

STRATEGIC STUDIES, STRATEGY AND STRATEGIC THINKING IN STUDY OF SECURITY¹

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Abstract: Current technological progress offers mankind a feeling of finding a panacea for almost all problems. The collapse of bipolarity at the end of the 20th century brought about an upheaval in international relations, which was also a catalyst for a change in the approach to the study of security. The peace secured by a single global actor, after the collapse of bipolarity in the late 20th century, also fundamentally influenced the thinking of many experts in that a broader approach to the study of security was favored, with an emphasis on non-military threats. Armed conflicts around the world in recent times highlight the increasingly important, and undiminishing role of military power for state security. The importance of strategy remains unchanged and is an essential defining tool for state actors to exert

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power effectively, which cannot be properly executed without apt military support even in today's age of technological conveniences. Strategic studies are not a relic after all and continue confirming their adequacy for examining the evolution of international security relations.

Keywords: Strategy, technology, strategic studies, strategic thinking, world order

Introduction

Current technological progress offers mankind a high level of illusion when thinking about finally finding a panacea for almost all problems. In terms of gaining military superiority in conducting a military campaign, technology brings great benefits without doubt, especially in situations deploying modern weapon systems, where for instance milliseconds are crucial factors for high precision weapons to avert an enemy's strike or neutralizing it. Decisions made by military commanders based on technological progress accelerates developments and tempo of battlefields and can fundamentally influence the course of military operations in a theater. Therefore, in order of conducting successful combat operations the exploitation of modern technologies is essential. On the other hand, however, a sense of absolute faith by a military commander in modern technologies only is a false image of reality.

Colin S. Gray argued that the level of competitiveness of global actors such as the United States of America (US), People's Republic of China (PRC), and Russian Federation (RU) will depend on their capabilities to apply new strategies in warfare, which requires careful consideration of the future of armed conflict. According to Gray, strategy is a way of achieving political objectives, which if translated into practical means is a way of ensuring peace and security. There is a fundamental uniformity in crucial historical strategic milestones because the nature and function of war and strategy are immutable. Gray's definition of strategy follows one that Karl von Clausewitz defined, that is, strategy is the bridge that connects military power to political purpose; it is neither military power per se nor political purpose. As petty as it sounds, many strategists nowadays, even military commanders, forget this simple premise and become prisoners of modern technologies (Mahnkenn, Potter, 2021).

The collapse of bipolarity at the end of the 20th century brought about an upheaval in study of international relations, which was also a catalyst for a change in the approach to the study of security. Lasicová (2006) argued that strategic studies have become less important on the grounds at the time when crafting a strategy by state actors face minimum military threats and thus encountering it becomes unnecessary. On the other hand, other factors gained importance such as political, economic, and social.

The peace secured by one global actor, namely the US, after the collapse of bipolarity in the late 20th century has also fundamentally influenced the thinking of many scholars in favoring a broader approach to the study of security, with an emphasis on non-military threats. The evolution of international security relations in the first two decades of the 21st century, however, demonstrates that examining security in terms of strategic studies is still warranted and the use of force and military threat is real. This is demonstrated by the development of the security situation for instance in Ukraine after the annexation of Crimea by the forces and means of the RU in 2014 and the subsequent military aggression of the RU in Ukraine, which the RU launched against Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

Theoretical background researching strategic studies

The end of the Cold War caused a turning point in the global security environment. It caused a transition from a state of high-threat high-stability to a state of lower-direct-military-threat-lower-stability (Ondrejcsák, 2005). Such a new situation defines a broader view of security. It overcomes the traditional emphasis on the military dimension of security and underlines the increased existence of other threats (Škvrnda, 2004a). Considering these developments, the current global security environment is marked by high dynamics of change, an increase in the number and intensity of regional conflicts, a large increase in the number of state and non-state actors, uncontrollable expansion of technological progress, globalization, non-compliance of selected state actors with the norms of public international law, etc. During the Cold War, states had two options: to become either a client of one or the other superpower, the US or the then Soviet Union. These limited choices have contributed immensely to the stabilization of the international order. Nuclear deterrence strategy used by the then superpowers and based on the principle of mutually assured destruction (MAD), also

contributed to a great extent to this state of world affairs (Ondrejcsák, 2005). The development of military capabilities during the Cold War was oriented towards linear, high-intensity conflict with the planned use of nuclear weapons and the involvement of all available state resources (Prochádzka, Nečas, 2020).

Consequence of the end of the Cold War affected a change as well in the focus of military strategies of the superpowers. They started cutting state resources earlier assigned to a robust maintenance and development of military capabilities to face challenges of symmetric threats. In general, the prevalence of threats in the period right after the end of the Cold War broadened and were more asymmetric in nature. They made a state actor's external security environment become progressively unstable and complex. Compared to the Cold War period, the current stage of the development of the international order is influenced by the deterioration of the global security situation, its complexity, interconnectedness of various phenomena and increased level of instability. As a result, international security relations are more difficult to predict, security threats more urgent and regional war conflicts more realistic to erupt (Ibid). Current conflicts in the world point to the increasingly important role of military power assuring state security regardless of the changes recorded in the threats landscape. Following the end of bipolarity in the 20th century, it was supposed to bring an end to armed conflicts that could have caused World War III with the use of nuclear weapons. The paradox, however, is that the rate of local armed conflicts is the highest since the collapse of bipolarity, and issues such as deterrence and the role of nuclear weapons are once again coming to the fore (Jurčák, Trebula, 2017). In relation to the unpredictable development of the global security situation, the current efforts of state actors are directed towards developing strategies and building military capabilities for deterrence, contributing to collective defense and at the same time ensuring the territorial defense of the state (Prochádzka, Nečas, 2020). Due to the current development of international security relations global state actors will likely choose an approach returning to the creation of military deterrence strategies to gain advantageous competitiveness in the military field. Such an approach can be attributed as well to the beginning of the creation of a revised world order where multipolarity and conduct of next-generation wars may prevail.

Owing to the collapse of the bipolar world order in the 1990s brought existential concerns in the application of strategic studies practitioners. There have been views that strategic studies are a relic and inadequate for examining the evolution of international security relations. Despite the contemporary antagonism that strategic studies are losing their usefulness, the use of force remains an essential factor in international security relations. This was evidenced, for example, by the military-political measures taken by the US in relation to the 2001 terrorist attacks and the military campaign the US led consequently in Afghanistan (Ondrejcsák, 2005). Strategic studies played an important contribution in the field of security studies in the early 20th century. In terms of scientific rigor, strategic studies are a methodological approach not yet surpassed due to the strict definition of the field of security (Lasicová, Ušiak, 2012). In accord with Hrebíček (2006), strategic studies are a real tool for understanding the laws and regularities of development in the field of defense and security issues and have a focused determination.

In consonance with Vennesson (2017), critics of strategic studies often describe them as paralyzed, state-centric, and West-centric by its narrow focus on Cold War era military issues. However, this approach may contrast sharply with the theory of Clausewitz and Thomas Schelling. Die-hard opponents of strategic studies may overlook the strategy's dramatic expansion during the Cold War, its long-term involvement of competing political actors (rather than states), and its ability to place Western and non-Western actors in a common analytical framework. Many areas of academic study are expanding in recent years. However, strategic studies remain narrowly focused on military issues, which is ascribed to superpowers rivalry from the 1950s and 1960s. Some academics allege that these studies are obsolete and have little relevance to modern understanding of international security. This is so only because of a very narrow understanding of the concept when considering that it is focused on security within the context of a military security agenda only. Although many had a narrow understanding of security before the development of nuclear weapons, the Cold War brought a period of expansion in strategic thought. New methods and theories were developed as people sought to better understand conflict and resolve it. Although strategy is primarily understood as the use of tactics and politics in a particular theater, it is not just a political concept. It is also about understanding the larger military context of warfare. As Clausewitz stated, war was essentially the strategy portion of

strategy. Many reasons were given as to why people decided to go to war. Such as politics, there are many elements involved in preparing for a war and the wider effects it had on both domestic and international affairs. Thus, wartime strategies from the Cold War were not merely about military. Schelling and other prominent Cold War era strategists and strategic thinkers redefined their field and developed a new concept. In addition, strategic thinkers also employed sociologists, mathematicians, and economists to implement their concepts. They understood that war no longer defined strategy; instead, they incorporated nuclear deterrence to create a permanent state of war impossibility. Many of these individuals were not soldiers but primarily engineers, economists, sociologists, and mathematicians. Consequently, deterrence, coercion, and arms control, the three strategic models that symbolize the Cold War, comprehend violence and its (non)use in peacetime (not just wartime), and understand wartime more broadly than earlier strategic concepts used for searching decisive battles. As stated by Schelling, theory of strategy is not essentially a theory of aggression or resistance or war. It includes the threat of war, but also any other threat, as the theory focuses on the use of threats and promises. Clausewitz recognized the importance of the state, and strategy was not simply state-centric: he was not a state theorist, he never claimed that only states could wage war. He sheds light on some key insights of enduring value in uncovering struggling non-state actors in world politics, such as the dynamics of attack and defense, and examines situations in which great powers may lose small wars. In reference to the western centric connotation of strategic studies may sound viral, however, Western centrism has not been incorporated into strategic studies. Besides, there is no such thing as the West in strategic studies, strategy has been a central concern of philosophers of all cultural practices since ancient times and remains a ubiquitous part of security practice in non-Western countries as well. Contrary to the Western-centrism Clausewitz and Schelling's theory of strategy put Western and Non-Western actors in a conflict into a common analytical framework and give recognition of non-Western actors as well.

In furthering the support for strategic studies and its relevance with current international relations studies Antulio Echevarria II (2022) published his article on the implications that the Russian invasion may bring for strategic studies. In it, he studies the effects that Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent invasion of Ukraine has shattered the

widely held notion that all-out interstate war is a thing of the past. Further on, some experts see the decline in major wars since World War II as evidence that armed conflicts are disappearing entirely. In addition, there are six premises that the experts offer supporting their views on the mentioned disappearance of armed conflicts. However, an interesting implication for strategic studies is, that at least half of them acted to accelerate, rather than deter, Putin's aggression against Ukraine. In theory, all six premises provide plausible reasons for the supposed decline in major conflicts since World War II: a) proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, b) spread of democracies and democratic values, c) growth of multilateral institutions, d) increasing economic integration, e) influence of international law and the law of armed conflict, f) spread of anti-war norms. In practice, however, nothing prevented Putin from launching an all-out attack on Ukraine. A seventh possible explanation for the low frequency of military conflicts between states since 1945 is the relative balance of military power, especially regionally. This contemporary balance of power is not to be confused with the balance that existed between NATO and the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War. However, the explanations that Echevarria build upon are that maintaining military balance could be just as effective, and the reason states choose to compete in a gray zone below the threshold of kinetic war and not above it.

Conforming to Taylor (2018) the fate of strategic studies is inevitably closely related to its international political and security environment. For example, the first two decades after it emerged as a formal field of study in the late 1940s, it has been dubbed the golden age of strategic research. The main concern of scholars during this period was some of the dilemmas associated with the advent of the nuclear age, including how to avoid or at least control and limit the use of these devastating new weapons if their use broke out into war. However, in the radical political environment of the late 1960s and early 1970s, strategic studies quickly became obsolete. The so-called oil shocks of the 1970s shifted international focus more towards the potential use of economic weapons and placed greater emphasis on the economic dimension of security. A period of de-escalation between the US and the then Soviet Union, coupled with the normalization of US-China relations, has pushed the prospect of inter-state conflict further afield. It can be said, however, that a new golden age in the history of strategic research is coming.

Understanding the significance of strategic studies and their impact on the security agenda of a state actor in the past as well as in the current century is not possible without broadening one's knowledge, among others, on terms such as strategy, and strategic thinking.

Defining strategy, and strategic thinking

The emergence of strategy is closely linked to the emergence of the first state entities, development of human education and technologies that provided human society with the ability to build power structures of the state from around 500 BC. Among the earliest and most famous thinkers (strategists) of that era is Master Sun Tzu. Despite the passing centuries, the essence of war has not changed and prevails in the 21st century (Galatík, Krásný, Zetocha, 2008). The origin of the term strategy is primarily military and refers to the theory and practice of warfare with the intention of achieving military objectives as effectively as possible. Strategy can be understood in descriptive or prescriptive terms. The former implies a discourse of analysis of the different parts of the strategy with the possibility of their assessment and critique. The latter involves guidance on how to achieve objectives with available resources. Both semantic parts have a permanent presence in crafting a strategy (Hřebíček, 2006). According to historical evolution of mankind, we can divide the most famous strategists and strategic thinkers into four categories: no. 1: Sun Tzu, Thucydides, Carl von Clausewitz, no. 2: Niccolo Machiavelli, Antoine Henri de Jomini, Basil Liddell Hart, J.C. Wylie, Edward N. Luttwak, no. 3: Bernard Brodie, and no. 4: Thomas C. Shelling (Gray, 2015). Nowadays, it is without doubt that placing another great strategist into the no.4 category is Colin S. Gray, who as a staunch supporter and with his lifetime dedication to the field of strategy contributed immensely to the development of geopolitics, international relations, and strategic studies through his scholarship.

General definitions of strategy are described in various forms in several literatures and dictionaries. For example, in the Dictionary of Security Relations (Kulašik et al., 2002, p. 186), strategy is defined as "the gradual examination of the set goals of political activity together with the overall political or military situation, as well as the setting of general objectives and the search for general methods to achieve victory". As Gray (1999) described it, strategy is not an exact science and to be suc-

successful it must be practical. Strategy does not necessarily mean absolute war. The kind of strategy to wage war is also symptomatic nowadays and delimits the interface between military means and political ends. War itself is a particular expression of strategic interaction (Stone, 2017) and a specific manifestation of phenomena that are associated with politics, the conflict of interests and power potentials of a state actor (Kazanský & Ivančík, 2015).

Every state actor, if it wants to advance its interests within the anarchic international relations landscape and ensure prosperity and stability of the state, must have set goals and priorities and the means to achieve them. Modern state actors, if they want to be successful, come up with a framework depicting their own behaviors at the highest, strategic level. The manner and scope of behaviors are part of the state's security policy documents, i.e., strategies (Javorčík, 2004). The process of drafting state security policy documents such as for instance defense strategy has a specific character. It considers domestic and foreign policy issues of state security and the understanding of their interrelation. Security-policy documents of the state are significant in that they influence the direction and implementation of the security policy of the state actor for different periods (Škvrnda, 2004b). The current drafting of documents of strategic importance by a state actor is influenced by the so-called beginning of the fifth period of the development of international relations. It can be defined as the replacement of unipolarity led by the hegemon US with multipolarity of global actors most likely to be led by the US, RU, and CN. Each historical balancing of these transitions resulted in creation of a new world order (Volner, 2004).

Technological development represents a large part in the current strategic agenda of a state actor. Concepts such as war, crisis, alliance, asymmetric threats, power, or security are all strongly influenced by the prevalence of technology. Technological advances have not always been a decisive aspect in strategy making. Its effects have had and will continue to have an impact on at least five aspects in the military field: firepower, protection, mobility, communications, and intelligence. Technological advances are now also deeply embedded in civilian society, which means that it is not a temporary affair, but rather confirms its immutability. The greatest implication of technological advances for strategy making is the difficulty of assessing the military strength of an adversary. Many variables have been added to the assessment equation that are qualitatively and almost always subject to change,

causing, for example, a blurring of the distinction between defensive and offensive weapon systems. War is unfortunately the only reliable litmus test for determining whether an adversary is dominant offensively or defensively. Because military dominance can differ fundamentally in times of war and peace, there can be considerable uncertainty that induces misjudgment (misjudgment was an example in 1914, when general expectations favored the offensive and triggered World War I). History confirms that wars have always existed and will so in the future as well (Buzan, 1987). Brodie framed the strategic situation created by the military technology of the nuclear age with his often-quoted 1946 statement in his book *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order*, which read “Thus far the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars. From now on its chief purpose must be to avert them. It can have almost no other useful purpose.” The quote referred to the idea that the invention of nuclear weapons constituted a sea change in warfare, and possibly in international relations itself. However, technological breakthroughs are only a one part of the game changer (Walt, 2010). It appears that today's advanced technology can overwhelm the decision-making process of state actors with information that is irrelevant. Answers to simple questions that arise in the application of strategy cannot be found despite advanced technology: e.g., How do we proceed? When is victory expected? Is victory achievable? Finding the right answer to these questions is as challenging in the 21st century as it was 100 years ago (Gray, 2007). The test of the difficulty of the answers can be tried in the context of, e.g., the deployment of international troops in Afghanistan since 2001 and their withdrawal in August 2021 (How do we proceed now?), the evolution of the security situation in until 2025 in Afghanistan (Shall we do anything?); the operation of private military groups in the Mali in 2022 (Are they going to stay or to be redeployed to Crimea?); The annexation of Crimea by RU in 2014 (Why did it happen?) etc.

Strategy-making is not about intellect and philosophy and does not seek objective truth but is a pragmatic idea that may have abstract features. Each theme of modern strategy - e.g., deterrence, arms control, international crisis management, hybrid threats, strategic communications - is promoted because of its relevance to the security of the times (Ibid). It can be generalized that a state actor's strategy consistently interprets broader goals into more distinct objectives and connects them through the means available to achieve these objectives. One of

the means used pursuing a strategy is the armed forces of the state actor by way of building capabilities and deploying them as needed. Strategy in general also provides unwritten guidance on how to apply a strategy's objectives to internal affairs of state actors in the form of, for example, budget planning.

Understanding the meaning of strategy is not easy, but it is even more difficult to implement strategy well. It is the so-called mysterious bridge between political goals and military power as an instrument of war, which as separate entities are paradoxically easy to understand. Simply defined, almost every contemporary state has been created by military means within the framework of strategic history (e.g., the relations between politics and war, war and warfare, war, and peace) (Ibid). The reality of the strategic world is inextricably linked to our way of conceiving it. In an operational sense, strategy is inherently more nationalistic than most other aspects of social behavior. Strategy is a universal concern, but its meaning is always contextual, determined by the concerns, perceptions, interests, traditions, and ideologies of those with whom we are dealing. These cannot be understood without a perception of cultural interconnectedness (Booth, 1979). Defining strategy as just a guide for deploying military troops is highly misleading; strategy is about effect. In an ideal world, strategy is necessary and applicable without the use of force to achieve the goal. In the real world, there are historically few situations that confirm that it is possible to achieve a strategic objective without the use of live force. (Liddell Hart, 1991). Accordingly, reflecting the immutability of the nature of strategy also indicates its complexity in that strategy making is not a straightforward (linear) process and must be adopted at a particular time for a particular goal. The time factor fundamentally influences strategy formation and highlights another cardinal regularity that strategy formation must be subject to an ex-ante rather than ex-post modus operandi, otherwise defined, the correct actor's strategy is adopted before the adversary's strategy. The above trends confirm the importance of making the right strategic choices, which cannot be based on technological advances alone. In the context of achieving a political goal, the way of achieving it without using military force is the ideal avenue. However, it is not a conventional strategy, but an indirect strategy using the politics of the state combined with the psychological dimension of propaganda to identify the target group with the politics of the adversary state. The decision of which strategy a state actor chooses to achieve its political goals is also strongly influenced by the time in

which a state actor implements its strategy, i.e., the strategy of, for example, securing a balance of power now is highly likely to be different from the strategy of securing a balance of power twenty years from now.

Origins of strategic thinking cannot be clearly established, but it can be said that it has probably existed since the word strategy (Greek origin "strategos" = general) entered the human vocabulary. Many of the strategic principles present in strategic thinking are unchanging, irrespective, for example, of the evolution of technology. One such principle in strategic thinking is that events do not take place in a vacuum and have a historical background. It is not possible to properly understand e.g., current social developments in RU or CN if the historical context is absent. Strategy formulation is dependent on the geographic location, economy, society, and politics of the actor. Regardless of whether land, naval, air or other strategies have been applied in the past, they have a common denominator: striking a decisive blow is necessary to impose one's will on the opponent, preferably without directly attacking the main forces of the adversary; fighting must be effective so that forces and resources are not exhausted; it is important to be stronger than the adversary. However, the current era exploits the synergistic effect of jointly conducting operations on land, water, air, and space, and in cyberspace (Snyder, 1999). Strategic thinking is heavily influenced by the complexity of warfare and the synergy of military and non-military means of confrontation. Today, there are new domains where force confrontation takes place: information and communication, psychological, and cognitive. Without considering the new spheres of confrontation into the process of strategic thinking, it is unlikely to assume the formation of a successful strategy and the effectiveness of armed forces in armed conflict (Kruglov, Yakupov, 2017).

Many of today's conflicts (battles) are fought outside of the physical world without using kinetic means and are won at strategic level; they are not armed conflicts (Grohmann, 2021). It is called indirect strategy which, however, does not exclude the use of military force but prefers intense politically driven engagement and focuses on two elements of war: the balance of forces (no one is certain of his superiority) and the economic situation. The purpose of indirect strategy is to secure a strategic situation that is insufficient to reach a decision, but sufficient to reach a decision by the mere belief that the struggle is going on. The success of the indirect strategy is based on the mass use of mass media

and depends on the mindset of the society and its will, i.e., on psychological and disinformation warfare (Galatík, Krásný, Zetocha, 2008).

Strategic thinking is a highly creative process that must not succumb to templating, even though the principles of strategic thinking exist and are respected in strategy development. The content of the principles is the creation of an idea and a process for influencing a defined environment, be it, for example, the internal or external security environment of a state actor.

The basic principles of strategic thinking are variability (periods of steady and chaotic forcing, the main postulate is that there is no exactness in determining the change in forcing, i.e., only the probability level can be determined), permanence (the operating environment is volatile and changing, strategic thinking is a never-ending process, and systems approach (phenomena are evaluated comprehensively, i.e. developments in the external environment and the internal environment are inseparable) (Židek, 2008).

It is literally quite striking bringing a retrospect into today's world and wondering how much more precise one could had been when remarking on the lasting importance of the role of force in international relations. Such were Hedley Bull remarks in 1981 on the onset of the second Cold War (Taylor, 2018, p. VII): "In the late 1960s and the first few years of the 1970s, it was widely held in the Western world that the role of force in international relations had gone into decline ... A school of writers about international politics began to argue that the strategic factor in international power relationships was giving place to an economic factor ... Today, rightly, or wrongly, [those ideas] are in large part rejected. In the Western world there is now a widespread expectation that the role of force will not diminish but increase—an expectation that is borne out by the evidence of mounting arms and arms expenditures in the Soviet bloc, the Third World, and the West itself". Such remarks confirm that in the ever-changing international political landscape, the need for quality strategic thinking has become increasingly urgent and apparent. For Henry Mintzberg (Liedtka, 1998), recognized as one of the foremost proponents of strategic thinking states that the term is not just an alternative nomenclature for everything under the concept of strategy. Strategic thinking is a special way of thinking with specific characteristics built on a systems perspective. Strategic thinkers have a mental model of the entire end-to-end value creation system and understand the interactions. Strategic

thinking is also intention-driven. Strategic intent provides focus, enabling individuals within an organization to focus and use their energy, focus, resist distractions, and stay focused for the time needed to achieve goals. In this intent-driven focus, there must be room for clever opportunism not only to advance the intended strategy, but also to allow room for new strategies to emerge. From this perspective, timely thinking draws on an institution's memory and broad historical context to think well about shaping its future. This requires the ability to select and use appropriate analogies from one's own and others' histories, and to identify patterns in these events. The final element of strategic thinking sees it as a hypothesis-driven process. It embodies the scientific method with hypothesis generation and testing as its core activities. Strategic thinking is both creative and critical in nature.

Strategic thinking has not lost in its value of significance, even if proponents of security studies would prefer security connotations to be linked to a more human aspect of security and diminish the role of the military aspect. However, as the new international order is just in making, and resembling massive political tectonic plates movements that heavily impact the entire surface of the Earth where emergent powers exercise their interests and often come into collisions, there is more than just a diminishing role of the military in the global picture. That being the reality of the day and a landscape that would probably prevail for at least the next decade, there is hardly a chance avoiding military deployment to ensure some state actor's own defense and sovereignty. As Futter and Zala (2021) describe of what is coming, we are on the threshold of a third nuclear age. It is highly likely causing challenges to the established main features of the global nuclear order. The main identified driver of the coming change rests in the development of a range of strategic non-nuclear weapons (SNNW). Such a change will substantially affect and challenge the norms of academic and political thinking about nuclear weapons and nuclear stability. The strategic significance of various system of SNNW developments and advances in detection and reconnaissance provide more ambitious arguments for the political and strategic significance of SNNW. The challenge is not only technical, but fundamentally involves changing the way policy-makers and strategists think about how to deal with nuclear threats.

Strategic thinking requires more complexity compared to operational or tactical thinking, which are less bureaucratic. Many times, the chal-

lenge of strategic thinking is expressed as an attempt to reconcile conflicting antagonistic elements (Bonadonna, 2018). In the early 19th century, the Russians had a wealth of experience on how to win a war, led by military greats and military strategists such as Michael Kutuzov or Alexander Suvorov. Despite their victories with Napoleonic armies, Russians were forced to look to the defeated West, represented by Clausewitz or Jomini, to begin to understand the importance of strategic thinking (Paret et al., 1986). As reported by Futter and Zala (2021, pp. 259-262) “Nuclear ages begin in the mind. They are, at the outset, mental constructs. However, thinking in such ways has material ‘real world’ policy effects. When a particular construct becomes widely held it produces a conventional wisdom. However, we agree with Colin Gray that using the ‘intellectual constructs’ of nuclear ages is an imperfect but useful way to organize evidence that can guide theoretical or conceptual discussion on significant changes in the structure of the global nuclear order. It allows the strategic thinker to differentiate between causes and symptoms of policy change”. Strategic thinking is both an art and a science, it is not a prophet; it is the ability to translate complexity and uncertainty into a rational expression of goals and thus create a pre-field for planning (Židek, 2008). The quality of strategic thinking in the Cold War era (nuclear deterrence), for example, was related to the recognition and understanding of the evolution and dynamics of international relations at the time on the one hand, and nuclear weapons technology on the other (Howard, 2018).

State strategic thinking is not dogmatic, but fluid and subject to change as the global security environment evolves, the nature of security threats changes, and global trends shift. At the same time, it must be emphasized that it also contains a static part that reflects the vital interests of the state. These interests are permanent and only minimally variable over time (preservation of sovereignty, territorial integrity, political system, protection of the nation). To defend vital interests, the state is willing to use all means at its disposal, including military force. The strategic thinking of the state is directly reflected in the content of national security, defense and military strategies, which explicitly set out the principles, objectives, priorities and modalities of external and internal security, national defense and the deployment of the armed forces. It can be assumed that these strategies also implicitly contain unstated objectives, namely the power objectives of the state. The strategic framework of the state's power objectives can be derived from an

analysis of strategic thinking, which reflects the concrete steps and actions of the state in the pursuit of power objectives over a long period of time. Even nowadays, the term strategic thinking is a very frequent concept in both military and non-military environments. The main reason for this is the development of a new form of conflict management (hybrid form of conflict management, also established under terms such as grey zone, unconventional warfare, warfare conducted just below the threshold of armed conflict) and the development of modern weapon systems. These factors again put the state and the building of new capabilities of the armed forces at the forefront.

Conclusion

From today's perspective, expectations of a decline in the incidences of direct armed clashes after the end of the Cold War were unrealistic to the point of naivety. This is evidenced, for example, by the conflicts in the Balkans, the Persian Gulf, the terrorist attacks on the US in 2001, the terrorist attacks on the European continent over the last decade, and others, confirming the high importance of military power for state security. There are several reasons for the relevance of strategic studies even today, e.g.: it is important to be prepared for the possibility of a new armed conflict between major powers; the impact of analysis at the strategic level integrating political, economic, and military judgement is crucial for decisions on the use of force, etc. (Suchý, 2003). The world is entering a period of great uncertainty, which is compounded by weak unifying ties between the various global actors.

The end of the Cold War and the developments following the terrorist attacks in the US in 2001 also changed the experience, requiring the real application of strategy and war in a way for which humanity was not prepared. The Cold War was a threat but never a reality compared to the current situation. It caused a situation where, for example, the US in Afghanistan viewed counterinsurgency doctrine as a strategy instead of being a tactic of warfare (Larsdotter, 2019). Misunderstanding the importance of strategy brings failures that are not felt immediately but rather in a long term. For instance, President Donald Trump was warned at his US presidency start that he would regret not having a grand strategy. The same was the case with his predecessor when Barack Obama stating in press conferences that his administration did

not need a new grand strategy, nor even a George Kennan-type strategist (Popescu, 2018). The reduced likelihood of the outbreak of armed conflict after the end of the Cold War was exaggerated even though it had been on a downward trend in the last decade of the 20th century. Today, the opposite can be observed, an upward trend that reaches the 1989 levels. Strategic studies as they stand today deal with broader issues than they did during the Cold War. In addition to the issue of deterrence, there are equally fundamental issues concerning the elements of missile defense, arms control and disarmament, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, modern technology in the military and others. Conflicts in the world in recent years point to the growing importance of military power for ensuring the security of the state and the further development of strategic studies (Jurčák, Trebula, 2017). Strategy is the basis for understanding current struggles, armed conflicts, and wars, as well as an unsurpassed tool for anticipating future wars. Experts' opinions confirm that strategy is not mainly about war. Kiszely (2019) argues that the importance of having a strategy is not that the state actor has one, but that he understands its process in relation to balancing the goals to be achieved.

There is a good case in point comparing a well-known security conference introductory notes taking place recently in Stockholm under the auspices of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. In 2021, the wording of the introductory followed the theme Battlefield of the Future. In that sense, war was fought in many ways. While evolution and revolution in the military domain continued to occur, recent developments have opened-up cyberspace, outer space, and mental space as potential new battlegrounds for the future. Rapid technological developments increase uncertainty and the urgency to understand, respond to and manage it. This sense of urgency is heightened by growing distrust among major powers. These advances, and the resulting disruption and destruction, can come at a huge human cost. In 2022, the wording of the introductory follows a notion that war is a reality, even on the European continent. When last year's conference launched the Future Battlefield series, there was an expectation that warfare would continue to be just a phenomenon. However, no one anticipated or could have predicted the nature of the war that Ukraine is observing: a contemporary European war. The war that is considered a game-changer (SIPRI, 2021, 2022) not only in establishing a new world order but also in rediscovering that strategy and strategic thinking for a state actor are not relics.

The current turbulent evolution of international relations is a situation to test the qualities and capabilities of state actors to apply strategic thinking to formulate decisive strategies that will have a major impact on the functioning or failure of the world order of powers in the third and following decades of the 21st century. There is a high probability that a new form of Cold War will set the benchmark for international relations among world powers such as the US, RU and CN. Arranging future relations and balancing the influence of actors is a question for strategists to decide whether e.g., multipolarity or bi-multipolarity will be realistic and workable and by what time strategic partnerships such as RU-CN, US-India-Japan and Europe etc. may take place. Future grand strategies of the world powers should clarify the goal of partnership and how to arrive at an ideal, but most importantly balance of power. Understanding strategy, and strategic thinking in modern history is not likely to be the most difficult task for the world powers but undertaking them presupposes overcoming an insurmountable obstacle in the realistic world of international relations, which is largely determined by anarchism. The probably closest picture about the importance bridging strategy, strategic thought, and strategic studies with international studies comes in the article of Echevarria II (2022, p. 32) “If only the dead have seen the end of war, only the living can study it. And the study of future war, to include its prevention and mitigation, can only take place in the present”.

Wars are natural parts of humanity, which since establishment of statehood, are also a state power tool enforcing interests. Whether real war happens, it always depends on whether power is exercised by force or by other means by the decision maker. History of mankind confirms that without military power, the exercise of state interests is limited and could even lead to a threat to the very sovereignty of the state. It is present in a situation when the state as a fundamental subject of international law ceases to exist since it is no longer able to meet the basic criteria for its international recognition, such as the definition of its territory or its ability to enter international relations with other states. Even though the above premise is unchanging, humanity forgets about it in a moment of abundance, economic development, prosperity, false belief in inexhaustibility of resources etc. The above situation lasts until a crisis (e.g., a state of war) arises due to reasons such as lack of raw materials, resources, views, attitudes, and activities that go beyond the social, cultural, or religious norms accepted by the state. If such circumstances are possible, so to say programmed in our DNAs, and are

a fixed part of the human condition regardless of technological breakthroughs, why does then nowadays security research have an interest in displacing a research framework factors that are historically immutable. If the state is to be a fundamental and indivisible actor in international security relations that are based on anarchy, there is nothing left for the state to do but to maintain the means to assert force in the internal security environment and be prepared to face challenges in the state's external security environment as well. It is probably utopian to want there to be one world, one political system for all, one state, one economy, etc. Such unity is unattainable despite the social, economic, and technological development of mankind. Fukuyama also thought that mankind had finally reached the pinnacle of social development and had reached its culmination in the form of democracy. If threats have not narrowed since the end of the Cold War, but have instead expanded, and asymmetry and multipolarity prevails above symmetry and bipolarity, it is probably not too wise to insist on a point restraining the rationale of the military sector in the study of security in the future.

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