

Coercive Strategies and Their Inertial Considerations



Lt. Col. Darin S. Elgersma, U.S. Air Force

On 24 February 2022, Russia initiated an invasion of Ukraine. Western powers made plenty of threats during the preceding weeks that did nothing to dissuade Russian aggression. It seems that deterrence failed because Russia invaded, yet Russia did not attack the territory of NATO. Deterrence failed but also succeeded.

From another perspective, threats from Russia have not kept the EU and the United States from providing billions of dollars of aid to Ukraine.¹ It seems that Russian threats are unheeded, even given the bevy of nuclear weapons at its disposal. Deterrence failed because the West has become involved, yet the Western democracies have been loath to provide weapons that could range deep into Russia itself and have sent no troops into Ukraine.² Deterrence failed but also succeeded.

In this conflict, Russia seems impervious to sanctions that are destroying its economy.³ At the same time, the EU has absorbed soaring energy prices and inflation triggered by Russian supply cuts.⁴ It seems that compellence is failing on both sides, yet both sides continue to wield compellent measures.

The war in Ukraine raises questions about coercive theory. Threats and limited applications of force affect behavior in some circumstances but are less effective in others. Leaders seem unable to predict the effectiveness of their own strategies. Given how frequently nations rely on deterrence and compellence calculations, it is vital to understand how these strategies interact.

This project postulates that different coercive strategies have inertial components that impact their efficacy. The following pages will build a foundation

for the inertial aspects of coercion, and then identify its role in two conflicts: the 1954–55 Taiwan Strait Crisis and the 1999 Kargil Crisis. These case studies illustrate an inertial aspect to coercion relationships that makes deterrence stable, compellence hard, abrogation harder, unilateralism common, and concurrence the most optimal.

The Inertial Aspects of Coercion

The stability of deterrence. Lawrence Freedman defines deterrence as “deliberate attempts to manipulate the behavior of others through conditional threats.”⁵ This definition, however, says nothing about the stability of deterrence as a phenomenon. General views of deterrence often picture superpowers with their forces on a razor’s edge. In *The Delicate Balance of Terror*, Albert Wohlstetter said, “The balance, I believe, is in fact precarious, and this fact has critical implications for policy.”⁶ Wohlstetter’s view of deterrence matches the diagram in figure 1, where the slightest move by Country A or Country B invites disaster. This picture, however, does not match reality. Deterrence has an inertial component to it that makes it

Lt. Col. Darin Elgersma is an F-15C fighter pilot with the U.S. Air Force. He has an MA in strategic studies from the Advanced Strategic Leadership Studies Program at the School for Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He is currently assigned as a strategic planner in Headquarters, U.S. Air Forces in Europe and Air Forces Africa.

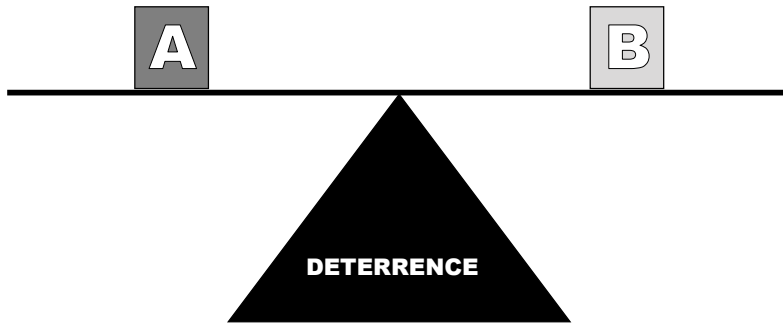


Figure 1. Unstable Deterrence

more stable and resembles the depiction in figure 2. Specifically, the rationality of human decision-making and the weight of international norms all enhance deterrence. This is not to say that inertia is insurmountable, and deterrence will never fail, but it does mean that deterrence lasts unless actively eroded.

Basic deterrence rests on the rational actor model. Thomas Schelling explained that if an adversary can threaten resistance where the costs of war outweigh the spoils, then a rational actor will forgo conflict.⁷ It is a simple cost-benefit analysis and war is risky and potentially costly.

Another source of inertial stability for deterrence stems from the international system. The relationship between states is anarchical, which means there is no arbitrator higher than the states themselves.⁸ Due to this environment, states have developed a system of international normative behavior.

States cannot thrive in chaos. Nations have insulated themselves from that scenario by developing norms against aggression that have grown stronger with time.⁹ Country A might have designs against Country B, but Country A knows aggression would weaken the norm, jeopardizing its own security. This process is evident within the EU where the rules-based order has risen to great prominence replacing deterrence calculations. These states are still self-interested, but norms have stabilized their relations. Rational actor calculations combined with international norms give deterrence great inertia.

The problem with compellence.

While deterrence may be stable, it has no ability to alter the current situation. A state that wishes to improve its position requires a different approach. For this reason, states often pursue policies of compellence in which the threat of coercion induces the adversary state to comply with demands (see figure 3).¹⁰

However, compellence must overcome inertia (see figure 4). Namely, it must overcome the emotional resistance to domination, and it must fight a state's concerns about losing momentum. These factors make compellence difficult.

To begin with, compellence must overcome a psychological barrier. Threatened states tend to reject demands due to a desire to regain autonomy. This phenomenon is called reactance and will lead the target state to resist, even when analysis would favor capitulation.¹¹

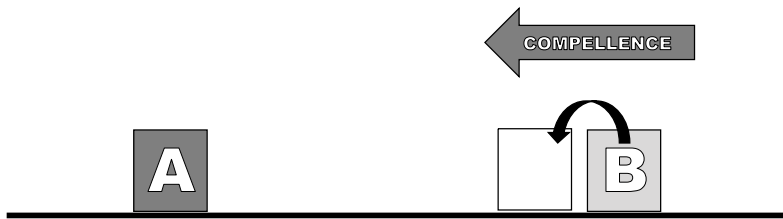
In addition to psychological resistance, target states can have practical concerns about ceding momentum to their adversary. If a country compromises its resolve in one instance, other observers might view it as susceptible.¹² This was Serbia's situation in 1999. If it yielded to threats and detached Kosovo, it might prompt other minorities to pursue the same path.¹³

Abrogation: Especially difficult compellence. The challenge of compellence increases if the target state already has momentum in a different direction. This special case of compellence is abrogation (see figure 5). Abrogation describes a situation where one state



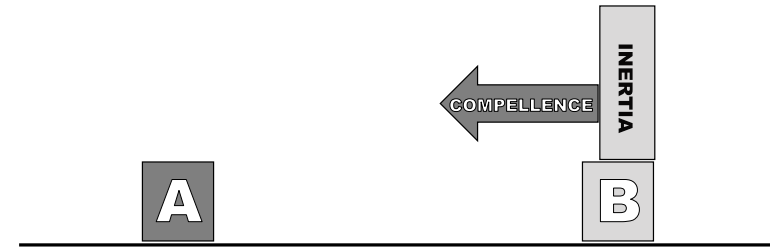
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Figure 2. Stable Deterrence



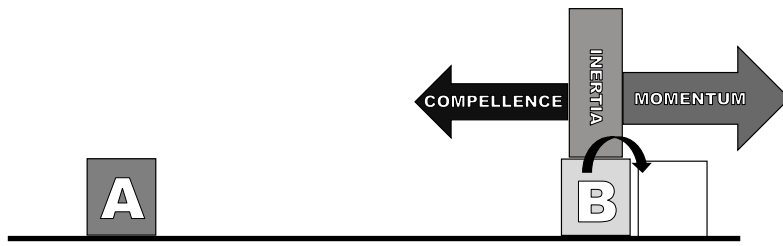
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Figure 3. Basic Compellence



(Figure by author)

Figure 4. Compellence in Reality



(Figure by author)

Figure 5. Abrogation

uses compellence to force another state to repeal an espoused policy or action. In addition to the inertia discussed above, abrogation must also overcome the physical and political momentum behind the target state’s present course. When a state has acted, there is a physical reality to it. If it has seized territory, there may have been deaths and destroyed property ... things that cannot be undone.¹⁴ The facts on the ground complicate the prospect of compellence.

There is also political momentum. The politicians that staked their future to an action might be personally humiliated and politically damaged by changing

course.¹⁵ Political momentum, just like physical momentum, makes abrogation especially difficult.

Compellence affects deterrence. To overcome momentum and inertia, compellence requires substantial force. In the example of Kosovo, consider that NATO had a difficult time compelling Serbia, even though the combined defense budgets of NATO exceeded Serbia’s at a 300-to-1 ratio.¹⁶ States must magnify their compellence if they wish to be successful.

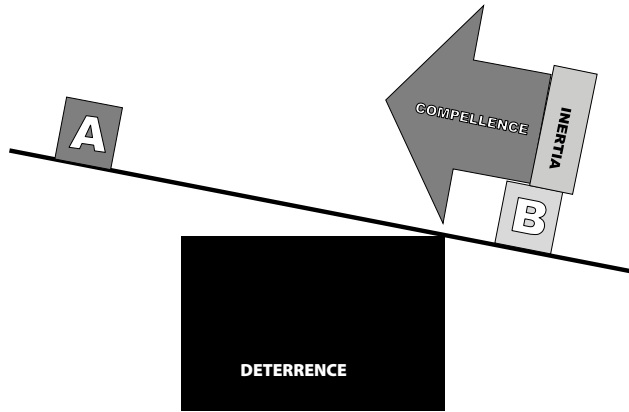
However, this magnification can be dangerous. The goal of compellence is to gain an objective at a cheaper cost than it would take to acquire by force alone. A compellent demand that is too powerful might be escalatory (see figure 6). Robert Jervis describes the danger by saying, “Threats and negative sanctions, far from leading to the beneficial results predicted by deterrence theory, are often self-defeating as a costly and unstable cycle is set in motion. Short-run victories are possible but will prove Pyrrhic if they convince the other that the victorious state is a threat that must be met by force.”¹⁷

This side-effect creates a dilemma for the application of compellence. Too little force will not force concessions from the target state. At the same time, too much force can escalate into a general war. These factors make compellence a difficult instrument to use and is prone to miscalculation.

Unilateralism: An alternative to compellence.

Given the problems with compellence, many states will resort to unilateralism. Unilateralism builds on the stability of deterrence but can change the status quo. It involves advancing a position with little interaction with the adversary and only requires passive acquiescence (see figure 7).

The unilateral approach avoids the inertia of compellence. Changing state policy can create political or personal humiliation for the target state, but with unilateralism, there is the option of saving face by downplaying unfolding events.¹⁸ For example, China



(Figure by author)

Figure 6. Weighted Compellence Upsets Deterrence

has enhanced its position in the South China Sea by building artificial islands.¹⁹ While neighboring nations denounce this action, there is no political necessity to reverse it. China’s unilateral action has given it the islands without needing cooperation from its neighbors.

Unilateralism is also much more stable than compellence. Coercive demands are typically acute, and the target state must comply or face consequences. With unilateralism, the intensity of response options is more diffuse. Schelling offers the picture of evicting a tenant. The landlord could threaten force to compel the tenant to leave, at which point there will either be acceptance or escalation. Under a unilateral approach, however, the landlord could simply cut utilities to the house. They have not acted directly against the tenant so there is less confrontation, yet the landlord has advanced their position and made it more likely that the tenant will leave.²⁰

Despite these strengths, unilateralism is not a panacea. There are many objectives that cannot be achieved unilaterally, such as conducting a trade deal or receiving recognition of a boundary. Also, while unilateral action avoids the brinkmanship of compellence, there is no guarantee that actions will not cross a red line and lead to escalation. Unilateralism does avoid much of the inertia of compellence,

while having an active ability not present in deterrence.

Concurrence: Stable and efficient.

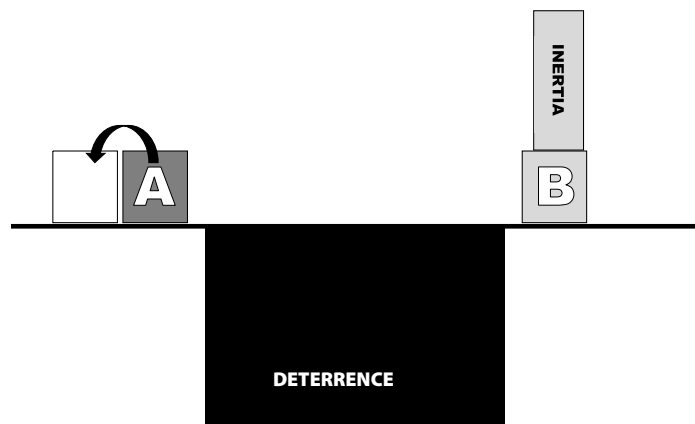
There is another method of international relations with inertial aspects. Concurrence is the mode of interaction where each party adjusts its position in a manner favorable to the other side expecting reciprocation. This type of action has the double advantage of stability while efficiently using resources (see figure 8).

Concurrence, by its nature, is stabilizing and does not endanger the deterrence balance. One party is moving their position in a direction that favors the other, in a gesture that is conciliatory instead of escalatory. When Country A moves

toward Country B, it reinforces the deterrence value-proposition by offering gains to Country B without the costs of conflict.²¹

Not only is concurrence stable, but it also avoids all the inefficiencies of compellence. The parties are participating voluntarily, so they do not need to overcome the barriers of reactance or fear about momentum. National leaders have face-saving options by pointing to the benefits of the agreement to justify compromises.²²

The previous example of Serbia and NATO is illustrative. Despite overwhelming strength, NATO could not compel Serbia to accept an agreement on Kosovo. However, NATO made progress through concurrence. They secured limited autonomy for Kosovo and the



(Figure by author)

Figure 7. Unilateralism

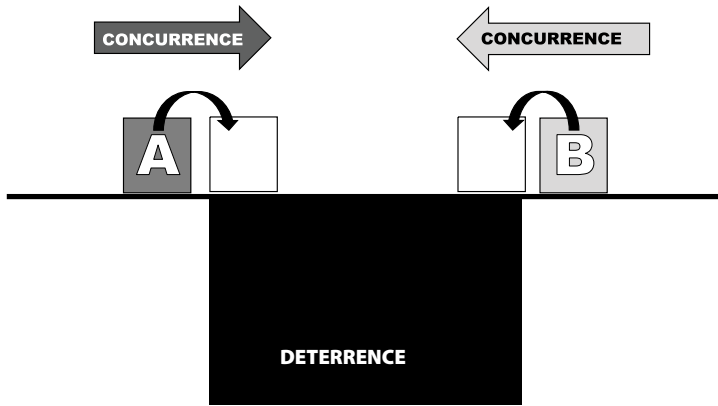


Figure 8. Concurrence

(Figure by author)

Summary. This section established the inertial qualities of various forms of international interactions (see table 1). The following sections will identify these methods of interaction in practice. The Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1954–1955 between the United States and the People’s Republic of China shows the inertial strength of deterrence and the weakness of compellence, even when one side has nuclear weapons, and the other side does not. The Kargil conflict between India and Pakistan shows the limits of unilateral action, and again underscores the inertial strength of deterrence.

withdrawal of Serbian troops in exchange for pledging to respect Serbia’s territorial integrity and facilitating the disarmament of the Kosovo Liberation Army.²³ Agreement accomplished what force could not.

The possibility of concurrence seems counterintuitive because it involves agreement among adversaries. However, sociology has the tools to help explain why concurrence is possible. The famous prisoner’s dilemma illustrates how there are advantages to working for a common goal rather than self-interest alone.²⁴ Concurrence is not some naïve pipedream but rather a reasonable strategy worthy of consideration by any realist.

The Taiwan Strait Crisis, 1954–1955

The Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1954–1955 is especially illustrative for several reasons. First, it is a case where the deterrence balance was never upset and there was no general war. Second, the two primary actors, the United States of America and the People’s Republic of China (PRC), did not have diplomatic relations at the time, making visible actions the primary method of communication. Finally, unlike other exchanges throughout the Cold War, in this example the United States was the only nuclear power. Rather than decide

Table 1. Summary of Coercive Strategies

	Stability	Effect of Inertia	Unique Drawbacks
Deterrence	Stable	Bolstered by inertia	Unable to change the status quo
Compellence	Moderate risk of destabilization	Degraded by inertia	Difficult to calibrate
Abrogation	Moderate risk of destabilization	Doubly degraded by inertia	Difficult to calibrate
Unilateralism	Slight risk of destabilization	Avoids inertia	Might cross a “red line”
Concurrence	Stable	Avoids inertia	Must compromise on self-interested position

(Table by author)



(Figure by author)

Figure 9. Nationalist China

the contest, this one-sidedness demonstrated limits of the compellent strategy.

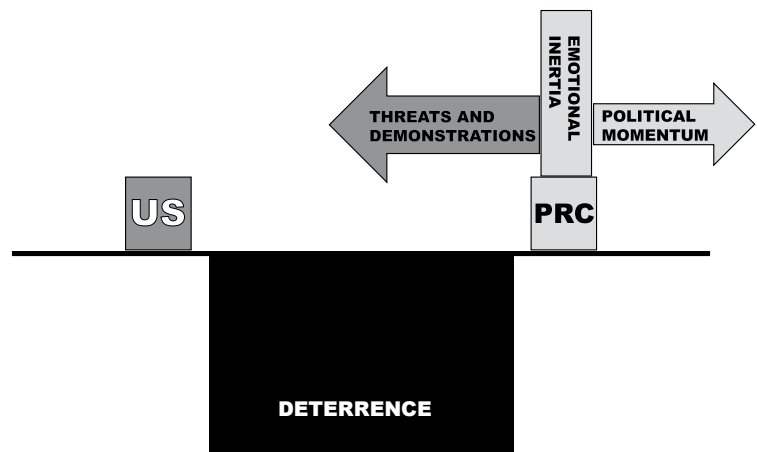
Background. The Chinese Civil War largely ended when the nationalist forces retreated from mainland China in 1949 to Taiwan and several offshore islands (see figure 9).²⁵ In the following years, the Republic of China’s (ROC) offshore islands served as a dangerous irritant for the PRC. Some of the islands were only a few miles from the mainland, specifically the Tachen, Matsu, and Quemoy island groups.²⁶ The nationalist forces that lurked offshore were a constant invasion threat, waiting to capitalize on crisis within the PRC.²⁷ Even more critically, the independence of the ROC fed resistance on the mainland and blocked the PRC from international organizations as the voice of the Chinese people.²⁸ For survival, the Chinese Communist Party needed to gain international recognition as a legitimate government and to assert control of all of the offshore islands, including Taiwan.

Conversely, the United States wanted the Republic of China to maintain its independence. Taiwan controlled the sea lanes between Japan, the Philippines, and British Malaya.²⁹ Not only that, but the National Security Council (NSC) feared that U.S. prestige around the globe was tied to opposing communist aggression.³⁰ By February 1955, defending the offshore islands became a priority for the United States.

The strength of deterrence. With the United States and PRC pursuing opposed objectives, it is important to understand the role of deterrence in the conflict. As rational actors, neither nation wanted to go to war with the other. Throughout the conflict, each nation worked to avoid escalation (see figure 10). Deterrence was so strong that when the Chinese shot down an American A-1 Skyraider on 9 February 1955, it did not prompt a U.S. response.³¹ In the same way, Mao Zedong would not permit any communist military activity around the offshore islands when U.S. assets were nearby.³²

International norms also strengthened deterrence. Neither the United States nor the PRC wanted to appear as the aggressor, and both sides courted international opinion. Reciprocally, international observers feared an escalating conflict and encouraged restraint.³³ Altogether, deterrence was very stable.

Attempts at compellence. With deterrence in the background, neither the United States nor the PRC were satisfied with the status quo. The United States was supporting the ROC in its bid to remain independent while the PRC had vowed to capture all



(Figure by author)

Figure 10. U.S. Compellence

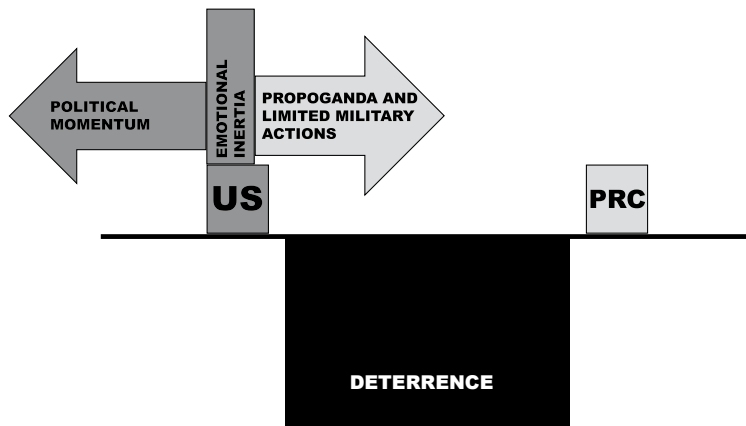


Figure 11. PRC Compellence

(Figure by author)

ROC-controlled territory. Both sides would attempt to use compellence to advance their positions but, because of the greater pressure of deterrence, both sides blunted their compellent actions to the point they were ineffective.

At that time, the NSC had approved economic and diplomatic measures to coerce the PRC to give up their expansionist approach in the region.³⁴ However, in their debates, members were torn on how threatening they could be. They wanted the communists to change behavior but worried that too much strength would cause escalation.³⁵

As the PRC made moves that seemed to herald an assault on the offshore islands, the U.S. government offered warnings that they would punish acts of aggression.³⁶ However, the administration always tempered its threats. Even when the United States threatened nuclear strikes in March 1955, Chinese records show that senior communist officials did not consider the situation to be especially dangerous.³⁷ The U.S. compellent actions, blunted to avoid escalation, were not effective in overcoming Chinese inertia (see figure 11). Emotional reactance and concerns about momentum can be clearly seen in a Communist Party instruction issued on 21 February 1955, stating, “Regarding Washington’s call for a ‘cease-fire’ and its threat to start a war ... if we show any fear, the enemy will consider us weak and easy to bully. In other words, if we give them an inch, they will take a mile and intensify their military expansion.”³⁸

For their part, the communists had their own coercion campaign and launched military operations

off their coast. The memoir of Gen. Ye Fei, commander of the forces that shelled Quemoy on 3 September 1954, shows that the attack was meant to compel the United States and Taiwan from considering a defense treaty.³⁹ When the United States continued to pursue the treaty, Mao sought to make the region so volatile that the U.S. Senate would not dare to ratify it. On 10 January 1955, just four days after Congress had received a copy of the proposed treaty, the PRC launched an assault on the Tachen islands utilizing around one hundred aircraft.⁴⁰ However, these compellent actions failed to achieve their

objectives for similar reasons mentioned above (see figure 11). In the NSC meetings, there are consistent mentions of U.S. prestige, saving face, and not yielding to the communists.⁴¹ In the end, coercion did not help the PRC reach any of their objectives.

Unilateralism. Compellence was not the only strategy pursued by PRC and the United States. While the deterrence balance limited the effectiveness of compellence, both countries were also attempting to change the status quo using unilateralism. Instead of attempting to move their opponent directly, they were seeking indirect options.

The United States had been using a form of unilateralism against the PRC for years. Using the ROC as a proxy, the United States leveraged the ongoing struggle between the two Chinas to advance its interests.⁴² When the PRC seemed resolved to take Taiwan by force, President Dwight Eisenhower sought to send the problem to the UN where the PRC had no voice. Lastly, the United States sought to conclude a Mutual Defense Treaty with the ROC. This would enhance the status of the Taiwan by putting its government on the same standing as other U.S. allies.⁴³

The communist Chinese also used unilateralism to advance their aims (see figure 12). Although compellence did not force the United States away from Taiwan, the PRC did achieve another objective—diplomatic recognition. In the spring of 1955, war seemed likely between the United States and the PRC, and many global leaders were concerned about escalation.⁴⁴

Sensing this moment, Chinese foreign minister Zhou Enlai leveraged the stage offered by the Asian

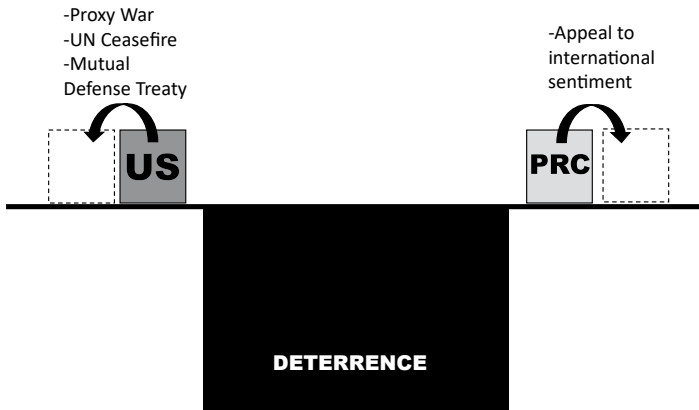


Figure 12. US/PRC Unilateralism

(Figure by author)

Conference at Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955. Rather than address the United States directly, he made general conciliatory statements to the national leaders attending the event and his words resonated with their desires for peace.⁴⁵ At that time, domestic pressure and the ROC had kept the Eisenhower administration from formally recognizing the PRC, despite the communists’ invitations. However, after Zhou’s words at Bandung, the global community essentially forced the United States to the negotiating table.⁴⁶ Unilateralism accomplished what compellence could not.

Summary. The crisis ended in May 1955 with limited coercive success by each side (see table 2). In the years since, the divergent interests of the United

States and the PRC have endured, and it is difficult to foresee a peaceful resolution. However, there is hope that some future acts of concurrence might make the region more stable and secure.

The Kargil Crisis, 1999

The Kargil Crisis between India and Pakistan in 1999 offers another chance to explore the inertial qualities of geopolitical interactions. This case is unique, as it is one of only two examples of a hot war between nuclear-armed antagonists. The Kargil Crisis underscores how nations can attempt coercive strategies while still maintaining the balance of deterrence.

Background. The partition of India in 1947 created a dangerous problem in the former state of Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmir has strategic value for both India and Pakistan. Pakistan claims kinship with the majority Muslim population and has a narrative that Kashmir is stolen territory. Conversely, India sees the retention of Kashmir as critical to its national unity as a diverse, secular state.⁴⁷ Currently, the Line of Control (LoC) divides the territory and has become the de facto border (see figure 13).⁴⁸

Attempted compellence. The location of the LoC has created a status quo that favors India, driving Pakistan to a compellent strategy to initiate change. For

Table 2. Taiwan Strait Overview

Strategy	Result
Deterrence	<u>Succeeded.</u> Both the PRC and the United States took active steps to avoid escalation in response to the danger posed by the other.
U.S. Compellence	<u>Failed.</u> It was blunted to avoid escalation and could not overcome PRC’s emotional inertia and political momentum.
PRC Compellence	<u>Failed.</u> It could not overcome U.S. emotional inertia or political momentum.
U.S. Unilateralism	<u>Partially Succeeded.</u> The United States and the ROC concluded a Mutual Defense Treaty.
PRC Unilateralism	<u>Partially Succeeded.</u> The PRC used international pressure to gain recognition from the United States.

(Table by author)



(Figure by author)

Figure 13. The Disputed Area of Kashmir

meeting in Lahore, Pakistan, where they pledged to “refrain from intervention and interference in each other’s internal affairs.”⁵⁴ This agreement was in the best interests of each side, but sadly, it would not last. One of the drawbacks of concurrence is it requires compromise from strictly one-sided interests. Some voices within Pakistan wanted to enhance their bargaining position and resorted to unilateral action.

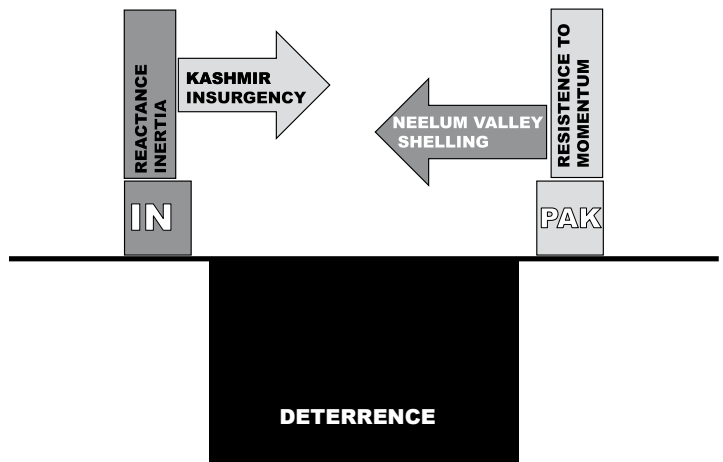
Unilateralism. India set a precedent for unilateral action when it seized the Siachen Glacier a decade before. The 1972 Simla Accord, which defined the LoC, had not demarcated the glacier and India took advantage of this gray area by moving troops to the area in April

years, Pakistan has supported an insurgency in Kashmir to coerce a renegotiation of the situation.⁴⁹ India has responded with a compellent strategy of its own, with artillery strikes across the LoC on Pakistan’s strategic roadway through the Neelum Valley to coerce Pakistan to halt the insurgency.⁵⁰ Ultimately, both countries failed to gain their objectives using compellence (see figure 14). India had a natural reactance against coercion by the insurgency and focused on a firm response.⁵¹ Similarly, Pakistan saw the Indian shelling as part of a pattern of aggression along the LoC and feared giving India momentum.⁵²

To be successful, any compellent strategy needs enough force to overcome the other side’s inertia. However, force of that magnitude risked upsetting the balance of deterrence and triggering a general war. This had already happened several times between Pakistan and India to their mutual detriment. The danger increased even more when both countries became nuclear powers in 1998.⁵³

In the shadow of this threat, the two countries attempted concurrence (see figure 15). On 20 February 1999, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee of India and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan held a historic

1984.⁵⁵ Informed by India’s example, Pakistan decided to attempt its own land grab (see figure 16). Every winter, Indian forces along the LoC withdrew from their mountain bunkers until spring. In March 1999, Pakistan sent over one thousand troops of the paramilitary Northern Light Infantry Regiment across the LoC to seize thirty vacant Indian bunkers.⁵⁶ Surprised by their success, the Pakistani commanders increased their objectives and eventually seized about 500 square miles and occupied 130 fighting positions.⁵⁷ Once in place, the



(Figure by author)

Figure 14. Attempted Compellence

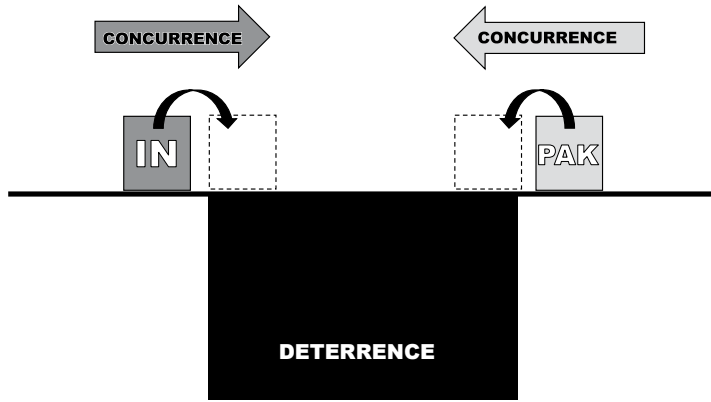


Figure 15. Lahore Declaration

(Figure by author)

commanders assumed deterrence would cement their positions as the new status quo.

Deterrence remains strong. In many ways, Pakistan’s assumptions about deterrence were correct. As postulated earlier, the inertia underpinning deterrence in 1999 made it incredibly resilient (see figure 17). Both India and Pakistan worked to keep the crisis limited because both understood the risks of war. Neither side took measures that were blatantly escalatory such as moving heavy mechanized units to the border and both sides communicated restraint through military and political channels.⁵⁸

The international norm of respecting boundaries also aided deterrence by providing a focus for restraint. When India learned of the incursion in May 1999, it reacted violently but not without caution. India’s military requested permission to conduct operations into Pakistan, but the government denied them.⁵⁹ Likewise, Pakistan’s air force was forbidden from engaging Indian aircraft or from providing any support into Indian territory.⁶⁰ Both sides respected old boundaries and declined horizontal escalation.

Eventual abrogation. In the end, Pakistan made two serious miscalculations. The first was assuming that India, constrained by deterrence realities, would accept the new status quo. The second was assuming norms would protect their gains. Unlike the Siachen Glacier, where driving off Indian troops would have been clear escalation by Pakistan, in this case, India could reclaim the Kargil heights without crossing any of recognizable red lines because Pakistan denied affiliation with the invaders.

To make matters worse, when India offered evidence that the attackers were truthfully Pakistani military, the full weight of international disapproval over broken norms fell squarely on Sharif and his government.⁶¹ What followed was abrogation with the international community doing the compelling (see figure 18). With great personal and political humiliation, Sharif ordered all Pakistani forces back across the LoC following a 4 July meeting with U.S. President Bill Clinton.⁶² India declared an end to the conflict on 25 July with the LoC fully restored.⁶³ As a testament to the costliness of abrogation, a coup ousted Sharif three months later.⁶⁴

Summary. The 1999 Kargil conflict put the inertial dynamics of international relations on full display. For years, both India and Pakistan had attempted to compel the other, but their coercive attempts were too weak to overcome the inertia of the other party’s position. The antagonists briefly attempted concurrence at Lahore; however, Pakistan responded to India’s earlier unilateral action on the Siachen Glacier by choosing its own unilateral action. Pakistan crafted a plan to seize a large chunk of Indian territory around Kargil and then counted on the strength of deterrence to consolidate its gains.

Deterrence was strong in the conflict, and both sides relied on norms to reduce escalation. Those same norms would eventually end the conflict when the weight of international compellence forced Pakistan into abrogation. From beginning to end, the inertial components of coercive strategies shaped the course of

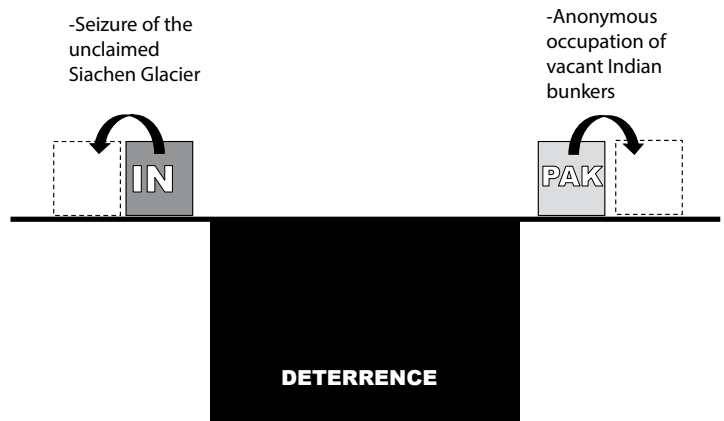


Figure 16. Indian/Pakistani Unilateralism

(Figure by author)



(Figure by author)

Figure 17. Strong Deterrence

the Kargil conflict (see table 3). There have been more moments of tensions between India and Pakistan in the decades since Kargil, but there is hope that some major acts of concurrence in the future might make the region more stable and peaceful.

Implications for the Future

For the foreseeable future, international relations will continue as it has for thousands of years. Human beings are naturally self-interested, and despite our global prosperity, resources are finite. Individuals, joined together in political units, will seek to advance their own objectives, and this will bring them into interactions with other states. States will use different strategies to influence each other with varying degrees of success.

The purpose of this project has been to explain why some strategies are more likely to be successful. A deterrence strategy, which threatens punishment in retaliation for aggression, is a very stable and efficient strategy, and is likely to cheaply underwrite any status quo. As we saw with the Taiwan Strait case and the Kargil case, a crisis does not automatically escalate. Any state can rest assured that contributions to deterrence offer a significant return on investment because it leverages the inertia present in the system.

Compellence is alluring because it offers a chance to change the status quo by using threats to achieve gains. However, compellence and abrogation are problematic. To successfully compel another state, one must overcome system inertia while preventing escalation. Each of the major actors in the case studies (the United States, the People’s Republic of China, India, and Pakistan) were unsuccessful in compelling their adversary.

For this reason, unilateralism is more common in international relations than the literature seems

to suggest. States naturally seek to avoid the inertia of compellence and act indirectly to achieve their objectives, such as India seizing the Siachen Glacier. However, as Pakistan learned, there is no guarantee that unilateral action will succeed. Comparatively, concurrence has several advantages. When it is possible to agree and mutually move toward the other party, it maximizes benefits and stability for both players. However, as the failure of the Lahore Declaration illustrated, it is difficult to compromise on deeply held positions. This explains why concurrence is absent in many frozen conflicts.

Undoubtedly, international relations will continue to provide examples of each of these strategies. Regardless, when assessing options, decision-makers need to understand the strengths and shortfalls of each. It is only by understanding the inertial nature of these strategies that national leaders can make wise choices on the efficacy of the tools they employ.

Ukraine. That brings us back to the beginning of this article and the war between Ukraine and Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin continues to pound Kyiv with missile attacks week after week, but if he is hoping to compel Ukraine to a negotiated settlement, he is ignoring the mountain of inertia against him. The emotional reactance against Russia and the fear of falling into the Russian sphere, not to mention the political momentum of Volodymyr Zelensky, are all much larger sources of inertia than a few missiles can overcome.

The Western powers are facing similar challenges with their attempts to use economic coercion to bring Russia to its knees. Russia has its own inertia, and the Kremlin will literally let its people starve before it yields to Western will. The West does not dare do more, because behind every sanction and aid package, there are public concerns about escalation. As



(Figure by author)

Figure 18. Abrogation

Table 3. Kargil Overview

Strategy	Result
Pakistan Compellence	<u>Failed.</u> It could not overcome the inertia of India's reactance to being controlled by an insurgency.
India Compellence	<u>Failed.</u> It could not overcome the inertia of Pakistan's fear of losing momentum along the LoC.
Concurrence	<u>Failed.</u> After the Lahore Declaration, Pakistan resumed a self interested position and tried to make gains along the LoC.
India Unilateralism	<u>Succeeded.</u> They took control of the Siachen Glacier.
Pakistan Unilateralism	<u>Failed.</u> They incited an Indian response in Kargil.
Deterrence	<u>Succeeded.</u> India, Pakistan, and the international community all saw the danger of the situation and took steps to avoid escalation.
Abrogation	<u>Succeeded.</u> The international community eventually compelled President Sharif to reverse course.

(Table by author)

described above, the West blunts its coercion attempts out of fear of upsetting the deterrence balance.

Deterrence is very strong. Russia does not want war with NATO just like NATO does not want war with Russia, and both sides are actively bolstering that deterrence calculus. However, both sides are also using unilateral action. Russia is concluding a nuclear treaty with Belarus while Western powers are courting former Soviet states in Central Asia. Both sides are trying to advance while not upsetting the balance ... all while Ukraine is fighting for its life.

How will it end? Maybe it will not. Deterrence might hold this as a simmering frozen conflict much like the examples of Taiwan and Kashmir. However, there is always hope of concurrence. Could the West acknowledge Russia's security dilemma and pledge that Ukraine will never join NATO? Could Russia rescind all claims to Crimea and the Donbas? These are conditions directly opposed to the self-interest of the belligerents, but they might be the compromise needed to move the two sides toward each other. Momentum can work that way too. ■

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