SECOND EDITION

# *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*

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# *Preface*

This book updates and considerably expands *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), coauthored by Alexander L. George, David K. Hall, and William E. Simons, which has been out of print since the late 1970s. The framework and analysis of coercive diplomacy developed in that book have held up rather well, and the book continues to be widely cited in related research studies. But it has been clear for some time that a major expansion and reworking of the text was needed.

The 1971 book contained studies of only three cases in which the strategy of coercive diplomacy was employed by the United States—in the Laos crisis of 1961, in the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, and against North Vietnam in early 1965. All three of these earlier case studies have been updated and revised on the basis of new primary source data and secondary accounts. In addition, four new case studies have been prepared for this volume: the effort to use coercive diplomacy against Japan in 1941, which boomeranged; the Reagan administration's attempt to coerce the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua; that same administration's coercive pressure against Libya, which culminated in the air strikes of 1986; and the U.N.-supported use of coercive diplomacy against Iraq in the Persian Gulf crisis of 1990–1991.

The opening chapter of the first edition, "The Development of Strategy," which provided a timely context for the newly developing interest in coercive diplomacy in the 1960s, seems no longer necessary in the 1990s and has been eliminated from the present edition. The theoretical framework of coercive diplomacy has been much improved and is the major focus of Part One. The addition of a new chapter by Paul Gordon Lauren analyzing the experience with ultimata during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provides a historical context for the study that was lacking in the 1971 edition. Finally, the statement of findings regarding the context-dependent nature of the strategy of coercive diplomacy, the various constraints and obstacles it encounters, and the conditions that favor its success has been considerably elaborated for Part Three of the present study. A short essay giving a preview of some aspects of the present study was published in 1991 by the United States Institute of Peace under the title *Forceful Persuasion: Coercive Diplomacy as an Alternative to War.*

I would like to express appreciation to the Carnegie Corporation of New York for a grant that made this study possible and to the United States Institute of Peace for the award of a Distinguished Fellowship (1990–1992) and for the provision of a stimulating and congenial atmosphere in which to work. I would like to thank the contributors to this volume for essays that I believe notably enrich our understanding of coercive diplomacy. In particular, I express my deep appreciation to William Simons for assuming responsibility as coeditor when, as the project neared completion, I was sidelined for several months by surgery. He reviewed and improved drafts of Parts One and Two of the study and made a valuable contribution as coauthor of Part Three.

We are indebted to Rachelle Marshall for her careful editing of the entire manuscript, to Arlee Ellis for expediting administrative services with her customary skill and good cheer, and to David Joel for preparation of the index. Finally, I would like to thank Jennifer Knerr and her colleagues at Westview Press for making publication of the study so pleasant an experience.

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# *Introduction: The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*

ALEXANDER L. GEORGE

In February 1993, when the Clinton administration decided to take a more assertive role in the Bosnian crisis, it embarked implicitly on a variant of coercive diplomacy. The problems the administration encountered in directing its initiative at the opponent and in mobilizing Western allies behind its strategy are illustrative of the kinds of complexities and constraints affecting the implementation of coercive diplomacy that we explore in this book. By demanding that the Bosnian combatants guarantee humanitarian access to the beleaguered villagers and accept the territorial settlement outlined in the United Nations/European Community (U.N./EC) peace plan, and backing these demands with allusions to a possible punitive use of airpower and calls for tougher economic sanctions, the United States undertook what we call a "try-and-see" variant of the strategy. Early in April, a modest escalation of the coercive pressure came via U.S. success in getting the U.N. Security Council to authorize military enforcement of the "no-fly zone" it had first declared in October 1992.

As of early summer 1993, however, it appeared unlikely that a stronger coercive strategy would be adopted. The Clinton administration felt politically constrained to act only as a member of a Western coalition, and the European partners objected to proposed actions to increase military pressure on the Serbs. To further complicate an already complex situation, the proper focus for harsher coercive measures became murky as the Bosnian Croats resumed their version of "ethnic cleansing" against Muslim villages in an effort, like that of the Bosnian Serbs, to take control of more territory than provided for in the U.N./EC plan. Moreover, whereas the prospect of direct military action against one or more of the aggressors appeared likely to fan the flames of ethnic nationalism in the region, stiffer economic sanctions imposed against

Serbia seemed to influence the leadership of that country to come out in support of the U.N. solution and, for awhile, to press the Bosnian Serbs to agree. However, the Western governments' follow-on strategy remained in a state of flux, and it appeared increasingly likely that the Serbs and Croats would retain much of the Bosnian territory that their forces had seized.

As this example shows, coercive diplomacy, or coercive persuasion as some prefer to call it, is not an esoteric concept. The use of intimidation of one kind or another in order to get others to comply with one's wishes is an everyday occurrence in human affairs. What we refer to here as coercive diplomacy has often been employed in the long history of international conflict, sometimes successfully and sometimes not. The general intent of coercive diplomacy is to back a demand on an adversary with a threat of punishment for noncompliance that will be credible and potent enough to persuade him that it is in his interest to comply with the demand.

The essentials of coercive diplomacy have long been known, although the use of diplomacy in the European balance-of-power era was evidently not systematically articulated or evaluated. Rather, it was part of the conventional wisdom and accumulated experience of statesmen and diplomats of that era. Properly analyzed and compared, however, earlier historical cases of efforts at coercive diplomacy can contribute to a more refined understanding of the uses and limitations of this strategy as an instrument of foreign policy.

Coercive diplomacy bears a close resemblance to the ultimatum, which was often employed in the conduct of European diplomacy. A full-blown ultimatum has three components: a specific demand on the opponent, a time limit for compliance, and a threat of punishment for noncompliance. Not all of these components are always present in efforts at coercive diplomacy, however. In consequence, as discussed in Chapter 2, there are several variants of the strategy; each is illustrated in the case studies presented in Part Two.

In Chapter 1 I provide the conceptual groundwork for the study. Coercive diplomacy is defined as a defensive strategy and is distinguished from other nonmilitary strategies for preventing opponents from altering status quo situations in their own favor. In this chapter I also distinguish coercive diplomacy from exclusive reliance on military force to deal with opponents' actions and, in this connection, indicate why policy makers often regard it as an attractive alternative to war. It should be kept in mind that coercive diplomacy is essentially a diplomatic strategy, one that relies on the threat of force rather than the use of force to achieve the objective. If force must be used to strengthen diplomatic efforts at persuasion, it is employed in an exemplary manner, in the form of a quite limited military action, to demonstrate resolution and willingness to escalate to high levels of military action if necessary.

Chapter 2 takes up the complex, murky question of the relationship between the theory and practice of coercive diplomacy. This discussion is based on the fundamental proposition that theory, in any of its forms and even in its



most developed stage, cannot serve as a substitute for the judgment that a decision maker must make in deciding whether and how to employ coercive diplomacy in any particular situation. Theory can aid in making such judgments, but the decision maker is nonetheless left with the need to understand the specific configuration of a particular situation well enough to judge whether coercive diplomacy is likely to be a viable strategy and to formulate a workable, specific version of the strategy.

In brief, good theory can help to bridge the gap between theory and practice, but it cannot eliminate that gap. A moment's reflection should serve to underline the accuracy of this observation. After all, as is so often stressed, theory must necessarily simplify the reality it addresses. Theory can seldom—and indeed it does not attempt to—encapsulate all the variables and conditions that can influence the outcomes of interaction between states. In addition, as theorists of international conflict relations have noted, the outcomes of that interaction are generally indeterminate. Events and relevant variables outside the direct influence of the actors can significantly affect the consequences of their interaction.

All this does not imply that theory is irrelevant to policy making. Theory can make a useful contribution to the analysis of a specific situation that policy makers must undertake in order to identify and diagnose its special configuration—how it is similar to and different from other cases. In addition to contributing to the diagnostic function of policy making, theory may also help policy makers judge whether the general model of coercive diplomacy can be adapted and tailored to fit the characteristics of the case at hand.

Accordingly, Chapter 2 starts with a description of the abstract, general model of coercive diplomacy and discusses its uses and limitations for policy making. Viewed as a deductive theory, this abstract model is not developed fully enough to allow reliable predictions to be made regarding the success of coercive diplomacy in each situation in which its use might be considered. Nor is the abstract model by itself capable of providing explanations for actual cases in which coercive diplomacy succeeded or failed. Nonetheless, the abstract model does identify the key variables of coercive diplomacy and the general "logic" associated with its efficacy. As a result, the abstract model has a number of important potential uses for policy making (as well as limitations that must be recognized); these uses are discussed in Chapter 2. Chapter 2 also emphasizes another fundamental point—namely, that the abstract model is not itself a strategy of coercive diplomacy—and discusses four tasks that the policy maker must accomplish in order to convert the abstract model into a specific strategy of coercive diplomacy.

Finally, in Chapter 2 I discuss the need for an empirical theory of coercive diplomacy that provides generic knowledge of the conditions under which the strategy is likely to succeed or to fail. Empirical knowledge of this kind can be derived from a systematic analysis of historical experience; it is informed in part by the framework of the abstract model and in part by the addition of other variables not encompassed by that model. To this end, we have included in Part Two seven historical cases in which the United States attempted some variant of coercive diplomacy. The contributions of these cases to empirical theory and generic knowledge are presented in Part Three.

Like our earlier edition, the present study focuses entirely on post–World War II cases in which the United States attempted to employ coercive diplomacy against a state perceived to be a threat to its interests. A much broader set of historical cases, some going back to the nineteenth century and involving actors other than the United States, is discussed by Paul Gordon Lauren in Chapter 3. This chapter provides perspective on the origins and varieties of international political behavior that is closely akin to coercive diplomacy—particularly as practiced by European statesmen in the decades between the Napoleonic Wars and World War II.

# PART ONE

# 1

# *Coercive Diplomacy: Definition and Characteristics*

ALEXANDER L. GEORGE

## THE CONCEPT OF COERCIVE DIPLOMACY

First we need to clarify how we are using the concept of coercive diplomacy in this study and to differentiate it from other ways in which threats are used as an instrument of policy.[1] In this study, we restrict the definition of the term *coercive diplomacy* to defensive uses of the strategy—that is, efforts to persuade an opponent to stop or reverse an action. Defensive uses are quite distinct from offensive ones, wherein coercive threats can be employed aggressively to persuade a victim to give up something of value without putting up resistance. Such offensive uses of coercive threats are better designated by the term *blackmail strategy.*

Coercive diplomacy also needs to be distinguished from deterrence, a strategy that employs threats to dissuade an adversary from undertaking a damaging action not yet initiated. In contrast, coercive diplomacy is a response to an action already undertaken.

The term *compellance,* which Thomas Schelling introduced into the literature almost thirty years ago, is often employed to encompass both coercive diplomacy and blackmail and sometimes deterrence as well. I prefer not to use this term for two reasons. First, it is useful to distinguish between defensive and offensive uses of coercive threats; compellance does not. Second, the concept of compellence implies exclusive or heavy reliance on coercive threats, whereas I wish to emphasize the possibility of a more flexible diplomacy that can employ rational persuasion and accommodation as well as coercive threats to encourage the adversary either to comply with the demands or to work out an acceptable compromise.

As defined here, then, coercive diplomacy is a defensive strategy that is employed to deal with the efforts of an adversary to change a status quo situation in his own favor. We have found it useful also to distinguish among three quite different defensive objectives coercive diplomacy can pursue. The aim may be limited to merely stopping the action. A more ambitious aim is the reversal of what has already been accomplished. An even more ambitious aim, as Bruce Jentleson notes in his case study, is a cessation of the opponent's hostile behavior through a demand for change in the composition of the adversary's government or in the nature of the regime. This type of demand stretches coercive diplomacy to its outer limits since it may blur the distinction between defensive and offensive uses of threats. And, quite obviously, the more ambitious the demand on the opponent, the more difficult the task of coercive diplomacy becomes. Table 1 differentiates among these three types of defensive coercive diplomacy and illustrates their primary distinction from the strategy of deterrence.

## OTHER NONMILITARY STRATEGIES

Coercive diplomacy is only one of several nonmilitary strategies that may be resorted to by the "defender" when confronted by an adversary's attempt to change an existing situation to his own advantage. Some other strategies the defender can employ are listed below.[2]

1. *"Drawing a line."* When confronted by an adversary's efforts to alter an existing situation in his own favor, the defender may respond by drawing a line to indicate that further action would provoke a strong response.

2. *Buying time to explore a negotiated settlement.* This defensive strategy may be resorted to when the defender (1) is operating under political, diplomatic, or military disadvantages; (2) recognizes that the adversary's dissatisfaction with the status quo has some merit; or (3) believes that the most important of his own interests might first be safeguarded through negotiation before contemplating more forceful strategies.

3. *Retaliation and reprisals.* In some situations this strategy may be preferable to weaker or stronger responses to the adversary's provocation. Carefully measured reprisals, chosen to match but not exceed the adversary's actions, may be necessary to communicate clearly an intention to resist and, hence, offer the possibility that the opponent will desist or that the crisis may then enter a stage of negotiations. Retaliation or reprisals, however, may have to be accompanied by deterrent threats to dissuade the opponent from escalating to stronger action.

4. *Engaging in a "test of capabilities."* When the defender is confronted by a relatively low-level, controlled challenge to the status quo—a blockade, for example—he may forego coercive diplomacy or military action and instead attempt to meet the challenge within the framework of the ground rules associated with the opponent's challenge. Even though at that early stage the ground rules seem to favor the opponent's eventual success, the defender may hope that the expected outcome can be reversed through hard work, skill, improvisation, and efficient use of available resources, thereby forcing the adversary to decide whether to engage in a risky escalation of the crisis or to accept the failure of his initiative. The defender may also have to undertake measures to deter the opponent from escalation. Two examples of this strategy, both successful, were the response of the West to the Berlin Blockade of 1948 by using an airlift and the U.S. response to the Chinese artillery blockade of Quemoy and Matsu in 1958.



TABLE 1 Three Types of Defensive Coercive Diplomacy

| | *Coercive Diplomacy* | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Deterrence* | *Type A* | *Type B* | *Type C* |
| Persuade opponent not to initiate an action | Persuade opponent to stop short of the goal | Persuade opponent to undo the action | Persuade opponent to make changes in government |

Thus, coercive diplomacy is not the only nonmilitary option available to the defender when confronted by an action that encroaches on his interests. Any of these four strategies may be preferable to an immediate resort to coercive diplomacy. And coercive diplomacy may be tried (as in the Persian Gulf crisis) before resorting to war.

## THE APPEAL OF COERCIVE DIPLOMACY

Coercive diplomacy is an attractive strategy because it offers the defender a chance to achieve reasonable objectives in a crisis with less cost, with much less—if any—bloodshed, with fewer political and psychological costs, and often with less risk of unwanted escalation than is true with traditional military strategy. A crisis resolved by means of coercive diplomacy is also less likely to contaminate future relations between the two sides than is a war.

However, precisely because of these attractions, coercive diplomacy can also be a beguiling strategy. Leaders of militarily powerful states may be tempted at times to believe that they can, with little risk, intimidate weaker opponents into giving up their challenge to a status quo situation. But the militarily weaker state may be strongly motivated by what it has at stake and refuse to back down, in effect calling the bluff of the coercing power. The latter, then, must decide whether to back off or to escalate the crisis into a military confrontation.

Moreover, as illustrated in the case studies, militarily powerful states may encounter other constraints, risks, and uncertainties in attempting to employ a coercive strategy. Finally, it should be noted that coercive diplomacy is sometimes chosen by the defender not because of its attractions but rather (as in the Bush administration's response to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait) because at the inception of the crisis, political-diplomatic support, or military readiness, for a resort to force is lacking.

## COERCIVE DIPLOMACY: AN ALTERNATIVE TO MILITARY STRATEGY

Coercive diplomacy, then, offers an alternative to reliance on military action. It seeks to persuade an opponent to cease aggression rather than to bludgeon him into stopping. In contrast to the blunt use of force to repel an adversary, coercive diplomacy emphasizes the use of threats of punishment if the adversary does not comply with what is demanded. If force is used in coercive diplomacy, it takes the form of an exemplary or symbolic use of limited military action to help persuade the opponent to back down. By "exemplary" I mean just enough force of an appropriate kind to demonstrate resolution and to give credibility to the threat that greater force will be used if necessary.[3] Even a relatively small exemplary action (as, for example, President Kennedy's ordering U.S. "civilian advisers" in Laos in April 1961 to put on their uniforms) can have a disproportionately large coercive impact if it is coupled with a credible threat of additional action. The strategy of coercive diplomacy, however, does not require use of exemplary actions. The crisis may be satisfactorily resolved without an exemplary use of force; or the strategy of coercive diplomacy may be abandoned in favor of full-scale military operations without a preliminary use of exemplary force. Hence, in coercive diplomacy, if force is used at all it is not part of conventional military strategy but rather a component of a more complex political-diplomatic strategy for resolving a conflict of interests, which is why *coercive diplomacy* is an appropriate description.

Coercive diplomacy, then, calls for using just enough force of an appropriate kind—if force is used at all—to demonstrate one's resolve to protect well-defined interests as well as the credibility of one's determination to use more force if necessary. To this end, both the threat and employment of force should be coupled with (that is, preceded, accompanied, or followed by) appropriate communications to the opponent. The coercive strategy necessarily includes the signaling, bargaining, and negotiating that are built into the conceptualization and conduct of any military alerts, deployments, or actions—features that are not found or are of secondary interest in traditional military strategy.

Coercive diplomacy seeks to make force a much more flexible, refined psychological instrument of policy in contrast to the "quick, decisive" military strategy, which uses force as a blunt instrument. In coercive diplomacy, the goal is to persuade the opponent to stop or to undo encroachment instead of bludgeoning him into doing so or physically preventing him from continuing.



## NOTES

1. I remind the reader that the definitions offered here—as is true of most definitions of complex phenomena—tend to oversimplify reality and are best regarded as a starting point for empirical analysis of a particular phenomenon that should go beyond the confines of the definition.

2. These alternative defensive strategies, their uses and limitations, and examples of each are discussed in A. L. George, ed., *Avoiding War: Problems of Crisis Management* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 383–392.

3. The concept of exemplary use of force presented here as a possible component of coercive diplomacy is not always easily distinguishable in historical situations from the practice of retaliation and reprisals. Strictly speaking, the term *reprisal* should be reserved for an action that is limited in purpose to punishing an opponent for a transgression in some appropriate way. Retaliation and reprisal may also constitute what some writers refer to as *active deterrence.* In contrast, the purpose of an exemplary use of force in coercive diplomacy is to convey a willingness to do more, if necessary, to persuade the opponent to stop or to undo his transgression. When the offended state does not make clear whether its action is merely a reprisal or an exemplary component of coercive diplomacy, the historian will have difficulty determining the purpose of that action.

# 2

# *Theory and Practice*

ALEXANDER L. GEORGE

## THE ABSTRACT MODEL OF COERCIVE DIPLOMACY: ITS USES AND LIMITATIONS

The abstract model identifies the general characteristics of coercive diplomacy and the basic "logic" on which its presumed efficacy rests. The logic of coercive diplomacy postulates that such diplomacy will be successful if demands on an adversary are backed with a threat of punishment for noncompliance that will be considered credible and potent enough to encourage compliance. It should be evident that the logic of coercive diplomacy rests upon the assumption of a "rational" opponent; that is, it assumes that the adversary will be receptive to and will correctly evaluate information that is critical to the question of whether the costs and risks of not complying will outweigh the gains to be expected from pursuing the course of action.

I discuss under "Task 3" in this chapter the various limitations of this assumption of rationality and here address three other characteristics and limitations of the abstract model. First, it gives the policy maker only limited help in devising an effective version of coercive diplomacy for any specific situation; second, it cannot be used to predict whether coercive diplomacy will be successful in a specific situation; and third, it is not a *strategy* of coercive diplomacy.

The first of these three limitations means, quite simply, that the abstract model identifies only the general logic of successful coercive diplomacy and does not include what must be done to inject that logic into the adversary's calculations and lead him to comply with the demand made. To achieve that result, the policy maker must tailor the abstract model to the specific configuration of each situation in which coercive diplomacy is attempted, a task discussed more fully under "Task 4" in this chapter.

Second, to achieve the possibility of predicting outcomes of coercive diplomacy, a specification of the conditions under which its general logic can be achieved in a variety of situations would have to be added to the abstract model. Only if such specificity is added to the model—thereby making it a fully developed, robust deductive theory—could individual situations be analyzed to predict the success of coercive diplomacy. To achieve this predictive capability, the abstract model would have to be operationalized, which requires specification of ways of measuring or assessing the value of the key variables that enter into the particular interaction between the coercer and his opponent and also of the relationships that must exist among these variables in that specific situation for coercive diplomacy to be successful. These key variables are the magnitude of the demand(s) made on the opponent, the magnitude of the opponent's motivation not to comply, and the factor of whether the opponent will feel the threatened punishment is sufficiently credible and potent to cause him to comply. Operationalizing the model by means of such specifications is such an extremely complex task that it is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.[1] It has not been done, for example, for the abstract rational model of deterrence,[2] and it would be equally, if not more, difficult to perform for the abstract rational model of coercive diplomacy.

The abstract model of coercive diplomacy that exists at present is at best only a quasi, incomplete deductive theory. The logic of the model indicates in a general way what must be achieved in any particular situation for coercive diplomacy to be effective, which is indeed useful. This logic at least identifies what some "necessary" conditions may be for successful coercive diplomacy, albeit under the questionable assumption of pure rationality on the part of the adversary. But the abstract model does not provide either a basis for judging whether in any particular situation the conditions for success already exist or, as already noted, for judging whether and how they can be created by the coercing power in implementing the strategy.

The third limiting characteristic of the abstract model is that it is not in and of itself a strategy. Rather, the abstract model is only a starting point—to be sure, a useful and relevant one—to assist policy makers in considering whether a particular version of coercive diplomacy can be designed that might be effective in a specific situation. In other words, for policy makers to make use of the abstract model, they must transform it into a specific strategy.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this logic of coercive diplomacy has several general implications that are relevant in various aspects of policy making: first, in the process of judging whether coercive diplomacy may be a viable strategy in a particular situation and, second, in the attempt to design and implement an effective version of the strategy for that situation. These implications become self-evident once we look more closely at the central task of coercive diplomacy, which is to cause the adversary to expect sufficient costs and risks to cause him to stop what he is doing.[3] To have this impact we may ask how much of a threat, or of a combination of threat and positive inducement, will be necessary to persuade the adversary to comply with the demand made. The logic that underlies the abstract model tells us, by implication, that the answer will depend on two variables and on the relationship between them: first, what the coercing power demands of the opponent and, second, how strongly disinclined the opponent is to comply with that demand. From the logic of the model we also discern that these two variables are not independent of each other. That is, the strength of the adversary's disinclination to comply is highly sensitive to the magnitude of the demand made by the coercing power. Thus, asking relatively little of the opponent should make it easier for him to be coerced. Conversely, demanding a great deal of an opponent will strengthen his resistance and make the task of coercive persuasion more difficult.



Another important implication of the model's basic logic is that the coercer's choice of a demand will influence not only the strength of the opponent's motivation to resist but also the strength of the coercer's own motivation and, hence, the relative motivation of the two sides. *Motivation* in this context refers to each side's conception of what it has at stake in the dispute, the importance each side attaches to the interests engaged by the crisis, and what level of costs and risks each is willing to incur on behalf of those interests. If the coercing power demands something that is more important to it than to the adversary, then the coercer should benefit from what may be called an *asymmetry of interests.* Conversely, if the coercing power pursues ambitious objectives that go beyond its own vital or important interests, and if its demands infringe on vital or important interests of the adversary, then the asymmetry of interests and balance of motivation will favor the adversary and make successful application of coercive diplomacy much more difficult.

The way in which asymmetry of interests and relative motivation will be perceived by the two sides and what influence this will have on the outcome in real-life cases is more complicated than is suggested by the general logic of the abstract model, as our case studies demonstrate. Nonetheless, the logic of the model is important because it demonstrates that there is an important strategic dimension to the choice of the demand the coercing power makes on its adversary. Quite simply, strategic interests affect the motivation of both sides and the balance of motivation between them, variables that will likely influence both the interaction between them and the efficacy of the attempt at coercive diplomacy.

We see in the case studies in Part Two that these implications of the model's logic do indeed manifest themselves in practice and that they can play an extremely important role in determining the ease or difficulty of conducting coercive diplomacy. But we also see that various impediments to information processing, and political and psychological variables not encompassed by the abstract model's assumption of rationality, can have an important impact on the way the model's logic actually operates in the real world, often making it more difficult for the coercing power to use the strategy effectively.

Another characteristic of coercive diplomacy is the possibility that the coercing power may couple its threat of punishment for noncompliance with positive inducements to encourage the adversary to comply with the demand. When this is done, the resulting variant of coercive diplomacy is often referred to as an example of the "carrot-and-stick" approach. As with threats of punishment, positive inducements and reassurances must also be credible. When both negative sanctions and positive inducements are employed, the adversary must make a more complex calculation of the utility of complying with the demand, although the logic of the model operates in the same way.

## CONVERTING THE ABSTRACT MODEL INTO A STRATEGY: FOUR TASKS

I have noted that the abstract model of coercive diplomacy is not in and of itself a strategy. The model is only a starting point for designing a particular strategy of coercive diplomacy for a specific situation and also for helping to assess whether that strategy or variant of it would likely be successful in that situation.

How, then, is the abstract model transformed by the policy maker into a specific strategy? To achieve this, four tasks must be accomplished.

### *Task 1: Fill in the Four "Empty Boxes" (Variables) of the Model*

To design a specific strategy of coercive diplomacy, the policy maker must make decisions regarding the four variables, or empty boxes, of the abstract model:

1. what to demand of the opponent
2. whether and how to create a sense of urgency for compliance with the demand
3. what punishment to threaten for noncompliance, and how to make it sufficiently potent and credible
4. whether also to offer positive inducements and, if so, what "carrot" to offer together with the "stick" to induce acceptance of the demand

I have indicated that what is demanded of the opponent is of critical importance in determining the balance of interests and motivation that will create ease or difficulty in carrying out coercive diplomacy. The case histories illustrate the importance of this variable in determining the success or failure of the strategy on different occasions.



The strategy one chooses in any particular situation may include an effort to convey to the adversary a sense of urgency for compliance with one's demand. It is generally presumed that a sense of urgency generally adds to the coercive impact the strategy has on the adversary. But, as is noted in Chapter 3 and in Part Three, risks are sometimes associated with creating urgency, and other reasons may exist for not placing the adversary under undue time pressure. There are different ways of transmitting a sense of urgency, most notably by setting an explicit and relatively brief time limit for compliance with the demand. However, a sense of urgency may also be conveyed by actions such as alerts and deployments of military forces, which may be coupled with verbal communications indicating that time is short.

The fact that coercive diplomacy functions on two levels of communication—both words and actions—is also evident in addressing the third variable in the model. The threat of punishment in the event of noncompliance may be signaled through military actions or political-diplomatic moves as well as by explicit verbal warnings. As is seen in the cases in Part Two, however, the defender's actions in any given situation can either strengthen or detract from the credibility of verbal threats. Hence, actions intended to convey a specific threat must be chosen carefully, in sensitive accord with the structure and evolution of the particular situation.

Another important decision to be made in designing and implementing a specific strategy of coercive diplomacy is whether to rely solely on a threat of punishment or also to offer positive inducements, concessions on behalf of a compromise settlement, or reassurances in order to secure the adversary's acceptance of the demand. The "carrot" in such a strategy can be any of a variety of things the adversary values. The magnitude and significance of the carrot can range from a seemingly trivial face-saving concession to substantial concessions and side payments that bring about a stable settlement of the crisis. Such a settlement may take shape either as a genuine, balanced quid pro quo or in the form of concessions that favor the opponent and do little more than permit the coercing power to save face and avoid an outright defeat.

Whether coercive diplomacy will work in a particular case may depend on whether reliance is placed solely on negative sanctions or on whether threats are coupled with positive inducements. This point has considerable practical as well as theoretical significance. What the threatened stick cannot achieve by itself, unless it is formidable, can possibly be achieved by combining it with a carrot. Indeed, in some cases the hard-pressed defender may rely more on offering a substantial carrot than on making a strong threat to achieve a minimal success.

Finally, the decisions made in specifying these four ingredients of a strategy at the outset are subject to change during the course of the crisis. The coercive power may stiffen or dilute its demands, enhance or relax the sense of urgency initially conveyed, strengthen or soften the threat of punishment and its credibility, and move from reliance only on threats to a carrot-and-stick variant of the strategy.

### *Task 2: Identify the Preferred Variant of the Strategy of Coercive Diplomacy*

Depending on what choices the policy maker makes with regard to the four variables of the model, the resulting combinations will define significantly different variants of the strategy. For analytical purposes, I have identified four such variants: the classic ultimatum, the tacit ultimatum, the "gradual turning of the screw," and the "try-and-see" approach.

The starkest variant of the strategy includes all three ingredients of a full-fledged classic ultimatum: (1) a demand on the opponent; (2) a time limit or sense of urgency for compliance with the demand; and (3) a threat of punishment for noncompliance that is credible and sufficiently potent to convince the opponent that compliance is preferable to other courses of action. An ultimatum, although the starkest variant of coercive diplomacy, is not necessarily the most effective. Moreover, as is seen in Chapter 3, ultimata may take a variety of forms. An ultimatum may be inappropriate, infeasible, or even highly risky in a particular situation. (We return to this in some of the case studies and in Part Three.)

When a time limit is not set forth explicitly but a sense of urgency is nonetheless conveyed by other means, this variant of the strategy is referred to as a *tacit* ultimatum. Similarly, when the threat of punishment is not specifically set forth but is nonetheless credibly conveyed by actions, this variant may also be referred to as a tacit ultimatum. If a strategy incorporates an implicit rather than an explicit form of one of the three components of a classic ultimatum, however, it is not necessarily less potent. Before delivering an explicit ultimatum, a state may find it preferable—as John F. Kennedy did in the Cuban Missile Crisis—to convey the gist of that ultimatum through some combination of military preparations and stern warnings.

Other variants of coercive diplomacy exist in which one or another of these components of an ultimatum is diluted or absent. One is the try-and-see approach. In this version of the strategy, only the first element of an ultimatum—a demand—is made; the coercing power does not announce a time limit or convey a strong sense of urgency for compliance. Instead, it employs one limited coercive threat or action and waits to see whether it will persuade the opponent before making another threat or taking another step. There are several versions of the try-and-see approach, as is evident in some of the case studies in Part Two.

Stronger in coercive potential, though still falling well short of the ultimatum, is the variant of coercive diplomacy that relies on a gradual turning of the screw. This differs from the try-and-see approach in that a threat to gradually step up pressure is conveyed at the outset and is carried out incrementally. At the same time, the gradual turning of the screw differs from the ultimatum in that it lacks a sense of time urgency for compliance and relies on the threat of a step-by-step increase in coercive pressure rather than of escalation to strong, decisive military action if the opponent does not comply. In practice, the analytical distinction I have just made between the try-and-see approach and the gradual turning of the screw may be blurred if the policy maker wavers or behaves inconsistently.



Several observations about these variants of coercive diplomacy are made in the next section, "Needed: An Empirical Theory and Generic Knowledge." It is sufficient to note here that when an ultimatum or a tacit ultimatum is not appropriate or feasible or is considered premature or too risky, a try-and-see or gradual turning of the screw approach may better fit the political-diplomatic-military configuration of the conflict. It is also true that, as happened in some of our historical cases, policy makers may shift from one of these variants to another. Sometimes, in fact, such strategy shifts may be inadvertent—especially if the policy makers do not maintain a consistent sense of operational purpose.

Indeed, helping to maintain a clarity of purpose is the main reason we distinguish among these four different forms the strategy of coercive diplomacy may take. These brief characterizations help sharpen the focus on the combination of policy choices made in Task 1. Still, although such a distinction is useful, it would be misleading to imply that the form of the strategy alone determines the likelihood of its success. Certainly from a formalistic standpoint, the ultimatum is a stronger, or starker, variant of the strategy than are the gradual turning of the screw and the try-and-see approaches. But the coercive impact of any particular form of the strategy and whether it will be effective depend on other factors to be discussed under "Needed: An Empirical Theory and Generic Knowledge."

### *Task 3: Replace the General Assumption of a "Rational" Opponent with an Empirically Derived Behavioral Model*

The abstract model of coercive diplomacy, as noted earlier, assumes pure rationality on the part of an opponent. But in real life decision makers are not attentive to and do not correctly perceive all incoming information; various external and internal psychological factors influence their receptivity to new information and its assessment, and these factors also affect their identification and evaluation of options.

It is clear, therefore, that a specific behavioral model of the adversary is needed that will characterize in a more discriminating way how that opponent tends to approach the task of rational calculation—for example, how his values and beliefs influence his processing of information and evaluation of options, and how political factors and organizational variables enter into his policy making.[4] In sum, policy makers making use of a strategy of coercive diplomacy must replace the assumption of pure rationality with sensitivity to the psychological, cultural, and political variables that may influence the adversary's behavior when he is subjected to one or another variant of the strategy.

### *Task 4: Take into Account Contextual Variables*

The abstract model of coercive diplomacy spins out its general logic without reference to the characteristics of any particular situation. In this sense, the abstract model is context-free. But in transforming the model into a variant of the strategy to be used in an actual situation, the policy maker must pay close attention to whether and how the logic associated with successful coercive diplomacy can be achieved in that particular set of circumstances. Many different situational-contextual factors vary from one crisis to another. The policy maker faces the difficult but necessary task of adapting the strategy of coercive diplomacy to the special configuration of the situation.

That this task is an important one quickly becomes evident when we study and compare different historical cases in which some type of coercive diplomacy was attempted. A number of the important contextual variables that were identified in the case studies are reported and discussed in Part Three. It will suffice here to emphasize that coercive diplomacy is a highly context-dependent strategy.

## NEEDED: AN EMPIRICAL THEORY AND GENERIC KNOWLEDGE

Why does coercive diplomacy succeed on some occasions and fail on others? The abstract model provides only limited help in answering this question. It does offer a useful, though incomplete, framework that can serve as a starting point for such an inquiry. The model helps to identify some, though not all, of the variables that may account for success or failure of the strategy. Familiarity with the abstract model and its logic can also help investigators to raise some relevant questions and to formulate hypotheses as to why coercive diplomacy succeeded or failed. But the model itself cannot identify all possible explanations or assess explanatory hypotheses.

The abstract model lacks not only the ability to predict the outcome of efforts at coercive diplomacy but also adequate explanatory power. True, *after* the outcome of any attempt at coercive diplomacy is known, the model can be invoked to explain it. For example, one might be tempted to say that coercive diplomacy failed in a particular case because the threatened punishment was not credible or potent enough. Such pseudo-explanations lack relevant supporting data and have a circular character. Post-facto "explanations" of this kind violate methodological canons and are not acceptable. A satisfactory explanation is possible—and then only possible—if adequate data are available on the decision-making processes of the two sides and the interaction between them that led to the success or failure of the coercive diplomacy. But even then, such data must be adequately analyzed and interpreted before valid conclusions can be drawn.



To understand why the strategy succeeds on some occasions and fails on others, we need to develop an empirical theory of coercive diplomacy by studying and comparing in a systematic way actual historical cases of success and failure. *Theory* in this context refers to the cumulation of generic knowledge about the conditions under which different variants of the strategy have succeeded or failed.

The policy maker who knows from the abstract logic of coercive diplomacy what must be accomplished in general terms can turn to generic knowledge of the strategy's past applications to diagnose its potential in a current situation. Judging from past cases, what kinds of circumstances favor the use of specific variants of coercive diplomacy? What possible obstacles and constraints to its success are likely to be encountered? How have specific opponents reacted to its use in different kinds of situations?

In sum, the abstract theory does not provide the policy maker with a basis for judging whether coercive diplomacy is likely to be effective in a particular situation. Rather, policy makers must turn to the generic knowledge derived from study of a variety of past cases for help in making such judgments.

## NOTES

1. The difficulty or virtual impossibility of fully operationalizing the model stems from the fact that the outcomes of strategic interaction in a conflict situation are indeterminate.
2. For a discussion of the lack of a fully developed, "rational" deductive theory of deterrence and the difficulty in achieving it, see A. L. George and R. Smoke, "Deterrence and Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 41, no. 2 (January 1989): 170–182.
3. These implications of the abstract model emerged as analytical conclusions from the empirical case studies reported in the 1971 study by A. L. George, David K. Hall, and William E. Simons, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971). It is now possible, as I have done, to identify them as logical implications of a more fully stated abstract model.
4. For a more detailed discussion, see A. L. George, *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1980), pp. 66–72. Also see George's *Bridging the Gap: Theory and Practice of Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1993).

# *Findings and Conclusions*

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We now turn to a comparison of the seven cases presented in Part Two in order to identify contextual factors and conditions that influence the outcome of a government's efforts to employ the strategy of coercive diplomacy. By doing so, we formulate essential generic knowledge about the strategy to supplement the general abstract model described earlier.

It is striking, of course, how different the seven cases are from one another. Impressed with this fact, the reader may well wonder how any useful generalizations can be drawn from the study. Is it not true, as historians are quick to remind us, that each case is unique in important respects? If so, then how can one draw lessons from any past case that can confidently be applied to a new one? Is there not a danger that even if scholars can agree on the correct lessons of a particular case, those lessons are likely to be misapplied to a new case that is bound to be different in some crucially important way?

## SCOPE OF THE ANALYSIS

Admittedly, historical analogies can be dangerously misleading. And yet, there is ample evidence that when confronted with an international crisis, policy makers rely on the presumed analogy to an earlier case to diagnose and deal with the crisis. If the present study does no more than discourage this practice by calling attention to the important differences among cases of coercive diplomacy, it will have made a contribution. In addition, the seven case studies enable us to better understand the tasks policy makers face when they try to adapt the general conceptual model of coercive diplomacy to a particular situation. The complex, unique configuration of each case has to be diagnosed by policy specialists, as outlined in Chapter 2, before some variant of coercive diplomacy can be designed and implemented well enough to achieve useful results.

In similar fashion, the study of past experiences also provides an opportunity for decision makers to sharpen their ability to make the essential determinations for new cases that arise. In other words, the accounts of our seven cases provide material for vicarious experience and for the learning of essential diagnostic and policy skills before a policy maker is immersed in the urgent pressures of an actual crisis.

But more than such minimal contributions is possible. The starting point for drawing more ambitious findings from the cases is the recognition that although they are different and in some sense each is unique, the seven cases are all instances of the same class of events. That is, they all share an effort to employ the strategy of coercive diplomacy rather than some other strategy such as appeasement, deterrence, or war. Viewed from this standpoint, the fact that each case seems unique or different in important respects is *not* a reason for pessimism regarding the possibility of developing useful knowledge about coercive diplomacy. Actually, if the cases are compared in a systematic manner, then each case can contribute something useful for an overall understanding of the conditions that contribute to the success or failure of the strategy.

Clearly, the systematic comparison we undertake is *not* intended to formulate a set of sweeping generalizations that purport to explain in a simple way why coercive diplomacy sometimes succeeds and at other times fails. The phenomenon of coercive diplomacy is too complex, and the conditions and variables at play are too numerous, to permit formulation of such generalizations. Rather, we will try to articulate the case findings in ways that will reflect the complexity and variance of these experiences with coercive diplomacy. This will call not for sweeping, unqualified generalizations but rather for *conditional* generalizations that identify those factors and variables noted in our case studies that, if present, favor the success of the strategy. Such generalizations will also identify those factors that are likely to lead to its failure.

We focus on the following question: When is it reasonable for the policy maker to choose a strategy of coercive diplomacy or give it serious consideration? In addressing this question, we maintain the distinction—standard in the study of public policy—between the policy maker's choice of a strategy and the policy outcome. Thus, although the issue of policy success in each of these cases informs our analysis, we recognize that ultimate success may be determined by several factors outside the policy maker's direct influence—or even that of his or her opponent.

In the discussion that follows, major emphasis is given to illuminating the generic knowledge needed to augment the abstract theory of coercive diplomacy and to enable policy makers, when faced with a specific case, to carry out two functions essential to formulation of an effective strategy. The first is to diagnose the current situation; the second is to analyze and choose among



the available policy options. These functions depend on the following questions: What variable factors in the international political context can affect the likelihood of success? What kinds of risks may be incurred in threatening punitive action? What potential roles might the opponent's allies play in the unfolding crisis? In what ways can the process of bargaining assist or hinder the achievement of an acceptable resolution? What conditions in the relationship between the coercing power and its adversary tend to favor or obstruct the process of coercive diplomacy?

Another area of emphasis is the kinds of insights policy makers need regarding their opponent's decision-making tendencies. How does this particular opponent tend to react to threats? What are the opponent's high-priority stakes in the anticipated bargaining process? How firm are the political underpinnings of the opponent's leadership, and what factors are crucial to its future stability?

In dealing with such questions, our analysis occasionally makes comparisons between those cases in which coercive diplomacy was successful and those in which the results were ambiguous or clearly negative. Most of these comparisons are made with reference to the single factor then under scrutiny, although success or failure in the employment of coercive diplomacy in any specific case is the product of many factors operating together. Few, if any, factors may be said to be absolutely necessary to the attainment of a particular outcome.

As noted in Chapter 1, three types of coercive diplomacy can be distinguished with reference to the nature of the objective pursued. In Type A, the coercing state attempts to persuade the opponent merely to stop the aggressive action short of its goal. In Type B, the coercing state goes further, demanding that the opponent undo its action. Even more extreme is Type C coercive diplomacy, in which an attempt is made to stop the opponent's unacceptable policies and behavior by demanding that it make changes in its government. Our cases indicate that different results—success and failure—were achieved by both Type A and Type B efforts. The two cases of clear success using coercive diplomacy were the Laos (Type A) and Cuba (Type B) crises. The three cases of clear failure of the strategy were Pearl Harbor (Type B), Vietnam (Type A), and the Persian Gulf (Type B).

Ambiguous results were achieved from attempts at coercive diplomacy in the Libya (Type A) and Nicaragua (Type C) cases. These results are illustrated in Table 2. It is obvious from this comparison of the results that success or failure has little causal relation to the type of strategy attempted, although Bruce Jentleson argues convincingly that Type C coercive diplomacy in particular carries little prospect of success. The factors that contribute to an explanation of these results are discussed in the subsections that follow.

TABLE 2 Outcomes of the Use of Coercive Diplomacy

| | *Successful* | *Unsuccessful* | *Ambiguous* |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A** | | | |
| Laos | x | | |
| Vietnam | | x | |
| Libya | | | x[a] |
| **B** | | | |
| pre–Pearl Harbor | | x | |
| Cuba | x | | |
| Kuwait | | x | |
| **C** | | | |
| Nicaragua | | | x[b] |

[a]The extent of Libya's influence on the variety of terrorist groups in operation, hence the extent of the impact of a strategy to diminish that influence, is very difficult to ascertain. There is also some question as to how long the positive effects of coercive diplomacy continued to influence Qaddafi in 1986.

[b]Although U.S. policy clearly had some positive impacts on the situation in Nicaragua, many other influences outside of U.S. control also had strong effects. It is difficult, therefore, to assess with confidence the extent of responsibility for the outcome that was achieved by the U.S. contra policy.

## VARIABLE ASPECTS OF COERCIVE DIPLOMACY

The seven case studies make clear that coercive diplomacy is a highly flexible strategy that can be implemented according to several variants. The cases also indicate that the policy maker's choice of variants is often constrained by characteristics of the particular situation, which vary strikingly from one case to another. Moreover, as the particular crisis evolves, these situational factors can change, thereby encouraging modifications in policy, including shifts from one variant of coercive diplomacy to another. Of course, strategy shifts may also occur because of an opponent's lack of response to milder variants of coercive diplomacy. In several of the cases, for example, early implementation of coercive diplomacy took the form of the try-and-see variant, only to shift to a gradual turning of the screw or some variant of ultimatum.

### *Contextual Variables*

It is essential to note that coercive diplomacy is highly context-dependent. Many different variables can affect the variant of the strategy the policy maker selects, its implementation, and its outcome. Because these contextual factors vary from one case to another, the fact that the strategy worked in one case does not mean it will be successful in other cases as well. Therefore, each of these seven cases offered a fresh challenge to the ability of policy makers, in effect, to adapt the abstract model of coercive diplomacy to the crisis at



hand. The impact of many different contextual variables is such that coerciv diplomacy must be tailored in a rather exacting fashion to fit each new situation. Some of these contextual variables, identifiable in the case studies, ar examined below.

*Global Strategic Environment.* The seven cases illustrate that the approacl taken by decision makers to a particular regional crisis is affected significantly by the global strategic environment. Other crises or conflicts may b accorded a higher priority. Demands made on the opponent may be subordinated to larger, overarching strategic interests when these interests are also a stake. Proposed terms of settlement may take into account other issues affecting the postcrisis state of relations with the opponent or his third-party benefactors.

In the pre–Pearl Harbor period, for example, White House attention was diverted repeatedly by the war already in progress in Europe and the intense struggle to control the Atlantic sea lanes. Particularly during the autumn of 1941, U.S. diplomatic interaction with Japan and military force deployments to the Pacific were shaped in part by the U.S. strategic interest in assuring Winston Churchill that our embattled British ally's interests in the Pacific were given due consideration.

During the cold war, most regional crises in which coercive diplomacy was applied were strongly influenced by the U.S. competition with the Soviet Union. This tended to make the Soviets significant players even though, except in the Cuban Missile Crisis, it was not their aggressive actions that precipitated a U.S. response. In the Laos crisis, a major portion of the Kennedy administration's diplomatic initiatives were conducted with Soviet officials and directed toward Soviet strategic concerns. Interactions between John Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev during both of these crises were affected by their mutual hope for movement toward improved U.S.-Soviet relations in the postcrisis period. In the Vietnam case, the fundamental U.S. interest was perceived by the Johnson administration as preserving the credibility of America's global commitments to stem Communist encroachment. Moreover, as its predecessors had done regarding Laos, it attempted to achieve an early halt to North Vietnamese aggression by combining deployments and limited applications of force with diplomatic initiatives directed principally at the Soviet Union. Years later, in Nicaragua, the Reagan administration also perceived the key issues in global cold war terms, and it failed to appreciate the limits of Soviet interest in perpetuating Sandinista influence in Central America.

With the Soviet Union increasingly in disarray and the winding down of the cold war, regional crises could be approached from different strategic perspectives. For example, despite the Soviet Union's early encouragement of nationalist resistance movements in areas still affected by the residual influences of Western colonialism, including extensive training of terrorist organizers, it quietly removed itself from an association with the bombastic and unpredictable Muammar Qaddafi. As a result, Libya's support of terrorism could be dealt with largely as an isolated offense against which an attempt could be made to mobilize the moral outrage of the entire Western community of nations. In the case of Saddam Hussein's seizure of Kuwait, the process of disintegration within the Soviet Union removed both Soviet aspirations in the Gulf and historic Soviet support for Iraq as serious strategic factors. Ultimately, in the evolving crisis, the Soviet government joined the U.S.-led diplomatic coalition and supported the U.N. resolutions condemning, and applying coercive pressure against, Iraq. Accordingly, the Bush administration could focus its attention and energies more fully on the problems of coalition cohesion and on preservation of the fragile separation of the Gulf crisis from the deep-seated Arab-Israeli tensions.

*Type of Provocation.* Crises in which coercive diplomacy is attempted vary greatly in the challenge they pose depending on the type of provocation that triggered the confrontation. Some types of provocation are easier for the perpetrator to stop or undo, if coerced by the defender, than are others. A successful fait accompli action that quickly overruns and occupies a neighboring country (as in the case of Iraq's seizure of Kuwait) is extremely difficult to reverse. An effort to alter a status quo situation that is only just under way and is highly dependent on outside support (as in the case of the Pathet Lao's attempt to overrun key locations held by the Royal Laotian government) is more susceptible to carrot-and-stick amelioration.

Covert sponsorship or encouragement of internal upheaval and irregular forms of aggression by others (as in Libya's support of international terrorist groups) makes it difficult for the defenders to clearly define the aggressive behavior and assign political responsibility for that behavior. However, clear-cut attempts to alter the status quo through violation of recognized boundaries or other examples of flagrant disregard of international norms tend to give the defending party a kind of strategic high ground. In such cases, the wielder of coercive diplomacy, applying the strategy in obvious defense against another party's aggression, enjoys the kind of legitimacy that norms of international law bestow on the defender. This legitimacy can be extremely helpful in obtaining international as well as domestic support and in denying the opponent the benefits of international backing. Being able to invoke legitimacy on behalf of one's demands in coercive diplomacy can also be helpful (as in the Cuban Missile Crisis) in persuading the opponent that its behavior is indefensible and must be altered.

*Image of War.* The more horrible the image of war the crisis triggers, the more strongly motivated one or both sides will be (as in the Cuban Missile Crisis) to exercise restraint and to cooperate to avoid such a war. In Vietnam in 1965, neither side regarded the immediate prospect of war as a reason to soften its position and work out an acceptable bargain. As William Simons



indicates in his study, the U.S. leadership exuded confidence that if it were necessary to bring American military power directly to bear on North Vietnam, the leaders in Hanoi would surely be forced to back down. For their part, the leaders in Hanoi regarded escalation of the fighting in South Vietnam to a contest between their forces and those of the United States as a battle they could ultimately win. At the same time, President Johnson's image of the escalation that might follow from an immediately expanded conflict inhibited his selection of coercive actions in his brief attempt to move beyond the try-and-see variant of coercive diplomacy.

The respective images of war are only one of several instances of the prominence of perception in the conduct of coercive diplomacy, but surely it is one of the most important of the contextual variables. Had Saddam Hussein perceived "the mother of all battles" in images even approaching the destruction levied on Iraq's forces and infrastructure, he might have more seriously considered the negotiating initiatives advanced by others in the international coalition arrayed against him.

*Unilateral or Coalitional Coercive Diplomacy.* Coercive diplomacy is likely to be more difficult to carry out when it is employed by a coalition of states rather than by a single government. Although a coalition brings international pressure to bear on the target of diplomacy and can devote greater resources to the task, the unity and sense of purpose of a coalition may be fragile. In the Laos crisis, for example, resistance from France and the United Kingdom to the use of threatened military intervention made the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) less than useful as a base for coercive diplomacy. A partial exception to the rule was the strength and stability of the U.N. coalition President Bush succeeded in building on behalf of coercive diplomacy against Iraq. However, it should be noted that concern over the vulnerability and lack of staying power of this coalition was among the considerations that led President Bush to substitute the threat of war for economic sanctions as the main coercive lever in the coalition's strategy.

By contrast, as Tim Zimmermann shows, President Reagan was unable in early 1986 to build an effective coalition to exert meaningful coercive pressure on Libya's Col. Qaddafi. Despite a commonly asserted objective of seeking an end to international terrorism, European allies declined to join the United States even in a common policy of economic sanctions directed at Libya's encouragement and support of terrorist activities. As in the later Persian Gulf case, U.S. concern over the lack of a firm commitment to sanctions from its allies was one of the factors contributing to Reagan's decision to increase unilateral military pressure on Qaddafi.

*Isolation of the Adversary.* The task of coercive diplomacy is likely to be more complex and sometimes more difficult when the adversary (as in the Laos crisis of 1961–1962 and in the 1965 Vietnam case) is not an isolated state but is supported diplomatically and militarily by allies. In both of these cases, it was not only the government of North Vietnam that had to be influenced to back away from its original design; Beijing and Moscow also played significant roles in shaping the opponent's reactions to U.S. pressure. Happily, as the Laos crisis progressed, Moscow became convinced of the desirability of a compromise settlement and was able to exercise enough leverage with Laotian and Vietnamese Communist leaders to help bring it about. By 1965, the dominant leverage was being exerted by the Chinese, who strongly encouraged the North Vietnamese proclivity to resist any bargain that compromised their basic national goal.

By contrast, the virtual diplomatic isolation of Iraq in the recent Gulf crisis made it easier for the United States to intervene and to organize the coalition that demanded that Iraq get out of Kuwait. In particular, the fact that Saddam no longer had the support of the Soviet Union meant that the international authority of the U.N. Security Council could be called into play without fear of a Soviet veto. As a result, that authority could be harnessed to attract multinational support for the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq and, later, for the international military force assembled as a coercive threat.

### *The Risks of Ultimata*

The starkest variant of coercive diplomacy, as was noted in Part One, is the ultimatum. It has three components: (1) a demand on the opponent, (2) a time limit or sense of urgency for compliance with the demand, and (3) a threat of punishment for noncompliance that is credible and sufficiently potent to impress upon the opponent that compliance is preferable. An ultimatum, or tacit ultimatum, was employed by the United States in four of the seven cases examined in Part Two: the Pearl Harbor case, the Laos crisis, the Cuban missile case, and the Persian Gulf case.

For various reasons, however, policy makers may consider it necessary to forgo resorting to an ultimatum—for example, in situations in which strong domestic or international opposition to such a course of action could result in a severe political-diplomatic backlash. In the Nicaragua case, as Bruce Jentleson argues, the Reagan administration's ability to engage in stronger coercive diplomacy against the Sandinista regime was severely constrained by domestic political resistance to further U.S. involvement, as well as by strong international opposition. In the Vietnam case, Simons's account indicates that President Johnson felt severely constrained from coupling an ultimatum with the modest air attacks against North Vietnam in early 1965 by his perception of shaky domestic political support and international pressure for premature negotiations. It is also possible that Johnson—knowing that if an ultimatum were rejected, he would not want to order all-out air attacks because of the risk of Chinese and Soviet intervention—chose not to issue an ultimatum and risk having it exposed as a bluff.



Even in cases in which an ultimatum variant of coercive diplomacy wa tried, policy makers had to confront certain risks presented by the specifi situation. Something approximating the ultimatum was employed success fully in the Laos and Cuban missile cases, and we later review the condition that made this possible. For the moment, however, we consider two cases i which an ultimatum variant was tried despite the risks but failed.

In the Pearl Harbor case, Scott Sagan indicates that U.S. leaders had helc off imposing an embargo on oil to Japan for some time. Aware of Japan' acute dependence on oil imported from the United States, the Roosevelt administration knew that taking this step to back its demand that Japan get ou of China would be a serious provocation. In effect, imposing an embargc would be the equivalent of a tacit ultimatum; cutting off access to the oil Japan needed to fuel its military machine would create a sense of urgency tc comply with U.S. demands. What is more, President Roosevelt and his advisers realized that to impose an embargo, versus merely threatening to do so, would be a harsh move to which Japan might respond by attacking the Dutch East Indies in order to gain new sources of oil. For this reason, Washington held off imposing an oil embargo until, under the highly unusual circumstances described by Sagan, the embargo was initiated in late July 1941 by Dean Acheson in his capacity as chairperson of the interdepartmental Foreign Funds Committee.

The oil embargo indeed proved to be provocative. Tokyo decided it would have no alternative but to initiate war by early December, not only against the Dutch East Indies but also against U.S. bases in the Philippines and Pearl Harbor, unless the United States softened its demands that Japan get out of China and give up its aspirations for regional hegemony. When the Japanese negotiators were unable to reach an acceptable accommodation with Washington, war was launched. The Pearl Harbor case, therefore, fully exemplifies the fact that under certain circumstances, the strong tacit ultimatum variant of coercive diplomacy can boomerang. The critical variable in the case was the extreme magnitude of the U.S. demand, which strengthened the opponent's motivation to resist. Backed into a corner and given no acceptable diplomatic way out, and confronted by the humiliating demand that they give up their imperialistic achievements and aspirations, Japan's desperate leaders felt they were left with no acceptable alternative but to initiate what they knew to be a highly risky war against a militarily and economically stronger opponent.

The ultimatum variant of coercive diplomacy also failed in the Persian Gulf crisis. As noted by Richard Herrmann, coercive diplomacy in the Gulf war began with U.N. resolutions that approximated the gradual turning of the screw variant of the strategy. The U.N. Security Council made use of increasingly severe economic sanctions. In late November 1990, the approach was replaced by an ultimatum to Iraq, backed by the threat of war. Well before the United States persuaded the Security Council to take this step, the Deputies Committee of the National Security Council in Washington carefully considered the utility and risks of subjecting Saddam Hussein to an ultimatum. Drawing upon knowledge of historical experience with ultimata, the Deputies Committee identified several possible risks of an ultimatum and undertook the difficult task of estimating whether any of these risks were likely to materialize and how they might be minimized, if not avoided altogether. The full results of the group's risk analysis are not yet available, but the following observations appear to be correct.[1]

Initially, the major concern of members of the working group and higher officials appears to have been that of making the threat of punishment credible enough to make it extremely unlikely that Saddam Hussein would dismiss it as a bluff. The original ultimatum left open just when the U.N. coalition might begin military operations. The date attached to the ultimatum—January 15, 1991—was not a deadline after which war would follow immediately but rather was the point at which something approximating the game of chicken would begin. Later, however, as January 15 approached, it took on the character of a deadline for compliance as yet another risk became a significant concern for the Bush administration. It was feared that Saddam might announce partial, conditional, or qualified withdrawal from Kuwait in an effort to erode the coercive pressure to which he was being subjected and to salvage some of his gains. This possibility was referred to by well-informed journalists as the administration's "nightmare scenario," and detailed contingency plans were made to deal with such a development.

We need not review the possible reasons why Saddam did not accede to the ultimatum or at least resort to the strategy of announcing a partial withdrawal. A conclusive answer is not possible given the lack of data on Saddam's thinking. But it seems likely that he rejected the ultimatum at least in part because he regarded acceptance as humiliating, as incompatible with honor, and as too damaging politically.

From these cases, we can see that policy makers in several different crisis situations have wrestled with a number of risks inherent in confronting an opponent with an ultimatum. Paul Lauren summarizes a great deal of additional historical experience on which we can also draw to highlight the constraints and risks encountered with this starkest variant of coercive diplomacy. At least four such risks can be identified:

1. The opponent may reject the ultimatum, thinking it is a bluff, and thus place the burden of deciding whether to carry out the threatened punishment on the shoulder of the coercing party.
2. The opponent may reject the ultimatum because he regards acceptance of it as humiliating, as incompatible with honor, as too damaging politically, with the same consequence as in no. 1.



3. The opponent may take the ultimatum seriously but decide to initiate war himself rather than accept the demand.
4. The opponent may neither accept nor reject the ultimatum outright but may attempt to defuse its coercive impact by partial, qualified, or equivocal acceptance of the demands, hoping thereby to force the coercing power to settle for less.

### *Components of Crisis Bargaining*

One of the most important areas of generic knowledge relevant to the strategy of coercive diplomacy is that of crisis bargaining; that is, the policy maker's timely application of appropriate combinations of threat and accommodation to attain an acceptable change in the opponent's behavior. The two cases in which some variant of coercive diplomacy proved to be clearly effective—the Laos crisis of 1961–1962 and the Cuban Missile Crisis—are also examples of the use of some version of the ultimatum. These cases bear close examination lest an incorrect lesson be drawn; namely, that resort to a strong variant of coercive diplomacy was the sole or primary factor contributing to its success in these two cases. Coercive diplomacy is a form of crisis bargaining, and it is instructive to view President Kennedy's policy decisions in these two crises from this standpoint.

In any crisis, the policy maker must decide *what combination* of persuasion, coercion, and accommodation to employ *and in what sequence.* It is noteworthy that Kennedy employed all three of these components of crisis bargaining in both the Laos and Cuban crises. However, the mixture of the three and the sequence in which he brought them into play differed. The use of threat was significantly greater in the missile crisis, but one should not overlook the fact that his coercive threats were initially coupled with considerable emphasis on persuasion and, toward the end of the crisis, with accommodation. As Alexander George points out, Kennedy believed it was essential to employ coercive threats and actions at the outset of the crisis to demonstrate his resolution and to gain credibility for his warning that he would resort to force if necessary. He gave priority to this objective, deliberately deferring any discussions of concessions until he had first impressed Khrushchev with his resolve.

In his study of the Laos crisis, however, David Hall shows that Kennedy began with an emphasis on the possibility of accommodation, signaling a readiness to reduce the U.S. objective in Laos in return for that country's neutralization. Later, he resorted to occasional threats of intervention in order to discourage the adversary from exploiting his battlefield advantage too far and to motivate the Soviet Union to pressure its Communist allies to be more receptive to the U.S. demands. In fact, Kennedy's earliest attempts to signal a reduced objective, including a statement to the press, at first encouraged reactions from the Communists that illustrate the delicacy of crisis bargaining. Seemingly emboldened by the U.S. inclination to step back from its original posture, the Communist governments rejected outright the U.S.-sponsored diplomatic proposal, and the Pathet Lao–Vietminh embarked on a major new offensive. One must speculate on the degree to which that experience, surmounted by the Kennedy administration only through increased commitment and carefully coordinated diplomacy, convinced the president of the need first to convince Khrushchev of his resolve when the Cuban crisis developed eighteen months later.

Since the major target of Kennedy's strategy in the Laos crisis was likewise engaged globally and also had many reasons to avoid too deep an involvement in a dangerous regional struggle, the threatening nature of these events made an impression in Moscow as well. The Soviets' awareness that these new developments carried a clear potential for rendering mutual control of the crisis more difficult lent greater credibility and coercive impact to Kennedy's new bargaining posture.

Kennedy made considerable use of persuasion in both crises. He employed a variety of diplomatic and open channels to clarify, explain, and justify to his adversary, as well as to others, why the demand he was making was truly important to the United States and why he was strongly resolved to achieve it. And, cognizant of the principles of crisis management, Kennedy deliberately slowed the momentum of events, particularly during the Cuban Missile Crisis, in order to give diplomatic processes and communication an opportunity to help achieve a peaceful resolution.

Coercive diplomacy could work in these two cases because neither Kennedy nor Khrushchev viewed the particular conflict of interests in the dispute or their overall relationship as approximating a zero-sum conflict. The objectives Kennedy pursued in both crises, even in the missile crisis, were limited ones. They did not threaten vital Soviet interests. And, as we noted, Kennedy offered substantial carrots as well as making threats in order to secure compliance with his demands. When the conflict with an adversary is viewed in zero-sum terms—as in the case of U.S. policy toward Japan in 1941, the Reagan administration's view of the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua, and possibly also in the Persian Gulf case—it is much more difficult to employ the carrot-and-stick variant. In extreme cases of this kind, the strategy of coercive diplomacy tends to become all stick and no carrot, and little scope is left for diplomatic efforts to reach a mutually acceptable peaceful resolution of the crisis.

Of course, the process of crisis bargaining requires a perceived freedom to bargain. President Kennedy had this in Laos, in part because of the tradition of bipartisanship that tends to grace the first few months of a newly inaugurated administration. He had it in the Cuban Missile Crisis, principally because of the high priority all Americans attached to peacefully eliminating a nuclear missile threat in our own hemisphere. President Reagan probably had such freedom to bargain with Nicaragua, but because of his administration's strongly held views regarding a Communist hemispheric threat, he chose not to use it.



For analytical clarity, perhaps a better term than freedom is *political capital.* In this sense, the perceived availability of bargaining room may better be thought of as a somewhat finite resource rather than some generally present condition. Moreover, it may more usefully be thought of as a resource the policy maker can choose to use or not rather than some advantageous condition that should be seized upon. For example, in 1965 President Johnson was not willing to risk the political cost of scaling back the U.S. objective in Vietnam to entice North Vietnam into early bargaining sessions. He genuinely feared the political reaction to an abandonment of the policy goal inherited from President Kennedy and the likely impact of this reaction on his domestic strategy for the Great Society.

In each case in which a strategy of coercive diplomacy is contemplated, before entering into a bargaining posture the policy maker would be wise to assess the likely political costs and risks of this step. He or she should (1) calculate the likely nature and strength of domestic political opposition to the particular bargaining position under consideration; (2) contemplate the importance of other future policy objectives for which the support of that opposition might be needed; and (3) assess the opportunities likely to be available for enlisting that support should the imperatives of the immediate crisis seem to describe an urgent need for a bargaining initiative.

### *Conditions that Favor Coercive Diplomacy*

Because coercive diplomacy is not always successful, it is important to identify conditions that, if present, favor its success or, if absent, reduce the likelihood of its being effective. We use the term *favor* advisedly here because our analysis of historical experience suggests that no single condition can be regarded as sufficient for the success of the strategy. Moreover, with very few exceptions, we avoid suggesting even that a particular condition is necessary for successful use of coercive diplomacy. In some cases, the presence of a necessary condition may contribute little to a causal explanation of the outcome; other conditions may be more directly relevant.

In fact, many variables can influence the outcome of efforts to employ coercive diplomacy. Some have to do with the content of the particular version of the strategy that is employed—that is, what is demanded, whether a sense of urgency is created for compliance, whether a credible and sufficiently potent threat of punishment for noncompliance is conveyed, and whether the threat is coupled with positive incentives and assurances that make it easier for the adversary to accept the demands. Other relevant variables have to do with situational and contextual aspects that were illustrated in the case studies and discussed earlier in this chapter.

However, although the seven cases make it clear that no variable suffices in itself as a causal explanation of successful coercive diplomacy, certain conditions in the interaction between a coercing government and its opponent will, if present, favor the strategy. In the sections that follow, we discuss each of these conditions and cite selected cases to illustrate how their presence or absence contributed to the case outcomes. Not all cases are evaluated with regard to each condition; Table 3 (p. 288) summarizes a fuller reporting of our judgments in this respect.

The reader will note some variance from the list of conditions developed for the 1971 edition. In particular we do not include "usable military options" in the current set. This omission does not downgrade the importance of selecting military options that are politically and strategically appropriate when operationalizing a variant of coercive diplomacy. It merely reflects our later recognition, illustrated in some of the newer cases and in Paul Lauren's historical survey, that coercive pressure can sometimes be applied through nonmilitary means. The current list of conditions is meant to be relevant for any situation in which coercive diplomacy might be contemplated.

*Clarity of the Objective.* Clarity with respect to what is to be achieved through coercive diplomacy is important in two respects. First, it assists policy makers in selecting from among several available response options. Second, clarity and consistency in what is demanded help persuade the opponent of the coercing power's strength of purpose. In both the Laos and Cuban crises, this condition was satisfied and contributed to the success of coercive diplomacy. The condition was also present in the Pearl Harbor and Persian Gulf cases, but coercive diplomacy failed because other factors were also at work.

In the Vietnam and Nicaragua cases, Washington's objectives and demands were not clear, which contributed to the difficulties encountered by U.S. strategy in those confrontations. To the extent that coercion of North Vietnam was attempted in early 1965, Simons demonstrates that other conflicting objectives constantly tended to obscure the demands directed toward Hanoi and to limit the impact of the other components of coercive diplomacy. Attempting through its actions to send messages to different target audiences, the Johnson administration left its demands on Hanoi somewhat opaque. And in the Nicaraguan case, as Jentleson shows, President Reagan's failure to set and enforce a clear policy line led to an intense struggle within his administration over the objectives and modalities of its coercive policy. In both cases, the lack of clear and consistent objectives severely constrained the possibilities for productive bargaining with the opponent.

*Strength of Motivation.* Obviously, the coercing power must be sufficiently motivated by what it perceives to be at stake in a crisis to act at all. Yet



that motivation must be strong enough to encourage national decision makers to accept the costs and risks inherent in steadfastly pursuing a coercive strategy. At root is their perception of the depth of national interest involved when the key decisions must be made.

For example, in the Laos case, until April 1962 President Kennedy exhibited only a questionable commitment to preventing the impending defeat of the Royal Lao forces. Then, as David Hall points out, the added motivation of showing strong national resolve following the embarrassing Bay of Pigs fiasco prompted Kennedy to risk the stronger commitment of placing U.S. military advisers in harm's way and later actually deploying back-up forces to Thailand. Kennedy's behavior until that point was such as to raise questions about what he would have done had the Communist opponents not accepted his demand for a cease-fire. In the Cuban Missile Crisis, however, the Kennedy administration's strong motivation to get rid of the missile threat was obvious from the beginning.

Events quite removed from the crisis may also have affected the coercing power's motivation in the Libyan case—although in a different direction. From late 1985 through the punitive U.S. air strikes against selected Libyan targets, the Reagan administration was determined to maintain a strong public posture against state-supported terrorism. Then, despite a clear warning by the president that Libya would be struck again if it continued its hated policy, the administration declined to follow through. Apparently, the onset of the Iran-contra affair, among other factors, encouraged the administration to assume a less assertive posture toward Qaddafi's links with terrorist activities.

*Asymmetry of Motivation.* As important as the coercing power's perceptions of its stakes and interests may be, it is essential to recognize that motivation is a two-sided matter. As the theoretical discussion in Part One and the case studies have stressed, the relative motivation of the two sides plays an important role in determining the outcome of coercive diplomacy. The strategy is more likely to be successful if the side employing it is more highly motivated than its opponent by what is at stake in the crisis. What is critical in this respect, however, is that the adversary *believe* the coercing power is more highly motivated than the adversary to achieve its crisis objective.

In some cases, the relative motivation of the two sides tends to be fixed by the nature of the conflict. In other cases, however, the side that engages in coercive diplomacy may be able to create an asymmetry of motivation in its favor in two ways: (1) by demanding of the opponent only what is essential to protect its own vital interests and not making demands that engage the vital interests of its adversary, and (2) by offering a carrot that reduces the adversary's motivation to resist the demands. In the Laos and Cuban crises, as we have seen, Kennedy used both of these levers to create an asymmetry of motivation in his favor. The success of his coercive threats in these two cases cannot be properly understood without taking this leverage into account.

The critical nature of the *opponent's* perception that an asymmetry of motivation favors the coercing power is perhaps best illustrated by the Persian Gulf and Vietnam cases. The air assault that began in January 1991 proved that the Bush administration was strongly motivated to pressure Iraq into reversing its seizure of Kuwait. As Richard Herrmann's case study shows, however, Saddam Hussein apparently believed that Arab politics and Islamic fervor would ultimately disrupt the international coalition aligned against him. Further, he was convinced that the "imperialists" who continued the struggle would have to negotiate a settlement that would permit Iraq to fulfill its destiny as the dominant power in a region consumed by Arab nationalism. He apparently perceived the baser motivations of the Western governments as unable to withstand the righteous power of Islam and the Arab people.

The North Vietnam leaders' belief in the correctness of their mission to drive Western influences from South Vietnam likewise was not shaken by their perceptions of U.S. intent. In 1965 at least, prodded by their Chinese benefactors, they apparently were persuaded that the bombing campaign was intended primarily to improve the U.S. posture for negotiations. In the view from Hanoi and Beijing, the Johnson administration was not projecting a commitment to persevere but was merely maneuvering toward an attempt to win at the bargaining table what it and its allies were not winning in the countryside of South Vietnam. We regard the inability of Washington to create in its opponent a perception of an asymmetry of motivation favoring the United States as important in explaining coercive diplomacy's failure in these and other cases.

*Sense of Urgency.* Once again, it is the opponent's perception of the condition that is critical. If the state employing coercive diplomacy genuinely experiences a sense of urgency to achieve its objective—as Kennedy did particularly in the last stage of the Cuban crisis—it is more likely to be able to generate a sense of urgency for compliance on the part of the opponent. Otherwise, the coercing power must find other ways to convey a credible sense of urgency for compliance.

Hall's study of the Laos case shows that the Kennedy administration's highly coordinated diplomatic maneuvering was largely responsible for conveying a sense of urgency to the Communist opponents. Bilateral talks with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Foreign Secretary Harold MacMillan, and Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, SEATO meetings, and bilateral Soviet–United Kingdom talks were all used for this purpose. These initiatives apparently reinforced, at least for Soviet leaders, the urgency of the situation and helped persuade the Chinese to accept a cease-fire and engage in resultant negotiations.



By definition, employment of the lesser variants of coercive diplomacy—try-and-see and gradual turning of the screw—avoids imparting a sense of urgency for compliance. Hence, this condition was inoperative in the cases involving Libya, Nicaragua, and Vietnam. Only in cases in which classic or tacit ultimata are invoked can it be communicated with coercive effect. In the Persian Gulf case, Herrmann relates how the Bush administration tried to create a sense of urgency by getting the U.N. coalition to treat January 15 as a deadline for compliance. It is not clear, however, whether Saddam Hussein perceived this date in urgent terms. On the other hand, as we saw in the Pearl Harbor case, creating a sense of urgency for compliance with one's demand may boomerang and encourage a desperate or committed opponent to initiate war in preference to acceding to the coercing power's terms.

*Strong Leadership.* The choice, implementation, and outcome of coercive diplomacy depends to some extent on the presence of strong and effective top-level political leadership. Such leadership was provided by President Kennedy in the Cuban Missile Crisis and undoubtedly contributed to the success of the strategy in that case. George shows how Kennedy's decision to opt for the limited objective of withdrawal of the missiles rather than removal of Castro or of Soviet influence in Cuba and his firm control over the deployment and use of military forces were critical to the outcome. Similarly, in the Persian Gulf crisis, although coercive diplomacy did not succeed, President Bush's leadership made it possible to gain coalition support for the ultimatum to Saddam and for the war that followed when the Iraqi leader refused to accept the demands made on him.

By contrast, in the critical months of August and September preceding Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt apparently allowed a mid-level bureaucrat to convert his administration's potentially most effective carrot into a harsh stick. Skillful control over Japan's access to U.S. oil might have proven a useful bargaining lever had Assistant Secretary Dean Acheson's self-righteous refusal to grant the Japanese request for petroleum licenses, in contradiction of the president's loosely communicated decision, not been allowed to stand as the de facto policy. Had Roosevelt demanded strict supervision over the implementation of his policy or, like President Truman regarding Korea a decade later, insisted on policy loyalty from his subordinates, the use of coercive diplomacy might have led to a negotiated settlement that avoided war.[2]

In a special way, strong leadership in the opponent's government also facilitates the implementation of coercive diplomacy. Because the prospect for success in coercive diplomacy depends so heavily on correct readings of the opponent's political and military reactions to the coercing government's actions and demands, an adversary's control over its military forces and diplomats can become a critical element in the process. In the autumn of 1962, Khrushchev exercised effective control over the Soviet diplomatic corps and over the ship commanders who were bringing the missiles to Cuba. Conversely, the 1941 Japanese government had only limited control over Japan's military leaders, particularly those commanding its occupation forces in China.

*Adequate Domestic and International Support.* A certain level of political support at home is needed for any serious use of coercive diplomacy by U.S. leaders. It is difficult to go beyond this simple generalization, however, because the extent to which the strategy depends on domestic political support can vary substantially depending on the specifics of the case. In the Laos crisis during his first few months in office, President Kennedy's domestic support rested mainly with Congress, both within his own party and from many Republican members who had supported Dwight Eisenhower's policies in Southeast Asia. It is doubtful that a significant number of Americans had much interest in the situation. However, Kennedy had strong support from both Congress and the American public throughout the Cuban Missile Crisis. Similarly, there was considerable public backing of President Reagan's effort to coerce Qaddafi into giving up his support of international terrorism.

These situations contrast sharply with the Vietnam and Nicaragua cases. At the time of President Johnson's brief attempt at coercive diplomacy in the spring of 1965, U.S. public opinion had not yet turned against the administration's Southeast Asia policy, but increasing numbers of members of Congress were beginning to question it openly. Johnson knew that a substantial increase in the U.S. military commitment in Vietnam would provoke more widespread opposition. In the mid-1980s, support from both the public and Congress for the Reagan policies toward Nicaragua was extremely weak. Opposition to these policies was particularly persistent regarding the possibility of U.S. military intervention of any kind and encouragement of the contras to take guerrilla actions designed to weaken the Sandinistas' hold on the country.

International support (or lack thereof) is also an important factor in some cases of coercive diplomacy. The support of the Organization of American States and the United Nations was helpful to Kennedy in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Unusually strong international and domestic support in the Persian Gulf crisis allowed the Bush administration to adopt an ultimatum strategy. In contrast, concern about international reactions contributed to Johnson's cautious use of air power against North Vietnam. However, the relationship of international support to the rationality of attempting coercive diplomacy is more complex than is indicated by these cases.

This complexity is illustrated by the two cases from the Reagan administration, both of which resulted in ambiguous outcomes. As Jentleson shows, President Reagan's policy of using the contras to apply coercive pressure against the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua received almost universal condemnation abroad. Yet, although probably unintended, this unilateral U.S. policy played some part in motivating Central American leaders to undertake independent efforts to mediate Nicaragua's internal political dispute. Later, despite extremely limited international support for its attempt to coerce Qaddafi's Libya with meaningful economic sanctions, the Reagan administration unilaterally applied graduated military pressures. In this case, as Zimmermann points out, these military operations were intended for European as well as Libyan observation. Ironically, after the military operations culminated in punitive air strikes, some launched from British bases, several of Washington's European allies adopted the kinds of political and economic sanctions against Libya that the Reagan administration had requested of them earlier.



*Unacceptability of Threatened Escalation.* The impact of coercive diplomacy is enhanced if the initial actions and communications directed against the adversary arouse his fear of an escalation to circumstances less acceptable than those promised by accession to the coercing power's demands. (In some cases [as in Laos] this perception would depend in part on the inducements being offered as well.) This condition occurred in the Cuban Missile Crisis because the accelerating buildup of U.S. combat forces in the southern states and the shooting down of the U-2 aircraft evidently convinced Khrushchev that stronger American military action might be imminent, thereby heightening the prospects for war. This possibility must have been particularly alarming to the Soviet leader because, as we now know, Khrushchev had predelegated to Soviet commanders in Cuba authority to use their tactical nuclear weapons in the event of an attempted U.S. invasion. In the Libyan case, the U.S. air strike appears to have had a similar intimidating effect for a time. Retreating to his desert quarters, Qaddafi remained quiescent for several months, and considerable dissent was provoked among units of Libya's military forces and Islamic fundamentalist groups.

In the Pearl Harbor case, the threat of an oil embargo from the United States, which Japanese leaders feared most, became a reality in July 1941. Sagan explains how the embargo constituted an escalation of the crisis that was unacceptable to the Japanese. They then regarded their options as being limited either to securing an alleviation of the oil embargo through diplomacy or going to war. Though fraught with risk, early war against the United States and other Western powers in Asia was more acceptable than the certain ultimate frustration of regional ambitions stemming from an inadequate supply of petroleum.

Other cases give little evidence that opponents feared U.S. escalation. In early 1965, North Vietnamese leaders showed little concern over any portent suggested by the limited U.S. air attacks or conveyed by Washington's cautious diplomatic signals. In the case of Nicaragua, the Sandinista leadership may have been concerned over the possibility of direct U.S. military intervention in the months following the Grenada invasion, and this condition might have helped shape a settlement had the United States pursued less extreme objectives at that time. However, fear of escalated U.S. military action played only a minor role at best in motivating the Sandinistas to accept the formula for ending the crisis developed later by the Central American leaders. In the Persian Gulf crisis, Saddam Hussein apparently underestimated either the capability of the U.S.-led coalition to wage a decisive ground campaign or the cohesiveness of the multinational alliance arrayed against him, or both.

*Clarity Concerning the Precise Terms of Settlement of the Crisis.* Clarity of objectives and demands (the first condition listed above) may not suffice. In some cases it may also be necessary for the coercing power to formulate specific terms regarding the termination of the crisis that the two sides can agree on and to establish procedures for carrying out these terms and verifying their implementation. Obviously, this would not be helpful in cases with extreme demands, such as the Reagan administration's Type C strategy against Nicaragua, where the desired terms are more threatening to the opponent's interests than the punishment being inflicted. In other situations, a coercive strategy may be enhanced by this condition.

For example, in the Laos crisis, the Kennedy administration realistically had few resources available with which to effect a settlement that satisfied the objectives endorsed by its predecessors in office. It forestalled a Communist takeover of Laos by achieving a cease-fire in place through a combination of veiled military threats and some political concessions. Kennedy enhanced the persuasiveness of his carrot-and-stick approach by agreeing in advance to some implementing features of a neutralized Laos and later to U.S. participation in an international conference within the Geneva framework to work out the arrangements—*provided that* the cease-fire had already taken effect. Accompanying the elaborate pattern of bilateral talks and third-party entreaties leading to acceptance of the proposals were the administration's assurances to the Soviets that it would withdraw the U.S. military mission in Laos and channel all aid through an international body if the Communist governments would reciprocate.

As with Laos, specifying terms of settlement in advance of formal agreement can also be of major importance to the adversary's side. It may want precise settlement terms to safeguard against the possibility that the coercing power has in mind a broader, more sweeping interpretation of the formula for ending the crisis or will be tempted to renew pressure and push for even greater concessions after the initial agreement for terminating the crisis is concluded. The adversary who contemplates succumbing to coercive diplomacy may need specific and reliable assurances that the coercive power will carry out its part of the termination agreement. Accordingly, suitable U.S. assurances to Nicaragua in 1984 might have led to a negotiated agreement providing for most of Washington's regional security objectives short of the Sandinista collapse the Reagan administration hoped for had the administra-



tion recognized the merit of the other conditions for policy success that then existed.

For purposes of better understanding coercive diplomacy, it is also intriguing to speculate as to how Japan's civilian leaders might have reacted in late November 1941 if the Roosevelt administration had given such assurances along the lines of the once-opted-for modus vivendi position rather than choosing an inflexible reiteration of its "fundamental principles of peace." Of course, such a decision would have met with strong opposition from the British and Chinese governments.

* * *

Elsewhere in this study, we have stressed that coercive diplomacy requires skill on the part of policy makers in tailoring the strategy to the special circumstances of a particular crisis. Our major finding, however, is that strategic skill can contribute to successful application of coercive diplomacy only if the eight conditions that favor the strategy, as described in this section, are present in that crisis situation in some combination or if the coercing state is able by some of its actions to help create favorable conditions. But generally, skill can only capitalize on favorable conditions latent in the situation; it cannot compensate for their absence. Therefore, the failure of coercive diplomacy in a particular case should not necessarily be taken as evidence of an administration's ineptness in implementing the strategy. Rather, it is more likely an indication of that administration's failure to recognize that the situation was intrinsically wrong for the strategy.

Not all of these eight conditions appear to be equally important in determining whether coercive diplomacy is a reasonable strategy to pursue. Three that seem particularly significant for influencing the outcome have to do with the *opponent's perception.* Thus, coercive diplomacy is facilitated if the *opponent* believes that an asymmetry of motivation operates in favor of the coercing power, that it is time urgent to respond to the coercing power's demands, and that the coercing power will engage in escalation that would impose unacceptable costs. Another condition that seems particularly significant is the clarity of settlement terms. Table 3 shows that only the cases in which coercive diplomacy was a clear-cut success—the Laos and Cuban crises—are characterized by all four of these conditions. No other case clearly reflects more than one of them.

However, the condition of time urgency poses a special problem; by definition, it applies only to cases in which some variant of an ultimatum is employed. Should we infer that only the ultimata variants can produce successful outcomes of coercive diplomacy? Unfortunately, the two other cases that might have helped us to answer this question do not provide compelling evidence. Both the Libya and Nicaragua cases, neither of which exemplifies ultimata, displayed some elements of success—however ambiguously. Had these cases had clearer, more positive outcomes or been imbedded in less complex

TABLE 3 Conditions That Favor Coercive Diplomacy

| | Pearl Harbor | Laos | Cuba | Vietnam | Libya | Nicaragua | Persian Gulf |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clarity of objective | + | + | + | | ? | | + |
| Strong motivation | + | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| Asymmetry of motivation[a] | | + | + | | ? | | |
| Sense of urgency[a] | + | + | + | | | | ? |
| Strong leadership | | + | + | + | + | + | + |
| Domestic support | + | ? | + | | + | | + |
| International support | + | + | + | | | | |
| Fear of unacceptable escalation[a] | | + | + | | ? | ? | + |
| Clarity of terms | ? | + | + | | | | |

*Note:* A "+" indicates the presence of the conditions; a "?" means that it is not clear whether the condition is present.

[a] Opponent's perception

circumstances, they might have enabled us to answer with a firm "no." As our evidence stands, we can only express doubts that ultimata are required and leave it to other case work to present a more compelling argument.

In addition, these non-ultimatum cases do not offer enough evidence to bolster a strong argument concerning the relative influence of the other three significant conditions, which are not reflected clearly in any of the non-ultimatum cases. We can only point to their coexistence in the two successful cases and to the details of their respective roles in these cases while calling attention to their importance.

As three of these conditions involve perceptions held by the leaders of the state that is being subjected to coercive diplomacy, it should be apparent that whether this strategy will work in any particular situation rests heavily on the correctness of the policy maker's assessment of the opponent's perceptions and strategic reasoning. Thus, even when the three most significant conditions are believed to exist, ensuring success in the use of coercive diplomacy still involves considerable uncertainty; their presence or absence is not always self-evident. The policy maker employing coercive diplomacy often cannot reliably judge as to whether these conditions are sufficiently present or can be created in the case at hand.

### *The Image of the Opponent*

Whether leaders of the coercing power have a correct image of their opponent is a significant determinant of the reasonableness of their choice of a variant of coercive diplomacy for use in a specific crisis. This can also have a major impact on the success or failure of that strategy. The prospects for success in the choice and implementation of coercive diplomacy are greatly enhanced if a policy maker can view the crisis events and his own crisis behavior from the perspective of the opponent.



In the Cuban Missile Crisis, for example, President Kennedy's correct image of Khrushchev as a seasoned Communist leader who was capable of making a tactical retreat if made aware of the risks of not doing so played a major part in the successful U.S. resolution of the crisis. After discovering the Soviet missiles in Cuba, administration policy makers had to choose between removing them by direct military action or by applying coercive diplomatic pressure. Critical for this policy choice was the question of whether Khrushchev and his advisers were capable of withdrawing the missiles once the potential costs of not doing so were made clear. Fortunately, the familiarity of some of Kennedy's advisers with old Bolshevik doctrine—advocating readiness to retreat in order to extricate oneself from overwhelming danger—which was derived from studies of past Soviet behavior, enabled the president to assess his opponent correctly. His choice of coercive diplomacy to persuade Khrushchev to remove the missiles peacefully was a direct result of this correct assessment.

Faulty images of the opponent, however, can lead to ineffective policy choices and other miscalculations. In the absence of adequate information, one side often arrives at such images through attributing to the opponent a value system and reasoning process similar to its own. This tendency toward mirror imaging can distort policy makers' estimates of likely opponent motivation and reactions when initially assessing a crisis situation and implementing a chosen strategy.

For example, in the Vietnam case, President Johnson and several of his advisers miscalculated the tenacity of North Vietnam's leaders in pursuit of their objectives in the South. Although Johnson made an effort to visualize himself in his opponent's shoes for bargaining purposes and apparently recognized the relative advantage experienced by Ho Chi Minh in early March 1965, he did not fully appreciate Ho's strength of motivation and moral conviction. This was demonstrated by Johnson's private assertion, barely a month later, that Ho could not resist the carrot offered openly in the Johns Hopkins speech. Did he really believe such an offer would not be seen in Hanoi as a public bribe for abandoning the Viet Cong to their fate? This misjudgment was also evident in the confidence expressed by his top advisers—which Johnson apparently accepted—that once the leaders in Hanoi realized they could not win in South Vietnam, *then* the threat of destruction to the industries and economic infrastructure around Haiphong and Hanoi would have a truly coercive effect. In addition, the Johnson administration may have failed to appreciate that Hanoi had far more at stake in 1965 than had been the case in Laos four years earlier. Whereas Ho and his advisers could afford to accommodate the modest U.S. negotiating objectives in 1961 in order to preserve a favorable position relative to their high-priority goals in

South Vietnam, those goals were clearly at stake in 1965. The leaders in Hanoi saw Washington's bargaining aims then as taking away what they were close to finally achieving—their long-standing national goal of unifying the two parts of their country. The leaders of North Vietnam were much more strongly motivated to resist the U.S. demand that they give up this objective than they had been to oppose Kennedy's 1961 demand for a neutralized Laos.

Administration officials similarly misjudged their opponents in the Pearl Harbor and Persian Gulf cases. For most of 1941, Roosevelt's advisers were divided in their estimates of whether the Japanese would react to an oil embargo by attacking the Dutch East Indies. When Dean Acheson in effect imposed the embargo, his mistaken judgment on this issue was shared by at least three members of the Roosevelt cabinet. Why the president and his secretary of state allowed the policy to stand after they became aware of it is another question; Roosevelt clearly had been among those who earlier believed an embargo would provoke Japan into more aggressive actions. It seems evident that at the time, none of these officials seriously contemplated the possibility that these more aggressive actions might include a simultaneous attack on U.S. forces in the Pacific.

Those officials in the Bush administration, principally in the Department of State, who expected Saddam Hussein to seek a compromise solution once he was confronted with a credible threat of war clearly misjudged the Iraqi leader. To the extent that the view of Saddam Hussein as a "survivalist" actually prevailed in Washington in the autumn of 1990 and was at the root of the administration's campaign to shift the U.N. strategy to the ultimatum variant, this misjudgment contributed to the failure of coercive diplomacy in this case. Of course, given more time to demonstrate its impact on Iraq, the gradual turning of the screw variant, represented by the progressive economic sanctions, may have proven equally unsuccessful. Saddam's motivations and his faith in an ultimately favorable Arab solution may have been unshakable in any event.

More important for our purposes is the observation that, as in this and other cited cases, many possibilities exist for misjudging an opponent in crisis situations. The policy makers' inner circle often contains influential advisers with quite different images of the opponent. This can result in different perceptions of the opponent's motives, varying assessments of his ultimate objectives, and conflicting estimates of his calculus and probable reactions. As a result, the decision maker may be presented with quite different estimates of the overall situation and competing recommendations for an appropriate response.

Effective coercive diplomacy avoids this kind of problem by meeting certain complex and difficult informational requirements. These include particularly accurate knowledge concerning the opposing leaders, their mind-sets, and the domestic and international political contexts in which they operate.



Using this knowledge, policy making can then draw accurate estimates of these leaders' motivations and develop cost-benefit calculations. Often, however, as we have seen, such estimates must be made on the basis of fragmentary and equivocal information. Providing for the gathering of accurate knowledge on potential opponents and establishing a policy-making climate wherein such information can be considered objectively, relatively free from passions and prejudices, are perhaps the most useful preparations an administration can make for the potential use of coercive diplomacy.

## CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis of seven attempts to employ coercive diplomacy highlights several important characteristics of the strategy. Coercive diplomacy is a *flexible* strategy that is highly *context-dependent;* its success depends heavily on *adapting* the abstract model (outlined in Part One) to the specific configuration and dynamics of a particular situation and on *skill in implementation.*

The general strategy of coercive diplomacy is strikingly flexible in three basic respects. The demand made of the opponent is a variable that significantly influences the prospects for success. The demand may be modest—as in President Kennedy's effort in the Laos crisis to get the other side to cooperate with his effort to reduce the U.S. commitment to the anti-Communist Laotian government and to obtain neutralization of the entire country. Or, as in the Pearl Harbor and Nicaragua cases, the demand may require that the opponent give up a great deal that affects its vital interests.

The strategy is also flexible in regard to how much of a concession or side payment, if any, the opponent is offered to induce compliance with the demand. As we have seen, along with a threatened use of the stick, little or no carrot was offered Saddam Hussein in the Gulf crisis, Qaddafi in the Libyan case, or the Sandinistas in the Nicaragua case; only a modest one was conveyed to the Japanese in the negotiations preceding the attack on Pearl Harbor. In contrast, quite substantial carrots were offered in the Laos and Cuban crises.

A third aspect of the flexibility of coercive diplomacy is that it has four significantly different variants: the ultimatum, the tacit ultimatum, the gradual turning of the screw, and the try-and-see approach. These forms vary in coercive impact and in the risks they may entail. Their capacity to influence the adversary varies as well and is affected heavily by the circumstances in each case. However, the state that chooses to employ coercive diplomacy seldom has an unencumbered choice as to which variant of the strategy to employ because there may be significant constraints on its actions. As experience has demonstrated, the lesser variants are not likely to be effective when what is demanded is of major importance to the opponent. Yet policy makers may decide not to resort to an ultimatum because they are unwilling to accept the associated risks.

In judging whether coercive diplomacy is likely to be a viable strategy in any particular situation, policy makers should weigh carefully whether the demand they plan to make, the coercive threat they can convey, the carrot they may offer, and the resolution they can display are likely to create three beliefs in the adversary's mind: (1) that an asymmetry of interest and motivation exists that favors the coercer; (2) that the threatened punishment is credible and potent enough to necessitate compliance with the demand; and (3) in cases where variants of ultimata are used, that a sense of urgency exists for compliance with the coercer's demand. Although our research does not enable us to state that these three perceptual variables are strictly necessary or sufficient conditions for the success of coercive diplomacy, the case studies indicate that the presence of these beliefs in the mind of the target of coercive diplomacy strongly favors successful implementation of the strategy.

All this means that policy makers must tailor the abstract mode of coercive diplomacy in a rather exacting manner to fit the special configuration and context of each situation. This is a challenging task because the relevant characteristics of a situation are not always clearly visible or easily appraised. And, as has been noted, several contextual variables influence the workings of the different components of coercive diplomacy. For example, the nature of the provocation affects both the demands made of the opponent and the inducements offered in the bargaining process. The prevailing image of war influences the creation of a sense of urgency, the threatened punishment for noncompliance, and the inducements offered.

It is important to note, as we have suggested in several earlier observations, that not all situations in which a government determines that an adversary's policy must be changed are appropriate for the employment of coercive diplomacy. Recognition of this fact seems particularly important in light of the variety of regional crisis situations the United States appears likely to face in the future. For example, because of political and diplomatic constraints or perceived risks, other defensive nonmilitary strategies may be preferable (See Chapter 1). Some situations may require dealing with aggressive regimes whose goals are not clear or with regimes that calculate costs and risks according to criteria that are different from the recognized norms of international behavior (see Task 3 under "Converting the Abstract Model into a Strategy" in Chapter 2 and "The Image of the Opponent" earlier in this chapter). Others may contain circumstances wherein the adversary receives external support and encouragement from allies whose disparate objectives make bargaining difficult or impossible (see "Isolation of the Adversary" and "Conditions That Favor Coercive Diplomacy" in this chapter). Each situation must be examined carefully to determine whether its circumstances favor the strategy.



Once policy makers determine that coercive diplomacy is appropriate for the situation, their efforts to use the strategy effectively rest heavily on skill in improvisation. The government that adopts this strategy assumes responsibility for pacing the key events—including actions by supportive third parties—for determining the appropriate interactions between the demands made and the inducements offered, and for clear and timely communications. The government must weigh carefully how the opponent is responding to developments in considering what to do next. Reliable insight into the mindset of the opponent is necessary to orchestrate the strategy skillfully; without such insight the actions taken to influence him can easily backfire, triggering critical misperceptions and misjudgments. Indeed, the state that engages in coercive diplomacy can seldom have full or reliable control over the outcome because so much depends on the adversary's assessment of the situation. Moreover, as we have stressed, skillful use of the strategy can only capitalize on favorable conditions latent in the situation; it cannot substitute for their absence.

For all these reasons, coercive diplomacy will constitute a high-confidence strategy in few crises. If it can be made to work, it is a less costly way of achieving one's objectives than exclusive reliance on military force. Coercive diplomacy is a sharp tool—useful at times but difficult to employ successfully against a recalcitrant or unpredictable opponent. Although the strategy sometimes assumes an attraction that may be difficult to resist, its apparent advantages should not distort judgment of its feasibility in any particular situation. The authors hope the analyses presented in this study—of the variants of coercive diplomacy, the constraints that may come into play in designing and implementing the strategy in different situations, and the conditions that influence its effectiveness—will help policy makers to judge the uses and limitations of the strategy in the challenging crises of the future.

## NOTES

1. This analysis draws upon research and interviews conducted by Alexander George for an earlier study, *Bridging the Gap: Theory and Practice of Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1992), pp. 80–82.

2. However, from a broader historical and strategic standpoint, one may question the desirability of a negotiated settlement. Given the nature of Japanese imperialistic ambitions and the emerging U.S. conception of its expanding global and strategic interests one might conclude that a war between the two countries was inevitable and that developments leading to Pearl Harbor merely determined the timing and circumstances of such a war. Some would even argue that however costly the war with Japan proved to be, it was necessary in order to eliminate Japan as a militaristic, imperialistic power. We need not debate the proposition here in order to call attention to the narrower set of lessons this case provides regarding the problems the strategy of coer-

cive diplomacy can encounter and the conditions under which, instead of providing a peaceful alternative, the strong ultimatum variant of the strategy can boomerang and provoke war. We should also note that at the beginning of their prolonged diplomatic crisis and for some time thereafter, neither Japanese nor U.S. leaders believed their disagreement would or should lead to war.

# Acronyms

| | |
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| ADA | Americans for Democratic Action |
| ASW | antisubmarine warfare |
| CCFR | Chicago Council on Foreign Relations |
| CIA | Central Intelligence Agency |
| CINCPAC | Commander in Chief, Pacific Command |
| CMEA | Council on Mutual Economic Assistance |
| COMUSMACV | Commander U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam |
| CSCE | Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe |
| DESOTO | U.S. destroyer patrols |
| DOD | Department of Defense |
| DRV | Democratic Republic of Vietnam |
| EC | European Community |
| EEC | European Economic Community |
| FCC | Foreign Funds Committee |
| FMLN | Faribundo Marti Liberation Front |
| FSLN | Sandinista Liberation Front |
| GCC | Gulf Cooperation Council |
| GVN | government of South Vietnam |
| ICC | International Commission for Supervision and Control in Indochina |
| ICO | Organization of the Islamic Conference |
| JCS | Joint Chiefs of Staff |
| LOCs | lines of communication |
| MACV | Military Assistance Command Vietnam |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NLF | National Liberation Front |
| NSAM | National Security Action Memorandum |
| NSC | National Security Council |
| NSDD | National Security Decision Directive |
| OAS | Organization of American States |
| PLO | Palestine Liberation Organization |
| POWs | prisoners of war |