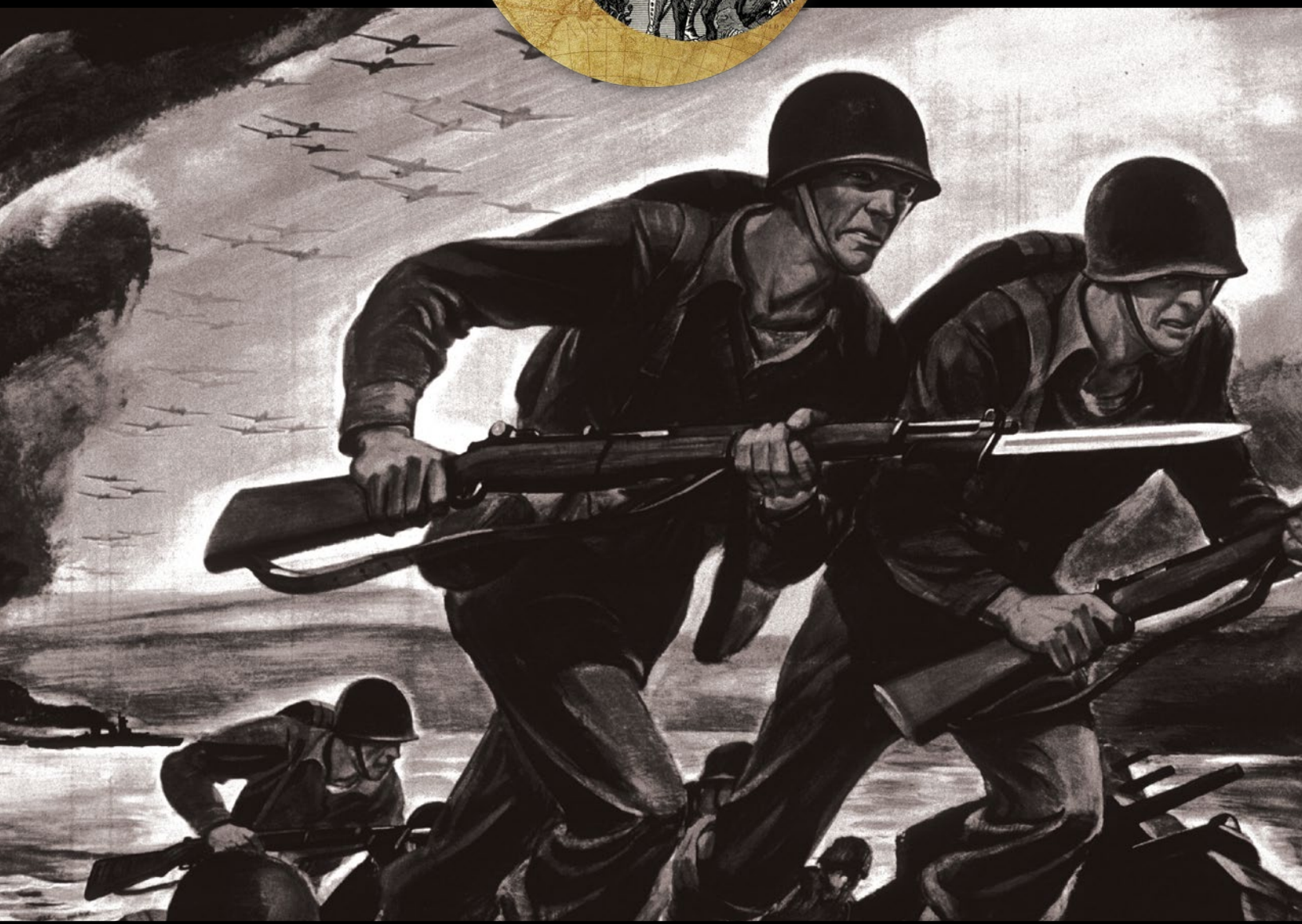


STRATEGIKA

Conflicts Of The Past As Lessons For The Present

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PREEMPTIVE STRIKES AND PREVENTIVE WARS

IN THIS ISSUE

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ABOUT THE POSTERS IN THIS ISSUE

Documenting the wartime viewpoints and diverse political sentiments of the twentieth century, the Hoover Institution Library & Archives Poster Collection has more than one hundred thousand posters from around the world and continues to grow. Thirty-three thousand are available online. Posters from the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia/Soviet Union, and France predominate, though posters from more than eighty countries are included.

Preemptive Strike or Preventive War?

By Williamson Murray

With the troubles bubbling over on the Korean Peninsula, as the North Korean regime approaches possession of nuclear weapons and missiles capable of striking the United States, two words, *preemptive* and *preventive*, have gained increasing currency. While similar in meaning, their context is crucial in understanding their applicability to the current crisis. And here, as is so often the case, history is a useful tool in thinking through the possibilities. A *preemptive strike* usually carries the connotation of attacking or destroying substantial enemy capabilities, in some cases with the hope that it will so wreck the enemy's military forces that he will not be able to use them effectively, should war result. In the largest sense, those who execute preventive strikes have usually understood that their military effort, no matter how successful, would lead to a conflict of some indeterminate length. Thus, the two words are directly tied together in that *preemptive strike* almost inevitably will lead to what the attacker in most cases regards as a *preventive war*.

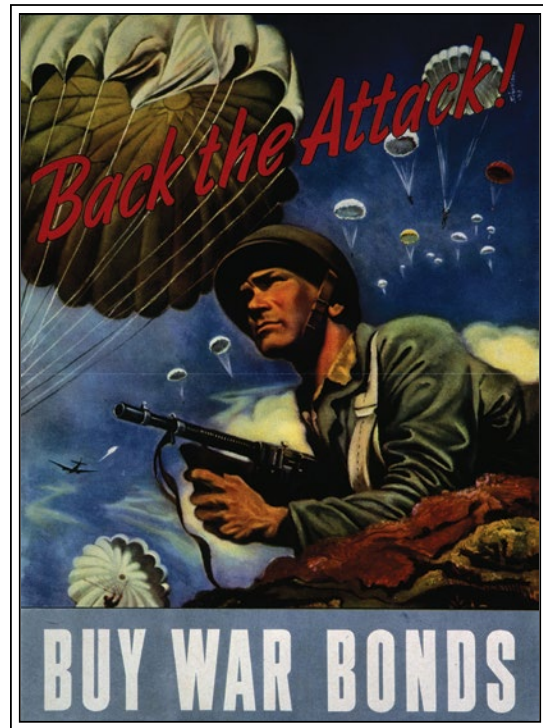


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We, of course, have been down this road in the recent past. In response to 9/11, the Bush administration in its National Security Strategy for 2002 boldly stated that the United States “must be prepared to stop rogue states and their territorial clients before they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction against the United States and our allies and friends.” That statement led directly to the invasion of Iraq in 2003 with the aim of removing Saddam Hussein and his supposed weapons of mass destruction as well as the possibility that he might eventually possess nuclear weapons. Well, there were not any weapons of mass destruction and the United States almost immediately found itself mired in a totally unexpected quagmire—a quagmire at least unexpected by the administration and all too many of its military advisers. The ensuing insurgency against the United States and its allies as well as the civil war between the Sunni and Shi’a religious constituencies proved to be a nightmare for American strategists and policy makers. In retrospect, the result of the Iraq invasion seems obvious, but it was certainly not so at the time.

In reflecting on the Bush administration’s aim of preventing future threats to the homeland by launching a *preventive war* against Iraq, one inevitably runs into Clausewitz’s ironic warning that echoes through much of history: “No one starts a war—or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so—without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it.”¹ In fact, in the real world, once embarked on war, statesmen and generals have almost inevitably discovered that they have underestimated the enemy, or their intelligence was faulty, or they have overestimated their own military’s effectiveness, etc., etc. There are cases in history, of course, where a *preventive war* might well have prevented a far worse conflict. The most obvious case was the refusal of Britain and France to fight in defense of Czechoslovakia in 1938, when Nazi Germany was in a far weaker position than it would prove to be in 1939. But the judgment is only the result of having the terrible strategic results of and fallout from the Munich Conference available to the historical commentator. At the time no one except Winston Churchill—and obviously the Czechs—understood what Neville Chamberlain gave away in surrendering Czechoslovakia to the tender mercies of Nazi Germany.

Perhaps the most useful way to think of *preemptive strike* is that it represents a tactical effort to change the balance of forces in favor of the aggressor, who should understand that the initial strike is only the opening shot that heralds the beginning of war. The dictionary definition indicates that the meaning of preemptive is “to seize the initiative.” But “seizing the initiative” is only the first step. We might start our examination of *preemptive strikes* with the decision of Jefferson Davis and his Confederate cabinet to approve the bombardment of Fort Sumter. Interestingly, internal political considerations appear to have been the driving force behind their decision. Crucially, in April 1861, North Carolina and Tennessee remained on the fence, apparently still uncertain as whether to join the Confederacy or attempt to remain in the Union. Davis and his advisers were also afraid that Federal supply ships would reach Sumter and thus, prolong the crisis. As for worries that such a *preemptive strike* might have a serious impact on Northern public opinion, that possibility received little consideration from the Confederate leadership. In retrospect, Southern leaders were still contemptuous of the Northerners’ ability and willingness to conduct a war seriously. It proved to be a disastrous miscalculation. What the Confederates received in bombarding Sumter was a massive outpouring of Northern popular outrage and a determination to fight the war through to its conclusion. That popular feeling would motivate Union armies throughout the war.

The Japanese make interesting reading, even if their case is more ambiguous. Their two major international conflicts in the twentieth century both began with *preemptive strikes* to insure that their military forces would have the advantage in what they understood would be an upcoming struggle. The attack on Port Arthur in early February 1904 aimed at damaging the Czarist Russian Pacific fleet so thoroughly that it would not be able to play a significant role in the war that the Japanese understood they would have to wage against the Russians in Manchuria immediately after their attack on Port Arthur to achieve their political aims. The Japanese would eventually win their war, but the casualty bill was extraordinarily high, while the nation was bankrupt at the war’s conclusion. Only the facts that the Czarist Army suffered from gross incompetence and that revolution broke out in European Russia in the following year prevented a Japanese defeat.

In the second case, the Japanese *preemptive strike* on the American Fleet at Pearl Harbor in December 1941 was not so successful. It aimed at taking the US battle fleet off the strategic table, while the main Japanese effort conquered the raw material riches of Southeast Asia, in particular oil and rubber. What exactly would happen afterwards was not entirely clear to Japanese planners except that they believed they would have time to build a strategic set of bases on the Pacific Islands that would be impossible for the Americans to break, and thus, the United States would find itself forced to make peace. What happened, of course, is that the Pearl Harbor attack awakened a sleeping giant. Within three years the Japanese were confronting the US Fifth or Third Fleets—depending on who was in command, Admiral Raymond Spruance or Admiral William “Bull” Halsey—which were by themselves larger than all the rest of the fleets in the world combined. The smoking ruins of Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki underlined the extent of the Japanese miscalculation in launching their *preemptive strike* against Pearl Harbor as the kickoff to their war against the United States and its allies in Southeast Asia.

Perhaps the most effective combination of a *preemptive strike* was the opening gambit for a *preventive war* which came in 1967 with the Six-Day War. Outnumbered, at least on paper by the massive Arab armies deploying on their frontiers and with the rhetoric in the Arab capitals indicating an intention to wipe Israel off the map, the Israelis struck first. In this case, the *preemptive strike* consisted of the bulk of the Israeli Air Force flying deep into the Mediterranean and then swinging south to launch a series of devastating attacks on the major Egyptian air fields. In less than half an hour, the Israeli Air Force had wiped out nearly all of Nasser’s air force. With air superiority now assured the Israeli Defense Force’s (IDF) ground forces began a *preventive war* that would last for six days and see the IDF destroy the Egyptian Army in Sinai, capture Jerusalem’s old city, destroy the Jordanian Army and seize the West Bank, and knock the Syrians off the Golan Heights. If the Six-Day War failed to bring peace to Israel, the Jewish state has never been threatened to the extent that it was in June 1967. However, the very success made it impossible for the Arab states to agree to a peace treaty. Six years later, Israeli arrogance and underestimation of their Arab enemies resulted in the costly and inconclusive Yom Kippur War.

Perhaps the most successful *preemptive strike* in history was also launched by the Israelis in June 1981 that wrecked the Osirak reactor that the French were building for Saddam Hussein. Using exquisite intelligence, F-16 fighter bombers, escorted by F-15 fighters, attacked at precisely the time when Iraqi anti-aircraft crews were taking their meals. Saddam was furious, because the strike had set the Iraqi nuclear program back for an extensive period of time. But he had no military answer he could make to the Israelis; thus, bluster and outrage at the Zionist international conspiracy could be his only response.

If the Japanese and Israeli cases provide a somewhat ambiguous story line, there is the grim warning of 1914 that suggests that *preemptive strike* and *preventive war* can have disastrous consequences. In July 1914, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Germany determined to risk a *preemptive strike* to take Serbia out of the game, fully conscious of the fact that such a war might well lead to a general European war. When the Russians mobilized in response to Austria-Hungary's declaration of war on Serbia, the Germans responded by launching a *preemptive strike* against France, the infamous Schlieffen Plan. The German calculation rested on the belief that in launching the unprovoked invasion of Belgium, Luxembourg, and France, the German Army could knock the French out of the war and win what they clearly believed was a *preventive war* against the Entente armies surrounding their frontiers.

Frightened by the buildup of the Czarist Army that had begun shortly after Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, and their increasing diplomatic and strategic isolation, the Germans casually embarked on a *preventive war*. But the Schlieffen Plan failed in the Battle of the Marne. By launching the Schlieffen Plan without serious strategic thought, the Germans immediately brought the British with their Royal Navy and the British Expeditionary Force, which in spite of its small size would prevent the Germans from outflanking the French Army. Moreover, by invading France with so little justification, the Germans insured that international public opinion, particularly in the United States, would be hostile to the Reich's cause right from the war's beginning.

It would seem that *preemptive strikes* may be of some utility, but only in the case where military forces are fully prepared to take advantage of the resulting chaos. But there are all too many cases in history where the attacker who launches the *preemptive strike* finds himself mired in a war that turns out to be far more difficult than he supposed at the beginning. In other words, like the Wehrmacht in 1941, the result of the *preemptive strike*, one that was enormously successful, only resulted in Nazi Germany finding itself tied to a conflict it lacked the resources and capabilities to win.

1 Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: 1976), 579.



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Image credit: Poster Collection, US 1684, Hoover Institution Archives.

Preemptive Strikes and Preventive Wars: A Historian's Perspective

By Barry Strauss

Preventive wars and preemptive strikes are both risky business. A preventive war is a military, diplomatic, and strategic endeavor, aimed at an enemy whom one expects to grow so strong that delay would cause defeat. A preemptive strike is a military operation or series of operations to preempt an enemy's ability to attack you. In both cases, a government judges a diplomatic solution impossible. But judgment calls are debatable and preventive wars often stir up controversy. Preemptive strikes run the risk of arousing a sleeping enemy who, now wounded, will fight harder. Yet both preventive wars and preemptive strikes can succeed, under certain limited circumstances. Consider some examples.

The Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC) is the granddaddy of all preventive wars. The Peloponnesians, led by Sparta, decided to make war on Athens less because of a series of disputes dividing the two blocs than because of the future that they feared, one in which Athens' growing power would break apart Sparta's alliance system. The Athenians wanted to decide the two sides' dispute via arbitration, but the Spartans refused, which cost Sparta the moral high ground. Before Athens and Sparta could fight a proper battle, the war began. Sparta's ally, Thebes, launched a preemptive strike on the nearby city and Athenian ally, Plataea.

Both the preemptive strike and the preventive war succeeded but at no small cost. It took four years of hard fighting and considerable escalation before Plataea surrendered. Sparta emerged victorious against Athens but only after twenty-seven years of intermittent and escalatory warfare. The price of victory was steep, leading to embroilment in war against Persia, a falling-out with Sparta's former allies, and ultimately, the collapse of the Spartan regime after centuries of stability. Athens lost the Peloponnesian War, but managed to preserve and even strengthen its regime at home; it never successfully restored its overseas power.

To turn to another ancient case, Rome frequently engaged in preventive war. The most egregious example was the Third Punic War (149–146 BC), when Rome declared war on Carthage. Carthage offered no serious threat for the foreseeable future, if ever, because Rome had thoroughly defeated it twice in the past. Yet some Romans feared the growing prosperity of its longtime rival. The war was hard fought but led to a complete Roman victory. After a lengthy siege, Carthage was destroyed. It ceased to exist as a polity. For a century it wasn't even a city, but then it was refounded—as a Roman city.

Turning to modern times, Japan fought a preventive war against Russia in 1904–1905 in order to stop the Russians from building up their strength in the Far East, particularly via a railroad through Russian-occupied Manchuria. The Japanese launched the war with a preemptive strike, a surprise attack on the Russian naval base at Port Arthur. The strike weakened the Russian fleet but did not destroy it. Ultimately Japan was successful at sea but compelled to accept a stalemate on land. The outbreak of revolution in Russia forced the Russians to the peace table and handed Japan victory, but although Japan bruised Russia badly it did not win the war on the battlefield.

In June 1967 Israel launched a series of preemptive strikes against Egyptian and other Arab air forces. A devastating success, it contributed greatly to Israel's victory in the Six-Day War. In 1973 Egypt and Syria launched a series of highly successful surprise attacks if not preemptive strikes. Although Israel bounced back by dint of effort and with American resupplying, the Arab states' military successes, along with their use of the Arab "oil weapon," led to victory, especially for Egypt.

None of the belligerents in 1973 had to convince their people to fight, but not all politicians have that luxury. In Rome before the Third Punic War, for instance, the leading war hawk, Cato the Elder, frequently ended his speeches in the Senate with the statement that Carthage must be destroyed. It took an effort to convince the senators to fight a preventive war against a less-than-obvious threat, but it is even more difficult to convince modern liberal democratic societies to do so. Popular and successful politician though he was, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt did not dare ask Congress for a declaration of war against Nazi Germany or Imperial Japan until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Yet both regimes were expansionist powers offering widely—but not unanimously—acknowledged threats to American security. Even after Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt asked Congress for a declaration of war only against Japan, even though the United States and Germany were engaged in an undeclared shooting war in the Atlantic. Not until Germany declared war on the United States on December 11, 1941, four days after Pearl Harbor, did the US Congress declare war on Germany.

Most would consider the Japanese attack on the United States in 1941 a preventive war by Japan, before the United States could intervene in the Far East. The Japanese might say that American economic strictures such as freezing Japanese assets and embargoing oil were tantamount to acts of war. In any case, Japan launched a preemptive attack on both the US navy and air force in Hawaii on December 7, 1941. The strike did great damage but left the Americans with more than enough resources to rebound and win the war. This despite Japan's ability to inflict a second damaging preemptive attack on the US air force in the Philippines, a little over nine hours after news of the Pearl Harbor attack had arrived.

The United States fought a preventive war in Iraq in 2003 against the threat of Saddam Hussein's program of weapons of mass destruction. Some in the US government also hoped to turn Iraq into an ally. The invasion succeeded in defeating Iraqi conventional forces, occupying the country, and toppling Saddam. Yet US intelligence concluded that although Saddam's goal was to recreate his WMD program, that program had been destroyed in 1991. Public support for the war in the United States wavered after the emergence of an Iraqi insurgency. In spite of eventual success by a US counterinsurgency campaign, a change of government in the United States brought a complete withdrawal of remaining American troops from Iraq. Today Iraq has no WMD but it is a divided state, reeling from war with ISIS, and in large part an ally of Iran rather than the United States. If preventive war was a success, it came at a heavy price.

To sum up, preventive wars and preemptive strikes work only under certain conditions. If the attacker carries out a brilliant operation, has overwhelming military superiority, is able to mobilize political support particularly at home but also abroad, and is willing to pay a heavy price and bear a long burden in case the war drags on, then one of those two moves might make sense. States lacking those strengths would do best to avoid such risky endeavors.



BARRY STRAUSS is a military historian with a focus on ancient Greece and Rome. His latest book, *The Death of Caesar: The Story of History's Most Famous Assassination* (Simon & Schuster, March 2015), has been hailed as "clear and compelling" by *TIME* and received three starred reviews from book journals (*Kirkus*, *Library Journal*, *Shelf Awareness*).

His *Masters of Command: Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar and the Genius of Leadership* (Simon & Schuster, May 2012), was named one of the best books of 2012 by Bloomberg.

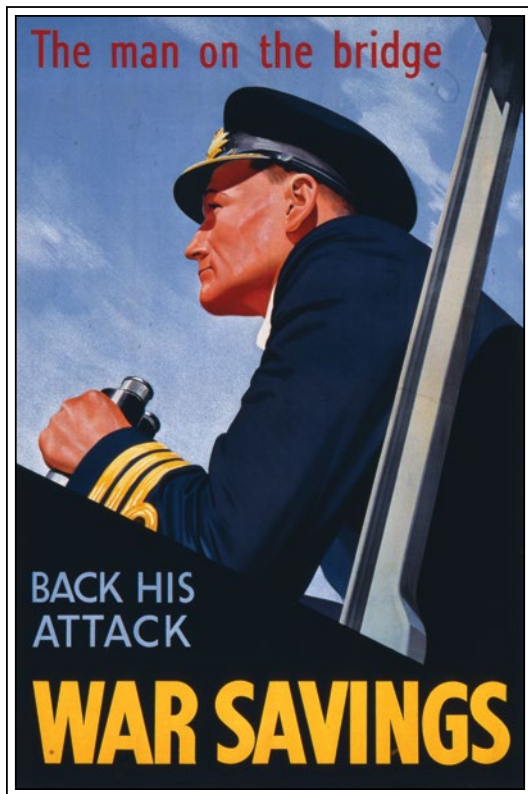


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Calculating the Risk of Preventive War

By Max Boot

The issue of “preemptive” war is more in the news now than at any time since the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The impetus, of course, is the rapid development of North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs, which will soon give Pyongyang the capability to hit any American city with a nuclear-tipped ICBM. President Trump has been threatening “fire and fury” in response, and warning that the United States is “locked and loaded” for war. His national security adviser, Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, has said that North Korea may not be deterrable and that, therefore, a preemptive strike may be justified.

In truth, the use of “preemptive” in this context is a misnomer. In international law, a “preemptive” strike is one undertaken just before an enemy attack. There are few examples of such conflicts beyond the 1967 Six-Day War. The use of force in such an instance is

labeled “anticipatory self-defense” and is clearly legal and logical. If Washington were to acquire intelligence that North Korea was about to attack the United States—or even US allies such as South Korea and Japan—there is no doubt that a preemptive strike would be warranted.

But that is not the situation the United States faces at the moment. If it were to attack North Korea today, it would be launching a preventive, rather than a preemptive, war—a war intended to address a future, rather than imminent, threat. The strategic and legal rationale for such a move is far shakier. There are a few instances where preventive strikes were undoubtedly wise—e.g., Israel’s attacks on nuclear facilities in Iraq (1981) and Syria (2007)—even if not strictly sanctioned under international law. There are also widely cited examples of when a preventive war would have made sense—for example, against the growing power of Nazi Germany in the 1930s. (It may, however, be argued that such a conflict would not have been truly preventive because it would have occurred after Hitler had already provided a *casus belli* by violating the Treaty of Versailles.)

But history is also littered with preventive wars that are widely considered a mistake and sometimes a crime. These include the German attack on France and Belgium in 1914 (motivated by fear of rising Russian power—in order to strike at Russia the German General Staff decided to first defeat Russia’s ally, France); the German attack on the Soviet Union in 1941 (motivated, again, by fear of its rising power); the Israeli attack on the Sinai in 1956 (designed to avert an Egyptian threat, it led to a humiliating climb-down by Israel in the face of American pressure); and of course the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, which was based on a faulty premise (Iraq’s WMD program was not nearly as far advanced as US intelligence feared) and plagued by faulty execution.

In addition, the United States was lucky to avoid a preventive conflict with the Soviet Union during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. If John F. Kennedy had given in to the advice of his more hawkish advisers and launched a military attack on Cuba, the result would likely have been a catastrophe; the Kennedy administration did not realize that the Soviets had already activated tactical nuclear weapons in Cuba and given their commanders discretion to use them.

The track record of preventive conflict makes clear that such a use of force should be approached with great caution—more caution, certainly, than displayed in the Bush administration’s 2002 National Security Strategy, which declared: “Given the goals of rogue states and terrorists the United States can no longer solely rely on a reactive posture as we have in the past. The inability to deter a potential attacker, the immediacy of today’s threats, and the magnitude of potential harm that could be caused by our adversaries’ choice of weapons, do not permit that option. We cannot let our enemies strike first.”

Preemptive strikes make sense against terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula or Islamic State that are plotting attacks against the United States or our allies. But it is a different matter when it comes to a preventive war against North Korea, which is armed not only with nuclear weapons but also chemical and biological weapons and 10,000 artillery tubes in close proximity to Seoul. Any conflict with Pyongyang should be approached with considerable caution given the large-scale loss of life that would be likely.

Such risks are not justified even by North Korea’s growing capacity to attack the American homeland. Kim Jong-un may be an unusually cruel ruler, but there is no evidence that he is suicidal, undeterrable, or bent on aggression. His aim in acquiring nuclear weapons is defensive—to allow his criminal regime to survive. North Korea has possessed formidable conventional, chemical, and biological capabilities for decades without using them, for the simple reason that its rulers realize that any large-scale conflict would result in the destruction of their regime and their personal demise. Even if North Korea acquires a few dozen nuclear weapons capable of hitting the United States, it can still be deterred, just as Russia and China were (and are), by the thousands of nuclear weapons in the American arsenal. It is simply not worth rolling the dice on a preventive war under such difficult circumstances.



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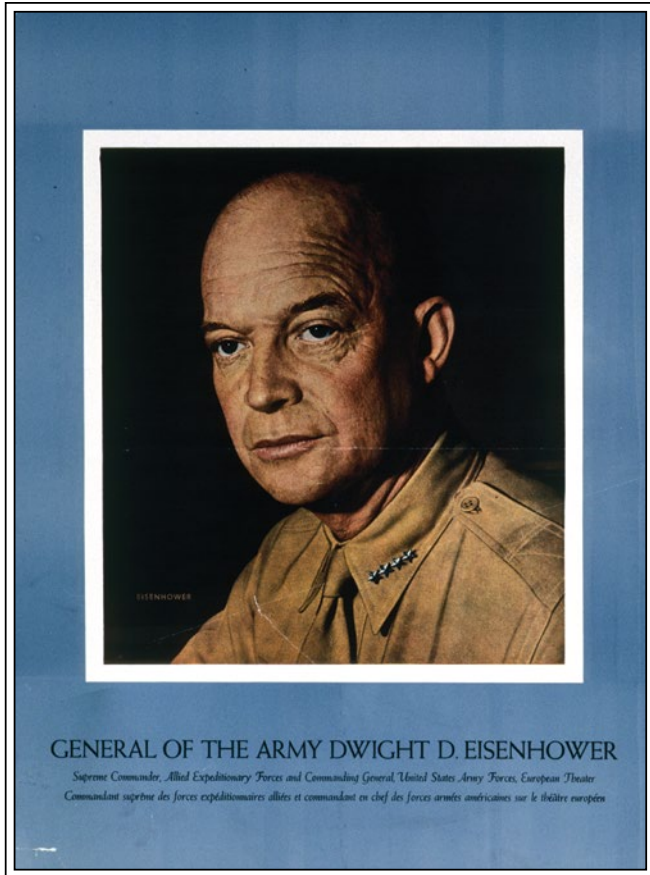


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Considering Preemptive War

By Kori Schake

President Trump set off a rhetorical hand grenade this week, threatening North Korea with “fire and fury like the world has never seen”.¹ The secretary of state rushed to reassure Americans that there was no imminent threat and they could “sleep safe at night”.² The secretary of defense issued a statement bristling with resolve to win any war that North Korea initiates—with the interesting subtext that the United States would not initiate a war with a preemptive attack on North Korea’s nuclear weapons.³

President Trump is by no means the first American president to publicly threaten the government of North Korea. Much of the overheated coverage of President Trump’s admittedly unhelpful statement overlooks that Nobel Peace Prize–winner President Barack Obama publicly said, “We could, obviously, destroy North Korea with our arsenals”.⁴

In the hive of social media, suggestions abound that Secretary Mattis ought to reprise Secretary Schlesinger’s instruction to the chairman of the Joint

Chiefs of Staff in 1973 during President Nixon’s impeachment not to execute any order from the president without consulting him (something Secretary Mattis nipped in the bud by emphasizing his subordination to the only elected national security official). There are even suggestions the secretaries of Homeland Security and Defense conspired to ensure one or the other would be in Washington at all times for similar purpose. The enervation is enough to make one long for the careful procedural deliberation of the Eisenhower administration.

Debates among the Eisenhower administration’s national security cabinet are some of the most serious-minded explorations of strategy ever conducted by Americans. Students of strategy revere the Solarium project, an exercise to design competing strategies for consideration and around which to build administration consensus. But even in the biennial updates of the Basic National Security Policy (as the National Security Strategy was then called—and properly, because the policy provides the ends that strategy must connect to means), the seriousness of the president’s engagement is extraordinary.

For me, the best example comes in the discussion of circumstances related to those under consideration by President Trump about North Korea: whether to preemptively attack the Soviet Union if a nuclear attack on the United States were determined to be imminent. As the U-2 overflights would later reveal, the United States could very likely have completely destroyed the Soviet Union’s strategic nuclear forces. President Eisenhower concluded it to be impractical—and not on military grounds. Morally, Eisenhower believed such a preemptive attack would “violate national tradition.” Eisenhower declined to give himself the option because, as he wrote in his diary, he believed the president of the United States lacked the Constitutional authority to undertake such an attack without the consent of the Congress.⁵ And he could not see how Congress could be speedily and secretly convened to issue a declaration of war.

- 1 <http://www.latimes.com/politics/washington/la-na-essential-washington-updates-trump-warns-north-korea-of-fire-and-1502220642-htmllstory.html>
- 2 <http://abcnews.go.com/International/tillerson-americans-sleep-night-amid-korea-crisis/story?id=49111147>
- 3 <http://thehill.com/policy/defense/345908-mattis-warns-north-korea-of-destruction-of-its-people>
- 4 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/04/26/us-developing-missile-shield-to-guard-against-nuclear-attack-fro/>
- 5 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1983/05/16/no-first-strike/27a61456-e5c0-4512-ae66-ba35506f45f6/>



KORI SCHAKE is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution. During the 2008 presidential election, she was senior policy adviser to the McCain-Palin campaign. From 2007 to 2008 she was the deputy director for policy planning in the state department. During President Bush's first term, she was the director for Defense Strategy and Requirements on the National Security Council. Projects Schake contributed to include conceptualizing and budgeting for continued transformation of defense practices; the most significant realignment of US military forces and bases around the world since 1950; creating NATO's Allied Command Transformation and the NATO Response Force; and recruiting and retaining coalition partners for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Discussion Questions

1. What precisely are the differences between preemptive strikes and preventive wars?
2. Have either preemptive strikes or preventive wars ever resulted in sustainable victories?
3. Are not preemptive strikes and preventive wars often an excuse for otherwise naked aggression?
4. Are preemptive strikes and preventive wars just fancy names for old-fashioned surprise attacks?

POLL: What would be the result of a preemptive strike on Iran's nuclear facilities?

- ☐ Such an attack would ruin the credibility of the United States and render our diplomacy bankrupt.
- ☐ Iran would attack Israel and deploy terrorists throughout the Western world.
- ☐ The wider Middle East would go up in flames.
- ☐ The wisdom of the strike would depend on whether Iran had violated accords and whether it destroyed Iran's program.
- ☐ Iran would do nothing and a preemptive strike would end its nuclear program for good.

Suggestions for Further Reading

- Victor Davis Hanson, “Epaminondas the Theban and the Doctrine of Preemptive War,” in *Makers of Ancient Strategy: From the Persian Wars to the Fall of Rome*, ed. Victor Davis Hanson (Princeton University Press, 2010): 93–117. <http://press.princeton.edu/titles/9115.html>
- Jack S. Levy, “Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War,” *World Politics* 40, no. 1 (October 1987): 82–107. <http://piirs.princeton.edu/wpj>
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- Dan Reiter, “Exploding the Powder Keg Myth: Preemptive Wars Almost Never Happen,” *International Security* 20, no. 2 (Fall 1995): 5–34. <http://www.mitpressjournals.org/loi/isec>
- Randall L. Schweller, “Domestic Structure and Preventive War: Are Democracies More Pacific?,” *World Politics* 44, no. 2 (January 1992): 235–269. <http://piirs.princeton.edu/wpj>
- Stephen van Evera, “Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War,” *International Security* 22, no. 4 (Spring 1998): 5–43. <http://www.mitpressjournals.org/loi/isec>



IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

The Practice of “Principled Realism”

Military History in Contemporary Conflict

As the very name of Hoover Institution attests, military history lies at the very core of our dedication to the study of “War, Revolution, and Peace.” Indeed, the precise mission statement of the Hoover Institution includes the following promise: “The overall mission of this Institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man’s endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life.” From its origins as a library and archive, the Hoover Institution has evolved into one of the foremost research centers in the world for policy formation and pragmatic analysis. It is with this tradition in mind, that the “Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict” has set its agenda—reaffirming the Hoover Institution’s dedication to historical research in light of contemporary challenges, and in particular, reinvigorating the national study of military history as an asset to foster and enhance our national security. By bringing together a diverse group of distinguished military historians, security analysts, and military veterans and practitioners, the working group seeks to examine the conflicts of the past as critical lessons for the present.

Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict

The Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict examines how knowledge of past military operations can influence contemporary public policy decisions concerning current conflicts. The careful study of military history offers a way of analyzing modern war and peace that is often underappreciated in this age of technological determinism. Yet the result leads to a more in-depth and dispassionate understanding of contemporary wars, one that explains how particular military successes and failures of the past can be often germane, sometimes misunderstood, or occasionally irrelevant in the context of the present.

Strategika

Strategika is a journal that analyzes ongoing issues of national security in light of conflicts of the past—the efforts of the Military History Working Group of historians, analysts, and military personnel focusing on military history and contemporary conflict. Our board of scholars shares no ideological consensus other than a general acknowledgment that human nature is largely unchanging. Consequently, the study of past wars can offer us tragic guidance about present conflicts—a preferable approach to the more popular therapeutic assumption that contemporary efforts to ensure the perfectibility of mankind eventually will lead to eternal peace. New technologies, methodologies, and protocols come and go; the larger tactical and strategic assumptions that guide them remain mostly the same—a fact discernable only through the study of history.



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