Proceedings of the British Academy, LXXIII, 1987, 49–68

THANK-OFFERING TO BRITAIN LECTURE

STRATEGY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Read 11 March 1987

STRATEGY is a word that tends to be used very loosely, particularly by the media. At times it is indistinguishable from policy, at others from tactics. The definition given in the *Oxford Dictionary* is: 'The art of a commander-in-chief. The art of projecting and directing the larger military movements and operations of a campaign.' But some writers about war give it a wider meaning: to encompass both the general attitude of a society or nation to war, and also theories about how wars and campaigns should be conducted. What strategy is not is a set of rules which, if faithfully followed, will result in victory. Different circumstances require different strategies. One of the most perceptive fairly recent writers on the subject, the French General André Beaufre, who wrote two books on strategy, described war as 'the dialectic of two opposing wills, using force to resolve their dispute', and strategy as 'the art of that dialectic'. An even more recent definition is to be found on the last page of the new edition of *Makers of Modern Strategy*. The joint authors of that chapter, Gordon Craig and Felix Gilbert, defining effective strategy as 'a calculated employment of force and statecraft for a political end', considered three successful examples: the first, that pursued by the Founding Fathers of the United States of America: the second, that pursued by Prussia, guided by Bismarck, between 1862 and 1866; and, third, the way in which the Truman administration responded to the challenges America faced between 1947 and 1950. 'Common to these strategies', they write, 'was their complete rationality in formulation and, in their implementation, a realistic appraisal of the international context in which they were to be pursued, an accurate view of the capabilities and proclivities of potential opponents, an underlying assumption that the accumulation and employment of military force must be justified by a demonstrable political advantage and must not impose too heavy a burden upon national

resources, and a determination that the use of force should end with the attainment of the political objective.'

Time and time again one returns to Clausewitz. This is not surprising, as he made a deep study of war, attempting to establish some permanent principles about both its nature and its conduct. He had no illusions about the nature of what he defined as 'an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will', warning us against 'kind-hearted people [who] might think that there was some ingenious way to disarm or defeat an enemy without too much bloodshed, and might imagine this is the true art of war'. 'Pleasant as it sounds,' he wrote, 'it is a fallacy that must be exposed: war is such a dangerous business that the mistakes which come from kindness are the very worst.' Having devoted seven volumes to demonstrating that the most effective strategy was to concentrate maximum force to destroy the enemy's armed forces in what he called Absolute War, he had to face the fact that war is meant to have a purpose. Just to impose one's will on the enemy is not enough: there must be some reason, some policy behind the act. 'No one starts a war,' he wrote, '—or rather no one in his senses ought to do so—without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it.' This led him on to his famous definition, which takes slightly different forms in different places, but is most fully explained in chapter six of Book Eight. It is worth quoting in its context:

> It is, of course, well known that the only source of war is politics—the intercourse of governments and peoples; but it is apt to be assumed that war suspends that intercourse and replaces it by a wholly different condition, ruled by no law but its own. We maintain, on the contrary, that war is simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means. We deliberately use the phrase 'with the addition of other means' because we also want to make it clear that war in itself does not suspend political intercourse or change it into something entirely different. In essentials, that intercourse continues, irrespective of the means it employs. The main lines along which military events progress, and to which they are restricted, are political lines that continue throughout the war into the subsequent peace. . . . If that is so, then war cannot be divorced from political life; and whenever this occurs in our thinking about war, the many links that connect them are destroyed, and we are left with something pointless and devoid of sense.

Leaving Clausewitz, and having defined what strategy is and what is required for it to be effective, let us look at the strategies

which have been employed in this century and consider how successful they have been and whether we have anything to learn from them, as we face a future overshadowed by the nuclear weapon.

The first thing which strikes me is the difference between the strategies applicable to nations or movements who wish to change things and those whose aim is to preserve the existing state of affairs. At the beginning of this century, the three powers who clearly wished to preserve the *status quo* were the United States of America, Britain, and France. The last hoped to regain Alsace and Lorraine, but was not planning to do so by force. Their strategies were different. That of the United States, relying primarily on their navy, was to ensure that European imperialist and trading rivalries did not extend into the American continent, and were, as far as possible, restricted, if they could not be eliminated, in the Far East. They were prepared to use force to meet any challenge to American freedom to trade world-wide, but had no intention of becoming involved in conflicts in Europe or between the imperialist powers. It was a prudent strategy, closely linked to their political interests.

Britain hoped to pursue the strategy which our geography and history always pushed us towards: to limit our liability to employ armed force on the Continent, while concentrating on exploiting and securing our world-wide trading interests. These had by then resulted in extensive political and military commitments outside Europe, the burden of which had been brought home by the Boer War. The combination of these far-flung commitments with the development of serious naval threats nearer home, first from the Franco-Russian alliance, and then from the development of the German High Seas Fleet, led to a major change in our naval strategy. Squadrons were withdrawn from distant waters, accepting that naval supremacy in the Caribbean passed to the US Navy and in the Far East to Japan, with whom an alliance was concluded. After the *Entente* with France in 1904, the Mediterranean also was largely left to her; as Fisher concentrated the fleet in the North Sea. The strategy which underlay that was derived from the American Alfred Mahan, developed from a study of the British naval wars against the Dutch and the French in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He concluded that the essential element of successful naval strategy was to concentrate the fleet to bring about the destruction of the enemy's main battle fleet. Once that was achieved, freedom of action for all other maritime activity would be assured.

Before Germany's aggressive attitude provoked the *Entente*, the British army's strategy was determined by the Stanhope memorandum of 1891, which laid down its tasks, in order of priority, as aid to the civil power in the United Kingdom, which then included the whole of Ireland; to find garrisons for India and for fortresses and coaling stations elsewhere; to be able to mobilize two army corps of regular troops and the various reserves 'for the defence of London' and 'the mercantile ports'; and, after all those commitments had been met, 'to aim at being able to send abroad two army corps, but it will be distinctly understood that the probability of the employment of an army corps in the field in any European war is sufficiently improbable to make it the primary duty of the military authorities to organize our forces efficiently for the defence of this country'. That priority of home defence over an overseas expeditionary force was gradually to be whittled away, as cooperation with France followed the *Entente*.

French strategy in the period was coloured by what its leading soldiers believed to be the lessons of the 1870 Franco-Prussian war, and by the demographic facts of life, which made it inevitable that Germany could field a larger army than she could. The first requirement was to acquire allies who could either contain or divert German forces, or reinforce those of France. Russia was to fulfil the first and Britain the second requirement. The American Civil War and, more recently, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5 had proved how vulnerable infantry advancing *en masse* in the attack had become to modern artillery and rifle fire, to which the machine-gun had been added, creating a 'zone of death' for the leading infantry. The success of the Japanese against the Russians confirmed the French in their belief that, skilful manoeuvre having resulted in a concentration of force, high morale and mass combined would carry the *poilu* through the 'zone of death' to break through the enemy's defences. High morale and the offensive were inextricably linked: one was not possible without the other. This belief that French *élan* or *furia francese* could counterbalance enemy firepower was encouraged by those officers who had been inspired by French colonial compaigns in North Africa. If they had been better historians, they might have remembered that *furia francese* lost François Premier the Battle of Pavia in 1525, and led to his capture. But the offensive strategy on which France pinned her hopes was not unsound. An effectively conducted thrust north-eastward towards the Rhine could have severely disrupted Schlieffen's plan for the invasion of France. The severe casualties

suffered by the initial French offensive were caused by marching into artillery fire, not by properly organized attacks. Joffre's success at the Marne showed that well timed and judged offensive action could succeed. A strategy which held the bulk of their forces in reserve for a counter-offensive would have had better prospects of success, but would have prejudiced co-operation from Britain and Belgium, and therefore the defence of the important industrial area of north-eastern France.

What of the strategies of those nations who sought change, Japan, Russia and Germany? Japan's war with Russia encouraged those elements who saw the solution to her internal problems in the development of and settlement in Korea and Manchuria. As soon as the war started in Europe, Japan exploited the situation by seizing German colonial possessions in the Pacific and her concessions in China, to whom Japan presented twenty-one demands, which would virtually have established Japanese control of much of China's trade. Pressure from the United States, as well as from Britain, France and Russia, caused her to modify them. It was an ominous sign of the strategy she was to pursue later in the century, which failed because it was not, to quote Craig and Gilbert, based on 'a realistic appraisal of the international context' and 'an accurate view of the capabilities and proclivities of potential opponents', although it looked as if it was until 1941. Japanese strategy was later to illustrate the dangers, to which Clausewitz drew attention, of allowing soldiers or sailors to determine strategy, divorced from political considerations.

Russia's defeat by Japan in 1905 had, for the moment at least, put an end to the former's ambitious strategy in the Far East, or, if it ever really existed, in the direction of India. Her concern between 1905 and 1914 was to prevent Germany extending her power, and at the same time to extend her own, at the expense of the weakening Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. Up to 1910 that led to a purely defensive strategy towards Germany, while Russia failed in its attempt to erect an anti-Austrian alliance of Serbia, Bulgaria, and Turkey. She hung back from direct involvement in the Balkans from fear that Germany would exploit it, perhaps in Poland or Galicia. Germany's increasing involvement in Turkey from 1913 onwards imposed further caution. It was therefore as surprising as it was imprudent that she was persuaded, in return for French investment, to change her strategy into one that committed her to an offensive into German East Prussia and Austrian Galicia, priority between the

two being given, against considerable opposition from Pan-Slav enthusiasts, to the former, as the one which would divert German effort from France. It was a strategic error which was to have profound consequences. Had Russia concentrated primarily on the detachment from the Austro-Hungarian Empire of its non-German speaking peoples, and adopted a defensive strategy towards Germany, she might have succeeded in spite of the general inefficiency of her army. Brusilov's offensive in 1916 showed that the Russian army, if sensibly directed, was a formidable war machine. One is forced to the conclusion that Russian interests were sacrificed to those of France, which prompts another thought. That, if Britain had been prepared to commit herself more wholeheartedly to a Continental strategy in support of France, or at least to the Low Countries, so vital to her strategically for obvious geographical reasons, Russia need not have subordinated her strategy to that of France. The Russian revolution might then not have succeeded. What would the consequences of that have been?

We must leave that fascinating avenue of speculation and turn to the strategy of the country which most wanted change, Germany. After Bismarck's dismissal in 1890, his cautious strategy, based on avoiding both provocation of France and Russia and support of Austro-Hungary in the Balkans, was abandoned. Under the influence of General Waldersee, the Prussian General Staff developed a strategy designed to give Germany, led by Prussia, the same control over the destiny of the German-speaking peoples of Central Europe as was enjoyed by Britain, France and Russia over their empires. It was inherent in that strategy that the military, in the form of the Prussian General Staff, should retain control of events and not let it slip into the hands of politicians, affected by popular liberal or socialist views. Regarding war with Russia and France as inevitable, and indeed as a good thing in itself; especially for ensuring that control of events was in military hands, Waldersee's successor, Schlieffen, appreciated that the war must be short, if both external and internal opponents were to be prevented from developing their full potential strength. The strategy which he designed owed much to the theories of Delbrück, set out in his *History of the Art of War in the Framework of Political History*, the first of the seven volumes of which was published in 1900. It was known as a strategy of annihilation—*Niederwerfungsstrategie*. It aimed at a decisive battle, which would destroy the enemy's forces at one blow. It was to be preferred to a strategy of exhaustion—

Ermattungsstrategie—which would use a variety of measures, direct and indirect, over a longer period.

Recognizing that frontal assaults had become dangerously expensive, Schlieffen based his plans, at all levels, on envelopment, a combination of manoeuvre, surprise and superior forces making it possible at the strategic level. While holding off Russia with a limited offensive, designed to prevent her crushing Austro-Hungary, he planned to envelop the French army by a wide movement through Belgium, sweeping round behind Paris. The possibility of his plan succeeding was prejudiced by his successor, the younger Moltke, who was not prepared to run the risks that Schlieffen had accepted in leaving the left wing of the envelopment, in the Vosges, comparatively weak.

The German navy's part in the strategy was based on the misplaced concept that Britain would be so awed by the strength of the Imperial High Seas Fleet that she would be prepared to buy off Germany by colonial concessions, remain neutral in a European war, or even, perhaps, ally herself with Germany. Tirpitz calculated that the Royal Navy would not be prepared to withdraw its fleet from other oceans to concentrate in the North Sea, for fear of losing its grip on the Empire, which he believed, citing the Boer War, to be in a state of incipient revolt. He resisted all attempts to persuade him to adopt a strategy of *guerre de course*, designed primarily to attack merchant shipping on the high seas, instead of building up a battle-fleet of capital ships. He was to be proved wrong on all counts.

When war came, none of the strategies worked. All proved too optimistic, underrating what Clausewitz called the friction of war: all those elements which combine to make the best laid schemes gang aft a'gley; but none of them were abandoned. The United States tried to keep out of the war, while its navy planned to ensure that, when it was over, it would be in a position to meet the challenge posed by the combination of whichever naval power won joining hands with Japan. The change in strategy which led to its participation in 1917 was based on President Wilson's desire to bring the war to an end as soon as possible and to establish an international system to do away with wars caused by European imperialist rivalries. He had come to the conclusion that he could achieve his aim better by joining in than by trying to act as a referee. The navy continued its previous strategy, while the army, led by Pershing, ensured that its participation was seen as distinctively American, giving as much leverage as possible to American influence on the final outcome. France

measure. The 1925 Geneva convention outlawing the use of gas did not, however, affect their confidence in their strategic bombing theory. The other school, led by Fuller and Liddell Hart, believed in a combination of this aerial attack with mechanized forces, whose target would be the paralysis of the enemy's command and communication system. These theories were attractive to those who were appalled by the casualties of the recent war, which Liddell Hart attributed to Clausewitz's emphasis on the destruction of the enemy's armed forces, forgetting the important qualifications he made to the concept of Absolute War in his final volume, from which I have quoted. Claims for these new strategies chimed in with Britain's traditional desire to pursue a strategy of limited liability as far as the Continent was concerned, allowing her to concentrate on Imperial Defence, to which both the army and the navy preferred to devote their attention. Liddell Hart espoused that cause, notably in his book *The British Way in Warfare*, arguing against a Continental commitment; but also maintaining that, if we had to commit ourselves to the side of France, a small professional wholly mechanized force would be a more effective contribution than a collection of infantry divisions. Britain's strategy persisted in this mould almost up to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, when it was shown up for the hollow reed it was. The air force discovered that they could not reach targets in Germany from bases in Britain, and, even if they did, they could not hit them, let alone do them much damage. In any case, the politicians, British and French, refused to let them try for fear of retaliation, persuaded that 'the bombers would always get through' by the strategic bombing enthusiasts, who were thus hoist by their own petard. No other strategy had been developed. From the time of the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 onwards, the Chiefs of Staff every year warned the government that 'they could not foresee the time when our defence forces will be strong enough to safeguard our trade, territory and vital interests against Germany, Italy and Japan at the same time'. In 1938 they warned Chamberlain that 'no pressure that we and our possible allies can bring to bear, either by sea or land or in the air, could prevent Germany from invading and overrunning Bohemia and from inflicting a decisive defeat on the Czechoslovak army', and that that country's integrity could only be restored 'by the defeat of Germany and as the outcome of a prolonged struggle'. When Chamberlain gave so-called guarantees to Poland and Romania in the summer of 1939, they pointed out

that 'neither Great Britain nor France could give either country any direct help' and they urged co-operation with the Soviet Union.

An offensive in co-operation with France was ruled out as much by French devotion to a defensive strategy as by Britain's military unpreparedness and political aversion to such a step, which would mean picking up where we had left off in 1918, but with the odds apparently in favour of Germany. Both countries had shrunk from it at the time of Hitler's remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936, when the military odds were not in his favour, except perhaps marginally in the air. But, when he attacked Poland in September 1939, Germany's western frontier was guarded by forty-four divisions of which only twelve were regular, a total of 750,000 men. The French army had sixty-seven, but only nine moved forward for five miles until they came into contact with, but did not attack, the German Siegfried Line defences, although five months earlier General Gamelin had told the Polish High Command that 'immediately on the outbreak of war, the French army would assume the offensive against Germany, and that, at the latest by the fifteenth day after mobilization, it would throw in the full weight of its forces'.

The purely defensive strategy adopted by France owed much to the influences of Pétain and the elderly generals whose war experience had impressed on them the strength of a modern defence and the huge effort needed to break through it. It was encouraged by the political desire to avoid a repetition of 1914–18 and to reduce the length of conscript service, the manpower available for which was further reduced by the fall in the birth-rate in the war years. The political pressure to reduce defence expenditure, reparations from Germany having failed to come up to expectations, and to seek an international solution to security, added further emphasis to reliance on defence, the construction and manning of the Maginot Line absorbing money and manpower that could have been devoted to more flexible forces, as proposed by Lieutenant-Colonel de Gaulle in his book, expanded from an article in 1934, *Vers l'Armée de Métier*. If Britain and France could be said to have had a strategy at all by 1939, it was a totally negative one. Weygand was right to complain to Paul Reynaud when he relieved Gamelin in the middle of the débâcle in 1940: 'We went to war with a 1918 army against a German 1939 one. What madness!' He must have bitterly recalled the words of his old chief, Foch, in an article in the *Daily Mail* in 1919, protesting against Clemenceau's refusal

to back the establishment of an independent Rhineland, or failing that, permanent occupation of the Rhine crossings. 'What was it', he wrote, 'which saved the Allies at the beginning of the war? Russia. Well, on whose side will Russia be in the future? With us or with the Germans? The Allied armies. Where will they be? The British army will be in Canada, Australia, in New Zealand. The American armies will be in the United States. And next time, remember, the Germans will make no mistake. They will break through Northern France and seize the Channel ports as a base of operations against England.'

What then was the strategy which Germany followed in 1939? Initially it was no more than a return to 1914. Hitler's aim was the same as that of Waldersee: that Germany should control the destiny of all the German-speaking people, the removal of the restrictions and losses of territory imposed by the Versailles Treaty being the first step towards it. And again the generals attempted to ensure that control of events remained in their hands and competed against each other in the process. Their aim, therefore, was to see that war should not come until the German armed forces were fully ready for it. They resisted Hitler's desire to exploit the weakness of the potential opposition in launching into his *Drang nach Osten*, from his invasion of Austria in 1938, followed by that of Czechoslovakia, Poland, and finally Russia. Hitler's successes, in disregard of their gloomy forebodings, meant that they failed in their principal aim: to keep control of events in their own hands. They failed to prevent him from embarking on a strategy of opportunism. Step by step, control, even of military operations, passed into his hands, as he exploited the competition between the generals, each pressing for support for his particular command in the hope that it would bring him power and influence.

German strategy in the west was designed to fulfil the same function as Schlieffen's had been in 1914, i.e., to remove a threat from that direction in order to give Hitler freedom of action in the east. The development of the *Luftwaffe*, and the exaggeration of its actual strength, was intended to serve the purpose Tirpitz intended for the High Seas Fleet: to intimidate Britain, and others, into standing aside, while he pursued the ambitions in the east that he had inherited from the Hindenburg–Ludendorff team. But at no stage would he allow the generals to devise a coherent strategy. Not only did he divide responsibility between different staffs, but he kept all of them ignorant of his intentions until the last moment, and thereafter interfered in the execution

of operations. The lack of a coherent overall strategy, or even of one for the eastern front, was fatal to the campaign in Russia, which dominated the whole war. There, the generals wanted to pursue a strategy of annihilation, in which initially they seemed to have as much success as they had enjoyed in Poland and France. If they could follow it up with the capture of Moscow, they believed that Stalin's regime would be so discredited that it would collapse. Hitler, on the other hand, had his eyes on economically valuable targets, which the generals argued would fall to him in any case, if they followed Clausewitz in making the destruction of the enemy's armed forces their strategic aim. Divergent aims, divided counsels, Hitler's failure to relate means to ends, over-optimism, stemming from his initial victories, and refusal to adapt to changes in the situation by strategic, or even tactical, withdrawals, brought about the *Gotterdämmerung* of the body which laid claim to the greatest expertise in strategy, the German, ex-Prussian, General Staff.

The body which played the largest part in bringing that about was the Soviet General Staff, heirs to the Russian Imperial General Staff. In 1941 nobody thought that possible. It was only four years since Stalin had instituted the Great Purge, which had resulted in the death of 475 out of the 781 most senior officers and the dismissal of one third of all the officers of the Soviet armed forces. The correct strategy for the Soviet Union to adopt had been discussed with great intensity ever since the end of the Civil War in the early 1920s. It originated in rival views as to how the army should be organized. The purists wished to get rid of the specialists, the ex-officers and NCOs of the Imperial Army, of whom 250,000 were still serving, and to rely on a province-based militia. This could only provide security for the Revolution, if that were extended to other countries which posed a potential threat. Trotsky, having firmly defended the use of specialists as long as there was active fighting to be done, took this view. His opponents, of whom Stalin was one, argued for a standing army, which could not only defend the Soviet Union from active enemies, like Poland, but, when the time was ripe, could carry the Revolution abroad on their bayonets by offensive action. Frunze and Tukhachevsky, whose influence on the future Soviet Army and its General Staff was profound, belonged to that school. The realities of Russia's economic and military resources imposed a compromise both about organization and about strategy, but Frunze and his colleagues laid the foundations of the fundamental devotion of Soviet military doctrine to an

offensive, manoeuvre-based strategy of annihilation. The Second World War, however, was to prove, as Napoleon had learned to his cost, that Russia's fundamental strength lay in her vast territory and large population, allowing her to absorb the pressures of a strategy of exhaustion.

At the time of the Purge and after, Stalin believed that a war in Europe was inevitable, and that the Soviet Union would not be able, as he put it, 'to stand aside with arms folded'; but he was determined that it would not become involved in the early stages, but allow the participants to weaken each other before he intervened to grab what he could, his eyes being directed first towards the areas over which the Russian Empire had exercised authority before 1917. That policy lay behind the non-aggression pact with Germany, while his eagerness to acquire the lost provinces, for fear that Germany would establish a firm hold over them, sharpened Hitler's determination to put matters to the test, once he had secured his western flank.

The trouble was that Stalin, like Hitler, did not trust his generals at that stage, and took no steps to adopt a military strategy to fit his political one. The result was that his armies, trained in an offensive doctrine, were prepared and deployed, when the blow came in 1941, neither for defensive nor for offensive operations, epitomized by the radio message, overheard by the Germans, in which a Soviet general reported: 'We are being shot at. What do we do now?' In spite of huge losses of men, material and territory, the Soviet Union, against all predictions, not only absorbed and survived the initial blows, including German penetration to the Black Sea and the Caucasus, but struck back at the end of 1942 with well co-ordinated blows by new formations of soldiers, supported by ample numbers of tanks, guns and aircraft, almost all produced in factories, which had had to be displaced by hundreds of miles. This was made possible by an important aspect of Soviet strategy, the organization of the whole country, all its people and all its resources, for war purposes. Successive Five-Year Plans had concentrated on heavy industry to support that strategy, as education had prepared the minds and bodies of the people for it. Soviet strategy from 1943 onwards was designed as an offensive, manoeuvre-based one of annihilation, consisting of a series of envelopments, developed from massive breakthroughs in areas where the defence was thinly spread; but, in spite of Hitler playing into their hands by refusing his generals permission to withdraw, the practical friction of war prevented them from

being decisive. Victory was finally achieved at Berlin as a result of a strategy of exhaustion, applied in co-operation with the Anglo-American alliance.

The strategy of that alliance evolved as a compromise both between the demands of the war with Japan and that with Germany and Italy, and between the British preference for an indirect and the American for a direct strategy. From the moment that Churchill took office as Prime Minister, the main aim of his strategy was to involve the United States of America, if possible as an active participant, if not, as a sympathizer, a source of supply and a counter to any threat from Japan. Apart from that, after the fall of France, Britain had no choice but to pursue a peripheral strategy, its expedition to Greece in 1941 raising ghosts of Gallipoli. The minor campaign in Libya and the ineffective bombing campaign against targets in Germany in 1941 and 1942 had little strategic effect on German activities, but were necessary, as there was no other way of fighting the Germans and of demonstrating to the Americans that Britain was determined to fight for its future and was therefore worthy of support. The German navy's submarine *guerre de course* against Britain was proving, as it had in the First World War, the most effective weapon against her war effort. The *Luftwaffe*'s assault was annoying, but was strategically little more than a pin-prick and served to stiffen morale in favour of the war effort rather than diminish it.

The German attack on Russia in June 1941, and the Japanese one against the US Fleet in Pearl Harbor six months later, transformed the strategic position for Britain from one that had been hopeless to one that promised victory, although of necessity as a result of a strategy of exhaustion, which would strain her own resources to the limit. The direct involvement of America was decisive; but it would not have been against Germany, if the latter had come to terms of some sort with the Soviet Union. Fortunately their political rivalry in the centre of Europe effectively precluded that. Even with American support, a strategy of naval blockade, aerial bombardment, and attempts to 'knock away the props', principally Italy, would not have sufficed to bring Germany to her knees or reduce her strength to the degree that would have permitted re-entry to the Continent and subsequent defeat of her forces, had not the campaign against Russia absorbed the great bulk of her war effort.

The nub of the argument about Anglo-American strategy in the war against Germany lay in the degree of weakening of

German armed strength in France that was necessary before a re-entry could be undertaken, that would succeed, not merely in entering, but also in subsequently effecting a strategy of annihilation. Under the influence of Arthur Wagner and Emery Upton, both admirers of the Prussian General Staff, the US Army was wedded to Clausewitzian principles. It was also true to the American distaste for European and imperialist squabbles and a desire to finish off the war, and American participation in it, as quickly as possible. Even before the USA became directly involved, and in spite of the US Navy's intense interest in the Pacific, Roosevelt's administration, including Marshall, Chief of the US Army Staff, and Stark, Chief of Naval Operations, as well as his successor, Admiral King, accepted that the defeat of Germany should take priority over that of Japan. The shortest and most direct route by which the maximum concentration of strength, army and air, could be deployed against that of Germany was from England across the Channel. But Churchill and his advisers believed that it could not succeed, until Germany's overall strength had been reduced, and unless a substantial part of it could be diverted from France and the Low Countries by threats and pressure further afield. There were also practical limits, notably that of amphibious craft, to the force which could actually be deployed, however much was available. While the Americans resisted becoming drawn into operations in the Mediterranean, the British resisted withdrawal from Italy of forces which could not immediately engage the Germans elsewhere, thus allowing them to switch forces to face a cross-Channel operation. Each accused the other of trying to pursue unsound strategies. American pressure for an early cross-Channel operation was influenced by fear that the Russian war effort against Germany might slacken if it was delayed, a view which Stalin did all he could to foster.

In the Far East, there were four rival strategies, three American and one British. Of the American, that of the US Navy, led by Admiral King, favoured a direct threat westward from Hawaii to defeat the Japanese Navy. This would obviate the need for a methodical and expensive island-hopping advance northward from Australia to the Philippines, and thence to Formosa and the Chinese mainland, favoured by MacArthur. The third was that of those who believed that deployment of US forces to and support of Chiang Kai-shek in China would be the most effective, although his two American advisers, Stilwell and Chennault, disagreed about whether armies or air forces could

produce the decision against Japan. All three supported Roosevelt's political aim of building up China, if necessary at the expense of British, French and Dutch imperial territories in the area, to replace Japanese power and the influence in the Far East. The British were not interested in, indeed actively disliked, that policy, and were primarily concerned with restoring their position in the area and removing the Japanese threat to Australia and New Zealand. In the event it was the naval war, following the precepts of Mahan, the aircraft-carriers forming the battle-fleets, and a systematic *guerre de course* by submarine and aircraft against Japanese merchant shipping, on which their garrisons in the islands of the South Pacific and on the mainland of South-east Asia relied, which contributed most to victory, the *coup de grâce* being administered by the entry of Russia into the war against Japan and the two atomic bombs, apparently justifying at last the airmen's faith in strategic bombing.

The policy which lay behind Japan's strategy was the creation of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere to replace the economic imperialism of the European powers. It was strongly backed by the Japanese Army, led especially by that part of it stationed in Korea and Manchuria. Japan's attempt to establish her own imperialism over China outside Manchuria was bound to bring her into conflict with the United States. It was a serious misjudgement to imagine that she could challenge American power. An alternative strategy could have been, while avoiding conflict with the USA, to co-operate more closely with her German ally in operations directed against Britain, and even also perhaps against the Soviet Union. Had she been able to do this without provoking hostilities with America, the course of the Second World War could have been very different for all concerned. It would have involved her in limiting her ambitions in China itself. Having become involved in war with the United States, she was foolish to extend her hold so far south, making her even more vulnerable to a naval war than she was already. It was a classic example of the danger of continuously extending one's outer defensive area for the sake of protecting the essential inner core, a danger which grew as the range of aircraft against which one sought protection increased.

What of strategy since 1945? It has, of course, been dominated by the nuclear weapon. At first it seemed merely a natural extension of air power, both strategic and tactical, as used in the recent war. But a new dimension was added not only when the Soviet Union developed its own weapon, but also when the

megaton warhead appeared on both sides, deliverable by inter-continental ballistic missiles, against which there appeared to be no defence. In that situation, there was no such thing as air supremacy, the state when one side's superiority in air forces allowed it to strike enemy targets, strategic and tactical, in great strength, while the other side could only retaliate weakly. As that perceptive American strategist, Bernard Brodie, wrote in 1946, foreseeing that this situation would arise: 'The fact that it [that is the nation bent on aggression] destroys its opponent's cities some hours or even days before its own are destroyed may avail it little.' In this situation, which has persisted since the early 1960s, to initiate the use of nuclear weapons against an enemy who can retaliate in kind has made no strategic sense. There is no policy of which it could be a rational strategic continuation by other means. It would, in Clausewitz's words, 'be divorcing war from political life' which left one 'with something pointless and devoid of sense'. The nuclear superpowers have tried to escape from their predicament by seeking a superiority which would enable them, by attacking the opponent's nuclear delivery systems, to reduce the risk to themselves; what it known as a counterforce strategy, distinguishing it from a strategy based on fear of attack on cities, known as a counter-value strategy. But the result has been that the other side responds by counter-measures which still pose a threat of unacceptable destruction and horror, the out-come being an escalation in the number and type of nuclear weapon systems on both sides, adding to the totality of the potential horror, and therefore, one has to admit, to the overall deterrent to war posed by the existence of all these horrible weapons. Both superpowers are trying to escape from this trap by resort to defensive systems, but, while this restored balance to the strategic air power situation when radar was introduced, by ensuring that not all the bombers got through, the chances are small that the plans of both superpowers to develop resource-effective anti-ballistic missile systems will do anything other than add to the defence costs of both sides without increasing their mutual security. Indeed, they could decrease it, leading to strategic instability as a result of their mutual fears and suspi-cions.

The advent of the nuclear weapon has had other effects on strategy. It has made questionable the use of war between the major developed nations. That must be a good thing. But it has not precluded the possibility of other wars, including those involving major developed nations, nuclear or not, against less

well developed ones, and between the less developed themselves. But it has encouraged a return to the strategic sense of seeking limited aims for resorting to force. At the same time, as Vietnam and Algeria demonstrated, success in pursuing a strategy of limited war depends on both sides to the conflict, tacitly if not openly, accepting those limits. The North Vietnamese and the Algerians were prepared to go to almost any limit of time and sacrifice to achieve their ends, which neither the French nor the American publics, who in the last resort determined what strategy their governments could pursue, were prepared to support. British governments were more fortunate. In severely limiting their aims and the resources they were prepared to devote to achieving them, they retained popular support. Suez was a strategic aberration. The Falklands was the opposite, the strength of popular support for war overruling the prudent solution, favoured both by policy and by strategy. In that case fortune favoured the bold; but only just.

Israel had been forced to pursue limited strategies in her wars against her neighbours, because her resources of everything are strictly limited, and, as in the case of the Indo-Pakistan wars, she is highly dependent on external sources of supply, principally the USA. A limitation common to her and to the Indo-Pakistan wars was refraining from air attacks on cities for fear both of retaliation and of antagonizing the suppliers of arms, and international opinion generally. The Iran–Iraq war has turned out to be one of exhaustion, the limits being set principally by the resources of both sides. All these wars seem to have shown that, when fighting becomes intense, expensive military equipment is consumed at a rate far beyond that at which it can be replaced. Probably only the Soviet Union has reserves capable of sustaining intensive combat for any length of time. That factor, combined with fears of wars turning nuclear, seems to show that, if military force is to be used effectively as a continuation of policy (if that is going to be possible at all), it must be limited in its aim. The most effective strategy is likely to be one in which, by a swift surprise move, one acquires some territory or resource, which can then be used as a bargaining counter or lever to obtain whatever was the aim of one's policy. One may hope to achieve that at one stroke: what I call a strategy of *fait accompli*, or by a succession of such strokes; what one might call a strategy of grandmother's steps or slices of salami. Neither of Delbrück's strategies, annihilation or exhaustion, although both easier to apply than they were in his day, are likely to be effective in

achieving a satisfactory political solution, for the reasons Clausewitz used when qualifying his concept of Absolute War.

Under these new conditions, there have been major changes in the national strategies of most of the countries I have considered. Japan has discovered that she can achieve a Prosperity Sphere for herself without the use of armed force, while sheltering under the umbrella of that of the United States. The latter have totally changed their strategy, committing their armed forces potentially to support of their anti-communist policy anywhere in the world. The Soviet Union has achieved the strategic aims held by Stalin, and by Tsar Nicholas II before him, with certain limitations in the Far East. Her strategy is designed to secure the position she has established, and support her claim to be regarded as an equal of the United States. Her military doctrine, applied both to nuclear and conventional forces, remains dedicated to the pre-emptive offensive as the best form of defence. Britain reversed her traditional strategy in 1954 in making an apparently permanent Continental commitment, ironically in order to persuade the French and others to accept German rearmament. The Germans, east and west of the Iron Curtain, have been forced to renounce the pan-German ambitions which convulsed the Continent in the first half of the century. Having survived a succession of humiliations, in the Second World War and in Indo-China and Algeria after it, the French have found a highly secure strategy. Russia remains their guarantee against a resurgent German threat, and France's NATO allies provide her with an all-round defence, with which she can afford to associate herself as much or as little as she likes, to suit her domestic internal politics. An observer from outer space could be forgiven for scratching his head to discover why the major nations of this world had pursued the policies and strategies they did in the twentieth century.

Finally, as the Falklands operation reminded us, let us not forget that chance, good or bad luck, plays a very large part in operations of war, as it does in all aspects of life. I leave the last word to General André Beaufre. 'The strategist', he wrote, 'is like a surgeon called upon to operate upon a sick person, who is growing continuously and with extreme rapidity, and of whose detailed anatomy he is not sure; his operating table is in a state of perpetual motion and he must have ordered the instruments he is to use five years beforehand.'