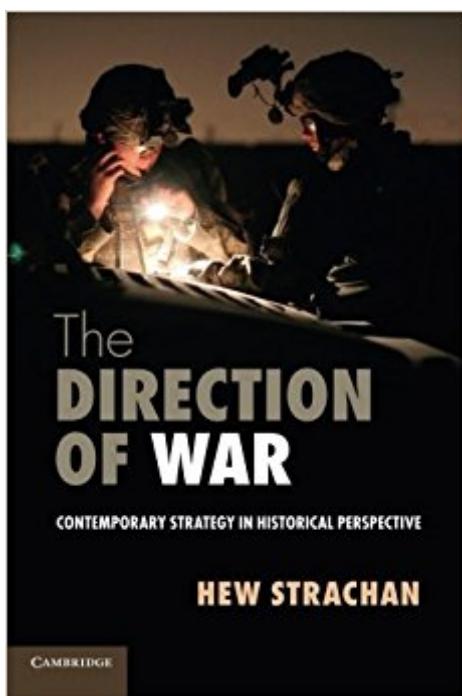


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The Direction Of War: Contemporary Strategy In Historical Perspective



Synopsis

The wars since 9/11, both in Iraq and Afghanistan, have generated frustration and an increasing sense of failure in the West. Much of the blame has been attributed to poor strategy. In both the United States and the United Kingdom, public enquiries and defence think tanks have detected a lack of consistent direction, of effective communication, and of governmental coordination. In this important book, Sir Hew Strachan, one of the world's leading military historians, reveals how these failures resulted from a fundamental misreading and misapplication of strategy itself. He argues that the wars since 2001 have not in reality been as 'new' as has been widely assumed and that we need to adopt a more historical approach to contemporary strategy in order to identify what is really changing in how we wage war. If war is to fulfil the aims of policy, then we need first to understand war.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A very thoughtful, enormously stimulating, and hugely thought-provoking examination of the strategies, concepts, and civil-military relationships that have influenced the character of war in the twenty-first century." General David H. Petraeus, former Commander of United States Central Command and Commanding General of the Multi-National Force - Iraq and the NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan"Another masterpiece from the foremost military academic of our generation. If you want to understand strategy, just read this book!" General Sir David Richards GCB CBE DSO, former Chief of Defence Staff"Unparalleled in historic depth of argument, a surprising yet seductive view on whether modern war should bend to the demands of politics, or politics to the needs of war." Jan Willem Honig, King's College London"Strachan's historical analyses are a valuable addition to the literature on strategy. He invites the reader to think carefully

about what we think we know and understand about strategy, and, perhaps more significantly, why we understand and think about strategy the way we do today." Terry Terriff, University of Calgary "A valuable book tracing an esteemed scholar's contributions to contemporary strategic thinking." Antulio Echevarria, Strategic Studies Institute, United States Army War College "... extremely well written ..." Jerry Lenaburg, New York Journal of Books "[Strachan's] insistence on Clausewitzian exactitude produces a uniquely incisive assessment of key moments in America's twenty-first-century wars that may be particularly valuable to American leadership as it leaves them behind." Foreign Policy's 'The Best Defense' blog "... offers much good sense." Lawrence D. Freedman, Foreign Affairs

The West's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been seen as strategic failures resulting from a lack of consistent direction, of effective communication, and of governmental coordination. Leading military historian Sir Hew Strachan argues here that these failures resulted from a fundamental misreading and misapplication of strategy itself.

This is a very very useful work for members of the contemporary national security strategy community. While Hew's reputation as a historian is very high, it is his thoughtful and insightful comments that he makes in the latter chapters that lay out some of the critical challenges facing contemporary military and civilian leaders.

I think we need to get to know who our new leaders are going to be. This is one of the books on "Mad Dog's" reading list. So far it has been very compelling and interesting. Having lived during the Colin Powell years and Bush years as a young impressionable youth to now see what was really going on and the thought behind it.

While not perfect, certainly one of the best works on strategy I've read recently and possibly the best work on post-1945 strategic history I've read in a while. Two main flaws or issues of contention: Strachan's critique of civil-military relations is at times lucid, but at other times appears to come slightly off the rails. Second, the books origin as a (much altered and added too) collection of articles shows through in the many areas which it doubles back on itself covering ground previously well trodden, at times this is done to build on previously mentioned ideas, at other times it seems overly repetitive. On the whole it is an excellent assessment and critique of the recent history of Strategic Studies as a field, as a historian I find many of his disciplinary critiques of the history/IR

balance quite convincing, but I suppose I'm biased.

Thoughtful, balanced, nuanced and sophisticated, this book raises important methodological questions about strategy, history and policy. Though about military strategy, I highly recommend it to anyone who aspires to make strategy in any sphere, and to anyone who wants to understand war and conflict .

Strachan offers a surprising and profound analysis of the direction of contemporary warfare. Highly recommended for scholars and military professionals. I enjoyed it.

I like Strachan, but I have to agree with the other reviewers. The essays can become repetitive, highly theoretical, and somewhat inconsistent. Still, he writes well on important topics, particularly the taxonomy of strategy, policy, and operational art. Recommended.

This is a must have book. It is, beyond a doubt, the best book I have read on military strategy. The author is clear, provides case examples, and more importantly makes this "readable." I retired with 24 years on active duty and spent 15 more working in PMC's working in austere and conflict environments. THIS book is long overdue.

Hew Stratchan has used a clear and lucid narrative style to throw light upon the otherwise drab subject of strategy, drawing upon his talent as an historian, contemporising it in the current global environment, and has presented a practical guide to understanding strategic theory and putting it in practice.

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