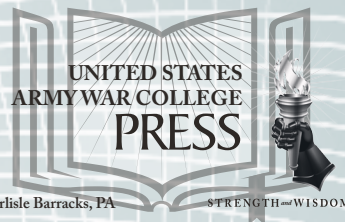


# GRAND STRATEGY IS ATTRITION: THE LOGIC OF INTEGRATING VARIOUS FORMS OF POWER IN CONFLICT

Lukas Milevski



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IN CONFLICT**

**Lukas Milevski**

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## FOREWORD

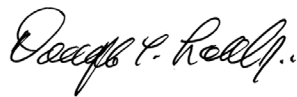
In this monograph, Dr. Lukas Milevski explores the fact that grand strategy is accepted by academics as a concept, without any firm agreement on what that concept is or the logic that supports it. Indeed, it is vital to understand this logic, regardless of whether one pins it to the label “grand strategy” or to any other label that may be available.

Dr. Milevski begins his monograph with a discussion of various competing visions of grand strategy as he works his way through the literature to identify the question of combining military and non-military power in war as the most fundamental building block of grand strategy. Yet, in recent decades, this vital component has been less prominent in the literature than other perspectives have been. Given the crucial context of war for grand strategy, the author moves on to the well-understood topic of the foundations and logic of military power. Annihilation is one pole of that logic in which military force may be used decisively to crush the adversary and bring about a quick end to the war. Its opposite is attrition, a longer and slower whittling process that transpires until the enemy can no longer bear the costs of war. Such considerations inevitably mark the wartime environment in which non-military power may be wielded.

Dr. Milevski then shifts track to consider the various logics of non-military instruments in peacetime, from economic sanctions to financial sanctions and propaganda, all the better to realize the changes which such instruments themselves undergo when employed in an adversarial context and alongside active military power. Finally, he combines the logics of military and non-military power in war to conclude that this

combination is inherently attritional, as it is only in a war of attrition that non-military instruments have relevance. Dr. Milevski ends by considering Russia's so-called hybrid warfare and China's three warfares, concluding that they, too, follow this same logic; their main innovations are in how this logic is ordered in time.

By providing the first thorough exploration of the logic of grand strategy, Dr. Milevski's illuminating monograph will be of great interest and value to those who think about meaningfully combining military and non-military power in war, as well as to those who are responsible for doing so in practice.



DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.  
Director  
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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LUKAS MILEVSKI is an assistant professor at Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands. He has published two books with Oxford University Press, *The Evolution of Modern Grand Strategic Thought* (2016) and *The West's East: Contemporary Baltic Defense in Strategic Perspective* (2018). Dr. Milevski teaches strategy in the M.A. international relations and B.A. international studies programs at Leiden University.



## SUMMARY

In 1992, Lawrence Freedman posited that:

The view that strategy is bound up with the role of force in international life must be qualified, because if force is but one form of power then strategy must address the relationship between this form and others, including authority.<sup>1</sup>

This is necessarily true, as force never has been, is not, and never will be the sole instrument for achieving political consequence—even in war, although its primacy in a wartime context should not be doubted. Freedman’s assertion has gone largely unnoticed in strategic studies. Despite the regular invocation of definitions of strategy, which incorporate non-military as well as military instruments, the West still experiences significant trouble combining these instruments in practice. Russian hybrid warfare came as a shock to Western scholars and practitioners of strategy, as well as policymakers, despite the enormous quantities of ink spilled in writing about grand strategy. This monograph seeks to respond to Freedman’s challenge by examining the conceptual logic of grand strategy, an idea that is often considered the intersection of military and non-military forms of power.

These days, grand strategy is casually taken for granted as a concept, even though there exists no academic consensus on what it actually is, or the conceptual logic underpinning the idea. In part, this inherently contradictory condition stems from the resurgence of interest in the idea of grand strategy since the end of the Vietnam War, and particularly, since the end of the Cold War. To address Freedman’s challenge, one must emphasize the instrumental logic, the use of multiple

instruments of power, which, rarely ever seriously discussed, implicitly or explicitly underpins all modern interpretations of grand strategy.

To understand the essential character of grand strategy is vital for all practitioners of strategy, particularly those with the global reach of the U.S. Army, because to embark upon a grand strategic conflict encompassing all instruments of power is implicitly to make a fundamental choice concerning what Clausewitz considered the most vital decision in war.

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish . . . the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.<sup>2</sup>

The choice to pursue grand strategy and exercise the full breadth of instrumental power is implicitly a judgment that the war will be attritional, which, in turn, necessarily must affect the design of military operations as they fit into the larger concept of how strategists anticipate the achievement of success in war. Beyond the meaning of this choice purely for the practice of strategy, the choice also affects the way that the grand strategy and the war are communicated to the public or other audiences, in terms such as the duration of the conflict, expectations about the utility of certain courses of action, or the costs involved.

The first section lays out competing visions of grand strategy: multi-instrumentality used to be at the forefront of grand strategy, but a focus on overarching visions and decisions has assumed the mantle of grandness in the concept from the latter half of the Cold War to the present day. This development has resulted in a dearth of theoretical inquiry into how productively

to use multiple forms of power in combination. Moreover, the original emphasis on the unique environment of war formerly had concentrated the concept, a focus that is now lacking.

Having established the significance of studying the instrumental logic of combining various forms of power in war, this monograph proceeds to explore the logic of military strategy, which is the baseline logic to which all other forms of power must necessarily relate in wartime. Annihilation is one pole of that logic, in which military force may be used decisively to crush the adversary and bring about a quick end to the war. Its opposite is attrition, a longer and slower process of whittling until the enemy can no longer bear the costs of war.

Compared to military force, the logic of non-military power is poorly understood in general, although well-understood in the particular. Economic sanctions, for example, may be studied according to one or more of three logics: signaling; as an independent instrument of coercion; and as a constraining force on the target. Of these logics, most are not relevant to the wartime environment, leaving constraining force as the only viable logic. Once military and non-military power are combined, the aggregate logic necessarily turns attritional, as it is only in the context of a longer, slower wearing down that non-military power can have any strategic relevance to the adversarial contest (i.e., by allowing one belligerent to impose artificial limits upon the enemy's resources, which may then be reached through military attrition).

The attritional logic of grand strategy is then contrasted with Russia's so-called hybrid warfare and China's three warfares, which both also combine military and non-military power. The major significant

difference between Western grand strategy on the one hand and Russian hybrid warfare and China's three warfares on the other hand is the temporal dislocation of the attritional element in combining military and non-military power. Rather than occurring simultaneously with the application of military force, as in Western grand strategy, the attritional elements precede military operations and substantially alter the operating environment, primarily by weakening the enemy prior to hostilities. However, despite differences between the Russian and Chinese combinations and Western grand strategy, their attritional logic nonetheless persists.

Both security studies and strategic and defense studies as academic fields and as policy professions have been emphasizing the multiplicity of forms of power and their relevance for decades. Ideas such as the comprehensive or whole-of-government approach have played a significant conceptual part in wars, as in Iraq and Afghanistan. Despite this, hardly anyone has sought to explore the actual logic, which must necessarily underpin such real-world practice. Being able creatively and effectively to combine military and non-military power enhances one's ability to alter the future, as the Russian example in Crimea clearly indicates. That same example also testifies to the West's shortcomings at actually doing so. It is past time to redress this glaring gap in the West's academic and policy grasp of how to combine military and non-military power in a single effort. After all, when U.S. strategists embark upon grand strategy rather than simply strategy, they are essentially, if implicitly, anticipating and committing to a longer war, with implications for the deployment and employment of the one element on which the whole logic of combining multiple



instruments of power most often rests – Landpower in war.

## ENDNOTES - SUMMARY

1. Lawrence Freedman, "Strategic Studies and the Problem of Power," in Lawrence Freedman, Paul Hayes, and Robert O'Neill, eds., *War, Strategy, and International Politics: Essays in Honour of Sir Michael Howard*, Oxford, United Kingdom: Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 290.

2. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, eds. and trans., Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 88.



## GRAND STRATEGY IS ATTRITION: THE LOGIC OF INTEGRATING VARIOUS FORMS OF POWER IN CONFLICT

In 1992, Lawrence Freedman posited that:

The view that strategy is bound up with the role of force in international life must be qualified, because if force is but one form of power then strategy must address the relationship between this form and others, including authority.<sup>1</sup>

This is necessarily true, as force never has been, is not, and never will be the sole instrument for achieving political consequence—even in war—although its primacy in a wartime context should not be doubted. Freedman’s assertion has gone largely unnoticed in strategic studies. Despite the regular invocation of definitions of strategy, which incorporate non-military as well as military instruments, the West still experiences significant trouble combining these instruments in practice. Russian hybrid warfare came as a shock to Western scholars and practitioners of strategy, as well as policymakers, despite the enormous quantities of ink spilled in writing about grand strategy. This monograph seeks to respond to Freedman’s challenge by examining the conceptual logic of grand strategy, an idea that is often considered the intersection of military and non-military forms of power.

These days, grand strategy is casually taken for granted as a concept, even though there exists no academic consensus on what it actually is or the conceptual logic underpinning the idea. In part, this inherently contradictory condition stems from the resurgence of interest in the idea of grand strategy since the end of the Vietnam War, and particularly, since the end of the Cold War. To address Freedman’s

challenge, one must emphasize the instrumental logic, the use of multiple instruments of power, which, although rarely ever seriously discussed, implicitly or explicitly underpins all modern interpretations of grand strategy, as well as Freedman's basic question. The first section of this text lays out competing visions of grand strategy and why it remains vital to focus on the mutual compatibility of military and non-military power in war. This interpretation of grand strategy – indeed any interpretation of strategy that combines military and non-military means – utilizes a conceptual logic that is inherently attritional. This attritional logic stems from combining the particular and disparate logics of military and non-military power, along with the implicit assumptions which underpin their respective employment during war. This line of argument will be logically explained, from the annihilative versus attritional modes of military power to the inherently cumulative effects of non-military power, as will the form that these two manifestations of power take when combined in a single, strategic effort – warfare. The attritional logic of grand strategy is thereafter contrasted with Russia's so-called hybrid warfare and China's three warfares, which both also combine military and non-military power. Despite the significant differences between the Russian and Chinese combinations and Western grand strategy, the attritional logic nonetheless endures.

To understand the essential character of grand strategy is vital for all practitioners of strategy, particularly those with the global reach of the U.S. Army, because to embark upon a grand strategic conflict encompassing all instruments of power is implicitly to make a fundamental choice concerning what Clausewitz considered the most vital decision in war.

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish . . . the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.<sup>2</sup>

The choice to pursue grand strategy and exercise the full breadth of instrumental power is implicitly a judgment that the war will be attritional, which, in turn, necessarily must affect the design of military operations as they fit into the larger concept of how strategists anticipate the achievement of success in a war. Beyond the meaning of this choice purely for the practice of strategy, the choice also affects the way that the grand strategy and the war are communicated to the public or other audiences, in terms such as the duration of the conflict, expectations about the utility of certain courses of action, or the costs involved.

For decades, both security studies and strategic and defense studies, along with academic fields and practitioner and policy professions, have been emphasizing the multiplicity of forms of power and their relevance. Ideas such as the comprehensive or whole-of-government approach have played a significant conceptual part in past or ongoing wars, as in Iraq and Afghanistan. Consequently, the theme of how these instruments may be combined productively has been close to the heart of the use and practices of U.S. Landpower for nearly 2 decades. The Army is rarely, if ever, employed alone to achieve a desired objective. Despite this, few have sought to explore the actual logic which must necessarily underpin such real-world practice, and by which one could comprehend how the various instruments of national power must all fit together in a single, concerted, strategic effort.

In most wars, Landpower is and will be the foundation on which the whole logic rests in application, and to which this logic must therefore refer. Being able creatively and effectively to combine military and non-military power enhances one's ability to alter the future to one's own benefit, as the Russian example in Crimea clearly indicates. That same example also testifies to the West's shortcomings at actually doing so, as the West was taken entirely by surprise not only in the fact of the Russian action but also in the details of how it played out. If a potential threat is multidimensional in the variety of instruments employed, then one must certainly understand the basis upon which these instruments may work together to comprehend their ultimate effect upon one's ability to act strategically. It is past time to redress this gap in the West's academic and policy grasp of how to combine military and non-military power in a single effort—regardless of whether or not the resulting ideas and practice are called grand strategy.

## **COMPETING VISIONS OF GRAND STRATEGY**

Prior to discussing the question of associating grand strategy with attrition, one must examine instrumentality and multi-instrumentality in grand strategy. The idea of integrating various forms of power in war used to be one of the dominant interpretations of grand strategy embraced by various strategists, from Julian Stafford Corbett to Edward Luttwak and Colin Gray. This logic of grand strategy stemmed from the development of maritime strategic thought in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, before which grand strategy only narrowly applied to the military. Only through the influence of the two

major maritime theorists, Alfred Thayer Mahan and, particularly, Julian Stafford Corbett, did grand strategy expand to include non-military instruments. This conceptual change reflected the particular characteristics of sea power and the maritime environment, a space in which the contest between empires could take on other than a solely military dynamic. As Mahan argued, “The diplomatist, as a rule, only affixes the seal of treaty to the work done by the successful soldier. It is not so with a large proportion of strategic points upon the sea.”<sup>3</sup> Far-flung islands—indeed, entire colonial territories—could be bought, sold, and bartered for rather than won through battle, such as the Louisiana Purchase from France and Alaska from Russia, or the Red Sea town of Assab by an Italian company in 1869, which became the first Italian colonial territory in 1882.

Once the codification of maritime strategy had begun, theorists such as Corbett were obliged to recognize this breadth. Corbett’s notes for lectures to British naval officers at the Royal Naval College in Greenwich, United Kingdom, reflected this realization.

First there is Grand Strategy, dealing with whole theatre of war, with planning the war. It looks on war as a continuation of foreign policy. It regards the object of the war & the means of attaining it. It handles all the national resources together, Navy, Army, Diplomacy & Finance.<sup>4</sup>

This conceptual breadth thereafter became a bedrock feature of most interpretations and reinterpretations of grand strategy. British military theorist John Frederick Charles Fuller broadly defined grand strategy as “The transmission of power in all its forms, in order to maintain policy,” although he would also maintain that it was purely a peacetime concept.<sup>5</sup> His

contemporary, Basil Liddell Hart, offered a definition of grand strategy which remains a favorite among those who write about grand strategy today. Liddell Hart identified that the role of grand strategy was “to co-ordinate and direct all the resources of a nation, or band of nations, towards the attainment of the political object of the war – the goal defined by fundamental policy.”<sup>6</sup>

Contemporaneously with Fuller and Liddell Hart, American interpretations of grand strategy underwent a similar, but even more expansive, broadening. Edward Mead Earle’s definition of grand strategy also continues to be popular, albeit less so than that of Liddell Hart. He suggested that:

The highest type of strategy—sometimes called grand strategy—is that which so integrates the policies and armaments of the nation that the resort to war is either rendered unnecessary or is undertaken with the maximum chance of victory.<sup>7</sup>

Great breadth has also marked many of the more recent interpretations of grand strategy which emerged from the latter half of the 1970s onward. Barry Posen, for instance, argues that, “A grand strategy must identify likely threats to the state’s security and it must devise political, economic, military, and other remedies for those threats.”<sup>8</sup> Edward Luttwak also places the combination of military and non-military means at the center of grand strategy.

For at the level of grand strategy, the interactions of the lower, military levels, their synergisms or contradictions, yield final results within the broad setting of international politics, in further interaction with the nonmilitary transactions of states: the formal exchanges of diplomacy, the public communications of propaganda,



secret operations, the perceptions of others formed by intelligence official and unofficial, and all economic transactions of more than purely private significance.<sup>9</sup>

Colin Gray similarly argues, "If the concept of grand strategy is to have intellectual integrity, it has to admit a necessary connection to military force as a, not the only, defining characteristic."<sup>10</sup>

A final defining characteristic of this interpretation of grand strategy is that it revolves explicitly around war, save for outliers, such as J. F. C. Fuller's notion. As Luttwak argues concerning the practice of grand strategy, "The boundaries of grand strategy are wide, but they do not encompass all the relationships of all participants in the totality of international politics." Grand strategy occurs only in the presence of armed conflict, rather than being pure statecraft at all times.<sup>11</sup> This fixation anchored the logic of grand strategy, as the context of war imposed certain restrictions and limitations on the assumptions and understandings which underpinned the logic of grand strategy.

This qualification for fixing grand strategy to war is significant. Peace and war are substantially differing contexts, and those who act in either do so holding opposing assumptions about fundamental questions, such as **how** to achieve one's policy goals. When combining military and non-military power in war, non-military power must be integrated into and benefit the main military effort. Non-military power must bow to the basic facts of war and warfare. Combining the two in peace requires military power to be integrated into non-military power and act along the lines required by diplomacy and statecraft, an altogether different task. Corbett believed that one of the purposes of theory is to make concepts communicable:

“Every man concerned must have been trained to think in the same plane; the chief’s order must awake in every brain the same process of thought; his words must have the same meaning for all.”<sup>12</sup> The basic frame of mind, fundamental standards of effectiveness, and foundational forms of power vary greatly between peace and war. It is both conceptually and practically difficult to incorporate the logics of military and non-military power within one single context, without then also expanding the concept of grand strategy into a wholly other context, where the logics differ again.

Unfortunately for the state of the concept, the instrumental logic inherent in combining multiple forms of power, whether in war or in war **and** peace, has never been systematically explored. It remains, as Liddell Hart perceived it throughout his writing career, “for the most part *terra incognita* – still awaiting exploration, and understanding [italics in original].”<sup>13</sup> Despite the lack of real development, the question of multi-instrumentality used to be the **defining** element that distinguished grand strategy from strategy, the new aspect that made grand strategy **grand**. This conception of grandness has become mundane, at least since as early as the 1960s, when the U.S. Air Force Manual 11-1, *Glossary of Standardized Terms*, succinctly encapsulated this mundanity: “**national** strategy – See **strategy**.”<sup>14</sup> The manual’s entry for strategy differentiated between military strategy – a formulation which would once have been considered redundant – and national strategy.

**strategy** – The art and science of developing and using political, economic, psychological, and military forces *as necessary* during peace and war, to afford the maximum support to policies, in order to increase the probabilities

and favorable consequences of victory and to lessen the chances of defeat.

*military strategy*—The art and science of employing the armed forces of a nation to secure the objectives of national policy by the application of force, or the threat of force.

*national strategy*—The art and science of developing and using the political, economic, and psychological powers of a nation, together with its armed forces, during peace and during war, to secure national objectives [emphasis and italics in original].<sup>15</sup>

The idea of mixing military and non-military forms of power together in the pursuit of political goals came to be accepted as commonplace, a natural evolution which required little thought. Ubiquitous in practice, this interpretation of grand strategy does not hold an intellectual monopoly. No longer appearing sufficiently grand to carry the weight of grand strategy, in academic discussions, this interpretation is an increasingly marginalized understanding of grand strategy. Although the interpretation implicitly remains a major feature of contemporary definitions of grand strategy, it is rarely discussed. Why, then, should one privilege the interpretation over the competing logics of grand strategy as espoused by others? To answer this question, one must first elaborate upon the term's conceptual competition.

In recent decades, this multiple-instrument logic of grand strategy has been overshadowed by an alternative conception of grand strategy, one that places the concept above policy itself, to manage it, often on time scales which may be measured in decades or centuries. This latter understanding of grand strategy is especially popular in the United States. Earle's definition of grand strategy fits within this "overarching"

understanding of grand strategy as well, as it explicitly referred to the integration of policy, as well as the armaments (in a broad sense, the means) of the nation. Paul Kennedy popularized this interpretation in the early 1990s: "A true grand strategy was now concerned with peace as much as (perhaps even more than) with war. It was about the evolution and integration of policies that should operate for decades, or even centuries."<sup>16</sup> Alternatively, as another commentator of that time suggested:

The natural inclination is to view strategy as supporting policy, rather than the reverse. . . . But strategy is more than this: it is the grand design, the overall mosaic into which the pieces of specific policy fit. It provides the key ingredients of clarity, coherence and consistency over time.<sup>17</sup>

This conception of grand strategy requires the ability to maintain political coherence even when crossing boundaries, such as peace to war, and later to peace again.

The great American grand strategic debate of the 1990s wholeheartedly adopted this impression of overarching grand strategy. The vocabulary of grand strategy suddenly revolved around arcane terms, such as neo-isolationism, selective engagement, primacy, and cooperative security, which were joined a decade later by additional labels, such as offshore balancing and liberal interventionism.<sup>18</sup> These labels all represented individual "grand strategies" which sought to impose on U.S. policy coherence which each author believed to have been missing since the end of the Cold War and the success of the policy of containment. According to the proclivities of each individual author, the coherence to be imposed varied thematically. Some

preferred to return to an isolationist posture, others to take advantage of the U.S. unipolar moment to impose its primacy upon the world and so forth.

Most subsequent writers on the topic further extrapolated from this basic understanding of grand strategy:

It should be clear to the reader that ‘grand strategy’ and ‘foreign policy’ are not synonymous. Grand strategy, the conceptual framework, is necessarily broader than foreign policy, the political actions of the state in international relations.<sup>19</sup>

To write treatises espousing the virtues of a specific grand strategy has become an academic cottage industry in the United States. Daniel Drezner has flippantly but accurately commented upon the popularity of writing on grand strategy.

Grand strategies are easy to devise—they are forward-looking, operate in generalities, and make for great book tours. Whenever a foreign policy commentator articulates a new grand strategy, an angel gets its wings.<sup>20</sup>

Once one begins discussing grand strategy at this level, the content of the debate becomes essentially ideological.<sup>21</sup> William Martel suggested:

Scholars and policy makers must understand that they cannot articulate a coherent grand strategy without first achieving a consensus on the political goals that shape the state’s policies and allowing policy makers to garner broad public support for that goal.<sup>22</sup>

This is both quixotic and unproductive because it lowers the level of debate to that of first political principles—that is, ideology. As Marc Trachtenburg trenchantly noted:

To my mind, one of the main problems with the idea of grand strategy is that it places a premium on a certain kind of intellectualizing. It is never enough just to call for a particular course of action; one has to justify the strategy by rooting it in a certain theory about what is at the bottom of international politics, or at least what is at the heart of the situation one is trying to deal with. Since the strategy needs to be simple and all-encompassing, there is a tendency for the theory to be framed in rather grandiose terms—that is, for the theory to overdefine or to misdefine the problem, and in any case to misdirect attention away from the real issues that policy should focus on.<sup>23</sup>

The resultant debate among those with varying ideologies produces heat and angst, but no light or agreement. Questions concerning the instrumental logic of integrating various forms of power remain, but the focus has shifted away from them in favor of various big, overarching ideas. Even one of the most recent samples of American grand strategic literature focuses on selling the big idea and, even though an extensive discussion of the instrumental logic necessary for implementing the big idea is provided, it still plays a secondary role to, and is a part of, the idea of salesmanship.<sup>24</sup>

The concept of grand strategy under this interpretation is no longer **strategic**. Rather, (grand) strategy and policy have swapped roles as compared to classical strategy, from which modern strategic studies is derived. Now, “In effect, strategy tells us *what* policies to pursue, whereas foreign policy is about the *how* to do so [italics in original].”<sup>25</sup> Grand strategy, as currently envisioned by many, drives policy and operates constantly—in peace as in war. It determines the way in which a country is to interact with the rest of the world, usually without reference to any particular

purpose, and thus, ostensibly, until the end of time. The original underlying concept of strategy is now lost, along with its instrumental logic (and ensuing practice) of military power in the peculiar and unique context of war.

Strategy is designed to make war useable by the state, so that it can, if need be, use force to fulfil its political objectives. One of the reasons we are unsure what constitutes war is that we are unsure about what strategy is or is not. It is not policy; it is not politics; it is not diplomacy. It exists in relation to all three, but it does not replace them.<sup>26</sup>

Unlike any other instruments or circumstances in political life, individually or in combination, the instrumentality of violence and the context of war are both vital and unique to strategy. The grandiose expansion of grand strategy into real responsibility and authority in peace as well as war, plus the increasing apparent banality of combining multiple forms of power, result in losing sight of this uniqueness.

Finally, this expanded interpretation of grand strategy is derived from a fundamental misunderstanding of its conceptual patron saint: containment, often invoked as the great and successful example of grand strategy working as a framework for foreign policy, which, despite both domestic and foreign crises, endured for decades to guide U.S. foreign policy throughout the Cold War. Yet, containment was not a framework. Rather, it was a way or method of achieving a particular goal – the collapse of the Soviet Union – together with an explanation of the underpinning instrumental logic. It was the **how**, not the **what** or the **why**. It endured despite ideational challenges

because all alternatives—rollback, the prospect of nuclear war, surrender—were instrumentally worse.

What these grand strategists have mistaken as authority over policy was actually a normal mutual feedback loop between the desired political end and the chosen ways to achieve that end within an ever evolving geopolitical context. What these grand strategists have mistaken as a four decade-long grand strategy was simply a constancy of purpose within an international environment which constrained the action realistically suitable for achieving that purpose to a single option.<sup>27</sup>

This constancy of purpose was ensured by an enduring enemy—containment persisted because the Soviet Union persisted.

Some have sought to defend this notion of grand strategy. Paul Miller was concerned that “If grand strategy does not include consideration of the ultimate or political aims of national security, then it is unclear what differentiates *grand strategy* from *strategy* [italics in original].” Yet, at the same time, he himself noted that mainstream concepts of grand strategy varied from strategy in four ways, two of which represented the grand, unifying idea and its subjugation of policy. The other two outstanding features were the instrumental breadth of grand strategy and its peacetime role.<sup>28</sup> This alone suggests that there remains enormous and significant room for grand strategy to exist as a concept, even without directing policy through the conception of a big idea.

To privilege the older and now neglected instrumental emphasis of grand strategy over the newer and prevalent ideological understanding would be to bring the grand strategy debate closer to policy relevance. Examination of instrumental logic is of eternal concern to policymakers and strategists, as the basic



logic remains constant, regardless of political views or the party in power—although political authorities may believe otherwise. Ideology, on the other hand, both sidelines and is easy to sideline. To a favorable audience, it is preaching to the choir; to an unfavorable audience, it is misguided noise. The basic logic of instrumentality inherent in combining multiple forms of power in grand strategy can—and should—be elucidated. Yet no one has yet seriously taken up Freedman’s challenge regarding the relation of military power to other forms of power.

Due to the shift of focus in the study of grand strategy from multi-instrumentality to overarching grand visions and decisions, the gap in both the literature and the understanding of grand strategy, never filled even by the older literature on grand strategy, became fossilized as no longer sufficiently vital to study in its own right. This has relegated even the relatively few discussions of grand visions which **do** include consideration of instrumental logic on an ad hoc basis with little to no general theoretical foundation. The resulting hole in our understanding of grand strategy must be plugged.

## **THE FOUNDATIONS AND LOGIC OF MILITARY POWER**

To understand the role which non-military power may play in grand strategy, one must begin by comprehending military power and its role in war. War is adversarial, which breeds a particular kind of thinking. Adversarial ways of thinking are unique and readily distinguishable from peaceful, even if competitive, thinking. Clausewitz described the basic tenor of adversarial thinking:

So long as I have not overthrown my opponent I am bound to fear that he may overthrow me. Thus I am not in control: he dictates to me as much as I dictate to him. . . . If you want to overcome your enemy you must match your effort against his power of resistance. . . . But the enemy will do the same.<sup>29</sup>

In such circumstances, with often critical political issues gambled on the outcome of war, one must use the most promising instruments at one's own disposal. This is military power. It is why violence is a **defining** element of war. It is why Clausewitz stated that battle is the basic means of war: because combat is the clash of opposing military forces.

The logic of military power is well-trodden ground. Military power may be employed to attrite the enemy, to exhaust him, or to annihilate him. Usually this logic is represented as a spectrum with only two opposing poles, annihilation versus attrition or exhaustion, which are often treated as synonyms. In the first decades of the 20th century, German military historian Hans Delbrück was among the first to distinguish between strategies of annihilation (*Niederwerfungsstrategie*) and exhaustion or attrition (*Ermattungsstrategie*).<sup>30</sup> This basic model of two opposing strategies has remained popular ever since its conception, albeit it is occasionally modified by splitting attrition and exhaustion into two distinct poles to create a tri-polar model of military strategy, where attrition emphasizes the accumulation of physical and material damage and exhaustion the accumulation of moral and psychological harm.

Strategies of annihilation posit that a swift, overwhelming victory in which the enemy's army is wholly defeated leads to the collapse of the enemy's will to fight and his quick, subsequent surrender.

Napoleon's campaigns at the height of his power in 1805-1807 were the early models for this. Helmuth von Moltke the Elder's campaign against Austria-Hungary in 1866, which culminated at the battle of Königgrätz, also became an instant classic in the historical canon of the strategy of annihilation. Such campaigns have become the military ideal and are often given the brazen label of "decisive."

This strategic ideal is two-dimensional. Strategies of annihilation are expected to be relatively inexpensive, in both human and material cost. They are expected to be fast. Both dimensions must combine synergistically; because the campaigns are fast, they will also be cheap. These strategies demonstrate the strategic conceit that military power is capable of delivering fast, approximately desirable results—and the truth of this has been demonstrated throughout history, at least within favorable strategic circumstances. This is the basic promise of military action, although only sometimes does it actually bear fruit in real strategic practice.

Yet, strategies of annihilation are difficult to achieve in practice. Cathal Nolan's recent tome, *The Allure of Battle*, testifies to this difficulty, despite the siren song of annihilation and its purported decisiveness, which result in short wars. Too many factors in war, from politics to technology, tactics, the adversarial learning process, etc., can impede the successful achievement of a truly decisive, war-winning battle of annihilation.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, despite the difficulty, such decisive battles have occurred—or appear to have occurred—just often enough in military history not only to entrance many strategists but also to prove that they can and do occur. It remains the ideal military logic. It is also still practicable—as long as the appropriate circumstances

in the strategic environment are met. When the requisite circumstances are not met, then strategies of annihilation and their resultant battles fold into larger strategies of attrition. Battle therefore becomes, in Nolan's phrase, mere "accelerants of attrition."<sup>32</sup>

Strategies of attrition or exhaustion are the unloved step-sibling of the favored strategy of annihilation.

Annihilation creates the inability to carry on. Attrition and exhaustion produce either (or both) the improbability of victory or the unacceptable cost. Attrition tends to be associated with the destruction of military forces while exhaustion refers to the gradual degradation of a broader range of national capabilities (military forces, economic or industrial power, will, etc.).<sup>33</sup>

Attrition or exhaustion works by wearing down the enemy, materially or psychologically, and often both at once, through the accumulation of damage from various actions toward some identified limit. This logic has the potential to become terribly expensive in both men and materiel, as these processes can be painfully slow.

The popular image of attrition is the Western front of World War I, an unrelenting meat grinder into which tens and hundreds of thousands of young men were thrown to die for pitiful and pyrrhic territorial gains. Although this is not an accurate depiction of attrition as such, poorly directed attrition may degenerate into such scenes, albeit not necessarily of such magnitude as during World War I. Ironically, the attrition of World War I often stemmed from recurring attempts of the generals to seek decisive battles of annihilation by breaking through the fortified frontlines and, thereby, restore opportunities to maneuver. It was often the quest for annihilation which begat

the horrific scenes of attrition during World War I. A more recent and less extreme example of attrition is the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-1988.

American admiral and strategist J. C. Wylie described the logic of attrition or exhaustion in a different manner, by instead labeling it “cumulative strategy.” This is:

a type of warfare in which the entire pattern is made up of a collection of lesser actions, but these lesser or individual actions are not sequentially interdependent. Each individual one is no more than a single statistic, an isolated plus or minus, in arriving at the final result.<sup>34</sup>

Yet, the mechanism of effect is identical to that of attrition or exhaustion: the cumulative effect of warfare upon the enemy. In the most advantageous circumstances, a cumulative strategy itself could lead to the political and demographic annihilation of the enemy, if he has not already surrendered, on the basis of the impossibility of victory and of the human and financial cost of the war. Wylie identified the campaign against Japan to have been on this track by the last year of World War II due to the country’s totally vulnerable position after the United States established control of the sea.

Yet not all military power is equivalent. Land-power, sea power, and air power are all unique within the broader tent of military power. They share certain aspects of the logic of military power, fundamentally derived from their individual abilities to inflict physical harm and damage upon an enemy, but their unique geographies dictate variations in operation, as well as in specific effects. The various forms of military power become versatile due to this variety, but they also are not necessarily mutually exchangeable.

Each can accomplish missions and achieve effects that the others cannot, and each similarly has weaknesses and limitations that the others do not.

This basic understanding of military power and its possible modes of use indicates that military power is an inherently flexible tool in what the French strategist André Beaufre terms “a contest for freedom of action.”<sup>35</sup> Military power can contest freedom of action in various ways. It can engage quickly or it can attrite slowly. It can attempt to crush in a single battle or to whittle away over the course of innumerable engagements. It harbors both the promise of being a stand-alone instrument to achieve national policy and the capability to be employed alongside other levers of political power. As a strategic instrument, it is versatile in its employment.

The basic strategic purpose toward which this flexibility is used is to **control**. As naval historian Herbert Rosinski argued, “*It is this element of control which is the essence of strategy: Control being the element which differentiates true strategic action from a haphazard series of improvisations* [italics in original].”<sup>36</sup> Second, he noted, “Comprehensive control of a field of action means a concentration upon those minimum key lines of action or key positions from which the entire field can be positively controlled.”<sup>37</sup> The more control one strategic actor has over the field, the greater his own freedom of action and the less his opponent enjoys, thus shaping the pattern of adversarial interaction in war. This assumes that control is positively taken, of which military power—particularly Landpower—is capable. Control may also be denied, and military power is capable of achieving this standard as well.

However, it is only military power that can compel or control. Through its use, a strategist may oblige the

enemy to make a decision about continuing to engage in hostilities or revert to making peace. As Wylie argued, “*the ultimate determinant in war is the man on the scene with the gun.* This man is the final power in war. He is control. He determines who wins [italics in original].”<sup>38</sup> Yet, within the larger pattern of adversarial interaction in war, only Landpower has the potential to take control of that interaction. Sea power and air power have the ability to deny that control to the enemy, but those relying purely upon sea or air power cannot impose their own control over the whole pattern of the war.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, how the military compels and controls is in the details of military operations, and it may occur through annihilation, attrition, exhaustion, or at some point on the spectrum among these ideals.

## THE LOGIC OF NON-MILITARY POWER FROM PEACETIME TO WARTIME

The logic of non-military power differs from that of military power substantially. Whereas military power compels, coerces, and controls, non-military power primarily persuades and limits. The ability of non-military instruments to compel, coerce, and control is restricted. Even coercive diplomacy is closer to diplomacy than to coercion. As Gordon Craig and Alexander George argued:

Coercive diplomacy needs to be distinguished from pure coercion. It seeks to *persuade* the opponent to cease his aggression rather than bludgeon him into stopping. In contrast to the crude use of force to repel the opponent, coercive diplomacy emphasizes the use of threats and the exemplary use of limited force to persuade him to back down [italics in original].<sup>40</sup>

Such persuasive efforts take a long time to achieve desired results, even in diplomacy between friendly countries in non-adversarial contexts—such as U.S.-European Union negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, which began in 2013, and are not expected to be finalized until 2019-2020.

Furthermore, persuasive ways of influencing behavior are largely inappropriate for the adversarial climate of war. War engenders an adversarial mentality which encourages a disregard of persuasive means, as each side strives to outdo the other in dealing reciprocal damage, within the limits of its own capabilities, the limits imposed by its politics, and so forth. Thus, one may safely suggest that if the logic of non-military power is a certain way in peacetime, in wartime it is necessarily more conditional, and perhaps even marginalized. This is why Clausewitz identifies combat as the only means in war. “Only” is an exaggeration, but persuasion can make its effects felt only after the enemy has been weakened through combat, and his will to continue fighting has begun to crack and flag. When fighting enemies are comprised of multiple decision-making bodies, such as any coalition or alliance, adroit diplomacy after sufficient combat may lead to the withdrawal of a belligerent from the conflict. Thus, diplomacy may serve in certain circumstances, like the battles of annihilation described by Nolan, as accelerants of attrition. One need only think of the surrender of Italy during World War II or the Sunni Awakening during the Iraq War to see examples of how best to employ the persuasive logic of diplomacy even within war. The reduction of enemy manpower through diplomacy is largely—but not entirely—functionally equivalent to a similar reduction through force of arms. A dead man stays dead forevermore, but a



man turned by diplomacy may not only remove his strength from that of the enemy, but also add it to his own.

Yet, if the logic of non-military power were limited to persuasion, then its role in war would remain restricted. Fortunately, persuasion is not the only logic through which non-military power may be applied, in peace or war. Much like military power has an overall logic which is further conditioned by the specific details of that power—Landpower, sea power, air power, etc.—non-military power similarly may be comprised of a more general logic under which is a constellation of more particular logics. Whereas the logic of military power is already well-understood, both in general and in particular, the logic of non-military power is often better appreciated in the particular rather than in the general. The logics of three forms of non-military power are examined—economic sanctions, financial sanctions, and propaganda and fake news—from which a more general appreciation of non-military power is derived. As David Baldwin correctly observes, “The utility of a technique of statecraft is a function of the situation and not a quality intrinsic to the particular technique.”<sup>41</sup> The particular logic(s) of each form of non-military power below will not be ascertained in a vacuum but, ultimately, with regard to wartime utility.

### **Economic Sanctions**

Of all forms of non-military power, the logic of economic sanctions has drawn the most scholarly attention and debate, in part because sanctions have remained particularly popular among Western

policymakers as instruments of policy. In the context of peacetime statecraft:

Economic measures are likely to exert more pressure than either diplomacy or propaganda and are less likely to evoke a violent response than military instruments. In mixed motive games in which applying pressure and avoiding the evocation of a violent response are both important goals, economic tools are likely to be especially attractive. In such situations economic sanctions are not just 'second-best' techniques, but rather techniques that promise to be effective in ways that military force could not be.<sup>42</sup>

Although economic statecraft encompasses both positive inducements for behavior and negative sanctions against it, the climate of war discussed earlier limits the utility of the former until diplomacy as such becomes a viable method of engaging the enemy again. Such being the case, the focus should be on the negative dimensions of economic power—how can it contribute to the warfighting itself?

Academic debate surrounding economic sanctions identifies from actual practice three distinct logics through which sanctions have been applied and been expected to have effect. These are coercion, constraining, and signaling.<sup>43</sup> The hypothesis concerning signaling logic suggests that the primary target of economic sanctions is not the literal target of the sanctions but, rather, a section of the international audience witnessing the sanctions and their effects. Although this may be a valid logic in peacetime, it is less applicable in times of war for a number of reasons. First, in war, the main audience that one wishes to affect is the enemy himself. Second, given the relative weight of military versus non-military power in the adversarial climate of war, if one's own military power and action

cannot prevent an external audience from intervening counter to one's own interests, then the mere signaling of economic sanctions will also fail. Within the context of grand strategy, of combining military and non-military power in war, signaling is not a relevant logic. This is not to deny that, within considerations of broader statecraft beyond the war itself, signaling may be a relevant logic, but it is still not part of grand strategy as here defined.

In the context of economic sanctions, coercion refers to the ability of sanctions independently to change the target's policy. Economic coercion is:

the threat or act by a nation-state or coalition of nation-states, called the *sender*, to disrupt economic exchange with another nation-state, called the *target*, unless the targeted country acquiesces to an articulated political demand [*italics in original*].<sup>44</sup>

The academic debate has gone back and forth over the effectiveness of sanctions as an independent instrument of coercion. Robert Pape has starkly asserted, "economic sanctions do not work."<sup>45</sup> T. Clifton Morgan believes that:

We now know that sanctions are often effective, and we have identified a number of factors that contribute to, or detract from, their efficacy. We also know that sanctions threats frequently work, and we suspect that the credibility of these threats is bolstered by states' demonstrated willingness to impose them.<sup>46</sup>

Daniel Drezner identifies the question of future diplomatic or economic conflict between the sender and the target as a vital consideration for the latter in its reception of present economic sanctions and its response to them.

The target's conflict expectations determine the magnitude of concessions. Facing an adversarial sender, the target will be worried about the long-run implications of acquiescing. Because it expects frequent conflicts, the target will be concerned about any concessions in the present undercutting its bargaining position in future interactions. The sender might exploit the material or reputation effects from these concessions in later conflicts.<sup>47</sup>

Discussion of sanctions as coercion focuses on the question of peacetime sanctions as an independent instrument of policy. This perspective is wholly inappropriate in war, simply because economic sanctions are neither coercively independent in hostilities between two parties nor are they the only instrument of policy. Moreover, returning to the adversarial climate of war, economic sanctions are also not the strategically or politically weightiest instrument, as military power receives that distinction. If military power itself has yet to break the enemy's will to continue fighting, then the application of economic sanctions will certainly not do so.

This leaves constraining as the final logic of economic sanctions. As Morgan observes:

We should view sanctions as an effort to have a direct effect on the environment in which the target makes its decision. All actions require resources: If sanctions reduce the resources available to the target then the target *has* to make some changes in its behavior. These may or may not be the changes the sender wanted, but that should depend at least partly on the specific design of the sanctions, especially if many types of resources are not fungible.<sup>48</sup>

Constraining is the universal logic of negative economic sanctions. Regardless of the intended logic by

which sanctions are anticipated by policymakers to take effect, such as signaling or coercion, sanctions constrain. This is the source of their power as an instrument to affect the future. This is certainly a significant logic in peacetime: “sanctions can be used to create vulnerabilities that can later be exploited in negotiations,” as the use of economic sanctions against Libya for nonproliferation purposes attests.<sup>49</sup> Any coercive or signaling potential that economic sanctions may have stems from the fundamental ability of those sanctions to limit. The ability to limit the enemy’s present and future access to resources may also be meaningful, even in the middle of a war. The maritime dimension of this constraining activity, naval blockade, has a long history, especially in British hands. Limitation itself through economic means usually cannot be decisive, but it can certainly be productively combined with military power in war.

Besides the particular context of war, which naturally conditions the effect and effectiveness of economic sanctions, there is one other prerequisite for sanctions to have any effect at all—in peace or in war. Unlike military power, economic sanctions require pre-existent economic ties between or among the actors involved. Economic sanctions, even with a multilateral framework, interrupt inherently one or more bilateral trade flows. The more significant the pre-existing economic links were, the more effective sanctions may be, and the opposite is the case as well. This simple fact naturally conditions the utility of economic sanctions, whether in peace or in war.

## Financial Sanctions

Financial sanctions are one of the newest policy instruments available, enabled by the context of a truly global financial system. Strictly speaking an offshoot of the broader category of economic sanctions, financial sanctions target the ability to move or store money rather than the movement of trade. Economic statecraft in practice, especially in the West, has recently been employing financial sanctions more regularly than economic sanctions: “the United States and the European Union have relied upon targeted financial sanctions as their preferred instrument of statecraft.”<sup>50</sup> Juan Zarate, an actual practitioner of financial warfare, argued in 2013, “Over the past decade, the United States has waged a new brand of financial warfare, unprecedented in reach and effectiveness.”<sup>51</sup> The academic debate on financial sanctions has yet to reach full momentum, as attention is shifting only relatively slowly from the more traditional forms of economic power. As it remains a form of economic power, it may still fall underneath the identified tripartite logic of economic sanctions: signaling, coercion, and constraining. Signaling was already established as inappropriate for the context of war; therefore, only the latter two logics are considered.

Much like economic sanctions, limitation is the essential effect of financial sanctions. As one recent article introduced the topic to a predominantly military audience, “Financial power is simply the means to make warfare—or anything for that matter—more or less costly.” More specifically, “Financial warfare can, at a minimum, disrupt the monetary foundations underlying production and distribution and, accordingly, disrupt an adversary’s ability to produce

and distribute goods and services.”<sup>52</sup> Zarate the practitioner similarly describes the effects of financial sanctions.

In a series of financial pressure campaigns, the United States has financially squeezed and isolated America’s principal enemies of this period—Al Qaeda, North Korea, Iran, Iraq, and Syria . . . these campaigns have consisted of a novel set of financial strategies that harness the international financial and commercial systems to ostracize rogue actors and constrict their funding flows, inflicting real pain.<sup>53</sup>

In the experience of the U.S. Treasury during the global war on terrorism, financial sanctions could indeed coerce. Yet it was not, for example, al-Qaeda itself that was being coerced. Although al-Qaeda never gave up its desire to attack the West, financial warfare nevertheless posed a dual threat. First was the essential limitation imposed by financial sanctions:

By the time Osama bin Laden was killed, Treasury’s work had paid off. Al Qaeda’s old financial networks had been decimated, and the Al Qaeda core was pleading for money from its affiliates and donors and trying to find new ways to raise money.<sup>54</sup>

Moreover, although al-Qaeda was never coerced into changing fundamental political perspectives, many of its financiers were so coerced.

The Al Qaeda operatives did not exist in a vacuum. They relied on an entire system and support structure. The financial networks and the money were essential to their ability to operate and for the movement to survive in the long term. That support structure was made up of different types of actors, with varying motivations and vulnerabilities. For the financiers—who often were not as ideologically committed to the cause as the terrorists themselves—money was a factor, and they valued their

bank accounts and businesses. They wanted and needed to continue to do business across borders. Thus, we could find ways of altering the decision making of those donors, suppliers, and supporters who would value their ability to continue to do business. If their access to the legitimate commercial and financial systems were blocked, we reasoned, then they might reduce their support, desist for a time, or never provide support again. Any of these would be good outcomes.<sup>55</sup>

The role of the dollar in the global economy is the vital element in anticipating the effectiveness of U.S. financial sanctions:

Financial isolation did not come from a classic trade-based sanction or law; nor did it derive from a UN [United Nations] sanctions resolution. The bank had no assets in the United States, and the United States had not frozen \$25 million. Instead, the essence of this power came from banks' decisions to stop doing business with North Korea – prompted by the Treasury's unilateral 311 action.<sup>56</sup>

The Treasury prompted but did not control the market reaction against the target, whether al-Qaeda, Iran, or North Korea. Banks dealing with such illicit money faced a choice: do business with the enemy or with the United States. Thus far, the choice for markets has been easy. Yet, this extraterritorial reach is incumbent upon the dollar's central position in global finance, which has endured thus far, despite both financial warfare and financial crisis, but which is still coming increasingly under threat.

The experience of financial warfare suggests that it has the potential to be an independent instrument of policy, as it has had effect in countries such as Iran and North Korea. However, financial sanctions have failed to change the policies of actors who are



explicitly wholly adversarial, such as al-Qaeda. Nevertheless, financial sanctions still constrain the enemy and degrade its operational capabilities, perhaps even preventing it from carrying out some attacks altogether. As with other forms of non-military power, in war, these forms of power are not meant to be independent; therefore, their fundamental contribution should be seen through the lens of constraining the enemy and his freedom of action.

## **Propaganda and Fake News**

Propaganda has existed for at least 2,500 years, but has become a major concern only in the past century or so. Harold Lasswell defined it well during the inter-war period:

Propaganda is the management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols. The word attitude is taken to mean a tendency to act according to certain patterns of valuation. The existence of an attitude is not a direct datum of experience, but an inference from signs which have a conventionalized significance.<sup>57</sup>

Since 2014, the debate about propaganda has focused primarily on the issue of fake news.

Fake news is a concern for most, if not all, Western policymakers. Some argue that it influenced the result of the 2016 U.S. Presidential election. A North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) cooperative center of excellence focused on strategic communication was founded in Riga, Latvia, to lead NATO's response to fake news. Yet much of the current debate about fake news focuses on the specific case of Russia and the methods it uses, which include "deception, deflection of responsibility, outright lies, and the creation of an alternative reality."<sup>58</sup> There has been less theoretical

discussion about the effects of fake news, as observers and analysts prefer to emphasize the current and the specific over the general. Along these lines, Russia analyst Keir Giles described Russia's powerful fake news narrative:

Western media organizations more broadly, as well as the populations they serve, were entirely unprepared in early 2014 for a targeted and consistent hostile information campaign organized and resourced at state level. The result was an initial startling success for the Russian approach—exemplified in Crimea, where reports from journalists on the scene identifying Russian troops did not reach mainstream audiences because editors in their newsrooms were baffled by the inexplicable Russian denials. . . . This led at first to striking success in penetration of narratives, which contributed powerfully to Russia's ability to prosecute operations against Ukraine in the early stages of the conflict with little coordinated opposition from the West. The fact that the EU [European Union] continued to find itself unable to refer publicly to the presence of Russian troops in Ukraine for almost a year denoted a broader inability to challenge the Russian version of events—without which a meaningful response was impossible.<sup>59</sup>

Similarly, one of the early individual targets of Russian fake news, Finnish reporter Jessikka Aro, has described how:

aggressive pro-Russia propaganda trolls [have] had an impact on many Finns, on their attitudes and even their actions: some had stopped discussing Russian politics online; others had lost touch with what was true or false, for example, about the war in Ukraine.<sup>60</sup>

From such specific discussion, it is possible to derive observations about the effects of fake news in general. The primary effect of fake news is to limit or constrain the target's freedom of action. This may be

done by disrupting any competing, more truthful narratives, as occurred during the Crimean annexation. It can also be done by:

supplying polluted information, exploiting the fact that Western elected representatives receive and are sensitive to the same information flows as their voters. When disinformation delivered in this manner is part of the framework for decisions, this constitutes success for Moscow.<sup>61</sup>

Decision-making usually can be only as good as the information that feeds into it.

This pollution of the information framework for decision-making is a key element of the long-established Soviet and Russian principle of reflexive control—influencing the decision of your adversary by ensuring that he is supplied with specific information or disinformation on which to base it.<sup>62</sup>

The logic of propaganda and fake news lies in the manipulation of the information space, in which decision-makers exist and craft their policies to restrict the target's freedom of action, even if the target itself is not actually aware of this restriction. Of all non-military forms of power, fake news and propaganda are most compatible with non-attribitional forms of military power because they may directly influence decision-making. Yet, such influence does not occur immediately; it accumulates over time.

## **COMBINING MILITARY AND NON-MILITARY POWER**

To combine military and non-military power effectively in wartime, one must be able to translate the effects of non-military power into a form

comprehensible in the framework of strategy and strategic theory. Clausewitz defined combat as the only means in war. This is a slight exaggeration, but combat is necessarily the primary means. In such a context, non-military instruments may be useful only inasmuch as they may mitigate the need for combat, whether in the present or, more likely, in the future. In translating the effects of non-military power into something comprehensible to strategy, a common thread appears and runs through each of the instruments of non-military power. Each is capable of restricting or constraining the enemy. The instruments of non-military power may impose limits on the enemy, toward which military power can then act to attrite the opponent. However, instruments of non-military power cannot impose control upon the pattern of interaction between adversaries—rather, they deny the enemy control in war. The effects of instruments of non-military power accumulate over time; whether this occurs quickly or slowly, it does not happen all at once. Yet the fundamental question must be: What might such combinations of military and non-military power actually look like in practice?

Generic military power can either annihilate or attrite; it can take and exercise control or deny control. Generic non-military power cannot annihilate; it can only limit and attrite. Generic non-military power cannot take and exercise control; it can only deny control. If theory were to disregard the primacy of practice, it would suggest that there are no special implications to combining military and non-military power. Military and non-military power merely work together toward common political ends. This is the implicit assumption in the many definitions of strategy that incorporate both military and non-military

power beneath their wings, as they rarely, if ever, distinguish among the varying instrumental logics that must necessarily be at play among the variety of included instruments.

In practice, however, the implications of combination are significant. Non-military power is unlike military power in its logic. It cannot be assumed to be able to fulfill the same functions, certainly not in the same way as military power, and so it cannot be treated in the same manner. Combining these two distinct types of power within a single concept is not as straightforward as simply including non-military instruments into otherwise military-oriented definitions of grand strategy. The mutual compatibility of military and non-military instruments is low and contextual. The inclusion of non-military instruments in a military strategy has implications and reflects assumptions about the future.

Military strategists often invoke grand strategy, implicitly or explicitly, only when they judge annihilation to be implausible. Strategists prefer to avoid employing non-military instruments if they do not judge them necessary. The U.S. color war plans of the interwar period are telling examples. War Plan Green, which envisaged a fluid scenario in Mexico that might require U.S. Army intervention to protect American nationals, wholly disregarded non-military instruments.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, War Plan Tan against Cuba did not feature non-military instruments—the military alone was judged sufficient for any task.<sup>64</sup> In neither scenario would there be sufficient time for non-military instruments to be brought to bear, let alone to take effect, whether as a result of U.S. military effectiveness or due to the inherent fluidity of the strategic situation at hand. Non-military means were wholly irrelevant to

the strategic tasks that were anticipated in Mexico and Cuba, to be performed quickly by the military alone. Operation IRAQI FREEDOM in 2003 is another more modern example of when the military was expected to bring about such a quick result that any consideration of non-military instruments was laid aside – although this was informed as much by inappropriate political assumptions about internal Iraqi security after the war as by faith in military power.

In contrast to War Plans Green and Tan, in War Plan Orange against Japan, the joint planners could not overemphasize their desire to include non-military instruments in the anticipated war.

Mission for the Civil Power: To support the Armed Forces in their operations; to prevent JAPAN from obtaining any means of waging war from Neutral Countries and to destroy JAPANESE credit in order to accomplish the economic exhaustion of JAPAN.<sup>65</sup>

It contained an entire section (XVI) detailing “Cooperation with Other Government Departments,” which contained a list of necessary actions by the relevant government departments: exertion of economic and financial pressure, including worldwide preclusive purchase against Japan; exertion of pressure upon neutral nations to prevent those nations from supplying means of waging war to Japan; stoppage of all U.S. trade with Japan, but maintenance of U.S. foreign trade; treatment of enemy merchant vessels in U.S. ports upon outbreak of war; regulations for the declaration of contraband; control of enemy aliens and property in the United States; required intelligence service, including espionage and counterespionage; censorship of communications and the press; and propaganda in support of the war.<sup>66</sup> Finally, as a memo

from the Joint Planning Committee to the Joint Board argued, "It is considered that this section is of such importance that there should be as little delay as possible in the appointment of the representative of the various Government Departments."<sup>67</sup> The war against Japan was expected to be protracted and arduous; therefore, the long time horizons inherent in the use of non-military power could be accommodated in the overall grand strategy against Japan, thereby allowing them the opportunity to achieve the desired limiting effects.

Whereas War Plans Green and Tan demonstrated where grand strategy appeared to be unnecessary and War Plan Orange indicated under what circumstances grand strategy was desirable, War Plan Red against Great Britain revealed when it might be counterproductive. As the war planners observed:

The RED financial structure is strong and independent of any BLUE banking interests. BLUE investments in Europe at present have comparatively little effect in neutralizing RED financial influence in that field, and the contingency that they may some time do so, is considered remote. The necessity which many European nations are now under to pay interest on large loans to the BLUE government and to BLUE private banking interests, will probably be utilized by RED to mobilize sentiment in these nations in her favor in a war with BLUE.<sup>68</sup>

That is, recourse to non-military instruments would not only be ineffective but may actually be harmful to the United States in any war with Great Britain. The anticipated disadvantage was a question of non-British European diplomacy and political pressure limiting U.S. freedom of action in any hypothetical war.

A clear, albeit failed, example of the limiting and attritional logics of non-military power in the form

of economic sanctions, and of military power in the form of a cyber special operation, respectively, is the sanctions and Stuxnet attack on Iran. Iran's nuclear program had been subject to sanctions and trade controls for some time prior to the Stuxnet attack as the United States and other international actors sought to slow the program down. These actors sought to constrain Iran's freedom of action by limiting its potential acquisition of necessary resources, particularly with regard to its nuclear program, which in turn led Iran to attempt to circumvent these limitations through smuggling. As the other element in the strategic equation, special operations may be considered an instrument of attrition:

At the strategic level . . . special operations are less about an epic Homeric raid than they are about the combined effects of disparate unorthodox activities in the ebb and flow of a campaign or series of campaigns.<sup>69</sup>

Stuxnet may be considered a special operation, perhaps the first of its kind, in cyberspace. Like more physical special operations, it was essentially a single-shot attempt. There could be no repeat with the same code (or mission plan).

The strategic picture is clear. Iran's nuclear program was limited by external action, leading to a relatively inflexible cap on the resources it could dedicate to expanding or sustaining the program. Iran at the time was estimated to have stockpiled material to build 12,000 to 15,000 early generation centrifuges, of which 9,000 had already been deployed and were in use at the Iranian nuclear facility at Natanz. Due to Iranian unfamiliarity with nuclear technology at the time and the poor quality of its early generation centrifuges, routine operation of its nuclear facilities led



to an annual wastage of about 1,000 of these centrifuges. Iran's limits appeared to be quite close, as Iran had a buffer of only 2,000-5,000 centrifuges to replace losses. Yet at this point, Iran still could replace the losses – the limits Stuxnet imposed made the development of the nuclear program more difficult, but it did not meaningfully impact its activity. More centrifuges had to be destroyed for the imposed limits actually to become significant. In Stuxnet, the West had an instrument that could possibly destroy Iranian centrifuges. The tactical end result of the Stuxnet attack was that another 1,000 centrifuges were destroyed at Natanz. This hit the Iranian resource buffer, but did not overwhelm it. Although a tactical success for an innovative instrument, Stuxnet was not tactically successful enough to provide the desired strategic consequence.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, despite failure, the logic of combining military and non-military power is clear.

The employment of non-military instruments in war is primarily a question of imposing constraints or limitations on the enemy's freedom of action by denying him access to resources. Limitations are often insufficient to convince the target independently to come to terms, especially in war, in which policymakers' basic frame of reference focuses on the question of combat and operational effectiveness and success. Such being the case, limitations become relevant when they are meaningful. What gives them meaning is when the target (the enemy) requires resources to sustain its war effort which it can no longer acquire – or acquire sufficiently easily for them to be reliable – due to the limitations imposed by non-military instruments. In this context, the military aspect of grand strategy is to push the enemy to, and beyond, those limits. Strategy therefore turns to attrition, for which

annihilation at best may only be an accelerant. Even diplomatic events like the surrender of Italy in 1943 or the Sunni Awakening only bring the limits closer to the enemy by denying it resources and redirecting the attrition toward other adversary groups. In this way, too, even such diplomatic coups only take effect as accelerants of attrition, albeit from the other direction by pushing the breaking point closer to the ongoing level of attrition.

### **ALSO TRUE FOR HYBRID WARFARE AND UNRESTRICTED OR THREE WARFARES?**

If the logic of grand strategy is inherently attritional due to its fundamental combination of military and non-military means, it stands to reason that other strategic concepts which combine these unlike forms of power must be similarly attritional. Other forms of this combination exist, including Russia's so-called hybrid warfare and China's unrestricted or three warfares strategic theses. The logic of these two combinations of military and non-military power will be examined to determine whether or not they too are attritional in nature. Of the two, Russian hybrid warfare has been practiced, but not theorized (at least not by the Russians themselves, although much has been written about hybrid warfare in the West), whereas Chinese unrestricted warfare or three warfares has been theorized, but not practiced up to the point of actual war.

The Russians themselves are adamant that it was the West that first practiced hybrid warfare:

there is a general consensus in Russian military circles that hybrid war is a completely Western concept as no Russian military officer or strategist has discussed

it, except to mention the West's use of the term, or to mention the West's use of hybrid warfare against Russia. . . . The Russian military has been adamant that they do not practice a hybrid-war strategy.<sup>71</sup>

Hence, the Russians themselves have not explicitly theorized on their own practice of hybrid warfare, although their ruminations on the Western practice of hybrid warfare reveal much about their own practice. For an explicit discussion of the logic of hybrid warfare, one must turn to Western interpretations of Russian practice. Latvian analyst Jānis Bērziņš identifies eight phases in Russian hybrid warfare, of which the first four do not involve military force:

**First Phase:** non-military asymmetric warfare (encompassing information, moral, psychological, ideological, diplomatic, and economic measures as part of a plan to establish a favorable political, economic, and military setup).

**Second Phase:** special operations to mislead political and military leaders by coordinated measures carried out by diplomatic channels, media, and top government and military agencies by leaking false data, orders, directives, and instructions.

**Third Phase:** intimidation, deceiving, and bribing government and military officers, with the objective of making them abandon their service duties.

**Fourth Phase:** destabilizing propaganda to increase discontent among the population, boosted by the arrival of Russian bands of militants, escalating subversion [emphasis in original].<sup>72</sup>

These first four phases are not inherently sequential; no phase is logically reliant on any previous phase, they generally overlap, and they may occur

simultaneously. These phases are intended to achieve up to nine distinct outcomes:

- i. Stimulation and support of armed actions by separatist groups with the objective of promoting chaos and territorial disintegration;
- ii. Polarization between the elite and society, resulting in a crisis of values followed by a process of reality orientation to Western values;
- iii. Demoralization of armed forces and military elite;
- iv. Strategic controlled degradation of the socioeconomic situation;
- v. Stimulation of a socio-political crisis;
- vi. Intensification of simultaneous forms and models of psychological warfare;
- vii. Incitement of mass panic, with the loss of confidence in key government institutions;
- viii. Defamation of political leaders who are not aligned with Russia's interests;
- ix. Annihilation of possibilities to form coalitions with foreign allies.<sup>73</sup>

These nine outcomes are all similar in that they restrict the ability of the target government to act. If the state is falling apart at the margins due to separatists, if its government and public institutions are not trusted by the people, if the armed forces are demoralized, etc., these factors all limit the freedom of action of the target state. In other words, "The essence of Russia's tactics was precisely to try and avoid the need for shooting as much as possible, and then to try and ensure that whatever shooting took place was on the terms

that suited them best.”<sup>74</sup> That is, by the time Russia is employing real military power, the opponent’s options are ideally so limited that there is no realistic choice other than acquiescence and surrender, simply because the capacity for other action no longer exists. This ideal was asymptotically achieved in Crimea, but failed later in the Donbass.

It has long been suggested that China’s strategic culture differs significantly from that of the West, a difference that influences even fundamental concepts of strategy. Rather than the Western model of means, ways, and ends, the Chinese favor a condition-consequence approach, which “is a Chinese concept of efficacy that teaches one to learn how to allow an effect to come about: not to aim for it directly, but to implicate it as a consequence.”<sup>75</sup> This implies that limitation of the enemy’s freedom of action is the focus of the corpus of Chinese strategic thought. This is achieved by manipulating the conditions in which the adversary acts in such a manner that the enemy simply has no scope for action except along the lines which China desires.

This imposition of limitation relies upon a longer-term insight into the future, as conditions that are established earlier lead more naturally to the desired consequences, in part because the target of these early-imposed restraints begins to accept such limitations as immutable. Acting so early minimizes the amount of effort eventually required to achieve the desired goals.

China’s strategic culture encourages intervening subtly in a situation long before armed conflict arrives to alter the strategic landscape. Or, to translate the concept into a Western context, by laying the groundwork in Phase Zero the strategic landscape can be altered so that the

objectives of the state can be achieved, and with minimal fighting.<sup>76</sup>

It also serves to minimize the risk of failure in war itself.

Chinese strategy aimed to use every possible means to influence the potential inherent in the forces at play to its own advantage, even before the actual engagement, so that the engagement would never constitute the decisive moment, which always involves risk.<sup>77</sup>

This upstream engagement of the target before it is an actual enemy and the manipulation of the environment often cannot rely on military force but, rather, on non-military power. China's three warfares concept identifies three main methods by which the People's Liberation Army may contribute to this task through non-military means: psychological instruments, public opinion, and legal instruments.<sup>78</sup> The goal of the use of these means and methods is to increase one's own freedom of action and limit that of the opponent, and they may easily be used in conjunction with other non-military instruments, such as economic power.

One clear distinction emerges between Russian hybrid warfare and China's three warfares on one hand versus the Western version of grand strategy as multiple instruments of power in war on the other. This difference is timing. In this Western notion of grand strategy, military and non-military power are combined in war, with relatively little thought given to pre-war, non-military efforts to make the ensuing war easier. Perhaps only J. F. C. Fuller's and Edward Mead Earle's individual conceptions of grand strategy addressed this point, in different ways, but both tended to focus more on arming the nation to prepare

for war rather than weakening and limiting the prospective enemy—a defensive rather than aggressive concept. In contrast, in both theory and practice, Russia and China have exported their use of non-military instruments into the era of peace leading up to a potential armed conflict to shape the environment to suit their own interests best by limiting what their potential opponents may be able to do. As the Russian propaganda network RT's editor-in-chief, Margarita Simonyan, stated by way of comparing RT to the Ministry of Defense:

Of course, the Defense Ministry can't start training soldiers, preparing weaponry and generally making itself from scratch when the war already started. If we don't have an audience today, tomorrow and the day after, it'll be the same as in 2008.<sup>79</sup>

This is a key difference, because it shifts forward the timing of attrition, of when the effect of non-military power accumulates. It is both a relatively safe and a relatively easy way to influence the strategic environment because it occurs substantially before an adversarial relationship, such as that between Russia and the West, is established. It is a more deliberate use of non-military power than occurs in war because it establishes the most beneficial conditions for war in advance. Thus, it may perhaps be suitable or even available as a policy option, only for revisionist powers, as those interested in the status quo are also inherently disinterested in initiating war.

Regarding the effect of non-military power, its logic endures whether in war or in peace when it is combined, simultaneously or sequentially, with military power. It imposes identifiable limits on the opponent, which may then be reached by military power

through attrition or exhaustion. Nonetheless, limits imposed through the sustained peacetime use of non-military power may ultimately prove to be quite tight, and the attrition or exhaustion necessary to succeed may be relatively low, as seen in Crimea, a campaign that was the ideal case for hybrid warfare, but it is unlikely to be repeatable.

## CONCLUSION

Grand strategy is often invoked within strategic studies and related disciplines, less often defined, and almost never explored at the level of conceptual logic. Yet, the conceptual logic of grand strategy matters, as it is this logical level that determines how the various component forms of power fit together. This is true especially of the interpretations of grand strategy – as well as of strategy in general – which particularly emphasize combining multiple forms of power. Yet this logic is not limited to these concepts of grand strategy only, as even more recent definitions of grand strategy implicitly assume such combination, albeit the amalgamation of various forms of power is now often considered mundane. However, recent Western strategic experience suggests that combining military and non-military power is hardly a mundane task. It is difficult to do and when others do it successfully, the West is usually surprised. It is therefore necessary to delve into the conceptual logic of grand strategy.

Combining military and non-military means is an action with important consequences for how these very different forms of power actually achieve strategic and political effect when employed in tandem. The logic of military power is flexible, it may annihilate or attrite, it may take and exercise control or deny it, and



it may be used sequentially or cumulatively. Military power has the capacity to be an independent instrument of policy achievement. Non-military power is more limited in its instrumental logic: it may impose limits, it may deny freedom of action and control, and it accumulates over time. The deliberate combination of military force with non-military power reveals a basic, strategic assumption about the military in that particular context—that it will not be able to achieve a quick victory. After all, if military power could achieve quick success, then non-military power would clearly be unnecessary. Fundamentally, therefore, the logic of using both military and non-military means within the same adversarial contest turns that conflict into an attritional struggle, as it is only within an attritional situation that non-military means can have any strategic or political significance at all. Grand strategy is attritional. When U.S. strategists embark upon grand strategy, rather than simply strategy, they are essentially, if implicitly, anticipating and committing to a longer war, with implications for the deployment and employment of the one element on which the whole logic of combining multiple instruments of power most often rests—Landpower in war.

Just as the West has been stumbling in its employment of military force and its combination of military and non-military power, potential rivals have expended considerable effort to combine such unlike forms of power productively. Russia's hybrid warfare and China's three warfares represent these countries' own idiosyncratic attempts to combine military and non-military power. The forms differ from that of Western grand strategy, as their revisionist agendas allow them advantageously to apply non-military power in peacetime, before an openly adversarial

relationship is established, to prepare the battlespace. This allows them to impose potentially tight limits on their opponent's resources, political will, and freedom of action, which in turn may enable the military to achieve campaigns that are essentially attritional, yet also quite quick. Nevertheless, such innovations merely displace the attrition from wartime to peacetime, rather than eliminating it altogether.

If the West wishes to improve the quality of its grand strategies, it must cease to consider the combination of military and non-military power as mundane, as a quality of strategy that may be taken for granted. It cannot be taken for granted—it is challenging, and the West has not done it well in the recent past. The task of combining unlike forms of power is sufficiently daunting, conceptually and practically, to be considered “grand” all on its own, without needing to elevate strategy above policy or to rarify it as a grand scheme about how we should interact with the rest of the world.

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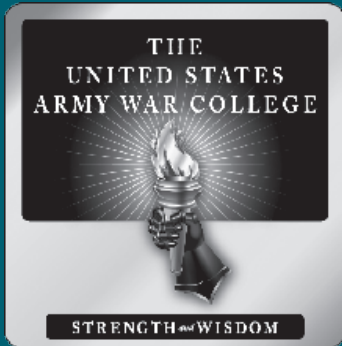
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