The Evolution of Strategy

Is there a ‘Western way of war’ which pursues battles of annihilation and single-minded military victory? Is warfare on a path to ever greater destructive force? This magisterial new account answers these questions by tracing the history of Western thinking about strategy – the employment of military force as a political instrument – from antiquity to the present day. Assessing sources from Vegetius to contemporary America, and with a particular focus on strategy since the Napoleonic Wars, Beatrice Heuser explores the evolution of strategic thought, the social institutions, norms and patterns of behaviour within which it operates, the policies that guide it and the culture that influences it. Ranging across technology and warfare, total warfare and small wars as well as land, sea, air and nuclear warfare, she demonstrates that warfare and strategic thinking have fluctuated wildly in their aims, intensity, limitations and excesses over the past two millennia.

Beatrice Heuser holds the Chair of International History at the School of Politics and International Relations, University of Reading. Her publications include Reading Clausewitz (2002); Nuclear Mentalities? (1998) and Nuclear Strategies and Forces for Europe, 1949-2000 (1997), both on nuclear issues in NATO as a whole, and Britain, France, and Germany in particular.
The Evolution of Strategy

Thinking War from Antiquity to the Present

BEATRICE HEUSER
In memory of Julian Chrysostomides
1928–2008
scholar, teacher, friend
Contents

Acknowledgements xi
A note on referencing xiii

Part I Introduction
1 What is strategy? 3
   Art of war or science of war, and technical definitions of ‘strategy’ 3
   The articulation of different dimensions of Strategy 9
   What is this book examining? 29

Part II Long-term constants
2 Warfare and mindsets from Antiquity to the Middle Ages 39
   Technology and warfare 39
   Causes, aims and ethics of war from the Roman Empire to the late Middle Ages 42
3 Warfare and mindsets in early modern Europe 54
   Causes, aims and practice of war in early modern Europe 54
   The ethics of war in early modern Europe 64
4 Themes in early thinking about Strategy 76
   Sieges and static defences from Troy to Basra 76
   Feudal levies, mercenaries or militia? 82
   Battle avoidance or decisive battles? 89
   Limited and unlimited wars 97
   The enduring quest for eternal principles governing warfare 100

Part III The Napoleonic paradigm and Total War
5 The age and mindset of the Napoleonic paradigm 113
   Causes of wars, world-views and war aims 1792–1914 113
   The influence of Social Darwinism and racism 123
## Contents

6  The Napoleonic paradigm transformed:  
   - from total mobilisation to total war 137  
   - The quest for total victory 139  
   - The centrality of the battle 142  
   - Annihilation of the enemy 145  
   - The universal cult of the offensive 146  
   - Total mobilisation or professional military elites? 152

7  Challenges to the Napoleonic paradigm versus the culmination of Total War 171  
   - Mars mechanised: the Napoleonic paradigm versus technological innovation 171  
   - The dissenters: Corbett’s limited wars and Jaurès’s defensive army 176  
   - Lessons of the First World War 179  
   - Strategy responses to the First World War 181  
   - The Second World War: culmination of Total War 194

Part IV  Naval and maritime Strategy

8  Long-term trends and early maritime Strategy 201  
   - Strategy on land, at sea and in the air 201  
   - Writing in the age of oar and sail 207

9  The age of steam to the First World War 216  
   - The ‘Anglo-Saxon’ writers in the age of steam 216  
   - French naval theorists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries 233  
   - Germany before the First World War 245  
   - Conclusions 247

10  The World Wars and their lessons for maritime Strategists 248  
    - The First World War 248  
    - British lessons 250  
    - French lessons 256  
    - The second-tier powers 260  
    - US lessons from the Second World War 266  
    - Conclusions 267

11  Maritime Strategy in the nuclear age 268  
    - The Cold War framework 268  
    - Multiple roles for navies 276
Contents

Strategies for second-tier powers 286
Change of world-views and principles in conducting international affairs 290
Conclusions 291

Part V  Air power and nuclear Strategy

12  War in the third dimension 297
    Child and grandchild of naval Strategy 297
    The beginnings of air power 298

13  Four schools of air power 313
    The strategic or city bombing school 314
    The military targets school: denial 336
    The leadership targeting school: decapitation 342
    The political signalling school: games theories 345
    Conclusions 350

14  Nuclear Strategy 351
    Targets 351
    Deterrence 357
    Nuclear war-fighting Strategy 366
    War taken to its absurd extreme 382

Part VI  Asymmetric or ‘small’ wars

15  From partisan warfare to people’s war 387
    Two meanings of ‘small war’ 387
    The mosquito and the lion: tactics 397
    Hearts and minds I 414
    Defence in depth 416

16  Counterinsurgency 419
    The legal status of insurgents 419
    Brutal repression 422
    Hearts and minds II 427
    Conclusions 436

Part VII  The quest for new paradigms after the World Wars

17  Wars without victories, victories without peace 441
    The First World War as turning point? 441
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A note on referencing

For the purposes of this book, I needed to adapt Harvard-style referencing, as it was not designed with archival or internet sources in mind, nor for ancient or medieval manuscripts that were first printed centuries after they were written, and translated later still. My references serve as a shorthand for indicating the original date when a text was written; any additional date refers to the translation I have used, so that for example (Anon. 6th c./1985: 10–135) refers to the sixth-century anonymous text Peri Strategias translated and edited by George Dennis in Three Byzantine Military Treatises (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1985), pp. 10–135; this full information can be found in the bibliography. Where only a later edition was available to me, this is indicated in the bibliography; nevertheless, the earlier date is given as the in-text references in order keep these short, even where the page reference applies to the later edition. With key texts which have been reprinted many times, however, I have adopted the classicists’ convention of referring to book, chapter and verse rather than to page numbers. Finally, ‘q.i.’ stands for ‘quoted in’; ‘t.i.’ stands for ‘text printed in’.