Preface

The premise of this book is that major powers have continually played a decisive role in international conflicts. Since the most precarious and quite common form of dispute between major powers arises over third nations, my primary focus is appropriately placed on so-called extended deterrence. In this type of deterrence, one side (deterrer) attempts to prevent another side (challenger) from initiating or escalating conflict with a third nation (deterrer's "protégé"). When is extended deterrence likely to be effective? What happens if deterrence fails? In what circumstances is war likely to result from a deterrence failure? In order to address these important questions, the book presents a critical examination of the relevant literature and offers a new understanding of the dynamics of deterrence and conflict between major powers.

For deterrence to work, a potential challenger must perceive the deterrer's threats as capable and credible for retaliation. The impact of capabilities on deterrence has been extensively analyzed in the literature, yet the core problem of effective deterrence concerns the issue of credible intentions. That is, potential attackers need to believe that the deterrer is willing to carry out its threat. There are two ways to approach the credibility issue. Shaped by the dilemmas of superpower nuclear deterrence, the strategic literature has been largely influenced by commitment theory. It prescribes various "manipulation of risk" strategies intended to build a deterrer's reputation for strong resolve, regardless of its national interests in the particular issue of dispute. Only a few analysts challenged this view and recognized the importance of intrinsic interests in the issues at stake, also known as the inherent credibility of deterrent threats. This book demonstrates the validity of this latter approach, emphasizing the importance of inherent credibility for explaining the history of major power clashes in the twentieth century, and also suggests its greater suitability for the post–Cold War context.

More precisely, this study expands the inherent credibility

approach and takes the position, rarely examined elsewhere, that the salience of a protégé's region for the deterrer's national interests is a principal ingredient of the credibility of major power deterrence. My central argument is that a major power's national interests, which shape the inherent credibility of threats and are shaped by various regional stakes, set the limits to the relevance of other factors that have received greater scholarly attention in past. Since this argument is strongly supported by the empirical findings presented in this study, the book draws important implications for conflict theory and deterrence policy for the post–Cold War era.

This book represents the culmination of a long research process during which I received indispensable help from many colleagues. My main and deepest debts are to Frank Zagare, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, and Jacek Kugler. Their work has been a constant source of inspiration for my research interests and intellectual development. I have also been extremely fortunate to benefit directly from their generosity and scholarly brilliance. Each was kind enough to read the entire manuscript, and Professor Zagare provided wonderful guidance and encouragement at every stage of its preparation. Each gave a wide range of valuable and insightful suggestions that only made this a better book. Most of the credit for what is good in this work should go to them, with any errors or lapses in argument and interpretation remaining entirely my own.

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