

If the adversary sees that there are no benefits to restraint, it will work against the deterring party.

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General Description of the Literature:

The idea that it is counterproductive to put an opponent's back against the wall, to leave the opponent with "nothing left to lose," or to provide the opponent with no benefits to restraint, has the status of a folk theorem and versions of this argument are often articulated by deterrence theorists. Schelling (1966) argued that in order for deterrence to work, threats to inflict punishment if an adversary takes a certain course of action, must be accompanied by promises not to retaliate if the opponent does take that course of action. In a theoretical model of a limited nuclear exchange, Powell (1989) argued that a state with "nothing left to lose" would be forced to conduct a massive nuclear strike. In the realm of deterrence against terrorism, scholars (e.g., Kroenig, 2010) have argued that policies to eradicate terrorist groups are in contention with deterrence by punishment strategies. Indeed, STRATCOM's Joint Operating Concept defines "inducing adversary restraint" as an element of a deterrence strategy. Despite extensive theorizing, there have been only a few studies that provide systematic empirical support for this hypothesis (e.g., Downes 2008) and only one study (Cronin 2009) that provides support for this hypothesis as it relates to VEOs.

Similarly, the idea that the higher the expected costs of a course of action, the less likely an actor will be to pursue that course of action is a central premise of deterrence theory. Deterrence theorists have long argued that the best way to reliably deter an adversary is to make the costs of the proscribed course of action unacceptable. There is solid empirical evidence from international politics (e.g./ Bremer 1992) and criminology (Paternoster 1989) that the higher the costs of action, the more likely a state is to be deterred. There is little direct analysis of this issue as it relates to terrorism, but the existing evidence (Li 2005, Chenoweth 2008) suggests that capable states, which are also those states that might be best able to retaliate against terrorists groups, are more—not less—likely to experience terrorism.

Detailed Analyses

176: *If the adversary sees that there are no benefits to restraint, it will work against the deterring party.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: The history of conventional warfare between states includes numerous instances of states in desperate positions becoming more risk acceptant. Historians (e.g., Prange 1982) have argued that the U.S. oil embargo on Japan put Tokyo in a difficult position of choosing between halting economic expansion and war with the United States, which helped to encourage the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor. In a study of why states purposely target civilians in war, Alex Downes (2008) finds support for the idea that "desperate times call for desperate measures." Using multiple case studies and statistical analysis, Downes finds that states are more likely to target innocent civilians when they are on the verge of defeat. In a study of how terrorist organizations end, Cronin (2006) concludes, after studying cases such as the IRA, Peru's Shining Path, and Palestinian terrorist groups, that "terrorist organizations in their final stages are often at their most dangerous."

Empirical Support Score: 9

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Applicability to Influencing VEOs: The vast majority of the empirical studies on this subject focus on state behavior, not VEOs. Therefore, there is reason to be cautious about applying these findings. Nevertheless, given the large quantity of support for this hypothesized dynamic in the state-to-state context and that the existent research on VEOs is supportive, there is reason to believe that this might be a generalizable phenomenon.

Applicability Score: Direct: At least some of the empirical results directly concern the context of influencing VEOs

16: *If the adversary perceives that the costs of action are acceptable, it will work against the deterring party.*

Summary of Relevant Empirical Evidence: A large body of international relations literature demonstrates that powerful states are less likely to be challenged militarily because they can impose greater costs on their adversaries in the event of conflict. While there are studies on the cases of weak states prevailing over stronger adversaries (e.g., Arreguin-Toft 2006), the proposition that the ability to impose unacceptable costs on an adversary enhances deterrence is supported by dozens of quantitative analyses and case studies (e.g., Bremer 1992, Beardsley and Asal 2009, Mearsheimer 1985). A multitude of studies in Criminology have also shown that the certainty, severity, and swiftness of punishment deter crime. Paternoster (1989), for example, conducted a survey of students in nine high schools over four consecutive years and, performing statistical analysis on the data, found that students' perceptions of the certainty, severity, and swiftness of punishment were strongly correlated with whether they participated in certain types of delinquent behavior. There is mixed evidence on the efficacy of certain types of punishment, such as capital punishment (e.g., Sellin 1959, Dann 1939), but there is nevertheless broad empirical support in the criminology literature that punishment deters crime there is little empirical research directly on this subject as it relates to terrorism, but in conducting a statistical analysis on terrorist attacks from 1975 to 1997, Li (2005) and Chenoweth (2008) both find that more powerful states are more, not less, likely to experience terrorism and that this might be because powerful states are more attractive targets. In addition, Chenoweth (2008) finds that more powerful states were also more likely to have new terrorist groups form on their soil in the same time period. The military capability of a state, however, is a crude measure for a VEO's perception of the costs of action for a variety of reasons. For example, states of equal capabilities might differ in their willingness to conduct counterterrorism operations, which would affect the VEOs perception of costs.

Empirical Support Score: 3

Applicability to Influencing VEOs: Nearly all of the studies on this hypothesis were performed on deterring military attacks by states or deterring crime. Therefore, it would be premature to conclude that this hypothesis holds for VEOs. Nevertheless, given the strength of the logic and the overwhelming evidence for the hypothesized dynamic in other arenas, there is some reason to be confident that this finding might hold for VEOs.

Applicability Score: Moderate Confidence: Empirical results are derived from alternative contexts, but you have *some* degree of confidence that they apply similarly to the context of influencing VEOs.

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