

STRATEGY



***Everything in strategy is very simple,
but that does not mean that
everything is very easy.¹***

Clausewitz

All too often, leaders fail to learn from history. Hindsight clearly reveals the outcomes of past actions and the impact of decisions made with less than full awareness. Now and in the future, it is increasingly vital that we learn and apply lessons from the past to the present. The future is revealed through an assessment of history, which provides a pathway for overcoming the challenges we face in the present. The development of a sound strategy, informed by heightened awareness of past actions and current circumstances, offers the opportunity to confront emerging threats effectively.

Given the dynamic, Interlinked world environment, the necessity of applying all instruments of U.S. national power collaboratively is critical to succeed in today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment. Concise strategic objectives are essential for developing a strategy that allocates resources and effort effectively, given the interdependent complexities of the cultural, paradoxical, and diverse motivations inherent in this pervasive environment. Cognition, coupled with heightened awareness infused with a reasonable frame of reference (FOR), is essential for developing the understanding needed to fulfill these strategic objectives.

Within the context of the *DIME* (diplomatic, information, military, and economic), information is typically the least leveraged but potentially the most valuable element of national power. The information revolution and the age of knowledge are clearly upon us. Thus, it is incumbent upon us to determine which information is relevant when seeking to fulfill strategic objectives. To assist in this endeavor, technology can be leveraged to provide a timely, accurate means of managing and organizing accumulated data, from which useful information can be derived. As the demand and necessity for intellectual capital grow, so does our reliance on the information environment, which feeds the rapidly unfolding age of knowledge. Strategists must leverage knowledge cultivated through awareness to actualize the asymmetric advantage offered by intellectual enlightenment.

Given that war is an extension of politics by other means, it becomes essential that both political and military leaders possess and hone the competencies needed to develop intellectual awareness. U.S. national interests can be met by acquiring knowledge that will foster our understanding of the likelihood of leveraging resources and capabilities to fulfill those objectives. It is the criticality of this task and the honed ability—military genius—that Clausewitz defines as “a very highly developed mental aptitude for a particular occupation.”²

As the complexities of the world continue to compound, so does the military’s need to evolve. While the world flattens and the information society grows exponentially, it becomes imperative that a heightened awareness of circumstances is both available and utilized. Actions taken today must be committed to with a complete understanding of the resulting causality of second and third-order effects to preclude unintended consequences. Thus, the fog and resulting friction caused by cultural, linguistic, and intelligence differences can lead to insurmountable impediments to progress.

The globally interconnected environment has heightened the intensity of once-simple dilemmas due to the confluence of diverse paradigms, expectations, and perceptions. By developing an appreciation for the conditions, cultures, and world expectations inherent in an open system, military leaders will be suitably prepared to overcome evolving threats and challenges. Joint Publication 3-0 cautions that “history has shown that cultural awareness cannot be sufficiently developed after a crisis emerges and must be a continuous and proactive element of theater intelligence and engagement strategies.”³

Understanding and agreeing on U.S. objectives and developing the knowledge necessary to achieve them speaks to an essential aspect of what Clausewitz referred to as “military genius.”⁴ It is therefore incumbent upon strategic leaders to establish good SA and an expansive FOR from which to make sound decisions. To adequately prepare for the art of the possible, given the effects of the current environment on the open system, it is crucial to leverage the ways and means by which information is accumulated. When properly fused, information elevates awareness and catalyzes understanding. Through the cultivation of this knowledge, an evolved awareness of the interdependencies within this highly complex interconnected environment is developed.

Research concludes that all too often, the magnitude of a given situation is underestimated due to a lack of awareness. By effectively leveraging this knowledge with heightened SA and a sound FOR, decision-makers can mitigate risk to fulfill U.S. national interests. To tackle the complex strategic problems that will affect the U.S. now and, in the future, we must fully understand their second- and third-order effects. To that end, SA is essential in preparing strategic leaders to formulate sound strategic decisions that support U.S. national ends.

Within the context of this paper, an Understanding Model (*UM*) will be presented to enable the reader to conceptualize the process for making informed, high-acuity decisions. The paper will walk the reader through the steps of data assimilation, using Bloom’s Taxonomy to elevate the process of critical thought. It will then outline how information is fused into knowledge through the cognitive process. Finally, the *UM* will then establish how past SA (*perspectives*) enveloped into a FOR (*paradigms*) coupled with current SA (*perceptions*) develops understanding. It is through the maturation and refinement of understanding that informed decisions become the catalyst.

Then the research will explore the impact of the cognitive model on perceptions held at all levels and address the associated liability of being uninformed (*unkown*) and unaware (*unknowable*). By applying cognitive skills to assess the effects of actions on results, the opportunity exists to evaluate measures of performance and effectiveness within the closed system. By considering the injected variable and the implications of the dynamics and the continually evolving open system, the propensity to accurately forecast the potential of future action will become apparent. By applying heightened awareness to a sound FOR the tendency to produce a high degree of reliable predictive analysis, predicated upon an open-minded approach, will reveal the art of the possible within the science of the probable.

The method in which this research was conducted explores the foundation upon which information is assessed and defined. The research will develop a framework for formulating knowledge, providing the reader with the means and measures to mature their cognitive processes. By recognizing the application of relationships and the resulting dependencies, we begin to understand how perceptions and paradigms shape how things are viewed, which directly affects their impact on shaping the environment in ways that safeguard national vital interests.

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The method by which this research was conducted explores the foundation upon which information is assessed and defined. The research will develop a framework for formulating knowledge to provide the reader with the means and measures to mature their cognitive processes. By actively applying relationships and their resulting dependencies, we begin to understand how biases and perceptions shape the formation of paradigms. In turn, the formation of perceptions directly shapes the environment in a way that safeguards national vital interests.

Through an application and understanding of conscious competence models, the reader can assess, ascertain, analyze, and assimilate (A4) a cognitive framework that enlightens, empowers, and evolves (E3) their critical thinking. The implications and effects of SA are defined and explored to correlate with

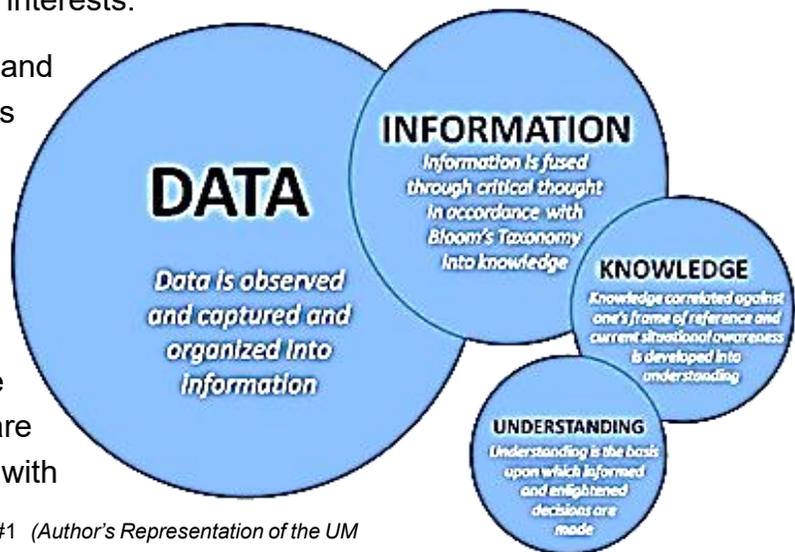


Figure #1 (Author's Representation of the UM)

the *UM* presented in figure #1 above. A real-world example will illustrate the costs and potential benefits of applying SA. Effective development of SA and the application of its associated cost-benefit analysis leverages SA to unleash the inherent power of information to evolve knowledge that surpasses understanding.

- **Data** *is observed, captured, and organized becomes information*
- **Information** *structured in accordance with Bloom's Taxonomy becomes knowledge*
- **Knowledge** *correlated to a FOR contextualized to one's SA establishes understanding*

**Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory.
Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.**

Sun Tzu:



¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard/ Peter Paret eds. & trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 178.

² *Ibid.*, 43.

³ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 3-0, Joint Operations* (September 10, 2001), VII-10.

⁴ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret eds. and trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 43.

⁵ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard & Peter Paret eds. and trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 558.

⁶ United States War College, *Strategic Leadership Primer*, 2004, <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/USAWC/dclm/slp2ndEd.pdf> (Accessed March 12, 2009).