Book Reviews

The Art of Peace: Engaging in a Complex World

Juliana Geran Pilon
New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 2016, 383 pp.

Juliana Geran Pilon's *The Art of Peace* asks a question of first-rate importance: Why does our country do so badly peacefully protecting its interests? We outspend and outfight our enemies, winning battles—but not the peace. Now, the new challenges such as accelerating nuclear proliferation, Russian hybrid warfare, cyberwar, Chinese aggrandizement, political terrorism, and criminal networks require disenthralling ourselves from the intellectual and emotional pathology Pilon calls "Strategic Deficit Syndrome"—that is, a lack of grand strategy, a failure to synchronize all the elements of statecraft, not just the military, and to study ourselves and the world. This is not a fringe view. She quotes no less an establishment figure than Ambassador Robert D. Blackwill, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, on the so-called National Security Strategy as a "wish list disassociated" from both the world and U.S. objectives. And that is our problem.

Her interest is in minimizing the resort to violence everywhere by understanding war and peace in the manner of the Chinese sage Sun Tzu, as elements of life. Each contains the seeds of the other. We will do better to manage them, rather than to pursue total "solutions" that end in disaster, like President Woodrow Wilson and the war to end all wars. She calls for a comprehensive approach to war and peace that has an enhanced role for civilian talents and agencies, at least so

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that the military may focus on its own areas of expertise. Perhaps most of all, she finds in Sun Tzu a logic both humane and effective: the acme of military skill is to subdue the enemy without firing a shot. Get inside the enemy's head to disrupt his plans, rather than seek cataclysmic battle. Use peacetime to pursue national objectives and thereby make war less likely.

She ranges easily between military theory, international relations, our recent wars, the role of the Constitution, the strategic thought of the American Founders, public opinion, and relations between voters and their leaders. She has studied the relevant government literature, such as reports and strategy statements, carefully—no small job, since many of them are pretty low on signal and pretty high on noise. She delivers her message fluently, with an occasional flash of humor—and exasperation—driven by her ultimate focus on the real world. Readers with an interest in the study of war and peace will come away with their own views challenged and enriched.

Her theme recalls President Lincoln in 1862: "We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country." She finds the country in peril because we are operating on the wrong assumptions about human nature, international relations, state and substate conflict, leaders and the led, and how to organize government for the defense of national sovereignty. She finds us making false dichotomies between national morality and benevolence, on the one hand, with self-respect and preservation, on the other. Her analysis should (but won't) end the jejune debates of academics over "realism" and "idealism," to say nothing of "soft power."

She pays full attention to the relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy. She especially notes the fault line between left and right in our society. It is national defense where identity politics is most dangerous by undermining unity of national purpose about fundamental things. Debates among experts on nuclear forces, for example, still show the traces of "hawk" versus "dove" team identities that go back to the Vietnam War. Pilon's discussion of immigration, the Statue of Liberty, and the incorporation of immigrants is invaluable and would do much to clarify current debates. In general, she calls for transcending "ideological tribalism." Easier said than done, but the saying is the first step in the doing.

At the heart of these problems she finds Strategic Deficit Syndrome (SDS). We don't try to understand our enemies, current and potential, or ourselves, almost guaranteeing failure. In particular,

she finds a failure of our institutions to credit the role of nonmilitary functions in foreign relations, peace, and even the conduct of war. So, these inherently civilian functions in the defense of the nation either fall to the military, which has enough to do as it is, or they don't get done. The cost is to the civilian agencies, in terms of losing missions they should have, and to the military for being given missions it shouldn't have. As Col. Michael R. Eastman writes in his introduction, we blur the distinction between national strategy and military strategy—that is, between what we should do and what we can do.

The military is an asset that can act fast. But it can also be deeply wasteful, compared to previously having invested in, say, public diplomacy, which would explain to foreign publics the ideas and principles that animate us, and for which we will fight if necessary—thereby making it less necessary. The military, says Pilon, "should not be the only—or even the main—branch of government to prepare itself for future threats." And there is no point in blaming the abstraction of "the bureaucracy," says Pilon, because it does not intentionally fail.

Instead, she recommends dropping the distinction of hard versus soft power (the latter concept she examines and demolishes), and dropping the definition of victory as purely military. She calls for a concept of "peacefaring as a tool not only not antithetical to warfare but complementary." But the nonmilitary capabilities—intelligence, foreign aid, public diplomacy, and strategic communications—are in trouble because of SDS. As Pilon notes, there is "confusion about the nation's values and conception of peace, exacerbated by ignorance and misunderstanding of history and tradition."

In contrast, Sun Tzu and the American Founders shared a "keen appreciation for grand strategy and the role of nonlethal power." They appreciated unity of effort, strategic proportionality, and preserving our own freedom of action. Pilon compares George Washington to Sun Tzu, who "explored strategy in peace no less than that in war, for unless the peace is won, wars will necessarily be lost. Moreover, it is during peace that wars have a chance to be prevented."

The Founders, she explains, saw cultural intelligence as central. They saw a need to realistically assess "the total . . . environment of every conflict, anywhere." How modern this sounds when any conflict now, even one fought for a little cause in a little place, can reach out to us.

Sun Tzu thoughtfully observed state relations and broke them down into basic logic in a slim volume we know today as *The Art of War*. No, the Founders were not aware of Sun Tzu, but they rediscovered the inevitable logic of statecraft, which resonated with other sharp observers such as the ancient Western sages the Founders knew well.

Sun Tzu—and history—teach that, contrary to popular belief, peace is not the normal state. Life is perpetual strife; don't make it worse. War may not start from "miscalculation," as the academics often teach. Instead, war and peace are in a continual cycle. There is no need to make it worse, especially by naïve "improvements" or total solutions that go against the natural flow of things. The Treaty of Versailles, for example, was the kind of imposed peace that Sun Tzu, and Sir Basil Liddell Hart, saw as the mirage of victory leading to the next war. Indeed.

But recognizing this, we can carve out decent national and personal lives so long as we minimize the resort to violence and don't chase utopian fantasies that always turn to increased, totalitarian control to force perfection onto society. The latest of the species is political correctness/post-modernism/social justice, which increasingly resembles the visions of George Orwell, in both Animal Farm and 1984.

"Peace" to the totalitarian ideologies such as Communism or Islamism is temporary and tactical on their part—or when they win completely. A strategy of wearing them out needs the efficient allocation of all our relevant capabilities, of which the military is only one, if the most important.

Sun Tzu is simple but deep: The effective leader subdues the enemy without violence. The most effective strategic target is the enemy's mind or plans. The second is his alliances. If that still doesn't work, attack his army. And if that doesn't work, last you may be forced to attack his cities. Mutual Assured Destruction, targeting enemy cities with nuclear weapons and making our own cities equally vulnerable, would have struck him as insane. Instead, trying to make "oneself invincible . . . is the indispensable prerequisite to waging peace." (If only the THAAD system were already deployed in defense of South Korea and Japan.) Pilon writes: "It is precisely because he hated armed conflict that he advocated being prepared for it."

In sum, Pilon makes the case and explains how we could critically examine intelligence and influence operations, alliances, leadership,

team-building, and national ethos. Under Sun Tzu's example we also would study how our Founders' used—and left us a legacy of—liberalism, trade, influencing by example, resilience, and control of government by the Constitution. Sun Tzu would, we can surmise, think that awareness of Strategic Deficit Disorder could focus us on synchronizing elements of power with goals. He might especially address our cultural ignorance and our intelligence deficit. Perhaps some of this critical reexamination of institutions must actually spread to academia and the media. While Pilon is realistic about what can be done in our big institutions—often, not much—she urges action, anyway, as the concrete first step. She is a distinguished academic, but her goal is in the real world.

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Illiberal Reformers: Race, Eugenics, and American Economics in the Progressive Era
Thomas C. Leonard
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016, 264 pp.

Thomas C. Leonard's *Illiberal Reformers* tells a story that captures the mind, breaks the heart, and turns the stomach. Today, many economists argue that minimum wage laws are bad policy because they reduce employment opportunities for low-skilled workers. Leonard recounts the ways in which Progressive Era economists argued that minimum wages were *good* policy precisely because they reduced employment opportunities for those workers. Social scientists in the thrall of the eugenics movement enthusiastically endorsed policies that excluded "unfit workers" from the labor market lest those workers' earnings enable them to continue polluting the gene pool. Leonard shows how policies like minimum wages and prohibitions of child labor were not victories for oppressed laborers under the thumb of rapacious capitalists. Instead, they were explicitly intended to limit competition.

Illiberal Reformers is a detailed, but compact, intellectual history of American economics during its separation from "political economy" and its emergence as a separate profession guarded by a new scholarly organization, the American Economic Association.