

Military Power

Source A

Moreover, military power (or “capability”) itself can mean different things in different contexts. Military forces, after all, do many things, ranging from defending national territory to invading other states, hunting down terrorists, coercing concessions, countering insurgencies, keeping the peace, enforcing economic sanctions, showing the flag, or maintain domestic order. Proficiency in one or even several does not imply proficiency in them all: good defenders of national territory can make poor peacekeepers; forces that can defend national territory cannot necessarily conquer their neighbors. For any one mission, moreover, “success” can be defined very differently by different actors. Defenders of national territory may all value low casualties, short wars, and complete restoration of the status quo, but these goals often conflict with one another, and different defenders value them differently in the margin. Some would trade higher casualties and a longer war for a complete reconquest of lost territory; others would not. Some would bomb an opponent for months to avoid losing friendly ground troops; others would invade quickly to shorten the war at the cost of the heavier casualties. If capability is the ability to succeed at an assigned mission, different states will thus access capability very differently for the same forces – no single, undifferentiated concept of “military capability” can apply to all conflicts in all places and times.

Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) p. 5

Source B

Smart power strategies combining coercive and noncoercive instruments have been employed nonstop against a variety of state and nonstate actors to stop and undo acts of aggression and massive human rights violations (Iraq, Somali warlords, Bosnian Serbs, Serbia); to reverse the overthrow of democratically elected governments (Haiti); to stop and undo acquisition and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) (Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea); and to stop the use and support for terrorism (Al Qaida, Iran, Libya, Pakistan, Sudan, the Taliban). According to one study, the United States has used coercion and diplomacy on 16 occasions from 1990 to 2001; another study counts 36 Western attempts from 1990 to 2005.

Unfortunately, these studies also show that the Obama Administration has a major policy problem on its hands. They reveal that the coercive component of Clinton’s smart power approach has a poor track record and that the United States and allies have been bad at using their overwhelming military superiority to coerce far weaker opponents to comply with their demands. The first study identifies five successes in 16 attempts and in the second study, six lasting successes in 36 attempts. It is clear from case studies that Western decision makers generally have a poor understanding of military coercion and how this strategy most effectively can be employed in combination with non-coercive instruments. This is, for example, evident from the way the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) initiated its air campaign against Serbia in 1999 believing that Serbian President Milosevic would yield in a matter of days. In the end, it took the alliance 78 days and far more extensive bombing than had been anticipated to prevail.

Peter Viggo Jakobsen, “Pushing the Limits of Military Coercion Theory”, *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (May 2011), p.154.

Source C

The beginning of wisdom is to recognize that the ongoing war in Iraq is not one that the United States can win. As a result of its initial miscalculations, misdirected planning, and inadequate preparation, Washington has lost the Iraqi people's confidence and consent, and it is unlikely to win them back. Every day that Americans shell Iraqi cities they lose further ground on the central front of Iraqi opinion.

The war can still be won –but only by moderate Iraqis and only if they concentrate their efforts on gaining the cooperation of neighboring states, securing the support of the broader international community, and quickly reducing their dependence on the United States. Achieving such wide consensus will require turning the U.S.-led occupation into an Iraqi-led, regionally backed, and internationally supported endeavor to attain peace and stability based on the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In the eyes of the Iraqi people and of all the neighboring populations, the U.S. mission in Iraq lacks legitimacy and credibility. Only by dramatically recasting the American role in the region can such perceptions begin to be changed. Until then, U.S. military operations in Iraq will continue to inspire local resistance, radicalize neighboring populations, and discourage international cooperation.

James Dobbins, "Iraq: Winning the Unwinnable War", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (Jan/Feb 2005), pp. 16-17, available at: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/60423/james-dobbins/iraq-winning-the-unwinnable-war>

Source D

War and force may be down, but they are not out. Instead, the use of force is taking new forms. Military theorists today write about "fourth generation warfare" that sometimes has "no definable battlefields or fronts"; indeed, the distinction between civilian and military may disappear... Military power remains important because it structures world politics. It is true that in many relationships and issues, military force is increasingly difficult or costly for states to use. But the fact that military power is not always sufficient in particular situations does not mean that it has lost the ability to structure expectations and shape political calculations... Metaphorically, military power provides a degree of security that is to political and economic 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 21st century. Military power will not have the utility for states that it had in the 19th century, but it will remain a crucial component of power in world politics.

Joseph S. Nye Jr. 'Is Military Power Becoming Obsolete?', *The Korea Times*, 13 January 2010, available at: http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/19858/is_military_power_becoming_obsolete.html

Source E

The pressure to reorient U.S. defense planning to meet what many members of the U.S. Congress and many of Washington's eastern European allies see as a revived Russian military threat will complicate the Pentagon's effort to save money by modernizing and downsizing. The U.S. military, which is currently focused on counterterrorism and securing access to the seas surrounding China, will now have to beef up its capabilities to fight a ground war in Europe.

The new Cold War with the United States and Europe will hurt Russia even more, especially because Moscow is much more dependent on the West than vice versa, in at least one critical respect. To diversify its resource-dependent economy and modernize its aging, Soviet-era infrastructure, Russia has counted on an inflow of Western capital and

technology. To the degree that this option is lost, Moscow will be forced to become vastly more dependent either on its relationship with Beijing—in which it is a distinctly junior partner—or on scattered partnerships with countries that do not offer anything resembling the resources of the United States and Europe.

Only four years ago, after the global financial crisis had laid bare the weakness of the Russian economy, then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev argued that the country sorely needed “special alliances for modernization” with the United States and the countries of the EU. But now, as the crisis in Russia’s relations with those countries deepens, Russia is already feeling the crunch, as capital is fleeing the country, its credit markets are shrinking, and its economy will soon enter a recession.

Such economic hardship may prompt Russian leaders to preemptively clamp down on domestic dissent even harder than they already have to avert potential social unrest at home, which would mean a level of repression that could backfire and at some point produce the very kind of widespread opposition the Kremlin fears. Meanwhile, Russia’s poisoned relations with the United States and its European allies might well lead such Russian partners as Armenia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan—all of which are crucial to Russia’s plans for a Eurasian economic union and a stronger Collective Security Treaty Organization—to subtly distance themselves from Moscow for fear of tainting their own relationships with the Western powers.

The new confrontation with the West will also force Russia to stretch its military resources thin. That will leave Moscow poorly equipped to handle a host of other security challenges, such as violence in the northern Caucasus and instability in Central Asia, the latter of which is compounded by the unpredictable futures facing Afghanistan and Pakistan. Russia must also defend its vast border with China and prepare for a potential conflict between North and South Korea.

Robert Levgold, “Managing the New Cold War: What Moscow and Washington Can Learn From the Last One”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 93, No. 4 (Jul/Aug 2014), p. 79, available at: <http://harriman.columbia.edu/files/harriman/content/Managing%20the%20New%20Cold%20War.pdf>

Essay Question:

Using the sources and your own knowledge, analyze the extent to which military power has become obsolete.