

AIR POWER STUDIES CENTRE

CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE  
AND  
NATIONAL SECURITY

JOHN HARVEY

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# CONTENTS

Preface	iv
List of Abbreviations	v
Introduction	1
<b><i>PART 1</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b><i>CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE</i></b>	
General	
Chapter 1 The Relevance of Conventional Deterrence	5
Chapter 2 Forms of Deterrence	12
Chapter 3 Deterrence Theory	24
Chapter 4 Empirical Analysis: The Historical Record	38
Chapter 5 Criticisms and Limitations of Conventional Deterrence	42
Chapter 6 Conclusions	60
<b><i>PART 2</i></b>	<b>68</b>
<b><i>THE ROLE OF CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE IN AUSTRALIAN SECURITY</i></b>	
Chapter 7 Direct Threats to Australian Sovereignty	70
Chapter 8 Other Forms of Threat	82
Chapter 9 Broader Security Interests	88
Chapter 10 Collective Action	92
Chapter 11 Regional and Global Security	96
Chapter 12 Conclusions	104
Bibliography	111
Index	115

## PREFACE

This book was started when the author was a Visiting Fellow at the Australian National University's Strategic and Defence Studies Centre and completed at the RAAF's Air Power Studies Centre. The aim was to examine conventional deterrence from a detailed theoretical basis and then to apply the findings in the context of Australian security.

Although much has been written on deterrence, the emphasis has been on nuclear deterrence; and even when conventional deterrence has been considered the wide range of issues have not previously been brought together in one volume. This book is an attempt to bring together the wide variety of issues involved with conventional deterrence.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADF	Australian Defence Force
ANU	Australian National University
ANZUS	Australia New Zealand and United States
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
ASP90	Australia's Security Planning in the 1990s
BWC	Biological Weapons Convention
C3	Command Control and Communication
CDR	Closer Defence Relations
CSCAP	Conference on Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific
CWC	Chemical Weapons Convention
DoA 87	The Defence of Australia 1987
DA 94	Defending Australia 1994
EMP	Electromagnetic Pulse
FPDA	Five Power Defence Arrangements
IADS	Integrated Air Defence System
JCSS	Jafee Center for Strategic Studies
MAD	Mutual Assured Destruction
MFN	Most Favoured Nation
MTCR	Missile Technology Control Regime
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPT	Non Proliferation Treaty
PGM	Precision Guided Munitions
PRC	People's Republic of China
RMAF	Royal Malaysian Air Force
RUSI	Royal United Services Institute
SDSC	Strategic and Defence Studies Centre
SR 93	Strategic Review 1993
USN	United States Navy
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction



## INTRODUCTION

Deterrence is a word that generates strong reactions. It is often seen as provocative, being associated with nuclear weapons and Cold War strategies of mutual assured destruction (MAD). In a military sense, however, deterrence existed long before nuclear weapons were invented and has been a feature of relations between antagonistic tribes and states since such relationships first existed. The concept of deterrence, convincing an adversary not to carry out an undesirable action by threatening him with harm, is widely understood and applied in military and non-military contexts. The theoretical and psychological basis of deterrence, however, is generally not well understood. This is particularly so in the case of conventional deterrence, which, until recently, has been largely overshadowed by consideration of nuclear deterrence.

The end of the Cold War and the success of advanced conventional weapons in the Gulf War has led to a renewed interest in, and re-examination of, conventional deterrence. A re-examination is necessary for five major reasons :

- deterrence is generally associated with nuclear deterrence and much of the theorising about deterrence specifically relates to nuclear forces or, at least, concentrates on them;
- as a result of the concentration on nuclear deterrence, deterrence is assumed to be offensive in nature - it is equated with punishment and retaliation and the concept of defensive deterrence or deterrence by denial is ignored;
- deterrence theory concentrates on immediate deterrence (where there is a specific threat) at the expense of general deterrence (where there is no specific threat);
- advances in conventional weapons have led to counterforce and countervalue capabilities whose strategic implications have not been fully considered; and
- advanced conventional weapons provide the capability for effective military action without necessarily involving large-scale loss of life - a major determinant of involvement in military operations by advanced nations.

In a specifically Australian context, while it can be argued that deterrence has always been an aim of defence policy, there has been a reluctance to adopt explicitly a deterrence strategy. As a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Australia has forsworn the use of weapons of mass destruction and restricted itself to the use of conventional weapons in protecting its sovereignty and interests. For Australia to make its aim of deterrence a reality, an understanding of the application and limitations of conventional deterrence is essential. There has, however, been little theoretical analysis of deterrence and its place within overall security policy. A feature of recent Australian security policy is the apparent tension between the deterrence of, and cooperation with, regional neighbours. This tension has come about

as Australia moves from what has been seen as a 'defence against Asia' to a 'defence with Asia' paradigm. While there is significant interest in and writing on defence cooperation, consideration of deterrence receives less than equal time.

There is growing recognition in Australia that its security cannot be separated from the security of the Asia-Pacific region as a whole. While Australia faces no specific threats, uncertainty is the major feature of the Asia-Pacific region in the post-Cold War era. The increased military spending in the Asia-Pacific region is a response to this uncertainty - conventional deterrence is a key aim of self-reliant defence forces. An understanding of conventional deterrence - where it may and may not work and what range of strategies may be required - is necessary to determine strategies to promote Australia's security.

Part 1 of this paper will conduct a broad analysis of conventional deterrence from both theoretical and empirical perspectives and draw general conclusions. Based on these conclusions, Part 2 will examine the role of conventional deterrence in an Australian context.



# **PART 1**

# **CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE**

# **General**



## CHAPTER 1

### ***THE RELEVANCE OF CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE***

Military power is used in one of three forms: deterrence, defence and compellence.<sup>1</sup> These forms are differentiated on the basis of:

- whether force is actually *used* or only *threatened*; and
- whether the aim is to *prevent* an adversary from undertaking action (passive) or to *stop* an action already begun or to force an adversary do something not yet begun (active).

Table 1 shows how deterrence, defence and compellence are differentiated on the basis of these factors:

Objective	Mode of Employment of Military Force	
	Threatened use of Force	Use of Force
Passive (not do something)	<b>Deterrence</b>	<b>Defence (1)</b>
Active (stop an action already begun or do something not yet begun )	<b>Compellence</b> (Coercion)	<b>Compellence</b>

**Table 1 - Relationship between the modes of employment, objectives and forms of use of military force**

Note:

1. Defence can include the preventative and pre-emptive use of force.

#### *DEFINITION*

As table 1 shows, deterrence involves the threatened use of force to convince an adversary 'not to do something'. While a wide range of formal definitions of deterrence exist, the following definition is most useful:

Deterrence is the state of mind brought about by a credible threat of retaliation, a conviction that the action being contemplated cannot succeed, or a belief that the costs of the action will exceed any possible gain. Thus the potential aggressor is reluctant to act for fear of failure, costs, and the consequences.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A fourth minor use - 'swaggering' - will not be considered. For further discussion see Robert J. Art, 'The Role of Military Power in International Relations', in Thomas B. Trout and James E. Harf, (eds.), *National Security Affairs: Theoretical Perspectives and Contemporary Issues*, Transaction Books, New Brunswick, 1982, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Naval Doctrine Publication 1: Naval Warfare. Department of the Navy, March 1994, p. 17.

Two specific points need to be made about this definition. First, the definition specifically includes deterrence by denial - i.e. deterrence through ‘fear’ of failure. Secondly, while all definitions of deterrence include the use of some form of threat, others also include the possibility of reward if the undesirable action is not carried out. The use of rewards is excluded from this definition. This is because the use of rewards is essentially the opposite to the use of threats and will therefore be considered as a separate, but not necessarily mutually exclusive, strategy later in this paper.<sup>3</sup>

The key features of deterrence therefore are:

- the desired effect is a psychological one, aiming to affect the aggressor’s decision process;
- the effect is achieved through the ‘use’ of force in the form of a threat;
- the psychological effect is fear of possible undesirable consequences; and
- the undesirable consequences are failure or that costs will exceed possible gains.

#### *HISTORICAL BACKGROUND*

In a military sense deterrence has been a feature of relations between antagonistic tribes and states since such relationships first existed.<sup>4</sup> For most of the history of mankind deterrence has been characterised by calculations of the balance of capabilities of opposing forces. Of critical importance in such calculations were alliances between various nations. Diplomatic isolation - to be without apparent allies - seriously undermined a nation’s deterrence capacities and was considered a prerequisite for war.<sup>5</sup> If deterrence failed, military forces of each alliance would meet face to face on the battlefield. The three primary functions of military force - punishing the enemy, denying territory or taking it from him, and mitigating damage to oneself - were provided by the same weapons.<sup>6</sup> Punishment of the enemy was only possible once its military forces had been beaten on the battlefield.

The introduction of the military aircraft to warfare in 1915 meant for the first time that a nation’s population could be threatened even though its army and navy were still intact.<sup>7</sup> While the direct military value of early bombing raids was strictly limited, the psychological and hence political value was significant.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For further discussion on the use of rewards see Patrick Morgan, *Deterrence: A Conceptual Analysis*, Sage, London, 1983, p. 69.

<sup>4</sup> See George Levinger, ‘The Limits of Deterrence: An Introduction’, *Journal of Social Issues*, 43, 4, 1987, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> See Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1974, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> Glenn Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense: Toward a Theory of National Security*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1961, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> George Quester points out that the ability to punish an enemy without defeating its forces in the field was available and used for deterrence even earlier. He cites the case of threats in the early nineteenth century by the British Navy against US coastal cities to deter the US from attacking Canada. In this case, punishment was possible because there was no effective defence and the ability was asymmetrical - the US could not retaliate against British cities. While this earlier case is acknowledged, the introduction of the aircraft is generally seen as a fundamental change in the nature of deterrence. See George Quester, ‘Conventional Deterrence: The Past as Prologue’, in G.L. Guertner, R. Haffa, and G. Quester, *Conventional Forces in the Future of Deterrence*, Strategic Concepts in National Military Strategist Series,

The detonation of the first nuclear weapon in August 1945 brought about a fundamental change in the nature of deterrence. Nuclear weapons provided for the first time a clear distinction between the power to hurt and the power to defeat military forces - a clear distinction between punishment and victory.<sup>9</sup> Between 1945 and 1949, the US, as the only nation with nuclear weapons, gave little consideration to deterrence - the deterrence provided by 'the bomb' seemed almost automatic, more of a fact than a problem needing analysis.<sup>10</sup> As Samuel Huntington pointed out during this period, 'Deterrence depended not upon the size of American air-atomic capability but rather upon its monopolistic character'.<sup>11</sup> Successful testing of a nuclear weapon by the Soviet Union in 1949, however, led to a fundamental rethink of the US attitude towards deterrence. Even though the US still had vast nuclear-strategic superiority its ability to inflict massive damage on the Soviet Union with impunity had disappeared.<sup>12</sup> By 1954, the US had adopted a policy of threatened 'Massive Retaliation' against the Soviet Union - this marked the first systematic application of deterrence in the Cold War era.<sup>13</sup> A mutual build-up of nuclear forces by the US and the Soviet Union eventually saw an end to US superiority, and for the remainder of the Cold War stability was based on the concept of MAD. During the Cold War consideration of deterrence based on conventional weapons was generally overshadowed by nuclear deterrence.

#### *NUCLEAR AND CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE*

As the term suggests, *conventional deterrence* involves threats based on conventional weapons - threats to use unconventional weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are specifically excluded. *Nuclear deterrence* is based on the threat of use of nuclear weapons but is generally broadened to include all forms of WMD.

While the difference between nuclear and conventional weapons may be considered by some as essentially one of degree, they are fundamentally different. First, the scale and rate of destruction varies enormously between the two. While conventional weapons can theoretically inflict the same amount of destruction as their nuclear counterparts, it would take months or even years for the destruction wreaked by conventional weapons to reach such high levels. A bi-product of their inherent power is that nuclear weapons would involve collateral and environmental damage on a massive scale that would not necessarily arise with conventional weapons.

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US Army War College, Pennsylvania, March 1992, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> A true strategic bombing capability that posed a significant threat to a nation's population and infrastructure did not occur until near the end of the Second World War. See Richard J. Overy, 'Airpower and the Origins of Deterrence Theory Before 1939', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 15, 1, March 1992, p. 89.

<sup>9</sup> George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Huntington, *The Common Defense: Strategic Programs in National Politics*, Columbia U.P., N.Y., 1961, p. 61. The US nuclear stockpile in the years immediately after World War II was surprisingly low (1945 - 2, 1946 - 9, 1947 - 13, 1948 - 50). There was therefore a precarious balance between the US atomic monopoly and the strength of the only partially demobilised Red Army.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Jervis, *Psychology and Deterrence*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 1985, p. 132.

<sup>13</sup> For further information on massive retaliation see John L. Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1982, p. 159.

Second, the mode of employment of nuclear weapons is quite different to that of conventional weapons. While from one perspective nuclear weapons are inherently offensive and unable to be used effectively in defence, from another perspective they cannot be used directly in offence in trying to seize territory.<sup>14</sup> The primary, and some would argue, only viable role for nuclear weapons is to deter against their use by other nations.

Third, while an effective defence against conventional weapons is possible, there is no effective defence against nuclear weapons. Because of this inability to defend, the only way to prevent the effects of nuclear weapons is to deter against their use through the threat of retaliation.

Fourth, the consequences of failure at the nuclear and conventional level of conflict differ considerably. The destructiveness of nuclear weapons is so great that the threat they pose cannot be ignored - the price of deterrence failure can be destruction of the nation. In the case of conventional deterrence, however, the potential costs are more bearable and can be traded for political or other gains.<sup>15</sup>

#### *THE RELEVANCE OF CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE*

Shortly after the introduction of nuclear weapons many strategists believed that conventional deterrence would have no future relevance. It was believed that threats at the nuclear level would always deter conflict at the conventional level.<sup>16</sup> Yet history has shown that this expected 'vertical' deterrent effect has been less than total. This is because, firstly, not all conflicts involve states with nuclear weapons,<sup>17</sup> and secondly, because of the 'self-deterrence' effect of nuclear weapons.<sup>18</sup>

Self-deterrence involves refraining from taking some form of action for reasons purely within one's own value system<sup>19</sup> rather than because of fear of a response in kind - a situation referred to as 'mutual deterrence'.<sup>20</sup> For example, in a regional conflict where the asymmetry of US nuclear capability would be clear, and therefore mutual deterrence would not be a factor, there would still be considerable disincentives to use nuclear weapons because of the morally and politically unacceptable costs associated with noncombatant casualties and environmental destruction. Even in the case of the use of a nuclear weapon or other WMD against the US, a nuclear response would probably not occur unless national survival were at stake.<sup>21</sup> This self-deterrent effect is not restricted to the US. All five of the

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<sup>14</sup> Nuclear weapons can, however, be considered defensive in a counterforce role.

<sup>15</sup> See Robert P. Haffa, 'The Future of Conventional Deterrence: Strategies and Forces to Underwrite a New World Order', in Guertner, Haffa, and Quester, *Conventional Forces in the Future of Deterrence*, p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> For further discussion see N. Marais, *Deterrence and Deterrence Interaction*, Institute for Strategic Studies, University of Pretoria, Ad hoc Publication, 20 July 1984, p. 28.

<sup>17</sup> Although, during the Cold War almost all conflicts had some implications of nuclear involvement because of the superpower overlay.

<sup>18</sup> Roger Barnett, 'Deterrence Theory for the Coming Decade'. Paper presented at Global 93, Naval War College, June 1993.

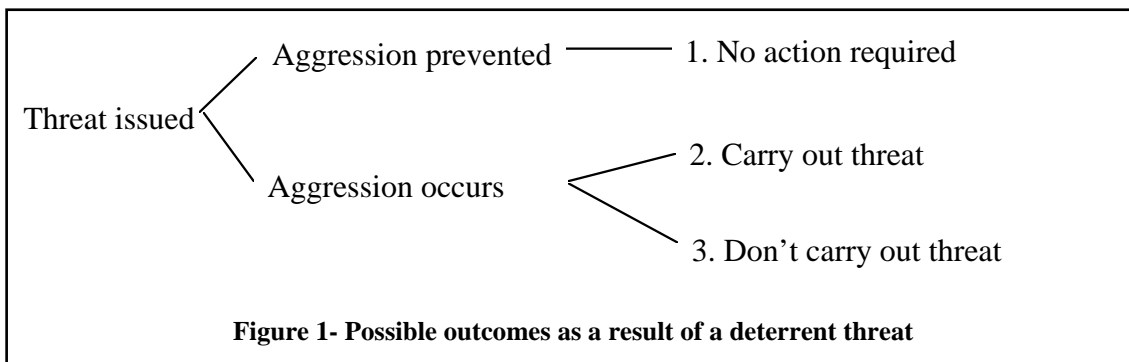
<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Mutual deterrence was seen at the beginning of World War II where both sides were unwilling to bomb each other's cities because of the likelihood of a similar response. In the Gulf War it has been argued that Saddam Hussein was deterred from using chemical weapons (which he had previously used against Iran) because of fear of a possible nuclear response from the US or UK.

<sup>21</sup> Charles T. Allan, 'Extended Conventional Deterrence: In from the Cold and Out of the

acknowledged nuclear powers have accepted battlefield casualties in their fighting forces rather use nuclear weapons, or even to threaten nuclear use against a non-nuclear foe.<sup>22</sup>

The problem with making threats based on nuclear weapons is the dilemma faced if the threat is ignored. There are three general outcomes of a deterrent threat, as shown in Figure 1:



In the case of a threat based on nuclear weapons the first outcome is not likely because, except in the case of national survival, both parties believe that the second outcome is also unlikely. And, because the third outcome would result in a loss of credibility, compelling nuclear threats are rarely issued. Historically, there has been at least a psychological ‘quantum’ difference between nuclear and conventional weapons:

in even the lowest yields and most restricted circumstances, the combat use of nuclear weapons represented a virtually inviolable threshold. No such ‘taboo’ applies to the use of conventional weapons.<sup>23</sup>

Yet as one US commentator has observed, the inventor of the nuclear hand-grenade will be cursed!<sup>24</sup>

Because conventional weapons do not present the self-deterrent effect of nuclear weapons they are more useable and therefore represent a more credible threat.<sup>25</sup> Deterrence based on conventional weapons, is, however, inherently

Nuclear Fire?’, *The Washington Quarterly*, 17, 3, pp. 211-12.

<sup>22</sup> For example, the United Kingdom is actively pursuing the acquisition of conventionally armed Tomahawk cruise missiles for its Trafalgar-class submarines. These weapons are seen as representing a credible deterrent threat to third world countries whereas threats based on nuclear weapons would not be credible.

<sup>23</sup> William S. Huggins, ‘Deterrence After the Cold War: Conventional Arms and the Prevention of War’, *Air Power Journal*, 7, 2, Summer 1993, p. 53.

<sup>24</sup> There is some evidence to suggest that the ‘inviolable threshold’ may be breaking down and the use of ‘micro-nukes’ is being seriously considered. See for example Arthur Knoth, ‘Counterproliferation at the crossroads’, *International Defense Review*, 11/95, Nov 1995, p. 23.

<sup>25</sup> In its review of the role of the United States Navy (USN) in crisis response and influence the USN recognised that: ‘The degree to which we can exert influence with nuclear deterrence has changed fundamentally. ... The emerging security environment will rely heavily on conventional deterrence’. Chief of Naval Operations, USN, SSG XIII, ‘Crisis Response and Influence: the value of overseas military presence’, June 1994, p. 25. (Unpublished conference paper).

contestable and an adversary will carefully measure likely gains and losses before deciding on action.

#### *TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES IN CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS*

During the Cold War, strategists concentrated on nuclear deterrence and nuclear weapon capabilities - technological developments that led to significant advances in the capabilities of conventional weapons were largely ignored. Major advances in conventional weapons, specifically in the area of stealth and precision guidance, however, were effectively displayed in the Gulf War and have led to what has been referred to as 'US conventional dominance'.<sup>26</sup>

There are two major advantages of these precision conventional weapons. Firstly, they limit collateral damage and the resultant moral and political dilemmas associated with loss of innocent life. Secondly, for forces carrying out the attack, they reduce the likelihood of casualties which has become a major determinant of military involvement by developed nations in operations other than direct defence of the nation.<sup>27</sup> Because the use of such weapons will be more acceptable politically, they represent a credible deterrent threat.

While the Gulf War showed the capability of high technology conventional weapons - and many argue that it was a turning point in the nature of warfare - care must be taken in generalising too far from the results. An understanding of both the effectiveness and limitations of advanced conventional weapons is essential before strategic implications are drawn. Smart weapons can do much to limit loss of life but they cannot take on all missions. As the conflict in the former Yugoslavia has shown, future crises will have their own context and present their own challenges - smart weapons do not represent a panacea.<sup>28</sup> This limitation is well summarised by a purported comment by a United States general, who, when asked to explain the limited effectiveness of air power in Bosnia, replied: 'We do deserts, we don't do mountains!'

The Gulf War also showed the inability of even the most sophisticated military forces to locate and destroy Iraqi Scud launchers or to provide a fully effective defence against their use - lessons not lost on those seeking to acquire WMD and advanced delivery systems to obtain 'leverage' over nations with superior conventional forces. These so-called 'rogue states' will not be self-deterred against using such weapons and represent a significant threat to even major powers. A further risk associated with overly optimistic expectations of the future role for advanced conventional weapons is that they may blur the boundary between what have traditionally been classified as 'tactical' and 'strategic' - weapons such as conventionally armed cruise missiles could become as provocative as a measured use of low-yield tactical nuclear weapons.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Allan, 'Extended Conventional Deterrence' p. 208.

<sup>27</sup> In the US what have been dubbed as 'zero-dead' wars are increasingly seen as the only politically acceptable form of foreign conflict. This is largely a result of transmission to the television screens of US as they occur - the so-called 'CNN factor'.

<sup>28</sup> For further discussion see Allan, 'Extended Conventional Deterrence', p 212, and Paul H. Nitze, 'A Conventional Approach', *Proceedings*, May, 1994, p. 46.

<sup>29</sup> R.A. Beaumont, 'Nonnuclear Deterrence: Potentials and Problems', *Military Review*, September 1982, p. 37.







**FORMS OF DETERRENCE**

Deterrence strategies can be applied in a number of forms depending on: the immediacy and specificity of threat (general vs. immediate deterrence), the nature of the deterrent threat (denial, retaliation or punishment), whose interests are at stake (direct vs. indirect deterrence), the number of parties providing the threat (cooperative, and international deterrence), and whether deterrence is applied at all levels of conflict (total vs. limited deterrence). While generally considered in the context of deterring war, deterrence of conflict short of war and deterrence of proliferation of WMD can also be considered.

*SPECIFICITY OF THREAT (IMMEDIATE AND GENERAL DETERRENCE)*

Deterrence strategies are classified as *immediate* or *general* based on the specificity of the threat faced. Immediate deterrence, also referred to as fundamental or pure deterrence, exists where an adversary is actively considering the use of force, and the deterrer, aware of the threat, issues a counterthreat to deter. The threat of aggression is specific in terms of: adversary, issue, time, and place. The deterrer is essentially 'eyeball-to-eyeball' with the potential aggressor and, hopefully, the aggressor blinks. Actions available to the deterrer to support his counter-threat include general mobilisation, the deployment of forces to face the threat, or the declaration of a *casus belli*.<sup>1</sup>

General deterrence refers to a situation in which there is the possibility of armed conflict but the potential aggressor is not actively considering the use of force. The deterrer, aware of the 'threat', maintains forces of its own and offers warnings of a response against the use of force contrary to its interests.<sup>2</sup> Because general deterrence operates before a specific threat develops, it is more likely to be effective than immediate deterrence where an aggressor is more committed to action and there would be political costs as a result of backing down.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Casus belli is defined as 'an act or situation justifying or precipitating war'. The drawing of casus belli or 'lines that must not be crossed' in advance act as a signal for automatic trigger of war or a large-scale military action if a specific aggressive act is carried out. For example, in the mid-1970's Israel communicated to Syria the maximum permitted depth of Syrian military intervention into Southern Lebanon. The advance declaration of casus belli serves three general purposes: it lessens the possibility of miscalculation; provides a clear signal when deterrence has failed; and establishes a foundation of international legitimacy in the event of subsequent military action. When a casus belli is declared deterrence of that act is referred to as 'specific deterrence'.

<sup>2</sup> For further discussion of the characteristics of general deterrence see Bruce Russett, 'Between General and Immediate Deterrence', in Aharon Klieman, and Ariel Levite, (eds.), *Deterrence in the Middle East: Where Theory and Practice Converge*, Jafee Center for Strategic Studies (JCSS), Study No. 22, Westview Press, Colorado, 1993, pp. 34-35, and Morgan, *Deterrence*, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> Allan, 'Extended Conventional Deterrence', p. 224.

Traditional definitions of general deterrence include both specific and potential adversaries.<sup>4</sup> It is useful, however, to limit general deterrence to cases where a specific adversary exists and to introduce a new form, ‘basic deterrence’, for cases where there are only potential adversaries. Basic deterrence is appropriate in situations where a military threat could be expected to emerge if the would-be ‘deterrent’ had no credible military capability. Because there are no specific threats or adversaries, force structure must be based on: the nature of the geo-strategic environment; the range of capabilities that could credibly be brought to bear; and the time in which a credible threat could be expected to develop. Maintaining military forces in the absence of a credible threat performs two important functions: it ‘generates’ warning time and creates an inverse relationship between the likelihood and seriousness of threats - i.e. it ensures that the most extreme threats are the most unlikely.

The desired ends or outcomes (policy goals) of basic, general and immediate deterrence strategies and the strategic circumstances in which they would be applied are shown in Table 2:

Form of Deterrence	Strategic Circumstance	Desired Outcome
Basic Deterrence	no specific threat, no specific adversary	Don’t even consider military action
General	non-specific threat from specific adversary	Don’t plan specific military action
Immediate	specific threat from specific adversary	Don’t carry out a planned action

**Table 2: Circumstances and desired outcomes for basic, general and immediate deterrence**

Figure 2 shows a simplified ‘life cycle of a conflict’ and the level of ‘conflict’ at which each form of deterrence would be employed. Based on the inclusion of basic deterrence, progression to conflict from stable peace (a non-adversarial relationship) would be a three-step process. Failures of deterrence at the basic, general and immediate levels would be required for armed conflict to occur.

*NATURE OF DETERRENT THREAT (DENIAL, PUNISHMENT AND RETALIATION)*

Deterrence can be based on threats that are essentially defensive or offensive. Defensive deterrence - deterrence by denial - aims to deter aggression by convincing an adversary that: aggression would fail, prospects for a quick battlefield success are low or that the losses associated with a victory are not worth the prospective gains.<sup>5</sup> In its classical form, deterrence by denial concentrates on territorial defence, eschewing offensive capability in favour of concepts such as ‘non-offensive defence’. In its more

<sup>4</sup> Based on discussions with Patrick Morgan. Also see Barnett, ‘Deterrence Theory for the Coming Decade’ p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> For example the Singaporean ‘poisonous shrimp’ philosophy was based on the recognition that it could not defeat a full-scale invasion of Singapore but its defence capability was such that the cost of achieving such a victory would not be worthwhile.

**LIFE-CYCLE OF A CONFLICT, AND  
TYPES OF CONFLICT PREVENTIONS & INTERVENTIONS**

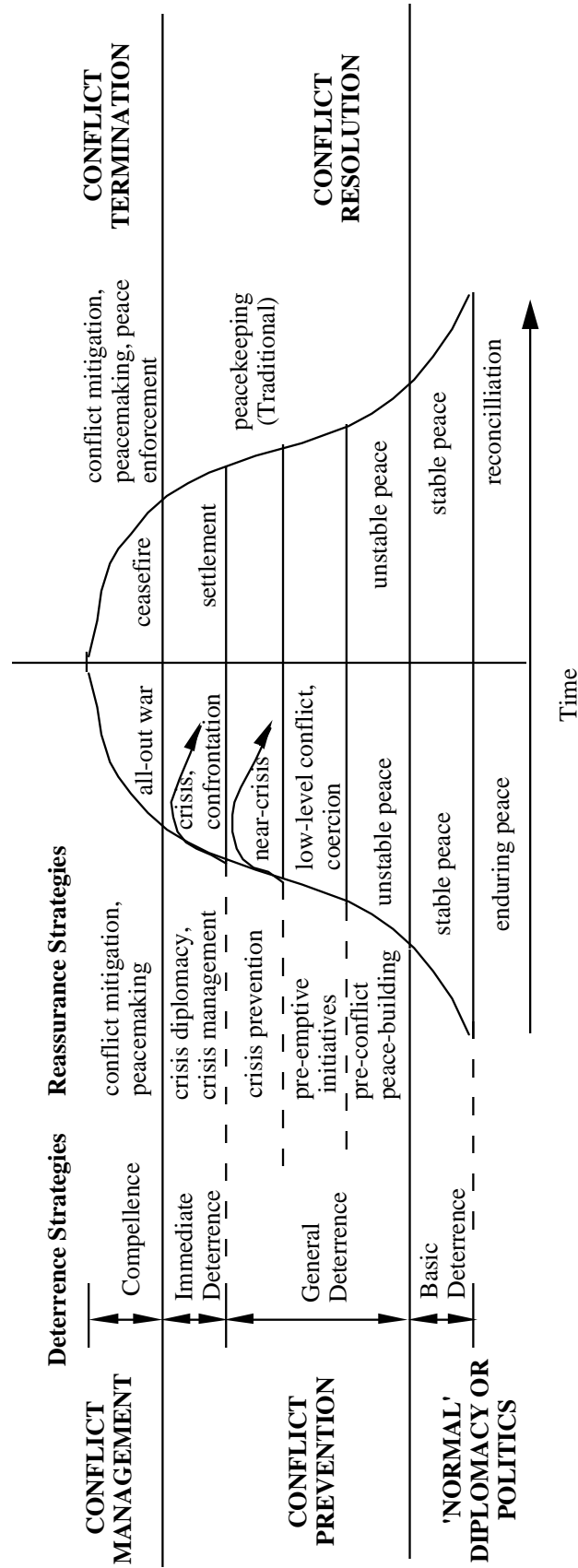


Figure 2 - Life cycle of a conflict showing deterrence and reassurance strategies

dynamic form, it includes offensive capability - the targets of those offensive elements, however, would always be counterforce rather than countervalue.<sup>6</sup> Even where aims are defensive, offensive capabilities provide: the opportunity to seize the initiative, the ability to reclaim lost territory, the option of preventative and pre-emptive strikes, the dilution of the aggressor's offensive capacity by forcing him to divert resources to his own defence, and the ability to take the war to the enemy, increasing the political cost of aggression deterrence includes strategies of punishment and retaliation. Punishment involves the destruction of 'items' valued by an aggressor without necessarily defeating the aggression itself. Targets of punishment strategies are generally countervalue - deterrence being based on inflicting costs that outweigh any likely gains of aggression. For example, French nuclear deterrent forces were maintained to raise the cost of Soviet aggression above what was considered to be the level of 'maximum acceptable loss'<sup>7</sup> - the level of expected damage to an aggressor that would make even certain victory unattractive.

Retaliation is a form of punishment but the amount of punishment is proportionate<sup>8</sup> to the aggressor's actions. Retaliation is carried out incrementally so that the aggressor has the option to cease hostilities and avoid further punishment. It is the possibility of avoiding further destruction of targets of value that differentiates retaliation from punishment.

While all forms of deterrence aim to affect the aggressor's intent, punishment and retaliation strategies aim to achieve this effect directly whereas denial strategies aim to achieve the effect indirectly - by defeating capability.

#### *CHOOSING DETERRENCE STRATEGIES AND THE FORCES REQUIRED*

Choosing between deterrence strategies based on denial and punishment depends on: whether defence is technically feasible, the relative strengths of the aggressor and deterrer, and the interests involved. Deterrence by denial can only be employed where an effective defence is possible and is therefore not applicable to nuclear weapons or other WMD. Because denial involves direct confrontation with opposing forces, relative measures of military strength are most important. While a perfect defence may represent an excellent deterrent, perfection is unlikely to be achieved. And even when the defender has a marked advantage, it may be difficult to communicate the capability to an aggressor. Further, a defender's advantage can be offset by an aggressor's use of surprise and deception.<sup>9</sup> Where the balance of forces is such that a defensive response may not be sufficient to deter, the ability to punish the enemy raises the cost of aggression and can increase the effectiveness of deterrence.

<sup>6</sup> While the terms 'counterforce' and 'countervalue' have traditionally been used in reference to nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence, they are still useful when discussing conventional deterrence. Counterforce targets are those that have a direct effect on the outcome of a military conflict and countervalue targets are those which have no direct military effect but rather affect the political will to continue fighting.

<sup>7</sup> See George Downs 'The Limits of Deterrence Theory' in *Deterrence in the Middle East*, JCSS Study No. 22, Westview Press, Colorado, 1993, p. 77.

<sup>8</sup> Proportionate does not necessarily mean 'equal to'. In the case of retaliation the 'amount' of response is measured in relation to the 'amount' of the initial action.

<sup>9</sup> As Janice Stein has observed: 'Deception is a force multiplier and military leaders know this only too well'. Further, 'while a strategy of deception promises substantial advantage, it entails few immediate costs'. See Janice G. Stein, 'Military Deception, Strategic Surprise, and Conventional Deterrence: A Political Analysis of Egypt and Israel, 1971-1973', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, March, 1982, pp. 94-5.

Punishment strategies are based on the need to inflict an absolute level of damage to the aggressor and, because there is no need to defeat enemy forces, force measurements tend to be absolute rather than relative. This must be modified somewhat to take into account an aggressor’s pre-emptive strike ability that could destroy or at least reduce the punishment capability. The deterrent forces must therefore be protected or made proportionately larger so that sufficient punishment capability is retained. The essential requirements for punishment forces are: range to reach targets of ‘value’, ability to penetrate enemy defences, and sufficient force to create the required level of damage. These requirements have generally restricted punishment forces to air power - long range aircraft, and ballistic and cruise missiles.<sup>10</sup>

Although the ability to punish can considerably increase the prospective cost of aggression, such an ability can be provocative if a pre-emptive attack capability is coupled with a perceived hostile intent. Deterrence by punishment will only be effective if an aggressor believes the threat will actually be carried out if deterrence fails. While there will be little doubt that denial forces will be used if deterrence fails, when deterrence is based on punishment there may be no advantage in carrying out a deterrent threat if it does not reduce the aggressor’s chance of success. A strategy of retaliation avoids this problem to some extent as the willingness to punish the enemy is demonstrated while retaining the ability to inflict further costs if aggression continues. The effectiveness of the three forms of deterrence, therefore, is based on different assessments by the aggressor. For denial, success is based almost exclusively on the aggressor’s assessment of the deterrer’s *capability*. In the case of punishment and retaliation, the calculation is based on the aggressor’s assessment of deterrer’s *credibility* of carrying out the threat.

Differences between the three forms of deterrence are summarised in Table 3:

		Form of Deterrent Threat		
		Defensive	Offensive	
		Denial	Retaliation	Punishment
Component of aggressor’s threat to be threatened	Capability	Primary Aim	Not essential	Not essential
	Credibility	Indirect	Primary aim	Primary aim
Basis of aggressor’s ‘risk calculus’		Deterrer’s capability	Deterrer’s intent	Deterrer’s intent
Extent of deterrer’s threatened action		As required to defeat attack	Proportionate to attacker’s actions	Sufficient to inflict high costs
Likelihood of carrying out deterrent threat if aggression occurs		Almost certainly (revert to defence)	Likely (carefully measured)	Questionable

**Table 3 - Features of Deterrence Strategies Based on Denial, Retaliation and Punishment**

<sup>10</sup> Long-range is not always a requirement as recent conflict in Croatia has shown. The Serb retaliatory response to a successful Croat offensive was a rocket attack against the Croatian capital of Zagreb. And in the future the development of so-called ‘information attacks’ may introduce a whole new range of punishment options.

*COUNTERFORCE AND COUNTERVALUE TARGETING*

The traditional distinction between countervalue targeting (punishment/retaliation strategies) and counterforce targeting (denial strategies) may no longer be quite so clear cut for a number of reasons:

- Although military personnel are by definition counterforce targets, the sensitivity of developed nations to casualties means that attacks on them can have an effect that is essentially countervalue in nature. For example, the bombing of the US Marine barracks in Beirut, while essentially a counterforce target, was chosen for its political value rather than any likelihood of incapacitating US military capability. While this sensitivity to casualties can be seen as a humane development in the conduct of conflict, 'until that attitude is held universally, it will provide great leverage for those who reject it and who employ terror weapons'.<sup>11</sup>
- The Additional Protocols to the Geneva Convention prohibit attacks on an enemy's civilian population either by direct means or as a result of indiscriminate attack on an enemy's forces. For countries that have adopted these additional protocols attacking traditional 'countervalue' targets - a nation's population - is not an option. Even countries that have not adopted the Additional Protocols will be subject to considerable international pressure to follow the guidelines.
- Long-range, precision conventional weapons provide the capability to achieve denial by operating offensively using direct pre-emptive attacks against an aggressor's military capability.
- Direct attacks against military capability on an enemy's territory is likely to have direct political effect - this makes such targets effectively countervalue, directly affecting their willingness to continue hostilities.
- Long-range, precision conventional weapons provide the capability to operate in a 'precision punishment' mode, where, for example, the leaders of an aggressor regime could be attacked directly.

When classifying targets, therefore, they would be differentiated on whether the aim is to defeat military capability directly (counterforce) or indirectly through their political impact (countervalue).

*NATURE OF INTERESTS INVOLVED (DIRECT VS. INDIRECT/EXTENDED DETERRENCE)*

Deterrence can be classified as either direct or indirect (extended) depending on whose interests are being protected. Direct deterrence aims to deter an attack against a state's home territory or its own interests. Because of the obvious self-interest involved there will be little doubt that a state will fight to defend that which is threatened.

<sup>11</sup> Stuart Mackenzie and Alan Stephens, *Bolt From the Blue: The Ballistic and Cruise Missile Problem*, Air Power Studies Centre Paper No. 20, February 1994, p. 9.

Indirect or extended deterrence aims to deter an attack against a third party. The third party is typically a 'protege' of a larger power. Extending the umbrella of a country's deterrence to another country, however, is no simple task. The credibility of a deterrent threat in an extended deterrence situation depends critically on the level of interest the deterring power is seen to have in the country or area in question. While direct deterrent threats may be inherently credible, extended deterrent threats will generally need to be made credible.<sup>12</sup> For example, during the Cold War it was difficult for the US to establish the credibility of its threat to retaliate against the Soviet Union if Western Europe had been attacked - the dilemma of 'trading Boston for Bonn'. Means available to reinforce the credibility of extended deterrence include: declaration of a casus belli; development of a reputation for firmness; and adoption of a 'trip-wire'<sup>13</sup> strategy. Extended deterrence may also require projecting force over a considerable distance and the 'defensive advantage' that would typically exist in a case of direct deterrence may be lost or at least reduced. This can be offset, however, if the strategy adopted is one of punishment/retaliation rather than denial. For example, Greece's extended deterrence of Cyprus is based on retaliation against Turkey rather than denial of military aggression against Cyprus. This strategy has been adopted because of the imbalance of forces and relative distances to Turkey and Cyprus.

A major consequence for any state 'borrowing' power through a powerful ally's extended deterrence is determining how much and what type of independent military capability it must maintain. In the case of Japan, for example, its force structure is clearly 'externally balanced' - it relies almost exclusively on the US for offensive and force projection capabilities. In general, however, states will strive for more 'internal balancing' where some level of self-reliant capability is maintained.

#### *COLLECTIVE AND INTERNATIONAL DETERRENCE*

Collective deterrence refers to the situation where a group of states form a military alliance to deter an external threat. The aim of such an alliance is to increase the total threat faced by an aggressor - an attack on one member is considered to be an attack on all and all would respond. The aim is to avoid the so-called 'falling domino' situation where individual smaller states could be 'picked-off' one at a time by a larger state. For maximum effectiveness, a clear statement of mutual defence commitment is required, as in the case of NATO. While some deterrence effect can be achieved through an ambiguous commitment it is less likely to be effective.

Collective deterrence has been extended to the concept of 'international deterrence' which is based on the strength of the international community acting to pressure any potential aggressor not to go beyond commonly agreed standards of behaviour or to disturb the status quo. A formal defence agreement between specific

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<sup>12</sup> For further discussion see Thomas Schelling, 'Arms and Influence', in Klieman and Levite, *Deterrence in the Middle East*, p. 54.

<sup>13</sup> A 'trip wire' strategy involves stationing forces in the area of extended deterrence - any attack on that country would involve an attack on the 'deterriers' own troops and would raise the likelihood of military involvement. An extension of this concept was the basing of nuclear weapons in the path of any Soviet invasion in Western Europe. NATO could not afford to leave the weapons so it is argued that they would have to be used. An analogy to the location of American troops to Europe can be drawn with the British deployment of troops to deter Germany from attacking France in 1905. The French response to how many British soldiers would need to be killed was: 'One, and we will make certain he is killed on the first day'. See Quester, 'Conventional Deterrence', p. 38.



states is not required for the deterrent effect to be achieved. As coalition action in the Gulf War showed, when the interest of a large number of nations is threatened military threats can be carried out. Such international action has been facilitated by the end of the Cold War because the UN Security Council is not held 'automatically hostage to a superpower veto'.<sup>14</sup> As international interdependence increases, the implications of conflict for the international community at large also increases, thereby increasing the credibility of future coalition action.

#### *TOTAL VS. LIMITED DETERRENCE*

In the Cold War years deterrence was seen as operating at the nuclear, Cold War, and conventional levels.<sup>15</sup> While the Cold War level has now been removed, recent studies also consider deterrence operating at a lower level which includes deterrence of 'conflict short of war'<sup>16</sup> and deterrence of the proliferation of WMD. To be effective overall, deterrence must be effective at all levels - a situation of 'total deterrence'. Total deterrence is defined as a situation between adversaries where absolute stability - i.e. the absence of conflict - exists at all levels<sup>17</sup> and can be achieved through two modes of operation of deterrence:

- stable, independent deterrence at all levels (i.e. *horizontal deterrence interaction* - where the potential aggressor is met with credible deterrent threats at each level of conflict); or
- effective deterrence interaction between levels - (i.e. *vertical deterrence interaction* - where, for example, a deterrer's nuclear capability deters the potential aggressor at all potential levels of conflict)<sup>18</sup>.

Limited (or partial) deterrence is where stable deterrence does not exist at all levels and a challenge could therefore occur. While deterrence success is only limited and may not prevent the outbreak of war, it may still ensure that escalation does not occur.<sup>19</sup>

A highly motivated aggressor, faced with successful deterrence at one level, will look for other levels where a challenge may be successful. For example, adversaries of the US will try to 'design around' US dominance at the conventional level either by 'going under' it by adopting terrorist and guerrilla tactics or by 'going over it' by acquiring WMD.

Related to the concept of total deterrence is cumulative deterrence which is the sum effect of all forms of deterrence strategy a nation practices. For example, for Israel, its cumulative deterrence consists of its conventional forces, nuclear forces and

<sup>14</sup> Chief of Naval Operations, USN, SSG XIII, 'Crisis Response and Influence: the value of overseas military presence', June 1994, p. 25.

<sup>15</sup> For further discussion see Andre Beaufre, *Deterrence and Strategy*, Faber & Faber, London, 1965, pp. 15-77.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph J. Valenzuela, 'Non-Nuclear Deterrence in U.S. Strategic Policy: Incentives and Limitations', PhD Thesis, Navy Postgraduate School, Monterey California, June 1992.

<sup>17</sup> Marais, *Deterrence and Deterrence Interaction*, p. 1. In this case he was referring to Beaufre's original three levels of deterrence.

<sup>18</sup> The most obvious example of vertical deterrence interaction is the effect of deterrence at the nuclear level on the conventional level.

<sup>19</sup> Marais, *Deterrence and Deterrence Interaction*, p. 1.

the extended deterrence gained from its alliance with the United States. Total deterrence is a special case of cumulative deterrence where the sum of all forms of deterrence at all levels (from horizontal and vertical interaction) results in stability at all levels.

*DETERRENCE OF CONFLICT SHORT OF WAR*

Consideration of deterrence has recently been extended to include deterrence of ‘conflict short of war’.<sup>20</sup> While specifically developed to consider extended conventional deterrence by the US in regional security challenges, the concepts can be generalised to other situations. Three forms of conflict short of war have been identified: ‘gray area phenomena’, political or ideological struggles (‘vertical’ conflict); and primal violence (‘horizontal’ conflict). Features of these three forms of conflict and their expected future frequency are shown in Table 4:

Form of Conflict	Features	Frequency
‘Gray area phenomena’	Threats to security that fall somewhere between traditional, politico-military challenges and large-scale organised crime.	Increasing
Political or Ideological Struggles (‘vertical’ conflict)	Guerrilla warfare	Decreasing
Primal Violence (‘horizontal’ conflict)	Antagonists are defined by ethnic, tribal, clan, religious, linguistic, or racial difference (rather than economic class)	Increasing

**Table 4: Forms of conflict short of war, features and frequency of occurrence**

The ability to deter conflict at this level has been questioned<sup>21</sup> because the groups involved are in most cases motivated differently and understand the world differently to national leaders.<sup>22</sup> Although they have been traditionally considered as irrational, current studies suggest that they typically display ‘subjective’ rationality rather than the ‘objective’ rationality of state actors. Features of the two forms of rationality, and the implications for deterrence are listed in Table 5:

	Objective Rationality	Subjective Rationality
Features	Externally focused Linear Empirical Deductive Strategic	Internally focused Dialectic Metaphysical Intuitive Astrategic
Goals	Tangible	Psychic fulfilment or personal meaning
Transparency of decision-making process	Transparent	Opaque
Implications for deterrence	Possible to decide what component of costs/benefits/risks to manipulate	Difficult for an outsider to understand and manipulate decision-making process

**Table 5: Features of objective and subjective rationality and the implications for deterrence**

Rationality for individuals is seen as occurring at a point on a continuum between these two extremes - the closer they are towards the objective end of the

<sup>20</sup> See Steven Metz, ‘Deterring Conflict Short of War’, *Strategic Review*, Fall 1994, pp. 44-51.

<sup>21</sup> Valenzuela, ‘Non-Nuclear Deterrence in U.S. Strategic Policy’ p. 44.

<sup>22</sup> See Metz, ‘Deterring Conflict Short of War’, p. 45.

continuum the greater the potential for deterrence.<sup>23</sup> When group decision-making is involved the overall degree of subjective vs. objective rationality is a function of the size of the group. Generally, the larger the group (and, in most cases, the larger the number of individuals involved in decision-making) the more the decision-making process will be characterised by objective rationality. Where a group is small, the potential for subjective rationality is high.

Because the party trying to deter will be a state actor operating at the conventional level of conflict, deterrence relies on vertical deterrence interaction - from the conventional level down to the lower level. This form of interaction is characterised by marked asymmetries, as shown in Table 6:

	<b>Deterrer</b>	<b>Aggressor</b>
Level of threat to survival	Low to None	Absolute
Willingness to accept risk	Low	High (Need for danger)
Relative strength	High	Low
Decision-making	Transparent	Opaque

**Table 6: Asymmetrical nature of conflict short of war**

While the deterrer has the advantage in military capability - specifically, in terms of numbers, weapons, ability to concentrate firepower, air support, and air transport - guerrillas and terrorist groups are able to make maximum use of the total available space. This is because security forces can typically occupy only a small portion of the total terrain effectively, and, by systematically refusing to engage and by taking refuge in unoccupied zones, guerrilla and terrorist groups can continue to survive and to carry on surprise actions.<sup>24</sup> In this way they are able to maintain a psychological pressure on the occupiers and maintain their prestige before the world. The aim of such groups is to keep the battle going even if at a very low level of intensity.

Specific capabilities the deterrer will need to achieve effective vertical interaction include: a high degree of mobility, special operations forces, rapidly deployable conventional units, and stand-off precision weapons. The only way these capabilities can be effective, however, is if they are supported by timely and accurate intelligence.<sup>25</sup>

While deterrence at this level may be possible, it will probably be more like a police action with continual enforcement/compellence required - the aim being to keep the level and instances of conflict to an acceptable level. Deterrence is therefore 'inter-conflict' in nature<sup>26</sup> - achieved by decisively acting against one group and developing a reputation for effective action. Once a reputation is established, however, it will have a limited life - constant 'booster shots', or acts of compellence, will be required to maintain the reputation established. Although periodic failures of deterrence will be inevitable, because this level of conflict does not represent a fundamental threat to the survival of the state, they will be acceptable.

<sup>23</sup> Valenzuela, 'Non-Nuclear Deterrence in U.S. Strategic Policy', p. 45.

<sup>24</sup> See Metz, 'Deterring Conflict Short of War', p. 45.

<sup>25</sup> See Valenzuela, 'Non-Nuclear Deterrence in U.S. Strategic Policy', p. 49.

<sup>26</sup> See Marais, *Deterrence and Deterrence Interaction*, p. 39.

*DETERRENCE OF PROLIFERATION OF WMD AND ADVANCED DELIVERY SYSTEMS*

While the end of the Cold War has seen a great reduction in the likelihood of nuclear war between the superpowers, a significant threat is posed by the proliferation of WMD and advanced delivery systems. For example, at present approximately 14 nations have ballistic missiles and ten more are expected to achieve missile capability within ten years. Many of the countries developing ballistic missiles are also actively pursuing acquisition of WMD.<sup>27</sup> Even a state that is considerably more powerful at the nuclear and conventional levels can be seriously threatened by an adversary which is much less capable overall but possesses WMD. Even without WMD, ballistic missiles with conventional warheads which may produce only limited physical damage, can have large psychological and hence, political impact - as the Iraqi Scud attacks on Israel demonstrated.<sup>28</sup>

Because there is no effective defence against them and the damage from even a single WMD would be unacceptable, deterrence must be aimed at preventing proliferation rather than use. While the acquisition of WMD and ballistic missiles is a means of defeating or ‘designing around’ successful deterrence at the conventional level, conventional deterrence has also been proposed as part of the solution. Deterrence, however, would be only one of a combination of ‘supply-side’ and ‘demand-side’ strategies that need to be employed, as shown in Table 7.

Strategy	Incentives	Disincentives
Supply-side		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Embargoes</li> <li>- Export Controls</li> <li>- Treaty obligations not to export</li> </ul>
Demand-side	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Security assistance &amp; guarantees</li> <li>- Confidence-building &amp; conflict reduction measures</li> <li>- Treaty obligation to work toward disarming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deterrence through threats of use of force</li> <li>- Compellence - use of military means to enforce nonproliferation (counterproliferation)</li> </ul>

**Table 7: Strategies for enforcing nonproliferation<sup>29</sup>**

Deterrence in this case would be based on threats of counterproliferation - the preventative and pre-emptive use of advanced conventional weapons to destroy weapons, launch systems and production facilities.<sup>30</sup> Precedents for the use of force in

<sup>27</sup> See Franklin R. Wolf, *Of Carrots and Sticks or Air Power as a Nonproliferation Tool*, Air University Press, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, July 1994, p. 37.

<sup>28</sup> While the effect of Scud attacks during the Gulf War was largely psychological, if they had been more accurate they ‘might have inflicted serious damage on military targets, including the large troop concentrations at Saudi ports at the start of the war’ - see Final Report to Congress, Conduct of the Persian Gulf War, US Department of Defence, April 1992, p. 169.

<sup>29</sup> Adapted from Wolf, *Of Carrots and Sticks or Air Power as a Nonproliferation Tool*, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> For further discussion see Gary Guertner, ‘Deterrence and Conventional Military Forces’, *Washington Quarterly*, Winter 1993, and Colin Gray’s comments in Allan, ‘Extended Conventional Deterrence’, p. 213.

the counterproliferation role exist. The Israeli attack on the Iraq nuclear facility at Osiraq was an example of successful preventative action although Israel was subsequently censured by the UN for its unilateral action. In contrast, preventative destruction of WMD production facilities in Iraq by the US using conventionally armed cruise missiles was supported by a UN security council resolution. Future counterproliferation action will require strong political will and must be supported by detailed and timely intelligence.



## DETERRENCE THEORY

Deterrence theory has been developed in an attempt to understand the decision-making process in a deterrence situation and to make predictions about behaviour as a result of deterrent threats. The term 'deterrence theory' has become virtually synonymous with 'rational deterrence theory'. While references to 'psychological deterrence theory' can also be found, it is more a collection of observations on psychological factors that affect the decision-making process than a clearly defined theory.

### *RATIONAL DETERRENCE THEORY*

Rational deterrence theory, as the name suggests, assumes that potential aggressors are rational. Decision-makers are said to be rational if they compare the expected costs and benefits of alternative courses of action and, based on the results of that comparison, choose the course of action that maximises benefit or minimises cost according to a consistent, hierarchical value system.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, decision-makers are said to be irrational if, given a choice among alternative courses of action, they do not choose behaviour which they believe satisfies their higher priority value or if the choice between alternatives is made by means other than by generally accepted logic - for example, if it was based on the toss of a coin.<sup>2</sup>

Rational deterrence theory has been modelled as an expected utility problem under a condition of risk - the outcome is uncertain with either costs or benefits being possible. The decision is based on the simple rule: if one wins, one achieves certain benefits; if one loses, one sustains certain losses. In the simplest case the aggressor has two options available - war or no war and the defender has only one defence option. In this case the aggressor's *expected utility* of going to war is determined by taking the aggressor's utility of winning the war, multiplied by his estimated probability of winning, and adding it to his utility of losing the war, multiplied by the estimated probability of losing. This is expressed mathematically as:<sup>3</sup>

$$\mathbf{EU(war) = P(winning) * U(winning) + P(losing) * U(losing)}$$

where:

EU equals expected utility

P(x) is the aggressor's assessment of the probability of event 'x' occurring, and

U(x) is the aggressor's utility of event 'x'

<sup>1</sup> For further discussion see P. Huth, and B. Russett, 'Testing Deterrence Theory: Rigor Makes a Difference', *World Politics*, 42, 4, July 1990, p. 469.

<sup>2</sup> For further discussion see Barnett, 'Deterrence Theory for the Coming Decade', p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Huth and Russett, 'Testing Deterrence Theory: Rigor Makes a Difference', p. 488.

If the expected utility is positive (i.e. there is an expected gain) the aggressor would choose to go to war - *deterrence failure*. If the expected utility is negative, a cost would be expected so war would be avoided - *deterrence success*.

This simplistic form of the model ignores two important factors. Firstly it does not consider what has been called the ‘cost of inaction’ - there may also be a cost associated with doing nothing. A more realistic form of the model compares the expected utilities of ‘going to war’ and ‘not going to war’ and, because rationality is assumed, the aggressor will choose the option that has the greater expected utility.

Secondly, a deterrer will generally have more than one option available in response to aggression. For example, options available to the US in response to a Soviet attack on Western Europe included: an all-out nuclear strike on the Soviet Union, a limited nuclear strike on the Soviet Union, use of tactical nuclear weapons to defeat the invasion, a conventional defence response or even no response at all. Where the deterrer has a range of possible responses, the likelihood of each must be considered by the aggressor - the overall expected utility of aggression being calculated by summing the expected utilities for all possible responses.

Mathematically, for the case where the deterrer has ‘n’ response options, this can be expressed as:<sup>4</sup>

$$EU(\text{war}) = \sum_{i=1}^n P(x_i) * [ P(\text{winning} | x_i) * U(\text{winning} | x_i) + P(\text{losing} | x_i) * U(\text{losing} | x_i) ]$$

where:  
 EU equals expected utility  
 P(x<sub>i</sub>) is the aggressor’s assessment of the probability of response ‘x<sub>i</sub>’ occurring, and  
 | x<sub>i</sub> means ‘given that x<sub>i</sub> is the response chosen’.

This overall expected utility must then be compared with the expected utility of not going to war.

Note **P(x<sub>i</sub>)** is a measure of credibility - the aggressor’s assessment of the probability that a particular response (the deterrent threat) will be carried out. This is the key element that links the decision-making processes of the attacker and the deterrer.

For the potential aggressor precise statements of potential costs and benefits and probabilities of winning or losing in any deterrence situation cannot be known beforehand; they can only be estimated on the basis of available information. This process of estimation has been referred to as the attacker’s ‘risk calculus’ and is based on:

- the aggressor’s valuation of the war objectives (i.e. the expected gains),
- the costs expected to be incurred as a result of the various possible responses by the deterrer (including the no response or capitulation option),
- the probability of the various responses (including the no response option), and
- the probability of winning the objective with each possible response<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Note: because all possible response options are considered  $\sum_{i=1}^n P(x_i) = 1$ .

<sup>5</sup> For further discussion see Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*, p. 12.

Proponents of rational deterrence theory do not suggest that potential aggressors carry out detailed mathematical calculations of probabilities, costs and benefits based on the preceding formulae. Rather they propose that these factors will at least be considered, either implicitly or explicitly before aggression takes place.

*THE MEANING OF 'VALUE'*

Value or utility refers to the level of interest a state has in that which is being challenged. While difficult to quantify, value consists of two components: intrinsic value and power value.<sup>6</sup> Although measured on different scales, it is the aggregate of these two values that represents total value or total cost.

- *Intrinsic values* are defined as 'end values' or values in their own right - they have no direct effect on future relationships. They include such things as the value placed on: the lives and material assets that would be lost in a conflict, a state's independence, the economic value of being able to trade freely with other independent nations, and moral values such as self-respect, honour and prestige.
- *Power values* are extrinsic or 'instrumental values' - they are valued for what they contribute to intrinsic values. Power values are based on perceived interdependence of commitments - when commitments are seen as interdependent, it is believed that the outcome of any challenge will have a direct effect on the outcome of all other challenges. This is sometimes expressed using an analogy of falling dominoes - once one falls the rest will fall as well. When commitments are not considered interdependent the response to each deterrence challenge is assessed on its own merits. Power values consist of three components:
  - ◆ *Strategic Value* - the potential contribution to military capabilities for either side in possessing the disputed asset. Strategic value takes into account power of population, raw materials, industrial capacity, and, importantly, strategic location. Put differently, the strategic value of territory is the effect the loss or gain of that territory will have on future territorial disputes/conflicts.
  - ◆ *Deterrent Value* - the effect that defending or not defending against aggression in this case will have on perceived future response to aggression. It is essentially a consideration of developing and maintaining a reputation.
  - ◆ *Political Value* - refers to the political effect of a response and its direct consequences on relations with third parties.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 31. While developed as a measure of the ability of military forces to mitigate costs in the case of aggression, the concept can be used in an aggressor's calculations. For the simplicity of his argument Snyder assumes that in all cases aggression will result in a net cost to the defender - even if he successfully defends. The role of defensive military forces is to minimise the net loss.



*DETERMINANTS OF SUCCESSFUL DETERRENCE*

Rational deterrence theory recognises three essential determinants of deterrence success: communication, capability and credibility.

*Communication*

Effective deterrence relies on the ability to communicate to the potential aggressor, in an unmistakable manner, what action is considered unacceptable, what response that action will incur (the deterrent threat), commitment to carry out the threat, and ability to carry out the threat. The communication of a threat does not necessarily have to be explicit to be effective. In the case of direct deterrence, where a state's homeland is challenged, implicit communication is achieved because there is little doubt about what action is unacceptable and the willingness to fight. Where the undesirable action to be deterred is not so obvious, explicit and unambiguous communication will probably be required to remove uncertainty from the aggressor. Means available include formal statements, force deployments, declaration of a formal security pact, declaration of a *casus belli* and forward positioning of troops as a 'trip-wire'.<sup>7</sup> A major consideration in communicating the deterrent threat, however, is to ensure that aggressive intent is not perceived.

While it may be desirable to leave a potential aggressor with some doubt regarding the deterrer's capability and restrict access to sensitive tactical information, lack of information may also reduce deterrence effectiveness. Means of communicating capability to carry out a threat include: military exercises, show of force, and involvement in peacetime activities so presence and abilities are observed.

*Capability*

Deterrence can only be effective if the threat on which it is based is technically capable of execution and sufficiently large to deter. While a deterrent threat can be made without the capability to back it up, such a bluff has obvious risks. The 'amount' of force required to provide a sufficiently large deterrent threat will depend on the adversary and the interest being threatened. The amount of force required also depends on the strategy adopted. As discussed previously, where a strategy of denial is chosen force measures tend to be relative, whereas for a strategy based on punishment, absolute measures are more important.

As well as considering the 'amount' of force available in terms of a count of ships, aircraft, soldiers, etc., the forces must be capable of effective operation for a threat to be technically credible. Factors such as logistics support, serviceability, quality of command and control systems, and ability to operate and resupply in the area of operations must also be taken into account.

Whereas the capability of nuclear forces is largely determined by warhead counts and yields, less tangible 'human factors' can prove decisive in any conventional conflict. These human factors include superior strategy, superior tactics, troop morale, training, technological surprise, and individual capabilities such as

<sup>7</sup> The failure of the US to deter the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was in large part a communication failure. 'An elementary lesson of deterrence had been lost. The Bush administration drew a line in the sand in firm, deep strokes, but not until the Iraqis had already crossed it.' See Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1995, p. 29.

especially gifted commanders. Because these factors are hard to quantify, difficult to prove except in combat, and almost impossible to communicate, they add to the inherent contestability of conventional deterrence.

### *Credibility*

Credibility refers to an aggressor's perception of the commitment of a nation or group of nations to use the force with which they are threatening. To be effective, the aggressor must be sure beyond all reasonable doubt that the deterrent threat will be carried out if aggression occurs. Credibility does not only refer to the initial response - a deterrer must also be prepared to stay the course once the costs begin to mount. While it has been argued that the key determinant of credibility is a nation's reputation for carrying out past threats, the perceived level of commitment to the interest being challenged is likely to be the most important factor.<sup>8</sup>

Commitment is political in nature and will be based on an assessment of the value of the interest at stake. When a challenge is directed against vital interests of the state, credibility is virtually assured. It is where commitment is questioned that challenges are most likely to occur. Even when a nation is sure of ultimate military victory, the costs in achieving the victory may be too great to justify any action. This is particularly important for developed nations where the likely cost in lives - of the enemy as well as one's own forces - has become a crucial consideration in any conflict. This sensitivity to casualties has led to a preference for the use of stand-off, precision weapons that minimise the likelihood of casualties to those employing them and reduce the level of collateral damage in the target area. Where such weapons cannot be employed and the risk of casualties is high, strong political will is required to commit forces and to convince a potential aggressor that the deterrer will carry out a threatened action. As a result, it may be difficult to convince potential aggressors that societies which are sensitive to casualties are not inherently weak or lacking in resolve.<sup>9</sup>

### *PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERRENCE THEORY*

Rational deterrence theory reduces the decision-making process in a deterrence situation to a rational cost benefit calculation by the aggressor and discounts the effect of psychological factors in the decision-making process.<sup>10</sup> Psychological deterrence theory was developed specifically to consider these psychological factors. Critics of rational deterrence theory argue that as well as the basic assumption of rationality, the theory makes a number of additional tacit assumptions:

- leaders are capable of relatively unbiased assessments of information and realistic linkage of actions to consequences,
- political systems permit the implementation of rational decisions as policy,

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<sup>8</sup> See Stein, 'Military Deception, Strategic Surprise, and Conventional Deterrence', p. 94.

<sup>9</sup> As Hooker and Waddell have observed: 'The very factors which contribute to the strength and stability of their political systems - democratic accountability, separated powers, a free press, and guaranteed rights to organize, petition, and express differing political points of view - can paralyze or hinder their decision to mobilize and deploy military forces.' See Richard D. Hooker, and Ricky L. Waddell, 'The Future of Conventional Deterrence', in *Deterrence in the Cold War Era*, Naval War College Review, Summer 1992, p. 82.

<sup>10</sup> See Alexander George and Richard Smoke, 'Deterrence and Foreign Policy', *World Politics*, 41, 2, January 1989, p. 176.

- leaders are well-informed, and comprehend the intentions, interests, commitments and values of their opponents,
- leaders focus on external factors as the final determinant of decisions, and
- leaders understand their military capabilities and the general consequences of their decisions.<sup>11</sup>

Supporters of psychological deterrence theory argue that if one or more of these conditions is absent, there is no justification for assuming that rational deterrence theory would hold.<sup>12</sup>

#### *THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BASIS OF DETERRENCE*

The psychological basis of deterrence - influencing the decision-making process through fear of the consequences - is not unique to military strategy, it is a basic feature of human interaction. While the psychological basis of deterrence is generally recognised, rational deterrence theory does not consider the motivation that leads an adversary to attack. Understanding the motivation of an aggressor, however, is useful in understanding when and how deterrence should be applied, when it is likely to be effective, and when it is likely to fail.

Two general models have been proposed to explain the motivation of aggression: the 'opportunity' model and the 'need' model. The opportunity model, on which rational deterrence theory is based, assumes that states are inherently expansionist and, given the *opportunity*, will act to maximise their own gains regardless of the cost to others. Critics of the opportunity model argue that it is not adequate to explain acts of aggression because policy-makers who start wars are more likely to be influenced by domestic pressures or external factors other than 'opportunity'. To explain the effects of these influences, a 'need' model, also referred to as the 'weakness hypothesis', has been developed which proposes that the aggressor's decision to initiate a confrontation is most likely to be motivated by a combination of offensive and defensive aims.<sup>13</sup> When aggressors are motivated by what they see as defensive aims - i.e. to avoid loss rather than to achieve gains - the incentive to use force may be greater and deterrent threats may be less effective.<sup>14</sup>

Supporters of rational deterrence theory, while acknowledging that 'need' or 'weakness' can be a motivation for aggression, argue that a challenge will still only occur when opportunity also exists. For example, in the long period of confrontation between Israel and Egypt, even though Nasser was pressured for a considerable period to act out of what could be seen as 'need', he refrained from doing so until 1967 when he (and independent, external analysts) believed that Egypt had a military advantage over Israel - i.e. he waited for an *opportunity* before he acted. More recently, in the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, aggression was a result of the 'explosive relationship between the deteriorating Iraqi economy and its outside military.'<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> For further discussion on 'assumptions' of the rational deterrence model see Huth, and Russett, 'Testing Deterrence Theory', p. 471 (n. 14) and Barnett, 'Deterrence Theory for the Coming Decade', p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> See Huth and Russett, 'Testing Deterrence Theory', p. 484.

<sup>14</sup> This is consistent with findings in experimental psychology where, at the individual level, individuals are more willing to accept risks in order to avoid losses than to achieve gains. See *Ibid.*, p.487, n.48.

<sup>15</sup> See Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 9.

Lebow and Stein argue that because aggressors can be motivated out of need as well as opportunity, deterrence will always be uncertain and risky and must therefore be supplemented by other strategies of conflict management.<sup>16</sup> These alternative strategies are generally grouped together under the rubric of *reassurance*.<sup>17</sup> Reassurance strategies are based on defenders communicating their benign intentions to their adversaries - the aim being to reduce the fear, misunderstanding and insecurity that can lead to unintended escalation to war.<sup>18</sup> Reassurance strategies include:

- *Reciprocity* - Reciprocity consists of returning like for like - adversaries are made aware that the defender's responses are *contingent* on their own action.
- *Irrevocable Commitment* - An irrevocable commitment is an irreversible, often dramatic, statement of benign intentions. It is similar to establishing credibility in deterrence, by taking actions that someone who is uncommitted would be unwilling to carry out.<sup>19</sup>
- *Self-restraint* - Self-restraint occurs when one adversary, although feeling justified in carrying out some form of action, refrains from doing so in the hope of avoiding escalation. Even if defenders cannot directly reduce political pressures on their opponent, they should at the least refrain from actions that would exacerbate those pressures. In practising self-restraint a major aim is not to restrict the aggressor's options for a peaceful solution. Care must be taken, however, that self-restraint is not interpreted as weakness or lack of commitment - for example, in the case of Britain's failure to deter Argentina in 1982.
- *Norms of Competition* - By developing informal, shared, 'norms of competition' adversaries can establish mutually acceptable boundaries of behaviour and reduce some of the uncertainty that can lead to unintended or miscalculated war. A concession that is readily interpreted as adherence to a shared norm is less likely to be interpreted as evidence of weakness which may lead to a challenge.
- *Limited Security Regimes* - The concept of a 'limited security regime' is an extension of international law that has been broadened to incorporate the range of shared norms, principles, rules, and procedures around which leaders' expectations converge. These principles may be formal or informal, tacit or explicit, but because some norms are shared, the behaviour of leaders is

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<sup>16</sup> See Richard N. Lebow and Janice G. Stein, 'Rational Deterrence Theory: I Think, therefore I deter', *World Politics*, 41, 2, January 1989, p. 40.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40-54.

<sup>18</sup> In this context reassurance applies to the relationship between the deterrer and the challenger. Reassurance can also apply to the relationship between allies, where a large power's military capability provides 'reassurance' to its protege. For example, extended deterrence provided by the US reassured Japan against fears of aggression. In this case reassurance also extended to Japan's neighbours who feared a possible military build-up by Japan in the absence of US security 'guarantees'.

<sup>19</sup> An example of an irrevocable commitment to provide reassurance was President Sadat's visit to Israel in 1977 to address the Knesset on Egypt's desire for peace.

constrained.<sup>20</sup> Cooperative security activities and trust- building measures play an important part in limited security regimes and, at a minimum, provide access to more reliable and less expensive information about each other's activities, which can reduce uncertainty, the incidence of miscalculation, and an inappropriate manipulation of the risk of war. Success does not require sacrifice by individual nations for the good of all - 'egoists', whose only aim is to further their own gains, can be readily accommodated. Such regimes, however, cannot accommodate 'competitors' who seek to maximise their own relative gains at the expense of an 'adversary'.<sup>21</sup>

Because aggression can be based on 'need', reassurance and deterrence strategies can be used together to prevent aggression. The appropriate mix of strategies, however, will depend on the nature of the adversarial relationship. Where there is a specific threat and immediate deterrence is required, scope for reassurance strategies will be limited and aimed at preventing unintended conflict. Where there is no specific threat (general deterrence) development of norms of competition will be possible. Where there are no specific adversaries (basic deterrence) limited security regimes can be developed and can be extended to include cooperative security activities.

#### *ATTACKER'S DECISION-MAKING PROCESS*

Two psychological factors which can affect the aggressor's decision-making process in any deterrence situation are the personality of the individual decision maker, and the effect of a crisis on that personality. While it can be argued that because of today's generally bureaucratized government, individual personality has little effect on government policy, 'subjective preferences' are more important when pressure is high and data is incomplete - which will certainly be the case in any immediate deterrence situation.<sup>22</sup> For example, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Washington policymakers were worried about Khrushchev's mental stability and his propensity to act impulsively to threats.<sup>23</sup>

Individual personality characteristics that can affect decision-making include:

- The decision-maker could be *grossly irrational* or, at least, *mentally disturbed*.<sup>24</sup> (The counterargument is that irrationality in national decision-making is more a myth than reality<sup>25</sup> and what is needed is better understanding of the factors contributing to the leaders' decision-making process and better leader profiles - i.e. better intelligence.<sup>26</sup>)

<sup>20</sup> Richard N. Lebow and Janice G. Stein, 'Beyond Deterrence', *Journal of Social Issues*, 43, 4, 1987, p. 61.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>22</sup> For further discussion, see G. Ben-Dor, 'Arab Rationality and Deterrence', in Klieman and Levite, *Deterrence in the Middle East*, p. 93.

<sup>23</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence*, p. 155.

<sup>24</sup> Research has shown that: 'at least seventy-five chiefs of state in the last four centuries led their countries, actually or symbolically, for a total of several centuries while suffering from severe mental disturbances.' See Jerome Frank, *Sanity and Survival, Psychological Aspects of War and Peace*, Random House, New York, 1967, p. 59, cited in *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>25</sup> David Jablonsky, *Strategic Rationality is not Enough*, Strategic Studies Institute, August 8, 1991, p. 74.

<sup>26</sup> As discussed previously, rather than classifying decision-makers simply as rational or

- Leaders vary in their *propensity to take risks*. Deterrence is more likely to be successful when threats are directed at leaders who are by personality ill-prepared to take risks. Some leaders, however, will have a marked propensity to take risks. For example, Hitler had an ample capacity for risk, one that was unnerving to his generals, who were far less impervious to threats from prospective opponents.<sup>27</sup>
- Leaders can have a *penchant for 'drama' or 'action'*. Going to war can attract international attention and provide a chance to play a role in history.
- Different people have *different ways of responding to threats*. While in some cases a threat may be useful in successfully modifying an opponent's behaviour, in other cases threats can increase the likelihood of attack. 'Disrespect' can back the attacker into a corner where his honour must be defended without regard to the apparent outcome. For such individuals it may be necessary to provide a graceful way out so that 'face' can be saved. This effect can also be one of cultural influences. For example, in the Arab world, loud, public deterrent threats are generally discounted as bluffs and a sign of weakness.<sup>28</sup> Where the potential aggressor's domestic survival is at stake, however, an acceptable way out may be difficult or impossible to find.
- Different leaders have *different levels of self-confidence*. Because deterrence aims to succeed by creating doubt in the mind of a potential aggressor, an attacker with a low sense of self-confidence would appear to be an ideal candidate for deterrence. This is probably true to a point but what Morgan referred to as the 'driving force of personal insecurity' must also be considered.<sup>29</sup> Because a leader's self-doubts and feelings of inferiority have been strongly repressed, they may be excessively sensitive to any appearance of defeat or error and have difficulty reversing a decision once their ego has been attached to it.<sup>30</sup>

The overall effect of the interaction of these personality factors is difficult to predict and is further complicated because the existence of a crisis situation can have a significant effect on 'normal' decision-making styles.

A 'crisis' is characterised by high threat, short time, surprise, the possibility of conflict and significant implications for stability.<sup>31</sup> While some, such as Thomas Milburn, argue that the effect of a crisis is to produce caricatures of normal behaviour<sup>32</sup> the alternative view is that the main effect of a crisis is a diminution of

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irrational they can be placed on a spectrum from more deterrable to less deterrable based on characteristics of subjective versus objective rationality.

<sup>27</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence*, p. 155.

<sup>28</sup> As Thomas G. Mahnken has observed: 'It is naive to expect cultures that place supreme value on martyrdom, or regimes that slaughter their own citizens to embrace Western precepts of deterrence and stability'. Mahnken quoted in Allan, *Extended Conventional Deterrence*, p. 219.

<sup>29</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence*, p. 160.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>31</sup> As defined by Charles Hermann in *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>32</sup> See Morgan, *Deterrence*, p. 158.

the effect of the personality of individual leaders who will tend to act according to the good prospects of their nation, thereby improving the prospects of successful deterrence.<sup>33</sup> One of the means by which deterrent threats may be enhanced in a crisis is through an aggressor's doubts about his ability to control the situation, in terms of his own forces as well as the adversary's actions.<sup>34</sup>

The effect of the interaction of these factors is complex and general rules are required to assist in the prediction of the types of threats that are most likely to be successful and the overall likelihood of deterrence success. While considerable effort has been put into the study of the capability, credibility, and (to a lesser extent) communication elements of deterrence, little effort has been put into developing the necessary general rules governing the effect of personality factors. The situation is further complicated because in most situations detailed personality information will not be available.

#### *DEFENDER'S DECISION-MAKING PROCESS*

Rational deterrence theory deals exclusively with the aggressor's decision-making process. The outcome of any deterrence situation, however, will also be affected by the deterrer's decision-making process which will be influenced by similar psychological factors. The first task for a deterrer is to recognise that a threat exists. In the Argentine invasion of the Falklands the British did not believe a credible threat existed until it was too late. This was partly due to the number of previous false alarms and the British leaders' resultant fear of 'crying wolf' which would have damaged their reputation and hence the credibility of their deterrent threats.

Once a defender recognises that a threat exists, a decision must be made on what action, if any, to take. In some cases it may be that a counterthreat is not considered justified based on the stake involved. As discussed under 'credibility', the perceived level of commitment will affect the credibility of any threat. In cases where sovereignty or national survival is at stake there is little doubt that a defender will respond. In all other cases the value of the interest being threatened must be evaluated against the expected cost of a response, even if that response is likely to be successful. If the 'interest' is considered worth defending and a threat is issued, the deterrer must act in such a way that the threat appears credible. It is only where the deterrer is *perceived to be committed* and the aggressor is *not committed* to attack that deterrence can be successful.

Finally, if a deterrent threat is issued but aggression still occurs - i.e. deterrence fails - the defender must choose what action to take. Three general responses are available: carry out the deterrent threat; carry out a different form of response; or even no response at all. It is the aggressor's assessment of the deterrer's response if deterrence fails that is key determinant of the success of deterrence.

#### *A COMPLEX, CYCLICAL STIMULUS-RESPONSE RELATIONSHIP*

A major simplification of rational deterrence theory is that it reduces a deterrence situation to a single decision by the aggressor. In any real deterrence situation, however, decision-making by both the aggressor and deterrer is involved and it occurs in a complex, cyclical, stimulus-response relationship. Put simply, state A's action is

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

stimulus to state B whose reaction is stimulus to state A and so on.<sup>35</sup> At each stage leaders will be required to assess their opponent's level of commitment. Case studies of crises show, however, that leaders are subject to serious misconceptions regarding the level of commitment of potential opponents.<sup>36</sup> This general problem is exacerbated by cultural differences where different value systems apply and, as Huntington has pointed out, the values that are most important in the West are least important worldwide.<sup>37</sup>

Even if aggression occurs, it is not necessarily an all-or-nothing action - the attacker's decisions are often contingent and uncertain. History has shown that deterrence often fails in stages.<sup>38</sup> The aggressor's decision to act will always be made on incomplete (and perhaps incorrect) information regarding the deterrer's commitment, capabilities, and intentions. The aggressor's plan of action will be revised based on responses to initial actions. For deterrence to be successful the deterrer must respond decisively to initial probes to convince the aggressor that it has the will and capability to back up its deterrent threat.<sup>39</sup> In all cases, however, the deterrer's response must be measured to avoid the possibly escalatory effect of such interaction - the so-called 'conflict spiral'.<sup>40</sup> While the cyclical stimulus-response relationship is present for all forms of deterrence, time compression is a major concern in the case of immediate deterrence.

#### *MOTIVATED MISPERCEPTIONS*

In a crisis situation decision-makers, under intense pressure, may be motivated to misperceive the situation.<sup>41</sup> In an effort to make a foreign adventure seem more desirable, leaders may employ denial, selective attention, or other psychological 'sleights of hand' to dismiss indications of an adversary's resolve.<sup>42</sup> They may therefore underestimate the likelihood of their actions leading to war and/or exaggerate their probability of winning. Motivated misperception is likely to occur when a leader is under significant political pressure - typically 'weakness' at home and/or abroad - which necessitates some form of action. In these cases deterrence can be challenged even if the balance of capabilities is unfavourable. In such cases the miscalculation of capabilities is not the cause of the decision to act but rather a consequence of that decision.<sup>43</sup>

#### *LEVEL AND STYLE OF DECISION-MAKING*

Decision-making in a deterrence situation can occur at a number of 'levels' and can be more complex than the single, rational, decision-maker that rational deterrence theory assumes. Three levels of decision-making have been proposed: the individual,

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<sup>35</sup> For further discussion on what is referred to as the 'mediated stimulus-response model' see Jervis, *Psychology and Deterrence*, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>37</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations?', *Foreign Affairs*, 72, 3, Summer 1993, pp. 40-1.

<sup>38</sup> See Huth, and Russett, 'Testing Deterrence Theory', p. 479.

<sup>39</sup> For further discussion see Gordon Craig and Alexander George, in *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> For further discussion on the 'conflict spiral' see Levinger, 'The Limits of Deterrence', p. 2.

<sup>41</sup> Klieman and Levite, *Deterrence in the Middle East*, p. 42.

<sup>42</sup> See Lebow and Stein quoted in E. Lieberman, 'The Rational Deterrence Theory Debate: Is the Dependent Variable Elusive?' *Security Studies*, 3, 3, Spring 1994, p. 387.

<sup>43</sup> See Lieberman, 'The Rational Deterrence Theory Debate', p. 404.



the group/organisation, and the national actor.<sup>44</sup> At the individual level, decision-makers are subject to a number of influences that lead to misperceptions which can affect their decision-making processes in a time of crisis. Based on empirical analysis of past crises, individuals:

- tend to fit incoming information into their existing theories and images;
- tend to be too wedded to the established view and too closed to new information;
- more easily assimilate into their established image of another actor information contradicting that image if the information is transmitted and considered bit by bit rather than if it comes all at once;
- are more likely to misunderstand when messages are sent from a different background of concerns and information than their own;
- tend to think that the message about a plan or a decision they spend a great deal of time making up will be clear to the receiver;
- generally see other states as more hostile than they are;
- tend to overestimate the degree to which others are acting in response to what they themselves do when the others behave in accordance with their desires; but when the behaviour of the other is undesired, it is usually seen as derived from internal forces;
- they tend to assume that when they have intentions that they do not try to conceal from others that others accurately perceive these intentions; and
- find it hard to believe that the other side can see them as a menace and it is often even harder for them to see that issues important to themselves are not important to others.<sup>45</sup>

While the general effect of these factors is misperception of an adversary's motives and intentions, the effect on the outcome of a deterrence situation is difficult to predict.

When a group or groups of individuals are involved in the decision-making process, account must be taken of not only the complexity of individual decision-making but also the interplay within and between groups. While some work has been done on the decision-making process at the group level for national security policy, little work has done on decisions involving deterrence.<sup>46</sup> Work that may have some relevance is analysis of the phenomenon referred to as 'groupthink' carried out by Irving Janis. One of the key features of groupthink, according to Janis, is that intragroup pressures can result in 'a deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing and moral judgement'.<sup>47</sup> The characteristics of groupthink can be summarised as:

- an illusion of invulnerability, shared by most or all the members, which creates excessive optimism and encourages taking extreme risks;
- collective efforts to rationalise in order to discount warnings which might lead members to reconsider their assumptions;
- an unquestioned belief in the group's inherent morality;

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<sup>44</sup> See Morgan, *Deterrence*, p. 63.

<sup>45</sup> See Robert Jervis, quoted in *Ibid.*, pp. 56-7.

<sup>46</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>47</sup> See Janis Irving in *Ibid.*, p. 63.

- stereotyped views of enemy leaders as too evil to warrant genuine attempts to negotiate, or as too weak and stupid to counter whatever risky attempts are made to defeat their purposes;
- direct pressure on any member who expresses strong arguments against any of the group's stereotypes, illusions, or commitments;
- self-censorship of deviations from the apparent group consensus, reflecting each member's inclination to minimise to himself the importance of his doubts and counterarguments; and
- a shared illusion of unanimity concerning judgements conforming to the majority view.<sup>48</sup>

The specific implications in a deterrence situation are that there is a greater propensity for risk-taking and for adhering to simplistic stereotypes of the opposing leadership groups. These influences have been proposed to help explain such fiascos as the abortive Bay of Pigs 1961 invasion.<sup>49</sup> When a bureaucracy rather than a small group is involved the main effect is that the information provided to decision-makers is filtered by different agencies and officials based on their interests and objectives. Different groups will also use information differently and differ in their advice as to what would be an appropriate response. Because individual sub-groups may try to use an external threat to their own advantage, it is necessary for the 'deterrer' to understand the group dynamics of the aggressor to determine what will deter and what will encourage aggression. As a specific sub-group, the military, with its own set of values, will have a significant influence on the decision-making process.<sup>50</sup>

Decision-making can also be considered at the level where the nation is operating as a whole - the 'national actor'.<sup>51</sup> While it is often asserted that in a crisis the impact of emotional factors is heightened or that other 'irrational' elements play a larger role, it has also been argued that a grave crisis allows, even forces, decision-makers to rise above bureaucratic and personal concerns to behave more like rational decision-makers - weighing the costs and benefits of any decision and taking the path of maximum expected utility.<sup>52</sup>

#### *OBSERVATIONS*

Two general observations can be made based on the preceding consideration of the two 'theories' of deterrence. Firstly, although referred to as a theory, psychological deterrence theory makes no specific predictions on the outcome of a deterrence situation but rather identifies important psychological factors that affect the decision-making process. Secondly, the factors identified do not invalidate rational deterrence theory but rather expand on its simplifying assumption of rationality.<sup>53</sup> The most

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> As Colin Gray has observed: 'from the point of view of institutional health, the armed forces are organizations in search of external enemies so as to overwhelm domestic enemies' in *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>53</sup> Paul Davis, for example, uses the term 'limited rationality' to take into account the considerations of psychological deterrence theory and carries out a detailed analysis of the implications for likely deterrence success - see Paul K. Davis, 'Improving Deterrence in the Post-Cold War Era: Some Theory and Implications for Defense Planning', in *New Challenges*

important of these factors are a regime or nation's key motivations, its perceptions and its values. These factors are considered as part of the study of 'strategic personality'<sup>54</sup> and 'strategic culture'.<sup>55</sup> By understanding these factors they can be taken into account, manipulated or targeted.<sup>56</sup> Rational deterrence theory's three determinants of successful deterrence - communication, capability, and credibility - must be seen, therefore, as elements that are necessary rather than sufficient for successful deterrence.

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*for Defense Planning: Rethinking How Much is Enough*, RAND, 1994, pp. 197-222. This is also consistent with the view expressed by Lebow and Stein's 'Beyond Deterrence'.

<sup>54</sup> For further discussion see Allan, 'Extended Conventional Deterrence', p. 220.

<sup>55</sup> The concept of 'strategic culture' was developed in the late 1970s in an attempt to take into account differences in thinking between Soviet and Western strategists. It was developed to understand how 'different countries and regions approach the key issues of war, peace and strategy from perspectives which are both quite distinctive and deeply rooted, reflecting their different geostrategic situations, resources, history, military experience and political beliefs'. See Desmond Ball, 'Strategic Culture in the Asia Pacific Region', *Security Studies*, 3, 1, Autumn 1993, p. 45.

<sup>56</sup> See Allan, 'Extended Conventional Deterrence', p. 220.



## EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS: THE HISTORICAL RECORD

Numerous attempts have been made to evaluate the success of deterrence based on empirical analysis of past ‘conflicts’. While such evaluations would appear to be a reasonably simple task, contradictory results have been obtained. Supporters and critics of the effectiveness of deterrence can both quote historical examples to support their claims.<sup>1</sup> For example, in 1984 Huth and Russett compiled a collection of 54 cases of immediate extended deterrence that occurred between 1900 and 1980.<sup>2</sup> They classified 31 of these cases as deterrence successes and 23 as deterrence failures. Lebow and Stein,<sup>3</sup> however, on reviewing these same 54 cases concluded that only nine were valid examples of immediate extended deterrence; of these nine only three were classified as deterrence successes; and seven were classified as deterrence failures (one compound case qualifying as both a success and as a failure).

Surprisingly, none of the three successes identified by Lebow and Stein was recognised as such by Huth and Russett. Further, one of the cases classified as an immediate extended deterrence failure by Huth and Russett was classified by Lebow and Stein as a success but with the roles of attacker and defender reversed!<sup>4</sup>

Major methodological problems have been identified in Lebow and Stein’s analysis which suggest the success of deterrence as a strategy was not properly tested.<sup>5</sup> The conflicting results and questions about assessment methodologies are due to the inherent difficulty in developing an appropriate research design to measure the success of deterrence - this is because it requires proving why an event did *not* occur.<sup>6</sup>

### COMPLEXITY OF RESEARCH DESIGN

Specific factors which complicate developing a research design to test the success of deterrence include: identifying appropriate cases to include; identifying appropriate

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- <sup>1</sup> See Richard Betts, ‘Conventional Deterrence: Predictive Uncertainty and Policy Confidence’, *World Politics*, 37, 2, January 1985, p. 155.
  - <sup>2</sup> Paul Huth and Bruce Russett, ‘What Makes Deterrence Work? Cases From 1900-1980’, *World Politics*, 36, No. 4, July 1984. In their examination they restricted the cases in the following ways: they did not include cases of positive inducement; only considered military deterrence of a military threat; and only considered extended deterrence.
  - <sup>3</sup> Richard N. Lebow and Janice G. Stein, ‘Deterrence: The Elusive Dependent Variable’, *World Politics*, 42, 3, April 1990, p. 340.
  - <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 361.
  - <sup>5</sup> See C.H. Achen and D. Snidal, ‘Rational Deterrence Theory and Comparative Case Studies’, *World Politics*, 41, 2, January 1989, p. 161; and Lieberman, ‘The Rational Deterrence Theory Debate’, p. 389.
  - <sup>6</sup> Robert P. Haffa, ‘The Future of Conventional Deterrence: Strategies and Forces to Underwrite a New World Order’, in Guertner, Haffa, and Quester, *Conventional Forces in the Future of Deterrence*, p. 10.

criteria for success; correctly identifying the challenger and defender; and selecting the appropriate time-span for individual cases.

While some analysts have proposed that appropriate case studies must involve unambiguous evidence of the planned use of force, evidence of planned use of force is already a partial deterrence failure; if general deterrence had been successful the potential aggressor would have been deterred from planning (and revealing) the use of force.<sup>7</sup> Where there is no hard evidence of planned use of force, however, it is difficult to prove that a real threat existed or would have existed if it were not for successful deterrence. The problem is essentially one of determining an aggressor's intentions. If aggression does not take place has deterrence been successful or was there no intention to act at all? This problem of what Patrick Morgan calls 'ambiguous inhibition'<sup>8</sup> is typified by analyses of the success of deterrence during the Cold War. While the Soviet Union may have attacked Western Europe but for NATO military strength, very possibly it may *not* have done so even in the absence of NATO - all that can be said is that NATO military deterrence did not fail.<sup>9</sup> The problem of ambiguous inhibition means that empirical analyses generally do not consider instances of general (or basic) deterrence because when they work, the effects remain largely invisible to outsiders and there is therefore no clear criterion for case selection. When only cases of immediate deterrence are studied, however, results are biased towards deterrence failure because once an explicit threat is made there is significantly more pressure on the aggressor not to back down.<sup>10</sup>

Closely associated with the problem of identifying valid cases for inclusion is identification of appropriate criteria for success. Generally evidence of contemplation of a specific hostile act and subsequent reversal of the decision is required before deterrence can be considered a success. As discussed above, broader criteria are required to allow inclusion of cases of general and basic deterrence.

A fundamental requirement for any analysis of the success of deterrence is a clear identification of challenger and defender. As the differences in results between Huth and Russett and Lebow and Stein reveal, in complex real-world situations such identification may be difficult. Where mutually exclusive designation of aggressor and deterrer is not possible, the effectiveness of deterrence is impossible to assess and deterrence theory provides no explanatory or predictive value.<sup>11</sup>

Assessment of success or failure of deterrence is also critically dependent on correctly identifying the period of time during which a deterrence situation is considered. Should a deterrence failure (or success) be declared if war comes in three years, but not in two? Is every day without war a success?<sup>12</sup> A deterrence relationship, which by its nature is temporal and dynamic, cannot be effectively tested by 'cross-sectional' research designs which focus on instantaneous 'snapshots' of deterrence episodes.<sup>13</sup> Rather, a long-term perspective is required. Because historical analyses tend to end their analysis at the time when war breaks out, they ignore the effect that

<sup>7</sup> See Lieberman, 'The Rational Deterrence Theory Debate', p. 388.

<sup>8</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence*, p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce Russett, 'Deterrence in Theory and Practice', *The Jerusalem Journal of International Relations*, 8, 2/3, June 1986, p. 216-17.

<sup>10</sup> While Lebow and Stein are generally critical of the success of deterrence they acknowledge the bias built into case studies. See Lebow and Stein, 'Beyond Deterrence', p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335.

<sup>12</sup> See George Downs, 'The Rational Deterrence Debate', *World Politics*, 41, 2, January 1989, p. 228.

<sup>13</sup> Lieberman, 'The Rational Deterrence Theory Debate', pp. 389-90.

conflict has on that long-term deterrence relationship or other deterrence relationships. In an attempt to analyse the success of deterrence on a long-term basis Lieberman studied the adversarial relationship between Israel and Egypt over the period 1948 to 1979.<sup>14</sup> While the relationship witnessed specific episodes of crises and war - which have been identified by Stein as instances of deterrence failure - Lieberman argues that because of the success of deterrence the relationship was transformed over time into stable deterrence, and eventually a peaceful relationship.

The long-term success of deterrence in this relationship was based on decisive responses to major challenges during the period which were necessary to establish Israel's reputation and the credibility of its threats. Even after the 1967 loss to Israel, Egypt kept challenging by adopting a limited aims strategy to obtain concessions from Israel. While Stein proposes that this is a clear case of deterrence failure, Lieberman considers it a form of success. He saw Egypt's actions as a response to Israel's successful deterrence at the conventional level. Where challenges did occur the challenger sought more limited goals and realised that the range of options available to achieve these goals had narrowed.<sup>15</sup>

When interpreting the results of empirical studies care must be taken that specific cases of deterrence failure are not equated with failure of deterrence theory. Deterrence theory predicts that deterrence strategies can fail - the appropriate question to ask is whether the theories correctly predict both successes and failures. Where deterrence theory fails to predict correctly the outcome, analysis of the reason for the failure should be used to improve the theory. By using this form of analysis, while the bias in overall success or failure of *deterrence* as a strategy will still exist, observations on the success of *deterrence theory* are valid.

#### *GENERAL OBSERVATIONS FROM EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS*

While empirical analyses have provided contradictory results, even deterrence's harshest critics agree that it can be successful and its strongest supporters agree that it can fail. Because deterrence can be successful there is general agreement that it still has a role to play in the management of international conflict. Because it can fail, however, it is essential to recognise its limitations and inherent uncertainty and be prepared to make greater use of other strategies of conflict management.

Additional general observations that can be made include:

- Potential challengers will make an assessment of the probability of military success before initiating action.
- The perceived balance of interests has a major effect on the success or failure of a deterrence situation - when the defender's resolve is considered to be high it is very likely that the aggressor will forgo military action.
- Leaders may abstain from military action if they see a plausible alternative - a direct relationship can be observed between a narrowing of the bargaining range and the use of force.
- Potential challengers will view a range of options to challenge deterrence - highly motivated aggressors will try to 'design around' an initially successful deterrence threat, even if this means adopting a limited aims strategy.

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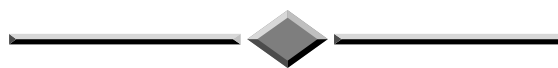
<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 414.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

- Attitudes of allies and suppliers of military equipment can have a significant effect on the outcome of a deterrence situation.
- Because aggression can be motivated by need, the success or failure of deterrence can be based on a calculation of comparative loss rather than potential gains.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See Stein, 'Military Deception, Strategic Surprise, and Conventional Deterrence', p. 94.



## CRITICISMS AND LIMITATIONS OF CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE

‘Deterrence’ has been criticised broadly and vigorously in terms of its conceptual basis, the predictive value of theory, and its success as a strategy. Specific limitations of conventional deterrence have also been identified. This chapter will address these criticisms and, where they exist, present counterarguments.

### 1. CRITICISMS OF THE CONCEPTUAL BASIS OF DETERRENCE

#### (i) *Derivative of Motivational Assumption*

A fundamental criticism of the concept of deterrence is that it is a derivative of its own implied motivational assumption. This motivational assumption is that states are inherently motivated to aggression and will do so if the opportunity arises. A consequence of this assumption is that when a potential adversary does not attack it must be because it has been successfully deterred.<sup>1</sup> There are two undesirable consequences of assuming that states are inherently aggressive. First, *where there is no aggressive intent* the result will be a lost opportunity for a mutually beneficial cooperative relationship. Second, *where there is aggressive intent*, an undesirable consequence of unjustified claims of successful deterrence is that it can lead to a serious underestimation of an adversary’s capability. When an adversary does not initiate a challenge and we ‘know’ it would if given the opportunity, it must have been deterred - the capabilities directed against it must therefore be sufficient to deter aggression. The overall result is that the analysis of the power relationship is derivative of the motivational assumption.<sup>2</sup>

While not negating the value of deterrence as a concept, this specific criticism identifies that an assessment of motivation is an essential element in determining an appropriate strategy and in assessing the effectiveness of that strategy in any adversarial or potentially adversarial relationship.

#### (ii) *Self-Defeating - Leading to Reduced Stability*

Deterrence has been criticised because it can be self-defeating, leading to reduced stability. This is because the threats on which deterrence is based can provoke as well as prevent aggression, particularly in a time of crisis. The events that led to World

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<sup>1</sup> An analogy is that because there is a law against murder and children generally do not kill their parents the law must be an effective deterrent. The ‘proven’ effectiveness of this form of deterrence is based on an incorrect motivational assumption, i.e. children are motivated to kill their parents.

<sup>2</sup> For further discussion see Richard Hermann, ‘Political Diagnosis and Strategic Perceptions: The Essential Connection’, *Journal of Social Sciences*, 4, 1987, p. 95.



War I are frequently cited as an example of such a situation.<sup>3</sup> A deterrent posture can contribute to a 'spiral of conflict' which can occur, for example, if the capacity for retaliation is so great that a pre-emptive strike capability is perceived, tempting the potential aggressor to attack before it is too late. Deterrence can also intensify conflict by encouraging defenders to develop an exaggerated concern for their reputation for honouring commitments and resisting challenges to the status quo, regardless of the level of interest involved.<sup>4</sup>

The interactive nature of threat and counterthreat can result in the classic 'security dilemma' or 'credibility/stability dilemma' where attempts by one state to become stronger lead to feelings of insecurity in the other.<sup>5</sup> The rational deterrence model fails to recognise that beyond a certain (but difficult to define) point increasing capability may reduce overall stability, thereby defeating the basic aim of deterrence.<sup>6</sup>

In an attempt to understand the credibility/stability dilemma Boserup<sup>7</sup> defined a condition of military stability between two opponents 'a' and 'b' as one where:

$$D(a) > O(b) \quad \text{and} \quad D(b) > O(a)$$

where: D(a) = defensive capacity of 'a'  
 D(b) = defensive capacity of 'b'  
 O(a) = offensive capacity of 'a'  
 O(b) = offensive capacity of 'b'

The parameters are not to be taken as numerical relationships of forces of 'a' and 'b' but rather as a statement about the expected outcomes of actual confrontations.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, the common, but incorrect assumption of forces required for stability is:

$$F(a) \approx F(b)$$

where: F(a) = Forces available to 'a'  
 F(b) = Forces available to 'b'

<sup>3</sup> See Klieman and Levite, 'Deterrence in the Middle East', p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> See Lebow and Stein, 'Beyond Deterrence', p. 37.

<sup>5</sup> See Barnett, 'Deterrence Theory for the Coming Decade', p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> 'The advocates of deterrence talk of necessary insurance. Their opponents can counter with the analogy of the man who is obsessed with the danger of a meteor strike: he steadily increases the thickness of his roof until his house collapses, himself and his family inside.' Huggins, 'Deterrence After the Cold War:', p. 69.

<sup>7</sup> A. Boserup, *The Strategy of Non-offensive Defence*, Working Paper No. 2, Peace Research Centre, ANU, 1986, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> The reason such an apparently asymmetric relationship can exist is because of what is called the 'defender's advantage', which some argue can result in a force ratio advantage of up to 6:1 in favour of the defender.

which is a condition of symmetry rather than stability. The important feature in determining an appropriate level of force to maintain stability, therefore, is the relative balance between offensive and defensive capabilities.

As well as the need for a ‘measured’ level of capabilities to maintain stability, ‘measured’ reactions to an adversary’s actions will also be required. While a decisive response by a deterrer will be required to reinforce credibility, overreaction can lead to uncontrolled escalation, particularly as the pace of events can outstrip the time necessary for careful diplomacy.<sup>9</sup> What is required are measured ‘firm but fair’ responses that evidence strength and flexibility but not indecisiveness or weakness.<sup>10</sup>

(iii) *Does not Provide a Long-Term Solution*

Deterrence has been criticised because it only treats the symptoms of a problem and does nothing to solve the underlying problem itself and therefore cannot provide a long-term solution to an adversarial relationship. In his consideration of the West’s deterrent strategy towards the Soviet Union, Michael MccGwire argued that the problem should have been considered from a higher level.<sup>11</sup> If Soviet expansion was seen as a threat, rather than seeking deterrence and containment, action should have been taken so that the Soviets no longer wanted to expand. He saw the need for positive objectives such as increasing trade interdependence, fostering consultation on matters of mutual interest, and even encouraging rising expectations by helping to improve the Soviet standard of living.

Supporters of rational deterrence theory argue that while deterrence may not remove the source of tension it can allow time for a more lasting solution to be put in place. As Joseph Nye has pointed out ‘buying time ... is a feasible policy objective’.<sup>12</sup> The period of time for which deterrence can provide stability depends on the nature of the adversarial relationship which determines the form of deterrence employed, as shown in Table 8:

<b>Form of Deterrence</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Form of Stability</b>	<b>Period of Stability</b>
Immediate	High levels of readiness - forces ‘eyeball-to-eyeball’	Crisis Stability	Days to Weeks
General	Lower levels of readiness	Strategic Stability	Years
Basic	Low levels of readiness - balance of power considerations	Strategic Stability	Long-term

**Table 8 - Forms of deterrence and period of stability**

As well as stabilising an adversarial relationship in the short-term, deterrence can convince an adversary that military means of achieving his objectives are not possible, thereby providing encouragement to pursue alternative means of conflict

<sup>9</sup> Klieman and Levite, *Deterrence in the Middle East*, p. 67.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.70.

<sup>11</sup> Michael MccGwire, ‘Deterrence: The Problem - Not the Solution’, *International Affairs*, 62, 1, Winter 1985/86, p. 59.

<sup>12</sup> See Joseph S. Nye in Wolf, *Of Carrots and Sticks or Air Power as a Nonproliferation Tool*, p. 3.

resolution. Successful deterrence, although not an end in itself, can be a means to allow political and diplomatic resolution of a problem.<sup>13</sup>

(iv) *Other Strategies May be As/More Effective*

Deterrence based on the threat of military force is not the only means available to provide stability in an adversarial relationship. Non-military threats, both political and economic, can be used subtly and even unconsciously to encourage continuing good behaviour.<sup>14</sup> For example, even in the absence of concrete security guarantees, the Greek presence in European political institutions has been seen as an asset in stabilising the conflict with Turkey because it increased the diplomatic and political costs associated with any aggression by Turkey.<sup>15</sup> Enmeshment strategies can be used to develop interdependencies such that maintaining stability is advantageous to all parties. For example, Henry Kissinger tried to enmesh the Soviet Union in a web of interdependence with the West so that the Soviets had something substantial to lose if they strayed too far from detente.<sup>16</sup> Rewards or positive inducements can also be provided for non-aggressive behaviour. For example, by not being aggressive towards the West and its interests the Soviets were given access to trade opportunities.

While the use of non-military means to provide stability are desirable, history has shown that this will not always be possible. Successful deterrence may be a prerequisite for putting more positive strategies in place. Stability is most likely to be achieved when a mixture of military and non-military means are used to 'convince' an adversary or potential adversary that military aggression will not be in its interests.

## II *CRITICISMS OF RATIONAL DETERRENCE THEORY*

(i) *Assumes Rationality of Decision-Makers*

The most basic criticism of rational deterrence theory is that its assumption of rationality is too simplistic and not always justified. It is this assumption of rationality that led to the development of psychological deterrence theory, which, as discussed in Chapter 3, identifies the importance of a complex mixture of motivational, cultural, organisational and personality factors in the decision-making process in any deterrence situation.

Supporters of rational deterrence theory argue that while the assumption of rationality on which the rational deterrence model is based may in some ways be too simplistic, it is both moderately accurate and of considerable use to decision-makers. As empirical analyses have shown, in most cases aggressors will at least consider the probability of military success before initiating action.<sup>17</sup> There is still no guarantee that the rational deterrence model will correctly predict the outcome of a specific situation, as evidenced by Egypt's attack on Israel 1969 where 'Israel's deterrent strategy failed not because it was badly designed but because Egyptian calculations were so flawed that they defeated deterrence'.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Metz, *Deterring Conflict Short of War* p. 47.

<sup>14</sup> See Russett, 'Deterrence in Theory and Practice', p. 219.

<sup>15</sup> See Klieman and Levite, *Deterrence in the Middle East*, p. 50.

<sup>16</sup> Russett, 'Deterrence in Theory and Practice', p. 219.

<sup>17</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence*, p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Lieberman, 'The Rational Deterrence Theory Debate', p. 409.

(ii) *It is a 'Weak' Theory*

Rational deterrence theory has been criticised because it is a 'weak' theory - it views the outcome of a deterrence situation as a function of expected 'costs' and 'benefits' which are not well-defined and could therefore include almost anything.<sup>19</sup> In any specific situation it will be possible to find some set of objectives that decision-makers can be construed as having 'optimised'. Critics argue, therefore, that there is insufficient justification to rate the decision-making process as a 'cost-benefit calculus'.<sup>20</sup> To convert the weak theory into a strong theory would require the inclusion of specific forms of costs and benefits, measures of propensity to accept risk, and measures of uncertainty associated with probabilities of winning/losing.<sup>21</sup> The key questions for developing a useful model of deterrence, then, are how many such complicating factors need to be added to the weak model and how they are to be determined. General observations from empirical analyses go some way towards answering these questions but the uniqueness of individual circumstances will probably defeat attempts to develop a 'strong' theory.

(iii) *Fails to Consider the Cost of Inaction*

Rational deterrence theory concentrates on an assessment of the attacker's 'expected utility' of going to war. An adversary's assessment of the status quo, however, will be equally important in determining the success of a deterrent threat.<sup>22</sup> Rational deterrence theory also tends to look at the current situation rather than what will happen if the aggressor refrains from initiating military action - referred to as the cost of inaction. Where the cost of inaction is high, i.e. the future looks unfavourable, challenges to deterrence are more likely to occur. If the aggressor's assessment of the long-term status quo represents an intolerable condition, it may choose to go to war regardless of the current balance of power.<sup>23</sup> For example, after its defeat in 1967, Egypt had little confidence in its economy and was being pressured by other Arab nations to take action against Israel if it was to retain its hold as leader of the Arab world. In this case, the cost of inaction was seen as high and war with Israel was, on balance, better than inaction.<sup>24</sup> (Evaluation of the aggressor's cost of inaction is comparable with an assessment of motivation - when the cost of inaction is high, there is a strong 'need' to challenge the status quo.)

While in the case of nuclear deterrence it is generally agreed that the results of nuclear war would be so devastating that almost any form of peace would be better, in the case of conventional deterrence the potential costs of any conflict are considerably less and the outcome is far more contestable. Acceptance of an undesirable status quo is therefore less certain.

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<sup>19</sup> Downs, 'The Rational Deterrence Debate', p. 226.

<sup>20</sup> See Baruch Fischhoff, 'Do We Want a Better Theory of Deterrence', *Journal of Social Issues*, 43, 4, 1987, p. 75.

<sup>21</sup> Downs, 'The Rational Deterrence Debate', p. 226.

<sup>22</sup> For further discussion see Allan, 'Extended Conventional Deterrence', p. 219.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Stein, 'Military Deception, Strategic Surprise, and Conventional Deterrence', p. 117.

(iv) *Recognises Only Two Options: 'Attack' or 'Not Attack'*

The rational deterrence model has been criticised for recognising only two options for the potential aggressor - attack or not attack - and is therefore too simplistic and inadequate for predictive purposes.<sup>25</sup> Realistically, a potential aggressor will have a number of options and will choose the mode of action that will maximise his gains while minimising an undesirable response from the defender. First, the level at which a challenge occurs is one option. This relates to the concept of total deterrence discussed previously where, for stability to be achieved, deterrence must be effective at all levels. Second, aggressors can also adopt limited aims strategies that seek to avoid a response from the deterrer while achieving gains incrementally.

Third, even if aggression occurs, it will not necessarily be a full-scale assault. Review of case studies shows a preference for the attacker to test the resolve of the defender in a limited, reversible, largely incrementalist fashion.<sup>26</sup> Specific strategies adopted include limited probes and controlled pressure.<sup>27</sup> Limited probes are strategies where the initiator employs a limited and relatively riskless challenge to test what is considered to be an ambiguous commitment.<sup>28</sup> For example, in China's shelling of Quemoy in 1958 the Chinese were attempting to test the strength of the American commitment to Taiwan. To ensure deterrence is effective a demonstration of commitment will be required. Further, committed defenders must respond in a way that would be too costly for irresolute actors to mimic.<sup>29</sup> The action must be decisive so that the aggressor is convinced of the deterrer's commitment but not so disproportionate that it would lead to undesirable escalation and loss of allied and international support.<sup>30</sup> Controlled pressure strategies involve the use of non-military tactics that are not easily countered without a military response. The aim of such a strategy is to erode a commitment while avoiding a frontal attack. Soviet pressure on Berlin in 1958 and in 1961 are examples. The general implication of the use of such strategies is that successful deterrence of military challenges may lead to non-military challenges that further the aggressor's aims.

Not all initiation of conflict has been through the indirect routes of limited probes and controlled pressure. 'Fait accompli' strategies have also been adopted where the challenger mounts a sudden, large-scale effort. Examples include the North Korean attack on South Korea in June 1950 and the Chinese invasion of Tachens in 1955.<sup>31</sup> The fait accompli, while perhaps achieving tactical surprise, also aims to achieve a result before the defender can decide what his own action should be. This

<sup>25</sup> See George and Smoke, 'Deterrence and Foreign Policy', p. 173.

<sup>26</sup> Examples include Russian pressures against Berlin and Chinese efforts against the offshore islands. Even the Chinese entry into the Korean War, ultimately in the form of a massive attack on UN forces, was initially undertaken via probes, limited engagements, and serious attempts by Peking to signal its intentions. See Morgan, *Deterrence*, p. 143.

<sup>27</sup> George and Smoke, 'Deterrence and Foreign Policy', p. 173.

<sup>28</sup> Achen and Snidal, 'Rational Deterrence Theory and Comparative Case Studies', p. 156.

<sup>29</sup> Lieberman, 'The Rational Deterrence Theory Debate', p. 415.

<sup>30</sup> It is interesting to note that the use of limited probes can be compared with the French attitude to conventional deterrence, albeit used in the opposite sense - i.e. testing the aggressor's intentions. As Yost has commented: 'France's conventional forces have an extremely limited deterrent function; the task of these forces is to test the enemy's intention and to gauge the nature of the threat.' See David Yost, in Marais, *Deterrence and Deterrence Interaction*, p. 30.

<sup>31</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence*, p. 144.

was the strategy adopted by Saddam Hussein in his invasion of Kuwait where he believed the West would not have the political will to reverse his aggression.<sup>32</sup> Although Morgan argues that 'such situations are hardly failures of deterrence [because] no true primary deterrence situation existed',<sup>33</sup> it would be more correct to identify this as a failure of *general deterrence*. General deterrence did not prevent a specific threat from developing and there was no recognition by the deterrer that the specific threat existed.

(v) *Relies on Information That is Difficult or Impossible to Obtain*

Rational deterrence theory relies on knowledge of an adversary's capabilities, valuation of the interest being challenged, level of commitment, propensity to take risks, and likely action. Because this information must come from a combination of intelligence sources and qualitative assessments, the necessary information may be missing or unreliable.<sup>34</sup> This is particularly true for conventional deterrence where 'human factors' are critical to the outcome of conflict but inherently difficult to evaluate and communicate.<sup>35</sup> In some cases the necessary information may not even exist prior to aggression occurring - uncertainty about a defender's commitment may be present for both the defender and the attacker.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, determining the appropriate level of deterrent threat will be difficult for the deterrer because prior to a crisis aggressors themselves may not know how much of a threat it would take to deter them.<sup>37</sup>

Supporters of rational deterrence theory, while acknowledging the difficulty in obtaining the necessary information, argue that the assessments required are part of the uncertainty and risk involved in any real-world decision-making process - lack of information does not invalidate the theory. Critics respond, however, that any theory that relies on information that cannot be obtained is of limited value.

(vi) *Can Fail Because of Ethnocentrism/Mirroring*

Rational deterrence theory has been criticised because of its ethnocentric assumption of a common (Western) understanding of deterrence and does not explicitly acknowledge the existence of different value systems and different, but rational, responses to deterrence situations.<sup>38</sup> Differences in geo-strategic situations, resources, history, military experience and political beliefs can profoundly influence how a country perceives, protects and promotes its interests and values with respect to the threat or use of force.<sup>39</sup> Asking the question 'given these threats how would I respond?' is therefore not sufficient - it mirrors one's own beliefs onto an adversary

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<sup>32</sup> R. Dannreuther, *The Gulf Conflict: A Political and Strategic Analysis*, Adelphi Paper 264, Winter 1991/92, p. 22.

<sup>33</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence*, p. 144.

<sup>34</sup> See Klieman and Levite, 'Deterrence in the Middle East', p. 82.

<sup>35</sup> While decision-making in such circumstances has been referred to as displaying 'limited rationality' this is incorrect - rationality refers to the process of decision-making, not the quality or completeness of information available.

<sup>36</sup> Allan, *Extended Conventional Deterrence*, p. 213.

<sup>37</sup> See comments by Colin Gray in Allan, *Extended Conventional Deterrence*, p. 219.

<sup>38</sup> See A. Goldstein, 'Robust and Affordable Security: Some Lessons from the Second Ranking Powers During the Cold War', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 15, 4, December 1992, p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> Ball, 'Strategy Culture in the Asia Pacific Region', p. 45.

who may think quite differently.<sup>40</sup> Cultural differences also complicate effective communication between aggressor and deterrer, increasing the opportunities for miscalculation and misjudgment. Cultural differences do not imply irrationality - what is required for rational deterrence theory to be used effectively is a study of an adversary's strategic culture to understand the decision-making process in terms of the basis of their value system, effective forms of threats, and how those threats can best be communicated.

(vii) *Ignores the Effect of Expected Changes in the Military Balance*

Rational deterrence theory concentrates on a 'snap-shot' of the balance of military capabilities. Expected changes in that balance, however, may be as or more important in determining the outcome of a deterrence situation.<sup>41</sup> The impact of expected changes, however, is not easy to predict. While it would appear to follow that an expected shift in the military balance in favour of the defender would make challenges less likely, even a rational decision-maker may choose to attack if the situation will be even less favourable in the future. This has been proposed as the explanation for the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor - an act of desperation because the military balance between the Japanese and the US would never again be as favourable.<sup>42</sup>

Supporters of rational deterrence theory argue that if, based on an assessment of the current situation, the theory predicts a clear cut 'attack' or 'not attack' outcome, the decision is probably unlikely to be affected by expected future changes. It is when the decision is marginal that expected changes will be the deciding factor. While it is not easy to predict which way it would go in such a case, the theory is at least a useful indicator of an unstable situation.

(viii) *Ignores the Political Basis of Conflict*

Critics of rational deterrence theory argue that it has limited usefulness because it concentrates on a simple calculation of relative military capabilities and ignores the political nature of international conflict. They argue that the assessment of relative capabilities that characterises rational deterrence theory has reduced war to a 'military-technical exercise virtually bereft of all political meaning'.<sup>43</sup> The effect of military capabilities - whether they deter, tempt, or provoke attack - is highly dependent on political factors, especially the attacker's motives and beliefs.<sup>44</sup> For example, in the case of Saddam Hussein invading Kuwait, as well as gaining access to additional oil resources, political aims included furthering his ambition of diminishing US and Western influence in the Middle East and consolidating Iraq's position as the regional hegemon. Stronger Western signals may have made his action against Kuwait even more imperative.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>40</sup> For further discussion see Morgan, *Deterrence*, p. 130.

<sup>41</sup> For further discussion see Klieman and Levite, *Deterrence in the Middle East*, p. 44.

<sup>42</sup> Lebow and Stein, 'Beyond Deterrence', p. 13.

<sup>43</sup> See Colin Gray, 'Arms Control Does Not Control Arms', *Orbis*, Summer 1993, p. 340.

<sup>44</sup> For further discussion see Betts, 'Conventional Deterrence', p. 154. See also Cohen's comment in Morgan, *Deterrence*, p. 130.

<sup>45</sup> See Nitze, 'A Conventional Approach', p. 22.

There are complex political considerations for both the nation choosing to challenge the status quo and the deterrer. For the aggressor, there are a number of subtle judgements that must be made concerning both the opponent's commitment and the best way to initiate a contest. There are many options besides a full-scale military operation. Each option will have different levels of risk and degree of control over the resulting confrontation. Political considerations must be taken into account by the defender as well. The formulation of commitment and, if deterrence fails, deciding what action to take are subject to the play of conflicting interests, judgements, and pressures.

Any deterrence situation is inherently complex and difficult to reduce to a simple cost-benefit calculation. The likely success of deterrence must be assessed in the context of political decision-making and include analysis of the patterns and processes that shape decision-making, of which threats and techniques for threatening are only a small part. This criticism, however, can be directed against any theory and the strategy to which it applies, as a strategy must always be subordinate to policy and can only produce meaningful solutions 'in the light of the political aim being pursued'.<sup>46</sup> The strategist can only recommend solutions that appear the most favourable and apply them in the means which maximises their effectiveness - it is up to the politician to choose the appropriate strategy based on broader considerations.

(ix) *Ignores the Influence of Domestic Politics*

One specific political consideration that the rational deterrence model is said to ignore is the influence of domestic political pressures and constraints. These include: weakness of the political system, political vulnerability of the leader, and intra-elite competition for power. Domestic pressures on both the aggressor and deterrer can affect the outcome of a deterrence situation. The effect of these influences, however, is difficult to predict. A challenger may be more likely to make an overt military challenge when he is having trouble at home and wants to distract attention and divert hostility from domestic troubles to foreign ones. Because the domestic threat may appear more critical, a challenge may be initiated even when the military balance is unfavourable and there is no reason to doubt adversarial resolve.<sup>47</sup> An aggressor may also choose actions short of war, aiming to achieve a diplomatic victory in the form of a defender's retreat from a commitment. War, however, could be the result. For example, in the case of the Argentinean invasion of the Falklands Islands, the aim was a quick diplomatic victory to bolster support for the regime at home - there was no desire for war with Great Britain.<sup>48</sup> While such 'diversionary action' may be chosen in some circumstances, it has the inherent problem that the costs of any such action may far outweigh the benefits. A quite different choice may therefore be made. A state in trouble at home may seek an accommodation with an adversary so that full attention and resources could be spent on resolving the internal problem. While this

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<sup>46</sup> Marais, *Deterrence and Deterrence Interaction*, p. 171.

<sup>47</sup> This is consistent with the 'need' model of motivation discussed under the psychological deterrence model. See also Lebow and Stein's comments in Lieberman, 'The Rational Deterrence Theory Debate', p. 386.

<sup>48</sup> As Lebow and Stein observed: 'In the aftermath of the 30 March labor demonstration the generals faced a stark choice: step down or do something dramatic to restore public confidence and their own legitimacy. The obvious choice in the latter regard was recovery of sovereignty over the Falklands.' See Richard N. Lebow, 'Miscalculation in the South Atlantic: The Origins of the Falklands War' in Jervis, *Psychology and Deterrence*, pp. 98-9.



approach may take much longer than a possibly ‘quick-fix’ foreign adventure, the potential for disaster - losing on both fronts - would be much less.

Where a defending nation is experiencing domestic problems it is more likely to be attacked than under more stable circumstances. This is readily explained by the rational deterrence model because internal instability will have a direct negative effect on the defending nation’s capability and therefore lessen the effectiveness of its deterrent threat.

While deterrers may not be able to remove the source of domestic pressure on a challenger, they must at least be aware that domestic pressures can lead an adversary to challenge in what would otherwise be a stable deterrence situation and should therefore refrain from actions that would be likely to exacerbate the pressures on their adversary.<sup>49</sup> Care must be taken, however, that sensitivity to an adversary’s problems is not interpreted as weakness or lack of resolve.<sup>50</sup>

(x) *Assumes a ‘Zero-Sum’ Game*

Rational deterrence theory has been criticised because it essentially assumes that any adversarial or potentially adversarial relationship is a ‘zero-sum game’. A zero-sum game exists in a situation where it is impossible for both players to be winners - one player’s gain must be the result of the other player’s loss. While this criticism is essentially true, it is because deterrence strategies are applied in situations where there have been obstacles to a more mutually beneficial arrangement.<sup>51</sup> As discussed previously, the aim of deterrence is to stabilise an adversarial relationship - it is only within a stable relationship that mutually beneficial, cooperative strategies can be implemented.

(xi) *Ignores the Use of Rewards*

Rational deterrence theory has been criticised because it does not include the use of rewards (positive inducements) to prevent aggression.<sup>52</sup> While some definitions of deterrence do include the use of rewards, the definition used in this paper specifically excludes them.<sup>53</sup> This is not because their utility is doubted, rather it is because they represent an alternative strategy, though not necessarily a mutually exclusive one.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>49</sup> See Lebow and Stein, ‘Beyond Deterrence’, p. 50.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>51</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence*, p. 11.

<sup>52</sup> A recent example of the use of positive inducements (although not to directly to prevent aggression) is the promised supply of light-water reactors to North Korea in exchange for North Korea agreeing to freeze and eventually dismantle its nuclear programme.

<sup>53</sup> For example, see George and Smoke, ‘Deterrence and Foreign Policy’, p. 182.

<sup>54</sup> Three ‘strategies’ are recognised in the psychology of behaviour modification: positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement and punishment:

- **Positive reinforcement or rewards.** If the desired behaviour is displayed (i.e. no aggression), desirable stimuli are provided (for example, provision of most favoured nation (MFN) status);
- **Negative reinforcement.** If the desired behaviour is not displayed (i.e. aggression occurs), desirable stimuli are removed (for example, trade access is limited); and
- **Punishment.** If the desired behaviour is not displayed (i.e. aggression occurs) undesirable stimuli are applied (for example, military attack).

While negative reinforcement is not strictly the same as punishment, both result in negative consequences of undesirable behaviour and are generally grouped together under the term

The use of both (threatened) punishment and (promised) reward can be powerful tools in influencing behaviour. They can also be used together to achieve a synergistic effect. The exclusively threat-based definition of deterrence concentrates on avoiding war by reducing the expected utility of going to war - i.e. making war look undesirable. In contrast, a reward-based strategy aims to avoid aggression by increasing the expected utility of not going to war - making the status quo look more attractive. Using threats and rewards together maximises what Wolf refers to as a 'carrots and sticks' approach.<sup>55</sup> Because deterrence can never remove the underlying cause of an adversarial relationship, additional strategies will be required to provide a long-term solution. The use of rewards is one means of reducing the reliance on deterrence.

(xii) *Ignores the Influence of Other Relationships*

Rational deterrence theory has been criticised because it does not consider the effect of relationships other than between the deterrer and defender. Other relationships, however, may have an effect on the likely success of a deterrent strategy. For example, if the challenger is faced with another dispute it is less likely to initiate a confrontation in the first dispute.<sup>56</sup> Alternatively, if the defender has other problems it is more likely that the original challenger will attack. Supporters of rational deterrence theory argue that these are factors that can be taken into account in assessing the likelihood of various actions and therefore do not need to be explicitly stated.

(xiii) *Does not Consider the Effect of Interaction of Factors*

As well as the individual 'complicating factors' discussed above, interactions between these factors will have a complex effect on the predictive accuracy of rational deterrence theory. This is particularly relevant for conventional deterrence where the costs of aggression are more 'contestable' than in the case of nuclear deterrence. Because so many factors can affect the outcome of any conventional deterrence situation there is a critical need for good situational analysis, including an understanding of: the nature and strength of the aggressor's motivation; the urgency of the need to challenge; the options available for doing so; the kind of utility calculations and assessment of options the potential challenger is likely to be making; and which of them it is likely to choose.<sup>57</sup>

Supporters argue that because any deterrence situation is so complex a simplifying theory is required. Rational deterrence theory, while providing only limited predictive value, is at least widely understandable and useful in the absence of any better alternative.

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'punishment' and they are communicated via a threat.

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, Wolf, *Of Carrots and Sticks*.

<sup>56</sup> Klieman and Levite, *Deterrence in the Middle East*, pp. 41-2.

<sup>57</sup> For further discussion see George and Smoke, 'Deterrence and Foreign Policy', p. 180.

### III *LIMITATIONS OF DETERRENCE STRATEGIES*

#### (i) *Deterrence Can Fail*

While empirical analyses provide conflicting assessments of the success of deterrence strategies, there is no question that conventional deterrence can, and does, fail. Because deterrence can fail policy-makers must select forces based on considerations of both their deterrence and defence value. Whereas deterrence aims to prevent conflict, defence aims to 'reduce one's own prospective costs and risks in the event that deterrence fails'.<sup>58</sup> Because maximising the enemy's cost expectancy may not always be consistent with minimising one's own, strategic policy and force structures required for deterrence may be quite different to those required for defence. The degree to which force structures differ depends on the form of deterrence employed, with forces structured for deterrence by punishment showing the greatest difference.<sup>59</sup>

When deterrence is based on punishment, defensive capability will generally be limited to that which is required to protect the deterrent forces against a pre-emptive attack. Additional defensive forces may be maintained to face aggression, not expecting to defeat attack but rather to test the aggressor's resolve.<sup>60</sup> While Morgan has argued that in the case of conventional deterrence 'the requirements for deterrence and for effectively fighting a war more or less coincide'<sup>61</sup> this is not necessarily the case.<sup>62</sup> Since the development of long-range aircraft, conventional weapons have provided the possibility of punishment without necessarily providing significant defensive capability. For example, a force based primarily on long-range aircraft armed with 'dumb' bombs targeted against an enemy's population centres may represent a credible threat of punishment, but it would have limited defence capability against a more balanced, technologically advanced force.

While it is possible to build a force with significant deterrent effect but with little or no defence capability, the reverse is not true - any defence capability will provide some deterrent effect. When deterrence is based on denial, therefore, the force structure requirement for deterrence and defence do closely align - this is reflected in the view that deterrence and defence are 'two sides of the same coin'.<sup>63</sup> A 'defensive' strategy does not mean that there is no offensive capability. The targets of offensive forces, however, would always be counterforce, aiming to defeat aggression directly - it is the nature of the targets that differentiates punishment and denial.

The essential difference between a strategy of defence and one of deterrence by denial is that in the case of defence likely success is based only on a consideration of capability. And, significantly, it is the defender's assessment that is paramount. For deterrence by denial considerations of communication and credibility must also be included and it is the aggressor's perception that is the key determinant. Force levels

<sup>58</sup> Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>59</sup> For this discussion the term 'punishment' will be used to include retaliation as the mode of operation is essentially the same.

<sup>60</sup> This is the basis of French conventional forces. Deterrence is based on the threat punishment with nuclear weapons but defensive conventional forces are maintained to test the commitment of any aggressor attacking France.

<sup>61</sup> Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*, p. 43.

<sup>62</sup> This was not strictly true before the nuclear age either- there was limited capability before that time, especially in terms of military aircraft as early as 1915. See chapter 3.

<sup>63</sup> Klieman and Levite, *Deterrence in the Middle East*, p. 124.

required, therefore, are not necessarily the same - the level of force required to defeat an attack<sup>64</sup> may not be the same as that which is required to convince an adversary that an attack is not worthwhile.<sup>65</sup> Force requirements for deterrence may be higher or lower than for defence, depending on the motivation for aggression.

Once a defender communicates his defensive capability and commitment to respond to aggression with the aim of preventing that aggression, the defensive strategy has become a strategy of deterrence by denial. Because nations will always communicate their willingness to defend, even if implicitly through the possession of credible military capability, it may be that a strategy of pure defence is more a myth than a reality.<sup>66</sup> The difference is in effect a temporal one, where 'deterrence is primarily a peacetime objective, while defense is a wartime value'.<sup>67</sup>

(ii) *The Theory is Unable to Define its Own Applicability*

Deterrence is not an appropriate security strategy in all situations. There is, however, nothing within the theory that defines where, when or how it should be applied. <sup>68</sup> This being the case, a meta-strategy is required to determine the appropriate strategy or mix of strategies to adopt. This will require good situational analysis based on effective intelligence that provides an understanding of the motives, perceptions, and power of other actors.<sup>69</sup>

(iii) *Deterrence By Itself is Unlikely to Be Effective*

Critics of strategies based solely on deterrence argue that such strategies are unlikely to be effective. To maximise deterrence's effectiveness, parallel strategies of reassurance and positive inducements are also required. The aim of the combination of stabilising mechanisms is to convince an adversary that: aggression would not be profitable (deterrence); the deterrer has no aggressive intentions (reassurance); and there are beneficial outcomes from cooperative activity (positive inducements). By using a mix of strategies the strengths of one can compensate for the weakness of another,<sup>70</sup> thereby reducing the likelihood of committing the two basic types of perceptual error in international relations: Type I errors (underestimating the hostility

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<sup>64</sup> The amount of force required to defeat an attack will depend on the specific strategy used and on both sides' willingness to accept casualties - military and civilian.

<sup>65</sup> As discussed earlier, when defining deterrence by denial, deterrence can be achieved by convincing an adversary that a quick battlefield success is unlikely, even certain victory is not worth the cost or that victory would not be achieved.

<sup>66</sup> Those who question the validity of the concept of deterrence by denial would not agree with this approach - arguing that the definition of deterrence has become so broad as to make it effectively meaningless. The inclusion of this form of deterrence, however, is consistent with the definition used on page 5. Further, to ignore this form of deterrence would mean ignoring a fundamental feature of international security relations and nations' reasons for maintaining military forces.

<sup>67</sup> Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*, p. 4.

<sup>68</sup> See George and Smoke, 'Deterrence and Foreign Policy', *World Politics*, Vol. XLI, No. 2, January 1989, p. 181.

<sup>69</sup> Richard Hermann, 'Political Diagnosis and Strategic Perceptions: The Essential Connection', *Journal of Social Sciences*, 4, 1987, p. 97.

<sup>70</sup> For further discussion see Robert Jervis, 'What Do We Want to Deter and How Do We Deter It?' in L.B. Ederington, and M.J. Mazarr, *Turning Point: The Gulf War and U.S. Military Strategy*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1994.

of an expansionist power); and Type II errors (overestimating the hostility of an accommodative power).<sup>71</sup> And while the three strategies have different modes of operation, they are all critically dependent for success on the same information - understanding the key perceptions, motivations and pressures on the potential adversary. Understanding these factors is required to determine the correct mix of strategies and the best means of employing each.

Empirical analysis has also shown that the chance of deterrence success is reduced when it is separated from complementary political and diplomatic efforts.<sup>72</sup> Political and diplomatic initiatives, however, can also be enhanced through the presence of strong military capabilities.

(iv) *A Strategy of Deterrence Implies Surrendering the Initiative*

While in one sense deterrence can be seen as more pro-active than defence, aiming to control the strategic environment rather than reacting to it, Thomas Schelling has argued that making deterrence the essence of national security strategy implies surrendering the initiative. This is because, in its purest form, deterrence sends the message 'the status quo is sacrosanct: attempt to alter it, and you will pay'.<sup>73</sup> The criticism is largely a political one, relating to how broadly the general strategy of deterrence is applied. If deterrence is applied selectively and the message is that 'the status quo cannot be altered by violence, but other means of change are acceptable' this criticism need not apply.<sup>74</sup>

IV *SPECIFIC CRITICISMS/LIMITATIONS OF CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE*

The preceding criticisms and limitations in most cases apply to both nuclear and conventional deterrence. Specific criticisms have also been raised in relation to conventional deterrence and generally relate to its inherent contestability.

(i) *Conventional Weapons Are Not Sufficiently Threatening*

Critics of the effectiveness of conventional deterrence argue that it will always be unreliable because it is based on weapons that are not sufficiently threatening. Nuclear deterrence achieves its effectiveness 'existentially' - the destructive power of the weapons cannot be ignored. In contrast, conventional weapons create only limited damage and the outcome of any conventional conflict will depend on a wide range of factors that will be difficult to predict. Conventional deterrence is based on threats that are inherently contestable and, therefore, failures are inevitable.

Supporters of conventional deterrence argue that while the destructive power of nuclear weapons is not contestable, threats based on them will only be credible where the actual survival of a nuclear state is being threatened. Conventional weapons, although representing a contestable threat, are far more useable and therefore more credible - they are not subject to the self-deterrent effect of nuclear weapons.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> See Phillip E. Tetlock, 'Testing Deterrence Theory: Some Conceptual and Methodological Issues', *Journal of Social Issues*, 43, 4, 1987, p. 90.

<sup>72</sup> See Klieman and Levite, *Deterrence in the Middle East*, p. 99.

<sup>73</sup> See Valenzuela, 'Non-Nuclear Deterrence in U.S. Strategic Policy', p. 50.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> The sensitivity of advanced nations to enemy casualties - both military and civilian - means

While failures of conventional deterrence are inevitable, they must be seen as part of a cyclical progression between peace and war - conflicts occurring because conventional deterrence is a perishable but renewable commodity. Periodic conflict (assuming deterrence was not based on bluff) provides the 'opportunity' to once again demonstrate the price of aggression, re-establish the credibility of the deterrent threat, and establish a new period of stability.<sup>76</sup> While this can be viewed as an admission of the inherent limited effectiveness of conventional deterrence, the opposing view is that it is evidence of deterrence success, preventing the alternative of perennial or overlapping intervals of conflict which would exist in its absence.<sup>77</sup>

How conflict is terminated will have a major effect on future deterrence success. Victory will need to be decisive and 'disproportionate' in terms of aggressors' expected gains to convince them (and others) that future challenges are not worthwhile.<sup>78</sup> While the coalition's Gulf War victory has been considered by some as decisive, the decision not to continue the war and destroy the Republican Guard (whether from strategic, political or moral reasons) will affect the way future aggressors will view the willingness of such coalitions to punish or destroy a hostile regime.

(ii) *Communicating the Threat Provides the Aggressor the Opportunity to Defeat it*

Successful deterrence requires communicating to the aggressor the nature of the deterrent threat. Provision of this information, however, will allow the aggressor to try to design around the effectiveness of the deterrent strategy. Conventional deterrence threats can be contested through exploiting time, new tactics and improved counter-weaponry. For example, in 1939 German forces were deterred from attacking France only until a strategy to defeat the Maginot Line defence could be developed.<sup>79</sup> To be effective, therefore, the deterrer must carefully balance the need to communicate the nature of the threat and the need preserve the integrity of that threat.

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that there is still some self-deterrent effect associated with even conventional weapons. This has led to significant interest in the development of non-lethal weapons, including those that immobilise personnel or disrupt/ destroy command and control or infrastructure targets (these weapons include for example, EMP bombs, and carbon fibre bombs). For a counterview on the issue of sensitivity to casualties see, for example, Mueller, J. 'Policy and Opinion in the Gulf War', University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 76.

<sup>76</sup> For further discussion on the cyclical nature of peace and war see Guertner, Haffa, and Quester, *Conventional Forces in the Future of Deterrence*, p. 3. See also Lieberman, 'The Rational Deterrence Theory Debate: Is the Dependent Variable Elusive?', p. 388.

<sup>77</sup> Guertner, Haffa, and Quester, *Conventional Forces in the Future of Deterrence*, p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> For further discussion see Allan, 'Extended Conventional Deterrence', p. 211.

<sup>79</sup> The German General Staff was initially unable to develop an operational plan to guarantee a decisive outcome and convinced Hitler to delay an assault on France 14 times. See Richard J. Harknett, 'The Logic of Conventional Deterrence and the End of the Cold War', *Security Studies*, 4, 1, Autumn 1994, p. 97.

*(iii) Difficult to Communicate the Capability of Conventional Forces*

The contestability of conventional deterrence means that adversaries will pay careful attention to the balance of capabilities. Advanced capabilities such as long-range aviation, stand-off precision weapons, strategic lift capability, and battlefield reconnaissance may be critical to the outcome of any future conflict, but communicating their effectiveness beforehand to a less technically advanced opponent may be difficult to achieve.<sup>80</sup> While the capability of high technology weapons was displayed in the Gulf War, limitations have also been displayed in Bosnia and Somalia. The effectiveness of advanced weapons will be dependent on the nature of the specific situation - another contributor to the overall contestability of conventional deterrence. Peace-time exercises will be useful in displaying conventional capabilities but cyclical episodes of deterrence failure and displays of capability through acts of compulsion may be an undesirable but necessary long-term feature of conventional deterrence.

*(iv) Conventional Deterrence Can be Countered*

While the Gulf War displayed the military effectiveness of advanced conventional weapons, strategies can be adopted to minimise their effectiveness in future conflicts, and thereby reduce the likely effectiveness of conventional deterrence. The following five strategies were identified by Allan when specifically considering US extended conventional deterrence of regional conflict, but the points raised can be applied more generally.<sup>81</sup>

- *Controlling the Threshold of Conflict.* Where there is no unambiguous threat to the deterrer's interests there will be difficulty in gaining political support for military action. To avoid appearing to threaten the deterrer's vital interests an aggressor may adopt a limited aims or 'incremental' strategy where likely gains are always set below the threshold of the deterrer's involvement - the aim being to achieve substantial goals after an extended period. Between each action there would be a period of sitting back and assessing the deterrer's response. Limited probes may also be used to determine the deterrer's reactions and involvement 'threshold'. The deterrer may also be dissuaded from intervention if the source of threat can be made to appear as internal dissent or insurgency.
- *Controlling the Spectrum of Conflict.* To be effective overall, deterrence must be effective at all levels of conflict. When deterrence is successful at the conventional level, highly motivated aggressors will attempt to challenge at other levels, possibly through acquisition of WMD or adoption of guerrilla or terrorist tactics. The inability of the coalition forces in the Gulf War to locate and destroy mobile Scud launchers showed the effectiveness of such weapons against even the most sophisticated conventional weapons. While the Gulf War showed that modern, high technology weapons can be decisive in operation against conventional forces, the forces and tactics that prevailed in

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<sup>80</sup> For further discussion see Allan, *Extended Conventional Deterrence*, p. 219.

<sup>81</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 210.

Desert Storm are not readily adapted to guerrilla warfare or terrorist actions.<sup>82</sup> Adversaries may also attempt to defeat high technology conventional weapons through the use of passive and low-technology solutions, including: mobility, hardening, operating in bad weather, camouflage and dispersal - all with the aim of defeating air supremacy and precision munitions. Additionally, special operations forces may be used to attack air bases and logistics facilities.

- *Strategies of Exclusion.* A range of strategies is available to attempt to exclude involvement in conflict - this is particularly relevant to extended, cooperative deterrence where there is no direct threat to the nation deciding whether or not to become involved:
  - ◆ Threats of terrorism or the threatened use of WMD against coalition partners can destroy the effectiveness of a coalition or prevent access to essential bases and facilities.
  - ◆ By sufficiently raising the expected costs in blood, national cohesion, or 'treasure' compared to the value of the interests threatened, an aggressor may deter intervention, even if victory were assured. Aversion to casualties of its own and allied forces and civilians on both sides of any conflict will be a major determinant in whether or not to become involved. Possible new forms of threats to increase costs include threats to disrupt national or international trade, financial transactions, and communications through attacks on vital trade, communications links and computer systems.
  - ◆ Where there is a risk of prolonged guerrilla warfare there will be a marked aversion for involvement.
  - ◆ The threat of environmental terrorism, first seen in the Gulf War, may be an effective means of excluding nations not directly affected by the interests at stake.<sup>83</sup>

(v) *Proliferation Of WMD And Advanced Delivery Systems Pose A Serious Threat To The Success Of Conventional Deterrence*

Acquisition of even a small number of such weapons and the means to deliver them can to a large extent negate the value of a conventional deterrence strategy. This is because:

- at present there is no defence against them;
- while the use of a small number of such weapons would not threaten the survival of the defending nation, when targeted against population centres the damage they could cause would be politically unacceptable;<sup>84</sup> and

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<sup>82</sup> For further discussion see *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>83</sup> While the release of oil into the Persian Gulf (to prevent an amphibious landing) and setting fire to oil fields (to hinder land and air forces) may have had tactical uses, these actions have been generally recognised as the first case of 'environmental terrorism'.



- unlike conventional forces which take considerable time and money to acquire and develop, WMD can be obtained quickly and relatively cheaply<sup>85</sup> - defeating warning time and destroying the inverse relationship between the likelihood and seriousness of threats.<sup>86</sup>

Because there is no defence against WMD and their use is unacceptable, action must be taken to prevent their proliferation. Action must be taken globally in supporting the NPT, Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR).<sup>87</sup> This will necessitate adopting a range of strategies, including counterproliferation action. Counterproliferation action will, however, require timely and detailed intelligence and considerable political will, even with UN Security Council endorsement.

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84 This is certainly the case if used against large population centres but as Russian experience in Afghanistan showed (where up to 2000 Scud missiles were used), when targeted against the widely dispersed Mujahideen forces (which did not rely on sophisticated infrastructure), such weapons had little effect.

85 For example, the program cost (which does not include recurrent training, personnel and maintenance costs) for an F/A-18A-D is in the order of \$50m. In contrast, ballistic missiles can be bought for as little as \$1m each and attract far less recurring costs and do not require a sophisticated training, maintenance or operating system. See Mackenzie and Stephens, *Bolt From the Blue*, p. 12.

86 For example, in 1988 the Saudis acquired 30 Chinese CSS-2 missiles but they were only detected by US reconnaissance systems after they arrived - obviously too late for any preventative action. See *Ibid.*, p. 6.

87 The MTCR was formed in 1987 by the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Italy, Japan, Germany and France. Member states agreed to ban the export of both ballistic missiles capable of carrying warheads of 500 kg or more over distances greater than 300 km, and missile related technology. By late-1993 the number of signatories had risen to 23. As with the NPT, however, it is seen by many non-members as discriminatory - perpetuating the division of the world into 'haves' and 'have-nots'.



## CONCLUSIONS

The preceding analysis shows that deterrence, while generally well-understood as a concept and widely applied in military and non-military contexts, is complex when considered in detail. The complexity is due to the interactive nature of any deterrence situation which involves a wide range of strategic, political and psychological factors. This is particularly so for conventional deterrence and has led to a wide range of criticisms regarding its conceptual basis, theoretical understanding and effectiveness in practice. While not negating the value of conventional deterrence, these criticisms highlight its inherent contestability. This contestability is supported by the results of empirical analyses which, while providing conflicting results on the success of conventional deterrence, show that it can be effective in practice. Because it can be effective and because peace-loving nations will always prefer to deter conflict than to fight, conventional deterrence will remain a fundamental feature of security strategies. But because conventional deterrence can fail its weaknesses as well as its strengths must be recognised.

Specific conclusions which can be drawn from the preceding analysis are as follows:

- **Conventional weapons can provide a credible deterrent threat**

Advanced conventional weapons allow decisive military action while limiting collateral damage and danger to one's own forces, a major determinant of advanced nations' involvement in any future conflict. The success of advanced conventional weapons in the Gulf War has led to high hopes for the future stabilising role of conventional deterrence.

- **Although credible, conventional deterrence is inherently contestable**

Factors which contribute to the inherent contestability of conventional deterrence include:

- the costs of conventional warfare are far more bearable than for nuclear warfare;
- the outcome of any conventional conflict is difficult to predict in advance. A major factor in this unpredictability are 'human factors' which are hard to quantify, difficult to communicate and difficult to prove except in combat; and
- the outcome of future conventional conflict will be dependent on the application of advanced weapons, the capability of which may be difficult to communicate to a less technically advanced adversary.

- **Advanced conventional weapons are not a panacea**

Although some see the Gulf War as a turning point in the nature of warfare, care should be taken in generalising from the results. Future crises will have their own unique characteristics and, as the conflict in Bosnia has shown, advanced conventional forces cannot take on all missions. Lessons have been learned from the limitations of advanced conventional weapons in Bosnia and the inability to locate, defeat and defend against Iraq's Scud missiles.

- **Deterrence is not applicable in all circumstances**

There is, however, nothing within deterrence theory to assist in determining where and when it should be used. These decisions must be based on political considerations that take into account a wide range of strategic issues.

- **Deterrence is only a strategy**

Deterrence is a means to an end, not an end in itself - it is a tool at the service of policy.

- **Deterrence can be self-defeating leading to reduced stability**

Because threats can provoke as well as restrain they must be applied carefully. Capability must not be so great that an adversary sees itself as threatened. A major determinant in assessing the appropriate level of forces to provide effective deterrence will be the relative balance between offensive and defensive capabilities.

- **Deterrence does not provide a long term solution**

At best deterrence is a stabilising mechanism - it cannot remove the source of tension in an adversarial relationship. It may, however, be essential in stabilising a situation such that diplomatic and political solutions can be found.

- **Rational deterrence theory, while based on a simplifying assumption of rationality, is still analytically useful**

While the assumption of rationality on which rational deterrence theory is based has been widely criticised as too simplistic, empirical analyses have shown that aggressors will at least make an assessment of the likely success of military action before acting.

- **Communication, capability and credibility are factors necessary but not sufficient for deterrence success**

Rational deterrence theory proposes that the success of a deterrent strategy is based on consideration of communication, capability and credibility. Analysis of past conflicts shows, however, that while these are necessary for effective deterrence they are not sufficient.

- **The balance of interests is a major determinant of the success of deterrence**

Empirical analysis has shown that the level of interest in the stake being challenged is a major determinant of deterrence success. It is where the level of interest, and hence commitment, is questioned (most likely in cases of extended deterrence) that credibility is most likely to be questioned.

- **Deterrence is psychological in nature and based on perceptions**

In considering the likely success of deterrence it must be recognised that:

- it is the adversary's *perception* of the capability and credibility of a deterrent threat that determines its effectiveness, and
- it is only where the aggressor is *not committed* to action and the deterrer is *perceived to be committed* to carrying out the threat that deterrence is possible.

- **Leaders may refrain from military action if a viable alternative option is available**

Empirical analysis has shown there is a direct relationship between a narrowing of the bargaining range and the use of force. When adopting a deterrence strategy, therefore, it may be necessary to provide a 'graceful' way out so that the aggressor does not lose face.

- **Conventional deterrence can be achieved through denial**

Because defence against conventional weapons is possible, conventional deterrence can be achieved by denial. Denial does not necessarily mean there is no offensive capability. The aim of the offensive elements, however, would be to directly defeat the aggressor's military capability rather than to raise the cost of aggression.

- **A strategy of pure defence may be more a myth than a reality**

Whereas a strategy of defence is based on a consideration of capability only, deterrence by denial also takes into account consideration of communication and credibility. Once a defender seeks to reduce the likelihood of an attack by communicating capability and willingness to use force to defend its interests, the strategy has essentially become one of deterrence by denial. Because defenders will always (even if implicitly) communicate their capability and intentions, a strategy of pure defence may be more a myth than a reality. The essential difference between deterrence by denial and defence is a temporal one, deterrence being a peacetime objective and defence a wartime value.

- **A strategy of deterrence by denial may not be sufficient to deter aggression**

Where the balance of forces is such that it may not be possible to convince a potential adversary that aggression would not succeed, the addition of an ability to punish can raise the cost of aggression and increase the likely effectiveness of deterrence.

- **Conventional deterrence can fail**

Because conventional deterrence is inherently contestable failures are inevitable. Failure, however, does not automatically lead to conflict. Depending on the nature of the adversarial relationship there may be progression from basic to general to immediate deterrence, with opportunities to reinforce the credibility of the deterrent threat at each stage. Even if conflict does occur it does not necessarily mean an all-out attack. Historically, nations have favoured limited probes to test a deterrer's resolve. Decisive action will be required to reinforce the credibility of the deterrent threat but the response must not be so 'disproportionate' that undesired escalation occurs and allied or international support is lost.

- **A mix of strategies will be required to maximise the likelihood of maintaining stability**

To maximise the effectiveness of conventional deterrence parallel strategies of reassurance and positive inducements must also be applied. The aim of the combination of stabilising mechanisms is to convince an adversary that:

- aggression would not be profitable (deterrence),
  - the deterrer has no aggressive intentions (reassurance), and
  - there are beneficial outcomes from cooperative activity (positive inducements).
- **The cost of inaction is a key determinant of the likely outcome of a deterrence situation**

Because aggression can be motivated by need as well as opportunity, an assessment of costs as well as gains can be a major determinant of deterrence success. While rational deterrence theory essentially assumes that aggressors are motivated by 'opportunity', 'motivation based on need' must also be considered. When aggressors are motivated based on need - either from internal or external pressures - action may be taken even in the presence of a credible military threat.

- **An ambiguous commitment will reduce the effectiveness of deterrence**

While deterrence is based on creating uncertainty in the mind of the aggressor, uncertainty regarding commitment is likely to reduce the effectiveness of deterrence. Although an ambiguous commitment may provide some deterrent effect, explicit statement of intentions will be required to maximise effectiveness.

- **An understanding of strategic culture and strategic personality is required**

Because different personalities and different cultures have different value systems and different ways of responding to threats, asking the question 'how would I respond in this situation?' is not adequate for predicting deterrence success. An understanding of strategic culture is required to allow these values to be understood, manipulated or targeted. This is equally important for strategies of deterrence, reassurance and positive inducements and for determining the appropriate mix of these strategies.

- **Highly motivated aggressors will view a range of options to challenge deterrence**

To be effective overall, deterrence must be effective at all levels of conflict. A strongly motivated aggressor will explore a range of options to challenge successful deterrence at the conventional level.

- **Specific instances of conflict do not necessarily mean a general failure of deterrence**

Redirection of acts of aggression to less serious ones can be seen as a sign of deterrence success rather than deterrence failure.

- **A long-term perspective is required in assessing the success of deterrence**

To assess the overall effectiveness of deterrence in an adversarial or potentially adversarial relationship a long-term perspective is required. Ironically, short-term

failures of deterrence and decisive acts of compellence may be required to establish the credibility of a deterrent threat and, hence, long-term stability.

- **Deterring conflict short of war is possible but is more likely to be inter-conflict in nature**

Conflict short of war does not represent a fundamental threat to the survival of the nation but a decisive response will be required. Deterrence is therefore most likely to take the form of inter-conflict deterrence - a decisive response in one case will be required to display capability and resolve to deter other instances. In this form deterrence is more a police-type action - keeping undesirable activity down to an 'acceptable' level. Where the aggressor is identifiable as a state actor, escalation of the conflict is possible to avoid inefficient use of one's own forces. Undesirable escalation that could lead to widening of the conflict and loss of allied or international support must be avoided.

- **Conventional deterrence can be countered**

A number of strategies can be adopted to counter successful deterrence at the conventional level. These strategies include:

- controlling the threshold of conflict - the aim being to reduce the level of conflict below the threshold of involvement,
- controlling of the spectrum of conflict - e.g. by acquisition of WMD or adopting guerrilla/terrorist tactics, and
- strategies of exclusion - relevant in the case of extended or cooperative deterrence where the costs of intervention are raised by threats of terrorism and raising the costs involved (particularly in terms of casualties) so nations are 'deterred' from participation.

These strategies for countering deterrence are most likely to be effective in the case of extended deterrence where commitment will be based on a political assessment of the interests at stake. Where a nation's own interests are at stake there will be little doubt that a deterrent threat will be carried out.

- **Deterrence can be applied in immediate, general and basic forms.**

While deterrence is generally considered in the form of immediate deterrence (where a specific threat exists), it can also be applied in the general (specific adversary, no specific threat) and basic forms (only potential adversaries). In cases of immediate deterrence the potential aggressors are generally highly committed to challenge because significant political costs are associated with backing down. The less committed to undesirable action a potential aggressor is, the more likely deterrence will be successful. Based on the nature of the relationship in which each would be relevant, a number of general observations can be made on the characteristics of strategies of basic, general and immediate deterrence. The observations are listed in Table 9.

	<b>Basic</b>	<b>General</b>	<b>Immediate</b>
<b>Aim</b>	Stable peace	Strategic stability	Crisis stability
<b>Readiness</b>	Low	Low alert	High alert
<b>Period of Operation</b>	Long Term (Indefinite)	Medium Term (Years)	Short Term (Days to Weeks)
<b>Force Structure</b>	Generic - based on: • nature of geo-strategic environment • range of capabilities that could credibly be brought to bear • time in which a credible threat could develop and the deterrer's ability to respond	Based on specific capabilities of adversary/s - warning time may be sufficient to match changes in adversaries capability/posture	Level developed based on general deterrence - no time to adjust force structure based on specific threat developing
<b>Force Level</b>	Sufficient to show willingness and capability to defend interests - able to be expanded within time of emergence of specific adversary Sufficiently low to avoid escalation and destabilisation	Capability must be adequate to provide credible threat to adversary Sufficiently low so as not to be seen as having offensive intent	Inherited from general deterrence situation
<b>Force Deployment</b>	Non-provocative	Non-provocative but directed towards adversary	Deployed to meet specific threat or ready to retaliate
<b>Posture</b>	Generally reassuring - threat will be largely implicit	Clear threats to adversary - may be implicit but more likely to be explicit	Explicit threats - mobilise forces, perhaps declare casus belli
<b>Use of Reassurance Strategies</b>	Important to ensure peaceful cooperation is the best outcome for all	Important to ensure capabilities are not seen as threatening	Important to stabilise a crisis - reduce fear of pre-emptive strike
<b>Transparency of Intentions</b>	Full transparency	High - explicit but general	High - explicit and specific - perhaps declare casus belli
<b>Transparency of Capability</b>	Full transparency	High	High at strategic level Low at tactical level
<b>Scope for Co-operation</b>	High - joint exercises, exchange personnel, reciprocal training	Low - cooperation to the extent that 'incidents' do not occur or get out of hand	Very low - limited to actions to avoid accidental initiation of conflict

**Table 9 - Characteristics of basic, general & immediate deterrence**

- **Proliferation of WMD and advanced delivery systems pose a serious threat to conventional deterrence**

The self-deterrent effect of WMD experienced by major powers is unlikely to be present for rogue states seeking to acquire WMD to obtain leverage over otherwise more powerful states. Unlike conventional forces which take considerable time and money to acquire and develop, they can be obtained relatively quickly and cheaply. They can therefore destroy the warning time and the inverse relationship between the likelihood and seriousness of threat created by successful conventional deterrence. Because the damage caused by the use of even limited numbers of WMD would be unacceptable, action must be taken to prevent their proliferation rather than their use.

- **International deterrence will be of increasing importance**

The success of coalition action in the Gulf War and increasing levels of international economic interdependence will lead to an increase in the importance of international deterrence. But the failure of international action in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia shows that international deterrence will not have credibility in all cases. This is because, as for all forms of deterrence, credibility is based on an assessment of the interests at stake - decisive action will only be taken when it is clearly in the interest of the major powers. A key factor in the future success of international deterrence will be the UN's willingness to support counterproliferation action where proliferation of WMD occurs.

*CONCLUDING REMARKS*

Because of the widespread aversion to weapons of mass destruction and because non-aggressive nations will always prefer to deter than to fight, conventional deterrence will remain an essential feature of future security policies. Although necessary, conventional deterrence is not sufficient to ensure security. Conventional deterrence is inherently contestable and therefore uncertain. As Hooker and Waddell have observed, 'it is a fragile thing, resting not only on tangible resources and demonstrated resolve but also on effective communication of capability and intent, filtered through a screen of domestic politics and international sensibilities'.<sup>1</sup>

The strengths and weaknesses of conventional deterrence must therefore be recognised. Adoption of parallel strategies of reassurance and cooperation as well as a range of diplomatic and political measures will be required to maximise the prospect for security. But as Geoffrey Biggs has observed, 'As ever, deterrence is the initial task of the defence forces ... and [provides] evidence of military might in support of diplomatic and political manoeuvres'.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richard D. Hooker and Ricky L. Waddell, *The Future of Conventional Deterrence*, US Naval War College Press, 1991, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey Biggs, *The Utility of Amphibious Forces in Conventional Deterrence*, RUSI Journal, April, 1993, p. 40.





## **PART 2**

# **THE ROLE OF CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE IN AUSTRALIAN SECURITY**



## DIRECT THREATS TO AUSTRALIAN SOVEREIGNTY

The security of Australia encompasses more than protecting its territory from armed attack. But ensuring the nation's physical integrity will always be the first duty of any government.<sup>1</sup> And while military power may be becoming less important as an element of national power, it remains 'one of the ways in which national power can be asserted and national self interest pursued.'<sup>2</sup>

Unilateral action by Australia is not the only means by which it can promote its security, but for at least the last twenty years there has been growing recognition in Australia that a self-reliant defence capability is required.<sup>3</sup> This need for self-reliance is explicitly identified in *Defending Australia 1994* (DA 94) which recognises that 'Australia's security is not so vital to other nations that we can assume others would commit substantial forces to our defence.'<sup>4</sup>

### *ATTITUDE TO DETERRENCE*

Australia is a nation with no expansionist aims, seeks peace with its neighbours and is generally satisfied with the status quo. And while the terms 'denial, layered defence, defence in depth ... deterrence'<sup>5</sup>, and more recently 'depth in defence'<sup>6</sup> have been used at various times to describe its security strategy, Australia's defence posture always has been 'in the broadest possible sense, a deterrent posture.'<sup>7</sup> It is somewhat surprising, then, that the Australian government has at times 'tied itself into semantic knots'<sup>8</sup> trying to maintain that deterrence is not the basis of its security policy. For example, in 1989, while the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade stated that protection of Australia's security, albeit in a purely military sense, meant 'having the

<sup>1</sup> See Gareth Evans, Ministerial Statement, *Australia's Regional Security*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, December 1989, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Defending Australia 1994*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, December 1994, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Even as early as 1959 the strategic basis paper proposed that 'where we may be called upon to defend New Guinea or the north western approaches by our independent efforts ... our forces should be designed primarily to act independently of our allies.' Kim Beazley, The Roy Milne Memorial Lecture: 'Thinking Defence: Key Concepts in Australian Defence Planning', in Kim Beazley, Minister for Defence, *Selected Speeches 1985-1989*, Directorate of Departmental Publications, Department of Defence, Canberra, February 1989, p. 161.

<sup>4</sup> *Defending Australia 1994*, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> John Baker, 'Technology, Strategy and the Defence of Australia', in *New Technology Implications for Regional and Australian Security*, Desmond Ball (ed), ANU, Canberra, 1991, p. 122.

<sup>6</sup> *Defending Australia 1994*, p. 28.

<sup>7</sup> Beazley, 'Thinking Defence', p. 167.

<sup>8</sup> See *A Strong Australia - Rebuilding Australia's Defence*, Defence Policy of the Federal Liberal Party/National Party Coalition, October 1992, p. 53.

capability to deter, and if necessary defeat, an aggressor'<sup>9</sup>, the Department of Defence consciously eschewed the word 'deterrence' from its strategic planning statement.<sup>10</sup>

This reluctance, at times, to explicitly declare a strategy of deterrence appears to be a result of three basic misunderstandings about the nature of deterrence. Firstly, deterrence is seen as inherently provocative and incompatible with more cooperative security strategies. This apparent 'tension' between deterrence and cooperation is particularly evident as Australia moves from what has been seen as a 'defence *against* Asia' to a 'defence *with* Asia' strategy.

Secondly, deterrence is seen as essentially offensive in nature and equated with strategies of punishment and retaliation - a consequence of seeing deterrence as synonymous with nuclear deterrence. The value of deterrence by denial has often been ignored or at least questioned; evident in the view that deterrence and defence values must be measured on two 'yardsticks.'

Thirdly, and perhaps most influentially, there is what can be seen as a philosophical argument regarding the differentiation between ends and means; best displayed by Paul Dibb's view that deterring aggression against Australia 'should be the outcome of our detailed defence planning and preparations, not the starting point.'<sup>11</sup> Treating deterrence as the outcome rather than the starting point of security planning, however, has several limitations:

- First, it is only valid when deterrence is based on denial. When deterrence is based on punishment or retaliation, deterrent forces may have little defensive value and therefore will have little influence on detailed planning and preparations for actual defence if deterrence fails and conflict occurs. And while Australia's recent 'defence' strategy has been largely based on denying its air and sea approaches to any potential aggressor, a credible retaliatory strike capability has been maintained to increase the likely success of deterrence.<sup>12</sup>
- Second, it concentrates exclusively on consideration of capability at the expense of the critical factors of communication and credibility. While in the case of the direct defence of Australian territory this is perhaps a moot point - effective communication and credibility of the deterrent threat being virtually assured - it is not the case when considering Australia's extended security interests.

<sup>9</sup> Evans, *Australia's Regional Security*, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Australia's Security Planning in the 1990s* (ASP 90), Defence Departmental Publications, Canberra, November 1989. The term deterrence was also absent from the Department of Defence's 1993 Strategic Review except in relation to the ANZUS alliance. See *Strategic Review 1993*, Defence Publications, Canberra, December 1993, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Dibb, *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities*, Report to the Minister for Defence, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, March 1986, p. 36. The attitude is shared by Ross Babbage who considers that: 'Deterrence is a highly desirable outcome for Australia's defence strategy but because of its conceptual weaknesses ... it is, on its own, an inappropriate basis for Australian defence strategy.' Ross Babbage, *A Coast Too Long*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990, p. 54.

<sup>12</sup> This is not to say that strike forces have no defensive value but rather their major aim is to have a direct political effect on an aggressor rather than indirectly through defeating the aggressor's offensive capability.

- Third, it ignores the fact that while ever-increasing levels of capability increase defence capacity, this does not necessarily lead to increased security. Beyond a certain point increases in capability can be self-defeating, leading to reactionary arms acquisitions and reduced stability.
- Next, while a defensive strategy is based on Australia's own assessment of necessary capability levels, a deterrence strategy must be based on a potential aggressor's perception of capability levels. The force level required to deter aggression may be less, equal to, or more than that required to actually defend against aggression - the level of capability required to deter being primarily dependent on the balance of interests involved. It is the balance of interests in any deterrence situation that will determine the costs the defender and aggressor are willing to pay to achieve their aims. An understanding of strategic culture and strategic personality is required to determine the best form of deterrent threat and how that threat can be best communicated to ensure deterrence success.
- Finally, a strategy that is based purely on 'defence' is entirely reactive whereas a strategy of deterrence is proactive; aiming to control the strategic environment. A purely reactive strategy ignores the inherently interactive nature of the security environment. Any action Australia takes in reaction to the perceived security environment alters that environment - the old adage 'everybody's strategy affects everybody else's' still holds good.

To a large extent the reluctance to acknowledge that deterrence is a central part of Australia's security strategy has been overcome in DA 94 which identifies that the role of the ADF is to 'deter or defeat any credible armed attack'.<sup>13</sup> Whereas DoA-87 talked about 'insurance'<sup>14</sup> against aggression, DA 94 recognises that the role of the ADF is to 'ensure'<sup>15</sup> security.

#### *AUSTRALIA'S STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT*

In choosing an appropriate deterrence strategy for Australia, the first point to note is that Australia's security environment is generally favourable. Australia has no adversaries, faces no obvious threats, and there are no territorial disputes or other conflicts of interest that are likely to lead to armed conflict.<sup>16</sup> Further, no regional

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<sup>13</sup> *Defending Australia 1994*, p. iii.

<sup>14</sup> 'The government's approach to defence is to seek to reinforce the positive aspects of Australia's strategic environment and to provide an appropriate measure of *insurance* against future uncertainty.' *The Defence of Australia 1987*, Department of Defence, AGPS, Canberra, 1987, p. 10, para 2.1(emphasis added).

<sup>15</sup> *Defending Australia 1994*, p. 5, para 1.10.

<sup>16</sup> While in informed circles there is general agreement that Australia faces no direct military threat, this attitude is not shared by 80% of voters who believed that Australia would face a threat to its security from one or more nations in about five years. (In contrast, only 47% of elected representatives made the same assessment. The question was: 'Thinking about 5 years from now, in your opinion will any of the following countries pose a threat to the security of Australia?')

There is still strong public support for current levels of defence spending, with 85% of voters believing that defence spending should be kept at the current level or higher. The question was: 'Do you think the government should spend more or less on defence?'. (In comparison,

countries see Australia as a threat.<sup>17</sup> Even when Australia acquired an additional 15 F-111 strike aircraft in 1993 there was little concern expressed in the region.

Like its neighbours, Australia seeks stability in the region to allow it to get on with the primary task of economic development. The recent rapid rate of economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region has been based on high levels of trade. Future growth will be dependent on increasing those levels of trade and will lead to increasing interdependence. Security and stability are essential for this to occur.<sup>18</sup>

Increasing interdependence is seen as a generally positive force for the future but uncertainty is the defining characteristic of Asia-Pacific security since the end of the Cold War. This uncertainty is the result of the rapid and continuing rate of change and the general complexity of the security situation. At a time when other parts of the world have experienced a 'peace-dividend', military spending in the Asia-Pacific region has generally increased. Uncertainty and fear of a 'power vacuum' following the removal of the Cold War's superpower overlay and the resultant drawdown of US forces in the region have been identified as the major reasons for increased arms spending. And while the increased spending is generally seen as arms modernisation rather than an arms race, the range and capability of weapons systems being acquired would increase the intensity and area of any potential conflict.

Uncertainty and instability, however, do not necessarily have only negative implications for the future. As Barnett has observed:

At present, the West is so unsure about the origins of aggression and the threats to national security that, in its frustration, it has identified "instability" as the threat. Even in the abstract, however, instability cannot be the threat. Instability describes a condition that may result in a threat to Western interests, it may represent an opportunity, or it may result in either. To those who continue to believe instability is the threat one might ask how instability might be deterred, since all agree that deterrence constitutes the preferred way to go.<sup>19</sup>

While the role of deterrence in dealing with instability can be questioned, regional nations are spending considerable amounts to develop credible, self reliant military capabilities in an attempt to prevent possibly adverse consequences of an unstable security environment. As DA 94 observes 'By sustaining forces which can effectively resist aggression, we help to prevent it.'<sup>20</sup>

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only 69% of elected representatives feel the same way.) Source: 1993 Australian Election Study survey, voter and candidate samples.

As the then Defence Minister Kim Beazley said in 1987, 'No government can afford to place itself too far at variance with what the electorate considers necessary for national security.' Beazley, 'Thinking Defence:', p. 159.

<sup>17</sup> 'No ASEAN state sees Australia as a military threat.' *Strategic Review 1993*, Defence Publications, Canberra, December 1993, p. 13, para 1.43.

<sup>18</sup> As Paul Dibb has observed: 'But as trade and economic interdependence increases, so too will the interest of all the powers in maintaining a regional order in which sea lines of communication are not threatened or disputed.' See Paul Dibb, 'Towards a New Balance of Power in Asia', *Adelphi Paper*, No. 295, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1995, p. 15.

<sup>19</sup> Roger Barnett, *Deterrence Theory for the Coming Decade*, paper presented at Global 93 Conference held at the US Naval War College, June 1993.

<sup>20</sup> *Defending Australia 1994*, p. 4.

*DETERRENCE IN THE ABSENCE OF THREATS OR ADVERSARIES*

Deterrence in the absence of specific threats or adversaries is, as defined previously, *basic deterrence*, where credible military forces are maintained to promote a favourable security environment. While use of the term *basic deterrence* is new, its aims have previously been identified in relation to Australian security: ‘Deterrence does not mean that a specific threat has been identified. Clearly no such threat exists at present. A credible defence policy will deter threats from ever arising.’<sup>21</sup>

Australia’s current favourable strategic environment cannot be isolated from the possession of a credible military capability. While it would be naive to suggest that the lack of threats is due solely to the deterrence provided by the ADF, it would be equally naive to suggest that the ADF has had no part to play in creating the favourable environment. The security environment is the result of a complex interplay of economic, diplomatic, political and military factors. Military capabilities still represent an important element of overall national power and influence how a nation conducts itself and how others react to it.

Australia’s security environment has not always been so favourable. There was a very real fear of invasion by the Japanese in 1942. The Japanese were effectively deterred from invading, not because invasion was inherently impossible, but because they estimated that 12 divisions would be required to complete the task - a force that they could not afford. More recently, during confrontation with Indonesia in the 1960’s, although Australia was not at risk of invasion, the RAAF’s F-111s were purchased explicitly to deter undesirable actions by Indonesia.<sup>22</sup>

As identified in Part 1, maintaining credible military forces in the absence of specific threats or adversaries creates two favourable outcomes:

- it generates warning time; and
- it creates an inverse relationship between the seriousness and likelihood of threats.

*WARNING TIME*

Warning time refers to the period of time it would take for a credible threat to Australia’s security to develop. Based on the force levels and type of forces available in the region it has been previously estimated that it would take something in the order of five to ten years for a regional nation to develop the capabilities to pose a serious threat.<sup>23</sup> Discussion of warning time, however, often neglects the fact that it is the force in being that *generates* warning time - warning time does not exist of itself.

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<sup>21</sup> *A Strong Australia - Rebuilding Australia’s Defence*, p. 54.

<sup>22</sup> A specific aim in acquiring the F-111 was to give Australia a ‘demonstrable capability to strike targets in Indonesia from Australia ... hopefully to succeed as a deterrent’. See Alan Stephens, *Power Plus Attitude*, AGPS, Canberra, 1992, p. 154.

<sup>23</sup> For example Paul Dibb assessed ‘... a putative enemy would need to acquire large-scale defensive military capabilities (including some 200 modern combat aircraft and about 50 to 60 surface warships with advanced ASW and air defence capabilities) to protect the amphibious force. It would take at least seven years for any regional country to acquire, learn to operate and maintain such large forces.’ See Dibb, *The Conceptual Basis of Australia’s Defence Planning*, p. 2.

Similarly, Ross Babbage concluded: ‘It would take, at a minimum, five to ten years to develop the complex mix of capabilities essential for such an undertaking and this would only be possible for most potential candidates were substantial external assistance provided by a major power.’ Babbage, *A Coast Too Long*., p. 20.



Even though the ‘constraints of regional military and economic capabilities and the effects of geography limit at this time what is practicable’<sup>24</sup>, the previously estimated five to ten year warning time would not exist in the absence of a credible ADF capability.

In the longer term, the force build-up required to pose a credible threat to Australia would be so large that it would be impossible to hide. And Australia still has significant capacity to expand its forces to match any such build up.<sup>25</sup> By increasing forces in response to a perceived threat developing, warning time can be re-established.

#### *LIKELIHOOD AND SERIOUSNESS OF THREATS*

Possession of credible military capabilities ensures that the most serious form of threat - a threat to the survival of the nation - is also the most unlikely. Strongly motivated aggressors, however, may seek other forms of challenge to achieve some form of political concession. The fact that other forms of threat may develop should not, however, be seen as a deterrence failure. Rather, it is the *success* of deterrence that limits aggressors’ options and diverts them to less serious forms of threats.

#### *DETERMINANTS OF A STRATEGY OF BASIC DETERRENCE FOR AUSTRALIA*

Implementation of a strategy of basic deterrence for Australia must be based on considerations of the enduring features of the strategic environment (including geography), the range and nature of capabilities that could credibly be brought to bear, and the time-scales in which that could occur. These determining factors have been explicitly identified in Australia’s previous strategic assessments.<sup>26</sup>

Key features of Australia’s strategic environment that determine an appropriate deterrent strategy include:

- as an island continent any challenge to Australia must come through its northern sea and air approaches,
- Australia is a large land area but has a small population,
- it has a small but highly skilled volunteer defence force with access to and ability to operate advanced military equipment, and
- while Australia’s neighbours do not represent a threat to its security the capabilities they possess represent the level of capabilities that could credibly be brought to bear.

Additional considerations which affect the strategy that Australia should adopt include:

<sup>24</sup> Dobb, *The Conceptual Basis of Australia’s Defence Planning*, Annex C, p. 105.

<sup>25</sup> ‘... Australia has a significant capacity to expand its forces. It would be well within Australia’s economic and military capacity to raise the threshold for major assault quite considerably - to the point where an aggressor could not contemplate such an attack without facing the near certainty of defeat.’ See *Strategic Review 1993*, para 5.26, p.43.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, *Australia’s Strategic Planning in the 1990’s*, p. 27, and Dobb, *The Conceptual Basis of Australia’s Defence Planning*, p. 68.

- Australia is not a great power with global interests or responsibilities to exercise and has limited ability to affect other than local events.
- As a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty,<sup>27</sup> the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the Biological Weapons Convention, Australia has forsworn the use of WMD; and
- By adopting the 1977 Additional Protocols to the Law of Armed Conflict, Australia has accepted specific constraints on the actions of its military forces. The only targets which can be attacked are those that have direct military relevance to the conflict. Deterrence based on punishment (countervalue targeting) is therefore not an option.<sup>28</sup>

#### *THE APPROPRIATE DETERRENCE STRATEGY*

Based on these considerations, and as DA 94 has concluded, the ability to deny Australia's air and sea approaches to any potential aggressor is the appropriate deterrence strategy to adopt. Recognition of this is not new, as Desmond Ball observed in 1983:

It would be the height of foolishness if Australia were to adopt a military posture which did not give priority to holding, and preferably destroying, an invading force on the high seas before it reached Australia. It follows, therefore, that the defence of Australia must in the first instance be the responsibility of maritime forces.<sup>29</sup>

While deterrence based on denial can be effective, the ability to raise the costs of aggression by taking the war to the enemy can increase the likely effectiveness of deterrence. Recent Australian defence policy has recognised 'the prospective advantages of retaliation, both as a means of deterring attack, or if that fails of deterring escalation'.<sup>30</sup>

#### *DETERRENCE BY DENIAL*

Deterrence by denial is based on convincing an adversary that aggression will fail or the cost in achieving the objective outweighs any potential gains. In selecting forces to achieve the denial task the aim is to generate a disproportionate response - any aggressor would need a proportionately larger force to defeat Australia's defensive capability. But because ADF forces will always be very limited against the size of their potential areas of operations, the priorities for the ADF must be:

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<sup>27</sup> An important reason for Australia choosing not to acquire nuclear weapons is because they would have only limited relevance for the range of threats Australia could face and they could lead to a net decrease in security by stimulating a regional arms race.

<sup>28</sup> This does not imply that it is the legal implications that prevent Australia from adopting a punishment strategy. Rather it is Australia's moral objection to such strategies that led it to adopt the additional protocols.

<sup>29</sup> Desmond Ball, 'Labor's Defence Policy: A National Effort for a National Defence', in John Reeves & Kelvin Thomson (eds), *Labor Essays 1983*, A Drummond Book, printed by Globe Press Pty Ltd, Melbourne, Australia, p. 119.

<sup>30</sup> Dibb, *The Conceptual Basis of Australia's Defence Planning*, p.24.

- wide area surveillance capability and intelligence to provide early detection of an attack,
- a capable anti-ship capability, and
- air defence to protect against incursion and to protect maritime assets.

To achieve this task Australia has, logically, selected a mix of advanced air and sea platforms providing a significant anti-ship capability. A large-scale assault against Australia would be a costly proposition for any aggressor.<sup>31</sup> Reliance on a relatively small number of expensive air/maritime platforms does, however, mean that these platforms themselves become a prime target. They must therefore be defended against attack if the deterrent is to be credible.

While an effective maritime defence strategy obviates the need for large-scale defensive land operations, there is still an essential role for land forces in protecting vital assets - particularly air and naval bases - from small-scale raids.<sup>32</sup> The key requirements for land forces would be effective surveillance and high levels of mobility.

#### *RETALIATORY CAPABILITY*

The threat of retaliation can be an effective form of deterrence but there would be strict limitations on the actions that could be taken: 'Broader political considerations might caution against a policy of retaliation and constraints would apply to strikes against land targets in an adversary's own territory.'<sup>33</sup>

Although the term 'retaliation' has been used officially in the past, the use of the term is not strictly correct. As discussed in Part 1 of this book, retaliation is a form of punishment based on countervalue targeting. Of direct relevance for Australia is that it is legally bound not to directly target or threaten the civilian population of a nation or indirectly threaten it through the use of indiscriminate methods.<sup>34</sup> Attacks must always be directed against 'selected military targets.'<sup>35</sup> Targets must therefore be counterforce in nature - directly affecting the aggressor's ability to fight. But even when acting in a counterforce role it is possible to choose targets such that the political value of attacks is maximised, increasing the cost of aggression. Targets must be selected carefully however so that the aggressor's resolve is not hardened and allied and international support is not lost.<sup>36</sup> These restrictions have been explicitly

<sup>31</sup> The forces consist of the fleet of submarines, surface ships, P-3C maritime patrol aircraft, F/A-18 fighter aircraft and F-111 strike aircraft.

<sup>32</sup> Baker, 'Technology, Strategy and the Defence of Australia', p. 119.

<sup>33</sup> Dibb, *The Conceptual Basis of Australia's Defence Planning*, p.24.

<sup>34</sup> Targets that can be attacked are those that make an effective contribution to military action, such as combatants, airfields, warships, military headquarters. Economic or infrastructure targets, such as railways, transport nodes, communication centres and industrial centres providing materiel for combat forces if they make effective contribution to the combat operation. See: Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, IRIC, Geneva, 1977, art 48 and 51(1) and 51(5). See also E.E. Casagrande, *Air Bombardment and the Law of Armed Conflict*, Air Power Studies Centre Paper No. 10, February 1993.

<sup>35</sup> Baker, 'Technology, Strategy and the Defence of Australia', p. 123.

<sup>36</sup> This has been recognised, for example, in Strategic Review 1993 which states: 'We would generally not want, or want to be seen by the international community, to escalate a conflict. But any potential adversary needs to be in no doubt that such forces would be used if necessary.' *Strategic Review 1993*, p. 65, Annex A, para 23.

recognised in Australian defence policy,<sup>37</sup> emphasising the need for high quality intelligence and precision attack capability.

Strike forces can also indirectly increase the efficacy of a denial strategy by forcing the adversary to divert resources (in the longer term) and forces (in the shorter term) to its own defence, thereby reducing an adversary's overall offensive capacity.

#### *THE LIKELY SUCCESS OF AUSTRALIA'S DETERRENT STRATEGY*

Assessment of the likely success of Australia's deterrence strategy can be based on considerations of communication, capability and credibility.

#### *Communication*

Where the sovereignty of Australian territory is at stake there is no question what action is unacceptable. Communication of the nature of the deterrent threat is achieved both implicitly, through the maintenance of credible military forces, and explicitly, in the form of statements such as Defence White Papers. The ability to carry out the threat is effectively communicated through exercises and displays.

#### *Capability*

The capability element of a deterrent threat is based on considerations of amount of force, technical credibility, and human factors. When deterrence is based on denial, capability is based on relative measures of force. While no regional nations are seen as a threat to Australia, capabilities they possess represent the type and level of force that could credibly be brought to bear. And although declared defence expenditure is not necessarily an accurate measure of military capability, it is at least a useful basis for comparison. As table 7.1 shows, while in relative terms Australia's level of capability is dropping, the ADF is still a large military force in regional terms. No nation in the region has the military capability to threaten the survival of Australia as a nation.

Where deterrence is based on punishment or 'retaliation', absolute measures of force determine effectiveness. Australia's strike capabilities (primarily the RAAF's F-111s) are unmatched in the region and provide a viable offensive capability to support deterrence. When technical credibility is considered, Australia has historically shown its ability to effectively operate its high technology military forces.

Other factors however, especially logistic support and readiness levels, also have a significant effect on capability. And although Australia has for some time pursued a policy of defence self-reliance, it is still highly dependent on the US for technology, resupply, and training assistance. There is implicit recognition of this dependence in DA 94 where self-reliance has essentially been redefined as being the ability to defend 'without depending on help from other countries' *combat forces*.<sup>38</sup> While it may be highly likely that the US would provide support in a threat to Australia's basic survival, such support cannot be guaranteed. The ability of Australia to defeat any attack, at least in the short term, therefore, may be dependent on its own

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<sup>37</sup> This has been recognised in Strategic Review 1993 which states: 'Strategic strike forces require capabilities which provide government with useable, realistic options consistent with the obligations of the laws of armed conflict.' See *Strategic Review 1993*, p. 65, Annex A, para 22.

<sup>38</sup> *Defending Australia 1994*, para 3.3. (emphasis added)

stockholding of weapons. This is particularly critical in the case of precision guided munitions (PGMs) such as the Harpoon anti-ship missile which provides the ‘teeth’ of the maritime denial strategy. But as one well placed commentator reported in 1988, stockholdings of PGMs are so low that they ‘would not last one day of intensive operations at the higher level’.<sup>39</sup>

	<b>1987</b> <b>US\$ billion (1)</b>	<b>1994</b> <b>US\$ billion (2)</b>
<b>Australia</b>	4.980	7.300
<b>Indonesia</b>	1.370	2.300(b)
<b>Malaysia</b>	0.937	2.800(eb)
<b>Philippines</b>	0.458	1.300(eb)
<b>Thailand</b>	1.660	3.500(eb)
<b>Singapore</b>	1.01	3.000(b)
<b>Brunei</b>		0.312(eb)
<b>Total ASEAN</b>	5.435	13.212
<b>Australia as a percentage of ASEAN total</b>	92%	55%

**Table 7.1 - Comparison of Australian and ASEAN Defence Spending 1987 and 1994**

Notes

(1) Source: Gareth Evans, Ministerial Statement, *Australia's Regional Security*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, December 1989, pp. 17/18.

(2) Source: The Military Balance 1994-1995

b Budget

eb Estimated budget

Another key element in the technical credibility of its deterrent threat is the existence of appropriate and well exercised doctrine, procedures and tactics. Although the ADF acknowledges the importance of effective joint operations in the defence of Australia, joint doctrine is still being developed and has yet to be put in place. Similarly, considerable effort still remains in developing an effective command and control organisation. A key determinant of the outcome of any conventional conflict is intangible human factors. Although difficult to quantify, by all measures the ADF is a highly competent defence force, well led, with high morale and a reputation for effective action. There is no doubt the ADF would fight effectively to defend the sovereignty of Australia.

### *Credibility*

Where the sovereignty of the nation is at stake there is little doubt that deterrent threats will be carried out. Unlike the case where deterrence is based on punishment, forces used for denial are directly applicable for defence if deterrence fails. Even Australia's ‘retaliatory’ strike capabilities are directly relevant in defence. There is no doubt that Australia would use all force at its disposal to defeat aggression.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> S.D. Evans, ‘Air Power in the Defence of Australia: The Strategic Context’, in Desmond Ball (ed), *Air Power: Global Developments and Australian Perspectives*, Pergamon-Brassey's Defence Publishers, Sydney, 1988, p. 122.

<sup>40</sup> It is also important to note that even Australia's ‘retaliatory’ strike capability is also directly applicable in direct defence.

*LIKELY SUCCESS*

Based on these considerations there is every reason to believe that Australia can provide an effective deterrent to a large scale conventional attack on its territory. This is not because such action is inherently impossible, but rather because the forces required and costs involved would be so high that invasion 'would rarely be worth the effort or cost'.<sup>41</sup> The one major threat to its security that Australia faced was in 1942, and then the Japanese Cabinet decided against it because it considered it would take 12 divisions and the entire lift capabilities of the Japanese fleet.<sup>42</sup>

As recently as 1989, recognition that 'Australia can ensure its own security' was seen as an 'historic development'.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps even more surprising is that the confidence of the strategic community is still not shared by the Australian public. A survey of 1200 people in 1992 showed that:

- two-thirds of respondents thought that Australia did not have adequate defence forces to defend its national interests, and
- almost two fifths considered that Australia would face a military threat over the following ten years from Indonesia, Japan or some other Asian country.<sup>44</sup>

While communication, capability and credibility are necessary factors for deterrence success they are not sufficient. It is generally the balance of interests at stake that determines the outcome of any deterrence situation. In the case of the direct defence of Australia it is difficult to envisage a situation in which another nation's level of interest would be such that it would be prepared to pay a price greater than Australia for possession of Australian territory.

*THE FUTURE*

Australia at present has a significant military advantage over its neighbours in both quantitative and qualitative measures. This situation is, however, deteriorating. While Australia's defence budget has recently fallen to less than 2 per cent of GDP - the lowest level since such records have been kept - the majority of its neighbours are maintaining strong growth in defence expenditure. As recently as 1988 Australia's defence budget equalled the sum of all ASEAN countries but by the end of 1993 it had dropped to 60 per cent of their total.<sup>45</sup> And as Asian Pacific economies continue to grow at rates exceeding that of Australia there is every reason to believe that Australia's relative force level will deteriorate.

It is not only in terms of quantity that Australia's military advantage is declining. For example, until recently, Australia enjoyed essentially a 'generation' advantage in terms of fighter aircraft. And while there may still be a technological edge in terms of ability to maintain and operate the systems, there is no reason to believe this edge will be maintained in the coming decades. But as DA 94 points out:

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<sup>41</sup> Baker, 'Technology, Strategy and the Defence of Australia', p. 114.

<sup>42</sup> See Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, *Threats to Australia's Security: Their Nature and Probability*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1981, p. 62.

<sup>43</sup> *Australia's Strategic Planning in the 1990s*, p. iv.

<sup>44</sup> See *The Australian*, 22 May 1992, p.2.

<sup>45</sup> Andrew Mack, *Australian Security in the 1990s*, Working Paper 1993/9, Department of International Relations, Australian National University, December 1993, p. 14.

As differences in military technology narrow, the relative effectiveness of our capabilities will depend increasingly on the human factor - better commanders, higher levels of skill, more individual initiative and more effective teamwork.

Overall, however, there is an inevitable shift in the regional balance against Australia.<sup>46</sup> This does not necessarily mean a deterioration of the security environment but it does mean that Australia will have less capability to affect that environment unilaterally. And, if a conflict does break out, the area and level of damage that could result would be high. Deterrence is still likely to be effective, however, as long as no regional nation develops a significant power projection capability in the form of aircraft carriers, long range bombers, or large scale amphibious forces. As ASP90 observed: 'So long as our capability development maintained our relative advantages to counter effectively any *power projection forces* within the region, then major direct assault from any regional country would continue to remain improbable'.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, p. 14.

<sup>47</sup> *Australia's Strategic Planning in the 1990's*, p. 24. (emphasis added)



**OTHER FORMS OF THREAT**

Chapter 7 concluded that Australia's military forces can successfully deter a large-scale, conventional military threat to Australia's territory. Such an attack, however, is not the only form of military threat Australia could face. History has shown that highly motivated aggressors, when faced with successful deterrence at one level, will seek other forms of challenge. To be successful overall, therefore, deterrence must be successful at all levels of possible conflict.

There are two broad military options for challenging successful deterrence at the conventional level: to go 'under' it by engaging in lower-levels of conflict or adopting terrorist/guerrilla tactics; and to go 'over' it by acquiring WMD and/or advanced delivery systems.

*LOWER LEVEL CONFLICT*

Australia's military forces effectively create the desired inverse relationship between likelihood and seriousness of threat; the most likely form of threat being conflict at the lower end of the conflict spectrum. As Desmond Ball has observed:

An adversary eschewing major military operations against Australia for whatever reason still has a wide range of options which are either non-military or in which military force is used only in an auxiliary role ... Indeed, the adoption of this sort of 'persuasive strategy' might actually be encouraged by the paralysis of conventional military force induced by a successful deterrent.<sup>1</sup>

This is also recognised in DA 94 which acknowledges that:

An adversary deterred from mounting larger attacks by our capacity to respond might nevertheless attempt to mount a series of lower level raids and other harassing actions.<sup>2</sup>

The credible range of contingencies at this lower end of the conflict spectrum could include: harassment, limited lodgements, attacks on offshore territories or facilities, and terrorist attacks, through to a more concentrated conflict, 'but well below the level of an attempt to lodge substantial forces in Australia.'<sup>3</sup> The aim in pursuing such strategies would necessarily be a limited one - seeking some form of political concession in a conflict of interests. And force does not have to be actually employed to achieve the desired effect. The threatened use of force in the form of

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<sup>1</sup> Joel Langtry & Desmond Ball, *Controlling Australia's Threat Environment A Methodology for Planning Australian Defence Force Development*, SDSC, ANU, 1979, p.33.

<sup>2</sup> *Defending Australia 1994*, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Dibb, *The Conceptual Basis of Australia's Defence*, p. 10.



coercion could be effective in achieving political aims contrary to Australia's interests.

Although successful basic deterrence at the conventional level generates warning time in the case of a large scale attack, capabilities to launch low-level military operations already exist in the region. And while an 'abrupt change in our political relations with a regional power'<sup>4</sup> would need to occur, such threats could develop with little or no warning. DA 94 has classified the range of such potential challenges as 'short warning conflict'. Because there would be insufficient time to change force structure to meet such threats, the force in being must be able to deal with them.

### *Force Structure Considerations*

In his review of the conceptual basis of Australian strategic planning, Paul Dibb identified the need to 'balance the shorter term demands of credible low-level contingencies ... with the requirement to maintain higher level skills and potent elements of strike and deterrence in our force structure as a basis for expansion against the possibilities of the future'.<sup>5</sup> But while it has been considered that 'resource limitations mean that choices and compromises are [therefore] necessary'<sup>6</sup> and, thus 'the Government has directed that priority be given in defence planning to ensuring adequate and appropriate capabilities exist within the Defence Force to deal with such [low level] pressures',<sup>7</sup> forces required for the two levels of conflict are far from mutually exclusive.

It is an unpleasant reality that as regional capabilities increase relative to those of Australia, the most serious form of short warning conflict becomes closer to what would represent a fundamental threat to Australian sovereignty. Because of the size and sophistication of forces now present in our region, forces developed for deterring a large scale attack against Australia - advanced air and maritime forces to deny the air and sea approaches - are directly relevant at the higher end of the credible short warning conflict spectrum.

At lower levels of the short warning conflict spectrum, compromises in force structure are only required where effective vertical interaction cannot be achieved, i.e. where forces developed to deter conflict at the higher level cannot be effectively applied at the lower level. Unlike nuclear weapons, conventional weapons are much more useable in a range of possible conflicts. There are two general response options for dealing with conflict at the lower level: a direct response and an indirect response.

### *A Direct Response*

A direct response means dealing directly with and defeating attacking forces. Effective vertical interaction from forces structured for higher levels of conflict with these lower level challenges can be achieved through either commonality of force requirements or flexibility in application of those forces. The most significant problem for Australia in dealing with any low level threat is the need to 'position and apply forces relatively limited in number to best effect over the enormous distances

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 68.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 66.

<sup>7</sup> *The Defence of Australia 1987*, para 3.43.

involved'.<sup>8</sup> Information is the key requirement to allow Australia's asymmetry in force (based on Australia's technologically advanced forces developed for the higher level of conflict) to be brought to bear when dealing with forces which are less capable but have the advantage of being able to maximise the use of space and time, i.e. they can choose where and when to attack across a vast area. Intelligence and wide area surveillance capabilities developed for the higher level threat will therefore be common with the lower level case, with the latter being perhaps even more demanding because of the small size and potentially dispersed nature of hostile forces involved.

Particularly attractive targets would be key isolated settlements, economic facilities and military facilities, such as airfields and naval bases. Attacks on military facilities would be particularly attractive because they have the capacity to reduce Australia's capability to defend or 'retaliate', they would be popular with the aggressor's domestic constituency, they would have high international political acceptability as valid targets, and they would put significant pressure on the Australian government.

Where attacking forces cannot be defeated in Australia's sea and air approaches and manage to land on Australian territory, a direct response would probably require rapidly deployable land forces with high levels of mobility, secure communications, and advanced capabilities such as night vision devices. Although lightly armed, these Australian forces would be adequate to locate and identify the forces involved and possibly defeat them. If higher levels of force were required the ADF elements could call in heavy firepower support in terms of larger, more heavily armed land forces or fighter/strike aircraft. The land force role therefore closely aligns with that in the higher level conflict case, i.e. protection of vital assets and dealing with small-scale incursions onto Australian territory. Additionally, the land force has a specific role for counter terrorism which could also be expected to occur at both the higher and lower levels of conflict.<sup>9</sup>

The flexibility of modern weapon systems also provide options for dealing with lower level threats. While in the past it has been considered a 'disproportionate' response on Australia's part to employ assets such as the RAAF's F-111 in lower level conflicts, in such a circumstance there would be no threat to the platform and the capabilities they bring would provide Government with a wider range of response options. The F-111, with its Pave Tack system, was primarily developed for the land strike role using stand-off delivery of PGMs in a high threat environment. The aircraft can, however, also be effectively employed in lower level conflict where its Pave Tack sensor can be used by day or night to locate small vehicles and even personnel for identification and possibly prosecution by land forces. If higher levels of force are required, the same aircraft could immediately revert to the weapon delivery role.<sup>10</sup>

Such effective vertical interaction of high level forces down to the lower level of conflict, however, is dependent on timely, detailed information (a composite of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance); flexible weapon systems; well trained personnel; and effective joint doctrine, tactics, procedures, and command and control.

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<sup>8</sup> Baker, 'Technology Strategy and the Defence of Australia', p. 122.

<sup>9</sup> Presentation by MAJGEN Geoff Carter (DCGS) to the Shadow Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, 2 September 1994.

<sup>10</sup> For further discussion see Peter Criss, *Employing Smart Technology in Low Intensity Conflict*, Air Power Studies Centre Paper No. 6, Canberra, August 1992.

*Indirect Response - Escalation*

The nature of Australia's geography and the size of forces available mean that a direct response to low level aggression may in some cases be 'quite disproportionately demanding'<sup>11</sup>. This was demonstrated in Exercise Kangaroo 92 where a relatively small force stretched the capabilities of the ADF.<sup>12</sup> To avoid the inefficient use of Australia's forces, the Government has the option of an indirect response, escalating the conflict by 'strikes against land targets in the adversary's own territory'<sup>13</sup>. While there would be definite political constraints on such acts of 'retaliation', the potential for retaliation does have a real deterrent value.<sup>14</sup> Political constraints would of course be severe, particularly where there is no unambiguous attack by a sovereign nation.

Long range strike forces required to carry out such attacks would be common with those forces required for the higher level of conflict. For political reasons, survivability of offensive forces will also be a key determinate to their employment, particularly so where there is no substantial threat to the nation. The use of ground forces for such action would be undesirable because the risk of capture would have significant political consequences.

*Allied Support*

While there is at least the prospect of allied support in the face of a fundamental threat to the survival of Australia, such support at the lower level of conflict is more questionable. This is because, firstly, Australia would be expected to be able to deal with such situations itself, and secondly, there is the high probability that the nature of the dispute may generate 'little sympathy, let alone direct support'<sup>15</sup> from allies or friends. This was recognised as early as 1976 when the Government acknowledged that 'we could face a range of other situations that we should expect to handle more independently'.<sup>16</sup> The need to independently deal with such low level threats reinforces the need for a self reliant defence strategy. This self reliance applies not only to combat forces but also logistic support for those forces. Where there is a conflict of interests and it is not clearly in the US's interest to support Australia, rapid supply of weapons cannot be assured.

*Relevance of Deterrence*

While it has previously been concluded that deterrence at this level of conflict is 'irrelevant'<sup>17</sup>, the preceding analysis shows:

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<sup>11</sup> Dibb, *The Conceptual Basis of Australia's Defence*, p. 68.

<sup>12</sup> In Exercise K95 a force of approximately 200 to 300 men, a submarine, some patrol craft and a few jet fighters stretched the capabilities of the ADF. See *A Strong Australia - Rebuilding Australia's Defence*, p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> Dibb, *The Conceptual Basis of Australia's Defence*, p. 24.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p.24.

<sup>15</sup> Baker, 'Technology, Strategy and the Defence of Australia', p. 115.

<sup>16</sup> *Australian Defence*, Defence White Paper presented to Parliament in November 1976, AGPS, Canberra, p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> See Baker, 'Technology, Strategy and the Defence of Australia', p. 115.

- it is successful deterrence at the conventional level that diverts aggressors to these less serious form of threat;
- when considering the lower level threats, forces developed to deal with higher level threats can deter escalation - either vertical (in terms of level of conflict) or horizontal (in terms of geographic expanse); and
- successfully dealing with any challenge at this level can result in inter-conflict deterrence, reducing the likelihood of future such challenges.

*PROLIFERATION OF WMD AND ADVANCED DELIVERY SYSTEMS*

Successful deterrence at the conventional level can also be challenged by an adversary who acquires WMD and/or advanced delivery systems. Although the threat of global nuclear war has greatly reduced with the end of the Cold War, significant threat still remains from nations seeking WMD and advanced delivery systems to obtain leverage over nations with superior conventional forces. Unlike conventional forces which take considerable time, money and supporting infrastructure to develop, WMD can be obtained relatively quickly and cheaply. Acquisition of such weapons by any of Australia's neighbours would remove warning time and destroy the inverse relationship between seriousness and likelihood of threat, to a large extent negating the value of Australia's conventional deterrence strategy. And although the survival of Australia would not be at stake if only a small number of such weapons were acquired, the potential for massive loss of life and the threat to Australia's freedom of action would be politically unacceptable.

Because there is no effective defence against WMD and their use is unacceptable, action must be taken to prevent their proliferation rather than their use. There is little that Australia can do unilaterally to achieve this. Action must be taken globally in supporting the NPT, CWC, BWC and the MTCR. The recent indefinite extension of the NPT provides hope for the future, but non-proliferation cannot be guaranteed. Where proliferation does occur, pre-emptive counterproliferation action may be required to remove the threat such weapons pose - i.e. destroying the weapons before they can be used. Advanced conventional forces provide the possibility to carry out such counterproliferation action but, because of the level of political will required, unilateral action by Australia is highly unlikely. Australia would probably have to rely on actions by the United Nations, most likely in the form of a US-led coalition but even then any such action would require considerable political will on the part of the international community.





**BROADER SECURITY INTERESTS**

As acknowledged in Chapter 7, ensuring Australia's security includes more than protecting its mainland from armed attack. Australia has a broad range of interests that affect its long term security. As Ian McLachlan, Minister for Defence, has stated 'A narrow perspective on Australia's security focussed solely on continental defence would sell us short'.<sup>1</sup> Australia's security interests can be divided in terms of the widening definition of security and those wider in terms of geography.

*A BROADER DEFINITION OF SECURITY*

In what has been referred to as the 'new security agenda', consideration of security has been broadened to include a range of non traditional security issues including:

concerns about international financial flows and market access, to food scarcity, resource depletion, global warming, transnational crime, illegal immigration, virulent new strains of disease, and a host of other issues not previously associated with security and foreign policy.<sup>2</sup>

Security, therefore, must be seen as being multi-dimensional in nature, incorporating a range of economic and environmental factors which have a fundamental impact on the well being of a nation.<sup>3</sup> As Alan Dupont observes, however, these non traditional threats, 'raise serious questions about the adequacy of mainstream security paradigms.'<sup>4</sup> While it is true that in many of these areas military force, and therefore deterrence, may have little direct relevance, economic and environmental pressures can lead to actions that may require a military response. For example, a sea level rise caused by global warming could not be 'deterred' by military force but military force may be required to prevent a resultant large-scale influx of refugees. Similarly, a military contribution may be required to help deal with drug trafficking, smuggling and illegal immigration. Deterrence in the case of these 'broader' security threats will tend to be essentially inter-conflict in nature, where effective action in one instance reduces the likelihood of future activities - effectively a policing operation where the aim is to reduce the frequency of undesirable action to an acceptable level.

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<sup>1</sup> Ian McLachlan, *Defence Policy and Regional Co-Operation with Asia*, address Presented to the Government Defence, Trade and Foreign Affairs Committee, Canberra, 3 December 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Dupont, 'New Dimensions of Security', paper prepared for the Joint SDSC and IISS Conference on *The New Security Agenda in the Asia Pacific Region*, Parliament House, Canberra, 1-3 May, 1996, pp. 4/5.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example Evans, *Australia's Regional Security*. The same recognition of the broadening definition of security has been reflected in later security policy documents, ASP 90, SR 93, and DA 94.

<sup>4</sup> Dupont, 'New Dimensions of Security', p. 10.

The effectiveness of military force in these broader applications will depend on effective vertical interaction - from high level capabilities down to what are effectively lower level threats. And, as discussed in Chapter 8, effectiveness will be based on commonality of requirements (particularly in terms of broad area surveillance) and flexibility in application.

#### *GEOGRAPHICALLY BROADER SECURITY INTERESTS*

Australia is not a major power with global security interests or influence. But it is a middle power whose security interests extend 'beyond our shores to include a range of direct interests which are important to our defence. That requires us to cover a vast area; over 10 per cent of the earth's surface.'<sup>5</sup> These 'offshore' interests include Australia's offshore territories, its sea lines of communication and its offshore resources. Security interests also extend to limited defence commitments for other countries and broader considerations of regional and global security. The remainder of this chapter will address Australia's extended interests that are essentially unilateral in terms of action. Formal 'collective' security issues will be addressed in Chapter 11. Consideration of broader regional and global issues affecting Australia's security will be addressed in Chapter 12.

Just as in the defence of Australia itself, Australia will prefer to deter threats to its extended security interests rather than to fight. But it is in the context of these extended security interests that conflicts are most likely to arise. This is because it is in these areas that a number of nations' interests may overlap and the potential for conflict is therefore highest. For example, Australia has a direct economic interest in the exploitation of the Timor Gap area but Indonesia has a similar interest. While the peaceful resolution of a potential conflict of interests in this area will allow cooperative development, other issues may not progress as favourably. There is, therefore, at least the potential for a conflict of interests that could ultimately lead to the use of force.

To successfully deter threats to its offshore interests Australia must communicate to a potential aggressor what Australia's vital interests are and its commitment to fight for them. But in the case of its extended security interests it is unlikely that even the Australian government would know in what circumstances it would fight before a threat arose. Whereas the former Prime Minister, Mr Fraser, when considering the defence of Christmas and Cocos Islands, stated that 'Australia would not yield a foot of its territory to another power',<sup>6</sup> Air Marshal Evans, former Chief of the Air Staff, stated:

It would be somewhat naive to assume that the status of being Australian territory automatically makes these far flung possessions a practical proposition for a smallish military power like Australia. Such catchcries as 'we will not surrender an inch of Australian territory' might be tolerable political rhetoric when no threat darkens the horizon. They could be totally irresponsible when the defence of such places was clearly impractical and when strenuous attempts to do so could cause heavy and futile losses and could weaken the defence of continental Australia ...<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Defending Australia 1994*, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> *The Canberra Times*, 16 September 1982, in Ross Babbage, *Should Australia Plan to Defend Christmas and Cocos Islands?*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1988, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Evans, 'Air Power in the Defence of Australia: Strategic Aspects', p. 123.

The decision of whether or not to defend these islands would be a political one at the time, based on an assessment of the 'value' of the interest at stake.<sup>8</sup> When such doubts exist about the defence of Australian sovereign territory, the willingness to defend broader economic and environmental interests - possibly far from the Australian mainland - must be even more questionable.

In terms of capability, the focus of Australia's military force development, at least in recent history, has been the 'defence of Australia'.<sup>9</sup> Forces are primarily defensive in nature with limited force projection capabilities. While this may not be of major concern in dealing with lower level threats such as piracy, drug trafficking or illegal immigration, higher level threats to offshore territories or sea lines of communication could prove a considerable challenge. And unlike the case where Australia is acting directly to protect the Australian mainland, when protecting its offshore interests Australia would not enjoy the same 'defender's advantage'. The ADF would be either operating at extended ranges or perhaps even from foreign bases. Additionally, because forces are currently structured specifically for the defence of Australia, those same forces may not be the optimum in other areas of operation. This would be particularly critical in terms of surveillance, intelligence, logistics and C<sup>3</sup> capabilities.

Further, while a strategy based on denial may be quite feasible for the defence of the mainland, such a defensive approach may not be the optimum strategy for the defence of its offshore interests. But a proactive, pre-emptive strategy may not be politically acceptable as unambiguous aggression will almost certainly need to occur before the ADF would be permitted to respond. To some extent these limitations could be offset by using an indirect response, i.e. attacking the aggressor's homeland, but there would be considerable political pressure against attacking a nation that had not directly attacked Australia. In terms of capability, then, Australia's ability to deter threats to its extended interests is questionable.

Overall there can be little confidence that Australia can effectively deter or deal with threats to its extended security interests. This has been acknowledged by the Minister for Defence, who in terms of capability has said that 'we have to be looking at making sure our defence forces have the ability, if asked or needed, to be a little more mobile off the shore or further out than just the coastline'.<sup>10</sup> Development of force projection capabilities by Australia to meet its extended security concerns, however, could be self defeating if such acquisitions generated concerns about Australia's intentions, possibly leading to reactive arms acquisitions and resulting in an overall decrease in stability.

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<sup>8</sup> For a discussion on the nature of 'value' see Chapter 2.

<sup>9</sup> *Defending Australia 1994*, p.5.

<sup>10</sup> Ian McLachlan in Don Greenlees, 'Defence chief sees role in region', *The Weekend Australian*, May 25-26, 1996, p. 22.







**COLLECTIVE ACTION**

Unilateral action is not the only means by which Australia can deter threats to its security. Australia has adopted a range of collective security arrangements which, at least in part, are aimed at deterring threats contrary to its interests. These collective arrangements comprise formal bilateral and multilateral defence agreements, and include the ANZUS alliance, the Joint Declaration of Principles with Papua New Guinea, Closer Defence relations with New Zealand, the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) and the Agreement on Maintaining Security with Indonesia.

Australia is also involved in range of broader regional and global defence relationships; which are addressed in Chapter 11.

*BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL DEFENCE AGREEMENTS*

*The ANZUS Alliance*

From 1951 until the early 1970s the ANZUS alliance played a central role in Australia's security strategy. The alliance with the US was seen as providing a significant deterrent to any aggression against Australia.<sup>1</sup> While the alliance also included New Zealand, the real strength as far as Australia was concerned was from the combat capability of the US. Since about the end of the Vietnam War, however, the Australian government has recognised that Australia 'should not allow its expectations of external support to overshadow its obligations to assume, within the limits of its own resources, the primary responsibility for its own conventional defence'.<sup>2</sup>

The value of extended deterrence provided by the US can be assessed on the three key criteria of capability, communication, and credibility. In terms of capability there is no doubt that the US could provide considerable support for Australia. A large scale conventional military attack on Australia would certainly be defeated in the face of full-scale American support.

In terms of communication, the ANZUS alliance commits the US to do no more than 'consult' in the face of a threat to Australia's security. And although the existence of close military ties and the presence of US facilities indicates some level of commitment to Australia's security, there is no guarantee of support.

The key determinant of the value of extended deterrence provided by the US is the credibility of its support, which is in turn based on the perceived level of US commitment to Australian security. Even though the US-Australian relationship is underscored by a 'similarity in national cultures and political systems, a common language, and a shared history of combat to preserve democratic values',<sup>3</sup> there is no

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<sup>1</sup> *The Defence of Australia 1987*, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Australian Defence Review*, Department of Defence, AGPS, Canberra, 1972, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> William Tow, 'American Defence Interests and Australian Security', in Henry Albinsky (ed),

guarantee of US support for Australia. US support would be a political decision, based on the US's assessment of its own interests at the time of any specific threat. And while it can be expected that in most areas Australian and US interests would coincide, this will not always be the case. For example, in the case of the Indonesian take-over of Irian Jaya in the early 1960s, the US gave clear indications that it would not support Australia in any conflict between Australia and Indonesia.<sup>4</sup> But while this case demonstrates that US support cannot always be assumed, it must also be recognised that there was no direct threat to the security of Australia so any lessons drawn must be limited.

The prospect of US assistance is, however, at least an important 'complicating' factor for any potential aggressor.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, the same uncertainty results in difficulties for Australia's defence planners. As Gary Brown has observed, such uncertainty:

would have disastrous consequences for the Government in Canberra and the ADF in the field in the lead-up to operations and once operations had commenced. Will the US resupply us? When? With what? With how much? On what terms? These questions are significant to potential aggressors; to Australia they are vital.<sup>6</sup>

Even without providing a guarantee of support, the alliance with the US still provides a number of direct security benefits that strengthen Australia's self reliant defence capability, including: supply and support arrangements; industrial and scientific cooperation; and access to intelligence, advanced military systems, joint training and exercises. And as pointed out in Chapter 7, it is in logistic support that Australia is critically dependent on the US. As Brown has again observed, for Australia, 'US intervention (at least via resupply) is something which *must* happen because current stock holdings are likely to be insufficient for operations over any period or at enhanced levels of intensity'.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Closer Defence Relations with New Zealand*

Australia's ties with New Zealand go deeper than the formal ANZUS defence alliance.<sup>8</sup> And although DA 94 concludes that Australia's security is of no direct

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*Australia and the United States: Strategic and Defence Cooperation Futures*, Australian Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1993, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> 'To give a hypothetical example, should Australia and Indonesia become embroiled in hostilities for some reason, Washington will need to weigh up its priorities very carefully indeed. Both Indonesia and Australia are important regionally to the US, ...' See Gary Brown, 'The Anzus Alliance: The Case Against', in Ball D. & Downes C., (eds), *Security and Defence: Pacific and Global Perspectives*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990, p 241.

<sup>5</sup> This view is expressed in Strategic Review 1993 'The [ANZUS] relationship has enduring defence value, both as a source of practical support in areas such as science, technology and intelligence, and for its deterrent value, as any potential aggressor would need to take account of US commitments to support an ally like Australia.' See *Strategic Review 1993*, p.28, para 4.2.

<sup>6</sup> Brown, 'The Anzus Alliance: The Case Against', p. 242.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion on the Australia/New Zealand relationship, including the Canberra Pact, see, for example, Jim Rolfe, *Australia and New Zealand: Towards a More Effective Defence Relationship*, Working Paper No. 286, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, Canberra,

consequence to any other country, it ignores the close and long-enduring strategic relationship between Australia and New Zealand. The two countries' security and political interests do not always align, but historically there has been general recognition that a threat to either country would also be a threat to the other and both would respond.<sup>9</sup>

New Zealand Defence Forces are significantly smaller than Australia's and considerable concern has been raised regarding their capability level after large funding cuts in recent years. The possible contribution of New Zealand forces (representing something in the order of 20% of Australian capabilities), however, should not be ignored. A concerted effort has been made in the last few years to increase interoperability and maximise overall effectiveness and efficiency of the two armed forces as part of the Closer Defence Relations (CDR) initiatives. Experience during the CDR has shown, however, that while there may be some willingness to modify individual force structures to increase overall cost-effectiveness, there is little prospect of a fully integrated defence capability. Both countries require an independent military capability because security and foreign policy interests do not always align. This has been highlighted recently in the form of different responses to UN requests for peace-keeping support.<sup>10</sup>

Overall, however, because of the perceived high level of commitment of New Zealand to Australia's security, the close alliance with New Zealand provides at least some enhancement of Australia's deterrence strategy.

#### *Joint Declaration of Principles with Papua New Guinea*

The Joint Declaration of Principles with Papua New Guinea 'enshrines basic principles for the maintenance and strengthening of our defence relations with that country'.<sup>11</sup> Given the relative size of military capabilities there is little prospect of Papua New Guinea providing military assistance to Australia, but the nation is of critical strategic importance to Australia, representing one of the few possible routes for an attack. A secure Papua New Guinea therefore provides increased strategic depth for Australia and a potential base for operations further afield if necessary in the future.

Looking from the opposite perspective, Australia spreads the 'umbrella' of its deterrence to Papua New Guinea via the defence agreement. There is, however, no guarantee of Australia's commitment to defend Papua New Guinea, with Australia only obliged to consult in the face of a threat. Any action by Australia in the face of a threat to Papua New Guinea would be a political decision at the time, based on an assessment of the perceived value and expected costs of involvement. The realities of geography, however, means that Australia has a vital strategic interest in the security of Papua New Guinea and any threat to Papua New Guinea would be of direct interest to Australia.

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1995.

<sup>9</sup> This understanding was given formal recognition in the Canberra Pact of 1944. For further discussion of the strategic importance of the relationship see *The Defence of New Zealand 1991: A Policy Paper*.

<sup>10</sup> For example, New Zealand sent forces to Bosnia whereas Australia did not because of Australia's fear of internal social problems.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander Downer, Minister for Foreign Affairs, 'Security through Cooperation', address to *The New Security Agenda in the Asia Pacific Region*, Canberra, 1-3 May 1996, p. 7.

### *Five Power Defence Arrangements*

Australia is a party to the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) with Malaysia, Singapore, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. The FPDA came into effect in 1971 with the aim of enhancing the security of the newly independent Malaysia and Singapore.<sup>12</sup> The Arrangements were not designed to provide direct defence of Australia but rather as contributing to Australia's forward defence strategy of the time. The forward defence strategy was based on the premise that it was preferable to defeat any threats to Australia's security as far from Australia as possible.

The FPDA provided no guarantee of commitment of Australian forces for the defence of Malaysia or Singapore, but the credibility of deterrence was reinforced by the basing of Australian forces in Malaysia, acting as a potential 'trip-wire'.<sup>13</sup> Australia's implied commitment was further reinforced during confrontation with Indonesia, when there was a progression from general deterrence to immediate deterrence, with deployment of forces and shows of force.<sup>14</sup> The withdrawal of Australian forces from RMAF Butterworth in 1983 raised significant concern in Malaysia and Singapore as it was seen as a marked reduction of Australia's commitment to the security of those countries. Notwithstanding those fears Australia remains a major part of the FPDA and, while not established to directly deter threats to the security of Australia, the arrangement enhances Australia's security by contributing to the security of the region as a whole.

### *Agreement on Maintaining Security with Indonesia*

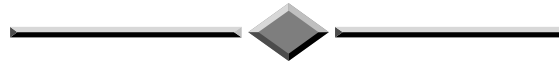
The Agreement on Maintaining Security, signed with Indonesia in late 1995, is evidence of the dramatic improvements in relations between Australia and Indonesia since the time of Confrontation. The Agreement completes the collection of security arrangements Australia now maintains with its closest neighbours. As with Australia's other defence agreements, there is no commitment to act on either's behalf, rather it is an agreement to consult on matters of mutual security interest. Although little may be added in terms of deterring threats to Australia, the agreement does add to Australia's total range of security strategies.

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<sup>12</sup> The FPDA replaced the earlier Anglo-Malaysian Defence agreement. See Alan Stephens, *Going Solo: The Royal Australian Air Force 1946-1971*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1996, p. 270.

<sup>13</sup> Australian forces deployed in the region included combat and transport aircraft in Butterworth, Malaysia as part of the Integrated Air Defence System (IADS) as well as ground forces, also based in Malaysia.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Stephens, *Going Solo*, p. 262.



## REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SECURITY

As well as unilateral and ‘formal’ defence arrangements that Australia has adopted, it has also taken action at the regional and global levels in an effort to deter threats to Australia’s security.

### *AUSTRALIA’S REGIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS*

Since about the early 1980’s there has been increasing recognition in Australia that its security is inextricably linked with the security of the Asia-Pacific region as a whole. As Chief of the ADF, General Baker has put it:

We [have] shifted from a period of forward defence to concentration on the defence of Australia with a move now back to consider regional security as a much more relevant issue to the present security circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

A threat to Australia’s security is only likely to develop if there is instability in the region in general. It is a reality of geography that any threat to Australia must come ‘from or through’ the nations to its north.<sup>2</sup> The security of those nations is therefore of vital importance to Australia. To a large extent the reverse situation is not true; Australia provides a secure southern flank to its neighbours and can therefore largely be ignored.<sup>3</sup> Moves towards a greater emphasis on regional security have been seen by some, somewhat negatively, as a return to a forward defence strategy.<sup>4</sup> While it is true that the focus of defence has returned to a ‘forward’ emphasis, such criticism ignores the fact that the new approach is a much more balanced one, with regional forces also exercising and training in Australia.

The Asia-Pacific region is, however, a very complex and potentially dangerous strategic environment. As Paul Dibb has concluded, in the Asia-Pacific region there are a range of disputes which, ‘remain sources of tension, suspicion and misunderstanding with the ever present danger of miscalculation and escalation - particularly where the claimants operate in close proximity to each other, as they do in the South China Sea’.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Baker in Don Greenlees, ‘The General Speaks his Mind’, *The Weekend Australian*, May 25-26, 1996, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> See *Defending Australia 1994*, para 8.14.

<sup>3</sup> As Dr Mochtar Kusumaatmadja has said, ‘Australia was the appendix; something Asians noticed only when it hurt’. See Edy Prasetyoni, *The Regional Focus of Australia’s Defence Policy - An Indonesian Perspective*. Working Paper No. 15, Australian Defence Studies Centre, Australian Defence Force Academy, 1993, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> For example, see Alan Thompson, *Australia’s Strategic Defence Policy: A Drift Towards Neo-Forward Defence*, Working Paper No. 29, Australian Defence Studies Centre, 1994.

<sup>5</sup> Dibb, *Towards a New Balance of Power in Asia*, p. 52.

Within the region a large number of nations' security interests overlap and there are many extant and potential conflicts of interest. For example, the Spratly Islands is often cited as the most likely area of conflict in the Asia-Pacific region, precisely because of the overlap of security interests of at least six nations.<sup>6</sup> Expanding Australia's area of direct security interest to include a large part of the Asia-Pacific region, therefore, means a large increase in the range of potential conflicts in which Australia could become involved. As the Chief of the Defence Force, General Baker has concluded, the most likely use of the ADF is 'not in the defence of Australia but overseas'.<sup>7</sup>

There is little Australia, or any other small or middle powers in the region, can do unilaterally to influence the security of the region as a whole. A cooperative security approach is therefore necessary for the smaller nations to achieve some 'leverage' effect. And whereas in the past Australia has been seen as 'the odd man out' in Asia there has been considerable effort in recent years to become 'the odd man in'. From a regional perspective Australia's increasing engagement is seen as generally favourable.<sup>8</sup>

From Australia's perspective increasing cooperative defence engagement performs a number of useful functions:

- It reduces tension between regional nations through increased transparency and understanding.
- It allows dealing on a multilateral basis with extended security issues such as piracy, drug trafficking, and refugee movement. (And while this can be seen as an end in itself, in many ways it provides a vehicle for developing closer relations.)
- It increases the independent defence capability of Australia's neighbours.
- Independent but cooperative defence forces provide at least some level of deterrence to 'outside players' wishing to act counter to the interests of the region as a whole.<sup>9</sup> Smaller nations can do little unilaterally to influence major power's activities but a strong grouping of smaller nations may provide some 'leverage' effect.<sup>10</sup>

Even within an informal cooperative security arrangement, therefore, there is an element of deterrence to be considered. As SR93 acknowledged: 'The growing resilience of ASEAN and responsible force development will enhance regional stability and provide a shield against pressures from further afield'.<sup>11</sup> Such a 'shield' is seen as important in deterring large nations from increasing their influence in the region through a 'salami slicing' approach, where small nations could be individually

<sup>6</sup> The interests could be classified variously as security, sovereignty or economic but they are all interrelated.

<sup>7</sup> John Baker in Greenlees, 'The General Speaks his Mind', p. 22.

<sup>8</sup> 'ASEAN members and other South-East Asian nations have welcomed what they see as a new commitment by Australia to develop economic, security and other links with Asia.' *Strategic Review 1993*, p. 13 para 1.43.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 23 para 3.11.

<sup>10</sup> Dibb, *Towards a New Balance of Power in Asia*, p.70.

<sup>11</sup> *Strategic Review 1993*, p.16 para 1.31.

overpowered by a major power.<sup>12</sup> Collective political action by ASEAN states in 1996 in response to PRC pressure on the Philippines in the Mischief Reef area can be seen as an example of banding together of regional nations to resist a large external power. Activities such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the Conference on Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) communicate to potential aggressors the existence of, at least, a shared security interest in the region.

### *Credibility*

Cooperative defence relationships and activities may have some deterrence effect, but in the absence of a formal security alliance the credibility of collective action in response to an external threat is limited. The success of cooperative deterrence will, as always, be based on the perceived level of commitment which, in turn, is based on the balance of interests involved. The commitment of regional nations to support their neighbours will be difficult to determine in advance not only for any aggressor but also for the would-be deterrers themselves. As Australia's Minister for Defence has acknowledged, in the face of a threat to regional security, 'We would take it case by case ... It is a hypothetical question. It will depend on the circumstances'.<sup>13</sup>

### *Capability*

In terms of capability, the overall deterrent threat to outside players is, at best, the sum of individual national capabilities. Unlike the case of NATO where forces are closely integrated and force structures are modified to improve overall capability there is no close integration of regional defence forces and virtually no prospect for further integration in the foreseeable future.<sup>14</sup> Particular difficulties would be experienced in any coalition action in terms of intelligence, command and control, surveillance and joint tactics and procedures. When countries as culturally and politically close as Australia and New Zealand have achieved little headway in common force development, there is little hope of any closer cooperation between Australia and Asian nations or between Asian nations themselves.

With the exception of the US, regional forces are structured for self-reliant defence of their own territory with very limited force projection capabilities. And even in the medium-term 'Most middle powers in Asia will not be able to afford large power-projection forces and this will be a stabilising factor'. It does mean, however, that it will be difficult for small nations to band together against a single large power to protect a weaker state. And although the Australian Minister for Defence, Ian McLachlan, has identified that there is need for the ADF 'to make a substantial contribution to regional security as a whole',<sup>15</sup> this will not be easy to achieve in practice. Australia's air-sea gap provides an important defensive barrier but it also complicates any active involvement in regional conflicts which would necessarily require force projection over considerable distances. Forces developed primarily for

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<sup>12</sup> This has been specifically applied to fear of aggressive action by China pursuing its claims in the South China Sea.

<sup>13</sup> Ian McLachlan in Greenlees, 'Defence chief sees role in region', p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> A possible exception is IADS but it has a largely training role.

<sup>15</sup> Ian McLachlan, Minister for Defence, 'Australian Defence Policy After the Year 2000', Presentation given to the conference on *The New Security Agenda in the Asia-Pacific Region*, Parliament House, Canberra, 3 May 1996, p. 13.



the defence of Australia may not be particularly useful when operating far from home. The absolute size of the ADF also means that it could do little unilaterally but would have to rely on supporting the US or acting as part of a coalition of forces led by the US. For Australia to make some concrete contribution to regional security action at least some force projection capabilities would be required. Enhancing Australia's force projection capabilities has been discussed, with options considered including cruise missiles for the RAN's Collins class submarines and air-to-air refuelling for the RAAF's F-111s and F/A-18s.<sup>16</sup> Development of a force projection capability would have to be progressed in such a way as not to appear as a threat to our neighbours or introducing destabilising new capabilities into our immediate region. As Desmond Ball has pointed out: 'abandoning the "Defence of Australia" for some form of forward defence would be "reckless", risking the traditional bipartisan support for defence policy'.<sup>17</sup> Ball considered that China could be seen as the basis of any perceived threat and that would be dangerous.<sup>18</sup>

### *The Likely Success of Australia's Involvement*

As ever it is in terms of credibility that the success or failure of deterrence will be determined. Whereas direct deterrence involves threats that are inherently credible, collective and extended deterrence needs to be made credible. For example, although Australia provided political support for US action in the recent Taiwan/PRC confrontation,<sup>19</sup> it is highly unlikely that Australia would have been willing to deploy forces. Such political support is likely to be the Australian response to any such future tension in the region. As the Chief of the Defence Force, General John Baker has acknowledged: 'What will be sought, I think, will be a political commitment not a military one. The military commitment will be a demonstration in those circumstances'.<sup>20</sup>

### *US Involvement*

The major determinant of future security stability in the Asia-Pacific region is the level of ongoing commitment of US military capabilities. As Paul Dibb has observed 'Asia would be a very dangerous place without the US'.<sup>21</sup> Within the Asia-Pacific region there is almost universal support for US presence in the form of a strong conventional military capability. This presence is seen as a 'balance' against other

<sup>16</sup> For example, see Ian McPhedran, 'Defence Thrust into north Asia', *Canberra Times*, 4 December 1996, p. 1. Also see John Steinhoff, 'Sea Control: Submarines or Air Power?', *Australian Aviation*, October 1996, p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> Desmond Ball quoted in McPhedran, 'Defence Thrust into north Asia', p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Australia's Defence Minister told the Chinese that 'we did not approve of what happened and we supported the actions of the Americans and the way they went about it'.<sup>19</sup> The Defence Minister also went on to say that Australia could get involved in a conflict between China and Taiwan because 'We have obligations under [the] ANZUS [treaty] and they would no doubt be brought to some account.' Quoted in Greenlees, 'The General Speaks his Mind', p. 22.

<sup>20</sup> John Baker in Greenlees, 'The General Speaks his Mind', p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Dibb, presentation titled, 'The Emerging Architecture in the Asia-Pacific Region', given to *The New Security Agenda in the Asia-Pacific*, conference at Parliament House, Canberra, 1-3 May 1996.

large powers, particularly China. Continued US involvement in the region performs a number of deterrence roles:

- Basic deterrence, in the form of a broad balance of power in the region, preventing possible hegemonic ambitions of countries such as China and Russia.
- General deterrence, in the case of supporting South Korea against the North.
- Specific episodes of immediate deterrence, for example in the case of deploying two carrier battle groups to the Taiwan straits in March 1996.

At the same time that the US presence acts as a deterrent to potential aggressors, it also provides reassurance to its allies. For example, the US presence in South Korea reassures both South Korea and Japan against North Korea's possible hostile actions. Further, because Japan is not required to increase the capabilities of its own armed forces, this then reassures Japan's Asian neighbours about the possible growth of Japan's capability.

As always, the success of deterrence provided by the US will be based on its perceived level of commitment, questioned recently as a result of force reductions and the closure of bases in the Philippines. US assurances to retain military forces in the Asia-Pacific at the level of approximately 100,000 personnel have to some extent allayed these concerns. The deployment of two carrier battle groups to the Taiwan Straits during the period of tension between the PRC and Taiwan is further evidence of the US's interest in the region and its desire to communicate its commitment to stability. What price it would be willing to pay if conflict actually broke out, however, is difficult to predict, both for potential aggressors and the US itself. This unpredictability is increasing as the US is seen as becoming more inward looking.

In terms of the specific Australia-US alliance, a recent major statement on its future identified that: 'The Australia-United States security relationship, having proved its value for five decades, will remain a cornerstone of Asia-Pacific security into the twenty-first century.'<sup>22</sup> So while Australia has moved away from reliance on the US and towards greater defence self-reliance in terms of the defence of Australia itself, it is reinforcing its defence relationship with the US in terms of broader regional security.

### *Alternative Regional Security Strategies*

Deterrence, of course, is only one of the strategies available for enhancing regional security. Parallel strategies of reassurance and positive inducement must also be considered, and are being pursued. Increased transparency between nations provides an important element of reassurance. The Australian Government's aid project in the Mekong River Commission and its predecessor, the interim Mekong Committee, are examples of the use of positive inducement strategies. The specific aim of the project is to 'ensure sustainable and equitable development of the Mekong Basin's resources for all the countries in the region,'<sup>23</sup> but the broader aim is to improve the quality of life in the region and thereby remove a source of security threat.

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<sup>22</sup> *Australia-United States: A strategic Partnership for the Twenty-First Century*, Sydney Statement, Joint Security Declaration, Sydney, July 1996. (Emphasis added)

<sup>23</sup> Downer, 'Security through Cooperation', p. 12.

*AUSTRALIA'S GLOBAL SECURITY INTERESTS*

As well as acting at the national, bilateral/multilateral and regional levels to promote security, action can also be taken at the broad international/global level. The end of the Cold War and its bipolar security overlay has provided both challenges and opportunities for new security structures. International deterrence, based on the strength of the international community pressuring nations not to go beyond internationally accepted norms, is now a real possibility. As SR93 stated:

... potential aggressors must consider the possibility that their actions will be met with a concerted international response. It is in our interests to make this an increasing factor in the calculations of those contemplating military aggression against other states.<sup>24</sup>

Such action, however, is dependent on the commitment of individual nations to contribute to international efforts. And because there are no formal defence commitments at the broad global level, communication of deterrent threats must be based on developing a reputation for action. The UN response to aggression in Kuwait led to high hopes for future such international action. Indecisive response in the first 42 months of conflict in the former Yugoslavia, however, led to serious questions about the willingness of the international community to get involved. There were of course difficult issues for UN involvement in what can be seen as an internal conflict, a problem which also arose in Somalia, but such conflicts are likely to be the most common in the post-Cold War world.

Issues of capability must also be considered. While the sum of UN members' individual capabilities would be more than enough to defeat any single aggressor, there is no permanent commitment of force so any action will be an ad hoc collection of individual nation's forces. And because international consensus is unlikely to be achieved until unambiguous hostile acts have been committed, preventative or pre-emptive action is unlikely to be an option.

As ever, credibility - based on the assessment of interests involved - will be the key determinant of deterrence success. Involvement in UN or coalition operations will be based on individual nations' assessment of their interests - both long and short term - before committing to action. Where there is no guarantee of commitment, failure of deterrence is almost certain to occur. Deterrence will tend to be inter-conflict in nature, success situations depending on the reputation established by the international community in responding to previous aggression.

While there are no guarantees of a direct contribution to the security of Australia from its contribution to UN or other coalition actions, identifiable benefits include:

- the reinforcement of the credibility of future responses by the UN or ad hoc coalitions;
- direct contribution to a more stable, 'just' world that will have indirect flow-on effects for Australia;

<sup>24</sup> *Strategic Review 1993*, para 2.4, p.16.

- recognition in the world community of Australia's commitment to contribute to the good of the international community in general, raising its political and diplomatic standing;
- provision of valuable experience for ADF personnel; and
- the opportunity to display the high level of capabilities of the ADF.

While defence reviews have stated that the ADF will be structured for the 'defence of Australia',<sup>25</sup> the reality over the last five or so years is that the ADF's primary 'operational' commitments have all been in various permutations of peacekeeping operations, and that - by their very nature - all such commitments have been outside Australia. It has traditionally been assumed that the capabilities developed for defence of Australia will provide credible options for contributing to operations in support of the UN; not only in terms of force structure but doctrine as well. To date this has proven to be a correct assumption, for example the ADF performed effectively in Somalia where 'From the outset the operation in Baidoa was conducted like a no-nonsense counter-insurgency campaign'.<sup>26</sup> This success to date has, at least to some extent, been because Australia has had the luxury of being able to choose its form of contribution. Future operations may not provide such scope for choice. It is possibly due to recognition of this shortcoming that DA 94 accepts that the Government would 'consider some marginal variations to force structure' to allow the ADF to make an effective contribution to peacekeeping operations.<sup>27</sup>

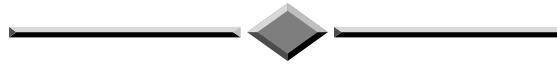
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<sup>25</sup> *Defending Australia 1994*, para 4.48.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Patman, 'Australian Lessons for the UN', *Pacific Research*, Periodical of the Peace Research Centre, Australian National University, Vol. 8, No. 1, February 1995, pp. 48-9.

<sup>27</sup> *Defending Australia 1994*, p. 34.





## CONCLUSIONS

Australia has no adversaries, faces no obvious threats, and there are no territorial disputes or other conflicts of interest that are likely to lead to armed conflict. Further, no regional countries see Australia as a threat. But as long as there is the potential for armed force to be used contrary to Australia's interests, Australia will attempt to deter threats to those interests.

The security environment is, however, inherently interactive - anything Australia does in response to the environment affects that environment. Australia's rejection of nuclear weapons is a clear recognition of this interactive nature. While nuclear weapons may provide a useful deterrent capability, acquisition of such weapons would almost certainly result in instability in the region and a net decrease in Australia's security. Conventional weapons, to a point, do not carry the same undesirable consequences as nuclear weapons. As long as forces are not too large and do not contain large force projection capabilities they can have a stabilising effect on the strategic environment. In Australia's case, the currently favourable security environment cannot be separated from Australia's possession of credible conventional military capabilities.

In the absence of specific threats or adversaries, deterrence, as defined in Part 1, is *basic deterrence*. Basic deterrence performs two vital functions: it *generates* warning time; and creates and maintains an inverse relationship between seriousness and likelihood of threat. While not explicitly identified as such, these two aims form the basis of Australia's deterrence strategy. To implement this strategy Australia has, logically, chosen to maintain advanced conventional forces to deny its air and sea approaches to any potential aggressor and, based on the conclusions reached in Part 1, Australia can have a high degree of confidence that its forces can successfully deter a large scale conventional military threat to its territory. While credible military *capabilities* are necessary for deterrence success, it is *credibility*, based on the balance of interests involved, that is the key determinant of deterrence success. There would be little doubt amongst any potential aggressors that Australia would fight with all it had to protect its people and the Australian continent. And even though Australia's relative military position is declining in the region (in terms of both quantity and quality of military equipment) the situation will remain favourable unless there is a major change in the balance of capabilities in the region. This favourable situation is likely to continue even in the absence of direct support from the US, under whose umbrella Australia enjoyed considerable *extended deterrence* in the past.

Consideration of deterrence in terms of this single form of threat is far too restrictive, however, although it has often been the extent of past analyses. Australia could possibly face a wide range of threats to its security and there is at least some element of deterrence to be considered in dealing with all of them.

Potential aggressors, deterred by Australia's successful deterrence at the higher level, may seek a lower level form of challenge. While not representing a

fundamental threat to the survival of the nation, action at this level could place Australia under considerable pressure and limit its freedom of action. Unlike threats at the higher level, capabilities for lower level action already exist in the region. Australia's force in being must therefore be able to deal with these capabilities with little or no warning. But the same forces developed to deter threats at the higher level are directly relevant for dealing with threats at the lower level - particularly as capabilities in the region increase towards what would be a more serious form of threat. This is generally achieved through commonality in requirements, particularly in terms of wide-area surveillance and intelligence capabilities, and flexibility in application. And while it may not be possible to deter all threats at this level, deterrence is still relevant. First, it is successful deterrence at the conventional level that diverts aggressors to the less serious forms of challenge. Second, forces developed to deter threats at the higher level can *deter escalation*, either vertical (in terms of level of conflict) or horizontal (in terms of the geographic extent). Finally, successfully dealing with any challenge that does occur at this level can provide inter-conflict deterrence, reducing the likelihood of future such challenges.

Australia could also face the threat of an aggressor armed with WMD or advanced delivery systems. Such acquisitions by any of Australia's neighbours would rapidly remove warning time and destroy the inverse relationship between likelihood and seriousness of threat, thus largely negating the value of Australia's conventional deterrence strategy. While *self deterrence* may be a factor in preventing the use of WMD against Australia, it is unlikely that Australia would accept such an undesirable situation. There is little that Australia can do unilaterally to prevent the proliferation of such weapons so it must work in support of regional and global initiatives such as the NPT, CWC, BWC and MTCR. Where proliferation does occur, decisive counter-proliferation action will be required, both to remove the specific threat and to deter other nations from acquiring such weapons. Again there is little Australia can do unilaterally so it must rely on collective action. Any such pre-emptive counter-proliferation action, however, would require very high levels of political will. In relation to WMD, therefore, deterrence takes the form of *international deterrence* to prevent the proliferation of weapons and possibly '*interconflict*' *deterrence* based on collective action to prevent the further spread of such weapons.

But security means more than protecting sovereign territory from armed attack. Australia is not a major power but its security interests extend well beyond its own borders, including limited security commitments for other nations, offshore resources and trade routes. Further, Australia is increasingly recognising that its security is linked with the security of the region as a whole. But it is in the context of those extended security interests that conflict is most likely to occur. This is because, first, there is more likely to be a conflict of interests between nations; and second, because deterrence is less likely to be successful. Whereas the communication and credibility of deterrent threats is readily achieved when sovereign territory is considered, in the case of extended security interests it is difficult for any potential aggressor to determine what Australia would be willing to fight for and what price it would be willing to pay. And in terms of capability there is every likelihood that Australia would be operating at extended ranges from its own territory and its military effectiveness would be significantly reduced, particularly as Australia has limited force projection capabilities. Acquisition of enhanced force projection capabilities may be required to give credibility to Australia's desire to deter threats to its extended security interests and to threats to broader regional security. Unfortunately the

development of such capabilities can be destabilising if they are seen to introduce undesirable new capabilities into the region or if they are seen to threaten regional neighbours. Just as Australia has declined to acquire WMD largely in the aim of improving overall security, it must also consider not expanding capabilities in other ways that could also be destabilising.

Because smaller nations in the Asia-Pacific region can do little individually to deter undesirable actions by larger powers, cooperative action may be required to achieve some leverage effect. Cooperative regional security regimes will be an important part of providing *collective deterrence* against threats from within or outside the region but in the absence of a formal security alliance and closely integrated forces there can be little confidence of deterrence success. The key to deterring threats to regional security will be the continuing presence of US forces - either acting unilaterally or by 'tying together' a regional coalition. It is the credibility of the commitment of the US to provide *extended deterrence* that will be the key to regional stability. It is interesting to note that as Australia moves towards greater defence self-reliance in terms of the defence of Australia it is reinforcing its defence relationship with the US in terms of broader regional security.

And even at the global level conventional deterrence has a role to play. Australia's contribution to operations such as the coalitions formed in the Gulf War, Somalia and Cambodia show Australia's commitment to contribute to support of the UN and consequently enhance international deterrence.

For Australia, within the general concept of conventional deterrence, therefore, a range of deterrence strategies must be considered. These are summarised in Table 1:

<b>Deterrence Strategy</b>	<b>Nature</b>
<i>Direct deterrence</i>	Unilateral action, based on Australia's own advanced conventional forces
<i>Extended Deterrence (1)</i>	Extended from the US to Australia under the ANZUS alliance (Some collective deterrence from New Zealand)
<i>Extended Deterrence (2)</i>	From Australia to islands of the South Pacific, Papua New Guinea, regional neighbours
<i>Collective Deterrence</i>	Some deterrence provided by regional nations working together to deter outside threats
<i>International Deterrence</i>	Potential collective action by the world community to resist aggression
<i>Vertical Deterrence</i>	From conventional level to lower level conflict - also relevant in broader security 'policing' roles
<i>Deterrence of Vertical and Horizontal Escalation</i>	Relevant in the case of lower level conflict where Australia would aim to either deter or control escalation
<i>Inter-conflict Deterrence</i>	Decisive acts of compellence to deter future actions - relevant in the cases of lower level conflict and counterproliferation action
<i>Self deterrence</i>	Relevant where nuclear states are self deterred from threatening Australia

**Table 1 - The Range of Conventional Deterrence Strategies Relevant to Australian Security**

The likely success of these deterrence strategies against the range of threats Australia could face is summarised in Table 2:



Threat		Seriousness for Australia	Likelihood	Warning Time	Likely Success of Deterrence			Comment
					Communication	Capability	Credibility	
Large Scale Conventional Attack		High - fundamental to the survival of the nation	Extremely low - made so at least in part by existence of credible military capability.	Considerable - in the order of 5-10 years - dependent on development of capability <i>relative to</i> ADF	Virtually assured - achieved implicitly through maintenance of forces and explicitly through official policy statements	Existing forces are large in regional terms and highly capable but are dependent on US for logistic support	There would be no doubt that Australia would use all force at its disposal to defend its territory	Maintenance of credible military forces generates warning time and maintains the inverse relationship between seriousness & likelihood of threat
Short Warning Conflict	Upper Level	Not a fundamental threat to survival of the nation but as regional capabilities increase, the seriousness of the threat increases	Low - there is no existing conflict of interests or a foreseeable situation where conflict is likely to occur.	Short (by definition) - capabilities already exist in the region. Warning based on change in motivation and intent.	Virtually assured - achieved implicitly through maintenance of forces and explicitly through official policy statements.	Existing forces are large in regional terms and highly capable but are dependent on US for logistic support. Logistics support may be a major consideration when a rapid response is required.	There would be no doubt that Australia would use all force at its disposal to defend its territory.	The higher the threat, the higher the potential loss to the deterrer and hence deterrence is more likely to be successful.
	Lower Level	Low - no fundamental threat to the nation but must be dealt with decisively	The most likely form of direct threat to the mainland but there is still no obvious motivation.	Short (by definition) - capabilities already exist. Warning based on change in motivation and intent.	As above	Largely relies on vertical interaction from forces developed for higher level threats - information is the key to apply asymmetric force capabilities.	As above	Highly motivated aggressors may be difficult to deter in all cases - deterrence may have to be inter-conflict in nature.
Proliferation of WMD		High - potential for massive loss of life or coercion	Not high but more likely than a large-scale conventional attack.	Short - such weapons can be acquired relatively quickly and cheaply.	Australia's interests are easily communicated but a unilateral deterrent threat would be difficult to formulate and communicate	There is little Australia can do unilaterally - short of acquiring similar weapons action would require pre-emptive strikes.	It would be difficult to convince an adversary that Australia would act unilaterally to remove such a threat.	Action must be to prevent proliferation rather than use - a global approach is required.

Threat		Seriousness for Australia	Likelihood	Warning Time	Likely Success of Deterrence			Comment
					Communication	Capability	Credibility	
Extended Security Interests	PNG & SW Pacific	Not a serious threat but any attack would have undesirable strategic consequences	Not high but much more likely than a direct threat to Australia.	Short - sufficient regional capabilities already exist.	Doubtful - there are no definite statements that Australia would act to protect these extended interests.	Australia's force projection capabilities are limited but likely to be adequate to deal with likely threats.	Any Australian action would be a political decision at the time - commitment is therefore questionable.	The success of deterrence will be determined by the balance of interests in any specific case.
	SLOCs	A major disruption of SLOCs could have serious economic consequences for Australia and other trading nations.	Not high but more likely than a direct attack on Australia.	Short - necessary maritime forces exist in the region.	There is no clear statement of in what cases Australia would fight.	Australia's limited force projection capabilities would have trouble dealing with threats far from the mainland or over an extensive area.	Any Australian response would be based on a consideration of costs and benefits at the time.	It would be unclear to any potential aggressor in what cases it would fight and what price it would be willing to pay.
	Offshore Resources	As above but more of a unilateral interest.	As above.	As above.	As above.	As above.	As above.	More likely to be of unilateral security interest than for SLOCs.
General Regional Security		Indirect but significant in the medium to long term.	High - conflicts of interest and tensions already exist.	Short - both capability and intent are already present.	Little Australia can do unilaterally - communication will be based on perception to act as part of an informal security community.	Australia's limited force projection capabilities would limit its contribution to any conflict far from Australia.	Australia at best provides an ambiguous commitment to act in response to a conflict far from its shores.	Stability largely dependent on US presence and the deterrence it provides.
Global Security		Low in terms of a direct threat to Australia's security.	High - many conflicts of interest and tensions already exist.	Almost none - since the end of the Cold War many conflicts have broken out with little warning.	Communication of deterrent threat is based on reputation of UN actions in past conflicts.	Based on perceived willingness of the international community to contribute forces.	Credibility of deterrent threat is based on reputation of UN actions in past conflicts.	It would be difficult for any potential aggressor to determine beforehand in what cases the UN would intervene.

**Table 2 - Likely Success of Australia's Deterrence Strategies**

*CONCLUDING REMARKS*

Deterrence is not, of course, the only security strategy Australia can or has adopted to promote its security. A range of parallel strategies of reassurance and positive inducements is available and, as concluded in Part 1, is required to maximise the likelihood of deterrence success and increase the prospects for stability. The fundamental challenge for security planners is therefore one of balance between:

- military and non-military means to provide security;
- strategies of deterrence, reassurance and positive inducements;
- unilateral and collective action;
- action at the national, regional and global levels; and
- the demands of higher and lower levels of conflict.

Because deterrence will continue to play a central role in Australia's future security strategy, understanding the nature of deterrence - where it can be successful, where it may fail, and what can enhance its prospects for success - is an essential part of security planning. These issues will be critical as Australia increasingly moves its focus from the direct defence of Australia, where conflicts of interests are unlikely and there is no question of Australia's commitment, to a regional defence focus, where conflicts of interests already exist and Australia's commitment is at best ambiguous.

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# INDEX

- accommodation, 51
- Additional Protocols, 18
- advanced delivery systems, 10, 23
- advantage
  - military capability, 22
- aggression, 30
- aircraft, 6, 17, 54
- airpower, 17
- alliances, 6, 19, 42
- ambiguous inhibition, 40
- analysis
  - methodological problems, 39
  - research design, 39
- Argentina, 31, 34, 51
- Asia-Pacific region
  - arms spending, 74
  - ASEAN, 81
  - Cold War, 74
  - growth of economies, 81
  - interdependence, 74
  - power vacuum, 74
  - security, 74
  - Spratly Islands, 98
  - stability, 74
  - uncertainty, 74
  - US forces, 74
- asymmetry, 9, 22
- Australia
  - Additional Protocols, 77
  - ADF, 73, 75, 80, 86, 94
    - most likely use of, 98
  - ADF, reputation, 80
  - advanced delivery systems, 87
  - aggression, costs of, 78
  - air and sea approaches, 72, 77
  - allied support, 86
  - anti-ship capability, 78
  - ANZUS, 93, 94
  - balance of interests, 73
  - Biological Weapons Convention, 77
  - capability
    - asymmetry, 85
    - commonality of requirements, 84
    - defender's advantage, 91
    - flexibility in application, 84
    - force projection, 91
    - human factors, 82
    - regional balance, 82
    - vertical interaction, 84, 85
  - challenges, forms of, 82
  - Chemical Weapons Convention, 77
  - Christmas and Cocos Islands, 90
  - Closer Defence Relations, 95
  - coercion, 84
  - Cold War, 87
  - collective security arrangements, 93
  - command and control, 80
  - conflict of interests, 83
  - counter terrorism, 85
  - counterproliferation, 87
  - DA 94, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 84
  - defence commitments for other countries, 90
  - defence expenditure, 79, 81
  - defence in depth, 71
  - defence policy, 79
  - denial, 77, 79
  - denial strategy, 72
  - depth in defence, 71
  - deterrence
    - basic deterrence, 75, 76
    - capability, 79
    - communication, 79
    - credibility of, 80
    - effectiveness of, 77
    - extended deterrence, 93
    - inter-conflict, 89
    - vertical interaction, 90
  - differentiation between ends and means, 72
  - direct response, 84
  - disproportionate response, 77
  - doctrine, 80
  - ensurance, 73
  - escalation, 86
  - Exercise Kangaroo 92, 86
  - extended security interests, 72
  - F-111s, 74, 79, 85
  - features of strategic environment, 76
  - fighter/strike aircraft, 85
  - force level required, 73
  - force structure priority, 84
  - FPDA, 93
  - global security, 93
  - harassment, 83
  - Harpoon anti-ship missile, 80
  - indirect response, 84, 86
  - Indonesia, 75, 94
  - information, 85
  - insurance, 73
  - intelligence, 78, 79, 85, 91
  - interactive nature of strategy, 73
  - interests
    - broader, 91
    - extended, 91
    - offshore, 91
    - offshore resources, 90
    - offshore territories, 90
    - range of, 89
    - value of, 91
  - Irian Jaya, 94

- Japan, 75
  - threat from, 81
- land forces, 85
- likelihood and seriousness of threat, 83
- logistic support, 79
- lower-level conflict, 83
- military advantage, 81
- military capability, 75
- misunderstandings about deterrence, 72
- most serious form of threat, 76
- New Zealand, 93, 94
  - capabilities, 95
- Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, 77
- offensive capability, 79
- offshore interests, 90
- Papua New Guinea, 93, 95
- peace-keeping, 95
- policy tension, 72
- political concession, 76, 83
- political constraints, 86
- power projection, 82
- precision attack capability, 79
- precision guided munitions, 80, 85
- pre-emption, 91
- prime targets, 78
- proactive strategy, 73
- protection of vital assets, 78, 85
- reactive strategy, 73
- regional capabilities, 84
- regional security, 93
- response
  - direct, 91
- retaliation, 77, 78, 80, 86
- security
  - economic and environmental factors, 89
  - interests, 90
  - multi-dimensional nature, 89
  - sea lines of communication, 90
- security environment, 73
- self reliance, 86
- self-defeating, 73
- self-reliance, 71, 79
- self-reliant, 94
- seriousness and likelihood of threat, 87
- seriousness and likelihood of threats, 75
- short warning conflict, 84
- stockholding of weapons, 80
- strategy
  - self defeating, 91
- strike capability, 72
- strike forces, 79, 80, 86
- surveillance, 78, 85, 91
- targets, 85
  - counterforce, 78
  - political value, 78
- technological edge, 81
- terrorism, 83
- threats, offshore territories, 83
- unilateral action, 71
- United Nations, 87
- US support, 79, 86, 93, 94
- Vietnam, 93
- warning time, 75, 84, 87
- WMD, 77, 83, 87
  - proliferation of, 87
- balance
  - capability, 45
  - changes in, 50
  - external, 19
  - of interests, 41
  - of power, 47
- ballistic missiles, 23
- Bay of Pigs, 37
- Beirut, 18
- beliefs, 50
- benefits, 25
- Berlin, 48
- bluff, 28, 33, 57
- Bosnia, 10, 58
- Britain, 31, 34
- calculations, 47
- capability, 28
  - amount required, 28
  - balance, 45
  - defence vs. deterrence, 54
  - effect of, 50
  - meaning of, 28
  - nuclear weapons, 10
- carrots and sticks, 53
- case studies, 40
- casualties, 10
- casus belli, 13, 19, 28
- challenges, 20, 27, 29, 41
- Chemical Weapons Convention, 60
- China, 48
- coalition, 20
- Cold War, 1, 7, 10, 19, 20, 23, 40
- collateral damage, 29
- commitment, 29
  - demonstration of, 48
  - level of, 49
  - perception of, 34
  - political nature of, 29
- communication, 28
  - difficulty, 57
  - explicit, 28
  - implicit, 28
  - means of, 28
  - of capability, 16
- compellence, 5
- competitors, 32
- conflict
  - political nature of, 50
  - termination of, 57
- conflict short of war, 20
- conflict spiral, 35
- contestability, 10, 53, 56
- conventional weapons

- advanced capabilities, 58
- capabilities, 10
- counterproliferation use of, 24
- dominance, 20
- future role, 10
- limitations, 10
- precision, 10, 18
- punishment by, 54
- US dominance, 10
- useability, 56
- cost-benefit calculus, 47
- costs, 16, 25
  - in lives, 29
  - of inaction, 26, 47
  - political, 14
- credibility, 28
  - and reputation, 34
  - deterrent threat, 10
  - key determinant of, 29
  - loss of, 9
  - meaning of, 29
  - measure of, 26
  - need for, 19
  - threat, 10
- crisis, 35
  - characteristics of, 34
  - effect of, 32
- criticism
  - motivational assumption, 43
  - self-defeating, 43
- cruise missiles, 17
- Cuban Missile Crisis, 32
- cultural differences, 35, 50
- cultural influences, 33
- cumulative deterrence, 20
- Cyprus, 19
- deception, 16
- decision-making, 51
  - aggressor's, 32
  - bureaucratic, 37
  - complexity, 35
  - cultural differences, 50
  - deterrent's, 34
  - group, 22, 36
  - influencing, 30
  - levels of, 36
  - national actor, 37
  - political, 51
  - process, 26, 29
  - real world, 49
  - stimulus-response, 35
  - styles, 33
- decisive responses, 41
- defence, 54
- defender's advantage, 16
- defensive advantage, 19
- definition
  - basic deterrence, 14
  - collective deterrence, 19
  - conventional deterrence, 7
  - defence, 54
  - defensive deterrence, 14
  - deterrence, 5
  - direct deterrence, 18
  - extended deterrence, 19
  - general deterrence, 13
  - immediate deterrence, 13
  - indirect deterrence, 19
  - international deterrence, 19
  - limited deterrence, 20
  - military stability, 44
  - nuclear deterrence, 8
  - punishment, 16
  - retaliation, 16
  - total deterrence, 20
- denial, 1, 6, 14, 17, 54
- détente, 46
- deterrence
  - basic deterrence, 14, 32
  - collective deterrence, 19
  - conflict short of war, 20, 21
  - cumulative deterrence, 20, 21
  - definition, 5
  - direct deterrence, 18
  - extended deterrence, 19
  - failure, 17
  - general deterrence, 13, 32, 40, 49
  - horizontal interaction, 20
  - immediate deterrence, 1, 13, 40
  - inter-conflict, 22
  - international deterrence, 19
  - limited deterrence, 20
  - long-term relationships, 41
  - mutual, 8
  - nuclear, 1, 10
  - psychological basis, 30
  - pure, 13
  - self-deterrence, 8, 57
  - total deterrence, 20
  - vertical deterrence, 8
  - vertical interaction, 20, 22
- deterrence theory
  - comparison, 38
  - expected utility, 25
  - failure of, 41
  - psychological, 25, 29
  - rational, 25, 49
- deterrent
  - value, 27
- diplomacy, 45
- diversionary action, 51
- DoA 87, 73
- domestic survival, 33
- doubt, 28, 33, 34
- effectiveness, 17
- egoists, 32
- Egypt, 30, 41, 46, 47
- environmental terrorism, 59

- escalation, 20, 45
- ethnocentricity, 49
- Europe, 46
- expected utility, 37, 47, 53
- external factors, 30
- failure, 39, 41
  - all-or-nothing, 35
  - consequences, 8
  - in stages, 35
  - inevitability, 23
- fait accompli, 48
- Falklands, 34, 51
- falling dominoes, 19, 27
- false alarms, 34
- force projection, 19
- France, 16
- gains
  - political, 8
- Geneva Convention, 18
- gray area phenomena, 21
- Great Britain, 51
- Greece, 19, 46
- guerrilla, 20, 22, 58
- Gulf War, 10, 20, 58
- historical examples, 39
- Hitler, 33
- honour, 33
- human factors, 28, 49
- information, 32, 35, 37, 49, 56, 57
- intelligence, 22, 24, 49, 55
- intent, 16
- intentions, 36, 40
  - aggressive, 28
- interests, 16
- inviolable threshold, 9
- involvement, 10
- Iraq, 23, 24, 31, 50
- irrevocable commitment, 31
- Israel, 20, 23, 30, 41, 46, 47
- Japan, 19, 50
- Khrushchev, 32
- Kuwait, 31, 49, 50
- leaders, 21, 29, 33, 34, 41, 51
- leverage, 10
- limited security regime, 31
- logic, 25
- logistics support, 28
- MAD, 1, 7
- Maginot Line, 57
- massive retaliation, 7
- measures
  - absolute, 17, 28
  - relative, 16, 28
- Middle East, 50
- military power, 5, 71
- military stability, 44
- mirroring, 50
- Missile Technology Control Regime, 60
- morale, 28
- motivation, 30, 38, 41, 47, 53, 55
- motives, 36, 50, 55
- national power, 71
- NATO, 19, 40
- need, 30, 32
- non-offensive defence, 14
- norms of competition, 31
- North Korea, 48
- NPT, 1, 60
- nuclear deterrence, 47
- nuclear weapons, 1, 7, 8, 16, 57
  - proliferation, 23
  - strategic, 11
  - tactical, 11
- opportunity, 30, 43
- options, 48, 53
  - narrowing, 41
- Osiraq, 24
- overreaction, 45
- peaceful relationships, 41
- Pearl Harbor, 50
- perceptions, 38, 55
- personality, 32, 34
  - effect of, 34
- political, 50
  - commitment, 29
  - considerations, 51
  - domestic, 51
  - value, 27
  - will, 29
- population, 6
- positive inducements, 46, 52
- pre-emption, 16, 17, 18, 24, 54
- pressure, 51
  - domestic, 51
- prevention, 16, 24
- psychological
  - egoists, 32
- psychology
  - difference, 9
  - effect, 6
  - ego, 33
  - factors, 32
  - groupthink, 36
  - mental stability, 32
  - misperception, 35
  - motivated misperception, 35
  - pressure, 22, 32, 35
  - self-confidence, 33
- punishment, 6, 16, 17, 18, 54
- Quemoy, 48
- rationality
  - assumption of, 25, 46
  - gross irrationality, 32
  - irrational, 21, 25
  - irrational elements, 37
  - objective, 21
  - subjective, 21
- reassurance, 31

- reciprocity, 31
- Republican Guard, 57
- reputation, 19, 23, 29, 34
- retaliation, 8, 16
- rewards, 6, 46, 52
- risk, 25, 31
- risk calculus, 26
- risk-taking, 37
  - propensity, 33
- rogue states, 10
- Saddam Hussein, 49, 50
- Scud missiles, 23
- security
  - government duty, 71
  - new agenda, 89
  - non traditional, 89
  - widening definition of, 89
- security dilemma, 44
- self-reliance, 19
- self-restraint, 31
- sensitivity to casualties, 18, 29, 59
- Somalia, 58
- South Korea, 48
- Soviet Union, 7, 40, 45, 48
- stability
  - requirements for, 44
- status quo, 19, 47
- strategic culture, 38, 50, 73
- strategic personality, 38, 73
- strategies
  - alternate, 31
  - choosing, 16
  - controlled pressure, 48
  - counters, 58
  - defensive, 54
  - demand-side, 23
  - enmeshment, 46
  - exclusion, 59
  - incremental, 58
  - limited aims, 41, 48
  - limited probes, 58
  - mix of, 32, 55
  - mixture of, 46
  - parallel, 55
  - reassurance, 31
  - reward, 52
  - rewards, 46
  - supply-side, 23
  - synergistic effect, 53
- success, 41
  - analysis of, 39
- surprise, 16
  - technological, 28
- symmetry, 45
- Tachens, 48
- Taiwan, 48
- targets
  - classifying, 18
  - counterforce, 16, 18
  - countervalue, 16, 18
  - leaders, 18
  - population, 18
  - punishment, 16
- territorial defence, 14
- terrorism, 20, 22, 58, 59
- threats
  - likelihood, 14
  - non-military, 46
  - responding to, 33
  - specificity, 13
- time, 40
- training, 28
- trip-wire, 19, 28
- Turkey, 19, 46
- Type I errors, 56
- Type II errors, 56
- UN, 20, 24
- uncertainty, 25, 31, 49
- United States, 7, 19, 50
  - conventional dominance, 10
- unreliable, 56
- value
  - assessment of, 29
  - deterrent, 27
  - instrumental, 27
  - intrinsic, 27
  - meaning of, 27
  - political, 7, 18, 27
  - power, 27
  - strategic, 27
  - system, 8
- values, 38
  - different systems, 49
  - system, 25
  - Western, 35
  - worldwide, 35
- warning time, 14
- weakness, 31, 33, 35, 45, 52
- weakness hypothesis, 30
- Western Europe, 40
- WMD, 10, 16, 20, 23, 24, 58, 59
  - defence against, 23
  - destruction of, 24
- zero-sum game, 52