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## **Book Review: The New Makers of Modern Strategy: From the Ancient World to the Digital Age**

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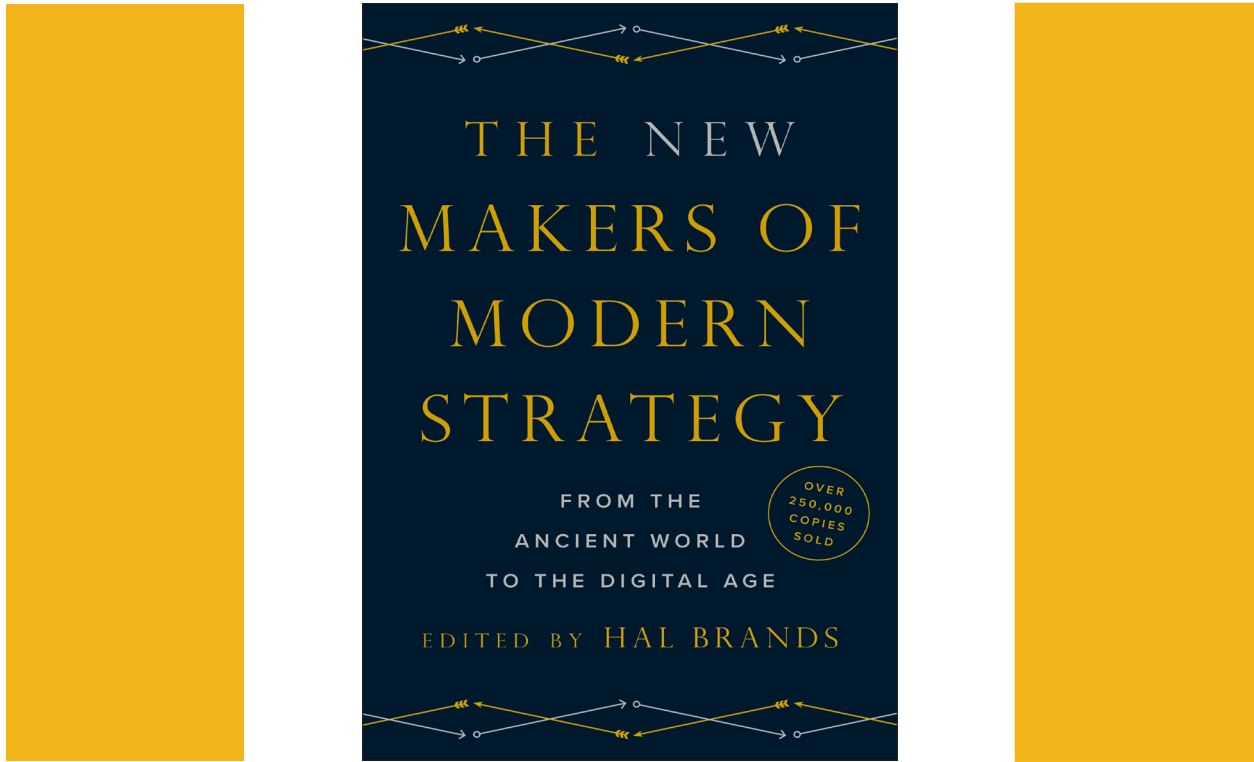
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## — PARAMETERS BOOKSHELF —



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**W**hen the first edition of *Makers of Modern Strategy* was published in 1943, an America just finding its footing as the world's most powerful nation faced the twin threats of Nazi Germany and the Empire of Japan. The authors of that notable collection of essays, whom the estimable Edward Mead Earle gathered together, drew upon the long history of strategic thought to find a path to victory in the global struggle in which the United States was engaged.

The second edition was published in 1986, near the height of the Cold War with the Soviet Union. This time, under its editor, Peter Paret, the book explicitly described its goal in its subtitle: examining strategy *From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (the latter of which the first edition clearly could not have covered).

Keeping with the tradition of publishing a new volume about every four decades, Hal Brands has brought forth a third edition that goes back further and reaches forward to a present in which the United States does not have a clearly defined enemy as it did during earlier iterations.

This is only one factor making this third edition the most interesting yet. While the authors in the first two volumes were overwhelmingly British and American males, the third volume reaches far more widely in the topics it covers and in the authors' lived experiences. The combination of academic rigor, historical analysis, and concluding questions each essay poses makes this edition especially valuable.

These exceptional essays touch upon different time periods and aspects of military and national or grand strategy. Particularly good essays include US Army War College Professor Emerita Tami

Biddle's on Allied grand strategy in World War II and the Editor in Chief of *Parameters* Antulio J. Echevarria II's on Henri Jomini. Seth Jones's fascinating analysis of irregular warfare as practiced by state actors focuses on what may be the most likely challenge for America and her allies. Jones notes, "For Russia, Iran, and even China, choosing to fight a conventional or nuclear war with the United States would be a risky and dangerous proposition indeed," and that "the United States and other Western countries are vulnerable to irregular methods" (1,021).

In another important essay, Joshua Rovner describes how new war-fighting domains bring about new strategies and outlines the three-fold historical pattern that invariably follows. Initially, hopes are high as new war-fighting domains emerge. Then comes fear as questions are raised about what adversaries can do in those new domains and as they adapt their strategies to counter ours. Last is the acceptance of limitations as technological and adversarial setbacks occur during conflict. Rovner raises questions about the emergence of potential manmade domains beyond cyber, space, and artificial intelligence. He notes: "Forty years ago few predicted the growth of the internet. Twenty years ago, few could have predicted the nature of social media today. A similarly unexpected change will force observers to reconsider their understanding of cyberspace, and the strategic implications that follow" (1,091).

John Lewis Gaddis's fitting and comprehensive capstone essay to this volume discusses national and grand strategy. Gaddis blends insights into Clausewitzian ideas with domestic and ecological factors to assess what makes grand strategy succeed or fail. A successful grand strategy, he argues, must balance the theory of strategy ("Grammar") and its application in real time to uncertainty ("Logic").

If strategy, as Brands argues in his introductory essay, is "the indispensable art of getting what we want, with what we have, in a world that seems set on denying us," then the essays continued in this new edition are of immeasurable importance for students, practitioners, and scholars alike (1). This new volume calls for a comprehensive renewal of our understanding of strategy because "[s]trategy is most valuable when the stakes are high and the consequences of failure are severe," as they so clearly are today (2).

It is hard to overstate the importance of this book. The essays provide excellent starting points for research on almost any topic relevant to practitioners, and many of them will endure as the best summaries of thinking on their respective subjects until the next edition is published around 2065 or so. Until then, war college students would be well served to pick up this hefty tome for a mental workout.

Reading the book cover to cover would be terrific preparation for a year at any American professional military education institution—or for service in Congress or the executive branch at a time when American strategy appears to be faltering.

Princeton University Press, 2023 • 1,200 pages • \$45.00

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**Keywords: World War II, Henri Jomini, irregular warfare, cyberspace, Carl von Clausewitz**