

APPENDIX I

GUIDELINES FOR STRATEGY FORMULATION

Strategy is an art. It is also somewhat scientific, in that it follows certain patterns which require a common understanding of terminology, adherence to certain principles, and disciplined, albeit creative, thought processes. Remember that these strategy formulation guidelines are not formulas. Strategy will be developed in keeping with the particular features of the time, place, and personalities involved. Nevertheless, these guidelines offer an approach to address the complexity of strategy, and are intended for strategists attempting to achieve the coherence, continuity, and consensus that policymakers seek in designing, developing, and executing national security and military strategies.

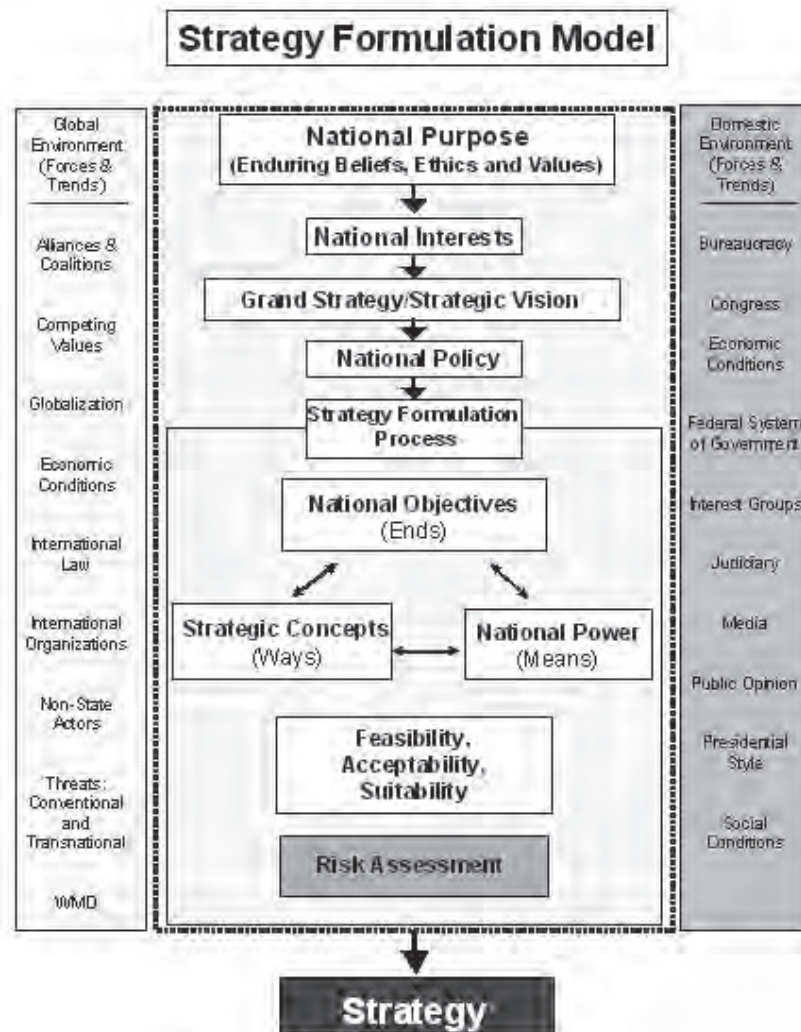


Figure I-1. Strategy Formulation Model.

NATIONAL PURPOSE

This is the starting point for the entire process. Enduring values and beliefs embodied in the national purpose represent the legal, philosophical, and moral basis for continuation of the American system. From the nation's purpose – as well as an understanding of the nation's domestic and

global needs—the United States derives its enduring core national interests. The strategist should return to these considerations in terms of risk assessment at every derivative level of strategy formulation.

Core National Interests/Ends.

There are four generally agreed upon core U.S. national interests: physical security—defined as the protection against attack on the territory and people of the United States in order to ensure survival with fundamental values and institutions intact; promotion of values; stable international order and economic prosperity. These core interests are translated into three grand strategic objectives: preserve American security, bolster American economic prosperity, and promote American values. All administrations focus on these objectives, but depending upon the assessments of threats and opportunities, as well as other variables such as personal beliefs and unique circumstances, Presidents establish different strategic visions of America's role in the world, often causing them to choose to emphasize one objective over the others. For the Carter administration, the initial emphasis was on human rights; for the Reagan administration it was security; and for the Clinton administration, it was the economy. Security is once again the top priority, but in an increasingly globalized world populated by nonstate actors with possible access to weapons of mass destruction, achieving physical security paradoxically may require an equal emphasis on promoting democratic values and generating global economic prosperity.

Grand Strategy/Strategic Vision.

At the grand strategic level, the ways and means to achieve U.S. core national interests are based on the national leadership's strategic vision of America's role in the world. Throughout America's history, this vision has ranged from isolationism to global engagement, containment of Communism to American primacy. To be effective, each new administration has had to express a vision for the U.S. role in the world that does not outpace the experience of the American people, and thus lose the decisive authority or domestic consensus to implement the strategic vision. Is the vision, in other words, suitable and acceptable?

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, for example, had to act carefully prior to World War II as he moved the American grand strategic vision from isolationism to one of global engagement. And within 5 years after the end of that war, the perception of external threat allowed President Truman to gain support for the grand strategic vision of containment—focused on containing the Soviet Union on the Eurasian landmass.

Grand strategy involves careful consideration of America's national elements of power at the broadest level. Given the state of the international and domestic environments and the scope of the administration's strategic vision of the U.S. role in the world, a key consideration is the feasibility of employing sufficient U.S. power to achieve core objectives.

National Policy. Based on grand strategic decisions, the U.S. political leadership provides national policy in the form of broad guidance concerning America's global role in pursuit of core national objectives. This policy is the start point for strategy formulation at the national level. National policy is conveyed in many iterative and cumulative forms ranging from formal national security directives and pronouncements in presidential and cabinet-level speeches to presidential replies to press queries and cabinet-level appearances on current affairs television shows.

STRATEGY FORMULATION PROCESS

General.

(1) Inherent in this more detailed strategy process is an appropriate degree of analysis designed to illuminate alternatives in the face of recognized uncertainties. A general outline for this phase of the strategy process follows:

- (a) Identify U.S. interests.
- (b) Determine level of intensity for each interest.
- (c) Evaluate the issues, trends, and challenges (threats and opportunities) in regard to interests.
- (d) Determine objectives (ends).
- (e) Consider alternative concepts (ways) that utilize available or needed resources (means) to achieve objectives.
- (f) Determine the feasibility, acceptability, and suitability of the strategic options.
- (g) Conduct a risk assessment.
- (h) Present policy recommendations.

(2) The analysis must be more than a listing of challenges. To be useful, it must examine and explain which and in what ways U.S. interests are affected. The analysis should seek to identify opportunities and threats to U.S. interests. As a consequence, the strategic analysis will not only be influenced by current national policy, but will help identify recommendations to change existing policies or create new ones. The analysis should address most—if not all—of the following questions:

- (a) What is the current U.S. policy or precedent?
- (b) Who are the other critical actors?
- (c) What are their interests and/or policies?
- (d) With whom does the United States have convergence or divergence of interest/policy?
- (e) What are the other feasible options to employ the U.S. power to implement the policy options under consideration?
- (f) How will the policy be sustained?

(3) The strategy formulation guidelines delineated above can apply equally to all formal national security documents (i.e. National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, National Military Strategy, theater military strategy, etc.). The strategist must be able to develop strategies employing all of the instruments of power. Students at the U.S. Army War College (USAWC) will develop and practice these skills in NSPS, elective courses, and the Strategic Decisionmaking Exercise. Remember, the formulation of strategy at any level employs the strategic thought process based on the balancing of Ends, Ways, and Means.

National Interests.

During the strategy formulation process, the strategist moves beyond the core grand strategic interests to more specific national security interests derived from those core interests in accordance with national policy. These national security interests provide more detail to the nation's needs and aspirations, in terms of the relationship between the foreign and domestic aspects of national security, and are thus the start point for defining strategic objectives for national security-related strategies.

(1) As a rule of thumb, interests are stated as fundamental concerns of the nation, and written as desirable conditions without verbs, action modifiers, or intended actions. For example, U.S. national interests might be stated as:

- (a) Access to raw materials – (not “Protect sources of raw materials”).
- (b) Unrestricted passage through international waters – (not “Secure sea lines of communications”).

(2) Categories: The USAWC groups national interests into three categories derived from the four core interests of the United States. Categories help to organize interests. Keep in mind the breakdown is normally artificial. Thus, while “Unrestricted access to Persian Gulf Oil” as a U.S. national interest has a primary category of “Economic Well-Being” for the United States and its allies, it also ties into the other two categories of national interests used by the USAWC. The three categories are:

- (a) Security of the Homeland: protection against attack on the territory and people of a nation-state in order to ensure survival with fundamental values and political systems intact.
- (b) Economic Well-Being: attainment of the conditions in the world environment that ensure the economic well-being of the nation.
- (c) Promotion of Values: establishment of the legitimacy of or expansion of the fundamental values of the nation such as democracy and human rights.

(3) Intensity of interests: Determining the level of intensity helps to determine priority of interests, recognizing that without prioritization, there is the potential for unlimited derivative objectives and the consequent mismatch of those objectives (ends) with resources (means), which are always finite. The degree of intensity of an interest, in particular, should be determined *before* a detailed analysis of threats to those interests. It is important that interests not become a function of a particular threat. If a government begins with a threat assessment before a conceptualization of interest intensity, it may react to a threat with major commitments and resources devoid of any rational linkage to that intensity. Rational cost-benefit analysis should not be allowed to affect the intensity of interest. The three USAWC degrees of intensity are determined by answering the question: What happens if the interest is not realized?

- (a) *Vital*: if unfulfilled, will have immediate adverse consequences for core national interests.
- (b) *Important*: if unfulfilled, will result in damage that will eventually adversely affect core national interests.
- (c) *Peripheral*: if unfulfilled, will result in damage that is unlikely to damage core national interests.

Ends-Ways-Means.

(1) Strategic objectives are derived from national policy and from a detailed consideration of U.S. national interests by category and intensity against the backdrop of issues, trends and challenges (threats and opportunities) that affect those interests. Based on these objectives, strategists then consider alternative concepts and courses of action for the use of the national elements of power. Note the primacy of the objectives – strategy should be ends-driven, not resource-driven, in order to ensure maximum opportunity to achieve the objectives.

(2) Defining the objective (end), therefore, is a critical first step in the strategy formulation process. If the objective is too vague or poorly understood, no amount of resources or careful consideration of ways to employ those resources will ensure success. On the other hand, defining an objective too narrowly may restrict the ways and/or means available. Finally, understanding of the objective is critical to determining success or failure of any particular strategy.

(3) Once the desired end is identified, strategists consider the range of resources (means) available, and then examine potential ways to employ these resources in pursuit of the objectives. While strategy should remain ends-focused, ways are necessarily resource-constrained. Unless a state has nuclear weapons, the concept of nuclear deterrence cannot be adopted in developing its security strategy (there is no “mutually assured destruction”). Therefore, the state must find alternative ways to enhance security or deter attack by a nuclear-capable adversary. Potential alternatives include establishing alliances with nuclear-capable countries (e.g., the North Atlantic Treaty Organization NATO), or securing security assurances in exchange for not pursuing attainment of (or eliminating existing) nuclear weapons (e.g., Cuba). If, however, deterrence is perceived to be the only viable option, the state must either work to attain nuclear weapons (e.g., North Korea) or to develop alternative forms of deterrence (chemical or biological weapons, perhaps?).

Feasibility, Suitability, and Acceptability.

Once potential strategy options are identified, each option must be examined to determine its *feasibility* (Do we have the means to execute the ways?), *acceptability* (Does it have domestic and Congressional support? Is it legal? Ethical? Worth the cost?) and *suitability* (Will it achieve the desired ends?). This evaluation process enables the strategist to evaluate the likelihood of success for each option and to select that strategy deemed most likely to attain the desired ends with available means and in an acceptable way. Before a final strategy is recommended or adopted, however, each option must also be subjected to a risk assessment.

Risk Assessment.

Strategies at any level normally lack resources or the ability to employ resources in a manner sufficient for complete assurance of success. As a result, a final and essential test is to assess the risk of less than full attainment of strategic objectives, as well as the risk of second and third order effects that implementation of the strategy could have (e.g., effects on the economy, relationships with allies, etc.). Living with risk is part of the strategist's business in the modern world, and being able to articulate its character and extent is the first step in reducing its impact. Where the risk is determined to be unacceptable, the strategy must be revised by either reducing the objectives, changing the concepts, increasing the resources, or some combination of these actions. In the deterrence example described previously, the state's decision about whether to pursue attainment of nuclear weapons rather than entering into an alliance or accepting a security assurance pledge will depend, in part, on the extent to which it is willing to accept the risk associated with each option. If the risk associated with relying on the good faith of its allies and/or potential adversary is unacceptable, then the state will likely try to attain nuclear weapons. On the other hand, if the risks associated with attempting to acquire nuclear weapons (e.g., economic sanctions that might cripple the economy) are too great, the state may have little choice but to pursue other options.

Monitor for Success, Failure or Modification.

The final step in the strategy formulation process is one of continuous monitoring or review of the strategy as it is being implemented. Continuous assessment should be a formalized, recurring process during the life of the strategy that assesses and evaluates the strategy's ends, ways, means, and risks against the evolving realities and possibilities in the strategic environment. The assessment evaluates for success, failure, essential modifications, or continued appropriateness in regard to the realization of the desired end state(s). The strategic environment is dynamic and continuous change is inherent to it. Strategies that are successful may present new opportunities or require a new strategy to account for the conditions of success. Strategies that are failing beg for

replacement. In addition, unforeseen changes in the strategic environment may occur that justify modification of some aspects of an existing strategy, but are not significant enough to invalidate the greater whole of the strategy. Lastly, national interests and policy can also change over time, and as a result new strategies or modification(s) to existing strategies may be appropriate. Ideally, properly formulated strategy is constructed with inherent flexibility and adaptability in its statements of ends, ways, and means. Continuous changes beyond requirements of success, failure and changed conditions, or beyond the control of the formulators of the strategy, may be an indicator of poor strategic thinking or a flawed strategy formulation process. Nonetheless, both the strategic environment and the strategy are continuously assessed to ensure that strategy supports the directing policy and interests appropriately.