

THE WAY OF ACHIEVING STRATEGIC ENDS IN THE COMPLEX ENVIRONMENT – POSITIONAL SUPERIORITY MODEL

Colonel Elnur Alasgarli
National Defence University
elnuralasgarli@yahoo.com

Abstract. The changing, uncertain, complex and ambiguous characteristics of the strategic environment in the modern era often lead to the failure of activities carried out to achieve strategic goals. This requires the review of approaches to strategy formulation, including the strategy model, which is used as a tool for achieving strategic goals. Given the interconnectedness of strategies with the environment in which they are implemented, a new approach and model is required to reflect the characteristics of the modern strategic environment and allow the actor's flexible actions.

The similarity of the characteristics of the virtual environment formed in the game of chess and the real security environment shows that this game can be considered for the formulation of a new strategy model. In addition, in the game of chess, the focus of the main efforts is not on the strategic goal, but on the superior position that helps to achieve it, the consistent application of strategy and tactics, and the possibility of changing the initial strategic goal in the course of the game can play an important role in ensuring the flexibility of the model to be developed.

In the preparation of the model, the activities carried out by the Republic of Azerbaijan on the restoration of its territorial integrity are used as an example. This shows the possibility of applying the mentioned model in the formulation of a real strategy.

Keywords: national security, strategy, tactics, positional superiority, global security environment

Introduction

Every country implements strategic activities based on different approaches to ensure its security and sustainable development within the framework of its national interests. One of them is strategy. With optimal management, a well-designed strategy can concentrate common efforts on the main goal, use resources efficiently and purposefully, and provide conditions for strategic impact at the right time. In addition, having a strategy allows actors to anticipate and respond to changes in the competitive environment.

However, a strategy is implemented in an environment that contains factors beyond the control of those who develop it. For this reason, in order to be successful, a developed strategy must meet the characteristics of the environment formed by those factors. Constantly increasing complexity of the environment can be considered one of the biggest obstacles to development and implementation of the strategy.

Important changes are currently taking place in the global security environment. The number of actors and trends affecting the security environment in the world is increasing day by day. Strategic processes such as globalization, rapid technological development and the increasing irregularity of relations between the world's leading states that influence each other, further complicates the global security environment by increasing uncertainty. It is not a coincidence that the Secretary General of the United Nations, A. Guterres, noted at the Environmental Security Conference that a more complex and dangerous environment is being formed in the world [1].

The increasing level of complexity of the security environment negatively affects [2, p.52] the implementation of strategies developed based on the traditional "Ends, Ways, Means" strategy-making model. This approach is basically designed for clear or complicated environments rather than complex ones. Recent events show that the traditional strategy-making model based on goal-oriented, linear approach has limitations in coping with modern challenges [3, p.38].

Due to the complexity of the security environment, tactical actions are increasingly being used as another approach to achieve the ultimate goals, nowadays. However, they bring more short-term solutions, which are insufficient in achieving long-term strategic goals, and do not provide a comprehensive and systematic approach to the issue.

In general, the abovementioned approaches are accompanied by significant weaknesses either by not reflecting the dynamic and increasingly complex nature of the current environment [4, p.8] or by not being sufficient in achieving long-term strategic goals in the modern era. Each environment-specific problem becomes increasingly difficult to answer with the strategy-making approach used for a simpler environment.

The current state of the modern security environment requires the application of flexible approaches to the implementation of strategic activities.

The continuous complication of the global security environment and its complex character requires the application of more flexible approaches to achieve the strategic ends.

I. The basis of a new approach

To develop a strategy that reflects the characteristics of a complex security environment the game theory, especially the game of chess, which has been successfully tested in virtual practice to make a strategy, can be used as a new model. Its strategy-making philosophy based on the concept of "positional advantage" [5, p.32], the method of achieving the end state can provide prominent ways in this regard.

Similarities between the virtual environment created in the game and the modern real environment in terms of complexity, and the fact that they both require serious planning are the main reasons for choosing it as a model. In chess, the number of possible combinations increases after each move and calculation becomes more difficult, which makes the establishment of a superior position the purpose of strategy instead of checkmate. The high level of uncertainty in the security environment theoretically shows the possibility of applying this approach to achieve strategic ends in the modern era.

1.1. Components of the superiority

The increasingly intertwining socio-political, economic and military processes, since the beginning of the 21st century, the requirement of more collaborative [6, p.302] action rather than coordination and interaction especially in the current complex security environment stipulates the creation of positional superiority not in the areas, but in specific directions, depending on the characteristics of the main object of the strategy.

However, it is important to prioritize the areas of actions to increase the efficiency of the strategy to be prepared and to harmonize joint efforts in the complex strategic environment. Considering the resolution of the conflicts, the foreign policy, economy, military, social public and information fields can be defined as associated areas of ensuring national interests (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Areas of action

On the other hand, identifying specific directions will contribute to the synchronic application of the force, space and time elements of the strategy and to the simultaneous acquisition of superiority in different areas in order to create the necessary strategic impact.

Considering the characteristics of modern conflicts, its external and internal aspects, as well as the opponent, the formation of opinion, the creation of a strong side and unbalancing an opponent can be determined as the directions of action covering the actual issues that can create appropriate conditions for joint action.

The analysis of the Karabakh conflict allows us to say that the Republic of Azerbaijan has been implementing a complex of long-term and purposeful measures in these areas of activity. The following examples can be considered some of those activities:

– One of the successful elements of Azerbaijan's foreign policy during the Second Karabakh war was the formation of an opinion. Activities in this direction included gaining foreign and domestic support for the de-occupation of Azerbaijani territories, the return of internally displaced people to their native lands, and the need for a possible military operation to restore justice. By persuasively conveying its position on the issue Azerbaijan managed to get most countries of the world to accept that Karabakh is the historical territory of Azerbaijan. This also created the legal grounds for the liberation of Karabakh and adjacent 7 regions which were occupied during the First Karabakh war.

– Taking into account the characteristics of modern warfare, while ensuring the necessary combat readiness of the Armed Forces, the Republic of Azerbaijan has managed to create strong sides by developing certain military capabilities that had a serious impact on the course of the military operations. New methods combat activities, including Special Forces on the battlefield, as well as modern technologies such as armed UAVs and high-precision strike systems are a few examples. It is no coincidence that foreign experts say that the Azerbaijani side bought certain types of weapons on purpose in the last ten years, prepared selected units for use in special types of operations, and prepared a joint operational plan in order to isolate the battlefield [7].

– The Azerbaijani side purposefully and effectively used all the opportunities affecting its economic potential to reduce the budget revenues that could be directed to the development of the defense potential of Armenia. Azerbaijan has succeeded in preventing Armenia's economic development by excluding it from important international projects, including the oil and gas pipelines from Azerbaijan to Turkey and Europe, the railway line connecting China to Europe, communications connecting Iran and Russia, or by making its projects unpromising. At the same time, the closure of the borders with Turkey has given an additional impetus to the isolation of Armenia, hence the deterioration of its economic situation and emigration. Armenia's poor economic situation and lack of human resources did not allow it to strengthen militarily, which became one of the main factors determining its defeat in the war.

Positional superiority is created by gaining a decisive advantage over the opponent. This involves convincing the opponent that the continuation of the conflict is ineffective, creating a significant deterrence and prompting the rational opponent to make the desired decision on the resolution of the conflict. In some cases, the advantage created in chess forces the opponent to resign without waiting for the end. Sometimes the created superior position for various reasons may not be enough to force the irrational opponent to resolve the conflict. This determines the transition to the next stage, the realization of superiority through military operations. For example, the superiority created by the Republic of Azerbaijan was not enough to force the Armenian authorities to hand over the occupied territories peacefully. The Armenian side fell into the illusion that its army is invincible and its allies will protect it. Therefore, instead of trying to solve the problem they continued the provocations on the ground and by presenting the concept of "new war for new territories" [8] and the strategy of "active deterrence" [9]. Finally, Armenia's military provocation on September 27, 2020 forced Azerbaijan to realize its positional advantage.

1.2. The model of reaching the end state

New strategy-making model can be formulated by taking into account the conceptual basis of the complex strategic environment and the characteristics of the chess game. This time, the stages of chess can be transformed into stages of the model. The game of chess consists of the opening, midgame and endgame stages. The opening stage mainly involves the strengthening of the existing position, as well as the preparations for creating a superior position with dual-purpose attacks. Based on created position in the midgame, activities are carried out to achieve a decisive superiority over the opponent for the endgame, and to achieve the main goal at the end of the game. For this reason, the stages of "Establishing positional superiority", "Realization of superiority" and "Achieving strategic ends" can be defined in sequence (Figure 2).

In terms of application in real strategy, the position created at the end of the opening game is called "Positional superiority", and the position in the midgame is called "Special superiority". So, sometimes the created Positional superiority may not be enough to push the unrealistic actor to resolve the existing conflict for various reasons. This also necessitates the transition to the next stage, the creation of a special superiority. Here, positional superiority includes a complex of non-military activities, while special superiority includes military actions.

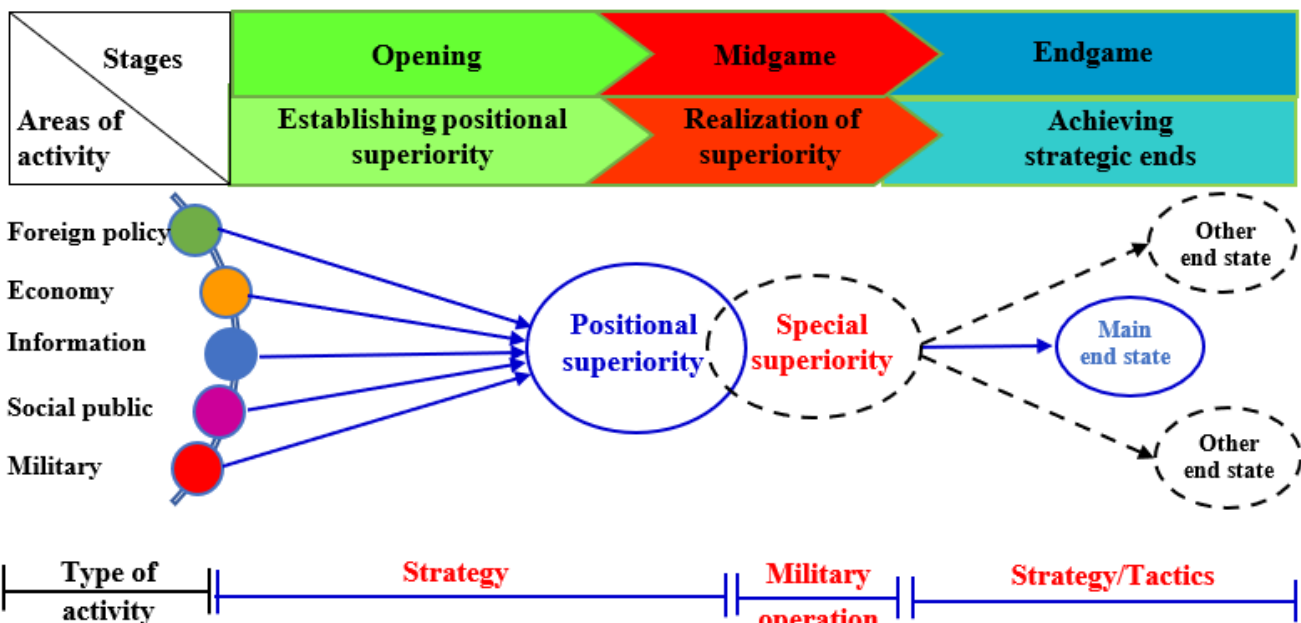


Figure 2. Modelling the game of chess

A strategy and tactics are used to achieve the end state in the game of chess. Here, strategy is used to create an advantage, while tactics are used to achieve a strategic goal using an existing advantage. Positional advantage created as a result of good strategic play lays bases for tactical action by presenting new opportunities.

In chess, there are many cases where advantage is created by tactical activities. However, this can lead to the desired result either against a very weak opponent or if the opponent makes a mistake. Against a strong opponent, this approach is considered to be unsuccessful. Besides, separate tactical successes unaligned with strategic goals may not be enough to achieve the end state. There is a need for a strategy to ensure that the actions are moving in the right direction.

It might be the case in real-time strategies as well. In today's security environment, tactical activities can be more focused on immediate targets and have a short-term strategic impact. However, it is important to align tactical successes with strategic goals to ensure that resources are being used effectively and that the organization is moving towards its desired end state.

For example, the superior position established by the Republic of Azerbaijan, during the Second Karabakh War, has created a foundation for the strategic goal of ensuring its sovereignty throughout the

country. In this context, Azerbaijan's initiative to conclude a peace agreement with Armenia can be evaluated as tactical activity arising from a superior position.

In order to create positional superiority, strategic objectives are defined in the directions of activity. At this time, they are formed based on the transformation of the end state by adapting it to the current realities. However, the end state is always kept in mind during the implementation of the strategy. This will play the role of a lighthouse, preventing activities from deviating from it and guiding the determination of the next steps.

The strategic objectives of positional superiority differ significantly from the medium-term objectives of traditional strategies. Thus, achieving the medium-term objectives of traditional strategies only provides an opportunity to advance to the main goal. However, positional superiority can be used to achieve different goals. For example, the superior position achieved by the Republic of Azerbaijan as a result of the Second Karabakh war created a basis for pursuing a different strategic goal, such as forming its more reliable partner status capable of diversifying Eurasian transport and communication connections in an unstable world. In this context, Azerbaijan's initiative to open the Zangezur corridor can be evaluated as strategic activity arising from a superior position.

Conclusion

Strategy is one of the approaches used to achieve strategic goals. Since it is implemented in an environment that contains factors beyond the control of those who develop it, the success of the strategy is closely related to its adequacy to the characteristics of that environment. In the modern era, the degree of complication of the global security environment is continuously increasing and becoming complex that negatively affects the success rate of strategies developed based on traditional approaches designed for simpler environments. Currently, a more flexible approach is required to achieve strategic goals.

The similarity between the characteristics of the modern security environment and the virtual environment of chess makes it possible to develop a new approach based on this strategy game. Its strategy-making philosophy of concentrating the main efforts not on the strategic goal, but on the strategic objectives of superior position, achieving the end state not only with strategy, also with tactical activities, and presenting an opportunity to change strategic goals in the implementation process are the main features that distinguishes this approach from others. In the framework of the new approach, strategy is used to create a superior position, and tactical activities are used to achieve the end state. Depending on the situation, gained superiority can be used to achieve either the original or different strategic goal.

In the study, the activities carried out by the Republic of Azerbaijan during the Second Karabakh War, before and after it to ensure the territorial integrity and sovereign rights in all its territories are analyzed from the perspective of the positional superiority approach. It can be said that to achieve its strategic goals, the Republic of Azerbaijan first established a positional advantage, then realized it in the war against an irrational opponent, and pursued its ultimate and other strategic goals by tactical activities.

In general, it is evaluated that the presence of an appropriate approach to developing a strategy for each level of the environment will facilitate the successful implementation of strategies. In this regard, the application of a superiority-based approach, and consistent use of strategy and tactics to achieve the end state could provide the necessary flexibility to meet the requirements of a complex security environment characterized by its dynamism and high uncertainty.

References

1. UN Secretary-General press release. “Threat to Global Security More Complex, Probably Higher Than during Cold War, Secretary-General Warns Munich Security Conference”: [Electronic resource] / – Munich, Germany. – 18 February, 2022. – URL: <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sgsm21146.doc.htm>

2. Ivančić, V. Strategy implementation – external environment alignment / V.Ivančić, M.Ivan, L.Jelenc, Ž.Dulčić // – Croatia: Management: journal of contemporary management issues – 2017. №22. – p.51-67.
3. Alasgarli, E. How much successful the traditional strategy-making models in the contemporary strategic environment? The analysis of the Ends, Ways and Means formula // –Romania: Journal of Defense Resources Management (JoDRM) – 2019. №2. – p. 30-39.
4. Cerami, J.R. Holcomb, J.F. Jr. US Army War College Guide to Strategy / – Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, – 2001. – p.8.
5. Lasker, E. Common sense in chess / E.Lasker – New York: Dover Publications, – 1965. – p.43.
6. McLeod, J., Childs, S. The Cynefin framework: A tool for analyzing qualitative data in information science? // – Norman, Oklahoma, United States of America: Library & information science research – 2013. №4(35). – p. 299-309.
7. Gressel, G. Military lessons from Nagorno-Karabakh: Reason for Europe to worry The European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR): [Electronic resource] / – November 24, 2020. URL: <https://ecfr.eu/article/military-lessons-from-nagorno-karabakh-reason-for-europe-to-worry/>
8. Wilson, J. Caucasus: Armenia's New war for new territories: [Electronic resource] / –July 2, 2020. URL: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/azerbaijan/opinion/caucasus-armenias-new-war-for-new-territories/>
9. Abramyan, E. Rationalizing the Tonoyan Doctrine: Armenia's Active Deterrence Strategy: [Electronic resource] / – May 2, 2019. URL: <https://jamestown.org/program/rationalizing-the-tonoyan-doctrine-armenias-active-deterrence-strategy>

Xülasə

Kompleks mühitdə strateji məqsəllərə nail olmanın yolu – mövqe üstünlüyü modeli Elnur Ələsgərli

Müasir dövrdə strateji mühitin dəyişkən, qeyri-müəyyən, kompleks və müxtəlif cür yozula bilən xüsusiyyətləri strateji məqsəllərə nail olmaq üçün həyata keçirilən fəaliyyətlərin sıxlıqla uğursuz olmasına gətirib çıxarır. Bu da strateji məqsəllərə nailolma aləti kimi istifadə edilən strategiyanın hazırlanması üzrə yanaşmaların, o cümlədən strategiya modelinin nəzərdən keçirilməsini şərtləndirir. Strategiyanın icra olunduğu mühitlə sıx bağlılığını nəzərə alsaq, yeni yanaşma və modelin müasir strateji mühitin xüsusiyyətlərinə və aktorun çevik fəaliyyətinə uyğun olmasını tələb edir.

Real təhlükəsizlik mühiti və şahmat oyununda formalaşan virtual mühitin xüsusiyyətlər baxımından oxşarlığı şahmat oyunundakı əsas məqsədə nailolma üsulunun yeni strategiya modeli kimi nəzərdən keçirilməsini şərtləndirir. Bu halda əsas səylərin strateji məqsədə deyil, ona nail olmağa kömək edən üstün mövqeyə yönəlməsi, strategiya və taktikanın ardıcıl tətbiqi, ilkin strateji məqsədin dəyişdirilməsinin mümkünlüyü hazırlanacaq modelin çevikliyinin təmin edilməsində mühüm rol oynaya bilər.

Modelin hazırlanmasında Azərbaycan Respublikası tərəfindən ərazi bütövlüyünün bərpa edilməsi və qorunub saxlanması məqsədilə həyata keçirilən fəaliyyətlər əsas götürülür. Bu isə sözügedən modelin həqiqi strategiyanın formalaşdırılmasında tətbiqinin mümkünlüyünü göstərir.

Açar sözlər: milli təhlükəsizlik, strategiya, taktika, mövqe üstünlüyü, qlobal təhlükəsizlik mühiti

Аннотация

Достижение стратегических целей в комплексной среде – модель позиционного превосходства Эльнур Алескерли

Изменчивый, неопределенный, комплексный и неоднозначный характер стратегической среды в современном этапе часто приводит к провалу мероприятий, осуществляемых для

достижения стратегических целей. Это требует пересмотра подходов к формулированию стратегии, в том числе модели стратегии, которая используется как инструмент достижения стратегических целей. Учитывая взаимосвязь стратегий со средой, в которой они реализуются, необходимы новый подход и модель, отражающие характеристики современной стратегической среды и позволяющие гибкие действия актора.

Сходство характеристик виртуальной среды, формируемой при игре в шахматы, и реальной среды безопасности заставляет рассматривать способ достижения основной цели в игре в шахматы как новую модель стратегии. В этом случае важную роль в обеспечении гибкости могут сыграть сосредоточение основных усилий не на стратегической цели, а на превосходящей позиции, способствующей ее достижению, последовательное применение стратегии и тактики, возможность изменения исходной стратегической цели. модели, которую предстоит разработать.

При подготовке модели за основу взяты мероприятия, осуществляемые Азербайджанской Республикой в целях восстановления и сохранения территориальной целостности. Это показывает возможность применения указанной модели при формулировании реальной стратегии.

Ключевые слова: национальная безопасность, стратегия, тактика, позиционное преимущество, глобальная среда безопасности.

Məqalə redaksiyaya daxil olmuşdur: 16.04.2024

Təkrar işlənməyə göndərilmişdir: 22.04.2024

Çapa qəbul edilmişdir: 03.05.2024