

1972

## Problems of Modern Strategy

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### Recommended Citation

Byrne, Charles A. and Strategic Studies, The Institute for (1972) "Problems of Modern Strategy," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 25 : No. 4 , Article 13.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol25/iss4/13>

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The Institute for Strategic Studies. *Problems of Modern Strategy*, Foreword by Alastair Buchan. Studies in International Security: 14. New York: Praeger, 1970, 219p.

The Institute for Strategic Studies was founded in London in 1958 to provide an international forum for thinkers and authors in the field of strategic studies. *Problems of Modern Strategy* is a collection of nine essays written as papers for the Institute's 1968 annual conference and revised as a result of the discussions held.\* The essayists were set the task, each in his area of specialization, of analyzing the development of strategic ideas over the past 15 to 20 years. The book thus constitutes something of a retrospective state-of-the-art show for strategic studies but is much more than a contribution to the history of strategy. The essayists identify the problems confronting today's theorists and practitioners, and several of them suggest possible paths toward their solution.

It is impressive to read in Alastair Buchan's foreword that the mold of traditional strategic thinking shaped by writers such as Clausewitz, Mahan, and Douhet was broken in the 15 to 20 years leading to 1968. Its breaking was occasioned by the development of nuclear weaponry in a time when the ideological conflict between the Great Powers of the world was inhibiting their communication with each other, empires were throwing off or losing their colonies, and strategies of revolutionary warfare were succeeding. It was a time to intensify and expand the study of strategy and to apply hitherto unused disciplines in the effort. Scholars throughout the world responded and produced a virtual renaissance in strate-

gic thinking. The nine essays in this book are an appraisal of the effort.

Raymond Aron, the French member, in "The Evolution of Modern Strategic Thought," leads off with the thesis

... that the partial neutralization of nuclear arms, and the provisional absence of armed conflict between the nuclear states serve to focus our attention once more on traditional problems of a strict military nature, while strategic thought, on the other hand, extends its scope to include all the various permutations of relations between states in peace or war.

He returns again and again to the theme that the entity of strategic thought embraces far more than those elements of a situation which can be managed by systematic analysis of physical or economic aspects. Aron categorically asserts that "strategic thought is never separate from political thought." And: "At the highest level, strategy is virtually identical with the conduct of a state's external affairs." He relegates the systems analysts' scientific attempts to quantify decisions to a niche in history when he asserts that, after theory had illuminated the implications of nuclear weapons, strategic thought seems to have "finished absorbing innovation" and to have returned to the traditional historical analysis approach only partly modified by the contributions of the analysts.

In "The Classical Strategists," Michael Howard surveys the strategic problems, controversies, domestic and international, and the work of the theorists who aided the Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations in the development of massive retaliation concepts, in NATO defense policies, and in their transition to flexible response. Howard outlines the French contributions to modern strategy, their doctrines of nuclear multipolarity, revolutionary war, and indirect strategy. Questioning the assumptions underlying

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\*For an excellent review from a different perspective see Noel F. Parrish, "The Civilian Analysts, in Their Pride and Their Fall," *Air University Review*, July-August 1971, p. 3-13.

Andre Beaufre's concept of indirect strategy, he argues "that it is not simply a theory of strategy but also a theory of international relations." Yet in criticizing Beaufre, Howard seems to support him, for he himself goes on to a discussion of strategy's dependency on technological competence when attempting to solve problems in deterrence and on political, economic, and sociological competence when addressing limited war, revolutionary war, and indirect strategy. "Increasingly the fields overlap," he says, and questions at the end whether "classical strategy," as a self-sufficient study, has no longer a valid claim to exist.

Kenneth Boulding's "Social Systems Analysis and the Study of International Conflict" attacks the "national security" school of strategic thought represented by the concepts discussed in the two preceding essays. Boulding explains the two major branches of sociology's attack on strategy: the social systems approach and the peace research approach. The social systems advocates accuse the international nation-state system of epistemological blindness, lack of ability for radical self-criticism, and insistence on the application of sterile literary, philosophical, and historical research methods to the problem of war. The peace researchers see the institution of war as the prime enemy. "The major human conflict is seen as between the world war industry and the civilian population . . . rather than between national states." Boulding concludes that since the world population has achieved social self-consciousness, and is learning how to refuse the dictates of "history," we face "a crisis and a revolution of an intensity with which traditional studies are quite unable to cope." He says, "The social systems approach may not be able to cope with it either, but at least it seems to have a better chance."

"The Reappraisal of Limited War," Robert Osgood's essay, examines the

efforts since the advent of nuclear weapons to "bring force under control as a rational instrument of policy." Osgood regards America's experiences in Korea and Vietnam and the Russians' buildup of limited war capabilities as constraints on future American intervention in local wars. While limited war theory is well developed, little of it has been tested and none conclusively; nor will we see the comprehensive perfection of limited war theory and practice. Osgood credits both the limited war strategists and the nuclear age itself with having instilled a respect for "the deliberate control and limitation of warfare." "That respect," he says at the very end, "is a more significant and enduring achievement of limited-war strategists than any of their strategies."

"The Ethical Problem of Modern Strategy," according to Carl Friedrich Freiherr von Weizsaecker, stems from the fear of nuclear weapons effects which has driven us to elaborate lesser means of resolving conflicts by force. We should, instead, be seeking ways to change the assumedly implacable wills driving the conflicts, by means other than force. Von Weizsaecker acknowledges the present need to preserve the balance of terror and pays great respect to the strategists and statesmen who have managed to do it. Somehow we "have to learn not to impose our will, but to change our will," and he apologizes for not providing the formula. However, having been asked to write the essay, his position is that debating war means instead of political ends amounts to nothing more than a casuistic second-best approach to world problems which will be self-destructive in the long run.

"Arms Control; a Stocktaking and Prospectus" is Hedley Bull's criticism of the assumptions underlying arms control. While he credits the "new thinking" of 1960 with having "brought arms control out of the realms of cynical propaganda and scholastic irrelevance

and into that of serious international politics," Bull argues that the results so far are disappointing. Like von Weizsaecker, Bull questions the premise that the balance of terror is the guiding principle of international security and that the preservation of that balance is the chief aim of arms control efforts.

Bernard Brodie on "Technology, Politics, and Strategy" asserts that technology and systems analysis have been overrated because they neglect political considerations and fall short as a substitute for "the name of the game which is strategy."\* The Swiss contributor, Urs Schwarz, produced in his "Great Power Intervention in the Modern World" a conclusion that Great Powers can no longer intervene successfully in the affairs of smaller nations. His arguments complement Boulding's social systems arguments and to von Weizsaecker's ethical logic.

In the "Strategic Uses of Revolutionary War," Brian Crozier writes that "it is impossible to say, with sweeping finality, either that revolutionary war is invincible or that the techniques of counterinsurgency have been mastered once and for all." The evidence indicates that revolutionary wars will continue to be a problem, especially if South Vietnam goes under.

Some of the essayists argue among themselves. Does Aron believe, for example, that the mold of traditional strategic thought has been broken as Buchan asserts in his foreword? Are new

approaches to strategy at hand? Robert Osgood senses the end of an era in military affairs but confesses to having little idea of what lies ahead. He places strategic imagination on "a rather flat plateau." Aron believes that strategic thought is no longer absorbing innovation and is reverting to earlier methods. Schwarz dismisses Great Powers intervention as a no longer useful concept, and Michael Howard questions the assumptions of Beaufre's indirect strategy, but Crozier leaves both revolutionary warfare and counterinsurgency open to further development. Kenneth Boulding, with support from von Weizsaecker and Schwarz, argues that the social systems school offers better paths toward conflict resolution than the discredited route traveled by the national security strategists. Aron and Michael Howard seem to agree that strategy as a generic concept has expanded to embrace new disciplines. Strategy, in its new form, has considerable influence on international politics.

The lasting impression is the agreement among the essayists that strategy is an art rather than a science. The strategist is an artist, and his aim today is world stability. He strives to achieve structure, harmony, truth, and universality and is frustrated by conflicts, contradictions, and failures. Yet, the few successes give hope for the future. Therefore, one is inclined to disagree with Michael Howard when he cites Voltaire's description of strategy as "murderous and conjectural." The ancient art is, perhaps, closer to Bach and his *Well Tempered Clavichord* than that.

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\*For new views on this subject see Stephan T. Possony and J.E. Pournelle, *The Strategy of Technology, Winning the Decisive War*, (Cambridge, Mass.: University Press Dunellen, 1970), 189p.