

# **Prolonging the War and Its Impact on the Standards of Profit and Loss**



**By: Professor Bassel Hajjar**

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## **Introduction**

Historically, warfare has often entailed symmetrical engagements between organized state entities utilizing regular military troops. Conventional wars are often defined by their dependence on combat efficacy, territory dominance, and the capacity to decisively vanquish the opponent. The efficacy of conventional militaries has always depended on discipline, logistics, and organized command, illustrating the evolution of state institutions and the necessity to uphold sovereignty, order, and national security.

As human civilizations progressed and the international system became more intricate, nations formalized their military, providing them with doctrine, training, and infrastructure to address foreign threats and internal disturbances. Nonetheless, the essence of warfare has consistently remained dynamic. It perpetually adjusts to political realities, technical advancements, and uneven power relations. In contemporary conflicts, especially those involving state and non-state actors or asymmetrical adversaries, conventional warfare has frequently transitioned to irregular or non-traditional warfare—a conflict paradigm where the weaker party eschews direct confrontations and employs strategies focused on attrition and disruption over time.

A prominent feature of these asymmetrical clashes is the intentional effort to extend the conflict. This strategy involves the weaker side mitigating its material and technical deficiencies by prolonging the fight, utilizing time as a weapon to erode the will, economics, morale, and worldwide reputation of the more powerful opponent. Instead of pursuing an immediate triumph, the objective shifts to undermining the adversary's capacity and resolve to persist in the conflict—politically, economically, and socially.

This dynamic significantly transforms the traditional metrics of profit and loss in conflict. Historically, triumph has been assessed via military superiority, geographical expansion, or the capitulation of the adversary. However, in

extended conflicts, these criteria undergo significant transformation. The extended duration of the struggle results in cumulative attrition in people, material resources, national cohesiveness, public support, and strategic clarity. The protracted duration of a conflict increasingly influences local and international interpretations of success and failure.

The weaker party frequently attempts to reframe the concepts of triumph and loss by leveraging the psychological, cultural, and moral aspects of battle. This entails utilizing global empathy, undermining the more powerful adversary via tales of defiance, and use civilian hardship as a mechanism to exert diplomatic influence. The battlefield encompasses information warfare, economic disruption, and psychological operations. In this sense, "prolonging the war" is not indicative of weakness but rather a calculated and frequently effective tactic of counterweight.

**The primary study issue is: To what degree does the strategic extension of conflict influence profit and loss measures, notably benefiting the weaker party by taking the initiative from the strong power?**

This study examines the significant ramifications of prolonged combat from a strategic viewpoint. It contends that the prolongation of wars should not be regarded just as a time element but as a strategic aspect that might fundamentally affect the war's result. Prolonged conflicts exhaust resources unsustainably, destabilize national economies, undermine political cohesion, and exacerbate humanitarian disasters. They evaluate the durability of societies, the trustworthiness of leadership, and the coherence of military organizations. In several instances, they undermine the legitimacy of the dominant party and allow the subordinate faction to acquire undue power.

The aim of this study is to provide an in-depth analysis of the cost-benefit assessment in extended warfare, assisting military strategists, policymakers, and conflict analysts in evaluating the justification for the persistence of hostilities amid changing circumstances. This question is particularly significant in the current global setting, when battles can last for years or

decades, altering the geopolitical landscape and questioning the traditional notions of military victory.

For all what I mentioned, this research will analyze historical and contemporary case studies in which the duration of warfare was a critical component, evaluating the military, economic, political, and humanitarian repercussions of prolonged conflicts with a particular attention directed towards the significance of strategic patience, the utilization of time as a warfare instrument, and the manner in which extended battles transform both the battlefield and the wider socio-political context of fighting and resolution.

## Chapter One

# The Military Repercussions of Prolonging the War and Its Strategic Repercussions

### **1– Military Repercussions of Prolonging the War**

Henry Kissinger summed up the <sup>1</sup> concept of war as "the actions by which society seeks to preserve its right to survival."<sup>2</sup>.

With the balance of power at the forefront of their minds, nations strive to win wars and military operations by using all of their available capabilities, according to this definition. The bearer of this equilibrium is granted tactical and operational flexibility, which enables them to keep the initiative throughout the course of the fight. This balance is a crucial factor in deciding the outcome of conflicts. The ability of a state to exert its will on the battlefield is often enhanced by the fact that it has an advantage in the area of power.

Nevertheless, the more powerful side does not always emerge victorious. Numerous examples of less powerful armies overcoming barriers via the implementation of creative plans and the backing of the general populace can be found throughout the history of military operations and conflicts. The tactic of extending the battle is one of the most important and impactful of these new techniques. Long-lasting battles have often resulted in unanticipated results that are in direct opposition to the established power structure over the course of history.

Therefore, decision-makers must, by examining a wide range of current studies and historical precedents, understand the dynamics of war prolongation and its continued military implications—starting with the draining of military resources due to the intensive consumption of weapons,

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<sup>1</sup>American politician and diplomat, US Secretary of State 1973–1977.

<sup>2</sup> Issam Ismail, Arab National Security under the American Occupation of Iraq, Center for Strategic Studies, No. 111, Beirut, 2003, p. 92.

ammunition, and equipment; moving to the erosion of soldier and commander morale on one hand, and the increasing logistical challenges on the other, due to difficulties in maintaining supply lines and ensuring proper maintenance of weapons and equipment; and finally, leading to a rise in human losses, as prolonged wars increase casualties and injuries among troops

#### **a– Remarkable drain for military resources**

Prolonged warfare dramatically increases the demand on military equipment—such as weapons, vehicles, and numerous devices—resulting in rapid wear and degradation of these resources. Military equipment is designed to endure a certain level of use and is serviced or replaced according to a predetermined timetable under typical circumstances. Under the setting of prolonged battle, the rate of degradation escalates significantly owing to the incessant and rigorous use of this equipment under severe combat conditions. Consequently, weaponry becomes less dependable, cars have mechanical malfunctions, and other essential apparatus may diminish in efficacy. This degradation is not just a consequence of physical wear; it is also propelled by the sophisticated technical requirements of contemporary combat, which may obsolete equipment more rapidly than before.

A notable historical instance of this phenomenon is seen in World War I, when extended trench fighting resulted in significant degradation of artillery and rifles, necessitating regular barrel replacements and creating delays in resupply. During the Soviet–Afghan War (1979–1989), the Soviet Union encountered significant maintenance and resupply challenges attributable to the mountainous terrain, extended operational durations, and the guerrilla tactics utilized by the Mujahideen, which further strained helicopters and armored vehicles functioning in harsh conditions.

The primary issue in prolonged combat is that the rate of equipment deterioration often exceeds the pace of new equipment production, delivery, and deployment. Even when a nation's war industry operates at maximum capacity, it has constraints regarding raw supplies, industrial capabilities, and

logistics. This discrepancy engenders considerable operational risks. Armed forces may encounter equipment that is unreliable or technologically inferior, consequently diminishing their operational capabilities and compromising combat effectiveness in the field.

This condition may influence not just the immediate tactical equilibrium on the battlefield but also provide long-term strategic ramifications, possibly modifying the conflict's conclusion. During the Vietnam War, U.S. troops often rotated and repaired helicopters and armored personnel carriers owing to deterioration from incessant jungle operations, precipitation, and rugged terrain. The logistical strain was significant, and despite America's economic dominance, this depletion of resources led to the ultimate departure of U.S. soldiers.

The extension of conflict leads to considerable loss of military resources and a progressive fatigue of the armed forces. Extended exposure to conflict depletes machinery and exhausts individuals, undermining their physical and psychological fortitude. Over time, this undermines morale, diminishes combat effectiveness, and poses problems to leadership at both tactical and strategic levels.

The situation deteriorates with the prolonged duration of the conflict, especially as logistical strains escalate. The administration of war logistics is more intricate owing to strain on supply chains, challenges in maintaining a consistent flow of essential commodities to the front lines, and increased threats to logistical bases, supply routes, and communication systems. These aspects often become primary objectives for adversarial forces, particularly as the conflict progresses and intensifies. In Russia's protracted conflict in Ukraine, assaults on munitions depots, railway connections, and logistics centers have considerably disrupted Russian supply networks, illustrating how logistical weaknesses may influence the trajectory of an extended battle. The strategic ramifications of military resource depletion in protracted conflicts are significant. They influence not just immediate battlefield efficacy but also determine the overarching course of warfare, compelling governments to

reevaluate their military strategy, war aims, and even their political will to persist in combat.

### **b– Weakening the morale of commanders and soldiers**

Military leaders make concerted efforts to shield their subordinates from the negative psychological effects of war. To achieve this, they employ several effective strategies, including providing psychological support services, maintaining regular communication from command about the mission's purpose and objectives, ensuring adequate rest periods, and prioritizing unit cohesion and morale. One of the most crucial elements is offering support to soldiers' families and ensuring that troops are aware of this support, which can significantly reduce personal stress that undermines morale.

However, as the war drags on, these methods often prove insufficient to preserve the morale of both commanders and soldiers, which begins to falter under the strain of an open-ended conflict. Prolonged exposure to combat, the constant threat to one's life, witnessing the death or injury of comrades, and experiencing or inflicting violence can lead to serious psychological conditions such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety.

These mental health conditions not only affect the well-being of individual soldiers but can also impair operational performance, cloud the judgment of officers, and diminish the troops' willingness or ability to comply with orders such as post-traumatic stress disorder <sup>1</sup>(PTSD), Depression and anxiety can affect the decisions of leaders and the compliance of subordinates with these decisions. In protracted conflicts, the lack of a clear solution or end goal can create a sense of hopelessness that can be overcome by maintaining morale through constant motivation and stress management, which can weigh on even the most experienced leaders. But even these efforts become useless as the war continues to be prolonged, as the constant stress and stress of a protracted war can lead to the

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<sup>1</sup> Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that usually arises as a result of a person experiencing a traumatic or repetitive event involving fear of death, severe injury, or violence.



disintegration of discipline and cohesion within the unit, reflecting an increase in disobedience, conflict within the ranks, or even flight.

### **c– Increasing logistical complexities**

As the length of conflict prolongs, the need for a more diverse and adaptable supply network increases, mostly owing to the adversary's adjustment to its opponent's logistical tactics. As a result, logistical complexity escalates considerably in extended battles, necessitating more sophisticated systems and infrastructure. This results in a significant escalation of supply chain issues, influenced by two key factors: the difficulty in sustaining safe and accessible supply lines, and the ongoing need for equipment and weapon maintenance.

Maintaining the functionality and security of supply channels becomes more challenging, especially when supply lines are extensive and vulnerable to enemy assaults, ambushes, or interruptions. This vulnerability is particularly pronounced in hostile territories or areas with frequent changes in territorial authority. In unstable circumstances, each escalation of the conflict necessitates more resources to safeguard and maintain logistical lines, including security escorts, surveillance systems, and alternate backup routes.

An illustrative example may be derived from NATO's actions in Afghanistan, where reliance on extensive and convoluted supply lines via Pakistan and Central Asia exposed significant weaknesses. Insurgent assaults on convoys and roadblocks often impeded or interrupted vital supplies, compelling NATO to consider expensive and intricate options such as aerial resupply or rerouting across the Caucasus.

The persistent use of military equipment under severe combat circumstances hastens deterioration, resulting in an urgent and continual need for maintenance, repairs, and sometimes, swift replacement of components. In extended conflicts, sustaining equipment in a functional condition becomes into a logistical endeavor in its own right. Tanks,

armored vehicles, planes, and small weapons deteriorate in battle conditions, and their efficacy diminishes without adequate maintenance.

This logistical challenge encompasses more than only supplying new equipment. It necessitates the creation of effective maintenance facilities, spare parts depots, and skilled staff, often in forward operating zones. During World War II, the U.S. military used a mobile logistics system called the “Red Ball Express” to guarantee swift and uninterrupted supply and repair delivery to frontline forces in Europe. Notwithstanding its efficacy, the system was expensive, resource-demanding, and reliant on the management of topography and infrastructure.

In protracted conflicts, the difficulty becomes significantly. The ability to maintain logistical operations over time is as crucial as fighting strategies. If inadequately handled, logistical breakdowns may incapacitate military assets, diminish operational tempo, and constrain strategic alternatives. As the fight continues, the logistical front may become as contentious as the combat front—vulnerable to deliberate assaults, sabotage, cyber disruptions, or resource deficiencies

#### **d– Increasing human cost of war**

When a battle continues for a longer period of time, the human cost begins to increase. This is especially true since troops are constantly exposed to combat engagements, which increases the possibility that they may get injuries or perhaps lose their lives. In addition, ongoing battle causes the soldiers to experience higher levels of weariness and exhaustion, which might affect their judgment and slow down their ability to respond to situations. Because of this, they are more susceptible to being injured or killed in combat scenarios, which leads to an increase in the number of fatalities and wounded soldiers. This is particularly true given that medical supplies are becoming more limited over time and are becoming more difficult to get to the front lines.

This is especially true under unclean situations, where inadequate health services and decaying infrastructure heighten the danger of infection among

troops. Prolonged durations of conflict may also make the spread of illness worse, particularly in conditions where sanitation has to be improved. In addition, the psychological burden of war can lead to psychological problems that may increase people's vulnerability to lethal situations as a result of operational deadlock and more aggressive strategies<sup>1</sup> aimed at breaking the military deadlock and winning battles. As a war continues on, one of the most significant and unappreciated repercussions of lengthy battle is the loss of experienced and competent warriors. This is one of the most important consequences of prolonged conflict. These seasoned soldiers are not only experienced fighters; rather, they are institutional pillars inside their respective units. They represent tactical knowledge, combat discipline, leadership under fire, and battlefield intuition that cannot be readily copied by other soldiers. In high-stakes operations, when accuracy, rapid decision-making, and situational awareness are the determining factors in whether or not an operation is successful, their presence is often essential.

On the other hand, when faced with a prolonged and serious conflict, it is inevitable that some of these experienced professionals will be lost. The majority of them are killed in combat, suffer injuries that render them unable to continue serving, or become physically or mentally incapable of doing so. Their numbers are decreasing, and they are constantly replaced by new recruits who, although being well-trained and highly driven, have not yet had any experience in actual combat situations on the battlefield. Due to the fact that they are not experienced with the unpredictable nature of live battle, their decision-making process is often slower and more prone to mistake when they are under some kind of strain.

This difference in war experience presents a number of operational concerns, including the following:

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<sup>1</sup> The warring forces on the Western Front in World War I used biological weapons and nerve agents specifically to resolve the battles after the front entered a phase of military stalemate as a result of the stationing of the warring parties in fortified trenches, which reflected an increase in the size of casualties on both sides.

- There is a greater likelihood of tactical mistakes occurring, such as incorrectly estimating the movements of the adversary, failing to foresee ambushes, or improperly managing equipment when under fire
- It is possible for slower response times to result in lost opportunities or delayed responses to threats, which may compromise the safety and effectiveness of whole units at the same time.
- Because fresh troops need extra supervision and may not yet be completely incorporated into the culture and command dynamics of the unit, there is a possibility that operational cohesiveness will be higher than usual.
- The capacity of the military to carry out operations that are sustained and coordinated is negatively impacted as a result of this process, which, over time, leads to a loss in overall combat efficiency. As an example, during the final years of the Iraq War, the United States military faced frequent rotations of soldiers.

As a consequence, many freshly arriving units lacked consistency or knowledge with the local environment, which led to strategic and tactical weaknesses. During World War II, a similar pattern was observed, particularly on the Eastern Front. The Soviet Red Army, which was attempting to replenish its ranks through mass conscription, experienced heavy losses among its experienced officers and non-commissioned leaders, which impacted its operational sharpness despite having numerical advantages.

Not only is the cycle of losing veterans and replacing them with soldiers who lack experience a tactical liability, but it is also a strategic one. It lowers the overall resilience of the armed forces, undermines the continuity of command, and erodes the memory of the institutions that make up the armed forces. During protracted conflicts, when psychological fortitude and the ability to adjust to new circumstances are of the utmost importance, the lack of experienced combatants becomes a compounding deficiency. Additionally, it is possible that the morale of the surviving soldiers may deteriorate. As a result of seeing the deaths of revered commanders and

other soldiers, soldiers may develop a heightened awareness of their own expendability. This perspective might result in a feeling of fatalism or detachment, which further weakens the cohesiveness of the unit and the desire to carry out its operations.

## 2– **Strategic repercussions to prolong the war**

The prolongation of war has strategic implications that go beyond military aspects and deeply affect politics, the economy, and diplomacy. Politically, prolonged wars may weaken governments and alter both domestic and foreign policies. Economically, such wars deplete resources, leading to economic deterioration and hindering development. From a social and humanitarian perspective, extended conflicts cause immense suffering, including loss of life and the displacement of populations. They also lead to the reshaping of international alliances and shifts in the balance of power, which affect international politics and increase regional and global instability. Additionally, prolonged conflicts complicate reconstruction efforts and pose challenges related to international law and human rights. Finally, there is a tangible impact on culture and national identity, as the cultural values of war-affected societies undergo significant transformation.

### **e– Strategic reflections from an economic perspective**

Wars need a significant amount of financial resources. It is possible that the expense of continued military operations may, over the course of time, result in a considerable drain on the economy of nation. As a consequence of this protracted financial commitment, the funds that are available for essential sectors like as healthcare, education, and public infrastructure are reduced, which leads to a fall in both social welfare and economic development. Conflicts that last for an extended period of time often result in the destruction of vital infrastructure and industrial facilities. This destruction not

only hinders current economic activity but also requires massive investments for post-conflict reconstruction. These efforts become more difficult due to the economic sanctions and international isolation that warring states are forced to endure. These sanctions cut them off from global trade systems, which further exacerbates economic hardship while also impeding long-term recovery.

Furthermore, the loss of life and changes in demographics that are brought about by conflict have been shown to have significant effects on the labor market. It is possible that there will be a lack of trained workers, and the destruction of human life caused by conflict may have a long-term impact on the economic capability of a nation. Long-lasting conflicts typically result in the deaths of significant numbers of people and the relocation of a large number of others, which in turn reduces the labor force and has an influence on important industries such as agriculture and industry. There is also the possibility that skilled professionals may leave the civilian job market as a result of the focus placed on military recruiting. It is possible that these economic implications would result in a downgrading of the country's credit rating, which will make it more costly to borrow money. In addition, the instability that is brought on by protracted war and the hazards that it implies have a tendency to discourage foreign direct investment, which is particularly important for the expansion of the economy. The unpredictability and instability that are associated with protracted conflicts discourage investment on both the local and international levels, which has the potential to stall economic growth, bring about a slowdown in technical advancement, and cause damage to infrastructure.

In addition, prolonged battles disrupt the delicate equilibrium that exists between the economy and the population. There is a high probability that massive displacement would result in refugee crisis, which will put further economic burden on the state. There is a possibility that governments may turn their attention to war activities, so abandoning economic reforms and development initiatives, which will ultimately halt innovation and stagnate long-term progress. It is possible for inflation to be caused by the high cost

of war, in conjunction with increased expenditure by the government. In addition, the value of the national currency may decrease, which would have an impact on both foreign commerce and the general stability of the economy.

So, it is of the utmost importance to emphasize that lengthy conflicts not only drain immediate economic resources, but they also have far-reaching, long-term repercussions on the economic structure, stability, and development potential of the nations that are participating in the war as well as the global economy. It is possible for governments to become reliant on foreign assistance for the purposes of rebuilding and recovery after a war has occurred. This dependence may make it more difficult for a state to achieve self-sufficiency and restrict its capacity to drive its own economic resurgence. Conflict that lasts for an extended period of time diverts national resources away from productive economic activities and toward military endeavors. This puts strain on public budgets and leads to a fall in economic activity.

Additionally, the larger economic climate is impacted as well. Wars, particularly those that last for a lengthy period of time, have the potential to significantly disrupt trade routes and supply networks, which may have an effect not only on the nations that are engaged in the conflict but also on the economy of the whole world. It is possible that this disruption may result in shortages of critical items, inflation, and an increase in the cost of living. Therefore, lengthy wars have the potential to change the global balance of economic power, creating a situation in which certain governments get stronger while others become weaker, so modifying the dynamics of the international economy. An excellent illustration of this is the present tension that has arisen in the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb Strait as a direct result of the fighting in Gaza. This conflict has caused disruptions in marine commerce and brought to light the susceptibility of global trade routes to violence in the area.

## **f– Strategic Implications from a Political Perspective**

When a conflict is allowed to go on for an extended period of time, it progressively alters the political authority and system of administration within the nations that are involved, particularly those states who were the ones to start the war and are seen to be more powerful militarily.

In the United States, for instance, the extended combat that occurred during the Vietnam War led to widespread criticism of the authority of the president, which finally resulted in a reshaping of the relationship between executive and legislative war powers.

It is true that conflicts of this kind may strengthen governments by strengthening national emotion. This is because the state of war and the fear of international conflict can bring the people together, which in turn strengthens the power of the government. For example, the early phases of the Falklands War (1982) helped to increase popular support for the British government, which was led by Margaret Thatcher and used the crisis to consolidate power.

However, the protracted prolongation of the war contributes to the growth of public dissatisfaction, which in turn weakens the position of the government. This is especially true when considering the high number of human casualties, the economic burdens, and the perception that the war is pointless because it is unable to achieve a decisive outcome, all of which are factors that fuel this discontent. A pertinent example is the Soviet–Afghan War, which took place from 1979 and 1989. During this conflict, the number of victims and the strain on the economy weakened domestic support and legitimacy, which in turn contributed to political instability and ultimately led to the fall of the Soviet state.

Whenever a government continues to wage a war that the general public considers to be pointless or overly expensive, it often results in widespread unhappiness that stems from a variety of reasons. These sources include the perception that the war is pointless, the economic burden that it places on the country, and the human losses that it causes. Following the year 2005, for example, popular unhappiness in Iraq increased among residents



of the United States because the war looked to be unending, costly, and unconnected from clear goals. This resulted in significant political implications in the years 2006 and 2008.

The effects of this unhappiness may be broken down into many categories.

It may take the form of public demonstrations and civil unrest, which are aimed at opposing the policies and choices made by the administration. As people become more convinced that the conflict is having a detrimental impact on their day-to-day lives, their faith in the government's ability to make sound decisions and prioritize its goals may begin to weaken. This was made abundantly clear in France during the Algerian War of Independence, which was characterized by protracted fighting that resulted in protests and political instability, which ultimately led to the collapse of the Fourth Republic.

It is only inevitable that this loss of confidence would result in a decrease in popular support for the party that is currently in power as well as a decrease in electoral approval ratings. Prolonged conflicts have an effect on election results because the manner in which the government administers the war, which often becomes a prominent issue in the election, shapes the attitudes of voters about the war. The presidential election that took place in the United States in 1968 is a prime example of a situation in which popular opposition to the Vietnam War had a significant influence in influencing electoral movements.

In severe circumstances, lengthy wars may end in the change of a government. This can occur either as a result of internal pressure, such as revolutions or coups that are driven by public dissatisfaction, or as a consequence of external pressures, such as foreign involvement backing one side in a civil conflict. An important illustration of this is Libya in 2011, when the Gaddafi dictatorship was brought down as a result of the extended civil war, which was made worse by the participation of foreign actors.

The nature of protracted war, which severely damages the legitimacy and efficacy of the government, is directly responsible for these changes in political power, which are direct results of the nature of the fight. There is a

possibility that a government that is generally seen to be unrepresentative of its people, incapable of safeguarding national interests, unable to win or stop the conflict, or that causes an inordinate amount of suffering would lose its hold on power. For instance, Argentina's military dictatorship was disgraced as a result of the country's defeat in the Falklands War in 1982, which accelerated the country's transition back to democratic administration. Within the context of this scenario, the door is open for opposition organizations to acquire strength, or for foreign forces to exert influence over domestic politics, which might potentially result in a change in either the administration or the political system itself. There have been numerous instances of lengthy warfare that have resulted in the fragmentation of state power and a rise in the role of foreign players in dictating domestic results. Some examples of these conflicts include Syria and Yemen.

#### **g– Strategic implications from a diplomatic perspective**

When seen from a diplomatic point of view, the strategic ramifications of war are diverse and of utmost significance. As a result of the creation of similar interests over the course of time, the protracted duration of conflict often results in the formation of new alliances or the breakdown of existing ones for a variety of reasons. Due to the fact that protracted wars almost always end in a change in the balance of power, they have the potential to greatly affect both regional and worldwide politics by destabilizing whole areas.

The continuation of war and the pressure that results—stemming from the economic and political repercussions previously discussed—may drive states to bypass or violate established international norms and legal frameworks, particularly those related to human rights and conflict resolution. This kind of activity has the potential to destabilize the international legal system, which may result in an increase in the level of instability in global relations. Diplomatic measures, such as economic penalties and trade embargoes, are routinely employed to exert pressure on warring parties. These infractions typically trigger diplomatic replies. The influence of these economic

instruments may be far-reaching, having an effect not just on the governments that are being targeted but also on the economy of the whole world, particularly in a system of international relations that is heavily interwoven. In addition, protracted battles have profound and far-reaching repercussions for the diplomatic connections of a nation, often causing the nation's position to shift on both the regional and global levels. It is possible for a nation's ties with its allies and other governments to become progressively strained and complicated when the nation is engaged in a war that lasts for an extended period of time.

First, there is a possibility that allies may become worried about the path that the war is taking and the consequences it has for the stability of the area. It is possible that they will be hesitant to lend continuous assistance if they believe that the war is unwinnable or if it is in contradiction with their national interests or beliefs. It is possible that this will lead to a drop in the amount of military, economic, and diplomatic support, all of which are often necessary for maintaining a war effort over an extended period of time. A historical example of this is the war that the United States fought in Vietnam. During this conflict, allies such as Canada and the United Kingdom voiced increasing dissatisfaction with the war, which eventually resulted in them decreasing their support or distancing themselves diplomatically.

Second, continuing a battle for an extended period of time might bring forth new diplomatic obstacles. In the event that the war results in a humanitarian catastrophe, for instance, it may result in international criticism and a deterioration of ties with nations that place a high priority on human rights.

In addition, the opposing side in the conflict may use diplomatic channels, such as the United Nations, international media, and global civil society, in order to influence public opinion in a manner that is adverse to the state that is engaged in the conflict. This might lead to the country experiencing diplomatic backlash and a reduction in its influence in multilateral forums, which can result in the country becoming isolated on the world stage.

So, we can say that the diplomatic repercussions of extending the conflict are harsh and only get more severe over the course of time. The legal duties, international reputation, alliance arrangements, and worldwide position of a state are all impacted on account of these factors. There is a correlation between the length of time a conflict continues and the likelihood that a state's diplomatic capital would deteriorate, leaving the state isolated, limited, and susceptible to political pressure from both the outside and the inside itself.

# Chapter Two

## The Contribution of Strategic Reflections to the

### Prolongation of War in Establishing Profit and Loss

#### Standards between Conceptual Theories and Real-World

#### Experiments

### **1–Prolongation of the war and its theoretical impact on profit and loss criteria**

Because prolonged battle has a significant influence on the definitions of triumph and defeat in both military and political settings, we will look at how the loss of military initiative causes a change in the balance of power in the first section of Chapter Two.

In order to determine how these factors may affect the final results of combat, we will examine the tactical and strategic changes that take place throughout protracted conflicts, as covered in depth in Chapter One. Therefore, regardless of the conditions that predominate on the battlefield at any particular time, we will examine in section 2 some historical instances and current case studies that demonstrate the intricate dynamics influencing the trajectory and outcomes of lengthy battles

#### **h– Criteria for profit and loss in wars**

A precise and widely recognized concept of what constitutes success and loss in combat is conspicuously absent from military literature. Determining or defining these criteria is a subjective, multifaceted, and intricate process. The basic idea of who controls the battlefield after the conclusion of a military conflict is far from it. Therefore, it is necessary to view triumph and loss from a more nuanced perspective, one that takes into account the variety of metrics used to assess the results of protracted and asymmetrical confrontations.

The significance of recognizing and comprehending these criteria is not lessened by this relativism. Instead, it emphasizes how important it is to do so as they are crucial for determining the actual effects of conflict and developing long-term plans for establishing lasting peace and stability. Therefore, victory might require more than just gaining territory or dominating the military; it can also involve cultural cohesiveness, economic resiliency, political survival, or even the capacity to impose a narrative about the fight that lasts.

One well-known example of a situation in which military superiority did not result in strategic or political triumph is the United States' experience in Vietnam. The United States failed to accomplish its political goals despite overwhelming firepower and military possession of strategic regions, which prompted a comprehensive reevaluation of what "victory" means in contemporary conflict. Similar to this, despite protracted military operations, the USSR's failure to crush the Mujahideen or establish a stable government in Afghanistan represented a kind of strategic loss.

These hazy boundaries become even more important in protracted conflicts. The impression and reality of victory or failure are increasingly shaped by non-military variables as a battle drags on. The narrative of success or loss is shaped by a variety of factors, including post-war rebuilding, diplomatic ramifications, economic resilience, international legitimacy, and civilian support.

Comprehending this intricacy has practical consequences and is not only a theoretical or intellectual endeavor. Policymakers and military leaders can more effectively assess the advantages and disadvantages of ongoing engagement, prepare for transitions, and create post-conflict strategies that tackle the underlying causes of violence rather than merely announcing an early end to hostilities by thoroughly examining and defining victory.

In the end, a thorough and contextually aware interpretation of triumph and loss goes beyond battlefield markers to provide a comprehensive assessment of the effects and legacy of a struggle. Building a more stable post-war order and avoiding the return of violence in many forms need this wider

viewpoint. However, by studying wars and military campaigns in ancient, modern and contemporary history, and then examining their short and long-term results, we can derive some criteria<sup>1</sup> that enable us to evaluate the outcome of any war between profit and loss:

### **a– Control of Territory**

Territorial control is the main and most conventional measure used to assess a war's success. Crucial territory is often the focus of wars, and the degree to which one side can assert authority over contested areas is a crucial determinant of victory. The capacity to capture, retain, and manage critical locations—like cities, borders, or regions with abundant resources—is often seen as a concrete demonstration of military might and efficacy.

Territorial dominance by itself, however, is not always a strategic advantage or a clear indicator of triumph, particularly if it is not combined with other crucial success factors. Land occupation that lacks popular support, political legitimacy, or logistical viability may turn into a strategic disadvantage.

For instance, American soldiers took control of important cities and governmental buildings during the American occupation of Iraq. But rather than being a clear victory, this control became a burden due to the lack of long-term stability, the emergence of insurgency, and political fragmentation. Similar to this, Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon (1982–2000) did not result in long-term strategic advantages since, despite extended geographical control, ongoing resistance ultimately compelled disengagement.

Therefore, territorial dominance may be a tactically successful short-term goal, but in order to be a meaningful indicator of victory in contemporary warfare, it must be combined with more comprehensive strategic goals like political stability, legitimacy, and public order

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<sup>1</sup> It is necessary to recognize the relativity of these criteria. The concept of profit and loss varies according to customs and beliefs .

## **b– Casualty Numbers**

When evaluating the results of war, casualty statistics—such as the number of troops and civilians killed, injured, and missing—represent a sobering but essential indicator. Even though these figures are harsh and sometimes upsetting, they provide important insight into the human cost of war and how it affects a state's capacity to continue and recover from hostilities.

Particularly when experienced people, specialized groups, or important leadership figures are involved, high death rates may seriously impair military capabilities. Increasing casualties over time may lead to a decline in military morale, operational exhaustion, and diminished combat effectiveness.

Furthermore, civilian deaths have the potential to spark national indignation and international censure, which might weaken popular support for the war effort. Regardless of tactical successes, this degradation may put pressure on political authorities to change military tactics or perhaps leave the fight completely.

A state may experience strategic loss even in instances of territorial or tactical triumph if the perceived benefits are outweighed by the human cost. For instance, neither side gained a definite strategic edge during the Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988), while suffering enormous fatalities estimated in the hundreds of thousands. Despite several territorial exchanges, no nation achieved a long-lasting triumph and was left socially and economically scarred.

High death tolls can also make post-conflict healing and reconciliation more difficult. Societies scarred by mass loss may have long-term social disintegration, demographic imbalances, and collective trauma. Veterans may return with psychological or physical wounds that put years or decades of burden on social services and public health systems.



### **c– Economic impact**

Both direct expenses, like military spending, and indirect costs, such post-conflict rebuilding and humanitarian assistance, are included in the economic effect of war. These monetary costs have the potential to significantly impact both the conflict's immediate resolution and its lasting effects.

Whether a state emerges stronger or weaker depends on its capacity to absorb and manage these costs, whether via a robust economy, sound fiscal policy, or outside assistance. While a less stable economy may experience inflation, debt, and social discontent even if it claims combat victory, a nation with substantial financial reserves and strong industrial capability, for instance, may be able to support extended operations without experiencing domestic collapse.

The United States is a prime example of a country that effectively handled its economy throughout World War II, resulting in military triumph and post-war worldwide leadership. On the other hand, despite its early military achievements, Nazi Germany finally fell apart due to a combination of economic exhaustion and military overstretch.

Even more severe are indirect expenses. Long-term investment is needed for public service restoration, infrastructure reconstruction, displaced population assistance, and veteran reintegration. Neglecting these demands might impede the growth of the country and increase instability. For instance, even after Saddam Hussein's administration was overthrown, post-war Iraq had to deal with severe rebuilding difficulties and persistent economic dysfunction.

Furthermore, the effects of conflict on the economy may transcend national boundaries, upsetting international supply networks, regional commerce, and investment flows. Recent wars like Russia's war in Ukraine, which has raised the price of food and energy globally and had an impact on economies all around the globe, are clear examples of this.

According to all of this, the economic aspect of war is a crucial component in deciding strategic success or failure, not only a supporting one. No

matter how well a state performs on the battlefield, it may not be able to consolidate advantages, retain influence, or guarantee long-term peace if it comes out of combat economically destroyed.

#### **d– Political Goals**

One important factor in determining how a conflict turns out is the degree to which political goals are met. From gaining territory to overthrowing a government, gaining ideological control, acquiring strategic resources, or gaining regional clout, these goals may take many different forms.

Since attaining military supremacy does not always translate into accomplishing the political objectives of the conflict, the post-war political environment often has the power to reinterpret what triumph and loss entail. There are many examples throughout history when a military victory eventually fell short of achieving its political objectives, leading to what might be called a diplomatic or strategic setback.

One instance where overwhelming military might proved insufficient to accomplish the political goal of stopping the spread of communism in Southeast Asia is the United States' participation in the Vietnam War. The United States withdrew after years of fighting and significant expenditure, and the South Vietnamese government soon fell, reunifying Vietnam under communist control. Another instance is the Suez Crisis of 1956, in which Israel, Britain, and France temporarily succeeded militarily in capturing the Suez Canal. Nevertheless, a departure was forced by strong international pressure, especially from the US and the USSR, which left the political goals unmet and indicated a reduction in the worldwide dominance of the UK and France.

However, political objectives may be met without achieving a complete military triumph. For example, in the 1991 Gulf War, the U.S.-led coalition achieved the narrowly defined political goal of driving Iraqi troops out of Kuwait but failing to overthrow Saddam Hussein, so granting coalition members a strategic triumph.

These instances demonstrate how the story of war is shaped by political consequences. The legitimacy of the war effort may be questioned both locally and internationally when military measures do not correspond with political outcomes. Therefore, gauging success in terms of political accomplishments offers a more comprehensive and significant framework for comprehending the actual effects of conflict.

The 2003 U.S. involvement in Iraq exemplifies this concept in a contemporary and succinct manner. Although the primary military aim of overthrowing Saddam Hussein's dictatorship was achieved rapidly and effectively, the overarching political objectives—creating a stable democratic government, guaranteeing long-term domestic security, and mitigating regional adversaries—were not fulfilled. Subsequent years saw Iraq descend into sectarian warfare, institutional disintegration, and pervasive instability, significantly eroding the legitimacy of the mission. The power vacuum resulting from the disintegration of Iraq's state structures facilitated the proliferation of Iranian influence throughout Iraq's political and security organizations. Iraq has essentially become integrated into Tehran's regional sphere of influence due to the ascendance of Iran-backed militias, political groups, and economic entanglements, a geopolitical development that directly contradicts U.S. strategic goals in the area. This result demonstrates how a military triumph can transform into a prolonged strategic disadvantage when the post-conflict political framework does not align with the goals of the intervening nation. It reiterates the principal assertion that the efficacy of warfare should be evaluated not alone by military victories but also by the capacity to establish a durable, advantageous political landscape post-conflict. Remaining Military Capabilities and Assets determining the actual result of a war requires evaluating the military's residual might and assets after a fight. This entails assessing the military's strength, capabilities, and morale in addition to the availability of weapons, equipment, and supplies for logistics.

Even while a side may declare victory on the battlefield, they may not be able to protect themselves, project power, or recover swiftly after the conflict.

This situation is sometimes called a "Pyrrhic victory"—a triumph that is so expensive that it essentially amounts to a permanent loss. Ancient Rome's military triumph against Pyrrhus of Epirus is among the most often cited historical instances. However, Rome only achieved this victory after suffering casualties so great that their capacity to fight on was all but destroyed. Germany also for example fought well in World War I for the most of the fight, but by the end of 1918, its military strength, resources, and morale were depleted, causing it to collapse internally even if it still held territory outside. Similarly, both nations came out of the Iran–Iraq War with militarily exhausted and mentally and physically spent troops. Despite the lack of a definite winner, the enormous loss of life and resources made both governments strategically weaker, more susceptible to instability in the future, and more reliant on reconstruction.

#### **f– Support from Public Opinion**

A decisive element in selecting the victories in every battle might be public opinion, both domestically and internationally. The public's support or opposition has a direct impact on a government's capacity to continue the war effort, and it often plays a crucial part in determining the terms of a settlement or during peace negotiations.

A drop in popular support on the domestic level might result in large-scale demonstrations, political pressure, and even unstable governments. For instance, despite having greater military might on the battlefield, the American public's growing disapproval of the Vietnam War eventually forced the country's leadership to leave. In the face of popular opposition, the war came to represent the limitations of power.

Public opinion may impact foreign policy choices and global alliances at the international level. International audiences may grow sympathetic to one side, which might lead to increased foreign aid, sanctions, or diplomatic isolation, particularly during humanitarian emergencies. For example, international reactions to South African apartheid were significantly

influenced by public opinion throughout the globe, and the regime's final downfall was facilitated by persistent pressure from civil society organizations around the world.

Positive global public opinion may sometimes legitimize a weaker party, increasing its diplomatic clout and undermining the narrative of the dominating state. On the other hand, as seen by the responses to several wars in the Middle East, broad criticism may delegitimize a militarily superior actor, particularly if its actions are viewed as unfair or out of proportion.

As a result, public opinion is not just a background element; rather, it is an active force that has the power to reshape the dynamics of conflict, impact decision-making, and establish the legitimacy of results over the long run. prevailing the "battle of narratives" might be just as important as prevailing on the battlefield in contemporary conflict, as media and information move instantly and globally. An illustrative historical instance that underscores the pivotal influence of public opinion on wartime results is the case of Tsar Nicholas II and the Romanov dynasty during World War I. Despite Russia's military successes, notably the Brusilov Offensive in 1916, the extended duration of the war, coupled with significant deaths, pervasive economic distress, and declining living standards, ultimately undermined public support for the monarchy. The military advancements on the Eastern Front were unable to counterbalance the internal disintegration of public confidence in the imperial rule.

Notwithstanding initial patriotic enthusiasm, the Russian populace became progressively disenchanted with the war effort as casualties escalated and resources dwindled. Food shortages, inflation, and inadequate administration of both the front and the home front incited widespread demonstrations, strikes, and mutinies, especially in major areas like as Petrograd. The pressures compromised the legitimacy of the Romanov monarchy, culminating in Tsar Nicholas II's resignation in March 1917 amid the February Revolution.

This instance exemplifies how popular sentiment—formed by personal experience, adversity, and views of governmental ineptitude—can eclipse military results. The war's persistence, despite increasing public dissent, was regarded not as a display of strength but as an emblem of the regime's alienation and authoritarian inadequacy. Ultimately, military triumphs could not shield the Romanovs from the political and social repercussions of a disaffected and suffering populace.

The downfall of the Romanovs illustrates that military victories are insufficient when the populace withdraws support for the war effort, underscoring that the resilience of governments and regimes in conflict relies equally on popular mood and military efficacy. This example closely correlates with the overarching conclusion of this study: in both contemporary and historical battles, triumphing in the "battle of narratives" and sustaining public legitimacy are equally crucial as tactical or operational victory on the battlefield.

### **g– Elong–Term Cultural and Psychological Effects**

War has significant and enduring psychological and cultural repercussions. Both soldiers' and civilians' experiences with trauma may have long-lasting effects, influencing not only the lives of those directly engaged but also the social mores and sense of community of subsequent generations.

Veterans, their families, and whole communities may be affected by psychological scars that last for decades, including anxiety, sadness, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Long-term mental health issues may overburden public health systems, lower productivity, and erode social resilience. For example, severe differences in national identity and interethnic interactions persisted in the wake of the Bosnian War (1992–1995), and significant portions of the population suffered from trauma far into the next generation.

Culturally, protracted combat often alters societal values, public memory, and national identity. Changes in education, media narratives, and political

discourse might result from wartime experiences that cultivate a culture of fear, distrust, or militarism. In some situations, a profound disenchantment with institutions and authority develops, while in others, the exaltation of armed conflict may become ingrained in the national consciousness.

These shifts have the potential to permanently alter society objectives, which would have an impact on social cohesion, civic involvement, and governance. In this situation, a short-term or tactical win might plant the seeds for long-term instability. An apparent victory may turn into a strategic defeat, especially if the conflict leaves behind a state that has lost its legitimacy, a traumatized populace, or a fragmented society.

The Soviet experience in Afghanistan serves as a stark illustration, as the psychological toll on returning troops and the deterioration of popular confidence in the leadership played a role in the USSR's downfall and final fall.

In conclusion, a crucial aspect of strategic evaluation is the long-term psychological and cultural effects of conflict. It draws attention to how a conflict that seems to be winning in the short run might really set off a downward social, political, and cultural trajectory that ends with the fall of a regime or the deterioration of state legitimacy

According to all mentioned criterias, The Central Question:

**How does the prolongation of war affect the criteria for victory and defeat discussed above?**

The extension of conflict often exacerbates the effects across all three parameters, frequently resulting in more intricate and unexpected consequences. The protracted duration of a battle gradually alters the parameters of triumph and loss, complicating the attainment of a definitive resolution.

In extended conflicts, the notion of territorial control—originally a simple measure—becomes more flexible and precarious. What initially serves as a definitive indicator of victory or failure progressively diminishes in importance as the dispute persists. The frontlines fluctuate, and regions formerly

deemed secure may be repeatedly lost and reclaimed. This converts territorial acquisitions into transient, tactical instances rather than strategic successes. As the conflict persists, its character evolves into a battle of attrition, whereby the objective transitions from rapid and conclusive triumph to the slow depletion of the adversary's resources.

In such circumstances, the strategic significance of land may likewise change. Territory that was pivotal at the start of a battle may diminish in significance as military goals evolve. For instance, during World War I, formerly valued areas of trench fighting diminished in strategic significance due to the stalemate. The international community may increasingly prioritize the humanitarian and global ramifications of extended war above initial territorial dynamics, therefore redefining legitimacy and influence.

The significant human toll of lengthy warfare demonstrates how longer battles exacerbate misery. As the duration of the conflict extends, the impact on military troops and civilians intensifies, resulting in more fatalities, diminished morale, and exacerbated trauma. However, the most crucial aspect is to the impact on civil society and public opinion, which may progressively influence the perception of the war's profitability.

The public and military perceptions of victory might vary markedly owing to contrasting objectives and interpretations of significance.

The military approach often prioritizes strategic and tactical objectives, including territorial dominance, undermining the adversary, and ensuring national security.

The civilian viewpoint emphasizes the humanitarian, economic, and social ramifications of conflict, including loss of life, infrastructural devastation, economic adversity, and the disturbance of everyday existence.

A war may be deemed militarily successful if goals are achieved, regardless of significant human or material losses. From the perspective of public opinion, it may be seen as a failure if it leads to extensive human suffering and enduring harm.

The consequences intensify when civilian zones transform into battlegrounds, leading to the devastation of infrastructure, including hospitals,



schools, and residences, as well as the disintegration of vital services—healthcare, food supply systems, and sanitation. This results in sickness, starvation, and a public health catastrophe, exacerbating the disparity between strategic success and public detriment.

From an economic perspective, as previously explored, the strategic ramifications of prolonged conflict intensify with time. The financial strain escalates with the duration of the conflict, including both direct military costs and indirect expenses such as disrupted commerce, damage to productive assets, and the long-term needs for rebuilding. These consequences undermine national economies, exhaust resources, and influence global markets, particularly in interdependent economies.

From a political standpoint, the ramifications of extended conflict may significantly reshape the parameters of triumph and failure. As time progresses, the initial political aims may become ambiguous, obsolete, or even unachievable, particularly in the context of evolving local and international dynamics. Consequently, states are compelled to reframe or amend their objectives, perhaps relinquishing their original aspirations altogether.

This shift in aims often coincides with a reduction in public support, especially in democracies attuned to popular sentiment. Extended wars may incite demonstrations, opposition movements, and political turmoil. A military operation deemed essential may become politically untenable, resulting in a disjunction between political authority and military command. This disconnection hinders governments from leveraging wartime successes, ultimately leading to strategic loss, as military accomplishments diminish in political significance or transform into liabilities.

Moreover, the psychological and cultural ramifications of extended conflict—evidenced by social trauma, alterations in values, and cultural disintegration—foster a profound transition. War inflicts enduring psychological and emotional trauma, particularly on communities subjected to violence and devastation. The assimilation of these experiences results in

changes to societal values, public trust, and national identity, all of which affect post-war recovery and government.

## **2–The impact of protracted war on profit and loss criteria** **(practical examples)**

The importance of linking theoretical frameworks to practical examples when discussing protracted warfare and its impact on the criteria of victory and defeat lies in several key dimensions. While theories provide a structured lens for understanding the complex dynamics of war, real-world examples offer contextual grounding, demonstrating how these theories play out in actual conflicts.

This connection is vital because it allows scholars, analysts, and decision-makers to test the validity of theoretical assumptions against historical and contemporary realities. It also enables the refinement and evolution of theory, ensuring that it remains responsive to new patterns of warfare, shifting geopolitical contexts, and emerging strategic challenges. In turn, this enhances the quality of strategic and political decision-making, especially in preparing for and responding to future conflicts.

From this standpoint, it becomes clear that the integration of theory and practice is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the effects of prolonged war. It not only strengthens academic analysis but also equips policymakers, military leaders, and diplomats with the tools needed to anticipate and mitigate the consequences of long-term conflict.

Accordingly, in this chapter, we have selected a number of practical case studies from ancient, medieval, and modern history to support and validate the theoretical conclusions presented in the first part of the study. These examples serve to bridge the gap between abstract theory and real-world application, offering insight into how prolonged wars reshape strategic calculations, societal resilience, and the very meaning of victory and defeat.

## a- Byzantine–Sassanid War (602–628)

This protracted war greatly drained the resources of both empires. Initially, the Sassanid Empire achieved remarkable successes, capturing large swathes of Byzantine territory, including vital areas such as Egypt and the Levant. This period saw important battles, such as the fall of Jerusalem in 614.



Image 1: Byzantine and Sassanid empires in 600<sup>1</sup>

However, as the war dragged on, the balance gradually shifted in favor of the Byzantines, who were able to preserve and replenish their resources, while also capitalizing on morale-based mobilization, invoking the sacred mission of reclaiming the Holy Land and recovering the True Cross of Christ. In contrast, the Sassanian Empire faced a critical decline in food supplies and other essential resources due to the prolonged nature of the conflict. Over time, the war severely drained the Sassanian economy, eroding its ability to maintain control over the territories it had conquered. In response, Byzantine Emperor Heraclius launched a series of counteroffensives starting in 622. Though limited at first, these campaigns began to gradually alter the balance of power. By 627, Heraclius had penetrated deep into Sassanian territory and achieved a decisive victory at the Battle of Nineveh. This success not only enabled the Byzantines to recover their lost territories, but also inflicted a crippling defeat on the

<sup>1</sup> Available for the website :

[https://www.marefa.org/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%A8\\_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%B7%D9%8A%D8%A9\\_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9\\_602-628](https://www.marefa.org/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%A8_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%B7%D9%8A%D8%A9_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9_602-628) . Check-in date: 20/2/2024 at 15:30.

Sassanians, which in turn triggered major political upheaval within the Sassanian Empire.

This historical example compellingly demonstrates the extent to which the prolongation of warfare can fundamentally alter strategic trajectories, often reversing early gains and undermining seemingly dominant positions. At the outset of the Byzantine–Sassanian conflict, the Sassanian Empire appeared to possess a commanding advantage, having seized key Byzantine territories, including Jerusalem and Egypt. However, as the war extended over several years, the accumulated costs—strategic, economic, and psychological—began to erode the Sassanian position. Prolonged military campaigns depleted their logistical and agricultural base, strained internal governance, and weakened their ability to project sustained power.

In stark contrast, the Byzantine Empire, initially reeling from military defeats, gradually repositioned itself through a deliberate strategy of endurance. Emperor Heraclius, by preserving resources, reorganizing military structures, and leveraging religious and symbolic narratives (such as the recovery of the True Cross), transformed the Byzantine war effort into a long-term struggle rooted in national and spiritual motivation. His ability to sustain morale and reorganize Byzantine forces over time allowed for a successful strategic counteroffensive, culminating in the decisive victory at the Battle of Nineveh in 627, which not only reversed territorial losses but also destabilized the Sassanian regime itself.

This case serves to illustrate a critical conceptual insight in the study of military strategy and conflict resolution: war must be understood as a dynamic and temporal process rather than a fixed or linear confrontation. The initial distribution of military power does not necessarily predetermine the final outcome. Rather, the capacity of a state to absorb shocks, adapt to changing conditions, and sustain strategic coherence over time often plays a more decisive role than early victories.

Furthermore, the example underscores the need to incorporate non-material dimensions—such as morale, national identity, and ideological mobilization—into assessments of wartime effectiveness. It also reveals how strategic

patience and institutional resilience can compensate for initial weaknesses and lead to long-term success, particularly in conflicts characterized by attrition and fluctuating momentum.

Thus, the Byzantine–Sassanian war exemplifies how protracted conflicts reshape strategic calculations, challenging conventional assumptions about military advantage, and highlighting the transformative power of time in shaping both the conduct and consequences of war

#### b– **Hundred Years War between Britain and France**<sup>1</sup>

The immediate cause of the war was England’s claim to the French throne, which arose following the death of Charles IV, the last male heir in a long line of French kings. This dynastic dispute laid the foundation for what would become one of the most protracted and complex conflicts in European history: the Hundred Years’ War.

The war began in 1337 and was characterized by intermittent campaigns and extended truces, rather than continuous fighting. Throughout the conflict, the French often outnumbered the English forces by three or even four to one in many battles. Nevertheless, the English won most of the early major engagements, thanks to superior tactics, disciplined use of longbowmen, and effective leadership.

Historians typically divide the Hundred Years’ War into four main phases, each marked by shifts in momentum, changing political dynamics, and evolving military strategies. These phases are reflected in the map below, which outlines the territorial changes and key theaters of conflict over the

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<sup>1</sup> Although the war was called so, it lasted about 106 years.

course of more than a century.

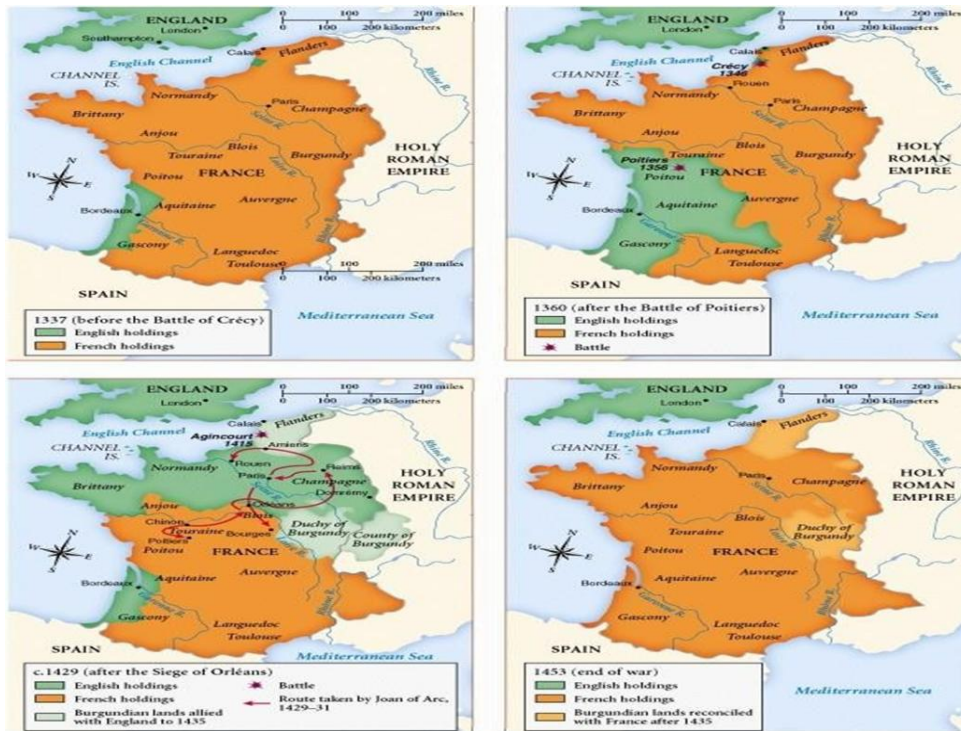


Photo 21: The Four Phases of the Hundred Years War<sup>1</sup>

Although the English repeatedly destroyed French armies during the Hundred Years' War and at one point occupied two-thirds of French territory, the financial and human costs of maintaining this dominance ultimately proved too great. The expense of fortifying and defending the conquered lands, combined with the heavy toll of continuous French resistance movements, gradually eroded the sustainability of English control.

While England achieved numerous military victories—notably at Crécy (1346), Poitiers (1356), and Agincourt (1415)—these successes masked deeper structural problems. The occupation of vast territories required constant garrisoning, administrative costs, and military reinforcements, all of which strained the English treasury. Additionally, guerrilla tactics and uprisings by the French population, supported by local nobles and inspired by figures like Joan of Arc, inflicted significant losses and drained English manpower.

By the 1420s, the internal stability of the English monarchy began to falter. The prolonged war effort led to mounting national debt, rising taxation, and growing discontent among the English nobility, many of whom had lost family members

<sup>1</sup> Available on the website: <https://www.nuttyhistory.com/100-years-war.html> . Check-in date: 20/2/2024 at 15:30.

and resources in France. The war became increasingly unpopular, and the perception of its strategic value diminished as the cost of occupation outstripped its benefits.

In 1429, following the lifting of the siege of Orléans and the resurgence of French morale under Joan of Arc's leadership, the English began to lose their territorial grip. That same year marked a turning point in the conflict, as France regained strategic momentum and began to reconsolidate its kingdom.

Thus, despite their early battlefield dominance, the English failed to secure a lasting political or strategic victory. The war destabilized the English crown, contributing to internal unrest and setting the stage for later domestic conflicts, such as the Wars of the Roses. Ultimately, England withdrew from most of its French territories, concluding the war in 1453 with only Calais remaining under its control.

This example illustrates the intrinsic constraints of military conquest, especially in the absence of a viable economic strategy, political unity, and lasting local legitimacy. The English experience in the Hundred Years' War illustrates a wider principle in strategic history: combat victories do not ensure strategic success, particularly when the occupying force cannot transform military achievements into lasting political authority and social cohesion. Notwithstanding their notable triumphs in open warfare, the English were inadequately equipped to address the intricate, protracted demands of occupation. Their territorial expansions in France necessitated substantial expenditures for defense and governance, including fortifications, garrisons, tax collection, and the implementation of English administrative systems. Nonetheless, the economic infrastructure of medieval England was insufficient to support such an expensive foreign empire. The lack of a comprehensive financial plan to sustain and reinforce authority over these territories resulted in a scenario where each military triumph created more budgetary weaknesses.

Furthermore, political unity in England eroded as the conflict persisted. The aristocracy, burdened by taxation and the loss of sons and vassals in extended conflicts, started to scrutinize the strategic justification for ongoing involvement. The conflict, which originally fostered national unity in England, evolved into a

catalyst for internal political tension, leading to elite division, a decline in royal power, and finally inciting public unrest, exemplified by the Wars of the Roses. Simultaneously, England did not establish legitimacy among the French populace. Conquered territories were not only inert areas to be occupied; they were dynamic political and social entities with distinct loyalties, identities, and networks of resistance. Absence of local support and ongoing French insurrections—particularly those inspired by leaders like as Joan of Arc—consistently undermined English authority, jeopardizing the sustainability of their stay in France.

This scenario exemplifies also how an extended conflict may distort the concept of triumph, converting tactical and operational achievements into strategic burdens. As the expenses of war escalate—economically, politically, and socially—they may exceed the original goals, rendering further conflict illogical or even detrimental. An forceful effort for influence or growth may deteriorate into a quagmire of overextension, opposition, and internal disintegration.

The English defeat in France illustrates that military dominance must be accompanied with administrative forethought, political cohesion, and public approval for a conquest to produce enduring outcomes. Otherwise, the semblance of authority rapidly succumbs to overextension, and ephemeral supremacy may eventually lead to strategic withdrawal and systemic fragility

#### c– Soviet operation in Afghanistan 1979.

On December 22, 1979, the Soviet leadership made the decision to intervene in Afghanistan and change the regime. On December 27, 1979, the operation began when Afghan elements backed by Soviet special forces and KGB agents occupied key government, military, and radio buildings in the capital, Kabul, including their main target – the Tajbek Presidential Palace, where they got rid of President **Hafizullah Amin**<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Hafeezullah Amin (1929–1979) was an Afghan politician and statesman during the Cold War. Amin was born in Baghman and educated at Kabul University. He was one of the main organizers of the Saur Revolution, which overthrew the government of Muhammad Daoud Khan.



The Soviets continued to carry out their pre-prepared operations order, all sensitive positions and ministries were occupied and the new revolutionary leadership announced the liberation of Afghanistan from the rule of Amin, who was executed by the Afghan Central Revolutionary Committee, which chose former Deputy Prime Minister Babarak Karmalas **his successor**.<sup>1</sup> Soviet ground troops continued to enter Afghanistan from the north until the number of Soviet troops in Afghanistan was estimated at 100,000. "The Soviets were able to achieve a quick and decisive military victory operationally and strategically, especially since this intervention marked the beginning of a new phase of Soviet foreign policy that took the character of an attack, which would change the equations of international power in a new way in their favor. Soviet generals used to say: "We lagged behind the Americans by two wars, they fought in Korea and Vietnam, but we did not fight, we have to expose our troops to fire and officers before others and try combat equipment and modern types of weapons."<sup>2</sup>

The United States found itself facing a Soviet army marching south in Afghanistan, but for many strategic considerations avoided direct intervention. On the other hand, she found in prolonging the war and turning it into a war of attrition a trap that she hoped the Russians would fall into in order to taste the bitterness of the cup she had dried. To this end, the United States succeeded in forming an alliance that included Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Pakistan that contributed effectively to supporting the Afghan resistance and providing it with money, weapons and intelligence, which enabled it to stand up to the Soviets and inflict heavy losses on them until its withdrawal from Afghanistan after they depleted their forces and damaged their economy, prestige, and the morale of their officers and soldiers, which ultimately led to the rapid rupture and collapse of their state.

This example serves as a compelling illustration that strongly corresponds with the fundamental points of this reaserch regarding the strategic

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<sup>2</sup> Alexey Vasiliev, **Russia in the Near and Middle East from Apostolism to Pragmatism**, translated by the Arab Center for Press and Publishing, Moscow, Madbouly Library, Cairo, 2003, p. 361.

ramifications of prolonged combat and the evolving definitions of triumph and failure. Initially, the Soviet Union secured a rapid and ostensibly conclusive military triumph: Soviet special forces and Afghan allies seized crucial positions in Kabul, assassinated President Hafizullah Amin, and established a sympathetic dictatorship commanded by Babrak Karmal. In conventional military terminology—territorial control, regime change, and operational supremacy—this may be construed as a successful intervention.

This study contends that early combat victories frequently deteriorate under the strain of extended warfare. The Soviet Union rapidly became embroiled in a war of attrition against a well-structured and highly motivated Afghan resistance, which received material and logistical backing from a multinational coalition spearheaded by the United States, along with Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Egypt. A campaign that started as temporary evolved into an expensive and extended struggle, imposing significant economic, military, and psychological burdens on the Soviet Union. The obligation of maintaining occupation troops, overseeing logistical supply chains, and combating ongoing rebellion drained Soviet resources and diminished both public and military morale.

This scenario underscores the principal assertion that military victory, in the absence of sustainable economic strategy, political unity, and enduring local legitimacy, may transform into a strategic liability instead of an advantage. The Soviet Union, despite its early military superiority, was unable to sustain control over the conquered region due to rising expenses and increasing resistance. Similar to earlier historical instances—such as England during the Hundred Years' War or the Sassanians in their ultimate confrontation with Byzantium—military supremacy alone did not ensure strategic triumph.

Furthermore, the Afghan conflict highlights the significance of time as a strategic factor. The United States intentionally planned to extend the battle, transforming it into an attritional trap designed to deplete Soviet strength. In this context, time served as a weapon, and the protracted character of the conflict directly contributed to the final decline of the Soviet Union's worldwide stature. By the time Soviet forces exited in 1989, the conflict had not only

failed to realize its political aims but had also caused irreparable harm to the Soviet economy, military standing, and domestic legitimacy—elements that contributed to the state's disintegration only two years later.

#### **d– The Iraq–Iran war.**

Iran's initiative to offer a ceasefire at the end of the eight–year Iran–Iraq war, which was marked by the occupation of the territory of others, as shown in the map below, led the prevailing view that Iraq had emerged victorious from the war in addition to a significant increase in its military machine. But in fact, Baghdad ended the war with strength and at the same time suffering from the effects of attrition due to the prolongation of the war due to the catastrophic financial situation. "At the beginning of the war, Iraq had 30 billion dollars in reserves, and the eight years of war did not pass until Iraq's debt exceeded 100 billion dollars."<sup>1</sup>

These economic conditions later paved the way for the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which turned into a strategic defeat for the Iraqi regime. But this invasion was an inevitable result of prolonging the Iran–Iraq war, as a result of the economic situation, Iraq became threatened with suffocation, especially after Kuwait and the UAE increased their shares of oil production, which led to a decrease in its prices, and Iraq was the first affected and became unable to meet its debts, and this is what Iraqi President Saddam Hussein called in his address to the Iraqi people on July 16, 1990, on the occasion of the anniversary of the revolution that brought the Baath Party. To the referee, the name of the Gulf oil conspiracy.

"The losses of weapons in that war for Iraq were estimated at \$ 100 billion, the infrastructure was estimated at \$ 35 billion, and oil revenues were estimated at \$ 15 billion, and during that period Iraq borrowed from foreign countries \$ 35 billion, for the account of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Most of this spending on

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<sup>1</sup> Nassif Hitti, The Five Major Powers and the Arab World, Center for Arab Unity Studies, First Edition, 1987, Beirut, p. 130.

the military machine has been at the expense of financial obligations in Iraq."<sup>1</sup> Saddam Hussein has no choice but to war. War in such a region provokes the whole world, especially since the expected battlefield contains the largest proven oil reserves in the world and it is also the largest oil exporting power that is very important to Western industry. It has become understandable that such a war is a major adventure that even the most ignorant people do not undertake politics. But it was an inevitable consequence of the prolongation of the Iran–Iraq war, which put Iraq in the predicament of strategic defeat despite military victory.

This case of the Iran–Iraq War and its aftermath provides a compelling illustration of the central thesis of this study: that the prolongation of war can distort traditional criteria of victory and defeat, transforming initial military gains into long-term strategic vulnerabilities. While Iraq was widely perceived to have emerged victorious from the eight-year war—particularly following Iran’s acceptance of a ceasefire in 1988 and the expansion of Iraq’s military capabilities—the reality proved far more complex and ultimately devastating for Baghdad.

At the heart of this paradox lies the economic and political cost of protracted warfare. At the outset of the conflict, Iraq possessed approximately \$30 billion in financial reserves. However, by the end of the war, the Iraqi economy was crippled, burdened with over \$100 billion in debt, much of it owed to regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The immense cost of the war—estimated at \$100 billion in military losses, \$35 billion in destroyed infrastructure, and a severe reduction in oil revenues—left Iraq economically exhausted and politically constrained. The need to maintain control over occupied territory, sustain the war machine, and recover from years of attritional warfare exceeded Iraq's capacity for fiscal recovery.

This situation, in turn, pushed Iraq toward the invasion of Kuwait in 1990—an act not merely of aggression, but one born of strategic desperation. Saddam Hussein viewed the Kuwaiti overproduction of oil and the resulting decline in oil

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<sup>1</sup> Amer Tamimi, **The Economic Dimensions of the Invasion**, Research Symposium, No. 195, monthly books issued by the National Council for Culture, Literature and Arts, Kuwait, March 1995, p. 228

prices as a direct threat to Iraq's economic survival. In his speech on July 16, 1990, he framed the crisis as a "Gulf oil conspiracy," accusing Kuwait and the UAE of conspiring with Western powers to economically strangle Iraq. The invasion was intended as a bold solution to an unsustainable problem, but it provoked a global military response and ultimately led to Iraq's strategic isolation, military defeat in the Gulf War, and long-term geopolitical decline. This example powerfully reinforces the study's argument that military success, in the absence of economic sustainability, political cohesion, and post-war planning, can result in strategic collapse. Iraq's battlefield victories were undone not by a superior enemy, but by the slow erosion of state capacity under the weight of a war that had lasted too long. The decision to invade Kuwait was a consequence of that erosion—an act driven by the structural pressures accumulated over years of prolonged conflict.

Furthermore, the Iraq-Iran case underscores the broader conclusion that protracted wars alter the meaning of victory and defeat. Victory is no longer determined solely by territorial conquest or enemy withdrawal, but by the state's ability to sustain itself politically, economically, and diplomatically after the war ends. In Iraq's case, the long war with Iran directly paved the way for its strategic defeat in the early 1990s—a defeat rooted not in combat, but in the unsustainable conditions created by prolonged war.

# Conclusion

The **Duke of Wellington said** <sup>1</sup> after exploring the remains of the Battle of Waterloo in 1815: "Only one thing is worse than winning a battle, and that is losing it. History says that the period after a costly military victory always bears the burden with it."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the burdens that afflict countries that are engaged in a protracted war suffer consequences rooted in the political, economic and diplomatic dimensions that we have talked about at length. Therefore, it was necessary for these countries to find the incentive that ensures their continuity and development by getting rid of these consequences to invest victory in the field at the strategic levels, and here comes the role of ideology and ideological ideas that play this role.

Through our research, we have shown that the implications of prolonging war strategically significantly affect conflict profit and loss parameters. Prolonging a war is not just a matter of extended time, but involves complex economic, political and psychological interactions. They often lead to a change in the balance of power, sometimes in favor of the weaker side at first. This phenomenon is observed when protracted conflict drains resources, morale, and public support for the stronger party, while providing an opportunity for the weaker party to gain strategic advantages and adaptation. tactics and attract external support. and regional .

It is also important to note that victory in a war does not always depend on immediate military dominance. Alternatively, it can be about resilience, adaptation, and strategic patience. The weaker party's ability to prolong conflict can turn into a strategy to balance the power of a stronger adversary, leading to a redefinition of what constitutes win and lose. As

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Wellesley (1 May 1769 – 14 September 1852) was a British military and political leader of Irish descent, best known for his victory over Napoleon Bonaparte at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Nixon, **Beyond Peace** , translated by Malik Abbas, Dar Al-Ahlia, Egypt, 1995, pp. 16–17.

history has shown, many conflicts have undergone a dramatic shift when the supposedly weaker side managed to prolong the war, changing the dynamics of the conflict. In their favor.

Therefore, this research contributes to a broader understanding of military strategy and conflict resolution. He points out that when assessing the outcome of wars, consider not only immediate battlefield gains but also the long-term strategic implications of prolonging the conflict. The findings of this research have profound implications for military planners, policymakers, and historians in understanding the complexities of war and its often unexpected nature.

This essay significantly contributes by providing a flexible and comprehensive conceptual framework for evaluating the results of war, especially in the setting of extended warfare. This approach transcends traditional military metrics—such as territory acquisitions or casualty figures—and presents a comprehensive analytical tool that incorporates military, economic, political, psychological, and cultural aspects. This method enables a systematic assessment of both the actual and intangible costs of war, together with the degree to which each side attains or fails to attain its declared objectives.

This methodology is especially pertinent at a time when asymmetrical warfare, hybrid wars, and ideological confrontations are on the rise, rendering conventional concepts of triumph and loss more antiquated. By employing consistent criteria across various historical and geopolitical situations, we may standardize our analytical approaches while still recognizing the distinct attributes of each battle.

This paradigm acknowledges that triumph and failure are not absolute classifications, but rather relative results shaped by several internal and external factors, including domestic political stability, international legitimacy, economic resiliency, and public image. The resolution of a war is not only

dictated by military events, but by a state's capacity to withstand, adapt, and use the post-conflict landscape.

This relativity necessitates that each dispute be examined within its particular context. A short-term tactical success may, with sustained strategic pressure, transform into a long-term defeat. A state that experiences initial defeats may ultimately succeed by exhibiting resilience, ideological consistency, and diplomatic adaptability.

By employing this integrated and contextualized perspective, researchers, military strategists, and politicians may get a more profound and precise comprehension of the whole continuum of war—from its beginning to its aftermath. This facilitates more informed decision-making at all phases of conflict: from strategic planning and combat involvement to ceasefire negotiations and post-war rehabilitation. The essay enhances both academic discourse and the practical field of conflict assessment and resolution, providing techniques relevant to historical analysis and modern policy formulation.