

HISTORY OF MILITARY STRATEGIC THOUGHT

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Abstract

The article presents the origin of the strategy and focuses on the historical development of theories of strategy and strategic management. It presents the fundamental theories of strategy; ancient treatises on strategy; thoughts and practices of European military strategists and the American influence on the strategic thought.

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Introduction

Modern organizations operate in an environment comprising expansion of integration processes, formation of financial-industrial groups and globalization of business. Global companies view the world as a single market in which volatility and unpredictability constantly increasing. In this situation, it is extremely important to use this type of management that will ensure to the company way to adapt to rapid changes in the environment. Strategic management is the process of determining where the organization wants to be and how quickly to go there. Strategic management is a critical success factor in the survival of the organization in increasingly difficult market conditions. It is a philosophy and ideology of the business and is a symbiosis between the intuition of leadership, etc. professionalism and

creativity of employees and their active participation in search of the best ways to achieve the organizational goal.

Literature review

The article presents the origin of the strategy and focuses on the historical development of theories of strategy and strategic management. It presents the fundamental theories of strategy; ancient treatises on strategy; thoughts and practices of European military strategists and the American influence on the strategic thought.

Theoretical background

In the 80s of 20th century business strategists realize that there is a huge knowledge base that extends thousands of years back in time and turning to military strategies. Today, main business strategies are significantly close to the military strategies. As examples can be mentioned offensive marketing strategies; defensive marketing strategies; accompanying marketing strategies, strategies of guerrilla warfare, etc.

Genesis of the theories for strategy

The word “strategy” comes from the Greek word “στρατηγία” (“strategia”), which means “headquarter, command, military art”, which derives from “στρατηγός” (“strategists”) translated as a leader or commander of the army and the combination between “στρατός” (“stratus”) – “army, host” and “γός” (“agos”) – “head, chief”, derived in turn from “γω” (“ago”) – “will, lead, leader”. Initially, the strategy was defined as the science and art of placement of troops in war. How we should lead a battle is a matter of tactics, and whether to start it is a matter of strategy. In the field of martial arts Russian school talks about “strategy”, “operational art” and “tactics” while within the Western school for “strategy” and “tactics”, the actions highlighted in the Russian school as “operational” in the Western school are defined as “small strategies”.

“Art of War” is a Chinese military treatise written by Sun Tzu, military strategist in the state of Wu in the late 6th century BC or at the beginning of the 5th century BC. The work examines the strategies that need

to be followed for the implementation of basic management goals. Today this treatise underlies the strategic SWOT analysis, which shows the relationship between the strengths and the weaknesses of the organization and the opportunities and threats arising from the external environment. Leaders, as different as Mao Zedong, Antoine-Henri Jomini, Napoleon and even Nazi commanders, drew inspiration from the treatise. “Art of War” has an impact not only on military thinking, but also on economics, business and management. Sun Tzu believed that the strategy should not be a plan in the form of pre-established list, but rather required prompt and appropriate actions in a response of changing conditions. [Sun-Tzu, 2003] Today the work of Sun Tzu has captured the world of business. It gives advice on how to outwit the enemy, so the battle not to be necessary.

“Arthashastra” is an ancient Indian treatise on government, economic policy and military strategy, which is traditionally associated with the name Kautiliya or Vishnugupta, identical to Canakya. It is believed that the author lived 350-283 BC, taught in Takshashila, and later was the Prime Minister of Empire Mauro. [Mabbett, 1964] “Arthashastra” justifies an autocratic rule of an effective and stable economy and describes a strategy for state management. The scope of the work is far wider than the government and provides a description of the entire legal and bureaucratic framework for management of a state, enriched with topics: mineralogy, mining, extraction of metals, agriculture, animal husbandry, medicine, and wildlife utilization. It focuses on the problems of welfare, redistribution of wealth during times of famine, and collective ethics. The main idea in the treatise is the active participation of the ruler in the management of the state’s economy. The root of wealth is considered to be embedded in economic activity and the lack of such leads to decline of the state. In the absence of economics activities, the current prosperity and future growth will be destroyed.

Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645) was a Japanese swordsman turned into a legend. Musashi came from an old Samurai family. At the age of seven, he remained an orphan and was sheltered by his uncle – priest in a Buddhist monastery. He mastered the basics of the strategy to combat with sword. Watching the movements of the drummer in a Buddhist monastery, Musashi developed technique to fight with two swords, making his defence

impenetrable. Only thirteen, armed with a stick, he defeated in his first fight a well-skilled swordsman. In Japan he is known as “sensei” – the warrior-saint. [S9.com (1997-2015)]

Miyamoto Musashi wrote *The Book of Five Rings* in 1643. It has been considered as a classic treatise on military strategy. Five “books” in the book are related to the idea that there are different elements of the battle, just as there are different physical elements in life.

The first book is “Earth”, which refers explicitly to the strategy for fighting. The second is the book of “Water”. The author speaks of the spiritual attitude in the way of strategy and warfare, including ways of holding the sword, approaches to fighting, martial hit, ways of protection, principles of the fight and others. [Musashi, 2005] In the book of “Fire” the hostilities are likened to the fire, and decisions instantly. Typical elements of the strategy that are mentioned are: to imagine that you are your enemy; to upset the enemy; to scare the opponent; to get the enemy to fall into indecision; to divert the enemy; to crush and eradicate deep. The author advises: “in every respect take the initiative.” The fourth is the book of the “Wind.” An important part of understanding your own course of action is to understand opponent’s mode of action. The fifth is the book “Emptiness”. It is connected with what cannot be understood. According to the author, the strategy becomes free and undistorted and is the result of natural and spontaneous reaction.

Strategikon is a handbook dedicated to strategic actions in war, written at the end of the 6th century by the Byzantine Emperor Maurice. Effectiveness of the Byzantine military system was laid through the reforms of Emperor Maurice (582-602) reflected in *Strategikon*. The text consists of 12 chapters on various aspects of the strategy and tactics used by the Byzantine army in the sixth and seventh century, focusing mainly on cavalry, infantry, various military formations types of tactics, training, surprise attacks, ways of siege, drilling and others. The seventh and the eighth chapters contain practical advice in the form of instructions and maxims on the strategy. Chapter 11 characterizes the main Byzantine enemies, including Franks, Lombards, Avars and Slavs. Its purpose is to introduce the various methods of warfare of the enemy. The book also contains a list of military offenses and appropriate penalties for them.

The book is very similar to Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* in some pieces of advice, which are given: [Maurice, 1984] "A ship cannot cross the sea without a pilot or an army cannot defeat the enemy without tactics and strategy." "To conquer the enemy army is better than to destroy it", and in addition "It is necessary to know the opponent in order to avoid his strengths and strike at his weaknesses."

Strategikon promotes the use of spies and deserters from enemy's army and misleading the enemy with disinformation. "The enemy must be deceived by false reports and plans submitted to him by deserters" [Maurice, 1984] wrote Emperor Maurice and offers a wide range of tricks of which the commander to choose the most appropriate for the situation.

Strategikon (Cecaumeni Strategicon) of the Byzantine commander Cecaumenus (Kekaumenos), written at the end of 11th century, is a handbook offering advice on keeping of war and internal state affairs. The book is composed between 1075 and 1078 and is divided into six parts. Part I refers to obligations and services due to ruler. Part II contains general strategic advices. Part III contains pieces of advice for inland questions, like growing children, house and family management and social relations. Part IV contains tips for proper implementation of actions in cases of rebellion against the Emperor. Part V contains pieces of advice to the Emperor about management and defence of the state. Part VI contains pieces of advice to autonomous local rulers about their relations with the Emperor.

Leo VI the Wise (866-912) was a Byzantine emperor who strengthened absolutism, limited the role of the Senate and removed urban governance. Work *Tactics* (Táctica) is a military treatise written by/or on behalf of the Byzantine Emperor Leo VI about 895-908 years. The treatise is one of the largest works on Byzantine military tactics. It consists of 20 chapters, an epilogue and 12 additional chapters. It affects a wide range of issues, such as nature and content of the tactics, the general qualities, ways of decision-making, health of the officers, equipment of cavalry and infantry, military sanctions, camping, military training, preparation before the battle, sieges, actions after completion of the battle and after the war, surprise attacks, study of enemy military units.

Leo VI updated and expanded Emperor Maurice's *Strategikon* and emphasized the use of prayer before battle. He believed that having the "divine help" his fighters would fight in "high spirits" and postulated: "all who are struggling through Christ, our Lord and on behalf of their families and friends and country, and for the entire Christianity easily will overcome the grief, thirst, lack of food, cold, heat, pains ..." [Leo VI, 2010] and those who died in battle were considered as blessed.

European military strategists

The most famous works of Niccolo Machiavelli are *The Prince*, *Discourses on Livy*, and *The Art of War*. Machiavelli dedicated his treatise *The Prince* to the ruler of Florence, Lorenzo de Medici. This work remains in history as the first detailed analysis of the art of power. Regarding the qualities required of the Prince, Machiavelli wrote that he should be merciful, lenient, humane, honest and religious, but most important of all is to look like he possesses all these qualities.

The Art of War by Machiavelli is a treatise written between 1519 and 1520 and published in 1521. It describes how it should be trained and organized an army. Machiavelli was one of the first writers who talked about size, composition, used weapons, moral and logistical capabilities of the army. The work is focused on the following elements: [Machiavelli, 1560]

- Selection of the soldiers;
- Preparation of the army;
- Ways to maintain order;
- Leading battles;
- Clothing during the war;
- Troops strength;
- Qualities and actions of the Commander;
- Leadership of the army;
- Halting siege fort;
- Provisions;
- Possible penalties;
- Secrecy in writing and transmission of letters and others.

On military strategy, Machiavelli said that if diplomacy failed, war was a natural extension of the policy. *The Art of War* also stresses the need for state militia and promotes the concept of an armed citizenry. Machiavelli believed that the whole society, religion, science, and art were based on security.

Frederick the Great (1712-1786), King of Prussia, is considered a brilliant military leader. He skilfully held off armies of Russia, France and Austria during the Seven Years' War from 1756 to 1763. After his accession to the throne, he indicated qualities of decisive leader. His tactical and strategic views arouse the admiration of Napoleon Bonaparte and have a significant influence in military science. Friedrich relied on an alliance with Russia, which army almost beat him in the Seven Years' War but his rivalry with Austria in Germany continued. In the area of domestic policy, his primary objectives were the creation of order and discipline in the army, carrying out a number of important legislative reforms, the establishment of new industrial enterprises, and support for education and improving the infrastructure of Prussia.

He wrote his work *Anti-Machiavelli*, which was a refutation of the theories of that author. He says: "Every art has its rules and maxims. One must study them: the theory makes practice easy. The life of one person is not long enough to let him to acquire a perfect knowledge and experience." [Air war gateway College (2013)] and "For having break it is necessary the enemy to be busy." [Air war gateway College (2013)].

Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) was the first French Emperor. In the course of little more than a decade he established control by conquest or concluded unions on almost all-continental western and central Europe to his defeat in the Battle of Nations in 1813. At the Battle of the Nations near Leipzig, Napoleon fought against Russians, Swedes, Austrians, Saxons, and Prussians. Napoleon was defeated and after the entry of the allies in Paris demised. He got in possession of the island of Elba in the Mediterranean and was headed into exile by decision of the allied monarchs. In the spring of 1815 he left the island and returned to France. It was a period of "100 days" of his rule. On June 18, he lost the battle of Waterloo. Napoleon was exiled to the island of Saint Helena, where he died in 1821. His works

Memoirs of Saint Helena Island and *Memoirs* have been published after his death. [Academic (2000-2014)]

Napoleon significantly altered the state structure of the country. He strengthened his personal power, held administrative reform, established a National French bank to store gold stocks and paper money, and centralized system for collecting taxes. His economic policy was aimed at ensuring the leading role of the French industry and finance in the European markets. During his campaigns, Bonaparte won more than 60 battles and carried out reforms in the army, which turned the French troops into the most efficient force on the continent.

In terms of strategy, he considered: “The personalization of general is absolutely necessary, he is the commander, and he is the whole army. Gauls were not conquered by the Roman legions but by Caesar. Rome trembled not before the Carthaginian troops but before Hannibal. The Macedonians did not penetrate into India but Alexander. Prussia was not protected for seven years against the three most formidable European powers by the Prussian soldiers but by Frederick the Great.” and “Nothing is more important in times of war than the unity of the command”. [Air war gateway College (2013)]

On War was written by the Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831) after Napoleonic wars between 1816 and 1830 and published posthumously by his wife in 1832. It is one of the most important military treatises and has a significant impact on strategic thinking. The book contains a range of historical examples in which Frederick the Great and Napoleon are central figures. Clausewitz played a direct role in the reform of the Prussian army, which led to the victory over Napoleon.

According to Clausewitz, war should never be seen as an end in itself but as an instrument of politics: “War is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of politics by other means” [Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, 1874]. He associated “strategy” with art and “tactics” with science. Clausewitz argued that the main task of an army is to enter into battle and destroy the main forces of the enemy in a decisive battle. Thus, the overall strategy must be focused on the destruction of the enemy army.

Over the years, various thinkers and leaders in the military sphere and economy as Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir Lenin, Mao Zedong and Dwight Eisenhower used his ideas.

Antoine-Henri Jomini (1779-1869) was a Swiss officer, infantry general who served in the armies of France and Russia. One of the famous military theorists and historians of the 19th century, he is the founder of modern strategy. He is an author of *The Art of War*, published in 1855.

The work consists of six parts:

1. State military policy.
2. Strategy or the art of properly directing the masses in the development of military action of defend and attack.
3. Basic tactics.
4. Logistics or the art to move armies.
5. Engineering – attack and defence of fortifications.
6. Small tactics.

A memorable thought of the author is: “Of all the theories about the art of the war is only reasonable that, based on the study of military history, which recognizes a number of principles for the regulation, but leaving the natural genius majority in the general behaviour of war without overburdening him with exclusive rules.” [Air war gateway College (2013)]

Basil Henry Liddell Hart (1895-1970) was a captain in the British Army. He was a military theorist and historian, author of several books such as *The Future of War* (1925) and *Strategy* (1954). His theories of armed attack laid the foundation of the German Blitzkrieg. [Liddell Hart, 1939]

The main idea of Liddell Hart is to bring the set of principles of warfare in an indirect approach to the enemy. According to him, using the longest way is usually the most correct from a strategic perspective. The direct approach to the object exhausts the attacker and increases the resistance on the other side, while the indirect approach misleads the enemy violating its balance. Hart explained that one should not use a solid strategy and direct attacks or long term defensive positions. Instead, he recommended a flexible defence and room to manoeuvre. [Danchev, 1998] His well-known thoughts are “Only short-sighted soldiers underestimate the importance of psychological factors in time of war”, “Originality is the most important from

all military virtues”, and “The principles of war could shortly be condensed in a single word: concentration”.

The American influence on strategic thought

Dennis Hart Mahan (1802-1871), a professor at the “West Point” trained military leaders for many years. His textbook written in 1847 *Elementary Treatise on Advance-Guard, Out-Post, and Detachment Service of Troops* [National Museum of American History (2013)] is the first comprehensive scientific work on tactics and strategy that appeared in America. The advantages of the speed of movement, the invasion of enemy territory and applying final blow are the principles that shape his strategic vision.

Dennis Mahan advised: “Attack the enemy suddenly when he is not ready to resist” [Air war gateway College (2013)] and “to cause the most damage to your enemy with at least exposing himself is a military axiom that cannot be followed only by strangers of the true goal – victory”. [Air war gateway College (2013)]

Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914), a son of Dennis Hart Mahan, a naval historian and theorist is the author of *The Influence of Sea Power upon History: 1660-1783*, written in 1890.

The Influence of Sea Power... is the story of economic and military rivalry between nations and reveals the strong influence of maritime trade on the formation of wealth and politics of countries, their economic and military growth and prosperity. His ideas are caused by the conflict between Holland, England, France and Spain in the 17th century and naval wars between France and Britain in the 19th century, where the British naval superiority is the basis of victory over France.

The introduction presents the importance of naval strategic combinations and scope of naval strategy. The first chapter focuses on the elements of sea power; advantages of moving and transport of goods by water; the use of naval forces to protect trade; use and development of the colonies and the conditions affecting the establishment of sea power, includes geographical location, scope of territory, population size, characteristics of nations, a policy of individual governments. From Chapter 2 to Chapter 13 are presented sea wars between the 17th and 19th centuries. Chapter 14

presents elements essential to active naval war, the importance of bases abroad, the importance of the supply of resources, the increased importance of the communications, difficulties in sending and receiving information in the sea, and others. [Mahan, 1890]

The mission of the fleet, according to Mahan, is to provide naval power, while preserving trade between Members and neutralizing the enemy fleet. Mahan argued that a transnational consortium that acted to protect multinational system of free trade might exercise naval superiority. [Mahan, 1890] As a result of his ideas, the United States began a major program of shipbuilding, which displayed them in third place among the world sea forces in the 90s of the 20th century.

Mahan stressed the importance of the individual in shaping world history, extolling traditional values such as “loyalty” and “courage” and declared that “strategy is one that always keeps the aim of the war, and the purpose of the war is never military, but is always political”. [Air war gateway College (2013)]

The concept of Colonel John Warden III – Warden’s Five Rings is a strategy for establishment of political, military and economic superiority. According to him: “If we think strategically, we must think of the enemy as a system composed from multiple subsystems. We cannot think strategically if we focus on a particular element of the enemy. Instead, it is necessary to focus on the totality of our enemy” and “...As strategists we must free ourselves from the idea that the main feature of the war is the clash of military forces. In strategic war, a clash may be carried out, but this is not always necessary” [Air war gateway College (2013)]

Each system consists of five circles, comprising:

- (1) Leadership;
- (2) Basic system;
- (3) Infrastructure;
- (4) Population;
- (5) Armed forces.

Each level of the system, circle or “ring” is considered one of the centres of the enemy. Warden idea is to attack each of the rings, but the order to paralyze the enemy’s forces. To optimize the attacker’ attack must

attack as many rings as special focus is on the centre ring, which is the enemy leadership. This would lead to paralysis the enemy as a whole. [Warden III, 1995]

Conclusion

In a global context, the strategy is the art and science of developing and using political, economic, and socio-psychological and information resources to create effects that protect national and international interests in cooperation between all stakeholders – government, business, and society. At national level, it is a set of specific instruments of power to achieve the political goals of the state. Nowadays, the environment is characterized by instability, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. It is always in a state of dynamic instability and the role of strategy is to exert influence on volatility, to manage uncertainty, simplify complexity and to resolve the ambiguity, so that the system to be able to survive and develop itself in the ease of chaos. Therefore, the strategy suggests, predicts, examines and assesses the strategic environment in varying degrees, to manipulate it according to certain goals.

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