



Reorienting Statecraft from External Projection to Internal Consolidation: A Critical Review of “The Boat Bridge Doctrine - A New Paradigm for the National Power”

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to critically analyze and review the novel approach of national power projection, the Boat Bridge Doctrine (BBD), proposed by Mian Mazhar Waqas in his book “Boat Bridge Doctrine: A new Paradigm for National Power” published in 2025. The doctrine holds that the consolidation of the internal state is, above all, the condition of sustainable influence in the international arena instead of manoeuvring. BBD takes the metaphor created by boats that have been carefully put together and tied down before crossing the rough waters of the sea, and flips it upside down; it says that domestic resilience is essential before taking the big step of engaging in the world, not as a result of it. This paper adopts a qualitative methodological approach grounded in comparative theoretical analysis. It evaluates The Boat Bridge Doctrine using key International Relations frameworks, including realism, liberalism, institutionalism, and state-building theories, to critically assess its conceptual positioning and theoretical contribution. This review places BBD in the context of the current international relations theoretical tradition and scrutinizes how it fits with and differs from realist, liberal, institutionalist, and state-building approaches. By comparing BBD with other theories on state capacity, credible commitment, and diplomatic credibility, the paper maintains that BBD is a unique addition to grand strategy theory that provides a systemisation of the internal-external nexus in statecraft. The review marks both the theoretical innovations of the doctrine and identifies some issues that need to be further developed empirically, such as the question of measurement metrics, issues of applicability for small states, and the security dilemma in inward-first strategies.



Introduction

The concept of National Power has always been one of the most constant issues in International Relations and Strategic Studies. There has been a long-standing debate in the scholarly literature as to why some states gain enduring influence while others cannot translate their resources into enduring power in the international system. Classical realist thinkers stressed the military strength, strategic location, and national interest as the key factors influencing state *behaviour* (Morgenthau 1948). Liberal institutionalists, on the other hand, emphasized the importance of international institutions, cooperation and interdependence in determining state outcomes (Keohane, 1984). In the more recent scholarship literature, the role of domestic institutions, administrative efficiency and political legitimacy in shaping national resilience and international performance has been a growing focus (Fukuyama, 2004).

These debates are more relevant in the twenty-first century. At the same time, though, many countries are facing domestic fragmentation, social disintegration, economic weakness and governance challenges in the midst of an unprecedented period of globalization and interdependence. History and contemporary examples indicate that the capacity of a state to exert international influence through military force, economic power and diplomacy are insufficient for such long-term influence when domestic institutions are weak or social bonds are tenuous (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). Throughout history, the fall of great empires and the seeming strength of apparently formidable states have been brought down by internal weakness, even when the external power is great (Ghani & Lockhart, 2009).

Thus, there has been a growing body of literature focusing on the relationship between internal state capacity and external effectiveness. Strong institutions have been found to be important enablers of policy implementation, economic development, conflict management and international credibility (Centeno, 2002). Likewise, credible commitment and diplomatic credibility research has shown that states that have stable political institutions, predictable governance, are more likely to be trusted by allies, to deter adversaries, and to maintain international partnerships (Brands et al., 2018). Such findings have helped to form a growing consensus that domestic strength is not just a domestic issue but a key factor to a state's international strength.

However, current international relations theories tend to treat domestic governance and foreign policy as separate domains, even though their interaction is widely acknowledged. Internal consolidation remains under-theorized and lacks a dedicated framework that places it at the centre of national power projection. In this regard, *The Boat Bridge Doctrine: A New Paradigm for National Power* provides a new theoretical insight, by suggesting that resilient and transparent institutions play a critical role in supporting national influence in the International arena (Waqas M. M., 2025). The metaphor of a ship that needs to be carefully built and levelled before it sets sail into the ocean is used to illustrate how a solid base within the country is needed to ensure that it can reach out and engage with the outside world. It presents important concepts, including the concept of “hollow core”, meaning the gap between the external power and the internal weakness, and the Anshan Model, which refers to the six dimensions of national power: order, prosperity, cohesion, education, information and security. These elements collectively create a framework that connects internal consolidation with external influence, guided by strategic vision, collective will, and capable leadership (Waqas M. M., 2025). This paper reviews and critically assesses the Boat Bridge Doctrine in the context of existing literature on state capacity, state credibility, state-building

and foreign policy analysis. It evaluates its theoretical contribution and its constraints as a new paradigm of statecraft, and explores the contribution that the doctrine can make in developing the understanding of how domestic consolidation and international power projection relate.

Theoretical Context: External Fixation to Internal Foundations

The Conventional Compasses of Diplomacy

Traditionally, modern statecraft has been predicated on the outside world, using tried and tested instruments like Realpolitik, economic diplomacy, liberal internationalism, and transnationalism. Foreign engagement has been largely outward-looking and the externalist predisposition in International Relations theory has been very prominent.

Classical realism sees power projection, strategic alliances, and the pursuit of one's national interest as the key concepts, with the international system being seen as competitive and zero-sum. Diplomacy in this perspective is a game of external benefits, which is not much concerned with the social or institutional factors inside the country (Waqas, 2025, p. 3). Likewise, economic diplomacy is carried out in the form of trade agreements, capital investment, sanctions, and conditionality in provision of aid as tools of influence (Waqas, 2025, p. 3).

Liberal internationalism has an externalist focus too, with the importance of international institutions and global norms, human rights and democracy promotion as routes to global order. The effectiveness of this approach, however, relies on the capacity of states to put such commitments into action and maintain them; if values are not followed up, the credibility and trust in the approach is undermined (Waqas, 2025, p.4).

This external orientation has been further strengthened by the growth of transactional diplomacy, which emphasizes short-term gains and immediate practical benefits over long-term structural cooperation (Waqas M. M., 2025). It is flexible and outcome-driven, but can have a negative impact on building long-term trust and cannot promote more fundamental problems.

Together, these strategies show a common flaw which they focus on external engagement but fail to consider vulnerabilities within the body. The author imagines this deficit to be a "critical blind spot" in modern statecraft, and asks the question whether states have enough internal integrity to meet external expectations and envisions a "hollow core" in contemporary governance.

State Capacity and the Internal-External Nexus

The scholarly literature of state capacity provides key theoretical foundations to BBD's emphasis on internal consolidation. The concept of state capacity, "the capacity of the relevant political authority to enforce its wishes and implement policies," (Centeno, 2002, p. 3), has been the focus of a considerable amount of research in the realm of conflict, development, and governance outcomes.

In recent years a consensus is emerging that state capacity is an internal process that takes place within the institutional context of the state (LSE 2013 p. 17). When external actors try to build state capacity via institutional transplantation, they typically do not get it right for a variety of reasons, such as lack of contextual fit, low levels of incentives, short term time horizons, and over-reliance on a few "champions."

The literature further argues that externally driven institutional reforms tend to have weak long-term effects and may even create parallel systems that weaken existing state capacity (LSE, 2013, p. 17). This critique aligns with the Boat Bridge Doctrine's focus on the limitations of externally imposed solutions.

The link between internal conflict and state capacity is especially pertinent. Internal conflict has a negative effect on fiscal capacity and public goods provision, and the intensity of conflict has the expected effect, as found by Cárdenas, Eslava, and Ramírez (2011). External conflicts do not seem to significantly affect state capacity building to date. This external/internal imbalance of determinants of state strength reinforces BBD's emphasis on consolidation from within rather than engagement with the outside world.

Among the factors facilitating guerrilla warfare and insurgency are low financial, organizational, and political state capacities, as shown by (Fearon and Laitin, 2003). More capable states provide lesser opportunities for rebels to initiate violence, as they are able to "channel social demands in a way that limits the possibilities of rebels to achieve collective action" (Sobek, 2010). The results indicate that the internal state capacity is not only a domestic phenomenon but it is also a key determinant of a country's external security environment and its ability to create stability.

Good intentions, goodwill, and good judgment.

As stated by the Brands, Edelman and Mahnken (2018), "credibility is the foundation of the international peace and stability of the U.S. global posture, the glue that holds it together. They say that if a nation's promises are believable, "the adversaries will be deterred, allies will be reassured, and relative geopolitical stability will reign. On the other hand, if the credibility is low, "adversaries will be encouraged, allies will be disheartened, and geopolitical revisionism and aggression will grow.

BBD further extends this logic by figuring out the source of credibility. The classic theory on credibility relies on signaling mechanisms (audience costs, costly signaling, and reputation maintenance), but BBD suggests that the main determinant of credibility is the state's health inside. A stable economy, strong institutions and social cohesion provides a "more credible nation" in international dealings as it is "inherently more credible in international dealings" (Waqas, 2025, p. 30). This is a fundamental turnaround; from the point of view of credibility as a signaling problem, credibility as a structural property of the state.

BBD's framework is also bolstered by the notion of "credible commitment" in political economy. Credible commitment is an idea that relates to the sequentiality of actors' decisions; it is the 'interdependence of actors' decisions' in which forcing 'self-interested choices' can result in 'desirable behaviour' from other actors (SAGE, 2011). Economic development is fostered by credible commitment as demonstrated in Constitutions, courts, independent Central banks and international agencies. BBD's Order component puts emphasis on the rule of law, institutional continuity and accountability mechanisms, directly impacting the institutional dimension of credible commitment. The viable option literature on credible commitments suggests that the government needs to be "credibly constrained" from opportunistic behavior to support healthy economic growth (SAGE, 2011).

The Boat Bridge Doctrine: Core concepts and innovations

The Hollow Core Diagnosis

Focusing on one of the conceptual contributions of the Boat Bridge Doctrine (BBD): The “hollow core” diagnosis: States externalizing power and weakening internally over time. This concept is more than just talking about failing, it's about the danger of focusing too much on the external and neglecting the foundation at home. The doctrine gives proof to this argument with historical examples. Although the Spanish Empire was large, rich, and military-strength in the Americas, there was a decline in the empire in the 16th century. It has not generated local economic structures and political institutional structures remained stagnant while intellectual and social capital decreased over time, leading to long-term fragility of institutions (Waqas, 2025, pp. 6–7). Likewise, the Ottoman Empire demonstrates the opposite principle, that is, an internal weakness can weaken an external strength. It was once a formidable imperial power but over time became corrupt, lost control of administration and stagnated in its institutions. In time, even the most trusted military institutions including the Janissary corps, lost their elite status and became internal pressure groups, which led to their long-term decay (Waqas, 2025, p. 8). A recent example of this is the Soviet Union. It seemed externally like a strong superpower, but it was plagued from within by economic stagnation, resources scarcity, and political rigidity. Gorbachev reforms highlighted further structural problems, which in the end led to the failure of the system and to the extent of its internal instability (Waqas, 2025, p. 9). In sum, these examples illustrate that having solid internal foundations is key to sustainable external influence (Waqas, 2025, p. 6). This concept may be extended to the wider literature on state fragility, which emphasises that internal fragilities can have external spill overs, thus leading to regional and global instability (British Academy, 2015).

The Myth of "Fixing It From Outside"

This is a direct attack on the "myth of 'fixing it from outside'" that BBD says prevails—that is, that others can fix it from the outside. This myth is seen in different ways, such as foreign aid, military support, economic sanctions and grand alliances, all of which assume that “these external levers have the intrinsic capacity to heal internal rifts, to stabilize an unsettled situation and to bring a troubled nation onto a trajectory of recovery and strong engagement” (Waqas, 2025, p. 12).

The critique is in keeping with the growing scholarly scepticism about externally imposed state-building. In his important book *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century*, Fukuyama (2004) states that there is no template for successful state-building – it cannot be automatically transferred from elsewhere. He adds, ‘Much evidence shows that externally-imposed institutional change is less effective, less adapted to local context, based on flawed incentives, and too short a time horizon and too few institutional champions’ (LSE, 2013, p. 17).

BBD describes several diseases of external fixation

The Dependency Syndrome and Rentier States: Dependency on external donors of aid can slow down the development of local economic activities and lead to the development of a “rentier state” mentality among the leaders, the external donors being more important than the own population. This decreases the responsibilities towards citizens, and the governments' interest in having robust domestic tax collection systems (Waqas, 2025, p. 14).

The problem of Corruption and Leakage: In countries with poor rule of law, a substantial share of aid could be misappropriated by elites and benefit a small group instead of the beneficiaries. This makes it less effective to provide assistance and worsens the public trust in the government and international assistance, as well as socio-economic inequalities (Waqas, 2025, p. 14).

Prioritization in the context of prior to the aid: Donor priorities may not always be relevant to local needs, and it may be the case that local sector needs have been overlooked or inappropriate projects implemented. In some situations, inflows of foreign currency can also misrepresent the local economy and also minimize its productive skills (Waqas, 2025, pp. 14–15).

The Boat Bridge Metaphor: Structural Integrity as Causal Priority

The Boat Bridge Doctrine is a metaphor for a key principle in strategic theory, the process of putting together boats and tying them up before crossing a river. It is a statement on what is often assumed in statecraft: structural integrity is the basis of the functional capacity. As everyone knows, no one would build a bridge out of weak or flawed materials, because the strength of a bridge is solely determined by its foundations (Waqas, 2025, pp.). 27–28). Similarly, the doctrine is about “inverse causality” – that is, the effective performance on the outside comes from the internal strength, not the other way around. This is quite different from most traditional strategic theories that divide the internal and external aspects into two separate but interrelated parts. BBD, on the other hand, sees internal integration in a hierarchy and as a prerequisite for external engagement. The metaphor also emphasizes why it is that external strength and internal decay can and do happen together, and why it is that it can't be fixed with external strengths alone (Waqas, 2025, p. 28). The metaphor also has important implications for policy implementation. Like the ancient engineers who built and stabilized bridges before launching them on river banks, the doctrine states that the national state should grow internally and strengthen its institutions before it could project influence externally. This establishes a clear sequencing principle in which domestic straightening precedes external engagement.

The Anshan Model of operation:

The 6 National Powers Components

For operationalization of BBD, Waqas presents the model that consists of six pillars of national strength (also known as “boats”) as the basic building blocks for this.

The Order Component: It focuses on "the reliable, just, and effective working of state organizations under clear laws, ensuring a stable political atmosphere and promoting faith in governance" (Waqas, 2025, p. 41). This includes rule of law, institutional continuity, administrative capabilities, civic legitimacy and strong accountability systems. It is argued that the Order component is “fundamentally the first” as well as “the very keel of the ship of state” (Waqas, 2025, p. 46).

The Prosperity Component: It refers to “a nation's capacity to create viable wealth, to increase dynamism and to ensure that the benefits of that wealth are spread widely across the nation that creates it” (Waqas, 2025, p. 41). Some of the elements are diversified economic bases, self-funding potential, fairness in the distribution of wealth and strong public welfare systems.

The Cohesion Component: It is the Strength of the nation's social fabric. It denotes national

unity, trust among citizens, and strategic investment in the full human capacity of the nation's citizens (Waqas, 2025, p. 41). It is developed through inclusive representation, national narratives shared and opportunity and protection given.

The Education Component: It focuses on "ensuring wide spread access to quality education at all levels; fostering critical thinking and innovation; and continuously developing the skill of the population" (Waqas, 2025, p. 42). A healthy, educated and skilled population is the "ultimate engine of national strength, innovation and long-term economic competitiveness" (Waqas, 2025, p. 42).

The Information Component: It Speaks to "the vital role of a free, diverse, and reliable information ecosystem within a nation, ensuring that truth can flourish, citizens are well-informed, national narratives reaches the required audience (domestic and abroad) and protected from manipulation" (Waqas, 2025, p. 42). This encompasses institutional integrity of data sources as well as pluralism of the media, strategic communication capacity and public trust in information.

The Security Component: It refers to "a country's fundamental power to defend its territory, its people and its critical assets from all threats both within and outside the country, guaranteeing full protection and stability" (Waqas, 2025, p. 42). This includes civilian oversight of security forces, predictability of security responses, approaches to security that are human-centred and robust digital integrity.

The Binding Forces: Strategic Vision, Collective Will, and Capable Leadership

The six components are not independent. The binding factors of Strategic Vision, Collective National Will and Capable Leadership are crucial to their "coordinated movement" (Waqas, 2025, p. 41). These "ropes" give it "direction, propulsion, and steady guidance" (Waqas, 2025, p. 41) and help it to function as a single, robust bridge.

This tripartite binding is filling a gap in the state capacity literature. Less research has focused on integrative mechanisms that link the components of state strength into national strategy, such as economic development, social cohesion, and the quality of the bureaucracy. The Anshan Model's primary focus on Strategic Vision as a unifying compass, Collective Will as the "powerful impetus of unified energy and determination," and Capable Leadership as "the indispensable steady hand on the helm" (Waqas, 2025, p. 7) offers a way to comprehend how state capacity can be transformed into state coherence.

This emphasis is backed up by the scholarly literature on political leadership. State fragility studies focus on the importance of "effective leadership" to develop state capacity and legitimacy (British Academy, 2015, p. 10). Likewise, in the context of credible commitment, the literature emphasizes the role of leadership in setting and sustaining institutional restrictions to improve the credibility of the state (SAGE, 2011).

Anshanism: The Philosophical Foundation

The Anshan Model is part of a bigger philosophy, known as "Anshanism" after the author's parents, Anwaar and Shahnaz, which states that "genuine and sustainable strength, profound resilience, and the inherent capacity to positively influence any environment, whether personal, organisational, communal, or national, emerge first and foremost from diligently and honestly addressing one's own deficiencies and cultivating core strengths" (Waqas, 2025, p. 25).

Anshanism is a "unified vision which gives a true ground to the basic architecture of all human endeavour, which leads the creation of internal stability, moral clarity and coherent progress" (Waqas, 2025, p. 25). It offers "a path to strength, harmony, and well-being that is both universal and holistic and emanates from the heart" (Waqas, 2025, p. 25).

This is a philosophical underpinning that sets BBD apart from instrumentalist conceptions of state-making. Anshanism sees internal integrity as the means and end, the basis of external effect and the moral purpose of governing and making decisions. Anshanism views the internal integrity as the means and end, the basis of the external effect and the moral purpose of the governing and decision-making. In this philosophy, the essence of the ruler is the main cornerstone of political stability, which has been inherited from classical notions of statecraft and adapted to modern times of democratic governance and global interdependence.

Comparative Assessment: BBD and Established Frameworks

BBD and Realism

Classical and structural realism are still the prevailing paradigms of international relations theory. But BBD has troubles with realism's core strong belief that the international system is anarchic and that states thus have to pursue external power accumulation.

BBD not denies the fact of international anarchy but suggests that the only way to deal with anarchy is to consolidate in the interior. No state can hold on to or use power if it lacks a "hollow core". As Waqas (2025, p. 6) states, "If the building blocks of a nation are dotted with cracks, it cannot build an effective bridge to bridge the gaps or foster a long-lasting relationship elsewhere.

This is a very great theoretical step. Although defensive realists (Waltz, 1979) make a point of stressing the security motive of states, and offensive realists (Mearsheimer, 2001) stress the hegemonic motive, neither takes sufficient account of the internal prerequisites of either the security motive or the hegemonic motive. BBD does this by setting the internal consolidation as the independent variable to determine the sustainability of external power accumulation.

All the historical examples that BBD used such as the Spanish Empire, Ottoman Empire, the Soviet Union were realist powers, focusing on an external orientation with military power and territorial expansion. Their failures did not stem from a failure of realism, but a failure of the internal structure on which realist strategies relied. BBD therefore complements realism as a way of pointing out the circumstances in which realist strategies are effective and ineffective.

BBD and Liberal Institutionalism

Liberal institutionalism is an argument about how international institutions can aid in the cooperation under anarchy (Keohane, 1984). Institutions lower costs of transactions, supply information and establish reputational mechanisms, thus enabling cooperation.

But BBD is not against institutionalism; it claims the effectiveness of an institution depends on the effectiveness of its component states. When their espoused values do not match the reality of their lives, they lose credibility and effectiveness, and people lose their trust and confidence in them. (Waqas, 2025, p. 4) A state which is a promoter of human rights abroad but denies it at home is undermining the institutions it is trying to build; a state that promotes free trade but continues to have protectionist barriers is undermining the very system it is

trying to bolster.

This critique is in line with current research on institutional legitimacy. The literature on state fragility highlights the importance of legitimacy as a concept to understanding fragility and the fact that "states that are perceived as legitimate by their citizens are more likely to be stable and effective" (British Academy, 2015, p. 15). BBD builds on this thinking and holds that legitimacy is a prerequisite for successful international institutional engagement, rather than just a domestic issue.

BBD and Soft Power Theory

Joseph Nye's soft power (the ability to achieve objectives by attraction not coercion) is one of the most seminal theories of the world of international influence that is not based on material forces. A nation's culture, political outlook and foreign policy can create attraction which can strengthen a country's power, writes Nye.

BBD brings in the concept of soft power and distorts the causality of soft power. For Joseph Nye, soft power can be considered as a means that states can implement as an instrument for influencing others. BBD, on the other hand, believes that soft power is an outcome of strong and well-functioning state. A society that continuously encourages justice, human rights, allocates funds on social welfare and has a strong internal management builds moral worth and earns international respect (Waqas, 2025, p. 31). The argument here is that public diplomacy and cultural influence can only be maintained if the external perception of a state corresponds to the state's internal reality.

This emphasize an important difference. BBD says, though, that Nye's theory is flawed because it assumes the soft power is something that can be manufactured or easily acquired as a tool. If educational strength, cultural attraction and values are artificial projections, then they have no significance as sources of influence for a country.

BBD and State-Building Literature

There has been a long history of research on state-building, with a particular emphasis on the need to build strong and effective states, especially in post-conflict and fragile settings. It is generally assumed that state-building is an internal process and that external actors have only limited capacity to directly build state institutions (LSE, 2013, p. 17). BBD agrees that this is the perception and provide a more structured understanding of state capacity. The Anshan Model considers six dimensions of State strength in addition to those that have been used in more conventional measures, such as bureaucracy or economic performance. It contains not only cohesion, education, information, order, prosperity, and security, but also the fact that state capacity is interdependent and a lack of one may adversely impact the others. Significant weaknesses in external state-building are also identified in the literature, such as a lack of adapting to local context, conflicting incentives, unrealistic timelines, and over-reliance on a few key actors (LSE, 2013, p. 17). The argument for BBD that sustainable state capacity needs to be built from within is thus reinforced. But BBD goes beyond fragile states and proposes that the argument should be applicable to all states, even the big boys. From this perspective, the "hollow core" is not restricted to weak states but also exists as an overall threat to any state that focuses more on external projection rather than strengthening its internal core.

Critical Assessment: Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research

Theoretical Strengths

BBD offers a common methodology which combines realism, liberalism, institutionalism and state-building to work beyond the constraints of these single approaches. In BBD the explanatory variable is made internal, thus providing a parsimonious answer as to why states with similar material capabilities have very different levels of international influence.

The 'hollow core' approach is useful when assessing the health of a State. It is not a dialectical opposition between strong and weak state, rather it is the state that is strong on the exterior and weak on the interior; it is a dangerous state. This is a diagnostic particularly relevant for today's great powers that has broad military and economic power but at home issues.

An action plan for implementing policy is provided by Anshan Model. Unlike many theories, BBD isn't at a grand strategic level, but it does provide specific components, binding mechanisms and measurable indicators which can be employed for statecraft in practice. This dimension enhances the applicability of the doctrine to the work of policy makers.

The boat bridge heuristic is presented as a metaphor that enables the strategic theory to be understood more generally. This is an easy-to-use benefit for a time when the world is more important than ever for democratic legitimacy.

Areas in need of improvement

While these strengths can be further elaborated in the scholarly literature, there are some areas that need further elaboration:

- BBD specifies "measurable indicators" for each of the Anshan components; however, the metrics have not been fully developed. Further research should bring each component into operation through measurable indicators which can be compared across countries and analyzed over time. The state capacity literature provides some useful precedents: Assessment of the quality of bureaucracy, tax extraction capacity and public goods provision. BBD's general conceptualization needs general measurement tools: Assessment of the quality of bureaucracy, tax extraction capacity, and public goods provision.
- How can states act if they feel they are at risk from an external attacker, but they are developing their internal infrastructure first? BBD's focus on consolidation from within before outside engagement presents the question of how states can act when they feel threatened by an outside attacker, yet they're building their infrastructure from within? Although, the doctrine is against isolationism because it "prepares the nation for engagement" and not isolation (Waqas, 2025, p. 36). The balance between "build first, cross later" and "build as you go" is still not well addressed however, the tension between them is to be treated more systemically. How does BBD manage the security dilemma in a world where there are threats to take advantage of periods of consolidation within the organization?
- Can all six Anshan components be achieved in a realistic fashion before a small state (or a resource poor state) goes out in the world? Do they have a concept for "Minimum Viable Bridge" that permits gradual implementation? The claims of the doctrine have to be made universal and demonstrated with examples of how it works

with various types of states and various amounts of resources.

- BBD emphasizes sequencing internal consolidation and external engagement – a process rarely seen in the real world. States frequently need to integrate inwards, and integrate outwards. Future studies are needed which would investigate BBD in the context of simultaneous processes instead of sequential processes and the manner in which states can manage the trade-offs between internal and external demands.

Avenues for future Research

BBD is supported with the help of historical cases and a limited systematic empirical testing of BBD's propositions. In the future the external influence is to be tested with quantitative methods, after controlling material ability and international context, the external influence is to be measured using quantitative methods, based on the internal consolidation indicators.

If a State is so interconnected within the world economy, what can it do to strengthen itself? Domestic and international life are becoming increasingly interconnected through global supply chains, financial flows and information networks. The clear separation between 'home bank' preparation and 'bridge' crossing' put forth by BBD might need to be tempered in the case of highly integrated economies.

Conclusion

The Boat Bridge Doctrine is an important contribution to the theory of international relations and foreign policy analysis. BBD inverted the traditional dichotomy of external engagement with internal consolidation and created a model that is descriptive, diagnostic and prescriptive in nature. The "hollow core" describes a widespread and sinister phenomenon in current statecraft, and the Anshan Model offers concrete insights into how to tackle it. The difference between the doctrine and other approaches to the study of statecraft is not the identification of new facts about state behaviour but the restructuring of the causal structure of statecraft theory. It makes explicit and systematic what is often implicit and spread across a range of literatures: Sustainable international influence is dependent on the health of the state. In so doing, BBD connects theory on state-building with the field of foreign policy analysis and its emphasis on international behaviour.

BBD's core propositions are well supported by the scholarly literatures on state capacity, credible commitment, diplomatic credibility, and state fragility. State capacity studies have shown that the key to effective governance, conflict prevention, and development is internal consolidation. Research on credible commitment reveals that institutional strength is the foundation for international trust and cooperation. The results of the work on diplomatic credibility show that the view of the internal stability of a state increases the ability to build and sustain international relations. And the state-building literature now reflects an increasing awareness of the need for sustainable state capacity to be developed from the inside, not imposed from the outside.

Meanwhile, BBD opens new avenues for research. It focuses on the integrative mechanisms – Strategic Vision, Collective Will, and Capable Leadership – that tie together the various components of the state in a coordinated national strategy, which is not covered in the current literature. Doing this is an agenda for empirical study, as suggested in the call for measurement and metrics. And its philosophical basis in Anshanism provides it with a normative aspect, which makes it different from just instrumentalist perspectives.

The Boat Bridge Doctrine serves as a compass to help us navigate through the stormy seas of

a world that is "bewildering complexity, profound paradoxes, and an accelerating pace of change" (Waqas, 2025, p.1). It reminds us that the best diplomacy begins at home, strong foundations are the best structures for enduring alliances and that global leadership is not about image but substance of power from within. The main tenet of the doctrine is that "Global influence is not given by others but earned at home" (Waqas, 2025, p. 7). It is not only a prescription for statecraft, but a philosophy of national purpose that demands serious scholarly consideration and a thorough empirical study.

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