

Naval War College  
Newport, R.I.

## Coercive Diplomacy American-Style

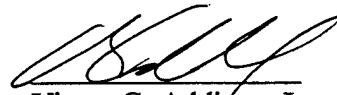
by

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As an Advanced Research Project

A paper submitted to the Director of the Advanced Research Department in the Center for Naval Warfare Studies in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in National Security and Strategic Studies.

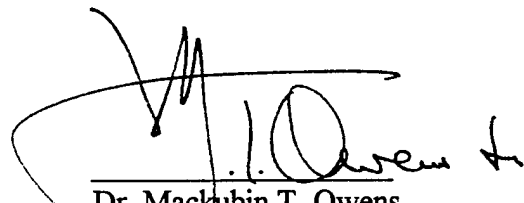
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February 1997

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<p>The current national security strategy of "Engagement and Enlargement" will require the United States to increasingly rely on coercive diplomacy as a foreign policy tool. Since the practice of coercive diplomacy is no longer constrained by the rules of the Cold War, its success or failure is now largely dependent on when and how it is used. In order to provide a contemporary theory that may be employed by American national security strategists, coercive diplomacy is first redefined as—<i>efforts to decisively influence the immediate military intentions or actions of an adversary with threatened force</i>. This new definition is incorporated into a seven-step procedural model which determines when and how the United States should use coercive diplomacy. The model applies several of Clausewitz's principles in a numerically-based approach which identifies and evaluates important crisis-related factors. The output of intermediate steps is finally referred to a "Coercive Diplomacy Menu" that delineates strategies according to poker betting options. Since even the most carefully conceived coercive diplomacy strategy may inexplicably fail, factors which affect predictability of outcome are also explored. The seven-step "Coercive Diplomacy Model" is applied to two case studies—Kuwait: 1990-91, and Taiwan Strait: 1996. After the historical record of events is established, the model is utilized to illustrate the procedural approach and highlight differences in prescribed strategy.</p>			
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## Executive Summary

The current national security strategy of “Engagement and Enlargement” will require the United States to increasingly rely on coercive diplomacy as a foreign policy tool.

Since the practice of coercive diplomacy is no longer constrained by the rules of the Cold War, its success or failure is now largely dependent on when and how it is used.

This thesis begins with an analysis of existing coercive diplomacy theory—which is derived primarily from the work of Alexander George. George defines this defensive strategy as, “efforts to persuade an opponent to stop or reverse an action,” and subsequently classifies types of coercive diplomacy based on their intended result. Since this is an analytical theory, it offers little practical utility.

In order to provide a contemporary theory that may be employed by American national security strategists, this thesis first redefines coercive diplomacy as—*efforts to decisively influence the immediate military intentions or actions of an adversary with threatened force*. This new definition is incorporated into a seven-step procedural model which determines when and how the United States should use coercive diplomacy. The model begins with a “National Interest Litmus Test” which is derived from the following paradox: utilizing coercive diplomacy as a last resort to avoid war may greatly increase one’s likelihood of becoming involved in warfare in the first place. The model then applies several of Clausewitz’s principles in a numerically-based approach which identifies and evaluates important crisis-related factors. The output of intermediate steps is finally referred to a “Coercive Diplomacy Menu” that delineates strategies according to poker

betting options. Since even the most carefully conceived coercive diplomacy strategy may inexplicably fail, factors which affect predictability of outcome are also explored.

The last section of this thesis applies the seven-step "Coercive Diplomacy Model" to two case studies—Kuwait: 1990-91, and Taiwan Strait: 1996. After the historical record of events is established, the model is subsequently applied to illustrate the procedural approach and highlight differences in prescribed strategy.

## **Coercive Diplomacy American-Style**

*“There are two levers for moving men—interest and fear.”*

—Napoleon I

### **I. Introduction**

The American definition of coercive diplomacy begins in exasperated fashion with the question, “Where are the carriers?” Generally abhorred by career diplomats and peace-loving politicians alike, this seemingly Machiavellian practice is employed with only the greatest reluctance by liberal democracies. Consequently, those who tout coercive diplomacy as “a low-cost means of avoiding war” have little difficulty reciting the numerous twentieth-century conflicts that might have been averted with a proper, timely threat of force. Regardless of whether one accepts the aforementioned view that wars are always preventable, or if one is a subscriber to chaos theory, it is arguable that the United States has not always used coercive diplomacy to its best advantage.

### **Hail to the Global Fire Chief**

During the Cold War, the endgame objective of coercive diplomacy was always constrained by the rules of nuclear stalemate, with neither superpower desirous of risking a foray into the realm of “mutually assured destruction.” Barring a sudden reemergence from Chapter 11 reorganization by the former Soviet Union, however, global nuclear annihilation is no longer a potential consequence of an American foreign policy misstep.



Conversely, since the predictability of bipolar deterrence is now nothing more than a strategic memory, in order to remain engaged, the United States has been forced to change occupations from “world’s policeman” to “global fireman.” With smoke and flames on every horizon and despotic arsonists lurking in every shadow, deterrence may not always be practical or even possible—“early warning” is not what it used to be. In such an increasingly uncertain and flammable international environment, coercive diplomacy is likely to become an indispensable foreign policy tool. James Nathan argues, “Without a credible capability to use moderate force, fate rather than statecraft determines the future.”<sup>1</sup>

### **A Tightrope to the Twenty-First Century**

The current national security policy of “Engagement and Enlargement” has its origins in the premise that fostering the spread of democracy will produce a favorable international environment. In its discussion of the more practical applications of this policy, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America-1995* states:

Guarding against threats to United States’ interests requires the use of appropriate military capabilities in concert with economic, diplomatic, and informational elements of our national power. Our armed forces are engaged worldwide on a continual basis to accomplish two national military objectives—promoting stability and thwarting aggression.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James Nathan, “The Rise and Decline of Coercive Statecraft,” *Proceedings*, (October 1995):64.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. John Shalikashvili, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America-1995: A Strategy of Flexible and Selective Engagement* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1995), i.

During the era of containment, identifying national security objectives was fairly simple—if the Soviet Union had an interest, either directly or by proxy, so did Uncle Sam. In some respects the Clinton Administration's policy is just as ambitious; and it will continue to blur the line between national and international interests. National interests of the United States may still be expressed in truly regional conflicts and civil wars—but for totally different reasons than during the Cold War.

Assuming a leadership role in areas where national interests may not be intuitively obvious requires a delicate balancing act. The United States has the capability, on a selective basis, to bring overwhelming force to bear in support of a foreign policy objective—at the risk of turning adversaries into martyrs, and allies into critics and competitors. Alternately, “An unwillingness to use unambiguous instruments of coercion and to validate threats with the use of force when called for undermines alliances, weakens prior commitments, emboldens rogue states and terrorists, and threatens U. S. leadership and credibility.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Your Answer Must Be in the Form of a Question**

So just what exactly is coercive diplomacy? Is it a panacea or a “Pandora's Box”? Can coercive diplomacy precipitate, rather than prevent, war? Is it possible to produce a procedural coercive diplomacy model that defines when and how it should be used? Herein lies an attempt to answer these and other relevant questions for beleaguered American national security strategists.

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<sup>3</sup> James Nathan, “The Rise and Decline of Coercive Statecraft,” *Proceedings* (October 1995): 64.

## II. Background

### The “Godfather” of Coercive Diplomacy

The theoretical framework of coercive diplomacy is derived primarily from the work of Alexander George. George specifically defines coercive diplomacy as, “efforts to persuade an opponent to stop or reverse an action.”<sup>4</sup> It is, therefore, a *defensive* strategy employed against an adversary who has initiated efforts to unacceptably alter a status quo situation in his own behalf. This concept is a subset of the more generic theory of “compellence,” which was introduced by Thomas Schelling to also encompass blackmail strategies and deterrence.<sup>5</sup>

George delineates three distinct categories of coercive diplomacy: “Type A”—which is defined as efforts to persuade an opponent to stop short of the goal; “Type B”—which is limited to persuading an opponent to stop short of an action; and “Type C”—which consists of efforts to persuade an opponent to make changes in his government.<sup>6</sup> In each of these specific types of coercive diplomacy a demand is accompanied by a threat. In some cases the demand may be rather vague (“Type C”), and the threat itself may take a variety of forms ranging from the direct (classic ultimatum) to the implied (the so-called “try-and-see”).<sup>7</sup> In each circumstance it is incumbent upon the coercing power to

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<sup>4</sup> Alexander L. George and William E. Simons, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), p.7.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), p.69.

<sup>6</sup> Alexander L. George and William E. Simons, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), p.9.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

convince the adversary that it would be in its best interests to comply with the demand. In this regard, a “carrot” may be included in order to make the “stick” more acceptable.

Since coercive diplomacy is employed as a means to avoid conflict without compromising national interests, failure can result in two eventualities: either the coercing power backs down at the expense of both the national interest and international credibility; or the situation escalates into warfare. Success is defined, by default, as the adversary acceding to the demands of the coercing power sufficiently to safeguard the national interest. George’s analysis comprises seven cases in which the United States attempted to coerce an adversary—with the final score listed as two “wins,” three “losses,” and two “draws.” Since coercive diplomacy is highly context dependent, George categorizes ambiguous cases as those in which a clear result is not evident.<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that in all but two of the cases—Pearl Harbor and Kuwait—coercive diplomacy was practiced against a Cold War backdrop, thereby greatly complicating the initiative and significantly raising the stakes.

While George’s analysis provides substantial theoretical insight into the intricacies of coercive diplomacy, it admittedly offers little practical utility for national security planners who are contemplating the engagement of an adversary. The postulated definition of coercive diplomacy as “efforts to persuade an opponent to stop or reverse an action,” while intellectually palatable, is far too inclusive for policy formulation. Indeed, the subsequent delineation of coercive diplomacy into three types is nominally useful only for accounting purposes. It is arguable that many of George’s case studies have elements of all three classifications of coercive diplomacy inherent in them, and that “Type C”

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 270.

(efforts to persuade an opponent to make changes in his government) is too vague even for analytical purposes. George recognizes these limitations in his prescient plea for “an empirical theory and generic knowledge.”<sup>9</sup> Since an empirical theory requires a much greater sample size than is available and can typically leave one fighting the last war, generic knowledge in the form of a procedural model is a logical next step in the theoretical evolution of coercive diplomacy. George’s “Findings and Conclusions” effectively lay the groundwork for this enterprise by suggesting a list of nine conditions that appear to favor the successful application of coercive diplomacy.<sup>10</sup> The majority of these conditions will be incorporated at various stages of model development.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 288.

### III. Adding Clausewitz to George: “The Coercive Diplomacy Model”

Coercive diplomacy is not simply an isolated act performed as a low cost alternative to war. While most national security strategists are able to quote Clausewitz’s infamous dictum, “war is a continuation of policy by other means,” those without a recent Naval War College degree may not recall its implications: that there is not a discrete boundary where policy ends and war begins (the water’s edge, for instance), and that the political “end” must always remain the master of the military “means.”<sup>11</sup> With these caveats in mind, it is useful to graphically illustrate where coercive diplomacy lies on the “Policy Continuum” (fig. III-1).

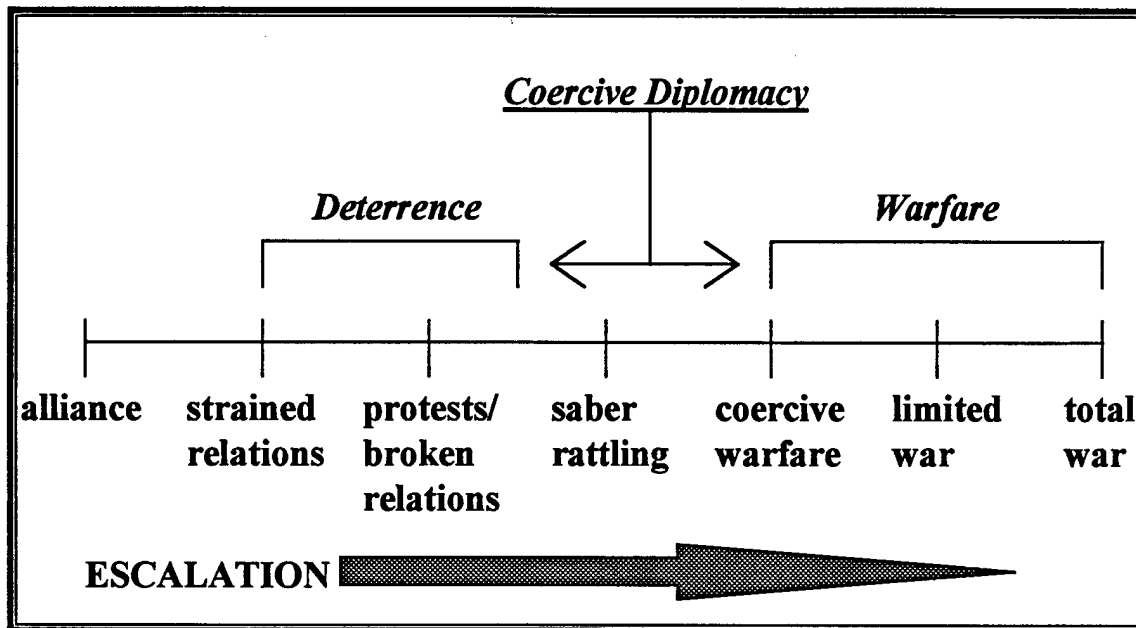


Fig. III-1. The Policy Continuum

<sup>11</sup> Karl von Clausewitz, *On War*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p.87.

While it is understood that policy events are not always discrete occurrences that unfold in a prescribed sequence, the most important implication of this continuum is the relationship between succeeding policy events and *escalation*—that voracious force which often leaves its victims longing for pre-conflict days. Since coercive diplomacy is typically perceived as an escalatory act by its intended recipient, one must consider the following paradox: utilizing coercive diplomacy as a last resort to avoid war may greatly increase one's likelihood of becoming involved in warfare in the first place. Coercive diplomacy, therefore, is properly undertaken only in response to a specific *military* threat to the status quo—to do otherwise would not only invite presumably undesired escalation, it would rightly be interpreted as an offensive act. On this theoretical basis it is possible to fine-tune the definition of coercive diplomacy as: *efforts to decisively influence the immediate military intentions or actions of an adversary with threatened force*. It should be noted that the term “coercive warfare,” which appears in the figure, refers to the attempt to use actual force as a means to “send a message” to an adversary (e.g., punitive, retaliatory, or even preemptive strikes). In the words of one of coercive warfare's leading proponents, Thomas Schelling: “To be coercive, violence has to be anticipated. And it has to be avoidable by accommodation. The power to hurt is bargaining power.”<sup>12</sup> Since such an approach is often *indistinguishable* from the usual form of warfare—as evidenced by the North Vietnamese response to “Rolling Thunder” during the Vietnam War—it is, therefore, quite *distinguishable* from any form of diplomacy and will be considered separately, as a possible follow-on to a failed coercive diplomacy initiative.

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), p.2.

### A. Model Step I: "The National Interest Litmus Test"

Coercive diplomacy is obviously a serious business, so it is naturally assumed that it will only be employed when a *vital* national interest is jeopardized. But what is a vital national interest? If the term is reserved to address situations that potentially threaten our national survival, then following the demise of the former Soviet Union, the list of absolute threats to U.S. vital interests may now be headed by rogue asteroids. Referring again to figure III-1, the "Policy Continuum" of the post-Cold War United States must—at least for the foreseeable future—be properly truncated at the "limited war" point. Although Clausewitz stated that "in war the result is never final,"<sup>13</sup> the United States will fight future wars with its nuclear hand tied, at least partially, behind its back—or *the result will be final*. Since we will be fighting limited wars for limited policy objectives, defining something as a vital interest provides limited enlightenment for national security strategists. Taking a more pragmatic approach that is soundly based on the premise that labels are only absolutely required on prescription medicine and restroom doors, the first model step defines national interests as a function of a negative coercive diplomacy outcome. Clausewitz pointed out that, "One should not take the first step without considering the last."<sup>14</sup> Here we endeavor to undertake the more modest objective of at least considering the *next* step. The decision to apply coercive diplomacy in a given scenario can potentially engage the United States in limited warfare, therefore, it is logical to define risk in this context. Although the United States has never fully subscribed to a

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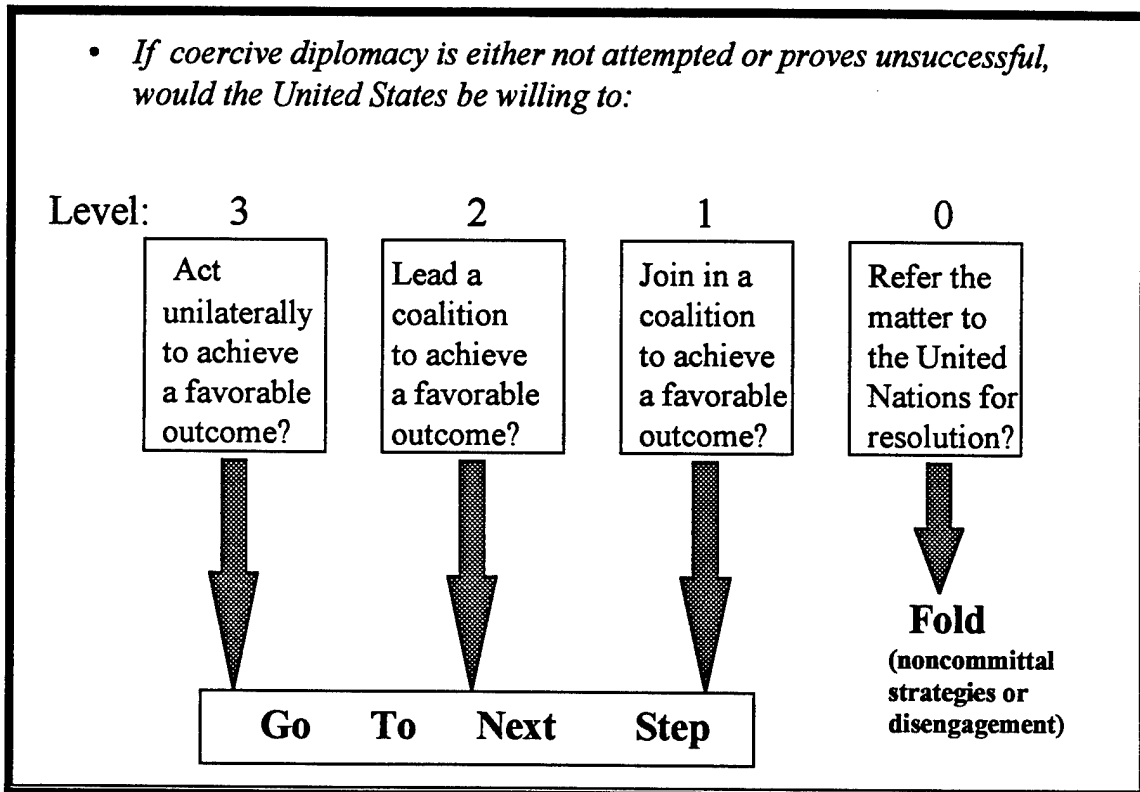
<sup>13</sup> Karl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p.80.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 81.



purely *real politik* foreign policy, and morality generally plays a key role in our assessments, an honest answer to the seemingly simple question in this first step is critical for the following reason: *there are going to be instances when coercive diplomacy can not possibly succeed, so at the outset it is important to consider the next step.*

**Step I: National Interest Litmus Test**



One caveat that may be reemphasized repeatedly is that the reliance on numbers in various steps of the model is intended either for illustrative purposes, to highlight relationships between factors, or as a means to ensure that particular factors are considered properly as part of a logical sequence. Since many aspects of national security and human behavior are almost impossible to absolutely quantify, the associated numerical

assessments must be interpreted as no more than relative indices—found somewhere on the intellectual curve between statistics and numerology.

Referring to Model Step I (National Interest Litmus Test), the previously alluded to assumption is that although a universal definition of vital national interests might be difficult to agree upon, one might recognize a vital interest if it “bit one on the bottom.” Given our limited resources and almost unlimited interests, it is reasonable to assume that there will be few instances when the United States will be willing to commit to unilateral intervention. Most scenarios should, therefore, inevitably be assigned national interest levels of between “1” and “2.5” (in the interest of avoiding precision wherever possible, fudging of numbers is encouraged). Assuming a level of “0” is the only definitive exception—a result that immediately refers the strategist to a noncommittal strategy and precludes the use of coercive diplomacy. It is understood that crises are typically dynamic in nature. All that is necessary at this point, however, is to consider a “snapshot” of the situation.

#### **B. Model Step II: “Determination of Adversary’s National Power Index”**

Since all adversaries are not created equal, it is advisable for a national security strategist to perform an initial net assessment. Completely disregarding Clausewitz’s legendary aversion to intelligence, the objective of this step is to gauge an adversary’s potential to successfully resist a U.S. coercive strategy by utilizing *all* aspects of its

national power. There are obviously many ways to approach this problem, but only one will be presented here:

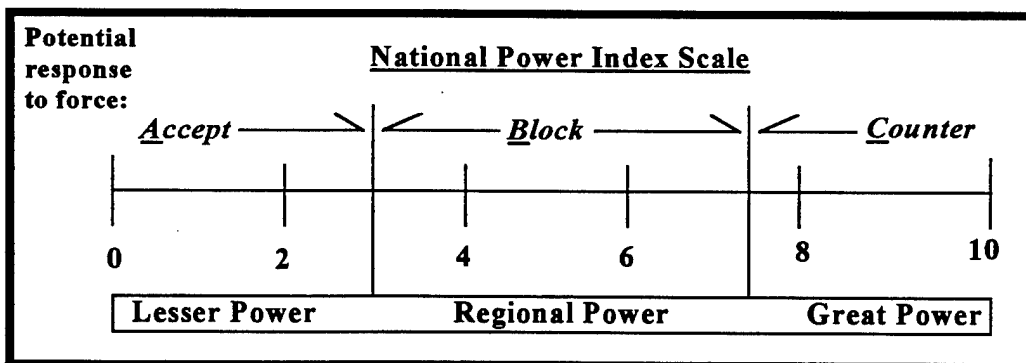
**Step II: Determination of Adversary's National Power Index**

**National Power Factors (weighting factor-x):**

<u>Military Power (x4)</u>	<u>WMD (x3)</u>	<u>Political Influence (x2)</u>	<u>Economic Power (x1)</u>
1.0 Global Power	1.0 Nukes	1.0 Sec Council Mbr	1.0 G-7 Mbr
.5 Regional	.75 Bio	.75 Allied with SCM	.75 Central
.25 Self Defense	.25 Chem	.25 Regional Allies	.25 Periphery
0 Disorganized	0 None	0 Pariah	0 Dysfunctional

*Example:*

	Military (x4)	WMD (x3)	Political (x2)	Econ (x1)	Total
China	0.8	1.0	1.0	0.75	8.95
North Korea	0.6	0.75	0.75	0	6.15
Iraq	0.5	0.75	0.75	0.5	6.25
Cuba	0.25	0	0.25	0	1.5



The goal of this step is to divide potential adversaries into three relative groups:

A "Class A" adversary is one whom the United States should have little difficulty imposing

its will upon—assuming there is a proper commitment of resources to the task. A “Class B” adversary has the power to greatly complicate a U.S. coercive diplomacy strategy in the short term, and may even possess the ability to block our efforts in a regional crisis. The most dangerous potential adversaries, who occupy “Class C,” are powerful enough to defeat (counter) the United States regionally—perhaps by even striking us directly.

The weighting factors in this step are not binding and, once again, number fudging is encouraged. The assumption in this sample hierarchy of national power factors is to weight most heavily those that are likely to prove decisive in a short-term crisis. In many scenarios, conventional “military power” is the overriding concern and an effort should be made to estimate this factor more carefully, particularly with due regard for such intangibles as readiness and asymmetric military strategies. In other scenarios, “political influence” may dominate, and a more concerted effort must be made to decipher complex international relationships. “Political influence” and “economic power” may even intertwine in subtle ways. For example, France’s economic ties to Iran provide a significant complication for U.S. strategies in the Middle East, and the potential loss of China as a trading partner would make any U.S. ally think twice before committing to a showdown over anything less than the most vital of interests.

The possession of “weapons of mass destruction” (WMD) by an adversary must be considered a potential *trump card* that could actually be used to coerce the United States. Either a “Class B” or “Class C” adversary may possess such weapons, and with them the obvious potential to inflict heavy casualties without warning.

It is apparent from the sample calculations in this step how the Cold War greatly complicated coercive diplomacy efforts for the United States. Although monolithic nuclear communism is not presently a threat, it is still wise to heed an important component of Bismarck's limited war strategy: *ensure the adversary is diplomatically isolated*. When one engages an adversary who is part of an alliance (or potentially part of an alliance, once hostilities commence), the full resources of that alliance must be considered in the calculations.

### C. Model Step III: "Cost-Benefit Analysis"

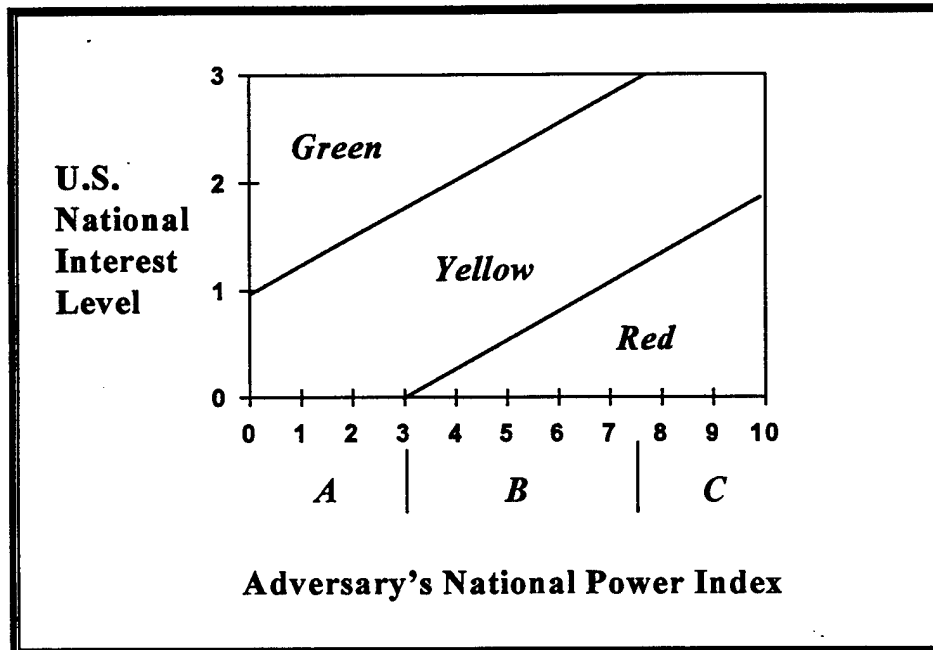
In order to remain faithful to Clausewitz's "rational calculus of war," one must counterbalance the necessity of engagement against its potential cost.<sup>15</sup> In this step, the objective is to identify situations in which the potential cost of a negative coercive diplomacy outcome is too high for a given national interest level. Utilizing coercive diplomacy in a situation where one is not prepared to follow-up demands with credible force is tantamount to bluffing—a highly risky approach considering what is potentially at stake. Once again, this is a somewhat subjective analysis and while "green" or "yellow" results will not guarantee success, nor will a "red" result automatically doom one to failure—although it is a good start.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 90.

**Step III:**

**Cost-Benefit Analysis**



This step is primarily intended as a “reality check” to identify potential problem areas and highlight risks. Obviously, it is far more likely that only the strongest adversaries will possess the capacity to threaten our most vital interests. Since the inherent risk in utilizing coercive diplomacy against such worthy opponents is proportionally greater, the resolution of minor disputes should be attempted with less confrontational means. It would not be logical, for example, to settle a dispute with China over copyright infringement by utilizing the Seventh Fleet. Conversely, this risk analysis should not be misconstrued to imply that the U.S. has a mandate to coerce countries on the lower end of the national power spectrum in all circumstances. The delineation of the “yellow zone” may be determined by the strategist to address these issues.

#### D. Model Step IV: "Support Check"

The Framers of the Constitution may not have properly considered how challenging it would be for a President to conduct foreign policy. After being "checked and balanced," sniped at by a recalcitrant press, and subjected to instant feedback from a veritable array of pollsters and experts, an American President could be forgiven for momentarily admiring the simplicity of North Korea's foreign policy apparatus.

Clausewitz explained how the nature of war is determined by the balance between a nation's people, military, and government—otherwise known as the "trinity."<sup>16</sup> This lesson, which was relearned painfully by the United States during the Vietnam War, also applies to coercive diplomacy. Since almost all of our potential adversaries now have ready access to CNN, CSPAN, and the Internet, American foreign policy has become practically transparent—particularly if one has access to late-night pizza delivery data for Washington, D.C. Any U.S. coercive diplomacy initiative that is not solidly backed by all elements of the trinity may be disregarded as a bluff by a media-savvy opponent. Even if the initiative is not a bluff, the United States may then find itself in the precarious position of potentially engaging an adversary in limited warfare without sufficient domestic or international support. National security strategists should heed the following warning by Alexander George on the danger of bluffing:

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,

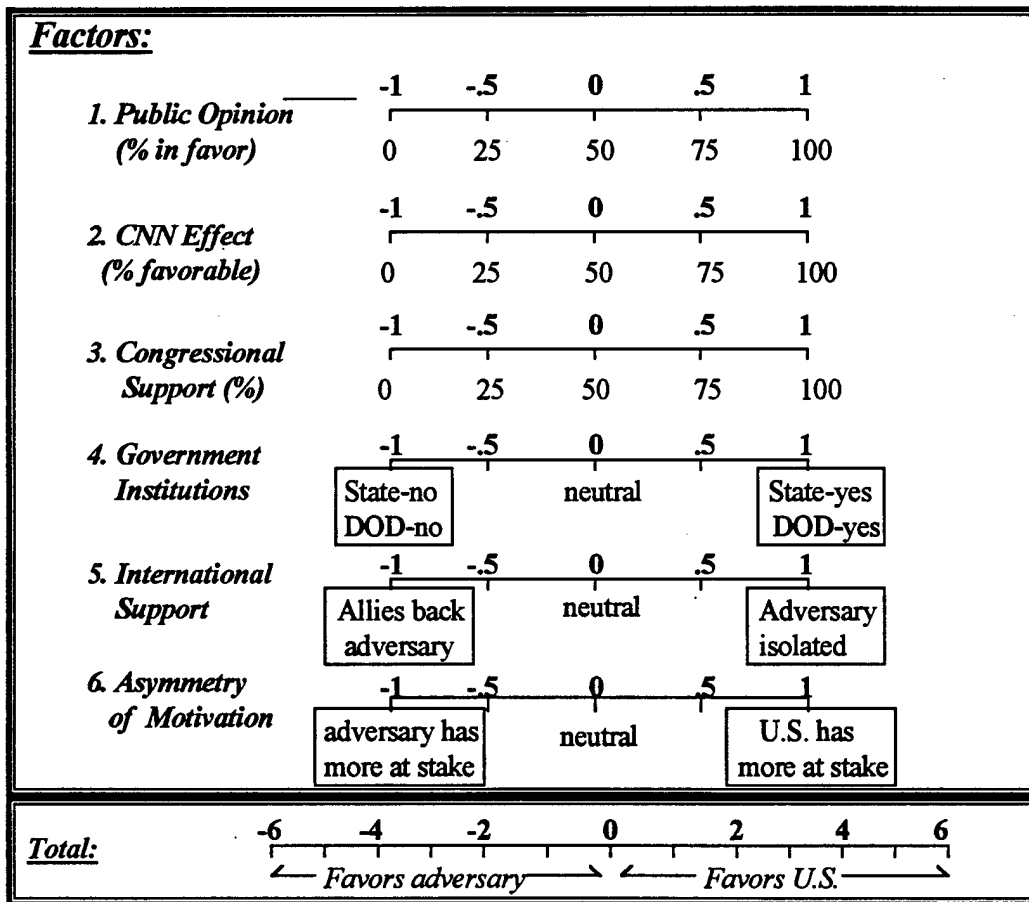
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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 89.

in effect calling the bluff of the coercing power. The latter, then, must decide whether to break off or escalate the crisis into a military confrontation.<sup>17</sup>

There are two distinct types of bluffs—*intentional* and *unintentional*. The strategist is cautioned to avoid the former, while these model steps should hopefully eliminate the latter.

**Step IV: Support Check**



<sup>17</sup> Alexander L. George and William E. Simons, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), p.9.



This step is an attempt to graphically estimate support for an American coercive diplomacy initiative. Since, in life, support is not only fleeting but difficult to interpret, any of the factors listed in this step can change suddenly or prove decisive. For example, if media coverage of a crisis changes dramatically—as it did when emaciated Bosnian prisoners were filmed in a Serbian concentration camp in 1994—it may not be long before the other indices follow suit. Negative numbers are included in the calculation to represent the ability of factors to cancel each other out, and to emphasize the critical importance of having a positive reservoir of support prior to committing the United States to a showdown. Each factor will now be briefly examined:

**Public Opinion.** The government is literally saturated with data from an endless array of polls and focus groups, but how much do the results really matter when the issue involves foreign policy? Although the American people have a long history of lining up behind their Commander-in-Chief in crises, they also have a strong aversion to spilling American blood on foreign shores. The strategist needs to assess the depth of public sentiment, and also its likely trend. The President has tremendous power to influence public opinion, so even if the initial estimation of this particular factor is discouraging, it may simply illustrate the need for a little public relations work from the “bully pulpit.” As with all methods of analysis, it is always important to understand exactly what one is measuring. A President’s job approval rating should not be mistaken for public opinion unless the two converge.

**CNN Effect.** The CNN effect is only important to the extent that media coverage influences the other factors listed in this step—particularly the previous factor. U.S.

policy in Somalia was completely derailed by prime-time footage of American servicemen being dragged through the streets of downtown Mogadishu. It is incumbent upon the strategist to estimate the likelihood of favorable coverage of U.S. initiatives, and the effect this coverage will engender: *How will it look on television, and what will the ratings be?* Unfortunately, it is only possible to follow that old Department of Defense adage “when in doubt, black it out” in the very short term.

**Congressional Support.** There are many complexities associated with determining which way the “wind” is blowing on Capitol Hill, and while some are clearly related to both public opinion and the CNN effect, others are not. Since votes are easier to measure than rhetoric, obtaining a rough congressional “head count” is always a good starting point. Congress also has a long history of *initially* lining up behind the President in a crisis, but the depth and duration of that sentiment are related to such issues as who—including the President—is facing reelection, which party is in the majority, and how effective the opposition is in getting its message across. The Clinton Administration was forced to address significant right-wing Republican pressure while formulating its strategies in the Taiwan Strait and Bosnia, and there is no question that the Congressional Cuban-American Caucus has long enjoyed considerable influence over U.S. policy toward Fidel Castro. The daunting task for the strategist, then, is to determine the probability that an adversary may channel-surf over to CSPAN and find Congress passing a resolution that would undermine the credibility of a coercive diplomacy initiative.

**Government Institutions.** This factor refers to the opinions of the Departments of State and Defense with regard to the crisis at hand. For the sake of simplicity, the Joint

Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of Defense have been grouped under the designation “DOD,” while “State” is self-explanatory. Although both factions are notoriously opinionated a “-.5”, for example, can result from a “no” by one and a “we’re not sure” by the other.

**International Support.**<sup>18</sup> It is not enough to simply estimate how the United Nations can be expected to vote on a resolution that condemns an adversary’s actions. Even if a U.N. resolution against a pariah nation might be expected to pass by a wide margin, the decisive factor in a crisis involving North Korea, for instance, would be the extent of anticipated Chinese interference. Since the “Otto von Bismarck School of Coercive Diplomacy” requires an adversary to be diplomatically isolated, the worst-case scenario would have a staunch ally (the British, perhaps) undermining our efforts.

**Asymmetry of Motivation.**<sup>19</sup> This factor is a “wild card” that, at first glance, does not appear to belong in this grouping. The premise for its inclusion, however, is that if the United States *appears* to have more at stake in a crisis—as it did during the Cuban Missile Crisis—this perception will affect the other support factors and may also favorably influence an adversary’s behavior. Unfortunately, in the post-Cold War world, U.S. participation in most crises may be viewed as optional—or even intrusive—therefore our adversaries will usually assume they have more at stake.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 288.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 281.

### E. Model Step V: "Escalation Potential"

One of the conditions that George lists as a likely prerequisite for successful coercive diplomacy is that the adversary should possess a greater fear of unacceptable escalation.<sup>20</sup> Since determining the extent of an adversary's fears may not be possible unless the CIA begins operating an international "psychic hotline," a more prudent approach requires that we first assess the "Escalation Potential" of a given crisis. The factors in this step are additive in nature—akin to adding fuel to a smoldering fire—hence, negative numbers are not required.

#### Step V: Escalation Potential

1. Divergent cultures*	+1
2. History of animosity	+1
3. Close proximity of forces	+1
4. National honor declared	+1
5. Survival of government threatened**	+1
6. National survival threatened**	+1

*Notes:* \* Utilize Huntington's criteria in The Clash of Civilizations.

\*\* Refers to adversary's national and governmental survival (which may be indistinguishable).

Briefly examining each factor:

**Divergent cultures.** History is replete with of conflicts that were fueled primarily by the belligerent's cultural differences. Since it is beyond the scope of this treatise to argue what constitutes a significant cultural difference, adopting Samuel Huntington's

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 285.

criteria—with which he divides the earth along eight cultural fault lines—seems to be a realistic approach.<sup>21</sup> A national security strategist would also be well advised to read Huntington's subsection entitled "The West Versus The Rest" before assuming anything but a "+1" for this factor.

**History of Animosity.** Two adversaries do not necessarily have to live on opposite sides of a cultural fault line in order to have a long-standing hatred for one another. Indeed, a cliched corollary to this factor might read "familiarity breeds contempt." There are many foreseeable conflicts that may be bred by competition between cultural brothers, rather than by ethnic hatred. The deep mistrust between China and Taiwan would be addressed by this factor, as would the lack of friendly relations between two cultural opposites: the United States and Iran.

**Close Proximity of Forces.** The likelihood of an unanticipated or even accidental exchange of ordnance between forces increases substantially when they are within range of one another. Even with over-the-horizon targeting systems and stand-off weapons, coercive diplomacy often necessitates placing one's forces directly in harm's way. Having opposing forces "staring down the barrel" at each other is not only inherently confrontational, it also invites that infamous legal expert "Murphy" to take part in the proceedings. How many times have isolated incidents along the 38th parallel threatened to generate into warfare between North and South Korea?

**National Honor.** It is reasonable to assume that nationalism will always be a factor in any international confrontation—but it is not always a decisive factor. Once a

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<sup>21</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?", in *Strategy and Force Planning* ed. by Strategy and Force Planning Faculty (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1995), 373.

leader publicly declares that national honor is at stake in a crisis, it becomes very difficult to back down without “losing face.” In the United States, “losing face” sometimes translates into foregoing reelection—with book deals, lecture fees, and corporate board memberships as compensation—but in other cultures it may be a death sentence.

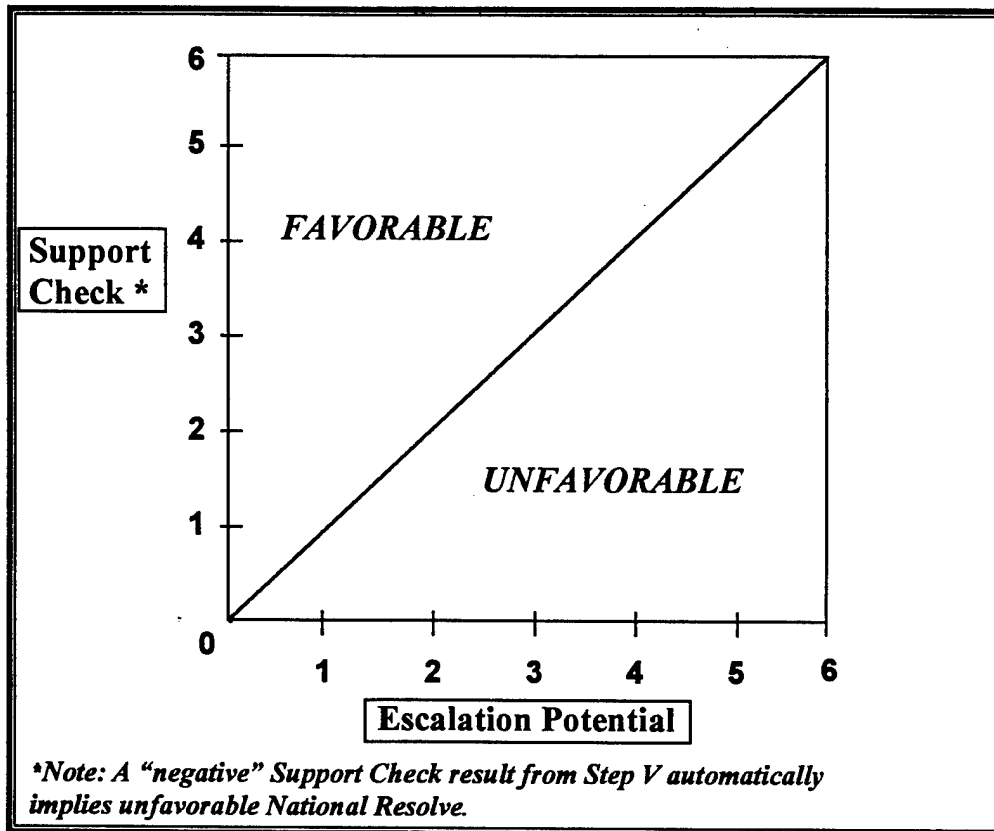
**Survival of Government and National Survival.** These are delineated as separate entities because they may be readily distinguishable in countries that possess a strong opposition. During a conflict, these factors are not likely to be an immediate consideration for the United States (impeachment takes time); so the threat to an *adversary's* governmental and national survival is what requires close scrutiny.

#### **F. Model Step VI: “National Resolve Test”**

Will a leader ever admit to possessing insufficient resolve to see a crisis through to a satisfactory conclusion? How would a leader even know if that were the case? In a pluralistic society, many factors may subtly limit a leader's resolve in a crisis, with the possible effect of turning a masterfully crafted threat into a transparently feeble bluff. The potential coercive power of two carrier battle groups can be completely negated by a lack of credible resolve to use them. In this model step, the amount of support a leader can expect at the onset of a crisis is referenced to the tendency of that crisis to spiral out of control, producing a rough quantification of a heretofore unquantifiable quality—“national resolve.”

Step VI:

**National Resolve Test**



If an American president has a tenuous base of support in a crisis, then as that crisis becomes more dangerous and costly it becomes more difficult to act boldly enough to achieve success. The point at which a nation's resolve runs out may be during the coercive diplomacy phase, producing an unintentional bluff, or during the follow-on limited warfare stage—possibly resulting in defeat. Potential adversaries expend a great deal of effort estimating the "national resolve" of the United States, and their assessments can be expected to improve in both sophistication and accuracy.

### G. Model Step VII: "Coercive Diplomacy Menu"

Clausewitz often compared warfare to a game of cards, rather than to chess, because one can never fully account for the effect of luck on a battlefield.<sup>22</sup> There will always be unknown and unforeseen factors in warfare, and these factors may interact in a seemingly random fashion that may benefit (good luck) or hinder (otherwise known as bad luck) one of the belligerents. If warfare can be likened to a game of cards, then coercive diplomacy is clearly a high-stakes game of poker. Chance may influence what the contents of one's "hand" might be, but how that hand is played is determined more by skill, judgment, and experience. The United States is holding many of the world's military cards at present, but a worthy and determined adversary may still induce us to bet recklessly or "fold" needlessly—at great cost of national treasure.

This step associates the tools of coercive diplomacy with poker betting options, and recommends the correct "play" based on the results obtained from the previous steps. For those who are not familiar with poker, each betting option will be described briefly: A player "folds" when he or she withdraws from a hand— forfeiting whatever chips have been wagered up to that point. The advantages of folding are that one does not become entangled in an undesirably escalating situation, and one *never* shows one's cards. The disadvantage of folding is apparent. "Call" is a term that one uses when matching an opponent's bet. The opponent must then decide whether it is advantageous to play the hand, "fold," or escalate the situation by "raising." A player "raises" in an attempt to

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<sup>22</sup> Karl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p.86.



either drive an opponent out of the hand, or to simply increase the stakes. It can be the most reckless or rewarding maneuver in poker—depending on the circumstances.

Relating the aforementioned poker terminology to coercive diplomacy is a fairly straightforward endeavor. A national security strategist elects to “fold” when the use of coercive diplomacy is *not recommended* in a crisis—thereby enabling the United States to either explore other noncommittal options or disengage entirely. A “call” is employed when coercive diplomacy is utilized to clearly signal U.S. involvement in a crisis in the least provocative manner possible—forcing the adversary to “make the next move.” “Raising” utilizes coercive diplomacy to place the adversary in a position of either initiating warfare, “folding,” or “calling our bluff” and forcing the United States to initiate warfare. A strategist may, in fact, recommend proceeding directly to “raise”—an eventuality that may be deemed necessary due to the urgency of the situation or level of national interest at stake. It is important to realize that “folding” does not preclude the possibility of future utilization of coercive diplomacy in a crisis, that one may use “calling” as a means to buy time while support is garnered or forces positioned, and one may go from “call” to “raise”—but never the reverse. Once coercive diplomacy has been employed in a crisis, proceeding from “raise” to “call” or subsequently “folding” from either position will be interpreted by an adversary as a sign of weakness.

**Step VII: Coercive Diplomacy Menu Options**

<b>Cost-Benefit Analysis</b>	<i>Red</i>	F/C	F
	<i>Yellow</i>	C/R	F/C
	<i>Green</i>	C/R	C
		<i>Favorable</i>	<i>Unfavorable</i>
<b>National Resolve Test</b>			

**Legend:** F= Fold  
C= Call  
R= Raise

Model Step VII (Coercive Diplomacy Menu Options) delineates the range of approaches recommended to a strategist for a given “Cost-Benefit Analysis” level and “National Resolve Test” result. Examining the chart’s extremes indicates that all coercive diplomacy options are available with a “green” cost-benefit level and “favorable” resolve—as dictated by the circumstances. At the other extreme, a “red” cost-benefit level coupled with “unfavorable” national resolve indicates that the use of coercive diplomacy by the United States is either not justified, too risky, or both.

Menu options are fairly meaningless without a menu, so a fairly representative one is provided in figure III-2. Each option will be addressed briefly:

<u><i>Fold</i></u> ( <i>noncommittal options</i> )	<u><i>Call</i></u>	<u><i>Raise</i></u>
* Protests	* Implicit threats	* Explicit threats
* Sanctions	* "Try-and-see"	* Blockade
* Break off relations	* "Turning of screw"	* Interpose forces
* Disengage	* Forces on alert	* Threaten war
* Ambiguity	* Forces deployed	
* Appeasement	* Show of force (exercise)	
* Persuade others to coerce	* Embargo	
	* Strategic ambiguity	
	* <i>Quid pro quo</i>	

**Figure III-2. Coercive Diplomacy Menu**

### **The Fold Option**

Since the "fold" option is characterized as being non-coercive in nature, the intention in utilizing this approach is to address U.S. foreign policy concerns as forcefully as possible without becoming committed to a potential military situation. Although many strategies listed under this option may seem provocative, none irrevocably involve the United States in direct conflict intervention. Strategies under the "fold" option include:

**Protests.** Diplomatic protests will naturally accompany any strategy, and may even lead to the sponsorship of a formal U.N. resolution. Protests associated with this option must be pithy, yet noncommittal.

**Sanctions.** This frequently misapplied strategy may have questionable coercive value in a short-term crisis, but is an effective method of registering long-term disapproval. Care must be taken to predict the effect of sanctions on one's own country

and allies—a lesson recently learned during the futile attempts to link human rights violations in China to “Most Favored Nation” status.

**Break off relations.** Formally breaking off relations with an adversary is obviously a more serious and direct approach, which may be initiated by simply threatening to do so.

**Disengagement.** One may disengage on favorable terms, or otherwise, and find a less demanding method of engaging the adversary—perhaps by referring the issue to the United Nations.

**Ambiguity.** One may be intentionally ambiguous as a means of either keeping one’s options open or avoiding undesirable commitments. When ambiguity is used in a situation that demands clarity, however, it may not achieve the intended effect.

**Appeasement.** Once highly regarded as a diplomatic strategy, appeasement gained a bad name following Neville Chamberlain’s ill-fated overture to Adolf Hitler—but sometimes a “carrot” may defuse a crisis more readily than will a “stick” (particularly if it’s a large, pointy “carrot”).

**Persuade others to coerce.** If all else fails, it may be possible to persuade a loyal ally to do the coercing for us—presumably one who either owes the United States a large favor, or has more at stake in the crisis.

## The Call Option

All of the strategies listed under the “call” option are coercive in nature and will involve the United States directly in the crisis. The intention with this list of strategies is to clearly signal involvement in the least provocative manner possible, so as not to unnecessarily limit U.S. options or prematurely force a military confrontation. Since these strategies may utilize subtle threats that take time to prove effective, the urgency of a situation may preclude their use, and more direct measures may be necessary. It is also worth reemphasizing that should it become necessary, one may also “ratchet up” the level of coercion from a “call” to a “raise” option. Once a strategy listed under the “call” option is employed, the credibility and prestige of the United States are committed to the resolution of the crisis.

**Implicit threats.** The implicit threat, otherwise referred to as the tacit ultimatum, does not insist upon a time limit for compliance, but is generally used to give the distinct impression that punishment is forthcoming.<sup>23</sup> Mothers are masters of the implicit threat—a fact that will be readily confirmed by anyone who has ever been on the receiving end of the familiar refrain: “Just wait until your father gets home!” What an implicit threat achieves in flexibility and subtlety, it may completely forgo with its lack of clarity. As is the case with all strategies listed under the “call” option, great care must be taken to ensure that the terms are clearly understood by the adversary.

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<sup>23</sup> Alexander L. George and William E. Simons, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), p.18.

**Try-and-see.** The “try-and-see” approach is a variant of coercive diplomacy in which a demand is made on an adversary without conveying a strong sense of urgency.<sup>24</sup> The coercing power then waits to see if this approach is persuasive before taking any further action or making additional threats.

**Turning of screw.** The “turning-of-the-screw” is more forceful than the “try-and-see” approach in the sense that an incremental increase in pressure is threatened and then implemented.<sup>25</sup> It is not clear whether the “Rolling Thunder” bombing campaign during the Vietnam War was intended as a “try-and-see” or a “turning of the screw”—but it didn’t work anyway.

**Forces on alert.** Placing forces on alert sends a strong signal to an adversary, particularly when it appears to be an obvious prelude to warfare. A nuclear form of this strategy, termed “raising the DEFCON,” was employed by the United States during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

**Forces deployed.** This can be a relatively benign gesture, such as simply getting ships underway and moving them toward the theater of interest, or it may be an action that is directly coupled to an explicit threat—an approach which will be explored as a “raise” option.

**Show of force (exercise).** A “show of force” can range from live-fire war games in theater, to a simple “freedom of navigation” transit by one or more ships. In both approaches the United States is clearly expressing its interests and daring an adversary to interfere.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

**Embargo.** Implementing an embargo is a much stronger step than imposing sanctions, and one that requires the support of many allies. Embargoes send a clear message, but take time to become effective and generally impact civilian populations disproportionately.

**Strategic ambiguity.** This is a very unique diplomatic gambit that is employed when dealing with an adversary who possesses weapons of mass destruction. In such an instance, “grave concern” may be expressed over the possible use of such weapons, and a military response involving American nuclear weapons is strongly implied—but no specifics are offered.

***Quid pro quo.*** Although *quid pro quos* may take a number of forms, as a “call” option strategy one is particularly appropriate: the coercing power threatens to escalate the military situation (sometimes very graphically) if the adversary attempts to do anything that is considered unacceptable. In this way, the onus is placed on the adversary to make the next move.

### **The Raise Option**

The “raise” option may be employed as a first step if the urgency of the situation demands it, or as a follow-on to a “call” strategy. Each of the strategies listed under this option are extremely provocative and may serve as either a last-ditch measure to avoid war—if successful—or otherwise as a prelude to warfare. Once the United States utilizes one of these strategies, there is no turning back.

**Explicit threats.** An explicit threat (otherwise termed the classic ultimatum) includes a demand, a time limit, and a threat of punishment for non-compliance.<sup>26</sup> Since there is no “wiggle room” left for an adversary in such an approach, a coercing power must be ready, willing, and able to carry out the advertised threat if the terms of compliance are not met. The United States successfully used a version of this approach as a prelude to the 1994 *Operation Restore Democracy* in Haiti. An American invasion force was deployed and presumably beyond the control of the distinguished negotiators (“Team Carter”) on the ground. The Haitian strongman, Raoul Cedras, was given the “last clear chance” of avoiding conflict by capitulating to U.S. demands. This technique is considered in some quarters as “brinkmanship.”

**Blockade.** A blockade is an act of war that utilizes a military presence to enforce a total embargo. The United States possesses the resources to indefinitely enforce a naval blockade against class “Class A” and “Class B” adversaries without the assistance of third parties. A naval blockade was used effectively during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and it still remains a highly risky and escalatory act.

**Interpose forces.** One may interpose forces directly in harm’s way in order to transfer the burden of decision to an adversary (the “trip wire” effect), or simply as a statement of purpose. This approach should be taken utilizing a military asset which is powerful enough not to be disregarded, yet one which the U.S. can afford to lose—if that possibility exists. Whereas sending a carrier battle group off the Cuban coast may not be

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.



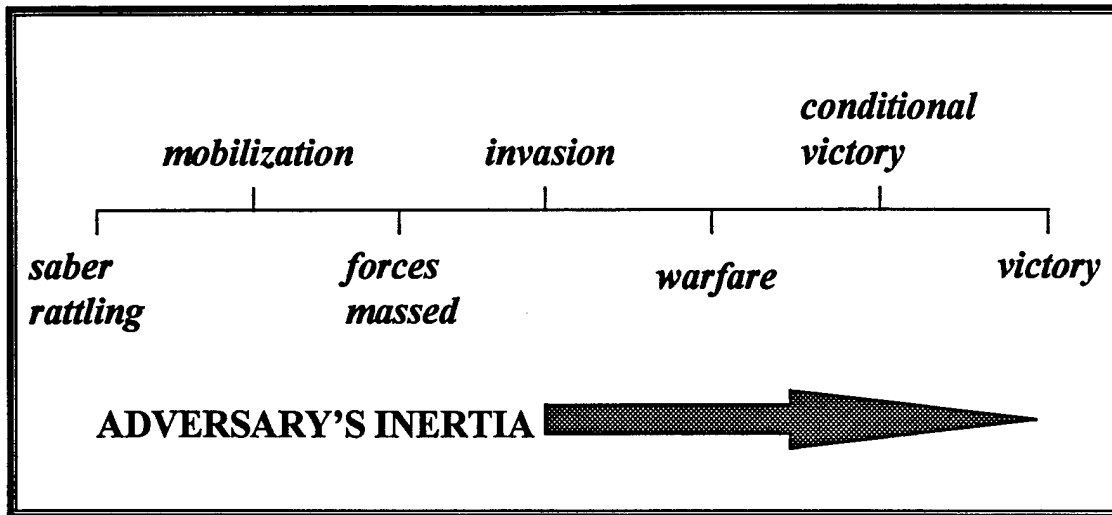
inherently risky, sending one into the Taiwan Strait may not be considered prudent a few years from now.

**Threaten war.** This is a time-honored diplomatic approach that is generally employed when patience is in short supply. One should never assume that a militarily inferior adversary will automatically acquiesce when threatened with war.

### **H. Death, Taxes, and Coercive Diplomacy?**

Hardly! As indicated in the beginning of this desperate attempt to define the undefinable, there are going to be instances—even when this model is religiously adhered to—when coercive diplomacy will fail. There is, after all, a large uncertainty factor when classifying variables such as human behavior and chance. One way to mitigate this unfortunate aspect of reality is by addressing the factors that affect predictability of outcome:

**“Situational factors”** are those which are determined primarily by the circumstances of a crisis. The **“Coercive Diplomacy Model”** is intended to address many of these factors by matching strategy to policy (**“Cost-Benefit Analysis”**), reducing the possibility of unintentional bluffing (**“National Resolve Test”**), and tailoring the coercive diplomacy strategy to the crisis to enhance the credibility and effectiveness of the threat (**“Coercive Diplomacy Menu”**). What has heretofore remained neglected is an assessment of the adversary’s intentions and actions. An examination of the **“Adversary’s Warfare Continuum”** (fig. III-3) is illuminating in this regard:

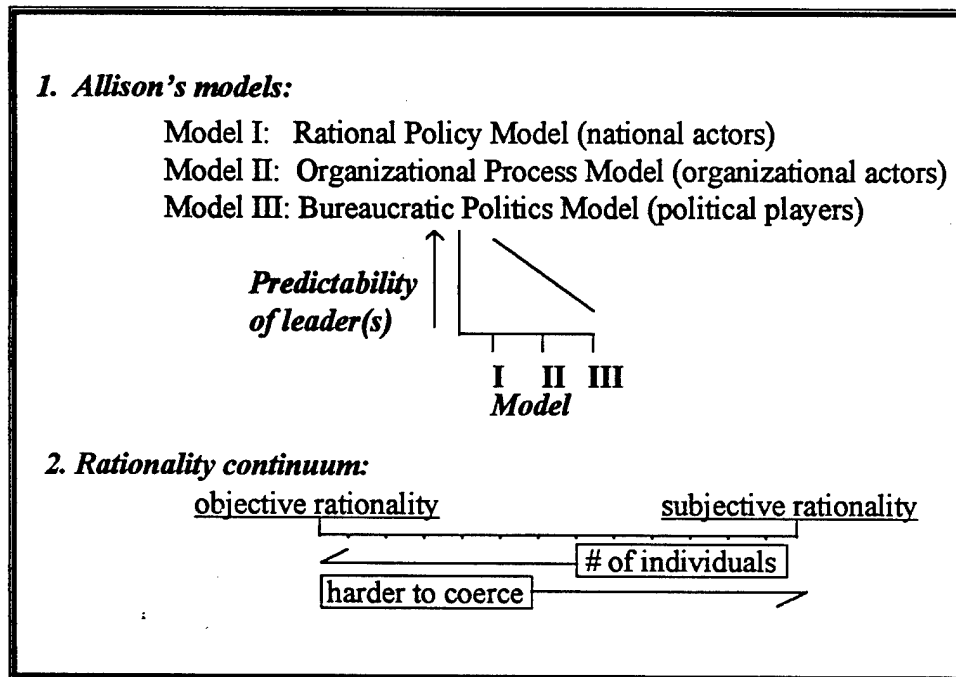


**Fig. III-3. Adversary's Warfare Continuum**

Since the nature of coercive diplomacy is, to paraphrase Sun Tzu, "to interfere with an adversary's plans," logic dictates that a prudent strategist must ascertain what those plans may be—and how difficult it will be to interfere with them. Without resorting to the "snowball-rolling-down-a-hill" analogy—it is readily apparent from figure III-2, that an adversary who has not yet initiated warfare (low inertia) will be much easier to coerce than one who has just successfully completed it (high inertia). Consequently, an adversary who has no intention of seeking a military victory—and is merely mobilizing forces for a limited political purpose—has little inherent inertia and should be comparatively easy to coerce. In any event, it stands to reason that the greater an adversary's inertia, the more challenging it will be to successfully coerce him, and the greater the likelihood of failure.

**"Predisposed factors"** are those that inherently affect the decision making of an adversary. The CIA and State Department undoubtedly expend a great deal of resources developing psychological profiles of adversaries in an attempt to predict their behavior in crises. Although it would be impudent to completely disregard such efforts, suffice it to

say that it is sometimes impossible to predict the behavior of close friends—as the ever-increasing divorce rate would attest. A more modest objective, then, is to at least assess the predictability of our behavioral predictions (fig. III-3).



**Fig. III-4. Assessment of Predisposed Factors**

The intention of figure III-4 is to classify the decision making of an adversary according to two models. Allison's model is used to delineate the structure with which decisions are made, and assess the predictability inherent in that structure.<sup>27</sup> The "rational policy model," which utilizes national actors as its focal point, would logically imply the most predictability of the three due to its simplicity—provided there is an accurate assessment of that national actor available. At the other extreme, the "bureaucratic politics model" relies upon political players and their mysterious influence networks to derive decisions. For an American national security strategist to correctly deduce the

<sup>27</sup> Graham T. Allison, "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis," *American Political Science Review* (September 1969): 689-694.

extent of each player's influence, much less their psychological propensities, is quite challenging.

The "rationality continuum" is borrowed from Stephen Metz's theory on deterrence and misapplied here.<sup>28</sup> The implication of this model is that because the West is naturally inhabited with objective, rational individuals, that we generally assume ourselves to be *objectively* rational. If we encounter a leader who makes decisions based on factors and values that we don't understand—such as culture, tradition, or religion—then that leader must be *subjectively* rational. As an addendum to this theory are the somewhat interrelated facts that the smaller the number of individuals who are likely to influence a decision (cadre-sized down to omnipotent dictator), the more subjective their rationality--and the more difficult it will be to coerce them. The complementary assumption is that the influence of additional individuals brings moderation and objectivity. This theory is intended to account for the apparent unpredictability of many absolute dictators.

### I. The Fine Print

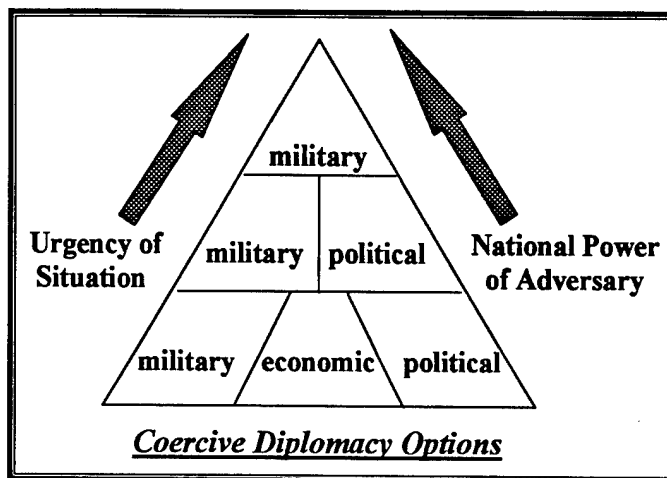
Since no model—at least not this one—can possibly foresee the myriad nuances of international crises, a few relevant aphorisms will be offered as an adjunct to the preceding theory:

**The choice of a coercive strategy is as important as deciding whether to engage in coercive diplomacy in the first place.** Although coercive diplomacy has been

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<sup>28</sup> Steven Metz, "Deterring Conflict Short of War," *Strategic Review* (Fall 1994): 45.

defined in relation to an adversary's *military* intentions or actions, it is theoretically possible to utilize all elements of national power in a response—regardless of which of the previous options is employed. The decision to employ military, economic, or political strategies is dependent upon the urgency of the situation and the national power of the adversary—as *either* one of these is increased, options tend to become more limited (fig. III-5).



**Fig. III-5. Limitations on Coercive Diplomacy Options**

When formulating a coercive diplomatic strategy, it is important to remember that economic pressures take time to accumulate and often do not achieve their desired result, while political resolutions may be ineffective against powerful foes (particularly at the United Nations). Nevertheless, it is quite feasible to use political and economic initiatives to form alliances and “set up” a military strategy. It is also important to distinguish a “political” strategy (e.g., a United Nations’ resolution) from that which is inherent in coercive diplomacy itself—there is *always* a political “message” delivered when coercive diplomacy is employed.

**Coercive political and military strategies must be kept “in phase.”** Even an overwhelming display of force utilizing multiple carrier battle groups, when coupled with a weak or ambiguous political posture, may produce nothing more than momentary confusion in the mind of a determined aggressor. The reverse is also true—no amount of saber rattling will compensate for a perceived military weakness or a lack of resolve. Since the United States will be viewing future confrontations from the vantage point of world leader, there is no advantage in declaring interests in anything but the most clear and precise terms unless bluffing is considered—a risky strategy that should only be employed when no other recourse is available or an unfavorable result is acceptable

**It’s not just what you say—it’s how you say it.** If different diplomatic messages are to be conveyed publicly and privately (to allow the adversary to “save face,” for instance), ensure that the private message is extremely direct and forceful—and on the record. Since clarity is a virtue in most crisis environments, ambiguous messages should be avoided unless they are part of a specific strategy (e.g., “strategic ambiguity”)—and they should not be used to determine an adversary’s intentions. Coercive diplomacy is a power strategy that, for the United States, must be based on intimidation rather than subterfuge or guile.

**An adversary’s actions usually reveal his intentions.** If an adversary has several mechanized divisions poised for attack across the border, assume he intends to use them—regardless of what he is saying or what his behavioral profile reads. It is sometimes difficult to ascertain the intentions of allies whom we presume to understand, so it makes little sense to risk a national interest by making dubious assumptions about

what an adversary is thinking. The national security strategist must consider an adversary's actions, and address his capabilities.

**Naval power is the premier instrument of coercive diplomacy.** The use of naval forces (where possible) offers an American President speed, flexibility, and duration of response, the ability to demonstrate clear resolve, and the advantage of absolute military superiority—without violating sovereignty, obtaining overflight and basing rights, or requiring congressional approval. Against resourceful “non-Iraqi” adversaries who can be expected to utilize asymmetrical strategies, creative application of this capability will be required. Utilizing a force that is directed at an enemy's weakest point (e.g., antisubmarine warfare) may convey a stronger message than is possible by simply invoking the “carrier reflex.”

**If a “carrot” (in the form of appeasement or incentives) is offered to an adversary, great care must be taken to ensure that it does not dilute the coercive aspect of the overall strategy.** It must always remain clear that a lack of compliance will result in punishment, or the adversary will find great advantage in holding out for a better deal.

**If a coercive diplomacy strategy is initiated by a coalition or alliance of which the United States is a member, that strategy will be identified by the adversary as American in origin and focus.** The implication of seeking anonymity behind the veil of a coalition may materialize surprisingly when the coercive diplomacy strategy fails—resulting in what may be termed “the weak-sister syndrome.” In the words of Hans

Morgenthau: "Never allow a weak ally to make decisions for you."<sup>29</sup> Whereas in some instances a coalition may provide a coercive influence which is greater than the sum of its parts, the reverse may also be true if critical vulnerabilities in its structure are exposed.

**Coercive warfare can be effective as a follow-on strategy to a failed coercive diplomacy initiative.**<sup>30</sup> As alluded to previously, the "message" of coercive warfare is most likely to be correctly received when it is delivered as a prelude to war rather than during it. Since this is a highly escalatory act—one that *will* be perceived as offensive in nature—it should never be used unless one is prepared to conduct full-scale warfare.

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<sup>29</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, "Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace," in *Strategy and Force Planning* ed. Strategy and Force Planning Faculty (Newport: Naval War College Press, 1995), 278.

<sup>30</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of coercive warfare, the strategist is advised to consult Robert Pape's *Bombing to Win*.



#### IV. Case Studies: "The Test Drive"

The best way to assess the validity of a model is to employ it under realistic conditions. Since the National Security Council is not presently engaged in any crises that would require the use of this model, two case studies have been selected for analysis based primarily on their illustrative characteristics.

##### A. Kuwait: 1990-91

Iraq entered 1990 saddled by enormous debts resulting from an eight-year war with Iran, massive military spending, and an ambitious palace-building project by its resident dictator—Saddam Hussein. On July 10, Iraq negotiated an agreement with its fellow OPEC ministers that would generate revenue by limiting oil production and concurrently raising prices. In announcing the agreement the next day, however, Kuwait added the stipulation that it would review and possibly reverse its commitment in the fall.<sup>31</sup> In the words of Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi Foreign Minister, "We started to realize that there is a conspiracy against Iraq, a deliberate conspiracy against Iraq by Kuwait, organized, devised by the United States."<sup>32</sup> Accusing the Kuwaitis of undermining his regime by flooding the market with cheap oil, Saddam issued the Emir of Kuwait a stark

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<sup>31</sup> Janice Gross Stein, "Deterrence or Compellence in the Gulf, 1990-91: A Failed or Impossible Task?", *International Security* (Fall 1992): 142.

<sup>32</sup> Transcript of *Frontline* Television Show #1407, *The Gulf War: Part I*, Air Date: 9 January 1996, 2.

warning: "Each dollar less in price means to us one billion in revenues for a year. If you do not mean waging a war against Iraq, please stop it."<sup>33</sup>

On July 16, 30,000 Iraqi troops from elite Republican Guard divisions were deployed toward the Kuwait border—an event which was duly noted by American spy satellites.<sup>34</sup> Saddam then escalated his demands, attempting to "shake down" the Emir of Kuwait for \$2.4 billion in compensation for oil that he claimed Kuwait had pumped from the disputed Rumaila oil field (by alleged slant drilling), \$12 billion in compensation for the depressed oil prices brought about by Kuwaiti oil overproduction, forgiveness of Iraq's war debt of \$10 billion, and a lease on the strategic island of Bubiya that controlled access to Iraq's only port.<sup>35</sup> Urged on by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the Emir refused to budge.<sup>36</sup>

As the number of Iraqi troops heading for the Kuwait border increased from 30,000 to 70,000, then 100,000, other Arab leaders attempted to defuse the crisis.<sup>37</sup>

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarek recalled his meeting with Saddam Hussein:

He met me in the airport. Then he took me in the car—he was driving—beside him. Nobody with us. And we went upstairs to the first floor, tete-a-tete in a big room and we were both alone. Nobody with us. I asked him about the problem, what's happening, I told him "Do you have any intention to attack them or invade them?" He told me, "No, but don't tell the Kuwaitis about that." It was a very clear answer.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Janice Gross Stein, "Deterrence or Compellence in the Gulf, 1990-91: A Failed or Impossible Task?", *International Security* (Fall 1992): 150.

<sup>36</sup> John Mueller, *Policy and Opinion in the Gulf War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p.17.

<sup>37</sup> Transcript of Frontline Television Show #1407, *The Gulf War: Part I*, Air Date 9 January 1996, 2.

As soon as he left Baghdad, the Egyptian President telephoned the White House to report that Saddam was bluffing. Mubarek told President George Bush that the Iraqi leader was desperate for money, but that the Arabs would sort things out.<sup>38</sup>

On July 25, the day after Mubarek's visit, Saddam abruptly summoned the American Ambassador, April Glaspie. In her two years as Ambassador, she had never met with the Iraqi President privately. Glaspie assured Saddam:

I know you need funds. But we have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border dispute with Kuwait. I was in the American Embassy in Kuwait during the late sixties. The instructions we had during the period were that we should express no opinion on the issue and that the issue is not associated with America. [Secretary of State] James Baker has directed our official spokesmen to emphasize this instruction.

Glaspie then asked, in light of Iraq's troop movements to the border with Kuwait, but also "in a spirit of friendship, what are your intentions?" Saddam informed Glaspie that he had just asked President Mubarek

to assure the Kuwaitis . . . that we are not going to do anything until we meet with them. When we meet and we see that there is hope, then nothing will happen. But if we are unable to find a solution, then it will be natural that Iraq will not accept death, even though wisdom is above everything else.<sup>39</sup>

Although Ambassador Glaspie claimed in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that she delivered strong warnings orally to Saddam against the use of force, her message may have been misconstrued. Tariq Aziz, who was present at the meeting, provided his own interpretation:

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Janice Gross Stein, "Deterrence or Compellence in the Gulf, 1990-91: A Failed or Impossible Task?", *International Security* (Fall 1992): 153.

Having been a Foreign Minister, I understand the work of an ambassador and I believe Miss Glaspie's behavior was correct. She was summoned suddenly. The President wanted to tell her that our government would not waive its options . . . . We knew she was acting on available instructions. *She spoke in vague diplomatic language* and we knew the position she was in. Her behavior was a classic diplomatic response and we were not influenced by it.<sup>40</sup>

Confident in her belief that Saddam's "emphasis that he wants a peaceful settlement is surely sincere," Ambassador Glaspie recommended in a cable to Washington to ". . . ease off on public criticism of Iraq until we see how the negotiations develop." Without making any reference to the 100,000 Iraqi troops deployed along the Kuwaiti border, President Bush adopted the Ambassador's advice and cabled Saddam that, "we believe that differences are best resolved by peaceful means and not by threats involving military force or conflict. My administration continues to desire better relations with Iraq."<sup>41</sup>

Apparently satisfied that Kuwait was—for the moment—diplomatically isolated, Saddam reiterated his demands. When Kuwait's Crown Prince reportedly shouted in a meeting on August 1 that if the Iraqis needed funds, they should "send their wives onto the street to earn money for them"—Saddam responded by invading them the next day.<sup>42</sup> By noon on August 2, 1990, Saddam Hussein controlled one-fifth of the world's oil.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> John Mueller, *Policy and Opinion in the Gulf War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p.17.

<sup>43</sup> Transcript of Frontline Show #1407, *The Gulf War: Part I*, Air Date 9 January 1996, 3.

## The Way Things Might Have Been—Kuwait: 1990

Assuming that the “Coercive Diplomacy Model” could be transported back in time and applied by U.S. national security strategists during those fateful days of July 1990—what might the result have been? The “Gulf Crisis” began to appear on American radar screens after July 16, 1990—when Saddam Hussein vented his frustration over Kuwaiti intransigence by issuing demands for compensation and deploying 30,000 troops toward the border. As the troop deployment continues to gain momentum, our intrepid National Security Advisor strongly considers the possibility of employing coercive diplomacy and directs his staff to perform Model Step I (fig. IV-1):

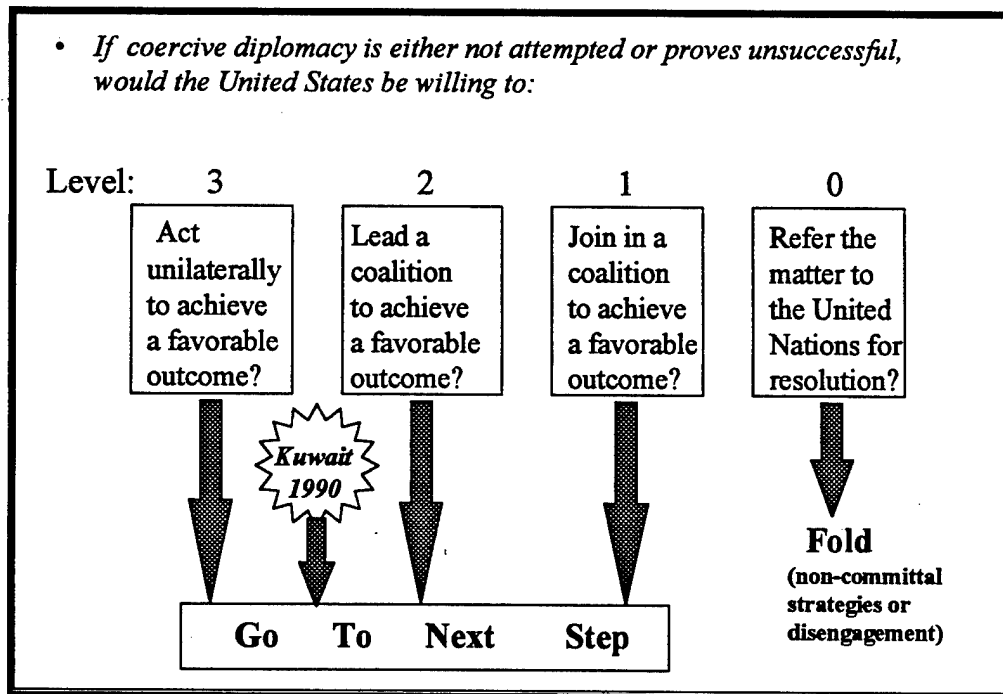


Fig. IV-1. National Interest Litmus Test—Kuwait: 1990

Maintaining the unencumbered flow of oil from the Persian Gulf directly toward America’s gas tanks has been a vital interest since President Jimmy Carter’s motorcade

waited in its first gas line. Furthermore, since the Kuwaitis are *de facto* allies of the United States and the Iraqis are not, the prospect of Saddam Hussein acquiring control of one-fifth of the world's oil supply by annexing Kuwait is clearly unacceptable. The threat posed by the deployment of tens of thousands of Republican Guard troops along the Kuwaiti border therefore justifies a minimum of level "2" and perhaps even level "3"—hence, the compromise determination of level "2.5" which is depicted in the test result (fig. IV-1).

The calculation of Model Step II (National Power Index) could be greatly simplified by merely assuming that Iraq is a regional power ("Class B")—but addressing each component of the index may prove enlightening.

National Power Factors ( <i>weighting factor-x</i> ):			
			★ = Iraq: 1990
<u>Military Power (x4)</u>	<u>WMD (x3)</u>	<u>Political Influence (x2)</u>	<u>Economic Power (x1)</u>
1.0 Global Power	1.0 Nukes	1.0 Sec Council Mbr	1.0 G-7 Mbr
★.5 Regional	.75 Bio	★.75 Allied with SCM	.75 Central
.25 Self Defense	★.25 Chem	.25 Regional Allies	★.25 Periphery
0 Disorganized	0 None	0 Pariah	0 Dysfunctional

**Fig. IV-2. Calculation of Iraq's National Power Index**

Referring to the sample calculation (fig. IV-2):

**Military Power.** Iraq's Soviet-equipped conventional military is clearly formidable. Possessing the largest standing army in the Middle East, a capable air force, a sophisticated air-defense system, and recent combat experience, Iraq's score for this factor is considered a solid ".5" ( regional military power).

**Weapons of Mass Destruction.** Although intelligence indicates that Iraq is developing both biological and nuclear weapons, evidence from the Iran-Iraq War indicates a considerable *operational* chemical weapons capability—and no apparent remorse concerning its employment. The possession of SCUD missiles as a potential chemical weapon delivery system further complicates matters. A score of “.25” (chemical weapons capable) is therefore assessed for the “WMD” factor.

**Political Influence.** Iraq’s political influence may depend on how favorably the world—particularly the Arab world—regards U.S. involvement in the crisis. Although this issue is addressed more comprehensively during Model Step IV (Support Check), it is reasonable to assume that some Arab countries may support Iraq in a showdown with “the West.” A more disturbing possibility is that Iraq’s traditional ally, the Soviet Union, may intercede on their behalf. It is this eventuality that justifies a score of “.75” (allied with Security Council member) for the “Political Influence” factor.

**Economic Power.** Iraq readily admits to being on the verge of bankruptcy—a fact that would normally assign one as a card-carrying member of the world’s economic periphery.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, the ability to raise the price of the world’s oil by merely stamping one’s feet definitely counts for something—resulting in a “.5” (compromise between “center” and “periphery”) for this category.

Adding up the total of these wildly divergent factors produces a total “National Power Index” score of “6.25” for Iraq (fig. IV-3)—which categorizes it as one of the world’s more dangerous regional powers.

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<sup>44</sup> Barry Buzan, “New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century,” in *Strategy and Force Planning* ed. Strategy and Force Planning Faculty (Newport: Naval War College Press, 1995), 86.

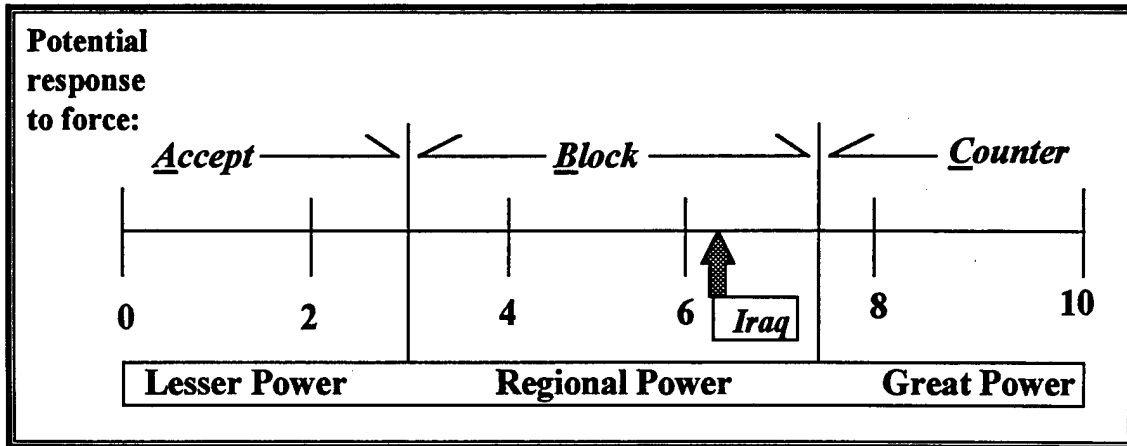


Fig. IV-3. Iraq's National Power Index

Once again, it is worth cautioning that when computing the value of vague or subjective influences, one's mileage may definitely vary. The intent of this calculation is to provide a *relative* net assessment of the "equities" that an adversary brings into a crisis.

Applying the output of the previous steps to Model Step III (Cost-Benefit Analysis) produces a "yellow" result (fig.IV-4), which translates into the following statement by our heretofore unnamed National Security Advisor:

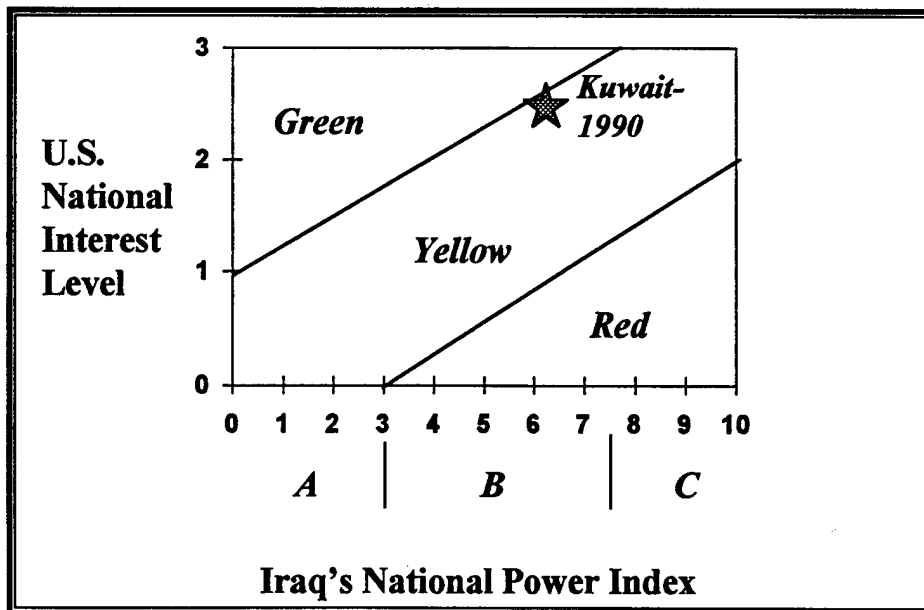
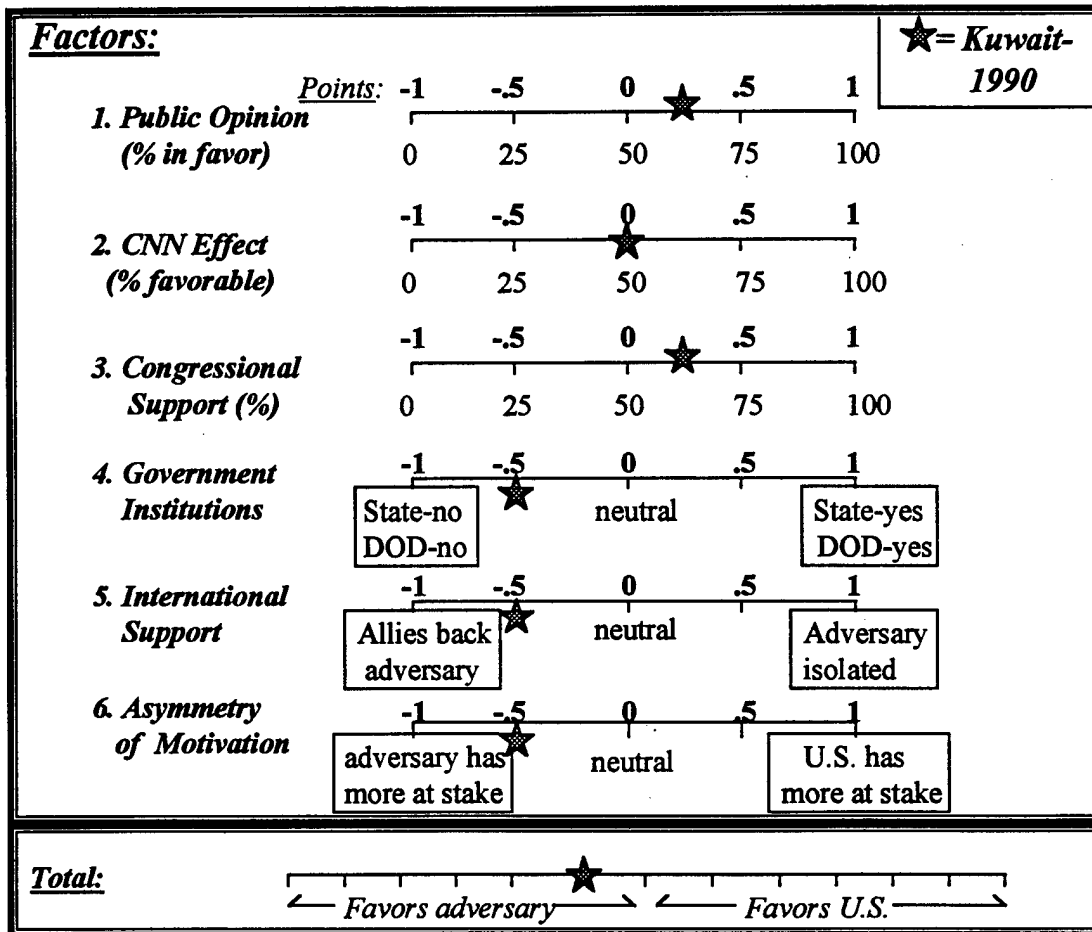


Fig. IV-4. Cost-Benefit Analysis—Kuwait: 1990



Mr. President, even though the Iraqis are formidable foes, the risk to our national security posed by their deployment of 100,000 troops along the Kuwaiti border is great. Since we can not be absolutely certain of Saddam Hussein's intentions, I recommend that we *consider* utilizing coercive diplomacy in order to protect our friends from possible attack and prevent Iraq from controlling one-fifth of the world's oil reserves. I will get back to you with a more definitive recommendation once my staff completes the remaining steps of the "Coercive Diplomacy Model". And sir, can you please talk your new pal, Mr. Gorbachev, into sitting this one out so I can get a "green" result on my "Cost-Benefit Analysis?"

The situation acquires a stronger sense of immediacy as new satellite photos lend further credence to the assumption that the 100,000 Republican Guard troops are probably not vacationing along the Kuwaiti border—unless they normally bring their tanks when "on leave." It is also evident that talks between Iraq and Kuwait are presently stalemated—with no immediate prospects for breaking the impasse. The only encouraging news is provided by Egypt's President Mubarek, who is absolutely convinced that Saddam is bluffing. Nevertheless, the National Security Advisor does not believe in cautious optimism; deriving his cynical outlook from a recent traumatic divorce—and from the cold, Clausewitzian reality of the "Coercive Diplomacy Model." After seeing their mentor slam the latest intelligence photos down on the briefing table, National Security Council staffers scramble to perform Model Step IV (Support Check)—an extraordinarily tedious calculation which considers the probable influence of several important factors, including those related to the "trinity," on the unfolding crisis (fig. IV-5).



**Fig. IV-5. Support Check—Kuwait: 1990**

Examining each of the factors in the previous figure individually:

**Public Opinion.** Since the American public is not yet aware of the gravity of the “Gulf Crisis,” the best indication of public opinion is the President’s “Foreign Policy Approval Rating”—which was measured at 62% in a poll completed on July 8.<sup>45</sup> This data coincides very closely with the President’s overall approval rating of 60%, from the Gallup poll completed on July 22.<sup>46</sup> The public perception is that George Bush is an “old foreign policy hand” who can be trusted to manage an international crisis. It is also

<sup>45</sup> John Mueller, *Policy and Opinion in the Gulf War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p.184.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

reasonable to assume that these numbers would *increase* as Americans rally around their President—a historical precedent, at least during the short term. Based on a minimum projection of 62% public support for taking on Saddam Hussein, this factor is assessed as “+.25”.

**CNN Effect.** It is difficult to assess the influence that media coverage may have on the crisis, because it is not a “story” yet. Since the media are typically more effective representing human interests rather than national security interests, coverage is likely to remain positive as long as the United States appears to be acting on moral principles—rather than for purely *real politik* reasons. Although brutal, maniacal dictators generally have image problems, American Presidents lost their immunity from bad press a quarter century ago—so this factor is initially considered an unknown (“0”).

**Congressional Support.** The President’s point men on Capitol Hill are telling him that he has strong support for this issue in the House, but that a Senate vote could go either way.<sup>47</sup> The assumption is that he should be able to whip up public sentiment for challenging Iraq, call in a few favors, and there should be sufficient votes for a bipartisan resolution. It is also expected that several influential leaders will voice opposition to the prospect of embroiling the United States in an overseas crisis that could eventually escalate into warfare—raising the specter of the dreaded “War Powers Act.” A cautionary “+.25” is assessed for this factor—primarily driven by the decisive support expected in the House of Representatives.

**Government Institutions.** The support the Departments of State and Defense are offering for engaging the Iraqis is best described as “underwhelming.” The State

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<sup>47</sup> Transcript of Frontline Television Show #1407, *The Gulf War: Part I*, Air Date: 9 January 1996, 9.

Department is populated by “Arabists” who concur with the opinion that Saddam is bluffing, and believe that the United States should do nothing. State’s official diplomatic posture is best summed up by senior spokesperson Margaret Tutwiler: “We do not have any defense treaties with Kuwait, and there are no special defense or security treaties. We also remain strongly committed to supporting the individual and collective self-defense of our friends in the Gulf with whom we have long-standing ties.”<sup>48</sup> *Huh?* The Department of Defense is still haunted by the ghost of Vietnam—and a computer projection of 10,000 casualties from a war with Iraq. There also appears to be a division developing between Secretary Richard Cheney—who publicly reaffirmed an American commitment made during the Iran-Iraq War to come to Kuwait’s defense—and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, who believes that the Iraqi troop deployment “wasn’t immediately troubling because it was just a buildup within their own country.”<sup>49</sup> Since neither department appears anxious for a fight, “Government Institutions” is considered a “-.5”.

**International Support.** The support and influence of the international community may be the critical factor in this crisis. Although Arab condemnation of Saddam’s bellicose posturing has been significant, there is little support for direct U.S. intervention—other than from the Kuwaitis. A much larger stumbling block is the potential involvement of Iraq’s traditional ally, the Soviet Union. Relations between the United States and the Soviet Union have been quite cordial following the end of the Cold War, but Soviet support—or even neutrality—in this matter is not guaranteed. Based

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<sup>48</sup> Janice Gross Stein, “Deterrence or Compellence in the Gulf, 1990-91: A Failed or Impossible Task?”, *International Security* (Fall 1992): 152.

<sup>49</sup> Transcript of Frontline Television Show #1407, *The Gulf War: Part I*, Air Date 9 January 1996, 1.

on the fact that there are presently more problems than solutions in this area, a “-.5” is estimated.

**Asymmetry of Motivation.** Regardless of the fact that U.S. national interests are at stake in this crisis, no one has bothered to explain it to Saddam Hussein. The Iraqi’s dire economic predicament contrasts sharply with the ostentatious prosperity of their recalcitrant neighbors to the south. This factor is easily a “-.5”, and would be even more negative if the United States did not have such a distinguished history of defending its interests in the Persian Gulf.

The total for the “Support Check” is a “-1.0”; hardly a result that encourages one to dive head-first into the Persian Gulf. While these preliminary indications are disturbing, our determined strategists view them as “a work in progress” and proceed to Model Step V (Escalation Potential)—the results of which are depicted in figure IV-6.

1. Divergent cultures*	+1 ★	★ = <i>Kuwait-1990</i>
2. History of animosity	+1	
3. Close proximity of forces	+1 ★	
4. National honor declared	+1	
5. Survival of government threatened**	+1 ★	
6. National survival threatened**	+1 ★	
<p><i>Notes:</i> * Utilize Huntington’s criteria in <u>The Clash of Civilizations</u>.            ** Refers to adversary’s national and governmental survival (which may be indistinguishable).</p>		

**Fig. IV-6. Escalation Potential—Kuwait: 1990**

The “Escalation Potential” of the crisis should be addressed cumulatively from two perspectives: Iraq versus Kuwait, and Iraq versus the United States. In the former pairing

one finds several inherent escalatory factors. Although Kuwait and Iraq are Arab brothers and had no history of animosity prior to the crisis, the close proximity of 100,000 Republican Guard troops massed along their common border has great potential to inflame the situation. Saddam Hussein has already indicated that he believes Kuwait's reluctance to cut oil production is an attempt to threaten his regime's survival—an issue that he will undoubtedly present in national terms to motivate Iraq's citizenry. From an American standpoint, at least one other factor comes into play: although Iraq and the United States became unofficial allies during the Iran-Iraq War—because of their mutual hatred of Iran—they have radically divergent cultures and have since parted company. With Kuwait now being assailed as a “U.S. puppet,” it appears that the Iraqis are positioning themselves as Arab defenders against the evil West. The cumulative score for this step is “+4,” with good potential for further increase as the rhetoric grows and positions become even more entrenched.

The outcome of the “National Resolve Test” became a forgone conclusion after the dismal “Support Check” result—since negative support automatically produces unfavorable resolve (at least in this model). Faced with a deepening crisis that is characterized by a high national interest level, unfavorable resolve, and great potential for escalation, the National Security Advisor briefs the Chief Executive:

Mr. President, the threat to our national security posed by those 100,000 Iraqi troops massed on the Kuwaiti border justifies our immediate involvement in this crisis. I must inform you that while the potential for this situation to escalate is great, support for your involvement in it is not. I will inform you of my recommendation as to whether we should use coercive diplomacy when my staff completes the final step of the “Coercive Diplomacy Model.” In the meantime, sir, have you talked to Mr. Gorbachev yet?”

Returning to the West Wing of the White House, the National Security Advisor is told that the model recommends either a “call” or “fold” option as an initial approach (fig. IV-7).

<b>Cost-Benefit Analysis</b>	<i>Red</i>	F/C	F
	★ <i>Yellow</i>	C/R	F/C ★
	<i>Green</i>	C/R	C
		<i>Favorable</i>	<i>Unfavorable</i> ★
<b>National Resolve Test</b>			

**Legend:** F= Fold  
C= Call  
R= Raise

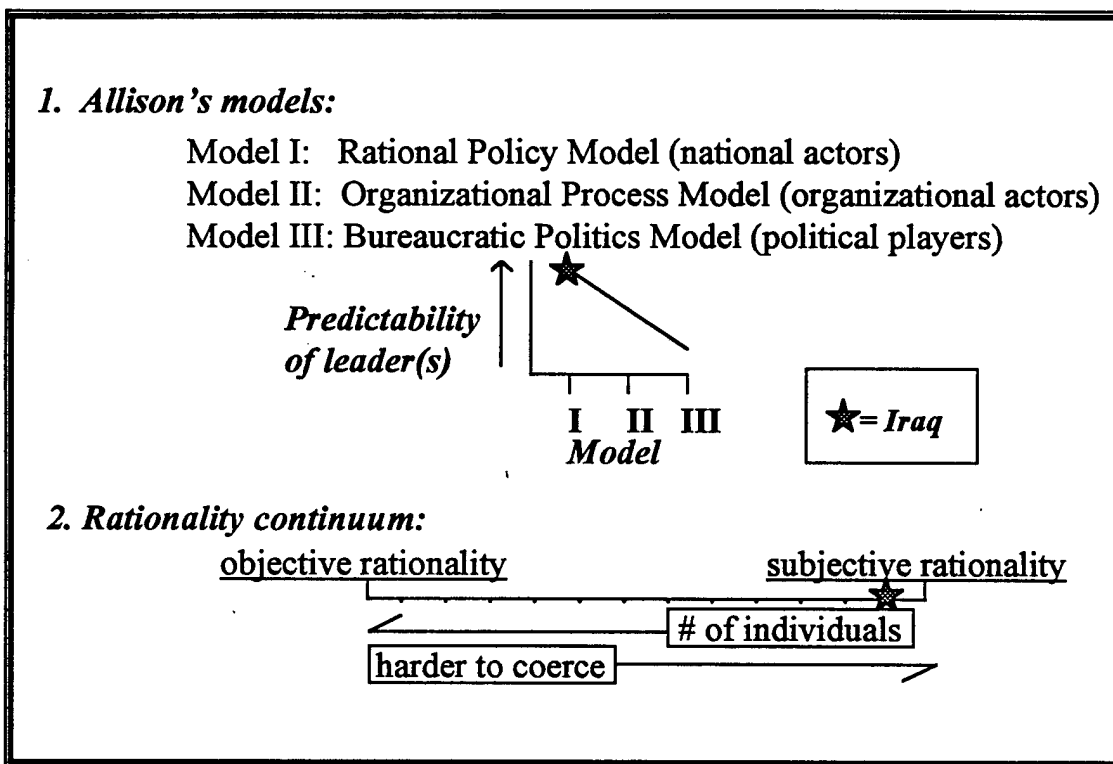
★ = *Kuwait-1990*

**Fig. IV-7. Coercive Diplomacy Menu Options—Kuwait: 1990**

It is a difficult decision. Although the entire staff agrees that direct U.S. involvement in the crisis is justified on national security grounds, the model has identified some potential problems that could—if not properly addressed—preclude a successful outcome.

Suddenly, a junior staffer (and recent Naval War College graduate) bursts into the conference room clutching a handwritten note from the President. “The Gorbster!” he exclaims, “He’s going to stay out of it. The guy is a godsend. He’s got everything completely under control!”

With the Soviets on the sidelines, the National Security Advisor realizes immediately that the “Cost-Benefit Analysis” has gone “green,” and the “Support Check” is not quite as “unfavorable”—producing a “call” recommendation in the final step. In order to properly select a strategy from the “call” option, however, two other factors must now be considered. First, the predictability of the Iraqi leadership must be assessed by applying “Allison’s models” and the “Rationality Continuum” (fig. IV-8).



**Fig. IV-8. Assessment of Iraqi Leadership’s Predictability**

Based on the fact that all Iraqi decision making is believed to originate from Saddam Hussein—with little influence from even his closest advisors—one does not need to spend a great deal of effort deciphering complex political and bureaucratic influences in order to “crack their code.” With Saddam identified as a national actor, the ponderous task of predicting Iraqi behavior in the crisis is reduced to finding an accurate psychological



profile of the beloved dictator. The bad news is that Saddam is probably operating at the subjective end of the “Rationality Continuum” and is, therefore, more difficult for sports-minded Americans to understand—much less coerce.

The second factor that may influence the selection of a particular “call” strategy is determined by examining the “Iraqi Warfare Continuum” (fig IV-9).

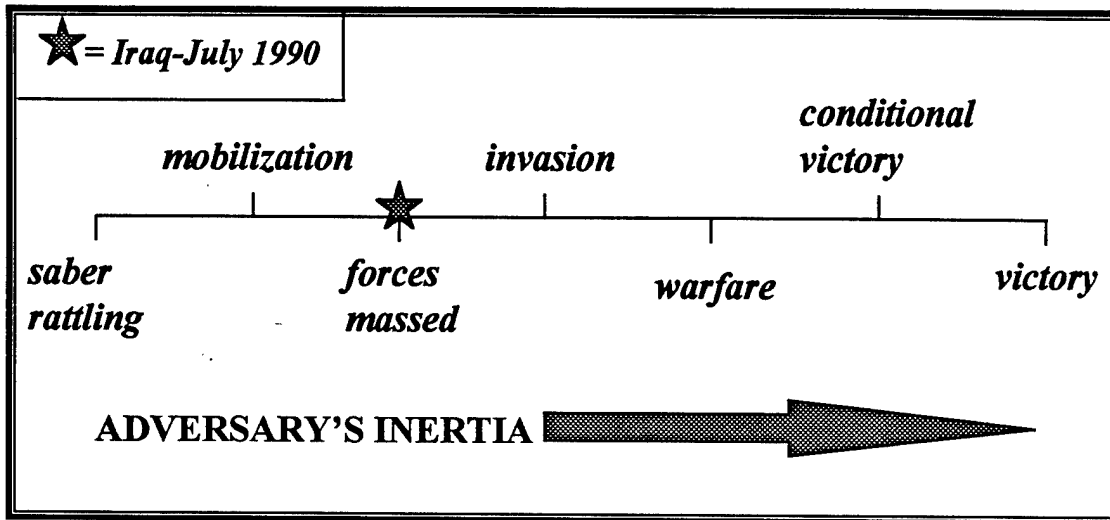


Fig. IV-9. Iraqi Warfare Continuum: July 1990

It is apparent that Iraq’s forces have now completed the mobilization phase and that it is still not a coincidence that they have all managed to find their way to the Kuwaiti border. Adopting the worst-case assumption that Saddam is seriously considering a military solution for his problems (after all—diplomacy and economics don’t appear to be his strong suits), he will not increase his inertia to a “point of no return” until his troops cross the border. This also highlights the point that Iraq is ready for war, while the United States and Kuwait are not.

Returning to the Oval Office, the National Security Advisor is finally ready to recommend a course of action (fig. IV-10) to the President:

Sir—if Saddam Hussein invades our ally, Kuwait, he would control 20% of the world’s oil. Even though President Mubarek has assured you that Iraq is bluffing, there are now 100,000 Republican Guard troops with heavy armor massed on the border. Based on the results of the “Coercive Diplomacy Model,” I recommend the following strategy: First, send two carrier battle groups to the Persian Gulf to join the one that is already on station, and put our forces on alert. Second, you must tell Saddam Hussein that this situation *will not stand!* We should apply the *quid pro quo* strategy by informing him of our intention to defend Kuwait—if he attacks. Concurrently, we should advise him that we will apply our influence on the Kuwaitis to reconsider their position and negotiate in earnest—once the Iraqi troops are removed from the border. Mr. President, I’m sure you will be able to use your extensive diplomatic experience to properly explain the rationale for these actions to our Arab friends, request their cooperation, and remind them of how disastrous it would be if Iraq surprised everyone by invading Kuwait—starting yet another war in the Middle East.

<u><i>Fold</i></u> ( <i>noncommittal options</i> )	<u><i>Call</i></u>	<u><i>Raise</i></u>
* Protests	* Implicit threats	* Explicit threats
* Sanctions	* “Try-and-see”	* Blockade
* Break off relations	* “Turning of screw”	* Interpose forces
* Disengage	★★ Forces on alert	* Threaten war
* Ambiguity	★★ Forces deployed	
* Appeasement	* Show of force (exercise)	
* Persuade others to coerce	* Embargo	
	* Strategic ambiguity	
	★★ <i>Quid pro quo</i>	

★ = *Kuwait-1990*

Fig. IV-10. Recommended “Call” Option Strategies—Kuwait: 1990

Fast-forwarding to the present in order to gain the benefit of hindsight, a few issues come to mind. Although the United States took no definitive action to coerce or even deter Saddam prior to his invasion of Kuwait—such action was certainly contemplated. Alarmed by new reconnaissance photos that indicated the Iraqis were preparing for an *imminent* attack, President Bush's advisors urged him to send a forceful warning to Saddam. Just as the President and his National Security Advisor sat down to discuss the contents of the proposed message, news of the invasion reached the White House.<sup>50</sup>

The implication that any procedural model will provide the “correct” answer is misleading, at best. There are no indications that even if the course of action prescribed by the model had been attempted in July 1990, that Saddam Hussein would have backed down. Saddam was apparently convinced that the risk of military defeat was preferable to an intolerable status quo—an eerie similarity to the decision-making logic that led Egypt's Anwar Sadat to surprise Israel in 1973. General Wafic Al Sammarai of Iraqi Military Intelligence explained another important aspect of Saddam's reasoning: “Saddam Hussein thought any reprisals would be limited and would tail off with time. He thought that America's involvement in Vietnam had badly damaged its willingness to use military power. Vietnam had been an outright defeat, militarily and politically.”<sup>51</sup> As discussed previously, there are going to be circumstances when coercive diplomacy will inevitably fail, so a procedural model is useful to highlight strategic weaknesses and properly position one for the next step—or prevent one from taking an ill-conceived first step.

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<sup>50</sup> Transcript of Frontline Television Show #1407, *The Gulf War: Part I*, Air Date 9 January 1996, 3.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

The next step in this case study occurred after Presidents Bush and Mubarek got over their collective shock at the notion that Saddam Hussein could be either desperate or foolish enough to invade Kuwait. Shock then turned to alarm as new intelligence indicated that the Iraqis might be headed for the border of Saudi Arabia.<sup>52</sup> Without resorting to the level of analysis applied to July's events, it can be stated with certainty that President Bush "learned his lesson" and adhered very carefully to the model's procedural steps as he attempted to coerce Saddam to *leave* Kuwait (without taking the long way home to Baghdad via Saudi Arabia). The "National Interest Litmus Test" level rose to a solid "3," as the Iraqis now threatened to add Saudi Arabian oil to their inventory. The United States then isolated Iraq in convincing fashion by forming a 30-nation coalition, initiating an embargo, and persuading the Soviets not to interfere. Finally, the credibility of the threat to eject the Iraqis forcefully from Kuwait was greatly enhanced when President Bush rallied public and congressional support—painting Saddam as a "Hitler" who took Kuwaiti babies out of incubators and threatened U.S. oil, jobs, and friends—to mass an unprecedented level of force in the region during "Desert Storm." But as the January 15, 1991, United Nations' deadline for the Iraqis to leave Kuwait came and went, Saddam still refused to yield. Addressing a cheering crowd on Iraqi television he exclaimed, "The Americans rely too much on technology. They never fight man to man. They can never win the battle."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Transcript of Frontline Television Show #1407, *The Gulf War: Part I*, Air Date 9 January 1996, 4.

<sup>53</sup> Transcript of Frontline Television Show #1407, *The Gulf War: Part I*, Air Date 9 January 1996, 10.

It may be emotionally satisfying to label Saddam Hussein as “uncoerceable,” but it is more enlightening to explore the possible explanations for why he did not submit. The likely explanation for his apparent stubbornness in July of 1991 is fairly simple: no one made a serious effort to coerce him. In January 1991, however, the Iraqis had ample reason to leave Kuwait. The updated “Iraqi Warfare Continuum” (fig. IV-11) sheds some light on the reason for this apparently illogical behavior (remember, Saddam is one of those “subjectively rational” individuals).

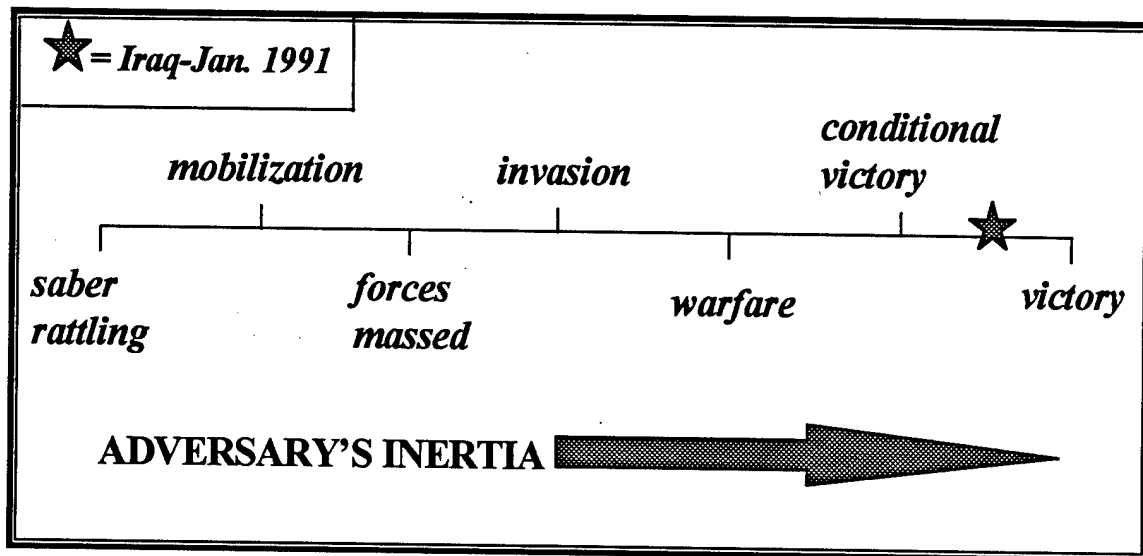


Fig. IV-11. Iraqi Warfare Continuum—January 1991

At this point, Clausewitz would not have allowed us to award Saddam a victory—because in war the result is never final—but he was well on his way. With such an inherently high inertia level, a far greater incentive would now be required to dislodge the Iraqis from Kuwait than would have originally been required to keep them out in the first place. Additionally, once the entire world observed Saddam’s forces crossing into Kuwait, Iraq’s national honor became an international spectacle (another escalatory factor) and the Iraqis had much more at risk (asymmetry of motivation increased in Iraq’s

favor). Combining all this with Saddam's perception that the United States lacked the resolve to undertake a bloody overseas war, one arrives at the next step—*Operation Desert Storm*.

One successful aspect of the U.S. coercive diplomacy strategy during this period was the effort to defuse Iraq's dreaded chemical weapons capability. This was accomplished very adroitly by employing "strategic ambiguity" in the following manner: President Bush had a letter delivered to Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz that, according to Secretary of State Baker, "made it very clear that if Iraq used weapons of mass destruction, chemical weapons, against United States forces that the American people would demand vengeance and that we had the means to achieve it."<sup>54</sup> Although no specifics were offered, Aziz got the message and apparently delivered it to his formerly fearless leader.

In October 1994, Saddam Hussein once again took advantage of the "tyranny of distance" by massing troops on the Kuwaiti border.<sup>55</sup> Since the inertia level of this action was comparatively low, and Saddam had recently obtained direct evidence that the United States military had "gotten over" Vietnam, the combination of direct threats and the immediate deployment of American reinforcements to the region was sufficient to deter him.

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<sup>54</sup> Transcript of Frontline Television Show #1407, *The Gulf War: Part I*, Air Date 9 January 1996, 9.

<sup>55</sup> Conversation with Dr. M. Owens, Professor, Strategy and Force Planning Department, Naval War College, Newport, RI: January 1997.

## B. Taiwan Strait: 1996

As China emerges from over 500 years of mediocrity and lays claim to its great-power heritage, one item on the agenda is “reunification.” With Hong Kong reverting back to Chinese control in 1997, Taiwan and the Spratly Islands have now moved up one place on this imperial checklist. In March 1996, China focused the world’s attention on its “renegade province,” Taiwan.

In the almost 50 years since its dramatic birth at the hands of the U.S. Seventh Fleet, Taiwan has never managed to elect its President democratically—that is, until 1996. Enraged not only by the prospect of rampant democracy in its precocious colony, but by the expected landslide victory of a “closet separatist,” China decided to apply some pre-election influence. As a poignant reminder to Taiwan’s 21 million citizens (and 14 million eligible voters) of who is actually in charge, The Peoples Republic of China began live-fire missile exercises in the Taiwan Strait on March 12, 1996—just 11 days before the scheduled election.<sup>56</sup> Despite pleas from Taiwan to end the belligerent act and resume a dialogue, Beijing announced that the exercise would last through the election.<sup>57</sup>

While Taiwanese financial markets and travel agencies anxiously awaited the next move, the United States contemplated reappointing itself as Taiwan’s *de facto* guardian. Although the U.S. defense treaty with Taiwan was abrogated in the years following President Nixon’s visit to Communist China in 1972, the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979

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<sup>56</sup> Patrick Tyler, “China Signalling U.S. That It Will Not Invade Taiwan,” *The New York Times*, 13 March 1996, 3.

<sup>57</sup> Patrick Tyler, “China Says Maneuvers Will Last Through Taiwan’s Elections,” *The New York Times*, 16 March 1996, 3.

asserted Washington's right to help Taiwan defend itself; declared Taiwan to be within the American sphere of influence; and said the United States would consider "any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts and embargoes, a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of *grave concern* to the United States."<sup>58</sup> U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher applied this time-honored approach—euphemistically termed "creative ambiguity"—by warning a senior representative of the Beijing government that there would be "*grave consequences*" if China should attack Taiwan.<sup>59</sup> In defense of the gambit Clinton Administration Press Secretary Mike McCurry stated, "There's merit in being ambiguous." The reason—the United States did not want to encourage Taiwan to declare its independence from the mainland, thereby provoking Beijing into accelerating its reunification timetable and potentially involving the United States in a Chinese Civil War.<sup>60</sup> In the words of another senior administration official: "Without precommitting or allowing Taiwan to dictate our China policy, it's very important that China knows it cannot act with impunity, and that we have options and can use them."<sup>61</sup>

While the diplomatic aspect of the Clinton Administration's strategy was intentionally vague, the military component was quite the opposite. With one aircraft carrier battle group (USS Independence) readily available in the region, President Clinton dispatched a second battle group (USS Nimitz) toward the Taiwan Strait in order to send

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<sup>58</sup> Patrick Tyler, "New Move in U.S. to Stand Up to China," *The New York Times*, 12 March 1996, 1.

<sup>59</sup> Melinda Liu and Sam Siebert, "Chinese Fireworks," *Newsweek*, 18 March 1996, 31.

<sup>60</sup> William Niekirk, "Election Year Drives Clinton's Foreign Policy," *The Chicago Tribune*, 13 March 1996, 2.

<sup>61</sup> Patrick Tyler, "New Move in U.S. to Stand Up to China," *The New York Times*, 12 March 1996, 1.



a more direct message—not just to Beijing, but apparently to the American electorate and congressional critics as well. Defense Secretary William Perry emphasized the point by stating emphatically, “Beijing should know, and this will remind them, that while they are a great military power, the premier—the strongest—military power in the Western Pacific is the United States.”<sup>62</sup> Domestic response was divided predictably along party lines, with Democrats favorably invoking comparisons with Harry S. Truman and John F. Kennedy, while Representative Christopher Cox (R-Cal) summed up the Republican position by deriding the President for what he called “a weak imitation of Teddy Roosevelt.”<sup>63</sup>

China reacted indignantly to what it perceived as “gross interference” in its internal affairs.<sup>64</sup> Apparently irked not only by the unprecedented concentration of U.S. firepower heading for the strait, but also by another of Defense Secretary Perry’s assertions that “America has the best damned navy in the world”<sup>65</sup> and could easily pass through the Taiwan strait if it wanted, a Beijing-controlled Hong Kong newspaper warned that

with a concentrated fire of guided missiles and artillery, the Peoples Liberation Army can bury an enemy intruder in a sea of fire. Don’t forget that the Taiwan Strait is just off-shore China and within the scope of naval and air war-making operations.<sup>66</sup>

Although the USS Independence remained 200 miles from Taiwan and carrier pilots were reportedly ordered to not go within 100 miles, tension between the sides

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<sup>62</sup> Steven Erlanger, “Christopher to Meet His Chinese Counterpart,” *The New York Times*, 20 March 1996, 6.

<sup>63</sup> William Niekirk, “Election Year Drives Clinton’s Foreign Policy,” *The Chicago Tribune*, 13 March 1996, 2.

<sup>64</sup> Patrick Tyler, “War Games Play Well For Taiwan’s Leader,” *The New York Times*, 22 March 1996, 10.

<sup>65</sup> Seth Faison, “China Denounces U.S. ‘Interference’ in Dispute With Taiwan,” *The New York Times*, 22 March 1996, 10.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

increased as China's "escalating menu" of military exercises and rhetoric reached a crescendo.<sup>67</sup> Foreign Minister Qian Qichen again voiced China's hard line by stating:

We have never undertaken to give up the use of force. This is not directed against the Taiwan compatriots, but against foreign forces attempting to interfere in China's internal affairs and make an intrusion, and those on the island trying to bring about "Taiwan independence."

A lower-level Chinese official then delivered an astonishing nuclear threat to visiting American diplomats, by reportedly suggesting that Washington should not dare to defend Taiwan because Beijing would "rain nuclear bombs" on a west-coast U.S. city.<sup>68</sup> The strategy failed miserably when it was subsequently revealed that the city the Chinese were referring to was Los Angeles.

On March 23, 1996, 11 million Taiwanese citizens went to the polls and elected Nationalist Party candidate President Lee Teng-hui, who received over 54% of the vote. While the landslide victory of President Lee was viewed worldwide as a repudiation of China's heavy-handed tactics, Beijing attempted to save face by noting that the Democratic Progressive Party—generally considered the most anti-mainland of all parties—only received 21% of the vote.<sup>69</sup> A statement issued by the New China News Agency implied that a fourth round of military exercises may be forthcoming, and noted that

the success of the exercises demonstrates the military and political quality as well as the determination of the ground, naval and air forces, and

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<sup>67</sup> Nicholas Kristof, "Off Taiwan, U.S. Sailors Are Unworried," *The New York Times*, 18 March 1996, 3.

<sup>68</sup> "Los Angeles For Taipei?", *Reuters New Media*, 18 March 1996.

<sup>69</sup> Seth Faison, "China Says Election Shows That Voters Oppose Separation From the Mainland," *The New York Times*, 24 March 1996, 16.

indicates that the Chinese armed forces are resolved and able to deliver a political message.<sup>70</sup>

While olive branches drifted cautiously across the Taiwan Strait in the weeks following the election, China and the United States preferred to exchange snubs. The Clinton Administration called off a long-awaited visit to Washington by China's Defense Minister, and Beijing officials countered by claiming that the Chinese government had canceled the visit in retaliation for Washington's show of support for Taiwan.<sup>71</sup> Apparently flabbergasted by the overwhelming U.S. military response during the crisis, China has since taken a more pragmatic approach—reportedly by redoubling its efforts to procure anti-ship missiles.<sup>72</sup>

#### **The Way Things Might Have Been—Taiwan Strait: 1996**

Once again adopting the confusing “time-travel” convention . . . . National Security Council staffers have been working overtime ever since March 12, when China unexpectedly announced that it was restricting access to the Taiwan Strait while it conducted live-fire missile exercises. Not only does this action violate freedom-of-navigation provisions of international law, but it also appears to be an effort to brazenly intimidate the citizens of Taiwan on the eve of the first democratic election in their history. Since it is the job of National Security Council staffers to “think the unthinkable,” one

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<sup>70</sup> Seth Faison, “Tensions Seen As Receding As China Ends War Games,” *The New York Times*, 26 March 1996, 3.

<sup>71</sup> Elaine Sciolino, “White House Snubs China Over Military Maneuvers,” *The New York Times*, 23 March 1996, 5.

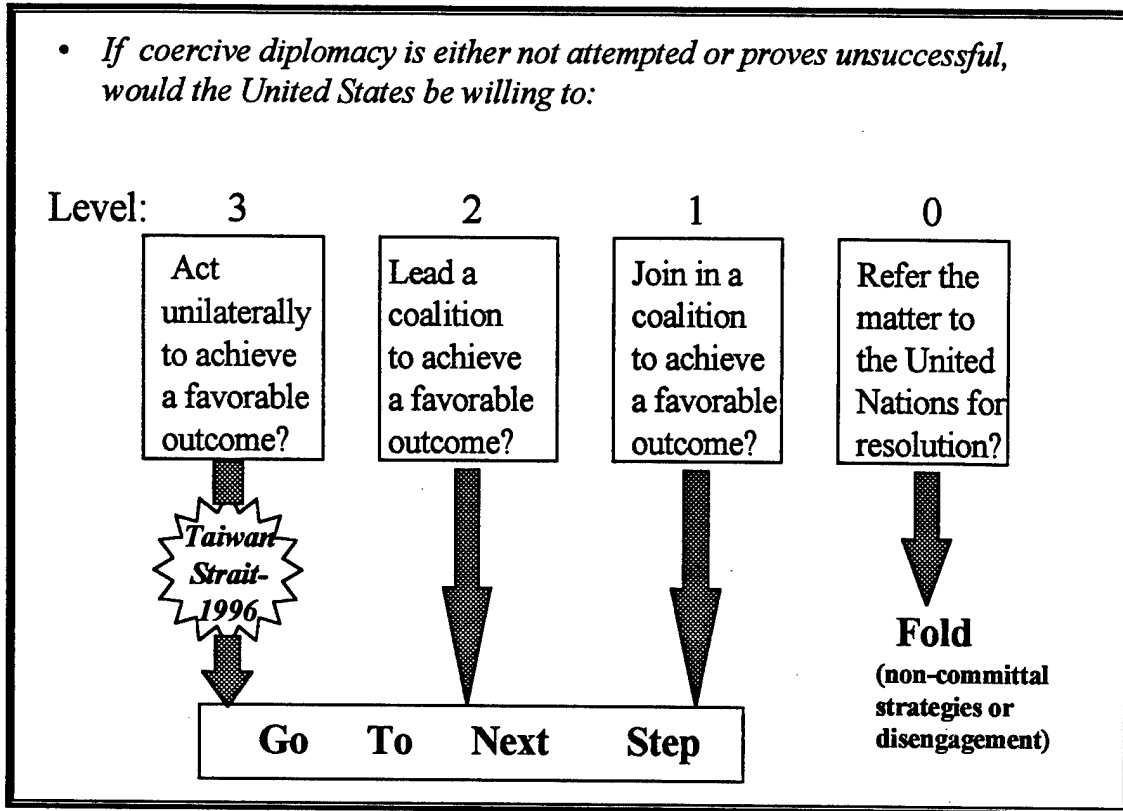
<sup>72</sup> Interview with Dr. A. Waldron, Professor, Strategy and Policy Department, Naval War College, Newport, RI: January 1996.

must also consider the possibility that this is more than simply a show of force on the part of the Chinese, and may instead be a harbinger of things to come. China's Prime Minister Li Peng succinctly summarized this more sinister option only a month or so earlier: "There is only one China in the world and Taiwan is an inalienable part of it. We have consistently encouraged the peaceful reunification of the motherland, but in the final analysis we can not promise to give up the use of force."<sup>73</sup> Statements such as this imply that any declaration of independence by the Taiwanese will be interpreted as a declaration of war by Beijing—and patience on both sides appears to be running out.

While the United States is publicly committed to a "one-China" policy and would go to great lengths to encourage peaceful reunification, it has also served as Taiwan's protector for almost fifty years. In the past, Taipei's authoritative regimes have elicited more comparisons to Beijing than Washington. But with the first democratic election in Taiwan's history scheduled in just two weeks, the U.S. policy of "Engagement and Enlargement" of free-market democracies is being directly challenged by China. So the question becomes: Would the United States actually stand by and allow the 21 million citizens of a friendly, free-market democracy to be invaded, blockaded, or intimidated by 1.2 billion communists? The answer—*probably not*—justifies a level "3" result in the National Interest Litmus Test" (fig. IV-12).

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<sup>73</sup> Yosef Bodansky, "Right on the Brink," *Strategic Policy*, February 1996, 7.



**Fig. IV-12. National Interest Litmus Test—Taiwan Strait: 1996**

Computing the next step, China's "National Power Index" (fig. IV-13), is a fairly straightforward endeavor. Any adversary who possesses: a three-million man army, nuclear missiles, 8000 tanks, over 100 warships and submarines, a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, and one of the fastest growing economies in the world—must be treated with caution.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Melinda Liu and Sam Siebert, "Chinese Fireworks," *Newsweek*, 18 March 1996, 32.

National Power Factors ( <i>weighting factor-x</i> ):				★ = China: 1996
<u>Military Power (x4)</u>	<u>WMD (x3)</u>	<u>Political Influence (x2)</u>	<u>Economic Power (x1)</u>	
★1.0 Global Power	★1.0 Nukes	★1.0 Sec Council Mbr	1.0 G-7 Mbr	
.5 Regional	.75 Bio	.75 Allied with SCM	★.75 Central	
.25 Self Defense	.25 Chem	.25 Regional Allies	.25 Periphery	
0 Disorganized	0 None	0 Pariah	0 Dysfunctional	

Fig. IV-13. Calculation of China's National Power Index

Even though the Peoples Liberation Army is not renowned for its swimming ability, the grim reality of seeing such a large force jumping about on the other side of a 100 mile-wide strait is quite disturbing to the Taiwanese—and Beijing knows it. China is, therefore, clearly a “Class C” (Great Power) adversary whether one scores them as an “8.75” or otherwise (fig.IV-14).

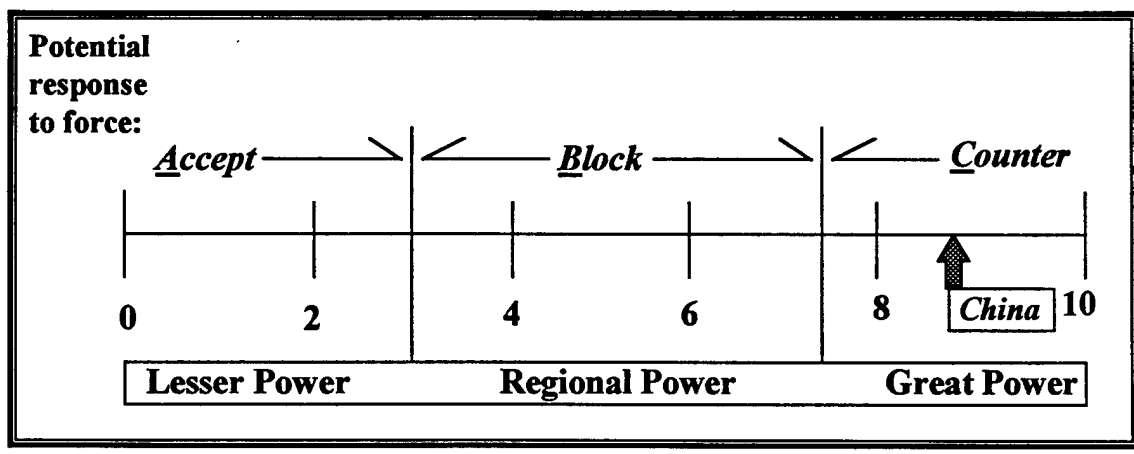


Fig. IV-14. China's National Power Index

Having been dutifully warned by his predecessor on the danger of briefing the President prior to completing all the model steps, our crisis-hardened National Security Advisor directs his staff to proceed to the “Cost-Benefit Analysis” (fig. IV-15).

Juxtaposing China's great-power status against our vital interest in drawing a line (or at least stringing buoys) in the Taiwan Strait produces a "yellow" risk factor. The literal translation of this step is, "Damn the torpedoes, all ahead two-thirds."

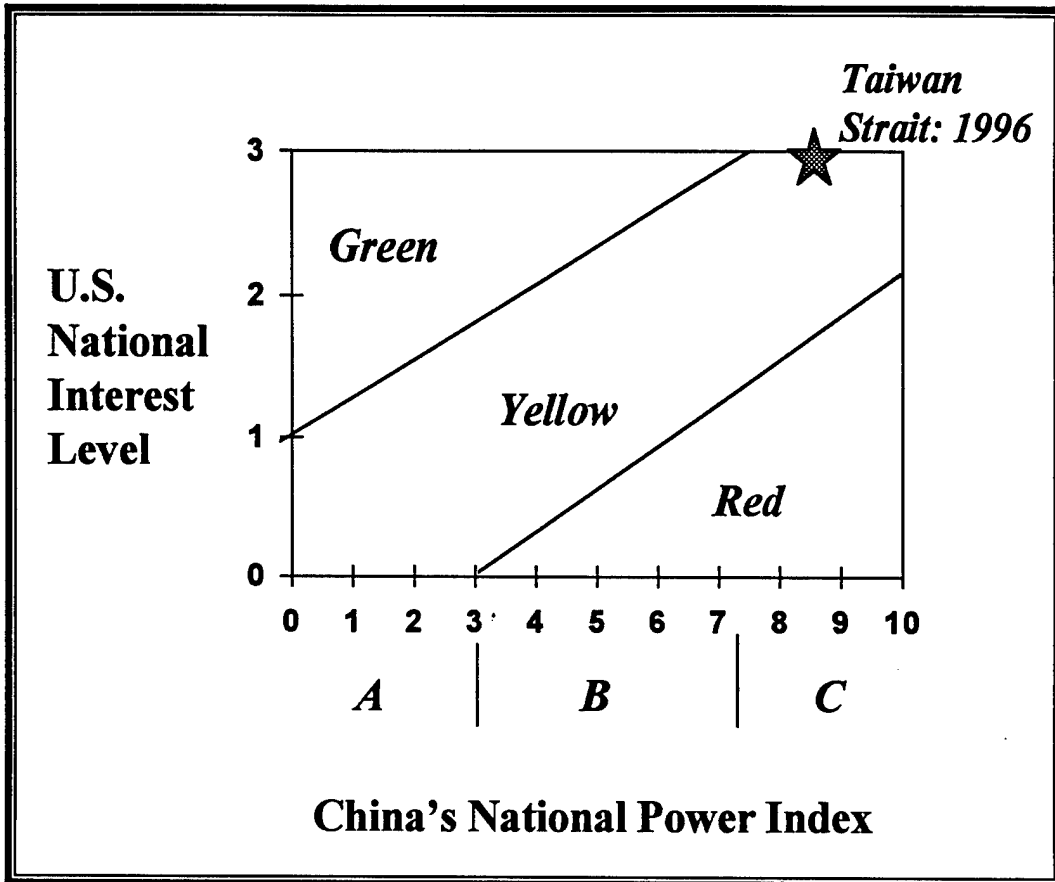


Fig. IV-15. Cost-Benefit Analysis—Taiwan Strait: 1996

After completing the first three model steps in record time, the staff must now tackle that Achilles heel of all liberal democracies—the "Support Check" (fig. IV-16). Despite the intense rhetoric emanating from both sides of the strait, the President is acutely aware of the challenges that are associated with managing an international crisis during an American election year--and is proceeding cautiously.

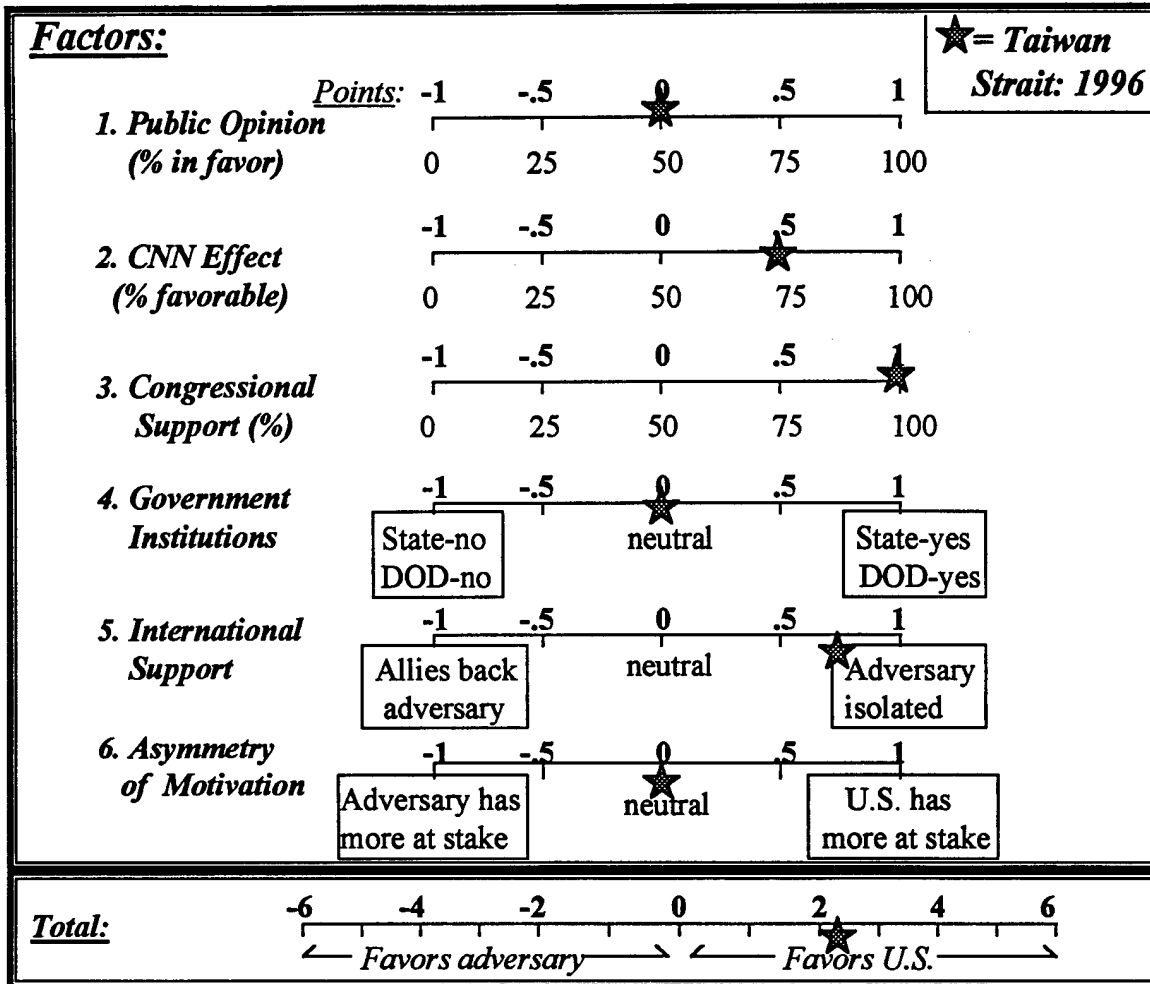


Fig. IV-16. Support Check—Taiwan Strait: 1996

**Public Opinion.** Addressing the impact domestic public opinion is likely to have in this unfolding drama, the strategist is forced to examine the bedrock values of “Joe Six-pack.” Although it is safe to assume that most Americans have an unfavorable impression of China—particularly after the televised coverage of the Tiananmen Square Massacre—they will probably not be overjoyed at the prospect of sending their sons to fight the Chinese Army (the “Korea Effect”). Another consideration is that China has dealt its “nuclear card” in an effort to diminish American resolve—presumably through its direct link to public opinion. Chinese doctrinal writings specifically discuss forestalling U.S.



intervention in regional surges—such as the reunification of Taiwan or the “liberation” of the Spratly Islands—through nuclear ultimata.<sup>75</sup> What this strategy fails to consider is the fact that America just finished “staring down” the world’s *second* greatest nuclear power, and still possesses an unequaled nuclear arsenal. If a Chinese nuclear weapon ever exploded in the vicinity of U.S. territory or citizens, the American public would *demand* that Beijing be immediately vaporized. In other words, China does not possess a credible nuclear deterrent.

Taking all these vague inferences into consideration and combining them with the most recent polling data that gives President Clinton a 48% “Foreign Policy Approval Rating,” places this factor squarely in the middle of the influence spectrum.<sup>76</sup> The conservative approach in an unpredictable election year is to initially assign a “0,” and continue to monitor polling data as the public becomes more aware of the crisis.

**CNN Effect.** Since communist bullies have not received good press since the Vietnam War, it is reasonable to assume that blatant Chinese aggression will not play well in prime time. A conservative estimate of this factor is “+.5,” with the assumption that Peter Arnett and Christianne Amanpour are not capable of combining for more than one quarter of the on-location reports in this crisis.

**Congressional Support.** This factor is clearly the most influential of the lot. The Republican-controlled House of Representatives just passed, by a vote of 369 to 14, a nonbinding resolution that states: “United States military forces should defend Taiwan in

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<sup>75</sup> Yosef Bodansky, “Right on the Brink,” *Strategic Policy*, February 1996, 13.

<sup>76</sup> “Clinton Retains Lead Over Dole,” *The Gallup Poll Monthly*, March 1996, 19.

the event of invasion, missile attack, or blockade by the Peoples Republic of China.”<sup>77</sup> As “congressional support” becomes “extreme bipartisan congressional pressure,” the President becomes vulnerable if he takes a soft stand on this issue—particularly in an election year. This factor is judged, therefore, to be a solid “+1.”

**Government Institutions.** The Secretary of Defense is obviously enthusiastic not only about defending Taiwan, but also of the prospect of slapping down the Chinese Navy as well—a task many military experts see as inevitable. The Secretary of State’s position is based on Morgenthau’s “weak-sister” rule—which leads one to avoid inspiring President Lee to even mention the “I” word, and does not commit the United States to military action unless a formal treaty absolutely requires it. Combining the canceling effect of these two contradictory opinions yields another “0.”

**International Support.** The Peoples Republic of China is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, and is recognized by that body and most of the countries of the world as the *only* China. Nevertheless, China has not attempted to cultivate strong diplomatic and economic ties with other powerful nations until very recently, and is generally regarded as being somewhat reclusive. The United States should have little difficulty drumming up a large amount of luke-warm support for its efforts against the communist behemoth, with the unfortunate presumption that few nations other than Great Britain are likely to voluntarily provide anything more than moral support if the crisis escalates. Allies in the Western Pacific will be especially reluctant to join the fray because of the unspoken fear that the United States may not always be the strongest

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<sup>77</sup> Steven Erlanger, “Christopher to Meet His Chinese Counterpart,” The New York Times, 20 March 1996, 6.

power in the region—if it decides to remain at all. Japan will cite the laws constraining the use of its “self-defense” force, while South Korea will have its attention riveted on its northern horizon—looking for signs of a possible Sun Tzuian “double deception” involving a simultaneous attack from North Korea.<sup>78</sup> Based on this anticipated lack of international interference, the United States should have a relatively free hand to “go it alone,” and this factor therefore becomes a fairly solid “+.75.”

**Asymmetry of Motivation.** The Chinese are likely to believe that they have more at stake in this crisis unless the United States clearly convinces them otherwise. Nevertheless, a significant amount of motivational symmetry is provided by Taiwan—who has great deal to lose in this affair. This factor should remain neutral (“0”) as long as the political constraints of the dispute are respected by both sides (e.g., no overt declarations).

The grand total of the “Support Check” is “+2.25.” The most powerful influence is obviously the congressional pressure to support Taiwan. It is also reasonable to assume that the compelling moral basis for U.S. intervention can be highlighted from the “bully pulpit” to whip up favorable domestic public opinion and drive that factor into the plus column. Traditionally, the State Department becomes more hawkish as matters degenerate, and the “Government Institutions” factor can be expected to rise accordingly.

One must make many assumptions while computing the “Escalation Potential” in the Taiwan Strait (fig. IV-17). Essentially, this conflict must be viewed as the endgame in a 50 year Chinese Civil War, with *both* sides seeking reunification on their own terms. As long as Taiwan does not declare independence, the only factors that come into play are

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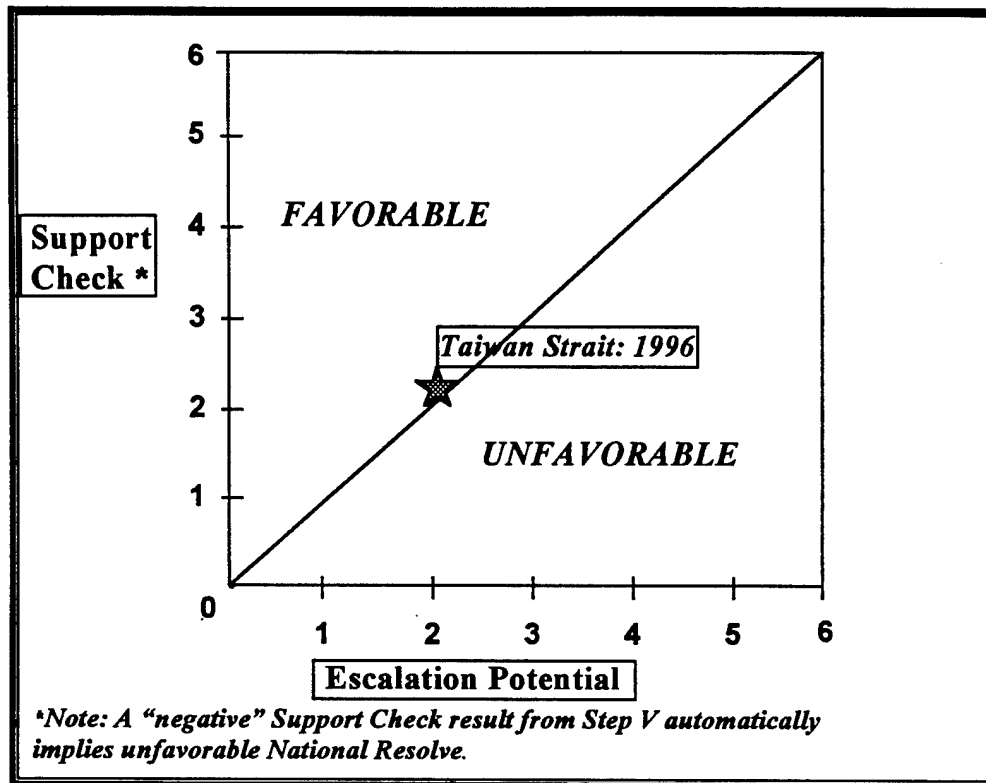
<sup>78</sup> G.R. Copley, “Judging the Enemy,” *Strategic Policy*, February 1996, 15.

“History of Animosity” and “Close Proximity of Forces.” Although the United States and China have obviously “Divergent Cultures,” the fact that Taiwan is 98 % Chinese greatly mitigates the influence of this factor. If Taiwan either declares its independence or threatens to do so, “National Honor” becomes a factor--and, depending on how the rising tide of democracy in the strait influences the mainland, the survival of China’s government may also be perceived at risk.

1. Divergent cultures*	+1	★= <i>Taiwan Strait:</i> 1996
2. History of animosity	+1★	
3. Close proximity of forces	+1★	
4. National honor declared	+1	
5. Survival of government threatened**	+1	
6. National survival threatened**	+1	
<p><i>Notes:</i> * Utilize Huntington’s criteria in <u>The Clash of Civilizations</u>.  ** Refers to adversary’s national and governmental survival (which may be indistinguishable).</p>		

**Fig. IV-17. Escalation Potential—Taiwan Strait: 1996**

Tallying up the scores thus far and applying them to the “National Resolve Test” yields a slightly “favorable” outcome (fig. IV-8). With a borderline result such as this, it is of critical importance to identify and monitor those factors that are most likely to change as the situation develops. A coherent crisis-management strategy strives to favorably manipulate these dynamic factors whenever possible—otherwise one is left at the mercy of fate.



**Fig. IV-18. National Resolve Test—Taiwan Strait: 1996**

This result does not imply that the National Security Advisor should immediately cartwheel into the Oval Office with the good news. Any of the factors which conspired to provide such a narrow “favorable” margin can easily “head south” if one is not careful. And besides, the remaining model steps have not yet been completed.

Applying the aforementioned results to the “Coercive Diplomacy Menu Options” matrix (fig. IV-19) indicates that either a “call” or “raise” should be considered as an opening move in this crisis.

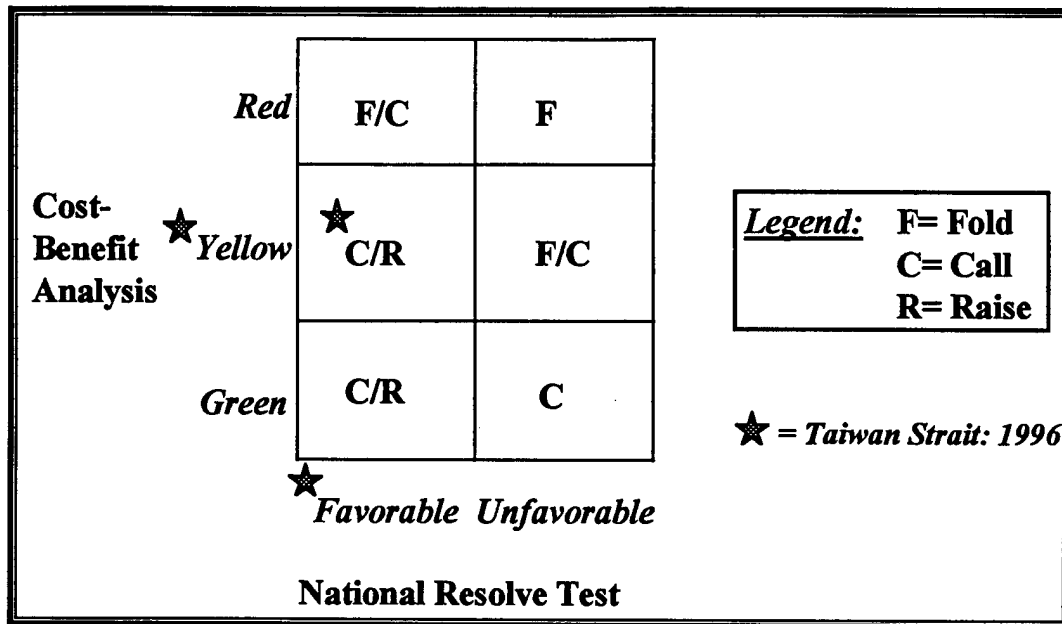


Fig. IV-19. Coercive Diplomacy Menu Options—Taiwan Strait: 1996

Since China has not explicitly threatened to either invade or blockade Taiwan (nor have they mobilized the requisite force to do so), given the present level of “inertia” (fig. IV-20) only a “call” option is justified.

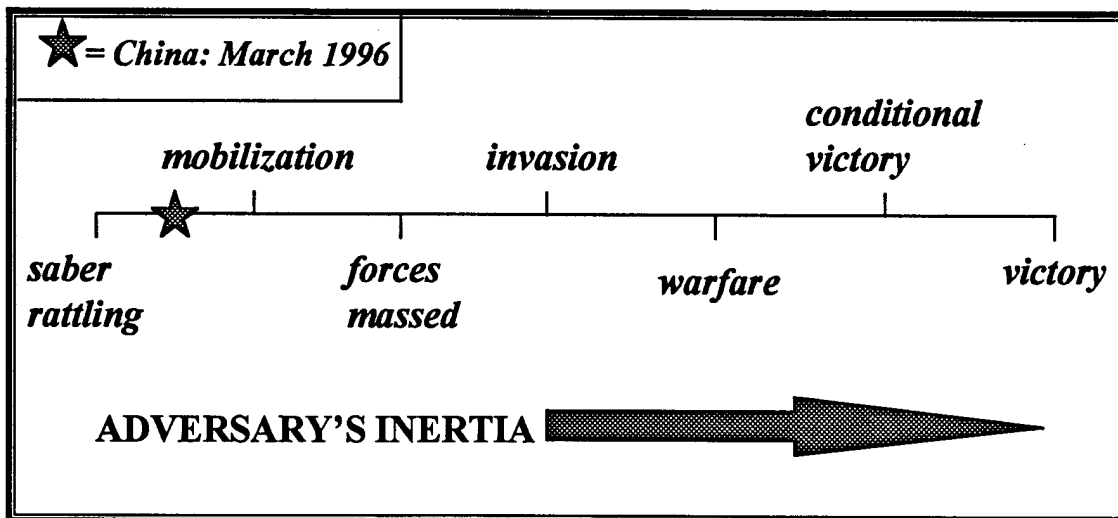
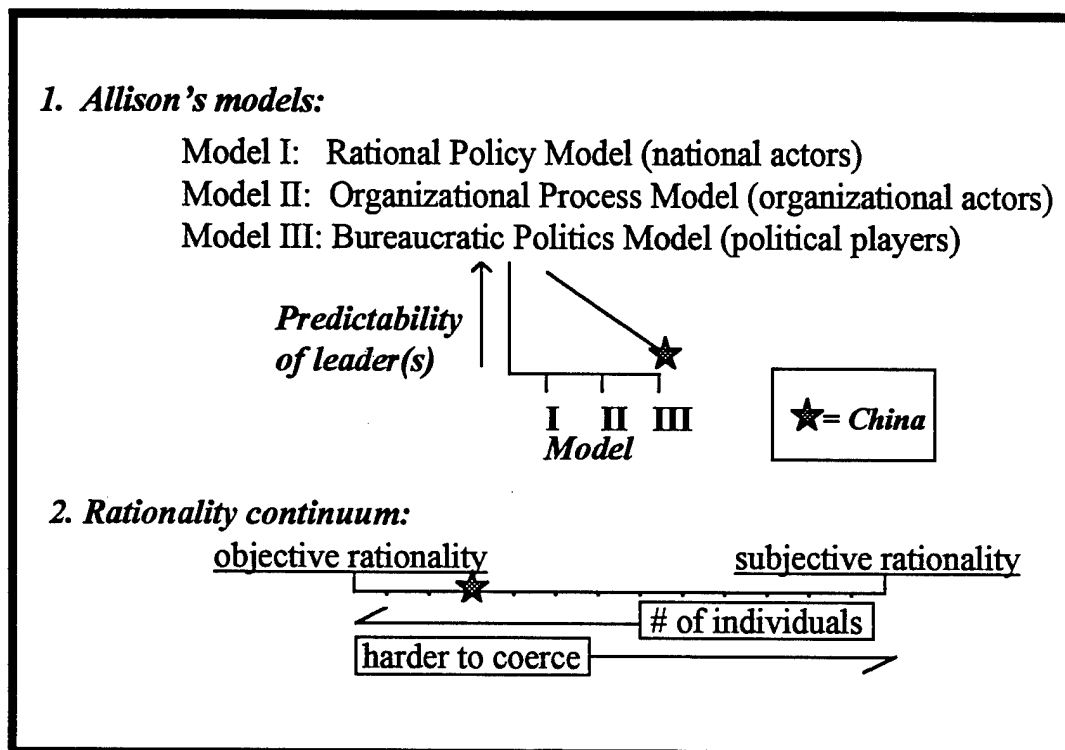


Fig. IV-20. Chinese Warfare Continuum—Taiwan Strait: 1996

Another consideration that would favor the use of a “call” option is that an excessively forceful U.S. position may unnecessarily antagonize China and recklessly embolden Taiwan—two extremely escalatory eventualities.

Before making any irrevocable decisions about how to proceed in this highly emotional affair, one must assess the predictability of the Chinese Politburo (fig IV-21).



**Fig. IV-21. Predictability of Chinese Leadership**

With Deng Xiaoping finally completing his transition to an inorganic state, even seasoned “China watchers” are likely to be surprised by the outcome of the power struggle that will ultimately become his legacy. The only reasonable conclusion that can be reached about the leadership in Beijing is that its unpredictability is defined by Allison’s Model III (political players), so National Security Council staffers should not spend an inordinate amount of time commissioning behavioral assessments of individual Chinese leaders.

Fortunately, with the number of political players potentially involved in China's decision making, it is probable that they are operating at the "objective" end of the "Rationality Continuum." Taken together, these seemingly divergent influences indicate that the Beijing leadership is likely to react objectively under normal circumstances (and should be relatively easy to coerce), but may behave unpredictably if backed into a corner—perhaps by either a Taiwanese declaration of independence or excessive domestic turmoil. The challenge, then, is to formulate a "call" option strategy that adequately addresses the flagrant Chinese actions in the Taiwan Strait, without pushing the Beijing leadership "over the edge" (fig. IV-22).

<u>Fold</u> ( <i>noncommittal options</i> )	<u>Call</u>	<u>Raise</u>
* Protests	★★ Implicit threats	* Explicit threats
* Sanctions	* "Try-and-see"	* Blockade
* Break off relations	* "Turning of screw"	* Interpose forces
* Disengage	* Forces on alert	* Threaten war
* Ambiguity	★★ Forces deployed	
* Appeasement	* Show of force (exercise)	
* Persuade others to coerce	* Embargo	
	★★ Strategic ambiguity	
	* <i>Quid pro quo</i>	

★ = Taiwan Strait: 1996

Fig. IV-22. Recommended "Call" Option Strategies—Taiwan Strait: 1996

On the advice of his loyal and capable staff the National Security Advisor selects the appropriate strategies from the "call" menu, and he is now ready to brief the Commander-in-Chief:

Mr. President, with our ally Taiwan on the verge of the first democratic election in its history, we can not sit idly by and allow communist China to use brute force to influence the result. Ever since we



allowed President Lee to visit the United States a few months back, China has been getting more and more aggressive toward Taiwan. While there are no immediate indications that China intends to either invade or blockade them, I recommend we make our position clear by issuing the following *implicit threat*: "The United States will continue to pursue a one-China policy and favors the peaceful, voluntary reunification of Taiwan. The United States also firmly supports free-market democracies throughout the world and is, therefore, committed to the defense of Taiwan." Although the Chinese will express outrage at our blatant interference in their internal affairs, it will draw a line in the Taiwan Strait that they will not dare to cross. Relations with the Chinese will chill for a time, but we have the complete support of Congress for this policy. In the longer term we will emphasize the reunification portion of this statement in order to allow the Chinese to save face. Prior to making this statement we need to consult privately with President Lee to caution him strongly against making any reckless declarations of independence—a point we can emphasize by suggesting that we might be tempted to change our opinion about the Peoples Liberation Army if he does so.

The military component of this strategy complements the diplomatic side by demonstrating our resolve to defend our interests without appearing unnecessarily provocative. I recommend that we announce to the Chinese that *we* are outraged that they have blocked access to an international waterway with dangerous live-fire exercises and are taking two actions: First, we will move the USS Independence to a position outside the strait. Second, we are deploying an undetermined number of Los Angeles class submarines *inside* the strait to monitor the exercise. Since the Chinese have virtually no antisubmarine warfare capability, this action should completely eliminate any possibility of a Chinese naval blockade or amphibious invasion, and leave them scratching their heads for years. Even if they counter by deploying their own submarines, the 688's will have no difficulty operating undetected in the strait. Frankly, we don't even really have to send all our submarines into the strait—we can just tell the Chinese we did. At the end of the exercise, we can send one submarine in and have it wave its periscope at them.

As you know, sir, a low-level Chinese official implied that they might nuke Los Angeles if we ever defended Taiwan. Even though a strong response would enhance your standing among California voters, we need to remain low-key on this one. I recommend we use "strategic ambiguity" by implying that any use of "weapons of mass destruction" by the Chinese will be met by an *overwhelming* response. I think we should consider publishing this as part of a "No First Use" policy—so in future confrontations we don't even have to address it directly. Any questions, Mr. President?

"Just one—did you run the 'Coercive Diplomacy Model' yet?"

## V. Conclusion

Coercive diplomacy is a risky business. A procedural model can be useful as an analytical tool that guides a national security strategist, but it must never replace the strategist. Clausewitz repeatedly emphasizes this point by railing against the false promise of “war by algebra.” The “Coercive Diplomacy Model” utilizes numbers in an attempt to provide shape to mysterious forces, but those numbers do not restrict one to a particular course of action. In both of the included case studies, a significant amount of variation in the calculations will produce a similar range of results. In the “Kuwait: 1990” case study, a “yellow” result at the “Cost-Benefit Analysis” stage would have produced a choice of “fold” or “call” at the last step—rather than simply a “call.” It is presumed that a wise strategist would have recommended a “call” strategy based on the high national interest level and perceived urgency of the crisis. A procedural model might not have led President Bush to a different conclusion regarding the need to coerce Saddam Hussein back in the summer of 1990—but perhaps he would have reached that same conclusion *before* Saddam invaded Kuwait, rather than immediately after.

Coercive diplomacy is power politics. The difficulties that might have been avoided by using a procedural model during the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis are associated with the challenge of tailoring diplomatic and military strategies to match overall policy. While it was correctly ascertained that blatant Chinese aggression toward Taiwan could not be tolerated, the combination of an ambiguous diplomatic stance (a “fold” option) and a strong military show of force (a “call” option) can be extremely dangerous—and is

hardly necessary now that the Cold War is over. In this particular case, the damage wrought by this policy-strategy mismatch is evident from two vantage points: First, without a clear diplomatic stance and a credible resolve to use force—rather than sending multiple aircraft carriers—it would have been more appropriate for the Seventh Fleet to deploy ferries in order to *assist* the Peoples Liberation Army across the Taiwan Strait. Secondly, combining weak diplomacy and a great deal of force produces the same response that a parent elicits by severely punishing a misbehaving child whose previous transgressions went largely ignored—shock, confusion, and ultimately resentment. These unfortunate feelings are usually found in sufficient abundance during crises, and it is not advisable to needlessly amplify them.

One of the most critical model steps is the “National Interest Litmus Test.” The two case studies developed herein do not adequately represent the wide variety of crises that are regularly presented to the National Security Council. It is presumed that some may be weeded out by the first step; and others by the last. For example: If China completely bungles its scheduled assimilation of Hong Kong and precipitates a massacre that makes Tiananmen Square seem, by comparison, like an unruly soccer crowd—a cry for U.S. intervention will emanate from every corner of the globe (especially from the British corner). Nevertheless, the cold reality of the situation is that the United States would *never* start a land war with China over an internal human rights issue—no matter how terrible it looked on television—and any attempted use of coercive diplomacy by Washington would be correctly interpreted as an inept bluff. Many options are available

to strategists to address such a situation; coercive diplomacy does not happen to be one of them.

It should also be emphasized that national interests can change quickly as a crisis unfolds, and today's decisions can turn into tomorrow's regrets if one is not paying attention. If Fidel Castro were to brutally suppress a democratic uprising in Cuba (this is, of course, purely hypothetical), the "Litmus Test" result may only turn out to be a "1" or "2"—based on the circumstances. If it is subsequently discovered that *biological weapons* were used by the regime in this enterprise, the United States would now have a "Cuban Virus Crisis" on its hands and the outcome of Step I would be quite different.

Coercive diplomacy can be practiced without the benefit of a procedural model. As a crisis develops, the National Security Council is literally flooded with briefings, point papers, and opinions—so decision making never occurs in a vacuum. An organized, theoretical approach does not guarantee results; it merely decreases the likelihood that important facts will be buried under piles of paper, and makes it easier to understand the relationship between complex strategic influences. There will be times when a President will take a particular course of action regardless of what advisors or models have to say about it. According to President Bush's Deputy National Security Advisor, Robert Gates:

The President privately, with the most inner circle, made absolutely clear he was going to go forward with this action even if he were impeached. The truth of the matter is that while public opinion and the voice of Congress was important to Bush, I believe it had no impact on his decision about what he would do. He was going to throw that son of a bitch out of Kuwait, regardless of whether the Congress or the public supported him.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Transcript of Frontline Television Show #1407, *The Gulf War: Part I*, Air Date 9 January 1996, 10.

President Bush may have ultimately been successful in this endeavor, but one thing is certain: When contemplating a coercive diplomacy strategy, proper consideration of Clausewitz means never having to say you're sorry.

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