

# Here to Help: Third Party Deterrence Against Insurgent Groups

A Monograph

by

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## Abstract

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During the Cold War, both the United States and the Soviet Union exercised third party deterrence to protect key allies against hostile aggression. However, since the end of World War II, violent non-state groups such as terrorists, insurgents, and criminal organizations represent the predominant security threats to states. This monograph argues that third party deterrence is a valid concept applied against an insurgent group challenging a partner state. This monograph analyzes three key variables of Cold War deterrence—state centrism; nuclear prominence; and congruent relationships. Recognizing the evolution of those variables since the end of the Cold War unlocks deterrence methods not just limited to threats of punishment, but of deterrence through denial and delegitimization. Deterring an insurgent or potential insurgent group through delegitimization is a powerful approach, but it requires the third party state to apply coercive force against both the insurgent group and the partner state's government.

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## Acronyms

BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CWMD	Counter-Weapons of Mass Destruction
DIME	Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organization
IO	Information Operations
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IS	Islamic State
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPR	National Public Radio
PFLO	Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman
RAF	Regionally Aligned Forces
SAC	Strategic Air Command
SFA	Security Force Assistance
USSTRATCOM	US Strategic Command
VC	Viet Cong
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

## Introduction

Is deterrence still relevant in the contemporary operating environment? With a few exceptions, deterrence was at the foundation of order during the bipolarity of the Cold War era. The United States and the Soviet Union built alliances, nuclear stockpiles, and even anti-ballistic missile systems, signaling to each other the potential consequences of taking aggressive military action against them or their friends. The fear of punishment or retaliation was the language of deterrence. However, in the current world where the vast majority of armed conflicts since World War II occur within national borders, and arguably the most urgent security concerns arise from violent non-state groups unfazed by threats of punishment, deterrence as a strategy seems anachronistic and impractical. Nevertheless, the term “deterrence” remains a fixture in US strategic planning documents and generally applicable to all types of potential enemies.<sup>1</sup>

Between two adversarial states, the traditional idea of deterrence—threatening punishment through retaliation centered around military capabilities and a willingness to use them—mostly endures. However, third party or “extended deterrence” where a state attempts to deter attacks against an ally<sup>2</sup>, is more dubious than during the Cold War given the preponderance of violent non-state groups that threaten states now. Insurgencies, in particular, which Phil Williams defines as “an organized, armed political struggle whose goal may be the seizure of power through revolutionary takeover and replacement of the existing government,” have proven extremely resilient and tough to defeat.<sup>3</sup> America’s twelve years of combating insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan attest to this difficulty. While insurgency is unlikely in the United States, a real concern for US strategists is to determine if insurgencies can be prevented from exacting

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<sup>1</sup> United States National Security Strategy, The White House (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015), 1, 8, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen L. Quackenbush, *Understanding General Deterrence* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 4.

<sup>3</sup> Phil Williams, “Violent Non-State Actors and National and International Security,” in *International Relations and Security Network*, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich, (2008), 8.

large-scale violence against a friendly government and its population, particularly in a country where the United States possesses national interests and seeks to build partner capacity.

Therefore, proceeding from the assumption that a third party state can deter an insurgent group, the primary research question posed by this paper is: how best can third party deterrence work against an insurgent group? For the United States, this question is of particular importance, given US efforts to bolster partner nations through capacity building and security force assistance as reflected in the 2015 US National Security Strategy.<sup>4</sup> This paper's hypothesis is that third-party deterrence can best be achieved against insurgents by applying coercive actions against both the insurgent group and the partner country's government. This hypothesis requires a reconsideration of Cold War deterrence assumptions set against the increased complexity inherent to the multipolar post-Cold War environment of states, violent groups, and modern communication and information networks.

### Contemporary Deterrence: Evolving Concepts

Third-party deterrence is a valid concept and applicable against insurgents. Third-party deterrence has existed for centuries. Insurgencies are not new either, but their unconventional backgrounds coupled with their access to mass media and the internet as well as their ability to draw upon sizable external networks connotes distinction. This environment should not diminish the important role deterrence theory can play in preventing or defeating insurgencies. The notion that one party could prevent another party from acting in a certain way against an ally based upon what the latter assessed were unacceptable costs echoes of Thucydides in his Melian Dialogue.<sup>5</sup> During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union each deterred the other from acting against countries within their respective spheres of influence. The collective security achieved

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<sup>4</sup> National Security Strategy, 7, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Perez Zagorin, *Thucydides: An Introduction for the Common Reader* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 102-107.

through the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and America's decision to arm and ally with Somalia shortly after the Soviets lent support to the communist Derg junta in Ethiopia in 1974 are but two additional examples.

However, when the Cold War ended, commentaries on the utility of deterrence abruptly declined. As James Lebovic noted, the "perceived association between deterrence and the US-Soviet nuclear standoff was that deterrence principles seemed increasingly antiquated with the waning of Cold War tension."<sup>6</sup> Lawrence Freedman added, "Deterrence was no longer needed...international relations calmed down...new threats could be discerned."<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the post-Cold War, multi-polar international system witnessed the rise of non-state actors capable of using violence or the threat of violence to achieve their political goals: Al-Qaeda's attack on September 11, 2001 demonstrated the violent resolve of such groups. The Bush Administration proclaimed that the new threat "of delinquent states and shadowy terrorist groups" was beyond the effects of deterrence.<sup>8</sup> However, for those seeking an alternative to an open-ended war against an ideology, many wondered if deterrence could provide a useful alternative framework for a strategy that contemplates violent non-state actors as an adversary.<sup>9</sup>

Yet as third-party deterrence reemerges as a theoretical framework for dealing with insurgencies, the pre-9/11 literature and much of its more recent progeny have not made the conceptual leap in three fundamental areas. First, deterrence writing emphasizes states as the primary actors or discusses non-state groups either too broadly or too narrowly for meaningful consideration.<sup>10</sup> There is a relative dearth of sources contemplating non-state actors as deterrence

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<sup>6</sup> James H. Lebovic, *Deterring International Terrorism and Rogue States* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *Deterrence* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), 24.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 11. Stephen J. Cimbala, *Military Persuasion: Deterrence and Provocation in Crisis and War* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 15-17. Uri Fisher, "Deterrence, Terrorism,

worthy. In fact, although George and Smoke decried the lack of theoretical treatment of deterrence applied to guerrillas and insurgents in 1974, though few ever responded to their call.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, there remains an emphasis on discussing deterrence in the nuclear or “strategic” realm.<sup>12</sup> Although commentators like John Mearsheimer and Richard Betts contemplated conventional deterrence during the Cold War, they never fully dissociated nuclear capabilities from their analyses and all considered states (or state alliances) as the primary actors.<sup>13</sup> While nuclear deterrence remains a strategic imperative for the United States, its allies, and other countries for a multitude of reasons, focusing deterrence literature on the nuclear topic virtually eliminates opportunities to consider deterrence more generally through conventional means. Applying deterrence against insurgent groups requires an emphasis on conventional deterrence.

Third, while there was certainly a great deal of political, military, and economic wrangling among superpowers and their spheres during the Cold War, the deterrence relationships (mostly between states) were predominantly congruent. In other words, a country like the United States provided protection to a country or entity to secure its interests or project power to gain an advantage against communism. From Chile to South Vietnam to the Nicaraguan Contras, the United States sought to deter communist aggression by supporting troubled regimes. So too did the Soviet Union do the opposite in propping up and supporting questionable governments in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and across Eastern Europe. The relationships were congruent: the superpower provided a third-party deterrent effect and the host nation acquiesced

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and American Values.” *Homeland Security Affairs* 3, no. 4 (February 2007), accessed March 26, 2015, <https://www.hsaj.org/articles/152>.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy, Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 44.

<sup>12</sup> Sean P. Larkin, “Cracks in the New Jar: The Limits of Tailored Deterrence,” (Master’s Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, 2011). Michael S. Gerson, “Conventional Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age,” *Parameters* (Autumn 2009): 32-48.

<sup>13</sup> Richard K. Betts, “Conventional Deterrence: Predictive Uncertainty and Policy Confidence,” *World Politics*, 37, no. 2 (Jan. 1985): 153-179; John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 13.

to their demands. The Soviets and the Americans were the only games in town; to reject one invited courting from the other. This bipolar structure served as an incubator for deterrence theory, a striking feature that George and Smoke articulated in 1974.<sup>14</sup>

Wrapped around these three concepts—state centrism; nuclear/strategic focus; and congruent relationships—Cold War deterrence focused almost solely on punishment as the mechanism of coercion. Yet, according to Alex S. Wilner, writing more recently in 2011 and looking at the applicability of deterrence to terrorist groups, deterrence by punishment (targeting what one values) constituted only one of three ways of deterrence.<sup>15</sup> “Punishment relies on threatening to harm something an adversary values.”<sup>16</sup> Against an insurgency, this could take multiple forms: actions against insurgent financial, materiel, and personnel networks; arrests of insurgent leaders and seizures of insurgent equipment; or targeting insurgent members with kinetic force.

Furthermore, while deterrence by punishment maintains a place in contemporary deterrence considerations, it is the least preferred approach when contemplating third-party deterrence against an insurgent group. It is difficult to threaten punishment against a group that likely possesses no fear of retaliation. In fact, the three reciprocal deterrence variables—conventional focus; incongruent relationships; and the inclusion of non-state entities—lend themselves to two other forms of deterrence postulated by Wilner: deterrence by denial and deterrence by delegitimization. Deterrence by denial (targeting what one wants) and deterrence by delegitimization (targeting what one believes) may offer viable routes to achieve coercive leverage against an insurgent entity.<sup>17</sup> This is at the heart of the hypothesis. Deterrence by

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<sup>14</sup> George and Smoke, 32.

<sup>15</sup> Alex K. Wilner, “Deterring the Undeterrable: Coercion, Denial, and Delegitimization in Counterterrorism,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 34, no. 1 (Feb 2011): 14, accessed July 16, 2014, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2011.541760>.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Wilner, 14-26.

denial—undertaking efforts to block funding, personnel, favorable terrain, and facilities, for example—demonstrates a third-party state’s ability to apply coercive force against an insurgent group.

Deterrence by denial affects an insurgent group’s perceived cost/benefit analysis. Denial mechanisms include providing increased security and training and infusions of development aid in contested areas; generating uncertainty and unpredictability for insurgencies through randomness; and mitigating the effects of insurgent actions by denying them the immediate consequences they anticipate and desire.<sup>18</sup> Wilner explains that utilizing denial requires “assessing how individual groups value attacking particular targets, how they measure tactical successes, and how they weigh unsuccessful/foiled attacks in their utility calculations.”<sup>19</sup> However, this paper’s hypothesis requires a coercive force applied to the host nation as well.

Coercion against the host nation, most likely in the form of persuasive efforts by the third-party deterring state, is at the core of deterrence through delegitimization. Deterrence by delegitimization focuses squarely on the belief structures and ideologies of the insurgents. This approach requires deterring states to “raise the costs...by challenging the normative, religious, and socio-political rationales individuals rely upon when participating in violence.”<sup>20</sup> Frequently, the socio-political rationales for insurgency emanate from an unequal distribution of goods, revenues, or resources along ethnic, religious, or geographic lines. Armed opposition to governance occurs when groups of individuals feel marginalized, disenfranchised, or terrorized by those charged to fairly govern them. Often, religion, ethnicity, gender, or color provide readily compelling narratives to foster discrimination and violence among disparate people in less developed parts of the world. Time and again, propagators of such violence inevitably turn it against the state.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 27.

Therefore, deterrence through delegitimization seeks to inhibit those forces that give rise to insurgent violence by helping to further legitimize the leaders and institutions exercising governance across countries. In turn, host nations, with the help and support of a third-party deterring state (which may have to coerce or at least persuade the host nation) undercut both the reasons for an insurgency and the corrosiveness in the co-opting of religion, ethnicity, gender, or a myriad of other differences, harmless on their face. As a result, governing institutions, police forces, militaries, health providers, and a host of other services should function more fairly and with less corruption in order to drive home gains through deterrence by delegitimization.

There are three key takeaways from the hypothesis. First, in host nations that are ripe for insurgency or are experiencing insurgencies, third-party deterrence through denial and delegitimization should dominate all efforts. However, as noted, there can be a limited application of deterrence by punishment in the form of threats of or the actual use of force in order to kill or capture insurgent leaders or to prevent insurgent groups from committing atrocities against innocent people. Secondly, while some might consider deterrence by punishment an abrogation of deterrence theory, it possesses a second-order deterrent effect. For example, the recent intervention by French military forces into the complex insurgency gripping Mali demonstrated deterrence by punishment on two levels. At the more immediate level, killing or capturing insurgent group members conveyed both French military capabilities and France's willingness to use them. This likely impacts some insurgents in that conflict to abandon violence. At a higher level, France, as a third-party deterring state can deter future potential insurgents (or those who oppose their government but have not taken up arms) from pursuing violence in the first place having demonstrated its capability and willingness to use it in the Mali situation.

The third takeaway considers the relationship of the actors—the host nation, an insurgent group, and a third-party state. Wilner originally applied his three-part deterrence framework to state sponsors of terrorist groups. In his analysis, a coercive act against the state sponsor produced

an effect in the behavior of the terrorist group due in part to their respective interests converging. An insurgency in a host nation is almost the opposite situation. The insurgent group and the host nation typically do not have congruent interests. Fundamentally, the insurgent group seeks to wrest control of some portion of the sovereign state's territory for its exclusive control.

Quite possibly, the host nation and the third-party deterring state may also have divergent interests as well. This is a unique feature of post-Cold War third-party deterrence dynamics. Consequently, the interactive relationships of the multitude of actors involved lend themselves to analysis as a complex system. A noteworthy feature of complex systems that is helpful for visualizing a theoretical approach to deterring insurgencies are feedback mechanisms. "Complex systems usually have multiple feedback loops. Positive feedback loops strengthen the cause and the subsequent effect in an ever increasing cycle."<sup>21</sup> Conversely, negative feedback resists changes to the system.

An insurgency wants to alter the status quo and thus harnesses positive feedback loops to overwhelm the current state-imposed system for its own benefit. The state relies upon negative feedback loops as a dampening effect—many cite the thermostat as an example—to keep the system functioning along its preferred path by keeping equilibrium. Deterring the insurgent group does not equate with maintaining equilibrium, but by using positive feedback against the insurgent group and the state to achieve a comparatively more desirable outcome for the state. Bill Casebeer and Troy Thomas "contend that deterrence remains a viable strategy for meeting the challenge if adapted to an understanding of violent non-state actors as a dynamic open systems."<sup>22</sup> This approach also accords with Adam Lowther's argument that threats posed by

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<sup>21</sup> Neil E. Harrison, "Thinking About the World We Make," in *Complexity in World Politics*, ed. Neil E. Harrison (Albany: State University of New York, 2006), 5.

<sup>22</sup> Troy S. Thomas and William D. Casebeer, *Violent Systems: Defeating Terrorists, Insurgents, and Other Non-State Adversaries*, USAF Institute for National Security Studies, Occasional Paper 52 (March 2004), 2.

non-state actors require deterrence approaches along a spectrum from denial to threat at multiple levels from individual to domestic to international.<sup>23</sup>

This paper does not prescribe an exact method for contending with insurgencies. Rather, its purpose is to introduce a theoretical approach for contending with insurgencies in the twenty-first century that recognizes the necessity of applying coercive force against a range of diverse and interrelated actors. Thus, this paper adds to the deterrence debate in that it considers third-party deterrence where the aggressive entity is a non-state actor challenging the sovereign power of a partner or ally. Despite limited writings on this precise topic, it arguably represents many potential and active conflicts facing industrialized nations that support and defend weak or imperiled governments across the globe. From Yemen to Nigeria and from Ukraine to the Philippines, insurgency movements threaten vital partnerships in the form of trade, social exchanges, law enforcement, and diplomacy between a host nation and its international proponents.

At a very basic level, deterrence is about communicating signals to a target audience in order to influence that audience to refrain from certain behaviors on account of the high costs which the deterring entity threatens to impose. This monograph asks how best can a third party state deter violent non-state actors from conducting an insurgency against a partner country through a strategy of extended general deterrence. There will likely always be some disagreement with the decisions of political leaders, varying in size, intensity, and cohesion. However, as Paul Staniland writes, seizing political power using violence, distinguishes an insurgency from a mere political movement.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Adam Lowther, "Introduction: The Evolution of Deterrence," in *Thinking About Deterrence: Enduring Questions in a Time of Rising Powers, Rogue Regimes, and Terrorism*, ed. Adam Lowther (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2013), 14.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 5.

The remainder of this monograph is organized into three parts. First, it examines materials from the Cold War and contrasts them with contributions from authors writing after 9/11 to provide insight into the language of deterrence, its theoretical development, and how it must be adapted in order to achieve effects against insurgencies. This analysis is used to explore the key variables of Cold War and post-Cold War deterrence previously introduced: state-centrism; the prominence of nuclear deterrence; and congruent relationships. Next, embracing the distinctions between Cold War and post-Cold War deterrence, this paper suggests ways in which third-party deterrence by denial and deterrence by delegitimization can achieve effects against insurgencies. Finally, using a single case study of the insurgent group Boko Haram operating against the Government of Nigeria with the United States exercising extended general deterrence, this paper applies part three's framework to evaluate the hypothesis.

#### Shifting the Deterrence Paradigm

Acknowledging changes in the three variables of state-centrism; nuclear vs. conventional; and order potentially signifies what Thomas Kuhn described as a “paradigm shift” in the calculus of deterrence. “The resulting transition to a new paradigm is scientific revolution, a subject that we are at long last prepared to approach directly.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, to accept deterrence as a legitimate strategy in the contemporary environment requires a critical treatment of its assumptions, especially if they are outdated and susceptible to emerging information. The most problematic assumption employed by deterrence scholars is the reverence for the state in international relations. Furthermore, the overwhelming tendency in deterrence writings previous to and throughout the Cold War—to focus on inter-state relations—presents damaging repercussions for any post-Cold War considerations of applying deterrence to non-state groups like insurgencies. Therefore, the state-centric bias is the first variable for consideration.

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<sup>25</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University Press, 1996), 90.

## The Bias of State-Centrism

John Mearsheimer wrote, “Deterrence in the broadest sense, means persuading an opponent not to initiate a specific action because the perceived benefits do not justify the estimated costs and risks.”<sup>26</sup> Similarly, James Lebovic suggested that, “Deterrence results when a party foregoes action because its costs outweigh the benefits.”<sup>27</sup> These definitions were appropriate for the Cold War setting and even well before that era. Following the Napoleonic Wars, the Concert of Europe offered an ordered system for balance of power arrangements that could convey deterrence against states seeking to acquire greater power. The currency of deterrence was military power and it operated in terms of punishment. Fundamentally assumed in those views, states were the only actors. In fact, in 58 cases of third party deterrence identified by Paul Huth and Bruce Russett from 1885 to 1983, every third party deterring entity as well as every aggressor entity were states.<sup>28</sup> The ally or partner was always a state or pseudo-state, like a colony, under the control of a state.<sup>29</sup>

It is no surprise that many Cold War deterrence commentators, like Mearsheimer and Thomas Schelling, embraced a realist perspective of international relations which counts states as the most important factors. Nevertheless, this singular take on deterrence limits its potential application to non-state groups. Recognizing a conceptual unwillingness to apply deterrence theory to post-Cold War situations, deterrence scholar Stephen Quackenbush offered that “deterrence is a general phenomenon that is not limited to any particular time or space.”<sup>30</sup> However, he nevertheless focuses his analysis on relations between states.<sup>31</sup> Writing in 2010,

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<sup>26</sup>Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 14.

<sup>27</sup> Lebovic, 4.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Huth and Bruce Russett, “Deterrence Failure and Crisis Escalation,” *International Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (Mar. 1988): 32, accessed April 26, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2600411>.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Quackenbush, 3.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

Paul K. Davis conceded, “The dominant cold war interpretation of deterrence was largely irrelevant for dealing with al-Qaeda as an entity or with al-Qaeda leaders.”<sup>32</sup>

During the Cold War, not only were states the only meaningful actors in considerations of deterrence, but a state’s foray into “limited” or “unconventional” wars which almost always included non-state adversaries, was only itself used as a deterrence signal to other states. The decision by the United States to support South Vietnam early in its struggle with the North in 1959 was in reaction to operations conducted by the Viet Cong (VC). Washington hoped its presence in the South—training, advising, and assisting the Army of the Republic of Vietnam—would send a deterrence signal to both Moscow and Beijing that their support of an armed belligerent on the peninsula would not be tolerated. Schelling articulated it best, “We tell the Soviets that we have to react here because, if we did not, they would not believe us when we say that we will react there.”<sup>33</sup>

From a US perspective, the opposite occurred in Nicaragua in the 1980s. The United States chose to arm, train, and support the Nicaraguan Contras against the Sandinistas as a way of signaling to the “evil empire” that its costs of interfering in Central American affairs would carry unacceptable costs.<sup>34</sup> Since the end of World War II, there is really only one example of US deterrence in a “limited war” against a non-state entity. In 1994, after the end of the Cold War, President Clinton ordered the mobilization of US airborne and special operations forces to Haiti in order to restore President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power. A junta led by Lieutenant General Raoul Cédras overthrew Aristide three years earlier.<sup>35</sup> The mere deployment of US forces

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<sup>32</sup> Paul K. Davis, *Simple Models to Explore Deterrence and More General Influence in the War with al-Qaeda* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2010), 1.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University, 2008), 55.

<sup>34</sup> William R. Meara, *Contra Cross: Insurgency and Tyranny in Central America, 1979-1989* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006), 98.

<sup>35</sup> Philippe R. Girard, “Peacekeeping, Politics, and the 1994 US Intervention in Haiti,” *Journal of Conflict Studies* 24, no. 1 (June 2004): 15, accessed March 19, 2015, <http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/JCS/article/view/290/461>.

convinced Cédras and his backers to relinquish power and permit an uncontested US intervention.<sup>36</sup>

### The Prominence of Nuclear Deterrence

Closely associated with the state-centric focus of most deterrence literature is the emphasis on nuclear or strategic deterrence. According to Quackenbush, “Deterrence theory came to prominence in academic and policy-making circles because of the threat of nuclear holocaust during the Cold War.”<sup>37</sup> After all, states possess or are trying to possess nuclear weapons. Although the previous section on state-centrism included examples of conventional deterrence, the main thrust of deterrence emphasis and theory during the Cold War focused specifically on nuclear deterrence. It was only because of mounting pressure from NATO allies given the increasing Soviet conventional threat and a desire by US policymakers to “keep the nuclear threshold as high as possible,” that writers like Mearsheimer found an opening to write about conventional deterrence.<sup>38</sup> Regardless, the focus on nuclear deterrence, emanating principally from the Cold War arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union, disproportionately influenced deterrence theory at the expense of considering conventional threats.

The use of the atomic bomb in 1945 provided a demarcation in deterrence theory from which it largely has not recovered. This was not necessarily a bad thing. According to Freedman, “the idea that future wars might be prevented through the prospect of the intense destruction made possible by the processes of nuclear fission,” called to mind more noble deterrence intentions.<sup>39</sup> However, the emerging Cold War dynamic between the United States and Soviet Union, built upon both sides have nuclear weapons, harkened policymakers and academics to redefine the role of deterrence in the nuclear era. Writings on deterrence theory during the Cold

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Quackenbush, 12.

<sup>38</sup> Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 13.

<sup>39</sup> Freedman, 10.

War thus focused rather exclusively on the nuclear confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. Michael Gerson noted, “Deterrence theory was developed against the backdrop of the Cold War nuclear arms race and focused on the prevention of nuclear conflict...the net result was that deterrence became synonymous with nuclear weapons.”<sup>40</sup> No doubt Gerson’s point reflects what Henry Kissinger meant when he famously wrote, “the nuclear age turned strategy into deterrence, and deterrence into an esoteric intellectual exercise.”<sup>41</sup>

The net result of this symbiotic relationship between deterrence and nuclear weapons were strategies largely aimed to confront nuclear aggression and to contain the proliferation of nuclear materials. In the first instance, for example, Robert Pape considered the primacy of air power as a coercive mechanism in Cold War inter-state dynamics, not only because of strategic bombing capabilities exercised with conventional munitions, as during World War II, but of its ability to inflict total destruction through the airborne delivery of nuclear payloads.<sup>42</sup> Incidentally, regarding deterrence by punishment, Pape’s cautionary advice proved prescient as strategic bombing enthusiasts were giving way to precision guided munitions after Desert Storm. Pape suggested that neither capability could, individually, promise greater coercive effects.<sup>43</sup> However, precision guided munitions appear to be policymakers’ preferred measure in attempting to deter through punishment those who would seek leadership roles in violent non-state groups.

The creation of Strategic Air Command (SAC) by the United States in the late 1940s, along with its responsibility not only for air-delivered nuclear ordnance, but eventually for nuclear missiles as well, cemented the ties (and the academic dialogue) between nuclear weapons and deterrence as the primary purpose of such efforts. Nevertheless, SAC’s modern-day successor, U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) fares no better in addressing the

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<sup>40</sup> Gerson, 34.

<sup>41</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Maintaining Effective Deterrence* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2003), 2 and Freedman, 12.

<sup>42</sup> Pape, 44-47.

<sup>43</sup> Pape, 314.

deterrence of non-nuclear threats. USSTRATCOM's emphasis on deterrence remains largely focused on strategic or nuclear threats. To illustrate, although its most recent Joint Operating Concept on Deterrence Operations published in 2006 identifies potential threats emanating from both state and non-state actors, it focuses exclusively on nuclear deterrence and how to deter non-state groups from acquiring or using nuclear weapons.<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore, in the most recent posture statement of USSTRATCOM Commander, Admiral C.D. Haney before the Senate Committee on Armed Services in February 2014, while acknowledging USSTRATCOM's mission to deter and detect strategic attacks, he stated that, "Strategic attacks are those which have decisive negative outcomes—and they are not all nuclear in nature."<sup>45</sup> However, the mission areas he discussed were: Nuclear Deterrent Forces; Nuclear Command, Control and Communications; Nuclear Triad; Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles; Ballistic Missile Submarines; Heavy Bombers; START Implementation; Space and Cyberspace Operations; Missile Defense; Global Strike; and Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD).<sup>46</sup> While the majority of these areas focus specifically on nuclear threats, space and cyberspace are not too distant relations. Only his comments on CWMD considered (briefly) non-state actors.<sup>47</sup>

Attempts to contain the proliferation of nuclear materials represented the second branch of nuclear deterrence. Interestingly, while much of the early focus of counter proliferation strategies focused on states like India and Pakistan (continuing to the present with North Korea and Iran) trying to illegally acquire fissile materials, a significant amount of scholarship and policy debate emerged with regard to violent non-state groups attempting to do the same. In 2010,

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<sup>44</sup> United States Department of Defense, *Deterrence Operations Joint Operating Concept* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006).

<sup>45</sup> *Hearing before the Senate Committee on Armed Services*, Statement of Admiral C.D. Haney, Commander, United States Strategic Command, February 27, 2014, 3.

<sup>46</sup> *Senate Armed Services Committee*, 6.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

Rolf Mowatt-Larssen wrote that “several terrorist groups have actively sought weapons of mass destruction (WMD) of one kind or another.”<sup>48</sup> After the attacks of 9/11, and based on comments made by Osama Bin Laden, there was little doubt that many around the world believed Al-Qaeda, in particular, was trying hard to acquire a nuclear, biological, or chemical weapon for use against enemies of Islam.

#### Congruence Between a Third Party Deterring State and a Partner State

Cold War definitions of deterrence, like Michael Howard’s, also utilized by Paul Huth, explained deterrence as “a policy that seeks to persuade an adversary, through the threat of military retaliation, that the costs of using military force to resolve political conflict will outweigh the benefits.”<sup>49</sup> While the term adversary may have been comprehensive enough to account for terrorist organizations, insurgent groups, or a traditional state, the focus on military retaliation, to the exclusion of other capabilities, was much too narrow for application in the current environment. Furthermore, any current understanding of deterrence must take account of simultaneous relationships between multiple actors, not simply a bilateral relationship between a deterring entity and a deterred entity.

Therefore, the third specific deterrence variable necessitating a review, and perhaps the most important, is the change in the relationship of the actors in contemporary third party deterrence. Bipolarity during the Cold War ushered in a type of deterrence order really not seen since before World War I. As Stephen Cimbala notes, there was no “buck passing” of responsibility for peace and security.<sup>50</sup> The United States and the Soviet Union engaged in deterrence against each other and exercised third party deterrence to promote or secure there

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<sup>48</sup> Rolf Mowatt-Larssen, *Al Qaeda Weapons of Mass Destruction Threat: Hype or Reality* (Boston: Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center, 2010), 5.

<sup>49</sup> Paul K. Huth, *Extended Deterrence and the Prevention of War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 15.

<sup>50</sup> Cimbala, 267.

spheres of influence against the other. “Other actors, however influential on the margin, remained constrained by U.S. and Soviet strategic primacy.”<sup>51</sup> Thus, third party deterrence rested on a congruence of interests between the deterring state and the partner or ally.

However, the multipolar or nonpolar contemporary environment displays a greater multitude of connections and resources for states and non-state groups. This is what Cimbala refers to as a “flexibility of alignment compared to its Cold War predecessor.”<sup>52</sup> In *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Mearsheimer argued in the absence of the bipolar order of the Cold War, states would seek to maximize power relative to each other seeking hegemony, at least regionally.<sup>53</sup> Advanced through global telecommunications and information proliferation, many countries in the developing world turn not to the United States but to China, India, or elsewhere for investment, defense, and clout. The other BRICS countries—Brazil, Russia, and South Africa—also influence fellow countries and non-state groups. Middle Eastern countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia have deep connections to groups like Hezbollah, Hamas, and some of the entities fighting in Syria. In turn, these benefactor countries increase their own power, but typically at the cost of regional instability and human rights problems. Rich individuals and multi-national corporations all over the globe can also influence the actions and decisions of countries and non-state groups.

Looking to the Cold War, Paul Huth offered precise terminology to account for the triangular relationship between a primary state, an adversary to that state, and a third-party state seeking to influence the adversary from taking actions against the primary state. First, Huth considered whether an entity, specifically a state, engages in deterrence for itself (direct deterrence) or on behalf of another (extended deterrence). “Deterrence as practiced by major

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Cimbala, 267.

<sup>53</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001).

powers is most commonly deterrence of an attack on another party.”<sup>54</sup> The second group dealt with the proximate degree of the threat, either immediate or general. Immediate deterrence concerned a situation where an adversary is “seriously considering an attack” while the primary state (or entity) “is mounting a threat of retaliation in order to prevent it.”<sup>55</sup> General deterrence, by contrast, referred to maintaining capabilities that regulate an ongoing relationship where an actual attack is remote.<sup>56</sup> So, extended general deterrence—the focus of this paper—occurred when a third-party state (defender) influenced an adversary (attacker) to refrain from altering the status quo against a primary state (protégé).<sup>57</sup>

Although Huth’s terms are useful in describing the characters at play in third-party deterrence, he nevertheless fails to adequately address the spectrum of behaviors that must occur between the three entities. This was never much of a concern for deterrence theorists during the Cold War and has been almost disregarded in its aftermath. In considering third-party deterrence, the Soviet Union, and its satellites, absolutely knew the form and the consequences of American nuclear retaliation and had a pretty good idea of America’s conventional retaliation should any of them aggressively impede on US interests both at home and among its sphere of influence. However, this was the environment of a bipolar world order where partner states typically snapped into line. In the complex, multipolar landscape of the twenty-first century, replete with power-wielding non-state actors in the form of terrorists, insurgents, multinational corporations, and intergovernmental organizations, interests and policies are not necessarily consistent or congruent even between a defender state and one or more of its protégés. Thus, a more

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<sup>54</sup> Paul K. Huth and Bruce Russett, “What Makes Deterrence Work? Cases from 1900 to 1980,” *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (July 1984), 496.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 496-7.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* Although this monograph argues that states can successfully deter insurgencies through extended general deterrence, Huth and Russett acknowledge that evaluating the success or failure of general deterrence is difficult to evaluate.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 498.

comprehensive notion of deterrence must prevail for it to be useful—for a state to be able to achieve its interests relative to both other states and non-state actors. Deterrence must embrace what Colin Gray calls a “broad strategy of influence.”<sup>58</sup>

As such, this paper demands an understanding of deterrence that applies against an insurgent group, while also permitting, and essentially requiring a third-party state to leverage a host nation. Robert Pape draws a distinction between deterrence and coercion. “Both coercion and deterrence focus on influencing the adversary’s calculus for decision making, but deterrence seeks to maintain the status quo by discouraging an opponent from changing its behavior...By contrast, coercion seeks to force the opponent to *alter* its behavior.”<sup>59</sup> Although certainly grounded in the historical actions of state-centric deterrence relationships, Pape’s point is of greater utility as applied towards an environment that features non-state actors. Pape’s distinction between coercion and deterrence, with slight modification, can be adapted to account for the range of influential behaviors that must exist when considering relationships between a state, an insurgency within its borders, and a third-party state that seeks to deter the insurgent group.

Another variation on this line of reasoning emerges from the work of Stephen J. Cimbala. Identifying the distinction between passive and active forms of deterrence, Cimbala suggests that the former is “the ability of state A to dissuade state B from taking an action which has not yet begun, but which A has reason to believe B is considering.”<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, “active deterrence, sometimes called ‘compellence,’ involves the use of threats by A to get B to stop and undo an action already in progress.”<sup>61</sup> Put another way, Cimbala sees active deterrence or compellence much as Pape views coercion—using influence of some kind, perhaps force or its

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<sup>58</sup> Gray, 31.

<sup>59</sup> Pape, 4.

<sup>60</sup> Cimbala, 21.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

threat, to affect an entity seeking to alter the current conditions. To Colin Gray, “A compellant strategy is relevant only after deterrence failed, or was not attempted explicitly.”<sup>62</sup> What this paper seeks to harness is an approach that prevents a targeted group from using violence to alter the status quo or influencing it to refrain from hostile activity while simultaneously influencing a host nation to delegitimize an insurgency at its very roots.

For this monograph, deterrence must be viewed across a spectrum that encompasses the host nation, the insurgent group, and the third-party state. Change to the system in which the three entities exist is inevitable—the status quo will be altered. The question that remains, especially for the host nation, is to what degree will the relationship between the entities change, while still enabling the ruling structure to endure. Thus, third-party deterrence should consist of what Huth calls a “defender” state engaging in a spectrum of influential behaviors manifested in denial actions or the threat or limited use of coercion against an insurgent group and the coercion or act of persuasion against a host nation’s government to delegitimize the insurgency in order to prevent or cease violence.

For deterrence to be relevant within a modern context, the relationship between audiences and signals cannot be as it was during the Cold War. A threat by the United States against the Soviet Union like massive retaliation under the Eisenhower Administration or an act of deterrence like the blockading fleet during the Cuban Missile Crisis fit neatly within that paradigm. While the signals were clear, it assumed US and Soviet satellites acted according to the wishes of their respective benefactors. It further assumed that states were the only actors. In the current environment, some interests between a deterring state and a partner could be at odds and subject to other global and internal economic, military, and diplomatic influences. For that reason, viewing the associations between a deterring state, a partner state, and an insurgent group

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<sup>62</sup> Gray, 13.

through the lens of a complex system helps to improve understanding both in terms of how signals are communicated and to which audiences. This approach acknowledges that there are multiple, interconnected agents acting within the system and allows for analysis through an examination of patterns in the aggregate.

This approach also enables a wider application of deterrence as a strategy. For example, where an insurgency is brewing or is already in violent opposition to a partner government, the goal of a deterring state seeking to assist the imperiled government is to force the insurgency to renounce violence and compel it to adopt peaceful means towards resolving its issues with the partner government. While some might consider this a type of counterinsurgency operations, threats and acts by the deterring state against the insurgent group constitute what Stephen Cimballa refers to as “active deterrence.”<sup>63</sup> Such actions are no different from readying forces for deployment or deploying them, as when the United States sends a carrier strike group to a particular part of the world or when NATO discussed a training exercise in Poland following Russia’s backing of separatist insurgents in Ukraine. Furthermore, threats or active measures to deter an insurgent group in one instance communicates a signal to potential future insurgent groups that where a deterring state unambiguously pledges its support to a partner country against insurgent violence within its borders, any group that would challenge the government will refrain from violence based upon the perceived costs implemented by the deterring state.

This definition is useful for several reasons. First, a focus on influencing allows for synergistic compound effects that are not specifically tied to military force. Furthermore, in order to achieve effects against a complex system, small variations on the concept of deterrence must be considered. Davis introduces the broader concept of influence into the realm of deterrence.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Cimballa, 21.

<sup>64</sup> Davis, 2.

Davis suggests that “moving to the influence concept...is more comprehensive than even the broader interpretation of ‘deterrence’; it includes additional forms of coercive diplomacy (e.g., economic sanctions) and other forms of persuasion.”<sup>65</sup>

Davis developed this approach because he viewed violent non-state groups like al-Qaeda as systems. With the system as the basic network of a violent non-state group, Davis argued that “influencing” that system in any number of ways, not just military or kinetic, could potentially achieve a deterrent effect on the group. Directing coercive actions against behavior manifested as capabilities lies at the heart of deterring an insurgency. Secondly, the definition allows for the transmission of coercive effects within a complex system. Traditionally, deterrence, both direct and extended, transmitted intentions to the adversary (attacker) in a linear way. This is perhaps why Lieutenant Colonel Sean P. Larkin assessed that tailored deterrence was “too blunt an instrument,” ineffective at communicating clear intentions to an adversary of a different culture and experience.<sup>66</sup>

However, the adoption of this strategy has costs to both the deterring state and the state dealing with an insurgency. First, the deterring state, which may not be threatened directly by an insurgent group might indeed find itself a target of a more expansive violent agenda, executed by the insurgent group or a member of its network. Secondly, there is no escaping the link between violence at this level tied to a political goal. For deterrence to work, the deterring state must persuade a partner facing an insurgency through inducements or acts to take political measures to alleviate potential violence. This is the price of deterrence. Where a partner state enjoys a diverse array of foreign investments and perhaps relies on an insulated political establishment, but faces an insurgency, it must come to terms with its own survival and this may be the only leverage a deterring state possesses in such a situation.

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<sup>65</sup> Davis, 3-4.

<sup>66</sup> Larkin, 18.

The three deterrence variables considered in this section—state centrism; nuclear vs. conventional; and congruence between the third party state and the partner state—each underwent fundamental changes since the end of the Cold War despite an unwillingness by policymakers, academics, and practitioners to acknowledge these changes. A reluctance to account for these changes engenders skepticism for third party deterrence as a useful strategy given the complexity of the contemporary operating environment with its multitude of actors, both state and non-state, but specifically the rise of violent non-state groups, coupled with the ever increasing speed of information and technology. However, lending credence to this evolution enables a more expansive view of third party deterrence that offers more than simply the threat of punishment. The next section explores deterrence by denial and deterrence by delegitimization.

#### The Roads Less Traveled: Deterrence by Denial and Delegitimization

The primary research question of this monograph asks how best can a state deter an insurgency against a partner country through third-party deterrence. Borrowing from *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers*, “every insurgency may be unique, but not so much that it matters at this level of analysis.”<sup>67</sup> While the elements of DIME: Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic may “leave behind a whole realm of matters consequential to military success” against insurgencies, they, nevertheless represent a helpful way to visualize various objectives in punishing, denying, or delegitimizing insurgencies. Further, while deterrence by punishment remains of limited utility against insurgent groups, the more preferred lines of effort exist through deterrence by denial and deterrence by delegitimization.

Often, all three types of deterrence, used simultaneously and to varying degrees, will be needed to coerce an insurgent group. It should not be oversimplified that third party deterrence concerns only, to use Huth’s terms, the attacker, defender, and protégé. The insurgent group, third

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<sup>67</sup> Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, and Beth Grill, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2010), 89.

party state, and partner state, as well as many other actors form a complex system. This system is more than and different from the sum of its components. A certain impact on one component may not yield a predictably certain outcome on the other actors. However, for explanatory purposes, the vectors for action in deterrence by denial may seem linear and causal, but readers should not discount uneven effects. Similarly, while deterrence through delegitimization seemingly involves only the three primary entities, outcomes and signals resulting from such efforts possess second-order deterrence effects which will impact future potential insurgents, state sponsors of terrorists and insurgents, and many other actors in the system. A principal and usually contested piece of an insurgency—a particular population’s support or lack of support—factors across all deterrence lines of effort.

#### Deterrence by Denial

Deterrence through denial is not a new concept. Many deterrence scholars recognize it as a form of deterrence, though not held in as much reverence as the threat of punishment through retaliation as a means of coercion. However, facing an insurgency or potential insurgents, especially as a third party, undertaking efforts to deny such groups or individuals the resources or the headlines they need to further their cause can alter the dynamic. In turn, such actions could potentially coerce insurgents to abandon violence as a means to their political ends or preempt them from committing violent actions in the first place. This section considers aspects of both the “supply side” and the “demand side” of deterrence through denial. The former consist of targeting an insurgent group’s funding, resources, manpower, and state sponsorship while the latter considers actions to improve or harden resistance measures as well as efforts to prevent violence by imposing unacceptable costs on insurgents and their networks.

All insurgent groups require resources, money, and personnel to carry out their violent activities as well as vulnerabilities they can exploit to achieve their objectives. Commenting on

terrorists, Lowther wrote that “a failed attack is worse than no attack at all.”<sup>68</sup> This extends to insurgent groups as well. Denying them what they need will have effects both positive and negative. On one hand, the insurgent group may lose followers if they have nothing to eat. Yet, shutting off the faucet on multiple support nodes may incite groups to heighten their violent activities by launching foraging attacks into previously untouched areas or making more public displays of violence to encourage some bloodthirsty fence-sitters to join the ranks. Boko Haram’s recent raids into Niger and Cameroon coupled with an Islamic State style video beheading might indicate that the group’s resources are diminishing.<sup>69</sup>

In fact, recent research indicates that efforts to disrupt resource networks of insurgent groups has some quantifiable results stemming from counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. Two significant separate but associated studies by the RAND Corporation which produced *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers* as well as its follow-up piece, *Paths to Victory*, reflect an analysis and categorization of good and bad COIN practices across seventy-one total insurgencies from World War II through 2010.<sup>70</sup> With regard to what the researchers termed “tangible support,” comprised of an insurgent group’s levels of recruits, weapons, materiel, funding, intelligence, and sanctuary, “in every COIN win, COIN forces managed to substantially reduce tangible support to the insurgents; only two COIN forces managed to substantially reduce insurgent tangible support and still lost.”<sup>71</sup> While the challenge may lie in getting ahead of insurgent resource issues before they materialize in a violent group, such research nonetheless indicates that proactive attempts to identify and target internal and external networks for possible insurgencies holds merit.

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<sup>68</sup> Lowther, 209.

<sup>69</sup> Abdoulaye Massalaki and Anne Mireille Nzouankeu, “Boko Haram Launches Twin Attacks in Niger and Cameroon,” *Reuters*, February 9, 2015, accessed March 31, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/02/09/us-nigeria-violence-niger-idUSKBN0LD14L20150209>.

<sup>70</sup> Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, and Molly Dunigan, *Paths to Victory* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2013), xiv.

<sup>71</sup> Paul, Clarke, and Dunigan, *Paths to Victory*, xiv. (emphasis added)

Denying insurgent groups resources also presents different effects depending on the type of group it represents. In *Networks of Rebellion*, Paul Staniland identifies four types of insurgent groups—integrated, vanguard, parochial, and fragmented—based upon horizontal and vertical ties pursued by members of the group and group leaders across their social bases.<sup>72</sup> For more robust, integrated groups like the Irish Republican Army (IRA), resource interruptions alone did not stem the tide of violence.<sup>73</sup> However, for fragmented groups like the Pakistani Taliban and parochial groups like the Huks of the Philippines, which held strong ties to their base but lacked a central organizing authority, resource scarcity often leads to feuds and group fissures.<sup>74</sup>

Along the same lines, an insurgent group's decision to commit resources to a specific attack or activity reflects some evaluation of what resources are available to the group. As Brian Jackson suggested in 2009, an acceptability of resources required, together with an assessment of risks, the perceived benefits, and the sufficiency of information influences a terrorist group's propensity to act.<sup>75</sup> While not exactly a terrorist group, per se, an insurgent group may nevertheless rely on terrorist tactics to achieve its objectives.

State sponsorship of insurgent groups presents a serious challenge to deterrence through denial efforts by a third party state. To Carl Schmitt, an irregular fighter “always depends on assistance from a regular power.”<sup>76</sup> State sponsorship of insurgent groups greatly strains relations between a third party deterring state and the sponsor state. In extreme cases, a state sponsoring an insurgency in another country may find itself dragged into a war with that country, with a third party deterring state, or both. Eritrea was sanctioned by the United Nations for providing support

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<sup>72</sup> Staniland, 25-33.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 182-3.

<sup>75</sup> Brian A. Jackson, “Organizational Decisionmaking by Terrorist Groups,” in *Social Science for Counterterrorism: Putting the Pieces Together*, eds. Paul K. Davis and Kim Cragin (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2009), 231, 429.

<sup>76</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Theory of a Partisan* (New York: Telos Press, 2007), 74.

to Al-Shabab in Somalia in 2009.<sup>77</sup> Eritrea ostensibly did this to aggravate and endanger its rival to the south, Ethiopia, which was conducting or assisting in COIN operations in Somalia at that time. While Eritrea and Ethiopia did not go to war over that specific affair, it further hampered reconciliation efforts between the two countries and intensified their ongoing border dispute.

This is not an isolated incident. Iran's notorious financial and materiel support to Hamas and Hezbollah showcase its attempts to deter Israel from taking offensive actions in Lebanon or against the Palestinians in Gaza. Likewise, Ukrainian separatist groups received support from Russia in 2014 (which likely continues).<sup>78</sup> *Paths to Victory* notes, "Every case that involved external professional forces supporting the insurgents was a COIN loss, unless it was balanced by external professional forces supporting the government."<sup>79</sup>

Examining the other side of deterrence through denial, the "demand side," considers efforts of a third party state to reinforce or improve upon existing measures of the partner state that increases the potential risks and costs for an insurgent group. Joint military training programs are probably the most visible ways in which "defensive" capabilities are increased within a partner state. The US Army's Regionally Aligned Forces (RAF) concept is a more recent attempt by the United States to habitualize and promote enduring training relationships between the US military and partner militaries in order to build the latter's capabilities against internal and external threats. RAF is at the heart of conventional American third party deterrence strategy as Army units deploy to contentious regions in Africa, Asia, South America, and Europe where the United States maintains vital interests, least of which is ensuring the partner state's stability.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> United Nations Security Council <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/751/> accessed March 19, 2015; Barbara Plett, "Eritrea: UN Security Council Toughens Sanctions," BBC World News Online, December 6, 2011, accessed March 19, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-16043561>.

<sup>78</sup> Radio Free Europe, "Obama: Russia Directly Supports Ukrainian Separatists," accessed on March 19, 2015, <http://www.rferl.org/content/ukraine-obama-russia-supports-separatists/25371121.html>

<sup>79</sup> *Paths to Victory*, xxiii.

<sup>80</sup> Rosa Brooks, "Portrait of the Army as a Work in Progress," *Foreign Policy*, (May/June 2014), accessed March 31, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/08/portrait-of-the-army-as-a-work-in-progress>.

Statistically, there is reason to favor joint training programs, with the aim of deterrence, where a third party state dispatches training units to develop best practices and improve capabilities of a partner's military. According to the RAND study, with regard to COIN practices, "external or externally supported COIN forces win almost as often as wholly indigenous COIN forces. This suggests that using external forces is not inherently a bad COIN practice."<sup>81</sup> Therefore, it suggests that the presence of a third party state's military forces, in limited numbers, *prior* to hostilities with an insurgent group, can be positively received and effective in deterring violence. More robust joint police training and assisting programs, possibly facilitated under a more expansive Defense Institutional Reform Initiative (DIRI), could provide better policing in lieu of military forces. However, there is a point of diminishing returns. Too much or too frequent third party state military or police presence, or actions by such a force that overly disrupts the local population could (further) delegitimize a partner nation's government, further empowering an insurgent group.

An area of deterrence by denial that requires additional research exists in developing employment programs that provide alternative pathways for susceptible insurgent recruits inside a partner country. While several news sources reported on the underperformance of such programs in Iraq and Afghanistan not to mention indications of money earmarked for such programs finding its way to insurgents, this remains a viable objective in a deterrence by denial approach. Following security, Robert Kemp notes, many Afghans indeed sought jobs, especially in highly ruralized areas where many lived at subsistence level.<sup>82</sup> Development and jobs programs provided COIN forces with an advantage against the insurgents.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> *Paths to Victory*, xxiii.

<sup>82</sup> Robert Kemp, *Counterinsurgency in Eastern Afghanistan 2004-2008: A Civilian Perspective* (Washington, DC: New Academia, 2014), npn.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

In many ways governments already work to place resource constraints on those who would join or contribute to a violent group. Passenger watch lists, money transfer safeguards, and sanctions (in the case of state sponsorship) achieve some success in denying an insurgent group a critical requirement and also deterring both the group and potential future benefactors and volunteers from contributing to its cause. Supply side problems, much like in America's drug war, are not easily overcome. Similarly, third party deterring states providing military units for security force assistance missions occurs across the globe. Nevertheless, demand side problems require sustained support along multiple avenues, like joint policing, but not overly enlarged to the detriment of a partner's legitimacy. Continued diligence, increasing cooperation across borders that enlists the help of regional and international security networks, and sharpening the teeth of economic sanctions and financial crimes help, but deterrence by denial typically requires additional lines of effort.

#### Deterrence by Delegitimization

Of potentially greater deterrent effect is a third party state's attempt to delegitimize an insurgent group operating in a partner country. Once again, this is not a new concept. During the Cold War, the West attacked an ideology, painting communism as the Red Menace, unholy, wicked; its leading nation, the Soviet Union, "the evil empire." Ideologies, beliefs, and values (or fig leaves of such) remain of invaluable significance to an insurgent group's struggle for legitimacy. In addition, insurgent groups seek to weaken the legitimacy of the government against which they fight. While individual members join an insurgent group for a host of reasons—many of which may have nothing to do with the group's avowed purpose—the group nevertheless collectively represents an idea. Applying Wilner's argument, deterrence of delegitimization "can be used to manipulate the political, ideological, and religious rationale that informs terrorist

behavior. The objective is to reduce the challenger's probability of achieving his goals by attacking the legitimacy of the beliefs that inform his behavior."<sup>84</sup>

What many writings on deterrence through delegitimization have in common with a number of those who dismiss the utility of deterrence against violent non-state groups is that they both do not explicitly tie delegitimizing the group with enhancing the legitimacy of the host government. It is as if they are considered in isolation. This paper contends that coercion, as the force behind deterrence, must be applied not only against an insurgent group, but simultaneously in the form of coercion against a partner state. Insurgent groups pose direct challenges to a government's legitimacy. A partner state must work to reverse or mollify what Parsa described as governance that "increased social inequalities and narrowed the social basis of support for the state."<sup>85</sup> And while neither the partner state nor the third party state should appease the insurgent group, the existence of a mounting or full-fledged insurgency signals that a group (with varying degrees of population support) seeks redress on a considerable and undeviating issue.

Striking head-first against an insurgent group's ideology, from which it largely derives its legitimacy—in its cause—is one approach to deterrence through delegitimization. Illustrative of this method is anti-communist messaging of the Cold War and so many Information Operations (IO) activities emblematic of the last twelve years of counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. On the importance of ideology, David Galula wrote, "the insurgent cannot seriously embark on an insurgency unless he has a well-grounded cause with which to attract supporters among the population."<sup>86</sup> Yet, Kalyvas contends that motivations of individuals to join a violent group, like an insurgency, rarely have anything to do with ideology.<sup>87</sup> He cites in his research that

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<sup>84</sup> Wilner, 26.

<sup>85</sup> Misagh Parsa, *States, Ideologies, & Social Revolutions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 55.

<sup>86</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare Theory and Practice* (St. Petersburg, FL: Hailer Publishing, 2005), 13.

<sup>87</sup> Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University

many participants, in reflecting on their time spent as part of a movement after the fighting ends, focus on their ideological conversion in lieu of a more personal motivation for how they joined a violent group.<sup>88</sup>

Nevertheless, an insurgent group is attempting to exercise control over some geography within an existing state. Undermining its legitimacy directly presents opportunities to weaken its resiliency and enable a population to reject it. However, the majority of present day insurgent groups advance extreme religious positions as their ideology, providing their legitimacy: for example, Boko Haram, Islamic State (IS), Afghan Taliban, Abu Sayyaf, Hamas, and Hezbollah all rely on religious ideology to a certain degree. This contrasts with a small number of groups that merely seek nationalism or independence and a far cry from those which espoused communism during the Cold War. Many assess that Muslim extremist groups, in particular, cannot be deterred or similarly call for more expansive applications of deterrence.<sup>89</sup>

However, Muslim extremist insurgent groups, like pro-independence or nationalist groups, remain susceptible to deterrence through delegitimization. Al-Qaeda leader Ayman Zawahiri's rebuke of Abu Musa Zarqawi while the latter ran Al Qaeda in Iraq; Zawahiri's more recent rebuke of IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi; and rifts between the al-Nusra Front, fighting in Syria, and Zawahiri reveal cleavages in ideology.<sup>90</sup> Exposing wounds leaves openings for

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Press, 2006), 44.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>89</sup> See Matthew Kroenig, "How to Deter Terrorism," *The Washington Quarterly*, 35, no. 2 (Spring 2012), 21-36, accessed on March 18, 2015 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2012.665339>. Anthony Vinci, *Armed Groups and the Balance of Power* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 127. Andreas M. Bock, "Negotiate with Terrorists! or: Why Terrorism Cannot be Deterred," review essay (2007), 162-169 accessed on March 19, 2015, [http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/ipg/ipg-2007-1/12\\_re\\_bock\\_gb.pdf](http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/ipg/ipg-2007-1/12_re_bock_gb.pdf). Roger A. McCain, *Game Theory: A Nontechnical Introduction to the Analysis of Strategy* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2010), 366.

<sup>90</sup> Ellen Knickmeyer, "Al Qaeda Disavows Rebel Group Fighting Syrian Regime," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 3, 2014, accessed March 19, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304851104579361041928884318>. United Press International, "Al-Qaida Leadership Rift Hints at Future Trouble," June 24, 2013, accessed March 19, 2015, [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/Special/2013/06/24/Al-Qaida-leadership-rift-hints-at-future-](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2013/06/24/Al-Qaida-leadership-rift-hints-at-future-)

targeting IO messages and a counter-narrative that imperils an insurgent group. Wilner suggests manipulating religious debates to counter a violent group's interpretations and encouraging moderate jihadi scholars to refute hateful ideologies to chip away at a group's religion-backed legitimacy.<sup>91</sup> In another example, Jordanian Special Forces Brigadier General Aref al-Zaben recently told NPR how he used to bring a moderate imam with him to villages threatened by the Taliban during his assignment in Afghanistan to delegitimize the group's message.<sup>92</sup>

A separate take on deterrence through delegitimization identifies ways to undercut the legitimacy of an insurgent group by improving the legitimacy of the partner state's government. A government that relies on a particular power base and enjoys political isolation from a disenfranchised segment of its population will be reluctant to concede power, resources, programs, or much else to that group. This is when a third party state must use coercion, or at least persuasion, against such a government if it facing or could likely face an insurgency. Often, movements built around religious extremism, as well as nationalist groups have a committed cadre of believers, typically in the senior ranks who fervently believe in their ideological message. However, for a large portion of the group, and those in the populace who support the group, actions by the partner state government to address infrastructure problems, improve revenue distribution, or fairly and adequately support some local governing autonomy significantly detracts from an insurgent group's legitimacy and mandate.

This method of deterrence through delegitimization requires a synchronized and simultaneous blending of all elements of national power by the third party state with the end result featuring a successful persuasive effort by the partner state to demonstrate its inclusiveness and reinforce its legitimacy. High-level diplomacy coupled with sustained grassroots diplomatic

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trouble/89561372092354/.

<sup>91</sup> Wilner, 28-9.

<sup>92</sup> Robert Siegel, "Jordan's Army Preps for a Bigger Role Against ISIS," National Public Radio interview, accessed March 19, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/blogs/parallels/2015/02/23/388456448/jordans-army-preps-for-a-bigger-role-against-isis>.

and development actions; a small but committed military and/or police force to train and assist; economic incentives or program funding; and a narrative reinforcing the partner state government's legitimacy characterize this approach. Once again, the third party state must not appear exploitive or manipulative—a partner state problem must reflect partner state led solutions. This is different than putting “a local face” on the effort. The effort remains decidedly local, but the resources combine to persuade a partner to diffuse the situation.

A partner state will probably not warm to such a strategy. However, a third party state retains leverage by preventing an insurgency or deterring one from continuing to use violence. This represents a win for both the partner and the third party state. In the former's case, it does not have an armed conflict festering within its borders. For the latter, it builds credit in terms of will and capability, sending a second order deterrence signal to those groups or individuals who would challenge governments where the third party state clearly and unequivocally pledges its support against insurgent movements. Two examples show how persuasion on the part of a third party state furthered the partner's legitimacy and undercut the insurgency.

The first occurred during the Dhofar Rebellion which racked Oman from 1962-1976. A sultanate, Sultan Taimur bin Feisal ruled absolutely. His province was beset by internal strife for decades and was virtually isolated diplomatically from the rest of the world following World War II.<sup>93</sup> Britain was virtually the Sultan's only affiliate. After fighting insurgents in its northern area, multiple insurgent groups materialized in Dhofar during the 1960s.<sup>94</sup> The Sultan's army performed poorly against the most troublesome groups, of which the Dhufar Liberation Front emerged supreme and received support and communist indoctrination from the Soviet Union.<sup>95</sup> Frustrated with the turmoil, the Sultan's son, Qaboos bin Said Al Said, overthrew his father in a

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<sup>93</sup> J.E. Peterson, *Oman's Insurgencies: The Sultanate's Struggle for Supremacy* (Beirut: Saqi, 2007), 22-23.

<sup>94</sup> Peterson, 186.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 196. The movement was renamed Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman (PFLO).

palace coup in 1970. Although Britain provided consistent though limited military support throughout most of the insurgency, it was that country's diplomatic persistence and the new Sultan's fresh vision in implementing needed reforms which undercut the fierce insurgency in Dhofar.<sup>96</sup> Britain was in the region to secure its interests and exercised measured third party deterrence through delegitimization (and deterrence through punishment) against the rise of any future insurgent groups in a country where armed opposition was nearly constant.

El Salvador in the 1970s struggled with a tumultuous social and political dynamic. Government fraud combined with the "curious and combustible mixture of Marxism and Christianity called 'Liberation Theology'" appealed to many disenfranchised Salvadorans.<sup>97</sup> Aided by Fidel Castro, Salvadoran revolutionaries formed the Farabundo National Liberation Front to challenge the government.<sup>98</sup> Diplomatic pressure, first by US President Jimmy Carter and continued by Ronald Reagan, against Salvadoran military interference in the contentious 1980 elections relieved the mounting insurgent pressure in the country.<sup>99</sup> Conditioning further US aid on political reforms was another important component of US strategy.<sup>100</sup> In the end, a peaceful governing transition helped restore calm to the country, advanced US interests in the region, and served as a second order deterrence signal against additional insurgent groups in El Salvador and elsewhere.<sup>101</sup>

Emphasizing deterrence through punishment restricts policymakers and practitioners from using more useful avenues of deterrence in the contemporary operational environment. While threatening punishment through retaliation may have been the preferred approach and

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 417-418.

<sup>97</sup> Anthony James Joes, *Resisting Rebellion: The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2006), 28.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Joes, 29. That signal may not have been adequately received or conveyed, as in the later case in Haiti.

signal during the Cold War by a third party state, the changing variables of state-centrism, nuclear prominence, and congruence require more dynamic deterrence solutions for the concept to be effective in the current environment. While punishment still has a place in any comprehensive deterrence strategy against an insurgent group operating or festering in a partner state, deterrence through denial and deterrence through delegitimization offer more promising methods to coerce such a group while preserving the partner state's governing structure.

#### Case Study: Boko Haram, Nigeria, and the United States

This monograph uses Nigeria's experience with Boko Haram as a case study. The case study injects the United States as a third party deterring state against Boko Haram in defending Nigeria. The United States clearly and unambiguously signals its intent to deter insurgent groups operating or festering in Nigeria. As to the deterrence variables, Boko Haram is a violent non-state group. Although often viewed as a terrorist organization, especially by US policymakers, its actions to date and avowed objectives qualify it for consideration as an insurgent group. Recalling Phil Williams' definition of insurgency, "the group aims to establish a fully Islamic state in Nigeria, including the implementation of criminal sharia courts across the country."<sup>102</sup> Secondly, nuclear deterrence holds no place in the confrontation between the primary entities. Threatening nuclear retaliation against Boko Haram is ludicrous. Additionally, while WMD proliferation is a concern, Boko Haram has not, to date, demonstrated an interest in or an ability to acquire chemical, biological, or nuclear materials.

Most importantly, although the United States maintains interests in Nigeria (and West Africa more broadly) and Nigeria obviously desires an insurgency-free country, the relationship between the two countries nevertheless exhibits incongruence. On one hand, President Obama's

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<sup>102</sup> Mohammed Aly Sergie and Toni Johnson, "Boko Haram," Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/nigeria/boko-haram/p25739>.

remarks attesting to the strong ties between the United States and Nigeria, as well as citizens of both countries, reflects a cooperative relationship.<sup>103</sup> The United States-Nigeria Bilateral Commission is what former Secretary of State Hilary Clinton called a “flagship agreement for bilateral cooperation on the entire African continent...advancing good governance, promoting energy access and reliability, improving food security, and dealing with extremism,” amid deepening economic and military cooperation.<sup>104</sup> The United States and Nigeria also cooperate through the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, which is a US government effort to enhance regional security and counter violent extremism.<sup>105</sup>

However, with the leading Gross Domestic Product in Africa and a historical narrative of strength, Nigeria sees itself as the preeminent power in West Africa, if not the entire continent. Nigeria receives significant Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from countries with economic and political interests that do not necessarily align with those of the United States. Great Britain provides the single largest source of FDI to Nigeria, but though it is a US ally, it is not the only country with monetary influence.<sup>106</sup> China is Nigeria’s second largest trading partner behind South Africa and invests nearly three times the amount of US FDI (primarily oil-based) of \$2.1 billion.<sup>107</sup> The United States lacks economic leverage. Furthermore, in 2014, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan dismissed US military support, but recently wanted US troops to actually

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<sup>103</sup> President Barack Obama, “Remarks by President Obama Before Bilateral Meeting with President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria,” September 23, 2013. Accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/23/remarks-president-obama-bilateral-meeting-president-goodluck-jonathan-ni>.

<sup>104</sup> Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, “Remarks With Nigerian Foreign Minister Olugbenga Ashiru After Their Meeting,” September 29, 2011. Accessed on March 26, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/09/174818.htm>.

<sup>105</sup> White House, “FACT SHEET: U.S. Efforts to Assist the Nigerian Government in its Fight Against Boko Haram,” October 14, 2014. Accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/10/14/fact-sheet-us-efforts-assist-nigerian-government-its-fight-against-boko->

<sup>106</sup> “FDI Overview,” Corporate Nigeria, accessed March 26, 2015, [http://www.corporate-nigeria.com/index/fdi/foreign\\_direct\\_investment\\_overview.html](http://www.corporate-nigeria.com/index/fdi/foreign_direct_investment_overview.html).

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

engage Boko Haram.<sup>108</sup> Lastly, US Secretary of State John Kerry recently signaled Washington's frustration with Abuja over Nigeria's postponement of national elections.<sup>109</sup>

Some additional context on Nigeria and Boko Haram is helpful for this analysis. Nigeria's political and social experiences since independence include periods of democratic rule, military-backed coups, and frequent internal discord between various ethnic groups. However, Nigeria has nevertheless managed to demonstrate consistent economic growth since independence with significant foreign investment from countries such as China. Although many view Nigeria's growth tied to oil production and exports, more recently, the World Bank reported that Nigeria possesses a more diversified economy than previously assessed which is contributing both to short term gains and longer term positive forecasts for investment.<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, economic gains are not spread evenly throughout the country.

Economic inequality, coupled with long-standing tensions between ethnic and religious groups, as well as geographic divisions, provides a poisonous recipe for government discontent and the possibility of growing insurgent movements. Against this milieu, Al-Qaeda saw several reasons supporting its move into Africa in the early 2000s. Nigeria had high government corruption and a lack of transparency; the ethnic and religious conflicts made the country weak; easy movement of mujahedeen across unguarded borders; Nigeria's rich economic resources could finance activities; there was a weak Christian presence in Nigeria; and there was plenty of cheap weaponry available.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, "Nigeria was unique among West African countries,

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<sup>108</sup> Neanda Salvaterra and Drew Hinshaw, "Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan Wants U.S. Troops to Fight Boko Haram," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 13, 2015, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/nigerian-president-wants-u-s-troops-to-fight-boko-haram-1423850893>.

<sup>109</sup> Secretary of State John Kerry, "Postponement of Elections in Nigeria," February 7, 2015. Accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/02/237290.htm>.

<sup>110</sup> "Nigeria Economic Outlook," African Development Bank Group, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.afdb.org/en/countries/west-africa/nigeria/nigeria-economic-outlook>.

<sup>111</sup> Jacob Zenn, *Northern Nigeria's Boko Haram: The Prize in al-Qaeda's Africa Strategy* (Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation, 2012), 6-8.

however, in that only in Nigeria did the transition to democracy lead to a clamoring for Sharia law in the country's twelve predominantly Muslim northern states, despite the national constitution stating explicitly that Nigeria is a secular state."<sup>112</sup> Many Nigerian Muslims demanded Sharia law based on the example of Taliban-ruled Afghanistan; this became the impetus for the formation of the Nigerian Taliban.<sup>113</sup>

Preying upon religious, but also ethno-regional and economic animosity and a low adult literacy rate, the Nigerian Taliban initially drew many to its anti-government position, insinuating northern Nigerians would enjoy a better life with them in charge. Jacob Zenn writes that "one of the main problems in Nigeria is that northerners and southerners alike have a low level of civic education about the demographics of their country, with most northerners for example incorrectly believing that Nigeria is more than 70 percent Muslim (in actuality more like 50 percent)."<sup>114</sup> Although disjointed internally and struggling to coordinate its activities with regional Islamic militant groups and Al-Qaeda, the Nigerian Taliban remained resilient.

Operating predominantly out of the northeastern Nigerian state of Borno, the group that would eventually be known as Boko Haram clashed with police forces and insolent villagers who resisted its religious mandate. 2009 marked a clear turning point for the group. During the Battle of Maiduguri, Nigerian forces captured and killed Boko Haram's leader, Mohammed Yusuf.<sup>115</sup> Despite losing its leader, having fought off the Nigerian security forces "marked the first turning point for the Nigerian Taliban, which since then has been known as Boko Haram."<sup>116</sup> Vicious and

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>115</sup> Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence Committee on Homeland Security, US House of Representatives, *Boko Haram: Emerging Threat to the US Homeland*, December 2011, Page 5.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. Officially known as "Jama'atul Alhul Sunnah Lidda'wati wal Jihad" to its members. Translation: people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and jihad.

fiercely committed to the extremist Islamic ideology of the group, Abubakar Shekau emerged as the new leader following Yusuf's death.<sup>117</sup>

Under Shekau, "Boko Haram's brutal campaign includes a suicide attack on a United Nations building in Abuja in 2011, repeated attacks that have killed dozens of students, the burning of villages, ties to regional terror groups, and the abduction of more than two hundred girls in April 2014."<sup>118</sup> The US Department of State designated Boko Haram as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) in 2013.<sup>119</sup> Most recently, Boko Haram conducted its first suicide bombing and video-taped beheading amid Shekau pledging his loyalty to IS.<sup>120</sup> The group also conducted attacks into Chad, Niger, and Cameroon. Though somewhat successful in acquiring limited resources, the surrounding countries moved closer to establishing a regional force, in cooperation with Nigeria, to eradicate Boko Haram from the Lake Chad Basin and northeastern Nigeria.<sup>121</sup>

The Boko Haram insurgency within Nigeria traces a majority of its causality to actions undertaken by the Nigerian government coupled with a myriad of unresolved social, economic, and religious tensions. US efforts to deter rather than counter such an insurgency requires more than just a threat of punishment, but a holistic application of deterrence that embraces deterrence by denial and, crucially, deterrence by delegitimization that coerces both the insurgent group and the Government of Nigeria. In the case of the former, deterrence through denial demonstrated by increased security in highly populated areas and Security Force Assistance provided by the US military (and regional partners) to date has not quelled the insurgency. Additional hardening and

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<sup>117</sup> "Nigeria's Boko Haram Leader Abubakar Shekau in Profile," *BBC World News*, May 9, 2014, accessed on March 31, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-18020349>.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> Adam Chandler, "Islamic State of Boko Haram?" *The Atlantic*, March 9, 2015, accessed March 31, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/03/boko-haram-pledges-allegiance-islamic-state/387235>.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

protective efforts in Nigeria's more heavily populated southern cities does not confront the problems Boko Haram poses to Borno state and the northeastern part of the country where it mainly operates. The designation of Boko Haram as an FTO by the United States was an important step to deny the group outside funding, but such a move is not decisive to Boko Haram's defeat.

Emphasizing deterrence of Boko Haram through delegitimization offers the most promising approach (supported by denial and punishment) to marginalize the group while communicating second-order deterrence towards other insurgent groups and those partners seeking US third party deterrence. However, coercion applied only to Boko Haram will not achieve the desired result. While the Nigerian government also attempts to delegitimize Boko Haram through efforts such as articulating moderate Sharia views and the "Bring Back Our Girls" campaign, fully delegitimizing Boko Haram requires political moves by the Nigerian government. The Nigerian government is not likely to embrace any actions that reflect negatively on its perceived standing or its ability to decisively overcome an internal threat. However, the country risks further violence at Boko Haram's hands by refusing to take necessary steps to delegitimize the group at its core.

Therefore, the United States should consider encouraging the Nigerian government to pursue policies that undermine Boko Haram's perceived legitimacy. Encouraging some type of divested, regional, or autonomous local governing structure in northern Nigeria, backed with dedicated revenues and a commitment of infrastructure development illustrates this approach. As an example, Kenya recently divested some power from the federal government to its counties under a new constitution.<sup>122</sup> While that country still experiences incursions and attacks by Al-Shabab, there are few if any other armed internal groups challenging the government after

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<sup>122</sup> The World Bank, *Kenya's Devolution* accessed on March 26, 2015, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kenya/brief/kenyas-devolution>. Kenyan counties are the equivalent of a country's states or provinces.

decades of post-independence strife. The US could consider targeting some of its aid for Nigeria's north. Furthermore, the United States could broker a more responsive power-inclusion scheme that gives a voice to those in Nigeria's north who are disenfranchised.

Such efforts highlight both the need and power of coercion applied to the partner state's government in order to overcome violent challenges by an insurgent group. Third party efforts to deter an insurgent group within a partner country encounter limitations if focused primarily on threatening punishment or relying exclusively on denial mechanisms. Deterrence through delegitimization is an important and necessary tool in any third party deterrence strategy aimed at a partner state's internal threat. However, delegitimizing the insurgent group directly cannot, by itself, detract from the group's legitimacy in such a way that the group loses cohesion and reduces its violent tendencies. This case study validates the hypothesis that coercion against a reluctant partner state government is also required to achieve an enduring deterrent effect through delegitimization as the preferred way to deter an insurgent group.

### Conclusion

Deterrence is not a static concept limited to a bygone era. While overcoming preconceived notions of the concept's applicability is difficult for some to acknowledge, this paper attempted to draw attention to three specific limiting variables and diffuse them for contemporary practitioners and policymakers. The expansion of actors within the international system over the last thirty years, and specifically since the end of the Cold War, requires a recognition of non-state actors and their myriad relations with states and each other. Deterrence used only by states and against states handicaps the concept's use in the twenty-first century security environment and is not realistic. Focusing deterrence on nuclear threats to the exclusion of conventional challenges posed by states and non-state actors is similarly unrealistic and too limiting of a qualification seventy years since the last time a nuclear weapon was used in war.

Above all, the lack of congruence between third party deterring states and a partner or host state is the most vexing piece in the contemporary application of deterrence. What was once considered a very compatible relationship based upon the third party's provision of protection and tolerance of the partner state's behavior in exchange for influence, economic access, and unwavering support in international relations and institutions is now at the mercy of a multitude of competing states, multi-national corporations, influential individuals, and violent groups. Such relationships appear most in the developing world, where countries like the United States, China, and others seek stability in securing and furthering their own interests while building capacity within the partner state. It is precisely in such states, where central governments often rule through and in spite of weak mandates that violent challenges to their security emerge in the form of insurgent groups.

The insurgent group presents a different type of threat for a third party deterring state. Contrary to the Cold War environment, it is not a state, it does not have nuclear weapons, nor is it likely able to acquire them. In addition, motivations and methods for overcoming such groups are not necessarily shared between the third party deterring state and the partner state. Therefore, deterrent strategies based solely on the threat of punishment are not useful, but can be a part of a successful deterrence approach that embraces deterrence by denial and deterrence by delegitimization. While denial mechanisms are crucial in the contemporary operating environment, deterrence through delegitimization is the most important approach in any third party deterrence strategy. Its utility, however, lies in applying coercive force, not only directly against the insurgent group, but also against the partner state's government. The latter coercive pressure influences the partner state to undertake political actions that undercut the insurgent group's legitimacy which deters the group from using violence against the partner state. Lastly, successful third party deterrence, that relies upon delegitimization, sends powerful signals to

other potential insurgent groups and partner states that the third party deterring state possesses the will and capability to deter challenges against a partner state.

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