

Making Twenty-First Century Strategy, Dew and Snow (2006)

(Condensed version of Chapter 6)

Force Development Strategy

Force employment strategy decisions ideally determine, in a broad sense, what needs to be done, where it needs to be done, and how it should be done. These decisions are also the primary driving force behind force development strategy decisions. Force development concerns resources for getting the job done—how much, what kind, and how these resources are molded and shaped into a force structure. It is important to remember that although force employment drives force development, these two facets are interactive. For example, many force employment decisions depend on the raw resources available for development. A small, poor, isolated, and backward state would find it difficult to wage modern, high-intensity, mechanized warfare in far-flung overseas locations. The requirements would overwhelm its available resources. In another sense, a country confronted by a contingency requiring immediate action is forced to rely on forces already developed regardless of raw resources available for future development. Consequently, force employment and force development are dependent variables.

Resources are the key to force development. The key resources are well known. Among them are raw materials (or access to them), an industrial base (or access to one), population, technological sophistication, and economic wherewithal. These are the primary factors in determining the force structure that can be developed in response to force employment decisions. Strategists' function is to manipulate these primary factors to develop a force structure in concert with force employment strategy.

In sum, force development decisions revolve around the most effective use of resources to meet the requirements of force employment decisions. The decisions involved are difficult, and the situation is always fluid. But the decisions must be made so that the force structure can be properly constructed and finally deployed.

Force Deployment Strategy

Understanding who the enemy is and where forces would likely be employed will obviously be driving factors in the deployment of forces. The design of the force structure will likewise be an important consideration, especially force size, equipment characteristics, and lift capacities. Geography also plays an important role, particularly in wartime. The United States, for example, has broad and immediate access to maritime transportation routes across both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, making large deployments by sea and the sustainment of deployed forces overseas a relatively easy task.

Strategists must perform a delicate balancing act when making decisions about deployments forward during peacetime. This is particularly true for any state that has many security interests in different parts of the world. Strategists must balance three factors: time, vulnerability, and flexibility.

Time, of course, is the centerpiece of peacetime deployment. The primary military reason for deploying forces forward (i.e., overseas) is to reduce the time required to respond to enemy actions. Certainly, there may be other reasons for forward deployment, such as providing a deterrent, demonstrating resolve, or strengthening alliance relationships, but the hard, practical military reason involves time. Having forces in place should increase their readiness for employment and facilitate their training in a realistic environment. Further, the availability of in-place maintenance facilities and logistics depots can be of inestimable value, particularly in remote areas.

Forward basing, no matter how valuable in terms of response time, is a risk-laden undertaking because it increases vulnerability. Although more quickly available for combat, forward based forces are more vulnerable to enemy fires, air raids, and possibly to quick encirclement and destruction by a rapid enemy thrust. On one hand, forward deployment decreases response time and increases readiness. On the other hand, forward-deployed forces may be so vulnerable that readiness becomes irrelevant.

The third factor strategists must consider in deployment decisions is flexibility. If forces are deployed forward, one assumes they are deployed advantageously. However, if conflict erupts in another corner of the world, redeployment of forward-deployed forces could be time-consuming and, perhaps, politically difficult.

If strategists had perfect knowledge of the places where forces would actually be needed, deployment would pose few problems. If a country had few vital interests overseas, the deployment problem would be mitigated. The fact is, of course, that perfect knowledge is rarely available. As the world becomes more interdependent, worldwide security interests multiply, particularly for a superpower such as the United States. As a result, deployment dilemmas increase, and the need for a coordinated military strategy becomes paramount.

Coordination of Military Strategy

Coordination of the three parts of military strategy—employment, development, and deployment—is essentially an exercise in risk management. In the American experience, neither the will nor resources to create adequate forces to meet every contingency have ever existed. Strategists must, therefore, make hard choices and understand the risks involved with each choice.

The fundamental problem is that enemies seek to exploit weaknesses. An enemy will attack where the adversary is weak or will seek to wage the kind of war the adversary is least capable of

waging. Every military strategy decision is made in response to a threat but at the same time forecloses other options because of limited resources. Thus, countering one kind of threat in a particular place creates opportunities for the adversary elsewhere.

How can these risks be managed? The American answer to that question in the Cold War was based on worst-case analysis. In essence, the United States concentrated its efforts on preparing for the war it could least afford to lose—a nuclear war. Thus, for four decades the United States concentrated much of its effort on developing and deploying a nuclear retaliatory force designed to convince the Soviets that a nuclear attack on the United States or its allies would certainly result in disaster and devastation for the Soviet Union. That is, the United States viewed nuclear deterrence as its first priority and nuclear war as *the* worst case to be avoided.

At a lesser worst-case level, the United States concentrated on conventional forces designed, equipped, and deployed to counter possible Soviet conventional aggression in Western Europe. It is true that the United States also developed and deployed conventional capabilities elsewhere—most notably Northeast Asia—but the primary focus remained on Europe throughout the Cold War.

In the post–Cold War world, a firm American military strategy has yet to emerge. The forces developed during the Cold War were reduced significantly in anticipation of much less need. Unfortunately, a succession of military operations in East Africa, the Balkans, Southwest Asia, and the Middle East tasked those forces heavily with operations tempos higher than had been seen for decades. The situation became so serious by the end of the second war in Iraq that serious talk about reinstating compulsory military service (the draft) spread through the news media. There is little indication that such heavy demands on the US military will soon abate. To the contrary, the specter of North Korean nuclearization, continued animosity between India and Pakistan, unending problems in the Middle East, and chaos in much of sub-Saharan Africa would seem to indicate continued demands on US forces throughout the world. Such is the price paid to be the world’s only superpower.

Conclusions

As discussed in this chapter, the issues involved in coordinating the development, deployment, and employment of military forces—military strategy—are very complex and remain so in the “new world order.” Strategists face new and, in many ways, more challenging dilemmas in the post–Cold War world. How should these new risks be managed? Should strategists prepare for the worst case or the most likely case? Is there a worst case? Is there a most likely case? Can one prepare for both possibilities, or would that raise the specter of not being prepared adequately for either case? Resolving such risk management dilemmas is the essence of military strategy. The chapters in the next section explore these contingencies and the strategy problems they pose.