

The opportunities & limits of compellence strategies : the quest for a framework for analysis

Angeren, J.F.W. van

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This thesis concerns coercive strategies, in particular 'compellence', the counterpart of the better-known notion 'deterrence', both holding a special position in the contemporary International Relations theory. Compellence is defined as, "the use of threatened force — and at times the actual use of limited force to back up the threat — to induce an adversary to reverse an intolerable action he has taken earlier."

The dissertation provides a framework for the analysis of compellence processes. By means of this framework, it investigates the circumstances affecting the (successful) application of compellence.

The study is based on several sources from the preponderant compellence school of thought. The framework uses mechanisms from game theory and micro-economy. The factors that offer the highest chance of success are determined by means of a sensitivity analysis. Validation of the model was done through 'calculating' two cases: the case of Serbia (Kosovo), and the case of Iraq.

The framework can be useful to explain — ex post — the development of a particular compellence case. Furthermore, it can provide a basis for future research to expound — ex ante, given particular circumstances — the probable outcome of a compellence case.

The analysis made shows that 'motivation' is the most important 'critical success factor' in a compellence process. Consequently, the parties involved should enhance their own motivation and try to reduce the adversary's motivation in order to increase their chance of success. Application of the framework also demonstrates that 'targets' have, in general, an advantage over 'compellers'. Moreover, it shows that compellence strategies that imply the gradual increase of pressure on an opponent tend to be failure prone. In addition, this study argues that the profit of offering the opponent compensation for submission or the profit of offering concessions amply counterbalances the loss involved. Finally, a remarkable conclusion is that there is insufficient proof to support Robert Pape's assertion that, in general, 'compellence by denial' is preferable to 'compellence by punishment'.

Colonel (ret.) van Angeren is a graduate of the Advanced Staff Course of the Netherlands Defence College and the Senior Course of the NATO Defense College. He attained a Master's degree in Air Warfare (with Honors). During the last twenty years of his military career, he held mainly military strategic affairs appointments. His publications and lectures range from general strategic and military doctrinal issues to specific AirPower subjects. He worked at the Royal Netherlands Military Academy of Breda while writing this doctoral thesis. He is now Associate Professor of AirPower studies at the Netherlands Defence Academy.

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THE QUEST FOR
A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

JAN F. W. VAN ANGEREN