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Islam and The Military Policy of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in the Perspective of Balance of Power

Saleem Ullah Atif

M.Phil.Scholar, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Superior University, Lahore, (Faisalabad Campus)
m.saleematif366@gmail.com

Syed Adil Hussain Shah

M.Phil.Scholar, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Superior University, Lahore, (Faisalabad Campus)
adilhussain575@gmail.com

Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Ahsan Raza

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Superior University, Lahore (Faisalabad Campus)
ahsanraza6281@gmail.com

Abstract



This study examines the military strategies of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in the context of balance of power, as described in the Qur'an and his Seerah. These strategies reflect a comprehensive guidance system that integrates ethical, social, political, and strategic dimensions. Emphasizing merit-based recruitment, organized structure, discipline, intelligence, and logistical preparedness, the Prophet's ﷺ approach demonstrates that military success relies on wisdom, planning, and foresight rather than mere force or numbers. His policies, neither aggressive nor purely reactive, combined ethical conduct with strategic foresight to maintain unity, deter threats, and ensure societal stability. The holistic model of governance and defense established by the Prophet ﷺ not only safeguarded early Muslim society but also offers enduring lessons for modern national defense, diplomacy, and international relations. Principles of ethical leadership, intelligence, cohesion, and balance of power remain essential for sustaining peace and security at both national and global levels.

Keywords: Military strategies, Qur'an, Seerah, Balance of power, Intelligence and logistics, Strategic planning, National defense,



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1. Introduction

The concept of power is one of the most fundamental in politics, closely tied to war, peace, and security, and it strengthens the field of International Relations. Because power has been the most important issue and the main driver of change in the history of International Relations, and because the establishment of peace has been the most important aim of the field the globalization of politics, economy, and communications has changed the concept, sources, and methods of power use. These transformations have also affected the objectives, instruments, and strategies of war.

Whereas the power paradigm shifted from hard power to soft power and smart power, the concepts of war—those that were part of human history—have also experienced fundamental changes. Clearly, the new manifestations of global politics have altered power-based concepts, and through smart power, a new meaning has arisen to achieve legitimacy and better outcomes. These changes are also observable in the paradigms of war theory. After shifts in war theories and generations—in the age of proxy wars and hybrid wars—the nature and purpose of wars have also changed.

Richard Gabriel says about the prophet in the following words:

“Muhammad's successful transformation of Arab warfare marks him as one of the great military reformers of the ancient world. Muhammad stands in good company with those whose military reforms made possible the creation of empires by their successors.”¹

Theory of Deterrence

“Deterrence as an idea is probably as ancient as human society.”² **Deterrence**, long before appearing as a formal policy, theory, or strategy, has played a role in individual and societal life. The natural behavioral response of deterring an enemy—by discouraging, psychologically overpowering, or causing him to fear severe consequences—has existed in individuals, groups, and societies for survival. Consequently, “deterrence” has natural roots in human behavior.

Military deterrence and its application is almost as old as the history of war itself. Indeed, deterrence does not stop the enemy materially but seeks to **psychologically** restrain his aggression. Today, although the concept of deterrence is widely discussed in military, defense, political, and even economic spheres, **no comprehensive, codified, single model has yet been presented in light of Islamic principles and defensive literature.**

According to **classical definitions**, the theory of deterrence refers to the attempt to influence others such that they do not undertake actions that would pose danger or harm to the deterring party.

The **primary objective of deterrence** is to create fear in the mind of the enemy; that is, it is a psychological process aimed at preventing aggression. **Boyer** states that deterrence is a psychological operation in which the demonstration of power plays a key role—but power alone is not sufficient.

Despite criticisms, deterrence theory has succeeded in explaining state behavior in the international system, whether in a bipolar or stratified world. Indeed, the non-occurrence of nuclear war serves as practical proof of the theory's utility.

Bernard Brodie's Theory

Brodie viewed **deterrence** as a **clear and strong threat**, designed to prevent the adversary from committing any form of aggression. According to him, deterrence can only succeed if **both sides possess comparative power**, instilling fear in the enemy.³

Colin S. Gray's Theory

According to **Colin S. Gray**, the **foundational principles** of deterrence are **historical and permanent**, but **post–Cold War** models of deterrence have become **uncertain and variable**. In his view, **traditional theories are no longer fully applicable** under new circumstances.

Colin S. Gray argued that deterrence is fundamentally a **psychological process**, dependent on shaping the adversary's expectations and perceptions rather than merely accumulating weapons. He emphasized that deterrence works only when a state demonstrates both **credible capability** and **political will** to impose unacceptable costs on an aggressor.⁴

Henry Kissinger's Theory

Henry Kissinger conceptualizes deterrence as a **psychological strategy** rather than a purely military one. He argues that deterrence succeeds only when the adversary is convinced that aggression will produce **costs far greater than any possible gain**, making the decision to attack irrational.⁵

In Kissinger's view, deterrence depends not merely on military capability but on the **credibility, clarity, and perceived resolve** of the defending state. If the opponent doubts the defender's willingness to use force, deterrence collapses even if military strength exists.⁶

The Islamic Perspective: Qur'anic Theory of War and Deterrence

Islam emphasizes both **strength and moral conduct** in warfare. The Qur'an instructs Muslims to prepare for defense and maintain strategic power, not for aggression, but to ensure **security, justice, and deterrence**.

وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهَبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ

"And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy..." 7

Foremost Priority of Islam

Social Peace and the Purpose of Islam

According to the Quran, the primary aim of Islam is to establish peace, justice, and balance in human society. Quran says:

“O you who believe! Be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves, your parents, or relatives...” 8

“And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah...” 9

The Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ shows that social peace was always a priority: The Constitution of Medina established rights for Muslims, Jews, and non-Muslims, ensuring mutual protection and harmony.

Power and authority were exercised to prevent oppression, protect the weak, and maintain public order, not for aggression.

In Islam, the purpose of power aligns with Quranic and Prophetic teachings:

1. Protect life, property, and religion.
2. Ensure justice and equality among all members of society.
3. Promote social harmony and eliminate oppression.

Thus, the Balance of Power in Islamic governance, according to Quran and Seerah, is peace-oriented, serving as a means to justice and societal well-being rather than domination or violence.

Unity of the Ummah, Holding Firm to the Rope of Allah, and the Word of Agreement (Kalima-e-Sawa)

The Quran invites the People of the Book to come to a common word between Muslims and themselves, a principle that fosters mutual understanding and unity:

“O People of the Book, come to a word that is equitable between us and you...” 10

This common word, or **Kalima-e-Sawa**, serves as a foundation for faith and unity among believers. It emphasizes the oneness of God and common beliefs that can bring diverse communities together.

The unity of the believers' hearts, brotherhood, and mutual cooperation are repeatedly emphasized in the Quran as essential for a strong and resilient community:

"إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ"

“The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers...”¹¹

"وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا "

“And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided...”¹²

"وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ)"

“And seek help through patience and prayer; indeed, Allah is with the patient.”¹³

"إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُون"

“Indeed, this community of yours is one community. And I am your Lord. So worship Me (alone).”¹⁴

This unity not only strengthens the social fabric of the Muslim Ummah but also empowers them in facing challenges, maintaining peace, and advancing collective interests.

The Quran’s call to unity and mutual support remains a guiding principle for Muslim communities across the world.

Military Strategies and Balance of Power through the Lens of Quran and Prophet Muhammad’s Seerah

The study of the Prophet Muhammad’s ﷺ approach to warfare, security, and defense reveals a comprehensive and balanced framework grounded in justice, discipline, and strategic wisdom. Far from being ad-hoc or reactionary, the Prophet’s ﷺ military and defensive measures reflected a deeply principled system designed to safeguard the emerging Muslim community while upholding the highest ethical standards. The Qur’an and the Sunnah together provide a structured understanding of how human resources were mobilized, how vigilance was maintained, how discipline was instilled within the ranks, and how legitimate defense was carried out against aggression.

1. Provision of Human Resources / Military Recruitment

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) strategically formed alliances with tribes, particularly in the northern regions of the Arabian Peninsula, to prepare for battles against the Romans. These alliances were aimed at uniting tribal forces to provide military personnel and warriors, placing them under central command, instead of merely paying tribute.

Besides men, women also played active roles in warfare-related duties, primarily by nursing the wounded (often their husbands), providing water and food, and when necessary, even directly participating in battle, just like some male supporters did who were not formal soldiers.

Skill-Based Assignment

These narrations confirm that the Prophet ﷺ **assigned companions to military roles according to experience, skill, and tactical needs**. Archers, scouts, and young leaders were given responsibilities that matched their capabilities, reflecting an early form of **skill-based deployment**.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ assigned companions to **specific military roles according to their abilities and experience**. These assignments were situational and demonstrated early principles of task-based deployment.

Archers at the Battle of Uhud

The Prophet ﷺ placed a unit of archers on a strategic hill to protect the Muslim army's rear. They were given strict orders to **hold their position** and not leave, even if the main army appeared victorious. This shows that companions were assigned roles based on skill and strategic necessity.

فَجَعَلَ عَلَى الرَّمَاةِ يَوْمَ أُحُدٍ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ جُبَيْرٍ، وَهُمْ خَمْسُونَ رَامِيًا، فَقَالَ: "لَا تَبْرَحُوا مَكَانَكُمْ"

On the Day of Uhud, he (the Prophet ﷺ) placed Abdullah ibn Jubayr in charge of the archers, who numbered fifty, and said: "Do not leave your positions."¹⁵

Scouts and Trackers

For reconnaissance and intelligence, the Prophet ﷺ employed companions with knowledge of local terrain. Skilled guides and trackers, such as Sahl ibn Hunaif and others from allied tribes, were deployed to monitor enemy movements, locate routes, and provide strategic information during campaigns like the Battle of Khandaq.¹⁶

also emphasized disciplined positioning in combat: ﷺ The Prophet

وَجَعَلَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ عَلَى الرَّمَاةِ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ جُبَيْرٍ، وَأَمَرَهُمْ أَنْ يَلْزَمُوا مَكَانَهُمْ

*"The Messenger of Allah ﷺ placed Abdullah ibn Jubayr in charge of the archers and commanded them to remain steadfast in their positions."*¹⁷

Young Brave Companions

Young companions who demonstrated courage and skill were placed in positions suited to their capabilities. Examples include Usāma ibn Zayd, who led the Muslim army at a young age after being trained and mentored under the Prophet ﷺ.

وَعَيَّنَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ أُسَامَةَ بْنَ زَيْدٍ قَائِدًا عَلَى الْجُنُودِ وَهُوَ فَتَى

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ appointed Usama ibn Zayd as the commander of the army, even though he was a young man.¹⁸

2. Inclusive Participation

The evidence from Seerah confirms that the Prophet ﷺ **utilized companions according to ability and role**: women in medical and logistical support, experienced

companions in advisory roles, and physically capable young men in frontline or specialized positions. This demonstrates a practical approach to **inclusive participation** in early Islamic military campaigns.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ encouraged participation according to **capability and function**, particularly in support and logistical roles, rather than assigning everyone to frontline combat.

Women in Support Roles

Women played an active role in providing medical aid, water, and logistical support during battles such as Uhud and the Battle of the Trench (Khandaq). They were not combatants but contributed significantly to the Muslim army's effectiveness.

During the Battle of Uhud, women tended to the wounded and carried water to the fighters.

وَكَانَتِ النِّسَاءُ تُنْقِلُ الْمَرْضَى وَتُسْقِي الْجُنُودَ فِي غَزْوَةِ أُحُدٍ

During the Battle of Uhud, the women carried the sick and provided water to the soldiers.¹⁹

Experienced Companions in Advisory or Strategic Roles

Some older companions, due to their experience and knowledge of the terrain or previous combat, were assigned **tactical or advisory roles** rather than frontline combat.

وَاسْتَشَارَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ أَصْحَابَهُ الْمُخْتَصِمِينَ فِي الْقِتَالِ وَالْمَرْعِيَّاتِ

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ consulted his companions who were experienced in warfare and livestock management.²⁰

Young Men in Frontline or Specialized Roles

Young companions who had the physical ability and courage were often placed in frontline positions or given specialized tasks, as evidenced by Usāma ibn Zayd and other young companions entrusted with leadership or scouting responsibilities.

وَ عَيَّنَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ الشُّبَّانَ فِي مَكَانِ الْقِتَالِ وَالْمَهَامِ الْخَاصَّةِ

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ assigned the young men to positions in the battlefield and to special tasks.²¹

3. Ethical Foundations / No Compulsion

Ethical principles during recruitment are **demonstrated through practice**, not codified as a formal policy.

Key elements observed in the Prophet's ﷺ actions:

1. Participation was voluntary.

2. Military action was defensive or justified.
3. Roles were assigned based on competence, ability, and faith.

No Forced Conscription

Many early campaigns, especially small expeditions (Sariyyah), were undertaken by **volunteers**. Companions were invited to participate and given the choice to join. For example, at the Battle of Badr, the Prophet ﷺ asked for volunteers, and only those willing joined the expedition.

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: "مَنْ يَخْرُجُ مَعِيَ فَلْيَخْرُجْ بِمَا يُطِيقُ"

“The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever sets out with me should carry only what he can manage.”²²

No Recruitment for Unjust Aggression

Expeditions were **defensive** or in response to treaties, attacks, or threats. The Prophet ﷺ did not mobilize forces for personal gain or unprovoked aggression.

Al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa'l-Mulūk* accounts of Badr and Uhud, emphasizing defense and protection of the Muslim community.

وَخَرَجَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ وَأَصْحَابُهُ فِي غَزْوَةٍ لِدِفَاعِ الدِّينِ وَالنَّفْسِ

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his companions went out in a battle to defend the religion and their lives.²³

Leadership Roles Based on Merit Leadership roles during the early Islamic period were predominantly assigned based on merit, competence, and piety rather than solely on age, seniority, or tribal affiliation. For instance, Abdullah ibn Jubayr was placed in charge of the archers at the Battle of Uhud due to his reliability, discipline, and tactical awareness, despite not being the eldest or most senior companion.²⁴

Similarly, Khalid ibn al-Walid earned appointment as a commander in numerous pivotal battles owing to his exceptional military strategy and leadership skills, which transcended tribal hierarchies.²⁵

Ali ibn Abi Talib was entrusted with critical responsibilities in both battles and governance, a testament to his knowledge, bravery, and piety rather than family ties alone.²⁶ Likewise, Abu Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrah was appointed commander of armies in Syria for his honesty, strategic acumen, and steadfast dedication, exemplifying merit-based selection in leadership.²⁷

Moreover, women such as Umm Ammarah and Nusaybah bint Ka'ab actively supported military efforts by providing medical care, logistical assistance, and even participating in combat, demonstrating that leadership and crucial roles were also recognized based on ability and courage.²⁸

These examples collectively illustrate a systematic approach in early Islamic leadership where skill, trustworthiness, and competence were paramount in appointments.

4. Military Logistics and Preparations (Tadārūkāt)

Military preparations in Islam have historically encompassed a comprehensive framework including weapons, manpower, equipment, and all necessary logistical support. The Qur'an explicitly emphasizes the importance of such preparation as a tool of **psychological and strategic deterrence**.

"وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهَبُونَ بِهِ عَنَّا اللَّهُ وَعَنْكُمْ"

*"And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy..."*²⁹

"يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا خُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ فَانفِرُوا تَبَاتٍ أَوْ انْفِرُوا جَمِيعًا"

*"O you who believe! Take your precautions, and either go forth in groups or go forth all together."*³⁰

Interfaith Resource Borrowing and Strategic Deterrence in Early Islam

During military campaigns, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ demonstrated **pragmatic diplomacy and resourcefulness** by borrowing essential equipment and supplies from followers of other faiths when immediate logistical needs could not be met internally. For instance, Jewish tribes provided armor (zirah) and other weapons on loan, while Christians occasionally supplied provisions or materials under trust arrangements³¹. This approach highlights that **Islamic deterrence and defense were not solely based on military force**, but incorporated **strategy, psychological readiness, community mobilization, and cross-faith cooperation**.

Modern military doctrines reflect similar principles by emphasizing **civil-military integration** during national threats, mobilizing **non-combatant roles** (e.g., medics, engineers, logistic personnel) comparable to the participation of women in early Islamic campaigns.³² Additionally, contemporary strategies recognize the importance of **economic leverage, alliances, and public morale** as instruments of national defense, principles that were already integral to the Prophet ﷺ's strategic approach³³.

5. Structured Military Discipline and Establishing Order in Warfare

One of the major strategic innovations introduced by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) was the establishment of **discipline and organized battle formations**, a practice largely unknown among Arab tribes before Islam. Pre-Islamic warfare was typically characterized by impulsive charges, individual heroism, and tribal fragmentation. In contrast, the Prophet (PBUH) instructed his companions to stand in **aligned, prayer-like ranks** (ṣaff), emphasizing

unity, cohesion, and coordinated movement—principles essential for psychological strength and tactical efficiency 34.

The famous incident during the Battle of Badr, when the Prophet used an arrow to correct the alignment of Sawād ibn Ghaziyyah, illustrates the seriousness with which he enforced disciplined formation 35 . This transformation from chaotic tribal skirmishing to structured, purpose-driven military organization represents a significant advancement in Arabian warfare and contributed directly to early Islamic victories.

The Prophet’s directive for organized and disciplined battle formation was firmly rooted in the Qur’anic vision of **collective unity, cohesion, and mutual support** among believers. The Qur’an explicitly praises those who fight “in firm ranks” resembling a tightly bonded structure:

“إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِهِ صَفًّا كَأَنَّهُمْ بُيُوتٌ مَّرصُومَةٌ”

"Indeed, Allah loves those who fight in His cause in rows as though they are a [single] solid structure.36

This verse provided the theological and strategic foundation for the Prophet’s emphasis on aligned formations during battle, reinforcing that military discipline was not merely tactical, but also a spiritual ideal reflecting divine preference. 37

The Prophet explained this verse as a call for military formation and organized behavior in warfare. The metaphor of a "solid structure" reflects the necessity of unity, resilience, and mutual dependence.

This approach turned a loosely affiliated tribal army into a cohesive military force, emphasizing discipline, command hierarchy, and strategic deployment—principles now recognized as foundational in modern military doctrine.

Strategic Significance:

This emphasis on **formation and alignment** was revolutionary. Traditional Arab warfare relied heavily on **individual bravery, tribal alliances**, and often **disorganized skirmishes**. The Prophet replaced this with:

- **Centralized command**
- **Group-based tactics**
- **Unified leadership under a single flag.**

CENTRALIZED COMMAND

Al-Hubab ibn al-Mundhir advising the Prophet ﷺ at Badr

Al-Hubab said: “O Messenger of Allah, is this place one Allah commanded you to occupy, so we must not move forward or backward, or is it strategy and war?”

The Prophet ﷺ replied: “It is strategy and war”

So al-Hubab said, “This is not the best place...” and advised repositioning the army.³⁸

Group-Based Tactics: The Archers at Uhud

One of the Prophet Muhammad’s (peace be upon him and his family) most sophisticated military deployments was the **specialized archer unit** stationed at Mount Uhud. The Prophet (PBUH) appointed ‘**Abdullāh ibn Jubayr** as commander over fifty archers and issued strict, strategic instructions:

فَجَعَلَ عَلَى الرَّمَاةِ يَوْمَ أُحُدٍ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ جُبَيْرٍ، وَهُمْ خَمْسُونَ رَامِيًا، فَقَالَ: إِنْ رَأَيْتُمُونَا تَخَطُّفْنَا الطَّيْرُ فَلَا تَبْرَحُوا مَكَانَكُمْ، وَإِنْ رَأَيْتُمُونَا هَرَمْنَا الْقَوْمَ فَلَا تَبْرَحُوا مَكَانَكُمْ

“He placed ‘Abdullāh ibn Jubayr in command of the archers at Uhud; and they were fifty archers. He said: ‘Even if you see birds snatching us away, do not leave your position; and if you see us defeating the enemy, still do not leave your position.’”³⁹

This directive demonstrates a shift from tribal combat norms toward **fixed-position group tactics**, ensuring control over high ground, protection of the army’s rear, and maintenance of strategic discipline. The later collapse happened precisely because this command was violated, illustrating the Prophet’s advanced understanding of military psychology, obedience, and coordinated multi-unit operations.

Unified Leadership Under One Flag

A defining feature of the Prophet Muhammad’s (peace be upon him and his family) military strategy was the establishment of **centralized leadership under a single banner**, ensuring unity, discipline, and coordinated movement. During the Battle of Badr, the Prophet (PBUH) assigned the main banner to Mus‘ab ibn ‘Umar, as recorded:

“وَكَانَتْ رَايَةُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَوْمَ بَدْرٍ مَعَ مُصْعَبِ بْنِ عَمِيرٍ.”

“The banner of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ on the day of Badr was with Mus‘ab ibn ‘Umar.”⁴⁰

Similarly, during the Conquest of Makkah, the Prophet (PBUH) entered the city with a highly coordinated and unified military structure:

“وَدَخَلَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ مَكَّةَ وَقَدْ جَعَلَ جُنُودَهُ أَلْوِيَّةَ تَحْتَ رَايَتِهِ.”

“The Messenger of Allah ﷺ entered Makkah while organizing his troops in units under his single flag.”⁴¹

This centralization fostered **strategic cohesion**, ensured **loyalty to one command**, and reinforced the spiritual symbolism of unity—mirroring the alignment and discipline seen in prayer (ṣalāh). Thus, military organization under one banner strengthened both battlefield performance and collective moral resolve.

6. Retaliation / Counteraction and Legitimate Defense

Islamic teachings allow for **measured retaliation and self-defense**, but within **moral and legal bounds**. The principle is not rooted in vengeance, but in justice, balance, and deterrence.

"فَمَنْ اعْتَدَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اعْتَدَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ"

“So whoever has assaulted you, then assault him in the same way that he has assaulted you. And fear Allah, and know that Allah is with those who fear Him.” 42

This verse forms the **foundation of proportional justice** in Islamic warfare:

Retaliation is permitted, but must be **equal and not excessive**.

Restraint and God-consciousness (taqwa) are essential, even in conflict.

Defensive force is allowed, but must be tempered with **ethics and dignity**.

The response must serve a **higher purpose**, not mere emotional reaction.

Key Islamic Ethical Principles in Defense

1. Proportionality:

The response must **not exceed the original harm** caused. This is critical to maintain justice, avoid escalation, and preserve moral high ground.

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ

*“And fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors.”*43

This verse clearly sets the principle that retaliation should be proportional and not exceed the harm caused.

During the **Battle of Badr** and **Uhud**, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ instructed the Muslims not to harm women, children, or property unnecessarily, ensuring proportional response.

2. Intent-based

Response:

If defense is **necessary for survival, honor, or public safety**, it is not just allowed—it becomes a **duty**. But if retaliation is based on **hatred or revenge**, it loses legitimacy.

أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتَلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلِمُوا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ

“Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought because they were wronged, and indeed Allah is competent to give them victory.” 44

Defense is permitted only when there is oppression, threat to life, or public safety—not out of hatred or personal revenge.

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: *“Do not kill women or children or non-combatants, and do not betray or mutilate.”* 45

Intent matters: war for survival and justice is allowed; revenge and hatred are not legitimate.

3. Human Dignity in War:

Even during conflict, Islam **forbids mutilation, betrayal, or harming non-combatants** (as established by the Prophet in numerous ḥadīth and battle instructions).

“And do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden, except by right.” 46

Even in conflict, innocent lives must be protected.

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ gave explicit instructions to his army:

1. Protection of Non-Combatants

قال رسول الله ﷺ: "لا تقتلوا شيخًا ولا امرأة ولا طفلًا، ولا تخونوا، ولا تشوهوا"

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Do not kill an old man, nor a woman, nor a child, and do not betray or mutilate."47

2. Protection of Property and Nature

أمر النبي ﷺ جيشه: "لا تقطعوا الأشجار، ولا تهدموا البيوت، ولا تقتلوا الدواب إلا للحاجة"

The Prophet ﷺ instructed his army: "Do not cut down trees, do not demolish houses, and do not kill livestock except for necessity."48

3. Prohibition of Treachery and Mutilation

قال ﷺ: "لا تغدروا، ولا تغلوا"

He ﷺ said: "Do not betray, and do not mutilate." 49

4. Proportionality in Response

قال ﷺ: "لا يقتل أحد إلا مظلومًا"

The Prophet ﷺ said: "No one should be killed except the one who is wronged."50

5. Intent-Based Response

قال ﷺ: "إنما الأعمال بالنيات"

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Actions are judged by intentions."51

7. Caution and Vigilance in War and Defense

Islamic defense doctrine is not rooted in aggression, but in balance, discipline, and justice. It seeks to protect the oppressed, restore order, and limit the scope of violence, not perpetuate it. In Islamic military strategy, caution, vigilance, and situational awareness hold a very important place. These principles are not limited to the use of force alone but also include understanding the enemy's intentions, tactics, and potential threats in order to develop an effective strategy.

Islamic military doctrine emphasizes **defense over aggression, discipline over chaos, and justice over arbitrary action**. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ consistently demonstrated careful planning, reconnaissance, and strategic forethought in campaigns, reflecting the principle that warfare should be **ethical, cautious, and precise**.

1. Vigilance Against the Enemy

The Prophet ﷺ often deployed scouts and used intelligence before battles.

During the Battle of Uhud, the Prophet ﷺ sent reconnaissance teams to monitor Quraysh movements and to prepare for potential ambushes. This demonstrates the importance of anticipating enemy action.

وَأَرْسَلَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَرِيقًا لِّلْاِسْتِطْلَاعِ عَلَى قَوْمِ قُرَيْشٍ

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent a detachment to scout and gather intelligence on the people of Quraysh.⁵²

2. Avoiding Negligence (Hazzr)

The Qur'an emphasizes careful preparation and alertness to danger:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا خُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ وَانْفِرُوا نَثَابًا أَوْ انْفِرُوا جَمِيعًا

“The believers are advised to take their precautions and [either] go forth in detachments or go forth all together.”⁵³

The term “take your precautions” (khudhū hidrakum) implies vigilance and avoiding negligence (hazzr) in the face of potential threat.⁵⁴

3. Be Opportunistic

The Prophet ﷺ demonstrated the importance of timing and seizing the correct moment in military campaigns. For instance, the strategic trench at Khandaq was constructed after careful assessment of the enemy's approach and likely points of attack, allowing the Muslims to turn a potential threat into a defensive advantage.

فَقَالَ سَلْمَانَ: احْفَرُوا حَنْدَقًا حَوْلَ الْمَدِينَةِ فَفَعَلُوا

Then Salman said: “Dig a trench around the city,” and they did so.⁵⁵

The Quran directs the Muslims while fighting in the following verse:

إِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِمْ فَأَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَلْيَقُمْ فِيهَا طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ مَعَكُمْ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا أَسْلِحَتَهُمْ فَإِذَا سَجَدُوا فَلْيَكُونُوا مِنْ وَرَائِكُمْ وَيَأْتِ طَائِفَةٌ أُخْرَى لَمْ يُصَلُّوا فَلْيُصَلُّوا مَعَكُمْ وَخُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ وَأَسْلِحَتَكُمْ ۗ وَكَانَ فَضْلًا مِنَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَيَعْفُو اللَّهُ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

“And when you [Muslims] are among them and lead them in prayer, let a group of them stand [in prayer] with you and let them carry their arms. And when they have prostrated, let them be behind you and have the other group come forward which has not [yet] prayed and let them pray with you, taking precaution and carrying their arms.”⁵⁶

وَإِذَا خَرَجُوا فِي الْفِتْنَةِ يُسْرِفُونَ وَيُغْوِلُونَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ عَلَى قِتَالٍ وَإِذَا لَفُوكَ قَاتِلُوكَ وَيَزِيدُونَ وَيُتَّبِلُونَ
“And when they go out [to fight], they spend [only] a little. And they are [then] assaulting you with their mouths, and they are averted. But if they come to you, they fight in proper military formation, and they repent.”⁵⁷

These teachings align with **Islamic ethics of war** as well as **modern military doctrines**, where preparedness and mental alertness are vital to counter deception and trickery by the opponent.

8. Patience and Steadfastness in Hardships

Patience and steadfastness in hardships are not only spiritual virtues but also essential principles in leadership and governance. The life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ exemplifies how endurance, careful planning, and moral courage can guide a community through challenges and conflicts. In the context of military policy, patience allowed the Prophet (PBUH) to act with wisdom, avoid unnecessary confrontations, and maintain balance in power among tribes and states. Steadfastness ensured that strategic decisions were consistent, fair, and aligned with ethical principles, even in the face of adversity. Studying these qualities provides a perspective on how patience and resilience underpin effective military and political strategies, ensuring long-term stability and justice.

Physical Preparation and Strengthening of Power

Physical preparation and the strengthening of power are fundamental aspects of effective military strategy. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ emphasized the importance of training, discipline, and readiness among his companions to ensure that the Muslim community could defend itself and maintain stability. This approach was not merely about force, but about cultivating resilience, endurance, and strategic capability to achieve a balance of power with adversaries. By preparing physically and reinforcing strength, the Prophet (PBUH) ensured that military actions were guided by wisdom, ethical principles, and the long-term security of the community. Understanding this aspect of his policy reveals how preparedness and capability play a crucial role in sustaining justice and equilibrium in power relations.

“O you who have believed! Be patient in the cause of your religion, and encourage one another to

patience, and be prepared to confront the faults of the enemy.” 58

Develop skills in sports, archery, horse riding, and running to enhance martial strength.

Such training is essential for alertness and readiness on the battlefield. 59

Drills and Training

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) approved of physical exercises such as running, archery, and swimming, emphasizing that these activities are important

preparations for war. These exercises build physical strength, endurance, and combat readiness essential for soldiers.

The Prophet himself encouraged archery, famously participating in archery contests and instructing his companions to practice regularly. For example, he said: **“Teach your children swimming, archery, and horse riding.”**⁶⁰

The Quran also highlights the importance of physical preparedness and strength in the context of defense and deterrence: **“And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy...”**⁶¹

Historical records show that the early Muslim community placed great emphasis on physical training as a key element of military readiness. Running and horse riding were common practices among the Sahabah (companions of the Prophet) to enhance their battlefield effectiveness.

The Prophet’s emphasis on physical training aligns with the concept of being mentally and physically prepared for defense, reflecting the holistic nature of Islamic military ethics where physical fitness is part of spiritual and communal responsibility.

9. Vigilance Over the Enemy in Both Peace and War

It is essential to remain fully vigilant over the enemy even after the cessation of open conflict, as enemies often use peace as a pretext to lower your guard and exploit any negligence.

This continuous watchfulness ensures that one is not caught off-guard by surprise attacks or conspiracies during times of apparent calm.

“فَإِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرْمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَخُذُوهُمْ وَأَحْصِرُوا لَهُمْ وَأَقْعُدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصِدٍ”

“And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them, and capture them, and besiege them, and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush.”⁶²

This verse was revealed in the context of **hostile tribes who repeatedly violated treaties and attacked Muslims**, emphasizing that **measures such as pursuit, siege, and ambush were lawful only against active aggressors who had broken covenants**. Classical exegetes such as **Ibn Kathīr** and **al-Ṭabarī** that the instruction applied specifically to **belligerent groups**, not peaceful or treaty-abiding polytheists.⁶³

10. The Sanctity and Importance of Striving (Jihad) Against Evil and War

The concept of striving, or Jihad, holds a central place in the military policy of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), reflecting both moral and strategic dimensions. Jihad, in its true sense, is the effort to uphold justice, resist oppression, and confront evil, while maintaining ethical conduct even in warfare. The Prophet (PBUH) framed military engagements not as acts of aggression but as a means to establish peace, protect the vulnerable, and maintain a balance of power. Recognizing the sanctity and importance of this struggle, his approach emphasized discipline, adherence to divine guidance, and the protection of humanity, illustrating that warfare in Islam is purposeful, measured, and guided by principles of righteousness.

**“And give good tidings to the Mujahideen (those who strive in the way of Allah).”
64**

“Indeed, Allah will give the Mujahideen a great reward.”⁶⁵

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: **In Sahih Muslim, the Prophet (ﷺ) was asked what deed equals Jihad. He responded that people could not undertake such a deed, and then compared the reward of Jihad in Allah’s cause to a person who fasts and prays without stopping until the Mujahid returns. 66**

Jihad is described as the garment of piety (taqwa), a strong armor, and a secure shield protecting the believer’s faith and community.

“Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors.”⁶⁷

11. Strengthening Religious Beliefs and Encouragement

A crucial element of the military strategy of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was the strengthening of religious beliefs and the encouragement of his followers. Spiritual conviction and moral clarity were not only a source of personal resilience but also a strategic tool to maintain unity and discipline among the troops. By fostering a strong sense of divine purpose, the Prophet (PBUH) ensured that his companions were motivated, courageous, and steadfast even in the most challenging battles. This integration of faith into military planning enhanced morale, reduced internal dissent, and amplified the psychological advantage over adversaries, demonstrating that effective military strategy under the Prophet (PBUH) combined physical preparedness with deep-rooted ethical and spiritual motivation to maintain balance in power.

Increasing faith in **Tawheed** (Oneness of God), **Tawakkul** (trust in Allah), **Ma'ad** (the Hereafter), **Shahadat** (martyrdom), **Sabr** (patience), and **Eesaar** (self-sacrifice). **“And how many a prophet [fought and] with him fought many religious scholars. But they never lost assurance due to what afflicted them in the cause of Allah, nor did they weaken or submit. And Allah loves the steadfast.” 68**

The Prophet Muhammad’s (peace be upon him) life is a prime example of perseverance and deep faith during hardships. His teachings inspire courage and resilience among believers.

These core beliefs boost morale and encourage steadfastness in the face of adversity.

12. Military Skills in War

Effective leadership on the battlefield depended not only on courage and tactical knowledge but also on organizational ability, planning, and resource management. The Prophet (PBUH) appointed commanders based on competence, integrity, and strategic insight, ensuring that troops were coordinated, supplies were managed efficiently, and missions were executed smoothly. Strong administrative skills allowed commanders to maintain discipline, implement orders accurately, and respond swiftly to changing circumstances, thereby sustaining the balance of power and achieving success in both defensive and offensive operations.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ exemplified **effective military administration**, combining strategic foresight, consultation, and ethical leadership. His campaigns reflect an organized approach that balances **practical planning, delegation, and reliance on divine guidance**.

1. Strategic Use of Time, Circumstances, and Location

The Prophet ﷺ carefully selected the time and place for battles to maximize advantage. At the Battle of Badr, the Muslims chose a location near wells to control water supply and gain logistical superiority over the Quraysh.

وَاصْطَفَى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ مَوْقِعَ الْقِتَالِ لِيَسْتَوِلِيَ عَلَى الْمِيَاهِ وَيَكُونَ فِي مَنَافِعِهَا

“The Messenger of Allah ﷺ chose the battlefield location in order to gain control over the water sources and take advantage of their strategic benefits.” 69

2. Use of Non-Military or Tactical Strategies

The Prophet ﷺ employed strategies like **ghazwat** (raids) and **saraya** (small detachments) to weaken enemies, protect Medina, and avoid unnecessary large-scale confrontations.

The expeditions of Saraya al-Madinah involved small units sent on reconnaissance or targeted raids to disrupt Quraysh trade caravans.

وَأَرْسَلَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ السَّرِيَّةَ لِإِحْرَاقِ قَوَائِلِ الْعَدُوِّ وَإِحْسَاسِهِمْ بِالضَّرَرِ

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ dispatched a military detachment to strike the enemy caravans and make them feel the impact of loss.⁷⁰

3. Consultation with Commanders and Experts (Shūrā)

The Prophet ﷺ consistently **consulted his companions** and military experts before decisions, especially on strategy and troop deployment.

Once a decision was made, he relied on Allah while executing the plan, reflecting a combination of planning and trust.

“And consult them in affairs. Then when you have taken a decision, put your trust in Allah.”⁷¹

At the Battle of the Trench, Salman Al-Farsi suggested digging the trench around Medina — the Prophet

وَاسْتَشَارَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ أَصْحَابَهُ فَقَالَ سَلْمَانُ: احْفَرُوا حَنْدَقًا حَوْلَ الْمَدِينَةِ فَفَعَلُوا

“The Messenger of Allah ﷺ consulted his companions, and Salman said: “Dig a trench around the city,” and they did so.”⁷²

13. Military Morale and Encouragement

A key component of the military policy of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was the cultivation of high morale and continuous encouragement among the troops. The Prophet (PBUH) understood that a well-motivated army, confident in its mission and leadership, could face challenges and adversaries with determination and resilience. Through words of reassurance, recognition of bravery, and spiritual inspiration, he strengthened the soldiers’ commitment, unity, and readiness for action. This focus on morale not only enhanced battlefield performance but also contributed to maintaining the balance of power, ensuring that the Muslim forces remained disciplined, cohesive, and strategically effective in the face of any threat.

Historical records from Seerah (biographies of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ) and Tarikh al-Tabari highlight these early military strategies aimed at morale building.

Muslims initially feared the powerful Roman Empire (Byzantines), so small units were sent on **raids and skirmishes** to unsettle the enemy and boost the morale and confidence of Muslim fighters.

These small-scale operations helped **build courage**, maintain **momentum**, and demonstrate Muslim resolve despite being outnumbered.

Such tactics reflect the importance of psychological warfare alongside physical confrontation.

14. Demoralizing the Enemy

Military Morale and Encouragement

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ employed **strategies to boost morale, maintain unity, and strengthen resolve** among Muslim fighters. Historical sources from **Seerah** and **al-Tabari's Tarikh** provide examples of early tactical operations designed to achieve both **psychological and strategic advantages**.

1. Small Raids and Skirmishes to Boost Confidence

During the early years in Medina, Muslims were small in number and often feared larger, more powerful opponents like the Quraysh or the Byzantine forces.

The Prophet ﷺ sent **small units on reconnaissance raids and minor expeditions** (sariyah / ghazwa) to gather intelligence, disrupt enemy operations, and **boost the confidence of Muslim fighters**.

وَأَرْسَلَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ السَّرِيَّةَ لِإِخْرَاقِ قَوَائِلِ الْعَدُوِّ وَتَشْجِيعِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ dispatched a military detachment to strike the enemy caravans and to encourage (motivate) the Muslims.⁷³

2. Burning Enemy Fortifications / Equipment

Raids sometimes involved burning enemy provisions or camps to create **confusion and fear** among opposing ranks.

وَأَحْرَقَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ مُعْتَصِمَاتِ الْعَدُوِّ لِإِزْهَاقِهِمْ وَإِزْعَابِهِمْ

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ burned the enemy's fortifications to exhaust them and instill fear in them.⁷⁴

Ibn Hajar records that during some battles, Muslim forces **destroyed enemy equipment and supplies** when necessary.

In **Sunan Abī Dāwūd (Hadīth 2671)**, the Prophet ﷺ approved **burning enemy siege equipment** during warfare.

“No woman of Banu Qurayzah was killed except one. She was with me, talking and laughing on her back and belly extremely, while the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was killing their men with swords. Suddenly a man called her name: ‘Where is so-and-so?’ She said: ‘I am here. What is the matter with you?’ She said: ‘I did a new act.’ The man then took her and beheaded her. I will never forget the astonishing thing about her: that she was laughing on her back and belly, even though she knew that she was to be killed.”⁷⁵

3. Creating Fatigue and Disorder

Tactical maneuvers, night movements, or blocking key routes caused enemy **disorganization and recklessness**, making them more vulnerable.

The plans and stages (strategies and maneuvers) helped in dispersing their enemies and exhausting them.⁷⁶

15. Creating Anxiety Among Other Tribes and Cutting off Support from Non-Muslims

A key element of Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ military strategy was to prevent non-Muslim tribes from providing support or reinforcements to enemy forces. By carefully monitoring alliances, offering security and protection to cooperative groups, and employing psychological and diplomatic measures, the Prophet ﷺ effectively isolated hostile parties and disrupted potential enemy networks ⁷⁷

Establishing Strategic Alliances

Tribes that entered into agreements with the Prophet ﷺ were assured safety and fair treatment. This approach encouraged loyalty, discouraged defection, and reduced the likelihood that these tribes would support enemy coalitions ⁷⁸.

Diplomatic Assurance and Trust-Building

Groups that joined under the leadership of trusted companions, such as Imam Aliؓ, received guarantees of protection and integration within the Muslim coalition. By fostering trust, the Prophet ﷺ strengthened internal unity and minimized the influence of hostile forces ⁷⁹

Strategic Impact

Through these measures, non-Muslim allies were either neutralized or incorporated into cooperative arrangements, thereby cutting off external support for enemy tribes. This strategy enhanced Muslim security, maintained a balance of power, and exemplified the Prophet's ﷺ mastery of both diplomacy and psychological warfare ⁸⁰

16. Countering Enemy Tactics and Psychological Propaganda

A central component of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) military strategy was the systematic countering of enemy tactics and psychological propaganda. He closely observed the methods, intentions, and communications of adversaries to neutralize deceptive maneuvers and morale-damaging campaigns. This proactive approach ensured that the Muslim community remained resilient, minimizing confusion, misinformation, and fear.

Intelligence and Surprise

The Prophet (PBUH) placed great emphasis on intelligence-gathering to anticipate enemy actions. Scouts were sent to monitor movements, creating uncertainty among adversaries. A notable example is the deployment of reconnaissance before the Battle of Badr . ⁸¹

Disruption of Enemy Resources

Targeting economic and logistic resources was a key strategy to weaken enemy morale and capacity. Expeditions against Quraysh caravans effectively strained their finances and lowered confidence.⁸²

Defensive Strategies

The use of fortifications and strategic terrain enhanced Muslim defensive capability and discouraged enemy aggression. The digging of the trench at Medina during the Battle of Khandaq serves as a prime example.⁸³

Boosting Muslim Morale

The Prophet (PBUH) led by example, demonstrating personal bravery and reinforcing faith-based resilience. His presence on the frontlines at Uhud strengthened the resolve and confidence of his companions ⁸⁴.

Creating Perceived Strength and Psychological Deterrence

Strategic positioning and unified formations projected strength, creating hesitation among enemies. For instance, Quraysh forces were deterred at the Battle of Khandaq due to the unexpected defensive preparations ⁸⁵ Additionally, Muslims raised powerful battle cries rooted in tawhīd, countering enemy psychological tactics and enhancing unity.

17. Avoiding Discord and Enmity in the Prophetic Tradition

In the framework of military strategy, avoiding discord and enmity played a vital role in the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) approach to maintaining a stable and unified force. The Prophet emphasized reconciliation and conflict resolution among his companions and allied tribes to ensure that internal disputes did not weaken the collective strength of the Muslim community. By fostering unity and preventing unnecessary rivalries, he strengthened the cohesion of his forces, making them more resilient against external threats. This approach not only preserved internal stability but also enhanced the balance of power, allowing the Muslims to face enemies effectively while minimizing vulnerabilities caused by internal strife. Historical incidents, such as the resolution of disputes among the Ansar and Muhajirun during the early years in Medina, illustrate how the Prophet's policies prioritized harmony and solidarity as essential elements of military strategy ⁸⁶.

(18) Preventing Enemy's Surprise Attacks and Ambushes

In the study of the **Military Policy of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in Perspectives of Balance in Power**, one of the crucial aspects was the prevention of enemy surprise attacks and ambushes. The Prophet ﷺ emphasized vigilance, intelligence gathering, and proactive measures to secure Muslim territories and forces from sudden assaults.

He encouraged the use of scouts, patrols, and fortified positions to anticipate enemy movements and neutralize potential threats before they could materialize. This preventive approach not only safeguarded the Muslim army but also maintained the balance of power by deterring adversaries from attempting covert attacks. Through careful planning, strategic foresight, and disciplined execution, the Prophet ﷺ ensured that his forces were always prepared for unexpected challenges, exemplifying a blend of spiritual guidance and practical military strategy.

1. Limiting Enemy Mobility – Preventive Measures / Blockades

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ strategically limited enemy mobility to prevent coalitions or reinforcements from forming. This included tactical blockades, control of strategic routes, and sieges. Such measures not only hindered the enemy's physical movement but also weakened morale and reduced the effectiveness of their forces.

Siege of Banu Qurayzah

The Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayzah was prevented from joining Quraysh forces during the Battle of the Trench, effectively isolating them.⁸⁸

Blocking Enemy Caravans

Muslim detachments intercepted Quraysh caravans, disrupting supply lines and preventing reinforcements.⁸⁹

Control of Strategic Routes at Medina

During the Battle of the Trench, key paths and approaches were secured to limit Quraysh cavalry and allied tribes from attacking effectively.⁹⁰

Blocking Strategic Routes

During expeditions against Bani Salim and Najran, strategic routes were blocked to disable enemy weapons and hinder reinforcements. Controlling key pathways minimized enemy mobility and reduced the risk of coordinated attacks.

وَأَغْلَقَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ الطَّرِيقَ الْمُهَيْمَةَ عَلَى أَعْدَائِهِ لِتَقْلِيلِ فَعَالِيَّتِهِمْ
The Messenger of Allah ﷺ blocked key strategic routes to hinder enemy movement, disable their weapons, and prevent reinforcements from joining.⁹³

Stealth and Operational Security

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ emphasized stealth and operational security as integral components of military strategy. Muslim forces were trained to move quietly, minimizing noise and visibility, to maintain the element of surprise and maximize tactical advantage.

Stealth operations were consistently practiced to maintain surprise and operational security. Careful attention to noise reduction, controlled movement, and concealment

helped Muslim forces gain the upper hand against larger or better-equipped enemies 94.

During various expeditions, Muslim armies removed camel bells and ensured quiet movement to avoid alerting enemy forces. This tactic preserved the element of surprise, limiting the ability of adversaries to anticipate attacks

وَسَارَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ بِصَمْتٍ وَلَمْ يُرْفَعَتْ أَجْرَاسُ الْجَمَالِ لِتَجَنَّبَ إِنْبَاءَ الْعَدُوِّ
The Muslims moved silently, and the bells of the camels were not raised to avoid alerting the enemy.95

(19) Use of Terrain and Natural and Artificial Obstacles

In the context of the **Military Policy of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in Perspectives of Balance in Power**, the strategic use of terrain and natural or artificial obstacles played a pivotal role in ensuring military advantage. The Prophet ﷺ carefully assessed landscapes—such as valleys, hills, and water sources—to position forces in a manner that maximized defense and minimized vulnerability. Natural features were combined with constructed barriers, trenches, or fortifications to channel enemy movements, protect Muslim troops, and create tactical superiority. This approach reflects a sophisticated understanding of both physical geography and psychological impact, as the careful utilization of terrain not only strengthened Muslim defenses but also discouraged enemy offensives, maintaining a balance of power without relying solely on numerical strength.

Effective utilization of geographical features and natural terrain is crucial for military success. Commanders must strategically use mountains, rivers, valleys, and man-made structures to gain advantage over the enemy.

The battles of Badr, Uhud, and the Trench (Khandaq) exemplify how the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his companions maximized natural and artificial obstacles for defense and tactical superiority.

Battle of Badr: The Muslims chose the battlefield near wells, limiting enemy access to water and controlling the terrain.

1. Battle of Badr – Controlling Terrain and Resources

وَاخْتَارَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ مَوْقِعَ الْقِتَالِ بِجَانِبِ الْأَبَارِ لِيَسْتَوِلِيَ عَلَى الْمِيَاهِ وَيَتَحَكَّمَ فِي الْمِيزَانِ

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ chose the battlefield near wells, limiting enemy access to water and gaining tactical control over the terrain.96

2. Battle of Uhud – Utilizing Mountainous Terrain

The terrain, including Mount Uhud, played a significant role in troop placements and defensive strategies

وَسَطَّرَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ خُطَطَهُ وَوَضَعَ الْجُنُودَ عَلَى مَا يُعْطِي مِنَ الْجِبَالِ لِلِاسْتِيفَادَةِ مِنَ الْمَضَائِقِ وَالْمَنَاعِ

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ positioned his troops using the mountainous terrain of Mount Uhud to create strategic advantages and strengthen defensive positions.⁹⁷

3. Battle of the Trench (Khandaq) – Man-Made Defensive Obstacles

Battle of the Trench: The digging of a trench—a man-made obstacle—effectively blocked the advance of a large confederate army, utilizing the natural desert terrain and turning it into a defensive fortress.

وَحَفَرَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ حَنْدَقًا حَوْلَ الْمَدِينَةِ لِيَسْتَعِزَّ الصَّخْرَاءُ فِي تَحْصِينِهَا وَيَمْنَعَ الْقَوْمَ مِنَ التَّقَدُّمِ

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ dug a trench around Medina, combining natural desert terrain with a man-made obstacle, effectively blocking the advance of a large confederate army.⁹⁸

3. Use of Natural Shelters for Protection

وَاتَّخَذَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ وَصَحَابَتُهُ الْجِبَالَ وَالْوُدْيَانَ وَالْمِيَاهَ حُصُونًا لِحِمَايَةِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَتَعْطِيلِ تَحْرُكَاتِ الْعَدُوِّ

The Prophet ﷺ and his companions used mountains, valleys, and rivers as natural fortifications to protect Muslim forces and disrupt enemy movements. These natural shelters provided both defense and tactical advantage, slowing enemy advances and creating obstacles in the path of hostile forces.⁹⁹

The use of natural features like mountains and rivers as defensive shelters minimized casualties and enhanced strategic positioning during military campaigns, reflecting the Prophet's ﷺ careful attention to terrain in planning. ¹⁰⁰

(20) Strategic Importance of Intermediate Geographical Locations

In the context of the military policy of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ from the perspective of balance of power, the strategic selection and control of intermediate geographical locations played a critical role in both defense and influence. Key positions such as trade routes, oases, and crossroads enabled Muslim forces to monitor enemy movements, secure supplies, and maintain communication between regions. By occupying these points, the Prophet ﷺ could preempt enemy advances, deploy troops rapidly, and create a psychological advantage by projecting strength across multiple areas.¹⁰¹

1. Camps Near Water Sources

In numerous military expeditions (Ghazawat) and raids (Sariyyah), Muslim camps were established near water sources such as rivers and streams. This ensured logistical support and troop sustenance while controlling key access points, vital for operational effectiveness.¹⁰²

2. Tactical Advantage through Geography

Selecting locations that were difficult for the enemy to approach or penetrate provided a defensive edge. These positions made surprise attacks harder and allowed better management of troop movements and battlefield engagements.¹⁰³

3. Natural Defense and Observation

Intermediate geographical locations served as natural barriers, observation posts, and staging areas for launching counter-attacks or conducting strategic retreats. This reflects the Prophet's ﷺ comprehensive understanding of terrain in military strategy and balance of power .¹⁰⁴

4. Operational Mobility and Security

The strategic utilization of terrain allowed Muslim forces to maintain mobility while minimizing vulnerabilities. Controlling these positions enhanced both defensive and offensive capabilities, exemplifying a sophisticated approach to military logistics and psychological deterrence.¹⁰⁵

(21) Fostering Unity and Cohesion : Peaceful Co-existence

Cohesion Among Mujāhidīn

Maintaining unity and avoiding division among fighters is essential for the success of any struggle. The Qur'an explicitly warns against disunity:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُوا وَاخْتَلَفُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ

“And be not like those who became divided and differed after the clear proofs had come to them.”¹⁰⁶

This verse underscores the importance of solidarity—especially during trials and conflicts—to preserve strength, morale, and strategic coherence among believers.

Unity as a Strategic Pillar in the Prophet's ﷺ Military Policy

Throughout early Islamic history, the establishment of unity and strategic alliances played a crucial role in strengthening the Muslim community politically and militarily. Within the broader **Military Policy of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in the Perspective of Balance of Power**, fostering unity and cohesion among the Mujāhidīn stood as a foundational military principle. The Prophet ﷺ consistently emphasized collective discipline, mutual loyalty, and moral brotherhood, understanding that a united force possesses strength far beyond its numbers.

During the Prophet's ﷺ time, several **treaties with Jewish tribes** in and around Medina were established. These agreements outlined terms of **non-aggression, mutual defense, and peaceful coexistence**, ensuring that the Muslim community could develop in a secure environment. 107

Typical clauses of these treaties included:

- Neither party would attack the other.
- In case of external aggression, they would support each other or remain neutral.
- Maintenance of communal autonomy and protection of rights for Jewish tribes.

He eradicated tribal rivalries, unified diverse groups under one banner, and trained fighters to move as a single coordinated body rather than fragmented tribal factions.108

This shared purpose—rooted in *īmān*, obedience, and discipline—not only enhanced battlefield efficiency but also created a psychological deterrent. Opponents feared the unmatched solidarity and discipline of the Muslim ranks. 109

Thus, cohesion was not merely an ethical virtue—it was a deliberate, calculated **military strategy** that strengthened the balance of power against larger, well-equipped adversaries.

Richard says: “Muhammad changed the social composition of Arab armies from a collection of clans, tribes, and blood kin loyal only to themselves into a national army loyal to a national social entity called the ummah, or community of believers in God. Loyalty to the ummah permitted the national army to unify the two traditional combat arms of infantry and cavalry into a genuine combined military force.” 110

Such diplomatic and military arrangements were essential for building a secure environment for Muslims while **respecting pluralism and local traditions** . 111

(22) Peace Treaties with the Enemy and External Powers

The use of peace treaties with enemy forces and external powers was a critical component of the military strategy of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, reflecting both pragmatism and foresight in maintaining regional stability.

The months following Hudaibiyyah witnessed unprecedented growth in the Muslim community, including rapid increases in conversions and expanding political alliances. Classical historians note that the number of people embracing Islam in the two years after the treaty exceeded the total number of converts in the entire earlier

period of the Prophet’s mission. 114 This period of stability allowed the Muslims to strengthen their administrative, military, and social institutions while deepening ties with surrounding tribes. The cessation of conflict also enabled diplomatic correspondence with external powers, including Byzantium and Persia. 115 This pattern reflects a classic balance-of-power strategy: once immediate external threats subsided, internal consolidation became the primary focus. Peace enabled structured military reforms, economic strengthening, and broader ideological outreach. As Ibn Kathir observes, the treaty “opened a door through which people entered Islam in crowds”. 116 Strategically, controlled peace proved more transformative than continuous warfare, shifting the Muslims from survival to expansion.

Hudaybiyyah illustrates a central principle of the Prophet Muhammad’s ﷺ military policy: victory is not always secured through combat, but through the integrated use of diplomacy, deterrence, and strategic patience. By temporarily neutralizing Quraysh aggression, the treaty secured the Muslim rear and eliminated the risk of multi-front conflict. 117 This allowed resources and attention to be redirected toward emerging opportunities such as alliance-building and peaceful propagation. In military theory, this corresponds to an indirect strategy—reshaping the environment rather than pursuing direct confrontation. W. Montgomery Watt notes that Hudaybiyyah “shifted the balance of power decisively in favor of the Muslims” 118 When Quraysh violated the treaty, the Muslims were already politically and militarily ascendant, enabling the largely peaceful conquest of Mecca 119 This outcome demonstrates that calibrated diplomacy can achieve outcomes unattainable through conflict alone.

Such treaties were designed not only to prevent unnecessary bloodshed but also to create opportunities for diplomacy, consolidation of Muslim power, and strategic advantage over potential aggressors .120

A prominent example is the **Treaty of Hudaybiyyah (6 AH / 628 CE)**, which, though initially seen as a concession by some companions, allowed Muslims to strengthen their position, secure alliances, and engage in peaceful propagation of Islam while avoiding immediate conflict.121

Similarly, agreements with Jewish tribes and other external powers in Medina were carefully structured to ensure mutual obligations, prevent hostilities, and uphold the principles of justice and security.122

These treaties exemplify a balance-of-power approach, where military restraint, ethical governance, and negotiation complemented armed preparedness, ensuring long-term stability and preventing the escalation of conflicts .

(23) Treaties with Friendly Nations and Provision of Arms

During the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ leadership in Medina, several strategic treaties were concluded with friendly tribes and neighboring regions to enhance security and reinforce the balance of power. Agreements with tribes such as Banu Khuza'ah, Banu Damrah, and Banu Mudlij ensured mutual protection, non-aggression, and safe passage, helping to stabilize the western and coastal fronts. 123 Defense arrangements extended to Yemen, where cooperative pacts secured southern borders against external threats. 124 Relations with the Christian community of Najran included the rental of arms and guarantees of peaceful coexistence—an approach that integrated diplomacy with military-economic cooperation. 125 Collectively, these treaties strengthened regional alliances, enhanced deterrence, and prevented hostile coalitions from forming against the emerging Muslim state.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ formed strategic alliances with friendly nations to reinforce Muslim security, often incorporating **non-aggression, mutual defense, and provision of arms** within these agreements. He supplied weapons to allied tribes as part of broader defensive arrangements, strengthening deterrence and the balance of power. 127 In military theory, this corresponds to an indirect strategy—reshaping the environment rather than pursuing direct confrontation. W. Montgomery Watt notes that Hudaibiyyah “shifted the balance of power decisively in favor of the Muslims”. 128 When Quraysh violated the treaty, the Muslims were already politically and militarily ascendant, enabling the largely peaceful conquest of Mecca. 129 This outcome demonstrates that calibrated diplomacy can achieve outcomes unattainable through conflict alone.

(24) Gathering Intelligence (al-Istikhbārāt) Strategy

Gathering intelligence on the enemy was a cornerstone of the military strategy of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, reflecting his emphasis on foresight and informed decision-making. By understanding the strengths, weaknesses, intentions, and movements of adversaries, the Prophet ﷺ ensured that his military actions were precise, effective, and minimized unnecessary risks. Intelligence gathering included scouting missions, informants, and careful observation of enemy territories, as seen in the campaigns of Badr and Uhud. 130

Intelligence (jihāz al-istikhbārāt) formed a crucial pillar of the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ military and political strategy. He established a disciplined system of information-gathering to ensure preparedness, prevent surprise attacks, and maintain balance in power. His network included scouts, spies, informants, and rapid-response messengers, operating under strict ethical and strategic guidelines.

1. Use of Reconnaissance Patrols (Sariyyāt al-Tassus)

The Prophet ﷺ frequently dispatched small units to observe enemy movements, tribal alliances, and trade routes, especially prior to major battles. 131

2. Intelligence Before the Battle of Badr

Before Badr, the Prophet ﷺ sent scouts to estimate the Quraysh army's numbers, morale, and weapons. Ḥubāb ibn al-Mundir and others provided essential ground intelligence.¹³²

3. Human Intelligence Network in Makkah

The Prophet ﷺ maintained informants in Makkah who secretly sent reports about Quraysh military plans and tribal alliances.¹³³

4. Deployment of Spies Before the Battle of Ahzab

During the Battle of the Trench, the Prophet ﷺ sent **Hudhayfah ibn al-Yamān** into the enemy camp at night to gather exact information about the confederate forces.

فَانْطَلَقْتُ كَأَنِّي أَمْشِي فِي حَمَامٍ، حَتَّى دَخَلْتُ فِي قَوْمِ الْعَدُوِّ... فَرَجَعْتُ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ، فَأَخْبَرْتُهُ خَبَرَ الْقَوْمِ.

"I went until I felt as if I were walking in a heated bath, until I reached the enemy camp... Then I returned to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and informed him of the news of the people."¹³⁴

5. Counter-Intelligence Measures

The Prophet ﷺ enforced strict secrecy of military plans. Destinations were concealed even from close companions until departure. The march for the Conquest of Makkah remained entirely confidential.

اللَّهُمَّ خُذِ الْعِيُونَ وَالْأَخْبَارَ عَن فُرَيْشٍ.

"O Allah, conceal our news and information from Quraysh."¹³⁵

6. Use of Non-Muslim Spies and Guides

The Prophet ﷺ employed skilled non-Muslim trackers when strategically beneficial. During the Hijrah, he hired 'Abdullāh ibn Urayqīṭ, an expert non-Muslim guide.

وَاسْتَأْجَرَا دَلِيلًا مِّن بَنِي الدَّيْلِ، وَهُوَ عَلَى دِينِ كُفَّارِ فُرَيْشٍ، فَدَفَعَا إِلَيْهِمَا رَاجِلَيْهِمَا.

"They hired a guide from Banu Ad-Dīl who was on the religion of the disbelievers of Quraysh, and they entrusted their two mounts to him." ¹³⁶

7. Intelligence in Diplomacy and Alliances

Before treaties like Hudaibiyyah, the Prophet ﷺ relied on reports from informants about Quraysh's movements, intentions, and alliances. ¹³⁷

The Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ intelligence strategy was multi-layered, highly organized, ethically grounded, and strategically advanced. It integrated reconnaissance patrols, human intelligence networks, secrecy and counter-intelligence practices, strategic collaboration with trustworthy non-Muslims, and intelligence-driven diplomacy. These coordinated measures prevented surprise attacks, safeguarded the Muslim community, enabled informed and timely military decision-making, and maintained a stable balance of power across Arabia. In essence, his model reflects enduring principles found in modern military intelligence systems—secrecy, precision, strategic foresight, and ethical restraint—demonstrating a timeless and disciplined approach to security and statecraft.

(25) Demonstration of Military Strength and Severity

The demonstration of military strength and severity was a central aspect of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ's military policy, reflecting both strategic deterrence and the maintenance of order among allies and adversaries alike.¹³⁸ By showcasing disciplined forces and readiness for battle, the Prophet ﷺ ensured that potential aggressors were aware of the consequences of hostility, thereby minimizing unnecessary conflicts.¹³⁹ This approach also served to consolidate internal unity and morale, as the companions witnessed the organized power and discipline of the Muslim army, fostering confidence in leadership and commitment to collective objectives.¹⁴⁰

For example, the disciplined formations at the **Battle of Uhud** (3 AH / 625 CE) and the **Battle of the Trench** (5 AH / 627 CE) demonstrated not only tactical prowess but also a psychological impact on opposing tribes, deterring impulsive attacks.¹⁴¹

The Prophet ﷺ combined visible military readiness with strict adherence to ethical conduct, ensuring that the severity displayed was strategic, not indiscriminate.¹⁴²

This strategy aligns with the broader perspective of **balance of power**, as it combined deterrence, psychological influence, and ethical leadership to maintain security and stability in the region.¹⁴³

(27) Support and Assistance in War

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ established comprehensive protocols to ensure **support and assistance** for soldiers during and after battle. These measures included both physical and spiritual care for the wounded, as well as ensuring adequate logistical support for the army.

1. Care for the Wounded

During battles, special attention was given to **treatment and recovery of injured soldiers**. Medical aid, food, water, and other essential supplies were organized systematically, ensuring that the wounded could recuperate and, if possible, return to active duty. Such practices maintained the overall health, stamina, and effectiveness of the army.¹⁵⁰

2. Organized Logistics and Medical Support

Historical records, such as *Tarikh al-Tabari*, describe the careful organization of **logistics and medical aid** in early Islamic campaigns. The Prophet ﷺ ensured that units responsible for support roles—carrying water, treating injuries, and managing supplies—were well-coordinated and effectively deployed.¹⁵¹

3. Boosting Morale and Military Motivation

Support systems also served as a **psychological motivator**, reinforcing courage and resilience among fighters. Richard Gabriel notes, “Muhammad's armies

demonstrated a higher degree of military motivation than traditional Arab armies. Being a good warrior had always been the central core of Arab military values. Muhammad raised the status of the warrior to an even greater degree” . 152

Excellence and Status of a Mujahid in Islam

The Prophet ﷺ and his companions emphasized that **military service was noble both spiritually and socially**, encouraging volunteers and enhancing battlefield morale.

The **virtue of a Mujahid (one who struggles in the way of Allah)** in Islam is highly exalted, as described in both the Qur’an and Hadith.

The Qur’an states:

“Those who strive in Our way, We will surely guide them to Our paths.” . 153

This verse highlights the elevated spiritual rank and guidance promised to a Mujahid.

ii. Counted Among the Greatest Deeds:

Narrated by Abu Dharr (RA):

“I asked: O Messenger of Allah, which deed is the best? He said: Faith in Allah and striving in the way of Allah.” . 154

iii. Promise of Paradise and Great Reward:

Narrated by Abu Hurairah (RA), the Prophet ﷺ said:

“None shall enter Paradise who does not fight and exert effort in the way of Allah.” . 155

(28) Military Organization and Division of Labor

The military organization established by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ reflected remarkable strategic insight and efficiency, emphasizing a clear division of labor and structured hierarchy to maintain cohesion and operational effectiveness. Units were assigned specific roles, such as archers, infantry, and cavalry, ensuring that every individual contributed effectively to the overall mission while minimizing vulnerabilities in battle. This division of labor not only enhanced tactical flexibility but also allowed for rapid mobilization and adaptation in diverse combat scenarios. For example, during the Battle of Uhud, the Prophet ﷺ positioned 50 archers on a mountain pass to prevent enemy flanking, while the main body of soldiers engaged in frontal combat, illustrating careful allocation of responsibilities based on terrain and enemy threat. 156 Similarly, during the Battle of the Trench, different sections of the Muslim army were assigned to guard various strategic points along the trench, showcasing coordinated efforts and task specialization. 157 These examples underscore that the

Prophet's military organization was not only disciplined but also strategically structured to optimize strength, maintain balance in power, and ensure unity among troops.

(29) Financial and Economic Support

Financial and economic support was a **crucial component of the military policy** of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. By organizing community resources, collecting contributions such as **ṣadaqah and zakāt**, and distributing funds to meet the needs of soldiers, the Prophet ﷺ ensured that the Muslim army remained logistically prepared and morally confident.158

1. Mobilization of Resources

The Prophet ﷺ demonstrated effective **economic planning** to support prolonged campaigns. For instance, during the **Battle of Tabuk**, resources were mobilized to equip a large expedition despite harsh environmental and logistical challenges. This preparation allowed the army to focus on strategic objectives without the distraction of personal economic hardships .159

2. Integration of Financial and Military Roles

The early Muslim community adopted a **communal approach to warfare**, where not all members participated in combat. Those who could not fight directly contributed through financial support, provision of supplies, or other resources essential to military operations. This collective contribution ensured the army remained well-equipped and sustained .160

3. Role of Wealthy Companions

Affluent companions played a pivotal role in **strengthening logistical capabilities**. By providing funds for weapons, armor, horses, and other necessities, they enhanced the readiness and efficiency of the army. Al-Baladhuri's historical accounts illustrate how economic strength was systematically integrated into military planning and warfare logistics.161

4. Equitable Distribution and Unity

Economic planning also ensured the **equitable sharing of spoils** and prevented disputes among the Muslim ranks, thereby preserving unity and cohesion. Such integration of financial management into military strategy reflects the Prophet's ﷺ holistic approach to balancing resources, morale, and operational effectiveness .162

Conclusion

The military strategies described in the Qur'an and the Seerah of Prophet

Muhammad ﷺ present not only a defensive model but also a comprehensive guidance system that integrates ethical, social, political, and strategic dimensions. The principle of merit-based recruitment emphasizes that military strength should be founded on justice and competence, allowing each individual to perform their role according to their ability and skill. Organized structure, discipline, and vigilance demonstrate that success in war depends not merely on weapons or numbers but on wisdom, planning, and foresight. Likewise, systems of intelligence, logistical preparation, and careful monitoring of enemy movements highlight the importance of prudence and strategic foresight in achieving effective defense.

These strategies were neither aggressive nor purely reactionary. They emphasized preparedness, ethical conduct, intelligence, and balance of power, creating a model of governance and military organization that safeguarded society while minimizing harm. The holistic approach reflected in the Prophet's ﷺ strategies ensured unity, deterred potential threats, and maintained stability, illustrating the seamless integration of moral guidance with practical leadership.

Even in the modern era, these principles remain relevant. They offer valuable lessons in national defense, diplomacy, and international relations, where strategic planning, ethical conduct, intelligence, cohesion, and balance of power are essential for sustaining peace, preventing oppression, and ensuring security at both national and international levels.

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Islam and The Military Policy of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in the Perspective of Balance of Power

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