Challenges of Future Deterrence

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The views expressed here are the presenter’s.
Agenda

- Does Deterrence Still Matter?
- How Do We Know If It Will Work?
- Challenges Ahead

- Traditional concepts of deterrence will not work against a terrorist enemy whose avowed tactics are wanton destruction and the targeting of innocents; whose so-called soldiers seek martyrdom in death and whose most potent protection is statelessness. The overlap between states that sponsor terror and those that pursue WMD compels us to action.

The United States will not use force in all cases to preempt emerging threats, nor should nations use preemption as a pretext for aggression. Yet in an age where the enemies of civilization openly and actively seek the world’s most destructive technologies, the United States cannot remain idle while dangers gather.


If deterrence is unreliable and defense is impractical, then preventive action becomes more attractive.
Does Deterrence Still Matter? (Today)

But war itself has too many costs and vagaries to encourage the assumption that deterrence will not work. This helps to explain new interest in the topic.

- Official statements describing deterrence as part of U.S. strategy include:
  - *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (Sept. 2006)
  - *Deterrence Operations Joint Operating Concept* (Dec. 2006)

*Deter terrorists from employing WMD.* A new deterrence calculus combines the need to deter terrorists and supporters from contemplating a WMD attack and, failing that, to dissuade them from actually conducting an attack. Traditional threats may not work because terrorists show a wanton disregard for the lives of innocents and in some cases for their own lives. We require a range of deterrence strategies that are tailored to the situation and the adversary. We will make QDR Report (2006), p. 49

Vision. The Department is continuing its shift from a “one size fits all” notion of deterrence toward more tailorable approaches appropriate for advanced military competitors, regional WMD states, as well as non-state terrorist networks. The future force will provide a fully National Strategy for Combating Terrorism (2006), p. 14
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• Does Deterrence Still Matter?

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• Challenges Ahead
How Do We Know If It Will Work? (Then)

Formerly, stylized comparisons of U.S. and Soviet strategic nuclear force structures were used to model “first-strike stability.”


Intriligator & Brito, “Can Arms Races Lead to the Outbreak of War?” *J. of Conflict Resolution* (March 1984), p. 74
How Do We Know If It Will Work? (Now)

Today, deterrence is discussed mainly in terms of an adversary’s mindset. It can be very costly to validate or disconfirm these kinds of claims.

The closer examination of Saddam’s historical record gives little reason to be sanguine that Saddam can be deterred in the future, especially after he acquires nuclear weapons. He has a twenty-eight year pattern of aggression, violence, miscalculation, and purposeful underestimation of the consequences of his actions that should give real pause to anyone considering whether to allow him to acquire nuclear weapons.

- Saddam never discussed using deception as a policy, but he used to say privately that the “better part of war was deceiving,” according to ‘Ali Hasan Al Majid. He stated that Saddam wanted to avoid appearing weak and did not reveal he was deceiving the world about the presence of WMD.

- The UN’s inconclusive assessment of Iraq’s possession of WMD, in Saddam’s view, gave pause to Iran. Saddam was concerned that the UN inspection process would expose Iraq’s vulnerability, thereby magnifying the effect of Iran’s own capability.


*Comprehensive Report of the Special Adviser to the DCI on Iraq’s WMD* ("Duelfer Report") (Sept. 2004), p. 34
How Do We Know If It Will Work? (Ever)

In fact, deterrence is “invisible” and its successes are almost invariably subject to dispute. We appear fated to live with uncertainty.

There are… intervening variables between the actions of the defender and the deterrence of the potential attacker—variables of perception and assessment… [T]hese subjective factors imbedded in the minds and calculations of the potential attacker’s policy-makers… are of the essence in deterrence. 

George & Smoke, Deterrence in American Foreign Policy (1974), p. 90

The greatest barrier to judging the efficacy of threats is that there is no reliable evidence about what leaders in Moscow or Beijing were thinking during the crises. Thus there is no way to be sure what their initial objectives were or how high a premium they placed on them, and therefore no way to be sure how much they really conceded in the outcomes of the confrontations. … The only evidence available… is circumstantial.

Betts, Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance (1987), p. 18

Deterrence successes… can remain entirely invisible to outsiders. Who is to know if and when leaders were dissuaded from using force by the threats of their adversary? Decisions of this kind are likely to leave few public traces at the time and even after the fact; leaders are understandably reluctant to publicize their impotence and frustration in the face of superior force. For this reason, almost all of our evidence about deterrence successes is circumstantial and highly speculative.

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• Challenges Ahead
The challenges identified in the National Security Strategy require a new concept for ‘waging’ deterrence paired with revised joint force capabilities that provide a wider range of military deterrent options. Deterrence requires a national strategy that integrates diplomatic, informational, military, and economic powers. DOD must develop strategies, plans and operations that are tailored to the perceptions, values, and interests of specific adversaries. Deterrence strategies and actions must span daily operations and must be developed for all phases of conflict planning.

**DoD’s Deterrence Operations JOC**

The *DO JOC* “describes how a joint force commander, 8-20 years into the future, may conduct deterrence operations in order to convince adversaries not to take actions that threaten US vital interests.” (p. 8)

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**Ends-Ways-Means Approach (Strategy)**

**ENDS**
- Deterrence of aggression and coercion against US vital interests

**WAYS**
- Credibly threaten to:
  - Impose Costs
  - Deny Benefits
  - Encourage Adversary Restraint

**MEANS**
- Global Situational Awareness
- Command and Control
- Forward Presence
- Security Cooperation and Military Integration and Interoperability
- Force Projection
- Active and Passive Defenses
- Global Strike
- Strategic Communication
- Deterrence Assessment, Metrics, and Experimentation

*Deterrence Operations Joint Operating Concept (Dec. 2006), pp. 3, 20*
Challenge #1: Tailoring

The DO JOC is blunt about the extent of the knowledge and capabilities that would be required to perform the mission, as it is envisioned.

Deterrence operations are dependent on the ability of the joint force to manage perceptions and act directly and discriminately through multiple domains on the decision-making calculus of adversaries. Finally, successful deterrence is knowledge-dependent and requires the ability to establish and secure communication access to adversaries in order to generate the desired decision outcomes. (p. 9)

An enduring feature of the military problem addressed by this JOC is likely to be uncertainty regarding important factors that influence the decision-making calculations of potential adversaries. Such uncertainties may include the identities of key decision-makers themselves, the roles those decision-makers play in determining decision outcomes, the variables they consider important when making decisions, and their perceptions of those variables. (p. 16)

Uncertainties regarding the nature and content of adversary values, perceptions, and decision-making processes could prevent development of a sufficiently accurate and detailed understanding of adversary decision calculations to support effective deterrence strategy and plan development and execution. (p. 11)

Deterrence Operations Joint Operating Concept (Dec. 2006)
Challenge #2: Layering

The DO JOC is equally explicit about the interagency and international dimensions of the mission, as it is envisioned.

[D]eterrence operations are planned and executed across all domains in concert with other elements of national and international power in order to achieve strategic objectives. Deterrence is most likely to be effective when the actions and capabilities of the joint force are integrated with those of the interagency and as necessary, non-state and multinational partners. (p. 9)

[T]he range of required means to effectively deter extends beyond those available to the Department of Defense (DOD) alone and reaches into other executive departments and across to our international partners. (p. 16)

HUMINT is essential in seeking to understand an adversary’s values, culture, decision calculus, risk propensity, and capacity for situational awareness as well as obtaining other information required for effective deterrence. HUMINT reporting must be integrated into situational awareness displays that provide joint forces with battlespace visualization. Interagency and multinational cooperation is key to achieving success in these efforts. It requires creation of a collaborative environment that incorporates intelligence community, diplomatic, law enforcement, military, and multinational inputs to achieve true global situational awareness for deterrence. (p. 30)

Deterrence Operations Joint Operating Concept (Dec. 2006)
Responses to the Tailoring Problem

The requirements of tailoring are so extensive as to resemble those of intelligence reform writ large. But it is at least possible to achieve a more rigorous and complete picture of what is unknown or uncertain.

- Better insights into adversary decision-making are needed, but may never become fully available
  - An understanding of the identities, roles/processes, perceptions, values, and interests of adversary decision-makers is needed
  - An understanding of how to influence adversary decision-makers is needed

- Better assessment and communication of uncertainties are within reach
  - Judging by NIE Key Judgments released in 2007, the state of the art in the IC is rudimentary compared to fields like nuclear safety
  - Undefined terms like “probably,” “likely,” and “high confidence” are still the norm

- Regardless of what happens, we must learn to live with uncertainty
Responses to the Coordination Problem

The requirements of multi-layered strategy are so extensive as to resemble those of *interagency* reform writ large. Can plans built by a single agency and developed outside of Washington DC really harness “the DIME”?  

• **Option #1: Define deterrence downwards**  
  – Reduce the scope of coordination by defining deterrence exclusively in terms of the threat of force

• **Option #2: Make it an interagency mission**  
  – Set up an interagency working group to share information and conduct planning

• **Option #3: Militarize foreign policy**  
  – Subordinate other agencies to DoD
Questions