

Strategy Research Project

Framework for Developing the Political Judgment of the Beltway Strategist

by

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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Abstract

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The purpose of this paper is to examine current theoretical models that help inform the Beltway strategist to “understand” the unique nature of the Beltway as an area of responsibility (AOR), and from those theoretical models propose a “framework” that creates context in the mind of the Beltway strategist and a start point for developing political judgment and awareness. To the neophyte, the myriad of influences to decision making and strategy within the Beltway AOR seem an imponderable act to decipher. The policy, process (bureaucracy), politics, and personality (4-Ps) model, emphasizing a framework relationship between the 4-Ps; the twin forcing functions of time and interests; and the lens of strategy as a function of priorities, resources, and risk, give the Beltway strategist, in any policy domain, a start point for contextual analysis. Independent of the framework, recommendations to the Army to develop political judgment and awareness focus on exposure and experience, earlier educational opportunities and broadening experiences, and a competitive and desirable selection process.

Framework for Developing the Political Judgment of the Beltway Strategist

Area of Responsibility: The geographical area associated with a combatant command within which a geographic combatant commander has authority to plan and conduct operations. Also called AOR.

—Joint Publication 1¹

The proverbial Washington D.C. “Beltway” is an Area of Responsibility (AOR) within the Department of Defense (DoD) that is the purview of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) and the Service Chiefs. Like the Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs), strategists operating within the “Beltway AOR,” who have developed a refined level of political judgment, recognize operating in this space is, as defined by David Hackett Fische, “A dense web of contingency, in which many people [make] choices within a structure of relationships.”²

The purpose of this paper is to examine current theoretical models that help inform the Beltway strategist to “understand” the unique nature of the Beltway as an AOR, and from those theoretical models propose a framework that creates context in the mind of the Beltway strategist and a start point for developing political judgment and awareness. After examining theory and proposing a framework, this paper will propose a series of recommendations to the United States Army in preparing military officers to successfully operate within the Beltway AOR.

The Web of Contingency

To the neophyte, the myriad of influences to decision making and strategy within the Beltway AOR seems an imponderable act to decipher. Interests and positions collide, the force of will--or seeming lack of it--may reveal a hidden hand, and bureaucracies emerge to temper, slow, or accelerate the road to consensus. Consensus itself seems at times to be a bridge too far, and at others, quickly coalesces

around bigger, larger ideas. At the same time the sometimes petty nature of man emerges, personalities collide as the invisible handler whispers into the principal's ear. The Beltway AOR is dominated by characteristics penned into the Constitution and the collage of interests that have emerged to shape outcomes through influence in the form of placement and access. Within the AOR of the Beltway "Laws are far and few indeed: skills are everything. The key skill [is] the ability to grasp what makes a situation unique."³ In other words--to comprehend the complex.

This seeming barrage of interests is enough to freeze an observer. Unable to see the underlying structures in play, he becomes discouraged at best, manipulated at worst. This "complex web of contingency in which choices are made within the structure of relationships"⁴ describes the uncertain environment that defines the Beltway AOR. Creating shared understanding of these underlying structures and interests--comprehending the complexity--creates opportunities to see beyond the surface, and move agendas forward, even in the face of morphing equities.

The Beltway as a Unique Culture?

The frustration with getting things done inside the Beltway is palpable. Moving from idea to execution to follow through with any measure of effectiveness is an extraordinary feat. The question is why? Whole industries of academia now exist to educate and explain the complexity of politics and policy. Yet many times we look at the question idealistically rather than realistically. We talk in terms of strategic culture when examining strategic issues, but as a subset of U.S. strategic culture, would it be more realistic to talk in terms of the unique aspects of the Beltway's culture to understand how to get things done?

As a start point to defining the problem, it begins with wiping away the immediacy of the now to attempt to understand the broader question of whether there is a Beltway culture, does it derive itself from the U.S. strategic culture, and if so, what are characteristics of said culture? Thomas Mahnken asserts:

A nation's strategic culture flows from its geography and resources, history and experience, and society and political structure. It represents an approach that a given state has found successful in the past. Although not immutable, it tends to evolve slowly.⁵

Using this definition of a nation's strategic culture, we can extrapolate that the U.S. strategic culture "flows" from a combination of a land-mass surrounded by two oceans giving us the perception of stand-off and a rich resource base from which to exercise independence. The revolution for independence created civilian oversight, a fear of large standing Armies, and a political structure, grounded in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution that is averse to centralization of power and creates a tension to balance human will and to create the time and space for policies to be subjectively and objectively debated before a decision.

From this explanation of U.S. strategic culture, can we derive the "decision-making culture" inside the proverbial Beltway? This culture acknowledges the reality of separated institutions sharing power and a historical/geographical influence of being a nation independently resilient and comfortable with a time/space buffer created by two oceans? Best described by Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow in the *Essence of Decision, Explaining the Cuban Missile Crises*, the Beltway's cultural character can be described in the form of the game of governance, in which the Beltway strategist would be a player, in the complexity forged by the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, reinforced by geography, history, and precedent:

The rules of the game, or the rules for choice, stem from the Constitution, statutes, court interpretations, executive orders, conventions, and even culture. Some rules are explicit, others implicit. Some rules are quite clear, others fuzzy. Some are very stable; others are ever changing. But the collection of rules, in effect, defines the game. First, rules establish the positions, the paths by which individuals gain access to positions, the power of each position, and the action-channels. Second, rules constrict the range of governmental decisions and actions that are acceptable.⁶

But the complexity and character of decision making inside the Beltway is much richer than a game. It is the collision of interests with massive implications for policy. Creating comprehension from the chaos of complexity defines the ability to shape the Beltway operating environment. Are there lenses by which we can both understand and comprehend the complex nature and reality of the Beltway?

Simplifying the Complex--Understanding the Why

Models help simplify and provide comprehension to the complex in order to create an epiphany of understanding. There are inherent risks in the oversimplification of models, but they serve as a start point for creating clarity. The convergence of political science and organizational behavior studies begin to create in the mind of the Beltway strategist some understanding behind the “web of contingency” that defines the Beltway AOR. In this section I will examine models that help create root understanding of large, complex organizations.

Complex Adaptive Systems

In a working paper produced by the United States Army War College, Professor Andrew Hill takes a reductionist approach to bring focus to large, interconnected organizations. Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) are “system[s] in which large networks of components with no central control and simple rules of operations give rise to

complex collective behavior, sophisticated information processes, and adaptation via learning and evolution.”⁷

Recognizing the ubiquitous reality of CAS in different forms, you can begin to see the different component interactions affecting the outcome of the system: “. . . composition (size, diversity), structure (openness, network density, etc.), agent behavior (rules, adaptation, etc.), collective behavior, and equilibrium conditions.”⁸ By being able to reduce the complexity into “parts” you begin to see connections to behaviors and opportunities exploited when equilibrium becomes disrupted. A nuanced understanding of CAS leads to “understanding causal relationships in strategic systems and identifying means either to alter the conditions within the system to achieve a new equilibrium, or to maintain an existing equilibrium.”⁹

The August to September 2013 timeframe within U.S. geopolitics gives us a start point for understanding CAS. The verbal “red-line” policy established by President Obama in reaction to Syrian use of chemical weapons emerges as an example of structures in the form of the National Security Staff, Department of Defense, Department of State, Congress, agents in the form of the President, Secretary of State, CJCS, and members of Congress reacting to an equilibrium that had been disrupted.

Governmental Politics

In the book *The Essence of Decision, Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, Zelikow and Allison present three logical models for understanding the decision-making apparatus of the Soviets and the Americans during the Cuban Missile crisis. As the authors move from model to model, the monolithic “they” of the Soviets and the “we” of the Americans begin to crumble and the complex web of interests converging within the contingency of relationships emerges as a model with more nuance and granularity:

Outcomes are formed, and deformed, by the interaction of competing preferences . . . the Governmental Politics Model sees no unitary actor but rather many actors as players: players who focus not on a single strategic issue but on many diverse intranational problems as well; players who act in terms of no consistent set of strategic objectives but rather according to various conceptions of national, organizational, and personal goals; players who make government decisions not by a single, rational choice but by the pulling and hauling that is politics.¹⁰

Implicit in Allison and Zelikow's treatise is the acknowledged reality that politics and governance are inextricably connected. Drawing from this Beltway culture as discussed earlier as a function of the constitutional separation of powers, the Governmental Politics Model has incredible synergy to the Complex Adaptive Systems Model. Allison and Zelikow posit:

For those who participate in government, the terms of daily employment cannot be ignored. Within the framework of broad values and shared interests leaders have competitive, not identical operational objectives; priorities and perceptions are shaped by positions; problems are much more varied than straightforward strategic issues; management of piecemeal streams of decisions is more important than steady-state choices; making sure that government does what is decided is more difficult than selecting the preferred solution. Coalitions are formed to produce the desired actions. The coalitions may include relevant outsiders, legislators, and lobbyists for an interest group, or even foreign officials, as if they were some different species of domestic power broker.¹¹

You can feel the tensions between the structure, diversity, agent behavior and equilibrium so eloquently described by Professor Hill, yet layered on top of the Complex Adaptive System is a thick influence of political realities in the form of interests and values. "Each [government] is a more or less complex arena for internal bargaining among the bureaucratic elements and political personalities who collectively comprise its working apparatus."¹²

As explicit and implicit interests began to form around the reaction to Syria's use of chemical weapons, coalitions began to form around a need for action versus whether

or not action was within a vital U.S. interest. The conversation coalesced very quickly around whether the use of force was legitimate or not.

Punctuated Equilibrium

There is an inertia of interests that surrounds policy. Precedence, statute, and regulation are relatively static, except on the margins. This occurs because of the routine coalescing of interests and hardening of organizational structures that often emerge to support the precedence, statute, or regulation. Timing, as a function of environmental scanning and political awareness, understands that beyond change at the margins, large-scale Beltway change does not occur unless there is a punctuation of the existing equilibrium. More commonly known as “opportunity,” punctuated equilibrium is defined as an “evolution that is characterized by long periods of stability in the characteristics of an organism and short periods of rapid change during which new forms appear.”¹³ The formation of the Department of Homeland Security is a prime example of the punctuated equilibrium of 9/11 creating the disequilibrium and therefore the political space to reorganize government.

Coupling punctuated equilibrium within the Government Politics Model and the Complex Adaptive Systems model, we can begin to see the value of opportunity or inactivity in relation to interests. In the face of the opportunity of punctuated equilibrium, “Those who oppose the decision, or oppose the action, maneuver to delay implementation, to limit implementation, to raise the issue again with a different face or in another channel.”¹⁴ Further, the keen Beltway strategist begins to understand the cost/benefit of action or inaction to future endeavors.

Practical Drift

Building upon Complex Adaptive Systems and the Governmental Politics Model, structure/density/agents within the CAS could be defined as the processes or bureaucracy of large complex organizations. Professor Scott Snook from the Harvard Business School proposed a theory of Practical Drift that posits a phenomenon inherent in large organizations with multiple sub-units of “*the slow steady uncoupling of practice from written procedure.*”¹⁵ Using the shoot down of two UH-60 Blackhawks over northern Iraq by Air Force F-15’s on patrol, Snook deconstructs the causal linkages from the formulation of policy in conducting operations over northern Iraq, to changes in leadership, precedence, and structures that inevitably lead to the shoot down of the Blackhawks.

Most Complex Adaptive Systems, within a construct of the Governmental Politics Model, during periods of punctuated equilibrium have “constant demands for local efficiency dictat[ing] the path of the drift. Over time, incremental actions in accordance with the drift meet no resistance, are implicitly reinforced, and hence become institutionally accepted within each sub unit.”¹⁶

Practical Drift, when viewed through a Complex Adaptive System or Governmental Politics lens could be renamed “organizational drift” as a natural erosion state that is in a constant state of “disequilibrium” where policy and precedent are constantly redefining organizational norms and interpretations of policy. “Over time, the globally engineered, standardized organization is replaced by a series of locally adaptive subunit logics, each justifying their own version of “the rules.”¹⁷

Principal-Agent Theory

Inherent in any large organization is a degree of decentralization. That decentralization is designed to power down decision making and to compensate for the extraordinary realities of large Complex Adaptive Systems that are connected many times by interests only.

As a theory of economics applied to organizational behavior, the Principal-Agent theory provides a realist perspective on the actions between a “Principal” and an “Agent.” Those same “agents” within the Complex Adaptive Systems theory, or the “players” within the Government Politics Model, seek advantage within their own interests by taking advantage of asymmetry. The farther away from direction, the more asymmetric the information between the principal and the agent, the more there are tendencies to shape information and create moral hazard. “A classic principal-agent problem occurs when *information asymmetries* make it hard for an employer to monitor the action of an employee, allowing the employee to act in a way that meets his or her needs, not those of the employer.”¹⁸ Further, in the arena of the Beltway, there forms *interest asymmetries* where vital interests in one camp may not be vital in another, creating tensions and opportunities. The recently produced Quadrennial Defense Review highlights the interest asymmetries between the Department of the Army and the DoD as the Army’s interest in the size of the force conflicts with the DoD's need to balance the budget.¹⁹

The moral hazard or slippage within agents occurs when they filter “information according to their own biases and deliberately distort the information to reinforce their views.”²⁰ Decision making within the Beltway is fraught with examples of the Principal-Agent theory in practice as influencers to decision makers seek to “shape” the message

internally, horizontally, and vertically in order to win the resourcing battle that is commonly referred to as “strategy.”

Strategy Defined

No true discussion of the decision making space of the Beltway AOR would be complete without tying the complexity of the Governmental Politics Model to an attempt to understand the true nature of “strategy” as a *term* within the context of the Beltway.

Though there are a range of definitions of both strategy and grand strategy, generally accepted are the ideas that *strategy* is “a concept for relating means to ends,”²¹ and *grand strategy* is “the capacity of the nation’s leaders to bring together all of the elements, both military and non-military, for the preservation and enhancement of the nation’s long term best interests.”²²

Yet a more realist set of ideas within the Complex Adaptive System of the Beltway posits that *strategy* is more realistically just a function of *priorities*, *resources*, and *risk*.²³ There are few if any contemporary examples of a theory of strategy, along the lines of George Kennan’s *Long Telegram*, mainly because of the absence of a perceived existential threat.²⁴ Instead, resources become the prime driver of defining what it is we can do.

Strategy emerges when the complexity of the Beltway begins to influence its formulation and follow-through. The combinations of the separation of powers with the checks and balances in the process reveal the reality that resources drive strategy, and that strategy is a reflection of priorities (which are different depending on where you sit), and risk. Risk becomes a nuanced understanding of what one can and cannot do, and from a political perspective is explained in the form of preservation of options and governance conducted through the lens of re-election.

A Framework for Developing Political Judgment

Pulling from a few theories focused on organizations, decision making, behavior, and strategy, we can begin to form a loose understanding of the Beltway AOR as an operating environment. Is there an environmental frame that can quickly allow the context behind strategy formulation within the Beltway AOR to emerge?

This paper proposes there is a way to “frame” the Beltway AOR to assist the strategist in comprehending the complex, the shifting nature of the environment, and from that understanding shape the context as a Beltway strategist. This is the basis of developing the political judgment and awareness necessary for success.

Policy, Process, Politics, and Personality: The 4-Ps

These four factors (policy, process, politics, and personality) influence every contextual issue within the Joint, Inter-agency, Inter-governmental and Multi-National (JIIM) environment of the Beltway AOR. Influenced by “interests” and “time,” the interconnected “Ps” interact through the tensions that lie within “strategy” as a function of “priorities,” “resources,” and “risk.” Using the preceding models to enhance the understanding underlying the 4-Ps, this framework gives the Beltway strategist a start point to understand the interconnected realities that drive behaviors, alliances, and partnerships. Granularity is achieved when the strategist understands the relations of different parts of the model to each other. The next portion of this paper will look at each component of the model.

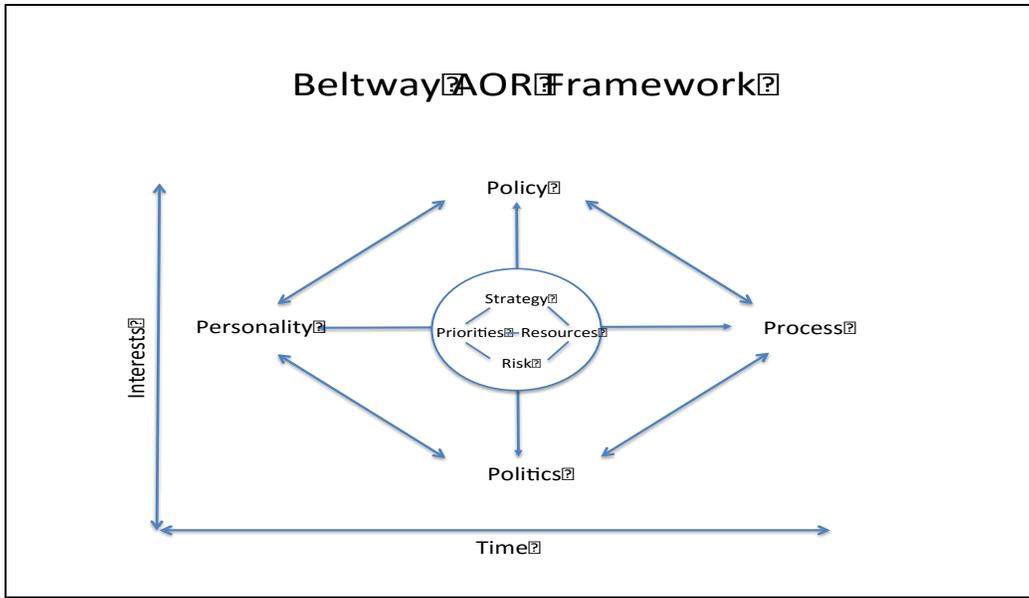


Figure 1. Beltway AOR Framework

Policy

Whether through statute, regulation, speech or article, policy defines the playing field. It outlines the *authorities* and *responsibilities* that become a start point in understanding equities within the Beltway. The legal interpretations of those authorities and responsibilities become part of the interplay within the 4-*Ps*.

As we learned earlier, policy within Complex Adaptive Systems “drift.” With new leaders or new precedents, the authorities and responsibilities can potentially shift over time under the opportunity of punctuated equilibrium, or the re-calibration of organizational norms as a function of addressing a Principal-Agent challenge. As in Syria, the red line response by the President was perceived as a form of policy, which the different elements of the government began to react to in the late summer of 2013. Through established policy, the ways and means of implementing policy, lead us to “process.”

Process

As a short hand for bureaucracy, processes are the workflows, approval processes, and precedents based on previous action or tradition, which become opportunities or threats within the operating environment. Processes can be used to accelerate or decelerate an interest in direct relation to both politics and personality. As a “Complex Adaptive System,” the composition of the agents and structures seek to establish equilibrium. With constant inputs in the form of reactions to critical events, established precedents, guidance, and drift, two concepts from the discussion of theory become apparent in relation to process outputs:

- *Organizational Drift.* Large organizations develop their own culture and processes that feed internally to create what the outside observer would think is a singularly static and monolithic set of behaviors which defy understanding. As a Complex Adaptive System, processes born from precedent seeking to solve an internally relevant set of challenges will drift over time, decoupling original design from current reality. Applying the Governmental Politics Model to a Complex Adaptive System, we can begin to dissect the why and the what behind organizational decisions.
- *Organizational Capacity.* There exists an equilibrium point within which an organization can effectively accomplish its mission in relation to time and resources. When priorities—written, verbal, or non-verbal—emerge that do not emphasize the need to create, harmony, the rationalization process of work translates into a prioritization that de-emphasizes the importance of unified effort and potentially creates internally focused outcomes.

The Diplomacy, Development, Defense Planning Guide (3D Planning Guide) functions as an example of a “process.”²⁵ Interestingly the formulation of the 3D approach to inter-agency planning seemed to be an offshoot of the relationship between two key principal agents in the form of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Yet, drift started to emerge as these two key drivers of

the process departed and departmental equities, in the form of capacity, no longer saw the importance of the process.

Politics

As a Beltway strategist, it is important to understand political positioning, the political mind, and the motivations behind the political mind. Balancing multiple stakeholders, internal and external constituencies, and keeping options available until absolutely necessary, are just the start point to understanding how politics, as a reality, impact decision making.

Clearly recognizing the reality of ideology, as an influencing factor within the interface between the 4-Ps, is critical to developing good political judgment as a strategist. Whether it is the realism, idealism, or constructivism approach to international relations, or the tax or spend agendas behind domestic politics, developing an understanding of the ideology behind politics, and the reverberation to the other 3-Ps, creates conditions conducive to political judgment and awareness.

There are few instances within political psychology of a “pattern” associated with political personalities. As a link to the 4th “P” of personality, what becomes apparent in the literature is that “there is sufficient variation in situations, problems, and opportunities faced by leaders--both presidents and ordinary leaders--that no single cluster of public, consistent behaviors has much of an effect on performance.”²⁶

Personality

Whether serving as a political appointee, government civilian, think tank personality, lobbyist, or military officer, the ability to create relationships counts. It is first among equals. It frames and shapes the Beltway discussion. The weight of interests and the ability to create persuasive arguments, as well as create and leverage

relationships, are as much a factor in understanding contextual issues as the other 3-Ps.

Though Complex Adaptive Systems and the Governmental Politics Model seek to look holistically at a system of decision making, it is the judgments and decision making of individuals that create the organizational drift, create the information asymmetries, or create opportunities in a period of punctuated equilibrium. Who really knows the political calculus behind President Obama's decision to defer to Congress on the authorization of force in Syria, but it lends itself to the power of personality in shaping the political landscape with the connection to policy, process, and politics.

Time/Interests

Surrounding the 4-Ps are the twin drivers of time—which impacts energy and attention—and interests. Linked to the 4-Ps *time* and *interests* can determine organizational capacity (bandwidth) and focus. Hill asserts:

Timing is an art, and time is precious. Timing is the pace of surveillance and intervention in a system. A leader must tread a fine line between avoiding the early abandonment of an effective intervention and avoiding the delayed abandonment of an ineffective intervention; or between concluding too soon and waiting too long to determine that a causal relationship exists.²⁷

Interest, in relation to politics and personality, further defines the playing field within the Beltway AOR. Interest can develop externally or internally, and “where you stand depends on where you sit . . . Knowledge of the organizational seat at the table yields significant clues about a likely stand.”²⁸

An understanding of time and true interest may describe both the tactics and the reason behind the deference for authorization for the use of force to Congress in Syria.

Strategy as a function of Priorities-Resources-Risk

At the center of the connections of the 4-Ps is a diamond of concerns focused on strategy as a function of priorities, resources, and risk. Though there are arguments in many circles as to what comes first, strategy or resources, it is clear within the Beltway AOR that they are linked, and a concrete reality. They are therefore the prism by which the 4-Ps pass through in connection with one another.

Understanding the complexities of Beltway strategy formulation and the myriad of actors involved--as a Complex Adaptive System in itself--arms the Beltway strategist with understanding that “effecting a desired change in a complex, adaptive system is about probabilities, not certainties.”²⁹

Strategy as a function of priorities, resources, and risks shapes the equilibrium of a Complex Adaptive System, balances and reconciles organizational drift, and provides a point from which to shift as the Beltway strategist lays out options to principals.

Increasing Granular Understanding

Balancing and building “context” by understanding the inter-relationships between the 4-Ps can focus understanding of strategy, and increase probabilities.

Freedman emphasizes that:

A gifted strategist will be able to see the future possibilities inherent in the next moves, and think through successive stages. The ability to think ahead is therefore a valuable attribute in a strategist, but the starting point will still be the challenges of the present rather than the promise of the future.³⁰

As we connect elements of the 4-P model together we begin to see totality and therefore linkages and granularity. Understanding the cost/benefit of action or inaction, comprehending political capital and the need to preserve options, seeing the power differentials between opposing ideas or policy options, all reveal themselves through

thorough analysis. That same analytical approach to dissecting the 4-Ps allows the Beltway strategist to understand shifts in equities over time. You begin to see elements of the Melian dialogue where the "the strong do as they can and the weak suffer what they must,"³¹ while at the same time identifying the operating space within the Beltway AOR to shape the environment.

But there is risk in making the complex comprehensible through a framework. Inevitably, a simplistic framework for understanding the Beltway AOR lends itself to a reality check. The fear is that models such as the 4-P model soothes: "(1) Our collective preference for simplicity; (2) our aversion to ambiguity and dissonance; (3) our deep-rooted need to believe we live in an orderly world; and (4) our seemingly incorrigible ignorance of the laws of chance."³²

Framework Conclusion

Political judgment and awareness within the Beltway AOR means: being comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty. Through trial and error the Beltway strategist can develop the instinct to see the angles around issues and strategies on behalf of institutional interests. There is no doubt that experience counts when operating within the Beltway AOR, and the learning curve should be extrapolating if preparation and study persist. The 4-P model is one framework to build context, and then to be able to operate within the unique space that is the Beltway. But it should not be considered the final answer. Institutionally we can do more.

Recommendations to the Army

This paper has been about developing the political judgment to operate within the unique operating space that is defined by the Beltway AOR. Based on theories of organizational behavior, political science, and one officer's experience, the 4-P model is

just one way to create context and foster political judgment as a strategist or senior leader. But are there recommendations to the Army, as an institution, that can better prepare future strategists and leaders to not only survive, but dominate the complex environment of the Beltway AOR? As an extension of the JIIM construct, how can we better create political judgment and awareness within our Army's officer corps?

Below are recommendations to the Army that are focused on the human aspects of selection, education, and experience as components to developing the political judgment to operate effectively in the Beltway AOR.

Exposure and Experience to Build Political Judgment and Awareness

Career selection earlier in the officer life-cycle to exposure and experience within the Beltway AOR will lead to cumulative long-term benefits for the Army, the GCCs, and the Joint Staff in being able to develop unified action.

Consistent exposure earlier to how the Beltway works is an attempt to create the political judgment equivalent to Napoleon's *Coup d'oeil* or Clausewitz's military genius. Awareness through the constant exposure and problem solving over time will naturally create a capability of value to the JIIM environment.

Strategic-Level Educational Opportunities Should Come Earlier

Consider the "when" in educating strategic leadership competencies unique to the Beltway AOR. Earlier exposure to the constructs as taught at the United States Army War College will create the mental models and conditions for more nuanced understanding.

Assignments need to focus on true broadening as opposed to development. Expose those selected to operate within the Beltway AOR to broadening assignments that force a re-framing of cognitive models. Rather than a developmental, or skill set

development assignment, the exposure to different modes of thinking forces creative approaches to solving problems directly impacting the contribution of the Beltway strategist.

Selection for Operating Within the Beltway AOR Should Be Competitive and Desired, but Balanced

The requirement for an earlier education focused on understanding of strategic level concepts, coupled with consistent exposure and experience to the unique aspects of the Beltway AOR, in order to create nuanced political judgment must attract the best and the brightest. A competitive selection process balanced against operational opportunities can create the desire in the force, and also mitigate the risk against a negative perception. Additionally, the functional area approach to assignments will allow the Beltway strategist to understand the needs of the Army and the Joint Force by continuous exposure to operational and tactical assignments.

Conclusion

We have seen how it happened: not a single event, or even a chain of events, but in a great web of contingency. . . To study an event . . . is to discover a dense web of contingency, in which many people made choices within a structure of relationships.³³

In David Hackett Fischer's seminal work *Washington's Crossing*, he describes the beginning of the political culture of the United States through the lens of Washington's crossing of the Delaware in 1776. The "web of contingency, in which many people made choices within a structure of relationships"³⁴ accurately captures the operating environment that defines the contemporary Area of Responsibility (AOR) of the Washington D.C. "Beltway." Though "Beltway," as a term of reference has many connotations, in the context of this paper it seeks to create a shorthand for the interplay

of the separation of powers, and the collage of interests that have emerged to define what it means to create strategy and unified action within the purview of this distinctly American AOR.

Though focused from a perspective of the defense environment, the 4-P model, emphasizing a framework relationship between policy, process (bureaucracy), politics, and personality; the twin forcing functions of time and interests; and the lens of strategy as a function of priorities, resources, and risk, give the Beltway strategist in any policy domain a start point for contextual analysis. Whether working in Defense, Diplomacy, or Development, the constant of the 4-Ps resonates across the totality of the Beltway.

But it is only a framework. A start point for seeking clarity in what is a constantly shifting environment that recognizes complexity, seeks constant advantage, and values relationships and intellect. In the framework is risk, if not ground in an understanding of organizational behavior, political science, strategic leadership, and strategic planning.

The Army is in a position, as a service, to create a competitive advantage within itself by dedicating a portion of the education and human resourcing mechanisms to create the *coup d'oeil*, or the “gift of being able to see at a glance the possibilities offered by the terrain,”³⁵ within the force. The “terrain” in this case is the unique operating environment--the web of contingency--that defines the Washington D.C. Beltway.

Endnotes

¹ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Publication 1-02 (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, November 8, 2010), 24.

² David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 364.

³ Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy, A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 613.

⁴ Fisher, *Washington's Crossing*, 364.

⁵ Thomas G. Mahnken, *United States Strategic Culture* (Defense Threat Reduction Agency, Advanced Systems and Concepts Office, November 13, 2006), 1.

⁶ Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision, Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1999), 302.

⁷ Andrew Hill, *An Introduction to Complex Adaptive Systems*, Working Paper (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2013), quoting Melanie Mitchell, *Complexity: A Guided Tour* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

¹⁰ Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 255.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 258.

¹² *Ibid.*, 260.

¹³ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "Equilibrium," <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/punctuated%20equilibrium> (accessed March 20, 2014)

¹⁴ Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 304.

¹⁵ Scott Snook, *Friendly Fire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 194.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 194-5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹⁸ Daniel L. Byman, "Friends like These, Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism," *International Security* 31 (Fall 2006): 89.

¹⁹ Chuck Hagel, *Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, March 2014).

²⁰ Byman, "Friends like These," 90.

²¹ Carl H. Builder, *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1989), 49.

²² Tami Davis Biddle, *NSPS AY 14 Directive, 20130905, Lesson 5, Grand Strategy Intro*, 36, quoting Paul Kennedy.

²³ Interview with CSIS, non-attribution discussion, February 2014, February 17, 2009.

²⁴ George Keenan, "The Long Telegram," <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm> (accessed March 20, 2014).

²⁵ 3D Planning Guide, "Diplomacy, Development, Defense, Pre-decisional Working Draft," July 31, 2012, <http://www.usaid.gov/documents/1866/diplomacy-development-defense-planning-guide> (accessed March 20, 2014).

²⁶ David G. Winter, "Personality and Political Behavior," in *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, ed David O. Sears, Leonie Huddy and Robert Jervis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 119.

²⁷ Hill, *An Introduction to Complex Adaptive Systems*, 17.

²⁸ Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 207.

²⁹ Hill, *An Introduction to Complex Adaptive Systems*, 16.

³⁰ Freedman, *Strategy, A History*, 611.

³¹ Robert B. Strassler, *The Landmark Thucydides, A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 352.

³² Hill, *An Introduction to Complex Adaptive Systems*, 5.

³³ Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, 364.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Freedman, *Strategy, A History*, 613.