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Courtesy of Valerie Gray

COMMENTARY

STRATEGY'S EVANGELIST

Lawrence Freedman

I was not an exact contemporary of Colin Gray and our careers were not quite parallel, yet it was pretty close on both counts. He was five years older, but we were both undergraduates at Manchester University and did doctorates at Oxford. He began his career working on arms races and nuclear strategy but then branched out to write much more broadly on strategy, and so did I. We overlapped very briefly at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in the autumn of 1975 until he had a spectacular falling-out with the director, Christoph Bertram, over, I believe, some biting criticism Colin had written of U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's readiness to do deals with the Soviet Union. Colin then went off to work with Herman Kahn and Donald Brennan at the Hudson Institute before setting up the National Institute for Public Policy with Keith Payne. For the next few years I was the dove on arms control and Colin was the hawk, and so began a relationship that lasted until his death.

We regularly sparred, often disagreed, but treated each other with mutual respect. One of the most refreshing things about Colin was that disagreement was never complete. Even if you were wrongheaded on one issue it was perfectly possible that you had something worthwhile to say on another. Thus his tough-minded realism was far removed from the more optimistic ideas of Ken Booth, yet Colin regularly cited Ken's book on ethnocentrism in strategy, and Ken was

an influence on the way Colin thought about the impact of culture on strategy.¹ Another refreshing aspect of any engagement with Colin was that the dialogue was never concluded. He was out to persuade, but he also could be persuaded. This was as true in his writing as in conversation; indeed,

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his books were almost a form of conversation. I realized to my embarrassment when preparing this essay that he had sent me copies of most of his main works with a charming personal note, and I really had not reciprocated. In the note for *The Strategy Bridge* he wrote that he feared he “may have achieved the deserved fate of Icarus.” But he did not fall from the sky with melting wings; instead, this book—perhaps more than any other—cemented his reputation as one of the most profound and stimulating strategic thinkers of this century.

In each book—and there were many—the reader was joining Colin on a journey. As each volume concluded there was little more than a pause before he was off again. He never seemed truly confident that he had reached his destination, which is perhaps why he returned regularly to the same themes, looking for a new and better way to convey his distinctive views. His arguments were refreshed each time. He anticipated likely objections, acknowledging their potential force before explaining why they were not conclusive, offering a choice historical example, quoting approvingly from a helpful authority, or adding a neat aphorism. And then the argument would continue unabated in long footnotes, in which more examples and quotes could be found. In the next book the argument would be refined and at times amended, with different examples and many new insights. This was the subject he never could let go and to which he kept returning. He opened the preface of *Strategy Bridge* by reporting that every decade he tried to write a “fairly bold book.”² This one, published in 2010, was the third in the series after *War, Peace, and Victory* in 1990 and *Modern Strategy* in 1999.³ In the following years he published new books, working over the same themes, on an extraordinarily regular basis, until his last book, *Theory of Strategy*, was published in 2018.⁴

Colin's discursive and often dense style meant that he never could be accused of oversimplification. “Poetry, this is not,” he wrote in his preface to *Strategy Bridge*. You had to read carefully, but if you did there always would be pleasant discoveries, whether snippets of unexpected history, telling quotes, or satisfying conjunctions of ideas. Behind everything he wrote was an extraordinary level of erudition. Colin could discuss, with equal facility, centuries of military history, the nuances of contemporary security debates, and the character of modern weaponry. Although he had important things to say about nuclear arms control, geopolitics, and the role of navies, underlying everything was his view of the importance of strategy.

Colin's writings were prescriptive. His aim was not simply to explain historical events or explore recurring features of international affairs but to improve the practice of strategy. He turned naturally to history as the master discipline for strategy and was wary about the value of quantitative social science.⁵ Yet he knew his way around the social sciences and he engaged directly when it came, for example, to the question of the impact of culture on strategic practice.⁶ At the

same time he was not a historian. Unlike many of the great strategists he admired, including Clausewitz, he did not immerse himself in the detail of particular campaigns to hone his theories through case studies. He was not trying to sort out the past but the present. He studied strategy, and strategic issues, to produce better policy. He acknowledged that he was not averse to “lobbying for programs in which I believe or writing the occasional polemic to make a case that I believe in,” but in his most important works he insisted that his aim was to understand what strategy was about rather than to make a case for specific strategies and their associated budgets.⁷ He did not wish to be described as an advocate, because he was not making his case to meet the demands of a particular brief. But he nonetheless was something of an evangelist on behalf of strategy, pointing to the calamities that had befallen those who had failed to grasp the essentials of sound strategic thinking and the achievements of those who had paid attention. His writings on strategy were intended not only to elucidate the concept but to get people in responsible positions to think in ways that would produce better strategies. “Strategists cannot be trained,” he observed, “but they can be educated.”⁸

Colin’s starting point was that the phenomena he was addressing were timeless. The context changed because of political events, new technologies, or even tactical fashions, but at the heart of any discussion of strategy were military power and the purposes for which it could be used. “Strategy is ever varying in character, but not in its nature, which is unchanging.”⁹ This was certainly true at one level, since conflict is a constant, as is force as the ultimate means by which conflicts are resolved. At any stage in history commanders seeking to use force effectively to get the desired result might be confronted with sets of issues that their predecessors or successors could recognize easily. They might be considering the virtues of a frontal assault versus trying to catch the enemy by surprise or laying siege. They would be taking into account climate and terrain; looking to the balance of forces, both quantitatively and qualitatively; wondering whether innovations in weapons and tactics might make a difference; remaining conscious of intangibles such as the state of morale; and so on.

But strategy also has changed a lot. It has become increasingly rare for the same person to set both political objectives and military means, and those at the top are likely to be positioned well away from the front. They rely on large staffs and elaborate chains of command even to manage quite routine military activities. The means at their disposal are many and varied and, for a number of powers, now include nuclear weapons. Those weapons’ huge destructive potential has reduced dramatically the attraction of war as an instrument of policy and has led to a search for ways of achieving political objectives short of war.¹⁰ Early in his career Colin had thought that nuclear weapons did not challenge traditional concepts of strategy, but by the end of his life he was not so sure.¹¹

The challenge for Colin was to develop a unified theory of strategy that could be timeless in its application yet take account of all these changes. His approach followed naturally from the presumption of timelessness and was based on the conviction that it was hard to improve on the thoughts of those who first had the chance to reflect on military power. In his *Fighting Talk* he asserted provocatively that “If Thucydides, Sun-tzu, and Clausewitz Did Not Say It, It Probably Is Not Worth Saying.” He followed this up with the assertion that “[t]here are no new ideas in strategy. Instead there is a stock of concepts of great antiquity, whose exact provenance is unknown and unknowable.”¹² Those theorists in each generation who try to update the classics (I presume he included himself) are “invariably disappointing.” By the time of *Strategy Bridge* he was slightly more cautious in his claims, at that point listing ten books in the canon (the contemporary additions were all Western), now classed according to merit (Clausewitz was in a class by himself).¹³

It is possible to recognize that these works constitute a sort of canon—and all do repay careful reading—while still finding the sentiment disturbing. The view that there is nothing new under the sun was popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when officers were obliged to read the classics of antiquity such as Polybius, Frontinus, and Vegetius. In the nineteenth century it was a common view, encouraged by Antoine-Henri, Baron de Jomini, that strategic principles were unchanging. Therefore, to understand strategy it was mainly necessary to study the campaigns of the great generals.¹⁴ Once this view became part of military education the effect was to encourage a stultifying orthodoxy. Only as new wars came along that did not fit the models of the past—in particular, that were not resolved through decisive battles—did strategic thought begin to open up to other possibilities. Even when this happened it was possible to scour the canon to legitimize an otherwise heretical new thought, just as communists would do with Marx, Engels, and Lenin, to find a sentence or two to justify a change in the party line.

As with the assertion on timelessness, there is a point to be made about the persistence of core ideas, but after a point it becomes a bit of a game, of the same sort that philosophers can play with Plato and Aristotle. If reversion to the classics becomes a habit, then at least it is necessary to understand the intellectual life around these key thinkers. To understand Clausewitz, for example, is it also necessary to understand Hegel? These were men of their time, and times do change. The intellectual influences on contemporary strategic thought—whether nuclear physics or cognitive psychology, the claims of totalitarians or hostility to empires—produce different ideas. That is what makes the study of strategic thought productive.

Colin even considered whether it was possible to rely solely on Clausewitz. The Prussian was the one who best had grasped the essentials of modern warfare and who still provided the most valuable framework through which thoughts on

war could be organized. “Whether I have been studying nuclear targeting, the leverage of seapower, or the strategic utility of special operations,” Colin wrote, “Clausewitz’s *On War* has been my constant companion and by far the most heavily used book in my library.”¹⁵ He understood that the great man was not always easy to follow and did not get everything right (for example, regarding the importance of intelligence), but Colin placed himself firmly within a Clausewitzian tradition of strategic inquiry.

This meant, above all, that war without policy was mindless violence. The vital role of strategy was to show how military means could serve political ends. The challenge of strategy was that this was difficult. Colin discussed many different definitions in his publications, tending to dismiss those that were too long-winded or failed to make the link with policy (for example, Martin van Creveld’s “the method by which . . . armed forces wage war”).¹⁶ He liked Wylie’s definition of *strategy* as a “plan of action designed to achieve some end; a purpose together with a system of measures for its accomplishment.”¹⁷ But he kept coming back to Clausewitz’s (“the use of engagements for the objective of war”) because it had the virtue not only of concision but of providing a sharp distinction from *tactics* (“the use of armed forces in the engagement”).¹⁸ He did not accept that the definition was too narrowly operational, although he acknowledged that it might be seen that way. He also broadened the scope much more when he got to *grand strategy*, in which he included all the potential instruments of power.

In the opening to *Modern Strategy* Colin introduced *strategy* as “the bridge that relates military power to political purpose.”¹⁹ Here he adopted the strong metaphor with which he is now so closely associated. By the time he got to putting it in the title, with *The Strategy Bridge*, this provided an overall theme. So he returned to the issue of definitions. He acknowledged that over the years he had favored a number of them, although each one risked being too exclusive (as with Clausewitz) or too inclusive (so that any focus was lost). He doubted a perfect definition could be found; *strategy* was “an idea, a function, a behaviour that almost begs to be abused as a consequence of misapprehension.”²⁰ He settled on the following: “The direction and use made of means by chosen ways in order to achieve desired ends.” This had the advantage of fitting in with the ends, ways, and means formulation that the U.S. and U.K. armed forces favored.²¹

By his final book, Colin was convinced that this was by far the best formula and was surprised that he had not appreciated it earlier. “While I have long suspected that the theory of strategy was obedient to no limits traceable either to history or geography,” he remarked, “the true ubiquity, universality, and indeed eternity—for want of a better concept—of strategy did not dawn on me for many years.” Now, after fifty years, he was convinced that “there was no alternative framework for the theory of strategy.” Ends, means, and ways would

be “functioning regardless of our skill.” It was a framework that could “apply in all times and in all geographies. Shifts in technology, geographical context, and ideational preferences should not trouble it all.” However, while the framework could help order thoughts, it could not generate the actual thoughts.²²

More important than a precise definition was that strategy was part of a wider and coherent conceptual framework, with policy as the source of political objectives and tactics as actual military behavior. The issue for Colin in his efforts to build a unified theory was how to capture the holistic character of strategy, bringing together activities that otherwise might be treated as autonomous realms. Policy, strategy, and tactics had to be seen as interdependent—they all needed each other. Tactics without strategy could achieve nothing, yet without the available means some objectives never could be achieved. The problem of the need to change objectives if they were beyond reach was not quite captured in his own definition, probably because he wished to stress the hierarchy that began with policy and then descended down to tactics.²³ This hierarchy led to an ideal type describing how all the different levels of strategy should come together. “I insist that a vision of a politically desirable condition should inspire policy choices which should be supported by a strategy which makes proper use of an operational competence founded upon tactical excellence.”²⁴

The problem was that it was unusual for this ideal to be reached. At each level, guidance, competence, and excellence might be lacking. The point about a holistic approach, however, was that it “captures or corrals the whole; it does not assume a perfect coordination of the whole.” Perfect coordination simply might be impossible for reasons beyond the control of the strategist, and even when attainable it still would be extremely hard to achieve. The whole point about strategy was that it involved opponents who also would be acting strategically; as he put it in another of his maxims, “the enemy has a vote.”

The restlessness in Colin’s investigations into strategy flowed from this determination to develop a holistic approach, to cover what T. E. Lawrence had called the “whole house.”²⁵ The framework captured the *timelessness*, but something was needed to take account of the *timely*. What did strategists need to consider to make the right policy choices? He took as a starting point “The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy,” Michael Howard’s 1979 essay on the dimensions of strategy—except that, in contrast to Howard’s four dimensions, Colin came up with seventeen.²⁶ These were as follows: people, society, culture, politics, ethics, economics and logistics, organization, administration, information and intelligence, strategic theory and doctrine, technology, operations, command, geography, friction/chance/uncertainty, adversary, and time. Proper strategy required that these be considered holistically—that is, both individually and in context with the others. They were grouped together under three broad headings: “People

and Politics,” then “Preparation for War,” and “War Proper.”²⁷ The dimensions as an organizing device were not carried forward into *Strategy Bridge*, although in an appendix they could be found as “21 Dicta of Strategy,” backed up by “14 Skeleton Keys of Theory.” Before the dimensions there had been the “40 Maxims” and in *Theory of Strategy* there were “23 Principles.” If these lists were assumed to be part of Colin’s core theory, then all this was confusing. One day a graduate student might try to chart the inclusions and exclusions and identify the common themes, but a better explanation for the varying lists is that at any particular time they simply helped Colin organize his thoughts.²⁸

This constant striving to improve and develop his theories reflected a problem he had set for himself at the start of his career that never could be solved fully. Colin’s aim was to produce a theory of strategy that would result in better strategy. It thus tended toward the development of an ideal type of strategist who might be more capable of producing an ideal type of strategy. Colin wanted to push up the standard, and in the high-stakes situations that truly interested him—when matters of war and peace were being decided—we should expect the appropriate level of professionalism from those making policy and those advising them. Inevitably, as he fully recognized, practice would fall short of the ideal type. The question he continued to pose was what difference good theory and a good theorist could make to the practice.

When preparing this piece, I found a critique I wrote in 1983 of two of Colin’s early books on strategy.²⁹ His authorial voice already was well established. I noted his “iconoclasm, refusal to bow to the conventional wisdom, willingness to ask awkward questions and to offer uncompromising and sometimes outrageous answers” and remarked on his “restless pen, which can rarely resist a tangent and happily allows substantial insights to get lost in asides.” The basic issue behind my review, however, concerned the role of the strategic theorist. Colin then was working in a think tank in the United States, and he labeled himself as a “civilian defense professional.” He described with admirable candor how this role could push the scholar (and he was adamant that it was vital to stay in touch with the world of scholarship) into the cut and thrust of political debate. Although governments had managed perfectly well without civilian strategists for centuries, the Cold War had created a novel situation, especially with regard to nuclear weapons. Although highly critical of the actual performance of the strategic studies community—not least in its uncritical support of arms control but also in its hubristic embrace of doubtful theories of counterinsurgency in Vietnam—he believed that it could and must do better.³⁰ Out of these pages a code of conduct emerged: stay close to empirical material; keep in touch with technology, but never neglect the study of history or fail to recognize the importance of political and cultural factors; remember to consider how military forces might be operated

in wartime, as well as how they look in peacetime; and keep the first-order question of the role of military power in international affairs to the fore.³¹

This was a code that Colin followed throughout his life. In my review I noted that this was not necessarily a way to attract the attention or approval of policy makers. Indeed, at issue was how the specialist, focused on a specific issue, could address the generalist, distracted by many issues. I suggested that it was as useful to contribute to policy debate as to get closeted with officialdom. In addition, Colin had written that “the strategist is licensed to analyze and often to propose, not to dispose.”³² This seemed to me to get it the wrong way round. To be sure, those with the best methodologies and conceptual grasp and the cleverest proposals should be listened to and could influence policy, but in the end the only true strategists were those who had to take responsibility for the consequences of their decisions, measured in lives, values, and even the fate of whole societies.

In retrospect, part of my critique was quite unfair. Colin never shirked his role as an active debater, let alone as an educator, and contributed throughout his career to public discourse, including by being unafraid to take positions that challenged the mainstream. With regard to the second point, I think there remained a tension. It may be that in the 1980s he hoped that governments might consult strategists in the same way they did economists, allowing them to bring a real expertise to bear that policy makers would welcome and embrace. He would not have been alone in that view. At the very least, the academic strategist could help the policy maker think his way through the perplexing issues of national security. Especially in the nuclear age, a political leader not well versed in the arcana of weapons systems and deterrence theory might well rely on such an informed civilian as much as on a general.

Colin opened one of his last books with the following statement: “I am a strategist. For fifty years I have spoken, written, and sought to advise governments about strategy.”³³ It is hard to begrudge him the title, yet how much could a theorist and adviser be an actual strategist? In French there is a distinction between the label *stratégiste* for the nonpractitioner and *stratège* for the practitioner.³⁴ My view—in that review, and still today—was and remains that the only true strategists are those with executive responsibility—the *stratège*. I think that Colin basically agreed. In *Strategy Bridge* and elsewhere, he highlighted “executive strategists” as the key actors, as opposed to the adviser or educator, and stressed the importance of command as the means by which they executed strategy.

In this book Colin’s concluding chapter provides an excellent, straightforward description of what executive strategy in practice is all about. The strategist seeks control over the course of events, and that requires thinking about causation and consequences. This is difficult. The effort to achieve strategic effects can be frustrated not only by the enemy but by dysfunctional policy-making processes. It is

necessary to “influence enemies, allies, and neutrals, which means minds and actions, foreign and domestic.” So the “would-be controller of history is ever locked into a struggle against severe odds.” By way of consolation, the need is to be “good enough,” for the challenge is to be better than the strategist on the other side. Of course, it is possible that the strategist will fail, but some failures are worse than others, and at least good strategy in bad conditions will avoid the worst consequences. In this chapter the strategic theorist appears as one engaged in educating “executive strategists that they are mentally equipped to tackle their historically unique problems as well as they can be enabled.”³⁵

The difficulty here was that the ideal-type strategist that emerged from Colin’s many books was much more likely to be *stratégiste*, with the time for proper study and contemplation, than *stratège*, rushed and distracted while making the executive decisions. The final chapter of *Strategy Bridge* was subtitled the “Strategist as Hero.” Colin explained: “The subject truly is challenging and the strategist’s role, properly understood, should be recognized as heroic. To be performed well, its multiple demands require extraordinary natural gifts, advantages that need nurturing by education and experience.”³⁶

The strategist had to be properly educated into this role. “Only the educated strategist can be trusted to develop the multilevel body of doctrine that must serve to staple together synergistically efforts in performance at every level of warfare.” In *Modern Strategy* he had described a strategist as someone rather special, with an “exceedingly demanding” job description, able to see the “big picture” and familiar with all of war’s dimensions.³⁷

It seemed to me that Colin had an overexalted view of the strategist as a rather special person, able to appreciate sets of complex interdependencies and to grasp the numerous factors at play in a conflict so as to identify where effort could be applied most profitably. In practice they would do the best they could, but however many lectures they had attended or books they had read or whatever the quality of the advisers at hand, they would not be able to organize their thoughts and action in ways close to those of the ideal strategist Colin identified. In my own book on strategy, which came out in 2013, I included a chapter entitled “The Myth of the Master Strategist.” My main target in this was not so much Colin as Harry Yarger, who had picked up on the seventeen dimensions and taken them a stage further, by describing strategic thinking as being “about thoroughness and holistic thinking.” It required a “comprehensive knowledge of what else is happening within the strategic environment and the potential first-, second-, and third-order effects of its own choices on the efforts of those above, below, and on the strategist’s own level.” Yarger wanted the strategist to be a student of the present who must be aware of the past, sensitive to the possibilities of the future, conscious of the danger of bias, alert to ambiguity, alive to chaos, ready

to think through the consequences of alternative courses of action, and then able to articulate all this with sufficient precision for those who must execute its prescriptions.³⁸ Even Colin had worried that this “appeared to encourage, even demand, an impossibility.”³⁹ But I included him in the end as subscribing to this myth of a master strategist.

It is fair to say that Colin took exception to this characterization. In his review of my book, which actually was quite generous, he argued that the chapter should have been retitled “The Myth of the Myth of the Master Strategist.” His objection was that master strategists were rare but feasible. “If the idea is understood sensibly as requiring demonstrated good enough mastery on the dimensions of strategy that are most essential to the context of time and place, my argument is readily supportable.”⁴⁰ The examples he gave from the Second World War—Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding and Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke—to some extent reinforced my point, because my concern was the belief that the master strategist was set to operate within the military sphere; whereas, as far as I was concerned, “[t]he only people who could be master strategists were political leaders, because they were the ones who had to cope with the immediate and often competing demands of disparate actors, diplomats as well as generals, ministers along with technical experts, close allies and possible supporters.”⁴¹ I was not arguing that masterful strategists at times did not come up with exceptional strategies that achieved their objectives, but instead (as I explained in an exchange with Daniel Steed) that the truly masterful strategic person required exceptionally demanding qualities, which might be no more than good judgment, and then needed appropriate circumstances before those qualities could come into play, and that these circumstances would pass. “Consistently high strategic performance is extremely hard. Even those who perform well for a while rarely sustain their performance over time. Great strategists emerge in relationship to great situations.”⁴²

I wish I had had a proper conversation with Colin about this. My view of where a master strategist might be found—as he would put it, at the level of policy—was actually close to his own view of strategy’s proper hierarchy. My characterization of his views risked caricature. Yet there was a real difference between us. Colin regretted the migration of strategy as a concept from the military sphere into many others, including business, whereas I found this intriguing, so I broadened my studies accordingly. When it came to the military sphere, we agreed on the importance of strategies; on the value of concepts in making sense of them; and that, in essence, it was all about the relationship between military means and political ends. My approach was more skeptical. An ideal strategist working with an ideal strategic theory, founded on the classics of the field, was going to be a very rare beast who as likely as not would struggle with forms of conflict other than major war, for which the theories were not necessarily appropriate. I could see

how intuition as much as educated deliberation (for which there may not be time) still could produce good results. I took it for granted that strategies were going to be suboptimal, produced by fallible people relying on imperfect organization and inadequate information.

And yet, what would we have done without Colin telling us what good strategic theory and practice should look like? The suboptimal offended Colin. He was an evangelist for strategy, demanding that people take the subject seriously, and encouraging those professionally engaged with war and conflict to join him in his quest to improve both our understanding of what it entailed and strategic performance in practice. He was well aware that a life spent worrying about how wars should be deterred, fought, and concluded might be seen as representing an odd career choice. We should be grateful that it is the one he took.

NOTES

1. Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (London: Croom Helm, 1979).
2. Colin S. Gray, *The Strategy Bridge: Theory for Practice* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010).
3. Colin S. Gray, *War, Peace, and Victory: Strategy and Statecraft for the Next Century* (New York: Touchstone, 1990); Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999).
4. Colin S. Gray, *Perspectives on Strategy* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013); Colin S. Gray, *Strategy and Defence Planning: Meeting the Challenge of Uncertainty* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014); Colin S. Gray, *The Future of Strategy* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity, 2015); Colin S. Gray, *Strategy and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2016); Colin S. Gray, *Theory of Strategy* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford Univ. Press, 2018). There had been a number of others before: Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1996); Colin S. Gray, *War, Peace and International Relations: An Introduction to Strategic History* (London: Routledge, 2007); Colin S. Gray, *Fighting Talk: Forty Maxims on War, Peace, and Strategy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007). All this was in addition to the textbook he coedited: John Baylis, James Wirtz, Eliot Cohen, and Colin S. Gray, *Strategy in the Contemporary World* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002); the sixth edition appeared in 2019, not long before his death.
5. Gray, *Modern Strategy*, p. 334.
6. See Jeannie L. Johnson, "Strategic Culture in the Service of Strategy: The Founding Paradigm of Colin S. Gray," *Texas National Security Review* 3, no. 3 (Summer 2020).
7. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*, p. xvi.
8. Gray, *Strategy and Politics*, p. 59.
9. Gray, *Modern Strategy*, p. 1.
10. Thomas G. Mahnken and A. Bradley Potter, "The Translator in Chief: Colin S. Gray's Approach to Strategy & War," *Texas National Security Review* 3, no. 3 (Summer 2020).
11. This point is made forcefully in *Theory of Strategy*.
12. Gray, *Fighting Talk*, maxim 58. (I presume he meant "or" rather than "and"; otherwise this only works where their views overlap.)
13. Gray, *Strategy Bridge*, p. 240.
14. Lawrence Freedman, "The Meaning of Strategy, Part II: The Objectives," *Texas National Security Review* 1, no. 2 (February 2018).
15. Gray, *Modern Strategy*, p. xi.
16. Martin van Creveld, *Nuclear Proliferation and the Future of Conflict* (New York: Free Press, 1993), p. 1.
17. J. C. Wylie, *Military Strategy: A General Theory of Power Control*, ed. John B. Hattendorf (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1989), p.

14. Colin did much to encourage a revival of interest in Wylie's writing. He also has a good word for Liddell Hart's "the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfil the ends of policy" and Beaufre's "the art of the dialectic of opposing wills to resolve their dispute." Basil Liddell Hart, *Strategy: The Indirect Approach* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), p. 335; André Beaufre, *An Introduction to Strategy: With Particular Reference to Problems of Defense, Politics, Economics, and Diplomacy in the Nuclear Age* (New York: Praeger, 1965), p. 22. Colin was very clear that he disliked the definition I came up with: "Strategy is the central political art. It is about getting more out of a situation than the starting balance of power would suggest. It is the art of creating power." Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013), p. xii. In *The Future of Strategy* he described this as "not so much wrong as inappropriate and overloaded with inference." His view had softened a bit by the time of *Strategy and Politics*; the definition now was described as "clever, often true, but it is perilously obscure, creating more difficulties than resolved and should be rejected, albeit with regret."
18. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1989).
19. Gray, *Modern Strategy*, p. 17.
20. Gray, *Strategy Bridge*, p. 17.
21. The idea of *strategy* as being "concerned with ways to employ means to achieve ends" comes from Arthur F. Lykke Jr., "Toward an Understanding of Military Strategy," in *Military Strategy: Theory and Application*, ed. Arthur F. Lykke Jr. (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1989), pp. 3–8.
22. Gray, *Theory of Strategy*, pp. 4–5. He added *assumptions* to the ends, ways, and means framework.
23. In my view quite properly, he was wary about the inclination in many Western militaries to have a separate operational level. Gray, *Strategy Bridge*, pp. 18–19.
24. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*, p. 7.
25. T. E. Lawrence, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph* (New York: Anchor Books, 1991), p. 191.
26. Michael Howard, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy," *Foreign Affairs* 57, no. 5 (Summer 1979), pp. 975–86; Gray, *Perspectives on Strategy*, pp. 191–205.
27. Gray, *Modern Strategy*, pp. 23–43.
28. Frank Hoffman notes that while some found this "pendant for creating enumerated lists distracting," many others found it "instructive." Frank Hoffman, "Distilling the Essence of Strategy," *Texas National Security Review* 3, no. 3 (Summer 2020).
29. The books were *Strategic Studies and Public Policy: The American Experience* (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1982) and *Strategic Studies: A Critical Assessment* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1982). My review appeared as Lawrence Freedman, "The Strategist's Vocation," *Survival* 25, no. 4 (1983), pp. 170–74.
30. The first piece of Colin's I read was his scathing and compelling critique of the theories that had shaped U.S. strategy in Vietnam. Colin S. Gray, "What RAND Hath Wrought," *Foreign Policy*, no. 4 (Autumn 1971), pp. 111–29. I suspected him to be a man of the left.
31. Freedman, "The Strategist's Vocation," p. 172.
32. Gray, *Strategic Studies*, p. 72.
33. Gray, *The Future of Strategy*.
34. I am grateful to Beatrice Heuser for reminding me of this distinction.
35. Gray, *Strategy Bridge*, p. 239.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 238.
37. Gray, *Modern Strategy*, p. 49.
38. Harry Yarger, *Strategic Theory for the 21st Century: The Little Book on Big Strategy* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2006), pp. 36, 66, 73–75.
39. Gray, *Strategy Bridge*, p. 23.
40. Colin Gray, review of *Strategy: A History*, by Lawrence Freedman, *International Affairs* 90, no. 2 (March 2014), pp. 446–48.
41. Freedman, *Strategy: A History*, p. 244.
42. See the exchange between Daniel Steed and me: Daniel Steed, "Finding Strategic Man," *War on the Rocks* (blog), 7 October 2014, warontherocks.com/, and Lawrence Freedman, "The Master Strategist Is Still a Myth," *War on the Rocks* (blog), 14 October 2014, warontherocks.com/.