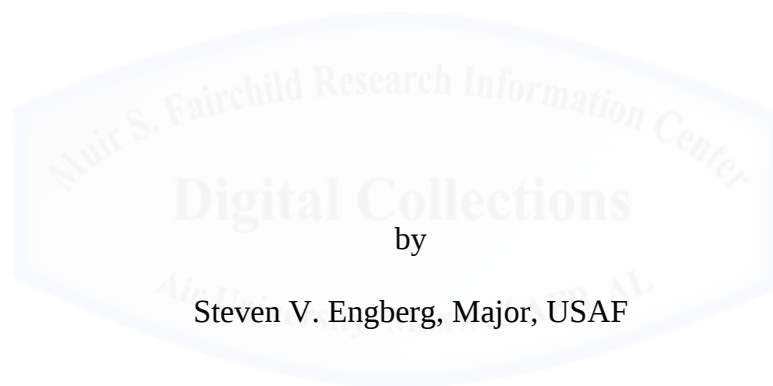


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AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

**TURNING MILITARY VICTORY INTO POLITICAL SUCCESS:  
STRATEGIC DESIGN AS A CANDLE IN THE DARK**



by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

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April 2012

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## **Abstract**

In war, military victory is not synonymous with success. It is not enough to win the war; political leadership must provide strategic guidance that enables the national instruments of power to win the peace. Success can only be achieved when enduring political goals, the purpose of war, are achieved. At its core, the underlying impediment preventing military victory from achieving overall success is the inability for the national security system to develop a coherent and purposeful grand strategy, the outputs of which are policies that guide instruments of power to achieve a specific political goal. The current approach used by the national security system to develop and disseminate grand strategy and strategic guidance is a relic of the Cold War and is insufficient in today's interdependent and complex strategic environment. By adopting a Strategic Design framework, the national security enterprise gains a methodology to instill within its institutions and individuals the agility and critical reasoning needed to create imaginative grand strategy during peace and adaptive strategic guidance during war. In order to maintain credibility, influence, and security in an ever-increasingly complex international landscape, the United States national security system must adopt a Strategic Design processes to ensure that all instruments of national power are applied in a coherent effort towards achieving purposeful political ends. This paper introduces the Strategic Design framework and demonstrates how its iterative processes link military and non-military operational level triumphs with the political concept of success.

## **Introduction: The Road to Success**

Political authorities, responding to mounting pressure to do something in crisis, regularly assign ambiguous missions to senior military leaders.<sup>1</sup>

BG(r) Huba Wass de Czege, 2009

In war, military victory is not synonymous with success. As Clausewitz tells us, war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument; the political objectives are the ends and war is the means.<sup>2</sup> While military victory is a positive action, it is only one of the many contributing factors to the larger concept of success.<sup>3</sup> Success, writ large, is defined by whether enduring political goals, the purpose of war, are achieved.<sup>4</sup> It is not enough to win the war, political leadership must also provide strategic guidance that enables the national instruments of power to win the peace. Linking political ends with military and non-military means, therefore, can be said to define ‘the true way of war’. Unfortunately, American military and political thought tends to “shy away from thinking about turning military triumphs into strategic successes,” resulting in a way of battle instead of a way of war.<sup>5</sup> In order to maintain credibility, influence, and security in an ever-increasingly complex international landscape, the United States national security system must adopt a Strategic Design processes to ensure that all instruments of national power are applied in a coherent effort towards achieving purposeful political ends.

At its core, the underlying impediment preventing turning military victory to overall success is the inability for the national security system to develop a coherent and purposeful grand strategy, the outputs of which are policies that guide instruments of power to achieve a specific political goal. Simply put, strategy is the thinking and understanding of the relationship between ends and means.<sup>6</sup> It is this concept that lays the groundwork for grand strategy, the coordination and direction of all of a nation’s instruments of power towards the attainment of the

political objectives for both war and peacetime security.<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of this paper, the discussion of strategy will revolve around this definition of grand strategy, references to subordinate strategies, such as military or theater strategy, will be annotated as such. Grand strategy must view the interdependent and complex international environment with a long-term perspective, the purpose of which is to set a continuum of conditions that optimizes a nation's security and prosperity. It is impossible to envision and predict idealized ends states across long time horizons, therefore success of a nation's grand strategy must be measured in terms of distinguishing outcomes as 'better' or 'worse' as events unfold.<sup>8</sup> This differs significantly from policy, the product of grand strategy. In the realm of campaign planning and execution, policy and strategic guidance are interchangeable. Relative to grand strategy, which seeks to set conditions decades into the future, the focus of policy is limited to the short-term. The short term goals expressed by policy requires action "based on a problem frame derived from [the] best current understanding of the situation," and as such, success is measured in using a concrete 'win'/'lose' construct.<sup>9</sup> Establishing a true way of war requires coherent and purposeful grand strategy, from which meaningful strategic guidance is divined to coordinate action across all instruments of power towards a common purpose.

Achieving political goals of war requires a whole-of-government approach that aligns and harnesses all the strengths of our nation's instruments of power.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, the existing national security enterprise does not have the ability to "foster government wide collaboration on actions and outcomes through coherent application of available resource to achieve desired objective or end states."<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, it is too rigid and parochial to respond swiftly and decisively to emergent opportunities and threats. The current approach used by the national security system to develop and disseminate grand strategy and strategic guidance is a

relic of the cold-war era and insufficient in today's interdependent and complex strategic environment. By adopting a Strategic Design framework, the national security enterprise gains a methodology to instill the institutional and individual agility needed to create imaginative grand strategy during peace, adaptive strategic guidance during war, and the ability to unite the nation's instruments of power in the singular purpose of achieving desired political goals to win both the war and the peace.<sup>12</sup> Changing the way the existing national security enterprise thinks about grand strategy and policy will not be a simple task, but is a task that must be undertaken if the United States wants to maintain power and influence in the international environment.

The purpose of this paper is to introduce the Strategic Design framework and to demonstrate how it links military and non-military operational level triumphs with the political concept of success. First, this paper will examine and counter Brennan and Kelly's assertion that the American way of battle is the result of the way the United States military currently conceptualizes and utilizes operational art.<sup>13</sup> Using Operational Allied Force as a case study, this paper will highlight the need for a unified and enduring strategy development process. Finally, Strategic Design and its elements and functions will be introduced and explained. This paper will close with a short discussion on the legal and cultural reforms that are required to make the Strategic Develop concept a reality.

### **Xenophobia: Blaming an "Alien"**

In their monograph "Alien: How Operational Art Devoured Strategy", Mike Brennan and Justin Kelly suggest that the introduction of the operational level of war and the perversion of the classical definition of operational art are the root causes for the creation of the American way of battle.<sup>14</sup> Brennan and Kelly argue that by associating operational art with campaign planning, "it

has come to compete with strategy, rather than to serve it”, inhibiting the strategy to task continuum.<sup>15</sup> This problem is further exacerbated, they argue, by the addition of the operational level of war, which “has usurped the role of strategy and thereby resisted the role that the civilian leadership should play in campaign planning.”<sup>16</sup> Brennan and Kelly also contend that by planning at the operational level political leaders are relegated to “strategic sponsors” rather than providers of strategy who are involved in the minute-to-minute conduct of war.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, congruency between military victory and political success can only be reinstated by deleting the operational level of war, and returning the function of campaign planning to the strategic leadership “at the seat of government.”<sup>18</sup> In concert with moving campaign design to a nation’s capital is Brennan and Kelly’s notion of strategic art.

While the idea of strategic art is interesting, Brennan and Kelly’s conceptualization of it falls short in terms of providing a solution to link military victory to political success. What they refer to as strategic art is essentially nothing more than operational art in “strategic” clothing; it simply transfers the current understanding of operational art, the “use of creative thinking by commanders and staffs to design strategies, campaigns, and major operations and organize and employ military forces”, from the Combatant Commands to the national capital. This is problematic on multiple fronts. First, it removes planning from the theaters in which those campaigns will occur. It makes little sense to create theater strategy from a geographic location outside the anticipated theater of operation, which is essentially what Brennan and Kelly propose using their notion of strategic art. Furthermore, it assumes that moving planning to a closer proximity to political leadership will enhance political participation and will clarify guidance. Simply rebranding campaign planning as strategic art, and relocating it to the seat of government, does not address the underlying cause of the bifurcation of American way of war.

No one, in Brennan and Kelly's vision of strategic art, supplies the 'strategic artist' with guidance that defines political goals and that links the application of military and non-military means to attain those goals. By not addressing the underlying problem that afflicts campaign planning, the lack of cogent grand strategy and strategic guidance, Brennan and Kelly are simply advocating a concept that encourages the status quo.

Unfortunately, Brennan and Kelly's analysis betrays their unfamiliarity with the American national security system, the Joint Operational Planning Process used to campaign plan, and the global scope of responsibility for the United States instruments of power, especially that of the military. In reality, operational art does not usurp the political leadership's role of developing strategy because there is nothing to usurp. The disconnect between military action and political goals does not occur within the operational level of war, but rather at link between political leadership at strategic level and the military at both the strategic and operational levels. Viewed pictorially, Figure A shows the relationship between strategy and operational art. The problems faced by planners reside not between Theater Strategic (operational) level and the tactical level. It is the lack of guidance and communication from the strategic leadership that leads to dissonance between military action and political expectations. If nothing else, operational art provides the bridge that links grand strategy to tactics. The absence of coherent and purposeful strategic guidance turns operational art into a bridge to nowhere.

The unwillingness or inability of political leadership to provide coherent guidance creates a strategic void preventing the national instruments of power from being unified in action and effort to achieve the desired political outcomes. This strategic void must be filled for steady state operations, deliberate and crisis action planning, and everything in between. More often than not, the responsibility to fill that void falls on the shoulders of the only organization capable

of doing so, the Combatant Commanders and their staff. The absence of grand strategy, and by extension strategic guidance containing desired political end states matched with the appropriate means, is the root cause of the dissonance between military victory and achieving political success. Operation Allied Force provides the perfect case study to explore the relationship between political end states, military victory, and “success”.



Figure A: The relationship between Strategy and Operational Art<sup>19</sup>

### Operation Allied Force: Fallout from the Strategic Void

“We’re certainly engaged in hostilities. We’re engaged in combat. Whether that measures up to, quote, a classic definition of war, I’m not prepared to say.”<sup>20</sup>

Secretary of Defense Cohen, 15 Apr 1999

"I don't think you can characterize [the Administration goal] as 'total victory.'

That's not what I'm asking for.”<sup>21</sup>

President Clinton, 3 May 1999

"It's not a conventional thing, where one side's going to win and one side's going to lose.”<sup>22</sup>

President Clinton, 6 May 1999

“It's not clear ‘if we won’ because the desired end state has never been articulated.”<sup>23</sup>

Lt Gen Short, Feb 2000

Despite Secretary of Defense Cohen's bold proclamation before congress on 31 January 2000, Operation Allied Force (OAF) was not an "overwhelming success." Such an audacious statement regarding the outcome of OAF hints of revisionist history, especially given the public pronouncements listed above questioning if victory was the goal, a realistic possibility, or even whether or not the United States was even engaged in "war". The reason Secretary Cohen cannot credibly claim "overwhelming success" has nothing to do with operational art or with the fact that campaign planning took place at the operational level of war. Rather, it is due to the inability for the national security system to create a coherent and purposeful grand strategy, and from political leaders failing to provide strategic guidance, based on that grand strategy, to link political goals with the synchronized action of the nation's instruments of power.

Grand strategy is the relationship between ends and means, and the lack of a clearly defined political end state is the first indication that the grand strategy governing the United States' involvement in OAF failed. Entering Kosovo, the United States government and NATO defined three "strong" interests justifying intervention as well as three strategic objectives.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, Gen Clark provided Lt Gen Short five military end states that clearly stated what he was to achieve with air power.<sup>25</sup> The lack of a cogent political goal, however, resulted in the use of the military and diplomatic instruments of power to terminate, not resolve, the conflict. Therefore, the United States made arguably little progress in providing a solid foundation for stability in the Balkans, which, ironically, the United States stated was its top interest justifying action in Kosovo.<sup>26</sup> The fact that no such vision existed, and that conflict resolution was not a priority, is evidenced by the fact that the cease-fire agreement did not "fully define the future government of Kosovo, deal with the issue of independence, or describe the role of the Kosovo liberation army or Serbian forces in Kosovo."<sup>27</sup> The underlying tensions that sparked the

conflict were not satiated, and despite the presence of NATO and United Nation ground forces to secure the region, 2004 witnessed the worst ethnic violence in Kosovo since Operation Allied Force.<sup>28</sup> Ten years after the cessation of conflict, Kosovo declared independence, a move that received far from universal acknowledgement and acceptance from the international community. To date, only 80 countries have publically recognized Kosovo as an independent, sovereign, country.<sup>29</sup> Despite declaring independence, 6200 foreign ground forces and an operational reserve still remain in Kosovo to maintain order.<sup>30</sup> Lack of clear vision for the future of Kosovo, and the region write large, is endemic of a failed grand strategy. In addition to not providing salient end states, grand strategy failed by not unifying action across all of its instruments of power.

Lack of effective grand strategy and strategic guidance is also evident by the incoherent and uncoordinated utilization of national instruments of power in Operation Allied Force. Diplomacy and air strikes were the primary tools used in OAF, with the economic and information instruments of power being mere afterthoughts.<sup>31</sup> When synchronized, the threat of and actual application of military forces provides the bite to diplomacy's bark, resulting in unified action to achieve the desired effects. This level of synchronization was never achieved in OAF. Diplomats and civilian leaders felt that if diplomatic unity and threat of force couldn't convince Milosevic to capitulate, that only a limited number of "politically symbolic air strikes would."<sup>32</sup> When diplomatic talks broke down at Ramboulet, Secretary of State Albright, Gen Clark, amongst others, reinforced this sentiment that stating that Milosevic would fold in a matter of days.<sup>33</sup> This not only highlighted the inaccurate assumptions about the intentions and sources of power of the relative actors, it also implied that diplomatic and military efforts would

be interwoven to turn their optimistic prediction into reality. Unified action, however, was non-existent.

The diplomatic effort focused on three main areas; maintaining the alliance, containing the humanitarian crisis, and ensuring an open and constructive relationship with Russia.<sup>34</sup> While Lt Gen Short was aware, in general, that the State Department was engaged in diplomatic activities, he did not know their specific action or goals.<sup>35</sup> In a speech to the Royal Norwegian Air Force Academy, Lt Gen Short reflected that diplomats work at the operational and strategic level of war and that:

They know stuff that you and I do not know. For instance, I did not know that the British had placed restrictions on my airplanes based in the United Kingdom. The British said to me that parliament needed to approve all targets dropped by B-1s, B-52s, and F-15Es based on their soil. That approval process was incredibly slow. In more than one instance...the British parliament...said a target was not approved, and I ended up cancelling the whole strike package. I did not know that, and I did not know the French would have veto power over the entire line.<sup>36</sup>

Only in retrospect did the interagency come to grips with the fact that early and active coordination between *all* instruments of power could have made them more effective in a shorter span of time.<sup>37</sup> Unfortunately, without any overall political end state to guide them, earlier coordination in and of itself would not have been enough to turn OAF into the success that Secretary Cohen proclaimed. This lesson, if learned, was sadly forgotten during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Reflecting on the relationship between end and means, the foundation of grand strategy, raises many questions about the United States' efforts in Kosovo and potential involvement in future conflicts. Whether "strong", not vital, interests are reason enough to justify intervention is an integral part to the discussion designing effective grand strategy. Additionally, the degree to which air power and diplomacy contributed to the achievement the strategic objectives and

fulfillment the military end states in OAF is also a subject worthy of debate, but beyond the scope of this paper. What is relevant, however, is that regardless of their operational and tactical effectiveness in realizing either the military end states or strategic objectives, if use of force doesn't support the fulfillment of political goals, then the use of the military instrument of power is nothing more than violence and the use of the diplomatic instrument is tantamount to extortion. To risk blood, treasure, power, and influence by entering a conflict without assessing national interests, opportunities, and threats, and without aligning clearly stated political ends states with appropriate instruments, reflects an incompetent grand strategy and makes it impossible to declare 'success'.

Miscarriages of grand strategy are not a phenomenon isolated to OAF or the Clinton administration. As depressing as it is, examples of the bifurcation between what Echevarria calls the "grammar and logic of war" exist in virtually every administration involved in limited wars from Vietnam to Operation Enduring Freedom. This is an indictment of the current national security enterprise and should serve as the siren call to implement a Strategic Design framework to guide the political leaders' and national security bureaucracy's ability to understand of the complex strategic environment, "to frame a complex, ill-structured problems, and to design a broad approach" that gives planning direction to stakeholders that control all instruments of power the ability to adapt to emergent changes in the environment.<sup>38</sup> Such a process is required to preserve if our nation is to maintain its position as leader of the free world

## Strategic Design

Strategic Design is a conceptual framework that will align actions of instruments of power with desired political end states; it is the bridge that connects military victory with politically defined measures of success. Currently, there is no end-to-end “strategic management” process to create grand strategy for long-term security and prosperity or strategic guidance for taking advantage of emergent opportunities and threats.<sup>39</sup> Strategic Design is that strategic management process. It will enable national security professionals to understand the complex strategic environment, frame ambiguous problems, construct solutions that harmonize national means with strategic ends, and learn and adapt with changing conditions in both the strategic environment and the operational ecosystem.<sup>40</sup> This process will distill clarity for national decision makers, institutionalize creativity, ability, adaptability, and enable collective understanding. Construction of the Strategic Design framework leverages Dr. Terry Deibel’s work on formulating strategy and BG(r) Huba Wazz de Czege’s and Dr. Reilly’s work on operational design.<sup>41</sup> This framework seeks to blend these two areas of study into a single entity to structure the way national security professionals approach visualizing the world, both as it is and how they want it to be.

Born from the concepts of strategy and operational design, the Strategic Design framework consist of seven elements that are organized according to three functions, all cast against the backdrop of the strategic environment. The seven elements of Strategic Design are divided into international and domestic bins to help focus thought and distinguish the ways in which they affect grand strategy and its policies. The international elements of Strategic Design are assumptions, opportunities and threats, national interests, and objectives. Domestic elements

include assumptions, power and influence, and instruments. The three functions that form these elements into a cohesive and structured analytical model are understanding, framing, and constructing. The relationship between the elements and their organizing functions can be seen in Figure B. Inputs into the strategic design process are emergent conditions in both the strategic environment and operational ecosystems that demand attention, feedback from changes cause by the effects of current grand strategy, and changes to the assumptions used to explain both the observed and desired systems.

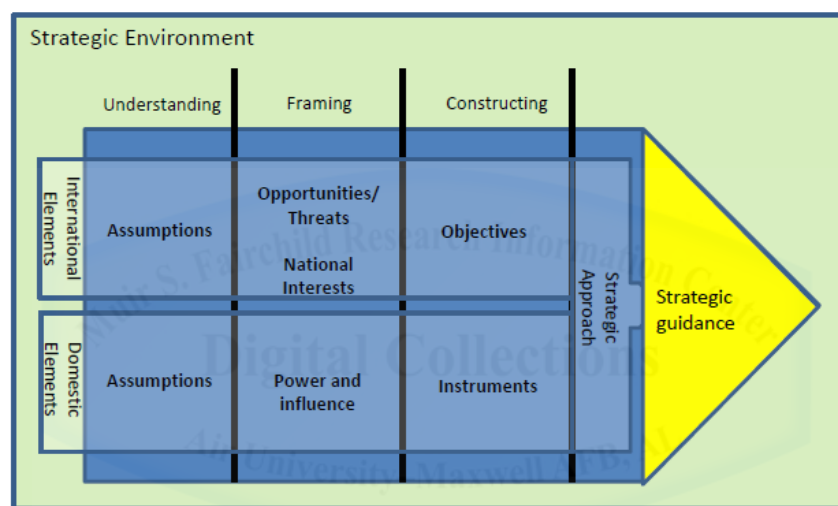


Figure B: The Strategic Design Framework

The purpose of Strategic Design is to generate coherent and purposeful strategic guidance. Outputs, therefore, include strategic guidance to the operational planning processes used by agencies and organizations throughout the national security enterprise. These planning processes include, but are not limited to, the Department of Defense's Joint Operational Planning Process and the Integrated Operational Response Framework being developed in a collaborative effort between the Stated Department and the United States Agency for International Development. The graphic in Figure C represents the complete strategic design infrastructure, from tooth to tail. It is important to highlight that Strategic Design merely sets the problem; it

defines end states, identifies means, and directs a broad concept for how to achieve those end states by assigning supported/supporting roles to appropriate stakeholders within the interagency. It is the campaign planning by military and non-military personnel at the theater level determines the appropriate operational and tactical solutions for the stated problem. A more in depth explanation of the framework and its elements will be conducted by function, starting with understanding.

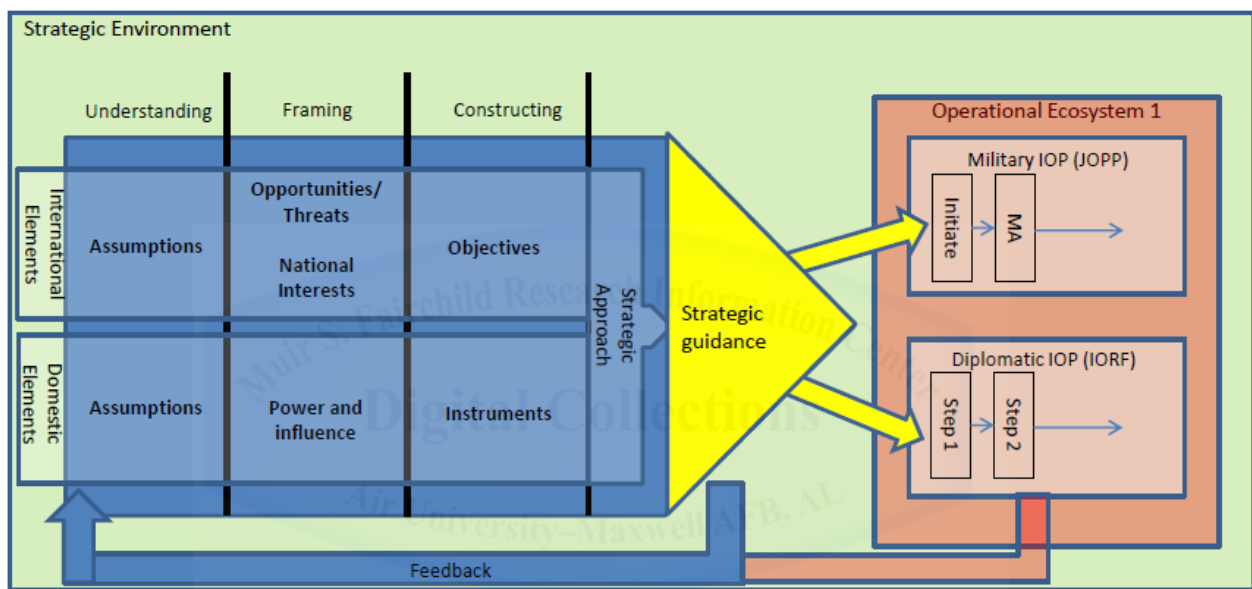


Figure C: The relationship between Strategic Design and Campaign Planning

The purpose of the understanding function of Strategic Design is to develop a realistic mental model that represents both the international and domestic systems that comprise the strategic environment. The strategic environment is complex, and the relationships and connections between humans and states throughout an increasingly interconnected world is the prime component to that complexity.<sup>42</sup> The individual components that form this “dynamic, interactive, and adaptive” complex system cannot be separated from the environment.<sup>43</sup> Rather, they are all independent variables; change in the behavior patterns of one affects the others in

different ways.<sup>44</sup> Assumptions are foundational to Strategic Design. They are the underlying truths that become fleeting representations of reality for a given system.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, as perceptions of the strategic environment, they must be constantly reassessed with a skeptic lens to validate their accuracy. Both international and domestic concerns must be addressed when developing grand strategy and strategic guidance. As such, it is absolutely imperative to build mental models for both the observed and desired international and domestic systems at the outset of Strategic Design.

Assumptions provide the strategist with a snapshot of the observed system, as it exists today, and to project the desired conditions for the desired system. Assumptions of the international system provide an understanding of how the world works abroad. Aspects of the international system that must be considered include the power and motives of actors, the relationships between actors, how relevant actors will respond to emergent situations, and the structure of the international system.<sup>46</sup> The assumptions used to construct the vision of the international system must be as accurate as possible, as they are the basis for identifying political end states, opportunities and threats, and national interests. Strategists must also be aware and sensitive to the domestic factors, such as public opinion, economic conditions, and Congressional support. These domestic factors are the source of our nation's power and influence, and as such, they serve as the basis for the identifying and selecting the means to operationalize strategy. Not accounting for domestic support, in the context of emergent situations, will create dissonance between linking ends and means and ultimately lead to ineffective grand strategy and policies. Armed with an accurate mental construct of the international and domestic systems within the strategic environment (hereby referred to as the operational ecosystem), strategists are able to begin the abstract formulation of identifying the

ends and means that will become the purpose of, and the tools needed to realize the grand strategic vision.

Framing involves the abstract association of ends and means to formulate a shared vision of the problem to be solved. During this phase strategists begin to understand the problem in detail by teasing out the initial notions of desired ends states through the international elements of Strategic Design, ‘opportunities and threats’ and ‘national interest’, and the potential means available, through the domestic Strategic Design element, ‘power and influence’. National interests are based on the values that underpin the national character and they justify the need to respond to specific opportunities or threats.<sup>47</sup> As such, they are a key component to the development of strategy. When considering national interests, strategists must be concerned not only with their categories, such as physical security, economic prosperity, value preservation at home, and ensuring a just international order, as articulated in the 2010 National Security Strategy (Figures D), but also with their priority.<sup>48</sup> The priority of national interests can be described in many fashions, such as vital, important, and peripheral. In OAF, for example, the Clinton administration used the term “strong” interest to define the moral imperative to justify intervention on behalf of Kosovo. Amorphous metrics like “vital”, “peripheral”, and “strong” provide a vague hierarchical structure for determining importance and priority of interests. However, if the policies generated by strategists and political leadership do not comport with the developed and stated national interests, those courses of action must be abandoned.<sup>49</sup>

This uncovers an important concept in the Strategic Design process; attainability should not be a factor in developing and forming national interests.<sup>50</sup> To show this, it is necessary to distinguish interests from objectives. Interests inform, but are not synonymous with, objectives. Objectives are created when defined interests are juxtaposed with available national power,

which takes place during the Constructing function of Strategic Design. National interests form a ‘wish list’ for engaging the systems in the operational ecosystem; they “provide an anchor of stability for strategy, but do not by themselves mandate action.”<sup>51</sup> Nations are not blessed with unlimited resources or bottomless wells of power. Strategists that tailor interests to the nation’s specific available power run the risk of underestimating, and therefore shortchanging, the nation’s true interests, or overestimating the threats and opportunities they are able to influence.<sup>52</sup> In the abstract realm of the Forming function of Strategic Design, it is therefore necessary to keep the formulation of national interests isolated from the assessment of power and influence.

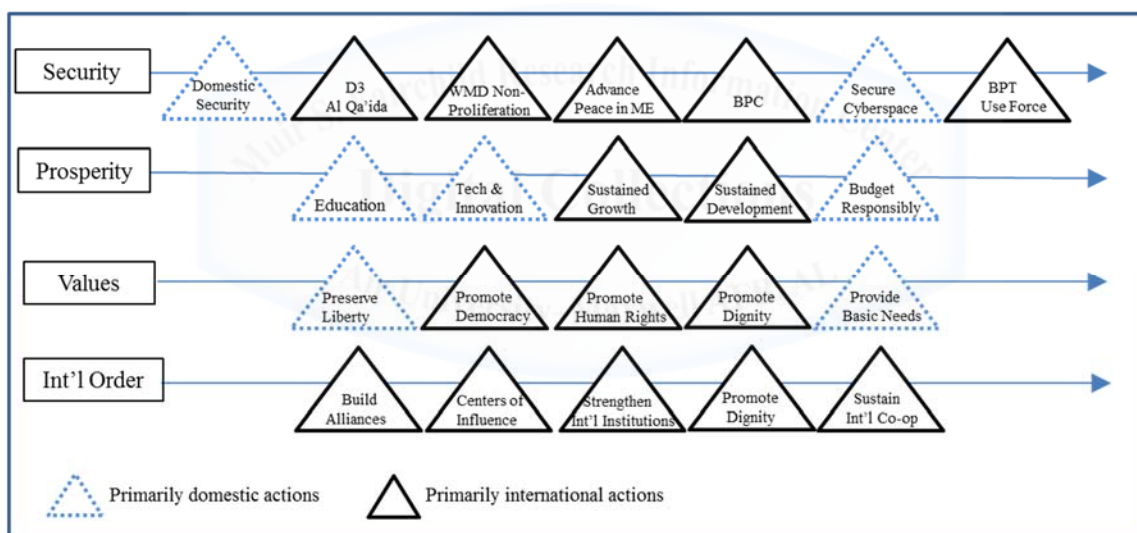


Figure D: The interests, and their associated actions, stated in the 2010 NSS.

As with its relationship to power, interests must be selected prior to identifying the threats and opportunities that exist in the strategic environment. Assessing threats and opportunities prior to determining interest cedes the initiative to the adversary and results in a resource intensive reactive strategy.<sup>53</sup> Threat analysis, an integral part of framing the problem, identifies risks in the strategic environment that place national interests in peril. The simultaneous examination of potential opportunities is crucial, as they present chances to identify

and to take advantage of emergent conditions to promote national interest. The cornerstone of the international elements of Strategic Design in the framing function is determining the relationships between selected national interests and the identified threats and opportunities. In the Department of Defense's January 2012 review "Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense," as shown in Figure E, political and military leadership adapt the nation's vital security interest to changing conditions in the international system, shifting focus primarily to the Asia/Pacific region.<sup>54</sup> While not the case with the 2012 defense review, threats and opportunities that neither endanger nor benefit selected national interests represent an incoherent analysis of the operational ecosystem. Courses of action based on taking advantage or hindering incoherent opportunities or threats do not contribute to achieving political objectives, and by extension overall success, and are therefore a waste national power and influence. Similar to the international elements in the framing function of Strategic Design, which form abstract notions of end states, the domestic element of power and influence seeks to identify abstract sources of national power that will eventually be turned into tangible means.

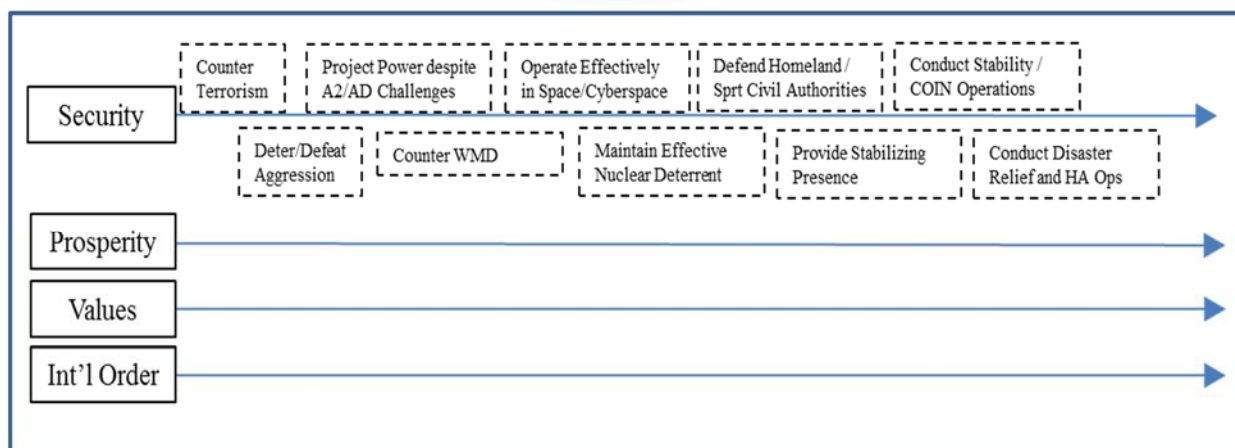


Figure E: New Security line of operation, focusing on Asia/Pacific Theater, as depicted in Jan 2012 Defense Priority review.<sup>55</sup> Other lines of operation remain unchanged.

Power and influence is a means oriented domestic element of Strategic Design that examines the physical and metaphysical sources of power and influence that undergird the ability to produce tangible tools to execute policy during the constructing phase. What is being sought here is not the identification of actual instruments or tools to project power, but latent power that can be converted from potential to actual instruments during the Constructing function of Strategic Design.<sup>56</sup> Potential power consists of the resources the nation controls and the ability, should the need arise, to transform those resources into tools to influence events. Influence, in this context, deals with the effects potential power can have against intended targets. Potential power and influence are generated from domestic attributes, such as those listed in Figure F. As the Strategic Design process moves from Framing to Constructing, it transitions from the abstract to the real as actual instruments are selected and matched with desired end states.

| <b>Tangible factors:</b>     | <b>Intangible factors</b> |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Size or territorial extent   | Social cohesion           |
| Location                     | Political stability       |
| Geographical characteristics | National Character        |
| Population                   | Government and leadership |
| Natural Resources            | National will or morale   |
| Economic Productivity        | Intellectual quality      |

Figure F: Attributes of potential power<sup>57</sup>

Construction is where the abstract rubber meets the actual road. The analysis that occurred during the understanding and framing phase is now turned in strategy through the matching of ends and means. It is the beginning of the process that operationalizes grand strategy in the sense that ends and means are developed and matched to specific emergent conditions and will eventually be packaged and distributed to operational level planners in the form of strategic guidance. However, it is first necessary to identify which instruments are

available to use in pursuit of the identified opportunities or threats, a few of which are listed in Figure G. The means available to realize a specific end state, the nation's instruments of power, are cultivated from analysis on the sources of potential power that was conducted during the framing phase of Strategic Design.

| <b>Instruments of Power</b> |                      |                          |                 |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Diplomatic</b>           | <b>Informational</b> | <b>Economic</b>          | <b>Military</b> |
| Negotiations                | Public Diplomacy     | Foreign Aid              | Threat of Force |
| IGOs                        | Psychological Ops    | Trade & Financial Policy | War Fighting    |
| Int'l Law                   | Information Warfare  | Sanctions                |                 |
| Alliances                   |                      |                          |                 |

Figure G. National instruments of power and examples of their abilities<sup>58</sup>

The capabilities possessed by of the expanse of all the nation's instruments of power are monumental, and great care must be made to align a specific tool with an appropriate objective. Strategists, therefore, depend both on special matter experts and on their own skill, judgment, experience, and knowledge to determine the most effective ways to turn the ethereal potential power into tangible instruments to achieve desired ends. This process, the application of experience and knowledge to the creative and adaptive processes of linking means to ends, is the true definition of strategic art. The critical reasoning and creative thinking that comprises strategic art undergirds the entire Strategic Design process, but is critically important to the final steps strategy development process; developing the desired political end states that directs the overall purpose of action and directing a broadly stated strategic approach for achieving those political goals.

Defining desired political objectives represents the nexus of the analysis conducted throughout the previous steps of the Strategic Design process. Selecting end states, and matching them with appropriate ends, is only possible after creating an accurate mental map of

the international and domestic systems within the strategic environment based on valid assumptions; identifying justifiable national interest and appropriate threats and opportunities; assessing the level of public support and relative national power; and converting potential power into tangible instruments. Objectives are the prioritized national interests the “statesman Decides to protect or promote”.<sup>59</sup> They are verbs that state a required action to take advantage of an identified opportunity or to protect against an anticipated threat. Objectives can be expressed in many ways, but whatever terminology is used, it is crucial that it be clear and concise. Success is not defined by military victory or diplomatic triumph, but as the achievement of desired political objectives. Therefore, the language used to define success should be political.<sup>60</sup> With ends and means identified, the final step needed to complete the strategic guidance package is to develop a broad strategic approach and risk assessment.

Strategic Design is an iterative process, one that requires strategists to learn and adapt as changes occur throughout the strategic environment. Rare events that have the potential for yielding catastrophic risk for a given strategy are impossible to predict, a fact that is exacerbated by using a strategy development and decision-making model based on human judgment.<sup>61</sup> It is not realistic to expect strategists to make highly accurate predictions about all future risk. That being said, the analytical rigors inherent in the Strategic Design framework provide strategists the ability to anticipate broad future events and their associated risks. The deliberate analysis of the strategic environment and the development of appropriate pairing of ends and means afford strategists the ability to identify potential risks and to develop predetermined decision points. These decision points, examples of which are shown in Figure H, are responsible for increasing flexibility and reducing response time when reacting to emergent threats and opportunities during the execution of grand strategy.

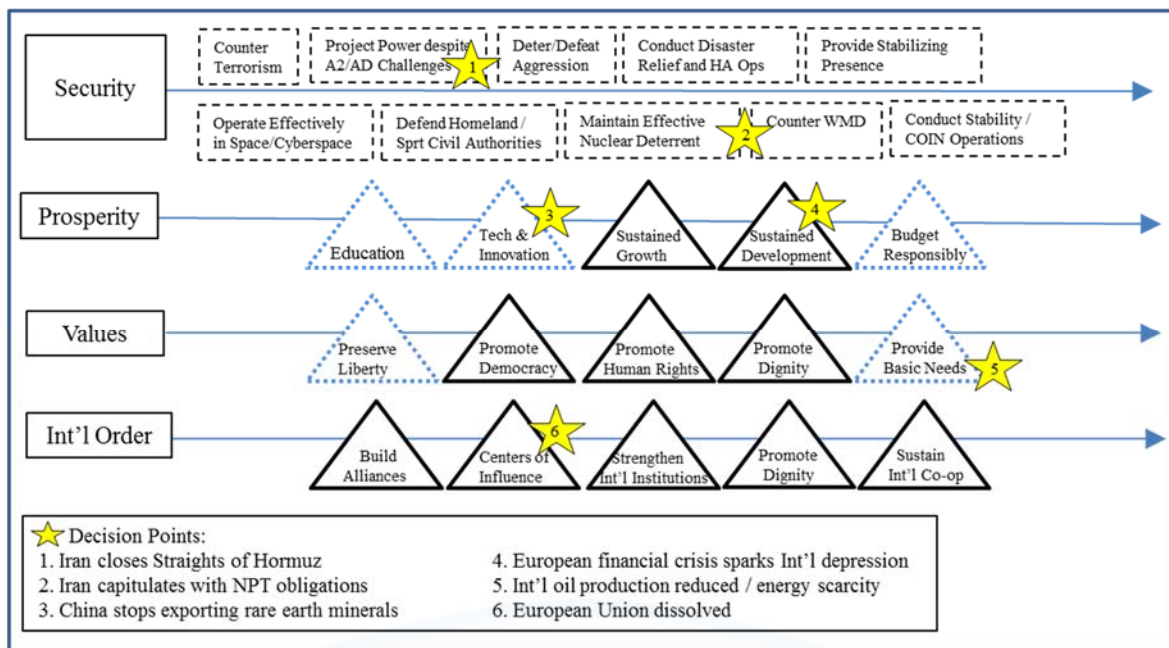


Figure H. Examples of decision points strategists can develop to aid in creating an adaptive and interactive grand strategy.

The purpose behind strategic design is to cultivate an American way of war by generating coherent and purposeful guidance to military and non-military operational planners to link the political definition of success to tactical action. Through Strategic Design, strategists are able to distill clarity regarding the complex strategic environment and identify the foundations of ends and means needed to direct action. The strategic guidance packages generated through Strategic Design must include a list of objectives defining the terms of political success, the appropriate instruments needed to achieve those objectives, a broad strategic approach identifying supported and supporting relationships between relevant agencies and organizations, and a preliminary risk assessment based on the current understanding of the threats, opportunities, and interests in the operational ecosystem. Failing to adapt to emergent conditions results in the operationalization of a strategy that no longer reflects the true nature of the strategic environment.

## Ownership

Strategy development...should become a core competency of the National Security Staff.

Project for National Security Reform

As recommended by the Project for National Security Reform, the process for developing grand strategy and strategic guidance proposed in this paper should be managed by permanent strategy directorate within the national security staff.<sup>62</sup> For such a process to take root and deliver consistent and coherent products over long time horizons, however, Strategic Design must be protected from the entity it is created to serve, the United States government. The current system that is responsible for developing grand strategy and formulating planning guidance is at the mercy of the “personalities and the strengths and weaknesses of the people who work for the President, as well as the personality and management style of the President.”<sup>63</sup> A system such as this may have worked in a strategic environment in which the United States faced a known and constant existential threat in the Soviet Union. In this Cold War environment, Presidents and their staffs, for the most part, were united behind the primacy of ensuring the nation’s survival in the face of communism. Today, long-term coherence is impossible when a system that is defined by personalities experiences near-total turnover every four to eight years. The Cold War era national security system “is no longer satisfactory for the twenty-first century and the many transnational and complex challenges it confronts.”<sup>64</sup> As the strategic environment becomes increasingly complex, the structural and conceptual shortcomings of the national security system become more and more apparent, especially when it is tasked with forming grand strategies and policies to address ill-defined problems.<sup>65</sup>

Constructing a national security enterprise that can cope with the rigors of a complex international system will require a multitude of reforms. Procedural and structural changes

alone, however, are insufficient to drive change in the way the United States approaches the development and execution of grand strategy. These types of changes may prevent disorganization and inefficiency, but as President Eisenhower aptly observed, “organization cannot make a genius out of an incompetent; even less can it, of itself, make the decisions which are required to trigger necessary action.”<sup>66</sup> While the nature of the Strategic Design drives changes to the organization and processes of the national security system, it also drives changes to the thought processes and entrenched organizational cultures that currently pervade the interagency. Strategic Design ushers in a process that demands strategists use an imaginative and adaptive approach to problem solving. Moreover, it also requires the strategists who comprise the national security staff to escape the trapping of their organizational identity and to view themselves not as members of the military or foreign service officers, but as national security professionals. Legal reform is required to ensure structural and procedural changes in the national security system are enduring. Changes to the culture of the national security staff can only be accomplished through a top-down approach, where leaders throughout the interagency collectively agree to prioritize the need to create a unified, coherent, and purposeful grand strategy over the parochial interests and relative power of their organizations.

## **Conclusion**

Incompetent grand strategy is the root cause of the disconnect between military victory, or positive action from any of the nation’s instruments of power for that matter, and the failure to achieve overarching political success. The current process employed by the national security enterprise to coordinate and direct the nation’s instruments of power towards the attainment of political goals is an antiquated relic of the Cold War. As shown in Operation Allied Force, the

national security system failed to articulate desired political objective and to coordinate efforts throughout the interagency. Strategic Design, a conceptual framework to create coherent and purposeful grand strategy and strategic guidance, provides the procedural and cultural changes needed to deal with emergent threats and to take advantage of fleeting opportunities in today's strategic environment. Only with a coherent grand strategy can America turn its 'way of battle' in to a true 'way of war'.



## Notes

(All notes appear in shortened form. For full details, see the appropriate entry in the bibliography.)

1. Wass de Czege, "Systemic Operational Design," 5.
2. Clausewitz, *On War*, 87.
3. Jackman, "Political Success in War," 6.
4. Lessard, "Campaign Design," 36.
5. Echevarria, *Towards an American Way of War*, vi.
6. Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy*, 4-5.
7. This is a blended definition from Biddle Hart's notion of grand strategy, which pertains solely with the conduct of fighting a war, and the modern construct of grand strategy, which incorporates the component of security during peace.
8. Wass de Czege, "Systemic Operational Design," 5.
9. Ibid.
10. Porter and Mykleby, *A National Strategic Narrative*, 7.
11. Project for National Security Reform, *Turning Ideas into Actions*, 14.
12. Ibid., 22.
13. Kelly and Brennan. *Alien: How Operational Art Devoured Strategy*, 5-10.
14. In the late 1800s, wars and battles became more complex and spread across time and space, eclipsing the ability for a single sovereign or general to direct all aspects simultaneously. As the size and scope of war expanded, campaigns were needed to connect strategic vision with battlefield action. The arrangement of these tactical actions to achieve strategic objectives is what Kelly and Brennan call the classic definition of operational art. Note, the classic definition of operational art does not include the operational level of war. See Kelly and Brennan. *Alien: How Operational Art Devoured Strategy*, 17-20.
15. Kelly and Brennan. *Alien: How Operational Art Devoured Strategy*, 2.
16. Ibid., 63.
17. Ibid., 93.
18. Ibid., 82.
19. Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations*, I-13.
20. Quoted in Dudney, "Verbatim Special," 48.
21. Ibid., 49.
22. Ibid.
23. Tirpak, "Kosovo Retrospective," 33.
24. As stated in the Congressional Operation Allied Force After Action Report, the three US/NATO interests where: Stable Eastern Europe, thwart ethnic cleansing, ensure NATO's credibility. Strategic objectives, also from the After Action Report and public statements from President Clinton: Demonstrate NATO's resolve, deter ethnic cleansing, and damage Serbian capacity to wage war. See Department of Defense, *Kosovo/Operation Allied Force After-Action Report*, 3-4, 7. The 4th "secret" objective, regime change, was hinted at by administration and discussed by Gen Clark, but never expressed in public due to NATO not supporting. See Grossman, *U.S Military Debates Link Between Kosovo Air War, Stated Military Objectives*, <http://insidedefense.com>.

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25. The military end states, as told in an interview between this author and Lt Gen(r) Short, were: Stop the killing in Kosovo, drive Serbian forces out of Kosovo, enable ground forces to protect Kosovar civilians, enable the return of refugees to Kosovo, facilitate the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia process.

26. Cordesman, *The Lessons and Non-Lessons*, 54.

27. Ibid.

28. Department of State, "Background Note: Kosovo,"

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/100931.htm>

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Department of Defense, *Kosovo/Operation Allied Force After-Action Report*, 15.

32. Cordesman, *The Lessons and Non-Lessons*, 20

33. Grossman, *U.S Military Debates Link Between Kosovo*, <http://insidedefense.com>.

34. Department of Defense, *Kosovo/Operation Allied Force After-Action Report*, 9.

35. Lt Gen Short, interview by the author, 12 December 2011.

36. Olsen, *From Manoeuvre Warfare to Kosovo?*, 279.

37. Department of Defense, *Kosovo/Operation Allied Force After-Action Report*, 15.

38. Mattis to Joint Forces Command, memorandum, 2.

39. Project for National Security Reform. *Turning Ideas into Action*, iv.

40. Since specific ecosystems are subsets of an overall environment, the term "operational ecosystem" is used instead of "operational environment." This is to illustrate that multiple campaigns and operations could occur within the strategic environment, each with unique, but slightly overlapping, operating areas.

41. Dr. Deibel uses Hart's definition of grand strategy in his book *Foreign Affairs Strategy: Logic for American Statecraft*, limiting it in scope to only the conduct of war with all instruments of power. As the title implies, Dr. Deibel's work is on how to formulate what he calls foreign affairs strategy, the "evolving written or mental plan for the coordinated use of all the instruments of state power to pursue objectives that protect and promote the national interest." Since foreign affairs strategy encompasses all foreign policy related issues (peace or war), it is hierarchically superior to grand strategy. For Strategic Design, I employ the concepts Dr. Deibel uses for Foreign Affairs Strategy, and apply them to the formulation of grand strategy (of which, I use the broader definition of aligning ends and means to meet political goals in both in peace and war). The elements of Dr. Deibel's concept of strategy formulation are conflated with BG(r) Wass de Czege and Dr. Jeff Reilly's ideas concerning systemic operational design. The result is a conceptual framework that helps strategists within the national security system to divine grand strategy and to provide strategic guidance information packets to the military and non-military agencies at the operational level of war who are responsible for campaign planning. See Deibel, Terry L. *Foreign Affairs Strategy: Logic for American Statecraft*, Wass de Czege, Huba BG(R). *Systemic Operational Design: Learning and Adapting in Complex Missions*, and Reilly, Jeffery M. *Design: Distilling Clarity for Decisive Action*.

42. Wass de Czege, *Systemic Operational Design*, 3.

43. Ibid.

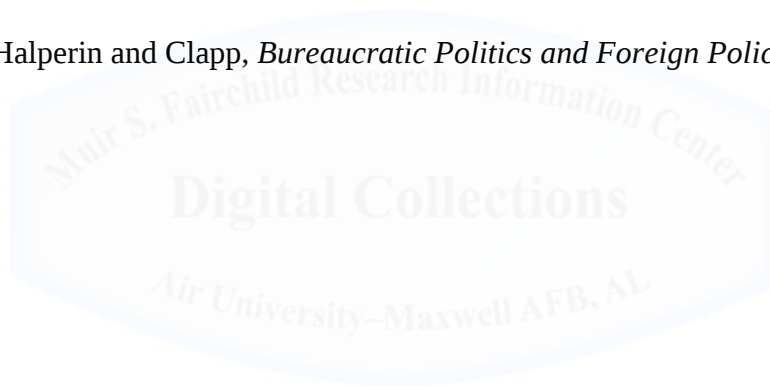
44. Porter and Mykleby, *A National Strategic Narrative*, 5.

45. Wass de Czege, *Systemic Operational Design*, 9.

46. Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy*, 41.

47. Porter and Mykleby, *A National Strategic Narrative*, 6.

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48. The White House, *National Security Strategy*.
  49. Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy*, 123.
  50. Ibid., 129-130.
  51. Ibid.
  52. Ibid.
  53. Ibid., 153
  54. Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership*, 2
  55. Ibid., 4-6.
  56. Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy*, 171.
  57. Ibid., Figure 5-3, 165.
  58. Ibid., Figure 6.2, 209.
  59. Ibid., 294.
  60. Jackman, "Political Success in War," 14.
  61. Makridakis and Taleb, "Decision making and planning," 726.
  62. Project for National Security Reform. *Turning Ideas into Action*, 38.
  63. Whittaker et al, *The National Security Policy Process*, 5.
  64. George and Rishikof, *The National Security Enterprise*, 1.
  65. Ibid.
  66. Quoted in Halperin and Clapp, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 106.



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