

AN ESSAY ON DEFENSE MANAGEMENT

THE APPLICATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT TO IMPLEMENT THE RTN VISION

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INTRODUCTION

1. In 2006, the Royal Thai Navy (RTN) set the direction that it would make it “the leading navy in region with a quality management and a balanced force structure.” This vision is not only challenging but also exciting and innovative. How could the RTN move the entire organisation from where it currently stands to become the leading navy of Asia or Southeast Asia in the future? This is not an easy job particularly trying to move a large organization like the RTN with its force structure of; 1 aircraft carrier, 10 frigates, 7 corvettes, 26 patrol boats, 6 guided/gun missile attack crafts, 9 amphibious assault ships, 15 fleet support ships, 7 mine sweepers/hunters, 77 river operation boats, 20,000 marine corps, 44 aircrafts, and 36 organisation under the RTN. It is a complex problem and requires “strategic management and planning” in order to achieve the desired outcome.

2. The purpose of this paper is to examine how business strategic planning and management could look for the application to the RTN and translate the vision from rhetoric into reality. The scope of this paper is divided into three parts:

(1) The first part will examine the problems faced by the RTN in implementing the new vision;

(2) The second part will examine how business strategic planning will help the RTN to fulfill its vision;

(3) The third part will focus on the strategic change management consideration.

THE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE RTN VISION

3. Although the RTN vision is great for its development, there are five problems associated with the planning and implementation of the vision:

- (1) **No Clear Vision.** The RTN vision has not been clearly articulated. The officers and all stakeholders are not able to see clearly where the RTN is going and why. In what way does the RTN want to be the leading navy? What does the quality management mean? What does a balanced force structure look like? What could be the scope of being the leading navy in Asia or Southeast Asia? Why does the RTN want to be the leading navy in the region? They need to be able to visualize a future operating environment and the future capabilities of the RTN in order to set the context for strategic developments, organisational cultures, management approaches and to lay the foundation for the desired means to achieve the desired outcome.
- (2) **No Support Plan.** The RTN vision has not materialized due to the lack of a plan to translate the vision into reality. In the business planning process, the vision cannot stand alone. It must drive the strategic planning and the implementation process. The RTN cannot use some part of business planning and hope that the process will work. The RTN must adopt the whole process to plan and implement the vision.
- (3) **Lack of Support from Strategic Leader.** To move a large organization like the RTN, the mobilization for the support from the strategic leaders in the RTN must be planned. All strategic leaders must appreciate the vision so that they can convince and lead all people under their command to move in the direction to

work for the goals of the plan. Without this mobilization, the RTN vision would be difficult to achieve.

- (4) **Resistance to Change.** The RTN organization culture is very strong and it often resists change. The most important aspect of the culture of the RTN is the promotion system. This system relies heavily on the seniority system. High-flying officers will never be put into the top job unless they have enough seniority. Seniority depends on the time the officer serves in each rank, but not his capability. This kind of system is not suitable for the RTN of the future, which must compete with the other navies in the region. This system must be changed. Of course, there will be a lot of resistance to the change due to the fear of the unknown future and the change from the familiar. If the change is not carefully managed, it might create a crisis. Therefore, the RTN must identify ways to change it through altering attitudes, value, and behaviors.
- (5) **Lack of Resources.** There is a lack of resources to support the vision. The vision will never become the reality if the RTN does not provide the resources for it. The RTN must invest its resources for the vision. Although, the RTN faces resource constraints, it needs to provide some resource to support for the vision. Human resource development is the key element to make the RTN vision become reality. The officers in the RTN have to be developed to meet the need for the vision. These officers are the engine that drives the organization toward the RTN vision.
- (6) **Problem of Ownership.** The vision lacks participants from the people in the RTN due to the top down vision. The RTN cannot gain commitment and ownership of the vision from many officers; consequently, these officers will not drive themselves towards trying to achieve the RTN vision. How could the RTN become the leading navy without cooperation from the officers?

HOW THE BUSINESS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING WILL HELP THE RTN TO FULFIL ITS VISION

4. To solve the above problems, the RTN must adopt a business strategic planning framework (Viljoen & Dann, 2003, p.37) in order to translate the RTN vision into a realistic plan. Once the plan is written, the strategic management process needs to ensure that plan can be implemented successfully. There are the five processes (see appendix) that the RTN must undertake to create the strategic plan to support its vision:

- (1) **Environmental Scanning.** The RTN must perform a strategic analysis. It involves an environmental scanning process and use of the information gained to ascertain the strategic position of the organization. All the major external forces must be considered whether they are opportunities, challenges, or threats to the organization. The strategic analysis also examines the strengths and weaknesses of the RTN resources in order to prepare itself to react to those external forces which may require capability building to capture the opportunities or the use of its existing resources to mitigate the threats. With this process, the scope of the RTN vision will be clearly identified.
- (2) **Set the Strategic Direction.** Besides the vision, the RTN must create value, a mission statement and objectives which focus on organizational efforts that are relevant, comprehensive and based on the opportunities and threats facing it. The mission statement must also identify the organization strengths and weaknesses, and the expected needs of the stakeholders. In this process, the mission statement or the organizational aspirations of the RTN need to be articulated. The mission statement should include the vision (the RTN's ideal future), the purpose (the RTN's core business), the objective (the RTN's desire to achieve) and the values

(the RTN's belief). These statements form the basis for the subsequent establishment of the RTN strategic objectives which must be measurable, acceptable, motivating, and consistent. For every major strategic objective and for all core processes of the organization, the key performance indicators (KPIs) must be established in order to measure the achievement of the strategic objective;

- (3) **Create Strategic Choices.** The RTN must generate choices of strategy and evaluate them in ways that best suits the needs of the vision. In this process, the strategies to achieve the RTN's objective must be identified and chosen. The chosen strategies must be compatible with the environment in which the RTN will operate. There are four criteria to evaluate the strategies: firstly, they must not present mutually inconsistent goals and policies; secondly, they must represent an adaptive response to the external environment and to the critical change occurring within it; thirdly, the strategies must provide for the creation and /or maintenance of a competitive advantage in the selected area of activity; fourthly, they must neither overtax available resources nor create irresolvable problems.
- (4) **Strategy Implementation.** The RTN must focus on strategy implementation and strategic performance management which relate to the operational strategies and systems that must be used to apply the strategies. The implementation of the strategies requires four skills of organizational activity: firstly, the acquisition and deployment of the RTN's resources; secondly the development of an appropriate the RTN's structure; thirdly, the establishment of appropriate organizational systems; and fourthly, the development of a strategy-supportive culture.
- (5) **Strategic Performance Measurement and Correction.** The RTN needs to measure its performance. There are two skill sets of management: strategic performance measurement and corrective action. In other words, the RTN needs to

know how well the RTN can do the right thing and how well it can do the thing right. The RTN needs to be able to use this measurement to make a correction and adjustment to keep direct the organization on the right track.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATION

5. The more important issue, however, concerns putting plans into action. Strategic planning is useful if it is carefully linked to implementation. Most of strategic plans break down when they are implemented because of resistance by the people in the organization who feel threatened by change. To prevent this kind of problem, the RTN should adopt a management change plan which includes the following (Paton & McCalman, 2008, pp.39-58; Viljoen & Dann, 2003, pp.337-397):

(1) **Tell the Story.** The RTN must tell the whole story why the RTN has to be the leading navy in the region with a quality management and a balanced force structure. The RTN must engage with all key senior officers and ask them these two series questions: where is the RTN now; what is necessary to make change to materialize the vision successfully. This process is to moves them into a sense of control and engagement. Starting the strategic change management process with this first stage helps prevent a crisis.

(2) **Identify Culture Change.** The RTN must identify organizational culture and change. The RTN must conduct an organizational culture review to assess the current organizational culture and to obtain information regarding how the culture supports quality and effectiveness. If this culture is not supportive of the vision, it must be changed and the new culture must be clearly articulated so that the people in the RTN hold it as an organizational culture; consequently, it will shape and

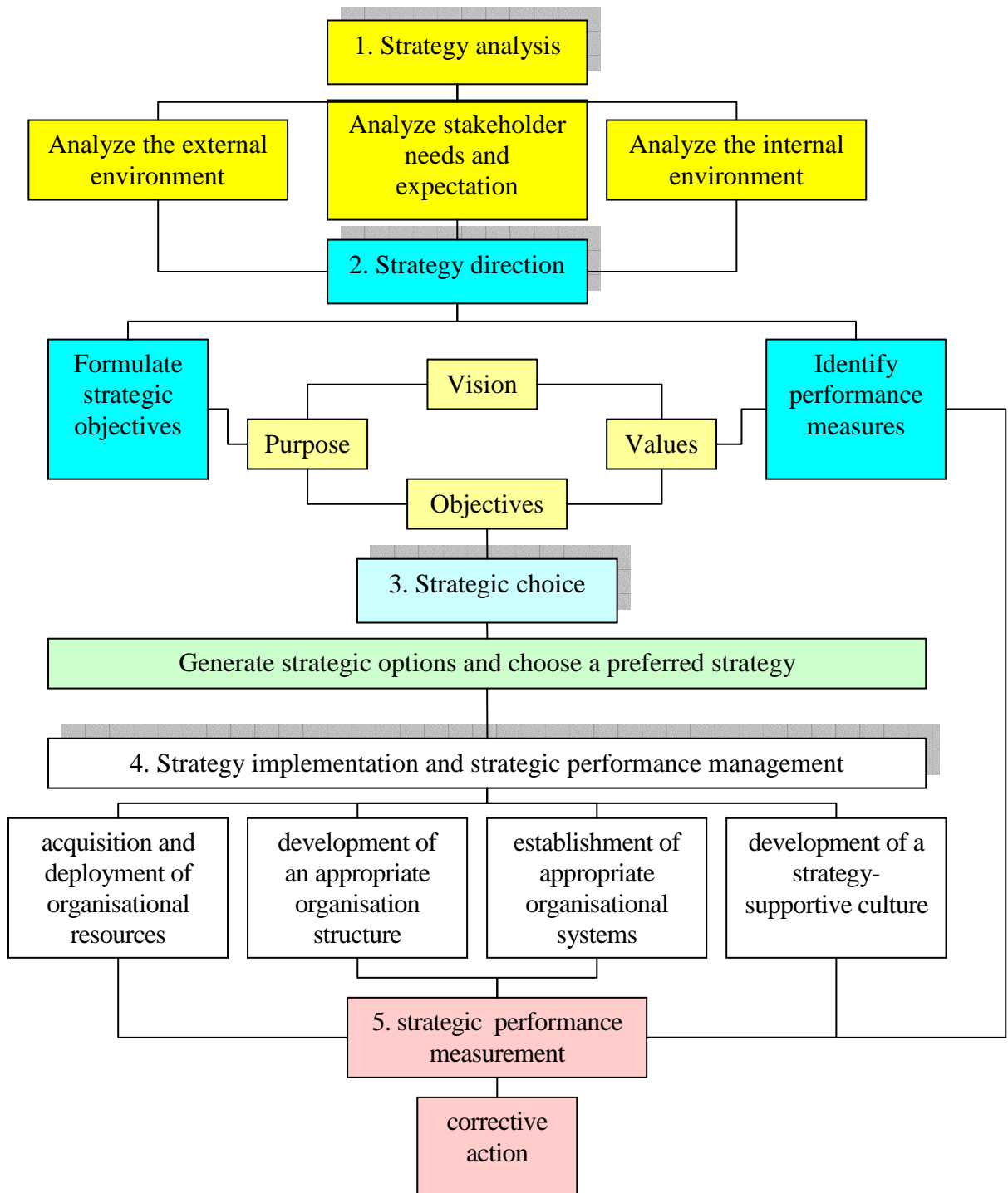
sustain their performance and behavior according to the direction of the RTN values and vision; moreover, a regression to tradition can be avoided.

- (3) Identify a High-Flyer.** The first and the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the RTN has to make is changes in its human resource management. The RTN must champion “the right man in the right job at the right time” regardless of who they work for. The RTN needs to establish a performance and behavior measurement system which is used to identify, select, nurture and develop a high-flyer to be put into the top job in the future. Therefore, the RTN must have a succession plan in accordance with its vision and values.
- (4) Establish Change Agent.** The RTN must establish a change of management teams in every RTN organization. Each team must have competencies to effectively contribute to the process of change. The team must have four abilities: firstly, the ability to communicate with the people involved in the change situation; secondly, the ability to deal with interpersonal relationships; thirdly, the ability to cope with conflict; fourthly, the ability to facilitate the people willing to change rather than to merely survive.
- (5) Monitor and Control.** The RTN must monitor and control change and maintain its momentum. If there are some barriers to change due to the unsuitable or unwilling staff after the process mentioned above, a hard decision must be made: these staff must be removed; all obstacles within bureaucracies must be dismantled. Once this has been achieved, then the remaining staff will give the support needed for success.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

6. This paper examines the application of the business strategic planning and management to the RTN's new vision—"to be the leading navy in region with a quality management and a balanced force structure." There are six problems associated with the vision: (1) no clear vision; (2) no support plan; (3) lack of support from strategic leaders; (4) resistance to change; (5) lack of resources; and (6) problem of ownership. To resolve these problems, the three step business strategic planning and implementation processes are recommended: (1) the RTN has to convert the vision into the strategic plan; (2) that plan must be implemented; (3) the change management should be considered when the plan is implemented.

Appendix



Management Framework (Viljoen & Dann, 2003, p.37)

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