

WARCOUNCIL.ORG: 300 Word Strategic Education,v2

By Major Matt Cavanaugh

Master these 300 words – 50 concepts, 6 words each – to maximize strategic competency with minimum time investment. This study enables Clausewitzian Critical Analysis, which in simplified form compares a strategic concept with evidence from a conflict (cause), and then judges impact on the combatants willingness or ability to fight (effect). Example: At the end of the Pacific War, American airpower and seapower severely constrained Japanese tactical resources (cause), which aided American island hopping and policy achievement (effect).

| Studying War | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Strategic Studies | Multi-disciplinary study of threat and force. |
| Cognitive Biases in Strategic Studies | Humans seek simplicity in security decisions. |
| Strategic Understanding | Intellectually links tactical action and policy. |
| Strategic Thinking | Habitual ends to means mental contrasting. |

| Levels of Analysis | |
|---------------------|---|
| Tactics | Combatant instruments of power in action. |
| Operations | Tactics ordered in time, space, purpose. |
| Strategy | Balances ends, ways, means and risk. ¹ |
| Strategy | Bridge between tactical action and policy. ² |
| Grand Strategy | Relates national means to large ends. ³ |
| Policy and Purpose) | Desired ends as decided by politics. ⁴ |
| Strategic Effect | Impact on opponent fighting capability, will. |

| Foundational Terms | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| War | Intense, reciprocal, public violence for purpose. ⁵ |
| Clausewitz: Description of War | Trinity of violence, chance, and policy. |
| Security Dilemma | Impossible to gauge opponent hostile intent. |
| Ultimate Object in War | Sustainable political outcome consistent with interests. ⁶ |
| American View of War | Anticipate success against direct hostile threat. ⁷ |
| National Interest | Enduring national goals: security, values, prosperity. |
| National Power | Always relative, hard coercion, soft persuasion. ⁸ |
| Civil Military Relations | Warrior-citizen interaction in strategic affairs. |

| Common (Mostly Non-State) Force Employment | |
|--|--|
| Insurgent | Seeks new authority through violent rebellion. |
| Counterinsurgency | Suppresses armed rebellion; supports existing authority. |
| Terrorism | Indiscriminate, premeditated, sensational, politically motivated violence. |
| Hybrid Warfare | Fused mix of multiple strategic behaviors. ⁹ |

¹ Arthur Lykke, "Toward an Understanding of Military Strategy"

² Colin Gray, *The Strategy Bridge*

³ John Gaddis, "What is Grand Strategy?"

⁴ Colin Gray, *The Strategy Bridge*

⁵ Rob Johnson, *Changing Character of War Programme*, Oxford University

⁶ H.R. McMaster, "Ground Forces Dialogue," *CSIS*

⁷ *Chicago Council on Global Affairs*, "Survey of American Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy"

⁸ Joseph Nye, *The Future of Power*

⁹ Frank Hoffman, "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges"

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| Geographic Military Domains | |
|---|---|
| Landpower | Gains, sustains, controls - land, resources, people. ¹⁰ |
| Seapower | National sea-based capacity to shape events. ¹¹ |
| Airpower | Ability to control airspace for purpose. |
| Marine Corps | Expeditionary operational force with maritime soul. |
| Comparison 1 – Landpower & Army Special Forces | (1)- Provides tactical engagement while signaling commitment. ¹² |
| Comparison 2 – Seapower | (2)- Avoids direct tactical engagement; signals commitment. |
| Comparison 3 – Airpower, Marine Corps & Direct Action Special Operations | (3)- Provides tactical engagement without signaling commitment. |

| Theorists & Theories | |
|---|---|
| Thucydides | Humans fight for fear, honor, interest. |
| Sun Tzu | Avoid battle; know yourself, know enemy. |
| Clausewitz: “Iron Calculus” | Opposition resistance: material capability and will. |
| Clausewitz: “Center of Gravity” | Win by striking opposition power hub. |
| Clausewitz: “Friction” | Physical and psychological factors inhibit war. |
| BH Liddell Hart | For victory: dislocate opponent, then exploit. |
| JC Wylie | Sequential and cumulative strategies for control. |
| Albert T. Mahan | Command of the sea brings victory. |
| Julian Corbett | Seapower: for influencing events on land. |
| Giulio Douhet | Indiscriminate strategic bombing forces political capitulation. |
| John Warden | Node strikes induce opposition systems paralysis. |
| Robert Pape | Air-ground integration works; decapitation does not. |
| Geostrategy | Geography constrains, influences use of force. |
| Strategic Culture | Inherited beliefs, assumptions about using force. |
| Erosion Strategy | Target adversary will to continue struggle. ¹³ |
| Incapacitation or Disarming Strategy | Target adversary capacity to continue struggle. ¹⁴ |
| Deterrence | Discourage through fear; cost exceeds benefit. |
| Coercion | Threaten force to influence voluntary agent. ¹⁵ |
| Irregular Victory | Irregulars win substituting will for resources. ¹⁶ |
| War Termination | War converges actor aims to compromise. ¹⁷ |

¹⁰ Army Doctrinal Publication 1, *The Army*

¹¹ Geoffrey Till, *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century*

¹² Matt Cavanaugh, “Simplifying Strategic Concepts,” *WarCouncil.org*

¹³ Christopher Bassford, “The Relationship Between Political Objectives and Military Objectives in War”

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Lawrence Freedman, *Deterrence*

¹⁶ Malcolm Gladwell, “How David Beats Goliath,” *The New Yorker*

¹⁷ Roger Spiller, *Between War and Peace: How America Ends its Wars*