



# What is my country: Striving for power or Fleeing weakness?

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** The Epic Fury/Roaring Lion War is a litmus test for the power index of many countries. For the purposes of this paper, power resides in a country's security and economic posture. In between the pole of the global main power (the United States) and the pole of many weak countries (Spain as a new member) the other countries exist on a continuum between two types: those that strive for power and those that flee from weakness. Based on a preliminary and qualitative perspective, it can be said that the United States, China, and Russia grew stronger as a result of the war; Iran has returned to fleeing from weakness. France and Britain established themselves on the side of fleeing from weakness, while Germany took another step toward achieving power. Saudi Arabia's pursuit of power has been undermined, as has the other Gulf states, fle from weakness. Israel advanced in its pursuit of power, but that power is unbalanced. Further in-depth power analysis is required as the 'dust settles', and it should be used to advance significant opportunities and hedge risks.

**Thesis: Strive for strength or flee from weakness**

The Epic Fury/Roaring Lion War cast a spotlight on the power index of many countries and the global and regional balance of power. For the purposes of this paper, a country's power is defined as its security and economic posture. A country may have additional supporting strengths (once called "soft"), such as diplomacy, influence, and internal resilience. For the weaker player, such

strengths provide power, but their effectiveness is limited. Ultimately, they are embodied in two main ones: strategic-security posture and economic dominance.

There is a gap between a country's self-perception and its actual power, as Russia learned after its decision to invade Ukraine. This paper assess “objective” power rather than a country’s self-perception.

One country in the world today is considerably more powerful than all others: the United States. There are weak countries in the world. In fact, out of about 200 countries, a significant portion of them are either weak or have small yet sufficient power relative to their surroundings. A new member of the latter club is Spain, which was once a global empire but which is now weak in terms of both security and economy.

The other countries rest on a continuum. They can be divided into two types: those that strive for power and those that flee from weakness. The Epic Fury War held up a mirror to the global and regional arena, allowing for a recalibration of the position of various countries on the continuum.

There are several reasons why Epic Fury is a better indicator of countries’ strength than the war in Ukraine or the situation in the China Sea:

- a. It is the first global war crisis during the presidency of Donald Trump, who has placed the issue of power at the center of his strategy;
- b. it transformed from a regional crisis into a global one due to the energy issue and the supply chain challenges, which have intensified in recent years, especially since the Covid-19 pandemic; and
- c. it puts key geostrategic arenas to the test, such as Russia-Europe, India-Pakistan, and, in the Pacific, from China to Australia.

### **Estimating change in the power index of key countries**

The description below is intended to provide initial directions for the professional and academic discourse on the issue.

**Iran:** The Islamic Republic has returned to fleeing from weakness. In the first two decades of its existence, the regime fled from weakness, with the trauma of the Iran-Iraq War playing a central role. However, in the last two decades, it

changed course and moved toward striving for power. The Iranians decided that security power was more important than economic, and were willing to pay the painful price of sanctions in exchange for it. The main milestones of this shift seem to have been the regime's success in suppressing the "Green Movement" protest in 2009; the absence of restrictions on its behavior in the missile field and in the regional arena in the JCPOA in 2015; its ability to supply advanced missile capabilities to proxies; and the victories of its axis in aiding the Assad regime in Syria and in the Houthis' fight against the Saudis and the UAE. Unlike Qassem Soleimani, who strove for regional power in a calculated manner while managing risk, his successors were less rigorous, as evidenced by their inability to control Hamas on October 7. The current war, even if the Islamic regime does not yet fully understand it as such, is a severe blow to its striving after power. During the process of internalizing the results of the war, the regime will likely grasp that it has to return to the approach of fleeing from weakness.

**United States:** The US has strengthened its pursuit of power. Epic Fury was a purposeful display of the Americans' absolute military superiority, especially as it was supported by an ally who is a "running horse", not a "lazy donkey". It experienced a slight backlash in the area of economic power, because it is still internally sensitive to energy price fluctuations, but this negative is insignificant relative to its achievements.

**China and the Pacific:** The Chinese have come out ahead in their pursuit of power. On the one hand, an ostensible ally of Beijing has been severely damaged and isolated. But on the economic level, through the strength it has built in recent years in the field of supply chains, China has demonstrated clear superiority over its Japanese, South Korean and Australian neighbors. On the military side, what happened in the Persian Gulf hardly whet the world's appetite for further conflict in the China Sea, which strengthens China's bargaining power.

**Russia and Europe:** The Russian balance sheet for the pursuit of power, especially vis-à-vis Europe, is positive. In economic terms, the war boosted its ability to profit from energy sales and balance the economic difficulties resulting from the long war and sanctions. In the security sphere, Europe's weakness strengthens Russian power. Like Russia, Ukraine – a country that is

by definition fleeing from weakness, especially in the current war – also managed to strengthen its position in the form of security and economic gains. On the other hand, Europe, fleeing from weakness, suffered another blow to its security power: the practical disintegration of the NATO alliance and the distancing from Europe of the United States, NATO's critical component.

**India and Pakistan:** India's quest for power has been negatively affected. Pakistan succeeded – in a process that has been going on for more than a year - in positioning itself as an asset to the United States, but was exposed for its weakness as a military partner of Saudi Arabia. However, this development should be analyzed more in the context of India, since the rapprochement between the United States and Pakistan is an American challenge to the independent strategy that India is pursuing, among other areas, in the Russian context. In addition, the war revealed weaknesses in the Indian supply chain. These developments reflect the fact that India still faces significant challenges in its quest for global power.

**Germany, Great Britain and France:** Here we see a reversal of roles. Germany is the one striving after power, while Britain and France, which, in recent decades, have exercised security power in various arenas, have been revealed as unable to exert power, mainly for internal reasons. They are now deep along the continuum among those fleeing from weakness, while Germany appears to have passed through another stage in its complex return to being a security power.

**Saudi Arabia and the Gulf:** Epic Fury posed a challenge to the Saudi approach of striving for power and fleeing from the weakness of the other Gulf countries. For decades, Saudi Arabia positioned itself as the key regional player striving for power through its enormous economic capabilities. The current *de facto* ruler, Muhammad bin Salman, attempted to regulate this effort through Vision 2030. In this pursuit, Saudi Arabia prioritized economic power over security power, and this resulted in painful military losses to the Houthis over the past decade. The Iranian decision to militarily attack the Gulf states and oil exports as a central strategic approach (albeit with no choice) represented a security challenge to the Gulf states' economic power. Saudi Arabia will now have to reexamine whether it can continue to strive for power or must shift to the more realistic approach of fleeing from weakness.

In the other Gulf states, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and Kuwait, the situation is even clearer. Their basic strategy is to flee from weakness. The war proved to them that they need to improve their capabilities, mainly in the security field and in alternatives to oil and gas flows.

**Turkey's** approach also retreated somewhat as a result of the war. It has shifted from a country that strives more and more after power to one that flees from weakness.

**Israel:** Epic Fury/Roaring Lion constituted a significant achievement in Israel's pursuit of power – with an asterisk.

David Ben-Gurion's national security strategy was designed as a flight from inherent weakness. It created a durable force with five components: a qualitative conventional military advantage, an image of nuclear deterrence, special relations with a superpower, economic and technological superiority, and national resilience.

Over a long process, Israel's approach transformed from a flight from weakness to the pursuit of power. A number of key events can be highlighted: the Six-Day War, which confirmed Israel's military power in the region and ultimately led to the peace agreement with Egypt; the leap to a hi-tech, free-market economy that manifested from 1992; and the process, resulting from the shock of the October 7, 2023 attack, of releasing itself from the constraints it had placed upon itself on its use of military force. That unshackling manifested in the operation in Khan Yunis in early 2024, the beeper operation and elimination of Nasrallah at the end of that year, and Operation Rising Lion in 2025. The State of Israel today is, as a result of the current war, a country with military and economic power much greater than its objective geo-political posture. However, when we look forward, we see that its position is unbalanced. Israel must re-strengthen the other elements of its power (*see* Perspective Paper No. 2347, June 3, 2025): an advanced, resilient society and economy, with improved long-term positioning of its relations with the United States and other powers.

## **Recommendations**

This initial qualitative analysis will require in-depth thinking as the war ends and the dust settles. For many countries in the world, Epic Fury/Roaring Lion

has held up a mirror to their situation that will certainly lead to serious thinking about their national security strategies. Europe in particular has much to learn from the combined experience of both the current litmus test in Iran and the Ukraine war.

The Iranian regime exists within a “thought bubble” and is in survival mode (see Perspective Paper No. 2373, April 9, 2026). External and internal players will have to reflect upon its situation and digest the ways in which it will need to change its strategy, perhaps (and preferably) in the direction of profound change or even the establishment of a different regime.

For Israel, there is a double challenge: to derive lessons for itself, and to monitor the changes in key countries – first and foremost the United States, but also the Asian powers, with an emphasis on India, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states – to exploit opportunities arising from those changes and hedge the risks.

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