

WARCOUNCIL.ORG: 300 Word Strategic Education,v2

By Major Matt Cavanaugh

Master these 300 words – 50 concepts, 6 words each – to maximize strategic competency with minimum time investment. This study enables Clausewitzian Critical Analysis, which compares a strategic concept with evidence from a conflict, and then judges impact on the combatants willingness or ability to fight. Example: At the end of the Pacific War, American airpower and seapower severely constrained Japanese tactical resources, which aided American island hopping and policy achievement.

Studying War	
Strategic Studies	Multi-disciplinary study of threat and force.
Cognitive Biases in Strategic Studies	Humans seek simplicity in security decisions.
Strategic Understanding	Intellectually links tactical action and policy.
Strategic Thinking	Habitual ends to means mental contrasting.

Levels of Analysis	
Tactics	Combatant instruments of power in action.
Operations	Tactics ordered in time, space, purpose.
Strategy	Balances ends, ways, means and risk. ¹
Strategy	Bridge between tactical action and policy. ²
Grand Strategy	Relates national means to large ends. ³
Policy and Purpose	Desired ends as decided by politics. ⁴
Strategic Effect	Impact on opponent fighting capability, will.

Foundational Terms	
War	Intense, reciprocal, public violence for purpose. ⁵
Clausewitz: Description of War	Trinity of violence, chance, and policy.
Security Dilemma	Impossible to gauge opponent hostile intent.
Ultimate Object in War	Sustainable political outcome consistent with interests. ⁶
American View of War	Anticipate success against direct hostile threat. ⁷
National Interest	Enduring national goals: security, values, prosperity.
National Power	Always relative, hard coercion, soft persuasion. ⁸
Civil Military Relations	Warrior-citizen interaction in strategic affairs.

Common (Mostly Non-State) Force Employment	
Insurgent	Seeks new authority through violent rebellion.
Counterinsurgency	Suppresses armed rebellion; supports existing authority.
Terrorism	Indiscriminate, premeditated, sensational, politically motivated violence.
Hybrid Warfare	Fused mix of multiple strategic behaviors. ⁹

¹ Arthur Lykke, 'Toward an Understanding of Military Strategy'

² Colin Gray, *The Strategy Bridge*

³ John Gaddis, 'What is Grand Strategy?'

⁴ Colin Gray, *The Strategy Bridge*

⁵ Rob Johnson, *Changing Character of War Programme*, Oxford University

⁶ H.R. McMaster, 'Ground Forces Dialogue,' *CSIS*

⁷ *Chicago Council on Global Affairs*, 'Survey of American Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy'

⁸ Joseph Nye, *The Future of Power*

⁹ Frank Hoffman, 'Hybrid Warfare and Challenges'

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Geographic Military Domains	
Landpower	Gains, sustains, controls – land, resources, people. ¹⁰
Seapower	National sea-based capacity to shape events. ¹¹
Airpower	Ability to control airspace for purpose.
Marine Corps	Expeditionary operational force with maritime soul.
Comparison 1 – Landpower & Army Special Forces	1 - Provides tactical engagement while signaling commitment. ¹²
Comparison 2 – Seapower	2 - Avoids direct tactical engagement; signals commitment.
Comparison 3 – Airpower, Marine Corps & Direct Action Special Operations	3 - Provides tactical engagement without signaling commitment.

Theorists & Theories	
Thucydides	Humans fight for fear, honor, interest.
Sun Tzu	Avoid battle; know yourself, know enemy.
Clausewitz: 'Iron Calculus'	Opposition resistance: material capability and will.
Clausewitz: 'Center of Gravity'	Win by striking opposition power hub.
Clausewitz: 'Friction'	Physical and psychological factors inhibit war.
BH Liddell Hart	For victory: dislocate opponent, then exploit.
JC Wylie	Sequential and cumulative strategies for control.
Albert T. Mahan	Command of the sea brings victory.
Julian Corbett	Seapower: for influencing events on land.
Giulio Douhet	Indiscriminate strategic bombing forces political capitulation.
John Warden	Node strikes induce opposition systems paralysis.
Robert Pape	Air-ground integration works; decapitation does not.
Geostrategy	Geography constrains, influences use of force.
Strategic Culture	Inherited beliefs, assumptions about using force.
Erosion Strategy	Target adversary will to continue struggle. ¹³
Incapacitation or Disarming Strategy	Target adversary capacity to continue struggle. ¹⁴
Deterrence	Discourage through fear; cost exceeds benefit.
Coercion	Threaten force to influence voluntary agent. ¹⁵
Irregular Victory	Irregulars win substituting will for resources. ¹⁶
War Termination	War converges actor aims to compromise. ¹⁷

¹⁰ Army Doctrinal Publication 1, *The Army*

¹¹ Geoffrey Till, *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century*

¹² Matt Cavanaugh, 'Simplifying Strategic Concepts,' *WarCouncil.org*

¹³ Christopher Bassford, 'The Relationship Between Political Objectives and Military Objectives in War'

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Lawrence Freedman, *Deterrence*

¹⁶ Malcolm Gladwell, 'How David Beats Goliath,' *The New Yorker*

¹⁷ Roger Spiller, *Between War and Peace: How America Ends its Wars*