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## The Quest for Victory; the History of the Principles of War

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values themselves are preserved and protected?"

Modern society, the beneficiary of many intellectual and technological gifts, seems no more capable than the ancients of achieving a just peace. Plato and the other early philosophers logically presumed most war to be evil. They developed criteria to illustrate the differences between the just and the unjust war in the belief that war should serve as a political instrument only when justice demanded it.

Medieval philosophers tried to distinguish between the civilian and the soldier and to place limitations on war within two emerging schools of thought.

The first school contrasted the contractual and the organic views of the state. The contractual notion, conducive to democratic values, expected all citizens to perform a wartime role; in the organic state all citizens must serve as their inherent duty, especially during war. Both groups helped shape the notion of a mass national army which in time supplanted the small professional or mercenary armies.

The second school of thought examined the growth of technology in the medieval era and the vastly increased firepower and lethality of war. Both schools shaped the modern era of massive force, total war, and the risk of extermination.

The modern era added other views at both extremes of war and peace, some extremist with sweeping concepts and goals, others reducing the issues to shallow slogans, both unreasonable and unworkable and, in the authors' view, sometimes contributing to the outbreak of war.

Peace through the ages was and has been preserved by constant striving for and maintenance of a balance of power between sovereignties. Yet military

professionals often forget the importance of striving for peace to preserve the balance; some are mere technicians who resist intellectual inquiry and ignore the vital lessons of history. Some academic counterparts see war as the ultimate injustice, whatever the result. Understanding the causes of war requires time, study, experience, common sense, and a knowledge of the past which created the present. Such is the path to wisdom and compassion so vital for mankind's advance beyond barbarism and toward a better civilization.

The survey of thought from ancient to modern times is quite well done. The selections are short, pithy, well integrated, and offer excellent source material for further study. Several noted philosophers are included whose works are not often considered in relation to the politics of war and peace. Their inclusion, however, magnifies the major flaw, the absence of prominent military strategists and philosophers, particularly of the current era. *The Politics of War and Peace* should include thoughts of war as well as peace. The Clausewitz selection is from a poor translation and not well chosen. But where is Mahan or Mackinder, Beaufre or Brodie, Howard or Liddell Hart, Millis or Kissinger, or (to include our home-grown scholars) Eccles and Wylie? If the quote of General Goodpaster above suggests anything, surely these thinkers have much to offer and their absence is strange indeed.

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Alger, John I. *The Quest for Victory; the History of the Principles of War*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982. 318pp. \$29.95

The very nature of war is at stake in the subtitle of this book. Common sense

and Clausewitz combine to tell us that war is essentially two-sided, interactive, dialectical: there is, obviously, more than one side to it, and both sides will have their mistakes, omissions, blunders, and strategies.

Why, then, have intelligent military men persisted for decades in the gross blunder of calling "principles of war" what are, at best, selected principles of strategy? No one seems to know; therefore we speculate boldly but tentatively.

The misnomer of "principles of war" articulates, enshrines, and seeks to legitimate the solipsism or self-centeredness of the American way of war, which is well known to be long on applications of materiel and short on sophisticated foreign policy. To be fair, one must recognize that self-centeredness is the path of least resistance, for it is difficult to think through in a practical way the process of strategic interaction and to base one's own strategy on the unpredictable dialectic which defines the course of any real war. It is easier to get on with the options, especially those involving physical rather than moral assets, available to one's side. Moreover, the so-called principles of war appeal to the adherents of Jomini. For these "principles" exclude the national and coalition war aims which dictate the selection of major strategic objectives; they also ignore the pervasively political domestic processes unleashed in every conflict of any significance and duration. So the principles do tacitly and by omission what Jomini was forthright enough to say in so many words: "apart from the intimate bonds which tie war to politics during preparations for war, almost all campaigns will include military efforts undertaken to satisfy political views which are, often, very important but, often, very short on rationality and

which, strategically speaking, lead to serious errors rather than useful operations." (Jomini, *Précis de l'art de guerre*, 1838, page 204.) On page 40 of his *Précis*, Jomini anticipates General Upton's anti-Clausewitzian and unpolitical notion of war: once war has been decided on, it must, no doubt, be waged according to the rules of the art ("la guerre une fois décidée, sans doute il faut la faire selon les principes de l'art"). Colonel Alger's book neither quotes nor mentions these important Jominian positions.

In short, the persistent misnaming of some principles of depoliticized and heavily "material" strategy as "the principles of war" sums up the congenital outlook of the military in an insular and continental giant. The summary is the quintessence of American strategic ethnocentrism. The summary may well be a threat to national security, for solipsistic miseducation of officers increases the probability of myopia, rigidity, loss of initiative, and traumatic awakenings.

Speculations of this type are absent from Colonel Alger's book. Yet he himself points to their importance. In his concluding chapter he writes that "to understand the 'principles of war,' their history must be known. The forces that ordained and inspired their development and the acceptance of their content and format are perhaps more significant than their metamorphic chronology, but these forces are far more difficult to identify" (p. 175). Indeed they are, which is why the reviewer has ventured to speculate where Colonel Alger feared to tread. He and others are invited to do better than these speculations.

Alger, in any case, has given us a considerable data base, though his translations of German book titles are

not to be trusted. His book begins with a chapter on the maxims of war before Napoleon. Here he misses the essential and revealing context of the pre-Napoleonic maxims. From Giles of Rome in the high Middle Ages to Frederick the Great, these maxims and reflections were a standard element of absolutist political science expressed in mirrors for princes and political testaments. Written from the ruler's perspective and meant to be useful, these writings necessarily sacrificed rigor, science, and universality for immediacy and specificity. *Kriegstheorie*, a genuine theory of war for the ages, had to wait for Clausewitz.

For the era since Napoleon, Alger gives a chronology, history, and reference work. Leaving aside bibliography and index, fully a fourth of the book is reference material. It ranges from a list of book titles of the genre in question to extracts ranging from Machiavelli to FM 100-1 (1978), telling us all, perhaps more than all, that we care to know.

The book certainly fills a lacuna; especially for the era since J.F.C. Fuller (here cut down to size) it provides a useful overview.

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International Institute for Strategic Studies. *The Military Balance 1982-1983*. London: 1982. 141pp. \$14

Each year the prestigious London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies publishes their *Military Balance*. This study is considered a primary source for most of the academic world and by the press. The 1982-1983 edition has just recently appeared and has some significant material of interest to Navy officers.

IISS now credits the Soviet Union's submarine force with a MIRV capability

on both the SS-N-6 and the SS-N-8 submarine-launched ballistic missiles. Previously, a MIRV capability for the SS-N-6 was only documented in one table of DOD's *Soviet Military Power* (while it was referred to as a MRV capable missile in the text).

In addition to the obvious strategic significance of this possible new missile capability, the MIRVing of the SS-N-6 and SS-N-8 has a dramatic impact on arms control. Under SALT II, any launcher which has been tested or developed for a MIRV missile means that all such launchers are considered MIRVED.

Using IISS data, the Soviets would now appear to have 1,700 MIRV missile launchers. This means that they would be some 500 in excess of the SALT II limits if the SS-N-6 and SS-N-8 are in fact MIRVED. Naturally there will be those who can argue that the MIRVing of these two missiles is debatable.

Less debatable is the overall tabulation of strategic nuclear delivery vehicles. According to the *Military Balance*, the Soviets now have some 2,498 total vehicles which are accountable under SALT II. According to that Treaty, which has not been ratified, the USSR was to have reduced its total to 2,250 by the end of 1981. It is obvious that they have not and that the assertion of this noncompliance made by former President Jimmy Carter in his book *Keeping Faith* is correct.

It is difficult to ascertain how much credibility to place in the *Military Balance*. For example, the B-1A aircraft is SALT II accountable yet is not listed in IISS data for the United States. *Jane's Fighting Ships* and *Combat Fleets of the World* both credit the USSR with GOLF IV and V submarines, whose launchers would be SALT I and II accountable, yet these submarines and their launchers do not appear in the *Military Balance*.