

## Methodology of Strategy and Strategic Thinking

Linking classic advice with disruptive trends

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This paper seeks to discuss elements of strategy and strategic thought. What should we be thinking of in order to produce national security strategies that will have the intended impact on policy and allocated resources? What strategy will best achieve government coordination, operational execution and the desired end state?

How do we use and integrate mass communication, artificial intelligence, the internet of things, social media and [soon] quantum computing in shaping tomorrow's strategies? At the same time, we are seeing radical geo-strategic and geo-economic shifts, while simultaneously dealing with traditional state actors (China, Russia, Iran and DPRK) and non-state challenges (ISIS, terrorism, hackers, anti-microbial resistance and climate change). How do we devise strategies that deliver the desired end state in such a disruptive world?

### **Objective: successful strategies**

A successful strategy is one which is clear, understood and implementable. Strategy is about choices and priorities and a fine balance between normative, realist, analytic and executive elements.

By definition no strategy will please all, nor be beneficial to all interests (national and international). From a government's perspective, it is about optimizing the use of available assets in order to achieve a desired objective and to further long-term status. When the strategy is challenged by unforeseen events, technology and external players, the priorities and principles are there to provide guidance in an evolving landscape. In other words, a national strategy must be important, add value and strengthen the state.

Implementation of strategy and strategic thinking is more of an art form than science.<sup>2</sup> This calls for leadership, vision, clarity, mobilization of both citizens and agencies. It calls for the ability to coordinate in order to optimize the use of limited resources for a desired outcome. It also calls for the adaptation of strategy as policy and developments unfold. In many ways it's "the art of national security leadership".

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<sup>2</sup> Moltke the Elder argued that "Strategy is a system of makeshifts. It is more than a science, it is the application of science to practical affairs; it is carrying through an originally conceived plan under a constantly shifting set of circumstances. In war, as in art, there can be no set standards nor can code of rules take the place of brains." Helmuth Graf von Moltke, *On Strategy*, 1871.

## **Defining strategy**

The term strategy has varied over time from the rather narrow Clausewitzian battle-oriented focus to higher or grand strategy (“policy in execution”)<sup>3</sup>. A US National Security Strategy, and many other Western peacetime national security strategies, seeks to use all elements at a government’s disposal to secure and further national interests.

Professor Lawrence Freedman defines strategy as “a comprehensive way to try to pursue political ends, including the threat or actual use of force, in a dialectic of wills in a military conflict, in which both adversaries interact.” In the sphere of national security the means are also trade, aid, diplomacy, information/data, innovation, technology and legitimacy. With a nod to Chinese strategic thought: legal, public opinion and psychological warfare may be equally impactful on how we view national security strategies.

A strategy needs to be clear about what the goal or aim is and what our starting point is. But the core element of a strategy is how we get from situation A to B. In other words: what elements are to be utilized and how; which are the stepping stones and how do we measure that we are on the right track?

There is a risk that every plan or idea is labeled as a “strategy”. Dr. H R McMaster wrote in 2015 about the challenge of calling everything a strategy and watering down the concept of strategy: “Incomplete plans disconnected from the problems they are ostensibly meant to address masquerade as strategies and establish a deceptive rationale for folly. Loss of precision in the word strategy has encouraged in the West a narcissistic approach to national security; ‘strategies’ are frequently based on what the purveyor prefers rather than what the situation demands.”<sup>4</sup>

For the purpose of this paper, the focus lies on national and/or security related strategies as formulated by governments.

## **Sequence of strategy**

Strategy should ideally come before budgetary discussions, but after overarching government priorities are known. Unfortunately many strategies are de facto budget driven: what can we get for investment volume X, or how should we re-calibrate the threat to fit available resources? Strategies launched without any link to resources are fatally flawed from the start.

Therefore, the preferred order is: internal debate on government priorities, sounding-boards and preliminary strategies, budget/resource tuning and coordination with other strategies, adjustments to the strategy proposal, and only then, the formal launch of a strategy. After that the real work of strategy implementation begins: government coordination, follow-up and strategy updates as reality, developments and ambitions continuously shift.

The hierarchy of strategies is equally important. For example a National Security Strategy, signed by a head of state, is often the top long-term political signal of national direction, challenges, opportunities and government priorities. Strategies and strategic guidance for individual departments/ministries for defense, trade, diplomacy, technology, innovation, environmental issues, development aid, etc. should be closely aligned with the NSS. Agencies and services are next in line. Further there are individual policy strategies (e.g.

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<sup>3</sup> As Liddell Hart argued in chapters 19 and 22, Strategy, second revised edition, 1991. Liddell Hart was one of the first modern strategists who saw strategy as beyond the military campaign (unlike Clausewitz, Napoleon, de Jomini and most 19<sup>th</sup> century strategic thinkers). See Henri de Jomini, The Art of War, 1838, chapter 3.

<sup>4</sup> H.R. McMaster, “The Uncertainties of Strategy”, Survival Vol 57, No 1, pp 197-208.

nuclear/cyber/AI/development aid strategies, strategies for a certain campaign or initiative and country strategies). Naturally these too must be written within the spirit of the top strategies and coordinated across various departments/ministries/agencies. This hierarchy can be seen as a mechanical clock. All the subcomponents, large and small, interact and contribute to the primary objective.

Congress/Parliament input on strategy is crucial and budgets must correlate with and further the stated strategic ambitions. A strategy is vastly strengthened if there is broad political support and understanding for it. Without such support, it is weak, fragile and vulnerable. However strategy is about direction (not consensus) and there can be only one Commander-in-Chief and one formal set of priorities set by the executive branch.

### **The process and the product**

To a degree the process of developing a strategy is equally as important as the final strategy. Discussions on objectives, means, aims, financial resources and especially priorities crystalize the arguments and expose many of the costs.

Brainstorming sessions, sounding boards, workshops and drafts are vital in the process. Imagination, scenario developments, red teaming and war gaming are equally important. They mature the ideas and prepare them for the reality and implementation. An inclusive process can be both educational and a way of convincing opponents. It also engages those who will ultimately execute the strategy. If the political vision, the context and the challenges can be explained to and accepted by the public and key players in the government, much of the work is done.

A strong pen holder, with a small and dedicated team, is advised.

The Japanese, British, Canadians and Australians often use the White Paper formula. In most cases this is a strategic document, approved by Cabinet (often signed by the PM) and Parliament, which aims to present government policies while inviting public and expert opinion/debate on the issues. The spectrum of clarity, feasibility and process has over the years been wide, but there are also some great examples to study. The Germans often have open and logical processes and the British Strategic Defense Review of 1997/1998 is seen by many as a gold standard. Although a complex operation, it is unprecedented in its transparency and inclusivity. In the end it delivered new priorities and a clear strategy that was well understood and implementable.<sup>5</sup>

If it is difficult to identify a clear objective, or one hesitates to involve allies and partners, then one should question the whole exercise. The human and psychological aspect of inclusion cannot be underestimated. If initial strategic thinking cannot stand up to internal scrutiny, it will rarely survive the light of day.

### **Elements and opportunities of successful strategies.**

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<sup>5</sup> One of the overarching aims was to forge a national consensus on defense. This called for close and continuous consultations across party lines and on several levels, as well as the engagement from experts, civil servants (both active and retired) and service leaders. The process included workshops, public information and debates, expert involvement and academic papers on specific themes (such as introducing defense diplomacy, then a new concept). This included an advisory panel/sounding board of 18 external experts under the Secretary of State/Deputy Minister of Defence, written submissions from the general public (450 received) and MoD civilian and service personnel (all presented to the House of Parliament). The final strategy included the formal White Paper, factsheets, essays, summaries and background analysis.  
[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121026065214/www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/65F3D7AC-4340-4119-93A2-20825848E50E/0/sdr1998\\_complete.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121026065214/www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/65F3D7AC-4340-4119-93A2-20825848E50E/0/sdr1998_complete.pdf) and <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/RP98-91/RP98-91.pdf>

### **The importance of clarity**

“Battles are won through the ability of men to express concrete ideas in clear and unmistakable language.”<sup>6</sup> The same goes for strategy. The risk of misinterpretation must be kept to a minimum. Clarity is also important as a tool of legitimacy. Strategies may be geared primarily towards experts, civil servants and senior leadership. The strategy must be understood by opponents, the media, politicians at large, scholars and, in a democracy, the general public.

All strategies are not public, but grand and costly ideas, visions and priorities often need broad public and government backing. Strategies are not only for the elites. Those paying for it, i.e. the taxpayers, have a right to be informed and should be motivated and mobilized (and able to assess whether or not elected leaders are fulfilling what they promised). The degree of secrecy may depend on whether state is at war or not. In the former state, much is gained from avoiding misunderstandings and miscalculations. In war, although public and allied support is crucial, deception and strategic dislocation often are important elements in strategy.

It is easier for authoritarian states to have strategies based on deception or, as Sun Tzu argued, that all warfare is based on deception and that it is not possible to discuss a strategist’s keys to victory beforehand. Stonewell Jackson spoke of the aim to “mystify, mislead and surprise.” Today, with counter terrorism, ongoing hybrid warfare and disinformation, plus major states actively shaping the strategic landscape to their advantage, we are living in a grey area between peace and war.

### **Strategic context “from where”**

A strategy is strengthened by identifying the strategic context, i.e. an introduction to where we are (in time and space), how we got here and what our role is in relation to other actors/states/departments/interests. It is also helpful to be clear of one’s own and others’ strengths and where one needs to do more or where there is room for development (i.e. to a degree what the strategy is for).

Some previous US National Security Strategies have labeled it as “The World as it is”. However, we should remind ourselves that the strategic context is in constant motion and we and the world around us are continually shifting and changing.<sup>7</sup> Today shifts in the global power and world order, plus technology development (global access to knowledge/internet, AI, IoT and social media) and the decreased role of governments, are outpacing both structures, available assets, the public mind set and many of our strategies.

A common threat perception is often part of this strategic context, and the more realistic and objective the better. In many ways it’s about identifying probable obstacles, challenges and opportunities while taking into account that an adversary will adapt to your strategy and counter it with direct and indirect means. It is also a fact that many of today’s threats and challenges such as terrorism, climate change and sustainability can only be managed through international cooperation.

There should also be varying degrees of threats and not all can be categorized as great, ultimate or existential. Current and emerging threats and challenges need to be described in

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<sup>6</sup> The Armed Forces Officer, Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-2, 1950, Chapter 20.

<sup>7</sup> Machiavelli often saw the inability of diplomats, rulers and statesmen to accept changing circumstances as their most fatal flaw.

terms of potential outcome, risk and probability and with the same precision as national interests.

### **Identifying interests “for what”**

A government's or a country's interests are innumerable. They are often diverse and at times contradictory. Nevertheless it is paramount for a national security strategy or a defense/diplomatic/aid/homeland security strategy to identify core or vital interests. A national security strategy it is in essence a question of what we are prepared to die for. For what are we really prepared to deploy our women and men in uniform? For what are we prepared to make extraordinary state and financial sacrifices?<sup>8</sup>

There is naturally a hierarchy of interests. Values, national sovereignty, government functionality, the lives of citizens and a nation's way of life may be of highest priority and worth the ultimate effort of our combined resources. However, there are many interests where we are prepared to make some national sacrifice, or where there is a degree of conditionality. In some cases, there are ambitions and opportunities that are to be promoted and supported, but not at any price.<sup>9</sup> It is ultimately a case of what is a “must have” versus a “nice to have” for the security of our nation.

It may be helpful to speak of vital national interests, extremely important national interests and important national interests. There may also be a category of secondary national interests that de facto only receive an honorable mention in a national security strategy.

### **Clarity in objectives and priorities – “what to achieve”**

The aim of the strategy must be clear. The vision and end state/states must be easy to grasp for all and relatively short. The reasoning behind the strategy should also be sharp and brief.

A vision (e.g. “The World we seek”) is not a strategy, but it could be part of a national strategy. Strategic guidance should give direction and principles and end states should be concrete objectives. One approach is to focus on goals or national security tasks (e.g. as formulated in US NSS 2006) for various areas. It all boils down to priorities and being able to argue why they are important and how they are going to be implemented. Significantly the objectives must be implementable, or as Marshal Tukhachevskiy said in 1924: “The strategy must ensure that the tactical task is a readily feasible one.” In other words, don't make a promise you cannot keep.

Although unpopular, it is wise to indicate what current priorities will be downgraded or taken off the list in order to focus on a select few. If everything is a priority, then nothing is. Choices are tough and new priorities (not to mention disruptive technologies) are rarely popular with the establishment, but nevertheless they must be clear if a strategy is to be successful. Fluffy or inarticulate strategies, filled with good intentions and references to all

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<sup>8</sup> Interestingly some of the reasons of making the ultimate sacrifice, or going to war, are classic, even in this age of ISIL, terrorism, major power rivalry, the South China Sea developments and NATO and other alliances. De Jomini wrote in Précis de L'art de la Guerre, Anselin Libraire, Paris 1838, pp 38-39 that (in own translation) “A government goes to war:

- To reclaim certain rights or to defend them;
- To protect and maintain the great interests of the state, as commerce, manufactures, or agriculture;
- To uphold neighboring states whose existence is necessary either for the safety of the government or the balance of power;
- To fulfil the obligations of offensive and defensive alliances;
- To propagate political or religious theories, to crush them out or to defend them;
- To increase the influence and power of the state by acquisitions of territory;
- To defend the threatened independence of the state;
- To avenge insulted honor; or;
- From a mania for conquest.”

<sup>9</sup> See Condoleezza Rice, “Promoting the National Interest”, Foreign Affairs, Vol 79, Nr 1.

things important, tend to signal unwillingness or inability to be clear and focused. Declarations of good will and hope, which may also serve political purposes, are not strategies.

There are always risks involved when identifying objectives and priorities. There are alternative costs of both action and inaction which also have to be calculated and weighed, at least by those formulating and signing the strategy.

If the objectives and priorities are clear, it also makes the strategy predictable. This will inform adversaries of one's intentions and prepare friends and allies for what is to come. In security policy and diplomacy, at least in times of relative peace, surprises are rarely appreciated. They can be dangerous.

### **Operationalization – “how”**

From a national security or national defense perspective the formulation of mission priorities is key. It sets the stage for questions of volume, capability, technological levels, readiness and levels of coordination (internal and external) in sub-strategies. Although the military and the security establishment is center stage, private and academic capabilities in AI, social media and high-tech spheres may be equally important to promote, fund and integrate into the strategy.

There should be clear correlation between mission statements, organization and employment, although this is rarely the case in many countries. Procurement, organization and base/embassy/agency/public-private partnership structures should only be subordinate means in order to achieve strategic objectives.

The most well intended strategy will fail if it is not funded. Dialogue with the legislative branch is as important as dialogue with the operationalizing agencies. There should be a high degree of correlation between a strategy and budgetary priorities. In many ways they are two sides of the same coin, and both are watch-dogs of the other. Together both the executive and legislative branch should foster national strategic priorities and interests, plus long-term thinking.

In the case of national security strategies or military strategies there are often only one. But at the lower level different strategies may deliver mixed priorities, count on the same resources or not be in tune with the larger political direction. Strategies and priorities need to be reviewed and pruned regularly.

There should also be a communications element in the strategy. How do we get the message out and how is the strategy used by leaders, departments and agencies? How do we secure the continued support and understanding of the public?

### **Inclusivity – “with whom”**

A strategy must provide partnership context and instructions for the relevant players. What should individual players do and how should they interact with other players/agencies/departments in order to achieve the end state. In other words, who should be involved, why and in what capacity?

Few, if any, security oriented strategies involve only one department or a specific agency, and most global challenges demand international coordination. Those involved should ideally be

identified and tasked/addressed in the strategy. Each player needs to know its role and how it fits into the greater architecture and objective.

A successful strategy needs to be explained and supported by those involved, preferably beginning in the draft stage. By including a broad array of actors, support can be greatly enhanced.

The key is to inform and listen, and where appropriate take the good advice. But it is critical that external input, whether it is from other parts of government, think tanks, academia, or public engagements, doesn't water down the strategy. But in an age of AI, IoT and social media, academia and private enterprises may play key roles in both development *and* implementation of a strategy. This calls for very different processes and degrees of inclusivity and security aspects.

Inclusivity is particularly important when it comes to allies and partners. No friend likes to be caught off guard. Inform and engage allies and partners as early as possible; you will need them for many of the challenges ahead. They will always want to understand and often they instinctively want to contribute and be supportive. Let them. Although not all strategies need external support, the interest and understanding will do no harm, security concerns permitting. In many cases a strategy is dependent on international support or legitimacy, and adding allies and partners as an afterthought is rarely optimal, if success is the key objective.

If one does not want to expose a strategy, even to friends and allies, then it may not be a very mature, clear or well-argued strategy in the first place. Failure to include may, in the worst case, unnecessarily irritate your trusted friends, and could also lead to obstruction or open criticism of the strategy.

### **Legitimacy – “follow”**

A strategy is seen as legitimate if it fixes a problem, improves a state's position or promotes progress for the greater good. It should be perceived as just, fair and responsible.<sup>10</sup> A strategy should be based on clear legal national authority, and preferably also be in accordance with international law, norms and standards. Public support is significantly easier to manage if there is a degree of natural legitimacy and an understanding for the vision/context/challenge from the very start.

A strategy is easier to implement if it has broad support from the establishment, or at least the key players of the establishment.<sup>11</sup> Ideally all leaders (think Cabinet and Majority and Minority Leaders) must be informed, and preferably express support. Otherwise the risk of sabotage, implementation obstacles or challenges by interest groups, industry or services may be heightened. Inevitably, though, there will be opposition to any strategy. The key is to manage expectations, build support and internal legitimacy and be prepared to push through. Broad understanding from allies and partners, and hopefully active support, will also increase credibility.

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<sup>10</sup> Naturally it depends on how we (and our opponents) view and argue what is "just" and "progressive". "History shows that wars are divided into two kinds, just and unjust. All wars that are progressive are just, and all wars that impede progress are unjust." as argued by Mao in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, Foreign Languages Press, 1969, p 59.

<sup>11</sup> Dr Luttwak is correct in his observation: "Even if there is no elected parliament to contest the will of the executive and its scheme of grand strategy, even if there are no interest groups outside the government capable of challenging its policies, the diversified bureaucratic apparatus of modern states is itself a powerful obstacle to the implementation of any comprehensive scheme of grand strategy." *Strategy*, Harvard University Press, 1987, p 233.

If a strategy breaks with international law a great deal of effort must be made to argue the merit of the case. Only history will be able to say whether a strategy was successful or not, and only an extraordinary threat/challenge/genocide or clear flaw in the international system will in time legitimate a strategy that was clearly lacking international support.

### **The question of how much detail**

Strategic context, objectives, priorities and principles of “how” and follow-up mechanisms need to be part of a strategy. However, one could debate how much detail there should be on the exact implementation.

There is a case to be made for detailed directions to be part of a strategy. It is not bad for all agencies to get a clear picture of what the various stepping stones are and for all to understand the desired sequence and coordination. It is very much a question of specifying with whom we should cooperate and in what order of priority, what should be avoided, which obstacles need to be managed and the level of detail in secondary objectives. The drawback is that such a strategy becomes less adaptable and nimble. There is a risk that the shelf life for a strategy of this type is relatively short.

The alternative option is for a strategy to leave a lot of the details out and only focus on the strategic context, objectives, priorities and principles of “how” and the follow-up mechanism. In other words, a strategy that is clear on direction but adaptable in its execution. Besides, it may not be necessary to give all potential adversaries all the details of a nation’s strategic thinking.

Detailed sub-strategies, action plans, operational execution and tactics can be developed in other documents and can thus be modified without much political fanfare. Limited strategies, or strategies of limited objectives, in scope and ambition, may be more credible and realistic.

A strategy is perhaps more akin to an old fashioned paper road map, rather than a GPS navigation device micro-managing every turn. It is not a self-driving car on autopilot, but rather is continuous adapting to reality and human psychology while maintaining a clear picture of objectives and principles for “how” to successfully get from A to B.

### **Implementation of strategy**

How a strategy is interpreted, debated and implemented is as important as the strategy itself. A strategy should be a living and present document, a bible and a reference point, not something placed beside the previous strategy in the book shelf. It is up to leaders to own it, to refer to it and use it in day-to-day operations. As mentioned earlier, the communications elements, both internal and external, need to be thought through. The author of the strategy has the ultimate responsibility for the implementation of the strategy, and it is often helpful with a team to continuously follow-up that the strategy is delivering as intended. This function is more of a controller role (as opposed to a strategy writing and coordination role).

There should preferably also be assessment stages at regular intervals (e.g. annually in the case of an NSS or NMS) in order to scrutinize the impact and fulfillment of the strategy. Indicators and reference points for each of the objectives/goals/missions/technology levels/end states are often helpful, but rarely absolute. Reports from the field, quantitative and executed changes, shifts in resources, public and allied perceptions and opinion polls may contribute to assessing the fulfillment of the objectives. Are we more secure in the fields of X, or is situation Y more or less stable since the strategy was signed? Is the national position



in forum or on issue Z more or less strengthened or is a specific value more safeguarded/advanced thanks to the strategy?

Such a review should be done independently by someone outside the office who authored/coordinated the strategy and the results should be reported to the signatory of the strategy. Gaps in the implementation of each objective, or shifts in ambition can and should be adjusted along the way. However, in the extreme, if essential parts of the strategy have failed (due to lack of clarity, resources or poor implementation) or the strategic context or the political ambition has fundamentally changed, it is imperative to move on with a completely new strategy.

### **Replace old strategies**

Politically it is often more interesting to initiate new strategies than to weed out old ones. For every new strategy it is important to clarify what it is replacing. Strategy proliferation and overlapping or contradicting strategies can do more harm than good.

### **Strategic thinking**

There are many desired attributes of strategic thinking. These should be seen as aspirations, and reminders, rather than absolute qualifications of a super human or master strategist.<sup>12</sup>

The desired peaceful **end state** must be at the forefront of strategic thinking. It is the question of being able to grasp all the elements and means at one's own disposal and applying them in such a way as to further long-term national interests and outcomes.

Strategic thinking should promote your core national interests in the **long term**, preferably over decades. That means that defeating an adversary in such a way that it provokes a follow-on challenge or in a way that depletes your own resources, is counterproductive. "Do no harm" is equally applicable to the strategist. A nation's values, cohesion, wealth, resilience and partnerships must be the same or greater through the application of the strategy, not less.

Managing **complexity** is a key to strategic thinking. Mastering change, multiple interests and ambitions, coordination of a broad array of assets and the continuous adaptation to how your own strategy impacts allies and adversaries is extremely difficult. It is about seeing and understanding the mosaic, and giving direction, and not blending it all into a strategic smoothie without edge. At the same time, with AI, IoT, social media and the prospects of enhanced/quantum computing power, can enhance strategic thinking but it also increases the complexity and the number of parameters.

As mentioned above, alternative and secondary costs of both action and inaction, and of the chosen priorities, must be assessed. At the highest decision making level, the strategic mind must weigh how much should be invested on the **immediate**, on the **important** and on the **long-term**, to paraphrase Dr. Henry Kissinger and Secretary Hillary Clinton in a joint 2009 interview. The strategic thinker must not let the urgent drive out the important, while one must always keep an eye on the long-term trend lines.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See Freedman's views on the myth of the master strategist in Strategy – A History, Oxford University Press, 2013, chapter 17.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.newsweek.com/hillary-clinton-kissinger-sec-state-job-75525>

**Empathy** may be the most important feature in strategic thinking. If you cannot put yourself into the mind of the adversary, you will always be overwhelmed by his/her reactions. The same goes for the ability to understand individual and institutional ambitions within your own government and among allies. Naturally the sentiment of the people you represent must be understood in order to maintain long-term support for your policies. “Know your enemy and know yourself, and in a hundred battles you will never be in peril” as the wise Chinese strategist said some 2500 years ago.

Further, strategic thinking is about **leadership**. Not all interests are as important as others, and it is up to the leader to point out and make the case for clear priorities and direction. Strategic thinking can be helped by structure, lessons from history and the wisdom of strategists past. But ultimately it is an art form. The choice of leaders who write and execute strategy is an essential part of the strategic process.

Governments need to promote and institutionalize a **culture of strategic thinking**. A cadre of civil servants, servicemen and politicians with integrity and the ability to think in critical and unconventional terms, and the above traits, need to be recruited, promoted and developed. Critical and analytical thinking is a national strategic asset, and a Western comparative advantage.<sup>14</sup>

### **In summary: the ultimate strategy**

A successful strategy has three main components: a clear objective/end state, an element of strategic context and the operational strategy itself. The strategy should be clear about priorities and how we get from today to the end objective. Subcomponents of the strategy identify the necessary stepping stones, appropriate partners, choices, alternative costs and a link between resources and ambition.

Strategy is like a two-way street. It is about conveying intention, interests and how to get from A to B. At the same time it is all about how the strategy is perceived by those who are meant to implement it, by the public who is paying for it, by the technology companies supporting it, by the allies who want and need to understand and support you, and by potential and actual adversaries who should be warned and hopefully dissuaded. The successful development and implementation of strategy demands strategic thinkers and a culture that promotes the qualities needed for a strategic mindset.

The highest form of strategic success is furthering your national interests without having to sacrifice your resources. The ultimate strategy delivers a strategic situation so advantageous that the opponent not only gives way, but does so willingly and without a sense of defeat or vengeance.

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<sup>14</sup> For a good example of critical thinking, institutionalized dissenting voice and a long-term perspective, see State's Policy Planning's mission statement: <https://www.state.gov/s/p/>