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Introduction

PETER PARET

CARL VON CLAUSEWITZ defined strategy as the use of combat, or the threat of combat, for the purpose of the war in which it takes place. This formulation, which a modern historian has characterized as both revolutionary and defiantly simplistic, can be amended or expanded without difficulty.[1] Clausewitz himself, setting no great store in absolute definitions, varied the meaning of strategy according to the matter at hand. Strategy is the use of armed force to achieve the military objectives and, by extension, the political purpose of the war. To those engaged in the direction and conduct of war, strategy has often appeared more simply, in Moltke's phrase, as a system of expedients. But strategy is also based on, and may include, the development, intellectual mastery, and utilization of all of the state's resources for the purpose of implementing its policy in war. It is in both of these senses—the narrower, operational meaning, and its broadly inclusive implications—that the term is used in this volume.

Strategic thought is inevitably highly pragmatic. It is dependent on the realities of geography, society, economics, and politics, as well as on other, often fleeting factors that give rise to the issues and conflicts war is meant to resolve. The historian of strategy cannot ignore these forces. He must analyze the varied context of strategy, and the manner in which context and ideas act on each other, while he traces the development from idea to doctrine to implementation, a progression that in turn will give rise to further ideas. The history of strategic thought is a history not of pure but of applied reason. Consequently the essays in this volume go far beyond theory and touch on many of the military and nonmilitary factors that help shape war. In a variety of ways they demonstrate the close interaction of peace with war, the links between society and its military institutions and policies; but the thread of strategic thought runs through them all. The essays explore ideas of soldiers and civilians since

[1] Michael Howard, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy," *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1979); reprinted in Michael Howard, *The Causes of War*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), 101.

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the Renaissance on the most effective application of their society's military resources: how can the fighting power available, or potentially available, be used to best purpose? Having addressed these ideas, the essays turn to the further issue: what impact did strategic theory have on wars and on the periods of peace that followed?

I

The concept of this volume, and some of its substance, derive from an earlier work. In 1941 Edward Mead Earle organized a seminar on American foreign policy and security issues for faculty of the Institute for Advanced Study and Princeton University. The seminar led to a collection of twenty-one essays on "military thought from Machiavelli to Hitler," which Earle, assisted by Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert, brought out two years later under the title *Makers of Modern Strategy*. One of the striking features of this book was the confidence of its editors and authors that in the midst of a world war the *history* of strategic thought deserved serious and wide attention. In their eyes, the trials of the present did not diminish the significance of the past. On the contrary, history now seemed particularly relevant. In his introduction, Earle declared that it was the purpose of the book "to explain the manner in which the strategy of modern war developed, in the conviction that a knowledge of the best military thought will enable . . . readers to comprehend the causes of war and the fundamental principles which govern the conduct of war." He added, "we believe that eternal vigilance in such matters is the price of liberty. We believe, too, that if we are to have a durable peace we must have a clear understanding of the role which armed force plays in international society. And we have not always had this understanding."[2]

The impact on these words of the condition in which they were written is apparent. A society that until recently had paid little attention to events beyond its borders was now fighting in the greatest war of all time. A new interest in learning about war, about matters that had been ignored but that now dominated public life, even an interest in gaining some kind of historical perspective not only on the political and ideological but also on the military elements of the conflict, might be expected. And as much a part of the atmosphere in which the essays were written was the belief not alone in the need but also in the possibility of a citizenry that understood the determining realities of war. *Makers of Modern Strategy* was a scholarly contribution from the arsenal of democracy in

[2] Edward Mead Earle, "Introduction," in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, ed. Edward Mead Earle (Princeton, 1943), viii.

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the best sense of that contemporary term; a serious and fundamentally optimistic response to important intellectual needs of America at war and at the threshold of world power.

It was a further remarkable aspect of the book that its wartime origin and mission did not compromise its scholarly objectivity. Its contents varied in quality, although the general level was very high, but none of the essays was marred by chauvinism or denigrated current enemies; even essays on "Japanese Naval Strategy" and "The Nazi Concept of War" maintained an exemplarly intellectual honesty. No doubt that is one reason for the collection's continued success, decades after the war ended. The book has now provided two generations of readers with a rich fund of knowledge and insight; for some, very likely, it has been their only encounter with the sophisticated study of war, as opposed to its drum-and-bugle variety.

Makers of Modern Strategy became a modern classic. That the essays dealing with the Second World War were soon overtaken by events did not weaken its overall impact. No book of this kind can remain up to date; more important was the fact that it defined and interpreted crucial episodes in earlier phases of strategic thought, showed their connection with general history, which even many historians tend to ignore, and placed some continuing issues of war and peace in broad historical perspective. But, inevitably, over time the volume as a whole became less satisfactory. Since the defeat of Germany and Japan and the advent of the nuclear age strategic analysis has moved in new directions, while historical research has continued to change and deepen our understanding of the more remote past. A replacement for *Makers of Modern Strategy* has now become desirable.

In preparing the new volume, the editors have had no wish to discard the model of the old. Neither comprehensiveness nor interpretive uniformity is aimed for. Contributors were not asked to employ a particular theoretical scheme; each approaches the subject from his or her point of view. As in the earlier work, too, significant figures and episodes in the history of strategy have had to be excluded if the volume, already large, was to be kept to reasonable size. Nevertheless, collectively the essays—linked chronologically and often thematically—offer the reader a guide to strategic theory and to ideas on the use of organized violence from the time Machiavelli wrote his *Arte della guerra* to the present.

The new *Makers of Modern Strategy* contains eight more essays than did its predecessor. A few essays have been taken over from the earlier work; most were not.[3] Three essays of the 1943 edition remain unchanged

[3] Of the essays that were not retained, several did not fit into the new distribution of

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except for some corrections and stylistic alterations: Henry Guerlac on Vauban and the impact of science on war in the seventeenth century, Robert R. Palmer on Frederick the Great and the change from dynastic to national war, and Edward Mead Earle on the economic foundations of military power. More might certainly be said about these figures and issues, but each essay retains a strong voice in the continuing scholarly discourse. The bibliographical notes of these essays have been updated. Two further essays have been very extensively rewritten, and two others revised.[4] The remaining twenty-two essays in the present volume are new.

To conclude this brief comparison of the two books, it may be appropriate to note some of the more significant thematic differences between them. The new volume has far more to say about American strategy than did its predecessor. It also contains four essays on the period since 1945, which still lay in the future for Earle and his collaborators. More generally, the new *Makers of Modern Strategy* takes a somewhat broader view of its subject. Earle would have preferred to limit himself and his collaborators to the analysis of major theorists, although the nature of the subject compelled him to look further. Because the United States had "not produced a Clausewitz or a Vauban," the only American soldiers discussed in the earlier volume were Mahan and Mitchell. Other American and European figures were not included "either because they were more tacticians than strategists or because they bequeathed to posterity no coherent statement of strategical doctrine." This last consideration also explains the absence of an essay on Napoleon. In his introduction, Earle wrote that Napoleon "recorded his strategy on the battlefield (if we exclude his trite maxims); hence he is represented here by his interpreters Clausewitz and Jomini."[5] This seems too exclusive a point of view. The difference between strategy and tactics is worth preserving; but strategy is not exclusively—or even mainly—the work of great minds, interested in spelling out their theories. Although Napoleon did not write a comprehensive treatise on his ideas on war and strategy, they deserve to be studied, and not only through the intervening screen of Clausewitz's and Jomini's interpretations. An essay on Napoleon will

topics—e.g., Derwent Whittlesey's study of geopolitics and Theodore Ropp's sketch of Continental doctrines of sea power. Others were written before adequate documentation on their subject was available or, although advancing scholarship at the time, have now been superseded. One or two—e.g., the essay on Maginot and Liddell Hart by the author who used the pseudonym Irving M. Gibson—did not achieve the quality of the rest.

[4] Felix Gilbert has rewritten his essay on Machiavelli, as has Mark von Hagen the essay on Marx and Engels by Sigmund Neumann. Gordon Craig has made some changes in his essay on Delbrück, and Peter Paret has revised the first part of Hajo Holborn's essay on Moltke, the second part of which has been replaced by a new essay.

[5] Earle, "Introduction," ix.

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therefore be found in the present volume. But it must also be recognized that Napoleonic strategy was not created by the emperor alone. It was made possible because he had the genius and the compulsion to combine and exploit the ideas and policies of others. Some of these men, and even such forces as conscription, which cannot be identified with any particular individual, also belong to the history of strategy and are discussed here. As a contributor has commented, because of its broader historical focus, the new volume might be more appropriately titled *The Making of Modern Strategy*.

II

The problems and conflicts of the times in which the new *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* appears are very different from those that gave rise to the earlier work. The need to understand war is, if possible, even greater now than it was in 1943. But the enormity of the issues has inhibited as much as it has encouraged their study. Many people have reacted to the destructive power of nuclear weapons by rejecting the concept of war in general, and consequently feel that the nature of war itself no longer requires investigation. It is even claimed that nuclear weapons have made all wars irrational and impossible, a denial of reality that is a measure of the special anxiety that has become a part of contemporary life. Until today the nuclear age has accommodated every conceivable kind of war waged with non-nuclear weapons, from terror and guerrilla operations to large-scale air strikes and armored campaigns. War has not been excluded, it has merely become more dangerous. And even in the realm of the unthinkable—as theories of nuclear deterrence show—strategy and the need to study it have not disappeared.

A continuum—intermittent and dialectical though it may be—runs from the strategies before 1945 to the strategies of conventional war since then. The link is less apparent, more ambiguous, between the prenuclear age and nuclear strategy. It has been argued that at least so far as nuclear conflict is concerned, everything on this side of the nuclear divide is new. The technology is certainly new; but man and his social and political ideas and structures have changed very little. Governments and armed services that dispose over nuclear arsenals are made up of men and women who are not yet so very different from their parents and grandparents.

Under these conditions of crisis and partial discontinuity, in which so many of our earlier experiences seem to be beside the point, the new *Makers of Modern Strategy* raises the question of relevance even more forcefully than did its predecessor. Edward Mead Earle had no doubt that an understanding of war in history would help the reader deal more

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intelligently with war in the present. Not everyone—certainly not every historian—would fully share his faith in the contemporary relevance of history. Not only is every age unique in its combination of conditions, issues, and personalities; occasionally a profound revolution in technologies, beliefs, or in social and political organization seems to sever us from history, and in the view of some reduces its relevance to an absurd fiction. Much depends, however, on what is meant by relevance. The past—even if we could be confident of interpreting it with high accuracy—rarely offers direct lessons. To claim that kind of relevance is to deceive oneself. But history as the educated memory of what has gone before is a resource not to be abandoned lightly. In the affairs of a nation and in the relations between states, as in the life of the individual, the present always has a past dimension, which it is better to acknowledge than to ignore or deny. And even if we can see the present only in its own surface terms, we still have available to us what may be the greatest value history has to offer: its ability, by clarifying and making some sense of the past, to help us think about the present and future.

The phenomenon of war can be better understood by studying its past. That is one message of this book. But the history of war should also be studied in order to understand the past itself. Historians have sometimes been reluctant to acknowledge this necessity. Although they can hardly deny that war has been a fundamental reality of social and political existence from the earliest stage of political organization to our own day, war is so tragic and intellectually and emotionally so disturbing that they have tended to sidestep it in their research. In the training of historians and the teaching of history, particularly in the United States, war has never been a favorite subject. One result has been to leave far too much scope for a popular, essentially romantic literature on war, which explains nothing, but crudely responds to the fascination that war past and present exerts on our imagination and on our wish to understand. This volume tries to suggest the usefulness of integrating the history of military thought and policy with general history.

The essays that follow have as their common subject the role of force in the relations between states. All recognize that war never has been, and is not today, a unitary or even a wholly military phenomenon, but a compound of many elements, ranging from politics to technology to human emotions under extreme stress. Strategy is merely one of these elements—if a large one at times. Twenty-four of the essays trace the ideas and actions of former generations, as they used and misused war; the remaining four analyze military thought and policy in the very recent past and the present. The book is largely historical; but it also addresses and—as was its predecessor—is dedicated to the timeless cause of "a broader understanding of war and peace."

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