Post-Cold War deterrence: theory, policy, practise

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Theoretical frameworks for contemporary deterrence

- Structural realist theory
- Liberal institutionalist theory
- Gramscian hegemonic theory
- State terror theory
- No one theoretical framework adequate

C.20th shifts from modern war to total war

- shift from the potential within Clausewitzian war
- C20 mobilization of national energies
  - mass production, mass politics, mass communications
  - weaponry and social organization bring C20 war close to Clausewitz’s “absolute war”
- necessarily genocidal character of total war
- erosion of rationality of war for states
- bloc formation - erosion of the “external”
- 50 years of the Cold War as “the imaginary war”

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Core contemporary forms of security threat from organized violence

• Consequences of break-down of law, organised crime, and terror
• Transnational non-state networks aiming at destabilization of governments
• Wars of always incipient genocide aimed at the reconstitution of the nation-state (internal make-up and borders)
• Wars of imperial intervention
• The re-constituted *imaginary total war* of global scale involving potential nuclear exterminist means and uncontrollable consequences.
  – *Immediate and general/background versions*

Varieties of strategic coercion

• Strategic policies using military force to …
  – Deterrence
    • … to coerce another state to not act in a way it would otherwise do
  – Compellence
    • … to coerce another state to stop doing what it is doing
  – Reassurance
    • … re-assure an ally or an enemy of intention

Two modes of deterrence: Patrick Morgan

• *general vs immediate* deterrence
• general deterrence
  – when neither side is about to mount an attack on the other
• immediate deterrence:
  – When at least one state is considering using military force against another which may be itself considering the immediate use of force.

US military definitions of deterrence

• Deterrence is “the prevention from action by fear of the consequences. Deterrence is a state of mind brought about by the existence of a credible threat of unacceptable counteraction.”
  – DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, 08 November 2010
  http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/

• “The objective of strategic deterrence is to convince potential adversaries that courses of action that threaten U.S. vital interests will result in outcomes that are decisively worse than they could achieve through alternative courses of action available to them. Strategic deterrence achieves this objective by decisively influencing an adversary’s decision calculus.”
Enduring issues with nuclear deterrence

- Credibility of intention
  - to antagonist
  - to allies
  - to domestic audience
- Reliability of capacity for expressed intention
  - Force structure and disposition
  - Political resolve
- Risks and consequences of error
- Moral and political standing of planning
  - “a smoking ruin at the end of two hours (David Rosenberg)

Contemporary forms of nuclear deterrence: bilateral direct deterrence

- US-Russia
- US-China
- US-North Korea
- North Korea - South Korea, Japan, China
- US-Iran
- China-Russia
- India-Pakistan
- Israel-Iran, .....

Philip Bobbit on the nature of deterrence

“Deterrence is an extraordinarily limited theory that relies on a reasonable but extraordinarily broad assumption. That assumption is that the State will make decisions as a result of balancing the benefits to be achieved by a course of action against the costs incurred in pursuing those benefits by the particular means proposed...

“Military deterrence is a concept that is useful within war or the approach to war, once political relations have become so strained that hostilities only await opportunity. It is only because we have lived so long at war [i.e. cold war] that we are inclined to miss this point, and that we have come to think of deterrence as a prominent feature of the international relations of a peacetime regime.”


• Source: Peter Hayes, Pacific Powderkeg, American Nuclear Dilemmas in Korea, Lexington Books, Lexington Massachusetts, 1990, p. xxxi
Extended nuclear deterrence; defenders, antagonists and protégés

- US-Russia
  - protégés: NATO countries (historically China re SU?)
- US-China
  - protégés: Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Australia
- US-North Korea
  - protégés: Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Australia
- US-Iran
  - Middle Eastern allies - Israel; selected others?

Dimensions of the organization of the US contemporary nuclear umbrella

- the range of threats against which nuclear protection is offered
- the location and type of forces involved in substantiating the threat
- the physical location of the nominal antagonist nuclear weapons state in relation to the allied recipient country
- the level and type of engagement of the allied recipient country in the provision of the deterrent
- the involvement of the allied recipient country with other allied nuclear weapons states besides the nuclear guarantor

Models of US extended nuclear deterrence (Tanter, 2011)

- How many countries under the US “nuclear umbrella”?  
  - 30?, 31?, “30 plus”?
- Four regional models
  - NATO - nuclear sharing
  - East Asia - Japan, South Korea, (Taiwan)
  - Australia
  - Emerging Middle East
New and emerging forms of deterrence (Tanter and Hayes, 2011)

- existential deterrence (not new: Bundy, 1963)
- collective actor deterrence
- tailored deterrence
- pivotal deterrence
- recessed deterrence
- retired deterrence
- dependent/extortionate deterrence

The post-Cold War “deterrence reformers”

- 1. Perception of “Golden Age of Stable Deterrence”
  - Mutual assured destruction and later variants
  - Understood rules of the road
    - Dependent on comparable technologies
    - Roughly symmetrical stakes
    - Technical capacity to communicate
    - Cultural capacity for mutual understanding
    - Number of players = 2, or at times, = 3.

Security Challenges

- Irregular
  - Non-state and state actors employing "unconventional" methods to counter stronger state opponents—terrorism, insurgency, etc.

- Catastrophic
  - Terrorist or rogue state employment of WMD or methods producing WMD-like effects against American interests

- Traditional
  - States employing military forces in well-known forms of military competition and conflict

- Disruptive
  - Competitors employing technology or methods that might counter or cancel our current military advantages

Our approach should be tailored to deter and dissuade across the challenges

An n-player game (Paul Bracken)

- Cold War was a bilateral contest
  - Much thinking about the dynamics of that competition assumed two player game
  - Pathological strategic dynamics of n-player games
- E.g. Martin Shubik’s true: a duel between three players:
  - Who shoots first? What is the cost of waiting?
  - No rational solution without an account of communication, trust and commitment

Some further differences (Paul Bracken)

- Centrality of bomb-making to state-making and national identity
  - Problem of dismantling supportive institutions
- As late-comers they face resistance from the established nuclear powers
- Distance from the rational strategic cultures of the US and Europe that generated the first nuclear age.
  - Asymmetries and hierarchy of globalization

In case of international nuclear security, also no “rational” solution in extremely complex situations
- Strategic stability, deterrence, bluffing and war avoidance all become problematic
- Result is extreme uncertainty
Persistence of the state of nuclear terror

• classic state in Cold War, never totally gone:
  – Terrorized misrecognition/meconnaissance of the nuclear facts of life
  – Simultaneously knowing dread coupled with an averting of the eyes that amounts to various forms of denial
  – Supported by social structures of media and education
  – Crucial to the maintenance of national security postures in democratic states.
• now background for reduced US/Russia/China tension;
• foreground for US/North Korea/Iran/Israel/Pakistan/India

Putative roles of US deterrence today

– Deterrence
– Compellence - defeat in war
– Assurance of allies
– Disarmament / non-proliferation

Functions of US END in Northeast Asia - Patrick Morgan

• Protecting ROK from war, via deterrence
• Compensating ROK for not developing nuclear weapons and huge conventional offensive capability
• Offsetting DPRK’s (past) superiority in conventional forces
• Offsetting the DPRK nuclear weapons program
• Helping to reassure Japan US will not “lose” South Korea and threaten its security
• Re-assuring Japan that US would not retreat from NE Asia
• Adding to deterrence of attacks on Japan
  – Partly compensating Japan for not developing nuclear weapons - and hence avoid domestic conflict
• Discouraging development of nuclear weapons by Japan, supplementing US umbrella over Japan
• Adding to American power projection capability in the region; helping secure US access to bases in Korea

Nuclear reliance or nuclear marginalization?
The actual place of nuclear weapons in US strategic practise

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Report of the Secretary of Defense Task Force on DoD Nuclear Weapons Management” (Schlesinger report), 2008

• “... a distressing degree of inattention to the role of nuclear weapons among many senior Defense Department military and civilian leaders...[who] may lack the foundation of experience for understanding nuclear deterrence, its psychological content, its political nature, and its military role - which is to avoid the use of nuclear weapons.” (Report)

• “We emphasize that deterrence must start at the top, that the services indeed have picked up clues since the end of the Cold War that interest in deterrence at the highest levels of the Defense Department has diminished.” (James Schlesinger)

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• Richard Tanter and Peter Hayes, Beyond the nuclear umbrella: re-thinking the theory and practice of nuclear extended deterrence in East Asia and the Pacific, (with Peter Hayes), Pacific Focus, Vol. 26, No. 1 (April 2011)