

Strategy and peace: a relationship for the twenty-first century?

Peter S. Randall MA

University of Reading, United Kingdom

p.s.randall@reading.ac.uk

In *De Re Militari*, Vegetius wrote "Igitur qui desiderat pacem, praeparet bellum" ("Therefore, those who wish for peace, prepare for war"). The linking of these two concepts, of war and peace, is one that has endured throughout human history, being drawn upon by Augustine of Hippo, who wrote that "war is waged in order that peace may be obtained". The linking of war and peace, and the concept that peace is the aim of war, naturally has implications for strategy. Strategy is commonly thought of as being about the achievement of ends, through application of means in different ways. Peace can be one of the ends that strategy seeks to achieve. Thus, the peace that results after war has to potential to be, and is often, used in order to measure the success of the strategy used in the war that preceded.

This paper will analyse the challenges posed to the strategist by the concept of peace and its relationship with strategy.

As an end to be achieved through use of military means, peace is a difficult objective for a strategist. Leaving aside George Carlin's assertion that "fighting for peace is like screwing for virginity", in the twenty-first century, those charged with the conduct of strategy are separate from the policy-makers who define the ends that war will be conducted for, and also from those who negotiate peace at the conclusion of the war. While outcomes upon the battlefield are more than able to shape the peace that results from war, as successes and failure thereon subsequently strengthen and weaken the negotiating position for the diplomats, strategy is a very blunt dialogue through which to achieve peace.

As military strategists are not responsible for the negotiation of the actual peace that results from any military conflict, it is incorrect for peace to be used as a measure for defining the success, or otherwise, of strategists and their strategies. Indeed, there is the potential for peace to be quite removed from the ends that strategists are tasked with, and this should not always be seen as resulting from the failings of the strategist. While the classic, Clausewitzian, method of achieving peace is to impose one's will upon one's enemy, there are two ways this imposition of will may be brought about. One is by forcing the enemy to accept one's will. This may, ultimately, result from the actions of the strategist, bringing military means to bear in such a way that one's enemy would rather submit to one's will than continue fighting, but may also result from other tools of pressure that policy makers have at their disposal. The other way in which an enemy may be brought to accept one's will is by amending one's will so that it is more acceptable to one's enemy. If peace is

brought about in such a manner, then the result of the conflict will have been decided at the negotiating table, influenced by, but ultimately separate from, results on the battlefield, making it difficult to judge the success or otherwise of the strategist by such methods.

The strategist must maintain the desired status quo (the peace) that is to be created by their actions when conducting warfare, as they cannot be considered to have been successful if their actions produce outcomes incompatible with this peace. The obvious example of this would be strategists who are unsuccessful upon the battlefield, as this necessarily lessens the likelihood of a desired status quo being produced, and increases the possibility of the enemy achieving a status quo more amenable to themselves. But a strategist may also have to avoid strategies deemed more likely to deliver success upon the battlefield, if they are incompatible with, or less likely to deliver, a desirable post-war status quo.

Moreover, measuring strategy by peace is only effective if peace can be achieved. Military forces can be asked by their masters to carry out wars that have indefinite ends: the example *prima intra pares* for this would be the 'war on terror', a conflict that, as a war against a concept, must necessarily be conducted without a single agreement being able to be made to secure peace. Even if groups such as al Qaeda were able to be completely defeated, or negotiated a deal that saw them renounce terrorism, there would still be other groups willing to carry out acts of terrorism. Therefore, there can be no peace by which to judge the success of a military strategy.

To judge the success, or otherwise, of military strategy, it is necessary, particularly in the twenty-first century with its contemporary context under which military strategists must operate, to move away from the idea that peace can be a useful measure of strategy.