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Strategy and History: Essays on Theory and Practice

Timothy D. Hoyt

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BOOK REVIEWS

A NEVER-ENDING STUDY

Gray, Colin S. *Strategy and History: Essays on Theory and Practice*. Cass Strategy and History Series, 15. New York: Routledge, 2006. 234pp. \$41.95

This volume is largely successful not only in emphasizing the continuity and wisdom of Colin Gray's long-standing defense of the study of strategy but in capturing his delight in skewering the latest intellectual fads in both American and British security theory. *Strategy and History* is a rich and occasionally provocative read for any student of strategy, military issues, or international relations, and it reinforces the need to study strategy—the relationship between military force and desired political objectives.

The introduction and very brief conclusion can stand alone as a valuable beginning to the study of strategy and its core themes. The first section examines the key issues in strategic studies—the meaning of strategy itself and the crucial use of history as a tool to understand strategy and think strategically. The second section examines major contemporary debates in the field of international security—nuclear targeting and deterrence in the 1970s, the revolution in military affairs (RMA) debate of the 1990s, and the broader issue of arms control. The third, and arguably

most adventurous, section illustrates the multidisciplinary nature of strategy, looking at geography, culture, and ethics. The first section—representing Gray's lifelong defense of the study of strategy—is, not surprisingly, the strongest and most cogent; the other two sections are more iconoclastic and, at times, more difficult for the average reader.

Section 1 contains five mutually reinforcing chapters, clearly articulating not only the inherent difficulty in serious study of strategy but its immense and ongoing relevance for the academic, policy maker, and war fighter. The first chapter, written in the 1970s, attacks the Cold War study of strategy in the United States as both ahistorical and technologically determinist—a theme Gray has continued to hammer relentlessly (and properly) throughout his career. This chapter, combined with the second essay in section 2 (on the RMA debate) and Hew Strachan's recent article in *Survival* on the co-optation of the concept of strategy, constitutes a devastating counterargument to many of the core assumptions of current American

strategic thought, in both academe and the policy world. The second chapter addresses both the strengths and weaknesses of “new security” thinking in academe in the 1990s. This chapter could be of particular value to political scientists and international relations specialists.

The third, fourth, and fifth chapters of this section should be required reading for the modern war fighter and other practitioners. These sections focus on the importance of seapower and maritime strategy, on the enormous complexities involved in making strategy, and on the paradoxes inherent in the principles of war and in efforts to adapt them to the changing international environment. Gray notes that the principles of war are actually principles of *warfare*—intimately connected with the tactical and operational levels of war but remote from the fundamental issue of waging war to achieve *political* ends.

The second and third sections do not quite achieve the high standards of the first. The second section’s focus on nuclear strategy, on the RMA debate, and on arms control may seem antiquated to today’s reader. Nevertheless, the notions that the RMA debate failed to consider adversary responses to American technological superiority and that arms control “is as likely to fuel political antagonism as prevent or alleviate it” still have relevance to policy today. The third section’s first chapter notes the salient impact of geography on strategy—an obvious point, perhaps, but one exemplified most recently by the problems of carrying out a counter-insurgency campaign in an Iraq with insecure land borders on all sides. The third chapter is a laudable effort to explain morality and ethics in international

relations from the viewpoint of a neo-classical realist. The middle chapter, on strategic culture, is the most daring, and in some respects the most disappointing. Gray attempts to make a very complex argument regarding the definition of strategic culture, but much of the chapter is focused on a debate with Iain Johnston, which readers unfamiliar with this literature may find particularly daunting. This unusual chapter, however, does not detract from the overall value of the volume, which is excellent not only as an introduction to those unfamiliar with the study of strategy but also as a useful addition to the libraries of practitioners, academics, and military officers.

TIMOTHY D. HOYT
Naval War College



Haqqani, Husain. *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005. 380pp. \$17.95

Five years into the U.S.-led global war on terror, Pakistan remains a cornerstone of U.S. strategy in defeating the Taliban and rooting out al-Qa’ida. Despite the importance of Pakistan, it is a country that poses challenges for the United States. A key challenge is the dominant role of the military, which seeks to balance its commitments as a valuable U.S. partner with its role as a guardian of the country’s Islamic identity through its close relationship with Pakistan’s religious establishment. How Pakistan manages these commitments has serious implications for U.S. policy. Fortunately, Husain Haqqani