Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: *Theory and Practice*

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For my daughter Mary
—A.L.G.

To the memory of my father
—R.S.

Preface

ALMOST FROM THE BEGINNING of the Cold War, critics of American foreign policy have pointed to the dangers of overreliance by Washington on deterrence threats to prevent direct or indirect communist encroachments against other countries. This book provides the first comprehensive, in-depth assessment of both the theory and practice of deterrence in American foreign policy since World War II. Eleven historical cases are examined from this perspective, and the study concludes with a detailed and sobering analysis of the complex requirements of deterrence strategy and of the difficulties policy-makers can expect to encounter in attempting to use it.

This book is the latest in a series of publications to emerge from a research program on "Theory and Practice in International Relations," which is directed by Alexander George at Stanford University. One of the purposes of this program is to provide a clearer understanding and a critical evaluation of some of the major kinds of activities—such as deterrence, coercive diplomacy, crisis management, détente—that actors in world politics engage in from time to time in dealing with acute conflicts of interest with other countries.

To achieve this objective requires the development of a policy-relevant theory of international relations. The special kind of research approach needed for this purpose is outlined and applied in this book. (See especially chapters 4 and 16 and the Appendix.) Both authors have applied this research ap-

proach in earlier studies: Alexander George in *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (1971, together with David K. Hall and William E. Simons); and Richard Smoke in his doctoral thesis at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, *The Control of Escalation*, which was awarded the Helen Dwight Reid prize by the American Political Science Association for the best Ph.D. dissertation in international relations completed in 1971 or 1972.

While both authors share responsibility for the entire book, they divided the labor of preparing initial drafts of chapters. Richard Smoke is primarily responsible for chapters 1, 2, 3, 13, 14, and the Appendix. He is coauthor with Alexander George of chapters 4 and 21. Alexander George is responsible for the conception and design of the study, and is primarily responsible for chapters 5, 6, 7, 9, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20. We received material assistance from Stephen J. Genco, a graduate student at Stanford University, who is primarily responsible for chapters 10 and 11, and is coauthor with Alexander George of chapter 8.

We take pleasure in expressing appreciation for the invaluable help and encouragement received from others. Exploratory work on deterrence was undertaken by the senior author in 1966–1968 while he was a member of the Social Science Department of The RAND Corporation. Useful comments and suggestions were received from colleagues. At that time Jane Howland provided invaluable research assistance and prepared preliminary versions of some of the cases presented in Part Two. Continuing the project after moving to Stanford University in 1968, the senior author benefited from the assistance of a number of students in graduate and undergraduate seminars: Pamela Ellis, Harry Harding, Raymond Morrow, John Oneal, Elye Pitts, Stanley Wells, and Frederik Wiant.

Richard Smoke joined the project as research colleague and coauthor in 1969; at that time he was engaged in research on the related topic of escalation control employing a similar research approach.

A number of scholars have read and commented on the entire manuscript or parts thereof: Ole Holsti, Burton Levin, Bruce Russett, Thomas Schelling, and Allen Whiting. Chapter 11 benefited from a careful reading by several specialists on American policy in the Middle East: John C. Campbell, Louis Gerson, and Malcolm Kerr; Fuad Jabber incorporated some of their suggestions and his own into the present version of this chapter.

For invariably cheerful and efficient secretarial and administrative support we are grateful to Lois Renner.

For financial support that enabled him and Richard Smoke to complete the study, the senior author expresses deep appreciation to the Committee on International Studies at Stanford University and to the National Science Foundation which awarded him a research grant for 1971–1972. The authors would also like to thank Doubleday & Company, Inc. for permission to use quotations from Roger Hilsman's *To Move a Nation* and Dwight D. Eisenhower's *The White House Years: Waging Peace, 1956–1961*, and the editors of *Policy Sciences* for permission to print, as the Appendix to this book, a much condensed version of the article that appeared under the title "Theory for Policy in International Relations" in *Policy Sciences*, December 1973.

The authors assume sole responsibility for the views expressed in this book.

Contents

Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: *Theory and Practice*

Introduction

THIS BOOK PRESENTS a critical examination of deterrence theory and deterrence strategy as they have been applied in American foreign policy since the end of World War II. We should make clear at the outset that the study is *not* concerned with the problem of "strategic deterrence"—that is, the effort of the United States and the Soviet Union to deter each other from launching a general war. Strategic deterrence has a number of special properties that make its problems relatively easy to conceptualize. After examining these particular properties early in the book, in chapter 2, we leave aside this special kind of deterrence and give it no further attention.

Our study focuses, rather, on the effort of the United States to deter *limited* conflicts that might start through encroachments by other countries on U.S. allies or neutral states. We approach this problem of deterrence of limited warfare from the standpoint of both theory and practice. This kind of deterrence has played a major, even dominating role in United States foreign policy since shortly after World War II. The onset of the Cold War and its intensification generated strong pressure on successive American administrations to find ways of using deterrence strategy as an instrument for containing the expansion of Soviet influence and, more generally, the spread of international communism. This development stimulated efforts to understand deterrence processes in the international arena more clearly and to conceptualize the requirements of deterrence in

the form of a general theory for possible policy applications.

The task of conceptualizing is appreciably more difficult in some ways for deterrence of limited conflicts than for strategic deterrence. Formulation of the former kind of deterrence theory has tended to follow, rather than leading or guiding, practice in employing deterrence strategy in U.S. Cold War policy. Part One of this study offers a critical assessment of deterrence theory as it relates to limited conflicts. We conclude that this theory has been markedly less useful to policy-makers than it might have been. But while its productive impact on American foreign policy was limited, it did have the negative effect of reinforcing the policy-makers' tendency to rely too heavily on deterrence strategy and deterrent threats in lieu of the more flexible instruments of inter-nation influence associated with classical diplomacy.

These conclusions are widely shared. But the causal factors underlying this critical assessment of deterrence theory have been ill understood. In attempting to explicate them, we find it necessary to emphasize the way in which deterrence theory was derived, largely deductively, from a priori premises. A major objective of this study is to demonstrate the questionable character of many of the premises and assumptions on which deterrence theory has been based. The oversimplified and often erroneous character of these theoretical assumptions is best demonstrated by comparing them with the more complex variables and processes associated with efforts to employ deterrence strategy in real-life historical cases. Accordingly, Part Two of the study presents eleven case histories in which the United States either applied deterrence strategy or considered applying it on behalf of weaker allies and neutral states between 1948 and 1963. (More recent events of this kind are discussed more briefly.) Remarkably few efforts have been made to weigh carefully the available historical experience in applying deterrence. The failure to do so has obscured the severe limitations of the guidance that deterrence theory has offered policy-makers.

We believe—and seek to demonstrate—that systematic study of relevant historical experience can assist in developing

a better theory of deterrence. Further, we believe and attempt to show that such an *inductively* derived theory of deterrence will emphasize the limitations and risks of deterrence strategy, as well as its possible uses under certain circumstances. In Part Three of the study, we begin (although we certainly do not complete) this kind of reformulation of deterrence theory, deriving our conclusions explicitly from the empirical material of the case histories in Part Two. We give particular emphasis to developing a *differentiated* theory, one that discriminates among varieties and patterns of deterrence situations. This kind of theory offers policy-makers greater assistance in diagnosing new problems as they arise, in assessing what sort of deterrence strategy may be appropriate to them, and more importantly, in judging whether deterrence is indeed the proper kind of policy to apply to them.

While the study focuses on deterrence theory, our critical appraisal also extends to certain aspects of American foreign policy itself during the Cold War. We believe that a critical appraisal and reformulation of deterrence theory will benefit from, and indeed requires, a critical stance also toward the use of deterrence strategy in American foreign policy. Since deterrence is an instrument of foreign policy, the uses and limitations of deterrence strategy in any given context depend inescapably upon the nature of that foreign policy.

American foreign policy during these years must be kept in mind for another reason as well. As emphasized in Part One, deterrence theory per se does not define its own scope or relevance as an instrument of foreign policy. That is, the general theory of deterrence does not indicate when a state should attempt to apply deterrence strategy to protect weaker countries. The answer to this question can be determined only with reference to that state's foreign policy, not by deterrence theory per se. Deterrence is at times a necessary or useful instrument of foreign policy, but the correct and prudent use of deterrence strategy is by no means self-evident or easily determined in all circumstances.

While the American policy of "containment" of the Soviet

Union required some use of deterrence, the need for selective, discriminating use of deterrence and of alliance commitments gradually gave way to an overly rigid attempt to exclude loss of any territory (even the offshore islands lying a few miles off mainland China!). Our critical appraisal of American foreign policy since World War II, however, stops well short of the more extreme "revisionist" theses. Rather, we tend to agree with those who, like Senator William Fulbright,[1] in looking back upon the early postwar world find that something like containment in Europe was necessary and useful at the time, even while they deplore some of the ways in which it was justified and implemented—particularly in its extension to Asia and the Middle East.

Thus, it can be said on behalf of the American policy of containment and its handmaiden, deterrence, that they did at least establish some firm lines in the postwar world, when so much was fluid. The vacuum created in Central and Eastern Europe by the defeat of Nazi Germany was a source of dangerous conflict in the relations of the Western powers with the Soviet Union. In that historical situation something like the Cold War was probably inevitable, although its intensification and prolongation were another matter. Still, unless the United States was to abandon Western Europe to its fate, measures like the Marshall Plan and NATO were necessary for the strengthening of noncommunist societies in Western Europe in the coming division of Europe. Whether NATO and the U.S deterrence commitment were necessary cannot be judged solely with reference to whether the Soviet Union really intended, or would be tempted by the weakness of Western Europe, to engage in naked military aggression. Other maneuvers to extend Soviet control were also possible. And in any case, whether or not concern over Soviet intentions was fully justified, uncertainty on this score generated acute psychological

[1] J. William Fulbright, "In Thrall to Fear," *The New Yorker*, January 8, 1972, pp. 47–62. This article was incorporated with minor revisions in his later book, *The Crippled Giant: American Foreign Policy and Its Domestic Consequences* (New York, Random House, 1972).

anxieties and contributed to political instability within some of the Western European countries.

Deterrence is a policy which, if it succeeds, can only frustrate an opponent who aspires to changing the international status quo in his favor. The consequences of continued frustration, however, are not easily predictable and are not necessarily benign. The most reliable benefit successful deterrence can offer is more time—time in which some of the conflict-generating or conflict-exacerbating elements in a historical situation can abate, so that deterrence will no longer be necessary or, at any rate, so critical for the maintenance of peace. One possibility is that continued frustration under conditions that are imperfectly understood may indeed lead an opponent to abandon the objectives or modify the means of pursuing them that have contributed to conflict and tension. Thus, containment was applied to the Soviet Union in the hope that it would furnish time for developments in Soviet society and Soviet leadership to bring about a mellowing process, a lessening of the insecurities and strong ideological motives that gave Soviet foreign policy an expansionist thrust. Such a mellowing does appear to have occurred in the intervening years, though observers disagree on the dimensions, stability, and significance of the change and, indeed, on whether it is the Soviets who have changed or the Western leaders and public who have come to a more correct view of the nature of Soviet foreign policy.

Another possibility, of course, is that deterrence gives the opposing parties time to work out an accommodation of their conflicting interests, thereby reducing tensions and the potential for overt conflict in their relationship. But time is a precious commodity, and the failure or inability of the parties concerned to make use of it to reach an accommodation can easily transform deterrence into a more permanent way of life. We agree with those critics of American policy who view the Cold War as a tragedy of misperceptions and possibly missed opportunities. With the intensification and prolongation of the Cold War, both the United States and the Soviet Union came to rely too heavily on deterrence strategy and strategic power to achieve a broad

range of conflicting foreign policy objectives. This contributed in an important and unforeseen way to bringing the two nuclear superpowers to the most dangerous of their confrontations in Cuba. Stepping back from the brink of thermonuclear war in the autumn of 1962, Kennedy and Khrushchev were finally able to break out of the straightjacket of the Cold War. The search for détente and accommodation through patient negotiation had finally begun.

But by this time the deformation of containment had led to a proliferation of American deterrence commitments throughout the world. Faced with complex and fluid situations in Asia and the Middle East that had arisen from the postwar shattering of empires, American policy-makers succumbed to the temptation to cope with them by applying containment on a global scale. In Asia, the United States attempted to apply containment to a situation which was not neatly structured, as was Europe, for a classical *defensive* application of deterrence strategy. The situation in Asia differed in important respects from the one in Europe. The task of applying containment and deterrence strategy against the Soviet Union was made easier by the fact that the Soviets had no unsatisfied irredentist claims; besides, the Soviet Union had enhanced its security by acquiring control over countries on its border in Eastern Europe. In contrast, Communist China was by no means a satisfied power. The Communist Chinese had yet to eliminate their rival in the civil war and to recover Taiwan. The threat which the Chinese Nationalist regime posed to Peking's security interests was much magnified as the United States drew closer to Chiang and gave him increased support. Because the Chinese civil war had not run its course, the American effort to employ deterrence strategy on behalf of the Nationalist regime on Taiwan resulted in a confusion of containment with "liberation," thereby greatly exacerbating tensions and inviting dangerous crises.

Similarly, following the Suez crisis of 1956, American policy-makers attempted to cope with still a different kind of complex and fluid situation in the Middle East by extending containment to that area as well. The unique situation in the Middle East, however, was probably even less suited to containment and deterrence than was the situation in Asia. Not only did the Soviet Union have no irredentist claims in this area of the world, but there were also no communist states in the region that could be seen as playing a role comparable to that of China, North Korea, or North Vietnam in Asia. But by 1956 the United States' reliance on deterrence threats and alliance commitments as the primary tools of its foreign policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union had become a rigidified response to almost any perceived communist encroachment anywhere in the world. Thus, when U.S. leaders began to take notice of increased Soviet economic activities in the Middle East following the retraction of the American offer to assist Egypt in the building of the Aswan Dam, and when the sudden elimination of British influence in the area created what was perceived to be a "power vacuum" following the Suez crisis, the Eisenhower Administration responded with a deterrence-alliance policy that was completely inappropriate for the situation. The policy, aimed at deterring communist military thrusts into the region, proved powerless in counteracting the Soviet economic moves and, at the same time, alienated most Middle Eastern states because of its lack of relevance to what they considered to be the true problems of the region. The two main results of this ultimate extension of misapplied deterrence strategy under the Eisenhower Administration were severe damage to the Western position in the Middle East and at least the beginnings of a reevaluation of the efficacy of global containment as the backbone of United States foreign policy.

A postcontainment era now characterizes U.S. relations with Communist China as well as with the Soviet Union. But the problem of deterrence does not thereby vanish. Indeed, in some respects the problems of deterrence have become even more complicated. The final chapter of this study argues that in this new period United States policy-makers must resort to deterrence more selectively than in the past, and suggests a few guidelines for the admittedly difficult task of defining more careful and flexible deterrence policies within the framework of a new, as yet largely undefined foreign policy appropriate for the post–Cold War era.

Part One

The Nature of Contemporary Deterrence Theory

Chapter 1

Deterrence in History

IN ITS MOST GENERAL FORM, deterrence is simply the persuasion of one's opponent that the costs and/or risks of a given course of action he might take outweigh its benefits. But even within the context of deterrence as an aspect of international relations, the many kinds of situations in which this relationship between actors can occur and the historically changing international system within which such situations arise generate enormous complexity. Furthermore, the practitioners and theorists of deterrence approach these complexities from different perspectives, depending in part upon their own immediate purposes.[1]

[1] At least four general perspectives on the theory and practice of deterrence can usefully be distinguished. *Policy-makers* are interested in focusing upon operational concepts which can readily be translated into concrete action and declaratory policies. (We will discuss this in much greater detail subsequently.) *General theorists* of deterrence, by contrast, have focused upon its abstract theory, generally using strategic nuclear deterrence as their paradigm and later extending this paradigm to other applications. Efforts of this kind include the works of Schelling, Kaufmann, Snyder, Kahn, Pool's "Deterrence as an Influence Process," and Russett's "Calculus of Deterrence" and "Pearl Harbor: Deterrence Theory and Decision Theory." *International relations specialists* have tended to focus upon the relationships among "deterrence," the "balance of power," "collective security," and the nature of "the international system." In addition to the above, on deterrence and the balance of power see Claude, *Power and International Relations*, chapters 3 and 4, and Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*. Finally there is a special group of theorists, sometimes called the "*spiral theorists*," who focus upon the potential of deterrence policies for generating conflict and possible ways of supplementing deterrence with policies for con-

We begin our study, therefore, with an admittedly cursory review of the historical experience of deterrence to place the contemporary problem in context and to suggest a handful of ways in which technological and international-systemic changes can affect deterrence. If, as we suggest at the conclusion of this study, deterrence in the post–Cold War era may be taking on aspects reminiscent of earlier, especially "balance-of-power," eras, there may be an additional value in beginning from a historical perspective.

Deterrence before the Atomic Era

Theorizing about deterrence seems to be a rather new phenomenon, but its practice in a commonsensical, instinctive way must be as old as the military art. One of our earliest military writers, Thucydides, in his *Peloponnesian War* recounts many instances where one side or another maneuvered for allies or other advantages in such a way that its opponent would think that beginning a war, or expanding it, would not be worth the risks or costs. Among other early writers, Emperor Leo of Byzantium and Machiavelli both emphasized the "show of force" and similar devices as economical means of persuading an enemy that the costs and risks of aggressive action might be too high.

While the Thirty Years' War in northern Europe was causing devastation such as had not been seen since the depths of the Dark Ages,[2] the Italian *condotierri* were engaged in elegant

flict-reduction. Representative discussions include Boulding, "National Images and International Systems," and Etzioni, *The Hard Way to Peace;* also Milburn, "The Concept of Deterrence"; Charles Osgood, *An Alternative to War or Surrender;* Rapaport, *Strategy and Conscience;* Singer, "Threat-Perception and the Armament-Tension Dilemma," and *Deterrence, Arms Control, and Disarmament.* For a critical appraisal of "spiral theory" see the forthcoming study by Robert Jervis now tentatively entitled *Perception and International Relations.*

[2] Not only did millions—indeed, a significant fraction of the entire population of Europe—die in this war, but in many districts most of the towns and villages were utterly destroyed. See, for instance, Fuller's *Military History;* or, for a longer treatment, Gindely's *History of the Thirty Years War.*

battles of maneuver in which high casualties or costs were not acceptable, and a general faced with the prospect of them would sooner surrender.[3] Similarly, the absolute monarchies that arose in Europe after the exhaustion of the Thirty Years' War soon evolved a pattern of "limited warfare" in which the threat of inflicting high costs played at least as great a role as their actual infliction. Due to limitations in available manpower and wealth and the disputants' mutual desire not to ruin what they were contesting, the threat to go to war and, once at war, to endanger by maneuvers were an important part of the game: "The ultimate goal was the capture of a fortress or a town; but the game was often decided, almost bloodlessly, by a skillful maneuver into a superior position." [4] According to eighteenth-century conceptions of honor, a belligerent or potential belligerent faced with superior forces, or a potential belligerent faced with an apparently superior combination of probable foes, could surrender or abandon his objective without a fight and with no loss of esteem.[5]

The *levy en masse,* invented by the French Revolution and inherited by Napoleon, raised French capabilities to a point where the rest of Europe combined could not deter, and for a period could not defeat, Napoleon's expansionist adventures. In the period following the Congress of Vienna, however, the principal powers returned to a pattern of small military standing capabilities and limited commitments to warfare.

The balance-of-power system, adopted generally in the

[3] Fuller, *Military History,* contains a treatment. For a brief description, see the same author's *Conduct of War.*

[4] R. E. Osgood, *Limited War,* p. 63.

[5] R. E. Osgood's *Limited War* contains a good brief treatment of this period, as does Fuller's *Conduct of War.* The latter quotes Ferrero as writing that "Restricted warfare was one of the loftiest achievements of the eighteenth century. It belongs to a class of hot-house plants which can only thrive in an aristocratic and qualitative civilization. We are no longer capable of it. It is one of the fine things we have lost as a result of the French Revolution" (p. 25). See also Speier, *Social Order and the Risks of War,* pp. 223–52.

eighteenth century and reaching its height in the nineteenth, had a number of features in common with what today would be called "deterrence" systems. In particular, the core concept of the balance-of-power system was that the military capabilities available to any combination of powers should be sufficiently balanced so that full-scale conflict would appear profitless. In effect a "mutual deterrent balance" remained stable for approximately a century after the close of the Napoleonic wars (though a few small wars were fought under its umbrella): "The typical limited war in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was fought in order to achieve marginal adjustments in the balance of power that diplomacy had failed to secure." [6] Indeed, a principal aim of diplomacy was to insure the stability of the deterrent balance, and reinforce it as required.

It is slightly surprising, in retrospect, how many of the concepts of contemporary deterrence theory—commitments, and how to reinforce or escape them, signaling, comparatively fine calculations of opposing forces, the fear of escalation and the use of that fear as a deterrent, the mutual assumption of rationality—were implicitly part of the diplomatic practice of the balance-of-power system, without being articulated in this kind of terminology.

Indeed, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century diplomatic and military history provides the politico-military analyst with a rich lode of empirical material for the expansion and refinement of contemporary concepts. This history has not been studied systematically from such a perspective, and cannot be here; but the mention of a few instances that include aspects of deterrence may be suggestive.[7]

[6] R. E. Osgood, *Limited War*, p. 62.

[7] The historical examples in the following passage are drawn from René Albrecht-Carrie, *Diplomatic History of Europe, passim*. The scope of this discussion does not permit detailed empirical or theoretical analysis of the differences and similarities between a "balance of power" system and a "deterrence" system. For a provocative, though now somewhat obsolescent, abstract discussion of these matters, see "From Balance to Deterrence," by Arthur Lee Burns. Two other deservedly classic analyses of the balance of power system are "Balance of Power in Theory and Practice," chapter 8 of Wolfers' *Discord and Collaboration*, and "The International System," chapter 2 of Kaplan's *System and Process in International Politics*. Also important are "The Balance of Power in the Missile Age," by Glenn Snyder, "The Balance of Power: Prescription, Concept, or Propaganda," by Ernest Haas, and "An Analytic Study of the Balance of Power Theories," by Dina Zinnes. For more extended discussions, see "Theories of Balance and Imbalance," Part Four-A of *International Politics and Foreign Policy*, Rosenau, ed.; and *The Balance of Power and Nuclear Deterrence*, Gareau, ed.

Early in the Franco-Prussian War, for example, Bismarck carefully led Austria, then considering intervention on the French side, to believe that any such act would trigger Russian involvement on the Prussian side. Austrian decision-makers were reluctant to risk their then rather delicately poised empire in the fires of a general European war, and Bismarck's threat of escalation was successful in deterring Austrian entrance. Again, Britain and sometimes France demonstrated their commitment to oppose Russian intervention in the Ottoman Empire by periodically sending naval squadrons to the area in what today would be called a "signal." In 1854 such an action escalated into the Crimean War; in 1878 a similar action coerced Russia into agreeing to an early end to a Russo-Turkish War. Throughout the nineteenth century Britain regularly delivered deterrent threats against any intervention in the Low Countries (often contemplated by France); and these were as regularly successful. Napoleon III's abandonment of his "Belgian railways scheme" in 1869 after receiving a stern warning from Britain is one of many instances.

Though the measures that nineteenth-century powers took to demonstrate commitment and reinforce deterrence differ somewhat in details from those open to the Cold War superpowers, the earlier generations of statesmen were at least as imaginative, if often no more successful, in finding military and diplomatic tools to deter (and coerce) others. Mobilization of one's forces was, of course, the most serious of measures, but piecemeal mobilizations or other preparatory acts could serve as lesser warnings: in the summer of 1870 Austria decided against mobilization but in favor of purchasing horses and accelerating several key railroad construction projects—two "long lead time

items," as they would be called today—as a hedge and a demonstration of resolution. And in 1859, a partial mobilization by Prussia was instrumental in deterring Napoleon III from pursuing his war with Austria beyond its early, somewhat inconclusive stages; the Armistice of Villafranca, followed by a peace treaty, was a direct result.

Similarly, the dispatching of naval forces to trouble spots became during the nineteenth century a highly conventional, even slightly ritualized, codebook for the demonstration of a commitment—the size of the squadron or fleet dispatched often serving as an index of the power's commitment and perception of the seriousness of a crisis. So frequently was this technique resorted to—especially by Britain—that it apparently proved itself to be an ideal demonstrative device. It was effective in this role not only because it carried a threat of escalation—as in the Crimean case and in the accidental Navarino Bay episode of 1827 that was the proximate cause of Greek independence—but also because the limited forces involved often could effect a local military operation under the umbrella of the overall stable deterrent balance—as in the French capture of the city of Algiers in 1830.

The exchange of military observers was a technique designed both to bind an ally more tightly and to deter third parties: in 1869 and early in 1870, the French and Austrians exchanged military missions, leaving the French with the impression that they possessed a firm military ally. (As it happened, the Austrian observers were struck chiefly with the poor state of France's defenses, and the gambit failed, both as a means of guaranteeing Austrian intervention and as a deterrent to Prussia.) But the seeds of Franco-Russian alliance were sown in General Boisdeffre's military mission to Russia of 1891, which led to the signing of a military convention the following year on a return visit.

Since the rough balance required for stable deterrence was provided not by approximate technological parity, as in the mid-twentieth-century case, but by shifting diplomatic alliances, the usual object was to insure that one had as many great-power

players on one's own side as were numbered among the likely opponents.[8] Accordingly, to be diplomatically "isolated"—without apparent allies—was to have one's deterrent capacities undermined, and to isolate one's opponent was the prerequisite to going to war against him. Russia was isolated in this way in 1853, partly by accident, prior to the Crimean War. And Bismarck, before launching his major wars, carefully isolated his intended victims with great deliberation: his Biarritz conference with Napoleon in October 1865 had (unknown to Napoleon) no other real purpose than to insure that France would not join Austria in the imminent war; in 1870, besides his escalation threat to Austria already alluded to, Bismarck employed a well-orchestrated series of moves to insure British neutrality.

Since the deterrent balance flowed from the number and weight of major players on each "side" at any moment, the principal instrument in constructing the deterrence system was the treaty of alliance. But since the system had to remain flexible, such treaties were generally of short term, and highly conditional. The result was a complicated web of diplomatic agreements of varying formality and duration. The fact that some of these were secret was not necessarily a hindrance to the system, for revelation could be a potent device for reinforcing deterrence. Thus Bismarck signed a secret, five-year alliance treaty with Austria in 1879 with the quite conscious intention of revealing it to the Tsar—against whom it was principally aimed—in the event of a crisis. On other occasions, the terms of Bismarck's treaty with one ally were used to help deter that ally from making any hostile moves against another ally. The passionate Italian *irredenta* movement against Austria was effectively stifled for a period when Bismarck drew Italy into the Triple Alliance of 1882. And the terms, as well as the negotiations, of the Reinsurance Treaty of 1887 between Germany and

[8] During much of the century, Britain employed a slight variation on this theme—to retain no allies, but to insure such divisions among the Continental powers that no general combination against Britain would be possible. It was the growing imbalance on the Continent in the early years of this century that forced Britain into an increasingly tight and permanent relationship with France, thus in part leading to World War I by generating increasing rigidities.

Russia very explicitly warned Russia against any attack on Austria, then Germany's ally.[9]

Several other features of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century system merit brief mention. Deterrence was further undergirded by the perception of most of the powers that large-scale warfare might upset the domestic social order. Metternich's well-ordered Concert of Europe effectively maintained almost complete peace for some thirty years following the Congress of Vienna in 1815, in major part because all the powers, including monarchist France, had been frightened by the disruptions of the French Revolution. Later in the century, the great influence of the merchant and capitalist classes similarly worked against adventurism; in Britain, especially, these elements keenly appreciated the costs and risks of major warfare.

Finally, the deterrent system generated several devices designed to increase its flexibility. The doctrine of "compensation" allowed a power that for some reason had lost a possession, or found a rival gaining one, to receive an offsetting benefit, lest he otherwise accumulate motives for upsetting the balance. A different kind of flexibility was provided by two principles of international law, "retorsion" and "reprisal," that entitled an injured party to take limited, legally sanctioned diplomatic or military steps to regain its prerogatives—or to coercively threaten to do so—without the stability of the system being jeopardized. All these devices helped to drain tensions out of the system, thereby preventing accumulated grievances from motivating grave crises; and all of them provided recognized boundaries within which violence could be contained, thereby helping to minimize escalation.

As the end of the century drew nigh, two developments took place that were to foreshadow twentieth-century concepts of deterrence. One was the Anglo-German naval race, perhaps the closest analogue in history to the Cold War arms race. For a

[9] A clause in the treaty rendered it inoperative in the event of Russian attack on Austria, and in the course of negotiating it Bismarck made the rather dramatic move of briefly showing the Russian Ambassador the text of Germany's secret treaty with Austria, pledging military alliance if Austria were attacked.

period of approximately twenty years, England and Germany devoted very serious efforts to out-building each other in naval capital ships. The efforts were accompanied on both sides by novel doctrines—in Germany, the "risk theory," arguing that a sufficiently large German fleet would make the British one unusable due to fear of risking it in combat; in England, the dawning recognition that Britain, for the first time in history, needed naval allies. Japan and the United States were gradually approached.

But it was the coming of the airplane that truly set the stage for twentieth-century warfare and deterrence theory. A short aircraft-building race immediately preceded World War I, and that war was not many months old before both sides possessed a significant capability for dropping bombs hundreds of miles behind enemy lines. Beginning about 1915, military professionals, theorists, and the public in the technically advanced countries believed that their major cities were vulnerable to destruction from the air even while their air, sea, and land forces remained potent.[10] In 1917 the Germans subjected London to a serious bombing offensive, leading to panic and rioting by the city's inhabitants.[11] The war ended, however, before either side attained the capability of inflicting really widespread damage on the other's cities or civilian populace.

That limitation would not apply to the next war, it was widely realized; and the interwar period witnessed considerable theorization about the future role of air power. General Giulio Douhet, an Italian, was the most influential but by no means the only such theorist.[12] The great destructive effect on what today we would call "countervalue targets" which these theorists postulated was picked up and dramatized by popular writers. H. G. Wells's nightmare fantasy, *The Shape of Things to Come*, was the most widely known projection of a future world war, first as a book and later as a movie; and in prophesy-

[10] Quester, *Deterrence before Hiroshima*, chapters 3 and 4.

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 32–38.

[12] The most widely influential work was Douhet's *Command of the Air*.