

Joint Doctrine Note 1-18



Strategy



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CHAPTER II

STRATEGIC ENDS AND MEANS

“The most fundamental task in devising a grand strategy is to determine a nation’s national interests. Once they are identified, they drive a nation’s foreign policy and military strategy; they determine the basic direction that it takes, the types and amounts of resources that it needs, and the manner in which the state must employ them to succeed. Because of the critical role that national interests play, they must be carefully justified, not merely assumed.”

Robert J. Art, A Grand Strategy for America

1. Introduction

Strategy is about how nations use the instruments of national power to exercise control over people, places, things, and events to achieve strategic objectives in accordance with national interests and policies.

a. Complexity and uncertainty are inherent in any strategic challenge. Unraveling the complexity and resolving the uncertainty is difficult and calls for the ability to think strategically about the problem at hand. Thinking strategically reconciles the ends with the means and circumstances. The following fundamental elements should be considered when developing strategy:

(1) Analyzing the strategic **situation** (the challenge, the security environment and its international and domestic components).

(2) Defining the desired **ends** (the outcomes sought or end states), to include first defining the overarching national or strategic objectives, and then the subordinate objectives.

(3) Developing the **means** (resources and capabilities) to bring to bear.

(4) Designing the **ways** to use the means to attain the desired ends (see Chapter III, “Strategic Ways”).

(5) Assessing the **risks** and **costs** associated with the strategy (see Chapter IV, “Assessing Strategy”).

b. Strategy formulation demands creativity, critical thinking, insight, and judgment, as well as the courage to act on that judgment. Determining the strategic security environment illustrated below requires the strategist to answer innumerable questions to produce an effective strategy. Unfortunately, the strategist may find definitive answers to only some of those questions; for the rest, the strategist must rely on assumptions. In developing strategies, unknown factors often outnumber known factors. Thus, the strategist always operates in an atmosphere of widespread volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. The key for the strategist is to thoroughly understand the

national decision maker's "red lines" for unacceptable outcomes and then design strategies that will steer future outcomes into a range of acceptable end states.

c. Figure II-1 illustrates one way to visualize the interrelationships of the strategic security environment in any situation. It depicts the strategic situation as a cloud; it is shapeless, ever shifting, and considerably opaque. Comprising that cloud are considerations such as the problem's parameters, international and domestic conditions that bear on the problem, national interests and political objectives, threats to those interests (or opportunities for advancing them), and constraints on freedom of action. Identifying national interests is crucial for the development of strategy, national interests are essential to establishing the objectives or ends that serve as the goals for policy and strategy.

d. The key to developing a strategy lies in devising an ends-ways-means-risks/costs relationship that helps the strategic situation and attains the desired end state. Strategists should begin with national interests as a starting point to determine ends. The strategist cannot formulate the ends without considering available means, possible ways, and likely risks and costs. When the calculus does not support the desired end state due to an unacceptable level of risk, cost, or a lack of means, or will then the ends must be adjusted: either changed, limited, or delayed until more favorable conditions exist. The cyclical

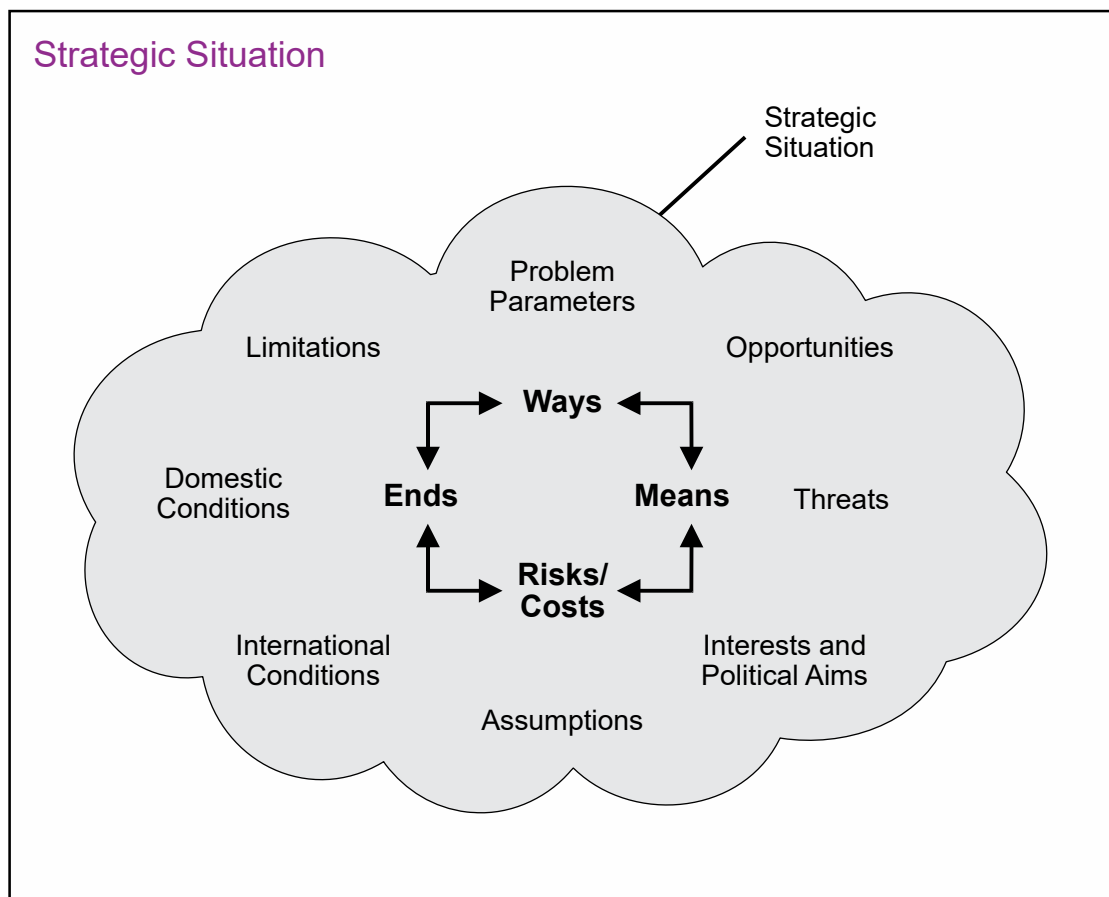


Figure II-1. Strategic Situation

relationship in Figure II-1 demonstrates that there is no end to the process, the strategist should continually reassess the strategy across its execution.

2. Analyzing the Strategic Situation

a. Every security challenge occurs within a broader strategic situation. To provide definitive focus for strategy development, a clear, concise summary problem statement is essential. The strategist should identify the relevant factors (political, military, economic, social/cultural, historical, technological, informational, legal, etc.) essential to producing an accurate description of the security challenge at hand. Included in this elaboration is the strategist's best judgment about the interests, perceptions, and intentions of the other actors associated with the challenge.

b. Events across the strategic security environment powerfully shape both the challenge itself and possible approaches to dealing with it. The strategist should identify the most important regional and global conditions and dynamics that bear on the nature of the challenge and the range of potential strategic responses. National security threats have evolved and future conflicts will likely be dealt with across multiple borders, boundaries, domains and functions. Strategists must think their way to success in incredibly complex scenarios.

3. Defining the Desired Ends

a. The desired ends get to the "why" the strategy is being developed and seeks to answer the question: "How does the state's leadership want the adversary to behave?" Attaining the desired ends defines strategic success.

b. Defining strategic ends begins with determining a nation's interests; those fundamental, enduring conditions a state chooses to pursue. National leaders evaluate the interests to determine if a state has a stake in a particular security issue, determining both why the problem is important and how serious a challenge the problem presents. For the US, the executive branch of the federal government has primary responsibility for determining the national interests that address perceived needs and aspirations external to the geographic borders of the nation. Determining internal or domestic interests is complex with executive and legislative bodies at federal, state, and local levels interacting in the political process to reach.

c. Once the appropriate interests have been determined, the next question for the strategist is to answer why the nation should care enough to do anything about them. The security environment's complexity forces strategists and policy makers to make hard choices. One approach is to categorize national interests as vital, important, and peripheral.

(1) **Vital** interests: What are we willing to die for? States generally have four vital interests: security of the home territory, safety of citizens at home and abroad, economic prosperity, and preservation of the national way of life.

DEVELOPING AN ENDURING STRATEGY—COLD WAR EXAMPLE

In May 1953, shortly after Dwight Eisenhower succeeded Truman as president of the United States, Eisenhower authorized Project Solarium in which three teams would operate in secret at the National War College to propose various strategies for dealing with a Soviet Union that was projected to field an arsenal of thousands of thermonuclear weapons and missiles for delivering them. George Kennan headed Team-A of Project Solarium, and in July 1953, President Eisenhower attended a daylong conference at the White House to hear the various teams make their cases for their strategies. Eisenhower opted for Team-A's approach, which was largely a continuation of the Truman administration's containment policy.

By that autumn, as the National War College Class of 1954 was setting into its academic routine, Eisenhower's National Security Council would turn Team-A's proposal into NSC-162/2, which like NSC-68 strove to contain the Soviet Union, but unlike NSC-68, NSC-162/2 relied to a much greater degree on nuclear weapons and deterrence and less on an expensive conventional military force buildup.

Although later administrations would produce updated National Security Strategy documents, the fundamental concepts developed in Roosevelt Hall in the early years of the Cold War remained the basis for American foreign policy and strategy until the Cold War's end.

Strategic Leadership Foundation Course National War College,
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(2) **Important** interests: What are we willing to fight for? Nations important interests generally include freedom of access to the global commons, regional stability, secure alliances, or the promotion of the state's values.

(3) **Peripheral** interests: What are we willing to fund (deploy peacekeepers, balance trade deficits)?

d. Former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld proposed similar questions in 2002 by asking, "Is the proposed action truly necessary? If people could be killed, ours or others, the US must have a darn good reason." These questions act as a way to understand the intensity of national interests and defining ends. Not all foreign policy crises result in deploying ground forces, and we argue that the type of force deployed (air, ground, or allies) is a good empirical way to understand the intensity of national interests.

e. Should the political leadership decide it wants to use the military instrument of power to attain a desired strategic end, the challenge for the military strategist is to develop options that are coordinated with the other national instruments of power. Taking into account the strategic objective and the strategic situation, the strategist must identify what objective(s), once achieved, will attain the desired strategic end.

f. Military strategists face difficult challenges in formulating the objectives of a wartime military strategy. The strategist must gauge the types and level of effects that will attain the strategic end. Clearly, some wars will call for much wider application of force than others will.

(1) The use or threat of force works via death and destruction. However, death and destruction in and of themselves are seldom warfare's objective. States and non-state actors go to war to attain a particular political, social, economic, or ideological objective. This is of critical importance when the destruction of an enemy's military is either unattainable or undesirable. In these cases, in designing and executing a military strategy, the strategist must identify and recognize the point of victory.

(2) The military instrument must be wielded in combination with the other instruments of power. The use or threat of force must work in concert with the other instruments. Force and violence must be contained at appropriate levels to ensure it does not undermine the effectiveness of concurrent diplomatic, informational, and economic efforts and strategic designs. Since warfare emanates from a desire to produce a different state of affairs, preserving the effectiveness of the other instruments of power is essential to achieving the desired political and strategic objectives. Excessive force can diminish the utility of the non-military instruments of power, and thus irrevocably undermine the desired strategic end.

(3) Military operations may produce tactical and operational gains, but not achieve desired political objectives and enduring outcomes sought. Failure to translate military gains into strategic success may reflect, to some extent, a tendency to focus primarily on affecting the enemy's material capabilities rather than their will to develop and employ those capabilities.

4. Developing the Means

a. The means are the capabilities and resources one can bring to bear in the effort to attain the desired strategic ends. In warfare, the means employed are military capabilities and resources. Warfare is never, however, limited to purely military means. Each of the instruments of national power has its own essential role when adversaries go to war.

b. The 'DIME' acronym (diplomatic, informational, military, and economic) has been used for many years to describe the instruments of national power. These elements align to the major executive branches applying the power: the Departments of State, Defense, and Commerce, as well as the intelligence community.

(1) **Diplomatic Instrument.** The essence of the diplomatic instrument is engagement—how a nation interacts with state or non-state actors, generally to secure some form of agreement that allows the conflicting parties to coexist peacefully. Two important considerations for any strategist contemplating economic action in pursuit of strategic ends are globalization and the particular natures of individual state economies.

(a) Globalization has woven state economies worldwide into an increasingly interdependent web. A disturbance in one state's economy can reverberate widely across

the globe with unexpected consequences. Efforts to influence another's economy can end up producing unintended and often negative outcomes in one's own economy. States have less ability to shape their trade and financial activities to suit a particular strategic purpose when a considerable portion of their economic activity is controlled privately and they rely on free-market forces to generate economic prosperity.

(b) The more another state's economy is privatized and governed by free-market forces, the less effective trade, finance or aid actions will likely produce a particular strategic outcome. On the other hand, in states with authoritarian governments, the state's leaders can often redirect economic activity within the state to blunt the effects results of efforts to use economic tools to coerce the state.

(2) **Information Instrument.** The informational instrument is about creating, exploiting, and disrupting knowledge. A state or non-state actor generally benefits when it enjoys an information advantage over another party. Creating and exploiting that information advantage is key to the employment of the information instrument in NSS. The infrastructure, capabilities, and processes by which a state or non-state gathers, analyzes, disseminates, and exploits information are crucial foundational and institutional dimensions of power. Communication synchronization and information activities are two primary effects created to achieve the state's strategic informational objectives.

(a) Communication synchronization entails focused efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of national interests, policies, and objectives. It actively engages key audiences with coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power. Public diplomacy is good example of strategic communication.

(b) Information activities entail efforts by one party to deny another the ability to acquire and use information, and to protect and enhance its own ability to do the same. This includes protecting not only the information the state has, but also the capabilities for gathering information, analyzing and interpreting it, feeding knowledge gained into decision-making processes, and using information to shape and control state activities. In democratic states, increasingly, this inward focus also includes efforts to ensure the reliability of information available to one's domestic audience so that they can effectively exercise their democratic responsibilities.

(3) **Military Instrument.** The essence of the military instrument is the use of force by one party in an attempt to impose its will on another. This use can entail applying force, threatening the application of force, or enabling other parties to apply force in furtherance of strategic ends.

(a) Force can be applied across a broad spectrum and in multiple forms. It can occur in any domain (land, maritime, air, space) and the information environment (to include cyberspace).

(b) Threat of force is used to compel an adversary to modify current behavior or shape future action. It works by deploying and posturing military capabilities and issuing warning statements that convey a decision to use force if one's conditions are not met.

(c) Force enabling entails increasing the capability of international partners to apply force and usually occurs in close coordination with the diplomatic and economic instruments. It can include providing weapons and materiel, training and education, joint combined exercises, foreign internal defense, and advisory missions.

(d) Security cooperation sets conditions that prevent conflict, shape the security environment, compete for influence below the threshold of armed conflict, and prepare US forces to respond to contingencies. Security cooperation includes military engagements with foreign defense and security establishments, DOD-administered security assistance programs, combined exercises, international armaments cooperation, and information sharing and collaboration. Security cooperation programs and activities are normally integrated and synchronized with the other instruments of national power.

(4) Economic Instrument. The economic instrument focuses on furthering or constraining others' prosperity. Economic power is frequently considered the heart of national power. Whether the state has the economic power to pursue a particular strategy, or whether the effort to attain a strategic end will consume too much of the state's economic power are crucial national strategy judgments. Few, if any, strategies' ends are worth putting the nation's economic power in jeopardy. The economic instrument consists of the following basic capabilities:

(a) Trade of goods and services generally increases the wealth and prosperity of trading partners. Conversely, limits or restrictions on trade (including sanctions and tariffs) can harm an adversary's economy.

(b) Finance and access to capital markets is required for modern businesses to undertake investments to increase productive capacity, and for modern governments to provide expected services (infrastructure, health, welfare, education) to their citizens. Restricting or impeding access to finance and banking systems can undermine others' economic prosperity.

(c) Aid is money (or goods or materiel) given by one party to another to increase the recipient's capability and/or capacity. Granting aid adds to the recipient's ability to develop capabilities, while its withdrawal or reduction hinders that ability.

c. Despite how long the DIME has been used for describing the instruments of national power, US policy makers and strategists have long understood that there are many more instruments involved in national security policy development and implementation. Strategists should be aware that a whole-of-government view might better define US instruments of national power. However, the whole-of-government approach should not be viewed simply as everyone developing the respective plans and then coming together, piecing together the strategies, and deciding which way to go. When different agencies,

DESCRIBING THE ELEMENTS OF NATIONAL POWER: CHANGING THE PARADIGM

New acronyms such as MIDFIELD (military, informational, diplomatic, financial, intelligence, economic, law, and development) convey a much broader array of options for the strategic and policymaker to use.

One of the most important additions to this new acronym is the letter L. Americans take great pride that their nation is governed by the rule of law. Reaffirming the American commitment to the rule of law by simply adding it to our national security dialogue is a step in the right direction to restoring what Joseph Nye termed soft power, which he defines as the “ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments.” Nye contends that soft power “arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideas, and policies. When our policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, our soft power is enhanced” (Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, p. x). Ultimately, it is our policy actions and not our words that will carry the day, but we must begin by expanding our national security vocabulary.

Another important addition to this acronym is the D for development. The US Agency for international Development has played an integral role in advancing America’s soft power image since its foundation in 1961. Despite the agency’s numerous contributions to furthering US interests; until recently, it was rarely included in US foreign policy dialogue.

Recent Secretaries of State and Defense have both renewed the US commitment to the role of development by making it part of their 3D (diplomacy, development, and defense) approach to foreign policy. If American leaders wish to shape today’s environment, then development is, without questions, a key instrument of national security power.

Harnessing America’s Power Joint Force Quarterly, 4th QTR, 2011

each wielding instruments of national power, do not coordinate sufficiently, there is the risk that agencies interpret national policy guidance differently and develop misaligned objectives. As a result, agencies develop different objectives and strategies, set different priorities, and ultimately fail to achieve a **unity of effort** toward attaining unified national strategic ends states.

5. Orchestrating the Instruments of National Power

a. Each instrument of national power works most effectively when it supports and operates harmoniously with the other instruments of national power. Consequently, the strategist should consider what the proposed strategy is asking each instrument to do at any point in time and space. The strategist should ensure each is doing all it can to achieve its particular objective and to support the efforts of the other instruments of national power. Moreover, at any point in time, one of the instruments is usually playing the principal role in advancing the strategy, while the others are supporting. Strategists normally seek to

attain strategic ends at as little cost in lives, resources, property damage, sovereignty, and stability to any of the involved parties as feasible considering national or multinational objectives. Strategists should take care to identify the right combination of instruments of national power. Strategists should also recognize and accept that the available combination of means will be greatly affected by the strategic ends sought and the kind of strategy pursued.

b. Military professionals naturally concentrate on the military means of strategy, but they should also be conscious to exploit and defend other means. They must effectively evaluate the utility of the military instrument. Force is an inappropriate tool for the solution of most political difficulties. Force is at best a necessary means for clearing obstacles to more peaceful solutions. In appraising the relationship between the military instrument and diplomacy, economics, and information in any given situation, military leaders must be prepared to ask the following three questions:

(1) How can military capabilities complement or assist the other instruments in achieving the political objective?

(2) How can diplomatic, informational, and economic capabilities aid military efforts?

(3) How might contemplated uses of force impede or imperil the achievement of the political objective?

6. Adapting the Means

a. Strategy discussions in the abstract often treat means as fixed. In practice, however, in the development and progress of a strategy, strategists frequently tend to adjust means. The occurrences of warfare, successes and failures, lessons learned, new concepts, the emergence of new technologies, the entry of new combatants, may cause the strategist to alter means as reframing occurs and an emergent strategy develops.

b. As resources increase, confidence in one's abilities grows, and as the enemy proves increasingly vulnerable, goals tend to expand. On the other hand, when resources or capabilities prove inadequate, ambitions ought to contract. Means are adjustable to some degree at every level. State or non-states can develop the means to attain their desired ends given time, will, and creativity.

7. Strategy's Relationship with Time

Strategic thinking requires the ability to foresee continuity of strategic choices with the past and the consequences of their intended or unintentional effects in the future. The strategist is concerned with continuity and change. The strategist extrapolates possible futures from the present situation and then constructs a paradigm of change from which strategic planning seeks to shape a more favorable future. Strategists deal with time horizons in terms of years and not only the immediate future.

AMERICA'S COLD WAR STRATEGY—ADJUSTING MEANS TO ENDS

An example of the different ways strategic means can be adjusted to match strategic ends can be found in America's shifting strategy during the Cold War. Beginning with the Truman administration, the American government pursued the political objective of containing the Soviet Union. The means adopted, however, evolved from administration to administration. President Eisenhower's administration employed a strategy labeled "massive retaliation," which relied on the United States' nuclear superiority to deter Soviet expansion. The Soviet Union enjoyed a huge conventional force superiority, but could not match American nuclear capability. Eisenhower wished to avoid building and maintaining large conventional forces, arguing that nuclear weapons provided "more bang for the buck." President Kennedy's administration had an entirely different approach to means. Partly because of the success of the massive retaliation strategy, the Soviets built up their nuclear arsenal to negate the US strategy. At the same time, they found a way around America's nuclear capability by sponsoring numerous "wars of national liberation."

When the resources and commitments needed to implement "flexible response" in Vietnam proved too costly, President Nixon's administration increased the emphasis on diplomatic means in its pursuit of the political objective of containment. Nixon's strategy of détente employed a combination of coercion and inducements designed to convince the Soviets to restrain themselves. Among those policies were the conduct of direct negotiations with the Soviet Union on issues such as arms control, the establishment of links to the People's Republic of China, and a new set of policies toward American allies subsequently known as "the Nixon doctrine."

The Nixon doctrine emphasized establishment of a series of bilateral and multilateral alliances to contain Soviet expansion. The United States would provide economic and military support to its allies, many of whom bordered the Soviet Union or one of its clients.

In 1981, with the country emerging from the national "soul searching" that followed its defeat in Vietnam, the incoming Reagan administration chose to adjust the means of containment one last time. Taking advantage of an economic upturn, Reagan embarked on a significant military buildup coupled with the development of new military technologies, particularly a ballistic missile defense capability and by aiding proxy forces in Afghanistan fighting the Soviets. Their efforts to match the increase in US defense resources cracked a state already beset by formidable political, economic, and social weaknesses, and in 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed.

More recently in 2003, the US entered southern Iraq as liberators. When this assumption was disproved, the strategy changed to counterinsurgency that required a much longer time horizon.

Thus, over nearly half a century, the US adjusted the means brought to bear in its effort to produce the political objective it first adopted in 1947—containment of the Soviet Union. As these episodes from the Cold War and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM show, strategy is never static, and strategists must recommend adjustments to address current realities on the ground. Successes and failures, and the recognition of assumptions proved too bold or too timid, mandate strategists continually reassess their ends and means and the relationship between them.

Foundations of Strategic Logic
National War College

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