

# National Security and Grand Strategy

American and Israeli Perspectives

MVZ248

# National Security

- Israel
  - borders = protection = security (Jewish people/Israel)
  - defensible borders
- USA
  - borders (regional)
  - global

# What is Strategy?

- “Strategy” is a simple concept that does not require deep study and contemplation itself.
- Richard K. Betts offers a provocative and informative consideration of “strategy,”
  - “Is Strategy an Illusion?,” *International Security*, Fall, 2000.
- Stephen M. Walt stresses the value of understanding state action as a response to perceived threats, rather than potential enemies.
  - *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987)
- Prominent recent writings on Grand Strategy is in Stephen D. Biddle, “American Grand Strategy after 9/11: A Reassessment.” (Strategic Studies Institute, April 2005).ff.

# Strategic culture

- Strategic culture to include geography, climate, natural resources, memory, key texts, transnational norms, generational change, and changing technology.
  - Darryl Howlett, “Strategic Culture: Reviewing Recent Literature,” Strategic Insights IV, October, 2005
- The concept of strategic culture does not minimize—let alone discount—the importance of material factors of hard power.
- It pierces the boundaries between culture and politics, contextualizes hard power, explores “the range of cultural conditions which shape the perception strategists have of material conditions.” (Howlett)
- What are the determinants, the greatest influences on a state’s grand strategy?

# Grand strategy and Theory

- According to Liddell Hart (1967) “policy which guides the conduct of war” and may be conceived of as “policy in execution” p335.
- As in many things throughout *Strategy*, Liddell Hart juxtaposes himself against Clausewitz in how he defines strategy. The old Prussian officer, he argues, looked at strategy merely as “the art of the employment of battles as a means to gain the object of war” (Liddell Hart 1967, 333).

# *Strategy and Grand Strategy*

- This definition has two flaws. First, it “intrudes on the sphere of policy, or the higher conduct of war, which must necessarily be the responsibility of the government and not of the military leaders it employs as its agents in the executive control of operations” (Liddell Hart 1967, 333).
- Additionally, Clausewitz’s definition unnecessarily stresses the importance of engaging the enemy as the only means to achieve a strategic end, which leads to the profound heresy that all efforts in war should focus on setting up and fighting a decisive battle (Liddell Hart 1967, 333).
- While these views and critiques of Clausewitz’s concept of strategy are still debated, they are at least the understanding against which Liddell Hart directed his efforts.

# Strategy and Grand Strategy

- Hart offers that “...strategy is concerned not merely with the movement of forces – as its role is often defined – but with the effect” (Liddell Hart 1967, 335).
- In contrast to the extreme interpretations of Clausewitz, Hart argues that strategy “...has for its purpose the reduction of fighting to the slenderest possible proportions... The perfection of strategy would be, therefore, to produce a decision without any serious fighting” (Liddell Hart 1967, 338).
- In support of this ideal concept;
  - Julius Caesar’s Iberia campaign, Moltke’s encirclement of MacMahon’s army at Sedan, and General Allenby’s 1918 encirclement of Turkish forces in Samaria (Liddell Hart 1967, 338).

# Strategy

- In seeking what he considered a more accurate definition of strategy, Liddell Hart turned to Helmuth von Moltke the Younger who claimed strategy is “the practical adaptation of the means placed at a general’s disposal to the attainment of the object in view” (Liddell Hart 1967, 334).
- According to Liddell Hart, this definition makes clear that the military is responsible to the government employing it and allows the government to intervene in strategy, amend it, and push it in a direction that may not simply be the overthrow of an enemy’s military (Liddell Hart 1967, 334).
- Such a nuanced vision of what strategy is and ought to be offers a start for understanding how Liddell Hart viewed the issue; namely, he defined strategy as “the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy” (Liddell Hart 1967, 335).



# Grand strategy

- An aspect of strategy that sets Liddell Hart apart from many earlier strategists – the belief in and application of grand strategy.
- The British strategist suggests that grand strategy is the “policy which guides the conduct of war” and may be conceived of as “policy in execution” (Liddell Hart 1967, 335).
  - He goes on to argue that “...the role of grand strategy – higher strategy – is to co-ordinate and direct all of the resources of a nation, or band of nations, toward the attainment of the political object of the war – the goal defined by fundamental policy” (Liddell Hart 1967, 335 -336).
- Further separating it from traditional understandings of strategy, grand strategy deals with economic, diplomatic, commercial, ethical, and military aspects of war in addition to questions about securing peace after a conflict (Liddell Hart 1967, 335 -336).
- Grand strategy envisions what is today called a whole-of-government approach to waging war and establishing and maintaining peace. While decidedly separate from the strictly military strategy that makes up most of Liddell Hart’s book, the concept of grand strategy ultimately benefits from the application of the indirect approach as well.

# Constructivism?

- Both the historical and political science approaches offer methods for inquiry into formulating grand strategy.
- Moreover, the constructivist nature of strategic culture makes grand strategy a fertile subject for the interdisciplinary use of history and political science.
- Political science theories should serve, in the words of Marc Trachtenberg, as the “engines of analysis” to determine research questions.
- Marc Trachtenberg, *The Craft of International History : A Guide to Method* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 33

# Strategic culture

- The study of grand strategy requires reading political, cultural, diplomatic, and military history and theory, but it also provides a new framework by asking as to the relationship between these topics rather than examining each one discretely.
- This approach to the study of grand strategy, operating within Luttwak's definition, allows for the study of a wide choice of states and various epochs of war and peace.
- The use of strategy whether be termed 'grand' to provide for the national security of a nation also fits with the IR paradigm.

# Modern strategy?

- Edward Luttwak in his book *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* (2001), raises concerns about the wisdom of equating war and peace.
- A convincing argument is made that decision making in war is fundamentally different from that in peacetime or civilian pursuits, such as business or politics.
- In peaceful pursuits, legal systems and strong customs exist to allow policymakers to plan without worry of physical attack or destruction.

# Peace not War

- Political theorist Michael Walzer offers another compelling argument about why the study of decision making in war may poorly inform peacetime choices.
- In *Arguing about War*, Walzer warns against the “routinization of emergency” and considers the moral and ethical dilemmas of treating all foreign policy problems as if resolution requires the full weight of the state’s power.
  - Michael Walzer, *Arguing About War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). See Chapter 3, “Emergency Ethics.”

# Constant Crisis

- The decisions taken by historical leaders in Hart's study were often brutal and horrific,
  - a Hobson's choice between life and death.
- The routinization of grand strategy, in the mould of Liddell Hart's definition, leads directly to what Walzer terms the "routinization of emergency" whereby means are trivialized and ends reign

# Strategy as ‘national security’ ....

- Many scholars have used Liddell Hart’s definition profitably when studying the history of high policy of war.
- James McPherson, to provide a prominent example, has used the concept successfully to explain Abraham Lincoln’s role as Commander-in-Chief during the Civil War. Lincoln’s grand strategy, what McPherson also calls his “national strategy,” was the concentration of all political, economic, diplomatic, psychological and military resources to achieve the Union’s “policy,” or war aims.
  - McPherson notes that his term “national strategy” might also be called “grand strategy.” James M. McPherson, *Tried by War : Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), p. 5

# Application to Israel and USA

- Cold War
  - superpower
  - regional democracy amongst autocracy
- Geopolitical position
  - from 1945-1991 bi-polar leader (West)
  - 1991-present uni-polar
  - proxy (Israel) for Western powers
  - defense of 'values'



# Application to USA and Israel

- Support of counter-intuitive policy
  - anti-communist dictatorships
  - over-reach of financial/military capabilities
  - private partnerships with public enemies
- Involvement in wars
  - South America and Africa
  - low-grade conflict with Arab neighbors (1948-1985)
  - low-grade conflict with Arab population (Palestinians) from 1980s to present

# Caution and Creativity

- Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu is meeting other world leaders who can help Israel, such as Russian President Vladimir Putin (4x)
- Tacit Israeli alliances with leading Sunni states?
- Israel developing as diplomatic and security anchor with Egyptian dictators or Saudi sheikhs.
- All this represents Middle East realities, and indicates Israel's strategic worldview.

# Caution

- Israel is joining those who share a common cause:
  - preventing Iranian hegemony and tamping down Islamist insurgencies (Egypt and Saudi Arabia).
- This includes Russia, which is flying its air force along our borders.
- Russian president Putin is partnered with Iran in Syria for the moment, but he respects Israel's role as a regional stabilizer, and understands Israel's security redlines.

# Creativity

- Israeli security thinking:
  - Several Arab states are melting down, with the region in the throes of civilizational chaos.
  - The security environment is unstable, future truly unknown. This situation could continue for decades or even 100 years.
  - In the vacuum are really bad actors: radical non-state actors such as al-Qaida and ISIS, and wannabe regional hegemony like Iran.
- The Palestinians, too, have been radicalized,
  - suffer from a chronic acute leadership deficit.
  - victimhood clogs their ability to think straight.
- Gaza appears permanently locked under control of Hamas.
  - Neat territorial deals with the Palestinians nearly impossible,
  - Adds to the long-term fragility of Israel's frontiers.
- Because of these factors, a time of extreme uncertainty, Israel's approach can be termed: caution with creativity.

# Israeli strategy (2010–)

- Ride out the Mideast storms by strictly securing Israel's borders.
- Avoid grandiose yet problematic diplomatic experiments, and refrain from bloody wars.
  - Gaza (2014) NOT Lebanon (2006)
- Ensure domestic government stability, grow Israel's economy, and manage frictions with the Palestinians.
- Develop new regional alliances.
- Intensify and routinize security ties with the US defense establishment for the long term, irrespective of the political winds in Washington, if possible.

# Points missed in Washington....

- The main game in the region is no longer Israel versus the Palestinians or versus the Arabs.
- It is Israel and most of the Arabs together versus the Iranians and jihadis.
- The “Palestinian problem” has been marginalized as a priority issue for Arabs in the Middle East. And also viewed in broader context, Palestinian nationalism is one of the more controllable problems that Israel faces.
  - The frictions can be managed.
- Israelis overwhelmingly think that Benjamin Netanyahu is (still) the best man to manage all this.
  - He may not be loved by the Israeli electorate, but his prudence and professionalism meet Israel’s current needs.
- Its strategic posture makes a lot of sense in the transformed regional landscape.

# Creativity

- The Muslim Arab world circling Israel had been arbitrarily spliced up into 19 ethnically heterogeneous states by imperial powers, France and Great Britain.
  - Richard Labeviere (2000) *Dollars for Terror: The United States and Islam* pg. 206.
- A 'temporary house of cards put together by foreigners', composed of mutually hostile ethnic minorities and majorities, that, once disintegrated into feudal or tribal fiefdoms that, in Ahmad's interpretation, would no longer challenge Israel.
  - Muhammad Ahmad (2014) *The Road to Iraq: The Making of a Neoconservative War* pg. 83.
- A perilous fragmentation that offers Israel opportunities it had failed to exploit in 1967.

# American strategy

- The phrase “national security” entered U.S. political discourse from Alexander Hamilton
- “If a well-regulated militia be the most natural defense of a free country, it ought certainly to be under the regulation and at the disposal of that body which is constituted the guardian of the national security.”
  - Alexander Hamilton, The Federalist No. 29, “Concerning the Militia,” Jan. 9, 1788
- The U.S. National Security organization was formed on July 26, 1947, when U.S. Truman signed the National Security Act of 1947. Together with its 1949 amendment.
- After 9/11, the Patriot Act provoked debate about the alleged restriction of individual rights and freedoms for the sake of U.S. national security.
  - easing of warrant requirements for intelligence surveillance, under Title II of the Act.<sup>m</sup>



# Evolving

- US grand strategy has had five principle goals. It is in how they are pursued that foreign policy changes from one era to the next....
- Homeland defense understood today was relatively lax before the twentieth century because of the United States' unique geographic position, separated by two oceans from the other major powers of the world.
- September 11, 2001
- NSS 2012
- In May 2015, the White House released The National Security Implications of a Changing Climate

# Evolving

- Each stage in the development of US homeland-defense capabilities grew in response to specific threats against American territory and lives.
- Today, thanks to new technology and globalization, there is a great diversity of threats against American territory and lives than ever before.
- While a land invasion is unlikely, the United States is at risk from ballistic missiles, nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, terrorist attacks and, because of the increasingly network-dependent nature of much of the US economy and infrastructure, cyber attack.
- In response, the United States must develop appropriate defensive capabilities, including border-, port- and cyber-security measures, and missile defense.