



Defence Academy
of the United Kingdom

The Royal College of Defence Studies

Thinking Strategically

October 2010 Edition



CONDITION OF RELEASE

The United Kingdom Government retains all propriety rights in the information contained herein including any patent rights and all Crown Copyright. No material or information contained in this publication should be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form without the prior written consent of the UK Ministry of Defence. The Publication right in these papers vests in the Secretary of State for Defence of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in each of these papers are those of the Author and do not necessarily represent those of the UK Ministry of Defence. Further, such views should not be considered as constituting an official endorsement of factual accuracy, opinion, conclusion or recommendation of the UK Ministry of Defence or any other department of Her Britannic Majesty's Government.

THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF DEFENCE STUDIES

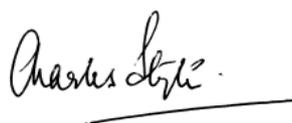
THINKING STRATEGICALLY

FOREWORD

The Royal College of Defence Studies develops international strategic leaders. We do this primarily by bringing in the very best experts in the subject from all over the world. They include heads of state: they are all people who have practised strategic leadership, made good strategy or analysed it well. Some are military; the majority are not.

Over the last three years we have been collating our accumulated insights. These originate from outside speakers, from our own corporate understanding and research, and from the members themselves. As in everything the College does, learning comes from exchange and discussion. We felt it was time that the College knew its own mind on strategy better than it did; it was not good enough to trust that understanding would develop by chance from our lectures, panels, conversations and seminars.

This booklet, *Thinking Strategically*, is the result. It is designed as a practical reader for members as they think about futures in high and responsible places. As a freestanding RCDS document, it does not constitute formal doctrine. Rather, it contains the accumulated ideas of many people including our members, and is the product of distillation and thought within the College. This is the third edition; it is reviewed annually. I encourage readers to comment and criticize constructively where they see room for improvement. Strategy and leadership are not subjects in which anyone has a monopoly of wisdom. They deserve our close attention and best efforts.



Charles Style CBE
Vice Admiral
Commandant
Royal College of Defence Studies
London

26 October 2010

CONTENTS

<i>Section</i>		<i>Page</i>
	Introduction	1
1.	Strategic Theory and Terminology	4
2.	The Strategic Environment	11
3.	Fundamentals of Strategy	19
4.	Instruments of Strategy	27
5.	Strategic Appreciation	34
6.	Strategic Leadership	42
	Further Reading	49

Annexes

A.	Fundamental Factors: An Approach To Strategic Analysis	50
B.	Strategic Crisis Management	54

Illustrations

<i>Figure</i>		
1.1	The Relationships between National Policy and Grand Strategy	Inside Cover
1.2	The Relationships between Grand Strategy, Military Strategy, Operations and Tactics	Inside Cover

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The study of strategy represents the heart and soul of the Royal College of Defence Studies (RCDS). Consistent with our mission, our prime role here is to develop strategic thinkers and leaders who can apply the principles of strategy-making adeptly in today's challenging multinational and multi-agency arenas. The College focuses unequivocally on the making of strategy at its highest plane – at the level of government, both nationally and internationally – within the context of security. This is the province of Grand Strategy, in which the traditional instruments of nations' power (*diplomatic, military and economic*) are orchestrated to meet policy goals. It is our contention that studying strategy at this, the most demanding, level will best inform and prepare individuals for the challenges that may confront them in the future.

In today's complex, globalized and increasingly inter-dependent world, examples of 'effective strategy' at the highest level are hard to find. Despite the best efforts of leaders and policy-makers, the disparity between design and outcome is evident. Many in positions of power and influence, beset close-hand with the complexity and immediacy of the issues they face, would deny this view. This disagreement is instructive. Partly it arises from the contemporary context: an interconnected world in which people, goods and ideas (and ideologies) flow as never before whilst the competition for scarce global resources increases. It may also occur as the consequence of flawed strategic leadership that confuses activity with achievement and obfuscates 'delivery' with realising outcomes. Good strategists, in contrast, focus on the long as opposed to the short-term and view the big picture from perspectives other than the most familiar and convenient.

Against this backcloth, *Thinking Strategically* has been written to summarize the art and science of strategy-making in a handy format, reflecting the refinement of our analysis and informed discussion at Seaford House.

Above all, as its title describes, this booklet is designed to stimulate how to think strategically as opposed to rehearsing what to think; and to inspire further debate, reading and research into strategy-making.

SCOPE

The specific objectives of this booklet are to:

- Summarize the historical origins of strategic theory and terminology, noting their wider application today.

- Describe the strategic environment, illustrating its enduring nature and evolving characteristics.
- Set out the fundamentals of strategic language and thought, expressing the basic concepts that underpin theory and practice.
- Explain the utility and application of the instruments of national power.
- Consider the practical formulation and implementation of strategy, including strategic appreciation.
- Outline the key challenges, qualities and characteristics of statesmanship and strategic leadership.

APPROACH

In meeting our remit of presenting a body of *how to think strategically*, and not of what to think, we have designed the contents of this publication to be descriptive rather than prescriptive. Thus we make no attempt to offer a doctrinal manual or an academic monograph. We include observations from experts in their fields and insights from RCDS into the theory and practice of strategy, to which members contribute and from which they benefit. Our authority stems from good thinking and practice derived from rigorous analysis and frank debate.

We make no effort here to re-state the enduring qualities of leadership that apply at every level. Most experienced leaders at the tactical and operational levels of their professions have learnt and practised these along the way. We do, however, propose that new and higher skills are required at the strategic level. Simple ‘rules’ or principles of leadership and templates of decision-making do not necessarily serve one well in complex situations, where there are no ‘right answers’, just limited choices between the ‘least wrong’ ones.

The realm of strategy abounds with well-laid but misguided plans, their success thwarted by the unintended and unforeseen consequences. Clarity of thought, vision and adaptability exemplify the strategic leader as much as resolution and determination. An ability to live with ambiguity and uncertainty, and not least a pragmatic capacity to take a calculated risk for the longer-term and greater benefit, distinguishes the successful strategic leader from the tactical thinker.

We do not shrink from including controversial material just because it does not match an established, standard view. Like RCDS itself, this booklet is designed to deal with the real world, complex, challenging and ever-changing. The planet is ever more interconnected, and security and defence are no

longer distinct. National strategies, military strategies and corporate strategies all now intertwine, as do international economic and political ambitions, responsibilities and communications. To be at the forefront of strategic thinking we must have the courage of our convictions to contest convention constructively. We should be prepared to question received opinion on any related subject – all on the basis of rigorous analysis and discussion.

In using this booklet, and in thinking about strategy, therefore, we ask that members keep an open mind on what they read and hear. Be prepared to challenge others in a manner you would wish to be challenged yourself. Bear in mind that the experience and views of others, including your peers, are as valuable as your own. So do make the best of the opportunity to learn from our speakers and contribute pro-actively to discussions, whether held in plenary session or in the seminar room. The real essence of RCDS is the quality of that discussion arising from the experience and insights of the members themselves. The course content provides the educative framework on which to build: we shall signpost the way, but the strategic journey you must travel for yourself.

Finally, it can never be stressed enough that the budding strategic thinker, from whatever sector, has to be comfortable with uncertainty and paradox. As the late Sir Michael Quinlan, Permanent Secretary at the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, observed sagely:

In matters of military contingency, the expected, precisely because it is expected, is not to be expected. Rationale: what we expect, we plan and provide for; what we plan and provide for, we thereby deter; what we deter does not happen. What does happen is what we did not deter, because we did not plan and provide for it, because we did not expect it.

THE ‘SEAFORD HOUSE RULE’

The RCDS operates under the ‘Chatham House Rule’: everyone who speaks to us does so freely, understanding that though what is said may be quoted, *it will not be attributed*. This booklet is the product of the accumulated wisdom of speakers, commentators, practitioners, staff and members who have spoken freely here. They include heads of state and other strategic leaders. Under our own ‘Seaford House Rule’, they are not identified, but they are hereby acknowledged and thanked collectively and anonymously.

SECTION 1 – STRATEGIC THEORY AND TERMINOLOGY

This Section provides an overview of strategic theory and terminology, citing their historical precedents, giving current military definitions and demonstrating how the levels of war are linked. It then explores how the term strategy is employed much more widely nowadays across all walks of life, embracing the corporate worlds of finance and governance. It also includes advice on how to apply past experience carefully to meet new strategic conditions.

THE APPLICATION OF THEORY

We cannot start to think intelligently about strategy without applying some theory. Carl Maria von Clausewitz, the celebrated author of *On War*, wrote:

Theory then becomes a guide to anyone who wants to learn about war from books; it will light his way, ease his progress, training his judgement and help him to avoid pitfalls... Theory exists so that one need not start afresh each time sorting out the material and ploughing through it, but will find it ready to hand and in good order. It is meant to educate the mind of the future commander...

He also observed equally acutely that:

So long as no acceptable theory, no intelligent analysis of the conduct of war exists, routine methods will tend to take over even at the highest levels. Some of the men in command have not had the opportunities of self-improvement afforded by education and contact with the higher levels of society and government. They cannot cope with the impractical and contradictory arguments of theorists and critics even though their common sense rejects them. Their only insights are those that have been gained by experience. For this reason, they prefer to use the means with which their experience has equipped them, even in cases that could and should be handled freely and individually.

There is an enduring point here: the practical design and implementation of strategy requires an independent, free and creative spirit, not one that rests on 'routine' or set procedure. Experience at one level of war – or in its equivalent in the business world – does not necessarily equip individuals for higher level responsibilities. RCDS provides an opportunity to learn through the application of theory and the vicarious experience of others, applying it critically and pragmatically as required to meet new strategic circumstances. It may also confirm whether the operationally gifted are capable of making the significant jump to strategic thinking, understanding and action.

HISTORICAL ORIGINS AND DEFINITIONS

Policy

It is important to differentiate strategy from policy, while acknowledging that their very meanings and relationships may differ between nations, organisations and cultures. At its simplest, policy is defined generically as ‘a course of action adapted and pursued by a government’ (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Hence it is fundamentally a political activity.

Policy and Strategy

In the public sector in Britain, and therefore at RCDS, policy can be described more broadly as the political direction given in pursuit of national or collective interests, which strategy is then designed to achieve. It should ordain the *ends*, and indicate the broad parameters of the *means*, but not necessarily the *ways*, which strategy then develops and integrates with the means to achieve policy objectives. Policy typically also contains any constraints that are imposed in the fulfilment of those goals, and circumscribes the means available, be it in terms of time, money, capabilities or usually all of these.

In practice, however, ‘policy’ reaches further down into officialdom within departments of state and much deeper into regional and local government and business than its primary definition would indicate. Most crudely, policies are often loosely used to describe the ‘what to do’ and supporting strategies the ‘how to do it’. For our purposes, a true strategy must contain not only the ‘how’ but also the ‘why’ and ‘what with’. Hence a strategy without clearly stated objectives and resources is but a hollow shell.

Strategy and Subordinate Activities

In turn, in order to meet policy ends, strategy must be designed, constructed and conducted in a robust and thorough manner, as Paul H. Nitze observes:

The notion of strategy implies an organised authority capable of sustained action along the lines of policy.

Meanwhile, it is important to note that, whilst much in military tactics and operational technique changes as technology advances, strategy has much more of an enduring character, as Colin Gray observes:

There is an essential unity to all strategic experiences in all periods of history because nothing vital to the nature and function of war and strategy changes.

It is sensible first to clarify what we mean by strategy, beginning with a short history of the modern concept in order to explain our own working definition.

The English word strategy descends from *strategia*, the function of a *strategos*, the Greek for general; *strategia* is the general's office, and by extension, the skill of generalship and therefore, the art of war. For most of history two conceptual levels of warfare and command sufficed:

- **Strategy** – how to win a war.
- **Tactics** – how to win a battle.

Whereas Marlborough was able to distinguish between the two famously as: 'Sire, my strategy is one against ten, my tactics ten against one', Clausewitz concluded:

Tactics teaches the use of armed forces in the engagement; strategy, the use of engagements for the object of the war.

From the 18th century, as armies grew larger and more complex, a third level became helpful:

- **Grand Tactics** – how to manoeuvre detached corps to bring about the decisive battle and win it.

With the separation of political and military leadership in the modern nation-state, the need arose to distinguish two levels of strategy:

- **Grand Strategy** – decides how the policy for war or peace will be accomplished.
- **Military Strategy** – develops and assigns military forces to achieve the objectives of the Grand Strategy.

Basil Liddell Hart wrote:

Strategy is the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfil the ends of policy.

and that:

The role of grand strategy is to coordinate and direct all the resources of the nation, or band of nations, to the attainment of the political object of the war.

So strategy originates as a military term and retains this association. The hierarchy of activity and command was formerly defined in British Defence Doctrine as:

- **Grand Strategic** – the responsibility of Her Majesty’s Government – is the national political level that sets the government policy on international issues, in effect national aims in peace and war that strategy is to deliver [sic].
- **Military Strategic** – the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence – is the highest military level, developing, sustaining and assigning military forces to support government policy and achieve goals set at the Grand Strategic level.
- **Operational** – the responsibility of the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) – planning military campaigns and deploying forces to achieve the strategic objectives set by the MOD.
- **Tactical** – the responsibility of Field Commanders or Component Commanders – directing operations on the ground, at sea and in the air.

The United Kingdom has recently replaced the term Grand Strategy with **National Strategy**, defining it as:

National Strategy directs the coordinated application of the instruments of national power (diplomatic, economic and military) in the pursuit of national policy aspirations.¹

There is a growing realization, however, that National Strategy is not synonymous with Grand Strategy and that the latter historical term has wider utility, despite its somewhat dated feel.² A coalition or alliance, for example, could develop a grand strategy based on a blend of a number of national strategies in pursuit of common, international goals.

Linking the Levels of Activity

Within the military sphere, it is useful to understand the relationships between the levels of activity in war and conflict, and appreciate how they complement each other. It is a modern truism that these levels have been compressed and that it is often difficult to differentiate between them, and perhaps not

¹ *British Defence Doctrine*, Joint Doctrine Publication 0-01 (JDP 0-01) (3rd Edition) August 2008.

² In a recent Cabinet Office memorandum on the subject, the UK government acknowledges that Grand Strategy is no longer a term that is in widespread use, but it is ‘understood to mean the purposeful and coordinated employment of all instruments of power available to the state, to exploit the changing opportunities and to guard against the changing threats it faces’.

even worth the effort. The associated danger is that those who should think and act strategically may be more comfortable in doing so at the operational and tactical levels; in other words, shrinking from their responsibilities and thereby running the risk of falsely ‘operationalising’ strategy. In an effort to preserve clarity in terminology and usage, we can note profitably A. A. Svechin’s (a Soviet military theorist of the 1920s) succinct observation:

Tactics form the steps from which operational leaps are assembled; strategy points out the path.

Although this is necessary for our purposes, it remains insufficient. Recalling that the focus of our considerations at RCDS is at the grand strategic level, we can link policy and strategy by extending Svechin’s analogy as follows:

If policy provides the general direction and means of travel within a grand strategic context, military strategy determines the appropriate route and timing, and confirms that sufficient resources are available for the journey to be undertaken.

If one accepts this approach, the essential point to be re-stated is that strategy, whether grand or military, is all about integrating the complex calculus of *ends, ways* and *means*. In this model, the business of strategy is a much wider matter than considering the ways alone. In practice, however, ends, ways and means are rarely fixed. Events may change the context and objectives of original political decisions; in conflict, strategy is inherently adversarial and the ways and means must be adjusted accordingly to counter an opponent’s actions. Hence the relationship between ends, ways and means is inherently unstable. It must be managed pro-actively and dynamically – one of the prime roles of the strategic leader.

For the purposes of this booklet and teaching at RCDS, we therefore describe strategy as a ***‘course of action that integrates ends, ways and means to meet policy objectives.’***

A further obstacle to common understanding is the widespread use of the term ‘strategy’ outside the military or political environments according to meanings or interpretations which are not spelled out. Too often ‘strategy’ and ‘strategic’ are used as synonyms for ‘plan’ and ‘important’.

BEYOND THE MILITARY

To gain a more comprehensive view of strategy we must look beyond the military into the corporate world and take a wider perspective. For example:

Strategy is the most misunderstood leadership concept today. Strategy is not about Attila the Hun or Sun-Tzu; it is not about the management disciplines; nor is it about econometrics [sic], numbers or programmatic objectives. At its essence, strategy is an intellectual construct linking where you are today with where you want to be tomorrow in a substantive, concrete manner.

Gordon R. Sullivan and Michael V. Harper

Although for most of history strategy has been thought of as the art or science of warfare, it is now the business of all those who direct the different capabilities of nations or of significant corporate bodies. Organizations see the advantage in thinking and acting strategically. As Helmut Schmidt, then Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, opined in 1986:

What do I mean by the word "Strategy"? Today almost everyone claims to have a strategy. For the advertising manager in the drinks industry it is a sales strategy, for the football coach a match strategy (or in America a "game plan"). Economists preach their governments' business strategies; and self-evidently military strategies exist in all countries, and have done so for three thousand years, because that is how long the word has been in use in the military sense.

In view of the history of strategy, it is not surprising that most early literature relates to military affairs. The term 'strategy', however, is now used in almost every human activity from sport to politics. Despite this phenomenon, there is general agreement that strategy at whatever level, and in relation to whatever activity, whether governmental, business or military, needs to consider and employ all the capacities of the organization concerned to achieve the overall aim in various ways, with a premium placed on the cost-effective and innovative methods

Whatever process is used to derive a given strategy, it must remain adaptable. Although a high-level strategy may have an enduring quality in comparison with its subordinate activities, the application of strategy must still evolve to changing circumstances, and potentially radically so at short-notice. As one commentator has it:

Unlike planning, which is largely cause and effect, strategy is a process interacting with the strategic environment. Strategy is process, a constant adaptation to shifting conditions and circumstances in a world where chance, uncertainty and ambiguity dominate. Proactive not predictive, seeking to influence and shape the ongoing future, rather than trying to set a final end.

Harry Yarger

APPLYING THE EXPERIENCE OF WAR AND CONFLICT

War provides the supreme test of grand strategy when all instruments of national power are applied in the pursuit of victory and national survival. Military tactics and operations remain important but getting the overarching strategy right – including its economic and political aspects – is paramount. An authoritative study of lessons from the Second World War concluded:

No amount of operational virtuosity ... redeemed fundamental flaws in political judgment. Whether policy shaped strategy or strategic imperatives drove policy was irrelevant. Miscalculations in both led to defeat, and any combination of politico-strategic error had disastrous results, even for some nations that ended the war as members of the victorious coalition. Even the effective mobilization of national will, manpower, industrial might, national wealth, and technological know-how did not save the belligerents from reaping the bitter fruit of severe mistakes [at this level]. ... Mistakes in operations and tactics can be corrected, but political and strategic mistakes live forever.³

The test we face in the early 21st Century is to learn how to derive and apply strategy holistically across government (and with other actors) to complex challenges and conflicts that may appear to be discretionary, and in those which strict limits in the expenditure of national blood and treasure are the norm. If national survival is not immediately at stake, political judgement and strategic direction may be clouded by competing priorities for expenditure, or by short-term expediency. In these circumstances, if achieving a national consensus and maintaining popular will prove problematical, the challenge is even more pronounced in an alliance or coalition context.

There are perhaps three over-riding strategic lessons emerging from recent campaigns of intervention. First, a failure to think through the potential unintended consequences of military action; secondly, a failure to apply early on sufficient resources from *all* instruments of power to best combined effect; and thirdly, a poor appreciation of the opposing strategy and how it may adapt. These deficiencies have proved to be dangerous economies of intellectual and physical effort.

As Clausewitz observed, '*No-one in his right mind starts a war without knowing **what** he intends to achieve by it, or **how** he intends to achieve it.* Thus the politics (and hence the policy) must be appropriate in the first place if a successful strategy is to be derived, let alone implemented.

³ Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox and Alvin Bernstein (ed.), *The Making of Strategy – Rulers, States and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 3.

SECTION 2 – THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

This Section describes *an approach* to considering the strategic environment rather than attempting to describe the environment itself, an impossible task within the brief compass of this booklet. During the Course we shall explore various ways to interpret this environment both regionally and thematically in order to deduce a number of enduring aspects of strategy. As importantly, we shall consider the contemporary dynamics and resultant tensions and challenges, including the drivers of conflict.

SOME THEORY

Conceptually, a model of strategy is simple – ends, ways and means – but the nature of the strategic environment makes it difficult to apply. To be successful, the strategist must comprehend the nature of the strategic environment and construct strategy that is consistent with it, neither denying its nature nor capitulating to other actors or to chance.

Harry Yarger

There is much talk of the strategic environment; it is easy to waste time trying to identify and define it. The simple truth is that the environment of strategy is the real world and, whereas policy-makers and planners have the luxury of constructing ideal (and ideological) policies and plans, strategists must act in accordance with constantly evolving reality: shaping, adjusting, coordinating, and above all achieving. This means that strategy-makers need to perceive, analyse and understand their environment clearly and fully – as Clausewitz infers, simple to say, but far from easy in practice.

This means that the strategic environment is boundless. It includes the ideals, ideologies and intentions of policy-makers, the assumptions beloved of planners and programmers, and mathematical principles of accountants. It also comprehends the realms of reality: change, chance, friction, opposition, malice, the forces of nature, science and religion, human strengths, weaknesses, foibles, hopes, fears and beliefs.

To make sense of this we can borrow usefully from General Systems Theory, which describes two types of environment: an internal and an external environment. The theory explores the concept that any system operates in an environment with both internal and external components. Its internal environment is that part of its environment over which it has some control. If some aspect of the internal environment is causing some difficulty for the system, that aspect can be altered.

A system's external environment is that part of its environment over which it has no control, but it still affects the requirements of the system. So a strategist must be aware of the requirements of both the internal and external environments in which he⁴ is working and distinguish between those parts of the environment that can be shaped and those that cannot.

It is unnecessary here to try to list all the elements of the strategic environment, but it is crucial to understand certain essential propositions, and categorising them helps to simplify its complexity. Broadly, the environment can be divided into the following categories or factors:

- **External Environment**
 - Time
 - The Information Domain and the Media
 - Actors
 - Friction
 - Chance

- **Internal Factors**
 - Timing
 - Self

Although it would be neat to consider the external environment and internal factors separately, in practice they are very closely inter-related. To illustrate this point, we start with time and timing and discuss their interplay.

FACTORS

Time and Timing

The first essential proposition is the prime role of time itself, and its attendant, change, in the strategic environment. *The key to dealing with time and change is timing.* Time is an external factor and timing an internal factor. The one we cannot change, the other we can choose. Moving physically from one place to another, or producing one type of good or another is always constrained by time. Whereas in the relatively straightforward realm of planning, and at the ordinary level of tactics, time is a largely linear fact, a tool by which to measure, audit and report progress (D Day, H Hour – with a ‘fudge’ factor to account for friction and chance) in strategy, time is as much a part of the operating environment as geography.

⁴ Unless otherwise specified, masculine nouns and pronouns used in this booklet refer to both men and women.

To the planner time is all; to the strategist *timing is everything*. Timing can be changed as long as time has been allowed for, and this is the critical element in good strategy as in all good drama, both tragedy and comedy: timing is all. The most critical decision is when to commit to action; once committed the strategy is alive and becomes part of time, and timing is increasingly conditioned by events. At the strategic level, time is a dimension to be used and if possible mastered, in the sense that the strategist must understand strategic timing; must know when to play things long, when to give and take time (especially time to think), when to accelerate and change gear, when to allow things to develop and when to strike. The strategist must have an understanding of strategic patience, of the dangers of falling for the attractions of short term gain. Timing is the aspect of the strategic environment which allows us to deal with chance.

There is no real end to strategy: although the strategist should have realistic goals, there are no final conclusions and hence no effective exit strategies but rather transition strategies. As long as there is another day there is a need for continuing strategy; the only alternative is to abdicate responsibility (and hope?) and just let things flow. Just as at the end of the football match there is another for which to prepare, and at the end of the season, another season, so in world affairs ceasing an activity in a geographical space does not mean that there is no longer a requirement for strategy. The British military victory in 1982, for example, does not mean the end of a British strategy in relation to the Falkland Islands. It may mean that the strategy is to remain uninvolved, but even remaining uninvolved in the global world requires at least thought, and probably action; any state must have a policy for non-engagement, and work on it, if only very occasionally to review it and confirm that inaction is still the right strategy.

The Information Domain and the Media

Within an increasingly complex strategic environment, we need to address closely the all-pervasive reach and growing force of information in a digital, globalized society. The conduct of strategy, as with its subordinate operational and tactical level activities, is subject not only to international law, but also to time-sensitive and critical scrutiny at the bars of domestic and international opinion. Thus *information* can be regarded increasingly as a strategic instrument in its own right, with *influence* being its desired product. Furthermore, such means we may wish to employ in pursuit of our objectives may also be used against us. Whilst many international strategies are designed for the common good (such as efforts to limit global warming), much of strategy-making and its execution remains bitterly contested on an inter-state and intra-state basis, whether in war or in various other forms of competition or conflict.

Some regard the media as just important actors. They are now so prevalent, potent and unavoidable that they (its members) form as much a part of the strategic environment as the terrain or weather, and like terrain and weather they cannot be ignored, nor can they be readily shaped or changed. Conversely, they can be employed to advantage (many members of the media would resist this fundamentally), but only under carefully considered conditions.

The media reaches into even the most controlled societies and the most distant places. Even Erich Honecker could not order the machine guns set up in Dresden or Leipzig, or Unter den Linden in Berlin, in November 1989 to fire upon the gathering crowds of East Germany. Both his police and people had seen Tiananmen Square on television, and he knew it. The ubiquity of the media does not apply only to events on the ground.⁵ Their access extends even to military air operations: British pilots have reported being contacted in the cockpit by the BBC, on the safety frequency. The media reach everywhere. They are the environment. They can *never* be ignored.

We shall develop our approach to the media throughout the course, but we would do well to remember here that the information domain is ever expanding in reach and compressing in time, and that the 'high ground' is in danger of being occupied by our opponents, sceptics and doubters who do their best – wittingly or unwittingly – to undermine the 'official' cause, whatever that may be, for good or ill. As Nik Gowing has put it:

In a crisis there is a relentless and unforgiving trend towards an ever greater information transparency. In the most remote and hostile locations of the globe, hundreds of millions of electronic eyes and ears are creating a capacity for scrutiny and new demands for accountability. It is way beyond the assumed power and influence of the traditional media. The global electronic reach catches institutions unaware and surprises with what it reveals.

Overall, this surge of civilian information is having an asymmetric, negative impact on the traditional structures of power. It is subverting their effectiveness, and calling into question institutional assumptions that as organs of power they will function efficiently and with public confidence...
(From *Skyful of Lies and Black Swans*)

Strategic leaders should also understand that within the contemporary information environment a 'battle of narratives' is being waged to inform,

⁵ For example, there was said to be 3574 journalists accredited to KFOR on the day (12 June 1999) the British General Jackson led some 7,500 NATO soldiers from Macedonia into Kosovo in 1999: nearly one journalist for every 2 soldiers and that's not counting the unaccredited.

persuade and mobilise domestic and foreign audiences by state and non-state actors. In this modern conflict of persuasion, it is not so much whose military and other hard assets might be (or prove to be) stronger, but rather whose story is the most compelling. The 'compelling narrative', described by Lawrence Freedman as *'story lines which can explain events convincingly and from which inferences can be drawn'* is one of the strategic leader's most important tools in any national or international endeavour. This insight was well demonstrated by the Cold War, described by another expert as *'the apogee of the twentieth century struggle for hearts and minds...by its very nature a global propaganda conflict, the alternative to real war'*.

Since then, the importance of strategic leaders developing and maintaining attractive, legitimate and convincing positions has been accentuated by a revolution in information technology. This development has brought about the so-called "Age of Democratic Information". The control that states and large organisations used to enjoy over the information disseminated to their people has been broken and, indeed, the voices of authority are now invariably challenged. The strategic leader must therefore expect the narrative, that he and his organisation projects, to be able to compete in a fast, freewheeling and open global conflict of interpretations. This environment provides little room for tailoring discrete messages to separate audiences or to 'spin'. In brief, *only the compelling story, consistently supported by action, will survive the test of the contemporary information environment.*

Actors

Only its human inhabitants make the environment strategic. This reality demands a deep understanding of all actors (states, organisations as well as individuals) involved and their associated characteristics, aspirations, intentions and limitations. We need to distinguish carefully between:

- **Own:** i.e. all those subject to one's own government.
- **Allies.**
- **Partners.** Coalitions rely on partnerships other than alliances.
- **Other interested parties:** e.g. the populace, unallied but engaged nations, NGOs, private sector organisations.
- **Opponents.**
- **Neutrals:** e.g. other nations, NGOs and private sector organisations.

Although many of these may be thought to behave as rational actors in pursuit of their objective interests, they are composed of and led by human beings whose behaviour is driven by more emotional responses, sometimes subconsciously. The leadership may come from a particular group that has its own narrative and deep-seated attitudes to others, both within and without the organisation. In the case of strongly held prejudices for instance, it is important to know which “other” is distrusted, feared or loathed. These human foibles are major constraints to the range of possible policies and are likely to exclude some otherwise rational options, and thereby impact on our own strategy.

Friction

Clausewitz observed that:

Friction is the only concept that more or less corresponds to the factors that distinguish real war from war on paper. The military machine...is composed of individuals, every one of whom retains his potential for friction...the least important of whom may chance to delay things or somehow make them go wrong. (On War, 1832, tr. Howard and Paret)

What was true of the notoriously well-disciplined Prussian military machine of which Clausewitz wrote, is immeasurably truer of the 21st Century strategic environment. Sources of friction abound, including:

- The actions of other actors, not least opponents.
- The effort required to exercise the components of one’s own influence.
- The difficulties posed by geography and terrain.
- The fog of war: misperception and miscalculation.
- The challenge of the media in any true democracy.

Chance

Even the greatest and best served strategist is neither omniscient nor omnipotent; even without misapprehension or miscalculation, the best plans and intentions may have unintended or unforeseen outcomes and consequences. Chance is a constant feature of the strategic environment. It means that the future is always unpredictable; that history does not repeat itself; what has worked in the past will not necessarily work in the future. In most modern texts chance is relabelled as risk.

Field Marshal Erwin Rommel separated the way a strategist applies chance into two domains: risk and gamble. In taking a risk the strategist understands the range of likely outcomes and takes a balanced judgement on which to pursue. In taking a gamble the range of outcomes are unknown and the decision maker commits on the basis of an expectation of gain.

Self

Finally, one of the most important factors (and actors) is oneself. One of Sun-Tzu's most famous insights is the *paramount importance of self knowledge*. This is easily described, but much more difficult to achieve, especially perhaps at senior levels where confidence, power and flattery can drive it out. Subordinates – who are the best providers of insight in this area – become less and less inclined to offer it. Consider:

*He who knows the enemy and himself
Will never in a hundred battles be at risk;
He who does not know the enemy but knows himself
Will sometimes win and sometimes lose;
He who knows neither the enemy nor himself
Will be at risk in every battle.*

AN INTERIM CONCLUSION

In sum, the combination of the external environment and the internal factors that influence and affect our decision-making represent a multiplication of complexity for strategy makers. Thus the strategic context not only provides the backcloth to our consideration of strategy but can also determine largely its outcome. Therefore we must also always strive to consider strategic issues broadly and as deeply as required, and seek to understand and shape the current strategic environment that we act in.

CURRENT STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

Since the strategic environment constantly evolves, in addition to understanding its enduring aspects, it is important to recognise some of its most significant characteristics today:

- There are many new security threats, including competition for resources; climate change; proliferation of WMD; and not least international terrorism. Effective responses require multinational and multi-agency cooperation, for which existing structures are not necessarily well fitted.

- Asymmetrical warfare is the logical strategic choice in most conflicts as parties seek to exploit their strengths at the expense of their opponents. Although this is often perceived as the preserve of the weak, any power may seek to conduct warfare asymmetrically.
- It is commonly supposed that there is a trend from inter-state to intra-state conflict and 'war among the people'. This may be so, but inter-state warfare is not necessarily at an end. It may manifest itself in ways other than the military, including economic and cyber-warfare. Many tensions remain between states: the *potential* for conflict between them thus remains.
- There is an associated trend from imperative to discretionary conflict; from short-term intervention to longer term commitment. Whether this can be sustained, remains to be seen.
- In coalition-building it is important to negotiate the strategy to maximise the coalition, isolate the adversary and satisfy the non-aligned. Some compromises between the 'desired' and the 'achievable' are inevitable in this process.
- The multilateral dimension: UN, Regional Security Organisations; the issue of legitimacy; competition between international organisations.
- The 24-hour media (with their relationship with public opinion), and associated impact on domestic politics, is ever more demanding. Hence there is an extraordinary challenge in maintaining a medium or long-term focus when the public agenda is largely driven by what is seen on screens, whether television or Internet-based.
- To achieve breadth and depth of understanding on the strategic stage demands the best possible intelligence and analysis, 360 degree horizon scanning, and the education and training to encompass it all.

SECTION 3 – FUNDAMENTALS OF STRATEGY

This Section describes the nature and purpose of strategy; describes its characteristics and principles; lists four important tests for its application; and concludes with a note on strategic language. Strategy demands a particular way of thinking and expression if it is to be articulated effectively, let alone implemented in practice. RCDS, as a ‘school for thought’, encourages this approach: on the basis of known fundamentals we apply theory to particular circumstances that cannot be predicted with any certainty. Hence the making and conduct of strategy is a fundamentally practical and pragmatic business, based on clear thinking and sound appreciation.

NATURE OF STRATEGY

Strategy is about realising a vision for the future but we cannot analyse the future. It is not deterministic but probabilistic; in this way, although its principles can be captured and codified as a science, it will always remain in practice an art, underpinned – but not driven by – calculation. As Sun Tzu observed, *‘In the art of war there are no fixed rules’*.

The sheer complexity of the world, the number of independent actors, the range of instruments available, and the uniqueness of each situation or strategic challenge all mean that there is no set formula for strategy. You are planning and operating against an adversary, and with or among any number of other actors, all of whom also have free will and scope for action. In addition, a strategy that has worked in the past will not necessarily function well in the future. For all these reasons, though strategy is a rational process, it is more an art than a science. The Duke of Wellington famously observed:

They (the French) planned their campaigns just as you might make a splendid piece of harness. It looks very well, until it gets broken; and then you are done for. Now I made my campaigns of rope. If anything went wrong, I tied a knot; and went on.

But we must be very wary of making a habit out of developing, or implementing, strategy on a shoe-string basis. Resources do matter, as do the mechanics of deployment and sustainment. In practice, this is not simple business as much of the devil lies in the logistic detail, whether in military effort or in humanitarian aid. As Clausewitz noted:

Everything in strategy is very simple, but that does not mean that everything is very easy.

A good description of strategy that indicates its complexity in the military sphere, often wrongly ascribed to Field Marshal Alanbrooke (but in fact coined by his eminent biographer, General Sir David Fraser, a former commandant of RCDS), is:

The art of strategy is to determine the aim, which is or should be inherently political; to derive from that aim a series of military objectives to be achieved; to assess these objectives as to the military requirements they create, and the preconditions ... the achievement of which is likely to necessitate; to measure available and potential resources against the requirements; and to chart from this process a coherent pattern of priorities and a rational course of action.

Strategy involves the derivation and determination of options, matched against the resources required and the associated risks: economic, military and political. At the completion of this process of appreciation, including confirming the legal and moral basis for any action, a decision must be made. Within the wider grand strategic context, we can review the purpose of strategy by identifying a number of generic goals that have an enduring quality.

PURPOSE

The purpose of strategy is to combine all the means available together in the most economic way to achieve the goals set by policy. These goals typically include national *interests* such as prosperity, security, stability and influence, together with the enduring *values* to which we subscribe. Not only do we seek to protect our values, we may also decide (and feel that we have no option to do otherwise) to *project* them.

Prosperity

Prosperity is perhaps the most straightforward purpose of strategy. It encompasses not just material circumstances, but also more intangible ones to do with the well-being, respect and self-respect, and confidence and potential of an organisation and its members. Hence the goal of prosperity and well-being for all is fundamentally linked to our values.

Security

Security in the widest context is also straightforward, at least conceptually. It means freedom to live, act and make choices. Economic prosperity can to a large extent rest on military security, including the protection of trade routes and, ultimately, the defence of national sovereignty.

Stability

Stability is a more complex idea. The very word suggests the opposite of change, which is itself inevitable. It is important therefore to understand that in using the word we do not seek to deny or overcome change, but to take proper account of it. So stability does not mean stasis or standing still, but rather a firm platform for action, like a ship at sea. It therefore has connotations of balance and harmony. Stabilisation, furthermore, may be conducted as an active process to restore stability to a country or region.⁶

Influence

Influence is the sum of actual power, potential and reputation. It describes and prescribes how much the world (and other actors and their actions) can be shaped in one's favour.

Values

Values are the intangible guiding principles, ideals and ambitions of the organisation. They are therefore part of both the policy which directs strategy, and its objective. So strategy will aim to accord with and sustain and further these values. They may or may not be virtuous, and one of the problems of strategy is that values and interests often diverge.

CHARACTERISTICS OF STRATEGY

The best way to consider strategy is to understand its inherent challenges; to think comprehensively about security issues; and to identify enduring principles that remain helpful *when treated judiciously*. Hence we have produced this booklet; in approach it reflects all that we do in Seaford House. Specifically:

- Strategy flows from policy in the sense that it seeks to achieve the aims of policy. Since policy can change with political leadership, however, strategy must be flexible enough to be adapted to new policy direction and strategy-makers must be able to influence policy. They must constantly remind policy-makers of the art of the possible; of the realities of the environment (not least in relation to time, blood and money: and in all these cases, in conducting strategy, effectiveness trumps efficiency); and that reality is rarely finite: realistic objectives are unlikely to be end-states, exit strategies, clean breaks, but rather

⁶ *Security Stabilisation: the Military Contribution*, Joint Doctrine Publication 3-40, (JDP 3-40), November 2009.

influenced transitions. This can be summarised as the duty to speak truth unto power.

- Strategy should be realistic in concept and application. Although the underlying ideas that provided its inspiration may have an enduring character, strategy must evolve as circumstances change. Hence strategy is not linear: it requires a dynamic and proactive approach, based on realistic assessments and associated decisions made on the balance of probabilities.
- From this flows the strategic 80/20 rule which is crucial to effective strategy. Related to the necessity of planning on the basis of incomplete information (the 'known unknowns'), it is in essence the understanding that nothing is certain (apart from failure if there is no margin for friction, chance and opposition). In effect, it means keeping a reserve of everything: effort, resources, time. It is the embodiment of strategic flexibility and adaptability.
- A good strategist is not just responsive to the situation. He requires a positive and enquiring frame of mind, drawing on a running review of the integration of the ends, ways and means to achieve the policy goals. This approach is very much about refining the 'art of the possible'. It involves influencing others, and hence events, to shape and develop the situation in a favourable manner.
- Strategy is therefore very rarely passive, but rather active, dynamic and transformational (in the sense that it should seek to manage and achieve change for the better). In consequence, it tends to challenge stability, which in turn may challenge security.
- Strategy does not exist in a policy vacuum. Because of the nature of the strategic environment, and that grand strategy emanates from policy, all subordinate strategies are interlinked. They are most unlikely to have neat and final outcomes. This means that the need for good strategy-making is ceaseless. Policy makers should regard themselves as strategic leaders. They need agile strategy-making machinery, peopled with strategic thinkers, with subject matter experts readily available.
- A grand strategy should be owned personally by the leading statesman, both in conception and implementation. It should be conceived by the political leader and developed by experts, who need to have the ability and authority to question and challenge it as necessary.

- Alternatively, a political leader can get his team of strategy-makers to conceive and develop the strategy, and then take ownership of it. What is corrosive, ineffective and all too common is a half way house between the two.
- It is absolutely essential, in whatever manner strategy is conceived and developed, that strategic leaders – both political and military – take personal responsibility for its implementation. Inevitably, since grand strategic reality rarely permits the luxury of end-states, one of the prime responsibilities of strategic leadership is identifying, fostering and mentoring successors who can provide suitable but not inflexible continuity in strategic implementation.
- It should be possible to encapsulate the essence of a strategy in a single line. It should be memorable to those involved in its execution and expressed in a manner which enables them to see their part in achieving it. This is analogous to the principle of a clear and succinct ‘intent’ at the lower levels; and also to the well-known adage that it is easier to write a long and complicated paper than a short and simple one. Brevity and simplicity force clarity of thought and expression, and economy of action. In practice, the intent of all good strategies can be summed up in a page if not better in a paragraph.
- A strategy which has no unifying idea is not a strategy. The importance of *strategic ideas* is often over-looked. The innovative and compelling idea is often the basis of a new strategy: it must not only bind the ends, ways and means but inspire others to support it. It plays as much to people as to process, giving the destination, direction and means of travel in such a manner that they feel bound to make the journey.
- Strategy must provide a ‘golden bridge’ to the future for all those involved; it must conceive of an outcome in which, where competition or conflict is involved, all sides have a stake, and emerge with self-respect and hope. Since strategy is seldom finite, a true strategy will rarely be short term. It must always take account of medium to long term implications, and be adaptable, within policy parameters, over time. This is especially challenging in the light of 24-hour media feeding public opinion’s demand for instant action.
- Finally, we must never forget that our strategy may be contested and not necessarily solely in the military domain. Political, economic and, above all, information levers of power may be applied to oppose

our will and intentions. Thus strategy remains essentially an interactive and iterative process.

PRINCIPLES OF STRATEGY-MAKING

Trotsky wrote that '*principles of strategy never transcend common sense*'. So it makes sense to set out some practical guidance on how strategies should be constructed, which should be considered as complementary to the characteristics of strategy already described:

- **Holistic.** To be effective good strategy needs to take account of those elements that can be changed by action, and those that cannot be changed but will shape the range of possible outcomes.
- **Simple.** In order to guide action strategy must be clearly and readily expressed and understood. In simplicity there is inherent flexibility and strength.
- **Adaptive.** Strategy must be capable of change and response within its broad parameters; it must be pragmatic. Inflexibility, complexity and high levels of interdependence will weaken and undermine good strategy.
- **Seek Advantage.** If the ultimate purpose of strategy is to pursue policy goals, it must seek advantage for the interests of those engaged.
- **Focused on Timing not Time.** We cannot control time but we can use it and choose the timing of our actions. The strategist accounts for time, but the selection of timing of actions is the critical role.

THE FOUR TESTS OF STRATEGY

Meanwhile, in achieving policy goals, strategy must pass four simple tests: it must be *politically acceptable*; it must be *feasible*; it must be *suitable* to the circumstances; and it must be *sustainable* not only in terms of resources, but also in the *common will* of the members of an organisation or the people of a nation to see it through.

At all levels (global, national or organisational), to be sustainable a strategy needs to be seen to be fulfilling the interests of the organisation as perceived by its leaders, and subject to scrutiny by its members and, ultimately, by others at the bars of national and world opinion. These diverse interests will always be concerned with: the existence of the organisation or state (its physical presence); its prosperity; the stability of its environment; and its core values.

Acceptability

Political acceptability is not to be confused with *party* political acceptance. This is a high order test of whether a strategy is legal in terms of its necessity, proportionality and immediacy, and whether it is achievable within the limits of risk that may be politically determined.

A proposed strategy must be politically acceptable. In creating an acceptable strategy, it needs to be built upon a clear understanding of **the interests at stake, and their relative importance**. If the interests at stake are clear, their relative importance is (or is close to being) vital, and the consequences of failure are evident, then a **clear coherent narrative** that underpins any good strategy can be readily articulated.

Suitability

Suitability is a test of whether the strategy proposed is economic and timely in its application of the instruments available. It relates to acceptability in that what is suitable must also be legal and at a level of risk that can be accepted. To illustrate the point: nuclear weapons are the ultimate form of violence that can end most conflicts, however they are only acceptable and suitable in the most special of circumstances. Similarly 'hard power' may be suitable, in that it will more quickly deliver the ends, but may not be acceptable because of the international or national political climate.

The 'ends' of strategy must be compatible with the 'means' and the 'ways'. A suitable strategy is consistent with its overarching policy narrative and coherent with the goals being sought. Suitable strategies must be credible, and to **be credible** they must **be legitimate**.

Feasibility

Strategy must be feasible. This is the simple test of 'whether it can it be done'. This may seem self evident but history is filled with instances of strategies that are acceptable and suitable, but in practice fanciful and doomed to failure. Often feasibility is governed by the minimum, not the maximum, commitment of resources or force, required by policy. Thus the test may become whether the minimum resources are sufficient. 'Just enough' strategies, however, have a bad track record. A wise strategist plans a reserve of effort, not only to cater for set-back but also to be poised to exploit unexpected opportunity.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a broad concept and not restricted to material sustainability. It encompasses both the physical and moral sustainability – simply the will to see it through – that needs to be assessed as a strategy is developed.

Strategy is about the future; it must be sustainable over time. This is as much about moral advantage and the will to maintain a strategy in the long term, as it is about sustaining physical resources.

These four tests are intimately bound up with the assessment of interests. The degree to which interests are deemed to affect the survival of an organisation or state, are vital to its existence, or are of major importance, or are merely peripheral will determine the degree of latitude in how the tests are applied.

THE LANGUAGE OF STRATEGY

The duty of strategy-makers to speak truth unto power means that honesty is essential. This in turn underlines the importance of the language of strategy. It must be understood: clear, accurate, unambiguous and easily (and expertly) translated. It should always avoid hyperbole, generalisation and euphemism. Good strategy provides a clear narrative that links interests to policy goals, and expresses the ways those goals will be achieved. Examples may be instructive here:

- *Hyperbole*: the declaration of wars on drugs, crime, or most recently, on terror have grabbed headlines, but did not amount to or facilitate cogent strategy.
- *Generalisation*: ‘Islamist (or worse Islamic) Terrorism’ and ‘Religious Fundamentalism’ are glaring examples of generalisations which insult and thereby create misunderstanding, anger and ill-will.
- *Euphemism*: ‘Collateral damage’, ‘friendly fire’, ‘ethnic cleansing’ and ‘extraordinary rendition’ are a few examples of euphemisms that undermine strategy and those who make it by demonstrating their discomfort with truth.
- And an example of good strategic language: ‘Germany first’.

SECTION 4 – INSTRUMENTS OF STRATEGY

After a short discussion of hard, soft and smart power, this Section describes the instruments of strategy, and where applicable, the principles that underpin them. Although strategy encompasses all elements of human activity, the principal instruments available to strategy makers and strategic leaders can be categorised quite simply. That said, they overlap and interrelate in very complex ways in practice.

HARD, SOFT AND SMART POWER

The Pope! How many divisions has he got? (Stalin to Pierre Laval in conversation in Moscow in 1935)

The military is generally considered the quintessential instrument of hard power, but it has important “soft power” uses: for instance in training assistance and studying at foreign training establishments. Aspects of some of the other instruments are also “hard” (economic or diplomatic sanctions, for instance) in that they attempt to change other parties’ behaviours against their will. Soft power, as originally conceived by Joseph Nye, is the ability to attract others and to induce changes in their behaviour favourable to your desired outcome.

The essential difference between the two is that the exercise of hard power is *coercion*; that of soft power, *influence*. Soft power improves the prospects for persuasion. *Smart power* is the right blend of hard and soft power for each situation. If coercion becomes necessary, the threat of using hard power is more desirable than having to actually carry it out. Better still: get others to adopt your values and to share your interests.

The essential truth about all these instruments is that strategy must take close account of all of them. The strategic leader need not be personally expert in any of them, but rather must have trusted advisors and subordinates to plan and conduct their own elements of the overall strategy. They must not only be expert, but also understand and respect each other, sharing a common understanding of strategy-making in theory and practice, and ownership of the actual strategy in which they are engaged. Above all, they must never be ‘yes men’, but have the independence of mind, confidence and moral courage always to tell the strategic leader the truth, however inconvenient or unpalatable. The leader must demand this from them, and respect it.

Many of the principles of each of the instruments enunciated below apply to strategy as a whole. The principal distinction is between those which are

owned or directed by the state and those which it can only try to influence. The primary instruments which are generally controlled by the state are political, military, and diplomatic. Then there are those which the state only controls to an extent: economic and informational. Finally are those over which it has almost no control: social, psychological and reputational.

POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC

Politics

One of the paradoxes of strategy is that there is an inverse relationship between legitimacy and freedom of action: the more liberal and democratic a state, the less freedom the leader has, and vice versa. This means that one of the principal responsibilities of the strategic leadership is to master the political aspects of strategy, and especially the art of balancing values and interests, domestic and international politics and opinion, and aspirations with the art of the possible. Much of this is encapsulated in the advice to RCDS of an elder statesman:

- *'A lot of things go wrong in politics because people [i.e. leaders] don't ask the right questions.'*
- *'Call in the experts first before you decide what your policy [then strategy] is to be.'*
- *'Politics will always have its share of madmen, fools, and shits.'*

In the international arena, the successful application of politics requires authority, sensitivity (including social, religious and cultural awareness) and diplomacy.

Diplomatic

Diplomacy is the use of influence to create and maintain alliances or isolate opponents; it aims to achieve objectives by force of argument or threats rather than resorting to actual economic or military power (It is unlikely to work without economic or military back-up: as Frederick the Great observed: *'Diplomacy without arms is like music without instrument'*). In summary, persuasion is always better than coercion, but the latter should never be ruled out in relation to the most vital issues.

Principles of Diplomacy

'One of the things that I learned when I was negotiating was that until I changed myself I could not change others.' Nelson Mandela

- **Long-term Thinking.** It is a principle of diplomacy – and of strategy itself – not to allow short term political expediency to trump either enduring principles or long term interests. One must consider the longer term consequences of actions or interventions. Hard-headed expert analysis is essential, as is the recognition of human weakness.
- **Morality.** Beware double-standards: they may be unavoidable but you must expect others to notice and exploit. You should set a high bar of necessity.
- **Public Diplomacy.** Do not play solely to the home audience; your message may be playing badly to other constituencies abroad, where it could have adverse real-world effects. Both audiences are important.
- **Negotiation.** In international negotiations, have a clear concept of what you are trying to achieve and how far you are prepared to go to achieve it – at least in your mind (for you do not declare your hand before you negotiate).
- **Compromise.** You must give and take. When irreconcilable positions are deeply entrenched the only way forward is to compromise. Know what you are prepared to concede – separate what is essential from what is merely desirable.
- **Preparation.** Work out your responses to the positions likely to be adopted by the others.
- **Comprehension.** Understand those with whom you are dealing, especially their aspirations and expectations, and not least their hopes and fears.
- **Communication.** Be prepared to talk, even to those deemed “unacceptable” or vilified if they are part of the solution: a handshake is not an absolution.
- **Trust.** The diplomat – as does any member of the military – needs many qualities, but among them must be honesty, integrity and courtesy which are essential for building trust and confidence.
- **Respect.** Respect is the key to influencing other proud nations.

MILITARY

In strategy, the military instrument should always and only be used to enforce, or reinforce, the peaceful political, economic and diplomatic ones. This reflects Clausewitz's famous dictum that war is but a '*continuation of political relations by other means*'. He was among the first in the modern era to enunciate a set of principles of war. Most nations have adopted their own principles within doctrine to guide military activity at all levels. Partly because strategy originated in the military, and also because war should only ever be waged as a deliberate act of strategy (and its last resort), it is not surprising that the principles of war retain relevance in strategy at the highest level, and across all its capacities and instruments.

The British Principles of War are listed opposite, along with an explanation of their purpose.

Principles of war guide commanders and their staffs in the planning and conduct of warfare. They are enduring, but not immutable, absolute or prescriptive, and provide an appropriate foundation for all military activity.

The relative importance of each may vary according to context; their application requires judgement, common sense and intelligent interpretation.

Commanders also need to take into account the legitimacy of their actions, based on the legal, moral, political, diplomatic and ethical propriety of the conduct of military forces, once committed.

Principles of War

- **Selection and Maintenance of the Aim.** A single, unambiguous aim is the keystone of successful military operations. Selection and maintenance of the aim is regarded as the master principle of war.
- **Maintenance of Morale.** Morale is a positive state of mind derived from inspired political and military leadership, a shared sense of purpose and values, well-being, perceptions of worth and group cohesion.
- **Offensive Action.** Offensive action is the practical way in which a commander seeks to gain advantage, sustain momentum and seize the initiative.
- **Security.** Security is the provision and maintenance of an operating environment that affords the necessary freedom of action, when and where required, to achieve objectives.
- **Surprise.** Surprise is the consequence of shock and confusion induced by the deliberate or incidental introduction of the unexpected.
- **Concentration of Force.** Concentration of force involves the decisive, synchronised application of superior fighting power (conceptual, physical and moral) to realise intended effects, when and where required.
- **Economy of Effort.** Economy of effort is the judicious exploitation of manpower, materiel and time in relation to the achievement of objectives.
- **Flexibility.** Flexibility – the ability to change readily to meet new circumstances – comprises agility, responsiveness, resilience, acuity and adaptability.
- **Cooperation.** Cooperation entails the incorporation of teamwork and a sharing of dangers, burdens, risks and opportunities in every aspect of warfare.
- **Sustainability.** To sustain a force is to generate the means (conceptual and moral as well as physical) by which its fighting power and freedom of action are maintained.”

MEDIA

'Remember you are never in control.'

(General Sir Sam Cowan, former Director of Public Relations of the British Army, on media operations, 1999)

Having already described the media as part of the strategic environment, it is important to recognise that collectively they are also one of the most powerful instruments that enable strategy. The media are powerful because the public is powerful, even (and increasingly, because of technological developments) in closed and authoritarian states. Indeed, the media have played a key role in all the recent revolutions which have overturned authoritarian regimes. Their impact is greater still in democracies, where their influence on public opinion, and hence on elections and political decision-making (and therefore policy and strategy), is incalculable and highly significant.

Though it is impossible to prove a linear relationship between the media, public opinion and political/strategic decision making, they are undeniably linked; the media have been known to influence strategic decisions directly. So the media are not only part of the environment; they are also an instrument, and to achieve the most out of them, exponents of strategy must understand how the media work as thoroughly as possible. Strategy-makers and strategic leaders can try to be silent, or just use their own media for propaganda, but since the independent media exist, are ubiquitous, hugely popular and powerful, technically competent and free, it is wasteful as well as risky to ignore them.

If the strategic leader accepts that he must compete whole-heartedly in the global information environment, then he needs to consider how to shape that environment and prevail in it. This objective will require the activation of the collective 'voices' of his organisation or nation. His people must broadly believe in a compelling narrative that explains the actions which come about as a result of the leader's strategy. They must also be free to engage with all forms of media in telling their own part in that story. Controlling every exchange between a government or organisation and the global information environment will not only be impossible, but also will never create the 'mass' and agility required to win a global argument. The government or organisation will only be outpaced and outnumbered by quicker and louder voices.

Principles of Media Handling

- **Clear Message.** The first principle in dealing with the media is to have a clear message: be clear on what you are trying to achieve, both in the long term context and the specific message you want to get over. In other words, have a plan and a mission, and keep them simple.
- **Know Your Audience.** The next is to know the target audiences, and the media through which to get to them.
- **No Control.** The third (and master) principle is to remember that with the media you are never fully in control. This is patently true of the free press in democracies, but even the most authoritarian regimes cannot control all the means of communication fully, or how people respond. The lesson is to engage the media, and maintain contact even when keen to say nothing, or frustrated by wilful misunderstanding.
- **Speed.** Speed stems from two connected roots: the age-old desire of mankind to be first with the story, and the ever-increasing speed available through technology. Real time news is now a reality and not only in the broadcast media.⁷ All this means that journalists in the field and editors in their offices demand speed, and expect it of those with whom they do business. Nothing impresses them more than interlocutors who realise this and actually feed them stories as they happen.
- **Trust.** A reputation for telling the truth, speedily, can establish mutual trust with journalists. There are risks, and one must always take care in dealing with journalists because even the most trustworthy of them will be tempted by a Pulitzer Prize-winning scoop (and they will rightly assume that if they know a story but don't publish, someone else will). However, journalists do trust those who are truthful and speedy, and will, for self-interest if for no better reason, refer to those who are both. This is the basis for a professional relationship with the media, in which ideally journalists check before going to print, or broadcasting a story, and even alert one to potential issues.

⁷ The British war reporter Kate Adie gives a striking example from the NATO campaign against Serbia in 1999. She was on the deck of a US Navy Tomahawk cruiser, with other journalists, when the first cruise missile was launched against Belgrade. The New York Times reporter took a photograph of the launch and e-mailed it, with a caption, to the paper. It was embedded in the front page of the first edition before the missile hit its target.

SECTION 5 – STRATEGIC APPRECIATION

In this Section we consider the practical and pragmatic business of making strategy and in particular the strategic appreciation of how to identify and integrate ends, ways and means in order to meet policy goals. We propose an iterative process to strategic appreciation in the form of a guide. We also introduce the notion of strategic choice and then suggest some alternative ways of thinking about putting strategy into action. Finally, we provide some thoughts on dealing with the inevitable obstacles to strategic success.

APPROACH

Simply put, the most important skill of a strategist is *the ability to work out what to do, to express this vision, to determine how to implement it and with what, and then get people to get on with it*. The art of integrating ends, ways and means within a complex and dynamic strategic environment, let alone converting the best-laid plan into successful actions, however, is far from easy. Typically the devil lies in the inevitable detail, or perhaps a critical and unexpected shortage of resource or new factor that crops up along the way. The big, broad brush strokes of the strategic artist – however elegantly sketched – may obscure an uncomfortable truth: rarely can his canvas be completed to the original design. Strategic appreciation involves a cognitive and so very human process that leads to a decision and plan based on the best available, but invariably imperfect, information and understanding. Therefore an intelligent awareness of the limitations of any methodology is absolutely vital.

Moreover, the quest for ‘closure’ in strategic affairs is illusory for one action prompts a reaction and so on: every consequence (both intended and unintended) may change the character of the situation and second-order responses to it. There is inevitably an historic legacy to past strategic action that shapes the present and the future, both in popular perceptions and political perspectives. Yet history does not repeat itself. Hence strategic complexity may multiply bizarrely in unexpected dimensions rather than adding arithmetically in a linear manner. Long-term results may become *incalculable* to any degree of reliability. If we are to understand and attempt to master such challenges of strategy, then we must learn to think comprehensively about the issues at hand, and seek to identify enduring principles that remain helpful when treated judiciously. Throughout we should remain mindful of Quinlan’s paradox.

Furthermore, an annoying aspect of strategic appreciation is that the more we try to calculate the likely effects of our actions (or those of our potential or

actual adversaries) with any certainty, the more *uncertain* the outcomes may appear. This phenomenon should not surprise us: it is no more than Clausewitzian friction writ large. This is not to say that there is no place for any quantitative measurement in the strategic appreciation process, for money, time and space always count. Rather, the majority of the instruments of power and other factors under consideration at the grand strategic level demand a more *qualitative* approach. McNamara's 'body-count' analysis during the Vietnam War, or indeed the over-fascination in the numbers of casualties resulting from contemporary conflicts, serve as potent reminders of the folly of ascribing numbers in defining either 'victory' or 'defeat'. In today's world, success and failure may assume rather different faces; indeed they may be difficult at times to distinguish. In this respect, the moral to the physical is as three is to one.

An eminent academic has proposed that '*it is extraordinary difficult, perhaps impossible, to train strategists*'. We would agree: hence we seek no more than to educate them. There is little merit in attempting to provide potential strategists with anything more detailed than equipping them with the right questions to ask. The same writer (Colin Gray) reminds us of Napoleon's enduring advice:

Tactics, evolutions, artillery, and engineer sciences can be learned from manuals like geometry: but the knowledge of the higher conduct of war can only be acquired by studying the history of wars and battles by great generals and by one's own experience. There are no terse and precise rules at all; everything depends on the character with which nature has endowed the general, on his eminent qualities, on his deficiencies, on the nature of the troops, the techniques of arms, the season, and a thousand other circumstances which make things never look alike.

If we were to insert 'statesman' for 'general' then Napoleon's words apply equally to the realm of grand strategy. Thus we cannot 'do' strategy by referring to a doctrinal handbook. So rather than attempting to set out a 'strategic estimate' with fields to fill in, and boxes to tick, in a misguided desire to 'solve' strategic problems, a more productive approach is to identify the core activities that should be undertaken at this level. Whilst we should embrace useful analytical tools such as SWOT or PESTLE as best we can, we must remain aware that there is no guarantee of deriving, let alone demonstrating, a perfect solution in a 'QED' manner so beloved of mathematics teachers. In short, we need to attempt as broad an appreciation of the factors and forces that may influence our desired outcome before we determine a preferred strategic design.

A GUIDE TO STRATEGIC APPRECIATION

At RCDS, therefore, we propose the following iterative process to strategic appreciation. It involves a number of closely-related steps which require review at each stage to ensure context and coherence without dampening the seemingly irrational spark that may provoke the vital, intuitive leap towards better understanding, decision-making and action. Keep constantly in mind, however, that the timely and appropriate **product** (decision and plan) remains far more important than the process used to derive it. So we suggest that strategists should be guided (but certainly not 'ruled') by the need to:

- **Understand the nature of the problem at hand.** If it is a conflict, for example, consider its origins. What are the current drivers? How will your strategy, or potential mission, alter the dynamics between the parties or indeed the character of the conflict itself?
- **Identify the requirement.** Confirm the broad purpose of any action in terms of the strategic goals that the policy of your government wishes (or may wish) to pursue. Secondly, determine what must be decided, when and by whom; what information/intelligence is required (and in what priority); and those 'known unknowns' that you are willing to accept. In other words, we must define the problem as best we can before attempting to solve it.
- **Assess the situation.** Analyse the factors that impinge on it, and consider how the instruments of power (diplomatic/political, information, military and economic) should be applied. Critically, such analysis should help determine what and how these levers of influence can best be brought to bear, and where and when. For those more familiar with the tactical-operational level estimate process, the need to assess the impact of culture, popular desire and sentiment and other 'softer' factors will often prove challenging, but none the less necessary, elements of strategic thinking.
- **Decide what to do.** At this stage, various options may be considered before one is chosen. On occasion, 'do nothing' may represent a sensible and viable course of action. More often, however, there will be a need to take purposeful action in order to *change the situation to your advantage*, rather than waiting for the situation to change.
- **Make a plan.** Easily said, but far less easily done in practice. The essence of grand strategy lies in the artful combination of the instruments of power that best meet the political objective, both in the short and long terms. Clarity of thought and succinctness of expression (covered elsewhere in this booklet) characterise a useable plan.

Above all, the strategic leader's big strategic idea should be embodied into his **intent**, the most important part of the plan which he himself should word.

- **Co-ordinate and integrate the plan.** This aspect of planning, often overlooked, is critical if allies, coalition partners, government departments, and not least supporting agencies and organisations, are to act as one coherently and credibly, with the product of their efforts proving greater than the sum of their constituent contributions. All those who have a stake in the plan need to have a voice in the process that determines it.
- **Communicate the plan.** At the highest level, the strategic plan needs to be instantly communicable if it is to gain traction at home and abroad. Thus over-complexity may 'kill' the most elegant of plans. Above all, the plan's logic and appeal must be compelling, which implies it must be easily understood.
- **Implement the plan.** Shaping the environment is a vital adjunct to implementation; it may prove its essential pre-cursor. The greatest strategists make their own luck, prepare for success, and then exploit it decisively when it appears.
- **Review your thinking, the plan, and its implementation.** Critical to this part of the process is to test any assumptions made in the initial thinking or planning. Situations change, sometimes dramatically, but the fundamental tenets of strategic design may have a more enduring quality. So there is fine balance to be achieved between 'maintaining previous course' and charting a new one. Assessing the merits of criticism from unpalatable sources, whether allies or opponents, should be part of this approach. Mechanistic staff-led 'process reviews' will not engender flexibility or fresh thinking; honest re-appraisals by leading strategic thinkers that are based on new insights, inspiration and good data should provide this necessary impetus.⁸

STRATEGIC CHOICE

In determining the most effective response to a given situation, there may be a range of strategic choices available. In a war of national survival, the strategic options may be extremely limited and non-discretionary. In other, less demanding, circumstances, there may be a broader range of responses

⁸ A visit to Churchill's Cabinet War Rooms in London, which display living examples of the data for war production and document the progress of the Battle of the Atlantic during the Second World War, make this point far more eloquently than many pages of process.

open. In turn, these may rest on the perceived urgency and importance of the situation, and, more simply, in the capabilities available and applicable.

Looking back over 20 years, we often perceive the Cold War (1945-1990) as a period of stasis in terms of strategic development. The overwhelming memory is of Deterrence Strategy dominating the thinking of that time, but deterrence was but one of three broad strategies that were pursued. In truth not one these strategies predominated but they threaded together over the 55 years, ebbing and flowing as circumstances changed, culminating in the final years in a NATO doctrine that recognised the need to reflect change: 'Flexible Response'. However, it is useful to draw the three main elements apart and to appreciate their core tenets. The three strategies were **Containment**, **Deterrence**, and **Intervention**. The most notable Cold War examples of the latter were in Korea and Vietnam, although there were myriad other lesser conflicts that form part of overall tapestry of these years.

Containment as a strategy owes its origins to the analysis of George Kennan, a US Foreign Service Officer. Kennan wrote an analysis and policy prescription while serving in Moscow, which later became a key element of the first post war US National Security Strategy (NSC 68), subsequently known as the Truman Doctrine. Kennan recognised that once the Soviet Union had exploded its atomic bomb the world had changed, but few recognised that the Soviet Union's mindset was based on Russian culture and ideals. He proposed that the only way the "free world" could counter an aggressive Communist expansion was to seek to contain and challenge it wherever it appeared. The Soviet Union would then collapse on account of its own internal contradictions. Containment is therefore not static; it is in essence dynamic and seeks to contain not only military power but extends to all aspects of national power including the realm of ideas and information.

Deterrence is a classic strategy that depends upon the three Cs: Capability, Credibility and Communication. To be viable, one must have the capability to carry out the threatened sanction. Those whom one seeks to influence must believe that you will use it. You must communicate that you have the capability and the will to employ what is at your disposal, and make clear what the thresholds of use are. As in the Cold War, deterrence may be part of an overall containment strategy. Similarly, intervention may also be an element of an overall containment or deterrence strategy.

Intervention may be a coercive threshold that is part of a broader strategy (such as the Chinese intervention in the Korean War), or it may be an active element in a containment strategy (such as the US intervention in Vietnam), or it may be a discrete effort to restore peace and stability (such as are the ongoing UN operations around the world).

A SHORT HEALTH CHECK FOR ANY NEW-BORN STRATEGY

Does your strategy match the following characteristics?

- The political objective and its context are clearly described, and there is a strong sense of political purpose.
- The nature of the political contest is explained, as is the way we will deal with the problem (and confront our opponents, if this proves necessary).
- The strategy includes an element of surprise or originality, and **seeks to gain and maintain the initiative.**
- The strategy **has at its heart either a single big idea, or a coherent and linked collection of smaller ideas**, with a clear underpinning rationale and unifying purpose.
- The strategy provides guidance on timings, resources and priorities, and can thus be a basis for campaign planning.
- The totality is generally quite simple, or at least capable of explanation in simple terms.
- The strategy must have the capacity to bind the key players and the instruments of power.
- Finally, and last but not least, the strategy must be practical – it must be ‘doable’ in the available time and space.⁹

PUTTING STRATEGY INTO ACTION

Successful strategy may demand the reversal of some comfortable (or comforting) principles and ways of thinking that work tactically or operationally. We may learn at junior levels to treat as anomalies what are in fact norms. How does the international strategist deal with inconsistent national wills, missions, plans, intents and leadership structures?

This state of affairs represents an *apparent* paradox of military doctrine. In providing parameters (or some structure within chaos) for service people at war, it tends to inculcate thinking, planning and execution that is linear,

⁹ Developed from Commodore Steven Jermy's eight characteristics of superior strategy; see the *Further Reading* section of the booklet.

ordered and sequential. A true understanding of the enduring nature of war expressed in doctrine and in wider strategic studies, however, confirms that this is not the case at all. Conflict by its very nature tends to be anarchic. Its resolution likewise may often demand radical, if not unorthodox, solutions.

Thus the good strategist with an open and enquiring mind must attempt to think round corners, and in parallel, employ sets of *different* (as opposed to 'right') ways of thinking, including:

- **360 Degree Vision.** How do the other actors see this issue; how will they react?
- **Mirror-imaging.** Are we making assumptions about others based on our own way of thinking or behaviour?
- **80:20 Balance.** Do we understand the necessity of planning on the basis of incomplete information; what, at least, are the 'known unknowns'?
- **Centres of Gravity.** What matters most to the key actors and how are they linked?
- **Soft vs. Hard power.** What is the best way of achieving the strategic aim?
- **Actual vs. Potential power** – Is your overall influence greater by not acting but retaining the ability to intervene in a range of different situations or by intervening militarily in one, getting fixed and reducing your wider influence?
- **Unintended Consequences.** What unintended consequences may arise, directly or indirectly, from taking decisive action? Careless language repeatedly creates unintended consequences.
- **Friction.** Bearing in mind the complexity of alliance-building, managing the international system and coordinating operations, as well as the adversary's scope for action, what are the realistic timescales – and (maybe de-graded) results?
- **Golden Bridges to the Future.** How to ensure that all parties, including adversaries, emerge with self-respect and positive prospects?
- **End-state.** Accounting for all above, what strategic goal is realistic?

DEALING WITH OBSTACLES

To guard against over-optimism by the reader that the use of this booklet's guide to strategic appreciation will lead to success, we conclude this section by dwelling on the obstacles that will remain, regardless of our recommendations. Reminding ourselves of the humility that every leader should have towards the uncertainty of outcomes, the RCDS guide expresses what every strategist should aim for, but paradoxically knows that he is unlikely to achieve. Leaders, by nature of the human condition, are never adequate in all respects to their calling and, in the same manner, the provision of information, interpretation, advice and other ingredients crucial to sensible strategic appreciation will always fall short of the requirement. These preconditions warn the leader that his strategy at its best may shape or deflect events in his favour, but it will never make them subservient to his will.

Many strategists who have presented at RCDS have developed their own techniques to deal with the obstacles to sound strategic appreciation. A former UK CDS is known to have developed an instinct of doubt towards officially-provided information, always testing it against a network of informal advisors whom he had collected from outside the MOD. A US general with a distinguished record of service in Iraq said that in planning he relied more on the works of the early twentieth century traveller Gertrude Bell about Mesopotamia than briefings from his staff or from the US State Department.

Leaders have stressed to RCDS the importance of exercising and improving the decision-making environment of their organisations as an ongoing investment in strategic appreciation. Some RCDS speakers cite a failure by the UK MOD to gain early traction with other government departments about its concept of the 'Comprehensive Approach' as a missed opportunity to set favourable conditions for the strategy-making of the last seven years.¹⁰ The 'Butler Report' provides insight as to how in the most historically-tested of government mechanisms an '*informality and circumscribed character*' can still creep in, '*reducing the scope for informed collective political judgement*'. With these and other wolves, leering from the woods around the strategist's camp, an inexhaustible vigilance appears to be required to pre-empt every one of them from breaking cover. The strategist must try to do exactly that and demonstrate intelligent resolve in pursuing his objectives.

Where are the best lessons? At the end of a recent RCDS strategic leadership phase, over 90% of the membership considered (rightly in our view) that the best strategic insights had come from civilian (including commercial) speakers and panellists. What does this indicate?

¹⁰ For a detailed analysis, see House of Commons Defence Committee, 'The Comprehensive Approach: the point of war is not just to win but to make a better peace' Seventh Report of Session 2009-10.

SECTION 6 – STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

This Section explores the art of statesmanship, the highest form of strategic leadership, that bridges national policy making and grand strategy. It then describes the qualities, capabilities and behaviours required of a strategic leader and concludes with a very important note on law and ethics. The material that is presented is derived as much from civilian writing and experience as from military doctrine and practice. Above all, this final part of *Thinking Strategically* is designed to challenge conventional wisdom on the subject and inspire open thinking and fresh approaches. It applies to strategic leaders, their advisors and supporting thinkers.

STATESMANSHIP TO STRATEGY

Throughout history exceptional demands have been made of the strategic leader. He therefore needs an extraordinary breadth and depth of character, intellect and industry. Not only must he possess the right personal qualities and capabilities, he must also behave in a manner that commands a natural authority and inspires widespread confidence, and work steadfastly to achieve the desired results. Ultimately, he must be able to think and act decisively in times of national crisis or existential challenge, or when unexpected opportunity presents itself. Hence patience, insight, wisdom and versatility are true strategic virtues. Strategic leadership carries its own very special obligations and responsibilities for the good of others.

Effective political leadership at the grand strategic level that has an *enduring* beneficial effect for a nation, or more widely for the community of nations, can be described as statesmanship. As Mikhail Gorbachev observed neatly, '*What is the difference between a statesman and a politician? ... A statesman does what he believes is best for his country, a politician does what best gets him re-elected*'. Therefore a true statesman is bound by disposition and inclination to take a long-term view, and to distinguish between lasting values – by which he and his country stands – and attractive short-term interests. A wise statesman knows that he will be judged by the verdict of history, and not by any immediate popular opinion poll or focus group view.

Notwithstanding any lofty idealism that may drive the statesman in his core beliefs and policies, statesmanship demands a pragmatic, timely approach to the formulation of policy and strategy, and to the associated decision-making derived from it. As Churchill suggested, '*the distinction between politics and strategy diminishes as the point of view is raised. At the summit, true politics and strategy are one*'. Kissinger put it more bluntly: '*the task of statesmen is to resolve complexity, not to contemplate it*'.

The late nineteenth century German 'Iron Chancellor', Count Otto von Bismarck, is often recalled for his *Realpolitik*, in which he placed national interests foremost in his thinking and actions. Yet he also concluded after the German wars of unification that '*I consider even a victorious war as an evil, from which statesmanship must endeavour to spare nations*'.

True statesmanship is an art that requires a nuanced blend of ideals and realism, without unwitting sacrifice of either values or interests. Yet to balance competing values and interests may often appear as a Hobson's choice – the statesman may be damned whatever his decision. In practice, the best, if not only, choice may lie between the greater and the lesser good, or between the lesser of two evils.

Decision-making at the grand strategic level is often extremely difficult to achieve because this level is pervaded by the Clausewitzian factors of chance, uncertainty and ambiguity. It is also dynamic as other states, peoples and organisations react to actions and events. Thus the unrelenting law of unintended consequences takes a heavy toll on careless, badly thought-through policies and strategies. In this context, the idea that there should be any fixed 'rules' for strategic leadership is misleading as the situation in which future decisions must be taken is inherently unpredictable. Hence strategists must be able to handle a strategic environment in which there are unlikely to be 'right' answers, just ones that are 'best possible in the circumstances.' *Yet grand strategy is not unconstrained.* Domestic and international law prohibit actions that imperil peace and threaten humanity. Recalling Clausewitz again, the support of the people and their passion for a strategy are prerequisites for action.

In summary, successful strategic leadership, at which statesmanship stands at its pinnacle, requires an elusive and extraordinary mix of personal qualities, capabilities and behaviours. These three closely inter-related and inter-dependent areas are explored below.

QUALITIES

Much of the following list of qualities (or personal attributes) comes from the experience of strategic leaders and statesmen on the world stage:

- Sincerity, humility, and truthfulness: the integrity that flows from true self-knowledge, which includes the capacity for self criticism. Presence of mind and of self, including gravitas and facility in the media.
- Flexibility: the ability to give and take. When irreconcilable positions are deeply entrenched the only way forward is to compromise. To be able to make choices and decisions which are almost always the

'least bad', not 'best'. *'When the facts change, I change my mind. What do you do, sir?'* (John Maynard Keynes, in reply to a criticism during the Great Depression that he had changed his position on monetary policy.)

- Moral courage and boldness, including a willingness to face down natural supporters and public opinion, in order to deal with the most difficult personal ethical challenges.
- Great stamina and resilience in the face of set-back: the self-confidence and an ability to inspire confidence in others, whatever the adversity. There is probably no better British example of determination in crisis than Winston Churchill.
- Human and intellectual breadth of a high order, beyond normal or corporate mind-sets; emotional as well as traditional intelligence: which provides an exceptional understanding of what Thucydides termed the *anthropinon* (the human condition), guided as he suggested by *phobos* (fear), *kerdos* (self-interest) and *doxas* (honour).
- Inspiring enthusiasm for people, international affairs and strategy. A genuine interest in people should accompany inclusiveness, openness and respect for others' views and backgrounds.
- A natural instinct for networking, bonding people of potentially very different political and social persuasions, to build communities of common interest and shared vision. Though as Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating said, *'Leadership is not about being nice, it's about being right and being strong'*.
- A blend of inspiration and common-sense; much of strategic leadership is common-sense, but the highest form is inspired. As Kissinger noted, *'the statesman's duty is to bridge the gap between experience and vision'*.

CAPABILITIES

Complementing exceptional personal qualities, statesmanship requires a profound understanding that it is the primary task of the strategic leader to set the strategy, direct it, adjust it when necessary, and at all times assume full responsibility for it. This requires not just the personal qualities listed above, but also the capability to translate knowledge and expertise into considered action – which requires close study and careful application. There are rarely any short cuts to the formulation of sound strategy. What may typically be ascribed as 'strategic intuition' is more often than not the product of long experience and prior reflection, combined with an ability to act adroitly when required.

A sense of the pattern of history will inform helpfully. Isaiah Berlin wrote that Churchill's greatness was in part due to a '*historical imagination so strong, so comprehensive, as to encase the whole of the present and the whole of the future in a framework of a rich and multicoloured past*'. As Churchill himself noted, '*the past is but a prologue to the future*'.

The statesman or strategic leader requires a broad set of general *capabilities* (these are deeper than the 'competencies' so beloved of human resources departments; at this level, mere competence is insufficient). These include:

- The confidence to operate in a province of uncertainty: an ability to comprehend and handle extreme complexity, to overcome self-doubt and the hesitation of colleagues and subordinates, and to operate successfully in an environment of potential disorder, disunity, uncertainty and ambiguity. An acceptance that knowledge is *always* imperfect is vital to understanding the limitations of strategic leadership.
- Making and sustaining sufficient space to consider and act strategically: the freedom to think is essential both for himself and for his supporting team. This requirement includes resistance to the widespread phenomenon of 'group think', that is the silent subordination of individual insight to a single narrative or course which is thought to be erroneous. Despite the pressures of day-to-day decision-making, a leader needs to use time wisely in order to create and devote sufficient time to strategy, in both its formulation and execution. Whilst the pursuit of the last detail is invariably unproductive in terms of time and effort, the strategist must be able to gather and master the *critical* detail.
- The ability to operate under intense media pressure: the relentless spot lights of news and public opinion polls is unforgiving. The leader should choose his media appearances carefully (in most situations a well-informed and authoritative spokesman is preferable). He should not succumb to 'sound bite communication' and reflex politics, sacrificing long-term strategic goals for short-term popular gain.
- Acknowledging human limitations, including self: the leader is not indispensable, let alone immortal. Arrogance (in its extreme form, hubris) has led to some of the greatest strategic failures of the past and present.
- A wise strategic leader has a natural respect for his colleagues and subordinates and a desire to consult, to develop and mentor them to the best of their abilities. Reflecting on Churchill's leadership style, President Dwight Eisenhower noted, '*leadership by persuasion and the whole-hearted acceptance of a contrary decision are both the fundamentals of democracy*'.

- Cabinets and teams have a greater collective capability and depth than their leader acting in isolation. Furthermore, succession planning is often neglected. A leader must at some point stand down and hand over his responsibilities, a matter that Churchill, for one, long prevaricated over in his second premiership.

In addition, the strategic leader requires certain specific capabilities that need to be tailored to the environment in which he is operating. As one business expert reminded RCDS recently, 'context is all'. None the less, that same individual provided a useful set of generic imperatives that can be adapted and applied according to circumstance:

- Set and communicate the required future direction of the enterprise, which must be understood by all involved. This requires more than words – it requires demonstrable deeds.
- Motivate the people concerned to do things (such as embrace necessary change) they may not necessarily wish or are inclined to do. Consider how best they can be rewarded.
- If inspiration and potential reward prove insufficient, how can you get things going? Initiate matters yourself. Personal drive, imagination and innovation count heavily in influencing others.
- Once started along a path of change, the leader must sustain momentum. This requires renewed energy and enthusiasm, and positive feedback to all those affected.
- Finally, to lead throughout by example!

BEHAVIOURS

The appropriate set of behaviours (in the sense of *how* as opposed to *what* you do) at the strategic level is vitally important for the health of the nation or organisation. These include:

- A desire to push work across boundaries (and out of 'stove-pipes'). This also requires an instinct for cooperation. not confrontation; in politics and in strategy-making, an internationalist inclination.
- A habit of building, leading and listening to teams, drawn from all the instruments: teams which constitute a trusting network, educated appropriately at the strategic level through mentoring as well as more formally, easily cooperating across traditional structural boundaries and stove pipes and untrammelled by party lines.

- A personal ability to work and act when necessary collegiately with allies. But conversely, to be alert to and be ready to confront 'group think', the tendency among individuals, surprisingly prevalent even at the highest levels, to acquiesce when collegiate decisions and direction are clearly wrong.

Ultimately, a statesman's policy and the strategist's plan will be judged and measured by their effectiveness over time, and not by the original intentions of their authors. Expressed another way, where the stakes are high, it is the solemn obligation of the strategist to see clearly a realistic and practical route to the eventual end.

FINALLY – AN IMPORTANT NOTE ON LAW AND ETHICS

For some there is a 'morality of results'; that strategic success creates its own virtue. We would suggest that ends rarely justify the means. We also consider that the temptation to believe in this kind of 'Machiavellian virtue' (as Robert Kaplan describes it) and allow policy to stray close to illegality and immorality (of the two, harder to define) is the most precarious aspect of strategy-making. That said, a statesman must be prepared to take *personal* responsibility for the most difficult decisions, some of which may challenge morals and even universal ethics – and may well have to be made on the basis of incomplete data. These range from diplomatic and political compromises to declaring war and authorising death and destruction (even ultimately nuclear release).

'Moral accountability is a central part of what it means to be a human being'; this truth includes the would-be strategist.¹¹ In trying to balance what is necessary with what is morally right, he will be aware that morality 'has history', its interpretation changes, and his own account will be open to review beyond the standards of his time by those of following generations. We do not attempt to define what a strategic leader's personal morality should be now, but we do suggest that he needs to pay careful thought to what it is before and during his tenure in power. His own moral code will inevitably influence his decision-making and it will be tested. The leader must prepare for this moment if he is to steer strategy away from the immoral and give himself the best chance of living on with minimal personal regrets. To quote from Shakespeare's Henry V: 'Every subject's duty is the king's; but every subject's soul is his own'; whatever his calling, the leader must know his soul.

In addition to international law, the statutes of the land and a leader's personal principles, the strategist should also seek guidance for his task from

¹¹ This and subsequent quotations in the section are taken from Charles Guthrie & Michael Quinlan, *Just War: the Just War Tradition: Ethics in Modern Warfare* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007).

the traditions of *Jus Ad Bellum* (rightness in going to war) and *Jus In Bello* (rightness in the conduct of war). Before reminding the reader of the criteria of these theories, we would propose that they have application to all grand enterprises that involve an adversary and the potential of substantially harming others; this includes the use of those state capabilities that are instruments of conflict other than the application of force – economic sanctions being an example. The criteria for *Jus Ad Bellum* are:

- **Just Cause:** *‘The tests [for just cause] need to include an honest weighing of whether the action we seek to forestall is in truth highly probable (not merely possible) ...and of a kind and weight that would leave us crucially damaged’.*
- **Sufficient and Proportionate Cause:** *‘...even if our cause is just we still have to consider most carefully and honestly whether the good we reasonably expect to achieve is large enough – and probable enough – to outweigh the inescapable harm’ which we will do.*
- **Right Intention:** *‘our purpose...must genuinely be to help create a better subsequent peace than there would otherwise have been’.*
- **Right Authority:** *‘decisions by governments to use armed force externally in substantial ways should be taken on the basis of thorough and accurate information made publicly available, candid and consistent explanation by government, and careful consideration fully involving parliaments in advice and decision’.*
- **Reasonable Prospect of Success:** *to achieve a better outcome for the people than would result from...doing whatever is possible by other [less-harmful] means’.*
- **Last Resort:** There must be no reasonable alternative to applying force or causing harm.

The criteria for *Jus In Bello* are:

- **Discrimination:** *‘we must do all that we reasonably can, consistently with not thwarting or gravely endangering the legitimate military purpose, to reduce the risk to non-combatants to a minimum’.*
- **Proportionality:** *‘We must not do things, however legitimate in themselves, if in our honest and considered opinion the good they achieve is likely to be outweighed by the harm they inflict on those who ought not to be harmed’.*

FURTHER READING

John Bayliss, James Wirtz, Colin Gray, Eliot Cohen (eds.), *Strategy in the Contemporary World* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007)

Richard Betts, 'Is Strategy an Illusion?', *International Security*, 25/2 (Fall 2000)

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

Nik Gowing, "*Skyful of Lies*" and *Black Swans: the New Tyranny of Shifting Information Power in Crises*, (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2009)

Colin Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford Oxford University Press, 1999)

Michael Handel, *Masters of War* (London Frank Cass, 2001)

Steven Jermy, *Strategy for Action: Using Force Wisely in the 21st Century* (London: Knightstone Publishing, forthcoming publication in January 2011)

Edward Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* (Cambridge, Mass, Belknap Press, 2001)

Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox and Alvin Bernstein (eds.), *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States and War* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1994)

Harry Yarger, *Strategy Theory for the 21st Century: The Little Book on Big Strategy* at www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil (February 2006)

EDITOR'S NOTE

Any comments or suggestions on the content of the 2010/2011 version of this booklet would be gratefully received by the Editor, Senior Directing Staff (Army), Major General Mungo Melvin. Feedback will be extremely helpful in refining it for the 2011/2012 Course, and for wider circulation across the Defence Academy and further afield.

Please feel free to e-mail the Editor with your comments on mg@rcds.mod.uk or arrange to see him via +44 (0)20 7915 4805/4840.

In the meantime, the Editor would like to express his thanks to the Commandant, Vice Admiral Charles Style, to his colleagues, Rear Admiral Simon Williams, Air Vice Marshal Brian Bates, Mr Jeremy Jarvis, Colonel Jon Hazel and Mr Paul Ellis and not least members of the College, past and present, for their many contributions, frequent advice and helpful assistance in preparing this latest edition.

ANNEX A

FUNDAMENTAL FACTORS: AN APPROACH TO STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

*“Think of the world when a man was 20 and then you will understand him”
(Napoleon)*

INTRODUCTION

This annex sets out a framework for thinking about how a particular regime or leader will act in a developing crisis. It is based on understanding what shapes individual leaders’ thinking (examining their *origins* and previous *experiences*) and in determining what has motivated their political life to the present day (identifying their previous *decisions* and present *ambitions*). Like all analysis based on the important principle of empathy, it is subject to limitations and risks, not least those of caricature or generalisation. This approach, however, has been found helpful in generating key insights and as a starting point for developed analysis, where current information can be overlaid on the background material and the principal hypothesis (“x will base his strategy on y”) can be tested.

What is this key skill of empathy? Originally a term from psychology (the power of projecting one’s personality into and fully comprehending another’s mind), it basically means feeling and understanding as the other understands and feels. Weber’s distinction between ‘explaining’ and ‘understanding’ is helpful. You *explain* someone’s situation in terms of your own categories or system of understanding. But you *understand* his situation when you do so in terms of *his* categories or system of understanding. That is empathy.

Our examination starts with the enduring factors that shape the national psyche, then considers the formative factors that have influenced the thinking of the individual leader and his group over the years, before concluding with some strategic issues arising out of the contemporary situation – the threats or opportunities of the crisis concerned.

THE ABIDING FACTORS

History

What is the national narrative – the story of the nation, the shaping triumphs and/or tragedies of its history? Tragedies and humiliations are particularly powerful factors. Who are the traditional enemies of the nation? Who, or what, may still be the focus of distrust or hatred?

Geography

How does geography affect the national psychology, e.g. attitudes to neighbouring peoples, countries and regions? How does it affect national defence requirements and priorities? Where are the valuable natural resources located (including people and water, i.e. agriculture, as well as any valuable minerals)? (Rule of thumb: mountains and deserts divide; rivers and other lines of communication unite, through trade.)

Culture

How strong is the sense of national identity in the dominant group within the state? What other ethnic/linguistic groups are there in the state? How does the dominant culture affect attitudes to foreigners, including threats from outside and in particular from other countries in the region? How does the nation project its insecurities by seeing threats from another nation which is significantly different in culture? (Most nations have had a historical enemy and the sense of “otherness” is reinforced psychologically even if the differences may be balanced by their similarities.) Does the culture accept the use of force as a tool of state policy or is it essentially pacifist?

THE PERSONAL OR GROUP FACTORS

Although states may be thought to behave as rational actors in pursuit of their objective interests, they are led by human beings whose behaviour is driven by more emotional responses, sometimes subconsciously. The leadership may come from a particular group within the state that has its own narrative and deep-seated attitudes to others, both within and without the state. In the case of strongly held ethnic prejudices, it is important to know which “other” is distrusted, feared or loathed. These are major constraints to the range of possible policies and are likely to exclude some otherwise rational options.

Leadership – Background

What constituency/clan/tribe/group does the leader represent? What are their vital interests? What were the formative experiences of the leader and the leadership group? Who were his friends in his young adulthood? (There is a propensity for leaders to choose colleagues from among their friendship or kin groups; they are likely to be of similar age/background).

Leadership – The Current Individual

What is the character of the dominant leader? How does he make decisions? Who are his key advisers and what are their attitudes? (There may be a leader psychological profile available.)

THE IMMEDIATE ISSUE

In any crisis, strategic analysis must in the end focus on the specific situation. Each case will be different, but an understanding of modern history and international politics can help us identify some generic patterns or scenarios that shed light on the strategic opportunities, and constraints, inherent in the case at hand.

Political Vulnerability

Is the leader or government strong or weak in domestic political terms? Does the crisis threaten the government or the leader's position? Or does it in fact tend to play to their advantage? An unpopular regime facing internal challenge is likely to be strengthened if it can blame external powers for the crisis or point to a threat of intervention (the "rally round the flag" syndrome).

Basic Scenarios

Bilateral Tension or Conflict between States

Which side is the *status quo* power? Which is the *demandeur* of change?¹² Is the issue a core issue for one or both sides? What is at stake? How vital is it to the nation? Is either side vulnerable domestically? Bear in mind that as sources of conflict remain unresolved, and incidents of violence occur, over time each side will become more entrenched and more extreme tendencies can gain the upper hand in the polity.

What is the military balance and what does this tell us about the likelihood of escalation to conventional war? In most cases of tension there will be either an imbalance, or strong international pressure against open conflict, making asymmetric or deniable responses more likely. In cases of possession of WMD, there is another level of deterrence to consider, including how it might, paradoxically, lower the threshold for limited conventional war.

State vs. Non-state Actor

This scenario assumes revolutionary or insurgent groups trying to seize power in a state or cede from it. What are the external dimensions of this conflict? (Very few conflicts are isolated or self-contained – e.g. the Maoist insurgency against the Kingdom of Nepal.)

¹² The international system, based on the UN Charter and the resolution of disputes by peaceful means, favours the status quo power in any fundamental dispute. The threat or use of force by the party that wants change puts it at a disadvantage in legal, political and public diplomacy terms, regardless of the justice of its case.

What external support does the non-state actor have and how material is it? Consequently, what support from the international community of nation-states does the state have, and how material is it? How deep-rooted is the insurgency in terms of popular support? Is it limited to one region? Is it the standard-bearer for a particular disadvantaged ethnic or religious minority?

Is the conflict just another stage in a self-reinforcing cycle of conflict between certain groups within a state, who alternate in power? It may be clear which side is the *status quo* power and which the seeker of change, but who has the strategic patience for the long game and who is under the greater pressure for short term results? What is the real end-state goal of the insurgency – is it to take power in a weak state, or is it really just to continue as a relatively strong insurgency or quasi-state in its own area/region (e.g. UNITA in Angola)?

Single Events with Strategic Impact

Regardless of the media frenzy, we need to judge whether major events will have a strategic impact or not. Are they just cumulative events to the existing narrative or will the response they evoke lead to a new strategic situation? '9/11' "changed the world" not because Tony Blair said it did, but because of the way the US responded; other terrorist attacks in the broader AQ campaign, meanwhile, have not. In this regard, it is the *nature of the response* that creates the strategic significance as much as the event itself.

Natural Disaster

For the government: a threat if its control and capacity to help its people is revealed as weak or inefficient; an opportunity to display leadership and strengthen support if the reverse is true.

For old enemies/rival neighbours: an opportunity to open up new diplomatic avenues by offering and delivering humanitarian assistance (in cases where there is a mutual interest in rapprochement but domestic constraints have applied hitherto.)

Terrorist Attack

As above, plus an opportunity to blame external actors (with or without evidence and/or justification)

Always a threat to any peace process as the sense of victimhood drives the polity to harder positions (e.g. public outrage leads to calls for revenge or decisive counter terrorist action). The default strategy of rejectionists is the resort to violence to keep the parties polarised.

ANNEX B

STRATEGIC CRISIS MANAGEMENT

In this Annex we outline responsibilities for crisis management and the pragmatic approach required; give some handy hints on the subject and list eight key questions to ask in planning and in the monitoring of the situation. We introduce the notion of strategic choice in terms of response to any crisis, and then suggest some alternative ways of thinking about putting strategy into action.

APPROACH

We have seen that strategy emanates from policy, all strategies are interlinked, and they are most unlikely to have neat and final outcomes. Therefore there is a permanent need for an effective mechanism to make and conduct strategy at the highest levels of government. Such strategies may typically address a wide variety of issues other than military. Civil emergencies such as natural disasters and terrorist attacks all demand an equally considered, co-ordinated, timely and effective response.

At the grand strategic level, a crisis management organization cannot work effectively in isolation within government or the nation, or without international consultation. Therefore the planning and monitoring of campaigns and operations is undertaken in close conjunction with others; joint team working across government has become the norm. Whatever the theory and process, a fundamentally pragmatic approach to crisis management and the direction of enduring campaigns or responses to civil emergencies is needed, based on rigorous and realistic assessments of requirements and capabilities.

In the United Kingdom, the Cabinet Office provides the central machinery for crisis management and associated strategic analysis across government. The Ministry of Defence supports it with its own Defence Crisis Management Organization (DCMO).¹³ Other departments such as the Home Office, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department for International Development (DfID) have parallel arrangements. The security and intelligence services have a vital role in supporting this work. In addition, the newly-formed National Security Council provides the forum for collective discussion about the Government's security objectives and how best to develop a national security strategy. A series of inter-departmental

¹³ The DCMO is split between the Main Building in Whitehall and the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) in Northwood. The work in the DCMO is thus *strategic-operational in nature* with a deliberate overlap of responsibilities.

committees support a weekly National Security Council (NSC) meeting of Departments at Permanent Secretary-level, chaired by the National Security Adviser.

FUNDAMENTAL FACTORS

In strategic assessment work there is a requirement to understand the nature of an emerging or actual crisis, and its potential dynamics. Even when time is very short, the effort spent on a study of the fundamental underlying factors is seldom wasted. Experience shows that this background analysis pays rich dividends, and is worth re-visiting later with fresh evaluations.

For example, when looking abroad, if the plans and policies of the crisis-makers (or responders) are unclear, it is advisable to go back to first principles and analyse the *fundamental factors* that are likely to shape the response of the leaders concerned. This approach requires studying the abiding strategic factors of history, geography and culture of the parties (not necessarily only nations) to the crisis.

HANDY HINTS

- Be aware of impending crises; do not be totally surprised. Warnings and indicators (W&I) are just that – ignore them at your peril. Assess intelligence carefully alongside all open-source material.
- Decisions have to be made on imperfect information, but you must distinguish between the perception and reality of what is happening.
- In international affairs, the opportunities to make progress typically are only fleeting. They must be grasped quickly. Windows of opportunity close quickly, so be ready to act swiftly to deal with crisis and pre-empt conflict. But be aware that others may not have the capacity to move, or decide, as fast and that international legitimacy depends on a broad degree of consensus, which takes time to build.
- Integrate all the requisite instruments of power: military, diplomatic, economic, humanitarian and any others engaged (the so-called Comprehensive Approach) throughout.
- Select and maintain the aim: stick to it as long as the politics and luck allow. It must be clear and easily expressed. It must also include a long term vision, focused on enduring outcomes; not a finite end-state, but a continuing future, changed in direction.

- Remember that persuasion is always better than coercion because parties tend to abide by agreements made co-operatively, and tend not to abide by those made under coercion.
- Early intervention is better and less costly than late intervention if the trend of events is adverse.
- But think through the transition strategy. Military intervention often freezes a conflict without resolving it, making it difficult for the interveners to leave.
- Military interventions are not sufficient in themselves; they provide at best temporary holding positions or changes of direction and emphasis which are wasted if a political process does not deliver agreement, reconciliation and enduring indigenous civil solutions which do not depend on military action. The probability of meeting this requirement must figure in the initial decision to intervene.
- Public support is volatile in the case of discretionary interventions, especially when vital national interests are not at stake.
- **Above all, be flexible.** Be prepared to adjust a strategy in response to events or changes in political will.

KEY QUESTIONS

Remember 8 key questions for crisis management:

- How well do we understand what is happening?
- What global interests are at stake and how do they relate to national ones?
- What national interests have we at stake, and how important to us are they?
- What means do we have available?
- What are we seeking to achieve, and how will we know we have achieved it?
- Will we act alone or with allies? (And how will we interact?)
- How will we coordinate internally (the inter-agency), and who is in charge?
- What is the desired enduring outcome, and therefore our own transition strategy?

PERSONAL NOTES

PERSONAL NOTES

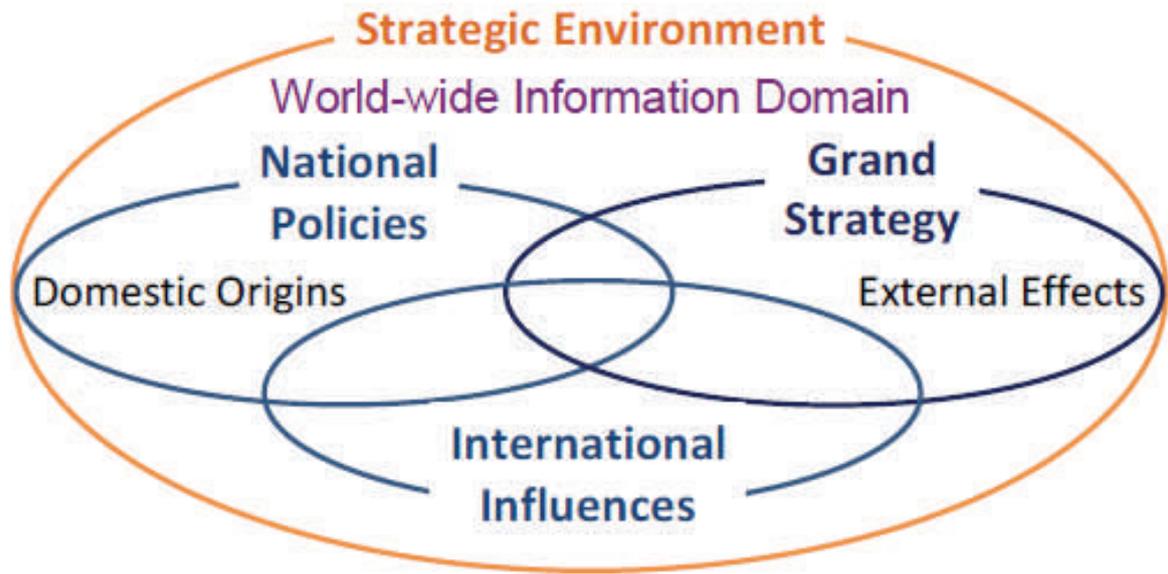


Fig 1.1: The Relationships between National Policies, International Influences and Grand Strategy



Fig 1.2: The Relationships between Grand Strategy, Military Strategy, Operations and Tactics

In 1852 (the year he died) the Duke of Wellington, aged 83, walked from Folkestone railway station the three miles to the house of his old friend, John Wilson Croker. Croker recalled: *"He said he had found it a rough walk, and the ground intercepted in a way he had not expected, so I said to him "it seems you forgot 'to guess what was at the other side of the hill'" This was an allusion to a circumstance which had occurred some 30 years before... when...we amused ourselves what sort of a country we should find at the other side of the hills we drove up; and when I expressed surprise at some extraordinary good guesses he had made, he said, "why, I have spent all my life trying to guess what was at the other side of the hill." He turned round to Mrs Croker to explain to her, adding "all the business of war, and indeed all the business of life, is to endeavour to find out what you don't know by what you do; that's what I call "guessing what is at the other side of the hill!"*