



THE POLICY BEACON

Volume No. 18

Strategy in Statecraft and Warcraft

BY ANEELA SHAHZAD

Intro

Strategy is part of human nature and grows in complexity as society grows, expands and mingles with other societies. In the globalization and post-globalization eras, with warfare becoming increasingly hybrid, statecraft and warcraft, especially in states like Pakistan, who have been victim of terrorism, proxy-war and geopolitics, a striking dichotomy has emerged. This because, in the battle for protecting the sovereignty and security of the country, the state and the military are often having to infringe into each other's domains. Why this happens, and how the balance between the state-machine and the war-machine has to be restored, is a question we can answer only by delving deeper into the problem, by understanding the core of the workings of the two, and by contemplating upon 'the purpose', 'the methods' and 'the goals', that drive these two vital pillars of the nation.

This work will explain how strategy is 'universal' but at the same time, the structure of the state and the military, the equations of 'power', and foreign intervention, allow this universality to be compromised, and force the statecraft and warcraft to take refuge in each other's domains. The task of thinkers is to acknowledge the inherent shortcomings of our systems and find practical ways forward.

Understanding Strategy

Strategy can be on the individual level and at the level of humanity, it is a human thing. We plan, strategize and execute at every level; we put our purpose before our actions; we set goals and then think of ways to achieve them. Without purpose, our acts are hollow and our achievements are barren. The same is with the life of a nation, its purpose defines its actions, and its actions define its purpose!

The behaviors of nations, as a collection of human populations, though essentially rooted in human nature, seems to be extra-human because at the level of a collective, human societies tend to show emergent¹ properties which are not observable on the level of the individuals. For instance, societal norms, institutions, markets, inequality, crowd behavior, are not predictable on the basis of the behaviors of individuals, and only emerge in collective situations and settings. So, when we are looking at nations from the outside, many times the behavior of the state and that of its people seems unrelatable, in terms of purpose, actions and goals. This dichotomy is dire, because if the purpose, actions and goals of the people and the state are not aligned, the existence of the states and its people both are at risk.

The grand task then, is to relate the levels; to relate the state with the global framework and also to the perception of the individual. To relate how strategy works in geopolitics, in states and in individuals. Indeed, that would be a colossal undertaking, nevertheless the need of the undertaking must be recognized, and the pathway for further thought in this direction should be opened.

Strategy is when we connect power and capabilities to purpose — we perceive the purpose, calculate the possible pathways and adapt within the constraints of our circumstances, resources and structures. At the global level these structural settings are described in the faculty of geopolitics, a field of political science that has emerged together with globalization, to explain how the world is working, in a global environment.

In the gargantuan scheme of things at the global level, wherein data-explosion in so many facilities has made the task of comprehension evermore fatiguing, if not impossible - geopolitics comes as a science of generalization; of painting, in a teeming complex and copious human environment, the big-picture. It is a thought-space that allows to take into account the politics of states embedded in their geographical constraints; in their sociological, the economic and the strategic factors; and relating them to the global

¹ Durkheim, É. (1982). *The Rules of Sociological Method and Selected Texts on Sociology and its Method* (W. D. Halls, Trans.; S. Lukes, Ed.). New York: The Free Press; London: Macmillan.

political environment. It is a science wherein academics try to theorize, what politicians have done and will do; on the grounds of basic human behaviors; on the grounds of sociological compulsions; and on the grounds of survival and hegemony. But because of the need for an extreme generalization in this science, in an expeditious political environment, the theories that explain these relationships are many times rendered incomplete and superfluous.

And the dilemma is, that even when, we are having an increasingly complex human environment, and the piles of data that need to be studied to understand it, it seems there is scarcely any time to do all that when decisions have to be made. At the level of the state, faced with difficult and perplexed dynamics all the time, even when aided by lines of ministries and thinktanks, there is usually only crude understanding and dotted experience that leads to decision-making. Strategy, which is something that ideally comes pre-action, something that should rigorously be done in the planning stages, is usually seen following 'action'. And in real-time, decision-making has to ultimately depend on volition – hopefully of the prudent!

Many times, when we are posing to define our 'strategy', we are really only going through the process of narrative-building; to justify our actions; and to gauge public-opinion in our favor. We are not putting forward a laid-down plan with a philosophical underpinning, that coheres our possible options of action in the near future with our history, ideology, economy, security and 'our purpose'. We are not understanding sufficiently, analyzing critically, and accounting proportionately, all the things that really matter to us as a conglomerate of humans, as a nation.

Perhaps this is not to badger the high echelons of power in our states, perhaps this is the way human society is composed. Perhaps the wheel of time always rolls ahead of human perception, perhaps events are always striking us off-guard, and in spite of all the accumulated data and insight, at difficult times we are pushed to corners where we have but to rely upon our own power of comprehension, and our momentary volition has to be the rule of the day.

The need here is not to be unnecessarily critical against our state machines, but to at least acknowledge the inherent lacking within the human enterprise. This lacking, that makes the human enterprise - with all its resilience, potency and progressiveness - nonetheless frail, indecisive and fearful within its conditions and circumstances. It needs to be acknowledged that, as much as the human enterprise is a mechanical object, it is also a mental and emotional object. It is a machine, but with a large amount of play, large amounts of freedoms, options, possibilities – the practice of which bring into practical real-time situations, new permutations that recombine to open up even newer permutations, and we find ourselves in a more and more complex and perplexed human society and global political framework every time. Every time we put our feet in the same river, it is not the same river; every time we are in unique, evolving situations.

And that necessitates for the critical observer to examine the human enterprise, with mechanical and scientific tools, but in addition also with non-mechanical, non-scientific tools, tools that can gauge the way humans think, feel and act; the way human emotions, perceptions and beliefs, effect human actions. This primacy of human nature in the ways the human person acts, has actually been recognized by political thinkers, and they have laid their theories on the foundations of human nature, or what they understand it to be.

So, the realists have founded their whole theoretical edifice on the primary assumption and belief that the world is essentially run by A-type men, who are power-seeking and will do anything to get absolute power. Liberalism, on the other hand, is constructed upon an opposite idealism, that humans are basically 'good' and merely binding them in a democratic collection will put them on the path of goodness and peace and progress. And the Constructivists, believing that knowledge and reality are constructed by individuals, rather than being passively absorbed by them. And approving of change and evolution as a constant in a human society of interacting individuals, believe that if knowledge is

constructed in a certain way in the societal framework, it will lead to development and peace, but, that it has to be a constantly worked upon as an evolving process.

These and other political theories give us a hint that society, at the local level or the state level or the inter-state global level, are all generated in some way from basic traits of human nature - and in this sense, all societies are sewed together! We live in one big political, economic and social unity, wherein we separate and isolate ourselves to enhance our smaller identities and interests. Coming down from the global to the state level, one realizes that the biggest truths are those that are spoken of humanity as a whole, and the less-bigger truths are those that encompass the identities and interests of sections of humanity confined in national boundaries, and that the truths of individual identities and interests, especially in politics, turn out to be untruths and corruptions.

From here, one can assimilate that strategy cannot be but universal. Because what humans do, affects their surroundings, their environments, their families, their neighbors; and in the same way what nations do, affects their neighboring states and the global inter-state environment. So, while strategists of statecraft and warcraft may be laying down their playbooks with national interests and identities in view, they must have this in the back of their minds that whatever they do internally, will have external effects. The individual or the group cannot escape the fact that it is an in-extractable part of the larger humanity.

Strategy in Statecraft and Warcraft

So, if strategy is universal, in the sense that the acts of the state affect its own citizen, and in parallel affect the global citizens and the global environment – then it is doubtlessly necessary that in spite of the tediousness and protracted labor required in contemplation and deliberation, the task of deep thinking must be undertaken as a preliminary to setting out any strategic dictate.

Usually when we use the term strategy, the first thing that comes to the mind is something concerning with warfare. It is true that warfare and defense strategies have been more mainstream due to their critical nature, especially in times of war or conflict, but this only makes it more essential to affirm that strategy is principally a matter of statecraft, and warcraft strategy is only its augmentation.

The clear and present danger then, is when, we are taking lightly and misusing the faculty of ‘strategy’, upon which the fate of a nation inclines. Rather, it is true that in the theatres of war and statecraft, the term “strategy” circulates with a dangerous elasticity — used loosely, invoked uncritically, and understood insufficiently. It is a word that has to bear the weight of history, the burden of morality, the load of necessities, and the pressures of enmities – yet is lightened by contemporary misuse at the hands of matter-of-course academics; unrefined, untrained politicians; and superfluously knowledgeable media persons. Rather, the term ‘strategy’ is more often treated as a plan, a checklist, a slogan, or worse, a synonym for tactical ingenuity – this is a mistake.

Because, at its heart, strategy is not an act but an orientation – a way of perceiving the alignment between human intention and the material world. Though, popularly, it is tested in difficult times, and manifested in times of crucial decision-making, yet it was all the time lying in the foundational nature of the state. And in fact, times of crucial decision-making check out the depth of the foundations upon which the decision-makers stands, and how much they relate with the true purpose of their states.

Also important to note is that, strategy in statecraft and warcraft cannot be two isolated wholes? The state cannot make a program for running the internal matters of the country in isolation, while the military makes an autonomous program for fighting wars, with the external.

Because the national strategy, is a plan that unites in a progressive manner, a collective of individuals; who have culture, language, beliefs, identity; who identify within, with their subgroups, and dialects, and families; who identify with national unity; and who identify with the larger humanity, in terms of

their shared belief systems, their shared concerns for afflicted, worn-torn people, for the deprived sections of humanity, and for existential threats like climate change or nuclear war. And therefore, warcraft strategy, though essential in its own right, can only be an injunction of state-strategy, something that will aid the ‘purpose’ of the state, not dictate its own purpose on the state!

In such case, if strategy in statecraft and warcraft is being designed with the interests and identities of individuals or specific groups in mind - that becomes the biggest crime against the people and a crime against humanity. Those who are at the highest echelons of power, may think that they have immunity to misuse power for their vested interests, but this would be an extremely naïve thinking. Such behavior may save them from being criminalized, but it will not immunize them from essentially compromising the national interest, ruining governance, losing public confidence and placing the country on a weaker front in regional and geopolitical dynamics. And even more so, fracturing the unity of the people from within, and with friendly nations, and with the larger humanity.

Surely, the most crucial times in the life of nations are those when it has to engage in warfare, and that is where the two strategies cross and reflect upon each other – one becomes a filtering prism for the other. One shows how much the other has diverted from the main course.

In peacetime, statecraft strategy is about long-term coherence, stability, and the shaping of future conditions for the people, through the orchestration of all instruments of national power — political, economic, cultural, informational, and military. Practically, these ideals are rarely met, perhaps because people in the political circles and circles of power, seem to believe more in the dictates of realism and less upon liberal individual rights. They believe in Hobbes’ anarchic ‘state of nature²’ that is only organized under political power; and on Rousseau’s decisive saying that individuals necessarily surrender their individual wills to the collective to create a just and free society; and in Machiavelli’s *raison d’état*, the pragmatic use of power over morality or belief. Machiavelli legitimizes for the ‘prince’ the use of cunning, ruthlessness, deception and violence, to keep his power inside the state and to expand it outside. In the modern states, where the people have willfully signed off their wills to the ballot box, it does not take much time for the ballot box to shift from public property to private ownership; and it does not take much time for those in power, to assume that the power they are in, is not a public domain, it is their very own. It takes not much time for the elected-representative of the people to morph into Machiavelli’s ‘prince’.

The problems faced by the ‘prince’ then, are; to maintain legitimacy in the eyes of the people; governance in the wide pool of corruption and extortion; and the preservation of the social contract or its transformation into new social contracts, as suits the power of the prince. In such an environment of constant tension between power and people, and between governance and rebellion, the state has to maintain another vital thing, the sovereignty of the state – that has to be preserved both internally with the people, and externally in the community of nations. And this becomes more challenging in times of warfare, because as much as you need the enemy to think that it is losing, you also need the people to think that you are really winning. Because losing a war can in one strike, take away, trust, legitimacy, the social contract and even the sovereignty of the state.

Wartime strategy is different; it is a time when the state has to manifest its power upon the ‘other’. In doing so it has to have the support of its own people for the infliction of violence and destruction on the ‘other’. If the people believe that their country is fighting a just war, not as an aggressor but as a defender, or more so as a defender of an oppressed section of humanity, they will stand by the state and the armed forces, and will willfully give away their comforts, and the soldiers will willfully give their lives in the battlefield.

Statecraft strategy – ideally based on the premise that the ‘people believe in their leadership’ and the ‘leadership is true to its people’ – requires a long-term sustained order through good governance, justice

² Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Edited by Richard Tuck. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

and legitimacy. There is smooth evolution of structural national development and institution-building. Statesmen need to be predictive and consensus-seeking, and like sagacious architects, use their influence and persuasion to shape the nation's future. Their goal is to avoid conflict, preserve and improve law, and nurture the common good.

In parallel – in the ideal premise where the master of warfare is committed to the state and the soil – his outlook is completely opposing. Disagreements and differences with the adversary are highlighted in his mind. His aim is not a slowly shaping evolution, rather he is focused on the quick and complete defeat of his adversary and decisive political results in the aftermath. He is an offensive-realist, he is frictional and adversarial, and is constantly in contest with the existential threat. His gameplan is short-to-medium term, and tactical to operational. In his mind, conflict is inherent and often necessary, and has to be dealt with coercion, destruction and force projection. So, in the school of warcraft, conflict is a necessity, it maintains proportionality between the state and its adversary, and has a constant utility in national sovereignty.

Warfare strategy is surgical and/or catastrophic; it seeks ruptures and resolves contradictions through force. Whereas, statecraft is long-term, slow-moving, social and pragmatic.

It is clear then, that statecraft is constantly on-going, deeply rooted and adaptable, while warcraft is occasional and forceful. So, warcraft strategy is a useful show of force in critical times and has to be an augment of statecraft strategy, and has to remain subordinated to it, and only help achieve its long-term goals. War needs to serve policy, not the other way around. But there is a danger that the state-machinery can err, the state can become power-driven, fascist and imperial, if so, the state becomes the vehicle of war, and policy become subservient to militaristic needs.

Power in Statecraft and Warcraft

It is also noteworthy how power plays in both statecraft and warcraft. But in doing so, one needs to understand the nature of Power itself. The philosophical difference between strategy for the state and strategy for warfare lies in their foundational purpose of achieving power, the scope of its application, and the ontological nature of power they seek to determine.

Statecraft uses power to establish purpose and order. Warcraft uses power to neutralize the adversary.

American political theorist Robert Dahl *defined power in statecraft as 'getting others to do what they otherwise would not do'*³. Interestingly, he distinguished between, four elements in the state's *power-game of statecraft*; the source (or domain or base) of the power; the means or instruments used to exert that power; the amount or extent of the power over the subject; and the range or scope of the power over the subject.

By breaking down political power in this way, Dahl's work helps in concluding the reality that the power in statecraft is bounded in certain constrains and is not unlimited. It needs to be managed and exploited. Modern states, with their networks of government, semi-government and private institutions; political and civil-society webs; and intergovernmental and international arrangements; has to move circumspectly and with reservations, so as to not disturb or displease a sector of the society to the extent that it reacts or rebels. So, practically, power inside the state will be used to organize the works for the

³ Dahl, Robert A., The Concept of Power, Behavioral Science, 2:3 (1957: July) p.201, https://welcometorel.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/08/conceptpower_r-dahl.pdf

betterment of the people to an extent, while at the same time it will be exploiting the very system it is maintaining, to extract undue benefits for the ruling elite.

Ideally speaking then, power in statecraft is holistic and integrative – it is soft-power. It seeks exploitation but only to the extent it can remain unexposed. It seeks influence over consent, narrative control, economic systems, and legal norms. In statecraft, strategy is about preventing conflict by shaping environments, inside the country; and also, outside the country with diplomacy, wherever conflict is unnecessary or unwinnable. The state is adaptive to circumstances, and dialectic in nature. It may be firm in the results it needs to harbor, but on the face, it is compromising, diplomatic, and wants deterrence, not actual use of power. In extreme cases, when/if the state uses physical power, it tries to hide it in covers, and still poses to dominate through order and civil control.

The philosophy of warcraft, on the other hand, is a philosophy of conflict. It idealizes Clausewitz's 'war is the continuation of politics'⁴; Nietzsche's will to power⁵; and Heidegger's idea that death is not just an end point but a fundamental aspect of human existence⁶. In Heidegger's idea of being-toward-death, is the acknowledgement of the inevitability of death, and it informs us how we live or ought to live, rather it tends to shape our understanding of life and selfhood – to the purpose of war!

The focus of power here is on time-bound coercion and destruction, manifested in force, momentum and decisive action. Its existence depends upon the existence of the 'enemy', so if the enemy is not there, it must be created. Danger, even if not clearly visible, must be clearly defined, and future needs to be portrayed as a fearful place, a place that has to be secured by allowing force to act in contingency. Friction, emotion, chance, reason, all are to be used as proofs for the legitimacy of the actions of the warrior. Struggle is necessary in the face of presupposed opposition and existential threat.

Beyond this generalized picture, one must also recognize that there is no perfect-case scenario for any of these theories, rather every state is a unique one, with its own political framework, its own military-state dynamics, its own visions and purposes.

Contemporary Dynamics – how ideas moved

Ideas and dialect lead to structure, structure leads to new ideas and structures; human systems are feedback-loops. Only the loops get extending and overlapping to make things more complex than before.

Time has moved many places from Platonian 'idealism' wherein virtue and justice were thought to be the foundations of governance⁷; it moved to Machiavellian realpolitik⁸, to the Hobbesian social contract⁹, and to Kantian internationalism¹⁰. Then there was the long wave of imperialism guided by

⁴ Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War*. Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

⁵ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1966.

⁶ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper & Row, 1962.

⁷ Plato, *Republic*.

⁸ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 1532.

⁹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1651.

¹⁰ Immanuel Kant, "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch," 1795

the Sea-Power Theory¹¹ and the Heartland Theory¹². Then there was the constant contest between people-centered socialism and state-centered capitalism.

The 20th century was crowded by strains of realism and liberalism. With the inception of the United Nations came ideas like Structuralism¹³, Institutionalism¹⁴, and after the demise of USSR, in the post-Cold War era came constructivism¹⁵ and the core-periphery theory¹⁶.

Notice that changing circumstances in the societal buildup, resources, technologies and capabilities, led thinkers of their eras to explain how the world is working and how it ought to work. For instance, in the Cold War bipolar era there was recognition of systemic anarchy and need for institutional cooperation, while later in the post-Cold War unipolar moment, there were ideas like the ‘end of history’¹⁷, the ‘core-periphery theory’ and that all ‘states should align with capitalist dynamics’¹⁸.

The ‘end of history’ and the ensuing globalization was a time when the West assumed that all other system of governance – except that of capitalist-based Liberal Democracy, where the whole world should open its markets for the free capitalists of the West – were unacceptable. The US would dictate the vision, not only for global governance but also for how states should govern internally. States needed to imitate the Western models, or the models dictated by the West in order to progress. This did not just mean something like Rostow’s five stages of economic growth through which all countries must pass to become developed. Which he labelled as; traditional society; preconditions to take-off; take-off; drive to maturity; and age of high mass consumption. Rather it meant the complete alignment; of the internal bureaucracies of the states with international institutions; and with the approach that governments should actively lead and coordinate economic growth complimenting the liberal-capitalist model - as in Developmentalism and Modernity¹⁹.

This idea was countered by the Latin American debate of the Dependency Theory, that criticized the ideas of Developmentalism and Modernity as the continuation of imperialism and colonialism with new faces. The theory recognized ‘an underlying global structure that created wealth in some parts of the world at the detriment of other parts’²⁰. Rather, the Developmental State is just the globalization of the division of labor, carried out by the power of international capitalism. The same force has acted ‘originally as mercantilism, then as free trade, later as finance capital, and most recently under the auspices of the multinational corporation - capitalism over the last five centuries has created a world economic system’²¹.

¹¹ Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*, 1890

¹² H. J. Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” *The Geographical Journal* 23(4), 1904; and *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, 1919.

¹³ Raúl Prebisch, “The Economic Development of Latin America and Its Principal Problems,” UN ECLA, 1950; Hans Singer, “The Distribution of Gains between Investing and Borrowing Countries,” 1950.

¹⁴ Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, 1984; Robert O. Keohane & Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 1977

¹⁵ Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It,” *International Organization* 46(2), 1992; *Social Theory of International Politics*, 1999.

¹⁶ Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (multiple vols., 1974–1989).

¹⁷ Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?,” *The National Interest* 16, 1989; *The End of History and the Last Man*, 1992

¹⁸ Bob Jessop, *The Future of the Capitalist State*, 2002; “The Strategic-Relational Approach,” various essays (2000s).

¹⁹ Grosfoguel, Ramon. "Developmentalism, Modernity, and Dependency Theory in Latin America." *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, no. 2 (2000): 347-374. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/23893>.

²⁰ Hout, W. (2023). Dependency Theory. In M. Clarke, & X. Zhao (Eds.), *Elgar Encyclopedia of Development* (pp. 162-166). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800372122.ch35>

²¹ Hugo Radice (2008) *The Developmental State under Global Neoliberalism*,

All this underlines the fact that statecraft is ‘universal’. The state is not just a set of elected individuals keen for the welfare of their people, it is a member of a global community that is economically, strategically and ideologically intertwined, and the state has to play an intricate game of diplomacy, alliances, partnerships, and of economic and strategic pressures and enmities. In the global framework, the state is one player of 195 countries that share between them, geography, resources, relations and interests. It is necessary to realize the basic human characteristic, of unique emergent behavior at different social levels, the same people behave differently at the level of families and at the level of the neighborhoods or the level of an institution. And equally necessary is to acknowledge that the bigger and wider the level of interaction, the more expertise, prudence and wisdom is required, especially at the state level, where your decisions affect millions of lives internally and also affect the global population and environment. Sadly, is the case, that the institution of the state, in electoral democracies, require neither expertise nor prudence nor wisdom from its parliamentarian, but only sloganeering, and the arts of trickery and treachery.

So, in our present era, of an approaching multilateralism and regionalism, and of Hybrid and 6th Generational warfare, we find in our dynamic and eventful environment new ways to see the world, perhaps ways which can easily exclude the idea of good and bad, right and wrong. The Systems and Complexity Theories of recent times, see the states not as isolated units, but as adaptive systems interacting within a vast, constantly changing network of other systems — political, economic, ecological, technological, and social²². The state is like a living organism made of interconnected parts like institutions, citizens, markets, bureaucracies²³. And externally, information and energy are constantly being exchanged between the state and the global environment, in terms of global economy, international politics, technology and climate.

This dynamic and eventful environment has replaced linear cause-and-effect thinking with emergent behavior thinking, wherein lies the possibility of massive, unpredictable outcomes from seemingly small changes²⁴. The state is now seen as an ecosystem, rather than a machine; it cannot be fully controlled, it can only be guided or nudged through feedback loops and adaptive policies. The state can only create conditions for stability or growth, but not dictate every outcome.

This means that the present states machine has to find itself in a more intricate, more fragile and more demanding internal environment; and a more invasive, hybrid and anarchic external environment. Disruptive technologies, especially in the social and strategic realms, that are increasingly over-arching humanity with their stealth and reach, have become challenges that states are unequipped to counter, rather they often have to give-in and compromise or ‘adapt’. How then, when reduced to mere pawns in the global chessboard, will the states, bring together a collective of individuals, who have culture, language, beliefs, identity, who want to vitalize their sovereignty and who yearn for the glory of the collective!

How is the state to defend its own positions from adversaries who control the mediums of communication and information via broadbands controlled by privately owned multinational

16 Jul 2008, Third World Quarterly, 29:6, 1153-1174, DOI: 10.1080/01436590802201121

²² John H. Holland, “Complex Adaptive Systems,” *Daedalus* 121, no. 1 (1992): 17–30; Melanie Mitchell, *Complexity: A Guided Tour* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

²³ Herbert A. Simon, “The Architecture of Complexity,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 106, no. 6 (1962): 467–82; Niklas Luhmann, *Political Theory in the Welfare State* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990).

²⁴ Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); P. W. Anderson, “More Is Different,” *Science* 177, no. 4047 (1972): 393–96.

companies²⁵ like Amazon, Google, Microsoft, IBM, Cloudera? How is the state to defend itself from long-range intercontinental missiles ranging up to 18,000km, and nuclear arsenal like the US, B83 gravity bomb that is more than 80 times stronger than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, or the Russian RS-28 Sarmat ICBM carrying 10 tones of fusile payload in a single go? How to, in the hybrid environment, defend against satellite surveillance that breaches our sovereign spaces; against warfare methods including cyber, psychological, propaganda, militancy, initiated from foreign soils; and against the 6GW networked battleground? A battleground wherein states truly find themselves to be adaptive systems interacting within a vast, constantly changing network of other systems.

Wherein states find themselves at a point where statecraft and warcraft need to be combined in a single integrated methodology, to defend against increasingly non-linear, disruptive, hybrid attacks, when the wherewithal to deal with all this is limited, trailing and easily checked.

Comparing and Measuring State Power

Comparing and measuring state-power is especially of interest in times of conflicts and wars. As armies juxtapose at the battlefield, nations, collect solace by contrasting each other's pros and cons. But how to make such comparisons? Because here our purpose is bigger, we need to make a comparison of the consolidated power that comes with the combination of statecraft and warcraft, because we need to assess our position in an adverse, anarchic global environment, wherein each state has to fight its own war – and for that it needs to know it's 'purpose', its existential needs, its preferred pathways, its friends and its foes.

So, consider the United States, a state that not only claims to be the oldest continuous democracy of the world, but also makes it its purpose to spread its liberal democratic ideals to the world. Yet, since its independence in 1776, it has engaged in 400 military interventions outside its borders. Half of them have taken place post-WWII, since it came out as a superpower. These interventions came in the name of removing dictators, bringing democracy and in the pursuit for counterterrorism. The wars on Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria are recent examples, and Ukraine, Gaza and Iran are on-going ones. One wonders then, is the US a democracy focused on the welfare and progress of its people, or is it a military state, flaming in the fire of its own power. A power that forces it to create enemies and fight contingency wars. A power that needs to become bigger and bigger and force into submission all 'others'; that needs to destroy all in order to exist. A power that is always on the way of coercion, quick vehement action and decisive results.

Now consider Russia, whom since the fall of the Soviet Union, within three and a half decades has rebounded as a daunting military power, challenging US hegemony at every front. Russia stands second only to the US in military power. The West describes Russia as a hybrid regime, a mix of authoritarianism and managed democracy²⁶, with a strong emphasis on executive power and limited political pluralism. Freedom House says, 'Power in Russia's authoritarian political system is concentrated in the hands of President Vladimir Putin. With subservient courts and security forces, a controlled media environment, and a legislature consisting of a ruling party and pliable opposition factions, the Kremlin manipulates elections and suppresses genuine opposition'²⁷. The question is, is not this type of control and manipulation practiced in more or less all democracies, though they may do all this under lots of covers. And if democracy is measured by its claimed fruit, i.e. progress and welfare

25 Marcus Law, Top 10 companies in the world of big data, April 28, 2023, Technology Magazine, <https://technologymagazine.com/top10/top-10-companies-in-the-world-of-big-data>

²⁶ Petrov, N., Lipman, M., & Hale, H. E. (2014). Three dilemmas of hybrid regime governance: Russia from Putin to Putin. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 30(1), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2014.893866>

²⁷ Russia, Freedom in the World 2025, Freedom House, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/russia/freedom-world/2025>

of the people, Russia is an ‘emerging and developing economy’²⁸ and a ‘high income economy’; it is the 11th largest state by GDP²⁹; has a ‘very high’ Human Development Index at 0.821³⁰; a monthly average net salary of \$1368, and a national debt of US\$0.312trillion only.

Compare that to China, who may stand at second rank, after US, in GDP, but China’s national debt is approximately US\$18.8 trillion³¹; whereas the debt of the US in March 2025, was \$36.56 trillion³². Freedom House’s comments on China are, ‘China is ruled by a repressive regime. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) maintains tight control over all aspects of life and governance, including the state bureaucracy, the media, online speech, religious practice, universities, businesses, and civil society’³³. The same Freedom House marks India’s government as presiding over discriminatory policies and persecuting Muslim populations; while Pakistan in its view imposes selective restrictions on civil liberties and is marred with military influence and terrorism. India’s GDP ranking is 4th in the world, but its national debt is also a large, at US\$3.44trillion³⁴. In contrast, Pakistan’s GDP ranking is 44th in the world, but its national debt is only US\$0.277trillion³⁵.

So, each country has its own kind of democracy; it may measure its economic strength with different parameters; it may define its freedoms, happiness, and ‘purpose of life’ in different ways. And everyone may not think that economic indicators are the sole index for measuring value and fulfilment. Nor is it the case that Freedom House or other western organizations are completely unbiased, rather they measure friends and non-friends with different yardsticks. Therefore, the best way to measure a state’s own worth in an anarchic, competitive, indifferent, biased and manufactured global environment, is how it defines, describes and measures its own value and worth.

And that is necessary for a nation, because the power and position of a state in the global environment, is derived by the value and worth the state and people ascribe to their selves. And this power, based on one’s value and worth, is translated into the line that it draws between what is acceptable for it and what is not acceptable for it, in the community of states.

One needs to ask here; how then do we measure the power of a state in the global framework? Is it merely its economic prowess, its treasury and GDP that determine how powerful a state is, or its land area or population, or the inventory of weapons and artillery, or its human development index, or the combination of all these! Or, is the power of a state not determined by its ability to block outside forces from infringing upon its sovereignty, in the matters of its politics, its economy, its society and upon the ‘purpose of life’ of its people?

Power therefore, can be monetary, military and diplomatic, but all power that rests on physical assets and transactions, stands on shifting grounds. Real power comes from more abstract sources, from ethics, morality and beliefs. The power formed on these abstract foundations, may seem flimsy to the eye, but it is the one that will last longer, and yield true loyalty, stability and resilience. This type of power relies

²⁸ World Economic Outlook Database - Groups and Aggregates Information, International Monetary Fund. Retrieved 5 August 2024.

²⁹ World Economic Outlook database: October 2024, IMF

³⁰ Human Development Insights, 6 May 2025, Human Development Reports, <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/country-insights#/ranks>

³¹ National debt in China from 1995 to 2030(in billion U.S. dollars), Statista, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/531423/national-debt-of-china/>

³² Fiscal Data Explains the National Debt". fiscaldata.treasury.gov. Retrieved February 27, 2025.

³³ China, Freedom House, accessed June, 28, 2025, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/china/freedom-world/2025>

³⁴ India: National debt from 2020 to 2030(in billion U.S. dollars), <https://www.statista.com/statistics/531619/national-debt-of-india/>

³⁵ State Bank of Pakistan, 5.1 Pakistan's Debt and Liabilities-Summary, https://www.sbp.org.pk/reports/stat_reviews/Bulletin/2025/Jan/Chap-5.pdf

heavily upon the internal integration and resilience of the people; the people who believe in their leadership, stand behind it in thick and thin; whereas, public mistrust upon the state erodes it.

Pakistan facing Hybrid War

Pakistan has been a decades-long victim of terrorism that it has linked with foreign agencies such as the Indian RAW. Pakistan came under the brutal sway of Terrorism during the first decade of US occupation of Afghanistan. To counter this, Pakistan Government and Army came together and proceeded with a number of counter-terrorism campaigns starting from Operation Al-Mizan and Operation Rah-e-Haq and leading to the Operation Zarb-e-Azb and the on-going Operation Radd ul-Fassad³⁶.

In spite of several successful operations, the scourge of terrorism keeps resurging at different times and places. Reportedly, 1,600 civilians and security personnel have been killed across Pakistan in 2024 only, and the trend is fiercely continuing in 2025. Baluchistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa dominate the terror landscape³⁷.

Repeatedly, Pakistan has revealed India for its involvement in terrorist incidents in Pakistan³⁸. Several terrorist attack around the time of Operation Sindoor have also been linked to India, including the February 2024, ISIS-claimed twin bombings in Pishin District and Killa Saifullah, killing 28 people³⁹; the August 2024 BLA attacks across Baluchistan in a single day resulting in 73 killed⁴⁰. Or, the killing of 21 Jaffar Express hostages at the hands of the BLA militants in March this year⁴¹. Four days after the Pahalgam tragedy, a BLA attack led to the martyrdom of 10 Pakistan Army personnel in Quetta⁴². Seven

³⁶ Pakistan Army launches 'Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad' across the country, Feb 22, 2017, Dawn, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1316332/pakistan-army-launches-operation-radd-ul-fasaad-across-the-country>

³⁷ CRSS Annual Security Report 2024, Security Landscape of Pakistan's 2024, retrieved Oct. 12, 2025, CRSS, <https://crss.pk/2024-marks-deadliest-year-for-pakistans-security-forces-record-high-fatalities-in-a-decade/>

³⁸ Hannah Ellis-Peterson, Pakistan blames India for suspected suicide attack on school bus, May 21, 2025, Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/may/21/pakistan-blames-india-suspected-suicide-attack-school-bus-balochistan>

³⁹ Twin bombings kill at least 28 as Pakistan prepares for elections, 7 Feb 2024, Aljazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/7/blast-kills-at-least-six-people-in-pakistan-ahead-of-elections>

⁴⁰ Saleem Ahmad and Saud Mehsud, 'More than 70 dead after militant attacks in Pakistan's Balochistan', August 27, 2024, Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/twenty-three-people-killed-pakistan-militant-attack-interior-minister-says-2024-08-26/>

⁴¹ Gavin Butler, 'Killed in front of our eyes': How the Pakistan train hijacking unfolded, 13 March 2025, BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cy0d5y9ew24o>

⁴² Abid Hussain, Suicide blast near paramilitary headquarters in Pakistan's Quetta kills 10, 30 Sep 2025, Aljazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/9/30/suicide-blast-near-paramilitary-headquarters-in-pakistans-quetta-kills-10>

more soldiers laid down their lives in May, in Kachhi, Baluchistan⁴³. After a latest such attack Pakistan has even threatened of war on India⁴⁴.

So, the Hybrid phenomenon is old-time for Pakistan. By now, the country is not only battle-scarred it is battle-hardened. Time and again, Pakistan's leadership has warned that the country has been a victim of 'hybrid warfare'⁴⁵. Hybrid warfare is a phenomenon that umbrellas all non-conventional warring methods. These may be decentralized conflicts involving non-state actors; or irregular tactics leveraging social, political, and economic networks; and they can use diplomacy, politics or terrorist acts. These methods that target the vulnerabilities of their adversaries, reach directly to the people, the institutions, the marketplaces, and attack at ethnic and religious fault lines. The purpose is economic ruin, a terrified public and delegitimization of the state in the eyes of the people. The war is now within, and the enemy is disguised among the people.

In the increasingly hybrid environment, the enemy has now crossed the sovereign boundaries without detection. Once inside, it will integrate kinetic, cyber, psychological, and informational tactics. It will rely on diplomacy, politics, espionage, irregular formations, terrorist acts, indiscriminate violence, and criminal activity⁴⁶. It will recruit professional soldiers, terrorists, guerrilla fighters, mercenaries and criminal thugs, whatever suits the purpose.

The same state that was being architected in slow-moving, evolving statecraft strategies, which ensured its existence, sovereignty and freedom, has now become an expedited battlespace, where things will now be dealt on a war footing. The needed armory now includes state-of-the-art information technology, cyber capabilities, satellite surveillance, internal espionage, and a police-force trained to encounter armed militants in civil localities. The new enemy is internal but networked abroad; it has a local presence but backed by foreign handlers; it seems to be composed of irregular, crude, sporadic elements but in reality, it may be extremely organized, sophisticated, networked and enveloping.

This war is 'war by all means'! On one side, it may be aided with the overly improvised and highly trained 'special forces'⁴⁷, that are by definition, specially designated, organized, selected, trained and equipped military units, trained to conduct special operations using unconventional modes and techniques in foreign soil. And on the other side, to overwhelm the national conscience, there can be a slew of propaganda machinery. In 2021, a detailed report by the name Indian Chronicles⁴⁸ came out,

⁴³ 7 soldiers martyred in terror attack by 'Indian proxy', May 7, 2025, Express Tribune, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2544434/7-soldiers-martyred-in-terror-attack-by-indian-proxy>

⁴⁴ Samaan Lateef, Pakistan warns of new war with India after 11 soldiers killed, 09 October 2025, Telegraph, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2025/10/09/pakistan-warns-real-risk-war-with-india-11-soldiers-killed/>

⁴⁵ 'Hybrid war' imposed on country to internally weaken it, says Bajwa, April 15, 2018, Dawn, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1401747>

⁴⁶ Jasper, Scott; Moreland, Scott (2014-12-02). "The Islamic State is a Hybrid Threat: Why Does That Matter?". *Small Wars Journal*, retrieved Oct 2, 2025 from Academia, https://www.academia.edu/11509209/The_Islamic_State_is_a_Hybrid_Threat_Why_Does_That_Matter

⁴⁷ North Atlantic Treaty Organization (13 December 2013). "Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations". *NATO Standard Allied Joint Publication. AJP-3.5* (Edition A, Version 1). Brussels: NATO Standardization Agency: 1.

⁴⁸ Zeeshan Javed, Analysis of the Indian Chronicles, March, 2021, IPRI, <https://ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Indian-Chronicles-Policy-Brief.pdf>

disclosing a massive anti-Pakistan disinformation network set up by India. The Chronicles identify over 600 fake media outlets, hijacking accredited UN organizations, resuscitating dead individuals and coordinating with anti-Pakistan elements in different NGOs. The purpose was a brazen attempt by India to malign and isolate Pakistan, especially in the international front.

Inevitably, the Hybrid War brings the military to partake in policing a country where the crime is not between individuals or local gangs anymore, rather crime has become war-crimes between the foreign enemy and the state. Sadly, the country does not have enough resources or will, to strengthen and empower the national Police to the extent required to tackle with the Hybrid scourge on its own, perhaps because it can't be allowed to cross the hierarchy of power in a disruptive way. And all the while, the military is already being equipped to the teeth, due to its bigger purpose and because it to deal with sovereign and existential matters, making the military the only top-notch institution capable of dealing with the 5G and 6G dynamics.

This raises the political question, of who is to getting how much and what kinds of powers, in the new hybrid environment? Is the new environment obligating the military to step in? Is the military the only institution that can rescue the country in the created state of emergency? Does that off-balance the constitutional balance of power among the institutions?

Alarmingly such questions will remain lingering and unanswered due to the complexities discussed above. Yet it will remain imperative to maintain the line where war and the warcraft machine serve policy, and not the other way around.

Conclusion

Pakistan needs strategic rethinking in both its statecraft and warcraft. With out-of-box thinking, the democratic foundations that have as yet failed the people can be revised. Pakistan can forge for itself a conditioned democracy that ensures the welfare, integrity and security of the state. The power equation between the military and the state cannot be made a constant tug-of-war that keeps creating loopholes for foreign intervention. A lingering unarticulated power structure that can be changed with the whims of incoming politicians and generals is more dangerous for the country and the people than war.

We need to understand human nature, and the needs and aspirations of human societies when they become a nation, and base our strategies on that. Strategy is based upon 'the purpose', the purpose defines 'the goals', and 'the methods' take the purpose to the goals. Strategy has to bear the weight of history, culture and belief; it has to face the intricate complexities of the present, and it has to forge a future for its people. It is the vital, life-saving instinct that delivers nations through difficult and ambiguous times, it cannot be left to indiscrete, reckless wastefulness.



MDSVAD

Mariam Dawood School of Visual Arts & Design

RHSA

Razia Hassan School of Architecture

SMSLASS

Seeta Majeed School of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences

SMC

School of Media & Mass Communication

SCIT

School of Computer & Information Technology

SE

School of Education

SMS

School of Management Sciences

IP

Institute of Psychology

BNU Center for Policy Research
Beaconhouse National University

Main Campus

13 KM, Off Thokar Niaz Baig
Raiwind Road, Lahore-53700, Pakistan
Telephone: 042-38100156
www.bnu.edu.pk