

of these conflicts were characterized by acute crises or wars between the protagonists and all were transformed over time into relationships in which the prospect of violence has seriously diminished.

In none of these relationships is it easy to distinguish defender from challenger. If it is sometimes difficult to distinguish challenger from deterrer in immediate deterrence encounters, it is that much more difficult, if not impossible, to do so in the case of general deterrence. A challenger can become a defender over time, and a defender can exploit an opportunity to resort to force. The categories of defender and challenger can be static, arbitrary, and misleading. To the extent that both parties consider war a possibility, both will seek to maximize their relative political and military advantages. Under these conditions, the dichotomy between challenger and defender becomes, in Edward Kolodziej's words, "a distinction without a difference."¹⁵⁸ The Egyptian-Israeli conflict gives vivid testimony to this phenomenon. The cycle of provocation and response went through so many iterations that the behaviour of the antagonists became more or less indistinguishable. From whose perspective should the long-term consequences of deterrence be examined?

The Soviet-American relationship also illustrates this dilemma. There is a consensus among American students of the Soviet Union that Soviet foreign policy has evolved considerably since the Cold War. Soviet-American crises have become rare rather than common events and at least one survey of elite opinion reveals that perceptions of Soviet aggressiveness have declined markedly.¹⁵⁹ Some analysts assert that in the last decade Soviet policy has become predominantly defensive; its primary goal is the preservation rather than the expansion of its sphere of influence. Commenting on this apparent and remarkable change, one prominent hawk recently exclaimed: "The Cold War is over. We won it!"¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Edward A. Kolodziej, "The Limits of Deterrence Theory," *Journal of Social Issues* 43, no.4 (1987), p.129; Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, "Beyond Deterrence: Building Better Theory," *Journal of Social Issues* 43, no.4 (1987), pp.156-157.

¹⁵⁹ Lebow and Garofono, "The Military Balance and Soviet Aggressiveness: Testing the Predictions of Deterrence Theory."

¹⁶⁰ Edward Luttwak, chairing a seminar at the Center for the Study of International Affairs, Georgetown University, 1 November 1988.