

Regional Deterrence in the Future Security Environment

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Traditional deterrence in the current security environment is likely to fail. In some scenarios, U.S. response options are insufficient, thus constituting a deterrent gap. A strategy of “assertive persuasion” has the potential to reestablish a “dynamic deterrence” foundation while building on U.S. strengths and minimizing its political-military vulnerabilities.

Introduction

A key threat to the United States is the prospect of facing a regional power that, unlike Iraq in the 1990–91 Gulf War, has a more sophisticated arsenal, a greater understanding of technology, and a greater willingness to employ the full strength of its weaponry against intervening forces. Asymmetric and indirect strategies will also challenge traditional U.S. political-military calculations regarding power projection. These developments will complicate U.S. deterrent options. This paper argues that deterrence in the current security environment is more likely to fail and that U.S. response options are insufficient. This constitutes a deterrent gap. A strategy of “assertive persuasion” has the potential to reestablish a “dynamic deterrence” foundation while building on U.S. strengths and minimizing its political-military vulnerabilities.

This paper is divided into three major parts. The first part deals with the changing post Cold War environment and is divided into three subsections. In the first subsection, the 1990–91 Gulf War is used as a case

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study. This conflict exemplifies a portion of the modern conflict spectrum and highlights variables that impact regional deterrence. In the second and third subsections, two further specific factors that have altered the traditional Cold War environment are analyzed: proliferation and the ongoing technological, organizational, and operational evolution in military affairs. The second major part examines the role of military force and deterrence in the post-Cold War environment, arguing that traditional U.S. political-military criteria regarding the use of force are too stringent and potentially detrimental to U.S. deterrence efforts. In the third and final part, a strategy of "assertive persuasion" is proposed. This part is broken into three subsections, as well, in which the required components of deterrence are discussed: communication, capability, and credibility. The central focus of this paper is on the potential use of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) or conventional "niche" capabilities by a regional power.

Factors That Alter the Traditional Cold War Environment

United States-Soviet deterrence reflected the unique post-war bipolar nuclear competition. Its subsequent replication between the United States and regional powers in the post-Cold War world is unlikely. Both the United States and the Soviet Union devoted considerable resources to military competition, manifested in part by the creation and maintenance of robust, survivable strategic nuclear forces. With these forces came institutions and concomitant constraints on nuclear use. The United States and Soviet Union also became risk-averse and conservative in their use of nuclear weapons—particularly after the Cuban Missile Crisis. This achieved, in retrospect, a measure of predictability. Deterrence, however, was based on abstract notions that corresponded with an overarching foreign policy designed to contain one primary adversary (Martel and Pendley 1994, 17–18; Dunn 1993, 39; George and Smoke 1974, 2, part 1). The present era, however, will require a spectrum of context-dependent strategies to contend with the problem of WMD and conventional niche capabilities possessed by a range of regional powers.

The 1990–91 Gulf War

An examination of the U.S. experience with Iraq, from the summer of 1990 through the conclusion of the Gulf War, uncovers three relevant issues for

U.S. regional deterrence policy. First, during the events leading up to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990, there was no deterrent relationship between Washington and Baghdad. When the United States attempted, belatedly, to establish immediate extended deterrence during the last two weeks of July 1990 it failed (Morgan 1993). Both communication and credibility had been undermined; U.S. deterrent signals were neither clear nor persuasive because its Iraqi policy, codified in National Security Directive 26 of October 1989, was designed to further political, military, and economic relations, moderate Iraq's international behavior, and encourage Baghdad to stabilize the region as a counter to Iran.

Second, the extension of immediate deterrence through operation Desert Shield was made necessary in large part because of the formidable political-cultural-strategic divide between the United States and Iraq. For example, Saddam held obstinate views of the United States, in particular that the United States was seeking to undermine his regime through covert action and economic warfare. In addition, Saddam was convinced that the United States would not react to his quick alteration of the status quo, and he was equally sure that the United States would not be willing to suffer casualties over it. Furthermore, Saddam's invasion of Kuwait had become necessary for domestic political and economic reasons and he saw an opportunity to reassert both Iraq's claim against Kuwait and to control oil pricing (Allan 1994; Haffa 1992; Watman and Wilkening 1995). Thus, effective communication was blocked—through skewed perceptions and domestic political considerations—with the result that each escalation created more obdurate and intransigent behavior.

The conflict with Iraq also indicates that the United States may encounter "undeterrable" or "unstoppable" actors in the future—at least until a greater appreciation for different cultural and value systems can be incorporated into new deterrence concepts. The prospects for non-violent interaction of U.S. and non-U.S. concepts of rationality in a crisis are challenged by the existence of conflicting ethnic, religious, and domestic political perspectives. The United States, too, must grapple with alternative value systems in which interests, incentives, and disincentives are determined in a manner which may defy U.S. attempts to deter. These different conceptions of rationality will erode the effectiveness of U.S. deterrence strategies.

Third, U.S. military effectiveness in the Gulf War challenged the dominant nuclear deterrence paradigm of the Cold War by highlighting the possibility of using conventional forces and missile defenses in a

deterrent role. Demonstrated U.S. advantages in conventional weapon technology also increase the likelihood that opposing forces will adopt asymmetric strategies. These options could include the use of WMD, low-intensity-conflict (LIC), or even forms of information warfare, designed to thwart U.S. military-technological preeminence.

Technology Diffusion

The continuing scope and pace of proliferation of WMD, delivery systems, conventional and space-related technological components, know-how, and processes challenge U.S. deterrence efforts. Divergent histories, political-strategic cultures, perceptions, values, and interests influence the decision to acquire or develop these capabilities—for deterrence, stability, regional dominance, and/or desires for prestige—and they will retain their motivational power (Martel and Pendley 1994, 21–26; Millot, Molander, and Wilson 1993).

Currently, at least 24 countries possess or are pursuing WMD. By the turn of the century, twenty or more developing countries could acquire ballistic missiles, at least nine could have nuclear weapons, thirty or more could have chemical weapons, and ten could maintain biological weapons stockpiles (Woolsey 1993, 1995; Payne 1995, 203, fn. 5; 1992; Roberts 1993). It is expected that proliferative capabilities in these categories will vary widely.

A key concern for the United States regarding new WMD powers revolves around the degree of control and the incentives for use of these capabilities. WMD capabilities impute a greater sense of political-military confidence, heighten an opponent's sense of vulnerability, and can make conflict more likely (Millot 1994; Garrity 1993a, 152–53; Garrity and Weiner 1992, 64). Despite arguments to the contrary made by Waltz and Van Creveld (Sagan and Waltz 1995, 42–45; Van Creveld 1994, 269),¹ the possibility of “safe and secure” ownership of these weapons is questionable. Given an owner country's frequent geographic proximity to enemies, the emphasis placed by owners on crisis readiness, and in some cases their level of animosity toward other regimes, the stability of such environments must remain in doubt. The pressures to *act* in a crisis due to various domestic forces and, similarly, the potential for these regimes to distract their populations from deteriorating socioeconomic issues by turning to external conflict add to destabilization in a proliferated world. In addition, many Third World regimes of concern are dominated by military-run or weak civilian-led governments, while varying infrastructural

capacities, safety standards, and political and technical competence in safe and secure command and control may not be adequate (Sagan and Waltz 1995, 48–49). Finally, “reliable” ownership is controversial because there have already been instances of missile and Chemical Weapons (CW) use in the Third World. Ballistic and cruise missiles have been used in regional conflicts eight times since the Third Arab-Israeli War in 1967, and CW has been used at least three times since 1967 (Carus 1991, 3–11; System Planning Corporation 1992, 7–10, 32; OTA-ISC-559 1993, 58, fn.18; Waters 1990).² The use of CW is particularly significant since it represents violations of international norms.

The proliferation problem, however, is more expansive and pervasive than WMD and ballistic missiles. Conventional weapons diffusion of diesel submarines, anti-ship cruise missiles, wake homing torpedoes, mines, unmanned aerial vehicles, C3I systems, and tactical fighter aircraft, is a burgeoning strategic threat as well (Sokolski 1994). The acquisition of these systems may allow for “niche competitors” to pursue strategies designed to prevent or limit U.S. involvement in a region. The globalization of the arms industry, illustrated by the conundrum of dual-use technologies, is another emerging proliferation challenge which may create and sustain niche suppliers (Bitzinger 1994). Space is a further dimension of the problem, in part because it is difficult to distinguish between a civil and military space program. Space-based proliferation concerns also include satellites and other targeting and navigational capabilities that increase missile accuracy, lethality, and sophistication (Nolan 1991, 40–41; MDST 1995, 10, fig.1–2).

Proliferation is thus a process that yields long-term benefits to the recipient country. While the transfer of completed items continues, proliferation today is increasingly composed of production processes and components. The future of technology diffusion is likely to be marked by the transfer of development processes that generate enabling technologies. Proliferation continues in tandem with technological development and economic realities; though it can be slowed, it cannot be eliminated (Moodie 1995, 188–89).

Other proliferation-related challenges that impact the future of regional deterrence include the “handful of weapons” problem and the “virtual arsenal” puzzle. The former refers to the reality that, in order to influence U.S. behavior, a regional adversary requires only a small number of nuclear weapons rather than a high-quality superpower arsenal (Molander and Wilson 1993, 20,26,30; Mandelbaum 1995, 22). “Virtual”

capabilities and arsenals refer to prepositioned personnel with materials that can be rapidly built or assembled. For example, a nuclear infrastructure could be revealed, its production capability surged; changes in infrastructure operations to expose a military capability could be considered nuclear employment (NSPA and ANSER 1994, xiv–xv, ch.2). Other elements of this problem include the rising quality of scientific and technical infrastructures in the developing world, the improvement of commercial nuclear infrastructures, as well as the accumulation of fissile material (Roberts 1995, 7; Makhijani 1995; Wohlstetter and Jones 1995, 11–12).

Technology diffusion promises to shape future security affairs by enabling asymmetric strategies. These strategies could attempt to neutralize U.S. high-technology advantages, preclude or limit U.S. involvement in a region, or—in hopes of undermining U.S. national cohesion—raise the perceived costs of political-military intervention through the threat of protracted and bloody conflict (Garrity 1993b; Mahnken 1993; Dunn 1994; Cohen 1994; Blackwell, Mazarr, and Snider 1993). As an illustration, opposing forces could control the threshold of conflict by pursuing limited objectives which may not necessarily elicit U.S. attention. In the pursuit of these limited objectives, niches within the spectrum of conflict could be exploited, such as guerrilla warfare, terrorism (possibly with WMD), LIC, WMD, or economic, financial, or communications dislocation through nascent or more advanced forms of information warfare. Niche capabilities could complicate U.S. military operations by impeding logistical operations, access to key facilities, or by coercing U.S. friends and allies to prohibit U.S. access to the theater.

The Evolution in Military Affairs

How the United States deters, as well as the strategic landscape in general, will be affected by the ongoing evolution in military affairs. There are three components to this evolution: operational innovation, organizational adaptation, and emerging technologies. Any one of these elements can be individually important, but to capture their full potential, the synergistic effects of these elements must be utilized (Cooper 1994, 19–21; Mazarr 1994, 8–27).³

In sum, the conduct and effect of military operations in the Gulf War have been interpreted as a vision of a new way of conducting war: precision munitions, stealth, and space-based (near real-time) information

assets providing local commanders with information that yielded detailed situational awareness of Iraqi forces. Three particular advantages of U.S. forces in Desert Storm are key to the future evolution of the U.S. military. First, superior Command, Control, Communications, and Intelligence (C3I), comprising satellites, tactical navigational systems exemplified by the Global Positioning System (GPS), and reconnaissance platforms such as JSTARS and AWACS. These capabilities coalesced to give the operational commander enhanced situational awareness. Though there are problems to be addressed, joint combat power benefited from the free flow of information in a top-down, bottom-up, and side-to-side fashion (Allard 1994, 165–66, 171–77). A second advantage was in air defense suppression through stealth, cruise missiles, and antiradiation missile strikes against key enemy command and control nodes. Third, precision munitions combined with stealth technology to greatly facilitate efficient and lethal attacks against enemy centers of gravity. Importantly, it was the synergy among these elements that made their impact on Iraqi forces truly dominating.

The current evolution in military affairs is about further integration and timely military action based upon precise information, “coherent operations” that continue the trend away from strategic, operational, and tactical distinctions, and the elimination of pyramid-style command structures (Cooper 1994, 26–31; Metz and Kievit 1995). The future of military affairs rests on the systems that generated the success of Desert Storm. Yet it also relies on a new “system of systems” composed of battle space awareness, advanced Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence (C4I), and the use of precision force (Owens 1995b). Battlespace (i.e., space, air, land, sea, and undersea) awareness is based on sensing and reporting technologies associated with intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR) that provide local commanders with precise information on the location and disposition of enemy forces. Advanced C4I relies on technologies that gather and extract pertinent information from battlespace awareness which are translated into a deeper and more thorough knowledge of the battlespace. This more thorough knowledge—referred to as Dominant Battlespace Knowledge (DBK)—can form the basis for missions and assignments (Johnson and Libicki 1995). Lastly, precision force exploits ISR and C4I and continues the trend towards timely, lethal, and discriminate strikes against enemy centers of gravity (Allard 1994, 164, n.4, 175–77; Cooper 1995, 26–31; Kraus 1995; Libicki

1995).⁴ "Coherent operations" envision simultaneous parallel operations that are synchronized, integrated, and conducted at a high operational tempo, with high lethality and mobility, and that occur throughout the depth and extent of the theater.

The evolution in military affairs will allow the United States to retain and further develop the significant technological advantages demonstrated in the Persian Gulf War. In doing so, U.S. decision makers will be able to reduce the effectiveness of WMD, niche capabilities, and other asymmetric strategies that seek to either protract a conflict or make it too costly for the United States. In turn, U.S. regional deterrence may be enhanced. However, in order to assure the success of regional deterrence, the United States will need to be more willing to use its military capabilities, demonstrating their effectiveness.

The Role of Military Force and Deterrence in the Post-Cold War Environment

Should military force remain a key function and tool of foreign policy, or should diplomacy and trade predominate in the promotion of U.S. interests and pursuit of objectives? The issue of how the military will be used and the composition of *effective* force are now of critical importance for regional deterrence planning. The United States prefers to use military force as a last resort when there are clear threats to vital national interests. It takes time to gain (or form) public support and the United States usually exercises a range of unilateral and possibly multilateral diplomatic and economic options before resorting to force. But the chances for miscommunication and misperception between the United States and a regional power with WMD have increased. This heightens the prospect that immediate deterrence will fail. Reliance on the use of military force as a compellent may be required to reestablish deterrent thresholds.

The current—and foreseeable—international political environment constitutes a multidimensional power spectrum that can be envisioned as a three-level structure. The top level is traditional state-centered military power, presently embodied by the United States. The second level is distinguished by economic and technological strength and has been composed of the United States, Europe, and Japan for the last 20–30 years. These two levels are comprised of advanced nation states. The third level corresponds to sub-state, non-state, and transnational challenges to state authority and legitimacy. These groups and organizations, ranging from

ethnonationalist or religious groups to international criminal organizations, have a wide dispersal of power at their disposal and an increasingly pervasive and negative influence (Nye 1991, 46; Van Creveld 1991; Haass 1994, 1–18).

In this framework, power—the ability to achieve one's goals by altering the behavior of another entity—consists of resources and the ability to convert these resources into power potential. Yet resources comprise more than what is measured by traditional indices of population, raw materials, military forces, and territory. Resources also include economic strength, technological prowess, political stability, and the appeal of culture, ideas, and institutions. Nye distinguishes between command (hard) power—the power to induce or in some other way change what others do, through coercion if necessary—and co-optative (soft) power—the power to shape what people want, through culture and ideas for example (Nye 1991, 42).

Because power is multidimensional and international relations are currently in a period of uncertainty, it is not surprising that there are different ideas as to how and when to use force as a deterrent (Allan 1994; Stern et al. 1989, 315–16; Jervis, Lebow, and Stein 1985, ch. 8–9; Chayes and Chayes 1995). However, a flexible and adaptable merging of diplomacy and force that creates a more credible foreign policy is still required. Declaratory policies, though, continue to advocate that overwhelming force (possibly with artificial time lines) for the protection of vital national interests be used only as a last resort and only when casualties can be limited (Garrity 1993b, 152–153).⁵ While these criteria may be appropriate in some limited circumstances (for example, in the case of a Major Regional Contingency), they do not offer the basis for a flexible and effective U.S. policy for the broader range of possible scenarios. Similarly, sole reliance on military force to achieve political objectives cannot be the policy prescription for all circumstances.

Since general deterrence between the United States and regional powers is unsure, and because extending immediate deterrence may fail due to political-cultural-strategic divides, a willingness to use limited amounts of force when less than vital interests are threatened may contribute to the reestablishment of regional deterrence by communicating intent, will, and capability more credibly (Luttwak 1995, 110–12, 115; Nathan 1996, 61).⁶ Policies allowing for a more flexible use of force will allow the United States to respond quickly and effectively to threats from regional powers. When deterrence is uncertain, the use of force supple-

mented by diplomatic efforts could have positive impact. Operation Desert Shield in August, 1990, is illustrative of a quick use of force as a successful deterrent. Military force was rapidly deployed to deter Iraq and defend Saudi Arabia. As those forces did not have the capability, or authority, to threaten Iraq, room for diplomacy remained (George and Simons, 1994, 7–8, 10–11; Cimbala 1994, 169 fn.5). The quick U.S. reaction to Iraqi troop deployments in October 1994 is another example of how a limited signal of intent contributed to the reestablishment of credibility and thus the maintenance of deterrence. Similarly, the punitive firing of *Tomahawk* cruise missiles at Iraq's military intelligence headquarters in response to evidence of an Iraqi plot to assassinate former President George Bush is a demonstration of a limited, yet effective, military response (Davis 1995, 22–23).

Several points emerge from the preceding analysis. A proper balance between statecraft and military force is necessary, given the continuing struggle for advantage in an international system where national power and relative position remain inherently important. Due in particular to the proliferation of military technology and advances in the development of high technology, power has become more diffuse and multidimensional, allowing for the possibility of accelerated state-based challenges. The prospects for altering the concept of deterrence are greater now than ever before. Yet distinctly different political-strategic cultures and value hierarchies, and the predominance of domestic political pressures in many countries, indicate the possibility of encountering “undeterrable” actors. Proliferation will increase their capabilities and means at their disposal, perhaps even expand their foreign policy ends, and allow for the utilization of asymmetric strategies. The nature of the WMD environment increases the stresses upon the system. A more active and flexible response to regional powers offers the best chance for strengthening the foundations of deterrence. By remaining with a policy of “all or nothing” options when its interests are threatened or impinged upon, the United States would encourage encroachments in regions or the testing of boundaries by regimes interested in altering the status quo.

A Proposed Strategy of Assertive Persuasion

Given the greater tendency for traditional threat-based deterrence to fail in the changing post Cold War environment, the nature of U.S. responses to regional power threats to U.S. interests is critical. U.S. strategic and

extended deterrence policy is still dominated by the nuclear paradigm, while conventional forces in a deterrent role have historically been unreliable—primarily because the threat of punishment by conventional deterrent forces does not imply to aggressors a high enough cost for their actions, should they disregard the deterrent measures. Thus, there is a deterrence gap between the United States and regional powers. While deterrence has traditionally been based on the *threat* to use force to punish or deny, force now needs to be *used* to punish and deny enemy military objectives promptly in order to reestablish regional deterrence based on three key elements: communication, capability, and credibility (Snyder 1977, 39–43; Kaufmann 1989, 171–73).

In what follows, “assertive persuasion” is advocated as a strategy that fills the deterrence gap by laying the foundations for the establishment of “dynamic deterrence”. This strategy takes advantage of the evolution in military affairs, reduces the impact of proliferation, niche capabilities, and asymmetric strategies, and would replace the current emphasis placed on nuclear deterrence with a new triad composed of precision forces, Ballistic Missile Defenses (BMD), and a secure nuclear reserve composed of strategic and tactical nuclear weapons.⁷ With assertive persuasion, the United States would not threaten the use of force but would instead practice “precision punishment” and denial through offensive military operations. Missile defenses would offer a damage limitation capability while facilitating military operations. Secure nuclear weapons would remain in the background projecting a deterrent shadow. The use of precision punishment and denial capabilities is necessary to convince opponents that these tools of assertive persuasion work forcefully, effectively, and discriminately. Once credible reputation has been established, dynamic deterrence, based on the threat of precision punishment and denial, will be possible.

Communication

The probability of miscommunication is higher when interests are not clearly defined, commitments are not expressly stated, and when opponents are already fixed on their objective. U.S. diplomatic and military reactions in the last two weeks of July 1990 illustrate this. Effectively communicating interests, intent, and consequences poses a series of problems. Communication is the key to knowing your enemies: their goals and what they are willing to risk. Through successful communication of

a credible threat of action in a deterrence situation, opposing leaders are made to focus on the probability of suffering maximum losses. They should be relatively unbiased in their assessments of information and realistically link actions to consequences; be well-informed and understand the interests, intentions, commitments, and values of their opponent; and base their decision on the military capabilities arrayed against them as opposed to domestic, internal factors (Payne and Fink 1993, 28; Payne 1993).

Yet this is a stringent set of requirements that may be difficult to meet in a crisis. To illustrate, Saddam Hussein failed in every one of these categories. His actions were shaped by domestic political factors. He had an unalterable belief that the United States was seeking to undermine his regime, therefore, incentives for a non-violent solution were reduced and numerous diplomatic offerings were rejected (Allan 1994, 218–220; Haffa 1992, 159–160; Watman and Wilkening 1995, 3–6, 27–36, 45–47). He misperceived the U.S. commitment, although Desert Shield and Allied deployments were not merely shows. In addition, Saddam was ill-informed about U.S. capabilities and modern warfare. He chose war in the face of military superiority and was willing to absorb punitive retaliation. Saddam exemplifies the type of opposition that the United States may face in the future: the decision maker who is disdainful of the status quo, willing to accept high risk and costs, and dependent on regime survival at the expense of all else (Payne 1993). Such opponents will be more likely to misperceive or underestimate U.S. threats and will therefore present significant deterrence challenges.

Consequently, the stable deterrent relationship manifest in the bilateral superpower nuclear framework of nearly a half century is not transferable to current regional deterrence dilemmas. In its place, an approach based on strategic personality would attempt to establish a more comprehensive knowledge of varied proliferators by pursuing key avenues of analysis where the United States has traditionally been deficient: history; culture (including ethnicity and religion); attitudes of the decisional unit; and alternate value systems. By utilizing a strategic personality approach, a mix of reassurances and threats may eventually be possible. For purposes of assertive persuasion, strategic personality would determine what instrument would affect the opponent's situational perception (Blackwill and Carter 1993, 236–37). For instance, drawing upon assessments of an opponent's strategic personality, precision punishment could focus on targets that the opposing regime values most. Given advancing levels of

precision location, identification, targeting, attack, and assessment, future opponents would be particularly susceptible to strikes. These strikes could target exposed communications; transportation; and energy production and distribution centers (Record 1994, 153; Cohen 1994, 124; Sample 1994).

Capability

Deterrence can be achieved by threatening punishment or denial of enemy military objectives through the defeat of their forces on the battlefield. In its most fundamental form, denial is non-offensive and focuses on territorial defense. Denial, therefore does not emphasize punishment of an aggressor (Snyder 1961, 14–16). But the Gulf War display of precision munitions, stealth, and space-based information assets was suggestive of a credible form of compellence—assertive persuasion through precision punishment and denial—that will bridge the deterrence gap and eventually constitute dynamic deterrence (Allan 1994, 207). A wider range of discriminate offensive military operations would facilitate precision punishment and deny the enemy its war objectives. Offensive contingencies would exploit U.S. advantages in conventional weapons technologies; stealth, precision strike, power projection with mobile forces; minimal dependence on logistics; and superior C4I capabilities (Haffa 1992; Nitze 1994).⁸ This approach, depending on U.S. objectives, could culminate in rapid and comprehensive strikes throughout the enemy's territory. Additionally, conventional preemptive strikes—disabling or destroying WMD programs before they can be used in a crisis or conflict—and preventive action—destroying the adversary's means of acquisition, development, or deployment of WMD—could be taken against opposing states before they are in a position to threaten U.S. forces, allies, or friends.

While preemptive and preventive options should not be excessively used, they are options that should not be discarded. Ideally, preventive operations would not involve overt military action. Alternatives include special operations forces, covert action, or possibly even the use of information-based attacks. These capabilities could be used when there is evidence that a crucial acquisition or key development milestone in a WMD program is about to be achieved and other attempts to dissuade that country have failed. Pursuing preventive options during these phases would probably be the most advantageous and least costly, even if

unsuccessful, since the more visible these capabilities become, the less vulnerable they are to this type of action. In a crisis or transition towards conflict, preemptive operations would be warranted if the threat of WMD attack against U.S. troops, allies, and friends is imminent. A preemptive operation could blunt the imminent attack or reduce an opponent's ability to retaliate (Flournoy 1993, 148–52; Zelikow 1993, 164–78).

Precision punishment would need to have excellent intelligence for either option. An opponent's force disposition, defenses, and military operations would need to be well known in order to determine the chances of success of preemptive strikes. Intelligence would need to provide for the location, size, strengths, and weaknesses of key facilities, components, and command and control centers. In a preventive attack during the acquisition and development phase, for example, the United States would need to be careful that it is in fact destroying a militarily-relevant target, not a purely commercial target, and that the expected benefits of action outweigh their cost. What are the chances for success, both in the short-term as well as the long-term? Will this attack halt their nuclear ambitions or inspire renewed efforts? Considerations of the likelihood and nature of retaliation—both directly on the United States, its troops, allies, and friends, or indirectly against U.S. interests abroad—would need to be incorporated as well.

This is a series of demanding tasks for the intelligence community. Proliferating WMD programs are likely to be small, dispersed, and some will be concealed within otherwise legitimate commercial enterprises. Thus, it will be a challenge for the intelligence community to determine whether a WMD-capable program actually exists, if it is in fact designed for civilian or military purposes, or has already produced a widely capable arsenal (Blackwill and Carter 1993). For military purposes, careful assessment of whether a specific target is worth destroying or disrupting, as well as determinations of technical location—in other words, “which building/window/time has to be targeted to achieve the desired effect”—are necessary (Smith 1995).

BMD would complement offensive denial operations. Missile defenses would reinforce regional deterrence in three ways. First, BMD will allow the United States to reassure friends and allies and, consequently, facilitate coalition-building. Second, BMD would limit the effectiveness of a potential strategy of a regional power: targeting the U.S. political-military vulnerability in the area of conflict prolongation and casualty sensitivity. Whereas regional powers may aim to exploit this vulnerability, as Saddam

sought to do in the Gulf War, the United States would be able to "attack the enemy's strategy" by denying them this alternative. Consequently, BMD allows for, and facilitates, power projection operations into WMD-laden regions while devaluing the utility of WMD and missile attacks. Third, BMD would limit damage to U.S. forces, thus eventually enhancing deterrence while contributing to U.S. control, or dominance, of escalation (Payne 1991, 50–51, 144; Director's Workshop Report 1993; Crospey 1994, 16–18; MDST 1995).

Nuclear weapons cannot yet be excluded from the deterrence equation, despite growing policy and financial support for some form of extended conventional deterrence complemented by BMD. Because fewer forces will be stationed abroad and there will be a greater dependence on power projection, extending nuclear deterrence may be more applicable, particularly in a scenario where U.S. and allied forces could be overrun by a conventional attack (Payne 1992, 269–82; Pape 1992; Quester and Utgoff 1994). But until precision punishment capabilities and the will to use them have been demonstrated by the United States and accepted by adversaries as an effective deterrent, the destructive power of nuclear weapons and the inability of these regimes to defend against them serve as psychological reinforcements of the prospect of massive damage and, therefore, deterrence. Further, extending nuclear deterrence in a regional conflict in order to deter WMD use may be more credible than previously thought. Saddam's cousin and son-in-law, Hussein Kamel al-Majid, who oversaw Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) programs, claimed after his defection that the fear of nuclear retaliation deterred Iraqi use of CW in the Persian Gulf War (Inside Saddam's Brutal Regime 1995, 82).

The concept of extended nuclear deterrence does not, however, refer to strategic nuclear forces. These weapons are too disproportionate to any threat the United States might face from a regional proliferator—with the exception of a WMD attack on the continental United States—and, thus, any threats involving these forces would most likely not be perceived as credible. Regional powers might even be encouraged by the prospect of such an incredible threat which amounts to U.S. self-deterrence. Deterrence may fail and the United States would be forced to make good on its threat or risk severely undermining the credibility of its extended deterrence policy. Therefore, small and flexible nuclear weapons would be more appropriate to deter these regional threats. These capabilities would have the added advantage of reassuring U.S. allies and friends while offering a plausible retaliatory capability in the event of WMD attack (Quester and Utgoff 1993; Strain 1993; Dowler and Howard 1995).

Credibility

The capability to punish and deny by putting at risk those things of value to a regional power through offensive military operations and BMD must be perceived as credible. Credibility depends on an adversary's perception of U.S. capability and political will. Establishing credibility is critical and there will be pressure on the United States to demonstrate these dynamic deterrent capabilities; the will to use them; their intensity; sophistication; the skill with which they are employed; and their reputed overwhelming effectiveness in order to reestablish deterrence. Despite the effectiveness of Coalition Forces in the Gulf War, conventional deterrence still has a negative reputation. It has been prone to failure in the past since aggressors often do not consider conventional deterrent forces capable of inflicting upon them a high enough price for their actions. As Saddam demonstrated, the political benefits to a small power can outweigh the military costs imposed by a large power (Orme 1987; Paul 1994, 35). Given the current deterrence gap, the establishment of dynamic deterrence may require the use of assertive persuasion to cultivate a reputation and reestablish thresholds beyond which challengers realize they will elicit a particular response.

The credibility of precision punishment and deterrence can be reinforced by forward presence activities in peacetime and in crisis periods.⁹ Forward presence can stabilize regional security, or at least reassure allies and friends, by demonstrating U.S. commitment to regional ties, guaranteeing ready access to the region, and allowing for a quick response should U.S. regional interests be threatened. Additionally, military exercises and training with pre-positioned equipment demonstrate the potential for interoperability, should a multilateral approach to a crisis be chosen, and the potential for rapid deployment in a crisis. Presence in a crisis situation would be undergirded by appropriate deployments of U.S. military forces, whether Navy Carrier Battle Groups, Marine Corps Amphibious Ready Groups, Air Force squadrons, or Army rapid deployment forces. These activities would signal politically—though less so than a peacetime forward presence—intent, resolve, and reassurance and, thus, could constitute a deterrent, while allowing for the option to transition to more aggressive functions.

Rapid projection of power is crucial to reassuring allies and friends, establishing a credible deterrent, or formulating a sensible crisis management response. Quick response can be achieved through position: naval

forward presence, Air Force bombers deployed from the United States, and forward deployed ground troops signaling a higher level U.S. political commitment (Davis 1995; Owens 1995a, ch.6–8; Perry et al. 1995). The United States must be able to demonstrate its capability to decisively defeat aggression when necessary, but the United States must also be capable of more limited uses of military power in order to resolve crises and signal commitment and resolve. The quick U.S. reaction to Iraqi troop deployments in October 1994 and the firing of cruise missiles at Iraq's military intelligence headquarters are examples of the value of limited military options, pre-positioned assets, and forward presence (Davis 1995, 22–23). These illustrations also offer evidence of the feasibility of precision punishment and minimal dependence on overseas basing, as well as the importance of discrimination. The use of precise and discriminate fire enhances the credibility of U.S. deterrence and the effectiveness of threats to punish or deny.

Conclusion

Despite U.S. preeminence, the international system is in a transitional period in which a lack of structure; the pace of technological development and its dissemination; and the continuing communications revolution are creating and sustaining sources of instability as well as providing the actual means for redressing grievances. The end of the Cold War has brought comprehensive power (political, military, economic, cultural) to the United States and has broadened the scope of deterrent options. The lessons drawn from an analysis of this post Cold War environment are that general deterrence may not exist in regional settings; immediate deterrence will need to be extended; there may be a deterrent gap; and that assertive persuasion will bridge the gap and eventually establish dynamic deterrence.

In the post-Cold War security environment, the rapid pace of technology proliferation as well as the increasing sophistication of global science and technology capabilities is expected to result in increasing numbers of countries armed with WMD and niche capabilities. This has important implications for competing U.S. security strategies, including deterrence. WMD could be used to coerce, deny access, disrupt and even defeat military insertion operations. WMD also could allow a regional power to pursue asymmetrical strategies that take advantage of U.S. political-military vulnerabilities by raising the costs of intervention.

If the Iraqi model is any indication of future paths to proliferation, a military dominated political structure supports a rigidly centralized decision-making unit. Secrecy, deception, and dispersal will characterize WMD programs. In order to preserve these capabilities without attracting external attention, decisions regarding force development, deployment, and their use are made in a very small group. In a crisis, this group would be insulated without the benefit of balances or alternative opinions, thereby increasing the tendency to misperceive, making conflict more likely (Dunn 1993, 38).

Current U.S. strategic deterrence policy is, at a minimum, inappropriate and potentially incredible and self-detering as well. There is no mutuality of destructive capabilities, yet a developing country could cause great pain with WMD, and the United States would be hard pressed to assure the nuclear destruction of a Third World country. Even a U.S. extended deterrence policy that depends on tactical nuclear weapons is questionable. U.S. interests may not be so vital as to warrant the use of nuclear weapons. The United States has an interest in maintaining the nuclear taboo, and the potential for noncombatant casualties and collateral damage could impede a nuclear-use decision (Cropsey 1994; Kaysen, McNamara, and Rathjens 1991; Dunn 1994). In turn, incredible threats or self-deterrence could undermine the value of U.S. security commitments to allies and friends.

The legacy of conventionally-based deterrence may require the United States to be willing to use effective force—compellent measures or “early forceful options”—more often in order to (re)establish an effective post-Cold War reputation that supports U.S. deterrent options. Compellent measures—short of war—can be employed to reinforce diplomacy, (re)establish deterrence, or project a shadow of threat in tandem with diplomacy. Though the U.S. post-Cold War reputation for decisive and effective use of force in defense of vital interests may remain (Gray 1992, 259; Perry 1991; Guertner 1993), the Persian Gulf War also demonstrated U.S. liabilities that will be scrutinized by regional competitors in the future. Mistakes made by the Iraqis are unlikely to be repeated again. Assertive persuasion—the utilization of precision punishment and denial—could communicate intent, capability, credibility, and sustain the reputation necessary to establish dynamic deterrence. These concepts would be operationalized with forward and rapidly deployable conventional forces, missile defense capabilities, and a secure mix of strategic and theater nuclear forces (National Security Planning Associates 1994).

The ability to employ precision punishment options—to punish; prevent; preempt; deny adversaries their military objectives; and impose upon them overwhelming military defeat—promises to enhance U.S. deterrence and power projection options. Evolving technologies, such as stealth, precision munitions, space-based near real-time ISR, and BMD constitute particularly powerful tools of diplomacy and war. Such capabilities also allow for similarly potent forms of punitive, persuasive, and compellent targeting. Targets include military forces and infrastructure; economic; communications; and energy sources; and even the institutional foundations of an enemy regime's political authority (Record 1994, 154).

In the final analysis, however, deterrence is a “cooperative relationship”; leaders of another state have to choose to be deterred. This calls for continued involvement and interaction with allies and friends to demonstrate both commitment and access to the region (Gray 1992, 258, 264). But the most credible U.S. deterrent policy will allow (1) tailored capabilities which, (2) facilitate the political decision to use force to, (3) negate a future adversary's attempts to avoid our strengths through asymmetric strategies. Deterrence stands a better chance of success if U.S. military forces are capable of being deployed rapidly, of intervening with mobile forces sufficient to defeat an attack (preferably without sustaining heavy casualties), and of protecting allies and coalition partners if necessary (Owens 1995a, 12–25).

Assertive persuasion, based on a new “system of systems”, will communicate a more credible message of U.S. capability and will to adversaries. Advanced C4I allows commanders to bring precision force to bear at weak spots already identified through ISR. The synergistic effect of these capabilities could constitute a potent deterrent to the use of WMD as well. Such power could undercut the effect of WMD and begin to form the basis for dynamic deterrence. By negating the implied threat of high casualties, assertive persuasion measures can create a more favorable political-military environment for the United States than an adversary's use of WMD implies. This will, in turn, cast doubt in the minds of regional aggressors and instill a sense of futility in proliferators' minds by devaluing the political-military potency of their nuclear weapons.

The United States is the only current superpower. It can use force more effectively and more easily on the current and foreseeable security landscape and, in some respects, with fewer consequences. The United States must continue to be self-regulating and judicious in the use of its

power, particularly its military power, but it is not in the U.S. interest to portray weakness, indecision, or paralysis due to overly strict parameters. This could encourage the very acts we wish to forestall.

Notes

¹Kenneth Waltz argues that because international politics remains a self-help system countries will determine their own fate, that the balance of terror is indestructible, miscalculation is difficult due to the destruction of just one nuclear weapon which imposes potential costs that outweigh potential gains, and new nuclear nations will be more concerned with their safety and mindful of dangers. Van Creveld argues that the presence of nuclear weapons is leading to the elimination of large-scale interstate war.

²As an illustration: in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War Egypt fired Styx cruise missiles at Israel, Argentina fired Exocets against the British Royal Navy in the Falklands war, and Iraq fired 88 Scuds at Coalition Forces in the 1991 Persian Gulf War. With regard to CW Egypt is suspected of using CW against Yemeni forces in 1967–68, Iraq and Iran used these weapons against each other in their war, and Baghdad used CW against its Kurdish population.

³Michael Mazarr identifies RMA pillars as: information dominance, synergy (i.e., jointness), disengaged combat (distance, mobility), and civilianization (i.e., the idea that building blocks for future warfare will be built more on civilian assets instead of military. Nonlethality is closely related).

⁴Precision force use may come to include information warfare (IW). The information revolution can be seen either as a functionally-based definition of a potential RMA, or as a supporting capability that enables seamless, high-speed, high-intensity warfare. As a separate technique of war, IW does not yet exist, though as a distinct form of warfare there are several manifestations, including: command and control warfare, intelligence-based warfare, electronic warfare, psychological warfare, hacker warfare, economic information warfare, and cyberwarfare. At this inchoate stage, though, there are more questions than answers inspired by IW.

⁵Even the Joint Chiefs of Staff have declared that, "in all cases, U.S. military forces must be able to undertake operations rapidly, with a high probability of success, and with minimal risk of U.S. casualties." (U.S. Department of Defense 1993, 3.; Payne 1995, 203, fn.4).

⁶It is precisely this environment that leads Charles William Maynes to argue that the opportunities to use military force are limited. (Maynes 1995).

⁷On this point, the author acknowledges work done with Kerry Kartchner and Patti Barwinczak at ANSER.

⁸Many of these themes were expounded upon in the Report of The Commission On Integrated Long-Term Strategy which was released in January 1988. (Commission On Integrated Long-Term Strategy 1988)

⁹Forward presence refers to forces deployed or stationed in key areas overseas and providing the link between peacetime operations and crisis. They are able to act as a deterrent, transition to a quick reaction force, or respond to other contingencies. The following comments on forward presence are drawn from Jacquelyn K. Davis, *Forward Presence and U.S. Security Policy* (1995, 21–40).

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