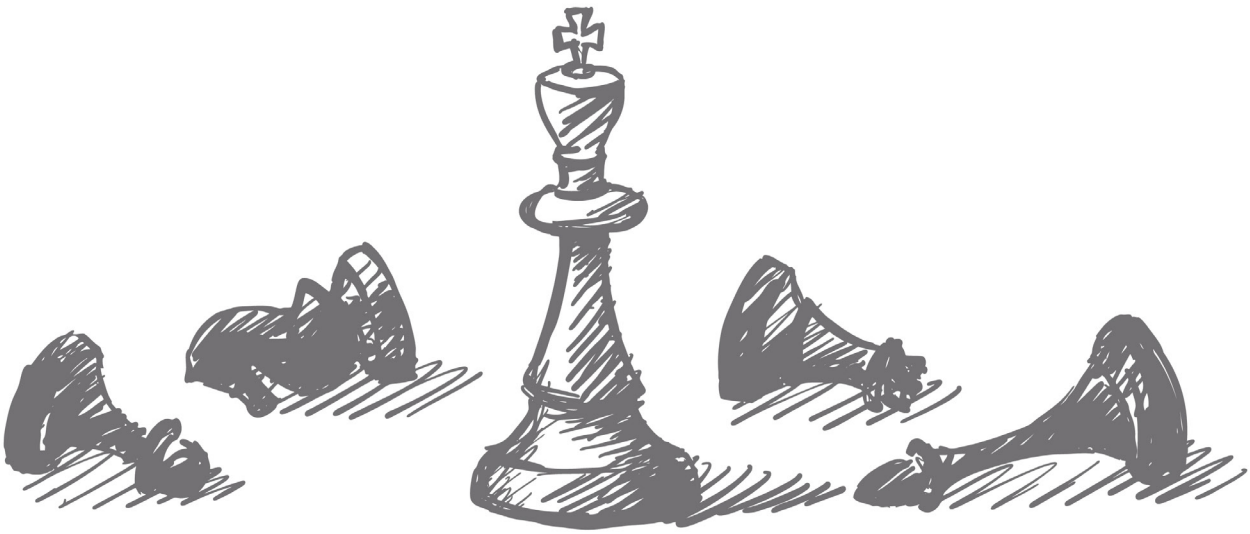
Defence Academy
of the United Kingdom

Getting Strategy Right (Enough)



The Royal College of Defence Studies

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Getting Strategy Right (Enough)

THE ARMORIAL BEARINGS OF THE
ROYAL COLLEGE OF DEFENCE STUDIES

Acknowledgements and editorial control

This booklet has been produced for release on 4th September 2017 by the team at the Royal College of Defence Studies (RCDS), both staff and Members of the 2016/17 course, with the help and support of a number of external experts from across Whitehall and academia. Further comment and suggestions on how it could be improved are very welcome in order that the next edition can be of greater value in helping people improve their strategic literacy.

Should you wish to comment, please contact the editor, Major General (Retired) Craig Lawrence, by e-mail on: sds.d@rcds.mod.uk

Disclaimer

Contents

“

A nation must think before it acts.

”

Robert Strausz-Hupé[1]

1. The motto of the Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI) founded by Strausz-Hupé in 1955.

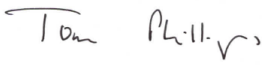
Foreword

Over the 90 years of its history, and initially as the Imperial Defence College, the Royal College of Defence Studies (RCDS) has been concerned with the issue of how political leaders and their senior military and civilian advisers should think strategically about the challenges faced by the nation and its allies, and indeed in some cases – climate change would be a good modern example – by the international community as a whole.

Some of those who studied at the College over the years went on to play significant roles in times of crisis affecting their nations: in UK terms, for example, Field Marshal the Viscount Alanbrooke, who attended the first course as Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Alan Brooke, would, as Chief of the Imperial General Staff, play a key role in steering the country to victory in the Second World War. But last year's Report of the Iraq Inquiry (the Chilcot Report) into the 2003 invasion of Iraq and its aftermath was a sharp reminder that each generation has to re-learn the hard lessons of history and the complexities of strategic thinking and planning.

This booklet is an updated version of an earlier text, '*Thinking Strategically*', first produced for use in the College in 2010. In revising it we have sought to focus in particular on key themes which have emerged in lectures to the College by eminent military and civilian speakers and in discussion between Members themselves, and on the major issues which were identified in the Chilcot Report, in part in an attempt to respond to the direction from the Secretary of State for Defence that we are to "embed the lessons of Chilcot in our DNA".[2] But our goal on the Chilcot front has also been to highlight points of much wider relevance than purely to the UK. The change in title is to make it clear that the subject is not just getting the thinking right, but the implementation too. The inclusion of 'enough' in the title reflects the fact while the perfect strategy is likely to remain elusive, our strategies must be 'good enough' to compete successfully with those of our adversaries.[3]

I am grateful to the many Whitehall and other colleagues who commented on this text as it developed. The booklet is consistent with the Ministry of Defence's approach to strategy making, set out in *Organising Defence's Contribution to National Strategy*[4] and the more recent *Making Better Defence Strategy*,[5] and is a 'living text'; we aim to update it periodically, so any further comments are welcome at any stage. Our primary hope indeed is that this booklet will be of use not just to our Members, but to those working in Defence and Security establishments wanting to learn the lessons of the past, and seeking to understand and address the many challenges which lie ahead in the increasingly complex, rapidly changing and inevitably inter-connected world of the future.



Sir Tom Phillips KCMG, Commandant Royal College of Defence Studies

2. Ministry of Defence (MOD), "Embedding the Lessons of Chilcot," MOD Intranet http://defenceintranet.diif.r.mil.uk/News/BySubject/DefencePolicyandBusiness/Pages/EmbeddingthelessonsofChilcot.aspx (accessed 17 January 2017).
3. Colin S Gray, *Schools for Strategy: Teaching Strategy for 21st Century Conflict* (Strategic Studies Institute, November 2009), vi. http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/ssi/schools_for_strategy.pdf
4. MOD, *Organising Defence's Contribution to National Strategy*, (MOD, 2012).
5. Director for Strategic Planning, *Making Better Defence Strategy* (MOD, 11 October 2016).

Introduction

Purpose

1. The study of strategy is the core purpose of the Royal College of Defence Studies (RCDS). Consistent with its mission, its prime role is to develop strategic thinkers and leaders who can apply the principles of strategy-making adeptly in today's challenging multinational and multi-agency arenas. The College focuses unequivocally on the making of strategy at its highest plane – at the level of government, both nationally and internationally – within the context of security. This is the province of grand strategy, in which the instruments of a nation's power (diplomatic, informational,[6] military and economic) are, or could be, orchestrated to meet policy goals. Studying strategy at this, the most demanding level, is arguably the best way of preparing individuals for the challenges which may confront them in the future as senior members of their country's national security community or elsewhere.

2. In today's complex, globalised and increasingly interdependent world, examples of 'effective strategy' at the highest level are hard to find. Despite the best efforts of leaders and policy-makers, the mismatch between design and results is often all too clear. Partly it arises from the contemporary context: an interconnected world in which people, capital, goods and ideas (and ideologies) flow as never before while the competition for global resources increases. It may also occur as the consequence of flawed strategic leadership that confuses activity with achievement. While recognising the importance of the short-term, good strategists focus on the long-term and consider the big picture rigorously and holistically from perspectives other than the most familiar and convenient.

3. *Getting Strategy Right (Enough)* has been written to summarise the art and science of strategy-making and implementation in a handy format, reflecting analysis and informed discussion at Seaford House, the home of RCDS. Perhaps fortuitously, this revision of the booklet took place shortly after the publication of the seminal Chilcot Report. This document – which runs to some 2.6 million words – summarises the findings of an exhaustive inquiry into the deployment of UK forces to Iraq in 2003. The inquiry team was tasked with considering 'whether it was right and necessary to invade Iraq in March 2003; and whether the UK could – and should – have been better prepared for what followed'.[7] It concluded, *inter alia*, that the Government failed to achieve its stated objectives and that the UK military role in Iraq ended a very long way from success,[8] identifying several shortcomings in the strategic decision-making process.

6. The UK only recognises 'diplomatic', 'military' and 'economic' instruments of power, with the three instruments underpinned by information. However, we have opted to include 'information' as an instrument in its own right to reflect Allied doctrine (Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-01, *Allied Joint Doctrine* views information as a separate instrument of power) and to encourage strategists to accord an appropriate level of consideration to this increasingly effective instrument.
7. UK Cabinet Office, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry: Executive Summary* (HMSO, 2016), 4.
8. Sir John Chilcot, *The Iraq Inquiry – Statement by Sir John Chilcot: 6 July 2016*, 2, 11.

4. This failure provides numerous useful insights into the problems of formulating and implementing strategy at the highest level. Many of the findings in the Chilcot Report (some of which are echoed in the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) September 2016 report into the 2011 Libya intervention)[9] have therefore been used to highlight the difficulties that strategists face. To avoid the accusation that the examples cited relate only to the UK, lessons identified from the US' campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq have also been included where appropriate. In the main, these have been taken from the work of Richard D Hooker and Joseph J Collins who were tasked by General Martin Dempsey, then US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, to look at the strategic lessons from these two campaigns.[10]

5. Above all, this booklet is designed to enhance Members' strategic literacy by stimulating reflection on how to think about the planning and implementation of strategy, as opposed to rehearsing what to think, and to inspire further debate, reading and research into strategy-making.

Scope

6. The specific objectives of this booklet are to:

- explain what strategy is, noting its historical origins and suggesting a workable definition which has utility today;
- set out the fundamentals of strategic language and thought, expressing the basic concepts that underpin theory and practice;
- explain the utility and application of the instruments of national power;
- consider the practical formulation and implementation of strategy, including the strategic assessment; and
- outline the key challenges, qualities and characteristics of statesmanship and strategic leadership.

Approach

7. In meeting this remit, the contents of this publication have been designed to be descriptive rather than prescriptive. No attempt has been made to offer a doctrinal manual or an academic monograph. Observations from experts in their fields and insights from RCDS have been included to stimulate discussion and to raise Members' awareness of the many theorists and practitioners commenting on strategy. For a similar reason, no attempt has been made to remove controversial material just because it does not match an established, standard view. Like RCDS itself, this booklet is designed to deal with the real world, which is complex, challenging, and ever-changing.

9. House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, *Libya: Examination of Intervention and Collapse and the UK's Future Policy Options (Third Report of Session 2016-17)* (House of Commons, 2016).
10. Richard D Hooker and Joseph J Collins, *Lessons Encountered – Learning from the Long War* (National Defence University Press, 2015). A pdf copy of the book can be downloaded free of charge at http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/Books/lessons-encountered/lessons-encountered.pdf

8. The realm of strategy abounds with well-laid but misguided plans, their success thwarted by unintended consequences. Clarity of thought, vision and adaptability exemplify the strategic leader as much as resolution and determination. An ability to live with ambiguity and uncertainty, and not least a pragmatic capacity to take calculated[11] risk for the longer-term and greater national benefit, distinguishes the successful strategic leader from the tactical thinker. While RCDS does not claim to have a unique insight into what makes such a leader, the booklet offers some thoughts on the personal qualities, capabilities and behaviours that experience suggests contribute to effective strategic leadership.

9. Finally, it can never be stressed enough that the budding strategic thinker, from whatever sector, has to be comfortable with uncertainty and paradox. As the late Sir Michael Quinlan, Permanent Secretary at the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, observed:[12]

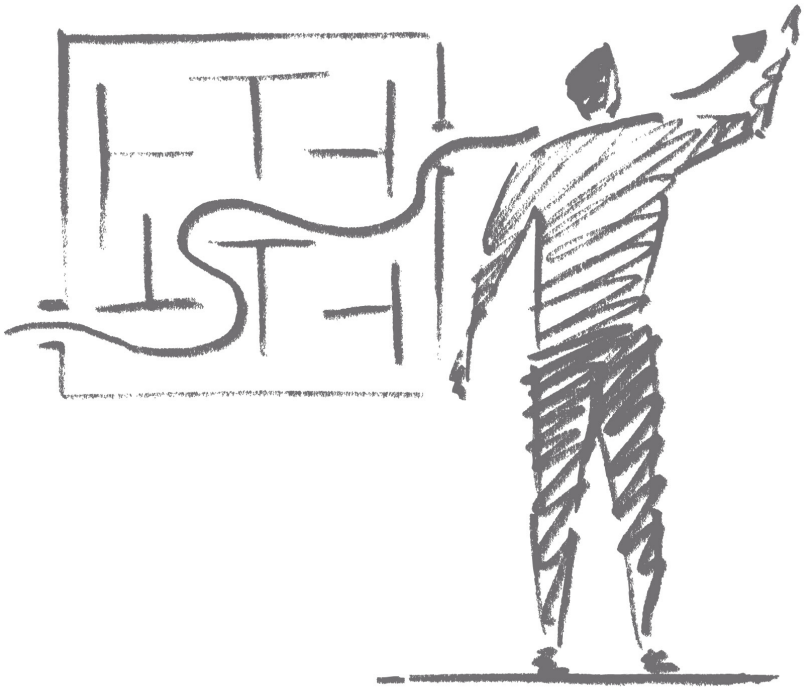
> 'In matters of military contingency, the expected, precisely because it is expected, is not to be expected. Rationale: what we expect, we plan and provide for; what we plan and provide for, we thereby deter; what we deter does not happen. What does happen is what we did not deter, because we did not plan and provide for it, because we did not expect it.'

The 'Chatham House Rule' and general acknowledgement

10. The RCDS operates under the 'Chatham House Rule': everyone who speaks at Seaford House does so freely, understanding that what is said may be quoted but it will not be attributed. Where a perspective or quote is included without a detailed reference, it is because it was given by a speaker at Seaford House under this Rule. Realising that this is not necessarily helpful to the would-be strategist, the number of such instances has been reduced compared to the previous iteration of this booklet.

11. Intuition certainly has its place when it has been developed over many years of relevant experience, but where possible, risk-taking should be informed by an evidence-based assessment of the likely outcome and the probability of success.

12. Peter Hennessey, *The Secret State: Preparing for the Worst 1945 – 2010* (Penguin, 2010), 396; citing Sir Michael Quinlan's private archive.



Section 1

What is strategy?

This section explains the evolution of strategy and its relationship with policy, citing its historical precedents, and then explores how the term strategy is now employed in a wide variety of contexts. It considers the nature of the 'adaptive' or 'wicked' problems which strategies are invariably designed to address and then explains RCDS' definition of strategy, concluding with four key lessons that experience suggests are worth noting by the would-be strategist.

'However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.'

Winston Churchill[13]

Policy and strategy

1.1. It is important to differentiate strategy from policy, while acknowledging that their very meanings and relationships may differ between nations, organisations and cultures. At its simplest, policy can be defined generically as 'a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by an organization or individual'.[14] It is fundamentally a political activity and can be described more broadly as direction given in attempted pursuit of national or collective interests, which strategy is then designed to achieve. Good policy should ordain the ends, and indicate the broad parameters of the means, but not necessarily the ways, which strategy then develops and integrates with the means to achieve policy objectives. Policy typically also contains any constraints that are imposed in the fulfilment of those objectives, and circumscribes the means available, be it in terms of time, money, capabilities or usually all of these. Harry R Yarger's succinct description of the relationship between policy and strategy is worth noting:

> '…policy dominates strategy by its articulation of the end-state and its guidance regarding resources, limitations on actions, or similar considerations.'[15]

1.2. Current UK doctrine provides a further useful description of the relationship between policy and strategy.

- Policy articulates a choice leading to a course of action proposed or adopted by a government. Policy is a statement of intent, or a commitment to act.

13. Although this quote is widely attributed to Winston Churchill, it has not been possible to confirm when he said or wrote it.
14. *Oxford Dictionary of English*, Second Edition (Oxford University Press, 2003), 1362.
15. Harry R Yarger, *Strategy Theory for the 21st Century: The Little Book on Big Strategy* (US Government, 2006), 7.

- Strategy is creating and orchestrating the instruments of power in support of long-term policy objectives.[16]

1.3. The same doctrine reinforces the interdependence between policy and strategy:

> 'Policy only works if there is a credible strategy to deliver it and strategy demands an achievable policy end-state.'[17]

1.4. As mentioned in the Foreword, in 2012 the UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) produced a paper which considered how the Department should contribute to the formulation of national strategy. The paper included descriptions of what the MOD meant by policy and strategy. These descriptions, which were formally reviewed by the MOD in October 2016,[18] are worth noting as they expand on those contained in UK doctrine and provide a useful summary of the difference between the two entities.

> a. Policy Policy represents a choice leading to a course of action proposed or adopted by a government. It is a statement of intent, or a commitment to act. Policy decisions provide strategy makers with the objectives or 'ends' to which they must ascribe 'ways' and 'means'. [19]
>
> b. Strategy. Strategy is not simply the articulation of a desired outcome. Within Government, strategy of any kind should be about finding plausible ways to deliver long-term policy objectives over time, using the resources available (i.e., balancing 'ends, ways and means'). Like statecraft itself, strategy is inherently competitive. It implies the attempt, either unilaterally or in concert with like-minded allies and partners, to assert policy objectives, derived from one's own interests or values, over those of competitors or competing forces.[20]

1.5. Considered together then, policy and strategy should describe what needs to be achieved (the 'ends'), how this will be done (the 'ways') and which resources will be used to do it (the 'means').[21] With that in mind, it is interesting to note the following important observation in the Chilcot Report:

> 'Crucially, UK strategies tended to focus on describing the desired end state rather than how it would be reached. On none of the 20 occasions when UK strategy was reconsidered was a robust plan for implementation produced. Setting a clear direction of travel is a vital element of an effective strategy, but strategies also require a serious assessment of the material resources available and how they can best be deployed to achieve the desired end state. That is especially important when the

16. UK Ministry of Defence (MOD), Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC), Joint Doctrine Publication (JDP) 0-01, *UK Defence Doctrine* (5th Edition) (2014), 7.
17. *Ibid.*, 8.
18. At a meeting of the MOD's Defence Strategy Group on 13 October 2016.
19. UK MOD, *Organising Defence's Contribution to National Strategy* (MOD, 2012), 6.
20. *Ibid.*, 3.
21. UK MOD, DCDC, JDP 0-01, *UK Defence Doctrine* (5th Edition) (2014), 8.

> strategy relates to an armed conflict in which it will be actively opposed by organised and capable groups. There is very little evidence of thorough analysis of the resources, expertise, conditions and support needed to make implementation of UK strategy achievable.'[22]

1.6. One important aspect of the relationship between policy and strategy is the iterative nature of their mutual development. Again, the UK MOD's 2012 strategy paper provides an admirably clear description of this relationship:

> 'In practice then, policy can both shape and be shaped by strategy. Good policy, and good strategy, should therefore be the product of an iterative dialogue between politicians and practitioners – military and civilian – to ensure that policy 'ends' are aligned with the limitations of national 'ways and means.' The frank and robust exchange that is required is absolutely dependent upon mutual trust and discretion, and is therefore particularly vulnerable to modern media scrutiny.'[23]

Levels of strategy

1.7. Having established that strategy is designed to achieve policy goals, it is worth pausing to consider the nature of strategy, beginning with a short history of the modern concept as this helps explain RCDS' own definition. The English word strategy descends from *strategia*, the function of a *strategos*, the Greek for a general; *strategia* is the general's office, and by extension, the skill of generalship and therefore, the art of war. For most of history two conceptual levels of warfare and command sufficed:

- strategy – how to win a war; and
- tactics – how to win a battle.

1.8. In differentiating between the two, Mao Tse-Tung noted that 'our strategy is pit one against ten and our tactics are pit ten against one'.[24] In a similar vein, Clausewitz noted that 'tactics teaches the use of armed forces in the engagement; strategy, the use of engagements for the object of the war'.[25] From the 18th century, as armies grew larger and more complex, a third level became helpful.

- Grand tactics – how to manoeuvre detached corps to bring about the decisive battle and win it.

1.9. With the separation of political and military leadership in the modern nation-state, the need arose to distinguish two levels of strategy.

- Grand strategy decides how the policy for war or peace will be accomplished.

22. UK Cabinet Office, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry*: Volume 8, Section 9.8 (HMSO, 2016), 501.
23. UK MOD, *Organising Defence's Contribution to National Strategy* (MOD, 2012), 7.
24. *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, Volume 1: From Marx to Mao (Foreign Language Press, 1965), 237.
25. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, eds. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton University Press, 1976), 128.

- Military strategy develops and assigns military forces to achieve the objectives of the grand strategy.

1.10. Sir Basil Liddell Hart, the prolific military historian and strategist, provided a useful perspective on grand strategy when he wrote that its role '…is to coordinate and direct all the resources of the nation, or band of nations, to the attainment of the political object of the war'.[26] The Japanese air strikes on Pearl Harbor and on US military facilities in the Philippines on 7 December 1941 provide a good example of the difference between military strategy and grand strategy. While the attacks were a victory from the military perspective, some commentators have argued that they were '…a prodigious failure in grand strategic terms, setting up a nearly inexorable path to Japanese defeat and surrender'.[27]

1.11. Strategy, then, originated as a military term and retains this association, at least to some extent. The hierarchy of activity and command was formerly defined in British Defence Doctrine as:[28]

- Grand Strategic: the responsibility of Her Majesty's Government – is the national political level that sets the government policy on international issues, in effect national aims in peace and war that strategy is to deliver;

- Military Strategic: the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence – is the highest military level, developing, sustaining and assigning military forces to support government policy and achieve goals set at the Grand Strategic level;

- Operational: the responsibility of the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) – planning military campaigns and deploying forces to achieve the [military] strategic objectives set by the MOD; and

- Tactical: the responsibility of Field Commanders or Component Commanders – directing operations on the ground, at sea and in the air.

1.12. The UK recently replaced the term grand strategy with national strategy, defining it as:

> 'The UK's national strategy coordinates the instruments of national power in pursuit of national policy aims to secure our interests.'[29]

1.13. However, there is a growing realisation that national strategy is not quite synonymous with grand strategy and that the latter historical term has wider utility, despite its somewhat dated feel. Although some would disagree, the term 'grand strategy' has connotations of a great endeavour undertaken using all of a state's guile and resources, applied across multiple

26. Basil Liddell Hart, *Strategy: Second Revised Edition* (Meridian, 1991), 322.
27. Erik Gartzke, "The Myth of Cyberwar: Bringing War in Cyberspace Back Down to Earth," *International Security 38*, no. 2 (2013), 60.
28. UK MOD, DCDC, JDP 0-01, *British Defence Doctrine*, (2nd Edition) (2001), 1-2, 1-3.
29. UK MOD, DCDC, JDP 0-01, *UK Defence Doctrine*, (5th Edition) (2014), 8.

instruments of power, to establish the state in its desired position in the world order. By comparison, a 'national strategy' seems to imply a less ambitious undertaking, or one that is less expansive in scope – a nation might, for example, have a national strategy for dealing with drug abuse or extremism. The distinction may be semantic but it might explain why the majority of nations still use the term 'grand strategy'. Peter Leyton's description of the term gives some sense of its scale:

> 'The essence of grand strategy is its integrative nature. In a conceptual sense grand strategy is a system: a set of interdependent elements where change in some elements or their relations produces change across the system, and the entire system exhibits properties and behaviours different from the constituent parts.'[30]

1.14. Hal Brands offers a rather elegant contemporary definition which reinforces the idea of grand strategy being more than just a single national strategy:

> 'I define grand strategy as the intellectual architecture that gives form and structure to foreign policy. Leaders who are doing grand strategy are not just reacting to events or handling them on a case-by-case basis. Rather, a grand strategy is a purposeful and coherent set of ideas about what a nation seeks to accomplish in the world, and how it should go about doing so. Grand strategy requires a clear understanding of the nature of the international environment, a country's highest goals and interests within that environment, the primary threats to those goals and interests, and the ways that finite resources can be used to deal with competing challenges and opportunities.'[31]

1.15. As the above quote suggests, a state's grand strategy is unlikely to be contained in a single over-arching document. Rather, it is more likely that it will exist as an aggregation of many different strategies each designed to achieve a particular set of policy goals, and even in the unstated assumptions which might underlie those policies and strategies. When considered collectively, these strategies set out what the nation 'seeks to accomplish in the world'. Of note, the underpinning strategies, and the policies that they operationalise, are in a constant state of flux as nations react to unexpected world events. Such shocks in the strategic environment provide the stimulus to adapt or replace component parts of the grand strategy which are no longer fit for purpose. As Patrick Porter notes:

> 'Grand strategy *originates* at critical junctures as a conscious, calculated choice, when the distribution of power has undergone rapid major change and, at the point of creation, where there is no settled elite consensus.'[32]

1.16. The focus at RCDS is on formulating the underpinning strategies which, collectively, make up a state's grand strategy. For that reason, Members study the international order and contemporary world events, drawing on historical examples to develop an

30. Peter Layton, "The Idea of Grand Strategy," *The RUSI Journal* 157, no. 4 (2012): 58.
31. Hal Brands, *What Good is Grand Strategy* (Cornell University Press, 2014), 3.
32. Patrick Porter, *The American Way: Power, Habit and Grand Strategy* (Draft) (undated), 4.

understanding of why some strategies work and others do not. During strategic exercises, Members are asked to consider responses to shocks in the strategic environment from the perspective of a variety of different nations. They are then asked to develop effective strategies to preserve, or further, their particular nation's interests in light of the changes in the strategic environment.

Beyond the military and the political

1.17. The term 'strategy' is often loosely used within government to 'denote any large-scale, long-term or broad-ranging planning activity.'[33] It is also now in widespread use beyond the military and political environments, though often with 'strategy' and 'strategic' being used as nothing more than synonyms for 'plan' and 'important'. This 'dilution' of the term prompted Sir Hew Strachan, the well-known academic and historian, to note that:

> 'The word strategy has acquired a universality which has robbed it of its meaning and left in only with banalities.'[34]

1.18. Gray takes this further in his seminal *The Strategy Bridge* and notes that 'unfortunately, the adjective strategic is employed promiscuously as a value enhancing qualifier'.[35]

1.19. Notwithstanding Strachan's and Gray's observations, strategy and its associated lexicon do have genuine utility in the broader context if used appropriately.

1.20. Gordon R Sullivan and Michael V Harper acknowledge this and suggest that:

> 'Strategy is the most misunderstood leadership concept today. Strategy is not about Attila the Hun or Sun-Tzu; it is not about the management disciplines; nor is it about econometrics [sic], numbers or programmatic objectives. At its essence, strategy is an intellectual construct linking where you are today with where you want to be tomorrow in a substantive, concrete manner.'[36]

1.21. So there is general agreement that strategy, at whatever level and in relation to whatever activity, whether governmental, business or military, needs to consider and employ all the capacities of the organisation concerned to achieve the overall aim, with a premium placed on cost-effective and innovative methods. With that in mind, RCDS defines strategy as:

A course of action that integrates ends, ways and means to meet policy objectives.[37]

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33. UK MOD, *Organising Defence's Contribution to National Strategy* (MOD, 2012), 3.
34. Hew Strachan, "The Lost Meaning of Strategy," *Survival* 47, no. 3 (2005): 34.
35. Colin S Gray, *The Strategy Bridge* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 80.
36. Gordon R Sullivan and Michael V Harper, *Hope is Not a Method* (Broadway Books, 1998), 98.
37. In January 2014, noting that there was 'a need for an agreed definition of strategy,' the House of Commons Defence Committee proposed that strategy be defined as 'a course of action integrating ends, ways and means to meet policy objectives.' This definition was accepted by the Secretary of State for Defence. House of Commons, *Towards the Next Defence and Security Review: Part One – Seventh Report of Session 2013-14*, Volume I (HMSO, 2014), 3.

1.22. The focus at RCDS is on the formulation of strategy at the grand strategic level – the level at which governments take decisions. It involves all of a state's levers of power and therefore operates across government. Whilst domestic politics need to be taken into account, it is an outward facing endeavour with an international outlook and with outcomes that relate to vital national interests and a nation's stability, security and prosperity.

1.23. Whatever process is used to derive a given strategy, it must remain adaptable. Although a high-level strategy may have an enduring quality in comparison with its subordinate activities, the application of strategy must still evolve to meet changing circumstances, and potentially radically so at short-notice. This is because strategies are designed to address what Ronald Heifetz termed 'adaptive' problems.[38] That is, they cannot be resolved by the application of good management and technical expertise alone; their resolution requires innovation and constant learning as the dynamics of the problem change, often as a consequence of strategies being applied. Such problems can also be described as 'wicked'. Keith Grint, who lectures at RCDS, offers the following definition:

> 'A Wicked Problem is more complex, rather than just complicated – that is, it cannot be removed from its environment, solved, and returned without affecting the environment. Moreover, there is no clear relationship between cause and effect.'[39]

1.24. Acknowledging the above, Yarger notes that strategy is a process which undergoes '…constant adaptation to shifting conditions and circumstances in a world where chance, uncertainty and ambiguity dominate'.[40] James Mattis, now the US Secretary of Defense, was one of the co-authors of a recent collective piece which develops this theme:

> 'Strategy is a process, not an endpoint. It is a process of problem-solving in circumstances where much is outside one's ability to control (in physics terms, an open, complex system), placing a premium on learning and rapid adaptation to develop integrated ways of achieving essential ends. The role of strategy is to reduce uncertainty to the degree we can and to be prepared to respond even when we are surprised.'[41]

1.25. Notwithstanding the need to be prepared to adapt a given strategy, there is an obvious requirement to guard against over-reacting to developments on the ground and amending a strategy too frequently as this can begin to erode trust and confidence in the strategic leadership.

38. The concept of 'adaptive' and 'technical' problems is explored in Ronald A Heifetz's seminal book *Leadership without Easy Answers*.
39. Keith Grint, *Wicked Problems and Clumsy Solutions: the Role of Leadership* (The British Association of Medical Managers, 2008), 12.
40. Harry R Yarger, *Strategy Theory for the 21st Century: The Little Book on Big Strategy* (US Government, 2006), 10.
41. James O Ellis, James N Mattis and Kori Schake, "Restoring our National Security," in *Blueprint for America*, ed. George P Shultz (Hoover Institution Press, 2016), 143.

Applying strategy

1.26. War provides a supreme test of grand strategy when all the instruments of national power are applied in the pursuit of victory and national survival. Military tactics and operations remain important, but getting the overarching strategy right – including its economic, political and informational aspects – is paramount. An authoritative study of lessons from the Second World War concluded:

> 'No amount of operational virtuosity ... redeemed fundamental flaws in political judgment. Whether policy shaped strategy or strategic imperatives drove policy was irrelevant. Miscalculations in both led to defeat, and any combination of politico-strategic error had disastrous results, even for some nations that ended the war as members of the victorious coalition. Even the effective mobilization of national will, manpower, industrial might, national wealth, and technological know-how did not save the belligerents from reaping the bitter fruit of severe mistakes [at this level]. …Mistakes in operations and tactics can be corrected, but political and strategic mistakes live forever.' [42]

1.27. One of the key challenges in the 21st Century is to learn how to derive and apply strategy across government (and with other actors) to complex security challenges. Another is how to deal with conflicts that will often be discretionary, and to which strict limits on the expenditure of national blood and treasure will apply, either by design or as a result of political pressure. If national survival is not immediately at stake, political judgment and strategic direction will be strongly influenced by competing priorities for expenditure, and the temptations of short-term expediency. In such circumstances, the challenge will often be further complicated by the need to secure and maintain popular support for the commitment of national assets, and even further complicated in an alliance or coalition context.

1.28. As the Chilcot Report and the work of Hooker and Collins suggest, there are numerous lessons which can be learnt from recent intervention campaigns, all of which are worth noting. But there are arguably four overriding strategic lessons that merit serious consideration by the budding strategist: first, the need for a full 'understand' phase in advance of key decisions and military deployments, and to apply critical thinking, and challenge, to the evidence available and any assumptions that have been made – as one senior commander recently suggested to RCDS "we should aspire to evidence-based decision making, not decision-based evidence making"; second, the need for clarity regarding the desired end-state to be achieved, and the resources required to do so; third, the need for built-in agility and flexibility to adapt when situations change, as they undoubtedly will, partly because 100% advance understanding of the problem to be addressed is never possible, no matter how thorough the 'understand' phase, and because 'the opposition has a voice' (and it is unlikely that all their moves will have been predicted); and fourth, the need to think through the potential unintended consequences at the

42. Williamson Murray and Mark Grimsley, "Introduction: On Strategy," in *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War*, eds. Williamson Murray, Macgregor Knox and Alvin Bernstein (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 3.

political level of using offensive military action to try and achieve a policy goal. The Chilcot Report noted that 'in any undertaking of this kind, certain fundamental elements are of vital importance'.[43] It went on to list these as being:

- the best possible appreciation of the theatre of operations, including the political, cultural and ethnic background, and the state of society, the economy and infrastructure;
- a hard-headed assessment of risks;
- objectives which are realistic within that context, and if necessary limited – rather than idealistic and based on optimistic assumptions; and
- allocation of the resources necessary for the task – both military and civil.

It also noted that 'all of these elements were lacking in the UK's approach to its role in post-conflict Iraq'.[44]

1.29. The House of Commons FAC drew similar conclusions in its report of 14 September 2016:

> 'We have seen no evidence that the UK Government carried out a proper analysis of the nature of the rebellion in Libya…UK strategy was founded on erroneous assumptions and an incomplete understanding of the evidence.' [45]

1.30. The need for clarity of purpose and an understanding of the resources required to implement a particular strategy are not new; nearly two centuries ago, Clausewitz observed that 'No one starts a war – or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so – without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it'.[46] The key point is that the politics (and hence the policy) must be appropriate in the first place if a successful strategy is to be derived, let alone implemented. Gray provides a more contemporary perspective:

> '…although there are many kinds of grit that create friction in the relationship between politics and strategy, by far the most pernicious is an absence of appropriate political objectives.' [47]

1.31. However, while it is easy to state that the policy goals should be clear before a strategy starts being developed, in reality achieving such clarity and defining exactly what needs to be done can be extremely difficult. As discussed earlier in this section, this is

43. UK Cabinet Office, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry: Executive Summary* (HMSO, 2016), 134.
44. *Ibid.*
45. House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, *Libya: Examination of Intervention and Collapse and the UK's Future Policy Options* (Third Report of Session 2016-17) (House of Commons, 2016), 39.
46. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, eds. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton University Press, 1976), 579.
47. Colin S Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 59.

because strategies at the grand strategic level are usually designed to address 'adaptive' challenges, ones which often defy easy understanding. The contemporary strategic environment provides numerous examples of such challenges. For example, most members of the international community would probably agree that the situations in Syria, Kashmir, Libya, the Crimea and the Occupied Territories of Palestine, to name but a few of the world's 'wicked' problems, are in urgent need of resolution. But defining what needs to be done is not straightforward.

1.32. Even when the policy goals are clear, problems at the grand strategic level are often so complex that areas of uncertainty are likely to persist well into strategy implementation. Understanding should improve as events begin to unfold and other actors' actions become clearer, although this is by no means certain as the situation will change once competing strategies start being implemented. One way of trying to ensure that a strategy is robust enough to cope with unexpected outcomes is to consider a range of potential scenarios during the 'understand' phase. This can add particular value when, because of an imperative to act quickly,[48] there is insufficient time to develop a comprehensive understanding of the situation. Considering a range of outcomes should also help counter the optimism bias that can sometimes pervade high-level decision-making. The following observation from the House of Commons FAC report makes interesting reading in the context of a cascade of arguably unforeseen events following the implementation of a strategy:

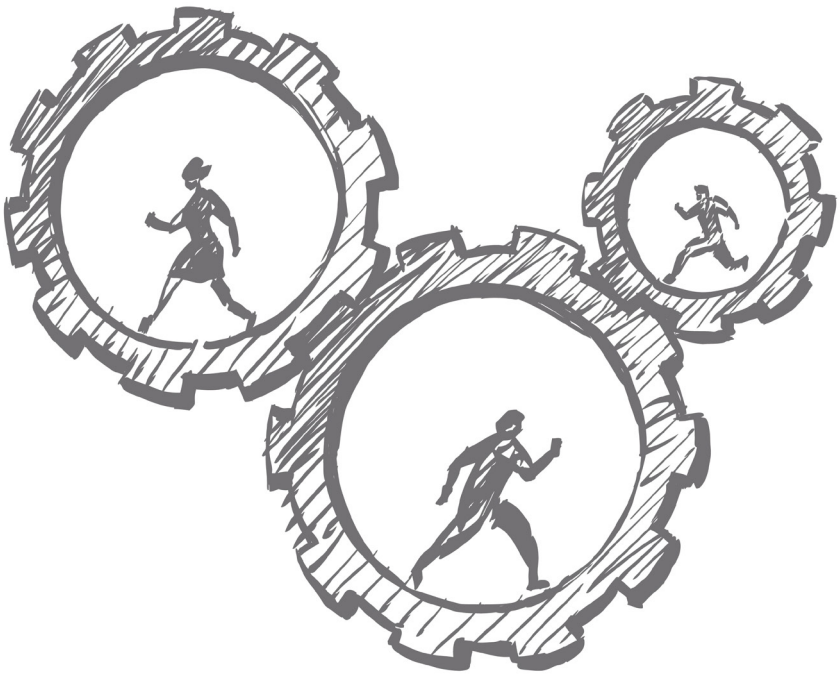
> 'By the summer of 2011, the limited intervention to protect civilians had drifted into an opportunist policy of regime change. That policy was not underpinned by a strategy to support and shape post-Gaddafi Libya. The result was political and economic collapse, inter-militia and inter-tribal warfare, humanitarian and migrant crises, widespread human rights violations, the spread of Gaddafi regime weapons across the region and the growth of ISIL in North Africa.' [49]

Conclusion

1.33. This section explained the evolution of strategy and its relationship with policy, citing its historical precedents, and then explored how the term strategy is now employed in a wide variety of contexts. It considered the nature of the 'adaptive' or 'wicked' problems that strategies are designed to address, explained RCDS' definition of strategy and offered four key lessons that experience suggests are worth noting by the would-be strategist. The next section of this booklet builds on this discussion by looking in more detail at the so-called fundamentals of strategy. It identifies the generic goals of grand strategy, suggests nine characteristics of good strategy and proposes five tests which can be applied to a developing strategy to ascertain whether it is likely to be fit for purpose. It concludes with some general pointers about the language used in effective strategies.

48. Such as: for humanitarian reasons; due to political pressure; or to seize a fleeting opportunity.
49. House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, *Libya: Examination of Intervention and Collapse and the UK's Future Policy Options* (Third Report of Session 2016-17) (House of Commons, 2016), 3.

Notes:



Section 2

Fundamentals of strategy

Strategy is inherently difficult to formulate. Whilst there is no 'one size fits all' formula, this section considers the 'fundamentals' of effective strategy. It starts by considering the purpose of grand strategy, proposing some generic goals, and then identifies the characteristics of good strategy. It suggests five tests that can be applied to assess whether a strategy is likely to be fit for purpose and concludes by considering the language used in strategies.

'A fundamental lesson from history is that strategy is necessarily purposeful, but must be designed in a world of ambiguity, complexity, and uncertainty.'

Frank Hoffman[50]

Introduction

2.1. The consequences of applying a poor strategy can be significant. As discussed in the previous section, the Japanese decision to attack Pearl Harbor[51] might have made sense militarily but, at the grand strategic level, it was arguably catastrophic. In terms of more contemporary examples, David Ucko and Robert Egnell note that:

> 'Strategy requires a clear alignment of ends, ways and means, prioritisation, sequencing, and a theory of victory. In contrast, [UK] strategy making for Basra and for Helmand was marked by a failure to grasp the nature of the campaign, to adapt once new realities came to the fore, and to resource these efforts both politically and financially, to achieve a clearly established objective.'[52]

2.2. Good strategies do exist. Perhaps the most obvious are those adopted by the West during the Cold War (see Section 4) but there are others. Malcolm Chalmers, for example, highlights the following recent interventions in which the UK was involved as having achieved strategic success: Sierra Leone in 2000; the NATO-led intervention in Bosnia from 1995 to 2002; and NATO intervention in Kosovo from 1999 to 2003.[53] The restoration of British Sovereignty to the Falkland Islands in 1982 and, arguably, the end of armed conflict in Northern Ireland provide other examples of where effective strategies have enabled policy goals to be achieved. Northern Ireland is a particularly good example of 'adaptive' strategy because, although the 'ends' endured, the 'means' and 'ways' evolved over the years as

50. Frank Hoffman, "Grand Strategy: The Fundamental Considerations," *Orbis* (Fall 2014): 474.
51. US spelling retained as it is a US place name.
52. David H Ucko and Robert Egnell, *Counterinsurgency in Crisis: Britain and the Challenges of Modern Warfare* (Columbia University Press, 2015), 147.
53. Malcolm Chalmers, *Wars in Peace: British Military Operations Since 1991* (RUSI, 2014), 90.

circumstances changed. However, there are many more examples of poor strategies. The main reason for this is that developing an effective strategy is actually very difficult. The problem is that strategy is about realising a vision for the future; it is not deterministic but probabilistic – hence the need for strategies to be adaptable. Although principles can be captured and codified, it will always remain in practice an art, underpinned – but not driven by – calculation. Yarger offers a useful perspective:

> 'Strategy provides a coherent blueprint to bridge the gap between the realities of today and a desired future. It is the disciplined calculation of overarching objectives, concepts, and resources within acceptable bounds of risk to create more favorable future outcomes than might otherwise exist if left to chance or the hands of others.'[54]

2.3. The sheer complexity of the world, the number of independent actors and the uniqueness of each situation or strategic challenge all mean that there is no set formula for strategy. Moreover, a strategy that has worked in the past will not necessarily function well in the future, not least because strategies are 'made and carried out by people'[55] and the people involved change. A strategy should never become a straitjacket: flexibility and adaptability are therefore at a premium as the Duke of Wellington famously observed:

> 'They [the French] planned their campaigns just as you might make a splendid piece of harness. It looks very well; and answers very well; until it gets broken; and then you are done for. Now I made my campaigns of rope. If anything went wrong, I tied a knot; and went on.'[56]

2.4. Although there is no 'one size fits all' template for a successful strategy, experience nevertheless suggests that there are a number of 'fundamentals' which, if observed, improve the chances of a strategy being effective. These range from being absolutely clear about what the strategy is trying to achieve through to ensuring that the 'big idea' behind the strategy is articulated in an accessible way and that the strategy, as an 'adaptive solution', is kept under constant review and adjusted when appropriate. It is worth the budding strategist considering each of these fundamentals in a little more detail. Where appropriate, lessons from recent US and UK endeavours in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya are again used to illustrate the enduring nature of these fundamentals.

Generic goals of grand strategy

2.5. No two strategies will ever have exactly the same objectives but, within the wider grand strategic context, it is highly likely that they will have similar long term generic goals. These goals typically include the sustainment, if not furtherance, of key national interests such as prosperity, security and stability. Considering these generic goals in more detail

54. Harry R Yarger, *Strategy Theory for the 21st Century: The Little Book on Big Strategy* (US Government, 2006), 5.
55. Colin S Gray and Jeanne L Johnson, "The Practice of Strategy," in *Strategy in the Contemporary World*, eds. John Bayliss, James J Wirtz and Colin S Gray, Fourth Edition, Impression 1 (Oxford University Press, 2016), 363.
56. Paul K David, *Masters of the Battlefield: Great Commanders from the Classical Age to the Napoleonic Era* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 530.

provides an insight into how the instruments of power – which are considered in more detail in Section 3 – might be employed to achieve a particular strategic outcome.

a. Security. Security in the widest context is relatively straightforward, at least conceptually. It means the freedom to live, act and make choices in accordance with a nation's values. It has an external component, such as the defence of national security from external threats, but there is also an internal component when prosperity and stability are threatened by violent internal forces. To some extent, economic prosperity can also be dependent on military security, such as when trade routes need to be protected. Notwithstanding this, only those policy goals which will genuinely impact on national or international security should be included in this category; there is a need to guard against unnecessarily securitising issues as this can lead to governments and organisations implementing inappropriately draconian measures which, in the longer term, may actually be detrimental.

b. Stability. Stability is a more complex idea. The very word suggests the opposite of change, which is itself inevitable. It is therefore important to understand that in using the word we do not seek to deny or overcome change but to take proper account of it. So stability does not mean stasis or standing still but rather ensuring the provision of a firm platform for action, like a ship at sea. It has connotations of balance and harmony, but also adaptability to changing circumstance. It is largely an internal concept and is influenced by a country's governance structures, its domestic policies and actions, and the provision of services and safe conditions which promote equitable opportunities for people to flourish and have cause for optimism about the future. Stabilisation, furthermore, may be conducted as a proactive activity to restore stability to a country or region.

c. Prosperity. Prosperity is arguably the most straightforward purpose of strategy. At the individual level, it may be manifest through a general sense of well-being, comfort, fulfilment, confidence, respect and self-respect. At the national level, it relates more to a state's continued development and sustained economic growth, as well as, importantly, how this increased wealth is distributed to provide a safe and secure environment for its people.

2.6. If the goal of a grand strategy does not relate to one or more of these categories, the overarching policy may lack clarity in terms of what it is trying to achieve and how it will benefit the nation. At best, this might be because of incompetent drafting; alternatively, it might be because the nation or organisation is responding to an imperative that 'something must be done' without having thought through exactly what it is trying to achieve. As Eric Gartzke notes:

> 'A failure to focus on grand strategy is an all-too-familiar by-product of the war on terror, where the objective has been to harm and not be harmed, rather than to effect meaningful changes to the disposition of world affairs.'[57]

57. Eric Gartzke, "The Myth of Cyberwar: Bringing War in Cyberspace Back Down to Earth," *International Security* 38, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 72.

2.7. There is an argument that 'influence' and 'power' should be included as generic strategic goals. However, the RCDS view is that neither are strategic goals in themselves; they are certainly important, but only in the context of enabling a nation to achieve 'prosperity', 'security' and/or 'stability.' There is also an argument that the pursuit or furtherance of a nation's values could be seen as a strategic goal. This perspective has some traction but the RCDS view is that values form the foundations on which a strategy is built. Sullivan and Harper offer a useful perspective:

> 'Think of strategy as a bridge: values are the bedrock on which the piers of the bridge are planted, the near bank is today's reality, the far bank is the vision. Your strategy is the bridge itself.'[58]

Characteristics of strategy

2.8. As well as clarity of purpose, effective strategies also have a number of other characteristics. Taken collectively, they give the strategy 'substance' and ensure that it is more than just a politically expedient narrative. As Porter noted in commenting on why the UK Government's 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) was not actually a strategy:

> 'The Government lost sight of the central question of strategy – which is not communications, but aligning power, commitment and national interest to political realities.'[59]

2.9. RCDS' characteristics of strategy could conceivably be termed 'principles' but this might imply that they are in some way definitive as, say, are the principles of war. They are not but they do reflect the experience of RCDS, and its many contributors, and have been reviewed following the publication of both the Chilcot Report and the House of Commons FAC report. They are therefore intended to aid contemporary reflection and discussion on the nature of good strategy which:

- is designed to achieve a clearly stated policy goal;
- has clear ownership, at the right level, and is subject to continuous constructive challenge, both during formulation and implementation;
- has a central 'big idea';
- is easily communicated;
- acknowledges uncertainty and expects unforeseen outcomes;
- is appropriately resourced;
- is based on reality and can adapt as circumstances change;
- accounts for all stakeholders;

58. Gordon R Sullivan and Michael V Harper, *Hope is not a Method* (Broadway Books, 1998), 99.
59. Patrick Porter, "Why Britain Doesn't Do Grand Strategy," *The RUSI Journal* 155, no. 4 (2010): 9.

- has continuity of leadership; and
- recognises that the opposition has a voice.

2.10. Given the importance of these characteristics, it is appropriate to review each in more detail.[60]

Ownership and constructive challenge

2.11. A grand strategy should be owned personally by the leading statesman or stateswoman, both in development and in implementation. As Hooker and Collins note in the context of lessons learnt from US interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan:

> 'Since authority can be delegated, but not responsibility, it is incumbent upon leaders to stay well informed about progress toward objectives, identifying anything or anybody that is impeding success. All leaders, from the President to the local commander and Ambassador in the field, must understand well whether the collective endeavour they supervise is succeeding or failing.'[61]

2.12. In UK terms, the forum for discussion and agreement on strategic issues is the National Security Council and, ultimately, the Cabinet. The experts responsible for the detailed work on strategic design need to have the ability and authority to question and challenge the realism of policy goals. A range of opinions, bringing real diversity of thought into the decision-making process, can provide a valuable source of insight and challenge; the inclusion of external experts in the decision-making process (from academia, think-tanks, etc) is therefore strongly recommended. The need for Ministers to allow the exploration of options which might challenge preconceived assumptions was highlighted in the Chilcot Report's observation that:

> 'At no stage did Ministers or senior officials commission the systematic evaluation of different options, incorporating detailed analysis or risk and UK capabilities, military and civilian, which should have been required before the UK committed to any course of action in Iraq.'[62]

2.13. Although strategy follows policy, there is a clear requirement for strategy-makers to influence policy, reminding policy-makers of what is realistically achievable given the resources available (including time). From a strategy-maker's perspective this can be summarised as having the responsibility to "speak truth to power". This requires considerable moral courage which, occasionally, is found wanting. Hooker and Collins make the point:

60. Less the need for clarity of purpose in terms of having a clearly stated policy goal as the importance of this has already been considered in detail.
61. Christopher J Lamb with Megan Franco, "National-Level Coordination and Implementation: How System Attributes Trumped Leadership," in *Lessons Encountered – Learning from the Long War*, eds. Richard D Hooker and Joseph J Collins (National Defence University Press, 2015), 201.
62. UK Cabinet Office, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry: Executive Summary* (HMSO, 2016), 82.

> 'Nevertheless, the basic assumptions upon which our national and campaign strategies for Iraq were based were flawed, with doleful consequences. The primary responsibility must lie with the political leaders who made them. But senior military leaders also have a voice and real influence as expert practitioners in their fields. In the case of the decision to invade Iraq, this influence was not used in full.'[63]

2.14. So senior military leaders and government officials have a responsibility to give honest and impartial advice. Theresa May, the UK Prime Minister, highlighted the importance of this in an interview with *The Spectator* in December 2016 when she stated that: "from the officials' point of view, what they owe to the Minister, and what the Minister expects, is the best possible advice".[64] Her direction to senior officials is also worth noting: "don't try to tell me what you think I want to hear. I want your advice, I want the options. Then politicians make the decisions".[65] Her point about politicians making the decisions is important. Senior officials are there to provide advice but the responsibility for deciding what to do resides with those elected to run the country. In reaching a decision, politicians may well chose to ignore some of the advice they have been given. This does not mean they are failing to think strategically; they just see the situation differently. However, as one very senior ex-Government official noted in addressing RCDS, Ministers and political leaders do have a responsibility to create an environment which encourages officials to give their best advice. It is in their interests to do this because, as the House of Commons FAC report illustrates, it is the political leaders, and not the officials, who are held accountable by Parliament when things go wrong:

> 'Through his decision making in the National Security Council, former Prime Minister David Cameron was ultimately responsible for the failure to develop a coherent Libya strategy.'[66]

2.15. There are a number of examples of effective constructive challenge. One of the most well known is the relationship that existed during the Second World War between Winston Churchill, then Prime Minister of Great Britain, and Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke, Britain's Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS). In his dairy, Viscount Alanbrooke (as he later became) noted that Churchill had:

> '…the most marvellous qualities and superhuman genius mixed with an astonishing lack of vision at times, and an impetuosity which if not guided must inevitably bring him into trouble again and again. Perhaps the most remarkable failing of his is that he can never see a whole strategical problem at once.'[67]

63. Richard D Hooker and Joseph J Collins, "Reflections on Lessons Encountered," in *Lessons Encountered - Learning from the Long War*, eds. Richard D Hooker and Joseph J Collins (National Defence University Press, 2015), 407.
64. James Forsyth and Fraser Nelson, "Theresa May: 'I Get So Frustrated With Whitehall'," *The Spectator* (December 2016): 23.
65. *Ibid*.
66. House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, *Libya: Examination of Intervention and Collapse and the UK's Future Policy Options* (Third Report of Session 2016-17) (House of Commons, 2016), 3.
67. Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke, *War Diaries: 1939 – 1945*, eds. Alex Danchev and Daniel Todman (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2002), 450-451.

2.16. Acknowledging what he believed to be Churchill's weaker areas, Alanbrooke believed that high rank brought with it 'a heavy obligation' to do the right thing.[68] So if Churchill, in making a point, thumped the table and glared at Alanbrooke, the latter would, if he disagreed, thump it harder and glare back.[69] Though often strained, their relationship was highly productive, indeed Churchill had specifically selected Alanbrooke for the job of CIGS because he had 'mettle'.[70] Although Alanbrooke's characteristic rejoinder of 'I flatly disagree'[71] worked for him, such a combative style is unlikely to be effective in most contemporary circumstances. A less confrontational approach, which chimes with the importance of strategists being able to build consensus, is likely to achieve better results. As one senior civil servant recently noted: "…while 'speaking truth to power' is vital, delivering such difficult messages to politicians needs to be done at the right time in the right way (and with the right evidence) to secure the best outcome".[72]

2.17. In considering how to embed the lessons from the Chilcot Report, the UK's Secretary of State for Defence gave the following direction which illustrates just how important constructive challenge is now recognised to be:

> 'Perhaps above all, though, we want to build a culture of reasonable challenge. There is a danger in any large organisation that people become predisposed to 'groupthink', and that's not a healthy basis on which to develop and implement policy. Much better is to have diversity of thought. At the end of the day, of course, decisions need to be taken, but they will be better decisions if all avenues have been explored. As the Department's top leadership, then, we want you – regardless of rank or grade – to feel empowered to offer challenge, within the normal bounds of courtesy and respect; and we will expect senior staff to accept challenge. We want to build strong policy and strategy by drawing on the range of views. And we want to see those who embrace this approach becoming central to our business, not regarded as outliers.'[73]

2.18. Following the Secretary of State's direction, the Ministry of Defence produced a guide to reasonable challenge.[74] This is included in Annex A to this booklet as the advice and guidance it provides for those receiving and offering such challenge will be of interest to RCDS Members.

68. Alex Danchev and Daniel Todman, "Introduction," in *Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke, War Diaries: 1939 – 1945*, eds. Alex Danchev and Daniel Todman (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2002), xvii.
69. *Ibid.*, xvi.
70. *Ibid*.
71. *Ibid.*, xv.
72. View given in December 2016 under the 'Chatham House Rule'.
73. Ministry of Defence (MOD), "Embedding the Lessons of Chilcot," MOD Intranet Home Page http://defenceintranet.diif.r.mil.uk/News/BySubject/DefencePolicyandBusiness/Pages/EmbeddingthelessonsofChilcot.aspx (accessed 17 January 2017).
74. There is no difference between what the MOD terms 'reasonable challenge' and 'constructive challenge' as described in this booklet. Notably, the US also refers to this type of challenge as 'respectful dissent'.

The central 'big idea'

2.19. A strategy which has no unifying idea is not a strategy. The importance of strategic ideas is often over-looked. The innovative and compelling 'big idea' is often the basis of a new strategy. It must not only bind the ends, ways and means but also inspire others to support it. It plays as much to people as to process, giving the destination, direction and means of travel in such a manner that they feel bound to make the journey.

Communicating the 'big idea'

2.20. It should be possible to encapsulate the essence of a strategy – the 'big idea' – in a single line. It should be memorable to those involved in its execution and expressed in a manner which enables them to see their part in achieving it. This is analogous to the principle of a clear and succinct 'intent' at the lower levels, and also to the well-known adage that it is easier to write a long and complicated paper than a short and simple one. Brevity and simplicity force clarity of thought and expression, and economy of action. In practice, the intent of all good strategies can be summed up in a page if not even better – in a paragraph. However, whilst the importance of having a compelling and pithy narrative needs to be understood, Porter sounds a note of caution:

> 'A good narrative should crown and capitalise on a coherent and effective strategy. It is not in itself a strategy and is no substitute for one.'[75]

Acknowledging uncertainty and mitigating the unexpected

2.21. The strategist will never know everything about the environment in which their strategy is designed to achieve a policy outcome, no matter how thorough the 'understand' phase. Nor will they be able to predict the unintended consequences once their strategy starts to be implemented. It therefore follows that strategists need to be comfortable planning on the basis of incomplete information. Because of this, they need to recognise that, despite their best efforts, outcomes are far from certain and therefore good feedback loops to ensure they are sighted on what is happening on the ground once a strategy has entered the implementation phase are important, as is being prepared to adapt the strategy as necessary to achieve the desired end-state. But while the need for reliable feedback is arguably self-evident, the difficulty of obtaining it should not be underestimated, particularly if a nation or organisation has only limited sensors, perhaps caused by a reducing 'footprint' in a target state or region.[76]

2.22. Because we cannot anticipate every eventuality or predict the unexpected, strategists should aim to keep a reserve of everything (effort, resources, time). Even after considering all the risks, being prepared for events to take an entirely unexpected turn is the

75. Patrick Porter, "Why Britain Doesn't Do Grand Strategy," *The RUSI Journal* 155, no. 4 (2010): 10.
76. During the UK's intervention in Iraq, it became much more difficult to understand what was happening in the key cities of Maysan and Basra, and therefore whether the UK's strategy was having the desired effect, once British troops had withdrawn from these key cities.

embodiment of strategic flexibility and adaptability. The following extract from the Chilcot Report highlights the importance of being prepared for the unexpected:

> 'Although the UK expected to be involved in Iraq for a lengthy period after the conflict, the Government was unprepared for the role in which the UK found itself from April 2003. Much of what went wrong stemmed from that lack of preparation.'[77]

2.23. This same apparent lack of preparedness for the campaign to take an unexpected turn was highlighted by the House of Commons FAC. It noted, *inter alia*, that 'the possibility that militant extremist groups would attempt to benefit from the rebellion should not have been the preserve of hindsight'[78] and that the 'UK strategy was founded on erroneous assumptions and an incomplete understanding of the evidence'.[79] Arguably, a more rigorous analysis of the desired 'ends' would have helped identify the likely consequences of trying to achieve them. As the FAC report notes:

> 'The UK's intervention in Libya was reactive and did not comprise action in pursuit of a strategic objective. This meant that a limited intervention to protect civilians drifted into a policy of regime change by military means.'[80]

2.24. One way of reducing the possibility of being surprised by an outcome is to ensure that an organisation has a 'challenge culture' – led from the top – which encourages the constructive challenge already described. However, imbuing this culture is not easy; moreover, it can take considerable time. One way of helping to overcome this inertia is the establishment of a formal 'red team' with the remit of testing a fledgling strategy against a range of potential scenarios, including the 'unthinkable' ones.[81] To be effective, the leader of the 'red team' needs to have direct access to the strategy owner and the confidence to speak honestly. As noted in paragraph 2.12 above, the possibility of including experts from outside government in the 'red team' (including academics and other subject matter experts) should be considered.

Resourcing the strategy

2.25. Failing to resource a strategy appropriately invites disaster. Without adequate 'means' to support the selected 'ways' – and maintain an adequate reserve to cater for the unexpected – it is highly unlikely that the 'ends' will be achieved. As Frank Hoffman notes:

> 'Thinking of strategy without understanding the limits of means or resources is woefully delusionary.'[82]

77. UK Cabinet Office, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry: Executive Summary* (HMSO, 2016), 130.
78. House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, *Libya: Examination of Intervention and Collapse and the UK's Future Policy Options* (Third Report of Session 2016-17) (House of Commons, 2016), 39.
79. *Ibid.*
80. *Ibid.*
81. The UK MOD's Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC) produces an excellent guide to 'red teaming' (UK MOD, *Red Teaming Guide* (2nd Edition) (2013)). The booklet is available on the RCDS intranet webpages and is also accessible in the public domain at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-guide-to-red-teaming
82. Frank Hoffman, "Grand Strategy: The Fundamental Considerations," *Orbis* (Fall 2014): 476.

2.26. The Chilcot Report goes further:

> 'Strategies and plans must define the resources required to deliver objectives, identify the budget(s) that will provide those resources, and confirm that those resources are available.'[83]

2.27. Accurate resourcing can of course be complicated by the inevitable uncertainties of strategy implementation hence the importance of thorough 'red teaming,' a realistic and hard-headed assessment of possible worst-case scenarios and of maintaining the necessary reserve (see paragraph 2.22).

The need for realism

2.28. Strategy should be realistic in concept and application. Although the underlying ideas that provided its inspiration may have an enduring character, strategy must evolve as circumstances change. Hence strategy is not linear; it requires a dynamic and proactive approach, based on realistic assessments and associated decisions made on the balance of probabilities. The strategist therefore requires a positive and enquiring frame of mind, drawing on a running review of the integration of the ends, ways and means to achieve the policy goals. As well as conjuring up an interesting mental image, the following advice from Hoffman is worth noting:

> 'Since strategy is an evolving contact sport, one should avoid what Lord Salisbury called the most common error, "sticking to the carcass of a dead policy".'[84]

2.29. When, despite a proactive approach, a particular strategy has failed to shape the situation as originally intended, the need for a realistic assessment becomes all the more important. If, as a consequence of this assessment, it becomes apparent that the desired policy goals are unlikely to be achieved, this needs to be communicated to the policy owner. With this in mind, the following observation in the Chilcot Report about the situation immediately prior to handing over responsibility to the Iraqi authorities (a policy goal) makes interesting reading:

> 'In his advice to Mr Blair on 21 January, Gen Walker [then Chief of the Defence Staff] did not expose the assessment made by Lt Gen Fry that only additional military effort by the MNFI might be able to get the campaign back on track.'[85]

2.30. The importance of ensuring that the policy owner is exposed to 'ground-truth' in terms of how a particularly strategy is faring cannot be underestimated. Developing this theme, the following observation by Christopher Elliott, whose seminal analysis of Britain's High Command during the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts was recently published, is worth noting:

83. UK Cabinet Office, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry: Executive Summary* (HMSO, 2016), 138.
84. Frank Hoffman, "Grand Strategy: The Fundamental Considerations," *Orbis* (Fall 2014): 482.
85. UK Cabinet Office, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry: Executive Summary* (HMSO, 2016), 98.

> 'The politicians thought that they were delivering what the military were asking from them, whilst the military were downgrading their requests to what they thought would be politically acceptable. Too often the military in the MoD meekly accepted their lot and tried their best, rather than demanding what was necessary for success and acting on what those in the front line were telling them was needed with the greatest clarity.'[86]

2.31. If it becomes apparent that policy goals are unlikely to be achieved, the situation should be re-examined in detail and a revised set of options developed. These might range from making minor adjustments to the existing strategy, or producing a new strategy, through to reviewing whether the original policy goals remain realistic. While the need for such activity might seem self-evident, the Chilcot Report notes that:

> 'What can be said is that a number of opportunities for the sort of candid reappraisal of policies that would have better aligned objectives and resources did not take place. There was no serious consideration of more radical options, such as an early withdrawal or else a substantial increase in effort. The Inquiry has identified a number of moments, especially during the first year of the Occupation, when it would have been possible to conduct a substantial reappraisal. None took place.'[87]

Stakeholder inclusivity

2.32. Strategy should aim to provide a 'golden bridge' to the future for all those involved, seeking to conceive of an outcome in which, where competition or conflict is involved, all sides have a stake, and emerge with self-respect and hope. But such inclusivity can be contentious, particularly when the conflict is with terrorist groups. Despite Margaret Thatcher's famous assertion that the UK does not negotiate with terrorists and had no intention of negotiating with the IRA or their political wing, it was such negotiations that led to the peace process in Northern Ireland, eventually bringing 38 years of armed conflict to an end. Jonathan Powell, who was the chief British negotiator in Northern Ireland from 1997 to 2007, puts is succinctly:

> 'If you want to stop violence then you have to talk to the men with guns, rather than only to those who act purely politically.'[88]

2.33. But while in Afghanistan attempted reconciliation with the Taliban became an increasingly important strand of Coalition strategy, it remains more difficult to contemplate opening lines for dialogue with groups such as Al Qaeda or Daesh, if only because of the difficulty of imagining an outcome acceptable to both sides. And denial of engagement can be a valid approach, at least until a more favourable set of conditions prevails and there is greater clarity about what can usefully be discussed and who might take the lead in doing so. As Powell suggests, the issue might not be whether to talk to a particular foe but 'when'

86. Christopher Elliott, *High Command: British Military Leadership in the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars* (Hurst & Company, 2015), 221-222.
87. UK Cabinet Office, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry: Executive Summary* (HMSO, 2016), 98.
88. Jonathan Powell, *Talking to Terrorists: How to End Armed Conflicts* (Penguin Random House, 2014), 1.

and 'how.'[89] The important point is to guard against excluding a course of action simply because of an emotional or even a moral reaction to a particular group's activities. As the House of Commons FAC noted:

> 'Political engagement might have delivered civilian protection, regime change and reform at lesser cost to the UK and to Libya. If political engagement had been unsuccessful, the UK and its coalition allies would not have lost anything. Instead, the UK Government focused exclusively on military intervention.'[90]

Continuity of leadership

2.34. It is absolutely essential, in whatever manner strategy is conceived and developed, that strategic leaders – both political and military – take personal responsibility for its implementation. Inevitably, since grand strategic reality rarely permits the luxury of end-states being achieved quickly, one of the prime responsibilities of strategic leadership is identifying, fostering and mentoring successors who can provide suitable but not inflexible continuity in strategic implementation.

The opposition has a voice

2.35. Finally, we must never forget that our strategy will be contested and not merely in the military domain. Political, economic and, above all, information levers of power will be applied to oppose our will and intentions. Hoffman again offers a helpful insight:

> 'Initial US strategies in Afghanistan and Iraq too quickly dismissed our adversary…A failure to think competitively has squandered opportunities in contemporary application, at great cost.'[91]

2.36. The idea that strategy is a competitive business is not new. Writing about the Second World War, the historians John Ferris and Evan Mawdsley note that:

> 'Grand strategy rests on a comparison of your own strengths and weaknesses with those of your rivals, and the exploitation of comparative advantage in competitions against them. It involves making decisions, mobilizing and using forms of power, and applying strategic principles.'[92]

2.37. Gray offers the following thoughts on the importance of acknowledging what he calls the 'inconvenient enemy':

89. *Ibid.*, 41.
90. House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, *Libya: Examination of Intervention and Collapse and the UK's Future Policy Options* (Third Report of Session 2016-17) (House of Commons, 2016), 39.
91. Frank Hoffman, "Grand Strategy: The Fundamental Considerations," *Orbis* (Fall 2014): 479.
92. John Ferris and Evan Mawdsley, "Introduction to Part I," *The Cambridge History of the Second World War: Part I – Grand Strategies* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 25.

> 'Obvious though it should be to insist upon recognition of the reality of the independence, actually interdependence, of the enemy, neglect of his nature, of his role and the historically unique detail of his being, has been commonplace by belligerents throughout the ages…Strategic theorists differ in their rank-ordering of the factors that promote strategic success and failure. However, inadequate understanding of the enemy, often truly The Other in psychological terms, should score heavily in the negative column.'[93]

2.38. Not only does the opposition have a voice but partner nations within a coalition might also find their interests diverging. Within the context of an agreed overarching policy, it is important that national strategies are mutually reinforcing. Although this might seem self-evident, the Chilcot Report notes that:

> 'US and UK strategies for Iraq began to diverge almost immediately after the conflict. Although the differences were managed, by early 2007 the UK was finding it difficult to play down the divergence, which was, by that point, striking.'[94]

The five tests of strategy

2.39. The characteristics offer broad suggestions on what an effective strategy might 'look like'. Other commentators take slightly different approaches. Hoffman, for example, provides a 'framework of eight considerations' which 'provide a foundation to think about, design and apply a national strategy'.[95] His considerations are: culture and context; constraints; compromise and consensus; competitiveness; coherence; contingency; continuous assessment/adaptation; and communication. Although arguably slightly contrived (to ensure that each principle begins with the letter 'c'), it provides a useful intellectual framework that is not too dissimilar to that provided by RCDS' characteristics. Gray provides an alternative view in his *General Theory of Strategy* stating that '…the particular details of each newly crafted strategy are derived from and must be attentively executed within each of seven contexts'.[96] He then goes on to identify the contexts as: political; sociocultural; economic; technological; military; geographical; and historical.

2.40. Whatever approach the strategist adopts to develop his or her strategy, experience suggests that it should pass five simple tests: first, it must be acceptable; second, it must be feasible; third, it must be suitable to the circumstances; fourth it must be sustainable, not only in terms of resources but also in terms of the common will of the members of an organisation or the people of a nation to see it through; and fifth, it must be able to adapt as circumstances on the ground change. It is useful to consider each of these tests individually, noting that they should be applied using a critical thinking approach.[97]

93. Colin S Gray, *The Strategy Bridge* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 131.
94. Cabinet Office, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry: Executive Summary* (HMSO, 2016), 124.
95. Frank Hoffman, "Grand Strategy: The Fundamental Considerations," *Orbis* (Fall 2014): 479.
96. Colin S Gray and Jeanne L Johnson, "The Practice of Strategy," in *Strategy in the Contemporary World*, eds. John Bayliss, James J Wirtz and Colin S Gray, Fourth Edition, Impression 1 (Oxford University Press, 2016), 364-367.
97. A critical thinking approach is one where assumptions, arguments and conclusions are questioned, rather than just accepted, before a reasoned judgment is made.

Acceptability

2.41. Acceptability covers several issues: legal acceptability (i.e. that Government legal advisors have identified the likely legal risks and the factors associated with them); political acceptability in terms of ability to secure political/Parliamentary (in UK terms) support; and domestic acceptability, which can be the most complex factor.

2.42. Political and domestic acceptability are more likely if the interests at stake, and their relative importance, are readily apparent. If these are easily understood, and the consequences of failure evident, then a clear and coherent narrative can be constructed and articulated. The importance of getting this right cannot be underestimated. The campaigns in both Iraq and Afghanistan have also emphasised the particular need for any use of military force in pursuit of policy and strategic goals to have wide domestic support, and that even if this is initially present it cannot be relied on to last once the going gets tough. On the economic front, following the 2008 global financial crisis, many governments developed strategies to try and return their nations to prosperity. Some succeeded in getting their populations to accept their strategies while others failed. Arguably, a key factor in determining whether a population accepted the draconian measures being proposed owed much to the way in which the strategies were articulated and, in particular, the extent to which governments were able to explain the consequences of not implementing a particular strategy.

Suitability

2.43. Suitability is a test of whether the strategy proposed is appropriate and timely in its application of the instruments available, and realistic in relation to the circumstances and culture(s) involved. It relates to acceptability in that what is suitable must also be acceptable in terms of legal and political risk.

2.44. The 'ends' of strategy must be compatible with the 'means' and the 'ways'. A suitable strategy is consistent with its overarching policy narrative and coherent with the goals being sought. Suitable strategies must be credible, and to be credible they must be legitimate.

Feasibility

2.45. Strategy must be feasible. This is the simple test of 'whether it can it be done'. This may seem self-evident but history is filled with instances of strategies that were acceptable and suitable, but in practice fanciful and impossible to implement. Often feasibility is governed by the minimum, not the maximum, commitment of resources or force required by policy. Thus the test may become whether the allocated resources are sufficient. 'Just enough' strategies, however, have a bad track record. As emphasised above (see paragraph 2.22), a wise strategist plans a reserve of effort, not only to cater for setback but also to be poised to exploit any fleeting strategic opportunities that arise.

Sustainability

2.46. Sustainability is a broad concept and not restricted to material sustainability. It encompasses both the physical and moral sustainability – simply the will to see it through – that needs to be assessed as a strategy is developed.

2.47. Strategy is about the future; it must be sustainable over time. This is as much about moral advantage and the will to maintain a strategy in the long term, as it is about sustaining physical resources.

Adaptability

2.48. No strategy survives contact with reality fully intact. Its chances of success will be significantly improved if it has been based on a profound understanding of the situation it has been designed to influence or change. Its chances of being effective will also be improved if the potential worst case and other scenarios were taken into account in its development. But no matter how thorough the preparation, the strategy will inevitably have to be adjusted once its implementation commences and events begin to unfold in an unexpected way. This should not be a surprise; as Grint notes, when we try to solve wicked problems, 'other problems emerge to compound the original problem'.[98] Adaptability therefore needs to be built into the strategy from the outset.

Applying the tests

2.49. The standard that needs to be achieved for a particular strategy to pass the tests depends on the circumstances as they relate to a nation's or organisation's interests. The people of a nation facing an imminent existential threat are likely to accept levels of privation which, if they were being urged to counter, say, climate change, they would find unacceptable. A degree of latitude therefore needs to be applied in considering the tests; it is not simply a question of pass or fail.

The language of strategy

2.50. The duty of strategy-makers to speak truth to power means that honesty and clarity are essential. This in turn underlines the importance of the language of strategy. It must be understood: clear, accurate, unambiguous and easily (and expertly) translated. It should always avoid hyperbole, generalisation and euphemism. Good strategy provides a clear narrative that links interests to policy goals, and expresses the ways those goals will be achieved. Examples may be instructive here:

- Hyperbole – the declaration of wars on drugs, crime, or most recently, on terror have grabbed headlines but did not amount to, or facilitate, cogent strategy.

- Generalisation – 'Islamist (or worse Islamic) Terrorism' and 'Religious Fundamentalism'

98. Keith Grint, *Wicked Problems and Clumsy Solutions: the Role of Leadership* (The British Association of Medical Managers, 2008), 13.

are glaring examples of generalisations which insult and thereby create misunderstanding, anger and ill will.

- Euphemism – 'collateral damage', 'friendly fire', 'ethnic cleansing' and 'extraordinary rendition' are a few examples of euphemisms that undermine strategy and those who make it by demonstrating their discomfort with hard truth.

- And, an example of good strategic language might be 'Germany first' which was considered by many to encapsulate the Allied strategy in the Second World War after December 1941 of defeating Germany before Japan.

Conclusion

2.51. This section provided an overview of what experience suggests are the 'fundamentals' of effective strategy. As well as considering the generic goals that strategy might be designed to achieve, it identified the characteristics of good strategy and proposed five tests which can be used to assess whether a strategy is likely to be fit for purpose. The next section builds on this and considers the instruments of national power (diplomatic, informational, military and economic) that an effective strategy should orchestrate in order to achieve policy goals. It looks at each of the instruments in detail and explains how they can be used as hard or soft power, or combined as 'smart power'.

Notes:

Section 3

Instruments of power

This section considers the instruments of power (diplomatic, informational, military and economic) in more detail and explores how an effective strategy can use them to achieve policy goals. Where appropriate, it identifies the principles underpinning their application and considers whether, in projecting power, a 'hard', 'soft' or 'smart' approach is most suitable.

'…something called Power, with or without a capital letter, which is assumed to exist universally in a concentrated or diffused form, does not exist. Power exists only when it is put into action.'

Michel Foucault[99]

Introduction

3.1. Section 1 differentiated between policy and strategy and established that strategy could be defined as:

> A course of action that integrates ends, ways and means to meet policy objectives.

3.2. In Section 2 we considered the generic goals, or policy objectives, of grand strategy; in the context of the above definition, these are the 'ends' that the strategy is designed to achieve. We now turn our attention to the instruments of national power – the 'ways' in the above definition – which, when coordinated and integrated in an effective strategy, should enable the nation[100] to achieve its policy goals.

3.3. The main Introduction noted that there are essentially four instruments of national power which are easily remembered using the mnemonic 'DIME': diplomatic; informational; military; and economic. As was also explained in the Introduction, formal inclusion of 'information' as an instrument in its own right is a relatively recent development – indeed, UK doctrine still prefers to describe the three traditional instruments of power (political, military and economic) as being '...underpinned by information'.[101] However, given the importance of information and strategic communications in the contemporary world, RCDS believes there are benefits to considering it alongside the other three. Notably, NATO doctrine[102] advocates this approach as do several prominent institutions. Chatham House,

99. Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (1982): 788.
100. Either acting independently or acting as part of an alliance (NATO, EU, etc.) or inter-governmental organisation (such as the UN, G7, etc.).
101. UK Ministry of Defence (MOD), Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC), Joint Doctrine Publication (JDP) 0-01, *UK Defence Doctrine* (5th Edition) (2014), 12.
102. NATO, Allied Joint Doctrine (AJP)-01, *Allied Joint Doctrine*, Edition D (NATO NSA, 2010), vii.

for example, notes in its seminal report into *Strategic Communications and National Strategy* that:

> 'A broader understanding of strategic communications would allow communications activity to function as one of the executive levers of national strategy, rather than being seen as a mere adjunct.'[103]

3.4. However, whether information (with strategic communications as a subset of this) is viewed as an instrument (or lever) in its own right or as a critical activity underpinning the diplomatic, economic and military instruments is arguably immaterial. What matters is that its importance as one of the ways of achieving a policy goal is recognised.[104]

3.5. No instrument can ever by truly effective on its own. The use of the military instrument, for example, is highly unlikely to achieve a favourable outcome in a conflict unless it is applied in conjunction with both the diplomatic and informational instruments. As current UK doctrine notes, the instruments '...should act together, unified behind a common national goal.'[105] Within the context of this full spectrum approach, how specific instruments are employed in a particular situation depends on the strategic context and the national policy goals being pursued.[106] Acknowledging the importance of this approach is critical, especially if a particular strategy might be expected to utilise only one of the instruments. The UK Government's most recent *National Security Strategy* (NSS) and *Strategic Defence and Security Review* (SDSR) provides a useful example of this in its opening narrative:

> 'We will use the full spectrum of our capabilities – armed force including, ultimately, our nuclear deterrent, diplomacy, law enforcement, economic policy, offensive cyber, and covert means – to deter adversaries and to deny them opportunities to attack us.'[107]

3.6. Before considering how best to integrate the four instruments into a coherent strategy, it is worth understanding more about each of them and the contribution they can make to achieving national policy goals.

Diplomacy

3.7. The diplomatic instrument uses diplomacy to manage international relations in pursuit of national interests. It involves the use of influence to create and maintain alliances, or isolate opponents, and aims to achieve objectives by strength of argument or threats rather than resorting to actual economic or military power. National interests are not

103. Paul Cornish, Julian Lindley-French and Claire Yorke, *Strategic Communications and National Strategy: A Chatham House Report* (Chatham House, 2011), ix.
104. An example of information having the lead over the other instruments might be the offensive use of attributable and non-attributable messaging to try and change particular perceptions held by an opponent's domestic population. Such activities might, or might not, be supported by state-to-state diplomatic activity.
105. UK MOD, DCDC, JDP 0-01, *UK Defence Doctrine* (5th Edition) (2014), 15.
106. *Ibid*.
107. UK Cabinet Office, *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom* (HMSO, 2015), 24.

necessarily defined narrowly in terms of the individual state involved: climate change, for instance, would be an example when national and multi-national interests can be seen to coincide, and states often enter collective agreements with other states in order to bolster their individual standing.

3.8. Satow's *Diplomatic Practice* offers a helpful perspective and defines diplomacy as:

> '…the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the governments of independent states, extending sometimes also to their relations with dependent territories, and between governments and international institutions; or, more briefly, the conduct of business between states by peaceful means.'[108]

3.9. A state's diplomatic 'weight' is undoubtedly enhanced by its economic and military standing, and international affairs reflect a tension between a search for international norms and rules with all states on an equal footing, and the reality that some states are more powerful than others. The specific link between diplomacy as an instrument of power and the military instrument is nevertheless a complex one. In the eighteenth century Frederick the Great observed that 'diplomacy without arms is like music without instruments'.[109] Tony Blair made a similar observation in the context of dealing with belligerent nations:

> 'We know, again from our history, that diplomacy not backed by the threat of force has never worked with dictators and never will.'[110]

3.10. But legal and other considerations mean that any shift from diplomacy to force should never be considered an automatic progression; at the very least, sufficient time needs to be allowed for diplomacy to take effect before force is used to try and achieve a policy goal.[111] The Chilcot Report makes the point:

> 'A military timetable should not be allowed to dictate a diplomatic timetable. If a strategy of coercive diplomacy is being pursued, forces should be deployed in such a way that the threat of action can be increased or decreased according to the diplomatic situation and the policy can be sustained for as long as necessary.' [112]

3.11. And the Chilcot Report as a whole points to the shortcomings of military or diplomatic action unless linked to a full understanding of all the aspects of the situation a nation or a coalition is seeking to influence. It also highlights the importance of making use of all the available instruments of power, including the deployment of adequate resources and a major and well-designed strategic communications effort.

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108. Satow, *Satow's Diplomatic Practice: Sixth Edition*, ed. Sir Ivor Roberts (Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.
109. Although this quote is widely attributed to Frederick the Great, it has proved difficult to find an authoritative reference to support the attribution.
110. Cited in: UK Cabinet Office, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry: Executive Summary* (HMSO, 2016), 18.
111. However, on rare occasions the quick and decisive use of military force might be appropriate in order to surprise an opponent and enable a policy goal to be achieved. Equally, climatic considerations (such as the onset of monsoon or winter snow falls) might constrain the time available for diplomacy if a military option is to remain viable.
112. UK Cabinet Office, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry: Executive Summary* (HMSO, 2016), 130.

3.12. Principles of Diplomacy. Although diplomacy has traditionally been viewed as a state-on-state activity, '...it is evolving to incorporate other opinion-formers, power brokers and third parties'.[113] Whatever the context, RCDS has developed a number of 'Principles of Diplomacy' which merit consideration.

a. Long-term thinking. Diplomacy should focus on long-term interests, although it might occasionally be necessary to address short-term political imperatives. The longer-term consequences of actions or interventions also need to be taken into account.

b. Morality. You should set a high bar. Beware of double standards – they may be unavoidable but you must then expect others to notice and exploit.

c. Public diplomacy. Do not play solely to the home audience; your message may be playing badly to other constituencies abroad, where it could have adverse real-world effects. Deft calibration is therefore required to ensure that messages are 'tuned' to disparate audiences while remaining consistent.

d. Negotiation. In international negotiations, have a clear concept of what you are trying to achieve and how far you are prepared to go to achieve it – at least in your mind (for you do not declare your hand before you negotiate). Drawing on his experience as a diplomat, the Commandant of RCDS recently produced a note setting out his thoughts on how to succeed in meetings. It is reproduced at Annex B to the booklet.

e. Compromise. You must give and take. When irreconcilable positions are deeply entrenched the only way forward is to compromise. Know what you are prepared to concede. Identify your 'red lines,' separating what is essential from what is desirable, and remember the adage that occasionally you may have to lose a battle to win a war.

f. Preparation. Work out your responses to the positions likely to be adopted by the others, identifying their 'red lines' as well as areas where concessions might be possible.

g. Comprehension. Understand those with whom you are dealing, especially their aspirations and expectations, and not least their hopes and fears. Much of this should come from a deep understanding of their culture.

h. Communication. Be prepared to talk, even to those deemed 'unacceptable' or vilified if they are part of the solution: a handshake is not an absolution.

i. Trust. The diplomat – as does any member of the military – needs many qualities, but among them must be honesty, integrity and courtesy which are essential for building trust and confidence.

j. Respect. Respect is the key to influencing other proud nations.

113. UK MOD, DCDC, JDP 0-01, *UK Defence Doctrine* (5th Edition) (2014), 12.

3.13. Many nations and international organisations have their own principles or guidelines which they have developed to guide their diplomatic activities. The above list, which has been assembled from the views of the many experts who speak at RCDS, is therefore not intended to be definitive. Rather, it aims to provide the strategist with an idea of how to optimise the effectiveness of the diplomatic instrument. In considering the list, it should be remembered that diplomacy is essentially a human-to-human activity, whether carried out by political leaders or professional diplomats. Personalities and personal relationships are therefore important and what works in one situation because two leaders understand each other might well not work in another if the relationship between the leaders is more antagonistic.

Information

3.14. We now live in what has been described as 'the information age'. Information, and the means of both receiving and transmitting it, has become ubiquitous. As Joseph Nye has observed, one consequence of this is that 'cheap flows of information have enormously expanded the number and depth of transnational channels of contact'.[114] While this presents an opportunity for strategists, it is also a threat. In this context, NATO doctrine provides a particularly helpful description of what is meant by the information instrument:

> '...Alliance information must be protected for national security and individual privacy reasons as well as to deny an adversary information essential for the successful application of his strategy. Controlled information release is also a vital tool for influencing global opinion. The information instrument is therefore focused on countering adversarial information and information systems, while defending the Alliance's own…' [115]

3.15. As the above quote suggests, there are a number of different ways in which the information instrument can be exploited by the strategist. This section discusses two ways:

- The role of the media and the importance of strategic communications (to support strategy). The above quote from NATO doctrine alludes to this but the strategist can achieve much by the offensive use of information.

- The opportunities presented by cyberspace (which the strategist can exploit, as can a state's opponents).

3.16. Although intelligence, which has a vital role to play in formulating and implementing strategy, can be considered to be an aspect of the information instrument, it is not considered in this section. However, Section 4 offers some advice on how intelligence should inform the 'strategic assessment'.

114. Robert O Keohane and Joseph S Nye Jr, "Power and Interdependence in the Information Age," *Foreign Affairs* 77, no. 5 (1998): 94.
115. NATO, Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-01, *Allied Joint Doctrine* (Edition D) (NATO NSA, 2010), 1-3.

Media and strategic communications

3.17. The media is one of the most powerful components of the information instrument. The media is powerful because it influences people and, considered collectively, people are powerful. Technological developments, and the rise of social media in particular, has meant that this is now also the case even in closed and authoritarian states – indeed, the media has played a key role in all the recent revolutions which have overturned authoritarian regimes. Its impact is greater still in democracies, where media influence on public opinion, and hence on elections and political decision-making (and therefore policy and strategy), is highly significant.

3.18. Though it is difficult to prove a linear relationship between the media, public opinion and political/strategic decision-making, they are undeniably linked; the media has been known to influence strategic decisions directly. So the media is not only part of the environment, it can also be used to shape it through effective strategic communications. To achieve the most out of the media, exponents of strategy must therefore understand how it works. Strategy-makers and strategic leaders can try to be silent, or just use their own media for propaganda, but since the independent media exists, is ubiquitous, hugely popular, powerful, technically competent and free, it is wasteful as well as risky to ignore it.

3.19. If the strategic leader accepts that he or she must compete whole-heartedly in the global information environment, then he or she needs to understand how to shape that environment and prevail in it. This objective will require the activation of the collective 'voices' of his or her organisation or nation, not least because, no matter how resilient, the strategic leader will soon be exhausted if doing all the talking. People must broadly believe in a compelling narrative that explains the actions which come about as a result of the leader's strategy. They must also be free to engage with all forms of media in telling their own part in that story. Controlling every exchange between a government or organisation and the global information environment will not only be impossible, but also will never create the 'mass' and agility required to win a global argument; the government or organisation will only be outpaced and outnumbered by quicker and louder voices. Joseph Nye's thoughts on this from the end of the Cold War remain worth noting:

> 'Information is becoming more and more plentiful, but the flexibility to act first on new information is rare. Information becomes power, especially before it spreads. Thus a capacity for timely response to new information is a critical resource.'[116]

3.20. Principles of media handling. General Sir Sam Cowen, then Director of Army Public Relations, advised those dealing with the media to "remember you are never in charge".[117] This is good advice but there are some additional guiding principles which, whilst not necessarily definitive, might help the strategic leader shape his or her engagements with the media. Again, the RCDS list is based on the thoughts and advice of the many experts who have spoken at Seaford House.

116. Joseph S Nye Jr, "Soft Power," *Foreign Policy*, no. 80 (Autumn 1990): 164.
117. General Cowen's comment was made in a presentation to a course at RCDS.

a. Clear message. The first principle in dealing with the media is to have a clear message: understand what you are trying to achieve (in the short and long term).

b. Know your audience. The next is to know the target audiences, and the media through which to engage them.

c. No control. Reiterating General Cowan's point, the third (and master) principle is to remember that with the media you are never in control. This is patently true of the free press in democracies but even the most authoritarian regimes cannot control all the means of communication fully, or how people respond. The lesson is to engage the media and maintain contact even when keen to say nothing.

d. Immediacy. Speed stems from two connected roots: the age-old desire of mankind to be first with the story, and the ever-increasing speed available through technology. Real time news is now a reality and not only in the broadcast media.[118] All this means that journalists in the field and editors in their offices demand speed, and expect it of those with whom they do business. Nothing impresses them more than interlocutors who realise this and actually feed them stories as they happen.

e. Trust. A reputation for telling the truth, speedily, can establish mutual trust with journalists. There are risks, and one must always take care in dealing with journalists because even the most trustworthy of them will be tempted by a Pulitzer Prize-winning scoop (and they will inevitably fear that if they know a story and don't publish, someone else will). However, journalists do trust those who are truthful and timely. This is the basis for a professional relationship with the media, in which ideally journalists check before going to print, or broadcasting a story, and even alert one to potential issues. The possible tension between 'trust' and 'immediacy' is acknowledged as confirming the 'truth' can take time. However, the important thing is to ensure that dialogue with the media continues, albeit limited to what a state can say while it carries out whatever checks are necessary before it can say what it wants to say.

3.21. The importance of 'wrapping' a strategy in a compelling narrative – the 'strategic narrative' – and ensuring that it is communicated at every possible opportunity cannot be underestimated. Social media and the speed with which even the more traditional media are now able to react mean that a description of how your strategy is unfolding on the ground will be widely broadcast the moment things start to happen, whether you like it or not! Being proactive in terms of 'setting the narrative' is therefore important in order to maintain the initiative and ensure that target audiences, both domestic and international, perceive events through a lens of your choosing. Again, the Chilcot Report makes the point:

> 'The UK was unprepared for the media response to the initial difficulties. It had also underestimated the need for sustained communication of key strategic messages to

118. The British war reporter Kate Adie gives a striking example from the NATO campaign against Serbia in 1999. She was on the deck of a US Navy cruiser, with other journalists, when the first Tomahawk cruise missile was launched against Belgrade. The *New York Times* reporter took a photograph of the launch and emailed it, with a caption, to the paper. It was embedded in the front page of the first edition before the missile hit its target.

> inform public opinion about the objectives and progress of the military campaign, including in Iraq.'[119]

3.22. Hooker and Collins emphasise the enduring importance of strategic communications in their analysis of lessons from the US interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan:

> 'Strategic communications was a weak point in our performance in Washington, DC, and in the field. Making friends, allies, and locals understand our intent has proved difficult. At times, the situation on the ground will block good messaging. However, our disabilities in this area – partly caused by too much bureaucracy and too little empathy – stand in contradistinction to the ability of clever enemies to package their message and beat us at a game that was perfected in Hollywood and on Madison Avenue.'[120]

3.23. But while there appears to be little doubt that strategic communications, often facilitated by the media, are an important aspect of a strategy, there is considerable discussion about what is actually meant by the term. As Paul Cornish *et al* note, 'the search for a common definition has often hindered rather than helped strategic communications'.[121]

3.24. To try and provide a degree of clarity, the RCDS view is that, notwithstanding its UK-centricity, the following definition of strategic communications adopted by the UK's National Security Council is worth noting:

> 'The systemic and co-ordinated use of all means of communication to deliver UK national security objectives by influencing the attitudes and behaviours of individuals, groups and states.'[122]

3.25. The inclusion of the words 'all means of communication' is important. Deploying several multinational divisions to a border with a state one is seeking to influence, for example, is a powerful act of strategic communication in itself; it does not need to be publicly trumpeted via the media by a strategic leader. As Cornish *et al* also note, the following definition in the *US Joint Integrating Concept for Strategic Communications* makes this point:

> 'Strategic communication is the alignment of multiple lines of operation (for example, policy implementation, public affairs, force movement, information operations, etc.) that together generate effects to support national objectives. Strategic communication essentially means sharing meaning (i.e., communicating) in support of national objectives (i.e., strategically). This involves listening as

119. UK Cabinet Office, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry: Executive Summary* (HMSO, 2016), 123.
120. Richard D Hooker and Joseph J Collins, *Lessons Encountered – Learning from the Long War* (Washington DC: National Defence University Press, 2015), 15.
121. Paul Cornish, Julian Lindley-French and Claire Yorke, *Strategic Communications and National Strategy: A Chatham House Report* (Chatham House, 2011), 3.
122. Neil Gerard Verrall, *Strategic Communication and the UK Integrated Approach: Developments, Communications and Conflict* (NATO), 19-2.

> much as transmitting, and applies not only to information, but also [to] physical communication – action that conveys meaning.'[123]

Cyberspace

3.26. Cyberspace can be considered to be an '...operating environment within the information environment'.[124] As cyber operations are becoming an increasingly common feature of state-on-state activity, it is useful to understand what is meant by 'cyberspace'. UK doctrine provides a helpful perspective:

> 'Cyberspace is the interdependent network of information technology infrastructures, (including the Internet, telecommunications networks, computer systems, as well as embedded processors and controllers) and the data therein within the information environment.'[125]

3.27. While the strategist does not need to be an expert on cyber operations, an understanding of how this developing capability can be used to help achieve policy goals would be beneficial. It is equally important to understand what capabilities opponents possess, another argument for having reliable experts available to advise as a strategy is formulated.

Military

3.28. Clausewitz's famous dictum was that war is but a 'continuation of political activity by other means'.[126] As noted in the section on diplomacy as an instrument of power, the reality is a more complex one, particularly in a world of 24/7 media coverage and with a growing body of international law related to the use of the military instrument.

3.29. The Principles of War. Clausewitz was among the first in the modern era to enunciate a set of principles of war. Most nations have adopted their own principles within doctrine to guide military activity at all levels. Partly because strategy originated in the military, and also because war should only ever be waged as a deliberate act of strategy (and its last resort), it is not surprising that the principles of war retain relevance in strategy at the highest level. The UK principles of war primarily relate to the application of military force. However, the Military instrument of national power encompasses all assets and activities wielded by a nation's defence department. In addition to direct action or the threat of direct action, military strategies may include international policing, security sector reform, defence diplomacy, international partnerships, agreements and treaties and many more subtle uses

123. Paul Cornish, Julian Lindley-French and Claire Yorke, *Strategic Communications and National Strategy: A Chatham House Report* (Chatham House, 2011), 3 citing US Department of Defense, Strategic Communication: Joint Integrating Concept (US Government, 2009), ii.
124. UK MOD, DCDC, JDP 0-01, *UK Defence Doctrine* (5th Edition) (2014), 15.
125. *Ibid*.
126. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, eds. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton University Press, 1976), 87.

of the military than that of force. The principles have utility in all of these contexts and are considered to be the following:[127]

a. Selection and maintenance of the aim. This is regarded as the master principle of war. A single, unambiguous aim is key to successful military operations. Similarly, a clear and unambiguous policy goal to which military action is designed to contribute is a prerequisite for an effective strategy.

b. Maintenance of morale. This enables a positive state of mind derived from inspired political and military leadership, a shared sense of purpose and values, well-being, feeling of worth and group cohesion. An increasingly important element in sustaining morale in the modern world is that those involved in military action are confident not just of full political backing, but of the support of majority domestic opinion.

c. Offensive action. This is the practical way in which a commander seeks to gain advantage, sustain forward momentum and seize the initiative.

d. Security. This is providing and maintaining an operating environment that gives freedom of action, when and where required, to achieve objectives.

e. Surprise. This is the consequence of confusion induced by deliberately or incidentally introducing the unexpected.

f. Concentration of force. This involves decisively synchronising applying superior fighting power (physical, intellectual and moral) to realise intended effects, when and where required.

g. Economy of effort. This is judiciously exploiting manpower, materiel and time in relation to the achievement of objectives.

h. Flexibility. This is the ability to change readily to meet new circumstances – it comprises agility, responsiveness, resilience and adaptability.

i. Cooperation. This incorporates teamwork and a sharing of dangers, burdens, risks and opportunities in every aspect of warfare.

j. Sustainability. This requires generating the means by which fighting power and freedom of action are maintained.

3.30. There will be occasions when use of the military instrument, in conjunction with other instruments, will be appropriate. But the decision to deploy a nation's armed forces should not be taken lightly, even when there is a firm legal basis for taking military action. Elliott notes that 'too often in recent years the reasons for going to war either have not been clear,

127. UK MOD, DCDC, JDP 0-01, *UK Defence Doctrine* (5th Edition) (2014), 50.

or have changed repeatedly, and the costs always exceeded'.[128] He offers the following advice:

> 'Going to war should be highly disciplined, with an auditable trail right from the top down to the formal orders given to field commanders. Likewise with the fighting that follows. The risks must be listed and the means to extract physically and politically from the military deployment worked out beforehand. The sort of events that might trigger this should be thought through. Of course things will change, but this work should be formally signed off and retained so as to record the starting point, the aims sought and to ensure that all government agencies are coordinated and committed.'[129]

Economic

3.31. The economic instrument of power relates to the use of incentives, boycotts, sanctions, tariffs and other measures targeted at an opponent's, or other actor's, economy or financial situation in order to persuade them to adopt, or desist from, a particular course of action. A contemporary example of this is the use of conditional loans by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Unless states agree to abide by conditions imposed by these organisations – which have traditionally included such measures as reducing the size of state structures and embracing free-market economics – they often experience real difficulty in obtaining such loans. The official development assistance (ODA) provided by Western donor states is also often conditional on changes in a recipient state's behaviour; this is one reason why many developing states are now looking to non-Western nations, such as Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (the BRICS nations), for less condition-dependent financial support.

3.32. While the theory is relatively straightforward, economic measures designed specifically to damage a nation's economy unless it complies with another nation's or multinational organisation's direction can be effective but are often difficult to enforce. One reasonably contemporary example of the economic lever being used to excellent effect occurred in November 1956.[130] Earlier in the year, Egypt had nationalised the Suez Canal prompting Israel, France and the UK to launch an invasion of the Sinai in an attempt to retake it. Concurrently, and as a result of speculative pressure on its currency, the UK had had to deplete its US dollar reserves in order to maintain the fixed value of the pound against the dollar. Britain's financial position continued to deteriorate to the extent that it required help but the US made it very clear that unless Britain withdrew its troops from Egypt, the US would not agree to the IMF lending Britain the money it needed to ride out the storm. Britain had little option but to agree and, on 3 December 1956, Britain announced that it would begin withdrawing its troops.

128. Christopher Elliott, *High Command: British Military Leadership in the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars* (Hurst & Company, 2015), 229.
129. *Ibid.*
130. International Monetary Fund, "Was Suez in 1956 the First Financial Crisis of the Twenty-First Century?" http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2001/09/boughton.htm (accessed 10 March 2017).

3.33. More recently, and possibly as a consequence of globalisation, achieving such an unequivocal response from the threat or use of the economic instrument has been more difficult. Saddam Hussein, for example, had little difficulty undermining the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq prior to Coalition intervention.[131] Likewise, action taken to freeze the accounts of suspected terrorist organisations undoubtedly has an impact of sorts but, done in isolation, it is highly unlikely to lead to their defeat. The unintended consequences also need to be considered as it is possible that the impact of draconian economic measures might only be felt by an already downtrodden population rather than the ruling elite of an opposing state. As Adam Tarock notes in considering the impact of sanctions imposed on Iran prior to the nuclear agreement of July 2015:

> 'The important point to note here, however, is that, although sanctions were badly hurting Iran's economy and, therefore, the people, sanctions by and of themselves had failed to bring down the government or modify its 'behaviour', or change the regime – and these were the objectives of the sanctions. In other words, sanctions make many people poor, but they can neither bring down a government nor can they break the will of a people confronted by an outside force.' [132]

3.34. When economic measures do work, it is often because they are executed within a wider context and by many actors as part of a broader tapestry of activities across the instruments of power (for example, in the context of a UN resolution). They can also be effective when, as Gray notes, 'the omnipresent possibility of the use of force, even when the other instruments of strategy are leading the charge, shapes the impact of specific non-military initiatives'.[133]

The application of power

3.35. States and organisations apply power across the instruments to achieve policy goals in one of three ways: as 'hard' power; 'soft' power; or 'smart' power. It is important to understand what these descriptions mean as they are in common usage across governments and in the literature relating to strategic thinking and strategy formulation.

Hard power

3.36. Most books on strategy will offer a definition of hard power. One of the most useful descriptions is that provided in UK doctrine:

> 'Hard power uses military capability and economic strength (both sanctions and incentives) to influence the behaviour of states, groups or individuals, or to directly change the course of events. Those using hard power seek to coerce opponents to adopt a particular course of action, which they would not otherwise choose

131. UK Cabinet Office, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry: Executive Summary* (HMSO, 2016), 8.
132. Adam Tarock, "The Iran Nuclear Deal: Winning a Little, Losing a Lot," *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 8 (2016), 1421-1422.
133. Colin S Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 163.

> themselves. Military and economic capability are important sources of hard power – they also serve as deterrents.'[134]

3.37. The point about deterrents in the last line of the above quote is well made. As UK doctrine notes:

> 'Deterrence and coercion strategies aim to counter threats to the UK's security by communicating to potential adversaries the consequences of their anticipated action or inaction.'[135]

3.38. The difference between deterrence and coercion is important. Both are aspects of hard power but 'deterrence aims to dissuade a course of action' whilst 'coercion aims to encourage a course of action'.[136] Given this description of deterrence, some might argue that the opening quote from Michel Foucault – that 'power exists only when it is put into action'[137] – is untrue. But it is important to note that deterrence only works when other states and interested actors are aware of a nation's capabilities. Communicating these is an important aspect of deterrence strategies and, in this sense, the nation is 'putting this power into action'.

Soft power

3.39. Soft power is different to hard power in that it does not involve deterring or coercing another nation or organisation to do, or not do, something; rather, the aim is to get them to want to do it of their own accord. Although the concept is relatively straightforward, the nature of soft power is often misunderstood and it is therefore helpful to understand the origins of the term.

3.40. In the latter part of the twentieth century, the American political scientist Joseph S Nye noted how the effects of globalisation, and particularly the extent to which states were economically interdependent, made the application of hard power both costly and difficult. Realising that 'proof of power lies not in resources but in the ability to change the behaviour of states',[138] he posited that whether a nation changes its behaviour because a more powerful nation orders it to or whether it does it because it wants to makes little difference in terms of the outcome.[139]

3.41. Of the two approaches, the latter is clearly preferable as it is less damaging to all involved and is more likely to lead to enduring change. Nye coined the phrase 'soft power' to describe this latter approach. Although quite lengthy, his description of the difference between it and hard power is well worth reading:

134. UK MOD, DCDC, JDP 0-01, *UK Defence Doctrine* (5th Edition) (2014), 66.
135. *Ibid*., 62.
136. *Ibid*.
137. Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (1982): 788.
138. Joseph S Nye Jr, "Soft Power," *Foreign Policy*, no. 80 (Autumn 1990): 155.
139. *Ibid*., 166.

> 'Everyone is familiar with hard power. We know that military and economic might often get others to change their position. Hard power can rest on inducements ("carrots") or threats ("sticks"). But sometimes you can get the outcomes you want without tangible threats or payoffs. The indirect way to get what you want has sometimes been called "the second face of power". A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries admire its values, emulate its example, and aspire to its level of prosperity and openness. This soft power – getting others to want the outcomes that you want – co-opts people rather than coerces them. Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others.'[140]

3.42. There is a temptation to assume that soft power is less effective than hard power. Nye would disagree:

> 'Soft co-optive power is just as important as hard command power...If it can support institutions that make other states wish to channel or limit their activities in ways the dominant state prefers, it may be spared the costly exercise of coercive or hard power.'[141]

3.43. Of course, one issue related to soft power is that many of its elements will be outside a state's control. Soft power 'pull' is a result of a number of factors, as disparate as the reputation of the BBC or a country's sporting reputation, or a more general sense of a particular country's values.

Smart power

3.44. So while, as Nye suggests, soft power is equally as important as hard power, a main drawback is that it is difficult to employ with precision and it can take a long time to have a measurable effect.[142] In achieving a particular policy goal, a strategy might therefore need to project both hard and available elements of soft power across the instruments of power. This approach is known as applying 'smart power'. Again, this has numerous definitions but the explanation provided in UK doctrine will suffice:

> 'Hard power and soft power strategies are not bi-polar. Skilful diplomacy, across multiple government departments, will fuse both. This approach is commonly referred to as smart power.'[143]

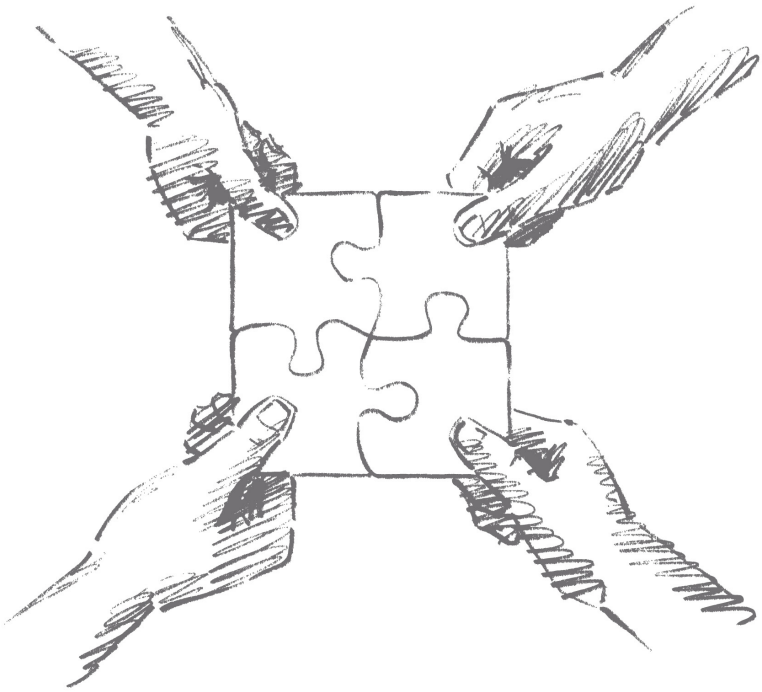
3.45. The military is generally considered the quintessential instrument of hard power but it has important 'soft power' uses, for instance in training assistance and studying at foreign training establishments and in carrying out or enabling humanitarian interventions. Aspects of some of the other instruments are also 'hard' in that they attempt to change other parties' behaviours against their will (for example economic or diplomatic sanctions). Smart power,

140. Joseph S Nye Jr, "The Benefits of Soft Power," Harvard Business School, http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/4290.html (last accessed 21 April 2017).
141. Joseph S Nye Jr, "Soft Power," *Foreign Policy*, no. 80 (Autumn 1990): 157.
142. UK MOD, DCDC, JDP 0-01, *UK Defence Doctrine* (5th Edition) (2014), 66.
143. *Ibid.*

underpinned by the necessary intent and resolve, is therefore the optimum mix of hard and soft power required to achieve specific policy goals in particular circumstances.

Conclusion

3.46. This section has considered the instruments of power (diplomatic, informational, military and economic) and identified some of the key issues associated with their application in the contemporary strategic environment. It also examined how these instruments can be used to project hard, soft and smart power. The next section builds on this foundation and considers the difficult business of weaving all this together to create strategy. It suggests an approach for conducting a 'strategic assessment', enabling the strategy to be 'tuned' to the environment in which it seeks to achieve a policy goal.



Section 4

Making strategy

This section considers the practical business of making strategy. It suggests an iterative twelve-step approach – referred to as the 'strategic assessment' – as one way of developing a strategy that orchestrates ends, ways and means. In doing this, it highlights the over-riding importance of understanding the environment before developing strategy options and the value of developing metrics in order to know when a strategy is beginning to fail. It also examines the Cold War policy of deterrence to demonstrate that seemingly disparate approaches can combine to create an effective strategy.

'The realm of strategy is one of bargaining and persuasion as well as threats and pressure, psychological as well as physical effects, and words as well as deeds. This is why strategy is the central political art. It is about getting more out of a situation than the starting balance of power would suggest. It is the art of creating power.'

Sir Lawrence Freedman[144]

Approach

4.1. The most important skill for a strategist is the ability to work out what to do, to express this vision, to determine how to implement it and with what, and then to get people to get on with it. However, integrating ends, ways and means within a complex and dynamic strategic environment is far from easy. Typically, the devil lies in the inevitable detail and it is therefore helpful to use some form of framework to help structure the process. It is also important to recognise that the quest for 'closure' in strategic affairs is often illusory. One action prompts a reaction and every consequence (both intended and unintended) may change the character of the situation and the second-order responses to it. As events unfold, strategic complexity may multiply in unexpected dimensions rather than adding arithmetically in a linear manner. Truly to understand and attempt to master such challenges, the budding strategist must learn to think comprehensively about the issues at hand, challenging received wisdom and asking 'so what?' when each new 'fact' is presented. The Chilcot Report makes the point, noting that lessons for the future include:

- 'the need to be scrupulous in discriminating between facts and knowledge on the one hand and opinion, judgment or belief on the other'; and
- 'the need for vigilance to avoid unwittingly crossing the line from supposition to certainty, including by constant repetition of received wisdom.'[145]

144. Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History* (Oxford University Press, 2015), xii.
145. UK Cabinet Office, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry: Executive Summary* (HMSO, 2016), 132.

4.2. Throughout, it is worth remembering Quinlan's paradox from Paragraph 9 in the Introduction; the last line bears repetition:

> 'What does happen is what we did not deter, because we did not plan and provide for it, because we did not expect it.'

4.3. One of the most challenging aspects of making strategy is that the more the strategist tries to calculate the likely effects of his or her actions, the more uncertain the outcomes may appear. This phenomenon should not come as a surprise: it is no more than Clausewitzian friction writ large. Arguably, it is to be expected given that the opposition, who could well be highly trained and experienced, will most likely be seeking to shape the environment with their own strategies in order to try and achieve their policy goals. It would be a grave mistake to underestimate them, particularly if they perceive your policy goal to represent an existential threat. It is also highly likely, especially in an intervention campaign, that the opposition will have a far better understanding of the environment and, in particular, of the other actors operating within it. As discussed in Section 2, the obvious conclusion from this is that strategies need to be flexible and based on the rigorous examination of possible scenarios. The initial strategy is just the start point; it needs to be kept under constant review and adapted, or even discarded and replaced, as events unfold. As the Chilcot Report noted:

> 'A government must prepare for a range of scenarios, not just the best case, and should not assume that it will be able to improvise.'[146]

4.4. Gray's observation that 'it is extraordinary difficult, perhaps impossible, to train strategists'[147] is worth noting. While this might be true, there is considerable merit in equipping the would-be strategist with the right questions to ask. Gray also suggests noting Napoleon's enduring advice that:

> 'Tactics, evolutions, artillery, and engineer sciences can be learned from manuals like geometry: but the knowledge of the higher conduct of war can only be acquired by studying the history of wars and battles by great generals and by one's own experience. There are no terse and precise rules at all; everything depends on the character with which nature has endowed the general, on his eminent qualities, on his deficiencies, on the nature of the troops, the techniques of arms, the season, and a thousand other circumstances which make things never look alike.'[148]

4.5. If the word 'general' were replaced with 'statesman', then Napoleon's words would apply equally to the realm of grand strategy. Thus, strategy cannot be 'done' by referring to a doctrinal handbook. With that in mind, rather than attempt to set out a 'strategic estimate' with fields to fill in and boxes to tick, in a misguided desire to 'solve' strategic problems by

146. *Ibid*., 137.
147. Colin S Gray, "Why Strategy is Difficult," *Joint Forces Quarterly* (Summer 1999): 10.
148. Colin S Gray, "Why Strategy is Difficult," *Joint Forces Quarterly* (Summer 1999): 10, citing Rudolf von Caemmerer, *The Development of Strategical Science During the 19th Century* translated by Karl von Donat (Hugh Rees, 1905), 171-172.

applying a mechanistic template, it is more productive to identify the core activities that should be undertaken in formulating strategy. Additional analytical tools, such as SWOT and PESTLE,[149] have utility within some of these activities but there is no guarantee of deriving the 'right' solution in the formulaic manner beloved of mathematics teachers. In short, the strategist needs as broad an appreciation as possible of the factors and forces which may influence a desired outcome before he or she attempts to determine a preferred strategic design.

A guide to the strategic assessment

4.6. RCDS has developed an iterative 'strategic assessment' to aid strategy formulation. This assessment, which is different to strategic assessments carried out by, say, the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), involves a number of closely-related steps which require review at each stage to ensure context and coherence without dampening the creative thinking and critical questioning which may spark better understanding, decision-making and action. Keep constantly in mind, however, that it is only a conceptual framework – a way to think about the problem – rather than the definitive way of developing strategy. Note also that it is not really a process in the sense that it might well be necessary to keep repeating particular steps as understanding of the issue develops during the analysis. The steps are described in detail in Annex C but the following paragraphs provide an overview of the process.

Understanding the issue

4.7. Step 1: Framing conversation. Notwithstanding the theory, it is highly unlikely that the strategist will receive a perfectly crafted policy which clearly articulates the goals to be achieved. It is therefore important that the first step for those involved in developing a strategy is to understand what they are trying to achieve and why. One way of facilitating this is to begin with a free flowing framing conversation which allows people to explore the nature of the problem as they see it. Critical questioning of the different perspectives, and the 'facts' and assumptions that underpin them, should lead to a degree of consensus regarding: the issue to be addressed; why it matters; its relationship to national interests and values; and its priority relative to other issues. The discussion should also identify what further guidance, or information, is required before the strategy can be developed. Leaders have an important role to play in this respect, identifying their 'critical information requirements' and ensuring that the state's full range of capabilities are harnessed to try and answer the questions. Internal and possibly – indeed preferably – external experts should be called in as required to contribute to the discussion. It should also be noted that the outcome from this step may well need to be revisited numerous times as understanding of the issue improves and/or the situation changes.

4.8. Step 2: Consider the strategic environment. Having developed an understanding of the issue, it is then appropriate to consider how it is likely to impact on the strategic

149. The application of a range of analytical techniques is covered in a series of lectures during the RCDS course. Members then have the opportunity to apply them during the strategic exercises (STRATEXes).

environment and, conversely, how the strategic environment is likely to impact on it. There is no 'right' way to approach this but experience suggests that it is helpful to structure this analysis around a series of headings, with each describing one aspect of the strategic environment. There are several such conceptual frameworks to choose from. One of the most useful is STEEPLEMS where the letters stand for: 'social'; 'technological'; 'economic'; 'environmental'; 'political'; 'legal'; 'ethical'; 'military'; and 'security'. The importance of asking 'so what' as each factor within a particular heading is considered cannot be underestimated. The aim is to develop a series of deductions from which conclusions about the issue, and its possible resolution, can be drawn. Experts, both internal and external, have a key role to play in this analysis.

4.9. Step 3: Identify and assess the actors/stakeholders in the system. In this context, the 'system' is taken to mean the interconnected environment in which the strategy will be executed. The actors and stakeholders involved could include allies, partners, adversaries and any other parties, state and non-state, which might be affected by, or have an interest in, the issue and the strategy being developed to try and resolve it. Note that this stage might need to be revisited several times as 'new' actors become involved, either directly or indirectly. One useful way of developing an understanding of which actors are likely to be especially important is to try and assess each actor's 'power' within the system and the 'interest' that they are likely to have in the issue you are seeking to resolve. Actors with 'high power' and 'high interest' would merit particular attention, either as potential allies and partners or as likely adversaries. The analysis should be wide-ranging and should include an assessment of how each actor is likely to respond to the situation and what their policy goal is likely to be – considering various scenarios, even the more outlandish ones, can help in this respect. Although this is necessarily a subjective assessment, plotting each actor's position on a graph (where 'power' forms the y-axis and 'interest' forms the x-axis) can aid understanding and help clarify which actors are particularly important.

4.10. Step 4: Centre of gravity analysis. Those actors identified as having both 'high power' and 'high interest' merit further consideration as the success of the strategy may well depend on a state's ability to cooperate with, or effectively oppose, these actors. Seeking to identify their centre of gravity can generate real insight into how to approach the problem, where, drawing on Clausewitz, centre of gravity is '…the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends'.[150] In analysing different actors' centres of gravity, the aim should be to identify the single 'thing' that gives them power for this particular issue, at this particular time, in these particular circumstances. An actor's centre of gravity might be domestic public support, alliance cohesion, an ideology, a particular capability (military or otherwise), an individual strategic leader, legitimacy or any other 'thing' that makes them powerful in the specific context being considered. Once identified, the intention should be to protect one's own and allies' centres of gravity while targeting those of adversaries. Because centres of gravity are often difficult to identify, it can sometimes be helpful to consider an actor's critical capabilities, critical vulnerabilities and critical requirements before

150. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, eds. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton University Press, 1976), 596-597.

determining what their centre of gravity might be. Note that, again, this step might need to be revisited as events unfold, understanding improves and the situation changes.

Developing the options

4.11. Step 5: Assess own means (resources). Having established the nature of the issue it is then useful to consider what means might be available to help achieve the desired policy goal. One way of doing this it to consider each of the instruments in turn using the mnemonic DIME (where DIME stands for the 'diplomatic', 'informational', 'military' and 'economic' instruments as described in Section 3). In addition to identifying the means available within each instrument, it is important to rule out those means which are unlikely to be useable. This might be because of a policy decision or their commitment elsewhere or, in the case of the military instrument, because there is little prospect of a favourable UN resolution to underpin its use.

4.12. Step 6: Take stock. By this stage of the analysis, the strategist should have an informed view of the nature of the issue, what broad outcome needs to be achieved, what other actors are trying to achieve and what means might be available. It is useful to bring this analysis together and use it to help identify 'opportunities' and 'threats' (drawing on the output from Steps 1-4), as well as one's own 'strengths' and 'weaknesses' (from Step 5), as this should start to generate ideas for how the problem might be approached.

4.13. Step 7: Derive potential ends. The next step is to start refining the analysis by identifying the specific ends (or objectives) which, if they were to be achieved, would collectively result in the policy goal being achieved. Viewed simplistically, this step effectively involves deconstructing the policy goal into discrete objectives. Each objective (or end) should be realistic – as one senior member of the UK Government recently reminded RCDS: "we don't have a moral obligation to do what we cannot do".[151]

4.14. Step 8: Determine possible ways and courses of action. This step involves using all the analysis done to date to try and identify the ways and means that could be used to achieve the ends derived in the previous step. In doing this, the aim should be to capitalise on our own 'strengths' and use these to exploit the 'opportunities' that have been identified, while avoiding ways and means that expose our 'weaknesses' or leave us vulnerable to 'threats'. Ideas are at a premium at this stage of the analysis. While the strategist is unlikely to have too many of the brilliant insights that T E Lawrence famously described as being 'like the kingfisher flashing across the pool',[152] they should aim to develop the 'big ideas' that could unite ends, ways and means in an innovative and creative manner that confers competitive advantage. There are likely to be several combinations of ways and means to achieve each particular end. These should be developed and taken forward to the next stage of the analysis as possible courses of action, noting that it may just be sequencing that differentiates the different courses of action.

151. Source not disclosed under the Chatham House Rule.
152. T E Lawrence, "The Evolution of a Revolt," *The Army Quarterly and Defence Journal* (October 1920): 9.

4.15. Step 9: Assess potential courses of action. By this stage of the analysis, there will be several possible courses of action that might achieve the ends and hence the policy goal. Each will have advantages and disadvantages. But identifying these is actually quite difficult as, as was emphasised in Section 2, it involves trying to predict what other actors are likely to do and how the environment is likely to change once a course of action begins to be implemented. Arguably the most effective way of gaining at least some understanding of this is to wargame each course of action against a variety of different scenarios. The preference for considering only the ideal outcome must be resisted; instead, a wide range of situations should be considered, including the most 'dangerous' and the most likely. The red team, comprised of internal and external experts, has a critical role to play at this stage of the analysis, particularly in providing an informed view of how other actors are likely to respond as a course of action begins to be implemented. As part of this analysis, the threats identified in Step 6 should also be considered. Once each course of action – or candidate strategy – has been developed to a sufficiently mature stage, they should then be tested against criteria which experience suggests give some indication of whether a particular strategy is likely to be successful. The tests considered in Section 2 provide a good starting point and include: 'acceptability', 'feasibility', 'suitability', 'sustainability' and 'adaptability'. Although it is subjective, each course of action should be scored against these criteria and the results added to their respective advantages and disadvantages.

Deciding what to do

4.16. Step 10: Decide. At the grand strategic level it is highly likely that it will be Ministers who will determine which course of action should be adopted. As discussed in Section 2, officials and senior officers have a responsibility to speak truth to power to the best of their knowledge and ability in impartially setting out the options and identifying the advantages and disadvantages of each. In that context, it is worth repeating Prime Minister Theresa May's direction in Section 2: "…don't try to tell me what you think I want to hear. I want your advice, I want the options. Then politicians make the decisions".[153] It is important to be honest and open about what is not known and the limits of the courses of action being offered. Do not aim too high: be clear about what can be done and what realistically cannot be achieved. Avoid hubris and jargon and do not try to fit complex situations in faraway places into Western frames of reference in an attempt to make them easier to describe. Understand the limits of knowledge, power and legitimacy in the context of the conflicted area. The quality of the decisions made by political leaders is generally directly related to the quality of the advice they are given. They should therefore be exposed to any differences of opinion between Departments and any continued areas of uncertainty. While this might be unpalatable, Departments also owe it to Ministers to declare any Departmental agendas which might have skewed their objective consideration of the options.

153. James Forsyth and Fraser Nelson, "Theresa May: 'I Get So Frustrated With Whitehall'," *The Spectator*, (December 2016): 23.

Implementing the strategy

4.17. Step 11: Communicate and implement the strategy. At the highest level, the strategy needs to be instantly communicable if it is to gain traction at home and abroad. Over-complexity may 'kill' the most elegant of strategies. Above all, the strategy's logic and appeal must be compelling, which implies it must be easily understood. In addition, shaping the environment is a vital adjunct to implementation; it may prove its essential pre-cursor. The greatest strategists make their own luck, prepare for success, and then exploit it decisively when it appears; they also prepare for events to take an entirely unexpected turn, husbanding their resources so that they can adapt and maintain the initiative whatever happens.

4.18. Step 12: Review your thinking, the strategy, and its implementation. Critical to this part of the process is to test any assumptions made in the initial thinking or planning. Situations change, sometimes dramatically, but the fundamental tenets of strategic design may have a more enduring quality. There is therefore a fine balance to be achieved between 'maintaining previous course' and charting a new one. As explained later in Section 4, establishing SMART metrics and reviewing these at the right level can help determine where this balance should lie. But it is also important to consider the merits of criticism from unpalatable sources, whether allies or opponents. Honest re-appraisals by leading strategic thinkers which are based on new insights, inspiration and good data should provide additional impetus. As explained in Section 2, the value of a formal 'red team', with members drawn from outside the government, can add real value not only in developing the strategy but in combating the optimism bias that can pervade its implementation and continued execution.

Applying the strategic assessment

4.19. Although the strategic assessment outlined above is presented as a process comprised of sequential steps, the reality is more likely to be a series of iterative loops as understanding of the issues grows and previous steps therefore need to be reconsidered. As Sir Paul Newton noted in commenting on an early draft of this booklet: 'I believe strategy is best made in a structured, iterative discussion or debate'.[154] The framework provided by the above steps aims to do nothing more than to create a possible structure within which the discussion can take place. The breakdown at Annex C is more detailed and explains how some of the tools described above can be used in each step. It should be noted that RCDS continues to refine the assessment and that the version contained in the Annex is subject to constant adaptation.

154. Sir Paul Newton, RCDS, e-mail (2 December 2016 at 17.01hrs).

4.20. As he or she goes through the strategic assessment, the strategist should maintain an open and enquiring mind.[155] There is no particular technique for ensuring this, and the pressures of a crisis will make it increasingly difficult to stand back and take a fresh look, but there are a number of questions which the strategist can ask him or herself which might help.

a. 360 degree vision. How do the other actors (both external and internal) see this issue; how will they react?

b. Mirror-imaging. Are we making assumptions about others based on our own ways of thinking or behaviour?

c. 80:20 balance. Do we understand the necessity of planning on the basis of incomplete information? What are the 'known unknowns' and are we doing everything we can to find out more about them?

d. Centres of gravity. What matters most to the key actors (including us and our allies) and how are they linked?

e. Soft or hard power. Have we explored every opportunity to exploit soft power opportunities and assets?

f. Actual versus potential power. Is your overall influence greater by not acting and retaining the ability to intervene in a range of different situations, rather than intervening and becoming 'fixed'?

g. Unintended consequences. What unintended consequences may arise, directly or indirectly, from taking, or not taking, decisive action?

h. Friction. Bearing in mind the complexity of alliance building and coordinating operations, as well as the adversary's scope for action, are the timescales realistic?

i. Short and long term. In addressing a new 'problem at hand', are we in danger of losing sight of the desired longer-term strategic end-state?

j. Golden bridges to the future. How do we ensure that all parties, including adversaries, emerge with self-respect and positive prospects?

k. End-state. Accounting for all above, is the policy goal realistic or do we need to consider reviewing it?

155. The UK's Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC) produces an excellent publication which considers human and organisational factors in decision-making (UK MOD, DCDC, JDP 04, *Understanding and Decision-making* (2nd Edition) (2016). This booklet replaced Joint Doctrine Note (JDN) 3/11 (Decision Making and Problem Solving: Human and Organisational Factors) on 14 December 2016. The booklet is available on the RCDS intranet webpages and is also accessible in the public domain at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/584177/doctrine_uk_understanding_jdp_04.pdf

4.21. Once the draft strategy has been developed, it should be compared against the characteristics of effective strategy and the five tests described in Section 2. It should then be kept under constant review.

4.22. As already explained, the RCDS twelve-step strategic assessment provides nothing more than a 'handrail' for the budding strategist. It should help him or her structure their approach to developing a strategy to achieve particular policy goals in a given set of circumstances. But it is not a panacea. Its effectiveness depends from the outset on whether sufficient time and effort is allocated to developing a thorough understanding of the situation. When time is tight, there can be a temptation to hurry through the stages in order to develop a plan, perhaps to present to Ministers or senior officials. This is a mistake; as will be apparent from the previous sections, one of the overarching lessons to emerge from the UK's formal inquiries into interventions in Iraq and Libya is the need to apply critical thinking, knowledge and challenge to the evidence available, rather than accepting received wisdom or cherry-picking from the available evidence to reach outcomes desired by political masters. Put simply, strategists MUST make the time to understand the situation to the best of their ability, calling in experts to contribute and challenge as appropriate. As circumstances change, strategists should ask themselves 'so what?' and have the courage to recognise when their strategy is no longer fit for purpose. When this happens, the same process – with no short cuts – should be followed to revise the strategy.

Measuring success

4.23. It is self-evident that failing strategies should either be adapted or replaced. The difficulty is detecting when this is starting to happen, particularly, as discussed in Section 2, when there are few 'sensors' in the target country or region. Milestones have some utility in helping to measure success but they have the disadvantage that failure is only apparent when the milestone has not been achieved – in that sense, they are 'lagging' indicators. Sufficient thought therefore needs to be given to designing 'leading indicators' of success that provide an early indication of whether things are going according to plan. The programme and project management world recommends that such measures should be SMART, where the acronym stands for specific, measurable, accurate, reliable and timely. Once appropriate measures have been developed and endorsed, their periodic review needs to be formalised. One way of doing this and ensuring the right level of oversight is for the strategy owner to chair a high-level strategy implementation stock-take. Done routinely and provided the strategy owner applies critical questioning to the evidence being presented – rather than just accepting the staff's views – these should alert the strategy owner, as well as other key stakeholders, to the possible need to adapt or replace a strategy when it becomes apparent that it is unlikely to achieve its policy objectives. Attention also needs to be paid to the 'feel' of key players on the ground who might detect a change of atmosphere before it is picked up by more formal measures.

4.24. It is worth considering an example of how an 'on-the-ground' team can support the process outlined above. In the crucial years of its post-2005 Afghanistan campaign, the UK established, in-theatre, a small military/civilian cell to monitor the progress of each

element of the campaign against the agreed metrics. Located in the British Embassy, and operating under the direct supervision of the Ambassador, the cell informed the stocktaking process back in London and advised on the adjustment of metrics to reflect changing realities. The intent was to provide early warning of impending gaps between objectives and implementation and to identify areas of success that merited reinforcement.

Strategic choice

4.25. In determining the most effective response to a given situation, there will be a range of strategic choices available. In a war of national survival, these may be extremely limited and non-discretionary. In other less demanding circumstances there may be a broader range of possible responses. Which are the most appropriate may depend on the perceived urgency and importance of the situation, as well as on the resources available in the required timeframe. In some circumstances, the most appropriate course of action might be to do nothing on the grounds that the benefits of getting involved are unlikely to exceed the costs. As Sir Lawrence Freedman notes in the *Official History of the Falklands Campaign*, in contemplating the possible consequences of military intervention to liberate the Falkland Islands, the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, had to consider whether the 'game was worth the candle'.[156] However, at least some analysis is likely to be necessary before such a value judgement can be made.

4.26. Looking back, the Cold War (1945-1990) is often perceived as a period of stasis in terms of strategic development. The overwhelming memory is of deterrence strategy dominating the thinking of that time. However, deterrence was but one of three broad strategies that were pursued concurrently. None of these strategies predominated; they threaded together over the 55 years, ebbing and flowing as circumstances changed, and culminated in the final years in a NATO doctrine of 'flexible response' that recognised the need to reflect change. It is useful to consider each of the three constituent strategies of containment, deterrence and intervention as this gives an insight into how seemingly disparate approaches can be woven together to produce a coherent over-arching grand strategy.

a. Containment as a strategy owes its origins to the analysis of George Kennan, a US Foreign Service Officer serving in Moscow. Kennan wrote an analysis and policy prescription which later became a key element of the first post war *US National Security Strategy* (NSC 68), subsequently known as the Truman Doctrine. Kennan recognised that once the Soviet Union had exploded its atomic bomb the world had changed. He was not alone in this but he also recognised that the Soviet Union's mindset was based on Russian culture and ideals. He proposed that the only way the 'free world' could counter an aggressive Communist expansion was to seek to contain and challenge it wherever it appeared. His theory was that the Soviet Union would then collapse on account of its own internal contradictions. Containment is therefore not static; it is in essence dynamic and seeks to contain not only military power but extends to all aspects of national power including the realm of ideas and information.

156. Lawrence Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign, Volume 2: War and Diplomacy* (Routledge, 2004), 17.

b. Deterrence is a classic strategy that depends upon the three Cs: capability, credibility and communication. To be viable, one must have the capability to carry out the threatened sanction. Those whom one seeks to influence must believe that you will use it. You must communicate that you have the capability and the will to employ what is at your disposal and make clear what the thresholds of use are, although there might be certain circumstances when a degree of ambiguity regarding threshold levels might be beneficial. As in the Cold War, deterrence may be part of an overall containment strategy. Similarly, intervention may also be an element of an overall containment or deterrence strategy.

c. Intervention may be the result of a coercive threshold being reached within a broader strategy (such as the Chinese intervention in the Korean War) or it may be an active element in a containment strategy (such as the US intervention in Vietnam). Alternatively, it may be a discrete effort to restore peace and stability (such as ongoing UN operations around the world).

4.27. To guard against over-optimism by the reader that the use of this booklet's guide to strategic assessment will lead to success, this section concludes by dwelling on the obstacles that will remain, regardless of how well the would-be strategist has applied the twelve-step assessment. Leaders, however good, will always be human and fallible and may be over-inclined to see new situations through the lens of a previous crisis in which they have been involved. In the same manner, the provision of information, interpretation, advice and other ingredients crucial to sensible strategic assessment will always fall short of the ideal requirement. There is no such thing as a blueprint for guaranteed success.

4.28. Many strategists who have presented at RCDS have developed their own techniques to deal with the obstacles to sound strategic assessment. A former UK CDS, for example, is known to have developed an instinct of doubt towards officially-provided information, always testing it against a network of informal advisors whom he had collected from outside the MOD. As the Chilcot Report and the House of Commons FAC report suggest, such scepticism should form a key component of a strategic leader's armoury. It is perhaps worth concluding this section with the following observation from Ucko and Egnell's recent analysis of UK performance in Afghanistan and Iraq:

> 'Strategy requires a clear alignment of ends, ways and means, prioritisation, sequencing, and a theory of victory. In contrast, strategy making for Basra and for Helmand was marked by a failure to grasp the nature of the campaign, to adapt once new realities came to the fore, and to resource these efforts both politically and financially, to achieve a clearly established objective.' [157]

157. David H Ucko and Robert Egnell, *Counterinsurgency in Crisis: Britain and the Challenges of Modern Warfare* (Columbia University Press, 2015), 147.

Conclusion

4.29. This section considered the practical business of making strategy. It suggested an iterative twelve-step approach – referred to as the 'strategic assessment' – as one way of orchestrating ends, ways and means into an effective strategy. In doing this, it highlighted the over-riding importance of understanding the environment before developing strategy options and the value of metrics in identifying when a strategy is beginning to fail and requires adaptation. It also examined the Cold War policy of deterrence to demonstrate that seemingly disparate approaches can combine to create an effective strategy. The next section focuses on strategic leadership. Whilst acknowledging the difficulty of identifying the 'ingredients' of successful strategic leadership, it proposes some qualities, capabilities and behaviours that seem to characterise effective strategic leaders.

Notes:

Section 5

Strategic leadership

This section considers the qualities, capabilities and behaviours that experience suggests characterise the most effective strategic leaders. It examines the responsibility that a strategic leader has to act both morally and legally, using the Chilcot Report to illustrate how nuanced the legality and morality of a course of action can be at the grand strategic level. It then examines the traditions of *Jus ad Bellum* and *Jus in Bello* of which the strategic leader needs to be aware.

'…it is the responsibility of a statesman to resolve dilemmas, not to contemplate them.'

Henry Kissinger[158]

5.1. Exceptional demands are made of strategic leaders, particularly at the grand strategic level. To be successful, they need extraordinary breadth and depth of character, intellect and industry. Not only must they possess the right personal qualities and capabilities, they must also behave in a manner that commands a natural authority and inspires widespread confidence. They require patience, insight, wisdom and versatility; ultimately, they must also be able to think and act decisively, particularly in times of national crisis or existential challenge.

5.2. Notwithstanding the above, true strategic leadership is more art than science. It is also context dependent. Churchill proved to be an excellent war time leader but, arguably, Atlee was the right man to rebuild Britain once the fighting was over. The point is that an individual who emerges as an effective strategic leader in one set of circumstances might fail even to get noticed in another. Because of this, it is very difficult, despite the number of books on the subject, to identify the exact mix of ingredients which, when combined, produce a successful strategic leader. However, there are some qualities, capabilities and behaviours which experience suggests characterise the most effective strategic leaders.

5.3. Although it is unlikely that those attending RCDS will go on to lead their nations,[159] it is probable that the majority of Members will, later in their careers, be involved in formulating strategy at the very highest levels, perhaps going on to become leaders of their service or organisation. Leadership at this level – whether of a country, service or large multinational company – is undoubtedly strategic and it is therefore appropriate to consider examples from the political realm and the higher echelons of both the armed services and the commercial world to illustrate the points this section is trying to make.

158. Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Simon & Schuster, 2011), 178.
159. But not impossible. As an example, Olusegun Obasanjo attended RCDS in 1974 and went on to become the military ruler of Nigeria from 13 February 1976 to 1 October 1979. He was subsequently democratically elected to be the President of Nigeria and served from 29 May 1999 to 29 May 2007.

Qualities

5.4. A quality in this context can be defined as 'a distinctive attribute or characteristic possessed by someone or something'.[160] The following list of qualities has been assembled from the thoughts and writings of the many distinguished speakers who have addressed RCDS over the years.

a. Sincerity, humility and truthfulness, the integrity that flows from true self-knowledge and self-awareness. This includes the capacity for self-criticism and knowing one's own strengths and weaknesses, and how to play to the former and compensate for the latter (especially by selecting people to join the team who can compensate for the leader's weaker areas). Another key part of this is authenticity; that you are who you are seen to be and that you live the values you are promoting.

b. Flexibility, the ability to give and take. When irreconcilable positions are deeply entrenched, the only way forward is to compromise. To be able to make choices and decisions which are almost always the 'least worst', not the 'best'. A good example of flexibility in terms of strongly held views is provided by John Maynard Keynes who, in response to criticism during the Great Depression that he had changed his position on monetary policy, replied: "When the facts change, I change my mind. What do you do, sir?"[161]

c. Moral courage and boldness, including a willingness to face down natural supporters and public opinion in order to deal with the most difficult personal ethical challenges. As discussed in previous sections, the courage to speak truth to power is fundamentally important. Both the Chilcot Report and Hooker and Collins's analysis of lessons from the US's campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan comment on the number of occasions where senior commanders and officials were found wanting in this respect. The reluctance to speak truth to power is not a new phenomenon. In commenting on Haig's plan for the 1916 Somme Offensive, Basil Liddell Hart noted that:

'What is perhaps more remarkable is the way his chief subordinates joined in the chorus of optimism, singing so loudly as apparently to drown the doubts they had felt during cool consideration of the problem.'[162]

Moral courage is also important in recognising when the team is no longer working effectively and certain individuals need to be removed. Prevaricating over doing this at the strategic level can have significant consequences as individuals who are struggling are more likely to fail when the pressure is greatest.

d. Great stamina and resilience in the face of setback, self-confidence and an ability to inspire confidence in others, whatever the adversity. There is probably no better British

160. *Oxford Dictionary of English*, Second Edition (Oxford University Press, 2003), 1438.
161. Paul Samuelson, "The Keynes Century," *The Economist* 287 (25 June 1983): 19.
162. Basil Liddell Hart, *A History of the First World War, 1914-1918* [Enlarged Edition] (Cassell, 1934), 237.

example of determination in the face of a crisis than that shown by Winston Churchill in 1940.

e. Human and intellectual breadth of a high order, beyond normal or corporate mindsets. Emotional as well as traditional intelligence, which provides an exceptional understanding of what Thucydides termed the *anthropinon* (the human condition), guided as he suggested by *phobos* (fear), *kerdos* (self-interest) and *doxas* (honour).

f. Inspirational enthusiasm for people, international affairs and strategy. A genuine interest in, and empathy for, people characterised by inclusiveness, openness and respect for others' views and backgrounds. An ability to define and promulgate a values-based and inspirational vision of the desired end-state.

g. A natural instinct for networking, bonding people of potentially very different political and social persuasions to build communities of common interest and shared vision.

h. A blend of inspiration and common-sense, much of strategic leadership is common-sense but the highest form is inspired. As Kissinger noted, 'the statesman's duty is to bridge the gap between his nation's experience and vision'.[163]

Capabilities

5.5. As was discussed in the characteristics of good strategy in Section 2, the strategic leader requires a profound understanding that it is their personal responsibility to set the strategy, direct it and adjust it when necessary. Having given broad direction and confirmed the policy goal, the strategic leader may task a trusted team to develop the strategy but, before it is agreed and implemented, he or she must take personal ownership of the finished product – this cannot be delegated. Likewise, once it has been agreed, the strategic leader remains personally responsible for its implementation – again, this cannot be delegated. And he or she should have insisted on the maximum possible clarity on actual and potential resource commitments and possible implications. However, strategic leaders often lack the time and means to maintain a constant over-view of how the implementation of a particular strategy is faring. Formal stock-takes, chaired by the strategic leader, therefore provide a useful way of addressing this, particularly when they are able to review progress against a set of well-crafted performance metrics (see Section 4).

5.6. Experience suggests that a sense of the pattern of history will help the strategic leader in developing and implementing a successful strategy although some leaders can go astray because of their tendency to 'read' a new situation incorrectly as fitting the conceptual frame of a previous crisis; Eden arguably saw the threat from Nasser's Egypt through the lenses of the Second World War rather than in the context of emerging Arab nationalism. In this context, it is interesting to note the comment made by Isaiah Berlin, the celebrated philosopher, that Churchill's greatness was in part due to a 'historical imagination

163. Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Simon & Schuster, 2011), 41.

so strong, so comprehensive, as to encase the whole of the present and the whole of the future in a framework of a rich and multi-coloured past'.[164]

5.7. Churchill himself noted that 'the past is but a prologue to the future'.[165] This is not to say that, to be effective, all strategic leaders must have a degree in history but an understanding of what has gone before, combined with personal experience, can help develop 'strategic intuition'. While some might argue that this is an innate ability, others would argue that it is more often than not the product of long experience and prior reflection, combined with an ability to act adroitly when required. It should also be borne in mind that although history rarely repeats itself, the course of world events is determined by the behaviour of people. In this context, it is worth noting the following statement by Abraham Lincoln which, perhaps fittingly, is used by Hooker and Collins to set the context for their analysis of lessons from the US interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan:

> 'Human nature will not change. In any future great national trial, compared with the men of this, we shall have as weak and as strong, as silly and as wise, as bad and as good. Let us therefore study the incidents in this [American Civil War] as philosophy to learn wisdom from and none of them as wrongs to be avenged.'[166]

5.8. Hoffman and Crowther, who contributed a chapter in Hooker and Collins' analysis, make a strong argument for the examination of historical case studies on the grounds that:

> 'There is little reason to believe that strategic success in the future would not depend on the same qualities that generated successful strategy and adaptation in the past - proactive rather than reactive choices, flexibility over rigidity, and disciplined consistency instead of improvisation in applying force in the pursuit of political goals.'[167]

5.9. In addition to taking personal responsibility for developing and implementing a particular strategy, and understanding how similar strategies have fared in similar circumstances in the past, the strategic leader requires certain capabilities to be truly effective (where capability is defined as 'the power or ability to do something').[168] These capabilities are in addition to the personal qualities described above and include the following:

a. The confidence to operate in a province of uncertainty: an ability to comprehend and handle extreme complexity, to overcome self-doubt and the hesitation of colleagues and subordinates, and to operate successfully in an environment of potential disorder, disunity, uncertainty and ambiguity. An acceptance that knowledge is always imperfect

164. Isaiah Berlin, "Mr Churchill," *The Atlantic* (September 1949).
165. It has proved difficult to trace this quote used in the previous iteration of *Thinking Strategically*.
166. Richard D Hooker and Joseph J Collins, *Lessons Encountered – Learning from the Long War* (National Defence University Press, 2015), v.
167. Hoffman and Crowther, "The Surges in Iraq and Afghanistan," in *Lessons Encountered – Learning from the Long War,* eds. Richard D Hooker and Joseph J Collins (National Defence University Press, 2015), 148.
168. *Oxford Dictionary of English*, Second Edition (Oxford University Press, 2003), 255.

and that the strategy will need to adapt to accommodate these is vital for successful strategic leadership, as is an acceptance of risk. An inevitable consequence of operating in an uncertain environment is that mistakes will be made. An effective strategic leader recognises this, learning from their mistakes and imbuing their organisation with a learning culture.

b. Making and sustaining sufficient space to consider and act strategically: the freedom to think is essential both for the strategic leader and their supporting team. This requirement includes resistance to the widespread phenomenon of 'groupthink', that is the silent subordination of individual insight to a single narrative or course which may well be wrong. Despite the pressures of day-to-day decision making, a leader needs to use time wisely in order to create and devote sufficient time to strategy, in both its formulation and execution. While the pursuit of the last detail is invariably unproductive in terms of time and effort, the strategist must be able to gather and master the critical detail.

c. The ability to operate under intense media pressure: the spotlights of 24/7 news and public opinion polls are relentless and unforgiving. The strategic leader should choose his media appearances carefully (in most situations a well-informed and authoritative spokesman is preferable in order not to 'dilute' the impact of the leader speaking when a particularly important point needs to be reinforced). He or she should not succumb to 'sound bite communication' and reflex politics, sacrificing long-term strategic goals for short-term popular gain.

d. Acknowledging human limitations, including their own: the leader is not indispensable, let alone immortal. Arrogance (in its extreme form, *hubris*) has led to some of the greatest strategic failures of the past and present. It is also important that the strategic leader is aware of our inherently human failings in terms of the way we think about problems and take decisions. Our cognitive biases, such as being more prepared to act to avoid a loss than to achieve a gain and our natural inclination to see new problems as being similar to previous ones, need to be understood.[169] Furthermore, succession planning is often neglected. A leader must at the right point stand down and hand over his responsibilities, a decision that many – even great – leaders get wrong: Churchill, for one, long prevaricated over when to resign during his second premiership.

e. Respect: a wise strategic leader has a natural respect for his colleagues and subordinates and a desire to consult, to develop and to mentor them. Reflecting on Churchill's leadership style, President Dwight Eisenhower noted that 'leadership by persuasion and the whole-hearted acceptance of a contrary decision are both the fundamentals of democracy'.[170] Some would go further arguing that being respected is not enough and that there needs to be a degree of affection between the leader and his or her team otherwise, when the going gets tough, which it occasionally will, people will be reluctant to 'go the extra mile' for their leader. Moreover, they will be unlikely to provide constructive challenge if they do not feel secure.

169. Daniel Kahneman's seminal book *Thinking, Fast and Slow* provides an excellent introduction to understanding how humans think about problems.
170. Dwight D Eisenhower, "What is Leadership?," *Reader's Digest* (June 1965): 49-54.

f. Recognising the benefits of collaborative working and collective decision making: Cabinets and teams have a greater collective capability and depth than their leader acting in isolation. They provide an opportunity for constructive challenge by informed and highly experienced people. As the Chilcot Report noted:

'In addition to providing a mechanism to probe and challenge the implications of proposals before decisions were taken, a Cabinet Committee or a more structured process might have identified some of the wider implications and risks associated with the deployment of military forces to Iraq. It might also have offered the opportunity to remedy some of the deficiencies in planning...'[171]

It is important to reiterate that the sorts of 'wicked' or 'adaptive' problems that strategies are usually designed to address defy easy resolution. They require innovative solutions which are best developed by a 'brains trust' of people working collaboratively. However, unless people feel comfortable in their environment – both physically and emotionally – they are unlikely to give of their best. The multi-coloured creative workspaces favoured by some high tech companies might seem excessive but the leader should at least ensure that conditions encourage free-flowing discussion and lateral thought.

Behaviours

5.10. In addition to qualities and capabilities, experience again suggests that the strategic leader's effectiveness can be enhanced by behaving in a particular way, where behaviour is defined as: 'the way in which one acts or conducts oneself, especially towards others'.[172] These behaviours, which are important for the health of the nation or organisation, include the following:

a. A desire to push work across boundaries (and out of 'stove-pipes'). This also requires an instinct for intelligent cooperation, not confrontation; in politics and in strategy-making, an internationalist inclination. As Hooker and Collins note:

'Timely coalition inputs into any assessment process are better than selling a strategic shift after the decision to do so. This may be more important during strategic reassessments than in initial interventions due to the political impacts among international partners when we are considering changing course and speed.'[173]

b. A habit of building, leading and listening to teams, drawn from all the instruments: teams which constitute a trusted network, educated appropriately at the strategic level through mentoring as well as more formally, consciously cooperating across traditional structural boundaries and stove-pipes and untrammelled by party lines. The point about mentoring and education is particularly important and was highlighted by Porter in 2010

171. UK Cabinet Office, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry: Executive Summary* (HMSO, 2016), 59.
172. *Oxford Dictionary of English*, Second Edition (Oxford University Press, 2003), 148.
173. Richard D Hooker and Joseph J Collins, *Lessons Encountered – Learning from the Long War* (National Defence University Press, 2015), 144.

who suggested that one reason Britain 'doesn't do grand strategy' was that 'Britons hardly study it'.[174] More recently, in suggesting four reasons why Britain had struggled with its counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, Ucko and Egnell noted that:

'Fourth, the British capacity for strategic thinking – its ability to formulate a campaign plan – has proved consistently and fatefully problematic throughout the last decade of operations.'[175]

Put simply, people cannot be expected to contribute to the development of strategies unless they have been given an opportunity to develop the requisite skill-set. And providing these opportunities is a key responsibility of the strategic leader and, institutionally, of the organisation or nation to which he or she belongs.

c. A personal ability to work and act collegiately with allies when necessary. But conversely, to be alert to, and be ready to confront, 'groupthink.'

Summary

5.11. The qualities, capabilities and behaviours identified in this section are drawn from the wisdom and advice of the many distinguished statesmen, strategic leaders, academics and other 'experts' who have addressed RCDS over the years. They are not exhaustive and they are no guarantee of success: a potential leader could possess all of them and still fail to be effective; conversely, someone possessing very few of them could, in the right circumstances, prove to be a highly effective strategic leader or statesman. Context is critical: when faced with an existential threat, people require less persuasion to accept a course of action and an autocratic style of leadership might be effective; when the threat is less immediate or tangible, such as with climate change, powers of persuasion and personal charisma might well be at a premium.

Other perspectives

5.12. As previously stated, numerous books have been written on the essence of strategic leadership. While there is little point in trying to summarise where they differ from the RCDS view, it is helpful to consider what some leaders personally believe the requirements of a strategic leader to be.

5.13. General James Mattis. General James Mattis, then Commander of the US' Central Command (CENTCOM) and now US Secretary of Defense, addressed RCDS on Friday 21st October 2011 and reflected on his experience as a strategic commander; he kindly agreed to the publication of the following personal thoughts which, though now dated, are worth repeating:

174. Patrick Porter, "Why Britain Doesn't Do Grand Strategy," *The RUSI Journal* 155, no. 4 (2010): 7.
175. David H Ucko and Robert Egnell, *Counterinsurgency in Crisis: Britain and the Challenges of Modern Warfare* (Columbia University Press, 2015), 147.

- Lack of reflection – our worst deficiency. Take the chance to reflect whilst you can and always identify thinking capacity in your team for you personally will always be distracted or interrupted by events.
- There is no room for rigid, templated solutions; what we need is disciplined, unregimented problem solvers.
- Where good people come up against bad processes, the bad processes will win 9 times out of 10.
- We cannot allow walls between people.
- I am interested in the value of ideas. People from different perspectives, cultures and backgrounds will give you the best insights – solutions often come from someone with a different perspective than you.
- You must not only be ready to listen to others; you must be ready to be persuaded by others - get out of comfort zones. Be cautious that we have built our military prowess on self-confidence and self-sufficiency NOT to trust those who are different.
- There is a job for everyone in coalitions if you approach the coordination in the right way.
- 'Hand-con', it is about personal relationships and trust. It takes time to build trust; it can be lost in a second. You probably won't get a second chance.
- Be ready to disobey: a matter of personal ethical choice and moral courage. Intelligently carry out your superior's intent and keep your Commander informed.
- Challenge assumptions, ask yourself: "What problem are you trying to solve?"
- Einstein: spend 59 minutes defining a problem, one minute solving it. Too often we don't do that; too often we are busy solving the wrong problem.
- Beware of falling back into one's comfort zone; it limits opportunity.
- Command relationship is less important than unity of effort built on trusted relations between Commanders.
- You can't teach attitude, attitudes must be caught; command climate is vital for unity of effort.
- Beware of 'dramatic instance fallacy' whereby one applies hard-won experience to every subsequent situation unquestioningly.

- You can be dominant and irrelevant.

- Ensure your relationships with politicians are neither acrimonious nor distrustful; do not give politically correct advice, military commanders owe politicians honesty and our advice is sometimes ugly.

5.14. General David H Petraeus. On being asked in an interview what it took to be a strategic leader, General Petraeus replied that:

> 'In essence there are four tasks. The first is to get the big ideas right. The second is to communicate them effectively throughout the breadth and depth of the organization. The third is to oversee the implementation of the big ideas. And the fourth is to determine how the big ideas need to be refined, changed, augmented, and then repeating the process over again and again and again.'[176]

5.15. Commercial perspective. Effective strategic leadership is not just required at the highest levels in public life, it is also important in large multinational corporations. While noting that 'context is all,' one leading business expert offered the following list of essential characteristics when he addressed RCDS:

- Set and communicate the required future direction of the enterprise, which must be understood by all involved. This requires more than words – it requires demonstrable deeds.

- Motivate the people concerned to do things (such as embrace necessary change) they may not necessarily wish or are inclined to do. Consider how best they can be rewarded.

- If inspiration and potential reward prove insufficient, how can you get things going? Initiate matters yourself. Personal drive, imagination and innovation count heavily in influencing others.

- Once started along a path of change, the leader must sustain momentum. This requires renewed energy and enthusiasm, and positive feedback to all those affected.

- Finally, to lead throughout by example!

176. General David H Petraeus, "On Strategic Leadership: An Interview with David H Petraeus (USA Retired)," *Parameters*, 45, no. 4 (2016), 75-79.

Law and ethics

5.16. A statesman must be prepared to take personal responsibility for the most difficult decisions, some of which may challenge morals and even universal ethics and may well have to be made on the basis of incomplete data. While some strategists might argue that there is a 'morality of results,' in the sense that strategic success creates its own virtue, the RCDS view is that the ends rarely justify the means and that the means therefore need to be both legal and moral.

5.17. Unfortunately, determining whether a particular course of action meets both criteria is not as straightforward as it sounds. It is worth considering the UK's intervention in Iraq in 2003 to illustrate the point. The legality of the UK's intervention hinged on the interpretation of whether Iraq was in 'material breach' of a particular clause (or 'operating paragraph'/'OP') of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1441. Whether it was appears to have been uncertain. Prior to the intervention, the Chief of the Defence Staff and the Treasury Solicitor asked the Attorney General (the UK Government's chief legal advisor) to give a final '...clear-cut answer on whether military action would be lawful rather than unlawful'.[177] He replied that:

> '...on balance, the "better view" was that the conditions for the operation of the revival argument were met in this case, meaning that there was a lawful basis for the use of force without a further resolution beyond resolution 1441.'[178]

5.18. Notably, the day after having given this reply, the Attorney General's office wrote to the Prime Minster:

> 'It is an essential part of the legal basis for military action without a further resolution of the Security Council that there is strong evidence that Iraq has failed to comply with and co-operate fully in the implementation of resolution 1441 and has thus failed to take the final opportunity offered by the Security Council in that resolution. The Attorney General understands that it is unequivocally the Prime Minister's view that Iraq has committed further material breaches as specified in [operative] paragraph 4 of resolution 1441, but as this is a judgment for the Prime Minister, the Attorney would be grateful for confirmation that this is the case.'[179]

5.19. Mr Blair's Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs replied:

> 'This is to confirm that it is indeed the Prime Minister's unequivocal view that Iraq is in further material breach of its obligations, as in OP4 of UNSCR 1441, because of 'false statements or omissions in the declarations submitted by Iraq pursuant to this resolution and failure to comply with, and co-operate fully in the interpretation of, this resolution'.'[180]

177. UK Cabinet Office, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry: Executive Summary* (HMSO, 2016), 66.
178. *Ibid.*
179. *Ibid.*, 67.
180. *Ibid.*

5.20. In considering this exchange, the Chilcot Report noted that 'it is unclear what specific grounds Mr Blair relied upon in reaching his view'.[181] It further observed that:

> '...Mr Blair neither requested nor received considered advice addressing the evidence on which he expressed his "unequivocal view" that Iraq was "in further material breach of its obligations".'[182]

5.21. The Chilcot Report does not offer a view on whether the UK's intervention was legal or not. But it does state that a committee of senior Ministers should have considered the question on the basis of formal advice and that 'such a Committee should then have reported its conclusions to Cabinet before its members were asked to endorse the Government's policy'.[183]

5.22. There are at least three key points for the strategic leader in this extract from the Chilcot Report:

- First, that 'the buck stops' with the strategic leader. Although the Attorney General was, and remains, the UK's chief legal advisor, in the final analysis he asked the Prime Minister to confirm whether grounds for the legal use of armed force existed.

- Second, that when the legality of an issue is highly nuanced, the strategic leader is very strongly recommended to seek expert advice, not just from lawyers but from whoever can provide the level of understanding that an issue requires.

- Third, the strategic leader should ensure that he or she has the support of their organisation's highest level decision making board (Cabinet in the case of the UK Government) before deciding on a course of action. Occasionally, the strategic leader might decide to go against the considered view of the board but a suitably high-level discussion would at least ensure that all the options were considered and subjected to constructive challenge, or what Hooker and Collins call 'respectful dissent'.[184]

5.23. Even when the legal risks associated with a course of action are assessed as being within reasonable limits, the strategic leader needs to ensure that it is likely to be perceived as moral and legitimate in a wider human and political context. Moreover, there is a personal dimension to morality. As Charles Guthrie and Michael Quinlan note, 'moral accountability is a central part of what it means to be a human being'.[185] The strategic leader's own moral code will inevitably be tested whilst in office. They should prepare for this, not only to try and keep his or her strategy within acceptable moral limits but also to give themselves the best chance of living on with minimal personal regrets. To quote from

181. *Ibid.*
182. *Ibid.*
183. *Ibid.*
184. Richard D Hooker and Joseph J Collins, *Lessons Encountered – Learning from the Long War* (National Defence University Press, 2015), 8.
185. Charles Guthrie & Michael Quinlan, *Just War: the Just War Tradition: Ethics in Modern Warfare* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007).

Shakespeare's Henry V: 'every subject's duty is the King's; but every subject's soul is his own'.[186] Whatever his or her calling, the strategic leader must know their own soul and be prepared to live with the consequences of their actions.

5.24. In addition to international law, the statutes of the land and a leader's own moral code, the strategic leader should be familiar with the normative frameworks that have evolved to help inform decisions about the use of force, both whether it should be used in the first place and, when that decision has been taken, how it should be applied. While there is a lot more to the subject of military ethics than the Just War Tradition, the latter represents a 'fund of practical moral wisdom' that has evolved over time to reflect the changing character of war.[187] What is often missed by those who approach it as an abstract theory, rather than as a true tradition, is that during its evolution it has developed to acknowledge the crucial importance of context when determining a correct course of action.[188]

5.25. In brief, the Just War Tradition demands that actions which can cause harm to others (such as going to war) can be undertaken only if there is a compelling, morally justifiable reason – a just cause. It also requires that the actions are: undertaken with the right intentions and authorised by those who have the legitimacy to sanction the suspension of the normal rules prohibiting this kind of action; as well as that the harms that the action may produce in both the short and long term are proportional to the injury that has been suffered; that there is a reasonable prospect for success; and that there are no alternative options that might do less harm and still produce results (ensuring that war is a genuine last resort). In addition to these *ad bellum* requirements, there are also certain *in bello* principles to take into account which are concerned with how the war may be conducted. Specifically, the importance of discrimination to ensure that any harm to the innocent is limited and that harm inflicted on the opposition is proportionate to the aim being legitimately pursued.

5.26. Throughout the history of the Tradition, the goal of Just War Thinking has always been to 'make a better peace.' However, following the US-led coalition's intervention in Iraq in 2003, there was a view that insufficient attention was given to thinking through the latter stages of the conflict. This has led to greater attention being paid to the idea of *jus post bellum*, or justice after war. *Jus post bellum* considers factors such as the legitimate 'ends' of a Just War and stipulates that, for example: the settlement between the antagonists must be publicly declared and proportionate to the initial justification for the conflict; it must recognize and vindicate the rights of everyone involved, not just the victor; it must discriminate between those who are morally culpable and those who are not, administering appropriate punishment for those (on both sides) who may have violated both *ad bellum* and *in bello* principles; it must consider compensation that does not sow the seeds of future conflict; and, finally, it must allow rehabilitation or reform of those state institutions that require it.[189]

186. William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, Act 4, Scene 1.
187. James T. Johnson, *Can Modern War be Just?* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 15.
188. David Whetham, "The Just War Tradition: A Pragmatic Compromise," in D. Whetham, ed., *Ethics, Law and Military Operations* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 15.
189. *Ibid.*, 83.

5.27. The Just War criteria should inform the formulation of both policy and strategy when the use of violence is being considered. The criteria also provide a useful guide for action that does not involve the direct application of lethal force, such as the imposition of economic sanctions. Interestingly, although it is often associated with Western or even Christian traditions, the principles underpinning the Just War Tradition resonate with ideas, cultures and religious principles found all over the world.

Conclusion

5.28. This section considered the qualities, capabilities and behaviours that experience suggests characterise the most effective strategic leaders. It examined the responsibility that a strategic leader has to act both legally and legitimately, using the UK's intervention in Iraq to illustrate how nuanced the legality and morality of a course of action can be at the grand strategic level. It then examined the traditions of *Jus ad Bellum* and *Jus in Bello*. In covering these areas, the intention has not been to identify a definitive set of characteristics that the strategic leader must develop, or provide a set of 'rules' that he or she must follow, but to stimulate reflection about what it means to lead at the highest level. One thing is certain, it is not easy, particularly when a nation is at war. Hooker and Collins conclude their recent analysis of the lessons from the US's campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan with a comment that Winston Churchill made between the two World Wars. It seems appropriate to end this booklet with the same quote given its relevance to leadership at the grand strategic level:

> 'Let us learn our lessons. Never, never, never believe any war will be smooth and easy, or that anyone who embarks on the strange voyage can measure the tides and hurricanes he will encounter. The Statesman who yields to war fever must realise that once the signal is given, he is no longer the master of policy but the slave of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events. Antiquated War Offices, weak, incompetent or arrogant Commanders, untrustworthy allies, hostile neutrals, malignant Fortune, ugly surprises, awful miscalculations – all take their seats at the Council Board on the morrow of a declaration of war. Always remember, however sure you are that you can easily win, that there would not be a war if the other man did not think that he also had a chance.'[190]

190. Winston Churchill, *My Early Life: A Roving Commission* (Scribner's, 1930, rpt. 1958), cited by Richard D Hooker and Joseph J Collins, *Lessons Encountered – Learning from the Long War* (National Defence University Press, 2015), 416.

Notes:

Ministry of Defence

Reasonable Challenge: A Guide

The Iraq Inquiry (Chilcot) Report tells us that it's important to avoid 'groupthink' as we develop policy, and the best antidote to that is *reasonable challenge*. An environment in which challenge is expected and accepted is important. People should be receptive to reasonable challenge and assume that it is provided with the best of intentions, while those offering challenge should know how to do so effectively. Challenge isn't about proving someone right or wrong; rather it's about highlighting and exploring alternative options. These cultures and behaviours reflect a healthy organisation and we have created the following guide to support their development.

For those **receiving challenge**, you should:	For those **offering challenge**, you should:
▪ Not take it personally – the challenge isn't about you, it's about the issue at hand. ▪ Make it known that you welcome reasonable challenge, and create space in the way you run your business to receive it. Recognise that challenge might result in change. ▪ Seek real diversity of thought, not just shades of mainstream thinking. ▪ Give staff the opportunity fully to articulate different views and give them credit for doing so. And remember that the person challenging shouldn't be expected to have a solution there and then. ▪ Demonstrate that you are giving serious thought to the challenge being offered – do not dismiss it out of hand and make sure people aren't just telling you what you want to hear. ▪ Respond respectfully – never belittle someone's view, and never (even after the event) sideline those offering it. ▪ If you do not accept the challenge, explain your reasoning, including supporting evidence when necessary. ▪ Encourage the use of evidence from beyond the immediate organisation, think tanks, academia and other sources. ▪ Support both junior colleagues and peers to raise a challenge with more senior colleagues.	▪ Make challenge with courtesy and politeness. ▪ Be prepared to explain the logic and reasoning behind your alternative view and provide evidence. Keep your challenge concise and relevant to the issue at hand. ▪ Think about the interpersonal dynamics. Keep it professional - it's the issue you're challenging, not the person. Be respectful to the approach from which you are differing. ▪ Choose your moment and your medium. A one-to-one discussion or a smaller team meeting may be more appropriate than a big meeting at which positions are being taken and decisions are expected; a gently probing conversation or email is better than a confrontational one. ▪ Raise issues in a timely manner. Don't leave your challenge too late in the process, when changing course could be too difficult. ▪ Accept if the eventual decision remains unchanged – a decision has to be taken once all reasonable challenge has been considered. Only in cases where regularity or propriety have not been observed should you need to turn to the Department's whistleblowing process.

Notes:

Annex B

How to succeed in meetings

Introduction

B.1. There are no single or simple rules on how to succeed at meetings. Much also depends on the level at which a meeting is being held and your precise role in it. But in all cases you should think about how to prepare before the meeting; how to behave during the meeting; and what to do after the meeting.

B.2. What follows focuses on meetings within a particular government system (in UK terms, 'Whitehall'), particularly inter-departmental ones. But the broad themes of careful preparation, etc., are always relevant, including for multilateral meetings.

B.3. It is also worth noting that there are different types of meeting in terms of the 'outcomes' you are seeking. Sometimes they are win/lose, for example, in Whitehall/government funding discussions and in some international meetings. But often they are win/win, for example in developing cross-government advice to Ministers, or in seeking a mutually beneficial multilateral compromise.

Before

B.4. When you receive an invitation to a meeting, you and your time should ensure you are clear:

- what the meeting is for;
- whether the meeting is a priority and whether you should attend/be represented (if not, at what level you should be represented);
- who else will be there;
- what your goals are for the meeting;
- whether you have allies in the pursuit of these goals; and
- what information you need to assemble in advance of the meeting – whether you need to commission any special briefing and/or arrange an oral briefing session, etc.

B.5. This is not an exhaustive list. But if you decide to attend then (within the time available and in the light of your judgment of competing priorities) in advance of the meeting, you must seek to master the detail and history, etc. You will not be able to deploy everything you know at the

meeting itself, but you must be able to respond authoritatively if pressed on the detail underlying your arguments.

B.6. You may think you know the positions others invited to the meeting are likely to take, but check. Talk to them, on the phone or face-to-face. If you can, win the argument in advance, or seek an acceptable compromise. Talk to the relevant experts, and be prepared to bring in 'outside challenge' to your/your team/your department's thinking, on the assumption such challenge will not be in the meeting room itself, if only to challenge your own thinking and in the interest of avoiding groupthink.

B.7. If feasible, talk to the chairperson in advance, to understand (if you don't already) the driver for the meeting and the political factors behind it, and what his or her preliminary views are on what an outcome might look like.

B.8. Think hard about the politics of the issue, and shape your proposals accordingly (without giving up on what you think the right goal should be). This is of course particularly important if the meeting is with Ministers (who would normally chair any such meeting), when advance contact with their political advisers ('SPADS') can be important.

B.9. Be absolutely clear before you go into the meeting about what your real bottom lines/ fall-back position(s) are. Clear any fall-back positions with your seniors/Ministers before you go into the meeting: it is important that they will back you up if you are forced to fall back on them.

B.10. More generally, know from the start that the outcome will almost certainly be a compromise decision taking account of the views of a number of stakeholders in the debate. To the extent possible you should have a clear view of what you can accept, and to have thought the issues through in your contacts with others before the meeting starts. You will not be able to (and should not!) treat every issue as a 'resignation' one, and need to think carefully about whether an issue matters sufficiently (to you personally, and to your Minister/Ministry) for you to die in the ditch/block/be isolated, etc.

B.11. Always consider whether there would be advantage in holding the drafting pen or being involved in the drafting of any paper to be considered at the meeting. 'He/she who drafts first, laughs last'. But there can be a downside to having the job of finding the formal compromises.

During

B.12. In the meeting room, judge carefully where you sit (so don't be too late arriving – all the best places will have been taken). Do not sit at a corner of a square table. Go for the middle, possibly opposite to the Chair, certainly in a position where you can get good eye contact so that he or she knows when you want to speak.

B.13. Meetings are a people business, as well as a policy business. There is no one style about how to play a meeting – whether to try to speak first and make your points forcibly, or to let others burn themselves out and then come in with what looks like a compromise/reasonable/reasoned

proposal which the exhausted group of individuals will accept. You need to judge tactics according to the personalities at the table, and the issues involved.

B.14. Body language matters. Do not look unprepared or disengaged/bored. If papers have been circulated, have them in front of you. Look at people when they are speaking – make it clear you are listening. If their points are significant, ensure you or one of your team are visibly noting them. Keep eye contact with others when you are speaking. Use language they will understand. Refer to the points others have made, either incorporating them in your argument or showing that you have weighed them up carefully before discounting them.

B.15. But do listen carefully to other points. If their counter-arguments are persuasive, be prepared to change your position – either in the meeting or subsequently by reference to your own hierarchy.

B.16. As noted above, your key arguments should be boiled down to a few key points by this stage – no one will have time to set out their whole stall. A classic brief for a meeting would include the following sections, or at least cover this ground:

- Goals/desired outcome.
- Points to make.
- Defensive points/if raised issues. Possible fall-back(s).
- Background (including history/positions of others, etc. Plus political and presentational points.)

B.17. Be ready to argue the long-term, strategic view, rather than (or at least as well as) the need for immediate responses to immediate pressures.

B.18. At the meeting, ensure that full account is given to the publicity/strategic communications aspect of any decisions reached.

B.19. Insist on clarity over the implementation and monitoring arrangements in relation to any decision-taking, and on the resource consequences particularly if they affect your department.

Afterwards

B.20. Watch out for the record/minutes. If they come round in draft, ensure any points you made which you think important are included. If the record comes round in final and ignores your input and/or gets other key points wrong, comment in writing to the Chair and all those present at the meeting.

B.21. Ensure all key players (and if necessary Ministers) in your Department are briefed promptly and succinctly on the outcome of the meeting, highlighting action points and explaining why you made any necessary compromises.

B.22. If you have had significant differences with other participants at the meeting, then find a way to reach out to them, perhaps on the way out of the meeting or shortly afterwards. You will almost certainly need to work with that individual in future.

B.23. Be prepared to be the one to say that conclusions reached at any particular meeting need to be revisited, because the world has changed. It does.

Machiavelli?

B.24. You should consider how media or Parliamentary comment could influence the debate. It may be in your country's or your department's interests to generate such comment in advance of key meetings. This is particularly true in international relations, where you could influence a foreign government though engaging their press. It is more difficult in cross-government debate, and as a rule you should only do so with Ministerial agreement.

Annex C

An approach to the conduct of a strategic assessment for a positional strategy[191]

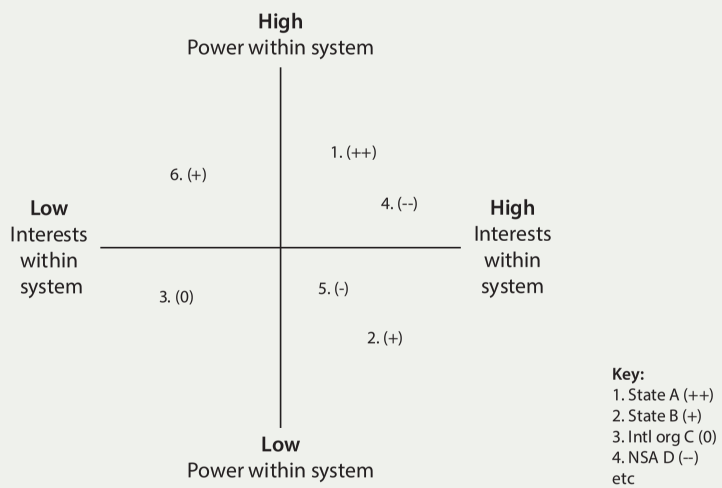
C.1. This annex offers an approach for the conduct of a strategic assessment at the grand strategic level, i.e. the level at which governments, from a cross-government perspective, take decisions about the use of their state's levers of power.[192] Within a strategic assessment, models and thinking frameworks act as a springboard for understanding, imagination and creativity to support analysis. That said, models themselves provide no answers. Any used need to be unpacked, applied intelligently and populated. Their use cannot be a box-ticking exercise or lead to the creation of lists of words with little or no meaning. Nothing representing the problem at hand and the prevailing situation should be entered into a model unless deductions and conclusions can be drawn from the entry or, at the very least, question(s) derived for subsequent study. No processes, or models within a process, should be followed slavishly. All should be adapted and discarded as necessary in order to help analysis, to inspire imaginative and creative discussions and to draw conclusions that help with strategy making. Do not be mechanistic and, throughout, iterate, create, seek a range of views and challenge, challenge and challenge. Cycle back frequently to see if fresh conclusions from a step in the framework influence those drawn already and, if so, adjust.

C.2. When conducting analysis, and using models, two filters may prove useful: "why?" and "so what?". The "why" filter pushes sights to a more strategic level. When a position or view is postulated, for example a potential strategic end or a perceived strength, ask "why… should this be an end…why is this a strength?." Ask the same question of the first answer and keep looking for the deeper and higher meanings. Eventually, the last answer to the succession of "why?" questions may be the end/objective/strength, etc., sought. Take little thinking at face value; keep questioning it until the answer is clear, robust and explainable to a layman. The "so what" filter applies to most thinking frameworks. It is used to draw deductions and conclusions that, in turn, can lead to thoughts about ends, ways and means and trigger ideas on what might need to be done. Using these filters requires some discipline and may test powers of analysis, imagination and creativity. Nonetheless, using them is worth it. It helps every idea lead to another until no further progression is apparent. This makes for a richer, broader and deeper analysis.

191. Recall consideration of strategy: positional and in the milieu (or, 'in war' and 'between wars').
192. For example, the UK's 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review (strategy in the milieu) has three objectives: protect our people; protect our global influence; and promote our prosperity. These could be construed to be the interests referred to by Lord Palmerstone in 1848 when, as the British Foreign Secretary, he said in Parliament: "we have no eternal allies and we have no perpetual enemies. [Only] our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow".

Purpose	Possible activity/remarks
Step 1: Framing conversation. • Establish why the group is together • Surface views and understanding and establish their range. • Test assumptions about what people see and why this is the case. • Provide a sense of direction.	Free flow, no barriers/constraints (less time), consider some questions; for example: • What is the issue at stake? • Does it matter? If so, why? • How does it fit with our enduring national interests and values? • Where does it fit in our priorities? • How will we approach the task? • What needs to be done by when and by whom? • How do we want this to end? What is our desired outcome? • What is our vision?

<table>
<tr><th>Purpose</th><th>Possible activity/remarks</th></tr>
<tr><td>Step 2: Consider the external environment.
• Surface facts/assumptions → deductions → conclusions about the operating environment within which any subsequent strategy may be executed.
• Identify the key strategic factors, i.e., those that may have the greatest influence on the realisation, sustainment and/or promotion of national interests.
• Capture and park the key strategic factors and the potential conclusions that can be drawn from them.</td><td>• An examination of the environment beyond the control of the government and its departments. Conduct analysis consistent with operating at the grand strategic level. Not all information or facts are strategic factors. What is really important flows from a thorough assessment of the realities and known or imagined possibilities of the strategic environment. Requires rigorous application of the ‘so what’ filter
• A thinking framework, such as STEEPLEMS (below) can trigger analysis and discussion.
<table><tr><th>Consideration</th><th>Factors</th><th>Deductions</th><th>Conclusions</th></tr><tr><td>Social</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Technological</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Economic</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Environmental</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Political</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Legal</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Ethical</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Military</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Security</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>• Could consider each trigger once in two layers, one for international and one for national, or run through twice, once for international and once national.
• Do not use simply as a checklist. While may consider each area in turn but do not think in silos. Look for links and interactions. View the external (not just international) environment as a system of systems.</td></tr>
</table>

Purpose	Possible activity/remarks
Step 3: Identify and assess the actors/ stakeholders in the system. • Identify other stakeholders operating in the system in which the strategy will be executed (for example, state and non-state, allies, partners, others, adversaries) and assumptions about their desires, preferences and interrelationships in relation to the situation being considered. • Within the context of the dynamic strategic environment as framed, determine those stakeholders with the greatest influence in the system and the ability (power) to achieve their own ends. • Narrow the aperture for a subsequent centre of gravity analysis of the most important stakeholders (as any examination of the potential list of stakeholders will exceed the time available). • Help steer broad approaches during strategy execution: stakeholders top right – cooperate closely or oppose/fight; top left – keep satisfied or block; bottom right – keep informed or block; bottom left – monitor.	• List, number, consider and plot each stakeholder against how much power they are exerting (applied power) and could apply if so desired and their institutions have the necessary levels of will, effectiveness and efficiency (latent power) in the strategic environment alongside how much interest they may have in using their power in the strategic environment to preserve/sustain their own national interests. This is probably a largely subjective analysis in the early stages. • Plot and annotate on a power/interest matrix. Add in parentheses alongside each stakeholder an assessment of their likely position in relation to your eventual strategy; e.g., (++) strongly supportive; (+) supportive; (0) bystander; (-) oppose; (–) strongly oppose (i.e. primary adversary/belligerent): 

<table>
<tr><th>Purpose</th><th colspan="2">Possible activity/remarks</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">Step 4: Centre of gravity analysis (for those in the top right quadrant).
Identify what to:
protect, or at least not harm (for supportive/ strongly supportive stakeholders in the top right quadrant); and
exploit/deny/target (for other stakeholders in the top right quadrant).
Conclusions inform strategic choices and strategy execution.</td><td colspan="2">At the strategic level, centres of gravity are often an abstraction and typically related to the dominant element of power for achieving strategic objectives sought, for example, will of the people; alliances. Operational centres of gravity tend to relate to capabilities. Conduct analysis consistent with operating at the grand strategic level.
Consider in turn each stakeholder chosen for analysis. The model below offers some thinking prompts, though there is no set starting point within it. While some centres of gravity may seem obvious, be prepared to revisit initial thinking after an examination of the critical supporting components:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Deduced aim and desired outcome: What is the stakeholder's main goal and what conditions do they seek?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Centre of gravity
The primary element of power upon which the stakeholder depends to achieve their strategic objectives. Key words likely to be nouns. To be protected in a friend and targeted in an opponent.</td><td>Critical capabilities
Primary abilities giving the stakeholder its power. Key words likely to be verbs, the ability to….. To be used in a friend (knowingly and in unison) and influenced negatively/denied to an opponent.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Critical vulnerabilities
Exists when a critical requirement is deficient or missing and exposes a critical capability to damage or loss. Key words likely to be nouns, with modifiers. To be protected in a friend (if possible) and exploited in an opponent.</td><td>Critical requirements
The specific conditions, components or resources essential to sustain critical capabilities. Key words likely to be nouns. To be provided to a friend (where possible) and denied to an opponent.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Conclusions: To change the strategic environment favourably, what can be exploited, denied, targeted, protected?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Cycle back to see if any conclusions drawn here influence those drawn already. As necessary, reflect and adjust.</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><th>Purpose</th><th>Possible activity/remarks</th></tr>
<tr><td>Step 5: Assess own means (resources).
• Identify and catalogue the means that may be available and position them in the context of the prevailing situation and the problem as it was framed.</td><td>
• One approach to building a catalogue of available and relevant means is to use the DIME model (diplomatic, information, military and economic) to trigger thinking in the broadest sense:[193]
<table>
<tr><th>Diplomatic, for example,</th><th>Information, for example,</th><th>Military, for example,</th><th>Economic, for example,</th></tr>
<tr><td>• Diplomatic network
• International organisations
• International law
• Alliances</td><td>• Intelligence agencies
• Strategic communications
• Psychological operations
• Information operations</td><td>• Armed forces
• Law enforcement agencies
• Border protection agencies</td><td>• Foreign aid structures
• Trade and financial policy
• Sanctions
• Inducements</td></tr>
</table>
• Consider the use of instruments in relation to adversaries, other stakeholders and the prevailing circumstances as the use of power is contingent on a state's ability, the ability and actions of others and the particular context and environment in which power will be used.
• Conduct the analysis consistent with operating at the grand strategic level and weigh instruments against what is going on, and what might transpire, in the external environment. Also, restrict the analysis to those means that the state might deploy. Think in the near term, rather than building a wish list of how levers could be enhanced (this comes later, under consideration of ways). Note any (pre) conditions related to a mean's use.
• Exercise discipline to prevent discussion moving too soon towards possible solutions. If creating a catalogue of means triggers thinking about ways to use those means park such potential courses of action and continue with the factual analysis of means.
</td></tr>
</table>

193. Rather than create a longer acronym, for example,, DIMEFIL (diplomatic, information, military, economic, financial, intel¬ligence and law enforcement); or MIDLIFE (military, intelligence, diplomacy, legal, information, financial and economic).

Purpose	Possible activity/remarks
Step 6: Take stock. • Deduce actions that offer the greatest potential to sustain, if not enhance, national interests. • Begin identification of areas of vulnerability and risk that may need mitigation or acceptance. • Begin to develop a sense of possible ends and courses of action to achieve them.	• Analyse strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, informed by the strategic assessment so far in the context of the prevailing strategic environment and the situation being considered. **Strengths and weaknesses** have an internal focus (i.e., on the government, its resources and positions). **Opportunities and threats** look externally at what is beyond the government's control or its substantial influence. • Strengths may be values based, for example, abiding by the rule of law, a strong liberal democracy and respect for, and application of, the rules and norms governing behaviour within the international system. More practical examples could be a nuclear deterrent, strong economy, resilient and robust system of government, being a permanent member of the UN Security Council, deployable military forces or centrality within an alliance structure with influence and respect. Strengths link to ends: play to the former to achieve the latter. • Weaknesses are internal elements and trends that, when set against the prevailing situation and left unchecked or unmitigated, may hamper sustainment or achievement of desired ends and, hence, affect national interests; for example, a marginal political mandate affecting the government's freedom of action, an inability to sustain a substantial military effort overseas, or a capability gap or vulnerability (such as a lack of will to use a particular instrument in a particular way). • Opportunities are external areas where ends may be achieved (and, hence, vital national interests sustained or, better still, enhanced). They are an amalgam of conditions whereby some effort and the use of one of more instruments of power exploits the situation for the benefit of the desired ends. • Threats are perceived factors external to the government's control that may prevent achievement of its desired ends (and, hence, sustainment of vital national interests). They reflect, for example, that other stakeholders, friends and adversaries alike, have their own desires and intentions and, to whatever extent, freedom of action.
Cycle back to see if any conclusions drawn here influence those drawn already. As necessary, reflect and adjust.	

<table>
<tr><th>Purpose</th><th colspan="4">Possible activity/remarks</th></tr>
<tr><td>Step 7: Derive potential ends
Begin the determination of the art of the possible at the grand strategic level through the formulation of potential objectives.
Consider other actions that may need to be taken to improve the chances of success.</td><td colspan="4">Ends are synonymous with objectives. Viewed collectively, they result in the policy goal (or vision) being realised. Objectives look to exploit opportunities to enhance or protect national interests. They also seek to mitigate threats and weaknesses. When set out, objectives will usually begin with verbs (for example, protect, ensure, create, develop, prevent, build). An objective may well serve more than one interest.
Note that grand strategy should have ends that relate to the conditions of any peace that should ensue. Military campaigns, and the destruction of an adversary, are not ends in themselves.
Begin to surface preparatory actions or the creation of pre-conditions that may be necessary to achieve certain objectives.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Step 8: Determine possible ways and courses of action.
Combine means (resources) in novel and creative ways to determine possible courses of action to meet the potential ends (objectives) being considered.
Begin to determine levels and intensity of activity in the form of options.</td><td colspan="4">While a range of thinking triggers can be used, the emphasis in this crucial, and difficult, step is on creativity and imagination, informed by the conclusions drawn so far.
One approach could be to consider a typology of generic (and escalatory) strategies[194] as an umbrella from which ways are derived to meet the potential objectives chosen for example:
<table>
<tr><th>Persuasion</th><th>Cooperative bargaining</th><th>Coercion</th><th>Force</th></tr>
<tr><td>Led by use of dialogue
Force of argument wins</td><td>Positive inducements
Aid
Guarantees
Lifting concessions</td><td>Negative inducements
Threats, not just military.
Includes deterrence, compellance, containment, and denial</td><td>Not just military
Object is unwilling recipient and participant
Defeat</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
</table>

194. See Terry Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy: Logic for American Statecraft* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 287-289. Other typologies exist.

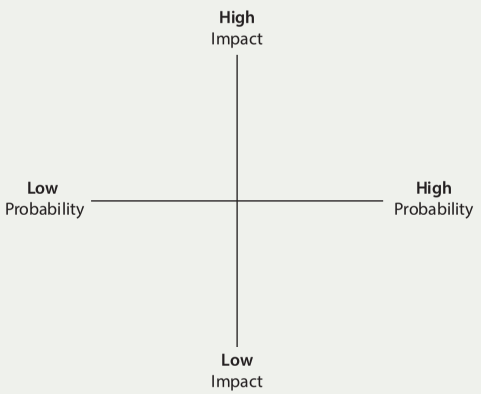
<table>
<tr><th>Purpose</th><th>Possible activity/remarks</th></tr>
<tr><td>Step 8 continued.</td><td>

Thinking may be developed by using the DIME framework as a trigger for possible courses of action to support the broad approach chosen. Do not dwell on whether a way falls under any particular lever. Use the model to trigger thinking. Spark ideas in some generally structured way (rather than filling neat boxes). Think broadly at first to get possible courses of action. Once an idea emerges under one letter of the acronym, see how other instruments of power can be deployed alongside in a related way to achieve the ends sought.
Look for alternative ways of combining means, perhaps using a supported/supporting notion to illustrate pre-eminence.
Consider grading potential ways into what 'must', 'should' and 'could'[195] be done, where options tend to escalate in terms of intensity, effort, costs and risks.
Ultimately, derive different courses of action (i.e. different combinations of ways) that might achieve the ends. If an end is deemed unachievable when considering ways (and means), revisit that end:

<table>
<tr><th>Diplomatic, for example,</th><th>Information, for example,</th><th>Military, for example,</th><th>Economic, for example,</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>Diplomacy and negotiation
International organisations
International law & treaties
Exploit Alliances
Confidence building
Sector reform</td>
<td>Intelligence agencies
Strategic communications
Psychological operations
Information operations</td>
<td>Armed force - constructive for example, sector reform
Armed force - aggressive for example, coerce, deter, contain, defeat[196]
Law enforcement actions
Border protection actions</td>
<td>Foreign aid
Trade and financial policy
Sanctions
Inducements
Sector reform</td>
</tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
</table>

195. Which NATO describes as "limited", "moderate" and "robust". See pp. 3-33 of the *Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive*, V2.0, 4 Oct 13.
196. General Sir Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force* (Allen Lane, 2005), 320-321 describes military roles as "ameliorate", "contain", "deter or coerce" and "destroy".

<table>
<tr><th>Purpose</th><th>Possible activity/remarks</th></tr>
<tr><td>Step 8 continued.</td><td>
Note the relationship between the determination of possible ends and ways and the earlier assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Craft and utilise instruments of power to sustain strengths and exploit opportunities to meet chosen ends and to remove or mitigate weaknesses and threats related to achieving them:
<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Strengths</th><th>Weaknesses</th></tr>
<tr><td>Opportunities</td><td>How to use national strengths to take advantage of these opportunities?</td><td>How to overcome any weaknesses preventing advantage being taken of these opportunities?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Threats</td><td>How to use national strengths to reduce the likelihood and impact of these threats?</td><td>How to overcome the weaknesses that will make these threats a reality?</td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Cycle back to see if any conclusions drawn here influence those drawn already. As necessary, reflect and adjust.</td></tr>
</table>

Purpose	Possible activity/remarks
Step 9: Assess potential courses of action. • Postulate 2nd and 3rd order consequences of the courses of action created. • Test potential courses of action. • Assess overall balance of potential courses of action across ends, ways and means. • Derive actions to mitigate risk. • Derive risks that may need to be accepted.	• Look to identify 2nd and 3rd order consequences of potential courses of action and the ways they contain. This will test imagination. It may be little more than "educated guessing". • Test each potential course of action, including its derived 2nd and 3rd order consequences, for example, using RCDS' five tests: acceptability; feasibility; suitability; sustainability; and adaptability. • No test is 'pass/fail'. Each will sit somewhere along a scale. The acceptable place along each scale is contingent upon the circumstances and the character of the threats faced, the costs and the potential rewards. • Identify associated risks and consider further by assessing those for each course of action against the likelihood of them occurring and their possible impact (high to low on both counts). Address those judged to be high/high in the first instance, through a combination of adjusting the course of action, putting mitigating measures in place and/or making the risks explicit so they can be accepted and owned by accountable decision-makers. • Remove from further deliberation those courses of action that still score very weakly after adjustment and re-testing.  

Purpose	Possible activity/remarks
Step 10: Decide. • Set out potential courses of action and the implications thereof. • Assist decision makers to decide. • Communicate the outcomes to allow further planning once decisions are made.	• The manner in which options are set out depends on the individual styles at play. • Offer genuine options, rather than only one flanked by weak ideas. • Spell out the results of the tests and the opportunities and risks. • Throughout, offer frank, fearless and unvarnished advice that hides nothing. Speak truth to those in power. • Explain where views diverge and may still be diverging. • After decisions are made, provide the direction and guidance required to allow further planning. • Coordinate and integrate the plan.
Step 11: Communicate and implement. • Communicate the strategy, consistent with the strategy itself. • Coordinate implementation.	• Ensure that the strategy's logic and appeal are compelling and that the underpinning 'big idea' is readily apparent and easily understood. • Coordinate the communication of the strategy, identifying the different audiences (both friendly and opposition) and tailoring the message accordingly. • Ensure that those implementing the strategy fully understand it and buy into it.

Purpose	Possible activity/remarks
Step 12: Review. • Ensure the strategy remains fit for purpose (by adapting it as required) • Identify when the policy goal is no longer achievable.	• Acknowledge that the implementation of the strategy is not the end-point and recognise that it will require constant adaptation as circumstances change (often in response to the different strategies being implemented). • Constantly review the assumptions underpinning the strategy, particularly after a 'shock' to the system within which the strategy is seeking to have an effect. • Develop SMART (specific, measurable, accurate, reliable and timely) metrics that indicate whether or not the strategy is working **before** it fails (so **leading indicators**, not **lagging ones**). • Routinely review progress against these metrics at the right level (the strategy owner must be involved). Encourage constructive challenge to counter optimism bias and 'groupthink' (recognise that a formal 'red team' can add real value in doing this). • When it is apparent that the strategy is failing, be prepared to adapt it quickly and effectively; if necessary, discarding the strategy and replacing it with a new one that better suits the changed environment. • Recognise when, despite constant adaptation, circumstances have changed to such an extent that the policy goal(s) are no longer likely to be achievable – ensure that the strategy owner is made aware of this as soon as possible.

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