stating the boarding time, setting it at 10 a.m. Indeed, 10 a.m. was the arrival time. On the other hand, it would have been impossible to leave at 10 a.m. from Boulogne and arrive before 3 p.m., at which time Caesar moved to the most hospitable beach.⁵⁷

Napoleon perfectly grasps the problem of the adversity of the landing site. It was the high and jagged cliffs of Dover. However, he does not grasp an important element related to this orography that Caesar emphasises. All around, on the cliffs overlooking the sea, Caesar saw the enemies in arms and immediately realised that he would be an easy target for the projectiles that the adversaries would launch from the height on the beach.⁵⁸

For the two campaigns in Britain, Napoleon strictly adhered to military data and, among them, tactical and logistical data. He does not formulate any reflection for the motivations of the expedition, which fuelled different hypotheses already in the sources. Among these, Svetonius cited Caesar's desire to find pearls.⁵⁹ It was not only a matter of keeping at bay populations that had always provided aid to the Gauls in the wars against the Romans,⁶⁰ but also of nurturing the ambition to gain new territories, where he could extend their area of influence and power.⁶¹ Nevertheless, reading Rollin provided him with a whole series

57 The misunderstanding on the time of departure belongs to Napoleon himself, since Rollin-Crevier's *Histoire Romaine* clearly indicates midnight as the time (Rollin, *Œuvres complètes*, 252). On the chronology of Caesar's first expedition to Britain see Raafaub-Ramsey, *The Chronology of Caesar's Campaigns*, 152-154.

58 *Caes. Gall.* 4.23.2-3 *Cum primis navibus Britanniam attigit atque ibi in omnibus collibus expositas hostium copias armatas conspexit. Cuius loci haec erat natura atque ita montibus angustis mare continebatur, uti ex locis superioribus in litus telum adigi posset.*

59 *Svet. Caes.* 47 for the pearls, on which see Canfora, *Giulio Cesare*, 34-35, 120-123. Nevertheless Rollin, who is Napoleon's main source, mentioned these reasons (Rollin, *Œuvres complètes*, 249-250).

60 See *Caes. Gall.* 3.9.10 [*Veneti reliquaeque item civitates*] *auxilia ex Britannia, quae contra eas regiones posita est, arcessunt.* 4.20.1 [*Caesar*] *tamen in Britanniam proficisci contendit, quod omnibus fere Gallicis bellis hostibus nostris inde subministrata auxilia intellegebat.*

61 *Caes. Gall.* 4.20 [...] *tamen magno sibi usui fore arbitrabatur, si modo insulam adiisset, genus hominum perspexisset, loca, portus, aditus cognovisset.* Indeed, the merchants, those who later provided useful information to Caesar, only knew the ports, not the hinterland: 4.20.3 [...] *neque enim temere praeter mercatores illo adit quisquam, neque his ipsis quicquam praeter oram maritimam atque eas regiones quae sunt contra Galliam notum est.* See Yann Le Bohec, *César chef de guerre, César stratège et tacticien*, Paris : Tallandier, 2015, 220-222 and Bettini, *Oltre il fiume Oceano*, 173-175.

of useful insights in this regard.⁶²

Napoleon seems to have no interest at all regarding the problem of the knowledge of the places, which was instead decisive both for Caesar's decision to venture into Britain and for the outcome of both expeditions. When Caesar decided to embark on his first voyage, the summer had long since begun (according to modern calculations, it was the first ten days based on the Julian calendar) and he was aware that he would not have time to lead a military expedition. However, he felt that he could usefully explore the island, get to know its inhabitants, places, ports, and accesses.

The formal reason for his expedition was the aid that the Britains provided to the Gauls against the Romans,⁶³ but it is clear that the ambition to explore new territories and then annex them to Rome's power was also important to Caesar. Indeed, although Britain was already known to the peoples of the continent, Caesar presented it as an almost completely unexplored land, which only merchants knew, but only limited to the coast and the areas in front of Gaul. Actually, we cannot exclude that Caesar had already received information from Publius Licinius Crassus, who would have gone on to explore Britain in 57 when he was sent by Caesar to Armorica to confirm to him that the inhabitants of those areas, the Veneti, the Unelli, the Osismi, the Coriosolitae, the Eusubii, the Aulerici and the Redones, were subject to the power of Rome. Indeed, a Publius Crassus explorer of the Cassiterides islands is quoted by Strabo.⁶⁴ However, on this occasion Caesar evidently wanted to know more, so he summoned the merchants, who were the only source of information available. However, these had a partial knowledge of the territory, which was limited to the coast and the region in front of Gaul. On the other hand, they were not able to give Caesar the information he wanted about the size of the island, the people who lived there, their warfare practices, and the ports that could accommodate many ships.⁶⁵ To obtain this information, Caesar sent Gaius Volusenus, whom he ordered to return to him as soon as possible after exploring everything. Volusenus returned after only four days of exploration to expound on the results of his exploration,

62 See Rollin, *Œuvres complètes*, 250: «Comme il [i.e. Caesar] n'avait pas moins de prévoyance que de vivacité et d'ardeur, il tâcha de s'instruire de tout ce qu'il lui était important de connaître touchant le pays où il se préparait à entrer».

63 See *Caes. Gall.* 3.9.10, on which *supra*.

64 *Caes. Gall.* 2.34.1. See *Strab.* 3.5.1.

65 Caesar himself answers these questions at the end of the two expeditions: the peoples inhabiting the inner part of Britain and their way of life (5.12.1-3; 5.14), the raw materials (5.12.4-5), the climate of the island (5.12.6), and the shape of the island and its size (5.13).

which, however, was not completed as Caesar had wished, as he had explored those regions «as far as it was possible for a man who did not dare leave the ship and rely on barbarians».⁶⁶

Evidently, the much celebrated information system that Caesar managed to organise did not quite work perfectly on that occasion, if one considers the difficulties Caesar encountered in terms of logistics, weather and time. On the contrary, the Britains were much better informed about Caesar's plan and his movements. He himself had informed them through the merchants, the «open source» he had relied on to induce them to surrender beforehand. This circulation of information had a good effect, so much so that many peoples sent him ambassadors to promise hostages and obedience to the Roman people. Caesar listened to them, made promises, and in dismissing them he sent Commius with them, whom «he considered to be a man loyal to him and very influential in those regions» and whose valour and intelligence he appreciated.

Napoleon blames the cause of the failure of the first expedition to Britain on the insufficient number of legions: two were too few, at least four were needed, but also on the lack of cavalry, which in his opinion was indispensable in a country like Britain. In short, «Caesar had not made sufficient preparations for such an important expedition».⁶⁷ By “préparatifs”, Napoleon means the organisation of troops, in sufficient numbers and equipped with cavalry. Instead, he does not realise that the most important preparations were the gathering of precise information about the territory and its inhabitants. The lack of sufficient information to know the characteristics of the coastline and the landings but also the intentions of the inhabitants was therefore decisive for the outcome of the expedition, which ultimately ended in a deadlock.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, on the basis of the report sent by Caesar, the Senate decreed a thanksgiving to the gods of no less than twenty days.⁶⁹

66 *Caes. Gall.* 4.21.9 *quantum ei facultatis dari potuit, qui navi egredi ac se barbaris committere non auderet.*

67 Napoleon, *Précis* 4.4.11

68 The error of Svet. *Caes.* 58.1, according to which Caesar did not bring the army into Britain before he had personally explored the harbours and access to the island, probably stems from Caesar's attention to this important strategic aspect; see N.J.E. Austin-N.B. Rankov, *Exploratio. Military and Political Intelligence in the Roman World from the Second Punic War to the Battle of Adrianople*, London-New York: Routledge 1995, 12-16.

69 *Caes. Gall.* 4.38.5. The days of *supplicationes* to the gods were normally five; an exceptional honour was the fifteen days granted to Caesar after the campaign against the Belgians (*Caes. Gall.* 2.35.4), an event that Napoleon himself emphasises (*Précis* 2.3).



Caesar's second expedition to Britain (54 BC)

The account of the second expedition to Britain in 54 is even more concise. Napoleon aseptically reports the salient data, which as always concerns the number of forces, locations, adversaries, and the outcome of military operations. Thus, he reports that Caesar left Labienus 3 legions and 2,000 horses to guard the coast of Gaul and embarked 5 legions and 2,000 horses; he set sail at sunset, taking advantage of a south-westerly wind that fell at midnight, and landed on the same shore as the previous year. The natives did not prevent the docking because they were afraid of such an imposing fleet. Caesar headed inland, where his opponents were camped, four leagues from the coast, and defeated them. Meanwhile, a storm sank 40 ships and damaged others. In the ten days it took to repair the ships, Caesar had the camp entrenched and then all the ships dry-docked. The peoples of Britain appointed Cassivellaunus, who ruled on the left bank of the Thames, as their commander. He attacked the Roman camp but was defeated and pursued until Caesar seized the capital of his kingdom. He then recognised Mandubracius, who had previously asked him for help and protection against Cassivellaunus, king of the counties of Essex and Middlesex. As a last act in Britain, Caesar repelled the people of the county of Kent who attacked his camp. As the autumnal equinox approached, Caesar decided to return to Gaul.

This is the exposition of the facts of the second expedition to Britain ac-

ording to Napoleon, who concludes with the geographical and ethnographic information that Caesar reports in the *Commentarii*: in the hinterland of Britain there are tin mines, on the coast copper mines and has no fir or beech trees; the climate is milder than that of Gaul; the houses of the Britains are similar to those of the Gauls; they have a large number of livestock, they use copper or iron coins, they do not sow but live off sheep farming; they paint their bodies green, let their hair grow and shave their bodies, they practise polygamy. Instead, he omits information regarding the shape, size and borders of the island, as well as descriptions of individual peoples.⁷⁰

Even for the second expedition to Britain in 54, Napoleon's summary correctly sets out the main facts, but the Emperor probably misses some important details for the reconstruction of the facts, and precisely those that are of most interest to him. For example, the place of landing: Caesar landed east of the place where he had moved during the first expedition, after approaching the cliffs of Dover, as in the second expedition «he realised he had left Britain to his left», meaning that he was pushed to the east by the current after *Africus*, the south-westerly wind, ceased at midnight.⁷¹ From here, he then reached by dint of oars the *aperto ac plano litore* that he had recognised as *optimum egressum* the previous summer.⁷²

As with the first expedition, Napoleon also in this case disregards all the information and intelligence activities that Caesar carried out and which decided the fate of his enterprise, ending up asserting the superiority of the Roman army over the indigenous populations anyway. Indeed, Caesar «learned from the prisoners» that there were no enemies when he landed at noon – another fact that Napoleon does not record, contrary to his habit of marking, sometimes obsessively, dates and times – because they gathered on the shore where he was about to land, but immediately moved away and hid on the cliffs because they were frightened by the large number of ships.⁷³ Caesar then headed inland, where the

70 Napoleon, *Précis* 5.1. Regarding the geography of Britain described by Caesar see Le Bohec, *César chef de guerre*, 222-225 and C. B. Krebs, “The World’s Measure: Caesar’s Geographies of Gallia and Britannia in their Contexts and as Evidence of his World Map”, *AJPh* 553 (2018), 103-112.

71 Caes. *Gall.* 5.8.2. On the identification of the landing site see Bettini, *Oltre il fiume Oceano*, xviii-xx, 204-214.

72 Caes. *Gall.* 5.8.3 *Tum rursus aestus commutationem secutus remis contendit ut eam partem insulae caperet, qua optimum esse egressum superiore aestate cognoverat*; see *Gall.* 4.23.6 and 5.9.1: *in litore molli atque aperto*.

73 Caes. *Gall.* 5.8.6 *sed, ut postea Caesar ex captivis cognovit, cum magnae manus eo convenissent, multitudine navium perterritae, quae cum annotinis privatisque quas sui quisque*

adversaries were, when he heard from the prisoners where exactly the enemies were.⁷⁴ When the soldiers of the Seventh Legion managed to drive the enemies out of the woods where they had taken refuge, Caesar ordered them not to pursue, both because he wanted time to fortify the camp, and above all «because he did not know the nature of the terrain».⁷⁵

Napoleon chooses to omit from his summary all of Caesar's operations against the army of the assembled Britains commanded by Cassivellaunus, dismissing them with a hasty «Il [Cassivellaunus] s'approcha du camp des Romains, ce qui donna lieu à divers combats où il fut battu, rejeté au delà de la Tamise, et fut poursuivi».⁷⁶ On the other hand, the *Commentarii* expose the difficulties that the Roman army encountered against an enemy that adopted the tactic of «scattered order», with several bases spread out over the territory and distant from each other, despite the fact that they managed to prevail thanks to the massive use of cavalry supported by the legions. In this way, Caesar was able to take the war directly to the heart of Britain, to the Thames, when he knew his adversary's plan, which was to retreat beyond the riverbank and obstruct his passage; the river could only be forded in one place and with difficulty.⁷⁷ Caesar then learned that it was impossible to cross to the other side because the shore was defended by sharp stakes driven into the ground; other stakes were driven into the bottom of the water. He learned of this detail from prisoners and deserters.⁷⁸

Napoleon's judgement of the second expedition to Britain is as critical and severe as his judgement of the first. According to the Emperor, Caesar did not achieve a better outcome than the first expedition, as he left no garrison on the island and founded no colonies. In short, the Romans «n'en ont pas été plus maîtres après qu'avant».⁷⁹ In this way Napoleon summarises the words with which Caesar concludes his twofold enterprise in Britain and the reasons why he gave up his conquest: he determined to winter on the Continent, and since

commodi fecerat amplius octingentae uno erant visae tempore, a litore discesserant ac se in superiora loca abdiderant.

74 *Caes. Gall. 5.9.1 Caesar exposito exercitu et loco castris idoneo capto, ubi ex captivis cognovit quo in loco hostium copiae consedissent.*

75 *Caes. Gall. 5.9.8 Sed eos fugientes longius Caesar prosequi vetuit, et quod loci naturam ignorabat, et quod magna parte diei consumpta munitioni castrorum tempus relinquere volebat.*

76 Napoleon, *Précis* 5.1.

77 *Caes. Gall. 5.18.1 Caesar cognito consilio eorum ad flumen Tamesim in fines Cassivellauni exercitum duxit; quod flumen uno omnino loco pedibus, atque hoc aegre, transiri potest.*

78 *Caes. Gall. 5.18.4 His rebus cognitis a captivis perfugisque Caesar praemisso equitatu confestim legiones subsequi iussit.*

79 Napoleon, *Précis* 5.5.

he had little part of summer left and knew that the enemy could easily stall until the bad season, he made requisition of hostages, and determined what tribute Britain should pay yearly to Rome. He straitly charged Cassivellaunus to do no hurt to Mandubracius or the Trinobantes.⁸⁰ Summer was over and with autumn approaching, Caesar understood that the enemy could take time to organise themselves. Above all in Britain Caesar was met with worrying information because he learned that Gaul was in turmoil. Once again, Caesar's action was based on the operation of an effective information system. But all this did not interest Napoleon.

Reading the *Commentarii*, Napoleon adapted Caesar's text to himself through the detailed reconstruction of places, figures, data, operations, and above all through the comparison with his own times, imagining what a modern army could have done in the same situations as the Roman one, but under different conditions and with different armaments and logistical and tactical support, and above all with a general, such as himself, who had combined the lessons of the past with military experience acquired in the field.⁸¹

Only at the end of his writing Napoleon allows himself to adopt a more passionate and participatory tone, abandoning the field of arms to embrace that of politics, in which by defending Caesar against the accusation of aspiring to absolute power he also absolves himself of the same charge:

César n'a donc pas pu désirer, n'a pas désiré, n'a rien fait, a fait tout le contraire de ce dont on l'accuse. [...] César n'a pas voulu être roi, parce qu'il n'a pas pu le vouloir ; il n'a pas pu le vouloir, puisque, après lui, pendant six cents ans, aucun de ses successeurs ne l'a voulu. C'eût été une étrange politique de remplacer la chaise curule des vainqueurs du monde par le trône pourri, méprisé, des vaincus.⁸²

80 *Caes. Gall.* 5.22.4-5 *Caesar, cum constituisset hiemare in continenti propter repentinus Galliae motus, neque multum aestatis superesset, atque id facile extrahi posse intellexeret, ob sides imperat et quid in annos singulos vectigalis populo Romano Britannia penderet constituit; interdicat atque imperat Cassivellauno, ne Mandubracio neu Trinobantibus noceat.*

81 J. Wintjes, "From «Capitano» to «Great Commander»: The Military Reception of Caesar from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries", in M. Wyke, *Julius Caesar in Western Culture*, Malden (Ma): Blackwell 2006, 276-279.

82 Napoleon, *Précis* 16.3. See Polverini, *Imitatio Caesaris*, 408-411; O. B. Hemmerle, "Crossing the Rubicon into Paris: Caesarian Comparisons from Napoleon to de Gaulle", in Wyke, *Julius Caesar in Western Culture*, 285-292; C. Pelling, "Judging Julius Caesar", in Wyke, *Julius Caesar in Western Culture*, 6-7; C. Pucci, "Caesar the Foe: Roman Conquest and National Resistance in French Popular Culture", in Wyke, *Julius Caesar in Western Culture*, 190-191; Eramo, *Leggere Cesare a Sant'Elena*, 180-182.

Napoleon's judgement of Caesar's campaigns was thus the judgement of one who lived his own life, a parallel life, as the models of his admired Plutarch suggested to him. Napoleon felt he was living the same life as Caesar, but not as his follower, but as his highest interpreter: a general equal to Caesar, but who believed himself superior to him.



Statue of *Napoléon I en César* on the ground after the knocking down of the Vendôme column, during the Paris Commune (Photo by Bruno Braquehais, mai 1871. Bibliothèque nationale de France, CC-PD-Mark). The statue, created by Auguste Dumont in 1863, is the repliche of the Antoine Chaudet's original, cast in 1806 with the bronze of Austrian and Russian guns taken at Austerlitz. The latter was removed in 1814 and in turn was cast in 1818 for the statue of Henry IV at the Pont-Neuf. In 1875 the Column was rebuilt and the Dumont's statue was restored and placed back on the top. See David Bordes, Jean-Paul Nerrière, Laurent Baridon, Claire Maingon et Antoine de Meaux (préf. Jean Tulard, photogr. David Bordes), *La Colonne Vendôme*, Paris, Éditions Norma, 2021.

Hitler and German Strategy 1933-1945

By ALEXANDER QUERENGASSER

Adolf Hitler's qualities as a military commander and strategist have been the subject of intense debate since the end of the Second World War. While the "Führer" hubrically dubbed himself the "greatest leader of all time" after the victory over France - with which quite a few Wehrmacht generals agreed with him - after the war he was an excellent scapegoat for explaining the German defeat. The memoirs of high-ranking Wehrmacht generals are full of accusations that Hitler overturned their professional operational concepts with his lack of military expertise. Such views found fertile ground in the early Federal Republic, which wanted to dismiss the Third Reich as a derailment carried out by a small Nazi elite, and were reinforced by politicians and publishers. For example, Franz Halder's slim treatise „Hitler as a General“, printed in 1949, is decorated with a banderole with the inscription: „The former chief of the general staff reports the truth“.¹ Roman Töppel critically assessed the value of these memoirs and even stated that “memoirs by leading military figures should generally be viewed as unreliable as long as their truth cannot be verified by comparing them with contemporary sources.”²

But the same memoirs, such as Erich von Manstein's "Verlorene Siege" (Lost Victories), often reveal between the lines that the approach to strategy between Hitler and his generals was different. The army officers in particular thought exclusively in military parameters, while Hitler's objections at least indicate that he also took economic and political factors into account in his understanding of strategy. So was he a better strategist than his generals? This would certainly be too simple a conclusion, because strategy does not only mean taking into account the role of economics and politics in planning operations, but rather developing a coherent concept from all these factors. The following article aims to trace the development of Hitler's strategy from his seizure of power

1 Franz Halder, *Hitler als Feldherr*, Munich: Münchener Dom-Verlag, 1949.

2 Quot.: Roman Töppel, *Kursk 1943. Die größte Schlacht des Zweiten Weltkriegs*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2017, p. 12.

to his death. Three phases can be identified here, first the German preparation for war until 1939, the successful expansion phase until the conclusion of the Eastern campaign in 1941 and finally the defensive phase from around 1942. The concept of strategy is not easy to define here, but as already indicated, Hitler included political and economic aspects in his deliberations, which is why his strategic understanding should be understood based on his foreign policy, the development of the German arms industry and finally operational planning. For these reasons, some aspects of Hitlers and/or Germany's strategy building process have to be considered beforehand in more detail.

This is an extremely extensive topic that has been discussed in monographs in the past, either in its entirety, such as in Harry Hinsley's "Hitler's Strategy"³ or in individual aspects, such as Andreas Hillgruber's "Hitler's Strategy. Politics and Warfare 1940-41"⁴, as well as several essays on Hitler as a military commander.⁵ Hillgruber's work was not well received by contemporary critics, as he paints the picture of a precisely composed, multi-stage strategic concept. Klaus H. Schmider recently came to a completely different assessment of Hitler's strategic decisions at the end of 1941.⁶ Important material on all aspects of Hitler's strategy for this article can be found primarily in the 10-volume series "The German Reich and the Second World War" published by the MGFA,⁷ as well as the edited war diaries of the OKW.⁸ Although - as has already been suggested - the memoirs of German officers and high-ranking NSDAP members are extremely tendentious, they nevertheless represent a source that should not be neglected, because in their attempt to place sole blame for the defeat on Hitler, many authors reveal their own limited strategic Understanding.

3 F.H. Hinsley, *Hitler's strategy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951.

4 Andreas Hillgrubers, *Hitlers Strategie. Politik und Kriegführung 1940-41*, Frankfurt a. M.: Bernard & Graefe Verl. f. Wehrwesen, 1965.

5 Oron James Hale, „Hitler als Feldherr“, *Virginia Quarterly Review* 24 (1948), pp. 198-213; Gert Buchheit, *Hitler der Feldherr. Die Zerstörung einer Legende*, Rastatt: Grote, 1958; Percy Ernst Schramm, *Hitler als militärischer Führer. Erkenntnisse und Erfahrungen aus dem Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht*, Frankfurt a.M / Bonn. Athenäum Verlag, 1962, John Strawson, *Hitler as Military Commander*, London: Batsford, 1971.

6 Klaus H. Schmider, *Hitler's Fatal Miscalculation: Why Germany Declared War on the United States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2021.

7 Germany and the Second World War, edit by the MGFA, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995-2017. I used the Germany original: *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg* (short DRZW, which was published by different companies between 1979 and 2008).

8 Percy Ernst Schramm (ed.), *Kriegstagebuch des OKW 1040-1945, 4 Vol.*, Augsburg: Weltbild, 2005.

The role of Technology for German Warmaking

Hitler always had a passion for technology and attached a great deal of importance to it for the conduct of war, as Henry Picker reports from one of his “table conversations” on June 3, 1942, in which the Führer stated: “War always turns out to be the case the best, i.e. most successful, soldier who has and has mastered the most innovative means of technology - and not only of attack, but also of transport and supplies (...) The strategy is therefore only really good that expands the technology and their application to the highest.”⁹

Halder also confirms Hitler’s lively interest in technical details.¹⁰ However, this fascination with technology was expressed in two different phenomena. Until the outbreak of war, Hitler aimed for quantitative rather than qualitative armament, so that although on paper a number of well-equipped elite units were created - namely the tank divisions - some of their equipment was not suitable for war. However, this development was not only due to Hitler alone, but was also an expression of quarrels within the Wehrmacht, as individual branches of the armed forces were eager to offer the leader their preferred units as quickly as possible. Heinz Guderian advocated quickly equipping the first three tank divisions with Panzer I and II, even though the Reich Armaments Office assessed these as too weak. However, the development of types III and IV took time.¹¹ Göring also canceled the project of a strategic “Ural bomber” in 1936 and focused on the rapid construction of medium bombers. “The Führer will never ask me ‘How big are your bombers?’ but always ‘How many bombers do you have?’”¹² Göring explained this decision, emphasizing that in this case, as with tank armament, quantitative aspects were given priority over qualitative ones, although this actually contradicted Hitler’s supposed insight, which he expressed in his conversation with Dr. Picker revealed. This proved successful in the Spanish Civil War, including in the operations against Guernica and Barcelona, the operational context here was special because the Condor Legion’s operational bases were close to the attack targets. The termination of the Ural

9 Quot.: Henry Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier 1941/1942*, Tübingen: Seewald, 1976, p. 351.

10 Halder, *Hitler als Feldherr*, p. 15.

11 Markus Pöhlmann, *Die Panzer und die Mechanisierung des Krieges. Eine deutsche Geschichte 1890 bis 1945 (Zeitalter der Weltkriege 14)*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh 2016, pp. 263-272.

12 Quot after: Cajus Bekker, *Angriffshöhe 4000. Die deutsche Luftwaffe im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Munich: Heyne, 1988, p. 248.

bomber project proved to be a mistake in the long term, but on the other hand, from Hitler's perspective in 1937, a conflict with England or the USSR seemed much less likely than with the immediate neighboring countries France, Poland and Czechoslovakia, whose capitals and industrial centers were all within range of the Do17, He111 or Ju88

This mentality changed during the war. Instead of leading a quantitative arms race with the Western powers, which even Hitler knew he could not win, the Führer now relied on qualitatively superior wonder weapons, with quality in many cases being made dependent solely on size and strength. "Hitler's interest in everything technical also led him to overestimate technical means,"¹³ Manstein aptly stated. This development probably did not come from him alone. Halder writes that Hitler only recognized the importance of miracle weapons - by which he primarily means V-weapons - late.¹⁴ The leader was therefore less a generator of ideas than an implementer of ideas. The ideas themselves came from business, as will be shown later.

But not only the V-weapons, but also the development of ever larger tank models probably did not arise solely from Hitler's wishes. Adolf Heusinger reports on a conversation Hitler had with various designers in Rastenburg at the beginning of September 1943. He initially expressed himself positively about the "primitive and appropriate" design of Russian guns and complained: "No, we want to keep too much secret in every weapon, we demand too many varied performance from it that it cannot fulfill (...) We have to be simpler."¹⁵ When the model of a 100-ton tank was presented to him shortly afterwards, he remarked: "I think we have to think about where the limits are in terms of size and weight. We cannot try to counteract the increased effectiveness of projectiles with ever stronger armor. It's better to check whether you can find the necessary protection through greater mobility and maneuverability."¹⁶ These objections are remarkable, as they suggest that Hitler was more in favor of developing simpler tanks, analogous to the Russian T-34 or the American Sherman. In fact, ideas circulated at times to copy the Russian tank¹⁷ or to concentrate on producing inexpensive but effective assault guns such as the StuG III. However, there were influential factions both within the armed forces and in business that

13 Quot.: Erich von Manstein, *Verlorene Siege*, Munich: Bernard and Graefe, 1981, p. 351.

14 Halder, *Hitler als Feldherr*, p. 18.

15 Adolf Heusinger, *Befehl im Widerstreit. Schicksalsstunden der deutschen Armee 1923-1945*, Stuttgart - Tübingen: Rainer Wunderlich Verlag, 1950, p. 272.

16 Heusinger, *Befehl im Widerstreit*, p. 275.

17 Heinz Guderian, *Erinnerungen eines Soldaten*, Heidelberg: Verlag Welschmühl, 1951, p. 251.

prevented these ideas from being implemented and contrary to this statement, Hitler later supported the construction of the super heavy Maus-tank.

On the other hand, Hitler was not always able to implement all of his ideas against the expertise of his engineers. After the French campaign, he ordered the Panzer III to be upgraded with the long 5cm L60 cannon. In consultation with Porsche, who considered this impractical, General of Artillery Friedrich Fromm, head of army armaments, decided to install the shorter 5cm L/42 cannon. At the end of 1941 this proved to be too weak in combat with the modern Soviet T34 and KV1 and 2 tanks. Hitler only found out about this decision at the beginning of 1941 and summoned his designers to Obersalzberg, where Paul Alten, director of the Altmärkische Kettenwerke, declared the installation of the L/60 possible. At this point, however, 2,100 Panzer IIIs with the L/42 had already rolled off the assembly line.¹⁸

Hitler's occasionally expressed, entirely sensible wish to simplify the product range within the range of weapons was also undermined by himself, as he intended to give prestigious projects to industrialists close to him. So he gave his associate Ferdinand Porsche the project to develop the super-heavy tank destroyer "Ferdinand/Elefant" after he had lost the tender for the Panzerkampfwagen VI to the Henschel company, not least because the Army Weapons Office had already financed 100 vehicles. Porsche also had too early hopes of receiving the order for the Tiger II and had 50 of the turrets he designed produced, which were installed in the first 50 tanks, again built by Henschel.¹⁹ The aircraft developer Ernst Heinkel also acquired a reputation as a very idiosyncratic project developer whose company strategy increasingly coincided with the goals of the armaments agency. In 1943, "Ernst Heinkel AG" (EHAG) was founded, in which the famous designer was pushed into the role of chairman of the board.²⁰ This directly leads us to Hitler's dealing with the German economy.

18 Roman Töppel, „Unbelehrbar? Hitler als militärischer Entscheider“. In: Martin Clauss, Christoph Nübel (eds.), *Militärisches Entscheiden. Voraussetzungen, Prozesse und Repräsentationen einer sozialen Praxis von der Antike bis zum 20. Jahrhundert (Krieg und Konflikt 9)*, Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 2020, pp. 341-364, here 357-359.

19 George Forty, *Die deutsche Panzerwaffe im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Augsburg: Weltbild Verlag 1998, pp. 118-119.

20 Paul Erker, „Ernst Heinkel. Die Luftfahrtindustrie im Spannungsfeld von technologischem Wandel und politischem Umbruch“. In Paul Erker / Toni Pierenkemper (eds.), *Deutsche Unternehmer zwischen Kriegswirtschaft und Wiederaufbau. Studien zur Erfahrungsbildung von Industrieeleiten (Quellen und Darstellungen zur Zeitgeschichte 39)*, Munich: Oldenbourg, 1999, pp. 217-290.

The German economy

Developing cutting edge technology is one thing, producing it in sufficient quantities and keeping it operational under the increased demands of a campaign is something completely different, as the Russian armed forces are currently discovering in the Ukraine war.²¹ A problem in the German economy that arose before the war was the low ratio between vehicles produced and spare parts. This would not be remedied until the end of the war, but it resulted in not only tanks and aircraft, but also the trucks lacking batteries, fuel filters, tires and other spare parts necessary for the already limited logistical apparatus. Statistics that measure the economic power of the powers involved in the war solely by the number of aircraft, tanks and guns produced ignore this fact, which, however, had a significant impact on keeping the war material produced usable in the field.²²

Although Hitler started the war against Poland in 1939 not least because he feared losing a supposed advantage in terms of armaments over the Western Allies in 1940/41, the German economy was not comprehensively converted to war production. The hope of a quick victory, the vested interests of leading companies and Hitler's fear that the necessary measures would severely restrict the quality of life of the civilian population prevented such a change. Only from 1942 did the Reich actually strive for deep armament, while even the USA had already taken this step.²³ Some modern researchers have attempted to put the loss of friction caused by the Wehrmacht bureaucracy into perspective. Although these certainly took place, "cooperative competition" still existed, especially in matters of armaments.²⁴ In fact, the German economy reached its highest efficiency only in 1944, but even then it was less effective, than at the end of World War I.

21 Alexander Querengässer, „Wie stark ist Russland? Ein Versuch zur Einschätzung des russischen militärischen Potentials und des Krieges in der Ukraine“ at: [Querengässer \(h-und-g.info\)](#).

22 DRZW. Vol 5/2 *Organisation und Mobilisierung des deutschen Machtbereichs. Kriegsverwaltung, Wirtschaft und personelle Ressourcen 1942-1944/45*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt 1999.

23 Alan Milward, *War, Economy and Society 1939-1945*, Berkeley – Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979, p. 75.

24 Paul Fröhlich / Alexander Kranz, „Ämterchaos“ in der Wehrmachtbürokratie?. Das Allgemeine Heeresamt, das Wehrwirtschafts- und Rüstungsamt und die deutsche Rüstungspolitik 1938 bis 1940, in: Christian Th. Müller, Matthias Rogg (eds.), *Das ist Militärgeschichte! – Probleme – Projekte – Perspektiven*, Paderborn e.o.: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2013, pp. 136-155.

In addition, the German economy lost too much time in standardizing production. Last but not least, the division of production sites forced by the Allied bombing offensive forced a reduction in vertical integration, which paradoxically led to an increase in efficiency in production. While the construction of a Ju88 required 100,000 working hours in 1939, in 1943 it was just 7,000. However, recent research emphasizes that such an increase in efficiency was partly planned for in the development of new weapon systems.²⁵ As the war progressed, it became apparent that the complex new weapon systems were overwhelming the German economy. The fact that legends of the superiority of German engineering, manifested in the “Tiger”, “Panther” and the Me262, persist to this day is not least due to the fact that the war ended in the spring of 1945 when the Allies were able to develop comparable weapon systems to use. The Americans had already produced 2,000 “Pershing” tanks (of which only a few examples reached the front by May 1945) in 1944, thus long since eclipsing the total production of the “Tiger” I & II. If the war had lasted longer, the US Army would have been able to keep up with the German tanks not only in terms of quantity but also in terms of quality.

The situation was very similar in the aircraft industry. Almost all major German aircraft companies were working on the development of new jet and rocket aircraft. The machines, which were treated as miracle weapons, still give rise to the myth of the Reich’s technical superiority in the last years of the war. However, the limited resources are not sufficient to produce the newly developed aircraft in sufficient numbers and Hitler hardly gave his engineers any time to technically mature the machines, which suffered from teething problems.²⁶ The Air Force’s technical lead was by no means unassailable. The Allies also experimented with the next generation of aircraft. The Americans launched the P59 jet fighter in small series and, with the Lockheed P 80, had another fighter ready that was comparable to the feared Me262, while the British put the first squadrons of Gloster Meteor into service in the summer of 1944 and further optimized their performance. German technicians were also constantly developing new types, but it seems likely that the Western Allies would have caught up with the Germans in the course of 1945, as they were focusing on the development of a few types, concentrating on bringing them to series production

25 Mark Spoerer / Jochen Streeb, *Neue deutsche Wirtschaftsgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Munich: Oldenbourg, 2013, p. 187.

26 Ralf Schabel, *Die Illusion der Wunderwaffen. Die Rolle der Düsenflugzeuge und Flugabwehrraketen in der Rüstungspolitik des Dritten Reiches (Beiträge zur Militärgeschichte 35)*, Munich: Oldenbourg 1994.

and in general subordinated the development of new weapon systems to the overall strategic concept. In Germany, however, many scarce resources were wasted on developing weapon systems for which it is not clear exactly how they should be used. Business, the Wehrmacht, and Hitler sometimes had very different ideas, of which the Me 262 is the best example. Willy Messerschmidt's designers developed the jet fighter as an interceptor, which air defense urgently needed in the face of powerful American long-range fighters such as the P51, which now accompanied the bomber streams all the way to Germany. However, Hitler, who combined his fascination with fast bombers with his desire for retaliatory weapons, had the fighter redesignated as a "lightning bomber" and used as a fighter-bomber. The development of another miracle aircraft, the Me 163, cost enormous amounts of money. Only 16 kills by this type are officially documented. Of the supposed "Volksjäger" He 162, to which only two kills can be attributed, significantly more machines were lost due to operational accidents than to enemy action, which was partly due to construction-related teething problems and partly to the lack of training of the pilots, who were unable to deal with them is.

Information

Decisions, whether political, economic, or military, at a strategic, operational or tactical level, must be made on the basis of the analysis of information. And herein lay one of the central problems of Hitler's strategy formation process. Although the leader was certainly able to incorporate non-military factors into his decisions, he tended to ignore dissenting opinions and data early on. "I know better," is a phrase he often used, brushing aside better analyses.

In addition, Hitler repeatedly referred to his own experiences in his analyses and significantly underestimated the possibilities of other nations, especially the USA. At a briefing at the Führer's headquarters in Rastenburg in March 1942, he declared: "We shouldn't be taken for fools. After all, I built a Wehrmacht from nothing and know the possibilities better (sic!) than those gentlemen in America who are now faced with this task."²⁷ Looking back, Manstein stated that Hitler could certainly come up with facts on such occasions: „He could argue with an astonishing knowledge of the effects of new enemy weapons as well as their own and enemy production figures. He preferred to use this when he wanted to distract from discussions that he did not like (...) but the belief in

²⁷ Quot.: Heusinger, *Befehl im Widerstreit*, p. 178.

his superiority in these questions had disastrous consequences.”²⁸

In the end, this trait meant that Hitler’s decisions were characterized more by wishful thinking than effective analysis and were therefore doomed to failure from the outset. The effect was ultimately reinforced by the fact that the leading military officers of the OKW and OKH concealed supposedly unwanted information so that it no longer reached Hitler. On December 16, 1941, when Army Group Center found itself exposed to a Soviet counterattack outside Moscow, Field marshal von Bock noted in his diary that the still acting commander of the army, General von Brauchitsch, had probably not forwarded his reports about the critical situation to Hitler. “Schmundt replies that he knows nothing of such a report to the Führer (...) It is regrettable that the Führer, as it turns out, has not yet been properly informed about the seriousness of the situation.”²⁹ Hitler’s tendency to appoint those personally close to him to top positions reinforced this effect, as Albert Speer aptly noted in his memoirs: “It was in keeping with Hitler’s inclination towards amateurism that he preferred to select unprofessional employees. After all, by then he had already appointed a wine merchant as foreign minister, his party philosopher as eastern minister and, for example, a fighter pilot as master of the entire economy; Now he made an architect, of all people, his armaments minister. Hitler undoubtedly preferred to fill leadership positions with laypeople; he distrusted experts, such as Schacht, throughout his life.”³⁰

What Speer describes here could well be a psychological phenomenon, because by elevating amateurs and lays to top positions and keeping professionals out, he made it easier for himself to brush aside their objections. The Ural bomber project for example died because one of its most important leaders, General Walter Wever, died in an airplane accident in 1936. Hitler replaced him with Ernst Udet, who had been an experienced fighter pilot in the First World War but, like Göring, had little understanding of the technical and economic aspects of modern aviation. Under Udet, the collaboration with the head of the technical office, Wilhelm Wimmer, who got types like the Me109, Ju88, He111 and Do17 ready for series production within three years in the mid-thirties, also suffered, so that the successor types developed under Udet’s leadership, like

28 Quot.: Manstein, *Verlorene Siege*, p. 305.

29 Quot.: Fedor von Bock, *Zwischen Pflicht und Verantwortung*, Munich – Berlin: Herbig 1995, pp. 352-353.

30 Quot.: Albert Speer, *Erinnerungen*, Munich: Propyläen, 2003, pp. 212-213.

the Ju88, took much longer.³¹ Planes like the He177 and Me210 took longer to develop and always suffered from technical deficiencies, which is why the lead that the Luftwaffe had partially gained in technical terms before the war, was lost quickly. Speer reports on a visit to the Junkers Works in the fall of 1941, where General Director Heinrich Koppenberg compared German and American production figures to him: “I asked him what our leadership said about these depressing comparative figures: > That’s just it, they don’t want to believe it <, he said. Stunned, he burst into tears. Soon afterwards, Koppenberg was removed as director of Junkerswerke.”³²

Willpower

Conversely, Hitler was just as willing to control the flow of information to the German population, right up to the army elites.³³ In 1940 he commented to Speer: „This time the mistake of 1914 will be avoided. Now it’s all about blaming the other side (...) It’s best for me to write the notes myself.”³⁴ With this in mind, Hitler declared to the commanders of the Army Groups of the Eastern Army in the spring of 1941: “You know, I have done everything since 1933 to maintain peace in the world.”³⁵ Such lies by Hitler, which he used very consciously, have a long history and still serve today as “evidence” of his peacefulness for right-wing conspiracy theorists and revisionists, who have regained importance in Germany in the last 15 years. According to the leader, this sovereignty over the distribution of information, i.e. propaganda, was important in order to strengthen the “will” of the people. He already gave this a central meaning in “Mein Kampf”: “In all cases in which the fulfillment of seemingly impossible demands or tasks is involved, the entire attention of a people must be concentrated on this one question only, as if existence or non-existence actually depended on its solution (...) So the very first prerequisite that is necessary for attacking such a difficult part of the human path is that the leadership succeeds in presenting to the mass of the people that partial goal that can be achieved

31 James S. Corum, „Stärken und Schwächen der Luftwaffe. Führungsqualitäten und Führung im Zweiten Weltkrieg“. In: Rolf-Dieter Müller / Hans-Erich Volkmann (eds.): *Die Wehrmacht. Mythos und Realität*, Munich: Oldenbourg 1999, pp. 283-306, here pp. 296-297.

32 Quot.: Speer, *Erinnerungen*, p. 198.

33 Wolfram Wette, „Ideologien, Propaganda und Innenpolitik als Voraussetzungen der Kriegspolitik des Dritten Reiches“. In DRWZ, Vol. 1, pp. 25-173.

34 Quot.: Speer, *Erinnerungen*, p. 179.

35 Quot.: Heusinger, *Befehl im Widerstreit*, p. 120.

and fought for better as the only one worthy of human attention and on whose conquest everything depends.³⁶ Even more than miracle weapons, willpower was the „magic bullet“ that was supposed to decide the war in Germany’s favor. OKW chief Wilhelm Keitel remarked in his memoirs that Hitler believed “that what was lacking in technology and military skill could be replaced by the National Socialist worldview.”³⁷ The willpower, and later “stamina qualities” of a general were always more important to Hitler than the traditional general staff training. This break with German military tradition was characteristic of the Nazi era.

Hitler and the German generals

Hitler viewed the Wehrmacht’s leadership with skepticism from the start.³⁸ “I don’t understand the army generals!” he complained to his adjutant Schmundt as early as 1938. “Instead of finding enthusiasm and approval from them, I only find concerns and inhibitions.”³⁹ This skepticism continued to intensify over the course of the war. In addition to the lack of confidence in their military capabilities, Hitler forbade any interference by the generals in non-military matters from the outset, as he told Schmundt on January 20, 1942: “I will lead the officer corps back to where the roots of its strength lie, to the pure ability to lead (...) They understand nothing about politics, economics and technology.”⁴⁰ This assessment ultimately led to the threat in a private conversation with Schmundt in July 1943: „Stalin used ruthless means in 1937. I’ll do it again.”⁴¹

This mistrust led to the splitting of leadership competencies at an early stage. In addition to the High Command of the Army (OKH), Hitler created the High Command of the Wehrmacht (OKW) in 1938. During the course of the war, both

36 Quot.: Christian Hartmann e.o. (ed.), *Hitler, Mein Kampf. Eine kritische Edition. Vol. 1*, Munich: Institut für Zeitgeschichte, 2016, S. 263-264.

37 Quot.: Wilhelm Keitel, *Mein Leben. Pflichterfüllung bis zum Untergang : Hitlers Feldmarschall und Chef des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht in Selbstzeugnissen*, Berlin: edition q 1998, p. 244.

38 Geoffrey P. Megargee, *Hitler und die Generäle. Das Ringen um die Führung der Wehrmacht 1933-1945*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2006.

39 Quot.: Heusinger, *Befehl im Widerstreit*, p. 38.

40 Quot.: Heusinger, *Befehl im Widerstreit*, p. 167.

41 Quot.: Heusinger, *Befehl im Widerstreit*, p. 262. See also Bernhard R. Kroener: “Generationserfahrungen und Elitenwandel. Strukturveränderungen im deutschen Offizierskorps 1933-1945“. In: Reiner Hudemann (ed.), *Eliten in Deutschland und Frankreich im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich: Oldenbourg, 1994, pp. 199-233.

institutions were assigned their own theaters of war. For example, the OKW led the occupation of Denmark and Norway in 1940. This development was viewed critically by the old elites. Halder commented on this to Field Marshal Fedor von Bock in April 1940: “The expansion of the powers of the OKW, the takeover of a theater of war by a staff that was not equipped for such tasks, the leadership of an operation by Hitler personally are worrying signs of a fragmentation of the overall leadership . The man wants to do everything himself.”⁴² However, the fragmentation that Halder feared was intended by Hitler.

Strategic planning was also made more difficult by the fact that Hitler probably indulged in fantasies in personal conversations with individual generals that ran counter to their actual orders. One of the best-known - albeit difficult to reconstruct - examples is the dispatch of Erwin Rommel and the German Afrika Korps to Tripoli in 1941. Officially, Rommel’s „barrier unit“ was only intended to form a holding position for the Italian units retreating from Egypt.⁴³ In his memoirs, however, the general describes how he had a personal conversation with Hitler before his departure, during which they analyzed English newspaper reports and discussed how war should be waged in the desert.⁴⁴ There was no lack of contingency plans for a possible war in the Middle East⁴⁵ and Rommel’s brief comments make it clear that Hitler was inspired by his enthusiasm and drew up plans for offensives with his general, which he then immediately initiated. What was fatal in this context, however, was that Rommel was not included in Hitler’s overall strategic plan. Rommel was obviously unaware that a rapid opening of the offensive against Russia was one of Hitler’s most important priorities, which is why he always trusted that he would receive the necessary reinforcements for his offensives as soon as the first successes occurred. This hope was not unfounded given the low overall strength of the Afrika Korps, as long as Rommel could assume that England was the last remaining enemy in the field. He was only a corps commander, but in this capacity he was also the commander of his own theater of war. In this capacity, he should have been better informed about the Reich’s overall strategy in order to make his own decisions. The letters to his wife show that he was

42 Quot.: Heusinger, *Befehl im Widerstreit*, p. 84.

43 Alexander Querengässer, *El Alamein 1942. Materialschlacht in Nordafrika*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh 2019, pp. 15-19.

44 Erwin Rommel, *Krieg ohne Hass (Afrikanische Memoiren)*, ed. By Lucie Maria Rommel and Fritz Bayerlein, Heidenheim / Benz: Verlag Heidenheimer Zeitung, 1951, pp. 12-13.

45 Gerhard Schreiber, „Die politische und militärische Entwicklung im Mittelmeerraum 1939/40“, in: DRZW 3, pp. 4-249, here pp. 162-222.

firmly convinced that he could deal the knockout blow to England if he only got the necessary reinforcements. He wrote on March 31, 1941: "I dared to go against previous orders and instructions because I saw an opportunity. They will approve of it in the end."⁴⁶

Ultimately, Rommel always received support and a long leash from Hitler because he attacked and achieved success. However, as soon as theater commanders in critical situations made suggestions that did not correspond to Hitler's view, he tried to take sole control, even though the generals on the ground may have had a better insight into the situation. Snubbed by Italy's secession after the fall of Mussolini, Hitler railed at a lecture in Rastenburg in July 1943: "These are political dilettantes that we have in Rome. Kesselring also knows nothing about politics. He should keep his hands off it."⁴⁷ The führer never hesitated to offer his opinion directly to his generals.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to portray the German generals as soulless puppets of Hitler's arbitrary decisions. The OKH and also individual army group and army high commands were fully capable of making their own decisions. In 1940, the OKH pushed forward a fairly conventional attack plan against France, which corresponded to an adapted version of the Schlieffen Plan, while Hitler himself had already envisaged shifting the focus of the attack to the south before Manstein presented him with his similar plans for the later sickle cut. The plan for an offensive on Kursk in the spring of 1943 was in no way the work of the Führer, as German generals later claimed in their work for the Historical Division of the US Army. Instead, Hitler favored Operation Panther to clear a front bulge in the Donets Basin, which was a high priority in his planning due to its wealth of resources. It have been objections from front-line commanders such as Manstein and Hermann Hoth that finally convinced him to attack Kursk.⁴⁹

Plans for War 1933 – 1939

What foreign policy course Adolf Hitler would take after he came to power was actually clear from the start. Since the 1920s, the NSDAP he led stood for anti-Semitism, anti-Bolshevism, but – what was perhaps most tangible for many

46 Quot. After: Ralf Georg Reuth, *Rommel. Das Ende einer Legende*, Munich: Piper, 2012, p. 108.

47 Quot.: Heusinger, *Befehl im Widerstreit*, p. 264.

48 Norman J. W. Goda: „Black marks. Hitler's Bribery of his Senior Officers during World War II", *Journal for Military History* 72 (2000), pp. 413-445.

49 Töppel, „Unbelehrbar? Hitler als militärischer Entscheider, pp. 346-354.

Germans at the time – a revision of the Peace of Versailles. Hitler initially spent the first months of his reign consolidating his regime through a series of laws that undermined the constitution of the Weimar Republic. Hindenburg's death in 1934 strengthened his position in several ways, as it allowed him to merge the office of Reich President with that of Chancellor. At the same time, he tied the military apparatus – the Wehrmacht – more closely to himself through a personal oath.⁵⁰

By 1935, Hitler's domestic political position had been consolidated enough for him to pursue his foreign policy goals. These primarily consisted of a revision of the Treaty of Versailles. This included, on the one hand, a reclaiming of ceded or occupied territories, but above all the establishment of a military apparatus that was intended to re-establish Germany in the ranks of the great powers. Hitler had already laid the foundations for this in 1933 with his withdrawal from the League of Nations, the Geneva Disarmament Conference and the establishment of an air force staff. On March 16, 1935, the law for the reconstruction of the Wehrmacht was passed, which announced an initial increase in the size of the army to 300,000 men and the establishment of an air and tank force.⁵¹ In these areas, the Nazi state was able to rely at least partially on the Reichswehr's secret rearmament plans and benefited from the support of the officer corps. While Hitler did not take the attitude of the Versailles powers into account when expanding the army and air force, he concluded the German-British naval agreement in June 1935, which allowed the navy to be upgraded to 35 percent of the Royal Navy's budget.⁵² This treaty is an expression of Hitler's ambivalent relationship with Great Britain, which he did not see as a natural enemy of the Third Reich, even after the outbreak of the Second World War. Instead, the dictator always feared a repeat of a two-front war and the re-establishment of a naval blockade that would be damaging to the German economy. In his view, preventing this strategic scenario from the First World War was a top priority. It was therefore important not to provoke Great Britain by arming the fleet, as was the case before 1914.

The agreement is also a symbol of German foreign policy until 1939, which largely consisted of a series of bilateral agreements. This also included

50 Jürgen Förster, *Die Wehrmacht im NS-Staat. Eine strukturgeschichtliche Analyse*, Munich: Oldenbourg 2007, pp. 19-27.

51 Wilhelm Deist, „Die Aufrüstung der Wehrmacht“. In: DRZW I, pp. 371-532.

52 Norbert Theodor Wiggershaus, *Der deutsch-englische Flottenvertrag vom 18. Juni 1935 und die geheime deutsche Aufrüstung 1933–1935*, Bonn 1972 Univ., Phil. Diss., 1971.

a number of non-aggression treaties with immediate neighboring countries, starting with the German-Polish non-aggression agreement of 1934,⁵³ followed by comparable treaties with France (1938), Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia (all in 1939).⁵⁴ This policy culminated in the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of 1939, the most impressive expression of Hitler's strategic capabilities and limitations. On the one hand, through this treaty he secured all of his immediate strategic goals by avoiding a possible two-front war after the already planned attack and the rapid occupation of Poland that had been taken into account, and on top of that he even secured the economic support of the USSR, thereby eliminating the dangerous effects of a British naval blockade became.⁵⁵ On the other hand, the high-handedness of the German-Soviet negotiations offended existing and potential allies, Italy and Japan. This was typical of Hitler's foreign policy. He used allies, but never acted as equals with them. However, he never managed to establish an integrated foreign policy. Hitler's solo actions convinced his allies to ignore Germany in their own strategic planning. This led to the Italian attack on Greece in 1940, as well as the conclusion and consistent compliance with the Soviet-Japanese neutrality pact of 1941. Both ran counter to Hitler's plans. "While the internal German leadership organization offered plenty of cause for criticism, the Axis war was a model example of leaderlessness,"⁵⁶ Albert Kesselring summed up this problem quite aptly. There was no Combined Chief of Staff between the Axis partners, as at least Great Britain and the USA created one after Pearl Harbor.

Despite these shortcomings, Hitler's strategy of the pre-war years could be considered to be well planned, as it was largely successful, especially on the foreign policy level. However, it is legitimate to ask how events would have developed if Germany had decided to attack the CSSR in 1938. The Wehrmacht

53 Zygmunt J. Gasiorowski: "The German-Polish Non-aggression Pact of 1934", *Journal of Central European Affairs* 15 (1955), pp. 3–29.

54 Manfred Messerschmidt: „Außenpolitik und Kriegsvorbereitung“. In: DRZW 1, pp. 535-1701.

55 Ingeborg Fleischhauer, *Der Pakt – Hitler, Stalin und die Initiative der deutschen Diplomatie 1938–1939*, Stuttgart: Ullstein, 1990; Anna Kaminsky, Dietmar Müller, Stefan Troebst (eds.): *Der Hitler-Stalin-Pakt 1939 in den Erinnerungskulturen der Europäer* (= Moderne europäische Geschichte 1), Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2011; Roger Moorhouse, *The Devils' Alliance: Hitler's Pact with Stalin, 1939–1941*, London: The Bodley Head, 2014; Claudia Weber, *Der Pakt. Stalin, Hitler und die Geschichte einer mörderischen Allianz*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 2019.

56 Quot.: Albert Kesselring, *Gedanken zum zweiten Weltkrieg*, Schnellbach: Verlag Siegfried Bublies 2000, p. 41.

was much less prepared for this than for the attack on Poland a year later and the Czechoslovak army was an absolutely and relatively stronger opponent. Such an attack would have presented the Nazi regime with an external and internal test, because it seems questionable whether France and Great Britain would have shown the same passive attitude in this case as in the course of the Munich negotiations. At the same time, there were already well-developed plans within the Wehrmacht to eliminate Hitler in the event of such a war. All of these factors are among the great “What if”’s of history and they underline that Hitler’s strategic approach in the pre-war years was not as rational as was assumed in view of his successes, but rather amounted to an increasing gamble. The fact that France and Great Britain showed themselves to be willing to compromise regarding the CSSR ultimately also contributed to Hitler massively underestimating his potential opponents and their determination in future foreign policy decisions.

However, this misjudgment was based not only on Hitler’s assumption that the Western democracies were effeminate, but also on calculations of their economic capacities. It was not lost on the Germans that France and Great Britain began to rearm their forces after the occupation of Czechoslovakia. German planners assumed that the Western powers would only develop their full armament potential from 1940 onwards, but that by then at the latest the Wehrmacht’s supposed quantitative and qualitative lead would have to be rapidly reduced. “Such considerations may not have decisively determined Hitler’s decisions, but they undoubtedly influenced the choice of timing,”⁵⁷ stated Albert Speer with a view to the next escalation step. At the same time, the successful occupation of the CSSR also strengthened Hitler’s self-confidence vis-à-vis the Wehrmacht leadership, as generals like Beck had advised against such a step.

Early Triumphs 1939-1941

Andreas Hillgruber once presented Hitler’s strategy for the first years of the war as a carefully constructed, multi-stage plan. This seemed understandable in the sequence of events, but only because the Western Allies played into the hands of the Germany. In fact, the attack on Poland in September 1939 already showed that Hitler had misjudged the reaction of England and France. These misjudgments of his opponents’ resolve and possible responses would represent a key weakness in Hitler’s strategy as the war progressed. This ultimately resulted in him increasingly losing control of events and instead of fighting his potential

⁵⁷ Quot.: Speer, *Erinnerungen*, p. 178.

opponents one after the other, he increasingly fought them simultaneously. The possibility of a multi-front war seemed to be averted by the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939, but the German western border was still defenseless against a potential Anglo-French attack. The already outdated West Wall had too few men to withstand a serious attack. During this phase, Hitler benefited from the passivity of the Western Allies, but he himself still seemed undecided about whether and how he should act against France, which was also evident in the subsequent operations against Denmark and Norway. The latter in particular proved to be materially costly - the Navy lost almost twenty percent of the surface units deployed - and of dubious strategic value, as a large number of occupying forces were to remain tied up in Norway. The same was true of Yugoslavia, which was intended to be occupied quickly in the spring of 1941, but which subsequently committed almost half a million men to the partisan occupation. Both campaigns are an expression not only of Hitler's, but also of the general German strategic mindset of the time, which was to solve any problems that presented themselves through the use of force without considering the consequences.

This was also revealed in the operational preparations for the two campaigns against France and the Soviet Union. In the case of France, the OKH essentially planned a repetition of the Schlieffen Plan, which, despite modern weapons technology - tanks and aircraft - seemed unlikely to be successful, since the Western Allies expected exactly this approach. In his memoirs, Erich Manstein describes that he had a rather instinctive aversion to this obvious repetition of the German offensive of 1914: "What would come of it if you pulled out a war plan that the enemy had already carried out with us once and which he had to be prepared to repeat!"⁵⁸ But he also recognized that, unlike in 1914, the OKH plan did not envisage an encirclement of the French army through the supposedly open Belgian front, but rather assumed from the outset that it would encounter strong enemy forces here and to overcome them. He criticized the fact that there was no attempt to achieve a complete victory over France, as Schlieffen had certainly intended, but that the German leadership assumed from the outset that only limited operational goals could be achieved due to the negative experiences from the First World War. What Manstein didn't know at this point: Hitler was also not satisfied with Plan Yellow drawn up by Chief of General Staff Halder. Nevertheless, the memorandum that Manstein sent to the OKH on October 31, 1939 did not find fertile ground.

After the original Plan Yellow was detected by accident through the Allies,

⁵⁸ Quot.: Manstein, *Verlorene Siege*, p. 96.

Hitler learned of Manstein's plans from his adjutant Colonel Rudolf Schmundt and had them presented to him personally on this occasion. He was excited by the concept and got Halder and Brauchitsch to change the deployment plans for yellow accordingly. As a result, what was later known as the sickle cut plan was created based on Manstein's idea. Looking back, Manstein was critical but not contemptuous of his supreme warlord: "As was later shown in the Russian campaign, Hitler did have a certain instinct when it came to operational issues. However, he lacked the training of a military leader, which enables him to take a high risk in an operation because he knows that he can master it [...] He was fortunate that the leadership on the enemy side did not launch a large-scale counterattack brought about."⁵⁹ However, one great deficit remained even with Manstein's plan. While he criticized the original plans for following limited operational goals, his plan wasn't really different, as it did not contain any hint what should be done, after the Anglo-French forces would have been encircled and forced to surrender. This is remarkable considering the Germany experiences in the war of 1870/71, when early victories, like Sedan did not lead to a quick end of the war, as Sadowa had done in 1866. In fact Manstein, like generations of German Military planners in the late 19th and early 20th century thought strategy from the bottom – the operational and even tactical level – not as a top-down process, like the Allies would do later on in World War 2. They misinterpreted Clausewitz' writings about the frictions of war, which make planning for war difficult. Their conclusion was, that the initial battle must be planned carefully and end in a battle of annihilation – a modern Cannae – which will break the enemies willpower. This thinking also underlined the Schlieffenplan and later on Ludendorff's plan for the spring offensives in 1918, when he said: "Tactics had to take precedence over pure strategy. Such a move could not be carried out without tactical success. A strategy that does not take him into account is doomed to failure from the outset."⁶⁰ Even if Hitler was critical of the tradition of the German general staff, he followed the same principle. He knew Ludendorff, who in the early 1920s was also a political ally during his failed coup. Most likely he read his book and he tended to believe more in what he read, as in what other people told him.

In the end, it worked out for the Germans against France in 1940. The sicklecut created the modern Cannae, military planners had dreamed of and it

59 Quot.: Manstein, *Verlorene Siege*, p. 123.

60 Quot.: Erich Ludendorff, *Meine Kriegserinnerungen 1914 – 1918*, Berlin: Mittler & Sohn, 1919, p. 474.

also helped to weaken French moral so that despite stronger resistance in the second phase of the campaign, the Grand Nation surrendered quickly.

After France's surrender, Hitler was riding a wave of euphoria. After his visit to Paris, he discussed fantastic redesign plans for Berlin with Speer. He saw England as good as defeated. Halder recorded in his diary on June 30, 1940 a conversation with Ernst von Weizäcker, who told him Hitler's views. It says: "c) Eyes focused heavily on the East. d) England will probably need a demonstration of our military strength before it gives in and leaves us free for the East."⁶¹ Four days earlier, the head of the OKH had assumed „that the Bessarabian question can be solved without war."⁶² Such statements are indicative of the rather lax and inconsistent preparations for the attack on England. In fact, many people close to Hitler report that after the fall of France, his focus was already on Russia and no longer on England. Sperr reports how he once told Keitel: "Now we have shown what we are capable of. Believe me Keitel, a campaign against Russia would just be a sandbox game."⁶³ Nevertheless, on June 4th, Hitler initially decided to reduce the size of the army in order to relieve the burden on the German economy.⁶⁴

Operation Barbarossa has often been described as one of the best - because long-term - prepared German offensive operations in the Second World War, even if no modern account fails to point out its shortcomings. However, these were significant and, in addition to significant strategic-operational discrepancies between Hitler and the head of OKH Halder, were also due to the short processing time of many detailed studies that were prepared in preparation for the campaign. Major General Erich Marcks, Chief of the General Staff of the 18th Army, prepared his first operational concept in three days, a revised version in just four days, and General Georg von Sodenstern, Chief of Staff of Army Group A, spent only 10 days on his study.⁶⁵ These short planning periods did not

61 Quot.: *Generaloberst Halder. Kriegstagebuch, Vol. 1 Vom Polenfeldzug bis zum Ende der Westoffensive (14.8.1939 – 30.6.1940)* ed. by Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, Stuttgart: Kolhammer Verlag, 1962, p. 373.

62 Quot.: *Generaloberst Halder. Kriegstagebuch, Vol.*, p. 375.

63 Quot.: Speer, *Erinnerungen*, p. 188.

64 Jürgen Förster: „Hitlers Wendung nach Osten. Die deutsche Kriegspolitik 1940-1941“. In: Bernd Wegner (ed.): *Zwei Wege nach Moskau. Vom Hitler-Stalin-Pakt bis zum „Unternehmen Barbarossa“*, Munich: Piper, 1991, pp. 113-132.

65 Alber Beer, *Der Fall Barbarossa. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Vorbereitung des deutschen Feldzuges gegen die Union der Sozialistischen Sowjetrepubliken im Jahre 1941*, Münster: Selfpublished, 1978, pp. 31-40.

allow for a detailed examination of road capacities, the structural conditions of cities, the density of forests or even detailed considerations of the expected Soviet resistance. These deficits quickly became noticeable during the course of the campaign, when the Axis powers had to draw up ad hoc plans, particularly when it came to taking cities, and proceeded with the wrong approach to their forces. For example, the capture of the port city of Odessa, which was important from a logistical point of view, was hardly discussed before the start of the war and was therefore left to inadequate Romanian troops after the start of the campaign.⁶⁶

Logistics remained a stepchild of German warfare. The rapid expansion of the Wehrmacht had led to increasingly inconsistent equipment with old and looted stocks. The acquisition of Czech and French tanks increased the effectiveness of individual divisions, but also created an administrative nightmare for supply officers. In addition, logistical requirements were quickly subordinated to aspects of the Nazi ideological war. Field Marshal Fedor von Bock reports that during Operation Typhoon, important railway wagons were diverted for the deportation of Jews from the Reich to Eastern Europe. "I let Halder report that I would prevent this by all possible means, since the arrival of these trains would mean that the corresponding number of vital trains needed to supply the attack would be lost."⁶⁷ In other areas, too, it became clear that the Nazis' warfare was different strictly followed rational logic. This is particularly evident in the urge for retaliation, as expressed, for example, in Hitler's Sports Palace speech on September 4, 1941 regarding the British air raids on Berlin: „If the British Air Force drops two or three or four thousand kilograms of bombs, then throw them We now in one night 150,000, 180,000, 230,000, 300,000, 400,000, a million kilograms. If they declare that they will attack our cities on a large scale - we will wipe out their cities!“⁶⁸ This excessive desire for revenge was deeply rooted in Nazi warfare and was also evident in other areas - for example in reprisals after partisan attacks - but, at least in Hitler's understanding, it also had a communicative character. Violence should be met with more violence.⁶⁹

66 Friedrich Forstmeier, *Odessa 1941. Der Kampf um Stadt und Hafen und die Räumung der Seefestung, 15. August bis 16. Oktober 1941*, Freiburg i. Br.: Rombach, 1967.

67 Quot.: Bock, *Zwischen Pflicht und Verweigerung*, p. 316.

68 Quot. After: Rolf-Dieter Müller, *Der Bombenkrieg 1939-1945*, Berlin: Ch. Links, 2004, S. 71.

69 Peter Longerich, „Der Russlandkrieg als rassistischer Vernichtungskrieg“. In: Hans-Heinrich Nolte (ed.): *Der Mensch gegen den Menschen. Überlegungen und Forschungen zum deutschen Überfall auf die Sowjetunion 1941*, Hannover: Fackelträger, 1991, pp. 78-94; Wolfgang Sauer, *Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung. Vol. 3. Die Mobilmachung der*

Strengthened in his self-confidence by his previous successes, Hitler ultimately made the same mistakes in Operation Barbarossa as in the campaign against France, only here he encountered a stronger and more determined opponent. During the planning phase, a growing discrepancy developed between the Führer and OKH chief Franz Halder. While he wanted to direct the main thrust of the German forces at Moscow, Hitler saw the priority on the one hand on Leningrad as the supposed political-ideological center of Bolshevism, and on the other hand on the resource-rich Ukraine.⁷⁰ The fact that he considered the local grain, oil and coal deposits to be important for German warfare illustrates the importance he attached to economic aspects in the course of his strategic planning. The problem, however, was that Hitler and Halder were unable to resolve their dispute and instead decided to determine the operational direction only after the start of the campaign, as soon as - according to their assumption - the Soviet forces directly across the border would have been destroyed.⁷¹

1942-1945

December 1941 can be seen as the Turning point in the war. The German offensive at Moscow was stopped and pushed back by a Soviet counterattack and after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hitler also declared War on the USA, the leading economic power in the world. Having stabilized the front with his holding orders, Hitler relieved Brauchitsch as nominal commander of the army and also filled this position himself. His relationship to the leading army officers further deteriorated during the summer campaign of 1941. Erich von Manstein, who traveled to the Führer's headquarters at the end of August 1942, witnessed the tense situation after Halder defended the Wehrmacht units there in a situation report about a Soviet offensive in the Army Group Center sector. "These objections, presented by Halder in a completely objective form, resulted in Hitler's outburst of anger [...] In a tactless manner, Hitler questioned the right of the Chief of General Staff to make such a judgment against him. He, Hitler, could judge this much better, since he was at the front in the First World War,

Gewalt, Frankfurt a.M. et al: Ullstein 1974; Ben Shepherd, *War in the Wild East. The German Army and Soviet Partisans*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.

70 This, too was recognized by Manstein: „Regarding Hitlers operational targets – at least during the fight with the Sovjet Union – they have been influenced by political and wareconomical considerations.“, Manstein, *Verlorene Siege*, p. 306.

71 Christian Hartmann, *Halder: Generalstabschef Hitlers 1938-1942*. 2nd revised edition, Padernborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2010, pp. 218-241.

while this was not the case with General Halder.⁷² Whether Manstein actually left the card table in silent protest at this „unworthy scene“? as he claimed is an open question. The fact is that it is indicative of the increasingly deteriorating relationship between Hitler and the Wehrmacht leadership. Hermann Göring also knew how to take advantage of this and was able to convince Hitler in those days to set up 22 Luftwaffe field divisions instead of handing over surplus personnel to the army, where they were urgently needed. According to Manstein, the IA of Army Group Center told him in confidence: “Göring justified Hitler’s demand to set up his own divisions within the Luftwaffe by saying that he could not give “his” National Socialist-educated soldiers to the army, which still had pastors and led by Wilhelmine officers.”⁷³ Nazi-Willpower was considered superior compared to traditional German Military skills and values. Such tensions between individual branches of the armed forces were not unknown in other nations. In Japan, Great Britain and the USA, the navy and army fought for resources. But in the Nazi state, the SS and the Luftwaffe in particular began to set up more and more combat units that came into direct competition with the army, consumed enormous resources and ultimately, especially in the case of the Luftwaffe field divisions, never reached their combat effectiveness. Because of the rising tensions between Hitler and the OKW and OKH, all staff meetings were ultimately recorded by two stenographers.

A final major strategic problem, not only of Germany but of the Axis powers in general, concerned their lack of strategic coordination. While Great Britain, the USA and the Soviet Union coordinated their operations relatively well despite all the tensions, Hitler left the Allies out of his planning. The conclusion of the Hitler-Stalin pact offended the Japanese, who in turn concluded a non-aggression pact with the Soviets in 1940, which they were to stick to throughout the war, while the attack on Poland took Italy by surprise. In the case of Italy, Hitler’s disdain for his allies led Mussolini to unleash wars in the Balkans and North Africa that threatened to destabilize his system and forced Hitler to intervene, tying up significant German resources in the Mediterranean. Japan ultimately acted just as independently as Germany itself, although it is indicative of the rationality of the Japanese leadership that it did not declare war on the USSR, while Hitler did exactly this against the USA. However, a possible cooperation between Japanese forces in the Indian Ocean and the German Afrika Korps in Egypt, as was feared by Great Britain during the Japanese advance in early

72 Quot.: Manstein, *Verlorene Siege*, p. 299.

73 Quot.: Manstein, *Verlorene Siege*, p. 292.

April 1942 but never seriously considered by the two Axis partners, did not materialize. More intensive activity by Japanese commerce raiders off the East African coast could have significantly delayed, if not made impossible, the re-equipment of the 8th Army. In the Battle of El Alamein in October 1942, they were able to eliminate the threat from Rommel's Afrika Korps. In the case of the Axis powers, the sum of all the individual parts did not add up to a whole.

The more fronts emerged, the more problems the German leadership had with setting priorities. So the Wehrmacht went into the new campaign season in 1943 with the aim of implementing its maximum goals on as many fronts as possible: holding North Africa, pacifying the Balkans and stabilizing the East at least to the extent that the offensive could be resumed the following year.⁷⁴ Defensively, however, the Reich was only able to respond to the Allies' blows. Their own offensive efforts, such as in the Battle of Kursk in 1943 or in the Ardennes in 1944, could be carried out with increasingly inadequate resources. With attacks from multiple directions by the allies, Hitler was increasingly unable to prioritize between the fronts. So the Allied invasion of Italy was often made responsible for his decision to stop the offensive of Kursk, because saving Mussolini's regime was politically important. However, in the two weeks between the Allied landings in Sicily (July 10), the abandonment of the Battle of Kursk (July 13) and the fall of Mussolini (July 25), no troops were transferred from the Eastern Front to Italy. According to Roman Töppel, Hitler emphasized the threat to Italy to Field Marshal Manstein in order to avoid having to discuss with him the operational dangers on the Eastern Front, in the Donets Basin and in the Oryol bulge. It would be another example of Hitler using his supposedly superior strategic overview to suppress dissent from subordinates. In fact, Hitler even sent back SS units that were already on the march to Italy to stop the Soviet offensive on the Mius.⁷⁵ This back and forth transfer of reserves from the Eastern Front to Italy makes it clear that the German leadership had previously been unable to decide which of the two theaters of war should be given priority. Hitler's negligent handling of information also prevented correct prioritization of strategic-operational goals. He repeatedly referred to the importance of Ukrainian coal from the Donets Basin, which would counteract the evacuation of these areas. In July 1943, OKH chief Zeitzler pointed out to him: "Speer

74 Bernd Wegner: „Defensive ohne Strategie. Die Wehrmacht und das Jahr 1943“. In: Rolf-Dieter Müller / Hans-Erich Volkmann (eds.), *Die Wehrmacht. Mythos und Realität*, Munich: Oldenbourg, 1999, pp. 196-209.

75 Töppel: *Kursk*, pp. 170-171, 174-176.

told me it wasn't that bad. Because of the railway situation, we have hardly been able to extract any coal from the Donets area recently anyway." To which Hitler countered with one of his well-known reactions: "How does Speer come up with such information? Towards you? I forbid that. That was still missing was that he talked me into the military leadership."⁷⁶ Wishful thinking without taking the facts into account increasingly determined strategic and operational planning, including during the Battle of the Bulge, when Hitler opted for the „big“ solution - an advance to Antwerp – although the tank divisions' gasoline supplies were not even sufficient for the small solution.

Conclusions

A balanced assessment of Hitler's qualities as a military commander and strategist is everything, but easy. To dismiss him as a dilettante, as many Wehrmacht generals did after the war in an attempt to vindicate themselves, is certainly not justified. Unlike the generals, who were still largely stuck in operational thinking, Hitler certainly had an understanding of the non-military factors of strategy and always included economic considerations in his plans. Political considerations also determined his decisions, such as the attempt to prevent the collapse of Italy in 1943. Hitler drew historical comparisons and tried to learn from past mistakes, for example by first preventing the emergence of a two-front war in 1939 through the pact with the Soviet Union, which was also intended to protect Germany economically from the consequences of a British blockade like in the First World War. However, what ultimately proved to be more important than the leader's existing qualities were his deficits: hubris, the lack of ability to set priorities and, especially in technical terms, a reliance on quantity rather than quality. With the attack on the Soviet Union before the end of the war with England and also the unnecessary declaration of war on the USA, Hitler was increasingly losing control of the situation. Already in the months between the occupation of Poland and the attack on the Soviet Union, the German leadership reacted more than acted. Potential sources of conflict, such as those opened in particular by the Italian ally in the Balkans and the Mediterranean, were to be pacified with military rather than political means, which quickly led to an overextension of forces, a classic example of how quickly imperial reach turns into imperial overreach. This situation would have been manageable without the attack on the USSR, but the attack on his

76 Quot.: Heusinger, *Befehl im Widerstreit*, S. 266.

main ideological opponent turned out to be one of the few priorities that Hitler consistently pursued. In the war that had been raging since the summer of 1941, in which Germany came increasingly into the defensive, Hitler ignored one of Frederick the Great's essential commandments: "He who defends everything defends nothing."

In many other areas it is clear that Hitler created a system that hindered effective strategy formation. His desire to control his surroundings led to the appointment of non-experts, whose opinions the leader was happy to ignore, in key positions. This environment now focused on pleasing the leader by only offering him the information or technical designs that it assumed would please the leader. Hitler was not only the creator, but also partly the director of the illusory world he created, as was shown in the acquisition of information and various armaments projects. However, it also became clear that his environment was able to force decisions on Hitler, either with or without his knowledge, as was demonstrated with the failed introduction of a longer gun for the Panzer III or the plans for the Zitadelle operation.

Finally, Hitler with all his qualities and deficiencies still followed a tradition of strategic thinking, which thought strategy from an operational-tactical level. Decisions should be won with force and willpower through single campaigns and battles. This worked out in the campaigns of 1939 and 1940, but not against the Soviet Union and in the latter half of the war against the Allies, who thought strategy from the top and were ready to accept single tactical and operational drawbacks, as long as they did not damage the overall strategic plan. With this in mind, it is clear that potential German successes at Kurk or in the Ardennes could not have been of much strategic significance.



Moscow, 23 August 1939, Stalin and Ribbentrop in conversation after the signing of the Non-aggression Pact. (ADN-ZB, Bild 183-H27337)

Stalin as Protean Strategist?

DAVID R. STONE

In Homer's *Odyssey*, the Spartan king Menelaus tells a tale of his return home from the Trojan War. In order for Menelaus to complete his journey, he had to subdue the god Proteus, 'the old man of the sea', in order to learn how to properly appease the gods into allowing his passage home. This was no simple task: as Menelaus described it, 'we rushed upon him with a shout, and threw our arms about him, nor did that old man forget his crafty wiles. Nay, at the first he turned into a bearded lion, and then into a serpent, and a leopard, and a huge boar; then he turned into flowing water, and into a tree, high and leafy; but we held on unflinchingly with steadfast heart'.¹ This image of Proteus, changing form as easily as water, proved remarkably persistent. Shakespeare's villainous Richard III brags of his ability to become whatever and whomever he needs to be, proclaiming

I can add colours to the chameleon,
Change shapes with Proteus for advantages,
And set the murderous Machiavel to school.²

This interpretive essay on Joseph Stalin, one of history's arch-Machiavellians, and Stalin's approach to strategy will take as its starting point Stalin's seemingly Protean character. Who he was, what he meant to achieve, and how he meant to achieve it remain remarkably difficult to pin down. There is no question about Stalin's ruthlessness—his willingness to order, to permit, or to regard with utter indifference the deaths of millions of people. But the ends served by those deaths, and the ways by which he intended to achieve those ends, remain deeply in question. After exploring the inherent difficulties in thinking about Stalin as a strategist, I will argue that we can indeed find a common thread in Stalin's approach to strategic thinking, one growing out of his Marxist ideology. The Protean character of Stalin's long career conceals a fundamentally Marxist habit of mind.

Studying Stalin as a strategist presents several difficulties. First is the sheer length of his career. He was brought into the Central Committee of Vladimir Lenin's Bolshevik Party in 1912, and died forty-one years later in 1953. In the inter-

1 Homer, *Odyssey*, Book IV (A. T. Murray translation).

2 William Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part Three*, III.ii.

im, he was never separated from questions of revolutionary, military, and political strategy. Even though his membership in the Central Committee came when the party's leadership and Stalin himself were languishing in exile with no realistic prospects of power, Lenin commissioned Stalin to formulate the party's strategy on dealing with ethnic minorities in *Marxism and the National Question* (1913). From his victory in the late 1920s over his rivals in the contest for Lenin's inheritance until his death a quarter century later, Stalin was the unquestioned and absolute authority in a continent-spanning great power. How can it be possible to find common themes and approaches across so many years and through so many momentous changes? Any generalization about Stalin's approach to strategy would seem guaranteed to find glaring exceptions in a four-decade career at the highest level of the Bolshevik Party.

The next difficulty, in keeping with Stalin's seemingly Protean nature, is the recurrence of absolute and glaring reversals of course on central questions of Soviet statecraft. Take, for example, the central question of Soviet policy in the 1920s: how could the Soviet Union modernize and industrialize? As good materialists, Stalin and the rest of the Soviet leadership understood well that maintaining power against domestic and foreign threats required a strong economic and industrial base. Given the Soviet Union's economic backwardness, though, and the terrible damage done to Soviet economy and society by World War I, the subsequent Russian Civil War, and its accompanying famine and epidemics, it was not at all clear how Soviet policy could produce economic development in the face of large disgruntled segments of the domestic population combined with enduring hostility from and towards the capitalist world.

This question had begun to arise during the last years of Lenin's life, and broke into the open as a bitter succession struggle after Lenin suffered a series of debilitating strokes and finally died in 1924. One approach was associated with the Bolshevik activist economist Evgenii Preobrazhenskii, and taken up by Leon Trotskii and his Left Opposition within the Bolshevik party. Their approach emphasized the internal danger of a hostile countryside, spearheaded by prosperous peasants whose private holdings of land put them inherently at odds with a communist regime. This internal threat ran alongside the need for rapid industrial development to counter the dangers presented by the world's capitalist powers. The Bolshevik Left's solution was to force industrialization as rapidly as possible. This required accumulating investment capital, and the only practical path was by squeezing it from the Soviet peasantry. Soviet agriculture in the 1920s was overwhelmingly private: by procuring grain at artificially low prices to both feed Soviet cities and earn hard currency through exports, and by selling industrial

goods to the Soviet countryside at artificially high prices, the resulting government surplus would underwrite Soviet industrial development. This strategy was, however, anathema to the Bolshevik Right. Under the intellectual leadership of Nikolai Bukharin, the Right's approach was precisely the opposite: to cultivate and support prosperous peasants, promoting and developing private agriculture to accumulate a surplus of investment capital more gradually. An agriculture-led development strategy would bring balanced economic growth without the political danger of alienating the Soviet Union's overwhelmingly rural population.

Stalin's approach to this fundamental question was a complete and rapid reversal of positions, seemingly driven by the exigencies of getting and keeping power. In the early and mid-1920s, he aligned himself squarely with the Bolshevik Right, arguing that Trotskii and the Left were dangerously radical, as their policies of squeezing the countryside threatened to set the Soviet countryside ablaze and thereby starve industrial cities and embitter the peasant conscripts who filled the ranks of the Soviet Army. By 1927, however, Trotsky and the Left had been thoroughly beaten. Once the Left had been disposed of, Stalin quickly turned against the Right and reversed his position on economic development, becoming an advocate of policies he had previously condemned. He broke with Bukharin, instituting the First Five-Year Plan for forced industrialization. This was accompanied by first the 'dekulakization' of the Soviet countryside: stripping prosperous peasants of their property and subjecting them to internal deportation; and then collectivization: compelling peasants to pool their individually-held land and livestock into collective or state farms, much easier for the Soviet regime to control and from which to extract resources. The only strategic principle at work seems to have been expediency: whatever undercut the most dangerous political rival of the moment.³

Another example of Stalin's rapidly changing his position, one more familiar to those studying military history and foreign policy, was his attitude towards Nazi Germany. From Adolf Hitler's taking power in 1933, the Soviet Union generally pursued a policy of collective security, joining the League of Nations and signing alliances with France and Czechoslovakia clearly intended at checking German expansion. In the Czech crisis of 1938, the Soviet military mobilized its western military districts, and showed every sign of preparing to honor its alliance commitments to the defense of Czechoslovakia before British and French

3 Alexander Erlich, *The Soviet Industrialization Debate, 1924-1928*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960; Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary, 1879-1929: A Study in History and Personality*, New York: Norton, 1973; Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938*, New York: Vintage, 1975.

abandonment of Czechoslovakia in the Munich agreements rendered that alliance a dead letter.⁴ Stalin's position changed after Munich, and by late summer 1939 he was actively entertaining the possibility of alliance with Nazi Germany, not solely opposition to Hitler's regime.

To be sure, a consistent strategist can still change course. Alexander Pope warned us that 'a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds', and economist John Maynard Keynes is reputed have said, 'When the facts change, I change my mind. What do you do?' In the two cases above, one can point to objective facts that might have motivated Stalin's change of heart: a grain collection crisis in 1928, which seemed to suggest that the Bolshevik regime could not permit an independent peasantry, or Britain and France's unwillingness to stand up to Hitler as displayed in the Munich crisis. But even this underlines the problem of finding a common strategic thread in Stalin's thinking. If it is in fact the case that Stalin's approach to strategy was simply whatever seemed expedient at the time, there seems no way to distinguish his approach from all other political and military leaders, who likewise would seem to pursue what seemed best to them.

Stalin's career presents substantial source problems as well. To take one example, the fraught questions of the early period of the Second World War—Stalin's choice for de facto alliance with Hitler's Germany against the West in 1939, and then the precise nature of his intentions as German attack loomed in late spring 1941—are especially murky because key documents are almost completely inaccessible. Unlike Nazi Germany, Stalin's Soviet Union did not have its key records of the Second World War captured and published. The most important documents of Soviet decisionmaking remain ensconced in the Kremlin's Presidential Archive, to which access is granted for only a few carefully-vetted scholars.⁵

There is serious reason to question the quality and insight of even those documents that were produced. In the late 1930s, Stalin engaged in a systematic purge of the military and political elite of the Soviet Union, expelling from the party, imprisoning, and executing all those tainted with any hint of disloyalty, either past or potential. The effects of the purges on, say, Soviet military effectiveness in the first years of World War II are clear, but they had an equally pernicious effect on the administrative functioning of the Soviet state. Bureaucratic processes were undermined by rapid turnover and the precipitous promotion of underqual-

4 Hugh Ragsdale. *The Soviets, the Munich Crisis, and the Coming of World War II*, New York and Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

5 One of the few Western scholars able to access the Presidential Archive on a limited basis for a study of the origins of World War II was Gabriel Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion: Stalin and the German Invasion of Russia*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.

ified cadres to fill vacant positions. Opinions put on paper became dangerous. At the highest levels of the Soviet state, debates over policy and decisionmaking processes shifted from the Politburo, a body with a defined membership, regular meetings, and careful minutes, to late-night meetings at Stalin's dacha among a small group of terrified cronies. The locus of policymaking shifted to the inside of Stalin's head, supplemented by what his subordinates surmised his intentions to be.⁶ As a result, even full access to Russian archives might leave important questions still unanswered.

The result is that scholars fundamentally disagree on basic questions of Stalin's intents and methods, and thus evaluating Stalin as a strategist is extremely difficult. Take, once again, the fraught question of Stalin's conduct in summer 1939 when he was faced with impending war. He had tentative and half-hearted offers from Britain and France for cooperative action to check Hitler's expansion by aiding Poland's defense against German pressure, as well as frantic offers from Germany for a non-aggression pact that would enable a German invasion of Poland free from the threat of two front war. While most scholars see Stalin as approaching a dangerous and uncertain situation cautiously, and weighing the merits of two opposing offers, two other distinct interpretations exist. Some see Stalin as still preferring collective security through an alliance with the West, and as driven at the eleventh hour to an alliance with Nazi Germany against his true preferences.⁷ Others see Stalin as consistently working long before August 1939 for an alliance with Nazi Germany in order to unleash European war, a war that Stalin could enter at a moment of his choosing when the other great powers were exhausted for maximum benefit.⁸ Those two interpretations are diametrically opposed in their view of Stalin's ultimate aim, but share at least in part an evaluation of the merits of Stalin's strategy. Those most favorable to Stalin see the downfall of his efforts at collective security not so much in Stalin himself as in the temerity of Britain and France. Those seeing Stalin as bent on expansionist war like-

6 On the mechanisms of Stalinist rule, see Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *Master of the House: Stalin and His Inner Circle*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

7 See, for example, Michael Jabara Carley, *1939: The Alliance that Never War and the Coming of World War II*, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999; Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin's Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939-1953*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006. Gorodetsky, mentioned above, takes a middle position of Stalin as pursuing realpolitik, neither preferring cooperation against Hitler nor seeking to unleash European war.

8 See, for example, R. C. Raack, *Stalin's Drive to the West, 1938-1945*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995; Albert L. Weeks, *Stalin's Other War: Soviet Grand Strategy, 1939-1941*, New York, Rowman & Littlefield, 2002; Sean McMeekin, *Stalin's War: A New History of World War II*, New York: Basic Books, 2021.

wise see Stalin as being wrongfooted, but by the failure of Britain and France to resist Hitler more effectively and allowing him a quick victory in 1940. As a result, there is not only a disagreement about Stalin's strategic aims, but why he fell short of those aims. Were his own policies clumsy and ill-chosen, or were they the best choices available but undercut by Western military incompetence? Given the limited nature of available sources, it is quite difficult to refute either interpretation definitely. It seems that Stalin is Protean: he can be read in a variety of ways, in keeping with the presuppositions that any individual author brings to the subject.

Given all the obstacles to evaluating Stalin as a strategist, is there any way to gain some insight into his approach to strategic questions? This essay suggests one potential path. Instead of looking at Stalin's concrete decisions in particular circumstances (1939, say, or 1941, or 1945), it will look at the ideological underpinnings of Stalin's decision making to try to gain some insight. Unsurprisingly, this will emphasize the role of a particular kind of Marxism, filtered through the prism of Lenin's version of Marxism. After a youthful flirtation with Georgian nationalism, Stalin converted to Marxist thought while still a seminary student in Tbilisi and Marxism shaped his mind throughout his life.

In terms of basic vocabulary of strategic thinking, Stalin's heritage as a Bolshevik combined with practical experience during the Russian Civil War meant that he was familiar with fundamental concepts and with the work of Carl von Clausewitz. Unlike Lenin, who clearly read and deeply engaged with Clausewitz, it is less apparent that Stalin had the same acquaintance.⁹ He did not routinely cite Clausewitz, and may have picked up the essentials of *On War* second-hand. He was certainly familiar with basic Clausewitzian concepts. In 1946, he told a Soviet military intellectual that Lenin regarded Clausewitz highly, for 'as a non-Marxist Clausewitz . . . confirmed in his own work the well-known Marxist position that there is a direct connection between war and politics, that politics gives rise to war, that war is a continuation of politics by violent means'.¹⁰

Stalin also had a clear and straightforward understanding of the strategy and its deliniation from mere questions of tactics, taking the military understanding

9 Lenin's affinity for Clausewitz, growing in part of Marxism's origins in German idealism, has long been understood; see Azar Gat, 'Clausewitz and the Marxists: Yet Another Look', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 27, no 2, 1992, pp. 363-382. On Stalin as reader, see Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin's Library: A Dictator and His Books*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022.

10 I. V. Stalin, 'Otvét tovarishchu Pazinu', 23 February 1946, in Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 16, Moscow: Pisatel', 1997, p. 21.

of the terms and applying them to questions of domestic politics and policy as well. His formulation is utterly unexceptionable to any strategic theorist, and in accord with Clausewitz's distinction between strategy and tactics in Book II of *On War*. Clausewitz wrote 'tactics teaches *the use of armed forces in the engagement*; strategy, *the use of engagements for the object of the war*'.¹¹ In 'On the Foundations of Leninism' (1924), lectures delivered to a university audience in 1923 and so intended as didactic, Stalin said in parallel that

If strategy has as its goal winning a war, say, against tsarism or against the bourgeoisie, to carry through to the end the struggle against tsarism or the bourgeoisie, then tactics sets itself less fundamental goals, for tactics attempt to win not the war as a whole, but this or that engagement, this or that battle, to successfully carry out this or that campaign, this or that maneuver, corresponding to concrete circumstances in a particular moment of advance or retreat of the revolution. Tactics is a part of strategy, subordinate to it and in service to it.¹²

Stalin echoed these points in that same series of 1923 lectures, adding an element of the objective and material basis for strategy:

The most important task of tactics is to determine those ways and means, those forms and methods of struggle, which most correspond to the given moment and most accurately prepare strategic successes. Therefore the actions and results of tactics must be evaluated not in themselves, not from the point of view of their direct effect, but from the point of view of the tasks and possibilities of strategy. . . . in other words, tactics cannot be subordinated to the transient interests of the moment; they must not be determined by conceptions of direct political effect; and even more they must not lose their grounding and build castles in the sky—tactics must be devised in accord with their application to the tasks and possibilities of strategy.¹³

Stalin then introduced a particularly Marxist approach to strategy, one that drew on Marxism particular nature as a *materialist* philosophy—one that based itself on the concrete, material world—and a *dialectical* philosophy—one that presumed fundamental, directional change over time:

The means of waging war and the forms of war are not always the same. They depend upon conditions of development, and above all depend on the development of production. . . . The art of waging war in contem-

11 Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976, p. 128.

12 Stalin, 'Ob osnovakh leninizma: Lektsii, chitannye v Sverdlovskom universitete', April-May 1924, in Stalin, *Sochinenie*, vol. 6, Moscow: Gosizdat, 1947, p. 154.

13 I. V. Stalin, 'K voprosy o strategii i taktike russkikh kommunistov', in Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 5, Moscow: Gosizdat, 1947, pp. 167-8.

porary circumstances consists in mastering the forms of war and all the achievements of science in this sphere, rationally employing them, skilfully combining them or properly applying this or that form depending on the situation The same needs to be said on the forms of struggle in the political sphere. . . . The task of the Party consists in mastering all forms of struggle, rationally combining them on the field of battle, and skilfully intensifying the struggle using those forms which are particularly appropriate in the given situation.

That is, war and politics do not permit general laws. Waging war and waging politics both require sensitive attention to particular conditions of both a general historical period and a specific correlation of forces.

In making those points, Stalin stood on firm Marxist ground. Karl Marx's writing partner and self-taught military expert Friedrich Engels held that 'Nothing so depends on economic conditions as the army and navy. Weaponry, personnel, organization, tactics and strategy depend above all on the state of productive forces and on infrastructure . . . the entire organization of the army and its application of the means of combat, and along with that victory and defeat, turns out to depend on material, i.e. economic conditions'.¹⁴

In terms of Stalin's approach to strategy, however, he seems to have relied heavily on another Marxist insight: that friends and enemies were not determined by national boundaries but by social class. Identity and allegiance were fundamentally matters of economics. In Stalin's early *Marxism and the National Question*, he systematically downplayed the affective and cultural aspects of nationhood, instead emphasizing the economic origins of national identity.¹⁵

The emphasis on economic solidarity over national identity was standard for Marxists of Stalin's generation. The 1907 Stuttgart Congress of the Second International, which Vladimir Lenin attended along the leaders of Europe's socialist and Marxist parties, declared that 'the duty of the working class and particularly of its representatives in the parliaments to combat naval and military armaments with all their might, characterizing the class nature of bourgeois society and the motive for the maintenance of national antagonisms, and to refuse the means for these armaments. It is their duty to work for the education of the working-class youth in the spirit of the brotherhood of nations and of Socialism while developing their class consciousness'. Workers of the world were brothers; capitalists, regardless of nationality, were their enemies.

14 Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Duhring* (Leipzig, 1878), Part II, Chap. 3.

15 I. V. Stalin, *Markszizm i natsional'nyi vopros*, in Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 2, Moscow, Gosizdat, 1946, pp. 290-367.

Clausewitz famously spoke of war as characterized by a 'paradoxical trinity' of 'primordial violence, hatred, and enmity', of 'chance and probability' and of 'reason'.¹⁶ Each element was associated with the people at war, the military, and government. But for Clausewitz, those elements were presented as individually homogenous and part of the state at war. For a Marxist, by contrast, there could be no simple, undifferentiated population. Society was divided into classes, each with distinct and particular interests. When war took place between two states of fundamentally different social structures, the people would necessarily have divided loyalties. As a result, Lenin and his Bolsheviks took for granted that even while capitalist states would be fundamentally hostile to the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union would in turn enjoy the sympathy of those capitalist states' working classes.

There was an unpleasant corollary to Soviet sympathizers abroad. If the Soviets could count on working class friends beyond their borders, they also expected class enemies at home. During the First World War, the Bolsheviks had themselves been an enemy within the Russian Empire, as Lenin called for turning the world war into a civil war. This experience was further bolstered by the Russian Civil War (1918-1920). Like many other Bolsheviks, Stalin's first military experience was as part of a bitter and bloody civil war against ideological opponents. The war killed ten million Russians, five times more than the First World War. More than half of the Soviet communist party at the end of the war had joined during its course, and so it was their formative experience as Bolsheviks. As a result, the Bolsheviks consistently thought in the 1920s and 1930s of internal and external enemies as inextricably linked, and used the language and concepts of warfare to deal with domestic political opponents.¹⁷

This fixation on the primacy of economic over national motivations likely helps to explain one of Stalin's key misjudgments: underestimating the National Socialists in Germany and treating the German Socialist Party as the real threat to Soviet interests. The Nazis, in the Soviet view as capitalist-imperialists at heart, could never win the true loyalty of the German working class, as Nazi appeals to nationalism could not overcome economic interests. The German socialists, however, presented a greater threat to sway German workers away from communism, and so accordingly had to be treated as the greater threat.

Stalin's Great Terror of the late 1930s, recent research has shown, is best ex-

16 Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 89.

17 Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'The Civil War as Formative Experience', *Wilson Center Occasional Paper* #134, 1981.

plained as driven by the regime's concern over suspect elements of the population. While some of that repression of suspect individuals focused on individuals among the state and party elite, those made up only a small proportion of those actually killed and imprisoned by the Stalinist state. Most of the victims of state repression in Stalin's purges fell victim to so-called "mass operations" and "national operations," which did not rely on the cycles of denunciation and false confession typical among Soviet elites. Instead, those broader purges depended much more on simple status, and that status was clearly linked to the regime's perception of particular groups within the population as risks to national security. The mass operations targeted kulaks—formerly prosperous peasants dispossessed for their land—and previously-convicted criminals and ex-convicts. The national operations attacked instead those seen enemy aliens: Poles, Germans, and Japanese. The two categories alone accounted for nearly 700,000 executions in 1937 and 1938, leaving aside the better known but numerically less significant attacks on Soviet elites.¹⁸ The motivation for both operations was purging Soviet society of disloyal or dangerous elements as the threat of war appeared imminent. Indeed, Mark Harrison has argued that when faced with the danger of war, Stalin's *first* instinct was to turn to domestic repression even before rearmament. Repression could be carried out and improve Soviet security quickly, while rearmament required time to bear fruit.¹⁹

Even Stalin's purge of his own military elite, so clearly detrimental to Soviet performance on the battlefield in 1941, can be seen as at least in part as an effort to eliminate potential internal threats. As Stalin's right-hand man Viacheslav Molotov told an interviewer long after the war, take someone like [Mikhail] Tukhachevskii. If trouble started, which side would he have been on?"²⁰ While no single explanatory factor explains the pattern of Stalin's purges of the military, one clear result of Stalinist repression was to eliminate those with foreign roots. The pre-war Soviet military elite included a disproportionate number of exiles: officers whose roots were in Poland or the Baltic states. They were almost entirely eliminated from the Red Army's high command in 1937 and 1938. To illustrate, the public phase of the military purge came with the trial of Tukhachevskii, portrayed by the regime as the center of an anti-Soviet conspiracy. Alongside

18 Mark Iunge and Rol'f Binner, *Kak Terror stal 'Bol'shim': Sekretnyi prikaz No. 00447 i tekhnologiiia ego ispolneniia*, Moscow: AIRO-XX, 2003; Paul Hagenloh, *Stalin's Police: Public Order and Mass Repression in the USSR, 1926-1941*, Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press / Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.

19 Mark Harrison, 'The Dictator and Defense', pp. 1-30, in Mark Harrison, ed., *Guns and Rubles: The Defense Industry in the Stalinist State*, New Haven: Yale UP, 2008.

20 Felix Chuev, *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics*, Chicago: I. R. Dee, 1993, p. 26.

him were seven other members of the Soviet military elite; Tukhachevskii was the only ethnic Russian. The rest were Baltic, Jewish, or Ukrainian, sending a clear signal to the Red Army of the danger of internal enemies.

On 23 February 1942, in the midst of the Soviet winter counteroffensive which had already driven the Germans back from Moscow, Stalin took the opportunity of the 24th anniversary of the founding of the Red Army to reflect on the war to date and to assess the strategic situation of the Red Army and the Soviet Union. In harkening back to the creation of the Red Army, Stalin emphasized the precise circumstances of February 1918. The bitter civil war between Vladimir Lenin's Reds and their White opponents—the broad swatch of Russian political society opposed to the Bolsheviks—had not yet begun in earnest. Instead, that particular date had been chosen and Stalin chose to emphasize the fight against the World War I German invaders, who sought to benefit from the collapse of the Russian imperial army and seize Russian territory.

In discussing the moment, Stalin celebrated the achievements of the Soviet army and people, and the liberation of occupied territory. Significantly, though, Stalin pointed to five “permanently operating factors” which would determine the outcome of the war: “the stability of the rear, the moral spirit of the army, the quantity and quality of divisions, the armaments of the army, and the organizational capability of the army's high command.” Stalin's remarks are noteworthy on several counts. First of all, they could hardly be based on the actual factors which produced Soviet victory, for Stalin spoke more than three years before Soviet victory actually materialized. Instead, his list expressed both his hopes and his evaluation of history while emphasizing *internal* qualities of the Soviet Union.

Traditional measures of military strength—mass, material, and leadership—came last in Stalin's list. Instead, Stalin looked first to *political* questions: the reliability of the Soviet domestic population and the army. Here, he was looking to the immediate and more distant past. The bitter experience of the first few months of the war gave Stalin ample cause to worry about both his people and his army. The fabled but real welcome by some Soviet citizens to the German army reflected how little reason Stalin had given his people, particularly those of the recently-annexed Western borderlands, to owe him any loyalty whatsoever. Likewise, the mass surrenders of Soviet troops when faced with German encirclement forced him to question the reliability of his soldiers. Looking back further, the stability of the home front and the reliability of the army were precisely what had led to the defeat of imperial Russia in the First World War. While the tsar's armies had suffered defeats, they remained in the field and fighting effectively, tying down ninety German divisions, when revolution erupted at home in Petrograd. Revolution quickly spread to Russia's soldiers, and the imperial army

collapsed over the course of 1917, enabling the Bolshevik seizure of power. This concern over domestic stability helps to understand some seemingly counterproductive strategic decisions. When resources and manpower were scarce, Stalin expended men and time to carry out the mass deportation of the Chechen population of the North Caucasus on slim evidence of collaboration with the Germans. If internal subversion was a key fear, Stalin's decision makes more sense.

Both ideology and concrete experience led Stalin to emphasize the centrality of domestic stability to victory in war. Stalin echoed these sentiments in a famous toast at a reception for the Red Army's high command in the wake of victory over Germany on 24 May 1945, published the next day in *Pravda*. He raised his glass specifically to the *Russian* people, not to the Soviet people as a whole. He particularly noted their "clear minds, strong character, and their patience [*terpenie*]. His justification for celebrating Russians, not Soviets, is worth quoting at length:

Our government made more than a few mistakes. We had moments when we were in a desperate position in 1941 and 1942, when our army was retreating, abandoning our native villages and towns of Ukraine, Belorussia, Moldavia, Leningrad oblast, the Baltics, the Karelian-Finnish Republic; abandoning them because there was no other choice. Another people might have said to its government: you have not met our expectations, step aside, we will set up a new government to conclude a peace with Germany and leave us in peace. The Russian people did not do this, for they believed in the correctness of their government's policy, and made the sacrifices to provide for the destruction of Germany. And this trust of the Russian nation in the Soviet government became the decisive force which provided for the historical victory over the enemy of humanity, over fascism.²¹

Stalin's use of Marxism as a tool of analysis meant that not only were domestic politics inherent tied to foreign policy, but that relations even among capitalist nations were dominated by Marxist considerations. In 1946, in what is generally known as his pre-election speech, he elucidated the causes of the First and Second World Wars, with implications for what he expected to see in the post-war world: inherent contradictions and clashes as capitalist powers sought to divide the world among them. Echoing the diagnosis that Lenin made in his 1917 *Imperialism of the state of the world and the causes of the First World War*,²² Stalin found that

The fact is that the unbalanced development of capitalist countries usually leads in the course of time to a sharp break in the equilibrium of the world

21 Stalin speech at Kremlin reception, 24 May 1945: Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 15 (Moscow: Pisatel', 1997), p. 228.

22 Vladimir Lenin, *Imperializm kak noveishii etap kapitalizma*, Petrograd: Zhizn' i Znanie, 1917.

capitalist system, in which that group of capitalist countries which considered themselves deprived of natural resources and markets for their goods usually make an attempt to change the situation and repartition “spheres of influence” in their favor through the application of armed force. As a result of that, the capitalist world splits into two armed camps with war between them.”²³

While Stalin was speaking specifically of the causes behind the First and Second World Wars, his logic was quite clearly not limited to the past. The logic of Marxism still applied even after the emergence of the United States as the world’s dominant capitalist power; capitalist states were inherently prone to internecine wars, and Soviet strategy should take note of that fact.

Stalin made this point explicit in one of the final programmatic statements of his life: *Economic Problems of Socialism*, published in 1952. Even well into the Cold War, after the 1949 creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and a western-aligned Federal Republic of Germany, Stalin still insisted that the key fact of world politics was rivalry between capitalist powers:

Some comrades claim that as a result of the development of new international conditions after the Second World War, wars between capitalist countries are no longer inevitable. They consider that contradictions between the socialist camp and the capitalist camp are stronger than the contradictions between capitalist countries, that the United States has sufficiently subordinated other capitalist countries to itself that they will not fight amongst themselves and weaken each other, that the leading figures of the capitalism have learned too well from the experience of the two world wars, bringing serious damage to all the capitalist world, to allow themselves to again entangle the capitalist countries in a war amongst themselves, that in view of all this, wars between capitalist countries are no longer inevitable.

These comrades are mistaken. They see external appearances, superficial details, but do not see those deeper forces, which although acting invisibly now, will all the same determine the course of events.²⁴

That is, deeper economic forces would inevitably force a resurgent Germany and Japan to renew the conflict among capitalist countries for resources and markets.

Stalin’s strategic judgment here was clearly mistaken; his own policies had engineered cooperation among the world’s leading capitalist powers. The point,

23 Stalin speech at pre-election meeting of Stalin district of Moscow, 9 February 1946: Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 16, Moscow: Pisatel’, 1997, p. 5.

24 Stalin, *Ekonomicheskie problemy sotsializma v SSSR*, in Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 16, p. 176.

however, is not that Stalin was wrong but *why* he was wrong: Marxism drove him to an ideologically based conclusions that empirical evidence of a coalescing Western coalition against Moscow could not overcome. Stalin's behavior and tactics might therefore have been Protean, twisting to match particular circumstances. The ideological basis, however, for his strategic judgments about the Soviet Union's long-term interests and the environment in which the Soviet Union would operate were not nearly so flexible. Stalin's Marxism provided a consistent set of principles that steered his behavior.



Yalta summit 9 February 1945 with Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin.
Photograph from the Army Signal Corps Collection in the U.S. National Archives

Cold War Strategy and Practice

By KENNETH WEISBRODE

The Cold War was not a traditional conflict or even a discrete historical event. It was, instead, a catalyst and an interregnum that occurred during a longer, transformative period when the former colonial world, its economies, and its societies were intimately re-integrated with those of Europe and North America, which, in turn, saw their own integration reach a climax. In theory, the 'Cold War' was an armed contest that, by the early 1960s, was managed diplomatically by its two main adversaries – the Soviet Union and the United States – and their allies and clients until it was mutually terminated by the very same management process about two decades later, in Europe, where it had begun. But elsewhere such management that existed often came by way of hot wars. Thus, in practice, the Cold War was bifurcated but less East/West than North/South. Bifurcation meant survival; but it also bought time and resources for many non-European societies to reorient themselves from a pre-industrial to an industrial (and in some cases, post-industrial) world, that, by the final two decades of the twentieth century, had begun to adapt technologically and culturally from the universalist ideologies that Vladimir Lenin and Woodrow Wilson each pretended to substitute for territorial empires as the principal agents of global integration. The Cold War supplied a facile superstructure for integration which was not without its strategic and practical uses. Considered retrospectively, however, such integration took place notwithstanding Leninism, Wilsonianism, or the Cold War, which all featured a certain misalignment between strategy and practice.¹ One reason for that was the persistence of imperial logic, and imperialism itself, as Europeans became the vassals of self-appointed liberators who at the same time declared a mission to liberate the rest of the world from Europeans, and from one another.

1 Compare Geoffrey Barraclough, *An Introduction to Contemporary History*. London: C. A. Watts, 1964.

I

Understanding how strategies, or, more accurately, policies that might pass for ‘strategic’, were applied in these circumstances requires an introduction to their history. Generally, there is a consensus among historians that the Cold War as it was known during the second half of the twentieth century ended sometime in the 1980s with the Soviet Union and the socioeconomic model it represented – Marxist-Leninist – giving way to the main alternative, market capitalism and liberal democracy. When and how that end came about is contested, but not nearly as contested as the Cold War’s origins. What is less contested is the fact most of humanity survived. Whether survival happened because of a fortunate conjunction of actors and policies that took advantage of similar alignments of strategic conditions, or mainly from simple luck, is also still a matter of some debate, however. In sum, there is at least as much disagreement over the Cold War’s definition as over its periodisation. Knowing this fact is the starting point to passing judgement on Cold War strategic practice.²

It is customary to date the Cold War to the second half of the Second World War or to its immediate aftermath as a political impasse between the Americans and the British, on one side, and the Soviet Union, on the other, over the succession to Nazi-dominated Central Europe, including, of course, Germany. That was what George Orwell, who coined the term, and later Bernard Baruch and Walter Lippmann, who popularised it, had presumed. At first the impasse was not armed; it was, as its best-known advocate, the American diplomat George Kennan, liked to describe it, primarily political and propagandistic. But with the Korean War and the establishment of two armed alliances – NATO and the Warsaw Pact – the Cold War became militarised. Even so, the impasse remained a shorthand for something larger: an ideological conflict that dated back at least to the Russian Revolution of 1917. When Winston Churchill proclaimed the Cold War in his Iron Curtain speech of 1946, he had that clash in mind and the ideological tyranny that Soviet power demanded. Yet neither Lenin, nor Wilson, for that matter, emerged from the ether a generation earlier, only to re-emerge in 1946. For the ideological bifurcation of Left versus Right, of freedom versus tyranny, of democracy versus despotism, of equality versus liberty, and so on, dates back at least to 1789 and the crystallisation of modern ideology in the French Revolution. Cold War continuities mattered, then, as much as revolutionary ruptures. But most, in practice, had less to do with world-historical forc-

2 In this essay, ‘practice’ refers to both how strategies were made and how they were (or were not) executed.

es than with nationalism and, to an even lesser extent, with loyalty to a regime in power.

The Cold War meant some or all of these things during the second half of the twentieth century when it was ‘waged’ throughout the world. To win or lose it therefore meant different things to different people, as well as different things to the same people, all at once. The conflict was less over meanings, however, than it was over whether or not it was possible to find practical compromises in a war of ideas understood by way of set principles and values.³ The Cold War was fought in chanceries, jungles, boardrooms, bedrooms, union halls, streets, kitchens; and on battlefields, oceans, university campuses, the Moon, and many other places besides. In most of those settings it is fair to say that the Cold War was, at any moment, a theoretically unlimited war of attrition. That is, each antagonist sought less to kill or convert the enemy than to stop from being killed or converted.

That the Cold War was experienced spatially as a ‘total’ war is significant for understanding its other main existential dimension: that it held for the first time in human history the capacity to destroy in an instant nearly all life on Earth. Nuclear weaponry, it has been argued, kept the Cold War cold, at least in Europe and between the two superpowers. However, that is more of a theoretical than a practical claim because nuclear capacities and threats neither prevented war altogether during this period, and may even have prompted and prolonged conventional conflicts. The fact that the USA and USSR moreover succeeded in avoiding a nuclear exchange, however close they may have come on at least one, and perhaps two, occasions, is not as significant as the fact that the vast body of nuclear strategy (described in the next sections) was neither fully implemented or even really understood by most main actors. Nuclear strategy has even been called into question for appearing to be ‘an oxymoron’.⁴ In practice, most of nuclear strategy had conditional rather than causal value in deciding the course of the Cold War. Rather, it was politics and economics which did. Culture and ideology came a close second.

Understanding Cold War strategic practice therefore includes a virtual dimension, which drew together political cultures, ideologies, and material as well

3 John Middleton Murry, *The Free Society*. London: Andrew Dakers, 1948, 13ff.

4 Colin S. Gray, ‘The Nuclear Age and the Cold War’. In John Andreas Olsen and Colin S. Gray, eds., *The Practice of Strategy: From Alexander the Great to the Present*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 237. See also Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*. New York: St. Martin’s, 1981, xviii (‘a contradiction in terms’), 48, 118–19.

as spiritual realities.⁵ It is not enough to trace strategic practice in a succession of adaptations and refutations of prevailing policies for attaining sometimes contradictory strategic aims. Most policies were part of a paradox. To understand nuclear war strategy also means knowing that no nuclear war has taken place and yet, at the same time, that preparations for such a war consumed millions of hours and military budgets for the better part of four decades. One must further understand that the war of ideas meant much more, in theory and in practice, than a battle for the hearts and minds of clients and puppets; that it also meant coming to accept on a daily and even hourly basis the fact that it could all be over at any moment, either by accident or by design, and therefore that civilisation itself had reached a perverse condition that nevertheless seemed to most people at the time almost certain to be permanent. And finally, one must understand that in many, if not most, parts of the world, industrial economies would, despite the high costs of the Cold War, succeed in modernising and urbanising agrarian societies, notably outside Europe but also in the poorer parts of Europe, and to extend and promote a new mass industrial consciousness. On balance, the Cold War served as a costly, contradictory, and sometimes confusing means to that larger end.

II

A further spatio-temporal refinement is necessary for placing the Cold War in political and military context. The usual three-part military division – strategy, operations, and tactics – is complicated, as already noted, by the Cold War’s global and varied nature, without an agreed-upon scope or chronology. So, for example, while it is possible to claim that both Lenin and Wilson had advanced something like a grand strategy or a strategic doctrine, neither they nor their successors were able to perfect any such strategy that took into account the practical limitations of domestic politics and international ‘geopolitics’. The same was true of other powers. During the Great War, the British and French as well as the Americans had established specialised planning units to design postwar political relationships, including the redrawing of borders.⁶ This also took place during the Second World War; in fact, for some like the US even before enter-

5 See Beatrice Heuser, *Nuclear Mentalities? Strategies and Beliefs in Britain, France and the FRG*. Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998, esp. chps. 1 and 3.

6 See Volker Prott, *The Politics of Self-Determination: Remaking Territories and National Identities in Europe, 1917–1923*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, chp. 1, esp. 50ff on self-determination.

ing the war. Strategic planning in this respect, as at the major diplomatic conferences – Versailles, Lausanne, Tehran, Yalta, etc. – exhibited an operational character, with strategic operations substituting for contending grand strategies. To the extent the latter were discussed openly at all, the main actors agreed to disagree (over decolonisation, for example, or over ‘self-determination’ in occupied areas), and turned instead to negotiating theatre operations, timetables, and, most often, the shape and flavour of international, that is, combined, administration, all of which became simultaneously tactical and operational substitutes for grand strategies much as nuclear arms control would do during the later Cold War.

In practice, the lack of a clear and consistent doctrine for waging the Cold War meant that it evolved in an improvised fashion for nearly all its major participants. Here, then, it serves to identify six principal interrelated (and sometimes duplicative) ‘grand’ strategies in more or less chronological order, followed by three operational strategies by way of introducing the practical implementation of those strategies in the next two sections, below.

The first and most enduring strategy of the Cold War was political subversion. Communist and anti-Communist parties were set up to defeat one another, by the ballot box as well as by violence. Communists, Socialists, Christian and Social Democrats, and even Liberals all made strategic and practical use of transnational relationships among political parties and associated organisations. Whether and to what degree these parties took orders from Moscow or Washington (or anywhere else) varied a good deal by circumstances; and several if not most of these parties had significant minds and powers of their own to determine who took orders from whom. But that historical point here is less significant than the fact that the initial and probably the most lasting strategic element of the Cold War was the transnational nature of party politics and of ideological and cultural influence, a trend that began in Europe but quickly took root (mainly during the interwar years) in other parts of the world.⁷ The main aspect of subversion, of course, was its indivisibility. For as Stalin famously pointed out to Milovan Djilas, whoever controls the political system on a given territory determines its ideology, its social system, its culture, and so on.

The second strategy, reified by the Second World War, was one of prepon-

7 With a long legacy: it was not necessarily more ironic that Chiang Kai-shek, Hosni Mubarak, and other paragons of the ‘West’ received military training in the Soviet Union than the fact that Ho Chi Minh and his fellow patriots demanded Indochinese independence in 1945 with a document modelled on the American Declaration of Independence.

derance. Theoretically, it was not inconsistent with a belief in the balance of power.⁸ The Cold War, to repeat, was a war of attrition, so it was natural for each side to try to outspend, out-build, and out-compete the other(s) in everything from ballistic missiles to consumer goods. The problem with preponderance, however, was that its maximal discourse was at odds with optimal reality. In other words, it did not take long for governments to realise that they could easily spend themselves into insolvency, or, better yet, to force the other side to do so. This was the premise of Solarium Project, begun in 1953 by Dwight D. Eisenhower, and, to the extent that military spending lost public support, of the military defeats in Vietnam and Afghanistan, and then of the renewed arms and technology race of the late 1970s and early 1980s, which culminated in the de facto end of the Cold War, at least militarily.

The third strategy was the counterpoint and complement to the second, namely arms control and, later, disarmament. Another legacy of the interwar period, this strategy appeared at the outset of the Cold War with the doomed Baruch Plan for the multilateral control of nuclear armaments alongside a ‘transparency’ regime. There were more failed attempts throughout the 1950s to impose some control on the arms race, and they succeeded finally but rather modestly with the first such agreement, the Limited Test Ban Treaty of 1963.⁹ That it took the Cuban Missile Crisis to seal such an agreement, along with other measures such as the installation of a hotline between the Kremlin and the White House, was significant. The Cuban Missile Crisis confirmed the need for such management of the arms race; it also made each side, but especially the Soviets, determined never again to be placed in so vulnerable a position.¹⁰ Thenceforth arms control would become its own military theatre, as it were, where the Cold War was waged in an increasingly arcane yet nevertheless consequential series of negotiations over nuclear arsenals and delivery systems.

The fourth strategy was the antithesis of the third and the extension of the first and second beyond Europe in what by the 1950s had come to be called

8 Martin Wight, ‘The Balance of Power’, in *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics*, eds. Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1966), 158–59, 165ff.

9 The strategic value of which, among other things, was to harden the Sino-Soviet split.

10 A typical example from the late 1970s of the fixation with such comparisons may be seen in John M. Collins, *Imbalance of Power: An Analysis of Shifting U.S.-Soviet Military Strengths*. San Rafael, CA: Presidio Press, 1978, 228: ‘NATO is quantitatively outclassed by the Warsaw Pact in almost every category, and is losing its qualitative edge in several respects that count.’ Being the subject of a fixation did not make them any less true.

‘the Third World’, namely insurgency (and counter-insurgency). It resembled a classic imperial rivalry whereby portions of the map, notably highly ‘strategic’ portions such as straits, mountain passes, and so on, were claimed by one side or another. This strategy of course possessed antithetical complexities of its own, as the more gifted of Third World rulers – Nasser of Egypt, Sukarno of Indonesia, Nehru of India, Castro of Cuba, et al. – became adept manipulators of the logic of *tertius gaudens*, in multiple dimensions, as it were, because their puppeteering involved not only two superpower antagonists but also, by the 1960s, China, not to mention multiple, interactive rivalries in their own regions, and, sometimes, extending to or emanating from the domestic politics of the superpowers as well.

The fifth and six strategies were opposing twins, as well as extensions of all four of the above: rollback and coexistence. Strictly speaking, both of these were operational, not grand, strategies, or, even more strictly speaking, policies. However, in the thinking of the time, each had an overarching significance and meaning, akin to a sphere of influence, which determined rather than followed policy imperatives, from the building of overseas military bases to defence expenditure to propaganda. Sometimes the imperatives would clash: during the 1956 Hungarian uprising, which coincided with both the Suez adventure and the re-election campaign of Dwight D. Eisenhower (premised on stable continuity), when the role of Radio Free Europe and its own ostensible campaign of rollback were called into question. But by and large the two strategies coexisted in a kind of dialectic where the excesses of each were invoked to champion the virtues of the other even though, in practice, the division of Europe into spheres of influence coexisted with the opposite beyond Europe, and with or more often without the legitimate support of the people living in them. The irony of that pattern came from the widespread belief that the Western bloc proponents of coexistence imagined it to be long-term, even permanent, while its Eastern proponents saw it as mainly a short-term opportunity to rearm for the long-term, quasi-permanent struggle against world capitalism. It turned out to be the reverse in practice, as described below in section three.

In the abovementioned Solarium Project, the Eisenhower administration purported to bury rollback strategy with another, mixed approach that combined doctrines of deterrence and containment. To a large degree, this mixed, operational strategy (summarised in a document labelled NSC 162/2) governed the main US, and therefore the main Western, approach to the European Cold War, at least, whereas for the Soviet Union, as noted, a rollback strategy persisted operationally, in Europe and beyond. ‘Containment’ then, as initially elaborated by

Kennan, was a brilliant but rather simple slogan in the guise of a grand strategy. In theory, containment was little more (for Kennan, at least) than a plan of subversion, using the weaknesses of Soviet society to the West's advantage through the clever manipulation of direct conflict by provocation and postponement, or one might say, adjusting the temperature on the deep freezer of war. In that respect, the rollback-coexistence dialectic took on a different, more subversive meaning that many people realised at the time. However, in practice, as already noted, this was a distinction without a difference because actors on each side in the Cold War continued to entertain the possibility of rollback, directly as well as indirectly, just as the American Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was careful to distinguish a '*capacity* for massive retaliation' from any precise plan thereof; and, at the same time, to accept or at least to tolerate the possibility of coexistence. That was another way of saying that the aim was deliberately to buy time by waging a permanent crisis.

Operationally, therefore, Cold War strategy was ambivalent. Each side developed plans and methods to defeat the aims of the other while, for the most part, trying to avoid a direct conflict. Where direct conflict did occur, each side tried its best to limit that conflict, or at least limit its own, public role in the conflict so as to avoid a First World War-style 'escalation'. Where escalation did occur or threaten to occur (as in the October War of 1973, see below), each side tried its best to divert or deflect conflict elsewhere. Diversion in practice tended to draw another quasi-dialectical relationship between the exercise of containment and deterrence. Yet there again, in practice, the benefits were more ambivalent than real as each side came to deter or contain itself ('tying one hand behind our back', as American commanders said in Vietnam) in order to reassure itself that the other side would be contained or deterred accordingly. Strategies of deterrence and containment advanced their mutual contradictions in practice by compelling restraint in action and excess in inaction, as much directly as indirectly on the part of each superpower. For other powers, particularly 'revolutionary' states such as Cuba, Iran, or North Korea, the reverse logic applied: excess in action begat restrained inaction by their actual, former, or aspiring patrons. Therefore, as noted, most Cold War conflict was limited in theory but unlimited in its practical capacity.

A discussion of the three operational strategies or dimensions of the Cold War – political, military, and geostrategic – follows below in their European and non-European settings.

III

The Cold War emerged in Europe from the destruction of the Great War and its dismantling of four empires. A European succession struggle came to include contending concepts of sovereignty, to which were added during the interwar period a contest of pre-existing geopolitical images-*cum*-ideologies – Atlantism and Eurasianism – as the primary means for integrating the power and the interests of the two main extra-European powers – The United States and the Soviet Union – into that succession struggle. In practice, succession was divided from the start and remained divided during the breakdown of peace in Europe in the 1930s and then again by wartime necessities. As soon as Soviet power recovered from the shock of 1941 and came to hold its own along the Eastern Front, a process that coincided over the course of late 1942 and 1943 with the imposition of American military supremacy over the remaining theatres of the war, the struggle over succession united a debate over postwar Germany with a larger debate over the international system. The allies, including Britain, which remained a superpower on paper until the late 1950s, agreed to disagree on both subjects, but in practice, they accommodated one another's main interests after a dangerous hiccup in 1947–48. There would be further hiccups in the 1950s and a rather large one in 1962 (recalling that the Cuban Missile Crisis was also the culmination of the Berlin Crisis), but then the German question would stall at a grotesque wall. Once again in practice, the division of Germany masked a latent effort by Europeans, beginning with Germans, to seize control of their own postwar future. It was they who led that effort, starting in the middle 1960s, gathering strength a decade later during the so-called era of negotiations, and finally succeeding in the subsequent decade with the destruction of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Only then did Mikhail Gorbachev decide to reverse the Brezhnev Doctrine and allow a dissolution of the Soviet sphere of influence in Europe. With the partial exceptions of Gaullism in the 1960s, and Eurocommunism a decade-or-so later, the West never faced a similar decision.

One sees in Europe therefore an organic process of political integration and disintegration throughout the Cold War in which the overriding strategic concept was not based on Leninism-versus-Wilsonianism or on any other related ideological contest, but instead on a shared if not always explicit belief in a geopolitical expression (or, as Europeans like to say, 'identity') to which Americans, Soviets, and even the British came to accept as a progressive reality by the last third of the twentieth century. That is the setting in which the abovementioned arcane plans, deployments, and negotiations over nuclear and other armaments

took place, and in which the Cold War really happened in and over Europe.

Nevertheless, when one speaks of Cold War strategy, one usually means nuclear strategy, for which greater Europe (including North America and the Soviet sphere) was in the cockpit. The reason was obvious: the acquisition of nuclear weapons made conventional war too dangerous and risky in Europe. Strategic rivalry there was diverted to the negotiating table where, as noted, arms control served as both a direct means of limiting or reducing those risks and an indirect proxy theatre of conflict which tended to take place officially within as much as between superpowers.

The nuclear subset of Cold War strategy has produced an impressive and vast record of thought.¹¹ In the United States, for example, ‘defence intellectuals’ based at the RAND Corporation and in various universities had an important degree of influence over the discourse with which nuclear weaponry was understood. Once trendy terms like ‘mutual assured destruction’, ‘balance of terror’, ‘throw weight’, ‘counterforce/countervalue’, ‘second strike capability’, ‘window of vulnerability’, ‘zero option’, ‘overkill’, and so on nearly all proliferated by the mental experimentation of social and other scientists, particularly mathematicians, physicists, and economists who aimed to develop behavioural models of optimal precision.¹² In practice, deterrent models were of some value: they retained confidence by emphasising and elaborating the opposite, that is, defence measured in degrees of vulnerability. They resembled, in other words, a ‘pure bluff’ which was ‘eminently sustainable and indeed desirable’.¹³

Intellectual onanism did not always enhance actual military planning. The reason was the inherent perversity of strategy in the nuclear age. Planners needed to know how to fight a war that, in Ronald Reagan’s words, could not be won and must never be fought. They had moreover to know how to win such a war and therefore how to plan for it. That perversion led to a number of strategic paradoxes. There was, for example, the asymmetry in NATO and Soviet defence policies, with the former relying mainly on cellular redundancy (and therefore vulnerability) and the latter relying on defensive hardening. There was also the inverse relationship of better technology and tactics with strategic weakness,

11 A good selection of interviews with thinkers may be found at: https://openvault.wgbh.org/collections/war_peace/interviews.

12 One of them, Thomas Schelling, won a Nobel Prize – for Economics, not Peace.

13 Andrew Edwards to Michael Quinlan, 20 June 1988, quoted in Tanya Ogilvie-White, ed., *On Nuclear Deterrence: The Correspondence of Sir Michael Quinlan*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2011, 100.

and, once arms control was added to the calculus, greater diplomatic exposure and perhaps even greater vulnerability. There was the upending of geography with the advent of the triad, whereby uncertainty resulted in targeting that was less predictable, and yet, was, by the logic of mutually assured destruction, somehow more stable.¹⁴ And there was a differentiated set of strategies among nuclear powers, with smaller ones adhering to something called the minimum (and/or the extended) deterrent, but which arguably brought about a renewed determination by both superpowers to focus their own deterrents closer to home, that is in Europe, with the deployment of intermediate range nuclear forces in the late 1970s. That deployment in turn brought about a final crisis in strategic practice, leading, ultimately, to the end of the Cold War in the middle of the 1980s, or at least, as already noted, an end to the European aspect of it.

For all its paradoxes and asymmetries, nuclear strategy was ostensibly consistent with non-nuclear, i.e. conventional, strategy in having a doubly inverse relationship: for NATO, nuclear deterrence was designed to compensate for conventional inferiority with forces there serving as a 'trip-wire'; for the Warsaw Pact, it was designed more for a 'warfighting' purpose as the complement to conventional superiority.¹⁵ Like the inverse defensive relationship between redundancy and hardening, offensive asymmetry mattered more in theory than in practice and did not, in retrospect, really rise to the level of a strategic competition.¹⁶ Reduced to their most basic expression, the doctrines or policies could seem obvious, as in one popularly attributed to Marshal Ye Jianying that went something like this: 'if Americans and Russians continue to confront each other directly, they both will lose. The way to win is for one to draw the other out as far as possible on a limb, then stand back and watch it break'. Simply put,

14 See, e.g., Julien J. LeBourgeois, 'What is the Soviet Navy Up To?' *The Navy* (Australia) 40 (1) (February-March-April 1978), 37–43. The 'triad' may refer to the combination of delivery systems (bombers, missiles, and submarines) as well as to weaponry (strategic nuclear, theatre or 'tactical' nuclear, and conventional).

15 See the essays by Andrew Lambert, Roger Reese, and David Stone in this volume; and J. M. Mackintosh, *Strategy and Tactics of Soviet Foreign Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962, chps. 8, 22; Derek Leebaert, ed., *Soviet Military Thinking*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981, chps. 3, 4, and 8.

16 The same may be said for efforts to transform the defensive calculus with anti-ballistic missile programmes. These became prohibited by treaty even though the prospect of their development, notably the Americans' Strategic Defence Initiative, possessed significant offensive (albeit fictional) capacity because the Soviets apparently believed such a programme existed. However, according to an infamous remark by an American defence official, T. K. Jones, a better means for defending against a nuclear attack actually did exist: a shovel.

contradictory but not necessarily competitive strategies coexisted with one another and with an ostensible test of wills; but in the meantime the West outspent the Soviet bloc, again, in the European cockpit, at least.

The degree to which a sense of stability in Europe compelled the opposite sense beyond Europe is another matter for historical conjecture. There was no real strategic 'linkage' between the two theatres in this respect, despite most assertions to the contrary in contemporary discourse, notably from the mouth of Henry Kissinger, whose geopolitics more than any other Westerner mirrored the Soviets' spider web logic of the 'correlation of forces'. In practice, linkage came to resemble a negotiation with oneself, not so much over interests as over negotiability.¹⁷ Thus, there is a case to be made for armed interventions having taken place as a feature of Third World modernisation that triggered voluntary and largely mistaken military reactions motivated primarily by rival superpowers. Yet, at the same time, it would be wrong to discount the role of Third World states and leaders themselves in drawing the attention and the resources of the superpowers. Even in the Second World, one sees putative client states becoming masterful in that respect: for example, in the career of Walter Ulbricht in East Germany. Just as there would have been no Berlin Wall built without him, there probably would have been no NATO (with the 'O') without the actions of Kim Il Sung in Korea, and no Western German rearmament in NATO and no Warsaw Pact without the actions of Ho Chi Minh and his forces at Dien Bien Phu.

Drawing causal linkages may have limited operational and normative value, but the analytical value is considerable.¹⁸ There is also a strong case to be made for such historical interdependence extending across regions, but it does not translate easily to or from strategic interdependence. Take, for example, the infamous 'domino theory' first mentioned by Eisenhower with regard to Southeast Asia. In attempting to explain the exercise of containment, the American president made an analogy to falling dominoes. It is about as prosaic a strategic concept as there is, but it was useful heuristically for separating the mind and motivations from the superpowers to those of the putative dominoes. To say that men like Fidel Castro or Sukarno took advantage of what they perceived was strategic ambivalence on the part of their superpower patrons is axiomatic; but this does not have the same meaning as claiming that their actions created this condition of ambivalence. One may ask, then, how strategically significant

17 I am grateful to Thomas Simons for this point.

18 See W. Scott Thompson, *Power Projection: A Net Assessment of U.S. and Soviet Capabilities*. New York: National Strategy Information Center, 1978.

the Pershing II deployments in Europe were as against the provision of Stinger missiles to the Afghan mujahideen by way of China in the strains each placed on Soviet military spending and priorities. Or, as against the simultaneous 'confidence-building measures' of each side, from the Stockholm disarmament conference starting in 1984 to something as simple but significant as Ronald Reagan's keeping his promise not to 'crow' following the Soviets' allowing the departure of Pentacostals who had been given refuge in the US embassy in Moscow the previous year. Or, as against the promotion of a human rights agenda within the rubric of a geopolitical agreement (the Helsinki Final Act of 1975). These are all valid historical interrelationships to consider. But there were few Cold War strategists who thought and calculated in such a way, and there is little evidence for their thinking to have been put into practice, didactically otherwise, to any meaningful degree.¹⁹

IV

There was a third geopolitical concept or ideology alongside Atlanticism and Eurasianism which played an important role in explaining Cold War linkages and interrelationships. For lack of a better term, it may be called Mahanism after the turn-of-the-century strategist, Alfred Thayer Mahan. It also divided the world strategically into continents but its perspective was more versatile and less centred than the other two isms on culture. Mahanism is best known for its emphasis on naval supremacy, but it is important that, again unlike Atlanticism and Eurasianism, it did not advance supremacy for its own sake, but rather as a means to ensure the life, specifically the economic life, of the nation. Mahanism in that sense was akin to Gaullism – or the related vogue term during the middle to late 1970s, 'trilateralism' – inasmuch as it was based on an essential and persistent yet intimate difference, even separation, of continents, notably Europe and North America. It had been significantly enhanced by the development of air power and maps using the polar projection, even when it advocated a pattern of geopolitical coordination with the language of interdependence. Atlanticism aimed to combine and integrate those two regions; Eurasianism aimed to combine and integrate Europe and Asia; Mahanism imagined the three distinct regions interpenetrating one another's politics for relative advantage. For that interdependence, their psychological separation remained a necessity.

¹⁹ Two notable American exceptions are the aforementioned NSC 162/2, and *Discriminate Deterrence: Report of The Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy*, co-chaired by Fred C. Iklé and Albert Wohlstetter. Washington, DC: January 1988.

All three isms matter because they conditioned the thinking and therefore the decisions of Cold War actors. In contrast to most of the nuclear strategies discussed above, such territorial thinking was proactive and even preventive with what imperialists used to call ‘forward’ policies. How else can one explain Stalin’s obsession with extending Soviet power into Europe by establishing a ‘buffer zone’ than with a territory-obsessed mind? How else can one explain Harry Truman’s decision to make NATO a ‘permanent alliance’ and to move his country’s strategic ‘perimeter’ well beyond his country’s Atlantic and Pacific coastlines? And how else can one explain the terminology of nuclear weaponry: ‘intercontinental’ as being synonymous with ‘strategic’? A ‘continent’ is an invented abstraction, but it is real, not mythical. It serves as a reminder that the Cold War was less a universal contest than one that took place geopolitically between and within regions.

In practice, as already discussed, Atlanticism and Eurasianism and their associated mental maps brought about the organised subjection of the Cold War to a larger end in Europe, namely, whether Europe would be able to say it was ‘whole and free’ or permanently divided into political and cultural zones associated with one or more extra-European powers. Meanwhile there was yet another significant ism, *tiers-mondisme*, or Third World-ism. The Third World, the previously trendy term for what is today just as fashionably called the Global South, referred to the mainly post-colonial territories of Africa, Asia, and Latin America: poorer, weaker, and more chaotic, apparently, but more deserving of praise, attention, and sympathy, than the ‘First’ or the ‘Second’ worlds. Dividing the strategic mind of the world in this way was hardly new. For almost as long as European imperialism existed, the concepts of centre and periphery acquired what seemed then to be yet another dialectical relationship by which the leading imperial powers alternately transferred and exploited their European rivalries to non-European regions where local powers did their best to manipulate, exploit, or otherwise resist being harmed too severely by those rivalries. Viewing the global Cold War as an extension of this pattern is natural but, at the same time, exaggerated. For, as noted, the overriding strategic nature of the Cold War and thus its relationship to geopolitics were not direct or indirect but ambivalent; that is, both at once, and therefore not really either, in practice. For as much as the Third World seemed the victim of Cold War antagonism, it was also at the centre of strategic calculus inasmuch as that calculus at times resembled both a ‘seesaw’ and a ‘merry-go-round’.²⁰

20 Cf. Wight, ‘The Balance of Power’, 157, 161–63.

It was the imprecise and ambivalent relationship of the post-colonial world to the Cold War that accounted for the abovementioned improvisational strategies. The results reverberated back and forth, to and from Europe, in a manner that not many people predicted. Thus, the Cold War in Europe was militarised as a result of the 1950 invasion of South Korea by the North. Nearly half a decade later, that process was brought to completion with West German rearmament in NATO as a result of the 1954 Geneva conference and the failure of the European Defence Community. (The conference, incidentally, had been called first to settle outstanding claims from the Korean War but quickly became preoccupied with Indochina.) Likewise, the proliferation of what Eisenhower called ‘brush fire wars’, i.e., counter-insurgencies throughout the Third World in the 1960s, may be ascribed to the post-Cuban Missile Crisis stabilisation that occurred between the Soviet Union and the United States in Europe, but that was not the only reason. Most of the insurgencies of this period had local root causes and were as much the result of political disruptions during decolonisation as they were of any sort of strategic transfer from the global centre to the periphery. That is not to say that interference and sometimes the direct intervention of outsiders in these conflicts did not matter, usually by prolonging them and sometimes, in rarer cases, by moderating or even ending them.²¹ However, with the exception of Stalin’s having given his blessing to Kim Il Sung for his invasion in 1950, very few of these conflicts were started or provoked by European powers in order to divert their rivalries, in traditional imperial fashion, from Europe.²² More often than not the superpowers sought to limit their own liability in such internationalised civil wars (and not, strictly speaking, proxy wars) by doing what they could to restrain their main adversaries and, later, to collaborate with them in defining the terms of defeat and withdrawal (as took place after wars in Vietnam, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Angola, etc.). If diversion was ever a strategy for a Third World war, it remained on the drawing board for what were mainly ‘episodes of increased tension and irritation in this ceaseless striving to retain a political position and to gain political advantage’.²³ That is, apart from the Middle East, where Israel’s wars with its neighbours were, for political and geostrategic reasons, at the near centre, and not at the periphery, of the Cold War.

21 An example is given in Chas W. Freeman, Jr., ‘The Angola/Namibia Accords’, *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1989).

22 Kathryn Weathersby, ‘Korea, 1949–50. To Attack or Not to Attack? Stalin, Kim Il Sung, and the Prelude to War’, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Spring 1995.

23 James King, quoted in Freedman, 105. Northeast Asia is a partial exception.

Despite nearly coming to blows in the Eastern Mediterranean and Iran in 1946–47, the Soviet Union and the United States were not early rivals elsewhere in the Middle East, where most of the problems just after the Second World War took place between the Americans and the British. The USA and USSR were the first nations to recognise Israeli statehood in 1948 and were on the same side (against the British, French, and the Israelis) during the Suez crisis of 1956. Following their collaboration in ending the Six Day War of 1967, however, the tables turned. Israel had emerged as a regional superpower, and its Arab enemies, notably Egypt and Syria, cemented what had been their developing client status with the USSR. An effort to defend the prestige of clients led, paradoxically, to one of the most dangerous moments of the Cold War. In 1973 Nasser's successor in Egypt, Anwar Sadat, decided to sever his country's military dependence on the Soviet Union and turn to the United States. But first he started a war with Israel to improve the terms. Catching the Israelis off guard, he nearly succeeded in reversing the latter's victory of 1967 had it not been for the panicked intervention of both superpowers, an intervention that came nearest after the Cuban Missile Crisis in causing a direct conflict between them.²⁴

The strategic import of the October 1973 war was great. The facility with which the superpowers could still be dragged into an escalating conflict for interests outside Europe – that is to say, their prestige as measured against that of the other as per the 'correlation of forces' – was a shock. It meant on the one hand that the *détente* the two had been seeking was rather superficial. And, on the other hand, that raw politics could still confound the principles of *Realpolitik*, even where the mutual interests of the superpowers coincided and where they had no real need for armed rivalry. For all that being 'non-aligned' was a fiction for most members of that eponymous movement in the 1950s onward, fence-sitting was a real Cold War condition for many, particularly Third World, states. The October War marked the moment at which nearly all of them got off the fence. But the strategic cockpit of the Cold War would return to Europe, with yet another nuclear arms race in the 1970s, followed by a rupture, then a rapprochement, and culminating with the end of the Cold War in the 1980s. This was the second Cold War, so called.

Eurocentrism notwithstanding, no country better illustrates the strategic mobilisation of the second Cold War for larger ends than China. The dramatic rise

24 There was also a war scare in 1983 during NATO's annual Able Archer exercise. Otherwise, aside from the actions of Soviet pilots during the Korean War, there was no direct combat between the military forces of the two superpowers.

of China and Chinese power demonstrates how overstating the meaning of preponderance, the ‘correlation of forces’, and fence-sitting geopolitics writ large can all mislead. The Cold War did not end because China ‘tilted’ towards the West; or because one superpower or the other played a ‘China card’; or because Sino-Soviet antagonism had earlier split the Communist camp; or because the victory of the Communists in the Chinese civil war had even earlier transformed a Central European rivalry into a global armed struggle with an apparently irrevocable logic of zero-sum. In practice, none of those developments happened to the extent that observers and participants discussed, promoted, or imagined. Rather, the Cold War in Asia, as in Europe, saw the consolidation of regional antagonisms amid the assertion of mainly national and regional, and only secondarily global, interests. It began and ended in each place because of such antagonisms and interests, not from the top down or the bottom up, but from the middle out – literally, as it were, because several very large countries like China, India, Brazil, Indonesia, and so on were well on the road to becoming middle income countries by the end of the twentieth century and abandoning ways of life that has existed for thousands of years, in spite of and not because of their choosing a particular side or sides in the Cold War.

Stated differently, China, despite immense suffering and privation at the hands of Mao Zedong and his regime, came out relatively ahead not because its rulers had skilfully manipulated other powers, beginning with the Americans and Soviets, to China’s advantage or because those powers has lost sight of the distinction between means and ends. That they occasionally did just that was beside the point. China came out ahead, firstly because its Communist revolution succeeded in imposing a harsh yet highly effective political discipline across the entire nation (or at least that is how it appeared at the time), and then because the post-Mao generation of rulers, notably Deng Xiaoping, was inspired to take advantage of a successful policy of top-down economic development and liberalisation, copied not from Manchester liberalism or Reagan-Thatcher neoliberalism but instead from Western Europe and from China’s successful neighbours – Singapore, Japan, South Korea, et al. – and their ‘Asian model’.²⁵ The Cold War helped advance this process but also, at the same time, was not entirely responsible for it.

²⁵ See, *inter alia*, Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *To Build a Better World: Choices to End the Cold War and Create a Global Commonwealth*. New York: Twelve, 2019, chp. 1.

V

The Cold War's principal contribution to strategic practice was to illustrate the lasting and paradoxical effects of ambivalence in a war over principles and values. The American economist Walt Whitman Rostow has offered an example of some of those effects. He was known for two theoretical contributions and one major practical one. The last was of course being one of the enforcers of the doomed American 'limited war' strategy in Vietnam, in reality a set of operational pseudo-strategies that not surprisingly coincided tragically with North Vietnam's successful total war strategy. The first was his popularisation of what he called the 'stages of development' and the other was his promotion of the Vietnam War as being necessary to gain time for other parts of Asia – including China, of course – to progress along those stages of development.²⁶ Rostow's theory would appear to have replaced a spatial frontier with a more organic, temporal one; but in practice, it militarised both realms by becoming a perverse analogue to the abovementioned imperial dialectic.²⁷ For not only did Vietnam allow for a theoretical diversion of Cold War antagonism to a faraway land but also for a kind of violent outlet in another sense: Vietnam would draw in and bog down, in the manner of a flypaper or tar pit, all the anti-modern, anti-Western forces in Asia, allowing the rest of its people the time and space to proceed along Rostow's progressive path.²⁸

Rostow may not have had an 'Asian model' in mind when he developed his theory, which may also resemble a game with rules: checkers, chess, or *Go*. Like much of social science, game theory has important uses – and they were powerfully advanced by the Cold War – but also the usual limits of most theoretical pursuits, including mental cartography. Politics in the real world do not so easily adhere to such experimental perversions of Gestalt psychology. In practice, the

26 An earlier South Vietnamese defeat might have brought about a different fate for Maoism, and for Sino-Vietnamese and even Sino-Soviet relations, than what had come by the late 1970s. See Robert Elegant, 'How to Lose a War: The Press and Viet Nam', *Encounter* (August 1981). For the earlier interaction of American modernisation 'theorists' with others, see David C. Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.

27 Another such convergence took place after the Cold War when NATO's Partnership for Peace, a collective effort of military modernisation, was quickly superseded by the enlargement of the NATO alliance. The former was offered to all members of the former Warsaw Pact, including the ex-Soviet Union. The latter was not.

28 One could make a similar, counterfactual case for Berlin having absorbed all the conflict that otherwise might have arisen over uprisings/independence movements throughout Eastern Europe.

‘Asian model’ had less to do with colouring places on the map than with human desires and needs that transcend boundaries, even in the heart of Vietnam. In that sense, both Wilson and Lenin had a point.

The Cold War then was enormously consequential and left deep wounds that were real. It obsessed the political imagination of rulers in the world’s most powerful countries for nearly half a century, and was fought on, around, and above every continent. Yet, for all that it provided the geostrategic framework and setting for a modernising, globalising world, it did so haphazardly and unpredictably. That is to say, for all that Cold War strategy refuted the dicta of Clausewitz in being a war that could never be won, the Cold War remained at its core a political struggle. Would globalisation have happened without the Cold War? Probably, but maybe not as quickly or as violently. This does not mean, however, that the Cold War was strategically irrelevant.

There were in truth multiple strategies that may still, by what was at the time called the process of cybernetics, comprise a multi-causal case of attrition. Like most wars of attrition, it succeeded mainly on the ‘home front’. It ended when the people of the Soviet Union and its satellites finally stopped pretending to believe in it. It is difficult to think that they were not aware that much, if not most, of the world did not believe in it, either. What went on in the hearts and minds of humanity during the twentieth century is the real subject demanding attention from strategists. The ‘Cold War’ was a sideshow.



Putin pays homage to the Monument of Russian Emperor Alexander the Third.
Photo Mikhail Mettsel', RIA/Novosti

Russian strategy across three eras: Imperial, Soviet, and contemporary

By ROGER R. REESE

Introduction

Russia's military strategy is and has been the armed component of its diplomatic strategy. From the ascent of Nicholas I to the throne in 1825 to Putin's war in Ukraine begun in 2022, Russian strategy has shifted between being aggressive and defensive depending on the international situation and the geography involved. Russia's domestic political, social, and economic situations, and foreign policy goals have determined whether the military takes an offensive or defensive posture as it anticipates future wars. Russia's military strategy has been heavily influenced, if not dictated outright, by the political leadership—variously tsars, Communist Party General Secretaries, and presidents. Russia's economic and related military-industrial policy, designed to support its military strategy through research, development, production, and procurement of weaponry and equipment, has been a negotiated process between the civilian and military leadership. Manpower policies to support military strategy also have been a product of negotiation and compromise and have evolved in response to social change. When devising its military strategy, the Russian military then, starts with the geopolitical ends given it by the politicians, determines the ways to meet those ends, and requests the necessary means. When policy goals, military strategy, and material and human preparation aligned—and they did not always—the outcome was often successful, however, even when aligned, circumstances and personalities of major players—always unpredictable—occasionally led to failure and defeat.

This analysis of Russian military strategy proceeds from the assumption that Russia's strategy mostly—but certainly not always—has been driven by leaders with visions—sometimes unclear—of what they want for themselves and for Russia, at least in general terms. They usually have exercised agency in pursuit of goals rather than being passive actors responding to events. Personality, culture, and history have played their roles in the strategy making process often in

unpredictable and irrational ways. In authoritarian regimes such as Russia, the role of the leader and his personality was usually paramount. Russian culture, with its strong xenophobic streak, lack of system, and pervasive corruption, also plays a role in strategic outlook, preparation, and execution. The student of Russian strategy can neither assume that a certain logic prevails over Russian strategy making nor that it has been supported by a loyal hierarchy of military officers and bureaucrats who presided over the strategy making structure. To the contrary, military leaders who exercised agency often followed their emotions and acted irrationally, acted out of self-interest, engaged in bureaucratic infighting, and let personal and institutional rivalries lead them to unpredictable and often unwanted outcomes. Finally, all too often, the state failed to match resources to its desired objectives by underfunding the military and not investing adequately in strategic infrastructure such as railroads and the defense industrial base. Seldom were sufficient means to achieve victory on hand or the ways to use them agreed upon making the ends either impossible to achieve or only so at an exorbitant price in blood and treasure.

One of the few constants that guided military strategy was fear of the West, not always regarding the potential for armed conflict, but, since the French Revolution in 1789 to Ukraine's Maidan Uprising in 2013, the fear that the West's liberal democratic ideals and nationalism would take root in Russia and lead to the destruction of authoritarian rule, challenge Russian social domination, and undermine the empire. The make up of Russia's elites changed over the centuries, from tsarist aristocrats to Communist Party apparatchiks to Putin and his oligarchs, but their common concern—to devise strategies to retain power over a Russo-centric empire—transcended regimes.

At the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Russia's western border was set at the Congress of Vienna which confirmed the division of Poland between Prussia, Austria, and Russia. No amount of conflict on Russia's other frontiers, that with the Ottoman Empire, Central Asia, or the Far East ever led the leadership to let down its guard in the west. Fears or hopes of war with Prussia (Germany after 1870) or Austria (Austria-Hungary after 1865) or Britain or France rose and fell situationally, but distrust of the West never ceased—not even when they were allies fighting common enemies. This distrust guided the most important aspects of Russian military strategy from the Napoleonic Wars to the present.

When it came to strategy in areas other than Western Europe, imperial expansion at the hands of the army followed an unpredictable course. Nearly sixty years ago, regarding Africa, Robinson and Gallagher highlighted the importance

of the “official mind” in guiding the behavior of officials on the fringes of empire when it came to questions of territorial expansion or the need to maintain prestige.¹ This idea also can be applied to Russia in Central Asia in the nineteenth century. Later, Paul Kennedy added the idea that maintaining great power status became an end in itself leading to ever increasing investment in the military as competition with other powers increased.² In the words of Alexander Morrison, “This was partly because territorial size was seen as a measure of power, but also because the very consciousness of ‘great power’ status brought about a sometimes neurotic obsession amongst ruling elites with the maintenance of ‘prestige’ in the face of challenges from weaker or more ‘backward’ states. As a ‘great power’, the default option for Russia ... was always to advance and expand, and once a claim to sovereignty had been made, it had to be permanent.”³ Russia’s strategy to restore hegemony and conquer territory in its “near abroad” is the contemporary manifestation of his mentality.

Russian military strategy-making became institutionalized in 1865 when Alexander II mandated that the Main Staff take charge of war planning in peacetime. Until then, tsars Alexander I and Nicholas I tended to react to rather than anticipate events and devised strategy on an ad hoc basis. Nicholas I never articulated a military strategy for Russia, nor did he assign a body to devise one for him. The Ministry of War oversaw the military, but concerned itself mostly with personnel and equipment acquisition, and budgeting. No organization within the Ministry of War existed to establish strategy or doctrine or for drawing up contingency plans in peacetime. Neither did the Ministry of War think ahead to prepare the economy for war nor establish logistical capabilities to project power. Corps commanders oversaw supplying their subordinate divisions. Regiment commanders trained their units according to the latest regulations. Alexander I’s and Nicholas I’s generals and diplomats thought in terms of conducting limited campaigns as the occasion arose that would revolve around decisive battles to end in negotiated settlements. The military sat by passively waiting for the tsar’s order to prepare to fight, which only came when war clouds loomed. One can argue that Russia had no formal strategy during the Nicolaevan era but

- 1 R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians. The Official Mind of Imperialism*, (London: Collins, 1965).
- 2 Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers. Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1988).
- 3 Alexander Morrison, “Introduction: Killing the Cotton Canard and getting rid of the Great Game: rewriting the Russian conquest of Central Asia, 1814-1895,” *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 33, no. 2 (2014), 137.

informally understood that the military needed to be prepared to defend against aggression in the west and to take advantage of opportunities for aggression that presented themselves in the Balkans and the Caucasus.

Russian military thought and activity was largely in line with Jomini's (rather than Clausewitz's) ideas that war was primarily an art, and less so a science, and that putting superior combat power at the decisive point on the battlefield as determined by the commander was the key to success. Combat power for Russia meant manpower first and armaments second.

Under Nicholas I, Russia fought two major wars, repressed a Polish nationalist uprising, and sent an expedition to assist Austria in suppressing a Hungarian bid for independence in 1849. All the while, Russian hegemony seeped southeastward into Central Asia. Both foreign wars were related to the "Eastern Question"—the viability of the Ottoman empire. His policy towards the Ottoman Empire was to keep it intact. The British, however, who had the same goal, did not believe Nicholas, and always suspected that he had expansionist aspirations in the Balkans and designs on Constantinople. Nicholas intended to use the Russian military to deter other states from seizing Ottoman lands or to intervene if they tried. The Russo-Turkish War of 1828-29 was reactive rather than proactive and stemmed from Nicholas' goal to establish a Russian presence in the eastern Mediterranean by supporting the Greek revolution alongside Britain and France. In response to the destruction of their Mediterranean fleet at the naval Battle of Navarino by the combined fleets of Britain, France, and Russia, the Ottomans shut the straits to Russian commerce thereby crippling the export of grain from southern Russia. Diplomatic negotiations failed to resolve the issue, so Nicholas I decided on war—a war he had anticipated since at least 1826. He counted on victory in this war to solidify Russian control over Bessarabia, a process earlier set in motion by Alexander I, positioning Russia to advance its interests further into the Balkans as the situation allowed.

The strategy outlined by Nicholas was for his army to engage and defeat the Ottoman army during a drive on Constantinople. He also assigned forces to attack in the Caucasus with the goal of seizing Armenia. The first attempt in 1828 failed mainly because generals in the field failed to adhere to the campaign plan. A second campaign in 1829 succeeded because the commander in the field, not the Ministry of War, planned the campaign. Under his bold leadership, with only 70,000 men, the Russian army managed to defeat the Ottomans in a three-month span with one siege, one battle, and a march of 500 miles. On taking Adrianople in mid-August, the Turks agreed to negotiate an end to the war.

The Crimean War, 1853-1855, also grew out of the "Eastern Question." The international politics behind the Crimean War revolved around the British and French desire to diminish Russian power in the eastern Mediterranean and prop up the Ottoman Empire to resist Russia's growing influence in the Balkans. Nicholas I accepted war as the logical solution to Russia's problems with the Ottoman Empire and its allies and yet it took nearly a year for him to articulate his strategic goal which was at least to maintain Russia's dominant position against the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans and Black Sea and if possible increase its domination. Nicholas I's initial military strategy was to occupy Moldavia and Wallachia to draw the Ottomans into battle there. The fight in the Balkans went against Russia so Nicholas withdrew under threat from Austria. Subsequently, Nicholas and his generals failed to adopt another strategy and passed the initiative to the British and French who chose to pursue a limited campaign in the Crimea. When the fighting in the Crimea turned into a contest over Sevastopol, Nicholas was content to fight on the defensive and never came up with a plan to drive the allies from the peninsula. After Nicholas' death in 1855, Austria delivered an ultimatum to the new tsar, Alexander II, threatening to enter the war against Russia if he refused to negotiate an end to the war. Under the provisions of the 1856 Treaty of Paris Russia emerged from the war humiliated and militarily, diplomatically, and economically weakened.

Alexander II's strategy after the war was to revise the Treaty of Paris to restore Russia's hegemonic position in the Balkans and to return Russia to preeminence in the Black Sea. This meant restoring his military standing in the eyes of the great powers to back up an assertive foreign policy. To restore credibility to the military, Alexander embarked on wide-ranging social and economic reforms the most fundamental of which was the emancipation of the serfs which enabled the creation of a trained military reserve based on universal male military obligation to serve. Alexander II wanted peace with Austria and Prussia, but he was prepared to intervene in European affairs militarily to restore Russia's standing. He continued Nicholas' military policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia allowing the commanders on the ground to advance as opportunities presented themselves.

As noted above, the institutionalization of Russian military strategy-making began in 1865 when Alexander II mandated that the Main Staff take charge of war planning in peacetime. He expected it to be forward thinking and develop mobilization and contingency plans.⁴ Alexander established the foreign policy

4 David A. Rich, *The Tsar's Colonels: Professionalism, Strategy, and Subversion in Late Imperial Russia* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998), 226.

goals, and he expected the Main Staff to develop military strategy to support them. Some of the Main Staff's immediate concerns were to expand the defense industrial base so Russia could end its reliance on foreign produced armaments, create mobilization schedules for various contingencies, and include railroads and their construction in war planning. The Main Staff focused most of its energy on the potential for wars with Austria-Hungary and Prussia/Germany whose growing populations, developing economies, and improved ability to project power eastward were seen as threats.

Alexander II's opportunity to restore Russia's hegemony in the Balkans at the expense of the Ottoman Empire and prevent further Austro-Hungarian advances came in the 1870s when nationalist ferment burst into violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia, and Bulgaria. Finally, in 1877, the diplomatic conditions were right for Russian intervention. Military and diplomatic planning for war began in 1876 with the strategic goals of firmly anchoring Romania in the Russian orbit and establishing Russian hegemony over Bulgaria at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. Chief of the Main Staff, General Obruchev, drew up a plan like that of 1829 with the goal of obtaining a quick victory by marching on and taking Constantinople before Turkey could ally with any of Russia's other rivals. For the first time, the army planned to mobilize several hundred thousand reservists and transport men, horses, and supplies by rail.

As in 1828, rather than the lightning advance over the Balkan Mountains to Constantinople that the Main Staff had planned, poor generalship from top to bottom led to delays, the most significant of which was an unplanned five-month long siege at Plevna. Finally, in December the army forced its way over the Shipka Pass and then steadily marched toward the Ottoman capital halting outside Adrianople in February. The ensuing Treaty of San Stefano brought Romania, Bulgaria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Serbia into Russia's orbit. Such an extension of Russian power alarmed Austria-Hungary. To avoid conflict, Alexander II agreed to the Berlin Conference which transferred Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia to the Austro-Hungarian sphere of influence and gave southern Bulgaria back to Turkey. The Russian military and political leadership were outraged that they had won the war but lost the peace, however, Alexander II felt compelled to concede because the great powers were arrayed against him. This had a dramatic effect on Russia's military strategy in the following years.

Russia's strategy from 1879 to the early 1890s remained constant: preserve peace in the west; continue to exert influence in the Balkans and the Caucasus; and to consolidate its hold over Central Asia. Both the military and the diplo-

matic corps worried about losing the peace in future wars if terms were to be decided by international conferences. This led the Main Staff to conclude a strategic alliance with France, not only for making war, but also to have a powerful partner at the peace talks. Talks between the Russian and French militaries began in 1891. The diplomats quickly joined in. Russian foreign minister, Nikolai Giers, proposed that the two nations be allies who would “coordinate measures” if either were attacked, however, the French wanted a commitment to offensive military action on the part of both countries in the case of German aggression. Chief of Staff, General Obruchev agreed with the French and supported the idea of a solid military commitment because it would mean Germany could not use all its forces against Russia. Obruchev’s thinking, and that of Minister of War, General Peter Vannovskii, considered Austria-Hungary to be the main threat to Russia. Still, Obruchev and subsequent Russian chiefs of staff and ministers of war believed war with Austria-Hungary would eventually end up with German participation.⁵ In 1894, France and Russia agreed to mobilize if either Germany, Italy, or Austria-Hungary mobilized. If Germany attacked France, Russia was to attack Germany “with utmost dispatch.” On the other hand, if Germany attacked Russia, France was to attack Germany.⁶ With the terms of the treaty being strictly defensive, the Main Staff assumed that war would begin with Russia being attacked by either Germany or Austria-Hungary, or both. Although the pact was defensive in nature, Russian strategy was to fight and win on the offensive. The strategy was for Russia to receive the attack, blunt it, and then go on the offensive. Thinking about and preparing for war with the Triple Alliance preoccupied Russian military planners until the outbreak of war in 1914. Over the course of twenty years, changes in chiefs of staff and ministers of war, what began as plans for potential war became preparation for an assumed war (more on this below). No one, however, ever articulated what victory would look like or how to craft a lasting peace that would leave Russia ascendant.

In the late nineteenth century, Russia established a strategy in the Far East to establish Russian hegemony over Manchuria and northern Korea, primarily for economic reasons. The emergence of Far Eastern imperial ambitions divided strategists between westerners and easterners who debated where the military’s resources would best be focused. Russia’s imperial ambitions clashed with Jap-

5 William C. Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600-1914* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 354-357.

6 Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600-1914*, 358, 359; Bruce Menning, “War Planning and Initial Operations in the Russian Context” in Hamilton and Herwig, *War Planning, 1914*, 82.

anese ambitions that resulted in the Russo-Japanese War. The potential for war with the Japanese after their victory in the Sino-Japanese War of 1895 became a topic of general discussion in the Ministry of War and the Pri-Amur Military District in 1898. Mobilization planning within the Pri-Amur Military District began in 1900, and, in 1902, the Main Staff began drawing up contingency plans for war.⁷

Russia's strategic goal was to force Japan and the great powers to acknowledge Russia's hegemony in Manchuria and northern Korea. Because Russia had not massed forces in the Far East, the Ministry of War had no choice but to begin the war on the defense to buy time for reinforcements to be sent to Manchuria ceding the initiative to Japan.⁸ From the outset, the Russian army, led by General Aleksei Kuropatkin, was hampered by the fact that neither the tsar nor the military establishment made the war in Manchuria a priority. The tsar and the Ministry of War deemed the western border to be too important to weaken by transferring more than a few divisions to Manchuria. Kuropatkin had to fight the war largely with mobilized reserve regiments. Poor generalship by Kuropatkin and his subordinates led to one defeat after another until the final catastrophic defeat of the Russian army at the Battle of Mukden in February 1905 followed by the complete annihilation of the Russian fleet at the Battle of Tsushima in May. The Treaty of Portsmouth ended the war in August 1905 with Russia the acknowledged loser forced to evacuate Manchuria.

Losing the war and the upheaval of the Revolution of 1905 exposed Russia's weaknesses and led Nicholas II to adopt a more moderate and realistic eastern foreign policy. At the urging of France, Russia joined the British-Franco Entente in 1907 stabilizing Russian relations with Britain over the issues of Afghanistan and Persia. This reproachment stood to give Russia another ally in future peace conferences. Subsequently, Russia worked to improve relations with Japan which resulted in a treaty that established mutually agreeable spheres of influence in Manchuria, Korea, and Mongolia. Together these agreements gave Russia security in Central Asia and the Far East, enabling the General Staff

7 R. S. Avilov, "Blizhaishim povodom k stolknoveniiu nashemu s Iaponiei mozhnet posluzhit' imenno Koreiskii vopros...." *Zapiska general-leitenanta N. I. Grodekova o mobilizatsionnoi gotovnosti Priamurskogo voennogo okurga. 1900 g.*, *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, no. 4 (2018), 159-183; David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Toward the Rising Sun: Russian Ideologies of Empire and the Path to War with Japan*, (Dekalb, Ill: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001), 185-195.

8 Frank Jacob, *The Russo-Japanese War and its Shaping of the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 15-29.

to concentrate its attention on Germany and Austria-Hungary.⁹

Following the Russo-Japanese war, the General Staff (the Main Staff was renamed Main Directorate of the General Staff in 1905) revisited the thinking behind the Franco-Russo alliance. A debate emerged, driven by indecision over whether to attack or defend at the onset of a war now increasingly seen as inevitable. This indecision stemmed from the uncertainty of which Germany would strike first, Russia or France. General Nikolai Mikhnevich, commandant of the General Staff Academy and author of *Strategy* (1906) and *Principles of Strategy* (1913), advocated for positioning the bulk of the Russian army away from the border to better defend, while Colonel Alexander Neznamov, author of *Contemporary War* (1911) and *Modern Warfare, the Action of the Field Army* (1912) and *War Plan* (1913), urged that the army should be close to the border to facilitate attack. The Staff's thinking was influenced by the fact that most Russian divisions, including those in the border districts, were below strength and would not be ready to fight until brought to wartime strength by mobilizing the reserves.

Concurrent with the revisiting of the strategic thinking behind the Franco-Russo Alliance, the General Staff and Ministry of War argued over whether to direct Russia's military power to the east or west. "Easterners" expressed a fear of war in the Far East believing that the Japanese were not satisfied with their gains in Manchuria and would be back for more in violation of their post-war agreements. General Feodor Palitsyn, an "Easterner," argued for sending 138 battalions from the west to Siberia and Eastern Russia to thwart Japan and to the Caucasus to guard against the Ottomans but was denied. His successor, General Vladimir Sukhomlinov, was convinced that war was more likely in the east than in the west, however, was able, in 1908, to shift some 128 battalions from the west to central Russia. There they were in position to deploy either to the west or to the east. Some senior officers shared a latent fear that Russia could face the worse-case scenario of a two-front war. Sukhomlinov, in 1909, openly advocated conducting a fighting withdrawal from Poland in the event of war with Germany; his repositioning troops away from the border supported this line of action. In the end, Mobilization Plan 19, written by Sukhomlinov and Quartermaster-General (head of planning and operations) General Iurii Danilov in 1909, and approved by the tsar in 1910, accepted giving up as many as ten

9 Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600-1914*, 415, 416; Bruce W. Menning, "Mukden to Tannenberg: Defeat to Defeat, 1905-1914," in Frederick W. Kagan and Robin Higham, ed., *The Military History of Tsarist Russia* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 212-213.

provinces in Poland to a German-Austro-Hungarian attack and then, after mobilizing, counterattacking.¹⁰ The French, already sceptical about Russia's ability to hold out for long against a combined German-Austro-Hungarian attack, began to doubt that Russia intended to attack by M +14.

Mobilization Plan 19, however, did not stand unaltered for long. When the French assured Danilov and Chief of the General Staff General Iakov Zhilinskii in 1912 that the British would commit their navy and send an expeditionary force to France in the event of war, Zhilinskii called for another planning conference. Factions of the General Staff, the Ministry of War, and the military district chiefs presented competing ideas to the tsar and Minister of War. Danilov's faction thought Germany posed the greater threat, so they advocated for an offensive into East Prussia while holding against Austria-Hungary. The faction led by General Mikhail Alekseev, thought Austria-Hungary was the greater threat and should be attacked first. Rather than side with one over the other, Sukhomlinov fatally changed the mobilization schedule to support simultaneous attacks on Germany and Austria-Hungary.

Sukhomlinov's Mobilization Schedule 19 (A) became the accepted strategy from 1913 on. It allocated two armies to defend or attack East Prussia as the situation dictated and three armies to attack Austria-Hungary if Germany attacked France first. If Russia were attacked first, then three armies would go against Germany and two against Austria-Hungary. Nicholas II endorsed this final version of the plan. If Germany began war by attacking France first, Zhilinskii promised the French that Russia would attack with 800,000 men no later than M +15.¹¹

Besides promising to attack before the army could be fully mobilized, the Russian planners erred by not allocating decisive mass to either axis of attack. Mobilization Schedule 19(A) was the worst possible strategy for a war on the western frontier because the two axes were not mutually supporting, and neither could be adequately supported logistically. The number of rail lines, locomotives, and amount of rolling stock did not exist to supply such a massive force in continuous motion. Annually, from 1894 onward, the Ministry of War asked

10 Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600-1914*, 428-433.

11 Bruce Menning, "Pieces of the Puzzle: The Role of Iu. N. Danilov and M. V. Alekseev in Russian War Planning before 1914," *The International History Review*, vol. 25, no. 4 (December 2003), 793-796; Bruce W. Menning, "War Planning and Initial Operations in the Russian Context," in Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig eds., *War Planning 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 115-120.

that more militarily strategic rail lines be built to the west, but the Ministry of Finance, with the tsar's endorsement, chose butter over guns, and so instead funded railways that aided the growth of the economy.¹² All the while, it was assumed that once Russia took the offensive, it would remain on the offensive until victory.

The General Staff also wrote up Mobilization Schedule 19 (G) to stand alongside Schedule 19 (A) in case there was only a war against Germany. The General Staff, however, did not create a mobilization plan to conduct war only against Austria-Hungary. Nicholas II seems to have been ignorant of this variant. By relying on Schedule 19 (A), Russia faced a crisis in July 1914 because it could not meet the German demand to stop mobilizing on their border according to Schedule (A) and still have the war with Austria-Hungary that the tsar really wanted.¹³

What happened between 1891 and 1913 was the army lost sight of its original and long-standing strategy in which the Russians would begin a war in the west on the defensive, to adopting an offensive strategy in which Russia would respond to the threat of war by attacking both Germany and Austria-Hungary. Neither the army, the foreign ministry, nor the tsar articulated a clear strategic goal for such a war with Germany and or Austria-Hungary. There was vague sense that victory would enable Russia to impose a harsh peace treaty that would somehow lead to long-term security on the western border.

As it turned out, Russia's strategy to conduct simultaneous wars with Germany and Austria-Hungary was a grand miscalculation. Russia was unprepared to sustain a protracted war on the scale it turned out to be. The initial offensive into East Prussia was a fiasco that ended in the near complete destruction of one army and the thrashing of another. The campaign against Austria-Hungary succeeded in advancing to the Carpathians after months of fighting before it bogged down. After the initial campaigns failed, the Russian high command did not devise a new strategy to win the war unless one interprets their fighting battles intermittently along the front as a strategy. The German-Austro-Hungarian Gorlice-Tarnow offensive of summer 1915 pushed the Russian army back into

12 Bruce W. Menning, "The Offensive Revisited: Russian Preparation for Future War, 1906-1914," in David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye and Bruce W. Menning, *Reforming the Tsar's Army: Military Innovation in Imperial Russia from Peter the Great to the Revolution* (Washington, D.C. and Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press, 2004), 222.

13 Menning, "Mukden to Tannenberg: Defeat to Defeat, 1905-1914," 219-221.

Belorussia and Ukraine capturing all of Poland. Russia suffered more than two million casualties that year. The Brusilov offensive of 1916 was a solid Russian victory that caused the Central Powers to retreat across a wide front, but for the cost of more than one million dead, wounded, and missing it had no strategic implications. By that time, Russian industry was doing a decent job producing war material, but at the expense of the quality of life of the average Russian to the point that war weariness, food shortages, decline in the quality of life, the huge casualties, and the lack of respect for the government and Nicholas II in particular, led to mutiny and revolution in 1917, and the Bolsheviks' eventual withdrawal of Russia from the war in March 1918.

Once the dust of the Revolution, civil war, and war with Poland had settled the Bolsheviks' new Red Army set about establishing a new military strategy to support the objectives of the Soviet state. Though the Bolsheviks sought to create something entirely new, the continuities between the tsarist and Soviet period were many and largely inevitable given that much of the leadership of the new Red Army was drawn from the old army and that the need for a strong national defense backed by a standing, professional military did not change with the revolution and the transition to socialist dictatorship. In the 1920s, with the failure of world revolution to materialize, the economically devastated and disorganized Soviet state adopted a strategy of defense. Because the host of new nations along the USSR's borders were weak and did not pose a threat, the army had time to organize and prepare for war at a relaxed pace.

The Soviet civilian and military leaders did expect to go to war with their capitalist neighbors eventually and so set about devising a strategy to prepare for it. Mikhail Frunze, Commissar of Military and Naval Affairs in 1925, in 1921 promoted a Unified Military Doctrine (UMD), the origins of which lay with strategic thinkers of the late tsarist period, to whose ideas he added Marxism, class consciousness, and egalitarianism. The gist of Frunze's thinking, borrowed from Friedrich Engels and several strategic thinkers of the old army (Nikolai Miknevich, Alexander Neznamov, and Alexander Svechin), was that the military, political, and economic establishments should be unified in their military strategy and that the political and economic establishments should organize the population and socialist economy to support it.¹⁴ The Marxist element of the UMD was to use the international communist movement to influence or disrupt the international relations of Russia's adversaries, ignite class warfare in the rear

14 Mikhail V. Frunze, "Edinaia Voennaia Doktrina i Krasnaia Armiia," in *Izbrannye Proizvedeniia* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1984), 30-51.

of the enemy, and suppress counterrevolutionary activity in “liberated” territory. Frunze, echoing Marx and Lenin, insisted that war with the capitalist world was inevitable and that an offensive strategy was the only way to victory.

Frunze died in October 1925 after having been Commissar for only ten months, and though his UMD officially remained in place, his death facilitated the emergence of a highly productive period for Soviet military thinking on strategy, tactics, technology, and the future of warfare from the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s. Some of the highlights of these years were the debates between Alexander Svechin and Vladimir Triandifilov on whether the USSR would best fight the next war focusing its strategy on offense or defense. The army grappled with Georgii Isserson’s and Mikhail Tukhachevskii’s concepts of deep battle which built on Triandifilov’s work (combined arms operations of armor, artillery, motorized infantry, and tactical air power), which ran parallel with British (especially J.F.C. Fuller) and German (Hans Delbück is prominent) thinking on mechanized war which inherently supported an offensive strategy.¹⁵

The debate between Svechin and Triandifilov centered on Triandifilov’s insistence—in line with Frunze’s UMD—that the only way to victory lay in offensive battles of annihilation sustained by a militarized industrial economy and mobilized society. Those battles would be conducted as what he termed “deep operations,” in which combined arms forces would penetrate the enemy front and drive deep into the rear, disrupting command, communications, and logistics, to set the enemy up for encirclement and ultimate destruction. He believed that the advent of mechanized warfare negated the potential for a repeat of battles of attrition like those of the First World War. Svechin, on the other hand, promoted the idea that even with armored forces offensive operations could become attritional in nature and that defensive battles of attrition were highly desirable and could be an aspect of a strategy of annihilation. He insisted that conditions would not always be favorable to taking or remaining on the offensive, and therefore, he proposed that the Red Army also prepare to employ defensive operations in order to wear down or even annihilate the enemy, and thereby create the conditions to go over to the offensive.¹⁶ In the end, an offen-

15 Mary R. Habeck, *Storm of Steel: The Development of Armor Doctrine in Germany and the Soviet Union, 1919-1939* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003), x, 94, 105-114; Mikhail Mints, “Predstavleniia voenno-politicheskogo rukovodstva SSSR o budushchei voine s Germaniei, *Voprosy istorii*, no. 7 (2007), 85-96.

16 David R. Stone, “Misreading Svechin: Attrition, Annihilation, and Historicism,” *The Journal of Military History*, vol. 76, no. 3 (July 2012), 690-693; Mints, “Predstavleniia voenno-politicheskogo rukovodstva SSSR o budushchei voine s Germaniei, 97, 100; Dmitry Plotnikov,

sive strategy prevailed and became enshrined in doctrine in the late 1920s and was refined in the mid-1930s.¹⁷

Stalin's five-year plans rapidly expanded heavy industry between 1928 and 1939, much of it devoted to building up the defense industrial base. In the process, the Red Army expanded from just more than half a million to three million soldiers. It armed and equipped itself with thousands of tanks, aircraft, modern artillery, and vehicles that would support an offensive strategy. Now backed by a resurgent army, Soviet foreign policy in the late 1930s became one of territorial reacquisition under Stalin. Using military intimidation and aggression, he began to restore to the USSR the territories the tsarist empire lost during the civil war. Once those territories were regained, Stalin resumed a defensive posture.

The Nazi-Soviet Non-aggression Pact, signed in August 1939, and the subsequent attacks on Poland and Finland, and the military occupation of the Baltic States, Bessarabia, and the Bukhovina, as well as Japanese aggression in Manchuria and Mongolia, led to a reevaluation of Soviet strategy. The basic assumption guiding strategic thought was that Nazi Germany would attack the USSR, either alone or in a coalition with Italy, Finland, Romania, Hungary and Turkey. The high command accepted the possibility that Japan might attack in the Far East. Rather than plan to preempt the predicted Axis attack, Stalin ordered the General Staff to draw up plans to defend against an invasion. The major questions the Staff addressed was where to position the bulk of the forces on the border with the Third Reich and its allies, north or south of the Pripet marshes, and how many to send to face the Japanese. While this thinking ceded the initiative to the enemy, it also assumed that the Red Army would succeed in blunting attacks in short order and then launch a counteroffensive. The Red Army's cult of the offensive embodied in the persons of Minister of Defense Semen Timoshenko and Chief of the General Staff Georgi Zhukov prevailed, and training maneuvers in 1940 and 1941 focused on offensive action. No detailed plans were drawn up for a prolonged defensive struggle. The same applied to the strategy for war with Japan, defeat its attack then quickly go on the offensive. While Soviet industry was fully capable of supplying the Red Army in 1941 unlike the tsarist economy in 1914, it was unable to support it logistically for

"Still Misreading Svechin: Annihilation, Attrition, and Their Strategic and Operational Implications," *The Journal of Military History*, vol. 86, no. 3 (July 2022), 670-687.

17 "Field Regulations of the Red Army, 1929," *USSR Report, Military Affairs*, (Springfield, Va: Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *JPRS-UMA-85-019*, 1985), Alexander Hill, *The Red Army and the Second World War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 31-51.

the same reason, a dearth of railroad capacity to both the east and west. Like the tsarist army's leaders, the Red Army had pled for more track to be built to the west, but the Soviet government, also like the tsarist government, prioritized economic development over strategic military transportation.

As is well known, at the start of the Great Patriotic War in June 1941, the Red Army did not blunt the Axis attack and go on to the offense in short order. Instead, the Red Army's unpreparedness to conduct a defensive campaign resulted in it suffering horrendously large numbers of casualties while being pushed back all the way to the gates of Moscow in only four months. There the Axis ran out of steam opening the possibility for the Soviets to go on the offensive. At this point, Stalin insisted on launching a counteroffensive in December 1941 along most of the front over the objections of his senior generals. What transpired was an offensive conducted on a broad front of roughly 600 miles from Kharkov in Ukraine northward to Lake Ladoga. Stalin's goal was to destroy the German army and seize the initiative for the Red Army as the first step in a drive to Berlin to win the war in 1942. The offensive achieved only limited success and did not represent in a shift in the offensive initiative to the Red Army as was revealed when the Axis summer offensive succeeded in pushing the Red Army all the way to the Volga River at Stalingrad in August.

The Battle of Stalingrad resulted in Soviet victory in February 1943 which included a significant advance westward that shifted the strategic initiative to the Red Army. From Stalingrad to the eventual victory in May 1945, Stalin insisted on a broad front strategy of offensive operations employing combined arms operations. In only one major operation, Operation Bagration in summer 1944, did the Red Army successfully employ its deep battle doctrine. This major success destroyed the German's Army Group Center allowing the Red Army to completely liberate Belorussia and advance to the Vistula River opposite Warsaw. Thereafter, the high command recommended focusing all Soviet resources into a concentrated drive through Poland aimed at Berlin which they believed would shorten the war. Stalin rejected this advice. His strategy was not just to win the war, but also to win the peace with the Balkans once more in the Russian sphere of influence, accepting the cost in lives a longer war would bring.

Post-1945 military strategy was guided by the war experience for the rest of the Soviet period although the civilians and the military operated from different outlooks. Until 1991, the underlying psychology of the Soviet military was that war with the West would be existential just as the Great Patriotic War had been. The lesson they took from that was not to give the enemy the initiative at the

beginning of a war. They wanted to be the first to strike, but the civilian leadership maintained a defensive outlook and preferred that the capitalist enemy be the first to attack. In the post-Stalin years, Khrushchev and his successors renounced the idea of inevitable conflict with the capitalist camp. The military remained adamant that war would come again and that on no account should they be caught unprepared. Because the military leadership based their strategic thinking on these premises, they adopted armaments and doctrine to support a preemptive attack against NATO which inevitably created tension with the civilian leadership.

Between 1945 and 1991, Soviet perceptions of the nature of future war passed through several phases and yet the military's underlying strategy remained remarkably unchanged. In the immediate post-war years, 1945-1949, the army envisioned defending Eastern Europe with the forces on hand, reduced in number as they were and with little thought to going over to the offensive likely due to the frailty of the post-war economy and the demographic catastrophe they had just experienced. During the next phase, 1950-1960, strategy shifted to creating a fully mechanized and motorized army, amassing an arsenal of aircraft-deliverable nuclear weapons and planning to use nuclear weapons on the battlefield if necessary to avoid defeat while maintaining sufficient forces to take the war into enemy territory. The years 1960 to 1966, in which the USSR developed intercontinental ballistic nuclear missiles (ICBMs), led the Soviet military to incorporate nuclear strikes against the United States and Western Europe into their strategy without regard to whether a war began with conventional weapons. From 1966 to 1986 strategy shifted to focus on fighting a conventional war in Europe, with the potential to escalate to the use of tactical nuclear weapons and even ICBMs. The final strategic shift occurred between 1987 and 1991, when the Soviet military under orders by the civilian government planned to conduct a conventional defense of Eastern Europe and avoid nuclear war if possible. There is no indication that the Soviet leadership thought a war with China would also be existential, yet the Soviet Army's strategy for war with the Chinese was much the same as it was with the West, to include the use of nuclear weapons.

The evolution of strategy in the post-Stalin period was driven by a variety of factors including most obviously technology and less obviously at the time by civil-military relations. Nikita Khrushchev, General Secretary of the Communist Party 1956 to 1964, with the advent of nuclear missiles and his creation of the Strategic Rocket Forces as a separate branch of service considered war with the West to be highly unlikely and so forced a truly defensive strategy on the military. Squashing the military's protests, he shrank the military in size from

5.7 to 3.6 million men and even proposed that the Soviet Union bring home its forces from Eastern Europe. Until the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff aided and abetted his ouster in 1964, the military gave lip service to defense while adhering to an offensive doctrine based on combined arms operations. The rise of Leonid Brezhnev and the restoration of the military's budget and numbers did not change the strategic outlook of the civilian government which remained defensive and reliant on nuclear deterrence. In an effort to reduce tensions between the USSR and the West, Brezhnev renounced first use of nuclear weapons and facilitated détente with the USA to the dismay of the armed forces. Still, contrary to the Party's outlook, the Soviet military continued to refine its doctrine to support an offensive strategy which can be described as an offensive-defense. This strategy included the widespread use of tactical nuclear weapons and an attack deep into Western Europe with conventional forces immediately at the outbreak of war—war begun by the West.

The Soviet-Afghan War, 1979-1989, was not part of a Soviet grand strategy. It was initiated by a cabal within the Kremlin led by KGB chief Yuri Andropov and Minister of Defense Dmitrii Ustinov who manipulated an aging Brezhnev into believing that the communist Afghan government was about to become a client of the United States. It has been claimed that what finally led Brezhnev to intervene in Afghanistan was his emotional reaction to the murder of Noor Taraki by Hafizullah Amin. Brezhnev claimed Taraki to have been his friend. The Ministry of Defense overrode the General Staff's objection to the intervention believing that the operation would be short and succeed in securing regime change in Kabul. Like the Russo-Japanese War, for its duration, the war in Afghanistan never had priority; the military's attention remained focused on preparedness for war with the West.

The rise of Mikhail Gorbachev as Communist Party General Secretary led to increased tension between the high command and the civilian leadership of the Communist Party. Gorbachev's goal of reforming and reviving the domestic economy was meant to come at the expense of the defense budget. To effect this diversion, Gorbachev, who, like his recent predecessors, did not ascribe to the inevitability of war with the capitalist world, dramatically improved relations with the West to reduce Cold War tensions. He withdrew Soviet forces from Afghanistan, unilaterally reduced the number of Soviet troops in Eastern Europe, reduced the size of the armed forces by 265,000, and curtailed production of nuclear weapons. He enforced his defensive strategy by forcing a doctrine of "reasonable sufficiency" on a resistant and reluctant military. This doctrine led to the reduction of the number of offensive weapons and units, mainly tanks and

other armored vehicles as well as combat aircraft, not only in Eastern Europe but also in the USSR itself. Gorbachev intended to eliminate or redirect 20 percent of all Soviet armament production capacity to civilian consumer production and to reduce defense spending by 14 percent by 1990 and cut the size of the military and its budget in half by 1995.¹⁸ The military overtly but reluctantly accepted Gorbachev's strategy of "defensive-defense" yet retained an offensive mindset and failed to devise a supporting defense-oriented doctrine. They did not even try.

After the collapse of the communist system and the disintegration of the USSR in December 1991, Boris Yeltsin's government continued to cut military funding and manpower in line with Gorbachev's defensive-defense strategy, trusting that good relations with the West obviated the need for a strong offensively minded military. Gradually, from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, strategic thought shifted from old thinking (preparing for majors war with the West or China—though they were not completely ruled out) to new thinking that included maintaining and expanding Russian influence, if not outright hegemony, in the the former Soviet republics through diplomacy, taking back territory through armed intimidation or outright aggression, and somehow challenging the United States' global influence short of armed conflict. For nearly ten years, the Ministry of Defense was at odds with the General Staff on how to reorient doctrine to support Yeltsin's defensive outlook. The Ministry of Defense wanted to focus their efforts on strategic deterrence based on nuclear forces and conventional tactical missiles, but the General Staff wanted to maintain an effective offensive capability by enhancing the technology of its mechanized forces. A lack of consensus in the high command and personal animosity between ministers of defense and chiefs of the General Staff weakened the military's ability to reverse the steep decline in funding caused by the economic catastrophe resulting from the transition from a planned to a free market economy, and from the generally anti-military State Duma and Yeltsin's close advisors. Only in 2001, when President Vladimir Putin appointed a friend from the FSB, General Sergei Ivanov, to be minister of defense and placed the General Staff directly under the control of the Ministry of Defense did relations take on a healthy tone between the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff.¹⁹

18 Nichols and Karasik, "Civil-military Relations under Gorbachev: The Struggle over National Security," 43, 44, 46-47; Dale R. Herspring, *The Kremlin & the High Command: Presidential Impact on the Russian Military from Gorbachev to Putin*, (Lawrence, Kans: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 29.

19 Herspring, *The Kremlin & the High Command*, 129-131, 133, 158, 163.

In the meantime, Yeltsin, pursuant to his strategy of holding together what was left of the empire, and seeking to raise his approval rate among Russians, forced the military into an invasion of the breakaway Chechen Republic in 1994. The invasion was hastily planned, was not based on current intelligence, was chaotically organized, and poorly led. The Minister of Defense, General Pavel Grachev, overestimated Russian capacity and underestimated the Chechens. The invasion turned into a costly and humiliating mess for the army that eventually led to a negotiated settlement in Chechnya's favor in 1996. Putin, for the same reasons as Yeltsin, invaded Chechnya in 1999, but with much better preparation. His war eventually brought Chechnya back into the Russian fold.

In the wake of the Chechen wars, Putin firmly established his foreign policy strategy as one of aggressively dominating the near abroad and challenging the United States' and NATO's influence in the former Soviet states. After several changes in chiefs of staff, from 2012 he held onto General Valery Gerasimov for the long-term.

Gerasimov created his "Gerasimov Doctrine" to support Putin's strategic vision in which he promoted the concept of non-linear "hybrid" warfare which uses both regular and irregular forces in the use of psychological, economic, and diplomatic means to weaken the enemy combined with deep operations all within a systematic and national effort uniting diplomacy, the mobilization of society, and the military—concepts whose origins predate Frunze. In practice, however, Gerasimov tended to implement ideas from the late Soviet era such as nuclear deterrence, the development of hypersonic missiles, and the maintenance of a large reserve force, rather than pursue professionalizing reforms necessary for a shrinking army. His formal document on doctrine published in 2014 indicated the Russian military anticipated a long-term confrontational relationship with the West short of all-out war.²⁰

Putin's diplomacy weakened the military's ability to intimidate the former satellite states of Eastern Europe and former republics of the USSR. By threatening them and questioning their sovereignty he drove them into the arms of NATO. The 2005 invasion of Georgia to secure North Ossetia and the rapid surprise takeover of Crimea in 2014 show Putin's strategy in play against weak and vulnerable neighbors. His military support of the rebels in the Donbas was meant to destabilize Ukraine until the time was right to invade. In fact, it galvanized the Ukrainian government and armed forces to prepare for full-scale war.

20 Eugene Rumer, *The Primakov (Not Gerasimov) Doctrine in Action*, (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2019), 5-15.

The invasion came in February 2022 in an attack as poorly planned as that of Stalin's invasion of Finland in 1939 and Yeltsin's invasion of Chechnya in 1994. A war that was supposed to last one week continues at the time of this writing. Overestimation of his forces and underestimating the Ukrainians was his and the armed forces' fatal shortcoming. There is no evidence that the Russian armed forces are following any sort of doctrine, Gerasimov's or otherwise to support a strategy that has run up against a determined foe backed by the West.

In the end, having an offensive or defensive strategy has made no difference in Russia's success or failure in war. What has been and still is key is its ability to mobilize its human and material resources to force the enemy to terms before either the will of the people falters or the international community unites against it.

Strategic Practice: Sweden

By ULF SUNDBERG

SUMMARY. 1. Introduction. 2. Viking Times and the Kalmar Union 1040–1561. *Russia becomes an enemy. Denmark becomes an archenemy.* 3. Building a Regional Empire 1561–1700, 4. Losing the Empire 1700–1809. 5. Small-State Sweden 1809–1945. *Denmark no longer an enemy. World War I. The intermediate years. World War II.* 6. The Cold War 1945–1991. 7. Post Cold War, Ukraine and Beyond 1991. *Russia no longer an enemy 1991–2004. Warning signals 2004–2014. Crimea – politicians alarmed 2014–2022. Ukraine 2022 – Russia clearly an enemy. Beyond today.* 8. Summary.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sweden of today is one of Europe's larger nations, with almost half a million square kilometers. However, Sweden only has a population of ten million people. Inhabitants are concentrated to the three major cities, with relatively few living in the northern half of the country. Sweden is highly industrialized and ranks about equal to Belgium in financial strength.

The concept of Sweden has varied dramatically over time. In the year 1000, the nation was somewhat unified. The Viking Age ended around then and Sweden entered the Medieval period. In early Middle Ages, Sweden had two Scandinavian neighbors, Denmark and Norway. Denmark was in possession of the three southernmost provinces of today's Sweden, Scania and two more. One of the latter went all the way up to south of what today is the city of Gothenburg on the Swedish west coast. A consequence was that Denmark could invade Sweden overland, without having to cross the Sound to any hostile coast. Strategic consequences of this positioning were highly unsatisfactory for Sweden, so these three provinces would play an important part in Swedish strategic thinking.

Contemporary Sweden is mostly separated from its western neighbor Norway by a high mountain range, but in early Medieval times, Norway had a province on what now is the Swedish west coast, reaching down to just north of the Gothenburg area. Thus, Sweden only had a narrow slice of land on the North Sea.

The northern parts of today's Sweden were not yet colonized. Finland was not its own unified nation and the same was, more or less, true for each of today's Baltic nations. Beyond Finland and the Baltic area there was Russia.

It can safely be assumed that the overriding strategic goal of Sweden from the year 1000 was preservation of the nation. This assumption enjoys considerable support when various literature points out that the ultimate goal of an organization is survival¹.

2. VIKING TIMES AND THE KALMAR UNION 1040–1561

Russia becomes an enemy

Until 1142, Sweden had seen fights over the throne and some intra-Scandinavian struggles, but in 1142 a new enemy emerged.² Russo-Swedish relations seem to have been cordial for a long time, but in 1142, the Novgorod Chronicles mention a naval battle against Swedish forces. While Sweden and Russia more and more united into their own nations, Finland did not. Armed conflict soon came up in deciding who would fill the power vacuum in fragmented Finland. Swedish and Russian powers were the main contenders.

In 1323, a first peace between Sweden and a Russian power was concluded. Sweden had been successful in the first round of fighting over Finland. The southern Swedish border was drawn close to today's St. Petersburg.

The Russians by no means relaxed their further activities against Swedish Finland after 1323. Swedish strategic policy dictated that the Russians must be kept at bay. This was mainly the responsibility of local commanders in Finland. When Russian attacks got heavy, such as in 1495–1497, resources were dispatched from core Sweden to ensure a successful defense. No major territorial changes in the east were seen during later Swedish Medieval times.

Denmark becomes an archenemy

By the end of the 14th century, a few things transpired which would change Swedish strategic practices. A powerful queen of Denmark, Margaret I, was

1 Compare for example W. J. Baumol, *Business Behaviour, Value and Growth* (Harcourt & Brace, 1962), *ibid*.

2 The material covering the period from the end of the Viking Age to 1814 is based on Ulf Sundberg, *Svenska krig*, Volumes 1–5 (s.l. 2010). Swedish titles in footnotes are translated in the literature list.

called upon to help drive an unpopular king out of Sweden. For that Margaret had to be made Queen of Sweden too. In 1397, Margaret managed to get her councils in Sweden, Norway and Denmark to consent to a union for Scandinavia, the Kalmar Union, with herself as the ruler.

Though there were benefits to the idea of a union between the three Scandinavian nations, soon disadvantages began to show. The Kalmar Union began to look to Swedes like a threat to Swedish national existence, giving Sweden the status of a province of Denmark.

The first Swedish rebellion against this came in 1434. It was successful, and Sweden signaled an end to the Kalmar Union. The Danes, however, did not share the Swedish view. For the rest of Medieval times, several Danish kings intermittently managed to become kings of Sweden too. With time, the Swedish strategic priority became to keep them off the Swedish throne. Swedish strategic practice during centuries to come could most often be described as “stop Denmark first”.

The Norwegians also tried to rebel against the Kalmar Union but failed, becoming a Danish fief for centuries.

3. BUILDING A REGIONAL EMPIRE 1561–1700

In 1520, Christian II of Denmark had carried out a successful military campaign and become King of Sweden. The year marks the end of the Middle Ages in Sweden. In 1523, a rebellion led by the young nobleman Gustav Eriksson (Vasa) managed to drive the Danes out. Christian II was the last Danish king to also rule Sweden. The Danes, however, had not given up on Sweden.

Gustav became King Gustav I and made Sweden a hereditary monarchy. He was succeeded by his eldest son Eric XIV in 1560. During his reign there was an important development. In the Baltics, the rule of the Teutonic Order was breaking up. Parts of today's Estonia chose Swedish rule, while Livonia, mainly today's Latvia, became Polish. Sweden had now entered a path of expansion, creating a new bone of contention with Russia. Eric also had to fight a war with Denmark, which made a new attempt to restore the Kalmar Union.

Eric was ousted by his brother John III, and here we can see a shift in Swedish strategic thinking. John did his best to maintain good relations with Denmark, focusing on Russia.³ Part of his strategy against Russia was cooperation with

3 Lars Ericson [Wolke], *Johan III: En biografi* (Lund 2004), page 225.

Poland.⁴ The idea seems to have been well conceived, as Sweden and Poland both had reasons to keep the Russians at bay. It did, however, prove difficult to get Swedish-Polish cooperation to work in the long run. Instead, Sweden got a new strategic problem. On John's death, his son Sigismund, already elected king of Poland, inherited the Swedish throne. Another of Gustav's sons, Charles (IX), rebelled and Sigismund was dethroned in Sweden. Sigismund and future Polish kings still claimed the Swedish throne, which was quite a problem for Swedish kings.

New on the throne, Charles IX soon found himself at war with Poland. Sweden also got involved in a war in Russia, and with Sweden fully occupied in the east, Denmark struck in 1611. Sweden now faced a strategic challenge of the worst kind.

Charles IX was succeeded by his son Gustav II Adolf, who prioritized the war against Denmark. It was brought to an end in 1613, so Gustav Adolf was able to reinforce the hard-pressed Swedish front in the Russian war. Peace was concluded at Stolbova in 1617. Sweden made substantial territorial gains at Russian expense, including the area with today's St. Petersburg. Russia was now closed off from the Baltic Sea, which was significant. Gustav II Adolf predicted that Sweden would face a bleak future the day the Russians could put a fleet into the Baltic Sea.

Now only Poland remained, as strategic urgency number three. Gustav Adolf decided to hit Poland in Livonia. After an extended siege, Swedish troops took Riga and thereby Livonia, in 1621. In 1626, Polish King Sigismund was ready to sign a truce for six years.

Under Gustav Adolf. Sweden was turning from strategic defense to an offensive strategy. An important strategic goal persisted, to ensure Sweden of natural and easily defended borders toward Denmark.

In 1618, a new cloud appeared on the horizon. It began in Prague and soon, Protestant powers seemed to be threatened by Counter-Reformation. Had he been left to his own devices, it could be assumed that Gustav Adolf would have turned his military machine against Denmark to settle matters once and for all. Now, the Holy Roman Emperor became strategic priority number one. A great Swedish victory at Breitenfeld in September 1631 paved the way for final Protestant success, for example giving Sweden Swedish Pomerania.

When the struggle of the Thirty Years' War seemed to allow for a temporary

4 Ericson [Wolke] (2004), page 241.

Swedish withdrawal of troops in 1643, Sweden attacked Denmark. Even with other problems, the Danish threat had never left the minds of leading Swedes. After two years of war, peace was concluded in 1645. Denmark ceded one province on the west coast of today's Sweden, widely opening the small Swedish window to the west. The major island of Gotland and some other land were also ceded. That peace treaty began to fulfil the Swedish ambition to have borders which were easy to defend.

Gustav II Adolf was succeeded by his daughter Christina, who abdicated in 1654 and handed the throne over to her cousin, Charles X Gustav, an able general and probably the most illustrious of all Swedish warrior kings. He was not a king to sit still; expansionism was clearly his strategic policy. His obvious target was Poland, whose king still claimed the Swedish throne. This claim was a good *casus belli*. Polish territories like Courland and Polish Prussia would fit nicely into what now was the Swedish Empire. Sweden attacked in 1655 but was soon bogged down in a difficult war. In 1656, now-expansionist Russia attacked Sweden. Russia was not a strategic priority for Charles X Gustav, and reinforced local forces had to stop the attack.

Sweden was now in a difficult situation. The occasion seemed to be too good to miss for the Danes and they attacked. Charles X Gustav changed his strategic priorities at once and marched his army against Denmark. The Danish army could by no means stand up to Swedish forces and the Peace of 1658 was expensive for the Danes. They had to cede their two remaining provinces on today's Swedish mainland – Scania and Blekinge (where the town Karlskrona of today is located), the Norwegian province on today's Swedish west coast and some additional land. The western border of Sweden was now coastline all the way up to Norway and then mountains, which made it easy to defend. A critical strategic goal had been met.

Before the wars with Russia and Poland could be concluded, Charles X Gustav attacked Denmark again. With the wars not going too well, Charles X Gustav suddenly died in 1660. A regency government for his young son Charles XI had to sort out the wars.

Some land had to be returned to Denmark, but the vital coastal provinces remained Swedish. Peace with Russia held no territorial consequences, neither did the Polish peace. The Polish king did, however, refrain from further claims on the Swedish throne. The Swedish Empire had now reached its zenith. The strategic agenda was back to basics. Denmark and Russia were the main threats. History had shown that Russian armies were numerous, but still easy to defeat.

4. LOSING THE EMPIRE 1700–1809

After the death of Charles X Gustav, the Swedish Empire was no longer expansive. Strategy turned into a defensive one, where not one inch of the empire was to be yielded.

Tempted by French subsidies, the regency for Charles XI got Sweden involved in the Franco-Dutch War 1672–1679. The Swedish army was not the war machine it had been in Charles X Gustav's day, and there were setbacks on the battlefield. Denmark attacked a hard-pressed Sweden in 1675, but peace could be concluded without territorial consequences.

Charles XI had nearly seen severe defeat in an unnecessary war and settled for future neutrality. Charles XI saw that his strategy had to be supported by strong armed forces and he carried out several military reforms, making the Swedish army a most respectable force again. Danes and the Russians did not go to war with Sweden as long as Charles XI was alive.

He died in 1697 and the throne devolved upon his young son, Charles XII. Denmark, Russia and the king of Poland, also ruler of Saxony, August the Strong, now saw opportunity to recover old losses. The result was the Great Northern War, beginning in 1700. At first, Charles XII was true to the Swedish strategic principle of "stop Denmark first", and maneuvered Denmark out of the war. He then drove Russian forces out of Swedish territory. Thirdly Charles XII left the defense of his Baltic possessions, today's Estonia and Latvia, to local forces and focused on the king of Poland.

Charles XII's strategic decision to go against Poland, without having defeated Russia, is one of the most debated in Swedish military history. Russia's Tsar Peter I skillfully used time given him to conquer much of Sweden's Baltic possessions, thus weakening the Swedish Empire. Having concluded peace with August the Strong in 1706, Charles XII embarked on a march eastward, based on an alliance with Cossack Hetman Ivan Mazepa. It ended with total defeat of the Swedish main army at Poltava in 1709. It could be observed that Sweden carried out its last act as a power in 1707 when Charles XII forced the Holy Roman Emperor to give better conditions to Protestants in Silesia in the Treaty of Altmärk.

In peace treaties following the Great Northern War, the Swedish Empire was heavily reduced. The Baltic possessions and part of Finland went to Russia, all German possessions, except Wismar and parts of Western Pomerania, went to Prussia and Hanover, the latter having joined the war in its final stages.

Charles XII was killed during the war and a new and reduced Sweden was ruled by a weak king, the nobility and the parliament. Sweden had not yet accepted its status as, at best, a secondary power. Plans for revenge came up and two wars ended badly. A third effort was more promising. In 1788, King Gustav III of Sweden, a ruler with increased authority, attacked a Russia that was already at war with the Ottoman Empire. He was intent on reconquering at least parts of Finland lost in the Great Northern War. Finally, in 1790, these ambitions came to naught. Gustav III had, however, created some renewed respect for Swedish arms, particularly by a decisive victory over Russian ships in the Finnish-islands Battle of Svensksund in that year. One interesting aspect of this war was that Gustav III concentrated almost his entire army on the Russian front, leaving only minor units and reserves to handle any Danish threat.⁵

Sweden was not unaffected by the turmoil of the Napoleonic Wars. Old strategic concepts were altered by the emergence of a powerful France. Gustav III was assassinated in 1792 and was succeeded by his son, 13-year-old Gustav IV Adolf.

Gustav IV Adolf soon nourished a deep hatred of Napoleon I; and in 1805, Sweden thus entered the war against France, attacking from Swedish Pomerania. In 1810, Sweden was forced into peace with France. Before that peace was concluded, disaster struck Sweden. In February 1808, Russian forces crossed the border into Finland. Instead of reinforcing his army in Finland, Gustav IV Adolf kept a large part of the army in Sweden to hedge against any Danish threat. Here the old Swedish strategic priorities obviously led the nation wrong. The Russian army was now the one that was more dangerous. Sweden's failure to grip the situation and the hasty surrender of the fortress of Sveaborg led to the total loss of Finland to Russia in 1809.

5. SMALL STATE SWEDEN 1809–1945

There was now little left of the Swedish Empire, just today's Sweden and remnants in Swedish Pomerania. Gustav IV Adolf was dethroned in 1809 and was soon replaced by Prince Bernadotte, one of Napoleon's field marshals, later known as Swedish King Charles XIV John. With an able warrior on the throne, it was thought that a reconquest of Finland ought to be possible. Bernadotte, however, thought differently. He ensured good relations with Russia and watched developments on the European continent. When he was reasonably

5 Ulf Sundberg, *Kraftsamling i Gustav III:s krig 1788–1790* (Kristinehamn 2013), *ibid.*

assured that Napoleon would be the loser in the ongoing conflict, he declared war on France in 1813. Swedish troops, led by Bernadotte, took to the continent and participated in the final stages of the war.

Denmark no longer an enemy

Bernadotte surprised his allies at one stage by taking his army to Denmark, which, conveniently for Swedish interests, had sided with Napoleon. In 1814 he forced the Danes to yield Norway, which then entered into a mismatched union with Sweden. Sweden could thus have been somewhat compensated for the loss of Finland. Norway did not, however, add much financial strength to Sweden. In the upcoming peace treaties, Sweden ceded what was left of Swedish Pomerania to Denmark. Sweden had now been reduced to small-power status.

The loss of Norway was a devastating strategic blow to Denmark, which now could be stricken out of Sweden's list of potential enemies. From then on, an ever-growing Russia would dominate Swedish strategic thinking. Sweden was no longer a hunter; it was prey.

Charles XIV John for the rest of his reign did carry out a policy of neutrality, cultivating good relations with all powers. He made efforts to improve Swedish armed forces, for example updating Swedish field artillery to a high international standard. Charles XIV John, however, sat there with army organization created by Charles XI in the 17th century. That organization created a small armed force which would have a hard time standing up against a conscripted army. Adding to such problems was that the new, and smaller, Sweden was a poor nation. Charles XIV John died in 1844. He was the last king of Sweden who was an actual ruler. With his son, Oscar I, professional politicians began to take over the scene and the kings got to be less relevant to foreign policy.

By the later part of the 19th century, Sweden got richer. The world market for Swedish wood was good and new metallurgical techniques made Swedish iron ore valuable.⁶ There was a discussion on defense policy, where some were really worried about Swedish capacity. There was no conscripted army and the navy was almost nonexistent. This discussion was to grow more intense as the century moved on towards its closure.

One of the debating voices belonged to an army officer, Julius Mankell. In

6 Eli F. Heckscher, *Industrialism: Den ekonomiska utvecklingen sedan 1750*, (Stockholm 1964), page 209–215.

1871, he published a popular book on Swedish defense strategy⁷. He dealt with two scenarios, an attack from the East, i.e. Russia, or an attack from the South, i.e. Germany, where the east seemed most likely. He asserted that due to winter weather, Russia could only attack during five to six months of the year. Mankell concluded that a Russian attack called for their supremacy in the Baltic Sea. If Sweden could challenge this supremacy, there would be no risk of a Russian attack. Sweden, however, was too poor to build a navy which could keep the Russians at bay. Mankell then suggested that the Russians could not throw their entire might at Sweden. Russia would most likely need to use the majority of their forces on other fronts. He also pointed at limitations in shipping capacity, generating a need of several waves of invasion. Such piecemeal invasion would reveal any Russian concentration point and increase a Swedish capacity to strike back. In an interesting sentence, Mankell claimed that the advancing Russian army would have to deal with a “people’s war”, suggesting an active Swedish guerilla. He described an advancing army getting problems with the relatively large distances within Sweden, which in combination with problems of supplying an advancing army, would wear a Russian force down. Before long, the Swedish army could have been concentrated, with the Russians suffering. At the right moment, Swedish forces could counterattack and defeat the Russians. Mankell’s last point was that the Norwegian harbors were open all year round, and that through these, a “not unrealistic”⁸ support from other powers could be brought in. He then presented a suggestion for a military budget which would allow for his scenario to be enacted in case of war. His foundations were general conscription and a strict prioritizing of spending on fortifications. Mankell’s conclusive words were that if the defense of Sweden and Norway was organized the way he described, the nations could face the future, without constant worries about maintaining independence.⁹

Mankell’s book is interesting in two ways. In the first place, it describes worries concerning the Swedish defense capacity in 1871. Second, several of Mankell’s ideas would come back later in Swedish strategy discussions. One exception is Mankell’s mention of a “people’s war”, which never has been seriously discussed in Sweden, although the nation is most suitable for guerilla defense.

In 1873, it was decided to build an army by conscription. It would, however, not be until 1901 until that such a new army took its first steps. Training was

7 Julius Mankell, *Kan Sverige försvara sin sjelfständighet?: Försök till populär afhanling om de allmänna strategiska grunderna för den skandinaviska halföns försvar* (Stockholm 1871).

8 ”ingalunda osannolika eventualiteten” in Swedish, Mankell (1871), page 91.

9 Mankell (1871), pages 88–98.

then 240 days. When Mankell wrote his book, the Swedish navy only had ships for operations in the many coastal islands. As Swedish wealth increased, larger armored ships were built, beginning with a 2,900-ton ship in 1885.

In 1897, it was decided to build up Fort Boden in the far north of Sweden. It was sometimes called “the Lock of the North”, built to stop any Russian advance from Finland into Sweden. The distant north in Sweden had for long not been seen as a battlefield. New iron mines and railroads built had changed that. The fortification system of Boden could hold a garrison of 15,000. It became the strongest fortification ever built in any Nordic nation and was completed in 1916.

Sweden faced a crisis when Norway declared that it was breaking out of the union of 1814. There were Swedish voices that called for war, but those calling for a peaceful settlement prevailed. In 1905, the disharmonious union between Sweden and Norway was dissolved. Swedish strategy planners now had to face a different geopolitical situation. For example, it could no longer be taken for granted that foreign support could come through Norwegian harbors.

Sweden continued on the path of neutrality after 1905, although there was a movement for closer relations to Germany. Since a long time, Russia was the major threat, and an alliance then with the major enemy of Russia, Germany, could make sense. Even with some ongoing Swedish armament, a widespread discussion about the country’s future armed forces continued. This debate spread widely into deep layers of the population. For example, in 1914, 30,000 farmers demonstrated at Stockholm Palace against cuts in the defense budget. Shortly thereafter, 50,000 workers demonstrated against increases in that budget. New and larger armored ships, so-called F-boats, were an important feature of these discussions and it was decided to build three of them. The first was launched in 1915.¹⁰

World War I

During the First World War, most Swedes opted for neutrality. Sweden had traditionally leaned towards France, but the war of 1870–1871 moved Swedish sympathetic to the German side.

Aiming for neutrality is one thing, but remaining neutral is another. Sweden’s geopolitical situation now served her well. There were no land borders except in less accessible areas in the extreme north and in the west toward Nor-

10 Sten Carlsson, “Försvars- och utrikespolitik i stormaktsalliansernas skugga 1905–1914”, in Jan Cornell (ed.), *Den svenska historien*, Del 9, page 271–282.

way. Any enemy's amphibious operations were always deemed complicated, and also there was no valid reason for anyone to attack Sweden.

In 1917, Swedish neutrality was put to a test. In December, Finland declared independence from revolutionary Russia, and soon a civil war broke out. The combatants were called "Reds" and "Whites". Several Swedish conservative politicians called for an armed Swedish intervention in support of the Whites. Swedish left-wing politicians were against that and the end result was limited to about a thousand Swedish volunteers allowed to fight on the White side. The war gave Finland independence, which was of advantage to Sweden but also created new strategic problems.

The intermediate years

The First World War was supposed to be the war to end all wars, and Sweden followed suit. Swedish defense forces were cut. By 1919, training time for infantry conscripts was down from 240 to 165 days. In 1925, it was decided to reduce the amount of army units by a third.

The cutbacks in Swedish defense capacity were made in the shadow of increased Russian power, as the Soviet Union from 1922. Several nations around the Baltic Sea discussed various forms of collective security, but the Swedish Government was not thinking in those terms.¹¹

There was also a strong movement in Sweden, called "Either – Or"¹². It was built up by intellectual Swedish officers, among them Helge Jung, future Commander in Chief. The movement presented two alternatives for future Swedish defense strategy. According to the "Either" stance, Sweden would rush to assist Finland militarily in case of a Soviet attack on that nation. "Or" meant that Sweden would remain strictly neutral. The movement saw a strategically impossible situation for Sweden if the Soviet Union occupied Finland and strongly advocated the "Either" policy, which would call for drastic Swedish rearmament. The idea, however, was politically unacceptable and these discussions did not result in any change in Swedish strategic policies.¹³

Swedish defense policy now included signs of resignation, but there was

11 Compare Sten Carlsson, "Internationalism och nedrustning 1920–1926", in Jan Cornell (ed.), *Den svenska historien*, Del 10 (Stockholm 1968), pages 42 and 44.

12 "Antingen – Eller" in Swedish.

13 Jan von Konow, *Helge Jung: opinionsbildare - försvarets nydanare – överbefälhavare* (s.l. 1999), pages 39–42.

one exception. Sweden maintained the three newly built armored ships, giving Sweden the strongest fleet among the Nordic nations. This could be seen as a sign that Sweden did not entirely give up its former status as a regional power.

World War II

Swedish strategy during the Second World War was quite similar to Prince Bernadotte's in the Napoleonic Wars, to wait and see who is winning. All the political parties in parliament agreed on a main goal of keeping Sweden out of the war. A problem, though, was that Sweden depended on Germany for essentials like coal and fertilizer. Thus, the export of iron ore had to go on to pay for these commodities. Sweden soon felt the pressure of the German boot and had to make several concessions.

During the war, Swedish armed forces were rapidly brought up to strength. The three armored ships were modernized, the air force expanded and the army was considerably increased. Army development began with an initial quantitative increase. In 1943–1945, the army was brought up to a high level of quality, even by international standards.¹⁴

Swedish air force development was much inspired by events of the war. The Battle of Britain brought focus on fighters. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor awakened an interest in aero-naval divebombing and torpedo warfare.¹⁵ It would, however, take several years for the aero-naval ideas to mature. The rearmament process was not completed until a few years after the war had ended.

Fort Boden served Swedish interests well during the war. It was a strong deterrent for a Russian advance into Sweden. It was also an obstacle for any German invasion in the north aimed at occupation of Swedish iron ore mines.

The Soviet attack on Finland in December 1939 was a challenge to Swedish collective conscience. Assisting Finland may have been urgent instinctively, but in the end, the Swedish effort only consisted of 8,000 volunteer soldiers, a number of aircraft and considerable material resources.

The German attack on Norway in April 1940 completely changed Sweden's strategic situation. The enemy was now at the gate, literally, and Sweden now faced the possibility of an overland invasion from the west. Swedish colonel and military historian Bo Hugemark has commented that Sweden probably would

14 Arvid Cronenberg, "Arméns krigsorganisation", in Carl-Axel Wangel (ed.), *Sveriges militära beredskap 1939–1945* (s.l. 1982), page 307.

15 Conversations with Air Force Major General Bert Stenfeldt in the summer of 2021.

have been drawn into the war if Norwegian resistance had not broken down rapidly with Allied reinforcement operations failing. In any other scenario, Germany would have demanded transition of troops through Swedish territory.¹⁶ Sweden would have had to refute such transfer, and then war would have been a fact.

As the war progressed, Sweden took on a more and more distanced stance towards Germany. At the very end of the war, Sweden made preparations for invading occupied Denmark and Norway in case German forces there would not accept the surrender of Nazi Germany. In hindsight, it was fortunate for the safety of many Swedes that the German forces actually surrendered. An attack on Norway would probably have worked out well, but not one on Denmark since it included a difficult crossing of the Sound.

The Swedish neutrality during the Second World War has led to much discussion and criticism. Swedish historian Alf W. Johansson summarized the Swedish politics as “small-state realism”¹⁷. This statement can be considered self-explanatory. Swedish researcher Robert Dalsjö concluded that: “Swedish policies were neither beautiful, nor noble, but possibly wise, in that, with moderate concessions, they ensured basic supplies for Swedish society and kept Sweden out of the war.”¹⁸ To this could be added that national survival really was at stake. One wrong move could have had dire consequences, very difficult to predict at the time.

6. THE COLD WAR 1945–1991

The end of the Second World War was much celebrated in Sweden, but such celebrations soon turned into worries for a future with the West and the East standing against each other, and Sweden in between. It was generally agreed that neutrality would serve Sweden’s goal of national survival best.¹⁹

16 Bo Hugemark, “Försvarets historiska utveckling”, in Zebulon Carlander & Oscar Karlflo, (ed.), *Sveriges försvarspolitik – en antologi* (Stockholm 2020), page 15.

17 ”Småstatsrealism” Alf W. Johansson, ”Något har gått snett i den svenska synen på andra världskriget”, in *Respons* 1/2014. <http://tidskriftenrespons.se/artikel/nagot-har-gatt-snett-den-svenska-synen-pa-andra-varldskriget/> Read 2023-01-28.

18 ”Politiken var inte vacker eller ädel, men möjligen klok, i det att den med måttliga eftergifter säkerställde folkförsörjningen och höll landet utanför kriget.” Robert Dalsjö, ”Från stormaktsspel till neutralitetspolitik: Några huvudlinjer i svensk säkerhetspolitik från 1700-tal till Sovjetväldets fall”, In Kjell Engelbrekt & Jan Ångström, (ed.) *Svensk säkerhetspolitik: I Europa och världen* (Stockholm 2010), page 210.

19 Compare Sten Carlsson, ”Sverige och stormaktsblocken”, in Jan Cornell (ed.), *Den svenska historien*, Del 10 (Stockholm 1968), page 154.

There was also a consensus that neutrality would call for a strong defense force. Swedish rearmament had come a long way during the war, and defensive power was further enhanced. This was particularly so regarding the air force, which was built up by domestic production of military aircraft. At times, the Swedish air force has been ranked as number four in the world. This expansion came at a high cost, which created tension between the different military branches, a state of affairs which remains today. Behind the urge to spend on aircraft, it could be assumed that the preservation of Swedish industrial capacity was a concern.

Conscription kept the total armed forces at almost one million people, out of a population of eight million. Around 50,000 men were trained each year. It not an exaggeration to say that Sweden was regional power.

Although Sweden built ample military resources, it was recognized that the nation could not hold off any determined Soviet attack for very long. It could be observed that there never was any serious Swedish doubt about the origin of a possible threat. The fundamental strategic concept was to fight Soviets from their harbors in the Baltic Sea until they had crossed Sweden and reached the Norwegian border. There was a hope that NATO support would be received before Soviets reached Norway and left Sweden done for. Here we can clearly see an echo from the writings of Julius Mankell in 1871. There were exceptions. Mankell wrote about a guerilla war, which did not have any discernable relevance in Swedish Cold War thinking. Furthermore, Julius Mankell envisaged a successful Swedish counterstrike on an invading enemy eventually. Swedish Cold War planners coined the device “Face – stop – defeat”²⁰. It is highly doubtful, however, that anyone in the Swedish defense organization really believed in the “stop – defeat” part without available foreign aid.

In this general strategic environment three issues could be observed. The first was nuclear weapons. For some time, there were strong groups, both in politics and among military men, who supported the creation of Swedish nuclear arms. Sweden had a substantial industrial capacity, and would have been fully capable of producing nuclear arms. With such a capacity, Sweden participated in the ongoing discussion about limiting nuclear weapons, with the option of manufacturing them. Thus, for the first time since 1707, Sweden was again an actor on the international power arena. There was, however, a strong political and later also military opposition to nuclear arms in Sweden. The military opposition was driven by the costs of nuclear weapons, which would leave less funds for other

20 ”Möta – hejda – slå” in Swedish.

purchases. By 1965, the idea of Sweden as a nuclear power was dead.²¹

The second issue involved naval strategy, an aerial strategy or an aero-naval strategy. A core issue in the Swedish strategy was to be able to hit a Soviet invasion fleet, which had to cross the Baltic Sea, as hard as possible. For quite some time, an invasion fleet would have been navy business. Adding to this impression was the fact that the Swedish Air Force had focused on fighters rather than attack aircraft during the Second World War and for some time thereafter.

In 1956, the situation began to change when the Swedish Air Force took delivery of a competent attack aircraft, the A 32 *Lansen*. Five years later, these aircraft were armed with heavy air-to-surface missiles. At least by 1961, it was no longer obvious who would be the best at sinking Soviet ships. This technical situation led to a vivid debate between the navy and the air force, with the matter of budgets at its base. The discussions resulted in an aero-naval strategy, where a Soviet invasion fleet would be subjected to both navy and air force attacks.²² Research on exactly how this aero-naval strategy was to be carried out in practice is yet to be publicly described.

The third issue stemmed from the fact that Swedish defense forces were divided into six military districts. The commander of each military district often saw any strategic threat as directed against his district, which of course would call for a buildup of resources there. The problem was that each of these military commanders could be right. Thus, Sweden was faced with a difficult strategic problem of where to focus its defense.

During the Cold War, there was one noticeable change in official Swedish strategic thinking. The focus on “support from abroad” was exchanged for the “marginal doctrine” by the end of the 1960s. The new idea was that an isolated attack from the Soviet Union could, for reasons never explained, be ruled out. Instead, any attack on Sweden would come in the context of a major war on the continent. Thus, the Swedish armed forces would only need to meet a marginal part of Soviet forces and the need for foreign support was reduced.²³ Despite these new ideas, the idea of “support from abroad” never really died in Sweden.

21 Compare Ulf Sundberg, “Planerade Sverige att använda kärnvapen?”, in Anders Frankson (ed.), *Sverige under kalla kriget: Myter och legender* (Stockholm 2021), pages 9–27.

22 Ulf Sundberg, *Ett kustförsvar i världsklass: Det svenska invasionsförsvaret under kalla kriget* (s.l. 2022), pages 56–57 and *ibid*.

23 Robert Dalsjö, “Från stormaktsspel till neutralitetspolitik: Några huvudlinjer i svensk säkerhetspolitik från 1700-tal till Sovjetväldets fall”, in Kjell Engelbrekt and Jan Ångström, (ed.) *Svensk säkerhetspolitik: I Europa och världen* (Stockholm 2010), page 224–225.

7. POST COLD WAR, UKRAINE AND BEYOND 1991–

Russia no longer an enemy – 1991–2004

With the Cold War ending in 1991, Swedish society was engulfed in peace optimism. Russia would not be a threat for at least ten years, and that period would be used to reshape the Swedish armed forces. During the 1920s, the military establishment had been heavily reduced; now it was virtually wiped out, leaving Sweden more or less unable to defend itself even for the shortest period of time. To put a figure to the reduction, in 1990, 730,000 soldiers could be mobilized; in December 2004, it was decided to cut this figure to a personnel of 31,500 in 2007. The remaining armed forces would only serve to participate in international operations.²⁴

Most military material was done away with. Scores of modern JA 37 *Viggen* fighter aircraft were scrapped and all artillery was discarded. Supplies of various items, built up over decades, were either thrown away, sold or donated to the Baltic States. Fort Boden was closed already in 1998, becoming a popular tourist attraction. The number of conscripts was gradually cut down to 5,000 annually. Very few Swedes of military age today have any training, and might have no idea about any possible need for them to defend their country. The entire process was carried out with little debate or media coverage.

With Russia stricken from the list of potential enemies, strategic issues got slightly confused. In 1999, discussions began on “Revolution in Military Affairs” (RMA) and a “Network Based Defense”²⁵. These concepts were somewhat vague to most people. There was, however, a measure of strategic thinking in relation to any major threat. Although there were no apparent enemies, the idea of foreign aid, in the unlikely event of an enemy appearing, was kept alive. Hopes of assistance from abroad were pinned on Swedish participation in certain international operations. NATO membership at the time was far afield of what could be rationally discussed.

One could see political strategy replacing any military strategy. This strategy was built upon an idea of Sweden as a major diplomatic power, with neutrality as the main supporting factor. The idea had been prevalent in Swedish poli-

24 Michael Holmström, “Försvarets bantning ger stort manfall”, in *Svenska Dagbladet* [Swedish daily], 2004-11-28, <https://www.svd.se/a/503e3ed8-2379-3661-ae83-7c765b76e390/forsvarets-bantning-ger-stort-manfall>. Read 2023-01-28.

25 Michael Claesson, “Försvarsmakten i dag”, in Zebulon Carlander and Oscar Karlflo (ed.), *Sveriges försvarspolitik – En antologi* (Stockholm 2020), page 62.

tics since the late 1960s²⁶. According to such thinking, Sweden would not need armed forces, since diplomacy would solve all security problems. Expressions like “Sweden has a strong voice in world politics” could be heard. This Swedish attitude could be summarized as: Small and unarmed – but diplomatically strong.

The Chechen wars 1994–1996 and 1999–2000 caused no alarm in Sweden. On the contrary, Russian success in 2000 was seen as progress. It was generally believed that Russia was on her way out of weakness and that she would become a part of the new world security order.²⁷

Warning signals 2004–2014

In July 2007, Swedish Colonel Bo Pellnäs published an article in a major Swedish daily. The headline was “We live in the paradise of fools”²⁸. Colonel Pellnäs claimed that Swedish defense policies were dictated by wishful thinking, and as such, Sweden had given up its most fundamental capacity to defend the nation. The article, for the first time in a decade, did lead to a discussion on what the Swedish defense forces really were supposed to do.²⁹ This discussion, however, soon died down and Sweden was back on a “see-no-evil” basis. In September of that year, Minister of Defense Mikael Odenberg resigned in protest against cuts in the defense budget. This caused a small stir which was soon forgotten. The war in Georgia in 2008 was so distant that it went unnoticed in Sweden³⁰ and peacetime conscription was abolished altogether in 2009.

Easter time in 2013, an alarm bell sounded again. Russian bombers and attack aircraft simulated an aerial attack on Sweden. It was concluded that the previously very high Swedish capacity to meet this type of operations in the air now was limited.³¹

26 Robert Dalsjö, ”Från stormaktsspel till neutralitetspolitik: Några huvudlinjer i svensk säkerhetspolitik från 1700-tal till Sovjetväldets fall”, In Kjell Engelbrekt and Jan Ångström, (ed.) *Svensk säkerhetspolitik: I Europa och världen* (Stockholm 2010), page 203.

27 Wilhelm Agrell, *Det säkra landet? Svensk försvars- och säkerhetspolitik från ett kallt krig till ett annat* (Malmö 2016), page 220.

28 Bo Pellnäs, ”Vi lever i dårarnas paradisi”, *Svenska Dagbladet* 2007-07-18, via Wilhelm Agrell, *Det säkra landet? Svensk försvars- och säkerhetspolitik från ett kallt krig till ett annat* (Malmö 2016), page 231.

29 Agrell (2016), page 231.

30 Agrell (2016), page 224.

31 Michael Claesson, ”Försvarsmakten i dag”, in Zebulon Carlander and Oscar Karlflo (ed.),

Crimea – Politicians alarmed 2014–2022

The Russian occupation of Crimea in February and March 2014 caused alarm in Swedish political circles. It was now obvious that Russia was not hesitating to use military means in international affairs. Swedish strategy, now embarked on, was “to eat the cake but still have it”. This meant that Sweden tried to ensure military support from abroad without becoming a NATO member.

In 2015, it was decided in parliament to rebuild a Swedish national defense capacity. This capacity would be built upon regional cooperation, primarily with Finland.³² In 2014, an agreement regarding Swedish–Finnish defense cooperation had been signed, and such cooperation has deepened ever since³³. Here we can see the ideas from the “Either – Or” movement coming back. The fact that Finland was one of the few nations to keep their conscript army intact, giving them a trained reserve of over half a million soldiers, probably also made an impression on Sweden.

In May 2016, Sweden took a big step towards NATO as parliament decided to sign a “Host Nation Support” (HSN) agreement with NATO.³⁴ In 2017, peacetime conscription was reinstated. Organization to train 50,000 soldiers a year was gone however. Thus, practical results were limited.

Any idea of NATO membership was still controversial. In 2015, an anthology warning of NATO membership and calling for stronger national forces and closer cooperation with Finland, was published. Among its fifteen authors there were three generals and two colonels.³⁵ There was, however, no public agitation on defense politics as in 1914. The defense debate outside minor circles was basically dead, and any wise politician stayed out of it.

In 2018, the winds had changed somewhat. Several political parties, then in opposition, talked in favor of a NATO membership. The foreign minister at the time, Margot Wallström, was adamant, however. She claimed that “There is nothing that points in the direction of Sweden being safer with a [NATO]

Sveriges försvarspolitik – En antologi (Stockholm 2020), page 72–73.

32 Claesson (2020), page 75.

33 Sara Norrevik, ”Internationella samarbeten”, in Zebulon Carlander and Oscar Karlflo (ed.), *Sveriges försvarspolitik: En antologi* (Stockholm 2020), page 169.

34 Anders Larsson, ”Taktik med marina stridskrafter” in Per Eliasson & Lars Ericson Wolke (ed.), *Mellan Neva och Nordsjön: Förutsättningar för att genomföra väpnad strid i Östersjöområdet* (Lund 2021), page 139.

35 Anders Björnsson (ed.), *Försvaret främst: En antologi om hur Sverige kan och bör försvara sig* (Lund 2015), *ibid*.

membership [...]”³⁶.

Steps were taken on rearmament and some efforts were made, but in reality, little was achieved regarding a Swedish capacity to carry out any effective defensive strategy at all. In 2020, Major General Michael Claesson spoke of twenty years of strategic obscurity³⁷.

Ukraine 2022 – Russia clearly an enemy

Russia’s attack on Ukraine in 2022 changed things substantially. This is very recent history, and the text below is mainly based on the author’s perceptions of Swedish society at the time. From the beginning of the Russian build up, there was a strong “see-no-evil” tendency. When the attack came, there was some denial, “no, this is not a war”. When pictures of dead people began to appear in media, denial became more problematic. Some tried an apologetic stance, claiming that Russia somehow had the right to do what they were doing. Others claimed that the war was only about Ukraine, and that Sweden and other nations had nothing to worry about.

At some point after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, government in Sweden, then led by Social Democrat Magdalena Andersson, began to think in new terms. On May 16, 2022, the Swedish Government decided to apply for NATO membership. A revolution in Swedish strategies was taking place. Rapidly, the ruling Social Democrat party had made a 180-degree reversal in the matter of NATO.

The full history of what transpired and how the Social Democrat party managed this turnaround will probably not be written for a long time. It must, however, be considered a feat of statesmanship by Magdalena Andersson, a feat that probably will get more than a footnote in future history books. To speculate, the big island of Gotland may have made a considerable difference. The advent of aircraft dramatically changed the role of the island; long distance missiles enhanced it even more. Military analysts in Sweden have long emphasized the importance of Gotland. The island could give momentum to any offensive action against Sweden, and Russian long-range weapons on the island would ruin several NATO strategies for defense of the Baltic Nations. The risk of Russia demanding the right to place troops in Gotland might have been seen as a threat

36 ”Det finns inget som pekar på att Sverige blir säkrare med ett medlemskap, [...]”. <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/utrikes/i-sin-kanske-sista-utrikespolitiska-deklaration-framstod-margot-wallstrom-som-mer-stukad> Published February 14, 2018, Read 2023-01-29.

37 Claesson (2020), page 59.

strong enough to dramatically change Swedish strategic thinking. As this article is written, a Swedish NATO membership is still being blocked by two nations.

There was relatively little public discussion of Swedish NATO membership, although some expressed their skepticism. Probably the Russian attack on Ukraine and the stance of the Western World has made clear what was to expect for a non-member nation if attacked by Russia. With only moral and material assistance, Sweden would fare badly, rapidly.

An old Swedish worry concerning NATO membership was about what Russia would do during the period of time from application to acceptance. Occupy Sweden? Occupy Finland? The worry was reasonably well overcome by various security guarantees plus the fact that Sweden and Finland applied at the same time.

Beyond today

The future? Sweden will most likely become a NATO member in due course. Swedish armed forces probably will be improved to some extent, although the pace set is slow. This means that very little is being done to rapidly improve Swedish defense capacity. All measures discussed will take a long time to implement. The most pressing matter, that of recruitment and military training, is discussed very little. During the Cold War, Sweden could field almost a million soldiers at “peak-defense”. Having participated in the Swedish Cold War defense effort, this author can clearly say that expanses in Swedish territory call for as many soldiers as possible.

Since May 2022, Sweden has a new strategy; NATO membership will keep the nation safe. This is probably not the end of Swedish strategic problems. For one example. NATO has never been fully tested. What if Russia occupies Gotland with a swift coup, coupled with dire threats? How will NATO react? How will Sweden react? Assistant Professor at the Swedish Defence University Tomas Ries raised doubts about the outcome in any such scenario³⁸. Tomas Ries also pointed to the question of “skill”, which can be understood as the ability of politicians to carry out policies in a proper mix to deter and ensure. Ries meant that European leaders lacked skill in in this field, with Finland as the only exception.³⁹

38 Tomas Ries, ”Östersjöområdet ur ett strategiskt perspektiv: En maktpolitisk bedömning”, in Per Eliasson & Lars Ericson Wolke (ed.), *Mellan Neva och Nordsjön: Förutsättningar för att genomföra väpnad strid i Östersjöområdet* (Lund 2021), page 60.

39 Ries (2021), pages 61–62.

When Wilhelm Agrell looked at WW II, he pointed out two variables, the need for concessions and the strength of defense forces. As Swedish defense forces grew, concessions could be reduced.⁴⁰ Are these principles still valid? Julius Mankell's book of 1871 has again become relevant. As a sign of situation awareness, the copy of the book held by the library of the Swedish Defence University was out borrowed at the time when this article was written.

8. SUMMARY

For over a thousand years, Swedish strategic policy has varied considerably. When Russia became an enemy, Sweden put much effort into conquering Finland before the Russians could do it – a clearly offensive strategy. In the 15th century, when the Kalmar Union turned into a threat to Swedish independence, Sweden focused on fending off the Danes. When Sweden grew stronger, beginning with Gustav II Adolf, offensive strategies were applied both to Denmark and Russia. The strategic offensive against Denmark came to fruition in 1814 and Denmark was taken off the Swedish list of strategic threats. Beginning in 1700, defensive strategies against Russia failed. The last step was taken in 1809 when Sweden lost Finland and was reduced to small-power status.

Small-state Sweden was limited to defensive strategies, which were based on neutrality. At times, like during World War II, these strategies had to involve the appeasement of stronger powers. During the Cold War, the defensive strategy was backed up by a strong military establishment, although coupled with the 19th-century idea of assistance “from abroad”.

The last decades have seen two remarkable shifts in Swedish strategic policies. The first was crossing Russia off the list of potential enemies after the fall of the Soviet Union, which emptied the list. As a logical consequence, Sweden's military establishment was dismantled, the principle of neutrality remained and a “see-no-evil” principle was established.

The Russian attack on Ukraine, and the reserved stance of the Western World in response to that attack, created a rude awakening. With remarkable speed, Sweden gave up neutrality and adopted a strategy based on alliance membership. With that general strategy in place, Sweden now has a number of other strategic details to consider, where the most pressing probably is how to rapidly recover lost military capacity.

40 Agrell (2016), page 33.

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India's Strategy from Nehru to Modi: 1947-2022

DR. KAUSHIK ROY¹

ABSTRACT. The general opinion is that with the advent of Narendra Modi Government in 2014, the 'land of Gandhi' has replaced the policy of strategic restraint crafted by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (1947-1964) with an aggressive expansionist strategy. This chapter argues that the shift is in fact a slow and gradual process which started under Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri (1964-1966) and then continued haltingly under the premiership of Indira Gandhi (1970s) and her son Rajiv Gandhi (1980s). Further, present day Indian national security policy and military strategy do not represent a complete break with the past but reflects both change and continuity. This paper deals with both grand strategy and military strategy and shows how historical legacies, cultural factors, external environment, domestic constraints and financial capacity shaped India's strategic planning and implementation of strategic policy in practice.

KEYWORDS: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, CHINA, INDIA, KASHMIR, LADAKH, PAKISTAN, PARTITION, STRATEGIC CULTURE.

Introduction

What is strategy? A group of Indian strategic managers define this term in the following words: 'In broad terms strategy can be defined as the art of harnessing the powers of a nation to accomplish the aims and objectives set forth either in peace or war.'² Strategy involves both interstate and intrastate relationships. Strategy is the product of a dynamic interplay between domestic policies and inter-state competition in the international arena. Individuals and long-term structural forces are equally responsible for the evolution of strategy. Strategy for the purpose of this paper is divided into grand strategy (national

¹ Guru Nanak Chair Professor, Department of History, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India,

² Quoted from Vice Admiral K.K. Nayyar, Air Marshal B.D. Jayal, Lieutenant-General V.K. Singh, Vice Admiral R.B. Suri and Major-General Afsir Karim, *National Security: Military Aspects*. Rupa & Company, New Delhi 2003 p. 90.

security policy) and military strategy. I conceptualise grand strategy as the policy followed by the strategic managers to maintain and if possible, expand the power of the nation state. Grand strategy is the result of combination of foreign policy, domestic policy (internal administration/art of governance), economic policy, societal fabric, culture, and military strategy. Military strategy is the art of using military assets both in times of peace and war to gain the objectives of grand strategy. Military strategy involves both theory (planning, formulating doctrine, etc.) and practice (actual implementation which involves deployment, and use of force). Below military strategy comes the operational level of war and tactics (minor and grand tactics) which are beyond the purview of this chapter.

Some scholars assert that India has no strategy. For instance, Stephen P. Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta assert that India's security policy is *ad hoc* in nature. Cohen and Dasgupta continue that at best India's grand strategy could be summed up as one of restraint. They argue that the deeply ingrained tradition of strategic restraint explains the Indian state's inability to generate sufficient military power to change its strategic position. Delhi acquires, according to these two authors, advanced weapons without any plan.³ Some scholars opine that the culture of restraint is the product of passive strand in Hinduism which emphasises cooperation instead of conflict.⁴ The senior Indian military officers also believe that India had no strategy to speak of. Lieutenant-General B.M. Kaul, Chief of General Staff, India from 1961-1962 noted in his autobiography: 'Warfare had no place in India's philosophy and, therefore, we had no definite defence policy. As a result, no adequate defence system had been built between 1947 and 1957. The Generals and their counterparts in the Navy and the Air Force had, more or less, been left to their own devices since Independence.'⁵ On a similar tune, one high ranking Indian Army officer who participated in the Third India-Pakistan War (1971) claims that at that time, India had no military strategy to speak of.⁶

The present author challenges the above views. India started publishing stra-

3 Stephen P. Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming: India's Military Modernization*. Viking, New Delhi 2010. See especially pp. xi-xii.

4 See for instance Swarna Rajagopalan, 'Security Ideas in the *Valmiki Ramayana*,' in Swarna Rajagopalan (ed.), *Security and South Asia: Ideas, Institutions and Initiatives*. Routledge, London 2006, pp. 24-53.

5 Quoted from Lieutenant-General B.M. Kaul, *The Untold Story*. Allied Publishers, Bombay 1967 pp. 202-03.

6 Lieutenant-General J.F.R. Jacob, *Surrender at Dacca: Birth of a Nation*. Manohar, New Delhi 1997, p. 59. Jacob was Chief of Staff of the Eastern Command during the 1971 War.

tegic manuals and policy papers from the last decade of the twentieth century. That does not mean that India did not have any strategic policy before that period. In fact, India's strategic theory and policy can be culled from the memoirs and diaries of the senior military and civil officers, government reports and through a critical analysis of the published accounts of the campaigns.

A minority opinion among the scholars is that with the advent of Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) Narendra Modi Government in 2014, the 'land of Gandhi' has replaced the policy of strategic restraint crafted by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (1947-1964) with an aggressive expansionist strategy.⁷ Till the advent of Modi, India, the argument goes followed a sort of defensive Monroe doctrine. Inspired by Ashoka, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, India's strategic elite avoided military bullying and dominance and tried to craft their defensive security policies on the basis of cooperation and non-violence.⁸ About the passive military strategy that India seemingly followed till the 1990s, Field Marshal 'Sam' Manekshaw, Chief of Army Staff (1969-1972) asserted: '... was a defensive mentality—wanting to hold on to every inch of our territory on the borders thus creating a totally inflexible strategic setting leading to a passive defensive mentality.'⁹

This essay argues that India's strategy (both grand and military) passed through three stages: passive policy, active policy and now moving towards a form that could be categorised as aggressive strategy (at least in a limited manner). This shift is in fact a slow and gradual process which started under Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri (1964-1966) and then continued under the premiership of Indira Gandhi (1966-1977, 1980-1984) and her son Rajiv Gandhi (Prime Minister from 1984 to 1989). Further, present day Indian national security policy and military strategy do not represent a complete break with the past but reflects both change and continuity. This paper deals with both grand strategy and military strategy and shows how historical legacies, cultural factors

7 For Kanti P. Bajpai, Nehru and the neoliberals believed in economic and diplomatic cooperation for avoiding war. In contrast, the BJP is an advocate of hyperrealism, focuses on the necessity of use of force and inevitability of war. See Bajpai, 'Indian Strategic Culture and the Problem of Pakistan,' in Rajagopalan (ed.), *Security and South Asia*, pp. 54-79.

8 James R. Holmes, Andrew C. Winner and Toshi Yoshihara, *Indian Naval Strategy in the Twenty-First Century*. Routledge, London 2009, pp. 170-76. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi promulgated the Indira Doctrine which stated that India has the moral right to intervene first in case of any crisis breaking out in South Asia. Her son Rajiv Gandhi followed this policy.

9 Quoted from Major-General Jogindar Singh, *Behind the Scene: An Analysis of India's Military Operations, 1947-1971*. Lancer, New Delhi 1993, p. xvi.

(passive and active strands of Hinduism), external environment, domestic constraints and financial capacity shaped India's strategic planning and implementation of strategic policy in practice.

Nehru's Passive Strategy

Strategy to a great extent is the product of interactions with neighbouring countries. Hence, strategy of a country is also shaped partly by what its neighbouring state is doing. The main bone of contention between India and Pakistan just after the two countries were born was Kashmir. In 1947, of Kashmir's 4 million inhabitants, 77 percent were Muslims.¹⁰ Pakistani strategic elite from the very birth of Pakistan has followed a militaristic policy. They always wanted strategic parity with India which is economically, territorially, and demographically several times bigger. Further, Pakistan's strategic managers follow irredentist policy, that is redeeming perceived lost territories (Kashmir) from India considered essential for its security.¹¹ Kashmir is also important for India for maintaining its secular policy. As Nehru aptly said: 'If Kashmir went, the position of Muslims in India would become more difficult. In fact, there would be a tendency of people to accept a purely communal Hindu viewpoint.'¹²

There have been some studies on Nehru's security policies. Lorne J. Kavic notes that Nehru's grand strategy was actually the product of balance of power politics. Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)¹³ was designed to balance the Soviet and the American blocs. Further, Nehru's military strategy was a legacy of British-India's security policy.¹⁴ Like Kavic, Srinath Raghavan, a retired Indian Army officer turned academician argues that Nehru had a strategy. Nehru's strategic thinking was influenced by Captain B.H. Liddell Hart on one hand (whom he had met between 1939 and 1949) and Reinhold Niebuhr on the other hand. Nehru in his discussions with Liddell Hart and Field-Marshal Bernard Mont-

10 Stanley Wolpert, *India and Pakistan: Continued Conflict or Cooperation?* University of California Press, Berkeley 2010, p. 21.

11 T.V. Paul, *The Warrior State: Pakistan in the Contemporary World*. Random House, Gurgaon 2014, pp. 3-5.

12 Quoted from Srinath Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India: A Strategic History of the Nehru Years*, PERMANENT BLACK, Ranikhet 2010, p. 100

13 NAM means keeping equal distance from the Soviet and the American blocs and following an independent foreign policy during the early phase of the Cold War,

14 Lorne J. Kavic, *India's Quest for Security: Defence Policies, 1947-1965*. University of California Press, Berkeley 1967.

gomery made a distinction between prophets (who were fanatics)¹⁵ and leaders. In Nehru's paradigm, the leader of a democratic country is a persuader and has to make compromises. Raghavan writes that instead of controlling strategy (it involves application of massive amount of force to impose one's will on the enemy), Nehru due to his liberal values followed quasi coercive strategy. The latter involves offering inducements to the enemy as well as applying moderate amount of force in a gradual manner.¹⁶

Kavic erroneously draws a connection between Nehru's strategic policy and British-India's security policy. British-India did not allow any foreign interference (be it Russian or Chinese) in Tibet but Nehru passively allowed Beijing to absorb Tibet in 1954. Further, Nehru's NAM policy alienated USA, China, and Soviet Russia. I show that Nehru's statecraft was also shaped by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's interpretation of Hinduism being passive in nature, and party politics within India.

On 22 October 1947, some 5,000 Pathan tribesmen trained and equipped by the Pakistan Army entered Kashmir. India's policy was reactive in nature and defensive in orientation. Faced with aggression, on 26 October 1947, Nehru agreed to airlift troops to Srinagar. Sardar Patel, Home Minister in Nehru's Cabinet was a follower of realpolitik and pressurized Nehru to militarily intervene in Kashmir. Thus, started the First India-Pakistan War. Instead of continuing military operation for liberation of whole Kashmir, on 1 January 1948, Nehru partly because of his own liberalism and due to advise given by Lord Mountbatten took the issue to the United Nations. Till now, large parts of North and West Kashmir remains under Pakistan's control which is known as Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.

As far as the neighbouring countries are concerned, India besides Pakistan faces serious border problems with China. Beijing refuses to accept the validity of the McMahon Line, the border between British-India and Manchu/Qing China which Nehru's India and Mao Ze Dong's China inherited. Initially, Nehru with the support of the left wing within the Indian National Congress (INC was then the ruling party) were impressed with the Chinese Revolution and followed a policy of appeasing China.¹⁷ Nehru's idealistic romanticism led to the poli-

15 In Liddell Hart's view, Clausewitz (the Mahdi of the mass) and his Nazi followers were all fanatics.

16 Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, pp. 6-8, 15-7.

17 Yaacov Vertzberger, 'India's Border Conflict with China: A Perceptual Analysis' *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 17 no. 4 1982, pp. 607-31.

cy of ‘Hindi-Chin Bhai-Bhai’ and ‘*Panchsheel*.’¹⁸ The latter terms means five principles: mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty; mutual non-aggression; mutual non-interference; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence. It was formally enunciated on 29 April 1954 as the basis of India’s policy towards China after the latter conquered Tibet.¹⁹ Partly, *Panchsheel* was influenced by the pacifist Mauryan Emperor Ashoka’s (c. 268-232 BCE) *dhamma* policy which was guided by the non-violent strand of Buddhism. Influenced by M.K. Gandhi’s philosophy, Nehru declared in 1958: ‘The best defence, internationally, is the friendship of other nations.’²⁰ Sardar Patel, the leader of right wing of the INC was conscious of the latent danger posed by China. He favoured India following a hard policy towards the ‘dragon.’ However, he passed away on 15 December 1950 which allowed Nehru to dominate the government as well as the party. The idealist Nehru believed that cooperation between India and China would allow these two countries to shape the destiny of Asia in particular and the world in general.²¹

From 1954, China challenged India’s control over Aksai Chin. In 1961, due to the prodding of Lieutenant-General B.M. Kaul, Nehru accepted a defensive military strategy. It involved preventing further encroachments by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) along the McMahon Line. Small Indian military posts were established along the border of Aksai Chin. This policy, the British journalist Neville Maxwell erroneously terms as India’s ‘Forward Policy.’²² Partly, Nehru was forced to accept this so called Forward Policy because his government’s passivity vis a vis China was coming under heavy criticism in the Indian Parliament.

Nehru’s scientific and military advisor was Patrick Blackett, a British scientist who had combat experience in the Second World War. Blackett was against India buying aircraft carriers from Britain. In fact, he wanted the Indian Navy to be a coastal force. Further, Blackett rejected India buying long range bombers.²³

18 Jaswant Singh, *Defending India*, Macmillan India, Chennai 1999, p. 34.

19 Panchsheel, External Publicity Division, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, www.meaindia.nic.in, accessed on 2 Nov. 2023.

20 *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, 1 April-30 June 1959*, Second Series, 42. Oxford University Press, New Delhi 2010, p. 480.

21 B.R. Nanda, *Jawaharlal Nehru: Rebel and Statesman*. 1995, reprint, Oxford University Press, New Delhi 2003, pp. 228-43.

22 Neville Maxwell, *India’s China War*. 1970, reprint, Jonathan Cape, London 1971, p. 174.

23 Robert S. Anderson, ‘Patrick Blackett in India: Military Consultant and Scientific Intervenor, 1947-72, Part One’ *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* Vol. 53 no. 2 1999, pp.

Had they been acquired, these aircraft would have been extremely useful during the 1962 India-China War. Since Nehru was the advocate of NAM, he did not want to get dependent on foreign countries for war materials. Nehru's policy was to establish a self-sufficient defence industrial base for autarky in defence materials. As part of this policy, Defence Minister Krishna Menon decided in 1961 to manufacture Vickers tank of Britain in India. This tank was later re-named as Vijayanta.²⁴

Nehru's greatest mistake was that he had failed to conceptualise that China could launch a short-limited war across the border. To B.N. Mullik (head of Intelligence Bureau), Nehru confided that if war breaks out between China and India then it would be a long attritional war which would last for decades and might expand into a world war drawing the USSR and USA on the warring sides.²⁵ Another mistake of Nehru was to consider the Himalayas as an impenetrable barrier for any invasion from Tibet. In fact, Nehru credulously believed that even an airborne army could not cross the Himalayas.²⁶ This trend of thought was shaped by Nehru's understanding of colonial and precolonial history of India. Never before 1962, was India threatened by an invasion force across the Himalayas. Nevertheless, Nehru's reasoning of the motives behind China's attack on India was reasonable. In the words of Mullik: 'Nehru said that it would be wrong to assume that the Chinese undertook this aggression only because they wanted some patches of territory.... The real cause was something else.... India came in her way of domination of Asia.'²⁷

The PLA started crossing the McMahon Line on 20 October 1962, when the two superpowers were engaged with the Cuban Missile Crisis. The Indian Army started melting like snow under the 'Red' heat on the Himalayas. On 21 November 1962, China declared an unilateral ceasefire and withdrew to the position it held along the McMahon Line before the war. Zhou Enlai (First Premier of People's Republic of China [PRC] from 1954 to 1976) informed the Indian charge d'affaires that the Indian troops should retreat 20 km from the position held by the PLA. Further, China reserved the right to strike back.²⁸ The last victim of

253-73.

24 Kaul, *The Untold Story*, p. 204.

25 B.N. Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: 1948-1964*. Allied Publishers, Bombay 1972, p. 206.

26 Yaacov Vertzberger, 'India's Strategic Posture and the Border War Defeat of 1962: A Case Study in Miscalculation' *Journal of Strategic Studies* Vol. 5 no. 3 1982, p. 374.

27 Quoted from Mullik, *My Years with Nehru*, p. 217.

28 Maxwell, *India's China War*, pp. 417-18.

India's defeat at the hands of China was Nehru who passed away heartbroken on 27 May 1964.

Tackling insurgency within India largely explains India's passive strategic orientation. Regional, linguistic, and ethnic diversities along with moral, material, and financial aid from Pakistan generated a host of insurgencies within India. India is a multireligious, multicultural and multiethnic country. Between 1947 (when India became independent) and 2012, India's population rose from 325 million to 1.15 billion. It is the home of one-sixth of humanity and became the most populous country in the world overtaking China in 2021. There are 22 official languages in India, 1,500 dialects and 216 ethnolinguistic groups. The population is 80 percent Hindu, 14 percent Muslim, 2.5 percent Christian, and 2 percent Sikh. India's 140 million Muslims make it the third largest Muslim country in the world after Indonesia and Pakistan. India is also the second largest Shia Muslim state in the world after Iran.²⁹ Kanti P. Bajpai, a leading strategic analyst of India as regards insurgencies in Northeast India notes: 'Secessionist violence... arises not just from fear of the northern heartland but also from more localized fears between ethno-religious groups within the borderlands.'³⁰

The police force of India remains inadequate in size and is not modernised in terms of training and equipment to tackle the heavily armed insurgents. For instance, India has only 142 police personnel for every 100,000 citizens. As a point of comparison, the figure for USA is 315, Australia 290 and in UK it is 200.³¹ The police of India still rely on the Lee Enfields of Second World War vintage while the insurgents carry AK-47s. Hence, in most of the cases, the government had to deploy the Indian Army. A significant section of the Indian Army remains engaged in counterinsurgency (COIN) duty especially in Kashmir. This not only prevents modernisation of the Indian Army but also forces the government to maintain an infantry heavy army instead of creating a capital-intensive modernised force. Thus, intense engagement of the Indian Army with COIN prevents India from generating adequate military power for force projection outside the country even today.

29 Bruce Riedel, *Avoiding Armageddon: America, India, and Pakistan to the Brink and Back*. HarperCollins, Noida 2013, pp. 2-3.

30 Quoted from Kanti P. Bajpai, *Roots of Terrorism*. Penguin, New Delhi 2002, p. 133.

31 Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming*, p. 124.

Transition to Active Strategy

Pakistan under Field-Marshal Ayub Khan's (President 1958-1969) dictatorship made rapid strides in economic growth. Annual economic growth rate of Pakistan averaged 5.5 percent which was considerably higher than contemporary India's economic growth rate.³² India's slow economic growth rate was dubbed as the 'Hindu rate of growth.' Rapid growth of economic power and acquisition of advanced weaponry from USA encouraged Ayub to reopen the Kashmir issue. Ayub's Pakistan joined SEATO (1954) and CENTO/Baghdad Pact (1955) and in return got Patton tanks and F-86 Sabre jets from USA. Under the terms of agreement, these weapons were to be used against the Soviet bloc but Pakistan decided to use these high technology weapons against India. Ayub thought that Nehru's successor, Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, a political weakling would be an easy walkover. From the perspective of the Pakistani strategic elite, the 1965 War was a sort of preventive war. They believed that under the guise of preparing against China, from 1963 onwards, the Indian military was undergoing a massive expansion. Indian defence budget, claimed the Pakistani top brass, had increased considerably. By 1967, India, assumed the Pakistani generals would have an army and an industrial base several times bigger than that of Pakistan. Hence, Pakistan should be prepared to confront India now or never.³³ This led to the Second India-Pakistan War in 1965 which lasted for 22 days.

Despite Pakistani misperception (partly intentional), in 1963, the India's defence budget was only 1.9 percent of the GDP and 19.61 percent of the total central government expenditure.³⁴ The Indian Air Force (IAF) had outdated aircraft like Harvards, Vampires, Spitfires and Hunters. When Y.B. Chavan, India's Defence Minister (1962-1965), requested Robert McNamara US Secretary of Defence (1961-1968) for F-104 starfighters, the latter turned it down.³⁵ Since India was following NAM, USA had no interest in reequipping India's military. Thanks to Nehru's sterile NAM, India was also disliked by USSR.

32 Srinath Raghavan, *1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh*. PERMANENT BLACK, Ranikhet 2013, pp. 14-5.

33 M. Asghar Khan, *The First Round: Indo-Pakistan War 1965*. Vikas Publishing House, Ghaziabad 1979, p. 7.

34 Singh, *Defending India*, p. 244.

35 R.D. Pradhan (ed.), *1965 War: The Inside Story, Defence Minister Y.B. Chavan's Diary of India-Pakistan War*. 2007, reprint, ATLANTIC Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi 2013, pp. xiii-xiv.

Both India and Pakistan followed continental military strategy. In Ayub Khan's understanding the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) was to function as an air-borne artillery for providing close air support to the Pakistan Army. However, the PAF argued that neutralising the IAF should be its first priority. Since, the Pakistan Army was ruling the country, the PAF was marginalised.³⁶ Under Shastri, India's grand strategy as well as military strategy experienced a slow and steady shift. This shift towards what I term as the active strategy continued under Shastri's successor Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her son Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

Ayub's overall aim was to capture Kashmir. To achieve this, he implemented a complicated strategy which had four phases and was an amalgam of unconventional and conventional warfare. In the first phase, a decoy attack was launched at the Rann of Kutch to distract Indian military's attention from the main front. During the second phase, Pakistani trained infiltrators entered Kashmir with the objective of blowing up power stations and bridges. During the third phase, the Pakistan Army launched a full-scale conventional attack at the Chhamb Sector to sever India's line of communications between Punjab and Kashmir. In the fourth and final phase, a massive, armoured attack was launched to capture Amritsar and threaten Delhi's link with Punjab. Ayub's strategic plan was partly based on racial prejudice which he had imbibed from the British officers of the Indian Army. After all, Ayub had served in the British officered Indian Army during the Second World War. Ayub told General Muhammad Musa Khan (Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army, 1958-1966), that the fragile morale of the unmartial Hindus would not stand against the warrior spirit of the martial Punjabi Muslims and the Pathans (the two most famous martial races of British-India). In fact, Ayub believed that Shastri due to his short stature was unmartial as martial people are wheat eating and tall in stature. This was the legacy of British generated Martial Race theory which came into vogue under General (later Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, Commander-in-Chief India, 1885-1893) in the 1880s.³⁷

On 24 April 1965, Pakistan implemented the first phase of its strategic plan and penetrated 8 miles within the Indian border in the Rann of Kutch. On 5 August 1965, Pakistan put into operation the second phase of their strategy. India's strategy during the Second India-Pakistan War was active from the defensive

36 Khan, *The First Round*, pp. 3-4.

37 Pradhan (ed.), *1965 War*, pp. xvii-xviii; Farooq Bajwa, *From Kutch to Tashkent: The Indo-Pakistan War of 1965*. Hurst & Company, London 2013, p. 390.

point of view but not aggressive. India did not attack East Pakistan partially because of pressure exerted by USA and especially China.³⁸ Lieutenant-General Harbakhsh Singh, General Officer Commanding Western Command (August-September 1965) urged for an offensive strategy by launching a preemptive attack involving Indian armour, mechanised infantry and ground support aircraft across Pakistan's Punjab before the Pakistani forces could mobilise. But, in tune with India's grand strategy his plan was turned down and the Chief of the Army Staff ordered Singh to follow an active defence. The Indian military strategy was to counter the Pakistani infiltrators at Kashmir and to smash the Pakistani armour and then to capture as much territory as possible which after the war was to be used for political bargaining. At Khem Karan (Asal Uttar) occurred one of the biggest tank battles (after Kursk [1943] and Golan Heights [1973]) between Pakistani Pattons and Indian Centurions. Despite possessing quantitative and qualitative superiority, the Pakistani armoured thrust was blunted.³⁹ Better tactics and training of the Indians nullified Pakistani technological and material superiorities. The point I am pushing is that no matter how good a military strategy is crafted by a nation state, it will not bear results if the tactics are poor. Hence, the implications present in the writings of scholars like Alan Millett and Williamson Murray that grand strategy and military strategy are the be all and end all of everything in war and tactics are nothing is untenable.

In tune with active strategy, Shastri ordered the Indian armed forces to launch attacks across the border to threaten Lahore. This was a break from Nehruvian passive military strategy. India's offensive towards Ichhogil Canal broke down due to lack of intimate cooperation between the infantry and the IAF.⁴⁰ India had to learn a lot in the field of conducting joint operations. On 23 September 1965, the desultory war came to an end. On 11 January 1966, Shastri died at Tashkent.

In 1970, the Bengali speaking Muslims of East Pakistan rebelled against the Pakistani central government which was dominated by the Punjabi Muslims and Pathans from West Pakistan. In the civil bureaucracy and in the military, the West Pakistanis dominated. Further, the East Pakistanis were infuriated due to the imposition of Urdu as the national language by the West Pakistani leadership over Bengali in East Pakistan. The Pakistan Army conducted a brutal COIN under the codename Operation Searchlight. Millions of Bengali Muslims fled

38 Bajwa, *From Kutch to Tashkent*, p. 393.

39 Lieutenant-General Harbakhsh Singh, *War Despatches: Indo-Pak Conflict 1965*. Lancer, New Delhi 1991, pp. 8-15, 65-8.

40 Singh, *Behind the Scene*, p. 260

to West Bengal in India. This almost created an economic crisis in India. While Jawaharlal Nehru was an idealist, his daughter Indira Gandhi was a follower of realpolitik as enunciated by the ancient Indian strategic thinker Kautilya. Indira Gandhi decided to take advantage of this situation to teach Pakistan a lesson. This was active strategy at its best. Indira Gandhi broke with her father's NAM policy (not seeking help from either the Eastern/Soviet or Western bloc) and made a pact with USSR.

On 9 August 1971, India signed with USSR the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. The two most important elements of this treaty are Articles VIII and IX which enunciated strategic cooperation between India and USSR. Article VIII stated: '... each of the High Contracting parties solemnly declares that it shall not enter into or participate in any military alliance against the other party.' And Article IX noted: 'In the event of either Party being subjected to an attack or a threat thereof, the High Contracting Parties shall immediately enter into mutual consultations in order to remove such threat and to take appropriate effective measures to ensure peace and the security of their countries.'⁴¹ After signing this treaty, India started receiving MIG fighters and diplomatic support in the United Nations from Moscow.

On 3 December 1971, angered by Indian support to the rebels of East Pakistan, Pakistan carried out a preemptive aerial attack on West India to destroy the IAF. The PAF was inspired by the *Luftwaffe* and Israeli Air Force's preemptive strikes during Barbarossa (22 June 1941) and Six Day's War (5 June 1967). Indira Gandhi unlike her father Nehru decided to take a risk and follow a policy of offensive-defence or active defence. She decided to carry the war into enemy's homeland. Keeping only 100,000 men to face China, Indira Gandhi decided to contain the Pakistani attacks on West India and concentrate against East Pakistan. Bulk of the Indian Army was deployed against the Pakistani units in East Pakistan. Lieutenant-General Jagjit Singh Aurora, General Officer Commanding Eastern Command deployed three corps (II, XXXIII and IV) against East Pakistan. Indira Gandhi gambled that due to the winter snow, the PLA would not be able to cross the Himalayan passes in case Beijing decides to intervene on behalf of its 'all weather ally' Pakistan. From the 1960s, PRC and Pakistan became allies to contain India. This friendship continues even today.

41 Quoted from Number 434, Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation between the Government of India and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, New Delhi, 9 August 1971, [https://mea.gov.in/Portal/Legal treaties Doc/RU71B1557.pdf](https://mea.gov.in/Portal/Legal%20treaties%20Doc/RU71B1557.pdf), accessed on 1 November 2023.

In 1971, India's military plan was to continue military operation for three weeks before international pressure would force New Delhi to shut down its military adventure. Further, if the war continued for long, there was the danger that Muslim countries like Jordan, Malaysia, etc. would join Pakistan. The objective was to smash the Pakistani units in East Pakistan and to capture as much territory as possible within that limited time frame. Interestingly, Dhaka the capital of East Pakistan, did not emerge in Indian military planning as the principal military objective.⁴²

On 3 December 1971, the Indian attack on East Pakistan started. The II Corps equipped with T-55 Russian tanks and PT-76 (amphibious tanks) attacked from Krishnagar in West Bengal. The XXXIII Corps attacked from Siliguri in northern part of West Bengal. Finally, the IV Corps with three mountain divisions advanced from Agartala. In addition, a small infantry force advanced from Guwahati in Assam.⁴³ Thus, East Pakistan's land borders on east, west and north were sealed by the Indian troops.

On East Pakistan's southern border is the Bay of Bengal. In this maritime space, the Indian Navy with its aircraft carrier maintained 'sea supremacy.' To break the Indian stranglehold over East Pakistan, the Pakistan Navy launched its most advanced submarine P.N.S. *Ghazi* which was sunk in the Bay of Bengal. The IAF established air supremacy over the sky of East Pakistan. West Pakistan could not send any military aid to East Pakistan through air, land, and sea. For the first time in 1971, the three branches of the armed forces of India and Pakistan were fighting against each other.

A desperate General Aga Muhammad Yahya Khan, Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army (1966-1971) and the President of Pakistan (1969-1971) sent messages repeatedly to the beleaguered Lieutenant-General A.A.K. Niazi (commander of the Pakistani ground forces in East Pakistan) in Dhaka to hold out as the 'red' and the 'blue' will intervene soon. The situation was somewhat similar to a desperate Hitler in November 1942 telling General (later Field-Marshal) Paulus, commander of the surrounded 6th Army at Stalingrad '*Der Manstein Kommt.*' In case of Pakistan, the 'red' (PRC) did not intervene but the 'blue' (USA) did. This was because, USA feared that India in lieu of the Indo-Soviet Treaty would allow USSR to dock its navy in Vishakhapatnam port which would turn the Bay of Bengal into a Russian lake. Such a development would

42 Raghavan, 1971, p. 236; Jacob, *Surrender at Dacca*, p. 248.

43 Major-General D.K. Palit, *The Lightning Campaign: Indo-Pakistan War, 1971*. Thomson Press, New Delhi 1972, pp. 103-05.

not be good from the perspective of Washington DC as the US armed forces at that time was heavily engaged in Vietnam. Further, Dr Henry Kissinger, National Security Advisor of USA (1969-1975) opined that if an American ally goes down while confronting a state supported by USSR, USA's prestige in the bipolar world will decline. Kissinger who personally hated Indira Gandhi decided to teach 'the bitch' a lesson.

On 10 December 1971, Enterprise Task Group (centred around the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise*) under Admiral Elmo Zumwalt started moving from Gulf of Tonkin and reached Singapore in 13 December, and then passed the Malacca Strait next day. On 15 December, Enterprise Task Group sailed towards Sri Lanka. If Zumwalt's Enterprise Task Group engaged the Indian Navy's British made aircraft carrier INS *Vikrant* which was of Second World War vintage and leaking, it would be a case of a two-ton truck crushing a puppy. At that critical juncture, the Indo-Soviet Treaty came into force and paid India good dividends. As early as 7 December, Soviet First Task Group of Missile Cruiser with its escorts sailed from Vladivostok. On 9 December, it was sighted by American reconnaissance aircraft in Tshima Strait. On 16 December the Second Task Group of Missile Cruiser and its escorts also sailed from Vladivostok. Next day, the First Task Group crossed the Malacca Strait and on 18 December trailed Enterprise Task Group. On 1 January 1972, both the Soviet First and Second Task Groups started shadowing Enterprise Task Group. It seems that the regional war between India and Pakistan might flare into a global war. But the task groups of the superpowers cancelled each other out and the Indian armed forces were already on the road to total victory in East Pakistan. On 8 January 1972, Enterprise Task Group started withdrawing from the Indian Ocean and the Soviets followed suit on mid-January 1972.⁴⁴

Back in East Pakistan, Niazi had scattered his troops in penny packets throughout the countryside. Niazi's objective was to defend every inch of East Pakistan to prevent India from setting up a provisional government comprising Bengali Muslim leaders. The Indian units bypassed the Pakistani strongholds and raced for Dhaka. India's *Blitzkrieg* in East Pakistan was completed in just 13 days. On 16 December 1971, when Niazi surrendered at Dhaka, he said two things to his Indian captors: '*Pindi main baithe huan haramzadon ne marwa diya*' (Those bastards sitting at Rawalpindi [headquarters of the Pakistan Army] had let me down) and 'How well I fought.' Somebody should have told Niazi:

44 Vice Admiral GM Hiranandani, *Transition to Triumph: Indian Navy 1965-1972*. Lancer, New Delhi 2000, pp. 157-66.

'very bad indeed.' About 90,000 Pakistani personnel (including 70,000 from the armed forces, the rest police and paramilitary) became prisoners of war. It was one of the greatest victories won by any army in the post-World War II period which permanently changed the geopolitical landscape of Asia. 1971 was India's 'finest hour.' Pakistan lost 75 million of its erstwhile citizens when Mujib ur Rahman with Indian support declared East Pakistan as a new country: Bangladesh.⁴⁵ India became the dominant player in Southern Asia. Since India's strategy was not overtly aggressive, even at the height of its power, New Delhi displayed some restraint. India did not attack West Pakistan though its armed forces were in total disarray and Yahya Khan lost control over the Pakistani officer corps. India declared unilateral ceasefire on 17 December 1971.

After the loss of East Pakistan, West Pakistan considered India as an existential threat. Islamabad realised that in conventional war, it stood no chance against India. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (President of Pakistan 1971-1973 and Prime Minister of Pakistan 1973-1977) then opted for developing the nuclear bomb in order to neutralise India's conventional military superiority. Bhutto argued somewhat rhetorically that the war with India would continue if necessary for a thousand years. Bhutto's successor, the military dictator General Zia-ul-Haq (President of Pakistan 1978-1988) besides pursuing the nuclear option started the policy of launching terrorist attacks against India especially at Kashmir. Zia termed this policy as 'Bleed India through a thousand cuts.'

At times, due to mission creep on part of Pakistan, its insurgent sponsored unconventional warfare escalated to conventional war. This happened in 1999 when the two nuclear states were on the verge of a full-scale war. In May 1999, Pakistani soldiers and insurgents infiltrated into the Kargil heights. Pakistan's objectives were to cut the Indian national highway from Srinagar to Ladakh and to reopen the Kashmir question. Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff General Pervez Musharraf (1998-2007) asserted that the Kargil intrusion was Pakistan's response to Indian capture of the Siachen Glacier in 1984. India responded militarily and the conflict continued till July of the same year until a ceasefire occurred under American supervision. The battle was fought along a stretch of 200 km of Himalayas at a height between 10,000 to 15,000 feet. India used the IAF and the Indian Navy bottled up the Pakistan Navy in Karachi. The latter remained completely inactive. This war resulted in 1,500 casualties for the Indian armed forces.⁴⁶

45 Palit, *The Lightning Campaign*, p 154.

46 *From Surprise to Reckoning: The Kargil Review Committee Report*. Sage, New Delhi 2000, pp. 16-8, 21-3.

Despite hype in the Western media that due to diplomatic mediations by the US President Bill Clinton (1993-2001), a nuclear conflagration was avoided in South Asia, the reality was different. Rhetoric apart, neither India nor Pakistan had deliverable nuclear weapons ready during the Kargil War. India for the second time had exploded experimental nuclear bombs between 11 and 13 May 1998. BJP's Vajpayee Administration was forced to go nuclear publicly because of the US engineered Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty coming into application in full force. In fact, Vajpayee was following in the footsteps of Indira Gandhi under whose leadership, India at Pokhran exploded a nuclear device for the first time on 18 May 1974. In fact, Indian intelligence in the mid 1950s made Nehru aware that the Chinese were tinkering with the atomic project. Homi J. Bhabha, scientist cum Nehru's advisor advised his '*bhai*' that he could develop a nuclear device. But Nehru turned it down. Nehru was partly influenced by M.K. Gandhi's assumption that possession of nuclear bomb is unethical. In addition, Nehru argued that the economic burden that will result from pursuing the atom bomb project would be unacceptable to the poverty ridden masses. On 16 October 1964, China exploded its first nuclear device at Lop Nur. In December 1964, Lal Bahadur Shastri requested UK and USA to provide guarantees against the nuclear threat emanating from China. However, Washington DC refused and finally Indira Gandhi took the plunge when Bhutto declared in 1971 that Pakistan would go for the bomb. Pakistan for the first time on 28 May 1998 exploded nuclear devices and India at that time had a recessed nuclear arsenal. The bombs were not mated with the nuclear delivery vehicles. In the next decade, India maintained an arsenal of 120 to 150 bombs.⁴⁷ Pakistan possesses about 110 nuclear weapons in its arsenal (as per calculation made in 2013). There is a danger of these weapons falling into the hands of the insurgents.⁴⁸

Meanwhile Pakistan expanded its terrorist activities beyond Kashmir. The principal instrument of the Pakistani state for conducting terrorism in India was the insurgent outfit named *Lashkar-e-Toiba* whose objective was to conduct *ji-had* in India for establishing an Islamic Caliphate. It was funded and trained by Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of the Pakistan Army. The ISI had also played an important role in helping the Afghan *mujahideen* to fight the Russians in the 1980s. The Pakistan trained Muslim terrorists targeted Mumbai, the financial capital of India, a city with a population of 20 million, the home of some of the

47 Bajpai, *Roots of Terrorism*, p. 157; Susanna Schrafstetter, 'Preventing the "Smiling Buddha": British-Indian Nuclear Relations and the Commonwealth Nuclear Force, 1964-68' *Journal of Strategic Studies* Vol 25 no 2 2002 pp. 87-108.

48 Paul, *The Warrior State*, p. 2.

richest persons of the earth. In July 2006, *Lahskar-e-Toiba* launched suicide bombers in the crowded local trains of Mumbai and killed 160 people. On 26 November 2008, 10 Pakistani terrorists armed with Kalashnikov rifles and hand grenades sailed from Karachi to Mumbai and in three days killed 163 civilians, wounded 300 persons, and destroyed various properties.⁴⁹ India's 26/11 is equivalent to USA's 9/11.

The importance of Counterterrorism (CT) strategy for the Indian state is registered by Sumit Ganguly and S. Paul Kapur in the following words:

'Sophisticated conventional military capabilities, and even a nuclear arsenal, mean little when ordinary citizens are not safe from the threat of gunmen in the railway stations, streets, hospitals, and even hotels of their own cities. And in the absence of major security improvements, international corporations will lose interest in India, viewing the country as excessively dangerous and refusing to do business there.'⁵⁰

India's COIN strategy is neither pacifist nor brutal but lies somewhat in between these two extreme positions. Negotiations, initiation of welfare measures to win the hearts and minds of the inhabitants of the disturbed areas and calibrated use of force characterised Indian COIN.⁵¹ Heavy investment in CT and COIN somewhat prevents India from asserting its power fully in the international arena.

The Modi Era: Beginning of Aggressive Strategy

The Indian Ocean remains extremely important for China because it obtains most of the oil for its fuel hungry expanding economy from West Asia. About 60 percent of the world's petroleum reserves are in the Persian Gulf region. In order to hem India on its western seaboard, China is helping Pakistan to build the Gwadar port. Reportedly, China has also acquired Cocos Island from Myanmar to block Indian maritime activities in the Bay of Bengal. To strengthen the hold of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), PRC is also developing naval bases at Munaung, Hainaggyi, Katan Island and Zadaiky Island. Major waterways connecting the southern province of Yunnan to the port of Yangon

49 Wolpert, *India and Pakistan*, p. 3; Riedel, *Avoiding Armageddon*, pp. 1-2.

50 Quoted from Sumit Ganguly and S. Paul Kapur, *India, Pakistan, and the Bomb: Debating Nuclear Stability in South Asia*. Columbia University Press, New York 2010, p. 95.

51 N. Manoharan, 'Learning through Conflicts: How have India's Internal Conflicts shaped its Strategic Thinking?' in Happymon Jacob (ed.), *Does India Think Strategically? Institutions, Strategic Culture and Security Policies*. Manohar, New Delhi 2014, pp. 53-82.

are being developed so that the PLAN does not have to cross the Malacca Strait for entering the Indian Ocean. Further, Chinese ships in the guise of conducting ocean research are visiting Sri Lanka regularly. New Delhi sees this as an attempt to contain the Indian Navy from expanding its sway in the central Indian Ocean. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, challenges Indian sovereignty as it passes through the territory that India claims. Besides Pakistan, Beijing is investing heavily in Nepal, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka. Economic intrusion in these countries is allowing China to shape these countries' political and military policies.⁵² Further, from the first decade of the twenty-first century, the armed forces of PRC are gearing up to wage informationised local wars along its borders.⁵³ China's hyperaggressive security strategy is the product of China's phenomenal economic growth from the 1980s. In 2018, PRC's defence spending rose by 8.1 percent and in 2019, there was a 7.5 percent increase.⁵⁴

In the new millennium, one witnesses an 'assertive' India. This assertive orientation is exemplified in Modi's India following an aggressive (at least in a restricted sense) grand strategy from 2014 onwards. This assertive strategy however partly builds upon the previous active defensive strategy. If passive strategy was partly influenced by the passive strand within Hinduism (as exemplified by Emperor Ashoka and M.K. Gandhi), BJP's aggressive national security strategy to a certain degree has been shaped by the aggressive strand within Hinduism as interpreted by the right-wing Hindu intellectual Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. Savarkar is the ideological father of *Hindutva* (the essence of being Hindu). Savarkar's credo is to Hinduise politics and militarise Hinduism. Savarkar critiqued Gandhi's *ahimsa* (non-violence). Savarkar's thought process was influenced by the nineteenth century Bengali nationalist writer Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Italian nationalist Giuseppe Mazzini and the German philosopher Martin Heidegger. Savarkar was also an admirer of the Third Reich.⁵⁵

I am not implying that the BJP is following Savarkar in full. Theory must adjust to reality. Modi's aggressive grand strategy became clear when in 2014

52 Niranjana Sahoo, 'China: A Threat to the Liberal Democratic Order?' and Ashok Malik, 'India, China, and the BRI,' in Harsh V. Pant (ed.), *China Ascendant: Its Rise and Implications*. HarperCollins, Noida 2019, pp. 43-8; 63; *National Security: Military Aspects*, pp. 13, 25.

53 Manoj Joshi, 'China's Military Modernization and its Implications,' in Pant (ed.), *China Ascendant*, pp. 18-22.

54 Tuneer Mukherjee, 'China's Naval Power and National Prestige,' in Pant (ed.), *China Ascendant*, p. 53.

55 Vinayak Chaturvedi, *V.D. Savarkar and the Politics of History*, PERMANENT BLACK, Raikhet 2022, pp. 3-25.

he changed the Look East Policy into Act East Policy. While Look East Policy (the consequence of active strategy) refers to India actively engaging with the countries in Southeast Asia in the diplomatic and economic spheres, under the Act East Policy, the security angle is also added and given prominence.⁵⁶ India in 2017 publicly challenged China's Belt and Road Initiative. India is slowly moving towards a sort of quadrilateral block (USA, Japan, Australia, and India) to contain China. Further, Modi had broken with the traditional Nehruvian 'liberal' policy of following an anti-Israel policy in order to appease the Muslims within India and the Muslim countries of Asia. Now India is engaging deeply with Israel particularly to obtain high technology weapon systems.

Further, the Modi Government is investing heavily in the development of disruptive technologies and their possible application in matters military. Under the supervision of the government, several policy papers on the future development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) have been published in recent times. In June 2018, the *National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence* was published by *Niti Aayog* (the body which has replaced Nehruvian Planning Commission). A break from Nehruvian socialist ideas is clear as the government is now seeking active collaboration and participation of the private sector for using AI in military and economic spheres. For building a healthy AI ecosystem, the above-mentioned policy paper urges greater cooperation between the researchers, manufacturers and end users.⁵⁷ India has Unmanned Aerial Vehicle for conducting tactical Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) duties. India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is developing Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles.⁵⁸ DRDO's Centre for Artificial Intelligence & Robotics is the focal point for developing lethal semiautonomous weapon systems.

Lieutenant-Colonel G.D. Bakshi asserts that the Hindu epic *Mahabharata* shaped independent India's strategic culture till the 1980s. Looking down upon intelligence led covert and psychological operations, which is considered as evil *kutayuddha*, the Hindu epic highlights the supremacy of *dharmayuddha* (fighting combatants in a battlefield). Further, *Mahabharata* favours symmetrical response in the battlefield (enemy chariots should be opposed with chariots, etc.) as per the norms of *dharmayuddha*. Both during the Second and Third In-

56 Kaushik Roy, 'Focusing on India's Look East Policy: India-China Relationship from 1947 to 2020' *International Area Studies Review* Vol. 24 no. 2 2021, pp. 79-96.

57 National Strategy for Artificial intelligence, AIFORALL, Discussion Paper, <https://www.niti.gov.in>, accessed 1 Jan. 2022.

58 *National Security: Military Aspects*, p. 61.

dia-Pakistan Wars, the Indian Army used its armoured brigades in a tank killer role against the Pakistani armour.⁵⁹ One can argue that besides the influence of *dharmayuddha*, British influence (most of the Indian and Pakistan Army officers who served till the early 1970s had served in the British officered Indian Army during the Second World War) also shaped the Indian Army's officers' penchant for using the tanks in tank killing role.

However, things seem to be changing with the advent of the Modi Government. The recent Indian military manuals highlight the importance of covert operations led by special forces which would keep the war at the sub-conventional level under the nuclear shadow. *Vis a vis* Pakistan, Modi's combative military strategy was exemplified in the 28 September 2016 Surgical Strike and the Balakot Strike on 26 February 2019. For the first time, during peace the IAF entered the Pakistani air space and blasted a terrorist camp of *Jaish-e-Mohammad* located within the border of this country. The Pakistani bluff that in case of a conventional strike by India, Islamabad will go nuclear by launching tactical nuclear weapons was called off.

Now, there is talk within the Indian government and the military leaders of changing two elements of the nuclear doctrine: No First Use and Use of Massive Retaliation. *India's Draft Nuclear Doctrine* issued on 17 August 1999 by the Vajpayee Administration highlighted that India would retaliate massively with nuclear weapons only after the country is attacked by an enemy country's nuclear weapons.⁶⁰ The problem is that India does not have adequate number of nuclear weapons (especially thermonuclear weapons) to survive a first strike by a nuclear country. Nor is India's command and control system robust enough to survive a nuclear first strike. Hence, India's capability to launch a massive retaliatory nuclear attack after being attacked with hostile nuclear weapons becomes academic. So, India is now thinking of conducting, if necessary, a limited conventional war with Pakistan under the nuclear threshold and if the nuclear Rubicon is crossed then planning for a slow escalation with the use of small range and small yield tactical nuclear weapons against Pakistani military units.⁶¹

A renaissance in Indian military planning and force acquisition started in the twenty-first century and this trend accelerated under Modi. Officers of the Indi-

59 Lieutenant-Colonel G.D. Bakshi, *Mahabharata: A Military Analysis*. Lancer, New Delhi 1990, pp. 72-5.

60 India's Draft Nuclear Doctrine, <https://www.anilkakodar.in>, accessed on 1 Nov. 2023.

61 Colonel Rajesh Gupta, *India's NFU Stance: Need to Change amidst the Changing Strategic Landscape*. Centre for Land Warfare Studies, New Delhi July 2022.

an armed forces started discussing the advent of the age of information war. One officer wrote in the service journal: 'The future of war is based on mastering the flow of information and conducting combat operations jointly.'⁶² As part of full spectrum military strategy, Indian military theorists are also advocating for a robust space-based network centric war deterring capability. They argue for linking dual use satellites with cyberwarfare capacities to attack non-military targets (like electric grid, etc.) deep inside China.⁶³ Now, Indian military officers are speaking of conducting offensive non-kinetic AI augmented cyber war at the strategic domain to exert psychological pressure on the Pakistani government and the public.

In concomitant with the change of grand strategy, India's military strategy is also registering a move towards an aggressive posture. The IAF which till the 1990s functioned as a sort of flying artillery is willing to marginalize its tactical function and has ambition of becoming a strategic air force. In order to counter the perceived threat posed by the Chinese fifth generation stealth aircraft, India is buying long range S-400 air defence system from USSR. The Indian Navy which started its career as a green water force and then in the 1970s became a brown water force is eager to develop as a blue water navy. The Indian maritime theorists claim that it is the bounden duty of the Indian Navy to patrol the Indian Ocean from Malacca Strait in the east up to the Gulf of Aden in the west.⁶⁴ The Indian navalists are influenced by the activities of the blue water Chola Navy which conducted amphibious operations in Java and Sumatra during the twelfth century. At that time, the Indian Ocean was a 'Chola Lake.'

However, serious problems remain for the strategic managers of the Indian state. Water table in India (which mainly produces and consumes rice and paddy cultivation requires lot of water) is falling at the rate of 5 feet annually.⁶⁵ Simultaneously, India's population continues to increase. Poverty and joblessness among the youth are serious issues in front of the government. In the last resort, in terms of economic growth and defence expenditure (both in absolute and real terms), India just could not match the rising superpower, China.

62 Quoted from Lieutenant-General Vijay Oberoi, 'Air Power and Joint Operations: Doctrinal and Organisational Challenges' *Journal of the United Service Institution of India* Vol. CXXXIII no. 51 2003, p. 3.

63 Kartik Bommakanti, 'The Dragon Challenge: The Necessity for an Indian Space Deterrent Posture,' in Pant (ed.), *China Ascendant*, pp. 31-4.

64 Pushan Das, 'Can India counter Emerging Chinese Capabilities like Stealth Aircraft?' in Pant (ed.), *China Ascendant*, pp. 23-5.

65 *National Security: Military Aspects*, p. 5.

Conclusion

As regards India's strategy from its birth in 1947, Pakistan and to a lesser extent China are the two main countries whom New Delhi has had to confront. Concerning strategic interactions beyond South Asia, just after independence, for India the most important country was UK, then USSR from the 1960s and from the 1990s, USA. Security and ideology (Islam for Pakistan and Hinduism for India) are the two most important factors shaping the contours of Indian and Pakistani strategic behaviour towards each other. In the new millennium, in the context of South Asia, China more than Pakistan is becoming the principal target for India's strategy makers. India's principal overseas ally is now Washington DC. However, it would be too early to say that USA and India, the world's two biggest democracies are 'natural allies.' India beyond a point will resist becoming America's 'whipping boy' to cow down China. At the same time, to balance China and for technological knowhow, Delhi requires Washington DC's goodwill. In the foreseeable future, India will try to avoid a too close entanglement with USA and at the same time would attempt to curry favour with the world's most powerful democracy to strengthen its hegemonic position within South Asia. If India could manage the insurgencies in its periphery and heartland and could sustain the economic growth, then nothing could stop India from pursuing an aggressive strategy for becoming one of the dominant players of Asia if not the world.

China's Military Strategy from Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping

XIAOBING LI¹

The findings in this chapter regarding the PRC (People's Republic of China)'s strategic changes differ from the standard Western image that typically characterizes the past two decades as reactive, confusing, self-doubting, anxious, and a return to the "old way" in the revolutionary period of the 1950s-1970s. The PRC at present has little in common with Cold War China. The country has been transformed because Xi Jinping's priorities and ruling methodologies changed tremendously through 2012-2022 and indicated many differences from his bland predecessors Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao. Because the Chinese Communists have strong links to their revolutionary past, any understanding of Chinese strategic culture, perspectives on leadership, and military transition must begin with a study of the PRC's strategic history since 1949. Meanwhile, the Chinese political system has also evolved in terms of leadership, organization, and world view in the past decades. Society appears to be flexible, able to adapt to strategic changes, and able to respond to rising demands and expectations of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the second half of the 2020s.

This chapter provides a brief historical survey of China's strategic evolution from 1949-2019. It focuses on development, changes, and problems in the modernization of the air, naval, and strategic forces of the PLA (People's Liberation Army, China's armed forces). This work also explains how China used its new military power to challenge U.S. East Asian-Pacific strategy around Taiwan and the disputed islands in the East and South China Seas, behavior that remains evident today. Understanding the goals of the PLA's modernization and Beijing's approach to warfare are essential to better comprehend China's strategy.

¹ University of Central Oklahoma.

Mao's Pro-active Defense and Deng's "Local War"

After the founding of the People's Republic in October 1949, Mao Zedong, CCP Chairman and PRC President, developed a self-reliant defense strategy against possible conflict with Western powers and the United States. Mao's inspiration came from Moscow after Josef Stalin rejected his request for Russian participation in Taiwan's campaign during Mao's visit to the Soviet Union in December 1949. Stalin did not want military involvement in China as the Chinese Civil War continued between the CCP and GMD (Guomindang, Nationalist Party) over the Taiwan Strait. Stalin told Mao not to worry "since in fact nobody wants to fight a war with China."² Stalin had no intention of challenging the Yalta agreement which was signed by the Soviet Union and the United States and created a post-World War II international system. Stalin was concerned that any change to the Yalta system might cause a direct conflict between the two superpowers. Stalin and his advisors told Mao that Moscow was willing to withdraw all Russian troops (about 12,000 men) from Port Arthur when China was ready.³ He repeatedly suggested China take care of its own security and defense. Although the Sino-Soviet Treaty of February 1950 ensured Soviet military assistance in case of an invasion of China by an "imperialist" power, Mao believed that Russian protection and intervention could be symbolic at that moment. Mao better understood Stalin's intentions after visiting Moscow and was not surprised when the Soviets did nothing as President Harry Truman sent the U.S. Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Strait in June and as General Douglas MacArthur crossed the 38th Parallel in Korea in October.

Moreover, Stalin asked that China share responsibilities in international communist movements, especially in leadership of East Asian revolutions. Pre-occupied with European affairs, Stalin needed Chinese help with ongoing Asian communist revolutions. Stalin reiterated to Mao, "The victory of the Chinese revolution proved that China has become the center for the Asian revolution. We believe that it's better for China to take the major responsibility in support and help [of Asian countries]."⁴ According to Stalin, China should share the respon-

2 "The Minutes of the Meeting between Stalin and Mao on December 16, 1949," file no. 00255, *Government Documents from the Soviet Archives*, in the Research Center for the International Cold War History, East China Normal University, Shanghai, China; "The Minutes of the Meeting between Stalin and Mao on December 16, 1949," *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao* [*The Sources for the Party History Research*] 5 (1998).

3 "The Minutes of the Meeting between Stalin and Mao on December 16, 1949," 4-5.

4 Shu Guang Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism; China and the Korean War, 1950-1953* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 23-24.

sibility of worldwide communism by supporting revolutionary movements in Asian countries.⁵ Even though Mao was unhappy with Stalin's demand, he understood the Soviet leader's intention and agreed to share "the international responsibility." Historian Chen Jian points out that "In an agreement on 'division of labor' between the Chinese and Soviet Communists for waging the world revolution, they decided that while the Soviet Union would remain the center of international proletarian revolution, China's primary duty would be the promotion of the 'Eastern revolution.'"⁶ Thereby, at Stalin's request, China became the revolutionary center in East Asia, engaging ideologically and geographically in the global Cold War. Whether ideology bound China to international communism's mission or simple, nationalistic self-interest, China was forced to make commitments to the Soviet Union in the Cold War.

Defending his country against superior military powers, like that of the United States, was an immediate problem for Mao. Weak national defenses or territorial loss would not help establish a new China-centered East Asia, and could have potentially cost the CCP's control of China. To overcome military "technology gaps" between China and the West, Mao developed his self-reliant doctrine and principle—active defense. It was an active anti-containment strategy by challenging the Cold War international system, in which the superpowers dominated global affairs. As General Xiong Guangkai, Deputy Chief of the PLA General Staff, explains, the emphasis on self-reliance does not necessarily mean closing the door or defending the country at its border. Instead, an active defense includes taking the fight to the enemy outside China's borders, rather than a defense at home.⁷ Major General Xu Yan of China's National Defense University points out, as in the Korean War, Mao "intended to 'safeguard the homeland and defend the country' beyond the border."⁸ Thereafter, Beijing developed an "out-wardly" aggressive security strategy by actively supporting military strug-

5 During their second meeting on December 24, for example, "Stalin did not mention the treaty at all," but, instead, mainly discussed with Mao "the activities of the Communist Parties in Asian countries...." The quotation is from Pei Jianzhang, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiaoshi, 1949-1956* [*Diplomatic History of the PRC, 1949-1956*] (Beijing: World Knowledge Publishing, 1994), 18.

6 Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 3.

7 General Xiong Guangkai, "The Characteristics and Impact of China's Defense Policy," in *Guoji zhanlue yu xin junshi biange* [*International Strategy and Revolution in Military Affairs*] (Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 2003), 215-16.

8 Major General Xu Yan, *Junshijia Mao Zedong* [*Mao Zedong as a Military Leader*] (Beijing: CCP Central Archival and Manuscript Press, 1995), 178.

gles in neighboring countries like Korea, Vietnam, and Laos. China's geopolitical position in East Asia changed from peripheral in World War II to central in the Cold War, directly involving itself in the French Indochina and Korean Wars in the early 1950s.

Mao Zedong adopted the active defense strategy by challenging the Cold War international system in East and Southeast Asia. On March 14, 1950, only ten days after Mao returned from Moscow, the CCP Central Committee began its military aid and advisory assistance to Ho Chi Minh in the French-Indochina War. By the end of summer, there were more than 450 Chinese military advisors in Viet Minh, including 13 PLA generals. In April 1950, the CCP transferred about 70,000 Korean Chinese soldiers to the NKPA (North Korean People's Army) with weapons. They were the PLA's 163rd, 164th, and 165th Divisions.⁹ Seasoned Korean Chinese soldiers, particularly those in artillery and engineering, were not only additional soldiers, but provided valuable technical support as well.¹⁰ These Korean Chinese soldiers played an important role in Kim Il-sung's initial invasion of South Korea (with 90,000 troops) in June.¹¹

China officially entered the Korean War on October 19, 1950 when Mao Zedong ordered 260,000 soldiers of the CPVF (Chinese People's Volunteers Force) to cross the Yalu River. By late November, Chinese forces in Korea totaled 33 divisions, nearly 450,000 men, and this was only the beginning of Chinese involvement. In April 1951, nearly 950,000 Chinese troops were in Korea.¹² By December 1952, Chinese forces in Korea totaled 1.45 million men, including

9 Major General Xu Yan, *Mao Zedong yu kangmei yuanchao zhanzheng* [*Mao Zedong and the War to Resist the U.S. and Aid Korea*], 2nd ed. (Beijing: PLA Press, 2006), 52.

10 Colonel Lee Jong Kan, interview by the author in Harbin, Heilongjiang, in July 2002; Lee, "A North Korean Officer's Story," in *Voices from the Korean War; Personal Stories of American, Korean, and Chinese Soldiers*, Richard Peters and Xiaobing Li (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 76-84; Marshal Nie Rongzhen, "Beijing's Decision to Intervene," in *Mao's Generals Remember Korea*, trans. and eds. Xiaobing Li, Allan R. Millett, and Bin Yu (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 47-48; Xu Longnan, "Interview with Ethnic Korean Soldiers in China Who Joined the NKPA during the Korean War," in *Lengzhan guoji-shi yanjiu* [*Cold War International History Studies*] 11 (2011): 117-46.

11 The PLA Korean soldiers returned to North Korea with 12,000 rifles, 620 machine guns, and 240 artillery pieces. See Liu Shaoqi, "Telegram to Mao Zedong, January 22, 1950," in *Jianguo yilai Liu Shaoqi wengao, 1949-1955* [*Liu Shaoqi's Manuscripts since the Founding of the State, 1949-1952*] (Beijing: CCP Central Archival and Manuscript Press, 2008), 1: 320-21.

12 Luan Kechao, *Xue yu huo de jiaoliang; kangmei yuanchao jishi* [*The Contest: Blood vs. Fire; the Record of Resisting America and Aiding Korea*] (Beijing: China Literature Publishing House, 2008), 203.

fifty-nine infantry divisions, ten artillery divisions, five anti-aircraft divisions, and seven tank regiments.¹³ From October 19, 1950, to July 27, 1953, China sent 3.1 million troops to Korea. Confronted by U.S. air and naval superiority, the CPVF suffered heavy casualties, including Mao's son, a Russian translator at the CPVF headquarters, who died in an air raid. According to Chinese military records, Chinese casualties in the Korean War totaled more than 1 million.¹⁴

Mao Zedong deemed China's intervention a victory because it saved North Korea's Communist regime, shaped China's relations with the Soviet Union, and secured China's northeastern border by preventing North Korea from being conquered or controlled by a Western power like America. Mao told Chinese leaders at the 24th Plenary of the Central Government, the War to Resist the U.S. and Aid Korea "has achieved great victory... with important significances," including "stopping a new invasion of China by the imperialists."¹⁵ China's intervention in the Korean War had changed its international political position from peripheral before World War II to central in the Cold War. China expert Peter Hays Gries observes, "To many Chinese, Korea marks the end of the 'Century of Humiliation' and the birth of 'New China.'"¹⁶ PLA historian Xu Yan concludes, China's war in Korea "created a few hundred miles of a buffer zone and

13 Major General Xu Yan, "Chinese Forces and Their Casualties in the Korean War," trans. Xiaobing Li, *Chinese Historians* 6 (no. 2, Fall 1993): 50-51. In 1952-1953, the Chinese Army had a total of 6.5 million troops, including 5.1 million PLA troops in China and 1.4 million CPVF troops in Korea.

14 Chen Hui, "Tracing the 180,000 Martyrs of the War to Resist the U.S. and Aid Korea," in *Kangmei yuanchao: 60 nianhou de huimou* [*Resist the U.S. and Aid Korea: Retrospect after 60 Years*], ed. Zhang Xingxing (Beijing: Contemporary China Press, 2011), 127; Xu, "Chinese Forces and Their Casualties in the Korean War," 56-57; Li Qingshan, *Zhiyuanjun yuanchao jishi* [*The CPVF Records of Aiding Korea*] (Beijing: CCP Party History Press, 2008), 13; Shuang Shi, *Kaiguo diyi zhan: kangmei yuanchao zhanzheng quanjing jishi* [*The First War since the Founding of the State: The Complete Story of the War to Resist the U.S. and Aid Korea*] (Beijing: CCP Party History Press, 2004), 2: 836-37. The UNF intelligence statisticians put Chinese losses for higher: 1.5 million casualties in all categories including killed, in action, died or wounds, and disease, missing in action, and wounded in action. For example, see Walter G. Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front; U.S. Army in the Korean War* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History and U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), 477-78.

15 Mao's speech at the 24th Plenary of the Central Government of the PRC, September 12, 1953, in *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao, 1949-1976* [*Mao Zedong's Manuscripts since the Founding of the State, 1949-1976*] (Beijing: CCP Central Archival and Manuscript Press, 1993), 2: 173-76.

16 Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 56.

provided a few decades of peacetime for the country.”¹⁷

Thereby, a successful defense against international imperialist attacks could be achieved by stopping foreign invading forces outside of China. Mao Zedong continued his pro-active war strategy against Western and U.S. controls in neighboring countries through the Cold War. Active defense became conceptualized as a new strategy by the Maoist politicalization of warfare in the 1950s-1970s. A PLA general considered Mao’s active defense as a theoretical innovation of Sunzi (Sun Tzu)’s idea as it was “winning a defense war without fighting the enemy in our country.”¹⁸ Active defense, or stopping the invader outside the gate, sounded reasonable and achievable for the PLA generals in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, who constantly recognized the original form or traditional style of Chinese warfare.¹⁹

As a Communist state bordering North Vietnam, China did not want increased American influence in South Vietnam (Republic of Vietnam, RVN) or a collapse of the North (Democratic Republic of Vietnam, DRV) resulting from President Lyndon Johnson’s escalation of America’s war effort in the country. From 1965-1973, Beijing sent 410,000 troops to the Vietnam War fighting the U.S. armed forces in Indochina. The PLA operated AAA guns; built and repaired highways, railroads, and bridges; maintained the Ho Chi Minh Trail; constructed offshore defense works; and assembled pipelines and factories using 23 divisions and 95 regiments.²⁰ Chinese intervention and assistance secured Ho’s regime in the North from the U.S. Rolling Thunder air campaign and enabled Ho to send more

17 Major General Xu Yan, “Reinterpretations of the War to Resist the U.S. and Aid Korea,” in *Xu Yan jianggao zixueji [Self-selected Lectures of Xu Yan]* (Beijing: National Defense University Press, 2014), 117.

18 Xu, *Junshijia Mao Zedong [Mao Zedong as a Military Leader]*, 177.

19 Mao highly praised *The Art of War*, and considered it a scientific truth by citing Sunzi in his military writing, “know the enemy and know yourself, and you can fight a hundred battles with no danger of defeat.” Mao, “Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War,” in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1977), 1: 190.

20 Among Chinese forces in Vietnam were 150,000 AAA troops of the PLAAF. Their statistics show that Chinese anti-aircraft units shot down 1,707 planes and damaged 1,608 U.S. airplanes in 1965-1968. American official sources say that the U.S. lost approximately 950 aircraft in North Vietnam between 1965 and 1968. Colonel Jerry Noel Hoblit (USAF, ret.), interviews by the author at Lubbock, TX, in October 2006 and again at Edmond, OK, in April 2009. Capt. Hoblit was an American pilot who flew F-105F in the 357th Technical Fighter Squadron, 355th Tactical Fighter Wing, USAF, during the Rolling Thunder campaign in 1966-1967. See George Moss, *Vietnam: An American Ordeal*, 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010), 187.

NVA regulars to the South. Chinese and Russian support prolonged the war, making it impossible for the United States to win.

However, Chinese and Soviet military assistance to North Vietnam between 1965 and 1973 did not improve Sino-Soviet relations, but rather created new competition as each attempted to gain leadership of the Southeast Asian Communist movements. After the founding of the PRC in 1949, the political and military alliance between Beijing and Moscow was the cornerstone of the Communist international coalition of the 1950s.²¹ However, beginning in the late 1950s, because of complicated domestic and international factors, the Sino-Soviet alliance began to decline. The great Sino-Soviet polemic debate in the early and mid-1960s further undermined the ideological foundation of the partnership.²² Gradually, China shifted its defense focus and national security concerns from the United States to the Soviet Union in 1969-1971. Chinese high command saw the United States as a declining power due to its failures in Vietnam and serious problems in other parts of the world. As the United States tried to withdraw from Asia, the Soviet Union filled the power vacuum, replacing the United States as the “imperialist” aggressor in the region. The Chinese-Russian rivalry in Vietnam from 1965-1968 worsened the Sino-Soviet relationship and eventually led to Sino-Soviet border clashes in 1969-1972. The Soviet Union deployed up to 48 divisions, constituting nearly 1 million troops along the border. Reportedly,

21 For studies on the rise and decline of the Sino-Soviet alliance, see Shen Zhihua and Yafeng Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945-1959* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015); Lorenz Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Odd Arne Westad, *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963* (Washington, DC and Stanford, CA: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press, 1998); Michael M. Sheng, *Battling Western Imperialism: Mao, Stalin, and the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); Gordon H. Chang, *Friends and Enemies: The United States, China, and the Soviet Union* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).

22 For a chronological development of the Sino-Soviet split, see Shen and Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership*; Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*; Song Enfan and Li Jiasong, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiao dashiji, 1957-1964* [*Chronicle of the People's Republic of China's Diplomacy, 1957-1964*] (Beijing: World Knowledge Publishing, 2001); Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), chapter 3; Yang Kuisong, *Zouxiang polie: Mao Zedong yu Moscow de enen yuanyuan* [*Toward the Split: Interests and Conflicts between Mao Zedong and Moscow*] (Hong Kong: Three-Alliance Publishing, 1999), chapters 13-14.

Moscow considered using a “preemptive nuclear strike” against Beijing.²³

In the meantime, the active interventional role that China played in Asia turned this main Cold War battlefield into a strange “buffer” between Moscow and Washington. With China standing in the middle, it was less likely that the Soviet Union and the United States would become involved in a direct military confrontation.²⁴ Although the global Cold War was characterized by the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, and the two contending camps headed by the two superpowers, China’s position in the Cold War was not peripheral but, in many key senses, central. After the Vietnam War, China regained its power status in East Asia, and created a favorable international condition in which it would survive the Cold War and beyond.

After Mao died in 1976, Deng Xiaoping became the new leader from 1978–1989 and continued pro-active defense strategy during the country’s reform movement in the 1980s. As the PLA’s Chief of General Staff, Deng told his generals in 1985, “I do agree with the active defense.”²⁵ He, however, adopted a pragmatic strategy and scaled down from Mao’s “total war” or a “nuclear war” preparation to a new doctrine of fighting a “limited, local war.”²⁶ That meant no war against the superpowers. He realized the importance of the U.S. market and technology for China’s reform. Deng Xiaoping asked his generals to “hide your capacities and bide our time...”²⁷ He became the first Chinese leader who visited the United States in 1979. The normalization of Sino-U.S. relations in the same year led to the rapid creation of an institutional and legal framework for expanded economic cooperation. These efforts paid off; the United States

23 Yang Kuisong, “From the Zhenboa Island Incident to Sino-American Rapprochement,” *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao* [*The Sources for Party History Research*], no. 12 (1997), 7-8; Thomas Robinson, “The Sino-Soviet Border Conflicts of 1969; New Evidence Three Decades Later,” in *Chinese Warfighting: the PLA Experience since 1949*, eds. Mark A. Ryan, David M. Finkelstein, and Michael A. McDevitt (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2003), 198-216.

24 Chen Jian and Xiaobing Li, “China and the End of the Cold War,” In *The Cold War: From Détente to the Soviet Collapse*, ed. Malcolm Muir, Jr. (Lexington: Virginia Military Institute Press, 2006), 121-22.

25 Deng’s comments quoted in Song Chongshi, *Hujiang Song Shilun* [*A Tiger General: Song Shilun*] (Beijing: Intellectual Rights Publishing, 2013), 233.

26 Deng, “Streamline the Army and Raise Its Combat Effectiveness,” a speech at an enlarged meeting of CMC Standing Committee on March 12, 1980, *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1994), 2: 284-87.

27 Qu Xing, “China’s Foreign Policy since the Radical Changes in Eastern Europe and the Disintegration of the USSR,” *Waijiao Xueyuan Xuekan* [*Academic Journal of Foreign Affairs College*] 4 (1994), 19-22.

granted MFN to China in July 1979 and gradually loosened trade restrictions, shifting the PRC to the category of “friendly, non-allied” country in May 1983. The improved relationship was seen in the Sino-U.S. Communiqué of August 17, 1982, signed by President Ronald Reagan during his visit to China.²⁸ Deng also resumed a friendly relationship with the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s.

Nevertheless, China maintained a strong defense strategy over its territory and territorial sovereignty. In 1978, Vietnam challenged China over disputed areas along the Vietnam-Chinese border and disputed islands in the South China Sea. Deng Xiaoping sent 220,000 troops to invade Vietnam in February 1979. After the Chinese invading forces' withdrawal, the border conflict continued. In May-June 1981, the PLA attacked Vietnam again, and occupied several hills.²⁹ The largest offensive campaign after 1979 took place in April-May 1984, when the PLA overran PAVN positions in the Lao Son Mountains. In 1988, the Chinese Navy defeated the Vietnamese defense and occupied the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. Until the end of the 1980s, China and Vietnam normalized their diplomatic relationship. In 1992, all Chinese troops withdrew from the Lao Son and Yen Son regions and returned to China. In the meantime, Deng Xiaoping began the negotiations with British and Portuguese governments for the returns of the colonies of Hong Kong and Macao. In July 1997, Britain returned Hong Kong to China, and in December 1999, Portugal returned Macao. Deng Xiaoping protected and promoted China's territorial rights during his reform and the PRC became one of few Communist survivors as well as a “beneficial participant” by the end of the Cold War.

28 Warren I. Cohen, *America's Response to China; A History of Sino-American Relations*, 4th ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 206-207.

29 For more details of these battles between 1979 and 1984, see Lieutenant General Han Huaizhi, *Dangdai Zhongguo jundui de junshi gongzuo* [*Military Affairs of Contemporary Chinese Armed Forces*] (Beijing: China's Social Science Press, 1989), 1: 679-82; Xie Guojun, “The Sino-Vietnamese Border War of Self-defense and Counter-offense,” in *Junqi piaopiao; xinzhongguo 50 nian junshi dashi shushi* [*PLA Flag Fluttering; Facts of China's Major Military Events in the Past 50 Years*], ed. Military History Research Division, PLA Academy of Military Science (AMS) (Beijing: PLA Press, 1999), 2: 629-32; Military History Research Division, PLA-AMS, *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun de 70 nian, 1927-1997* [*Seventy Years of the PLA, 1927-1997*] (Beijing: Military Science Press, 1997), 613-14.

Jiang's Maritime Interests and Hu's Naval Development

Although all the post-Deng leaders had no prior experience in high command or military service, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, and Xi Jinping became effective commanders in chief by approving their military leadership capacity and actively engaging the PLA in the post-Cold War world. Jiang Zemin became China's leader (1990-2002) after Deng's retirement in 1989. Although the year 1989 witnessed the Tiananmen Square Incident and 1991 witnessed the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Jiang government stayed its causes by continuing to promote Deng's economic reform, pragmatic diplomacy, and military strategy. From 1990-2002, the government doubled its defense budget with an annual GNP growth rate of 8.6 percent. To further their interests, the high command protected Jiang's new, central leadership based upon a coalition of key political institutions. Jiang earned the PLA's political support and as such, his position went unchallenged.

China's rapid increase in overseas trade made the oceans more important to national economic growth. In his early years, Jiang Zemin promoted a pragmatic nationalism to emphasize China's unity, sovereignty, strength, and prosperity. He gradually shifted the Party's ideology from radical communism to moderate nationalism as an ideology to save the state at the end of the Cold War, bringing in one more source of legitimacy for the CCP as the country's ruling party. As Jiang shifted the Party's political goals, he faced new challenges such as Taiwan and the disputed islands in the East China Sea and South China Sea. In 1992, under Jiang's leadership, the National People's Congress (NPC) passed China's First Maritime Law that codified the conception of "sea as territory," including the country's "sovereignty" over three million square kilometers of ocean and seas. From that point, China considered the oceans and seas as new frontiers. General Chi Haotian, China's defense minister (1993-2003) and CMC's vice chairman, supported Jiang's claims of sea power and "oceanic territory." He believes "the country's rise and fall depends on its role in the oceans." The Chinese Navy should be a blue water navy and "going to the four oceans" is its strategic choice.³⁰

In October 1992, Admiral Liu Huaqing, PLA Navy Commander, was elected as one of seven members on the CCP Politburo's Standing Committee and became one of the country's top national leaders as he helped consolidate Jiang Zemin's control of the PLA. Liu Huaqing administrated the PLA's daily opera-

30 General Chi Haotian, "Introduction," in *Zhongguo haijun zouxiang shenlan, 1980-2010* [*The Chinese Navy Goes to Blue Water, 1980-2010*], ed. Zuo Jinling (Beijing: PLA Press, 2014), vii.

tions, managed China's defense budget, and continued promoting naval development as the CMC Vice Chairman next to Jiang. The PLAN received the lion's share of Jiang's new defense budget as he concurred with Admiral Liu's focus on China's naval development. Jiang Zemin told PLA leaders, "We must prioritize the naval construction."³¹ The PLA moved away from traditional ground war preparation, becoming more focused on new naval warfare.

In the 1990s, the PLAN added more than 20 warships to its force with upgraded electronic countermeasures, radar and sonar, and fire-control systems. According to Liu Huaqing's plans, three *Song*-class conventionally powered submarines and two nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines were constructed.³² All the new warships and submarines were blue water capable.³³ The Chinese Navy sent out second-generation destroyers and frigates to visit four countries in the Americas. Jiang Zemin also supported Liu's initiative regarding China's aircraft carrier. Liu said to his staff that he "could not die with eyes closed without seeing a Chinese carrier."³⁴ China purchased an unfinished Soviet carrier *Voyage (Varyag)* from Ukraine in 2000 for structural studies. Although it took three years and \$200 million to tow *Voyage* from Ukraine to China, the Chinese Navy's carrier development became a reality. Many new missiles and electronic warfare systems were manufactured as main battle equipment. Some of the new missiles were used in the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis by the Jiang administration.

During his military reform, Jiang Zemin tested the PLA's command and control, combat readiness, and crisis management during the Taiwan Strait missile crisis. Known as the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis, it began in June 1995 when Lee Teng-hui (Li Denghui), President of the ROC (Republic of China, Taiwan), visited Cornell University in the United States. Jiang's government tried isolating Taiwan and opposed the U.S. government's authorization of Lee Teng-hui's visit. Defense minister Chi Haotian made a convincing suggestion to Jiang that it was necessary to employ the military forces to stop the further distortion

31 Chen Wanjun, Yuan Huazhi, and Si Yanwen, "Ride the Spring Wind and Waves: Historical Records of President Jiang Zemin's Efforts in the Modernization of the People's Navy," in *Guojia lingxiu yu haijun jiangling [Chinese Leaders and the Navy]*, eds. Wu Dianqing, Yuan Yong'an, and Zhao Xiaoping (Beijing: Ocean Wave Publishing, 2000), 300.

32 Admiral Liu, *Liu Huaqing huiyilu [Memoir of Liu Huaqing]* (Beijing: PLA Press, 2004), 477.

33 Li Qiong, *Haishang changcheng: Zhongguo renmin haijun 60 nian [The Great Wall at Sea: 60 Years of the PLA Navy]* (Jilin: Jilin Publishing Group, 2011), 55.

34 Liu's words quoted in You Ji, *China's Military Transformation: Politics and War Preparation* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2016), 194.

of Sino-American relations.³⁵ Jiang accepted Chi's proposal and decided on a show of force that summer. The PLA high command conducted four missile tests by launching eight missiles into the water around 30 miles from Taiwan in July. Simultaneously, the PLA concentrated large naval and landing forces and launched one wave after another of military exercises, including a joint amphibious landing exercise in the Taiwan Strait.³⁶ From August 15-25, the PLAN East Sea Fleet deployed 59 warships and naval vessels for a large-scale naval attack and amphibious landing exercise. The PLAN Air Force (PLAAF) launched 192 sorties and scrambled its fighters and bombers during the naval attack exercise. From October 31 to November 23, the PLA launched another joint amphibious landing campaign on Dongshan Island off the Fujian coast. The Navy deployed 63 warships, landing crafts, and support vessels.

Before the year's end, cross-strait tensions rose drastically. The Taiwan's military remained on high alert and declared that it had made all necessary preparations to deal with a possible PLA invasion of the island. In December 1995, the Clinton administration sent its aircraft carrier, the *Nimitz*, to pass through the Taiwan Strait in response to PLA activities. Between January and February 1996, the PLA concentrated 100,000 troops along the coast across the strait from Taiwan and launched another large-scale landing exercise to send a stronger signal to both Taipei and Washington. Through the winter of 1995-1996, tensions remained heightened in the strait.³⁷

Taiwan prepared for the presidential election in early 1996. It was Taiwan's first general election since 1949. Lee Teng-hui ran on the GMD ticket. To discourage the Taiwanese from voting for Lee, Jiang Zemin conducted a new set of missile tests, accompanied by live fire and naval exercises. Obviously, he used the military to threaten Taiwanese voters and on March 8, 1996, the PLA conducted more missile tests by firing three *DF-15* surface-to-surface missiles just twelve miles off Kaohsiung and about twenty-nine nautical miles off Keelung.³⁸

35 For more discussions on General Chi Haotian's hardline position, see John F. Copper, "The Origins of Conflict across the Taiwan Strait; The Problem of Differences in Perceptions," in *Across the Taiwan Strait: Mainland China, Taiwan, and the 1995-1996 Crisis*, ed. Suisheng Zhao (London: Routledge, 1999), 43; You Ji, "Changing Leadership Consensus; the Domestic Context of War Game," in Zhao, *Across the Taiwan Strait*, 91-93.

36 For a detailed overview of the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, see Qimao Chen, "The Taiwan Strait Crisis: Causes, Scenarios, and Solutions," in Zhao, *Across the Taiwan Strait*, 127-62.

37 William Perry and Ashton Carter, *Preventive Defense: A New Security for America* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 1999), 92-93.

38 Patric Tyler, *A Great Wall: Six Presidents and China* (New York: Public Affairs, 1999), 33, 195.

On the same day, the United States announced the deployment of the *Independence* carrier battle group to international waters near Taiwan. On March 11, the U.S. deployed the *Nimitz* carrier battle group to the Taiwan area. This was the largest U.S. naval movement in the Asia-Pacific region since the Vietnam War. In response to U.S. naval deployments, China announced more live-fire exercises near Penghu, a ROC-held island group near Taiwan. From March 18-25, the PLA deployed 300 airplanes, guided missile destroyers, and submarines in the joint exercise at Pingtan Island with 150,000 troops, about 70 nautical miles from the Taiwanese-held islands. The exercise included amphibious landing, paratroopers, and mountain assaults. Meanwhile, several nuclear submarines left their base at Qingdao. Without identifying the Chinese nuclear submarines' locations, the U.S. instructed the *Nimitz* to stay 350 miles away from the strait.³⁹

Beijing learned an important lesson from the 1995-1996 crisis, that Washington would not watch the PLA attack Taiwan. China has to deal with a US intervention in the Taiwan Strait. The Third Taiwan Strait Crisis was over, and Lee Teng-hui was elected as Taiwan's President on March 23, 1996. China's intimidation was counterproductive and boosted Lee 5 percent in the polls, earning him a majority of the voters.

Hu Jintao became CCP chairman (2002-2012) at the 16th Party's National Congress after Jiang Zemin retired in November 2002. Hu was elected president of the PRC at the Sixth National People's Congress (PNC) next March. In September 2004, Jiang left command of the Chinese military, and Hu Jintao became the new civilian commander in chief of the 21st-century PLA. Diversity grew within CMC leadership and competing factions became dynamically interdependent under Hu Jintao. Several political groups of younger, ambitious, and capable leaders aggressively fought political battles for control of the government and military.⁴⁰ Hu tried maintaining a balance in Beijing by emphasizing political and social harmony and nurturing working relations among the different military groups, while also empathizing the importance of the continuing naval development. He supported the military professionalism and merit-based system of officer promotion. He insisted that the PLA officers should have col-

39 William Perry, Secretary of U.S. Defense Department, made a public statement on March 11, 1996, about the large U.S. naval maneuver near the Taiwan Strait. For Perry's statement, see *American Forces Press Service*, March 11; the Department of Defense, *News Briefings*, March 12, 14, and 16, 1996.

40 Xiansheng Tian, "When Chongqing Challenges Beijing: The Bo Xilai Case," in *Evolution of Power: China's Struggle, Survival, and Success*, eds. Xiaobing Li and Xiansheng Tian (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 323.

lege degrees and formal overseas training. By 2005, all naval pilots and naval commanders of warships had a college education.⁴¹

After taking over the office of commander in chief, Hu Jintao continued to promote Jiang Zemin and Liu Huaqing's conceptions of sea power, oceanic territory, maritime sovereignty, and naval modernization. Hu Jintao told the PLA leaders that "China is a big oceanic country. The Chinese Navy plays a crucial role in defending our country's sovereignty, security, marine interests, and sea power. It is a glorious mission."⁴² In August 2004, Hu chaired a Politburo meeting to mobilize national resources and promote naval modernization. Hu called for the escalation of naval transformation and paid special attention to its combat readiness. In December 2006, Hu met the representatives of the PLAN Tenth Party Committee Conference and told naval leaders to "build a modern, professional, and strong navy to meet China's new demands and development in the new century."⁴³ According to Hu and the new high command, the Navy needed a "leap-over" transition from electronic means to digital capabilities. During Hu's administration, the Navy improved its equipment and weapon systems, and received a number of new warships.

Since 2000, the Chinese Navy has commissioned more than 30 new submarines, including 16 Chinese-manufactured *Song*-class submarines and 12 *Kilo*-class submarines purchased from Russia. Meanwhile, the PLAN designed, manufactured, and completed four *Yuan*-class submarines with an air-independent propulsion (AIP) system to reduce their vulnerability. On September 25, 2012, President Hu Jintao personally launched China's first aircraft carrier, *Liaoning* (CV 16), and gained a new public profile by achieving significant success in the navy's modernization.

In 2010, China became the largest shipbuilder in the world after its total building tonnage surpassed the long-time leader South Korea. Chinese news agency *Xinhua News* reported, "China built ships with a total deadweight capac-

41 Interview with the officer at Langfang, Hebei, on July 28, 2002. The provincial commander sent out a survey form to all of the officers of its regiments in 2003. The survey provides a mixed report on the only-child officers. Liberal and democratic, some emphasize on individual competition and equal opportunity, and dislike the political control. For more details, see Xiaobing Li, "The Impact of Social Changes on the PLA: A Chinese Military Perspective," in *Civil-Military Relations in Today's China: Swimming in a New Sea*, eds. David M. Finkelstein and Kristen Gunness (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2007), 26-47.

42 Hu Jintao's words quoted in Chi Haotian, "Introduction," in *Zhongguo haijun zouxiang shenlan, 1980-2010* [*The Chinese Navy Goes to Blue Water, 1980-2010*], viii.

43 New China News Agency, "Hu Jintao Meets Naval Representatives," *China News*, December 28, 2006. www.chinanews.com.cn/gn/news/2006/12-28

ity of 65.5 million tons, accounting for 43 percent of the deadweight capacity of ships built in the world.”⁴⁴ The PLAN was ready to improve its logistical support system for long-time maritime missions by providing better fleet training. The *China's National Defense White Paper in 2010* indicated the accelerated construction of “large support vessels.”⁴⁵ By 2010, the PLAN totaled 300,000 personnel and more than 600 warships, including an aircraft carrier and nuclear submarines. The Chinese navy has an air arm of 430 warplanes and 35,000 personnel, and commands China's 12,000-strong Marine Corps. You Ji examines the PLAN's transformation in the 2000s-2010s when it was “extending its operations from coastal defense to far-seas power projection.”⁴⁶ Bernard Cole believe that the Chinese have “the idea that a great country should have a great Navy.” He links Chinese naval efforts to “the nation's economic development” and to “dependence on overseas trade,” which have been principally overlooked by other works in the field. He concludes that Chinese maritime strategy attempts to “achieve near-term national security objective and long-term regional maritime dominance.”⁴⁷

In 2010, China's total energy consumption surpassed the United States for the first time ever, making it the world's largest energy consumer. Then, in 2011, China became the second-largest economy in the world, following only the United States. In the meantime, Beijing shifted its strategic priorities from land power to maritime power. China's maritime economic interests, as a net energy importer, are supported by increasing regional and global sea lines of communication (SLOCs). From December 2008 to February 2011, the PLAN sent 10 group formations to the Gulf of Aden and the African coast to combat the pirates. They supplied 25 warships, 18 airplanes and helicopters, totaling 8,400 sailors, marines, and naval special forces. They escorted 4,411 Chinese and international commercial ships and rescued 51 cargo ships. In April 2012, Admiral Liao Shining, Deputy Chief of Staff of the PLAN, and his warship *Zhenghe* left Lvshun for the PLAN's second around-the-world voyage. It was the first PLAN warship which sailed from China to the United States.

44 Wang Guangqun, “China Rises to Top in Ranks of Ship Makers,” Xinhua News Agency, May 9, 2011. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-05/09/c_13865547.htm

45 Information Office of the State Council, *China's National Defense in 2010* (Beijing: State Council Information Office, 2011), at http://www.gov.cn/english/official/2011-03/31/content_1835499.htm.

46 You Ji, *China's Military Transformation*, 181.

47 Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea: China's Navy in the Twenty-first Century*, 2nd ed. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2010), xix, 187, 190.

Xi's New Strategy and "World-Class" Force

After taking office as commander in chief in 2012, Xi Jinping inherited traditional military doctrines and drew on its Cold War strategic concepts. Chinese leaders today face some familiar international and domestic issues, which echo the prioritization of security concerns, national defense, economic development, and domestic control in the 1950s. Xi carries on the CCP doctrines and principles, calling for a "continuing struggle" against the perceived threats from the West and the U.S. It seems to Xi that the early communists established the CCP for just one purpose, national salvation. He advises Chinese Communists: "Never forget the original intent and stick firmly to the mission."⁴⁸ During the pandemic, he called for the party and Chinese people to study the CCP history and stick to the direction set up by the CCP. He considers Mao Zedong a great leader who mobilized the Chinese to join the revolution and seize the country through armed rebellion. Some Western scholars compare Xi's "fighting spirits" with Mao's legacy of the "continuing revolution." Henry Kissinger points out that "Each of the generations of leaders since the founding of the People's Republic of China has represented a particular aspect of the Chinese experience. Xi's is that of the children of those Chinese who traversed the purgatory of the Cultural Revolution."⁴⁹ Patrick F. Shan states, "Xi is so passionate about 1921 and 1949 that he applies them to yardstick his lofty 'Two Centennials' to turn China into a moderately prosperous country in 2021 and to make China a mid-dlingly developed nation in 2049."⁵⁰ Although the international environment has dramatically changed after the end of the Cold War, the PRC apparently replaced the former Soviet Union as the primary challenge to the U.S. and the post-Cold War world. Of course, China is nothing like it was in 1950, but the CCP's dominant leadership, continuing insecurity, and Xi Jinping's call for the party's doctrine and Mao's legacy challenge the current Asian-Pacific security system under U.S. leadership.

Among the factors influential in Xi's strategy are national defense, international relations, economic resources, and political and social conditions. He had new security concerns that are different from the Western specialists' argument

48 Xi Jinping, *Lun Zhongguo gongchandang lishi* [*On the History of the Chinese Communist Party*] (Beijing: CCP Central Archival and Manuscript Press, 2021), 159.

49 Henry Kissinger, "Xi Jinping: Helmsman of an Evolving Superpower," *Time*, April 29, 2013, 64.

50 Patrick F. Shan, "What Did the CCP Learn from the Past? An Analysis of Xi Jinping's Dexterous Utilization of History," in "China under Xi Jinping: A New Assessment," eds. Qiang Fang and Xiaobing Li, unpublished manuscript, 24.

that China feels safer than ever before. Recent interviews show that some PLA officers believed they live in a dangerous world in the 21st century with many uncertainties and potential challenges to China's security.⁵¹ Their concerns are confirmed by Beijing's high command in the *White Paper: China's National Defense*, which made it clear that the country is facing "unprecedented" challenges because "new security threats keep emerging."⁵² Their justification and calculation seem reasonable and logical in terms of the on-going globalization. Xi has made it clear that China is a superpower, and that it wants to be treated as a global power. He proclaims to the Chinese people that "we must achieve the great revival of the Chinese nation, and we must ensure there is unity between a prosperous country and a strong military."⁵³

Xi Jinping reaffirms Jiang Zemin's post-Cold War doctrine and continues to employ nationalism as an ideology to unite the country and fight for its superpower status, perhaps resulting in one more source of legitimacy for the CCP as the country's ruling party. Xi promoted his global plan "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) to establish a China-centric global system excluding America. The repetition in the development of a new cold war between the two countries is ever looming, especially if the latter continues efforts in creating "one world, two systems." History will prove repetitive if there is a complete break in diplomatic relations between the two countries, or a limited hot war in the 2020s occurs.

Moreover, Xi Jinping conducted a massive reorganization of the PLA, culminating in highly centralized chain of command under his new leadership. In the most sweeping institutional reform since 1949, Xi abolished all the general departments and regional commands, and instead established fifteen functional departments and five theater commands under the CMC with himself as the chairman. In 2012-2022, the new transformation of the PLA certainly affects areas such as strategy, doctrine, operational concepts, and combat techniques. For example, an important on-going change in the PLA doctrine moves away from the traditional defense principle of "never open fire first" in war. It dismisses

51 Among the interviews with the PLA officers by the author are Major Sun Lizhou, Second Department of the PLA General Staff, Beijing; the deputy commander, Jilin Provincial Command, Changchun, Jilin; and Major General Guan Zhichao (retired), at the PLA Political Academy, Nanjing.

52 Information Office, the PRC State Council. "The Security Situation." In *White Papers of China's National Defense in 2008*. <http://English.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/6578688.html>

53 Xi Jinping's words quoted in Hannah Beech, "How China Sees the World," *Time*, June 17, 2013, 28.

the timing issue and instead justifies the war efforts as defensive in nature even though Chinese troops may have to open fire first. The new strategy and transformations require the PLA to build up a combat force to win local wars in conditions of informationization. It requires the PLA to prepare itself for defensive operations under the most difficult and complex circumstances.

Xi Jinping emphasized technological development and made some progress in the aero-space weapon system, including new fighter jets, anti-missile systems, missile defense capability, Shenzhou-8, and a series of space shuttle launches. In line with the strategic requirements of mobile operations and multi-dimensional offense and defense, the PLA has reoriented from theater defense to trans-theater mobility. You Ji points out that the PLA has transformed itself “from a tactical homeland defensive force to one that is capable of strategic offensive missions beyond national borders... as a credible fighting force globally.”⁵⁴ As Asia’s largest air force, the PLAAF has over 2,250 combat aircraft, including 1,800 fighters, strategic bombers, tactical bombers, multi-mission tactical and attack aircraft. Among the PLAAF’s 1,100 fourth-generation fighters are the J-10C, J-11B, and J-16 (comparable to the U.S. F-16/F-18), armed with the latest air-to-air missiles (AAMs). During the 2019 military parade, the Chinese Air Force demonstrated its fifth-generation J-20 fighters. Thereafter, it has received more than 150 J-20s, which have bolstered Chinese air-to-air capabilities for the J-11A and J-11B with high maneuverability, stealth characteristics, and an internal weapons bay.

Xi Jinping inherited PLA naval doctrines and drew on its Cold War strategic concepts, but modify China’s maritime policy. On April 26, 2017, the PLAN launched its new aircraft carrier *Shandong*, *Type-002*, at the Dalian shipyard. As a modified version of the *Liaoning* (Russian *Kuznetsov*) design, it uses a ski-jump takeoff method for its J-15 fighters. By 2020, the PLAN had 240,000 naval officers and sailors with an overall battle force of 350 surface ships and submarines—the USN (U.S. Navy) had 293 warships at that time. The Chinese Navy also had 15,000 marines and 26,000 naval aviation personnel with 690 aircraft. Its tonnage totaled 1.82 million tons in 2019 as the second largest navy in the world, only after the USN. It continued its expansion into the 2020s, commissioning new warships and constructing more naval facilities. Moreover, for the PLA Navy’s next class of aircraft carriers and as a future naval fighter for export, China developed the smaller J-31 fighter. Naval aviation is developing new carrier born AEW (air-born early warning) aircraft. As the second largest navy in the world in

54 You Ji, *China’s Military Transformation*, 144, 227.

terms of tonnage, the Chinese Navy has a strength of 240,000 personnel, including 15,000 marines, with an overall battle force of 350 surface ships and submarines. The Navy Air Force has 26,000 naval aviation personnel with 690 aircraft.

Today, China's strategic force, the PLA Rocket Forces (PLARF, reorganized from SAC in 2015), totaling 100,000 troops, controls 320 nuclear warheads. The PLA has the largest land-based missile arsenal in the world. It includes 85-100 active inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBM), mobile nuclear delivery systems with a range of more than 13,000 kilometers and can reach most locations within the continental United States (CSS-4).⁵⁵ PLARF also has 200-300 medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBM), 300-400 ground-launched cruise missiles, and 1,200 armed short-range ballistic missiles (SRBM). Finkelstein warns, "For these and many other reasons, we can never discount or ignore this situation. It is one [that] casts a large shadow over the entire region... It always possesses high potential for major destruction and disruption."⁵⁶ What has not been clear is China's relative benign nuclear doctrine. Unfortunately, no official Chinese documents confirm its doctrine; much about it was inferred from the very beginning. As David Shambaugh points out, however, "China has consistently taken the 'high ground' on global nuclear disarmament but has itself been unwilling to enter into negotiations to reduce its own stockpiles until the other declared nuclear powers reduce their inventories to China's level first."⁵⁷ Alastair I. Johnston indicates some changes in China's nuclear doctrine from minimum deterrence toward limited deterrence.⁵⁸

Since the 2000s, China has focused on the development of cyber warfare (or informationization warfare) as a major military task. According to Hu Jintao, the PLA should make a "leap-over" transition from a conventional army to an army equipped with digital facilities. Xi Jinping's high command gave its pri-

55 Defense Intelligence Agency, U.S. Department of Defense, "China's Military Power: Modernizing A Force to Fight and Win, 2019," www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/China_Military_Power_FINAL_5MB_20190103.pdf [Accessed June 3, 2022].

56 David M. Finkelstein, "Three Key Issues Affecting Security in the Asia-Pacific Region," in *Asia-Pacific Security: New Issues and New Ideas*, ed. International Military Committee, China Association for Military Science (Beijing: Military Science Press, 2014), 113.

57 David Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military: Progress, Problems, and Prospects* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 102.

58 Alastair I. Johnston, "Prospects for Chinese Nuclear Force Modernization: Limited Deterrence versus Multilateral Arms Control," in *China's Military in Transition*, eds. David Shambaugh and Richard H. Yang (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

ority to the new technological development in the armed forces, “to strengthen the capabilities for ... conducting strategic counter-strikes” since cyberspace is offense-dominant.⁵⁹ In 2015, China established the PLA Strategic Support Force (SSF) as a cyber force to develop reconnaissance, cyberattacks, electronic warfare, network attack, space warfare, and cyber-defense capabilities. Chinese generals of cyber warfare believe the PLA can respond with a precise counter-attack after the first round of a cyberattack. Thus, the PLA is building up both an effective cyber offense and a strong cyber defense. The PLA considers cyber warfare to be a strategic priority in the 21st century, just like nuclear war in the 20th century. According to the Chinese definition, cyber warfare has broader significance to national defense and international politics beyond the military.

Xi Jinping remains concerned about international competition and possible conflict in space; the world’s major powers have recently mimicked one another in initiating strategic space forces and expedited special weapons research and development. Expanding the battlefield to space could greatly change the international military balance of power. At the CCP’s 18th Congressional Third Plenum, Xi told party leaders that building a full-fledged combat space army is part of creating a “new type” of combat forces.⁶⁰ He made a “three-step” plan for a strong space power in April 2021. Chinese leaders see a space war less costly in human casualties when compared to a naval or ground war. Additionally, space warfare is also more cost-effective as a *Dongfeng* space missile, costing \$200,000, can destroy a low-earth-orbit military satellite worth more than \$200 million. Nevertheless, war planners at the PLA’s National Defense University project China’s space actions as retaliative and preventive in the event that a Chinese satellite is attacked, an imminent attack is signaled, a PLA amphibious landing campaign is interrupted, or a large direct bombardment against China occurs. With a similar doctrine for nuclear warfare, the PLA must possess reliable space capabilities for retaliation (or second-strike capabilities) and destruction against a powerful enemy. Moreover, the PLA planners continue designing a “limited space war,” rather than an all-out star war, by identifying vulnerable but critical points in enemy space systems. They also argue that China’s increased space power can also serve as a means of war deterrence since all powers’ space assets are vulnerable.

Beijing continued its close military relations with Moscow. Xi Jinping made

59 Information Bureau, PRC State Council, *White Papers of China’s National Defense in 2004* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2005), 645.

60 Xi’s speech quoted in You Ji, *China’s Military Transformation*, 154.

eight trips to Moscow between 2012 and 2020 with the purpose of strengthening strategic support to China. By 2014, the two nations announced a new era of military collaboration as part of an enhanced strategic partnership. In a long-term view, the PLA's investment in Soviet technology and advisory assistance in 1950-1960 paid significant dividends during the PLA's modernization in the 1980s-2000s. The partnership between the PRC and Russian Federation air forces continues growing through collaborative engagement launched in the 2010s. This raises serious questions over the future of American security, and whether the United States has anything to fear from a potential military superpower of Communist China. The latest Chinese purchase included Su-35 fighters, accounting for over \$1 billion annually from 2012 to 2017. In May 2015, the Chinese and Russian forces conducted a joint air/naval exercise, code-named *Joint Sea 2015*, in the Mediterranean Sea. In August, a larger scale operation, *Joint Sea II*, was held in international waters, about 250 miles from Japan, and involved 22 warships and 20 aircraft. In the same year, the PLA conducted three large-scale military exercises in the East China Sea. The third live-fire exercise from August 24–28 involved more than 100 naval vessels, dozens of aircraft, and information warfare units. Chinese warships fired nearly 100 various missiles.⁶¹

In the 2020s, Xi Jinping's Cold War II may include a "strategic triangulation" of China-U.S.-Europe relations, in which Beijing can look for new bargaining chips with Washington. In the coming new cold war, China will deter the U.S. from a full-scale hot war with its nuclear arsenal as well as newly developed cyber and space powers. In case of war with the U.S., China has prepared a new battleground in Africa as America's next quagmire; though the Biden administration faces the pandemic, climate catastrophes, and racial tensions at home. The survival lessons learned by the CCP helped to re-define the party's strategy and changed its perceptions of the world in numerous ways. CCP leaders will act according to their own consistent logic in their political agenda, using their diplomatic experience within the context of Chinese society and a new international environment.

2024-2049 is the most important time-period for China's rejuvenation as well as when the PLA will reach three milestones for its modernization. Within 25 years, the PLA will integrate its mechanization, informatization, and intelli-

61 M. Rajagopalan, "China Conducts Air, Sea Drills in East China Sea," *Reuters*, August 27, 2015: 1-2. <http://www.reuters.com/articles/us-china-defense-idUSKCN0QW1EX20150827> [Accessed September 14, 2021].

gentization by 2027; complete the modernization of national defense by 2035; and fully transform the PLA into a “world-class force” by 2049. Due to all the above challenges, the PLA has an arduous task to safeguard China’s national unification, territorial integrity, and development interests. The Chinese armed forces will continue to fulfill its mission while evolving through adaptation and improvement for informatization and intelligentization. Through its operational experience in the Taiwan Strait, Vietnam, and the South China Sea, the PLA confronts four key issues: planning, learning, changing, and political control. War planning and aerospace strategy have been the most prominent and foremost of PLA operations.

Strategies for the Twenty-First Century

JEREMY BLACK

Writing in 2023, we are already well into the new century, indeed millennium; that is, assuming the conventional, Western-chosen calendar. As a result, the practice of framing the discussion of modern strategy in terms of the world wars, the Cold War, or the post-Cold War, appears seriously flawed, as does the tendency to refer back for guiding analogies. Indeed, there is now a chronology and agenda dominated by the deployment of twenty-first century terms such as the War on Terror and the New Cold War. These have merit, and we will return to them, but they still pose and face the disadvantages of looking back, and offering an accumulative history of simplistic programmatic descriptions. Indeed, in one respect, these terms represent the automatic theorisation seen with immediate classification, a temptation to pigeonhole the present that has readily-apparent deficiencies. In particular, this method entails a tendency both to simplify individual conflicts and to group them together in pursuit of a typology of choice, as in Cold War conflicts, or warfare in the 1990s, or the New Cold War. This approach adopts the clumping technique to which I referred in the Introduction, but also makes the individual example subordinate to the category, with the latter seen as the means to judge the specificities of the individual case.

Strategic practice is largely innocent of such a process, for it generally looks to the future, notably, but not only, the immediate future, and is very particular in its problems and context. Indeed, strategic practice is task-driven, not theory-provided, and this characteristic gives it its individual nature. This helps to explain a variety in practice, one that is enhanced by the degree to which, compared to a century earlier, there are far more people (2 billion in 1927; 8 billion today) and countries (50 in 1920; 195 today). As a consequence of the latter, the number of legitimate political and therefore military actors has increased. This means that there is an inherently unstable background to the present situation, one, moreover, that may be accentuated further by changing figures, not least a likely rise in population to over 10.5 billion.

The increase in both numbers, people and stages, leads to more settings and

circumstances for both international and civil warfare. In contradiction to the 2023 focus on Ukraine and Taiwan, and its likely accentuation in the short term if these issues provoke wider conflicts, it may be suggested that strategic practice in the future will perforce focus more on civil warfare across much of the world. That situation does not preclude international warfare, and, indeed, as during the Cold War, the two may well overlap due to the role of subversion as part of weakening opposing coalitions. This is an aspect of ‘hybrid warfare,’ a new term for an old practice. The extent to which civil warfare predominates will clearly affect the discussion of strategic practice. The leading military powers, America and China, have not experienced such warfare for a long period, and have thus historicised it. However, it is more common, albeit in very different forms, in many states as well as being an apparently incipient form of political and/or social breakdown.

Reprotage is part of the equation, for the report of the present is inherently a product of the factors affecting emphasis. Thus, the conflict in Ethiopia in 2022 involved many troops and caused significant casualties, but did not attract attention that was comparative with that in Ukraine. More generally, civil wars attract less attention than their international counterparts, as can be seen with the limited coverage of civil war in Myanmar.

As another overlapping feature, there is likely to be a continual decline in the practice of a rules-based system both in international relations and in terms of policies within states. Russian aggression and Chinese ambition represent a rejection both of such a system and of liberal internationalism, as do the internal politics of many states including their suppression of dissent.

Moreover, the outbreak of the 2022 Ukraine war saw the failure of deterrence, and there is scant sign that it is possible to revive the practice, whatever the theory might suggest. This situation can be extended to include the weakness of international law in addressing the large number of states in which internal conflict, and indeed politics, are conducted without any sense of limits on violence. Indeed, as aspects of the centrality of violence in this situation, it is instructive to consider the role, very much a hybrid role, of bodies such as Iran’s Revolutionary Guards which played a key role in keeping the theocratic regime in power, notably in 2010-11. Such forces can also be used for international conflict. So also with mercenary groups, most prominently the Russian Wagner Group, the destruction of which in August 2023 had to be a major act of state policy. Indeed, it is instructive to see, alongside a global narrative about the rise of the state, for example in terms of surveillance capabilities, also a far more complex pattern in the use of force. It is possible to see a sliding scale from con-

ventional militaries to paramilitary bodies, then to mercenary groups working for the state, and then to large-scale criminal gangs. To only regard the first in terms of strategic practice would be mistaken.

At the international level, the lack of an effective rules-based system, and particularly for states with differing, indeed hostile, systems of political culture makes it more likely that strategic practices such as deterrence or graduated escalation will not work, or will not work predictably. That may amount to the same, for the risk horizon will be very short term and, in such a context, unpredictability may be regarded as similar to not working. Combined with the spread of nuclear weaponry and, for the major states, of concentrated militaries, those with a small number of units but a high degree of lethality, this unpredictability would encourage first-strikes.

Judging intent and separating out rhetoric from likely military action is always difficult. As a rule of thumb it is important to be guided by what people say, along with practical actions that appear to support a described action. Thus, President Xi appears different and much more direct and clearer in his rhetoric than his predecessors. Moreover, his framing of a much more assertive China has been amplified by his provocative ‘wolf-warrior’ diplomats and the behaviour of Chinese consular officials. Leaving aside the rhetoric, the Belt and Road initiative, and the acquisition of Chinese owned or managed facilities and resources illustrate practical intent as do efforts to stimulate non-dollar payments systems. Putin has also made his views clear, not least on the demilitarisation of Eastern Europe.

The failure of the Russian attack on Ukraine in 2022 may well simply encourage future aggression in which more force, and with fewer inhibitions, are deployed from the outset. Combined with the difficulties of sustaining and replenishing concentrated militaries in the face of the depletions of conflict, this may well mean that slow-burn warfare only arises if, as in Ukraine, it becomes impossible to deliver the desired rapid victory, but that this warfare falls foul of a limited capability for attritional conflict. The rapid rate of fire of modern weaponry creates a particular problem in terms of ammunition stocks. This reprises the shells’ crisis of World War One, but with a different timescale.

As such, international warfare may be distinguished from much civil conflict, with the latter often characterised by a different type of attritionalism, namely insurgency strategies of disruption combined with counter-insurgency strategies of policing. Neither is new, not least in their overlap with politics, indeed means of effectuating politics; and the extent to which relevant contextual or technological changes may arise are unclear.

However, one demographic development is of major consequence. Not only is the global population growing; it is also becoming far more urban. As a result, a classic geographical forcing-house of insurrectionary struggles, the ‘backwoods’ of marginal economic zones and difficult terrain, notably forests and mountains, has become relatively less significant. Those milieux were the basis for Maoist strategy, and for classic practices of security in the interstices of state power and activity.

In contrast, now the bulk of the population lives in large urban areas. Strategies for insurgency in these zones also reflect the inherent difficulties of controlling them and, therefore, the possibility of exploiting that lack of control. There is an instructive historical parallel. In the past, in most polities, with the exception of city-states, the bulk of the population lived in rural areas. Yet, although rebellion then and there could be very important, as in China in the early 1640s, the key insurgencies were often urban as these were centres of power. Thus, in the 1640s, it was Lisbon and Barcelona, London in 1642 and Paris, Moscow and Constantinople in 1648 that were the crucial sites. Moreover, the Chinese example has to be refined to note that it was the seizure of Beijing in 1644 that made the rising transformative.

Counter-insurgency strategies can also reflect the difficulties of controlling cities and other spaces in the sense of accepting a degree of this very lack of control. Does it fundamentally matter to most governments if the equivalent of *bidonvilles* or *favelas* are not under control? What victory means in this context is in part a matter of the struggle over the narrative. The ability of government to accept limited control varies culturally, as does the willingness of society to accept large-scale lawlessness, which in part is what insurgencies entail: to civilians, there can be scant difference between insurgencies and major criminal organisations. The lawlessness seen with some counter-insurgency struggles, and indeed from government policies as a ‘war’ on the public, comes from a different background, although it can also be felt grievously by civilians.

The city as battlefield may well represent a convergence of conventional with insurgency warfare and contexts; and, indeed, for both cases, a sponge that soaks up forces and lessens their effectiveness. Control over greater populations, moreover, may become a matter of choking their supplies, including of information. Yet, what war means in this context will be unclear, and notably so with domestic conflict. It is possible to focus on drones as another military revolution, as suggested by Roger Boyes in the *Times* on August 30, 2023, but, leaving aside the difficulties of defining and distinguishing such alleged occurrences or processes; it is not before particularly clear what drones mean in terms

of control over cities.

The number of countries, whether authoritarian or in theory democracies, in which there is no acceptance by the governing regime that power may be exchanged peacefully, is such that violence or the threat of force are an integral aspect of politics. This situation throws to the fore another aspect of the city as battlespace, that of the coup, for capitals are in cities, and it is there that coups occur, as with Bamako in Niger and Libreville in Gabon in 2023: in total there was eight in 2021-3. Coups are frequently mounted from within the governing 'élite' including the military or paramilitaries, as with Niger and Gabon in 2023. These are different from insurgency warfare understood as anti-governmental. The ratio of the two is far from fixed; while the character of coup 'warfare' underlines the difficulties in assessing the role of drones and other technologies.

Violence or the threat of force in aspects of international relations, including border clashes, subversion, limited aspects, economic sanctions, and other uses of force also invites questions of definition. Whether, for example, Iran and Israel have in effect been at war for several years is a matter for discussion, an issue that can be readily extended to other cases. Linked to that point, comes the distinction, if any, between international relations and conflict. There is no reason to expect that the former should be peaceful. Seeing war as a branch of international relations makes it difficult to regard strategy as primarily a military activity. Instead, it is seen as political with the use of force simply one aspect of the politics, and one that is assessed with reference to 'political' criteria, whether in terms of forcing will on opponents or with regard to maintaining domestic support. President Macron of France made similar points on July 27, 2023 when arguing in Vila, the capital of Vanuatu, 'First of all, there is the predation of the major powers: foreign ships fish illegally in the exclusive economic zone, numerous loans are literally strangling development in the region.'

The significance of maintaining domestic support for strategy has never been a fixed factor, and, separately, is one that writers on strategic theory can be apt to underplay. Yet, this issue has been of considerable importance in the past, and has become more so as a greater percentage of populations have become politically aware and, often, active. The nature of consent and deference is different in authoritarian societies, but both are still a factor; although the context of this consent is more conditioned by the presence of force.

To bring in a different aspect of volatility, the process of strategic choice in the future might be affected by systems of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and to a degree that is unplanned. Such systems are present already in tactical circumstances, notably in the interaction of sensors and firers, but will probably spread

more generally, as in the development of logistical control practices. Strategy may appear far removed from this situation. Yet, there are links, and not least that tactical moves related to AI, for example the shooting down of aircraft flying in a challenging manner, may well have strategic implications. Conflict may begin between China and America as a result.

Moreover, as AI usage increases, it will in effect play a role in the framing of strategic choices because information will be assembled, organised and ranked by such means. So also in the consideration of options as part of the planning stage. Thus, 'war games' will be not only played on computers but also by means of their contribution.

There are plentiful reasons to be concerned about possible Doomsday scenarios involving a degree of machine takeover. As, differently, with contact with interplanetary opponents, deliberate or not (disease-causes primarily), these scenarios, however, are far less likely than the use of AI by human strategists in a manner that affects strategic formulation and execution.

This element is a reminder that the future is not a static military environment. Even if restricting attention to the twenty-first century, there is still just over three-quarters of a century to consider. Going back into the past over the same period would include such innovations as the move to atomic rivalry when the Soviet Union also acquired the relevant capacity, the development of hydrogen bombs and later space-based reconnaissance and weaponry, large-scale decolonisation, the tripling of the world's population, and a host of other changes. To envisage nothing comparable over the next seventy-five years in terms of new developments, as well as the major transformations brought by a different quantity or rate of pre-existing circumstances, such as population growth, would be to assume a steady-state strategic system for which there is no precedent in modern history, however defined. Nor is there any reason to assume such a scenario.

This then opens up questions about whether the future will be a matter of stages and periods of greater change that can be seen as turning points, or whether it will be more inchoate and, furthermore, understood in this light. Indeed, this very lack of clearcut trends and distinct crises may in practice be the major feature of the strategic environment. That certainly appears likely, and not least as the number of independent 'players' in international affairs is greater than a century ago.

The number, range and possible interaction of crises led in 2023 to the frequent use of polycrises as an analytical means and term. Again, the reality is

far from new as the interaction of crises has long been a constant in both international and domestic crises. Yet, that lack of novelty does not mean that the idea is without significance, but, in any polycrisis, there are still questions of prioritisation and process.

In this and other regards, strategic practice is not only a way to try to shape the challenges of risk, but also a means to try to minimise the inherent volatility of the changing human condition in a context that is highly unstable. Strategic practice in this sense is a matter not only of planning and execution as classically understood, but also of doctrine, procurement and tasking. All are key constituents of this practice, and, in turn, help frame its processes.

The discussion of the situation necessarily entails the available data sets. The focus of attention is the future, and there is a dataset accordingly, including plans, predictions and fears. Due to the unpredictabilities of the future, the major dataset, however, is inevitably the past, and its deployment for analytical purposes into the future poses all sorts of problems of credibility and applicability. Yet, in part, it is by considering collections such as this, that strategies in the future can best be practiced.

The Practice of Strategy

A Global History

This important collection ranges across time and space to assess how strategy has been conceived and implemented with the focus on military and political actors rather than theorists. Definitions of strategy are inevitably culturally constructed and therefore specific in place and time. Yet, at the same time, it is pertinent to see strategy as an overarching vision of what a state, organisation or, indeed, individual wishes to achieve, coupled with the set of objectives designed to make that possible. The focus here is on military and political understanding and activity at the state level, and the contribution throws much light both on specific cases and on the more general situation.

Introduction and conclusions by Jeremy Black. Chapters by Giovanni Brizzi, Isabelle Duyvesteyn, Immacolata Eramo, John France, Béatrice Heuser, Virgilio Ilari, Andrew Lambert, Xiaobing Li, Peter Lorge, Pratyay Nath, T. G. Otte, Alexander Quereingasser, Roger Reese, Kaushik Roy, Vladimir Shirogorov, David Stone, Christopher Storrs, Ulf Sundberg, Michael Taylor, Claudio Vacanti, Ken Weisbrode.

On the cover:

Chinese Woman Playing Go. Color on silk, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region Museum. Unearthed at the Astana Graves in 1972 from the tomb number 187. The tomb also contained a copy of the book “Tian Bao San Zai” dated to the year 744. Image from z Hong Guo Ancient Calligraphy and Painting Appraisal Group. 1997. Zhongguo Huihua Complete Works Zhongguo Art Classification Complete Collection. Beijing: Wenwu Publishing House, Volume 1. Wikimedia Commons.



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