Military Power

When most people speak or write about military power, they tend to think in terms of the resources that underlie the hard power behavior of fighting and threatening to fight—soldiers, tanks, planes, ships, and so forth. In the end, if push comes to shove, such military resources matter. Napoleon famously said that "God is on the side of the big battalions."

But military power needs a closer look. There is much more to military resources than guns and battalions and more to military behavior than fighting or threatening to fight. Military power resources have long been used to provide protection to allies and assistance to friends. Even the behavior of fighting on behalf of friends can engender soft power. As we saw in the last chapter, noncoercive and benign uses of military resources can be an important source of the soft power behavior of framing of agendas, persuasion, and attraction in world politics.

Even when thinking only of fighting and threats, many people envisage interstate war between soldiers in uniforms, organized and equipped by the state in formal military units. But so far in the twenty-first century, more "wars" occur within, rather than between, states and many combatants do not wear uniforms.[1] Of

course, civil war and irregular combatants are not new, as even the traditional law of war recognizes. What are new in this century are the increase in irregular conflict and the technological changes that increase vulnerabilities and put destructive power in the hands of small groups of nonstate actors that would have been priced out of the market for major destruction in earlier eras. And now technology has brought a new dimension to warfare: the prospects of cyberattacks. As we will discuss in Chapter 5, an enemy—state or non-state—can create enormous physical destruction (or threaten to do so) without an army that physically crosses another state's border.

FIGHTING AND WAR

Two and a half millennia ago, in explaining why the generals of Athens intended to capture the island of Melos and slay or enslave the inhabitants, Thucydides remarked, "The strong do as they will and the weak suffer what they must."[2] War and the use of force are endemic in human history. Indeed, political history is often told as a story of war and conquest. But as the Bible asks in Psalms 2:1–2, "Why do the nations so furiously rage together?"

One answer is human nature. Anthropologists describe chimpanzees (with whom we share nearly 99 percent of our genome) using force against each other and against other bands of chimpanzees.[3] Some classical realists stress greed as a motive. Others stress the desire for domination.[4] Great conquerors such as Genghis Khan, who swept across the Central Asian plain, or Spanish conquistadores in the Americas such as Hernán Cortés and Francisco Pizarro probably had a mixture of both motives. But ideas also play a role in organizing people for war and conquest, such as the expansion of Islam in the century after Mohammed's death, the medieval Christian Crusades, or nationalism and self-determination after the nineteenth century.

War shaped great empires as well as the state system of modern Europe, but it is important to remember that the hard coercive

power generated by military resources is usually accompanied by some degree of soft power. As philosopher David Hume pointed out in the eighteenth century, no human is strong enough to dominate all others acting alone.[5] A tyrant has to have enough soft power to attract henchmen to enable him to use coercion on a large scale. Rome's long-lasting empire, for instance, reinforced its military conquests with ideology and attracted conquered barbarians by offering them opportunities to become Roman citizens.[6] One problem with military resources, including soldiers, is that they are costly and the cost of their transportation increases with distance. Locals are cheaper if they can be co-opted.

A novel technology, such as the stirrup in the case of Genghis Khan or the gun for the conquistadores, can provide leverage that allows a small number to prevail over a larger group until the technology spreads. In the nineteenth century, Sir Harry Johnson conquered Nyasaland (today's Malawi) with a handful of troops. In India, fewer than 100,000 British soldiers and administrators ruled 300 million Indians. But the secret of this success was more than technology. It included the ability to divide the targeted population and to co-opt some of them into becoming local allies. Similarly, the spread of Islam was based on the attraction of belief, not just the force of the sword. Today's military counterinsurgency doctrine stresses the importance of winning the hearts and minds of the population. In understanding military power, we must realize that explanations of success rest on more than the famous nineteenth-century aphorism "We have the Gatling gun and they have not."

A modern school of realism emphasizes not human nature, but the structure of international politics.[7] The structural approach stresses the anarchic nature of international politics and the fact that there is no higher authority above states to which they can appeal. They are in the realm of self-help, and military resources provide the most help. Motives such as greed or domination are less important than security and a simple desire to survive. States are caught in a zero-sum game where it is rational to fend for themselves because

they cannot trust others. If an actor disarms and others do not, the actor is not likely to survive in anarchic conditions. Those who are benevolent and trusting tend to disappear over time. They are weeded out by the dynamics engendered by the structure of the system. The path to security and survival for the actor is to develop its own military resources through growth and to form alliances to balance the power of others. In this world, gains relative to others are more important than absolute gains.

Whether rooted in human nature as in the classic realism of Thucydides and Machiavelli or in the larger systemic forces stressed by modern structural realism, military resources that provide the ability to prevail in war are conventionally portrayed as the most important form of power in global affairs. Indeed, in the nineteenth century the definition of a great power was the ability to prevail in war, and certainly war persists today. But as we saw in the last chapter, the world has become more complex since the nineteenth century, and the realist model does not fit all parts equally.

British diplomat Robert Cooper argues that there are at least three different domains—postindustrial, industrializing, and preindustrial—of interstate relations, with war playing a different role in each. For the postindustrial world of advanced democracies, war is no longer a major instrument in their relations with each other. In this world, theorists correctly assert that it is almost impossible to find instances of advanced liberal democracies fighting each other.[8] Instead, they are locked in a politics of complex interdependence in which other tools are used in power struggles. This does not mean that advanced democracies do not go to war with other states or that fragile new democracies cannot go to war with each other.[9] And for newly industrializing states such as China and India, war remains a potential instrument, as realists would predict. Similarly, among preindustrial societies, including much of Africa and the Middle East, the realist model remains a good fit. So the twenty-first-century answer to the question "Is military power the most important form of power in world politics?" depends upon the

context. In much of the world, the answer is yes, but not in all domains or on all issues.

HAS THE UTILITY OF MILITARY POWER DIMINISHED OVER TIME?

States obviously use military force today, but the past half-century has seen changes in its role. Many states, particularly large ones, find it more costly to use military force to achieve their goals than was true in earlier times. In projecting the future, the National Intelligence Council (the body that prepares estimates for the American president) argues that the utility of military force is declining in the twenty-first century.[10]

What are the reasons? One is that the ultimate means of military force—the nuclear arsenals of the major powers—are musclebound. Although once numbering more than 50,000, nuclear weapons have not been used in war since 1945. The disproportion between the vast devastation nuclear weapons can inflict and any reasonable political goals has made leaders of states understandably loath to employ them. So the ultimate form of military force is for all practical purposes too costly—in terms of both a moral taboo and risk of retaliation—for national leaders to use in war.[11]

This does not mean that nuclear weapons play no role in world politics. Indeed, terrorists may not feel bound by the nuclear taboo.[12] And even if it is difficult to use nuclear weapons to compel others, deterrence remains both credible and important. It includes the ability to extend deterrence to others, for example, by the United States to allies such as Europe and Japan. Smaller states such as North Korea and Iran seek nuclear weapons to deter the United States and to increase their regional influence and global prestige, but they are not equalizers in world politics. And under some conditions, if they trigger decisions by other countries to proliferate, they may reduce security by increasing the prospect of a nuclear weapon being released without full central control or falling into

the hands of terrorists. Thus far, however, the taboo against state use of nuclear weapons has lasted for six decades. Nuclear weapons remain important in world politics, but not for war-fighting.

A second reason is that conventional force has become more costly when used to rule nationalistic and socially mobilized populations. Occupation helps to unite what under other circumstances would be disparate populations. Foreign rule is very costly in an age of broad social communication. Already in the last century, print media and mass communication allowed local peoples to broaden their awareness and identities to what have been called "imaginary communities," and the age of the Internet has extended this even further.[13] France conquered Algeria with 34,000 troops in the nineteenth century but could not hold the colony with 600,000 troops in the twentieth century.[14] The instruments, such as car bombs and improvised explosives, available to mobilized insurgents are far cheaper than those used by occupying armies. And there is a high correlation between the use of suicide bombers and occupation by foreign forces.[15]

A third reason is that the use of military force faces internal constraints. Over time there has been a growing ethic of antimilitarism, particularly in democracies. Such attitudes are stronger in Europe or Japan than in the United States, but they are present in all advanced democracies. Such views do not prevent the use of force, but they make it a politically risky choice for leaders, particularly when its use is large or prolonged. It is sometimes said that democracies will not accept casualties, but that is too simple. The United States, for example, expected some 10,000 casualties when it planned to enter the Gulf War in 1990, but it was loath to accept casualties in Somalia or Kosovo, where its national interests were less deeply involved. Moreover, the willingness to accept casualties is affected by the prospects of success.[16] And if the use of force is seen as unjust or illegitimate in the eyes of other nations, this can make it costly for political leaders in democratic polities. Force is

not obsolete, and terrorist nonstate actors are less constrained than states by such moral concerns, but force is more costly and more difficult for most states to use than in the past.

Finally, a number of issues simply do not lend themselves to forceful solutions. Take, for example, economic relations between the United States and Japan. In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry sailed into the Japanese port of Shimoda and threatened bombardment unless Japan opened its ports to trade. This would not be a very useful or politically acceptable way to solve current U.S.-Japan trade disputes. Today, China has become the leading greenhouse gas producer and is adding a new coal-burning plant each week. But the idea of threatening to use bombs or cruise missiles to destroy such plants lacks credibility, even though their output can be harmful to other countries. The scope and scale of economic globalization and complex interdependence are very different today from the nineteenth century.

Even though force remains a critical instrument in international politics, it is not the only instrument. The use of economic interdependence, communication, international institutions, and transnational actors sometimes plays a larger role than force. Military force is not obsolete as a state instrument—witness the fighting in Afghanistan, where the United States removed the Taliban government that had sheltered the terrorist network that carried out the September 2001 attacks on the United States, or the American and British use of force to overthrow Saddam Hussein in 2003. But it was easier to win the initial war against a government than to win the peace against nonstate insurgents in either instance. Moreover, military force alone is not sufficient to protect against terrorism. Before 9/11, a key Al Qaeda cell existed in Hamburg, but bombing Hamburg was not an option. Although military force remains an important instrument in international politics, changes in its cost and effectiveness make today's calculations of military power more complex than in the past.

THE CHANGING SHAPE OF WAR

War and force may be down, but they are not out. Instead, the use of force is taking new forms. Some military theorists have written about "fourth-generation warfare," which sometimes has "no definable battlefields or fronts" and in which the distinction between civilian and military may disappear.[17] According to this view, the first generation of modern warfare reflected the tactics of line and column following the French Revolution. The second generation relied on massed firepower and culminated in World War I; its slogan was that artillery conquers and then infantry occupies. The third generation of maneuver arose from tactics that the Germans developed to break the stalemate of trench warfare in 1918 and that they later perfected in the blitzkrieg tactics that allowed them to defeat larger French and British tank forces in the conquest of France in 1940. Both ideas and technology drove the changes. The same is true for today's fourth generation, which focuses on the enemy's society and political will to fight. As one theorist puts it, "Each succeeding generation reached deeper into the enemy's territory in an effort to defeat him."[18] Although dividing modern war into four generations is somewhat arbitrary and overstated, the important trend to note is the blurring of military front and civilian rear.

Taking an even longer view, Israeli theorist Martin van Creveld argues that the outstanding characteristic of war during the millennium from 1000 to 1945 was its consolidation. During the Middle Ages, hardly any territorial lords could raise more than a few thousand troops. By the eighteenth century, the numbers had grown to low hundreds of thousands. In the world wars of the twentieth century, seven states fielded more than 100 million men and engaged in battles around the globe. "Waging total war against each other, the states undertook operations so large and ferocious that in the end, forty to sixty million people were dead, and the best part of a continent lay in ruins. Then, dropping out of a clear sky on 6 August 1945, came the first atomic bomb, changing everything forever."[19]

Although there were other causes in addition to nuclear weapons,[20] and the effects were not fully understood for some time, total war soon gave way to limited wars such as the Korean War. Harry Truman, who used a nuclear weapon to end World War II, decided not to do so in Korea, and although Dwight Eisenhower hinted at the prospect of nuclear use, he also proved reluctant to do so. The age of total war seemed over.[21] Equally remarkable, even limited interstate wars "were becoming quite rare." Van Creveld counts a mere twenty in the half-century after 1945.

Armed conflict did not disappear, however. Interstate war has become less common than intrastate and transnational wars involving nonstate actors. Of 226 significant armed conflicts between 1945 and 2002, less than half were fought between states and armed groups in the 1950s, but by the 1990s that was the dominant form of armed conflict.[22] Such groups can be divided into insurgents, terrorists, militias, and criminal organizations, though the categories can overlap and blur with time.[23] For example, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia guerrillas formed alliances with narcotics cartels in that country, and in Afghanistan some Taliban groups have close ties with transnational Al Qaeda terrorists, whereas others are more local in orientation. Some are supported by states, but many are not.

Such groups see conflict as a continuum of political and violent irregular operations over a long period that will provide coercive control over local populations. They benefit from the fact that scores of weak states lack the legitimacy or capacity to effectively control their own territory. The result is what General Sir Rupert Smith, former British commander in Northern Ireland and the Balkans, calls "war among the people."[24] Rarely are such conflicts decided on conventional battlefields by traditional armies. They become hybrid wars—"a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism, and criminal behavior in the battlespace."[25] For example, in a thirty-four-day battle with Israel in Lebanon in 2006, the armed political group Hezbollah used well-trained cells that

mixed propaganda, conventional military tactics, and rockets launched from densely populated civilian areas to achieve what many in the region considered a political victory. In Gaza, two years later, Hamas and Israel fought by air and land in a densely populated area. In hybrid wars, conventional and irregular forces, combatants and civilians, physical destruction and information warfare become thoroughly intertwined. Moreover, with cameras in every cell phone and Photoshop on every computer, the information contest is ever present.[26]

Some theorists have referred to this new shape of war as "asymmetrical warfare," but that characterization is less helpful than first might appear. Warfare has always been asymmetrical.[27] Leaders and commanders always seek out opponents' weak points and try to maximize their own advantages to pursue victory. After the demise of the Soviet Union, the United States held an overwhelming advantage in conventional warfare as it demonstrated in the Desert Storm operation that defeated Iraq in 1991 at the cost of only 148 American dead. Similarly, in the 1999 Kosovo war with Serbia, U.S. dominance in the air eventually led to a victory with no American casualties. Faced with such conventional asymmetry in America's favor, opponents did not give up; they instead turned to unconventional tactics to counter the American advantage. Chinese strategists, realizing that a conventional confrontation with the United States would be folly, developed a strategy of "unrestricted warfare" that combines electronic, diplomatic, cyber-, terrorist proxy, economic, and propaganda tools to deceive and exhaust American systems. As one Chinese military official puts it, "The first rule of unrestricted warfare is that there are no rules."[28] Seeking unconventional tactics to counter asymmetries is not new; it can be traced back 2,000 years to Sun Tzu. And, of course, Sun Tzu is famous for pointing out that it is best to win without having to fight.

Governments are not the only warriors that understand this age-old wisdom. Terrorists have long understood that they can never

hope to compete head-on with a major government. Instead, as mentioned in Chapter 1, they follow the insights of jujitsu to leverage the strength of a powerful government against itself. Terrorist actions are designed to outrage and provoke overreactions by the strong. For example, Osama bin Laden's strategy was to provoke the United States into reactions that would destroy its credibility, weaken its allies across the Muslim world, and eventually lead to exhaustion. The United States fell into that trap with the invasion of Iraq and its concomitant failure to follow up its early success in Afghanistan. Al Qaeda follows a tactic of "inciter-in-chief" rather than "commander-in-chief."[29] This allows the organization great flexibility as local groups self-recruit to its network.

The United States was slow to adapt to these changes. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States was the only military power with global capabilities, it had a military budget equal to that of all other countries combined, and it was at the forefront of an information economy that was producing a "revolution in military affairs." In the 1990s, U.S. military strategy focused on the ability to fight and win two conventional wars simultaneously (for example, against North Korea and Iraq) and the development of technologies that would maintain the "dominant battle space awareness" that had been demonstrated in Desert Storm. Other uses of military forces were considered not as war-fighting but as lesser-included cases of "military operations other than war." When Donald Rumsfeld became secretary of defense in 2001, he pursued a military transformation that relied on new technologies. A combination of high-tech airpower and limited special forces allied to Afghan fighters on the ground initially worked well in Afghanistan, and the quick success of the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, with only thirty-three casualties, showed both the strength and weakness of this approach.[30] Americans were not mistaken to invest in the revolution in military affairs; they were wrong to think it was sufficient.

Technology has always had important effects on military power, and "revolutions in military affairs" are not new. Indeed, identifying

them is somewhat arbitrary, and a variety of lists of major techno-
logical changes can be constructed.[31] Max Boot identifies four: the
gunpowder revolution in early-modern Europe, the Industrial Rev-
olution of the nineteenth century, the Second Industrial Revolution
of the early twentieth century, and the current Information Revo-
lution. He adds that "history is full of examples of superpowers fail-
ing to take advantage. . . . The Mongols missed the Gunpowder
Revolution; the Chinese, Turks and Indians missed the Industrial
Revolution; the French and British missed major parts of the Second
Industrial Revolution; the Soviets missed the Information Revolu-
tion."[32] The costs were clear. Less obvious are the costs of putting
too much faith in technology.

For one thing, technology is a double-edged sword. It eventually
spreads and becomes available to adversaries that may have more
primitive capabilities but also are less vulnerable to dependence on
advanced technologies. American military theorists used to argue
that even though others could eventually buy some high technology
commercially "off the shelf," the United States would be progressing
to the next generation and integrating technologies into a system of
systems. But that was round one in the chess game. American ad-
vantages in robotics and unmanned drones will eventually be avail-
able to opponents in later rounds. For example, in 2009 the
American military discovered that insurgents were hacking into the
downlinks of data from Predator unmanned aircraft using software
that cost less than $30.[33] Meanwhile, growing reliance on elaborate
satellite and computer network–controlled systems makes the
United States more vulnerable than some of its adversaries.[34]

For another thing, too much faith and focus on the advantages
of technologies can divert attention from the asymmetrical measure
available to opponents. The American campaign of "shock and awe"
relied on smart bombs for precision targeting in the early stages of
the Iraq War, but the insurgents' use of car bombs and improvised
explosive devices provided them with cheap and effective smart
bombs of their own in the insurgency phase of the war. And too

much focus on high technology can lead to failure to invest in the training, military police, linguists, and other dimensions that infantry need for dealing with insurgencies.

By 2006, the American military was rediscovering the lessons of counterinsurgency that had been almost deliberately forgotten after Vietnam, then obscured by the focus on high-tech warfare, and finally relegated primarily to the branch of special forces.[35] *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* supervised by General David Petraeus adopted lessons from British, French, and Vietnam experience to make securing the civilian population, rather than destroying the enemy, the top priority. The real battle became one for civilian support to deny the insurgent "fish" the cover of the civilian "sea" to swim in. Counterinsurgency, commonly called "COIN," downplayed offensive operations and emphasized winning the hearts and minds of the civilian population.

Soft power was integrated into military strategy. Hard power was used to clear an area of insurgents and to hold it, and the soft power of building roads, clinics, and schools filled in behind. As Sarah Sewall says in her introduction to the new manual, "It is a stark departure from the Weinberger-Powell doctrine of overwhelming and decisive use of offensive forces. . . . Sometimes the more force is used, the less effective it is." Instead of calculating necessary troop levels in terms of opposing fighters, the COIN manual focuses on inhabitants and recommends a minimum of 20 counterinsurgents per 1,000 residents.[36] As the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff described the campaign for Marja in Afghanistan, "We did not prep the battlefield with carpet bombing or missile strikes. We simply walked in, on time. Because, frankly, the battlefield isn't necessarily a field anymore. It's in the minds of the people."[37] Nor is this trend uniquely American. The president of the Russian republic of Ingushetia says that "counterterrorism is mainly a matter of soft power. The most severe punishment, that should make up 1 percent. Ninety-nine percent should be persuasion, persuasion, persuasion."[38]

At the same time, counterinsurgency is not a solution to all military problems. Despite best efforts, civilian casualties are inevitable. In Afghanistan, "the persistence of deadly convoy and checkpoint shootings has led to growing resentment . . . a friction that has turned villages firmly against the occupation."[39] In addition, private contractors play an important role in modern operations, and their actions are often difficult to control.[40] Moreover, the numbers and time required for counterinsurgency may prove too costly in terms of both politics and budgets to be feasible in many situations. For example, the number and duration of security forces implied by the previous ratio may be unsustainable in Western public opinion, and that leads skeptics to question the effectiveness of what they call "COIN-lite."[41] As one Afghan Taliban is alleged to have said, "You have the watches, but we have the time."

Cultural conservatism, mistrust, civilian casualties, and local corruption make it difficult to win the hearts and minds that constitute the soft power part of a COIN strategy. A RAND report concludes that "the greatest weakness in the struggle with Islamic insurgency is not U.S. firepower but the ineptitude and illegitimacy of the very regimes that are meant to be the alternative to religious tyranny." Moreover, the track record of counterinsurgency campaigns is mixed. Although rough and imprecise, one estimate claims "their likelihood of success, empirically, is 50 percent."[42] Another RAND study put the rate of success at eight of the thirty cases resolved since 1979, or closer to 25 percent.[43] As one military critic puts it, the new counterinsurgency manual is "so persuasively written, so clear in its aims, that it makes the impossible seem possible."[44] And one of it proponents concludes that "counter-insurgency in general is a game we need to avoid wherever possible. . . . We should avoid such interventions wherever possible, simply because the costs are so high and the benefits so doubtful."[45]

And, of course, insurgency is not the only military threat that planners need to consider. Interstate conflict has not totally vanished, and hybrid versions of warfare remain a concern. As the un-

dersecretary of defense for policy declared about strategic planning, "I think hybrid will be the defining character. The traditional, neat categories—those are types that really don't match reality any more."[46] In 2010, the Pentagon's *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* underscored the importance of maritime piracy, nuclear proliferation, international crime, transnational terrorism, and natural disasters as well as interstate wars as threats to national security.[47] And U.S. Army planners preparing their new capstone doctrine downplayed faith in technology, linear planning, and centralization. Instead, they stressed assumptions about uncertainty, decentralization, and a spectrum of conflicts. In the words of General H. R. McMaster, the new doctrine explicitly rejects "the belief that technological capabilities had essentially lifted the fog of war . . . and that the development of these technological capabilities would substitute for traditional elements of combat power, fighting power, especially on land."[48] That makes the task of deciding how to train forces and invest limited resources in a military budget more complex than ever.[49]

HOW MILITARY RESOURCES PRODUCE BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES

Military planners and analysts constantly measure and compare the resources and capabilities of opposing forces. A country's population, for example, is a basic resource that can be shaped into a specific tool such as infantry, which can be subdivided into combat specialties. In general, analysts look at strategic resources such as budgets, manpower, military infrastructure and institutions, defense industries, and inventories. They then look at factors that affect conversion capability such as strategy, doctrine, training, organization, and capacity for innovation. Finally, they judge combat proficiency in detailed dimensions of ground, naval, air, and space forces. But even those planners who believe that "the ultimate yardstick of national power is military capability" admit that a capability-based methodology cannot predict combat outcomes.[50] As we have seen

earlier, we still have to specify what enables power resources to pro-
duce preferred behavioral outcomes. As military analyst Stephen
Biddle concludes, "No single, undifferentiated concept of 'military
capability' can apply to all conflicts in all places and times."[51] Force
employment is crucial. Strategy, the skill in combining resources to
accomplish goals, is the key to smart military power.

At a more basic level, we must realize that military resources are
relevant to all three aspects or faces of relational power discussed
in Chapter 1. Regarding the first face of power, force can threaten
or compel others to change their initial preferences and strategies.
Military resources also affect the agenda-framing that characterizes
the second face of power. When a small country knows that it can-
not possibly defeat a stronger country, attack is less likely to be on
its agenda.[52] Mexico might wish to recover the territories that the
United States took in the nineteenth century, but military recon-
quest is not on the twenty-first-century agenda. More subtly, suc-
cess in war can produce institutions that set the agenda for
subsequent periods—witness the institutions created in the after-
math of World Wars I and II. The dominance of American military
power after World War II provided the stability that allowed Eu-
rope and Japan to focus on economic agendas that stressed absolute,
rather than relative, gains and thus fostered the growth of economic
interdependence and globalization.

Force can also affect the shaping of preferences that constitutes
the third face of power. As we saw earlier, dictators such as Hitler
and Stalin tried to develop a sense of invincibility through military
might. Success attracts, and a reputation for competence in the use
of force helps to attract. In the aftermath of a competent and legit-
imate use of American force in the 1991 Gulf War, American stand-
ing increased in the Middle East. What this suggests is that there is
more than one way in which military resources can produce pre-
ferred outcomes. What the army calls the "kinetic" use of force is
not the only currency of military power. In a famous post–Vietnam
War dialogue, American colonel Harry Summers pointed out, "You

know, you never defeated us in a kinetic engagement on the battle-field." And his Vietnamese counterpart, Colonel Tu, accurately replied, "That may be so. But it is also irrelevant because we won the battle of strategic communication and therefore the war."[53]

Military resources can implement four types of actions that are the modalities or currencies of military power. Military resources can be used to (1) physically fight and destroy; (2) back up threats in coercive diplomacy; (3) promise protection, including peace-keeping; and (4) provide many forms of assistance. When these actions are performed well, they produce preferred behavioral changes in the targets. But whether they are effective in producing preferred outcomes depends on special qualities and skills used in the conversion strategies. Successful strategies must take into account the context of the targets of power, the conditions or environment of the action, and whether targets are likely to respond by acceptance or resistance. As Biddle concludes about military power, "Capability is not primarily a matter of material. It is chiefly a product of how states use their material resources. . . . Different military tasks are very dissimilar—the ability to do one (or several) well does not imply the ability to master others."[54]

The four major actions that constitute the modalities of military power are displayed in Table 2.1.

Fighting
Success in the first modality, fighting, depends upon a strategy that involves both competence and legitimacy. Competence in the ability to fight is obvious, but it requires a specification of "to fight what?" It involves orders of battle measured in terms of manpower, weapons, technology, organization, and budgets, as well as training and tactics exercised in war gaming and the morale of troops and the home front. Competence in the ability to fight has a broad dimension that calls for a strategic knowledge base, insight into political objectives, and a doctrinal base that covers a wide spectrum of potential conflicts. Too myopic a focus in the application of force

TABLE 2.1 Dimensions of Military Power

	COMMAND			CO-OPTIVE
TYPE OF BEHAVIOR	Physical coercion	Threat of coercion	Protection	Assistance
MODALITIES	Fighting and destruction	Coercive diplomacy	Alliance and peacekeeping	Aid and training
KEY QUALITIES FOR STRATEGIC SUCCESS	Competence	Capability and credibility	Capability and trust	Competence and benignity
SHAPED RESOURCES	Manpower, weapons, and tactics	Agile diplomacy	Troops and diplomacy	Organization and budgets

planning can undermine the effectiveness of force as an instrument of power.

God is not only on the side of the big battalions. Competence in the ability to fight can be important for small states even if they do not have a prospect of winning in a long war. For example, Switzerland historically used its geography plus conscription to make itself difficult for larger neighbors to digest quickly, and Singapore, a vulnerable city-state of 4 million, invests in impressive military capabilities to convince potential enemies that it would be as unpalatable as "a poisoned shrimp."

Legitimacy is a less obvious part of a strategy for fighting because it is intangible and variable. In the sociological sense, legitimacy refers to a widespread belief that an actor or action is right. "The concept of legitimacy allows various actors to coordinate their support . . . by appealing to their common capacity to be moved by moral reasons, as distinct from purely strategic or self-interested reasons."[55] Beliefs in legitimacy vary and are rarely universal, but the perceived legitimacy of the use of force in the eyes of the target and third parties is relevant to how the target will respond (quick surrender or prolonged fighting) and the costs that are incurred in

the use of force. Legitimacy depends in part upon traditional just-war norms, such as a perceived just cause, as well as a sense of proportion and discrimination in the way the force is used.

Perceptions of legitimacy are also affected by the vagaries of political maneuvering in the United Nations, competitive interpretations of humanitarian law by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the narratives created by the media, bloggers, and cell phones. The Iraq War in 2003 demonstrated great American competence in the invasion and capture of Baghdad, but suffered from a perceived lack of legitimacy in the absence of a second UN resolution. Moreover, the failure to prepare adequate forces to suppress looting, sectarian violence, and the subsequent insurgency eventually undercut the sense of competence. Some of these lessons carried forward to Afghanistan. In the words of General Stanley McChrystal, the former commander of allied forces there, "The biggest thing is convincing the Afghan people. This is all a war of perceptions. This is not a physical war in terms of how many people you kill or how much ground you capture, how many bridges you blow up. This is all in the minds of the participants."[56]

Sophisticated military men have long understood that battles are not won by kinetic effects alone. In the words of General Petraeus, "We did reaffirm in Iraq the recognition that you don't kill or capture your way out of an industrial-strength insurgency."[57] Or as McChrystal notes, when we resort to expedient measures, "we end up paying a price for it ultimately. Abu Ghraib and other situations like that are non-biodegradable. They don't go away. The enemy continues to beat you with them like a stick."[58] In Afghanistan, the Taliban has "embarked on a sophisticated information war, using modern media tools as well as some old-fashioned ones, to soften their image and win favor with local Afghans as they try to counter the Americans' new campaign to win Afghan hearts and minds."[59] As Australian COIN expert David Kilcullen notes, "This implies that America's international reputation, moral authority, diplomatic weight, persuasive ability, cultural attractiveness and strategic credibility—its 'soft power'—is not some optional adjunct to military

strength. Rather, it is a critical enabler for a permissive operating environment . . . and it is also the prime political competence in countering a globalized insurgency."[60]

Similarly, in terms of fighters killed and buildings destroyed, Israel outfought Hezbollah in Lebanon in 2006, but the latter's clever use of televised civilian casualties (partly caused by its siting of missiles in close proximity to civilians) as well as it ability to persuade the population and third parties that Israel was the aggressor meant that Hezbollah was widely regarded as the victor after Israel finally withdrew.[61] In 2008, Russia had little difficulty in defeating Georgia and declaring the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but Russia had a much more difficult time in winning international recognition for its new protégés. Russian complaints that it was merely repeating what NATO did with Kosovo missed the point that even though the Kosovo war lacked UN approval, it was widely regarded as legitimate.

Legitimacy is particularly important in counterinsurgency strategies because "the essence of the challenge of modern military leadership is ethical. . . . One significant objective measure of effectiveness is the number of civilians inadvertently hurt instead of protected." The ultimate failure of the French in Algeria in the 1950s grew out of the military's use of torture and indiscriminate force.[62] An Australian military expert points out that many insurgents are "accidental guerillas" recruited to fight alongside hard-core fighters by a foreign intrusion but capable of being split from the hard core. In his view, acting in accord with international norms is "not an optional luxury or a sign of moral flaccidity. Rather it is a key strategic requirement."[63] As just-war theory reminds us, legitimacy involves both the cause of the fighting and the procedures by which the fight is carried out.

Coercive Diplomacy

The second modality of military power—coercive diplomacy—depends upon the same underlying resources as those that produce competence in kinetic fighting and destruction, but it also depends

upon the credibility and cost of the threat. A threat of force can be used to compel or to deter, but the latter is often more credible. If a threat is not credible, it may fail to produce acceptance *and* it may lead to costs to the reputation of the coercing state. In general, threats are costly when they fail, not only in encouraging resistance in the target, but also in negatively influencing third parties observing the outcome.

The deployment of ships and planes is a classic example of coercive diplomacy, and naval resources benefit from the flexibility of movement in the ocean commons. In one study of 215 cases in which the United States used "force without war" in the mid-twentieth century, half involved only the movement of naval units, whereas others involved the alerting or moving of ground or air units as well.[64] Force need not be threatened explicitly. Military forces can be used to "show the flag" or "swagger." At the beginning of the twentieth century, President Theodore Roosevelt sent his newly constructed "great white fleet" on an around-the-world cruise to signal the rise of American power. Some countries stage elaborate military parades on national holidays for the same purpose.

More recently, when China destroyed one of its own satellites in low earth orbit, many observers regarded it as a coercive reminder to the United States that it could not count on uncontested control of the space commons. And in the cyberage, coercive diplomacy can be practiced indirectly with attribution left ambiguous. For instance, in 2008, when sporadic diplomatic spats over access to resources in the South China Sea became serious, what purported to be Chinese invasion plans for Vietnam were posted on major Websites in China, including the market leader, sina.com.[65] As we will see in Chapter 5, the prospect of cyberwar adds an interesting new dimension to coercion and threats.

Protection
The third modality, providing protection, is at the heart of alliance relations but can be extended to other states as well. Again, the key to a successful strategy involves credibility and whether that

produces trust in the targeted country. For example, when Russia held military exercises in the fall of 2009, an American warship toured the Baltic, six senior generals visited Latvia over the course of twelve months, and further bilateral military exercises were planned.[66] NATO military forces and personnel were used to reassure Latvia and remind Russia that Latvia's security was guaranteed by its membership in the NATO alliance.

Credibility is often costly to create but sometimes not. For example, in the wake of North Korea's 2006 nuclear explosion, the presence of American troops in Japan enhanced credibility at relatively low cost because Japan paid for their support. The ability to extend deterrence to Japan and other allies is an important factor in American power in Asia. For example, in the 1990s Japan decided not to support a Malaysian proposal for an economic bloc that would exclude the United States after the United States objected. Extended deterrence depends upon a combination of military capability and credibility. It is a gradient that varies with the degree of interest that the protector has. Costly promises to protect areas of low interest are not credible, but the stationing of American ground forces in Japan and Korea demonstrates a high degree of commitment and credibility. It means that any attack on those countries is likely to cause American casualties and thus links the fates of the countries in ways that mere words alone cannot do.

Protection can produce both hard and soft power for the state providing the protection. Alliance relations such as NATO enhance American hard power capabilities, but they also developed a web of personal ties and a climate of attraction. During the Cold War, the hard power of American military protection helped create a climate of soft power that advanced America's milieu goals of stability and economic prosperity in the Atlantic area. In contrast, American protection of Saudi Arabia (which dates back to World War II) rests upon implicit guarantees rather than formal alliance and on narrow bargains based on national interests. This protection generates limited soft power in the relationship, but it has often produced eco-

nomic benefits as the Saudi government has sometimes modified its energy policies to accommodate American demands.[67]

Peacekeeping operations are another aspect of the protective modality of military resources that does not generally involve active fighting. In recent operations, peacekeepers sometimes kill or are killed, but their general purpose is deterrence and reassurance to provide stability. Here again the key to whether the military resources produce preferred outcomes depends upon a mixture of hard and soft power. Competence in this military skill can be different (and require different training) from war-fighting, yet in modern military interventions soldiers may be required to simultaneously conduct full-scale military action, peacekeeping operations, and humanitarian aid within the space of three contiguous blocks.[68] This requires that broad capabilities be built into many units if they are to have an effective force. Careful performance of these functions determines the reaction of the target as well as the effects on third parties.

Assistance

Finally, military forces can be used to provide assistance. This modality can take the form of training foreign militaries, engaging in international military education, undertaking regular exercises, or providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Such assistance can enhance both hard and soft power. In training Iraqi or Afghan forces, for example, the United States is trying to enhance their capabilities for fighting insurgencies. But if the training, education, or humanitarian assistance also leads to attraction, then the military resources are producing soft power. The U.S. Navy recently developed *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*, which focuses on the navy's role in partnering with other states to maintain freedom of the seas and building collective arrangements that promote mutual trust.[69] This strategy involves joint training and technical assistance, as well as capacities for delivering humanitarian assistance.

Not only neighbors such as the United States and Brazil, but also countries as distant as Israel and China sent military units to help Haiti after the devastating 2010 earthquake. Whether the currency of assistance is successfully converted into a strategy that produces preferred outcomes depends upon such qualities as competence and perceived benignity. Competence is again obvious, but benignity enhances attraction, and its absence can lead to negative reaction in the target. Aid programs that are seen as cynical, manipulative, or helping a small minority against another part of a population can actually produce negative reactions.

In short, military resources can produce both hard and soft power, and the mix varies with which of the four modalities are employed.[70] The important point is that the soft power that arises from qualities of benignity, competence, legitimacy, and trust can add leverage to the hard power of military force. Strategies that combine the two successfully represent smart military power.

THE FUTURE OF MILITARY POWER

As Barack Obama said in accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009, "We must begin by acknowledging the hard truth that we will not eradicate violent conflict in our lifetimes. There will be times when nations—acting individually or in concert—will find the use of force not only necessary but morally justified."[71] Even if the prospect of the use or threat of force among states has a lower probability in the twenty-first century than in earlier eras, it will retain a high impact, and such situations lead rational actors to purchase expensive insurance. The United States is likely to be the major issuer of such insurance policies. Moreover, even if fighting among states and civil wars diminish, they are likely to continue among nonstate transnational and insurgent groups or between states and such groups. Hybrid wars and "war among the people" will persist. A capacity to fight and coerce, protect and assist, will remain important even if interstate war continues to decrease.

This leads to a larger point about the role of military force in world politics that relates to the second face of power: shaping the agenda. Military force remains important because it helps to structure world politics. Some theorists argue that military power is of such restricted utility that it is no longer "the ultimate measuring rod to which other forms of power should be compared."[72] But the fact that military power is not always sufficient to decide particular situations does not mean that it has lost all utility.[73] Even though there are more situations and contexts where it is difficult to use, military force remains a vital source of power in this century because its presence in all four modalities structures expectations and shapes the political calculations of actors.

As we shall see in the next chapter, markets and economic power rest upon political frameworks. In chaotic conditions of great uncertainty, markets fail. Political frameworks rest upon norms and institutions, but also upon the management of coercive power. A well-ordered modern state is defined in terms of a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, and that allows domestic markets to operate. Internationally, where order is more tenuous, residual concerns about the coercive use of force, even if a low probability, can have important effects. Military force provides the framework (along with norms, institutions, and relationships) that helps to provide a minimal degree of order. Metaphorically, military power provides a degree of security that is to order as oxygen is to breathing: little noticed until it begins to become scarce. Once that occurs, its absence dominates all else. In this sense, the role of military power in structuring world politics is likely to persist well into the twenty-first century. Military power will not have the same utility for states that it had in nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but it will remain a crucial component of power in world politics.