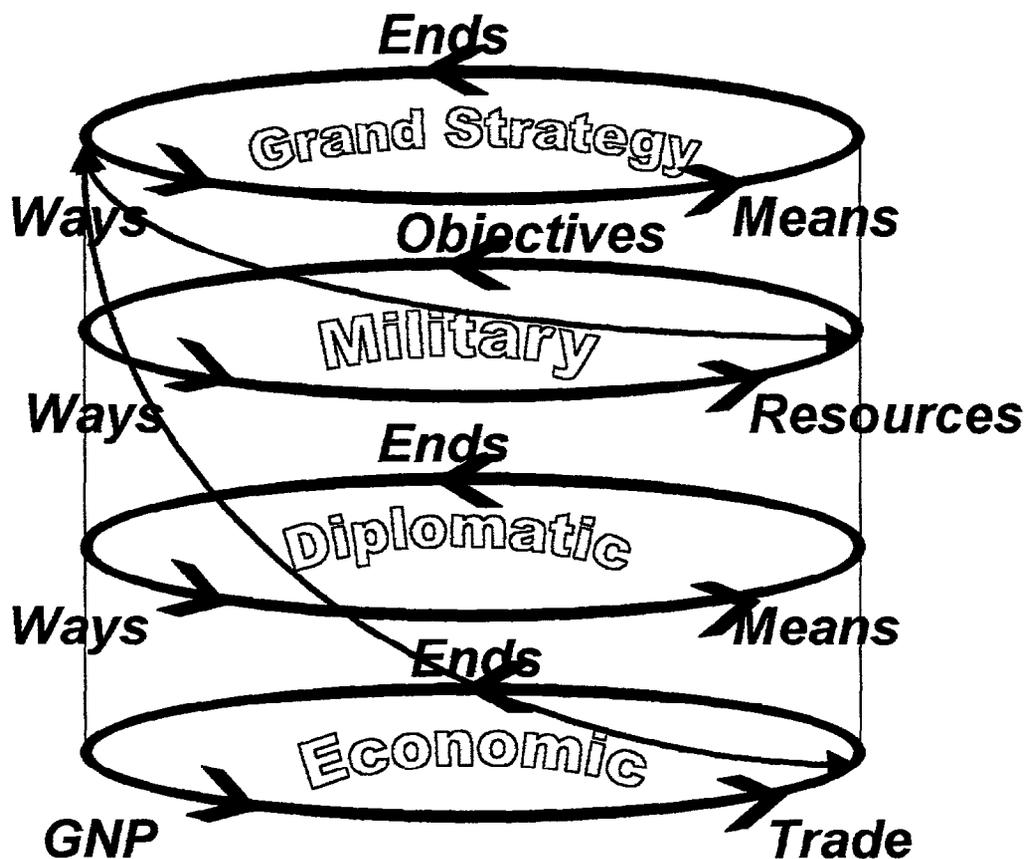


NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE

STRATEGIC THINKING IN AN ERA OF INTERVENTION

*THINKING OUT OF A BOX WITH NO SIDES*



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# Report Documentation Page

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## The Era of Intervention

*We must not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be  
to arrive where we began and to know the place for the first time*  
- T S Eliot

The strategic art has challenged the most astute minds. History is both decorated with the spoils of strategic success and littered with the consequences of strategic miscalculation. Nation states and millions of lives hang in the balance in this game of highest stakes. Anybody who plays blackjack knows what I'm talking about. The rules are simple. One plays against the dealer. As each hand unfolds, players assess how that hand has shifted the "balance" of remaining face cards and aces--in blackjack, these cards are power. Over many hands, the odds are close to even for a skillful player, capable of keeping track of the balance of "power" and adjusting the stakes at risk appropriately. Therefore, most people will sit at the blackjack table long before they try their hand at poker--a more complex multi-player game--or bridge, which is even more sophisticated. At many levels, the Cold War was like playing blackjack. But we've left the table.

Throughout history, strategy--particularly military strategy--has been linked to technology. The partnership between technology and strategy has made it easier for one nation to intervene quicker and deeper into other's territories to threaten their military and civilian structure. This trend has progressed along two fronts: weapons' range and mobility. Consequently, a nation's ability to prevent other actors from exerting influence--bringing force to bear--within its own borders has been consistently eroded. As weapons range has grown from the long-bow at Agincourt, to artillery and rifles, to barrels in the Civil War, to advanced artillery in World War I, weapons' effectiveness has gradually increased, allowing an army greater stand-off distance. Similarly, as mobility has increased from the forced march in Napoleon's Wars, to

the use of trains in the Mississippi Campaign in the Civil War and the Schlieffen Plan in World War I, to troop ships at Normandy and in the Pacific in World War II, the speed with which one could travel over distances and strike deep within an opponent's borders was increased. These two trends were, perhaps, first fully synthesized in the blitzkrieg of the German Panzer division in World War II and, most certainly, with the advent of urban bombing campaigns against Germany and Japan. In these two cases, mobility and weapons' technology combined in unprecedented ways to permit striking the enemy well within his borders.

The next leap in intervention capability came with the launch of Sputnik in 1957, coupled with the maturation of nuclear weapons programs by several nations. Now, for the first time, an adversary could "reach" into another nation from intercontinental range and deliver devastating destruction. The implications were unmistakable: the new weapons were truly strategic--transcending the tactical/operational dimensions to strike directly the national strategic level.

However, designing, building and fielding these weapons required access to relatively advanced scientific, manufacturing, and material resources that limited the number of actors who could belong to this exclusive club. For those who chose to join, nuclear weapons left a "technological signature" that was easy to see and monitor. The signature was so clear that a strategy of nuclear deterrence could be developed in all its manifestations, from "nuclear parity" in the number and capability of deployed warheads, to the ability to respond to nuclear attack with a retaliatory strikes in a matter of minutes.

The post-Cold War era may well turn out to be the Era of Intervention, for the capability to intervene has been taken to a new level. A growing array of tools allows small groups (both state and non-state actors) to achieve devastating destruction within a nation's borders. These new weapons, permitting the few to threaten the many, are relatively low-tech, but exceedingly

difficult to detect, monitor and control. An actual use of biological, chemical, or information weapons would be quite difficult to trace to their source. This makes a strategy of deterrence a weak reed.

Concurrently, the United Nations is increasingly inclined to establish a military presence on the ground inside national borders. While these missions are for peacekeeping, peacemaking, starvation prevention, genocide prevention, and a host of other humanitarian tasks--and are not necessarily "imposed" against a nation's will--they are, nevertheless, interventions. The net result is that now, more than at any time since the Treaty of Westphalia, borders are no impediment to intervention. Consequently, the strategic realm has drastically changed.

In a world no longer set in a two-piece mold, the United States is--with or without the complicity of the international community--the actor who sets the terms of interaction. This reality requires careful consideration of the ensuing strategic implications. Otherwise, the new hierarchy will bring more vulnerability than opportunity, with the United States' advantage slowly decaying, thus opening the door to a world where anarchy reigns.

### **Setting the Stage—The Strategic Realm**

*In some important ways, conflict cannot occur beyond geography.*<sup>1</sup>  
- Colm S. Gray

The master strategist operates in a unique world, comprised of conflicting goals, perceptual prisms, and subtle maneuvers--where every action must be assessed for its strategic impact. Like a chess grandmaster, he must see the strategic implications of events and act to take fullest advantage of the situation.

I'll refer to this "world" of the strategist as the *strategic realm*--an "idea space." "Geography" in this realm corresponds to a strategic understanding. To "occupy" terrain in the

strategic realm means to have synthesized the strategic implications into one's decision-making process. The realm taken as a whole contains total strategic knowledge--to occupy the whole strategic realm means to have complete strategic understanding. Unfortunately, it is an immutable principle that no matter how hard one works at probing over the strategic horizon, no single strategist can occupy the whole realm at once. Everyone has "blind spots" generated by cultural biases, perceptive limits, and the often unforeseeable intent of the opponent. A region of the realm exclusively occupied by one actor includes all strategic implications *not* considered in the strategic process of other actors. Thus, one is always vulnerable to strategic surprise.

Historically, the strategic realm has been well differentiated. The basic characteristics of most historical strategies divide into clear patterns: offensive or defensive, deterrent or compelling, conventional or nuclear, etc. A strategy may have been very aggressive and interventionist--such as the United States' strategy in Korea--or deterrent to prevent intervention--such as the United States' strategy of containing the Soviet Union. One may have had an overall defensive posture, such as the early strategy of the Chinese during the war against Japan (both Red Army and KMT together), or an offensive posture, such as the strategy of Hitler's Wehrmacht at the start of World War II. Historically, most strategies have been "Westphalian," in that they involved interactions in well-defined, "traditional," national roles.

That is changing. When warning and response are separated by mere minutes, seconds, or nanoseconds, how can an action be classified as defensive or offensive? When a nation establishes military presence in another's sovereign territory to keep the peace, or prevent hostile action by an internal tribal leader, is this deterrence or compulsion? Offense or defensive? Westphalian or post-Westphalian? Just as interstate borders have become less meaningful, traditional strategic boundaries have become more transparent. While the line separating

strategic dimensions like defense and offense was always gray, the availability of weapons of intervention has blurred these distinctions beyond recognition, creating a chaotic strategic environment. As complicated as the historical description in the previous paragraph might seem, the strategic realm in the Era of Intervention is even more complex.

All points on the strategic realm are now interlinked. Activity in any one area of the strategic realm will reverberate--trigger additional activity--in another remote region. Previously disconnected actors can now take advantage of the global nature of conflict to “leap in” and seize the opportunity. These new “pile-on” actors may operate asymmetrically--synchronously or asynchronously--against the same actor, or a different actor. The strategic realm has become like a chaotic weather system, where a butterfly’s flight in China may cause a tornado in the Midwest.

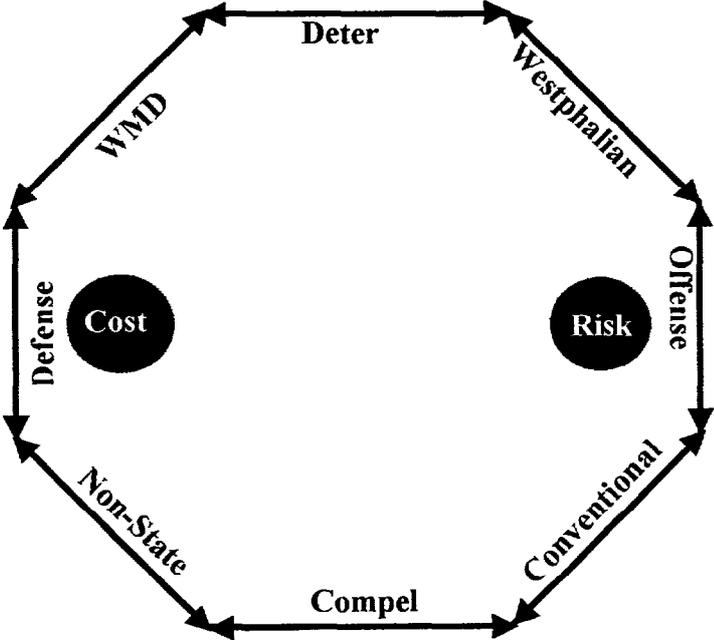


Figure 1 The Strategic Realm

Figure 1 diagrams a conceptual strategic realm. Prominent in the realm are cost and risk, acting like magnetic poles, between which the strategic problem oscillates. The near-continuous transition from offense to defense, deterrence to compellence, conventional to WMD, and state to non-state actors is also shown. This is not meant to depict an all-inclusive set of interactions, but merely to illustrate the chaotic and interconnected nature of the realm described above.

The strategist must try to survey this realm from as many angles as possible to appreciate the different perspectives that others might bring to the task. Aspects that are neglected (and there *will* be some, as discussed above) provide an opponent with the opportunity to set exclusive control over that strategic region. Therefore, as the strategist tries to see as much of the realm as possible, he is, simultaneously, trying to deny--or disrupt--such situational awareness to the opponent. Any region within the strategic realm that is exclusively occupied accords an advantage: a chance to conceal strategic options from the enemy and, should one choose to exploit that option, the opportunity to inflict strategic surprise. The goal of the master strategist, then, is to maximize the extent of the strategic terrain that is seen and grasped, while denying the same to one's opponents.

Given that the strategic realm contains all strategic possibilities, it would be helpful if there was a way to map the terrain and, thereby, ease navigation. Ideally, this would guide the strategist over as much of the realm as possible, providing the broadest understanding of all strategic alternatives--before a final decision is made. Frameworks, or models, are useful in this context. The best include an identification of interests (ends), the resources to achieve or defend them (means), and the preferred method by which one goes about it (ways). They push the user out to the edges of the realm not by describing reality, but by asking the right questions. With respect to the strategic realm, all strategically relevant frameworks fall into three basic

categories linear, regional (regions in the strategic realm, which do not directly coincide with geographic regions), and cyclic

Linear frameworks--e.g. "top-down," or "bottom-up" approaches--have two major drawbacks. First, they do not allow for the inherent interdependence between the ends, ways, and means. Second, in this age of almost instantaneous feedback, these models do not provide for the constant reassessment that is the essence of strategic decisions.

"Regional" models--including scenario-driven, threat-driven, mission-driven, and risk-minimizing approaches--identify a part of the strategic realm as the primary area of concern. This pre-designation limits the range of strategic options. Worse, a demarcated field in the strategic realm necessarily defines regions that are not considered--providing a bold "AVAILABLE" sign for an enemy to stake his claim. Like linear frameworks, regional approaches are also static--they fail to provide for self-evaluation.

The best strategic frameworks are dynamic, incorporating the non-linear interdependence of ends, ways, and means and the necessity to reevaluate all aspects of the strategy. They are iterative (cyclic), and free of self-imposed constraints. When mapped in the strategic realm, cyclic frameworks encompass a dynamic area--a "strategic field"--representing the spectrum of comprehension that has been incorporated into the strategic process. The strategist's goal is to expand the cycle until it captures the largest possible strategic field.

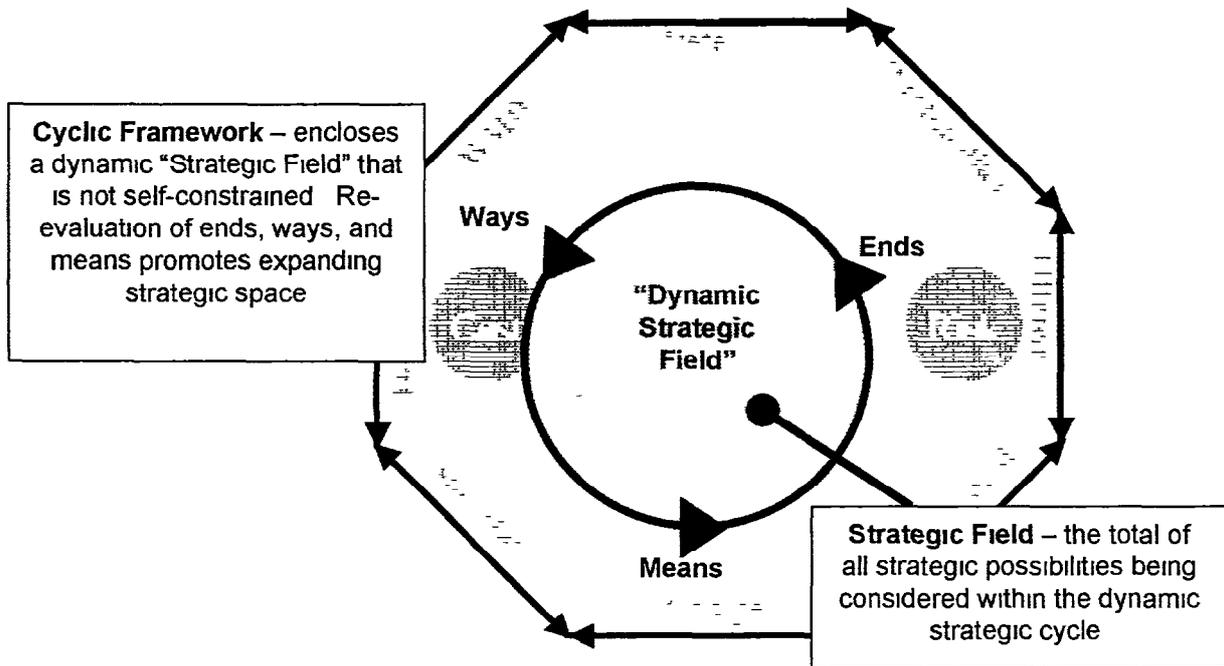


Figure 2 The Dynamic Strategic Cycle as a Tool to Explore the Strategic Realm

### Driving the Cycle: Reality, Information, Perception and Reality

Information is the primary force that drives the strategic cycle. The information revolution has transformed the worlds of finance, security, and personal communications, seamlessly connecting people across borders. Yet, just as strategic failure has very rarely been due to a lack of information, more information does not automatically lead to better strategic performance. In a data-rich environment, it is more important than ever to systematically think through the impact of information on the strategic process.

Like a master bridge player, the strategist must constantly discern, weigh, and balance the objectives of each fellow-player and try to estimate the cards each has to achieve those objectives. As a bridge player responds to successive bids--interpreting bids to estimate opponents' hands--a strategist responds to information, striving to grasp its strategic implications.

The player that best understands not just information, but the strategic transformation of information, will triumph. Information drives the interaction of ends, ways and means. Information about results--success or failure--is the force that fuels the necessary mid-course corrections.

There is a subtle but important difference between an *actual* event or fact, and *information about* that event or fact. Some facts make themselves very clearly and unmistakably known. As one proven strategist has put it, "Nothing gets your attention like explosions on your runway."<sup>2</sup> In these cases, there is little difference between the information about the event and the actual event. But, in many cases, there is considerable difference between what actually happened and the report describing what happened. These differences arise for a variety of reasons--legitimate technical errors in communication, unintended perceptual distortion of a message as it passes from sender to receiver, and deliberate distortion of a message by an actor (allied or hostile) who stands to gain from such distortion. Creation of information that is completely false, having no connection with an actual event, is an extreme case of deliberate distortion.

When differences arise between an actual event and the information about that event, it is the *information* about the event that drives the strategic cycle, not the actual event. If an informational report is always taken as truth--rather than somebody's (or something's) *representation of the truth*--this perceptual bias will skew strategy. The strategist must keep this difference in mind when digesting information--to neglect it is to create vulnerabilities.

## Working in the Strategic Realm: The Medium is NOT the Message

*[Things] look random unless one has developed through a process of abstraction a kind of filter which sees a simple structure behind the randomness. It is exactly in this manner that the laws of nature are discovered. Nature presents us with a host of phenomena which appear mostly as chaotic randomness until we select some significant events, and abstract from their particular, irrelevant circumstances so that they become idealized. Only then can they exhibit their true structure in full splendor.*

- J.M. Jamich<sup>3</sup>

To highlight the difference between raw information and its strategic content, I'll use two different notations. Information (such as an intelligence report or a photograph) that is analyzed in terms of strategic implications--and thereby "transformed" onto the strategic realm--is referred to as a strategic vector (**SV**)<sup>4</sup>. Like any vector, it has amplitude and direction. A **SV** not only connects datum-points in the strategic realm (e.g. ends to ways, ways to means), but also carries strategic "messages" between the two points. The strategic vector drives the strategic cycle (e.g. the *nature* of the interrelationship of ends to ways, ways to means). As it affects the strategic cycle, the **SV** that results from the transformation of raw information comprises three elements: strategic signal (**SS**), strategic noise (**SN**), and strategic anti-signal (**SAS**). One could say that

$$\mathbf{SV} = \mathbf{SS} + \mathbf{SN} + \mathbf{SAS}$$

Strategic signal (**SS**) "expands" the strategic cycle, providing a broader understanding of the strategic problem. It "opens the strategist's eyes" to a wider range of alternatives. By according the strategist more options to ponder, **SS**, by its nature, *slows down the strategic cycle*, lengthening the decision-making process. To illustrate, an intelligence report that provides new insight into enemy intentions or capabilities--such as the first satellite image clearly showing a secretly acquired weapons system--should generate an effort to determine the *reasons* for acquisition, the *methods* of employment, and, most importantly, the implications for the *enemy's ability to wage war*. For example, Israeli intelligence knew well before the Yom Kippur

War that Egypt and Syria had acquired advanced surface-to-air missiles and guided anti-tank weapons. Thus, the surprise was the unexpected--if not overwhelming--quantity and effectiveness of these weapons, rather than their mere employment. The first wave of Egyptian and Syrian troops fired *thousands* of missiles, exacting a tremendous toll on Israeli tanks and aircraft. As Defense Minister Moshe Dayan said, "It wasn't that they had the weapons, we knew that. What surprised us was that they used them in such numbers." The Arabs had changed their way of war, but Israel had not factored that possibility into its strategic cycle--it failed to occupy that portion of the strategic terrain. Consequently, Israel almost lost a war it couldn't afford to lose.

The second component of information is Strategic Noise (**SN**) information that, for better or worse, has no impact on the enclosed strategic field. It neither expands nor contracts the strategic cycle. **SN** comes in two forms: information that *has no strategic implications* for the problem at hand, merely cluttering the picture and wasting valuable time before being discarded, and information that *should have strategic implications*, but is disregarded before the implications are fully considered. The latter is really unrecognized **SS**, as the 1973 example illustrates. Similarly, before the 1968 Tet offensive, the enemy's plans outlining the surprise attack were discovered and turned over to the American command. Although the plans were exact and detailed (**SS'**), they were treated as **SN** because they did not fit the American notion of the opponent's strategic aims. Instead of rejecting the possibility of attack because the plan appeared to be suicidal, U.S. planners should have expanded their strategic cycle, trying to understand how such an attack could serve the enemy's rational objectives. Had this minimal level of credibility been given, the Americans could have at least attempted to exploit their

tactical victory at Tet, before ceding strategic victory to the North Vietnamese. Instead, a chance to explore new strategic ground had passed unrecognized, contributing to our ultimate defeat.

The third element of information is Strategic Anti-Signal (**SAS**). **SAS** tends to collapse the strategic cycle--making it both smaller and faster--as viable options are erroneously eliminated. False information, deliberately inserted as part of a deception plan is an example of **SAS**. Perhaps the best example of effective SAS was the creation of "The Man Who Never Was,"<sup>5</sup> whereby Churchill and British Intelligence convinced Germany that the Allies were to invade Sardinia and Greece, instead of the actual target, Sicily. Based on this information, Hitler discarded the Sicily invasion as a strategic option, redirecting his defenses to cover false targets.

A more subtle--but no less effective--version of **SAS** occurred during the Yom Kippur War. The primary reason for the successful surprise was Israel's self-perception of invulnerability. On 13 September 1973, only 23 days before the surprise attack, Israel and Syria engaged in a major air-to-air battle, in which 13 Syrian jets were shot down. While the Israelis clearly won the tactical air battle, the strategic effect worked *against* them. The information was transformed into the strategic realm as **SAS**, reinforcing the mistaken notion that the Arabs would engage the IAF in air-to-air combat, which Israel would decisively win. In fact, the enemy's plan hinged on asymmetry: surface-to-air missiles rather than air-to-air combat.

The analysis offered above indicates that the same data can be interpreted as **SS**, **SN**, or **SAS**. As illustrated by Figure 3, the transformation of information into a strategic vector occurs via the perception of the strategist--the prism through which the information must pass before entering the strategic cycle.

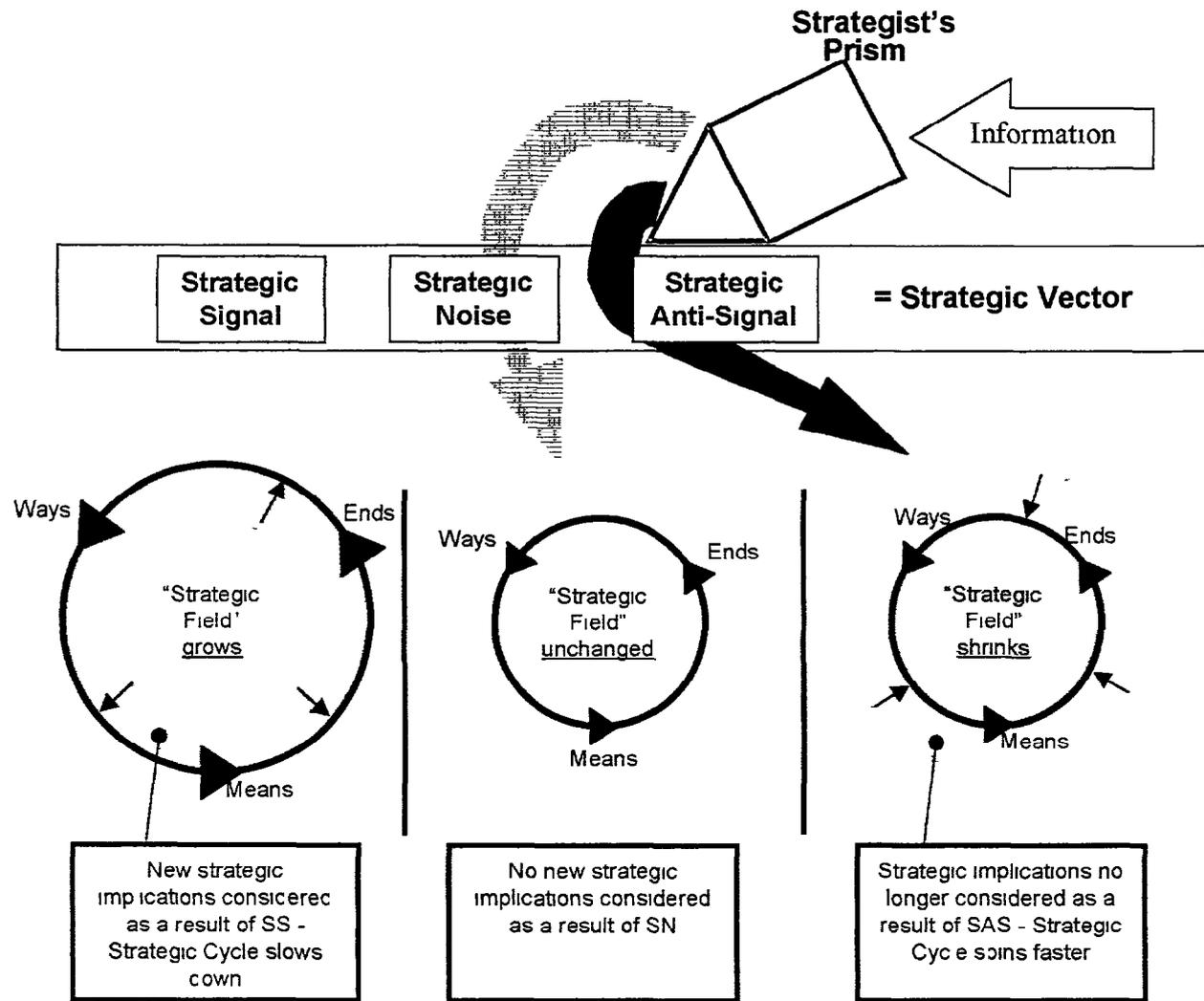


Figure 3 Information Transformed by Strategist's Prism into a Strategic Vector

This transformation affects the grand strategist, the military strategist, the diplomat, and the economic advisor. Each has a distinct prism--a critical filter through which every bit of information must pass. These strategists must work together to realize the National Security Strategy. Through their interactions, the dynamic strategic cycle expands to its full potential, bringing in all the elements of national power into a single, integrated framework.

## Developing the Strategic Cycle

*There are only the normal and extraordinary forces, but their combinations are limitless, none can comprehend them all. For these two forces are mutually reproductive, their interaction as endless as that of interlocked rings. Who can determine where one ends and the other begins?*

- Sun Tzu

Grand Strategy must consider all elements of national power—diplomatic, economic, and military. While each subordinate has its own strategic cycle—with tailored ends, ways, and means—all support the grand strategic cycle. To achieve a coherent national security strategy, the grand strategist must align and synchronize the strategic cycles for each of the elements of power.

Grand strategy is no longer the sum of its parts. It is now a non-linear synthesis of the subordinate strategic cycles with the grand strategy. The once relatively discrete fields of diplomacy, economics, and defense have been seamlessly fused. The President, Ambassador, military Commander in Chief (CINC), and the economic advisor must operate synergistically. The increasing tendency to intervene, coupled with the global flow of information, create a situation whereby the grand strategist can be called upon to account for—in near-real time—the consequences of any step taken by any other U.S. actor, no matter how trivial or remote. All strategists are now chaotically interlinked. A shot heard in Bosnia echoes in the White House. The result is a new dimension for strategic engagement—the strategic framework is no longer a cycle, but a vortex.

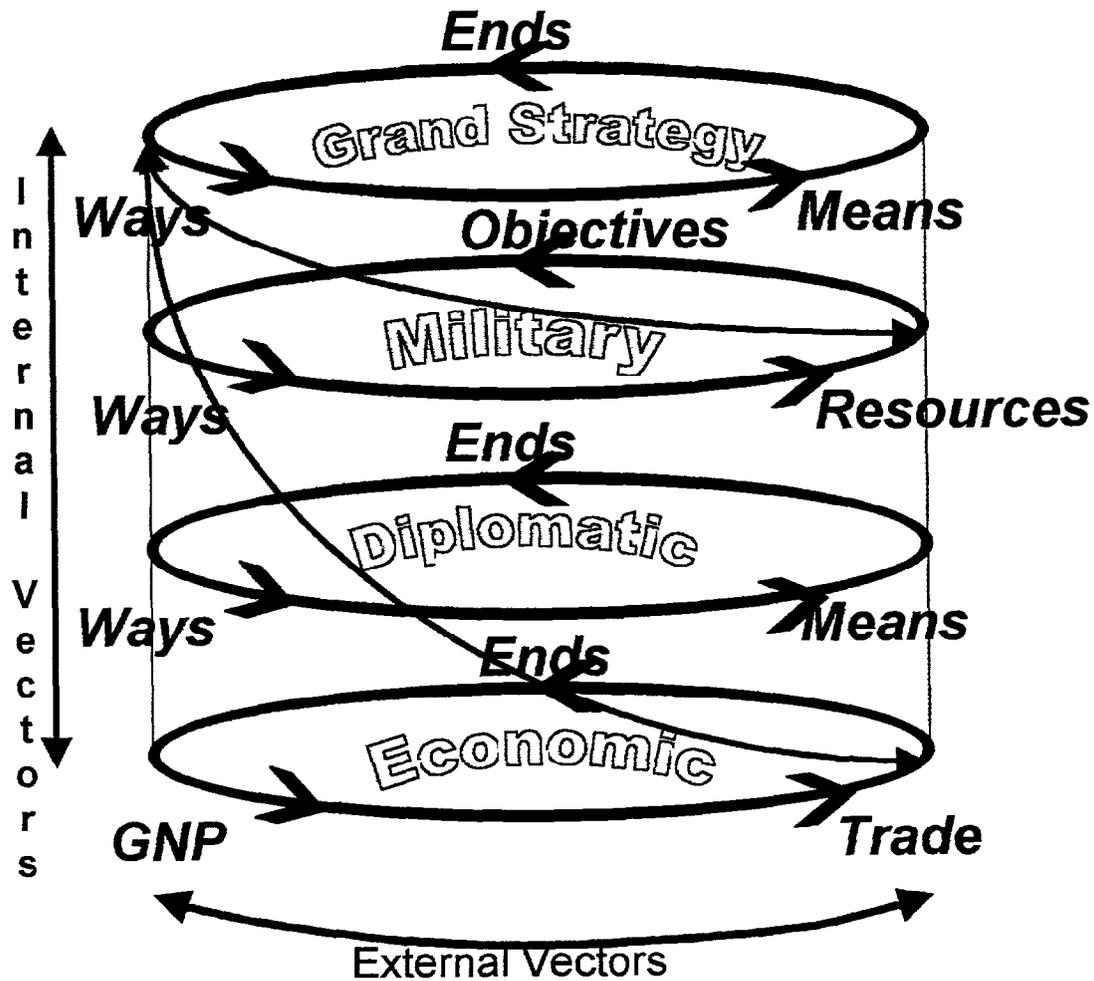


Figure 4 The Dynamic Strategic Vortex

The figure depicts two directions for the flow of strategic vectors (SVs) internal (connecting cycle-to-cycle) and external (driving the cycles around) Internal strategic vectors connect the grand strategist to his subordinate strategists, they also link each strategic dimension with the others External strategic vectors drive the speed of the strategic cycles, thus demarcating the strategic field As Sun Tzu suggests, the two directions are mutually reproductive The existence of external vectors (generated by the transformation of external information) necessitates a proportional network of internal vectors to communicate the strategic implications throughout the strategic vortex Should the internal vectors prove inadequate, the

strategic cycle could be desynchronized--overdriven by external events Establishing and maintaining this proportionality has critical ramifications for the strategic practitioner

Within the three-dimensional strategic vortex, the goal of all strategists is now twofold Within any component strategic cycle, the first goal is to maximize the size of the strategic field, the second goal is to maintain all component strategic cycles aligned and synchronized Inadequate internal strategic information flow risks strategic incoherence

### Caught in the Vortex

*At the highest level the art of war turns into policy but a policy conducted by fighting battles rather than by sending diplomatic notes No other possibility exists, then, than to subordinate the military point of view to the political*  
- Clausewitz, *On War*

The grand strategist must communicate with each of his subordinates frequently enough and fast enough to ensure that they stay aligned The Internal Vectors must be proportional to the External Vectors that are driving the component strategic cycles The faster and more forcefully events are moving, the stronger internal connections within the vortex must be In today's crises, *near seamless communications* must exist to achieve a stable network Each strategist must ensure that connections *within* the vortex respond at least as fast as events *drive* the vortex If one strategic cycle should, through inadequate connectivity, become isolated or desynchronized, the vortex becomes twisted and the grand strategic framework falls apart

The relationship between Golda Meir and Moshe Dayan before the Yom Kippur War is a case in point Meir was the first Israeli Prime Minister without military experience Dayan was larger than life, the hero of the 1948, 1956, and 1967 wars Consequently, Meir delegated all security matters to Dayan's purview For his part, by 1973 Moshe Dayan was no longer the bold master strategist--he was less aggressive, more bureaucratic Effectively, nobody was "minding

the store," yet each assumed the other was. The grand strategist became disconnected from her military strategist, who in turn was disconnected from the General Staff. Worse, Dayan filtered out--if not discarded--strategic signals from the military, making the strategic surprise all but inevitable.<sup>6</sup> A less subtle example occurred during the Korean War, when General MacArthur, deliberately *disconnected himself* from the grand strategist to pursue his own notion of victory.

A short conversation between a Theater CINC and the Secretary of Defense may contain more strategically relevant information than a CD-ROM full of imagery. Strategic vectors are about ideas and perceptions--raw intelligence, media reports, and other forms of electronic data transmit information rather than strategic implications. This is an important distinction, especially for the MOOTW that the U.S. is undertaking. In these scenarios, we have clear information superiority in the field. However, we fail to recognize the associated limitations and vulnerabilities. While our opponents are unable to challenge our information dominance, they have developed a highly sophisticated understanding of the difference between information and strategic message. They have become masters at inserting **SAS** into our cycle, primarily through the media. For instance, during the Bosnian war, CNN broadcasts described the horrors of shelling in downtown Sarajevo, with the accompanying footage showing shells falling on a different city altogether. The video of the actual event was deemed insufficiently horrible to match the script.<sup>7</sup> The lesson was not lost on the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), whose information operations portray Kosovars as victims of Serb-sponsored "genocide" and "ethnic cleansing"--buzz words that had proven so effective throughout what was Yugoslavia.

Much has been made of the so-called "CNN effect" on the outcome of strategy and national policy. Whether or not the media actually drive policy, they certainly *accelerate the*

*process*--requiring leaders to comment on strategies, expected outcomes, and, if the reporter presses the point, proposed modifications

The impact of this acceleration becomes clear in two ways. First, the *net effect of speeding up the decision cycle is to shrink the strategic field*. Consequently, strategic choices derive from a curtailed range of strategic options. Next, the instantaneous info-link that the media provide stresses the network of internal vectors required to keep the strategic vortex synchronized. When a crisis occurs, *strategic linkage* is often neglected, instead reactive policies are formed--before the strategic context is fully understood--but just in time for the press filing deadline. The extraordinarily agile strategic anti-signal jams the internal strategic signal. Far from achieving dominance, we become outmaneuvered in the strategic realm.

### **Tornado Watch!**

The strategic pressures so far described originate primarily a result of the opponent's superior strategic instincts. A more extreme external pressure could arise from the widespread availability of multiple asymmetric "means." Some eventualities--or actual events--are so overwhelming that they transform directly to the strategic realm. The development of nuclear missiles was such an event. This capability provided the means to strike at a nation's heart with unimaginable horror. The strategic implications of these weapons were obvious to the whole world, regardless of what their perceptual prism looked like. As a consequence, in the fifty-three years since their first employment, nuclear weapons have yet to be used again by anyone--in spite of a wide range of countries and cultures possessing them.

Now, in addition to nuclear weapons, chemical, biological, and informational weapons allow a small group of actors, state or non-state, to intervene deep into the borders--indeed the

psyche--of another nation with devastating strategic implications. In the Era of Intervention, new weapons of mass destruction (or disruption), thicken the "fog of war" not only on the battlefield, but more significantly in the *strategic* realm. Clausewitzian fog will envelop the strategic realm.

Clausewitz states that the "supreme, most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and the commander have to make is to establish the kind of war on which they are embarking, neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something alien to its nature"<sup>8</sup>. Now a single event--the use of a biological weapon against a deployed United States peacekeeping force, for instance--introduces so much external pressure (strategic anti-signal), that the strategic vortex collapses, becoming a tornado. Like its meteorological counterpart, this tornado rips the strategic realm apart. The strategist's prism is shattered. The employment of highly destructive and deeply intervening weapons seems to make the "supreme act of judgment" impossible. Is theory, then, doomed to irrelevance in the face of the strategic tornado?

Clausewitz provides the answer to the challenge. The "force" that slows down the strategic cycle and helps retain a coherent strategic picture is the *will* of the strategist--supported by theory and, to the fullest extent possible, sharpened by experience. The language evokes images of Clausewitz himself squinting towards the horizons of the strategic realm.

On the one hand, military operations appear extremely simple. At the same time we see how many factors are involved and have to be weighed against one another, the vast almost infinite distance there can be between a cause and its effect, and the countless ways in which these elements can be combined. The function of theory is to put this all in systematic order, clearly and comprehensively, and to trace each action to an adequate, compelling cause. When all is said and done, it is really the commander's *coup d'oeil*, his ability to see things simply, to identify the whole business of war completely with himself, that is the essence of good generalship. Only if the mind works in this comprehensive fashion can it achieve the freedom it needs to dominate events and not be dominated by them"<sup>9</sup>.

This *strategic coup d'oeil* alone allows the exercise of will unconstrained by doubt. Theory must be mastered--and then honed through practice, so that as the tornado rages, the strategist has the presence of mind required to exercise his will--despite the chaos inherent in the strategic realm. The strategist must explore the strategic terrain using theory, history, experience, and realistic, scenario-driven exercises, so that he can anticipate the stumbling blocks when the fog closes in. If he neglects these duties, the tornado will sweep him away. He will not be in Kansas anymore.

### **The Soldier is the Statesman**

*The responsibility for a martial host of million lies on one man. Although few such [military leaders] are to be had, when one can be found he is the precious jewel of the state. He is the respected one.*

*- Sun Tzu, The Art of War*

As a Naval Officer, I have told sailors at least a hundred times that, as they go ashore for liberty, they must remember that they are ambassadors for the United States. I know that all military personnel deployed overseas are told the same thing. In an era where the borders between soldiering and statecraft have been blurred, this is truer than ever. Now, a liberty incident can have immediate ramifications on America's position in a foreign country--ramifications that may require the Theater CINC, Secretary of Defense, or even the President to respond. It is thus more important than ever for the military commander to understand the vulnerabilities that have arisen in the Era of Intervention, for he is most vulnerable to becoming strategically misaligned or caught up in a strategic tornado.

Deployed in the field, far from the decision cycle in Washington D C , the commander is always challenged to stay in the loop. This challenge becomes more formidable as events move faster in his theater--where the indigenous infrastructure cannot begin to support the

requirements to stay strategically connected. In these cases--increasingly typical of the missions assigned to U S Forces--the commander must expend significant energy to establish and maintain the internal strategic vectors to required keep synchronized. As the commander becomes more remotely deployed, and "interest level" for his mission fades amongst policy makers, there is a growing vulnerability that he will end up "on his own" at the end of a very long and tenuous strategic vector.

Further, the theater commander is also vulnerable to misalignment because he does not operate exclusively on the same time scale as the rest of the vortex. While most of the vortex operates in the arena of meetings, phone calls, and teleconferences, the commander still must keep one foot in the arena of troops and tanks over ground, ships over sea, and aircraft through the air. It is the commander's responsibility to ensure that his forces--operating in the "miles per hour" dimension--stay synchronized with the strategic efforts happening in the "56K baud" ether. When the military gets disconnected from the message, the military commander becomes misaligned within the strategic vortex. Only the most accomplished strategic conductor can bring this disjointed orchestra together and make music.

Misalignment could also arise from the very nature of military strategy. Because it has less momentum, political strategy is generally more agile than military strategy. The military is historically slow to respond to major political shifts. The armies that confronted Napoleon were slow to react to his new concept of national war, and were, consequently, soundly defeated until they adapted to the ferocity of this type of combat. In the Korean and Vietnam Wars, United States national strategy looked for "limited" solutions. The military, forged in the fire of total war and decisive victory in World War II, struggled to conform to the new political strategy. As

nuclear strategy matured, it was civilian, not military leaders who developed the new concepts that would govern nuclear deterrence

The sort of events that exert extreme pressure on the strategic vortex, whipping it into a tornado, are those which are so tactically and operationally powerful that they transform directly into the strategic realm--because they are so devastating in the operational arena, they can potentially shatter the strategist's prism. These events have a higher probability of occurring in the area of responsibility of the military commander--his troops are a choice target for actors wishing to strike out at United States

Should one of these events occur, strategists will be struggling to maintain their equilibrium within the vortex. More acutely, the military commander--especially at the CINC level--must also strive to see through and transcend the tactical, operational, and strategic fog and friction caused by the event which occurred in his AOR. Strategic collapse, and the resulting tornado, will most likely occur at this point of greatest pressure, that is, at the theater commander level. Figure 5 depicts the commander's vortex, showing the two domains that the commander must keep synchronized: one purely conceptual (light gray) and the other physical (dark gray). The arrows show the theater CINC at the focal point of strategic and desynchronizing pressure.

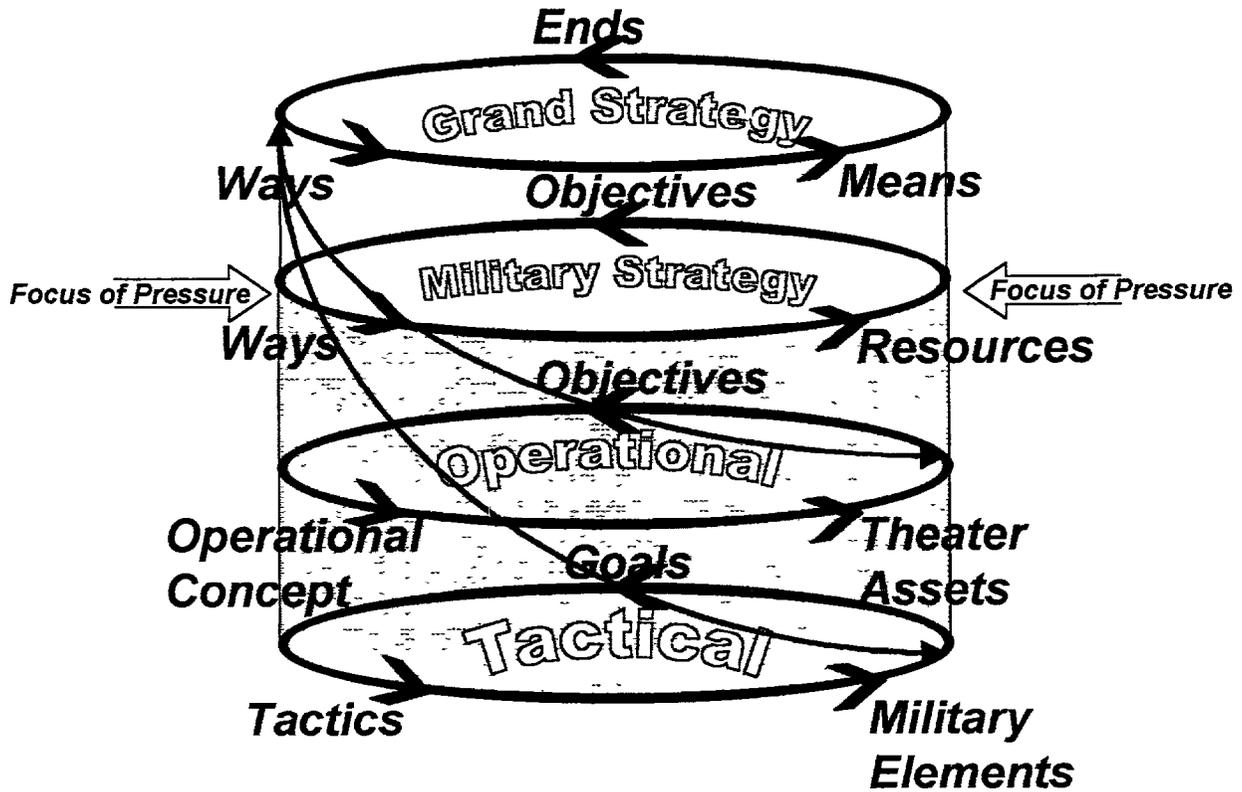


Figure 5 The Military Commander's Vortex

Military commanders are more susceptible to strategic anti-signal. This arises from two sources: internal and external to the command. Internally, the commander works hard to develop a climate that sets the rules governing the conduct of all subordinates. To the degree that the team adopts the commander's approach, they will be supporting the command. Unfortunately, they will also be "seeing" through the same strategic prism as the commander, which, as a stand-alone filter, creates command vulnerabilities that can be exploited. To say it another way, in addition to all the inherent difficulties of trying to transcend one's own perceptual prism, the military commander must also fight the "pride of ownership"--for he built that prism and made it his command policy. To get around this vulnerability, the commander must strive to foster a team that "sees around" his prism, while maintaining command discipline.

A different perspective is difficult to recognize in real time. It most often appears as a “troublemaker” who does not seem to “get it.” Those officers who challenge the command climate tax the patience and energy of the commander who is already under tremendous burden-- particularly in times of strategic pressure, *when the new perspective is most needed*. Nevertheless, freedom to challenge strategic assumptions is a necessary step to seeing more of the strategic realm. It trains and strengthens everyone's *strategic coup d'oeil*.

Concurrently, any deployed unit is highly vulnerable to enemy-induced strategic anti-signal from the media, local information operations, cultural differences, and mixed messages from the local population, be they allied or hostile. The unit in the field is a sponge for misinformation, which transforms into **SAS**, thus adding a rarely-recognized vulnerability.

### **A Box With No Sides**

*Clay is molded to form a vessel  
But it is on its non-being that the usefulness of the utensil depends  
Door and windows are cut to make a room  
But it is on its non-being that the utility of the room depends  
- Lao Tzu*

The “Era of Intervention” is a catch phrase. It is proposed to describe the nature of geo-strategy as the world emerges from the icy waters of the Cold War. This nature will be characterized by the dissolution of traditional boundaries. We are already seeing national borders become more and more porous to migration, information, capital, and even military presence. While the nation-state is still the primary actor today, non-state actors, legitimate and otherwise, are gaining political ground. These actors have at their disposal unconventional methods that can rip the civic fabric of a nation apart.

The loss of homeland sanctuary has been translated to the strategic realm. Traditional approaches to strategy are less relevant when applied to problems that arise from "free-floating actors," unconstrained by traditional, Westphalian military or diplomatic protocols. Like the world of nations, the strategic realm has become chaotic. Consequently, the strategic process itself has become a seamless fusion of all elements of national power. Old distinctions between diplomatic, military, and economic power are gone--all strategy has been subsumed into the strategic vortex. If the strategist fails to recognize and account for this new dimension, the vortex will become disconnected, and the component strategic cycles misaligned. The result is poorly executed confused policy that may shatter strategic focus altogether in the face of a massive intervention.

Far from giving in to the anarchy, the strategist must strive ever harder to see structure in the chaos. No longer limited to the battlefield, *coup d'oeil* must be cultivated at all strategic levels. More than ever, the strategist will have the opportunity to demonstrate genius, the chance, nay *necessity*, to exert his will unconstrained by doubt. In an era defined by dissolving boundaries, any emerging structure will hinge on the perception of the strategist. Recognizing this fact is critical to overcoming this vulnerability. The alternative is to be strategically outflanked in the strategic realm.

Students of strategy are often encouraged to "think out of the box"--to find creative solutions to problems. But one cannot "think out of the box" if the box has no boundaries, no sides. Therefore, one must first impose his will and construct a box. A structure must be developed in order to form a strategy. But like the clay vessel, it is on its non-being that the usefulness of a framework ultimately depends.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Colin S Gray, "The Continued Primacy of Geography," *Orbis* 40 (Spring 1996), p 252

<sup>2</sup> Dr Ilana Kass, during the advanced study seminar "Surprise, Deception, Warning and War," National War College, 17 March, 1998

<sup>3</sup> J M Januch, *Are Quanta Real?* pp 63-65 as quoted in Douglas R Hofstadter, *Godel, Echer, Bach*, Vintage Books, New York, New York, 1979, p 408

<sup>4</sup> This process of transforming information has a mathematical equivalent in the Fourier Transform. The Fourier Transform allows a person to look and analyze a time-varying signal (like a radio wave) in terms of its spectral, or frequency, composition. By transforming the time-varying signal into "frequency-space," it allows the analyst to use a wide variety of techniques not available in the temporal domain. For our discussion, we will think in terms of "transforming" raw informational reports into their strategic components which operate on the strategic realm.

<sup>5</sup> Ewen Montagu, *The Man Who Never Was*, Scholastic Book Services, USA, 1953. This true story gives a fascinating account of the creation of strategic anti-signal. Throughout this book, the primary goal fixed in the minds of the British deception team was how the details of their plan would effect the strategic cycle of their enemy, the German General Staff. All of their efforts were aimed at shrinking the strategic space within this cycle.

<sup>6</sup> A peripheral but contributing factor was Meir's physical absence from Israel in the days just before the attack. She had gone to Austria to negotiate a settlement regarding an attack on Jewish refugees from the Soviet Union and the subsequent closure of a refugee camp in Schonau. The physical separation only served to enhance the strategic disconnect that already existed as the crisis approached.

<sup>7</sup> Described during a private conversation with a visitor from the IREX Institute during a session of the advanced study seminar "Southeastern Europe," National War College, 23 March 1998.

<sup>8</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Sir Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1984 p 88

<sup>9</sup> *On War*, p 578