

# Statecraft in the Twenty-First Century

## *In Search of a New Paradigm*

What does it take to be an effective statesman or stateswoman? Throughout history, from early Mesopotamia to the ancient Greek polis, from the Han empire in eastern Eurasia to the Arab-Islamic empires, to the time of European states and colonial rule, through two world wars and a cold war into contemporary democracy and autocracy, state leaders have always had to make complex decisions to secure their authority over geographic areas and manage their populations. In the maelstrom of change, some challenges to statecraft reverberate and resurface across centuries and continents, such as conflicts over resources and territory, and some historical legacies continue to be enshrined in present geopolitical constellations. At the same time, and as humanity pushes new frontiers, both in space and science, unprecedented opportunities emerge and, with them, unknown perils. Today's blend of conventional and new challenges requires a fresh approach to the art of statecraft. Traditional geopolitical helmsmanship no longer suffices to steer ships of state through the turbulent waters of the third millennium. The main purpose of this book is thus to offer a new understanding of statecraft, one that is capable of navigating the risks, and of leveraging the opportunities, of an increasingly digitised and globally interconnected twenty-first century.

Although we all have an intuitive understanding of the term, statecraft remains a contested notion. Traditional approaches tend to define it as the art of conducting state affairs and achieving policy objectives effectively.

Whilst some include domestic policy in their conception of statecraft, however, others focus exclusively on interstate strategic actions.<sup>1</sup> Effective statecraft is understood in this book to include all internal and external actions that create an environment in which the state can flourish and secure the well-being of its inhabitants in the long run.

As the world has become more complex, so has statecraft. Today, more and more people negotiate between multiple cultural allegiances, compelling state leaders to create a common identity out of populations increasingly diverse in religion, cultural affinities, and world views. As we move further into the twenty-first century, new frontiers are about to open in science, bringing about opportunities and risks that are difficult to anticipate yet need to be prepared for. The rapid processes of globalisation and digitisation have multiplied transnational challenges, of which cyber threats and pandemics are just two examples. These threats make it imperative for states to work together on questions for which there are often no time-tested answers. Despite a heightened need for cooperation, an increasing number of states and actors are competing for influence and dominance through a variety of means, ranging from economic policy to political subversion.<sup>2</sup>

How should state leaders confront the ever-shifting array of contemporary challenges? In this book, I argue that, for a state to thrive in the twenty-first century, it has to leverage the interdependence of the world through what I call *reconciliation statecraft*. In other words, effective statecraft today is a delicate balancing act between the well-being of individuals, the interests of the nation, economic development, the sustainability of the environment, regional and international obligations, cultural interests (such as linguistic or religious traditions) and different moral outlooks.<sup>3</sup> As tensions between these diverse interests constitute a major source of international conflict, their reconciliation promotes global and national prosperity and peace and should therefore be the ultimate goal of twenty-first century statecraft. To achieve this goal, the traditional tools of statecraft need to be complemented by new ones. This book introduces five innovative tools and additional concepts that equip state leaders to navigate the international circumstances of the third millennium.

## 1.1 Structure of the Book

This book begins by discussing traditional concepts of statecraft and geopolitics in chapters two and three, illustrating their limitations in light of contemporary challenges. The following chapters introduce five

innovative concepts that serve as the main tools of reconciliation statecraft. These include, first of all, a new geopolitical analysis method I have termed *meta-geopolitics*. To pursue an effective foreign policy, state leaders need to study the geography of the broader area in which their state is located and the balance of power among surrounding states. They need to know how geographic, economic and demographic factors impact international relations (IR). The study of these factors is encapsulated in the discipline of geopolitics. That discipline's traditional focus on territory and resources, however, is no longer sufficient to capture the complex dramas unfolding on today's world stage. As I explain in chapter four, *meta-geopolitics* provides a more nuanced and comprehensive map that helps practitioners of statecraft orient themselves in the maze of international relations. *Meta-geopolitics* moves beyond classic geopolitical assumptions to include a wider range of variables that reflect the complexity of contemporary power dynamics. More specifically, it deals with seven 'state capacities': social and health issues, domestic politics, economics, environment, science and human potential, military and security issues, and international diplomacy. Assessing the geopolitical strengths and weaknesses of states by taking into account these seven factors provides a more accurate picture of worldwide dynamics in the twenty-first century. It also helps to identify the breadth of often interrelated security threats that states face but which remain largely hidden in more classic geopolitical analyses.

The second major tool of reconciliation statecraft is a new form of governance that prioritises human dignity. Applying neuroscientific findings to political analysis, chapter five argues that *dignity-based governance* allows a state to promote domestic stability, prosperity and peace by unlocking the best in human nature and, thus, in its constituents' behaviour. The extent to which domestic factors versus the international environment influence states' choices has been part of a long debate. What is certain, however, is that domestic structures and foreign policy affect one another.<sup>4</sup> Dignity-based governance allows a state to fully leverage its resources – human, natural and otherwise – thus realising its geopolitical potential.

As chapter five illustrates, dignity-based governance must be accompanied by a *symbiotic realist* approach to international relations, which is the third tool of reconciliation statecraft. *Symbiotic realism* is premised on the idea that, since we live in an interconnected and interdependent world, international politics can no longer rely on zero-sum gains (i.e., gains at the cost of others) but rather must strive for non-conflictual competition and absolute gains that are to the benefit of all.

Despite global interdependence and porous borders, state leaders often over-focus on narrowly defined national interests, with disastrous consequences, especially in the field of security.<sup>5</sup> In the twenty-first century, promoting international security is a key ingredient in, and often is identical with, enhancing a state's national security. The concept of *sustainable* national security that I propose in chapter five recognises that no state today can achieve security through gains at the expense of other states, nor can it be realised at the cost of the environment or individual well-being. In fact, national security is highly connected with human, transnational, environment and transcultural security. This requires international collaboration and what I call *transcultural synergy*, which implies mutually beneficial exchanges between members of different nations and cultures.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, a reconceptualisation of power is required for statecraft to reconcile diverse interests and create common ground in an age of increasing polarisation. Chapter six outlines the theoretical foundations for how both soft- and hard-power tools should be employed before introducing the new concept of *just power*, which argues that the promotion of justice should be the aim of twenty-first century statecraft. This is imperative – not for altruistic reasons, but because it is the only sustainable way states can promote progress and stability in a globalised world. Put differently, it is in the national interest of each state to promote the well-being of humans all over the world, regardless of their nationality.

Table 1.1 summarises the five concepts I believe are conducive to an improved statecraft paradigm suited for the twenty-first century.

Having outlined the main tools of reconciliation statecraft, chapter seven illustrates how they enable state leaders to solve the dilemmas raised by different interests represented by individuals, states and groups of individuals, as well as more general global interests such as environmental protection. Whilst these interests are not mutually exclusive, they may at times conflict with one another. A failure to reconcile them poses severe risks to the peace, security and prosperity of each country and of the entire planet. As chapter seven highlights, reconciliation statecraft is an approach focused on long-term sustainability and global progress rather than short-term gain.

Chapter eight presents case studies that apply the framework of *meta-geopolitics* to evaluate the geopolitical realities and dilemmas of twenty-six states and one union of states, the EU. Chapter nine builds on these case studies to identify the future trajectories and key geostrategic imperatives they must abide by if they are to flourish as states under

**Table 1.1 Tools of Reconciliation Statecraft**

<p>Comprehend the world through a new geopolitical analysis method: 'META-GEOPOLITICS'</p>	
<p>Adopt a new form of governance ('DIGNITY-BASED GOVERNANCE') that reconciles human dignity needs with the emotional amoral egoism that is innate in all human beings.</p>	
<p>Pursue multi-sum games and win-win situations (i.e., 'SYMBIOTIC REALISM') in its conduct of international relations.</p>	
<p>Promote 'SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL SECURITY' by adopting a multi-sum approach to security that includes human, environmental, national, transnational, and transcultural security and focuses on transcultural synergies.</p>	
<p>Integrate hard, soft, smart and 'JUST POWER' tools that foster equality and respect of different cultures and human dignity.</p>	

all seven state capacities. Chapter ten draws conclusions from the case studies and identifies the world's most volatile geopolitical area: a north-south corridor that runs from the Arctic to the Antarctic and includes the greater Middle East and East Africa. I call this the *tripwire pivotal corridor* (TPC). Without stability in the TPC, I argue, there can be no stability at the international level. This chapter also identifies the problems affecting some of the most unstable states in the TPC, problems that have turned into transnational threats. It also discusses

the geopolitical significance of the corridor in terms of both strategic natural resources and crucial maritime passageways. Finally, it identifies a number of pivotal states that have the necessary resources to promote regional stability within the corridor and warns against major powers' interference for narrow national interest and gains.

The book closes, in chapter eleven, with a more general glimpse into the future, drawing on the meta-geopolitical lens to analyse a series of global trends that are likely to affect geopolitics in the coming years. Climate change, the melting of the Arctic ice cap, space debris and militarisation and a multiplicity of technological and scientific innovations and developments, both military and civilian, are only a few issues that are likely to have a strong impact on power relationships among states in the decades ahead. I refer to these issues as *civilisational frontier risks* because they have the potential to fundamentally alter our lives and, if handled badly, could even lead to the collapse of human civilisation or the extinction of the human species. This book endeavours to bring these risks to the attention of statecraft practitioners, and to provide tools that could help leaders to make great strides in meeting the challenges of tomorrow.

This book is geared towards a broad audience, including scholars, policy makers and the interested public. It is my hope that the new concepts introduced in this book will be useful and can be developed and applied further by practitioners and political scientists alike.