

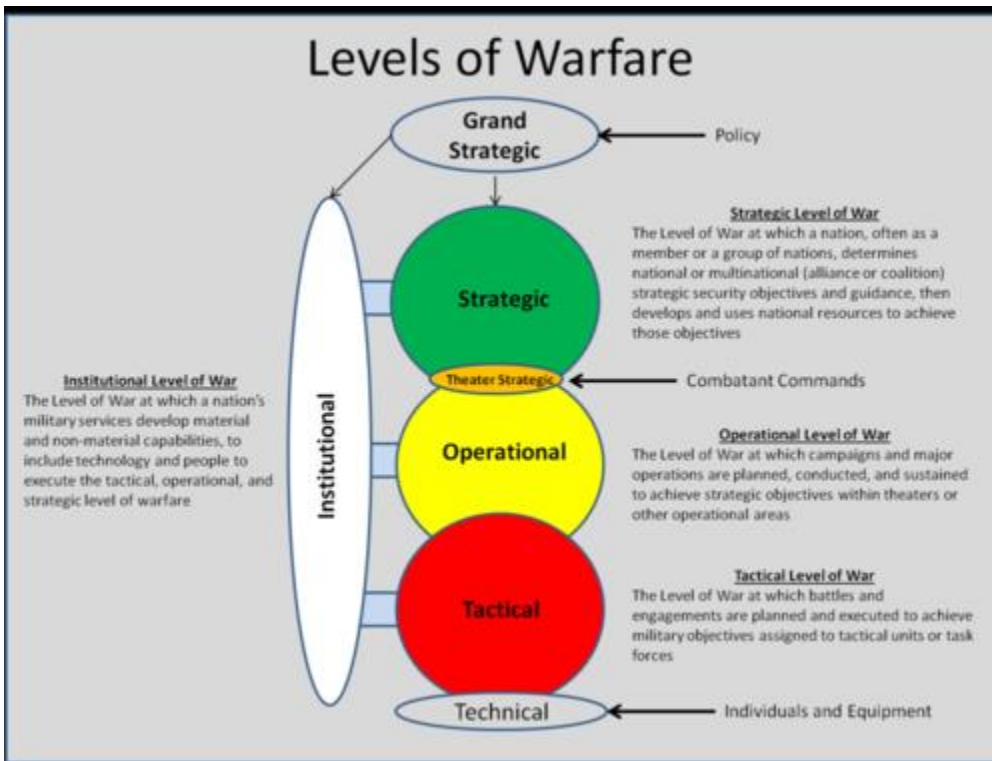
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## The OODA Loop & Strategic Thinking

(Pennsylvania Military Museum, T. Gum, Site Admin.)

Strategic thinking is made up of many things, and is dependent on context, desired outcome, and application. For this post - let us consider two parts of this mindset; one that has been applied knowingly by many on the battlefield and in the board room, and another that is used everyday but is not as well known.

First - three levels of thinking and planning;



Daniel Sukman, RealClearDefense, The Bridge

- Strategic
- Operational
- Tactical

At the strategic level time is spent on policy, desired outcomes. But to implement policy and achieve the desired outcomes the “how” must be clearly identified - this is the operational level. Then at the tactical level is the “who” and the actual execution of the necessary steps to achieve the goals that lead to the strategic objectives being met.

A second system of thought that is found more so at the tactical level is the OODA Loop. But that is not to say the OODA Loop is not used at the strategic level between state-actors making planned maneuvers politically, or militarily. The OODA Loop is made of four things;

- Observe
- Orient
- Decide
- Act

This is a system of thought that allows one to easily prioritize and execute based on real time information and systematic processing, as efficiently as possible. Used by countless military powers, the western-style of thought of military power and tactics is based on the experiences of COL Boyd during the Korean War.

Consider a boxing match, which is how Strategy Bridge expands the OODA Loop into being on the Half-Beat,:



OODA Loop, COL Boyd, Army War College.

The fighters approach each other, touch gloves and begin to *dance*. When the two fighters come into contact with one another they are immediately sizing each other up, **observing**, what provokes a reaction, and begin putting into place a plan, or, adjusting an existing plan, **orienting** him/herself. The boxer **decides** to throw a punch. To do so, he **acts** by placing his/her feet and body to throw said punch. Now back to **observation**... has the opponent reacting to the punch being setup? Has the punch landed properly? is a followup punch needed? Lastly... is the opponent completing their own OODA Loop faster and countering everyone of the moves?

A boxing match does not have the dire consequences of warfare between two States. However, it is a basic illustration of the Loop. The faster the Loop can be completed the more impactful the “punch” is to the opponent. Then if you’re truly on your game you begin to understand your opponent’s mindset and are able to base your moves/countermoves on the Loop they are completing.

Warfare is more than just putting lead down range. To be effective, war must be waged with multiple tools at your disposal – the fist and mind only being two of many critical pieces of the equation.