



On Strategy: A Primer

Nathan K. Finney

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REVIWER: Ashiqur Rahman, Student (Third year, Fifth semester), Department of International Relations, Faculty of Security and Strategic Studies Bangladesh University of Professionals, Mirpur Cantonment, Dhaka-1216, Bangladesh

At first glance two issues about the book are interesting. Firstly, C. S. Gray, Sir L. D. Freedman, M. B. Hartwell, N. K. Finney and others who have practical knowledge and experience in the field of strategic studies have contributed in this book. Secondly, the goal of this book is to provide the basic and fundamental understandings of strategic theories.

On Strategy: A Primer, is an edited book by Nathan K. Finney. This book is divided into three parts which respectively answers three basic questions like, what is strategy, Who is a strategist, and, how Strategy and strategist work and will be working in future. First part includes eight chapters and provides the ‘basic concepts’ of strategy where it includes the historical background of the Strategy, how it evolved in various sectors of war and policy making. Second part has three chapters and is about the ‘strategist’ which says about how a strategist should think, characteristics, practice in real field and correlate their works with others. Third part with eight chapters reflects the advanced concepts where classical thoughts although given emphasis, deals with how should a strategist think about desired out comes in a challenging security environment to fulfil the complex and ambiguous demands of future warfare.

Part 1: The Basics

Chapter 1: A Brief Introduction to Strategy by Nathan K. Finney and Francis J. H. Park

This chapter provides an introduction to strategy, tactics, national and theatre level of strategy. Besides, the difference between strategy and tactics has been clarified here. This chapter also deals with why strategy sometimes fails and its relation with policy makings.

Chapter 2: A Brief History of Strategy by Scott T. Davis

In this chapter strategy from ancient to enlightenment era has been presented with the aim to help new strategist in daily planning. The strategy of East and West has been presented with relevant book’s tales written on that time and the celebrated books of East and West writers has been mentioned with the book’s main ideas.

Chapter 3: Strategy’s Triumvirate: Thucydides, Sun Tzu, and Clausewitz by Matthew F. Cohen

When this chapter will be read the concepts of big three “Thucydides, Sun Tzu and Clausewitz” in the field of strategic studies will be found along with their contribution in their own region.

The ideas of Thucydides, Sun Tzu and Clausewitz will be compared and contrasted. The fundamental disparity of the strategy between East and west will be found here. “Strong do what they can and weak suffers what is must” – Thucydides (p. 27)

Chapter 4: Strategy at Sea by Jonathan P. Klug

The importance of sea power in strategic, tactical and operational level is important and more recently the technological advances have made it dynamic. The transformation of the utilization of sea power from the trade one to exercising military power is a diverse act and the component like Mahan, Corbett and Mackinder are the most important contributors who analysed sea as a source of power and related it with air and land power. Those issues can be understood by reading this chapter.

Chapter 5: Strategy at sea by David J. Lyle

In this chapter author has described the advent of air power and its steady attachment with the military. As mentioned “Air power has removed the obstacles of sea area” in the chapter is an important statement of it. The contributions of authors like Douhet, Trenchard and Mitchell has also been described step by step with reference to other factors of warfare as well as sea and land forces.

Chapter 6: Contemporary strategic theories and their Influence on doctrine by Ryan W. Kort

This chapter provides an excellent concept of the contemporary strategists’ thoughts and ideas or the doctrine and there present influence on strategy. For relevant examples various actions of USA has been presented. “Survive on our own terms, or improve our capacity for independent action.”(p. 78)

Chapter 7: A Bridge between Policy and Operations by Jeremy J. Gray

In this chapter it is shown how strategy works as a bridge between policy and military action and how strategists should work between the two dynamic situations of policy and action.

Chapter 8: Institutional Strategy by Daniel P. Sukman

This chapter describes what institutional strategy is and how it encompasses all three levels of war - tactical, operational and strategic - by developing material and non-material issues to include human and resources. It is also mentioned that the institutional intelligence is important to make up plans where in the institutional level of policy makers are supported by military personnel and the military in turn by politicians. This is something not just about the wartime but encompasses peace time too.

Part 2: The Strategist**Chapter 9:** Practical Strategists: The perspective and craft of the general staff officer by J. P. Clark and Francis J. H. Park

This chapter deals with the general nature of strategist. More specifically the military strategist and emphasises on the multidimensional skills on various subjects beyond military science including others like literature or social management.

Chapter 10: The Strategists' mixing board: characteristics of a strategist by Jacqueline E. Whitt

In this chapter the general characteristics of a strategist have been described. It has also been mentioned that traditional notions of strategist are either as policy makers or as military officers. Their task, rational analysis and learnings from failure and success, is highlighted in this chapter.

Chapter 11: Strategic thinking models by Aaron A. Bazin and Lianne de Vries

This chapter delves on strategic thinking models, the role of wisdom required for thinking, how to implement actions and predict the future. What are the illusions in the strategic mind setting how in a dynamic environment a strategist must think, whether strategy must include friend or foe or other stakeholders are some of the important debates. The discussions point to the disparity between tactical and strategic planning where tactical one is how to take a task and latter one is what to do after the take-off.

Part 3: Advanced Concepts**Chapter 12:** Geopolitics and Strategy by Chad M. Pillai

This chapter depicts the geographical importance for a strategist in a fantabulous way. Here, the importance of learning and knowing the history, economics and technology with regard to geography has been developed with relevant examples for one's understanding.

Chapter 13: The strategy of "Small Wars" by Brett A. Friedman

This chapter deals with how to conduct irregular warfare in strategic level. The thoughts of Carl Von Clausewitz and Mao Tse Tung have analysed with relevant examples. Counterinsurgency theories and their implications in Chinese civil war have been dealt with in detail here. Why these small wars can take place in strategic setting has also been appropriately analysed.

Chapter 14: Deterrence and strategy by Jenna E. Higgins

This chapter describes the relation between deterrence and strategy. Three 'C's of deterrence - communication, capability and credibility - have been explained. What will be the role of strategist in a given circumstance and when or how the perception of enemy varies has also dealt with in relation to the strategic approach.

Chapter 15: Nuclear Strategy by Jasmin J. Diab

This chapter will let audiences know about the basics of nuclear weapons, their function and methods of delivery. Various doctrine of nuclear strategy ranging from first strike to mutual assured destruction are lucidly explained. The chapter discusses how military strategists and policy makers can make the most efficient nuclear strategy.

Chapter 16: Coalition perspectives on strategy by M. J. Brick

In this chapter the role of coalition in warfare strategy has been discussed. Difference between coalition and alliance, how a coalition's approach attempts to accommodate diverse aims, to

what context they can succeed, if formed, has been discussed. Bringing Australia as a classical example of coalition provides practical lessons in understanding coalition strategy.

Chapter 17: Strategic approaches to building civil-military trust by Marcia Byrom Hartwell

This chapter deals with a different topic than all other chapters in this book. It emphasises on the civilian aspect of strategy which were missing in the traditional state centric view of warfare strategy and Military-Political dimension. What will be the civil military relations when strategy is prepared is perceptively dealt with. What are the challenges military strategists face and how they can be solved by civilian authorities and how a Bottom-up relations makes things easier for strategic planning are critical points discussed in the chapter.

Chapter 18: Transformational technology and strategy by Miah Hammond-Errey

This chapter deals with the revolution in technologies. How this revolution can affect the future strategic thinking is appropriately analysed since the characteristics of warfare are changing and technology remains an important factor on which future strategy will depend.

Chapter 19: Future war and competition: strategy for an age of acceleration by Mick Ryan

Strategy is changing as the security environment is changing. Various components are responsible for the change in security environment. Strategists must integrate all the components into a uniform system to get and find a desirable solution to a problem. As strategic actions are hard to predict so it must be selected more cautiously by reading and observing from various sources and disciplines. These aspects have been critically dealt with in this chapter.

On Strategy: A Primer, came into being as a book because there was a demand from various professionals for a book which will provide an easy understanding of the basic concepts and practical knowledge of strategy. The three parts of the book will help readers to understand strategy step by step, satisfying their inquiry about strategy, strategist and advanced concepts of strategy.

Editors of this book have smartly designed the subjects of strategic studies on the basis of real evidence. The resources used here to write the book have been collected from personal experience and from other relevant sources.

It is a fascinating and reader friendly book although edited for academic purposes but anyone who is interested to understand the nature of strategy (particularly pupils, either interested or new readers, writers, researchers from other disciplines) will gain by reading this book. At the end of each chapter additional reading information and references have been included for further reading/research.

As a beginner in the field of Strategic Studies, I found all the chapters very interesting as it is written in simple and easy words. This book has helped me to understand the subject matter, clarified underlying concepts and broaden my appreciation of core ideas concerning strategy and tactics. More importantly it has helped me to appreciate that strategy is not merely a concept surrounding military affairs. Strategic thinking also involves a keen interest and understanding of various other disciplines of knowledge to facilitate holistic understanding.