

Can a Nuclear Iran be Deterred?

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Eighth Herzliya Conference
January 22, 2008



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- The terminology and conceptualization of deterrence developed in a given context, which was very different from the current one.
- Deterrence Theory was a-political and a-historical, the “Rational Actor Model” did not allow for the primacy of Cultural and Political dimensions in Decision-Making
- Nor for the folly, failure and frailty of human nature involved in the Decision-Making process at times of complex crises and duress

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- We are burdened and constrained by a world of abstract terminology that Deterrence Theory ingrained deep into the psyche of Strategy as a discipline
- This includes the complex issue of the Second Strike, which may be “irrational”, or even counterproductive, and the adversary may observe this to be so
- Capabilities and strategies to deter one adversary may be inappropriate, or insufficient to deter another (prevalent in human behavior)

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- In the “Second Nuclear Age”, many of the obstacles to the smooth operation of deterrence as explicated by Deterrence Theory – have been identified
- Gray and Payne instruct us to a best possible acquaintance with the adversary’s world, so as to reduce as far as possible the propensity for errors in the correct operation of deterrence
- Deterrence in any event cannot be “ensured” (Gray), its viability depends on the willingness of the deterree to be deterred (our means and measures may influence his decision, but they are not equal to his decision)

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- Rafsanjani (2001): “If Israel and the Islamic Nation both have nuclear weapons, then one nuclear weapon can destroy Israel, but the Islamic Nation can not be destroyed” – revealing
- Today: UK MoD White Paper of December 2006 on “Minimum Deterrence” + Final Report of “Project Daniel” (January 2003, published April 2004) + Tony Cordesman “Iran, Israel and Nuclear War” (November 2007)
- **UK White Paper** analyses challenges and threats, and recommends the appropriate remedy (renew sub fleet)

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- “Project Daniel” report makes recommendations for Deterrence, i.e., on Israel’s Second Strike capability – develop capability to target 15 countervalue targets (from Libya to Iran) of major significance
- + Conventional Deterrence to inhibit escalation in the first place
- + Pre-Emption, based on Bush Doctrine of 2002

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- Cordesman describes nuclear war, including graphs and illustrations of nuclear hits in the countries involved
- Cordesman: Israel has the advantage, because of larger yield warheads (“Yield Matters”), and a more developed infrastructure to survive and recover; Iran has lower yield warheads and a backward infrastructure for survival and recovery
- Cordesman’s conclusion: Israel could “theoretically” survive and recover, Iran can not
- Ipso facto: no side should initiate nuclear war

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- Problem is: how to design and construct deterrence in light of Gray and Payne's recommendations
- Iranian response may be dismissive ("our sources tell us otherwise"), may view Second Strike issue in different culturally-based terms
- Interim finding: UK Paper + Project Daniel Final Report + Cordesman are about Sufficiency = *how much* deterrence do you need to deter adversary *n*?
- We may need to amplify deterrence to increase the chances of its success
- Too much deterrence could be dangerous
- The flip-side is that insufficient or inappropriate deterrence could lead to catastrophic failure

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- **Conclusions**: Deterrence is unlikely to work well if based on Deterrence Theory Assumptions
- Deterrence can work if it is designed and constructed to exactly fit the specific adversary
- For that, Gray and Payne's assertions stand: deterrence can work, but only subject to a superb knowledge of the adversary
- We need to develop the design, architecture and construction of a "New" Deterrence, different from previous models