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A General Theory of Conflict:

Bosnia, Strategy, and the Future

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## ABSTRACT

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To understand the phenomena of "war" or "operations other than war," we must view them in their *context* of conflict. The dominant academic views such as realism, rationalism, or idealism present partial perspectives of conflict; these views are of limited utility to *practitioners* who must deal with conflict in an environment of increasing volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. A general theory of conflict would expedite communication and coordination between the diverse efforts of the many agencies of conflict. An outline of a general theory of conflict starts with conflict as the competition of contradictory *ideas*. The mechanism of conflict is two-fold: *logic* and *violence*. The *milieu* of conflict includes *chance*, *fog*, *friction* and *circumstance*. Circumstance in turn includes *geography*, *resources*, *technology* and *history*. This outline of a general theory of conflict can be evaluated in light of Paret's three roles for theory: *cognitive*, *utilitarian*, and *pedagogic*. The cognitive test is applied to generate an improved understanding of the conflict in Bosnia. The utilitarian test is applied to test the usefulness of the theory in matters of current strategy: the conflict environment, the use of force, and the National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement. The pedagogic test is applied to analyze the future and the Revolution of Military Affairs.

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## Preface

This is a paper about war. This is also a paper about Bosnia, about strategy, and about the future. The observations in this paper have relevance to economics, politics, culture and just about every activity involving human participation. This is a paper about *conflict*.

The fundamental premise motivating this study is that there is no understanding outside of context. War and strategy are topics of daunting dimensions. But what about the broader *context* of these bewildering processes? Michael Howard succinctly poses the challenge:

“Wars are conflicts of societies, and they can be fully understood only if one understands the nature of the society fighting them. The roots of victory and defeat often have to be sought far from the battlefield, in political, social, and economic factors which explain why armies are constituted as they are, and why leaders conduct them as they do ... Without some such knowledge of the broader background to military operations one is likely to reach totally erroneous conclusions about their nature, and the reasons for their failure and success.”<sup>1</sup>

Michael Blumenson echoes Howard’s concerns:

“A proper study of war includes not only the leadership, battles, campaigns, logistics and strategy, but also the political direction ... as well as influencing social, economic, intellectual and other forces. To understand the clash of arms, we need to understand the larger context within which it takes place.”<sup>2</sup>

The *context* is conflict. I resolved to focus on this “larger context” during my War College Fellowship at Stanford University’s Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace. I was further interested in claims that the most promising areas of advance can be found at the boundaries of disciplines, where multiple perspectives are brought to bear.<sup>3</sup> The wide range of multi-disciplinary talent at the Hoover Institution, together with the broad resources of Stanford University, offered a unique opportunity for this kind of research.

The standard advice to Army War College students is to carefully limit one's topic of research. It is excellent advice. Would that I could have followed it! In focusing on war's larger context of conflict, however, I intentionally undertook a project of seemingly hopeless scope. To cope with this dilemma, I strove to identify and understand the general relations of the parts, rather than the intricacies of the parts themselves. This is an *integrated* -- rather than an *intricate* -- description of conflict. To devise an architecture of the components of conflict, I needed theory. I did not start with a grand ambition to outline a "General Theory of Conflict." I found it necessary to outline such a general theory -- in order to start.

I immediately encountered a frustrating phenomenon: The proposal to better define and understand conflict met with general enthusiasm from my military contacts. But from academicians I encountered general disinterest. From their perspective, everything that can be said about conflict has already been said. They can not imagine that anyone has problems understanding conflict. A concomitant frustration was the semantic chaos handicapping any discussion of "conflict" or "strategy." What Svechin called "semantic senility"<sup>4</sup> is clearly evident in a total lack of multi-disciplinary consensus on the terms "conflict," "strategy," "interests," and "theory." Paradoxically, these frustrations were also encouragement, confirming the legitimacy of a quest for a more fundamental understanding of "conflict."

My academic research was interrupted by an opportunity to organize and lead a group of 37 soldiers as a "Combined Arms Assessment Team" into Bosnia-Herzegovina. Our mission was to capture lessons learned for the initial phases of Operation Joint Endeavor, the United States participation in the NATO Implementation Force. I treated this 120 day excursion as an opportunity for "extended field research" of one of the more problematic conflicts of our time.

In this study we will first describe the current state of theory and doctrine concerning conflict. We will do that gently -- metaphorically -- to illustrate the lack of a common conceptual framework for understanding conflict. We then will examine the fundamental components that such a conceptual framework would encompass, abandoning metaphor to outline some simple principles of a general theory of conflict. The purpose, we must remember, is an *integrated* -- rather than an *intricate* -- view of conflict. In the integration process there will be a great deal of what Donelan calls "building with other men's bricks,"<sup>5</sup> -- capturing the ideas of others and arranging them in new combinations. Will we prove the efficacy of this theory throughout history? No. Will the theoretical framework be based on volumes of irrefutable empirical data? No. We will be sympathetic to Roger Fisher's admission:

"Necessarily, I will distort what others are doing and saying; I will oversimplify. In order to make my points, I will leave out all sorts of qualifications, refinements, and footnotes. But that is the nature of theory."<sup>6</sup>

Although we can not unassailably substantiate these generalizations, we can illustrate them. In doing so, we will apply this outline of a general theory of conflict to the more pressing issues that challenge us today: the conflict in Bosnia, strategy, and the future. A general theory of conflict can enhance our ability to deal with "the problems of the day." We can ask no more of theory.

## The Pond of Perception

### Reading the Ripples on the Pond of Perception

Let us first consider conflict without definition or preconception. Let us speak in metaphor. The reality of conflict is immersed in a pond -- the Pond of Perception. Perception Pond is surrounded by high and grassy banks -- pleasant to sit upon, offering diverse vantage points from which to contemplate its shimmering shadows. What is the reality of conflict that lies at the bottom of Perception Pond? We hear many answers from those who survey it.

**Realism.** The Realist speaks first and loudest:

*“Conflict is a competition for power. National power and military force is the quintessential source of security; diplomacy the recognition and communication of the realities of power. All states and nations seek as much power as they can get, fearing each other over issues of territory, autonomy, honor, religion, or economy.”*<sup>1</sup>

In conflict, the Realist adds:

*“Our salvation lies in Realism about going to war and, if war comes, in continued Realism in fighting it ... This, not moral and legal theorizing, is the sure guideline that should be expressed in tactical and strategic manuals and codes of military law.”*<sup>2</sup>

**Rationalism.** But the Realist is interrupted by a nearby observer on the banks of Perception Pond. It is the Rationalist:

*“Your view is distorted. Conflict is not a struggle for power as an end in itself. Conflict is the competition of interests. States are rational actors that can perceive and calculate their interests vis-à-vis other nations. National interests are paramount.”*

Walter Lippman echoes the Rationalist argument:

"We must consider first and last the American national interest. If we do not, if we construct our foreign policy on some kind of abstract theory of rights and duties, we shall build castles in the air. We shall formulate policies which in fact the nation will not support with its blood, its sweat, and its tears."<sup>3</sup>

The Rationalist is careful to point out that interests of nations do not always conflict. The complementarity of many nations' interests gives rise to security associations and other manifestations of international cooperation.

**Idealism.** Must we deal with two perceptions of the reality of conflict at the bottom of Perception Pond? Would that it were so! But a third voice -- somewhat shrill -- echoes from the far bank:

"There is not a dime's difference between you two! One seeks power; the other seeks power to secure his interests. But you are both worse than wrong -- you are dangerous. *Conflict is the failure to recognize the natural community of man.* Your talk of "power" and "interests" have brought us to our current state of chaos and sorrow."

It is, of course, the Idealist who speaks.

"We have membership in two communities: our homeland and mankind. We have an obligation to the common good -- not only in our nation but also in the international community.<sup>4</sup> States exist for the common good of the human community and therefore have an obligation to intervene in other states if the situation -- such as the violation of human rights -- warrants."

Kegley explains the perspective of the Idealist:

"Realist pessimism maintains that history is a record of preparations for war, the conduct of war, and recovery from war. But recent history suggests hope that this cycle can be broken. We often pejoratively label this hope idealism, or liberalism, but it is a rich tradition which deserves a new hearing. Idealism draws on the Enlightenment belief that maladaptive behavior is a product of counterproductive institutions and practices that can be changed by reforming the system that

produces it, and that human nature -- classical realism to the contrary -- is subject to modification and not permanently governed by an ineradicable lust for power.”<sup>5</sup>

**Fideism.** The Fideist -- the true believer -- picks up the theme.

“My friend the Idealist views the Pond of Perception much more clearly than our opposites on the far bank of Realism and Rationalism. But he misunderstands the true nature of community. A community of men is futile. Far more important is the community of God. *Conflict is the struggle of beliefs.* My Idealist friend asserts a principle that opposes selfishness and greed, the principle of a common good. But fallen, sinful men can not pursue such a principle.<sup>6</sup> I do not even need to study Perception Pond to know this, because through faith and revelations of the past I understand the fundamental truths relevant not only to this life but to the next. My ultimate responsibility is not to man or state, but to those understandings. When I fight, therefore, I fight without restraint:

“War is a crusade or it is a crime. There is no half-way house. Only pacifism or faith have true understandings of war.”<sup>7</sup>”

**Historicism.** “If you had sat on these banks as long as I,” says the Historicist, “you would recognize the advantages of my perspective. For *conflict is simply the inexorable unfolding of history.* As Ranke has stated, “There is no understanding of the present without knowledge of the past.”<sup>8</sup>

“Each moment occupies its own distinct position in a temporal series, and all moments considered in proper sequence, tell a story of linked events moving in a direction.”<sup>9</sup>

Conflict is best understood from the perspective of what has gone before, recognizing the continuity of the human experience and bringing the benefits of those experiences to the present. When we face a conflict in a foreign state, our only guide is the character and the beliefs of the

adversaries, that is, their history.”<sup>10</sup> This sense of Historicism is not only key to understanding others, but ourselves as well:

“The soldier’s thread is the legacy of the past; it is crucial never to lose hold of it ... the reliability of our bearings will depend as much on the memory of where we came from and how far we have traveled as on where we are headed and how we intend to get there.”<sup>11</sup> ”

**Clashing on Conflict.** There are others who line the banks of Perception Pond -- “neorealists,” “social constructivists,” “post-modernists” -- too many to count, let alone understand. The sad state of their science is evident in the fact that all these surveyors of conflict can see *each other* much more clearly than they can see the *reality of conflict* that lurks below the surface of Perception Pond. And it is on each other that they direct their energies.

Idealism challenges Realism for its blind focus on power and the failure to recognize the role of values in a competing, moral perspective on the nature of conflict. Rationalism draws fire for the “rational actor” and “perfect information” assumptions that mute consideration of organizational, psychological, and domestic factors.<sup>12</sup> The extension of notions of ‘morality’ and ‘law’ inherent to Idealism is disregarded as relevant only to individual states, not to a nonexistent ‘international community’. Fideism is both criticized and feared, because the crusading spirit ignores realities of power and urgencies of interests that have served to limit conflict in the past. And as Morgenthau points out, the efficacies of Historicism are suspect:

“... a general observation is in order about the propensity of statesmen to learn from history by thinking in terms of historical analogies. They frequently learn the lessons which would have been good to learn twenty years ago, and, by applying them to the situation at hand, they make mistakes at least as great as those their predecessors made. Only they are different mistakes. Vietnam is a case in point.”<sup>13</sup>

## Treading Water

Along the banks of Perception Pond, then, the "War of the -Isms" proceeds. In spite of their differences, the discourse is polite and restrained. It proceeds at the pace of intellectualism, searching for -- or attempting to create -- truth. But this measured discussion suffers disruption by an unseemly wailing. We search the banks of Perception Pond for the source of this distraction in vain, until our attention is drawn to the Pond itself. There, barely holding their heads above the water, we discern a desperate, thrashing group. These unfortunates lack the advantage of a removed perspective, or the luxury to criticize the attainable because it is not the ideal. Immersed in the reality of conflict, they face crises, consequences, and the realities of time and space.<sup>14</sup> To them, the "ripples" of Perception Pond are in fact huge waves of change. They do not perceive themselves to be in a Pond at all, but rather in a dangerous sea of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity.

Is our struggling group of conflict 'practitioners' the Clausewitzian trinity of *soldier*, *state*, and *people*? That analogy is a stretch, for those trinitarian components are evolving dramatically.

- Many observers portend that we are on the verge of -- in fact ongoing -- a radical reconfiguration of the modern *state* system, wherein there is sharp turn toward the market and away from the state in the organization and regulation of economic life. They project a more proactive involvement of "non-state," transnational actors in setting international agendas and even in the allocation of resources.<sup>15</sup> There is a diffusion of political, economic, technical and military power in a multipolar world where small states or quasi-states can acquire significant military power or even weapons of mass

destruction.<sup>16</sup> These trends challenge established institutions such as national governments or traditional alliances such as NATO.

- The *people* in this evolving environment demonstrate a renewed interest in the politics of identity, an identity drawn not on the state but rather on racial, ethnic, or religious distinctions. They foresee vast technological systems and communication linkages among individuals that will create an interdependent and global society.<sup>17</sup>

- The *soldier*, of course, no longer fights alone, but as part of a joint team that wields a vastly more complex array of capabilities. The efforts of the military joint team are completely interwoven with those of the economist, the scientist, the diplomat, and the politician. Finally, of course, there is the media, a missing quantity in the Clausewitzian formula, but now perched precariously -- and sometimes decisively -- on the shoulders of those immersed in the cold reality of conflict.

Clinging to each other, none of these practitioners of conflict is demonstrably "in charge." They bring a vast array of agencies of influence to bear in the process of conflict. But the interagency process lacks a common intellectual framework. They look -- in reflex -- to the military professional:

"You know 'conflict.' What is to be done to keep us afloat in this dangerous sea of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity?"

"I know war, not conflict," comes the answer, "and this ocean has changed considerably in the course of my career. During the Cold War, the currents were strong, but in a predictable direction. But now the meaning of security is extended beyond mere survival; this ocean is noticeably wider, with cross-currents of confusion and uncertainty. We are concerned not only

with the security of nations, but also the security of groups, individuals, and the international system. The notion of security encompasses the political, the economic, the social, and the environmental, and new actors such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Private Volunteer Organizations (PVOs) and the press are prominent players.<sup>18</sup> The very fundamentals of my profession -- the application of force -- are no longer straightforward. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has stated he wants:

“... to come to grips with, and satisfactorily answer for ourselves and for the nation, how to employ ... force ... equally important to building a force is building a consensus on when you would use that force in this new world. If we don't come to grips with (when to use force), we're going to tear at ourselves, as we have with each deployment. ... as a nation we still do not have a consensus about limited wars, much less about operations short of war.”<sup>19</sup>

This thing we call 'conflict' is clearly beyond my purview. Even if I could, I constitutionally can not and will not take charge here.”

But his companions persist:

“You have executed military operations well enough in recent years. Why can you not do the same for conflict?”

The military man pauses before answering.

“Understand that military operations, even during the Cold War, endured an environment of ambiguity. The threats we faced in the last century were not foreseen even five years before their development; the period's “small wars” were not anticipated clearly by even a year.<sup>20</sup> We countered this ambiguity through materiel technology, quality people, and training. All of this was built upon a foundation of commonly understood military doctrine and theory.”

“Doctrine? What is doctrine?”

“Doctrine is what an organization or institution believes about the best way to do things.<sup>21</sup> Military doctrine for conventional operations matters is relatively well developed. In “other operations,” we have made less progress. Strategic doctrine -- bearing more closely on the confusion we are enduring right now -- is even less rigorous. Our immediate dilemma is that doctrine is a child of organization, and no one organization or institution claims ownership of this immense challenge we call *conflict*. Who would write such a doctrine?”

The military man gets another question, rather than an answer.

“You mentioned theory? Can theory calm this sea of confusion?”

“Theory might help. But I know only of military theory. Clausewitz, for example, effectively outlined a theory of war. Elements of his theory are still incorporated into doctrine and referenced in debates on military matters. But after declaring that war is an extension of politics, Clausewitz focused on war, rather than war’s broader context. We need more general theoretical concepts that encompass not only military matters but all the dimensions of conflict. Perhaps those bright fellows on the shore can help.”

A veritable chorus responds from the banks of Perception Pond:

“Help is not what we are here for. But if you must ask, remember that we have given you theories in abundance -- take your pick. How many could you possibly need? Besides, theory -- and doctrine -- is optional at best, pernicious at worst:

“Theory perverts action and distorts scholarship. “Theory” began modestly as Greek ‘onlooking’; it hardened into censorship, and ascended the throne as Roman dogma; cast down, it reingratiated itself as intellectualism. Statesmen and citizens, unless they are vigilant, dance to the latest theory.”<sup>22</sup>

It is theory, they add, that legitimized the outrages of Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot.<sup>23</sup>

“We obviously enjoy different perceptions -- not only of conflict, but of theory,” sighs the military professional. “You see theory and doctrine as philosophical and prescriptive. I see both theory and doctrine as non-prescriptive -- an intellectual framework. The most dangerous aspect of your approach to theory is your *denial*; your *unconscious* use of theory. Consider your maxims on power, Mr. Realist. You claim they are factually based, empirical, derived from some inductive process from the observations of history, and systematically tested. But so are the maxims of all your associates up there, with fundamentally different perceptions of the nature of conflict. The real foundation of your maxims is your *theory* that conflict is essentially a struggle for power.<sup>24</sup> Yours is a dangerous game:

“Every action is postulated on a theory. Every interpretation we make of an event is grounded in certain operational generalizations about the world and our place in it; we may not even be conscious of the precepts that govern our behavior all the time. All of us base our actions on theory; there is no question about the role of generalizations and hypotheses in human endeavor. The real questions are not whether we use theory in our judgments, but rather whether our theoretical foundations are explicit and self-conscious or implicit, and therefore often misunderstood. ... There is no more vicious theorist than the man who says, ‘I have not theory; I just let the facts speak for themselves.’ ”<sup>25</sup>

You have given us an abundance of textbooks and teaching materials, monographs and opinions on specific matters of policy. You have engaged in piecemeal theorizing on specific problems such as the foreign policy of a particular nation or nuclear deterrence.<sup>26</sup> But you present international relations and conflict as an intellectual grab bag, without an ordering set of principles and concepts. Issues of strategy, moreover, have resource implication of enormous magnitude; much of your work is written for political, rather than instructive, purposes.<sup>27</sup> The realities we face as practitioners of conflict are too complex, the variables too overwhelming for ad hoc approaches based on emotion, bias, or even personal self-interest. No matter how

difficult, we need organizing concepts to impose meaning on the kaleidoscopic dimensions of conflict that confront us -- a comprehensive theory of conflict.”

“The other unsatisfactory result of your piecemeal approach has been our current chaos of terminology. Sir Edward Grey advised us that “discussion without definition is impossible.”<sup>28</sup>

You have rendered us mute.

“ ... in this particular topic (strategy) there is always the issue of imprecise language ... there was, and is, no real consensus on this language either in academia, where the public servants in Washington earlier took their training, or in Washington where they practice their arts. But, as we all know, language does make a difference ... ”<sup>29</sup>

With no common understanding of “conflict,” “theory,” “strategy,” or “interests,” we were at a serious disadvantage even before we waded into the reality of conflict.”

After a sullen pause, there is one last reprise from the Boys on the Bank.

“But was it not you who abdicated this field to us? Since the Cold War, it has been the academician who has dominated thinking and writing on national and international security.”<sup>30</sup>

“That may well be, but never mind. Right now we are drowning out here. We must build a raft.”

## **“To Build a Raft”**

If we wish to build a raft of theory that can keep us afloat on this Pond of Perception -- or Sea of Conflict -- we would be well advised to examine our construction material. What is theory? What is its purpose? What are its limitations? Using this material called theory, what would be the specifications for our intellectual raft -- a general theory of conflict?

### **What is Theory?**

A theory is a mental map. From the kaleidoscope of perceptions that assault our senses, apparent facts and relationships are selected and organized into an intellectual model or framework that reflects our perception of reality. Like a map, theory draws attention to certain durable features of our experience that are not likely to change over time. Like a map, theory can infer certain consequences to actions we may choose to take.<sup>1</sup> As the free invention of the human mind,<sup>2</sup> theory is implicitly neither “right” or “wrong.” Terms such as “truth,” “accuracy,” or “historically grounded” apply only partially to theory. Theories of the *past* have utility but do not necessarily reflect the reality of conflict *today*, just as the history of cartography may inform us on the art of map making but not necessarily render a realistic representation of today’s terrain.<sup>3</sup> Paradoxically, moreover, a theory’s simplifications may limit its accuracy, but immeasurably increase its utility. Returning to Fisher’s map analogy:

“The most useful map of London is probably the schematic map of the London underground ... This map is distorted; it is inaccurate; it does not represent the true subway conditions. But it is the most useful map if one wants to take the underground from one place to another.”<sup>4</sup>

### **What is the purpose of theory?**

As Fisher infers, the most effective criteria with which to evaluate theory is its purpose or roles. Peter Paret suggested that the roles of theory are *cognitive*, *utilitarian*, and *pedagogic*.<sup>5</sup> In its *cognitive* role, theory promotes understanding, establishing a comprehensive description of the timeless essentials of the activity it describes.<sup>6</sup> In its *utilitarian* role, theory facilitates successful execution of that activity. The *pedagogic* role of theory lies in the very process of theory creation. Through the process of devising concepts and analytical frameworks firsthand, the theorist develops a more profound understanding of the activity in question.

### **What are the limitations of theory?**

In its ideal, theory is a timeless structure of comprehensive concepts that will retain their validity independent of the context of the current situation. In reality, theory's inherent nature as a model dooms it to fall short of this ideal. Herbert Rosinski described Clausewitz as "that rare phenomenon, a natural born theorist. Whatever he touched revealed under his hands its hidden secrets."<sup>7</sup> But Clausewitz acknowledged the limitations of theory as a simplification of reality:

"The conduct of war branches out in almost all directions and has no definite limits; while any system, any model, has the finite nature of a synthesis. An irreconcilable conflict exists between this type of theory and actual practice."<sup>8</sup>

Clausewitz was particularly pessimistic of the utilitarian role of theory, stating that

"Rules are not only made for idiots, they are idiotic in themselves ... It is only analytically that ... attempts at theory can be called advances in the realm of truth, synthetically, in the rules and regulations they offer, they are absolutely useless."<sup>9</sup>

### **Is a general theory of conflict feasible?**

Notwithstanding the misgivings of Clausewitz, there are a great many "mental maps," developed and employed in diverse circumstances and for disparate purposes. This diversity is evident in the wide range of academic perspectives around the banks of Perception Pond, and

there is similar diversity in the theoretical perspectives of those 'practitioners' immersed in the reality of conflict itself. Is a *general* theory of conflict feasible? What would a general theory of conflict look like? The specifications are daunting . Such a theory would show relevance to the wide range of conflict circumstances: time, place, participants, situation. It would somehow encompass the sundry conceptual frameworks of both the academic and the practitioner. In 1967, Admiral J.C. Wylie examined the specifications for such a general theory, noting that:

"The recognition of a general theory that would fit compatibly over the specific ones would lend a degree of order to the consideration and resolution of conflicting opinions. Such an intellectually disciplined order does not now generally prevail ... if the contenders -- and this includes civilian as well as uniformed strategists -- were to find a rationale within which they could function with generally prevailing mutual understanding ... it might be able to provide a common and basic frame of reference for the special talents of the soldier, the sailor, the airman, the politician, the economist, and the philosopher in their common efforts toward a common aim."<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, the enforced generality of such a theory must not render it so vague and formless that it collapses to the trivial, with no *utilitarian, cognitive, or pedagogic* value.

### **Why Bother?**

Given the doubt of Clausewitz with respect to the utility of a theory of *war*, we can only imagine his pessimism with respect to a general theory encompassing the broader topic of *conflict*. And we can ask ourselves, if theory is so limited -- and a general theory of conflict is so problematic -- why pursue this chimera? The answer is three-fold.

First, as Ayn Rand observed, we really have no option with respect to theory:

"You have no choice about the necessity to integrate your observations, your experiences, your knowledge into abstract ideas ... Your only choice is whether you define your philosophy by a conscious, rational, disciplined process of thought and scrupulously logical deliberation -- or let your subconscious accumulate a junk heap of unwarranted conclusions, false generalizations, undefined contradictions, undigested slogans, unidentified wishes, doubts and

fears, thrown together by chance, but integrated by your subconscious into a kind of mongrel philosophy and fused into a single, solid weight: self-doubt, like a ball and chain where your mind's wings should have grown.<sup>11</sup>

Even if we could pass on theory, however, we should hesitate to do so. Who is really satisfied with the current, ad hoc approach to conflict? Admiral Wylie wrote:

“Neither the general theory that I propose nor any better alternate that someone else might propose can guarantee successful strategy any more than a good political theory can guarantee successful government. But a theory can provide a stable and orderly point of departure from which we might proceed to the specific facts at hand in devising, in carrying out, and later in criticizing a strategy for a particular purpose.”<sup>12</sup>

In non-military fields as well, the value of theory is understood. Writing on the commonality of various models in the field of complexity theory, Michael Waldrop noted:

“If nothing else ... the very existence of a common framework is reassuring, in the sense that most of the blind men at least seem to have their hands on the same elephant. But more than that, a common framework should help the people working on these models to communicate a lot more easily than they usually do, without the label of different jargons.”<sup>13</sup>

Ironically, it is in recognition of one of the limitations of theory that we find our final motivation to seek a general theory of conflict. In The Ascent of Man, Jacob Bronowski traced the history of man's intellectual development:

“Every theory, however majestic, has hidden assumptions which are open to challenge and, indeed, in time will make it necessary to replace it ... every theory is based in some analogy, and sooner or later the theory fails because the analogy turns out to be false. A theory in its day helps to solve the problems of the day.”<sup>14</sup>

What are our “problems of the day”? We live in a multipolar, chaotic world characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. Our multiple, diverse agencies of influence must plan and coordinate without the benefit of a common intellectual framework or even shared terminology. The problems of the day call for a comprehensive intellectual architecture that furthers the integration of our diverse national capabilities -- a general theory of conflict.

## Conflict

There are two possible approaches to outlining a general theory of conflict. The first would be an inductive approach, building a theory based on empirical facts of history and science. The second would be to build a theory of concepts that are logical, deductively related, and consistent.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of approach, we note the perspective of Clausewitz at the start of his theory of war:

“... in war more than any other subject we must begin by looking at the nature of the whole; for here more than elsewhere the part and the whole must always be thought of together.”<sup>2</sup>

A comprehensive perspective is equally appropriate for conflict, particularly a *general* theory of conflict. That perspective, moreover, leads us to favor the deductive approach, since empirical induction would be overwhelmed by the sheer mass of information available on every dimension of the broad phenomenon of conflict. Therefore we will proceed primarily by deduction, enumerating some simple principles of conflict, but invoking induction at times to illustrate them. Now we abandon the luxury of metaphor and turn to the hard work of definition.

### What is Conflict?

Ideas are the common currency of conflict. Individuals perceive reality through their senses. Their powers of reason order their perceptions into conceptions or ideas. Individuals

*“You know, when you think about it, war isn’t about battles, it is to do with men’s minds ... the war was really about: one set of ideas trying to prevail against another. The battles were almost incidental.”*

*Captain Warawick Charlton<sup>3</sup>*

communicate these ideas to others and over time groups of individuals may come to share them.

The ideas of individuals and groups may be generally similar -- or they may be contradictory.

Contradictory perceptions of reality -- contradictory ideas -- give rise to conflict between individuals or groups. *Conflict is the competition of contradictory ideas.*

“Idea” is admittedly a broad notion. Ideas range from the mundane (“I will stop digging my foxhole now.”) to the sublime (“Democracy is worth dying for.”) Ideas may be world views deeply embedded in a culture, evoking deep emotions and conviction. Ideas may be principled beliefs that give normative criteria for choosing right from wrong. Ideas may be causal beliefs about cause-effect relationships in a primitive village or the most sophisticated research center.<sup>4</sup> They may be passing notions that have no motivating influence on individuals or groups. A broad notion, to be sure. But a general theory needs a broad foundation. Power protects and projects *ideas* of value and interest; economic relationships advance *ideas* of individual and group profit, and clashing civilizations are best defined by the *ideas* that distinguish them. Ideas matter, because they are the stuff of decision, and decisions -- by individuals or by groups of individuals -- permeate every aspect of conflict. “Values,” “interests,” “power,” “ethnicity” -- all of these are categories of *ideas*. This theory of conflict will not be built around category, but will strive for generality by dealing in their common denominator -- ideas.

When we speak of ideas, we do not speak of ideology. We admit that ideas are the stuff of ideology, but ideology is a perverse application of ideas, as described by Jean-Francois Revel:

“... ideology ... is an instrument of power; a defense mechanism against information; a pretext for eluding moral constraints in doing or approving evil with a clean conscience; and finally, a way of banning the criterion of experience, that is, of completely eliminating or indefinitely postponing the pragmatic criteria of success and failure.”<sup>5</sup>

Ideology has a role in conflict, but the entire range of idea competition in conflict can not -- fortunately -- be characterized as ideology. The Cold War has been described at times, for

example, as ideological. But the ideological dimension of that competition was predominantly one-sided. The Soviet Union saw the competition as ideological and lost. The West waged a war of ideas and won. Free markets and democratic pluralism prevailed in a protracted competition with command economies and totalitarianism. The Cold War was exceptional in the sense that we enjoyed -- and endured -- a competing set of ideas well-defined in theory and miserably demonstrated in execution. Today the competing ideas can be ambiguous, arcane, or - from our perspective -- bizarre.

*"The more journalism I read and do, the more convinced I am not merely that ideas have large and lasting consequences, but that only ideas have large and lasting consequences - behind every war there lurks an idea ..."*

*George Will*

The role of ideas in internal politics or international relations has at times been dismissed. Ideas are viewed as "instrumental" -- in the sense that they legitimate the interests of the powerful but have no causal force. Ideas are characterized as "hooks" on which competing elites hang popular messages to propagate and reinforce their interests. Preferences and beliefs - ideas -- of international and domestic actors are viewed as "givens," *a priori* factors that then work within constraints of the international system.<sup>6</sup>

This general theory will not consign the ideas of actors in conflict as "givens." Ideas are operative. Even if the motives of those who employ them are suspect, the potential for those ideas to cause action -- and the process by which they do so -- is significant. Moreover, the evolution of ideas in the mind of the actors -- both individuals and groups -- is a key dimension to the process of conflict. As sources of perspective for interpreting events, as principled beliefs that set goals, as descriptions of cause-effect relationships that guide policy, ideas have causal weight in explaining human behavior.<sup>7</sup> Perceptions of interest and power may have a role in the

development of ideas, but once those ideas are embedded in beliefs and institutions, they assume a role that may outlast those original developing factors.<sup>8</sup> Ideas matter.

### **What is the Mechanism of Conflict?**

If we stopped at this point, a theory of general conflict as the competition of ideas would collapse to the trivial redefinition of all issues of conflicts as “ideas.” But we press on to examine the mechanism of the competition of ideas in conflict. *The mechanism of conflict is two-fold: logic and violence.* Ayn Rand states the proposition bluntly:

“There are only two means by which men can deal with one another: guns or logic. Force or persuasion. Those that know that they cannot win by means of logic, have always resorted to guns.”

*Logic* attempts to revise a conflict participant’s ideas through the exchange of information and the reasoned comparison of ideas to reality. *Violence* attempts this revision through the presentation of unfavorable alternatives to compliance: injury, destruction or death. The *violence* and *logic* components of conflict resolution are totally interdependent.<sup>9</sup>

Each of the instruments of conflict apply logic and violence in varying proportions. In economic conflict *logic* -- the comparison of alternative economic consequences -- is the overwhelming influence. We similarly view *logic* as the dominant mechanism in diplomacy. Our instincts are that reason should prevail. That was certainly our strategy for the Cold War -- and it worked. Through decades of containment and daily demonstration that ours was the superior system, the element of *logic* prevailed. As Michael Howard puts it, “the Cold War was not won by Western armed forces ... the war was won by Western market economies.”<sup>10</sup>

Both history and current experience underscore *violence* as a dimension of conflict. Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti or Bosnia shows a world filled with people prepared to “resort to guns.”

It is not simply a dimension of international conflict, but an aspect of general conflict between both groups and individuals. And it is a phenomenon that may be increasing:

“the global routinization of violence has spawned entire generations for whom protracted conflict is normal ... youth see violence not as an aberration, but as an intrinsic part of life. ”<sup>11</sup>

*“The Soviet experience was, of course, a terrible example of what can happen when an idea gets out of hand.”*

*Robert Conquest*

Most importantly, the violence and logic components of the mechanism of conflict are not an “either-or” proposition, for they are totally interdependent and do not work in isolation. Although we accept the role

of logic in our Cold War victory, for example, the potential violence of Western military strength was the enabling factor that made a Containment Strategy feasible. Although logic is ideally the dominant factor in the competition of ideas in diplomacy, that process may be “continued by other means” through military action. Even military force, properly applied, is not pure violence. Violence is the obvious component of military force, but not to the exclusion of logic. Military force is the measured application of violence to encourage a logical decision -- a favorable course of action on the part of our opponents. Violence does not have to be applied, merely credible. The violence we threaten must induce a compelling logic for our opponent, in which he foresees a situation that is even more unpleasant than the concession we seek. This interdependence of *logic* and *violence* can similarly work in the other direction, as Donald

Kagan points out:

“... wars have normally arisen “from almost a superabundance of analytic rationality. Sophisticated communities ... do not react simply to immediate threats. Their intelligence ... enables them to assess the implications that any event taking place anywhere in the world, however remote, may have for their own capacity, immediately to exert influence, ultimately, perhaps, to survive.”<sup>12</sup>

**The Linkage of Decision.** The competition of ideas in conflict is multi-dimensional, incorporating a pyramid of countless implicit ideas and their relative values to individuals and groups. The essence of tactics, operational art, and strategy is the linkage of decision through the mechanisms of logic and violence. Why does the infantrymen decide to go forward with his peers? He decides to go forward because his society, his leaders, his training and his peers have imbued him with the idea that it is better to go forward than to stay back. There are many subordinate ideas at work here:

- "the best chance of long-term survival for me and our group is to destroy this threat"
- "this attack is doable -- we have a chance"
- "I share the risk equally"
- "my buddies are watching"
- "to refuse to go will mean punishment and humiliation ..."

The motivation of individual fighters may be quite remote from the original basis of the conflict:

"... it is unworthy of the profession of arms to base any policy upon exaggerated notions of man's capacity to endure and to sacrifice on behalf of ideals alone. In battle, you may draw a small circle around a soldier, including within it only those persons and objects which he sees or which he believes will influence his immediate fortunes. These primarily will determine whether he rallies or fails, advances or falls back.<sup>13</sup>

*"Ideas are the great warriors of the world, and a war that has no idea behind it, is simply a brutality."*

*James Garfield*

Tactical leaders link individual decisions and actions to achieve tactical success.

Why does an army abandon the field? It decides -- either through its leaders or the mob psychology that precipitates a rout -- that it can not win. Tactical outcomes radically challenge their perception of reality. The information of their leaders and peers is no longer credible. The idea that brought them to war compares poorly to the idea of immediate futile death or injury.

Operational commanders link tactical outcomes to violently create favorable alternatives in the mind of the enemy commander or the enemy force as a whole.

At the strategic level, societies abandon or maintain ideas as their perception of reality is altered through the conflict process. It is important to note that the rational projection of the consequences of threatened violence can have an impact far beyond the physical application of the violence itself. The history of "decisive battles" demonstrates the leverage of a demonstrated ability to destroy. The physical destruction of battle is tragic, but the logical leverage of battle victory is far more significant. Even the most violent and decisive conflicts generally entail the destruction of a relatively small proportion of the participants. At the Battle of Koniggratz, a classic "battle of decision," the defeated Austrian forces suffered 5,793 killed. This was 3% of the battlefield force, 1% of the Austrian Army, and a minute fraction of the millions of Austrians who eventually abandoned the idea of Austrian supremacy among Germanic states as a result of the events that transpired at Koniggratz on 3 July, 1866.<sup>14</sup> The impact of violence is leveraged many times over through logic -- the rational projection of the consequences of potential violence that induces the emotion of fear and ultimately the decision to comply.

**Conflict to Crisis.** Not all contradictory ideas lead to crisis. The people of the United States and the United Kingdom hold contradictory ideas on the legitimacy of Great Britain's Royal Family. No one anticipates war over our divergent opinions, because -- since 1783 -- this contradiction is not relevant to the perceived sense of well-being of the two countries. A man may hold contradictory ideas with respect to his spouse over the proper channel to watch on TV. In most cases, this minor conflict does not lead to a 911 call and an incident of spouse abuse. Many Americans will hold contradictory ideas with respect to who

should be our next president. We do not expect these logical contradictions to lead to an exchange of violence.

What leads *conflict* to *crisis*? This transition can not be confidently predicted. In many situations a competition of contradictory ideas may lead to crisis if it is directly relevant to each group's perception of well-being. Often the immediate or long-term survival of one of the parties is threatened. Here once again we see the role of logic, for in making decisions for violence, -- as noted as early as Thucydides in the Melian Dialogue -- "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must."<sup>15</sup> If man perceives an ability to inflict violence without unacceptable retribution, he may decide for violence. He may also decide for violence if he perceives an adversary's actions as threatening to his immediate or long-term well-being. The linkage of decision in this process is extraordinarily complex, and difficult to project. If we are to attempt such projections, we must consider the environment in which these decisions are made -- the *milieu* of conflict.

### **What is the Milieu of Conflict?**

Conflict is a *competition of ideas* through the interdependent mechanisms of *violence* and *logic*. These mechanisms operate in an environment -- a *milieu* -- which completes our outline of a general theory of conflict. The milieu of conflict is *chance, fog, friction* and *circumstance*.

**Chance.** To recast a saying of our times -- "things happen." The cause and effect relationships of many events -- if they exist at all -- are so obscure as to be unfathomable. But these chance occurrences, nevertheless, have a significant impact on the outcome of the competition of ideas. Mt. Pinatubo erupts, hastening U.S. withdrawal from the Philippines and accelerating Asian perceptions that the U.S. will not maintain a military presence in the Pacific.

An Air Force jet crashes in Croatia, killing the Commerce Secretary Ron Brown and 34 others -- many of them leading U.S. business executives -- and discouraging prospects for the economic future of the Balkans and the outcome of the conflict there. From the perspective of the national jurisprudence system, the O.J. Simpson trial is a chance event -- but one with a huge incipient impact on competing national ideas about the jury system in our nation.

**Fog.** We borrow Clausewitz' concept "*the fog of war.*" Even if we could claim perfect logic, such perfection would be irrelevant in the competition of ideas, for our ability to perceive reality is not perfect. Imperfections in the perception of reality, failures in articulating those perceptions, further failures in communicating those perceptions or understanding the communicated perceptions of others -- all of these contribute to "*the fog of conflict.*"

**Friction.** We borrow from the master of theory yet one more time, and again without much elaboration, extending the Clausewitzian notion of *friction* to our milieu of conflict. There are certainly inefficiencies in the application of logic and violence during the competition of ideas; we call these inefficiencies *friction*.

**Circumstance.** Finally, we note certain factors of *circumstance* that reflect facts of nature as well as the consequences of former processes of conflict. *Geography* is certainly a fact of nature, but a significant one around which entire theories of war have been built. *Resources* may be a fact of nature such as a large oil reserve; they may also be the consequence of decisions made in the earlier competition of ideas, such as decisions to develop infrastructure or special technologies. Ideas are the ends of conflict, but the art of strategy must balance those *ends* with available resources -- the means. Grant's dictum that "War is progressive ... because all the

instruments and elements of war are progressive”<sup>16</sup> is appropriately extended to conflict; and we identify the dominant role of *technology* as an individual factor of conflict *circumstance*.

“Human history is, in essence, a history of ideas.”

H.G. Wells

Most importantly, *history* is a key factor of *circumstance* in the milieu of conflict. Our most recent historical experiences have a tremendous influence on our perception and relative prioritization of ideas. Kenneth Thompson illustrates this phenomenon:

“Those who were involved in the decision to intervene in Korea report that decision in the following terms. Those who met in Blair House to make the decision represented a wide range of opinions. They were men who came from different parts of the country, were formally educated in varying degrees, and had greater or lesser experience in foreign relations. They saw the facts in different terms and from different professional perspectives. But I have heard more than one of them say that the great uniting factors as they addressed themselves to the policy discussion of what our actions should be, centered around the lessons they had learned from the interwar period and the events leading up to World War II. That is to say, they had gleaned from pre-World War II history one overarching conclusion: aggression that was not resisted at its source was bound to spread, grow, and expand to a point where only a general world war of momentous proportion could turn it back.”<sup>17</sup>

Donald Kagan has demonstrated a similar circumstance of historical perspective on the eve of World War I:

“There appears to have been yet another reason for the reversal in policy, intangible and difficult to document, but no less real. William II represented the arrival in power of a new generation after a long reign by the previous one ... there was discontent as the old achievements were taken for granted ... There was considerable pressure, especially among the younger elite surrounding the young Kaiser, for change, almost any change.”<sup>18</sup>

“The Austrians and Germans knew that by standing together and threatening the use of force they had achieved their goals and forced the Serbs and Russians to back down. In ... 1914 some of their leaders expected the same result.”<sup>19</sup>

and in the events leading up to World War II:

“Britain’s governing class came to believe that the Western allies had been at least as responsible as the Germans for the war, that greater understanding, more generosity, and patience were better ways to avoid war than by military deterrence.”<sup>20</sup>

**“Will this raft float?”**

Our return to metaphor signals the fact that our fundamental outline of a general theory of conflict is complete. *Conflict* is the competition of contradictory *ideas*. The interdependent mechanisms of that competition are *logic* and *violence*. These mechanisms operate in a *milieu* of *chance, fog, friction* and the *circumstance* of *geography, resources, technology* and *history*.

Will this raft float? Does this theory meet our specifications? We have every reason to think that it will. Since ideas are the distinguishing characteristic of our humanity, a general theory built around the notion of conflict as the competition of ideas will have broad relevance in place and time. We see that this theory encompasses the arguments of the Realist, the Rationalist, the Idealist, the Fideist, and the Historicist, all of whom argue from the perspective of broad categories of ideas and beliefs. The dual mechanism of idea competition through violence and logic incorporates the work of the diplomat, the economist, and all the other practitioners of conflict. The ultimate test will be in purpose. Does it meet the *cognitive, utilitarian, and pedagogic* roles of theory? We now turn to that test.

## Floating the Raft Three Tests of Theory

Clausewitz, the quintessential theorist, dismissed theory in application to real problems, observing that "I do not follow a particular system, and demand nothing but the plain, straightforward truth, the simple linking of cause and effect."<sup>1</sup> We are not so bold to reach for "plain, straightforward truth" in this post-Cold War era, but we can legitimately ask if this theory at least helps us understand, employ, and discern the "simple linking of cause and effect" in conflict. We will apply Paret's three tests -- *cognitive*, *utilitarian*, and *pedagogic* -- to our general theory of conflict. We will attempt a better *understanding* of the conflict in Bosnia, test its *usefulness* for strategy, and *analyze* the future and the Revolution in Military Affairs.

### The Cognitive Test: Understanding Bosnia

"English persons ... of humanitarian and reformist disposition constantly went out to the Balkan Peninsula to see who was in fact ill-treating whom, and, being by the very nature of their perfectionist faith unable to accept the horrid hypothesis that everybody was ill-treating everybody else, all came back with a pet Balkan people established in their hearts as suffering and innocent, eternally the massacrée and never the massacrer."<sup>2</sup>

Rebecca West  
Black Lamb and Grey Falcon  
1937

The unhappy events on the Balkan Peninsula have provided a surfeit of grist for the traditional mills of international theory. The Realist sees the collapse of the power of the Yugoslav State -- with the subsequent grasp at power by subordinate ethnic groups -- as the catalyst for the conflict. The Rationalist sees a competition of interests of those groups -- security, economic, or cultural -- as the underlying cause. The Idealist is not as concerned with the 'causes' as with 'the cause' of Bosnia, the *horribleness* of it all, and the moral imperative that

it cease immediately. The Fideist calmly observes that these are wars of religion and that we should not be surprised at their ferocity. The Historicist turns to his craft with a vengeance: "The Balkans? You must understand that in the year 305, the Roman Emperor Diocletian ..."

All of these perspectives in fact have a role in interpreting the Balkan nightmare, but at the same time they generate translations that are partial and not infrequently contradictory. Realist theory is challenged by those who believe that many of the warring factions in fact *created*, rather than *reacted to*, threats.<sup>3</sup> Rationalists would argue for intervention if our interests were threatened, but the definition of those specific interests is elusive. The Idealist can demonstrate that our values are violated by the events of Bosnia, but does not enjoy consensus that violation of those values outside of our territory is justification for intervention. The Fideist argues against intervention, noting that wars of religion are matters of belief, intractable, and defy moral judgment. The Historicist clucks about the American taxpayers lack of appetite for 600 year conflicts and then asks: "Which side would you like to justify?"

My personal experience does not dispel the enigma of the Bosnian conflict. During my deployment in Bosnia, I consistently pressed all my interlocutors for their impressions as to the origins of the conflict. All contacts -- both military and civilian -- expressed confoundment. A British Joint Commission Officer confided that "If these were rational actors, these actors went insane. No one is better off -- in any dimension -- than before the conflict." Young interpreters blamed "corrupt, money-mad politicians." Many expressed resignation: "This is the way things are." A young militiaman's unit patch carried the motto "For Brcko We Die." To drive through the devastated Posavina Corridor and into the grimy town of Brcko, it is chilling and mystifying to contemplate how many -- both soldiers and civilian -- have in fact died for this nondescript place

on the Sava River. A Serb commander -- even while surveying the consignment of his major weapons systems to one of 900 NATO collection points, calmly announces, "My family lives in Banja Luka. If we lose Brcko, I will never see them again. I will fight to the death over Brcko."<sup>4</sup> No one, of course, conveniently introduced themselves with a definitive self-categorization: "I am a Rationalist," or "Realism is my operative theory."

**The Competition of Ideas.** Interestingly for this test of our general theory, the basis of Yugoslavia for the last several decades was characterized as "The Yugoslav Idea." The idea of the essential unity and nationality of the "Yugoslavs," or "South Slavs," predates Tito and the establishment of Yugoslavia at the end of World War I, all the way back to the nineteenth century. It is an idea that has seen many competitors. Many of the inhabitants of Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Dalmatia, Macedonia and Montenegro have preferred the ideas of their local identities, their language,<sup>5</sup> their religion, or their history as the basis for nationhood. In contradiction with those who supported the Yugoslav Idea as an economic necessity and a bulwark against Italian and Central European pressures on the west, and Bulgarian pressures on the east,<sup>6</sup> they have waged a continuous struggle of both *logic* and *violence*, punctuated by guerrilla wars, assassination, and -- during World War II -- wholesale ethnic slaughter.

Tito refined the Yugoslav Idea under a socialist rubric. National -- or non-Yugoslavian -- political rights were suppressed.<sup>7</sup> Tito enforced a taboo against political appeals to one group against another, under a "socialist patriotism" emphasizing "brotherhood and unity," national identity could only be invoked in non-contrarian terms.<sup>8</sup> The idea of dual sovereignty -- of the nations and of the republics -- implicitly embodied the idea that independence could not be granted without the simultaneous consent of the nations within that republic.<sup>9</sup> Regional centers of

power were afforded a significant degree of autonomy; Slovenia and Croatia, notably, balanced Serbia.<sup>10</sup> Serbs, the majority race of the Yugoslav state only in the region of Serbia, were placated by their relative dominance in the state and party bureaucracies of these more autonomous regions.<sup>11</sup> The socialist character of the Yugoslav state, meanwhile, legitimated the idea of financial transfers from more productive regions to less productive ones.

With the world-wide collapse of the idea of communism, the socialist foundation of the Yugoslav Idea disintegrated and the Pandora's Box of competing ideas -- virtually closed for 50 years -- was thrown open. In Croatia, the idea of a Greater Serbia seemed appallingly arrogant to the majority Croats, who now envisioned a contradictory idea -- an independent Croatia, where Serbs would no longer dominate the machinery of government but would be a minority population. Many Serbs were removed from government and administration. Serb policemen were disarmed. To most Serbs in the Croatian Krajina region, imbued with the ideas of a firmly embedded gun culture, the idea of disarmament was outrageous and dishonorable. They perceived their former positions in government as a consequence of membership in the Communist Party, not their nationality.<sup>12</sup> More significantly, the replacement of these displaced Serbs by Croats invoked the specter of renewed persecution at the hands of Croatian nationalists (Ustashas).

Economic ideas were also operative. Misha Glenny suggests that fundamentally different economic traditions were comingled within the former Yugoslav state:

“Without question, the economic traditions of Slovenia and Croatia ... developed in closer harmony with Western ideas in the twentieth century, whereas to the east ... the corrupt barter mentality of the Ottomans still dominates the rural economies of Serbia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Bosnia, Montenegro, and Albania.”<sup>13</sup>

Croatians now saw no legitimacy in 'Bolshevist' financial transfers to poorer, less-productive regions such as Bosnia.

What emboldened the minority Serbs of the Croatian Krajina region to take up arms? Perhaps it was the idea that their companion Serbs in other regions of Yugoslavia, particularly in the JNA (Yugoslav People's Army), would aid a Serb minority. They had encouragement from Slobodan Milosevic, who had violated the former taboos of the Yugoslav Idea and was vigorously fanning the idea of Serbian nationalism through mass public demonstrations throughout the area of the former Yugoslavia. Even in isolation, the Serbs would have been formidable. Serbs cherish the idea that their resistance saved European culture from the Ottoman Empire. Westerners profess bewilderment at Serbian celebration of their defeat at Kosovo in 1389, but as Rebecca West explains in her definitive exposition of Balkan ideas and history, they celebrate the idea of heroic sacrifice. They are not easily intimidated. Within hours of the Croatian and Slovenian declarations of independence on 26 June, 1990, Serb militiamen attacked the Glina police station near Zagreb and the Third Balkan War began.<sup>14</sup>

Bosnia had long been held up as the epitome of the Yugoslav Idea. Bosnia had never existed -- since medieval times -- as an independent state. The volatile intermingling of ethnic groups in Bosnia had always been controlled by the mediating influence of an external polity, except during World War II, when nationalist, religious violence devastated the region.<sup>15</sup> The Muslims of Bosnia, the privileged class throughout the many centuries of Turkish domination, had never been highly motivated to develop a modern national identity, and indeed, the idea of a nationality identified by religion was inherently contradictory to a government committed to the principles of atheism. The Moslems of Bosnia were initially afforded only official minority status

in Tito's Yugoslavia.<sup>16</sup> That changed in Yugoslavia's revised constitution of 1974, which granted "nationhood" to Bosnia's Moslems, in part to allay the fears of non-Serbs that the crushing of the "Croatian Spring" in 1971 meant a revival of Serb domination of Yugoslavia, and also to suppress the ideas of Serbs and Croats in the region that Moslems remained at heart -- after all these centuries -- either Orthodox Slavs or Catholics.<sup>17</sup> With nationhood, the idea of tri-national parity came to maturity. Bosnia would consist of 'three constituent nations' -- Serbian, Croatian, and Muslim -- all of whom would have to agree to constitutional changes.<sup>18</sup>

The delicate balance in Bosnia was shattered by the Slovenian and Croatian moves to independence and their subsequent recognition by the European Community in 1991. The European Community went on to extend the promise of recognition to Bosnia if supported by a simple majority in plebiscite.<sup>19</sup> The idea of independence from a rump Yugoslavia now increasingly dominated by Serbs appealed to the Croats and Muslims of Bosnia, who could generate a democratic majority. The idea of minority, isolated status in an independent Bosnia terrified the Serbs, who were convinced of the legitimacy of the idea of tri-national parity and remembered their World War II bloodletting at the hands of Croats and Muslims. Their concerns were exacerbated in the officer ranks of the JNA, dominated by Serbs, who knew that Tito had removed the bulk of Yugoslavia's military industries and installations to the mountainous 'redoubt' of Bosnia, and could not accept the idea of forfeiting over 60% of Yugoslavia's military industries to an independent Bosnia controlled by Croats and Muslims.<sup>20</sup> Serb nationalists promised to fight, and when the plebiscite was held, they kept their promise.

The nations of Bosnia did not simultaneously make a logical choice for a life of chaos. The cascading linkage of the cause and effect decisions of groups and individuals illustrated the

complex linkage of ideas operative in conflict. Extremists and thugs were easily encouraged to perpetrate acts of violence, motivated by ideas of nationalism or personal gain.<sup>21</sup> Their victims, galvanized by the immediate threat to themselves and their group, immediately gave primacy to the ideas of group identity, cohesion, and survival. Their reactions and preparations precipitated polarizing reactions in opposing groups. As the war unfolded, the perceived realities of the participants changed dramatically. In light of the ugly reality of horrific casualties and a destroyed economy, the primacy of personal and group survival -- and revenge -- soon succeeded the original ideas of misperceived nationalism.

United States policy in the Balkans from 1990 to 1995 stalled in the face of numerous contradictory ideas, both internally and with its allies. Most European states perceived the conflict to be a civil war -- an internal matter; the United States tended to see it as a war of aggression -- an international issue. Within the U.S. policy process, the principle of the "inviolability of borders" could not be reconciled with "the right of self-determination" for all parties. Traditional notions of power and interest argued against intervention; ideas of moralism and human rights increasingly gained primacy as American citizens viewed media images of the incomprehensible violence of the internecine fighting. The idea of maintaining NATO as a viable alliance -- led by the United States -- as a bulwark against a revanchist Russia was also operative. But as the United States committed land forces to the conflict in late November of 1995, the President invoked traditional American ideas:

"From our birth, America has always been more than just a place. America has embodied an idea that has become the ideal for billions of people throughout the world. Our founders said it best: America is about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness ... Today, because of our dedication, America's ideals -- liberty, democracy, and peace -- are more and more the aspirations of people everywhere in the world. It is the power of our ideas, even more than our size, our wealth and our military might, that makes America a uniquely trusted nation."<sup>22</sup>

Political pap? Perhaps -- but this is the logic that sends Americans to war -- and "operations other than war."

**The Mechanism of Conflict.** Let us shift our focus to the mechanism of conflict in Bosnia: logic and violence. Logic permeates the comparison of ideas and it is not necessary to dwell on this self-evident proposition. It is useful to note, however, the role of particular tools of logic, the media and symbolism, in fomenting the conflict. In Misha Glenny's book The Fall of Yugoslavia, he notes the essential roles of the primary media organs of Serbia, the largest circulating newspaper *Politika* and Radio Television Belgrade:

"*Politika* and RTV Belgrade became hollow vessels which Milosevic's bureaucracy filled with seductive nonsense, designed to manipulate and feed the gullible and disoriented Serbian people with a diet of suspicion and intolerance. The role of television during the elections had been especially tendentious."<sup>23</sup>

This role extended to the local level:

"Without doubt one of the most important actors on the Knin stage which transformed the consciousness of this dozy town was Srpski Radio Knin (Serbian Radio Knin). ... like all other media in Yugoslavia, with a few dazzling exceptions, Srpski Radio Knin is a vital accomplice in the dissemination of falsehoods and perpetuation of divisive myth ..."<sup>24</sup>

The media and the factions did not hesitate to employ symbolism that advanced their ideas. Such symbolism is readily at hand in the Balkan cultures. The Serbian Orthodox cross is adorned with four C's (the Cyrillic letter S), an acronym for the phrase '*Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava*' -- "*Only Unity Can Save the Serb.*"<sup>25</sup> It is a powerful symbol that combined the authority of religion with Serbian political aspirations for unity. For the Croats,

"The red and white chequered shield (*sahovnica*) is one of the oldest Croatian symbols. Unfortunately, it was also used most prominently by the Ustashas. In 1990, the *sahovnica* was used to replace the principal Yugoslav symbol, the red star. Serbs in Croatia view the red star not just as a communist symbol but as a sign legitimizing their equal status with Croats, and they believed that the

ubiquitous presence of the *sahovnica* underlines that loss of equality. Serbs believe they fought two world wars in order to preserve that equality and now the separatist will of the Croatian government is attempting to strip them of their hard-won prize. It does not matter how close to the truth this is. It does not matter that Tadjman's government was not a fascist one -- the point is, enough Serbs believed it to be so ...<sup>26</sup>

In his classic text The Bridge On the Drina, the nobel laureate Ivo Andric captured the unleashing of violence in Bosnia at the start of WWI. His words could equally apply to 1991:

"That wild beast, which lives in man and does not dare to show until the barriers of custom and law have been removed, was now set free. The signal was given, the barriers were down. As has so often happened in the history of man, permission was tacitly granted for acts of violence and plunder, even for murder, if they were carried out in the name of higher interests ..."<sup>27</sup>

The dimension of violence in the Balkan conflict is well reported but nevertheless difficult for us to fathom. We need not recount it here, except to mention that the evidence of violence made a visible impression on the U.S. soldiers of the NATO Implementation Force (IFOR) Task Force Eagle, many of them veterans of Desert Storm, Somalia, Rwanda, and Haiti. Standing outside the ruins of a minority Serb home, surrounded by the untouched homes of the now ethnically pure Croat town, a member of my team observed, "*If you went insane one night, and did this thing, would you not try to destroy the evidence? Burn it down? Bulldoze it? Plant grass? Cover it up? Would you leave it as a monument to what you did, a daily reminder? These are scary people.*"<sup>28</sup> This is a region inured to violence, desensitized to a degree that we can scarcely comprehend. Violence is an accepted mechanism of conflict in the Balkans.<sup>29</sup>

The impact of that mechanism of violence -- together with the ever-interdependent mechanism of logic -- was evident in the single thread of continuity to the perspectives of those I met and observed on all sides in Bosnia: palpable, recognizable fear. The interaction of logic and violence gave rise to the primacy of a particular idea -- the idea of security. This idea -- personal

security, and security for ones group -- is a dominant one for the hapless participants in the conflict. Many expressed helplessness, which I paraphrase:

*I could not choose my identity. By name, by pronunciation, by religion, everyone knows what I am. I belong to a particular group, a group that is hated and feared by others. Perhaps for good reason -- I don't know. Perhaps someone in my group did something very bad -- not me, of course. But now I fear the logic and the violence of "the others," and it behooves me to do unto them before they do unto me and my family. As always, my security lies in my group.*

The logic of their situation was inexorable and escalatory, as explained by Barry Weingast:

*"Plural societies are characterized by reciprocal vulnerability ... each group can potentially be victimized by the other. ... It is far better to be an aggressor than a victim. These conclusions imply that even peace-loving groups may be induced to violent aggression if they fear being a victim ... the stakes of ethnic violence are so large, even small probabilities that the other group will act aggressively can induce the first group to initiate violence to preempt being a victim."<sup>30</sup>*

The interdependent mechanism of logic and violence was also evident in the effect of the NATO bombing. An IFOR brigade commander related his conversation with a Serbian commander:

*"I asked him about the bombing. His answer was interesting. He said that the bombing was the end of it as far as he was concerned. Not for the destruction -- he didn't see much of that. It was the idea that NATO was bombing the Serbs. He couldn't believe it. He couldn't believe that NATO did not see how the Serbs were also victims in this war -- he saw his side as "morally equivalent." But if NATO saw the Serbs as the bad guys ... then he knew what his commanders were saying was wrong. He knew it was over."*

**The Milieu of Conflict.** The Bosnian conflict operates in its own milieu of chance, fog, friction and circumstance. A shell hits the Sarajevo market. The violence is minor compared to the killings around Serbinica, but the chance timing and presence of international media galvanizes world opinion and helps precipitate the NATO bombing campaign.

"Fog" was similarly at play. In a world of perfect logic, we might be able to induce the outcome of competing ideas. But imperfections of communication and perception obviate that

possibility. Misha Glenny writes of President Tudjman's misreading of the Serbs, confusing the apparent complacency of urban Croatian Serbs with the sentiments of the Krajina peasants:

"Cosseted by the moderation of the urban Serbs, the Tudjman team after the elections assumed arrogantly and stupidly that the passivity and adaptability of the urban communities was the way of the Serbian world in Croatia."<sup>31</sup>

The reality, however, was considerably different:

"The economic horizons of the rural Serbs are limited, but the early post-feudal concepts of land and home are central to their thinking and their sense of security. Passive for decades, when they believed their homes were under threat, their harmless ignorance transformed itself into something extremely dangerous."<sup>32</sup>

The Serbs, for their part, wildly overestimated the motivating power of the idea of Serb unity.

This idea was disabused in the failure of Serbs to rescue their compatriots pushed from the Krajina region by the Croatian counteroffensive of 1995, and Milosevic's isolation of the Republika Srpska Serbs in Bosnia.

*Circumstance* has and will continue to play an immense role in the conflict. The role of geography in Bosnia is particularly perverse. The intermingled demographics of Bosnia virtually ensured that it could not escape war as ideas of nationalism gained prominence. In Croatia, the location of the Serb-dominated area of Knin astride lines of communication vital to the Croatian coastal economy meant that Croatia could not ignore the contradictory ideas of the Krajina Serbs. In Bosnia, the primary line of economic communication runs from Sarajevo, through Tuzla, across the Posavina Corridor to Brcko and the Sava River, where trade can eventually access the Danube. The Posavina Corridor, the vital terrain linking the Banja Luka region Serbs with the Pale Serbs of the eastern portion of the Republika Srpska, narrows down to a few kilometers at Brcko. The Serbs must retain Brcko to maintain their security lifeline to the Serb majority region of Banja Luka. The Muslim-Croat Federation needs Brcko to realize the idea of an economically

viable state, and points to a pre-war Muslim majority in the town (now eliminated). Two intractable enemies vie for the same terrain and two contradictory ideas -- an unfortunate geographic *circumstance* of which we will hear more in the future.<sup>33</sup>

Winston Churchill is said to have remarked that the Balkans produce more history than they consume.<sup>34</sup> As always in the Balkans, the *circumstance* of historical perspective was especially significant. The memories of World War II Ustasha fascism in Croatia, and Muslim support to the Ustasha in Bosnia, galvanized the rural Serbs in both regions. And the predilection to violence, described above, must be attributed to centuries of historical conditioning, as related so eloquently by Rebecca West.

“I had come to Yugoslavia because I knew that the past has made the present, and I wanted to see how the process works. ... It is plain that it means an amount of human pain, arranged in an unbroken continuity appalling to any person cradled in the security of the English or American past. Were I to go down into the marketplace, armed with the powers of witchcraft, and take a peasant by the shoulders and whisper to him, “In your lifetime, have you known peace?” wait for his answer, shake his shoulders and transform him into his father, and ask him the same question, and transform him in turn to his father, I would never hear the word “Yes,” if I carried my questioning of the dead back for a thousand years. I would always hear, “No, there was fear, there were our enemies without, our rulers within, there was prison, there was torture, there was violent death.”<sup>35</sup>

With the recent memories of five years of vicious fighting fresh in everyone’s psyches, all sides report a conviction that “*it is impossible for us to live together again.*” At the end of a Joint Military Commission meeting between U.S. commanders and their Serbian, Muslim and Croatian counterparts, I posed my standard question (“Why?”) to a young civilian interpreter, a Croatian. After the obligatory history lesson, his closing comment was particularly telling: “*The real problem, in my opinion, is that everyone here has known a relative who has been killed by the other side. We don’t forget. This has been going on for a long time.*”

Given the current conflict *circumstance* in Bosnia, what are the prospects for lasting peace? All sides are exhausted and -- currently, at least -- disabused of the ideas of nationalism and ethnic purity. But fear and hatred remain. People choose ideas that they believe will make their lives better. Decisions for continued stability in Bosnia will depend on the credibility of ideas of.<sup>36</sup>

- Continued mutual physical security.
- Return of life's essentials: water, power, freedom of movement, food, education
- Viable economic alternatives: the opportunity for work and advancement.

The IFOR mission has tentatively established the idea of security. Uncertainties remain with respect to the duration of the IFOR mission, delays in establishment of a credible, multi-ethnic local police force, and the obstacles to bringing war criminals to justice (an action that would hopefully deter the scope of violence in the future.) The IFOR mission has vastly improved freedom of movement, and the essentials of life are slowly being restored. Credible economic alternatives, however, are problematic as economic assistance and major infrastructure development efforts are delayed. In addition, there is considerable doubt (see the Brcko issue above) that the current divisions of Bosnia along "more pure" ethnic lines constitute viable economic entities. These problems bode ill for long-term stability in Bosnia, while illustrating the interdependence of all the agencies of conflict -- diplomatic, economic, and military.

**The Cognitive Result.** Does a general theory of conflict that describes the competition of ideas through logic and violence improve our understanding of the Bosnian conflict? We have only examined a small sampling of the pyramid of ideas that influenced the conflict participants. Admittedly, it is improbable that anyone could have identified these ideational cause-effect linkages in 1990; it is even less probable that the prescriptions of such far-sightedness would have

earned a hearing. We find solace in the fact that we are testing only the *cognitive* role of theory, looking for the causative ideas from a position of retrospect, rather than prediction. Fortunately, it is *understanding*, not *prescription*, that we seek.

One could argue, of course, that all the traditional factors of power, interest, idealism, faith or history are implicit in the interplay of ideas that we have described. We have applied a filter -- a theory -- of ideas to other interpretations of reality. Gagnon's restatement of the "instrumental view" of the role of ideas in international relations is representative:

"Ideas such as ethnicity, religion, culture and class ... play a key role as instruments of power and influence, in particular because of their centrality to legitimacy and authority. Finally, conflict over ideas and how they are framed is an essential characteristic of domestic politics. ..."<sup>37</sup>

This argument is not wrong -- but it is the wrong argument. Our real question is: *which filter of theory is more effective?* Interpretations of conflict through filters such as "power," "interest," or "idealism" are problematic because the reality of conflict is described at a level of abstraction removed from the phenomena that link cause and effect: *ideas, logic, violence, chance, fog, friction* and the *circumstance of geography, resources, technology and history*.

The obvious disadvantage of our less-abstract theory of ideas is that we sacrifice simplification. There are no sound bytes; no 600 word op-ed solutions -- welcome to the Balkans. It is bewildering to trace the multiple ideas at work in Bosnia -- but it is closer to the uncomfortable reality of modern conflict, as described by William Johnsen:

"...policy makers must go beyond the current headlines and acquire a comprehensive understanding of the bases of instability and conflict within the region; the number of issues involved, the individual and collective complexity of those issues; the complicated interrelationships of issues; and the depths of the animosities present in the region."<sup>38</sup>

## **The Utilitarian Test: Strategy**

Strategy is a term that has evolved to an ever-higher level of integration since the time of Clausewitz, who used the term to describe major military operations.<sup>39</sup> Julian Linder and later Dr. James Schneider of the School of Advanced Military studies describe the extension of "strategy" beyond the execution of a military campaign to mean "the use of the entire state power (or of the aggregate of its economic, political, ideological, military and other potential) for attaining the whole (or almost the whole) of its political goals."<sup>40</sup> This trend to an ever more comprehensive perspective of strategy underscores the potential utility of a correspondingly comprehensive theory of conflict. Recalling the plight of our desperate conflict practitioners in Perception Pond, we will examine the utility of our general theory with respect to the current conflict environment, the use of force, and the Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement.

**Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity.** The opening lines of our National Security Strategy remind us that "The central security challenge of the past half century -- the threat of communist expansion -- is gone. The dangers we face today are more diverse."<sup>41</sup> We are engaging in regional strategies because we face regional ideas -- ideas that we find more confusing than those of the Cold War:

- Is General Aideed the rightful controller of the Port of Mogadishu?
- Is the Tutsi minority a legitimate threat to the Hutus of Rwanda?
- Do Bosnian Serbs have "historical justification" for a secure, contiguous territory?

The complexity of the issues embroiled in matters of race, religion, culture, gender, language or nationalism are not directly addressed by traditional theories built around categories of ideas such as 'power' or 'interest.' But as James Schneider points out, "at the core of every culture is a concept."<sup>42</sup>

“The definition of the mass of humanity into clearly articulated social groups is the result of the emergence of core concepts or ideas that adhere within the group’s culture. Core concepts or sets of beliefs held in common and shared through human communication create a cohesive force and sense of solidarity within that group”<sup>43</sup>

Each group, moreover, has not only its own ideas but may have its own tradition of rationality.<sup>44</sup>

A particular challenge in this conflict environment will be to avoid the “mirror image”

problem,<sup>45</sup> a problem articulated well by Robert Conquest:

“... we should avoid consciously or unconsciously projecting on to other cultures the feelings, ideas, and motivations we feel natural, and refrain from applying analytical concepts developed in our own backyards to the wild deserts and steppes of the outside world.”<sup>46</sup>

Some analysts suggest that we have fallen into the “mirror image” problem in Bosnia, by insisting --through the incorporation of elections in the Dayton agreement -- on an idea of multi-party, pluralistic democracy that has no correspondence to reality in Bosnia. These analysts describe Bosnian society as fragmented, personal -- a “coffee shop society” built around the personal interests of individuals, family and friends. This society has always viewed large civic institutions as an imposition of outsiders, and there is no tradition of individualism or tolerance, prerequisites for the U.S. vision of democracy.<sup>47</sup> The coming months will reveal if we will fit the indictment of Michael Howard:

“... people, often of masterful intelligence ... have led their governments into disastrous miscalculations because they have no awareness whatever of the historical background, the cultural universe of the foreign societies with which they have to deal. It is an awareness for which no amount of strategic or economic analysis, no techniques of crisis management or conflict resolution ... can provide a substitute.”<sup>48</sup>

A mental map of ideas competing through the mechanisms of logic and violence draws a more accurate -- albeit less simple -- representation of the reality of the future conflict environment.

## The Use of Force.

**Realism vs Idealism.** The recent debates over the use of force have many themes -- a frequent one is what Aron describes as "the traditional American controversy: the dialogue between idealism and realism."<sup>49</sup> Consider the following editorial piece by Charles Krauthammer:

*"Americans are intellectually autochthonous, having no pedigree except that of the idea."*

Gary Wills

"U.S. policy on Bosnia is finally on track. Its most important feature is an end to the moralism that had characterized it since Clinton's inauguration. When the Vance-Owen peace plan was offered up in February 1993, the Clinton administration frowned on the map that gave the Muslims and Croats only 57% of Bosnia. Too stingy to the victims, sniffed Clinton, who then stood by watching as the victims (until Krajina) lost more and more ground. It is now three years later, and the Muslims and Croats will be lucky to get the 51 percent now being offered in the latest American peace plan. ...The United States is, for example, pushing for a swap of Muslim-held Gorazde for some Serb-held Sarajevo suburbs because it makes for more rational borders and an easier settlement. A couple of years ago, the administration would have objected to such high-handed Realpolitik - expulsions, in effect - on "moral" grounds." No longer.<sup>50</sup>

But David Jablonsky has pointed out that "American presidents have long avoided using balance of power as the primary rationale for force,"<sup>51</sup> quoting Michael Howard:

"The classical 19th century concept of balance of power, a "model for the conduct of international relations ... had simply ceased to work by the beginning of this century, not because of unskilled statecraft, but because the hermetic system in which it had been effective had ceased to exist. The more democratic societies became the less possible it was for the system to survive."

Both idealism and realism can be used to interpret the events of recent U.S. policy in Bosnia -- but at an oblique level that gives limited insight into the real dimensions of our participation in the conflict. Realism and idealism are simultaneously components of U.S. foreign policy, by virtue of the ideas they bring into play. But the concepts of moralism and realism offer minimal

insights with respect to real conflicts such as Bosnia: the geographic and historic circumstances that exacerbate the conflict; the motivations of the combatants; or the potential contradictions in our own ideas and values of territorial inviolability and self-determination.<sup>52</sup>

**The Identification of Interests.** As Michael Roskin once pointed out, “The guiding concept of national interest is more often assumed than analyzed.”<sup>53</sup> The National Security Strategy, for example, invokes “interests” more than 30 times, but never explicitly enumerates them.<sup>54</sup> Our elusive ‘interests’ are categorized into various degrees of urgency or intensity -- “vital” vs “non-vital”; or “vital”, “important”, and “humanitarian”.<sup>55</sup> The categorization of interests is problematic, as pointed out by a former Secretary of Defense, James Schlesinger:

“Vital interests are easily debased coinage. Everything becomes a vital interest, and we must be able to distinguish between those things that are truly critical and those things that are only desirable.”<sup>56</sup>

Although they are a dominant feature of our foreign policy dialogue, the concept of national interest has become so elastic and ambiguous a concept that its utility is highly problematic and controversial.<sup>57</sup> Consider this Congressional testimony of General John Galvin, Former Supreme Allied Commander in Europe:

“Americans have many interests in Bosnia ... but when we consider the many practical aspects of our present and possible future commitments there, we need to ascertain whether we are in agreement as to the objective ... If we have no consensus on our strategy, we find ourselves saying, “The Serbs have just fired another shell and we need to do something about it.” We can use national interest as our guide, but that is too vague to be a strategic concept. Too much can be made to fit under that rubric.”<sup>58</sup>

Consider also the recent “talk show” dialogue on our Bosnian interests:

George Will: “Do we have a moral national interest (in Bosnia)?”  
James Baker: “Yes we do. I didn’t say we have a national interest.”<sup>59</sup>

As the above dialogues demonstrate, we are frequently not informed by the conceptual notion of "interest." Interest is a highly generalized concept that subsumes our more compelling ideas with respect to security, freedom, and economic well-being. Once again we are dealing with a concept of foreign policy that is too abstract and generalized to address the complex realities of our conflict environment. Hedley Bull illustrates the crux of the problem:

"To say that x is in someone's interest is merely to say that it serves as a means to some end that he is pursuing. Whether or not x does serve as a means to any particular end is a matter of objective fact. But whether or not x is in his interest will depend not only on this but also on what ends he is actually pursuing. It follows from this that the conception of interest is an empty or vacuous guide ... we need to know what ends he does or should pursue, and the conception of interest in itself tells us nothing about either ... Thus the criterion of 'national interest', or 'interest of state' in itself provides us with no specific guidance either in interpreting the behaviour of states or in prescribing how they should behave - unless we are told what concrete ends or objectives states do or should pursue."<sup>60</sup>

As Hedley Bull stated, to properly evaluate "interests," we must examine our ends,<sup>61</sup> and those ends are our values and beliefs -- our *ideas*. It is not true, then, to say that we are now witnessing "the emergence of values-driven as opposed to interest-driven interventions,"<sup>62</sup> for interest has always been linked -- albeit subconsciously -- to our ideas of value. A general theory of conflict that focuses our attention on the fundamental ideas in competition expedites the explanation of the logical linkage -- the interest -- we should have in the issues at hand.

**Exit Strategy.** In contemplating the issue of exit strategy, we can immediately bring our general theory to bear, noting the significant role of the *circumstance* of this country's current historical perspective. Our national nightmare in Vietnam soured us on the notion of open-ended commitments. Just Cause and Desert Storm experiences raised national expectations of casualty-free commitments. The fixed guidelines of the Weinberger principles are held in higher regard than the mission-creep of Somalia. All these perspectives reinforce the primacy of

*"You cannot put a rope around the neck of an idea; you cannot put an idea up against the barrack-square wall and riddle it with bullets; you cannot confine it in the strongest prison cell your slaves could ever build."*

Sean O'Casey

exit strategy in U.S. thinking about conflict.

But what does our general theory of conflict

tell us about "victory" in conflict? Conflict is

intrinsic to the contradictory nature of the competing ideas and is continuous and persistent until the mutual contradiction of ideas is "resolved" to an acceptable state. Complete conflict elimination is a very rare -- and horrible -- subset of conflict resolution. Ideas die hard, and conflict participants committed to the elimination of competing ideas rapidly discover that it is much easier to kill the thinkers than the thoughts. Hitler's Final Solution and the excesses of the Khmer Rouge are notorious examples of the frightful consequences of attempts at conflict "victory."

We seek not conflict "victory," but an end state that resolves the conflict to an acceptable level. The hard work of determining an end state, and calculating the interdependent tools of logic and violence that must be applied to achieve it, is the art of devising an exit strategy. Does the end state in Bosnia envision an economically viable state? Does the end state ensure fundamental security for all parties? Does the constitution provide an effective government that reflects the fundamental values of the population? Simple time limits will rarely suffice as an exit strategy, and can be counterproductive if they signal strategic weakness or lack of resolve.

There is considerable discussion today that the stated end state of IFOR withdrawal after one year is in fact an interim one, and that a longer term end state will emerge in the near future. But a strategy of maintaining an ambiguous end state fatally ignores the role of *logic* in conflict. The uncertainty of the end state -- future security, freedom of movement, economic prospects -- precludes the very logical decisions needed to achieve it. Ambiguity is a poor exit strategy.

**The Role of the Media.** If we view conflict as the competition of ideas, then the role of the media comes immediately into focus.

"Every war the U.S. has ever fought has been, in one way or another, a public relations war."

Dr. William M. Hammond<sup>63</sup>

The media is the communicator and arbiter of ideas, as described by Hedrick Smith:

"it's interesting to talk to somebody like Peter Drucker about the importance of ideas. And we (the media) are an idea profession ... we write a great deal about reality, but in many ways what we really focus on is ideas and what lies behind the reality that is either a sound or not sound idea."<sup>64</sup>

A cynical view of the media might note that "War between two nations under modern conditions is impossible unless you get a large number of people in each nation excited and afraid."<sup>65</sup>

"News media ... are rightly thought ... to constitute the core of a free civil society. ... But they play a central role, too, in the frightening process whereby very large numbers of people become excited and afraid."<sup>66</sup>

Most agree that world opinion is growing in political importance:

"According to the concept of Realpolitik, or power politics, nations act only to protect easily definable interests, such as territory or oil supplies, for example. .... The only explanation of the military involvement today (in Bosnia) is that Realpolitik now is driven by something that for lack of a better German word might be called Weltpolitik, or the pressure of world opinion ... The impulse to make war comes from the ground up as well as from the top down. What has changed today, even from five years ago, is the extent to which what goes on in any part of the world is subject to the scrutiny of the world community."<sup>67</sup>

Therefore the media rightfully enjoys a central, vice peripheral, role in the processes of conflict.

That role is increasingly recognized in recent years by the military participants in the conflict process, and that recognition was applied in Bosnia, where the United States Army Task Force Eagle viewed the media as *combat multiplier* rather than as a *distracter*. MG Nash established three objectives for the Task Force Eagle media campaign:

- to maintain the support of the American people for the IFOR mission,

- to make the soldiers feel good about their efforts,
- and to favorably influence the Former Warring Factions.

The level and access of the media coverage was a shock to our Muslim, Serb and Croatian counterparts, but Colonel Hank Stratman, Special Assistant to Major General Nash for the Joint Military Commission, related that "*We explained to all the faction members early on, that when you get the American Army, you get a large press contingent that comes with it ...*" Field commanders repeatedly employed the logic of the media -- or the threat of the media -- to enforce compliance. A Task Force Eagle brigade commander noted the efficacy of the media:

"The press is a great combat multiplier. The press should be at the Joint Military Commissions ... detail who was there and wasn't there -- and make it a matter of record for the world ... In the case of the VRS,<sup>68</sup> they're paranoid about the press; they don't know how to use the press. They're worried about their world image, but they've done little to fix it. In Han Kram and Han Piejak the other day I had some of the international press with me and they had enormous impact. The factions get real nervous around the press, they get real nervous around the cameras. ...It definitely makes things happen. I can say that I have close air support -- that's obvious, I have attack helicopters -- that's obvious, I have "x" number of Mark 19's, I outnumber you. But I've also got Time, Newsweek and CNN -- and that has a big impact on their behavior."

**The Strategy of Engagement.** Donelan has noted that "Democracies lack exactly the qualities needed for success in foreign policy: skill at detail, perseverance, flexibility, secrecy, patience. They are impulsive, not prudent, and abandon mature policy for the gratification of a momentary passion."<sup>69</sup> Snider, moreover, has confirmed the Democracy Dilemma:

"... there is no real consensus today as to the appropriate grand strategy for the United States. And, more importantly, this lack of consensus is due far less to any type of constraint on strategic thinking than it is to the fundamental value differences in our electorate, and the resulting legacy of federal government divided institutionally between the political parties. It is easy to agree with those academics concerned that the current dysfunctions of "divided government" increasingly preclude coherent strategic behavior on the part of our nation."<sup>70</sup>

Not surprisingly, of course, the Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement has endured its share of criticism. The Democracy Dilemma is that in conflict -- the competition of ideas -- the laissez-faire approach to ideas inherent to democracy imposes some daunting challenges to strategy -- the management of conflict.

Paradoxically, however, democracies have fared well in the competition of ideas, having won every extended rivalry between authoritarian and liberal states. It invites the question -- perhaps unwelcome to strategists -- that the *ideas* in competition are at least as important as the *management* of that competition. Schultz and Weingast point out some inherent advantages of liberal democracies with respect to limited government, long-term growth and short-term financial adaptability.<sup>71</sup> Democracy not only bestows significant internal advantages, but also poses some deadly disadvantages for opponents: Chettle cites the rise of democracy in Russia and South Africa:

“It was not just the armed might of the United States, nor its symbolism as the shining city on the hill, which was most effective in destabilizing these two regimes -- it was rather the complex impact on closed societies of a powerful, appealing seductive, and subversive society which carried within it, what was, for an autocracy, a virus as virulent as any Ebola. By helping to erode the core of belief that sustained each society, the United States contributed decisively to the overthrow of both regimes.”

Chettle has proposed that the nature of the democratic idea itself, rather than the economic or military power it engenders, was the wellspring of that success:

“For all its marvelous balance and its success in preserving democratic government, (the American system) is complex in the extreme, incoherent to the verge of chaos, conflictual often to the point of gridlock, and very unpredictable ... Each regime adopted elements of democratic ideas partly because it thought it was the right thing to do, partly to avoid trouble, but also partly to make itself more acceptable to the United States; and each succeeded only in destroying itself ... In effect, the United States acted as both the source of the ideas that began the process of reform and the instigator of a Tocquevillian revolution.”<sup>72</sup>

Chettle points out that the same process of erosion is now far advanced in China, while our reluctance to use that influence in North Korea and Cuba may inadvertently have prolonged communist rule in those countries.”<sup>73</sup>

“The American foreign policy dialectic is a very potent force, a creative tension that the American system produces as a matter of course. And underlying it is the sheer idea of the freedom -- an idea so powerful that not even those opposed to freedom condemn it, but are obliged to argue that their countries already have it, or that they are on the way to it, or that they are about to achieve a more perfect version of it, or that the freedom that the West enjoys is false.”<sup>74</sup>

Chettle makes a powerful argument in support of a strategy of engagement, for it is only through engagement that our ideas can be brought to bear.

“Engagement works for reasons that are so obvious that they are usually overlooked. Contact with other human beings makes an impact. It elicits information. It provokes comparison. It induces change. It subverts. It is ignorance that gives isolated and tightly-controlled states whatever coherence they possess”<sup>75</sup>

Ideas matter, and the mechanism by which they compete, particularly the mechanism of logic, underscores the the legitimacy of a Strategy of Engagement where the process of logic can be brought to bear in the application of our ideas through active engagement in political, military and economic world affairs.

**The Utilitarian Result.** Strategy -- the management of conflict -- is a process infinitely more complex than simple intellectual filters such as “power” or “interests.” Strategic decision makers are besieged by the realities of time and space, the conflictual *fog* of imperfect information or unfamiliar cultural ideas, *chance*, and the conflict *circumstances* of *geography*, *technology* or *history*. To operationalize this general theory of conflict, strategic planners must ask the following:

- What are the ideas in competition?

- How do they contradict or reinforce our own ideas and values; what is the linkage / interest?
- How do the participants perceive the mechanisms of logic and violence?
- How are those perceptions susceptible to our own agencies of logic and violence?
- What are the relevant conflict circumstances that will influence those perceptions?

Answering these questions will rarely be easy. But asking them is a first step to addressing many of the current challenges of conflict and strategy.

## The Pedagogic Test: The Revolution in Military Affairs

Clausewitz doubted the *utilitarian* and *cognitive* roles of theory, but he was generally optimistic about its *pedagogic* potential:

“The insights gained and garnered by the mind in its wanderings among basic concepts are benefits that theory can provide.”<sup>76</sup>

Can we use our general theory to assist our “wanderings” as we contemplate the vagaries of the future conflict environment? We speak of “the future,” but in fact there are *alternative* futures, encompassing “Resource Wars,” “Third Waves” and “Clashing Civilizations.” The ‘futures’ dialogue in the defense community heralds a “Revolution in Military Affairs” (RMA). There can be no doubt that we are indeed on the cusp of significant advances in battlefield awareness, information processing, and long-range precision strikes. But are these advances truly revolutionary or merely the evolving technological *circumstance* of the milieu of conflict?

A general theory may render an insight more valuable than an estimate of technological change, for it signals something more profound: what will not change. As Mahan pointed out,

“... it must be remembered that, among all changes, the nature of man remains much the same; the personal equation, though uncertain in quantity and quality in the particular instance, is sure always to be found.”<sup>77</sup>

In spite of all the potential changes in our future, the fundamental nature of conflict -- the competition of ideas -- will persist. Rather than focusing on technological *change*, what insights can we ‘garner and gain’ if we view the future from a perspective of conflict’s *continuity*? We will examine that question from the perspective of doctrine, organization, training and materiel.

**Doctrine.** The first task for doctrine will be to restore the proper relationship between war and conflict. In past doctrine, conflict has been categorized *horizontally* -- in a *spectrum* of varying degrees of conflict intensity -- or *vertically* -- as a gray zone<sup>78</sup> somewhere between

“war” and “peace.” Either approach presents military force as an *alternative* to economic or political means of conflict resolution, disguising war’s true relationship: as a *subset* of conflict -- one of the several simultaneous means of waging the competition of ideas. The same technologies that enhance the accuracy of weapons in the “Revolution in Military Affairs” will enhance the interdependence and continuity between war and other means of conflict.

Although current service and joint doctrines acknowledge the primacy of political considerations, the role of ideas per se is less explicit. The idea of national survival underlying the Cold War was straightforward; in our future of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, however, straightforwardness will be a rare commodity. We will increasingly find ourselves examining the fundamental nature of the ideas in competition. A fork in the doctrinal road looms with respect to “information warfare.”<sup>79</sup> Most of the current RMA debate deals with “command and control warfare” targetted on -- or in defense of -- the information processing capabilities of command and control assets. A revolutionary perspective, however, would extend beyond information *capabilities* to information *content* or meaning -- the underlying ideas. What are the key knowledge and belief systems of our adversaries? Who are the key decision makers? How can we apply information technologies -- and precision strike technologies -- to directly target their perceptions and beliefs? If we can reliably target key decision makers, is it ethical to do so? A truly revolutionary perspective of conflict as the competition of ideas would reinforce Aron’s observation that “they are all psychological wars.”<sup>80</sup>

Not only ideas, but also the mechanism of competition will be scrutinized. The nonviolent -- the logical -- component of that competition has increasingly been recognized, as

evidenced by the evolution of joint and service doctrines for "operations other than war." Army doctrine, for example, currently addresses conventional operations in Field Manual (FM) 100-5 - - with a focus on the violence of heavy combat -- and "operations other than war" with a focus on the logic of low-intensity conflict and peace operations in FM 100-20 and FM 100-23, respectively. The issue for the services will be whether to continue to pursue this doctrinal "dual track," or to develop a single, overarching doctrine for both war and "operations other than war." A 'revolution in military *doctrine*' would be one that bridges this dual track into a single unified approach that effectively encompasses the interdependent mechanisms of both *violence* and *logic* in conflict.

The impact of a more integrated perspective of military operations would be further heightened if it could be extended to the interagency process.

"The current 'revolution in military affairs' must include a revolutionary approach in the way we deal with other cabinet level agencies and non-governmental organizations if we are going to achieve long lasting victory on the battlefields of the future. Greater multi-agency integration, cooperation, and consensus among the multiple players in the interagency process is critical to the success of a national strategy ..."<sup>81</sup>

The strategist must incorporate the precise facts of physics, engineering, geography and logistics as well as the ambiguous factors of psychology, political science and history.<sup>82</sup> In relating the various elements of influence to achieve the ends of strategy, the key is integration.<sup>83</sup> The interdependent mechanism of logic and violence is the common, integrating perspective that could integrate the disparate tools of the strategist.

**Organization.** The issues of potential integration evident in doctrine are also operative with respect to organization. Some proponents of the RMA would argue that the requirements of warfighting, particularly for landpower, are diverging.<sup>84</sup> High technology fighting machines

will apply the effects of violence accurately at great distances in high intensity combat; entirely different types of units (light infantry / Special Forces) will engage the "grey area threats" with radically different skills in peace operations. Putting aside the issue of whether the United States would want or could afford multiple "types" of armies<sup>85</sup>, our general theory of conflict -- and our experience in Bosnia -- argues against this projection. The *violence* and *logic* dimensions of military forces are totally interdependent. Specialization -- at least on the ground -- is not practical. Faction commanders and interpreters advised us that the initial entry operation into Bosnia -- the adverse conditions Sava River crossing of a very heavy combat force -- convinced the Factions of our competence and determination to accomplish the mission. They repeatedly reacted to and obviously respected superior combat power -- heavy tanks, mobile armored artillery, and both Army and Air Force tactical aviation. During and after the initial entry operation, however, to capitalize on the favorable response from all the Former Warring Factions, Task Force Eagle deemphasized intimidating military postures, emphasizing the logic capabilities of psychological operations and civil affairs detachments to reinforce the favorable attitudes of the Factions. Heavy forces were employed in cooperative endeavors such as monitoring check points or the clearing of routes through the Zone of Separation. At times -- such as during the early February war criminals dispute with the Serbs -- invocation and demonstration of superior combat power was essential to bring about compliance. In Bosnia it was our readiness to rapidly shift emphasis between the *violence* and *logic* dimensions of military effect that guaranteed our success. Such shifting of emphasis could not have been accomplished by the redeployment of "specialized" units. Military forces will need similar versatility in the future.

**Training.** The demands of continued versatility in conflict operations have obvious training implications for military forces. We see additional training implications if we contemplate the technological advances of the RMA in light of the interdependent *logic* and *violence* mechanisms of conflict resolution. Through enhanced battlefield awareness and precision-strike systems we will improve the capability to 'calibrate' the application of violence. Equally important, the media and the public will expect us to do so. The extension of battlefield awareness beyond the commander to the public introduces misgivings when the international media conveys the images of the consequences of the mistaken bombing of an Iraqi public shelter during Operation Desert Storm. When the Israeli Army mistakenly shells a refugee camp in southern Lebanon, the results are catastrophic both for the refugees and for internal / international support for the Israeli intervention. "Non-logical" violence -- either by landmines or smart missiles -- is unacceptable to democratic publics; training and careful execution will minimize mistakes and ensure the highest possible level of the logical control of violence.

Commanders will seek to "fine-tune" unit training to correspond to the expected conditions -- both physical and cultural -- of the most likely missions. The U.S. Army European Command did exactly that in the months prior to the Bosnia mission. Units received intensive training in countermine and peace operations in Germany; leaders received extensive practice in negotiation techniques, often with "role players" who grew up in and understood the cultures of the Former Yugoslavia. A U.S. brigade commander in Bosnia noted that "More often than not, I would turn to my XO or my S3 and say 'we've been through this one before.'"<sup>86</sup>

The demands that leaders and staffs face in a "stability operations" environment are extraordinary. Leaders at every level in Bosnia expressed surprise at the range of their

responsibilities. The Task Force Commander encountered sensitive international political issues on a daily basis. Brigade commanders reported that they "felt like division commanders," both because of the size of their sectors and the range of combat, combat support, and combat service support capabilities that had been task organized into their units. It was not uncommon for lieutenants to be faced with the task of interpreting the Dayton agreement to confused and barely comprehending elements of the Former Warring Factions. All of this argues for leader development that produces even younger "generalists" who can master -- at an early point in their careers -- the full range of military skills. In a world where world-wide media speed images and reports of small unit leaders, "strategic thinking" is demanded at an increasingly junior level.

**Materiel.** It is obvious that the Revolution in Military Affairs -- as advertised -- will bestow materiel advantages on U.S. forces. But will materiel advantages be enough?

"One of the aspects of our defeat there (in Vietnam) that really jumps out even 20 years after Saigon became Ho Chi Minh City is the stunning combination of material readiness and intellectual unreadiness with which we entered Vietnam. We had enormous quantities of people, mobility, and firepower dedicated to the war effort. But we were utterly - and happily - ignorant of Vietnamese society and history, and especially of our Vietnamese adversary's character and style of warfare. Worse still, civilian and military leaders alike believed that knowledge of such things really didn't matter; what counted was only that which could be counted, and we had overwhelming numbers of everything."<sup>87</sup>

RMA technology is an aspect of the evolving technological *circumstance* of conflict. But the RMA does not signal the end of conflict as a competition.

"... there is something highly mechanistic about the current approach to the RMA. There is no sense of the dynamic, of warfare as politics or art form with highly changeable features. There is a tendency to view potential adversaries as caricatures either of themselves or of the former Soviet Union -- so-called peer competitors -- or or Iraq. Opponents do not learn, they do not exploit technological or strategic opportunities; at best they may engage in "niche warfare" via terrorism or nuclear blackmail."<sup>88</sup>

The most damaging misperception of the RMA may be the myth that we can wage conflict from a distance. The interaction of violence and logic must be carefully calibrated to an adversary's response. It

"You can fly over a land forever; you may bomb it, atomize it, pulverize it and wipe it clean of life -- but if you desire to defend it, protect it, and keep it for civilization, you must do this on the ground, the way the Roman Legions did, by putting your young soldiers into the mud."

T.R. Fehrenbach

demands the personal touch, as noted by the Task Force Eagle Commander:

"I will tell you, the hard part is giving sensible orders. Because the Great American Soldier will go out and do what you've given him to do. Once you give him that order, they're going to go out and get it done for you. And, if you tell him you want to walk into a town tough, ready to take on anybody ... and put up with no stuff, he'll do exactly that. But if you tell him to go into town and be ready, but don't be provocative ... and treat people with dignity and respect, he'll do that, too. And the other thing you need to consider is that the nature of this conflict is a land conflict, as most are. And it is a people conflict, as many are. And it's the soldier -- and the commander on the ground -- that is required to establish the conditions that can allow that conflict to come to a close."<sup>89</sup>

**The Pedagogic Result.** One does not revolutionize art by redesigning a paintbrush. The RMA dialogue is unidimensional, with a restricted focus on the *violence* dimensions of conflict. The advances of the RMA are aspects of an evolution in the means of *combat*; vice a fundamental revolution in military affairs. The vocabulary of warfare may change, but our general theory suggests that the fundamental grammar of conflict endures.

## **“Think or Swim”**

To those who sit on the banks of Perception Pond, this general theory may seem “conjectural,” “incomplete,” and “unproven.” It is all of those. There are no *cognitive* Rosetta Stones of interpretation, no definitive *utilitarian* rules and regulations for conflict or strategy, no *pedagogic* Cliff Notes for the future. There is merely theory -- the mental map. This is not a particularly simple map -- but this is not a particularly simple world.

For us, Bronowski’s “problems of the day” are embedded in a world of unprecedented connectedness. The meaning of strategy has expanded. Diplomatic, economic and military means of conflict are increasingly interdependent. A great many independent agents are interacting with each other in subtle ways. There is an emerging science that studies the phenomena of intricate, adaptive systems. Significantly, it’s name is “complexity.”

We all would prefer to find “centers of gravity” or “decisive points” in conflict. Unfortunately, those are metaphors of the past. A theory that describes the complexity of conflict in simplistic, singular categories is like a map of too large a scale. It is readable and fits nicely in our pocket. We are happy with it until we encounter unexpected rivers and ravines -- then we find ourselves considerably inconvenienced. There is both power and popularity in categorical methods of thinking -- until we encounter those inconvenient details of reality and complexity.

A theory of ideas, conversely, risks a map of overwhelming detail. Just as we can not accurately represent every rock and tree, we can not model the ideas of every conflict participant. Such maps can overwhelm, confuse and paralyze. Our general theory would collapse to triviality if we attempted to represent every idea, every decision maker, every

mechanism of violence and logic. But the advantage of a general theory built on “ideas” is that we can tailor our map to the most appropriate level of detail, selecting -- to the best of our ability -- what we judge (or even choose) to be the most significant ideas and the primary mechanisms of logic and violence. Does this sound like art? It should.

For those of us must “think or swim” in the sea of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, a general theory may help -- perhaps only momentarily -- to keep our heads above water. If that is the case, then it serves its purpose. We should never underestimate the storms that may arise on the Pond of Perception.

## End Notes

### Preface

<sup>1</sup> Ralph L. Allen (quoting Michael Howard), "Piercing the Veil of Operational Art," Parameters Vol XXV, No 2 (Summer 1995): 118.

<sup>2</sup> ibid, 118.

<sup>3</sup> M. Mitchell Waldrop, Complexity (New York: Touchstone Books, Simon & Schuster, 1992), 40-63.

<sup>4</sup> James J. Schneider, The Structure of Strategic Revolution: Total War and the Roots of the Soviet Warfare State (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1994), 148.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Donelan, Elements of International Political Theory (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Roger Fisher, "International Relations Theory and the Policy Maker" in Theory of International Relations -- The Crisis of Relevance, edited by Abdul A. Said (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), 44.

## End Notes

### The Pond of Perception

<sup>1</sup> Donelan, 36, 102.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 175.

<sup>3</sup> David Jablonsky quoting Walter Lippmann, Why is Strategy Difficult? Professional Readings in Military Strategy, No. 4, (Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, July 1995), 68.

<sup>4</sup> Donelan, 200.

<sup>5</sup> Kegley, Charles W. JR. "The Neoidealist Moment in International Studies? Realist Myths and the New International Realities. ISA Presidential Address, March 27, 1993, Acapulco, Mexico," International Studies Quarterly 37 (1993): 141.

<sup>6</sup> Donelan, 160.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 157.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Jay Gould, Time's Arrow. Time's Cycle. Myth and Metaphor in the Discovery of Geological Time (Cambridge: Howard University Press, 1987), 10-11.

<sup>10</sup> Donelan, 146.

<sup>11</sup> Lt Col Pedro L. Arbona, U.S. Army (ret), "Soldiers, Technology & the 21st Century," Army Magazine, (January 1996): 12.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "The Renaissance of Security Studies," International Studies Quarterly Vol. 35, No 2 (June 1991): 215.

<sup>13</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Impact of the Cold War on Theories of International Law and Organization," in Theory of International Relations -- The Crisis of Relevance, edited by Abdul A. Said (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), 177.

<sup>14</sup> Hoffman, Stanley "Report of the Conference on Conditions of World Order -- June 12-19, 1965, Villa Serbelloni, Bellagio, Italy," republished in Daedalus (Summer 1995): 22.

<sup>15</sup> The MacArthur Foundation, "The MacArthur Consortium On International Peace and Cooperation, a Three Year Project involving Stanford University, the University of Minnesota and the University of Wisconsin-Madison" in Course Reader for PS 340 SOC 314 Seminar: New Approaches to International Security, Vol. I, (Stanford University, Fall 1995): 1.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Emma Rothschild, "What is Security?" Daedalus Volume 124, No 3 (Summer 1995): 55.

<sup>19</sup> General John Shalikashvili, "Army Times Special Report," Army Times, 21 August, 1995, p 18.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Wolfowitz, "A Bomber for Uncertain Times," Wall Street Journal, 12 June, 1995.

<sup>21</sup> Col Dennis M. Drew and Dr. Donald M. Snow, Making Strategy: An Introduction to National Security Processes and Problems, (Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama: Air University Press, August 1988), 163.

<sup>22</sup> Donelan, 77.

<sup>23</sup> Donelan, 86.

<sup>24</sup> Donelan, 141.

<sup>25</sup> Abdul A. Said, ed, Theory of International Relations -- The Crisis of Relevance (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.), v.1.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>27</sup> Walt, 213.

<sup>28</sup> Schneider, 129.

<sup>29</sup> Don M. Snider, The National Security Strategy: Documenting Strategic Vision, (Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, March 15, 1995), 3.

<sup>30</sup> Col Lloyd J. Matthews, US Army (ret), "Censorship and Professional Writing in the Army Today," Army Magazine (November 1995): 12.

## End Notes

### “To Build a Raft”

<sup>1</sup> Fisher, 44.

<sup>2</sup> Waldrop, 103

<sup>3</sup> Fisher, 44.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Paret, “The Genesis of On War”, Introduction to Carl von Clausewitz’ On War, Edited and Translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 14.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Herbert Rosinski, “Scharnhorst to Schlieffen: The Rise and Decline of German Military Thought,” Naval War College Review (Summer, 1976): 88.

<sup>8</sup> Carl Von Clausewitz, On War edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 134.

<sup>9</sup> Jablonsky, Why is Strategy Difficult?, 5.

<sup>10</sup> RADM J.C. Wylie, “Military Strategy: A General Theory of Power Control” in Classics of Seapower (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1989), 64,84.

<sup>11</sup> Ayn Rand, Philosophy: Who Needs It?, (New York: New American Library), 1982, p 5.

<sup>12</sup> Wylie, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Waldrop, 290.

<sup>14</sup> Jacob Bronowski, The Ascent of Man, (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1974), 240, 140.

## End Notes

### Conflict

<sup>1</sup> Wylie, 58.

<sup>2</sup> Clausewitz, 75.

<sup>3</sup> Nigel Hamilton, Monty: Master of the Battlefield: Monty's War Years 1942-1944, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1983), 79-82.

<sup>4</sup> Judith Goldstein, Ideas, Interests, and American Trade Policy, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 8-10.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Sowell, The Vision of the Anointed: Self-Congratulation as a Basis for Social Policy, (New York: Basic Books, Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 1995), 241.

<sup>6</sup> Goldstein, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 3-4.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid,3.

<sup>9</sup> Is money an independent mechanism of conflict? Many, including the Secretary of Defense William Perry, have suggested that to be the case: "*The late political scientist Hans Morgenthau, dean of American realism, said that nations have three tools for influencing others: logic, money, and force.*" But because money is a mechanism of conflict primarily as a means to an end -- for persuasion (logic) or to finance military capabilities (violence), we can maintain the dual features of *logic* and *violence* as the primary mechanisms of conflict and still account for the very important factor of money in conflict.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Howard, Lessons of the Cold War, Paul Nitze Award Lecture, Center for Naval Analyses, Washington, D.C., March 1994.

<sup>11</sup> Steven Metz, "A Flame Kept Burning: Counterinsurgency Support After the Cold War" Parameters Vol XXV, No 3 (Autumn 1995): 33.

<sup>12</sup> Donald Kagan, On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace, (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 57.

<sup>13</sup> SLA Marshall, Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War, Infantry Journal, (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1947), 154.

<sup>14</sup> Gordon A. Craig, The Battle of Koniggratz, Great Battles of History Series, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964), 176-177.

<sup>15</sup> Thucydides, translated by Benjamin Jowett, (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1900), Book I, 89.

<sup>16</sup> Ulysses S. Grant Quote at the start of Chapter XXIV of North to the Naktong, South to the Yalu (June-November, 1950: United States Army in the Korean War, by LTC Roy E. Appleman, Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1961)

<sup>17</sup> Thompson, Kenneth W., "Theory and International Studies in the Cold War" in Theory of International Relations -- The Crisis of Relevance, edited by Abdul A. Said, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968): 41.

<sup>18</sup> Kagan, 124.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 167.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 414.

## End Notes

### Floating the Raft Three Tests of Theory

#### The Cognitive Test: Understanding Bosnia

<sup>1</sup> Carl von Clausewitz: Two Letters on Strategy. Edited and translated by Peter Paret and Daniel Moran, CSI Reprint, US Army Command and General Staff College, November 1984 (reprint), 38.

<sup>2</sup> Rebecca West, Black Lamb and Grey Falcon, (New York: Penguin Books, 1940), 20.

<sup>3</sup> V. P. Gagnon, "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict, The Case of Serbia" in Global Dangers: Changing Dimensions of International Security, Edited by Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995), 333. "The dominant realist approach in international relations tells us very little about violent conflict along ethnic lines, and cannot explain the Yugoslav case."

<sup>4</sup> The fate of Brcko was so problematic that it was deferred during the Dayton negotiations, but is to be addressed in a separate negotiation process by the signing of the agreement D+180.

<sup>5</sup> Ronelle Alexander, Professor of Slavic Languages and Literature, passed on an anecdote that speaks to the significance of language in the Balkans. During her travels in the Balkans she is repeatedly asked: "Why don't you Americans admit that you speak American and not English?" The fact that she thought the question was funny -- and that her questioners did not -- reflects our diverse perspectives with respect to language. (From Professor Alexander's lecture to a weekend conference of the Center for Slavic and East European Studies, "Crisis in the Balkans: Historical Background and Current Developments in the Former Yugoslavia" UC Berkeley, Berkeley, California, April 20, 1996.

<sup>6</sup> Rebecca West, 42.

<sup>7</sup> Misha Glenny, The Fall of Yugoslavia -- The Third Balkan War. (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 32.

<sup>8</sup> Andrew C. Janos lecture to the CSEES Outreach Conference, "Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia: Ethnic Conflict and the Dissolution of Multinational States," UC Berkeley, Berkeley, California, April 20, 1996.

<sup>9</sup> Misha Glenny, 142.

<sup>10</sup> Barry R. Weingast, "Constructing Trust: The Political and Economic Roots of Ethnic and Regional Conflict," Course Reader for PS 340 SOC 314 Seminar: New Approaches to International Security, Vol. I, Stanford University, Fall 1995, 18.

<sup>11</sup> Misha Glenny, 13.

<sup>12</sup> A Serbian woman advised me that the Serbs felt that they had been quite restrained in exercising their rights as the plurality within the Yugoslav state: "We would always say 'There must be a weak Serbia for a strong Yugoslavia.'" Serbian perception of other-nation ingratitude for their forbearance during the Yugoslav years exacerbated their resentment during the collapse of Yugoslavia.

<sup>13</sup> Misha Glenny, 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 89.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 144.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 140.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 142.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 141.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 164.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 151.

<sup>21</sup> It is arguable, of course, that many of the horrendous acts of the Bosnian conflict illustrate a pathology of murderous behavior. That pathology is not denied, but from the perspective of the actor -- even the murderous ethnic cleanser -- some type of logic is operative.

<sup>22</sup> President William Clinton, Address to the American People, November 27, 1995.

<sup>23</sup> Misha Glenny, 44.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 20-21.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p 92

<sup>27</sup> Ivo Andric, The Bridge on the Drina, translated from the Serbo-Croat by Lovett F. Edwards, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), 282.

<sup>28</sup> I do not propose that the level of violence in the Balkans can be quantified, or even that the level of violence in the Balkans exceeds that of other areas. I merely make the point that the cultural acceptance of violence as a normal dimension of life is different in the Balkans, and not a mirror image of our own society.

<sup>29</sup> William T. Johnsen, Deciphering the Balkan Enigma: Using History to Inform Policy, (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, November 7, 1995), ix.

<sup>30</sup> Barry R. Weingast, 3-4.

<sup>31</sup> Misha Glenny, 3.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> The constraints of *resource* are well understood in conflict; we do not need to extensively elaborate them. The mechanized resources of the Serbs were balanced by the numerical superiority of the Muslims, a formula for stalemate. All sides in Bosnia came to the peace table largely because they had exhausted their resources.

<sup>34</sup> Kurt Schork, Reuters News Article, SARAJEVO, April 22, 1996.

<sup>35</sup> Rebecca West, 54-55.

<sup>36</sup> The discussion of the prospects for lasting peace in Bosnia is drawn from a draft discussion paper by Mr. Richard Hill of the INTERTECT Relief and Reconstruction Company.

<sup>37</sup> Gagnon, 336.

<sup>38</sup> Johnsen, v.

## The Utilitarian Test: Strategy

<sup>39</sup> Peter Paret and Daniel Moran, ix.

<sup>40</sup> Schneider, 64.

<sup>41</sup> National Security Strategy Document, A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement, February 1996, p i.

<sup>42</sup> Schneider, 98.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 93.

<sup>44</sup> Donelan, 144.

<sup>45</sup> Johnsen, p 2.

<sup>46</sup> Conquest, Robert, History, Humanity, and Truth. The 1993 Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities, Hoover Essays No 5, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University, (Stanford, California: Hoover Press, 1993), 8.

<sup>47</sup> Professor Kenneth Jowitt, The Balkans: Europe's Ghetto, Lecture to the Center for Slavic and East European Studies conference: Crisis in the Balkans: Historical Background and Current Developments in the Former Yugoslavia., UC Berkeley, Berkeley, California, 19 Apr 1996.

<sup>48</sup> Robert Conquest quoting Michael Howard, p 9.

<sup>49</sup> Raymon Aron, Peace and War. A Theory of International Relations, Translated from the French by Richard Howard and Annette Baker Fox, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1966), 3.

<sup>50</sup> Charles Krauthammer, "Keep Pressing the Serbs" The Washington Post, 8 Sep, 1995, p 25.

<sup>51</sup> David Jablonsky, Time's Cycle and National Military Strategy: The Case for Continuity in a Time of Change A Monograph Prepared for the U.S. Army War College Annual Strategy Conference, April 1995, (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, June 1995), 9.

<sup>52</sup> Codevilla, Angelo M. American Security -- Back to the Basics. Essays in Public Policy No. 51, Hoover Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University (Stanford, California: Hoover Press, 1994), 5. Codevilla: "... the opposition between moralism and realism is peculiarly unfit for understanding American statecraft ... a free people dedicated to the "laws of nature and nature's God" will only fight for right. By the same token, moralism is immoral because it neglects the difference between wishing good and doing right. Practical Americans grow up learning to balance their reach with their grasp, not to start what they cannot finish, to take responsibility for making things come out better than they otherwise would have -- in short, to make the game worth the candle -- or to leave things alone. American foreign policy, then, must transcend the immorality of moralism and the unreality of realism."

<sup>53</sup> Roskin, Michael G., National Interest: From Abstraction to Strategy, (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, May 20, 1994), iii.

<sup>54</sup> National Security Strategy Document, 1996. The closest statement of interests is at page 11: "In all cases, the nature of our response must depend on what best serves our own long-term national interests. Those

interests are ultimately defined by our security requirements. Such requirements start with our physical defense and economic well-being. They also include environmental security as well as the security of our values achieved through expansion of the community of democratic nations.”

<sup>55</sup> Jablonsky, Time’s Cycle and National Military Strategy: The Case for Continuity in a Time of Change A Monograph Prepared for the U.S. Army War College Annual Strategy Conference, April 1995, 38.

<sup>56</sup> Jablonsky, Why Is Strategy Difficult?, 36.

<sup>57</sup> Richard N. Haass quotes Alexander George, Intervention: The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War World, A Carnegie Endowment Book, Washington, D.C., Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1994), Quote is from Book Review in Military Review (July - August 1995): 110.

<sup>58</sup> Prepared Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Subject: Situation in Bosnia, June 14, 1995.

<sup>59</sup> James Baker, “This Week with David Brinkley”, June 4, 1995

<sup>60</sup> Hedly Bull, p 66.

<sup>61</sup> Bull, p 67: Many common interests may be so self-evident that they are no longer seen as *means* to an *end* but are seen as valuable in themselves

<sup>62</sup> Parameters, Autumn 95, p 2.

<sup>63</sup> “Every war the U.S. has ever fought has been, in one way or another, a public relations war.” Dr. William M. Hammond, speech delivered to the 1989 Worldwide PAO Workshop, Washington, D.C. Oct 31, 1989

<sup>64</sup> Hedrick Smith, Op Cit, p 12

<sup>65</sup> Rothschild quoting Leonard Woolf (p 81 “(1916)

<sup>66</sup> Rothchild

<sup>67</sup> George Melloan

<sup>68</sup> VRS - the military arm of the Bosnian Serbs

<sup>69</sup> Donelan, p 26

<sup>70</sup> Snider p 9

<sup>71</sup> Kenneth A. Schultz and Barry R. Weingast, “The Democratic Advantage: The Institutional Sources of State Power in International Competition” Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University, 1996.

<sup>72</sup> Chettle, pp 4-9.

<sup>73</sup> Chettle, p 5.

<sup>74</sup> Chettle, p 18.

<sup>75</sup> Chettle, p 11.

## The Pedagogic Test: The Revolution in Military Affairs

<sup>76</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, On War, 578.

<sup>77</sup> Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power upon History, (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1894), 89.

<sup>78</sup> Department of the Army, FM 100-5, Operations, (Washington: U.S. Department of the Army, 1993), 2-1.

<sup>79</sup> Col Richard Szafranski, USAF, "A Theory of Information Warfare -- Preparing for 2020" Airpower Journal (Spring 1995), 56-65.

<sup>80</sup> Aron, 25.

<sup>81</sup> David H. Huntoon, LTC, U.S. Army Winning the Peace: Achieving the Commander-in-Chief's Vision in U.S. Military Interventions through Institutional Reforms in the Interagency Process, The Hoover Institution, Stanford University, (Stanford, California: Hoover Press, November 1995).

<sup>82</sup> Jablonsky, Why Is Strategy Difficult?, 69.

<sup>83</sup> Snider, 13.

<sup>84</sup> Steven Metz, William T. Johnsen, Douglas V. Johnson, James O. Kievit, Douglas C. Lovelace, The Future of American Landpower: Strategic Challenges for the 21st Century Army, (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, March 12, 1996), 19.

<sup>85</sup> Jablonsky quoting Swain (p 31) "Much as the military may wish it ... they will not have the liberty of selecting either an Armee de Metier, or forces organized for Operations Other Than War." Time's Cycle and National Military Strategy: The Case for Continuity in a Time of Change, p 31.

<sup>86</sup> Colonel John Batiste, Commander, 2d Bde, 1 AD

<sup>87</sup> Jeffrey Record, "Ready for What and Modernized Against Whom? A Strategic Perspective on Readiness and Modernization," Parameters, Vol XXV, No 3 (Autumn 95), 21, 30.

<sup>88</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Senate Armed Services Committee, The Procurement Subcommittee, Prepared Testimony of Dr. Daniel Goure, Deputy Director, Political-Military Studies, Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 5, 1995.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with MG Nash, Commander, Task Force Eagle, 25 February 96, Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

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