

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

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Many authors have written about grand strategy, but far fewer have defined it, and even today, there exists no real consensus on what it means. Those who write about grand strategy hardly ever pause to think through the concept: **how** to define it; **why** to define it in that way, as opposed to all the other ways; and **what** is the actual conceptual logic of their chosen interpretation?

There have been many competing visions of grand strategy. Multi-instrumentality used to be at the forefront of grand strategy, but a focus on overarching visions and decisions has assumed the mantle of grandness in the concept from the latter half of the Cold War to the present day. This development has resulted in a dearth of theoretical inquiry into how to use multiple forms of power productively in combination. Moreover, the original emphasis on the unique environment of war, which had previously concentrated the concept, is now lacking.

The combination of military and non-military power in war as the most fundamental building block of grand strategy, although rarely seriously discussed, implicitly or explicitly underpins all modern interpretations of grand strategy. The logic of military power in an adversarial context is the baseline logic to which all other forms of power must necessarily relate. Force never has been, is not, and never will be the sole instrument for achieving political consequence—even in war, but its primacy in a wartime context should not be doubted.

Given the crucial context of war for grand strategy, the foundations and logic of military power are reviewed—the prospects for annihilation, for attrition and exhaustion, and for controlling the enemy’s freedom of action. Although the incorporation of military and non-military instruments inevitably marks the wartime environment, the West in particular, still ex-

periences significant trouble in combining these disparate forms of power in practice.

Compared to military force, the logic of non-military power is poorly understood in general, although well-understood in the particular. Economic sanctions, for example, may be studied according to one or more of three logics: signaling; as an independent instrument of coercion; and as a constraining force on the target. Of these logics, constraining is the only viable logic in a wartime context. Once military and non-military power are combined, the aggregate logic necessarily turns attritional, as it is only in the context of a longer, slower wearing down that non-military power can have any strategic relevance to the adversarial contest (i.e., by allowing one belligerent to impose artificial limits upon the enemy’s resources, which may then be reached through military attrition).

The attritional logic of grand strategy is then contrasted with Russia’s so-called hybrid warfare and China’s three warfares, which both also combine military and non-military power. The major significant difference between Western grand strategy on the one hand and Russian hybrid warfare and China’s three warfares on the other hand is the temporal dislocation of the attritional element in combining military and non-military power. Rather than occurring simultaneously with the application of military force, as in Western grand strategy, the attritional elements precede military operations and substantially alter the operating environment in advance, primarily by weakening the enemy prior to hostilities. Yet despite these temporal differences between the Russian and Chinese combinations and Western grand strategy, the attritional logic nonetheless persists.

This monograph examines the conceptual logic of grand strategy as the combination of military and non-military power in war. First, competing visions

of grand strategy are explored, and the primacy of combining types of power is explained. Second, the monograph establishes the individual logics of military and non-military power as such before considering their logic in combination in war. Finally, this logic is mapped onto Russian so-called hybrid warfare and China's three warfares to determine whether they also follow this logic, as well as how they adapt the logic to their own particular purposes. This illuminating monograph will be of great interest and value to those who think about how to combine meaningfully military and non-military power in war, as well as to those who are responsible for doing so in practice.

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