

Because strategy never stops...

Infinity Journal



IN THIS EDITION

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A Note From The Editor

Welcome to the first issue of Infinity Journal - a journalzine concerned with the theory and practice of strategy. Why strategy? Because strategy is a widely and wildly misunderstood subject of critical importance. What strategy is, as well as how and by whom it is practiced, will be the subject of this unique journalzine because there seems to be widespread confusion about translating tortuous definitions into practice, and/or an inability to recognize a strategy when one is being applied. Above all, our intent is to assist everyone in a better understanding of this complex subject.

A major issue as to why strategy is so misunderstood emanates from current discussion taking place in a rarefied atmosphere where securing academic credentials has taken place over useful discussion. This is neither practicable nor profitable for the study of strategy. The aim of this journalzine is to strip away any confusion and get down to the fundamentals in a simple and accessible way.

We want our readers to write for this journalzine and not be fearful of well-known individuals in the realm of strategy who also write for this unique publication. We want debate, and while we require politeness and respect, we do not want deference to name, reputation, experience or standing. The reasons for this do not stem from a fashionable need to embrace the avant-garde, but rather a realization that such deference has, to date, been counter-productive. As many senior politicians, soldiers, academics, and laymen struggle in understanding the theory and practice of strategy, the result has been a short supply of objectivity. Therefore, Infinity Journal has set forth simple goals: to serve as an open venue for strategic thinking, to assist those struggling with the subject, to bring forward healthy and useful debate on strategy-centric issues, as well as to bring anyone interested in the subject into the realm of strategic thought.

We want to hear from you. We are sincerely interested in your thoughts and opinions on strategy or on the journalzine's approach to strategy. Contributors should be aware that submission means being subject to criticism and rebuttal. Critics must also be aware that they will also be held to the same standard of critique.

It is our pleasure to welcome you to a new and revolutionary electronic publication that focuses solely on one of the most critical topics that can be examined: strategy!

William F. Owen

Senior Editor, Infinity Journal

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Assumptions – A Fatal Oversight

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Col. (Ret) T.X. Hammes of the Institute for National Strategic Studies is the author of *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century* and *Forgotten Warriors: The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, the Corps, Ethos, and the Korean War*.

There has been a lively discussion in the open press concerning the appropriate strategy for Afghanistan. Stimulated by repeated top level administration reviews (Bush 2008, Obama 2009, proposed Obama Dec 2010) the chattering classes have spilled barrels of ink discussing what an effective strategy might look like. In fact, “Afghanistan strategy” results in over 28 million hits on Google. Yet most commentators – and to be fair, most administration personnel – are not really speaking about strategy but rather about what goals are appropriate for Afghanistan. This means that most of the discussion is simply wasted. A discussion of goals avoids the difficult task of developing a genuine strategy.

Once the strategist has stated his assumptions, then he can consider the ends (goals), ways (the how) and means (resources) triangle.

Professor Eliot Cohen has provided a thoughtful outline for strategy. He starts with the requirement to make assumptions about the environment and the problem. Once the strategist has stated his assumptions, then he can consider the ends (goals), ways (the how) and means (resources) triangle. This is where most discussion of strategy stops. However, Cohen states an effective strategy must also include prioritization of goals, sequencing of actions (since a state will rarely have sufficient resources to pursue all its goals simultaneously) and finally, a theory of victory (“How does this end?”)

Unfortunately, recent U.S. “strategic” documents and the strategic discussions concerning ongoing conflicts have failed to meet Cohen’s standards. The United States National

Security Strategy May 2010 lists a series of important goals (ends) and declares that the nation will use a multi-lateral approach (ways) when possible. [i] Unfortunately, the strategy does not go on to outline the means the United States will apply to each goal nor does it prioritize those goals. The section titled “The World as It Is” provides a very broad brush overview of the environment, but addresses none of the key assumptions critical to developing a strategy. In essence, the National Security Strategy is an aspirational document that provides a good overview of the administration’s goals for strengthening America both domestically and internationally. It also indicates the Administration prefers to use multi-lateral approaches whenever possible. However, it is not a strategy.

However, it is not a strategy

In a similar fashion, the United States National Defense Strategy, June 2008 provides a succinct list of five broad objectives. [ii] However, it does not list assumptions, prioritize goals or discuss the ways the United States will use to achieve those objectives. Further, the goals themselves are so broad as to provide little guidance for the execution. The document states:

“We will achieve our objectives by shaping the choices of key states, preventing adversaries from acquiring or using WMD, strengthening and expanding alliances and partnerships, securing U.S. strategic access and retaining freedom of action, and integrating and unifying our efforts.” [iii]

Unfortunately, it remains silent about how we will achieve these objectives. The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) is a little better, in that it does identify some of the ways the administration plans to use, but never addresses the means. Thus, although sometimes called a strategy document, the QDR is really a statement of goals.

In fact, no one really expects these documents to be genuine strategy documents. Instead, they serve to outline the goals an administration considers important – even if unachievable. While this does no harm in the glossy public documents each administration produces, the approach has infected the broader discussions of strategy within the administration, media, Congress and academia. Most often strategic discussions in these areas are simply arguments about goals (ends) with little discussion of the other aspects of a strategy.

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Most often strategic discussions in these areas are simply arguments about goals (ends) with little discussion of the other aspects of a strategy.

Assumptions

Perhaps what has caused the United States the most trouble recently has been the utter failure to discuss the assumptions behind recent major strategic decisions to take military action. The Department of Defense defines an assumption as:

"A supposition on the current situation or a presupposition on the future course of events, either or both assumed to be true in the absence of positive proof, necessary to enable the commander in the process of planning to complete an estimate of the situation and make a decision on the course of action." [iv]

In short, in every plan there will be key factors that are unknown to the planners. For instance, we can't know for certain how a population will react to a U.S. invasion or how much of the international development assistance promised at a conference will actually be delivered. However, to continue planning, the planners must make an educated guess – an assumption – about such key unknowns. While some may see this as a bureaucratic process of little value, recent events show assumptions are central to all planning. For instance, General Tommy Franks assumed the Iraqi government would remain in place after we removed Saddam. Thus Iraqis would deal with the problems of getting their nation back on its feet after the war. And because they would, the United States could invade with a much smaller force than that recommended by the previous CentCom Commander, General Anthony Zinni. In contrast, Zinni assumed the government would collapse and he would need large number of U.S. forces (380,000) to provide security and services.[v] This single, unexamined assumption dramatically altered the war plan.

Even when it became clear the Iraqi government had collapsed, U.S. decision makers did not react promptly. As Gordon and Trainor noted in *Cobra II*, their history of the planning for the invasion of Iraq, "The plan approved by the president heavily relied on existing Iraqi police and military forces to guarantee security post-Saddam. There was no discussion of a fallback plan." [vi] This highlights one of the critical factors in planning – questioning what happens if your assumptions are wrong and planning how to respond. If the assumptions are unexamined, the planners will not evaluate the impact of being wrong and prepare accordingly.

Primary Assumption: These are wicked problems

Since almost all conflicts are wicked problems, experts will disagree about the definition of the problem and planning assumptions. Further, there is a high probability the first understanding of the problem and its subsequent solution will be wrong.[vii] Thus, it is critical that planners think through

the implications if their assumptions prove false. Of course, not all assumptions have the same risk. For instance, the risk of assuming the Iraqi force of ex-patriots would assist in providing security was insignificant. Although the assumption proved untrue, it was largely irrelevant since there were fewer than 1,000 of them. On the other hand, assuming the Iraqi bureaucrats and police would remain in place had enormous downside risk, since the Coalition would have to fill 100,000s of billets essential to the operation of the Iraqi state.

In Afghanistan, neither the Bush nor the Obama Administration stated their strategic assumptions. Even after the Obama Administration completed its 2009 review and General McChystal's evaluation was leaked, there was no clear statement of assumptions. In this case, the proof was left to the reader.

If the assumptions are unexamined, the planners will not evaluate the impact of being wrong and prepare accordingly

Based on the public statement of goals and the documents leaked in the fall, the Obama administration's 2009 strategy seemed to be based on seven assumptions.

1. A democratic, centralized Afghan government is desirable and feasible.
2. Afghan President Hamid Karzai can form a government that most Afghans recognize as legitimate.
3. Public opinion in the U.S. will approve the commitment of sizable U.S. armed forces in Afghanistan for several more years.
4. Current counterinsurgency practices will win the hearts and minds of most Afghan people.
5. The International Security Assistance Force will provide the resources necessary to conduct population-centric counterinsurgency (COIN) campaigns.
6. Afghanistan is significantly more important to American security than Pakistan.[viii]
7. Pakistan will see the Taliban and AL Qaeda as a threat and fully cooperate in U.S. efforts to defeat them.

Even a casual examination of these assumptions would call into question the feasibility of the 2009 strategy. The much harsher examination of the political and military struggle in Afghanistan that has begun to take place in public and governmental forums has revealed the fallacy behind several of these assumptions.

During this article's gestation, the *Washington Post* printed excerpts from Bob Woodward's new book and, if his reporting is accurate, the actual key assumptions the Administration used were somewhat different.

"The new timetable relied on four 'key assumptions,' none of which the strategy review had suggested was likely. The assumptions were that Taliban insurgents would be 'degraded' enough to be 'manageable' by the Afghans; that the Afghan national army and police would be able to secure the U.S. gains; that the Taliban sanctuaries in Pakistan would be 'eliminated or severely degraded'; and that the Afghan government led by Hamid Karzai could stabilize the country."[ix]

Even a casual examination of these assumptions would call into question the feasibility of the 2009 strategy

Woodward's account actually highlights the fact our strategists do not use assumptions effectively. Three of four assumptions framed the operational environment rather than the strategic one. All four focused purely on the Afghanistan fight without considering the broader regional strategy or even the position of the U.S.A's International Security Assistance Force allies. The result is a mismatch between the strategic goals and the probable outcomes. Of particular concern, the plan was initiated even though "the review suggested" that the assumptions were not true.

Summary

Assumptions are critical to defining your understanding of the problem. Only by stating the assumptions can you insure all participants understand how you see the situation. Failure to do so precludes a coherent, thoughtful discussion of the

plan, since the participants are like the proverbial blind men touching the elephant. Each has a mental image of the problem he is discussing that has little or no relation to the vision of the others. They are literally not talking about the same thing. Further, even if the assumptions are stated, the discussion must continue to understand which are critical to the plan and which are not.

Unfortunately, assumptions have rarely been part of the recent discussions concerning strategy, either in the media or government decision making circles. The few exceptions – such as when Vice President Cheney assured Americans that our troops would be greeted with flowers by the Iraqis (Cheney to Tim Russert on *Meet the Press*, 14 Sep 2003) – were done more as part of public relations than as part of a serious strategic discussion.

A critical element of any discussion of strategy is to derive assumptions and then propose them. This ensures everyone in the discussion is trying to solve the same problem. This is the first step in dealing with assumptions. However, the process does not end there. Assumptions must be constantly re-examined to see if they remain valid. In addition, planners must think through the impact if a specific assumption proves invalid. Depending on the severity of the impact, it may be essential to develop branch plans to deal with the potential negative outcomes. In fact, if the assumptions used for planning turn out to be too far from fact, it will be necessary to admit the understanding of the problem was fundamentally wrong and therefore a completely different course of action is required. In short, as amply demonstrated in recent conflicts, an incorrect assumption can completely overturn a plan. A series of incorrect assumptions can lead to strategic failure.

Footnotes

[i] National Security Strategy, May 2010, http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf, accessed 20 Sep 2010.

[ii] National Defense Strategy, June 2008, p.6, <http://www.defense.gov/news/2008%20national%20defense%20strategy.pdf>, accessed 20 Sep 2010.

[iii] National Defense Strategy, June 2008, p. 13, <http://www.defense.gov/news/2008%20national%20defense%20strategy.pdf>, accessed 20 Sep 2010.

[iv] DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, 12 Apr 2001 as amended through April 2010, p. 39, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/?zoom_query=Assumption&zoom_sort=0&zoom_per_page=10&zoom_and=1, accessed 20 Sep 2010.

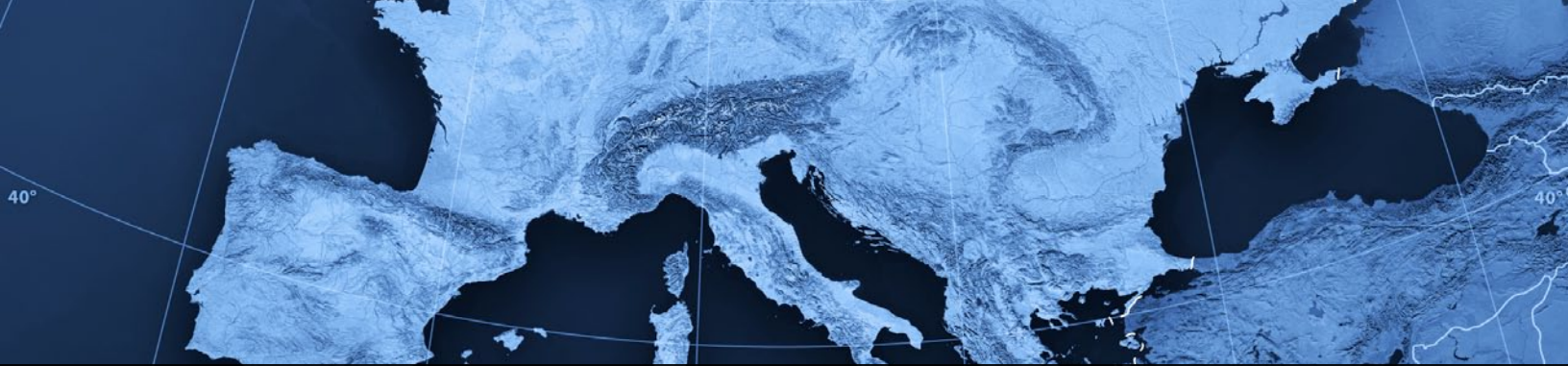
[v] Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, Pantheon Books, NY, 2006, p. 26.

[vi] *Ibid*, p. 162.

[vii] For a concise and very useful discussion of wicked problems, see Tradoc Pamphlet 525-5-500 Commander's Appreciation and Campaign Design, pp. 5-12, <http://www.tradoc.army.mil/tpubs/pams/p525-5-500.pdf>, accessed 4 Oct 2010.

[viii] These six assumptions were derived by John Collins, William McCallister and this author for a November 2009 article in *Naval Institute Proceedings* titled "Afghanistan: Connecting Strategy and Assumptions."

[ix] Bob Woodward, "Military thwarted president seeking choice in Afghanistan," *Washington Post*, 27 Sep 2010, p. 1.



The End of a Strategy-free Decision Making Environment?

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Have Europeans lost the habit of thinking strategically? A theatrical moment at the recent Chilcot Inquiry seems to indicate that the British certainly have. Giving evidence on July 20th 2010, Major General Andy Salmon (the British commander of the Multinational Division South East in 2009) was refreshingly blunt in this respect. Asked by Sir Roderick Lyne whether his operations around Basra took place "under the aegis of an overall strategic plan," General Salmon said: "Well we had a set of objectives. There was no comprehensive strategic plan that I ever saw". Sir Roderick then asked who therefore had overall responsibility, and would the General have known which minister or which senior official was directing the British operation from Whitehall? "Not really" replied General Salmon.

Almost as extraordinary as this exchange, was the failure of the press corps to spot or comment on the inescapable conclusion that the entire operation must therefore have been launched in a strategy-free planning environment. Did no one care that for five years several thousand British troops had been deployed to Iraq without an inkling of a strategic concept that could be subsequently explained by their commanding general at a national inquiry authorised by the Prime Minister? Not only had the British lost the habit of strategic thinking, but also appeared to have lost it for so long that no reporters, civil servants or senior military officers seemed to find this surprising.

How long had the European NATO nations accepted the absence of strategic thinking in their decision-making? Academics and generals certainly pontificated about strategy, and in the previous century Cold War Clausewitzians had energetically presented nuclear war thinking as strategy. But in the security era that followed, the politicians and senior

officials, so relentlessly indicted by Sir Roderick's precise questions on 20th July, seemed to have been making security decisions without having a long term national objective as their aiming mark.

How long had the European NATO nations accepted the absence of strategic thinking in their decision-making?

There is no doubt that at the early stages of the Cold War the success of NATO called for strategic thinking on a Herculean scale – and that the alliance was probably the mother of all strategic concepts. But as the years passed and the balance of nuclear terror began to stabilise, individual nations within the alliance no longer needed to think in terms of their individual security. Like the British Corps in the Northern Army Group, they were fastened into a tapestry of military formations strung out along the inner German border and beyond. Financial pressure and their gradual assimilation into a continental system had become a disincentive for strategic thinking at a national level. At NATO Council level, strategic planning (referring to genuinely long term policy-making) had slowed down and become a ritual of Byzantine complexity. The results of policy discussions took so long to emerge and were so diminutive in their effect that individual nations gradually lost the incentive to connect military planning to any higher form of political policy. In Cold War alliances, military deployments ran on metaphorical railway lines that had been laid at the highest level; trying to alter the alignment of the rails was a huge and usually fruitless effort for an individual nation.

As the Alliance passed from the Cold War into the strategic era that followed, individual members continued to rely on US leadership and NATO structures. So that when they formed the nucleus of expeditions to contingencies outside NATO's regional area of interest, individual nations still found themselves in the same strategy-free environment as before.

After forty years, when the Berlin wall came down, officials and political advisers were understandably nervous about the prospect of a post-NATO security environment; particularly in a threat scenario where national defence and security

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decisions would once again have to be connected to a nationally defined strategic outcome.

"These are interesting times!" was the agitated cry in the corridors of Whitehall. "Interesting times" during the chaotic 1990s referred to the problems of deploying a succession of increasingly muscular peace forces to Asia and Sub Saharan Africa, to civil war and humanitarian crises in which thousands died violently and millions more were displaced.

particularly in a threat scenario where national defence and security decisions would once again have to be connected to a nationally defined strategic outcome

Against this background of low-level violence in every region, the massive continental armies of the Cold War began to dismantle. And at last, after forty years of mental stagnation, it might have been possible to hope for a return to strategic thinking. However, as it turned out, the European allies continued to act and deploy in the familiar US + Europe consensus which had characterised NATO. The overwhelming domination of the US and the perceived need for the Europeans to stick to the Cold War mantras – "Russians out, Americans in" – provided the aiming mark for all security decisions.

In these familiar relationships and following their familiar procedures, they deployed to the Middle East and to Asia by land, sea and air. But these adventures now had an end of era feeling; they were the practical remains of an alliance that found itself in the wrong security era where its members no longer had a pressing reason for acting in concert.

So by the time General Salmon faced the courteous scrutiny of the Chilcot Inquiry, there were quite a few reasons why the expeditions, which had so characterised the post Cold War period were becoming history. In the same month as the inquiry, David Cameron pledged to start withdrawing the British contingent with a view to ending its combat role there in 2015. Similar arrangements to withdraw were also underway in other member states, notably the Netherlands and Canada.

These withdrawals however did not represent independent thinking; they were overwhelmingly influenced by President Obama's reiteration of America's own need to reduce its expeditionary profile. In the same summer months of 2010, the US garrison in Iraq was reduced from 83,000 to 50,000 with a view to achieving a total recall in 2011. Meanwhile US plans to start similar reductions in Afghanistan from 2011 were being publicly debated.

The expeditionary era was concluding and several factors converged to make it less and less likely, or even possible, for European NATO states to go on deploying again and again in this strategy-free manner. There was an increasing possibility that the public would reject further operations whose un-stated objective was merely to keep the "Americans in". There was now a measurable domestic resistance to

continued foreign military forces in Afghanistan. In a climate of diminishing support, it was hard to imagine that NATO nations would invade another "safe haven" purely on the grounds that it had been selected as a target in the US war against terror.

European politicians now found themselves unable to explain in a sound bite, how sending thousands of European troops to Afghanistan secured European cities and European populations. The evidence seemed to be to the contrary; television footage of beige uniformed troops and beige coloured fighting vehicles rolling across the Afghan landscape was acting as a recruiting sergeant for the opposition. Many peaceful citizens, who had migrated into Europe from South Asian countries, were outraged by what they saw. And from the extremist minorities of these migrant communities also came the future bombers. The war on terror aficionados had failed to see that the critical path of the next bomb attack no longer ran from the overseas safe haven into Europe. The violent extremists seeking to detonate themselves in European cities originated from European communities, not from a putative safe haven.

particularly in a threat scenario where national defence and security decisions would once again have to be connected to a nationally defined strategic outcome

It was no longer possible to present these expeditions as campaigns of necessity. True, after the highly visible drama of 9/11 Europeans had been ready to believe that their security depended on eradicating the distant safe haven where these attacks had been organised. And at that time it had seemed a matter of necessity. However by the summer of 2010, the campaign-of-necessity argument was undone by solid indications that the US coalition would begin its withdrawal in a year's time, and was already withdrawing from Iraq. Whatever the political leaders were saying, these expeditions were not campaigns of necessity. You do not withdraw halfway through a campaign of necessity. The British could not have ceased flying in the middle of the Battle of Britain. The fact the NATO nations were now organising their withdrawal meant that these were emphatically campaigns of choice.

Several conclusions arise from all of this.

In the approaching security era when we are threatened more by the indirect effects of climate change, over population, mass communications and mass migration, it is less and less easy to see a realistic scenario for the beige uniformed expeditionary soldier.

The imperative for collective security is diminishing. America and Europe no longer share the same threats from violent extremism – and Europeans will not blindly support the US's expeditionary remedies. European states have increasingly large African and Asian communities in their populations. Europe is attached to the same continental landmass as Africa and Asia. The countries from which their migrant

communities originated can be reached easily by air and by day ferry. Military interventions into these same regions and countries outrage Europe's migrant populations.

The US has a continuing cultural urge for armed expeditions, which the Europeans no longer share. The logic for Europeans to have a more European centred approach to security is becoming unassailable. Having paid a high political price for Iraq and Afghanistan, Europeans will now need a motive

on the scale of a future Soviet invasion to consider further expeditions that are no more than a continuation of a "keep the Americans in" policy.

Above all, when Europeans do eventually move towards a European-centred security regime, they will have to start thinking strategically for themselves for the first time in the experience of their defence staff and politicians.

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Targeted Killings Work

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Targeted killings have become a common strategy employed by a number of militaries, as is witnessed by their frequent use over the past decade. For the purpose of this brief article, a targeted killing (TK), in the context of modern war, is the planned killing by a state of specific individuals who belong to irregular armed groups that are in conflict with the state. Targeted killing is a strategy, not *the* strategy but it is one that is brought to reality by way of tactics, through the application of armed force. A strategy of TK, in turn, serves the policy to

A strategy of TK aims to destroy, degrade, and/or deter irregular armed organizations by the use of lethal, though limited, force in support of policy

which it is always subordinate. A strategy of TK aims to destroy, degrade, and/or deter irregular armed organizations by the use of lethal, though limited, force in support of policy. It can thus be argued that targeted killings, in fact, are a prime example of Clausewitzian observations. To understand whether or not a strategy of targeted killings is effective or ineffective, we must begin addressing fundamental questions. What is the policy? What is the strategy? And, does the action

of killing a specific individual serve or undermine the policy? The intent here is to briefly examine these practical questions – with a focus on specific Israeli targeted operations – in order to offer an understanding as to why TKs should be an effective strategy.

the better question is: “Do targeted killings serve or damage policy?”

Policy, Strategy and Tactics

Normally commentators in this area ask: “Do targeted killings work?” But the better question is: “Do targeted killings serve or damage policy?” In terms of ‘ends, ways, and means’, targeted killings would seek to benefit national political and/or security objectives. That is, it is assumed that the strategy of killing a specific individual serves policy. Whether the assumption is correct lies within the specific context of each case, though it may well be possible to ascertain trends as to when or where it is most likely to succeed or most likely to fail. TKs must also be understood within the specific context of the time they are being employed. Failure to understand the context will result in a failure to understand the strategy’s effectiveness or lack thereof. Here, the relevant context is concerned with the planned killing of specific leaders or activists of non-state organizations that advocate and practice the use of violence for political ends, specifically Hamas during the so-called “Second Intifada” or “al-Aqsa Intifada”. In fact, more appropriate terms for the five-year conflict are ‘armed rebellion’ or ‘insurrection’, which at their core, all represent nothing more than “an act of violence intended to compel [their] opponent to fulfill [their] will”. That is to say, war. The armed rebellion, which lasted from 2000-2005, witnessed a dramatic increase in a strategy of TK carried out by the Israeli military. Throughout the armed rebellion (for all intents and purposes a war), Israeli targeted killing operations underwent a number of critical evolutions – in terms of tempo, tactics, boldness, lethality, and even legality – ultimately proving TK an effective strategy.

Henry Kissinger once wrote that the “separation of strategy and policy can only be achieved to the detriment of both” [Baylis, et al 2007]. While correct, he failed to mention ‘tactics’, the conduct of which had implications for strategy in Vietnam. If one is to understand the strategy of TK, then the policy and the tactics must also be understood at the same

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time. A strategy requires both a policy to define its purpose and tactics to make it happen – these are the fundamentals of strategy. Good strategy requires coherence in this tripartite association and TKs are a particularly good example for the teaching of strategy. For example, it can be shown that it is a mistake to refer to a “policy of targeted killings”, as policy refers to ultimate political objectives, not a particular tactic (e.g. killing). At the same time, it is crucial to understand that while war is “a continuation of policy”, this in no way implies that Israeli politicians, or any politician for that matter, should utilize this strategy for unsuitable political objectives. That would define war as ‘a continuation of bad policy by other means’, which some believe is, in fact, what TKs represent. The policy must always be rational and attainable. The objective to influence Hamas to abandon armed violence is a rational and attainable political objective. If the policy were to wholly destroy Hamas as a physical and ideological entity, a strategy of TK would likely be ineffective, as the policy would be simply unattainable and possibly irrational, in purely tactical and even technical terms. As Clausewitz wrote, “if the policy is right—that is, successful—any intentional effect it has on the conduct of the war can only be to the good. If it has the opposite effect the policy itself is wrong.” [Clausewitz, 1976] However, as will be shown in the case of the TK of Salah Shehade, it is possible that the choice of tactics can undermine the policy. That is why policy, strategy and tactics must always be understood in partnership at all times – otherwise, the likelihood of success diminishes. While both Israel and the United States utilize similar tactics (drones, fighter jets and helicopter gunships) to carry out a similar strategy (i.e. TK), importantly their policies are also similar. That is to say, Israel’s political objectives vis-à-vis Hamas are similar to U.S. policy towards the Taliban and al-Qa’ida. Both countries, in their own ways, seek to bend or compel irregular armed organizations to their political will by the use of armed violence as a means to set forth their policy. Ultimately, and in its most basic terms, this is the use of armed force against armed force.

Good strategy requires coherence in this tripartite association and TKs are a particularly good example for the teaching of strategy

However, equally important is context. Even if a strategy of TK is effective, as was the case against Hamas during the 2000-2005 armed conflict for example, this clearly does not imply that the strategy is *always* effective at *all* times. The main reason for this is that TKs are not a ‘policy’ of any government – they are examples of a strategy carried out by the military in pursuit of political aims of a government. Take for example, Israel’s policy to convince Hamas to abandon armed violence. This policy for the most part remained the same as it was in September 2000 despite three different Israeli governments led by three different political parties during the five-year rebellion; the policy also remained static despite Hamas’ democratic victory and rise to power. Ultimately, it continues to remain the policy of the Israeli government to force Hamas to reject violence. A strategy of TK is simply one way of imposing Israel’s political will. If the policy of the Israeli government changes, so must the strategy. For example, if Hamas were to abandon armed violence and become a

non-violent organization, targeted killings would not serve Israeli policy because the use of armed violence against civilians would almost certainly be counterproductive in terms of the conflict and illegitimate in the eyes of the international community. But the reality is that Hamas is a violent organization that uses armed force in an attempt to impose its policy – that is the organization’s stated platform on which it exists: “There is no solution to the Palestinian problem except jihad.”[i] Their political objective and the means to attain that objective cannot be more explicit. However, it should be noted that while Hamas is based on violence, it does not imply that violence is an ineradicable feature.

this clearly does not imply that the strategy is *always* effective at *all* times

Following nearly 18 months of armed rebellion, including devastating suicide bombings carried out by Palestinian militants against Israeli targets, the Israeli military began targeting high-ranking Palestinian militants, despite international concern and condemnation of a strategy of TK. In 2002, the Israel Air Force (IAF) dropped a one-ton bomb on a building containing the former head of Hamas’ armed wing, Sheik Salah Shehade, who was responsible for over 200 Israeli deaths within a 24-month period. While the tactic succeeded, in that Shehade was killed, the choice of weaponry negatively affected the policy, but only up to a point. A one-ton bomb intended for one man is not surgical. It resulted in the collapse of adjacent buildings, killing a total of 14 Palestinians, including nine children. International condemnation was quick and harsh, which included claims of war crimes and lack of proportionality. Following the ‘hit’ against Shehade, Hamas carried out two bombings in Jerusalem, including one at Hebrew University that killed seven people, including five Americans. Further, Hamas-coordinated attacks increased, as did Israeli deaths (although the total number of injured Israelis decreased from the previous two years).

The question is, in this context, was the strategy successful or did it undermine Israeli policy? First, if it is assumed that the TK against Shehade and the collateral damage caused by that TK resulted in retaliatory attacks against Israelis, then the assumption is faulty. Given Hamas’s track record over the previous two years (2000-2002), it can reasonably be assumed that the organization would have perpetrated attacks whether or not Shehade was killed. ‘Tit for tat’ is not always a valid line of reasoning and is unlikely so in this case. In other words, the so-called Boomerang Effect is a weak argument when the very ethos (and even the meaning of the name) of an organization is built upon ‘resistance’ by way of armed violence.[ii] Second, domestic and international condemnation did not force Israel to abandon a strategy of TK – quite the opposite in fact, as TKs not only increased in quantity and tempo over the subsequent years, but also the choice of targets increased in boldness. Third, what must also be taken into account is the failed targeted operation that occurred soon after the hit on Shehade. Negative results from the Shehade operation, in terms of collateral damage and international condemnation caused the Israelis to utilize a much smaller weapon to target a much larger objective: the so-called Hamas ‘Dream Team’, which consisted of a

coterie of high-ranking Hamas leaders who had gathered for a meeting in Gaza. A 250-pound bomb was used and it failed to destroy the intended target. The result is a clear illustration of how the results from a specific tactical weapon in a previous TK caused a negatively disproportionate effect on strategic decision-making (i.e. planners misapplied lessons). But this was a negative result in one case, not a failure in the overall strategy. Moreover and importantly, it did not cause the Israelis to fail to achieve policy objectives, as the policy to convince Hamas to forgo armed violence remained, and continues to remain, in place. The tactic, not the policy, was modified. Had the targeted operation against the Dream Team been successful, it might have had a severely negative impact upon Palestinian militants early on in the armed conflict.

The result is a clear illustration of how the results from a specific tactical weapon in a previous TK caused a negatively disproportionate effect on strategic decision-making

Less than 24 months after the Shehade operation, the Israelis targeted the near-blind, quadriplegic 'spiritual' head and founder of Hamas, Sheik Ahmed Yassin. An AH-64 Apache fired hellfire missiles at his wheelchair following Friday morning services at a mosque in the Gaza Strip. Yassin and his bodyguards were killed. The official reason that Yassin was taken out was his direct involvement in coordinating terrorist attacks against Israelis. It is said that he authorized "a suicide bombing by a woman with children at Erez junction, killing four Israelis." [iii] An unofficial reason for the TK against Yassin was to send a very clear message to Hamas: no one involved in armed violence against Israel is immune. Similar to the aftermath of the Shehade operation, international condemnation was quick and harsh. The killing caused British Foreign Minister, Jack Straw, to arbitrarily label the TK "unlawful and in violation of international law." [iv] However, the key question that must be asked is, what is the measure of strategic success that can be gauged from this operation? To answer this, other questions must be addressed regarding Hamas: were the strategy and the tactic in line with the policy and was that policy undermined?

As with the Shehade operation, the Israelis did not abandon the strategy, and the policy remained the same for Yassin as it did for anyone in Hamas connected to terrorism or any form of organized violence - to both deter and to degrade the organization in an attempt to convince Hamas to jettison armed violence. The targeted operation against Yassin was a hit with positive strategic results. For one, it proved that no member of Hamas was immune when Israel showed its willingness to go after a paralyzed, unarmed and elderly individual. Moreover, his death certainly degraded morale and further, deterrence was witnessed with Hamas leaders choosing to stay underground out of fear of being the next target. In this case, both the strategy and the tactic were in line with the policy and neither the choice of the target nor the tactic used undermined policy. Following the death of Yassin, Abdel Aziz al-Rantissi was quickly named the new leader of Hamas. Rantissi spent most of his short-lived

leadership underground. In accordance with Israeli policy, the military continued to invoke a strategy of TK and successfully targeted Rantissi using Hellfire missiles. His bodyguard and his son were also killed. The TK's collateral damage included a woman and her five-year-old daughter. Within the space of 24 months, Hamas's leadership, which included many of the founders of the organization, had all been successfully targeted. Did these major targeted operations serve or erode the policy? The answer is: a strategy of TK served the single policy regarding Hamas.

Within the 12-month period following the killing of Shehade, the number of Hamas-coordinated attacks and deaths from those attacks decreased compared to the period of time that Shehade was in command. Following the operation against Yassin, and Rantissi in 2004 to the end of the conflict in 2005 - a one-year period where Hamas was void of any true command - attacks increased exponentially but fatalities declined. Moreover, when comparing to the previous year, suicide attacks and the death toll from those attacks also decreased. While the Israelis were not able to deter motivation, they were able to degrade the organization physically and psychologically by eliminating key actors, thus resulting in lower capabilities to carry out lethal attacks. In a four-year period, from the outset of the conflict in 2000 until just following the TK against Yassin, Israeli forces carried out nearly 200 targeted killing operations against Palestinian militants. Half of those targeted killings were aimed at Hamas. [v] The *Izz ad-Din al-Qassam* Brigades, Hamas's armed wing, are comprised not only of the bombers themselves, but also of the engineers who are the key to the effectiveness and destructiveness of weaponry. Each targeted killing of an engineer affected Hamas's capabilities, which could explain why even with an increase in attacks the death toll decreased. In other words, inexperienced militants under non-seasoned organizational command were forced to take the place of experienced bomb engineers, who proved to be far less effective. There are few armed organizations immune from this effect. Thus, the Israelis were successful in degrading the organization. However, focusing on the *Izz ad-Din al-Qassam* Brigades only partly proves the case for targeted killings. The targeting of the religious and political leadership, who advocate violence, also played a key role in deterrence.

The answer is: a strategy of TK served the single policy regarding Hamas

The targeted killings of Shehade, Yassin, and Rantissi, as well as a number of other key leaders, resulted in positive, strategic gains for Israel. First, and most important, was the elimination of leadership. The removal of any popular, seasoned and charismatic leader is beneficial to the opposing side. The belief that killing one leader will simply result in 10 more ready to take the leadership position is a highly debatable perspective. If a state constantly and correctly applies a strategy of targeted killings against the leadership of an irregular organization, it will not matter how many men will be ready to take his place because if the strategy is applied correctly, they will all be targeted. This, as was seen during the five-year armed rebellion, caused leaders to hide underground out of fear of being the next hit. The more time leaders spend underground, the less time they have for conducting armed activity against the state.

After all, Rantissi spent his four-week term as head of Hamas hiding underground with limited capabilities to direct armed violence.

There have been many claims that 'decapitation' does not work. This needs to be briefly addressed, as it is debatable for two key reasons. First, there is no written rule that a strategy of decapitation must imply the subsequent collapse of an entire organization, or at least it should not imply this. Without doubt, if collapse occurs, it will be a welcoming side effect of a strategy of TK. However, removing the head can and has resulted in organizational chaos and even calls for a cessation of military action, such as with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas. Second, one should not approach the strategy of 'decapitation' by trying to define its effectiveness because first, you can never predict the effect, and second, if skillfully applied, the continuous targeting and killing of enemy leadership is almost never counterproductive. It all depends on the context, but in the Israeli case, by 2004, Hamas leadership began calling for 'ceasefires' and 'calms'. As leaders were killed, the willingness to compromise became evident.

In other words, they failed to kill enough leaders

The reason that many commentators are against 'decapitation' is born out of the fact that in the specific context on which they were focusing, it was not that the policy was necessarily wrong, but rather there was a failure to correctly apply a strategy of targeted killings. In other words, they failed to kill enough leaders. The elimination of one leader and the subsequent rise of another, even worse leader, hardly proves the case for a failure of decapitation. It proves that one might need to do it again to see results. Many claims have been put forward that the TK against Hizballah's al-Musawi in the early 1990s resulted in the rise of the more popular, fiery and demagogic Nasrallah and therefore, decapitation was counter-productive. However, for all intents and purposes, TKs against leaders of Hizballah stopped after al-Musawi. Had they continued, it may well be possible that the organization would have been severely weakened. If the pursuit and targeting of leaders is constant, uncompromising, and successful- utilizing the strategy to the fullest - there will come a point where the organization is left with few options. They can compromise to preserve power, as was the case with Hamas in 2004; they can face near-organizational collapse, as did the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in the 1990s after the death of Fathi Shiqaqi; or they can face

total collapse, as was the case with al-Sa'iqa in the 1970s, albeit an already weak organization to begin with and one not nearly as organized and complex as Hamas.

Israeli targeted killings during the 2000-2005 armed rebellion represented a successful strategy. First and foremost, the strategy succeeded because the tactics never undermined Israeli policy enough to alter Israel's overall political objectives. The policy remained unwavering, which directly bore on the success of the strategy of TK. A firm, rational policy is a necessity for a sound strategy, which must be viable via tactics. Israel's strategy of targeted killings was such an example. Second, the strategy of TK, combined with other countermeasures such as the erection of the security fence and increased incursions by the IDF, led to Hamas's calls for ceasefires and periods of calm, which meant that at *that* time and in *that* specific context, Hamas's will to continue to fight was broken, albeit temporarily. Once political objectives are reached, the use of force must be reigned in or else the policy will suffer. Israel recognized that its use of force had obtained political objectives, at which time the strategy of targeted killings declined exponentially. That is, armed violence was successfully used as a means to a political end, similar to the way Operation Cast Lead caused a dramatic decline in Hamas-perpetrated rocket attacks. Had the targeted killings sustained the same tempo following Hamas's calls for ceasefires and calms, it is possible that TKs would have subverted political objectives, which would have led to a strategic and hence political failure. Third, Israeli forces applied targeted killings in the right way. It was the constant and uncompromising act of targeting, not a one-off event, that ultimately saw Hamas seek a ceasefire.

Once political objectives are reached, the use of force must be reigned in or else the policy will suffer

Beyond anything else, TK requires skill and a strict adherence to the fundamentals of 'doing good strategy', which is why the issue of 'protecting the population', even making friends with militants, which seems to have taken precedence over breaking the enemy's will to fight, is so counterproductive to military operations in a number of theatres of war, not just the Israeli-Palestinian theatre. No strategy can succeed if it cannot be realized in the effective tactics. As this article has demonstrated, TK can only succeed when there is a coherence of policy, strategy and tactics. Without it, one should not bet on success.

Footnotes


[i] The use of armed violence to set forth policy as stated in Hamas' Charter (1988), Chapter 3, Article 13 echo recent statements by Khaled Meshal. "I tell my people that the Palestinian state and Palestinian rights will not be accomplished through this peace process...but will be accomplished by force, and it will be accomplished by resistance." See Burston, Bradley. "A Special Place in Hell / Real men don't talk Mideast peace", Haaretz, 6 September 2010, <http://www.haaretz.com/blogs/a-special-place-in-hell/a-special-place-in-hell-real-men-don-t-talk-mideast-peace-1.312570>

[ii] See following sections of the Hamas Charter: Introduction, Chapter 1, Articles 3, 7; Chapter 2, Article 9; Chapter 3, Articles 11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 22; Chapter 4, Article 28, 32, 33, 34.

[iii] Aluf Benn and Amos Harel, "Hamas Leader Surfaced Only to Worship," Haaretz (Archives), 23 March 2004.

[iv] Dershowitz, Alan, "Killing Terrorist Chieftians is Legal." Jerusalem Post, April 23, 2004. Page 18. Harvard Law School. <http://www.law.harvard.edu/faculty/dershowitz/Articles/killingterrorists.html>

[v] Zussman, Asaf and Zussman, Noam, "Targeted Killings: Evaluating the Effectiveness of a Counterterrorism Policy," Bank of Israel-Research Department. Discussion Paper No. 2005.02, January 2005. <http://www.bankisrael.gov.il/deptdata/mehkar/papers/dp0502e.pdf#search=%22Total%20number%20%2B%20targeted%20killings%20%2B%20Israel%22>



Israel's Strategy (or Lack of) Towards Iran's Forward Rocket Deployments in Lebanon and Gaza

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Setting the Scene - Choosing the Proper Strategic Challenge

The first step in formulating a strategy is often to adequately define the precise challenge that we are seeking to address. This is particularly true when dealing with problems that have multiple aspects, as each of these aspects may warrant the employment of a different strategy. For instance, the United States might have had two very different strategies in Vietnam, had it defined the challenge as an attempt to block Soviet expansionism in South East Asia (the Domino Effect), or had it defined the problem as an internal struggle between two Vietnamese political forces in the context of Vietnam's pursuit of self-determination. Turning to the subject matter of this article, Hezbollah and Hamas pose an assortment of challenges for Israel, and in formulating its strategies, Israel should first decide which derivatives of the problem it seeks to address.

Hezbollah and Hamas pose an assortment of challenges for Israel

Hezbollah is a genuine grassroots Lebanese Shiite political party and a significant stakeholder in the Lebanese government. It constitutes the municipal and regional government in parts of South Lebanon, an economic group, a charity, a religious sect, an education system and a social movement. It is also a criminal enterprise engaged in drug trafficking, money laundering and blackmail. It is a terror organization with a global reach, a local ethnic militia and

one of the world's largest rocket forces. Hezbollah, with a ballistic force greater than that of most industrialized nations, can deliver continuous strategic blows that many NATO-members could not.

Iran supplies, finances and trains Hezbollah's rocket echelon, and has a significant (but non-exclusive) say over its operational command, in the pursuit of Iran's own strategic interests. Iran considers this rocket force as a sort of forward deployment of its own Revolutionary Guard Corps, with the role of deterring and restraining Israel from taking action against Iran. It would allow Iran to retaliate against Israel if attacked, and its potential intensity and severity could allow Hezbollah to force Israel to engage in a South Lebanese conflict and to draw Israel's attention and resources away from other efforts. The rocket force could possibly exhaust Israel, and, given Israel's size and lack of redundancies, it could also, in the future, potentially paralyze Israel.

Hamas is not an Iranian proxy, at least not yet

Hamas is a grassroots Palestinian political party, and the *de facto* government of the Gaza Strip (a "state", in a sense). It is an Arab Sunni religious faction with pan-Arab and pan-Sunni inclinations. It too is a charity, an education system and a social movement. It is also Gaza's police force, a local militia, a terror organization and a rocket force. Due to the Israeli-Egyptian joint blockade on Gaza, Hamas is still lagging behind Hezbollah in its high trajectory capabilities, yet its rockets can reach Israeli civilian and military infrastructure and even Tel Aviv.

Hamas is not an Iranian proxy, at least not yet, but Iran is the foreign power with the highest degree of influence over Hamas. Iran is Hamas' main political backer, prime financier and (almost) exclusive arms supplier. Given enough time for current political and armament trends to run their full course, Hamas will eventually become a complementary rocket force to that of Hezbollah.

The Chosen Challenge and Israeli National Objectives

If what occurs in Lebanon stayed in Lebanon, Israel would

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have little interest in it. After all, Israel does not want much from Lebanon strategically. However, Hezbollah poses a variety of challenges to Israel. It is destabilizing and restraining the Lebanese government and de-monopolizing the use of force by the Lebanese Army, over which it exercises increasing influence. It is prolonging the four decade long trend of Lebanese sectarian violence, and perpetuating the conditions which draw the country into a near failed-state reality. Often, such internal Lebanese pressures are released by using violence against Israel. But the greatest challenge of Hezbollah to Israel is not Lebanese-related (or even Syrian-related) but Iranian-related: the fact that in some respects Hezbollah is a forward deployment of Iran's rocket force, enabling Iran to have a continuous high intensity strategic attack capability against Israel. And while Iran benefits from the use of a proxy carrying out deniable operations along a *de facto* shared border with Israel, Israel must carry out complex long-range operations to reach Iran.

Even without the Iranian angle, Israel has an inherent interest in Hamas and Gaza.

Even without the Iranian angle, Israel has an inherent interest in Hamas and Gaza. Hamas challenges the PLO as well as polarizing Palestinian society, and is less influenced by restraining international forces, yet no resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is possible without dealing with the Hamas and Gaza problems. However, one direct and severe aspect of the Hamas challenge is Iran's attempt to arm it with rockets and possibly use it for its own strategic purposes. Taken together, it can be deduced that Iran is attempting to position two notional "unsinkable aircraft carriers" around Israel, South Lebanon and Gaza, in order to create a favorable asymmetric military strategic balance of power.

When deciding what Israel's national objectives are in this respect, we should first chose the perspective from which to look at the problem. Indeed, Israel may deduce from the circumstances a variety of potential national objectives. These could include reaching a comprehensive Israeli-Arab peace, or cutting a deal with the PLO on Gaza, or having a pro-Western government in Lebanon, or merely deferring the next round of violence for as long as possible, or even fighting crime. However, in the scope of this article the focus will be on the buildup of the Iran-sponsored rocket threat. Needless to say, this is a severe adverse development for Israel, and Israel may legitimately define it as a national objective to dismantle or at least contain the threat. While Israel has never perfected the articulation of its national objectives, such a proposition is not inconsistent with occasional statements made by Israeli leaders over the years.

Israeli Grand Strategy

Once a national objective has been distilled from the circumstances, the next step is to decide how we should apply all national means of power to its achievement. The framework for the application of all disciplines of national power toward a certain goal may be called a "grand strategy". The supremacy of the political world over the military one, and the proposition that war is essentially a

political phenomenon, not a military one, means that the central line of the grand strategy must be a political strategy. Military strategy must therefore logically be subordinate to political grand strategy.

The supremacy of the political world over the military one, and the proposition that war is essentially a political phenomenon

So what is Israel's main political idea *vis-à-vis* the dismantling or containment of the Iran-sponsored rockets threat from Lebanon and Gaza? Israel has never articulated one, and, as will be elaborated below, its actions are hardly consistent with any such idea.

A grand strategy is not something improvised simply at the outbreak of war, but a continuous effort spanning periods of armed conflict and the cessation thereof, with violent and non-violent means applied synergistically and in a mutually-supportive way. However, we do not know what the Israeli grand strategy toward Hezbollah is. It has not declared a policy, and during the current ceasefire we can hardly identify a coherent application of Israeli non-violent national means toward addressing the Hezbollah problem. Likewise, when violence does erupt, such as in the 2006 conflict, it is difficult to conclude that force was used in a manner consistent with any serious political idea. The Olmert government sent the Israel Defense Forces to "defeat" Hezbollah and create "a better reality" for Israel, without guiding the military as to what was the core political idea for the Second Lebanon War and how the application of violence could contribute to the realization of that political idea.

Outlining a hypothetical illustration of what Israel's grand strategy might have been illustrates the point: Hezbollah thrives on the status quo in which, on the one hand, the Lebanese government is weak and cannot enforce its sovereignty and will on Hezbollah, and, on the other hand, the Lebanese government is viable enough to be regarded by the West as an asset and an ally to which the West offers protection. For Hezbollah, there is a golden zone in which the Lebanese government is feeble and incapable but still regarded as existent and legitimate. This limits Israel's freedom of action against the Lebanese state and allows Hezbollah to maintain and benefit from its seemingly non-state status. Israel might therefore, have adopted a grand strategy of refusing to accept Hezbollah's golden zone, and asserting that the Lebanese government should either be effective or collapse.

This may indeed push Lebanon deeper into Hezbollah's hands, but at least Hezbollah will have to overtly assume state-like responsibilities

Israel might insist that the Lebanese government should take credible steps to re-monopolize the possession of heavy weapons, or else Israel will forcibly tilt the current Lebanese order out of balance. This may indeed push Lebanon deeper

into Hezbollah's hands, but at least Hezbollah will have to overtly assume state-like responsibilities. The Lebanese state will lose the protection offered to it by the West, and Israel's freedom of action will be broadened. Such a grand strategy is very different and arguably more feasible than the American one in Iraq and Afghanistan: while the United States took upon itself the task of nation building, changing the nature of Iraq and Afghanistan and the imposition of a new, friendly government; the above-mentioned grand strategy is about exposing the true nature of Lebanon – the way the things to a great extent already are – and forcing the opponent to assume state-like responsibilities. This way, the opponent loses much of its competitive advances and its freedom of action narrows.

Yet it cannot be argued that some sort of grand strategy is not necessary

The adoption of such a hypothetical example for a grand strategy will give Israeli diplomats something to work with: they can start a candid dialogue with Israel's allies, quietly exchange views with the Egyptians and Saudis, and even engage in discrete but tough discourse with the non-Shiites in the Lebanese government. If or when war erupts, the existence of an articulated political strategy provides a rationale for the application of force. Instead of merely servicing target lists and chasing each and every stashed rocket launcher out of an endless inventory, the IDF can in such circumstances form a coherent military strategy, leading to the planning of clear campaign themes, that will allow the composition of operational plans that actually service a desired political idea. Given the political directive of pushing the fragile Lebanese political system out of balance, military planners know what to do.

One may take issue with the specific example of a grand strategy that has been presented, which admittedly is not fully developed in this article. Yet it cannot be argued that some sort of grand strategy is not necessary. Without it, peace time is not being used to promote national interest or to set the scene for future military operations; and the use of force in war time is directionless, almost random.

Similarly, Israeli officials have not articulated what they want with regard to the Hamas government in Gaza. Does Israel want to topple the Hamas administration? Does it want the PLO to recapture Gaza? Does it want to apply a "divide and rule" policy, dealing with the PLO in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza? Does it want to keep Gaza as a living showcase demonstrating what happens when the Palestinians are left to run their own affairs? Is Gaza a useful display of the outcome of an Israeli withdrawal? Is the current situation convenient for Israel, since Gaza is also a threat to Egypt and places Israel and Egypt in a *de facto* alliance? Without knowing what the main Israeli political idea *vis-à-vis* Gaza is, we cannot form a political or military strategy. Hence, we do not know what part the rockets play in the puzzle, and in what way force should be used, if at all.

Israeli Military Operations do not Add Up to a Strategy

The most significant Israeli operation against Hezbollah in recent times was, of course, the Second Lebanon War. One of the War's declared objectives was to remove the Hezbollah rocket threat and the UN Security Council resolution that ended the war, Resolution 1701, deals extensively with the disarmament of Hezbollah and the prevention of further arm shipments to it. This, seemingly at least, disproves the argument made in this article. A closer look reveals that it actually validates it.

First, the Second Lebanon War unintentionally escalated out of an event that, while being tragic to those directly involved, lacked strategic importance: a cross-border Hezbollah ambush of an IDF patrol. "What ifs" are always tricky, but given the *raison d'être* of the Olmert government it is unlikely that it would have taken the initiative and launched a military operation of its own accord if it had not have been for Hezbollah's miscalculated provocation.

Second, when Olmert dispatched the IDF to battle, he did not spell out clear actionable and achievable strategic objectives. He did not even decide if Israel was engaged in a local retaliation, a limited operation or a full-scale war. When the IDF had a good day, Olmert developed an appetite for more such days. And when the IDF had a bad day, Olmert wanted to turn the tide before exiting the conflict. One day led to another and an extensive, yet directionless, military operation began to accumulate. Some of Olmert's rhetoric regarding objectives was developed later as the conflict rolled on, and without the backing of compatible military action that would enable progress.

Thirdly, Israel's experience with failed international security guarantees is extensive, to the point where, in an Israeli defense subtext, the delegation of a mission from the IDF to an international force operating under a UN mandate is an implicit admission that the mission will never be carried out. Indeed, it is under the current UN Resolution and the deployment of UN forces in Lebanon that Hezbollah underwent its largest rocket buildup ever.

directionless military operation began to accumulate

According to official and unconfirmed reports Israel has also taken action against arm shipments to Hezbollah (or against related personnel) half a dozen times since the end of the Second Lebanon War. Does this imply the existence of a strategy? Hardly, seems to be the answer.

First, Israel acted against such shipments and personnel on an occasional basis. It acted in a small number of cases and looked the other way in most instances. Unsurprisingly, these sporadic operations did not have a substantive effect on rocket deliveries to Hezbollah; neither on will nor on capability.

Second, while Israel acted infrequently at the specific shipment level, it chose to ignore the bigger strategic picture. There is a fast track of air shipments from Iran to Syria and then via land to Lebanon, and this freeway has been used to transfer tens of thousands of rockets in the past four years.

Israel has never tried to deal with it at the strategic level. For example, it never tried to use strategic levers against Syria with the intent of halting the phenomenon altogether.

A similarly disappointing reality exists in Gaza. Once Hamas came to power in 2006 Israel imposed a blockade on Gaza, and swayed the Quartet (US, EU, UN and Russia) to impose an embargo on Hamas. It seemed as if Israel was attempting to bring down the Hamas government. This, nonetheless, never materialized.

The most significant military operation against Hamas in recent times was, of course, the 2008 Operation Cast Lead. But once again, an Olmert government sent the IDF to battle without clarifying what the main political idea of the operation was, what were the achievable actionable objectives, and how should the military operation support a political idea. The issue of rockets was always rooted in the texts, but the fact is that while all the rockets found their way to Gaza via tunnels dug under the border town of Rafah, the IDF was not ordered to capture or even operate in this town. The Israel Air Force attacked some but not all, of the known tunnels. And while Egypt agreed to enhance its border enforcement and even obtained international assistance for this goal, Cast Lead ended without any effective, lasting political or military achievement against the Rafah tunnels, which continue to operate today.

these were sporadic and demonstrate the absence of a strategy more than its existence

Since Cast Lead, the IAF has attacked a handful of Rafah tunnels on numerous occasions. But all of these attacks were in retaliation to other actions taken by Hamas, and were directed at a small number of tunnels out of the many known ones. Israel never took the strategic initiative, never attempted to attack all known tunnels, never attempted to recapture the Rafah border area, and never came up with an indirect or a non-violent idea of how to stop rocket smuggling. Similarly to the case of Hezbollah, official and unofficial reports attribute to Israel various long range and overseas operations against arm shipments and involved personnel, but, again, these were sporadic and demonstrate the absence of a strategy more than its existence.

Ironically, perhaps the nearest thing to a viable strategy (or at least a component thereof) was Israel's operation against the Turkish flotilla that, while being a public relations disaster, ended with an effective Israeli assertion that it will inspect all vessels heading to Gaza – an assertion that was eventually acquiesced to by most of the West.

Between Strategy and Limitations of Power

Writing articles such as this, which suggest that Israel should adopt a consistent strategy and rigorously enforce it, is easy. Being at the helm of a small country and operating under serious constraints and limitations of power creates a much more complex reality than that portrayed in such articles.

Containment resulted in adverse strategic consequences, it was not elegant and lacked strategic "magic dust", but it was realistic.

In the years leading to the Second Lebanon War, Israel did not really have a strategy toward the buildup of Hezbollah's rocket force. The approach was called "Containment", which was a code word for being clueless and doing nothing. The Winograd Committee that investigated the war's shortcomings found that Containment was inadequate and illegitimate. The Committee may have got it wrong. Containment resulted in adverse strategic consequences, it was not elegant and lacked strategic "magic dust", but it was realistic. Did the Committee seriously expect Israel to attack Hezbollah out of the blue, occupy significant parts of Lebanon for an extended period and clear them of rockets? And if so, what would happen after Israel eventually withdrew? Wouldn't Iran rearm Hezbollah? Or did the Committee expect Israel to launch an attack against Hezbollah every few years, on each occasion that the organization was about to accumulate a critical mass of rockets? Moreover, if the Committee had brilliant indirect or political ideas as to how to prevent the buildup of Hezbollah's rocket force without the need to launch unprovoked major operations every few years, why didn't it make specific suggestions? Or could it get away with simply decreeing that "someone" should come up with a brilliant idea that the Committee itself could not think of?

Admittedly, Israel does not have a serious strategy to stop Iran from positioning rockets on its borders; and this challenge remains to be addressed. Yet strategy is not only about forming abstract ideas; it is about executing them in the real world, given actual diplomatic, economic and political constraints, and about being sensible regarding the limitations of power. Then again, being realistic is not a justification for being as bewildered as a deer on a highway at night, blinded by an approaching truck's lights. A golden path must be found.



Lynchpin: The U.S.-ROK Alliance after the Cheonan

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In the dark waters of the Yellow Sea on March 26, 2010, the South Korean corvette *Cheonan* was suddenly struck by a torpedo, broken in half, and sunk in 5 minutes – claiming the lives of 46 South Korean sailors. A subsequent international investigation identified a North Korean mini-submarine as the source of the attack.[i] Relations between the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Democratic People's Republic of North Korea (DPRK) – the formal names of South and North Korea – took an immediate nosedive, as did South Korea's relations with China after Beijing refused to acknowledge Pyongyang's responsibility for the attack.

Yet if there is any silver lining to this tragedy, it is that it inaugurated a deeper era of the U.S.-ROK alliance. Nearly four months after the sinking, the ROK and U.S. militaries conducted major naval exercises in the waters around the Korean peninsula. Washington strongly supported Seoul's

diplomatic efforts in the months following the sinking, and in June, the American and South Korean presidents jointly announced a delay in the transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON) from 2012 to 2015 – a major diplomatic achievement for Seoul. The Secretaries of State and Defense visited Korea to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the start of the Korean War. During the same trip, they also held a historic "2+2" meeting with their ROK counterparts which approved a broad swath of initiatives referred to as "Strategic Alliance 2015" (SA2015). While much of these events would probably have occurred without the sinking of the *Cheonan*, the tragedy added a degree of focus, attention, and urgency that was needed to truly begin a new era in the alliance.

Yet if there is any silver lining to this tragedy, it is that it inaugurated a deeper era of the U.S.-ROK alliance.

Still, significant challenges remain. Seoul is conducting a major reevaluation of its defense reform plan, which will inevitably be complicated by South Korea's vigorous domestic political debates. Seoul is also facing the daunting challenges of both managing China's rise as well as the continued threat coming from North Korea. At the same time, the American strategic community is grappling with the U.S. military's long-term ability to unilaterally provide global public goods in the face of new rising powers and proliferating advanced military technologies.[ii]

The consequences for the United States, and the broader Asia-Pacific region, will be profound. East Asia is poised to become the global economic engine of the 21st century, and this prosperity will be contingent on the stability traditionally provided by the United States and its allies and partners. Yet as China's power increases and North Korea continues to threaten the region, American policymakers are beginning to look to South Korea as a lynchpin for American presence in the region. Since President Obama's inauguration, his administration has clearly established Asia as a top foreign policy priority. The U.S.-ROK alliance will play an increasingly vital role in America's approach to the region, and it will be incumbent upon both Washington and Seoul to build on the strong foundation of the past, and chart a path forward for a flexible and robust alliance.

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The United States Returns to the Asia-Pacific

Since his inauguration, President Obama has signaled that the Asia-Pacific region will be a top priority for his administration. After declaring himself America's "first Pacific President," he made two trips to the region in two years. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited the region six times in the same time span. By the end of his November 2010 trip to Asia, President Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao will have met 7 times in Obama's first two years – more than any other American and Chinese heads of state for the same amount of time.[iii] President Obama's first head of government visitor was Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso, and his first head of state visitor was Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Since Obama's inauguration, the U.S. has also upgraded its relations with non-allies throughout the region and increased the level of its participation in the region's multilateral fora. President Obama's historic visits to India and Indonesia signaled a stronger interest in building ties in South and Southeast Asia, as did the warming ties between Washington and Hanoi. Washington also designated the East Asia Summit (EAS) as the region's preeminent security/strategic organization, and the President has committed to attending its annual leaders summit.

Seoul's Renewed Focus

Throughout America's rapprochement with the Asia-Pacific region, South Korea's international stature has steadily increased. Serving as the host of the November G-20 summit finalized Seoul's ascent as an important international political player. American policymakers also highlighted South Korea's increasing importance to American interests, referring to the ROK as "a lynchpin of stability and security in the region and now even far beyond."

Throughout America's rapprochement with the Asia-Pacific region, South Korea's international stature has steadily increased.

This rising stature coincided with a strategic refocusing within Seoul's national security community on the North Korean threat. Despite the heavily-fortified 238-kilometer border and history of belligerence serving as a constant reminder of hostilities, North Korea's sinking of the *Cheonan* catalyzed a significant shift in Seoul's strategic thinking. South Korea's cabinet endorsed a significant shift in the ROK's defensive posture, spending 35.2 billion won (\$29 million) to procure and maintain weapons systems to upgrade warship sonar, deploy sound surveillance systems for islands near the sea border, and develop an indigenous three-dimensional radar system. The ROK military has also announced plans to buy minesweeper and anti-submarine helicopters.[v]

Yet these adjustments – though welcome and helpful – will only be the first step in Seoul's attempts to deal with a complex set of threats posed by the DPRK. From hundreds of thousands of special forces to SCUD ballistic missiles, to

biological and chemical weapons, to an array of artillery that could quickly devastate Seoul, to nuclear weapons, the North Korean military poses a significant threat. Moreover, the potential for unconventional threats, such as the destruction of up-river dams to flood the South among others, presents a significant challenge to the South Korean people. South Korea has never been more cognizant of these threats as it is now, which has been further complicated by the power transition occurring in Pyongyang.

Though long predicted and not yet realized, many analysts in South Korea and the United States see the Kim family regime as increasingly brittle.[vi] With Kim Jong-il reportedly suffering from a wide variety of serious ailments and attempting to establish his young son Kim Jong-un as successor, many see the coming months and years as especially trying for the DPRK's ruling regime. The younger Kim might lack legitimacy and authority, something his father never seemed to confront when he took power from his own father and founder of the country, Kim Il-sung.

Such a situation may spell the end of the era of one-man rule in North Korea

Kim Jong-un's inexperience will make consolidating power difficult. Such a situation may spell the end of the era of one-man rule in North Korea, portending a time in Pyongyang when political dynamics will be more complex and possibly more unpredictable. If Kim Jong-un cannot consolidate power, the regime could collapse, potentially prompting a major humanitarian intervention as the world would have to help feed, medicate, and rebuild a society of more than 22 million that has faced poverty and near-starvation for decades.[vii]

The implications of regime collapse in the DPRK are tremendous – a fact South Korea fully appreciates. If the government were to topple, the effects would likely be wide-ranging and severe, even if a new government were able to regain power. Not only would the North Korean population likely suffer from further reductions in food distribution and basic services, the shock to the tenuous region could cause chaos. Among the numerous challenges that such a scenario would create would be the potential for unprotected nuclear and other WMD materials and weapons, large refugee flows northward into China and across the DMZ into South Korea, a catastrophic humanitarian crisis stemming from the loss of services and food production, and unprecedented financial costs to address these and other challenges.

Though a North Korean collapse would not necessarily lead to the unification of the peninsula, there would be tremendous pressure to reunite the two countries in such a scenario. The majority of South Koreans would like to see a unified Korea – though the tremendous costs involved would rightly give them pause. Some analysts have placed the cost estimates of reunification to be between \$25 billion and \$3.25 trillion, not including the cultural and social costs of reintegrating the two societies, making unification a truly multi-generational challenge.[viii]

The Next Evolution in the Alliance

In the context of South Korea's refocusing on North Korean threats and major uncertainties—both new and old—several near-term events spanning the political, economic, and military arenas will have a profound effect on the U.S.-ROK alliance. How each country approaches these issues will have a significant impact on the trajectory of the alliance going forward. On the military front, plans for the transfer of wartime operational control and South Korea's ongoing and off-changing defense reforms are occurring in the midst of a reevaluation of the North Korean threat. If the United States and South Korea can fit these individual strands together in a strategic manner, both countries will advance not only their own security interests, but also the alliance as well.

Military

Washington and Seoul agreed in 2004 to realign U.S. forces in the South in order to enhance the American military's strategic flexibility, while transferring increased responsibility for the defense of the South to the ROK military. The centerpiece of this shift was the transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON) from the U.S. to the ROK military, which was originally scheduled to take place in 2012 but was recently postponed to December 2015.

Meanwhile, in mid-2005, South Korea's Defense Ministry announced an ambitious plan to reform the ROK military, called "Defense Reform 2020." The objective of the plan was to qualitatively improve the military while reducing the quantity of military manpower and weapon systems by replacing out-dated weapons with high-technology systems and reducing the military's overall troop strength.[ix] The drive to reduce troop strength stemmed in part from the recognition that South Korea's changing demographics will pose a considerable challenge to its military manpower.[x]

The Defense Reform 2020 plan, however, has been plagued by problems since its inception. It called for military budget increases through 2020 at a total cost of 621 trillion won (\$550 billion in 2010 dollars) over 15 years. By 2009, however, the plan had a 22 trillion won (\$19 billion) shortfall. The Ministry of Strategy and Finance's 2010 military budget revision increased the 15-year shortfall to about 42 trillion won, or \$37 billion dollars. Some estimates now put the final shortfall by 2020 at about 110 trillion won (\$97 billion)—almost four times the 2009 MND budget.[xi]

Moreover, the plan was conceived with a radically different understanding of South Korea's strategic environment. The government in Seoul at the time under President Roh Moo-hyun sought engagement with North Korea, and had planned to significantly downsize the ROK military as part of a broader "Sunshine Policy." The current government's cognizance of the challenges posed by the DPRK requires a significantly different approach to defense planning, and a review of the Defense Policy Review is in order. Should North Korea collapse, securing it will require significant manpower, as well as a force that is experienced in the ways of peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and counter insurgency.

In these scenarios, the ROK military could potentially be

called upon to conduct a wide variety of complex tasks that would often bear little resemblance to the defense of the South from Northern attack. For example, providing food and medicine to millions of malnourished North Koreans, many of whom could be hostile and well-armed, will require a unique set of skills and capabilities that more closely resembled peacekeeping and counter-insurgency than conventional defense against attack. If South Korea were to continue its international contributions to peacekeeping, stabilization and reconstruction efforts, it would likely be further prepared for such contingencies on the Peninsula.[xii]

Unfortunately, as seen above, South Korea does not have the budgetary (nor the demographic) ability to support a large military capable of doing all things. Considering this, the ROK military should identify its top priorities and develop capabilities that are the most applicable to the widest range of possible contingencies.

With the transfer of OPCON delayed from 2012 to 2015, Washington and Seoul have seized the opportunity to develop a plan to jointly deal with the complex challenges the ROK will face in the short-to-medium term in a program called Strategic Alliance 2015 (SA15). Part of this effort should be a robust effort to plan and exercise capabilities necessary for dealing with a wide variety of collapse and North Korean attack scenarios. Fundamental to the success of these plans will be the integration of non-military agencies and organizations, so economic reconstruction and governance can be as well coordinated as military maneuvers.

Moreover, both sides should also look to long-term strategic issues and begin to discuss principles and objectives for a unified Korean peninsula. Fundamental to this conversation will be a frank bilateral conversation about the post-unification purpose and role of the U.S.-ROK alliance, and the key interests and principles of both Washington and Seoul.

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Economic

The ROK employs significant diplomatic and military power due, in part, to its own impressive economic rise. However, the United States has in recent years failed to recognize the strategic significance of trade in East Asia. As the region's economies expand and grow ever-more interconnected, the United States has to date fallen behind regional trends. This has had strategic effects: South Korea's top trading partner today is China, which is true for most other East Asian countries. This will inevitably have strategic effects in the years to come, especially if China continues to employ economic levers of influence and pressure to achieve strategic ends – as it did by withholding rare earth shipments to Japan during a row over disputed islands.

If the United States is to maintain strong relations throughout

the Asia-Pacific region, those relations must be greater than military/strategic relations. Increased trade and economic integration will be essential. The most important and visible factor in the U.S.-ROK economic relationship is the signing and ratification of a free trade agreement, known as KORUS. The administrations of both President Lee and President Obama have been pushing for the passage of the trade pact, citing economic benefits for both parties, but it has come up against some opposition in both capitals. Both administrations should make it clear that the future strength of the alliance will in part ride on trade and economic integration. Korea expert and former NSC Director for Asia Dr. Victor Cha (disclosure: Dr. Cha is on the Board of Advisors for the authors' home organization, the Center for a New American Security) has quipped that if the U.S. fails to ratify KORUS, historians will point to that moment as the time when the U.S. ceded Asia to China.[xiii] Dr. Cha's analysis is more accurate than ever, and the time for the U.S. to sign and ratify KORUS is now.

Conclusion

Ultimately, South Korea enjoys a high degree of security, protected from attack by the U.S. extended nuclear deterrent and its 28,500 U.S. troops stationed on the peninsula. With mutual interests in stability and shared democratic values, the United States and South Korea both receive significant benefits from the relationship.

But as Washington and Seoul look to 2015 and beyond, defense reform must be an integral part of alliance reform. The United States will stand with its ally during times of crisis or conflict, but will increasingly look to its ally to substantially contribute to its own defense and to the maintenance of the international system. The ROK must therefore be prepared to accept the challenges that come, no matter their source or character.

The most important and visible factor in the U.S.-ROK economic relationship is the signing and ratification of a free trade agreement

Yet, despite the complex challenges both sides will face in the coming years, Washington and Seoul must look beyond military and security relations and chart an alliance that is truly strategic. This will mean closer economic relations, which must be based on a robust free trade agreement. Without close economic ties, U.S. relations with Korea will be fundamentally limited in both its scope as well as in its depth.

As a lynchpin of America's interests in the Asia-Pacific region, South Korea must be prepared to step up to its natural role as a regional and global leader. The U.S.-ROK alliance must also be prepared to handle the region's future challenges. With China rising and North Korea undergoing a historic transition, the time to build a strategic, robust, and effective alliance is now.

Footnotes

[i] "Joint Investigation Report on the Attack Against ROK Ship Cheonan," Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, September 2010, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/files/fp_uploaded_documents/100913_Report%201.pdf.

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[iii] James S. Brady, "Press Gaggle on the President's Upcoming Trip to Asia," The White House: Office of the Press Secretary, October 28, 2010, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/10/28/press-gaggle-presidents-upcoming-trip-asia>.

[iv] Hillary Clinton, "Speech on U.S. Agenda in Asia-Pacific Region," U.S. Department of State, October 28, 2010, <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2010/October/20101028191722su0.9814875.html&distid=ucs>.

[v] Jung Sung-ki, "Defense Reform 2020 to be revised for NK threat," The Korea Times, May 26, 2010, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2010/07/205_66548.html.

[vi] See Minxin Pei, "Get Ready for DPRK Collapse," The Diplomat, May 12, 2010, <http://the-diplomat.com/2010/05/12/get-ready-for-dprk-collapse/>; Robert D. Kaplan, "When North Korea Falls," The Atlantic Monthly, October 2006, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/10/when-north-korea-falls/5228/>.

[vii] See Robert Kaplan and Abraham Denmark, "Power transfer will shake North Korea," Financial Times, September 7, 2010.

[viii] David Coghlan, "Prospects From Korean Reunification," Strategic Studies Institute, April 2008, p. 3; and Samuel S. Kim, "The Mirage of a United Korea," Far Eastern Economic Review, November 2006, p. 12.

[ix] For more details on the Defense Reform Plan, see Bruce W. Bennett, "A Brief Analysis of the Republic of Korea's Defense Reform Plan," RAND, 2006, http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/2006/RAND_OP165.pdf.

[x] In South Korea, military service is mandatory for males aged 18 to 35 and the ROK military is primarily manned by males at the age of 20. According to the Korean National Statistical Office, 20-year-old men generally numbered more than 400,000 from 1977 to 2003, which was quite sufficient to sustain the 690,000 active-duty military population that had been maintained in the 1990s. But the number of 20-year-old men in 2008 was projected to fall to 317,000, creating a serious manpower shortage. This number is projected to rebound up to 368,000 in 2013 and then decline nearly continuously, falling below 200,000 in 2036. Korean National Statistical Office, <http://www.kostat.go.kr/eng/>. As cited in Bruce W. Bennett, "A Brief Analysis of the Republic of Korea's Defense Reform Plan," RAND, 2006, http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/2006/RAND_OP165.pdf.

[xi] Bruce Bennett, "Managing Catastrophic North Korea Risks," The Korea Herald, January 21, 2010, <http://www.rand.org/commentary/2010/01/21/KH.html>.

[xii] The U.S. Department of Defense's Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) identified a wide variety of challenges for the future of the U.S. military—including counter-terrorism, stabilizing fragile states, preventing human suffering due to natural disaster, defeating aggression by adversaries armed with advanced anti-access capabilities, and protecting the global commons—that would be just as beneficial for the ROK military to help perform, not only out of obligation to continue supporting such multinational efforts, but because it could very well be in the national interest of South Korea in the event of further trouble in the DPRK. Robert Gates, *Quadrennial Defense Review*, February 2010, <http://www.defense.gov/qdr/qdr%20as%20of%2029jan10%201600.pdf>.

[xiii] Donald Kirk, "Time Running Out for Korean FTA," Asia Times Online, June 4, 2008, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Korea/JF04Dg01.html>.



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Strategic Culture: A Look at Europe

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The concept of "strategic culture" is a simple one: that long-term trends in the preferences, priorities and policies adopted by states in relation to military force and international affairs can be meaningfully identified.[i] In claiming to explain how states may differ in their opinions and policies on the use of armed force, it is an alluring model that openly challenges a focus on power in international relations.

Yet under scrutiny, how useful is this tool for understanding the behaviour of actual states? By using the case studies of Britain, France and Germany, this paper assesses the usefulness of the "strategic culture" viewpoint. Under examination, the ingrained position of these states in terms of policy priorities and military capabilities does indeed seem to reflect a strategic-cultural interpretation with some accuracy. However, the theory also has limitations for understanding the behaviour of these states. Most notably, the theory lacks deeper insight about individual policy choices, and its inability to identify the source of change in a state's strategic culture raises further doubts about its suitability as an analysis tool. Given this assessment, it should perhaps be concluded that, whilst useful, a degree of caution should be exercised when attempting to project strategic culture concepts onto specific international events.

Yet under scrutiny, how useful is this tool for understanding the behaviour of actual states?

So, what does "strategic culture" attempt to highlight in contemporary state behaviour? The approach in modern

academia is an offshoot of the Constructivist school, as championed by thinkers such as Alexander Wendt.[ii] Wendt's assertion that "Anarchy is what states make of it" created a new concept in international relations; namely that the nature of "threat" in the international system is not absolute, but relative to interpretation by individual states. Building from this, advocates of strategic culture have hypothesised that 'strategic realities are in part culturally constructed'.[iii]

To test the claims of strategic culture, the case study of the military preferences and priorities of Britain, France and Germany are very interesting.

The school of thought that emerged has been fraught with internal disagreements, and an exact definition has never been universally agreed upon. However, broadly speaking, the concept suggests that the preferences and practices of states are the result of a 'negotiated reality' built up over time through public and political discourse into a 'distinctive body of beliefs, attitudes and practices regarding the use of force'. In short, the way a state uses armed force is not decided by some "universal logic" of threat and defence, but a far more intricate relationship between history, context and culture. The result is a cultural "filter" through which states assess incoming international events, form policy responses and decide the eventual role of armed force within that response. [vi]

This proposed "filter" is important for two reasons. Firstly, it challenges a purely power-orientated vision of the world, as proposed by Realists. The Realist school remains the most widely referenced theory of international relations, and through focusing on power and the strategic goal of obtaining security, claims to explain almost all state behaviour. As such, the Realist school would predict that state behaviour, in a given context, can be judged by objective standards, such as geographical security, levels of resources and the manifestation of threats. Any given state, a Realist would argue, will behave in accordance with certain principles of power projection and security, irrelevant of historically held views or cultural factors. Realism claims that power, and the politics of power, are all that matter in international affairs. Strategic culture refutes this claim.

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Secondly, strategic culture claims to provide a broad contextual background to the use of force that affects *all* policy decisions by a state. Essentially, strategic culture analysis claims to not only define what a state views as being possible with armed force, but what it can even *imagine* may be possible.[vii] It claims that strategic culture will form the boundaries of state behaviour in general, as well as in given circumstances. This assertion of durability is important, as it boasts a predictive power that can be of great utility to strategic analysis.

Due to these two factors, the theory has gained a wide following in international relations literature, and its application to the European context is a particularly common one.[viii]

To test the claims of strategic culture, the case study of the military preferences and priorities of Britain, France and Germany are very interesting. This is because all three states seem to have near identical strategic context. They all have comparable demographic statistics[ix] , stable democratic politics, possess membership in the EU and prominent positions in the UN[x], whilst all enjoying some of the highest-ranking economic productivity in the world.[xi] Yet despite these similarities, and contrary to purely power-based interpretations, these states demonstrate policy preferences in relation to the use of force that strategic-culturalists claim cannot be accounted for by simple "realist" assessments of resources and geography.[xii]

Indeed, by framing their preferences in terms of deeply held strategic cultural sentiments, it is possible in these three case studies to identify a meaningful correlation between strategic cultural observations and continuities in their foreign policies and military capabilities. All three need to be illustrated in order to examine the utility of the strategic culture concept.

In marked contrast, Germany has displayed a strategic cultural policy preference that many argue illustrates a profound 'historical anomaly'.

In terms of policy preferences Britain and France share a common willingness to deploy force on the world stage that seems to reflect strategic cultural traditions.[xiii] A historical acceptance of the legitimacy of armed force as a policy tool is matched in both states by numerous examples of deploying armed force in both unilateral and multilateral circumstances.[xiv] These interventions have often been far from home, reflecting a colonial history and broader feelings of the importance of their respective influence world-wide.[xv] Each has also sought to maintain an independent nuclear deterrent, despite the cost, in order to guarantee their status as important security brokers world-wide.[xvi] Perhaps most importantly, the populations of both countries, whilst often known to resist individual military deployments based on unique criticism[xvii], do not question the *concept* of their troops being sent abroad. In short, both have a faith in "hard power" as a policy tool that seems to reflect a strategic cultural trend, each guided by particular, relevant factors of history and culture.

In marked contrast, Germany has displayed a strategic cultural policy preference that many argue illustrates a profound 'historical anomaly'.[xviii] Despite being the largest and most economically powerful of the three states, the 'major external shock'[xix] of defeat in World War II has created 'antimilitarism' in German strategic culture that has proved 'immensely durable'.[xx] The resultant 'culture of restraint'[xxi] has been characterised by a devout adherence to multilateralism and non-involvement in military operations aimed at maximising their global self-image as a reliable political partner.[xxii] Whilst a slow reduction of legal and constitutional impediments to Germany utilising armed force has occurred over the past two decades,[xxiii] German public opinion continues to be more staunchly antimilitarist than their British or French cousins. In general, political commitment to armed engagements remains controversial.[xxiv] Thus, in contrast to the other two major European states, Germany possesses a strategic culture deeply reticent about the role of armed force, utterly at odds with a realist perspective, which is reflected in a policy preference of 'restraint'.

These contrasting strategic-cultural policy preferences proceed to shed light on the military capabilities and practices of each state. For instance, the focus on global military relevance in British and French strategic culture has influenced the pace and scope of military reform since the end of the Cold War. Both radically restructured their armed forces in response to the newly emerging "expeditionary" priority that proceeded the lack of existential threat from the USSR.[xxv] Britain and France also remain committed to ambitious "legacy" projects, such as an aircraft carrier program.[xxvi] The strength of their respective strategic cultures clearly acted as a catalyst for the great deal of political energy required to carry out this re-structuring. Their levels of military spending, amongst the top four largest military budgets in the world, also illustrates this connection between strategic culture and policy commitment to armed force.[xxvii]

In contrast, Germany, with its lack of political will and domestic consensus around the use of force has undergone only intermittent military reform for power projection since unification.[xxviii] Indeed, not only does Germany have a €16 billion shortfall in its military budget compared to the per-capita commitment of Britain and France[xxix], but the military capacity of German troops has also been compared extremely poorly with other European states.[xxx] That a state with the economic and political position of Germany has such a low level of military deployability seems evident that strategic culture can fundamentally affect the practice of military policy in a state.

However, there are also some severe limitations to the strategic culture model that need to be explored.

Under examination, it seems that the theoretical implications of strategic culture on the policy preferences and resultant military capabilities of states have a strong correlation. Britain, France and Germany display policy alignments consistent with long term strategic cultural trends, proving that 'a distinctive approach to strategy can become engrained in

training, institutions and force postures'.[xxxii] This seems to prove the usefulness of the model in helping understand state behaviour, and stands as a potent argument against the power-obsessed tendencies of Realism.

However, there are also some severe limitations to the strategic culture model that need to be explored. These revolve around its lack of deeper insight about the particular strategic choices of a state, and the inability of theorists to identify the direct source of change in a state's strategic culture.

The initial problem is that whilst strategic cultural readings may illustrate broad trends, it 'lacks theoretical rigor in demonstrating the linkage between identified cultural trends and actual behaviour' in particular complex situations.[xxxiii] An example comes from assessing the specific form that the policy preferences identified above have taken shape in each state.

For Britain, an "Atlanticist" stance to defence policy has been identified, that has seen it walk a "tightrope" between European security and more global commitments to military co-operation with the USA.[xxxiii] In contrast, France has been attributed a "Gaullist" preference based around the priority of 'autonomy of action' from exterior (especially US) policy alignments.[xxxiv] Meanwhile, Germany has consistently demonstrated an 'admirable subordination of its own interests to the broader EU project' as the core of its multilateralism.[xxxv]

its inability to identify with any clarity the source of changes to a state's strategic culture

These strategies may reflect the broad assertion that Britain and France utilise military force, or prioritise international military capabilities, whilst Germany does not, but there is also immense nuance and political negotiation behind each policy path. For instance, the British relationship between US and EU defence initiatives is an immensely complicated one, characterised by forays into deeper EU co-operation[xxxvi], retreats from policy positions[xxxvii], and a general process of "muddling through" complex political processes.[xxxviii] French policies towards the EU and military force have demonstrated a similar schizophrenic streak, with advances in the European Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) initiative paradoxically causing a crisis of identity in the wider French vision of its role.[xxxix] Similarly, German debates over the reform of the Bundeswehr (armed forces) have been characterised by debate over the wider social implications of reform on the *Zivildienst*[xl] (civil volunteering) program, as well as budgetary concerns.[xli]

What such factors illustrate is a lack of deeper insight in the strategic cultural approach to explaining the more complicated realities behind policy decisions.[xlii] To be fair to the theorists, it has been suggested that a policy decision may be the result of numerous interrelating public, political and military factors that complicate a 'unitary understanding of strategic culture.'[xliii] Yet regardless, this reduces the utility of the model, as the complex context of any particular policy event is not adequately captured by strategic culture theory.

This leads to the final important limitation of the strategic culture concept – its inability to identify with any clarity the source of changes to a state's strategic culture.[xliv] It is widely agreed that a "massive external shock", such as complete economic and political collapse, may alter the historical makeup of a state's strategic culture. The case study of Germany and Japan's pacifism after World War Two is used widely as proof of this assertion.[xlv] However, there is substantial disagreement over the exact process of less severe, incremental processes of change to a strategic culture.[xlvi] Here the case study of Germany's gradual realignment from a policy position of almost total antimilitarism to a more nuanced semi-militarist stance over the 1990s is instrumental in illustrating this debate.

It is widely accepted that Germany has slowly come to accept a limited responsibility for military action over time, concluding with the deployment of German forces in active war zones such as Kosovo (1998-1999) and now Afghanistan that would have been unthinkable in 1990.[xlvii] However, there is a great deal of debate over how this process took place, and what this reflects in strategic cultural analysis.[xlviii] One potential perspective, the "Structuralist" approach, sees public opinion and *zeitgeist* as being the most important aspect of change. Another perspective, the "Actionalist" viewpoint, believe politicians instead actively debate international events, and if necessary, re-adjust the historical parameters of strategic culture in line with necessity.

Confusingly, both processes seem to have been at work in the German evolution of strategic culture. On the one hand, clear international pressure from the US combined with a growing sense of commitment to the EU in the Bundestag to give policy actors such as Schroeder and Scharping 'strong incentives for the political manipulation of reform'.[xlix] This led them to attempt to re-phrase the public debate in reference to "responsibilities", and gradually shift political willingness to use force.[l] Nonetheless, it has also been observed that public perception of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, and the emotive response in Germany on the subject of preventing genocide, was the 'primary catalyst for German foreign policy restructuring'.[li]

considering Britain, France and Germany in terms of their respective strategic cultures, illustrates historical differences in the policy and practice of armed force

Given these interpretations, Baumann & Hellmann wisely conclude that such changes in strategic culture are influenced by both the schools of thought suggested.[lii] Yet equally, this is a vague assertion, and the difficulty of confirming exactly which factor has the largest influence on the formation and re-formation of strategic culture represents a weakness in this model.

Clearly, considering Britain, France and Germany in terms of their respective strategic cultures, illustrates historical differences in the policy and practice of armed force. By proposing an 'intervening variable between stimuli arriving

from the strategic environment and a state's response to those stimuli, strategic culture aids an understanding of state behaviour by shedding light on factors other than power in the international system.^[liii] However, the usefulness of this theoretical model must be tempered by an appreciation of its limitations, notably its lack of insight to more complex policy processes and its incoherent response to the issue of changes within a state's strategic culture over time.

A strategic culture of co-operation has trumped power as the political tool of choice in Europe.

Where does this leave the debate between Realist and cultural viewpoints of state behaviour? Even with the weaknesses identified above, the evidence in Europe continues to point towards cultural interpretations, and not

Realist ones. As Europe enters an uncertain 21st century, the sluggish but potentially momentous move towards EU military integration is seeing a historically unparalleled level of co-operation and subordination of national interest. The strategic culture of security co-operation at any cost, lest Europe once again be torn apart by great power conflict, is so deeply ingrained in the institutions of Brussels, that it remains almost inconceivable that a purely power orientated viewpoint could emerge in modern Europe. A strategic culture of co-operation has trumped power as the political tool of choice in Europe.

Ultimately, it is in this historically exceptional agreement between sovereign states that strategic culture seems manifestly the more accurate of the two theories. Put simply, power does not provide all the answers. As long as the limitations above are borne in mind, the strategic culture approach provides a more historically relevant and accurate model for understanding international affairs.

Footnotes

[i] For the historical source of the "strategic culture" concept in the "ways of war" literature of the inter-war period, see Berger (1998) pp.9-15 and Sondhaus (2006) pp.1-3

[ii] For the roots of Constructivism, see Wendt (1992)

[iii] Booth found in Sondhaus (2006) p.5

[iv] For the "three generations" of thinkers and their disputes, see UzZaman (2009) pp.74-82. For the definitions debate, see Sondhaus (2006) pp.123-130

[v] Exact wording provided by Longhurst, though a comparison table of definitions can be found in Soundhaus (2006) pp.124-125. Table 5.1

[vi] Basur & Forrest Morgan, found in Sondhaus (2006) p.9

[vii] Duffield (1999) p.771

[viii] See for instance the work of Rashed UzZaman, Jack Snyder, Colin Gray and Lawrence Sondhaus, as discussed in UzZaman (2009) pp.69-82

[ix] See CIA World Factbook for population sizes per square mile and other comparable characteristics.

[x] Security Council membership for France and Britain being particularly important.

[xi] The 4th (Germany), 5th (France) and 6th (Britain) largest economies in the world respectively. Figures from 2008 World Bank estimates, found at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/GDP.pdf>

[xii] For the realist perspective of state behaviour and its belief in the uniformity of state motivation, see Waltz (2001)

[xiii] See Sondhaus (2006) p.14 and p.20 respectively.

[xiv] Unilaterally, recent history has seen Britain in Sierra Leone (2000) and France in the Ivory Coast (2004). Multilaterally both are currently engaged in Afghanistan.

[xv] For Britain's "uniquely global outlook" see Miskimmon (2004) p.281 For French perceptions of global grandeur see Irondele (2008) p.155

[xvi] For the priority of nuclear weapons as a "great power status" tool, see Howorth (2003) p.182

[xvii] See for instance the broad anti-war sentiment that has developed over the controversial Afghanistan mission, poll-figures available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE50JONQ20090120>

[xviii] Berger (1998) p.1

[xix] For the concept of a "major external shock" as a pre-requisite for strategic cultural re-alignment, see Berger (1998) pp.23-25

[xx] Sondhaus (2006) p.44

[xxi] For an exploration of this concept, see Baumann & Hellmann (2001) pp.62-63

[xxii] Lantis (2002) p.22

[xxiii] For a chart of this progress, culminating in active armed involvement in Kosovo (1999), see Dyson (2005) p.66 Fig.1

[xxiv] See opinion polls found in Maull (2000) pp.70-80 and for the ongoing domestic debate about armed force, see Noetzel & Schreer (2008) pp.211-213

[xxv] The scope and structure of reforms, see Sondhaus (2006) p.19 for Britain and Irondele (2008) p.162 for France

[xxvi] For Britain see Rogers (2006) and for France see Irondele (2008) p.162

[xxvii] Figures found at http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/mil_exp_dol_fig-military-expenditures-dollar-figure

[xxviii] See for instance the comprehensive failure to meet the targets of the Konzeption de Bundeswehr proposed in 2003, despite a seven year time-scale. Noetzel & Schreer (2008) p.217

[xxix] Meiers (2005) p.158

[xxx] See for instance the assessment of US, German and British Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan, in Bollen, Linssen & Rietjens (2006)

[xxxi] Colin Gray, found in Sondhaus (2006) p.4

[xxxii] Criticism forwarded by Johnston (1999) found in Sondhaus (2006) p.8

[xxxiii] Gordon, found in Smith & Timmins (2001) p.154

[xxxiv] Vaisse (2008) p.5

[xxxv] Sondhaus (2006) p.44

[xxxvi] Such as St Malo in 1998

[xxxvii] For the rocky path of US-British relations, see Niblett (2007) pp.627-630

[xxxviii] Hood (2008) p.196

[xxxix] For the "reincarnation/incarnation" debate, see Irondelle (2008) p.154

[xl] Conscripts undertaking civil service jobs as a substitute for military training, a political and economic source of great controversy. As discussed in Dyson (2005) p.365

[xli] Indeed, budgetary concerns have been identified as fundamentally shaping all three states policy orientations since the end of the Cold War, as discussed in Dyson (2005) p.365 and Cornish & Edwards (2005) pp.258-261

[xlii] See the work of Rejesh Basrur as discussed in Sondhaus (2006) pp.8-9 for such criticisms.

[xliii] Critique forwarded by Colin Gray, found in UzZaman (2009) p.82

[xliv] See Berger (1998) pp.23-25 and UzZaman (2009) p.70

[xlv] As discussed in depth in Berger (1998)

[xlvi] For an outline of these disagreements, see UzZaman (2009) pp.74-82

[xlvii] See Lantis (2002)

[xlviii] Arguments found in Baumann & Hellmann (2001) pp.62-72

[xlix] Dyson (2005) pp.368

[l] For this process of policy manipulation, see Dyson (2005) pp.368-373

[li] Lantis (2002) p.39

[lii] Baumann & Hellmann (2001) p.64

[liii] Sondhaus (2006) p.9

