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The Evolution of Military Strategy: From Conceptual Foundations to the Technological Transformations of Contemporary Warfare

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Abstract:

This article examines the evolution of the concept of military strategy. It traces its development from a set of intellectual and theoretical reflections on war into an autonomous field of study that became clearly defined in the late eighteenth century on the basis of methodical principles and precise analytical rules. This shift led to a new understanding of strategy as an integrated system concerned with planning and managing military operations in the service of the state's political objectives. This understanding rests on three interrelated variables. The first concerns the achievement of political ends with the highest possible efficiency and the lowest possible cost. The second concerns the mobilization and integration of the state's comprehensive power, including its military, economic, political, and technological dimensions, in line with the requirements of time and place. The third focuses on the analysis of the strategic environment of conflict in order to maximize opportunities and reduce constraints and challenges. On this basis, military strategy can be understood as the product of a dynamic interaction between theory and practice within a changing international environment that continually reshapes patterns of power and the mechanisms through which conflict is managed.

Keywords: Military Strategy; Comprehensive Power; Cyber Warfare; Artificial Intelligence; Hybrid Warfare.

Introduction

Military strategy has undergone profound transformations across history. These changes have been closely linked to the evolution of the broader environment within which strategy operates and with which it interacts. War has long been the natural arena in which strategic ideas took shape. Since antiquity, human beings have sought to understand the nature of armed conflict and the

ways in which military power can be used to attain the political goals pursued by different political entities in their struggle for influence and survival.

The development of military strategy, however, did not follow a straight or clearly defined path. It emerged through a long intellectual process marked by ambiguity and continual change. In its early stages, strategic thought relied mainly on practical experience and historical examples. Historians and military thinkers offered observations and advice drawn from earlier wars and from comparisons among them, yet these views were not grounded in a coherent theoretical or methodological framework. Attention often centered on recording military victories and defeats, on giving general guidance to commanders on how best to confront the enemy, and at times on identifying enemy weaknesses and exploiting them at vulnerable points.

The Chinese military thinker Sun Tzu (544–496 BCE) is a prominent example of this early form of strategic thinking. He presented a set of general principles and practical recommendations intended to help commanders secure victory in war. Although his ideas were not formulated within a systematic scientific framework, they made a major contribution to the intellectual heritage of strategy. Many of their broad principles still retain analytical value in contemporary strategic thought.

The shift toward a more scientific treatment of military strategy began at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. This transformation coincided with the rise of the modern state and the emergence of regular armies in Europe. During this period, several military thinkers attempted to analyze war within a more methodical theoretical framework. Among the most notable was the Prussian theorist Carl von Clausewitz (1780–1831), who sought to explain the relationship between war and politics and to formulate a theoretical understanding of the nature of armed conflict. By the early nineteenth century, strategy had begun to take shape as a distinct intellectual field within military studies.

With the development of military science in the twentieth century, strategy came to be taught in military academies as an organized discipline. Its scope was no longer confined to the conduct of military operations at the tactical level. It expanded to include the full range of resources and capabilities that a state can mobilize in pursuit of its aims in war. Strategic studies in this phase relied heavily on the comparative historical analysis of wars in order to derive the rules and principles that govern the management of armed conflict. Military strategy also grew more complex as technological change accelerated and the number of actors in the conflict environment increased.

A historical review of military strategy shows that it did not evolve in a simple linear manner. Rather, it developed through a complex interaction among multiple dimensions. For analytical purposes, these dimensions may be simplified into two parallel tracks that converge on a single final objective: safeguarding the security of the political unit and enabling it to achieve its aims in conflict. The first track is adaptive and defensive. It concerns the formulation of principles and rules that enable military strategy to adjust to the strategic environment, thereby ensuring the survival of the state and the protection of its vital interests against threats. The second track is developmental and offensive. It focuses on strengthening military tools and capabilities and on employing them effectively to overcome the constraints that limit strategic action and to secure superiority in the management of conflict.

Yet, despite its analytical usefulness, this distinction does not fully capture the complexity of strategic reality. The defensive and offensive dimensions are deeply intertwined and are difficult to separate in practice. Military strategy also remains fundamentally governed by higher political considerations, which makes it a means for attaining political objectives rather than an end in itself. In addition, contemporary technological and environmental transformations have not merely improved the instruments of war. They have also reshaped the very nature of conflict through the emergence of new domains that extend beyond the traditional military sphere. Any effort to understand the development of military strategy therefore requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account the dynamic interaction between defensive and offensive dimensions within a changing political and technological context.

Against this background, the study of the evolution of strategic thought gains importance through an attempt to answer a composite question: What were the principal milestones that shaped the conceptual development of military strategic thought? And what were the major changes that affected the broader environment within which military strategy operates, whether in the surrounding political contexts or in the tools and means used to manage conflict?

First: The Conceptual and Historical Foundations of Strategy

The concept of strategy is often used in intellectual, political, and military literature without a precise definition that clearly identifies its content and conceptual boundaries. Many researchers employ the term frequently without attempting to frame it theoretically or define its meaning in a

systematic way[1]. Etymologically, the word "strategy" derives from the Greek term strategos, meaning "leader" or "general," and refers to the art of commanding armies and directing large-scale military[2] operations. Strategy encompasses a range of military skills, including tactics, siegecraft, and the management of supply and logistical resources. It is believed that the term "strategy" was first used in the Eastern Roman Empire in the sixth century CE before later passing into the modern European languages and becoming a central concept in military and political thought[3].

The modern concept of military strategy did not appear suddenly as a fully developed science. It was the result of a long accumulation of historical experiences and practical lessons. Before any conceptual system takes shape, knowledge passes through a cumulative stage based on observation and experience. In this regard, Vladimir Lenin observed that human knowledge develops from experience to theory, and this applies clearly to the emergence of strategic thought.

For many centuries, military experience was the primary source for understanding the phenomena and laws of war. As society became divided into classes, as professional armies emerged, and as centralized states arose, the need to organize the conduct of war in a more methodical manner gradually became more apparent. In many cases, the head of state combined political authority with military command, which strengthened the link between politics and war from the early stages of state formation.

At first, military campaigns, victories, and defeats were recorded by historians without systematic theoretical analysis. As experience accumulated and comparison among historical military events became possible, thinkers and commanders began to notice recurring patterns associated with war. They therefore started to generalize experience and formulate preliminary principles and rules. These early generalizations, however, did not yet have the character of organized science. They were closer to practical conclusions drawn from experience.

Although classical commanders such as Alexander the Great, Hannibal, and Julius Caesar possessed advanced views on the art of war, their ideas remained largely within the realm of personal experience and practical

[1]Donald Stoker, What's In A Name? Clausewitz's Search To Define "Strategy", Militarystrategymagazine, (2016), Accessed 02-10-2025, Available At: Https://H1.Nu/1kaee

[2]Nawar Mohammed Rabie Al-Khairi, Strategic Planning: A Theoretical Political Study, The Political And International Journal, Political Encyclopedia Library, (2026-02-21), Accessed 02-10-2025, Available At: Https://H1.Nu/1pilv

[3]Oyuntsetseg Densmaa And Baasankhuu Suren, Understanding Certain Aspects Of Military Strategy, Understanding Certain Aspects Of Military STRATEGY, International Journal Of Innovative Technologies In Social Science, Volume 04, Issue, 44, (2024), P 02

application. They did not rise to the level of comprehensive scientific theorization.

The first attempts to codify accumulated military experience appeared between the first and fourth centuries CE, especially in the Greek and Roman civilizations, where military works began to address issues related to the conduct of war.

Among the most prominent works of this period were Instructions for the General by Onasander and Epitoma Rei Militaris by Vegetius. Although these works focused mainly on training, organization, and tactical art, they also contained important references to the broader management of war. In that sense, they represented an early nucleus of strategic thought.

The Middle Ages, and even the period up to the sixteenth century, did not make a major contribution to the development of military strategy as an independent science. For that reason, the German philosopher, economist, and historian Friedrich Engels described that period as a "barren era" in terms of theoretical military creativity.

A new phase of systematic reflection on war began in the early sixteenth century. The Italian thinker Niccolò Machiavelli sought to offer a more organized treatment of the factors involved in the conduct of war, drawing on the experience of classical generals and on an analysis of the armies of his own time. His writings marked an important step away from the mere historical description of wars and toward an effort to understand their laws and formulate general principles for their management. This development paved the way for the later emergence of military strategy as a distinct science.

The study of war underwent a significant methodological transformation with the emergence of Marxist dialectics, which opened broader horizons for understanding the laws governing the evolution of war and the methods used to conduct it. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels explained that major economic and technological transformations, such as industrial development, the construction of railway networks, and the appearance of new weapons and military equipment, directly affected the organization of armies and the evolution of theoretical military concepts. War, therefore, can only be understood through a comprehensive and realistic study of the material and technical factors that shape its environment[4].

Within the development of the concept of strategy, Strategy: A History by the British historian Lawrence Freedman stands out as one of the most important contemporary works devoted to the topic. The book reveals a high

[4]V. D. Sokolovskiy, A Dminsatice, Anal)Gs, And Commeniary And A Companson With Pdevious Editions By: Harriet Fast Scott, MILITARY STRATEGY, (Washington, D.C: SRI Project 8974 January 1971, Tnird Edition), P P 32,33

degree of variation in the way strategy is defined and used. Colin S. Gray, for example, defines strategy as "the use of force for the ends of policy"[5].

The Prussian strategist Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, by contrast, stressed the practical dimension of strategy. For him, strategy was manifested in the commander's ability to employ available resources in order to achieve the aim of war in the field. Strategy, in this sense, is the art of practical adaptation to the means at hand in order to realize desired ends throughthe optimal use of military resources and capabilities[6]. In the same context, Edward N. Luttwak, in Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace, presented several definitions, including that of the French general André Beaufre, who described strategy as "the art of the dialectic of wills using force to resolve conflicts." The American[7] expert in diplomacy Robert E. Osgood, in his study of the Second World War, regarded strategy as a comprehensive activity that employs the various resources available to a nation in pursuit of its goals, while emphasizing the interaction between the political and military dimensions[8].

This diversity of approaches and definitions raises a fundamental question for scholars of strategic studies: how can strategy be defined in a way that is both theoretically meaningful and practically applicable? This question occupied Clausewitz throughout his intellectual career, even though debate continues over whether he succeeded in offering a final and comprehensive definition of the concept[9]. Clausewitz used the notion of the "plan of war" as a synonym for military strategy and referred to the mechanism linking government, commander, and armed forces. Because political considerations take precedence, the plan of war determines both the objective of employing military force and the means best suited to achieve it[10]. In his view, strategy is therefore the art of employing the armed forces in war to achieve the desired political and military objectives. It is the principal instrument that links political ends to military means within an integrated and effective framework. He also saw strategy as a practical activity that requires the commander to use military capabilities and resources wisely and efficiently, so that the enemy may be defeated without excessive waste in lives or material[11].

One of Clausewitz's earliest attempts to grasp the meaning of strategy appears in his unfinished text known as Notes on Strategy

[5]Donald Stoker, Op Cit
[6]Zia Ul Haque Shamsi, Defining Strategy: A New Approach, International Journal Of Social Sciences Bulletin, Volume 3, Issue 6, (2025), P. 196
[7]Donald Stoker, Op Cit
[8]Zia Ul Haque Shamsi, Op Cit, P 196
[9]Donald Stoker, Op Cit
10Lennart Souchon, Strategy, War, And The Relevance Of Carl Von Clausewitz, Military Strategy Magazine, Special Edition, The Continuing Relevance Of Clausewitz, (December 2020), P. 33
[11]Zia Ul Haque Shamsi, Op Cit, Pp 194, 195

from 1804 (Strategie aus dem Jahr 1804). In that text, he addressed a wide range of topics connected with war, including tactics, defense, operations, and military command. It is one of his earliest efforts to draw conceptual distinctions between "tactics" and "strategy," since he often defined each through comparison with the other.

In this regard, Clausewitz distinguished the two concepts as follows: tactics is the science of using forces in battle in order to win, whereas strategy is the science of using individual battles to achieve the aim of the war. Put differently, if tactics is concerned with the conduct of the battle itself, strategy is concerned with employing the results of battles in the service of the larger purpose of the war.

Clausewitz held that battle is the essential foundation of the entire use of military force. Without it, the use of armed forces would have no real meaning. He therefore departed from the dominant assumptions of eighteenth-century warfare, in which many commanders preferred maneuver to direct engagement in the belief that maneuver could secure the objectives of a campaign without combat. The French Revolutionary Wars changed the nature of conflict and increased its intensity. This led Clausewitz to stress the centrality of armed confrontation, arguing that battle occupies in strategy a position comparable to that of "hard currency" in economics.

It should be noted, however, that Clausewitz's concept of strategy was very broad. He did not clearly distinguish between what contemporary military thought calls the level of "strategy" and the level of "operational art," or the management of campaigns. In his treatment of the "operational plan," he regarded it as part of the strategic plan, and this orientation recurs in On War. The contemporary reader should therefore recognize that the boundary between strategy and operations was not clearly drawn in Clausewitz's theorization in the way it later came to be in modern military literature.

The enduring value of Clausewitz's contribution lies not in providing a closed and final definition of strategy, but in opening a broad analytical horizon that links battle, campaign, and political purpose. In doing so, he laid the foundation for understanding strategy as a framework that explains the relationship between force and purpose within a conflict of wills[12].

Despite the central place of Clausewitzian thought in strategic studies, where war is understood as a struggle among political wills governed by a close dialectical relationship between war and politics, the strategic heritage is not confined to this

[12]Donald Stoker, Op Cit

approach alone. Alongside it stands The Art of War by the Chinese military thinker Sun Tzu, written more than 2,500 years ago, which offers a different conception of conflict management. This conception rests on achieving objectives with the least possible degree of direct confrontation through maneuver, deception, the management of the adversary's perceptions, and the weakening of his will before recourse to decisive military engagement.

Although Sun Tzu's ideas predate Clausewitz historically, contemporary strategic literature often treats them as two complementary approaches to understanding the nature of strategy. Clausewitz provides a theoretical framework that explains the structural relationship between war and politics and the nature of conflict, whereas Sun Tzu offers a set of practical principles for managing this conflict by indirect means that help reduce its human and material cost. The two perspectives are therefore complementary. The first grounds our understanding of the relationship between politics and war, while the second adds a flexible cognitive dimension in which intelligence and maneuver become essential tools in the management of conflict[13]. In this regard, Sun Tzu presents in his book an integrated conception of military strategy as a complex process arising from the interaction of several interrelated factors, such as the surrounding environment, the ability to adapt to change, and an understanding of human behavior and motives in conflict. He also stresses the importance of prior preparation and careful study before entering any military confrontation, together with the need to know oneself and know the enemy as two basic conditions for strategic superiority[14].

Drawing on the ideas presented in The Art of War, one may derive a set of basic principles that form the core of Sun Tzu's strategic thinking. The most important of them may be summarized as follows:

1. Knowing the enemy: Sun Tzu stresses that knowledge of the adversary is a fundamental pillar of strategic success. As he famously states, "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles." This requires the study of the enemy's strengths, weaknesses, intentions, and patterns of behavior.

2. Knowing oneself: Understanding one's own capabilities is no less important than understanding the enemy. The commander must be aware of his resources, possibilities, and limits in order to employ them efficiently in the management of conflict.

[13]Zia Ul Haque Shamsi, Op Cit, P 194

[14]Oyuntsetseg Densmaa And Baasankhuu Suren, Understanding Certain Aspects Of Military Strategy, Understanding Certain Aspects Of Military Strategy, International Journal Of Innovative Technologies In Social Science, Volume 04, Issue, 44, (2024), P 02

3. Deception: Sun Tzu states that "all warfare is based on deception." By this he means misleading the enemy, concealing one's true intentions, and displaying weakness when one is strong, or the reverse, in order to induce the enemy to make mistaken decisions.

4. Adaptation and flexibility: Sun Tzu emphasizes that strategy must remain flexible and capable of adapting to change. He likens it to water, which takes the shape of the vessel that contains it. This means adjusting plans as circumstances change and avoiding strategic rigidity.

5. Timing: Choosing the right moment is a decisive element of success. Sun Tzu underlines the importance of patience and of waiting for the opportune moment when the enemy is weak, thus treating time itself as a strategic instrument.

6. Directing force against points of weakness: Sun Tzu argues that force is most effective when employed against the enemy's weak points rather than against his strong ones. In this way, superiority may be achieved at the lowest possible cost.

7. Victory without fighting: One of Sun Tzu's most famous principles is that "to subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill." In other words, strategic success consists in defeating the enemy's plans and eroding his will before direct confrontation breaks out.

These strategic principles remain highly relevant in the contemporary world. Their applications extend beyond the military sphere to fields such as business management, economic competition, and strategic decision-making. Sun Tzu's teachings highlight the enduring value of knowledge, flexibility, timing, and self-control in the management of many different forms of conflict. The essence of strategy, then, does not lie in brute force, but in the intelligent adjustment of resources, opportunities, and timing in order to achieve objectives at the lowest possible cost. The greatest victory is the one attained without direct confrontation[15].

The rich intellectual heritage surrounding the concept of strategy provided a basic knowledge base that contributed to the emergence of specialized and independent military sciences by the middle of the nineteenth century, including tactics, artillery, and fortification studies. As war expanded in scope and grew in complexity, military geography also emerged as an independent branch of military science, while concepts of military administration and methods of army organization continued to develop. By the beginning of the twentieth century, more specialized theories had begun to appear in such fields as military planning, command, and

[15]Mohammad T Islam, Sun Tzu's 7 Rules For Strategic Thinking: Applications In Modern Contexts, Smartlifeskills, (September 26, 2025), In Seen, 21-11-2025, Available At: Https://H1.Nu/1kd-1

organization. As a result, strategy moved from being a comprehensive military framework for explaining all military phenomena to becoming one of the higher levels within the broader system of military sciences. It retained its general guiding role, yet it became integrated with other military specializations within a more complex and better organized structure of knowledge[16].

Second: The Evolution of Strategy toward a Comprehensive Approach

The traditional theory of strategy, as formulated by classical strategists and above all by Clausewitz, is no longer sufficient on its own to explain the complexities of contemporary conflict. That theory began from a central assumption: that destroying or paralyzing the enemy's military power is the shortest route to the achievement of political goals. Historical experience has shown, however, that operational or tactical superiority does not necessarily lead to the attainment of the state's higher strategic objectives.

Ancient wars offer a revealing example. In the Punic Wars, despite Hannibal's remarkable tactical successes, Carthage was unable to convert its military superiority into durable strategic gains that could alter the balance of power over the long term. The same can be said of contemporary cases. The Iraq War showed that toppling a political regime does not necessarily bring stability or produce a political order capable of enduring. This reveals a clear gap between "military success" and "strategic success." Such a divergence is one of the main conceptual challenges that unsettled the classical understanding of strategy[17]. Structural transformations associated with modern warfare, especially the rise in economic costs and the increasing complexity of war management, have consequently pushed the concept of strategy toward a broader and more interconnected perspective. The management of conflict is no longer a purely military affair. It has become a compound process that requires precise institutional coordination among military, diplomatic, economic, and media instruments within an integrated framework of governance linking state and society and ensuring coherence across the national effort as a whole[18]. In this context, the British military historian and strategic theorist B. H. Liddell Hart used the term "policy of war" and defined it as "grand strategy," concerned with coordinating and directing all the resources of a state, or group of states, toward the achievement of the political object of the war.

[16]V. D. Sokolovskiy, Op Cit, P. 33

[17]Dominic K. Albino, William G. Glenney IV, Military Strategy In A Complex World, Research Paper, (No Publication Date), P 07

18Mihai-Marcel Neag, Lucian Ispas, Cătălin Grindeanu, "The Comprehensive Approach Concept In Multinational Operations", Land Forces Academy Review, Vol. XXII, No. 4 (88), (2017), P. 221

This conception underscores that the political objective remains the compass around which the various instruments of power are organized, and that success in war depends on the state's ability to mobilize its comprehensive resources and direct them in a coherent and integrated manner[19]. War is therefore no longer understood as an isolated military activity. It is a total social phenomenon in which multiple levels of analysis intersect. An anthropological approach helps explain cultural conceptions of violence and the enemy. Sociology analyzes the relationship between the military institution and social structures and the effects of militarizing public life. Political economy clarifies the motives behind armament, the costs of war, and their developmental consequences. International law identifies the legal frameworks governing the use of force. Studies of technology and the environment reveal transformations in the nature of combat and its effects on natural systems. Political philosophy and the ethics of war, in turn, address questions of justice and of the limits of legitimacy in recourse to force.

In this context, contemporary war studies increasingly move beyond rigid academic divisions and adopt a multidisciplinary approach capable of grasping the structural interconnections among politics, identity, economy, and culture. Detaching military operations from their social and political environment produces partial knowledge that may lead to misleading strategic assessments. Likewise, understanding complex phenomena such as civil wars, mass violence, and state collapse requires an analysis that goes beyond the balance of hard power and takes into account transformations in identity, economic structures, and conflict narratives, all of which shape the cognitive and symbolic space of contemporary disputes.

The shift from the traditional perspective to the comprehensive approach thus reflects a transition from understanding war as a military instrument of policy to understanding it as a complex phenomenon that requires multidimensional strategic management, one that absorbs the dialectical interaction between hard and soft power within a specific social and historical context.

One of the most important transformations associated with the concept of strategy in recent decades is the expansion of the notion of defense to include issues that go beyond the protection of borders from conventional armies. Security now encompasses such fields as cybersecurity, climate change, pandemics, irregular migration, and environmental and biological threats. These challenges may produce human

[19]Thomas Bruscino, Grand Strategy: A Short Guide For Military Strategists, War Room Online Journal, (4-01-2024), Accessed 29-11-2025, Available At: Https://H1.Nu/1kk--

and economic consequences that exceed those of conventional wars[20].

The Egyptian Major General Mohamed al-Ghobari, former director of the National Defense College at the Nasser Higher Military Academy, has offered a conception of military strategy based on the idea of the state's "comprehensive power" as the highest reference framework for strategic planning. This comprehensive power is understood as the integrated outcome of eight principal elements, divided into "hard" and "soft" sources of power.

The hard sources consist of three basic components:

- Human base (human and demographic resources).
- Military capability, including organization, armament, readiness, and combat doctrine.
- Economic capability, including production, resources, and the ability to finance public policy and war.

The soft sources comprise five elements:

- Foreign policy and its ability to build alliances and manage international balances.
- Domestic policy as reflected in political stability and legitimacy.
- Media and its role in shaping public opinion internally and externally.
- Information technology as a driver of cognitive and cyber power.
- Morale, which reflects social cohesion and the collective will to support the state.

Comprehensive power is measured through comparative assessment tables prepared by states or alliances in order to compare their own capabilities with those of opponents or competitors. On the basis of these comparisons, policies are formed to preserve superiority, achieve balance, or weaken the capabilities of the other side. These elements therefore constitute the structural foundation upon which strategic planning is built in all major fields[21].

Along similar lines, Barry Buzan offered a profound conception of comprehensive strategy when he defined it as "a theory of the state concerning how it ensures its security and achieves its prosperity in peace and war."

This definition reveals that grand strategy goes beyond the narrow confines of military planning and becomes an intellectual

[20]Ahmed Moulana, How Do States Think About Organized Violence?, Al Jazeera, Al-Maidan, (30-05-2025), Accessed 29-11-2025, Available At: Https://H1.Nu/1khgi

[21]Hazem Abu Douma, An Egyptian Strategy Founded On The Setback Of June 1967: Comprehensive Power... The Secret Of Victory, Al-Ahram Newspaper (-11-242021), Accessed 29-11-2025, Available At: Https://2u.Pw/32h5b0

framework that guides the state's public policies as a whole. It is not confined to the management of armed conflict. It extends to the organization of the state's vision of its position and roles within the international environment.

Grand strategy therefore includes:

- Formulating an integrated conception of the nature and sources of threats.
- Determining national priorities in accordance with the state's vital interests.
- Allocating material and human resources in a manner consistent with those priorities.
- Managing alliances and international partnerships in ways that serve strategic objectives.
- Defining the role the state seeks to play within the international system[22].

In a related context, Colin S. Gray emphasizes that strategy is developed within a complex, multidimensional environment that includes political, social, cultural, economic, technological, military, geographical, and historical factors. One may add the individual human factor as a decisive variable in the shaping of strategy, since decision-makers influence its course through:

- Determining who will formulate strategy.
- Determining the channels of accountability and the authorities to whom reports will be submitted.
- Defining the scope of the problem, including the assessment of its present and future effects.
- Selecting alternatives and solutions that are politically and institutionally acceptable.
- Formulating practical solutions that can be implemented.

The relative weight of these factors differs from one context to another. Understanding the nature of their interaction is therefore an essential condition for achieving what Gray calls "situational understanding," which is the methodological entry point for any sound process of strategic planning.

Conceptually, strategy is a purposive activity directed toward the achievement of specific goals within a clear methodological process. It is not merely a display of ideas or a set of general expressions. Yet this rational character does not erase the role of psychological and behavioral factors. Considerations such as the desire to

[22]Thomas Bruscino, Op Cit

demonstrate effectiveness or to secure political satisfaction may also influence certain strategic decisions.

The literature on international relations indicates that some foreign policy decisions may be taken for domestic reasons, such as increasing popularity or appealing to specific political forces. This complicates the assessment of the adversary's reactions, since one cannot assume that all decisions are based exclusively on security concerns or on objective calculations of interest [23]. Within this framework, the relationship between political leadership and the military institution emerges as a central problem in the making of strategy. The constitutional principle in modern states is that the armed forces are subject to elected civilian authority. In practice, however, major structural complexities often appear. Defense policy may become subject to balances of power within the military institution or to elite calculations that do not necessarily reflect the priorities of the public interest. Likewise, weak civilian expertise in defense affairs may upset the balance in favor of a narrow military vision at the expense of broader political considerations.

Comparative experience confirms that the existence of a strong civilian apparatus within ministries of defense is a strategic necessity, not an administrative luxury. A professional civilian cadre equipped with the tools of analysis and accountability is a safeguard for sound democratic oversight. It prevents the military institution from becoming a closed body that makes planning and spending decisions without effective scrutiny. Many historical experiences have shown that the absence of such balance may lead to military decisions that are politically and strategically very costly, with negative consequences for national security and institutional stability.

For this reason, confronting contemporary threats cannot be limited to purely military instruments. It requires a multisectoral approach based on coordination among state institutions and the involvement of civil society, the private sector, and academic institutions. From this perspective, the concept of "integrated security" or "comprehensive security" has emerged as an organizing framework for modern defense policies in a number of Western states.

The United Kingdom provides a useful example. In its Integrated Review of 2021, it redefined its security priorities by combining traditional defense with digital security, climate concerns, the countering of disinformation and foreign interference, and threats associated with artificial intelligence. France, in a similar vein, placed the protection

[23]Christopher M. Schnaubelt, How To Write A Strategy, Strategy Series Insight 3/2024, NATO Defense College – Insight, Series Editor: Florence Gaub,(2024), P 23

of critical infrastructure and cybersecurity at the center of its strategic vision. Germany reconsidered the domestic role of the army within the constitutional framework in response to health and environmental crises. Estonia offers another example of integrating digital security into defense doctrine after the cyberattacks of 2007. Japan, for its part, developed a model that integrates military capabilities into disaster management, making its armed forces a central component of the national emergency response system[24].

A reading of history, with its repeated conflicts, compels states to think seriously about the nature of future disputes and how to prepare for them. Current trends indicate that the major surge in information technologies, which accelerated over recent decades, is likely not only to continue but to intensify.

These technologies include a broad spectrum of information-related capabilities: collecting relevant data, processing it, organizing it, integrating it, storing it, and disseminating it; supporting command-and-control functions such as analysis, planning, decision-making, and coordination among humans as well as between humans and machines; and denying the adversary information, deceiving him, or disrupting his information systems through such means as cyberwarfare and electronic warfare.

By 2050, these technologies are expected to produce a radical transformation in the nature of the battlefield. This expectation motivated a workshop organized by the University of Maryland with the sponsorship of the U.S. Army Research Office in March 2015. More than thirty experts, including technologists, scientists, military personnel, and futures specialists, gathered to imagine the features of a hypothetical war in 2050. Their discussions drew on trends in technological development and on the likely application of those trends in combat operations.

The workshop concluded that four main dimensions would shape the battlefield of 2050: the wide spread of intelligent systems; the emergence of technologically enhanced human forces; the growing importance of the information sphere and cyberspace as decisive theaters of conflict; and the challenge of exercising effective command and control over a complex mix of humans and intelligent systems in a turbulent and uncertain information environment.

This trajectory extends the historical transition from the wars of the industrial age to those of the information age. In the past, the soldier relied on a limited number of trusted official sources within a hierarchical chain of command that controlled the flow of knowledge. Today, with information liberated from many of its traditional constraints, access

[24]Ahmed Moulana, Op. Cit.

to multiple sources has become easy. The challenge has therefore shifted from scarcity to the problem of verifying quality and reliability and distinguishing valid information from misleading data[25].

In this light, "grand strategy" may be understood as a qualitative shift from an approach focused on managing a particular war to a broader vision that links security, prosperity, and the state's international role within a long temporal horizon that transcends the simple dichotomy between peace[26] and war. It reflects the state's ability to mobilize and employ all its resources, material and immaterial, within an integrated system that enables it to influence the behavior and decisions of other actors in the service of higher national objectives[27].

Third: Military Strategy in the Age of Technological Transformations

Rapid technological development, especially in the twenty-first century, has brought about profound changes in the strategic environment of the international system. This has, in turn, affected the understanding and development of military strategy. As noted earlier, military strategy is the product of the interaction between two principal factors. The first is the set of challenges imposed by the environment within which the state operates, including changes in the content of power, transformations in the nature of international actors, and shifts in the patterns of interaction among them. The second consists of the tools and means made available by that same environment at a given moment in time, which may be employed in pursuit of the state's political objectives.

From this perspective, the technological revolution has played a decisive role in reshaping the nature of military strategy by contributing to the emergence of new forms of warfare. In this context, three central forms of modern war may be highlighted as reflections of the transformations taking place in contemporary military strategy.

A. Cyber Warfare in Contemporary Military Strategy

The integration of cyber operations into the structure of modern military strategy has produced a fundamental change in the nature of contemporary warfare. The reliance of states and armed forces on interconnected digital infrastructures across military, governmental, and civilian sectors has created a new domain that combines strategic opportunities with vulnerabilities at the same time[28]. In the twenty-first century, cyber warfare has

[25]Alexander Kott, David S. Alberts, War Of 2050: A Battle For Information, Communications, And Computer Security, Cornell University, Accessed 02-12-2025, Available At: Https://H1.Nu/1pnon
[26]Thomas Bruscino, Op Cit
[27]Hazem Abu Douma, Op. Cit.

[28]Nick Rahimi And Henry Jones, Cyber Warfare: Strategies, Impacts, And Future Directions In The Digital Battlefield, Journal Of Information Security, Volume16, Issue (2025), P. 253

emerged as one of the most visible manifestations of international competition, and it has contributed powerfully to the reshaping of the equations and concepts of international security.

Cyber warfare consists in the use of digital attacks by states or by actors supported by them in order to disrupt, damage, or manipulate the critical infrastructure, data, or communication networks of other states. Unlike conventional warfare, which rests on the direct use of military force, cyber warfare operates in the virtual domain. It targets government institutions, financial systems, defense capabilities, and even sensitive civilian facilities[29].

The impact of this transformation does not stop at the development of new instruments of conflict. It also extends to the conceptual framework of war itself. The boundaries between peace and conflict become increasingly blurred, and the tools of deterrence, influence, and coercion overlap within a digital environment that is difficult to control or even to attribute with precision. There is therefore a pressing need for a deeper understanding of the strategic implications of cyber warfare and of its effects on the structure of the international system and on the future of interactions among states[30].

Technological development has thus created a new space of conflict in which cyberspace has become a modern arena of confrontation. States compete within it for superiority and dominance without resorting to direct military engagement. Battlefields are no longer confined to land, sea, and air. They now extend to computer networks and information systems that constitute the backbone of the modern state[31]. This development has triggered an unprecedented digital arms race among states, one that has accelerated to the point that some states struggle to keep pace with it or to frame it within effective institutional and regulatory structures[32].

The earliest signs of cyber warfare can be traced to the late twentieth century, when states began to explore the use of digital technologies for espionage and sabotage. As governments and critical infrastructures such as energy, water, transport, and communications became more dependent on digital systems, their exposure to targeting and sophisticated attack increased accordingly[33].This transformation forms part of the broader historical course of industrial

[29]Abida Farzana Muna, Cyber Warfare In Global Politics: The Evolving Landscape Of Inter-State Conflict, Bangladesh Institute Of Peace And Security Studies | BIPSS, (March-2025), P. 01

[30]Esra Merve Boztosun Çalışkan, Strategic Analysis Of Cyber Conflicts: A Game-Theoretic Modelling Of Global Cyber Crises In The 2000s, Security And Defence Quarterly, (31-05-2025), Accessed 08-12-2025, Available At: Https://H1.Nu/1polz

[31]Abida Farzana Muna, Op Cit, P. 01

[32]Idden Aryasatya And Eko Daryanto, Cyber Warfare And Its Place In Modern Geopolitics And War, Security Intelligence Terrorism Journal (SITJ), Vol. 02 No. 01 (2025), P 48

[33]Abida Farzana Muna, Op Cit P 02

revolutions. Current technologies represent an extension of what Klaus Schwab described as the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This phase has contributed to the rise of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and smart automation, thereby paving the way for the spread of the "smart city" as a modern model for managing urban centers with complex infrastructures[34].

A full international awareness of the potential of cyber warfare, however, did not clearly crystallize until after the Stuxnet attack of 2010, which targeted the Iranian nuclear program. It is widely believed that the attack was developed through cooperation between the United States and Israel. It caused physical damage to centrifuges and disrupted part of the technical capabilities of the targeted facilities. This event marked a decisive turning point because it demonstrated that digital attacks can produce direct material effects in the physical world, thereby opening the way for the use of cyber warfare as a strategic instrument in contemporary geopolitical competition.

Since then, cyber warfare has become a central element in international conflicts. Russia has been associated with cyber operations in the context of its conflict with Ukraine, most notably the NotPetya attack of 2017, which disrupted financial systems and vital services and caused enormous economic losses worldwide. China, in a similar context, has engaged in large-scale cyber espionage directed at government institutions and technology companies as part of its effort to strengthen its strategic and economic position within the international system.

These operations have included attacks on U.S. government agencies and major corporations in order to obtain intellectual property and sensitive data, amid intensifying technological and economic competition among major powers. Another notable incident was the WannaCry ransomware attack, attributed to North Korea, which inflicted extensive damage on health and financial institutions in several countries. Iran has also been accused of carrying out cyberattacks against global energy sectors within a complex regional and international context. All of this reflects the growing use of digital space as a direct extension of traditional theaters of conflict[35].

Cyber warfare highlights a series of broad and complex effects whose full dimensions are not yet completely understood. As digitalization accelerates and global interdependence deepens, managing these consequences and formulating effective strategies to reduce their risks will become a central challenge for governments, organizations, and societies in the coming decades[36]. Even technologically advanced states remain vulnerable to penetration because

[34]Idden Aryasatya And Eko Daryanto, Op Cit, P 48
[35]Abida Farzana Muna, Op Cit, Pp 02, 03
[36]Nick Rahimi And Henry Jones, Op Cit, P 263

of their heavy dependence on computer systems and digital networks. This reveals a latent fragility at the heart of modern infrastructure. There is therefore a need for comprehensive plans that strengthen cyber defense and deterrence while also working to establish legal rules and ethical frameworks comparable to those applied in conventional war[37].

Cyber warfare has thus become a decisive dimension of contemporary conflict. It is reshaping the landscape of international security and interstate relations. Its impact extends beyond short-term national security concerns to longer-term effects on social stability, economic performance, and patterns of international interaction.

Cyber warfare represents a structural transformation in the understanding of conflict, security, and international relations. As the world becomes increasingly digitized and more dependent on smart technologies, understanding cyber reality and adapting to its conditions becomes a strategic necessity for governments, institutions, and individuals alike. The future of conflict is moving steadily toward digital space. This requires the development of security strategies and international policies that can keep pace with the challenges of this new environment while also making use of the opportunities it offers[38].

B. Applications of the Integration of Artificial Intelligence and Unmanned Aircraft in Military Strategy

Artificial intelligence is no longer merely an experimental technology or a supporting tool in the formulation of military strategy. It has become a structural component that is reshaping patterns of military planning, mechanisms of decision-making, and concepts of deterrence and defense. It is now viewed as a key pillar in the development of operational capabilities and the enhancement of combat efficiency in present and future wars.

Artificial intelligence may be defined as a system of computer technologies designed to simulate human cognitive capacities such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making. In the military sphere, it includes a spectrum of advanced technologies, among them machine learning, computer vision, robotics, natural language processing, and autonomous systems. These technologies allow military institutions to analyze huge quantities of data quickly and accurately, automate complex processes, and provide immediate support to decision-making, especially in dynamic and high-risk environments.

Artificial intelligence has produced a qualitative shift in a number of defense-sector fields, including the management of combat

[37]Idden Aryasatya And Eko Daryanto, Op Cit, P 53

[38]Nick Rahimi And Henry Jones, Op Cit, PP 266, 267

operations, supply chains, cybersecurity, and intelligence collection[39]. Air power is among the fields most deeply affected by these applications, especially in relation to unmanned aircraft. In this context, the U.S. Air Force, in cooperation with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), launched the AlphaDogfight Trials to test the performance of AI systems in simulated aerial engagements against human pilots. The trials showed the superiority of the automated system, which achieved complete victory by performing rapid and precise offensive maneuvers that exceeded the limits of human response time in real-time conditions. These results reflect the growing operational potential of artificial intelligence in aerial combat and the major changes that may follow for concepts of air control[40].

The modern beginnings of drone warfare can be traced to U.S. programs in the 1990s, with the development of platforms such as the RQ-1 Predator, which marked the starting point for integrating unmanned systems into military operations. The use of such aircraft expanded after the attacks of 11 September, especially during the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, where they became a central instrument in reconnaissance and remote targeting missions. Over the next two decades, the technology developed rapidly, becoming more efficient, less costly, and easier to acquire.

With the opening of the third decade of the twenty-first century, the widespread diffusion of commercial quadcopters, especially those produced by Da-Jiang Innovations (DJI), brought a qualitative change to the landscape of drone warfare. Models such as the DJI Mini were designed for civilian purposes such as aerial photography and recreation, with prices beginning at around 335 U.S. dollars. Yet they were repurposed by state and non-state actors into loitering munitions, or suicide drones, capable of carrying explosive payloads and conducting low-cost precision strikes[41].

Within a short period, the drone manufacturing sector witnessed unprecedented expansion, with the number of companies operating in it doubling between 2022 and 2024[42]. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 marked a crucial turning point in the development of this form of warfare, as modified quadcopters were used intensively as

[39]Ngoc Nguyen, AI In Military: Top Use Cases You Need To Know, Smartdev - Al Powered Software Development, (10 /09/ 2025), Accessed 17-12-2025, Available At: Https://H1.Nu/1ks-D

[40]Ryan Atkinson, AI RISK Artificial Intelligence In Modern Warfare Strategic Innovation And Emerging Risks, MILITARY REVIEW, (September-October 2024), P. 104

[41]Tze Fung Kao, Drones And AI In Modern Warfare: A Security Analysis, Rnational Studies And Multilateral Diplomacy,Gyula Csurgai, Phd, Loyola Marymount University, International Relations And Affairs (Fall 2024), P 5

[42]The Institute For Economics And Peace (IEP), Technology And Modern Warfare: How Drones And AI Are Transforming Conflict, Visionofhumanity, ANALYSIS, (17-06-2025), Accessed 17-12-2025, Available At: Https://H1.Nu/1kvj0

loitering munitions. Ukrainian forces relied on modified FPV (First Person View) drones to carry out direct attacks against Russian vehicles and personnel[43], while Russia strengthened its own capabilities by introducing Iranian-made drones into its arsenal. This reflects a structural transformation in the nature of tactical air power in contemporary conflicts[44].

The growing use of drones is not limited to attack missions. It also extends to reconnaissance and fire correction, that is, the adjustment of direction, range, or angle of fire. This development indicates a transition from the limited use of unmanned systems to broad dependence on low-cost, high-impact platforms. It also prepares the ground for a deeper integration of artificial intelligence into sensing cycles[45] and strike execution with minimal human intervention, even in heavily jammed environments. Conflict is thus gradually turning into a race for algorithmic superiority[46] and for the reduction of direct human involvement. This change does not merely reflect technical improvement. It points to a structural redefinition of the management of military operations.

One of the clearest features of this transformation is the breakdown of the cost equation. Systems that cost only a few hundred dollars can inflict damage on military platforms worth millions. This redistributes elements of power between states and irregular armed groups, and it gives non-state actors effective tools for waging long-term wars of attrition.

This pattern extends globally. The spread of drones is helping to consolidate a model of prolonged conflict with no clear horizon, one that contemporary literature often describes through the notion of “forever wars,” characterized by difficulty in achieving decisive outcomes and by the steady exhaustion of resources over time.

In this context, the Global Peace Index 2025, issued by the Institute for Economics & Peace, indicates that the international system is experiencing the highest number of interstate conflicts since the end of the Second World War, with fifty-nine conflicts and seventy-eight states involved in military operations beyond their borders during 2024. This trend reflects the internationalization of conflict, driven by the ease with which modern military technologies, especially drones and AI systems, can be transferred and employed.

The transformation is not limited to the growing number of conflicts. It also affects their nature and their degree of resolvability.

[43]Tze Fung Kao, Op Cit, P 5
[44]Kyle Matthews And Marie Lamensch, AI, DRONES AND THE FUTURE OF DEFENSE A Transnational Security Challenge, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung E.V.(2025), P. 21

[45]Tze Fung Kao, Op Cit, P 6
[46]David Kirichenko, Artificial Intelligence’s Growing Role In Modern Warfare, War Room,(21-08-2025), Seen In, 17-12-2025, Available At: Https://H1.Nu/1kfwu

The proportion of conflicts ending in decisive victory declined from 49 percent in the 1970s to around 9 percent in the second decade of the millennium, while the proportion resolved through peace agreements fell from 23 percent to only 4 percent. This decline points to a structural shift in the dynamics of contemporary war, in which conflicts have become more protracted and less susceptible to traditional settlement.

With the rapid spread of drone technologies, it is expected that insurgent groups, militias, and other armed non-state actors will increasingly adopt them, especially in fragile states and unstable regions such as the African Sahel, the Middle East, and parts of South Asia. The incorporation of these technologies into local environments intensifies the complexity of conflict, fragments the centralization of violence, and weakens the effectiveness of traditional peacekeeping mechanisms and classical military interventions[47].

Control over intelligent systems has thus become a key indicator of military dominance. It is fueling a new international arms race centered on algorithms and data no less than on traditional hardware[48]. The central challenge facing the international community is therefore to redesign the instruments of peacebuilding in ways appropriate to a rapidly changing digital strategic environment[49].

C. Hybrid Warfare and the Transformations of Contemporary Military Strategy

The concept of "hybrid warfare" has attracted growing attention in strategic literature over the past decades and has become one of the key concepts used to interpret patterns of competition and conflict in the contemporary international environment[50]. If strategy is traditionally understood, as noted earlier, as the art of generating, building, and employing power in order to achieve political objectives, then what is now called hybrid warfare may be viewed as one of the newest methods employed by actors seeking to revise existing balances through the invention of new forms of power and their combined use in pursuit of strategic ends[51]. The rise of interest in this concept is connected to a number of deep transformations in the contemporary international system. These transformations have not only reshaped the nature of interactions among international actors. They have also redefined some of the principles and mechanisms on which the international system

[47]The Institute For Economics And Peace (IEP), Technology And Modern Warfare: How Drones And AI Are Transforming Conflict, Visionofhumanity, ANALYSIS, (17-06-2025), Accessed 17-12-2025, Available At: Https://H1.Nu/1kvj0
[48]Tze Fung Kao, Op Cit, P 06
[49]The Institute For Economics And Peace (IEP), Op Cit
[50]Mariya G. Bistrina And Aleksei A. Ivannikov, Hybrid Wars: Modern Challenges And Prospects, RUDN Journal Of Public Administrationi, Volume 12, Issue 2, (2025), P 247
[51]Sean Monaghan, Countering Hybrid Warfare So What For The Future Joint Force?, Features, Prism, Volume 8, Issue 2 (No Publication Date), P 83

itself is based[52]. In this context, the traditional nation-state model founded on the principles of the Westphalian state system has come under increasing pressure as global interdependence has deepened and non-state actors have gained a greater capacity to influence international interactions[53]. Rapid developments associated with globalization and the digital revolution have also produced major changes in the nature of national interests and the meaning of national security[54], as well as in the instruments and means states use to protect those interests and that security[55].

This situation has generated a wide range of asymmetric threats and has strengthened the place of hybrid warfare in strategic and military studies. As a result, terms such as "hybrid warfare," "hybrid conflict," and "hybrid threat" have become common in contemporary security analysis because they help describe a variety of threats that combine conventional and unconventional means, including direct military operations, terrorist activity, cyberattacks, information warfare, and instruments of economic and political pressure[56].

The modern formulation of the concept of hybrid warfare appeared in military literature in the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century. In 2005, James Mattis, then commander of the U.S. Marine Corps Combat Development Command, and Frank G. Hoffman of the Center for Emerging Threats and Opportunities in Quantico advanced the view that future adversaries of the United States would not rely on a single mode of warfare. Instead, they would blend and coordinate multiple forms of conflict in order to offset America's conventional military superiority on the battlefield.

The roots of this conception go back to the strategic debates that followed Operation Desert Storm in 1991, which was then regarded as a prominent model of Western military-technological superiority. That experience led a number of military theorists to think about future challenges that might undermine such superiority. Their concern revolved around two main ideas. The first was the possibility that new adversaries would combine different modes of warfare, including non-military tools such as media, propaganda, the economy, and cyberspace, thereby generating high levels of complexity and confusion for the opponent. The second concerned the emergence of what might be called "non-trinitarian" adversaries, that is, actors who do not fit the classical trinity of people, army, and government and are

[52]Mariya G. Bistrina And Aleksei A. Ivannikov, Op Cit, P 247

[53]Gurmeet Kanwal, The Changing Character And Thetaxonomy Of Conflict, Editor Vikrant Deshpande, Hybrid Warfare: The Changing Character Of Conflict (New Delhi :Published By Pentagon Press, First Published In 2018), P 3

[54]Mariya G. Bistrina And Aleksei A. Ivannikov, Op Cit, P 247

[55]Gurmeet Kanwal, Op Cit, P 03

[56]Gurmeet Kanwal, Op Cit, P15

therefore difficult to defeat within the classical Clausewitzian conception of war, which assumes that wars usually end through a conventional campaign decided by a decisive battle[57].

Frank G. Hoffman elaborated the concept of hybrid warfare through a series of articles and studies within a research program that built on a critical review of several earlier theoretical approaches, especially the concepts of fourth-generation warfare, compound warfare, and unrestricted warfare. He presented his view systematically in his landmark study Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars, published in 2007, which became one of the foundational works in this field.

Hoffman argued that future wars would be characterized by an increasing convergence and interpenetration of forms of conflict. They would combine the destructive power of interstate war with the ideological and organizational intensity of irregular war. The hybrid adversary does not simply use conventional or unconventional tools separately. Rather, he employs them within an integrated operational framework that simultaneously combines regular, irregular, and asymmetric methods.

In developing his thesis, Hoffman studied a number of historical cases, yet he concluded that most of them did not display a sufficient degree of operational integration, multidimensionality, or intensive exploitation of the information domain, all of which he expected to characterize future hybrid wars. He therefore regarded Hezbollah's confrontation with Israel in the 2006 Lebanon War as one of the most important contemporary examples of a hybrid adversary[58]. This judgment amounted to an early recognition that non-state actors could possess advanced military and organizational capabilities once thought to belong exclusively to states[59].

From this analysis, Hoffman concluded that traditional categories such as "conventional war," "irregular war," and "terrorism" should not be treated as separate challenges requiring wholly independent approaches. They should instead be seen as sets of tools and means that an adversary may employ simultaneously and flexibly. Such tools can be used by a wide range of actors, whether states or non-state groups, which adds another layer of complexity to the nature of conflict and calls for multidimensional strategic responses.

[57]Sean Monaghan, Op Cit, P 84

[58]Murat Caliskan, Hybrid Warfare Through The Lens Of Strategic Theory, Defense And Security Analysis, (17-01-2019), Accessed 18-12-2025, Available At: Https://H1.Nu/1q9zh

[59]Sascha-Dominik Bachmann And Håkan Gunneriusson, Hybrid Wars: The 21st-Century's New Threats To Global Peace And Security, Journal Of Military Studies, Volume 43, Issue 1, (2015), P. 78

On this basis, Hoffman formulated a definition of hybrid warfare centered on the integration of different forms of conflict. Understanding contemporary conflicts, he argued, requires recognition of the growing overlap between conventional military means, irregular operations, and terrorist activities within a single operational framework.

Where Hoffman focused on the blending of regular, irregular, and asymmetric tactics on the battlefield, the researcher Margaret Bond expanded the concept to include a wider field beyond the traditional battlespace. She defined hybrid warfare as a coordinated use of elements of national power to attain political and strategic goals. According to this view, hybrid warfare involves a broad spectrum of military activities, resources, programs, and applications designed to maximize the nonviolent and persuasive effect of economic and political instruments of influence in order to affect hostile governments or movements, especially in unstable political, social, and economic environments[60].

In 2011, the United States Joint Forces Command defined the hybrid threat as an adversary that uses, simultaneously and adaptively, a tailored mix of conventional, irregular, terrorist, and criminal means within the theater of operations. Such a threat is not limited to one specific actor. It may take the form of a network of state and non-state actors working in coordination to achieve shared objectives. With the rapid development of the digital domain, cyberwarfare has been added to the components of this pattern of conflict and has become one of the basic dimensions of contemporary hybrid warfare.

It is important to stress that hybrid warfare is not an ideology in itself. It is a practical framework containing a variety of tools and methods that actors may employ selectively according to their strategic circumstances and political objectives. This is why strategic literature includes several related terms, such as “ambiguous warfare,” “asymmetric warfare,” “gray-zone conflicts,” “new-generation wars,” and even, in some analyses, “total war.”

In this context, the experiences of Russia, Ukraine, and Iran stand out as important examples of the use of hybrid approaches in contemporary strategy. In the Russian case, the development of capabilities in hybrid warfare is closely connected to the perceptions of Russian security elites regarding the political upheavals that affected some former Soviet republics. Several decision-makers in Moscow viewed the so-called “color revolutions,” such as the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, as the result of organized Western intervention. These movements were marked by several features, including reliance on civil resistance and

[60]Vikrant Deshpande And Shibani Mehta, Op. Cit. , P 29

student activism, as well as the prominent role of international non-governmental organizations and Western media support[61].

The annexation of Crimea in 2014 offers a clear example of a hybrid approach in practice. In that operation, Russia employed a mix of tools that included undeclared special forces, local loyalist militias, economic pressure, disinformation campaigns, and the exploitation of social divisions within Ukraine. This enabled Moscow to impose a rapid fait accompli on the ground[62].

Russia also used a broad range of hybrid tools in the war it launched against Ukraine in 2022, targeting European societies as well. These tools included efforts to cast doubt on Ukraine's ability to win, to highlight the economic and social burdens of supporting Kyiv in order to reduce public backing for it in Europe, and to support certain populist political forces that adopt narratives close to the Russian position. From Russia's perspective, a decline in European support for Ukraine could allow Moscow either to secure decisive gains on the battlefield or to force Kyiv into major concessions in any future negotiations[63].

Ukraine's response to this hybrid war, by contrast, was marked by the adoption of a varied and integrated set of countermeasures involving media, cyber, and institutional dimensions. The effective use of social media and international platforms played an important role in mobilizing international support for Ukraine and in countering Russian media narratives. Kyiv also strengthened its cybersecurity capabilities through partnerships with NATO and the European Union, as well as through cooperation with major technology companies, which helped improve its ability to confront cyber threats and attacks.

At the domestic level, the Ukrainian government took several measures to limit the spread of pro-Russian propaganda. These included banning certain Moscow-funded media outlets active inside the country and launching national media-literacy programs aimed at increasing public awareness of the dangers of disinformation and propaganda techniques. This approach helped consolidate Ukraine's moral narrative and strengthen its presence in public consciousness both domestically and internationally.

At the operational level, major technology companies also played an important role in supporting Ukrainian cyber defense. Companies such as Microsoft and Google provided direct intelligence on cyber threats and immediate defensive capabilities.

[61]London School Of Economics And Political Science (Lse Ideas), Global Strategies, Hybrid Warfare In The Middle East, Global Strategies At LSE IDEAS, (February 2017), P. 5

[62]Sean Monaghan, Op Cit, P 84

[63]Stefan Wolff, Russia Now Has A Strategy For A Permanent State Of Hybrid War, The Conversation (16-10-2025), Accessed 18-12-2025, Available At: Https://H1.Nu/1qvce

The State Service of Special Communications and Information Protection of Ukraine established joint response mechanisms with internet service providers, satellite communications companies, and mobile network operators in order to ensure the continuity of communications under wartime conditions.

In addition, Ukraine benefited from intelligence-sharing relationships with cyber defense agencies in NATO and European Union member states[64].

Iran is another state that relies on a hybrid warfare approach in its military strategy. It has developed military structures of a hybrid character based on integrating regular and irregular forces in military operations. This approach rests on combining conventional military capabilities with irregular tactics, together with the use of armed non-state groups, illicit activities such as smuggling and money laundering, cyberattacks, and the illegal transfer of weapons.

These actors also seek to conduct synchronized operations across multiple domains, including land, sea, air, the information domain, cyberspace, and even outer space. The aim is to create synergy among different instruments of power and increase their strategic effect. This approach is used to attain several purposes, including deterring or coercing adversaries and influencing or undermining foreign governments in pursuit of specific political aims[65].

In light of the foregoing, hybrid warfare should not be regarded as an entirely new type of war. Rather, it reflects an evolution in the methods of managing conflict based on the diversity and integration of tools[66]. This view is consistent with the idea expressed by the Chinese military thinker Sun Tzu when he observed that "to subdue the enemy without fighting is the height of skill". Hybrid threats therefore often point to indirect strategies through which states or other actors seek to achieve political objectives without engaging in large-scale conventional war[67].

Finally, the principle emphasized by Carl von Clausewitz remains central to understanding the nature of conflict: war, in its essence, is the continuation of politics by other means, regardless of the instruments employed, whether conventional military forces, electronic and cyber operations, sabotage and media activity, or other forms of power [68].

[64]Anna Romandash, Hybrid Warfare: Ukraine, Russia And Western Lessons, Centre For International Governance Innovation, Policy Brief No. 209, (September 2025), P P 04-06

[65]Michael Eisenstadt, Iran's Gray Zone Strategy Cornerstone Of Its Asymmetric Way Of War, Features, Prism, Volume 9, Issue 2, (No Publication Date), P 81

[66]Murat Caliskan, Op Cit

[67]Sean Monaghan, Op Cit, P. 85

[68]Murat Caliskan, Op Cit

Conclusion

Understanding military strategy is the cumulative result of human experience across a long historical trajectory. Successive experiences have contributed to the formulation of a set of general principles and rules aimed at achieving political interests through the use of force in war. Strategic thinkers are therefore tasked with analyzing the environment in which the state moves, both in its internal dimension, linked to its capabilities and resources, and in its external dimension, connected to the nature of the international system and the balance of power within it. This analysis forms the basis for constructing a strategic vision capable of maximizing available sources of power and employing them methodically and in a coordinated manner within a comprehensive plan directed toward desired political ends.

Although the concept of strategy is now used widely in many fields of contemporary life, including management, economics, and politics, the field of war remains the sphere in which its essence is most clearly embodied, since it is the instrument through which political objectives are translated into practical plans based on the organized use of force. This connection, however, does not conflict with the development and expansion of the concept of strategy in line with transformations in the international environment. The contemporary world is characterized by intensifying international competition over limited resources, rising rates of consumption as a result of population growth, and increasing geopolitical tensions. These conditions compel states to reconsider their strategic approaches. Strategy is therefore no longer confined to the management of military operations on the battlefield. It now includes the mobilization and coordination of the various elements of national power in ways that increase the state's chances of achieving its political objectives.

The transformations taking place in the international system in the twenty-first century, within a context marked by increasing interdependence and interaction among its components, have also generated a range of challenges and opportunities for states seeking to formulate effective military strategies. The contemporary technological revolution has brought about deep changes in the nature and sources of power, thereby reshaping the meaning of traditional power in international relations. These technological developments have opened new opportunities for weaker actors to strengthen their position in the international system and to affect balances of power in ways that serve their political aims, and in some cases even to challenge the superiority of major powers in specific fields. At the same time, these transformations have imposed new challenges on more advanced powers, which must preserve their strategic superiority and adapt continuously to changes in the international environment.

Military strategy, in its essence, may therefore be understood as an ongoing process of perceiving and analyzing the changing strategic environment over time, along with the conditions, capabilities, and tools it makes available, in order to employ military power efficiently and effectively in pursuit of the state's political objectives, whether in war or outside it.

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