



SITUATIONAL STRATEGY: A TOOL FOR ENHANCING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper focused on the role of situational strategy as a tool for enhancing leadership capacity. The study builds on a three-thrust objective that emphasize contextual understanding of situational strategy, examining the psychological processes of thinking and its relevance to mastering situational strategy, and how to make the most of situational strategy to enhance leadership capacity. The paper emphasizes that despite scholarship efforts to classify strategy in deference to disciplinary perspectives, sift of the contents and contexts of the different types of strategy, the finesse to adopt exclusivity of content and content fail undermine the status of situational strategy as the basis of all strategy. Thus, all strategy is situational. Situation strategy helps to blind spots, to take control and advantage of conflicting or turbulent situations you find yourself no matter how bad they are or how badly you are prepared or equipped for it. In this paper situational strategy is portrayed with terms such as turbulence, storm, disruption and setbacks and results from upsets to process-progress of optimal which tactically rivals optimal strategy. The paper avers that situational strategy can either be opportunistic problematic, or both and can shift the balance of relevance among rivalling interests. The paper suggested that picturing unknown contentious bases to cover or picturing blind spots to surveil are crucial to simulating test-case contingency scenarios as signature for mastery of situational strategy. Accordingly resolving disruptions and turbulences require balancing between over-strategizing and under-strategizing. Finally, the paper submitted that the crux of situational strategy is developing an ingenious and alternative problem-solving approaches or strategy to handle the unknown. In conclusion the paper hinges on the importance of the psychological process to enhancing leadership capacity in crisis situations.

Keywords: Situational Strategy, Optimal Strategy, Deterrence Management, Tool, Leadership Capacity, Cognitive Process, Dual Thinking Process, Turbulence, Process-Progress, Strategy Decay, Case-Differentiation.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Uwa-Samuel, D. E. (2023). Situational strategy: a tool for enhancing leadership capacity. *International Journal of Institutional Leadership, Policy and Management*, 5(3), 384-392.

INTRODUCTION

Strategy has been differentiated to serve different scholarly and perhaps occupational perspectives. Whatever the case, the conceptualization of strategy is inherently situational. That is to say all organization's actions driven by thoughts processes are orchestrated for desired outcomes of events. Leaders need systems and structures to play in order to achieve their determined ends as fallout of expected events. All strategy kinds based on expected events fall short on being considered as situational strategy. Having said that, it must be understood that contextually all strategic events are situational with regard to efforts to wriggle out acceptable outcomes. This is to say that all efforts at distinguishing and classifying strategy rise and fall on the situation, which is the basis of appraisal and the problems arising in the thrust of the event.

It therefore falls to scholarship and empirical assertions to draw, drag, and drive back perspectives on strategy that is definitive of leadership. And that has to be relative to conceptual drawing board, operational templates, and psycho-emotive flashback conceived by earliest thinkers on the subject of strategy such as known to history and scholarship. Of these Sun Tsu and Aristotle rank among the known masterminds on evolving and evaluating strategy for leadership on the templates of philosophy, psychology and geography – with regard physical and mental space management.

Earliest thinkers and teachers offered strategy to leaders as a tool as typified by the mentorship of Aristotle over Alexander the Great (Rose, 2004). The beneficiary leaders then were kings, warriors, courtiers, statesmen, and at some points merchantmen. Strategy served a tool, or penetrative psychology to drive through massive walls of illusive thinking of the opposing numbers – the kings and warriors up in arms, at war, or in diplomatic engagements, and as at now the psychological process was based on leveraging one's wits against the competition.

Overtime from military and security operations has come the coinage 'sit-rep' implying situational report regarding a specific to overall assessment of unexpected, conflicting, and contrasting debacles and outcomes. Usually 'sit-rep' establishes communication between the field, out-station team or ground force deployed on specified assignments or missions. 'Sit-rep' is an operational code word conveying to command-control the context and nature of fracas on ground that effect alteration to the preparatory thinking and mindset upon which a mission was initiated. Command-control that is the operational leaders maybe onsite or offsite. But they have the ultimate responsibility for decision-making. As the mind behind the scene their objections will switch from strategy to tactical to contain the unexpected-fray of contending assault in real-time and real-space. Mastery of contradictory and contentious field events underscores the basis of situational strategy as a tool for enhancing leadership capacity. The expectation is to fashion tailor-made tactics to override field's onsite abnormality in other to achieve desired tactical-command goals. The ability to transition from strategy to tactical disposition forms the grain of situational strategy. It involves acquaintance with the psychological cognitive processes and the behaviours on-occasion that arise from them.

At present conceptualizations and contextualization of strategy are derivations from the original and formative perspective consistent with early history of knowledge of the subject. One might caution that efforts to establish dissimilarity in context should not be sacrificed in deference to adaptive benchmark from interdisciplinary postulations. In other words, despite divergence in disciplinary perspectives which classify strategy into types, and seek to dissociate the types, the psycho-motive cognitive reaction of the human mental consciousness when the

‘otherwise’ or ‘unexpected’ turn of play of forces crops in any strategic run of events shows that it is advisable to maintain that all strategy should be situational.

Situational strategy is not primarily about the whole cast of event but the part that if not tactically arrested and redressed will throw up unwanted complications to the layout of the operative strategy. Though not primarily about the whole cast of events, situational strategy impacts the wholeness of strategy despite not being the whole strategy. This maybe illustrated as with a bunch of keys in which is a specific key for a given lock. The wholeness of strategy is analogous to the bunch of keys and situational strategy analogous to the specific key fit open the given lock. Thus, adaptation and careful choice of thoughts for actions play commanding role for leaders to adopt situational strategy to their ‘rescue operations’ in management processes of organizations. Summarily, situational strategy is strategy. Thus, the distinctions or differentiations of strategy of strategy are merely make-over.

As an elite mentorship program from the earliest times, a massive shift has taken place from the courts of sovereigns to the classroom, and training camp grounds for military (ops) operations. Modern European and American business education particularly in the 21st century adapted, contextualized, reframed, and remodeled the primal concepts of strategy to fit perceptions of fights and exchanges as competition, plays and games. Contemporary thinkers have had to dig deep to alter insinuations subjecting same to the purposes of powers or occupational interests in present times.

Organizations and institutions became the new realms while the corporate leaders became the new sovereigns. Incidents of attritions for landscape territories shifted to economic landscape and market-share - thus new players. In the field of politics and diplomacy it has not been any different. Strategy had become a tool serving the ends of those committed to resource aggrandizement. The games and players have changed but the field of play being the mind remained unchanged. The end-game with regard success or failure, victory or loss centered on the mind. Hence as all competition is based on the exercise of the will-power, whoever overcomes the will-power of the opponent not only owned the game but seemed to win it. That however remains an assumption in observation of events across the world today because in modern football, the team that owns the game having higher ball possession does not admittedly win the game at the blow of the final whistle. Situational strategy helps leaders to cover blind spot and sail difficult turbulences.

Situational strategy could be understood from the prong of ‘special operations’ in collateral engagements in which field operatives may have to engage off the rules of engagement as a tactical decision due to field or ground conditions which threat potentials may spike higher than preparatory simulated program of action.

Source and Cause of Situational Strategy

Where does situational strategy come from? In jiggling a strategy, a situation is the operational setback from compromised, or uncompromised set, or unit of the optimal strategy system, or interfering forces and occasion from systems opposed to or alien to its the process-progress thereby hampering the sequential advancement of the operational units. The situation may otherwise result from diminishing returns besetting a long un-overhauled operational strategy system that has not been reconditioned for new realities and challenges. As a strategy at cross purposes to an optimal strategy, situational strategy is predatory and can do much harm to the optimal strategy of the system it has lined up against. In its sovereign rights, situational strategy

can cataclysmic or merely serve out as catalyst in that as a tangible recognizable thing, it hovers above the reach of optimal strategy sparking a psychological surge or cognitive stimuli of operators for revolutionary approach (Hamel, 2002). All the same this bit of study on strategy leaves for much and further reasoning and research.

Contextual Concepts on Situational Strategy

Leadership is a mental task and responsibly so. The thinking process involved determines if leaders can match up to the challenge that confront their ordered frame of thought and work process. As role-players the psychological make-up of leaders provide intellectual thrust determining their capability to withstand the conflagration of opposing interests and stakeholders. Thus, the impact of cognitive capability on leadership capacity is unquestionable. Situational strategy serves as a learning experience for leaders to grow in the ability to mentally assess difficult situations and make skillful opportunity of them. Beyond mental growth, leaders can evolve in thinking competence through the tactical approach they deploy to mitigate bad situations.

There are a number of different theories on leadership but these two the contingency theory, and transformational theory are critical to situational strategy and how it impacts leadership capacity. A popular cliché goes thus “different folks different faces” enthuses the deficiency in the ‘one mold fits all’. Situational contexts in role management has given verge to the development of the situational leadership theory by Hersey and Blanchard (1969). The theory as a model enthuses leaders style that revolves on adapting competences of human and material resources to fit emergent problems. In other words, it emphasizes individualization of capacity, skill, and mental balance to solve or address problems. Knowledge of problems is the reasonable basis to advance on turbulent situations. The impact of cognitive capacity and capability by an individual or group to appraise and assess a contingent problem through identification and interpretation on to proffering solution is recognized by psychologists. According to cognitive psychologists the human mind is an analyst or an analytical machine capable of processing ideas and thoughts. In fact this is established by the position of the information processing theory in psychology.

One cognitive process for decision making as applicable to situational strategy is automatic thinking. It was developed beginning with the dual process theory (Wason & Evans, 1974-1975; Barge, 1994; Kahneman, 2011).

Mental simulations establish parity between thoughts processes and actions. Simulations results or outcomes in some cases pan out differently from hands-on field experiences. A study by Pham et al. (2010) revealed that mental simulation process to achieve and as well that testing for the outcome of goal achievement contrasted each other. That is to say that expected outcomes established on controlled leadership environment can fall suspect when tested with free-range where natural forces pulse to establish their influence on the outcomes of transactional bids.

The Leadership Situation

If it is understood that leadership is about station which in some cases confer status, strategy rather is about situations and the units or cases that make the whole. Combined, the leadership is about problem solving. Relative to enhancing leadership capacity, situational strategy requires

the toolification of procedure and process to resolve strategy stage setbacks. It all begins with the psychological process of cognitive alertness.

Rise of Situational Strategy

Situational strategy is crucial for strategic leadership. Situational strategy is operational and critical not only for leadership management, and to leadership development. It is a tool for creating or resolving conflicting occasion to leverage its control of and over its operational surroundings. Its rise as an enabling enhancer of leadership capacity is tied to understanding its role to provide cues for leaders to interact with their cognitive environment and reorder chaotic consciousness into its integral operational framework. Chaos assessment in an unfriendly (prospective) operational environment with the aim of achieving organizational goals inspires questions and enquiries on the function and role of strategic leaders to play above the wits of the competition (Hamel, 2002).

Interests in situational strategy has risen as a result of the need to think outside the scope of perceived cultural objections, and mental attunement. Its development is demanding of leaders to build on management objectives from a multispectral and generic environmental scope. The cultural and production environment of relationship and work is replete with cognitive expectations or energy as a result of socio-cultural conditioning. Leaders are inundated with expectations to meet organizational or group goals and pitch the system on the achievement perch. As in all things human expectations are not statistically sacrosanct. This holds within natural and socio-anthropogenic casts wherein the system is driven by variable elements of production pulsing at different rates. Until the pulse rate of the variable elements consummate into a tangible whole, the delay or failure for the system to achieve its timed goals happens as a result of the inconsistencies occurring within the process system. These inconsistencies maybe unequal, and conflicting and are thought to arise out of force or energy fields that engage outside of the orbits of commitment-thought, and plan.

According to Tipuric (2022), in the rise of strategic leadership, there remains the need for assertion of the import of situational strategy as a needful and separate area for research to cover the gap regarding how different types of strategy are associative of events or situations. Going beyond that and broaching on the impact of blind-spots antecedents to blindside the thinking of strategy architects to contend incidental and accidental setbacks on operational dynamics and revealing the gaps in the knowledge of strategy that need to be covered.

The Psychological Process for Situational Capacity

Organizational agents as humans are emotional beings with behavioral responses in the face of disruptive and unexpected occurrences. The upsurge of such occurrences may involuntarily generate reactive negative mental activities in the consciousness of the agent or leader. Such negative mental activities maybe consistent with fear and despondency at the situation. The activity raises a buffer or no go-zone in the mind of the agent or leader. This mental activity and the buffer it creates in the consciousness comes about of impulse and maybe restraining or rather than not. Until the mind properly recovers having withdrawn primarily to make a conscious or mental assessment of how the situation might work out in favour of the protagonist agent, or the assailant. The fleeting of withdrawal and threat assessment maybe associated with instinct and or

intuition up and spurring a conditioning of the mind to come up with a couple of highlight or high point to mitigate the situation.

Understanding the dual process theory is critical to developing acumen to fit conditions consistent with addressing tactical and eventual incidental difficulties that mar a strategy process. Relative to the sides of the brain, the work of psychologists on the dual process theory is of immense value to the work of strategists and for strategic leadership and management operations. Much more so aiding the processes issues of management, leadership and leading as consistent with demands for situational.

The automatic thinking and controlled thinking patterns are built upon the theorization of the dual process theory that these two cognitive systems operate distinctly and yet interactively. Credit for this distinction is given to William James (Barker & Hollingworth, 2019) whence one was consistent with associative reasoning, the other was consistent with true reasoning. The associative reasoning employs memories to make auto-suggestion, while true reasoning helps us to adapt to new and surprising experiences that suggest situational contest of forces gearing up defining the outcomes of events. These formed the basis for the development of automatic thinking and controlled thinking thus a useful framework for systematizing the concept of dual system process theory. This theory also known as the dual processing theory was further built on by Wason and Evans (1974-1975) who instead chose the terms heuristic processing for automatic thinking, and analytic reasoning for controlled thinking. Further contributions came from Kahneman (2011) who through experimental researches contributed the terms – *system 1* and *system 2* to knowledge as already described. Kahneman shows that *system 1* equips leaders to interpret, respond and react to unexpected and unwanted changes and disruptions to the initialization process of optimal strategy. This is possible from the fray of involuntary act of consciousness associates with intuition, and emotion which are spontaneous and rapid responses to ‘threat’ or difficulty to the end goal of an organization. *System 2* is slow and analytical falling in the birth of controlled thinking.

Bargh (1994) a social psychologist expanded understanding of the dual process theory with his work contributing to the development of automatic thinking. In his work he broke down automatic thinking into four quadrants. The identities of the quadrants are firstly *unawareness* – implying that for the thinking process to qualify as automatic thinking a leader necessarily is unaware that our automatic thinking process has initialized. The capability of our cognitive system to respond to mental cues associated with problems we encounter spontaneously is that it involuntarily turns to its automatic thinking mode. Thus, the second quadrant is associated with *unintentional* thinking. The third quadrant of automatic thinking is construed as related to *cognitive efficiency* indicating its usefulness for strategic resolve where the control time is short and the consequences of delayed resolution are dire. The quadrant offers the understanding that automatic thinking cannot control us and though it points not us controlling our thinking. Thus, its occurrence when our cognitive stimuli are stirred cannot be prevented.

Thinking in the Spur of ‘Turbulence’ Situation

Optimal strategy is normal strategy as it is developed from known experiences. It developed from cognitive empowerment in our psychological environment. Situational strategy as already inferred could arise from natural, human or material energy system alien to the mental experiences of leadership and strategy operators. It is the cast of unpreparedness associated with

being confronted by 'situations' that rankle or throw operators off their wits. Even if that throw off is momentary it might pose different scale of problems to an organization's system.

The indications or contradictions of these disruptions, turbulences, and dissimulations in the line of leadership engagements can be managed and resolved with the penetrative potential of the exchanges of the cognitive energy or power. This cognitive power has the potential to penetrate the core of problems revolving in the originating cognitive opposite by breaking through or breaking down the resolve of the opposing consciousness.

The human intelligence is sovereign and independent and sails in the sea of consciousness according to interests and intents of strategic parties. The clash of human intelligence is actually a clash between cognitive abilities of contrasting entities and their role players.

This is the fact that forces situational strategy to the fore as tool for enhancing leadership capacity. Safe to say that every army be it of attrition, economics and business, politics, philosophy, or any idea constitutes mass agglomeration of human consciousness and is driven with cognitive force of the leader's mind.

When minds are at war, by the prompt of cognitive powers of the stakeholders - the competitors or contenders being either as protagonists and antagonists are forced to the mode of decision making. There is the likelihood that one actor comes off more assertive and proactive in their assessment of the setback. *The* stakeholder with more capable cognitive power could pass off as situational advantaged. But the end might not be so as different minds have different game-on capabilities and can swing surprises ranging from intuitive, instinctual, and cognitive intelligence.

As to decision making based on situational strategy, the aforementioned - automatic thinking and controlled thinking are the two prominent cognitive processes. Automatic thinking is reflective of auto-suggestion and is consistent with cognitive process that is unforced and unconscious. It prompts the conjecturing of ready answers and solutions to contingent problems. Automatic thinking is unaided by the conscious mind. This substantiates the information processing theory that the human mind is capable of processing and interpreting information automatically. This effortless thinking is a subconscious process. It is known to influence in a number of ways the behaviour of the person or persons in the line of duty and their decision behaviours.

Controlled thinking being the other cognitive process for decision making for situational debacles is slow, methodical, operational on sequence, systematic and rule-based. It requires processed efforts and is analytical in generating solutions to problems. Unlike automatic thinking it is spontaneous. Though automatic thinking is also known as the 'system 1 thinking' or simply 'system 1' and is associative with 'system 2', it inherently contrasts controlled thinking. The choice of process depends on the leaders in the game or flare of interests.

Situational Strategy Playbook

Our physical, social, cultural, intellectual, political, economic, technology and science environments all have their psychological nuances that limit our total perception and knowledge of variable elements. Notwithstanding the turbulences Rigby (2001) offered hope that a leader in a strategic position can ride out the 'stormy sea' or 'storm' and carry the day. From a purely business management position his advisement suggests continuous review and appraisal of the historical occurrences natural to the area of operations and those occurrences though natural and

remote might be imposed on the operational template and simulated for possible eventuality management. According to him preparing for bad times makes it possible for business-like leaders to make opportunities of turbulence circumstances to advance their leverage. Such situations are both opportunistic and problematic and can shift the balance of relevance among rivalling interests. It unleashes those whose thinking advanced over the problems - setting them up as lead players in the future. It shackles or leaves to play catch-up those whose thinking could not stand the torrents of the disruptive situations. Situational strategy is multifaceted and maybe also be portrayed as deterrence management.

Normal situations are part of our psychological perception and determine our perception and perspective of problems. Based on these, strategy solution-packages revolve and resolve on optimal strategy. Resolving disruptions and turbulences require balancing between over-strategizing and under-strategizing.

There is need to simulate test-case contingency scenarios for leaders and their task-teams to bottle up excess bubbles from stormy and turbulent situations. Picturing unknown bases to cover or picturing blind spots to surveil are crucial to simulating test-case contingency scenarios as signature for mastery of situational strategy.

Maintain your best skills-set for normal optimal strategy while developing containment skills for unknown problems - to the extent of modelling and projecting as existent the non-existent problems. This could be done using occasions in historical and natural environmental systems. The crux of situational strategy is developing an ingenious and alternative problem-solving approaches or strategy to handle the unknown. Conclusively situational strategy objectifies the pursuit of the unknown to solve the known and prepare to stand over the unknown at any time it might emerge.

Mental simulation is recommended as useful for preempting the minds of leaders to engage out of the box perception and complexities as preparedness to dismiss the count of turbulences to disrupt the process-progress of the leadership process as at when such upsurge may appear. Situational strategy should be well understood and mastered for decision-making in leadership. It will lead to honing the skills, ability and capacity to stand up to unpredictable affronts, unforeseen avalanche of forces, operative system collapses, and sundry orchestrated disruptions from natural and anthropogenic sources. This capacity may be enhanced from experience and exposure.

In enhancing leadership capacity, the psychological process favours situational strategy as the human consciousness of a leader has the ability to automatically spark mental processes to resolve unexpected strategic problems. While some turbulence requires the prompt of automatic thinking, problems that can be sustained for a longer duration without collapse of the organizational system may require the employment of controlled thinking processes.

CONCLUSION

Situational strategy is to be understood as the twist to the expedition for fortunes of an outward bound or expanding enterprise, or twists to the process-progress of optimal strategy leading to what Hamel (2002) termed as strategy decay. This paper would prefer the term case-differentiation which involves identifying the source or cause of strategy decay and applying the relevant model of the dual process theory to resolve such. Therefrom the system may be restarted if the whole complex was impaired by the twist. Otherwise the impaired unit or case is retired from the operational strategy system where needful changes were adapted to reconnect it to the

whole operational strategy system (structure and architecture). Otherwise the impaired unit or case is recessed, and or retired from the structure and architecture of operational (whole) strategy system. The psychological process is very useful to such scheme. Thus, situational strategy compels strategic leadership and management and plays critical role in organizational crisis management.

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