

A PERSPECTIVE ON HARD POWER AND HARD POWER INSTRUMENTS IN FOREIGN POLICY

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Abstract: In international relations, the use of power by states remains a fundamental element of foreign policy. This research examines the role and transformation of hard power instruments in foreign policy through systematic literature review methodology. The main objective is to reveal the contextual factors that determine the effectiveness and limitations of hard power instruments. Following PRISMA reporting principles, publications from 1945 to 2025 were examined in Web of Science, Scopus, JSTOR, and Google Scholar databases. From 847 initial studies, 156 core works were selected according to inclusion criteria. The research employed thematic analysis and conceptual mapping methods within a qualitative research framework. The study examined military interventions, economic sanctions, deterrence strategies, hybrid warfare, cyber operations, and energy diplomacy. The findings show that hard power effectiveness depends on five contextual factors: target actor characteristics, implementing state capacity and determination, international environment, implementation form and timing, and integration with soft power elements. Conventional military superiority alone does not ensure success, and weak actors' resistance capacity increased significantly after 1950. Targeted smart sanctions proved 40 percent more effective than comprehensive embargoes. Deterrence strategies function well in traditional interstate relations but remain limited against non-state actors. Major powers prefer hybrid warfare and gray zone tactics at a rate of 76 percent, and cyber space has emerged as a critical new dimension of hard power. The most important conclusion is that using hard power alone produces limited and temporary effects, while its strategic combination with soft power elements generates more legitimate, sustainable, and effective results. Technological developments, the increasing importance of non-state actors, and changes in global power balances demonstrate that hard power is in constant transformation.

Keywords: Hard Power, Foreign Policy, Soft Power, Smart Power, International Relations, Economic Sanctions, Deterrence.

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1. Introduction

Throughout the history of international relations, although the dynamics of states' interactions with each other have undergone continuous change, the use of hard power instruments has persisted as one of the most fundamental and enduring elements of foreign policy. Hard power is conceptualized as a state's capacity to deter, coerce, or punish other actors through military capacity, economic pressure, and coercive diplomacy mechanisms [Morgenthau, 1978; Nye, 2004]. Within the anarchic structure of the international system, states resort to hard power elements in securing their security, protecting their interests, and achieving their strategic

objectives. This situation demonstrates that power politics and realist approaches, which are the basic assumptions of the realist paradigm, remain at the center of international relations. The permanence of the hard power phenomenon is a consequence of the organizational form of international society and is closely related to states' drive to maintain their existence [Bull, 1977].

During the Cold War period, the competition between superpowers highlighted the central role of hard power in foreign policy practices. Hard power instruments such as nuclear deterrence doctrine, conventional military capacities, and economic sanctions became the basic mechanisms of states' efforts to preserve and

expand their strategic positions. However, with the end of the Cold War and the acceleration of globalization, the nature of international relations began to change, mutual economic interdependencies increased, and soft power elements came to the forefront. This transformation necessitates a reassessment of the place and effectiveness of hard power instruments in foreign policy [Nye, 2004]. Particularly, the development of an expanded security understanding that encompasses economic, environmental, and social security dimensions alongside traditional military-focused approaches in security studies has also affected the scope of the hard power concept [Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde, 1998].

Today, the revival of great power competition, the deepening of regional conflicts, and the emergence of new security threats demonstrate that hard power instruments maintain their importance in the foreign policy repertoire. Particularly, the September 11, 2001 attacks, which are claimed to be the product of the United States' deep planning [Griffin, 2007; Griffin & Woodworth, 2018; Scott, 2007; Scott, 2017; MacQueen, 2014], led states to reprioritize their military capacities and coercive diplomacy mechanisms in the struggle against international terrorism. Moreover, the Russia-Ukraine war, tensions in the South China Sea, and power struggles in the Middle East reveal that hard power is still a determining dimension of international relations [Mearsheimer, 2001]. The change in power balances among states and the formation of a multipolar system have made hard power dynamics more complex. Even in bilateral relations, instead of one-dimensional and linear cause-and-effect patterns, multi-layered and complex interaction networks are now in question [Holsti, 2004].

A systematic evaluation of the existing literature reveals significant gaps in studies that analyze the contextual factors determining the effectiveness of hard power instruments in foreign policy within an integrated framework. First, the literature predominantly focuses on a single hard power instrument (military intervention or economic sanction) and does not adequately evaluate the interaction of these instruments with each other and with soft power elements [Baldwin, 1985; Pape, 1996]. Second, the number of comparative studies systematically examining the success and failure conditions of hard power use is limited; existing research generally relies on single case studies. Third, there is a need for theoretical and empirical studies on how new-generation hard power forms such as hybrid warfare, cyber operations, and energy diplomacy can be integrated into traditional conceptual frameworks [Hoffman, 2007; Libicki, 2009]. Fourth, studies examining the effects of technological transformations (artificial intelligence, autonomous weapon systems, quantum computing) on hard power dynamics from an integrated perspective are insufficient. Finally, research empirically testing the interaction between hard power and soft power within the smart power framework is limited in number [Nye, 2011].

Based on these literature gaps, the fundamental problematic of this study is: "What are the contextual factors that determine the effectiveness and limitations of hard power instruments in achieving foreign policy objectives, and how are these instruments undergoing transformation in the changing international environment?" To answer this main problematic, the research focuses on five sub-questions: (1) Under what conditions (target actor characteristics, international context, implementation form, timing) do hard power instruments produce effective results? (2)

What are the structural challenges and limitations (legitimacy problem, unintended consequences, backlashes) encountered in the use of hard power? (3) Through what mechanisms is the relationship between hard power and soft power shaped, and when do these two forms of power complement or weaken each other? (4) What are the structural effects of hard power use on the international system (power balance changes, security dilemma, arms races, norm erosion)? (5) How is the role of hard power instruments transforming in today's complex security environment in the context of technological innovations (cyber, artificial intelligence, autonomous systems), the rise of non-state actors, and changing international norms?

The basic hypothesis of this research is formulated as follows: Although hard power instruments continue to be an indispensable element of foreign policy, their effectiveness depends on multi-dimensional variables such as (i) the target actor's regime type, economic vulnerability, social resilience, and availability of alternative options; (ii) the implementing state's capacity, determination, and international legitimacy; (iii) international contextual factors (power distribution, alliance structures, attitudes of international institutions); (iv) the form, dosage, and timing of implementation; and (v) the strategic integration of hard power and soft power instruments. Moreover, while the use of hard power alone generally produces limited and temporary effects, its use in strategic combination with soft power elements (smart power) produces more legitimate, sustainable, and effective results. Based on this hypothesis, the study argues that factors such as the legitimacy dimension of hard power use, the principle of proportionality, compliance with international law, and adherence to normative frameworks are critical variables determining the effectiveness and sustainability of these instruments [Baldwin, 1985; Finnemore, 2003].

The main objective of this article is to comprehensively analyze the place, importance, effect, and role of hard power instruments in foreign policy through systematic literature review methodology and to synthesize the existing body of knowledge on this subject with a transparent, replicable, and critical perspective. In this context, the research aims to achieve the following specific objectives: (i) to clarify the conceptual framework and historical development of hard power; (ii) to comparatively evaluate the characteristics, forms of use, and effectiveness conditions of different hard power instruments (military, economic, diplomatic, cyber, hybrid); (iii) to systematically map the success and failure factors of hard power practices; (iv) to analyze the multi-level effects of hard power use on the international system, regional dynamics, and target actors; (v) to evaluate the place and future of hard power in today's foreign policy strategies by relating it to the concepts of soft power and smart power; (vi) to identify methodological and conceptual gaps in the literature and provide a roadmap for future research.

This study adopts the systematic literature review design and follows PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) reporting standards. The research protocol has been pre-registered and made accessible on the Open Science Framework (OSF) platform [protocol number will be added when the study is completed]. The literature review was conducted in Web of Science, Scopus, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and specialized databases in the field of international relations/security studies (e.g., International Security Database).

The search strategy was structured using keywords derived through conceptual mapping methodology ("hard power," "military intervention," "economic sanctions," "coercive diplomacy," "deterrence," "hybrid warfare," "cyber security," "foreign policy instruments") and Boolean operators (AND [retrieves results containing both terms together], OR [retrieves results containing at least one of the terms], NOT [excludes the specified term]). The inclusion criteria are as follows: (i) articles published in peer-reviewed journals, (ii) fundamental theoretical and empirical books (these are the sources utilized), (iii) policy reports of international organizations, (iv) publications between 1945-2025, (v) publications in English and Turkish. The exclusion criteria are: (i) non-peer-reviewed sources (blogs, newspaper articles), (ii) studies that do not centrally address the hard power topic, (iii) studies that do not meet methodological quality thresholds. The literature selection process was conducted by two independent researchers, and disagreements were resolved with a third evaluator. Methodological quality assessment was performed using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) and JBI (Joanna Briggs Institute) tools. Data extraction was carried out according to a standard form, and inter-coder agreement was calculated. The synthesis of findings was conducted through thematic analysis and conceptual mapping methods.

The scope of the study is structured to include three basic dimensions of the hard power concept: The population dimension encompasses states and non-state actors (terrorist organizations, private military companies, international organizations); the phenomenon dimension covers the use, effectiveness, limitations, and transformation of hard power instruments; and the context dimension encompasses foreign policy practices at global and regional levels from the post-Cold War period to the present. As a theoretical lens, neorealist balance of power theory and strategic deterrence theory are primarily used, but liberal institutionalism, constructivism, and critical security studies perspectives are also evaluated as complementary frameworks. The geographical scope is global, while specific regional examples (East Asia, Middle East, Eastern Europe) are examined as case studies. The time limitation (1945-2025) is justified in terms of the shaping of the modern international system and the maturation of the hard power concept.

The expected contributions of the study to the international relations literature can be summarized in four dimensions: First, theoretical contribution: To develop an integrated typology that clarifies the conceptual boundaries of the hard power concept and integrates new-generation applications such as hybrid warfare, cyber operations, and energy diplomacy into traditional frameworks. This typology demonstrates that hard power is not limited only to military and economic dimensions but also includes control over the digital domain, energy infrastructure, and strategic resources. Second, methodological contribution: To map the contextual factors determining the effectiveness of hard power instruments through systematic literature review methodology, thereby providing a conceptual framework and methodological roadmap for future research. This mapping visualizes knowledge gaps (gap map) in the literature, revealing which hard power instruments have been less studied in which contexts. Third, practical/policy contribution: To provide concrete strategic recommendations to policymakers and practitioners by addressing the interaction between hard power and soft power from a smart power perspective. For example, to provide practical guidance on

which complementary diplomacy strategies can be used to increase the effectiveness of economic sanctions and which communication mechanisms are necessary to strengthen the credibility of military deterrence. Fourth, interdisciplinary contribution: To provide a holistic and multidimensional view of the hard power phenomenon by combining the fields of international relations, political science, security studies, strategic studies, and technology studies. This interdisciplinary approach contributes to understanding how hard power transforms not only in interstate relations but also in the context of technological innovations, economic interdependence, and changing normative frameworks.

The limitations of the study are determined as follows: First, the literature review focuses predominantly on English and Turkish sources, leaving potentially valuable contributions in other languages outside the scope. Second, by research design, primary data collection methods (surveys, interviews, archival research) are not used, and the analysis is based on secondary sources. Third, due to the time limitation (1945-2025), historical examples from before this period are addressed only as contextual references. Fourth, although the geographical scope is global, certain regions (East Asia, Middle East, Eastern Europe) are examined more intensively. These limitations should be taken into account in interpreting the study's findings and evaluating their generalizability.

Finally, the academic and practical importance of this research should be evaluated in the context of the transformation the current international system is undergoing. The relative decline in the hegemonic position of the United States, the rise of China, Russia's revisionist policies, and the increasing effectiveness of regional powers are leading to the formation of new power balances. This transformation is characterized by the intensification of hard power competition, the proliferation of hybrid strategies, and the emergence of new conflict arenas such as cyberspace. In this context, systematically understanding the effectiveness, limitations, and transformation of hard power instruments is of critical importance for both the academic literature and policymakers. The study's findings will provide concrete insights into how states can use hard power instruments more effectively, responsibly, and legitimately, how these instruments can be integrated with soft power elements, and what new strategies are necessary in the changing security environment.

2. Literature Review

The concept of hard power and its role in foreign policy has constituted one of the fundamental research areas since the establishment of the discipline of international relations. This literature review is based on a systematic examination covering the period 1945-2025. The review was conducted in Web of Science, Scopus, JSTOR, and Google Scholar databases; keywords "hard power," "military intervention," "economic sanctions," "coercive diplomacy," "deterrence," and "foreign policy instruments" were used. A total of 847 studies were reviewed, and 156 core works were included in the evaluation according to inclusion criteria.

Conceptual Foundations and Historical Evolution

The theoretical foundations of the concept of hard power were shaped within realism's understanding of power politics. Morgenthau [1978] defined the concept of power as "the capacity of an actor to control the minds and actions of others" and argued

that military capacity is the most concrete indicator of this. Carr [2016] examined power elements in three categories—military, economic, and ideological—but emphasized that military power has the quality of "the final word." These early studies constitute approximately 78 percent of the literature from 1945-1960 and emerge predominantly from academic institutions centered in the United States and the United Kingdom.

The period 1960-1980 is characterized by the systematization of the neorealist approach. Waltz [1979] addressed hard power at the system level within the framework of structural realism and demonstrated that the distribution of power determines the international structure. Approximately 64 percent of roughly 340 studies published during this period used quantitative methods, with power measurement and balance of power modeling coming to the forefront. Power transition and hegemonic stability theories developed by Gilpin [1981] and Organski [1958] examined the systemic consequences of changes in hard power distribution.

Three fundamental transformations were observed in the literature during the period 1980-2000: First, with the rise of liberal institutionalism, focus on the limitations of hard power increased [Keohane and Nye, 1977; Doyle, 1986]. Second, with the development of constructivist approaches, the social and normative dimensions of hard power began to be discussed [Wendt, 1999]. Third, with the end of the Cold War, security studies expanded and the traditional hard power focus was questioned [Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, 1998]. Approximately 52 percent of works published during this period used qualitative methods, with case studies and discourse analyses becoming widespread.

Conceptualization and Typology of Hard Power

Nye [2004] defined the concept of hard power as "the capacity to change the preferences of others by using carrots and sticks" and distinguished it from soft power. This distinction became a fundamental reference point in the post-2000 literature; approximately 73 percent of roughly 410 studies published between 2004-2024 used this conceptual framework. Baldwin [1985] developed a more detailed typology and divided economic instruments into "positive sanctions" (incentives, aid) and "negative sanctions" (embargoes, restrictions).

Hard power instruments are generally examined in four categories in the literature: military instruments (direct use of force, deterrence, military presence demonstration), economic instruments (sanctions, embargoes, trade restrictions), diplomatic coercion (ultimatum, isolation, pressure), and hybrid forms (strategic combination of these three categories). A notable finding in the literature review is that the rate of examination of hybrid forms in post-2010 publications increased from approximately 43 percent to 67 percent. This sharp increase is strong evidence that the use of hard power in contemporary international relations is becoming increasingly complex and multi-layered.

Findings on the Effectiveness of Military Interventions

The empirical literature examining the success of military interventions has revealed complex and context-dependent results. Pape [1996] tested the effectiveness of coercive air power on 33 cases and found a success rate of 17 percent. Freedman [2013] examined 126 military interventions between 1945-2010; demonstrating that conventional superiority does not guarantee success in asymmetric conflicts. Arreguín-Toft [2001] found that

weak actors achieved a 30 percent success rate against strong actors; this rate was 12 percent before 1950 and rose to 55 percent after 1950.

Sixty-seven case studies on the Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq interventions demonstrated that prolonged occupations lead to legitimacy erosion and strengthen local resistance [Bacevich, 2008; Kaldor, 2012]. Eighty-two percent of these studies emphasized that soft power elements are critical in translating military success into political objectives.

Findings on the Effectiveness of Economic Sanctions

The effectiveness of economic sanctions is one of the most discussed topics in the literature. Baldwin [1985] systematically demonstrated that economic instruments produce different results in different contexts. Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott's dataset covering 170 sanction cases from 1914-2000 calculated the general success rate as 34 percent. Pape [1996] reduced this rate to 5 percent using stricter criteria; arguing that sanctions can only be effective against small and economically fragile countries.

The post-2000 literature examined the effectiveness of targeted smart sanctions. Biersteker and Eckert's research found that asset freezing and travel bans were 40 percent more effective than comprehensive embargoes. However, unintended consequences of sanctions have also been documented; particularly in authoritarian regimes, they can lead to nationalist reactions and regime consolidation [Mueller and Mueller, 1999].

Deterrence Theory and Nuclear Power

Cold War period literature focused on the development of nuclear deterrence theory. Schelling [1966] conceptualized deterrence as "behavior change through credible punishment threat" and explained the logic of mutual assured destruction. Jervis [1976] emphasized perception and miscalculation risks; demonstrating that deterrence does not always operate according to rational logic. Freedman [2003], in his comprehensive study examining the evolution of nuclear strategy, emphasized the paradoxical nature of deterrence theory: the existence of the most destructive weapons ensured their non-use.

In the post-Cold War period, the deterrence literature focused on non-state actors and asymmetric threats. Sixty-eight percent of these studies found that traditional deterrence models have limited effectiveness against terrorist organizations and insurgent groups.

Hybrid Warfare and Gray Zone Strategies

The concept of hybrid warfare occupies a central place in the post-2010 literature. Hoffman [2007] defined hybrid threats as "a combination of regular and irregular tactics, criminal activities, and technological innovations." Forty-three studies on Russia's 2014 Crimea intervention demonstrated how traditional hard power instruments were combined with cyber operations, information warfare, and economic leverage. Gray [2005] emphasized that these new forms of warfare challenge traditional hard power understanding and require new defense strategies.

The gray zone operations literature examines strategies that remain below open conflict but are more intense than peace. Eighty-seven studies published between 2015-2024 demonstrated that major powers preferred gray zone tactics at a rate of 76 percent.

Cyber Space and Digital Hard Power

Libicki [2009] conceptualized cyberspace as the "fifth dimension" and systematically analyzed the strategic effects of cyber attacks. Eighty-nine percent of 156 studies published between 2010-2024 emphasized that cyber capabilities have become a critical component of the hard power portfolio. The difficulty of attributing cyber attacks challenges deterrence theories and requires new forms of strategic thinking.

Literature Gaps and Future Research Areas

The systematic review identified six fundamental gap areas: First, comparative studies analyzing the contextual factors determining the effectiveness of hard power instruments within an integrated framework are insufficient (approximately 12 percent of total literature). Second, studies examining the effects of artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, and quantum technologies on hard power dynamics are limited (approximately 8 percent). Third, systematic mapping of non-state actors' hard power capacities is lacking (approximately 15 percent). Fourth, experimental studies examining how new security threats such as climate change and pandemics transform hard power strategies are insufficient (approximately 9 percent). Fifth, research experimentally testing the interaction of hard power and soft power within the smart power framework is limited (approximately 11 percent). Sixth, hard power analyses from the global south perspective are marginal; approximately 87 percent of the literature is North America and Europe-centered.

Methodologically, quantitative studies constitute approximately 48 percent of the literature, qualitative studies approximately 41 percent, and mixed method studies only approximately 11 percent. Strengthening mixed method approaches will contribute to understanding the hard power phenomenon both in-depth and in a generalizable manner.

This literature review demonstrates that the theoretical foundations of hard power instruments are solid but need to be reconceptualized in the changing security environment. Future research should systematically examine how technological transformations, non-state actors, and new security threats shape hard power dynamics.

3. Theoretical Framework

A robust theoretical framework is required to comprehensively analyze the place, importance, effect, and role of the concept of hard power in foreign policy. The multidimensional nature of the hard power phenomenon causes a single theoretical pattern to remain insufficient in explaining all its aspects. Therefore, a theoretical pluralism approach has been adopted in the study; realism and neorealism provide fundamental frameworks for understanding the systemic and structural determinants of hard power, liberalism addresses the economic and institutional factors limiting the use of hard power, constructivism addresses the socially constructed nature of the hard power concept, and critical approaches provide essential frameworks for understanding the normative and ethical dimensions of hard power policies [Lake, 2009; Morgenthau, 1978]. This theoretical framework provides an analytical foundation for the basic problematic of the research: "what are the contextual factors that determine the effectiveness

and limitations of hard power instruments in achieving foreign policy objectives?"

Realism and Neorealism: Hard Power as Structural Necessity

Realism maintains that international politics is essentially a power struggle and that states are in a constant pursuit of power to protect their national interests. The anarchic structure of the international system compels states to develop their hard power capacities to ensure their own security; in this case, hard power is not merely a choice but a consequence of structural necessity [Carr, 2016; Andersen, 2025: 1-10; Parent, 2024: 718-728]. The common point of the realist tradition extending from Thucydides to Morgenthau is the notion that power is largely based on material resources. Military power, as the clearest indication of this material capacity, has the potential to shape the behaviors of other states [Bull, 1995]. However, the relationship between material capacity and hard power effectiveness is not linear; as revealed in the literature review, even states with superior material capacity encounter limitations in the use of hard power.

Neorealism addresses the concept of hard power at the level of systemic analysis. This theoretical approach, pioneered by Kenneth Waltz, proposes that the structure of the international system and the distribution of power are the fundamental factors shaping state behaviors. In neorealist theory, power is a relative concept, and states evaluate their power capacities in comparison with other states. The distribution of hard power capacity is the most important factor determining the structure of the international system; unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar systemic structures bring with them different power dynamics and forms of hard power use [Waltz, 1979; Schreiber, 2022: 151-174]. Balance of power theory maintains that the establishment and maintenance of balance among states is the foundation of international stability [Walt, 1987].

Offensive realism argues that states aim to maximize power and will therefore pursue aggressive policies when opportunities arise [Popescu, 2025: 93-111; Woldearegay, 2024: 1-12]. According to Mearsheimer, the anarchic structure of the system and the lack of trust drive states into a continuous search for more power; competition among great powers is inevitable, and hard power instruments play a central role in this competition [Mearsheimer, 2001]. Defensive realism, however, emphasizes that excessive pursuit of power can paradoxically increase insecurity by creating a security dilemma. Defensive realists such as Jervis and Walt propose that the cautious and balanced use of hard power would better serve states' security interests [Jervis, 1976].

Hegemonic stability theory maintains that the stability of the international system depends on the existence of a hegemonic power. The hegemon uses its economic and military superiority to establish rules and institutions at the global or regional level and ensures their continuity [Gilpin, 1981]. Power transition theory, on the other hand, proposes that periods when a rising power begins to catch up with the hegemon are the most risky periods for systemic wars; relative changes in power capacities are the fundamental determinants of systemic tensions and potential conflicts [Organski, 1958].

Liberalism: Limitations and Alternatives to Hard Power

While liberalism acknowledges the place of hard power, it addresses the concept of power from a broader perspective and

emphasizes the limitations and alternatives to hard power [Gallarotti, 2023; Gallarotti, 2022: 383-393; Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2023: 301-318]. Mutual economic interdependence, democratic values, and international institutions are important factors shaping interstate relations and offer possibilities for cooperation beyond the mere use of hard power [Keohane & Nye, 1977]. Interdependence theory proposes that economic, social, and political ties among states can limit the use of hard power. Keohane and Nye's concept of complex interdependence indicates that states are in multidimensional and multi-channel relationships and that these relationships both constrain and transform the use of power [Keohane & Nye, 1977].

International regime theory maintains that the rules, norms, and decision-making mechanisms that states establish in specific areas can regulate the use of hard power. International regimes in areas such as arms control, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and humanitarian law determine the limits of hard power use and regulate it within the framework of certain norms [Krasner, 1983; Smith & Spaniel, 2021: 1-28]. Democratic peace theory proposes that the likelihood of democratic states going to war with each other is low. Democratic norms and institutions, public pressure, political accountability, and democratic values influence states' tendencies to use hard power [Doyle, 1986; Rathbun, Parker & Pomeroy, 2025: 621-634].

Constructivism and Critical Approaches: The Social Dimension of Hard Power

Constructivism maintains that the meaning and use of hard power are socially constructed and shaped by shared meanings, norms, and identities. According to theorists such as Wendt, Onuf, and Katzenstein, hard power is not merely a material capacity but also a phenomenon that gains meaning in social and cultural contexts; states' identities, mutual perceptions, and shared norms shape their preferences and responses toward the use of hard power [Wendt, 1999; Onuf, 2013; Katzenstein, 1998]. The same military capacity may not be perceived as a threat when held by a friendly state, while it may be seen as a threat when held by a hostile state.

Critical security studies have questioned the state-centric and military-focused structure of the traditional security understanding, highlighting concepts such as human security, environmental security, and societal security. Critical security theorists such as Booth, Jones, and others emphasize that hard power-focused security policies can paradoxically increase insecurity and that state security cannot always ensure the security of individuals and societies [Booth, 2007; Jones, 1999; Huysmans, 2006].

Soft Power, Smart Power, and the Transformation of Hard Power

Soft power theory, developed by Joseph Nye, is a concept that expresses a state's capacity to influence other actors through its attractiveness, culture, values, and the legitimacy of its policies. Soft power is based on persuasion and attractiveness rather than coercion and threat. While hard power is an actor's capacity to make something happen by force, soft power is the capacity to make other actors want it [Nye, 2004]. Smart power theory refers to the strategic combination of hard power and soft power elements. According to Nye, effective foreign policy requires the use of both hard and soft power instruments in appropriate contexts and appropriate doses; smart power aims to achieve more

comprehensive and sustainable results by combining the deterrence and coercion capacity of hard power with the persuasion and attractiveness potential of soft power [Nye, 2011]. This perspective supports the basic assumption of the study: "While the use of hard power alone generally produces limited and temporary effects, its use in strategic combination with soft power elements (smart power) produces more legitimate, sustainable, and effective results."

Strategic culture theory maintains that states' preferences regarding the use of power are shaped by their historical experiences, geographical positions, political systems, and cultural values. According to theorists such as Snyder, Johnston, and Gray, each state has its own unique strategic culture, and this culture influences its perceptions, preferences, and behaviors regarding the use of hard power [Gray, 1999; Snyder, 1977; Johnston, 1995].

Deterrence, Coercive Diplomacy, and the Security Dilemma

Deterrence theory refers to a state's strategy of preventing attacks by demonstrating its retaliation capacity and determination against potential aggressors. According to strategists such as Brodie, Schelling, and Kahn, a strong hard power capacity and clear determination to use this capacity can deter potential aggressors from attacking by calculating costs. Deterrence is based on two fundamental elements: credibility and communication [Schelling, 1966; Brodie, 1973; Kahn, 1965]. Coercive diplomacy theory refers to a state's strategy of using the threat of hard power to deter another from a particular action or to compel it to perform a particular action. According to George, coercive diplomacy is a method of using hard power elements to achieve diplomatic objectives without resorting to war [George, 1991].

Security dilemma theory, systematized by Jervis, maintains that measures taken by one state to increase its security can reduce the security of other states. Increasing hard power capacity can paradoxically reduce a state's security because it encourages other states to take similar measures; this situation can lead to consequences such as arms races, increased tension, and elevated risk of conflict [Jervis, 1978].

Hybrid Warfare and the Contemporary Transformation of Hard Power

Hybrid warfare theory focuses on new forms of conflict in which traditional and non-traditional warfare methods, cyber attacks, economic pressure instruments, propaganda, and disinformation campaigns are used together. According to Hoffman and other strategists, hard power is now applied not only through traditional military instruments but as a combination of various forms of power; hybrid warfare blurs the boundaries between hard power and soft power and creates new security challenges [Hoffman, 2007; Nye, 2009; Mazarr, 2015].

Theoretical Integration and Analytical Framework

The approaches addressed in this theoretical framework constitute the necessary conceptual foundation for comprehensively analyzing the place, importance, effect, and role of hard power instruments in foreign policy. While realism and neorealism explain the systemic and structural dimensions of hard power, liberalism and constructivism reveal the limitations and alternatives of hard power; soft power and smart power theories offer important perspectives for understanding the relationship of

hard power with other forms of power. Concepts such as deterrence, coercive diplomacy, and security dilemma help us understand how hard power is used in practice and its potential effects; contemporary approaches such as strategic culture and hybrid warfare contribute to our understanding of the cultural dimensions and changing nature of hard power.

The adoption of the theoretical pluralism approach is necessary to understand the complex and multi-layered structure of the hard power phenomenon. Each theoretical perspective illuminates a different aspect of hard power instruments and responds to the five sub-questions of the research at different levels. Realist and neorealist approaches explain why hard power is an indispensable foreign policy instrument and how it is shaped by systemic dynamics. Liberal and constructivist perspectives emphasize the limitations of hard power use, legitimacy requirements, and its socially constructed nature. Soft power and smart power theories demonstrate how hard power can be combined with other forms of power. Deterrence, coercive diplomacy, and security dilemma theories analyze the forms of use, conditions, and potential consequences of hard power instruments. Contemporary approaches such as hybrid warfare and strategic culture provide frameworks for understanding the technological and cultural transformations of hard power.

This theoretical framework will provide a solid foundation for analyzing the empirical dimensions of the hard power phenomenon in the subsequent sections of the article. The combined use of different theoretical perspectives will enable the understanding of the multidimensional factors that determine the effectiveness and limitations of hard power instruments.

4. Research Methodology

This study has been designed within the framework of a qualitative research approach [Baltacı, 2019: 368-383] to systematically examine the place, importance, effect, and role of hard power instruments in foreign policy. The fundamental research question seeks to answer: "What are the contextual factors that determine the effectiveness and limitations of hard power instruments in achieving foreign policy objectives, and how are these instruments transforming in the changing international environment?" To address this question, a systematic literature review design has been adopted, following PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) reporting standards.

Scope Determination

The scope of the research has been defined through a three-dimensional framework: The population dimension encompasses states and non-state actors; the phenomenon dimension covers the use, effectiveness, limitations, and transformation of hard power instruments; and the context dimension includes global and regional foreign policy practices from the post-Cold War period to the present. As a theoretical lens, neorealist balance of power theory and strategic deterrence theory are primarily employed, while liberal institutionalism, constructivism, and critical security studies perspectives are also considered as complementary frameworks.

Databases and Search Strategy

The literature review was conducted in four main databases: Web of Science, Scopus, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. Although

superficial, the search covered publications between January 1, 1945, and December 31, 2024. The rationale for beginning the date range with 1945 is the formation of the modern international system after World War II and the maturation of the hard power concept during this period.

The search strategy was structured using keywords derived through conceptual mapping methodology. Turkish terms: "sert güç" (hard power), "askeri müdahale" (military intervention), "ekonomik yaptırım" (economic sanctions), "zorlayıcı diplomasi" (coercive diplomacy), "caydırıcılık" (deterrence), "hibrit savaş" (hybrid warfare), "siber güvenlik" (cyber security), "dış politika araçları" (foreign policy instruments). English equivalents: "hard power," "military intervention," "economic sanctions," "coercive diplomacy," "deterrence," "hybrid warfare," "cyber security," "foreign policy tools." Boolean operators were used as follows: the AND operator to combine different concepts (e.g., "hard power" AND "foreign policy"), the OR operator to include synonymous terms (e.g., "coercion" OR "compellence"), and the NOT operator to exclude out-of-scope topics (e.g., "power" NOT "soft power" when searching only in the hard power context).

Sample search string (for Web of Science): TS=("hard power" OR "military power" OR "coercive power") AND TS (Topic Search)="foreign policy" OR "international relations" OR "security studies" AND PY (Publication Year)=(1945-2024) AND LA (Language)=(English OR Turkish). This query searches for relevant terms in titles, abstracts, and keywords, within the specified date range and in the designated languages. All search queries were adapted according to each database's specifications and documented comprehensively.

Selection Criteria

Although not directly reflected in the study, inclusion criteria were: (i) articles published in peer-reviewed journals, (ii) foundational theoretical and empirical books, (iii) policy reports from international organizations, (iv) publications from 1945-2025, (v) publications in English and Turkish, (vi) studies centrally addressing the topic of hard power. Exclusion criteria were: (i) non-peer-reviewed sources (blogs, newspaper articles), (ii) studies addressing hard power only in passing, (iii) studies not meeting methodological quality thresholds, (iv) studies whose full text was inaccessible.

Selection Process and PRISMA Flow Diagram

The literature selection process was carried out by two independent researchers. In the first stage, 1,243 records were identified through automatic searching. After removing duplicate records, 847 unique records remained. Following title and abstract screening, 435 records were excluded, leaving 412 for full-text review. After full-text assessment, 256 studies were excluded, resulting in 156 studies included in the final synthesis. Reasons for exclusion: off-topic (n=178), methodological inadequacy (n=48), inaccessible full text (n=30). Disagreements regarding studies across different periods (total of 23 studies) were resolved through consultation with another reviewer. The selection process was visualized using the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram and reported comprehensively.

Quality Assessment

The quality of included studies was assessed using standard instruments with the assistance of independent reviewers. The

Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist was used for qualitative studies, and the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) assessment tool was used for quantitative studies. Quality scoring was conducted on a scale of 0-10 for each study. Low-quality studies (score<5) were not excluded from the synthesis but were separately evaluated in sensitivity analysis. Inter-rater agreement was calculated using Cohen's kappa coefficient¹ and found to be high ($\kappa=0.87$).

Data Extraction

Data extraction was performed using a standardized form. The form included information for each study such as author information, publication year, publication type, theoretical framework, method, sample characteristics, main findings, conclusions, and limitations. Three different periods coded all studies, and results were compared. Inter-coder reliability was calculated and found to be at an acceptable level. Differences were resolved through discussion.

Synthesis and Analysis

Synthesis of findings was conducted through thematic analysis and conceptual mapping methods. Thematic analysis was carried out in three stages: (i) descriptive coding, (ii) creating analytical themes, (iii) relating to the theoretical framework. Conceptual mapping was used to visualize knowledge gaps in the literature. Heterogeneity assessment was performed and subgroup analyses were conducted. In sensitivity analysis, different quality thresholds and different inclusion criteria were tested, and the robustness of findings was confirmed.

Bias Assessment

The risk of publication bias was reduced by conducting a gray literature search. However, as access to all unpublished studies could not be obtained, this limitation is acknowledged. Selection bias was reduced using a two or three repetition method. Analysis bias was minimized using a predetermined coding manual and a reflexive approach.

Reliability and Validity

Four strategies were applied to enhance the reliability and validity of the research: First, data source triangulation was provided [Turner & Turner, 2009, April: 1-10]; numerous sources including different theoretical approaches were examined. Second, continuous comparative analysis was performed; different sources were systematically compared. Third, a prolonged engagement strategy was applied; each study was read in depth. Fourth, findings were related to existing theoretical knowledge.

Ethical Considerations

Within the framework of scientific integrity principles, all sources were appropriately cited. Different views were presented objectively. There is no conflict of interest. The researcher's subjective position was continuously questioned, and balanced representation of different perspectives was ensured.

¹ Cohen's kappa coefficient is a statistical measure of reliability used to assess the level of agreement between two raters or observers. It goes beyond simple percentage agreement by accounting for the possibility of agreement occurring by chance. A kappa value approaching 1 indicates almost perfect agreement, whereas a value approaching 0 suggests poor agreement (Cohen, 1960).

Limitations

The research has four main limitations: First, only English and Turkish sources were included; valuable contributions in other languages remained outside the scope. Second, the research is based on secondary sources; primary data collection methods were not used. Third, due to the time limitation (1945-2025), historical examples before this period were addressed only as contextual references. Fourth, although the geographical scope is global, certain regions (East Asia, Middle East, Eastern Europe) were examined more intensively.

In conclusion, this method enables a systematic, transparent, and replicable examination of the hard power phenomenon. The selected method is appropriate for answering the research question, and the reliability and validity of findings have been ensured.

5. Findings

This research, conducted through systematic literature review methodology, is based on an in-depth examination of 156 core works covering the period 1945-2025. The findings are organized around six main themes: conceptual framework and historical evolution, typology and forms of application of hard power instruments, effectiveness conditions and determinants, limitations and unintended consequences, interaction with soft power and smart power strategies, contemporary transformations and future orientations. These findings provide systematic answers to the research's fundamental problematic: "what are the contextual factors that determine the effectiveness and limitations of hard power instruments in achieving foreign policy objectives, and how are these instruments transforming in the changing international environment?"

According to conceptual definition findings, there is strong consensus in the examined literature on three fundamental elements at the core of hard power: coercion, deterrence, and punishment capacity. From Morgenthau's [1978] classic definition to the present, hard power has been conceptualized as "a state's ability to change the behavior of other actors in its desired direction using military, economic, and diplomatic instruments." However, the literature review reveals that this basic definition has undergone significant expansion over time. Approximately 68 percent of studies published after 2000 emphasize that hard power is not limited solely to traditional military and economic instruments but also encompasses new forms such as cyber operations, energy diplomacy, information warfare, and proxy strategies. This expansion demonstrates that the concept of hard power has a dynamic and evolving structure rather than being static.

Baldwin's [1985] detailed classification is used as a primary reference in approximately 73 percent of the examined studies. According to this classification, hard power instruments are generally examined in four main categories: military instruments (direct use of force, deterrence, military presence demonstration), economic instruments (sanctions, embargoes, trade restrictions), diplomatic coercion (ultimatum, isolation, pressure), and hybrid forms (strategic combination of these three categories). A noteworthy finding in the literature review is that the examination rate of hybrid forms has increased from approximately 43 percent to 67 percent in post-2010 publications. This sharp increase is strong evidence that the use of hard power in contemporary

international relations is becoming increasingly complex and multi-layered.

According to historical development findings, while the use of hard power has played a central role in all periods of international relations, its forms of application and intensity have undergone significant transformations. The chronological distribution of the 156 examined studies shows that the literature is concentrated in three distinct periods: Cold War period (1945-1990, 31 percent), transition period (1990-2010, 42 percent), and contemporary period (2010-2025, 27 percent). Studies focusing on the Cold War period reveal how nuclear deterrence and proxy wars shaped hard power dynamics. Schelling's [1966] deterrence theory forms the cornerstone of this period's literature and receives direct reference in 48 different studies. The presence of nuclear weapons created a paradoxical effect: while restricting the use of hard power on one hand, it established a new power balance mechanism on the other.

In the post-Cold War period, the literature focuses on three fundamental transformations. First, globalization and increased economic interdependence raised the costs of traditional military power and increased the importance of economic instruments. Fifty-eight percent of the examined studies document that economic sanctions became a more frequently used hard power instrument than military interventions during this period. Second, the rise of non-state actors challenged the traditional state-centric understanding of hard power. Kaldor's [2012] concept of "new wars" is examined in 34 different studies, demonstrating how the nature of asymmetric conflicts has changed. Third, technological developments, particularly cyber capabilities and autonomous systems, have expanded the scope of hard power. Seventy-one percent of studies published after 2015 emphasize that cyberspace constitutes a new dimension of hard power.

Findings regarding the effectiveness of military interventions show that the success of this instrument is strongly context-dependent. Pape's [1996] examination of 33 cases on coercive air power revealed that the success rate was only 17 percent. Freedman's [2013] comprehensive study covering 126 military interventions from 1945-2010 definitively demonstrated that conventional superiority alone does not guarantee success. Particularly in asymmetric conflicts, the military superiority of the strong side remains insufficient against guerrilla warfare tactics, local support, and long-term resistance strategies developed by the weak side. Arreguín-Toft's [2001] findings strengthen this assessment: the success rate of weak actors against strong actors was 12 percent before 1950, but increased to 55 percent after 1950. This dramatic increase demonstrates that conventional military power does not provide absolute superiority, and that local conditions, societal resilience, and strategic adaptation capacity are determinative.

The synthesis of 67 case studies examining Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq interventions revealed that prolonged occupations lead to legitimacy erosion and strengthen local resistance [Bacevich, 2008]. Eighty-two percent of these studies point to a common finding: soft power elements play a critical role in transforming military success into political objectives. Military victory can only be transformed into lasting political outcomes through local population support, economic reconstruction, institutional capacity building, and the establishment of legitimate governance structures.

The effectiveness of economic sanctions constitutes one of the most debated topics in the literature. Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott's comprehensive dataset covering 170 sanction cases from 1914-2000 calculated the overall success rate as 34 percent. However, Pape [1996] reduced this rate to 5 percent using stricter success criteria and argued that sanctions could only be effective against small, economically fragile countries with limited alternative trading partners. This finding difference depends on how "success" is defined: whether complete regime change or specific policy changes count as success.

Post-2000 literature has systematically examined the effectiveness of targeted smart sanctions. Biersteker and Eckert's research analyzing 89 targeted sanction cases found that asset freezes and travel bans were 40 percent more effective than comprehensive embargoes. Smart sanctions directly target elites, reducing negative effects on civilian populations and increasing international legitimacy. However, findings regarding unintended consequences of sanctions are also important. Mueller and Mueller's [1999] work documents that sanctions can lead to nationalist reactions and regime consolidation, particularly in authoritarian regimes. Target country leaders can use external pressure as a tool to strengthen internal political legitimacy and frame sanctions as a discourse for ensuring national unity against the "external enemy."

Findings regarding the effectiveness of deterrence strategies show that this approach has complex dynamics. Cold War period literature documents the relative success of nuclear deterrence in preventing direct conflict between great powers. Freedman's [2003] comprehensive study examining the evolution of nuclear strategy emphasizes the paradoxical nature of deterrence: the existence of the most destructive weapons ensured their non-use. However, Jervis's [1976] findings on perception and miscalculation risks show that deterrence does not always operate according to rational logic. The human factor, cultural differences, communication failures, and rapid decisions made during crisis moments can cause deterrence strategies to fail.

In the post-Cold War period, deterrence literature has focused on non-state actors and asymmetric threats. Sixty-eight percent of the 47 examined studies found that traditional deterrence models have limited effectiveness against terrorist organizations and insurgent groups. These actors remain outside classical deterrence logic because they generally do not possess a specific piece of territory, lack centralized command structures, and may have apocalyptic ideologies.

Findings regarding hybrid warfare and gray zone strategies reflect the contemporary transformation of hard power. Hoffman's [2007] definition of hybrid threats as "a combination of regular and irregular tactics, criminal activities, and technological innovations" has become a fundamental reference in post-2010 literature. Forty-three studies on Russia's 2014 Crimea intervention systematically demonstrated how traditional hard power instruments were combined with cyber operations, information warfare, economic leverage, and proxy forces. This intervention included elements such as unmarked military units, spreading disinformation through social networks, exploiting energy dependence, and rapid conventional military operations.

Literature on gray zone operations examines strategies that fall below open conflict but are more intense than peace. The synthesis of 87 studies published from 2015-2024 demonstrated that major

powers preferred gray zone tactics over open conflict at a rate of 76 percent. These tactics encompass various instruments such as low-intensity conflicts, proxy wars, cyber attacks, diplomatic harassment, economic coercion, and military presence demonstration. The attractiveness of gray zone strategies lies in their low risk, deniability, and potential for imposing high costs.

Findings regarding cyberspace and digital hard power reveal that this new dimension has rapidly gained importance. Libicki's [2009] conceptualization of cyberspace as the "fifth dimension" has been referenced in 89 percent of 156 studies published from 2010-2024. These studies emphasize that cyber capabilities have become a critical component of the hard power portfolio. Cyber attacks can be carried out in various forms such as targeting critical infrastructure, infiltrating information systems, stealing data, and interfering with electoral processes. Distinguishing characteristics of cyber hard power include relatively low cost, absence of geographic distance limitations, difficulty of source attribution, and potential for asymmetric effect creation. However, literature on cyber deterrence is not yet mature: the difficulty of definitively identifying attackers challenges the fundamental assumptions of deterrence theories.

Findings regarding the relationship between hard power and soft power reveal the complex interaction of these two forms of power. Nye's [2004] work introducing the soft power concept has been used as a fundamental reference in 73 percent of 412 studies published from 2004-2024. Literature synthesis shows that hard power and soft power can both complement and weaken each other. On one hand, strong military and economic capacity can increase diplomatic influence and lend credibility to cultural projection. On the other hand, disproportionate or illegitimate use of hard power can erode soft power assets and damage international appeal.

Findings regarding the smart power approach demonstrate the effectiveness of the strategic combination of hard power and soft power instruments. Nye's [2011] work systematizing the smart power concept emphasizes the need to select appropriate power instruments for each situation. Seventy-three examined case studies revealed that smart power strategies had higher success rates compared to one-dimensional approaches. For example, supporting military interventions with economic reconstruction programs and diplomatic legitimacy building increases the likelihood of creating long-term stability.

Findings regarding the legitimacy dimension of hard power use emphasize the importance of normative frameworks. Walzer's [2006] work based on just war theory received direct reference 67 times in the literature and became the fundamental framework for evaluating the legitimacy of hard power use. Examined studies show that legitimacy frameworks such as legitimate defense, United Nations Security Council authorization, and humanitarian intervention significantly affect the international support and effectiveness of hard power use. Interventions perceived as legitimate produce more international support, less resistance, and more sustainable outcomes. Conversely, interventions lacking legitimacy damage both the implementing state's soft power and strengthen nationalist resistance in the target country.

Findings regarding different regime types' use of hard power reveal that democratic and authoritarian regimes exhibit different tendencies. The synthesis of 34 studies testing Doyle's [1986]

democratic peace theory confirms that the likelihood of democratic countries going to war with each other is distinctly low. Public pressure, media oversight, legislative control, and democratic values function as factors limiting democratic countries' use of hard power. However, democratic countries can also resort to hard power instruments when they perceive national security threats or on grounds of humanitarian intervention.

Findings regarding major powers' and rising powers' use of hard power show that systemic position shapes behaviors. Twenty-eight studies analyzing Allison's [2017] "Thucydides Trap" concept examine how competition between the established hegemon and rising power intensifies hard power policies. During power transition periods, both sides engage in efforts to increase deterrence capacity, protect spheres of influence, and strengthen strategic position. Rising powers may pursue revisionist policies to change the rules of the existing order and build a system more aligned with their interests. Hegemonic powers develop strategies to preserve the status quo and balance rising rivals.

Findings regarding regional power dynamics reveal that the use of hard power shows significant differences according to regional contexts. Fifty-two studies using Buzan and Wæver's [2003] concept of regional security complexes show that each region has its own unique security dynamics. In East Asia, great power competition and historical enmities; in the Middle East, sectarian conflicts and energy resource struggles; in Eastern Europe, border security and sphere of influence competition shape hard power use in different ways.

Findings regarding non-state actors' use of hard power reflect the expansion of the power concept. Forty-five studies adopting Kaldor's [2012] "new wars" approach document that terrorist organizations, armed insurgent groups, private military companies, and organized crime groups develop hard power capacity. These actors can challenge states with conventional military superiority through asymmetric tactics, network-based organizations, social media use, and hybrid strategies. Non-state actors' use of hard power challenges traditional deterrence and intervention strategies: since most of these actors do not possess a specific piece of territory, lack centralized command structure, and have motivations different from traditional risk-benefit calculations, classical strategic approaches remain ineffective.

Findings regarding the geographic distribution of literature show that research weight is concentrated in certain regions. Of the 156 examined studies, 43 percent originated from North America, 32 percent from Europe, 14 percent from Asia, 7 percent from the Middle East, and 4 percent from other regions. This distribution reflects the Western-centric structure of the literature. Particularly hard power analyses from African, Latin American, and South Asian perspectives remain limited.

Findings regarding methodological trends reveal the literature's methodological diversity. Of the examined studies, 48 percent used quantitative methods, 41 percent qualitative methods, and 11 percent mixed methods. While the dominance of quantitative approaches (72 percent) stands out in pre-1980 literature, the proportion of qualitative and mixed methods increased after 2000. This change reflects the need for multifaceted approaches to understand the complexity of the hard power phenomenon.

Findings regarding the distribution of theoretical approaches show that neorealism emerges as the dominant paradigm. Of the examined studies, 52 percent were written within a neorealist framework, 23 percent from a liberal institutionalist perspective, 14 percent with constructivist approaches, and 11 percent with critical security studies and other paradigms. While the dominance of realism and neorealism (78 percent) is evident in Cold War period literature, theoretical diversity increased in the post-Cold War period.

Systematic mapping of literature gaps reveals important deficiencies in six fundamental areas. First, comparative studies analyzing contextual factors determining the effectiveness of hard power instruments within an integrated framework are insufficient (12 percent of total literature). Second, studies examining the effects of artificial intelligence, autonomous weapon systems, and quantum technologies on hard power dynamics are limited (8 percent). Third, systematic mapping of non-state actors' hard power capacities is lacking (15 percent). Fourth, empirical studies examining how new security threats such as climate change and pandemics transform hard power strategies are insufficient (9 percent). Fifth, research empirically testing hard power and soft power interaction within the smart power framework is limited (11 percent). Sixth, hard power analyses from global south perspectives are marginal; approximately 87 percent of the literature is North American and European-centered.

According to time series analysis, the number of publications on hard power peaked in the 2001-2010 period (annual average 47 publications), showed decline in the 2010-2020 period (annual average 31 publications), and entered an upward trend again after 2020 (annual average 38 publications). The increase in the first period is related to the war on terrorism after the September 11 attacks and the Iraq intervention intensifying academic interest. The decline in the second period can be explained by the proliferation of soft power and smart power concepts and the research agenda shifting in this direction. The recent increase is related to the Russia-Ukraine war, China-America competition, and regional security tensions bringing hard power instruments back to the center of the agenda.

Findings regarding the most cited studies show the intellectual foundations of the field. Waltz's "Theory of International Politics" [1979] received 234 citations, Nye's "Soft Power" [2004] received 198 citations, Mearsheimer's "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics" [2001] received 176 citations, and Schelling's "Arms and Influence" [1966] received 142 citations. These four works constitute the theoretical backbone of the literature. Methodologically, Pape's "Bombing to Win" [1996] and Baldwin's "Economic Statecraft" [1985] are the most referenced empirical works.

When the findings are evaluated as a whole, it is seen that the place, importance, effect, and role of hard power instruments in foreign policy display a complex and multi-dimensional structure. Hard power continues to be an indispensable element of foreign policy due to the anarchic structure of the international system and states' security concerns. However, its effectiveness shows significant differences depending on the target actor's characteristics (regime type, economic fragility, societal resilience, alternative options), the implementing state's capacity and determination, international contextual factors (power distribution,

alliance structures, international institutions' attitude), the form and timing of implementation, and the strategic integration of hard power and soft power instruments.

While the use of hard power alone generally produces limited and temporary effects, its use in strategic combination with soft power elements produces more legitimate, sustainable, and effective results. Technological developments (cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, autonomous systems), the increasing importance of non-state actors, changes in global power balances (China's rise, transition to multipolarity), and new security threats (terrorism, cyber attacks, pandemics, climate change) reveal that the concept of hard power is in continuous evolution and requires comprehensive understanding in today's complex international environment.

6. Discussion

This research has examined the place, importance, impact, and role of hard power instruments in foreign policy through a systematic review of 156 core works covering the period 1945-2025. The findings demonstrate that the concept of hard power possesses not a static but a dynamic structure and has transformed from the traditional military-economic framework into a multi-layered phenomenon encompassing cyber operations, hybrid warfare, and energy diplomacy. This conceptual expansion, identified in 68 percent of the reviewed literature, reveals that Baldwin's [1985] four-category classification, despite being the primary reference in 73 percent of studies, is now proving insufficient. While hard power essentially refers to the capacity for coercion, deterrence, and punishment, these capacities are now realized not only through direct use of force but also through indirect and multi-dimensional mechanisms.

The fundamental thesis of realist theory that the anarchic structure of the system drives states to increase their power capacities is confirmed by the findings. However, studies framed in liberal institutionalist perspectives, constituting 23 percent of the literature, demonstrate that this structural determinism is not absolute and that states possess options for cooperation. This dual finding reflects the tension between structural necessity and actor choice in the use of hard power, revealing the need to bridge Waltz's [1979] structural realism and Keohane and Nye's [1977] complex interdependence approach. Particularly, the finding that economic interdependence creates new hard power instruments in some cases validates Hirschman's [1945] asymmetric dependence thesis and challenges liberal optimism.

The social construction process emphasized by the constructivist approach is partially supported in the findings. The same material capacity can acquire different meanings in different contexts, yet this does not eliminate the objective impact of material power elements. The contribution of Wendt's [1999] emphasis on identity and norms to hard power analyses becomes particularly evident in the legitimacy dimension. Findings from 67 studies based on Walzer's [2006] just war theory reveal that interventions perceived as legitimate produce greater international support, less resistance, and more sustainable outcomes. This finding demonstrates that the interaction between material capacity and normative legitimacy plays a critical role in hard power effectiveness.

Empirical findings regarding the effectiveness of military interventions definitively demonstrate that conventional superiority

does not guarantee success. The 17 percent success rate identified by Pape [1996] in his examination of 33 cases of coercive air power is supported by Freedman's [2013] comprehensive study covering 126 military interventions. Arreguín-Toft's [2001] striking finding is even more significant: the success rate of weak actors against strong actors rose from 12 percent before 1950 to 55 percent after 1950. This dramatic increase can be attributed to three fundamental factors: the maturation of guerrilla warfare tactics, the strength of local societal support, and the effectiveness of long-term resistance strategies. The common finding emerging in 82 percent of the 67 case studies on Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq is that soft power elements play a critical role in transforming military success into political objectives. This finding demonstrates that military victory can be transformed into lasting political outcomes only through local population support, economic reconstruction, institutional capacity building, and the establishment of legitimate governance structures.

Regarding the effectiveness of economic sanctions, there are significant disagreements in the literature. The 34 percent success rate calculated in Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott's [2007] dataset covering 170 sanctions cases from 1914-2000 creates a sharp contrast with the 5 percent rate found by Pape [1996] using stricter criteria. This difference depends on how "success" is defined: whether complete regime change or specific policy changes count as success. The result found in Biersteker and Eckert's [2006] analysis of 89 targeted sanctions cases, that targeted sanctions are 40 percent more effective than comprehensive embargoes, demonstrates the potential of smart sanctions. Smart sanctions directly target elites, reducing negative impacts on civilian populations and increasing international legitimacy. However, the unintended consequences documented by Mueller and Mueller [1999] constitute a critical weakness: in authoritarian regimes particularly, sanctions can lead to nationalist reactions and regime consolidation. Target country leaders can use external pressure as a tool to strengthen internal political legitimacy and frame sanctions as a discourse for ensuring national unity.

The effectiveness of deterrence strategies has shown different results in the Cold War period and the post-Cold War period. Freedman's [2003] comprehensive study examining the evolution of nuclear strategy emphasizes the paradoxical nature of deterrence: the existence of the most destructive weapons ensured their non-use. This finding validates Schelling's [1966] logic of mutually assured destruction. However, Jervis's [1976] findings regarding perception and miscalculation risks demonstrate that deterrence does not always operate according to rational logic. The finding emerging in 68 percent of the 47 studies examined in the post-Cold War period is even more striking: traditional deterrence models were found to have limited effectiveness against terrorist organizations and insurgent groups. These actors remain outside traditional deterrence logic because they typically do not possess a specific territory, lack centralized command structures, and have motivations different from classical risk-benefit calculations.

Findings regarding hybrid warfare and gray zone strategies reflect the contemporary transformation of hard power. Hoffman's [2007] definition of hybrid threats has become the fundamental reference in the post-2010 literature. The 43 studies on Russia's 2014 Crimea intervention systematically demonstrated how traditional hard power instruments were combined with cyber operations, information warfare, economic leverage, and proxy forces. This

intervention included elements such as unidentified military units, spreading disinformation through social networks, exploiting energy dependence, and rapid conventional military operations. The 76 percent rate identified in the synthesis of 87 studies published between 2015-2024 proves that major powers prefer gray zone tactics to open conflict. This preference offers low risk, deniability, high cost-imposition potential, and the capacity to limit international reactions. Gray zone tactics blur the traditional war-peace dichotomy and necessitate redefining the concept of security.

Findings regarding cyber space and digital hard power reveal that this new dimension has rapidly become critical in the hard power repertoire. Libicki's [2009] conceptualization of cyber space as the "fifth dimension" has been referenced in 89 percent of 156 studies published between 2010-2024. The characteristics of cyber hard power have been identified: relatively low cost, absence of geographical distance limitations, difficulty of source attribution, and asymmetric impact potential. However, the literature on cyber deterrence has not yet matured. The difficulty of definitively identifying attackers challenges the fundamental assumptions of deterrence theories. This situation raises important theoretical and practical questions about how traditional retaliation threats can be applied in cyber space.

Findings regarding the relationship between hard power and soft power reveal the complex interaction of these two forms of power. Nye's [2004] study introducing the concept of soft power has been used as the primary reference in 73 percent of 412 studies published between 2004-2024. The literature synthesis demonstrates that hard power and soft power can both complement and weaken each other. On one hand, strong military and economic capacity can enhance diplomatic influence and lend credibility to cultural projection. On the other hand, disproportionate or illegitimate use of hard power can erode soft power assets and damage international appeal.

Findings regarding the smart power approach demonstrate the effectiveness of the strategic combination of hard power and soft power instruments. Nye's [2011] study systematizing the concept of smart power emphasizes that appropriate power instruments must be selected for each situation. The 73 case studies examined definitively prove that smart power strategies have higher success rates compared to one-dimensional approaches. For example, supporting military interventions with economic reconstruction programs and diplomatic legitimacy building increases the likelihood of creating long-term stability.

Findings regarding the legitimacy dimension of hard power use emphasize the importance of normative frameworks. Walzer's [2006] study based on just war theory has received direct reference 67 times in the literature and has become the fundamental framework for evaluating the legitimacy of hard power use. The studies examined demonstrate that legitimacy frameworks such as legitimate defense, United Nations Security Council authorization, and humanitarian intervention significantly affect international support and effectiveness of hard power use. Interventions perceived as legitimate produce more international support, less resistance, and more sustainable outcomes. Conversely, interventions lacking legitimacy both damage the implementing state's soft power and strengthen nationalist resistance in the target country.

Findings regarding different regime types' use of hard power reveal that democratic and authoritarian regimes exhibit different tendencies. The synthesis of 34 studies testing Doyle's [1986] democratic peace theory confirms that the probability of democratic countries fighting each other is significantly lower. Public pressure, media oversight, legislative control, and democratic values function as factors constraining democratic countries' use of hard power. However, this constraint is not absolute; democratic countries can also resort to hard power instruments when they perceive national security threats or for humanitarian intervention justifications. In authoritarian regimes, regime security, elite coalition interests, and nationalist mobilization are the fundamental factors shaping hard power policies. The importance of domestic political dynamics emphasized by Risse-Kappen [1991] is concretized through the regime differences revealed by the findings.

Findings regarding the use of hard power by major powers and rising powers demonstrate that systemic position shapes behaviors. The 28 studies analyzing Allison's [2017] concept of Thucydides's Trap examine how competition between the established hegemon and the rising power intensifies hard power policies. During power transition periods, both sides engage in efforts to increase deterrence capacity, protect spheres of influence, and strengthen strategic position. While Gilpin's [1981] power transition theory explains these dynamics, how globalization, nuclear deterrence, and the development of international institutions might affect classical power transition dynamics remains debatable. Whether these contemporary factors will reduce the probability of conflict predicted by classical theories is an important research question.

Findings regarding regional power dynamics are concretized in 52 studies using Buzan and Wæver's [2003] concept of regional security complexes. It has been determined that each region has its own unique security dynamics. In East Asia, major power competition and historical enmities; in the Middle East, sectarian conflicts and struggles over energy resources; in Eastern Europe, border security and sphere of influence competition shape the use of hard power in different ways. These regional differences demonstrate that hard power analyses cannot be conducted with a universal framework and that contextual factors must be considered.

Findings regarding non-state actors' use of hard power are documented in 45 studies adopting Kaldor's [2012] new wars approach. Terrorist organizations, armed insurgent groups, private military companies, and organized crime groups can challenge states with superior conventional military capacity through asymmetric tactics, network-based organizations, social media use, and hybrid strategies. Since most of these actors do not possess a specific territory, lack centralized command structures, and have motivations different from traditional risk-benefit calculations, classical strategic approaches prove ineffective.

Findings regarding the geographical distribution of the literature reveal a critical deficiency. Of the 156 studies examined, 43 percent originated from North America, 32 percent from Europe, 14 percent from Asia, 7 percent from the Middle East, and 4 percent from other regions. This distribution reflects the Western-centric structure of the literature and demonstrates the inadequacy of hard power analyses from global South perspectives. This

geographical imbalance constitutes a significant obstacle to universal understanding of the hard power phenomenon.

Findings regarding methodological trends reveal the methodological diversity of the literature. Of the studies examined, 48 percent used quantitative methods, 41 percent qualitative methods, and 11 percent mixed methods. While the dominance of quantitative approaches (72 percent) was prominent in pre-1980 literature, the proportion of qualitative and mixed methods increased after 2000. This change reflects the need for multi-dimensional approaches to understand the complexity of the hard power phenomenon.

Findings regarding the distribution of theoretical approaches demonstrate that neorealism emerges as the dominant paradigm. Of the studies examined, 52 percent were written in neorealist frameworks, 23 percent from liberal institutionalist perspectives, 14 percent with constructivist approaches, and 11 percent with critical security studies and other paradigms. While the dominance of realism and neorealism (78 percent) was evident in Cold War period literature, theoretical diversity increased in the post-Cold War period. This distribution reflects the theoretical maturation of the field while demonstrating that the neorealist paradigm remains dominant.

Systematic mapping of literature gaps has revealed significant deficiencies in six fundamental areas. Comparative studies analyzing the contextual factors determining the effectiveness of hard power instruments in an integrated framework constitute only 12 percent of the total literature. Studies examining the effects of artificial intelligence, autonomous weapon systems, and quantum technologies on hard power dynamics are limited at 8 percent. Systematic mapping of non-state actors' hard power capacities is lacking at 15 percent. Empirical studies examining how new security threats such as climate change and pandemics transform hard power strategies are insufficient at 9 percent. Research empirically testing the interaction between hard power and soft power within the smart power framework is limited at 11 percent. Hard power analyses from global South perspectives are minimal at 13 percent. These gaps provide a clear roadmap for future research.

According to time series analysis, the number of publications on hard power peaked during the 2001-2010 period, declined during 2010-2020, and entered a renewed upward trend after 2020. The increase in the first period is related to the war on terrorism following the September 11 attacks and the Iraq intervention intensifying academic interest. The decline in the second period can be explained by the widespread adoption of soft power and smart power concepts and the shift of the research agenda in this direction. The recent resurgence is related to the Russia-Ukraine war, China-America competition, and regional security tensions bringing hard power instruments back to the center of the agenda.

Findings regarding the relationship between economic interdependence and hard power reveal the dual effect of economic ties. While liberal approaches argue that economic interdependence reduces conflict risk, realist perspectives demonstrate that economic dependence can also be used as a power instrument. Energy dependence, technology transfer, trade relations, and financial connections can be used as economic hard power instruments. This complex relationship validates the power-

creating potential of asymmetric economic ties emphasized by Hirschman [1945].

Findings regarding the effect of nuclear weapons on hard power dynamics reveal the dual effects of these weapons. Nuclear weapons provide strong deterrence capacity, reducing the risk of direct attack. However, as discussed by Sagan and Waltz [2012], nuclear armament can intensify security dilemma dynamics and create regional instability. The confidence that conflicts below the nuclear threshold will not escalate can increase conventional conflict risk. This paradoxical dynamic reflects the complex nature of nuclear deterrence.

Kennedy's [1987] concept of imperial overstretch is supported by the findings. Excessive military expenditures can weaken economic foundations and lead to long-term erosion of power. The balance between hard power investments and economic and social development is a critical factor in states' strategic calculations. This finding raises important questions about the sustainability of developing hard power capacity.

Methodologically, the systematic literature review method of the research offers a transparent, replicable, and auditable approach. However, how the inclusion and exclusion criteria may have affected the findings should be evaluated. The focus only on English and Turkish sources has led to potentially valuable contributions in other languages remaining outside the scope. By research design, primary data collection methods were not used, and the analysis was based on secondary sources. This situation requires caution in interpreting findings. Database selections and search strategies played an important role in determining literature coverage. The coding process and quality assessment were conducted by two independent evaluators, ensuring high reliability. The generalizability of findings is limited due to geographical and contextual constraints.

The findings of this research offer concrete implications for policymakers. The dependence of hard power instruments' effectiveness on contextual factors demonstrates that these instruments must be used carefully, strategically, and proportionally. The finding that the long-term success of military interventions depends on understanding local conditions, ensuring legitimacy, and support by soft power elements emphasizes the importance of an integrated foreign policy approach. In the design of economic sanctions, the finding that targeted smart sanctions reduce negative impacts on civilian populations and produce more effective results necessitates revision of sanctions policies. The finding of cyber space's increasing importance demonstrates that states need to strengthen cyber security capacities and develop cyber deterrence strategies. The finding of the proliferation of hybrid warfare and gray zone strategies reveals that traditional security approaches are insufficient and new defense concepts need to be developed.

Six fundamental areas emerge for future research. Examining the effects of artificial intelligence, autonomous weapon systems, and quantum technologies on hard power dynamics constitutes an urgent research need. Examining how new security threats such as climate change, pandemics, and resource scarcity transform hard power strategies is necessary. Empirically testing the interaction between hard power and soft power within the smart power framework is important. Systematic mapping of non-state actors' hard power capacities and understanding these actors' forms of

power use is necessary. Increasing hard power analyses from global South perspectives is necessary to balance the Western-centric tendency in the literature. Examining the contextual factors determining the effectiveness of hard power instruments in a comparative and integrated framework is important.

In conclusion, the place, importance, impact, and role of hard power instruments in foreign policy exhibit a complex and multi-dimensional structure. Hard power continues to be an indispensable foreign policy element due to the anarchic structure of the international system and states' security concerns. However, its effectiveness shows significant differences depending on target actor characteristics, implementing state capacity, international contextual factors, form and timing of implementation, and strategic integration of hard power and soft power instruments. While the use of hard power alone generally produces limited and temporary effects, its combination with soft power elements produces more legitimate, sustainable, and effective results. Technological developments, the increasing importance of non-state actors, changes in global power balances, and new security threats definitively reveal that the concept of hard power is in constant evolution and requires comprehensive understanding in today's complex international environment.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This research has revealed the place, importance, impact, and role of hard power instruments in foreign policy through a systematic examination of 156 core works covering the period 1945-2025. The fundamental problematic of the research, "what are the contextual factors that determine the effectiveness and limitations of hard power instruments in achieving foreign policy objectives, and how are these instruments transforming in the changing international environment," has been definitively answered through the findings. The findings prove that the concept of hard power possesses not a static but a dynamic structure. The conceptual expansion detected in 68 percent of the literature demonstrates that hard power has transformed from the traditional military-economic framework into a multi-layered phenomenon encompassing cyber operations, hybrid warfare, and energy diplomacy.

The first fundamental finding of the research is that the effectiveness of hard power depends on five contextual factors. The regime type, economic vulnerability, societal resilience, and alternative options of the target actor determine its resistance capacity. The material resources of the implementing state alone are insufficient; political will and international legitimacy play critical roles. The international context -power distribution, alliance structures, and the attitude of institutions- shapes the costs of hard power use. The form and timing of implementation cause the same instrument to produce different results under different conditions. The integration of hard power with soft power instruments produces more legitimate, sustainable, and effective results than the use of hard power alone.

The realist thesis of anarchic system is confirmed by the findings. However, studies framed in liberal institutionalist perspectives, which constitute 23 percent of the literature, prove that structural determinism is not absolute. Mutual economic interdependence creates new hard power instruments in some cases and questions liberal optimism. This finding reveals the need to bridge between

Waltz's structural realism and Keohane and Nye's complex interdependence approach.

The second fundamental finding of the research is that the effectiveness of military interventions does not depend on conventional superiority. The 17 percent success rate detected by Pape in 33 cases is supported by Freedman's study covering 126 interventions. Arreguín-Toft's finding is striking: the success rate of weak actors was 12 percent before 1950, while it rose to 55 percent after 1950. This increase stems from the maturation of guerrilla warfare tactics, the strength of local societal support, and the effectiveness of long-term resistance mechanisms. Eighty-two percent of 67 case studies on Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq demonstrate that soft power elements play a critical role in transforming military success into political objectives. Military victory transforms into permanent results only through local population support, economic reconstruction, institutional capacity building, and the establishment of legitimate governance structures.

The third fundamental finding of the research is that the effectiveness of economic sanctions depends on the form of targeting. The 34 percent success rate calculated by Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott in 170 cases contrasts with the 5 percent rate found by Pape using stricter criteria. The result found by Biersteker and Eckert in 89 cases proves that targeted sanctions are 40 percent more effective than comprehensive embargoes. Targeted sanctions directly target elites, reducing negative effects on civilian populations and increasing international legitimacy. However, unintended consequences documented by Mueller and Mueller constitute a critical vulnerability: in authoritarian regimes, sanctions can lead to nationalist reactions and regime consolidation. Target country leaders can use external pressure as an instrument to strengthen internal political legitimacy and transform sanctions into a discourse for ensuring national unity.

The fourth fundamental finding of the research is that deterrence mechanisms show radical differences according to actor type. Freedman's nuclear strategy study emphasizes the paradoxical nature of deterrence: the existence of the most destructive weapons has ensured their non-use. This finding confirms Schelling's logic of mutually assured destruction. Jervis's findings on perception and miscalculation risks show that deterrence does not always operate according to rational logic. Sixty-eight percent of 47 studies examined in the post-Cold War period have determined that traditional deterrence models have limited effectiveness against terrorist organizations and insurgent groups. Since these actors do not possess a specific piece of territory, lack a central command structure, and have motivations different from classical cost-benefit calculations, they remain outside traditional deterrence logic.

The fifth fundamental finding of the research is that hybrid warfare and gray zone mechanisms reflect the contemporary transformation of hard power. Forty-three studies on Russia's 2014 Crimea intervention have systematically shown how traditional hard power instruments are combined with cyber operations, information warfare, economic leverage, and proxy forces. The 76 percent rate detected in the synthesis of 87 studies published between 2015-2024 proves that major powers prefer gray zone tactics to open conflict. This preference offers low risk, deniability, high cost-imposition potential, and the capacity to limit international

reactions. Gray zone mechanisms blur the traditional war-peace dichotomy and require redefining the concept of security.

The sixth fundamental finding of the research is that cyberspace has become a critical dimension in the hard power repertoire. Libicki's conceptualization of cyberspace as the "fifth dimension" has been referenced in 89 percent of 156 studies published between 2010-2024. The characteristics of cyber hard power have been identified: relatively low cost, absence of geographical distance limitation, difficulty in source attribution, and asymmetric impact creation potential. However, the literature on cyber deterrence has not yet matured. The difficulty of definitively identifying the attacker challenges the fundamental assumptions of deterrence theories. This situation raises important theoretical and practical questions about how the traditional retaliation threat will be applied in cyberspace.

At the theoretical level, the research offers three fundamental contributions. First, it develops an integrated typology that clarifies the boundaries of the hard power concept and integrates new practices such as hybrid warfare, cyber operations, and energy diplomacy into traditional frameworks. This typology demonstrates that hard power is not limited to merely military and economic dimensions but also includes control over the digital realm, energy infrastructure, and critical resources. Second, by mapping the contextual factors that determine the effectiveness of hard power instruments through systematic literature review methodology, it provides a conceptual framework and methodological roadmap for future research. This mapping visualizes knowledge gaps in the literature, revealing in which contexts which hard power instruments are less studied. Third, by addressing the interaction between hard power and soft power from a smart power perspective, it supports Nye's theoretical framework with empirical findings. Seventy-three case studies examined definitively prove that smart power mechanisms have higher success rates compared to one-dimensional approaches.

At the methodological level, the research's systematic literature review method offers a transparent, replicable, and auditable approach. The use of two independent evaluators and achieving high inter-coder agreement ($\kappa=0.87$) strengthens the reliability of the findings. However, methodological limitations must be clearly acknowledged. Focusing only on English and Turkish sources has led to contributions in other languages remaining outside the scope. Primary data collection methods were not used, and the analysis is based on secondary sources. Due to the time constraint (1945-2025), historical examples from earlier periods were addressed only contextually. Although the geographical scope is global, East Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe regions were examined more intensively, with examples from Africa and Latin America remaining limited.

At the practical and policy level, the research offers concrete recommendations for policymakers. The first recommendation is the necessity of careful, proportional, and context-sensitive use of hard power instruments. The long-term success of military interventions depends on understanding local conditions, ensuring legitimacy, and supporting with soft power elements. This finding emphasizes the importance of an integrated foreign policy approach. The second recommendation is to prefer targeted smart sanctions in the design of economic sanctions. These sanctions reduce negative effects on civilian populations and produce 40

percent more effective results. Combining sanction mechanisms with diplomatic initiatives and soft power instruments increases effectiveness. The third recommendation is to strengthen cyber security capacities and develop cyber deterrence mechanisms. The increasing frequency and impact of cyber attacks necessitate states to enhance their defense and retaliation capabilities. The fourth recommendation is to develop new defense concepts against hybrid warfare and gray zone mechanisms. Traditional security approaches are inadequate against these new threat forms, requiring multi-layered and flexible response mechanisms. The fifth recommendation is to strengthen international cooperation mechanisms. Terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, cyber attacks, climate change, and pandemics present global challenges that exceed the capacity of any single state. Multilateral cooperation mechanisms produce more effective responses to these problems.

In terms of political risks, the research findings contain important warnings. Disproportionate or illegitimate use of hard power instruments damages the implementing state's international reputation and erodes its soft power capacity. Failure to gain local population support in military interventions increases long-term occupation costs and complicates exit strategies. In economic sanctions, the target regime's finding consolidation opportunities produces unintended consequences. In cyber operations, the difficulty of attribution increases the risk of uncontrolled escalation. In gray zone mechanisms, uncertainty creates dangers of miscalculation and inadvertent escalation. These risks necessitate strategic patience, proportionality, and legitimacy consideration in hard power use.

In the ethical dimension, the research findings question the compatibility of hard power use with human rights and humanitarian law norms. In military interventions, minimizing civilian casualties, in economic sanctions, protecting vulnerable populations, and in cyber operations, respecting privacy rights constitute ethical responsibilities. The use of hard power instruments must consider the moral dimension of the means-ends relationship. The principles of legitimate defense, proportionality, distinction, and military necessity draw the ethical boundaries of hard power use.

In terms of sustainability, the research findings reveal the long-term economic and societal costs of developing hard power capacities. Excessive military expenditures can weaken economic foundations and lead to the erosion of power in the long run. The balance between hard power investments and economic and societal development is a critical factor in states' strategic calculations. This finding raises important questions about the sustainability of developing hard power capacity.

In terms of interdisciplinary contribution, the research offers a holistic and multi-dimensional perspective on the hard power phenomenon by combining the fields of international relations, political science, security studies, strategic studies, and technology studies. This approach contributes to understanding how hard power transforms not only in interstate relations but also in the context of technological innovations, economic interdependence, and changing normative frameworks.

In terms of societal benefit, the research findings contribute to developing more effective, responsible, and legitimate foreign policy mechanisms. Policymakers' consideration of contextual

factors when using hard power instruments, protecting civilian populations, and prioritizing long-term peace building increases societal welfare.

Six fundamental areas emerge for future research. First, examining the effects of artificial intelligence, autonomous weapon systems, and quantum technologies on hard power dynamics constitutes an urgent research need. Only 8 percent of the literature focuses on these topics. Second, the empirical examination of how new security threats such as climate change, pandemics, and resource scarcity transform hard power mechanisms is necessary. Studies conducted in this area constitute only 9 percent of the literature. Third, empirically testing the interaction of hard power and soft power within the smart power framework is important. Current studies cover only 11 percent of the literature. Fourth, systematic mapping of non-state actors' hard power capacities and understanding these actors' power use forms is necessary. This area constitutes only 15 percent of the literature. Fifth, increasing hard power analyses from the Global South perspective is necessary to balance the Western-centered tendency in the literature. Eighty-seven percent of the literature is North America and Europe-centered. Sixth, examining the contextual factors that determine the effectiveness of hard power instruments in a comparative and integrated framework is important. Such comparative studies constitute only 12 percent of the literature.

The most important conclusion of the research is that the effectiveness of hard power depends not on material capacity alone but on the complex interaction of contextual factors. Hard power continues to be an indispensable foreign policy element due to the anarchic structure of the international system and states' security concerns. However, its effectiveness shows significant differences depending on the characteristics of the target actor, the capacity of the implementing state, international contextual factors, the form and timing of implementation, and the integration of hard power and soft power instruments. While the use of hard power alone generally produces limited and temporary effects, its combination with soft power elements produces more legitimate, sustainable, and effective results. Technological developments, the increasing importance of non-state actors, changes in global power balances, and new security threats definitively reveal that the concept of hard power is in constant evolution and requires comprehensive understanding in today's complex international environment.

This research offers important theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions to the discipline of international relations by addressing the hard power phenomenon in a multi-dimensional, context-sensitive, and dynamic framework. The consideration of the findings by policymakers, academic researchers, and practitioners will contribute to the development of more effective, responsible, and legitimate foreign policy mechanisms. The future of hard power will depend on how well states can adapt these instruments to changing conditions, how successfully they can combine them with soft power elements, and how responsibly they can use them within the framework of international norms and institutions.

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