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Grand Patterns of Strategy, old and new

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We have been invited to contribute a chapter to this work on the basis of our editorship of a two-volume work on the *History of Strategy* that is due to appear with Cambridge University Press. Meanwhile, Jeremy Black, who was on our advisory board, proposed us to join this online collection covering similar ground. We are drawing on the fifty-odd contributions in those two volumes in the present chapter, and want to express our gratitude to our own contributors. Rather than duplicating our own conclusions in those volumes, however, in the following, we will take a fresh approach. We shall home in on only two particular dimensions of strategy, one a tool, the other a key consideration that changed fundamentally over time. Both demonstrate both continuity and change in the history of strategy.

Constant Dimensions of Strategy-Making

For millennia, thinkers on war have pondered its particular manifestation as a function of different cultures, different particularities of the polities waging it. They have attributed particular "ways of war" to conditions of weather and the lie of the land, to the temperaments of particular peoples, or to the political constitutions of the polities engaged in war. Clausewitz who merely picked up on earlier writings is the one most frequently quoted on this topic, as he noted that each period, each people had its own particular way of waging war.

There are some longer-term constants, however, ever-present in the conduct of war, and in strategic decisions on how to wage war. In our two-volume work on the strategies of different rulers and polities over time and around the world, we have defined strategy, following Kimberly Kagan, as the setting of a ruler's or a government's objectives and of prioritising among them in order to allocate resources and choose the best means to prosecute a violent engagement.[1] In this

1 B. Heuser and I. Duyvesteyn: "Introduction", in B. Heuser and I. Duyvesteyn (eds): *The Cam-*

process of strategy making – usually revolving around the prioritisation of the allocation of finite resources – there are a number of dimensions which, implicitly or explicitly, have to be taken into account. Across time and space, we note the continued significance of geography, the population and material resources, as well as allies and decision-making processes.

Debating the Dimensions of Strategy

Very simply, the dimensions of strategy should begin, as already noted by authors of Antiquity, with *geography*. They will include *demography*: not only the size of a population, but the *proportion* of it that is available to wage war, also its *skills*. They will also include other *resources*, *money* (the famous "sinews of war") and *military means* available. They will also include *how strategy is developed*, and whether it has the support of the polity that is to apply it.

Consider the following famous speech attributed to the Athenian leader Pericles by the author of the great history of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides. Pericles was making the case that Athens would prevail in war against Sparta given what land (and sea) Athens controlled (geography), the ships it had (resources), and the seafaring skills of its population (demography). [2] The Spartans, he argued, were mainly farmers who could not afford to be absent from their homes from long, and lacked seafaring *skills*, highlighted by this first passage.

> For our naval skill is of more use to us for service on land, than their military skill for service at sea. Familiarity with the sea they will not find an easy acquisition. … is there any chance of anything considerable being effected by an agricultural, un-seafaring population, who will besides be prevented from practising by the constant presence of strong squadrons of observation from Athens? … seamanship, just like anything else, is a matter of art, and will not admit of being taken up occasionally as an occupation for times of leisure; on the contrary, it is so exacting as to leave leisure for nothing else.[3]

There were not the *resources*, the public funds – no accumulation of state capital – to hire mariners to man a fleet.

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bridge History of Strategy vol. 1 (CUP, expected 2024); see K. Kagan: "Redefining Roman Grand Strategy", *The Journal of Military History* Vol. 70 No. 2 (2006), p. 348.

2 R. Konijnendijk: "Ancient Greece; Strategy of the City States (500-400BCE)", in Heuser and Duyvesteyn (eds): *The Cambridge History of Strategy* vol. 1.

3 This and the following excerpts are taken from Richard Crawley's translation, Thucydides: *The Peloponnesian War* (London, J. M. Dent; New York, E. P. Dutton. 1910), Book I.140-145.

> Even if they were to touch the moneys at Olympia or Delphi, and try to seduce our foreign sailors by the temptation of higher pay, that would only be a serious danger if we could not still be a match for them by embarking our own citizens and the aliens resident among us. But in fact by this means we are always a match for them; and, best of all, we have a larger and higher class of native … sailors among our own citizens than all the rest of Hellas.

(In fact, he doubted that Athens' foreign sailors would allow themselves to be bribed.) Nor indeed did Sparta have the money to construct fortifications in Attica, the land around Athens, to threaten the city state.

"Besides," he noted, "they have not command of the sea." *Geographically*, Athens had great advantages as a coastal city-state commanding many islands in the Aegean onto which the Athenians could withdraw and from which they could be supplied by sea. If the Spartans

> march against our country we will sail against theirs, and it will then be found that the desolation of the whole of Attica is not the same as that of even a fraction of Peloponnese; for they will not be able to supply the deficiency except by a battle, while we have plenty of land both on the islands and the continent. The rule of the sea is indeed a great matter. … Suppose that we were islanders; can you conceive a more impregnable position?

And given Athens' strong navy, the Spartans could "never prevent our sailing into their country and raising fortifications there, and making reprisals with our powerful fleet." Indeed, given Athens' naval superiority, the Spartans, "with a small squadron … might hazard an engagement, encouraging their ignorance by numbers; but the restraint of a strong force will prevent their moving, and through want of practice they will grow more clumsy, and consequently more timid."

Finally, said Pericles, the Spartans needed to rely on their allies, but lacked "the single council-chamber requisite to prompt and vigorous action, and the substitution of a diet composed of various races, in which every state possesses an equal vote, and each presses its own ends, a condition of things which generally results in no action at all." In other words, their *collective decision-making processes* sucked.

Having passed review all these dimensions of strategy – geography, the respective human resources and their skills, treasure, allies and decision-making processes, Pericles suggested the following strategic guidelines:

> Dismissing all thought of our land and houses, we must vigilantly guard the sea and the city. No irritation that we may feel for the former must provoke us to a battle with the numerical superiority of the Peloponnesians. A victory would only be succeeded by another battle against the same superiority: a reverse involves the loss of our allies, the source of our strength, who will not remain quiet a day after we become unable to march against them. We must cry not over the loss of houses and land but of men's lives; since houses and land do not gain men, but men gain them.[4]

In other words, he recommended that Athens should, if necessary, temporarily cede territory and let the Spartans lay their land to waste, rather than risk a land battle. Here, then, a complex strategy put forward, even in the Fifth Century BC, considering all the dimensions of strategy named above, to build a sophisticated plan. What more evidence is needed to prove that strategic thinking existed, a good 1300 years before the term strategy was used in a modern sense by the Byzantine Emperor Leo VI round AD 900?[5]

Further dimensions of strategy were identified even by classical authors. One of them, resonating in the last part of Pericles' speech quoted about, was articulated more fully in much later times. It concerns the constitution of the polities at war, and how this constitution would influence strategy-making. Was it a tyranny with little concern for the lives of its subjects? Was it a republic governed in the interest of its citizens?[6] It is noteworthy, however, that in the Peloponnesian War which was cast in the account of Thucydides as a conflict between two political systems, the Spartan monarchy vs. Athenian democracy, speeches were made in both polities to rally the citizens to the cause. Only, in Athens, on several occasions Thucydides recorded speeches made for and against strategic decisions. On both sides, the consulted citizens took a vote; on the Spartan side, however, the decision was taken "by acclamation" not by vote.[7]

The very decision-making, the strategy-making process would thus depend on a polity's constitution, whether formally fixed or observed by tradition and practice. Interestingly, however, we have evidence of debates even in all but the most brutal dictatorships.[8] To give just one random non-European example, on

4 Thucydides: *The Peloponnesian War*, Book I.140-145.

5 Beatrice Heuser: *The Evolution of Strategy* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), chapter 1.

6 We find this idea in Guibert's *General Essay on Tactics* and in Henry Lloyd's reflections on his experience of the wars of the mid-18th century.

7 Thucydides: *The Peloponnesian War*, Book I.87

8 Lawrence Freedman, *Command in War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2022).

the eve of the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 against a combined army of Byzantines and Armenians, the Seljuk sultan Alp Arslan

> assembled those possessed of judgement from amongst the men of war, of administration and care for the Muslims and insight into the consequences, and he sought their counsel about how to achieve correctness of judgement. They consulted amongst themselves for a short while. Then their opinion was agreed on meeting [the enemy in battle].[9]

Thus the account of the account of the Andalusian counsellor Al-Turtushi, written half a century after the battle. Other than telling us that there was *consultation*, resulting in the agreement to go to battle, however, we are not told what their agreed strategy was, although we read that the Muslim forces homed in on the Byzantine emperor's tent, arrested him, spread the fake news that he was dead and thus decapitated the enemy forces, so to speak.[10]

Was Thucydides a fluke, a one-off, given that so many works on strategy may quote him, but then fast forward to Machiavelli and the Renaissance? We found that this was not the case, even though later authors may have expressed things differently, sometimes with other dimensions in mind that seem less relevant or even irrelevant to us today. These would include, as in our examples below, the spiritual dimension of a war (as in the crusades, that had the purpose of cleansing crusaders of their previous sins by making the sacrifice of the long and dangerous pilgrimage that a large proportion did not survive), or the court rivalries that found their expression in the elite debates about how to proceed (the latter are of crucial importance even today and should be considered much more).

Turning, then, to our next example, *geographic* and *political* considerations were also at the heart of a debate about which strategy to adopt in a medieval monarchy, that of France, when King Louis IX embarked on the Seventh Crusade.[11] Instead of taking the direct route to the Holy Land, Louis and his barons first turned in at Cyprus, a friendly Christian kingdom. But from there, again, the French crusaders did not head East for Jaffa or Acre, but South, for the Sultanate of Egypt, which from the South dominated the Holy Land. In late 1249, Sire de Joinville tells us, after his barons had successively disembarked in

9 Translation by and in Carole Hillenbrand: Turkish Myth and Muslim Symbol: The Battle of Manzikert (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 28.

10 Ibid., pp. 29-31.

11 Sophie Ambler: "Strategies in Latin Christendom, c. 1000-1500", in Heuser and Duyvesteyn (eds): *The Cambridge History of Strategy*

Damietta, including eventually the Count of Poitiers,

> The king summoned all the barons of the army to decide in what direction he should go, whether to Alexandria or to Cairo. The good Count Pierre of Brittany, as well as the majority of the barons, agreed in advising him to go and besiege Alexandria, because that city had a good harbour, where the ships bringing food for the army could land their supplies. But the Count of Artois [the king's brother] was of a contrary opinion, maintaining that he would never agree to their going anywhere except to Babylon,[12] because it was the chief city of the kingdom of Egypt, and if you wished to kill the serpent, you must first of all crush its head.

Thus here we find the geographically and thus logistically preferable option touted by one side, the seizing of the capital – like the decapitation of the enemy leadership practised by Alp Arslan at Manzikert another example of going for a *centre of gravity* as defined centuries later by Clausewitz[13] – by the other, with the aim of crushing the enemy's political centre. "The king rejected the barons' advice in favour of his brother's."[14] Thus the host set out for Cairo, but on the way met their nemesis at Mansoura, where they were defeated by the sultan's army while attempting to take and hold this strongpoint en route to Cairo. This was the turning point of the Seventh Crusade, leading to the withdrawal of the crusaders' army.

While in the previous example, the king seems to have decided against the majority among his counsellors, perhaps swayed by his brother's argument, perhaps merely by the fact that it was his brother, we find another French monarch and his counsellors operating more subtly four centuries later. The example is that of the decision as to whether or not to prolong a campaign and seek battle was taken by Louis XIV of France.[15] After a very successful start in one of his wars with Spain pushing into Flanders in 1676, Louis XIV at the head of his army had to decide whether to seek battle or not. His own forces were superior to those facing him, even though the contingent under the Duke of Orleans had not yet reached him.

> The marshals de Schomberg, Humières, la Fueillade, Lorges, etc. gathered their horses around the king, along with some of the most dis-

12 What was meant was Cairo.

13 Carl von Clausewitz : *On War*, ed. & trs. by Peter Paret and Michael Howard (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1976), Book VIII.4.

14 Joinville : *Vie de Saint Louis,* Jacques Monfrin (ed.), (Paris : Garnier, 1995), para 183, p. 254f..

15 Jamel Ostwald : "The Strategies of Louis XIV", Heuser and Duyvesteyn (eds): *The Cambridge History of Strategy*

> tinguished among the generals and chief courtiers, to hold a sort of war council. The whole army was crying out for battle, and all these gentlemen could see what was required, but the King's presence was preventing them [from speaking frankly], and even more so [his chief minister] Louvois, who knew his master, and who had been talking for two hours when it began to look as if things might come to a head. Louvois, in order to impress the company, spoke first, as a rapporteur, to argue against giving battle. Marshal d'Humières, his close friend and dependant, and Marshal de Schomberg, who was very obliging to him, agreed with him. The Marshal de la Feuillade, out of step with Louvois, but a favourite who knew no less well what opinion to take, after a few prevaricating remarks, concluded as they did. [Marshal] de Lorges, inflexibly committed to the truth, concerned for the glory of the King, sensitive to the good of the State, ill-favoured by Louvois … opted with all his might for the battle, and he argued so fervently for it that even Louvois and the marshals remained without reply. The few men of lesser rank who spoke afterwards dared to displease Louvois even less; but unable to weaken the reasons of Marshal de Lorges, they only stammered. The King, who listened to everything, again noted the opinions, or rather simply [counted] the voices, without repeating what had been said by each one, then, with a word of regret at seeing himself held back by such good reasons, and of the sacrifice he was making of his desires to what was of benefit to the State, turned back, and there was no further question of battle.

The Duke of Saint-Simon claimed cynically, however, that the true reason why the King wanted to break off the campaign and return to Versailles was that he longed to return to his mistress, Mme de Montespan.[16]

Again, we have evidence here of deliberations, only in this example, unlike those reported by Thucydides and by Joinville, Saint-Simon does not got through the pros and cons presented by the respective sides, but contents himself to tell us about the unspoken reasons for the king's decision, his relief veiled by pretended regret, supported by those whose interest in the king's favour was greater than their interest, Sain-Simon implies, in the best outcome for their country.

Interests, of course, and thus war aims would differ, depending on who was involved in strategy-making. If a war was being fought exclusively about the inheritance rights of medieval or early modern European princes, these would generally wish to expose their own populations to danger as little as possible,

16 MM. Chéruel et Ad. Regnier Fils (eds.) *Mémoires de* [Louis de Rouvroy, duc de] *Saint-Simon*, vol. 12 (Paris : Librairie Hachette, 1887), p. 6f.

to keep them productive, paying their taxes, so that largely professional armies could be paid and provisioned. The armies would be largely professional if they were employed for expeditionary war, rather than for territorial self-defence. The *Heerbann* or *Arrièreban* in which peasants of fighting age were called up to fight for their lord and prince generally applied only to the defence of their own country. If the war was one of collective self-defence against large-scale foreign invasion, especially when the foreigners were pagans or Muslims – Huns, Goths, Saxons, Vikings, Arabs, Turks – who had no inhibitions about massacring Christians or carrying them off as slaves, or if an *ideological* element came in – initially, religion or confession, later political ideologies – the population itself were directly involved and motivated. (It was only such conflicts that Clausewitz imagined when in his secondary "trinity" he articulated the assumption that the conduct of war would be influenced by government, the armed forces, and the emotional involvement of the people.[17])

Quite late on, authors began to identify *technological innovation* as having a strong bearing on strategy. What we now think of as the technological revolution introduced by gunpowder was not recognised as such by the majority of authors of the 15th to 17th centuries.[18] Then, of course, things speeded up considerably from the second half of the 19th century, and there is consensus that the invention and use of nuclear weapons dramatically changed the world in an unprecedented way.

The use of tools other than battle in the pursuit of dynastic or collective polity interests also goes back to the beginnings of recorded history. Naval blockades or sieges aiming to cut off an enemy from resources and imports (often consisting of vital food supplies) or battles resulting from attempts to break out of blockades were among the earliest forms of naval warfare, as the Pericles speech suggests. Scorched earth tactics – burning the enemy's harvests – were widely practiced, and it became one of the earliest international conventions, often ignored but nonetheless found in many cultures, to abstain from burning fruit trees as this would not just affect the following months but would affect later generations.[19] The opposite strategy – buying off attackers – was practised as well throughout history, the most widely known example being the protec-

17 Clausewitz: *On War*, Book I.1.

18 Beatrice Heuser: "Denial of Change: the Military Revolution as seen by Contemporaries", in Mauro Mantovani (ed): *International Bibliography for Military History*, No. 32 (Leyden: Brill, 2012), pp.3-27.

19 See for example in the Hebrew Bible: Deuteronomy 20:16-20.

tion money paid by the native populations of Britain to the Vikings, referred to "Danegeld", and the many presents made by East Roman rulers to would-be aggressors (which unfortunately often had them come back for more).

Many non-kinetic tools strategy have a long history and persisted; others changed or even disappeared, replaced by new dimensions. It is worth stressing that not even geography or climate are perpetual. Many harbours of Antiquity or of the Middle Ages have silted up, new ones have been constructed, changing key access points for navies and the need to defend them. Climate change has accelerated catastrophically in our own times, and the consequences of the melting of the Arctic and the opening of the Arctic sea route to shipping around the year are affecting strategies as we write, but fluctuations in climate at various points allowed armies to attack over frozen lakes, bays or rivers. Geographic obstacles still stand in the way of land and sea forces, but have been mitigated by the constructions of canals such as those at Suez or Panama, or the Baltic-North Sea Canal (the sole purpose of which was military), and they can at some expense be overcome by airlift.

In the following we want to focus on two examples, one of a particular practice of strategy that has disappeared, the other one that has come into being only in the 19th century.

Example 1. Dynastic Marriages as a defunct tool of strategic practice

Dynastic marriages as a tool of conflict-oriented statecraft, but also as a part of military strategic practice go back to Antiquity. Dynastic marriages were made for the purposes of securing allies over a longer period of time, or to end wars and ensure a lasting peace. They took mainly two forms, one of which was more suitable to strategy-making than the other. That more suitable presupposed that above all the recipient ruler was polygamous. In this case, a princess or aristocratic girl or young woman would be given to a ruler as a gift, much like a good horse or jewellery or particularly well-crafted and decorated sword or set of armour.[20] The Hebrew Bible brags that King Solomon had a harem of 700 wives and 300 concubines, mostly presents made to him. (He went against Jewish law in keeping them as Jewish law forbad intermarriage with foreigners.)[21] While the Achaemenid dynasty that ruled Persia did not follow

20 See for example, Mesut Uyar: "Strategies of the Ottoman Empire", in Duyvesteyn & Heuser: *The Cambridge History of Strategy,* Vol. I

21 1 Kings 11.

this practice,[22] Alexander III of Macedon, who brought this first Persian Empire to its end, married Parysatis and Stateira (Barsine), daughters of the last two Achaemenid rulers, at the mass wedding ceremony he arranged at Susa to cement the union between his Macedonian and Greek officers and the Persians.[23] In Han period China (206 BC-220 AD), Han princesses were sent to the rulers of client states as brides to keep the peace,[24] a practice that would be continued under the following dynasties.[25] Once the Romans had overthrown their early kings, they scorned dynastic marriages as un-republican, and it was thus that their relationships with Egyptian Queen Cleopatra VII were black marks against both Caesar and Mark Antony that contributed to turning many against them. This attitude continued even under the principate: Roman emperors were not to marry foreigners. According to Suetonius, Emperor Titus loved and promised marriage to the Syrian Hasmonean Queen Berenice, but was persuaded to send her away from Rome as public opinion would not tolerate it.[26]

It mattered little whether the young woman in question came from a monogamous culture, as Byzantine princesses would find when they were gifted to Muslim potentates when their fathers saw this as preferable to warfare. Their influence (or lack of it) on the recipient side would generally be a function of the host nation culture, not of that from which they came.[27]

The second category often turned out to be highly problematic: here, the young women – and sometimes young men, as in the case of the marriage of the Habsburg scions Philip the Handsome and his son Maximilian I, or several German princes of the 19th century – were married off to heirs of other dynasties with a clear recognition that a (mainly male) child that might spring from that marriage would have succession rights. The reasoning behind this was interesting: it was both the symbolic merger of dynasties to secure a lasting peace and a

22 John Hyland: "Teispid and Achaemenid Persia (c. 550-330 BCE)", in Duyvesteyn & Heuser: *The Cambridge History of Strategy,* Vol. I Ch. 3.

23 Andrew Fear: "Philip II, Alexander III and the Macedonian Empire", in Duyvesteyn & Heuser: *The Cambridge History of Strategy,* Vol. I Ch.5.

24 Peter Lorge: "Beyond Sunzi: Military Strategy in China to the 3rd Century CE", in Duyvesteyn & Heuser: *The Cambridge History of Strategy,* Vol. I Ch. 2.

25 David Graff: "Chinese Imperial Strategy, 180-1127 CE", in Duyvesteyn & Heuser: *The Cambridge History of Strategy,* Vol. I Ch.7.

26 "Titus reginam Berenicen, cui etiam nuptias pollicitus ferebatur, statim ab Urbe dimisit invitus invitam." (Suet. Tit. 7.2).

27 Georgios Chatzelis: "Byzantine Strategy (630-1204 CE)", in Duyvesteyn & Heuser: *The Cambridge History of Strategy,* Vol. I, Ch.12.

gamble on the fertility of the couple and any other couples close to succession.

On the Indian Subcontinent, the Gupta rulers were monogamous, or at most had two wives. Marriages in both directions – accepting a princess from an allied polity as a wife or giving princesses to an ally in marriage – were an important part of their strategies. Chandragupta I married a princess from the Licchavi clan in the Himalayas, raising his political status. The wedding cemented an alliance that would enable him to deter and then conquer other immediate neighbours. Their son succeeded his father to the Gupta throne, who in turn was succeeded by his son Chandragupta II, who in 395 married his daughter to Rudrasena II, ruler of the neighbouring Vakataka. Here we see an early example of what such politically arranged marriages in monogamous dynasties could lead to. Rudrasena II relinquishing his own father's religion, the worship of Shiva, and instead embracing the worship of Vishnu, the religion introduced to his court by his wife. Then when Rudrasena died relatively young, his Gupta queen became the regent and shaped Vakataka foreign policy in tune with Gupta interest.[28]

Byzantine rulers turned their marriage politics into a fine art. Together with the spread of Christianity, which brough along the cult of Jewish kingship to tribal leaders who quickly recognised its benefits, Byzantine princesses given in marriage had a civilising mission. They would normally arrive along with a small court of theologians and scholars, with craftsmen, presents and fineries that would make local craftsmen marvel and seek to emulate them. Thus the Slav and Germanic families into which the princesses married would get a whiff of Roman civilisation which had long vanished or had never existed in the lands they ruled, with copies of Romano-Byzantine churches springing out of the ground from Muscovy to Cologne, with ivories, icons, sculptures and manuscript illuminations, and with imperial clothing and rituals copied on the court of Constantinople.[29] Elegantly and with little or no bloodshed, barbarian rulers would thus become sons-in-law of Byzantine emperors, be given honorary titles such as Caesar, and with their increasingly civilised polities would be harnessed to the cause of the defence of the Byzantine Empire and Byzantine interests.[30]

In the Occident, marriage politics also had an element of Christian mission

28 Kaushik Roy: "The Gupta Empire: 319-544 CE", in Duyvesteyn & Heuser: *The Cambridge History of Strategy,* Vol. I, Ch. 9.

29 Chatzelis: "Byzantine Strategy (630-1204 CE)".

30 Edward Luttwak: *The grand strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

attached to it in the Early Middle Ages – a number of Christian princesses exported Christianity when they were married off to pagan tribal chiefs, an early and much celebrated example being the marriage of Frankish chief Clovis to Clothilde, a Christian Gothic princess, with whom he founded the Merovingian dynasty. Clothilde persuaded him to convert to Christianity, with the famous wager that he would do so if he won a victory against the pagan Alemanni, which he did at the very end of the 5th century. As this was the brand of Christianity that was favoured by Rome at the time, Clovis became the champion of the papacy, and acquired for France the claim to be "the oldest daughter of the Catholic Church", and indeed to have a claim to leadership of Christendom – later transformed into the *mission civilisatrice* of bringing human rights and other aspects of modern civilisation to the rest of the world, and within Europe, the claim to leadership seen until this day. Not always exercised peacefully – French leadership of the crusades was engineered by Pope Urban II in 1095 precisely by appealing to the traditional claim to such leadership going back to Clovis – it has in any case been a key dimension of French strategy. France's seat among the permanent five great powers in the UN Security Council ultimately stands in the tradition of this claim to leadership.

To illustrate how such dynastic marriages were seen as instrumental to cementing peace but also alliances against common enemies, here one example. In 1501, two toddlers, both only a year old, were engaged to each other by their parents. One was Claude, daughter of Valois King Louis XII of France and Anne of Brittany. The other was Charles, heir to the throne of Spain, who would later also become Holy Roman Emperor as Charles V. The baby bride's young mother organised a big banquet to celebrate this event, quite a daring wager on fate, as she had already lost her four previous children in their early infancy.

An eyewitness recorded the entertainment that was provided at the banquet in Lyon, a dance full of political symbolism. Three couples of dancers performed – one dressed in the French fashion of the day, one in the German fashion (baby Charles's father was a Habsburg prince), one in a distinctive Italian fashion. The three couples were suddenly joined by a further, single dancer of fierce mien, dressed up to look foreign and rich. He tried in turn to abduct each of the three ladies, but was repelled, and eventually retreated angrily. "This alien is to be understood as the Grand Turk, who at the time menaced France, Spain, Germany and Italy. And the couples of dancers … were supposed to signify the unity, peace and agreement between the said countries, which were to be joined together so tightly by the strength of the marriage contract that … the Turk will

not gain power over them."[31] Unfortunately for Europe, the engagement contracts were later dissolved, each child later marrying somebody else, setting the Habsburgs and the Valois (later the Bourbons) on a conflictual path of dynastic rivalry and wars of succession which would only end in the early 19th century.

But the opposite could also happen. The very wars of succession between the French Bourbons and the Spanish Habsburgs that took place in the second half of the 17th and the early 18th century were based on inheritance claims derived from marriages between Spanish princesses and future French kings. These marriages had been made, again, with the intention of cementing peace between the two great families of Europe. But the roulette of fertility (and the in-breeding of the Habsburgs who at various stages thought it wiser to keep their weddings within their family, leading to high infant mortality and then sterility in the last two generations of the Spanish Habsburgs) turned just these intentions upside down, leading to new wars.

Famously that was also the case with the late medieval marriages between the scions of English and French royal families: the Hundred Years' War was the outcome of succession quarrels resulting from such marriages, as were later English claims to the French throne which was not formally abandoned until the end of the 18th century, even if it had long become a mere matter of ritual restatement without any political consequence attached. While the Salic law was interpreted to preclude the succession of women to the French throne itself, French kings happily claimed lands outside France inherited by their wives, thus progressively increasing the French crown domain by marriage or war of succession, if they encountered opposition. It was a serious blow to the French ruling Valois dynasty when Eleanor, heiress to Aquitaine, decided to divorce her monkish husband Louis VII of France and took with her all her lands which she brought to her second family with Plantagenet King Henry II of England. These lands, and Norman lands adjacent to the French royal domains that Henry had inherited, would be at the heart of the Hundred Years' War, along with the direct claim to the French crown made by Plantagenet kings in a variant interpretation of the Salic Law (that women might not rule, but that their sons could inherit the claim to the throne).

By and by the dangers of such claims to thrones becoming a cause for war

31 Georges Doutrepont & Omer Doutrepont (eds.): *Chroniques de Jean Molinet* (Bruxelles 1935), Vol. II, p. 486f., cited in Dieter Mertens,: „Europäischer Friede und Türkenkrieg im Spätmittelalter", in Heinz Duchhardt (ed.): *Zwischenstaatliche Friedenswahrung im Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1991), p. 88f.

were recognised. The turning point arguably came when the Spanish War of Succession was ended in 1714 with the Peace of Utrecht: on the one hand, a French (Bourbon) prince was made the new king of Spain, but on the other, his grandfather Louis XIV renounced any claim to succession to the Spanish throne should his grandson's line die out. While the 18th and 19th century still saw dynastic marriages and the curious decision by newly created states – Greece and Rumania among them – to import foreign princes to be their rulers, dynastic succession wars gradually died out. The last among them were the Carlist Wars in Spain (1833-1876), in which rivalling claims to the succession to the French throne engendered civil war. Marriages between royal dynasties and aristocratic families continued to take place across state boundaries, but increasingly, nationalism spread as an ideology, carrying the assumption that land and the populations on it could no longer become the property of another country when the accident dynastic (in)fertility came to play. Royal domains were increasingly seen as national property, and thus linked in perpetuity to one nation or the other. And while European royalty continued to have a high percentage of "foreign" marriages, arranged marriages between dynasties increasingly gave way to love matches. Dynastic marriages to cement peace or alliances, or as legal underpinnings of war aims, are a tool of strategy that has disappeared from the modern world.

Example 2. Access to fuel as a new dimension of strategy

By contrast, technological developments made a different aspect of strategy extremely important: securing access to fuel, that with the invention of the steam engine and the industrial revolution became a vital resource of warfare. Unlike the eternal need to access food, for millennia, access to fuel played no role. From prehistory until the Industrial Revolution, armies relied on men's and animals' muscle power, and at sea, wind power for locomotion. Whether it was soldiers marching or cavalry, all that was needed in terms of consumption was to keep men and beasts fed and watered, and at best wood or other combustibles for a camp fire. When ships were driven by muscle power operating oars, or wind, all that was needed was food and water to keep the crew alive.

It was only with the invention of the steam engine that muscle power and wind were replaced by steam at sea and on land, where trains began to be used in the mid-19th century to transport soldiers. Not only did both revolutionise movement, making it faster and more calculable. They also created the need to stock coal and later diesel fuel along railway lines and sea lines of communica-

tion, and they turned parts of the world where these resources were found into areas of extreme importance to command strategically.

At the same time, coal, which had of course already been used previously for both domestic and industrial consumption, began to be of essence not only to keep the exploding populations of industrialised countries warm: congregated in sprawling towns, they could no longer rely on local supplies of firewood. The factories themselves, multiplying and expanding, required ever more coal and then later fuel oil, unless they were mills using waterpower. The latter could supply only limited energy until the large-scale introduction of electricity gained from dams. Crucially, while armies used horsepower even in the Second World War and soldiers are expected to march long distances even today, navies had become fully reliant upon coal and fuel oil by the end of the 19th century.

Henceforth, steam-powered ships needed to refuel. And for trading powers, this meant that access to coal and fuel depots became essential, indeed became a need over which wars might be waged. Just as the militarily-backed colonial expansion of the Netherlands, Britain, and France followed trade interests, the need for military bases along the way to distant colonies grew, triggering further imperial wars of conquests if rights of access were not granted amicably by treaty.

The sources of coal and oil also became strategic assets that were fought over. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71 ended with the cession of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany, ostensibly because the populations spoke a German dialect, but also in view of the coal fields and industry of those areas. By the time of the First World War, the control of the coal fields clustering along the French, Belgian, Luxembourg and German shared frontiers was an important *enjeu*, as was that of the Rumanian oil fields in the Second World War, by when only a fraction of oil and gas fields around Europe and in the Middle East and North Africa that are known today had been discovered let alone begun to be exploited systematically.

Ever since, calculations about dependence on coal and increasingly, oil and gas have had to be factored into strategy making in the context of cold and hot wars. Persia was brought under US influence in the 1950s to ensure access to its oil and to deny it to the USSR, a rival bidder for influence. The interest taken by European powers in tensions and wars in the Middle East in the 1960s and 1970s were greatly increased by the direct effects these had on oil prices in the rest of the world, thus including Europe. The oil producing countries could co-ordinate themselves to put pressure on oil importers with the non-ki-

netic strategic tool of export reductions and price increases, as the Oil Crisis of 1973/74 demonstrated so vividly.

Oil was also central to the three wars involving Iraq, starting with the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88.[32] While the three wars had multiple causes, the presence of the largest oil reserves in the world and the access to them is of pivotal importance to understand their outbreak and dynamics. The reliance on oil informed many of the choices made in the 1980s, the Western response to the occupation of Kuwait in 1990 and the US-UK decision to intervene in 2003. The 1980-88 war between Iran and Iraq could be explained by unresolved territorial issues, as well as the threat Saddam Hussein perceived as emanating from the new Shite leadership of ayatollah Khomeini. Furthermore, there is evidence that Hussein wanted to capture a specific region, Khuzestan, with large oil reserves.[33] In the 1990s, the occupation of Kuwait even more dominated by a resource logic. Iraq owed Kuwait – again a country with huge oil deposits – substantial amounts of money, that were lent during the preceding war. Moreover, the perception that Kuwait contributed to overproduction of oil which depressed the price Iraq could obtain for its primary commodity export, also played a role, as did the access to the best harbour on the Persian Gulf which could further facilitate the export of oil. In the joint American-British invasion of 2003, ostensibly based on a false claim that Iraq was producing weapons of mass destruction, as well as unfinished business with Saddam Hussein from the previous war, access to oil also played a role.

Given the chronic instability of the Middle East, it was debated in France in the early 1990s whether being barred from access to vital resources – i.e. oil – was something that might be met not only with armed force but even with nuclear weapons; in the end, only the protection of access routes to France was listed in France's White Book on Defence as such a vital matter to protect, along with "the free exercise of our sovereignty, the integrity of our national territory".[34]

To reduce dependency on the unstable Middle East, European countries after the end of the Cold War sought to multiply their energy sources, only to create their next great dependency, this time on Russia. Putin adroitly used this strategic tool vis-à-vis the EU countries. The deals for oil and gas exports proposed by Moscow were so attractive that particularly Germany fell for this,

32 Ahmed Hashim, 'The Three Gulf Wars and Iraq', in: Duyvesteyn & Heuser: *The Cambridge History of Strategy,* Vol. II.

33 Hashim, 'The Three Gulf Wars and Iraq', 491.

34 *Livre Blanc sur la Défense* (1994), pp. 56-57

successive governments under Angela Merkel gambling on relations with Putin's Russia remaining amicable even after Russian forces embarked on wars in Russia's vicinity, first against Georgia in 2008, then, with unmarked forces, against Ukraine from 2014. No plan B for alternative energy supply existed in Germany before the unsuccessful attempt by Merkel's successor Olaf Scholz on 15 February 2022 to dissuade Putin from launching a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which began nine days later. A substantial price of its support for Ukraine has since been paid by the EU countries in the form of the subsequent boycott of Russian oil and gas.

Nuclear energy has wrought change – it provides an alternative to dependence on the regular import of oil and gas. France for one has embraced this alternative, while scepticism about the safety of reactor technology and the long-term storage of the radioactive waste led to the closing of nuclear power stations in Germany around 2020, just as the switch to non-polluting energy sources became internationally agreed policy in a series of global conferences aiming to stem or mitigate climate change. However, the reliance on other states for nuclear fuel, uranium in particular, simply substitutes one dependency, oil and gas, for another, nuclear reactor fuel, uranium. The military coup in Niger in the summer of 2023, raised fears about access to the resource, as the country is the second-largest supplier of uranium to France. The same arguments could be raised for access to rare earth minerals, the components of batteries for cars and mobile phones. It is hard to image war in the near future without mobility and communication, witness the present conflict in Ukraine.

Conclusion

While an overview of the longue durée of the practice of strategy demonstrates a significant set of constants, change and discontinuity is also of great importance. We can trace a tool of strategy – a tool of forging alliances and of concluding peace – over centuries, and yet it has disappeared entirely in our modern world, going along with the transformation of societies: that of dynastic marriages.

Geography itself, the population and its skills, material resources, as well as allies and decision-making processes, all remain perennial features of strategic practices. And yet even hard geographic facts – Japan's island nature, for example – changed in importance, along with changes in technology. Thus with the naval and aviation means of the 20th century, Japan was able to launch an attack on the far-away American island of Hawaii, and the USA, in turn, could

fight, defeat and occupy Japan thereafter. We have also illustrated the quite sudden appearance very late in human history of a crucial dimension of strategy, namely the need for fuel, from coal to oil to uranium. Thus a resource, linked directly to geography, can fundamentally transform the importance of territorial possessions, both in terms of access to fossil fuels and to the control (preferably through possession) of secure ports where these could be stocked. Presently, we are experiencing another transition in the context of the climate crisis, an impending move away from fossil fuels towards environmentally sustainable fuel. The shape of this transition for the practice of military operations is still too early to assess.

It becomes apparent that, however modern Pericles' speech seems to us, many factors influencing strategy-making have changed over time. There are some lasting intangible dimensions of strategy-making that endure, such as the utility or indeed necessity of consultation and collective deliberations of some sorts, or the benefits that can be derived from achieving strategic surprise, as Hamas did in its attack on Israel on 7 October 2023. Other than that, it is worth remembering that strategy is a product of its particular technological, geographical, economical and socio-political circumstances. This should make us cautious about thinking of strategy in terms of a set principles that can be applied in all eternity.