Defence Research Paper
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What are the lessons for NATO’s ability to engage in coercive diplomacy from the Libyan, Syrian and Ukraine crises?

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ADVANCED COMMAND AND STAFF COURSE

NUMBER 18

Word Count: 14,952
Abstract

Coercive diplomacy is an important strategy of international politics because it offers the possibility of crisis resolution either without or with the limited use of force. This study analyses the contemporary case studies of the Libyan, Syrian and Ukraine crises to determine the lessons that NATO should draw its ability to engage in coercive diplomacy, a strategy that is facing a resurgence amongst policy-makers. The study identifies that there are political and structural challenges to NATO's ability to operationalise the strategy. However, as the preeminent security organisation for Western leaderships, NATO should continue to adapt to ensure it is the means of choice for a strategy that will continue to be relevant in the complexities of the current global environment.
Introduction

“Hybrid actions are all the more powerful, however, when backed by the credible threat of force. NATO leaders need to co-ordinate their tools of civilian power with improved military assets to provide a broader defensive armoury against future adversaries.”

In the current global environment NATO is arguably facing the most complex situation of its history. The Alliance’s endurance and relevance is likely to be defined by the way it is able to develop strategies that can be successful against a full range of crisis situations; this includes moving beyond doctrines based purely on military activity. The concept of coercive diplomacy offers a “beguiling” proposition for policy-makers, as it has the potential to achieve the resolution of a crisis without escalation to war and may be an appropriate strategy for the future of NATO crisis management. The theory of coercive diplomacy is facing resurgence amongst policy-makers strategizing for the complexity of the contemporary environment as it is an approach that aligns with the non-interventionist stances favoured by some of the Western leaderships following a decade of major combat operations. In seeking to persuade an adversary to change his behaviour, as opposed to “bludgeoning him”, it blends diplomacy with the threat of force, or limited use of force without escalation to war. The concept of coercive diplomacy is not new to NATO, having been the strategy employed during the Balkans crises. However, the significance of the principles to NATO policy-makers would appear to be apposite in a geostrategic environment that has been characterised by the strategic shocks of the Arab Spring and Russia’s revanchist policies in Ukraine. Therefore, exploration of NATO’s strength and limitations in employing coercive diplomacy within the present-day context is worthy further study.

This research paper presents a theoretical study using the example cases of the Libyan, Syrian and Ukraine crises to discern the degree to which NATO is able to engage in strategies of coercive diplomacy. Therefore, the emphasis of the analysis is placed on explaining the case studies through the lens of a theoretical framework, from which more generalised themes can be analysed as lessons for NATO. In order to maintain the focus of analysis on strategy and coercive diplomacy, a general level of knowledge of events in each crisis is assumed. This research paper aims to evaluate the validity and limitations of George’s theory of coercive diplomacy. It aims to give broader insights into the strategic choices for the policy-makers of Western leaderships. It further aims to determine the theory’s efficacy as a strategy in balancing the ends and means of NATO member states. Finally, it aims to establish the extent to which the study of empirical cases within the contemporary environment could be used to further develop the framework of coercive

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1 Niblett, R. "NATO must focus on ‘hybrid wars’ being waged on the West,” Financial Times, July 17 (2014).
diplomacy. It is acknowledged that the study is limited by the small number of sample cases and will require further refinement in the future. However, it is argued that the contemporary study of coercive diplomacy is vital to the understanding of theory’s continued relevance within the current global context. Secondary sources including academic papers, news articles and online sources are also used to develop the case studies, because, as Jakobsen notes, the accessibility of primary source data is an inherent limitation in studying contemporary cases. Additionally, the theoretical basis of coercive diplomacy has been established through the study of secondary sources that are drawn from books and academic journals.

The first section of the paper establishes the conceptual framework for the theory of coercive diplomacy. The subject is analysed as a strategy of crisis management that sits within the rubric of coercion. This analysis allows further interpretation that coercive diplomacy exists on a spectrum of crisis management responses that sits between diplomatic negotiation and war. Coercive diplomacy is further analysed to provide the basis from which the abstract theory can be operationalised. This analysis identifies the ambiguities within the variants of coercive diplomacy, the contextual variables and the conditions that favour success. It is argued that a simplification of the framework provides greater utility in analysing case studies. The underlying assumptions of coercive diplomacy and its reliance upon historical case studies are analysed to determine its transition from theory to strategy. Finally, the limitations of the theory in abstract are demonstrated to ensure that the analysis of the paper further refines the operationalisation of the theory.

The second section analyses the three discrete cases using the framework of coercive diplomacy. Of the three case studies, the Libya crisis provides the most complete analysis as it is the only crisis to have concluded and to have full NATO involvement. In the cases of the Syrian and Ukraine crises, it is only possible to analyse those coercive actions that have taken place to date and requires the acknowledgement of the more limited roles that NATO has played. The cases are analysed to determine whether the actions taken by Western powers, represented within NATO, can be determined as coercive diplomacy. The conceptual framework will then be applied to consider whether coercive diplomacy should have been considered a viable option. The strategies employed will be analysed through a simplified framework to determine the extent to which coercive diplomacy was successful and understand the factors that affected the outcome. Finally, analysis of the case studies elucidates the more generic lessons of coercive diplomacy that can be used to further understand the role of NATO within each example. The same framework of analysis is used across each case study to ensure that there is consistency in the derivation of deductions drawn from each case.

The third section draws together themes that have been derived from the case study analysis to provide insights into NATO’s ability to engage in coercive diplomacy. The implementation of coercive diplomacy is understood by applying the ends-ways-means paradigm in order to argue that NATO’s engagement with the strategy is dependent upon the political leaderships of the member states to define the end to be achieved. This provides further analysis on the policy-making of strategy and the dynamics of consensus within the NATO framework. Potential alternatives to the use of NATO in delivering international strategies of security are considered and the relevance of multilateral responses for states that are bound by liberal-democratic values is further explored. Western power within the international system is examined to determine when strategies of coercive diplomacy should be utilised and when situations will favour the choice of NATO to implement the strategy. This allows further discussion whether there is a moral imperative for Western states to engage in coercive diplomacy as an opportunity to avoid crises developing into war. This analysis is then taken to consider how the case studies can be used to further refine the basis of George’s theory of coercive diplomacy.

The conclusion draws together the analysis to support the main thesis of the paper that coercive diplomacy is an important strategy of international politics that must be continued to be developed, as it offers a different perspective of crisis management that does not start with the assumption that force should or will be used. Furthermore, there are specific lessons to be drawn on NATO’s ability to engage in coercive diplomacy: Firstly, NATO’s engagement in the strategy will continue to be constrained by the consensus of will of its member states; secondly, that the NATO framework is best understood as providing the means of the strategy; thirdly, as a security based organisation NATO has no economic levers it must work in concert with other organisation such as the EU; fourthly, that NATO’s asymmetric power advantage over adversaries is relative to its unity and the disposition of power within the international system; fifthly, the utilisation of NATO is most appropriate for the strongest variants of coercive diplomacy that have a requirement to integrate force. The analysis of the case studies demonstrates that coercive diplomacy is inherently difficult. However, the strategy remains an important proposition that is consistent with the Western values of liberal democracy and the ability to promote peace. It allows us to conclude that, despite limitations, NATO remains an appropriate mechanism for applying a strategy which will continue to have relevance in the complexities of the current global environment.
Section 1 – Understanding the Conceptual Framework

Coercion and coercive diplomacy

As an element of statecraft, coercive diplomacy is a strategy that sits within the rubric of coercion and is concerned with the dynamics of international politics. The broader perspective of international politics is concerned with the relationship between states and the strategic choices that influence another state’s strategic choices. The expansion of the concept is useful in order to understand that coercion is a strategy of influence which, like all strategies of statecraft, exists to achieve a stated political ends. Therefore, if coercion “is concerned with the role of threats in international politics,” then a coercive strategy requires an understanding of how the actors construct reality and how threats can be designed to act efficiently within that construct. At this level of analysis the type of coercion remains unimportant, as it is a basic tenet of all coercion that the coercing party must understand what they are prepared to risk or sacrifice in order to achieve the desired objective. However, it is also about creating a calculation for the adversary that gives them the choice on whether to consent to a threat or demand. If an adversary resists then there is a greater presumption of the need to resort to the use of force. The presumption of force as an arbiter of international threat demonstrates that coercion assumes an anarchic international system which aligns with a realist school of thought. The realist proposition determines that force is a legitimate tool of statecraft and states will act rationally to ensure their survival. Therefore, if the non-compliance has consequences with serious outcome and compliance can assure survival, the rational response is to consent. Therefore, the fundamental principles of coercion are founded upon a realist understanding of the world.

The theory of coercive diplomacy emerged after the coercive theories of deterrence and compellence. It is common to all theories that they seek to alter the strategic behaviour of an adversary by creating a cost/benefit judgement that persuades the adversary that compliance is in their interest. Whilst distinctions between the components of coercion are ambiguous and subjective in their interpretation, coercive diplomacy remains discrete, maybe paradoxically, by both its precision in definition and flexibility in implementation. The distinction from deterrence is the proactive/reactive nature to which threats are contained; in deterrence the threat of force is used proactively in order to stop an adversary undertaking a course of action before it is initiated.

\begin{enumerate}
  \item Ibid., 36.
  \item Ibid., 16.
  \item George. Forceful Persuasion, 5.
\end{enumerate}
where coercive diplomacy seeks to undo an action that has already taken place. The distinction with compellence is more opaque, with coercive diplomacy deriving from Shelling’s earlier work. George provides a narrower definition of coercive diplomacy that limits it to a defensive proposition, which it is a reaction to the actions of an adversary. The broader notion of compellence includes the offensive use of coercion which demands an opponent gives something up. It is argued that such lack of precision within compellence offers little practical guidance to policy makers. George’s definition also includes inducements in order to achieve compliance, or even compromise, and giving the adversary the opportunity to comply before employing force. There is greater implied latency in the use of force as a bargaining tool and if force is used it is limited to “just enough force to demonstrate resolution to protect one’s interests and to emphasize the credibility of one’s determination to use more force if necessary.” Therefore, this research paper considers that the theoretical position of coercive diplomacy can be viewed as an entry strategy which can be employed when deterrence has either failed, or when a shock crisis emerges.

Beyond George, the definition and understanding of coercive diplomacy becomes more contested. Scholars such as Art and Cronin consider that force is central to coercive diplomacy and that “coercive attempts” utilizing other levers of power should be distinct from the theory. However, it is argued that there is evidence in George’s definition to suggest that force is not presumed and that sanctions and actions other than force are very much within the scope of the theory. Freedman introduces the idea of coercion being a spectrum between consent and control. As an extension of the principle, it is argued that the theory of coercive diplomacy exists upon a spectrum between diplomacy and war. The notion of a spectrum of actions allows concession for such definitional ambiguities and demonstrates that there are only shades of distinction between the concepts of coercion. De Wijk reinforces the idea that there is a coercive spectrum by positing that “military coercion starts where coercive diplomacy ends” and notes that military coercion moves towards a position that is short of Schelling’s concept of brute force. Therefore, the exact points at which coercive diplomacy start and finish are imprecise and a matter of subjectivity. Jakobsen attempts to clarify the issue of the ambiguity of force by moving away from a materialistic view of the amount of force employed and concentrating upon the objective of

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15 Ibid.
16 Craig, George. Force and Statecraft, 196.
17 Ibid.
18 Schaub. “Compellence Resuscitating the Concept in Strategic Coercion 38.
20 George, A. Forceful Persuasion, 6-7; George A, Simons W. The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy. 16-17.
21 Freedman, Strategic Coercion: Concepts and Cases, 16.
force, signalling intent vis-à-vis imposing of compliance.\textsuperscript{23} It is considered that such distinction provides a useful interpretation to consider when force is being used under the premise of coercive diplomacy and when it is being used beyond its remit. This is also useful in considering that crises that start with coercive diplomacy may escalate to military coercion where the objective becomes the destruction of forces, or when efforts of coercive diplomacy have failed.

Whilst the literature on the use of force allows for such distinctions to be made, the literature at the diplomacy end of the spectrum is more problematic and represents an area of study that requires further consideration. Jakobsen dismisses the role of economic sanctions as having limited utility and argues that they precipitate the requirement to use force.\textsuperscript{24} Art argues that economic wealth and political skill are the preeminent tools of statecraft, to which the “fungibility” of military power adds credibility.\textsuperscript{25} However, when considering the validity of the use of tools such as economic sanctions and political isolation within the frame of coercive diplomacy, it is argued that their utility will depend upon the situation of the adversary and the levers of power to which they are most susceptible. It is further argued that economic and diplomatic variables are inherent in considering coercive diplomacy as forceful persuasion and in its ability to offer a genuine alternative to militarily orientated strategies.\textsuperscript{26} The latency of the threat of force will remain an implicit factor, but it is suggested that coercive diplomacy implores that power is considered in broader terms than just force. It is further proposed that diplomatic and economic coercive attempts are vital to maintaining the coercer’s legitimacy in trying to alter the behaviour of the adversary without war. Equally, economic and diplomatic levers offer flexibility in offering the positive inducements that make the theory distinct from other strategies of coercion. However, the problem with analysing economic and diplomatic coercive attempts is that their outputs are less tangible or decisive than the use of force. Therefore, it is a folly for policy-makers, or those studying coercive diplomacy, to be seduced by the decisiveness of force and underplay the role of economic and diplomatic sanctions.

\textit{From abstract theory to strategy}

George acknowledges that the utility of abstract theory has limitations for policy-makers and that it is only through the application of empirical case studies that the dynamic nature of coercive diplomacy can be more fully understood.\textsuperscript{27} It is one of the advantages over Schelling’s work on compellence that coercive diplomacy has been developed with the use of historical analysis in order to operationalise the theory.\textsuperscript{28} As Byman and Waxman posit, “[t]here is a strong temptation to

\textsuperscript{23} Jakobsen. \textit{Western Use of Coercive Diplomacy after the Cold War}, 15.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 141-142.
\textsuperscript{26} George. \textit{Forceful Persuasion}, xi.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 15.
treat coercive threats as single, discrete events with a simple linear logic." However, the empirical studies demonstrate the relationship between two parties is more nuanced and should be seen as a dynamic contest that depends upon actions and counteractions of both parties. The consideration of such dynamics enables the theory to be progressed past the abstract and into the realm of strategy.

Developing a strategy of coercive diplomacy from abstraction must start with the understanding of what the coercer wishes to achieve. In George’s abstract framework four strategic questions are considered when choosing of the variant of coercive diplomacy required to achieve the desired outcome: The demand on an adversary, the urgency that should be applied to the demand, the determination of punishment to be applied for non-compliance and whether to offer positive inducements to gain compliance. In essence these questions seek to balance the means with the ends in order to decide the type of strategy to be implemented.

The first variant, and most forceful, is the “ultimatum.” It requires a clear demand, a time limit to impose a sense of urgency, and defined punishment for non-compliance. The ultimatum requires the conviction and resolve of the coercer to accept the risk of escalation. There is a nuance to the ultimatum, the “tacit ultimatum”, which possesses greater ambiguity by not attaching a timescale to the demand. However, as Langenheim notes, the ambiguity of the tacit ultimatum may heighten the possibility of an adversary misperceiving the intentions of the coercer. The forceful and equivocal nature of both ultimatum variants limits their flexibility, because with strong domestic or international opposition ultimatums risk “severe political backlash” and challenge the legitimacy of the coercing state. Equally, if the calculus of an adversary’s point of consent is underestimated then the escalation to war becomes more probable, possibly through the adversary’s pre-emptive actions. If the coercer does not possess the resolve to progress to war, and backs down, then their credibility is immediately undermined. The ultimatum’s ability to take a crisis to the verge of war associates it with the notion of brinkmanship, which Freedman describes as “the most toxic term” of crisis management that can precipitate avoidable war. George also points out that the outcome of an ultimatum can result in the “conditional or equivocal acceptance in the way that would undermine the urgency with compliance.” This point seems more nebulous, as whilst it is implied as a negative, the potential to force a negotiated solution and avoid war should be seen as

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30 George. Forceful Persuasion, 7.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., 8.
35 George. Forceful Persuasion, 72.
36 Ibid.
38 George. Forceful Persuasion, 72.
positive. However, it reinforces that coercive diplomacy, like the broader subject of coercion, acts within a construction of reality.

The “try-and-see” variant is the softest of the approaches and places only a demand on the target state to see how it reacts, in the hope that the demand alone will be enough to persuade a change of behaviour before taking another step.\(^{39}\) This has led to analysts, such as Bellamy, to question its efficacy against the ultimatum variant.\(^{40}\) The approach is limited by the likelihood that a target state will not comply without resistance, or has a very low threshold for consent. The next variant is the “gradual turning of the screw”.\(^{41}\) The distinction from the try-and-see approach is the way that pressure is applied incrementally, although lacking the urgency or forcefulness of an ultimatum.\(^{42}\) It is considered that the approach offers a great deal of flexibility, in choosing when and how to apply pressure. The distinction between variants is ambiguous and, as George notes, may become more ambiguous where a policy-maker is not consistent in approach.\(^{43}\) The choice of policy-makers to employ softer approaches is context dependant and requires an understanding of when an ultimatum is too risky and may precipitate brinkmanship.

A key finding of George’s case studies is that there is often movement between variants of coercive diplomacy as a crisis’ situation changes and the relationships within it develop. Softer approaches of coercive diplomacy offer the opportunity for the coercer to increase the level pressure afforded if the target is unresponsive to initial demands, or only apply the level of pressure that is appropriate within the context of the coercer’s domestic-political-military context, before revising it if the situation becomes more permissive.\(^{44}\) George provides examples of the Cuban and Laos crises where both variants of try-and-see and the tacit ultimatum were used in the same crisis\(^ {45}\) and Manuluk uses the more contemporary example of Kosovo, where both the gradual turning of the screw and the classic ultimatum variants of the theory were evident.\(^ {46}\) Therefore, it can be considered that that in the same way that coercive diplomacy has been described as sitting upon a spectrum, there is a spectrum of graduated variants within the concept of coercive diplomacy. The ability to create escalation dominance through incremental pressure demonstrates the flexibility that is inherent within the strategy and provides policy-makers the opportunity to avoid brinkmanship. Therefore, softer versions of coercive diplomacy offer policy-makers less risk initially and offer the opportunity to test the resolve of adversaries, before committing to more force orientated strategies.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 8.
\(^{41}\) George, Forceful Persuasion, 8.
\(^{42}\) Ibid.
\(^{43}\) Ibid.
\(^{44}\) Ibid., 9.
\(^{45}\) Ibid., 73-75.
The final element that deserves further analysis is the “carrot and stick” approach which suggests that policy-makers do not have to rely purely on coercive threats, but also the use of “conditional positive inducements” to come to a positive conclusion. The use of carrots in the diplomatic process is a key distinction between George’s theory and Schelling’s earlier theory of compellence, which focusses purely on the use of coercive threats. Whilst Langenheim suggests that the carrot and stick approach is a variant of coercive diplomacy, this paper’s interpretation of the theory is that the carrot and stick approach is implicit as a constant that compliments all variants. It is considered that the inclusion of positive inducements creates more completeness in bridging diplomacy and force, providing opportunities for face-saving and making compliance more attractive at individual level. As George notes, carrots have the potential to “bring about a settlement of the crisis through a genuine, balanced quid pro quo.” However, in what Jentleson describes as reciprocity, the offer of inducements needs to be trusted if they are to be accepted and alter the behaviour of the coerced party.

The application of empirical studies provided the evidence that the efficacy of coercive diplomacy is highly context dependent and allowed George to derive eight variables: The type of provocation, the depth of interests at stake, time pressure of the objective, the nature of the coercer (unilateral or coalition), the image of war, the strength of leadership, the isolation of the adversary and the desired post-conflict relationship. These contextual factors further emphasize the gap between the abstract model and the reality of its operationalisation. The premise that coercive diplomacy is highly contextually dependent suggests that caution is required in applying the abstract model without considering the environment in which it can be applied. Therefore, it is the analysis of the contextual variables that will provide insight to whether a strategy of coercive diplomacy is viable. A difficulty in analysing the variables is that their context may change through the course of the crisis. As Jackobsen suggests, international support may change as the dynamics of a crisis change, this was exemplified in Russia’s change of diplomatic support to Milosevic in Kosovo. Therefore, understanding the changing context of a crisis will precipitate the requirement to remain agile in the implementation of the strategy. Furthermore, it is evident that the contextual variables are interrelated and should be considered as the sum of their parts. This may determine that the relative strengths and weaknesses across the variables counter-balance each other in the risk-benefit calculation on both the viability and need to engage in coercive diplomacy. Therefore, it is the proposition of this paper that the number of variables make the framework overly complex and

47 George. Forceful Persuasion, 10.
50 George. Forceful Persuasion, 11.
54 Jakobsen. Western Use of Coercive Diplomacy after the Cold War, 22.
that it can be simplified to a more modest framework that understands the type of provocation, the international power relationships, national or coalitional interests and adversary’s domestic factors.

In addition to the contextual variables, the framework provides seven factors that favour success: The clarity of the objective, the strength of motivation, asymmetry of motivation, the sense of urgency, adequate domestic and international support, the opponent’s fear of escalation and the clarity concerning the precise terms of settlement. If the contextual variables can be used to determine the viability of a strategy, then the success factors can be utilised to provide guidance to policy-makers on developing a specific strategy. Whilst the multi-variable approach demonstrates the inherent complexity in the dynamic relationships in international politics, it also creates limitations in assessing coercive diplomacy as theory, by tacitly acknowledging that any two situations cannot be compared directly. Equally, Jakobsen notes that the high number of variables present in George’s model limits its explanatory power and makes its operationalisation difficult, but that a more parsimonious model may leave out crucial variables that lead policy-makers to draw the wrong conclusions. However, this paper suggests that streamlining the number of variables affords a framework with greater generalisability and greater utility for policy-makers. The framework that Jentleson has refined highlights three criteria for success: Proportionality, reciprocity and coercive credibility. It is argued that this framework sufficiently encapsulates the intentions of George, whilst giving greater clarity and is the preferred framework for this paper in analysing factors that favour success.

Proportionality refers to the relationship between the demand and the objective; reciprocity refers to the relationship between the coercer’s inducements and target’s concessions; and coercive credibility refers to the target’s acceptance of the coReciprocity refers to the asymmetry of motivation and the settlement terms criteria, but pays further attention to the use of inducements. Coercive credibility subsumes the strength of motivation, domestic and international support and the opponent’s fear of escalation. It is argued that the simplified framework produces a more cohesive analysis that draws together the themes of the theory more holistically and provides greater linkage between the context, the success factors and the selection of the variant of coercive diplomacy.

55 George. Forceful Persuasion, 77-80.
57 Jakobsen. Western Use of Coercive Diplomacy after the Cold War, 23.
58 Jentleson, B. “Coercive Diplomacy: Scope and Limits in the Contemporary World”, 3.
59 Ibid.
Limitations of coercive diplomacy

As has been stressed, in order to change the behaviour of an adversary, a situation has to be created where the cost of non-compliance is not deemed as attractive as the benefits of compliance.\textsuperscript{60} However, it is a weakness that the premise is based upon an assumption that the actions of the coerced will be rational, although George acknowledges that psychological factors may require a different interpretation.\textsuperscript{61} In analysing the difficulties of coercive diplomacy, Art and Cronin expose the dynamic that is central to the issue of rationality; the extent to which an individual’s reputation and power are at stake.\textsuperscript{62} Therefore, in undemocratic and fragile situations, such as Somalia in 1993 with Mohammed Farah Aideed,\textsuperscript{63} the calculation of the consequences of non-compliance was not one of rationality but of personal esteem. In contrast, it can be argued that during the stability created by the Cold War, the consequences of war were deemed so dramatic that the use of carrots to save face allowed the rational conclusion to the Cuban Missile crisis.\textsuperscript{64} It is argued that rationality cannot be assumed and will involve a complex of power and interest at both the state and individual level.

The use of historical case studies demonstrates that coercive diplomacy has had mixed success in application.\textsuperscript{65} However, the application of historical cases to the theory is problematic in determining the validity of the concept of coercive diplomacy. As George notes, interpretations of case studies must remain provisional and subject to further refinement.\textsuperscript{66} The further limitation of using historical cases to develop the theory is that the understanding of security has moved beyond the traditionalist view that threat perception is purely based on an opposing military intent and capability.\textsuperscript{67} The corollary is that the application of coercive diplomacy should not be constrained by the realist origins of coercion and should demonstrate its applicability to situations where the global environment is dominated by liberal values. It is suggested that the realist/liberal premise of a given crisis is fundamental to understanding the strategy that is best placed to achieve the political end and the means by which the strategy implemented. As Radin notes, the experiences of Bosnia have affected how the US considers civil wars,\textsuperscript{68} where realist perspectives of security were not appropriate. However, it is proposed that by not relying on the use of force, the strategy of coercive diplomacy has the ability to adapt to crises that are determined by liberal values and provide a more pragmatic response to crisis management. Therefore, whilst the framework of coercive diplomacy may need refining to understand the implication of the

\textsuperscript{60} Freedman, Strategic Coercion: Concepts and Cases, 23.
\textsuperscript{61} George, Forceful Persuasion, 4.
\textsuperscript{62} Art, Cronin. The United States and Coercive Diplomacy, 366-367.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{64} George. Forceful Persuasion, 37.
\textsuperscript{66} George. Forceful Persuasion, 16.
proposition, conceptually the theory of coercive diplomacy provides policy-makers flexibility to apply the theory in a variety of contexts.

The theory of coercive diplomacy was developed through a US-centric approach to the application case studies. However, it is argued that this approach has limited the analysis of how coercive diplomacy is applied in coalition contexts which has implications for its enduring relevance. The theory needs to be moved beyond the state-based concepts of national interest. Therefore, whilst the statist approach may have been apposite for the Cuban Missile crisis, the contemporary environment demands more analysis on how coercive diplomacy can be used in interventions that require a consensus. The obvious example is the humanitarian intervention in Bosnia,\(^\text{69}\) where national interest is replaced by international obligation. However, the relationship with liberal concepts and national interest is dynamic. In the case of Kosovo national interests of the NATO members initially diverged and created strategic drift. However in a strange paradox, when NATO’s credibility as a relevant organisation was being undermined by its political division, it was the national interest in maintaining the Alliance that galvanised political leaders.\(^\text{70}\) This exemplifies the tension between liberal values of humanitarian intervention and realist principles of self-interest. Such tension is at the heart of the debate on NATO’s future with a dual role of deterrence against existential threat, as its most fundamental role, and its ability to maintain global influence through engaging in crises beyond its borders.\(^\text{71}\)

**Deductions**

Analysing the theory of coercive diplomacy allows the deduction that the theory can offer an attractive strategy for states engaging in international politics. However, the abstractions of theory require qualification if they are to become meaningful in practice.\(^\text{72}\) George’s theory attempts to address such limitations through the analysis of empirical case studies that are based on events that pre-dated the theory’s development. This suggests that coercive diplomacy existed implicitly prior to the theory’s classification. However, its theorisation allows the concepts to be brought into the consciousness of policy-makers and allows further refinement to increase its operationalisation. It is proposed that, whilst the George’s basic framework provides a sound basis from which to derive a conceptual understanding of coercive diplomacy, simplification of the framework provides greater utility, allowing it to be applied to the broad range of scenarios that face the contemporary security environment. Therefore, the cases of the Libyan, Syrian and Ukraine crises provide the opportunity to enhance the knowledge of its applicability in a contemporary environment.

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\(^{69}\) Art, Cronin. *The United States and Coercive Diplomacy*, 367.


\(^{72}\) George. *Forceful Persuasion*, 15.
Section 2 – Evaluating the Case Studies

Libya

The Libya crisis provides the most complete analysis as it was chronologically the first of the case studies and has concluded. The crisis emerged during the ‘Arab Spring’ and followed the successful, and relatively peaceful, uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. As protestors rose against the authoritarian regime of Qaddafi in February 2011, the international community condemned what was perceived to be a disproportionate response with reports of widespread human rights violations. Whilst the validity of the reporting of unprecedented violence and the extent to which protestors were peaceful has been questioned, the outrage that was caused by the perception of the humanitarian crisis mobilised the international community against the regime.

It is argued that whilst initial efforts can be taken as coercive diplomacy, the crisis rapidly escalated on the coercive spectrum and by the time that Qaddafi was killed in October 2011 it was a war, including a ground force of rebel militias. Initial efforts focused on the international and economic isolation of the Qaddafi regime through the imposition of the UN Security Council Resolution 1970 and widespread condemnation from a diverse international community. Such coercive efforts could be interpreted as the imposition of the turning of the screw variant of coercive diplomacy. However, consideration must also be given to the extent to which Qaddafi was given the opportunity to comply, which has been identified as one of the tenets of coercive diplomacy. The African Union’s (AU) efforts to mediate a negotiated solution would appear to have been undermined by Western powers, with France and Britain already working towards gaining the no-fly zone resolution that would permit the use of force. However, it would be overstated to suggest that the Western community had decided on intervention at this point; on the 10 March the Secretary General of NATO suggested NATO had no intention of intervening and it was not until the 15 March that the Obama administration decided to support a further UN resolution. Equally, the timings suggest that Qaddafi’s willingness to engage in the AU sponsored mediation was only evident when the momentum of the crisis had swung towards the rebel forces. Whilst it demonstrates the opaque nature of crisis management, it is considered that there is enough evidence to suggest early attempts of crisis management were an example of coercive diplomacy.

75 Ibid., 109-113.
76 Morini, D. “Did Diplomacy Succeed or Fail in Libya?”, E-International Relations, 12 April 2011.
77 Craig, George. Force and Statecraft. 196.
78 Morini. “Did Diplomacy Succeed or Fail in Libya?”.
81 Morini. “Did Diplomacy Succeed or Fail in Libya?”.
However, it is further argued that there was a tipping-point following the imposition of the no-fly zone, after which the crisis management progressed beyond coercive diplomacy and into the realms of military coercion. Therefore, the strategy of coercive diplomacy ultimately failed to bring about resolution and required the escalation to a stronger response to Qaddafi’s aggression.

The crisis that was being addressed was the slaughter of Libyan civilians. Therefore, the objective was to stop Qaddafi’s use of force against his own people. George suggests that using coercive diplomacy to stop the status quo, rather than give something up, is an easier proposition and increases the strategy’s viability. However, the change of objective from stopping Qaddafi to his removal from power, which was implied from the point that Qaddafi was referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC), altered the dynamic of the situation. This made the crisis a zero-sum scenario for Qaddafi and created a situation that was more likely to escalate to war.

From the Western perspective, the possibility of war with Qaddafi was less grave than the possibility of genocide. The White House is reported to have believed that the situation had the potential to be worse than Srebrenica. Allowing an atrocity to take place on the Srebrenica or Rwanda scale would damage the reputation of the Western powers, the UN and the concept of liberal democratic values. Therefore, it is suggested that policy-makers will be more inclined to adopt forceful strategies where the consequence of inaction are unpalatable.

The almost universal international condemnation of the humanitarian situation and the support of the UN gave policy-makers a strategic freedom to act forcefully. The UN legitimacy can be seen as one of the pre-requisites for international action, as there is evidence to suggest that the response would not have considered forceful action without a UN mandate. Therefore, the permissiveness of the international system became a strategic centre of gravity for the coalition. A unified coalition leadership was provided through the multi-lateral Libya Contact Group, with representatives from the UN, NATO, the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. Therefore, not only did the international community support action, but it was given direction through strong leadership that could deliver success. The isolation of Qaddafi from the international community was demonstrated by states that did not support intervention, including Russia and China, who abstained from the vote and did not block any action. It is argued that the disinterest of such states was a result of Libya’s strategic alignment with the West and Qaddafi’s decision to isolate Libya from previous strategic partnerships with Russia. The only element of context that was less clear was a consensus on what the desired post-conflict relationship was.

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82 George. *Forceful Persuasion*, 69.
87 Buckley. “Learning from Libya, Acting in Syria,” 85.
That regime change entered the rhetoric a few weeks into the conflict suggests the objective of the strategy changed and therefore, it is difficult to discern how an amenable post-conflict relationship could be negotiated, especially considering Qaddafî’s referral to the ICC. It is suggested that context should not be separated from the political end when determining the viability of strategy of coercive diplomacy. Therefore, the framework of the strategy should place greater emphasis in making the linkage between the crisis context and its objective.

The analysis of the context suggests that against the limited objective of protecting civilians and stopping the aggression of Qaddafî a strategy coercive diplomacy was viable. However, the strategy failed by going beyond the realms of coercive diplomacy. This suggests that there was a clear demonstration of coercive credibility. The escalation of the UNSCR 1973 to use force and the rapid collation of NATO force to enforce the no-fly zone signalled the resolve to ensure compliance. One possible explanation of Qaddafî not responding to the credibility of the coercive attempts is to consider him as an irrational actor. However, this does not take into account that Qaddafî had previously acted rationally in responding to an attempt of coercive diplomacy in giving up his WMD programme. The difference between the 2011 crisis and the previous successful attempt can be understood by considering the proportionality and reciprocity factors. The objective of regime change was far more challenging than his compliance in a situation where the objective had been limited to policy change. Whilst it is hard to imagine how Qaddafî may have reconciled with the population in 2011. As an extension of the reciprocity argument, the response became overtly impartial and by supporting the rebels NATO and its allies demonstrated that there was no way back for Qaddafî. It was in April that France, Italy and the UK all showed national support to the rebel forces by sending equipment and military advisors to the rebel forces. This was reinforced by National Transitional Council (NTC) gaining increasing recognition in the international community. Whilst France was the first state to recognise the NTC, by July the complete Libya Contact Group recognised them as the legitimate government of Libya.

Thirdly, and interconnected with the prior arguments, there was no use of inducements, with regime change being a pre-requisite for the NTC to negotiate. Therefore, Qaddafî was left with the decision to capitulate or fight on, which required a stronger and more overtly military strategy being pursued.

In evaluating more specific lessons for NATO, the first issue for consideration is the organisation’s interface with the political leadership of the international community. NATO’s actions were enabled

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89 George. Forceful Persuasion, 62.
92 “Italy, France sending troops to advise Libyan rebels,” CNN. 21 April (2011); UK military liaison advisory team to be sent to Libya” Gov.uk, 19 April (2011).
93 Rynning. “Coalitions, institutions and big tents,” 61.
and legitimised through the permissive nature of the international system. It was demonstrated that the political will of a broad international community, facilitated through the Libya Contact Group, allowed NATO to functionally provide political direction to the progress of operations. 96 The command and control structures of NATO and its ability to integrate multinational forces proved its adaptability and relevance in taking command of operations. 97 A second lesson is drawn from considering NATO’s limited ability to deliver all aspects of coercive diplomacy, specifically that the economic levers sit outside of the Alliance’s direct capabilities. 98 As NATO is primarily a security organisation, 99 its expertise lies in binding together the political will and operationalising it through military responses. Therefore, with an emphasis placed on the military response it is difficult to understand how NATO can offer inducements within the coercive bargain and apply a fully integrated approach to the application of power. The third lesson to be drawn from the Libya crisis also comes as a corollary of the military bias within the NATO modus operandi. Whilst the increase in the level of force was consistent with a revised objective of regime change, it could be argued that the military means of NATO became self-reinforcing as force is the lever of power that they are configured to exert. Therefore, policy-makers should be aware that utilising NATO as the means of strategy is most appropriate where force is seen as the most applicable element of the coercive toolset.

**Syria**

The Syrian crisis has taken a very different path to that of Libya and after four years of conflict, continues within a complex web of international security considerations. With specific relevance to this study, it is notable that NATO involvement has been restricted to rhetoric and the protection of the Turkish border from Syrian aggression. 100 As with the other crises that emerged during the Arab Spring, the Syrian crisis emerged due to a growing opposition to an authoritarian regime. Assad believed he was immune to the contagion that was sweeping the Arab world. 101 However, following the alleged torture of school children following some small scale anti-regime graffiti in Daraa, protestors of the population of the city took to the streets. 102 The incident proved to be a tinderbox with protests spreading across the country and which “created a perpetuating cycle” of protests and regime violence. 103 The international situation has remained complex, with significant international opposition to intervening in Syria; not least through Russia and China creating a

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96 Rynning, “Coalitions, institutions and big tents,” 61.
102 Ibid., 3.
103 Ibid.
paralysis within the UN Security Council, vetoing resolutions in fear that they would precipitate intervention and regime change.\textsuperscript{104} Whilst unilateral sanctions have been put in place by the US, EU and Arab league, Assad has retained a "political shield" from Russia and their "economic lungs" from Iran.\textsuperscript{105} Meanwhile, NATO has been reticent to engage without the legitimacy that would be inferred with through a UNSCR, which is unlikely to emerge.\textsuperscript{106} The closest the West has come to intervening was following Assad crossing Obama’s red line (by using chemical weapons in 2013).\textsuperscript{107} However, Russia arbitrated and negotiated a deal to for Syria to give up chemical weapons and have them destroyed outside of Syria, thus avoiding a wider intervention.\textsuperscript{108} The rise of ISIS and their movement into Syrian territory has only served to make the situation more complex. The future in Syria is bleak and, as Jenkins eruditely summarises, “[r]ight now there are no obvious good options.”\textsuperscript{109}

The complexity of the situation within Syria makes the analysis of coercive diplomacy more challenging. It is evident that the lack of pace in response to the emerging situation represents the caution with which Western governments have approached the crisis. The condemnation and placing of sanctions appear to be consistent with the try-and-see variant of coercive diplomacy. However, the degree to which such coercive attempts have been backed by a latent threat of force is more ambiguous. Hughes suggests that states which sponsor proxies may be using the strategy as part of coercion,\textsuperscript{110} a notion that is reinforced by Byman et al who suggest that support to opposition is a fundamental element of US coercive diplomacy strategy in the crisis.\textsuperscript{111} Therefore, in accepting that Western actions can be seen as coercive diplomacy it is obvious is that the risk/benefit calculation has not tipped enough in favour of success for stronger variants to be tried against the objective of removing Assad from power. As Charap suggests, in many humanitarian situations regime change is the only way of achieving the goal of stability.\textsuperscript{112} However, regime change is an ambitious and challenging goal for coercive diplomacy. Which allows a deduction that coercive attempts may not have been aimed at bringing a conclusion to the crisis, but been used as a mechanism to contain the situation. It is suggested that if coercive attempts are politically restricted to the try-and-see variant then patience is required to understand whether the strategy will be successful. The case study also demonstrates the strategy can be escalated for limited objectives. The Obama’s red line on the use of chemical weapons may have been weakened by the lack of coalitional support. However, with the threat of unilateral US action, the ultimatum

\textsuperscript{104} Buckley, “Learning from Libya, Acting in Syria,” 88-89.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 303-304.
created enough of a possibility of escalation to make Russia intervene and establish a negotiated solution against a limited objective and without forcing the removal Assad. Although it is acknowledged that the success of the ultimatum was as fortuitous as it was an exposition of diplomatic skill.\footnote{Rothkopf. \textit{National Insecurity} 303.}

At face value the Syrian crisis demonstrates many of the same humanitarian characteristics of Libya, which has led some to the conclusion that the West should have intervened to demonstrate consistency.\footnote{Buckley. “Learning from Libya, Acting in Syria,” 88.} However, closer analysis of the context suggests that Syria is not analogous to the Libyan crisis and is a situation where coercive diplomacy is not a viable strategy, or at least a strategy that would carry significant risk. The interest in the Syrian crisis is ostensibly humanitarian, with no specific interest to compel Western leaders to act for any other reason than the upholding liberal democratic values.\footnote{Ibid.} The support that Iran and Russia afforded Syria is argued to be the main factor that made the possibility of coercive diplomacy unfavourable.\footnote{Badran. “How Assad Stayed in Power”} Such resolve has been enough to convince states such as Germany, Poland and the UK that the perception of being involved in a protracted and complex intervention that could draw Russia and Iran into a conflict was not a risk worth taking. Equally, with Russia ensuring that the UNSC remained paralysis over the issue, Western nations could not act with the legitimacy that had been afforded in the Libyan crisis. The painful experiences of acting without a UNSCR in Iraq still resonated and further weakened the collective resolve of the Western states.\footnote{Hughes. “Syria and the peril of proxy warfare,” 525.} Therefore, the international context, and the strength that Assad is able to derive from it, suggests that anything more than the weakest of coercive attempts are not currently viable.

In terms of proportionality, it is argued that the try-and-see variant will prove to be too weak a response to achieve what is probably the most demanding objective of regime change.\footnote{Jentleson. “Coercive Diplomacy: Scope and Limits in the Contemporary World”, 3.} As Radin notes, a strategy built around sanctions and the support to the Syrian opposition is unlikely to precipitate the end of the crisis without Russia and Iran changing their strategic position.\footnote{Radin. “The Misunderstood Lessons of Bosnia for Syria”, 65.} Additionally, to achieve an ambitious objective requires absolute unity within the coercing states to create the coercive credibility; with only the US and France prepared to act the credibility has been absent. Therefore, Assad’s calculation of the consequences of non-compliance has not determined

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\item Rothkopf. \textit{National Insecurity} 303.
\item Buckley. “Learning from Libya, Acting in Syria,” 88.
\item Ibid.
\item Badran. “How Assad Stayed in Power”.
\item Hughes. “Syria and the peril of proxy warfare,” 525.
\item Jentleson. “Coercive Diplomacy: Scope and Limits in the Contemporary World”, 3.
\end{thebibliography}
a situation where it in his interest to relinquish power. With Assad in an apparent position of strength, the reciprocity factor has become irrelevant to creating a compromise of stepping down from his leadership position. Conversely, the ultimatum concerning chemical weapons proved to be partially successful against a more limited objective that has not demonstrably altered the strategic course of the crisis. It is argued that the relative success was achieved because it was the only occasion that, through the threat of unilateral action by the US, the West has been able to establish any demonstrable coercive credibility. Equally, as the objective did not challenge Assad’s power the coercive attempt demonstrated the reciprocity required for success. It can be deduced that a leaders power must be understood in the context of their allies, as the power of an adversary possesses may be derived from external support. Therefore, limited objectives that focus on policy change and do not compromise the power base, internally or externally, are more likely to be successful.

Although NATO has not been directly engaged in the Syrian crisis it is still possible to draw conclusions about the implications for the Alliance. Firstly, NATO’s legitimacy has become increasingly tied to the legality of intervention that is obtained from a UN mandate. Within NATO both the US representative and former Secretary General have ruled out any activity without a legal basis provided by the UN. The former SACEUR Stavridis, who has strongly argued for NATO involvement, points to the analogy of Kosovo, in which NATO operated successfully and arguably legitimately without a UN mandate. However, under the leadership of a hegemonic US there was a greater international consensus that the Kosovo intervention was justified. With Germany opposed to intervention and the UK unlikely to support militarily, the resolve to engage in something that could have significant geopolitical spill-over appears weaker. This leads to the second consideration that NATO only acts with the consensus of its member states and even in situations where limited coalitions act under the NATO banner requires the agreement of member states. Whilst support for the intervention in Libya was able to gain enough momentum through the lobbying of France and the UK, even without the direct support of Germany, the call for action against Assad has not been able to gain the same support, despite the efforts of the US. This provides two conclusions; firstly, that the participation of NATO countries is linked to their specific domestic political balance and a perception of national interest; and secondly, that despite the balance of material power that the US holds within NATO, US leadership is not enough to assume the support of the other NATO countries when acting beyond its borders. Therefore, NATO’s ability to act in any strategy is dependent upon the political will of the member states.

121 Ibid.  
122 Badran. “How Assad Stayed in Power”.  
123 Stavridis. “NATO must help Obama on Syria.”  
Ukraine

The annexation of Crimea and ongoing crisis in Ukraine provides a very different context from which to analyse coercive diplomacy. Libya provided examples of the West acting out of the altruistic liberal values that compel a response in a humanitarian situation and against an adversary that was significantly militarily and economically weaker. Syria provides a more complex humanitarian based case study, with the potential for wider geopolitical spill-over. However, the Ukraine crisis has emerged as the largest geopolitical struggle since the end of the Cold War, which has led analysts to consider that “Ukraine… was not the cause of Russia’s conflict with the West, but its consequence.” Therefore, analysis of the Ukraine crisis must start by considering the geopolitical dynamics that emerged from the Cold War. Mearsheimer provides a compelling argument that the West is blame for its emergence, with the policies of enlargement within both NATO and the EU that created an encirclement of Russia. An undercurrent of tension over strong internal support for Ukraine joining NATO and the EU culminated at the Maidan protests against President Yanukovych’s refusal to sign the EU Association Agreement. As the protests grew, the Eastern looking Yanukovych fled to Russia and was replaced with a Western facing government. Faced with a pro-Western Ukraine, Russia swiftly annexed Crimea and has undertaken a campaign of supporting pro-Russian rebels in destabilising eastern Ukraine. The West has condemned the annexation of Crimea as illegal and applied heavy economic sanctions against Putin, his inner circle and the critical industries that the Russian economy relies upon. The crisis is wrapped in a cycle of perception and misperception between East and West; as Kissinger puts it, “[u]nderstanding US values and psychology are not [Putin’s] strong suits. Nor has understanding Russian history and psychology been a strong point of US policymakers.”

Whilst commentators such as Monoghan suggest that the perceived threat which NATO poses to Russia is misplaced, it is Mearsheimer’s comments that are possibly more apposite. In stating that “it is the Russians, not the West, who ultimately get to decide what counts as a threat” Mearsheimer highlights that all threat within coercion is a construction of reality. Therefore, the applicability of coercive diplomacy, or any strategy of coercion, is subject to the reality that is constructed on both sides of the threat. The significance of this is that way that both Russia and the West view the conflict of their interests, and in light of the history of the Cold War, has dramatically shaped the crisis. Therefore, in analysing the recent actions of NATO allies, it is

125 “What Russia wants: From cold war to hot war,” The Economist, 14 February (2015).
126 Mearsheimer, J. “Why the Ukraine is the West’s Fault,” Foreign Affairs, September/October (2014).
127 “What Russia wants: From cold war to hot war,” The Economist.
131 Mearsheimer. “Why the Ukraine is the West’s Fault.”
argued the delineation between the actions that are aimed deterring the existential Russian threat to NATO borders and coercive diplomacy aimed at stopping Russian destabilization in Ukraine is ambiguous. The sanctions in place appear to be hurting the Russian economy, especially at a time that oil prices have been suppressed.\textsuperscript{133} However, the diplomatic condemnation and economic sanctions have not been backed by a threat to use force in Ukraine. The West's efforts to support the Ukrainian government with military training teams are a low-level gesture that could be described as tokenism against the strength of Russian resistance and demonstrate only limited elements of coercive diplomacy of the try-and-see variant. However, the increased effort within the NATO air policing of the Baltic states, increased exercises in the Eastern European states and the announcement of the Readiness Action Plan at the NATO summit in September 2014 are measures of deterrence.\textsuperscript{134} This poses the question of whether actions of deterrence can also be coercive diplomacy to different, but concomitant, political ends.

The Ukraine crisis places the dual role of NATO in an interesting juxtaposition that creates a tension between the liberal basis of supporting the partner nation Ukraine and a more realist perspective of only acting in the interest of maintaining the security of its borders. The condemnation of Russia is for acting illegally in the annexation of Crimea and the furtherance of liberal values, based on precedence, suggest that the same kind of coercive diplomacy would be sought. However, it is argued that because of the contiguity of the NATO borders to the crisis that there is a fear that actions that could be interpreted as provocative and could precipitate an escalation of tensions with nuclear state restraint is required. Consequently, the West has demonstrated the cautious approach that coercive diplomacy allows. Although, when the Malaysian Airlines aircraft was shot down, which directly involved the death of Western civilians, sanctions and pressure were dramatically increased.\textsuperscript{135} Consideration of the effect of such national interest is further amplified by the role of countries such as Germany and Poland, which had leant away from overt involvement in Syria and to a lesser degree Libya, whom have been central to the Western response to the crisis. The crisis demonstrates that the integrity of NATO and its sovereign borders, based upon a realist proposition, is of greater importance than acting in a response based upon liberal values. It is argued that the key differences between the Ukraine case and the other case studies are proximity and the material power that Russia possesses. Therefore, it is proposed that the strength of response in variant of coercive diplomacy is relative to both the importance of the objective to the interests of the coercer and the symmetry in power of the adversary.

\textsuperscript{133} Chan SP. “Russia remains defiant as EU sanctions and oil price fall paralyse economy” The Daily Telegraph, 21 April (2015).
\textsuperscript{134} Monoghan. “The Ukraine crisis and NATO-Russia relations”.
The viability of coercive diplomacy in the Ukraine crisis is analysed against the objective of creating stability within Ukraine, but not the undoing the annexation of Crimea, as the negotiated position that the Minsk peace-deals have tried to achieve has concentrated on stability within a status quo situation.\textsuperscript{136} Such a lesser objective demonstrates an acknowledgement that the concession of Crimea is a proposition that is unlikely to be achieved through purely peaceful means, because it is asking Putin to give something up. Equally, the alternative of using the military might that NATO can yield is unattractive since it would have the potential to result in a dangerous game of brinkmanship.\textsuperscript{137} Therefore, it can be argued that Russia’s isolation from the international system is a lesser factor than its relative parity of material power, as in realist terms, it is from the latter that NATO derives the perception of threat to its own integrity. Equally, the crisis has demonstrated that when international politics engages opposing powers on the UNSC a paralysis ensues, which demonstrates the fundamentally anarchic nature of the international system. Therefore, negotiation on the avoidance of war must be self-regulating between the powers in question. It is upon that basis that the annexation of Crimea, propped up by a hasty referendum,\textsuperscript{138} has fallen outside the negotiations at Minsk. It is suggested that for the short-term success of coercive diplomacy to be realised, the strategy must be based upon a limited objective of creating stability within Ukraine, without aggravating Russia’s interests Crimea.\textsuperscript{139} However, long-term success will largely depend upon how the Ukrainian governments of the future align themselves politically.

If the limited objective of a sustainable peace without Russia having to give up Crimea is accepted, then there is a better chance of relative success through the try-and-see strategy of sanctions. It is argued that the proportionality of the demand suggests that reaching an agreement is possible without Putin’s credibility being publically undermined. Furthermore, the Minsk agreement includes the promise for movement towards self-governance for Donetsk and Luhansk and the pardon and amnesty of those involved in the crisis,\textsuperscript{140} which demonstrates the reciprocity required for success. By linking the EU sanctions upon Russia to the implementation of the agreement, the EU is able to maintain its coercive credibility and work towards more sustainable governance within Ukraine.\textsuperscript{141} Therefore, coercive diplomacy does not become a redundant strategy, but it is likely to be limited to only achieving partial success.

The Ukraine crisis provides a similar lesson to the other case studies that NATO’s subordination to political leaderships will dictate the role NATO plays as a part of a coherent strategy, albeit within a different paradigm and with very different potential consequences. The use of a try-and-see variant

\textsuperscript{136} Rogin, J. “Inside Obama’s Secret Outreach to Russia,” BloombergView, 31 December (2014).
\textsuperscript{139} Rogin. “Inside Obama’s Secret Outreach to Russia”.
\textsuperscript{140} “Minsk agreement on Ukraine crisis: text in full,” The Daily Telegraph, 12 February (2015).
\textsuperscript{141} “EU must keep sanctions until Minsk agreement fulfilled – Tusk,” Reuters, 19 March (2015).
of coercive diplomacy against an adversary that includes the use of tactical nuclear weapons in its doctrine may have been a strategy of caution.\textsuperscript{142} However, it can be deduced that NATO to be engaged in coercive diplomacy it must be in a situation that is internationally supportive enough to include the threat of force as part of the strategy and where the fear of escalation is acceptable to the political leadership. However, the crisis has also demonstrated NATO’s ability to act as a deterrent force to protect the sovereignty of its member states borders.\textsuperscript{143} What is harder to discern is whether the deterrence posturing has also acted to signal NATO’s broader condemnation of Russia’s actions and provided a concomitant coercive diplomacy effect within Ukraine by showing the Alliance’s military capability. As Freedman notes deterrence and coercive diplomacy “are two sides of the same coercive coin, the differences between them came to be exaggerated through the research they stimulated.”\textsuperscript{144} This notion contrasts with George’s distinction between deterrence and coercive diplomacy, as highlighted in section one, and demonstrates that it is possible for the delineation between the two concepts to become blurred. It is argued that in its essence strategy is concerned with balancing the means with and end. Therefore, if in practice a strategy achieves the ends-ways-means balance then it is unimportant whether it remains pure to an abstraction’s definition.

Section 3 – Coercive Diplomacy into the Future

Ends, Ways and Means

The diversity of the cases examined adds gravitas to Shea’s argument that NATO is facing the most complex situation of its history.\textsuperscript{145} Each of the cases demonstrates elements of coercive diplomacy in very different contexts, none of which have provided a decisively successful example. NATO played a central role within the Libyan crisis, providing the mechanism for the political direction of operations.\textsuperscript{146} However, NATO has been marginalised as a mechanism to deliver coercive diplomacy in the Syrian and Ukraine crises, which raises questions on its purpose in the current security environment. Porter provides a critique of NATO’s broader security role suggesting that its political pretentions of enlargement and global engagement maybe counter-intuitive and that a more parsimonious role, which is centred on the defence of the North Atlantic is more realistic.\textsuperscript{147} However, NATO’s strategic concept, adopted in 2010, conforms to a broader concept of security and stresses the political roles that the Alliance can play with international partners, and specifically the UN and EU.\textsuperscript{148} Therefore, attention must be given to whether NATO can be both a

\textsuperscript{144} Freedman. \textit{Strategic Coercion: Concepts and Cases}, 32.
\textsuperscript{145} Shea. “NATO: the challenges ahead,” 1.
\textsuperscript{146} Rynning. “Coalitions, institutions and big tents,” 61.
\textsuperscript{148} “Active Engagement, Modern Defence,” NATO.
political and militarily security organisation. It is argued that applying the ends-ways-means paradigm allows greater clarity of the purpose and capabilities of the Alliance. In the context of this research paper, coercive diplomacy is a strategy that represents the ways of the paradigm. However, as Liddell-Hart states “[s]trategy depends for success, first and foremost, on a sound calculation of the end and the means.”

As the objective of coercive diplomacy is ultimately to achieve a political end it is possible to extrapolate the Clauswitzian mantra that war is an extension of politics to a broader view of international politics and security. In defining the political end, NATO represents the security interests of the member states and, as such, its decision-making processes are governed by their consensus. Therefore, whilst NATO may possess political apparatus for engagement with international partners, the Alliance does not act as a supra-national state and is not configured to define its political end; as Rynning suggests “NATO must think of itself as an organization that sponsors operations but does not decide on them or control them.”

As the Libyan crisis demonstrated, situations where limited coalitions of member states use the NATO label still requires the agreement of the collective political leaderships within the Alliance. The Alliance’s reliance on consensus requires member states to believe that NATO involvement would be in their national interest. Consequently, if national interests are not considered to be an issue of survival, vital, or major in their classification then they are likely to conclude that NATO involvement is not worth the potential cost that it could incur. Therefore, NATO’s ability to actively engage within the strategy of coercive diplomacy likely to continue to by enabled or constrained by vacillation over the leaderships of member states calculation of the benefit to national interest.

The deduction from the NATO’s subordination to national politics is that the Alliance’s purpose is to provide a mechanism to deliver the means of strategy. The Libyan crisis demonstrated that the standing structures, including political, provide an appropriate mechanism for bring together a coalition that includes member states and partner nations. The example also demonstrated that with consensus to act, NATO can provide the framework to quickly amass a force capable of quickly bringing effect upon an adversary, proving its military potency. However, as Shea argues, NATO remains an essentially military focussed alliance that lacks the capabilities in “economic deterrence or sophisticated civil society information or strategic energy policy”. In considering that a coercive diplomacy strategy should be comprehensive in integrating economic levers, NATO’s lack of capability in this area detracts from its ability to engage in the strategy. However,

151 “Consensus decision-making at NATO,” NATO, 22 August (2014).
152 Rynning. NATO Renewed, 180.
there are further inferences from such structural limitation. Firstly, whilst NATO can be considered a mechanism of strategy, it is not the only mechanism, with organisations such as the EU being able to deliver the softer elements of economic sanctions.\textsuperscript{156} However, it should be noted that the Alliance does have the political capabilities to bridge such organisations to coordinate activity.\textsuperscript{157} Secondly, in situations such as the Syrian and Ukraine crisis where NATO is not actively engaged, its political dimension is able to exert diplomatic pressure in the international community. Therefore, its ability to engage in coercive diplomacy may be more ambiguous beyond the application of the threat of force. Thirdly, it is argued NATO is most appropriate for use in stronger variants of coercive diplomacy where the use of force is suitable, or within strategies that move beyond the remit of coercive diplomacy, as its primary lever of power will remain the ability to project force.

\textit{NATO, Power and Coercive Diplomacy}

The application of the ends-ways-means paradigm has demonstrated the structural limitations that relate to NATO engaging in coercive diplomacy. This raises the question of whether NATO is the best placed mechanism to deliver a strategy of coercive diplomacy, or whether it becomes a default mechanism simply because it exists. The latter point is given gravitas by the inference in Porter’s argument that NATO has evolved due to a combination of its liberal ideological setting, its perception of being the guardian of peace and its own pursuit to remain relevant in the post-Cold War environment.\textsuperscript{158} A more moderate perspective of Porter’s analysis is that NATO has had to evolve into new areas to such as intervention in order to maintain its relevance and justify its expense in order to that its primary role of European security is not undermined.\textsuperscript{159} As Webber et al suggest “a secure and peaceful Europe is viewed as NATO’s singular contribution to US global priorities.”\textsuperscript{160} The underwriting of European security by US power remains absolutely relevant and, as Simon suggests, can explain the commitment of European states to supporting US operations in Afghanistan through the body of NATO.\textsuperscript{161} As NATO is the embodiment of the security dimension of the transatlantic relationship, maintaining the Alliance’s relevance through its diversification has been essential to in order to preserve its primary role in Europe. Therefore, whilst the mechanisms of NATO may not be ideally structured for coercive diplomacy, it is in the interests of the member states and the organisation itself to develop its mechanisms to allow valuable contributions to coercive diplomacy.

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{157} “Active Engagement, Modern Defence,” NATO.
\textsuperscript{160} Webber, Hallams, Smith. “Repairing NATO’s motors,” 784.
The argument that NATO remains relevant to contributing towards efforts in coercive diplomacy must also consider whether there is a viable alternative. This discussion must start by accepting the proposition that multilateralism is fundamental to the interconnectedness that liberals would argue promotes cooperation and peace.\(^{162}\) This perspective is given credence in a post-Iraq era where legitimacy of acting through international organisations has demonstrated to be as important as any material benefits.\(^{163}\) Although a statist approach may be easier to bring together the levers required for coercive diplomacy, it limits the strategy’s utility to situations where the asymmetry of power over an adversary is absolute and where the international community is at least disinterested. In determining who is the guardian of international peace, as the Syrian and Ukraine crisis is testament to, the UN is limited by powers that do not conform to the Western liberal ideals. A possible alternative is the EU which has the capabilities to integrate levers of power and would allow the US to place greater focus on the Asia-Pacific region.\(^{164}\) However, whilst US-EU bilateral arrangements have developed, the EU still lacks the “security of logic” of NATO.\(^{165}\) As was demonstrated in Libya with the US ‘leading from behind’, Europe still requires the material support of the US.\(^{166}\) Equally, the EU does not possess NATO’s mature command and planning structures that Webber et al describe as the Alliance’s “sui generis”.\(^{167}\) Therefore, NATO remains the most relevant security organisation for the promotion and pursuance of peace. As coercive diplomacy is likely to remain its relevance in the future, further integration between the EU and NATO is required to understand how they can complement each other in delivering a collective response to crises that is able to span the spectrum of coercive variants.

The idea of NATO power fits into the fundamental principle that coercive strategies aim to create a cost/benefit calculation that persuades an opponent to stop.\(^{168}\) A realist proposal of material power would suggest that NATO has the ability to coerce most adversaries. However, as has been demonstrated, the liberal basis of NATO means that the concept of power has to be understood in broader terms and that it must be derived from its legitimacy and unity. The ability for NATO to threaten overwhelming force is relative to its ability to maintain legitimacy.\(^ {169}\) Therefore, the cost/benefit calculation for an adversary is more about the West’s willingness to use overwhelming force than about NATO’s ability to apply it. Conversely, states that do not comply with the same value-base may be able to determine their power in different terms. The relationship between Syria and Russia demonstrates a more amoral approach to international politics that can be associated with notions of realism. Consequently, the idea of power is dependent upon threat and


\(^{163}\) Rynning. NATO Renewed, 176-177.


\(^{165}\) Webber, Hallams, Smith. “Repairing NATO’s motors,” 777-782.

\(^{166}\) Lizza R. “The Consequentialist How the Arab Spring Remade Obama’s Foreign Policy”. The New Yorker, 2 May (2011).

\(^{167}\) Webber, Hallams, Smith. “Repairing NATO’s motors,” 782.


\(^{169}\) Rynning. NATO Renewed, 178.
is a construction of reality that is specific to individual situations. As Freedman notes, the theory of coercive diplomacy was developed by using case studies where the US enjoyed an asymmetrical power advantage over the adversaries. However, the revanchist policies of Russia have demonstrated that crises are likely to emerge where the West cannot assume that it will have the advantage of asymmetric power. Equally, the relationship between Syria and Russia also demonstrates that power cannot be conceived in purely dyadic terms, but must relative to the disposition of power with the global system. It is argued that Western policy-makers must not take the asymmetric power advantage for granted and understand that their power is dependent upon the relativity of their own unity and the international system which favours selective strategy development dependent upon context.

The failure of coercive diplomacy to be decisive in the three cases adds credence to Art and Cronin’s assessment that coercive diplomacy is inherently difficult. However, despite such difficulties and low return on success it still remains a relevant and important strategy in the strategic toolbox. It is proposed that there is a moral imperative for Western liberal democratic states to attempt to engage in coercive diplomacy as it has the potential to resolve crises without having to resort to the actual use of force in order to preserve the values that they seek to uphold. In applying the cautious approach that coercive diplomacy allows, states have the opportunity to build the legitimacy of consensus and shift the moral burden to the adversary. The strategy has the flexibility to incrementally increase pressure and, only if unsuccessful, escalate to war as opposed to military options being the entry strategy. The Syrian and Ukraine crises demonstrated that power alignment in the international system can affect the likelihood of success. However, in such situations the try-and-see variant may be enough to satisfy the inevitable pressure to do something without undue risk to the coercing states interests. Therefore, in identifying coercive diplomacy as an entry strategy there is “a great deal to win and nothing to lose.”

**Refining the Theory**

The analysis of this paper suggests that it is possible to use the contemporary cases in order to refine the framework of coercive diplomacy. Whilst George’s framework suggests that the contextual variables determine whether coercive diplomacy is viable, the Syrian and Ukraine crises demonstrated that attempts of try-and-see are still possible without escalation in the crisis. These examples were never likely to prove successful, which allows consideration of whether try-and-see

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171 Ibid., 32.
can be attempted to stop a situation worsening rather than providing a decisive end to a crisis situation, thereby becoming a holding strategy of patience. This highlights the subjectivity of the notion of success and demonstrates an assumption that the objective cannot be restricted to more moderate ends. George describes detailed parameters of contextual variables, but does make the context relative to the variant of coercive diplomacy or the possibility of partial success.\textsuperscript{177} The concept of partial success allows consideration that coercive diplomacy can be applied alongside the development of stronger strategies to achieve more ambitious overall objectives, which are beyond the limitations of coercive diplomacy. This is particularly apposite where the overall objective becomes regime change.\textsuperscript{178} Therefore, it is argued that the framework of coercive diplomacy would benefit from making more explicit linkages between the objective, the context and the decision on the variant of strategy. It is suggested that the linkages are easier to establish through the simplified framework of contextual variables and success factors that have been proposed in this paper.

The case studies also demonstrate that there may be benefits in further qualifying in the limitations and boundaries of coercive diplomacy. George’s framework makes the distinction from compellence that coercive diplomacy is a defensive proposition that implores an adversary to stop an action that is taking place, as opposed to the compellence which can be used offensively to compel an adversary to give something up.\textsuperscript{179} Therefore, where the objective becomes regime change, which involves an adversary giving up power, compellence becomes a more appropriate policy guideline than coercive diplomacy. As regime change is a more difficult proposition, compellence allows an assumption that force will be required and the mobilisation of the forces required to achieve the aim. The consequence for the distinction for the theory of coercive diplomacy is creating a greater understanding of the conditions that its use may precipitate success. Therefore, coercive diplomacy’s principles remain relevant, but understanding the theory’s limitations allows policy-makers to be clearer in connecting the objective they wish to achieve with the strategies that they choose to employ.

\textbf{Conclusion}

NATO has proved to be a remarkably resilient organisation having gone through a continual re-definition since the end of the Cold War.\textsuperscript{180} However, the current global complexities have proven that NATO will need to continue to develop as it engages in strategies that are aimed at maintaining peace and stability across diverse crises. The theory of coercive diplomacy will remain an important and popular strategy for policy-makers as it has the potential to resolve crises without

\textsuperscript{177} George. \textit{Forceful Persuasion}, 69-75.  
\textsuperscript{178} Jentleson. \textit{“Coercive Diplomacy: Scope and Limits in the Contemporary World,”} 3.  
\textsuperscript{179} George, Simons. \textit{The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy}, 17.  
\textsuperscript{180} Webber, Hallams, Smith. \textit{“Repairing NATO’s motors,”} 774.
the use of force, or at least using only “just enough” force to create compliance.\textsuperscript{181} As such, the more measured and cautious approach that coercive diplomacy implores suggests that it has greater compatibility with the notions of operating under mandate based upon liberal democratic values. Coercive diplomacy, like the broader the theories of coercion, seeks to persuade an adversary to alter their actions by creating a cost/benefit calculation that non-compliance is not in their interest. However, the fundamental principles of interleaving diplomatic and economic levers, the focus on integrating inducements and disregarding the assumption of force, gives policy-makers a strategic option that has the potential to avoid becoming involved a costly and protracted intervention. However, the promises of coercive diplomacy can beguile policy-makers and may contribute to them over-looking the inherent difficulties of the executing the strategy. The study of contemporary case studies has served to reinforce that coercive diplomacy is highly context dependent, which produces limitations when choosing the strategy to achieve a political end and in choosing the most appropriate mechanisms to execute the strategy.

As NATO is the preeminent security organisation for executing the West’s security interests, this paper has focussed on the challenges that the Alliance faces when engaging within a strategy of coercive diplomacy. The lessons that can be drawn fall into two areas; the Alliance’s interaction at political level and the ability for NATO to operationalise the strategy. At the political level the first lesson to be derived from the study is that NATO’s ability to engage in coercive diplomacy is constrained by the need to obtain a consensus that NATO action is appropriate and in the interests of the member states. It has been evident that there are two key factors which influence whether the political will that is required to engage NATO can be gained. First, is the degree to which national interests dictate that the potential costs of a crisis are worth the political end that would be achieved. This demonstrates the tension between realist and liberal philosophies within the sphere of international politics. Second, the ability to gain political consensus is more likely when legitimacy is provided through a UN mandate to act. The second lesson at the political level is that NATO should be viewed as the means by which strategies are enacted and that the decision about which operations are conducted is the responsibility of broader political collectives, such as was provided by the Libya Contact Group. Rynning’s assertion that NATO is the sponsor, but not the decider, of operations provides an erudite assessment of the Alliances position in the ends-ways-means balance of Western political strategy.\textsuperscript{182}

There are three lessons that can be drawn from NATO’s ability to operationalise coercive diplomacy. Firstly, the different sources of power from which NATO and its adversary may draw from will affect the viability of using coercive diplomacy. The axiomatic material power of NATO is easily undermined by the lack of willingness to use it. Therefore, the perception of power becomes

\textsuperscript{181} Craig, George. \textit{Force and Statecraft}, 196.
\textsuperscript{182} Rynning. \textit{NATO Renewed}, 180.
a construct of threat perception and may require selective engagement based upon context. Secondly, NATO must further integrate with organisations such as the EU in order to develop the ability to integrate levers of power in a comprehensive approach. As Niblett suggests, integrating levers of power will make NATO more relevant against the diversity of future scenarios.\textsuperscript{183} Whilst NATO lacks economic levers, alternatives such as the EU lack the military potency and maturity of command structures of the Alliance. Furthermore, investing in NATO preserves the organisation for its most fundamental role of providing collective security against existential threat to its borders. Thirdly, the utilisation of NATO to deliver strategies of coercive diplomacy is most appropriate where stronger variants of the strategy dictate that use of force is suitable. The military basis of the Alliance suggests that it is not configured to deliver strategies that are confined to try-and-see variants of the strategy. Therefore, it is concluded that NATO is not the only mechanism to enact a strategy of coercive diplomacy and will need to continue to develop its capabilities.

Coercive diplomacy provides an enduringly valid set of principles as a strategy that gives an alternative to purely military based options. However, this study has concluded that further refinement from contemporary cases may increase its utility as guidance for policy-makers. There are two suggested refinements. Firstly, that a simplified framework that does not rely upon a large number of contextual variables and success factors may allow better conceptual connection between the context of the crisis, the political end that is to be achieved and the variant of strategy that is chosen. The second suggested refinement is that greater definition is required to determine which the political objectives that coercive diplomacy is unsuitable for and unlikely to deliver success. This paper furthers the assertion of Jentleson that regime change is harder to achieve than policy change,\textsuperscript{184} by suggesting that coercive diplomacy is not an appropriate strategy for regime change and that policy-makers should look at more overtly forceful strategies to achieve such an aim. However, coercive diplomacy will remain an important strategy because of its potential to deliver peace without the use of force and despite its inherent limitations. In an environment where there is often a pressure on Western leaderships to ‘just do something’ as a crisis emerges, coercive diplomacy offers policy-makers flexibility. Moreover, it has been argued that in a liberal world there is a moral obligation to at least try a strategy that does not assume the use of force. Therefore, this paper has demonstrated that coercive diplomacy will remain an important and enduring strategy for Western policy-makers and that NATO will remain an important mechanism that should continue to adapt to ensure that it can implement the strategy in the most effective manner possible.

\textsuperscript{183} Niblett. “NATO must focus on ‘hybrid wars’ being waged on the West”.
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