

COMPARATIVE GRAND STRATEGY AND MILITARY DOCTRINE

17.484

FALL, 2004, Professor Barry R. Posen

Wednesday, 10:00am-12:00pm

This course will conduct a comparative study of the grand strategies of the great powers (Britain, France, Germany and Russia) competing for mastery of Europe from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Grand strategy is the collection of political and military means and ends with which a state attempts to achieve security. We will examine strategic developments in the years preceding World Wars I and II, and how those developments played themselves out in these wars. The following questions will guide the inquiry: What is grand strategy and what are its critical aspects? What recurring factors have exerted the greatest influence on the strategies of the states selected for study? How may the quality of a grand strategy be judged? What consequences seem to follow from grand strategies of different types? A second theme of the course is methodological. We will pay close attention to how comparative historical case studies are conducted.

Two papers based on the class reading will be required. These are to be critical essays. They are due on Oct. 13 and Nov. 17. They shall be no longer than 7 pages; no creative line-spacing, margins, or character formats please. A comprehensive take-home final exam will account for 50% of the grade. In the early weeks of the term about half of classroom time is lecture and half is discussion. As the term progresses, an increasing percentage of class time will be devoted to discussion. Participation in classroom discussion is much appreciated; silence is noted.

The papers are meant to be think pieces, but not day-dreaming pieces. The first paper covers the foundational conceptual material of the course. This paper could take one or more arguments apart and examine them for logical consistency, completeness, clarity, and evidence. It could compare and contrast two or more theoretical arguments according to several of the aforementioned criteria. It could apply one or more theories to a substantive problem already well known to the student (and thus requiring no further research), as a vehicle toward a critique of the theoretical arguments. The second paper covers the substantive material on World War I. Thus it should involve application of the theoretical and conceptual material from part I of the course, to some of the World War I case material. The most self organizing and straightforward approach would test one or more theories against some of this case material. Extra reading is permitted but not required for this paper. Students should review the topics of these papers with me. The best way to do so is to send me a brief one paragraph summary of the plan.

Students should buy these books, all of which should be available at the MIT bookstore in paperback:

Michael Howard, War in European History

Paul Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery

John J. Mearsheimer, Conventional Deterrence

L.C.F. Turner, Origins of the First World War

Steven Miller, S. Lynn-Jones & S. Van Evera, Military Strategy and the Origins of the First World War

Barry R. Posen, The Sources of Military Doctrine

Jack Snyder, The Ideology of the Offensive

Ernest R. May, Strange Victory: Hitler's Conquest of France

The following books are recommended as sources for substantive or theoretical enrichment; I do not ask you to buy them but you should know of their existence. Others are mentioned below under individual headings:

Paul Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers

John J. Mearsheimer, Liddell Hart and the Weight of History

William H. McNeill, The Pursuit of Power

Theodore Ropp, War in the Modern World

Jack Snyder, Myths of Empire

Russell Weigley, The American Way of War

Some materials are also on reserve in Dewey Library.

I. Grand Strategies: Their Origins and Their Effects

September 8 - Course Overview and Introduction to Grand Strategy

Michael Howard, "The Influence of Clausewitz" pp. 27-44

Carl von Clausewitz, "War Plans," Book 8, pp. 577-637

[Both from, Carl Von Clausewitz, On War, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1976)] (note: all scholars of security affairs should own this book. If you do not wish to own this book, you must copy these pages and read them.)

Christopher Bassford, "Clausewitz and His Works," pp. 9-33, Chapter 2, in Bassford, Clausewitz in English, (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1994.)

Liddell-Hart, Strategy, Chapter XIX, pp. 319-323

Posen, Sources of Military Doctrine, Chapter 1, pp. 13-33

September 15 - Material Influences on Strategy: Geographical Position, National Power and Military Technology

Geographical Position and National Power:

Kennedy, Rise and Fall ..., Ch. 7, pp. 177-202.

Kennedy, "The First World War and the International Power System", pp. 7-40,

Posen, Sources of Military Doctrine, Ch. 2, p. 34-41, 59-80

Recommended: Weigley, The American Way of War, Ch. 9, "A Strategy of Sea Power and Empire", pp. 167-191 supplements the preceding.

Military Technology:

Howard, "Men Against Fire", Military Strategy and the Origins of the First World War (henceforth abbreviated MS) pp. 41-57

September 22 - Military Organizations

Howard, War in European History, Ch. 4, pp. 54-74

Dallas Irvine, "The Origin of Capital Staffs", pp. 161-179

Posen, Sources of Military Doctrine, pp. 41-59

Vagts, History of Militarism, pp. 323-359

T. H. E. Travers, "Technology, Tactics, and Morale: Jean de Bloch, the Boer War and British Military Theory, 1900-1914" pp. 264-286

September 29 - Nationalism:

Carr, Nationalism and After, "The Third Period", pp. 17-26

Stern, Perspectives on Nationalism and War, "Why do People Sacrifice for Their Nations?" pp. 99-121.

Hayes, Essays on Nationalism, "Nationalism and International War", and "Nationalism and Militarism", pp. 126-155, 187- 195

Peter Paret, "Nationalism and the Sense of Military Obligation,"

Barry R. Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power"

S. Van Evera, "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War" pp. 5-39

L.L. Farrar, Jr., "Villain or Scapegoat? Nationalism and the Outbreak of World War I"

Samuel R. Williamson, "The Domestic Context of Habsburg Foreign Policy," Chapter 2, pp.13-33, in Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War (New York: St. Martin's:1991)

October 6 --The International Political System: Constraints, Incentives and Interactions

Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma" pp. 167-214

Waltz, "Anarchic Orders and Balances of Power" in Theory of International Politics, pp. 102-128, and "Structural Causes & Military Effects," pp. 161-193

T. Christensen and J. Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks," International Organization Vol 44, No. 2 (Spring 1990), pp. 137-168

Lynn-Jones, "Offense-Defense Theory and its Critics," Security Studies 4, no. 4 (summer 1995) pp. 660-691.

October 13--Historical Case Studies

Alex George, Case Studies and Theory Development, pp. 43-68

Arend Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method," pp. 682-693

Arend Lijphart, "The Comparable Cases Strategy in Comparative Research,"

Jack Levy, "Too Important To Leave to the Other," International Security, Summer 1997, vol 22, no. 1, pp. 22-33.

S. Haber, D. Kennedy, and S. Krasner, "Brothers Under the Skin..." International Security, Summer 1997, vol 22, No 1, pp. 34-43

John Lewis Gaddis, "History, Theory and Common Ground...", International Security, Summer 1997, pp. 75-85.

Barry R. Posen, The Sources of Military Doctrine, Read the Preface, and Chapters 2 and 7, but read them after you read the methodology articles, and with an eye to how methodological problems were solved, or not. You can skim as much of the rest of the book as you wish.

Peter Paret, "The History of War and the New Military History," pp. 209-226, from Paret, Understanding War, (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1992)

II. Origins of World War I

October 20--The Anglo-German Rivalry (Naval and Otherwise)

Eyre Crowe, "Memorandum of Eyre Crowe"

Kennedy "Tirpitz, England and the Second Navy Law of 1900: A Strategical Critique: pp 33-57

Kennedy, Rise and Fall, Ch. 8 pp 205-237

L.C.F. Turner, Origins of the First World War, pp 1-60

Sean Lynn-Jones, "Détente and Deterrence: Anglo-German Relations, 1911-1914, pp.165-194, M.S.

Geiss, German Foreign Policy 1871-1914, pp 75-83, 106-118, 121-127, 139-145

S. R. Williamson, "Joffre Reshapes French Strategy", pp 133-154

Dale C. Copeland, "German Security and the Preparation for World War I," Chapter 3, pp. 56-78, from The Origins of Major War (Ithaca: Cornell, 2000),

Recommended:

Norman Rich, Hitler's War Aims, pp. XIX-XXX (useful historical background)

October 27--Grand Strategy and Military Doctrine Among the Pre-WWI Land Powers.

David Stevenson, "Militarization and Diplomacy in Europe before 1914," International Security, Summer 1997, vol. 22, no. 1 pp. 125-161.

Scott Sagan, "1914 Revisited: Allies, Offense, and Instability." pp. 109-133, M.S.

Ritter, The Schlieffen Plan, "The Breach of Neutrality" pp. 3-10, 78-96

Jack Snyder, The Ideology of the Offensive. (entire)

November 3--The July Crisis, Military Strategy and the Outbreak of the War

M. Trachtenberg, M.S. "The Meaning of Mobilization in 1914," pp. 195-226

Van Evera, M. S., "The Cult of the Offensive", pp 59-109

Turner, Origins, pp 60-115

L. C. F. Turner, "The Russian Mobilization in 1914", pp 252-268

Herrmann, David, The Arming of Europe and the Making of the First World War, chapter 7, pp. 199-224.

J.F.C. Fuller, "The Battles of the Marne and Tannenberg, 1914" in A Military History of the Western World, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1956) pp. 182-228.

The maps at this site will make the initial plans and the first battles much easier to understand.

<http://www.dean.usma.edu/history/web03/atlasses/great%20war/great%20war%20index.htm>

Recommended: M.S. J. Levy, "Preferences, Constraints, and Choices in July 1914" pp. 226-262

November 10--The Course and Conduct of WWI

Timothy Lupfer, "The Dynamics of Doctrine: The Changes in German Tactical Doctrine During the First World War", Leavenworth Paper No. 4, July, 1981, entire, 69 pp.

Those who have not read it before should read John Keegan, The Face of Battle, "The Somme", pp 204-284 [NOTE: THIS BOOK IS A MINOR CLASSIC; SECURITY STUDIES SCHOLARS SHOULD OWN A COPY; IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO

TO OWN THE BOOK OR CANNOT FIND A LIBRARY COPY YOU WILL NEED TO MAKE YOURSELF A COPY.]

Kennedy, Rise and Fall, Ch. 9, pp 239-265

Recommended:

Ernest R. May, "The U-Boat Campaign", pp 298-315 in Art and Waltz, Use of Force, 1971. (The original source is May, The World War and American Isolation (Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 1966), pp 114-136; Students will also find pp 200-252, and 387-415 instructive.)

Bibliographical Note On the Pre-World War I Period

Students interested in more comprehensive discussions will wish to examine Zara Steiner, Britain and the Origins of the First World War
V. R. Berghahn, Germany and the Approach of War in 1914
Keiger, France and the Origins of the First World War
D. C. B. Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War,
Samuel Williamson, Austria Hungary and the Origins of the First World War,
Gary Shanafelt, The Secret Enemy (about German-Austria relations.)

III. Origins of World War II

November 17--British and German Grand Strategy in the 1930s

Gerhard Weinberg, "From One War to Another", from A World At Arms, pp. 6-47
Ernest May, Strange Victory, Chapter 7, pp. 94-110
Kennedy, Rise and Fall, Ch. 10, pp 267-298
Posen, Sources of Military Doctrine, Chapters 5 and 6
Randall Schweller, Deadly Imbalances, Appendix, "An Assessment of the International Distribution of Power (circa 1938-1940), pp. 203-208.

recommended: Howard, War in European History, Ch. 7, pp 116-135

November 24 - French Grand Strategy

Ernest May, Strange Victory, Chapters 8,9,10, pp. 113-153, Chapters 19-21, pp. 271-322
Posen, "Still Strange Defeat," draft
Robert Young, In Command of France, pp 1-33
Posen, Sources of Military Doctrine, Chapter 4

December 1--Military Doctrine, Land Warfare, and the Crises of the Late 1930s

John Mearsheimer, Conventional Deterrence (All but the Chapter on the Nato-Pact competition.)
Holger Herwig, M.S. "Clio Deceived," pp. 262-301
May, Strange Victory, chapters 11,12, pp. 153-212
Posen, "Competing Images of the Soviet Union"
"The Soviet Union," Chapter 5, from R.J. Overy, and Andrew Wheatcroft, The Road To War, revised and updated edition, (London: Penguin, 1999), pp.210-257.

December 8 - The Opening Battles of the War

Review:

Posen, Sources of Military Doctrine, pp 81-104

Read:

Ernest May, Strange Victory, Chapters 15,16,17,18, pp. 215-268, Chapters 24 through to the conclusion, pp. 347-464