Strategy and peace: a relationship for the 21st Century?

Peter S. Randall
University of Reading

War and peace

- A well-established relationship within Western culture and military theory:
  - War is necessary to have peace.
  - Peace is necessary to have war.

What is peace?

- Peace is not solely the absence of war.
- Peace is a status quo borne out of war.
- Peace is a commodity that is shaped by the war that produces it.

Strategy and war

- War is for achieving peace.
- Strategy is for achieving war.
- Therefore, strategy is for achieving peace.

How does strategy create peace?

- War is for the purpose of compelling the enemy to do our will.

  OR

- Strategy is for the purpose of creating a favourable status quo (peace).

Strategy and peace

- Peace, as the result of the application of strategy, can therefore be used to judge the application of strategy.
- Successful strategists impose their will upon the enemy, thus creating a favourable status quo.
- Unsuccessful strategists do not!

Strategy and peace

BUT!

- Those conducting military strategy are not the figures that establish the peace.
  - They may shape it, but do not decide it.
- Nor do they define the favourable status quo they seek to achieve.
- And may even operate in situations where the peace has already been decided.

Strategy and peace

- Two ways of imposing one's will upon the enemy:
  1. Forcing the enemy to alter their will to accept your own.
  2. Altering your will so that the enemy may be more amenable to accepting its imposition.

Imposing one’s will through force

- May ultimately result from the actions of the military strategist.
- But may also result from other tools that policy makers have at their disposal.

Altering one's will to make it acceptable

- Means that peace must be decided at the negotiating table.
- Influenced by, but separated from, the successes and failures of the military strategist.
- As the will is changed, the logic under which the military strategist was operating is similarly changed.

Peace as the goal of strategy

- Military strategists must keep the desired status quo in mind when conducting their operations.
- Do not produce outcomes which are incompatible or not conducive to peace.
  - Do not fail on the battlefield.
  - May have to avoid strategies more likely to deliver success, if they are incompatible with the desired status quo.

Can peace be achieved?

- Military strategists may have to conduct wars with indefinite ends.
- As peace is inconceivable, there can be no peace by which to judge the military strategist.

Strategy and peace

- We must move away from the idea that ‘peace’ is a useful measure for the success or failure of ‘strategy’.

Strategy *in* peace

- Technology has created a ‘global civil society’.
- What happens in one state can affect another state hundreds, or thousands, of miles away.
- Thus, peace too must be the domain of strategy.
- Peacekeeping is an important strategic task, and may result in militaries conducting operations other than war more often.

Strategy in peace time

- Peace is a time in which militaries conduct strategy through means other than battle.
- Strategic actions are necessary as a result of the competitive nature of states.
- If states do not act strategically during peace, they risk competitors gaining undesired advantages.

Conclusion:

- Peace is an important strategic concept.
- Strategists will continue to be tasked with duties that impact upon either the desired peace, or that which exists.
- But we cannot consistently use peace to measure military strategy.

Thank you!