

A Perspective on Grand Strategy and Planning in India

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INTRODUCTION

The word strategy is derived from the Greek word "Strategoos" meaning General. Though the word strategy is now universally used, it was, however, in olden days intimately related to Generalship and war. Even Carl Von Clausewitz in his treatise on war defines strategy as "The employment of the battle as the means towards the attainment of the object of the war". So strategy has to do with nothing but war. Strategy is thus employment of battle to gain the ends of war.¹ Strategy, therefore, gives out the aim, purpose and broad frame work of the intended war.

"War has its root in a political object".² Though Generals would love to wage war, war is not a pastime. It is a serious and grave matter not to be left to the Generals alone. Nations go to war only when either their national interests are threatened or realised. War is basically a means to achieve political ends and hence the strategy for war has to have a political direction.

Grand strategy is the strategy of a nation to safeguard its national security interests. It is spelt out by the apex political body i.e. the Government. It can be defined as the art and science of developing and using political, economic, diplomatic, psychological and military means both during peace and war, to safeguard national security interests.³

EVOLUTION OF GRAND STRATEGY

To evolve and develop grand strategy nations have therefore developed organisations and processes, to suit their national infrastructures. The broad frame work for evolution of grand strategy leading to formulation of operational plans for waging war is as shown in Figure 1.⁴

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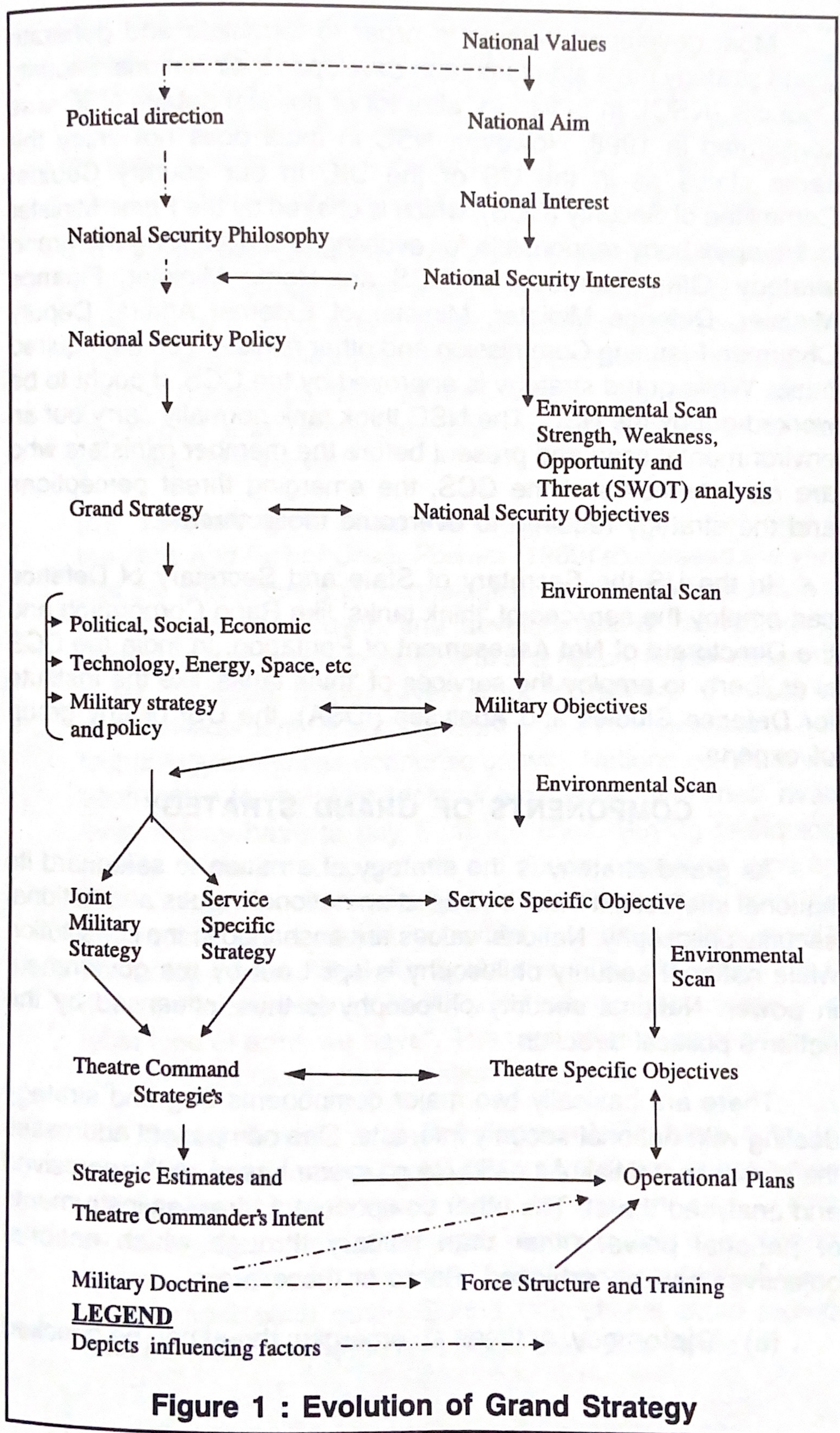


Figure 1 : Evolution of Grand Strategy

Most developed nations in order to formulate and generate grand strategy have structured and developed their National Security Councils (NSC). In India too, after lot of political debate NSC was constituted in 1998. However, NSC in India does not enjoy the same status as in the US or the UK. In our country Cabinet Committee of Security (CCS), which is chaired by the Prime Minister is the apex body responsible for evolving and approving the grand strategy. Other members of CCS are Home Minister, Finance Minister, Defence Minister, Minister of External Affairs, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission and other ministers on as required basis. While grand strategy is approved by the CCS, it ought to be worked out by the NSC. The NSC think tank normally carry out an environmental scan and present before the member ministers who are also members of the CCS, the emerging threat perceptions and the strategy required to overcome these threats.

In the US the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defence can employ the services of 'think tanks' like Rand Corporation and the Directorate of Net Assessment of Pentagon. In India the CCS is at liberty to employ the services of 'think tanks' like the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), the USI or any group of experts.

COMPONENTS OF GRAND STRATEGY

As grand strategy is the strategy of a nation to safeguard its national interests, it must be based on national values and national security philosophy. National values are enshrined in the constitution while national security philosophy is spelt out by the government in power. National security philosophy is thus influenced by the nation's political direction.

There are basically two major components of grand strategy dealing with national security interests. One component addresses the combat potential of a nation to go to war based on the perceived and analysed threat. The other component addresses instruments of national power other than military through which national objectives can be achieved. Some of these are :-

- (a) **Diplomacy.** At times an emerging threat can be checked

and stalled through effective diplomatic strategy. International pressures can be brought about on an adversary and the adversary's nefarious designs can be effectively checkmated through sound and at times aggressive diplomacy. The impact of such diplomacy was evident during the recent Indo-Pak standoff wherein Indian diplomacy paid rich dividends.

(b) **Economic Strength.** The ability to wage war, as well as to influence events in the world without using military power depends to a large extent upon a nation's economic wealth. In the present environment the US economic sanctions are a greater deterrence than all her military capabilities. Under developed and developing nations will acquiesce to her economic black mail.

(c) **Technological Base.** Harvard scholar Paul Kennedy in the *Rise and Fall of Great Powers* (1989) expressed the view that the productive and technological base is the foundation of national power. Growth and development of technology is directly related to economic growth of a nation. Higher economic growth provides higher revenue for investment in Research and Development (R and D). Conversely development of new technology enhances economic growth. Nations compete with each other to maintain technological edge over their rivals, even if they have to buy it off the shelf. Buying technology makes a nation dependent on donor countries whereas developing own technology base makes other countries dependent on a nation provided the nation has leading technology base. Red Army Marshal Zhu De supplements this by his statement, "The kind of war to fight depends on what type of arms we have". The type of arms depend on the type of technology that a nation invests in.

(d) **Social Growth and Development.** To have a military that is modern and advanced requires a nation of people who are highly educated and able to absorb and use the technologies to their advantage. Technological and economic growth are directly interlinked with social growth. They all complement each other. Sound educational base provides nations with the competitive edge over their rivals.

Strategy for enhancing combat military potential to achieve national security objectives again deals with two major issues. The first for enhancing combat potential for waging war against likely adversaries and the other for military operations other than war (MOOTW). War is waged by a nation when all other instruments of national power fail to safeguard national interest by mobilising the nation to a state of war.

On the other hand MOOTW focus on deterring war, resolving conflict, promoting peace and supporting civil authorities in response to internal domestic crisis.⁵ MOOTW may involve the employment of both combat and non-combat operations in peace and war like situations. One of the major goals of our Armed Forces employed in MOOTW operation is to prevent, preempt, limit and terminate militancy and insurgencies. Though major MOOTW operations in our context are carried out within the country, some of them are also carried out outside the country as part of the UN Peace Keeping Forces.

TRANSLATING GRAND STRATEGY INTO MILITARY OPERATIONS

Once grand strategy is formulated it must be discussed and debated in the Parliament and once approved, thereafter relevant extracts of the grand strategy must be translated into the form of Strategic Directions or Strategic Directives of the Government. These should be issued by the CCS to various ministries like Defence, Home, Foreign Affairs and Finance etc. These ministries in turn must based on the environment scan done by them derive their own security objectives and work out their draft strategies. These draft strategies must be discussed by the CCS once again. The NSC or other 'think tanks' could be employed to coordinate and synergise the efforts of all ministries to achieve the objectives of grand strategies. Once these are coordinated they should be approved by the CCS and issued to respective ministries. The Planning Commission must translate these strategies into allocation of resources in the Five Year Plans and Ministry of Finance must cater for the same in their yearly budgeting.

The approved military strategy of the Ministry of Defence must be translated into Raksha Mantri's (RM) Strategic Directive and

issued to the Service HQ and HQ Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (CIDS). HQ CIDS must work out a Joint Military Strategy in consultation with Service HQ and once approved by Chiefs of Staff Committee or Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) once appointed, it should be issued to Service HQs. Service HQ based on RM's Directive and Joint Military Strategy must work out respective service specific strategies. These should be approved by the RM before their dissemination to the respective Command HQ. Various Command HQ based on the environment scan of their respective theatre of operations work out their military theatre specific strategic objectives and design their own strategies. These strategies are translated into strategic estimates and issued to subordinate commanders. At the corps level these strategic estimates in conjunction with military doctrines are translated into operational plans. These plans are coordinated at Command and respective Service HQ and approved for execution thereafter.

Conclusion

In most countries grand strategy is quite ambiguous as either it is not spelt out by the governments or is shrouded in a cloak of secrecy. In a democracy, grand strategy should be publicly debated and approved by the Parliament. In the US it is only after the Goldwater Nichols Department of Defence Reorganisation Act of 1986 was passed that the US President on assuming office gives out his National Security Strategy. The latest Bush's National Security Strategy which advocates the doctrine of pre-emption⁷ has come in for a lot of debate and discussion universally, more so with the US venture into Iraq. In our country grand strategy is cloaked in the garb of secrecy.

If proper strategic planning process in evolution of grand strategy does not take place, then there is a possibility of strategic designs of a political party or a leader taking precedence over the considerations of a sensible grand strategy as emerged in the Schlieffen Plan by Germany in World War I. Also as grand strategy is a political product it some times ends up enmeshed in peripheral or unrelated political trends and hence all out efforts must be made to avoid these pitfalls.

Military strategy which is a product of grand strategy must pursue a constructive national goal which the government has spelt out in its Strategic Directive. Every nation will have to work out their own goals to be achieved, but by and large these goals must be in harmony with international norms, aims and aspirations, otherwise a nation even as strong as the US is likely to find itself isolated and unable to fulfill the mission it has set out for itself.

Strategic planning process down to operational execution must be thoroughly worked out, coordinated and synergised. When nations go to war and the dogs of war are unleashed, it is very difficult to predict in which direction they will go unless they have a sound tactical and strategic plan in operation. Hence it is very essential to invest time and money in designing a sound grand strategy that becomes a beacon for growth and development of a nation and that provides strength to its elements of national power to safeguard its national goals and objectives.

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