



Mark A. Stoler, “War and Diplomacy: Or, Clausewitz for Diplomatic Historians” (SHAFR Presidential Address), *Diplomatic History*, Volume 29, Issue I (January 2005): 1-16.

Commentary by **Sally Marks**, independent historian
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It is perhaps fitting that a presidential address to the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations on war and diplomacy should limit itself almost exclusively to American wars and American diplomacy and suggest by implication that diplomatic history consists of the history of United States foreign relations. To the bemusement of the rest of us, this peculiar form of isolationism has long been rife among students of American diplomacy. Professor Stoler's comments of course have much broader application although his categorizations do not always fit the rest of the field, which generally examines a more intricate interplay between and among powers with less liberal-conservative or diplomatic-military subdivision. In addition, events such as the Vietnam debacle have far greater impact on interpretations of US foreign policy than on studies of Polish-Czech relations, the Kashmir question, or struggles on the Congo's border.

Similarly, focusing on causes and consequences of wars may be primarily an Americanist tendency. True, I never learned anything of the military or diplomatic aspects of the American Civil War apart from the Emancipation Proclamation's link to relations with Britain until I went to graduate school in the South where everyone else knew every battle of The Waa-uh, but I chalked my gap up to the fact that the Civil War always arrived at midyears. In any event, my professors in European history courses always examined strategic and diplomatic aspects of the Napoleonic wars, the unification of Germany and Italy, and World War I. In those days, we rarely reached World War II.

Nonetheless, it is salutary to see the American Revolution presented in a properly global context and illuminating to receive a much broader view of the Mexican War than is usually offered. Europeanists know that the War of 1812 was a sideshow of the Napoleonic wars, but probably some Americanists need reminding. And given the number of students I have taught who were astounded to discover that World War I was not simply a one year German- American affair, the true scope of that war probably needs emphasis. Its diplomacy is also a splendid example of Clausewitz's dictum about minimizing the foe's allies while maximizing your own.

Professor Stoler is of course right to argue that policy drives both diplomacy and military strategy. I would equally agree that military history has expanded far beyond "guns and battles." Indeed, I find the H-War posts which are copied to H-Diplo to be both fascinating and elevating of debate. And I share Stoler's admiration for Karl von Clausewitz while noting that some of his views, especially on morale and mass support, unless religion was a major factor apply in the modern era chiefly to democratized wars after 1775, not, say, to the War of Devolution.

In examining the role of policy in determining strategy, Professor Stoler deals primarily with states which initiate wars. Yet those who are attacked, once they get past the imperatives of

survival and of retaining or regaining territory, develop wartime policies, too. After 1914, Belgian cabinet members in exile quickly decided that an Allied victory offered a splendid opportunity to rectify the "wrong" (as they saw it) of the territorial truncations imposed in 1839 and bent their efforts to this end.

Needless to say, great powers have more strategic choices and are far more likely to achieve their goals. It is also true that sometimes defenders against attack have to some degree provoked that attack. Arguments in this respect can be made about Britain and France in 1939-40 and the United States in 1941. However, once World War II's Grand Alliance was formed, its disagreements over military strategy were almost always dictated by geography, relative power, and especially differing goals. Churchill's consistent aversion to a landing in France not only stemmed from memories of World War I carnage there and the Gallipoli disaster but also dictated a so-called Mediterranean strategy and invasion of Eastern Europe through difficult terrain -- partly perhaps with an eye to Suez and the route to India but primarily to prevent Russian domination of the European continent. Roosevelt, with a very different vision of the postwar world, in addition to other factors cited by Stoler, was less concerned about a situation which would have been difficult to avoid appreciably beyond the extent to which the Normandy landings blocked it. Of course, for centuries Britain had fought domination of the continent by a single power, and Russia was a historic foe. This reminds us that policies rarely change a great deal when personalities do. Churchill's predecessor, Neville Chamberlain, was less imperially minded and more viscerally anti-Communist than Churchill, but his prewar appeasement was dictated in part -- although not in full -- by fear of Soviet domination of the continent if war eventuated.

Professor Stoler points to the role of military men in formulating policy. Those who have studied Germany strategy and aims in World War I, the evolution of Japanese policy from 1931 to 1941, the question of who influenced Chiang Kai-shek (aside from Mme. Chiang) during World War II, Latin American caudillos, or the Young Turk movement know about that. They know besides that usually only military leaders can overthrow a regime. That does not happen in the United States, but it certainly has elsewhere.

Professor Stoler's description of the motives behind the 1943 Unconditional Surrender declaration (which does not seem to have prolonged the war in any major respect) could hardly be bettered as a succinct summary of the key policy factors dictating a military pronouncement. While not disputing his contention that FDR often took wartime advice from military men, I would note as well his predilection for personal envoys. Some of these were military men, but the most unfortunate of them, while in uniform at the time, was essentially a civilian. In China, Patrick Hurley visited Chairman Mao (greeting him as Mr. Moo and with Choctaw war whoops) who seemed interested in exploring a deal, but then Hurley, who knew nothing of China, rejected the unanimous advice of the embassy, the military mission, and the local US intelligence community and instead backed a faltering and failing Chiang-with costly consequences.

Professor Stoler is no doubt right about the role of the US military during the Cold War. However, as he notes, the trend has not continued unchecked. Whereas Colin Powell's role in decision-making during the Kuwait War was apparently considerable, neither he nor his military successors were heeded about the Iraq War. The State Department, the Pentagon's military brass,

and at least some individuals in the CIA (who repeatedly leaked word that the intelligence was no good) consistently opposed the war to no avail. And the Army Chief of Staff, General Eric Shinseki, paid heavily for his sins, which apparently were honesty, courage, and realism.

That brings me to where Professor Stoler began - with David Brooks's remarks on the PBS Newshour, which either I or Professor Stoler misinterpreted. I thought Brooks was pointing out that we did not know the reasons for this war or the policy goals and telling us that military conquest did not mean victory, as has proved true. As to reasons and goals, it was clear that weapons of mass destruction and alleged substantial (but improbable) Iraqi links to Al Qaeda were talking points to sell the war, not primary aims. It was equally clear that a peaceful, united, democratic, free standing, secular, and pro-American Iraq (never mind the inherent contradictions) was being assumed as an end result-but not actively planned for until the last minute in circles which mattered, since State Department planning was disregarded. Bush obviously intended to evict Saddam Hussein, for reasons which were obscure and not framed in any larger policy of ousting tyrants. Beyond that, I did not know then and do not know now with any certainty what the president's primary goals were, let alone the vice president's. Both had a year before the war to clarify their policies as well as two years since -- and I think we heard little about bringing democracy to the entire Middle East until matters went awry in Iraq. Possibly my own intellectual baggage is to blame, but I interpreted Brooks's remarks in terms of facing a war neither sudden and very short nor blessed with any form of international sanction, a war overwhelmingly opposed by the world's peoples and many of their governments, a war whose consequences could easily be incalculable where clarity of goals and maximum diplomatic adroitness were needed but lacking. And to this day, I wonder whether we had a war without a real policy. If so, Clausewitz must be doing somersaults in his grave.

Sally Marks
Providence, RI

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