



Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies Series

NAVAL DIPLOMACY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

**A MODEL FOR THE POST-COLD WAR
GLOBAL ORDER**

Kevin Rowlands



Naval Diplomacy in the 21st Century

This book offers a detailed investigation of naval diplomacy, past and present, and challenges the widely accepted Anglo-American school of sea power thought.

Despite the acknowledgement of the importance of the threat or use of force in the pursuit of policy since the dawn of strategic thought, the utility of sea power in operations other than war is poorly understood and articulated. Theorists have invariably viewed sea power in peacetime through the lens of hard power effects such as coercion and deterrence. Commentaries on engagement, interoperability and the forging of friendships are largely conspicuous by their absence. This book considers how all these strands of international politics can be better understood for use in the 21st century.

The book explains and defines naval diplomacy, with existing theoretical frameworks being critically analyzed. It reviews over 500 incidents from the post-Cold War era, drawing on this empirical evidence to determine that naval diplomacy remains a potent means of 21st-century statecraft. It finds that existing understanding of naval diplomacy is insufficient and offers an alternative model, drawing on basic communication and stakeholder theories. The implications of the book relate directly to national security: naval deployments could be more effectively targeted; foreign activity at sea could be better understood and, if necessary, countered; finally, the ability of non-state actors to support national interests from the sea could, potentially, be better harnessed.

This book will be of much interest to students of naval power, maritime security, strategic studies and international relations.

Kevin Rowlands is Captain in the Royal Navy. He was awarded a PhD in war studies from King's College London and is the author of *21st Century Gorshkov* (2017).

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Global Order

Kevin Rowlands



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Abbreviations

A2AD	Anti-access/Area Denial
AAW	Anti-air Warfare
ADIZ	Air Defence Identification Zone
AGI	Auxiliary General Intelligence (spy ship)
ALTBMD	Active Layered Theatre Ballistic Missile Defence System
APS	Africa Partnership Station
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ASUW	Anti-surface Warfare
ASW	Anti-submarine Warfare
AU	African Union
BMD	Ballistic Missile Defence
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CNA	US Center for Naval Analyses
CSI	Container Security Initiative
CVN	Nuclear-Powered Aircraft Carrier
DEA	US Drug Enforcement Agency
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EPAA	European Phased Adaptive Approach to BMD
EU	European Union
EW	Electronic Warfare
FN	French Navy
FPDA	Five Power Defence Arrangement
FS	French Ship
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFS	Global Fleet Station
HADR/HADRO	Humanitarian Assistance Disaster Relief/Operations
HMAS	Her Majesty's Australian Ship
HMCS	Her Majesty's Canadian Ship
HMNZS	Her Majesty's New Zealand Ship
HMS	Her Majesty's Ship
HSV	High Speed Vessel

IAEA	International Atomic Energy Authority
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
IMO	International Maritime Organization
INS	Indian Naval Ship
INTERFRET	International Force East Timor
IR	International Relations
JMSDF	Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force
LeT	Lashkar-e-Taiba (group behind 2008 Mumbai terror attacks)
LST	Landing Ship Tank
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (or ‘Tamil Tigers’)
MCM	Mine Counter Measures
MCMV	Mine Counter Measures Vessel
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MEU	US Marine Expeditionary Unit
MIOPS	Maritime Interdiction Operations
MSO	Maritime Security Operations
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEO	Non-combatant Evacuation Operation
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PfP	Partnership for Peace
PLA	Chinese People’s Liberation Army
PLAN	Chinese People’s Liberation Army Navy (sometimes PLA(N))
PRC	People’s Republic of China
PSO	Peace Support Operation
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RFA	Royal Fleet Auxiliary
RIMPAC	Rim of the Pacific (US-led maritime exercise)
RN	Royal Navy
RNLN	Royal Netherlands Navy
RNZN	Royal New Zealand Navy
RoC	Republic of China (Taiwan)
ROK	Republic of Korea (South Korea)
RSN	Republic of Singapore Navy
SADC	South African Defence Community
SAR	Search and Rescue
SEATO	South East Asian Treaty Organization
SLNS	Sri Lanka Naval Ship
SLOCs	Sea Lines of Communication
SSBN	Nuclear Powered Ballistic Missile Firing Submarine
SSGN	Nuclear Powered Guided Missile Firing Submarine
SSN	Nuclear Powered Submarine
STANAVFORLANT	NATO Standing Naval Force Atlantic
STANAVFORMED	NATO Standing Naval Force Mediterranean
TAGOS	Tactical Auxiliary General Ocean Surveillance

TLAM	Tomahawk Land Attack Missile
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USN	United States Navy
USNS	United States Naval Ship
USS	United States Ship
WEU	Western European Union



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Introduction

Though not the *raison d'être* of navies, naval diplomacy has an enduring role to play in the exercise of sea power. From Thucydides' accounts of the coercive power of the Athenian Fleet to the hegemonic stability delivered by the Royal Navy in 19th-century Pax Britannica, great powers have used their naval forces to shape the world according to their vision. Rising powers have followed suit. Germany, the United States, the Soviet Union, China and India all staked a claim for global status, in part through their fleets and their activities at sea. The Cold War may have seen a different pattern of naval diplomacy from that which went before, primarily based on the might of the Eastern and Western blocs, but it was all, in the main, a state-centric understanding of effect.

But what of now? Is coercive diplomacy involving the threat and actual use of naval force alive and well? The two Koreas or China and Japan might believe that it is. Are alliances and coalitions built at sea? It is certainly an expectation, because states invest substantial amounts of time, effort and money pursuing them. Does naval diplomacy even have to be carried out by the uniformed forces of a recognized state? The Gaza Freedom Flotilla's interaction with Israel in 2010 certainly made news and grabbed the attention of powerful states, as do Greenpeace's environmental campaigns at sea today. Perhaps getting the message across is a good enough outcome in what is essentially a communicative process.

Is naval diplomacy merely a subset of coercive diplomacy? Not necessarily, because there are myriad 'soft' power initiatives from capacity building to the cultivation of friendships, the reassurance of allies, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, just 'being there' for nationals abroad and providing venues for defence sales which might fall under the umbrella of the topic. To echo the comment made by one former practitioner, naval diplomacy is about what navies actually do, rather than what they train for. One can add to that statement that it is certainly what navies do, but what naval theorists tend not to write about.

Mahan in America and Corbett in England – the writers with the greatest lasting impact on naval strategy – had much to say about sea power, but any reader must look hard at their work to find anything more than an oblique reference to the utility of navies in the pursuit of national political goals when not fighting wars. In the Cold War, economist, game theorist and Nobel laureate Thomas Schelling published *Arms and Influence*, which set out the principles of a coercive strategy

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and its effect on decision makers. Much of his work informed that which was to come later, but it was general in nature. Only in the 1970s did naval diplomacy begin to be studied as a subject in its own right. In the East Sergei Gorshkov, the man who shaped the Soviet Navy, wrote about it in his classic work, *The Sea Power of the State*. Simultaneously, in the West naval presence became a core mission of the US Navy and the American Edward Luttwak wrote of 'naval suasion', but scratch the surface and the political motivations of those works quickly become apparent.

Ken Booth set out what navies were for (the trinity of military, constabulary and diplomatic roles) and his thoughts were later subsumed into the official doctrine of numerous Western powers. But it was the seminal study by Sir James Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*, first published in the 1970s and running to three editions, which most influenced the understanding of the topic for the rest of the century. However, post-Cold War commentators such as Joseph Nye provided a fresh understanding of power, and naval practitioners and academics such as Mike Mullen and Geoffrey Till looked at old ideas through a new, 'post-modern' lens.

This book looks at each of these to determine what the old ideas were and to ask if they are still relevant in the 21st century. That question is important because after the end of the Cold War the purely military war-fighting role of navies, particularly Western 'post-modern' navies, has diminished as their principal focus. With no peer competitors, the combined fleets of the West effectively exercised command of the oceans for a quarter of a century. It is only now, with Russia reasserting its global influence and with the rising powers in the East, particularly China and India, militarily increasingly active in the maritime environment that physical confrontation might once again take centre stage.

However, this shift in emphasis between war fighting, constabulary tasks and diplomatic mission may be more nuanced than initial conjecture implies and it is not necessarily a new phenomenon. Navies have always been peacetime policy instruments of the state and the tools of grand strategy, as well as the fighters of wars at sea. Oliver Cromwell famously declared that 'a man-o-war is the best ambassador'; a 21st-century equivalent shows the US Navy depicted in posters and on T-shirts as an aircraft carrier over the caption '90,000 tons of diplomacy'. The images may be different but the message is the same. So perhaps the opening sentence of this introduction should be revisited – perhaps the advancement of political and economic goals *is* the *raison d'être* of navies.¹

Gunboat diplomacy is an instantly recognizable term, probably conjuring thoughts of 19th-century coercion and unwelcome, strong-arm tactics. It is also inaccurate. Not all diplomatic activity carried out at and from the sea is done by ships with guns. And not all diplomatic activity carried out at and from the sea is coercive. Co-operation, collaboration and mutual assistance are increasingly common in the globalized, interdependent world of today. A far better term is *naval diplomacy*, but that lacks a universally accepted definition. Indeed, is it *naval* (of ships) or is it *maritime* (of the sea)? Is it *diplomacy* at all, in the sense of codified discourse between recognized states, or is it part of a wider wielding

of influence by a multitude of state and non-state actors? It is, of course, all of the above and more.

Whatever it is, the topic certainly deserves attention.

The purpose of this book and its working hypotheses

The purpose of this book is to address a series of questions about the place of naval diplomacy in the post-Cold War global order and to understand whether macro-level issues from terrorism to climate change, from financial instability to ungoverned spaces, are subject to political influence from the sea. Interagency co-operation and multinational coalitions and alliances are features of contemporary maritime strategy and these too must be taken into consideration when trying to make sense of the uses of sea power today. The broad questions it asks are:

- 1 What is naval diplomacy? How does it differ from or build upon other forms of military/defence diplomacy?
- 2 What are the traditional models of naval diplomacy? Who conducts it, how, with what aim and against whom?
- 3 What, if anything, is new in the post-Cold War era? Have ‘globalization’ and the perceived increasing importance of non-state actors affected naval diplomacy? Has the incidence of naval diplomacy changed over time?
- 4 Are the existing models for naval diplomacy still valid? To what extent do they require revision? Do they appropriately encompass likely target audiences (potential adversaries, potential allies and domestic constituencies)?
- 5 Can a new model be constructed? If so, what should be its key tenets?

In attempting to answer these questions a series of working hypotheses have been framed which are implicitly tested and refined through the course of the book. The hypotheses relate to the nature of naval diplomacy itself and its correlation to the exercise of power in international relations.

The first hypothesis is that naval diplomacy is a subset of general diplomacy and not simply a ‘free good’ of military capability. Of course, there is a direct relationship between capability and credibility and this too must be acknowledged. Diplomacy is the formal and informal means of communication between international actors on the world stage; any communication can be carried out in innumerable ways and actors will seek to communicate via the means which they have at their disposal. Maritime states with naval forces will, therefore, engage in naval diplomacy.

Hypothesis: naval diplomacy is a subset of general diplomacy and will be used as a means of communication by maritime states in pursuit of their national interest.

Since most states experience varying degrees of peace more frequently than all-out war then, logically, armed forces are more often used in peaceful modes than for

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fighting an enemy. Ken Booth's widely accepted 'trinity' of naval roles (military, policing and diplomatic)² is a useful theoretical model for the understanding of naval power but it can be misinterpreted. The roles are not equally balanced, nor are they mutually exclusive. The prime reason to create and maintain a navy (as opposed to a coastguard) is for its military role. However, a navy may rarely or even never exercise its *military* role in full. The use of limited force and policing or constabulary responsibilities to maintain 'good order at sea'³ therefore become a navy's day-to-day, year-to-year employment – employment which inevitably has a communicative dimension. Nevertheless, for understandable reasons, the war-fighting role is the focus of most historical and theoretical writing on sea power.

Hypothesis: the diplomatic role of naval forces is more prevalent than the academic literature suggests.

To many, naval diplomacy is synonymous with coercive 'gunboat diplomacy'.⁴ Coercion is certainly a possible use of naval power short of war but it is not the whole. Joseph Nye's 'spectrum of behaviour' between international actors, in which power is classified from 'hard' to 'soft',⁵ offers a simple framework for situating naval diplomacy. At the 'hard' end, naval forces can be used to inflict punitive damage on an actor in order to secure behavioural changes. At the 'soft' end, they can make friendly port calls and open their doors to visitors to impress, educate and influence, to foster relationships with partners and to build their capacity. In between are countless possibilities for interaction which in some way further the interests of their state.

Hypothesis: naval diplomacy spans a broad spectrum from hard to soft power.

Few if any dedicated studies of naval diplomacy were undertaken until the 1970s, when the study of limited war and military influence became of interest to both East and West. The works published in that decade became a privileged discourse on naval diplomacy and in the main complemented each other. However, they were written by academics and practitioners living with the political realities of the day and should be viewed with that in mind.

Hypothesis: existing models of naval diplomacy were conceived in the Cold War and are products of their time.

The existing models of naval diplomacy assume bilateral, mechanistic relationships; that is, one party carries out an action against another party in order to produce a reaction which it calculates will be favourable to its own interests. This action-reaction model, described by James Cable in terms of an 'assailant' and a 'victim', need not be limited to coercion and is applicable across the spectrum of naval diplomacy. However, it is limited. The reality of international relations is far more complex; multiple audiences and stakeholders exist within every communicative relationship.

Hypothesis: existing models of naval diplomacy are limited by generally assuming a bilateral, mechanistic relationship between the actors involved.

Different levels of communication in naval diplomacy can be explained by use of a sporting analogy. If Team 'A' were playing against Team 'B', then the two teams are clearly the primary competitors in the game. The approach of previous theorists to the sporting analogy would examine the action of 'A' and the reaction of 'B' and declare one a winner, one a loser or an equal draw. There are, however, many more interested parties, all of whom are stakeholders in the wider competition. Both teams will have supporters and, potentially, sponsors. There will be other teams not involved in that particular fixture but who are competing in the same league; they will be interested in the game, as will their supporters and sponsors; the game could affect their own standing. Relative positioning and context is important, as a draw for one team may mean the maintenance of its place in the league, while for the other a draw may result in relegation. Importantly, the result for either team may determine who they play next. Returning to the military dimension, one side can win a battle but lose the war.

Hypothesis: a revised model of naval diplomacy should not be solely event based but take into account different levels of communication and the multitude of stakeholders involved.

Acknowledging that, though not the *raison d'être* of navies, naval diplomacy is a fundamental role has implications for politicians, planners and practitioners. Force structures, capabilities, deployments and training could be adapted to maximize the potential benefits to be gained. The requirements for naval platforms to perform constabulary tasks are well understood and are fuelling debate, as the words of the former US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates demonstrate: 'You don't necessarily need a billion dollar guided missile destroyer to chase down and deal with a bunch of teenage pirates wielding AK47s and rocket propelled grenades'.⁶ A similar level of debate on the subject of naval diplomacy is needed.

Hypothesis: an understanding of contemporary naval diplomacy can aid the development of appropriate force structures and capabilities of maritime states.

Book structure and findings

The book is made up of three parts. The first part (Chapters 1 and 2) explores the theoretical approaches taken to naval diplomacy over time. After defining the place of naval diplomacy in the context of international relations and sea power, the historiography is told through three broad phases: pre-Cold War, Cold War and post-Cold War, where Western, Eastern and non-aligned writings are evaluated alongside more recent contributions of contemporary commentators. As might be expected, the development of ideas has been evolutionary; hard power

concepts such as coercion and deterrence feature heavily throughout, but it is the later writers who place the greatest emphasis on the 21st-century soft power concepts of co-operation, assistance and persuasion.

The second part (Chapters 3–6 and the book's Appendix) attempts to provide a reality check. It considers what has actually happened at sea since the end of the Cold War. The Appendix is a chronological database of over 500 incidents of naval diplomacy along with two 'control' periods from the Cold War itself, which can be used by present and future practitioners and scholars for their own purposes. A brief, thematic analysis of the data is conducted, which includes discussion of the forging of amity and enmity between the actors involved, the role of international engagement and disengagement, prestige and symbolism and the numerical incidence of naval diplomatic events.

The second part then expands on the lived experience by drawing on a series of specific examples of incidents of naval diplomacy since the end of the Cold War for a more in-depth case study. Each example considers a different aspect of the topic during a time in which the global order underwent drastic and rapid change. Fragmentation and the uncertain security situation in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Communism, nationalism and opportunism, Pax Americana and resistance to US hegemony, and the return of great power rivalry are all considered. It also includes examples of the political use of the sea by non-state actors attempting to further their own agendas.

Finally, the third part (Chapters 7 and 8) attempts to do something new. It concludes that existing mechanistic 'assailant-victim' models are not appropriate to the 21st century, and instead it proposes an alternative based on an interdisciplinary application of communication and stakeholder theories. This new 'foundational' model is then applied to a different series of case studies drawn from both the Cold War and post-Cold War periods.

The main findings and conclusions may be broken down into six key areas. First, the book defines naval diplomacy as the use of naval and maritime assets as communicative instruments in international power relationships to further the interests of the actors involved.

Second, it reports that only around a quarter of the incidents of naval diplomacy in the post-Cold War period could be described as indicative of enmity between the parties involved. Conversely, some 90 per cent have some degree of amity, or relationship building, in their purpose. The sum is more than the whole because the two are not mutually exclusive and purposes are rarely binary; in complex relationships signals of enmity and amity can be, and are, made concurrently.

Third, it shows that there are varying degrees of engagement and disengagement within naval diplomacy and the state of a relationship can often be assessed by the type of activity practiced. At the lowest end of the scale, goodwill visits can be a means of ongoing 'relationship maintenance' between established allies or symbolic first forays for those with a more adversarial connection. Complexity and interoperability progressively increase until only the very closest allies are capable of fully integrated operations in difficult scenarios.

Fourth, the book identifies that the incidence of non-state actors making use of the seas to exert influence is increasing. Fifth, and closely linked, it identifies that the incidence of naval forces being used for humanitarian assistance is also on the rise. These two findings offer confirmatory evidence to support assumptions that have become widely held since the end of the Cold War.

Finally, the book concludes that existing models and frameworks for naval diplomacy are, essentially, event-based approximations of state actors' use of the 'spare capacity' inherent in military navies when not at war to influence other state actors. They are therefore insufficient for the 21st century.

Notes

- 1 Patalano defines naval diplomacy as the use advancement of naval assets to secure or advance political or economic goals. Patalano, Alessio. 'Commitment by Presence: Naval Diplomacy and Japanese Defense Engagement in Southeast Asia.' In Brown, James & Kingston, Jeff (Eds.). *Japan's Foreign Relations in Asia*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018).
- 2 Ken Booth. *Navies and Foreign Policy*. (London: Croom Helm, 1977), pp. 15–16.
- 3 Till, Geoffrey. *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century*, 2nd Ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p. 286.
- 4 James Cable. for example, limits his study to incidents of coercion. Cable, James. *Gunboat Diplomacy 1919–1991: Political Applications of Limited Naval Force*, 3rd Ed. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), p. 3. Ian Speller, however, suggests that naval diplomacy is a wider concept, inclusive of more 'benign applications.' Speller, Ian. *Understanding Naval Warfare*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), p. 76.
- 5 Nye, Joseph S. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), p. 5.
- 6 Gates, Robert. 'Remarks of Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.' *U.S. Naval War College Review* 63, No. 4 (2010): p. 14.

1 Defining naval diplomacy

What is diplomacy?

If contemporary naval diplomacy is little understood, it is perhaps because it is a subset of a broader topic which despite a long history and great study remains remarkably ill-defined. The common perception of diplomacy is one of formal state-to-state communication. That is certainly the meaning given in the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.¹ Martin Griffiths and Terry O'Callaghan echo many in the field of international relations when they state that diplomacy is 'the entire process through which states conduct their foreign relations';² but if that is the case, what exactly is meant by foreign relations? The same authors talk of diplomacy as 'the means for allies to co-operate and for adversaries to resolve conflicts without force', which does go some way to answering the question, but such an explanation rather limits the scope of what diplomacy is and what it has to offer. It is not simply codified discourse.

A broader view situates diplomacy at the very heart of international relations, and the theorists John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens offer what at first reading appears to be a reasonable contemporary definition:

In foreign policy it refers to the use of diplomacy as a policy instrument possibly in association with other instruments such as economic or military force to enable an international actor to achieve its policy objectives. Diplomacy in world politics refers to a communications process between international actors that seeks through negotiation to resolve conflict short of war. This process has been refined, institutionalized and professionalized over time.³

These writers are careful not to limit diplomacy to recognized states and they place it alongside 'other instruments' of policy though, interestingly, they still see it as separate and discrete. Yet, like Griffiths and O'Callaghan, they narrow the field again by connecting it directly to conflict resolution. International actors may indeed rely on diplomatic means to resolve conflict but that is just one part of the story. Similarly, the assertion that diplomacy operates 'short of war' surely needs to be challenged. Paul Sharp, a leading figure in the study of diplomatic theory, neatly counters this:

When force is resorted to, diplomacy need not necessarily come to an end. . . . In the age of total war diplomacy continued, with even the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki having their communicative components spelled out by unofficial and third party contacts.⁴

Relating diplomacy to the exercise of power is one way to potentially clarify its role and purpose. If Joseph Nye's description of power as 'the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get the outcomes one wants'⁵ is accepted, then perhaps a more accurate assessment would be to refer to diplomacy not in terms of conflict resolution but as *a communications process that seeks to further the interests of an international actor*, whatever those interests or whoever that actor might be.

Of course, many observers acknowledge that diplomacy has grown to become a 'profession'; perhaps it always was. By extrapolation, a *profession* requires *professionals*, and these we call *diplomats*. Paul Sharp states that 'we can find an uneasy consensus around the idea that diplomacy is whatever diplomats do, but it quickly falls apart again around the question of who are the diplomats'.⁶ He investigates the notion of diplomacy and diplomats in the formal sense – that is, as international actors on the world stage – and concludes that quite what diplomacy is remains a mystery. However, he does acknowledge that at a practical level diplomacy consists merely of people doing the normal things of human interaction such as bargaining, representing, lobbying and, of course, communicating that we find in all walks of life.⁷ In this informal sense we are all diplomats, though some of us may be better at it than others.

Niche diplomacy

Viewed this way, diplomacy can be exercised in a near-infinite number of ways, adapted as required to best suit the circumstances of the case. Some actors, be they individuals, organizations or states, by virtue of their particular strengths, weaknesses, interests and culture may favour one or more methods over another and they can develop a methodology to serve their particular purpose.

Andrew Cooper coined the term 'niche diplomacy' in the mid-1990s and, at state level, he discussed a range of 'middle powers' and how they differ in their diplomatic approach to international relations. For example, he explained how Canada tends to apply low-key institution-building policies while Argentina forges economic ties with its neighbours to gain influence and Turkey emphasizes its strategic geographical position. Of non-state actors Cooper has more to say:

a wide range of NGOs, especially those with an interest in issues such as human rights and the environment, such as Amnesty International and Greenpeace, have worked to secure their own niches in international relations. . . . Greenpeace has a greater influence on world policy than, say, the government of Austria.⁸

Cooper's thesis is compelling. Diplomacy need not be limited to recognized states; international bodies such as the European Union and United Nations certainly participate in diplomacy, as do *de facto* administrations such as Hezbollah or Hamas or even the Taliban and ISIL/Daesh which, while not universally recognized as legitimate governments, have or do control territory and play a role on the world stage. Whether Greenpeace and Amnesty International fall into a similar category is debatable, but the fact that they have global strategies, operate across state boundaries and influence events is not.

For the purposes of this book, a simple definition is adopted. Diplomacy is assumed to be a communications instrument used in power relationships to further the interests of the international actors involved. Actors with particular relative strengths will seek to use them; it would be counter-intuitive to think otherwise. It is a logical deduction, therefore, that military force may be a niche which some actors will seek to exploit for diplomatic purposes.

The diplomatic use of military force

The supposed *raison d'être* of military forces, *war fighting*, is just one extreme manifestation of their utility. Joseph Nye describes a 'spectrum of behaviour' in international relations along which sit different types of power. Under 'hard power', within which he tends to place military action, comes coercion and inducement, while under 'soft power', which he defines as 'getting others to *want* the outcomes you want',⁹ comes agenda setting and attraction. Initially a reader may assume that military forces are absent in the exercise of soft power. However, Nye is sufficiently astute to note that there is overlap.¹⁰ Addressing the role military forces in particular, he states:

The military can also play an important role in the creation of soft power. In addition to the aura of power that is generated by its hard power capabilities, the military has a broad range of officer exchanges, joint training and assistance programs with other countries in peacetime.¹¹

Alongside Nye's 'spectrum of behaviour', and closely associated with the widely accepted concept of the 'spectrum of conflict',¹² there is a corresponding spectrum along which military force can be used to support political objectives. In operations other than war this spectrum includes such activities as coercion, deterrence, reassurance, humanitarian relief, stabilization and peace support. In the absence of war fighting, whether in total or more limited conflicts, it is the activities along this spectrum which generally provide effective day-to-day employment for the world's armed forces. The American scholar Robert Art captures the essence of this situation, particularly the 'hard' end, well:

Military power can be wielded not only forcefully but also 'peacefully'. [. . .] To use military power forcefully is to wage war; to use it peacefully is to threaten war. Only when diplomacy has failed is war generally waged.

Mainly in the hope that war can be avoided are threats usually made. For any given state, war is the exception, not the rule, in its relations with other countries, because most of the time a given state is at peace, not war. Consequently, states use their military power more frequently in the peaceful than the forceful mode.¹³

Coercive diplomacy: deterrence, coercion and compellence

Notwithstanding Nye's soft power thesis, Art directly links the peaceful role of military power with the use of threat. From Sun Tzu through Machiavelli to the present day, much has been written on the utility of threatened force and it is important to distinguish between the positive and negative variants of this: coercion and deterrence. The difference is perhaps summed up best by Gordon Craig and Alexander George:

Whereas deterrence represents an effort to dissuade an opponent from undertaking an action that he has not yet initiated, coercive diplomacy attempts to reverse actions which have already been undertaken by the adversary.¹⁴

Both coercion and deterrence are methods by which interests may be pursued without resort to all-out conflict. *British Defence Doctrine* has adopted very similar definitions for the terms and emphasizes their positive and negative connotations by connecting coercion with the word *persuade* and deterrence with the word *dissuade*.¹⁵ However, some commentators use *coercion* as an umbrella term to cover both *deterrence* (the negative) and *compellence* (the positive) variants, and thus coercion and compellence can sometimes be read to mean the same thing.¹⁶ Whether coercion is the opposite of deterrence or whether it describes both deterrence and compellence is debatable, but the academic pursuit of any difference between them inevitably results in a concentration on the ends rather than the ways and means of conflict resolution in an international relationship. At the military level, the threat or use of force may be enacted in exactly the same way, for example by the forward positioning of troops, whether it is meant to coerce/compel or deter.

The main body of contemporary academic literature on coercion, deterrence and compellence stems from the bipolar world of the last century. Deterrence, particularly nuclear deterrence, most often comes to the fore. An influential work of the period is *Deterrence and Strategy* by the French soldier-scholar Andre Beaufre. Beaufre discusses the 'laws of deterrence' and defines the concept quite simply: 'The object of deterrence is to prevent an enemy power taking the decision to use armed force'.¹⁷ The effect Beaufre describes must be psychological, requiring the recipient of the 'threat' to calculate risk, determine that the likelihood of escalation is so high and the impact so unacceptable that the decision to use armed force is never taken. Given the nuclear backdrop at the time of his writing, it is unsurprising that Beaufre talks of 'fear' being engendered through deterrence.¹⁸ Deterrence theory dominated politico-military strategy and major

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power diplomacy for almost half a century through successive arms races, the presumption of mutually assured destruction (MAD) and arms limitations talks.¹⁹ The theory is important and well documented, but for the purposes of this book deterrence will be considered alongside coercion/compellence and the term *coercive diplomacy* will be used to cover all.

Sir Lawrence Freedman has written that 'the study of coercion in international relations remains dominated by work undertaken in the United States in the Cold War period and distorted through the preoccupation with deterrence'.²⁰ If coercion and deterrence are actually near-identical in means, then that criticism of distortion could be a debatable point. However, Freedman does offer his own definition of coercion as 'the deliberate and purposeful use of overt threat to influence another's strategic choice'.²¹ Freedman's definition is significant because like Beaufre's deterrence it identifies coercion as a cognitive tool. As such it need not necessarily threaten 'war' as Robert Art suggests; rather, it is about influencing another's choice. Logically, coercion need not even be the 'overt' act that Freedman contends; subtlety in international relations can be a powerful alternative methodology. Furthermore, a threat does not need to be kept below the threshold of force; limited physical action leaving the recipient with the understanding that there could be 'more to come' can be a very effective strategy.

The work which laid the foundation of the Cold War study of coercive diplomacy was Thomas Schelling's 1966 book *Arms and Influence*.²² A political economist inspired by game theory, Schelling laid down five theoretical conditions if a coercive strategy was to succeed. He said the conflict must be zero-sum; the threat made must be potent and convince the adversary that non-compliance would be too costly; the threat must be credible (i.e. through a convincing combination of will and capability); the coercer must assure the adversary that non-compliance will not simply result in more demands; and, importantly, the adversary must have time to comply.²³

Schelling's conceptual theory was further developed by Alexander George who has been called 'the foremost analyst of coercive diplomacy'.²⁴ According to George, the practical difficulty with the abstract theory of coercive diplomacy that Schelling espoused is that it

assumes pure rationality on the part of the opponent – an ability to receive all relevant information, evaluate it correctly, make proper judgments as to the credibility and potency of the threat, and see that it is in his interest to accede to the demand made on him.²⁵

Such a rational actor does not exist in reality, of course, which makes predicting the outcome of coercive diplomacy a most inaccurate science. Conversely, some actors on the world stage who have been portrayed as irrational tyrants and dictators appear to play the coercive diplomacy 'game' quite well; North Korea's ruling family springs to mind.

George used the term 'complex interdependence' to describe the modern globalized world,²⁶ and it is this myriad of linkages and relationships in concert with

fickle human behaviour which precludes any degree of certainty in advance of an action. George, along with Gordon Craig, attempted to build on Schelling's factors by identifying particular conditions required for the success of coercive diplomacy. To them the coercing power must create in the opponent's mind a sense of urgency for compliance with a demand, plus a belief that the coercer is more highly motivated to achieve his or her stated demand than the coerced is to oppose it. Finally, there must be a fear of unacceptable escalation if the demand is not accepted.²⁷ Additionally, in his book *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, written in conjunction with William Simons, George gives 14 factors to be considered when judging likely success: the global strategic environment; the type of provocation; the image of war; whether the action is unilateral or part of a coalition; the isolation of the adversary; the clarity of objective; the strength of motivation; the asymmetry of motivation; a sense of urgency; strong leadership; domestic support; international support; any fear of escalation; and the clarity of terms offered.²⁸

That there are 14 factors is indicative of the complexity involved. By analyzing these factors it can be seen that few are beyond the control of at least one of the actors involved, either the *coercer* or *coerced*, and that the initiative generally lies with the actor making the demand. According to realist tradition, relative strength is the paramount consideration in an inter-state relationship and, in military terms, this can be quite accurately determined. Art again:

It is more desirable to be militarily powerful than militarily weak. Militarily strong states have greater clout in world politics than militarily weak ones. Militarily strong states are less subject to the influence of other states than militarily weak ones. Militarily powerful states can better offer protection to other states, or more seriously threaten them, in order to influence their behaviour than can militarily weak ones.²⁹

The message is clear. At the 'hard' end of the spectrum strong military forces can be used as a means of influence to further the interests of an actor on the world stage.

Preventive diplomacy: the military contribution

But what of the 'soft' end? Therein lies the phenomenon known as 'defence diplomacy'. In essence, preventive defence diplomacy professes to further national interests not through threat or the limited use of force but through outreach, international engagement and conflict prevention. It is achieved by the exchange of attachés and other military personnel, by partnerships and coalitions, and by education and training. George Robertson, the British Secretary of State for Defence at the time of the Strategic Defence Review of 1998 neatly, if somewhat flip-pantly, summed up the task: 'Defence diplomacy is about the middle aged drinking together instead of the young fighting each other'.³⁰

Such diplomacy, however, is not merely social exchange. It requires resource and planning, strategy and policy. It involves building relationships with an eye to the future, building capacity in allies and friends and building on the influence