**Strategic Doctrines/ Coercive Diplomacy in Nuclear Age**

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**Strategic Doctrines/ Coercive Diplomacy in Nuclear Age**

**Introduction**

* Military strategies went under radical changes after the dropping of atomic bomb by US on Japan on August 6, 1945.
* The system of power since then transformed from ‘balance of power’ to a ‘balance of terror’
* With the dawn of nuclear age policymakers across the world had to face two central policy questions;

1. Whether they should use nuclear weapon, and
2. How to prevent others from using them

* As it is hard to estimate the terrifying immediate and delayed effects of a nuclear war, therefore, the search for the answers remained a critical area.
* Even a short war using a tiny fraction of any great power’s nuclear arsenal would destroy life
* The planet would be uninhabitable, because a ‘nuclear winter’ would result with devastating consequences

**Nuclear Winter:**

* The expected freeze that would occur in the earth’s climate from the fallout of smoke and dust in the event nuclear weapons were used, blocking out sunlight and destroying the plant and animal life that survived the original blast.

**Approaches to Coercive Diplomacy:**

* Although weapons of mass destruction have existed since World War II, strategies have changed with changes in technologies, defense needs, capabilities, and global conditions.
* For analytical convenience, strategic doctrines can be treated in three periods;

1. Compellence 1945-1962
2. Deterrence 1962-1991
3. Preemption Post Cold War era
4. **Compellence:**

* A method of coercive diplomacy usually involving an act of war or threat to force an adversary to make concessions against its will.
* Countries that possess military preeminence often think of weapons as instruments in diplomatic bargaining.
* The US, the world’s first, and for many years unchallenged, nuclear power, adopted the strategic doctrine of compellence when it enjoyed a clear-cut superiority over the Soviet Union.
* Military capabilities may not necessarily be used; a state may exercise influence over others simply by ‘demonstrating the quantity of force and highlighting the capability of, and intention to, use force.
* The US doctrine of compellence used nuclear weapons as tools of political influence, not for fighting but for convincing others to do what they might not otherwise do.
* The US sought to gain bargaining leverage by conveying the impression that it would actually use nuclear weapons.
* During Eisenhower administration, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles practiced ‘brinkmanship’, deliberately threatening US adversaries with nuclear destruction.

**Brinkmanship**

The intentional, reckless taking of huge risks in bargaining with an enemy, such as threatening a nuclear attack, to compel its submission.

* Brinkmanship, then, was part of the overall US strategy known as ‘massive retaliation’.

**Massive Retaliation:**

The Eisenhower administration’s policy doctrine for containing Soviet communism by pledging to respond to any act of aggression with the most destructive capabilities available, including nuclear weapons.

* To contain communism and Soviet expansionism, US called for a ‘countervalue targeting strategy’, that is, aiming US nuclear weapons at what the Soviets most valued-their population and industrial centres.

**Countervalue targeting strategy:**

The bargaining doctrine that declares the intention to use weapons of mass destruction against an enemy’s most valued non-military resources, such as the civilians and industries located in its cities.

* Alternative strategy to countervalue targeting strategy is ‘counterforce targeting strategy’

**Counterforce Targeting Strategy**

Targeting strategic nuclear weapons on particular military capabilities of an enemy’s armed forces and arsenals (thus sparing civilians from immediate destruction.

1. **Deterrence:**

* Massive retaliation heightened fears among the Soviets
* Soviet Union endeavoured to augment their nuclear capabilities.
* They launched world’s first space satellite (Sputnik), thereby acquiring the ability to deliver nuclear weapons to far-off places.
* US for the first time faced a nuclear threat to its homeland.
* With the erosion of US nuclear superiority, American policymakers began to question the utility of ‘compellence’ (as possibility lies that compellence may provoke nuclear exchange)
* The nearly suicidal Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 brought a shift in strategic policy from compellence to nuclear deterrence.
* Whereas compellence contains an offensive coercive threat, deterrence seeks to dissuade an adversary from undertaking some future action.

**Elements of Deterrence:**

* The key elements of deterrence are;

1. Capabilities- the possession of military resources that make threats of military retaliation plausible
2. Credibility- the belief that the actor is willing to defend its declared position
3. Communication- the ability to send a potential aggressor the clear message that it will carry out its threat.

* Advocates of deterrence argue that deterrence will succeed if threatened costs can be communicated to the challenger and believed by the challenger.

Deterrent strategy requires a ‘second-strike capability’.

**Second-strike capability**

A state’s capacity to retaliate after absorbing first strike attack with weapons of mass destruction.

* The possession of second-strike capabilities counters a first-strike nuclear threat and hence, is considered vital in ‘nuclear deterrence’.

**Nuclear Deterrence**

Dissuading an adversary from attacking by threatening retaliation with nuclear weapons.

* Deterrence, in today’s modern world, requires ‘sophisticated’ retaliatory capabilities ( or Smart Weapons).

*“Only when arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain without doubt that they will never be employed”.*

**(U.S President Kennedy)**

* After Cuban Missile Crisis, there emerged a strategic balance between the US and Soviet Union. This strategic balance is coined as ‘mutual assured destruction (MAD)’.

**Mutual Assured Destruction: (MAD)**

A condition of mutual deterrence in which both sides possess the ability to survive a first strike with weapons of mass destruction and launch a devastating retaliatory attack.

* Under these circumstances, starting a nuclear war became irrational.
* While MAD continued to dominate the thinking of some; others in the 1980s advocated ‘nuclear utilization theory (NUT)’

**Nuclear Utilization Theory:**

A body of strategic thought that claimed deterrent threats would be more credible if nuclear weapons were made more usable.

* Advocates of NUTs argued that use of nuclear weapons would not necessarily escalate to an unmanageable, all-out nuclear exchange.
* According to them it is possible to fight a ‘limited’ nuclear war.
* Opposed to these extreme approaches is the concept of ‘minimum deterrence’

**Minimum Deterrence:**

A form of deterrence in which a state possesses no more nuclear weapons than is necessary to deter an adversary from attacking.

* It is the most common form of deterrence practiced by nuclear weapons states, such as China, Pakistan, India, Britain, and France.

**Success of Deterrence**

* Success of nuclear deterrence remained dubious.
* Some attribute the peaceful end of the Cold War to the effectiveness of the superpowers’ deterrence strategies.
* Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., a historian, said that ‘Noble Peace Prize’ should be rewarded to the ‘atomic bomb’.
* Other scholars contest the usefulness of nuclear deterrence.
* According to them it is also hard to conclude the effectiveness of nuclear deterrence during the Cold War.

**Criticism:**

* It is hard to deter opponents who have suicidal inclinations
* Wherever, there are two enemy states both possessing nuclear weapons, there is possibility that one state suddenly launches weapons on its enemy by gaining the first strike advantage and completely destroys its enemy’s weapons launching facility, therefore the other state will be left completely incapable to respond
* Diplomatic misunderstandings and/or opposing political ideologies may lead to escalating mutual perceptions of threat, and a subsequent arms race that elevates the risk of actual war.
* Hence many politicians, scientists, and academic analysts are arguing for ‘nuclear disarmament’.

1. **Preemption:**

* A policy of launching a preemptive attack in order to prevent a suspected imminent attack
* The doctrine is also known as, ‘Bush Doctrine’.
* The end of Cold War ushered into an era where new nuclear threats appeared on the horizon.
* US developed an antiballistic missile system and declared its willingness to undertake preemptive action against emerging dangers
* To justify its strategy of preemption, U.S cites the threat of nuclear proliferation and the challenge of keeping of fissile materials out of the hands of terrorists.
* Bush Administration argued that preemption is a necessary doctrine suited for ‘asymmetrical warfare’

**Asymmetrical Warfare:**

Armed conflict between different types of enemies one of which is much more militarily powerful than the other.

* Modern technology allows shadowy terrorist networks to launch catastrophic attacks
* The terrorist network cannot be dissuaded by the threat of punishment because they have no fixed territory or populace to protect.
* Traditional concepts of deterrence cannot work against terrorist enemy also because they are willing to die.
* Moreover, generally their targets are non-combatants and innocent people.
* Statelessness is their most potent protection.

“We must take the battle to the enemy and confront the worst threats before they emerge”.

(US President, George W. Bush)

**The Concept of Preemptive and Preventive attack:**

* A preemptive military attack entails the use of force to quell or mitigate an impending strike by an adversary.
* A preventive attack entails the use of force to eliminate any possible future strike, even if there is no reason to believe that the capacity to launch an attack currently exists.
* The grounds for preemption lie in evidence of a credible, imminent threat.
* On the other hand, basis for preventive attack rests on mere suspicion of an incipient, contingent threat.

**Just War Theory:**

The theory that identifies the criteria under which it is morally permissible, or ‘just’ for a state to go to war and the methods by which a just war might be fought.

* The United Nations Charter does not support preemption as a legal use of force
* US adopted the concept of preemption as a policy feature in the 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS)
* The claim by the United States to the right of preemptive action continues to generate criticism and challenge the limits of international law

**Criticism:**

* Fight against terrorists involves multiple theatres of operations; for which it hardly remained possible to muster up military force for preemptive attack.
* Although modern military forces are more powerful than their predecessors, but in case of a preemptive attack, it is difficult to police the post-war environment.
* Example: No doubt, USA prevailed against Iraq militarily but failed to police the subsequent military, social and political dynamics.
* Result is the complete devastation of Iraq.
* Public Opinion, a necessary ingredient to win a war, generally does not favour preemptive strategies.
* There are fair chances of misperceptions on the part of policymakers as predicting another state’s future behavior is difficult.
* The Preemption or ‘Bush Doctrine’ is a retaliatory response. Critics adhered to this idea feel that the United States since 9/11, is responding in a retaliatory manner.
* Preemptive use of force potentially alienates one’s allies
* For example, Germany and France distance themselves from USA.
* International support in favour of US has also substantially decreased.
* Ethical and moral are also attached with the strategy of Preemption. It is feared that the preventive use of military force set a dangerous ‘precedent’.

**Uses and Limits of Coercive Diplomacy:**

* According to Alexander George, coercive diplomacy seeks to achieve three objectives.
* First, it attempts to persuade an adversary to turn away from its goal.
* Second, it seeks to convince an adversary to reverse an action already taken.
* Third, it may persuade an adversary to make "fundamental changes in its government.
* The advantage of coercive diplomacy over force is its relatively low psychological, economic and political costs.
* Coercive diplomacy’s reliance on the threat of force is designed to avoid the bloodshed and expense associated with traditional military campaigns.

**Limitations:**

* It involves the risk of war.
* It does not necessarily dissuade an enemy.
* During the 1990-91 Gulf War, coercive diplomacy failed to persuade Saddam Hussein to exit Kuwait and move his military forces back to Iraq.

**Manifestations of Coercive Diplomacy**

* Mainly coercive diplomacy revolves around threat of force or actual limited use of it
* However, it can be crystallized into various techniques like limited strikes, threats, sanctions etc.

1. **Military Intervention:**

* Operation undertaken openly by a state’s regular military forces within a specific foreign land in such a manner as to risk immediate combat.
* A state can act individually or with other-states,, there can be third parties or covert operations by a state.

**Covert Operation**

Secret activities undertaken by a state outside its borders through clandestine means to achieve specific political or military goals with respect to another state.

* Military intervention have often heightened international tension and led to war.
* Between 1816 and 2005, 44 cases of third-party military intervention in 236 civil wars occurred, with the result that 21 percent were transformed into interstate wars.
* The debate over military intervention took serious turn due to the wave of ‘failed states’

**Failed States:**

Countries whose governments have so mismanaged policy that they have lost the loyalty of their citizens who, in rebellion, threaten to divide the state into separate countries.

* Military intervention undercut the principles of state sovereignty and the ‘nonintervention norm’ in international law.

**Nonintervention Norm**

A fundamental international legal principle, now being challenged, that traditionally has defined interference by one state in the domestic affairs of another as illegal.

**Conditions for effective Military Intervention**

The following conditions are thought to favour the effective use of coercive diplomacy;

1. **Clarity of objective:** Demands must be clearly understood by the target.
2. **Asymmetry of motivation:** Motivations of the coercer should be bigger than the coerced.
3. **Opponent fear of escalation and belief in the urgency of compliance:** The coercing power must create in the adversary’s mind a sense of urgency for compliance with its demand. This depends on the i) coercer reputation of successful use of armed force and ii) its capability to increase pressures to intolerable levels in the eyes of target.
4. **Support**: Adequate domestic and/ or international support for the party using coercive diplomacy.
5. **Clarity on terms of settlement:** Clear precise terms of settlements and assurances not to formulate new demands after compliance.
6. **Economic Sanctions:**

‘Sanctions’ through ‘boycotts’ figure prominently as an alternative to bombs and bullets for coercion.

**Sanctions:**

Punitive actions taken by one state against another to retaliate for its previous objectionable behavior.

**Boycotts:**

Concerted efforts, often organized internationally, to prevent relations such as trade with a state, to express disapproval or to coerce acceptance of certain conditions.

* They are a popular tools of coercive diplomacy often favoured by diplomats
* Globalization increases the severity of economic sanctions due to dependence on other parties
* Moreover, they avoid the dangers of using armed force

**Economic sanctions may include;**

* Withholding foreign aid
* Placing tariffs and quotas on imports of the target state
* Boycotts
* Embargoes
* Freezing assets- it may have in or out in the foreign and international banks.

**Uses of economic sanctions:**

Five major policy goals are pursued by states when they adopt economic sanctions to pressure a foreign target;

1. **Compliance**- to force the target to alter its behavior to conform with the initiator’s preferences

Example: 1982 US embargo of Libya-designed to force it to end its support of terrorism

1. **Subversion**- to remove the target’s leader…..or overthrow the regime

Example: 2002 US efforts to topple Saddam Hussein in Iraq

1. **Deterrence**- to dissuade the target from repeating the disputed action in the future

Example: The Soviet grain embargo by the US

1. **Internationalism Symbolism**- to increase its domestic support or thwart international criticism of its foreign policies by acting decisively

Example: The British sanctions against Rhodesia after its unilateral declaration of independence in 1965.

1. **Domestic Symbolism**- to increase its domestic support or thwart international criticism of its foreign policies by acting decisively

Example: US sanctions against Iran following its seizure of US diplomats in 1979

**Limitations**:

* Historical record casts great doubt on the capacity of sanctions to work.
* Cuba is often cited as the best example where economic coercion through sanctions failed.
* The limitations of economic sanctions as a tool of coercive diplomacy can also be seen in the unsuccessful efforts to topple Saddam Hussein after the Persian Gulf War ended in 1991.
* These and other examples suggest that sanctions are seldom effective in bringing about major changes in the policies of the target country.

**Obstacles in the way of Economic Coercive Policies:**

1. Economic sanctions likely to stimulate more resistance in the target country and a heightened sense of nationalism.
2. Sanctions can hurt the average citizens which in the first place it aims to help.
3. Sanctions contribute to criminalizing the target state pushing it to believe in continuing Evil.
4. Governments sometimes covertly help the punished target they publicly denounce.
5. Sanctions are kind of trade protectionism hindering liberal free trade and profits.
6. The credibility of the state using sanctions is often low.
7. International community co-operation concerning sanctions seldom materializes. Whereas also unilateral sanctions rarely succeed in globalized market of competitive suppliers.