

Concept

Strategic Inferiority in National Security¹

01.31.2007

Definition

The concept “Strategic Inferiority in National Security” describes a situation in which the tools and resources utilized in the service of the national objectives of one party are less relevant than the tools and resources of its adversary. Consequently, the inferior side is expected to fail in achieving its national objectives.

Background

The concepts "strategic inferiority" and "strategic superiority" stem from the military realm and are used to measure the strength of one's army in relation to the enemy's strength. In this realm, strategic inferiority or superiority is determined in light of military resources and capabilities, organizational structure and operational doctrine of the security forces, terrain, climate, etc.

In the political realm, states' strength is assessed by numerous elements, primarily military power, economic power, strategic alignments and international relations. Additional elements include, inter alia, size of population and territory, geographic location, accessibility of natural resources, technological abilities, political culture, efficiency of decision-making processes and even solidarity within its society.²

The National Security Concept of a state is at the core of its strength. The National Security Concept articulates the nature in which a state mobilizes the entirety of the elements of strength in light of the environment in which it operates and in service of its objectives.

Strategic inferiority or superiority in national security develops when one party's National Security Concept is more relevant than another's. This relevancy is achieved as a result of definition of achievable goals and objectives, a richer understanding of the strategic environment and the trends which design it, awareness of the advantages and disadvantages of all sides, and creativity in designing political, military and economic tools.³

A strategically inferior party is expected to experience repeated disappointments vis-à-vis a strategically superior adversary. Nevertheless, strategic inferiority does not mean that victory on the battlefield is impossible. However, in the long term, over a course of many confrontations, a strategically superior party will achieve its objectives at the expense of the strategically inferior party.

¹ Acknowledgements - The Reut Institute would like to thank Dr. Zvi Lanir, founder of the Praxis Institute and author of **Fundamental Surprises** (Tel Aviv: Center for Strategic Studies, 1983, in Hebrew) for his contributions to this document. Nevertheless, the Reut Institute is solely accountable for the content of this document.

² Charles Kegley and Eugene Wittkopf, **World Politics: Trends and Transformation**, (Wadsworth, 2006), pp. 444-445.

³ Relevancy gaps are likely to occur as a result of three principal reasons which create difficulties to deal with the changing reality: 'cognitive problems, 'organizational rigidity' and 'political constrains.' See Lanir Zvi, **Relevancy Gap**, Praxis, (Tel Aviv 2006), and Max Bazerman and Michael Watkins, **Predictable Surprises**, (Harvard Business School Press, 2004), pp. 69-152.

End.