

Doctrine Strategy Link

Introduction

In his book, *On War*, Carl von Clausewitz described war as the means of reaching political objectives and stated the “means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose.” Modern political objectives are achieved through certain strategies. Modern warfare is guided by certain doctrine. Thus, strategies are reached through the appropriate application of doctrine. Likewise, it can be stated that doctrine should never be considered in isolation from strategy.

Lesson Objective

This lesson presents a detailed discussion of doctrine and its relationship to strategy. The lesson’s objective is for you to know the relationship between doctrine and strategy. You will achieve this objective by recognizing how doctrine influences strategy and ultimately the employment of airpower. You will be able to describe the role strategy has in the employment of Air Force forces. Finally, you will be able to identify the interrelationship between strategy and doctrine.

Overview

To help you gain an understanding of the doctrine–strategy link in today’s national security environment, this lesson will first examine the Caffrey Loop. It will then cover the concept of doctrine as it exists in current Air Force documents. Next, the lesson presents the concept of strategy as it exists at the national, joint, and individual Service levels. Finally, the lesson provides examples illustrating the dynamic relationship between doctrine and strategy.

Caffrey Loop

The Caffrey Model, developed at the Air Command and Staff College, illustrates the linkage between history, doctrine, and strategy. To demonstrate this model, let’s examine how Airmen sought to solve the problem of positional warfare during the interwar period. History includes the total accumulation of knowledge by man. In this case, history reflects the experience of trench warfare during World War I. In over four years of warfare, six million soldiers were killed with little or no movement of the front lines. Following the war, early airpower theorists, such as Douhet, Trenchard, and Mitchell, speculated the carnage could have been avoided by using the airplane to directly attack the enemy’s centers of gravity. Building on these ideas, instructors at the Air Corps Tactical School, or ACTS, developed the Industrial Web Theory and that of unescorted High Altitude Precision Daylight Bombardment. As these theories were debated, argued, and refined at the ACTS, they slowly evolved into doctrine. According to this doctrine, modern powers rely on major industrial and economic systems. Disruption or paralysis of these systems would undermine the enemy’s capability and will to fight. The doctrine held that large bomber formations could attack and destroy vital targets with acceptable losses. In July 1941, President Roosevelt tasked the Secretaries of War and Navy to develop an estimate of the material required to defeat the Axis powers. Within the Army, this tasking was passed to the new Air War Plans Division, or AWPDP. There, former ACTS instructors developed a plan and force structure based on the doctrine of High Altitude Precision Daylight Bombardment. The

planners provided the foundation for a strategic campaign plan by linking national objectives to operational task and the weapons required to execute the task. The plan stated 6,860 bombers could destroy 154 key targets and defeat Germany in six months. This plan was executed during World War II, and the lessons learned became part of the history by which post-war airpower theory and doctrine was developed.

Doctrine

Air Force doctrine is a body of central beliefs representing a distillation of best practices concerning the employment of airpower. It guides the employment of Air Force forces in support of national objectives. Air Force doctrine is a body of central beliefs representing a distillation of best practices concerning the employment of airpower. It guides the employment of Air Force forces in support of national objectives. Based upon history, experience, exercises, war games, and critical analysis, military doctrine describes the best ways to employ forces to accomplish military goals.

Three Levels of Doctrine

The Air Force develops doctrine at three levels: basic, operational, and tactical. Basic doctrine includes fundamental principles, while operational doctrine includes concepts of organization, support, and acquisition, with tactical doctrine describing tactics, techniques, and procedures. There are specific documents that guide the employment of Air Force forces at each level. These documents are consistent with and complement joint publications. Likewise, they conform to and support strategic planning documents.

Basic Doctrine

Basic doctrine is expressed in Air Force Doctrine Document 1, or AFDD 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine, Organization, and Command*. This document establishes guidelines for employing Air Force forces across the full spectrum of military operations. It forms the basis from which Airmen plan and execute assigned missions. AFDD 1 further provides the Air Force perspective to joint warfighters. Because of its fundamental and enduring character, basic doctrine provides broad and continuing guidance on the organization and employment of Air Force forces.

Operational Level of Doctrine

AFDD 2, *Operations and Organization*, presents the Air Force's capstone operational level doctrine. It builds on the fundamentals in AFDD 1 and outlines the organization and employment of Air Force forces. AFDD 2 also provides an overview of how the Air Force operates across the range of military operations. It describes how the Air Force organizes itself for theater operations and presents forces for joint operations. The document also describes how the Air Force plans, executes, and assesses operations. AFDD 2 is the capstone of a set of documents, the 2-dash series, that provides detailed operational level guidance in functional and support areas.

Tactical Level of Doctrine

Tactical level doctrine is contained in the Air Force's Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures 3-dash series. These documents contain employment information for specific weapons systems. Tactical doctrine considers tactical objectives and operational conditions and

describes how weapons systems should be employed or operated to accomplish those tactical objectives.

Strategy

Strategy differs fundamentally from doctrine even though each is necessary for employing military forces. Strategy originates in policy and addresses broad objectives and the plans for achieving them. Military strategies are designed to achieve military objectives that lead to the desired political objectives of conflict. Doctrine should play a vital role in formulating strategy because it suggests, based on the experience of history, the best way of achieving military objectives with the resources available.

Strategy Hierarchy

Like doctrine, strategy is developed at differing, but related levels. At the highest level is national security strategy. Strategy at this level is based on national security objectives and employs all instruments of national power, including economic, diplomatic, informational, and military. Developed from the national security strategy, the national defense and military strategies focus on how the military instrument of power will be used to support the national security strategy. Strategy at this level involves coordinating the development, deployment, and employment of military forces to achieve national security objectives. Since we fight as joint forces, individual service strategies are unnecessary; however, each of the Services articulates concepts or visions for supporting the national military strategy, guided by a family of joint concept documents.

National Security Strategy

The purpose of the national security strategy, or NSS, is to define a strategy for maintaining the security of our country and our way of life. The President, through the National Security Council, prepares this document. Our current NSS, titled *National Security Strategy*, provides a blueprint for pursuing the world we seek—a world of greater security and prosperity—by outlining a strategy to rebuild our foundations, promote a just and sustainable international order, and strengthen and integrate national capabilities. To achieve the world we seek, the NSS lays out a strategic approach for advancing American interests, including the security of the American people, a growing U.S. economy, support for our values, and an international order that can address 21st century challenges.

National Defense Strategy

The national defense strategy focuses on how the military instrument of power can be used to achieve national security objectives. The current strategy identifies five strategic objectives: defend the homeland; win the long war against violent extremists; promote security; deter conflict; and win our Nation's wars. These objectives will be achieved by: shaping the choices of key states in ways that deter conflict and promote stability; preventing adversaries from acquiring or using weapons of mass destruction, or WMDs; strengthening and expanding alliances and partnerships; securing US strategic access to important regions of the world to meet our national security needs and retaining freedom of action in the global commons; and integrating and unifying our efforts by seamlessly combining civil and military capabilities in ways that expand our understanding of *jointness*. To meet these objectives, the current defense strategy makes several implementation recommendations, including: further improvements to the Total Force, such as expansion of special operations forces and ground forces and developing modular, adaptable joint forces;

improvements to the joint planning and implementation of strategic communications; improvements to intelligence capabilities and information sharing; investing in the right kinds of technology at the right time; transforming industrial-era organizational structures into an information and knowledge-based enterprise; building alliances and partnerships to provide resources and capabilities we cannot duplicate; and developing options to manage risks to our national security.

National Military Strategy

As the nation's ranking military officer, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff publishes the National Military Strategy, or NMS. The NMS assists in setting the strategic direction of the armed forces by supporting the NSS and implementing the SecDef's national defense strategy. It describes ways and means to achieve the military objectives of protecting the United States, preventing conflict and surprise attack, and prevailing against enemies. These objectives describe how joint operating concepts, attributes, and functions are applied to achieve desired end states. Furthermore, the objectives and operating concepts support the identification of desired joint capabilities to guide the development of the joint force. The NMS provides a vision for the future joint force—one capable of full spectrum dominance.

Service Concepts/Visions

Each Service has its own ideas about how it will support and implement the directions contained in higher level strategic documents. These ideas are expressed in various documents ranging from vision statements, to concepts of operation, to transformation roadmaps, and flight plans. In broad terms, these documents explain the capabilities a Service provides to the Nation, the concepts for using those capabilities to support the national military strategy, and how the Service intends to transform to enhance its contribution to the joint warfighting team. The *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations, or CCJO*, is a similar document that applies to the joint force as a whole. It describes how the joint force intends to operate within the next 15 to 20 years. It provides the framework for concept development and experimentation at the joint, Service, combatant command, and combat support defense agency levels. The *CCJO* also provides the foundation for the development and acquisition of new capabilities through changes in doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel and facilities.

Air Force Transformation Flight Plan

The Air Force lays out its strategy for becoming part of the joint force envisioned in the *CCJO* in various transformation documents. First and foremost in this strategy is enhancing joint warfighting. These documents present a definition of transformation that makes it clear that transformation isn't just about buying the next new technology. It also looks to changes in how the force organizes itself and thinks about doing its missions. The Chief of Staff has directed the development of Concepts of Operation, or CONOPS, that identify effects the Air Force would like to produce for the joint force commander. The CONOPS then list the capabilities needed to produce those effects. A capabilities review and risk assessment process identifies overlaps and shortfalls in capabilities across the CONOPS. The results of this process feeds the planning and programming process to ensure needed capabilities are being procured rather than just platforms and weapon systems.

Doctrine – Strategy Link

To recap, strategy originates in policy and addresses broad objectives and plans for achieving those objectives. Military strategy describes how forces will be employed to accomplish national political goals and military objectives. Doctrine, on the other hand, evolves from military theory and experience and describes best practices in employing military power. Airpower doctrine is a statement of officially sanctioned beliefs and warfighting principles that describe the best methods of employing Air Force forces in military operations. When devising strategies for employing airpower, military leaders should consider the principles and guidelines contained in official doctrine. The proper alignment of strategy with doctrine results in the effective use of airpower.

Operation ROLLING THUNDER

For an example of the important relationship between doctrine and strategy, consider the ROLLING THUNDER bombing campaign of the Vietnam conflict. The overall national objective in Vietnam was to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the war. ROLLING THUNDER was executed as one of the military strategies to reach that objective. It called for a gradually escalating aerial bombardment of North Vietnamese targets to demonstrate US resolve and convince the North of the futility of continuing the war. The actual military objectives were poorly defined, but it was hoped that striking military targets would reduce the North's war-making capabilities. The tactical implementation of the campaign was dependent upon weekly policy decisions delivered from Washington. Doctrine of the time was based almost entirely on deterrence and nuclear warfighting, and provided little guidance for decisions in a limited conventional war. This lack of doctrine handicapped the military leadership in influencing the chosen strategy. Hence, the bombing campaign was executed to reflect changing policy decisions rather than in pursuit of defined military objectives to achieve political end states.

Operation LINEBACKER II

Comparing the ROLLING THUNDER campaign to the later LINEBACKER II Operation reveals a marked contrast in the effectiveness of the two bombing campaigns. During LINEBACKER II, many of the policy constraints were lifted allowing for greater military influence upon the military strategy. Consequently, LINEBACKER II achieved many of its military objectives, which resulted in a realization of policy goals as well. In spite of deficiencies in the doctrine of the time, LINEBACKER II was more firmly rooted in best practices than had been ROLLING THUNDER. The LINEBACKER II and ROLLING THUNDER Operations demonstrate the consequences of not having a sound doctrine in executing military strategy. The Air Force doctrine manual of 1964 had no references to the principles of war, and the ROLLING THUNDER Operation reflected a lack of these guiding principles. The lack of doctrine also seems to have played a significant role in producing an unsound and unachievable strategy. It was not until 1975 that conventional warfare gained any significant attention in Air Force doctrine, and the principles of war were once more included in the doctrine manual.

Operation ELDORADO CANYON

An example of the proper relationship between doctrine and strategy rests in Operation ELDORADO CANYON. During this event, the national security objectives centered on

sending a message to the Libyan leadership, and to the world, that the US would not stand for acts of terrorism against its citizens. To support this objective, the military developed a strategy grounded in doctrinal principles. This strategy called for demonstrating US military capability and resolve to retaliate against terrorist acts. The resulting joint air strategy consisted of precision air attacks on Libyan targets with links to terrorist activities. This strategy was based on tactical-level doctrinal principles. Those principles guided the selection and employment of the weapon systems most suited for fulfilling the military strategy of striking against terrorist acts.

Effective Linkage

The outcome of Operation ELDORADO CANYON demonstrates the effects of properly linking sound doctrine to executable national, military, and joint air strategies. The military strategy had clearly defined objectives that directly supported national security objectives. The air operation was conducted according to basic doctrinal principles and produced the effects sought by national leadership. In this example, the proper link between doctrine and strategy resulted in the effective employment of Air Force forces.

Forces of Change

The relationship between doctrine and strategy is extremely dynamic. Vietnam has shown the peril of developing strategy without due regard for doctrinal issues. On the other hand, the whole purpose of doctrine is to codify a set of best practices for achieving the goals of strategies. Our Cold War doctrine was developed to support a Cold War strategy. Doctrine cannot exist in isolation from strategy. There are many forces of change that affect the evolution of this dynamic relationship between doctrine and strategy. Certainly politics and social pressures can dictate military practices in conflict with established doctrine. Budget considerations may also cause political guidance that deviates from sound doctrinal practices. Technological changes affecting our capabilities or the threats we face can also upset the alignment of strategy and doctrine. When misalignments occur, military leaders are responsible for delineating the consequences to political leaders. It is a near certainty, however, that if a selected strategy is not linked to sound airpower doctrine, then Air Force forces are likely to be much less effective in achieving strategy objectives.

Summary

This lesson looked at war as one means of reaching national policy objectives. Victory in war is not measured in casualties inflicted, battles won or lost, or in territory occupied, but by whether or not the political objectives were achieved. The overarching objective of any military action is the support of national political objectives. When considering the employment of military forces, one must be aware of the dynamic relationship between doctrine and strategy. Effective and ineffective strategies produce lessons learned that should then be incorporated into doctrine as either best practices or practices to avoid. Doctrine then becomes the repository of those lessons learned to guide and shape future strategies. Compounding the dynamics of the doctrine strategy relationship are outside actors and factors that shape and influence both strategy and doctrine in unique ways. The effective employment of Air Force forces must consider the proper relationship of strategy to doctrinal guidance.