

Deterrence

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



According to Wagner (1982, 337), the concept of deterrence was developed at the time when the U. S. needed a new military stratagem which focused on the development of sophisticated nuclear arms that would render them unopposed. The central theme was superiority, which is quite difficult to comprehend since it does not determine whether the matching up of nuclear power produces its desired effect. Wagner (1982, 342) also noted that the branch of deterrence theory, which was derived from bargaining theory and the theory of games, contains serious errors in its treatment of the process of equivalency.

Powell (2003, 93) has stated that the concept of brinkmanship provides a model for the way that severe conflicts of interest between nuclear-armed states are handled, as the interplay of the dynamics of the Cold War crises elucidates policy trade-offs in proliferating nuclear weapons in the post Cold War era. For instance, in situations in which the balance of resolve clearly favors the small nuclear state, brinkmanship indicated that a small state will be able to deter the bigger, more powerful state like the U. S.

However, if circumstances are more ambiguous, the employment of National Missile Defense (NMD) should be looked into. Powell (2003) emphasized that a state should have, at least in assumption, a very good defense system in order to gain the upper hand in manipulating the game of expectation, making the rogue state rethink its strategy and back down in a crisis. The classical theory of crisis bargaining by way of immediate deterrence pertains to the decisions in employing military force in order to condition the grounds for compromise, rather than making debating on attacking or not.

Nonetheless, Powell (1987, 728) had indicated that the theory cannot exactly determine success or failure in enforcing immediate deterrence since it does not conceptualize the interplay between military threats and bargaining over a range of outcomes. However, Fearon (2002) explained that in some cases, immediate deterrence could be achieved. According to Fearon (2002, 21), a contender may be dissuaded from attacking if there is prior knowledge that there would be serious and unacceptable consequences if it entertains the idea of imposing an attack or proscribed action.

Proscribed actions are said to be a much broader class than military attacks, which covers coerced or tacit concessions to the contender from defender. Failures to immediate deterrence could be ascertained not only from proceeded attacks, but also cases where the defender made substantial concessions to the contender under the threat of force, as was the case in the 1938 Munich crisis. In this case, successful immediate deterrence should not only ward off an imminent attack but it should also inflict pressure or provoke an action or concession by the defender (Fearon 2002, 11).

In describing cases of compromises or agreements during crisis, states can be expected to hold out until one party accepts the terms of the other party, thereby imposing the unsatisfactory status quo as a provisional cost of non-agreement. In situations wherein a state desires a change in the status quo and the other does not, blockades would most likely be enforced such as cutting off trade or foreign aid until the other accepts its demands.

Another tactic that is employed to reach an agreement is the use of bombs or nuclear weapons that renders a more aggressive response. This was the case with the U. S. government's decision with North Vietnam or the Cuban

Missile crisis (Achen and Snidal 1989, 155). Based on the different views of political analysts regarding the precepts of bargaining and war, NMD is said to generally enhance the stability of the process in deterrence.

The stabilizing effect of NMD enhances more credibility toward the defender's case since the presence of the imminent threat leads to paranoia and fear of the consequences. If classical deterrence theorists were correct to assume that the mind frames of most states who utilize the notion of nuclear war is fear of its high costs, then effective NMD is the only way to achieve a balance of powers (Powell 2003, 97).

Nonetheless, the implementation of NMD as a threat of cost to the contender does not necessarily imply that it is not a rational decision for a state to consider since the costs can be outweighed by the expected benefit of inducing the opposing state's acceptance of the contender's demands (Achen and Snidal 1989; Wagner 1982). The relative stability during the second half of the Cold War provided a poor guide to the stability of a crisis between the United States and a nuclear-armed, regional adversary like Russia.

Stability depends on the outcome of the future conflicts of interest that are ever-present in contending states of power and how clear the balance of resolve is in those conflicts (Powell 1987, 722). Based on the general notion of political analysts that threats of nuclear punishment have lost its credibility due to the developments of the rules of war and peace, the importance of NMD as a deterrent provides a holistic view of the processes involved in bargaining and strategizing.