

THE STRANGEST DIRECTION

Relative strategic position to be successful

Humankind, throughout 5000 years, has had different types of war and to rule this broad scope, it was necessary for the strategy to be developed and modified aiming at a deep renewal.

KEY WORDS: WARS / STRATEGY / POLITICS / MILITARY / THINKERS / THREATS

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INTRODUCTION

Wars have historically been, together with trade and diplomacy, one of the main forms of relation among states. It is difficult to explain causes that lead societies to sacrifice in battlefields. It is difficult to confirm certainty of complex roots that underlie this particular relation.

It is also difficult to give a good explanation as to the causes of wars. It is important to highlight the importance of getting victory without war.

Winning without fighting is not only a manner to express a smarter manner to defeat the other one. It is a serious strategic position and it considers that destruction and destruction as a consequence of a battle leave some residue that is the basis for future conflicts.

As stated by Sun Tzu: as a general rule, it is better to keep intact an enemy rather than destroying him [...]. For this reason, those who win all battles are not really professional; those who make other armies surrender without fighting are the best masters of the Art of War [...], a real master of martial arts defeats other enemy forces without battle, conquers other cities without bothering and destroys other armies in little time¹.

Strategic actors must assess their means and consider them as superior to the opponent's, consider the target in dispute as important or relatively important and have a greater or smaller degree of freedom of action.

Therefore, we could ask what would the convenient relative strategic position that allows to be successful in a dispute?

It would be prudent to show as part of this work that the essence of strategy is not only to choose a way that leads us to victory but a position from which most ways we can take lead us to victory.

STRATEGY POSITIONS

The position that a strategist must adopt is not command of units in presence, this is something that a tactical and logistical chief, that is someone who better knows how to manage means, is in charge of.

A strategist is a mediator between politics and tactics and he must also arrange thoughts with a scheme that relates events in which there are ends (that is convenient to consider as political) with means that provide force to harmonize both with proper means to reach ends.

Ends are expressed as purposes, modes are expressed as plans as to the way to operate and means are expressed in



physical and psychological strength. The political purpose requires to have this sequence: a strategic plan and a tactical-logistical resolution.

The political purpose, understood as a purpose of will that comes through the ear, is words. If discussed, it would be a debate. The strategic mode, as a plan of reason comes through vision, is vision. If drawn, it would be a scene. The tactical mean, as a resolution comes through touch, is contact. If measured, it would be an effort: a comparison or collision of forces present in the Theater of Operations.

All these considerations have caused different opinions as to the current nature of strategic problems. This is beyond the simple classification of only three levels of analysis: political level, strategic level and tactical level.

Below is a possible summary of the reflection process as to strategic contents:

- › The French treatise writer Bonnal² satisfied himself with considering Strategy as the art of conceiving operations and Tactic as the art of carrying out combats.
- › The British military thinker Liddell Hart³ highlighted the specific presence of the political purpose in the election of the indirect mode to operate rather than what may be required in the classical or traditional action of Napoleon.

- › The French treatise writer André Beaufre⁴, after 1945, limited even more the operational strategy to the art of carrying out political objectives. He presented his opinion, an opinion that is inherent to a military man from the middle years of the 20th century, regarding the concept of deterrence.
- › Clausewitz, on the other hand, accepted that the decisive battle was the center of gravity of the strategy in which wars were to be won. Tactic in itself lacked value if it was not linked to the strategy due to its great results and this was not relevant either if it was not linked to political issues. Therefore, many other civil and military treatise

1. Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, several editions, Chapter III, "On positions of victory and defeat"

2. Henri Bonnal. French general theorist and military man, of infantry division, who served in Algeria from 1866 to 1868 and during the French- Prussian war of 1870 was a war injured. He was an Officer of the Honor Legion. Professor of Military History, general strategy and tactic. He has written several publications.

3. Sir Basil Henry Liddell Hart. He was born in Paris, France (1895 - 1970). British military historian, writer and journalist. He was famous for his contributions to the theory of military use referring to indirect approach.

4. André Beaufre (1902 - 1975). French General, he ended World War II with the Rank of Colonel. Known as a military strategist and model of an independent French nuclear force.

writers put attention to the concept of deterrence during long decades that took the Cold War. The concept of best strategy is not to defeat the enemy but deter them from the armed fight.

However, if we stop our watch in the initial stage of the Cold War, both in the drawing of the steel curtain in a bipolar world as in the ambition of a new world order that is close to society without wars and welfare state, the state of the question is expressed with the detailed study of the most prestigious models of that moment.

The word strategic defines a position, as indicated by the French General Ailleret⁵ when the Cold War began: (...) This is a level from which analyzing or dealing with questions related to war, whether referring to direction or preparation, or the use for political purposes of the situations that result from it or, last, deterrence that the threat may cause among possible opponents.

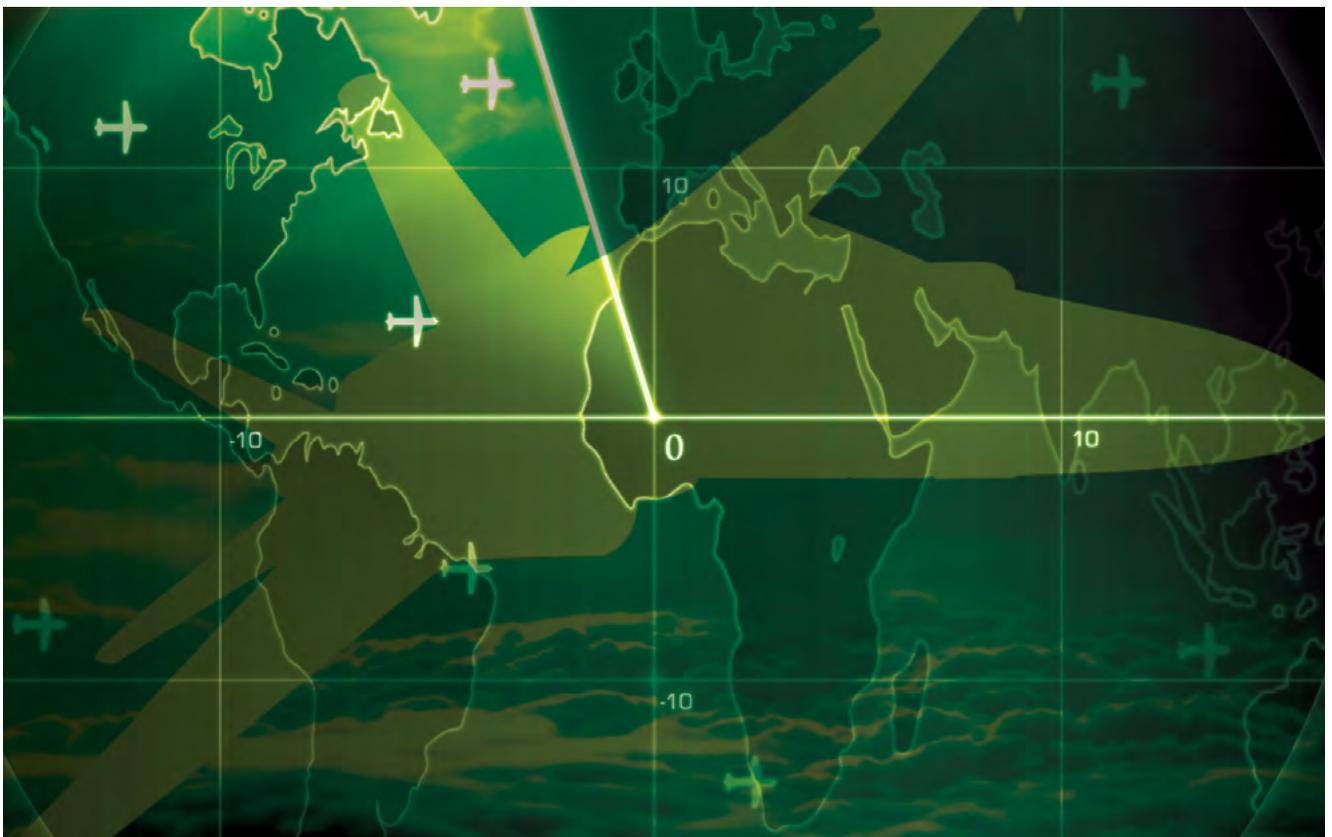
Close to Ailleret, General Beaufre has insisted on

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two considerations: a very basic one, Strategy, the art of dialectics of will is also the art of using force to reach the objectives of politics and a very graphic one, there is a pyramid of different and independent strategies. This is the idea that pluralizes strategic models above what has been usual in the year 1939.

In order to value conductors of great operations throughout universal history in all cultures and civilizations, whether old or modern, preferences of created power were taken into account (or military command) with respect to several strategic models.

5. General Charles Ailleret (1907 - 1968). He was a student of the Polytechnic School, one of the institutions that most generals has trained for the French Army. In 1942 he joined the resistance against the German, in the north of France and in 1961 he was appointed supreme commandant of all French forces in Algeria. He was officer of the Honor legion.



The best distinction lies in knowing whether the model elected is for action or deterrence. The action model includes the use of armed force while deterrence prefers mere presence of force.

Once the model has been defined which, in the case of the action, has relation with the breaking of hostilities and in the case of deterrence, with keeping a certain order of safety, other two distinctions will be considered: one based on ends (nature of each purpose) and one based on means (features of military means that are tested).

› Based on ends, a strategic model may be:

- a) Hegemonic (which suggests conquest)
- b) Autonomous (which suggests resistance)

The first one is linked to attack while the second one to defense. It may happen that during some time, the prevailing position is hidden but the true purpose is made clear when studying operations being carried out.

› Based on means, a strategic model may be marked because of the possibility to serve from what is technically specialized or the possibility to resort to the law of number (general mobilization of the country to war); in sum, search of quality or the resource of quantity.

MEANS FOR STRATEGIC LINING UP

In the decision to adopt a model, considering action or deterrence, ends or means, they have to keep a line-up position with the purposes established at political level when preparing military strategy. This is the most important as the lack of agreement between them is the most direct path to defeat, even before being in contact with the enemy.

Wrong lining up models⁶ are multiple and their examples may be seen in the main historical cases.

› The first wrong model refers to the use of improper military means to get the desired political result. The classical example of mistakes is the United Kingdom during the American Independence War.

A version of the model is when the manner in which military force is used may cause counter-productive political effects, for example actions by the United States in Vietnam.

› The second wrong strategic lining up model is when strategy takes politics or the military concept of victory overlaps the political concept of victory. The best example is the performance of General Mac Arthur in the Korean War that led to his removal by President Truman.

An alternative is tactification of strategy that is produced when existing capacities generate missions rather than otherwise.

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- › A third wrong model is that politics become so abstract or ambiguous that it is difficult to line it up with strategy. A clear example is the idealist attitude of President Wilson during participation of United States in World War I and their attempts to create a new international order in post-war.
- › A fourth wrong model is when there are policies that are so expansionist and/or political purposes are so ambitious that they may create too many enemies and exceed military capacities. Clear examples are those of Napoleon and powers of the Axis in World War II.
- › The fifth wrong strategic model is when limitations imposed by politics for the use of force are so restrictive that they make it difficult to reach victory. The best example is the performance of the United States in the Vietnam War and of NATO in Kosovo in 1999 that was very close to failure.
- › The sixth wrong model is when risks to expand the use of force, such as the intervention of a third party, possible use of weapons of mass destruction, the breaking of one's own coalition and the appearance of an insurgence exceed one's own reward. The best example of going "too far" was the invasion of the territory of Northern Korea until the Chinese border was reached in 1950.
- › The seventh wrong strategic model is when costs of military action exceed the value of the object sought, understanding by costs the magnitude and duration or number of casualties, economic and political costs. The historical example that better fits this pattern is World War I, even for successful powers such as Great Britain.
- › We could talk about an eighth wrong strategic model in light of the existence of badly conceived victory theories with false assumptions on how military operations will translate into political purposes. This case is the most common one, from the Peloponnesian War to the invasion of Iraq.

Therefore, once the strategist has understood complication of wrong lining up of strategy with political purposes, they will consider a conceptual scheme that will relate events. To do this, they will relate ends and means

6. González, C. F., "Estrategia militar y política: temas, teóricos y aplicación práctica", Boletín de Información, 2009.

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and to what extent freedom of action takes part in this compound without failing to consider what costs there are and risks to be taken.

Thus, depending on relative means of the two adversaries and the relevance of offer, the strategic plan will be ordered pursuant to different models, from which we will examine the most relevant ones:

Direct threat: If there are very powerful means and the objective is modest, the only threat of these means may take the adversary to accept conditions that are imposed and to withdraw more quickly from the intention to modify the existing status quo. This model of direct threat relates to the possession of atomic weapons and is the basis for the huge building of dissuasion strategy.

Indirect pressure: On the contrary, although the objective is modest, if there are no sufficient means to become a decisive threat, it will be necessary to find the decision through more or less deceptive actions of political, diplomatic or economic status. This model of indirect pressure is a strategy that corresponds to cases in which the area of freedom of action of the force is reduced.

Extended total fight: If the room for freedom of action is big but available means to reach a military decision are scarce, there may be a conflict strategy of great extension which aims at reaching moral tear and flexibility of the opponent. In order to last in this position, means used must be very rustic and it will be the technique to use them (generally a total war supported by a generalized guerrilla) which requires a more important effort that cannot be kept forever. This extended total fight model with weak military intensity has been successfully used in decolonization wars. This strategy requires a huge moral effort by the one that takes the initiative implies a strong passion element and a very good cohesion of the national soul.

Last, there is the option of violent conflict: If military means are very powerful, the decision sought through victory in a violent conflict and short. Destruction of opponent forces may be enough, especially if this is not



essential for the opponent. This violent conflict model which tends to military victory corresponds to classical strategy.

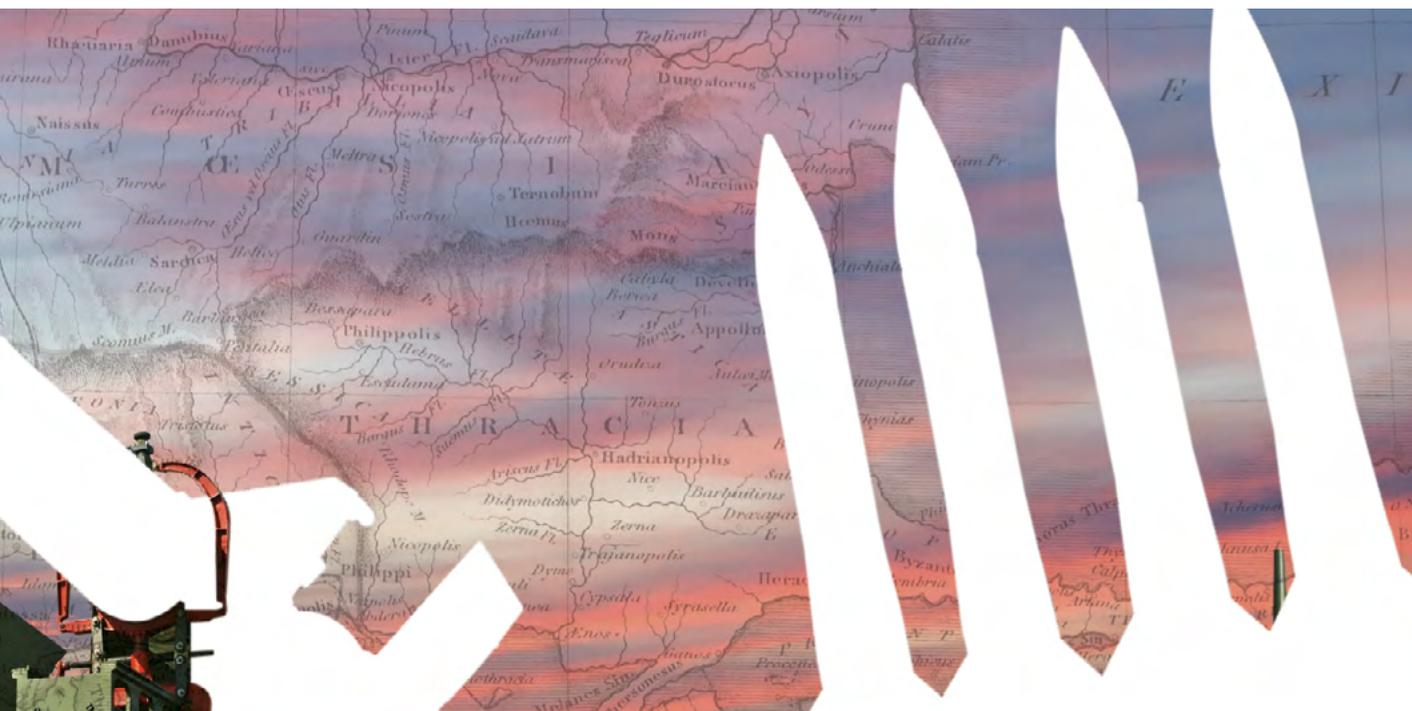
Thus, in light of these alternatives, we go back to the problem of election of one of the models previously analyzed. We can see that direct threat models, force consecutive actions and violent conflicts are the concept based on the search of decisions or dissuasion from the use or existence of military forces considered as the main mean, also called direct strategy.

On the other hand, indirect pressure models, consecutive actions that do not mean direct pressure and extended total fight inspire all forms of conflict that do not directly search for a decision through confrontation of military forces, but through less direct procedures, whether political or economic, or even military, by means of successive actions interrupted by negotiation.

CONCLUSIONS

This analysis of different strategies does not certainly simplify the problem and shows the complexity of the topic, helps to recognize that necessary abstraction of strategy leads to practical conclusions and that these, as they are found, make existing relations among different actors easier, the domain of which is absolutely essential to conduct war or keep peace.

This is why the strategic position from which horizon must be looked at will be, first, to have lining up with



politics objectives. This position cannot be overlapped with the main aspects of national strategy: operational and tactical strategy.

Strategic position will allow to make a correct interpretation of the ends sought with means available previously assessing costs that acceptance of the position taken would have and what risks to be taken would be. Also, it is important when deciding if the action or dissuasion to reach victory are to be adopted.

The defeated one then deserves his destiny because defeat is the result of thought mistakes made before or during conflict. The strategic position is not an intelligence game on realities of war or a conceited or pedant way to think about problems presented.

The strategic position is a body of thoughts that, despite its complexity, must be a practical guide to reach the ends of politics in the best way possible, especially to prevent mistakes about which history talks with many examples.

This position that goes from suggestion to physical destruction is the most important part of strategy. This election allows to face more difficult situations and frequently gives victory to the weakest one. It is difficult to adopt a strategic position without study bodies provided, without a proper method to analyze situations, without a perfect knowledge of the evolution and technological possibilities that may be used. There are many contexts of strategy that were not explored enough or unexplored.

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As regards a group of analysis as the one imposed by a correct strategic position, we can say that this millenary art, due to the pressure of events is becoming current again.

In order to domain phenomena of the extension and diversity of Cold War, revolutionary and atomic and total war, among others, it is necessary for classical strategy to be considerably extended and renewed.

This was the campaign of General San Martín in Perú considered by Antonio José de Sucre who would then be the Great Marshal from Ayacucho when he writes to San Martín a few days after he entered Lima... The famous marks of military victory of Your Excellence fight for preference, but it is true that making a great country and a great section of America without committing a battle is the result of rather well combined calculation and the strangest direction in a campaign in which art and prudence have replaced power of the enemy.

It will lie with the view, creativity and professionalism and experience of the strategist to have a position to reach victory.