

# COMPETITIVE SHAPING IN WORLD POLITICS: A Bibliographic Essay and Course Outline

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## About the Project

“Competitive Shaping” is not a new phenomenon in the conduct and study of foreign policy or in world politics, but it is usually covered and analyzed in a piecemeal fashion. This *Philadelphia Paper* seeks to discuss the concept, provide useful background, and offer a construct for how this topic might be taught to advanced undergraduate or graduate students. Those not interested in teaching such a course, however, should also (we hope) find some usefulness in the readings suggested.

Originally, this project was entitled “Competitive Soft Power.” Unfortunately, as time moved on in the development of the project, the term “soft power” had become somewhat of a distraction as the term itself became a bit of a political football in discussions of foreign and defense policy in the United States. We hope that “Competitive Shaping” conveys a useful analytical umbrella term for this important component of international politics. Competitive Shaping is the art of a country or non-state actors altering the context in which an opponent makes a decision such that the opponent is more likely to be bent to its will through measures short of the use of major coercive military force.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This *Philadelphia Paper* provides a theoretical and applied introduction to Competitive Shaping, an umbrella term for a variety of discrete means of contesting the state and the system surrounding it, contesting hearts and minds, and various aspects of how competitive success and failure in such endeavors are to be assessed over the long term. It is intended to help support coursework in the theory and practice of competitive shaping for advanced undergraduate and graduate students. Throughout American history, the United States and its allies have utilized competitive shaping for strategic effect. Examples range from the strategy, spying, and statecraft of the post-independence U.S. as well as the Cold War. What plagues the U.S. is a pervasive and pathological inability to retain, organize, and re-use best practices and adapt them to new circumstances.

While authoritarian regimes are certainly adept practitioners of competitive shaping, competitive shaping is not an inherent property of authoritarian regimes and other malcontents. As J. Bowyer Bell and Barton Whaley have observed, it is a common misconception (likely originating from certain features of Judeo-Christian theology) that guile, duplicity, stratagem, sophistry, subtle influence, and behavior shaping are tools reserved for “bad” people.<sup>1</sup> Competition for power and influence lies at the core of political and social life. Democracies can and should engage in competitive shaping, especially if they hope to retain their liberty and independence. American competitors almost certainly lack the scruples and normative

constraints that Americans often hold. The U.S. and its allies should not necessarily sink to their level, but it does mean that the opponent’s willingness to descend to said level is a factor for consideration.

This does not mean, though, that any and all methods of competitive shaping are instrumentally valid, politically important, or ethically justifiable. As the RAND Corporation analyst Gregory F. Treverton wrote in 1987, America’s covert operations often have been managed poorly and often are poorly justified.<sup>2</sup> An inability to see the risks, limitations, and complications of non-military tools and the inherent attractiveness of these discrete tools to policymakers can be highly dangerous.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, as Cold War historian John Prados points out, American’s efforts to use political, cultural, economic, and paramilitary influence abroad have often repeatedly failed to achieve American strategic objectives at great cost to those unfortunate enough to be the subject of such efforts.<sup>4</sup> By knowing the theories and approaches of competitive shaping, researchers and policymakers may discern better when it is justifiable and promising to utilize a particular technique or approach and when it is not. This is a matter of professional judgment that this paper hopefully aims to enhance, though it cannot be a substitute for it.

To be sure, the development of competitive shaping skills and capabilities will be

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<sup>2</sup> Gregory F. Treverton, “Covert Action and Open Society,” *Foreign Affairs* 65, no. 5 (1987): 995-1014.

<sup>3</sup> Micah Zenko, *Between threats and war: US discrete military operations in the post-Cold War world* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> John Prados, *Safe for democracy: The secret wars of the CIA* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

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<sup>1</sup> John Bowyer Bell and Barton Whaley, *Cheating and Deception* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1991).

hindered by bureaucratic seams, mismatched authorities, and the lack of properly trained U.S. personnel. We believe that this last issue is the most important starting point. Even the best reorganization plans will be suboptimal without the right people in place to carry out the assigned responsibilities. Undergraduate and graduate level education (both in universities and in U.S. government professional education) is essential for increasing the numbers of such personnel. University education in international affairs, security studies, and diplomatic and military history develop many of those who work in and lead various government bureaucracies and civil society organizations. But the vista of educational opportunities on this topic reveals scant offerings. We hope that this paper will be used to help fill that gap.

## WHAT IS COMPETITIVE SHAPING?

*Competitive shaping is the art of a country or non-state actor altering the context in which an opponent makes a decision such that the country or group attempts to bend the opponent to its will through measures short of the use of major coercive military force.*

This *Philadelphia Paper* outlines the rudiments of a course in competitive shaping, an element of conflict and competition that is both simultaneously and paradoxically omnipresent and marginalized. Competitive shaping is the art of a country or non-state actor altering the context in which an opponent makes a decision such that the country or group attempts to bend the opponent to its will through measures short of the use of major coercive military force. By implication, however, the opponent is also following the same course of action. Hence, it is “competitive.” It involves “shaping” in both the sense that the aim is to shape and modify the behavior of an opponent, but the means are more often than not the shaping of the opponent’s surrounding environment.<sup>1</sup> It is one of the oldest topics in security, defense, and international politics, and yet perpetually rediscovered as an emerging concern for theorists and practitioners. As will be discussed later, such shaping takes place in three arenas: (1) *shaping of the state and states* through doctrines related to political competition within and across states, directed at times by

statesmen and other elites (and everything in between), (2) *the shaping of the heart and the mind* by doctrines designed to achieve advantage via moral force, the production of information, and the manipulation and control of information in competition with some adversary, and (3) *competition in shaping* concerning factors pertaining to how competitive strategic interactions occur and are analyzed.

This *Philadelphia Paper* does not aim to provide a robust theoretical analysis of competitive shaping or a practical guide to conduct it. It is not clear that a grand unified field theory is either possible or necessary given the nature of the problem.

Information security scholar Daniel Bilar summed up the problem neatly when he noted that “[a]ny finite system by design must incorporate implicit and explicit assumptions into its structure, functionality, and language” and that “[t]hese systems are formulated with ‘expected’, ‘typical’ cases in mind and the assumptions reflect these expected use case. Attacks work because they exploit limiting assumptions and invoke

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Bilar, “Degradation and subversion through sub-system attacks,” *IEEE Security & Privacy* 8, no. 4 (2010): 70-73.

edge cases.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, the map can never be the territory. Any comprehensive theory of how such shaping is to be done would be obsolete the moment it is printed in an academic or policy journal, as it, too, would consist of a series of implicit and explicit assumptions that a clever adversary could transgress and violate.

One, of course, can distinguish a common pattern to the information security exploits that Bilar and others concern themselves with that makes defending against them even more difficult: licit vs. illicit uses of a complex system are a social, rather than technical, distinction. Exploit programming is merely a dark mirror of regular programming. In both cases, the programmer must outline an execution model and an execution mechanism; identify a set of programming inputs and components that can be used to make a system do as the programmer wishes; and then write and test the program code.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, “asymmetric” warfare is merely warfare well-applied contextually and the “paradoxical logic” of modern strategy is not really paradoxical when put under a microscope.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps, the general lesson in both is that, even within the most rational and well-ordered systems, there are always gaps, seams, emergent features, contradictions, self-references, ways in which the system can be hacked or gamed, and ambiguities. The Russian military theory of “reflexive control,”

explicitly assumes, in fact, that there is a filter in which people perceive reality and that this filter can be manipulated by those who both understand it and may elude it.<sup>5</sup>

What this paper attempts to provide is a way of understanding the various forms in which species of “competitive engagement,” “gray zone” conflict, “hybrid” operations, and other related ill-defined phenomena tie together as mechanisms by which actors seek competitive advantage within, between, around, and through war and peace.<sup>6</sup> In the first several parts of the paper, the contours of the problem are outlined and explained. In the second part of the paper, a bibliographical tour of some of the relevant component concepts is provided, followed by a summary analysis and a conclusion. Finally, an outline of a course in competitive shaping is provided.

<sup>2</sup> See, Daniel Bilar, “Degradation and subversion through subsystem attacks,” *IEEE Security & Privacy* 8, no. 4 (2010): 70-73; and Daniel Bilar, “On nth Order Attacks,” In *Proc. 2009 Conf. on Cyber Warfare* (2009) and Jeffrey L. Caton, “Beyond domains, beyond commons: context and theory of conflict in cyberspace,” In *CYCON 2012: 4th International Conference on Cyber Conflict* (IEEE, 2012), 1-11.

<sup>3</sup> Sergey Bratus, Michael E. Locasto, Meredith L. Patterson, Len Sassaman, and Anna Shubina, “Exploit programming: From buffer overflows to weird machines and theory of computation,” *USENIX; login* 36, no. 6 (2011).

<sup>4</sup> See Antulio Joseph Echevarria, *Preparing for One War and Getting Another?* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2010); Antulio Joseph Echevarria, “Deconstructing the theory of fourth-generation war,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 26, no. 2 (2005): 233-241; Colin M. Fleming, “New or old wars? Debating a Clausewitzian future,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32, no. 2 (2009): 213-241; and Bart Schuurman, “Clausewitz and the New Wars scholars,” *Parameters* 40, no. 1 (2010): 89-100.

<sup>5</sup> Timothy Thomas, “Russia’s reflexive control theory and the military,” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 17, no. 2 (2004): 237-256.

<sup>6</sup> See, Nadia Schadlow, “Competitive Engagement: Upgrading America’s Influence,” *Orbis* 57, no. 4 (2013): 501-515; Michael J. Mazarr, *Mastering the gray zone: Understanding a changing era of conflict* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2015); Francis G. Hoffman, “Statement before the House Armed Services Committee” (2017); and Stephanie Boluk and Partick LeMieux, *Metagaming: playing, competing, spectating, cheating, trading, making, and breaking videogames* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

## CONTESTING THE SEAMS:

### A SHORT HISTORY OF A “NEW” WAY OF WAR AND PEACE

In general, much of what matters in life occurs in the margins and seams. There is a formal order and a set of rules and structures that sits on the surface. But this “thin” order and the rules that ostensibly control it do not describe or sustain it in any meaningful way.<sup>1</sup> Take, for example, the modern organizational bureaucracy. It may conform to certain externally signified rules or regulations on the surface, but these rules and regulations often conflict with the numerous informal ways that the institution actually holds together.<sup>2</sup> Within this structure, there is also a competition for dominance that goes on beneath the surface.<sup>3</sup> Anyone that has ever held a full-time job understands that this competition may not always occur in an obvious or straightforward manner. Competitors may, for example, rely on proxies or cutouts. There is often an “official” version of what they say and an unofficial

version of what they really mean. Academia in particular is (in)famous for the manner in which research labs, faculty meetings, and graduate students can become weapons of war in the hands of clever (or petty) professors and deans. To some extent, this view of the world also has always described the nature of modern politics.<sup>4</sup> But while it may implicitly lie beneath the surface, it has been difficult to formalize and to teach, especially within the context of national security and foreign policy.

In many undergraduate and graduate security studies programs, students use the edited compilation *Makers of Modern Strategy* as a core textbook.<sup>5</sup> However, this is the second edition of a book originally published in 1943. It is worth looking at the 1943 version to see discussions of the clever tactics and stratagems of Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin along with the discussions of Nazi geopolitical theories, Marxist revolutionary warfare, and Western counter-revolutionary warfare in the 1980s edition (which has retained many of the essays originally included in the 1943 version and cut

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1 See, Nils Gilman, Jesse Goldhammer, and Steven Weber, eds., *Deviant globalization: Black market economy in the 21st century* (New York: A&C Black, 2011); James C. Scott, *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); James C. Scott, *The art of not being governed: An anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); James C. Scott, *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); and, Charles Tilly, *Trust and rule* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

2 John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan, “Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony,” *American Journal of Sociology* 83, no. 2 (1977): 340-363.

3 Xueming Luo, Rebecca J. Slotegraaf, and Xing Pan, “Cross-functional “coopetition”: The simultaneous role of cooperation and competition within firms,” *Journal of Marketing* 70, no. 2 (2006): 67-80.

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4 See, James Burnham, *The Machiavellians: Defenders of Freedom. A Defense of Political Truth against Wishful Thinking* (New York: Gateway Editions, 1943); John F. Diggins, “Four Theories in Search of a Reality: James Burnham, Soviet Communism, and the Cold War,” *American Political Science Review* 70, no. 2 (1976): 492-508; and, Joseph Femia, *The Machiavellian Legacy: essays in Italian political thought*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998).

5 Peter Paret, Gordon A. Craig, and Felix Gilbert, eds., *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986).

others).<sup>6</sup> What one sees in these period essays is a cataloging of largely informal, indirect, multi-dimensional, practical, and asymmetric means of conflict and competition. Similarly, in 1939, journalist John Spivak penned an analysis of the “new technique” of Nazi warfare, rooted in propaganda, sabotage, fifth columns, subversion, and other dirty tricks. Spivak warned of a vulnerability to the threat.<sup>7</sup> Hans Morgenthau, in his 1947 book, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*, lamented the inability of a conventional and unimaginative “scientific man” to understand the mechanisms of political struggle and strife.<sup>8</sup> Nathan Leites’s 1950 RAND Corporation monograph, *The Operational Code of the Politburo*, similarly castigated analysts unwilling to pay attention to the complex ways of how Bolsheviks waged political war.<sup>9</sup> In national security and foreign policy, the problem is not only the subtle, local, informal, and often multi-layered nature of conflict and competition, but it is also the integrated and total nature of how actors contest power.

The historian David M. Cole’s 1941 analysis of the “politico-military strategy of the Nazis” observes that “the success so far achieved by the German armed forces is due, in large part, to the exact synchronization of purely military measures with a meticulous perception of social conditions existing in the country being attacked.” Cole further noted that “in practice, the attack is preceded by the artificial stimulation of internal weakness” to “hamper and embarrass the civil and military power of the attacked country and produce a disaffected minority of possible sympathizers; all without risk to the attacker.”<sup>10</sup> Writing in 1950 in *Foreign Affairs*, the managing editor Byron

Dexter chronicled the “interchangeability of political and military weapons” in Soviet strategy. He lamented how the Soviets seemingly were able to direct a “unified” war in which “political and military instruments are used indifferently to suit a particular object in pursuit of a gigantic plan.” A Moscow “peace offensive,” a cultural conference in Warsaw, a strike in France, strife in Greece and Korea, and other things are all “instruments of one war, turned on and turned off from a central tap as a gardener plays a hose up and down a piece of land on which he is nurturing a crop.”<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, the French military strategist André Beaufre, writing in 1968, lamented the failure of Anglo-American strategy to appreciate the total and integrated nature of Marxist strategic theory and practice. “The common trait of [Chinese and Russian] strategies is one of totality, that is to say, the marrying of political, economic, and diplomatic factors to military factors in order to carry out actions,” Beaufre mused. Ironically enough, while Dexter attributed this trait to the Russian understanding of Clausewitzian dictums, Beaufre denounced the West’s supposed fetish of Clausewitzian ideas.<sup>12</sup> With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to say that Dexter, Beaufre, and others significantly exaggerated the order and coherence of the Cold War.<sup>13</sup> But the underlying complaint that

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11 Byron Dexter, “Clausewitz and Soviet Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs* 29, no. 1 (1950): 41-55.

12 André Beaufre, “The Dimensions of Strategy,” *The Intercollegiate Review* 4, no. 2 (1968): 78-84.

13 For perspectives on this issue, see, Odd Arne Westad, *The global Cold War: third world interventions and the making of our times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Odd Arne Westad, “The new international history of the Cold War: three (possible) paradigms,” *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 4 (2000): 551-565; John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of containment: a critical appraisal of American national security policy during the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: a new history* (New York: Penguin, 2006); Melvyn P. Leffler and David S. Painter, eds. *Origins of the Cold War: an international history* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Jonathan Haslam, *Russia’s Cold War: from the October Revolution to the fall of the wall* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); and Michael R. Fitzgerald and Allen Packwood, eds., *Out of the cold: the cold war and its legacy* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2013).

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6 Edward Mead Earle, Gordon Alexander Craig, and Felix Gilbert, eds., *Makers of modern strategy: military thought from Machiavelli to Hitler* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1943).

7 John L. Spivak, *Secret armies: The new technique of Nazi warfare* (London: Modern age books, Incorporated, 1939).

8 Hans Morgenthau, *Scientific man vs. power politics* (New York: Gateway Editions, 1947).

9 Nathan Constantin Leites, *The operational code of the Politburo* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1950).

10 D. M. Cole, “The Politico-Military Strategy of the Nazis,” *The RUSI Journal* 86, no. 543 (1941): 423-429.

both men articulated is the same complaint that many have today about the American response to Moscow's manipulations in Europe.<sup>14</sup> The historian and practitioner Hal Brands, writing in 2016 about the "paradoxes of the gray zone," observed the following:

*So what is gray zone conflict, to begin with? Gray zone conflict is best understood as activity that is coercive and aggressive in nature, but that is deliberately designed to remain below the threshold of conventional military conflict and open interstate war. Gray zone approaches are mostly the province of revisionist powers – those actors that seek to modify some aspect of the existing international environment – and the goal is to reap gains, whether territorial or otherwise, that are normally associated with victory in war. Yet gray zone approaches are meant to achieve those gains without escalating to overt warfare, without crossing established red-lines, and thus without exposing the practitioner to the penalties and risks that such escalation might bring. Gray zone challenges are thus inherently ambiguous in nature. They feature unconventional tactics, from cyberattacks, to propaganda and political warfare, to economic coercion and sabotage, to sponsorship of armed proxy fighters, to creeping military expansionism.*

*Those tactics, in turn, are frequently shrouded in misinformation and deception, and are often conducted in ways that are meant to make proper attribution of the responsible party difficult to nail down. Gray zone challenges, in other words, are ambiguous and usually incremental aggression. They represent that coercion that is, to varying degrees, disguised; they eat away at the status quo one nibble at a time.*<sup>15</sup>

Brands calls for a better thinking about grand strategy and the gray zone that merges together military and non-military means. If Brands is, indeed, correct, then something has gone horribly wrong. The United States is arguably

14 Zane M. Galvach, Anton V Soltis, Thomas B. Everett, Matthew J Mesko, and Jeffrey V. Dickey, *Russian political warfare: origin, evolution, and application*, Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, 2015.

15 Hal Brands, "Paradoxes of the Gray Zone," *FPRI E-Notes*, February 5, 2016.

the most powerful country in the world. And yet it finds itself continually floundering in peripheral wars, outwitted by competitors, and even—on its own soil—defeated by a foreign competitor's influence operation. What is missing? As former deputy National Security Advisor Nadia Schadlow has argued,

*[O]ngoing discussions about America's non-military power miss one important factor: in virtually every theater of the world, local, regional, and strategic competitions affect America's ability to exert influence through its aid and diplomacy. From Pakistan to the Middle East to Africa, ideas about how to develop economies, shape educational systems, administer health care programs, and build political institutions, are contested. Until the competitive nature of aid and diplomacy is deliberately and explicitly considered, Washington's ability to achieve outcomes using its non-military power—often called "soft" or "smart power"—will remain fundamentally limited.*<sup>16</sup>

Given the poor track record of American force of arms in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, Schadlow's message ought to be taken seriously. Schadlow also emphasizes that American instruments of foreign policy are weak. America finds itself resorting to force far more than it is necessary, and often ineffectually. Meanwhile, on-the-ground ideas, economic strategies, civic action plans, and even, at times, public health-related initiatives are aggressively contested by political actors. In Europe, Russian "little green men" traipse across Ukrainian battlegrounds. In Africa, competition over political order, economic development, and society rages between religious and ethnic groups, organized crime, and various political factions. The Middle East is an exhaustively complex patchwork of political, religious, military, and social competition between a variety of state, quasi-state, non-state, regional, and extra-regional forces. In Southeast Asia, China focuses a significant amount of time, energy, and resources on influencing

16 Nadia Schadlow, "Competitive Engagement: Upgrading America's Influence," *Orbis* 57, no. 4 (2013): 501.

public opinion, conducting legal “lawfare” to bolster its claims abroad, and maintaining domestic political control at home. In Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Latin America, similar competitive processes play out.<sup>17</sup>

The point of this exposition is not to suggest, as is often the case in bad foreign policy and security think pieces, that the world is more dangerous than ever and to urge intervention. Rather, it is to point out that competitive interaction will occur with or without the U.S. as a participant. The U.S., of course, may not be a participant, but it can be a *target*. The U.S. must make its own choices about which theaters to engage in and the costs and benefits of doing so. That is a subjective matter that this paper leaves for the reader. However, if it is to achieve its foreign policy and national security objectives—which even under retrenchment scenarios require some ability to exercise influence abroad—it cannot avoid competitive interaction of some sort. Additionally, as seen with Russia’s recent successive subversion operations within the United States, foreign adversaries may also seek to shape American domestic politics and society to their own ends. Perhaps in, say, 1955 being caught unawares by Moscow could be excused. In 2018, there is absolutely no excuse.

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<sup>17</sup> Nadia Schadlow, “Competitive Engagement: Upgrading America’s Influence,” 501-505.

## COMPETITION AND SHAPING:

### WHY JOHNNY CAN'T COMPETE

So what is the problem? Throughout history, state, non-state, and quasi-state actors have sought to achieve their goals through several approaches. They can induce directly a competitor to decide to accept an outcome that he or she otherwise would reject via rewards and punishments. Or actors can change the context of the competitor's decision such that it becomes more likely that the competitor does as the actor pleases. This is not so much a matter of direct vs. indirect approaches, regular vs. irregular conflict and competition, or gray, asymmetric, etc. warfare. Rather, it is most simply described as a question of whether the mechanism of competition is pressure applied directly to the competitor or on the environment in which the competitor operates. This is a seemingly simple, if even banal, distinction. And yet, in practice, it has become a significant source of difficulty not only in practice, but also in theory to resolve.

To see how and why, it is appropriate to discuss the rise of the Medici family via hook and crook in Renaissance Italy. How did Cosimo de Medici advance in the cutthroat social world of that time? He located holes and seams in social networks that he could occupy to increase his own influence over time. His identity was "multivocal," meaning that he could be many things to many different people and conceivably make moves in many games at once. He kept his adversaries continuously guessing about his true intent, goals, and plans. And perhaps he had no long-term fixed plans at all in the way people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century stereotypically might understand it. At a minimum, he was effective in concealing his

designs and updating them opportunistically to take advantage of promising circumstances.<sup>1</sup> How does one analyze such methods? How does one teach them? It seems that one of the obstacles is that the idiosyncratic talents of a scheming Medici are peculiar to a particular era and that any more generalizable theories or methods for executing such a clever approach would be too complicated and ambiguous to be useful practically.

In his book *Pure Strategy*, the strategic theorist Everett Carl Dolman distinguishes formally between strategy and decision-making. "Decision-making is the act of making meaningful choices where uncertainty exists." However, this is distinct from strategy because "strategists seek to increase available options by manipulating structure and context, and in this way dictate the terms of conflict." Dolman cites political scientist William Riker's theories of how actors manipulate "rules and boundaries to further ends of politics" as an example, explaining that Riker's theory shows how political actors alter and modify "agendas, rules, and procedures" to increase their flexibility and decrease that of the rival.<sup>2</sup> While Dolman principally is describing strategy in war, many of the processes that he describes do not cease when the guns fall silent. America's

1 See, John F. Padgett and Christopher K. Ansell, "Robust Action and the Rise of the Medici, 1400-1434," *American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 6 (1993): 1259-1319; and Fabrizio Ferraro, Dror Etzion, and Joel Gehman, "Tackling grand challenges pragmatically: Robust action revisited." *Organization Studies* 36, no. 3 (2015): 363-390.

2 Everett Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principle in the Space and Information Age* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 43.

**The United States and its allies once again face what is essentially the oldest and most traditional threat imaginable: adversaries that blur the line between war and peace and use all methods of influence at their disposal to undermine American security.**

problem is that it finds—again and again—that it cannot cope with the following state of affairs:

1. An adversary is willing to—within, around, between, and through war and peace—expand the arena of competition and exploit gaps in the U.S. response.<sup>3</sup>
2. To compete with this adversary, the U.S. cannot rely solely on bombers and money alone (even if both are very helpful on the merits)—it must organize for the competition.<sup>4</sup>
3. In particular, the U.S. must be willing to imagine a style of competitive interaction that may involve ways of competing that it might otherwise consider unorthodox or strange.<sup>5</sup>

Sadly, this is the point at which the game is up. Johnny can't compete. Johnny can, however, create epic bureaucratic dysfunction while wasting exorbitant sums of money and sadly often the lives of soldiers and civilians as

3 See, Colin S. Gray, "Irregular warfare: One nature, many characters," *Strategic Studies* 1, no. 2 (2007): 35-57; and Colin S. Gray, *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* (Strategic Studies Institute, 2012).

4 See, Nadia Schadlow, *Organizing to compete in the political terrain* (Strategic Studies Institute, 2010); and Thomas G. Mahnken, ed., *Competitive strategies for the 21st century: theory, history, and practice* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).

5 See, John Gooch and Amos Perlmutter, eds., *Military deception and strategic surprise* (New York: Psychology Press, 1982); and János Radványi, ed. *Psychological operations and political warfare in long-term strategic planning* (New York: ABC-CLIO, 1990).

well.<sup>6</sup> The United States and its allies once again face what is essentially the oldest and most traditional threat imaginable: adversaries that blur the line between war and peace and use all methods of influence at their disposal to undermine American security. It is worth reiterating: *The oldest and most traditional threat imaginable*. A threat that Americans have, in some shape or form, been fighting 150-plus years before the War of Independence.<sup>7</sup> So why are American strategic thinkers and policymakers perpetually surprised by adversaries that blur the line between war and peace and use all methods of influence at their disposal to undermine American security? Isn't this a done deal?<sup>8</sup> Why do Americans and their allies keep forgetting what amounts

6 Robert Komer, *Bureaucracy does its thing: institutional constraints on US-GVN performance in Vietnam* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1973). Sadly, there is also a sequel. Todd Greentree, "Bureaucracy does its thing: US performance and the institutional dimension of strategy in Afghanistan," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36, no. 3 (2013): 325-356. Also, see, James C. Scott, *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (New York: Yale University Press, 1998); Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the future: Modernization theory in Cold War America*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Jessica Elkind, *Aid Under Fire: Nation Building and the Vietnam War* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2016); and, Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as ideology: American social science and "nation building" in the Kennedy era* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

7 John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

8 John J. Carter, *Covert operations as a tool of presidential foreign policy in American history from 1800 to 1920: Foreign policy in the shadows* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000).

to the basics?<sup>9</sup> Perhaps, the problem is that the basics are not so basic after all.

Why do we keep floundering and failing? There are many reasons, and sadly too many. But the subset that this paper has the power to impact are relatively simple and well-defined. First, the United States has too many names for too many things. Gray zone warfare. Uncomfortable wars. Fourth Generation Warfare. New wars. The list goes on. Some of these terms might be individually useful for heuristic reasons even if they lack rigor. But all of them? To make matters worse, the U.S. throws away hard-earned knowledge that it does develop about these problems at the drop of a hat. A typical case of this is the trouble that the authors of the seminal text *Cheating and Deception* went through in order to secure funding and publication. Despite the evident topicality of a book about the theory of cheating and deception, the United States government and its military-industrial complex were not interested. Despite the obvious importance of deception and manipulation in domestic and international affairs, academia too was disinterested.<sup>10</sup> Deception and cheating were seen as fairly dastardly topics beyond the pale. This is sadly a common story. Guile, the use of sly and cunning intelligence, tends to be an underutilized and underappreciated skill rather than one to hone in the United States and other democracies.

Furthermore, as strategist Carnes Lord has argued, a large problem for Americans in the strategic realm is that they

*are a pragmatic people, tending to seek technical solutions to isolated problems and preoccupied with the here and now at the expense both of the past and the future. This means, among other things, that Americans tend to lack historical memory (critical for understanding other cultures) as well as the future orientation and holistic thinking that*

*are the preconditions for strategy.*<sup>11</sup>

This condition makes the conduct of competitive shaping difficult. Some have even argued that the mindset for conducting such integrated approaches constitutes, in the military domain at least, a “counterculture of war.”<sup>12</sup>

But here is what Americans keep forgetting: international politics is a competition. States and non-state actors frequently compete due to distrust of others, particular interests they may seek to advance, and a desire for prestige.<sup>13</sup> This competition can manifest itself through military, economic, and diplomatic means, but also through intelligence, covert operations, public diplomacy, and various means of indirect perception management and strategic influence. These forms of competitive interactions are far more common than wars and other armed clashes, which are relatively rare due to their cost and risk. However, steps taken to prepare the environment of competition may be advantageous if peacetime competition breaks down into open war. In general, competition occurs within, around, between, and through war and peace. Competitions can also co-exist quite frequently with cooperation, as seen with the U.S.-China strategic competition.<sup>14</sup> There are meaningful distinctions and differences between all of these spaces, sub-spaces, and seams of war and peace. But they are also perpetually negotiated and re-negotiated.

Analysts, for example, often claim that Russia has adopted a doctrine of “hybrid warfare” originated by its Chief of the General Staff

11 Carnes Lord, “American Strategic Culture in Small Wars,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 3, no. 3 (Winter 1992): 205-6.

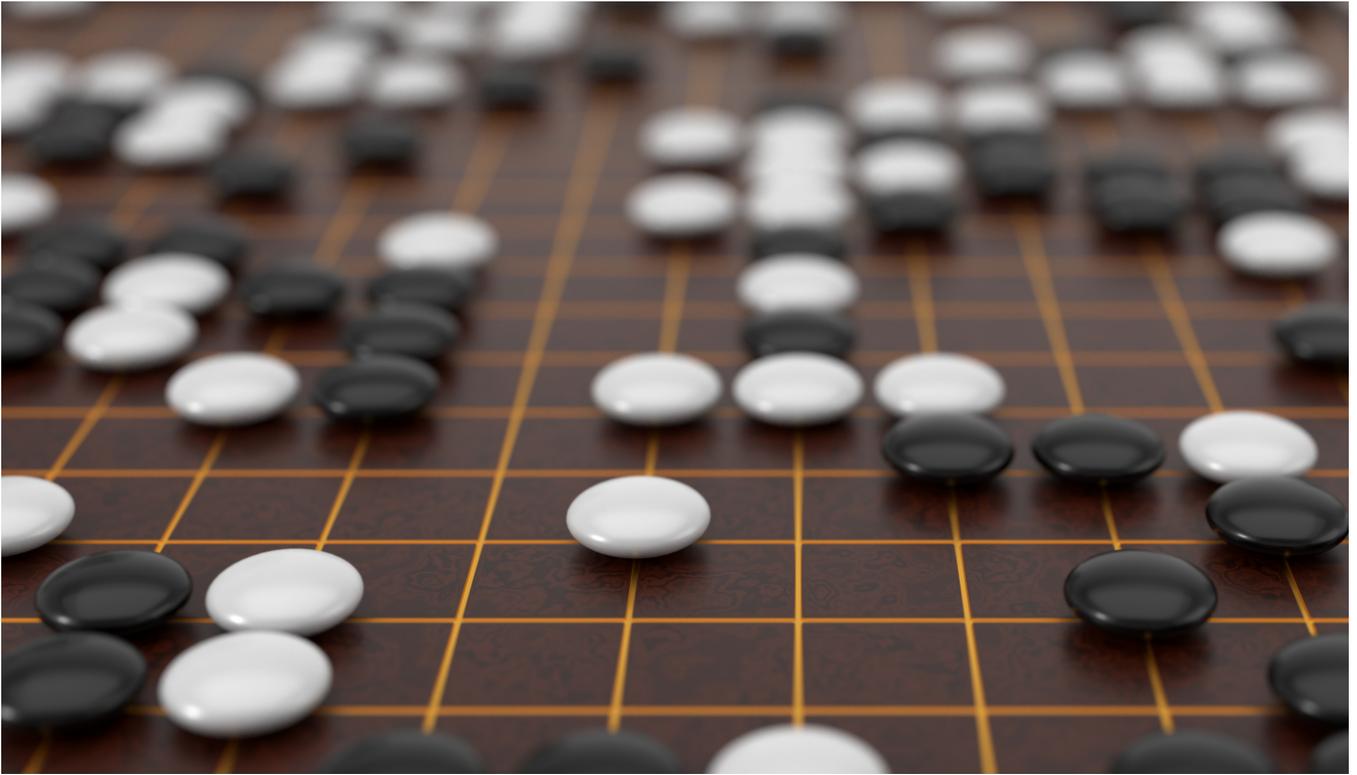
12 Jan K. Gleiman, “The American Counterculture of War: Supporting Foreign Insurgencies and the American Discourse of War,” *Special Operations Journal* 1, no. 1 (2015): 19-36.

13 Victor Davis Hanson, “Introduction,” in Thucydides, *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*; edited by Robert B. Strassler, translated by Richard Crawley (New York: Free Press, 1998).

14 Thomas G. Mahnken, ed. *Competitive strategies for the 21st century: theory, history, and practice* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).

9 Sarah-Jane Corke, *US Covert Operations and Cold War Strategy: Truman, Secret Warfare and the CIA, 1945-53* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

10 John Bowyer Bell and Barton Whaley, *Cheating and deception*, ix-xxxvi.



General Valery Gerasimov. But the so-called “Gerasimov Doctrine” is actually his perception of *what the West is doing to Russia* and his recommendations about how to reply in kind.<sup>15</sup> One can dismiss Russian allegations of trickery and subversion as paranoid, self-serving, or a form of crude projection. But this only illustrates the larger problem—American, Russian, Chinese, Iranian, North Korean, etc. perceptions of what constitutes war, peace, and competitive influence differ. Mismatches between these particular mental and political models can be cause for significant problems over time.

In the mid- to late-Cold War, two radically different studies of games were published. In one, the young American sociologist Scott Boorman described the way in which Maoist revolutionary strategy could be modeled by the ancient Asian game of Go.<sup>16</sup> In the other, the French philosopher Guy Debord laid out

in his own unique variant of the Prussian wargame of Kriegspiel.<sup>17</sup> (Go is a two player strategy board game where the aim is to surround more territory than one’s opponent, while Kriegspiel is a wargame where opposing sides make tactical decisions for units placed on a table board.) Both were reactions to a perceived deficit. Boorman believed that the U.S. was losing the fight for the Third World and needed to understand the strategic ways of its Maoist enemies in Southeast Asia. He believed that Go could model them. Debord, having witnessed the catastrophic political defeat of the Left in 1968, sought to use a wargame to illustrate his ideas about the problems with the then-current political strategy of the Left and how such problems could be rectified. What both depictions of strategic game-playing have in common is indirectness and flexibility. Unlike chess, both Go and Debord’s Kriegspiel variant are “smooth” spaces. Movements on non-contiguous elements of

<sup>15</sup> Roger N. McDermott, “Does Russia have a Gerasimov doctrine?” *Parameters* 46, no. 1 (2016): 97-106.

<sup>16</sup> Scott A. Boorman, *The protracted game: a wei-ch'i interpretation of Maoist revolutionary strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

<sup>17</sup> See, Alexander R. Galloway, “Debord’s nostalgic algorithm,” *Culture Machine* 10 (2009); Andrew Hussey, *The game of war: The life and death of Guy Debord* (New York: Random House, 2001); and Alice Becker-Ho and Guy Debord, *A game of war* (New York: Atlas, 2007).

the board impact the game as a whole. Both games are a matter of continuing and adaptive decision-making over time, and both games can be seen as allegories for the mobilization and manipulation of networks of social forces. The winner is the one that can secure and maintain an advantageous position over time within the structure of competition.<sup>18</sup>

Both game examples are also particularly useful because they illustrate the amount of knowledge of both the target and its surrounding environment required for success. During the Chinese Civil War, the Chinese Communist Party successfully identified the elite networks, political brokers, and sources of power it needed to influence, mobilize, and interact with to win.<sup>19</sup> Thus, Boorman—who would later go on to pioneer advanced techniques in social network analysis—saw Go’s gradual and contiguous assemblage of strategic patterns as a useful formal analog for Maoist strategy. Those that understood the opponent and the surrounding social environment could exercise influence successfully over that opponent. For Debord, his Kriegspiel variant was a way of critiquing a failure of left political strategy. Leftists traditionally thought in terms of the “war of position” and the “war of maneuver.” The war of position aims to secure fixed spatial and social territories; the war of maneuver constantly mobilizes in reaction to the opponent. The Left’s inability to see that neither strategy alone could succeed in the social struggle, Debord and others reasoned, necessitated the use of Debord’s Kriegspiel game as a way to train the right strategic intuitions.<sup>20</sup>

This is not to say that playing games is the answer to the problems facing the U.S. But

rather, they illustrate its complexity. Francois Jullien, a French philosopher who focuses on ancient Greece and China, has written about the way in which Chinese thinking about strategy—and many other aspects of life—posit it as the art of discerning the state of the world and pragmatically modifying it to suit one’s own ends.<sup>21</sup> This is not a particularly unique Chinese insight. It was true to some extent of the ancient Greeks and the way they thought about strategic problems.<sup>22</sup> It was also true of how many sociologists, anthropologists, and design thinkers have articulated alternatives to rational design approaches in decision-making.<sup>23</sup> The challenge is to systematize it, practically use it, and teach it.

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18 See, McKenzie Wark, “The Game of War: Debord as Strategist,” *Cabinet* 29, Spring 2008; and Benjamin DiCicco-Bloom and David R. Gibson, “More than a game: Sociological theory from the theories of games,” *Sociological Theory* 28, no. 3 (2010): 247-271.

19 Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive encounters: the Chinese civil war, 1946-1950* (New York: Stanford University Press, 2003).

20 McKenzie Wark, “The Game of War: Debord as Strategist,” *Cabinet* 29, Spring 2008.

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21 François Jullien, *A treatise on efficacy: Between Western and Chinese thinking* (Manoa, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2004).

22 Stephen Cummings, *Recreating strategy* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2002).

23 Chris Paparone, *The sociology of military science: prospects for postinstitutional military design* (New York: Blllmsbury, 2012).

## THE LANDSCAPE OF COMPETITIVE SHAPING

What the Medici and game examples show is *competitive shaping*. To successfully define competitive shaping is probably at least slightly less difficult than actually performing it in practice. It is best to start by showing the nature of the competitive landscape before defining what it means to engage in competitive shaping. The landscapes of competitive shaping are as varied as the activities that are subsets of the general category.

Suppose that you are a junior officer in a tin-pot dictatorship. You and your friends—operating the army motor pool—believe that it is truly you (and not the dictator, “El Jefe”) that deserve to issue commands from the presidential palace. There is, however, one small problem. El Jefe has tanks, armored personnel carriers, helicopters, aircraft, and machine gun nests. You, on the other hand, have cheap knockoff versions of Kalashnikovs held together with duct tape, parachute cord, and plenty of prayers. Seems like there’s no chance of a successful coup happening, right? But if you thoroughly investigate El Jefe’s military and security apparatus, you might find that you are not the only one that resents El Jefe. And with enough careful planning and enough disgruntled officers that hate El Jefe, he might be on a one-way flight to Paris, London, Washington, or Moscow tomorrow to live out the rest of his life in exile.<sup>1</sup>

This sort of total victory is an extreme example. It depends on a state that is so bureaucratically

rigid and well-organized that, like a hacker taking over an advanced computer, the person that owns it becomes a god-like figure. In many parts of the world, that is not really the case. Instead, the state is weak and holds on because the government is the most thuggish thug—not because it can necessarily exercise control over its territory. Instead of a well-organized and trained set of military and police, there are instead a group of South African mercenaries who will bolt at the first sign that they might not get paid.<sup>2</sup> The country is engulfed in factional conflict between various criminal gangs, insurgent militias, religious fanatics, opportunistic foreign powers, and hired guns that are paid top dollar to protect an obscenely wealthy Chinese mogul’s mines and oil rigs. Taking over the government is not akin to taking over the country, and if you want to be king, you suddenly are faced with a much larger pool of opposition.

This is also an overly extreme scenario. In reality, you are not trying to take over the country. What you want is a particular piece of it, and to be even more cynical, you want to get your fingers on the U.S. aid spigot. As Schadlow narrates about Pakistan,

*In South Asia, Pakistan’s three main actors—the military, civilian elites and Islamists—compete for power and control over the country’s key institutions. These rivalries are fueled by vested interests and divided over the role of Islam in the state—divisions that impact U.S. efforts to shape developments: from the*

<sup>1</sup> Edward Luttwak, *Coup d’etat* (New York: Penguin Press, 1968).

<sup>2</sup> William Reno, *Warlord politics and African states* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999).

*constructing of schools to the building of dams. Competitions are being played out in Pakistan's madrasas (schools) where ideas about education are contested. The most violent example of this was the Taliban's shooting of 14-year-old Malala Yousafzai, a young girl who had spoken passionately about the importance of education. A Taliban spokesman called her crusade for education rights an "obscenity," adding that because she had become a "symbol of Western culture," militants would try to kill her again. One U.S. program to reconstruct schools in Pakistan's Swat Valley sought to build some 115 schools, yet none were completed due to clashes among Pakistani politicians, monitoring agencies, and international actors. These contests for influence are a recurring problem in the disbursement of U.S. aid to Pakistan, where only a fraction of some \$1.5 billion of a five-year aid program has been distributed.<sup>3</sup>*

In these kinds of environments, it is difficult for any one actor to acquire a monopoly of power akin to the kind that El Jefe wielded in the first scenario. Because no one power can directly assume control by fiat, they instead fight over the pieces of the state, such as the spoils of U.S. aid money. Even within regimes in which the government holds something close to an overall monopoly of force, internal divisions among different classes of regime elites may still create a space for competition. Competition in the manner that Schadlow describes, though, is not solely limited to the likes of Pakistan. It's getting harder and harder to find a place where there isn't any.

Today, competition continues between state, quasi-state, and non-state actors within and across state boundaries and within, around, between, and through war and peace. Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and North Korea—to name a few—aggressively attempt to shape international and intra-national environments through a variety of official, semi-official, and illicit means. Throughout the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia, and South Asia, non-state and quasi-state

actors similarly compete with governments and other sub-state entities. Much of the tools of the trade in such competitions are well-established. Networks of proxies, the crafting of media narratives, and the conduct of covert operations are all well-known to students of strategy, security, and intelligence. China utilizes fora such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to bolster other authoritarian regimes through economic, political, and cultural partnerships. At times, China's state media also provides support to revanchist movements that oppose the current world order. The Islamic Republic of Iran has invested vast sums in media outreach, patronage, and bribery to spread its influence among targets with cultural commonality. Lacking a unified bloc of countries that can act as surrogates, Russia instead looks to massively subvert Western ideals through information campaigns in Europe and elsewhere. It relies on massive media outreach, sponsorship of fringe movements, and other similar tools.

A lot of these actions lack novelty. During the Cold War, the Soviets and their allies engaged in significant efforts to manipulate domestic political communities in the U.S., West Germany, France, Latin America, and other locales. One of the more famous of these efforts was the Soviet attempt to undermine NATO deployment of intermediate range ballistic missiles through its manipulation of the anti-nuclear movement.<sup>4</sup> The U.S., in turn, used a collection of citizen front groups (secretly funded by the Central Intelligence Agency) to contest Eastern bloc influence globally. Some of this, for example, took the form of extensive funding of cultural activities such as literary magazines, art fora, and the like. The people that contributed to such cultural outlets often had little idea they were being funded by the CIA, and in many cases were hostile to the U.S. and its dominant ideologies. However, the CIA reasoned, this made them all the more credible as opponents of the Soviet Union and

<sup>3</sup> Nadia Schadlow, *Competitive Engagement: Upgrading America's Influence*, 504.

<sup>4</sup> János Radványi, ed. *Psychological operations and political warfare in long-term strategic planning* (New York: ABC-CLIO, 1990).

*When one throws in the frequent occurrence of “sockpuppetry” (creating fake accounts) and agent provocateurs that fake their own identities to incite online “flamewars,” the competitive shaping practitioner is faced with an environment that makes even the Cold War “wilderness of mirrors” seem simple in conversation.*

their allies.<sup>5</sup> The CIA also worked with other actors in civil society such as the funding and support of the Solidarity movement and the Roman Catholic Church in Poland.<sup>6</sup>

Both sides also engaged in paramilitary operations, deploying agents, paramilitary teams, and advisors to various Cold War hot spots. At times, these covert efforts spiraled into direct regime change when the situation otherwise could not be controlled. The U.S. and Britain executed Operation Ajax in Iran, using a combination of propaganda and paramilitary operations to overthrow the government of Mohammad Mosaddegh. The Soviet Union deposed its own proxy in Afghanistan in a bloody coup preceded by significant subversion efforts. But today, the future of political skulduggery plays out online through “computational propaganda” efforts.<sup>7</sup> Across the world, state, non-state, and quasi-state actors flood social media with armies of trolls and automated “bot” programs, disseminating misleading information and disinformation in an effort to overwhelm their opponents online.<sup>8</sup> Some of these efforts borrow best practices from guerrilla public

relations methods in the civilian sector.<sup>9</sup> Others simply exploit a toxic combination of massively connected communities and an overall climate of severe political division and mistrust. It’s bot or be botted. Computer hacking is also a means of competitive shaping. During the summer of 2017, for instance, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was believed to have orchestrated the hack of Qatari governmental websites and the concurrent spread of incendiary false information to provoke an incident against Qatar.

Online, it is difficult to tell who or what is behind information operations and what is going on. Fora that organize information campaigns tend to be ephemeral, anonymous, and populated by a Byzantine assortment of bizarre figures with their own political agendas and personal motivations. When one throws in the frequent occurrence of “sockpuppetry” (creating fake accounts) and agent provocateurs that fake their own identities to incite online “flamewars,” the competitive shaping practitioner is faced with an environment that makes even the Cold War “wilderness of mirrors” seem simple in comparison. And as advances in artificial intelligence, machine learning, and other similar techniques continue, the pervasive sense of unreality online is likely to get worse. Given the success of recent Russian hacker-driven information operations against the American political system, this

<sup>5</sup> Hugh Wilford, *The mighty Wurlitzer: how the CIA played America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Carl Bernstein, “The Holy Alliance,” *Time*, June 24, 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Samuel C. Woolley, “Automating power: Social bot interference in global politics,” *First Monday* 21, no. 4 (2016).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Ryan Holiday, *Trust me, I’m lying: confessions of a media manipulator* (New York: Penguin, 2013).



ought to be cause for embarrassment if not sheer outrage.<sup>10</sup> Sadly, it was much easier to visualize unrealistic “cyber-doom” scenarios involving the destruction of the power grid than the subtle, computerized undermining of the U.S. political system.<sup>11</sup> That information manipulation and perception management could be used in competitive shaping was clear to anyone with a passing knowledge of the ways in which computers are actually

used as a means of competitive interaction.<sup>12</sup>

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10 The reader is recommended to peruse House Select Committee on Intelligence Hearings on Russian interference in the 2016 election and Russian influence operations more generally. See, for example, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/hearings/open-hearing-russian-interference-2016-us-elections>, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/hearings/open-hearing-intelligence-matters-1>, and <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/hearings/open-hearing-disinformation-primer-russian-active-measures-and-influence-campaigns>.

11 Robert M. Lee and Thomas Rid, “OMG Cyber! Thirteen Reasons Why Hype Makes for Bad Policy,” *The RUSI Journal* 159, no. 5 (2014): 4-12; Sean Lawson, “Beyond cyber-doom: Cyberattack scenarios and the evidence of History,” *Mercatus Center George Mason University Working Paper*, no11-01, January 2011.

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12 Dorothy Denning, *Information Warfare and Security* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1999).

## COMPETITIVE SHAPING: DEFINITIONS, THEORIES, AND APPROACHES

All of these vignettes are points on a continuum of competitive shaping, which this paper defines as the way in which actors compete to structure the decision environment to their advantage. Competition, of course, is obviously not new. States frequently compete due to distrust of others, particular interests they may seek to advance, and a desire for prestige.<sup>1</sup> This competition can manifest itself through military, economic, and diplomatic means, but also through intelligence, covert operations, public diplomacy, and various means of indirect perception management and strategic influence. These forms of competitive interactions are far more common than wars and other armed clashes, which are relatively rare due to their cost and risk. However, steps taken to prepare the environment of competition may be advantageous if peacetime competition breaks down into open war. In general, competition occurs within, around, between, and through war and peace. Competitions can also co-exist quite frequently with cooperation, as seen with the U.S.-China strategic competition.<sup>2</sup> And yes, it is a continuum. Table 1 below offers a useful list of examples of the types of tools that may be used for such competition.

To understand why, consider the non-security uses of the word “shape” when referring to an activity. In psychology, behavior shaping is

one of the oldest and most venerable forms of psychological practice. Imagine an animal—or an animal-like robot—that is reinforced when it does something that the experimenter desires. It is up to the experimenter to devise a schedule of reinforcement that results in a desired behavior,<sup>3</sup> much like Ivan Pavlov’s experiments with his dogs. There is, however, another meaning to the idea of shaping. Suppose you are a politician that would like to alter the conditions of a political dispute to your advantage. You can, perhaps, with clever rhetoric, subtly alter the conditions of the political debate to your will.<sup>4</sup> Or you may tinker with procedural aspects of political decision-making to make your favored outcome more likely.<sup>5</sup> The dichotomy between these approaches illustrates the nature of the problem.

Most thinking about international conflict and cooperation is rooted in the first image of shaping. I compel you to do as I say at gunpoint, and when you act as I wish, I demonstrate my good faith by letting you live. That is an admittedly extreme example, for sure, but to typically shape behavior in international affairs means to do something—or threaten to do something—that results in a desired behavior,

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3 See, John Staddon, *The new behaviorism* (New York: Psychology Press, 2014); and Marco Dorigo and Marco Colombetti, *Robot shaping: an experiment in behavior engineering* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).

4 William H. Riker, *The strategy of rhetoric: Campaigning for the American Constitution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

5 William H. Riker, *The art of political manipulation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

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1 Victor Davis Hanson, *Introduction*.

2 Thomas G. Mahnken, ed. *Competitive strategies for the 21st century: theory, history, and practice* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2012).

TABLE 1: EXAMPLES OF TRADITIONAL AND NON-TRADITIONAL TOOLS OF STATECRAFT AND INFLUENCE

“Traditional” Tools of Statecraft & Influence	“Non-Traditional” Tools of Statecraft & Influence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security cooperation and foreign military sales</li> <li>• Foreign internal defense</li> <li>• Economic sanctions</li> <li>• Public diplomacy and information activities</li> <li>• Support for rule of law and civil society</li> <li>• Military presence/engagements/exercises</li> <li>• Freedom of navigation exercise (maritime or aerospace domains)</li> <li>• Developmental aid</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arming insurgents, terrorists, or criminal actors</li> <li>• Unconventional warfare</li> <li>• Economic corruption</li> <li>• Propaganda/PSYOPS/disinformation</li> <li>• Electoral interference, political subversion by penetration or false front organizations</li> <li>• Cyber intrusions/cyber corruption/disruption</li> <li>• Undermining sovereignty</li> <li>• Currency manipulation, sponsored criminal activity</li> </ul>

prevents an undesired behavior, or modifies an undesired behavior to a desired behavior. However, unlike scientists in an experimental psychology laboratory full of undergraduates, policymakers cannot experimentally control the shaping of behavior in the international system. The primary tool that they have—military force—is difficult to use and understand, risky, and carries significant costs even when it works as advertised.<sup>6</sup> And, to be clear, a good deal of the time it frankly does not.<sup>7</sup> And if armed violence cannot guarantee a controlled outcome, it is not likely that nonviolent, but nonetheless coercive, options like economic sanctions will either.<sup>8</sup>

So what happens next? This depends on the degree to which an actor can achieve a goal by changing the context of decision and behavior vs. how much the actor will have to induce

directly a desired behavior. In the vignettes above, the reader can see a variety of distinct points on the continuum. It would be preferable to be able to succeed merely by altering the environment. But, as this is a “competitive” activity, there is someone else with the very same idea. The prefixing of “competitive” to shaping is not an accident. It means that the effectiveness of a particular approach is judged with some reference to the correlation of forces between adversaries. It takes place over the long term, but it also requires a particular flexible repertoire of operations that may be conducted over the short and near term.<sup>9</sup> Of course, the persistence of these adversaries—coupled at times with the difficulty of shaping—means that some forms of it end up being far blunter and direct than originally anticipated.

Still, in a complex political environment, actors have many potential options as to how they might compete. What U.S. defense analysts think is “asymmetric” is merely common

<sup>6</sup> Barry D. Watts, “Ignoring reality: Problems of theory and evidence in security studies,” *Security Studies* 7, no. 2 (1997): 115-171.

<sup>7</sup> Micah Zenko, *Between threats and war: US discrete military operations in the post-Cold War world* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Lee Jones, *Societies under siege: exploring how international economic sanctions (do not) work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, “Dynamics of contention,” *Social Movement Studies* 2, no. 1 (2003): 99-102.

sense.<sup>10</sup> But, as they say, common sense isn't common. The U.S., the reigning hegemon of the international order, is used to being able to maneuver through its commons and operate through normal channels. Those who are not hegemon quite naturally gravitate to strategies that blur seemingly clear lines, transgress sacred boundaries, and ruthlessly exploit gaps and contradictions. Even when fighting against non-hegemon, these actors are often too weak to take over everything simply by force of arms and must create carefully the conditions in their environment for success. Some of this can take the form of ingratiating themselves with the right elites. In other cases, it is building a hospital in the right neighborhood. This will increase the likelihood that they can get their opponents to do their will over the long run, even if in the near term there is still some fighting and killing to do. This is competitive shaping.

This paper provides an incomplete tour of competitive shaping by focusing on three dimensions of shaping:

1. **Shaping of the state and the system:** doctrines related to political competition within and across states, directed at times by statesmen and other elites (and everything in between).
2. **The shaping of the heart and the mind:** doctrines designed to achieve advantage via moral force, the production of information, and the manipulation and control of information in competition with some adversary.
3. **Competition in shaping:** while the first two dimensions examine the targets and means of competitive shaping, this final dimension concerns factors pertaining to how competitive

strategic interactions among various players occur and are analyzed.

While some may quibble with competitive shaping as an umbrella concept, as philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein suggested, things may be known to us in terms of family resemblance; the members of the family may not all look the same, but blend together in a family portrait.<sup>11</sup> However, to analyze the use of narrative and propaganda, one also must take care not engage in it. George Orwell famously called on the writer to write as simply and clearly as possible, but also to avoid saying anything "outright barbarous." Competitive shaping is the least barbarous way to describe something that is frequently—but not solely—a matter of "dirty tricks and trump cards," yet also necessary for the securing of the national interest in an adversarial international environment.<sup>12</sup>

There are many distinct theories and approaches of competitive shaping, many of which owe their origins to the early- to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. They vary according to the degree of how intense they are. Some of these approaches are meant to be executed in wartime and involve the use of armed violence. However, the intensity of competition is also not measured solely by how violent it is. It also is a function of how directly adversarial the form of competition is. Competitive strategy approaches, for example, are mostly zero-sum in nature and aim to achieve marginal rather than absolute advantage over an adversary. Another aspect of how intense a given approach may be has to do with status quo bias. Some approaches are mostly a matter of preservation and maintenance. Others are more aggressive substitutes for hot war. Because these terms are so myriad and frequently contradictory, the goal of slapping the "competitive shaping" label on them is to assist in seeing the broader connection—even if that connection may be somewhat crude in the abstract.

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<sup>11</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical investigations* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Roy Godson, *Dirty tricks or trump cards: US covert action and counterintelligence* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995).

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<sup>10</sup> Lukas Milevski, "Asymmetry Is Strategy, Strategy Is Asymmetry," *JFQ: Joint Force Quarterly* 75, no. 4 (2014): 77-83.

*Soft power is not alone effective in a climate in which attractive alternatives exist. And because soft power - and to some degree smart power - does not necessarily acknowledge the reality of competition among multiple actors, neither can really help the U.S. cope with a less permissive environment.*

It is perhaps natural to begin with the idea of “soft power.” The political scientist Joseph Nye distinguishes soft power from “hard power” tools such as military force or economic sanctions. Nye, contrary to many misinterpretations of his work, did not see soft power alone as sufficient. As he has stated clearly, “Soft power is not the solution to all problems.”<sup>13</sup> Soft power needs to be juxtaposed with a firm hard power foundation. However, Nye also saw soft power as a way to make the use of hard power less costly. Because credible hard power is expensive and risky, it is most effective when it does not have to be constantly deployed. Shaping the long-term preferences of friends, adversaries, and third parties alike could make the usage of hard power both rarer and more successful. While Nye focused on many tools of soft power, he fixated in particular on America’s cultural attractiveness.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps, this was a plausible inference at the time Nye coined the term “soft power” in 1990. The Cold War was nearly over, and Francis Fukuyama’s “end of history” was seemingly on the horizon. Not only had liberal democratic capitalism (exemplified by America, of course) vanquished its ideological challengers, America successfully had managed to motivate foreign populations and communities to see it as benign and even worthy of emulation. Or so the story

goes. In reality, Nye was putting a somewhat simplistic gloss on what had been a hard-fought and often bitter and haphazard global political struggle for power and influence between the capitalist West and the Communist East, a competition more often than not determined by the ability of small powers to play Washington and Moscow against each other for their own benefit.<sup>15</sup> American attempts to counter Eastern bloc influence had some prominent successes, but also many significant and catastrophic blunders and failures.<sup>16</sup> The fact that the Eastern bloc dissolved ought not necessarily to be taken as an endorsement of the American and Western approach, but merely the total failure of the alternatives.

Regardless, Nye’s “soft power” would later morph into the doctrine of *smart power*—“the combination of the hard power of coercion and payment with the soft power of persuasion and attraction.”<sup>17</sup> Today, a key assumption of Nye’s work—inherent American attractiveness—seems diminished. This may or may not be due to growing multipolarity in the international system, a decline in American cultural/economic/political leadership, or the rise of alternatives. Political scientists debate these topics and will continue to debate them for some time, and this paper takes no position on them. Inasmuch as practitioners

13 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Future of Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011), xiii.

14 See, Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to lead: The changing nature of American power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990); and his *Soft power: The means to success in world politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004).

15 Odd Arne Westad, *The global Cold War: third world interventions and the making of our times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

16 Derek Leebaert, *Magic and Mayhem: The Delusions of American Foreign Policy from Korea to Afghanistan* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010).

17 Nye, *The Future of Power*, xiii.

take them to be objects of concern, they are relevant topics. The basic problem is that if Nye's assumption of inherent American attractiveness was ever true in the first place (a contentious proposition), it is not necessarily true at the moment. America must, like everyone else, compete for advantage on the world stage. Soft power alone is not effective in a climate in which attractive alternatives exist. And because soft power—and to some degree smart power—does not necessarily acknowledge the reality of competition among multiple actors, neither can really help the U.S. cope with a less permissive environment.

A far more aggressive conception of “soft” power is political warfare. In the aftermath of World War II, the American diplomat and historian George F. Kennan outlined a program for what he called “political warfare.”<sup>18</sup> One of the first canonical approaches to competitive shaping is political warfare. As noted earlier, political warfare emerged out of the post-World War II struggle for influence between the West and the Eastern bloc. RAND analyst Brian Michael Jenkins—paraphrasing Kennan—perhaps most succinctly describes political warfare as an inversion of Clausewitz's dictum that war is the extension of politics by other means, as “political warfare is the extension of armed conflict by other means.”<sup>19</sup> This formulation is, admittedly, somewhat nonsensical in the context of what Kennan originally described when he coined the term—the struggle for influence in Europe. Armed conflict of a major scale ceased in Europe after World War II. Instead, what ensued afterwards was a dizzying array of localized and regional struggles for political supremacy between the U.S., the Soviet Union, their proxies, sub-proxies, and a series of other actors that—depending on the context—might go either way. That conflict in Europe featured violence,

18 Scott Lucas and Kaeten Mistry, “Illusions of coherence: George F. Kennan, US strategy and political warfare in the early Cold War, 1946–1950,” *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 1 (2009): 39–66.

19 Brian Michael Jenkins, “Strategy: Political Warfare Neglected.” Rand Corporation, June 26, 2005, <https://www.rand.org/blog/2005/06/strategy-political-warfare-neglected.html>.

but not a clash of arms directly between the armed forces of the Eastern Bloc and the West.

The context Jenkins uses to describe political warfare is partly rooted in his experience as a Special Forces captain in the Vietnam War:

*During the Vietnam War, I was among the U.S. Special Forces soldiers who recruited highland tribesmen to the South Vietnamese side—knowing if we didn't give them rifles, the Viet Cong would. In the same way today, the immediate benefit of recruiting large numbers of Iraqis into government security forces is keeping them employed and out of the clutches of the resistance.<sup>20</sup>*

This is legitimately an extension of armed conflict by other means, in the sense that both Jenkins and the Vietcong were both trying to expand the scope of the war through social engagement. Perhaps, the best way to rationalize these two contradictory definitions of political warfare is to observe that the political context in which conflict takes place today is the legacy of a broadening of political competition within the West that occurred during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, what was called “national” war was regarded as something to be avoided at all costs by dynastic states that mostly sought to prevent public participation in politics. Irregular operations were a feature of contemporary political rivalries, but for the most part, in Europe, they did not involve popular mobilization.<sup>21</sup> During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the state faced new challenges that required the expansion of its extractive, organizational, and coercive power. This, in turn, required a different model of political legitimacy that was capable of mobilizing the masses.<sup>22</sup>

Concurrently, the costs and risks of warfare

20 Ibid.

21 Beatrice Heuser, “Small Wars in the Age of Clausewitz: The Watershed Between Partisan War and People's War,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 1 (2010): 139–162.

22 Lars-Erik Cederman, T. Camber Warren, and Didier Sornette, “Testing Clausewitz: nationalism, mass mobilization, and the severity of war,” *International Organization* 65, no. 4 (2011): 605–638.

also grew enormously for states.<sup>23</sup> So, *contra* Jenkins, in waging “political warfare,” the United States and the USSR were trying to accomplish their aims without engaging in *actual* war. Armed conflict was not being extended, it was being suppressed. However, many of the same underlying processes that might have occurred in some kind of armed conflict—propaganda, political mobilization, subversion behind enemy lines, terrorism and other forms of political violence, and economic and cultural uses of influence—continued nonetheless.<sup>24</sup> For example, the United States intervened extensively in the 1948 Italian election, with the CIA and the State Department using “all means short of war” to try to shape the outcome of what post-war decision-makers believed was the first real political warfare confrontation with Communism.<sup>25</sup> And when the U.S. intervened militarily abroad in places such as Vietnam, it put into action during wartime many of the practices it developed during peacetime. This is why Jenkins, as a much younger man, found himself engaging in these kinds of activities during an actual shooting war, the Vietnam War.

As Schadlow notes, the use of the term “war” in “political warfare” is less a statement about the violence involved and more of a description of the inevitably aggressive and confrontational aspects embedded in even indirect approaches of competitive interaction.<sup>26</sup> It would be admittedly much more preferable if it were called something other than political warfare, but that propaganda leaflet has long since dropped. The essence of political warfare is not just the span of activities it encompasses, but also the element of *organization* for those

activities. After all, did not Kennan title his famous missive “organizing” for political warfare? The origin of the term comes not necessarily from Kennan’s paper, but from a British organization designed for integrated propaganda operations.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, much of the contemporary proposals for political warfare are rooted in pleas to combine “tangible, interrelated operations such as targeted economic aid, development projects, as well as the training, arming, and equipping of military and security forces.”<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps, then, a better name for political warfare would be *bureaucratic warfare*. The name “political warfare” may conjure up romantic images of the twilight struggle with Communism and John F. Kennedy’s promise to “pay any price” and “bear any burden,” but the true heart of political warfare is really the humble organizational wire charts of the kind that are intimately familiar to most government executives. Still, there is also an implicit ideological basis for political warfare that goes beyond bureaucratic arrangements. This deserves some consideration before adopting it wholeheartedly. Schadlow echoes Jenkins in noting that Kennan saw political warfare as a massive peacetime mobilization of resources for a perpetual struggle short of war yet also paralleling it.<sup>29</sup> In doing so, Kennan adopted a philosophy of politics not unlike the one held by his Bolshevik adversaries and the Nazis that America defeated in World War II: the natural state of politics is ceaseless war, the only difference between states of war being higher or lower intensities of violence.<sup>30</sup> The political doctrine of Marxism, after all, interpreted everything from the standpoint

23 Lars-Erik Cederman, “Modeling the size of wars: from billiard balls to sandpiles,” *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 135-150.

24 Patrick James and Glenn E. Mitchell, “Targets of covert pressure: The hidden victims of the democratic peace,” *International Interactions* 21, no. 1 (1995): 85-107.

25 Kaeten Mistry, “The case for political warfare: Strategy, organization and US involvement in the 1948 Italian election,” *Cold War History* 6, no. 3 (2006): 301-329.

26 Nadia Schadlow, *Organizing to compete in the political terrain* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2010).

27 Michael Stenton, *Radio London and resistance in occupied Europe: British political warfare 1939-1943* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

28 Donovan C. Chau, “Political warfare—an essential instrument of US grand strategy today,” *Comparative Strategy* 25, no. 2 (2006): 109-120.

29 Nadia Schadlow, “Competitive Engagement: Upgrading America’s Influence,” *Orbis* 57, no. 4 (2013): 501-515.

30 Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism: The West in the eyes of its enemies* (New York: Penguin, 2005).

of the class war.<sup>31</sup> The Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt saw political life in terms of peaceful or violent enmity between adversaries.<sup>32</sup>

This is the last key to political warfare, which can only be understood within the context of 20<sup>th</sup> century politics. Modern political thought replaced the Manicheism of an earlier religious era with the idea of political struggle, and the religious idea of the afterlife with utopia on Earth.<sup>33</sup> So perhaps, while Kennan may have famously differed with the far more hawkish Paul H. Nitze about the specific strategies and tactics to counteract Communism, these differences have been somewhat exaggerated. Both Kennan and Nitze's favored policies, anyway, required substantial integrated government instruments capable of waging—in peacetime—a struggle as expansive and far-reaching as the kind that the United States had fought during World War II. The risk in political warfare is that democracies lose sight of the very separation between the logic of the garrison and the logic of a peacetime society that they are seeking to preserve.<sup>34</sup>

Political warfare was, of course, not solely an American preoccupation. British and French post-war military writers—facing the twin threats of Communism and post-colonial revolts—also produced an enormous volume of literature about counter-revolutionary warfare. This literature, unlike the more straightforwardly aggressive American school, was much more oriented around preservation of their empires from internal and external threats even if it sometimes far surpassed the U.S. in the moral compromises it was willing to

tolerate.<sup>35</sup> As America sometimes played a role in dissolving those very empires, American and European motivations and stratagems for political warfare should not be regarded as interchangeable. Perhaps, the most significant overlap between U.S. and European conceptions of this problem can be found in the conduct of actual counter-revolutionary warfare. The U.S. civilian counterinsurgency program in Vietnam, for example, was part and parcel of a generalized series of development and modernization projects that the U.S. pursued during the Cold War.<sup>36</sup> Subscribing to so-called “rational peasant” theories, U.S. strategists believed that Communist ideology was attractive because it offered freedom from what Westerners saw as backward arrangements that persisted throughout the Third World.<sup>37</sup>

A more realistic theory of what actually went on during such competitions is the Australian counterinsurgency scholar and practitioner David Kilcullen's concept of “competitive control,” or rather the idea that third parties obey whoever is able to establish a consistent system of control over violence, economic activity, and human security. Kilcullen synthesizes competitive control from many different classical and modern sources.<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, competitive control is perhaps at the heart of the most infamous failures of the Vietnam War, such as the Agroville and Strategic Hamlet programs that tried to separate the South Vietnamese people from

31 Jacob W. Kipp, “Lenin and Clausewitz: the militarization of marxism, 1914-1921,” *The Journal of Military History* 49, no. 4 (1985): 184.

32 Gopal Balakrishnan, *The enemy: an intellectual portrait of Carl Schmitt* (New York: Verso, 2000).

33 William E. Scheuerman, “Was Morgenthau a realist? Revisiting Scientific man vs. power politics,” *Constellations* 14, no. 4 (2007): 506-530.

34 Aaron L. Friedberg, *In the shadow of the garrison state: America's anti-statism and its Cold War grand strategy* (New York: Princeton University Press, 2000).

35 Thomas Rid, “The Nineteenth Century Origins of Counterinsurgency Doctrine,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 5 (2010): 727-758; David H. Ucko and Robert Egnell, *Counterinsurgency in Crisis: Britain and the Challenges of Modern Warfare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); and Douglas Porch, *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the myths of the new way of war* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

36 Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the future: Modernization theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

37 David C. Engerman, “Social science in the Cold War,” *Isis* 101, no. 2 (2010): 393-400; and Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the future*.

38 David Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces.<sup>39</sup> These do not necessarily invalidate the idea of competitive control; they just suggest—as Kilcullen himself has oft-noted—the manner in which direct and indirect American intervention can go horrifically awry.<sup>40</sup>

Why did things go wrong in Vietnam? There are far too many reasons to count, but one of them was hubris about the information needed for success. In his acclaimed book, *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes To Improve The Human Condition Have Failed*, social scientist James C. Scott chronicles the repeated failures of governments to socially engineer utopia from the top-down. Governments repeatedly fail to understand the importance of local knowledge, the complexities of large-scale systems they try to change and build, and the informal ways that grand top-driven projects may be resisted from the bottom. The missing link all of these grand schemes is *metis*, a Greek term for the linkage between “thin” models of how a system is supposed to work and informal knowledge and processes. As Scott concludes, “The necessarily thin, schematic model of social organization and production animating the planning was inadequate as a set of instructions for creating a successful social order. . . . Formal order . . . is always . . . parasitic on informal processes, which the formal scheme does not recognize, without which it could not exist, and which it alone cannot create or maintain.”<sup>41</sup>

Schadlow also sums up why information itself may be the most important part of the picture:

[I]nformation grounded in history and the political context of any engagement effort is critical. Tools that seek to influence political outcomes require a serious inventory of political actors in the formal and informal domains. Who are the tribal leaders? Clans? Unions? Which external actors are backing local groups? Who matters, and why? What are their interests? Who are the youth leaders? The media leaders? Which actors are likely to oppose, be indifferent toward, or support a particular engagement or activity? The building of roads or of schools will have economic and political winners and losers at the state, firm, and individual levels.<sup>42</sup>

U.S. rivals have extensively cultivated information sources that can grant them this information. The U.S., in turn, is doubling down on big data, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and other heavily computerized intelligence-gathering and analysis approaches. This is not to say that an AI couldn’t help identify the kinds of political and social context that Schadlow mentions. They would need to be designed and programmed for different missions and tasks, but AI is not a substitute for more traditional means of compiling and analyzing information, or at least something close to it. Any organizational concept or strategy for competitive shaping should be heavily, if not mostly, determined by informational needs.

Schadlow implicitly and explicitly identifies two critical components of any kind of competitive shaping and more directly control endeavor: the means to collect the right information and the means to use it to structure a competitive design. During the Cold War, Andrew Marshall and others at the Department of Defense’s Office of Net Assessment became disillusioned both with the assessment of the U.S.-USSR strategic interaction and the strategies at hand to match Moscow’s moves. Marshall and others sought to do three things:<sup>43</sup>

39 Jessica Elkind, *Aid Under Fire: Nation Building and the Vietnam War* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2016); and Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as ideology: American social science and “nation building” in the Kennedy era*.

40 David Kilcullen, *The accidental guerrilla: Fighting small wars in the midst of a big one* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

41 See, James C. Scott, *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); and B. Flyvbjerg, *Making social science matter: Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

42 Nadia Schadlow, *Competitive Engagement: Upgrading America’s Influence*.

43 Andrew F. Krepinevich and Barry D. Watts, *The last warrior: Andrew Marshall and the shaping of modern American defense strategy* (New York: Basic Books, 2015).

1. Get the United States national security establishment to acknowledge that the U.S. and the USSR were locked into a strategic competition and that this competition would continue for the foreseeable future.
2. Focus the energies of the United States national security establishment on developing a more realistic model of this interaction.
3. Develop strategies that would match American strengths against Soviet weaknesses.<sup>44</sup>

Competitive strategies have a looser relationship to the business theory of competitive strategy developed by Michael Porter and the Boston Consulting Group. Porter and the BCG—who ironically were most inspired by military strategists—developed a capability model to help firms quickly understand what they were competing in and what they *should* be competing within. Though Porter’s model has since been met with some criticism, it remains one of the key ideas in business strategy.<sup>45</sup> It is somewhat obvious how and why competitive theories could be useful to political-military competition. But a truly competitive strategy seeks to impose costs and to dissuade the adversary to waste resources on elements of the competition that are not germane to our interests or would not be ultimately effective. Ultimately, a competitive strategy must select and invest in a domain where the U.S. can obtain and sustain a competitive edge. The U.S. has spent enormous sums on weapons systems, and such resources are only useful investments relative to the choices of an adversary.

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44 Andrew W. Marshall, *Long-Term Competition with the Soviets: A Framework for Strategic Analysis* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND report, 1972).

45 See, Michael E. Porter, *Competitive strategy: Techniques for analyzing industries and competitors* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008); and Bruce Ahlstrand, Joseph Lampel, and Henry Mintzberg, *Strategy Safari: A Guided Tour Through The Wilds of Strategic Management* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001).

The Nintendo Corporation provides an example for how this concept applies in the business world. Nintendo once dominated video gaming, winning the “console wars” of 1989-1995. However, Nintendo’s Super Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES) platform architecture was not easily compatible with major technological changes that occurred during the SNES’ lifetime, such as full-motion video, CD-ROM storage, and 3D graphics. Nintendo’s conservative corporate leadership resisted changes that might have better allowed them to adapt, relegating the company to the margins of the gaming industry for a period of time.<sup>46</sup> (And it should be noted Nintendo is having a renaissance today, which goes to show that it is possible to regain a lost lead which is an important lesson for both business and geopolitics.) Fairly small and seemingly insignificant choices can have long-term consequences, and this is perhaps the most important lesson of Marshall and Porter’s takes on competitive strategy.<sup>47</sup> Today, the form of competitive strategy analysis used by the Pentagon to think about competition with China reflects features of both Cold War competitive strategic thinking and Porter’s business oriented concept. How might this apply to irregular conflicts in the Middle East?<sup>48</sup>

The element of resource-based competition that Marshall and others pioneered may be useful within the context of competitive shaping. U.S. rivals such as Russia, China, and Iran pour massive resources into external influence projects. Are all of these projects cost-effective relative to an adversary’s strengths and weaknesses? Could they be induced to waste valuable resources on relatively suboptimal pursuits? Keep in mind that these resources need not be exclusively monetary in nature. Human beings are limited, for example, in both space and time. If a

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46 Dominic Arsenault, *Super Power, Spooky Bards, and Silverware: The Super Nintendo Entertainment System* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017).

47 Paul Bracken, “Net assessment: A practical guide,” *Parameters* 36, no. 1 (2006): 90-100.

48 Thomas G. Mahnken, ed., *Competitive strategies for the 21st century: theory, history, and practice*.

*Marshall anticipated one of the chief problems the U.S. currently faces in measuring how it competes for influence: the difficulty of quantifying measures that are frequently intangible, subjective, or at the very minimum not necessarily symmetrical in form.*

critically important Iranian covert operative is tied up in a backwater military theater, then he is not putting his talents to best use in an environment in which he could be doing real damage to U.S. interests. If Hezbollah focuses its attention on a marginal theater of political engagement, it misses an opportunity to compete for influence in an arena that is actually important. Of course, this also applies to the U.S. as well. The terrorism researcher Daveed Gartenstein-Ross has argued that al-Qaeda has successfully bled and distracted the U.S. and caused it to waste valuable resources.<sup>49</sup> The foremost utility of the competitive strategy approach is not really its effect on an opponent, but rather its use as a heuristic device to ensure that a strategy is not needlessly wasteful.

One of the many reasons that the Soviet Union declined was its inability to exercise restraint in its interventions. As economic crises multiplied at home, the USSR was stuck footing the bill for a menagerie of parasitic clients. This is an outcome that the U.S. must avoid at all costs. At the same time, however, the U.S. ought not to forfeit meaningful opportunities for long-term engagement that can advance U.S. interest. Another aspect of competitive strategy that may be useful in the context of U.S. competitions for influence is understanding competitive advantages and weaknesses. Competitive strategy is a subset of net assessment, a family of techniques that attempt to make a “net” comparison

side-by-side of U.S. and competitor forces.<sup>50</sup>

Marshall anticipated one of the chief problems the U.S. currently faces in measuring how it competes for influence: the difficulty of quantifying measures that are frequently intangible, subjective, or at the very minimum not necessarily symmetrical in form.<sup>51</sup> The United States lacks, for example, a political-military organization quite like the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps or North Korea’s Room 39, agencies that exist solely for the purpose of covert influence abroad and illicit activities. And quantifying the success or failure of various non-military initiatives within a competition may be difficult. The net assessment and competitive strategy approaches are probably equally as useful for analysis as they are for decision-making and acting. From competitive strategies, lastly, comes the overarching concept of strategic competition, which is a useful organizing principle to use in thinking about contemporary challenges. It focuses the mind not on the final result of victory or defeat, but rather on the state of the interaction and whether or not one is being a good competitor.<sup>52</sup> And actors such Russia and China control their media far more significantly than the U.S., and both have

<sup>49</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, “Toward Better Net Assessment: Rethinking the European Conventional Balance,” *International Security* 13, no. 1 (1988): 50-89.

<sup>51</sup> Mie Augier, “Thinking about war and peace: Andrew Marshall and the early development of the intellectual foundations for net assessment,” *Comparative Strategy* 32, no. 1 (2013): 1-17.

<sup>52</sup> Andrew W. Marshall, *Long-Term Competition with the Soviets: A Framework for Strategic Analysis*.

<sup>49</sup> Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, *Bin Laden’s legacy* (New York: Wiley, 2011).

substantial control over, if not ownership, of social media and television. A net assessment would have to account for the relative capacity of each side to manage the competition, especially in the intangibles of information as an instrument of national power.

Competition, of course, does not take place purely in the military realm, nor is it always strictly adversarial. Closely related to political warfare is the far more sedate *political action*, designed to support political parties and other entities that were either pro-American or neutral. Political warfare and political action, confusingly, overlap in that they both are oriented around the shaping of political environments and involve the integrated use of national power. However, if political warfare might involve dirty tricks and black operations, then political action ideally involves the crafting of government-government and government-society relationships. Examples of political action might include public diplomacy efforts, strategic communications, and more broadly the use of humanitarian, diplomatic, and other non-military governmental initiatives to advance American interests.<sup>53</sup> It should be stressed, of course, that political action is *not* Nye soft power, as political action—while not necessarily offensively targeted—has traditionally been conducted with some kind of competitive goal in mind and knowledge of an element of competition as a criterion of success. The primary distinction between political warfare and political action is really that the latter is an *indirect means of competing*, even if writing about political action has often inconsistently acknowledged this fact.

The Marshall Plan<sup>54</sup> is perhaps one of the biggest and most well-known examples of this on the U.S. side. Commonly misremembered as a humanitarian venture, the Marshall Plan was actually an initiative to shore up faltering governments believed to be at risk of Communist infiltration and takeover.

<sup>53</sup> Nadia Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance: Consolidating Combat Success into Political Victory* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2017).

<sup>54</sup> See: <http://marshallfoundation.org/marshall/the-marshall-plan/history-marshall-plan/>.

Likewise, U.S. information centers in Europe that disseminated American cultural materials in friendly states helped not only spread U.S. influence, but also they provided critical information about local attitudes that could aid strategic decision-making. As suggested in many of the earlier examples of political warfare, the borderline between political warfare and political action is porous and thin. Something similarly on the borderline between political warfare and political action was the 1981 Active Measures Working Group, an early case of successful interagency cooperation to rebut Soviet propaganda and keep neutral and friendly countries away from the Soviet orbit. As the National Defense University's Fletcher Schoen and Christopher J. Lamb pointed out in 2012,

*The group successfully established and executed U.S. policy on responding to Soviet disinformation. It exposed some Soviet covert operations and raised the political cost of others by sensitizing foreign and domestic audiences to how they were being duped. The group's work encouraged allies and made the Soviet Union pay a price for disinformation that reverberated all the way to the top of the Soviet political apparatus. It became the U.S. Government's body of expertise on disinformation and was highly regarded in both Congress and the executive branch.<sup>55</sup>*

Radio Free Europe and CIA efforts to distribute books are more mixed cases, if only because the causal effect is far more difficult to measure. This does not mean that these events and efforts weren't worthwhile; it just means that the U.S. has a hard time knowing how worthwhile such measures were relative to the alternatives.

Political action is perhaps the best entry point into many of the practical challenges of competitive shaping as a whole: how can be it done; how is success or failure measured; and

<sup>55</sup> See, Fletcher Schoen and Christopher J. Lamb, "Deception, Disinformation, and Strategic Communications: How One Interagency Group Made a Major Difference," *Institute for National Strategic Studies Strategic Perspectives*, No. 11 (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, June 2012), 3.

how are the right people for the job selected? Predominant challenges and questions with competitive shaping can be broadly decomposed into issues of organization, knowledge, measurement, and strategic choice. These issues run through the various ideas previously discussed and also pose significant challenges to their integration. Organization is the simplest and most obvious problem. There was no golden era of political warfare and competitive shaping; bureaucratic architecture has always hindered or confused the planning and execution of operations.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, previous attempts at whole-of-government integration have repeatedly and continuously fallen short of grand expectations. And without effective coordination, an adversary can merely exploit a seam or gap within the U.S. bureaucratic structure for competitive advantage. The converse is that blurred lines of authority may also lead to poor strategy and allocation of resources. The blurring of Title 10/50 authorities,<sup>57</sup> in particular, has been a major concern for intelligence policymakers during the global war on terror. Still, the Active Measures Working Group is suggestive that analysts should try to avoid knee-jerk fatalism about bureaucratic architecture.

What kind of people and organizations are generally identified as being effective at forms of competitive shaping? Because much of the activities—which can take place on a granular level—are highly personalized, they require people with special aptitude for the job. How are these people to be recruited, and what kinds of organizations do they work best within? What kinds of people should *not* work in critical roles that require delicacy, precision, and discretion? A particularly useful goal might be to compare and contrast social movements to states in this regard. Are there any lessons from non-governmental

<sup>56</sup> Sarah-Jane Corke, *US Covert Operations and Cold War Strategy: Truman, Secret Warfare and the CIA, 1945-53* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>57</sup> Title 10 refers to the authorities of the armed forces in the US Code whereas Title 50 relates to US Code relating to war and national defense. See: <http://uscode.house.gov/browse/prelim@title10&edition=prelim> and <http://uscode.house.gov/browse/prelim@title50&edition=prelim>.

movements that may be of use to the U.S.? What opportunities exist for partnerships with civil society groups and NGOs, and how might limitations and frictions between the U.S. government and these groups be surmounted?

Are there useful historical examples that can be used a starting point? Specifically, historical examples from before 1945 or even before the 20<sup>th</sup> century may be useful as a contrast.<sup>58</sup> U.S. analyses of contemporary competitive shaping challenges are too biased by the Cold War and the post-9/11 period. Yet, the U.S. has faced similar problems since its inception as a nation, with enormous variations in institutional architecture and authorities. Is there anything that can be learned from it? Additionally, what kinds of strategic mistakes in organizational choice have been most prevalent in competitive shaping efforts by the U.S. and others? How did these mistakes occur? Were those mistakes avoidable? And if not, what does the inevitability of such mistakes mean for the prospects of competitive shaping efforts? A failure analysis akin to the kind performed by the military historians Eliot Cohen and John Gooch would be particularly useful.<sup>59</sup> There is a literature on organizational failure in complex operations, the most prominent being *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing*.<sup>60</sup> But a systematic assessment would be very useful for both theory and practice.

Something of particular importance would be to examine the mistakes of non-U.S. actors. It is easy to get a false picture of U.S. weakness

<sup>58</sup> See, John J. Carter, *Covert operations as a tool of presidential foreign policy in American history from 1800 to 1920: Foreign policy in the shadows* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000); and W. Dirk Raat, "US Intelligence Operations and Covert Action in Mexico, 1900–47," *Journal of Contemporary History* 22, no. 4 (1987): 615–638.

<sup>59</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, and John Gooch, *Military misfortunes: The anatomy of failure in war* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012).

<sup>60</sup> Robert Komer, *Bureaucracy does its thing: institutional constraints on US-GVN performance in Vietnam* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1973). Sadly, there is also a sequel. Todd Greentree, "Bureaucracy does its thing: US performance and the institutional dimension of strategy in Afghanistan," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36, no. 3 (2013): 325–356.

solely by looking at U.S. mistakes and mishaps. U.S. adversaries may be suffering from similar problems. Iran, for example, tried a great deal during the Iran-Iraq War to incite rebellion among Iraqi Shiites. Why did they mostly fail? While hackers linked to Russia attempted to target Emmanuel Macron's campaign, they were not successful in altering the outcome of the 2017 French election. Why? It would be particularly valuable to look at cases in which an attempt by an insurgent movement to create a governmental authority did not work and compare it to U.S. influence efforts. Knowledge is another significant concern. As Schadlow notes, deep local knowledge at a granular level will be necessary to make competitive shaping work in practice.<sup>61</sup> How capable is the U.S. at collecting this knowledge? Who will supply it? Generally, many efforts to create positive change from the top-down fail when they cannot capture local knowledge.<sup>62</sup> Are there particular patterns in local groups whose cooperation and knowledge is needed for success? The late American sociologist, political scientist, and historian Charles Tilly studied trust groups, small and secretive sects and organizations that survive by making bargains with power in return for autonomy.<sup>63</sup> When the U.S. interacts on the ground with local actors whose insights it needs, is it getting the ground truth or merely a canned script?<sup>64</sup> There is a vast literature in general on how groups resist governance, and those seeking to practice competitive shaping should read it if only to understand the manner in which varying actors with no principled allegiance to any side get by in life.<sup>65</sup> The U.S. government

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61 Nadia Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance: The US Army's Conduct of Governance Operations from the Mexican War to Panama*.

62 James C. Scott, *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

63 Charles Tilly, *Trust and rule* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

64 James C. Scott, *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

65 James C. Scott, *The art of not being governed: An anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

has also done a generally poor job of rewarding informal knowledge relating to the kinds of competitions that this paper discusses. This is a longstanding problem as many of the individuals and institutions that hold it do not fit very easily into a bureaucratic pecking order and may have difficulty finding support in academia and other research bases as well.<sup>66</sup>

Measurement is a related issue. How does one quantify the success or failures of particular initiatives? In some cases, the U.S. has undervalued critical capabilities that, once cut, it has had extreme difficulty reviving. However, in other cases—again, most famously Vietnam—measurement became a political tool that obscured a lack of progress.<sup>67</sup> Even absent this problem, how can measurements be made meaningful to policymakers? An immense amount of data collected can be for naught if it is not of value to policymakers, and this was indeed the primary complaint about intelligence collected in Afghanistan.<sup>68</sup> A particular further concern relating to both local knowledge and measurement is that local elites' interests are unlikely to ever fully align with that of a distant American patron. This will not only impact the choices they make, but also the information they supply to the U.S. The problem becomes a kind of meta-meta game, where in order to get the information needed to make the right decisions, one must collect information sufficient to understand how to get the information needed to make the right decisions.

On a related note, how is strategic assessment to be done? If the shaping is to be "competitive," it requires an assessment of opportunities, vulnerabilities, capabilities, objectives, and conditions for success relative to an adversary. This is not something that has been done in a particularly structured manner

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66 Richard K. Betts, "Should strategic studies survive?," *World Politics* 50, no. 1 (1997): 7-33.

67 Gregory A. Daddis, *No Sure Victory: Measuring US Army Effectiveness and Progress in the Vietnam War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

68 Michael T. Flynn, Matthew F. Pottinger, and Paul D. Batchelor, *Fixing intel: A blueprint for making intelligence relevant in Afghanistan* (Washington, D.C.: Center for a New American Security, 2010).



outside the military sphere. But how does one assess the competitive use of aid or an intervention into civil society? These are all, of course, organizational issues as well, and organizational and institutional choices will determine how they are resolved. As this is a matter of *competitive* shaping that inherits from competitive strategy's organizational focus, effectiveness will also be measured in terms of U.S. organizations for competitive shaping vs. those of an adversary. How are such net assessments to be done? How can they be taught? This is perhaps where the competitive strategy literature pioneered by Marshall and others can be extremely practically useful. Moreover, despite enthusiasm for grand strategies that integrate all means of power, historical grand strategies generally only appear coherent in retrospect. American Containment in the Cold War was actually a sequence of different policies, loosely coordinated and in many ways highly reactive.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of containment: a critical appraisal of American national security policy during the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

## COMPETITIVE SHAPING AND U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY

Competitive shaping is difficult to understand, describe, and practice. And yet, American success or failure at it is critical to U.S. national security. This paper has outlined many of its permutations and practices. What should the U.S. do to competitively shape? An expansive program for competitive shaping is to build a community that ultimately aligns with U.S. ideals and interests. A longstanding American belief is that successful and liberalized societies are likely to ally with the U.S., so the U.S. should seek to promote them through various non-military forms of power and influence. There is, of course, some underlying truth to this, even if there is a somewhat annoying and recurring tendency to conflate successful and liberal societies with those that have regimes that the U.S. approves of and that further U.S. hegemony. Additionally, it is much easier said than done to promote liberalization abroad without incurring backlash or making existing problems worse. This paper has evaluated the potential benefits, costs, and risks of these approaches along with how some eminent thinkers have considered them. A more constrained definition of competitive shaping is that it merely keeps rivals out of areas of U.S. national interest.

Regional power vacuums are often filled by competitors. The U.S. may not seek regional alignment as an ultimate objective, but, at the very minimum, it should seek to thwart competitors in areas of key interest for U.S. security. The bulk of competitive shaping is likely to be opportunistic and characterized by maintenance and repair goals rather than

achievement goals. These goals are likely to, in practice, also conform to the vagaries of U.S. domestic politics. The American public is likely not going to be interested in an expansive regime of nation-building in a troubled and poor foreign state. It may, however, be interested in denying an adversary control over the territory or keeping the level of violence and conflict below a certain threshold. Prudent decision-making will not get ahead of the public, as efforts must be sustainable over time above all else. Ideally, they should also not make the headlines.

Competitive shaping is, at least from the American perspective, a “realist” approach to change. It should recognize the difficulty of externally changing complex foreign societies and the reality that local elites—even in the best of cases—will have significant divergences of interest with Washington. In many cases, the U.S. will not have good options or room for maneuver. As Schadow argues, policymakers should identify opportunities to advance U.S. interests and match them with resources. Because U.S. resources are limited, the U.S. also should resist the temptation to see every opportunity as inherently meaningful. One of the many reasons that the Soviet Union declined was its inability to exercise restraint in its interventions. The USSR was busy propping up its clients as its economic crises multiplied at home. This is an outcome that the U.S. must avoid at all costs. At the same time, however, the U.S. ought not to forfeit meaningful opportunities for long-term engagement that can advance U.S. interest.

*Competition is often ideological in nature, taking place within the public sphere. Competitors seek to control the nature and content of information and discourse in places ranging from ancient Roman fora to Facebook pages. Competition is endemic to social life; it may be found from the boardroom to the battlefield. Earlier thinking about how states and other actors shape and influence — such as soft power — has not really taken into account the presence of competitors and the prevalence of competition itself.*

Competitive shaping is in large part a bureaucratic and organizational challenge, as this paper has often demonstrated. As Schadlow and others observe, many non-military U.S. agencies do not think of themselves as being “competitive.” And it is difficult to win a competition when one does not know they are waging one to begin with. There must be a cultural shift to tie many aspects of current U.S. non-military engagement to the advancement of U.S. interest. Another half of the problem is facilitating interagency and cross-governmental cooperation. Here too, the U.S. needs to be realistic and opportunistic. Without significant and disruptive changes in the U.S. system of government or a perception of external threat sufficient to revive the Cold War-era competitive shaping regime, it is unlikely that the (much exaggerated yet still nonetheless meaningful) Cold War “whole of government” programs will be revived. How should the U.S. pragmatically and sustainably develop formal and informal institutional architecture and coordination for doing so?

Lastly, competitive shaping is also a significant challenge to typical American ways of thinking about war and peace. A recurring theme throughout the history of U.S. competitions abroad is a sense of surprise that opponents can transgress or blur typical boundaries and rules and an inability to acknowledge the limitations of military force. Why this is the case is a matter

for historians to debate. But what has become abundantly clear is that there is no justification for the sense of pervasive surprise that seems to be endemic to American treatments of this topic. Competition is often ideological in nature, taking place within the public sphere. Competitors seek to control the nature and content of information and discourse in places ranging from ancient Roman fora to Facebook pages. Competition is endemic to social life; it may be found from the boardroom to the battlefield. Earlier thinking about how states and other actors shape and influence—such as soft power—has not really taken into account the presence of competitors and the prevalence of competition itself.

Why? Perhaps, the U.S. and other Western powers took for granted the inherent attractiveness of their ideas, goals, and narratives along with their ability to rectify any deficits in the above with established tools such as military force, economic sanctions, and diplomacy. If the U.S. is to thrive in a complex 21<sup>st</sup> century environment characterized by competition and shaping, then it cannot afford to continue to do so.





# OUTLINING A COURSE ON COMPETITIVE SHAPING

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## Outlining a Course on Competitive Shaping

Assuming a 12-week course for advanced undergraduates and graduates, a competitive shaping course ought to focus on something resembling the following narrative. State, non-state, and quasi-state actors compete frequently in world politics. The method of competition may operate directly on the behavior of an opponent or indirectly to change the structure of the environment that influences the opponent's decision-making. The former has been well-covered in traditional theories of world politics and national security, the latter is generally not. This course focuses on the latter, lesser-included methods. Generalized questions the course asks are as follows:

1. What role does guile vs. strength play in world politics?
2. How can integrated and competitive minded strategies of the state accomplish actors' political objectives?
3. How do non-state and quasi-state actors utilize integrated strategies?
4. How should competitions be assessed?
5. What are the various theories and approaches to competitive shaping; how do they differ; and what are their advantages and disadvantages?
6. When does competitive shaping work, and when does it not?
7. How do different types of regimes vary in their usage of competitive shaping?
8. What kind of broader patterns emerge from a study of competitive shaping?
9. How does use of competitive shaping interface with other means of power?

The composition of the survey course is up to the discretion of the instructor, but it is recommended that a balance be made between the following thematic topics:

- Competition in politics (domestic, international, and world politics)
- Competitive theories, approaches, and perspectives
- Instruments, tools, and techniques on subnational, national, international, and cross-national levels
- Particular componential elements that must be considered
- Historical, comparative, and contemporary cases

## Outlining a Course on Competitive Shaping

Whenever possible, students should be encouraged to select past cases for review and assessment. Student grades will be assessed by how well they identify the structure of the competition, discuss the strengths, weaknesses, and asymmetries between competitors, and analyze the nature, effects, and relationships of competitor strategies and tactics.

Students should also select current cases and present their assessment of U.S. and/or competitor opportunities, interactions, and strategies. If possible, exercises and simulations of competitive dynamics could also be employed within the classroom utilizing the model of a policy game/simulation, though it is not strictly necessary. A possible exercise could be student actors picking a target to support or counter, identify opportunities, strategy, required capabilities to achieve objectives, and assess conditions for success.

As befitting the eclectic nature of the material, instructors have a wide range of options for use in teaching. They will obviously gear the course toward their particular interests and areas of expertise. It is recommended, however, that readings balance the varying permutations of competition as described in this paper, including not only state and military/intelligence organizations, but also business, social movements, interest groups, and other similar competitors.

A proposed 12-week course syllabus is offered on the following pages.

## COMPETITIVE SHAPING IN WORLD POLITICS 12 WEEK COURSE SYLLABUS

### Week 1—Power and Competition

- Robert Dahl, “The Concept of Power,” *Behavioral Science*, Volume 2, Issue 3 (1957), 201–215.
- Michael Doyle, “Kant, liberal legacies, and foreign affairs,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12, (1983), 205-235.
- G. John Ikenberry, “Liberal Internationalism 3.0: America and the Dilemmas of Liberal World Order,” *Perspectives on Politics* 7, No. 1 (March 2009), 71-87
- Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014), conclusion.
- Hans Morganthau, *Politics Among Nations* (2005 paperback edition), Chapter 3.
- Nadia Schadlow, “Competitive Engagement: Upgrading America's Influence,” *Orbis* 57, no. 4 (2013), 501-15.
- Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press; Revised edition 2008).

### Week 2—Deception, Guile, and Indirect Strategies

- André Beaufre, *An Introduction to Strategy: with particular reference to problems of defence, politics, economics, and diplomacy in the nuclear age*, translated by Major General R.H. Barry (London: Faber and Faber, 1965).
- John Bowyer Bell and Barton Whaley, *Cheating and deception* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1991).
- Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013): 3-65.
- Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Boston: Belknap Press, 2011).
- Niccolò Machiavelli, trans. by W.K. Marriott, *The Prince*.
- Sun Tzu, Ralph D. Sawyer, trans., *The Art of War* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).
- Thucydides, *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*, edited by Robert B. Strassler, translated by Richard Crawley, introduction by Victor Davis Hanson (New York: Free Press, 1998).

### Week 3—Competitive Strategies

- Bruce Ahlstrand, Joseph Lampel, and Henry Mintzberg, *Strategy Safari: A Guided Tour Through The Wilds of Strategic Management* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005),
- Thomas Mahnken, ed., *Competitive Strategies for the 21st Century* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford Security Studies, 2012).
- Michael Porter, *Competitive Strategy* (New York: Free Press, June 1998), introduction.

## Week 4—Soft Power, Smart Power, and their Critics

- Martha Bayles, *Through a Screen Darkly: Popular Culture, Public Diplomacy and America's Image Abroad* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014).
- Eliot A. Cohen, *The Big Stick: The Limits of Soft Power & the Necessity of Military Force* (New York: Basic Books, 2016).
- Niall Ferguson, "Think Again: Power," *Foreign Policy*, November 3, 2009.
- Janice Bially Mattern, "Why 'Soft Power' Isn't So Soft: Representational Force and the Sociolinguistic Construction of Attraction in World Politics," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, No. 3 (2005): 583-612.
- Suzanne Nossel, "Smart Power," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2004, 131-142
- Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, New Edition, 2005)
- Joseph Nye, "Get Smart: Combining Soft and Hard Power," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2009.

## Week 5—Political Warfare and Political Action

- Max Boot and Michael Doran, "Political Warfare," Policy Innovation Memorandum, No. 33, Council on Foreign Relations, June 28, 2013.
- Donovan C. Chau, "Political warfare—an essential instrument of US grand strategy today," *Comparative Strategy* 25, no. 2 (2006): 109-120.
- Patrick James and Glenn E. Mitchell, "Targets of covert pressure: The hidden victims of the democratic peace," *International Interactions* 21, no. 1 (1995): 85-107.
- Brian Michael Jenkins, *Strategy: Political Warfare Neglected* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 26 June 2005).
- William R. Kintner with Joseph Z. Kornfeder, *The New Frontier of War: Political Warfare, Present and Future* (London: Frederick Muller Limited, 1963).
- Linda Robinson, Todd C. Helmus, Raphael S. Cohen, Alireza Nader, Andrew Radin, Madeline Magnuson, and Katya Migacheva, *Modern Political Warfare: Current Practices and Possible Responses* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2018).
- Paul A. Smith, Jr., *On Political Warfare* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1989): 3-28.

## Week 6—Information Operations, Warfare, and Propaganda

- Richard I. Aldrich, "Putting Culture into the Cold War: The Cultural Relations Department (CRD) and British Covert Information Warfare," *Intelligence & National Security* 18, No. 2 (Summer 2003), 109-133.
- William R. Gery, SeYoung Lee, and Jacob Ninas, "Information Warfare in an Information Age," *JFQ: Joint Force Quarterly* 85, 2nd Quarter (2017), 22-29.
- Carnes Lord, *Losing Hearts and Minds: Public Diplomacy and Strategic Influence in the Age of Terror* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006).
- Scot Macdonald, *Propaganda and Information Warfare in the Twenty-First Century: Altered images and deception operations* (New York: Routledge, 2007).
- Ben D. Mor, "Public Diplomacy in Grand Strategy," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 2, No.2 (March 2006), 157-176.
- Jonathan Reed Winkler, "Information Warfare in World War I," *Journal of Military History* 73, No. 3 (July 2009), 845-867.

## Week 7—Tools of Competitive Shaping

- Robert D. Blackwell and Jennifer M. Harris, *War by Other Means: Geoeconomics and Statecraft* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2016).
- Rosa Brooks, *How Everything Became War and the Military Became Everything: Tales from the Pentagon* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016).
- John J. Carter, *Covert operations as a tool of presidential foreign policy in American history from 1800 to 1920: Foreign policy in the shadows* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000).
- Chas. W. Freeman, Jr., *Arts of Power: Statecraft and Diplomacy* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1997).
- Roy Godson, *Dirty Tricks or Trump Cards: U.S. Covert Action & Counterintelligence* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995; 2008 edition): 134-158.
- Rufus Phillips, *Breathing Life Into Expeditionary Diplomacy: A Missing Dimension of US Security Capabilities* (Bethesda, MD: National Strategy Information Center, Fall 2014).
- Nadia Schadlow, *Organizing to compete in the political terrain* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2010).

## Week 8—The Contemporary Security Environment

- Braden R. Allenby, “The paradox of dominance: The age of civilizational conflict.” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 71 (March, 2015).
- Hal Brands, “Paradoxes of the Gray Zone,” *FPRI E-Notes*, February 5, 2016.
- James Callard and Peter Faber, “An Emerging Synthesis for a New Way of War: Combinational Warfare and Future Innovation,” *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 3, No. 1 (Winter/Spring 2002): 61-68.
- Kelly M. Greenhill, *Whispers of War, Mongers of Fear: Extra-factual Sources of Threat Conception and Proliferation*, forthcoming.
- Frank G. Hoffman, “Hybrid Threats: Reconceptualizing the Evolving Character of Modern Conflict,” *Strategic Forum*, No. 240, April 2009.
- “Hybrid Warfare: Challenge and Response,” *Military Balance* (London: Institute for International Strategic Studies, 2015): 17–20.
- Michael Mazarr, *Mastering the Gray Zone* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2015).
- Martin Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1991).

## Week 9—Historical Case Study: The US and the Early Cold War

- Sarah-Jane Corke, *US Covert Operations and Cold War Strategy: Truman, Secret Warfare and the CIA, 1945-53* (London: Routledge, 2007).
- John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of containment: a critical appraisal of American national security policy during the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- Scott Lucas and Kaeten Mistry, “Illusions of coherence: George F. Kennan, US strategy and political warfare in the early Cold War, 1946–1950,” *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 1 (2009): 39-66.
- Kaeten Mistry, “The case for political warfare: Strategy, organization and US involvement in the 1948 Italian election,” *Cold War History* 6, no. 3 (2006): 301-329.
- Kaeten Mistry, *The United States, Italy and the Origins of Cold War: Waging Political Warfare, 1945–1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
- John Prados, *Safe for democracy: The secret wars of the CIA* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

- Paul A. Smith, Jr., *On Political Warfare* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1989): 185-211.

## Week 10—Case Study: Russia

- Keir Giles, *Russia's 'New' Tools for Confronting the West: Continuity and Innovation in Moscow's Exercise of Power*. Chatham House Research Paper (March, 2016).
- Jolanta Darczewska, "The Anatomy of Russian Information Warfare, The Crimean Operation," *Point of View*, Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies, May 2014.
- Zane M. Galvach, Anton V Soltis, Thomas B. Everett, Matthew J Mesko, and Jeffrey V. Dickey, *Russian political warfare: origin, evolution, and application*. Master's Thesis, Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School, 2015.
- Emilio J. Iasiello, "Russia's Improved Information Operations: From Georgia to Crimea," *Parameters* 47, No. 2 (Summer 2017), 51-63.
- Martin Kragh and Sebastian Asberg, "Russia's Strategy for Influence through Public Diplomacy and Active Measures: The Swedish Case," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 40, no. 6 (January 5, 2017): 773-816.
- Mark Kramer, "The Soviet Roots of Meddling in U.S. Politics," *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo # 452*, Washington, DC, January, 2017, at <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/soviet-roots-meddling-us-politics>.
- Timothy Thomas, "Russia's Information Warfare Strategy: Can the Nation Cope in Future Conflicts?," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 27, No. 1 (January-March 2014), 101-130.
- Clint Watts, *Messing with the Enemy: Surviving in a Social Media World of Hackers, Terrorists, Russians, and Fake News* (New York: Harper Collins, 2018).

## Week 11—Case Study: China

- Dean Cheng, "Winning Without Fighting: Chinese Psychological Warfare," The Heritage Foundation, July 12, 2013.
- Peter Dutton, "Three Disputes and Three Objectives," *Naval War College Review* 64, No. 4 (Autumn 2011), 42-67.
- Stefan Halper, China: The Three Warfares, Section VIII, Paper 1, Peter Mattis, "Chinese Propaganda and Positioning in the Sino-American Crises," <http://cryptome.org/2014/06/prc-three-wars.pdf>
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- Li Mingjiang, "China Debates Soft Power," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Volume 2, Issue 2, 1 December 2008, Pages 287-308.
- Mark Stokes and Russell Hsiao, *The People's Liberation Army's General Political Department, Political Warfare with Chinese Characteristics*, Project 2049 Institute, September 14, 2013.
- Tim Walton, "China's Three Warfares," Delex Systems, January 18, 2012.

## Week 12—Case Study: al-Qaeda and the Islamic State

- Cole Bunzel, *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 2015).
- Shireen K. Burki, "Ceding the Ideological Battlefield to Al Qaeda: The Absence of an Effective U.S. Information Warfare Strategy," *Comparative Strategy* 28, No. 4 (September/October 2009), 349-366.
- Daniel L. Byman and Jennifer R. Williams, "ISIS vs. Al Qaeda: Jihadism's global civil war," Brookings Institution, February 24, 2015.
- Tore Refslund Hamming, "Jihadi Competition and Political Preferences," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, No 6 (2017).
- \_\_\_\_\_, "The Al Qaeda-Islamic State Rivalry: Competition Yes, but No Competitive Escalation," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 7, No. 11 (2017): 1-18.
- Bruce Hoffman, "Return of the Jihadi," *The National Interest* 141 (January/February 2016), 9-17.
- Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, translated by Anthony F. Roberts (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), chapters 2, 6, 9, 13.
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## NOTES



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