Deterrence and Compellence in Iraq

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Lessons for a Complex Pandemic

1991–2003

CHAPTER TEN
challenges to leaders of the deterring state (A), clearly define the behavior deemed to be unacceptable, (B) communicate to challengers a commitment to punish violations, (C) possess the means (capability) to defend the commitment by punishing adversaries who challenge it or by denying the challenger the specific objectives sought through its aggression, and (D) demonstrate their resolve to carry out the retaliation if the challenger fails to comply. If these four prerequisites are satisfied, the expected net costs of the threatened sanction (to the challenger) should be greater than the expected net gains from noncompliance because the punishment (if carried out) would prevent the challenger from achieving intended military, political, or economic goals.1

Deterrence / Compellence Exchanges

The six exchanges described below occurred after the end of major military hostilities in the first Gulf war in 1991 and just before the onset of major hostilities in 2003. Initiation and termination dates for all of these exchanges are assigned as precisely as possible. A brief description of the events leading up to each exchange is followed by a narrative that conveys the deterrence or compellence threats, probes, and responses that came to characterize the event. Discussion then turns to outcome in terms of the success or failure of the deterrent and compellent threats that occurred.

Exchange 1: April 10–24, 1991

The Establishment of a Northern No-Fly Zone in Iraq: Operation Provide Comfort (Operation Northern Watch)

The creation of a no-fly zone (NFZ) in Iraq resulted from the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 688, on April 5, 1991, which stated that the Security Council condemned the repression of the Iraqi civilian population in many parts of Iraq and demanded that Iraq put an end to its domestic repression and open a dialogue to ensure that the human and political rights of all Iraqi citizens were respected.5 The United States ordered Iraq to end all military activity in northern Iraq. U.S. officials established an NFZ to prevent Iraqi aircraft from attacking the Kurdish population. U.S., British, and French planes patrolled Iraqi air space north of the thirty-sixth parallel in a deployment the U.S. military dubbed “Operation Provide Comfort.”6 Operating from Incirlik in eastern Turkey, coalition aircraft had a relatively short transit to enforce the NFZ above the thirty-sixth parallel. The NFZ also provided air cover for ground forces and humanitarian assistance to the Kurds, who remained fearful about another Iraqi military incursion. From April to September 1991, the operation led to over 40,000 sorties, helping to protect the relocation of over 700,000 refugees and the restoration of nearly 80 percent of the villages destroyed by the Iraqis.

Deterrence / Compellence Threats, Probes, and Responses. On April 10, 1991, the Iraqi government rejected a European plan to establish a Kurdish safe haven in the northern Iraq.7 On April 11, in response to this Iraqi action, the George H. W. Bush administration issued a warning to the Iraqi government not to use military force in northeastern Iraq—a message directly conveyed to Iraqi officials in Washington and at United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York.8 This warning was characterized by the New York Times as an explicit demand; the Bush administration made it very clear that “no land or air forces would be allowed to function in the area involved,” with an explicit threat to fire on helicopters or planes approaching Kurdish areas.

But the credibility and resolve of U.S. and European threats to prevent Iraqi ground forces from attacking Kurdish areas was seriously weakened by subsequent statements by the President on April 11:

I am not going to involve any American troops in a civil war in Iraq ... we are going to do what is right by these refugees, and I think the American people expect that, and they want that. But I don't think they want to see us bogged down in a civil war by sending in the 82nd Airborne or the 101st or the 7th Cavalry. And so, I want to get that matter cleared up.9

On April 12, following this weak threat, Iraqi forces launched attacks on Kurdish forces north of the thirty-sixth parallel, in direct violation of U.S. warnings.10 This Iraqi action was consistent with deterrence theory—a watered-down threat apparently failed to make much of an impression on the Ba'athist regime. Other Iraqi attacks reportedly occurred in Kurdish areas south of the parallel, including Sulaymaniyyah.11 Bush administration spokesmen did not confirm the reports, adding that there had been no attempts by Iraq to impede the refugee relief operations for the Kurds in northern Iraq. On April 14, President Bush reaffirmed his reluctance to “interfere” in Iraq's civil war.12

Consistent with findings from case studies of Bosnia and Kosovo,13 weak threats are often worse than no threat at all. Like Milosevic, Saddam often
exploited signs of weaknesses and used these occasions as an opportunity to demonstrate relevance and control to domestic and regional constituencies. As security concerns for Kurdish civilians grew, however, a stronger, more credible retaliatory threat was issued by the president on April 16, 1991, in an effort to deter further Iraqi incursions into Kurdish territory. The president announced a joint U.S.-European plan to send U.S. troops into northern Iraq to build refugee camps and guarantee protection for the Kurds. This commitment superseded the rhetoric about limiting U.S. involvement and dramatically upgraded the credibility and potency of the coalition threat to Saddam Hussein. Coalition solidarity bolstered U.S. deterrent threats, temporarily removing an important element of complexity that often is an obstacle to deterrence and compellence in other contexts.

**Outcome.** As predicted by traditional deterrence theory, the revised threat issued by the United States on April 16 produced results. On April 18, 1991, Iraq and the UN signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) providing for a UN humanitarian presence in Iraq, which included the stationing of five hundred UN security guards in northern Iraq to protect the relief operations. This agreement was to remain in force until December 31, 1991, and carried with it the possibility for renewal. While Saddam Hussein responded with statements that “the Western [U.S.] relief operation was ‘not necessary in practical terms’ because Baghdad and the United Nations had reached agreement in principle on easing the crisis,” nevertheless, Iraqi troops satisfied the conditions stipulated in the MOU on April 21. Approximately two hundred Iraqi policemen entered the Kurdish town of Zakho as Iraqi soldiers withdrew, a direct result of the agreement between the allies and the Iraqis to establish a safe haven for the Kurds.

Several senior U.S. military and political officials interpreted the stationing of Iraq police units as an initiative that undermined the spirit of the agreement. They viewed this as an all too common probing effort by the Iraqi regime to test the resolve of coalition forces. Additional probing efforts followed on April 22 as Iraqi troops, which had withdrawn from Zakho under the agreement with the U.S. military, returned to the outskirts of Zakho. This Iraqi troop deployment deterred many Kurds from returning to their homes. Iraqis in and around Zakho were generally viewed as friendly, with a preference to avoid confrontation with the Kurds in the area. Some Iraqi troops overlooking Zakho, however, did fire machine gun and mortar rounds in an effort to harass the Kurdish population.

On April 24, and in direct response to additional U.S. warnings, Iraqi officials agreed to move their troops several kilometers away from Zakho. Iraqi Kurdish leaders announced their agreement in principle with the Iraqi government on a formula to allow them autonomy in northern Iraq. In an obvious public relations move, Iraq welcomed several foreign journalists into Kurdistan to witness the conditions facing the local population. The Bush administration followed these events with an additional diplomatic and military warning, ordering Iraq to withdraw all police and military forces from the area near the Kurdish refugee camp in northern Iraq. A similar note was presented in the UN.

Consistent with Paul’s observation in the introduction to this volume that deterrence can operate between both parties in a given incident, the circumscribed and largely symbolic actions from Saddam Hussein served notice regarding further interactions. Specifically, Iraq hoped to deter further encroachments upon its sovereignty, while simultaneously being deterred itself from directly challenging the terms of the distasteful agreement it had just made with the United States.

**Exchange 2: August 26, 1992, to January 19, 1993**

**Establishment of Southern No-Fly Zone: Operation Southern Watch**

On August 26, 1992, the United States, Britain, and France established an NFZ in southern Iraq along the thirty-second parallel. President George H. W. Bush stated that the NFZ was a direct response to “Saddam’s use of helicopters and . . . fixed-wing aircraft to bomb and strafe civilians and villages” in southern Iraq, a clear indication, he added, that Iraq was “failing to meet its obligations under United Nations Security Council Resolution 688 . . . demand[ing] that Saddam Hussein end repression of the Iraqi people.”

Iraq was given twenty-four hours to comply with the NFZ. With the president’s announcement, U.S. Central Command activated Joint Task Force-Southwest Asia (JTF-SWA), a command-and-control unit for coalition forces monitoring the NFZ consisting of American, British, French, and Saudi Arabian units. JTF-SWA’s mission, dubbed Operation Southern Watch, was intended to monitor the NFZ and to respond if Iraqi forces infiltrated the area. While Baghdad vowed to eliminate the NFZ through the use of force, the Pentagon reported that Iraqi forces had begun removing their helicopters and airplanes north of the thirty-second parallel by the evening of August 26, 1991.
Deterrence/compellence threats, probes, and responses. JTF-SWA coalition forces flew their first Operation Southern Watch sortie within twenty-four hours of the NFZ activation and reported no Iraqi activity. In fact, for the next several months, Iraq complied completely with the no-fly restrictions and coalition forces controlled the airspace south of the thirty-second parallel.

Tensions between Iraq and the coalition over the southern NFZ flared up in December 1992. On the morning of December 27, 1992, while flying a routine mission in the NFZ, U.S. Air Force F-15s encountered a pair of Iraqi MiG-25s flying south of the thirty-second parallel. They were warned by the U.S. patrol to return north of the NFZ. The MiGs did so, but a second set of Iraqi MiG-25s were intercepted by two U.S. Air Force F-16s later in the day. One of the Iraqi MiGs, after having locked its air-to-air radar on one of the F-16s, was shot down.\(^{23}\) American officials stated that Baghdad’s decision to breach the thirty-second parallel was a deliberate move by Iraq to “test the willingness of the United States” to uphold the NFZ, especially in light of American involvement in Somalia and Bosnia, the relocation of the USS Ranger—an American aircraft carrier central to enforcing the NFZ—from the Persian Gulf to the waters off Somalia, and the upcoming transfer of power to the newly elected president Bill Clinton.\(^{24}\)

In an effort to counter a seemingly emboldened Iraqi policy regarding the southern NFZ, Washington sent two additional squadrons of navy warplanes to the region on December 28, 1992, to augment coalition forces already enforcing the NFZ.\(^{25}\) While Iraqi air incursions into the NFZ abated slightly in the days that followed, by the beginning of January 1993, Iraqi ground forces had begun deploying surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) south of the thirty-second parallel that could be used destroy coalition airplanes patrolling the zone. Thus, the United States-led deterrence effort that was based on the NFZ was met by an Iraqi military effort to compel the coalition to abandon its policy of protecting the Shia by denying Baghdad sovereignty over its airspace.

On January 6, 1993, an ultimatum was presented to the Iraqi representative to the UN by American, British, French, and Russian representatives. The ultimatum read, “All SAM systems which have been moved into new positions south of the 32nd parallel should be returned to their original sites or configurations within 48 hours of the delivery of the demarche.” This ultimatum warned that if Iraq did not remove the missiles from the southern edge of the NFZ, coalition forces would respond “appropriately and decisively.”\(^{26}\) Initially, Iraqi officials rebuffed the coalition’s ultimatum and continued to voice their displeasure with the demands of the United States and its allies. Yet, despite Iraq’s defiant rhetoric, continued political pressure by the United States and the UN Security Council, along with a doubling of JTF-SWA flights over the NFZ on January 8, 1993, compelled Iraq to dismantle and remove some missile batteries in the NFZ before the deadline in the coalition’s ultimatum. By January 9, White House officials asserted that Iraq had indeed “backed down” in the face of allied demands and had removed several SAM sites north of the thirty-second parallel.\(^{27}\)

While the immediate confrontation was defused, Iraq continued its provocative actions on January 11, 1993, by relocating several dismantled SAM sites to the northern NFZ and taking the unprecedented step of sending several hundred armed Iraqi soldiers across the border into Kuwaiti territory, apparently to retrieve six antiship missiles left behind when Iraqi forces were driven from Kuwait in 1991. Both the United States and the UN Security Council strongly condemned the incursion, warning of “strong consequences” if any further action was taken on the border.\(^{28}\) Despite this warning, a second Iraqi incursion into Kuwait took place on January 12, 1993. This second incursion, and Iraq’s continued ambivalence over removing the remaining SAM sites from the NFZ, prompted a strong and vocal response from the Bush administration.

Pentagon officials reported that a plan to attack Iraq had been adopted “in principle,” adding that it was “just a matter of when to pull the trigger.” British and French officials further reiterated the American report that agreement had been reached to respond to these Iraqi provocations.\(^{29}\) On January 13, 1993, more than one hundred American, French, and British strike aircraft launched a thirty-minute bombing raid on Iraqi targets inside the NFZ. This raid was the first large-scale attack since the cessation of conflict in 1991. It destroyed various missile sites, radar units, and low-level command bunkers.\(^{30}\) In a move that was designed specifically to deter further Iraqi incursions, a battalion task force of 1,250 American troops also was dispatched to the Kuwait-Iraq border.\(^{31}\) Officials in Washington, Paris, and London all expressed their resolve to uphold the NFZ and warned that further military action against Iraq would be taken if Baghdad continued to violate UN-sanctioned restrictions by following what appeared to be a “cheat and retreat” strategy.\(^{32}\) In the days immediately following the bombing raid, further warnings of renewed hostilities were issued by allied officials. These warnings were backed up by action. Forty-five Tomahawk cruise missiles were launched against the Safaranaj industrial complex near Baghdad on January 17, 1993, and a daytime air raid against SAM sites
in the NFZ, involving American and British fighter planes, took place on the following day.\textsuperscript{33}

Outcome. Both raids were of limited military scope but represented a strong political message to Iraq that allied forces were prepared to continue enforcing the UN mandate. On January 19, 1993, in an apparent policy reversal, Iraq announced that it had ordered a cease fire against allied jets in the NFZ.\textsuperscript{34}

Although further small-scale attacks, mostly against Iraqi fighter-jets and SAM sites, continued in the southern NFZ in June and July of 1993, the January Crisis ended with an allied victory. Iraq was compelled to accept the southern NFZ and was ultimately deterred from continuing its attacks against Shites in southern Iraq. Iraq's reaction to the January 1993 air strikes also initiated a pattern of cyclical response that was repeated in subsequent confrontations with allied forces. Iraqi actions began to follow a predictable tit-for-tat pattern: (1) Iraqi officials initiated an interaction with rhetorical rejections of UN resolutions that resulted in eventual policy moves that challenged U.S. resolve; (2) Iraqi forces would then hunker down while under allied attack; (3) Iraqi officials would then announce a policy reversal that would acquiesce to Western demands. This cycle would then start anew with an Iraqi rejection of some other UN demand or condition. This pattern is consistent with the presence of escalation dominance—a standard concept in the lexicon of deterrence theory—in favor of the United States-led coalition. In other words, Iraqi officials would continuously test the coalition's resolve, backing down when it became apparent that they were about to encounter the full force of allied military power. It also reinforces the continuing relevance of the rationality axiom even under conditions of multistage, multitactor complex deterrence. Iraq backed off from extreme confrontation in the face of clear and powerful threats; when the message began to fade, it started to probe again and test for new limits.

Exchange 3: October 7–16, 1994

**Iraqi Aggression against Kuwait: Operation Vigilant Warrior**

In October 1994, renewed Iraqi aggression against Kuwait resulted in a brief yet significant international crisis in the Persian Gulf. Operation Vigilant Warrior, the coalition operation launched in response to Iraq's provocation, was a direct result of Baghadad's apparent hostility toward Kuwait.

On October 7, 1994, Iraq repositioned an estimated 10,000 troops, includ-
reporters that Saddam Hussein “must not be allowed to intimidate either Iraq’s neighbors or the United Nations Security Council.”\(^{40}\) The president of the UN Security Council also expressed his disapproval of the Iraqi troop movements and reaffirmed the UN’s readiness to uphold the “sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kuwait.”\(^{42}\)

Ignoring these initial statements and warnings, Iraq continued to reinforce its military presence on the border, sending in a third division of elite Republican Guards to the area, increasing the total number of Iraqi troops on the border with Kuwait to 80,000. Many American officials believed that this Iraqi force was capable of staging an invasion of Kuwait “in a matter of days.”\(^{43}\) Pentagon officials called the Iraqi buildup “irresponsible and dangerous” and a “serious challenge” to regional stability.\(^{44}\) As the gravity of the Iraqi buildup became clear, and as an indication of how seriously Washington regarded these developments, President Clinton dispatched 36,000 troops along with fifty-one additional combat planes to Kuwait on October 9, 1994.\(^{45}\)

This third exchange between Iraq and the coalition was characterized by “credibility inflation.” Compared with early exchanges, the number of forces wielded to demonstrate interests and intentions was greatly increasing. Large bodies of troops and aircraft operating in close proximity to each other create a greater threat of inadvertent escalation and greater consequences if hostilities somehow manage to erupt in the absence of direct political authorization. In making these increasingly large deployments, each side conveyed its willingness to go closer to the brink of war and to endure greater risk than in past exchanges.

Outcome. On October 10, Iraq’s ambassador to the UN, Nizar Hamdoon, told the General Assembly that Iraqi troops had been given the order to withdraw from the border with Kuwait.\(^{46}\) Because his statement could not be immediately confirmed, the remark was met with skepticism. In a television address from the Oval Office that evening, President Clinton reaffirmed that the United States was “committed to defending the integrity of [Kuwait] and to protecting the stability of the gulf region.” He also confirmed the deployment of another 350 Air Force aircraft to the Persian Gulf region.\(^{47}\) Sensing that the immediate crisis had been averted, a debate about how to “contain” Iraqi aggression in the future began in the White House. The idea of establishing a southern containment zone in Iraq apparently emerged from these deliberations.\(^{48}\)

Confirmation that Iraqi troops had in fact begun moving north from their earlier positions near Basra came on October 11, and the confrontation between Iraq and the United States eased somewhat.\(^{49}\) Nonetheless, U.S. deployment to the Gulf region continued—and a further 155,000 U.S. ground troops were put on alert—amid a flurry of discussion regarding a U.S. plan for the future containment of Iraq. Clinton administration officials commented that the United States was considering establishing a buffer zone in southern Iraq, the territorial equivalent of the southern NFZ, that would bar Iraq from moving its elite ground forces within striking range of Kuwait.\(^{50}\) To that end, Ambassador Albright held discussions, on October 12, with her counterparts in the Security Council about establishing an exclusion zone that would restrict Iraq’s Republican Guard from deployment into southern Iraq.\(^{51}\)

During these Security Council talks, the first visible fissures between the allies became apparent, with France suggesting that American deployment to the Gulf was “not unconnected with domestic politics” and Russia announcing that Foreign Minister Andrei V. Kozyrev would fly to Baghdad on an official state visit.\(^{52}\) With support for the containment zone plan dwindling both within the United States\(^{53}\) and within the Security Council, American Defense Secretary William J. Perry announced on October 13 a revised plan to deter Iraq that involved increasing “the American military presence in the Persian Gulf region.” This plan included the positioning of American warplanes and a division’s worth of tanks and armor on the borders of Iraq—mainly in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait—even after the immediate crisis passed.\(^{54}\) Perry also commented on an American proposal to the Security Council, to be officially tabled within a few days, that would condemn Iraq’s recent deployment and acts of aggression. American troop deployments to the Gulf region continued, and a small-scale military exercise, involving 125 U.S. Marines—accompanied by an “army of international photographers and reporters”—began in Kuwait.\(^{55}\)

One way to interpret the French and Russian statements regarding the October 1994 crisis is in connection with the mounting costs of commitment and danger of escalation, especially given the provocative Iraqi behavior. French and Russian equivocation suggests at least temporarily successful deterrence by Iraq, which all parties believed to possess WMD and which seemed to be more willing than ever to go to the brink against the United States, its allies, and the UN. Even though they ultimately voted with the United States on the Security Council, France and Russia retreated into the background in terms of the diplomatic exchanges related to the October 1994 crisis. All of this follows the pattern described in the introduction to this book: multiple interactions among different agents producing a situation best described as complex deterrence. Exchange 3 is archetypal in that
sense, with deterrence and compellence initiatives being undertaken by both parties in the international interaction.

On October 14, 1994, the Clinton administration, in conjunction with the British government, formally introduced a Security Council resolution and, ignoring Russian pleas for delay, pressed for a “quick vote” on it. The vote took place on October 15 and UNSCR 949 passed unanimously. The wording of UNSCR 949 clearly stated what was expected of Iraq. The Security Council condemned recent military deployment by Iraq toward Kuwait, demanded that Iraq continue to “withdraw its troops to their original position,” and demanded that Iraq “not redeploy to the south” or use its forces in any “hostile or provocative manner.”

On October 16, government-controlled news media in Iraq indicated that UNSCR 949 had been accepted by Baghdad and that the government would comply with its demands to withdraw elite forces from southern Iraq. In an unusual move, all the details of the resolution were read aloud on Iraqi radio and television news bulletins, further signaling to the allies that Iraq would comply with their demands. This action effectively and intentionally substituted for the naturally credible signaling that would have taken place in a regime with open media. Iraq’s compliance with UNSCR 949 marks the last phase of October 1994 crisis.

Deterrence/compellence threats, probes, and responses. On September 1, 1996, the Clinton administration issued several explicit military threats to punish the Iraqi regime for its blatant violation of multiple Security Council resolutions. These threats were followed by action. On September 3, U.S. forces launched twenty-seven cruise missiles at military targets in southern Iraq. Fourteen missiles were fired from U.S. warships in the Persian Gulf, and thirteen missiles were fired from two B-52 bombers flying from bases in Guam. President Clinton’s speech following the attacks confirmed the U.S. intention to pressure Iraqi forces to retreat: “I want to reaffirm to you what I said to all the American people early this morning: Our objectives are limited, but our interests are clear ... These steps are being taken to further all of these objectives and the policy of containing Iraq that I have pursued for four years now, and it was developed before me under President Bush.”

On August 31, a 30,000 to 40,000 strong Iraqi armored force invaded the Kurdish provisional capital, Irbil. In the view of most observers, Saddam Hussein was repeating previous patterns of probing to test U.S. and coalition resolve. In this case, however, the seizure of Irbil by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan posed a more direct challenge to Iraqi sovereignty and status. It therefore would be more difficult for the United States to mount a sufficiently capable and costly threat to deter Iraqi forces from responding to this incursion. In addition, the credibility of the retaliatory threats was becoming less potent (and, therefore, less effective and more difficult to mount) as France and Russia became increasingly vocal about their opposition to the sanctions regime and to U.S.–United Kingdom (UK) military action. These French and Russian signals were continuously exploited by Saddam Hussein in ways that made it more difficult for deterrence to succeed. This Russian, French, and Iraqi interaction became increasingly more challenging (and detrimental) over time because it undermined the credibility of U.S. threats. This pattern helps to explain the last coercive diplomatic failure in the period preceding the 2003 Iraq war—a point that will be addressed in more detail in the overview of exchange 6.

Exchange 4: August 31 to September 13, 1996

The Irbil Offensive: Operation Desert Strike

On August 30, 1996, U.S. military officials in the Gulf region reported observing renewed mobilization and the movement of Iraqi troops toward Kurdish districts in northern Iraq. Clinton administration officials responded with warnings that “we will consider any aggression by Iraq to be a matter of very grave concern.” The administration’s objective was to send a strong signal to deter Iraq from crossing the so-called exclusion zone. Glyn Davis, a State Department spokesman, reiterated the threat, stating, “we would view any aggressive moves by Iraq with utmost seriousness. The Iraqis are in no doubt of our views on this.” Other media reports confirmed Pentagon plans to deploy additional warplanes to the region if Iraq violated the Security Council exclusion zone resolution and began, once again, to move forces in preparation for retaliation against any Iraqi incursions into northern Iraq.
Iraq.”70 The reception at the UN was even colder.71 These fissures within the coalition led Saddam Hussein to dismiss the Security Council resolutions and to issue several countercoseptive threats by promising to down any foreign aircraft flying over Iraq territory.72 Defense Secretary William J. Perry expressed Washington’s concerns about the newest challenge created by Baghdad: “the issue is not simply the Iraqi attack on Irbil . . . our concern is that if Saddam Hussein is emboldened by what he would see as a success in the north he might strike out in areas which are of greater strategic importance to him as well as to us in the south.”73

In response, on September 4, 1996, President Clinton announced his intention to widen the southern NFZ, extending it northward from the thirty-second to the thirty-third parallel. He also rejected calls for a limited oil sale by Iraq (under a recent UN resolution) until Iraq abandoned its current policy of using military force against the Kurds.74

Outcome. The coalition’s military actions and diplomatic threats succeeded. On September 4, 1996, President Clinton announced that “our mission has been achieved . . . there has been a withdrawal of the forces, a dispersal of the forces . . .” and that Iraq had “pulled back most of its troops from a contested Kurdish enclave [and] United States-led air patrols met only token resistance enforcing a newly expanded prohibition on Iraqi military flights.”75 On September 13, the Iraqi government announced that it would no longer attack coalition fighters enforcing the flight-exclusion zone in northern and southern Iraq.76 Pentagon officials also reported that Iraq had halted repairs to its air-defense sites in response to specific U.S. demands.77

Debate over the success of the operation, however, lingered. Saddam maintained a strong military presence just outside the exclusion zone, Russia, France, and China also were beginning to reject virtually all U.S. and UK diplomatic and military strategies toward the region, a development that improved Baghdad’s ability to resist coalition pressure. These divisions within the Security Council over how to respond to Iraqi challenges would continue and grow deeper in the coming years.78

Exchange 5: July to December 1998

Operation Desert Fox

On February 23, 1998, the UN secretary-general obtained an undertaking from the Iraqi government to resume full cooperation with the UN Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).79 An MOU was signed in Baghdad by the secretary-general and Tariq Aziz, whereby the government of Iraq reconfirmed its acceptance of all relevant resolutions of the Security Council” and undertook “to accord UNSCOM and the IAEA immediate, unconditional and unrestricted access.”80 Under the terms of the MOU, a special group of senior diplomats was assigned to accompany UNSCOM and IAEA members during inspection of the eight disputed presidential sites. The MOU also noted that the lifting of sanctions was of “paramount importance to the people and Government of Iraq” and that the secretary-general undertook to “bring this matter to the full attention of the . . . Security Council.”81

The UN Security Council endorsed the MOU in UNSCR 115482 on March 2, 1998, and warned that any violation of the agreement would have the “severest consequences for Iraq.”83 Washington and London had pushed for a more explicit threat but met with resistance from the other permanent members of the Security Council. There also was a dispute within the council over the precise meaning of the term “severest consequences,” with the United States maintaining that the resolution provided the authority to act in the event of further Iraqi noncompliance. China insisted, however, that the resolution was “not an automatic green light to use force.”84 The UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, also stated that the United States should hold “some sort of consultations with the other members of the Security Council” before any military action was launched.85 Reports that the UN was “divided over the Iraq issue,” emerged in a variety of media sources.86 The pattern of diplomatic activity within the Security Council was virtually identical to events preceding the 2003 Iraq war.

On March 5, 1998, UNSCOM inspectors returned to Iraq and carried out a number of site inspections, without hindrance.87 Questions remained, however, about access to the presidential sites, especially after the initial inspections found that all the rooms targeted by UNSCOM inspectors had been stripped bare of files, personnel, and even furniture.88 The Iraqi government claimed it had not agreed to any further inspections of the sites, whereas inspectors believed the initial visits only served to establish the right of access prior to future visits.

In spite of the declarations of cooperation, relations between UNSCOM and Baghdad began to deteriorate during late June and July 1998, following allegations that Iraq had sought to conceal the extent of its program to develop and weaponize the nerve agent VX. Iraq claimed the allegations were fabricated by UNSCOM in an attempt to delay the lifting of sanctions,
and Iraqi officials insisted they had provided all the necessary evidence that UNSCOM had demanded about their weapons programs.89

Talks between Baghdad and UNSCOM on the next stage of the inspection process broke down in early August 1998, despite indications from UNSCOM that work was almost complete on both the missile and chemical weapons files. On August 4, Tariq Aziz demanded that Richard Butler report to the UN Security Council that the disarmament process was complete, but the UNSCOM chief executive refused, saying he did not have sufficient evidence to make such a declaration.90

On August 5, 1998, Iraq announced it was suspending all cooperation with UNSCOM and the IAEA inspection teams and would restrict international monitoring activities to existing sites.91 In contrast to the rhetoric of the February 1998 crisis, the international response to the Iraqi decision was relatively muted. The UN Security Council declared the move to be "totally unacceptable," but London and Washington sought to minimize the crisis, believing that Iraq had created the dispute to provoke a split in the Security Council over how to respond.92

On August 26, 1998, UNSCOM inspector Scott Ritter resigned in protest over what he perceived to be a weakening of U.S. and UK policy toward Iraq. Ritter, a former intelligence officer and member of the U.S. Marine Corps, joined UNSCOM in the autumn of 1991 and played a key role in developing a more proactive approach to UN arms inspection in Iraq.93 In his resignation letter, Ritter accused the United States and Britain of putting pressure on UNSCOM to abandon planned intrusive inspections of controversial sites so as to avoid a fresh confrontation with Iraq. He declared that the Security Council was propagating "the illusion of arms control," which was "more dangerous than no arms control at all."94 He also accused Kofi Annan of acting as a "sounding board" for Iraqi complaints and claimed that the failure of the Security Council to punish Iraq for its decision of August 5, 1998, to suspend cooperation with UNSCOM constituted a "surrender to the Iraqi leadership." Ritter wrote that "the issue of immediate, unrestricted access is, in my opinion, the cornerstone of any viable inspection regime, and as such is an issue worth fighting for. Unfortunately, others do not share this opinion, including the Security Council and the United States."95 U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright dismissed the allegations and claimed that Ritter did not "have a clue" about the overall policy toward Iraq, arguing that the United States had in fact been the "strongest supporter of UNSCOM."96

U.S. officials admitted in private that Washington and London had sought to control the pace of confrontation with Iraq in order to keep other members of the Security Council on board. According to one Clinton administration official, "We're learning that this is a marathon race and we cannot threaten military action every time Saddam Hussein rattles his cage."97 The perception that the coalition was constrained in terms of making deterrent threats and taking military and diplomatic action in response to Iraqi provocations also represented a nonlinear effect produced by the complexity of multilateral, iterated deterrence and compellence. U.S. and UK officials realized that, with the rest of the UN Security Council off the bandwagon, pursuit of forceful and prompt competent or deterrent initiatives toward Iraq no longer could take place with certainty, reducing their escalation dominance when it came to threatening Baghdad.

In a number of interviews following his resignation, Ritter made additional allegations, saying he believed Kofi Annan had secretly promised Baghdad that intrusive inspections of the disputed "presidential sites" would take place only once within a four-month time frame. If true, such a deal would have effectively created safe havens for the Iraqis to hide weapons and material.98 It also would have undermined any threat emanating from the Security Council.

Deterrence/compliance threats, probes, and responses. On September 9, 1998, the Security Council adopted UNSCR 1194,99 condemining the August 5 decision by Iraq to suspend cooperation with UNSCOM and the IAEA. The Security Council also decided not to conduct the semiannual review of sanctions scheduled for October 1998 or any further reviews until Iraq rescinded its decision.100 As a potential incentive to Baghdad, the resolution offered the prospect of a comprehensive review of the state of Iraqi compliance if cooperation resumed.

Iraq was initially keen on the idea of a review, believing it would accelerate the lifting of sanctions by demonstrating that most of the requirements had been met. It soon became clear, however, that the United States had refused to include in the terms of the review any reference to paragraph 22 of UNSCR 687, which stipulated that the oil embargo would be lifted once Iraq was declared free of WMD.101 Baghdad declared the terms of the review to be too restrictive and refused to cooperate. Tariq Aziz said on September 28, 1998, "The idea of a comprehensive review is not a reward to be given to Iraq and then Iraq has to make concessions before such a review takes place. When the review is conducted in an honest and professional manner, we hope that it will lead to the lifting of sanctions."102

In October, the UN assistant secretary-general and chief UN relief
coordinator for Iraq, Denis Halliday, resigned in protest over the impact of sanctions on the Iraqi population. The lack of blame attached to Saddam Hussein for any of the side effects from sanctions, such as the suffering and death of children, is instructive regarding the overall UN position as it evolved across the exchanges surveyed in this chapter. Kofi Annan held direct talks with Iraqi officials during early October in an attempt to resolve the impasse over weapons inspections but failed to make progress. The Iraqi ambassador to the UN, Nizar Hamdoon, reiterated Baghdad's refusal to hand over a document sought by UN weapons inspectors. And on October 31, the Ba'ath party and Revolutionary Command Council declared an end to all cooperation with UNSCOM and the restriction of the IAEA to monitoring activities only. The UN continued efforts to defuse the crisis with Iraq.

On November 2, British prime minister Tony Blair repeated his warning to Saddam Hussein, who had halted cooperation with UN weapons inspectors. Blair stated, "If the use of force is necessary that is the course that will be taken." . . . Defense Secretary George Robertson [had] already warned President Hussein to stop obstructing UN weapons inspections or face the consequences. These threats were followed on November 5 by the passage of UNSCR 1205, which condemned Iraq's decision to halt cooperation with Security Council resolutions as a "flagrant violation of resolution 687 [the cease-fire resolution of 1991] and other relevant resolutions," and demanded that Iraq provide "immediate, complete and unconditional co-operation" with UNSCOM and the IAEA. The possibility of a comprehensive review of sanctions was kept open to encourage Iraq to comply with the UN.

The threat of military action was reinforced on November 11, when it was announced that all UNSCOM personnel had been withdrawn from Iraq on the recommendation of the United States. The secretary-general and Arab leaders put additional pressure on Saddam by urging Iraq to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis. This was followed by a statement by eight Arab states, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, warning President Saddam Hussein that he would be "solely responsible" for the consequences of his noncompliance. This introduction of new actors into the confrontation—including several with established anti-U.S. and anti-UK reputations—represented a qualitative change at both psychological and material levels for Saddam Hussein. The strong statement of the Arab states was a credible voice of international disapproval of Baghdad's policies and warned of Iraq's isolation in the event of escalation of the crisis.

In a Veterans Day speech at Arlington National Cemetery, President Clinton made clear that U.S. military action was a possibility if the weapons inspectors were not allowed to carry out their work. The final component of the threat was issued on the afternoon of November 14: the American and British Governments authorized "substantial military action" against Iraq as a wave of strike aircraft was launched. Simultaneously, the special representative of the UN secretary-general in Baghdad, Prakash Shah, was involved in a last-ditch attempt to find a diplomatic solution by providing Iraq with a face-saving formula to deescalate the crisis. Although Kofi Annan could not personally attempt another mediation mission to Baghdad without Security Council authorization, he insisted on sending a personal letter to the regime in Baghdad through his special representative, stating his conviction that "Iraq [should] be allowed to join the community of nations free of sanctions."

Outcome. Just hours before the first strikes were about to land, the response from Baghdad arrived. The Ba'athists declared that they were willing to comply with UN demands. Upon receiving further clarification from Iraqi officials concerning their agreement to comply unconditionally with Security Council resolutions and to rescind their earlier decisions to halt cooperation, the United States and Britain called off the strikes but warned that their forces would remain ready to act.

UNSCOM inspectors returned to Iraq on November 17, 1998. The UNSCOM executive chairman, Richard Butler, stated that full Iraqi cooperation would enable the inspectors to complete their work on chemical weapons inside two to three months, before long-term monitoring could be put in place. Unfortunately, this apparent coalition victory in the war of wills with Iraq was short-lived.

On December 8, 1998, Butler declared Iraqi officials were still impeding inspections. In his official report submitted on December 15, 1998, the executive chairman of UNSCOM wrote to the UN secretary-general with an updated report on the state of Iraqi compliance since the resumption of cooperation in mid-November. This report, which came to be known as the "Butler report," asserted that Iraq's claims to have fulfilled its disarmament obligations could not be accepted without further verification. It stated that the Iraqi government had provided some clarifications sought by the commission, but that in general Iraq had "not provided the full co-operation it promised on 14 November 1998." Moreover, the report concluded, "Iraq's conduct ensured that no progress was able to be made in either the fields of disarmament or accounting for its prohibited weapons programs."

On December 16, American and British forces initiated military action against Iraq in response to the refusal of the Baghdad government to
comply with UN weapons inspectors. The operation ended on December 19, just prior to the onset of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, which lasted from December 20, 1998, until January 19, 1999. In a televised address on December 16, President Clinton declared that the action, called Operation Desert Fox, was “designed to degrade Saddam’s capacity to develop and deliver weapons of mass destruction and to degrade his ability to threaten his neighbors.” Prime minister Tony Blair also issued a statement on December 16, saying, “There is no realistic alternative to military force. We are taking this military action with real regret but also with real determination. We have exhausted all other avenues. We act because we must.” The air strikes, however, provoked a strong response from some countries. Russia, for instance, recalled its ambassadors from the United States and Britain in protest. China also criticized the action.

As the air strikes began on December 16, the UN Security Council met in emergency session to discuss developments. Russia and China stated their opposition to military action. The Russian ambassador to the UN “rejected outright” the justifications given by the United States and Britain and declared that no one country could act for the council or “assume the role of a world policeman.” Russian president Boris Yeltsin demanded an end to the U.S.-UK strikes. Beijing also condemned the attacks, and in the UN, the air attacks met severe criticism.

On December 19, 1998, military operations in Iraq were called off by President Clinton, who suggested that coalition objectives had been achieved. Clinton said, “I am confident that we have achieved our mission. We have inflicted significant damage on Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction.”

In the aftermath of the air strikes, Iraq sought to demonstrate that it was unbowed by the U.S. and British action. On December 21, 1998, the Iraqi vice president, Taha Yasin Ramadan, declared Iraq was no longer willing to cooperate with the UN inspectors, saying, “all that has to do with inspection, monitoring, and WMD is now behind us.” Iraq declared that UNSCOM would never be allowed to return.

Periodic talks collapsed over the next two years, with the final straw for Washington coming on July 5, 2002, when Iraq-UN talks in Vienna broke down without any agreement.

On September 12, 2002, President George W. Bush addressed the UN and issued the first formal threat of military action if Iraq failed to comply with fifteen UN resolutions. This was followed on September 16 with formal acceptance by Iraq of the “unconditional” return of UN inspectors. Formal negotiations between the UN and Iraqi officials resumed on September 30, but Iraq insisted on keeping eight presidential compounds off-limits to international inspectors. The deal was rejected by U.S. officials, who insisted on a final UN resolution before the return of inspectors.

On November 8, 2002, the Security Council voted unanimously to endorse UNSCR 1441, declaring Iraq in “material breach” and reinstituting inspectors after a four-year absence. Saddam Hussein issued a formal reply on November 13 to the UN secretary-general, accepting the conditions outlined in the resolution. Five days later UNMOVIC weapons inspectors arrived in Baghdad.

**Deterrence/compellence threats, probes, and responses in a multilateral context.** The prerequisite for a return of UNMOVIC inspectors to Baghdad was UNSCR 1441. But to get unanimous consensus on UNSCR 1441, other permanent members of the UN Security Council (France, Russia, and China) needed a push—the threat of unilateral deployment by the United States and Britain of nearly 100,000 troops to Kuwait, Qatar, and Turkey. The prerequisite for such a substantial and sustained deployment of American troops to the region began with the “multilateral” domestic support Bush obtained in the 2002 midterm elections. These midterm elections were the first time since 1934 that a sitting president’s party picked up seats in the House of Representatives during their first term. Moreover, these first-term elections were the first time that the party controlling the White House gained enough seats in the Senate to become the majority party. This level of public support for Bush’s foreign and security policy was essential for building multilateral consensus within Bush’s cabinet, the Republican leadership, rank and file Republicans in the House and Senate, and even the Democratic opposition.

This momentum behind the Bush administration’s policies accelerated when the Senate voted 77-23 on October 11, 2002, authorizing President Bush “to use all means that he determines to be appropriate, including force, in order to enforce the United Nations Security Council Resolutions (regarding Iraq), defend the national security interests of the United States...
against the threat posed by Iraq, and restore international peace and security in the region.” The House added its support to Bush’s evolving “multilateral” coalition by approving an identical resolution by a vote of 296-133. The passage of these two resolutions was driven by a strong conviction held by a significant majority of politicians in both parties that the only way to get France, Russia, China, and nonpermanent members of the UN Security Council to accept UNSCR 1441 was to convey to these leaders the U.S. commitment to respond (alone if necessary) to what Americans perceived at the time as a growing threat to their security. In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, the potential threat posed by the possibility that Saddam Hussein was reconstituting a nuclear or chemical weapons arsenal was extraordinarily salient in the minds of most Americans.

The deployment by the United States and Britain of close to 100,000 troops to Kuwait and Qatar established the credibility of U.S.-UK resolve. Without this credible threat, and the fear in Paris, Moscow, and Beijing that their substantial economic interests in a post-Saddam Iraq were in jeopardy, the UN would not have come close to achieving a unanimous resolution.

Saddam Hussein allowed UNMOVIC inspectors back into Iraq in 2002 (with a significantly more robust mandate than UNSCOM) as a direct consequence of the application by the United States and Britain of credible and resolute coercive diplomacy throughout this entire period. If the coercive threat of unilateral action had not been issued at each stage, none of this domestic or international momentum to act against Iraq would have materialized. The United States succeeded in producing the multilateral consensus in 2003 (and in 1999, 1998, 1995, and 1991, for that matter) by linking coercive military threats against the target with inducements of political or financial rewards (grants, loans, or military aid) to those whose interests and priorities might have been adversely affected by the target’s compliance with U.S. demands. Multilateral coercion requires a major push involving coercive threats of unilateral action by major powers.127

Outcome. The problem with multilateral approaches to deterrence is that it they are significantly more difficult to sustain over time and even more difficult when coercion begins to have a direct impact on the core interests of those in the original coalition. Saddam began to misinterpret French, Chinese, and Russian reluctance to support a second resolution as a clear indication that the Security Council would prevent war.

As was evident in the previous exchanges surveyed in this chapter, successful coercive diplomacy requires effective communication (e.g., an explicit threat of “serious consequences” and a timeline for compliance), a clear commitment to the issue(s) at stake, the capability to impose sufficiently painful military costs on the opponent, and the resolve to carry through on one’s threats.128 But heavy reliance on multilateral consensus as the benchmark for a “legitimate” application of force occasionally undermines the credibility and effectiveness of coercive threats, because opponents may mistakenly conclude that “legitimacy” and “credibility” are linked, when in reality they are not. The mistake that ultimately led to the demise of Saddam Hussein (and Slobodan Milosevic after the election of 2000) was the assumption that the U.S.-UK threat lacked credibility because it did not satisfy the requirements for legitimacy. Because of this miscalculation, Saddam underestimated (1) the probability of an attack that did not first obtain UN endorsement and (2) the risks of noncompliance. Ironically, the obligation to demonstrate U.S.-UK resolve became even more pronounced in light of efforts by France and Russia to deny legitimacy to the threat of military action. From Washington’s point of view, this was the precedent-setting case for establishing the credibility required to manage and prevent threats from Iraq and other rogue regimes.

Observations, or Lessons for Complex Deterrence

Deterrence and compellence succeeded and failed in each case for all the right reasons, consistent with expectations derived from the standard four-condition model of deterrence theory. Table 10.1 provides a summary of exchanges in the Iraq case from 1991 to 2003. It is apparent that the four conditions for deterrence noted at the outset of this study (labeled A through D in the table) are connected to success versus failure across the six exchanges. Nuances within the respective exchanges are explained in notes to the table. What follows is a summary of events and outcomes for the six exchanges in narrative form to accompany the table’s summary of results.

The first exchange, in which all conditions for deterrence were present, ultimately proved successful for the United States and Britain. The coalition compelled Iraq to accept the southern NFZ and deterred it from attacking Shites in southern Iraq. Iraqi compliance offers impressive support for deterrence theory because there is some “white noise” along the way, namely, equivocation by the president regarding how long the United States would remain committed if troops had to be deployed. But strong follow-up statements, which showed high levels of credibility and intensity of response,
proved sufficient to gain the attention of Saddam Hussein and his supporters. In the second exchange, there was an escalation from words to deeds. Bombing raids and cruise missile attacks became necessary and represent deterrence by punishment. As a result of these actions, Saddam Hussein accepted the NFZ and eschewed attacking Shias in southern Iraq. Success in the third exchange revealed further escalation in the commitment of capabilities, ultimately producing an explicit show of compliance by Iraq. The way this exchange was terminated serves as strong confirmation for deterrence theory: Iraq went out of its way to prevent miscommunication that could lead to a United States-led attack.

Results in the next three exchanges began to change and combined to hint at ultimate failure by the United States and Britain to deter Saddam Hussein. Mixed results occur in the fourth exchange. Support from France, Russia, and China evaporated at this point in time as the confrontation between Iraq and the United States became even more militarized. Saddam gave up on his efforts toward compellence (i.e., no longer shooting at coalition fighters enforcing flight-exclusion zones), but maintained a military presence just outside the NFZ. This partial achievement of compellence hinted at the pattern of activity that would come to characterize future interactions between the Security Council and Iraq.

Exchange 5 featured very strong U.S. actions that compelled Iraq to accept IAEA and UNSCOM inspectors, but an important subtext also emerged: there was an increasing amount of public commentary emanating from Beijing and other national capitals about the lack of a “green light” for the use of force in the future. Although the United States succeeded in the short term, the necessary conditions for long-term success became increasingly problematic. The United States and Britain engaged in air strikes in response to Iraqi noncompliance on inspections. Iraq, however, remained defiant after the strikes ended. This defiance was probably produced by the realization that air strikes produced limited damage while affording the regime in Baghdad the opportunity to enjoy major political gains from standing up to the United States and Britain.

Exchange 6 began well and ended badly for the United States and Britain. By this point, both states were on their own in their efforts to deter Iraq. International inspectors returned to Iraq for a time, but miscommunication between Saddam Hussein on the one hand and the antiwar powers (Russia, China, and France) on the other distorted Iraq’s perception of the threat from the United States and Britain. Hussein’s overestimation of the power of Russia, China, and France to stop an attack on Iraq led to the failure of
compellence, full-scale war, and ultimately the downfall of his regime and his own demise.

After this review of events, it is clear that Alexander George and Richard Smoke are correct: deterrence fails over time and in stages. Their assertions anticipate this volume’s focus on complex deterrence. A direct answer to the question posed at the outset of this chapter is now possible. Deterrence remains relevant even in a complex security environment, although at times failure is to be expected when conditions for its implementation are not satisfied.

One aspect of complex deterrence that comes out in this case is the “game within the game.” While the United States and Britain attempted to deter or compel Iraq on various occasions, Iraq also probed its adversaries for weakness. Probes were a natural and almost inevitable feature of Iraq-U.S.-UK-UN confrontation. Probes provide an opportunity to demonstrate resolve, credibility, and commitment, so their occurrence cannot be viewed exclusively as an illustration of deterrence failure (in terms of both theory and strategy). In the absence of retaliation following probes, the theory predicts failure as opponents exploit weakness to demonstrate their own success.

States, no matter how powerful, rarely have the capacity to sustain credible threats over time without experiencing a few probes; the exceptions to this rule are nuclear rivalries between advanced nuclear powers. Probes, therefore, should be expected because opponents in conventional rivalries rarely know precisely what constitute “red line” conditions until the point of retaliation, when it is too late to compromise to avoid military action. If the unwanted behavior (e.g., an attack) continues despite the presence of credible and resolute commitments on the part of the actor intending to issue a deterrence threat, then such an outcome would constitute grounds for judging that both deterrence policy and theory had failed. In sum, the Iraq case reveals that no threat is better than weak threats because the latter tend to lead to escalation as opponents exploit weakness to demonstrate power, relevance, and control.

Deterrence complexity is an important yet still largely unexplored subject—behavior throughout the pre-Iraq 2003 crisis was a direct consequence of interactions in the previous ten years. Comprehending the failure of 2003 is impossible without a clear understanding of successes and failures and associated interactions over this entire decade-long rivalry. Iraq updated beliefs aboutcoalitional breakdown but went too far and engaged in wishful thinking about the implications regarding an attack by the United States and Britain.

CONCLUSIONS

Deterrence remains relevant to today’s complex security environment. Three of the four assumptions of the deterrence paradigm have been confirmed by the historical survey offered in this chapter. First, the paradigm assumes that states function more or less as rational actors. When events usually considered to be a single case are divided into their constituent diplomatic or military parts, cost-benefit calculations become clearer. Even Iraqi officials, who are often stereotyped as irrational or ruled by a mad dictator, were able to respond in a coherent way to the evolving situation. In terms of instrumental rationality, it would be difficult to find a more prudent performance than the one put in by Saddam Hussein as he confronted a series of three American presidents from 1991 to 2003. During each of the six exchanges, he appeared to follow the advice given by the coach to the team’s quarterback at the start of every football game: Take what the defense gives you.

A second axiom of the paradigm, which asserts that deterrence operates mainly among states, is confirmed. While the UN played an intermediary role, and the activities of Secretary-General Kofi Annan should not be overlooked, the decisive exchanges involved states, with the United States and Iraq in the foremost positions.

Rivalry, the third assumption, is perhaps the most easily confirmed by this case. The United States and Iraq sparred with each other for almost fifteen years before regime change occurred. Each state waited eagerly for its next opportunity to gain an advantage over the other, despite the fact that they faced an ever-increasing risk of war.

Fourth, the axiom regarding the differences among conventional, chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons forming the basis for different types of deterrence remains unclear. Much of the conflict between Iraq and the international community surrounded efforts on the part of the coalition to discover and to end Iraq’s effort to acquire WMD. But it is not clear that the quasi endowment of Iraq with these weapons, which may have existed mostly in the minds of its adversaries anyway, played a role in determining strategy and tactics on the part of the nuclear powers at various stages of confrontation. Instead, the latter seemed willing to run the risk of a chemical or biological weapons attack in their quest to force Iraq to back off from abusing its population and reveal more about its military infrastructure.

In sum, this chapter supports the notion that deterrence encounters are complex and multidimensional. Complex deterrence is a paradigm that
recognizes that multiple actors and iterations are a reality in today's security environment. Complexity is likely to remain as long as the power disparity among actors in the international system is large. Given its position of military dominance, the United States will try to compel and deter at the same time; success or failure may be based on the complexity of a particular situation, the importance of the issues involved, and the potential for issuing credible threats.

NOTES


3. Paul (this volume) collapses these conditions into three premises: "a deterrent should have sufficient capability; its threat should be credible; and it should be able to communicate the threat to its opponent." These premises for success are nearly identical to those noted in the text, although condition 1-1 makes the requirements imposed in this chapter more restrictive. It recognizes an additional complication—the inability of the target to comprehend what is unacceptable behavior—that appears in a range of cases.


24. Ibid., 25.


36. Ibid., 37.


41. Ibid., A10.
44. Ibid., A14.
53. Some Pentagon officials called the containment plan speculative, because the United States did not want to encourage Iraq to test its resolve to uphold the zone by sending in one or two tanks at a time and because the United States feared creating a "military vacuum" in southern Iraq that could result in the dismemberment of the country. See Sciolino, "U.S. Offers Plan to Avoid Threat," A16.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., A2.
90. Ibid.
99. "For more detail on Scott Ritter's allegations, see Peter J. Boyer, 'Scott Ritter's Private War,' New Yorker, November 9, 1998.
103. Ibid.
118. See the December 15, 1998, documents (fn. 116).
PART V

Deterrence and Major Powers