FRAMING COMPELLENT STRATEGIES

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Summary

The United States occasionally seeks to compel or coerce others, either nations or nonstate actors. To do so, it threatens use of force but, ideally, wants to prevail without actually using force. The analytic language surrounding "compellence" focuses on point outcomes. However, most cases of compellence turn out not to have point outcomes, but instead have been campaigns. For example, the United States was still dealing with Saddam Hussein almost a decade after Desert Storm.

In recent experience, the task of compelling has seemed to vary across three broad categories, each with a celebrated case in point: compelling major regional adversaries (Iraq); compelling would-be nuclear weapons proliferators (India); and compelling in circumstances rife with ambiguity, involving such considerations as U.S. stakes, who was to be compelled, and how much control the targets of compellence had over their own forces (Haiti). Efforts to compel Milosevic appeared, in terms of U.S. interests, to straddle the Iraq and Haiti categories; moreover, the Kosovo campaign was conducted as our research proceeded, and so it was added as a fourth case. Other cases were examined in less detail in each category.

The Challenge of Compelling

Regarding compellence, four clusters of factors, all intertwined, are especially worthy of consideration: who is to be compelled, how important U.S. stakes are, what threats or inducements are relevant, and who is doing the compelling. Fundamental background factors, such as whether the United States has overwhelming military force, do not become unimportant—they simply remain in the background. In all cases considered, the United States had or could as-semble overwhelming force. The question then became whether that force could be credibly applied to the American purpose, even as a threat.

Who was to be compelled mattered along dimensions of autocrat-to-democrat, friend-to-foe, and state or nonstate. In compellence strategy, it is important to recognize that the power base of autocrats is concentrated; for instance, Saddam responded to threats against Iraq's elite military units, those necessary to defeat insurgents and suppress coups. By contrast, the power of a democratic regime is dispersed. India's population generally favored nuclear weapons, or was susceptible to nationalist appeals about them, and so convincing the Indian

government not to test nuclear weapons was difficult. For friends, the menu of instruments to compel is limited. Military threats against India were never contemplated, although military inducements were employed. The United States could do what it did to ally Britain over the Suez in 1956—threatening to sink the pound sterling—only because that threat was technical and the episode was quickly over.

Compelling states is a very different task from compelling nonstate actors; the differences are especially relevant in the category of ambiguous contingencies. As in the case of Haiti, the United States may know what it wants but be unclear whether the state's leadership has the ability to comply with U.S. demands. Nonstate actors, such as terrorists, are difficult to identify and extremely hard to target with the conventional instruments of compellence. Diplomatic initiatives founder because the real leaders cannot be identified, or because those who can be identified do not have the power to control "their" forces. Military force is also problematic because terrorists are often dispersed, with no large and obvious targets. The U.S. cruise missile attacks on Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998— punishments intended to compel terrorist groups to cease targeting U.S. territory or citizens—destroyed their targets, but it is unclear whether they destroyed anything of critical value to the terrorist groups.

What is at stake for the United States is inevitably a critical consideration. Demonstrating the importance of stakes, however, is easier said than done. They are easier to characterize in major regional crises, which involve high stakes almost by definition. In such cases, U.S. credibility and domestic support are likely to be higher than in cases that are less critical to core U.S. concerns. For instance, in compelling Iraq, U.S. stakes were clear during the period immediately following the Gulf War. The United States and its allies had just fought an air and ground war to protect their interests in the free flow of Gulf oil. The United States also had large forces in the region and readily deployed more troops when it was necessary to demonstrate more credibility. As time progressed, however, the U.S. stakes in Iraq became less clear, reducing U.S. credibility, inviting increased provocations by Hussein, and making compellence more difficult.

Conveying stakes is harder in cases of would-be nuclear weapons proliferators, especially if they are *not* also major regional adversaries. India, for instance, knew of the general U.S. nonproliferation stance but believed that the United States had a variety of stakes in India, including private investment and trade in military and technical goods. When push came to shove, India expected the U.S. response to its testing to be limited.

In the category of ambiguous contingencies, the task of demonstrating stakes divides. If the target is a state and the purpose is humanitarian intervention, building democracy, or promoting human rights, U.S. stakes will initially be perceived as relatively weak. If, however, the threat is from a terrorist group, the United States has proven itself willing to risk both lives and money to combat such a threat.

In the end, what matters is the relative stakes of the United States and its intended target. Compelling is harder than deterring, because if the target has committed to an action in front of its people (not to mention the world), backing down entails at least a loss of face. Labeling Milosevic a war criminal and establishing the means to try him surely was helpful in building support for the campaign against him, both at home and abroad, and he probably deserved it. But, to the extent that complying with U.S. demands meant not just losing power but losing freedom as well, the label and process gave him all the more incentive to hold out. If complying becomes tantamount to dying, then fighting to the death hardly looks worse. By contrast, having condemned Cedras in Haiti somewhat less, the United States was prepared to offer him the incentive of comfortable exile if he stepped down.

What threats and inducements are relevant? Diplomacy is part of almost every compellence campaign. It was so central to the denuclearization of Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus following the breakup of the Soviet Union that it strains language to say that those nations were *compelled* to relinquish their nuclear weapons; they were *persuaded* to do so.

Economic sanctions are also part of almost every campaign of compellence, despite the now-conventional wisdom that views them as ineffective and the accumulating evidence that they inflict pain on relatively innocent civilians. The burden of the argument for their use rests with those who are *for* sanctions. Moreover, the United States uses sanctions more readily against nondemocratic and adversarial regimes, such as Iraq and Haiti, which are more resistant to sanctions because their leaders insulate themselves from the sanctions. When sanctions are imposed, the prospect of lessening them serves as an inducement to comply with U.S. demands. For instance, the allied victors in the Gulf War were willing to reduce sanctions in exchange for continued cooperation with international goals as implemented through the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM).

Military threats and actions typically move up a ladder of escalation: from limited air strikes to more aggressive strikes to, in some cases, ground presence or operations. Small-scale strikes, such as those against the terrorist facilities in

Sudan and Afghanistan, try to change the future behavior of adversaries or their supporters by demonstrating that the United States does have an interest in the issue. The problem with such strikes is that, like the attack on Sudan, they may invite international condemnation and convey a message precisely opposite to that intended, both to the target and the international community. Instead of raising the ante, the strikes may suggest that the United States is looking for an exit.

Why Milosevic yielded to NATO's air campaign in 1999 is, in the end, unknowable. Surely NATO's unity was impressive. Almost no one would have imagined, five years earlier or even two, that NATO would sustain its cohesion through months of bombing that took the alliance's warplanes to the skies over Belgrade. Adroit diplomacy helped as well, because Russia ultimately was persuaded to stop supporting him. In this respect, it also helped that he was his own worst enemy: Imagine if, when the bombing started, he had not accelerated his ethnic cleansing but visibly stopped it and begun to withdraw his troops. It is hard to believe that, in those circumstances, NATO would have sustained support for the air campaign.

The final clutch of pieces is still more suggestive about what compels. NATO had begun to put at risk what mattered to Milosevic. The prospect of a rejuvenated Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) offensive meant that the Yugoslav army might have to come out and fight, thus making itself vulnerable to NATO air power. Milosevic had to take threats to degrade his army seriously because it was his main support. The press accounts of NATO planning for a ground war magnified that threat. Finally, as long as the bombs were falling on Kosovo, they were not of much account to him, even if they hit military targets. Like Hussein, he did not much care about human suffering or even many military targets. Yet once the bombs began to fall on Belgrade, their impact must have been greater. They were no longer abstract; they had become a daily topic of conversation, hitting the factories of his cronies.

Who is doing the compelling? Almost all cases involved coalitions, and so will future campaigns. Even if the United States does not need either the bases or the forces provided by coalition partners, it will want the sanction of broader coalitions. Larger will be better than smaller; the more partners, the more legitimacy will be conferred. Yet the political requirements of coalition building run directly against the operational needs of the compellence campaign. Not only is it harder and slower for coalitions to plan and generate forces to back military threats, but coalitions limit options and make their actions transparent to adversaries. NATO could bomb Belgrade in March 1999 but not in March 1998, because it first had to demonstrate to the wavering among its members—not to

mention critical nonmembers such as Russia—that more limited steps had failed before it could move more assertively. NATO was locked into a very rigid, and very transparent, ladder of escalation. It could not jump steps to shock its opponent.

There is no escape from this policy dilemma. Sometimes when U.S. stakes are important or, conversely, the scope of the conflict is limited, the United States may act unilaterally; in other cases it may prefer smaller "coalitions of the willing" despite the lesser legitimacy they confer. In an ideal world—one approximated by the first years after the demise of the Soviet Union, when Russia was very cooperative—the United States would seek broad UN authorization, with subsequent implementation left to NATO or to the United States alone. Perhaps Kosovo will be a limited precedent for "regional" authorization when the UN is paralyzed. The United States might come to rue that precedent if either Russia or China one day came to construe regional authorization by its own definition. But trying to give NATO decisions legitimacy in the eyes of most of Europe seems a partial response to the downside of broader global coalitions. For part of the Haiti campaign, the Organization of American States performed a similar role for the Americas, initially on the argument that the stakes at play were of interest mostly to Haiti's neighbors.

Framing Compellent Campaigns

Recognizing compellence as a campaign requires asking, first, the inconvenient question: What if the target does not fall in the wake of utter military defeat? What if Milosevic is still around in five years? What if India continues to be tempted to test nuclear weapons for the next generation? Will the United States and its partners be left with dry powder, or will their credibility be diminished, along with their ability to up the pressure the next time around? The questions amount to the injunction to conceive, at the beginning, a series of what-ifs and interactions between U.S. threats and target responses.

Not thinking of compellence in terms of campaigns has made handling an adversary's countermeasures more difficult. The United States often does not have a good idea of what countermeasures the adversary is likely to try and has not thought through the campaign enough to envision a response. For instance, it was hard for NATO to imagine that its three-phase campaign in Kosovo would not bring Milosevic to the table. Worse, thinking through the options that would be necessary if these phases were unsuccessful risked breaking apart the coalition

before the war had even begun, so contingency planning for a longer campaign, if any, was very restricted.

In virtually all instances of compellence that became campaigns, U.S. purposes changed. However explicit the government was about the change—and that appears to have varied dramatically—there usually was too little public explanation or understanding of the shift. In Somalia, for instance, successful armed humanitarian relief in the UN Unified Task Force (UNITAF) turned into unsuccessful nation building in United Nations Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM) II. It was an example of "purpose creep"— or leap.

Iraq is a striking example, in part because the campaign has lasted so long. U.S. purposes first shifted from reversing Iraq's aggression to destroying its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs. By 1998, Hussein's compliance with all of these demands was no longer determined to be sufficient, and the United States added the goal of overthrowing Hussein's regime. This "purpose creep" led the United States from a position backed by most of the world to one that risked being seen as interventionist and overzealous. Even Britain, usually firmly in the U.S. camp, disagreed with U.S. goals by 1998.

The lessons are

- Be prepared to declare victory. UNITAF was a success, and Desert Storm was an enormous one. But UNOSOM II goes down as a disaster and Iraq as a mixed case because of what came later.

- Avoid being beguiled by success and capability. Success makes reaching for more a temptation. So does the possession of great, usually military, capacity near the target. But the expanded purpose usually is harder, and the measures that back the threat, while impressive, may be insufficient or inappropriate for the new, expanded purpose.

- Articulate the purposes, both to the public and for those implementing the campaign. This definition is a specific form of planning for what-ifs during the campaign. As elsewhere in policymaking, the challenge of preparing the argument for public consumption will sharpen the discussion inside the government.

Achieving visible, defined goals is easier than achieving more subjective ones. "Remove your forces from Kuwait" (or Kosovo) may be difficult to achieve but not hard to observe once achieved (although there might be, in some cases, room for dispute over whether military units had been converted into police). By contrast, "dismantle your WMD program" is an objective whose achievement is much harder to observe. It invites salami slicing, leaving room for endless arguments about what constitutes compliance and how it is to be measured. Had

Saddam Hussein been wiser, he would have readily agreed to the UN's six-month deadline for dismantling his WMD and probably escaped sanctions (and inspections) quickly, leaving him free to rebuild.

Moreover, subjective goals invite dissent within the compelling coalition and offer the target ready opportunities to coerce the weakest-kneed members of the coalitions. If half of the Iraqi army still remained in Kuwait, Russia or France could not have asserted that Saddam had "done enough" or "demonstrated good-faith compliance." If, by contrast, the goal is more subjective, such as capping WMD programs or conceding the Kosovars some autonomy, the target has more room to argue that it has complied and for members of the compelling coalition to concur.

The irony is that a certain amount of ambiguity makes it easier for the target to yield: It can do so with less loss of face. That, however, depends on the rare circumstances of the compeller—but not the rest of the world—knowing for certain that the target has climbed down; even then, the world may draw the wrong lesson from the ambiguous outcome. In most of these cases, however, the balance was in the other direction, and thus plainly unacceptable: The United States as a compeller had good reason to believe that compliance was much less adequate than the target claimed.

The lesson is: Beware of complicated, subjective objectives whose metrics are ambiguous. For instance, the 1994 agreement with North Korea was not specific about how the country's missile program would be affected. The United States felt that missile technologies were included in the agreement while Pyongyang felt that these were a separate issue, in part because North Korea made a great deal of money from the trade of these technologies. In ambiguous circumstances, verifying compliance will strain U.S. intelligence capabilities and put pressure on intelligence sharing in ways that were all too evident in the Iraqi case.

As the campaign proceeds, the United States and its partners acquire stakes that they did not intend and that are not necessary to the original and central purpose. Defending those stakes then becomes a test of U.S. credibility despite their being no part of the original purposes. This process of acquiring stakes is most obvious in the case of Iraq, where the United States acquired stakes in protecting Kurds and, to a lesser extent, the Shi'a in southern Iraq. Neither was part of original U.S. purposes. Indeed, the United States had explicitly not sought to splinter Iraq, on the long-term calculation that doing so would destabilize the region, in particular leaving little counterweight to Iran.

Yet once the stakes were acquired, defending them acquired a life of its own. The United States and its partners were compelled to make threats—and ultimately

take action—to reinforce the no-fly and no-drive zones. When, in 1996, Iraq moved into the Kurdish area to clean out opposition, the action was a sharp blow to U.S. credibility; U.S. and allied air strikes appeared as pinpricks.

The lessons are to avoid acquiring stakes that are not basic to U.S. purposes and not to make them tests of credibility if they are acquired. Acting on this lesson is particularly hard when visible human suffering is involved. The choice then can become a double-edged sword: Protecting the Kurds against genocide played to universal values and so probably increased broad support for the anti-Iraq campaign, but at the same time it directly hindered the coalition by generating more unease in Turkey about the ultimate impact of the exercise.

Finally, compelling requires targeting the adversary's mind. The proximate targets of compellent campaigns are states or groups, but the ultimate targets are individuals, i.e., leaders in a position to decide. The ambiguous cases are so for just that reason: Who is in charge, and how completely, is unclear. The challenge is to get inside the adversary's head, to threaten or hold at risk what he or she cares most about. This goal holds true for all war, perhaps all foreign policy, but it holds especially true when the United States seeks to prevail without using force and without necessarily defeating the adversary in the military sense.

The lesson of these episodes, as well as of RAND research conducted in the wake of Desert Storm, is to think harder about what opponents value. For Hussein, for example, attacks on his regular forces hardly bothered him, for they were Shi'a and of dubious value in his mind. Tasking intelligence to collect what snippets it can that are relevant to the opponent's motivation is valuable, as is serious "red-teaming" for the same purpose. For the latter exercise, enlisting a wide range of experts is imperative. Military experts and concerns dominate targeting, but those sources need to be supplemented. Psychologists may bolster thinking about what most concerns an adversary. And politicians are often better at understanding other "politicians," even autocratic ones like Milosevic or Hussein, than are nonpoliticians. For instance, the technical analysts who knew the most about India's nuclear program were probably among the least equipped to get inside the heads of the Hindu nationalists who came to preside over it.

Desert Storm stands as testimony to how effective the United States can be in exploiting the military weaknesses of an opponent once it puts its mind to winning the war. Paying comparable attention to what motivates the leaders and elite of those groups or nations the United States endeavors to compel might more often spare it the need to fight a war to achieve its objectives.

1. Introduction

This report begins by defining *compellence* and its kin, *deterrence*. It then sets out a template of questions to frame the cases. The third section provides thumbnail sketches of the lead cases, and the appendix reports the evidence from those cases in more detail, organized as responses to the questions. The cases themselves are available separately, in published form for Iraq and in draft for the others. The fourth section looks across the three cases and their categories, again within the framework of the questions. To extend the reach of the analysis, this comparison also makes use of other cases the project looked at in less detail in each of the three categories. The final section draws out the lessons and recommendations from the analysis.

Categories, Cases, and Terms of Reference

For starters, it is useful to think of the cases in which the United States confronts choices about compellent strategies in three categories:

- *Compellence in major crises.* The United States has important interests in several regions of the world. When crises arise, those interests can be threatened, and U.S. action is likely. The United States may seek to intimidate states or leaders to prevent or reverse aggression in both civil and interstate conflicts. If regional adversaries are truly strong enough to threaten U.S. interests and other states in the region, they almost certainly have military forces employed for these purposes. Therefore, the United States will probably need to make military threats and deploy military forces. The U.S. campaign against Iraq from the 1990–1991 Gulf War until the present exhibits many of the problems inherent in trying to compel a state in this category. Other cases in this category include Suez, Cuba, and Nicaragua. Such states will, like Iraq or North Korea, often be potential nuclear weapons proliferators, and so fit into two of the categories.
- *Compelling would-be proliferators.* While the technologies, information, and materials needed to create weapons of mass destruction (WMD) have become increasingly widespread, the United States has maintained a strong interest in preventing the proliferation of these weapons and their delivery systems. The United States seeks to prevent programs from maturing and to keep mature programs from testing. Compellence tasks in this category

include convincing states or nonstate actors (1) not to test; (2) to give up weapons, materials, or technology; or (3) to allow inspections of its production sites to ensure compliance with agreements such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) or the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). From 1974 to 1998, the United States tried to persuade India not to test its nuclear capability again. India was unusual in this category, for it was a friendly state, surely not a foe. Other cases of trying to compel would-be proliferators include North Korea, Iran, and Pakistan.

- *Compelling nonstate or ambiguous actors*. In these contingencies, the ambiguities may be either *strategic*, about how important the case is to the United States, or *tactical*, about the local situation, and usually are both. Preponderant U.S. force may not be worth using, or usable, or compelling. The necessity of calibrating government actions to what the U.S. body politic will think justified will be especially hard, and public support will be brittle and susceptible to swings if casualties mount.

  These operations will, almost by their nature, be multilateral, so understanding coalition partners will be imperative. This category thus puts a premium not just on tactical intelligence but on mindsets in evaluating would-be friends, foes, or those in between. The press tended to refer to the various faction leaders in Somalia as warlords or thugs, and to some extent policymakers understood them as such. But some of them had been involved in a lifetime struggle for power, one that began before the United States arrived and would continue long after it left. What compelling them required had to be seen in that light. Compellence tasks in this category include limiting humanitarian disasters, stopping genocide or ethnic cleansing, replacing regimes, or combating terrorism. In Haiti in 1994, the United States had to confront a new and unfriendly military dictatorship, compelling it to step down using the threat of force. Other compellence cases that fall within this category include Somalia and Libya.

The project looked in detail at an example from each category. We examined each in the context of emerging hypotheses about lessons that also grew out of less-detailed reviews of other cases to provide some validation of the conclusions that emerged from the lead cases. The categories are artificial, and some cases, like Iraq, belong to several; a large part of the U.S. campaign regarding Iraq was centered on controlling its ability to proliferate. Other cases fit the categories awkwardly. The project looked at coercing Milosevic, for instance, precisely because Kosovo did not quite match Iraq in the nature of U.S. stakes, and it also had some characteristics of the ambiguous category. Yet it seemed a far cry from Haiti.

The purpose of the project was to draw implications for U.S. strategy—particularly its military strategy, its military instruments, and force posture. The three lead cases are important by themselves, so their particularities are important. Thus, the cases were assessed as exemplars of the categories, and Section 3 draws comparisons across those categories. As is always true when the number of cases is small, providing rigorous proof of hypotheses is not possible. Rather, the project's premise is that while the particularities of the cases matter, it is still useful to derive some rules of thumb. Many of those rules are best expressed as "if, then" guidelines: If the case at hand is X, then beware of Y.

The cases were examined within a roughly common set of questions, one that grew out of the framework for thinking about compellence, as enriched by the hypotheses about lessons:[1]

Who was to be compelled? How good was the understanding of *who?* How important are distinctions among types of regimes—between friend and adversary, and between governments and nonstate actors? Understanding the target's sources of power or legitimacy, its motives and mindsets, and its strengths and weaknesses will be important.

To do what? How clearly was the purpose understood? Did goals change over time?

With what stakes and instruments? How important were U.S. stakes in the outcome? How clear were they? What options were available, especially military? Which military instruments were missing, and why?

In what context? Did the United States start in a strong position—one based on preponderant force, history, or reputation?

With what partners and politics? How difficult was building support and conveying signals, both internally and with regard to would-be supporters or coalition partners? How much did that matter?

How good was the analysis? How well were the target and its power base understood? How rich was the analysis of alternative strategies, possible countermeasures, responses, and systemic effects—and specific responses to these consequences? Was there an understanding of how long the campaign might last? This evaluation will be subjective and elusive.

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[1]For a similar framework, as well as a rich discussion of closely related issues, see National Research Council, *Post-Cold War Conflict Deterrence* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1997), p. 13.

2. Terms, Concepts, and Questions

Defining Compellence

This report uses *compellence* and *coercion* more or less interchangeably.[1] In principle they are distinguished from *denial, brute force,* or other actual military operations because they involve threats, including military ones, that the would-be compeller hopes will never have to be carried out. Compellence and coercion aim to affect the enemy's will rather than its capabilities. Thus, compellence is not narrowly military but rather a politico-military strategy for reconciling a conflict of interest with an adversary; it is a test of wills.

In fact, the reality of the cases defied the neatness of categories—a reminder that the categories and distinctions originally grew out of the conceptual tidiness of the U.S–Soviet nuclear confrontation. The cases were all *campaigns*, not point episodes. In several, force was actually used, and that use became part of the baseline for the next compellence effort, again in the hope of limiting the actual use of force. The cases also cast doubt on the conventional wisdom, which holds that if threats fail and force is actually used, it should be employed in "discrete and controlled increments" to compel the opponent to "revise his calculations and agree to a mutually acceptable termination of the conflict," in Alexander George's words.[2]

Compellence and coercion are close kin of *deterrence*; this report is really about all three. The distinction between deterrence and compellence turns on whether the party to be influenced must merely refrain from acting or must either stop doing something it is doing or do something that it is not. The distinction can be a fine one, even a semantic one. The task for U.S. policy in the late 1990s was either to deter India from testing or to compel it not to test. In hindsight, with better information, it now appears that, at some point, the task changed: As India's intentions to test became firmer, the desire to deter it from doing something it may or may not have intended turned into compelling it to divert from a course it had set.

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[1]Some of the literature establishes a broad category of *coercion,* of which *deterrence* and *compellence* are subcategories. In common language, *coercion* usually implies something more active than attempts to reinforce the status quo; we use it here more or less synonymously with *compellence*.

[2]Alexander L. George, David K. Hall, and William R. Simons, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy: Laos, Cuba, Vietnam* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1971), pp. 18–19.

The term *compellence*, in international relations, owes its origins to Thomas Schelling,[3] who noted that the problems of deterring an enemy's advance and compelling its retreat were similar yet different.[4] For him, the difference between the two turned on initiative and timing. A deterrent threat is a promised reaction to an adversary whose potential action evokes a specified response, the timing of which is in principle automatic. A compellent threat, on the other hand, is a more active or "offensive" strategy undertaken on the initiative of the threatener. The timing of such threats is crucial in determining success: Too strict a deadline makes compliance impossible, while one too lenient makes compliance unnecessary.

Hence, compellence is more complex than deterrence, because of the time element and the need to ask, "How much is enough?" in terms of the threatened sanctions. Deterrence is usually easier—but its success harder to judge—because the deterred party need not do anything visible.[5] Thus, that party does not suffer any loss of face and can simply argue or imply that it never intended to do the thing in any event. For that reason, success *is* hard to judge: Were the United States and the Soviet Union deterred in any meaningful sense from nuclear attacks on each other, or, given the awesome unpredictabilities, did they simply know better and never really intend to strike each other in any case?

By contrast, conceding to a compellent threat is visible, and usually the conceding side must devise an "excuse," preferably a "rationalized reinterpretation" of its original commitment.[6] That said, the moral burden, and so the broader public reaction, may be different in the two cases. Often, if the status quo is of long standing, it acquires a certain legitimacy; therefore, making deterrent threats to sustain it will be regarded differently from using coercion to upset it. The would-be compeller may be held responsible not only for upsetting the status quo but for violence or other unpredictable consequences that ensue during the confrontation. It was, for instance, NATO that had to take the initiative in Kosovo to eject Serbian troops. Of course, the would-be compeller may regard a status quo, even one of long standing, as illegitimate and be prepared to act accordingly. That is probably the case in China's view of Taiwan's increasing independence.

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[3]Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 69–91.

[4]Schelling notes that J. David Singer made a similar distinction using the terms *persuasion*, where the subject is desired to "act," and *dissuasion*, where the subject is desired to abstain. See J. David Singer, "Inter-Nation Influence: A Formal Model," *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 17 (1963), pp. 420–430.

[5]Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Peace* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 30–31. Also see Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, p. 44.

[6]Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 34.

Compellence and deterrence share the vocabulary of threats. Both imply punishment in some form. This project focused on military threats and military instruments, but in principle, coercive threats cover a range: from diplomatic words or actions, through political or economic sanctions, to covert or information operations. Similarly, the focus of the project was on sticks, not carrots. But thinking about compellence should include *inducements* as well, and this project did so; inducements can, in principle, help the coerced party to climb down from its commitment.

At both extremes of instruments, the language of threat becomes inapt, and thus the extremes probably should be regarded as at the edges of this report's subject. At one extreme, if diplomacy alone succeeded, more or less without threats, it would be better described as persuasion than compellence. For instance, it is probably fairer to say that Ukraine was persuaded to forgo its nuclear weapons in the 1990s rather than compelled to do so; the United States offered concrete inducements beyond pure persuasion.

At the other extreme, the allies' ground campaign in Desert Storm followed a compellent campaign that had failed; Iraq was not compelled to withdraw from Kuwait by threats but forced to do so by arms. Again, Schelling is eloquent on the transition: "Brute force succeeds when it is used, whereas the power to hurt is most successful when held in reserve. It is the threat of damage, or of more damage to come, that can make someone yield or comply."[7]

Figure 2.1 displays the range of instruments of influence in a stylized way, along with the general idea that the level of threat or harm goes up across the spectrum.

Points A and B are intended to represent the dilemma of sanctions, which is discussed in Section 4. Economic sanctions are often thought of in the continuum of instruments as more than diplomacy but less than force. In fact, as the cases demonstrate, they can inflict considerable harm—often, unfortunately, on relatively innocent citizens and not on the leaders they are intended to influence.

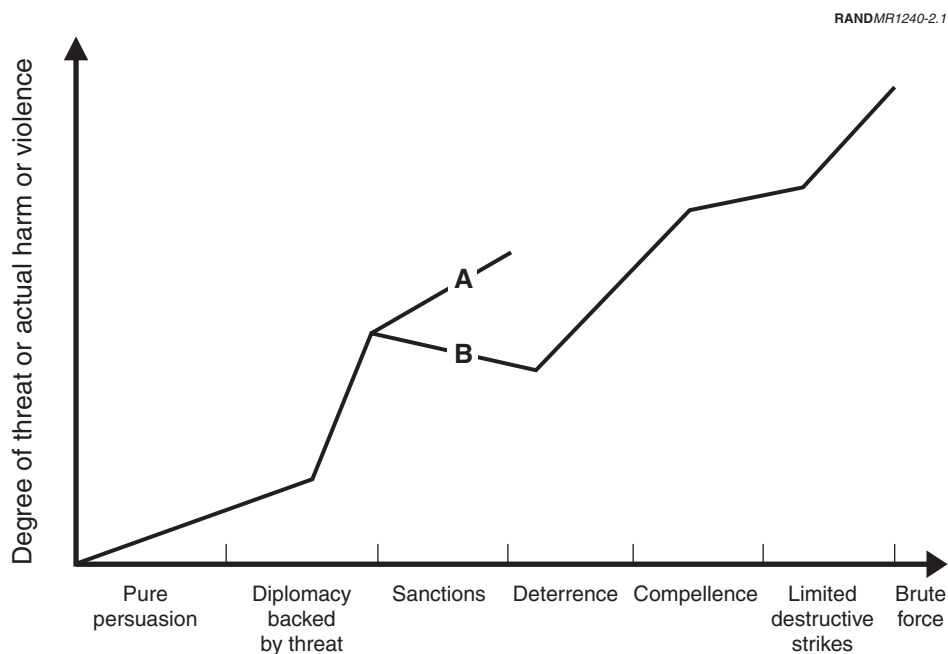[7]Schelling, *Arms and Influence,* p. 3.

Figure 2.1—Instruments of Influence

The y-axis is labeled "Degree of threat or actual harm or violence." The x-axis categories from left to right are: Pure persuasion, Diplomacy backed by threat, Sanctions, Deterrence, Compellence, Limited destructive strikes, Brute force. Two curve segments labeled A and B are shown near the Sanctions/Deterrence region.

Determinants of Success[8]

Because U.S. compellent campaigns involve threats with regard to places far from the U.S. homeland, the question of credibility looms large. Credibility turns on factors that may be relatively independent of a particular episode. *Reputation* is one: If cab drivers as a group are thought to be aggressive, then any particular cab driver will find it easier to deter other drivers from taking them on and coerce them into submission. In Schelling's words:

> Few parts of the world are intrinsically worth the risk of serious war by themselves . . . but defending them or running risks to protect them may preserve one's commitments to action in other parts of the world at later times.[9]

This received wisdom sees particular crises as connected tests of reputation, but there are grounds for skepticism about too rigid a view of the connections. Perceptions of the particular instance may matter more than images based on

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[8]Compare this list with National Research Council, cited above, p. 21ff; see also the notes on analyzing and modeling processes of deterrence and compellence, p. 36ff.

[9]Schelling, *Arms and Influence,* p. 124*.*

past behavior in other places; the U.S. failure in Vietnam, for instance, did not seem to diminish U.S. credibility in Europe, at least in Soviet eyes.[10]

A general perception of willingness to suffer pain is a second factor bearing on credibility.[11] Many coercive threats involve costs to the would-be compeller; the higher the cost, the lower the credibility, and the more reputation matters. For this reason, mad leaders—or political systems that produce unpredictable results—may be more credible because they might just cut off their noses to spite their faces. Conveying the appearance of irrationality can introduce uncertainty in the enemy's decisionmaking calculus by breaking the connection between the would-be compeller's present action and the pattern of past actions in similar circumstances.[12]

Other crucial factors depend on the nature of the case and the strategy. *Will* and *stakes* are two sides of the same coin, so the more important the interest at play is for the compeller—or the more important it can be made to seem—the more credible the threat.[13] The difficulty for the United States is that beyond the cold war, in Jervis's words, "few imaginable disputes will engage vital U.S. interests," and so the "balance of resolve" is likely to favor U.S. opponents.[14] Worse, if possible U.S. opponents fear big losses in the short run, they may resist U.S. threats or go to war in the hope of making future gains.[15]

Thus, compellent strategies attempt to manipulate credibility in a variety of ways. Declarations seek to magnify stakes, and military deployments advertise threatening intentions. "Painting oneself into a corner" or "tying one's hands" are also familiar; the United States may have experienced a little of both in dealing with Iraq (although it did not always like the military corner into which

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[10]See Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

[11]Schelling, *Strategy of Conflict*, p. 17.

[12]See also Glenn H. Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 25–27.

[13]This straightforward conclusion is reflected in, for instance, Paul Huth, *Extended Deterrence and the Prevention of War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 43.

[14]See Robert Jervis, "What Do We Want to Deter and How Do We Deter It?" in L. Benjamin Ederington and Michael J. Mazar, eds., *Turning Point: The Gulf War and U.S. Military Strategy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), p. 130. On the "balance of resolve," see T.V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Shai Feldman, "Middle East Nuclear Stability: The State of the Region and the State of the Debate," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (Summer 1995), p. 215.

[15]On these issues, see John Arquilla and Paul K. Davis, *Extended Deterrence, Compellence and the "Old World Order,"* N-3482-JS (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1992) and Paul K. Davis and John Arquilla, *Thinking About Opponent Behavior in Crisis and Conflict: A Generic Model for Analysis and Group Discussion,* N-3322-JS (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1991); Barbara Farnham, ed., *Avoiding Losses/Taking Risks: Prospect Theory and International Conflict* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995); and Jack S. Levy, "Prospect Theory and International Relations: Theoretical Applications and Analytical Problems," *Political Psychology*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (1992), pp. 283–310.

it painted itself). Nuclear strategists dreamed up "doomsday machines" that would tie the coercer's hands absolutely, or "threats that left something to chance" that would do so probabilistically.

The key to "threats that leave something to chance" is that, although one may or may not carry them out if the threatened party fails to comply, the final decision is not altogether under the threatener's control. The threat is not of the form "I may or may not, as I choose," but has an element of "I may or may not, and even I cannot be altogether sure."[16] The oldest of these is "I cannot guarantee that I will be able to control my troops."[17] Volatile politics may be another instance. Americans may be nearly as uncertain as their would-be opponents whether a given case will turn out to be a Lebanon or a Somalia, which the American public judges a game not worth the risk, or a Pearl Harbor, when stakes lost lead to redoubling.

Timing and *sequencing* are also crucial, more so than the classic literature suggests. Much of that literature focuses on discrete threats and responses, but recent instances of compellence have been *campaigns*, not single threats and responses. The language of *campaign* is apt not just because it calls attention to the time dimension. It also leaves open the nature of the sequence of actions. To the extent that the classics consider a sequence of threats and responses, the shadow of "controlled or graduated response" is powerful, as is the later "tit-for-tat."[18] Notice George's language cited near the beginning of this section. His ideas are rooted in limiting violence and demonstrating credibility. Vietnam seemed to convey the lesson that graduated response was ineffective; it did so despite some of the U.S. escalations in Vietnam being more massive than graduated.

More recent military operations, from Desert Storm to the intervention force in Bosnia, appear to testify to the value of massive force. As one recent study puts it:

> The basis for Rapid Dominance rests in the ability to affect the will, perception, and understanding of the adversary through imposing sufficient Shock and Awe to achieve the necessary political, strategic, and operational goals of the conflict or crisis that led to the use of force.[19]

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[16]Schelling, *Strategy of Conflict*, p. 188.

[17]See, for instance, William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 3. 3.

[18]On tit-for-tat, see Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

[19]Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade, *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance* (Washington, D.C.: NDU Press, 1996), p. 19.

That force may cow opponents into inaction; if it does not, it still may mean that the ensuing conflict will be so one-sided as to be relatively bloodless for the United States and its allies.

Perhaps, by similar logic, compellence campaigns should contemplate threats of massive, disproportionate violence early on. Such threats would be beset by credibility problems. America's well-known aversion to casualties might, though, be turned to advantage: Adversaries might judge the probability of the threat being carried out as low but also reckon the cost as if it were very high, on the awareness that *any* use of force would be massive enough to shock—and to diminish the risk of U.S. casualties. In any event, controlled response versus overwhelming force is a provocative theme in thinking about compellence.

Finally, *who* is compelling and being compelled is paramount. As Schelling put it a generation ago:

> [A]nalogies with individuals are helpful; but they are counterproductive if they make us forget that a government does not reach a decision in the same way as an individual in a government. Collective decision depends on the internal politics and bureaucracy of government, on the chain of command and on the lines of communication, on party structures and pressure groups, as well as on individual values and careers.[20]

Schelling was writing about the Soviet Union, but his language is apt for the cases in this project. Even in the cases where personalizing the target of the campaign is most tempting, such as Hussein or Milosevic, Schelling's admonition still directs attention to the leader's bases of support. If the leader is an autocrat (an elected one in Milosevic's case), he still has to reckon his stakes in light of his support base and his ability to command.

Two dimensions of who is being compelled are critical, sometimes in surprising ways. One dimension runs from *friend* to *foe*; the other from *autocrat* to *democrat.* On the one hand, compelling friends constrains U.S. options. No matter how concerned the United States was over India's nuclear ambitions, a military strike either to impress New Delhi or to degrade its capacity never was on the agenda. On the other hand, friends may pay more attention to U.S. threats precisely because they place value on the friendship. Targets of U.S. covert action were, for instance, very different in the 1950s and the 1980s. The former, Mossadeq in Iran or Arbenz in Guatemala, did not seek U.S. hostility; they cared how Washington viewed them, and so relatively small threats were magnified. For Iran in the

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[20]Schelling, *Arms and Influence,* p. 86.

1980s or Saddam in the 1990s, however, the United States was more useful as an enemy than as a friend, and standing up to U.S. threats had positive value.[21]

In the present an irony arises, noted by studies of economic sanctions, that democratic countries whose elites care about the United States or world opinion are more easily influenced than authoritarian regimes less affected by the opinions either of the world or their own citizens.[22] Sanctions had an effect on white South Africa because it was a democracy, albeit a circumscribed one, and, more important, because those whites cared what the world thought.

The *who* issue applies with equal force to compelled and compeller. Compellence, for the United States, is carried out in the context of domestic politics. Domestic politics affect all foreign policy, but the effect is sharper in this realm because threat-making is signaling; would-be targets will read not just the words of the U.S. government but also the public music behind the words. The deliberate, transparent decisionmaking process in democratic countries creates a disadvantage in bargaining because the opposing side knows the limits of the commitments that the democracy can enter. Conversely, the limits can sometimes add credibility to a bargaining position.[23] The U.S. executive mostly disdains the automatic sanctions Congress sometimes favors, but those represent a form of tying one's hands.

Moreover, many compellent strategies depend at least on international approval, as registered by the UN or a coalition broad enough to confer legitimacy, if not the cooperation of a group of partners. At a minimum, the costs and benefits of unilateral American action have to be reckoned not just directly—in money, lives at risk, and lost commerce—but in the lesser tangibles of whether the United States might be perceived as ceding the moral high ground even if it achieved its proximate objectives.

The requirements of speaking to these different audiences will conflict. This feature is also shared by much of foreign policy but perhaps carries more weight here because words count, but only for their portrayal of stakes and willingness to bear costs. Building support for compellent strategies at home may lead, as in

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[21]See Gregory F. Treverton, *Covert Action: The Limits of Intervention in the Postwar World* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), pp. 191ff.

[22]See, for instance, Gary Clyde Hufbauer, "Sanctions-Happy USA," International Economics Policy Briefs, Institute for International Economics, July 1998. Recent assessments of sanctions have all been dim. See for instance, Richard Haass, "Sanctioning Madness," *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 1997), pp. 74–85; and Robert A. Pape, "Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Fall 1997), pp. 90–136.

[23]Schelling, *Strategy of Conflict*, p. 22. "These tactics . . . rest on the paradox that the power to constrain an adversary may depend on the power to bind oneself; that, in bargaining, weakness is often strength, freedom may be freedom to capitulate, and to burn bridges behind one may suffice to undo an opponent."

the case of Iraq, to overselling what those words can achieve. Strong language directed at those to be compelled may frighten or arouse domestic opinion, and it may scare off would-be supporters or coalition partners in a kind of twist on the Duke of Wellington's famous line that he hoped his troops would frighten the enemy because they surely scared him.

A first checklist of propositions about success would concentrate on who is being compelled; on stakes and motivation; on what instruments are being employed; on who is doing the compelling; and on how the campaign is conducted.

Success is more likely when:

- the foe is hostile, not friendly
- the foe is nondemocratic
- the adversary regime is isolated from its own population, and its policies are perceived to promote narrow regime survival interests rather than "national" interests that command broad support among the population
- the specific bases of the regime's power can be identified accurately and threatened with unacceptable damage without harming the population as a whole
- the intrinsic stakes at issue are more important to the United States than to the adversary, thus the "balance of resolve" is in the American favor
- the status quo is clearly defined and accepted
- previous U.S. actions involving the adversary have demonstrated resolve, credibility, and a high valuation of the stakes at issue
- the adversary's compliance with U.S. demands are clearly visible, not subjective and arguable
- the U.S. interests are narrow security stakes, rather than broader goals like the protection of democracy or human rights
- the United States acts with broad domestic support
- the United States acts—ideally—unilaterally, rather than multilaterally, except when the territory of U.S. allies or coalition partners is directly at risk
- the threats employed are direct, unambiguous, and visibly proportional to the stakes at issue
- U.S. policy is conceived as a campaign, not as an episode, with emphasis on continuity.

Testing and extending these propositions is the purpose for examining the cases.