

Our critique of the major empirical studies of deterrence identifies three problem areas that future studies need to address more effectively. These are (1) the biases inherent in all data sets of deterrence and the constraints they impose on the generation and testing of hypotheses; (2) the inadequacy of existing definitions of deterrence success and failure, and the corresponding need to develop a workable definition derived from the postulates of deterrence theory; and (3) the need to explore, theoretically and empirically, the relationship between immediate and general deterrence.

These questions are addressed within the context of our research programme. This programme encompasses studies of immediate deterrence success and failure, of general deterrence and its relationship to immediate deterrence, and of the broader role deterrence plays in adversarial relations. The last question has received very little attention.

We begin with the study of immediate deterrence. The impossibility of identifying the universe of deterrence successes compels us to reject the goal, common to many studies, of assessing the efficacy of deterrence in terms of the frequency of its success and failure. Instead, we seek to investigate how and why deterrence succeeds and fails. Understanding the conditions and processes associated with the success and failure of immediate and general deterrence will tell us something about the relative importance of structure and process, and the ways in which the military balance, threats, and bargaining reputation affect adversarial behaviour.

To understand when and why deterrence succeeds, we develop a series of hypotheses that are outside of and in many ways contradictory to traditional deterrence theory. In contrast to deterrence theory which assumes that challenges are responses to opportunity, we argue that many important challenges have been need driven. This difference in motive reverses the flow of cause and effect. Opportunistic challenges are a response to incredible commitments. Need driven challenges are initiated by policymakers who may judge it rational to attack credible and well-defended