Prof.dr. I.G.B.M. Duyvesteyn

Strategic Illiteracy.
The Art of Strategic Thinking
in Modern Military Operations.

Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Strategic Illiteracy.
The Art of Strategic Thinking in Modern Military Operations.

Inaugural lecture by

Prof.dr. I.G.B.M. Duyvesteyn

on the acceptance of her position of Special Chair in

Strategic Studies

at Leiden University

on behalf of the Foundation for Strategic Studies

on Monday 10 June 2013

Universiteit
Leiden

Mr Rector, honourable members of the board of the foundation for Strategic Studies and members of the board of trustees of this chair, dear audience,

Recently a book has been published in which the author draws attention to one of the most underrated strategic thinkers of the eighteenth century, Jane Austen.[1] Yes indeed, the Jane Austen of *Pride and Prejudice, Sense and Sensibility* and *Persuasion.* Since this claim brings together two of my main passions, English literature and strategy the book immediately caught my attention. Before you think, where is this going, stories about repressed emotions sprung from the over-active imagination of an old spinster, nothing is further from the truth. Prof. Chwe argues in his book that the mapping of the social dynamics in the novels of Jane Austen touches on the essence of strategy. The book *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, follows the adventures of the five unmarried daughters of Mr. Bennet; how can we marry them off well, without much of a dowry to offer? When the second daughter Elizabeth Bennet, in an interview with Lady Catherine de Bourgh, is pressed to forfeit on a marriage with Mr. Darcy, who is socially beyond her station and whom she had rejected before because of his alleged pride, she refuses to make that promise. Hereby Elizabeth indirectly signals to Darcy that his renewed attempts would be welcome.

Chwe identifies fifty such cases of strategic manipulation in the social relations in the work of Austen. He specifically points to the importance of what he calls "cluelessness". The various parties display very different degrees of strategic thinking, caused either by a lack of capacity, but also a lack of recognition that strategic thinking is actually necessary, the cluelessness. Lady de Bourgh had probably not contemplated that Elizabeth, her subordinate in the social hierarchy, could even consider manipulating her to deliver a strategic message to Darcy. In her indignation at the impertinent behaviour of

Elizabeth, Lady de Bourgh functions as an unwitting mediator and becomes in fact a subordinate of Elizabeth.

This is in short the issue I would like to address today, the lack of strategic thinking based on what I consider some degree of cluelessness, but even more so, an alarming degree of strategic illiteracy, among political, military and scholarly thinkers. At this point I do not want to incriminate myself any further in what has been called literary Darwinism, the search for the *Origin of Species* by sifting through older texts.[2] I think it was Goethe who has previously claimed that all the brilliant thoughts have been thought before, the art is to think them again; indeed this afternoon we will attempt to rethink the essence of strategy.

My aim is to develop my argument by first addressing what strategy is, make clear based on four basic rules, how it operates and subsequently provide both an explanation and a solution for why strategic thinking is so difficult.

Strategy is about the exercise of power.[3] How do you ensure that you opponent does what you want him or her to do and, which he or she is not inclined to do initially? Strategy is about the use of available resources to ensure that your opponent changes course. A smart strategy will attempt to achieve the goal with limited, ingenious or surprising uses of resources, and not necessarily the most powerful tools, such as the military. As Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu wrote over two thousand years ago, the ultimate art of war is to subdue your opponent without the use of force.[4]

How does strategic thinking work? In thinking about the use of resources to achieve a goal, a host of factors must be taken into account that will make it difficult to plan ahead. Strategic thinking always has something speculative. How will an opponent react to your actions and what reactions will you formulate yourself?[5] Strategy aims to increase the

price of continued resistance, until the price of that resistance no longer weighs up against yielding to the desires of the opponent. It is unlikely that the rationality that you have in mind in planning your actions plays out in practice, when decisions have to be taken under time pressure. Not only does a thinking and calculating opponent play a role, but also the context of available resources and technology, the time horizon, the geographical conditions, history, culture, morality, ethical considerations, emotions and intuition need to be incorporated.

Strategy can be sub-divided into the so-called levels of strategy.[6] The first level is the tactical level involving manpower and equipment that come into contact with each other. The second level is the operational level where the military plans of the opponents meet. At this level, the link between the objective and the military plan that is supposed to bring the aim closer is practically elaborated.[7] The highest level of strategy involves the merging of the political objective and the military plan. Strategy is not the same as policy, it is the link between the goals and the use of resources, the civil-military interface.[8] All levels interact and are mutually dependent. States but also non-state actors, such as rebel movements and terrorist groups, can develop strategy and put it into effect.

The levels of strategy can be compared with language, the tactical level, the words are the building blocks of a sentence, the operational level is the syntax or sentence structure, words must be in a specific order to be understandable. For example, there should ideally be a capital letter and a full stop at the end of a sentence The strategic level is the grammar, every good sentence has a subject, a verb and preferably also a direct and an indirect object. But only with the addition of logic, the target at the strategic level, has the sentence meaning. It can be understood and can fit within a larger text. Will it become a novel, a song or a poem? All parts are necessary and are mutually dependent, and so it is with strategy. Without words

there will be no sentence, without a sentence there will be no logic and there is little logic without words.

What is the problem then with strategy? The issue is that we are suffering from collective strategic illiteracy, we have forgotten how to think strategically. There is a problem with the directives of the political leadership to the military planners, which are suboptimal. How can, for example the very broad ambition of creating a democratic state be translated into a viable military plan, what is the grammar if you will? Soldiers have failed to explain the possibilities and limitations of the use of the military instrument to attain specific ends, there is a problem with the logic. The relationship between the objectives to be achieved and the resources available is completely off balance. Too large, unclear or unrealistic objectives, in combination with limited or inappropriate resources, makes conducting a thorough strategy a far-fetched goal.[9]

Two examples can illustrate the problem; in 2010 General Stanley McChrystal was recalled from Afghanistan because he asked, among others, in an interview with a journalist from the magazine Rolling Stone, for a strategy that was lacking. What was the policy goal that should be achieved in Afghanistan? Originally in 2001 it was focused on the destruction of Al Qaeda, which was held responsible for the 9/11 attacks. Then it shifted to the expulsion of the Taliban that supported Al Qaeda, subsequently the goal was reinforcing the democratically elected government of Hamid Karzai and re-building the Afghan state, which had never existed in the form it was now proposed. What military plan could be developed to connect all this? Which centre of gravity could be identified to tie all this together? Not only the political ambition but also the scope of the military deployment need to be viewed critically here.

In 1952 during the Korean War, General Douglas MacArthur was also called back, in this case because he had independently

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advocated a change in strategy, which was importantly the domain of political decision-makers.[10] An attack on China was not within the range of options which the politicians in Washington had in mind. During the Cold War, without wanting to glorify this period of the so-called long peace, there was a clear strategy that Western states shared: curbing the influence of the Soviet Union through deterrence, containment and preventing escalation of conflicts in the Third World. Among others in the shape of the Truman doctrine, there was a strategy that was thought out and that was the subject of debate and refinement.

We have forgotten how to formulate viable political objectives, which can serve as a basis for making realistic military plans. Especially in the last twenty years strategic illiteracy has increased. We have been searching for our position and an appropriate strategic vision. The optimistic new world order of President Bush the elder, peace operations, the Global War on Terror, counter-insurgency and now the Long War, none of these ideas has enjoyed a great deal of enthusiasm, has been well thought out or subject of continued and widespread, public and scientific debate. We have tended to switch from one idea to another. It seems that our recent opponents, such as the former Al Qaeda network and the Taliban, Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi militias have been much more apt in thinking through a strategy, they at least have enjoyed superiority in their strategic message and involving the population in war.

It is true that current threats do not always offer the challenge to think strategically, we seem to be stuck to some degree on the aforementioned cluelessness. Perhaps a geostrategic rise of China or the prospect of a cyber-war might change this. Power transitions and economic crises such as we are experiencing presently have been previously linked to the outbreak of large-scale war. Thinking about cyber war is still in its infancy, and a comparison with the early years of the Cold War, when various strategic concepts were developed, seems appropriate.[11] At the

moment however, we seem to focus on tactical operations, such as disrupting hostile organization and taking out enemy leaders, rather than concentrating on the weaknesses of our opponents and implementing a deliberate and well considered strategy.

I am neither the first nor the only one who identifies strategic illiteracy as a problem. Bernard Brodie, one of the founders of the field of strategic studies, did so already in 1949.[12] He made his assessment on the eve of what is now known as the golden age of strategic studies.[13]

Those who know me and my work will not be surprised that in my elaboration of the problem, I will use four central ideas about strategy, which can be traced to the much admired Prussian strategic thinker, and founder of the scientific study of war, Carl von Clausewitz. Maybe some of you were already wondering why it took me so long to get to this point. I will not disappoint you. Clausewitz was a Prussian soldier and an eyewitness to the Napoleonic wars. He had great respect for Napoleon's military successes, which formed an important source of inspiration for his magnum opus *Vom Kriege,* which was unfinished and published posthumously in 1832.[14]

The four central ideas that I would like to discuss are the following: firstly, before you can design a good strategy, you must understand the war you are fighting. Secondly, war is a continuation of politics by other means and thus strategy is a translation of the political objectives into military plans. Third, war is a versatile phenomenon, Clausewitz himself speaks about a chameleon, which means, among other things, that the motives for war can change over the course of time. Finally, Clausewitz warns that results in war are rarely final. I will argue that strategic thinking is largely an art rather than a science and that it is the approach to strategy, as expressed through rules and laws, which often gets in the way of clear strategic thinking.

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Understand the war you are fighting

How can we understand war? The essence of war is violence and a political objective linked in a means-ends relationship. Conflict trends show that the dominant form of war since the nineteenth century is civil war, an armed conflict fought in the context of a domestic political problem.[15] A large part of the study to war, however, has focused on international wars. This paradox characterises the field to the present day and can be explained by the pressing nature of the threat of international war rather than practice.

War is a duel on a larger scale in which the political aims shape the passions of the population and the chance of the use of the military instrument. Before you can apply force you need to have a clear picture of what drives your opponent, what his motives are and his centre of gravity. The centre of gravity is the one particular object or element, which will deliver the opponent's will when you have captured it. Often the centre of gravity is formed by his army, his capital, his main ally, his leader, the support of the population or a specific territory. The centre of gravity can also be the opponent's cohesion, motivation, will or information position. You need to understand what drives the opponent and then draw your own plan.

The etymological origin of the word strategy comes from ancient Greece where *strategos* meant general. What a general did on the battlefield in ancient Greece was the conduct of war, but his activities were closer to what we now call tactics rather than strategy. The idea of strategy surfaces at the end of the eighteenth century and the formation of standing professional armies.[16] The Napoleonic wars proved the usefulness of a distinction between what happened on and off the battlefield. Wars were usually settled on the battlefield with the physical presence of the political commander in the form of the knight or the king who on site had to admit defeat or claim victory. The policy and strategy to be followed were personified in one individual. However, the size of the battlefield and the *levee en*

masse in the Napoleonic Wars made distinguishing strategy a necessity.

The Enlightenment played an important role in the slow recognition to think through war. Maurice de Saxe wrote in 1732 in his *Reveries de l'Art de la Guerre* that all sciences have their own principles and rules and that war up till then had nothing. Can we do what Copernicus did for astronomy and Newton for physics and apply the scientific method to the study of war?[17] One of the writers who accepted this challenge to understand the essence of war was Heinrich von Bulow in his *Geist des neueren Krieg Systems* from 1799. He concluded in his book that there were geometric and mathematical principles to be discerned. Michael Howard called the book which was filled with mathematical formulas more than two centuries later 'rococo absurdity'.[18] A complete opposite conclusion was reached by Berenhort who stated that success in war could only be ascribed to individual genius. He found the formulation of rules futile, if everything one encounters forms the exception.[19]

During the nineteenth century two traditions developed in the thinking about war, one of which stated that war was largely an art and the exponent of this approach was Carl von Clausewitz. The other one approached war as possessing a degree of skill and this proposition can be traced to Antoine Henri, baron de Jomini.

Based on his observations of the Napoleonic wars, but also those of Prussian King Frederick the Great at the end of the eighteenth century, Clausewitz stated that the nature of war is immutable and the character dependent on time and context. In other words, the words and the meaning as part of the language, are time bound, but the grammar and logic are necessary conditions and know important constants.

Jomini, in the nineteenth century the most important military thinker, was of the opinion that warfare was based on rules

and immutable principles and with extensive study and analysis these could be traced. Jomini was a Swiss banker and unlike Clausewitz had never commanded a military force. The fact that Jomini was more influential than Clausewitz has been attributed to the fact that Jomini substantially out-lived Clausewitz. Only with the wars of German unification in 1870 and the statement of von Moltke the elder, who was largely responsible for their success, that his inspiration came from Clausewitz, did this situation change in favour of Clausewitz.

Why is it important to understand the war you are fighting and what does it matter if there is a difference between art and science? You cannot develop good strategy if you do not understand the character of war. According to Clausewitz the distinction between art and science was fundamental.[20] Science is aimed at the thorough understanding of a particular problem and at increasing human understanding. Art appeals to creativity, it has nothing to do with laws but is focused on effects on the mind and perception. Yet the distinction is not solid because art has certain laws that appeal to the spirit based, for example, on the geometry of architecture, or certain shapes and colours and their combinations that are simply more appealing than others. Conversely, science also appeals to a certain extent to creativity and inspiration that cannot be clearly categorised as scientific. During the nineteenth and twentieth century history the preference for one or the other approach swung almost like a pendulum.[21]

War as the continuation of politics by other means
The main starting point for thinking about strategy is that war is a continuation of politics by other means, according to Clausewitz. This is the instrumental or utilitarian perspective on war and it appeals to the primacy of politics. Military commanders are trained to see themselves as apolitical and follow the orders of their political masters. Problems develop when politics does not formulate clear directives for the military as a guide for action.[22]

The emergence of the specific field of strategic studies at the start of the Cold War was characterised by an initial emphasis on strategy as science. While in the nineteenth century in the study of war, the historical case study was central to the development of insights, during the early twentieth century this approach changed radically. The invention of nuclear weapons did - fortunately - not produce much empirical evidence, with the exception of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Theory without empirics became the new standard. How could war, as a continuation of politics, still apply if there was a risk of a war without limits? With the advent of nuclear weapons, strategy became a matter of theory and not practical experience, creating an opportunity for civilian scientists. It was a young civilian researcher who delicately pointed out to a General during a debate on strategic planning, "General, I have fought just as many nuclear wars as you have".[23] This was the beginning of the civilian tradition of thinking about strategy.

At the birth of the discipline, the idea of applying the scientific method to understand the phenomenon of war resurfaced. This time the field of economic science in particular, featured prominently to think through patterns, to build models and apply game theory and mathematics. The idea behind the use of economics was that the role of resources to achieve a certain end in strategy was similar to cost-benefit calculations that are central to economics. What was needed, according to the thinkers in this first golden generation of strategic studies, which included Brodie but also Herman Kahn and the later Nobel Prize winner Thomas Schelling, was theorization and substantiation of thinking about strategy. Schelling noted that in fact the armed forces, unlike almost every significant and self-respecting professional field had until then no serious scientific counterpart.[24]

It was Brodie, who in 1949 wrote a manifesto for the scientific study of strategy.[25] After Hiroshima so goes the story, he told his wife that all the work he had done up till then, especially in the area of the effects of technology on strategy, could go

in the garbage.[26] The widespread idea was that the advent of nuclear weapons had made all hitherto available knowledge on strategy obsolete. What motivated Brodie particularly was the fact that the quality of analysis that political decision-makers had to work with left lots to be desired.[27] The geopolitical landscape was clear and an actual military conflict held the risk of nuclear escalation. Thinking about strategy went into the abstract; Deterrence theory, escalation ladders and second-strike capabilities. The escalation ladder of Herman Kahn had, for example, 44 rungs, the last one being all out nuclear war.

Whereas in the early years of the Cold War, strategy was approached as a science, this changed at the end of the nineteen seventies. After the failures of Vietnam and the recognition of the shortcomings in thinking about armed struggle, there was more attention for war as art. There was a Clausewitz revival and a second generation of strategic thinkers appeared. They were responsible for the so-called 'empirical turn' with more emphasis on historical research. With Hedley Bull ahead of the troops, they argued for the study of history as a source of sound strategic thinking. There was a recognition of the limitations of the rational actor model that assumed that actors are always rational and weigh costs and benefits and an appreciation for the role of history and culture. Except for the ideas about limited warfare in the fifties, as a result of the Korean war, hardly any thought had been devoted to conventional war. Strategic thinking at this point was recaptured by the military from the civilian thinkers through the discovery or development of the operational level of war. Here soldiers could get back to the essence of their trade, how to wage an armed struggle

This could not prevent, however, that at the end of the Cold War, the field of strategic studies was left practically empty-handed. The focus during the previous five decades had been strongly focused on international conflict, while at the start of the nineties, the greatest threat was posed by civil war and internal conflicts. The accusations were fundamental, insights and theories of civil wars were conspicuously absent. At first these civil wars were even placed outside the utilitarian Clausewitzean paradigm and described as barbarism.[28]

War as a true chameleon
The lack of recognition that the essence of these civil wars also constituted of violence, a political purpose and a direct relationship between these two, cost us dearly. There was no appeal to strategic or operational thought. It is inevitable that if you are physically present, placed between the warring parties, protecting aid convoys and facilitating elections that you form a party, if only in the perception of the other belligerents. Impartial help to resolve a conflict proved to be a myth, it imparts a very normative agenda, based on the idea of a compromise peace and democratic elections, which should contribute to the establishment of a stable political order. The translation into military feasible plans left lots to be desired.[29]

There was hardly any strategic thinking even in the more conventional wars. While the 1991 Iraq war showed a clear political-military interface in the removal of the Iraqi occupation forces from Kuwait by defeating the Iraqi armed forces with airstrikes and a short war of attrition in Iraq itself. The causes of the political problem, the expansionist policies of Saddam Hussein, his alleged weapons of mass destruction stockpile and his lack of respect for human rights, lead to a new war in 2003.

Here we see again the tendency, as a result of the partial success of 1991, at least in an operational sense, to elevate lessons into science. The so-called *revolution in military affairs* at the beginning of the nineties on the basis of technological and tactical superiority are yet another expression of the Jominian ideas of war. With the use of appropriate technological means, automatically the desired effect could be reached.[30] Also ideas, popular at this time, such as effects-based operations and network-centric approaches, still showed echoes of Jomini.[31]

To what extent were we able to think strategically in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan? In Afghanistan the Taliban regime was ousted in 2001 in a very short time by deploying special forces and support of local factions. What should happen, however, after the Taliban was removed and what should the political future of Afghanistan look like, were questions that were not subject of fundamental debate. Kabul fell in 40 days of fighting, without a genuine strategy.[32] In Iraq this recipe would be repeated, the regime of Saddam Hussein was removed from power in record time and the subsequent civil war took the coalition force, as much as the Iraqis themselves, by surprise.[33]

The Western states were confronted by an insurgent force they were not prepared for and the political decision-makers failed to develop an appropriate answer. In the absence of an all encompassing vision, as others have noted, the operational level ended up filling the strategy gap.[34]

The rediscovery of classical counter-insurgency theory from the era of de-colonisation in the course of 2004 fits the image of the lower military ranks trying to claim strategy in its absence. Martin van Creveld believes that the overwhelming majority of the insights that exist in the field of counter-insurgency thinking,99% is not worth the paper it is written on, because it has been compiled by the losers.[35] Counter-insurgency had been dismissed since the Vietnam war and the perception was that it was preferable a type of engagement Western armed forces should not get involved in. The insights that were available dated mainly from the wars of decolonisation and soon the allegedly winning recipe of the British, derived from the war in Malaya between 1948 and 1962 were elevated to standard. The Malayan conflict was conducted by the communist party consisting mainly of the ethnic Chinese population of Malaya, who demanded independence from the British. By listening to the grievances of the local population, the 'hearts and minds', and the granting of independence, the British managed to get the

upper hand. Only recently have the voices of historians been heard that it is not such an ideal typical example as it has been made out to be, due to an earlier stage with extremely violent forced population relocations.[36] The idea was that a combined political and military leadership, as in Malaya, and a 'hearts and minds' policy towards the Iraqi and Afghan people, could fill the strategic vacuum, with for the military an emphasis on the operational and tactical levels.[37]

Together with the concept of the comprehensive approach, counter-insurgency is the only idea that could to some extent claim the label strategy. It seemed initially that counter-insurgency would live up to this expectation the moment that the commander in Iraq and later Afghanistan, General David Petraeus initiated the development of a U.S. counter-insurgency doctrine that was published in December 2006, and which, exceptionally for a military doctrine publication, featured for weeks in the New York Times bestseller list.[38] Furthermore, David Kilcullen, an Australian military adviser, who was influential in Washington, with his ideas on global counterinsurgency centring on curbing the jihadist inspired battles which were being fought in several conflict zones, tried to elevate counter-insurgency to strategy.[39]

The question is whether the lessons of another historical period were as applicable as presumed. In practice, the application became, on the one hand a checklist of rules and principles. This has caused some experts to now label counter-insurgency a tactical tool kit which can be drawn upon depending the circumstances.[40] On the other hand, counter-insurgency became an end in itself. Carrying out counter-insurgency became the logic of operations in Afghanistan.

The so-called comprehensive approach, also had claims on strategic thinking. The comprehensive approach to conflict, with the 3Ds of defence, diplomacy and development could contribute to conflict transformation from war to peace. The underlying analysis was that states plagued by civil

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war had problems in various fields, a lack of state capacity, underdevelopment, socio-economic inequality and a lack of respect for human rights.[41] The presence of external forces could contribute to alleviating all these problems at the same time.

The major shortcoming of the comprehensive approach is that it is based on the Western model of state formation and that no fundamental choices are made. The democratic state with a capitalist market economy is the product of a specific historical process that cannot be transplanted one on one to other parts of the world. It ignores the fact that in many cases civil wars are related to ongoing processes of state formation. Such a process is heavily dependent on the formation of a legitimate political order based on locally perceived legitimacy. Democracy may mean something very distinct in different contexts. The state-building literature indicates that one of the main mechanisms to create a legitimate political order is a monopoly of violence. This is exactly what the external intervention forces try to do for the local state, robbing the local rulers of all but their one main instrument for gaining legitimacy. This is illustrated by the difficulties experienced in creating the Afghan national army from scratch.

We can at present not but come to the conclusion that we are quite good at tactical disruption of our enemy, instead of generating strategic effect. Recent conflicts show that the development of a strategic vision for the future of Afghanistan, Libya and Mali is missing. We focus particularly on the disruption of the enemy through, for example, drone attacks in the Afghan-Pakistan border region, Yemen and Somalia, the cutting off of irregular groups aiming to occupy urban areas in the interior of Mali. A political vision of what should happen next continues to be absent.

A large part of the problem we owe to ourselves. At first it was still possible to detect opponents because they had a physical home, such as in Afghanistan, Libya, Somalia and Sudan. Our actions have had as an unintended effect that they have been deprived of their base, and their organisational structure and have now become elusive networks, an ideology and an idea with lone wolfs carrying out independent action, which is even more difficult to detect. Methods have changed, the range of actions has shifted as a result of our actions, substitution of one tactic for another has occurred. With the pressure on organizations and networks, a change of the motives and objectives has taken place, the opponent has been forced to opt for survival strategies, which has often strengthened internal cohesion and generated new frames of enmity. We have failed to capitalise on any of these developments.

Clausewitz has described war as a true chameleon, war can significantly alter over time because it is influenced by events during the war. Indeed, war is a dynamic and changing phenomenon. And above all, it is not linear; there is no direct link between the use of resources and the achievement of political objectives. More resources do not automatically lead to bringing the goals closer. Although the focus of my argument so far has been on the use of military means, to achieve strategic objectives the use of additional instruments is important. Manipulation of the political calculations of the opponent can take place in many different ways. The continuation of war may in some cases be realistic, even if the original objectives have become unattainable. Logical drivers, such as prestige, credibility and personal survival may become dominant. This way wars persist that could have been terminated much earlier.[42]

Strategic thinking must thus be flexible enough to adjust to the changing dynamics of war over the course of time. At the moment it seems that there is a lack of recognition of the centre of gravity in the fight against Islamic extremism. This may well be the uncommitted population on both sides. An effective strategy to play on this centre of gravity would be to point out the internal inconsistencies of the opponent.[43] Here again we fail to capitalise on the fact that the vast majority

of victims of violence are Muslim.[44] Even though the Taliban organisation has a code of conduct which forbids the killing of innocent civilians. Is this cluelessness? The policy aimed at eliminating the leadership of enemy organizations has as an important effect the strengthening of the internal cohesion of groups, the hardening of the convictions and increasing the recruitment potential because of a clear external enemy.

Strategic thinking also involves a focus on the internal dynamics of the opponent and manipulating the cleavages that exist within movements of insurgents. The insight the Sunni leaders in Iraq developed that they were better off without the support of Al Qaeda in Iraq, responsible for large numbers of casualties, the so-called Al Anbar Awakening, which happened to coincide with the Surge, the influx of a large number of troops, lead to a decline in the rebellion. Manipulating the strategic calculations of the opponent may offer better clues to attaining objectives rather than the deployment of more or better resources.

War is a true chameleon; There is a dynamic interaction between war and policy, which was prominent in the era of active warfare in the nineteenth century, and which we have lost during the Cold War with policies aimed at preventing war.[45]

Outcomes are rarely final
The past two decades, wars almost never end in a military victory. Increasingly, a negotiated peace or an undecided outcome are the ways in which wars terminate. Some of you will now think that this is a welcome development. Unfortunately, negotiated peace is highly unstable and results, in more than fifty percent of the cases, in a renewed outbreak of hostilities.[46] An undecided outcome, when the level of violence simply drops, also has a high probability of resumption. Compromise peace in non-democratic political systems is often a product of the outside which enjoys little internal legitimacy.

An inadequate and unrealistic vision of a future after the war is also related to a lack of strategic thinking. It is clear that a military victory is not the same as a political solution but also a flawed political outcome can be a source of more conflict. It is a precarious balance between generating the results you desire and that what is acceptable to your opponents. The higher the price you ask of your opponent, the greater the chance of a renewed outbreak of hostilities at a later date.[47] It often happens that opponents switch between strategies, the fight after a conventional defeat, for example, can be continued in the form of insurgency or terrorism.

Strategic thinking also means dealing with the realistic achievement of objectives and the development of alternative political orders in peacetime. Recent research has shown that external interventions in civil wars often have an implicit preference for the incumbent and against rebel movements that challenge state power. However, the latter are statistically more likely to achieve a durable peace.[48] In addition, the chance of a viable democracy is many times larger and economic development is in better hands with victorious rebel groups.

The bankruptcy of the neo-liberal paradigm of creating democratic states in our own image has already been announced, the challenge is to think about alternatives that take into account local conditions in states that attempt to escape from civil war. The main alternative political system to democracy is patrimonialism, a political order that rests on a patron-client relationship between different layers of the population based on a relationship of reciprocity. How can such a system that existed in Europe and came to an end-with some exceptions- by the French Revolution, lead to development? This is one of the key questions for the development of a viable strategy for these states.

I have in my speech tried to show that strategic thinking is largely an art rather than a science. We have, at the beginning

of the twenty-first century, to recognise that approaching war as being subject to laws and predictability has, so far, not produced any tenable laws. Michael Handel has not so long ago argued that the theory of war is in fact still in a pre-Newtonian, pre-formal stage.[49] An exception is perhaps the democratic peace thesis. Originally developed by Enlightenment thinker Immanuel Kant, who argued that democratic states do not fight wars against each other, it is to some extent applicable in international relations. As the use of the word thesis, however, suggests, this leaves on closer inspection a lot to be desired. For example, it has no relevance for explaining the dominant form of war, civil war. We must be vigilant that the approach to strategy as expressed through rules and laws does not hamper strategic thinking. Strategic thinking shows you how to think and not what to think and this is the essence.

An explanation; Why is strategic thinking so difficult?
There are a number of factors that complicate strategic thinking but which cannot form an excuse to not engage in it. First, there is a challenge for politicians and soldiers. The short time horizon of electoral cycles in democracies, usually four or five years, forms an obstacle to developing a long-term vision. In the Netherlands, the terms in office of the past few governments was even shorter. Politicians should be aware of their responsibility, not only for clearly thinking through and articulating potential threats and appropriate policies. Also there is a role for the armed forces to properly explain the possibilities and impossibilities of deploying the military instrument. We should not blame the military too much since they have Damocles´ sword hanging over them continuously. If they have to say no to the mission, they run the risk of further reductions in the defence budget. Demonstrating relevance forms an unrelenting pressure. An interesting anecdote is the alleged exchange between Madeleine Albright and Colin Powell at the time of the intervention issue in Bosnia in the nineteen nineties. Powell was very hesitant in the deployment of the armed forces for non-essential tasks, and Albright is reported to have asked him ; "Why do we have that great

military you always keep talking about, if we cannot use it?'.[50] Political decision-making would benefit from a good mutual understanding of the feasibility of goals and the use of appropriate means and a careful balance between the two.

Secondly, strategic thinking takes place primarily in the context of alliances and coalitions, as the most likely format for foreign intervention. The ambition of being a reliable coalition partner - 'to keep the Americans in'- must not and cannot absolve us from developing viable plans for conflict zones far away from home. John Mackinlay has suggested that the planning process within NATO as a result of the Cold War has 'become a ritual of Byzantine complexity'.[51] This, however, should not serve as an impediment for developing strategy. It is true that states plagued by civil war are responsible for their own future. However, if we further wish to assist these states, we must have a clear, achievable and scientifically sound understanding of how we want to engage. Strategic thinking is again essential.

Thirdly, there is a challenge in the field of education and science. Abstract theory without a link to reality does not make translating ideas into practice easier.[52] What is held to be true or essential scientifically might not always be politically feasible or appropriate. The field has always had to navigate between the "Scylla of political expediency and the Charybdis of academic relevance and credibility".[53] The first years of the nuclear debate have shown us that much theorising was not feasible nor realistic when confronted with practice.[54] However, there is hope, the field of strategic studies has a long tradition of painful experiences and shortcomings that form an incentive for new ideas and debate.[55]

Solutions? To encourage more strategic thinking we need proper training and an appreciation for strategic thinking as a career option. One of the main causes of a lack of strategic thinking is an underestimation of the fundamental nature of strategic thinking as an enterprise.[56] We must avoid at all cost falling into the trap of cluelessness. Without clear strategic

theory we run the risk of operational planning outflanking strategy.[57] The development of a career perspective with a specific focus on strategy as a core competency in the Foreign Office and the armed forces would be my main practical recommendation.[58]

To finish the story of Elizabeth Bennet from *Pride and Prejudice*, with whom I started my speech, of course she gets her Mr. Darcy, unlike Austen who never married, but who has now not only been posthumously credited as the author of game theory that played such a huge role during the golden age of strategic thinking, even before the original author John von Neumann with his 1944 publication of the *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*. She has also been hailed in fact as the one and only strategic thinker of the eighteenth century, for the critical listener, before the invention of strategic thought as a product of the Napoleonic wars.[59] It was another great English author who claimed that 'all's fair in love and war' indicating an even greater similarity between romance and military strategy than Jane Austen could have ever intended or imagined. The underlying message, however, might be, to beware of ladies with a pen writing about love … and strategy.

A word of thanks
First of all, I am indebted to the board of the foundation for Strategic Studies for the confidence it has bestowed on me. My great teacher and mentor Jan Geert Siccama should have been here today. Unfortunately, we were forced to bid our final farewells at far too early an age, exactly one year ago this month. Yet he is here today, I have the great privilege to wear his gown. Thank you, dear Wilma.
I stand here alone, however, I do tend to think about practicing science as an activity that you just cannot do on your own. I would like to thank my colleagues and friends who continually challenge me and keep me on my toes. The fact that I will serve the field of strategic studies in this present capacity is also a recognition for all of you that you are important and make a difference!

I would also like to thank my students. I have the privilege to guide you and teach you in this important and formative phase in your lives and it is a great pleasure to see a new generation develop. And as I argued earlier, there is great need for new and fresh strategic thinkers.
Je veux aussi bien remercier ma meilleure amie Claire, qui est avec nous aujourd'hui; pour plus de vent ans d' amitié. Merci chère Claire.
My parents and my sister for their help and support in good times and in challenging times, without them this could not have been realised. Thank you.
My story this afternoon talked about a few villains and many heroes, my own heroes are Antoinette, Etienne, Benedict and Sebastian. I am indebted to them for many things but in particular for keeping me in balance and for showing me at times that, even though it is nice to show off to your friends that mom has written a book with a soldier on the front cover, writing books is not the most important thing in life. And finally my own romantic hero, Mark, thanks for everything, everything in particular.

I have said.

Notes

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9 Strachan, 'The Lost Meaning of Strategy', 166.

10 Strachan, 'The Lost Meaning of Strategy', 158.

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13 In the case of the Netherlands specifically, recently an active serving officer complained in a letter to a national newspaper that from the perspective of the work floor it has increasingly become unclear what indeed the military is for. Sander Luik, 'Geachte Minister: Niemand weet meer waar Defensie voor staat', *NRC Handelsblad*, 11 mei 2013. John Mackinlay has argued that there is a widespread tendency of 'strategy-free decision making'. Mackinlay, 'The End of a Strategy-free Decision Making Environment'.

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16 Strachan, 'The Lost Meaning of Strategy'.

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19 See discussion in: Thomas Waldman, 'Clausewitz and the Study of War', *Defence Studies*, 12, 3 (2012), 345-374.

20 See for this treatment: Waldman, 'Clausewitz and the Study of War', 356.

21 The positions of Clausewitz and Jomini were in many cases not as radically opposed as has been made out. Michael Handel has shown that Clausewitz and Jomini showed more commonalities than differences in interpretation. Michael Handel, *Masters of War; Classical Strategic Thought,* 2nd ed. London: Frank Cass 1996. Jomini did treat the metaphysical aspects of war and concludes that his theories should not be seen as mathematical formulae to prescribe action in war. Antoine Henri de Jomini, *Art of War* Texas; El Paso Norte Press 2005, 258, 260.

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Isabelle Duyvesteyn

Duyvesteyn argues in her inaugural speech that in the past two decades we have largely forgotten the art of how to think strategically. Strategic thinking importantly involves linking means and ends in foreign policy. The field of strategic studies has a long tradition of applying scientific methods to uncover rules and principles of warfare. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, scholars have tried, based on careful study, to dissect the essence of war. Till today no generally valid laws have emerged. The urge to think about war as subject to rules and principles, Duyvesteyn argues, has acted as an important impediment to sound strategic thinking. Strategic thinking ultimately does not dictate what you should think when waging war but it rather offers a framework on how to think about war. Strategic thinking is difficult because it is based on a long-term vision that is arduous to realise in short electoral cycles, and in the complex context of alliance and coalition decision-making. Yet strategic thinking is essential to realise foreign policy objectives. What, for example, do we do with states that are plagued by armed conflict and how can we contribute to their stabilisation? These are key questions that need an answer before a new and necessary strategic vision can be developed. The solution Duyvesteyn proposes, to achieve greater strategic thinking, is to formally recognise a core competency of strategic planning as a career path in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence. There is also a role for education and research to contribute to a necessary debate on strategic thinking and the essence of strategy.

2012	Appointment Special Chair in Strategic Studies, by the Foundation for Strategic Studies, with a focus on international security.
Since 2001	Assistant Professor, and since 2007 Associate Professor, at Utrecht University, Department of History and Art History/ History of International Relations.
2007 - 2012	Project leader of the VIDI project, 'A History of Counter-terrorism 1945-2005.
Since 2008	Member of the Advisory Council on International Affairs, Committee on Peace and Security.
2001	Assistant professor, Royal Military Academy, Faculty of Military Operational Science.
1997 - 2001	PhD King's College London, War Studies.
1996 - 1997	Junior Researcher, Dutch Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael'.
1991 - 1996	BA and MA in Liberal Arts, specialising in History of International Relations and Political History, University of Utrecht.

Universiteit Leiden