THE MARINE CORPS WAR COLLEGE

STRATEGY PRIMER

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Contents

Preface

The vision of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for professional military education is clear: the Marine Corps War College (MCWAR) needs to help prepare Joint leaders, senior staff officers, and strategists to "execute and adapt strategy through campaigns and operations" and "conduct joint warfighting at the operational to strategic levels."[1] To achieve this, MCWAR students must first grapple with the fundamentals of national security strategy and grand strategy formulation before delving into the complexities of military strategy.[2]

This is the purpose of *The Marine Corps War College Strategy Primer*. It not only provides students an overview of the elements of strategic logic but also introduces a cognitive model for developing and assessing strategy by leveraging innovative design methodologies and other

[1] *Developing Today's Joint Officers for Tomorrow's Ways of War: The Joint Chiefs of Staff Vision and Guidance for Professional Military Education & Talent Management* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2020), 4.

[2] For more information on U.S. national security and defense strategies, see Donald J. Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America, December 2017* (Washington, DC: White House, 2017); and James N. Mattis, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2018).

critical and creative thinking approaches. In short, this primer aids in forging strategically minded warfighters who understand how the military instrument fits within a whole-of-government strategy. Only then can MCWAR's historical case studies effectively teach the art and science of the "strategy bridge," nesting military options in support of policy ends in shared pursuit of a better peace.

Creating workable strategic approaches to the most intractable problems of the world is an intellectual exercise on par with the most difficult of all human endeavors. Empires and nations rise and fall with their strategic choices. MCWAR students will bear such a burden in the coming years as they face unprecedented rates of change in warfare, as well as the storm clouds of great power competition. The MCWAR strategy primer and succeeding curriculum is only the first step in preparing the next cadre of strategists—one that must be reinforced by a lifetime of study.

B. J. Sokol
Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps
Director, Marine Corps War College

Acknowledgments

While all of the Marine Corps War College (MCWAR) faculty's fingerprints are on this strategy primer, one person in particular deserves special recognition: Ms. Danielle Marion. She performed the research, created the charts, imbued the primer with her brilliant ideas, wrangled the staff to meet deadlines, and finally worked her magic with a pen. She did it all!

As the director of MCWAR, I want to thank her for her herculean effort in preparing this product for academic year 2021. Students, for years to come, will reap the rewards of her labor of love.

The Marine Corps War College

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INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of *The Marine Corps War College Strategy Primer*

Despite the many who have written on the subject of strategy, a common definition has eluded the experts, as has any consensus on the best process to formulate strategy. Most remarkably, experts on strategic thought still have not discovered a foolproof method for distinguishing a good strategy from a bad one, short of hindsight on what led to victory versus disaster.

This primer seeks to streamline many of the contradictions that you, the Marine Corps War College (MCWAR) student, will encounter during the year, without actually correcting them. That is the "art" of the strategist—particularly the military strategist—who must often choose between multiple contradictory solutions and approaches in the midst of mayhem. Strategy is neither easy nor for the feebleminded. In fact, the creation of workable strategic approaches to the most intractable problems on the planet is an intellectual exercise unmatched in human endeavors. History is filled with the destruction of empires and nations that got it wrong. Whether the United States remains a preeminent power in the twenty-first century will in no small measure rest on the capability of

the strategists graduating from our nation's war colleges today.

To aid you, this primer presents a sampling of principles and methodologies drawn from some of the most important works on the topic. The concepts and tools presented herein are not intended to be used in a literal or formulaic sense; this primer is not a set of concepts, tools, or checklists for students to memorize and apply as they would a formula or precise mathematical equation. Rather, it is a starting point for MCWAR students to begin thinking creatively and critically about strategy-making processes. The MCWAR Strategy Development Model (figure 1) should be viewed as a cognitive methodology for developing strategy, not a prescriptive process like the *Marine Corps Planning Process* or the *Military Decision-making Process*.[1]

What Is Strategy?

In its simplest form, *strategy* is a theory on how to achieve a stated goal.[2] Boiling the definition down to its most basic meaning avoids conflating the definition (i.e., what strategy is) with its function (i.e., what strategy should accomplish) or what makes it "good" (i.e., its value). Whether formulating a business strategy that seeks to improve corporate profits or a defense strategy that seeks to counter an adversary, this basic definition holds true. Another way to think about strategy is to consider how to get *from* a current state or condition *to* a desired state or condition.

[1] *Marine Corps Planning Process*, Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 5-10 (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 2016); and *Military Decisionmaking Process*, No. 15-06 (Leavenworth, KS: Center for Army Lessons Learned, 2015).

[2] Jeffrey W. Meiser, "Ends + Ways + Means = (Bad) Strategy," *Parameters* 46, no. 4 (Winter 2016–17): 86.

MCWAR graduates are likely to encounter many types of strategies during the course of their careers, including the following:

- *National security strategy*: a theory on how to protect or advance national interests.[3]
- *Grand strategy*: a theory on how to protect or advance national interests using all applicable instruments of national power.
- *Military strategy*: a theory on how to protect or advance national interests using military means.

These definitions may seem simplistic or general, but this is intentional and avoids conflating what something *is* with what it *does*, as noted above. For the most part, this primer uses a whole-of-government approach, focusing on grand strategy and national security strategy. In terms of function, all these types of strategies—and the approach advocated in this primer—seek to elicit desired behavior(s) from another actor in a way that aligns with our national interests.

What Should the MCWAR Student Know about Making Strategy?

There are probably as many ways to approach strategy making as there are definitions of strategy—or, for that matter, as there are war college strategy primers. There is no one magic formula. Each model comes with its own strengths and weaknesses. This primer will provide you with a complement of tools that can be optimized for multiple strategic problems, along with the ability to analyze the situation and select the best potential solution(s)

[3] *A National Security Strategy Primer* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019), 1.

for the circumstances. The problems we are trying to address are complex and often ill-defined, meaning that they cannot be solved in a linear fashion and have no one "correct" solution. The strategies we develop seek to find innovative approaches to those complex problems.

MCWAR Strategic Methodology

All strategies seek to elicit a specific desired behavior(s) from another actor to achieve a stated *end*, a specific desired outcome. In doing so, strategy becomes a causal relationship, translating *ways* and *means* into the desired ends. Achieving the desired strategic effects requires thoughtful analysis of the targeted actor's motivations, values, drivers, and goals, and then anticipating what types of actions (i.e., strategies) are most likely to steer that actor toward behaviors that conform to our own desired goals. *Drivers* are aspects or elements of the strategic environment that cause a change to a situation or outcome; they are change agents and can alter a situation or issue, which can therefore alter our assessments. For example, economic trends or systems, globalization, technological innovations, expansionist aspirations, ideology, and cultural differences are all potential drivers that can change behaviors or situations.

The crux of this model—eliciting the desired actor behavior—requires the strategist to make each subsequent decision in the strategy-making process with that behavior as the primary consideration.[4]

When employing this model, limitations on proposed strategies are not considered until relatively late

[4] For more information on strategy as causal logic, see Frank G. Hoffman, "The Missing Element in Crafting National Strategy: A Theory of Success," *Joint Force Quarterly* 97 (2d Quarter 2020): 55–64.

in the process. This is done primarily to facilitate creativity and allow the strategist to develop ideal potential solutions. This model can be characterized as *resource-unconstrained*.[5] Later in the process, the strategist applies limitations to the means to ensure the potential strategy is feasible. The intent is to develop the best possible solution(s) and then reallocate or develop the means if they do not already exist, rather than developing a solution within the confines of preexisting priorities and resources that are probably optimized for preexisting strategies.

In many ways, this approach resembles structured brainstorming in that it consists of a *divergent phase*, in which ideas are developed and not restricted based on limitations, followed by a *convergent phase*, in which those ideas are pared down or modified based on limitations.[6]

Although this model is a cognitive methodology, it is portrayed as a cyclical process for instructional purposes (figure 1). Therefore, it lists the strategy-making steps sequentially, where each step should build on the last. In practice, the cycle and the steps within the model are iterative, nonlinear, interactive, and sometimes simultaneous. Strategists will often need to return to a step and revise or refine their findings, then consider whether those changes affect any subsequent decisions and adjust as necessary.

Advantages of This Model

This model's emphasis on actor behavior means that the strategy focuses outward (i.e., what will influence an ac-

[5] Bryan McGrath, "Unconstrained Grand Strategy," *War on the Rocks*, 28 October 2014.

[6] Gene Brown, "Difference between Divergent Thinking and Convergent Thinking," DifferenceBetween.net, 17 January 2020.

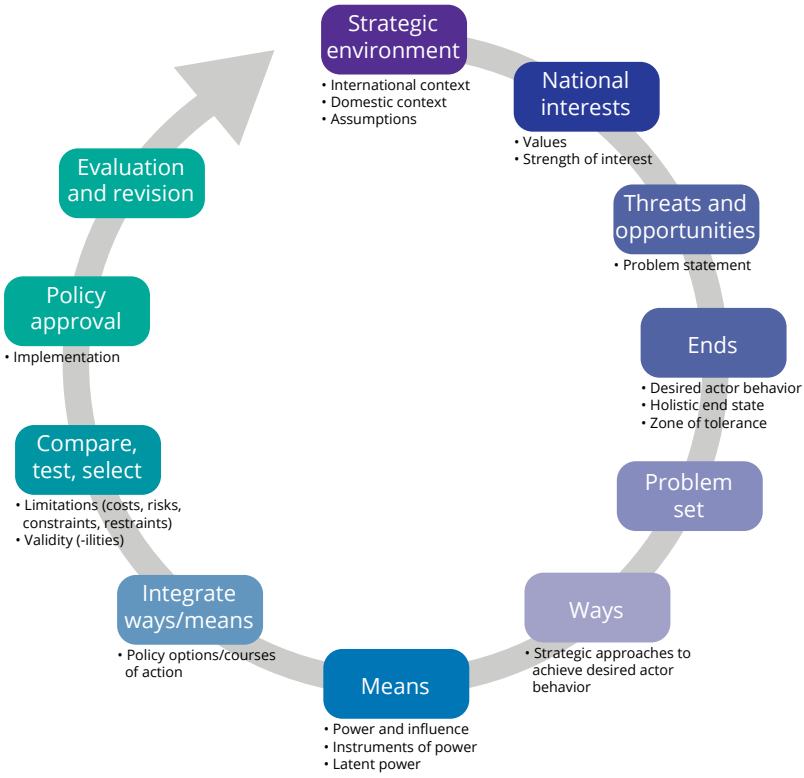

Figure 1. MCWAR Strategy Development Model.
Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

tor to behave in a way that will achieve the desired ends?) rather than focusing inward (i.e., what tools or capabilities are readily available to address this problem?), increasing the likelihood that the potential strategies are optimized for the problem at hand. Consequently, this model seeks to overcome the *law of the instrument bias*, the cognitive bias wherein humans tend to approach problems confined by the skills they know best or resources that are

most familiar to them (i.e., to a hammer, every problem looks like a nail).[7] Additionally, because the model initially is resource-unconstrained, strategists can exercise creative freedom to develop potential strategies that would be most effective rather than limiting themselves to what works best within the available means. Decision makers can reallocate resources or develop new ones if the proposed solution is compelling enough.

This model also encourages whole-of-government efforts and interagency coordination throughout the process, which will help ensure that strategies are balanced across the instruments of national power.

Potential Disadvantages of This Model

Because this model is resource-unconstrained and discourages limiting options early in the process, strategy options may require revision once the means are fully assessed and limitations are considered. This takes time. As a result, in a time-constrained environment the strategist may need to consider a means-driven model.[8] Additionally, this model is optimized for grand strategy or national-level strategy since it leverages all of the instruments of national power, so it may not be applicable for other strategy formulations.

Elements of Strategic Logic

Throughout this primer, we will examine the basic *elements of strategic logic* involved in strategy making, which encompass the following:

- The *strategic environment*, including the in-

[7] Abraham Kaplan, *The Conduct of Inquiry: Methodology for Behavioral Science* (San Francisco, CA: Chandler Publishing, 1964) 28–29.
[8] Arthur F. Lykke Jr., "Defining Military Strategy," *Military Review* 69, no. 5 (May 1989): 4.

ternational context, domestic context, and assumptions.

- *Sources and drivers of policy*, including values, interests, power and influence, threats, and opportunities (all of which comprise the problem set).
- *Limitations*, including costs, risks, constraints, and restraints.
- *Ends*, *ways*, and *means*, as well as their various subcomponents.

While some strategy guides portray a more abbreviated version of strategic logic, often consisting solely of ends, ways, means, context, and risk, our approach is deliberately more expansive to demonstrate the complexity and interconnectedness of all of the elements of strategic logic shown in figure 2.

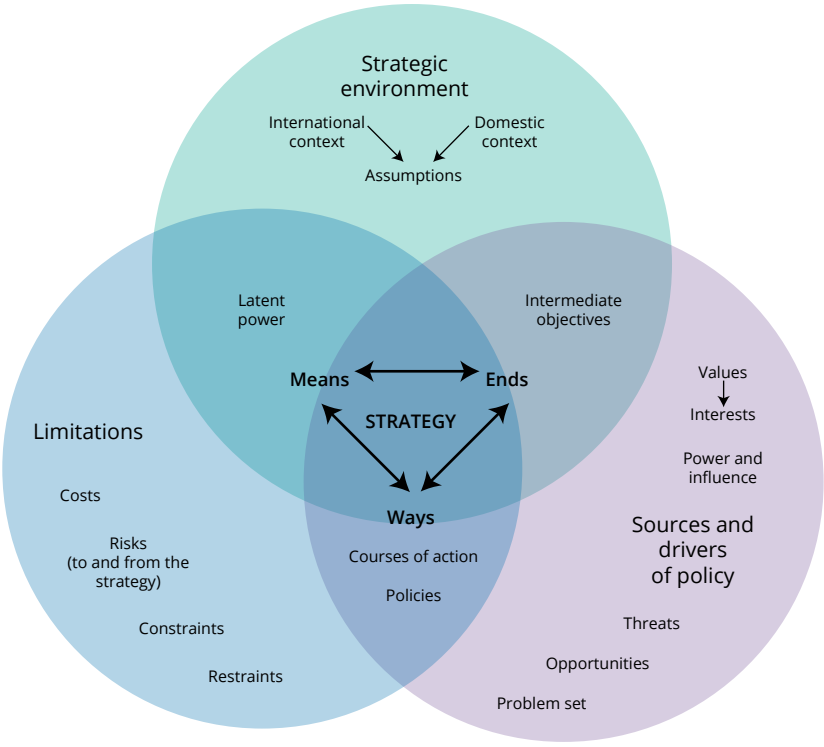

Figure 2. Elements of strategic logic.
Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

CHAPTER ONE

The Strategic Environment

The first steps of the Marine Corps War College (MCWAR) Strategy Development Model methodology assess the strategic environment. This is key to understanding what is happening and why. In short, the strategist is asking, "What is the story here?"[1] To assess and understand the strategic environment, the strategist will need to analyze the domestic and international context, consider strategic guidance, and identify underlying assumptions (figure 3).

International Context

The strategist must understand the international context of a situation before developing or selecting a strategy. The *international context* comprises cultures, historical events, current events, actor motivations and behaviors, drivers, trends, and environments in other countries. *Environments* can include physical environments, such as

[1] For more information, see Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers* (New York: Free Press, 1986).

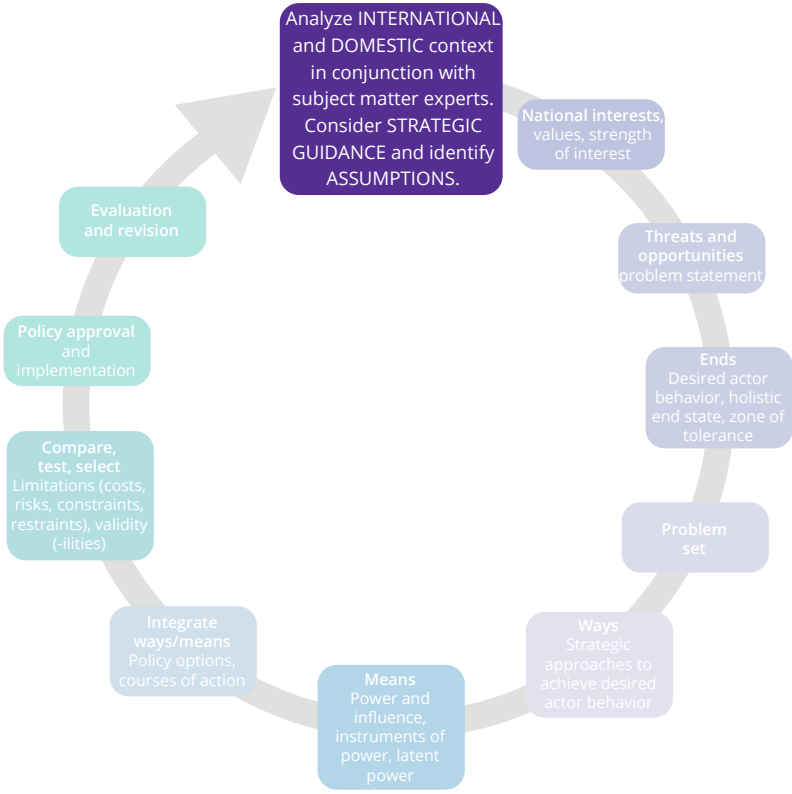

Figure 3. Assessing the strategic environment.
Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

geography or an urban setting, or social environments, such as the political or societal atmosphere. The international context may be specific to a potential operating environment, adversaries, neighboring countries in the surrounding region, potential partners supporting the strategy, or all of these.

A good starting point for analyzing the international

context is to employ a methodology commonly used in the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) called *PMESII-PT*, which stands for political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment, and time.[2] The structured approach of the PMESII-PT model can provide a well-rounded view of the international context for strategy development or planning processes.

Because the knowledge required to understand other regions and actors is vast and very few strategists will also be deep regional experts, it is vital to consult those who are, primarily intelligence professionals and policy action officers who focus on those regions exclusively.[3] It is also important to understand those countries' or actors' views of, policies toward, and relationships with your own government/nation, including perceptions of relative power, military, economic, or otherwise.

Failure to include regional experts early in the process will limit the strategist's understanding of the international context and is likely to lead to faulty assumptions and misunderstandings about the environment and the potential effects of the strategies or policies. Since strategies ultimately seek to elicit desired behavior(s) from other actors, subject matter experts are also best equipped

[2] There are numerous methodologies to analyze international context. Although it will not be covered in-depth here, the PMESII-PT model is used frequently in the U.S. Department of Defense for strategy and planning. For further information, see *Joint Planning*, Joint Publication (JP) 5-0 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017); and *Joint Intelligence*, JP 2-0 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2013).

[3] Subject matter experts can be found at a variety of agencies or embedded within one's own unit. National-level resources include, but are not limited to, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Department of State, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, policy experts at the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and experts at other governmental departments and agencies.

to judge what effects a potential strategy or actions within the strategy are likely to yield.[4]

As a final note on international context, strategists should be careful not to assume that other actors approach strategy making the same way we do. Depending on the actor, they may consider many of the same factors we do in strategy making, but the way that they prioritize and synthesize those elements through their respective paradigms may differ completely from our methodologies. Because other actors' strategy-making processes are often opaque to outsiders, subject matter experts are best positioned to advise the strategist on these assessments.

Domestic Context

Understanding the domestic context pertaining to a specific situation is just as important as understanding the international context, since developing a brilliant strategy that is not politically palatable, and therefore unlikely to be supported or resourced, is futile. The *domestic context* includes cultures, events, actor motivations and behaviors, drivers, trends, and environments in the strategist's own country. Domestic factors such as history, politics, the economy, physical environment and geography, election cycles, Congress, presidential-level agendas, interagency tensions and bureaucratic issues, national security culture, and national will can either enable or impede a po-

[4] For more information on assessing international context, see Terry L. Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy: Logic for American Statecraft* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 35–76, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511806773.

tential strategy.[5] The strategist must always keep in mind that every nation possesses a unique *national security culture*, a societal predisposition toward certain actions and policies over others, especially within political leadership circles.[6] Such culturally driven processes are not inherently bad, but they must be considered since proposing a strategy that is counter to cultural preferences is likely to be an uphill battle. Similarly, strategists must be alert to the possibility that they are offering inferior strategic options because they are captured in the same cultural paradigm.

Since a potential strategy's likelihood of success is determined just as much by domestic concerns as by conditions abroad, it is just as important to understand your government's views of, policies toward, and relationships with the foreign country(ies) or actor(s) in question, including perceptions of relative power, as it is to understand foreign outlooks.[7] Note that at this stage, strategists should not eliminate any potential strategy options because of perceived domestic constraints; rather, these trends should be thoroughly understood and characterized so that they can be weighed during strategy devel-

[5] For more information on interagency dynamics, see Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1971). For more information on U.S. foreign policy traditions and how they affect decision making, see Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

[6] Jeffrey S. Lantis, "Strategic Culture and National Security Policy," *International Studies Review* 4, no. 3 (December 2002): 87–113, https://doi.org/10.1111/1521-9488.t01-1-00266.

[7] For more information on assessing the domestic context, see *A National Security Strategy Primer* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019), 9–10; Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy*, 77–122; and Nikolas K. Gvosdev, Jessica D. Blankshain, and David A. Cooper, *Decision-Making in American Foreign Policy: Translating Theory into Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 284–333, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108566742.

opment and selection. If, at the end of this process, the strategist elects to present decision makers with strategy options that have notable domestic constraints, those constraints should be highlighted for consideration before final strategy selection.

Considering Strategic Guidance

The strategist will generally begin with senior leader guidance, strategic vision, and overall policy goals. This guidance can come directly from leaders or indirectly from sources such as the United States' 2017 *National Security Strategy*, the Joint Chiefs of Staff's 2018 *National Military Strategy*, the U.S. State Department's 2018 *Joint Strategic Plan*, and theater strategies or campaign plans that provide the broad strategic vision from senior leaders. The strategist's task throughout strategy development will be to turn those broad goals into specific strategy options for the decision maker.

Identifying Assumptions

Uncertainty is unavoidable in strategy making. We will never have enough information to make perfectly informed decisions, and if we wait until we do, we risk being too late to shape a situation or act in a timely fashion. Consequently, strategists are routinely called on to make informed judgments or assessments about the situation without a complete understanding of the domestic and international context. The assumptions should be clearly identified during the strategy-making process, and judgments about them should be deliberate. One of the most crucial questions a strategist must ask is how our assessments would change if the assumptions were proven false. Answering this question is the first step in developing mitigation plans to include in the overall strategy.

In the end, assumptions can make or break a strategy. It is essential for a strategist to identify them, since they directly correlate to the risk of executing the strategy.

An *assessment* is a judgment that is founded on supporting evidence. We have varying degrees of confidence in our judgments depending on the quantity and quality of information that supports our argument. In contrast, an *assumption* is a presumption that we accept as true without questioning it. There are many types of assumptions, including *framing assumptions*, which capture our mindsets about an actor or issue; *scoping assumptions*, which reflect choices we make to bound an issue; and *bridging assumptions*, which fill critical gaps in information or in assessments (table 1).[8]

Assumptions are often difficult to identify because they are integrally shaped by our unique mindsets, biases, and worldviews. In other words, we do not often think about our assumptions; rather, they exist without acknowledgment. To complicate the issue further, assessments and assumptions are commonly conflated. Understanding the distinction will significantly aid the strategy-making process.

Assumptions are often hidden within other statements or assessments, and it is difficult to decouple them. But identifying and examining our assumptions is a critical component of determining weaknesses that may exist in the strategies we formulate. For instance, if we assume that an actor has the same values or motivations that we do (i.e., mirror imaging), we are likely to create a distorted picture for the international context and anticipated behaviors, which sets a shaky foundation

[8] For additional examples of types of assumptions and more information on how to identify them, see appendix A.

Table 1. Common types of assumptions.

Type	Definition	Can include	Examples
Framing	Mental models about actor or system behavior	Beliefs we hold true about typical behavior and past precedents	One actor is a competitor while another actor is an ally
			Oppressed populations want self-determination
Scoping*	Choices we make when bounding an issue	Factors we hold constant and assume will not change	Threat levels will not significantly change
			Budget will not significantly decrease
			A leader will remain in power
		Factors, drivers, variables, actors, events, or timelines that we are excluding from the analysis	Only indigenous factions in a conflict are examined, not intervening foreign forces
		Presumptions that certain events will or will not happen	Elections in a particular country will be held on time
			A country will not develop nuclear armaments within a specified time frame
Bridging	Fill critical gaps in information or assessments	Missing elements that are needed to answer a question	Cannot confirm a country has specific capability/intent, but must assume it does
		Factors that must be present to prove an assessment true or false	Is valid assuming that preceding goals and milestones are successfully met on time

*Avoid using scoping assumptions as a crutch to oversimplify a problem to avoid tackling the inherent complexities of an issue. For example, a scoping assumption such as "this assumes tensions will not rise in the Middle East" to try to streamline the challenges of an issue is both unrealistic and ignores the complexities of the strategic environment, almost assuring that the scoping assumption will prove untrue and potentially invalidate every proposed solution founded on it.

Defense Intelligence Agency, adapted by MCUP

for the entire strategy-making process. Likewise, if we assume that other agencies or branches in our own government prefer one type of approach to an issue (e.g., military versus diplomatic), we may develop suboptimal or one-dimensional approaches that are not viable strategic options.

One way to tease out assumptions is by asking, "Is there proof for this statement?" If there is and we have not included it, thereby creating an unsupported assertion, we need to include the supporting evidence so that it becomes a well-supported assessment and the decision maker can see our reasoning. If we cannot identify proof, the statement potentially is an assumption. Asking the question, "What would need to be true for this statement to be true?" is another way to tease out hidden assumptions. If a judgment or statement rests on another supposition, there is a good chance that it is a hidden assumption. For example, in the statement "birds fly south for the winter," what is the hidden assumption? If we ask what would need to be true for this statement to be true, we realize that the statement assumes we are located in the Northern Hemisphere, since birds fly north for the winter in the Southern Hemisphere, or they go nowhere when located near the equator. We would need to account for alternate possibilities associated with this assumption.

Strategists should be careful not to "assume something away" just to avoid having to explain the basis for the argument. In other words, do not bury assessments as assumptions. If you are basing a strategy on an assessment (e.g., the adversary probably is developing nuclear weapons), that assessment should be supported with the available evidence. Otherwise, it is an unsupported assertion, and you run the risk of overstating the case,

creating the impression that there is more certainty than we can actually support. If the decision maker is likely to wonder why you believe something is true, it is best to substantiate the claim so that the decision maker can gauge the level of uncertainty surrounding the issue.

The essence of strategy is questioning, explaining uncertainties, learning, and then trying to answer those questions and verify assumptions. Once assumptions are identified, we need to determine how our assessments, strategies, or recommendations would be affected if the assumptions turned out to be incorrect. Would the entire premise fall apart such that we need to rethink the strategy? Or can we identify ways to mitigate any negative effects such that the strategy is still viable? We also need to outline what information is needed to determine whether the assumptions are accurate, and then seek out that information (e.g., collection requirements and indicators to watch for). Because assumptions are such a pervasive feature in our thinking and approaches to problems, we need to identify them as early as possible in the strategy-making process and make them explicit for the decision maker, as well as provide mitigation strategies in case the assumptions prove false.

Finally, the assumptions associated with each potential strategy as well as possible implications should always be outlined clearly for decision makers during the strategy formulation and assessment process.

CHAPTER TWO

Sources and Drivers of Policy

After assessing the strategic environment, the strategist will then identify the sources and drivers of policy, including the values and interests that shape policy, as well as the threats and/or opportunities that the potential strategies need to address (figures 4 and 5).

Values

National values are principles we see as an integral part of our national identity. Concepts like freedom, democracy, capitalism, liberty, and privacy are values often ascribed to American society. Because of their ingrained nature, values are either unlikely to change or very slow to change over time. These values stem from our domestic context and serve as the foundation for policy making and strategy making.[1] Consequently, values are the source of our national interests, and every process that occurs within strategy development should strive to be consistent with them.

[1] For more information on values, see Terry L. Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy: Logic for American Statecraft* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 134–38, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511806773.

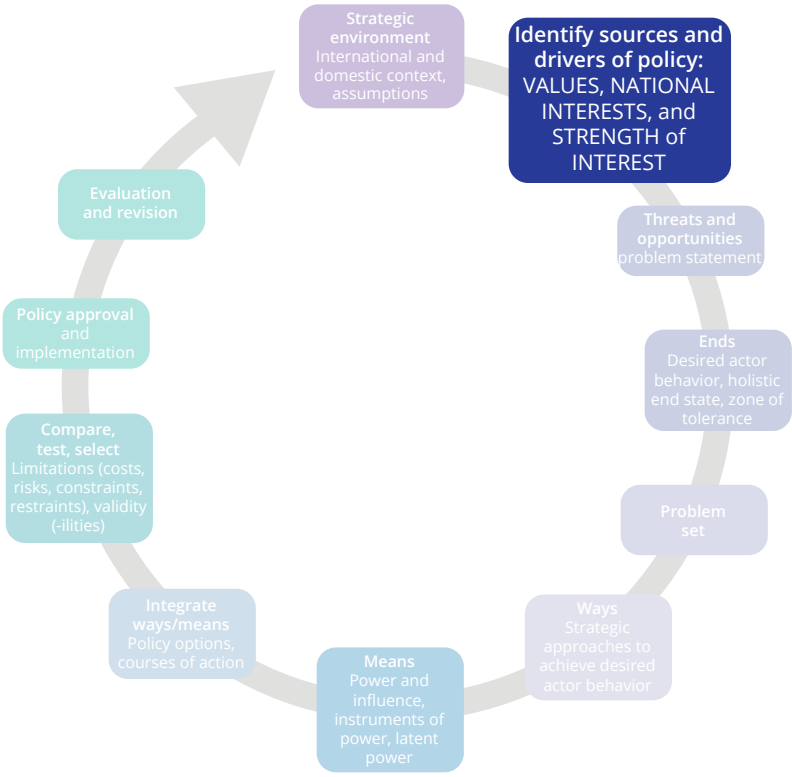

Figure 4. Identifying sources and drivers of policy: values, national interests, and strength of interest.
Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

Interests

National interests are conditions we seek to achieve or protect as a nation and that we believe are in our state's fundamental best interest. They represent a nation's wants, needs, and desires and derive from our national values within the domestic context. Although the specif-

ic phrasing may change from administration to administration, there have been three enduring themes of U.S. national interests: security, prosperity, and the protection and projection of national values. The 2017 *National Security Strategy* identifies four vital interests labeled as pillars: "Protect the American People, the Homeland, and the American Way of Life"; "Promote American Prosperity"; "Preserve Peace through Strength"; and "Advance American Influence"—all of which tie directly to the previously mentioned themes and values.[2] Note that while those themes and values are universal, national interests can be global in nature or may pertain to a specific region, as illustrated in the construct and examples below.

Some interests are more imperative than others, and interests are often categorized in a way that clarifies their relative importance or priority, such as survival, vital, important, and peripheral interests. Although other constructs exist to categorize interests, the general concepts tend to be similar to those presented below:

- *Survival interests* must be protected for the survival of the nation and generally consist of security issues such as homeland security and the safety of its citizens. An example of a U.S. survival interest is nuclear deterrence vis-à-vis China.
- *Vital interests* often pertain to political and territorial integrity and include issues such as domestic stability, prosperity, and the preservation of the American way of life. Keeping access to the Strait of Hormuz and

[2] Donald J. Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America, December 2017* (Washington, DC: White House, 2017).

the Bab al-Mandeb Strait is an example of a vital interest, since the straits are essential for both security and economic prosperity.

- *Important* or *major interests* are necessary for the nation to thrive and generally include issues related to economic stability and well-being, such as global freedom of access, regional stability, alliances, and the promotion of national values. The nation could be weakened if it does not act on its important interests.[3]
- *Peripheral interests* enhance our way of life but are not strictly necessary for the success of a nation. Sometimes called "humanitarian interests," these often relate to stability and the world order. They can include themes such as peacekeeping (assuming it does not directly threaten one's own regional security), trade balances, and foreign aid.[4] Governments generally only pursue peripheral interests if the costs and risks are limited.[5]

All policies should be grounded in at least one national interest; otherwise, the policy is probably not worth pursuing and is likely to be inconsistent or incompatible with other policies. We subsequently derive a multitude of different aspects of national security strategy from our national interests, including the specific goals or objec-

[3] *A National Security Strategy Primer* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019), 11.
[4] *Strategy*, Joint Doctrine Note 1-18 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018), vii.
[5] *A National Security Strategy Primer*, 11.

tives we believe will further those interests (ends) and the policies we develop to achieve them (ways).[6]

Additionally, the strategist should gauge the strength of interest regarding the issue for all actors involved. The *strength of interest* refers to the intensity of a nation's desire to pursue a goal, including factors such as the priority of the goal for decision makers, public support for the effort, and how likely it is that these factors will endure over time.[7]

Power and Influence

National power and influence are concepts that have bearing on several phases of strategy making. As discussed in the previous chapter, relative power—military, economic, or otherwise—can be considered part of the international and domestic context when assessing the strategic environment. Power and influence can also be viewed as drivers of national interests, which can include *latent power*, defined as the resources that a nation can convert into capabilities over time. For instance, a country with greater economic and military power may have the resources and reach to do much more globally than one with less power; therefore, the more powerful country will tend to pursue more expansive national interests than the less powerful country. Similarly, a country with greater influence will tend to have more ability to engage across a broader spectrum of issues and regions than one with less influence, so the interests are likely to be

[6] For more information on national interests, see *A National Security Strategy Primer*, 10–12; Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy*, 123–56; and Richard L. Kugler, *Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs: New Methods for a New Era* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2006), 40.
[7] For an in-depth example of a strength-of-interest comparison, see appendix C.

more far-reaching. In other words, elevated power and influence can amplify the magnitude of what a country is willing to designate as its national interests.

Power and influence can also include various intangible components, such as image, culture, respect, fear, and reputation. These factors can cloud the ability to determine how much power or influence a country has, but its leaders will often behave in accordance with their collective perception of how much power and influence the nation wields.[8]

Threats and Opportunities

Threats and opportunities are the concerns that policies and strategies need to address. A *threat* is something that could harm a national interest. Threats can come from an actor, internal or external, or a trend, manufactured or environmental. For example, foreign espionage, transnational terrorism, or a conventional threat from another state are all threats from external actors. Domestic terrorism and cyber crime are potential threats from internal actors. Widespread increases in xenophobia, nationalism, revisionism, revanchism, pandemics, and climate change are trends that constitute potential threats to national interests.

When analyzing threats from actors, a common model is to assess the actor's intent and capability in the context of our own vulnerability (intent + capability + U.S. vulnerability = threat). An actor possessing the capability to strike us does not inherently make it a threat if there is no intent; likewise, if we do not have a specific vulnerability to that capability, even with adversary intent the threat

[8] For more information on power and influence, see Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy*, 157–206.

may be assessed as low. The strategist needs to weigh all of these factors when determining the potential severity of the threat and assigning it a priority.[9]

An *opportunity* is an emergent situation or potentiality in the strategic environment that could be seized on to advance a national interest. Opportunities are frequently positive actions, often taken in conjunction with allies, to capitalize on a potential way to further national interests. For example, creating a bilateral or multilateral economic agreement, holding a peace summit between two adversarial nations, and providing humanitarian and disaster relief assistance are all opportunities. Opportunity analysis is often overlooked in policymaking and strategy making; it is human nature to focus on things that endanger us and our way of life, but it requires thoughtfulness and a proactive effort to examine a situation for potential opportunities. To create well-rounded strategies, strategists should always deliberately consider any potential for opportunities in addition to threats.[10]

Opportunities can also come from an adversary's vulnerabilities that we could potentially exploit to further our national interests. For example, potential recruiting pools and funding streams may be vulnerabilities for terrorist groups, whereas technical infrastructure or oppressed populations may be vulnerabilities for an adversary nation. When we consider exploiting vulnerabilities, strategists must carefully consider whether and how pursuing the issue will further national interests. Too often strategists and planners will seek to exploit vulnerabilities simply because they can, without considering the

[9] For more information on threats, see *A National Security Strategy Primer*, 12; and Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy*, 142–56.

[10] For more information on opportunities, see *A National Security Strategy Primer*, 12–13; and Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy*, 152–55.

strategic goals or effects of those actions. Seeking to exploit another actor's vulnerabilities without determining how it serves the nation's interests can potentially split our focus, unintentionally expand the mission, or incur risks and repercussions that are not worth the cost since the goal is out of step with strategic interests and goals.

Center-of-gravity (COG) analysis is a methodology used in the U.S. Department of Defense to identify an actor's key strengths and vulnerabilities, primarily in support of planning and target development processes.[11] A *center of gravity* is a source of power that provides mental or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act.[12] Although there are multiple ways to perform COG analysis, it generally comprises analyzing the adversary's strengths and vulnerabilities that can be disrupted, targeted, or otherwise influenced.

Although COG analysis is typically used in planning and targeting, it also can be applied during strategy making to determine how to capitalize on an adversary's strengths or weaknesses. However, if employing COG analysis, the strategist must be extremely careful not to succumb to the temptation to focus on a center of gravity simply because they can; that focus must fit into the broader strategy and comport with the desired ends and ways.

Problem Statement

After assessing the strategic environment, considering

[11] For more information on center-of-gravity analysis, see *Joint Planning*, Joint Publication (JP) 5-0 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017); and *Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment*, JP 2-01.3 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2014). For an opposing view of the utility of center-of-gravity analysis, see Lawrence Freedman, "Stop Looking for the Center of Gravity," *War on the Rocks*, 24 June 2014.
[12] *Joint Planning*, xxii.

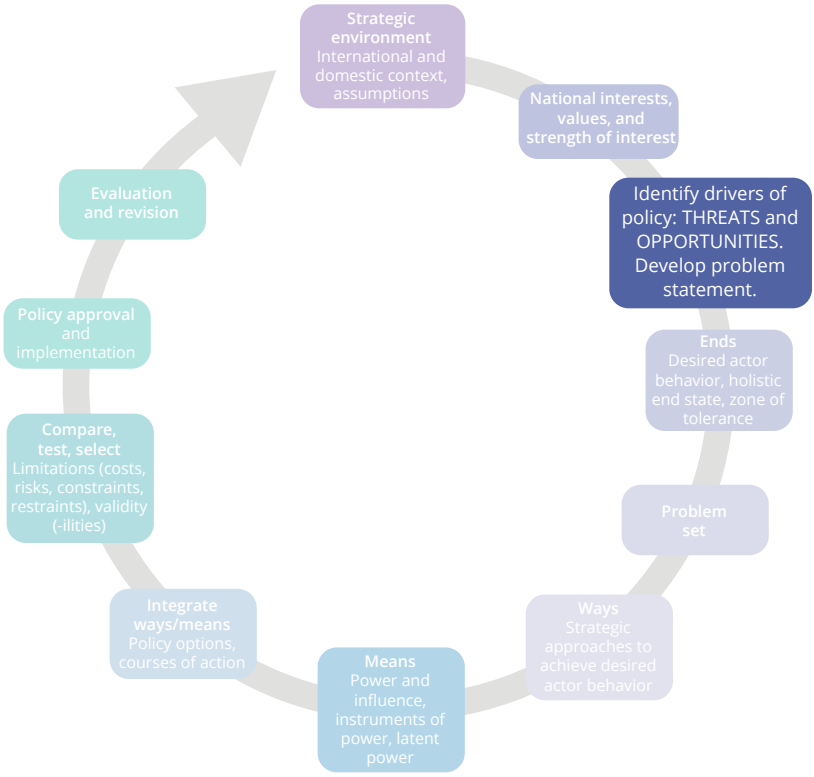

Figure 5. Identifying drivers of policy: threats and opportunities.
Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

the strength of interest, and identifying the threats and opportunities, the strategist should begin crafting an initial *problem statement*, or a concise description of the issue that needs to be addressed. If based on the right questions that are properly scoped, a problem statement can help ensure that everyone understands the issue to be addressed, that the problem is appropriately scoped, and that the issue is relevant to national security

interests. The problem statement is purely a mechanism to ensure that strategists are asking the right questions and that everyone involved has a common understanding of the issue(s) to be addressed and is focusing on the same priorities. As the strategist's understanding of the strategic environment increases over time, the problem statement should be updated and refined as needed.

To formulate a proper problem statement, the strategist should simply capture what the issue is (i.e., a threat or opportunity); why it is important to national security interests and/or what national interest is at stake, if not immediately evident; and the necessary context to understand the severity and scope of the problem. In other words, why is it a problem, and why do we need to take action? It is not appropriate to begin formulating proposed solutions, strategies, or courses of action during this phase because all of the relevant factors have not yet been considered. Also, because of heuristics, biases, and other cognitive tendencies, premature strategy formulation risks anchoring strategists and decision makers to a solution that has not been fully weighed against other potential options.[13]

[13] For more information on problem statements, see *A National Security Strategy Primer*, 8–9; and Kugler, *Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs*, 36–40.

CHAPTER THREE

Ends and Problem Framing

This chapter introduces the first of the basic concepts, aspects, and considerations of ends, ways, and means—the building blocks of strategy. There are multiple interpretations of some of these concepts; where relevant, we will highlight alternative viewpoints. There are also variations in how ends, ways, and means interact when it comes to strategy-development processes. Finally, the strategist will ensure that the problem set is framed holistically and appropriately reflects its complexities.

Ends

The broadest framing of our ends often derives from a *strategic vision* that is provided by our most senior leaders, including presidential administrations and senior military leaders. Strategic documents such as the United States' *National Security Strategy*, the Joint Chiefs of Staff's *National Military Strategy*, the U.S. State Department's *Joint Strategic Plan*, and theater strategies or campaign plans also give us a broad strategic vision that provides a framework for the conditions our leaders seek to set.

Having explored the strategic environment, we know the specific threat or opportunity that we need to ad-

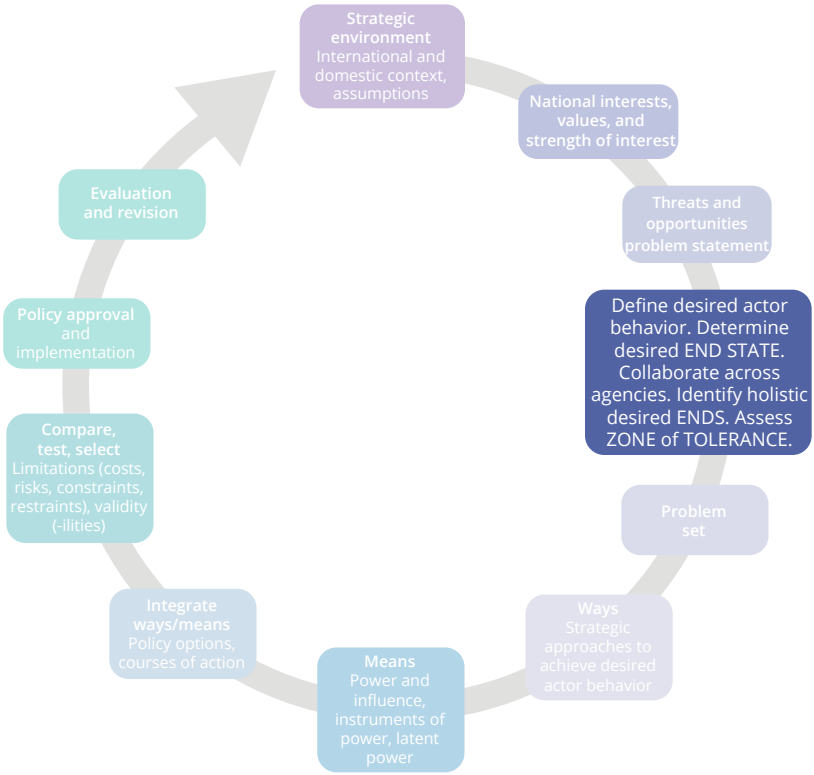

Figure 6. Defining desired actor behavior and identifying the ends. *Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP*

dress as well as the interests at stake and relevant context. From this, we can determine what conditions we want to create, or the desired *end state* (figure 6). Desired end states will generally correlate to our national values and interests and may be broad or general, but they should be achievable. Whereas our national values and interests are often universal, the desired end state will usually pertain to a specific region, country, or issue.

For example, freedom from oppression for a designated local population, limiting an adversary's aggression, self-determination/democratic rule for a specified local population, or a regional security balance may be a desired end state. Some strategy guides also refer to the end state as a political aim(s) or goal(s).[1]

While desired end states are broad, a strategic *end* is a specific desired outcome that is more clearly defined than an end state, such as the removal of a despotic leader, securing territory after an adversary incursion, or preventing a country from developing nuclear weapons.[2] Ends are also referred to as *objectives* and are often activities or outcomes that support one or more national interests. The ends or objectives will also generally have a relative priority that correlates with the importance of the affected national interest.

While ends and end states may seem the same, strategists will benefit from thinking about them as different but complementary concepts. The desired strategic end should be well-defined, specific, and achievable, whereas the desired end state is the broader condition that those ends are intended to support. If the strategist thinks solely in terms of specific ends, we risk losing sight of the big picture and failing in the overall goal even if our individual objectives are met, making it appear as though our strategies are successful even if they are not.

For example, in Iraq and Libya the desired strategic end to remove a despotic leader was successful, but the desired end state for more stable and democratic governance proved elusive. Why? This will probably be

[1] *A National Security Strategy Primer* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019), 15.
[2] *A National Security Strategy Primer*, 15.

debated for decades to come, but arguably, the strategies hinged too heavily on the specific end (i.e., regime change), and not enough on what else was required to create the desired end state (i.e., stability) and whether the end realistically supported that desired end state. In a sense, it was assumed that removing a despot would lead to stability, without enough consideration for what else would be required to create the desired condition. There was insufficient focus on strategy as a causal relationship to transform ways and means into ends that would work toward a desired end state.[3] Complicating the issue further, there was not complete agreement in some cases on what the specific objectives were, much less a clear vision on how they supported the desired end state.

We must also consider the broader desired end state and think holistically about integrating all available capabilities to avoid becoming too focused on specific policy instruments, such as military efforts. Thinking about the overall conditions or end state we seek to foster will provide a solid framework for developing specific ends and objectives that work harmoniously. Considering all of these aspects in advance also makes it less likely that we will have to adjust our ends at a later date (figure 7).[4]

To execute ends development within the Marine Corps War College (MCWAR) Strategy Development Model, the following should be considered:

- The most important aspect of developing

[3] For more information on strategy as a causal relationship, see Frank G. Hoffman, "The Missing Element in Crafting National Strategy: A Theory of Success," *Joint Force Quarterly* 97 (2d Quarter 2020): 55–64.

[4] For more information on ends, see *A National Security Strategy Primer*, 10–11; and Terry L. Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy: Logic for American Statecraft* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 294–302, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511806773.

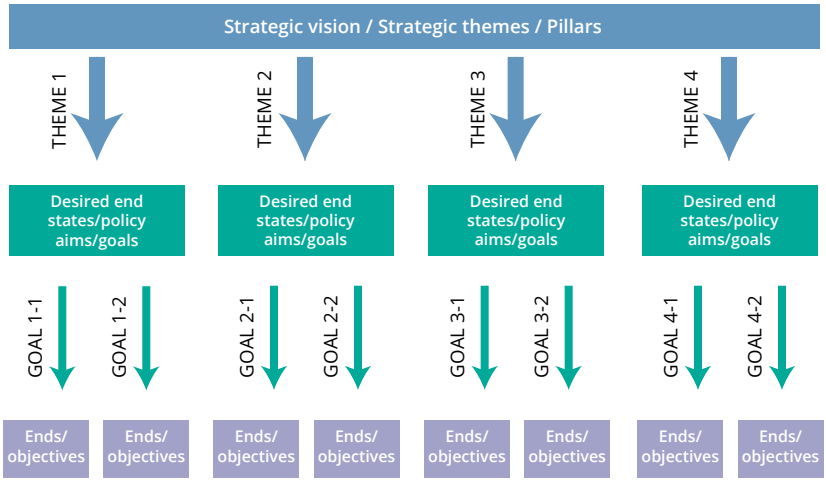

Figure 7. Developing the ends.
As this graphic depicts, ends development begins with a broad strategic vision from senior leaders and then becomes successively more specific, refining that vision into the desired end state for each theme, and then developing specific ends that will help to create the conditions identified within those end states.
Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

the ends in this model is to define the behavior that the proposed strategies seek to elicit from a given actor(s). What, specifically, do we want that actor(s) to do (or not do)? For example, we may want a country to sign a fair and reciprocal trade agreement or a nuclear arms reduction treaty, or we may want a country to cease hostilities with a neighbor or cease producing a particular materiel. At this stage, the strategist should avoid jumping ahead to any ways or means, focus on what we seek to achieve, and ensure that the desired behavior is clearly identified.

- The strategist will then need to use that desired behavior to describe the desired end state. As discussed above, the end state must be broad and comprehensive, such as peace in a given region, self-determination in an oppressed population, or security in a forward operating area. These determinations should be made in collaboration with interagency counterparts to ensure all instruments and equities are considered.
- The final component of ends development will be to describe the desired ends, or specific desired outcome(s). As noted above, this will be narrower and more concrete than the desired end state and should be oriented to the desired actor behavior. If successful, the identified ends should ultimately work toward achieving the desired end state. Examples might include removing a despotic leader from power, halting genocide, or reaching an agreement on a peace treaty. These ends will later be honed into more specific subordinate goals and objectives, but the initial list should include the overarching ends that need to be achieved to work toward the desired end state.

Zone of Tolerance

The *zone of tolerance* is the range of a goal or goals that we perceive as satisfactory. In other words, most outcomes will be suboptimal, but how much imperfection can we withstand until we consider the end state intolerable? On a scale, the zone of tolerance may appear as depicted in figure 8.

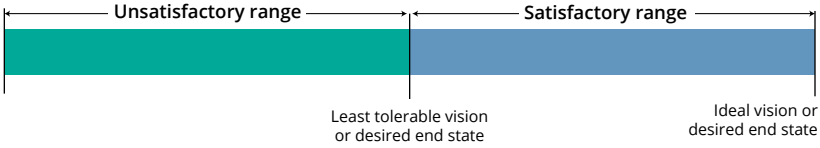

Figure 8. Zone of tolerance.
Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

The zone of tolerance is largely determined by factors such as the strength of interest (i.e., how strong is our national desire to attain a goal?), willingness to allocate resources toward the strategy, risk tolerance, and other considerations.

Framing the Problem Set

Taken as a whole, the elements covered in the first three chapters of this primer comprise the problem parameters needed to define the problem set. The strategic environment; our own assumptions; the sources and drivers of policy, including values, interests, threats, and opportunities; and the desired ends all contribute to appreciating the full depth and breadth of the issue. The *problem set* articulates where you are in the strategic environment, where you want to be (i.e., the desired end state), and the hurdles that must be overcome to get there. While crafting the problem set, the strategist must revisit the problem statement to ensure that the identified problem still holds true after further research and analysis. If there has been any deviation or expansion from the initial problem statement, the strategist must update and refine that problem statement at this time so that it reflects the full breadth of the problem set (figure 9).

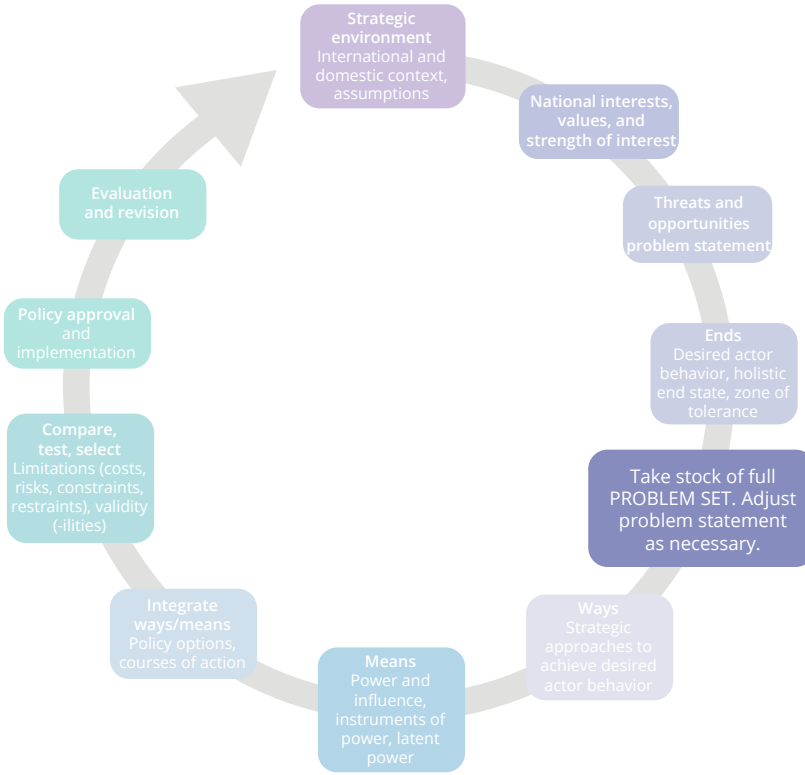

Figure 9. Framing the problem set.
Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

As underscored in the previous chapter, strategists must be careful not to default to oversimplification while developing strategy, since it compounds risks and will likely lead to faulty advice and poor decision making. After completing a full assessment of the strategic environment, strategists should take stock of the whole problem set and embrace its complexities, referring back to them

throughout the rest of the strategy-making processes. In pursuit of the ends and end state, the strategist must continually retain perspective of the intricacies of the strategic environment.

CHAPTER FOUR

Ways and Means

Ways are proposals for how to achieve the ends. *Means* are the resources and capabilities available or required to achieve the ends.[1] Some aspects of ways and means can be viewed differently depending on the model used to develop strategies, but in this model the ways will be addressed first to ensure that the resulting strategy focuses on the causal relationship between our actions and the other actor's reactions (figure 10).

Ways to achieve the objectives are also sometimes referred to as *courses of action*. However, note that this term tends to be more specific and operational than the broader *ways* and therefore can be viewed as a subset of ways, or even the planning phase for examining the ways.

Developing the Ways

Strategic Approaches

Strategic approaches are the causal mechanisms that

[1] *A National Security Strategy Primer* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019), 19, 37.

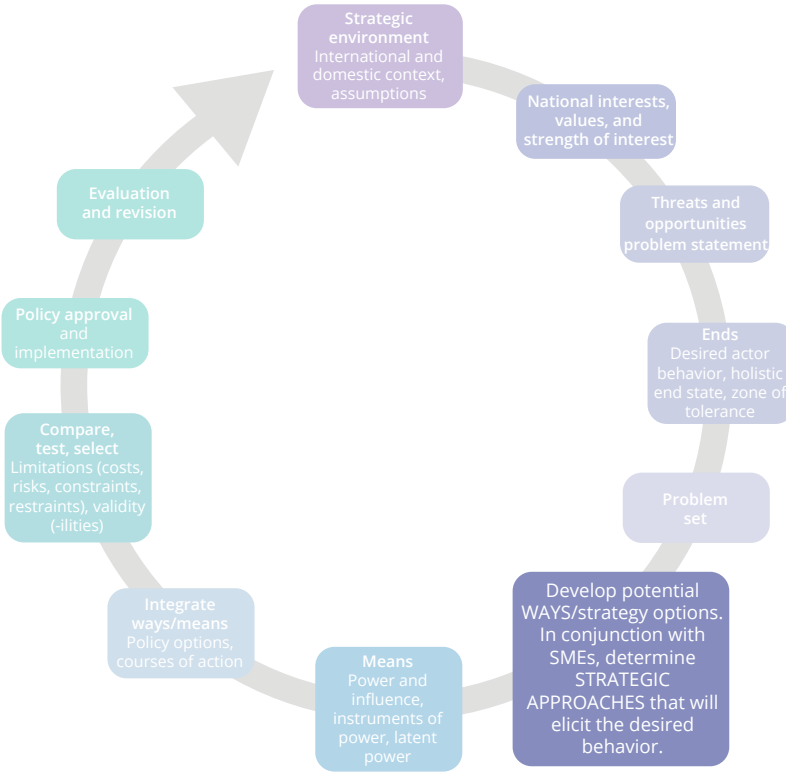

Figure 10. Develop potential ways.
Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

bring about a desired behavior from an actor.[2] There are many different strategic approaches a strategist could recommend, ranging from a noninterventionist approach to full engagement. Strategic approaches align

[2] For another interpretation of strategic approaches as causal mechanisms, see Frank G. Hoffman, "The Missing Element in Crafting National Strategy: A Theory of Success," *Joint Force Quarterly* 97 (2d Quarter 2020): 55–64.

with ways in this methodology. The available options that should be considered are as follows:

- *Observe*: the least active approach. Observation is generally selected when the threat to national interests is low, another actor such as a foreign partner can address the threat, or the costs and risks outweigh the benefits of a more engaged approach.
- *Accommodate*: adapting to another actor's wishes to achieve the desired ends.
- *Compromise*: all parties adapt their demands to reach a mutually agreeable solution.
- *Shape*: taking actions to mold the strategic situation in one's favor. Shaping generally requires a situation that is not urgent or high-threat. Shaping may be more appropriate for opportunities versus threats.
- *Persuade*: changing another actor's position by virtue of argument. This approach may be most effective when the other actor's values align with one's own.
- *Enable*: improving another actor's capability to continue pursuing an action that is also in one's own interest. This can be done through actions such as building partner capacity, providing military or financial aid, or sharing intelligence.
- *Induce*: offering positive incentives to change another actor's behavior to align more closely with one's own interests. Examples may include aid, security guarantees, or economic incentives.
- *Assure*: taking confidence-building measures to increase another actor's sense of security.

This may include increasing forward troop presence or providing security guarantees.

- *Coerce*: persuading another actor through threats or punitive actions, such as:
    - *Deter*: making credible threats to discourage another actor from initiating an action that conflicts with or threatens one's own interests. Deterrence threatens a negative outcome (e.g., denial of success by virtue of the defender's strength or severe punishment) in response to an anticipated, undesirable action. The adversary must then determine whether the threat of denied success or punishment is credible (i.e., strength of interest plus capability to fulfill the threat) and whether the risk is strong enough to forgo or cease pursuing the action in question.
    - *Compel*: threatening or imposing a negative condition on other actors to dissuade them from continuing a behavior or to convince them to take an action they would prefer not to take. This may include actions such as instituting or continuing economic sanctions or using force.
- *Subdue*: applying force to modify an actor's behavior to conform to one's own interests, wherein the applied force is sufficient enough to remove all of the adversary's other strategy options. Examples may include

occupation, regime change, and damage or destruction of capabilities to resist.

- *Eradicate*: the most severe approach. Eradication involves eliminating another actor, including leaders and adherents.[3]

To develop the ways, the strategist should first determine which strategic approaches would be likely to elicit the desired actor behavior. This should be done in conjunction with subject matter experts who are best positioned to anticipate a given actor's reactions to potential approaches. For example, some regimes may succumb to a certain type of pressure, whereas others may balk against it and become more entrenched in their position, depending on their own domestic context and views of the international context. Insight into these types of nuances in an individual leader's, state actor's, or nonstate actor's behavior is essential for this model to work. Ultimately, the question is, "Which combination of 'carrot and stick' in the spectrum of strategic approaches is most likely to be effective in achieving the desired ends?" The strategist may elect to develop multiple potential ways based on the most promising identified strategic approaches. This step is critical to determine whether an approach would be likely to yield the desired or expected result.

For example, if asked to develop a strategy for Iran, a number of the strategic approaches could be applied in a number of different manners. If the desired end state is decreased tensions with Iran, and one specific desired

[3] Adapted from *Strategy*, Joint Doctrine Note 1-18 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018), III-1–III-3. For more information on strategic approaches, see *A National Security Strategy Primer*, 37–39.

end is for Iran to cease supporting Shia militia group attacks on the U.S. presence in Iraq, a spectrum of potential strategic approaches may appear as follows:

- Compromise: engage in dialogue either directly or indirectly to try to mitigate tensions and reduce attacks.
- Induce: offer sanctions relief in return for a cessation of attacks.
- Deter: threaten Iran with severe repercussions if Shia militia groups attack U.S. positions or personnel.
- Compel: threaten Iran with increased sanctions or execute limited force if attacks do not cease.
- Subdue: apply more extensive force to remove Iran's capability to support Shia militia group attacks.

At this stage, the strategist is considering what potential strategic approaches might lead the actor, Iran, to behave in a way that matches our interests and desired end, to cease supporting Shia militia group attacks. The potential approaches are not yet recommendations and are not endorsed strategies—they are simply a starting point to develop options. From this point, the strategist(s) and subject matter experts would assess in more detail which of the strategic approaches would be most likely to yield the desired results, as well as which would best fit the strategic context. The list would then be refined to the most promising ways to be further developed as potential strategies.

At this point in the methodology, options are not yet culled for limitations or other considerations; that pro-

cess will be covered in the next chapter. In this instance, perhaps the *compromise* and *induce* options would eventually be ruled out as not in line with existing U.S. policy, and the *subdue* option may be ruled out as disproportionate for the issue, leaving the *deter* and *compel* options for further development. Or, if there were a change in political climate on the issue and decision makers requested a fresh approach, perhaps the *compromise* or *induce* options would also be developed. But at this stage, it would be premature to make those decisions since limitations have not yet been examined; instead, strategists should develop all of the strategic approaches that could potentially yield the desired actor response.

Policy Instruments/Instruments of National Power

Also called the *instruments of national power*, *policy instruments* include diplomatic, informational, military, economic, financial, intelligence, and law enforcement (DIMEFIL) instruments.[4] Some strategists and policy makers also include elements such as cyber, development (i.e., assistance and aid), and other capabilities and assets as policy instruments; however, opinions vary on their inclusion as discrete instruments. Policy instruments can be viewed as ways or means depending on the context and the strategy-making model. In this model, instruments as *actions*—how a nation interacts with state and nonstate actors to achieve specific ends, whether diplomatic, military, economic, or otherwise—are viewed as ways, while instruments as *assets*—what a nation uses to

[4] For more information on policy instruments, see Terry L. Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy: Logic for American Statecraft* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 207–80, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511806773.

achieve specific ends, such as resources or capabilities—are viewed as means.[5]

While we have elected to use the DIMEFIL model, some organizations and guides streamline the instruments to diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (DIME), wherein the informational instrument includes intelligence and cyber, the economic instrument includes the financial instrument, and development may be considered part of the diplomatic and/or economic instruments. The construct itself is less important than understanding the various tools and functions that should be considered in developing strong strategies. Additionally, the instruments are rarely used in isolation and will generally be applied in overlapping and coordinated ways.

Each of these instruments can also be applied across a broad spectrum of the strategic approaches covered above. The major considerations for the instruments include:

- *Diplomacy*: how a state formally interacts with other state actors and sometimes nonstate actors. It can consist of bilateral or multilateral engagement and span nearly the full spectrum of strategic approaches, from forging alliances, to communicating coercive threats, to notifying of sanctions or declaring war. Diplomacy is not conducted in a static environment, and the other party's or parties' reactions, ranging from cooperation to

[5] Since the United States rarely acts alone, these interactions often occur in conjunction with partners, including other stakeholders from the private sector and nongovernmental organizations as well as allied partner nations.

active resistance, also have bearing on diplomatic engagement.[6]

- *Informational*: creates, exploits, or disrupts knowledge.[7] Actions can be positive or enhancing efforts to strengthen national interests, such as public diplomacy or strategic communication. They can also be covert, such as psychological operations, information operations, influence operations, or sometimes propaganda. Finally, actions can be calculated to deny another actor access to or use of information to gain an information advantage, including denial, disruption, misinformation, or disinformation. This realm also includes protecting one's own information and access to information, as well as associated capabilities.[8]
- *Military*: entails the use of force, threat of the use of force, or enabling partners to use or threaten force to shape another actor's behavior to align with one's own national interests. The application of the military instrument could span virtually the entire spectrum of the strategic approaches previously discussed, with possible approaches ranging from security cooperation to nuclear war.[9]
- *Economic*: comprises issues such as region-

[6] *A National Security Strategy Primer*, 23–25.
[7] *Strategy*, II-6.
[8] For more information on the informational instrument, see *Strategy*, II-6; *A National Security Strategy Primer*, 26–28; and Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy*, 207–80.
[9] For more information on the military instrument, see *Strategy*, II-6–II-7; *A National Security Strategy Primer*, 28–30; and Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy*, 207–80.

al and bilateral trade, infrastructure development, and foreign investment. Examples include trade sanctions, restrictions on technology transfers, debt forgiveness, and security assistance programs. The economic instrument can be used to encourage or dissuade another actor's behavior by offering or withholding something desirable.[10]

- *Financial*: closely linked to the economic instrument, but more specifically entails issues such as funds transfers and banking. These tools are especially effective when dealing with nonstate actors regarding issues such as disrupting terrorist funding streams or restricting specific corporations because of illegal or questionable activities and affiliations.[11]
- *Intelligence*: knowledge generation via collection and analysis of information gathered through various, often clandestine means to inform decision making. Access to intelligence is restricted to provide decision advantage. Intelligence can pertain to state and nonstate actors and can be shared, withheld, or denied to augment or detract from another actor's advantage. For instance, sharing intelligence to enhance a partner nation's capacity and disrupting another actor's intelligence-

[10] For more information on the economic instrument, see Col Jack D. Kem, USA (Ret), "Understanding the Operational Environment: The Expansion of DIME," *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin* 33, no. 2 (April–June 2007): 49–53; and Richard L. Kugler, *Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs: New Methods for a New Era* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2006), 103–8.

[11] Kem, "Understanding the Operational Environment."

collection capabilities are both ways that intelligence could be approached as an instrument of national power. Intelligence can also be viewed as a way to enable and/or enhance the strength of the other instruments.[12]

- *Law enforcement*: pertains to legal means of enhancing or restricting another actor's actions. Examples include pursuing United Nations Security Council Resolutions to condemn violations of international law, U.S. laws such as the 2001 USA Patriot Act, and collaboration between U.S. law enforcement and other countries' law enforcement.[13]
- *Cyber*: includes actions from defensive (e.g., protecting our systems and capabilities) to offensive (e.g., disrupting or manipulating another actor's systems and capabilities). As noted above, some guides will include cyber as part of the informational instrument or the military instrument for offensive operations, but due to the criticality, pervasiveness, and vulnerabilities of the cyber domain, cyber is more frequently being viewed as its own instrument. As a result, the United States publishes its own dedicated *National Cyber Strategy*.[14]

[12] For a contrarian position on intelligence as an instrument of national power, see Adrian Wolfberg and Brian A. Young, "Is Intelligence an Instrument of National Power?," *American Intelligence Journal* 33, no. 1 (2016): 26–30.

[13] Kem, "Understanding the Operational Environment."

[14] For more information on cyber considerations, see *A National Security Strategy Primer*, 27–28; and Donald J. Trump, *National Cyber Strategy of the United States of America, September 2018* (Washington, DC: White House, 2018).

- *Development*: can be used to encourage or discourage behavior by offering or withholding development assistance, or by building a partner nation's capacity, such as economic, infrastructure, education, or medical, to encourage behavior that aligns with U.S. national interests.

The next step in developing ways is to consider which functions across the instruments of national power need to be involved. Each way should include a whole-of-government solution, in that the organizations best suited to perform those functions should be included in the strategy-making processes and their roles included in the potential solutions. If the preferred strategic approaches include diplomacy, then the strategist should involve the U.S. Department of State. If strategists consider offering aid or development assistance, then the U.S. Agency for International Development should be involved. If military action is considered, the U.S. Department of Defense should be included, and so on.

A whole-of-government approach does not simply mean that a DIMEFIL construct is used, but rather that critical thought is given to which agencies need to be involved based on the functions that need to be developed and performed within the proposed ways. Additionally, during this phase the strategist should avoid curtailing the options in anticipation of limitations, since the goal in this stage is to develop creative and novel solutions free of any cognitive obstacles. Similar to divergent thinking in structured brainstorming, promising ideas should not be ruled out. After this stage, the strategist should have a well-developed picture of the ends and the ideal methods to achieve them.

Determining the Means

As noted previously, the *means* are the resources and capabilities required to undertake the ways and achieve the ends.[15] This phase views the instruments of national power as the assets needed to execute the mission (figure 11). Additionally, a nation's power and influence can serve as means since a state can leverage its power and influence toward accomplishing its goals.

Determining the means comprises considering the means that already exist, whether those means need to be shaped or modified and optimized for the mission at hand, and whether new means need to be developed from latent power. Often, the means already exist, but they may need to be adapted in some way to tailored requirements, especially if they have traditionally been used in a different way in the past. For example, after focusing on the Global War on Terrorism for nearly 20 years and shaping many of our means for asymmetric warfare and counterinsurgency operations, the shift to great power competition will employ many of those same means in entirely new ways for more diverse missions. *Latent power*, or elements that can be converted into power over time, is also a key component of the means and the temporal aspect of strategy formulation.

Most of the U.S. agencies that need to be involved in means determination should already be included by this stage because they were consulted regarding the ways. The agencies that will perform the required functions will also need to weigh in on whether they possess the resources and capabilities to perform the identified task, or whether such resources need to be reallocated or developed. In some cases, existing resources may be

[15] *A National Security Strategy Primer*, 19.

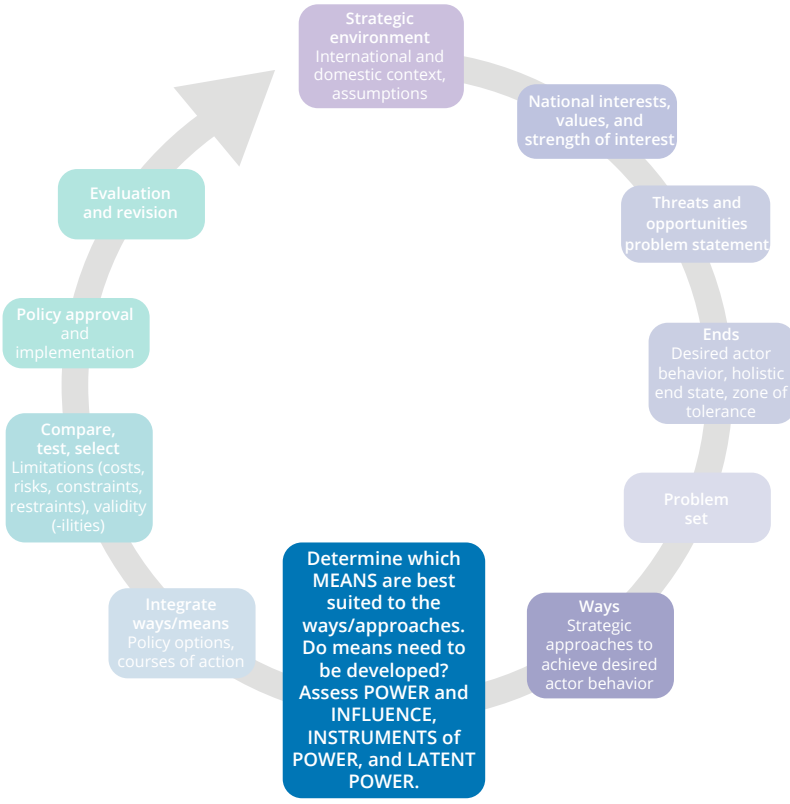

Figure 11. Determine the means.
Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

optimized for preexisting missions, and it may take some effort or time to adjust and adapt them to a new purpose. More detailed analysis of resource requirements will be addressed during each agency's planning efforts.

Because this model is resource-unconstrained and encourages the strategist not to limit options early in the process, strategic options may require revision once the

resource/means picture is fully assessed and limitations are considered. In a time-constrained environment, the strategist will need to be mindful of this necessity.[16]

Elements of Power/Latent Power

Elements of power are assets that a nation can convert into capabilities. While the raw elements do not directly constitute means, they represent potential power or latent power because they can be transformed into means. Elements of power consist of natural resources, geography, human capital, the economy, industry, research and development, technology, infrastructure, governance and political systems, culture, national will, international reputation, and other attributes.[17] These elements could be considered for their potential to enhance a nation's absolute power as well as relative power when compared to another country's potential power.

When considering means, the strategist should consider not only existing means but also means that could be developed from existing elements of power unless the issue (i.e., a threat or opportunity) is moving so quickly that additional means cannot be developed. Of course, by limiting strategy making to means that already exist, one will have fewer options and/or suboptimal strategies.

Integrating Ways and Means

Next, the strategist will merge the identified ways and means into initial holistic proposed strategies for further refinement and eventual consideration by the decision maker. Ends, ways, and means should be mutually reinforcing and designed to work in concert, never in iso-

[16] Arthur F. Lykke Jr., "Defining Military Strategy," *Military Review* 69, no. 5 (May 1989): 4.
[17] *A National Security Strategy Primer*, 19–20.

lation.[18] The integrated ways and means constitute the proposed *courses of action* for how to achieve the ends (figure 12).

At this time, the strategist will develop *intermediate objectives*, or waypoints against which the strategist can measure progress toward national-level goals. These intermediate objectives should be discrete, identifiable, measurable, and achievable, and they should include milestones, or assessment criteria and timelines for accomplishment.[19] The strategist should ask:

- Based on the strategic approach(es) selected, what are the specific courses of action we need to pursue to work toward the identified ends?
- What means will be required to execute each of the courses of action? Do they exist, or will they need to be developed? What is the relative priority of each of the requirements?
- What are the intermediate objectives we need to achieve to progress toward the ends for each potential strategy and for each selected strategic approach? What is the relative priority of each objective?

The resulting proposed strategies will be an initial roadmap for how to achieve the ends by integrating the ways and the means. There will be adjustments and refinements as the strategist proceeds through the rest of the strategy-making process, but this will provide a solid

[18] For more information on the relationship between ends, ways, and means, see *Strategy*, III-3–III-4; Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy*, 281–321; and Kugler, *Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs*, 86, 108–12.
[19] Adapted from *Joint Planning*, Joint Publication 5-0 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017), I-8–I-9, III-9.

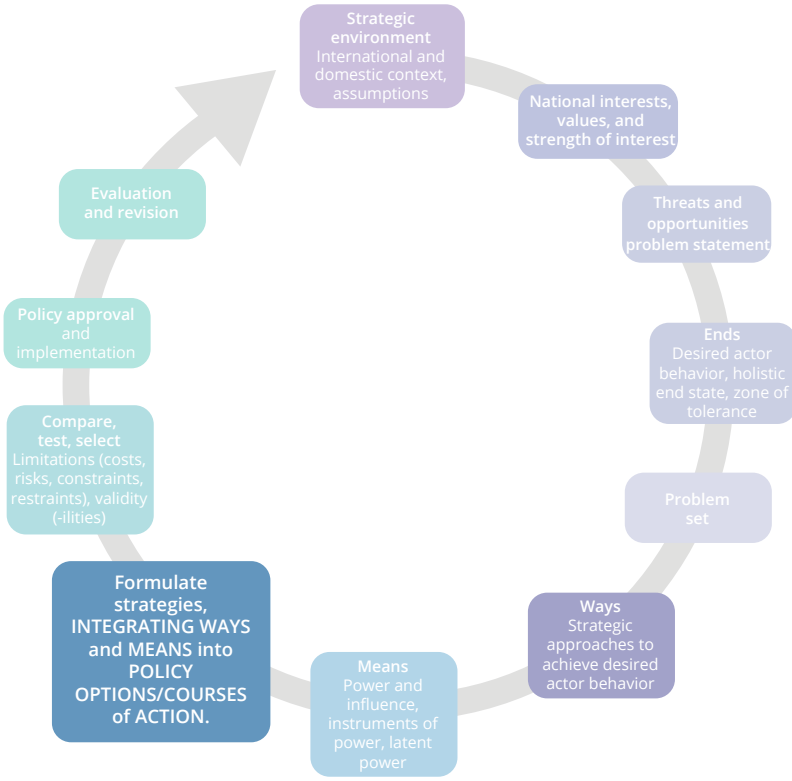

Figure 12. Integrate ways and means.
Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

outline of what needs to be achieved and what will be required to implement each ways-based approach.

At this point, you may also be wondering how ends, ways, and means relate to policy. *Policy* is a pattern of actions, activities, or behaviors designed to attain specific ends or objectives—in other words, when the ways are repeated consistently toward an end. When a gov-

ernment or organization officially adopts a way or course of action and then applies it consistently, it becomes a policy. The term *policy* is often used differently across the U.S. government and is conflated with *interests*, *ends*, *ways*, or *strategies*. When in doubt, clarify how the term is being used.

The Importance of Interagency Integration

Interagency coordination throughout strategy development is imperative, and it should not be delayed until late stages of the process, when input is far less likely to correct fundamental weaknesses in the strategic logic. Strategists rarely have subject matter expertise in every strategic approach or every policy instrument, and consulting those who fully understand everything those instruments can offer can dramatically change options for strategy development. Additionally, those subject matter experts will be best positioned to align the instruments against adversary capabilities, motivation, and will.[20]

Moreover, involving interagency partners will ensure that a whole-of-government approach is adopted and that the potential strategies are holistic rather than skewed toward one approach or instrument. *Whole-of-government* in this context means including and effectively integrating all relevant instruments for the issue in question. It should not be viewed as a checklist wherein a DIMEFIL chart is populated without consideration for whether all of the instruments are suited to address the

[20] In practice, the National Security Council is the coordinating mechanism for the U.S. government and will sometimes determine when to include specific agencies and how to integrate strategies. However, it is always best for the strategist to do this proactively while formulating the strategy rather than having it dictated after the strategy is complete, since the latter option is likely to fall short of fully integrating those agencies.

specific issue. Rather, thoughtful consideration should be given to how and whether each instrument will advance national interests on a given issue as well as who has the authorities to address the issue, and always in consultation with interagency partners. When implemented throughout the process, this offers true interagency integration.

CHAPTER FIVE

Compare, Test, and Select, Part I

Limitations and Validation

The final elements of strategic logic are *limitations*, the consequences and potential consequences of a proposed strategy that will need to be accounted for during strategy development, which include costs, risks, constraints, and restraints. This is also the beginning phase of several processes to compare and test potential strategies to pare them down and refine them for eventual policy approval (figure 13).

Keeping the strategic options open early in the process permits strategists to pursue what they envision as the ideal potential solutions to the problem, rather than immediately compromising on the solution because of potential limitations. It is only at this stage, when the strategist has developed the proposed solutions as well as the ways and means, that limitations should be considered so that potential strategies can be weighed and compared. Are there some costs, risks, constraints, or restraints that would make one or more of the proposed strategies difficult to execute? Could those limitations be overcome or offset? Is there sufficient time to do so? At this point, the thought process will necessarily be-

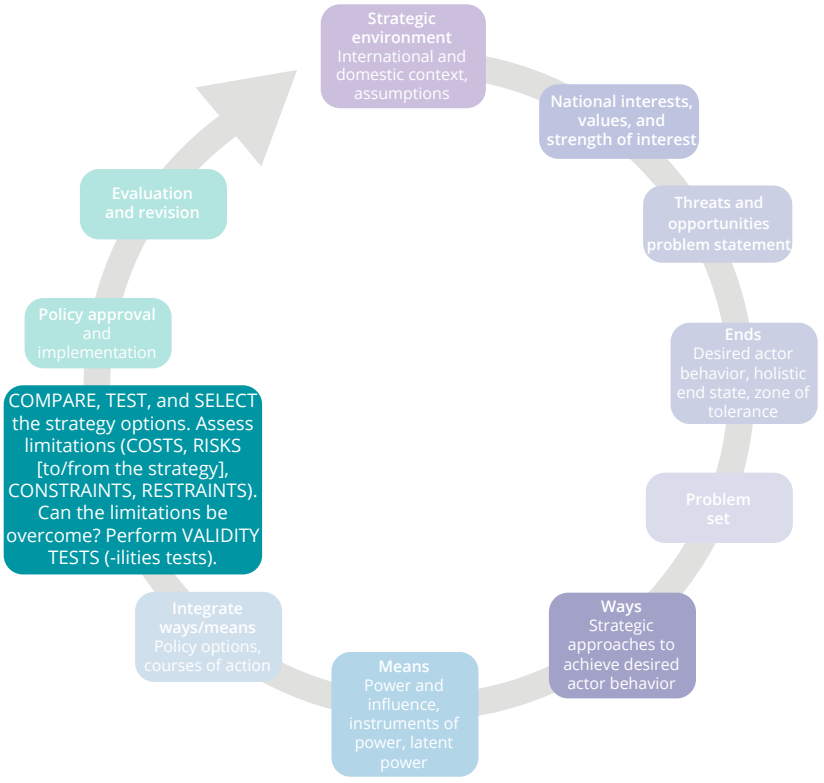

Figure 13. Compare, test, and select: assess limitations and test validity.
Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

come more convergent. If there are obstacles that simply cannot be overcome, even good options may need to be ruled out or modified. However, if a limitation can reasonably be mitigated or the proposed strategy can be adapted to account for the limitation, the strategist should make a reasonable effort to do so.

Costs

Costs comprise the resources and other expenditures needed to achieve the desired ends. The broad categories of costs that should be considered are resources, political costs, and opportunity costs. *Resources* include not only monetary costs, but also potential human costs (i.e., deaths and injuries), damaged or destroyed infrastructure and equipment, lost capital, incurred debt, overall economic losses, and time. *Political costs* could include a tarnished reputation or diminished influence, domestically or internationally. These costs should be measured not only in tangible outlays and losses, but also in the potential for lost opportunities (e.g., what can you no longer do as a result of pursuing this strategy, or what potential negative implications may occur that could lead to *opportunity costs* in the future).

Some costs will be measurable, whereas others will need to be estimated, including subjective aspects such as reputation and prestige. The strategist should capture the anticipated costs as accurately as possible so that the decision maker can weigh the costs alongside the potential benefits. In most cases, if the potential costs outweigh the potential benefits, the strategy may not be worth pursuing. Sometimes if the option most likely to achieve success also comes at a very high cost, a decision maker will opt for a less optimal solution that comes at a more palatable cost. Ultimately, it is the most acceptable cost-benefit ratio that is being sought.

On the other hand, if the threat is severe enough that an action must be taken regardless of the costs, then most decision makers will at least seek to mitigate the costs to an acceptable level. Additionally, the strategist should weigh the cost of inaction; sometimes, the

cost of not acting will be more severe than the estimated cost of an identified action, and vice versa.[1]

Risks

Risks are things that could go wrong with a strategy. There are both risks *to* the strategy and risks *from* the strategy; risks to the strategy are things that could cause the strategy to fail, while risks from the strategy are negative consequences caused by a strategy's implementation. These risks are often unintended and can be brought on by faulty assumptions, inaccurate assessments, and incorrect perceptions of the strategic environment, which underscores the importance of diligently researching and assessing the international and domestic context, as well as identifying and testing assumptions.

Risks can be viewed as the combination of the likelihood and severity of what could go wrong. If the consequences of a risk would be severe but the probability is not very high, the overall risk may be assessed as only low or moderate. For example, a potential nuclear retaliation in response to a given action would represent very severe consequences, but if the scale of the proposed action is very limited or nonmilitary in nature and nuclear retaliation is very unlikely, then the overall risk may be calculated as low. However, if the magnitude of the consequences is anticipated to be relatively low but highly probable, the overall risk may be viewed as unacceptable

[1] For more information on costs, see *Strategy*, Joint Doctrine Note 1-18 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018), IV-2; *A National Security Strategy Primer* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019), 43–44; Terry L. Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy: Logic for American Statecraft* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 333–39, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511806773; and Richard L. Kugler, *Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs: New Methods for a New Era* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2006), 53–54.

because of the high likelihood. If, for example, it is very likely that an adversary would attack a partner nation in response to a planned action, the overall risk may be viewed as unacceptable if it cannot be mitigated.

In addition to identifying the risks and their associated likelihood and severity, the strategist should also determine whether there are ways to mitigate the risk. Solid risk mitigation proposals may enable the decision maker to pursue a strategy that otherwise would not be acceptable. For example, if there is a risk that an adversary will launch a cyber attack in response to an action, but we have the ability to neutralize the anticipated attack, then the risk may be negated.[2] Sometimes risk cannot be mitigated fully, at which point the strategist may recommend risk acceptance, with the specific implications outlined for the decision maker.

Given that risk assessment requires nuanced analysis of multiple factors and hinges on subject matter expertise to judge adversary reactions, this is another instance in which regional experts such as intelligence professionals or policy specialists should be consulted to ensure that the judgments and their basis are as informed as possible. Again, it is worth noting that other actors almost certainly weigh these factors differently than we do in their own risk calculations and strategy-making processes, and regional experts are best postured to provide insight into an actor's calculus.

[2] For more information on risks, see *Strategy*, IV-2; *A National Security Strategy Primer*, 44–45; Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy*, 340–53; and Kugler, *Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs*, 43–47.

Constraints and Restraints[3]

Constraints are factors that limit freedom of action, often in the form of a situation or problem that bounds a strategist's options for achieving the desired ends. Constraints can also comprise guidelines that dictate how we must perform required actions. These constraints will be further scrutinized using validity tests, also known as "-ilities tests," which will be discussed later in this chapter. Examples of constraints may include:

- Competing interests: Are there conflicting or competing priorities and interests, whether internal (i.e., domestic) or external (i.e., those of partner nations or adversaries)?
- Policy: Is the proposed action consistent with existing policy? Do the necessary authorities exist?
- Insufficient resources or means: Are the needed elements of power, institutions, or actors limited in any way?
- Values and norms: Are there internal or external boundaries on the proposed action? Are there moral or ethical considerations?
- Insufficient time: What is realistically achievable within the given time constraint?

Restraints are restrictions on an action or an actor that may affect strategy or elements of strategy. They are similar to constraints in that they are limitations, but they represent things we must not do, and they are often—but not always—externally imposed.

[3] Note that not all strategy guides distinguish between constraints and restraints. We are doing so here for clarity and to align with U.S. Marine Corps and Navy terminology, but many strategy guides categorize all of these limitations as constraints.

- Legal limitations: Does the proposed action comport with the law? Do the necessary legal authorities exist? If operating overseas, does the proposed action comport with the host nation's laws? Always consult legal professionals to make this determination.
- Prohibitions: Have any specific actions been prohibited, whether by the strategist's chain of command or elsewhere in the U.S. government? Are there additional prohibitions that need to be considered in an allied environment?

Like costs and risks, the strategist should make these constraints and restraints as explicit as possible in the final strategy recommendations so that the decision maker can determine whether they can be shaped in any way, or whether the proposed strategy needs to be modified to account for the constraints and restraints.[4]

Overall Effect of Limitations

The strategist needs to consider the overall picture and assess the factors working for and against the potential strategy options. If the limitations on a given potential strategy outweigh the potential benefits or the potential support for it, other options with fewer challenges may become more attractive.[5]

[4] For more information on constraints, see *A National Security Strategy Primer*, 10; and Kugler, *Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs*, 45, 54–55, 151.

[5] For more information on synthesizing limitations, see Kugler, *Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs*, 54–55.

Strategy Validation

The strategist will need to assess the potential strategies' validity or viability using what are sometimes called "-ilities tests." A valid strategy should meet each of the five criteria examined below.[6] If the procedures outlined in the earlier chapters of this primer were followed, many of these questions should already have been addressed. Examining these criteria again will provide another check to ensure all critical aspects are considered. While some of the themes in the validity tests are similar to those covered under limitations, organizing the information into the following categories helps to view the potential strategies from different angles, ensuring the discovery of all potential shortcomings and unidentified risks. Once all of the criteria are assessed, the strategist will also be able to weigh the potential strategies' pros and cons for eventual policy approval by the decision maker.[7]

1. Suitability: the suitability test examines the ends and ways. The strategic goals (i.e., ends and end states) and ways should be consistent with national interests. If the strategist followed the processes outlined in the first four chapters of this primer, this check should be a formality or sanity check, because all of the potential strategies will be grounded in national interests.
    - How will the proposed strategy or strategies affect the actor we seek to influence? How might those actors react

[6] For more information on strategy validation, see *Strategy*, IV-2–IV-3; and *A National Security Strategy Primer*, 45–46.

[7] For more detail and additional questions and considerations that can be used for strategy validation, see appendix F.

to the proposed action? How do we expect allies and adversaries to respond? This can be likened to the action-reaction-counteraction construct in strategic wargames.

- What effects might the proposed strategy or strategies have on other key strategies, or what might the opportunity costs be? How might they affect allies and partners' interests?
- What are the relative priorities and tradeoffs? What are the regional and/or national priorities? What tradeoffs are strategic leaders willing to make? Is there agreement on what the national interests actually are?

2. Desirability: the desirability test examines the ends and means by weighing the expected costs discussed earlier in this chapter (i.e., real costs as well as opportunity costs) versus the anticipated benefits, or value, of achieving the goals. The value of the strategy's end goals must be compelling to the government as well as to the public.
   - What are the relative value and priority of the strategy's goals?
   - Are the potential benefits of the strategy worth its potential costs? Perform a cost-benefit analysis and consider the worst-case scenarios; would even a marginal return be worth those potential costs? What are the odds of succeeding? Does it offer a 75-percent chance of attaining 90 percent of its aims, or

only a 50-percent chance of attaining 50 percent of its aims? What does "good enough" look like in this assessment (i.e., zone of tolerance)?

- What are the tangible costs, as detailed above (e.g., material and human resources, financial, economic, and others)?
- What are the potential intangible costs, as outlined above (e.g., international and domestic relationships, time, political capital, opportunity costs, reputation, and more)?
- How does our government's desire to achieve its aims compare to the other government's or nonstate actor's desire to deny us our goals (i.e., strength-of-interest comparison)? What sacrifices are the respective actors prepared to make compared to our own government and population? Will the balance of the opposing strengths of interest be likely to change over time?[8]
- What are the potential risks, as outlined above, including any collateral effects of the strategy that could compromise other interests, strategies, and opportunities?
- Could the strategy survive unanticipated problems or risks and absorb reversals, yet still have the potential to succeed (i.e., is it robust and flexible)?

[8] For a specific example of a strength-of-interest comparison, see appendix C.

3. Feasibility: the feasibility test examines the means (i.e., capacity and capability, including political will). The appropriate means must be available, or reasonably feasible to develop, in sufficient quantities and strength as well as in time to support the strategy.
    - What capabilities and capacity can the nation dedicate to support the strategy?
    - What is the rationale for determining which means are most appropriate for the strategy? Recalling the causality principle, what action is likely to produce the desired reaction from the actor in question? Avoid seeing "every problem as a nail because your only instrument is a hammer." Ensure that the means are appropriate to the task, or if time permits, develop new means or conceptualize different ways.
    - Do allies support or oppose the strategy? Consider allies' cooperation as a force multiplier and their lack of support as a potential hindrance.
4. Acceptability: the acceptability test examines the ways. The strategy should be consistent with national norms and values.
    - Is the action moral and justified? How will the proposed action's morality affect public support for the strategy?
    - Is the strategy consistent with international norms and laws? Will it be acceptable to international bodies such as the United Nations, or regional bodies such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organiza-

tion (NATO), the European Union (EU), the Arab League, the African Union, and others?

- Are the ends, ways, and means proportional? Weigh the morality of the strategy's goals, ways of achieving those goals, and likely results.
- Is the proposed strategy consistent with our history and national security culture?
- Will presidential involvement be needed to convince the public and the government that the strategy is in keeping with our nation's values? Can the president shape public opinion on the strategy?

5. Sustainability: the sustainability test examines time and means. Resource levels and public commitment should be maintained over time to achieve the strategic goals. This criterion is directly related to the other four "-ilities." At least initially, if a strategy is suitable, desirable, feasible, and acceptable, it should inherently be sustainable. However, these factors can wane or change over time, so it is important to reevaluate periodically for sustainability. The strongest determinant of sustainability is usually desirability; is the cost worth the benefit, either in protecting our national interests or promoting them? If desirability wanes—especially with the public—it is likely that sustainability will falter as well.
   - How much time may be required to achieve the desired ends? It will not serve anyone to be unrealistically opti-

mistic in this assessment (i.e., planning fallacy). Err on the side of prudence and consider a spectrum of potential outcomes, not just the best-case scenario.

- Is the strategy robust enough to be effective in the face of changing strategic contexts? Will it be adaptable enough to survive interactions with the adversary's strategy? Strategies developed in a vacuum that underestimate countering strategies from the adversary generally will not be sustainable.
- Can political and/or public support, including from key nations, be maintained over time?
- Can the strategy be sustained if there is a stalemate (i.e., not a failure of the strategy but not a victory either, such as in Korea or Vietnam)?
- Could the strategy become politically contentious or be used for political purposes?
- Will the strategy be vulnerable because of our election cycle? How much bipartisan support does the strategy have? Could a compromise or consensus be forged by political leaders?

Difficulty meeting the validation criteria is an indication of a risk that was not previously identified. That risk may require limiting the ends we wish to achieve, increasing the means (with related cost increases), or modifying the ways to achieve the strategic goal. It may even represent the risk of failure, which would need to

be outlined clearly for consideration. It is also possible that an unforeseen risk emerged during the strategy's implementation, such as an adversary's skilled adjustments to our actions, an additional adversary joining the cause, or an ally withdrawing from the effort.

- Are there flawed assumptions? If so, what is the associated risk?
- What are the severity, likelihood, imminence, and manageability of the risk?
- Can adjustments be made to the strategy to mitigate the risk? If so, what are the costs (i.e., impact on the strategy's desirability)?
- Have policy makers and/or strategic leaders been adequately informed of the risks? Be sure to include thorough risk analysis in the final presentation of the strategy options.
- Has unanticipated risk arisen that requires adjustment? An adversary's calculus or mindset may transform in ways that we could not foresee because those actions or approaches may not have been typical for the adversary until presented with a catalyst (i.e., our action).

Elements of Strategic Logic Summary

The elements of strategic logic covered to this point can be visualized in a variety of ways. Figure 14 emphasizes the interaction between the strategic environment, the sources and drivers of policy, and the limitations as separate but interconnected categories. These categories shape the ends, ways, and means required to formulate strategy. None of these categories should be considered in isolation; each element has bearing on strategy development, and each interacts with the others.

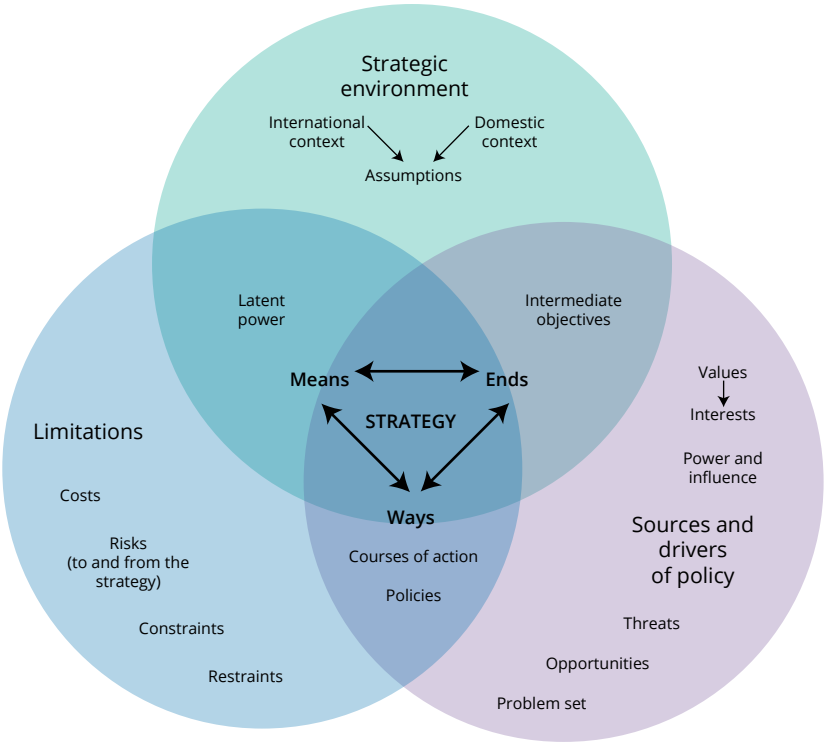

Figure 14. Elements of strategic logic.
Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

After refining the initial potential strategies based on the limitations and validity tests, strategists will have multiple viable strategies that will need to be examined and weighed.

CHAPTER SIX

Compare, Test, and Select, Part II

Strategy Option Assessment

This chapter explores how to assess multiple potential strategies and analyze their relative strengths and weaknesses so that policy makers can make well-informed decisions.

Why Generate Multiple Strategies?

Regardless of which model a strategist chooses to use for strategy making, it is critical to provide decision makers with multiple viable options. Without multiple options, senior decision makers may resist the proposed strategy, since they do not relish being boxed in and presented with what amounts to a *fait accompli*. Providing multiple, well-developed options gives them agency in the process and ensures that they can execute the strategy that best fits the strategic vision. It also empowers them by crystallizing the tradeoffs inherent in the various policy options.[1]

Additionally, developing multiple options helps avoid our natural tendency to anchor to an initial preferred op-

[1] Richard L. Kugler, *Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs: New Methods for a New Era* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2006), 36.

tion, potentially overlooking the solution(s) best suited to our problem. Since strategies are untested hypotheses for how to achieve the desired ends, those hypotheses should be tested as objectively as possible.[2] Deliberately exploring multiple potential strategies and conducting a rigorous review of the relative strengths and weaknesses of those options will help to ensure that all potential options are explored and that decision makers are prepared for the potential tradeoffs and implications of their choices, including taking steps to mitigate any negative consequences.

Ultimately, the final strategy may require including multiple nested or layered strategies to achieve the desired effect(s). Perhaps any single strategy would be too limited or fall short of the desired ends, but in combination or in a sequence, the likelihood of success would be greatly improved.[3] All of these options should be considered during final strategy selection, and using an array of tools to visualize the advantages and disadvantages of the various potential strategies can aid in this process.

Assessing the Potential Strategies

The tools provided in this section will enable the strategist to compare and assess multiple strategies to reveal the strengths, weaknesses, and tradeoffs inherent in each potential strategy so that decision makers can select the option—or combination of options—that best fits the nation's needs. These tools can help visualize some of the information gathered during strategy validation.

[2] Frank G. Hoffman, "The Missing Element in Crafting National Strategy: A Theory of Success," *Joint Force Quarterly* 97 (2d Quarter 2020): 55–64.
[3] For an example of such a process, see Michèle A. Flournoy and Shawn W. Brimley, "Strategic Planning for National Security: A New Project Solarium," *Joint Force Quarterly* 41 (2d Quarter 2006): 82.

The first step is to select criteria to compare and contrast the strategy options. Showing the differences between the strategy options as clearly as possible will be particularly helpful for strategy selection because it crystallizes the advantages and disadvantages of each potential strategy for the decision maker. Which elements are most pertinent to the potential success of the strategy? Are there costs or tradeoffs that have significant implications? Measuring the overall anticipated effectiveness of each strategy against the specific goals is one way to compare and contrast the strategies.

The information in table 2 can be used to compare potential performance across goals, plus the priority of the goals. If Goal A is the highest priority goal, Strategy 2 would probably be eliminated quickly, given its poor anticipated performance against this goal (shown in red). Although Strategy 1 is expected to perform very well against Goal A, it has low potential against Goals B and C. In this instance, then, it would depend heavily on how much more important Goal A is to the decision maker. If Goal A is the clear priority and Goals B and C are much lower priorities, then Strategy 1 may be the best option (shown in bold).

Table 2. Strategy tradeoffs, example 1.

Anticipated Performance of Potential Strategies			
Strategy options (Priority of goal)	**Goal A** (First, by far)	**Goal B** (Second)	**Goal C** (Third)
Strategy 1	**High**	**Low**	**Low**
~~Strategy 2~~	~~Low~~	~~Low~~	~~High~~
Strategy 3	Medium	Medium	Medium

Richard L. Kugler, Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs: New Methods for a New Era *(Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2006), 74, adapted by MCUP*

Table 3. Strategy tradeoffs, example 2.

Anticipated Performance of Potential Strategies			
Strategy options (Priority of goal)	**Goal A** (First, marginally)	**Goal B** (Second)	**Goal C** (Third)
Strategy 1	High	Low	Low
~~Strategy 2~~	~~Low~~	~~Low~~	~~High~~
Strategy 3	**Medium**	**Medium**	**Medium**

Richard L. Kugler, Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs: New Methods for a New Era *(Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2006), 74, adapted by MCUP*

If, however, as in table 3, Goals B and C are only slightly less important than A, then Strategy 3 may be the best option, given its anticipated even performance against all three goals. It is the relative priority that makes the biggest difference for weighing the options with this tool.

If the priorities of these goals are relatively even, as in table 4, the calculus for selecting the strategy probably would resemble example 2. The decision maker would probably not want to compromise any of the three goals with a low-performing strategy, so Strategy 3 would be the most likely selection.

The chart populated with more specific content might appear as in table 5. The decision maker may conclude that of the available options, military force is most likely to yield success on all three goals, but the strategy maker would also need to understand the potential implications and limitations to ensure all aspects are analyzed. This chart could also be populated in several iterations using different considerations for each version and then compiled for analysis.[4]

[4] For a more detailed tool for measuring performance, see appendix G.

Table 4. Strategy tradeoffs, example 3.

Anticipated Performance of Potential Strategies			
Strategy options (Priority of goal)	**Goal A** (Even)	**Goal B** (Even)	**Goal C** (Even)
Strategy 1	High	Low	Low
Strategy 2	Low	Low	High
Strategy 3	**Medium**	**Medium**	**Medium**

Richard L. Kugler, Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs: New Methods for a New Era *(Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2006), 74, adapted by MCUP*

Table 5. Strategy tradeoffs, example 4.

Anticipated Performance of Potential Strategies			
Strategy options (Priority of goal)	**Goal A:** Denuclearization (First)	**Goal B:** Cede seized territory (Second)	**Goal C:** Agree to ceasefire (Third)
1. Military force	High	High	High
2. Diplomacy/ threat of force	Low	Medium	Medium
3. Coalition pressure	Low	Low	Medium

Richard L. Kugler, Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs: New Methods for a New Era *(Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2006), 74, adapted by MCUP*

The costs and limitations will also need to be examined in detail (table 6). Ultimately, the chosen strategy must consider more than its potential performance. This is where tradeoffs must be considered based on the limitations and potential implications of each potential strategy. Table 6 arrays three considerations: the cost, the potential risk, and the average anticipated perfor-

Table 6. Strategy cost tradeoffs.

Tradeoffs of Potential Strategies			
Strategy options (Priority of criterion)	**Cost** (Third)	**Implications/ risk** (First)	**Average performance** (Second)
Strategy 1	$30 billion	Serious	High
Strategy 2	$20 billion	Moderate	Medium
Strategy 3	$10 billion	Minimal	Low

Richard L. Kugler, Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs: New Methods for a New Era *(Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2006), 74, adapted by MCUP*

mance. Below the header of the chart is the priority level of each of those three considerations, wherein the cost is the least of the concerns and the risk is the greatest concern in this example. The decision maker may judge that the costs or risks and implications are simply not worth the potential advantages in performance and decide to pursue a strategy that will still yield some benefit without as much risk and with a lower cost. In this example, Strategy 2 may be the preferred choice if the policy maker is willing to accept some risk for medium performance.

Zone of Tolerance and Strategy Selection

Another way to visualize and compare the various potential strategies is by arraying them on a spectrum according to their anticipated performance within the zone of tolerance previously mentioned in chapter 3 (figure 15).

When assessing potential strategies' performance within the context of the zone of tolerance, it is important to observe that the closer to the bottom of the spectrum the strategy falls, the more likely that its performance to-

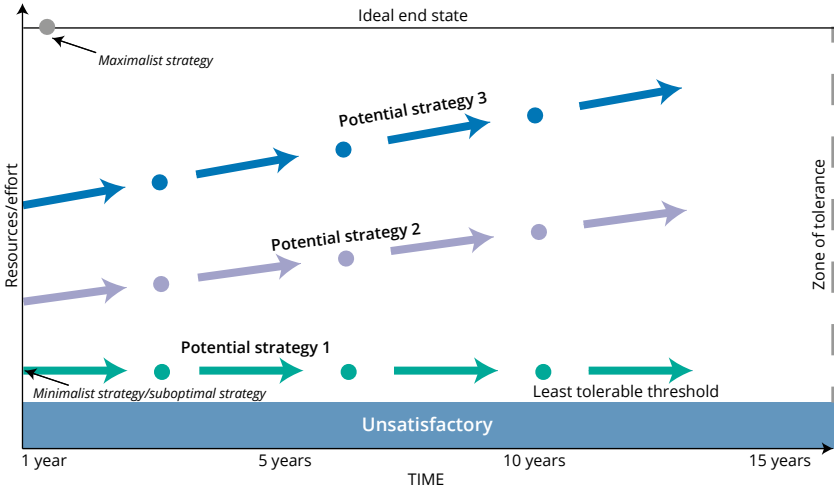

Figure 15. Zone of tolerance and strategy selection.
Note: the strategies toward the bottom of the graphic are minimally effective, while those toward the top are most effective toward achieving the ideal end state. Anything that falls below the least tolerable threshold would be unsatisfactory in terms of achieving the desired end state. The circles represent intermediate objectives.
Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

ward achieving the desired end state will be suboptimal. Whether a potential strategy that is suboptimal or lower on the zone of tolerance will be satisfactory largely depends on the severity of the risk and the priority of the national interest in question. Also note that proposed strategies that are less optimal potentially incur more risk.

The tools and examples in this section are merely a starting point and can be tailored to portray many of the criteria presented in the validation section in chapter 5.

Strategy Termination

Another critical component of the process is to ensure that the vision for the termination of the strategy is also deliberately outlined before the strategy is ever implemented, especially if armed force is part of the strategy. Many strategies that seemingly met their objectives during execution were ultimately viewed as failed efforts. Why is this? In some cases, this happened because the vision for strategy termination was not adequately outlined, and operations continued well past the point of effectiveness. In other cases, it occurred because incremental escalations that were not in line with the original strategy were executed without commensurate adjustments to the strategy or thorough analysis of the implications of those changes. A third case is overestimating how well a strategy will meet enduring requirements. We can sometimes accurately anticipate immediate or interim performance, but the means may not be as effective in the long-term, especially if not adapted to changing circumstances. In an environment such as great power competition, which is likely to endure for some time, the strategist would need to articulate clearly which efforts are likely to be somewhat persistent versus those that should have a clear termination. Finally, faulty assumptions could be involved. For instance, we often incorrectly assume that regime change ends conflict, when in fact it is sometimes merely the beginning of conflict, as demonstrated in both Iraq and Libya.

The termination outcomes should be consistent with the originally envisioned *end state* conceived in chapter 3. What conditions do we seek to achieve with this strategy? The strategy should contain specific measures and criteria for what success looks like as well as how to achieve

it. It should also contain stipulations for events or criteria that should trigger ceasing or completing the associated efforts. Have we completed the goals we set out to achieve? If so, is there any need to continue the effort, or should it be terminated? If the original ends have not been met, can the effort be salvaged? Can the strategy be modified so that the objectives can still be met (e.g., potentially including modifying goals or lowering expectations)? Sometimes this will be possible, and sometimes it will not. Also note that once the strategy has been implemented, war—and the application of any theater security plan—will change the domestic and international context and subsequently require us to routinely reassess our desired strategic outcomes.[5]

Therefore, strategy analysis should also contain qualifications for what failure looks like, such as when the costs become too high for the benefits of the effort to be sustainable, or realization that perhaps the original goal was not attainable. What are the triggers or conditions that would lead us to cease the effort? Just because resources have been invested does not make the effort automatically worth continuing. However, the human tendency is to keep investing more resources once we have committed ourselves to an effort, even when it should be clear that the benefit we originally sought is no longer feasible or worth the cost. Outlining the criteria for what failure looks like in advance provides an objective gauge to try to avoid pursuing a strategy past its value.

The strategist should also consider what the post-execution environment looks like. What will be required to sustain the desired ends? Will some sort of monitor-

[5] Hew Strachan, *The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 19–20, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107256514.

ing mechanism be required, such as treaty compliance monitoring or peacekeeping troops? If so, does such a regime already exist, or would it need to be established? Will it have international support? War should be undertaken to achieve a specific vision of peace. If armed force is involved in the strategy, will a post-conflict presence be required after the objectives are achieved to ensure stability and to support that vision of peace? How many troops, and for how long? Would this be a coalition or solo effort? Resource expenditures often do not cease when the strategy "succeeds," and any requirements that are likely to linger beyond the achievement of the ends need to be articulated and captured for decision makers.[6] It is worth noting that it is often more difficult to create and maintain peace than it is to initiate war, and creating and maintaining peace and stability requires effort and oversight.[7]

[6] For more information on war termination, see Kugler, *Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs*, 102–3.

[7] For more information on the relationship between peace and war as well as the effort required for peacemaking, see Colin S. Gray, *Fighting Talk: Forty Maxims on War, Peace, and Strategy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

CHAPTER SEVEN

Strategy Implementation, Evaluation, and Revision

Strategies become policy once they are approved, but strategy development does not end with policy adoption. This chapter will cover how strategy making flows into policy execution, as well as how it intersects with planning and operations. It will then move on to how the strategist observes strategy implementation to evaluate and adjust for any deficiencies or notable successes in a strategy.

Policy Approval and Adoption

After testing, analysis, and comparisons, the strategy options will finally be presented to decision makers for final policy approval (figure 16). The method and mode of presentation will vary by organization, but be sure to include an accurate reflection of the thorough analysis and considerations that have been formulated for the various strategy options. Include enough detail so that decision makers have an accurate representation of any drawbacks, risks, or tradeoffs for each strategy.

As previously noted, once a strategy is endorsed by a decision maker, it becomes policy. However, that does

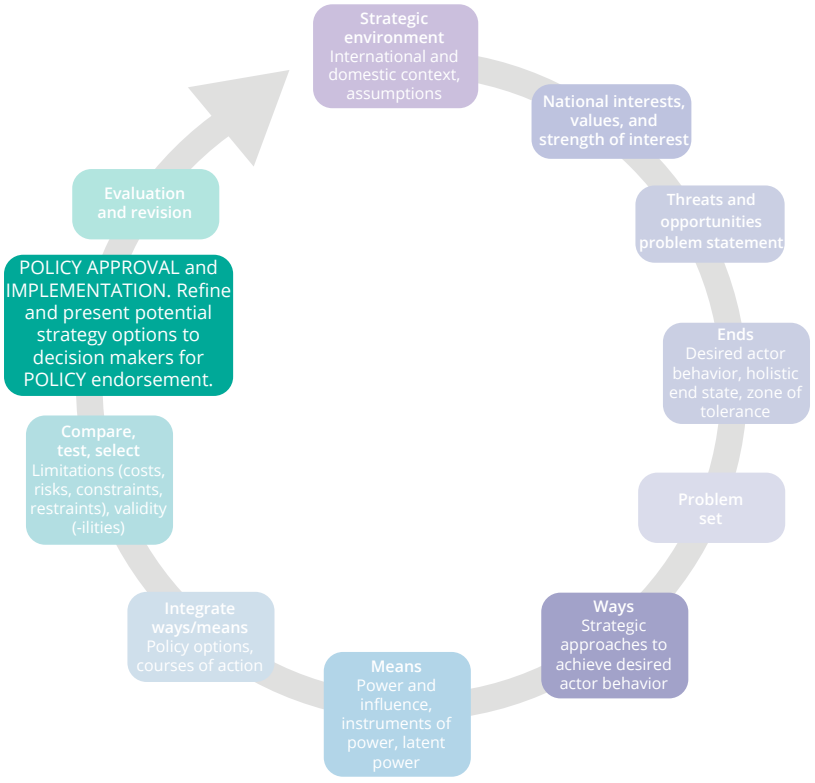

Figure 16. Policy approval and implementation.
Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

not mean that the strategist's work is over or that the cycle ends. Strategy selection is merely the beginning of another phase within nested processes. After the policy is adopted, the pertinent agencies will need to begin their portions of executing the policy, which generally will begin with their own subordinate strategy and planning processes.

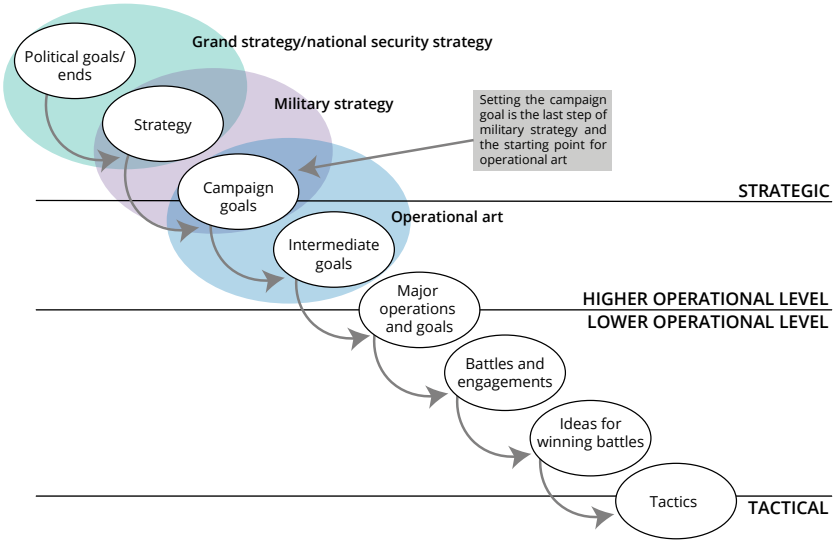

Figure 17. Strategic and operational design levels in the U.S. Department of Defense.
This primer primarily deals with strategic/interagency-level grand strategy and national security strategy, shown in the green oval at the top left. From there, Department of Defense elements will examine the goals that can be achieved through military means, conduct military strategy development, and begin operational art design processes. These processes will not be discussed in further detail here since they fall outside the scope of this primer, but it is helpful for the strategist to be able to visualize what happens after policies are adopted.
Joint Operations, *Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018), adapted by MCUP*

In the case of the U.S. Department of Defense, there are complex phases of subordinate strategy making and planning that occur before operations can be executed, as seen in figure 17.

Many other agencies will have comparable processes to develop subordinate strategies that are tailored to their particular instrument. However, some of these strategies may proceed directly to planning how

to achieve the objectives that fall within their portfolio based solely on the overarching national security strategy provided to them.

Planning

Planning translates the broad approach (i.e., the strategy) into a detailed solution (i.e., the plan).[1] Although processes vary across organizations, each planning phase will culminate in developing specific goals and objectives, generating courses of action for how to achieve the objectives, and identifying resources. Parts of this process may resemble the strategy-making process, but with more specificity because they are occurring at the operational or tactical level.[2]

Execution

Once operations are in progress, the strategist will need to monitor closely for progress and setbacks. Strategies are not executed in a vacuum, and adversaries will counter with their own strategies, often in unexpected ways. Since strategies are based in part on assessments and assumptions, events may proceed in unanticipated ways, and the strategic environment can change as a result. If the strategy is not performing as anticipated (i.e.,

[1] *Joint Planning*, Joint Publication (JP) 5-0 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017), I-2.

[2] There are numerous methodologies to analyze international context for planning, depending on your home organization's needs and purpose. Although they will not be covered here, the PMESII-PT (political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment, and time) and JIPOE (joint intelligence preparation of the operating environment) models are used frequently in the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD). For more information, see *Joint Planning*; and *Joint Intelligence*, JP 2-0 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2013). For more detailed guidance on DOD planning processes, see *Joint Planning; and Adaptive Planning and Execution Overview and Policy Framework*, CJCS Guide 3130 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2019).

achieving the political aims at an acceptable cost), the current ends, ways, and means may need to be adjusted or even abandoned.[3]

Evaluation

If the strategy is not working as intended, but the strategist is not certain why, the following questions may assist in identifying why the strategy is not unfolding as anticipated (figure 18):

- Are there changes in the strategic environment that alter or invalidate the initial strategic context? Have our initial judgments about the adversary and environment held true, or were there fundamental misjudgments that require us to re-evaluate the strategic context? As discussed in chapter 6, policy implementation—especially war—can change the international and domestic context, so the strategist will need to consider whether the strategic environment has changed in a way that requires modifications to the strategy.
- Does the public still favor the policy?
- Are there assumptions or assessments about the international or domestic context that proved to be incorrect? If so, how has that affected our understanding of the strategic situation or the adversary?
- Are there changes in our own national interests or policies that alter or invalidate the original ends, goals, and objectives?
- Have the threats or opportunities that the

[3] *A National Security Strategy Primer* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019), 46–48.

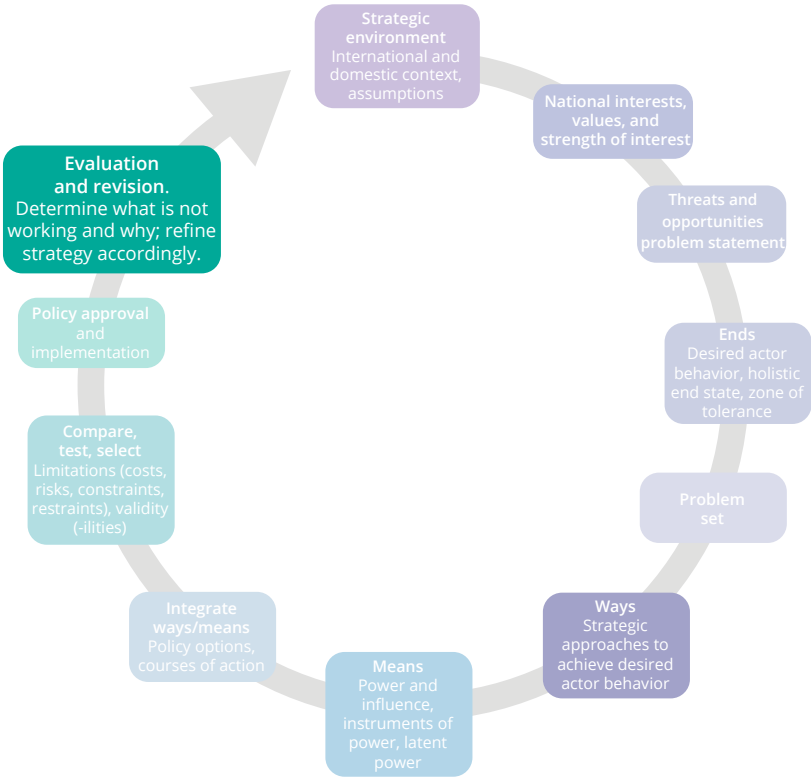

Figure 18. Strategy evaluation and revision.
Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

strategy was trying to address changed, diminished, or amplified?

- Have perceived costs exceeded the perceived value? Have the costs overrun the original projections? Has the value of the strategy fallen short of expectations?
- Have additional constraints arisen that inval-

idate the strategy or make it more difficult to execute?

- Are the ends adequately defined and still relevant and achievable? Are the ways and means tailored to the ends, and are they still appropriate for the current situation?
- Have any risks come to fruition that fundamentally change the potential for the strategy to succeed? These risks can be anticipated or unforeseen.
- Have adversary strategies or actions caused unanticipated consequences that alter the strategy's potential effectiveness?
- Has the strategy failed to meet any subordinate objectives or any aspect of the ends?
- Does the strategy still satisfy the validity criteria ("-ilities tests") outlined in chapter 5?[4]

If it is still unclear why the strategy is underperforming, additional thematic issues may be contributing. These pitfalls can be difficult to recognize or quantify, since most are caused by faulty assumptions, oversimplification, or the expansion of a mission beyond its original goals. The strategist can ask whether any of the following errors occurred, and if so, if adjustments can be made to correct them:

- Presenting a *fait accompli* that assumes the adversary is static. A *fait accompli*, or done-deal scenario, presents the adversary with a set of circumstances and assumes

[4] For more information on continual assessment and evaluation strategy, see *Strategy*, Joint Doctrine Note 1-18 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018), IV-3–IV-6.

they cannot be undone. However, these situations can lead to extreme and unanticipated reactions that escalate tensions or conflicts to a greater extent than anticipated. The strategist should never assume that an actor has no options other than the ones we desire or expect, since those assumptions are likely to be proven wrong quickly and with undesired consequences. Policy actions should be presumed to be dynamic, and strategists should anticipate that adversaries will consider multiple options in response to any given action.

- Oversimplifying the nature of the problem. As demonstrated in chapter 1 and reinforced in the discussions of the problem statement and strategic problem set, every strategic environment is complex and unique. Attempts to oversimplify the nature of the problem set or even the characterization of our own strategic approach can put the mission at risk. For example, using labels such as "limited warfare" can create a general impression that we are facing an inferior adversary that will be defeated quickly and easily. However, as already noted, adversaries also have agency and can react in unanticipated ways. The intensity or type of adversary response, especially when invaded or threatened existentially, can expand, protract, or change the overall course of a conflict or strategy as well as the nature of our strategic approach. Inaccurate labels, generalizations, mirror imaging, or incorrect use of comparisons or

false analogies can hinder our ability to recognize when a situation escalates or adapts to changing circumstances. Any time a contemporary problem is compared to a historical event, we must think very carefully about the dissimilarities in the circumstances to avoid making critical errors in assumptions and execution. A strategy will not necessarily work simply because it is just like another historical example; each situation is unique and complex and no two are ever truly the same.

- Assuming there is a strategic panacea. No two strategic situations are alike. If a so-called solution is assumed to be generic, universal, or adaptable to multiple strategic problems—including having been used for a historical issue—the solution is probably not adequately tailored to the requisite issue.
- Emphasizing process over product. As this primer emphasizes, there is more than one way to approach strategy making. Creative and critical thinking are required to avoid processes that are routine, unimaginative, predictable, and poorly suited to the problem. The frameworks and models should guide creative and critical thinking—not hinder, restrict, or substitute for it. This means thinking through the processes and models critically and adapting them where necessary. If strategists assume that following a specific formula will automatically render the strategy sufficient, the resulting efforts are likely to fall short of expectations.

- Preselecting the solution and/or creating straw man options. The opposite problem of the pitfall above, this occurs when a rigorous process is not used to arrive at the strategy, or when the process is reverse-engineered to make it appear to decision makers that only one option is suitable (i.e., the "Goldilocks" spectrum of choices, in that one option is clearly too soft, one is clearly too hard, and one is just right). This can also occur because there was not appropriate interagency representation early enough in the process to ensure that all viable options were considered or because there was not enough creativity and imagination to develop better options. Regardless of the cause, no one benefits from shaping data to support a preferred option, and it drastically increases the potential for poor decisions since valid options are being obstructed or overlooked.
- Mismatch between intensity of execution and desired political outcomes. As discussed, the ways and the means of any strategy need to be crafted appropriately to achieve the desired ends. If we lose sight of the ends during the course of operations, it is possible for tactics to escalate beyond what is necessary to achieve the ends. Sometimes restraint is required to achieve the desired reaction from the adversary, or we risk inciting the adversary to escalate beyond what we anticipated. The strategist must also ask whether the level of destruction is overkill vis-à-vis achieving the desired ends, such as creating

> destruction that necessitates rebuilding or governance support when it was not intended or accounted for as part of the strategy.[5]

Revision or Termination

After determining precisely what is not working as expected and why, the strategist must identify measures to correct the identified shortcomings and refine the strategy. This can be accomplished by going back to the beginning of the strategy-making process and repeating the steps as before, but with more information and context to refine the strategy. Also, if the strategist identified specific aspects to address or correct, perhaps only those aspects need to be reworked, while reviewing the rest of the strategy for context and to ensure all changes are consistent with the elements that are working. In essence, the strategy-making process can be viewed as a big cycle, wherein the feedback gleaned from the execution phase is used to adjust and refine the strategy. This can happen on a near-continual basis for as long as the strategy is in effect.

If multiple issues are hindering a strategy's performance, or the performance is exceptionally poor, the strategist may have to determine whether the strategy should be terminated. If the answer to the question "can this effort be salvaged?" is either "no" or "not without significant costs," termination may be the best course of action.

If the strategist already outlined criteria for strategy termination as recommended in chapter 6, revisions can draw from that previous work. Were redlines for termination crossed? Is the strategy failing to achieve success

[5] *Strategy*, IV-4–IV-6.

against its goals? Is it beginning to resemble the failure criteria laid out in chapter 6? Are the costs too high to justify the benefits? Are the ends still feasible? Are the costs still worth the investment based on the current reality, or should they be considered sunk (i.e., unable to be recovered because we can no longer achieve the political aim)?[6]

Once the analysis is complete, the findings and recommendations should be presented clearly to decision makers so that they can weigh the increased costs against the diminishing value and make a final determination on continuing or ceasing the effort (figure 19).

Conclusion

This primer encourages Marine Corps War College (MCWAR) students to think strategically and to consider the broad range of factors that compose the strategic environment. However, rather than being prescriptive about how the student executes strategy making, this primer demonstrates that there is more than one way to approach these processes. These frameworks and models are a starting point to help structure data and thought processes, but nothing substitutes for creative and critical thinking.

Among the many complex components of strategy, the strategist should never forget that the adversary plays a key role in our policy execution. If we want to impact a desired end state, we must consider what actions are most likely to cause the adversary to react in a way that will yield that end state. Moreover, we can never as-

[6] For more information on course corrections, see *A National Security Strategy Primer*, 46–48.

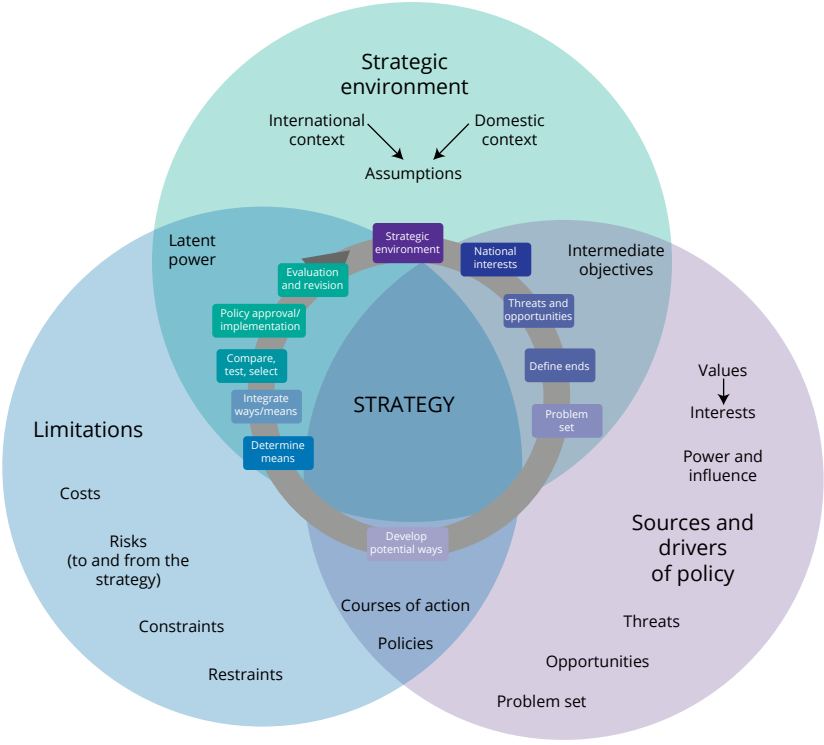

Figure 19. Synthesis of strategic logic and the Marine Corps War College (MCWAR) Strategy Development Model.
This figure shows the relationship between the strategic logic and the ways-focused strategy development methodology covered throughout this primer. The ways-focused model methodically builds on the elements of strategic logic to develop a holistic ways-driven strategy.
Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

sume that our carefully laid-out strategies will work as intended and continue to pursue them blindly without assessing efficacy; we need to be able to see the situation objectively and make adjustments. This primer provides specific evaluative criteria that can be examined to

determine the value and effectiveness of our strategies. Strategies are meant to elicit a desired reaction from another actor. If that is not happening, the strategist must ask whether there is still a realistic chance of achieving the desired end state. However, multiple options for how to think about strategy as well as tools to develop and compare strategy options, as provided in this primer, should increase our ability to develop dynamic solutions to secure our national interests.

APPENDIX A

Assumptions

As discussed in chapter 1, *assumptions* are suppositions that we presume to be true without examining them further. Sometimes we have reasons for believing our assumptions, but we do not provide them in our analysis. If possible, provide the supporting evidence to give the decision maker better insight as to the level of uncertainty surrounding the judgment(s), especially if the assumptions are key to other judgments. These statements then become supported *assessments* since the rationale and evidence are provided.

Since we base other judgments on assumptions, it is critical to make our assumptions explicit for decision makers along with their assessed criticality, as well as what might happen if the assumptions prove incorrect. In other words, what are the implications if the assumptions are incorrect? How detrimental would it be to your judgments and the proposed strategies? Which assumptions have the greatest impact on the analysis? The tools provided in this appendix can aid in teasing out those implications.

Additional Types of Assumptions

Table 7 is an expanded version of the one included in chapter 1 (see table 1) and includes additional types of assumptions that you may encounter.

Examples of Common Assumptions

The examples in table 8 highlight the fact that we often rely on stated and unstated assumptions to conduct analysis. However, these types of common assumptions are not always accurate.

Uncertainty, Criticality, and Implications

What if the assumption is wrong? How detrimental would this be to your understanding of the problem set and to your proposed strategies? Figure 20 illustrates the relative potential impact, based on the level of uncertainty associated with the assumption as well as the criticality of the assumption. Ultimately, assumptions that are highly uncertain and also very important to the judgment(s) have the most potential for volatility and extreme effects on the judgments or strategies they underpin.

Table 9 can be filled out to evaluate critical assumptions to understand their relevance and the strength of the case.

Key Assumptions Check[1]

A key assumptions check is a structured process to list and review the key assumptions that underpin fundamental judgments.

[1] This section is adapted from *A Tradecraft Primer: Structured Analytic Techniques for Improving Intelligence Analysis* (Langley, VA: Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 2009); and *Core Techniques* (Washington, DC: Defense Intelligence Agency, 2015). Minor alterations have been made to conform to current standards for grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Table 7. Types of assumptions.

Type of assumption	Definition	Can include	Examples
Framing assumptions	Mental models about actor or system behavior	Beliefs we hold true about typical behavior and past precedents	One actor is a competitor while another actor is an ally Oppressed populations want self-determination Regime change ends conflict During World War II, Japan would not attack the United States because of the latter's military superiority
Scoping assumptions	Choices we make when bounding an issue	Factors we hold constant and assume will not change Factors, drivers, variables, actors, events, or timelines that we are excluding from the analysis Presumptions that certain events will or will not happen	Threat levels will not significantly change Budget will not significantly decrease A leader will remain in power Only indigenous factions in a conflict are examined, not intervening foreign forces Elections in a particular country will be held on time A country will not develop nuclear armaments within a specified time frame

Table 7. Types of assumptions (continued).

Evidence assumptions	How we interpret and evaluate the evidence that supports our assessments	Information that can be interpreted in multiple ways	Imagery showing equipment missing from a depot can mean that it is deployed or that it is being repaired
		The value we ascribe to certain types of information over others	Valuing intelligence information over the news or placing more stock in video footage than witness statements
Logic assumptions	Stem from the reasoning we use to construct our analysis and arguments	Using a small sample to infer something about a broader sample	Some Americans support the death penalty; therefore all Americans support the death penalty (While statistical inference is a social science methodology, it is more rigorous than simple generalizations; stereotypes are an example of this kind of assumption)
		Extrapolating from a known situation to an unknown situation	Violence in a conflict zone will continue to increase in line with recent trends
		Presuming a causal relationship between one event and another rather than a simple correlation	You got a flu shot and then got sick; therefore, the flu shot made you sick (this is correlation, not causation; "jumping to conclusions" is another way to think of this type of assumption)

Table 7. Types of assumptions (continued).

Bridging assumptions	Fill critical gaps in information or assessments	Missing elements that are needed to answer a question	Cannot confirm a country has specific capability/ intent, but must assume it does Saddam Hussein stopped cooperating with United Nations (UN) inspectors to hide ongoing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs
		Factors that must be present to prove an assessment true or false	Is valid assuming that preceding goals and milestones are successfully met on time

Defense Intelligence Agency, adapted by MCUP

When to Use

A key assumptions check is most useful at the beginning of a project. An individual or a team can spend an hour or two articulating and reviewing the key assumptions. Rechecking assumptions can also be valuable at any time prior to finalizing judgments to ensure that the assessments and recommendations do not rest on flawed premises. Identifying hidden assumptions can be one of the most difficult challenges since they are ideas held (often unconsciously) to be true and are therefore seldom examined and almost never challenged.

A key assumption is any hypothesis that we have accepted to be true and which forms the basis of an assessment, judgment, or argument. For example, analysis on a military issue may focus on key technical and mili-

Table 8. Examples of common assumptions.

A leader . . .	• Is critical to an organization's cohesion • Is competent and has sufficient insight and information to assess risk accurately (not prone to egregious errors or miscalculations) • Can identify their best interests among a range of competing interests, formulate a plan that maximizes those interests, and then pursue that plan • Will retain the loyalty of the government, military, and security services
The state . . .	• Acts as a unitary actor (i.e., policy is coordinated, coherent, and smoothly synchronized between all policy agents of the state) • Acts rationally, based on its best interest on that issue, as opposed to being driven to policy decisions by domestic, bureaucratic, or interpersonal rivalry considerations • Will judge that the status quo is better than a long-shot, high-risk action • Has (or does not have) aspirations of territorial expansion
The population . . .	• Will accept and support a new constitutionally elected leader • Will welcome intervening forces as liberators from an authoritarian leader • Will only be motivated to civil unrest by economic dissatisfaction (and not by repression of political freedom, injustice, or inequality before the law, human rights abuses, or stolen or illegitimate elections)
A military . . .	• Is operating at full or partial strength • Is experienced and battle-hardened after years of fighting • Is worn out and battle-weary after years of fighting • Is training and not mobilizing for an operation • Is guided by centralized directives indicative of a broader strategy • Having been enabled by foreign assistance, will be perceived by the population as a legitimate force
A terrorist group . . .	• Will continue to be under counterterrorism pressure from the United States and other countries • Shares (or does not share) lessons and insight with other cells, nodes, or networks • Will continue to receive support from key backers
A system . . .	• Will be developed with no major delays in manufacturing, which could be caused by sanctions or supply-chain issues • Will be used how it is intended • Will not be deployed until units are trained to operate it

Defense Intelligence Agency, adapted by MCUP

tary variables of a force and assume that it will operate in a particular environment (e.g., desert, open plains, arctic conditions, etc.). Other conditions could dramatically alter the assessment. The goal of a key assumptions check is not to undermine or abandon key assumptions, but

Table 9. Evaluating critical assumptions.

Assumption: write out using clear and precise language.	
Key data: fill in why we believe the assumption is true.	Inconsistencies, anomalies, and gaps: include dissenting or disproving information.
Indicators that we are wrong: fill in indicators that may show us we are wrong.	If we are wrong: What is the impact on the assessment? Ask for alternative hypotheses, next steps, or mitigation strategies.

Defense Intelligence Agency, adapted by MCUP

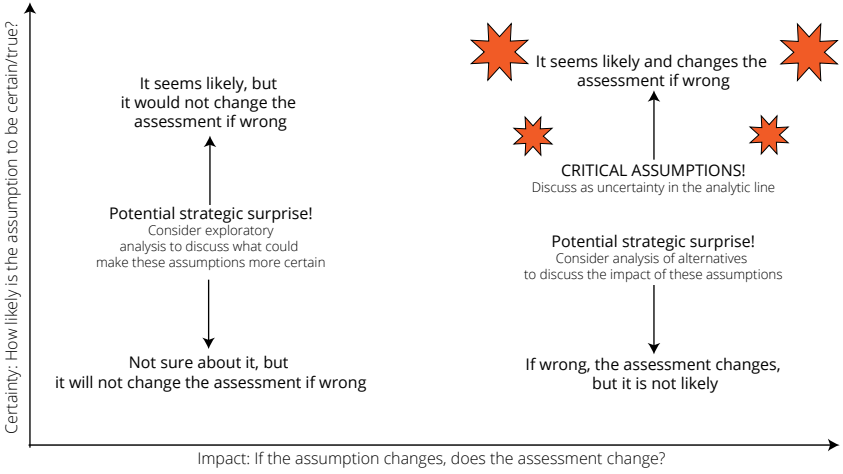

Figure 20. Criticality of assumptions.
Defense Intelligence Agency, adapted by MCUP

to make them explicit and identify what information or developments would require rethinking them.

Value

Explicitly identifying working assumptions during an analytic project can help to:

- Explain the logic of the analytic argument and expose faulty logic.
- Understand the key factors that shape an issue.
- Stimulate thinking about an issue.
- Uncover hidden relationships and links between key factors.
- Identify developments that would cause you to abandon an assumption.
- Prepare strategists for changed circumstances that could surprise them.

Method

Checking for key assumptions requires us to consider how our analysis depends on the validity of certain premises, which we do not routinely question or believe to be in doubt (table 10). To execute the four-step process:

1. Review the current assessment on the issue and write it down for all to see.
2. Articulate all the premises, both stated and unstated, that are accepted as true for this assessment to be valid.
3. Challenge each assumption, asking why it must be true and whether it remains valid under all conditions.
4. Refine the list of key assumptions to contain only those that must be true to sustain your assessment. Consider under what conditions or in the face of what information these assumptions might not hold.

The following are questions to ask during the process:

- How confident are we that this assumption is correct?

Table 10. Key assumptions check tool.

Assumptions	Determine whether the assumption is really an assumption.	Assess the criticality and strength of each assumption.
List all assumptions in this column.	Choose "yes" or "no." Make sure the assumption is distinct from your assessments and evidence.	1. Choose "high," "low," or "no impact." To what extent does the assessment change if the assumption proves to be false? 2. Choose "weak/vulnerable" or "strong." What is the likelihood that the assumption will prove to be false?*

*Assumptions that are weak or vulnerable decrease the overall confidence in judgments, especially if they have high impact on the assessment.

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- What explains the degree of confidence in the assumption?
- What circumstances or information might undermine this assumption?
- Is a key assumption more likely to be a key uncertainty or key factor?
- Could the assumption have been true in the past but not now?
- If the assumption proves to be wrong, would it significantly alter the analysis? How?
- Has this process identified new factors that require further analysis?

APPENDIX B

Heuristics and Cognitive Biases in Decision Making

Heuristics are mental shortcuts that our brains use to simplify complex, contradictory, or confusing issues and concepts. Heuristics serve an adaptive purpose and help us reach decisions quickly. This can be vital if we are facing a dangerous, threatening, or overwhelming situation. However, heuristics often contribute to *cognitive biases*, or systematic patterns of deviation from norms or rationality in judgment, that can lead to errors in thinking. Social pressures, individual motivations, emotions, and limits on the mind's ability to process information can exacerbate these biases.[1]

We assimilate and evaluate information through "mental models," also called "mind frames" or "mindsets." These are experience-based constructs of assumptions and expectations about the world in general and about specific subjects. These constructs influence what information the mind will accept—usually information that comports with unconscious mental models is more likely

[1] Kendra Cherry, "Heuristics and Cognitive Biases," Verywell Mind, 10 January 2020; and Kendra Cherry, "What Is Cognitive Bias?," Verywell Mind, 19 July 2020.

to be perceived and remembered than information that is at odds with them.

Mental models allow us to process what otherwise would be an incomprehensible volume of information. However, they can cause us to overlook, reject, or forget important incoming or missing information that is not in accord with our assumptions and expectations. Seasoned analysts and subject matter experts may be more susceptible to these mindset problems as a result of their expertise and past success in using time-tested mental models. The key risks of mindsets are that we perceive what we expect to perceive; that once formed, mindsets are resistant to change; that new information can be assimilated, sometimes erroneously, into existing mental models; and that conflicting information is often dismissed or ignored.[2] In crisis scenarios, these biases will become even more influential and difficult to overcome if they are not actively identified and examined.[3]

Cognitive and perceptual biases in human perception and judgment are an important reason to consider alternatives. Try to think of ways to mitigate the influence of these biases in your decision-making to make better-informed choices. Appendix H will introduce structured analytic techniques that can help to uncover biases and heuristics.

[2] Richards J. Heuer Jr., *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis* (Langley, VA: Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 1999), 8–14.

[3] *A Tradecraft Primer: Structured Analytic Techniques for Improving Intelligence Analysis* (Langley, VA: Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 2009), 1–2.

Common Biases, Heuristics, and Logical Fallacies[4]

Actor-observer bias	Attributing your own actions to external causes while attributing others' behaviors to internal causes. Example: you attribute your high cholesterol to genetics while you consider others to have a high level due to poor diet and lack of exercise.
Ad hominem attack	Attacking the person instead of the argument, the logic, or the evidence.
Affect heuristic	Relying on your emotional state to form an opinion (positive or negative) or make decisions. This is often referred to as a "gut reaction."
Ambiguity effect	Gravitating toward clear outcomes versus unclear outcomes, even if the unclear option may be more favorable. Also when initial exposure to ambiguous or blurred stimuli interferes with accurate perception, even after more or better information is available.

[4] Portions of this list are adapted from Peter A. Facione, *Critical Thinking: What It Is and Why It Counts* (San Jose, CA: Insight Assessments, 2020); Col Stephen Gerras, USA (Ret), "Thinking Critically about Critical Thinking: A Fundamental Guide for Strategic Leaders," U.S. Army War College, August 2008; *A Tradecraft Primer*; Cherry, "What Is Cognitive Bias?"; and Cherry, "Heuristics and Cognitive Biases." Minor alterations have been made to conform to current standards for grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Anchoring	Relying too heavily on the first piece of information learned and refusing to adjust thinking after forming an initial opinion. Groups will often anchor to the first suggestion presented, even if better solutions follow it. This also refers to the inability to recognize when situations are changing over time because of anchoring to initial perceptions.
Appeal to (unqualified) authority	Attributing greater accuracy to an authority figure's opinion (unrelated to its content) and being more influenced by that opinion. Example: a celebrity endorsing a political candidate or policy.
Appeal to fear	Attempting to create support for an idea by attempting to increase fear toward an alternative. Sometimes referred to as coercing others to support your point of view.
Appeal to the masses	Believing that a proposition must be true because many or most people believe it.
Association fallacy	Creates an irrelevant association or generalization by virtue of emotions that falsely equates one thing with another; assumes the qualities of one thing are inherently the qualities of another. Example: cancer = death.
Attentional bias	When perception is affected by

	selective factors in our attention; paying attention to some things while simultaneously ignoring others. This complicates our ability to consider alternatives objectively when our mind is occupied with one potential solution.
Attribution	See *fundamental attribution error*.
Availability heuristic	Basing information and judgments on what comes to mind quickly versus giving the issue deeper thought. You give greater credence to this information and tend to overestimate the likelihood of similar things happening in the future. Probability estimates are influenced by how easily one can imagine an event or recall similar instances.
Bandwagon effect	Adopting a certain behavior, style, attitude, or belief simply because everyone else is doing it.
Confirmation bias	Favoring information that conforms to existing beliefs and discounting evidence that does not conform. Also known as "cherry picking" information.
Consistency bias	Conclusions drawn from a small body of consistent data engender more confidence than ones

	drawn from a larger body of less consistent data.
Discredited evidence	Even though evidence supporting a perception may be proven wrong, the perception may not change quickly.
Dunning-Kruger effect[5]	Believing that one is smarter and more capable than they really are. The inability to recognize one's own incompetence. Illusory superiority despite low ability.
Einstellung effect[6]	The natural tendency to solve a problem the same way as before despite new, better, or simpler options existing. Often creates a barrier to creative thinking.
Expectation bias	When expectations about an event influence perceptions. We perceive what we expect to perceive. More (unambiguous) information is needed to recognize an unexpected phenomenon.
False analogy	The comparison drawn between two similar events is not strong

[5] David Dunning, "The Dunning–Kruger Effect: On Being Ignorant of One's Own Ignorance," in *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 44, ed. James M. Olson and Mark P. Zanna (San Diego, CA: Academic Press, an imprint of Elsevier, 2011), https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-385522-0.00005-6.

[6] Abraham S. Luchins, "Mechanization in Problem Solving: The Effect of Einstellung," *Psychological Monographs* 54, no. 6 (1942): i–95, https://doi.org/10.1037/h0093502.

	enough to support the conclusion being drawn. Also known as a *weak analogy*.
False cause	Assuming a second event was caused by a preceding event without proving a causal relationship or without distinguishing between correlation and causation.
False consensus effect	Seeing your own choices and views as more common or acceptable than they really are. Overestimating how much other people agree with you.
False dichotomy	Presenting only two possible alternatives when in reality many options exist, or portraying options as mutually exclusive when they may overlap.
Functional fixedness	The tendency to see objects as only working in a particular way. Example: not seeing that a wrench can also be used to drive a nail if you do not have a hammer. This can extend to people's functions, such as not realizing that civilians or political appointees can have a thorough understanding of military and defense issues.
Fundamental attribution error	Others' behavior is attributed to some fixed nature of the person or country, while our own

	behavior is attributed to the situation in which we find ourselves. Overemphasizing dispositional or personality-based explanations for behaviors observed in others while underemphasizing situational explanations. Example: everything a particular country does has malign intent because it is an adversary.
Halo effect	Your overall impression of a person influences how you feel and think about their character. Example: if you personally like someone, you are more prone to think highly of their work, whereas if you personally dislike someone, you are more prone to find fault with their work, even if the work is consistent.
Illusion of control	Overestimating the ability to control the outcome, especially over issues that one does not or cannot influence.
In-group bias	Favoring one's own group over outsiders. This can be expressed in evaluation of others, allocation of resources, etc. Also known as *in-group favoritism* or *intergroup bias*.
Mirror imaging	Assuming that other actors will act as you would under similar circumstances. Especially per-

	vasive regarding other cultures, states, or nonstate actors.
Misinformation effect	When post-event information interferes with the memory of the original event. It is easy for memory to be influenced by what you hear about the event from others after the fact. Knowledge of this effect has led to a mistrust of eyewitness information.
Missing information	It is difficult to judge the potential impact of missing evidence, even if the information gap is known.
Optimism bias	Believing that you are less likely to suffer from misfortune and more likely to attain success than your peers.
Overconfidence effect	Overcalibration of probabilities. Confidence in one's judgments is greater than the objective accuracy of those judgments. In assessing a probability estimate, people are often overconfident, especially if they have considerable expertise.
Pessimism bias	Believing that you are more likely to suffer from misfortune and less likely to attain success than your peers.
Planning fallacy	When optimism clouds judgment as to how long a project might take to accomplish, how

	much the project might cost, the risks associated with the project, or all of the above. This is a key pitfall regarding operational and campaign planning.
Rationality assumption	Events are seen as part of an orderly, causal pattern. Randomness, accidents, and errors tend to be rejected as explanations for observed events. Example: the extent to which other people or countries pursue a coherent, rational, goal-maximizing policy is overestimated.
Recency bias	People tend to recall the most recent information more accurately than previously heard or experienced information.
Red herring	Deflecting debate away from an issue using information that seems important and related but in reality has little to do with the original question.
Resistance to change	Perceptions resist change even in the face of new evidence.
Risk/loss aversion	Worry about the threat of loss unduly affects decision making compared to keeping the status quo or achieving potential gains.
Satisficing	Searching for available alternatives only until an acceptability threshold is met, without searching further for a more

	ideal alternative. At that point, the solution is considered "good enough."
Self-serving bias	Taking credit for positive events and blaming others for negative events. Example: when you win a poker hand, it is because of your skill at reading the other players and knowing the odds; when you lose, it is because the dealer dealt you a poor hand.
Similarity heuristic	Making judgments based on the similarity between current situations and other situations or prototypes of those situations.
Simulation heuristic	Gauging the likelihood of an event based on how easy it is to imagine.
Slippery slope fallacy	Believing that a relatively small first step leads to a chain of related events culminating in some significant effect, even if the evidence does not support that this chain of events will actually take place.
Straw man argument	Creating a fallacious argument by distorting an opposing position to make it easier to attack.
Sunk costs fallacy	Continuing an effort or continuing to pursue an option if time, money, or other resources were already invested in it, even if it becomes clear that the goal is

no longer attainable or no longer worth the cost. Invested resources cannot be recouped, but that does not make further investment worthwhile.

APPENDIX C

Strength-of-Interest Comparison

As discussed in chapters 1 and 6 of this primer, the strength of a nation's interest plays a large role in the domestic context of an issue as well as the sustainability of potential strategies. However, it is not only the strength of interest within one's own nation that matters—it is also the comparison of that interest to that of the other actor in question.

While it can be easy to underestimate how much this comparative ratio matters, if an opponent's strength of interest on an issue far outweighs our own, success is likely to be far more difficult for us to achieve. For example, North Vietnam's (Democratic Republic of Vietnam) strength of interest to maintain control of its own territory and eject an invading force proved to be far greater than the United States' desire to do everything necessary to win the conflict decisively and prevent the spread of Communism.

As noted in this primer, subject matter experts should be consulted to ensure that these interests are examined from that actor's perspective vice our own (i.e., to avoid mirror imaging). The choices our adversaries

make may not always seem rational or logical to us unless we have a deep understanding of their calculus and what they value. Immaterial principles, ideas, emotions, traditions, or beliefs may fuel those values and actions in a way that we cannot fully anticipate without a solid understanding of the actor(s) and their culture. These factors may also fuel the actor's commitment to certain actions or goals in ways that seem illogical to us from a cost-benefit perspective, such as a willingness to endure what seems like intolerable punishment simply because of the depth of the actor's will, determination, and commitment to a goal or interest.

Below are some tools and guidelines to explore opposing strengths of interest:

Step 1

Begin by listing what an actor's assessed principle national interests are, heeding the recommendations above. For example, a list of national interests for Iran may appear as follows:

- Its own security, especially from hostile neighbors and especially from Israel. (Nuclear weapons are one mechanism Iran might pursue to achieve this.) This also includes security from the United States, due to fear of potential efforts toward regime change.
- Regional influence/primacy. The type of influence Iran wants probably necessitates displacing the U.S. presence in the region to remove the counterbalance.
- Regional stability and allies, especially vis-à-vis Syria and Iraq. Supporting Shia militia groups (SMG), Lebanese Hezbollah, and

Hamas is a means to an end to maintain allies in the region.
- Stable population that cannot challenge rule or theocracy.
- Economic resilience/prosperity, which enhances stability.
- Hold to the principle of Velayat-e Faqih, with Iran as guardian of Shi'ism.
- Eradication of Israel (though this is probably more of a long-term aspirational and rhetorical goal than one Iran probably plans to pursue actively or anytime soon).

As a part of this step, you can also outline your assumptions. In this particular case, we might want to set some assumptions and assessments about what Iran does not want or is not willing to do. Iran probably does not want:
- Territorial expansion.
- Near-term conflict with the United States or Israel (although this does not mean Iran would not pursue conflict if pushed to do so or if it feels threatened).
- Long-term conflict or instability in its own region.

Step 2

List the principal U.S. interests for engagement with that actor or region:
- Prevent attacks on the U.S. presence in the region.
- Prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.
- Stem Iranian meddling in regional conflicts,

including via SMGs, Hezbollah, and Hamas, to increase regional stability.
- Lessen repression of the Iranian population and promote a regime more favorable to U.S. values. (This is a desired end state; there could be multiple ways to get there.)
- Oil security.
- Stem Iranian (Shia fundamentalist Islamist) influence.
- Security for Israel.

As part of this step, you may also want to determine any significant restraints on our interests (i.e., lines we do not want to cross). The United States does not want:
- Increased instability in the region.
- To exacerbate humanitarian or economic crises.

Step 3

Determine whether these interests coalesce around related themes and align the related interests to each other. This may require filling in some holes in the logic or thinking about parallel interests on a related area if you have blank cells in table 11.

Step 4

Add the assessed strength of interest on each side of the issue (the strength of interest is shown in red in table 12).

Step 5

At this point, you will be able to match up the various interests with potential strategies that are being considered to gauge whether our strength of interest is likely to

Table 11. Examples of related interests.

Issue	Iran's national interests	U.S. interests vis-à-vis Iran
Influence	Regional influence/ primacy (probably necessitates displacing U.S. presence)	Prevent attacks on U.S. presence in the region; maintain influence and ability to operate in the region
Security	Its own security, from neighbors and especially from Israel (obtaining nuclear weapons is one mechanism to achieve this), as well as from the United States (fear of regime change)	Prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons; maintain stable balance of power in the region
Regional stability	Regional stability and allies, especially vis-à-vis Syria and Iraq (supporting SMGs, Hezbollah, and Hamas is a means to an end)	Stem Iranian meddling in regional conflicts (such as those involving SMGs, Hezbollah, and Hamas) to increase regional stability
Population	Stable population that cannot challenge rule or clergy	Less repression of population; a regime more favorable to U.S. values
Economic	Economic stability and prosperity (which enhances stability)	Oil security
Shi'ism	Velayat-e Faqih/protectors of the Shia religion	Stem Iranian (Shia fundamentalist Islamist) influence
Israel	Eradication of Israel (though more of a long-term aspirational and rhetorical goal than one that will be actively pursued anytime soon)	Security for Israel

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Table 12. Examples of strengths of interests.

Issue	Iran's national Interests	U.S. interests vis-à-vis Iran
Influence	Regional influence/ primacy (probably necessitates displacing U.S. presence) HIGH	Prevent attacks on U.S. presence in the region; maintain influence and ability to operate in the region HIGH (but decreasing)
Security	Its own security, from neighbors and especially from Israel (obtaining nuclear weapons is one mechanism to achieve this), as well as from the United States (fear of regime change) HIGH	Prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons; maintain stable balance of power in the region HIGH (but decreasing)
Regional stability	Regional stability and allies, especially vis-à-vis Syria and Iraq (supporting SMGs, Hezbollah, and Hamas is a means to an end) HIGH	Stem Iranian meddling in regional conflicts (such as those involving SMGs, Hezbollah, and Hamas) to increase regional stability MEDIUM
Population	Stable population that cannot challenge rule or clergy HIGH	Less repression of population; a regime more favorable to U.S. values MEDIUM (but decreasing)
Economic	Economic stability and prosperity (which enhances stability) MEDIUM	Oil security MEDIUM (but decreasing with increase of U.S. production)
Shi'ism	Velayat-e Faqih/protectors of the Shia religion HIGH	Stem Iranian (Shia fundamentalist Islamist) influence MEDIUM
Israel	Eradication of Israel (though more of a long-term aspirational and rhetorical goal than one that will be actively pursued anytime soon) HIGH (but long-term)	Security for Israel MEDIUM

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stand up to that of the other actor. For instance, many of Iran's interests are driven by survival, proximity, and regional aspirations, whereas the United States' interest and engagement in the Middle East have been waning in recent years. A nation's interest will naturally tend to be stronger on issues that affect it or its region directly, whereas issues that are farther away and indirect naturally will not be as compelling if they do not fall into the survival or vital interest categories.

If we are considering a strategy or elements of a strategy where our strength of interest is outweighed by the other actor's strength of interest, we need to consider whether there are ways to offset the difference, or whether the strategy is worth pursuing if the strength of interest is not on par. If the strength of interest is unlikely to increase, the strategist will need to consider whether the issue is really a priority worth pursuing, and what level of investment (e.g., resources, time, etc.) it merits.

Part of the calculus also will be how this issue stacks up against all of our other priorities. For example, where does engagement in Syria fall in comparison to all of our other priorities, such as China and Russia? When combining these two factors—the estimation that Iran's stake in the issue (i.e., strength of interest) is higher than ours, plus the judgment that our strength of interest in other priorities is probably far greater than this specific issue—the overall strength of interest in engagement in Syria appears to be relatively weak at this particular time.

Another element that should be considered as part of the strength of interest is the validity, or "-ilities tests" discussed in chapter 5—in particular, the suitability, desirability, and sustainability of pursuing the issue. Do the costs and limitations make it less desirable to pursue this issue? What is the cost-benefit ratio? What are the poten-

tial opportunity costs, especially regarding other priorities? What is the sustainability over time?

You will need to summarize your assessments of the issue succinctly for the principle. For example, in this case you may indicate that Iran has a much greater stake in the outcome of the Syria conflict than we do, given its proximity and desire to maintain Syrian president Bashar al-Assad as an ally in the region. You should also convey the bottom line regarding where the issue falls compared to our other priorities. These key elements can help give the decision maker additional context on whether pursuing a particular strategy is likely to achieve sufficient benefits at an acceptable cost.

APPENDIX D

Additional Strategic Approaches

The following additional strategic approaches can be used offensively or defensively, depending on how they are applied.[1] See chapter 6 and appendix G for assessment tools to determine which approaches might be most effective.

Wedge Strategy

A wedge strategy can be defined as a state's attempt to prevent, break up, or weaken a threatening or blocking alliance at an acceptable cost. When the strategy is successful, the state (i.e., the divider) gains advantage by reducing the number and strength of enemies organized against it. Because wedge strategies can turn opponents into neutrals or allies, they can trigger surprising power shifts with significant consequences for war and peace and the trajectory of international politics.

[1] This appendix is adapted from Timothy W. Crawford, "Preventing Enemy Coalitions: How Wedge Strategies Shape Power Politics," *International Security* 35, no. 4 (Spring 2011): 155–89, https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00036. Minor alterations have been made to conform to current standards for grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Wedge strategies that "selectively accommodate" one adversary (i.e., a target nation) while standing firm against other adversaries are more likely to divide an opposing coalition than strategies that rely on confrontation and coercion. Additionally, selective accommodation is most effective in promoting neutral alignment outcomes or inducing targets to become or remain neutral. Finally, selective accommodation works best when dividers manipulate secondary interests (e.g., assets in peripheral areas, existing alliance ties, economic relationships, and market positions) that benefit targets in ways that are important to the targets, yet are largely under the dividers' control.

Dividers prefer selective accommodation strategies when they are likely to matter most—that is, when a dangerous alliance is likely to form or persist and the divider has some ability to use inducements to counteract the threat. By contrast, states are more likely to opt for confrontation when dividing their adversaries seems easy or less important, or when they have no other choice. Either way, such strategies are unlikely to greatly benefit the divider. In the first scenario, the divider confronts its adversaries because they seem prone to disunity or their unity does not pose a great danger, or both. In the second set of circumstances, the divider attempts confrontation even though it is almost certain to backfire; the divider is grasping at straws, and the situation cannot become much worse. To better understand how and when selective accommodation strategies are likely to achieve success, one can incorporate two factors into the analysis: the target's costs of alignment change and the divider's costs of inducing it.

Realignment

Realignment strategies seek to shift a target from an opposing alliance to a friendly one. To induce such a defection, the divider must offer rewards significant enough both to compensate the target for the blow it will suffer to its credibility and prestige and to benefit the target strategically.

Dealignment

A divider using a dealignment strategy tries to induce the target's neutrality, a less costly and less dangerous form of defection than realignment. The target must still pay the reputational and strategic costs of abandoning an ally, but it can finesse its defection through rhetorical sophistry, legalistic treaty interpretation, and claims of unpreparedness in a way that it could not if it flagrantly switched sides. A dealignment strategy may also serve a preventive purpose: to neutralize a target before its commitment to an ally grows stronger.

Prealignment

A prealignment strategy seeks to preserve the neutrality of a target that is not yet formally allied but is prone to join the enemy camp. Perceiving that propensity, the divider acts to forestall further movement in this direction. Inducing a target to remain neutral is easier and less costly than trying to detach it after it has joined an alliance.

Disalignment

A divider using a disalignment strategy seeks to weaken a target's cooperation within an opposing bloc without trying to convert the target into a neutral or an ally. Enticing targets into such bargains is relatively easy, because

targets do not have to pay the costs of defection to benefit from them. Ideally, the divider's policy will create or aggravate tensions between the target and its allies and, beyond that, reward the target for adopting policies that weaken their collaboration.

Appeasement, Compensation, and Endorsement

There are three main forms of selective accommodation: appeasement, compensation, and endorsement. Each rewards the target on issues to which it attaches major importance. Appeasement is the most costly type of selective accommodation, since the divider offers a direct concession to the target that is of primary interest to the divider. Compensation, which uses inducements based on secondary interests, is less costly. Endorsement is usually the least costly; for example, the divider supports the target's position in a conflict between the target and the target's ally.

APPENDIX E

Expanded Information on Diplomatic and Economic Instruments

The diplomatic instrument (table 13) builds up relationships over time to lay the foundation to solve problems based on shared interests. This table takes a broader view of the diplomatic instrument than the construct in the main text of this primer, but it may provide a different, useful perspective. Also note that there is some crossover among the instruments of power.

The economic instrument (table 14) uses economic powers of statecraft to advance the interests, goals, and objectives of the state. This table takes a broader view of the economic instrument than the construct in the main text of this primer, but it may provide a different, useful perspective. Also note that there is some crossover among the instruments of power.

Table 13. The diplomatic instrument.

Is a concept or way expressed through specific tools, including the following:	Relies on:	Constraints and considerations:
• Negotiations, persuasion, assurances, and compromise • Treaties • Relationships and contracts • Multilateral institutions • Money • Alliances, coalitions, and partnerships • Multilateral/ international institutions • Formal state-to-state dialogue • Public diplomacy and activism inside countries • Public opinion polling • Embassy reporting • Framing the issue • Back-channel diplomacy • Institutionalized regional expertise "good offices" • Informal interactions • Diplomatic functions or representation	• Global interdependencies • Strength and power of relationships • International and domestic policies • Flat implementation of diplomatic structures • Bureaucratic functions • Consistency over time despite political changes at home • Threat status • Presence (geographic personnel) • Words • Individual motivations	• Global interdependencies • Relationships and weaknesses • Foreign and domestic politics • Physical isolation (post-9/11) • Costs and efforts to maintain • Lack of resources (e.g., manpower or money) • U.S. strategic interests • Missing the "masses" (i.e., the "youth bubble") • Congressional mandates • May be issue beyond diplomatic capacity

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Table 14. The economic instrument.

Is a concept or way expressed through specific tools, including the following: • Development • Humanitarian aid and/or assistance • Arms sales • Sanctions • Embargoes • Monetary policy • Debt relief • Assets • Private organizations Sanctions as punitive statecraft include the following: • Trade embargoes • Trade boycotts • Tariff increases • Product dumping • Preclusive purchasing • Aid suspensions • Asset freezes • Expropriations • Capital controls • Currency manipulations Economic assistance as positive statecraft includes the following: • Grants • Loans • Technical assistance • Debt relief • Investment guarantees • Trade preferences • Trade credits	Ways we use the tools (means) to achieve our ends: • Persuasion • Image • Behavior change (e.g., autocrats/democratization) • Inducement • Coercion There are multiple uses of the ways based on the desired outcome	Constraints and considerations: • Measure-of-effectiveness and measure-of-performance assessments are challenging • Unilateral action can be difficult • Requires buy-in • Challenge of domestic support (e.g., poor perception of foreign aid) • Hard to predict second- and third-order effects and unintended consequences • Fiscal constraints • Personnel/resource constraints • Consider how aid is perceived by target nation • Unintended consequences of sanctions (e.g., moral issues) • Civilian sector control • Prioritize limited resources • Complexity of nongovernmental-organization and international-organization integration into strategies

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APPENDIX F

Additional Subject Areas for Comparative Analysis of Potential Strategies

The following subject areas amplify the comparative tools provided in chapter 6 and can be used to perform deeper analysis to validate and compare multiple potential strategies.[1]

Visions, Values, and Ambitions

An early subject of study should generate an outline of the visions, values, and ambitions of the policy. What is this option's heart and soul? What is it trying to achieve, and what underlying values and calculations does it represent? Does it provide for a sufficiently strong assertion of U.S. power and resolve to get the job done? Does it have a vision that is bold and clear, rather than cautious and muddled? Is it wise and mature, rather than impulsive and foolhardy? Does this option carry forth existing policy, reflect a linear extrapolation of it, or overturn it

[1] This appendix is adapted from Richard L. Kugler, *Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs: New Methods for a New Era* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2006): 42–47. Minor alterations have been made to conform to current standards for grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

by crafting an entirely new policy and strategic rationale? How ambitious is this policy? Are its aims modest, or does it aim high? How realistic are its aspirations, and do they reflect the best traditions of American values? Does this option propose to achieve the U.S. goal fully or only partially? Is it based on a sensible reading of events and U.S. priorities, rather than stretching credibility in both areas?

Main Actions, Instruments, and Other Characteristics

What does this option propose that the United States should do in terms of concrete actions, and what instruments does it intend to use? Does it create a simple agenda, or does it require multiple activities and instruments? Do these activities and instruments easily blend together into a coherent whole, or are they not natural partners of each other? Does blending them require a great strategic labor? What other characteristics mark this option?

Theory of Actions and Consequences

What is this option's theory of actions and consequences, or its core rationale for an expectation that it will succeed? Exactly how are its actions abroad supposed to bring about favorable consequences to achieve national goals? What cause-and-effect mechanisms does it rely on to produce these consequences? Does the option put forth a credible interpretation of these action-and-consequence dynamics? Are these dynamics simple or complex? Can success be achieved through a single change in strategic affairs, or is a chain of successes required? Do these successes promise to be readily accomplished, or will they be hard to bring about? Overall,

is this theory of actions and consequences based on credible logic, instead of representing a mere hope, or someone's flawed reading of the matter at hand?

Expected Effectiveness, Benefits, and Losses

Judged in relation to the U.S. goal and its own ideal aims, how effective is this option likely to be, and what are the benefits and payoffs likely to flow from it? To what degree will it not only achieve its aims, but also set the stage for additional progress in other domains? What negative consequences and losses might it produce in its own domain or elsewhere? Overall, will this option be highly effective or only marginally so? Will its gains exceed its losses? By how much will it produce net benefits on the balance sheet? What are the odds of it succeeding; does it offer a 75-percent chance of attaining 90 percent of its aims, or only a 50-percent chance of attaining 50 percent of its aims?

Level of Effort, Resource Requirements, and Costs

How much effort will the United States have to exert to pursue this option? What resources will this option require in political, economic, military, and technological terms? What will be its budgetary costs, direct and indirect, for personnel, investment in technologies, or daily operations? Are these budget costs readily affordable, barely affordable, or too expensive to contemplate? What other costs must be paid, including time, attention, and resources diverted away from other priorities? What are its opportunity costs in terms of inability to pursue other endeavors? Are its sacrifices easily bearable, or will the United States give up too much elsewhere to pursue this option? If only a portion of the necessary resources

can be mobilized, is the option still a viable proposition or not?

Cost Effectiveness

How do the expected effectiveness and benefits stack up in relation to the costs that must be paid, budgetary and otherwise? Do the gains of this option exceed its costs by a wide margin or only barely, or do its costs instead seem higher than its benefits? Does this option offer a wise and profitable way to spend money and resources, or could the same assets be allocated elsewhere for substantially better returns? If only two-thirds of the required funds are committed, would the option yield two-thirds of its expected benefits, one-third, or less? Surveying the balance sheet, does this option add up to a sensible investment, or does it waste resources?

Implementation Strategy

How will the United States go about implementing this option? Can one executive department implement it, or will a large interagency effort be needed? Will presidential support be required? Is congressional approval required and, if so, in what ways? What key constituencies would have to be mobilized? Should all of its activities at home and abroad be launched at once, or should they be phased to unfold sequentially and achieve their aims in cascading fashion? What steps have to be achieved in order to make others possible? Does this implementation strategy promise to be easily carried out, or is it quite demanding?

Time Horizons

How will this option and its consequences unfold over the coming years? Do its actions start fast and peak with-

in two or three years, or do they start slowly, reach maturity within a few years, and continue for a full decade or more? What is its benefit stream; does it achieve its goals and provide other benefits in the near term, the midterm, or the long term? What is its cost stream; do its costs peak early, or are they spread out over the entire course of the policy? How do its benefit stream and cost stream compare? Do its major benefits come early and its costs later, or the converse? Should the distant future be discounted, and if so, what discount rate should be applied? 5 percent? 50 percent? Does the discount rate alter the appraisal by elevating the benefits in relation to the costs, or the other way around?

Constraints, Difficulties, and Roadblocks

What constraints could impede the adoption or execution of this option? What difficulties could be encountered? What roadblocks to success might be encountered along the way? How strong are these impediments? Can they be overcome? How could they be lessened?

Confidence Levels: U.S. Ability to Make Policy Succeed

How confident can the United States be that this option will succeed in doing what it is supposed to do? Should the government be highly confident, moderately confident, or not confident at all? What is the path of events, including actions by the United States and reactions by allies and adversaries, by which this policy can succeed? What is the path by which it could fail? If it is adopted, how will the United States be able to tell—early enough to make a difference—whether it is on the path of success or failure? What is the main scenario for this policy succeeding? What is the main scenario for it failing? Which

scenario is the more likely to unfold? To what degree does the United States have the strength and influence to channel events in directions that foster the favorable scenario and prevent the unfavorable scenario? Does the United States possess the power to make this policy succeed even in the face of problems and opposition?

Consistency with Other Policies

Is this option consistent with overall U.S. national security strategy and other policies that might be operating in the same region? Does it reinforce these other policies, making them easier to carry out and succeed, or does it work at cross-purposes with them, or even threaten to damage them fatally? If there are inconsistencies, how does the importance of this option compare to that of other policies? Is it so important that other policies should be subordinated or sacrificed to it, or do the other policies weigh larger in U.S. priorities? How can this policy be adjusted to minimize any interference elsewhere?

Unilateral or Multilateral

Is this option to be pursued by the United States alone, or will it require cooperation from friends, allies, partners, and international bodies? If it is multilateral, how large a team of contributors must be assembled (e.g., a small coalition, all of NATO, or a majority in the United Nations)? Are the prospects good or problematic for assembling such a team? Will the United States be obligated to make concessions, within the policy or elsewhere, in order to gain the necessary multilateral cooperation? What are these concessions, and how do they affect this policy's drawbacks? Are the prices worth paying?

Feasibility and Prerequisites for Success

What is the feasibility of launching this option and pursuing it to completion? Can the necessary domestic consensus and resources be mobilized? Can key policy instruments, such as the U.S. military, be diverted from other tasks at acceptable levels of risk? To what degree does cooperation from other countries influence feasibility? Is it likely to be forthcoming? If there are multiple prerequisites for success in these areas, what do they suggest about feasibility? Can these prerequisites be met if the necessary efforts are made, or are they beyond the realm of the possible?

Encouraging Signs and Warning Signals

What signs at home and abroad provide encouragement for this option? Is the smell of success in the air? What warning signals are coming from at home and abroad? What is the net balance of encouraging signs and warning signals; does one dominate the other?

Robustness and Flexibility

Is this option robust or brittle? Will it make sense even in the eyes of people who hold somewhat different views and priorities? Can it encounter unanticipated problems and absorb reversals, yet still march onward to success? Or will it fall apart if only a few things go wrong? How flexible is this option? Does its implementation permit only a single narrow game plan, or can it be pursued in different ways? Can the United States shift gears along the way and pursue other paths that still enable the option to achieve its goal, or is the option so rigid that it cannot tolerate changes of direction even if they are necessary?

Vulnerability to Opposition

If this option seeks success at the expense of adversaries, how vulnerable is it to countervailing strategies that these adversaries might adopt? Can it withstand challenges and active opposition, or will it fall short of success if an opponent develops ways to undermine and dilute it? Can this policy emerge victorious in a tough competitive setting, or might it result in defeat in ways that damage and embarrass the United States?

Externalities, Wider Consequences, and Implications

What external considerations should be taken into account in evaluating this option? What could be this policy's unintended consequences and spin-offs? What impact will this policy have on international affairs outside its immediate domain and on U.S. interests and goals there? Is it mostly self-contained, or will it produce major ripple effects—good or bad—that must be taken into account in evaluating it? What precedents will it set around the world? Do these potential secondary effects make the option look better or worse?

Persuasion and Public Support

Is this option easy to sell to others, or will it be hard? How is it likely to be perceived and accepted at home and abroad? Will it be understood and accepted, or misperceived and widely criticized? Can a public relations campaign be mounted to counter criticisms and lessen negative reactions? Can such a campaign succeed? How and why will it succeed?

Assumptions, Uncertainties, and Biases

What key assumptions does this option make about the

problem or opportunity being addressed and about its own performance? Are any assumptions hidden but deserving of close scrutiny? What uncertainties does this option face, and how important are they to evaluating its likely performance? Does this option contain biases and blinders that might compromise the ability of policy makers and those who implement it to think and act clearly?

Sensitivities and Risks

How sensitive is this option to its own calculations and presumptions? Are its expectations for success vulnerable to minor changes in key factors, or do they remain valid in the face of substantial variations? What risks does this option entail? Are they small or large? What wildcards or unpleasant surprises could plunge the United States into deep trouble? Could the option backfire if it were to suffer bad luck that made the existing situation worse or created some new and unwelcome situation?

Contentious Issues and Key Judgments

Does the wisdom of this option turn on a few contentious issues about which difficult judgments must be made? What are these special issues, and what judgments must be made about them? How confident can the United States be that its judgments in these areas will be accurate?

"Gold Badges" and "Red Flags"

Are there features of this option that make it highly attractive, or necessary, or unavoidable—what might be called "gold badges?" Is it the only viable way to attain high-priority goals and protect vital interests? Is it a surefire success, or at least far more likely to succeed than its competitors, and substantially cheaper as well? Or,

instead, are its costs transparently unaffordable, its difficulties insurmountable, its payoffs too small, or its risks too big? In other words, are there "red flags?" Should this option be adopted or rejected for these reasons alone, irrespective of its other strengths and weaknesses?

Tradeoffs

Does this option pose important tradeoffs—something lost in exchange for gain—that must be considered? What are they? Does it offer high payoffs in exchange for heavy costs and significant risks? Or does it call for modest efforts and resources in exchange for modest performance and achievements? Does it offer strong implementation in exchange for less flexibility and adaptability? Does it offer the independence and other benefits of unilateral conduct in exchange for the loss of support from allies? Does it confront adversaries firmly at the expense of the disapproval of countries who resent U.S. superpower status? On balance, how do these tradeoffs add up? Are the gains worth the losses and sacrifices?

Adaptability to Other Ideas

Can this option be broadened to include good ideas contained in other options? If it is embraced by the president but encounters resistance in the Congress, can it be broadened to include changes and amendments during legislative review and remain coherent? Can it be used as a basis for negotiations with allies and adjusted to their views? Can it accommodate concessions to opponents or allies?

Bottom-line Appraisal

All things considered, is this option clearly a good idea or a bad idea? Or, instead, is the appraisal foggy, ambig-

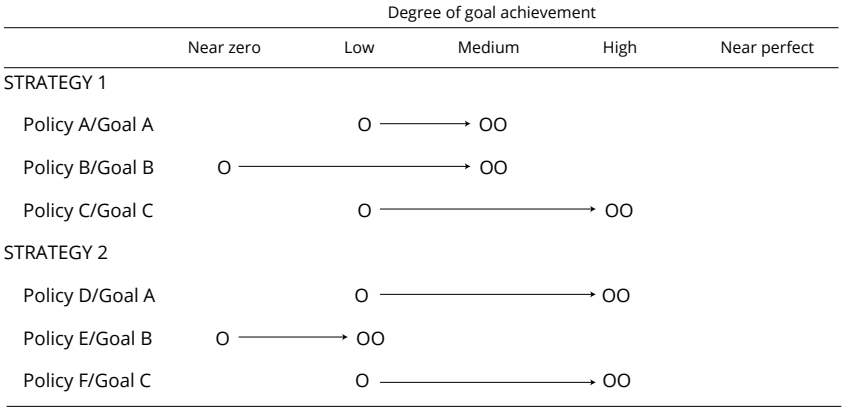
uous, and full of tradeoffs, some of which argue in favor of the policy while others argue against it? How does this option compare with other alternatives? Is it a clear winner, a clear loser, or an equal competitor? Under what conditions or judgments does this option make more sense than others? Under what conditions does it make less sense, or no sense at all?

APPENDIX G

Additional Strategy Assessment Tools

In addition to the tools provided in chapter 6, the below tools may be helpful for comparing and contrasting potential strategies. These tools can assist in weighing the potential strategies and determining which strategy—or combination of strategies—is likely to perform best against the goals. Some of these tools compare the same aspects examined in chapter 6, but they provide different ways to visualize potential strategy performance so that the strategist can assess strategies from multiple angles and provide the best insight and clarity to decision makers.

Figure 21 allows the strategist to display the anticipated performance of potential strategies against multiple goals. The main advantage of this tool is that it helps visualize where you are in the current situation as well as how much progress each potential strategy potentially would make against each goal. This provides context regarding the amount of expected progress versus present reality, which is not captured in some of the other tools.



Key: O = current situation; and OO = estimate outcome if policy is pursued.

Figure 21. Comparing strategies' potential performance against goals. *Richard L. Kugler,* Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs: New Methods for a New Era *(Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2006), 76, adapted by MCUP*

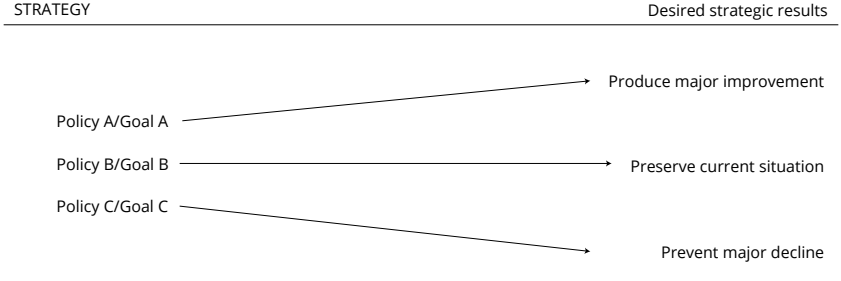


Figure 22. Comparing strategic effects.
Richard L. Kugler, Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs: New Methods for a New Era *(Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2006), 78, adapted by MCUP*

The main distinction of figure 22 is that it acknowledges that not all strategies are designed to advance a goal; some are designed to prevent a situation from

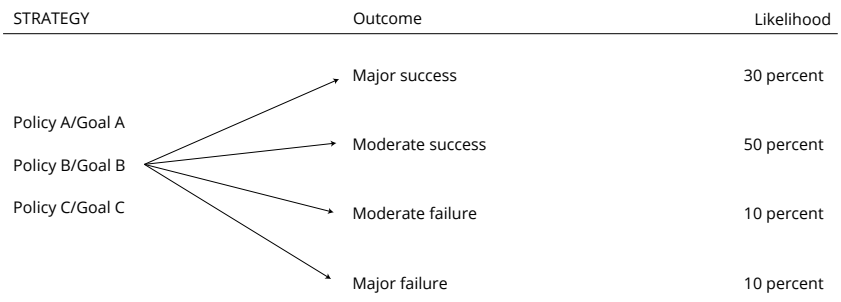


Figure 23. Probabilistic comparison.
Richard L. Kugler, Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs: New Methods for a New Era *(Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2006), 79, adapted by MCUP*

worsening or declining. This tool allows the strategist to array the potential strategies to depict the overall intent, whether that is seeking improvements, maintaining the status quo, or preventing a situation from worsening.

Figure 23 adds yet another dimension to the analysis in that it assesses the probability or likelihood of the anticipated performance. In other words, how confident are we in our judgment about the anticipated outcome? As discussed throughout this primer, there is always some level of uncertainty, but the extent of that certainty largely depends on the quantity and quality of the information underpinning our judgments, as well as the number and criticality of assumptions. This tool allows the strategist to provide the decision maker additional clarity regarding the likelihood that each potential outcome will occur.

Figure 24 adds the dimension of time, since not all strategies will perform at the same rate. Some may take longer to achieve an effect, even if that overall effect is anticipated to be greater than another potential strategy.

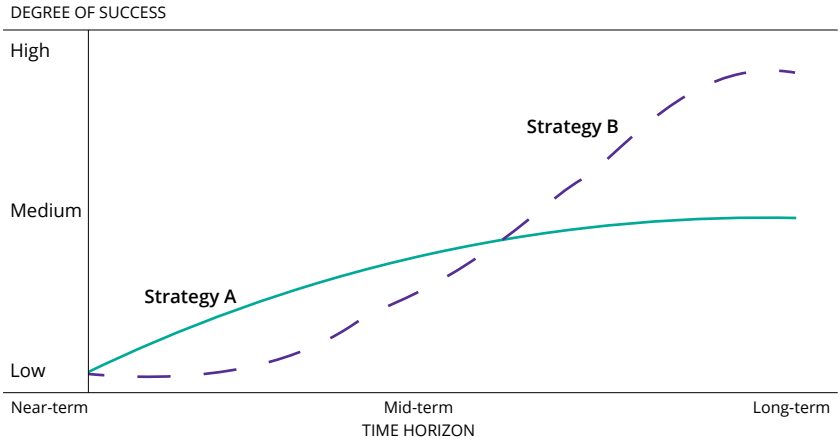


Figure 24. Time horizon strategy comparison.
Richard L. Kugler, Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs: New Methods for a New Era *(Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2006), 80, adapted by MCUP*

This tool gives strategists and decision makers more context as to how much time might be necessary for each potential strategy to reach its full potential.

Figure 25 is similar to the previous example, but it allows the strategist to assess the potential performance over time for individual goals versus overall strategies. This can provide more fidelity with respect to distinct goals and subordinate objectives.

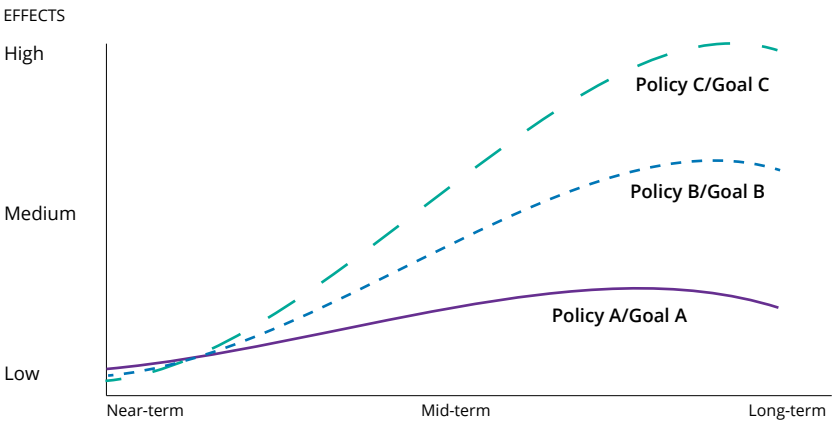


Figure 25. Time horizon goal comparison.
Richard L. Kugler, Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs: New Methods for a New Era *(Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2006), 80, adapted by MCUP*

APPENDIX H

Structured Analytic Techniques and Tools

Structured analytic techniques can help review the accuracy of our mindsets, make those mental models more explicit, and expose our assumptions.[1] We have included a selection of tools and techniques that have utility for strategy making, including brainstorming, the "Four Ways of Seeing," SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis, identifying drivers, and indicators/signposts of change. These structured analytic techniques can help to:

- Instill more structure into the analysis.
- Make arguments more transparent by articulating them and challenging key assumptions.
- Stimulate creative thinking and examine alternative outcomes, even those with low

[1] This appendix is adapted from *A Tradecraft Primer: Structured Analytic Techniques for Improving Intelligence Analysis* (Langley, VA: Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 2009); and *Core Techniques* (Washington, DC: Defense Intelligence Agency, 2015). Minor alterations have been made to conform to current standards for grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

probability, to see whether available data supports these outcomes.
- Identify indicators of change (or signposts) that can reduce strategic surprise.

Incorporating results of these techniques into potential strategies also serves the policy maker by:
- Highlighting potential changes that would alter key assessments or predictions.
- Identifying key assumptions, uncertainties, information gaps, and disagreements that might illuminate risks and costs associated with policy choices.
- Exploring alternative outcomes for which policy actions might be necessary.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a group process to generate new ideas and concepts and stimulate new thinking. It is typically used when beginning a project to generate hypotheses about an issue. Brainstorming allows us to see a wider range of factors than we would otherwise consider, since we naturally censor ideas that seem farfetched, poorly sourced, or irrelevant to the issue. It can spark new ideas, ensure a comprehensive look at a problem or issue, identify unknowns, and prevent premature consensus on a single hypothesis.

Brainstorming should be a structured process to be most productive. It includes a divergent thinking phase to generate and collect new ideas and insight, followed by a convergent phase to group ideas and categorize them by key concepts. Some best practices are as follows:
- Include 10–12 people in the process to best maximize results.

- Do not censor ideas no matter how unconventional they seem.
- Explore what prompted the thought. Even if the idea is not used in the end, it might reveal an important connection between the topic and an unstated assumption, or it might serve as a jumping-off point for another idea that will be used.
- Allow sufficient time. It usually takes an hour to set the rules, get the group comfortable, and exhaust the conventional wisdom on the topic. Only then do the truly creative ideas emerge.
- Involve at least one outsider in the process, such as someone who does not share the same educational background, culture, technical knowledge, or mindset as the core group but has some familiarity with the topic. This is essential for injecting new viewpoints as well as pointing out when others seem entrenched in old ideas.

The steps of the process are as follows:

1. Frame the question:
    - Pose the problem in terms of a focal question. Display it in one sentence on a large easel or whiteboard.
2. Divergent thinking phase (unconstrained):
    - Ask the group to write down responses to the question. (This is often done using post-it notes so that ideas can later be moved around and organized into themes.)
    - Stick the notes on a wall or white board.

Review the notes as a group, and treat all ideas as valid. Add any additional ideas that arise during the review.

- When a pause occurs, the group is reaching the end of conventional thinking and new divergent ideas are likely to emerge.
- End the idea-collection stage after two or three pauses.

3. Convergent thinking phase (organize and vet ideas):
    - Rearrange the notes on the wall according to commonalities or similar concepts. Some notes may be moved several times as themes begin to coalesce. You can copy some notes to include ideas in more than one group.
    - Title each grouping or cluster in a way that accurately characterizes the theme.
    - Identify any notes that do not completely fit with others and consider them either unrelated or a jumping-off point for an idea that deserves further attention.
    - Review and record new ideas or concepts that the group has identified or new areas that need more work or further brainstorming.
    - Have participants vote to select a few areas that deserve more attention.
    - Set priorities and decide on the next steps for analysis.
4. Conclude and summarize findings/recommendations:

- Record the themes, components of the themes, and the priorities for analysis selected by the group, as well as any assignments for the group/individual members.

The Four Ways of Seeing

The "Four Ways of Seeing" is used to examine two entities and gain a better understanding of perceptions, motivations, opposition or friction points and red lines, and potential misunderstandings. It can also identify points of commonality to examine opportunities.

The Process

Select two actors (one is designated as X and the other as Y in figure 26). In the top left quadrant of the tool, list a few characteristics of how X sees itself. In the bottom right quadrant, list a few characteristics of how Y sees itself. In the top right quadrant, list how X sees Y, and in the bottom left quadrant, list how Y sees X.

Using Iran and Israel in a specific example might appear as in table 15. After populating the tool, look for areas of friction that can be leveraged or commonalities that could represent opportunities. For instance, it helps to understand that both actors see themselves as justified and that their existence and power is preordained, while also seeing the other as the aggressor. This context also helps to understand that there is a certain rigidity underpinning what each state will be willing to accept or tolerate in its dealings with the other. Also, since each sees itself as relatively isolated in the region with few allies, that may exacerbate tension and fuel a desire to act quickly and decisively when presented with a challenge

How X **Sees X**	**How X** **Sees Y**
How Y **Sees X**	**How Y** **Sees Y**

Figure 26. The four ways of seeing.
Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

in the region. Many more themes could be pulled from the chart for analysis and further examination.

The Four Ways of Seeing (figure 26) is a tool that is relatively quick and easy to use, and it can provide excellent insight into other actors, as well as what their potential redlines are, and what might help to provide them assurances regarding things they value.

SWOT Analysis

SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis (figure 27) is another quick tool that allows you

Table 15. Iran and Israel.

How Israel sees itself: • Surrounded by hostile neighbors with few allies • Land of the chosen people; possessing a divine right to the land • Highly capable, technologically advanced • Willing to do whatever is necessary to defend itself	How Israel sees Iran: • The aggressor • A threat because of its actions and allies • An authoritarian, oppressive regime • A terrorist state and sponsor of terrorist groups
How Iran sees Israel: • The aggressor • A threat by virtue of its existence • An illegitimate state/power/occupier of the land • Destined to fall; long-term target to annihilate	How Iran sees itself: • Surrounded by hostile neighbors with few allies • Protectors of Shi'ism • Deserving of regional hegemony • Driven to develop technological parity

Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

to view a situation and potential outcomes from four different aspects. It can help to:

- Reduce personal and cultural biases.
- Consider the scope of positive/negative consequences and interaction between quadrants or actors.
- Identify disconnects and areas of tension/areas of commonality.
- Use it to identify the "holes in the plan."

Table 16 reflects a quick SWOT analysis of the 1993 Waco, Texas, siege involving the Branch Davidians.[2] Us-

[2] Melissa Chan, "The Real Story Behind the Waco Siege: Who Were David Koresh and the Branch Davidians?," *Time*, 24 January 2018.

Figure 27. SWOT analysis.
Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

ing this tool helps structure thought processes to be able to evaluate each of the quadrants more thoroughly and objectively than we may otherwise, aid analysis for determining whether the potential results are worth the risks, and identify weaknesses and threats that could be mitigated.

Identifying Drivers

Understanding drivers can aid analysis of the strategic environment and actor behavior and motivations. It can also help to understand aspects of a situation that are

Table 16. SWOT analysis of 1993 Waco siege

Strengths: • The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) is very capable • The ATF had legal cause for the action • The ATF initially had the element of surprise	Weaknesses: • David Koresh's followers were dedicated • Siege dragged on for weeks • The ATF lost the element of surprise • The ATF had no accurate insight as to the Branch Davidians' armaments and provisions
Opportunities: • Prevent potential future violence of attack • Negotiation • Patience	Threats: • The Branch Davidians were heavily armed and willing to fight • Families were present on the compound • The ATF did not foresee the Branch Davidians' willingness to die rather than surrender • The siege sparked public outcry

Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

likely to change, as well as what can be shaped or altered. To identify drivers, it is essential to understand variables.

- *Variables* are characteristics of situations or problems that can change depending on surrounding conditions. They are usually derived from actors, events, and factors related to a problem, but capture those aspects that can change over time and assume different values.
- *Drivers* are a subset of variables that can cause change to a situation or outcome. They are change agents, or things that could alter a situation or issue and therefore alter the assessment. Identifying drivers requires

foundational knowledge of the actors, their motivations, historical trends, and situational context. Drivers differ from variables in the degree to which they influence or change the larger situation or outcome.

- *Trends* are patterns of gradual change, whereas drivers are conditions that cause subsequent results, conditions, or decisions.

Identify key drivers based on the specific question you are analyzing as well as which changes in the situation would change the assessment (figure 28). Structured brainstorming techniques can sometimes be helpful in identifying your key drivers.

Categories of drivers include the following:

- Demographics and health, such as demographic trends and challenges, migration trends, gender issues, key health, and medical challenges.
- Governance, such as the form of government, its perceived legitimacy, the relationship between center and periphery, the quality of service delivery, the ability to regulate, and levels of corruption.
- Resources and environment, such as key environmental challenges (including severity), water and food quality/quantity, and natural resource assets and natural resource dependencies (especially energy).
- Security and order, such as a national role (and resources available) for the military and police, human rights records, domestic unrest, international threats, domestic crime rates, and criminal justice systems.

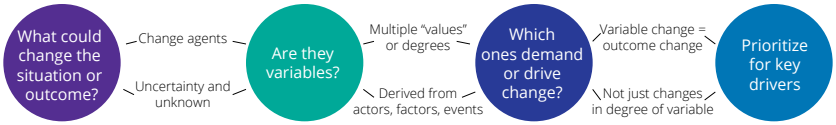


Figure 28. Identifying key drivers.
Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP

- Economics, such as the structure of economy (including strengths and weaknesses), trade patterns, wealth distribution, and gray/black economies.
- Civil society and communication, such as the presence and influence of nongovernmental organizations, the nonstate organization of society, media and government control of the media, and the role of social media in society.

Examples of drivers include the following:

- Drivers that affect a country's effectiveness in countering terrorism:
  - Legal system
  - Economic concerns
  - Strategic calculus
  - Internal concerns and politics
- Drivers that enable armed group activity:
  - Common ideology
  - Permissive operating environment/weak state counterterrorism capabilities (including lack of effective multilateral institutions to counter the activity)
  - Availability of weapons

- Availability of funds or ability to generate funds (e.g., natural resources, kidnappings for ransom, etc.)

Indicators/Signposts of Change

Indicators are specific identified events or developments that we can monitor to determine whether a particular situation is coming to pass. Explicitly outlining indicators helps prevent strategic surprise and provides an objective list of criteria to be able to recognize when a situation is changing. Periodically reviewing a list of observable events or trends and keeping them up to date can:

- Help track events, monitor targets, spot emerging trends, and warn of unanticipated change.
- Provide an objective baseline to track events or targets.
- Make the analysis more transparent.
- Be tailored for each potential hypothesis or scenario by creating several distinct lists of activities, statements, or expected events.
- Distinguish whether a development is or is not emerging.

Glossary of Selected Terms

Accommodate	Strategic approach wherein we adapt to another actor's wishes to achieve the desired ends
Assessment	A judgment that is founded upon supporting evidence
Assumption	A presumption that we accept as true without questioning it
Assure	Strategic approach wherein we take confidence-building measures to increase another actor's sense of security
Bridging assumptions	Filling critical gaps in information or assessments
Center of gravity	A source of power that provides mental or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act
Coerce	Strategic approach that entails persuading another actor through threats or punitive actions; includes deterring or compelling actions
Compel	Strategic approach that entails threatening or imposing a negative condition on other actors to dissuade them from continuing a behavior or to convince them to take an action they would prefer not to take; subset of *coercion*
Compromise	Strategic approach wherein all par-

	ties adapt their demands to reach a mutually agreeable solution
Constraints	Factors that limit freedom of action, often in the form of a situation or problem that bounds a strategist's options for achieving the desired ends; subset of *limitations*
Convergent phase	Paring down or modifying ideas based on limitations
Costs	Resources and other expenditures needed to achieve the desired ends; can include *opportunity costs*; subset of *limitations*
Courses of action	Integration of the ways and means into a proposal for how to achieve the ends
Cyber instrument	Can include defensive actions (e.g., protecting our systems and capabilities) and offensive actions (e.g., disrupting or manipulating another actor's systems and capabilities)
Deter	Strategic approach that entails making credible threats to discourage another actor from initiating an action that conflicts with or threatens one's own interests; subset of *coercion*
Development	Can be used as an instrument to encourage or discourage behavior by offering or withholding development assistance, or by building a partner nation's capacity (e.g., economic, infrastructure, education, or medical capacities) to encourage behavior that aligns with U.S. national interests
Diplomacy	How a state formally interacts with other state actors and sometimes nonstate actors
Divergent phase	Developing ideas without restricting them based on limitations
Domestic context	Cultures, events, actor motivations

	and behaviors, drivers, trends, and environments in the strategist's own country
Drivers	Aspects or elements of the strategic environment that cause a change to a situation or outcome; change agents that can alter a situation or issue; sometimes referred to as *causes*
Economic instrument	Comprises issues such as regional and bilateral trade, infrastructure development, and foreign investment
Elements of power	Assets that a nation can convert into capabilities; see also *latent power*
Elements of strategic logic	Includes the strategic environment, sources and drivers of policy, limitations, and ends, ways, and means
Enable	Strategic approach wherein we improve another actor's capability to continue pursuing an action that is also in our own interest
End	A specific desired outcome; also termed *objectives*
End state	The conditions we want to create; also termed *political aims* or *goals*
Environments	Can include physical environments (e.g., geography or the urban setting) or social environments (e.g., the political or societal atmosphere)
Eradicate	Strategic approach that entails eliminating another actor, including leaders and adherents; most severe of all of the strategic approaches
Existential threat	Something that could harm a state's survival interest(s)
Financial instrument	Closely linked to the economic instrument, but more specifically entails issues such as funds transfers and banking
Framing assumptions	Mindsets about an actor or issue
Grand strategy	A theory on how to protect or ad-

	vance national interests using all applicable instruments of national power
Important interests	Interests that are necessary for the nation to thrive; see also *major interests*
Induce	Strategic approach wherein we offer positive incentives to change another actor's behavior to align more closely with our own interests
Informational instrument	Creates, exploits, or disrupts knowledge
Instruments of national power	Diplomatic, informational, military, economic, financial, intelligence, and law enforcement (DIMEFIL); see also *policy instruments*
Intelligence	Knowledge generated via collection and analysis of information gathered through various, often clandestine means to inform decision making
Intermediate objectives	Waypoints against which the strategist can measure progress toward national-level goals
International context	Cultures, historical events, current events, actor motivations and behaviors, drivers, trends, and environments in other countries
Latent power	Resources that a nation can convert into capabilities over time; see also *elements of power*
Law enforcement instrument	Pertains to legal means of enhancing or restricting another actor's actions
Law of the instrument bias	The cognitive bias wherein humans tend to approach problems confined by the skills they know best or resources that are most familiar to them (i.e., to a hammer, every problem looks like a nail)
Limitations	Consequences and potential consequences of a proposed strategy that will need to be accounted for

	during strategy development; includes *costs*, *risks*, *constraints*, and *restraints*
Major interests	Interests that are necessary for the nation to thrive; see also *important interests*
Means	The resources and capabilities available or required to achieve the ends
Military instrument	Entails the use of force, the threat of the use of force, or enabling partners to use or threaten force to shape another actor's behavior to align with one's own national interests
Military strategy	A theory on how to protect or advance national interests using military means
National interests	Conditions we seek to achieve or protect as a nation and that we believe are in our state's fundamental best interest; categories of such interests are *survival*, *vital*, *important* or *major*, and *peripheral*
National security culture	A societal predisposition toward certain actions and policies over others
National security strategy	A theory on how to protect or advance national interests
National values	Principles we see as an integral part of our national identity
Observe	Entails primarily monitoring events; the least active of the strategic approaches
Opportunity	An emergent situation or potentiality in the strategic environment that could be seized upon to advance a national interest
Opportunity costs	Things we will not be able to do as a result of choices we make
Peripheral interests	Interests that enhance our way of life
Persuade	Strategic approach wherein we change another actor's position by virtue of argument

PMESII-PT	Political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment, and time
Policy	A pattern of actions, activities, or behaviors designed to attain specific ends or objectives
Policy instruments	Diplomatic, informational, military, economic, financial, intelligence, and law enforcement (DIMEFIL); see also *instruments of national power*
Problem set	Articulates where you are in the strategic environment, where you want to be (i.e., the desired end state), and the hurdles that must be overcome to get there; comprises the strategic environment plus the sources and drivers of policy
Problem statement	A concise description of the issue that needs to be addressed
Resource-unconstrained	Developing strategy without applying limitations
Restraints	Restrictions on an action or an actor that may affect strategy or elements of strategy; subset of *limitations*
Risks	Things that could go wrong with a strategy; subset of *limitations*
Risks from the strategy	Negative consequences caused by a strategy's implementation
Risks to the strategy	Things that could cause the strategy to fail
Scoping assumptions	Choices we make to bound an issue
Shape	Strategic approach wherein we take actions to mold the strategic situation in our favor
Sources and drivers of policy	Values, interests, power and influence, threats, and opportunities
Strategic approaches	Causal mechanisms that bring about a desired behavior from an actor
Strategic environment	Includes the international context, domestic context, and assumptions
Strategic vision	Broad guidance provided by our

	most senior leaders that frames our ends
Strategy	A theory on how to achieve a stated goal
Strength of interest	The intensity of a nation's desire to pursue a goal
Subdue	Strategic approach that entails applying force to modify an actor's behavior to conform to one's own interests, wherein the applied force is sufficient enough to remove all of the adversary's other strategy options
Survival interests	Interests that must be protected for the survival of the nation
Threat	Something that could harm a national interest
Vital interests	Interests that pertain to political and territorial integrity
Ways	Proposals for how to achieve the ends; also termed *courses of action*
Whole-of-government	Including and effectively integrating all relevant instruments for the issue in question
Zone of tolerance	The range of a goal or goals that we perceive as satisfactory

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Index