Strategy and Tactics: A Primer
Abstract: This document defines and describes the concepts of strategy and tactics in ways that can be applied to business operations. Its aim is to dispel ambiguity and confusion over the meaning and use of these terms. Using numerous examples from military history, this paper presents specific applications of strategy and tactics in the business world, with particular bearing on the activities of the competitive intelligence professional.

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strategy and tactics are high-priority topics in boardrooms and conference rooms of corporate America. More people are devoting more of their time to development and execution of “strategies,” with the aim of sharpening the focus of resource application for greater returns. Emphasis on strategy and tactics, however, has increased in the absence of a clear understanding by most people of what they actually are. The result is an unfortunate and aggregately larger disconnect between effort and productivity that sincerity is insufficient to overcome. The purpose of this brief document is to provide a clear overview of terms associated with what are generally thought of, in a collective sense, as “strategy” and “tactics.”

Strategy and tactics are, in their origin, military terms and any study of the subject requires a grounding in military context. Having developed an appreciation for strategy and tactics in a military sense, it is possible to successfully apply them in a business sense. The foundation of this paper, consequently, rests upon the writings of authoritative figures in military thinking.

Each section opens with definitions taken from a military context. Each definition is referenced for further study as desired. Grammatical liberties have been taken with certain passages quoted herein, with the aim of maximizing the relevance of the passage for the intended purpose. Context, however, has not been altered.

The second portion of each section is an editorial segue intended to crystallize the message offered through the definitions, and begin to apply the message to business purposes. Each section ends with specific applications of the message to business.

It is not intended that the terms considered herein will be categorically defined, such that the reader will recognize discrete beginning and end points for each. The reason for this is that although “in conception (strategy and tactics) are distinct... the two categories... can never be truly divided into separate compartments because each not only influences but merges into the other” [B.H. Liddell Hart, Strategy, Meridian, 1967, pp. 324 and 321]. Likewise, this paper is not offered as a comprehensive treatise on strategy and tactics, which require and merit a significant commitment of one’s life to master. Rather, it is intended to remove ambiguity associated with uninformed use of the terms and provide a framework that is conducive to applying the greatest possible force, at the decisive point, for the optimal result: success at the bottom line.

2 THE ROLE OF COMPETITIVE INTELLIGENCE

The heritage of competitive intelligence (CI) extends through history to the root of strategic thought; centuries of armed conflict perfected the art and science of acquisition and utilization of “competitive” information. Intelligence was required to ascertain the disposition of opposing forces, to reconnoiter the landscape, to determine the sentiment of the local populace, and to assess lines of enemy supply. In total the insights arising from intelligence activities allowed the formulation of strategy.

The master strategist Sun Tzu described around 512 B.C. 1 the activities and utility of the modern CI professional in his Ping Fa (The Art of War):

> What enables the wise sovereign and the good general to strike and conquer, and achieve things beyond the reach of ordinary men, is foreknowledge. 2.... This foreknowledge

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cannot be elicited from spirits nor from the gods; nor by inductive thinking; nor by deductive calculations. It can only be obtained from men who have knowledge on the enemy’s situation...

Because “primacy of information holds for battlefields as well as board rooms,” the CI professional is as fundamental to corporate strategy development as to war planning. It is imperative that the CI professional be a source of clarity on the terms and process of strategy formulation and tactical execution. The CI professional is, consequently, a primary target for the concepts detailed herein.

3 GRAND STRATEGY

“To coordinate and direct the resources of a nation, or a band of nations, towards the attainment of the political object of the war—the goal defined by fundamental policy.”

“Strategy which so integrates the policies and armaments of the nation that the resort to war is either rendered unnecessary or is undertaken with the maximum chance of victory.”

“Applying and coordinating all the elements of national power—economic, diplomatic, psychological, technological, (and) military.”

“The coordinated packaging of all the instruments of power, military and nonmilitary, at the disposal of a nation or an alliance to attain prescribed objectives.”

Grand Strategy involves the following:

- Calculation and development of the economic resources and manpower of nations in order to sustain the fighting services.
- Development and sustaining the moral resources—the people’s willing spirit—which is often as important as to possess the more concrete forms of power.
- Regulating the distribution of power between the several services and between the services and industry.
- Taking into account and applying the power of financial pressure, of diplomatic pressure, of commercial pressure, and not least of ethical pressure, to weaken the opponent’s will.
- Looking beyond the war to the subsequent peace.

4 Ibid., p. 115.
6 Hart, Ibid.
10 Hart, Ibid.
11 Examples include Gideon’s 300 soldiers facing 135,000 Midianites, starving Colonial troops at Valley Forge, Soviet forces at Leningrad, and Viet Cong forces faced by technologically superior Western power. A desperate army fights with the “courage of despair.” —Sun Tzu, Ibid., p. 35.
Combining the various instruments of war, but so regulating their use as to avoid damage to the future state of peace—for its security and prosperity.

The last two descriptors must be considered in light of the observation that “eternal vigilance in the matters of the causes of and the fundamental principles which govern the conduct of war are the price of liberty.”

Grand strategy has been described as the process of identifying objectives (policy), allies, and enemies. This is a joint process involving civilian policy and military temperance. The process involves identifying national interests arising from assumptions about self identity, culture, and quality of life priorities—those inalienable rights worth defending. Choosing allies is a function of identifying parties who, for the present, represent ideological confederates. “For the present” because priorities and consequently, partnerships, change; i.e., “France does not have friends, but interests.” Choosing enemies is generally less an active exercise than it is identifying parties whose interests or ambitions are, or are likely to become, elements of friction between “us” and “them” that are too troublesome, costly, etc. to reliably negotiate settlement for or to ignore.

The parallels to business are unmistakable. A company’s board of directors and senior executives must identify corporate goals (“mission,” “strategic intent”) that will serve to focus the efforts and actions of the organization. Those enterprises outside the company but not outside the influence of the company, which represent assets toward achieving the corporate goals, are considered for their ally potential. Alliances must be made based on sound intelligence: “If you do not know the plans of your competitors, you cannot make informed alliances.” Those entities likely to be a threat to achieving the corporate goals are the “enemy.”

The definitions above reveal that in addition to identifying objectives, allies, and enemies, grand strategy involves skillful resource management. Alignment of all available resources, within and without the organization, is pursued either to make conflict unnecessary or to make the outcome of unavoidable conflict inevitably favorable. Internal resources are R&D, manufacturing, marketing, logistics, and all other functions that make a company work. Speed and consistency in communicating the critical messages of resource alignment are imperative for success. External resources include suppliers and customers through value chain integration, elements such as the U.S. Department of Commerce, Department of Defense, the Export-Import Bank, national laboratories, universities, Congressional representatives, other companies with symbiotic potential or parallel interests, and even competitors—within carefully defined roles. Note that when an enterprise is simultaneously a supplier, customer, joint venture partner, and competitor (or some subset thereof), it is essential to understand the view that enterprise takes of itself, as that will determine the context within which it views its relationship with us, public statements and private assurances notwithstanding:

In addition to surveying all the corporation’s critical functions, the strategist must be able to look at competition in its totality, including such critical strategic elements as the

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12 Earle, Ibid.
13 John Warden, III, President, Venturist, Inc., presentation to Texas Instruments, 4/18/97.
14 President Charles de Gaulle.
competitor’s R&D capabilities, shared resources in procurement, manufacturing, sales and service, or other sources of profit (including all the other businesses in which the competitor may be engaged). He must also be able to put himself mentally in the place of a strategic planner in the rival company and thus ferret out the key perceptions and assumptions on which the competitor’s strategy is based.  

4  STRATEGY

“The comprehensive direction of power to control situations and areas in order to attain objectives.”

“The art of controlling and utilizing the resources of a nation—or a coalition of nations—including its armed forces, to the end that its vital interests shall be effectively promoted and secured against enemies, actual, potential, or merely presumed.”

“The art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy.”

“The practical application of the means placed at the general’s disposal to the attainment of the objective in view.”

“The activity that strives directly to attain the objectives of policy, in peace as in war.”

• The aim of strategy is to diminish the possibility of resistance by exploiting the elements of movement and surprise.
• The aim of strategy must be to bring about battle (if battle is required) under the most advantageous circumstances.
• The perfection of strategy would be to produce a decision without any serious fighting.
• (The strategist’s) true aim is not so much to seek battle as to seek a strategic situation so advantageous that if it does not by itself produce the (most profitable result), its continuation by a battle is sure to achieve this.
• It involves the establishment of military strategic objectives, the allocation of resources, the imposition of conditions on the use of force, and the development of war plans.
• One can describe military strategy as the discipline of winning wars.

20  Earle, Ibid.
21  Hart, Ibid.
22  Earle, Ibid., p. 324.
23  Ibid.
24  Ibid.
25  Ibid.
26  Ibid.
27  Ibid.
28  Ibid.
29  Ibid.
Having formulated grand strategy, in which the objectives have been identified, a comprehensive evaluation of available resources has been conducted, and the opposition has been identified, one determines how best to position in order to bring about the desired result. The intent is to make the outcome of any necessary conflict inevitable before engaging. This is accomplished through foreknowledge of the enemy’s dispositions (position, inclination, strength, weakness, preference for battle, allies, etc.), the terrain, and one’s own capabilities. The task is to match one’s strength against the enemy’s weakness, and make one’s weakness invisible to the enemy to avoid his strength, and then to move quickly in order to catch the enemy off balance. “The value of time—that is, being a little ahead of your opponent—has counted for more than either numerical superiority or the nicest calculations with regard to commissariat.”

The principle of swiftness in action was exemplified by the post-revolutionary French army, which “marched and fought at 120 paces to the minute, while their opponents adhered to the orthodox 70 paces.” This allowed Napoleon Bonaparte’s forces to “multiply ‘mass by velocity’ both strategically and tactically.”

Knowledge of the terrain is vital to success in this exercise—some is negotiable while other terrain is not, while still other ground may be assumed to be impassable to the enemy but with skillful maneuvering or preparation, can be crossed to catch the enemy unaware. In 217 B.C., for example, Hannibal Barca defeated the Roman general Flaminius at Lake Trasimene (modern northern Italy) by pursuing a forced march through marshy terrain considered unmanageable. He appeared unexpectedly at the enemy’s rear, baited Flaminius to attack, and inflicted 25,000 casualties upon the Romans in one of the greatest military ambushes in history.

By catching the enemy off balance, the outcome may be determined without a contest as the enemy realizes the futility of resistance. For example, the speed of Napoleon’s offensive across Southern Germany in the winter of 1805 caught Austrian forces at Ulm unprepared. Surrounded by the 200,000 man Grande Armée, the 60,000 strong Austrian army surrendered almost without a shot fired. Napoleon’s lightning maneuver at Ulm contributed directly to his smashing of the Third Coalition (Austria, Russia, and Great Britain) at Austerlitz on December 2. If the enemy chooses to resist, superior strategy ensures his defeat at greater cost than capitulation, as demonstrated during Alexander of Macedon’s invasion of Persia in the fourth century B.C. Although Darius III twice sued for peace, his refusal to meet Alexander’s terms, however excessive, resulted in his violent death by treason, destruction of his forces, and utter sacking and slaughter in several fortified cities. Surrender of the kingdom would have been personally costly but much less destructive.

When the corporation understands what it wishes to accomplish, knows its internal and external resources (and has sufficiently prepared the external resources to be certain of their appropriate deployment when necessary), and identified the opponent(s), the challenge becomes aligning all resources toward meeting the objective. Management must recognize the need for strategic

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31 Hart, Ibid., p. 94.
32 Ibid. Internal quote is from Napoleon Bonaparte, who also said, “It may be that in future I may lose a battle, but I shall never lose a minute.” Ibid., p. 101.
33 “If we know that our own men are in a condition to attack, but are unaware that the enemy is not open to attack, we have gone only halfway toward victory. If we know that the enemy is open to attack, but are unaware that our own men are not in a condition to attack, we have gone only halfway toward victory. If we know that the enemy is open to attack, and also know that our men are in a condition to attack, but are unaware that the nature of the ground makes fighting impracticable, we have still gone only halfway toward victory.” Sun Tzu, Ibid., p. 55.
thinking, that roughly 87% of the population does not think strategically, and that the enterprise must succeed nonetheless. Top priorities become (1) communicating objectives internally, (2) cross-functional communication geared toward eliminating implementation bottlenecks and maximizing resource deployment, and (3) acquiring comprehensive intelligence on the business environment—the terrain—and the competition. The company conducts acquisitions and divestitures as necessary to create swift access to technology and business control points, and to deny the competition access to resources or countervailing leverage. Certain elements of this process are visible as a function of the business environment (Securities and Exchange Commission reporting, shareholder accountability, etc.), but certain elements are not shared: “All men can see the individual tactics necessary to conquer, but almost no one can see the strategy out of which total victory is evolved.”

Control points may be referred to as “centers of gravity (COGs),” the exploitation of which brings about the desired result with a minimum of expended time and resources. In business, COGs are most often people. Even when pursuing technology or business COGs, people are the decision makers—executives, attorneys, officials, technologists, board members, professors, etc.—who affect one’s success in reaching one’s strategic objectives. Without discounting the importance of technology as an enabler, it is important to distinguish between a technology enabler and the people that make the technology effective. “Exploiting” the COG becomes an exercise in swaying decisions through identifying the decision makers and triangulating resources upon them so they hear the appropriate message from different viewpoints and different people. The message bearers are identified in advance as individuals with access to the COG by virtue of position, reputation, relationship, influence (the targeted person would like to be able to influence them and would therefore welcome contact by them), or some other reason. From this group of identified messengers, a subset that is amenable to the decided interest is selected and swayed to the appropriate viewpoint. They then can be directed through suggestion or circumstance to share their new information with the COG. It has been said that “one cannot tell people what to think, but one can tell people what to think about.” By triangulating the message to the COG, filtered from different yet sympathetic perspectives, the COG receives a robust, composite view of the desired outcome, and considers it, at the least, due to frequency of exposure. Unlike war, in which the COG may be reduced by force, in business the COG must capitulate because he or she decides it is in his or her (or his/her enterprise’s) best interest. As in war, the most effective method of accomplishing this is the indirect approach—triangulation through channels, with no visible intent to tackle the COG directly. Of the oft-attempted “direct approach,” the great British strategist Liddell Hart has pointed out that of more than 280 campaigns in 30 wars spanning 25 centuries, in only six “did a decisive result follow a plan of direct strategic approach.” He concludes with the observation that “the indirect is by far the most hopeful and economic form of strategy.”

The above methodology is independent of scale. It is effective at the corporate level, division and group levels, and in personal interaction. The reason for its effectiveness is that it exploits individual self interest. The operating principle is context. The information is presented to the

35 Industrial College of the Armed Forces statistic.
36 Sun Tzu, Ibid., p. 28.
37 John Warden, Ibid.
38 See “Technique” for more discussion on the role of technology in the strategy process.
39 Hart, Ibid., p. 144.
40 Ibid., p. 145.
messengers with their biases and interests considered. Likewise, the messengers “package” it for
the COG as a natural extension of their point of view and their interaction or relationship to
the COG, such that the COG is receptive to it. When the COG encounters the message at the point of
decision, he or she has been apprised of the relevant points within the appropriate context,
recognizes its merit as both a function of its attributes and the credibility of the messengers, is
reasonably certain of the support of like-minded confederates should resistance be encountered,
and has had occasion to consider how the corporation—and hence he or she—might benefit from
implementation. It is crucial at this point that appropriate quantitative groundwork, having been
performed before hand, be easily and immediately available to the COG to solidify his or her
convictions. The availability of such information would have been communicated to the
messengers, with the understanding that their presentation to the COG most likely would be
qualitative.

5 CAMPAIGNING (OPERATIONS)

“A series of related military actions undertaken over a period of time to achieve a
specific objective within a given region.”

“Campaigning reflects the operational level of war, at which the results of individual
tactical actions are combined to fulfill the needs of strategy.”

“(Campaigning) is the link between strategy and tactics.”

Campaigning embodies the following characteristics:

- The aim (of campaigning) is to give meaning to tactical actions in the context of some larger
design, which itself ultimately is framed by strategy.... The aim is to get strategically
meaningful results through tactics.
- The discipline of conceiving, focusing, and exploiting a variety of tactical actions to realize a
strategic aim.
- The basic tool by which the operational commander translates actions into strategic results is
the campaign.
- Its means are tactical results—be they victories, losses, or draws.
- Its end is the accomplishment of the established strategic aim.
- Its ways are the schemes by which we combine and sequence the tactical means to reach the
strategic end.

Victory in warfare is not achieved through winning battles, but in winning battles (when they
must be fought) within a framework that brings about the strategic objective. In the absence of
strategy, superior tactics are not useful. Likewise, strategy is hollow in the absence of the ability
to bring about a decisive result at the point of conflict. While strategy and tactics are mutually
dependent, tactical actions must be organized to affect the strategic aim. The campaign, or the

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41 Note that the discussion of implementing strategy also involves discussion of tactics and technique. They are “distinct in concept” but they
“influence and merge into each other.”

42 Gray, Ibid., p.3.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

operational aspect of war, is a process of organizing tactical actions such that the strategic objective is most expeditiously and economically achieved. The campaign is the framework that provides operational effectiveness to tactical success.

In business, the campaign consists of organizing various activity streams to meet the objectives of the enterprise. Achieving a particular technological position may involve technology transfer from the university or national labs system, acquisition of a software company, allying with a supplier, protesting the sale of a sensitive technology to foreign (competitive) interests, and the like. Landing a lucrative account may involve identifying and targeting internal decision makers and their influence captains, rallying spokespeople from among the customer base, interfacing with media, industry consultants, and Wall Street opinion makers, aligning corporate resources to reflect the best interests of the intended customer, etc. Many individual “battles” must be fought to bring each of these activities to a successful conclusion, at the right time, with the right visibility and spin, to appropriately influence the outcome. The process of organizing the effort in each area to this effect is the art of campaigning. Each activity represents a different campaign, which is conceived at the strategic level as a necessary element in producing the desired result, and is composed of myriad tactical actions that must be sculpted and leveraged to maximum effect. For a campaign to be decisive, it must contribute directly to the attainment of the strategic objective.

6 TACTICS

“(T)he art of handling forces in battle.”

“When the application of the military instrument merges into actual fighting, the dispositions for and control of such direct action are termed ‘tactics.’”

“The discipline of winning battles and engagements.”

“The art of executing the designs of strategy.”

In order to cause the enemy’s defeat, tactics include:

• Maneuver of forces in contact with the enemy to gain a fighting advantage
• Application and coordination of fire
• Sustainment of forces throughout combat
• Immediate exploitation of success to seal the victory
• Combination of different arms and weapons
• Gathering and dissemination of pertinent combat information
• Technical application of combat power within a tactical action

46 Pursued, perhaps, through the Department of Commerce or the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (“CFIUS”). The intent may be a delaying tactic, or to raise visibility on the issue obliquely to gain attention—PR—for the technology in question. Generally speaking, unless the situation demands extreme and visible action (as in the case of Eastman Kodak versus Fuji), this would be pursued behind the scenes, without exposing one’s corporate interests.

47 Through appropriate channels, such as Investor Relations and Public Relations departments.

48 Earle, Ibid.

49 Hart, Ibid., p. 321.

50 Gray, Ibid., p. 5.


52 Gray, Ibid.
Tactical action is the point at which conflict occurs. Tactics may be thought of as the mechanics of fighting and positioning for advantage towards the outcome of combat. It involves deployment of the tools of conflict, support of the troops engaged in conflict, and scrutiny of the battle as it unfolds to identify and seize decisive points that (a) determine the outcome; and (b) directly influence attainment of the operational objective. Focus of effort—concentrating and triangulating fire—is key to decisive tactical outcomes.

Consider the case in which the vice president of R&D is identified as a COG for a project decision. The VP has been identified at the strategic level as having a key vote in determining whether a particular project will go forward. He or she may not recognize his or her vote as being key. It may be that the opinion of the COG will sway those of several other executives who are closer to the proposed project than is the COG. Bringing the COG’s opinion to bear is the campaign, and is composed of many actions which collectively represent a compelling case—from his/her point of view—which persuades him/her to the desired perspective. These actions may include developing a compendium of quantitative data (including an abstracted summary of related information published in scientific journals, conference proceedings, etc.), influencing several of his/her direct reports, sending signals to his/her boss indirectly that show the merit of the project idea (not the project itself) from an independent third party perspective, identifying his/her “guru” upon whom he/she depends for critical insight, fostering a close working relationship with his/her administrative assistant, and so on. In each of these actions there should be the prospect of benefit, either directly or obliquely, to some aspect of the COG’s functional concerns. In the end, the COG’s support is won because through the appearance of unrelated events and bits of insight, he/she has decided that the project under consideration has potential to net the organization, and consequently him/her, reasonable dividends. An assurance of benefit is generally neither promised nor expected; the COG has determined the potential for gain is worth the risk represented by an affirmative opinion.

The reader should note that the indirect approach, often involving the process of triangulation, is presented herein as an historically effective method of achieving a decisive outcome. An underlying assumption of this paper is that the effort is geared toward accomplishing ends that benefit the corporation. The tactical approach described in the example above ensures that checks and balances improve the contribution of the project to corporate interests, as breadth of perspective is applied. In the end, the improved project is approved with appropriate oversight and broad conviction of its merit to the company or rejected with equally clear and broad conviction of superior returns on investments made elsewhere.

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53 His/her point of view must be determined in advance and the information delivered must be structured and delivered within this context.
54 “Indirect” does not mean “underhanded.” Attempts to influence the COG or messengers to the COG with methods other than clear presentation of value to the organization are unwise and unwarranted. Success in business depends upon trust arising from the integrity of relationships and commitment to corporate ideals.
7  

TECHNIQUE

“Those techniques and procedures for accomplishing specific tasks within a tactical action.”

“Nine-tenths of tactics are certain and taught in books: but the irrational tenth is like the kingfisher flashing across the pool and that is the test of generals. It can only be ensured by instinct, sharpened by thought practicing the stroke so often that at the crisis it is as natural as a reflex.”

- Deals with actions designed to enhance the effects of fires or reduce the effects of enemy fires—methods such as the calls for fire, techniques of fire, the technical operation of weapons and equipment, or tactical movement techniques.
- Distinct from tactics: Tactics are the product of judgment and creativity, while technique and procedure are generally performed by repetitive routine.

Technique is the science in warfare. It is the honing of skills through study, drill, discipline, commitment, and attention to detail. It is the individual enabler that ensures the skill required to effectively execute commands, fires, or maneuvers, and thus bring about the decisive tactical result. Courage, determination, threat, enticement, love, honor, fear, and every other motivator is in vain without technique.

Technique alone, however, does not win battles either in war or in business. It must be directed and skillfully employed in order to bring about the desired tactical result.

In business, technique is academic and professional acumen leveraged by personal dedication, tempered by experience, and driven by corporate vision. It is circumspection manifested in many ways. Effective technique arises, quite simply, from practice. It is being prepared to handle the unexpected by knowing available resources and knowing how to gain rapid access to required but immediately unavailable information. It also is being prepared to counter an unmeetable request for information with a reasonable and useful alternative, and possessing sufficient skill to make the counterproposal credible.

Technological wherewithal falls into the purview of technique. Being excellent in development of technology offers discipline and depth advantages that, effectively utilized, can contribute to tactical decisiveness. Technological excellence alone, however, is insufficient to ensure business success. Technology advantages are business advantages only when business leaders (a) recognize how they may be best applied given understanding of oneself, one’s opponents, and the terrain, and (b) are personally and professionally equipped to apply them to the uttermost. During February 1954, for example, Major Chuck Yeager was sent to Okinawa to evaluate the flight characteristics of a Russian-made MiG 15 acquired when a North Korean pilot defected. His evaluation revealed that the U.S. F-86 Sabre was technologically superior to the MiG 15. When asked, however, by a Lt. Colonel combat pilot if the Sabre’s technological edge gave U.S. pilots a dogfighting advantage, Major Yeager replied that the advantage went to the best pilot regardless of the technological capability of the aircraft. In order to prove the point, the pilots

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57 Gray, Ibid.
58 Or knowing that personal presentation limitations advocate an alternative presenter (personal skills deficit, inappropriate rank or reporting level, etc.).
59 The company and its internal and external resources.
then engaged in two mock dogfights, each in turn flying the MiG and the Sabre. Major Yeager defeated the combat pilot both times.60

8 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STRATEGY AND TACTICS

“(Strategy) is different from tactics... in much the same way that an orchestra is different from its individual instruments.”61

“The two categories (strategy and tactics), although convenient for discussion, can never be truly divided into separate compartments because each not only influences but merges into the other.”62

“In conception the two (strategy and tactics) are distinct.”63

“Tactics lies in and fills the province of fighting. Strategy not only stops on the frontier, but has for its purpose the reduction of fighting to the slenderest possible proportions.”64

The first definition above offers perhaps the clearest method for synthesizing the differences and interdependencies between the terms grand strategy, strategy, campaigning, tactics, and technique. An orchestra delivers a musical performance. The intent of the composer as interpreted by the conductor represents grand strategy. The orchestra in its totality represents the strategy for communicating the composer’s intent. Each section—the woodwinds, horns, strings, percussion, etc.—represents a campaign operating within the context of the strategy. Each musician within each section represents tactics. The disciplined study of music and music theory, and the precision of instrument design and production, represent technique which forms the cornerstone of effective execution, and the foundation of successful implementation of strategy and tactics. Interpretation of the music by the individual performers is the human element which is endowed at birth, annealed by technique, and applied in coalition toward a decisive tactical, operational, and strategic outcome.

The best efforts of the conductor at the “strategic” level, in the absence of the “tactical” elements of the orchestra, is silence. Without the “campaign,” or organization of the “tactical” elements of the orchestra, the result is noise. Without “technique” empowering the “tactical” elements of the orchestra, the result is chaos. Thus we see that grand strategy—the intent of the composer as interpreted by the conductor—meets with success only through the combined art and science of the members of the orchestra, leveraged through effective organizational design and execution.

60 General Chuck Yeager and Leo Janos, Yeager, Bantam Books, 1985, pp. 207-208.
61 Earle, Ibid.
62 Hart, Ibid.
63 Ibid., p. 324.
64 Ibid.
9 IMPLICATIONS FOR COMPETITIVE INTELLIGENCE

The skills of the CI professional may be called upon at any point in the strategy process. Whether providing depth during formulation of grand strategy or breadth in considering elements of technique, the CI professional must recognize the point in the process at which his/her skills are being inserted, and the flow of each element of the process into the others. Thus, the CI professional becomes both a provider of critical intelligence and a “keeper of context,” who understands how intelligence advances from decision making through operational planning and execution. Since “it is by the character of our adversary’s position that we can draw conclusions as to his designs and will therefore act accordingly,” the CI professional must likewise be able to (a) synthesize disparate pieces of intelligence to determine their aggregate relevance, and (b) deliver the consequent message(s) to the appropriate parties within the firm.

Herein, perhaps is the greatest contribution of the CI professional. The value of skillful synthesis of information to identify its essence and application to the firm is determined less by precision than by utilization. If even the best intelligence is not incorporated into the planning process and acted upon, it is of no use to the company. Resistance to new ideas regardless of their ultimately proven merit is axiomatic to the human experience. Therefore, in order to maximize the value of intelligence to the firm, the CI professional must operationally understand the importance of the indirect approach, since “the longest way round is often the shortest way home.”

10 SUMMARY

Development of strategy and tactics into useful disciplines has resulted from a fundamental element of human existence: conflict. As the most extreme of human interactions, the crucible of war has produced doctrines of strategy and tactics with great depth and breadth of applicability. These doctrines consequently apply to every level of human interaction in which the potential for conflict exists. In the business world, conflict is as real as on the battlefield, if less extreme in its immediate results. In the end, companies live or die; in the latter case, employees are displaced, their lives disrupted, their livelihoods in question (however temporarily). The study of strategy and tactics to ensure attainment of corporate objectives and reduce trauma associated with failure is well worthwhile. Yet without technique—beginning with a basic understanding of the terms associated with the strategic process in total—the result is chaos.

11 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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