

Bohuslava MIHALČOVÁ

Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa w Nowym Sączu

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REFLECTIONS OF BOTH THE STRATEGIC THINKING AND MANAGING OF CLASSICS

Summary

Dynamics of the external environment requires the company's management to anticipate future developments, continuously analyse and monitor their environment, search for new opportunities, and objectively evaluate the potential of the company with sufficient advance to prepare an appropriate strategy for future development and prosperity.

With the growing pressure to improve strategic management of organizations, companies employ outstanding managers – strategists whose main task is to ensure the long-term success of an organization in challenging, changing and heavy influenced (to-be or not to-be) environment. Several variables play significant roles and it is difficult to predict them. This paper discusses the concepts of strategic management with an emphasis on creating a suitable business strategy. Its benefit is the comparison of the ideas of military strategists and underlying of parallels in nowadays-strategic management.

Key words: strategic thinking, company, business strategy, military strategy.

Streszczenie

Dynamika środowiska zewnętrznego wymaga od kierownictwa firmy przewidywania przyszłych zmian, ciągłej analizy i monitorowania ich otoczenia, poszukiwania nowych możliwości i obiektywnej oceny potencjału firmy z wystarczającym wyprzedzeniem, aby przygotować odpowiednią strategię dla przyszłego rozwoju i dobrobytu.

Wraz z rosnącą presją na poprawę zarządzania strategicznego w organizacjach, firmy zatrudniają wybitnych menedżerów – strategów, których głównym zadaniem jest zapewnienie długofalowego sukcesu organizacji w trudnym, zmiennym i ciężkim otoczeniu (przyszłym lub nie). Kilka zmiennych odgrywa znaczącą rolę i trudno je przewidzieć. Artykuł omawia pojęcia zarządzania strategicznego z naciskiem na stworzenie odpowiedniej strategii biznesowej. Jego zaletą jest porównanie pomysłów strategów wojskowych i porównanie z dzisiejszym zarządzaniem strategicznym.

Słowa kluczowe: myślenie strategiczne, firma, strategia biznesowa, strategia wojenna.

1. What is strategy?

People for several hundred even thousands of years think about strategy. It is through, that strategy was primarily formulating and practically realising the aims and goals of César, Pharaohs, Kings, and Knights. Military generals, marshals and admirals implemented these goals practical ways through military operations. In today's life when we run modern economy both the business leaders and business theorists try to develop modern frames of historically proved ideas in economy environment. It is not simple to take up one definition or say definitive answer about what strategy really is about. People think about strategy in different ways. Some people believe that first of all we suppose to analyse the present situation carefully,

anticipate changes in market or industry environment, and, from this point of view, plan how we succeed in the future. Meanwhile, others think that the future is just too difficult to predict, and they prefer to evolve their strategies organically (Manktelow et al., 2017).

The notion of strategy originated from the Greek word „strategia” – the science of being in general. Gradually, this concept transfers from military to the business of economic units as the science of the company's future existence, the form of existence of the company in the future, the idea of its behaviour in the future.

One of the oldest definition of the strategy comes from A. Chandler (1962), who defines the strategy as „determining the underlying long-term goals of an enterprise, how to achieve them, and allocating the resources needed to achieve these goals”.

G. Johnson, K. Scholes and R. Whittington (2006, 2010) in their books *Exploring Corporate Strategy* stress that strategy determines the direction and scope of an organization over the long term, and they say that it should determine how resources should be configured to meet the needs of markets and stakeholders.

M. Porter (1996), a strategy expert and professor at Harvard Business School, emphasizes the need for strategy to define and communicate an organization's unique position, and says that it should determine how organizational resources, skills, and competencies should be combined to create competitive advantage.

H. Mintzberg (1973), a representative of the untraditional approach, defined the strategy as five P:

- plan;
- ploy;
- pattern;
- position;
- perspective.

The strategy represents the design and implementation of an overall concept whereby an enterprise seeks to achieve a target market position in competition with other competitors.

Strategy is always a combination of rational and irrational factors. Rational factors are so-called „computable components of the strategy”, e.g. costs, results of the business, various types of profitability of the company and others. Among the irrational factors (non-computable components of the strategy), we advise the qualitative attributes of the strategy, behaviour of the organization, its image, prestige, public behaviour, ideas of competition and others. General opinion is that if we have higher larger number of rational components, than we may have better strategy.

As we meant above the strategy consists of several types in different ways. For example, depending on the relationship, the company's business objectives are with the intentions of others, especially competitors.

Successful strategies obviously include cost leadership strategy, differentiation strategy, and targeted (focus) strategy, divided into two options. The first one is prone to costs (hybrid strategy) and the other tends to differentiation. There are some other authors like W. Chan Kim and R. Mauborgne (2004) who unlike Porter in their work *Blue Ocean Strategy* emphasize that companies, through Value Innovation, create sophisticated competition by striving for differentiation and low cost. However, this effort will only be temporary because the newly created „blue ocean” as a key issue the competitors (Kim, Mauborgne, 2004). Even knows the strategies need to be maintained and renewed.

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2. The purpose of the article and methodology

Our intent in this article is to pick up the recent views on strategic thinking of some authors and show up their ancestries in practical aspects within the enterprises. We also underline approaches and opinions of ancient even questioned strategists. We started to work on our article with accent on content analyze of paper works from great authors, then we studied classics from even methodological point of view. Our research proved that scientific coupled methods such as analyses – synthesis, induction – deduction were so important for them even for us in our today's business. From this point of view we implemented analyses of theoretical works of classics from management and economics. We use the method of comparison to find out of differences even similarities in their opinions. Simply we may say, if we study classics carefully, it gave us realized, their thoughts are valid for today reality and we may be surprised how much we may transfer even implement in our daily routine and company effort to be the best within competitors. In our article we also advice some steps how to improve present strategic thinking with use of thoughts of managerial and economy classics.

3. Strategic management and planning

Business strategy is being created in the strategic management process. What we currently use as a strategic management in the management of companies or a public-sector organization has emerged and used in the ancient world to in order achieve military or socio-political goals. Among the most important strategists of the ancient world were Perikles, Philip II Macedonian or Alexander the Great in ancient Greece. Approximately within similar period, the strategy was developed in ancient China as well. It was primarily about the formation of the military strategy of art.

The strategy was not used initially for managing the company. The basics of the theory of management at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries concentrated on achieving higher labour productivity and costs reducing. The main topics in the management were the specializations of work, the calculation of performances to a minimum of time and cost, respectively seeking for a harmonization of work organization. Planning was short-term and focused on the company's activities in terms of their effectiveness. Long-term plans and planning were introduced into corporate practice only later in mid-20th century. During that period various methods and techniques of long-term planning were also developed. Long-term plans based on existing figures (mainly on sales figures, costs, or other intra-company indicators were devoted from expected company development with focus on target values that these indicators should have in the future. However, these values were set by managers. J. Papula and Z. Papulová (2012) explains the plans were more than mere wishes, unconfirmed, no doubt they unsupported strategy.

Strategic management is a process that begins by setting goals, continuing with environmental analysis, identifying strategy variants, selecting a suitable variant, implementing it, and ending with feedback. Naturally, we need to start with strategic planning, which is primarily the process of defining strategy, process of allocating business resources to implement the strategy. However, unlike strategic management, the process is discontinuous.

When you want benefits, start with planning them. Everything you plan put on the weight. On one side there are planned benefits (you would like to learn Spanish or build your house or marry someone...). On the other side there are resources and time to spent them to achieve these benefits. If your benefits don't outweigh resources then leave your plan, because it would be waste of your time and money. Your decision must be balanced at any given time.

As we said before strategic planning is the first phase of strategic management. Strategic management is the collection of ongoing activities and processes that organizations use to coordinate and align resources and actions with mission, vision and strategy throughout an organization. Strategy is the key notion for strategic management, or strategic planning. Strategy includes processes of formulation and implementation; strategic planning helps coordinate both. Strategy in general is the manner of the fight. Tactics is a tool for fight. The fundamental tasks for starting planning are such:

- Where are we now? (Assessment);
- Where do we need to be? (Gap / Future End State);
- How will we close the gap (Strategic Plan);
- How will we monitor our progress (Balanced Scorecard).

The strategic planning is a process. Strategic plan has an irreplaceable place in the business plan system. The corporate plan is transformed into a strategic one, planning falls within the implementation phase of the strategic management process. Strategic plan directs the operation of functional organizational units so that they define objectives, programs and strategies that are consistent and linked to the goals of the organization. Sometimes we want to say: „Well, it's a strategic plan”, but that's not true unless you bring into it the external data. If you don't involve external data, such as what your customers think, what they want, what you competitors are doing, what's happening in your environment, you are not going to have a strategic plan. You are just going to have a plan! We can state following components strategic planning:

- defines what businesses we are in;
- establishes vision, mission, goals and objectives;
- chooses strategy;
- determines actions to accomplish goals;
- establishes investment and resource allocation priorities.

The overall goal of strategic planning is to produce a workable plan.

Mission statement is the essence of why the organization exists – Who we are what we do? It explains the basic needs that you fulfil and expresses the core values of the organization. Mission is best stated in the present tense, because it answers three questions:

- What?
- For whom?
- Why?

Vision is a statement about our desired state, where we want to go, and is best stated in the future tense. The mission, vision and core values are the foundation of our strategic plan.

Goals are long term objectives. We must to cascade them. Cascaded goals mean that everybody in the organization knows what their pieces of the strategy in the plan are.

Objectives compel the organization into action. Several objectives are needed to meet goals. Every objective must be SMART. After setting goals we must do environment analysis. The components of environment are macroeconomic environment, microeconomic environment and company environment.

Analysing the macro-environment of the company:

1. Demographic environment is most important! – When we want to make business, we must know the trends in this environment. WHAT FOR? Because demographics is about natality, mortality, gender, differences between cities and villages....

2. Economic environment. First component of economic environment is: EXCHANGE RATE (ER). Lots of companies are involved in international business, therefore it is very important to monitor the trends of exchange rate development. ER affects both the export and import of company products. When ER in our country decreases, it is an opportunity for our company to sell much more products, because they are cheaper on the international market. Second component is ECONOMIC GROWTH (EG). When EG is positive then it results in growth of purchasing power, higher wages or salaries, higher consumption and higher standard of living. Third component of economic environment is INTEREST RATE. When interest rate increases, it is more difficult for companies to get loans because they are more expensive. When interest rates decrease, there are more opportunities to get loans (loans are cheaper). Fourth component of economic environment is INFLATION. It causes devaluation of currency. High level of inflation is a negative factor of doing business. Inflation destabilizes market prices.

3. Legislative and political environment. Legislative and political environment includes laws, directives, and government agencies as well as lobby groups. The analysis of the environment is aimed to create and support a stable environment through its representatives. All of that must be provided with respect to human rights, basic freedom and democracy.

4. Technical and technological environment. The rate of the development in technology is directly affecting the rate of economic growth. Every change in the technology does not only influence the external environment of the company, but also the company's ability to innovate and push further its activities at a higher level of technology.

5. Social and cultural environment. Social and cultural environment represents a set of patterns of behaviour in the society and cultures.

6. Ecological environment. It is concerned with the laws of ecology and movements, respecting them while doing business.

A comprehensively/thoroughly developed analysis of the external environment provides us an overview of potential changes in the macro-environment in long-term horizons (namely the opportunities and threats a company is to face when dealing with the external environment).

Analysing the micro-environment (branch-related environment)

When analysing a branch, our attention is focused on investigating the influences of these groups. Changes in their behaviour can be of crucial impact on the company and its activities. The groups are competition, customers, suppliers and other critical factors (e.g. substitutes).

Choosing a strategy

External and internal analysis is given in the form of a SWOT analysis. It synthesis serves as an initial point for choosing a strategy. Choosing strategy means developing strategy variants defined by the goals of the company, its internal strength and weaknesses, external opportunities and threats (Slávik, 2013). Strategy at the level of entrepreneurship is the strategy of the company, which is active only in one branch, or a strategy of a single, independent business entity, which is made up of several business units (plants, subsidiaries, divisions...). Strategy at company level is forming business activities oriented on various branches do maximize long-term profits by the company. Top management teams (TMT) can enhance entrepreneurial orientation (EO) in dynamic environments. From an upper echelons perspective, it can use external advice-seeking and TMT absorptive capacity and interactively impact the ability of top managers to enhance economic environment when environments are dynamic (van Doorn, Heyden, Volberda, 2017).

Implementation of strategy represents an important part of the strategic management as formulating a strategy. Success depends on the course of actions. The Action Plan identifies the specific steps that will be taken to achieve the initiatives and strategies. It describes:

- who does what;
- when it will be completed;
- how the organization knows when steps are completed.

If we have several action plans, we may have to prioritize. When implemented, its functioning must be continuously monitored. Feedback serves to confirm the existing goals and strategies or recommending changes.

4. Findings

Strategy is the organized deployment of resources to achieve specific objectives, something that business and warfare have in common. In the 1980s business strategists realized that there was a vast knowledge base stretching back thousands of years that they had barely examined. They turned to military strategy for guidance. Military strategy books like *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu, *On War* by von Clausewitz, and *The Little Red Book* by Mao Zedong became business classics.

4.1. Strategic links from ancient strategist to present

One of most prominent strategists was Perikles. In the year 462 BC led alongside another Athens politician, Efialto, a fundamental supporter of the democratic path, the victorious political struggle against the powerful aristocratic conservative council of the Isopag. Pericles formulated the definition of a strategist, based on his own perception of his success, which, despite many centuries, did not lose his meaning and suggests the strength and success of the strategists. According to Perikl: „The strategist is the one who has more abilities than anyone else can see what might happen and know what he sees”.

Based on this definition, a strategist should see what others do not see, j. he should be a visionary – know how to anticipate and develop. It is equally important to be a leader, j. could work with people, to know others to motivate and to convince them about the effectiveness, the positives and the feasibility of their ideas, their strategy.

Leonidas I

The Spartan warrior and king entered history by leading the last battle in the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC, in which he bounced with a small number of soldiers a huge Persian force. This manoeuvre allowed the remnants of his Greek allies to escape. Teaches today's managers to prefer their team ahead of themselves. Leonidas, as a leader, realized that if he wants to secure freedom for Greece, the welfare of his soldiers takes precedence over his own well-being.

Filip II Macedonian was born around 382 BC. He was the son of King Amynte III and Eurydice. After the death of his elder brother, he became king. During his reign he underwent a major military reform that began the most famous period of the old Macedon. He managed to stabilize the internal as well as the foreign situation and gradually started an expansive. Filip II formed an army, who was refreshed by regular training. The essence of the reform, however, was the introduction of a heavy ride, composed of its hetairoi, and the organization of infantry as phalanges. He used in his policy not only military force and diplomacy, but also advantageous dynastic trusts (LIVIUS.org, 2017).

Alexander the Great

Alexander the Great dominated not only the tactics and strategy, but also what could be envied by several current finance ministers. He saved the country's menu from being protected from inflation and bankruptcy. On the other hand, Alexander the Great talked about the danger of burnout. After his tired army in India was forced to return, he completely burnt down. Even the most talented leaders need to know when to quit or stop fighting. But Alexander did not realize about this. So, by doing large scale of tasks he was exhausted, and such situation led to his premature death in 323 BC. He passed away in his age of 32 years.

Sun Tzu

Hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, there was a period in China known as the Age of Warring States. This was a period of great conflict and uncertainty as seven states fought for survival & control of China. These states sought out any means of gaining advantage over their opponents to win; those with knowledge on strategy & leadership was especially sought after. It was at that time when there arose a general from the state of Ch'i known as Sun Tzu. His ability to win victories for his warlord gained him fame and power

To hand down the wisdom he had gained from his years of battles Sun Tzu wrote a book, The Art of War, that became the classic work on strategy in China. His book, which details a complete philosophy on how to decisively defeat one's opponent, has given guidance to military theorists and generals throughout the ages (McNeilly, 2015b).

Parallels between Sun Tzu principles of strategy and the art of business:

1. Use speed and preparation to swiftly overcome the competition. To fully exploit foreknowledge and deception, Sun Tzu states that companies must be able to act with blinding speed. To move with speed does not mean that they do things hastily. Speed requires much preparation. Reducing the time, it takes your company to make decisions, develop products and service customers is critical. To think through and understand potential competitive reactions to your attacks is essential as well.

2. Capture business market without destroying it. Since the goal of company business is to survive and prosper, it must capture its market. However, company must do so in such a way that its market is not destroyed in the process. A company can do this in several ways, such as attacking parts of the market that are under-served or by using subtle, indirect, and low-key approach that will not draw a competitor's attention or response. What should be avoided at all costs is a price-war. Research has shown that price attacks draw the quickest and most aggressive responses from competitors, as well as leaving the market drained of profits.

3. Avoid your competitor's strength and attack their weakness. You should focus on the competition's weakness, which maximizes your gains while minimizing the use of resources. This, by definition, increases profits.

4. Use alliances and strategic control points in the industry to „shape” opponents of the company and make them conform to its will. „Shaping your competition” means changing the rules of contest and making the competition conform to desires of the company and its actions. It means taking control of the situation away from its competitor and putting it in its own hands. One way of doing so is through the skilful use of alliances. By building a strong web of alliances, the moves of its competitors can be limited. Also, by controlling key strategic points in industry of the company, it will be able to call the tune to which its competitors dance.

5. Use foreknowledge & deception to maximize the power of business intelligence. To find and exploit your competitor's weakness requires a deep understanding of their executives' strategy, capabilities, thoughts and desires, as well as similar depth of knowledge of your own strengths and weaknesses.

6. Develop character as a leader to maximize the potential of your employees. Sun Tzu describes the many traits of the preferred type of leader. The leader should be wise, sincere, humane, courageous, and strict. Leaders must also always be „first in the toils and fatigues of the army”, putting their needs behind those of their troops. It is leaders with character that get the most out of their employees (McNeilly, 2015a).

Napoleon Bonaparte

Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), also known as Napoleon I, was a French military leader and emperor. Born on the island of Corsica, Napoleon rapidly rose of the military during the French Revolution (1789-1799). After taking over political power in France in a 1799, he crowned himself emperor in 1804. Ambitious and a skilled military strategist, Napoleon successfully waged war against various coalitions in Europe and expanded his empire. After taking over political power in France in a 1799, he crowned himself emperor in 1804. Ambitious and a skilled military strategist, Napoleon successfully waged war against various coalitions in Europe and expanded his empire. After a disastrous French invasion of Russia in 1812, Napoleon abdicated from throne two years later and was exiled to the island of Elba. In 1815, he briefly returned to power in his Hundred Days campaign. After the Battle of Waterloo, he abdicated once again and was exiled to the island of Saint Helena, where he died at 51 (Kovařík, 2017).

No doubt, one of the most notable and greatest leaders in history is Napoleon Bonaparte. Despite of many failures he was considered as an excellent strategist.

To understand how business strategists used military strategies, we can look at the innovations of Napoleon and apply them to business situations. Napoleon made four key innovations:

- 1) increased his army's speed of marching;
- 2) organized the army into independent units;

- 3) lived off the country resources (for example = e.g. when he attacked Italy, his army was poor and underfed. He fed his army from local resources);
- 4) attacked the opponent's lines of supply.

All four provide lessons for business strategists:

- 1) By increasing the speed that the army marched and fought, they created a military advantage. They could implement their tactics faster than the enemy. Businesses, like armies must operate faster than their competitors to have a competitive advantage.
- 2) Napoleon returned to the Roman legion organization, which were independent fighting units and had a wide variety of skills. Businesses also should be organized by functional specialization.
- 3) Napoleon's armies lived off the country instead of bringing supplies with them. This allowed them to march faster. Businesses today have found supply chain management to be a critically important part of making business.
- 4) Striking at the opponents' lines of supply is known as a flanking strategy. An attack on a poorly defended supply line can make the whole enemy army unable to fight.

Carl von Clausewitz

Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831) was a Prussian general and military theorist. Even though Carl von Clausewitz participated in many war trips, he was predominantly a theoretician who recorded very carefully all the important aspects of war he had observed. His life-long, but not finished, book is *Vom Kriege* (in English: *On war*) is a book on war and military strategy written mostly after the Napoleonic wars, between 1816 and 1830, and published posthumously by his wife Marie von Brühl in 1832. *On War* is formed by the first three volumes and represents his theoretical explorations. It is one of the most important treatises on political-military analysis and strategy ever written and remains both controversial and an influence on strategic thinking (Howard, Paret, 1989).

4.2. Utilizing warfare strategy to business

Business has gone through a dramatic transformation in recent years. So, has warfare. Every executive knows first-hand the daunting challenges of the twenty-first-century business environment: rapid and disruptive change, fleeting opportunities, incomplete information, an overall sense of uncertainty and disorder. While military commanders have long faced such challenges on the battlefield, meeting them has become even more difficult in today's world of electronic weaponry, blurred battle lines, and amorphous enemies.

Military strategy, like business strategy, has had to evolve in response to the changing environment. This has led to the growing focus on an approach to armed conflict called manoeuvre warfare. Recognized as a viable combat philosophy for the past 65 years, manoeuvre warfare risen to prominence in the past decade because it is so well suited to today's combat environment. Although designed for the battlefield, the approach offers a novel and useful way to think about business strategy, allowing executives to capitalize on – rather than succumb to – the formidable challenges they now face (Clemons, Martino, Santamaria, 2005).

Manoeuvre warfare represents Warfighting as „a state of mind bent on shattering the enemy morally and physically by paralyzing and confounding him, by avoiding his strength, by quickly and aggressively plaiting his vulnerabilities, and by striking him in a way that will hurt him most”. Its aim is not to destroy the adversary's forces but to render them unable to fight as an effective, coordinated whole. For example, instead of attacking enemy defence positions,

manoeuvre warfare practitioners bypass those positions, capture the enemy's command-and-control centre in the rear, and cut off supply lines. Moreover, manoeuvre warfare doesn't aim to avoid or resist the uncertainty and disorder that inevitably shape armed conflict; it embraces them as keys to vanquishing the foe.

Despite the oft-cited analogy between warfare and business, military principles clearly can't be applied wholesale in a business environment. The marketplace is not, after all, a battlefield, if only because lives aren't at stake. That said, companies do compete aggressively even viciously – for strategic advantage in a chaotic arena that is increasingly like the modern theatre of war.

Conclusion

Consequently, while the battle metaphor in some settings may seem facile or ill considered, we believe concept of manoeuvre warfare is directly relevant to business strategy, precisely because it has been developed address conditions that in many ways mirror those faced by modern executives. Furthermore, the approach – with its focus not on overpowering a rival but on outflanking him, targeting his weaknesses, and rendering him unable to analyse the situation – can help a company to achieve a decisive advantage with a minimal deployment of resources. This is of interest in today's business environment, when many companies are hesitant to over-commit their resources.

Warfare, in general, takes place on multiple levels. On the physical level, it is a test of firepower, weapons technology, troop strength, and logistics. At the psychological level, it involves intangibles such as morale, leadership, and courage. At the analytical level, it challenges the ability of commanders to assess complex battlefield situations, make effective decisions, and formulate tactically superior plans to carry out those decisions.

If these dimensions seem familiar to most business executives, so too will the four human and environmental factors that, according to Warfighting, shape military conflict. Friction is the phenomenon that, in the words of the manual, „makes the simple difficult and the difficult seemingly impossible”. The most obvious source of friction is the enemy, but it can also result from natural forces such as the terrain or the weather, internal forces such a lack of planning or coordination, or even mere chance.

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