On War and Politics

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The articles in this issue highlight enduring questions around how states use military force to achieve (or fail to achieve) their strategic and political objectives.

Strategist Carl von Clausewitz has long been known for his aphorism "War is a continuation of policy [or politics] by other means" (in German, *Der Krieg ist eine bloße Fortsetzung der Politik mit anderen Mitteln*).[1] The concept appeared in his 1830s treatise, *On War*, which remains widely taught today across civilian degree programs in security studies and professional military education programs.

As the world watches what strategic gains American military action against Iran will or will not produce, this question—of how the use of force is used to accomplish a state's broader goals, in combination with other tools of grand strategy—has seldom seemed more central to unfolding developments in world politics. Scholarly debate over the translation of Clausewitz's famous saying has centered on the observation that Clausewitz intended his readers to think of war as one means of achieving objectives, admixed with other tools of politics and statecraft—not separate from them. This theme, in varied form, appears across each article in the pages that follow.

Indeed, the relationship between strategy and statecraft is at the heart of each of the articles in this issue of the *Texas National Security Review*. These essays draw from eras as far back as the ancient Greeks and as current as the present day, and span regions from East Asia to Europe to North Africa. Collectively, however, they reflect on how achieving the strategic objectives for which countries and leaders order the use of military power depends, fundamentally, on correctly marrying the use of force with the broader political context and other available tools of governance and statecraft.

In their article, "Trapped by the Tradition: Reading Thucydides on Strategy and Policy," Robert Stone and Joshua Hammond remind us that interpreting Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War as a purely realist exercise in hard military power neglects many of the most important lessons about the political and cultural dimensions of the war. Instead, the authors draw from Thucydides' account a set of lessons on how states' identities—both as maritime or continental powers, and as democracies—can provide powerful reserves of potential in broader strategic competition; they also point to the importance of moral appeals in political rhetoric and the importance of understanding national character as leaders navigate both the outbreak of war and the conduct of it. Their analysis serves as a reminder that military strategy does not exist in a vacuum, but is shaped by the social fabric of the societies that fight and the character of their leaders.

Samuel Helfont argues that domestic political incentives across both Republican and Democratic administrations have led to a mischaracterization of the presidential strategy and thinking of President George H. W. Bush, who led the United States through a pivotal period at the end of the Cold War. In "Liberal Internationalism Forgotten: Myth and Memory in the Legacy of George H. W. Bush," Helfont argues that the conventional wisdom on the elder Bush as a realist obscures more about his statecraft than it clarifies, and that "liberal internationalism practiced with strategic discipline"—a deep belief in freedom and a desire to promote it through stable multilateral institutions to avoid the pitfalls of unilateral American overextension—in fact formed the bedrock of Bush's foreign policy. Like Stone and Hammond, Helfont argues that misreading history will have dangerous consequences in the present, forcing a false choice between liberalism and restraint by crediting to the latter what was fundamentally a byproduct of the former.

In "A Plum for a Peach? Issue Linkage, Taiwan, and China's Policy Toward North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program," Shuxian Luo argues that Beijing's willingness to restrain (or conversely to shield and thereby encourage) North Korean development of its nuclear and missile program has been fundamentally shaped by Beijing's perceptions of American policy toward Taiwan. As Luo describes, credible or changing American assurances to Beijing involve not just military signals, but also fundamentally political ones. Thus, for Washington to achieve its strategic objectives in East Asia—which involve both stable deterrence and perhaps denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula, and peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait—the use of force must be carefully embedded in a broader political strategy, consistent with Clausewitzian thinking.

Anouar Boukhars's article, "Fighting Without Holding: Why Military Operations Fail to Produce Security in West Africa," probes exactly this question: When do successful military operations nonetheless fail to achieve the strategic objectives they are intended to

1 Scholarly commentary on Clausewitz has pointed out that a better translation of the original German is probably "with other means." See Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Peter Paret and Michael Howard (Princeton University Press, 1976).

support? Boukhars notes that for over a decade, West African states and their international partners have invested heavily in military operations against violent militant groups, with limited success. The reason, he argues, is that these operations have disrupted militant organizations but not replaced them with stable, functional governance, allowing militancy to return once military pressure is lifted. Military operations, he concludes, can make space for political processes that allow strategic ends to culminate; they cannot replace political processes on their own.

Finally, in our Strategist article, "Embracing (Not Bridging) the Gap: Integrating Intelligence Analysis, Social Science, and History," James Kwoun argues that epistemological differences among professions—fundamental differences over how knowledge is produced and what its purpose is—make for more productive diversity of thought and analytical tradecraft than is often recognized in conversations about the scholar-policymaker divide. Kwoun contends that it would be better to create a systematic framework to integrate the distinct comparative advantages of each approach, and that the (US) Intelligence Community is best positioned to conduct this integration. Again, this approach, executed well, holds the potential to shape the decision space in more helpful ways for military and civilian leaders and decision-makers by reminding them of the full range of factors that shape world politics and the ways in which these factors relate in complex and multivariate ways to shape policy outcomes.

War is the continuation of politics admixed with other means, Clausewitz says. The contemporary world presents example after example of the need to integrate the use of military force with broader tools of strategy and statecraft in service of broader political goals—and scholarship across history and political science highlights well the costs of failing to do so. At this particular moment, we at the *Texas National Security Review* hope that the articles here offer some guidance to readers on the essential and difficult work of using military force as an instrument of national policy, now and in the years to come.

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2 For the image, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:War_and_Peace_1966_poster.jpg.