

archetypal hapless British P.M.) – is that deterrence logic occupies the high ground of any discussion of conflict between states. Our own White Paper on Defence uses deterrence or its variants twenty-six times – and Canada doesn't even own any nuclear weapons.

THE QUESTIONS LEBOW AND STEIN ask about deterrence are deceptively simple: When does deterrence deter? When does it cause reactions not intended by the country doing the deterring? Is it possible to tell in advance when deterrence will help and when it will hurt? While their studies of wars and crises go all the way back to the turn of the century, we can clearly see what they are getting at in Lebow's interpretation of events surrounding that old standby, the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Deterrence, in his view, far from being the reason for its successful conclusion and proof of its utility in the hands of wise leaders, was the principle cause of the crisis. Each side's efforts to "deter" not only led towards war and not away from it, but often had an effect exactly opposite to the one intended.

Lebow draws three lessons about deterrence from the crisis and they all run directly counter to those reinforced by the Cuban Crisis of popular fable. First, and perhaps most important, between countries and leaders that are already suspicious of each other, efforts to "deter" more often than not look like mere threats and confirm suspicions that the other side is dangerous.

Second, deterrence tends to "elicit challenges." To an adversary, deterrence often looks like a dare. And dares are very difficult to pass up without looking foolish. A common result is the creation of a pattern in which every action is followed by a reaction which in turn must be reacted to, and so on.

Third, this momentum puts pressures on national leaders to act. All leaders, even totalitarian ones, work inside military and civilian bureaucracies attempting to influence the leader's decisions one way or another. An external challenge, at the worse possible moment, adds to the pressure to "do something."

How, according to Lebow, were these unwelcome effects of deterrence at work in 1962? At a recent meeting in Ottawa, Lebow bolstered his and Stein's theoretical attack on deterrence by relaying recent revelations from Soviet sources about how the Soviet leadership of 1962 perceived events at the time. According to Sergei Mikoyan (son of Anastas Mikoyan who was Khrushchev's close advisor and first deputy premier) and Fedor Burlatsky, Khrushchev's speech writer, the USSR had three motives for putting missiles in Cuba. The first was to protect their new client Castro whom they believed (correctly as we now know) to be under threat from the US. The second was to redress the nuclear balance which was overwhelmingly in American favour and, for the Russians, getting worse. And third, Khrushchev wanted Kennedy to feel the same threat from missiles in Cuba that he (Khrushchev) felt from US missiles in nearby Turkey; he wanted to give Kennedy a spoonful of his own soup.

There are lots of people who will claim that the Soviets' portrayal of their motives in 1962 are just so many self-serving lies. This could be true, but as Lebow remarked in Ottawa, it seems unlikely since their comments do not put Soviet actions at the time in a very flattering light. More important is the overwhelming evidence now available from public sources showing that the Cuban Missile Crisis embedded in popular culture never happened. The unintended and wholly deleterious result of all the "deterring" that was going on was to convince each side of the other's evil intent and to elicit even more efforts to deter.

In the matter of US nuclear superiority, the Russians knew they were inferior, but they did not know the Americans knew. When the new technology of spy satellites told the US that the USSR had relatively little in the way of nuclear

missiles (missiles were not coming off Soviet production lines "like sausages" as Khrushchev had boasted), presumably in an effort to "deter" the US), and where those few were located, they promptly let the Russians know that they knew. To the Soviets this seemed an attempt at political intimidation. It appeared the US was saying, "We see how feeble you are, so just watch out."

The para-military training of anti-Castro Cubans in the US, and the generally bellicose anti-Castro language of Washington was an effort to deter the Russians from using Cuba to export revolution. However, the Soviets believed that they were being challenged to back away from a public commitment to a new client and ally, and that to do so would be an unacceptable loss of prestige.

And last, we now know that with regards to the US missiles in Turkey (the infamous "Jupiters") the impression left in Robert Kennedy's account of the crisis, that JFK ordered the missiles taken out and was angry upon discovering that they had not been removed, is incorrect. Indeed, JFK was partly responsible for their installation in the first place, rejecting the chance to halt their deployment (a process begun but not completed by Eisenhower in his second term) on the basis that not proceeding with the Jupiter plans would appear weak in the eyes of the Soviets and demonstrate in Lebow's words, "a lack of resolve" – resolve being a necessary condition for deterrence.

To Khrushchev the Turkish missiles were a personal affront and added to the pressure to deal with overall Soviet inferiority. The result was a quixotic attempt by Khrushchev to solve his domestic and international problems at a stroke. Put missiles in Cuba and this will "deter" the Americans from invading Cuba, restore Soviet prestige in the eyes of the world

and show the Americans that they cannot intimidate the USSR. Action-reaction momentum sets in at this point, for from the US point of view, Khrushchev's action represented a radical change in the status quo which could not go unanswered.

There is a last poignant irony: former *Washington Post* diplomatic correspondent Murrey Marder has uncovered documents showing that President Eisenhower worried that plans for US Jupiters in Turkey would be equivalent to the Soviets putting missiles into a "communized Cuba" – a concern expressed well before Castro came to power. So much for the efficacy of deterrence.

PROFESSORS LEBOW AND STEIN ARE not proposing that deterrence be entirely abandoned as a strategy. Instead, they argue that deterrence is inherently unpredictable, and useful in a very limited set of circumstances. "A little deterrence goes a long way," says Lebow. The trick for scholars, political leaders and citizens is to decide whether in a particular international circumstance "deterrence" will make things better or worse.

A helpful first step would be to clean-up our use of language in the arena of public discourse; governments, political pundits, and the media in general should all be a lot more careful about the way we toss around vacuous notions like deterrence. For those who make defence and foreign policy abandoning deterrence as a cure-all will require an expenditure of effort – which probably explains at least part of the universal appeal of the word. Among its many attributes, deterrence is an excellent substitute for thought. □

Further Reading

- Barton J. Bernstein. "The Cuban Missile Crisis: Trading the Jupiters in Turkey?" *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 95, No. 1, Spring 1980.
- Robert Jervis. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976.
- Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein. "Beyond Deterrence," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 43, No.4, 1987.
- Marc Trachtenberg. "The Influence of Nuclear Weapons in the Cuban Missile Crisis," *International Security*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Summer 1985.



Craig Telson

DETERRENCE