few coercive alternatives, this tactic offers two unusual features for a form of interstate violence: it is ambiguous and it is inexpensive.

Unlike internal war or proxy war, state sponsored terrorism can be modulated to match the responses of Western decision makers. Individual acts of terror have no necessary connection with each other and need not be focused in time or target to be additive. Thus, a series of such acts can be effective in creating a climate of fear without being coordinated or directed in any very sophisticated way. And even while political leaders in the target states deny that they are responding to terrorist demands, and state sponsors deny their connection with the terrorists, both parties can tacitly signal their true intentions by concessions or counterattack, by the widening or lessening of terrorist incidents. Thus the importance of the goal for the terrorist sponsor need not be reflected in the continuity of the tactic or the cost in resources to the sponsoring state.

Defence is costly

The factors that make sponsorship of terrorism attractive to certain Third World elites make responses to terrorism by Western governments difficult and costly. Because virtually every important facility and concentration of humanity is at risk, improvements in security have to be very costly if they are to do more than change the most likely points of attack. Security and emergency agencies must develop and implement new strategies to protect the most vulnerable targets. Political decision-makers and other likely targets among the elite must be protected and made aware of threats in order to maintain a heightened security.

Terrorist incidents may occupy the attention of decision-makers at the highest levels for prolonged periods because of the public character of terrorist acts. This heightened importance given to acts of terrorism by the most important political elite, and the consensus view among the politically relevant strata that it is justified (in the absence of reliable information to the contrary), is itself an important source of leverage to the would-be terrorist and an important cost of terrorism to the target polity. The costs of effective internal security responses to terrorism by Western democracies are high and permanent.

Thus, more aggressive foreign policy responses, even if they have high short term risk and costs, are apt to be preferred to defensive strategies by those Western political elites for whom they are an option.

Coercive diplomacy

The conceptual framework within which the contemporary United States policy of coercive diplomacy has evolved has it origins in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This was a time when the imminent prospect of a stalemate in the field of nuclear weapons, together with rapidly advancing pressures toward decolonization in the Third World challenged the doctrine of containment.

While military confrontation in Europe remained a possibility to US decision-makers, the threat of Soviet gains in the Third World by means of support for domestic insurrections, incursions or guerrilla warfare began to preoccupy strategists. These contexts seemed promising for the Soviets, who were thought to prefer and to excel at "subversion," as compared to the more traditional methods of political influence. Unlike confrontations in Europe, conflicts in the Third World would be more difficult to assess and respond to because of the ambiguous nature of the threat they presented to US interests, and because of the sheer variety of political environments in which they were apt to occur. A mixture of military sales, development aid, covert political and military intervention and ultimately direct intervention with United States forces, were used.

The common thread that runs through many of these responses is the notion that US interests as a world power are seamless; challenges to interests anywhere, if unmet, undermine interests everywhere. But as military advisers often reminded policy makers, resources are always both limited and insufficient for current commitments. What could be more attractive in these circumstances than a doctrine that proposes that force be employed as a means to limit conflict to the lowest level of cost consonant with interests. Such was the conception urged by Thomas Schelling in his book *Arms and Influence* (1966), under the term "compellence."

Compellence as concept

Schelling's perspective was one that was common among those who formulated nuclear strategy inside and outside government since the late 1940s. He assumed, as did the nuclear strategists, that policy makers could be expected to act as rational calculators whose tactics would be adjusted to changes in the costs and risks of their opponents' countermoves.

Compellence is, then, the use of increasingly costly sanctions to coerce one's opponent to do or forbear from doing something. Schelling was particularly clear about the notion that costs (the level of violence used) must be increased gradually but in a distinct enough manner to convince one's adversary that a change in policy would be more profitable if done sooner rather than later. He also particularly stressed the notion that risk is itself a cost that can be used to coerce. If one's adversary's coercive responses are riskier than one's own, one's adversary is more likely to compromise.

It is likely that compellence will seem particularly attractive to policy makers whose commitments overreach their resources. Compellent force is symbolic rather than instrumental: its goal is to change the minds of the adversary rather than overwhelm by force of arms. Thus neither the amount of force, nor the degree of preplanning required by protracted conflict, are thought to be necessary. But compellence is coercive and public, in contrast to pure bargaining. When it is effective it enhances a nation's reputation for power and resolve. Such effects are precisely those required by a world power whose actual power to control events is on the decline, but whose desire to do so remains as great as ever.

Compellence is better suited as a strategy of conflict between nations of unequal power than it is to relations between more nearly equal adversaries. This is a strategy that is designed to avoid costly and protracted conflict. It is a strategy that requires the appearance of having a full commitment behind it but is used precisely when this is not the case. For its successful use, it must end in a resolution of the dispute before a great deal of force has been used, or else it will have turned into a trap for its user. Having suffered retaliation and responded in kind the initiator of conflict may feel compelled to continue without having any prospect of an outcome that is worth the costs.