Introduction to Volume I

The Practice of Strategy

ISABELLE DUYVESTEYN AND BEATRICE HEUSER

Strategy Making: A Global, Eternal Phenomenon?

With this project, we aim to break new ground: it is our ambition to compile a first truly global history of strategic practice. How did the linking of political goals with military means take place in different parts of the world over the course of history? How have existing ideas and concepts been translated, adopted, enacted, imitated and emulated on and off the many battlefields around the world? There exist individual studies of warfare in the late Middle Ages, or in ancient Greece, or in the China of the Warring Kingdoms, but they are difficult to bring together as they are written by different authors, using different definitions, and many gaps remain. We want to remedy this by bringing together topics over a broad chronological and geographic span, written by the respective experts on the subject, but with strong editorial impositions in order to give the chapters in this series a common framework which alone will enable comparisons to be made.

The study of strategy has a very long pedigree. It could be argued that much of the history of humankind revolves around clashes between groups over resources and interests. A history of the practice of strategy around the globe and throughout recorded history to date, however, does not exist.

There are works that attempt to produce a general history of the 'art of war' – a term that has been used in the past in a way overlapping with 'strategy' as we define it below – but in fact they have tended to be Eurocentric or Western-centric, and often focus only on the very recent past.[1] This is in part a result also of the uneven development of scholarship in different parts of the world. There have been civilisations which quite deliberately turned their backs on their own past, like that of the early

1 E.g. I. G. Bagramjan, S. P. Ivanov et al. (eds), *История войн и военного искусства* (History of War and the Art of War) (Moscow, Воениздат, 1970); L. Freedman, *Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

French Revolution, or of early Communist Russia and Communist China. Most civilisations do take an interest in their own history, but this can take many forms. Some have looked at wars of the past as religious inspirations, others following nationalist agendas, others still for glorification of their armed forces. Even today, even in democracies, a whiff of opprobrium surrounds anybody criticising their own country, their own government, their own military, sometimes even with regard to events that took place centuries back. And in general, visitors from other continents often observe that Europe is (perhaps unhealthily) obsessed with its history, which on the up side may explain the disproportional crop of historical studies – including of military history and the history of strategy – on this small continent. More important than the unequal obsession with history, there is the unequal existence and survival of written historical sources in different parts of the world, and the impossibility for one author to master all the requisite languages to read existing secondary literature on all parts of the globe, let alone engage with sources written in obsolete languages. Arnold Toynbee's ten-volume history of the world is a case in point – it is an unparalleled attempt to encompass all of recorded history, and yet this scholar of Greek and Roman antiquity found it challenging to explain the history of ancient India or China.[2]

Attempts have been made to develop a more inclusive research agenda. Back in 2004 or earlier, Jeremy Black challenged his fellow historians to write a more global military history. He noted that military history up until that point was very much the history of Western exploits, with very little attention to non-Western experiences.[3] His assessment is still correct today. He has written several notable contributions, which have included treatments of other parts of the world, and yet their starting point remains modern history and the spread of empire, most notably the British Empire.[4] A review of Jeremy Black's book of 2004 remarked that 'the traditional canon of Western strategy and military history remains intact, a reflection perhaps of the essential and immutable underlying unity of all strategic calculations'.[5] This is one question we shall set out to ask of our contributors: can we find 'unity of strategic calculations' in all parts of the globe, in all periods of history?

Where extant works on strategy encompass a larger time span, the paucity of sources available to their authors often led to their mixing strategic *thought*

2 A. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 10 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1934–1961).
3 J. Black, *Rethinking Military History* (London: Routledge 2004).
4 J. Black, *Military Strategy: A Global History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).
5 T. G. Otte, 'Military strategy: a global history', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 31:3 (2020), 597–9, 598.

with less-well-documented strategic *practice*.[6] As writing on strategic thought – mostly preceding the introduction into western European languages of the term 'strategy' – was in fact plentiful in Europe from the sixteenth century,[7] there have been several studies of its evolution.[8] Their focus has been on Europe and later the West, which is fully justifiable as this was to a very large extent a self-contained discourse with very limited interaction with Islamic thought and none with other parts of the world: the work attributed to the Chinese sage Sunzi (Sun Tzu) was first translated into a European language only in the late eighteenth century.[9] While it did have an immediate impact on the strategies of the French Wars,[10] it was then all but ignored for another century and a half, and only became very influential in the West during and after the Vietnam War. There doubtless was much cross-influence in terms of weapons and practices. By contrast, we know of no influence of European writers on Chinese strategic thought before the twentieth century.[11] Even Europe's most immediate neighbour,

6 E.g. H. Delbrück, *Geschichte der Kriegskunst*, 4 vols (orig. 1900–1920, repr. Hamburg: Nikol, 2003); M. van Creveld, *A History of Strategy: From Sun Tzu to William S. Lind* (Kouvola: Castalia House, 2015).

7 B. Heuser (ed. and tr.), *The Strategy Makers* (Santa Barbara: ABClio 2010).

8 The notable multi-authored works in this tradition include P. Paret's famous *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); W. Murray, M. Knox and A. Bernstein (eds), *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); J. Baylis et al. (eds), *Makers of Nuclear Strategy* (London: Pinter, 1991); D. Coetzee and L. Eysturlid (eds), *Philosophers of War* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2013); J. Baechler and J.-V. Holeindre (eds), *Penseurs de la stratégie* (Paris: Herman, 2014); T. Jäger and R. Beckmann (eds), *Handbuch Kriegstheorien* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011). The more coherent single-authored works are those of M. Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought* (London: Frank Cass, 1992); A. Gat, *A History of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); B. Heuser, *Evolution of Strategy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

9 'Les treize articles sur l'art militaire, ouvrage composé en chinois par Suntse . . .' trans. and ed. by Père J.-M. Amiot and J. de Guignes, *Art militaire des chinois, ou recueil d'anciens traités sur la guerre, composés avant l'ere chrétienne, par différents généraux chinois* (Paris: Didot l'ainé, 1772).

10 S. Kleinman, 'Initiating insurgencies abroad: French plans to "chouannise" Britain and Ireland, 1793–1798', in B. Heuser (ed.), *The Origins of Small Wars: From Special Operations to Ideological Insurgencies*, special issue of *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 25/4 (August 2014), 784–99.

11 T. Andrade, 'An accelerating divergence? The revisionist model of world history and the question of Eurasian military parity: data from East Asia', *Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*, 36:2 (2011), 185–208.

the Ottoman Empire, only belatedly took an interest in European writing on warfare, and then only on the most technical aspects.[12]

Where studies of strategy do deal with its *practice*, they are mainly written by military historians, usually with the evolution of a particular campaign centre stage, rather than its causes and strategic aims and context. Scholars with military backgrounds tend to interpret strategy as conducting operations. This again can be explained in part by the paucity of the sources on strategic decision making that have survived prior to the nineteenth or even twentieth centuries. Since 1945, however, the demography of the scholars interested in war has changed. There have been more civilians among them with an interest in strategy as a challenge for decision making, something that they have encountered perhaps in different walks of life.[13]

One recent work has taken a stab at recording and analysing the *practice* of strategy since antiquity and including some other parts of the world, but the selection of cases left many gaps, and the acquaintance of some of the authors with the subjects they discussed shows the lack, again, of the requisite language skills and detailed knowledge of culture and context.[14] Acknowledging that we too cannot go where our language deficiencies cannot take us, we endeavour in these two volumes to make up for our deficiencies by fielding a large team of experts to tackle their respective fields of expertise. The methodology we imposed on them will be discussed below, but it is now high time to explain what we mean by 'strategy' and its practice.

Strategy as a Concept

The word 'strategy' itself derives from the Greek *strategos*, meaning the chief military commander, the general. The word *strategía* in its modern meaning only came into use in the sixth century, in the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire, and was only translated into Western vernacular languages towards the end of the eighteenth century.[15] Coming into use in the West around the

12 As can be seen from the very small number of Western works, mainly on fortifications and artillery, translated into Turkish and preserved in the Ottoman imperial library. See E. İhsanoğlu (ed.), *Osmanlı Askerlik Literatürü Tarihi*, 2 vols (İstanbul: İslâm Tarih, Sanat ve Kültür Araştırma Merkezi, 2004).

13 See also L. Milevski, 'Western strategy's two logics: diverging interpretations', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, published online 10 October 2019, available at www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01402390.2019.1672158.

14 For some good examples of this angle, see J. A. Olsen and C. S. Gray (eds), *The Practice of Strategy: From Alexander the Great to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Black, *Military Strategy*.

15 B. Heuser, *The Evolution of Strategy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

time of the French Revolution, the meaning of the term has developed greatly since.

Many definitions of strategy have been articulated since. They may be summed up, admittedly clumsily: 'strategy is a comprehensive way to try to pursue political ends, including the threat or actual use of force, in a dialectic of wills'. And as this definition suggests, strategy can avail itself of both military and non-military tools, in ever new mixes, in pursuit of its ends.[16]

The most powerful instrument that can be used in adversarial encounters is the armed forces. Other means – some timeless, some technology- or culture-dependent – exist or have existed: economic leverage in particular. This leverage can take the form of trade or denial of trade, payments (chequebook diplomacy) that can be presented in many forms, ranging from voluntary gifts (such as Germany's payment to the USSR in 1990 to help house Soviet forces repatriated from East Germany) to exaction (such as Danegeld), protection money, tax, the vassals' due to their lord, the tribute to be paid by submitting tribes to their new overlord (which Ottoman Emperor Süleyman I imposed on Emperor Charles V in their five-year truce of 1547, euphemised as a 'gift of honour' by the latter while the Turks cashed it in as a 'tribute'), economic aid, or outright bribes.

Surrendering territory or populations or resources or any combination of these without a fight is surely also an instrument of strategy, designed to protect something more valuable from war and destruction. Other instruments include the conclusion of alliances, either short-term, as in the Greek *symmachia* to defeat a common adversary, or long-term, through kinship (real or perceived), already extant between groups (the Greek *syngeneia*), or created through dynastic marriages or friendship, presumably based on common values (the Greek *philia* sometimes covering this).

Throughout recorded history we encounter propaganda, alongside narratives favourable to one's own side and ambitions, such as passing off battles of uncertain outcome as great triumphs and victories: it is nothing less when we find Assyrian monarchs boasting on stone inscriptions about the towns they have sacked. And such retrospective narratives are the strategic tools of the present and future: rallying support, serving as deterrents and coercive signals towards enemies or third parties, and strengthening the leader's position of power within his (usually, but not always his) own polity.[17] In

16 For a comprehensive list, see Heuser, *The Evolution of Strategy*, Chapter 1.

17 A. Altman, 'Tracing the earliest recorded concepts of international law: the early dynastic period in southern Mesopotamia', *Journal of the History of International Law*, 6:2 (2004), 153–72.

short, strategy is generally seen as an instrumental or utilitarian concept and at the same time relational: for something to qualify as 'strategy' rather than an intuitive response, an ends–means link should be present as well as assumptions about an adversary and his plans and aims.

Some scholars claim that strategy did not exist before the word. In this perspective, the idea of strategy only surfaced with the emergence of the 'military Enlightenment'.[18] Napoleon and the practices of war he introduced called for a distinction between war fighting or warfare and the political affairs of state revolving around antagonistic encounters. Many scholars thus assume that it was only with the extension of the battlefield, but also the massive increase of the armed forces in the shape of the *levée en masse*, that strategy emerged. This assumption is made explicitly or implicitly when the works focus only on the time since the French Wars of 1792–1815, which (supposedly) introduced 'warfare as we know it', and is often referred to as 'classical warfare' (which thus does not refer to classical antiquity).[19]

The first problem with this approach is that it excludes millennia of history. If we stick to the letter and claim that strategy only existed once the word 'strategy' was used, we must exclude all of ancient history and all of western European history before the late eighteenth century when Byzantine Emperor Leo VI's work using this term *strategia* was first translated into French and German as *stratégie*/*Strategie* (and some time later into English, Russian and so on). That would not make sense, as this volume illustrates: complex thinking and planning was devoted to ends and means of warfare well before the eighteenth century. Sometimes we must simply find similar meanings under other labels – what Count Guibert referred to as *tactique* in the mid-eighteenth century is nearly identical with what Napoleon called his *système de guerre* and what Prussians called *das Wehrsystem* in the mid-nineteenth century.

To this day it is debated whether any one Japanese word appropriately reflects the modern meaning of the term 'strategy'.[20] Most of the histories of strategic thought available today emphasise the modern period. The second problem with this approach is that it is vulnerable to the criticism that it is too focused on the 'classical' warfare conducted by states, revolving above all around battles fought between 'regular' armies employed by states. The

18 H. Strachan, 'The lost meaning of strategy', *Survival*, 47:3 (2005), 33–54.

19 D. A. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014).

20 H. Nakatani, 'The development of US extended nuclear deterrence over Japan: a study of invisible deterrence between 1945 and 1970', PhD thesis, University of Reading (2019), Introduction.

recent past, however, especially the decades since the end of the Cold War, has been dominated by violent clashes of other forms, so the charge might be made that Napoleonic warfare and the manifestations of war most often associated with 'major war' since the mid-nineteenth century are no longer 'warfare as we know it' in our own times. (A closer look reveals that these were far from the only ones of that age, as asymmetric wars involving non-state actors at least on one side occurred all along.)

Against the historical background of great variety in the manifestation of war – Clausewitz pointed out that every age, every civilisation, has its own – how can we find evidence for strategy making, in the sense of our definition above? How to prove that some sort of strategic thinking along the lines of these definitions existed prior to the introduction of the term? To cut through this Gordian knot, we shall simply assume that we can find evidence of a 'strategy' when Kimberly Kagan's definition of 'strategy' applies, namely that leaders 'set objectives, establish priorities among them, and allocate resources to them, whether or not they develop or keep to long-range systematic plans'. Strategy is thus 'the setting of a state's [ruler's, oligarchy's . . .] objectives and of priorities among those objectives' in order to allocate resources and choose the best means to prosecute a violent engagement.[21] To put it simply, by focusing on the choices that were made about the use of resources to pay for wars and specifically for armed forces, about the creation of means (armed forces, weapons, supplies, fortifications) and their allocation (was the cavalry or the infantry more important? Did they opt for a navy or an army? If a little of both, did they prioritise one over the other? Did they build fortifications or prepare aggressive war? . . .), we can infer evidence of strategic decision making. While often direct evidence of such choices is lacking, inferences can be made about them from decisions taken, and from subsequent events.[22]

In order to prove workable, while Kagan's definition speaks of a state, we include under the umbrella of this term any political unit, polity or grouping that has displayed over the course of time the ability to execute this practice of aligning objectives with priorities and resources. In essence we focus on political systems, which can be defined as 'any persistent pattern of human relationships

21 K. Kagan, 'Redefining Roman grand strategy', *Journal of Military History*, 70:2 (2006), 333–62, 348.

22 E.g., if the Persians in the 1070s gave the Ottoman Turks '50 000 tents' of Turkmen and Tatars to accompany them on their incursion into the East Roman Empire, we can infer that they had plumped for a war by proxy rather than an undertaking by their own forces. ʿĀṣıḳ-Paşa-zāde, *Vom Hirtenzelt zur Hohen Pforte: Frühzeit und Aufstieg des Osmanenreiches nach der Chronik 'Denkwürdigkeiten und Zeitläufte des Hauses Osman' vom Derwisch Ahmed, genannt ʿAşik-Paşa-Sohn*, tr. Richard F. Kreutel (Graz: Styria, 1959), 20f.

that involves, to a significant extent, power, rule and authority'.[23] In our selection of cases detailed below, we have included a diverse set of actors of a diverse nature ranging from terrorist groups and insurgency movements to vast empires. Our concept of agency includes both individual agency, such as the roles of Pericles and Bismarck, and collective processes and procedures of shaping strategy in different empires, states and armed groups. Moreover, strategy is a relational concept as it requires at least one adversary upon whom effects are supposed to be attained. Agency therefore works in at least two ways.

A Strategy for a Conflict, Grand Strategy or Overall Aims in War and Peace?

Further clarification is needed. There is an overlap in the usage of the terms 'strategy' in the sense of 'a strategy for a particular conflict', sometimes rendered as 'plan for an operation', and 'strategy' meaning an overarching, complex plan that might be pursued in war and peace, taking into account multiple factors. Increasingly, we see the term 'grand strategy' employed for the latter. It has been demonstrated that this term was used with multiple meanings,[24] until Basil Henry Liddell Hart wrote that 'the role of grand strategy – higher strategy – is to coordinate and direct all the resources of a nation, or band of nations, towards the attainment of the political object of the war – the goal defined by fundamental policy'.[25] It has since been used in many similar ways to denote a strategy (usually with reference to the USA) that uses multiple tools, including non-violent tools, to pursue a set of overall aims, but no single dominant definition has emerged. This use of multiple tools, including 'political, economic, psychological and military forces as necessary during peace and war', has, at least since the early Cold War, been related to 'strategy' *tout court*, with no need seen to add 'grand' to the mix.[26] We thus see no need to use the term for our purposes here, but emphasise that, throughout our two volumes, when the term 'strategy' is used, we take it to encompass multiple tools.

Moreover, no generally agreed definition of 'grand strategy' has emerged. As the editors of *The Oxford Handbook of Grand Strategy* have noted, 'The more "grand strategy" is associated with war, the more it blurs into military

23 R. Dahl, *Modern Political Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1965), 6.
24 L. Milevski, *The Evolution of Modern Grand Strategic Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
25 B. H. Liddell Hart, *The Decisive Wars of History: A Study in Strategy* (London: G. Bell, 1929), 150 f.
26 US Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Dictionary of the U.S. Military Terms for Joint Usage* (1964), quoted in E. Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 239–41.

strategy. Yet the more "grand strategy" is detached from military strategy, the more it expands to encompass seemingly the entire realm of politics.'[27] Given how the term is most frequently used in relation to the USA, with its almost unmatched tools and resources, it is a little embarrassing when attempts are made to attribute 'grand strategies' to small powers, all with the good intention of treating them as equals in international affairs when the distribution of power is clearly at odds with this.[28] For our purposes, it will suffice occasionally to add the word 'overall' to 'strategy' or to speak less grandly about 'overall aims' if there is the need to distinguish between a strategy for a particular war or campaign, and the overall larger aims pursued by the rulers or governments of a polity over longer periods of time.

Studying Strategy

Moving beyond the etymological and conceptual origins of strategy, the field of strategic studies has been subject to a number of biases: occidento-centrism and the heavy focus on recent history discussed above, and the related excessive focus on the here and now.[29] Another is the tendency to see history in linear terms in which the present is a development of the recent past and has less in common with more remote periods of history. Then there is the belief that only we act 'rationally' while decisions based on different beliefs or premises are those of 'irrational actors'. Last but not least, there is the proclivity to focus on material factors such as geography, resources and technology to the exclusion of ideational and cultural factors.

The State-centric Approach

Intimately linked to a preference for contemporary and Western strategic thought is the tendency to look mostly at the state as the standard in strategy rather than other political power brokers and centres of strategic agency.[30] This results in a concentration on aims and means used by the modern state,

27 T. Balzacq and R. R. Krebs, 'The enduring appeal of grand strategy', in Balzacq and Krebs (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Grand Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 1–21, 2.

28 A. Wivel, 'The grand strategies of small states', in Balzacq and Krebs, *The Oxford Handbook of Grand Strategy*, 490–505.

29 I. Duyvesteyn and J. E. Worrall, 'Global strategic studies: a manifesto', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 40:3, (2016), 347–57. Isabelle Duyvesteyn and Jeffrey H. Michaels, 'Revitalizing strategic studies in an age of perpetual conflict', *Orbis*, 60:1 (2015–2016), 22–35.

30 A notable exception is Freedman, *Strategy*, which includes the 'strategies' of political movements, the rise of industries and business strategies.

which is a product only of Western early modern history. Moreover, politics and resultant strategy as a decision-making process of the modern state hampers the analysis of strategy making in premodern societies, in polities that do not qualify in terms of structure as 'modern states', and of non-state actors of all sorts which have played a part in many wars around the globe, throughout history, as they still do at present. For example, this state-centric approach has obstructed understandings of patrimonial politics in Africa which have provided a distinct political logic to the so-called barbaric 'new wars' on the continent.[31]

Rational and Irrational Actors

Closely linked to the excessive focus on the modern state is the conceptualisation of ends or goals that are pursued in violent engagement. Ideas about what the ends or goals are in warfare have been strictly married to the Western idea of politics and what politics is supposed to entail. Politics as secular, and based on interests, tends to be measured in terms of material objects such as land or resources, or in terms of power for the sake of domination, rather than power to promote some ideal, religion or ideology. When Clausewitz wrote his *opus magnum*, religion as a factor inciting wars had all but disappeared in Europe. As he himself was sceptical of democracy, he trod a difficult path between, on the one hand, grudgingly acknowledging the force of ideology in mobilising the French people, and, on the other, his reluctance to prescribe it for Prussia. His articulation of the relationship between *die Politik* and war as her instrument thus excluded ideology; emotions he relegated to another pole of his wondrous trinity, that which might be associated with the people, but not with policy making.[32] The Clausewitzian tradition in part explains why the mobilising power of political Islam embraced by al-Qaeda and the Islamic State or of Russian neo-imperialist nationalism has been underestimated in the West in recent years.

Contrary to most other significant academic disciplines, strategic studies have made limited headway in exploring alternatives to the narrowly utilitarian, instrumental approaches to strategy. Weighing costs and benefits, and making informed choices guided by what we today would see as a state's (supposedly objective) 'interests', form the dominant lens through which to view the development of strategy. Strategic studies have their roots in two

31 I. Duyvesteyn, *Clausewitz and African War: Politics and Strategy in Liberia and Somalia* (London: Frank Cass, 2005).

32 B. Heuser, 'Clausewitz, *die Politik*, and the political purpose of strategy', in Balzacq and Krebs, *The Oxford Handbook of Grand Strategy*, 57–72.

disciplinary domains. One is that of economics, where scholars assume a universal 'objective' reasoning with regard to interests and 'rational aims'.[33] The other is history, both military and diplomatic, and especially the history of the era of the two world wars, written by scholars who lived through this period and who understandably viewed the world as one in which liberty and democracy were constantly assaulted by militaristic authoritarian powers and had to fight back, rather than seek co-operation to survive. As Steven Walt noted in the early 1990s, much of this literature 'overlaps with more general works on international relations, and most of it fits comfortably within the familiar Realist paradigm',[34] 'Realism' being the predominant theory of international relations that largely took great-power relations of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth centuries as an eternal template for all inter-entity relations. Some scholars have even charged the field of strategic studies with being simply 'the specialist military–technical wing of the Realist approach' to international relations.[35] More critical voices have noted that indeed the relationship between Realism and strategic studies can be more accurately described as 'ambiguous'.[36] Other theories of international relations, such as Liberalism and Constructivism, which share the idea that domestic politics and factors are important to understand conflict, have left less of an impact on most writing on strategy. While they share with 'Realism' ideas about the significance of anarchy and uncertainty, as well as a stress on the importance of force in this context, they diverge when it comes to the role of the state and its supposedly objective material conditions when echoing larger structural-versus-agency discussions in the social sciences.

In the 1970s, significant attempts were made to move away from the dominance of the exact-sciences approach and a productive research line into strategic culture emerged. The Soviet military's strategic culture, which had until then been approached as identical to the American culture, came to be seen by the RAND Corporation as a subject worthy of independent study.[37] The British scholar Ken Booth suggested a strong link between

33 T. C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 2008).
34 S. M. Walt, 'The renaissance of security studies', *International Studies Quarterly*, 35:2 (1991), 212.
35 B. Buzan and L. Hansen, *The Evolution of International Security Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 16.
36 F. Doeser and F. Frantzen, 'The strategic and realist perspectives: an ambiguous relationship', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, published online 2 December 2020, available at www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01402390.2020.1833860.
37 J. Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations* (Santa Monica: Rand, 1977).

culture and rationality in the context of strategy: 'culture is important because it shapes the end which creates the problem to which rational thinking has to be addressed. If an outsider cannot understand or sympathise with the reasonableness of particular ends, he may not appreciate the rationality of the means'.[38] In his explanation of global strategic practice, Black argues that much variation that can be observed in the conduct of war can best be explained by differences in culture.[39] This builds on a longer line of inquiry in which cultural explanations for war take centre stage.[40]

Indeed, this concerns all sides. What over the last three-quarters of a century mathematicians, economists or systems analysts have deemed to be objective interests has been rooted deeply in prevailing American cultural assumptions. Placing an exceptionally great emphasis on material aspects, these are just as idiosyncratic as any other, and are as much part of a particular world view or beliefs. Again, research has shown that in the Cold War, with a similar geographic distance from Soviet missiles and air-carried bombs, with similar population sizes, industrial bases and GDP, the United Kingdom, France and West Germany developed quite distinct policies and strategic postures with regard to nuclear weapons and nuclear war.[41] The best explanation of this is the influence that historical experiences have had on the collective mentality of each country,[42] and the distinct traditions within subcultures within each. These have led to different assumptions, about the world, inter-state relations, war and peace, and, crucially for our purposes, about what strategy best to pursue to deter further Soviet encroachment on western Europe through both military and non-military means.[43]

While, admittedly, 'Warfare is not always rational and instrumental' when the emotions of the masses are aroused, as Ken Booth noted,[44] and as even Clausewitz acknowledged with his 'Trinity', the inclusion of and indeed emphasis on cultural and ideational factors does not amount to the abandonment of all belief in logic when it comes to strategy making. Logic can build on

38 K. Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 64.
39 Black, *Military Strategy*, in particular the conclusion.
40 J. Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York: Knopf, 1993); P. Porter, *Military Orientalism: Eastern War through Western Eyes* (London: Hurst, 2009).
41 B. Heuser, *NATO, Britain, France and the FRG: Nuclear Strategies and Forces for Europe, 1949–2000* (London: Macmillan, 1997).
42 B. Heuser, 'The conceptual heritage of strategic culture and collective mentality', in J. Johnson, K. Kartchner and B. D. Bowen (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Strategic Culture* (forthcoming).
43 B. Heuser, *Nuclear Mentalities? Strategies and Beliefs in Britain, France and the FRG* (London: Macmillan, 1998).
44 Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, 74.

premises we do not share. If some decision makers had or hold different beliefs and operate on the basis of different premises from those of others, they could and still can act on them logically but in ways in which others with other premises/beliefs would not, seeming 'illogical' to them. Whether holding those premises/beliefs was or is rational according to our latest knowledge of the natural sciences is another question.

Most recently, another strand of research has emerged focused on psychological factors such as emotions like fear and revenge in international affairs – a curious rediscovery since Thucydides had already noted them 2,500 years ago.[45] This may be significant for the study of strategy as well. Where appropriate we shall in this volume introduce perspectives on strategy that move beyond the dominant rational-actor paradigm and incorporate cultural, psychological and emotional aspects of strategic practices.[46]

Material Constraints

Another tradition of writing on strategy has put material factors at its centre: to some extent rightly so, as they clearly play a central role. A landlocked polity cannot espouse a naval strategy, deserts and mountain ranges continue to present obstacles to large-scale troop movement even in the era of air power, there were limits to what one could do with navies before the invention of the compass, and a very small nation cannot muster a large army even through conscription. But as with all the excessive preoccupations of writers about the history of warfare and the practice of strategy listed above, it is their neglect of other dimensions – especially those of ideas, culture, ideologies – that limit their usefulness. In his list of preconditions for being a (significant) naval power, Alfred Thayer Mahan included, besides material factors, the need for naval-mindedness: a society with an aptitude for the sea and commercial enterprise, and a government with the influence and inclination to 'dominate' the sea.[47] And yet the geostrategic school, notwithstanding its important contributions to our understanding of strategy, tends to be blind to this dimension. But how else can it be explained that the inhabitants of the British Isles or the Scandinavian peninsula became great seafarers and the Vikings and Britons extended their rule via or over the seas,

45 K. Payne, 'Fighting on: emotion and conflict termination', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 28:3 (2015), 480–97; Y. Ariffin, J.-M. Coicaud and V. Popovski (eds), *Emotions in International Politics: Beyond Mainstream International Relations*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

46 Duyvesteyn and Worrall, 'Global strategic studies'.

47 A. T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Co., 1890), 50–3.

while the inhabitants of the Philippines, the Indonesian islands, or the Korean peninsula did no such thing? Even Japan was strikingly uninterested in creating a naval empire – before it was influenced by Euro-American imperialist thinking from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.

The weapons and technology available for the waging of war are another obvious constraint, of course. But ideas drove people to dream about building universal empires long before the entire globe had been discovered by them; the desire to pursue certain overall, often long-term, aims inspired many a technological and administrative innovation, or in a creative mind led to the adaptation of inventions to the pursuit of these purposes. Some cultures would turn to ruses or unusual, perhaps extreme, measures to compensate for the sort of military technology they would have needed to carry out their purposes: think of the use of corpses of plague victims to bombard the enemy at the siege of Caffa in 1346,[48] or of kamikaze bombers by Japan in the Second World War in the absence of missiles. Others, if technological breakthroughs could be imagined, financed research that would lead to them – such innovations usually came in clusters, in response to articulated requirements, as for example the weapons of mass killing that were developed in the early twentieth century, from poison gases and bacteriological weapons to nuclear weapons. Technology is thus not a static condition in which strategy was formulated: strategy could formulate requirements for new technology, and military engineers strive to come up with new technologies to meet the requirements of strategy.

The Universalist Claim in Strategic Studies

In contrast to those who argue that there is little point talking about strategy before the Age of Enlightenment or the French Wars of 1792–1815, another school of strategic studies holds that strategic thinking has been present across time and place and possesses core universal traits. For example, Michael Handel, teacher of generations of US officers, claimed that 'the basic logic of strategy, like that of political behaviour, is universal'.[49] Comparing the works of Sun Tzu (Sunzi) and Carl von Clausewitz, Handel concluded, 'Ultimately, the logic and rational direction of war are universal and there is no such thing as an exclusively "Western" or "Eastern" approach to politics and strategy; there is only an effective or ineffective, rational or non-rational manifestation of politics or strategy.'[50] 'Both Sun Tzu and Clausewitz', he argued, 'view war as an essentially rational activity involving the careful and continuous correlation of ends and

48 M. Wheelis, 'Biological warfare at the 1346 Siege of Caffa', *Historical Review*, 8:9 (September 2002), 971–5.

49 Handel, *Masters of War*, xiii. 50 Handel, *Masters of War*, 3.

means'.[51] Colin Gray made a similarly sweeping claim: 'The practice of strategy, singular, considered as a function, is an eternal, universal, essential, and therefore unavoidable feature of human life. Individually and variably collectively, people perform the strategic function as a competitive necessity for survival.' Moreover, 'Because humans have always had to practice, or try to practice, strategy, it is inescapable to claim that a single, unified general theory must have pertained through all of history – past, present, and future.'[52] Many others in the field have argued along similar lines.[53]

This approach has been criticised for being based on a narrow reading of the history of strategic practices that focuses excessively on Europe and the West. The idea of universalism, it has been argued by Ken Booth, is intimately tied up with the dominance and influence of the Clausewitzean paradigm: 'To imply that the Clauzewitzean paradigm is synonymous with the meaning of war is to exhibit an extreme form of ethnocentrism.'[54] And he went on: 'Strategy itself might be characterized as a universal preoccupation, but that does not mean that it is conceived in universal terms.'[55] As we aim to explore in this work, strategy and its practise may be very much determined by local or specific experience. Strategies might not exhibit universally consistent characteristics, but may be determined by particular cultural views.[56] As Jeremy Black wrote in a review of Colin Gray's *Strategy and Defence Planning*, 'I am not confident that what are presented as the fundamentals of strategy are not in practice culturally located and conditioned, rather than the universals they are suggested to be.' As an example, he raises the possibility that 'uncertainty' in war is culturally and locally determined.[57] Indeed, even in a purely European context, the perception of uncertainty – including fortune, luck and risk – has changed dramatically over time.[58] The same applies to the use of force and understandings of victory and

51 Handel, *Masters of War*, 61.

52 C. S. Gray, 'Conclusion', in Olsen and Gray, *The Practice of Strategy*, 287–300, 287. See also C. S. Gray, 'Strategic thoughts for defence planners', *Survival*, 52:3 (2010), 159–78, 161; and Gray, *The Strategy Bridge: Theory for Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

53 E. N. Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace*, rev. edn (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2001), xi; R. Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), 6, 4; J. Angstrom and J. J. Widen, *Contemporary Military Theory: The Dynamics of War* (London: Routledge, 2015), 33.

54 Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, 74. 55 Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, 20.

56 H. Strachan, 'Strategy and the limitation of war', *Survival*, 50:1 (2008), 31–54; E. Simpson, *War from the Ground Up: Twenty-First-Century Combat as Politics* (London: Hurst, 2012).

57 J. Black and Colin S. Gray, 'Strategy and defence planning: meeting the challenge of uncertainty', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 39:5–6 (2016), 922–4, 923.

58 B. Heuser, 'Fortuna, chance, risk and opportunity in strategy', *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2022), at www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01402390.2022.2111306.

defeat.[59] A small group of scholars has started to engage with strategy as possessing multiple logics and diverse practices. The British officer-turned-strategist Emile Simpson has taken this argument to a logical endpoint of relativism, seeing strategy as 'a flexible interpretative structure' where winning or losing in war ultimately depends on the perception of the participants.[60]

Applying a conceptual framework based on one set of experiences to another culture can be productive, however. In an attempted to identify a field of 'jihadi strategic studies', Dima Adamsky has used the concepts and theoretical framework from existing strategic studies to question and explain the practices of al-Qaeda and affiliated movements. 'Although divine factors inform the Quranic war fighting doctrine', he argued, 'the Clausewitzeanism in the Islamic way of war is manifested in a strategic–analytical approach toward the opponent and in the regulatory relationship between ideological ends and military means'. And yet he urges caution, for '[a]pplying a Western conceptual framework to explain a foreign operational art, divorcing it from its foreign ideational context and from what the foreigners say to themselves may lead to misperception'.[61]

Our Methodology

The aim of this series is to engage with all these ideas.[62] By presenting a collection of case studies and evidence of practices of a variety of polities from the whole spectrum of civilisations over the past three millennia, this series is devoted to investigating whether this premise is actually reflective of a global reality. We may find, overall, that the practice of strategy displays universal traits. If this is the case, we will seek to gain a deeper understanding of what these are. Or else we might find that the conceptual foundations of strategy are not universal, that alternative understandings are possible and, in fact, have long existed. There might be multiple templates or sets of experiences which echo in specific times and places, but which are subject to change and amendment. We might find that the practice of strategy is unique to time and place, or, as some scholars have

59 J. Akshay, 'Strategic wisdom from the Orient: evaluating the contemporary relevance of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and Sun Tzu's *Art of War*', *Strategic Analysis*, 43:1 (2019), 54–74, 72; A. Monaghan, 'From victory to defeat: assessing the Russian leadership's war calculus', *Russia Research Network* (2021).

60 Simpson, *War from the Ground Up*, 32.

61 Dmitry Adamsky, 'From Moscow with coercion: Russian deterrence theory and strategic culture', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 41:1–2 (2018), 33–60, 50.

62 B. Heuser, 'The history of the practice of strategy from antiquity to Napoleon', in John Baylis, James Wirtz, Eliot Cohen and Colin Gray (eds), *Strategy in the Contemporary World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 17–32.

previously argued, that it is more akin to muddling through in uncertain circumstances. For example, Robert Chia and Robin Holt in their study of 'emergent strategies' describe this as 'a practice of strategizing from within the real activity', or, 'relying on a pre-established plan of action or some grand strategic initiative, decisions and action arise from within the habitus of established social practises, occurring *sponte sua* in response to events *in situ*'.[63] These are the central elements the current series aims to further dissect and explore. In sum, we ask, first, whether there is universality in strategic practice. Does it form a consistent social phenomenon across time and place? If there is diversity, then where, how and to what extent? Can we further substantiate or redefine strategy's universality claim?

Second, the objectives. While there have been many suggestions offered over the course of history as to what the objectives of violent actors could be, this study requires a set of parameters as to which factors qualify for inclusion. Strategy revolves around the use of instruments of power to make an adversary comply with your wishes and do as you desire. Conventionally, these objectives and desires have been framed as political will.[64] This is the dominant Clausewitzean discourse of war as 'the continuation of politics with the admixture of other means'.[65] Greed and opportunity have been offered as a lens through which to study objectives in war.[66] Also, as outlined above, we propose that apart from cost–benefit interpretations that say more about our own priorities than about those of the culture and age of each case study, we incorporate their cultural and ideational particularities to help us understand their strategic practice. We propose to open up this perspective to other driving forces, doing justice to the rich debate of recent years.[67]

Third, prioritisation. In any polity a process of calibration will take place as to the connection between the objectives and the routes to attain them within the given context. There are different ways of pursuing objectives involving a host of means and a panoply of methods. If there are objectives but not means, then prioritisation is futile. If there are means but not

63 R. Chia and R. Holt, *Strategy without Design: The Silent Efficacy of Indirect Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 134, 143.
64 Von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*. 65 Von Clausewitz, *On War*, Book I.
66 Freedman, *Strategy*; M. Berdal and D. Malone, *Greed & Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000); D. Keen, *The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
67 I. Duyvesteyn and J. Angstrom (eds), *Rethinking the Nature of War* (London: Frank Cass, 2005); H. Strachan and S. Scheipers (eds), *The Changing Character of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011).

objectives, then there is madness. The most powerful instrument that can be used in adversarial encounters is the instrument of armed force. Others are, for example, coercion, sanction and blockade, but also dialogue and negotiation. How have violent entrepreneurs over the course of time engaged in the process of calibrating the instruments available with the aims they sought to achieve?

In the process of selecting cases, we tried to cast our nets as wide and as broad as possible. The predominant question in the selection of the chapters has been: is there an important story to tell? To help us compare and distinguish between the generalisable and the particular, we have imposed on our authors a rigid framework of interpretation, in which we asked them about the evidence they were using (sources), about who determined strategies in their case study (actors) and through what processes of prioritisation, about who was seen as enemies or adversaries, about the causes of wars (including particularly culture-specific causes), about the objectives for which they were fought, about the means and finally about examples of how planned strategy was applied to practice.

In several of these categories, we encountered great variety. While classicists – students of European antiquity – and medievalists – students of medieval Europe – bemoan the paucity of their sources, we find that most of those that exist have been edited most carefully and gone over by generations of scholars, following widely recognised conventions of referencing, translation and citation. By contrast we see nothing like that for sources from other parts of the world, although some magnificent sources exist, as, for example, the chapters on China illustrate. In other parts still, especially in most of pre-Columbian America and pre-colonial sub-Saharan Africa, we simply do not have indigenous written evidence, and, as is apparent from the contributions on applied strategy in those areas, without such evidence about people's thoughts, very little can be constructed from the scarce remaining material evidence of their actions.

Even where written evidence exists, sources are, of course, very uneven. We thus cannot pronounce authoritatively on the sizes of populations or armies until well into modern times; much of what ancient and medieval European historiographers reported has been assigned to the realm of fantasy by critical scholarship. Even in the twentieth century, we have great problems with firm evidence, and that even in sophisticated states, which in the context of war may well lose some of their faculties. Thus, for example, estimates of Chinese casualties in the Second World War vary by 5 million

souls, or what would be a third of the lower and a quarter of the higher overall estimate.

Then, as we have already seen in the debate about the absence of a Western word for 'strategy' before the late eighteenth century, one can equally debate whether decision makers were conscious of aims such as 'deterrence' or 'centre of gravity' before those terms had been invented or applied in literature on war. We believe there is plenty of evidence for this; we see it, for example, in Timothy May's chapter, in what he has called the Mongols' strategy of devastating and then withdrawing from buffer areas, the better then to dominate nearer areas. Nevertheless, in different languages and cultures, something with the net effect of intimidation – exercising extreme brutality towards one city or tribe in order to scare others into submission without fighting – may have had different connotations and implications.

Answers to our question of what aims were pursued is particularly fascinating. Obviously, there were physical limits – geographic, demographic, technological, environmental and climatic. But ideas, and the transfer of ideas, clearly played a role in expansionist agendas, and it does not strengthen modern (wo)man's faith in the beneficence of religions to see just how many prophets, priests and imams told their followers that they had the mission to go, conquer, subject and kill in the process.

Where evidence of strategy formulation is absent or scarce, we have to rely upon evidence for its application or execution, which can greatly distort the strategy itself. What happened in practice may be conditioned more by mismanagement, bungling or ad hoc initiatives than by a coherent strategy. The war crimes committed by Nazi Germany flowed neatly from the Nazi ideology and were an intrinsic part of Hitler's overall strategy aimed at subjecting Europe (especially eastern Europe) to the domination of the 'master race' and exterminating selective parts of its population while enslaving the rest. By contrast, the massacre of My Lai perpetrated by US soldiers in the Vietnam War was the outcome of poor training, poorly enforced discipline and perhaps some latent grass-roots American racism, but not of the overall strategic plan of Washington for the war itself or the larger Cold War context.

By imposing this interpretational grid on our contributors, our ambition has been to produce a work written specifically for non-specialist audiences, keeping in mind the understandable absence of knowledge about European history in other parts of the globe, and of the history of other parts of the globe in Europe, as well as the waning of historical knowledge among

younger generations in general. Not understandable but deplorable is the general lack of any knowledge of history prior to the very recent past among scholars of international relations, but it is a fact, and if we want to widen the 'database' on which they test their theories, we must furnish them with accessible literature on the subject.

The resulting chapters – never more than an introduction to each topic – inevitably focus on fewer points and yield less nuance than specialists would wish to find, and would be needed more fully to empathise with each age and culture. But we hope that we have furnished sufficient markers for readers to find out more about each topic on their own. We have thus included references to further introductory reading material at the end of each volume. References to specific secondary literature have been kept to a minimum, indicating sources of quotations and historiographic points made on a particular subject.

An Ecumenical History of the Practice of Strategy

To sum up, all material and ideational obstacles notwithstanding, this *Cambridge History of Strategy* aims to be the first ever global history of the practice of strategy. This global narrative will be based on both a chronological and a thematic analysis of the role of strategy since ancient times, identifying elements of long-term continuity and discontinuity in practices globally. We aim to put together an integrated narrative combining these aspects to shed new and more comprehensive light on strategy, compared to what has been offered before, specifically in the existing large overview studies.