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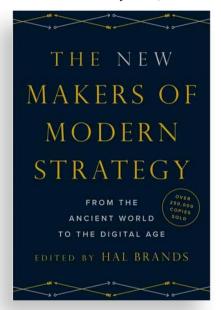


Estandart Reyal u d'a Cheneralisma, prencipal bandera carlista d'a primera guerra bordada por María Francisca de Braganza em 1833 Royal Standard of the General in Chief, main Carlist flag of the First War embroidered by Maria Francisca de Braganza in 1833). Wikimedia Commons

THOMAS MAHNKEN,

Arms Competition, Arms Control, and Strategies of Peacetime

Princeton University Press, 2023.



chapter in a ambitious book edited by Hal Brands¹, the Thomas Mahnken's "Strategies of Peacetime, Arms Competition and Arms Control" focuses on two exemplary patterns: the Anglo-German naval arms race at the beginning of the XX Century and the "strategic interaction" between the US and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

As Mahnken² convincingly explains, strategies in peacetime lay in between

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¹ Chapter 34 in The New Makers of Modern Strategy. From the Ancient World to the Digital Age, edited by Hal Brands, Princeton University Press, 2023.

² Dr. Thomas G. Mahnken is President and Chief Executive Officer of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, an independent and no-profit think tank, and a Senior Research Professor at the Philip Merrill Center for Strategic Studies at The Johns Hopkins

cooperation and conflict, their role is more to dissuade and deter than to defeat the potential adversary or anyway to influence its behaviour.

Arms race is a case in point and the quintessential historical case is the naval arms race between the British and the German Empire. However, the rationale of Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz's strategy, *die Risikotheorie*, was different from the one the author suggest. The *Risikoflotte* Tirpitz envisaged building up since its first naval law should not have been necessarily equal in size to the Royal Navy. In fact, he deemed it impossible to reach full parity. The *Kaiserliche Marine* (not the *Kriegsmarine* of WW 2) should have been equal to 2/3 of the Royal Navy. In case Britain chose war and destroyed the Imperial German Navy, it would amount to a Pyrrhic victory, leaving the Royal Navy at the mercy of the remaining rivals: France and Russia. The minimal deterrence represented by the *Risikoflotte* should have compelled Britain either to enter into an alliance with Germany or at least to keep its neutrality in the European concert of nations.

The *Risikoflotte*, therefore, at least at the beginning, was a diplomatic tool, a *Bundniserzwigenden Instrument*, meant to force upon Britain an alliance with Germany. It developed into a deterrent force as described by Jonathan Steinberg

University's Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). He currently serves as a member of the Congressionally-mandated 2022 National Defense Strategy Commission and as a member of the Army Science Board. Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy Planning from 2006-2009, where he helped craft the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review and 2008 National Defense Strategy, in the Office of Net Assessment, and in the Non-Proliferation Policy Office in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He served as a member of the 2018 National Defense Strategy Commission and on the Board of Visitors of Marine Corps University. He served on the staff of the 2014 National Defense Panel, 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review Independent Panel, the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the Gulf War Air Power Survey. He served for 24 years as an officer in the U.S. Navy Reserve, including tours in Iraq and Kosovo. Dr. Mahnken is the author of Net Assessment and Military Strategy: Retrospective and Prospective Essays (Cambria Press, 2020), Learning the Lessons of Modern War (Stanford U. P., 2020), The Gathering Pacific Storm: Emerging U.S.-China Strategic Competition in Defense Technological and Industrial Development (Cambria Press, 2018), Arms Races in International Politics from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century (Oxford U. P., 2016), Strategy in Asia: The Past, Present, and Future of Regional Security (Stanford U. P., 2014), Competitive Strategies for the 21st Century: Theory, History, and Practice (Stanford U. P., 2012), Technology and the American Way of War Since 1945 (Columbia U. P., 2008), and Uncovering Ways of War: U.S. Intelligence and Foreign Military Innovation, 1918-1941 (Cornell U. P., 2002), From https://csbaonline.org/about/people/staff/thomas-mahnken

in his landmark essay: *Yesterday's deterrent*. Tirpitz took into consideration the risk of a *Copenhagen*, a British pre-emptive strike before the Kaiserliche Marine reached a stage where it could avert such an operation, as it happened to the Danish fleet in 1801 and 1807. The build-up of the German High Sea Fleet should have gone through a *Gefahrenzone*, a danger zone, exposed to a British strike. In fact, Admiral John Fisher actually contemplated the *Copenhagen* option, which King Edward VII rejected out of hand.

The British response to the German challenge involved not only the intensification of the arms race by reaching and keeping a qualitative edge but it also included the rapprochement with France through the *entente cordiale* as well as the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. There was also an attempt by the British to put an end or slow down the arms race: the Haldane mission. While the British were ready to offer colonial compensation in Africa for German naval restraint, Germany insisted on pretending British neutrality in a future conflict with the Franco-Russian alliance. The mission failed but the British revived the arms control option in 1935, with the Anglo-German naval agreement.

The failure of the arms control option in 1912 leads us to the second part of the chapter, dedicated to the "strategic interaction" between the US and the Soviet Union. According to Mahnken, the "action-reaction" model, exemplified by the Anglo-German Naval race, does not apply to the US-Soviet completion during the Cold War, which followed an "asymmetric" pattern, focusing on the (successful) efforts of the US to gain competitive advantages.

The (IV) dedicated to arms control follows the well-established Schelling-Halperin model, which rightly considers arms control as part of security strategies. In fact, as demonstrated by the historical record of the Cold War, strategies of cooperation interacted with strategies of competition. A summary recap of the main bilateral and multilateral arms control agreements gives an overview of the arms control architecture of the Cold War. However, the NPT, the "nuclear Yalta", might have deserved more attention taking also into account the perspective of Non-Nuclear Weapon States.

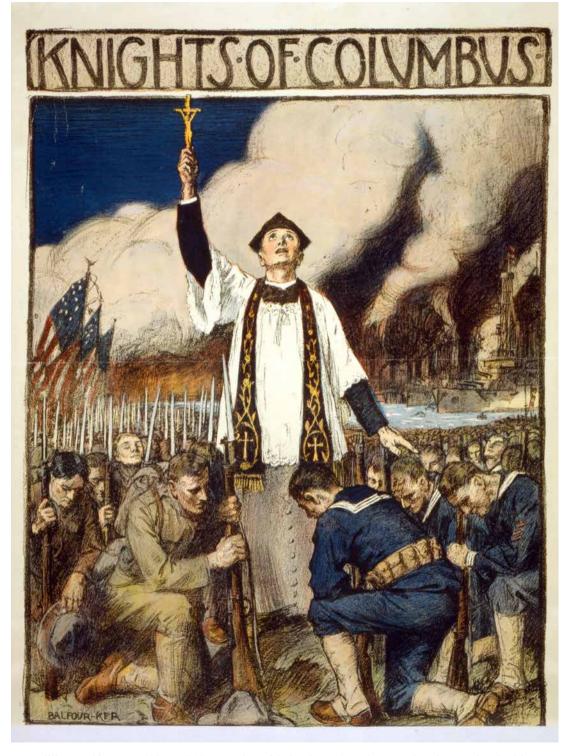
The section (V) dedicated to the Reagan administration's strategy, as a successful combination of competitive arms racing leading finally to arms reduction, is the most interesting. The section traces the origins of National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 75, starting with Richard Pipes' memorandum of 1981

and its subsequent implementation, the Soviet reaction and the final outcome. Reagan's grand strategy is the most fitting example of a successful, multidimensional grand strategy. The final analysis, in section VI, further corroborates the conclusions of the previous ones, emphasizing the strategies for competition, with minimal consideration for arms control strategies of co-operation.

With its emphasis on US strategies of competition during the Cold War the chapter does not take into consideration the gradual establishment, within the framework of the CSCE process, of the elements of the European security architecture such as the CSBM's and the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE) of 1990.

The rise, decline and fall of the European security architecture from 1990 to 2022, could have been tackled with by Part Five of the book, which, unfortunately, it is not the case.

EMANUELE FARRUGGIA



William Balfour Ker (1877-1918), *Knights of Columbus*, 1917 / Poster showing a priest looking heavenward and raising a crucifix, blessing kneeling soldiers. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA. Reproduction Number: LC-USZC4-10131 Rights Advisory: No known restrictions on publication. https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002711996/

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