“The roots of victory and defeat often have to be sought far from the battlefield, in political, social, and economic factors which explain why armies are constituted as they are, and why their leaders conduct them in the way they do.”

—Michael Howard

“That the factors are infinitely varied and difficult to determine is true, but that . . . is just what emphasises the necessity of reaching such firm standpoints as are attainable. The vaguer the problem to be solved, the more resolute must we be in seeking points of departure from which we can begin to lay a course.”

—Julian Corbett
A t its most basic, strategy is a matter of figuring out what we need to achieve, determining the best way to use the resources at our disposal to achieve it, and then executing the plan. Unfortunately, in the real world, all of these things are not easily done. Our strategic goals are complex and sometimes contradictory and may change in the middle of a military endeavor. The resources at our disposal are not always obvious, can change during the course of a struggle, and usually need to be adapted to suit our needs. Our adversary often refuses to fit our preconceptions of him or to stand still while we erect the apparatus for his destruction.

THE NATURE OF POLITICS AND WAR

Before we can usefully discuss the making and carrying out of military strategy, we must understand the fundamental character of politics and the violent expression of politics called war. Let us start by analyzing Clausewitz’s description of war as both an instrument of policy and of politics with the addition of other means.³

War is a social phenomenon. Its logic is not the logic of art, nor of science or engineering, but rather the logic of social transactions. Human beings interact with each other in ways that are fundamentally different from the way the scientist interacts with chemicals, the architect or engineer with beams
and girders, or the artist with paints. The interaction that concerns us when we speak of war is political interaction. The “other means” in Clausewitz’s definition of war is organized violence. The addition of violence to political interaction is the only factor that defines war as a distinct form of political interaction—but that addition has powerful and unique effects.

The two different terms we have used, policy and politics, both concern power. While every specific war has its unique causes, war as a phenomenon is fundamentally concerned with the distribution and redistribution of power.\(^4\)

Power is sometimes material in nature: the economic power of money or other resources, for example, or possession of the physical means for coercion (weapons and armed personnel). Power is just as often psychological in nature: legal, religious, or scientific authority; intellectual or social prestige; a charismatic personality’s ability to excite or persuade; a reputation, accurate or illusory, for diplomatic or military strength.

Power provides the means to attack and the means to resist attack. Power in itself is neither good nor evil. By its nature, however, power tends to be distributed unevenly in ways that vary greatly from one society to another.

Power manifests itself differently and in different places at different times. In Japan, during the 16th through 19th centuries, real political power was exercised by the shogun, who was formally subordinate to the emperor. Later, senior Japanese military leaders were for a time effectively controlled by
groups of fanatical junior officers. King Philip II of Spain, whose power was rooted in a landed aristocracy, was surprised to discover the power that Europe’s urban bankers could exercise over his military strategy. American leaders were similarly surprised by the power of the disparate political coalition that forced an end to the Vietnam War. One of the major problems of strategy is to determine where and in what form real power lies and to identify those relatively rare points where military power can be applied effectively.

Politics is the process by which power is distributed in any society: a family, an office, a religious order, a tribe, a state, a region, the international community. The process of distributing power may be fairly orderly—through consensus, inheritance, election, or some time-honored tradition—or chaotic—through assassination, revolution, or warfare. Whatever process may be in place at any given time, politics is inherently dynamic, and not only the distribution of power but the process by which it is distributed is under constant pressure for change.

A key characteristic of politics is that it is interactive—a cooperative or competitive process. It cannot be characterized as a rational process because actual outcomes are seldom what was consciously intended by any one of the participants. Political events and their outcomes are the product of conflicting, contradictory, sometimes compromising, but often adversarial forces. That description clearly applies to war.

Policy, on the other hand, can be characterized as a rational process. The making of policy is a conscious effort by a
distinct political body to use whatever power it possesses to accomplish some purpose—if only the mere continuation or increase of its own power. Policy is a rational subcomponent of politics, the reasoned purposes and actions of individuals in the political struggle. War can be a practical means, sometimes the only means available, for the achievement of rational policy aims—that is, the aims of one party in the political dispute. *Hence, to describe war as an “instrument of policy” is entirely correct. It is an act of force to compel our opponent to do our will.*

Do not, however, confuse rationality with intelligence, reasonableness, or understanding. Policies can be wise or foolish: they can advance their creators’ goals or unwittingly contradict them. They can be driven by concern for the public good or by the most craven reasons of self-interest. Rationality also implies no particular *kind* of goal, for goals are a product of emotion and human desire. The goal of policy may be peace and prosperity, national unity, the achievement of ideological perfection, or the extermination of some ethnic minority or competitor.

Remember too that policy, while it is different from politics, is produced via a political process. Even the most rational of policies is often the result of compromises within the political group. Such compromises may be intended more to maintain peace or unity within the group than to accomplish any external purpose. They may, in fact, be irrelevant or contrary to any explicit group goal. Policy is therefore often ambiguous,
unclear, even contradictory, and subject to change or to rigidity when change is needed.

Clausewitz’s reference to war as an expression of politics is therefore not a prescription, but a description. War is a part of politics. It does not replace other forms of political intercourse but merely supplements them. It is a violent expression of the tensions and disagreements between political groups, when political conflict reaches a level that sparks organized violence. Thus war—like every other phase of politics—embodies both rational and irrational elements. Its course is the product not of one will, but of the collision of two or more wills.

To say, then, that war is an expression of both politics and policy with the addition of other means is to say two very different things to strategy makers. First, it says that strategy, insofar as it is a conscious and rational process, must strive to achieve the policy goals set by the political leadership. Second, it says that such policy goals are created only within the chaotic and emotional realm of politics.

Therefore, the military professional who says, “Keep politics out of this. Just give us the policy, and we will take care of the strategy,” does not understand the fundamentals of strategy. Strategists must operate within the constraints of policy and politics. The only alternative would be for military strategy to perform the functions of policy and for military
leaders to usurp political power, tasks which are generally unsuited to both military strategy and military leaders.

FURTHER DEFINING WAR

We acknowledge that war is an expression of politics and policy with the addition of violent means. Still, this description does not fully explain war.

One frequent error is to describe war as something that takes place exclusively between nations or states. First, nations and states are different things. The Kurds are a nation, but they have no state. The Arabs are a nation with several states. The Soviet Union was a state whose citizens represented many different nationalities. Second, many—possibly most—wars actually take place within a single state, meaning that at least one of the participants was not previously a state. Civil wars, insurrections, wars of secession, and revolutions all originate within a single existing state, although they sometimes attract external intervention. Wars may spill across state borders without being interstate wars, as in Turkey’s conflict with the Kurds. Third, most interstate wars are fought not by individual states, but by coalitions. Such coalitions often involve nonstate actors as well as state governments.

Another mistake is to limit our definition of war to sustained, large-scale military operations. Here the defining condition is one of scale and duration. Under headings such as “Military Operations Other than War,” this approach lumps
many forms of political conflict that clearly satisfy Clausewitz’s definition of war with other events—such as humanitarian assistance—that do not.

In its broadest sense, war refers to any use of organized force for political purposes, whether that use results in actual violence or not. When we speak of warfare, however, we almost always mean actual violence of some considerable scale that is carried out over some considerable period of time. A single assassination, while certainly a violent political act, does not constitute a war. On the other hand, large-scale, long-term violence alone does not necessarily mean war either. For example, over a 25-year period—1969 through 1994—some 3,000 people were killed in Northern Ireland for an average of 120 deaths per year in a population of 1.5 million.\(^5\) For that same period, there were approximately 291 murders per year committed in Washington, D.C. in an average population of 642,000.\(^6\) The former situation is widely recognized as war, while the latter is not. The difference is a matter of organization. The perpetrators, victims, and targets of the violence in Northern Ireland reflect distinct political groups engaged in a power struggle. The violent death rate in Washington, D.C., roughly five times higher, seems to reflect random violence—a sign of social dysfunction rather than of some purposeful group movement toward any political goal.

From all this, we can say that war is—

- Organized violence.
• Waged by two or more distinguishable groups against each other.

• In pursuit of some political end.

• Sufficiently large in scale and in social impact to attract the attention of political leaders.

• Continued long enough for the interplay between the opponents to have some impact on political events.

THE NATURE OF WAR-MAKING POLITICAL ENTITIES

Military professionals often seek a “scientific” understanding of war. This approach is appealing because the human mind tends to organize its perceptions according to familiar analogies, like the powerful images of traditional Newtonian physics. Such comparisons can be very useful. Our military doctrine abounds with terms like “center of gravity,” “mass,” and “friction.”

The attempt to apply a scientific approach can result in some misleading ideas. For example, some political scientists treat political entities as unitary rational actors, the social equivalents of Newton’s solid bodies hurtling through space. Real political units, however, are not unitary. Rather, they are collections of intertwined but fundamentally distinct actors and systems. Their behavior derives from the internal interplay of
both rational and irrational forces as well as from the peculiarities of their own histories and of chance. Strategists who accept the unitary rational actor model as a description of adversaries at war will have difficulty understanding either side’s motivations or actual behavior. Such strategists ignore their own side’s greatest potential vulnerabilities and deny themselves potential levers and targets—the fault lines that exist within any human political construct.

Fortunately, the physical sciences have begun to embrace the class of problems posed by social interactions like politics and war. The appropriate imagery, however, is not that of Newtonian physics. Rather, we need to think in terms of biology and particularly ecology.\footnote{7}

To survive over time, the various members of any ecosystem must adapt—not only to the external environment, but to each other. These agents compete or cooperate, consume and are consumed, join and divide, and so on. A system created by such interaction is called a complex adaptive system.

Such systems are inherently dynamic. Although they may sometimes appear stable for lengthy periods, their components constantly adapt or fail. No species evolves alone; rather, each species “co-evolves” with the other species that make up its environment. The mutation or extinction of one species in any ecosystem has a domino or ripple effect throughout the system, threatening damage to some species and creating opportunities for others. Slight changes are sometimes absorbed without
unbalancing the system. Other slight changes—an alteration in the external environment or a local mutation—can send the system into convulsions of growth or collapse.

One of the most interesting things about complex systems is that they are inherently unpredictable. It is impossible, for example, to know in advance which slight perturbations in an ecological system will settle out unnoticed and which will spark catastrophic change. This is so not because of any flaw in our understanding of such systems, but because the system’s behavior is generated according to rules the system itself develops and is able to alter. In other words, a system’s behavior may be constrained by external factors or laws but is not determined by them.

For all of these reasons, systems starting from a similar base come to have unique individual characteristics based on their specific histories.

The reason we use the complex adaptive system as a model is that it provides insight into human political constructs. Humans build all sorts of social structures: families, tribes, clans, social classes, street gangs, armies, religious groups or sects, commercial corporations, political parties, bureaucracies, criminal mafias, states of various kinds, alliances, and empires, to mention just a few. These structures participate in separate but thoroughly intertwined networks we call social, economic, and political systems. Those networks produce markets, elections, and wars.
Such networks and structures create their own rules. The unpredictable nature of these complex systems makes it difficult to predict the outcome of specific events. We can normally analyze, describe, and explain economic, military, and political events after they have occurred, but accurately forecasting the course of such interactions is difficult to do with any consistency.

When we say that politics and war are unpredictable, we do not mean that they are composed of absolute chaos, without any semblance of order. Intelligent, experienced military and political leaders are generally able to foresee the probable near-term results, or at least a range of possible results, of any particular action they may take. Broad causes, such as a massive superiority in manpower, technology, economic resources, and military skill, will definitely influence the probabilities of certain outcomes.

Conscious actions, however, like evolutionary adaptations, seldom have only their intended effects. Events wholly outside the range of vision of political and military leaders can have an unforeseen impact on the situation. New economic and social ideas, technological innovations with no obvious military applications, changes in climatic conditions, demographic shifts, all can lead to dramatic political and military changes. Enemy actions, friction, imperfect knowledge, low order probabilities, and chance introduce new variables into any evolving situation.
The problem for strategists is how to develop a lasting and effective strategy in the face of the turbulent world of policy and politics. Despite the difficulty of understanding the interaction of political entities, they must strive to comprehend the nature of the problem, anticipate possible outcomes, and set a strategic course likely to achieve the desired objective. At the same time, strategists must sense the complex nature of this environment and be prepared for both the unexpected setbacks and the sudden opportunities it is likely to deliver.

STRATEGIC CONSTANTS AND NORMS

In Some Principles of Maritime Strategy, originally published in 1911, Sir Julian Corbett wrote—

The vaguer the problem to be solved, the more resolute must we be in seeking points of departure from which we begin to lay a course, keeping always an eye open for the accidents that will beset us, and being always alive to their deflecting influences . . . . [T]he theoretical study of strategy . . . can at least determine the normal. By careful collation of past events it becomes clear that certain lines of conduct tend normally to produce certain effects.  

Despite the complexity of interactions in the political realm, it is possible to discern elements that are present in any
strategic situation. These elements are at the core of the strategic environment and are the base from which the strategist develops an understanding of a specific set of circumstances. Because these elements are present in any strategic situation, we refer to them as constants and norms. While the particular aspects of these constants and norms present themselves differently in each strategic situation, an understanding of their fundamental nature provides a point of departure for its analysis.

To help understand the distinction between constants and norms and the fluctuations of a specific policy or conflict, we can use the following analogy. Annual seasonal climates of most regions of the world are predictable. Yet the weather on a given day cannot be predicted far in advance with any confidence. Still, annual vacationers in northern Pennsylvania know that a warm day in January is colder than a cold day in July, and a snow skier does not plan a ski trip for July, nor does a water skier plan on water skiing in January. Extreme variables in temporary weather patterns do not affect the long-term power and influence of global climate patterns.

The Physical Environment

Geography and its related aspects are a constant in any strategic situation. All parties in a conflict must cope with the physical environment. One strategic affairs expert has noted—
Misguided strategists who misinterpret, misapply, or ignore the crushing impact of geography on national security affairs learn their lessons painfully, after squandering national prestige, lives, and treasure.

Strategic masters manipulate the physical environment, exploit its strengths, evade its weaknesses, acknowledge constraints, and contrive always to make nature work for them.\(^9\)

The physical environment encompasses not only the traditional elements of geography such as land forms, terrain, oceans and seas, and climate, but also spatial relationships, natural resources, and lines of communications. Together, these factors exert considerable influence on a particular strategic situation. The political, economic, and social makeup of a nation results in part from its physical environment. We refer to Great Britain, the United States, and Japan as “maritime nations,” while Germany, Russia, and China have been traditionally labeled “continental powers.” The location and distribution of natural resources may on the one hand be a cause of conflict and, at the same time, be a major determinant of a conflict’s outcome. The nature of the interaction between political entities is in large part determined by their geographic relationships. Relations between states that border on one another are normally considerably different from those between states separated by oceans and continents.

In order to understand the nature of a problem, strategists must understand the role of the physical environment in each situation. Geography influences the way that all elements of
national power are applied. While the effect of geography on a conflict varies with the nature, location, and duration of that conflict, the physical environment always has an impact. Strategists must analyze and understand the local, regional, and sometimes global effects of this environment in order to use the elements of power effectively in a specific strategic situation.\(^\text{10}\)

**National Character**

Each nation, state, or political entity has its own distinct character. This character is derived from a variety of sources: location, language, culture, religion, historical circumstances, and so forth. While national character is always evolving, changes generally occur only over the course of decades and centuries and may be imperceptible to the outside observer. As such, national character can be looked upon as a norm or constant. National character is akin to global climate patterns that change very slowly through history.

Over three centuries, the British national character ran as deep and sure as the Gulf Stream across the North Atlantic. During this time, British national reaction to aggression from France, Germany, or, more recently, Argentina, was marked by many constants. Throw in a resolute and inspirational leader (the elder William Pitt, Winston Churchill, or Margaret Thatcher), add a villainous opponent bent on European domination (Napoleon, the Kaiser, or Hitler), and the British response to aggression was both consistent and predictable.
This is not to say that the British reacted the same way in each situation. The mood and inclination of the British public have been influenced by various swirls and eddies during periods and moments when issues were confused, threats ambiguous, and hopes for peace strong. For example, the British first attempted to avoid war with Germany by acceding to Hitler’s demands at the now infamous Munich Conference of 1938. Then when Germany invaded Poland a year later, natural inclinations and hopes for peace vanished into a steeled determination to wage war.

Consider too the Russian response to invasions from the West. The Russians have never deliberately adopted a strategy of retreating hundreds of miles into their interior without first trying to stop an invader near their borders. The point is that they have demonstrated an ability to retreat deeply into their own country if they must do so in order to survive and ultimately prevail. This demonstrated ability was a matter of historical record to be considered by Charles XII of Sweden in 1708, Napoleon in 1812, Kaiser Wilhelm III in 1914, and Hitler in 1941. It is no coincidence that of these invaders, the only one to succeed (Germany in World War I) was the one that adopted a strategy containing a viable political component, in this case the support of internal revolution, used in conjunction with the military component. The Germans in World War I considered knowable Russian physical and moral characteristics and devised an effective political-military strategy accordingly. Napoleon and Hitler had access to similar knowledge but
largely ignored the Russian character in relying on a purely military strategy.

Judging the national character of an adversary (or an ally) goes well beyond traditional orders of battle and related calculations regarding military and economic power. It requires consideration of national history, culture, religion, society, politics—everything that contributes to the makeup and functioning of a nation. The strategist must compile a complete dossier on a nation similar to that commonly prepared on enemy commanders. In the popular movie *Patton*, an impatient Field Marshal Rommel interrupts his aide: “Enough! Tell me about the man” (referring to General Patton). Rommel wanted to know about Patton’s personality: Was he a gambler? Would he attack sooner rather than later? What was his style of warfare and leadership? What did his troops think of him? Rommel wanted a psychological profile of the opposing commander to help him understand his adversary. At the strategic level, success in war is facilitated by having a similar comprehensive psychological profile of each nation or political group involved in the conflict, to include enemies, allies, potential enemies or allies, and even one’s own nation.

It is of critical importance that sweeping dogmatic assertions do not govern the analysis of national characters. Such assertions often spring from ethnocentric attitudes and a failure to examine the true nature of a political presence. Rather, what is required is rational, objective, and informed thought about the makeup of a national character and its possible effects on a nation’s action or reaction to an event.
War and the State

The state has been effective in all forms of politics, including war. It has been so effective, in fact, that virtually all of the world’s land surface and its people are now recognized as belonging to some more or less effective territorial state. While entities other than the state make war, a state will almost always become involved either in self-defense or in assertion of its monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. Thus, we must look upon the state as one of the strategic norms or constants when we are confronted with a specific strategic problem.

While it has been said that “war made the state, and the state made war,”\(^{11}\) the state has over time held in remarkable check the human tendency toward violence. Averaged over the first 90 years of the 20th century, even Germany’s annual rate of war deaths is lower than that of many typical primitive societies.\(^{12}\) Although warfare between states has continued, successful states have been able to control the costly endemic local warfare typical of nonstate societies.

States are normally replaced by other states. If a state fails to control the use of violence, it will likely be destroyed or taken over by some new group willing and able to take on this fundamental function of the state. This new leadership may be another state or possibly a supranational alliance like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or the United Nations. It could also be a revolutionary government evolving out of what was formerly a nonstate political presence.
This is not to say that states or the interrelated system of states does not change or that strategists can always rely on stability in the international arena. From 1950 to 1980 in Africa, 47 new states won their independence. In late 1988, after 73 years of colonial rule, Africa’s last colony, Namibia, gained its independence. The United States, which sees itself as a young state, in fact has the oldest constitutional system on earth. Many people alive today were born when most of Europe was ruled by kings or emperors. Powerful states and ideologies, commanding formidable military machines, have entered and left the world stage while those people grew up. The Soviet Union, one of the most powerful nations in human history, covering a sixth of the world’s surface and encompassing hundreds of millions of human beings, lasted less than a human lifetime.

However, on balance, we can look upon the state as remarkably tough and enduring. While political movements and individual states and governments that wage wars evolve and change, we must address any particular conflict or strategic problem in the context of the state system. Strategists must take into account the actions and reactions not only of their adversary, but also the actions and reactions of other states and nations. At the same time, we should remember that there is nothing permanent about any particular political entity. This lack of permanence is important because it reminds us that
every enemy, no matter how seamless and monolithic it may appear, has political fault lines that can be exploited.

**The Balance of Power Mechanism**

We have already noted that politics and policy are concerned with the distribution of power and that conflict often arises out of attempts to change the distribution of power. One of the ways political entities achieve stability in the distribution of power and avoid a continuous state of conflict is by seeking to maintain a “balance of power.” The balance of power is a mechanism intended to maintain the status quo in the distribution of power.\(^{14}\) It describes a system in which alliances shift in order to ensure that no one entity or group of entities becomes dominant. The balance of power is “at once the dominant myth and the fundamental law of interstate relations.”\(^{15}\)

The term “balance of power” is usually used in reference to states, but it is applicable to any system involving more than one political power center. The balance of power can be global, as it was during the Cold War, regional/local, as it was among Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the other Persian Gulf states, or internal to one state or territory, as it was among the various clans in Somalia.

Balance of power considerations are usually at work in any strategic situation. Thus, we can consider the balance of power as a strategic norm or constant. Balance of power systems have appeared frequently in world history. Normally, such a system
is created when several entities vie for supremacy or at least independence, yet none individually has the power to achieve it alone.

A balance of power system breaks down for two reasons. The first is when one or more of the participants in the system rebel against it. Their goal is to eliminate all competitors and achieve dominance. In modern Europe, this goal has been attempted by a number of states and their leaders such as Germany under Hitler and France under Napoleon. The rebels have never fully succeeded, largely because they have to take on multiple enemies. Ambitious powers must always be wary of what Clausewitz called the culminating point of victory. This is the point at which one competitor’s success prompts its allies and other groups to withdraw their support or even throw their weight against it.

The second threat to the balance of power system is the power vacuum that occurs when there is no authority capable of maintaining order in some geographic area. Power vacuums are disruptive to the balance of power in two distinct ways. First, the disorder in the vacuum tends to spread as violent elements launch raids into surrounding areas or commit other provocative acts. The disintegration of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s has provided many examples of this sort. Another example is the disintegration of Yugoslavia that resulted in NATO intervention in Bosnia. Second, a power vacuum may attract annexation by an external power. If this act threatens to add substantially to the annexing entity’s power, other states
will become concerned and may interfere. Many Russians saw NATO’s intervention in Bosnia in this light. NATO’s agreement to Russian participation in that mission was an attempt to mitigate such concerns.

Some have argued that the balance of power is no longer a useful concept in the post-Cold War world dominated by a single military superpower. However, it is clear that on a regional and local level the concept of balance of power remains a useful basis for strategic analysis. The balancing mechanism remains a useful strategic tool and is applicable to all levels.

Strategists must be aware of the dynamics of various balance of power systems involved in a strategic problem. Like the “invisible hand” of market economics, the balance of power mechanism is always at work, regardless of whether the system’s participants believe that it is a good thing. It influences our actions as well as those of our adversaries, allies, and neutral powers.

Consider the case of the Gulf War. One of the motives for participation in the conflict by the U.S. and other Coalition forces was concern over the prospect of a region dominated by Iraq. Conversely, one of the postwar concerns was to avoid the creation of a power vacuum that could lead to increased instability in the region or greater influence by Iran. Finally, the dynamics of relations within the Coalition also involved reconciling sometimes differing views on balance of power issues. In any coalition, some participants may be only
temporary allies with long-term goals that may diverge widely from one another. Thus, balance of power considerations were at work from start to finish during this conflict.

THE TRINITY

This chapter has described the nature of the strategic environment. This environment is defined by the nature of politics and the interactions of political entities that participate in the political process. The strategic environment is complex and subject to the interplay of dynamic and often contradictory factors. Some elements of politics and policy are rational, that is, the product of conscious thought and intent. Other aspects are governed by forces that defy rational explanation. We can discern certain factors that are at work in any strategic situation—the constants and norms—and use them as a framework to help understand what is occurring. At the same time, we realize that each strategic situation is unique and that in order to grasp its true nature, we must comprehend how the character and motivations of each of the antagonists will interact in these specific circumstances.

Summarizing the environment within which war and strategy are made, Clausewitz described it as being dominated by a “remarkable trinity” that is—
composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of [war’s] element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.

The first of these three aspects mainly concerns the people; the second the commander and his army; the third the government.

These three tendencies are like three different codes of law, deep-rooted in their subject and yet variable in their relationship to one another. A theory that ignores any one of them or seeks to fix an arbitrary relationship between them would conflict with reality to such an extent that for this reason alone it would be totally useless.

Our task therefore is to develop a theory that maintains a balance between these three tendencies, like an object suspended between three magnets.\textsuperscript{17}

Clausewitz concluded that the strategic environment is shaped by the disparate forces of emotion, chance, and rational thought. At any given moment, one of these forces may dominate, but the other two are always at work. The actual course of events is determined by the dynamic interplay among them. The effective strategist must master the meaning and the peculiarities of this environment.\textsuperscript{18}