

Executive Summary – ‘On Will’

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What barest the exit of that hungry wolf,
Volition. It can be that man has evolved
Into asceticism far enough to hold his
Natural tendencies at bay. It could be that
A catalyst has not awakened this day. But
Know well all ye who dwellith here on
This earth, it can be a monster that is held
at bay. Author Unknown

‘Will,’ an unpretentious word; yet, it is extraordinarily complicated and difficult to contemplate, let alone to grasp for use in our lives. Often I muse about what happens when one human imposes their ‘will’ on another. What happens if resistance to the imposition occurs. Or, what happens when a friendly decision-maker is on the receiving end of an adversary attempting to impose his ‘will’ via actions. This imposition of one’s ‘will’ suggests a clash and perhaps a form of submission by one foe in a conflict because of the nature of the imposing side’s actions. Struggles over ‘will’ usually involve physical and intangible clashes. The gruel of life also appears and makes its presence known – I’m speaking of greed, fear, retribution, desire, lust, religion, narcissism, and so on.

Human beings have been fighting one another since the first man clubbed another man to take his food and women. Fights always involve ‘will;’ one side commits an aggressive act against another, the other side defends against the imposition or submits. ‘Will’ though has historically inspired mankind’s interest, but only in the sense of platitudes and abstractions or generalities of fear and lack of hope. We must learn to think of ‘will’ as a series of interlocked rings, and this is precisely what this book provides – an examination of intertwined, conceptual rings that comprise ‘will.’ Each ring represents one of 14 essential elements of ‘will.’ In the book, I examine each ring one by one, but eventually I synthesize them into a coherent whole.

This book uses an allegory to think about and learn ‘will’s’ intricacies. The allegory is a spin-off from Plato’s Cave discussion in the *Republic*. Our thinking and discussion occur during a long trek from the dark pit of Plato’s Cave to the light of truth. Before we departed, we declared our resolve to master this abstract subject of ‘will,’ as we traipse up the trail. Learning about ‘will’ must become a passion for our best thinking people. We entrust our fate in them. These deep thinking people have promise for filling an existing void – a hole in the fabric of conflict – with a systematic thought model that enables thinking and actions about ‘will.’

We ascend a steep and obstacle-strewn path, ever so foreboding, dark, and narrow. I guide two travelers in this journey, my acolytes including one *Über-thinker*¹ and one *thought pilgrim*,² who escaped from the Cimmerian Gloom of Plato’s Cave. Of course, my intrepid readers accompany our group too.

This subject has been long over-looked; I do not know why, but its absence from discussions about conflict seem obvious. This is not to say people don’t use the word, and I certainly admit

¹ *Über-thinker* – literally, a great, or better-than-anybody type of thinker. This kind of thinker transcends all other thinkers and is trained and educated to engage in *mental combat* and to win against any foe, in any domain, at any level of conflict, day or night. This thinker is older and more experienced than a *thought pilgrim*.

² *Thought pilgrim* – a person preparing themselves for ‘deep thinking’ engagements by traveling to their personal ‘high country,’ which is conducive to their brand of deep thinking. Younger than the *Über-thinker*, the thought pilgrim is an intellectual apprentice, perhaps a journeyman.

great leaders do some of which I speak because they have an innate, intuitive sensing about ‘will.’ But, there must be more to it than just an innate sensing. All of us ordinary people need to take the time and expend the mental effort to think deeply and critically about this marvelous phenomenon we know as ‘will.’ This book, in its entirety presents a detailed method for thinking successfully about ‘will.’ With this methodology, one has the potential to codify ‘will’s’ intellectual, historical, philosophical, and conceptual underpinnings. When one writes the supporting doctrines, organizations, technology, equipment, software, and experiments, their fine minds possess the basis for pensiveness often lasting beyond a single lifetime.

In the book, I provide my travelers and my readers with a variety of models. Models help us learn ‘how to think’ not only about ‘will’ but also about the adversaries upon whom they might plan to impose their ‘will.’ As one model, I use *duality* from Clausewitz’s book *On War*. I also deliver you the wherewithal to learn ‘how to think’ about *operational contexts* in which conflicts involving bouts of ‘will’ occur. People must work for it with ‘how to think’ guidelines, as well as knowing to think deeply³ and, of course, borrowing the ideas of great thinkers who imposed or denied it, ‘wrestled with its sharp claws,’ but who only spoke or wrote obliquely about this phenomenon – ‘will.’ Just consider a couple of Clausewitz’s thoughts involving ‘will,’ as he wrote in *On War*,

War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will.⁴

He also wrote this thought that involves our subject,

One more observation needs to be made, which goes to the very heart of the matter. Only the commander who imposes his will can take the enemy by surprise; and in order to impose his will, he must act correctly.⁵

A clarion call sounds ever so clearly in my mind. With a start, I realize it is ‘will’ mankind has fought about and over from the beginning of time. Struggles over ‘will’ connect with the past and dominate conflict today. ‘Will’s’ tentacles stretch forth and connect with future conflict. I am sure you agree, even though mankind may try, we can’t keep the ravenous wolf of volition at bay. So, to whom do we turn to help people learn ‘how to think’ about ‘will?’ It is our institutions of higher education and deep thinking people from which our future thought leaders emerge. It is they who enact their comprehension of this phenomenon of ‘will.’ It is they, armed with knowledge of ‘will’s’ ‘intricacies’ who benefit from learning to deep think about ‘will.’ Knowledge and comprehension of ‘will;’ a lantern to follow, as we venture into the dark hollow to do battle with the wolf of volition and win. Winning in mental combat must occur when imposing one’s ‘will’ or holding our adversary’s impositions at bay.

‘Will’s’ equation is simple – one person wants something another possesses. He exerts his ‘will’ and imposes it through action to satisfy this ‘will’ and thereby satiates his ravenous appetite. The recipient of this violence has a choice - resist or comply. The recipient though, might wait for his competitor’s act of aggressive imposition to justify his own desire to strike. As the recipient of the action of an aggressor’s ‘will,’ he could secretly harbor desires to take something of value from the aggressor. Thus, a secondary imposition of ‘will’ becomes possible, put forth by the recipient of the original aggression.

³ Deep think – taking the time and expending the mental energy to think about a subject or problem deeply and critically.

⁴ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 75.

⁵ Clausewitz, 200.

The whispering draft in this dreaded cave brings forth in its ever so quiet but fetid breath, people asking, “Who should read this book of ‘will?’” I answer, as such, “All people who either are now or could be involved in conflict in the future – that is conflict of any type – should not only read, but study this book. Conflict is always about ‘will.’ But conflict doesn’t have to be one army against another army. It could be friendly conflict, such as football or basketball games. Or, of course, a clash of ‘wills’ could be hostile. If hostile, this clash could involve two people or a group of people trying to perform a hostile take-over of a company, or a country trying to abscond with another country’s source of wealth, or even a warm-water port. So, a wide range of people in a multitude of jobs and positions in life should read this book – Here you see a smattering; more are in the book!

1. Corporate strategists
2. Business leaders
3. Law enforcement
4. District Attorneys
5. Corporate security people
6. Decision-makers
7. Policy makers
8. Government leaders
9. Military leaders
10. Military strategists
11. Border agents
12. Drug Enforcement Agents (DEA)
13. Transportation Security Officers (TSA)
14. Conflict scholars
15. People planning to impose or resist ‘will’
16. War College attendees
17. Command and Staff attendees
18. War College instructors
19. Military Command and Staff instructors

I use six premises to frame the substantive thoughts of this book. Practitioners and students of conflict should work with these premises and add their own to the list. Their task - learn the intricacies of the phenomenon of ‘will’ and put this knowledge into practice. Otherwise, one loses what is clearly the main character in the play of mental combat in wars of wits.

1. Practitioners and students of conflict must know the intricacies of the phenomenon of ‘will’ and put this knowledge into practice.
2. The importance of ‘will’ is self-evident. It is the central idea of conflict and competition.
3. The subject of ‘will’ is difficult to master and put into use; therefore, to succeed, one has to use a method of ‘how to think’ about the subject to comprehend and use its innate powers.
4. To understand and employ ‘will’ to its fullest power requires knowing and using a thought model that has 14 essential elements, which are: 1) life-force, 2) purpose, 3) capabilities, 4) strength of motive, 5) advantage, 6) disadvantage, 7) determination, 8) perseverance, 9) passion, 10) sacrifice, 11) imposition, 12) action, 13) assessment,⁶ and 14) adaptation.
5. To win in clashes of ‘will,’ the winning participant always considers their adversary’s point of view (this is duality), and the operational context within which clashes occur.
6. To put forth the highest quality⁷ thinking possible, one must know, understand, and comprehend ‘connectedness.’ Connectedness requires the highest condition of holism and synthesis.

⁶ Assess - to judge success of a planned or unplanned outcome of an action coming from a decision; appraise outcomes coming forth from an action – appraise quality of action via outcome of action and appraise how well the action occurred.

⁷ Quality - the degree of excellence in a product, thought, play, book, briefing, problem solution, and the like; identifying and attempting to reach a pre-determined and defined standard or set of standards derived from the essence of an outcome, acknowledging the purpose of an effort and satisfying the purpose, recognizing the central idea, nub, core that is the cause of the effect – the output of an endeavor, an action, a product, a finish place in a track meet, recognizing a good wine, enjoying a good book, or those predetermined criteria with which one judges its degree of goodness. Quality is often a judgment that is non-quantifiable; however, at times, one will be able to use quantifiable methods to judge it, particularly in manufacturing,

Cautious but still inquisitive, apparitions appear in and out, to and fro, and wonder about in the dark of Plato’s Cave; they come to me and ask, “What techniques did you use to help learners go through the heavy brush and numerous obstacles along the trail to the light in trying to understand and comprehend ‘will?’” I answer, “I used these ten approaches you see below.

1. Allegory.
2. Thought travelers.
3. Excursions into my inner sanctum.
4. High country.
5. Thought models.
6. Graphics.
7. Fragments spun into wholes.
8. Poetry.
9. Thoughts in quotes.
10. Digressions, side bars, and Chautauquas.

When I speak of ‘will,’ I’m not speaking of ‘will power’ or ‘free will’ or the ‘will to live,’ as those constitute topics for someone else more qualified than me. I’m speaking of the aggressive side of man. Man and his life-force seeks to impose his ‘will’ on another person, often a resisting person who does not want to acquiesce to the imposition of which I speak. I use this definition of ‘will’ throughout the book:

Competition for supremacy or advantage is a recurring phenomenon in human life. People compete for supremacy or advantage over a wide variety of things and situations such as position, presence, action, appearance, dominance, influence, power, wealth, positions, promotions, bonuses, land, resources, and so on.

Thus, at least for the purpose of this book, “Will” is the desire, presence, or appearance of a demanding volition, and its derivative force to accomplish or satisfy an aim, goal, objective, or to win in other competitive situations in which one’s actions encounter a resisting entity, causing a struggle for dominance to ensue.

As the most important part of the definition of “will,” viz., as an explanatory and working interpretation of this phenomenon, “will” is the degree of resolve individuals apply to accomplish an aim, goal, or objective; “will” has 14 interconnected, essential elements—1) life-force; 2) purpose; 3) strength of motive; 4) capabilities; 5) determination; 6) perseverance; 7) sacrifice; 8) passion; 9) advantages; 10) disadvantages; 11) imposition; 12) action; 13) assessment; and, 14) adaptation.

Next, I present my book’s main ideas – they follow as words with bold font. **Duality** is an important concept for the book. It is a mindset. As such, my *Über-thinker* and *thought pilgrim* know they must occasionally ‘ride the wild pendulum’ of duality⁸ to consider the adversary’s mind, mental prowess, points of view, empathy, and thoughts about advantages and disadvantages, and, of course, ‘will’ in any contested operational context. The consideration our thinker makes is relative between friend and foe. All the pieces matter and connect.

mathematics, certain Newtonian physics, or such things as lowering of traffic tickets that can be traced to how well people learned a safe-driving course police presented.

⁸ **Duality** – the state of being in which one thinks in two connected opposites, in motion all the time, and emitting noise and energy as one side interacts with the other. Duality, while difficult to understand and to remember, considers two parts – friendly and adversary (and could increase the numbers in complicated contexts and conditions).

Deep think⁹ - it provides our *Über-thinker* and *thought pilgrim* insights into human nature and motivation – thus impositions of ‘will.’ Our *Über-thinker’s* and *thought pilgrim’s* minds sadly recognize a truism – purely altruistic quests prove rare. Instead, they find, at the core of most human actions and impositions of ‘will,’ the ugly Hydra of **self-interest**, fully or partially masked, and thereby not always obvious. But in this Hydra there exists, a presence, a lingering evil, with a voracious appetite to influence outcomes with one sole reason – self-interest, whether in matters trivial, or of life, or death. I tell my acolytes to always consider self-interest as ‘will’s’ nub because it is the opponent’s self-interest to which the resister must appeal or affect. Interestingly, within the ‘serpentine timber of mankind,’ overly aggressive people surface all the time; they will do anything to impose their ‘will’ successfully on other people. The underlying motives for actions often involve, when exposed to the light of day, self-aggrandizement, narcissism, self-interest, greed, hatred, prejudice, racism, and on and on. Self-interest guides all humankind’s thoughts and actions. It’s the nub of the fight over clashing ‘wills.’

Why does man use his ‘will’ to seek and hold power? Why does man want to keep power once he grasps and feels its razor-sharp edges? The strong desire to be recognized, to leave something behind, to be remembered – burns brightly in all human beings, but more brightly in some people than others. Often, **life-force** appears and influences, indeed guides, ‘will’s’ birth and maturation and its purpose. In this realization, we connect with people who lived in antiquity almost as though there was no passage in time. We ‘entangle’ with those who have come before us. We entangle with those coming after us. With the bonding, we find a commonality with all ages - the struggle for dominance in ‘will;’ it stretches into infinity.

As we travel through the thoughts in this book, you find an important thought model. It is the **14 essential elements of ‘will’ model** I developed to help people understand and turn theory into practice via the ideas in this book. Some of these elements prove to be interchangeable in their order, but not in meaning.¹⁰ Also, they relate with one another and to all elements. Sometimes not all elements come into play; at other times and in other situations, all come into the conflict. So, this is my model about ‘will’s’ essential elements.



Figure 1. Model for Contemplating ‘Will’

⁹ **Deep think** – taking the time and expending the mental effort to think about a subject or problem deeply and critically.

¹⁰ **Condition of stability** – life-force, purpose, imposition, action, assessment, and adaptation; **condition of flux** – capabilities, strength of motive, perseverance, determination, disadvantage, advantage, passion, sacrifice.

Anybody working with ‘will’ must seriously ruminate about a few or all of these **18 considerations of ‘will’** coming next. Understandably, people have trouble remembering even a few of the considerations. So, I put them into a graphic. Please realize, this list is not all-inclusive. I’m always adding aspects and ideas to the list almost as we speak, and I hope you, my readers do the same. I discuss each as chapters in my book ‘*On ‘Will.’*’

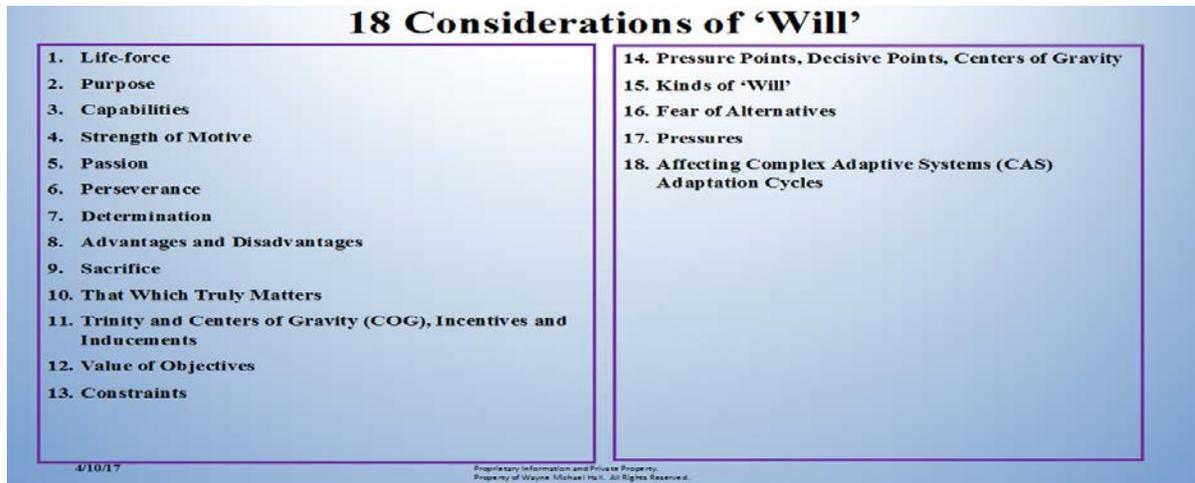


Figure 2. Considerations of 'Will'

Remember, the considerations you see in this graphic are vital for winning in any kind of struggle in which one side or the other or both sides attempt to impose their ‘will’ on one another sequentially or at the same time in a true clash of ‘wills.’ To do this deed, the deep thinking adversary understands and works a similar approach to impose their ‘will’ on you. On the other hand, as you wargame your quest to understand an adversary leader’s ‘will,’ specifically to anticipate and deny his intrusions upon the friendly leader’s ‘will,’ you pick considerations most pertinent to your problem.

As another important idea in the book, I speak of this notion – to impose one’s ‘will’ successfully on a resisting opponent, one must have a **union of moral and physical force**. Moral force, as abstract as it may be, and emotional force, both prove essential for infusing energy into ‘will’s’ innards: purpose, capabilities, strength of motive, determination, perseverance, passion, and commitment to sacrifice. Holistic thinking, enabled and enhanced by synthesis, provides you with an indispensable and irrefutable advantage over any foe. I’m sure you know that the physical and the nonphysical aspects of conflict *entangle* with one another. You must account for and take advantage of this entanglement.

The **high country**¹¹ is where our *Über-thinker* and *thought pilgrim* can think about the power one finds in one’s willingness to sacrifice to accomplish a high-value objective or the strength of motive to endure suffering necessary to prevail in a struggle. It is the place where my acolytes can ponder mysteries at hand, discover the purpose of ‘will,’ and the basis of an adversary’s strength of motive.

Thought leadership – directly bonds with ‘will.’ It is vital for thought leaders to mentor their subordinates so they learn and understand synthesis, again the key to unlocking the door to

¹¹ Robert Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. (New York: Bantam Books, 1974), 113.

the secrets of ‘will.’ Thought leaders purposefully help their people learn to consider difficult subjects, such as ‘will,’ as a moral responsibility. And, of course, relative to our study, it takes personal expertise to know, understand, and comprehend ‘will.’ Any thought leader must do the following -

1. Learn something new every day.
2. Help their subordinates think about difficult subjects, in a holistic way via the cognitive skill that is synthesis.
3. Help their organizations learn ‘to think’ better about their missions, their work, their organizations, the people who work together.
4. Appear as person who understands mental combat and its battle cry to outthink adversaries in all dimensions and levels of conflict.

I next tell my audience of another related implication intruding into my mind, the phenomenon of **‘will’ decay**. It’s neutral; each side in a clash of ‘will’ can voice natural or induced decay or recognize it for what it is. With cognizance, one could thereby cause decay to appear or disappear, or spread horizontally or vertically. Well, I ask of myself, what is it that decays in battles of ‘wills’? It strikes my mind to look at each of the 14 elements in my thought model of ‘will.’ “All of them prove vulnerable to assault!” I then take a few minutes and retreat to the high ground in my inner sanctum and ponder this phenomenon as I dive into the Pool of the Transcendental.¹² Here is what I derived. Decay comes with disuse. It also comes with the fragility of strength in question, as in ‘strength of motive,’ intensity of passion, dissipation of a person’s or a people’s readiness to sacrifice, or even the clarity and strength involved with purpose. One, or any of possible combinations, or all of the elements of ‘will’ can be vulnerable to decaying on their own, but even more so, with an adversary’s forceful and aimed intervention specifically to induce decay. Affecting ‘will’ decay could be a strategy or a tactic. Our intent - purposefully induce decay in our adversary’s model of ‘will.’

As I have stated before, but need to say once more, **connectedness** is an exhilarating theme repeatedly surfacing throughout the book. The Internet and social media promote connectedness for all sides in any kind of strife. Connectedness does not exist in isolation, but applies to and connects people from all sides in a conflicts involving a clashing of ‘wills.’ It is important to note in this discussion, connectedness is fundamentally important to winning in contests of ‘will.’ Each side in any kind of conflict must account for its presence and influence and wargame possible actions to affect their adversary’s connectedness. Their goal is to gain superiority in creating narratives, defining truths, defining facts, presenting evidence, shaping interpretations of data, shaping expectations, influencing perceptions, and so on. To understand and exploit the concept of connectedness requires the highest condition of holism and synthesis. Connectedness means

¹² Transcendental – in my world means the transformation of a subject or a problem to a state of ‘pure’ consciousness. That is to say, I intentionally purify all of my thoughts, husk the coverings and find meaning, implications, and look for the natural and man-made combinations and connections that signify a unity of meaning.

Joined together into a viable and thereby operable whole; linked to one another in a purposeful agreement; parts, pieces, people, organizations, infrastructures linked with one another to build coherence in the parts, pieces, objects, sub-systems, micro-aggregations, macro-aggregations comprising a relevant 'whole.'

I discussed early in the book a certain presence of different kinds of 'will.' So, as a next step in our summary, please stand on this escalator as it moves up 'will's' **slope of aggression**, as I depict in the graphic below. Immediately, you notice a variation in the types of people and how each relates with 'will' at intervals along this upward slope.

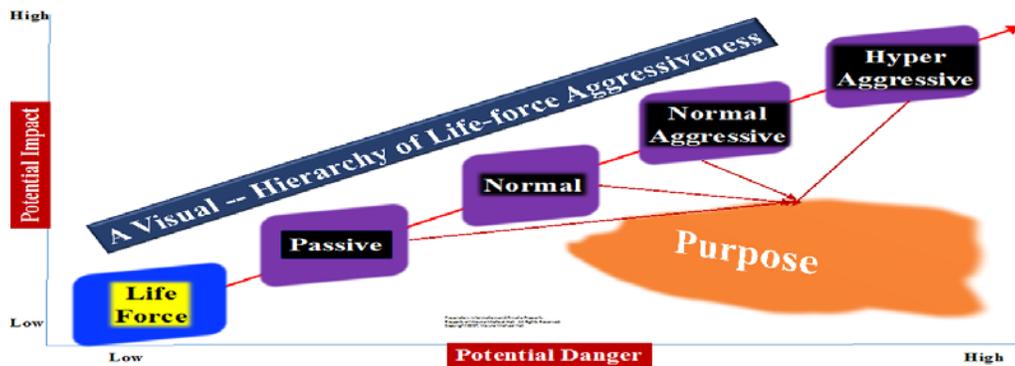


Figure 3. Glide Slope to Aggressive Imposition of 'Will' - Redux

Sometimes people prove to be passive and therefore benign, letting life come and go and not being assertive with their 'will' outside of the 'will' to live. Or, impositions of 'will' can be normal and could involve disciplining a child, losing weight, winning a softball game, and so on. The next step involves people with normal aggressiveness such as competing in business and subsequent take overs of one company or corporation or conglomerate by another. This form of 'will' imposition is more aggressive and potentially more harmful than normal aggressiveness, but still a part of any society. Finally, one finds the hyper-aggressive people; they live and thrive at the upper right portion of the slope. At the far end of this depiction, one finds Hitler, Stalin, Genghis Khan, and Napoleon. Power drives people like this; they have an insatiable desire to acquire more and more power with the power they gain.

Now, let us consider **vertical domain silos and horizontal levels of conflict troughs**. This book explains these two schemata as yet another example of the connectedness one can find everywhere, if they enter into a contemplative state of deep think. Understanding this theory has a direct impact on successfully instigating 'will' on other people or organizations, or defending oneself. Here is how I advocate competing in clashes of 'will' during mental combat via the use of vertical domain silos and horizontal levels of conflict troughs with this following discussion and accompanying graphic:

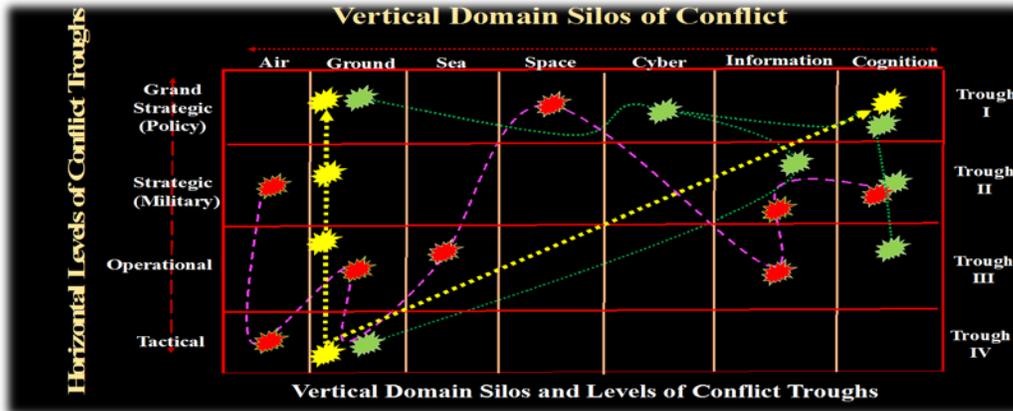


Figure 4. The Cutting Board – Vertical Silos and Horizontal Troughs - Redux

This important graphic represents battles over ‘will’ occurring and just how remarkable it is to see the connectedness that can be brought to fruition. It organizes what heretofore has seemed beyond organizing. It shows the connectedness of like and dissimilar things. In this graphic you see four *horizontal troughs* – Trough I – Grand Strategic (Policy), Trough II – Strategic (Military), Trough III – Operational, and Trough IV – Tactical. You also see the *Vertical Domain Silos* of seven domains of conflict – air, ground, sea, space, cyberspace, information, and cognition (I added the last two domains). The graphic shows that an event at the low end of one vertical domain trough (Ground) can skyrocket diagonally toward the upper right to affect the highest level of grand strategy – policy, Trough I. And, it leads us to think holistically, as all parts of this whole connect and function as a whole, but when one part weakens, the other parts can weaken too. Finally, this graphic and the explanation tell us to be alert and to keep track of these happenings at say a low level, as they can present vulnerabilities to strike quickly at other Troughs and in other Vertical Silos of conflict through direct or indirect approaches or as Sun Tzu says – via normal and extraordinary means.¹³

Context equals epicenter in contests of ‘will;’ context’s bubble surrounding conflict sends inputs via data to adversaries about changes in this context. Either side or both sides can influence the adversary’s or competitor’s thinking, reasoning, rationale, and/or decision making via *manipulating or creating false data inputs into the CAS’s (adversary’s) models for action and rules that drive the action*. Affecting an adversary’s co-evolution capability anywhere along this generalized continuum – decide, act, assess, evaluate, learn, adapt – interferes with the adversary’s ability to cope and change with not only their competitor, but also changing to cope with a turbulent operational context.

In closing this summary, I take leave with a bold stand. That is - People must carefully study the thoughts in this book, learn ‘will’s’ intricacies, and turn the thoughts into action. They should use the ideas in this book as a starting point for their own journeys into a world of conflict – past, present, and future, and think how they can do better than I. But, my admonition should sound in their minds as a truism – Take care, as each and every day, you must stare into the eyes of this hungry and fearful wolf of volition. Forces of volition are at play all of the time, everywhere, at all levels of conflict and in all domain silos, and they are not at bay.

¹³ Sun Tzu the Art of War, trans. and ed. Samuel Griffith, (London: Oxford University Press, 1971.) 91.

This book provides you with a rigorous methodology for thinking about ‘will.’ Thus, it follows that people in the business of ‘will’ – imposing their ‘will’ or resisting such an imposition – know a voracious beast is on the loose, and is coming to impose his ‘will’ on you through a variety of actions. Stop him in his tracks – you now possess the intellectual wherewithal to engage him and win.