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# "The Strange Voyage": A Short Précis on Strategy

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Richard D. Hooker

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"War is the father and the king of all."

—Heraclitus

Try as we might, war and armed conflict remain at the center of international relations and state policy. Success in war requires many things, but surely effective strategy must top the list. Why is making good strategy so hard? It is perhaps the most difficult task facing senior leaders in any government. Despite a wealth of sources and millennia of useful historical examples, sound strategic thinking more often than not eludes western democracies. Why?

History has a way of making strategy look simple and even inevitable. In the common narrative, for example, Pearl Harbor forced America into World War II, the United States adopted a "Europe first" approach, went to full mobilization, led victorious coalitions to smash the opposition, and then won the peace. The reality was very different, the outcome at the time far from certain, and the costs required far higher than expected. Strategic reality is more accurately captured by Churchill's term "the strange voyage."<sup>1</sup> Often begun with confidence and optimism, strategic ventures frequently end in frustration and indecisive outcomes.

Good strategy begins with basic questions. What are we trying to do? How much will it cost? How should we use what we have got to achieve the aim? The questions are simple. But answering them—thoughtfully, comprehensively, honestly, and dispassionately—is by far the exception to the rule. Failing to frame the problem correctly at the outset may be the most common, and disastrous, strategic error of all.

The first minefield is one of definition. Students, theorists, and practitioners of strategy face a bewildering range of competing and confusing terms. Thus we find national security strategy, national defense strategy, national military strategy, grand strategy, coalition strategy, regional strategy, theater strategy, and campaign strategy—to name a few. Where does one end and the other begin? Do they overlap? Or are some just synonyms? The word "strategy" derives from the the Greek *strategia* "generalship," and *strategos* "my leader." Classically, strategy was quite literally "the Art of the General." Webster defines strategy as "the science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological, and

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1 "Never, never, never believe any war will be smooth and easy, or that anyone who embarks on the strange voyage can measure the tides and hurricanes he will encounter. The statesman who yields to war fever must realize that once the signal is given, he is no longer the master of policy but the slave of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events." Sir Winston Churchill, *My Early Life: A Roving Commission* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), 214.

military forces of a nation or group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace or war.<sup>2</sup> The military prefers “a prudent idea or set of ideas for employing the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and/or multinational objectives.”<sup>3</sup> Clausewitz defined strategy as “the art of the employment of battles as a means to gain the object of war.”<sup>4</sup> The great Moltke used “the practical adaptation of the means placed at a general’s disposal to the attainment of the object in view,” famously observing that strategy is most often “a system of expedients.”<sup>5</sup> Liddell-Hart favored “the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy” while Colin Gray describes strategy as “the threat and use of force for political reasons.”<sup>6</sup> A short definition often used at war colleges is “relating ends, ways and means to achieve a desired policy goal.”<sup>7</sup>

The next minefield is the process. Even if we think we know what we mean by “strategy,” we need a way to make it. Here good intentions intrude. In most western political systems, strategy is created both top down and bottom up. In theory, political leaders come into office with a few big ideas, departments and ministries are consulted, a deliberative process follows, and decisions are made.<sup>8</sup> Alternatively, an unforeseen crisis occurs, desks are cleared, very senior people huddle, rapid decisions are reached, and action follows.<sup>9</sup>

Actual strategy is more opaque than these simple, clean models. Egos disrupt rational analysis. Institutional agendas trump overarching national interests. Current crises crowd out long-term planning. Personal relationships dominate or shut down formal processes. Budgets constrain strategic choices. Media leaks frustrate confidentiality. Domestic politics elbows in, and reelection politics distort altogether. Real strategy-making is at best strenuous and exacting, and at worst muddled, frustrating, and decidedly suboptimal.

Strategy matters. In the domain of armed conflict (and here we are not discussing political, business, or diplomatic strategies, but strategy in its classical sense), the price of failure can be high. The extreme penalty for failed strategy can be the fall of governments, loss of territory, even the destruction of the state itself. But lesser penalties are exacted as well in the loss of power and influence, in economic collapse or distress, in less capable and credible political and military institutions, and in a failure of national confidence and will. Strategists must ever bear in

2. *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th Edition (Springfield MA: Merriam-Webster Inc., 2003), 1233.

3. US Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Publication 1-02 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 8 November 2010), 396.

4. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Eliot Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 177.

5. Daniel J. Hughes, ed., *Moltke on the Art of War: Selected Writings* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1993), 130.

6. B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Praeger, 1967), 335; Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17.

7. J. Boone Bartholomees, Jr., ed., *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues, Volume 1: Theory of War and Strategy* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute), 15.

8. An example is the very methodical “Afghanistan Review” of the new Obama administration in early 2009.

9. For one case study in crisis decisionmaking, see the author’s “Presidential Decisionmaking and Use of Force: Case Study Grenada,” *Parameters* 21, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 61-72.

mind that in taking the state to war, victory becomes an end in itself. Even apart from the aims of the war, defeat can shatter or debilitate the state for years to come, possibly leading to permanent and irrevocable decline. Put another way, avoiding defeat can become the overarching aim—independent of the original strategic objective.

Military leaders work hard to overcome the frustrations and unknowns of strategy through a deliberate planning process, a comprehensive and detailed approach to problem solving that can take months and even years to complete. Seasoned commanders know that no plan survives contact with the enemy—meaning every situation is unique and will require unique solutions. But the laborious study, assessment, and analysis that goes into a detailed plan provides context, understanding, and much useful preparatory work, particularly in the logistical and administrative preparations needed to move large forces to remote locations and keep them there. Good planning provides a foundation from which to “flex” according to the situation at hand.

Political leaders usually approach strategic problems differently. Most are lawyers or business people with substantial political careers behind them. They may lack patience with military detail, may distrust strong military types, are keen to assert civilian control, and focus more on broad objectives than on the ways and means of strategy. Naturally, past experiences and processes that have worked well in the political or business arenas are applied to military problems with quite different results. Casual observers might think that strategy-making at the highest levels is a sophisticated, deliberative process conducted by civilian and military officials who have been prepared by arduous academic training informed by practical experience. All too often it isn't.

Ideally, both civilian and military leaders will forge synergistic, interactive, mutually dependent relationships. Good will and mutual respect will go far to reconcile different cultures and perspectives in the interest of teamwork and battlefield success. But the dialogue will always remain unequal. In this regard, the fashionable view that civilian leaders not only can but should intrude at will far into the professional military domain is both wrong and dangerous.<sup>10</sup> While they may overlap, there are clear lanes that distinguish appropriate civilian and military areas of responsibility and expertise. All parties understand and accept the doctrine of ultimate civilian control; however, asserting civilian control is the poorest excuse for bad strategy.<sup>11</sup>

Civilian leaders have an unquestioned right to set the aims, provide the resources and identify the parameters that guide and bound armed conflict. They have an unchallenged right to select and remove military commanders, set strategic priorities and, when necessary, direct changes in strategy. For their part, military leaders have a right—indeed, a duty—to insist on clarity in framing strategic objectives and to object

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10 Eliot A. Cohen is a primary exponent of this view. See his “Supreme Command in the 21st Century,” *Joint Force Quarterly* (Summer 2002): 48-54.

11 An apposite example is Secretary Rumsfeld's tinkering with military deployment orders in Afghanistan and Iraq. See Peter M. Shane, *Madison's Nightmare: How Executive Power Threatens American Democracy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 73.

when, in their best military judgment, either the constraints applied or the resources provided preclude success.<sup>12</sup>

Prior to assuming office, many political leaders have little interaction with the military and with strategy itself. The lack of strategic training and practical experience cited above, if combined with a contempt for military expertise, can dislocate strategy altogether. Often in the post-war era, we see strategies advanced where the level of ambition outraces the resources provided, leading to protracted, costly, and open-ended ventures with decidedly unsatisfying outcomes.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast, military leaders are generally cautious about use of force and, if ordered to fight, argue for larger and not smaller forces. The military preference for avoiding wars is based on an historical appreciation for how quickly violence gets out of hand, how devastating less-than-total victory can be for military institutions, and how painful and expensive success can be. The military preference for large forces is likely grounded in an intuitive understanding of the complexity and unpredictability of conflict.

One way to deal with these uncertainties is to overwhelm the problem with mass at the outset (Desert Storm being the obvious case in point). Larger forces, though harder to manage and more costly in the short term, provide more options and greater leverage amidst uncertainty, often leading to fewer casualties and lower costs than long, open-ended conflicts. In a sense they smother the friction of war and increase the chances of quick, decisive campaigns. Smaller forces, emphasizing air and sea power and special operations, may seem more transformational, but the historical record is on the side of the bigger battalions. “Transformation” has lost at least some of the glamour it enjoyed a decade ago, while more traditional approaches have grudgingly regained ground, as seen in the “surges” of Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>14</sup>

Political leaders and strategists should also be mindful of *strategic culture*, that mélange of history, tradition, custom, world view, economy, sociology, and political systems and mores that largely shapes how nations fight and for what causes. For example, there may be no agreed upon American theory of war, but an “American Way of War” surely exists, based on concepts of mass, firepower, technology, strong popular support, and a focus on decisive battle. “Good Wars” have historically followed this pattern, “Bad Wars” have not. While the analogy can be taken too far, it captures central truths that should inform our strategic calculations. Strategic culture is real and powerful, whether we acknowledge it or not.

So how do we to square the circle to make effective strategy? Clausewitz, of course, posited that the ideal solution was to combine the

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12 This is the great lesson of H. R. McMaster’s classic *Dereliction of Duty*. It is now clear that the Joint Chiefs knew, early in the Vietnam conflict, that the strategy adopted would likely fail. But individually, and as a body, they both supported and enabled it, resulting in 58,000 US deaths, hundreds of thousands wounded, and a defeat that would take a generation to overcome. See H. R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997).

13 The short, massive campaigns waged in Grenada, Panama, and the Gulf War stand in vivid contrast to Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan in this regard.

14 See Richard D. Hooker, Jr., H. R. McMaster, and David Gray, “Getting Transformation Right,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 38 (July 2005): 27.

statesman and the commander into one—influenced, no doubt, by the experiences of Prussia at the hands of Napoleon. Those days are long gone, never to return. The challenge today is to optimize strategy in an interagency, highly political, multinational decision setting characterized by multiple threats, declining interest and knowledge of military affairs, financial stringency, and limited reservoirs of public support. Accordingly, the following strategic considerations might usefully be kept in mind.

**Understand the Nature of the Conflict.** This sounds easy but usually isn't. Both in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as in Vietnam, the United States seems to have fundamentally misunderstood the nature of the conflict and to have persisted in the error for far too long. In each, intervention and initial success signaled not the end but the beginning of a long, expensive, tortuous conflict that dragged on far longer than most experts predicted. This is not Monday-morning quarterbacking. Strategists must be able to understand circumstances and make concrete assessments of the problems to be solved and how to solve them. Just as importantly, they must be ready to jettison failed policies and strategies and make new ones when needed.

**Consult Your Interests First and Your Principles Always.** Thucydides cautioned that states typically go to war for reasons of fear, honor, or interest. That doesn't mean they always should. Interventions for moral or prestige reasons will always have a certain appeal; there will always be ample opportunities for that. When vital interests and national values coincide (as with the first Gulf War), the prospects of strong domestic support and ultimate success are immeasurably enhanced. When they don't, expect trouble.

**Unless You Have to, Don't.** Colin Powell kept the following quote from Thucydides on his desk: "of all manifestations of power, restraint impresses men most." Military adventurism can be exhilarating when viewed from a distance.<sup>15</sup> The sheer exercise of power for its own sake has an undeniable appeal, not often admitted by insiders. But all too often, war takes on a life of its own, and what seemed easy at the outset can become painful and difficult. Democracies, in particular, can tend towards "no win/no lose" approaches to conflict that seek to achieve grand strategic objectives with limited means, uncertain popular support, and a very low tolerance for casualties. This is not to say that only wars for survival should be fought (the Rwandan genocide comes to mind as a catastrophe that could and should have been prevented through the use of force). As a general rule, wars of choice should be avoided, and when fought, they should be fought to win quickly with crushing force.

**Political Problems are Rarely Solved with Force.** Throughout history we see attempts to use military power to solve political problems. Overwhelmingly, this approach fails unless the adversary is crushed absolutely and his society remade. Force can help eliminate or reduce violence and set conditions to support a political settlement, a valuable and important contribution, but it cannot solve ethnic, tribal, ideological, or inherently political conflicts in and of itself. This is

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<sup>15</sup> As aide-de-camp to the Secretary of the Army in 2001-02, the author personally witnessed this phenomenon in the Pentagon. After 9/11, there was much talk among political appointees about "putting heads on sticks." The uniformed military were considerably more sober.

perhaps its most important limitation. Military power often appears to be useful because it is available and, superficially, both multipurpose and multicable; however, it is best used to solve military problems.

**Expect Bad Things to Happen in War.** Clausewitz made much of the tendency of war and violence to run to extremes.<sup>16</sup> The famous British Admiral John Arbuthnot Fisher echoed Clausewitz when he said “the essence of war is violence . . . moderation in war is imbecility.” That goes too far, but restraint is often the first casualty in war. For soldiers, but also for statesmen, war is a struggle for survival. And the struggle for survival is inherently impatient with limits.<sup>17</sup> Strategists must understand and accept this basic truth. Civilians will be hurt, war crimes will occasionally happen, the press will likely not be an ally, and every mistake will be exploited by the political opposition. All these should be expected. Don’t think they can always be controlled or avoided.

**If You Start, Finish—Quickly.** It is, or should be, a maxim of war that the longer things take, the worse they tend to get. The US industrial base has declined to the point that sustained, high intensity conflict in particular may no longer be realistically possible. The Weinberger and Powell doctrines—essentially arguments to fight only for truly important objectives with overwhelming force—were largely discredited in later years by both political parties, with tragic results. Because popular support is finite and rarely open-ended, democracies can ill afford long, drawn out, inconclusive conflicts. In the end, they can cost far more in lives, treasure, political capital, and international standing. Extended conflicts provide time and space for war’s natural tendency to get out of hand. Short, sharp campaigns must ever be the ideal.

**In War, the Military Instrument Leads.** In peacetime (defined as the absence of armed conflict), diplomacy and diplomats have the interagency “lead” as first among equals, under the ultimate control of the head of government. Congressional or parliamentary support is also essential. During times of war, the interagency lead must pass to the defense establishment, personified by its civilian head. In a sense, all wars or conflicts represent a failure of diplomacy in that a judgment has been made that the state’s strategic objectives cannot be realized except through force. This does not mean diplomacy ceases, or it is unimportant. On the contrary, sound strategy demands that the type of peace we desire remains uppermost in our councils and deliberations, and that channels—often indirect—remain open even during war. But for all that, war has its own ineluctable logic, a logic that strains against the kind of modulated, nuanced “signaling” often favored by diplomats. Even as the battle rages, they must have their say, but the louder voice should be the secretary or minister heading the defense apparatus and his chief of defense.

**Don’t Be Seduced by Airpower.** When selecting strategic options, statesmen are often encouraged to choose “safer, easier, cheaper” options relying principally on airpower. The prospect of lower casualties and quick wins is always seductive. Airpower is the jewel in America’s strategic crown, but it is no panacea and, like all forms of military power,

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16 Clausewitz, *On War*, 77.

17 See the author’s “Beyond *Vom Kriege*: The Character and Conduct of Modern War,” *Parameters* 35, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 9-17.

it has real limitations—chiefly, its inability to control (as opposed to influence) the ground and the populations which live there. Almost always, a balanced application of military force will be needed to achieve decisive outcomes in war.

**More Money Does Not Equal More Defense.** In the United States, at least, it can be politically dangerous to argue that more defense spending may not equate to a safer America. The combination of extraordinarily powerful defense industries, strong congressional support, and willing military leaders means controlling defense costs is a herculean task. Yet responsible strategists must confront cost and risk as necessary elements of the game. When two B2 stealth bombers cost more than the entire inventory of main battle tanks in the active Army, something is wrong. Political dynamics and service advocacy cannot be removed from the politics of defense, but statesmen and strategists should still fight for strategic balance.

**Beware Partisan Politics.** Wars should always be waged to achieve political and not just military objectives; however, statesmen should also be aware of unduly politicizing armed conflict. American political debates and controversies used to “stop at the water’s edge.” Today, strategies may be adopted simply because they are not what the other party advocates.<sup>18</sup> Democrats in Congress in 2008 strenuously opposed the Iraq surge mostly because it was a Republican idea. Republicans in 2011 fought President Obama over war powers in Libya for political, not strategic, reasons. A good rule of thumb is to set realistic, achievable political aims; get the strategy right; and then work hard to achieve consensus and bipartisan support. Policy should always drive strategy.

**One Crisis at a Time.** Historically, senior leaders struggle to cope with multiple simultaneous crises. By definition, every war is a crisis. Even in democracies, the circle of actual decisionmakers is surprisingly small. Though most won’t admit it, these few cannot devote their scarcest resource—their time—to effectively manage more than one complex crisis at once. This argues, whenever possible, for a limited and conservative approach to uses of force, or as Lincoln put it when urged to declare war on Britain during the Civil War, “one war at a time.”

**Keep Things Brutally Simple.** In 1944, General Eisenhower was given the following directive: “you will enter the continent of Europe and . . . undertake operations aimed at the heart of Germany and the destruction of her armed forces.” The mission statement in Afghanistan today is by contrast vastly more ambiguous and vague:

In support of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, ISAF conducts operations in Afghanistan to reduce the capability and will of the insurgency, support the growth in capacity and capability of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), and facilitate improvements in governance and socio-economic development in order to provide a secure environment for sustainable stability that is observable to the population.<sup>19</sup>

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18 On taking office in 1992, the Clinton administration withdrew most US troops from Somalia then waged an aggressive kinetic campaign against factional leader Mohammed Farah Aideed. The result was a military and political disaster that prevented any response to the Rwandan genocide on grounds of “political” liability. See the author’s “Hard Day’s Night: A Retrospective on the American Intervention in Somalia,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 54 (July 2009): 128-135.

19 *International Security Assistance Force Afghanistan Mission Statement*, <http://www.isaf.nato.int/mission.html>.

If soldiers and voters are to understand and support something as serious as war, it should be explained—and explainable—in brutally simple language. If we cannot do so, we should go back to the drawing board.

**Limit Your Level of Ambition.** US interventions in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan evolved into protracted, painful, debilitating, and indecisive conflicts. In contrast, Grenada, Panama, and the Gulf War were quick, overwhelming successes. The difference between the two categories is apparent. A strategy with clear, achievable aims matched with ample resources usually wins. Fuzzy, overly ambitious goals supported by inadequate resources usually do not.

**Get Comfortable with Bad Options.** When President George W. Bush decided to send 30,000 additional “surge” troops to Iraq in late 2007, he did so against the advice of the uniformed military, the Secretaries of State and Defense, and his Vice President. “Doubling down” when most thought defeat was inevitable, was not popular. Few things in war are. A clearly optimal way ahead rarely presents itself. For strategists, reality can often mean choosing the least worst from a range of “bad” options. The courage to make hard decisions is necessary equipment for strategists.

**Be Careful When Choosing Sides.** Most conflicts will force us to choose sides, but rarely will our choices be savory. The history of conflict since the end of World War II has often been messy and ambiguous, with “allies” like Diem, Tadjman, Maliki, and Karzai often implicated in corruption and human rights abuses. This reality may force us to pit our values against our interests and to make hard and painful choices with unknown consequences. This judgment must be made by presidents and prime ministers as an inherently political calculation. Rarely can it be avoided or evaded. Sometimes, as in the Balkans, holding our nose and going with soiled allies can lead to better outcomes. In others, as we see in Iraq and Afghanistan, those choices may be our undoing.

**Challenge Your Assumptions.** Ideology can be a primary driver for use of force, and it is often buttressed with bad assumptions. In Vietnam, President Lyndon Baines Johnson and his principal advisers assumed North Vietnam was a proxy for Moscow, not a true nationalist movement. In Kosovo in 1999, both North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and US senior leaders presumed that a quick, one week air campaign would drive Serbian forces out. In Iraq in 2003, the administration believed the Shia would welcome US troops enthusiastically, the Iraqi army could be disarmed without consequence, and a makeshift transitional government could be quickly assembled to take command of postconflict responsibilities. Few of these assumptions underwent searching analysis, nor were contrarian views allowed to challenge the prevailing consensus. (In this regard, a “devil’s advocate” like Robert Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis can be a game saver.) No strategy can overcome flawed assumptions. They are the foundation on which victory will stand or fall.

**Think Through Second and Third Order Effects.** Thinking through the problem is not a strong suit of western strategists. When Baghdad falls, what can we expect on the day after? Will massive amounts of international assistance fuel widespread corruption? Can the host nation military maintain order, or should it be disbanded? Are

sanctuaries in Pakistan an unsolvable problem? In most cases, these are not unknowables. They are the bread and butter of responsible strategy-making. Senior political and military leaders must demand and enforce thorough and painstaking strategic assessments to think the problem through and beyond the initial objectives.

**Tomorrow's Crisis is Not Predictable.** Despite a plethora of intelligence agencies and scores of “experts” in and out of government, forecasting the next crisis is unlikely, as the Arab Spring demonstrated yet again. Pearl Harbor, the German attack in the Ardennes, the North Korean attack across the 38th parallel, the collapse of the Soviet Union, Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, 9/11, and the Arab Spring—these intelligence failures are the rule, not the exception. Broad, overarching strategies, as well as more tailored regional and theater strategies, must be flexible enough to react to the unforeseen. Crisis response mechanisms must be thoroughly rehearsed. Strategists must expect surprises and be ready.

**It's Always Better with Allies.** Churchill loved to say “the only thing worse than fighting with allies is fighting without them.”<sup>20</sup> Going it alone may be necessary on very rare occasions, but in general, a lack of allies should give serious pause. Fighting with allies confers political legitimacy as well as extra troops. Often, allies can provide counsel and an outside perspective that can usefully enhance strategic decisionmaking. Sometimes, a threat may be so real and immediate that a unilateral use of force is the only resort. Still, when long-standing allies with congruent interests balk, maybe it's time to take a deep breath and think again. Maybe they know something we don't?

**Beware of Service Agendas.** Each military service has its own culture, and all will fight to maximize freedom of action and access to resources. If taken too far, weighting one service risks unbalancing the strategic equilibrium that represents America's true military strength. A military that is only globally effective in one dimension, or at one gradient along the spectrum of conflict, is a military shorn of the versatility and synergism that underpins America's true military dominance. Strategists should look for service agendas and ensure they do not corrupt military planning. In general, theater and operational commanders should control the military assets and activities present in their theater under the principle of unity of command (particularly true for Special Operations Forces). Service-specific strategic approaches should be viewed skeptically.

**Carefully Count the Cost.** We often hear the catch phrase “blood and treasure.” But we do not always think deeply about what it means. Experienced commanders know what it means to lose soldiers in war. Statesmen should also reflect on the terrible price of victory, and the terrible penalty of defeat, when contemplating the use of force. The prospect of casualties should not deter them from making the tough decisions when they are right and necessary. The prospect of needless or unnecessary casualties—and inevitably, this will include innocent civilians—absolutely should. The financial cost of war can also be tragic. The cost of the war in Iraq, projected by the US administration at \$50 billion

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<sup>20</sup> Viscount Alanbrooke diary, 1 April 1945, quoted in Arthur Bryant, *Triumph in the West, 1943-1946* (London: Grafton Books, 1986), 445.

(financed, the public was told, largely by Iraqi oil revenues), approached \$1 trillion—a truly colossal sum.<sup>21</sup> The terrible irony is not only the price in lives and dollars, but also that so many “experts” were so far off the mark. Whatever that’s called, it’s not strategy.

This short paper is not a strategic *tour d’horizon*, but it offers practical observations and recommendations grounded in history and a classical understanding of strategic thought. Some will find it excessively cautious or conservative. But all questions of war and peace should be approached so. Military action remains an indispensable tool in what continues to be an unstable and dangerous world. Yet it is one of many, often exacting a terrible price. Statesmen and soldiers alike are well advised to think long and deeply before sowing the wind. Sound and sober strategy-making can show us how.

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21 Total US government expenditures for Iraq are placed at \$823 billion, with indirect costs far in excess of \$1 trillion. See Amy Belasco, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service RL33110, March 29, 2011), 3.