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The Benefits of a Definition of the Term Strategy

A Perspective

Abstract

The present article attempts to discuss the question which goal-defining contents are key to a concept of strategy that meets today's challenges. The functional principles to be tested here on their relevance to a modern understanding of strategy come from the teachings of military leadership – the attempt was made to transfer their underlying, abstracted logic to the field of strategic guidance and goal definition.

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1. On the Dichotomy of Thought and Action

Athena was worshipped as the goddess of wisdom, war, the tactics of war and of strategy, as well as the patroness of the arts and sciences. Legend has it that she sprang, fully grown and accoutred, from Zeus's forehead after Hephaistos had cloven it at his behest. Hence, the goddess of strategy can also be seen as the embodiment of wisdom and of thought per se. If one regards thought and action as antipodes, the term strategy could be given a faint spin – because Athena jumped from Zeus's head, and not his arm.

Marc Bloch[1] credited the French officer corps of 1940 with great professional, operational-level and tactical expertise. However, he criticised their approach – mired in their upbringing and training - which betrayed the values of the Enlightenment. According to Bloch, 1940 France was primarily a defeat of the spirit and of thought. Should a forward-looking strategy not have had the enlightened concept of an officer as its goal, achieved by renouncing absolutist-hierarchical structures? Would not a new definition of military command have helped to prevent a defeat which not even gallant operational-level and tactical action could avert?

2. The Aim of The Article

What is beyond dispute - and is remarked upon by Martin Wagener - is that politics as well as the political sciences employ the term strategy in an inflationary manner; that the creation of the academic discipline strategic studies has been neglected; and that the published treatises discussing the most important military strategists as well as recent military strategies, are "clearly under-theorised".[2]

The present article deliberately makes no further attempt at an analysis of historical strategic thought. Not much is to be expected from an attempt at assessing which concrete variation of a historical idea of strategy would best meet today's challenges or which modern-day criticism is to be levelled at strategic conceptions only comprehensible in a historical context.

The present article attempts to discuss the question which goal-defining contents are key to a concept of strategy that meets today's challenges. The functional principles to be tested here on their relevance to a modern understanding of strategy come from the teachings of military leadership[3] – the attempt was made to transfer their underlying, abstracted logic to the field of strategic guidance and goal definition.

This treatise does not presume to attempt a further definition of strategy or to criticise previous, comparable attempts, but it deals with the question of where the specific benefit of a definition of

strategy would have to lie – the guiding interest, therefore, does not lie in how strategy should be defined, but to what end.

Functional principles of strategic thought should be investigated as to whether they are key to the requirements profiles which govern a state's understanding of strategy. Defined essential requirements as regards a modern understanding of strategy, and functional principles which meet such requirements, are to be illustrated in their systemic correlation – not, however, in the totality and precision expected of a definition.

The fact that pluralistic-democratic western states or their alliances/communities are regarded as the 'users' of such a requirements profile does not mean that such strategies could not also benefit completely different actors from politics, industry, NGOs, and multinational corporations, or also ideologically motivated mass movements. This means that a double expansion is required vis-à-vis the previous understanding of strategy. On the one hand, alliances/communities of pluralistic-democratic states must be capable of defining a strategy which is superordinated to the member states' defined goals, so as to achieve an external effect equivalent to the sum total of the individual potentials; on the other hand, additional actors from politics or industry must be allowed 'strategic subjectivity' as soon as they are capable of influencing or even challenging the strategies of democratic states or their alliances/communities.

The starting point is formed by three significant linguistic fields in which the term strategy is applied – politics, the economy and the vernacular. Herein, the political field of application must incorporate the defined goals for state actions and also include the option of falling back on military forces.

Subsequently, examples of important functional principles of strategic thought which are encompassed by the political and economic notions of strategy will be derived and then differentiated from those specific to certain fields of application. Once identified, such general principles can be used as the basis for the interdisciplinary generation of command personnel in politics, the military and the economy.

However, elements specific to certain fields must not be sacrificed on the altar of a general definition of strategy - every field of application must have the possibility of employing the term strategy in a manner tailored to its requirements. When the term is used outside this field, however, a definition of its meaning and potential transposition instructions need to be included. The national strategy, for example, which armed forces have to follow and of which they are a part, will be different in content, time frames and applied methods from the corporate strategy which they will pursue with regard to the approach of a privately run company.

If it is the fundamental functional principle of strategy holistically to compose the supreme national goal definition and guidance (something that will be shown later), i.e. to generate it by means of a synergetic integration of all spheres of military and economic policy, then a clear definition of the interfaces between the terminological worlds is not only a semantic challenge, but a critical success factor for strategic thought per se.

3. The Meaning of the Terms Used – A Working Definition

Of all the fields described above where the term strategy is applied, this text will limit itself to the political and the economic areas. In its goal definition, the former will also include the possibility of falling back on military forces. This aspect, which comprehensively accompanies political strategic thought, must, however, be sharply differentiated from military strategy, which, as one sub-strategy of many, can only be a constituent part of a political strategy.

It would seem obvious to refer to the result of strategic thought as strategic leadership or strategic planning. A comprehensive understanding of leadership would probably include visionary goal definition, planning, command in a narrower sense, and control. If the aspect of goal definition as a substantial factor of strategic thought is to be stressed, however, subsuming it under the term leadership would be counterproductive (it would only partially apply to the term leadership in a wider sense, and in its narrower sense, i.e. command, it would be contradictory). The same would apply if strategic thought were subordinated to planning.

If goal definition, planning and command in the narrower sense are understood as process steps required to achieve political goals, and if what Moltke the Elder stated applies to the demarcation between planning and command, namely (in a rough translation) planning until first contact with the enemy – from then on command, then a fundamental defining factor of strategic thought is to be found in the demarcation between goal definition and planning.

If command in the narrower sense means implementing plans and impacting enemy units in accordance with defined objectives during phases of operations for which there is no more anticipatory planning with the necessary degree of detail, then planning could be regarded as an assessment - starting from a predetermined objective - of possibilities and conditions given at the time of assessment, or of developments in the near future, identified by means of linear projection.

Strategy should, ideally, be targeted towards a time frame ending beyond known developments, or beyond such as can be predicted with relative certainty – simply put "strategy lies beyond visible or predictable developments; operational-level planning lies on this side of the horizon".[4]

Just as additional plans must also be available for phases following initial enemy contact, so strategy will have to keep a reactive approach ready in order to address foreseeable developments – not primarily focusing on the further ahead, however, would unduly diminish the value of strategic thought. On a level playing field, a reactive strategy will have to anticipate the effect of competing strategies and of strategies targeted against it by other international actors or make provisions to counter the effects in a contingency, at the latest. In this context it seems especially important not to put the formation and pursuit of strategy beyond the capabilities of actors that do not fit the model laid down by democratic states, such as, for example, ideologically motivated mass movements not attributable to a subject of international law.

As the terms command, planning and controlling do not meet the potential of strategic thought as outlined here or may even evoke inappropriate associations, a suitable working concept had to be found. For the present analysis, the rather cumbersome and not really catchy term of strategic goal and course setting was, found in order to underline that the result of strategic thought must be understood in terms of goal determination/definition/setting, as initiating planning, and that there must be a categorical differentiation between planning, command in the narrow sense, and control.

For goal determination, the term vision is defined as a creative projection only accessible to human categories of thought by means of broadening the time horizon of inquiry as far as possible. The differentiation between mission and vision, common to management theory, is not considered, as this only makes sense within the context of a company's mission statement.

4. Strategic goal and course setting – a working hypothesis

Strategic goal and course setting is to be understood as a polity's highest, most long-term goal determination functionality, holistically influencing all accessible plans and lines of action; it must have as its imperative the polity's security and continued existence (without a society's powers of self-assertion and its will to survive, any need for strategic goal and course setting would be absurd), but can also have other 'altruistic' goals going beyond only safeguarding immediate survival and pursuing economic prosperity.

Strategic goal and course setting is understood to be the first process step in goal achievement. The working concept subsumes the creative and proactive creation of visions, which, following a basic feasibility study, form the basis of a strategic goal hypothesis. This, in turn, initiates the subsequent planning process, in the course of which the strategic goals, determined according to their resource requirements, can be derived and defined. Planning, command in a narrower sense, and control follow after the process step of strategic goal and course setting.

The decision on the provision of resources required to achieve the strategic goal is inextricably linked to the task of strategic goal determination and definition.

5. Selected functional principles of strategic goal and course setting

5.1. Time frames of strategic thinking

If the thesis is correct that individuals and simply organised groups chiefly plan for their own life spans and, maybe, for those of their immediate descendants, there could be an indication of a specific functional principle of strategic goal and course setting in the fact that more complex polities must think beyond this time frame in order to ensure their survival. If this time frame extends to generations ahead, the success or failure of the long-term goal will, in all likelihood, not be an issue during the lives or terms of office of those who defined the strategic goals. Strategic goal and course setting will therefore not be able to offer a visible reward in the shape of tangible successes for all the efforts and cutbacks usually necessary in order to achieve a strategic goal. It continues to depend on the voters and inevitably gets caught up in the conflicting priorities of democracy and the strategic goals that have to be pursued to ensure long-term survival.

Governments which refer to implementation plans, medium-term changes of direction, and even catalogues of measures as strategy, contribute to this term's becoming progressively more arbitrary. Thus they not only contribute to conceptual fuzziness, but they also, through too short a short a timeframe for the goal determination instruments, reduce their strategy's visionary quality, and quite possibly threaten their state's secure future.

Strategic goal and course setting must start from a specific, known and accomplished level of societal development. Concerning strategic goal determination, however, it must also, while accepting imponderables, anticipate future social developments and apply them to the assessment. Such developments could be a change of values, the question of whether future generations will continue to pursue the defined goals in their original form, and even whether they will retain today's understanding of democracy.

It seems paradoxical in this context that governments often develop linear projections of developments such as the sense of values, the citizens' democratic ambition or defence readiness, although these are difficult to forecast, yet regard developments that could be influenced, such as demography, as fate and are apathetic towards them.

If the term command superiority, as taken from the teachings of military leadership, is applied to strategic goal and course setting, the deduction can be made that those international actors will have

the higher long-term chances of survival that manage to project their strategic goals farther into the future.

The reality of military command shows that, if a certain quality of assessment is to be preserved, an individual or a planning team can only achieve and cover a certain planning horizon. This has led to military assessment tasks being split into military-strategic, operational-level and tactical tasks, as well as to command posts being divided into cells dealing with current operations and those responsible for planning. By systematically relieving staffs and command post cells of tasks and planning/command horizons which do not fall within their purview, staffs and command post cells are enabled to employ specially qualified and trained personnel in their respective areas of responsibility, in order to produce the highest possible assessment quality and to cover the planning horizon aimed for with those cells oriented farthest into the future. It is the functional principle of this approach to achieve a supersummativity concerning the potential of the cells employed and thereby a significant increase in the quality of the work by focussing on specific tasks and time frames and by consciously omitting others.

Strategic goal and course setting might, analogously thereto, achieve superiority if it concentrates specifically qualified and trained expertise in a cell dedicated to creative goal determination and consciously relieves it of planning, implementation, and command tasks in a narrower sense. This, however, requires that a higher level coordinate strategic goal determination and operative planning/implementation as well as the visionary and the pragmatic approach. This instance would especially have to assess what degree of actual deviation from the planned goal necessitates either an adaptation of the strategic goal or a completely new strategic goal. Defining constant change as a quality per se or overtaxing the potential of the command in a wider sense by initiating a strategic realignment before the previous one has been implemented will create more instability rather than more viability.

It would also have to be demonstrated that retaining the current strategic goal would produce more harm than would a strategic realignment and the discontinuities this, by necessity, will result in. Strategic controlling would be especially called upon to assess how much strategic change a political actor could economically afford in a certain unit of time. Heisenberg's warning that every improvement is a change but not every change an improvement could provide valuable help in this assessment. A concrete benefit derived from an apposite definition of strategic goal and course setting could therefore lie, on the one hand, in adapting the training and selection of the personnel used in the creative goal determination cells as well as those of the coordinating instance between goal determination, planning and implementation to the required task profile at hand, and, on the other

hand, increasing the quality of the work by means of a strict limitation to task categories which conform to definitions.

The task categories for the goal determination and coordination cells should therefore meet the following fundamental demands.

Strategic goal determination cells should be geared towards generating every conceivable potentiality through the application of operational creativity while avoiding any critical-rational assessment of the visions identified. These potentialities should not be assessed according to their feasibility, but according to the question of whether or not they cover the entire spectrum of the conceivable and whether or not they are, for the most part, proactively formulated. Reactive goals, i.e. those which must be considered a reaction to foreseeable developments of enemies or competitors are necessary as a complement, yet not enough to serve as the exclusive basis for strategic orientation. Just as the economic business and industry have realised that from their beginning, Red Ocean Strategies[5] carry the nucleus of a later, confrontational decision on the question of market leadership in them, political strategy should pay more attention to Blue Ocean Strategies, i.e. operational-creative, proactive strategic goals, especially as regards the demand for developments that are as conflict-free as possible.

Leadership personnel with the pertinent operational-level professional expertise often tends to adapt established and proven strategic concepts to future challenges or to transpose such concepts into the future. Similar to the so-called Sailing Ship Syndrome which shows that such ships underwent a final massive upsurge in innovation towards the fast clipper at a time when the steamship's technological superiority was becoming obvious, upgraded strategic concepts can lead to new strategic possibilities being disregarded, as the adapted old ones still, deceptively, guarantee medium-term success. Such a danger could be met by including philosophically trained leadership personnel in strategic goal determination or experts from outside the subject area.

In his Deferred Judgment Model, Professor Rohrbach[6]) defines an operational-creative and a critical-rational operating mode in the human brain.

Transferred to military goal setting, this means that the visionary goal determination cell could use personnel with ample competence in the operational-creative field, and personnel with above-average critical-rational competence in the analysis of the discovered potentialities and goals. The instance tasked with coordinating the two cells would require balanced capabilities as regards the two modes of operation.

What is especially observable in private enterprise is that too much emphasis is placed on the management field dealing with implementation and on the predominantly critical-rational talents in management functions. The need to show three-year profits makes it difficult to argue for investments in long-term planning and visionary goal determination, as these do not return an immediate profit – a company's long-term domination of the market will, however, not be achievable this way.

If the creation of a vision is understood as the starting point for the setting of a strategic future goal, and the interim goals (derived in the course of backward scheduling), together with their implementation, as the path towards the goals which result from the given status quo, then the coordinating instance would initially have to ensure that both the creative-visionary and the pragmatic approaches concur and produce iterative feedback. The coordinating instance would especially have to guide the process which, following an initial feasibility study, derives a strategic goal hypothesis from the vision and, after a first assessment together with the identification of the resources required, determines the strategic goal, identifies interim goals or defines phases (in the course of backward scheduling), and, finally, presses ahead with goal achievement through forward planning as well as operative command and control.

5.2. Altruistic strategic goals - sustainability

Concerning their timeframes, three different horizons of strategic thought can be derived.

The first focuses on the guaranteed survival of the generation currently active in the polity – maybe also the following generation.

The next horizon also includes the weal and security of coming generations and long-term enterprise development in its strategic goal definition, even - and this is characteristic of this horizon – if successes will not become effective in the term of office of the currently active goal and course setting personnel.

The third horizon of strategic thought extends beyond the weal and survival of one's own polity as well as that of the following generations. The reconciliation of different cultures, the preservation of a common global heritage, fair global wealth distribution, a common responsibility for environmental and resource policy, as well as a common contribution to social development can count as examples of altruistic goals of strategic thought in this third horizon. In a commercial enterprise, such goals could manifest themselves by becoming a family-responsible employer. The sustainability of leadership, posited by civilian management theory and current theories of leadership, is directed at exactly these goals. It is essential, however, to do away with disingenuous approaches to leadership. Promoting employee job satisfaction only because happy employees increase the company's commercial success more than it actually cost to achieve, will lead to mistrust and the exact opposite of what sustainable

leadership should aim at. Honest sustainable leadership will have a positive impact on commercial success as a matter of course; the latter, however, should only be the "collateral benefit" of this approach.

Economic robustness and a minimum of affluence make developing countries, if anything, less susceptible to crises. If the viability of the donor countries is sufficiently assured and their need for security guaranteed in the long term, such an approach could mean that actual altruistic, humanitarian goals could be pursued in these regions.

If the thesis is correct that those players best ensure their survival who can move their horizons of strategic thought farthest into the future, then strategic goal and course setting will be well advised to cover not only the first and second, but also the third frame. The moral-ethical dimension of strategic thought will become more important as a matter of principle.

5.3. Theory and Empirism

In his book Carl von Clausewitz and the Making of Modern Strategy, Uwe Hartmann concludes that the main achievement which raises Clausewitz's work On War above other military-scientific analyses lies in the fact that philosophical and empirical approaches were combined to produce a synergetic result.[7] In this, it is especially the deductive, theoretical elements that must also be subsumed under the philosophical approach applied by Clausewitz. The operational-level decision making process, especially in German-speaking countries, reflects this principle. Initially, friendly and enemy possibilities are established in a deductive and operationally-creative manner, from which the commander first chooses one as a working hypothesis and gives it to the staff for empirical-rational assessment. The non-falsifiable hypothesis is kept ready for the commander's later decision, which is made as soon as all possibilities cleared by the staff have been assessed. If it were possible to transfer the synergetic use of theoretical and empirical approaches - which made Clausewitz's analyses timeless and which lives on in the operational-level decision making process - to strategic goal and course setting, the result would be a new understanding and a higher quality of strategic goal definition.

If vision determination and hypothesis derivation for a strategic goal developed based on this vision, i.e. the creative-visionary task quality, were applied to the deductive-theoretical operating mode, and if operational-level backward planning, resource requirement determination, operational-level command and control, i.e. the pragmatic task quality, were assigned to the empirical operating mode, then a fundamental transfer of the principle to the strategic goal and course setting would be possible.

As shown above, the decision to provide the resources required by strategic goal attainment is an integral and constitutive part of strategic goal and course setting. If the creativity required by vision

creation is to be constrained as little as possible by critical-rational arguments, then only a rough feasibility study of the most crucial resources should be made concerning the creation of a strategic working hypothesis. Determining the concrete resource requirements would then be left to the planning phase dealing with the strategic goal hypothesis. The results of this planning phase would have to be fed back into the beginning of the process, which would then have to lead to a change or rejection of the hypotheses worked on. If it is decided to declare one of the assessed hypotheses the strategic goal, the level responsible for strategic goal and course setting would have to approve the established resource requirements, integrate the provision of unavailable resources into the goal or change the goal in response to the resources available.

5.4. Problem Solving versus Goal Determination

There are frequent calls for strategy to find answers to current or looming problems or to anticipate developments which could lead to problems in the future, so that the latter do not become acute in the first place. Irrespective of how far these prognoses are to reach into the future, they all start in the here and now and are fundamentally reactive in their orientation. Furthermore, the span from the current moment of assessment to the targeted strategic goal horizon is fraught with so many imponderables that a an adequate quality of prognosis cannot be expected. Having to structure a new strategy reactively is oftentimes an indication that the previous one was a dud.

It should, however, be in the nature of a superior strategy that new goals are looked for proactively, on one's own initiative, without any injunction or emergency necessitating this. As described above, this approach could be supported by a differentiation in operational-creative and rational-analytical working cells. Techniques of creativity would be a valuable complement. Including philosophically trained thinkers in perspectives can contribute to widening the scope of search - often too problem-focused and restricted by technical expertise - to encompass new strategic goals.

The reactive, problem-related part of strategic goal determination would count as a complementary value. Goal-defining competence, a leading position and strategic advantage will, however, be achieved through visionary, pro-active goal determination.

5.5. Structuring the Strategic Work Resources

Strategic tasks could, in principle, be completed by means of either a divisional or process-oriented structuring of the working resources. An argument in favour of divisional structuring would is that the responsibility for all those sub-steps of the strategic goal and course setting relevant to the sub-strategy would rest in one hand. The disadvantage of this structure lies in the difficult horizontal coordination, due to the fact that the sub-steps of the strategic goal and course setting proceed in a

manner neither synchronous nor networked. If the strategic goal and course setting of complex polities is primarily understood as a revolving process formed of the sub-steps vision creation, strategic goal determination, commencement of operational-level planning, resource requirement determination and realisation, as well as iterative feedback to the strategic goal, it quickly becomes apparent that this functional principle requires, within this closed process step, strong horizontal coordination reaching across the sub-strategies, thereby quasi demanding the process-oriented structuring of the working resources. Especially as regards the comprehensive approach, required in international peace building missions, coordination reaching across the sub-strategies is a prerequisite.

In the organisational structure of western democracies, the various departments are often the carriers of sub-strategies. As they are mostly individually responsible, they tend to implement the idea notion of a divisional structure. Only the minister, decisive as regards sub-strategy matters, projects into the horizontally organised collegial bodies of government or legislature. The danger is that the department heads develop sub-strategy-specific sections of a strategy from their respective points of view only, without a staff exclusively dedicated to this task having worked through the process step of strategic goal determination reaching across the sub-strategies. The establishment of such a staff, which, as previously described, should not only include a cell dedicated to creative goal determination and a coordinating instance between goal determination, planning and implementation, but should also be directly responsible to government or parliament, seems imperative to the creation of a strategy that is more than the sum of its sub-strategies.

The interface between political decision-making and operational-level planning/implementation is located between the minister, responsible for the sub-strategy, and the highest officials of the department. The sole decision-making authority as regards the sub-strategy rests with the minister (primacy of politics). The highest administrative bodies must, however, be qualified to think in terms of sub-strategy content in order to support the department head in the preparation of decisions concerning questions of sub-strategy. By creating and using inter-ministerial networks at civil servant level, they can help to coordinate, at working level, the process steps which follow strategic goal and course setting. This coordination, horizontal as well as reaching across sub-strategies, would compensate for the lack of horizontal coordination which is a result of the divisional organisation of departments.

This presupposes that those employed at this level are also trained in strategic thought.

5.6. Comprehensiveness – reaching across sub-strategies

If strategic goal and course setting is to meet the demands made in the working hypothesis, i.e. to offer a goal determination functionality which holistically influences all accessible plans and lines of action, it would have to orient all sub-strategies and departments towards one national goal or, at least, fuse them to produce one synergetic result in regard to this goal. This could be achieved by integrating a staff for strategic goal setting into the structure.

Such a quality of strategic goal setting, reaching across sub-strategies, is often absent – already in regard to individual states, even more with communities of states or alliances.

This is shown, for example, in internal and external security, which, by necessity, are interdependent. Military contingents in international peace building operations frequently find themselves confronted with the need to perform police tasks. National security forces might have to rely on military assistance in the event of large-scale subversive threats. The solidarity clause in the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe stipulated the possibility of deploying military contingents to provide assistance in other EU states. The terror attacks in e.g. Madrid have shown that peace building operations can be torpedoed very easily by attacking the deploying nation's unprotected infrastructure instead of the forces in the area of operations, thus forcing the state to withdraw its contingent. How sensible is it therefore, despite being aware of this, not to coordinate internal and external strategy holistically, but to set them in opposition to each other, to find arguments in the battle for tight resources? Such a strategic approach to internal and external security, however, on no account means that the personnel resources of the two sub-strategies are to be organisationally merged or that the constitutional separation of the organs responsible for internal and external security is to be broken down.

The demographic development within the EU offers another example. The paper of the EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) titled What ambitions for European defence in 2020[8] regards poverty-driven migration across the Mediterranean Sea one of the biggest future challenges for the Union. Proposals have been made to use military means to combat this problem. At the same time, many European states have come to realise that they need higher numbers of immigrants to compensate for low birth rates. Where is the EU strategy, or the strategic approach of the member states, which integrates the possibilities of foreign policy to use development aid and investments to counter migration at its starting point, the options of security policy to stem mass migration, an education policy campaign to integrate immigrants, and, finally, the incentives of social policy to increase domestic birth rates, and places them in the context of a larger whole?

6. Summary

As a conclusion, a summary will be given of what benefits can be expected from a future-oriented reference definition of strategic thought and strategic goal and course setting

From the functional principles selected and described, a number of constitutive points of a possible strategy definition can be developed. There is freedom of scope concerning the content of these points. What is certain, however, is that they can be viewed as adjusting screws, i.e. critical factors of success concerning the efficacy of the strategy described by them. The attempt was made to demonstrate how the content of these functional principles would impact the efficacy of the strategy – not, however, what the content's concrete design should be.

If strategy were understood and defined more as a category of thought than one of action, this would help to determine its reach, creative-visionary quality and creative power. Thinking that is strategic, i.e. which reaches across sub-strategies and is geared towards a horizon that reaches as far into the future as possible, would, after an initial, cursory feasibility study and determination of resource requirements, have to be translated into a consistent strategic goal which is far removed from any implementation planning regarding its purpose and degree of detail.

A longer time-frame for a strategy, however, only creates an advantage and a head start if the creative-visionary quality of the process of goal determination is high; scope in itself is no measure of quality concerning a strategy's efficacy and creative power. A strategy's creative-visionary quality is significantly governed by how the horizon of enquiry is set and by how proactively it is defined. The less an attempt is made to react to an existing framework or to prognosticated developments based on the ideas prevalent in existing conditions, in order to be able to concentrate mainly on visionary approaches, the higher the quality of goal determination will be within the same horizon of enquiry. Achieving such a focus would be facilitated if cells engaged in strategic goal definition were permanently relieved of planning and implementation as well as any emerging control tasks. Personal initiative, tapping the creative potential, and creating visions which do not carry in them the potential of confrontation with other competitors developing in a similar direction (Blue Ocean approach) would, therefore, have to be defined as new desirable requirements, which would have to push the reactive problem solving characteristic of strategic thought into the background.

Any such goal determination relieved of planning and implementation would, however, require the definition of a coordinating instance which links up visionary goal determination with a pragmatic planning approach, harmonises backward planning starting from the strategic goal with forward implementation planning starting from the moment of assessment, and prevents any fixation on

unrealistic goals by harmonizing with the results of the feasibility analysis and the resource requirement determination. The further ahead the goal horizon of strategic goal/course setting is defined, the more likely the strategy will offer a survival guarantee also to following generations and be able to promote social developments extending beyond a particular community. A broader understanding of cross-cultural responsibility would mean that political leadership, sustainability, and the ethical dimension of strategic thought are fundamentally re-evaluated.

The stipulation that neither variable output parameters are to be statically integrated in the feasibility analysis nor invariable ones regarded as axiomatic would be a massive improvement concerning a strategy's creative power.

The definition of a method based on the operational-level decision making process, with which deductive-theoretical and empirical approaches are woven together to create a synergetic result would make it possible to substantiate the requirements profile of strategic goal setting.

The demand for a synergetic grouping of all sub-strategic approaches (comprehensiveness) to avoid any interference which might weaken the strategy's creative power constitutes a substantial defining factor. Given a divisional structuring in departments, this requires horizontal coordination in the first process step of strategic goal determination at the highest national decision-making level. A statement on the integration of dedicated work resources - organised, for example, in a staff - would hone this definition.

Assigning time frames to strategic goal setting or planning horizons to the following process steps, and describing the task characteristics required by the individual time frames/planning horizons would allow focused personnel selection and training. Finally, a future-proof definition of strategy should also make a statement on whether actors, active internationally in politics or industry, should be granted strategic subjectivity as soon as they are capable of influencing or challenging the strategy of democratic states or their alliances and unions.

 "…[c]onfusion among military theorists, even concerning core military terms such as strategy and tactics…" was one of the four shortcomings Clausewitz charged Prussian education with, which he not only castigated for semantic vagueness, but also blamed for the terrible defeat in the twin battles of Jena and Auerstedt.

Even today, an ambiguous definition of the term strategy not only means that this term dramatically loses in meaning through its essentially arbitrary, undifferentiated and uncommented application, but especially that fundamental, forward-looking functional principles of strategic thought, which are

constitutive for a strategy's creative power, are not fully realised and therefore disregarded both conceptionally and as regards their definition. This limits a strategy's potential capacity, gambles away any superiority or achievable advantage, and threatens the polity's secure future as well as its commonweal.

This text attempted to stimulate discussion, to analyse selected functional principles of strategic goal determination/course setting and to illustrate their potential influence on the creative power of any strategy to be defined by them.

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[1] Bloch, Marc, Die seltsame Niederlage: Frankreich 1940. Der Historiker als Zeuge, S. Fischer, 1992. (Preface to the German edition by Ulrich Raulff, p.15ff.)

[2] Wagener, Martin, 'Über das Wesen der Strategie', in, Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift, 4/2010, p.443.

[3] Military command is to be understood here in its widest sense, i.e. encompassing visionary goal determination, planning, implementation and control.

[4] cf. Malik Fredmund, 'Malik on Management, Gefährliche Gewinne', in, trend, 6/2004, p.160ff. The author's conclusion is that it would be a fatal mistake to derive a strategy from operational-level data. This would support the demand for a clear demarcation between operational-level command and strategic goal determination, and for carrying out strategic goal determination on the basis of developments extrapolated from operational-level planning.

[5] cf. Chan Kim W., Mauborgne Renée, Der Blaue Ozean als Strategie. Wie man neue Märkte schafft, wo es keine Konkurrenz gibt, Carl Hanser Verlag, Munich and Vienna 2005, ISBN 3446402179. The authors show that successful companies do not necessarily have to define themselves via competition, but can, through creativity and innovation, create a new, previously undiscovered market, in the sense of a Blue Ocean.

[6] cf. Lecture of Professor Rohrbach to the 14th General Staff Course at the Austrian National Defence Academy Vienna.

[7] Hartmann, Uwe, Carl von Clausewitz, Erkenntnis, Bildung Generalstabsausbildung, Munich OLZOG 1998, p.10ff.

[8] EU-Institute for Security Studies (EUISS): What ambitions for European defence in 2020, edited by Alvaro de Vasconcelos, Preface by Javier Solana, Original edition July 2009, 2nd edition (due to Irish „Yes") October 2009.

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