

The Use of Military Force



SIMULATION

You Are a U.S. President

A state leader in a conflict bargaining situation can apply various kinds of leverage to reach a more favorable outcome (see Figure 4.4). One set of levers represents nonviolent means of influencing other states, such as foreign aid, economic sanctions, personal diplomacy, and so forth (less tangible means include use of norms, morality, and other ideas). A second set of levers—the subject of the rest of this chapter—make violent actions occur. They set armies marching or missiles flying. In order to understand the decisions that leaders make about using military force, it is important to know how various military capabilities work, how much they cost, and what effects they have.

Violence as a means of leverage tends to be costly to both the attacker and the attacked. It is therefore not the most effective instrument in most situations: states can generally achieve their objectives in a more cost-effective way using means of leverage such as economic actions (Chapter 5), international organizations (Chapter 6), foreign aid (Chapter 7), and communication (Chapter 8). The utility of military force relative to nonmilitary means seems to be slowly declining over time. Yet most states still devote vast resources to military capabilities compared to other means of influence. For example, the United States has about 20,000 diplomatic personnel but 2 million soldiers; it spends about \$15 billion a year on foreign aid but more than \$400 billion on military forces.

The overall utility of military force in IR may be declining, but for the narrow purpose of repelling a military attack there is often no substitute for military means. Because of the security dilemma, states believe they must devote large resources to military

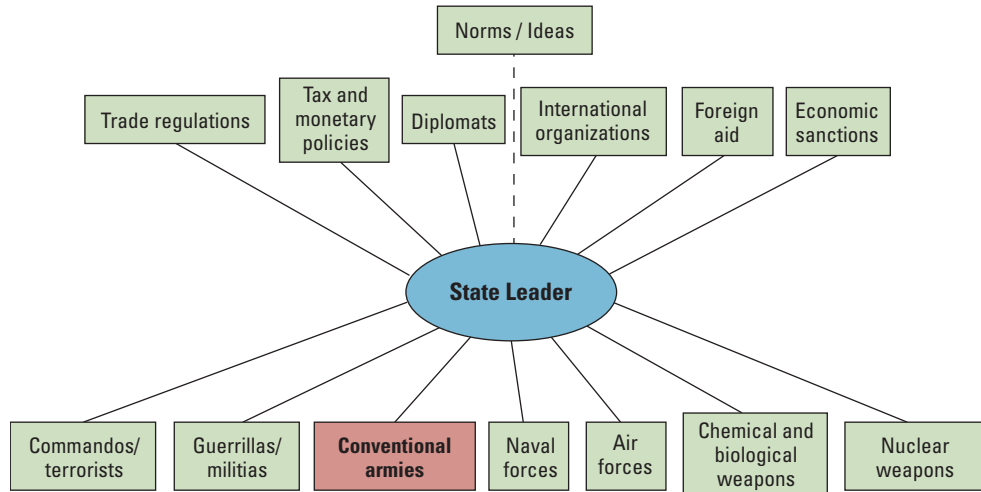


FIGURE 4.4 ■ Military and Nonmilitary Means of Leverage

Conventional armed force is the most commonly used military form of leverage.

capabilities if even only a few other states are doing so. The shocking attacks on the U.S. homeland in 2001 underscored many states' sense of insecurity and their need to maintain capable military forces.

Beyond defending their territories, states develop military capabilities for several other purposes. They often hope to *deter* attack by having the means to retaliate. They may also hope to *compel* other states to behave in certain ways, by threatening an attack if the state does not comply. States are increasingly using military forces for humanitarian assistance, surveillance of drug trafficking, and repression of domestic political dissent, among other missions. Peacekeeping operations (see pp. 242–245) are a growing specialization of certain military forces, and a focus of NATO's Partnership for Peace program.

Military capabilities are generally divided into two types: conventional forces and weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons). Almost all of the actual uses of military force to date have involved conventional forces. Weapons of mass destruction nonetheless come into play in international bargaining because even the implicit threat of their use is leverage. Although the superpower nuclear arms race has ended, the spread of weapons of mass destruction to new states and to nonstate actors is a grave concern.

Military Economics

Given the types of military capabilities available to states (at various costs), how should state leaders choose which to acquire? Choices about military forces depend on the connection between a state's military spending and its economic health. Not long ago, it was widely believed in the United States that "war is good for the economy." If this were true, state leaders would not face difficult choices in setting military budgets. High military spending would give them both more military capabilities for use in international conflicts and more economic growth for domestic needs.

Unfortunately for state leaders, the economics of military spending is not so favorable. In the long run, allocating economic resources for military purposes deprives the rest of the economy and reduces its growth. High-technology military development (using engineers, scientists, etc.) tends to starve civilian sectors of

THE WAR IS OVER



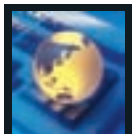
U.S. and Russian nuclear forces were greatly reduced in the 1990s. Here, U.S. B-52 bombers are being chopped up, under the eye of Russian satellites, to bring force levels down.

talent and technology. Fewer jobs are created, per dollar of government funds, in the military than in education, housing, construction, and similar areas. Conversely, reductions in military spending tend to free up economic resources for more productive purposes and strengthen the growth of the economy. Thus, state leaders face a trade-off between increasing their available military leverage and increasing their overall economic health. When the Cold War ended, U.S. leaders cut military spending to reap a peace dividend: more money for cities, education, the environment, and so forth. The savings in the next decade, estimated at more than \$100 billion, may not have changed those problems much, but did help reduce the U.S. budget deficit. At the same time, Russia and the other former Soviet republics drastically curtailed military spending, which their tattered economies could not support. Unfortunately, the immediate effect of a sharp reduction in military spending is often to throw people out of work and disrupt economic growth. Russia's cuts in military spending did little to stop its economic free fall. There and throughout the former Soviet Union—and somewhat less desperately in the United States and the West—political leaders scrambled to develop plans for **economic conversion**—use of former military facilities and industries for new civilian production.

Both the long- and short-term effects of military spending are magnified by actual warfare. War not only stimulates high military spending, it destroys capital (people, cities, farms, and factories in battle areas) and causes inflation (reducing the supply of various goods while increasing demand for them). Governments must pay for war goods by borrowing money (increasing government debt), by printing more currency (fueling inflation), or by raising taxes (reducing spending and investment).

Nonetheless, war and high military spending can have certain economic benefits. The short-term stimulation from a boost in military spending has been mentioned. Another potential benefit is the acquisition of territory (containing resources and capital). Serbian ultranationalists made fortunes off the plunder of Bosnians whom they “ethnically cleansed.” Another potential economic benefit of war is to stir up a population’s patriotism so it will work harder for less pay. But overall, the benefits rarely equal the economic costs of war.

The Choice of Capabilities



WEB LINK

Choice of Capabilities

States vary widely in military spending, from Costa Rica with virtually no military spending at all, to North Korea, which devotes 20 percent or more of all economic activity to military purposes. If military budgets are too low, states may be unprepared to meet a security threat. But if leaders set military budgets too high, they will overburden the national economy in the long run. (So far, Costa Rica has not been attacked, whereas North Korea is virtually bankrupt.)

In recent years, U.S. leaders have been rethinking military capabilities. The primary mission of U.S. armed forces during the Cold War was containing the Soviet Union, especially from attacking Western Europe, while keeping an eye on the Middle East and Southeast Asia. The Gulf War suggested a new type of mission based on the ability to

deploy a large armed force to a regional conflict area. Currently, U.S. policymakers envision smaller groups of conventional troops combined with special operations forces stationed around the world, armed with advanced weapons, which could be deployed very quickly in the event of a terrorist threat.

Meanwhile, other states reduced military spending in the 1990s—most dramatically in Russia and the other republics of the former Soviet Union. In 2004, however, Russia began stepping up military activities, conducting the largest navy exercise in 20 years and beginning to test new anti-missile systems.

The cutbacks are less dramatic in Western Europe, where NATO members spend several percent of GDP on military forces. In Japan, where military spending was already only 1 percent of GDP, dramatic cutbacks are not in the works. Chinese military forces underwent substantial reduction, along with modernization, in the 1980s and 1990s. They still lag behind in technology, but their capabilities are growing quickly.

Great powers dominate the makeup of world military forces. Table 4.2 summarizes the most important forces of the great powers. Together, they account for two-thirds of world military spending, a third of the world's soldiers, about 50 percent of the weapons, 99 percent of nuclear weapons, and 90 percent of arms exports. The table also indicates the sizable military forces maintained by Germany and Japan despite their nontraditional roles in international security affairs since World War II.

Arms imports by states of the global South make up more than half of all arms sales. In recent years, about half of the South's arms imports have been in the Middle East, where oil exports create a ready source of funding, but in 2004 India and China took a larger share. Of all arms exports, a third come from the United States, with Russia and Britain ranked next. Globally, arms sales have declined in the post-Cold War era.

Activists have called attention to the sales of small arms, especially assault rifles, to unstable conflict zones where irregular armies commit brutalities. In 2001, 140 states agreed to a voluntary pact to curb small-arms sales to conflict zones. The United States blocked proposals to restrict sales of military weapons to rebel movements and to civilians. A follow-up UN conference is planned for 2006.

World military spending decreased by about one-third overall in the 1990s, then began to increase again after 1998 and jumped back up after 2001. World military spending is about 2 percent of the total goods and services in the world economy—about \$1 trillion every year, or roughly \$1 million every 30 seconds. Most is spent by a few big states, nearly half by the United States alone. World military spending is a vast flow of money that could, if redirected to other purposes, change the world profoundly and improve major world problems. Of course, “the world” does not spend this money or choose how to direct it; states do.

Beyond these considerations about the size of military forces, the configuration of a state's military forces also presents difficult choices. Different missions require different forces. During the Cold War, about half of all military spending in the U.S. budget—and of world military spending—was directed toward the East-West conflict in Europe. Now other missions such as intervention in regional conflicts are more important.

TABLE 4.2 ■ Estimated Great-Power Military Capabilities, 2001–2003

	Military Expenditures ^b (billions of US \$)	Soldiers ^c (millions)	Heavy Weapons ^a				
			Tanks	Carriers/ Warships/ Submarines	Combat Airplanes	Nuclear Weapons ^d	Arms Exported ^e (billions of US \$)
United States	460	1.4	10,000	11 / 112 / 74	3,600	10,000*	14
Russia	10–20*	1.5	20,000*	1 / 40 / 69	1,800	20,000*	4
China	35	2.8	10,000	0 / 29 / 6	2,100*	410	1
France	35	0.3	1,000	0 / 19 / 12	300	350	1
Britain	40	0.2	1,000	0 / 35 / 16	300	185	5
Germany	30	0.2	3,000	0 / 14 / 0	400	0	1
Japan	50	0.2	1,000	0 / 39 / 20	300	0	0
Approximate % of world total	70%	30%	25%	100 / 60 / 50%	40%	99%	85%

Notes: Data are for 2003 unless otherwise noted and are in 2004 dollars. In the 1990s, the military forces of many of these states—Russia above all—were profoundly restructured. Numbers of weapons or soldiers do not indicate quality (levels of technology) or predict how armed forces would actually perform in combat. Russian forces are disorganized and in disrepair, with rampant desertion, nonoperational equipment, and low morale. Chinese forces are lower-tech than the others. Expenditure data are notoriously unreliable for Russia and China.

Data on soldiers exclude reserves. Tanks include only main battle tanks. Warships are major surface combat ships over 3,000 tons. Nuclear warheads include both strategic and tactical weapons. Arms exports are deliveries, not orders, for 2003.

*Problematic data: Russian military expenditure estimates vary. Many Chinese aircraft and Russian tanks are old and of limited military use. U.S. and Russian nuclear warheads include deployed strategic weapons (6,000 U.S., 6,000 Russian) with the remainder held in reserve or retired (awaiting destruction).

Sources: Author's estimates based on data provided by the Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies (IDDS), Cambridge, MA. Main sources are:^a 2001 data from IDDS World Arms Database 2001 (www.idds.org);^b SIPRI Yearbook 2003. Not adjusted for purchasing power parity.^c Institute for International and Strategic Studies. *The Military Balance 2001–2002*: 299–304.^d Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (www.ceip.org);^e Richard F. Grimmett. *Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations, 1993–2003* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2004).