

For July 2025: Bridge vs Chess

When it comes to politics and foreign affairs, you often hear pundits talking about chess as the analogy for how different strategies are used by opponents. Michael Ledeen, a foreign policy expert who died recently and whose writing often appeared in the Wall Street Journal, offered a different perspective. He cited President Eisenhower, an avid bridge player, as understanding that "Bridge – Not Chess – Is the Ultimate War Game." Ledeen wrote:

"No board game can replicate the conditions of the battlefield or the maneuvers of geostrategy, for one simple reason: All of the pieces are visible on the table. Card games are better models because vital information is always concealed by the "fog of war" and the deception of opponents. Most of the time a bridge player sees only one-quarter of the cards, and some of the information he might gather from them is false.

"Bridge is largely about communication, and every message a player sends—by bidding or playing a significant card—is broadcast to the player's partner and his opponents. Frequently a player will have to decide whether he would rather tell the truth to his partner (thereby informing his opponents) or deceive the enemy (thus running the risk of seriously fooling his ally across the table)."