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## The Evolution of Modern Grand Strategic Thought

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forms throughout the rest of his life. But readers be warned: do not invite a moral equivalency test between these two men. Orwell was a frustrated moralist, while Churchill, for all his success, was a politician—a man who, for most of his life, sought power and its trappings.

There are many great books on Orwell and Churchill. If you already have read D. J. Taylor's fine biography of Orwell and cracked William Manchester's biography of Churchill, then Ricks's work may seem like tilled soil. Consider, then, reading Christopher Hitchens's *Why Orwell Matters* or perhaps David Reynolds's *In Command of History*, a fascinating story of Churchill's production of his memoir *The Second World War* and a sure testament to the fact that those who win wars get to write the history. Regardless, this is a fine book for anyone interested in reacquainting themselves with either luminary, or for those curious to see both in a complementary light.

CHRISTOPHER NELSON



*The Evolution of Modern Grand Strategic Thought*, by Lukas Milevski. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford Univ. Press, 2016. 175 pages. \$80.

At first glance, telling the story of the evolution of grand strategy would seem to be a straightforward project. The term *grand strategy* is encountered often in a variety of disciplines, each of which attaches importance to the idea. However, as Lukas Milevski demonstrates, the task is far more challenging than it appears.

*The Evolution of Modern Grand Strategic Thought* is essentially Milevski's doctoral dissertation. It is not a book especially suited to the lay reader. Milevski is

thorough in this effort—he does not appear to have overlooked anyone of importance. Milevski explains that one of the major difficulties associated with grand strategic thought is a notable lack of a commonly agreed-upon definition of the term. He identifies six interpretations of the term in current use, of which five are associated with particular scholars and each of which presumably has passionate adherents. It is easy to imagine how Milevski must have felt as, in his own words, he began his doctoral research “believing I knew what a grand strategy was and how I would use the concept,” only to discover that “there were simply too many distinct and even contradictory definitions of grand strategy” (p. 1).

*The Evolution of Modern Grand Strategic Thought* takes a chronological approach to the subject, and explains how the context of the times affected contemporary thinking on grand strategy. Divided into eight chapters, the work starts during the Napoleonic Wars, anchoring grand strategy's origin as a military concept, as “interpreted” by Carl von Clausewitz and Baron Antoine-Henri de Jomini.

Those privileged to work within the halls of the Naval War College and its Royal Navy counterpart will not be surprised to find that great maritime strategists, notably Alfred Thayer Mahan and Julian Corbett, deserve places of prominence as theorists of grand strategy. Milevski reminds the reader that Stephen B. Luce brought Mahan to the Naval War College to teach strategy; however, as the College initially lacked students, Mahan had almost three years to refine this thinking before giving his first lecture. In comparing these two great naval strategists, Milevski identifies Mahan as the more influential, but considers Corbett superior as a thinker on grand strategy.

The period bookended between the first days of World War I and the last days of World War II was productive for grand strategists. Milevski details the rise of J. F. C. Fuller and Basil H. Liddell Hart, rightly described as “giants of British strategic thought.” Also discussed are the works of other strategists, notably Henry Antony Sargeaunt and Geoffrey West. The shadow of the First World War looms heavily over this portion of the book, and Milevski does an admirable job of showing how the war influenced the thinking of these strategists. Each was determined to avoid the horrors of the trenches and the near-fatal blows dealt winners and losers alike.

Milevski explains how postwar thinking about grand strategy took a different direction in the United States. Edward Mead Earle was a rising strategist, as was Captain George Meyers, USN, who lectured on strategy at the Naval War College. Not since Mahan had U.S. strategists engaged in “such serious, in depth development” of the grand strategic concept. Central to their work was a perceived need to link military ends to political results. Ironically, much of this thinking would be discarded after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki ushered in the age of nuclear strategy. Milevski argues that scholars forgot the “notion” of grand strategy as their attention focused on nuclear strategy and limited-war theory. During these discussions, more names joined the list of scholars dealing with grand strategy, including John Gaddis, Bernard Brodie, Henry Kissinger, and Herman Kahn.

Milevski states that during this period limited-war theory came into existence; prior to this, national power was used to prevent or win wars. During this time, Milevski credits the Naval War College with serving as the center of

what little study on grand strategy was undertaken. Milevski explains this phenomenon by noting that nuclear strategy protected and preserved the Air Force, while limited-war strategy served a similar function for the Army. Lacking such intellectual cover, the Navy stayed focused on grand strategy.

Grand strategic thought reemerged in the 1970s in the wake of the Vietnam War. New academics took up the study of grand strategy; Milevski identifies John M. Collins, Edward N. Luttwak, and Barry R. Posen. Paul M. Kennedy gets credit for building on Liddell Hart’s work, and Luttwak’s work is noted as being similar to Earle’s, in that Luttwak’s ideas of grand strategy are “effectively synonymous with military statecraft.” In contrast, Posen’s view of grand strategy, according to Milevski, focuses on “relating military ends to political means.”

In addition to discussing the major definitions of grand strategy, Milevski also has included unique applications. Here too the Naval War College contributed to the field. Historian John B. Hattendorf broke ground in using grand strategy as an analytical tool. The late William C. Martel, who taught at both the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and the Naval War College, turned the strategy-policy relationship—“one of the core concerns of strategic studies”—on its head.

In the end, Milevski concludes, “Grand strategy remains a standardless, incoherent concept” (p. 141). Its interpretations and explanations have been author-centric, and instances of scholars such as Collins and Kennedy being willing to refer to earlier definitions of the term are rare. Despite the decades of study, there is still no common definition of the term, and new definitions continue to multiply. At present, according to

Milevski, the state of grand strategic thinking is “unhelpful” and requires “rehabilitation” before that state can change. To say that this conclusion is surprising is something of an understatement, and it will be interesting to see how many scholars of grand strategy agree with Milevski in this regard.

RICHARD J. NORTON



*A Handful of Bullets: How the Murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand Still Menaces the Peace*, by Harlan K. Ullman. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2014. 214 pages. \$34.95.

The legacies of the First World War are many, and Harlan K. Ullman, a respected national security practitioner and academic, offers a thought-provoking snapshot of some of the current challenges facing the United States that can be linked back to the war. The book focuses on current policy debates, but simultaneously attempts to relate back to historical events. Ullman argues that the current threat environment began revealing itself when Gavrilo Princip assassinated the archduke of Austria, thus launching the First World War with only a handful of bullets. Today, Ullman contends that there are all kinds of Gavrilo Principis in the world who can throw international order into a tailspin. More significantly, the author argues that the means and methods of doing so have multiplied.

Ullman’s foundational argument is that individuals and groups now can have increased impact vis-à-vis the state. This change occurred because of the gradual unraveling of the Westphalian system and the erosion of state sovereignty over the last decades. Power is now

diffused among so many people and devices that they cannot be quantified. The consequence is a world with “four new horsemen of the apocalypse”: failed governments; economic despair, disparity, and dislocation; radical ideologies; and environmental calamity. These represent the main threats on which the United States should focus, but unfortunately our policy is grounded in the past, and our present strategies address the symptoms instead of the causes of these threats. This new environment is difficult for governments to manage; the United States in particular does not have a system in place that enables it to cope. Ullman argues that our political-military system merely hops back and forth from one crisis to the next without any real strategy.

The author argues that the United States desperately needs sounder strategic thinking. The extent of the national debt means that resources for projecting military power will be more and more limited. When a state’s chief enemies possess no organized military or economic base, traditional military power exerts less influence. The United States must become smarter in spending for national defense and must formulate strategies that take into account not just Iran, China, and Al Qaeda but all the overarching challenges it faces, as well as the wild card scenarios that can emanate from them. However, the author keenly observes that this strategic change is unlikely to occur, given the dysfunction and vitriol in our political system. Our elected leaders have a short-term obsession with winning elections and with the continuous pursuit of dollars for campaign financing. As many others surely would agree, Ullman worries that only major crises can create the impetus for real change.