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CONVENTIONAL TRIPWIRE DETERRENCE

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The views expressed in this dissertation are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the United States Air Force, Department of Defense, or the United States government.

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Abstract

This dissertation develops a theory to explain the conditions under which a tripwire force posture deters conventional war. Tripwires have been a common policy tool since the Second World War but the literature largely overlooks the nonnuclear potential of tripwires and underestimates the political power of a tripwire despite their relatively low upfront sunk cost. The theory predicts that a small tripwire of military forces deployed to a threatened protégé state ties the hands of the defender state to honor its commitment to the protégé. The tripwire operates via a nationalism mechanism that is universal in the international system and mutually understood by all states. This intelligible signal is credible when paired with the defender's capacity to escalate by projecting second echelon forces to the protégé's territory after the outbreak of conventional war. The presence of a tripwire and the capacity to escalate constrains resolved attacker states from selecting a strategy of conventional war by denying its ultimate territorial aims with the impending arrival of second echelon forces. However, the tripwire does not limit the selection of less effective revisionist strategies below the threshold of conventional war. Thus, while tripwires lower the probability of territorial revision by deterring conventional war, motivated attackers still pursue their territorial aims by employing violent and nonviolent strategies that do not 'trip the wire.'

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I hope to repay the debts of those who have expended such effort by striving to uphold the security and safety of the Nation. This dissertation is dedicated to those who have lost their lives at home and abroad working to do the same.

Matthew C. Slack

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

Deterring aggression and promoting stability with the forward stationing of military forces has been a mainstay of American foreign policy since the end of the Second World War.¹ The policy continues today as the 2015 and 2017 United States National Security Strategies emphasize US interest in deterring interstate aggression and preserving regional stability. The strategies both state that US forces will deter aggression through forward presence and engagement. Should deterrence fail, the United States will project power to defeat or deny revisionist action.² Efforts to prevent aggression are not the sole domain of the United States and many other major and regional powers have sought to deter potential aggressors from territorial aggression against protégé states. Forward deploying combat forces is a common defender strategy in such extended deterrence scenarios to signal the defender's commitment to the protégé and to bolster the protégé's defenses.³ This dissertation investigates a unique defender deployment strategy: the tripwire. A tripwire is a small military combat force that lacks the mass

¹ Tim Kane, "Global US Troop Deployment, 1950-2003," *Heritage Foundation* (2004). Retrieved from: <http://www.heritage.org/defense/report/global-us-troop-deployment-1950-2003>. For contrasting views on the value of forward troops in supporting US grand strategy, see Stephen G. Brooks and G. John Ikenberry and William C. Wohlforth. "Don't Come Home, America: The Case against Retrenchment." *International Security* 37, no. 3 (2012): 7-51; and Barry Posen, *Restraint a New Foundation for US Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014);

² United States National Security Strategy, 2015, 8. Retrieved from: https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy_2.pdf; and United States National Security Strategy, 2017, 47.

³ Common examples are the US military deployment to Western Europe throughout the Cold War, the US deployment to South Korea since 1950, or today's US Army deployment to the Baltics and Eastern Europe. On the ongoing US deployment to Eastern Europe as a demonstration of US commitment, see: <http://www.eur.army.mil/AtlanticResolve/>; "Operation Atlantic Resolve Fact Sheet," *US Army-Europe*. Retrieved from: http://www.eur.army.mil/organization/factsheets/Factsheet_AtlanticResolve.pdf; Britain, U.S. sending planes, troops to deter Russia in the east" 27 Oct 2016, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-nato-russia-idUKKCN12P320>; and "NATO Secretary General Opening Remarks – 5 Mar 2015," retrieved from: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_117895.htm?selectedLocale=en

to provide defensive power but deters aggression through signaling the credibility of the defender to honor its commitment to the protégé.

The purpose of this dissertation is theory development in pursuit of the following two questions. First, is a tripwire an effective extended deterrent against conventional war? Second, if so, under what conditions is a tripwire effective? I argue that a tripwire is an effective extended deterrent strategy under two conditions. The first condition is the presence of nationalism in the defender state. The act of an aggressor state attacking and killing troops from a defender state enflames nationalism in the defender state, tying the hands of the defender to honor its commitment to the protégé. Because nationalism is universal in the modern state system, the tripwire is a mutually understood threshold and an intelligible signal of resolve that if the attacker engages the defender's tripwire with military force then the defender will be forced to honor its commitment. The second condition is the defender state's capacity to escalate after its tripwire is attacked by an aggressor state. The capacity to escalate is the ability to deploy sufficient second echelon forces to the protégé's territory in the event of conventional war. The destruction or maiming of the tripwire triggers the deployment of follow-on forces to deny the ultimate territorial aims of the attacker state and/or embroil the attacker in a grinding war of attrition with unknown outcomes. Under these conditions, tripwires deter strategies of conventional war. However, tripwires do not deter attacker states from pursuing indirect or nonmilitary strategies of aggression against a protégé. Many indirect and nonmilitary strategies can be considered 'gray zone' warfare as discussed in recent policy debates that are "deliberately

designed to remain below the threshold of conventional military conflict and open interstate war.”⁴

The contribution of the dissertation is threefold. First, I develop a novel theory of tripwires in conventional extended deterrence that predicts tripwires send a credible and legible signal of defender intentions that can be a sufficient deterrent without the harbinger of nuclear armageddon. Second, the theory develops the requirements for an effective tripwire including how mobility influences the effectiveness of a tripwire in the ground, air, and sea domains. Third, I identify a universe of tripwires in extended immediate deterrence and develop the theory through a series of historic case studies. The French defenders in Chad case is selected for its extreme variation in force posture over time providing several observations for analysis. The Cyprus case illustrates the ineffectiveness of a tripwire force posture when the defender lacks the capacity to escalate. Finally, the Taiwan case investigates the effects of tripwire mobility with American naval and air forces in the Taiwan Strait.

1.2 Literature Review

There is significant research on extended deterrence and wide reference to the tripwire property of deployed military forces. The literature often theorizes that if a tripwire is attacked then war between defender and aggressor will likely follow.⁵ However, the existing literature

⁴ Hal Brands, “Paradoxes of the Gray Zone,” *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, February 5, 2016; see also, Frank Hoffman, “The Contemporary Spectrum of Conflict: Protracted, Gray Zone, Ambiguous, and Hybrid Modes of War,” *Heritage Foundation Index of Military Power*; Joseph L. Votel, Charles T. Cleveland, Charles T. Connett, and Will Irwin, “Unconventional War in the Gray Zone,” *Joint Forces Quarterly* 80 no.1 (2016).

⁵ See for example: Paul Huth, *Extended Deterrence and the Prevention of War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 79, 103, 214-215; Glenn Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense: Toward a theory of national security* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 22-25, 229, 257; Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 47-49, 91-104; Samuel Huntington, “Conventional Deterrence and Conventional Retaliation in Europe,” *International Security* 8 no.3 (1983-84): 35-36; Richard Betts, *Surprise Attack: Lessons for*

contains a gap when considering the research question. The existing logic of the tripwire is founded on the assumptions of nuclear deterrence that argues tripwires signal resolve through a risk strategy dependent on the threat of mutual nuclear punishment. However, in conventional deterrence, strategies of denial dominate and therefore the focus shifts from defender resolve to defender capability. The extended deterrence literature considers both capability and resolve, but lacks a theoretical structure to determine how tripwires operate. The main goal of the dissertation is to address the individual shortcomings of the separate logics of nuclear tripwires and conventional denial strategies to develop a viable theory of conventional tripwire deterrence. Furthermore, much of the recent literature on stability and extended deterrence treat deployed military forces as a sunk cost signal undervaluing the politics that underpin the hand-tying property of tripwires. Because of the common assumption that military forces primarily signal through sunk costs, small tripwires are often found to not have much of a deterrent effect.

The remainder of this chapter reviews the state of the literature on the use of tripwires in deterring war. The review opens by discussing what a tripwire is and its genesis in the rising age of nuclear competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. The chapter then considers the conventional deterrence literature, which gives less attention to mechanisms of resolve such as the tripwire and focuses on the capabilities of the defender to deny an aggressor its territorial aims. The review closes by examining the expectations of a tripwire in a conventional world through recent research on signaling and deterrence that draw mixed

Defense Planning (Washington DC: Brookings, 1982), 272-273; James Fearon, "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands versus Sinking Costs," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41 no.1 (1997): 70; Barry M. Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan, *Force without war: US armed forces as a political instrument* (DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1978), 7-8; Dan Reiter, "Security Commitments and Nuclear Proliferation," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 10 (2014): 64; Matthew Furhmann and Todd Sechser, "Signaling Alliance Commitments: Hand-Tying and Sunk Costs in Extended Nuclear Deterrence," *American Journal of Political Science* 58 No. 4 (2014): 925-927; Joshua Rovner and Caitlin Talmadge, "Hegemony, Force Posture, and the Provision of Public Goods: The Once and Future Role of Outside Powers in Securing Persian Gulf Oil," *Security Studies* 23 (2014): 554-555.

conclusions on the utility of tripwires in nonnuclear settings. The chapter concludes with the structure of the dissertation that will introduce a novel way to think about tripwires in conventional deterrence and the conditions under which tripwires are a credible deterrent threat.

1.2.1 The Tripwire's Nuclear Origins

The concept of a tripwire received most attention during Cold War nuclear competition as a strategy to credibly signal resolve in extended deterrence. In extended deterrence, a defender state seeks to deter aggression against a protégé state by an attacker state.⁶ A tripwire is the forward deployment of small contingents of token combat forces into the territory of the protégé state that would ensure any meaningful attack against the protégé would bring the attacker's military forces into contact with the defender's military. The purpose of the tripwire force is not to win the opening battle, nor slow the aggressors advance, nor impose some cost on the attacker. In other words, the purpose of the tripwire is not to provide defense by altering the local balance of forces. Instead, the purpose of a tripwire force is to trigger the involvement of the defender's military once the attacker crosses the nationalist threshold by killing uniformed members of the defender's military with uniformed members of their own. Schelling captured the tripwire's purpose as to “die heroically, dramatically, and in a manner that guarantees the action cannot stop there.”⁷ Snyder wrote that forward deploying US forces into a protégé's territory could be considered “demonstration by deployment” such that the potential attacker “knows that an attack will automatically bring the United States into war.”⁸

⁶ Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, 16.

⁷ Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 47.

⁸ Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*, 257.

These theorists argued that attacking and killing defender forces in an overt manner would force the defender to respond to the aggression with escalation. Schelling and Snyder cite prestige, national honor, reputation, and emotional values as possible underlying mechanisms that would make a face saving retreat by the defender under duress not possible.⁹ The tripwire, despite its diminutive size, is “practically certain to fight.”¹⁰ Once both sides are engaged in active combat, the defender state must respond because its prestige and national honor are on the line. The tripwire is an automating mechanism that removes certain strategic choices from the defender in the face of aggression including the option of ‘no response.’¹¹ This automation serves as a credible signal of defender resolve by forcing a reply. The communication of credible resolve is paramount when considering extended nuclear deterrence.

In extended deterrence, the aggressor’s calculus on the credibility of a deterrent threat hinges on two factors, the defender’s capability to carry out the threat and its resolve to do so.¹² In nuclear deterrence, the capability of a nuclear-armed defender is clear. Even a small number of nuclear weapons with reliable delivery is a capability that threatens to impose massive and unacceptable costs on any nation state. Thus, the balance of nuclear forces is largely moot, where any survivable nuclear capability equates to virtual parity in the ‘balance of terror.’¹³ In extended nuclear deterrence, the capability to inflict unacceptable cost is clear, therefore the

⁹ Ibid., 130-131, 229; Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 49.

¹⁰ Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*, 21.

¹¹ Ibid., 21-25.

¹² Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, 4-5, 33; Vesna Danilovic, *When the Stakes are High: Deterrence and Conflict among Major Powers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 4-5; Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 58-59. Jonathan Shimshoni, *Israel and Conventional Deterrence: Border warfare from 1953 to 1970* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 6, 27. Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 92.

¹³ On the debate over the threshold of nuclear weapons required for deterrence see: Scott Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed* (New York, NY: Norton, 2002).

resolve or intentions of the defender matter most.¹⁴ Schelling put forward that given the extraordinary potential costs between two nuclear-armed states that in extended nuclear deterrence, “the hardest part is communicating our own intentions” because a commitment to defend anything other than the homeland is not inherently credible.¹⁵

Nuclear war has two characteristics that magnify the issue of signaling resolve between nuclear actors. The first is the extreme costs of nuclear punishment. The second is mutual vulnerability to those extreme costs. With secure second-strike capabilities, the risk of destruction is mutual and the fate of nuclear adversaries is shared.¹⁶ Therefore, a threat to punish a nuclear adversary with nuclear weapons is inherently not credible because it would lead to the destruction of the threatening state. Mutual vulnerability challenges extended nuclear deterrence as when policy makers consider the irrationality of trading Los Angeles for Seoul or New York for Berlin.

Schelling’s solution to the problem of defending a protégé in a nuclear standoff is a competition of risk taking, or a risk strategy. Where a deterrent threat in the nuclear context is incredible, a risk strategy is a viable alternative. The goal is to put the onus on your adversary to make a decision with the last clear chance to avoid increasing the risk of nuclear war.¹⁷ In this world of nuclear risk taking, the tripwire serves as a threshold among many possible thresholds.¹⁸ Crossing the threshold with both states’ military forces engaged in violent combat creates an

¹⁴ Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*, 50.

¹⁵ Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 36-37.

¹⁶ Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), Chapter 1.

¹⁷ Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 92-101.

¹⁸ Schelling argues there is no ultimate threshold and other things such as geography and the use of nuclear weapons serve as thresholds limiting conflict.

immediate and unavoidable risk of escalation towards general nuclear war.¹⁹ The ‘nationality threshold’ of uniformed combat forces engaging each other with violence was a mutually understood threshold during Cold War competition between the US and USSR.²⁰ The escalation may not be certain or immediate, but the risk of escalation is automatic and unavoidable. Snyder states, in the event of an attack the presence of defender combat forces, “insure some violent response and pose risks of still greater eventual violence risks which the aggressor is unable to accept.”²¹ The risk strategy is effective because even if the likelihood of escalation is low, the overwhelming cost of nuclear war deters crossing the threshold.

To summarize, the nuclear tripwire establishes a nationality threshold as part of a risk strategy that if attacked increases the risk of escalation towards mutual nuclear punishment. The increased risk of Armageddon in the event of conflict is sufficient in deterring overt aggression against a protégé.

1.2.2 Tripwires in Conventional Deterrence?

The nature of conventional war has several theoretical differences of import when comparing conventional to nuclear deterrence. First, conventional weapons lack the firepower to impose costs on a scale anywhere close to that of nuclear weapons.²² Therefore, strategies of punishment or strategies risking punishment are rarely effective coercive strategies when

¹⁹ Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*, 229; Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 91-104.

²⁰ Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 158-159; Morton Halperin, *Limited War in the Nuclear Age* (New York: Wiley, 1963), 36-37.

²¹ Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*, 22.

²² Robert Pape, *Bombing to Win, Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 22-23; Edward Rhodes, “Conventional Deterrence,” *Comparative Strategy* 19 (2000): 226-234; Richard Harknett, “The Logic of Conventional Deterrence and the End of the Cold War,” *Security Studies*, 4 (1994), 91.

restricted to conventional weapons.²³ Second, the costs imposed by conventional war are not shared or mutual between actors. Actors suffer asymmetric costs and benefits that can result in a relative 'winner' and 'loser' at the end of the conflict. Third, because there can be a winner in conventional conflict, the capability to wage conventional war is paramount. Given these differences, much of the conventional deterrence literature focuses on the strategy of denial.²⁴ Denial strategies "target the opponent's military ability to achieve its territorial or other political objectives" and destroy the opponent's "confidence that it can take or hold the disputed territory."²⁵ Where punishment seeks to convince an attacker they will pay a high cost for action, denial seeks to convince the aggressor that they are unlikely to achieve their territorial aims and therefore the benefits associated with victory.²⁶

Speed is critical in denial strategies of conventional deterrence. Aggressors seek quick victories because quick victories are relatively cheap in blood and treasure.²⁷ Therefore, when an aggressor perceives that quick victory such as a blitzkrieg strategy or a fait accompli will be successful, deterrence is likely to fail.²⁸ A defender's goal in conventional direct deterrence is to convince an attacker state that a quick blitzkrieg attack will likely fail or devolve into a costly

²³ Pape, *Bombing to Win*, 20-29; Shimshoni, *Israel and Conventional Deterrence*, 12-13.

²⁴ John Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 15; Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, 74. There are exceptions to the focus on denial with some scholars arguing for a strategy of punishment with conventional weapons. However, the focus often remains on the conventional capabilities to induce such strategies, not the defender's resolve to do so. For example see Huntington, "Conventional Deterrence and Conventional Retaliation," 32-56; and Harknett, "The Logic of Conventional Deterrence," 86-114.

²⁵ Pape, *Bombing to Win*, 17, 19. On the original distinction between denial and punishment strategies, see Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*, 14-15.

²⁶ Christopher Achen and Duncan Snidal, "Rational Deterrence Theory and the Comparative Case Studies," *World Politics* 41 no.2 (1989) 151-152; Paul Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, 3-22; Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 14; Danilovic, *When the Stakes Are High*, 48.

²⁷ Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1999), Ch 2; Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, 39.

²⁸ Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 63-66.

grinding war of attrition with unknown outcomes.²⁹ Because denial is the primary logic of conventional deterrence, the focus of the direct deterrence literature is on the balance of conventional capabilities between the aggressor and defender to credibly communicate the defender's capability to prevent cheap victories.³⁰ In extended deterrence, where the defender is separated by some distance from the potential front line of conflict, the focus is often on the local balance of forces prepositioned on or near the battlefield.³¹ A defender may have a large latent and military advantage over the aggressor, but if its forces are not present or very close by, the attacker may perceive a quick victory over the protégé as likely before the defender can project its forces to halt the attack.³²

The predictions of conventional deterrence are pessimistic on the effectiveness and usefulness of a tripwire in deterring conventional war for three reasons, all driven by concerns over capability. First, a tripwire by design does not alter the local balance of forces or bolster the defense. A small 'token' deployment of military forces does not bring any capability to prevent a *fait accompli* or convince an attacker state that a blitzkrieg will end in a war of attrition. The conventional deterrence literature argues that a large forward force of combat power is required in place or very close by so that defender forces could move quickly into position in sufficient quantity, quality, and strategy to ensure the aggressor's aims will be denied at the start of conflict.³³ Of particular importance is the speed of mobilization at the start of crisis so that

²⁹ Ibid., 52-53, 63.

³⁰ Ibid., 58-63.

³¹ Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, 39-41, 57-60; Edward Rhodes, "Conventional Deterrence," 245-246; Michael Gerson, "Conventional Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age," *US Army War College Quarterly Parameters* 39 no.3 (2009):

³² Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, 4-5, 214-215; Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 15-29. Charles Glaser and Chaim Kaufmann "What is the offense-defense balance and can we measure it?" *International Security* 22 no.4 (1998): 44-82.

³³ Shimshoni, *Israel and Conventional Deterrence*, 19; Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, 4-5, 58-60; Gerson, "Conventional Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age," 39-40.

heavy forces can be in place when hostilities commence to provide immediate defense. Second, conventional deterrence is difficult because aggressors will design strategies that circumvent defender deterrence efforts.³⁴ In effect, aggressors seek ‘clever strategies’ that the defender’s force posture cannot defend against. The tripwire is a public deployment that can be employed in a singular domain such as the ground or sea. Because the information about the tripwire is known, the attacker can design strategies to avoid ‘tripping the wire’ that still achieve the territorial or political objectives of the attacker.³⁵

Third, many argue that conventional capabilities are difficult to determine.³⁶ They are certainly more difficult than the relatively clean delineation between nuclear or no nuclear capability.³⁷ The difficulty of assessment increases the chances for miscalculation over capabilities and therefore deterrence failure.³⁸ This may be exacerbated with a tripwire strategy, which is contingent on follow-on or second echelon forces whether pursuing strategies of denial via reinforcement or of punishment via striking targets within the attacker state’s territory. Evaluating distant capability is more difficult than judging a local balance of capabilities further increasing the chances of miscalculation.³⁹ Conventional deterrence pessimists argue that

³⁴ Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1974), 522-532; Betts, *Surprise Attack*, 111-118; Rhodes, “Conventional Deterrence,” 231. John Stone, “Conventional Deterrence and the Challenge of Credibility,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 33 no.1 (2012): 116.

³⁵ On concerns about designing around tripwire forces see: Jonathan Solomon, “Demystifying Conventional Deterrence: Great-Power Conflict and East Asian Peace,” *Strategic Studies Quarterly* (Winter, 2013): 119.

³⁶ In contrasting the challenge in evaluating conventional versus nuclear weapons see: Kenneth Waltz, “Nuclear Myths and Political Realities,” *The American Political Science Review* 84 no. 3 (1990): 734-735.

³⁷ Assessing conventional capabilities involves the strategy employed, the quantity and quality of forces, and unknown impacts of new technology. *Ibid.*, 734; Harknett, “The Logic of Conventional Deterrence,” 734.

³⁸ Shimshoni, *Israel and Conventional Deterrence*, 18-19.

³⁹ Jonathan Markowitz and Christopher Fariss, “Going the Distance: The Price of Projecting Power,” *International Interactions* 39 (2013): 121; On concern over even weak states miscalculating and being able to potentially design strategies to interfere with power projection see Stone, “Conventional Deterrence and the Challenge of Credibility,” 115-117.

because capabilities are not easily communicated, there is an information paradox regarding deterrence and defense. In order to deter an aggressor that it is unlikely to achieve victory in conventional war, a defender must present hidden information that reveals the capability or strategy of its defense. In doing so, it weakens its ability to defend because the aggressor can now use that information to design a clever strategy to overcome the defense, leading to the failure of deterrence.⁴⁰ It follows that the tripwire would be especially vulnerable because it is inherently public and the reliance on second echelon forces is common knowledge.

To summarize, the capabilities of the extended deterrence equation brings considerable doubt on the effectiveness of a tripwire in deterring conventional war. Without altering the local balance of forces, the attacker may be able to score quick and early victories over the protégé, which it perceives as a cheap and effective means to alter the territorial status quo. Second, the tripwire may be easy to design around and circumvent, resulting in achievement of revisionist aspirations. Third, risk and punishment strategies are ineffective in conventional conflict, therefore the tripwire as a threat of future punishment costs does not deter aggression.

The conventional and extended deterrence literature is more optimistic on the possibility of military forces in communicating defender resolve but fails to specify how it operates. The ideas put forward by the nuclear theorists about the tripwire permeate into the conventional debate adopting their implicit assumptions. As noted, many mention the tripwire property of forward deployed forces and the risk of escalation associated with attacking them. For example, Huntington argues that ‘deterrence by presence’ increases uncertainty of a defender response and

⁴⁰ Harknett, “The Logic of Conventional Deterrence,” 99, 105; Huntington, “Conventional Deterrence and Conventional Retaliation,” 36.

potential costs in conventional deterrence.⁴¹ However, such uncertainty is still framed as part of a risk strategy or brinksmanship of threatening the risk of future costs, which is ineffective in conventional deterrence where costs of punishment are relatively low.⁴² Does the tripwire have any value as a strategy in communicating a credible conventional deterrent threat? The following section reviews how the literature considers military deployments as a sunk cost or hand-tying signal. It then discusses how the distinction between sunk costs and hand-tying has steered research on the effects of deployed military forces.

1.2.3 Military Forces - Sinking Costs and Tying Hands

Communicating a state's intentions or resolve is a core challenge in international relations theory and central to extended deterrence. Communicating intentions is difficult due to the nature of the international system. The international system operates in a state of anarchy, where state intentions are private and states have ample incentive to misrepresent.⁴³ Because the potential cost of misinterpreting signals is severe and national survival may be at stake, states require a high threshold of certainty for a signal to be considered credible.⁴⁴ Additionally, states have many potential audiences for signals and therefore the intended recipient may be unsure of

⁴¹ Huntington, "Conventional Deterrence and Conventional Retaliation," 35-36.

⁴² Shimshoni, *Israel and Conventional Deterrence*, 21-22.

⁴³ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 30; Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 88-90; Charles Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Sebastian Rosato, "The Inscrutable Intentions of Great Powers," *International Security* 39 no.3 (2014): 48-88.

⁴⁴ On the threshold of certainty see Charles L. Glaser, Andrew H. Kydd, Mark L. Haas, John M. Owen IV, and Sebastian Rosato. "Correspondence: Can Great Powers Discern Intentions?." *International Security* 40, no. 3 (2016): 197-215.

its intended target or interpreting a signal designed for another state or actor.⁴⁵ How do forward deployed military forces communicate a defender's commitment?

Rational bargaining theorists argue that crisis actors signal credibility by undertaking actions that are costly through two means: tying hands and sinking costs.⁴⁶ Hand-tying signals generate a cost to the leader if she/he backs down from a public threat. The nuclear theorists envisioned the tripwire as such a hand-tying mechanism. Snyder theorized that when attacking an American tripwire, "the enemy must recognize that as a result of the commitment of our prestige in the form of American combat forces, we would be willing to suffer considerably higher costs in defending an area than would be warranted by the value we would otherwise attach to it."⁴⁷ In other words, the cost from backing down after a tripwire is attacked is so great that a leader would rather uphold their commitment and suffer the cost of war. In the signaling literature, verbal threats or "public statement of intent" and the resulting domestic audience costs are the most common hand-tying mechanism studied.⁴⁸

Ideal sunk cost signals are actions that are costly up front but do not affect the costs or benefits of the outcome. Military forces can be envisioned as a sunk cost signal of resolve during crisis. For example, a state can mobilize reserves, conduct shows of force with expensive assets, or launch unplanned exercises. Fearon generally categorizes troop deployments as sunk cost signals of general deterrence but acknowledges that they could also serve as a hand-tying tripwire as well.⁴⁹ He states that in grand strategy leaders pursue sunk cost signals given

⁴⁵ Stein, Arthur A. "The limits of strategic choice: constrained rationality and incomplete explanation." *Strategic choice and international relations* (1999): 220

⁴⁶ James D. Fearon, "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands versus Sinking Costs." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41 (1997): 71, 82-83;

⁴⁷ Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*, 229.

⁴⁸ Fearon, "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests," 70. See below on an extended audience cost discussion.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

unknown time horizons and unknown future adversaries.⁵⁰ Because the future is uncertain in grand strategy, he argues that hand-tying is ineffective since the current leader may not be the one punished for a future leader backing down. Much of the extended deterrence and recent stability literature acknowledges the possible hand-tying nature of a tripwire but follows the general supposition that military forces primarily serve as a sunk cost signal. The difference between tying hands and sinking costs is important when investigating the effects of forward deployed forces on deterrence or other related outcomes such as ‘stability’. For example, if military forces are operating via a hand-tying mechanism then their exact location and type is likely paramount. For an attacker must believe its military forces would encounter the defender’s forces for them to have any hand-tying effect. However, if military forces are signaling via a sunk cost logic then location and type is much less important and the credibility of the signal should be based on the size and cost of the deployment. These implicit assumptions shape many studies.

Danilovic’s study of extended deterrence outcomes argues that intrinsic interests communicate the inherent credibility of deterrent threats and that a defender’s “regional stake” is a strong signal of such interest.⁵¹ She considers a regional interest to consist of “alliances, colonies of the past, high volume of mutual trade, arms transfers, and other military, diplomatic, and economic transactions.”⁵² In testing her model, Danilovic codes military forces as sunk costs including force mobilizations and deploying military forces but she does not consider the

⁵⁰ The labels of ‘Grand strategy’ and ‘crisis’ here is analogous to ‘general deterrence’ and ‘immediate deterrence’ in the deterrence and strategy literature.

⁵¹ The focus on interests in signaling credibility is largely a counter to the reputational theories of credibility. The quantitative deterrence literature has attempted to develop measures of interest. On interests, resolve and reputation see Daryl Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

⁵² Danilovic, “Sources of threat Credibility in Extended Deterrence,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45 no.3 (2001): 349.

possible hand-tying effects associated with forward deployed forces.⁵³ Thus her study, while useful in identifying the salience of regional interests, and sunk cost signals such as troop mobilizations, does not provide much insight on the distinct role of defender forces located within the protégé's territory, including the potential of a tripwire. Similarly, Rovner and Talmadge develop the idea that the larger a deployed regional military force, the more credible the defender's commitment to ensuring stability in the region.⁵⁴ They argue that forward deployed forces serve to signal interest and therefore credibility because the defender (in their case the hegemon) is willing to pay the sunk cost of troops.⁵⁵ Additionally, a large presence concurrently communicates the defender's local capability to militarily defeat aggression. They implicitly argue that the sunk cost of deployed forces signal the resolve to halt aggression and the large force posture credibly communicates the capability of the defender. They explicitly doubt the efficacy of tripwires, arguing that a light and lower cost presence will be ineffective against resolved revisionist actors that are "more likely to view tripwire forces as a bluff."⁵⁶

Several recent quantitative studies on troop deployments and deterrence or stability draw pessimistic conclusions on the effects of forward deployed military forces. Fuhmann and Sescher find that nuclear and conventional deployed forces were insignificant in predicting the onset of militarized disputes.⁵⁷ Reiter also finds that forward deployed conventional forces were insignificant in determining nuclear acquisition and therefore ineffective at assurance.⁵⁸ Finally

⁵³ Danilovic, *When the stakes are High*, 155-156.

⁵⁴ Rovner and Talmadge, "Hegemony, Force Posture, and the Provision," 548-581.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 554.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 557.

⁵⁷ Their argument is also undertheorized in the differing purpose of each type of force. Critically, the use of forward deployed nuclear weapons risks near automatic escalation to nuclear warfare. Conventional forces are more appropriate as a tripwire force that is likely to fight against an invading conventional force. Fuhmann and Sechser, "Signaling Alliance Commitments," 919-935.

⁵⁸ Reiter, "Security Commitments and Nuclear Proliferation", 61-82.

Machain and Morgan provide a quantitative analysis of deployments and finds that US troop deployments lower host nation spending, do not lower the likelihood a receiving state will be the target of a MID or war, and that the receiving state is more likely to initiate a MID.⁵⁹ These findings are pessimistic on the impact of forward deployed conventional troops in both deterring adversaries and reassuring allies. However, the studies do not disaggregate the type of forces forward deployed beyond conventional versus nuclear.⁶⁰ When this data is applied to deterrence or stability outcomes, it makes the implicit assumption that the different types and purposes of forward deployed troops have homogenous effects on deterrence or assurance outcomes. In other words, these studies do not address how variation in military forces may change how they communicate defender resolve. This is an assumption that makes logical sense when considering sunk cost signals where cost and size are paramount. Additionally, these studies rely on MID initiation rates to determine if the force posture is effective. I posit that if the tripwire operates through a hand-tying signal, then MIDs may not be a good indication of the effects of the forward presence. In fact, the presence of forward forces should not necessarily decrease the MID rate because aggressors may still seek strategies to alter the status quo by means that do not trip the wire. What is missing from the analysis is a hand-tying framework of tripwires as envisioned by the early theorists to generate predictions of how a tripwire may deter certain aggressive strategies and not others.

⁵⁹ Carla Machain and T. Clifton Morgan, "The Effect of US Troop Deployment on Host States' Foreign Policy," *Armed Forces and Society* 39 no.1 (2013): 102-123.

⁶⁰ These studies source their US deployment data from the Kane dataset. The dataset provides significant time series data on US troop numbers but it does not disaggregate the type or purpose of deployed US troops. For example, Kane codes trainers, logistics forces, and combat divisions all the same. Tim Kane, "Global US Troop Deployment, 1950-2003," *Heritage Foundation* (2004). Retrieved from: <http://www.heritage.org/defense/report/global-us-troop-deployment-1950-2003>.

The most thorough work on hand-tying signals have been in the development and testing of domestic audience costs associated with verbal threats. Fearon argues that audiences care about consistency and that public threats “engage the national honor” and audiences will punish the leaders if they back down from a threat.⁶¹ He theorizes that democracies should have an advantage in crisis bargaining due to their strong domestic audiences, although recent research has argued that nondemocratic regimes have domestic audiences of their own.⁶² Despite significant support for micro level dissatisfaction of backing down from a verbal threat in survey research, the field has struggled to connect individual level dissatisfaction to empirical evidence of audience costs after backing down.⁶³ Snyder and Borghard find that domestic audiences care about policy success and maintaining the state’s honor and find little evidence the public is concerned about consistency or empty threats.⁶⁴ Several scholars have found that leaders have an information advantage in crisis and can explain away backing down and therefore avoid the theorized lock-in effects of verbal threats or warnings.⁶⁵ Furthermore, researchers have struggled to find evidence that adversaries understand the lock-in mechanism associated with verbal

⁶¹ Ibid., 581-582.

⁶² Jessica L. Weeks, “Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve.” *International Organization* 62, no. 01 (2008): 35–64; Steinberg, David A., and Krishan Malhotra. “The Effect of Authoritarian Regime Type on Exchange Rate Policy.” *World Politics* 66, no. 03 (2014): 491–529; Gallagher, Mary E., and Jonathan K. Hanson. “Power Tool or Dull Blade? Selectorate Theory for Autocracies.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 18, no. 1 (2015): 367–85.

⁶³ On survey work see: Tomz, Michael. “Domestic Audience Costs in International Relations: An Experimental Approach.” *International Organization* 61, no. 04 (2007): 829, 835-36; Graeme Davies and Robert Johns. “Audience Costs Among the British Public: The Impact of Escalation, Crisis Type, and Prime Ministerial Rhetoric.” *International Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (2013): 725–737; Jack Levy, Michael K. McKoy, Paul Poast, and Geoffrey P.R. Wallace. “Backing Out or Backing In? Commitment and Consistency in Audience Costs Theory.” *American Journal of Political Science* 59 no. 4 (2015): 988-1001.

⁶⁴ Jack Snyder and Erica Borghard, “The Cost of Empty Threats: A Penny, Not a Pound,” *The American Political Science Review* 105 no.4 (2011): 437-456.

⁶⁵ Levendusky and Horowitz. “When Backing Down Is the Right Decision: Partisanship, New Information, and Audience Costs.” *The Journal of Politics* 74, no. 02 (2012): 323–338; Jonathan N Brown and Anthony S. Marcum. “Avoiding Audience Costs: Domestic Political Accountability and Concessions in Crisis Diplomacy.” *Security Studies* 20 (April 2011): 143;

warnings.⁶⁶ This is likely exacerbated by the high levels of variation in domestic audiences and the contrasting signals they produce.⁶⁷ Finally, researchers have found that foreign policy is often not salient enough for domestic audiences to care about a leader's consistency in issuing verbal ultimatums.⁶⁸

Thus, significant doubt has accumulated in respect to audience costs tying hands through verbal threats alone. Ironically, work on secrecy has developed some of the most recent logic of overt military forces consistent with hand-tying logic. Carson argues that covert action “reduces the mobilization of external audiences, the reputational and domestic stakes involved in the incident, and hard to control escalation pressure.”⁶⁹ Covert activity works via a backstage creating an “illusion of a limited war” which “helps avoid further conflict escalation.”⁷⁰ The backstage avoids violation of the nationality threshold between two states. An overt tripwire is of course the opposite of covert action. A tripwire strives to force a public encounter between defender and attacker uniformed military forces thus engaging domestic stakes and bringing the defender into the war.

1.2.4 Tripwire Literature Summary - An Incomplete Picture

The nuclear deterrence literature introduced the concept of the tripwire as a part of brinksmanship. The nuclear tripwire is a threshold as part of a risk strategy that once crossed

⁶⁶ Ibid., 455; Marc Trachtenberg, “Audience Costs: An Historical Analysis.” *Security Studies* 21, no. 1 (2012): 38-42.

⁶⁷ For examples of how complex the domestic audience can be see Joshua D. Kertzer, and Ryan Brutger. “Decomposing Audience Costs: Bringing the Audience Back into Audience Cost Theory.” *American Journal of Political Science* 60, no. 1 (2016): 234–249.

⁶⁸ Douglas M. Gibler and Marc L. Hutchison. “Territorial Issues, Audience Costs, and the Democratic Peace: The Importance of Issue Salience.” *The Journal of Politics* 75, no. 4 (2013): 879–893; Marc Trachtenberg, “The Influence of Nuclear Weapons in the Cuban Missile Crisis,” *International Security* 10.1 (Summer 1985): 137-163

⁶⁹ Austin Carson, “Facing Off and Saving Face: Covert Intervention and Escalation Management in the Korean War.” *International Organization* 70, no. 01 (2016): 105-106.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

begins an unknown process of escalation that risks mutual nuclear annihilation. The nuclear tripwire operates through underspecified mechanisms that tie the defender’s hands by restricting the strategic options available once attacked. The tripwire received significant attention because resolve was the crucial variable of nuclear deterrence outcomes. The conclusions of the conventional deterrence literature is pessimistic on the tripwire’s effectiveness because risk strategies are often unsuccessful in conventional deterrence and the tripwire does not bring enough defensive power to deny an attacker in the opening moves of conventional war. Extended deterrence and signaling scholars often acknowledge that forward deployed military troops may have some hand-tying effects as theorized by the early nuclear theorists, but most studies investigate the effects of troops assuming a sunk cost logic by focusing on the size and cost of deployments instead of the location and type of forces.

Deterrence	Mechanisms	Effective Strategy	Tripwire as a Deterrent
Nuclear	Resolve	Risk strategy of escalation to nuclear war	Sufficient
Conventional	Resolve and Capability	Denial strategy preventing territorial gains	Insufficient

Table 1.1 – Literature Summary of Tripwires in Nuclear and Conventional Deterrence

This dissertation seeks to introduce a novel theoretic framework of tripwires in conventional deterrence that embraces the hand-tying nature as envisioned by the nuclear theorists but accepts that effective conventional deterrents are strategies of denial. By taking the political power of the tripwire and the efficacy of conventional denial strategies seriously, I seek to develop a theory that increases our understanding of how conventional tripwires operate, and predicts their effectiveness and limitations in deterring conventional war.

1.3 Dissertation Structure

The structure of the dissertation is as follows. Chapter Two develops the tripwire as a denial strategy that constrains options for an attacker state in extended conventional deterrence. The chapter develops the logic of the tripwire in communicating resolve as a nationalism fueled hand-tying mechanism. The chapter also generates typologies of defender force postures including a unique tripwire posture, and predicts how these postures constrain strategies for attacker aggression. Chapter Three identifies a universe of tripwires in extended immediate deterrence and selects three historic case studies for controlled comparison. Chapter Four is a crucial case study of France defending Chad against aggression from Libya. The case develops the concept of the tripwire and explores how the deployment of small token French forces deterred Libya from direct conventional war. Chapter Five evaluates the use of a tripwire by a defender lacking the capacity to escalate by tracing the failure of Greek military forces in deterring Turkish aggression in Cyprus. Chapter Six investigates the concept of an American mobile tripwire backed by snap forward capabilities in deterring aggression in the Taiwan Strait during the crises of the 1950s. The dissertation concludes with policy implications that follow from the theory and suggestions for future avenues of research.

Chapter 2: Theory

2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the logic of conventional tripwire deterrence and presents the following hypothesis: a tripwire force posture deters attacker states from selecting strategies of conventional war if the defender has the power to escalate. A conventional tripwire is a small overt military force forward deployed from a defender state into a protégé state's territory. The tripwire is too small to take or hold territory but wields political consequence. The tripwire credibly signals the intentions of the defender by tying its hands to honor its commitment to the protégé in the event of war. However, the tripwire is only credible when backed by a defender's capacity to escalate the conflict and threaten to deny the attacker's ability to achieve its territorial aims. The tripwire does not constrain other less effective means of altering the status quo short of conventional war regardless of the defender's capacity to escalate. Because the tripwire limits the attacker to strategies less effective than conventional war, the presence of a tripwire, backed with the capacity to escalate, decreases the likelihood of territorial revision.

Some notes on what the theory is not doing. First, the arguments presented here do not consider why a defender selects a particular force posture strategy. Many factors may go into the selection of force posture and the theory is interested in developing a hypothesis on the tripwire's effectiveness, not its selection. Second, the dissertation does not explain which revisionist strategy the aggressor selects beyond the tripwire deterring the selection of conventional war as stipulated above. Again, there are many factors behind the selection of an aggressor strategy, and the theory simply predicts that a tripwire will deter aggressors from selecting conventional war when facing a defender with the capacity to escalate. Finally, this dissertation does not seek

to discount the role of nuclear weapons in deterrence or to compare the effectiveness of conventional to nuclear extended deterrence. Instead, the dissertation seeks to explain the logic of tripwires in conventional deterrence outcomes, which may have overlapping effects concurrent with nuclear deterrence.

This chapter develops the arguments outlined above. The first section is a brief review of assumptions. The second section discusses the logic underlying the conventional tripwire, unpacks the hand-tying nature of the tripwire, and defines the capacity to escalate. The third section is a typology of force posture strategies available to a defender including the tripwire. The final section develops a typology of possible attacker strategies and discusses how tripwires affect their selection.

2.2 Assumptions

Deterrence operates by influencing the strategic calculus of an aggressor state to dissuade it from taking an action because the cost outweighs the benefit.¹ Defender states deter revisionist action by credibly communicating the “ability and willingness to wage war.”² The defender’s ability and willingness to wage war influences the calculus of deterrence by either increasing the expected cost of aggression, decreasing the probability of success, and/or increasing the risk of future costs.³ I adopt the assumption that states make rational cost benefit decisions with the information they have available. Additionally, to examine the effects of the tripwire I use the three-actor model common in the extended deterrence literature. The defender state provides

¹ Danilovic, *When the Stakes Are High*, 48; Schelling, *Arms and Influence* 69-91; Achen and Snidal, “Rational Deterrence Theory,” 151-152; Paul Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, 3-22.

² Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, 58.

³ Pape, *Bombing to Win*, Ch. 1; Paul Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, 3-22; Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 14.

some form of guarantee or deterrent threat to protect a protégé state from aggression with the option to deploy military forces to the protégé state. The protégé state is threatened by a third state, the aggressor or attacker state, which is interested in altering the territorial status quo.

These three states operate in an international system of anarchy⁴ where the intentions of states are private, unknown, and incentives exist to misrepresent one's own intentions.⁵ It is exactly this uncertainty of intentions that the tripwire seeks to alleviate, albeit in a limited fashion, by credibly signaling the resolve of the defender to protect the protégé from external strategies of conventional war. This communication can at best alleviate the question of the defender's immediate intentions to honor its commitment, but it cannot necessarily address the question of future intentions. For the defender may pack up and redeploy its forces home and renege its security agreement sometime in the future.

2.3 The Logic of Conventional Tripwire Deterrence

2.3.1 The Tripwire Strategy

The conventional tripwire as presented here is fundamentally a denial strategy to convince an attacker that it will not achieve its territorial objectives and therefore will not reap the benefits of aggression.⁶ This may appear counterintuitive at first glance since the tripwire is

⁴ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 88-90, and John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2011), 30.

⁵ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 29-53; Rosato, "The Inscrutable Intentions of Great Powers," 48-88.

⁶ There is also a secondary risk strategy associated with the conventional tripwire. Due to the escalatory nature of warfare, the limited intervention of the defender to protect the protégé via denial may expand to attacks directly against the attacker's home territory or stalemate into a war of attrition. Therefore, a tripwire is primarily a denial strategy that due to the unpredictable nature of war is secondarily a risk strategy threatening an unknown probability of punishment in the future. However, conventional weapons, while certainly destructive, most often lack the power to credibly threaten a punishment campaign that is costly enough. Because risk strategies are a weaker version of punishment, the denial component of tripwires is paramount over the threat of punishment. This dissertation does not attempt to address when a conflict is likely to escalate to include a strategy of punishment, but acknowledges that attacking a tripwire does induce some risk of an expansion from a purely denial strategy to also one of punishment. See: Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*, 15; Pape, *Bombing to Win*, 20;

a small force that cannot halt or appreciably slow an opening attack during conventional war. By its very definition, the tripwire cannot defend territory against any determined attack. However, this view overlooks the tripwire's deterrent power rooted in the politics that ties the defender's hands to respond. An attack on the tripwire locks-in the defender to honor its commitment to protect the protégé and communicates the increased costs the defender is willing to bear.⁷ A defender with the capacity to escalate honors its commitment by projecting sufficient military force into the protégé's territory ensuring the attacker cannot achieve its territorial objectives after entering into a costly war with the defender.

Denial, like all extended deterrence strategies, requires that a defender communicate its resolve and capability to deter an attacker state.⁸ The tripwire credibly signals defender resolve through two mechanisms, nationalism and audience cost. Nationalism demands that a response be made if the nationalist threshold is violated with an overt attack on the tripwire. The nation states that populate the international system understand this demand because nationalism is inherent to the system. The public death of fellow nationals serving the flag ignites and enlarges the national chauvinist portion of the domestic audience who then demand that the state uphold its honor and commitment to defend its protégés. Because the tripwire operates around the nationalist threshold, it is effective in deterring strategies of conventional war where the uniformed militaries of the attacker's invasion and the defender's tripwire are bound to meet.

Carl von Clausewitz, Michael Howard, and Peter Paret. *On War* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 89, 138; Shimshoni, *Israel and Conventional Deterrence*, 21-22.

⁷ Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*, 229.

⁸ Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, 79; Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, 58; Shimshoni, *Israel and Conventional Deterrence*, 6, 27;

However, the tripwire is ineffective at deterring other strategies of aggression that do not violate the nationality threshold.

In conventional tripwire deterrence, the skill of the defender is its capacity to escalate. A defender's capacity to escalate is defined as the ability to project sufficient second echelon combat forces into the protégé's territory after hostilities commence to prevent the attacker from taking or holding onto its territorial goals. The distinction between taking and holding is important. Direct deterrence encounters with a motivated attacker and an opportunity to quickly take territory are widely viewed as a recipe for deterrence failure.⁹ However, if the attacker knows it is unlikely to hold onto its initial victories in the face of defender escalation then deterrence should hold. This is important in extended deterrence, because the attacker must account for defender forces that may be projected into the protégé's territory after the start of hostilities. Furthermore, the speed of the defender's response need not always be immediate.¹⁰ If the attacker knows that in time, a significantly stronger defender is likely mass enough force to roll back its gains, then the attacker will be deterred from selecting a conventional war strategy.

The tripwire and capacity to escalate are necessary components, that when paired together, deter attackers from selecting conventional war strategies. Without the defender's capacity to escalate, the tripwire is a hollow threat and an attacker state is unconstrained in the selection of its revisionist strategy. Figure 2.1 summarizes the requirements for effective

⁹ See for example: Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, 40 ; Edward Rhodes, "Conventional Deterrence," 245-246; Shimshoni, *Israel and Conventional Deterrence*, 19; Van Evera, *Causes of War*, Ch 2.

¹⁰ Huth differentiates between the immediate and short-term force balance as a few weeks and a few months. Tripwire deterrence is focused on the short and long-term balance. See Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, 57, 73.

conventional tripwire deterrence. The following two sections develop the logic behind the hand-tying mechanism and the capacity to escalate for effective conventional tripwire deterrence.

		Tripwire	
		Yes	No
Capacity to Escalate	Yes	Deterred from selecting conventional war 1	Unconstrained 2
	No	Unconstrained 3	Unconstrained 4

Figure 2.1 – 2x2 of Independent variables and predicted outcome of attacker strategy selection

2.3.2 Tying Hands with Tripwires

The tripwire serves as a hand-tying signal that communicates the resolve of the defender to honor its commitment to defend the protégé. The following builds on insights that nationality is an observed threshold limiting war¹¹ and develops a hand-tying logic of commitment that explains the dynamics of the tripwire. I argue that tripwires tie hands through two reinforcing mechanisms: nationalism and domestic audience cost. Nationalism is the critical factor that generates a demand for riposte that is then enforced through domestic audience costs.

Nationalism creates escalatory demands that are mutually understood by nation-state adversaries creating an especially intelligible signal.¹² Nationalism is the belief that a nation, a

¹¹ For early examples see: Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 158-159; Halperin, *Limited War in the Nuclear Age*, 39-37.

¹² On the intelligibility and credibility of signals see: Austin Carson and Keren Yarhi-Milo. “Covert Communication: The Intelligibility and Credibility of Signaling in Secret,” *Security Studies* 26, no.1 (2017): 124-156.

distinct group of individuals, deserve their own state.¹³ Individuals believe they are part of an “imagined political community” that links the nation together, even when the individuals do not know each other personally.¹⁴ Education, common language, myths, and national military service reinforce the concept of the nation.¹⁵ Nationalists revere their land, government, and importantly, their fellow nationals. They admire their real or mythical history, and are willing to fight and die for the nation.¹⁶ The development of the nation also catalyzes the conception of the “other”¹⁷ which when pushed to extremes leads to hyper-nationalism, an intense public concern for national security, threat inflation, and military support for offensive action, which all increase the probability of war.¹⁸

When an “other” attacks fellow nationals, nationalist sentiments are inflamed. An outsider killing someone in the national community with whom one shares a “deep, horizontal comradeship”¹⁹ generates deep anger and demands to riposte.²⁰ These effects are not limited to those immediately affected by the violent loss, as fellow nationals have supported harsher action than those directly affected by violence.²¹ When military forces of one state are attacked by

¹³ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).

¹⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities, Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 4-6.

¹⁵ Ibid; Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States AD 990-1990* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 114-117.

¹⁶ Boyd Shafer, *Nationalism: Interpreters and Interpretations* (Washington: American Historical Association, 1959).

¹⁷ Tilly, *Coercion and Capital*, 114-117; Robert Pape, *Dying to Win, the Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005), 25-26.

¹⁸ Barry Posen, “Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power,” *International Security* 18 no.2 (1993): 80-124; John Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future, Instability in Europe after the Cold War,” *International Security* 15 no.1 (1990): 20-21; Stephen Van Evera, “Primed for Peace: Europe after the Cold War,” *International Security* 15 no.3 (1990): 23-25.

¹⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

²⁰ Clausewitz theorized that nationalism meant modern wars are fueled by “primordial violence, hatred and enmity,” that makes limited war difficult to control and total war likely. Clausewitz, *On War*, 89, 138.

²¹ For example British civilians who were not directly bombed in the Blitz, supported the bombing of German cities even more than those who had suffered the violent act. See, Pape, *Bombing to Win*, 26.

military forces of another, these nationalist effects are amplified. “Soldiers and sailors represent(ed) the entire nation”²² and the assault on the symbol of one one’s nation, by the symbol of another amplifies the nationalist sentiment, resulting in anger and increased support for vengeance.²³

Leaders are not immune from such affects because they too are part of the national community and an assault on it generates anger responses in decision makers as well.²⁴ Beyond leaders being susceptible to the emotional response, they understand other nations face the same conditions because nationalism is the foundation of the modern nation-state system.²⁵

Nationalism is not imbued in one nation state or another, it is international and found around the globe.²⁶ Nationalism is not regime type specific and is present in both democratic and authoritarian regimes. Authoritarian leaders also face nationalist domestic audiences that when rallied are more difficult to suppress than other protests or movements. When the populace is angered by foreign others it can induce mass nationalist discontent forcing the leaders to “face the wrath of mobs at the palace gates” which are difficult to quell and can spin out of control.²⁷

Importantly, nationalism is a permanent presence in the fabric of the nation-state. In times of peace, the appearance of nationalism need not be militant or exceptionally prominent but it is always present. ‘Banal Nationality’ is the reproduction of nationalism through daily

²² Tilly, *Coercion and Capital*, 115.

²³ Alan Lambert, Laura Scherer, John Paul Schott, Kristina Olson, Rick Andrews, Thomas O’Brien, “Rally Effects, Threat, and Attitude Change: An Integrative Approach to Understanding the Role of Emotion,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 98 no.8 (2010): 886-903.

²⁴ Todd Hall, and Andrew Ross, “Affective Politics after 9/11.” *International Organization* 69, no. 04 (2015): 847–79.

²⁵ Tilly, *Coercion and Capital*, 114-117;

²⁶ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, (London: SAGE, 1995), 6.

²⁷ Jessica Chen Weiss, “Authoritarian Signaling, Mass Audiences, and Nationalist Protest in China” *International Organization* 67 (Winter 2013): 2-6.

habits such as hanging the national flag and singing the national anthem. Such acts are omnipresent and “nationalism, far from being an intermittent mood in establishing nations, is the endemic condition.”²⁸ This consistent presence of nationalism primes the population for conflict mobilization. This means that in the event of crisis, especially in the killing of overt national military forces, the population mobilizes “without lengthy campaigns of political preparation.”²⁹

Nationalism also amplifies the audience cost of backing down after a tripwire is attacked. Where verbal threats often fail to generate and/or communicate audience cost, the public loss of military forces generates a large political cost for backing down.³⁰ Additionally, there is a particular sensitivity to backing down from a commitment after suffering military casualties.³¹ Furthermore, increases in acute nationalist sentiment, expected with the death of military forces, changes how the domestic audience holds political leaders accountable. Instead of just an instrumentalist logic for an audience to care about consistency, nationalism drives segments of an audience to care about both the “moral or normative concern about national honor” and increases existing concerns over consistency of threats. ‘National chauvinists’ punish domestic

²⁸ Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 6.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁰ Although Fearon argues verbal threats are sufficient he explains that “a tying-hands signal typically works by creating audience costs that the leadership would suffer due to the reaction of domestic political audiences to a perceived failure in the management of foreign policy” including the possibility of “small trip-wire forces stationed in the threatened area.” Fearon, “Tying Hands versus Sinking Costs,” 70.

³¹ In survey research, evidence shows the threshold is rather low with Tomz’s survey using 20 deaths. The effects of the nationality threshold have been reproduced in survey research in the United Kingdom. See: Tomz, Michael. “Domestic Audience Costs in International Relations: An Experimental Approach.” *International Organization* 61, no. 04 (2007): 829, 835-836 and Graeme Davies and Robert Johns. “Audience Costs Among the British Public: The Impact of Escalation, Crisis Type, and Prime Ministerial Rhetoric.” *International Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (2013):725-737. Both this and the Tomz surveys are structured where the leader follows through on a compelling threat with a military response, then casualties are suffered, and then the leader backs down and suffers an increase in dissatisfaction. This is not a direct match to tripwires because the threats in the surveys center on compelling threats with casualties sustained in the response. This contrasts to a tripwire, which will suffer casualties in the opening move of a deterrent commitment. However, they do show a correlation to casualties and increased dissatisfaction to backing down.

leaders for being inconsistent in backing up threats.³² The death of forward deployed troops magnifies nationalist sentiment in the domestic audience, growing the proportion of the audience that is ‘chauvinist’, therefore raising the costs to leadership for backing down from a public commitment.³³

Nationalism’s magnification of domestic audience cost addresses many of the shortcomings of audience costs associated with verbal threats. First, a public tripwire deployment is unambiguous. The force occupies a physical space and consists of combat forces with stated and inherent purpose to fight. Second, because the deterrent threat of the military force is unambiguous there is little new information leaders or elites can claim to explain away backing down after the force is attacked. Additionally, surging nationalism will likely override any rationalization with new information put forward by elites to not follow through. Third, nationalism associated with the public deaths of military forces in the face of a threat will make the issue salient for a wide portion of the domestic audience. Fourth, all nation states have an inherent and mutual understanding of nationalism and therefore do not need to have a complex understanding of the domestic political environment of its adversaries to understand the domestic consequences of attacking a tripwire. Fifth, those with nationalist sentiment care about consistency in following through on threats. The death of troops in an attack should arouse

³² Joshua D. Kertzer, and Ryan Brutger. “Decomposing Audience Costs: Bringing the Audience Back into Audience Cost Theory.” *American Journal of Political Science* 60, no. 1 (2016): 234–249.

³³ The argument is agnostic on regime type of the defender and attacker. Fearon originally postulated that audience cost should give democracies a bargaining advantage. Fearon, “Domestic Political Audiences,” 581. However, recent scholarship on audience have differing conclusions on the role of regime and several studies find subtypes of authoritarian regimes suffer domestic cost as well. Jessica L. Weeks, “Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve.” *International Organization* 62, no. 01 (2008): 35–64; Steinberg, David A., and Krishan Malhotra. “The Effect of Authoritarian Regime Type on Exchange Rate Policy.” *World Politics* 66, no. 03 (2014): 491–529; Gallagher, Mary E., and Jonathan K. Hanson. “Power Tool or Dull Blade? Selectorate Theory for Autocracies.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 18, no. 1 (2015): 367–85.

strong national chauvinism and amplify the audience cost. Table 2.1 contrasts the criticisms of audience costs relating to verbal threats with the benefits of tripwire threats.

Factors limiting audience cost	Verbal	Tripwire
Threats are ambiguous	Yes	No
Leaders can claim new information or otherwise mislead	Yes	Unlikely
Many foreign policy issues are not salient	Yes	No
Other states do not understand costs	Yes	No
Audiences do not care about consistency, just honor and outcomes	Yes	No

Table 2.1 Limitations of Audience Costs - Verbal vs. Tripwire

2.3.3 The Capacity to Escalate

Successful conventional tripwire deterrence requires a conventional capacity to escalate (C2E) after the tripwire is attacked. C2E is the ability to project sufficient second echelon combat forces into the protégé’s territory after hostilities commence to prevent the attacker from taking and/or holding its territorial objectives. The conventional deterrence literature generally focuses on the opening moves of a conflict or the taking of territory. Thus, under the conventional wisdom the speed of the defender’s response is paramount to either have in place, or be able to quickly mass enough forces to prevent a cheap fait accompli.³⁴ However, this dissertation posits that the requirement for a speedy defender response is dependent on the relative balance of power between the attacker and defender.

³⁴ Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, 39-41, 57-60; Edward Rhodes, “Conventional Deterrence,” 245-246; Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 63-66; Shimshoni, *Israel and Conventional Deterrence*, 19.

If a very powerful defender is guaranteed to respond through a mechanism such as a tripwire, then the speed of the defender's response is inconsequential. The defender holds such an advantage in power that even after a loss of the protégé, the defender can leverage its advantage and project power back into the protégé's territory. The defender will then engage the attacker state in a counter blitzkrieg or war of attrition and will likely rollback aggressor gains. In other words, an aggressor may be able to take the territory, but cannot hold it against a resolved and much more powerful defender. The attacker's initial victory will be short-lived as the overwhelming advantage of the defender is brought to bear and at best, the attacker faces an attritional war with a more powerful foe and at worst, its territorial gains are erased at great cost. Furthermore, when a defender is sufficiently more powerful than an attacker, the C2E of the defender is evident in its massive relative power advantage.³⁵

To put this in the framework of direct deterrence, an attack against a protégé with a tripwire and a large defender relative advantage is essentially a 'limited aims' strategy. The attacker cannot swiftly defeat the defender by attacking the protégé given the territorial separation of the defender, and the tripwire ensures that war with the defender will follow. Limited aims strategies are only an appealing strategy if the attacker does not think the defender will respond by launching a costly counterattack.³⁶ As Mearsheimer states: "Once the limited aims strategy is deemed worthy of consideration, the key question is: Will a limited victory lead to a war of attrition? If the answer is yes, deterrence is likely to obtain; if the answer is no, deterrence is likely to fail."³⁷ I posit that the tripwire communicates that the defender will

³⁵ Such a large disparity in relative power should alleviate the challenge of evaluating the capabilities conventional deterrence. Rhodes, "Conventional Deterrence," 231-233; Huntington, "Conventional Deterrence and Conventional Retaliation," 38-39.

³⁶ On limited aims see: Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 56, 63-64.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 64.

respond and accept the cost of retaliation once its tripwire is attacked. Thus, deterrence should be successful.

When the defender and attacker are near power parity, speed now matters. The speed and capability of the defender's second echelon underpin the credibility of the defender's C2E. If a near-peer attacker conquers a protégé quickly and has time to consolidate its gains, a peer defender may no longer have the capability to project power into the region without its protégé's military and/or territory. The challenge of projecting power into defended territory is particularly difficult, especially when over a large distance or separated by water. It is much easier for a defender to deploy forces into territory held by the protégé and then go into combat than assaulting enemy territory from a distance.³⁸ Therefore, in order to prevent the attacker from achieving its territorial aims, the defender must have the capability to quickly 'snap forward' second echelon combat forces of sufficient capability to meet the attacker's invasion of the protégé. The objective of the snap forward force is to arrive before the fall of the protégé, slowing or halting the aggressor's advance, and denying the quick achievement of its territorial objectives via a *fait accompli*. Heavy follow-on forces then augment the snap forward force driving the defender and attacker into an attritional war before the attacker achieves its aims.

When at parity, the defender must have a preexisting snap-forward capability in order for tripwire deterrent threats to be credible. Power projection capabilities are expensive and difficult to produce and cannot be created in crisis.³⁹ Furthermore, in order to be effective, near parity

³⁸ On the challenges and variations on amphibious operations when opposed and unopposed see: Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 88, 114-119; On the detrimental effects of distance see: Bruce Bueno De Mesquita, *The War Trap* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); Also see: Kenneth Boulding, *Conflict and Defense: a general theory* (New York: Harper, 1963).

³⁹ Barry Posen, "Command of the Commons, The Military Foundation of US Hegemony," *International Security* 28 no.1 (2003): 5-46; Jonathan Markowitz and Christopher Fariss, "Going the Distance: The Price of Projecting Power," *International Interactions* 39 (2013): 121.

defenders must demonstrate such snap-forward capabilities to avoid miscalculation.

Conventional capabilities can be difficult to communicate and when a defender threatens to project power over a distance, the target of the deterrent threat is more likely to miscalculate over the defender's capability than if the states were proximate.⁴⁰ Such demonstrations of robust snap forward capabilities can come in many forms such as regional base networks near the protégé or attacker's territory, large-scale exercises with the protégé or other distant partners, large-scale shows of force, or recent instances of snap-forward capabilities deploying to deter or fight another threat in the region.

Finally, the defender lacks the capacity to escalate if it is a near-peer without snap forward capabilities or if the defender is significantly weaker than the attacker. Without C2E, a tripwire is insufficient in deterring conventional war. When there is a large disparity in the attacker's advantage, deterrence calculus hinges on the inability of the defender to defend the protégé, not its resolve to do so. Neither a weak defender's tripwire, nor its second echelon forces can deny the aggressor's territorial aims. The myriad of challenges in attempting to project power over a distance will further diminish the capabilities of a weak defender to challenge the attacker. The only reasonable strategy for a weak defender is a large force posture that could induce heavy costs on the attacker at the onset of conflict. Table 2.2 summarizes the necessity for a snap forward capability to attain the capacity to escalate.

⁴⁰ Harknett, "The Logic of Conventional Deterrence," 99, 105; Huntington, "Conventional Deterrence and Conventional Retaliation," 36; Stone, "Conventional Deterrence and the Challenge of Credibility," 116; Markowitz and Fariss, "Going the Distance," 121; Erik Gartzke, "The Relevance of Power in International Relations," Working Paper, San Diego. University of California.

Relative Military Power	Snap-Forward Capability
Defender >> Attacker	Not Necessary
Defender \approx Attacker	Necessary
Defender << Attacker	Insufficient – No C2E

Table 2.2 – Capacity to Escalate Requirements

2.4 Defender Force Posture Strategies

The following section identifies three fundamental force posture strategies available to a defender and develops the requirements of the unique tripwire posture. The tripwire posture is an attempt to isolate the theorized hand-tying effects of forward forces from their propensity to alter the local balance of forces. The section closes with a discussion on how tactical and strategic mobility alter the effectiveness of a tripwire force.

2.4.1 Force Posture Strategies

I posit that the defender has three fundamental force posture strategies to consider in extended deterrence: a large force posture, a tripwire posture, and no forward posture. A large force presence is a combat force that alters both the local balance of forces and the balance of resolve. It brings significant fighting power to the protégé’s territory that could realistically offer a defense of the terrain by either defeating or delaying the expected attacking forces. A large force presence is composed of combat forces and the related supporting and logistic forces. Such a strategy alters the adversaries calculus on the capabilities of the defense and therefore on the likelihood of initial success on the battlefield.⁴¹ The large presence also alters the balance of

⁴¹ Such a force posture will likely also threaten neighboring states and raise tensions. Some defensive realists have argued that purely defensive forces could be composed of certain technologies or weapon systems only useful in

resolve by clearly communicating to the potential aggressor that an attack on the protégé state will bring immediate contact with the defender's forces tying the hands of the defender to respond.

A tripwire posture is an overt military combat force that lacks the capability to take or hold territory against expected opposing forces. In other words, a tripwire force posture is a small combat force that does not contain the mass to alter the local balance of forces. Despite not altering the balance of forces, the defender's tripwire posture still credibly communicates the defender's resolve. The aggressor knows that a conventional attack on the protégé will bring its forces into direct contact with the defender's tripwire. The public loss of those forces ties the hands of the defender to retaliate and come to the aid of the protégé.

The third option is no overt combat presence and extending some form of verbal commitment to the protégé and/or deterrent threat to the potential aggressor. This does not change the balance of forces and does not tie the hands of the defender to respond to an attack. This includes the prepositioning of material, the presence of covert forces, or logistics hubs enabling power projection. Non-combat forces are not designed or expected to fight force-on-force and may not be located in areas of expected enemy advance. The aggressor may perceive it could attack without encountering such forces, or perceive that they would not fight. Figure 2.2 summarizes this typology and highlights the tripwire force posture's isolation of the hand-tying mechanism from the local balance of forces.

defense. However, due to the dual use of most weapon systems and the historic uncertainty and variation in how to apply new technology, this paper assumes all military forces have an inherent offensive and defensive capability. See for example Rosato, "The Inscrutable Intentions," and Scott Sagan, "1914 Revisited: Allies, Offense, and Instability", *International Security* 11 (1986): 151-175.

	Hand-Tying	No Hand-Tying
Change to BoF	Large Presence	-
No Change to BoF	Tripwire	No Presence

Figure 2.2 – Defender Force Posture Strategies

2.4.2 The Tripwire Force Posture

A tripwire force posture is one that does not alter the balance of forces but does alter the balance of resolve. Therefore, the tripwire must be diminutive enough to be unable to hold or take territory, but also public and large enough to ensure that if the attacker invades the protégé that they contact the defender’s tripwire ensuring that “the action cannot stop there.” An ideal type tripwire would add no local military capability, however all combat forces no matter how small have some capability. Therefore, the following seeks to define a tripwire that has a negligible impact on the balance of forces while still engaging the hand-tying mechanism.

There are three factors to a force posture: size, composition, and location. The relative measure of preponderance of forces determines the maximum size a tripwire can attain before being considered a large posture. Mearsheimer defined a “significantly larger” force as one that has “a clear cut superiority on one side that does not preclude all possibility that the outnumbered defender could thwart the attack.”⁴² Even if the aggressor is ‘significantly larger’ than the defender, the defender’s force posture still qualifies as a large posture because the possibility of success remains. A tripwire posture is one-step further, where there is no realistic chance of a sustained offense or defense.

⁴² Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 59.

The local force ratio expected to grant the attacker an advantage in a conventional breakthrough battle is 3:1 in the attacker's favor.⁴³ However, this rule of thumb of local preponderance does not account for technological disparity, quality of troops, or force employment method.⁴⁴ Biddle provides expectations for an attacker and defender to take and defend territory based on preponderance and if they employ the 'modern system'.⁴⁵ We can use this data as a starting point in defining a tripwire. Using the most conservative estimates, we can assume the defender employs a 'modern system' tripwire and the potential aggressor state does not. Biddle expects a modern system force at a preponderance ratio disadvantage of 1:2 to be effective in attacking and taking territory from a non-modern opponent. The modern system is much more effective defending against a non-modern attacker, with Biddle's data ending at 3.5:1 with the modern system defender still not yielding territory.⁴⁶ Mearsheimer argues that in dense force to space ratios, a defender up to an 8:1 disadvantage may still be able to hold territory against an attacker.⁴⁷ Therefore, the upper limit of a tripwire force posture is a local attacker to defender force ratio of at least than 8:1. For example, ratios of 10:1 and 15:1 both qualify as a tripwire but a 4:1 ratio is a large posture. An 8:1 or greater ratio should leave no reasonable chance for the tripwire to attack or defend, whether the opponent employs a modern or non-modern system and regardless of the strategies employed. This ratio is designed to identify a tripwire force irrespective of qualitative disparities between the attacker and defender.

⁴³ The breakthrough battle is an attritional fight to gain penetration through prepared defenses. John Mearsheimer, "Assessing the Conventional Balance: The 3:1 Rule and Its Critics," *International Security* 13 no. 4 (1989): 54-59.

⁴⁴ Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 27-28; and Biddle, *Military Power*.

⁴⁵ Biddle, *Military Power*, 69-76.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁴⁷ Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, 47.

What forces are considered ‘local’ for the defender and attacker? The defender’s forces must be stationed within the territory of the protégé. Ideally, tripwire forces should be on the border, along avenues of likely advance, or around key centers that an aggressor would be forced to assault. Fundamentally, the potential aggressor should be reasonably confident that if they attack in force then their military forces will publically engage the tripwire force. Forces staged in neighboring territories or offshore are not considered local because they would not be harmed in a surprise attack on the protégé. On the other side of the ratio, an attacker’s local forces are considered those available for immediate attack, usually considered those able to reach the front within ‘weeks’.⁴⁸ These include active duty forces marshaled along the border, and other active duty forces that the attacker has the logistics capacity to move to the front rapidly. This does not include reserve or militia forces, or forces being actively used to maintain internal order of the attacker state, or are tied down in other theaters and are unavailable for an assault on the protégé.

Attacker perceptions on the likelihood of encountering and actively engaging the tripwire drive the minimum size of an effective tripwire. How small a tripwire force is affects whether the attacking state expects the tripwire to be in position and able to fight. For example, a single soldier deployed as a tripwire seems preposterous and one could not reasonably expect it to encounter or engage the invading army in combat. The aggressor must believe that in the event of invasion it will likely encounter the tripwire force. This means the tripwire must be large enough to have some presence, and the aggressor must believe the tripwire force will stand and fight, not retreat in the face of the invasion. I therefore propose that the minimum force must

⁴⁸ Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, 88.

have a self-sustained command structure and the capacity to fight independently from a larger command, if only for a limited duration.

The army battalion is the first level of command in the US army that has a supporting staff and forward support company. The army battalion is designed to execute full spectrum combat missions from low-level conflict to high intensity war.⁴⁹ The battalion is therefore the smallest US army unit that is administratively and tactically self-sufficient for limited duration combat operations. Battalions are typically between 300 and 800 people.⁵⁰ Because the unit can operate combat operations independently, an adversary can be reasonably sure it will fight. A 300-person rule of thumb is useful when expanded across air and sea domains as well. Air units of similar size, squadrons, are the principle unit in modern air forces that deploy forward, although often with additional supporting units.⁵¹ Squadrons in an air-to-air role generally consist of 18-24 fighter aircraft and up to 300 personnel.⁵² In the sea domain, the naval destroyer, or equivalent, is the minimum size of a tripwire. US naval destroyers in the Cold War period were crewed with between 275 and 350 personnel and could sustain independent operations if they have access to port.⁵³ Finally, all three units identified above are commanded by the equivalent rank across the US services providing a rough parity in the level of responsibilities to each unit. Given the considerations above, 300 personnel is a useful rule of thumb for a tripwire's minimum force size.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ "FM 3-21.20, The Infantry Battalion", *US Army* (2008): 1.1, 1.11-1.12.

⁵⁰ James C. Bradford, *International Encyclopedia of Military History*. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 162.

⁵¹ "Air Force Doctrine Volume 3 – AETF Organization" *US Air Force* (2016).

⁵² Michael Moran, "Modern Military Force Structures" *Council on Foreign Relations*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cfr.org/background/modern-military-force-structures>

⁵³ Bradford, *International Encyclopedia of Military History*, 389.

⁵⁴ The rule of thumb is useful when considering a universe of cases and developing the theory. However, one would expect the minimum number to vary based on the geography and politically salient locations in the protégé's territory. For example, in a vast state with many avenues of approach a 300 person tripwire is likely

The composition and purpose of the defender's forces are equally important as relative size. As a minimum for a conflict to remain limited below the threshold of war, states must "avoid direct and public combat encounters."⁵⁵ Of course, "direct and public encounters" is exactly the purpose of the tripwire. The tripwire posture should be comprised of overt combat forces that one can reasonably expect to engage enemy combat forces. These forces need to be overt, public, and wearing the uniform of the defender. Combat forces deployed in support of an explicit deterrent threat meet the requirement because the forces inherent purpose is combat and their stated purpose is defense or deterrence. The presence of such forces should also not be masked under language such as 'volunteers' or 'mercenaries'. These titles imply that the forces are present on their own personal volition and therefore do not represent the nation and the national honor may not be engaged. Furthermore, training advisors, logistics forces, and special operations forces are not suitable tripwires. They are not designed to fight force-on-force and an adversary may perceive that such forces will not engage a potential advance and not 'trip the wire'.⁵⁶

To summarize, the following are properties of a tripwire force posture:

- An expected force ratio of at least 8:1 (attacker : defender)
- Overt combat forces
- Located within the protégé's territory⁵⁷

2.4.3 Tripwire Mobility

easily avoided by an attacker if its exact position is known. Thus, careful consideration should be given to the design, location, and mobility of a small forward force.

⁵⁵ Carson, "Facing Off and Saving Face," 113.

⁵⁶ An exception is if advisors are given an explicit role to accompany the protégé forces into combat against aggressor forces. This distinction is murky but important

⁵⁷ Naval forces can also be considered a tripwire if along critical sea lanes and making port on the protégé's territory.

Mobility cuts both ways in communicating an effective tripwire. On the one hand, mobility decreases tripwire effectiveness because mobile forces could theoretically retreat in the face of force given their ease of movement, or may not be present at the initiation of hostilities. However, mobile forces also interfere with aggressor attempts at aggression by introducing uncertainty as to the exact location of defender forces. Mobile forces increase the difficulty of an attacker designing against a tripwire with a clever conventional war strategy that seeks to avoid contacting the tripwire while invading the protégé.⁵⁸ Mobility also makes salami slicing with limited acts of direct aggression more difficult by increasing the uncertainty that the attacker may encounter the tripwire. This dilemma is best understood by breaking the concept of mobility into two dimensions: strategic mobility and tactical mobility. Strategic mobility is the ability to move to and from the protégé's territory with relative ease. Tactical mobility is the ability to move within the protégé's territory. Where strategic mobility may induce uncertainty if the tripwire is present at all, tactical mobility induces uncertainty to the exact location of the tripwire within the confines of the protégé.

To counteract the negative effects of strategic mobility, tripwire forces should seek a static presence within the protégé territory even when not on active patrol. Examples are naval forces with a homeport on the protégé's coast or aircraft stationed at protégé airfields.⁵⁹ This presence communicates, that even when not on patrol, the attacker will encounter the tripwire if the protégé is attacked. Ground forces are generally strategically static but can also be tactically

⁵⁸ The tactical mobility of tripwire forces addresses the concern in the conventional literature that tripwires can be designed against or maneuvered around, crippling its deterrent effect. See: Solomon, "Demystifying Conventional Deterrence," 119; George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, 522-532; Rhodes, "Conventional Deterrence," 231; Stone, "Conventional Deterrence and the Challenge of Credibility," 116.

⁵⁹ This contrasts to tripwire forces dispatched from neighboring territory providing intermittent patrols within the protégé's territory. Such strategically mobile tripwire lack permanence in the protégé's territory opening avenues for revisionist use of force.

mobile with frequent patrols on avenues of approach, and ideally varying their timing and location at unknown intervals. However, the range and speed of ground forces are inherently limited and therefore must be based close to the routes or important centers that are threatened. Air and naval forces have greatly increased mobility and range granting the potential for a truly mobile tripwire.

Many naval and air forces are both strategically and tactically mobile. Air forces are less reliable tripwires than ground or sea forces because they are tethered to and geographically concentrated at airbases. These bases may or may not be a relevant location for a tripwire force. Additionally, a large number of aircraft are usually required for 24/7 air patrols along borders or important centers to match the permanence of ground or naval forces. However, the speed and mobility of air forces grant several deterrent advantages. First, air force's exact airborne location and future locations is difficult to discern without effective monitoring. Second, with proper early warning, air forces can scramble from their local bases to quickly meet attacker forces at the border or along critical routes of advance.

Naval forces are theoretically similar to aircraft but their usefulness as a tripwire is limited by geography. If the attacker is required to use an amphibious assault to take territory from the protégé, a naval tripwire is a possible defender strategy. Naval ships can make port in the protégé to provide strategic presence, and patrol waterways in which an invasion would have to cross to provide tactical mobility. Naval forces have more permanence than aircraft with greater endurance at sea enabling realistic continuous patrols along possible invasion routes.

2.5 Attacker Strategies

The following section develops a typology of aggressor strategies for altering the status quo. The defender's force posture does not change the interests, motives, or goals of the attacker state but it does constrain the reasonable options for altering the status quo.⁶⁰ Instead of dismissing conventional tripwires as ineffective because it can be designed against,⁶¹ this section develops a typology to see how attackers are likely to design against a tripwire strategy. I posit that aggressor states understand the credible commitment of the tripwire posture, and in response to a defender's tripwire, attackers develop strategies to alter the status quo without 'tripping the wire'. Thus, when a defender with C2E forward deploys military forces, resolved aggressors pursue revisionist strategies that limit the risk of engaging defender forces with their own military forces. The following outlines a four-part typology of aggressor strategies for territorial revision in decreasing order of effectiveness in altering the status quo.

The first aggressor strategy is conventional war. Conventional war is the use of uniformed military forces to alter the territorial status quo by taking and holding territory. By necessity, conventional war involves the use of attacking ground forces to take and hold territory but may also involve forces in the air and sea domains. Conventional war is the quickest and most effective method to alter the territorial status quo.⁶² As defined here, conventional war does not have a minimum threshold of deaths to qualify. The variable of interest is the strategy selected by the aggressor state, not the resulting scale.⁶³

⁶⁰ George, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, 519-532. On motives and intentions see: Rosato, "Inscrutable Intentions," 52-53.

⁶¹ For example see the concerns in: Rhodes, "Conventional Deterrence," 231.

⁶² Ground power is required to take and hold territory and the most effective at quickly defeating an adversary. As Mearsheimer writes, "only armies can expeditiously defeat an opponent." Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 87.

⁶³ Conventional war often results in many casualties, but the use of military force to take and hold territory may not meet the oft-cited 1,000-death threshold. On the common use of a death threshold see: See Daniel Jones, Stuart Bremer, J David Singer, " Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816-1992: Rationale, coding rules, and empirical patterns," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 1 no. 2 (1996): 171-173.

The tripwire is an effective defender strategy to deter conventional war strategies. Because conventional war involves the attributable use of violence by the attacker against the protégé's territory, it risks killing defender forces in the process. An ideal type tripwire would ensure with certainty the destruction of the tripwire in the event of such an aggressor strategy. The use of such an ideal tripwire will constrain the attacker from selecting a conventional war strategy under the conditions developed in section 2.3.3.

The second attacker strategy is 'direct aggression' short of war. Direct aggression is the use of the attacker's military forces to incur a cost on the protégé or defender by using overt military forces to attack opposing military forces or civilian targets. Such strategies include pursuing a punishment campaign against nonmilitary targets, airstrikes against military targets, or limited cross border raids. Direct aggression seeks to alter the territorial status quo by creating costs for maintaining the status quo, not through taking and holding territory. Direct aggression carries risk of defender escalation because it creates the possibility of a force-on-force encounter between the tripwire and the attacker's uniformed forces.

The tripwire has some but limited effectiveness in deterring direct aggression strategies. Because direct strategies involve the attributable use of violence by the attacker against the protégé's territory, it risks killing defender forces in the process. However, because direct aggression strategies are often geographically and temporally localized, attackers may be able to employ direct aggression against specific locations or targets that lack a defender presence. A tripwire with sufficient tactical mobility such that its exact location within the protégé's territory can never be known will be most effective in deterring direct aggression strategies.

The third strategy is ‘indirect aggression.’ The purpose of indirect aggression is to alter the status quo without triggering a direct confrontation with the defender escalating the defender’s involvement. Indirect territorial aggression takes two forms, both of which involve the use of military forces.⁶⁴ The first is nonlethal military action. This is the use of military forces, but in ways that the military is not “pulling the trigger” or initiating violent acts. Such actions include displays of force, blockades, providing supporting noncombat military forces to a proxy force, and noncombat military advisors. The second form of indirect aggression is non-attributable aggression. Non-attributable methods seek to inflict military gains, or punish populations, without the action being attributable to the attacker. The likelihood of attribution need not be zero, but it must at least cast doubt through plausible deniability.⁶⁵ This form of indirect aggression can involve the attacker military “pulling the trigger”, but does so in a way that the defender’s public remains unaware or in doubt. Such methods include support for terrorism or covert activity by the attacker’s military.

Indirect aggression is less effective than conventional war in altering the status quo, and carries some but lower risk of escalating the involvement of the defender. The indirect strategy is less effective because the attacker state loses measures of control and initiative. These strategies often rely on third party actors, which decreases control and injects uncertainty into the

⁶⁴ This is an important distinction from the direct vs indirect paradigm put forward by Mumford. He argues that direct intervention is unique because it is a willingness of the intervener to pay a blood price. Indirect intervention does not. However, the typology in this dissertation involves the use of aggressor military forces in indirect roles which still risks a blood price being paid, and therefore risks attacker and defender military forces killing each other. The risks are much lower than in direct but still present. This is compared to nonmilitary intervention which does not risk a blood price because aggressor military forces are not present. See Andrew Mumford, *Proxy Warfare* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 21-23.

⁶⁵ Mumford, *Proxy Warfare*; Carson, “Facing Off,” 107.

outcome.⁶⁶ Second, because the attacker state does not directly engage in violence, it may grant the defender and protégé an opportunity to respond and gain the initiative.

Indirect strategies are less likely to escalate to conventional war with the defender for two reasons. First, the nationalism fueled escalatory mechanism does not activate if the attacker state does not attack defender troops, or the attack is not attributable. Second, because indirect strategies are less effective and slower to achieve aims, the defender is less likely to escalate to a direct military confrontation because they may calculate escalation is not required.⁶⁷ Thus, the tripwire force posture does not deter the use of indirect strategies to undermine the status quo. Therefore, indirect aggression may be used to ‘salami slice’ the commitments tripwires are deployed to defend by blurring the limits of the commitment.

The indirect strategy departs significantly from Liddel Hart’s formulation of the ‘indirect approach.’⁶⁸ Hart’s argument is poorly defined but at its core, the indirect approach avoids combat between armies. That is where the similarity with the proposed attacker strategies here end. Hart’s evolving conceptions of the indirect approach all believe that states have some ‘Achilles heel’ that could bring down the state without force-on-force conflict. The typology arrayed above outlines the opposite expectation. Conventional war is the most effective at altering the status quo, and all other strategies decrease in expected gains. Hart envisioned the indirect approach in his first two formulations as punishment against civilians by employing violence from either air forces or armies, which in the above typology are direct aggression.

⁶⁶ Biddle et al argue that security force assistance, including training, equipping, and advising partner militaries, is less effective than overt interventions because of interest misalignments between the provider (the attacker state) and the recipient (the attacker’s proxy). See: Stephen Biddle, Julia MacDonald, and Ryan Baker, “Small footprint, small payoff: the military effectiveness of security force assistance,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41 (2018): 89-142.

⁶⁷ Paul Huth, “Major Power Intervention in International Crisis, 1918-1988,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42 no.6 (1998): 747.

⁶⁸ BH Liddel Hart, *Strategy: The Indirect Approach* (London: Faber, 1967).

Only his final formulation of the naval blockade would meet the requirements of ‘indirect territorial aggression.’⁶⁹

The fourth and final strategy is non-military aggression. These strategies pursue means to alter the status quo without the use of military force and do not involve the attacker’s military forces, lethal or nonlethal. Non-military strategies are the final category and distinct from indirect strategies because the attacker does not use its uniformed military forces at all. The risk of attacker and defender forces coming into contact is virtually nil. In contrast to the indirect strategy which still carries the risk that noncombat forces will become inadvertently engaged with defender forces risking escalation. Non-military strategies involve actions such as political subversion, sanctuary or aid to insurgents, aid to subversive political parties, economic sanctions, or verbal threats. These strategies are the least effective in changing the status quo, but have the lowest risk of initiating military conflict with the defender.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ For a detailed review on Hart’s varying conclusions on the ‘indirect approach’ see John Mearsheimer, *Liddell Hart and the Weight of History* (New York, Cornell University Press, 2010), 87-93, 215.

⁷⁰ On the relative effectiveness of military aid see Karen Yarhi-Milo, Alexander Lanoszka, and Zack Cooper, “To Arm or to Ally? The Patron’s Dilemma and the Strategic Logic of Arms Transfers and Alliances,” *International Security* no.2 (2016): 97-98.

Attacker Strategy	Examples	Effectiveness	Cost/Risk
Conventional War	Force on force engagements between attacker and protégé/defender to take and hold protégé territory	Most Effective	Most Risk
Direct	Airstrikes, artillery shelling, cross border raids	Less Effective	Medium Risk
Indirect	Blockades; noncombat support to proxy; support of terrorism	Less Effective	Less Risk
Nonmilitary	Political subversion; material aid to proxy; aid to political parties	Least Effective	Least Risk

Table 2.3 - Attacker Strategies

An aggressor state could theoretically pursue any combination of the four strategies to alter the status quo. When selecting a strategy, aggressors must weigh the probability of gains versus the probability of cost. Therefore, aggressors may first calculate that a nonmilitary approach is most appropriate because the risk is low. If that strategy is ineffective, the attacker can reassess and decide to continue the strategy, escalate, or quit. Changes in the defender force posture should alter the effectiveness and risk of a direct strategy initiating a reevaluation of the strategic calculus.

The aggressor can also attempt to discriminate which actor they target with different strategies. For example, the aggressor may still pursue direct aggression against protégé forces while pursuing an indirect or nonmilitary strategy against the defender. This is only possible if the aggressor can identify the location of defender forces and that the defender posture does not cover all possible avenues. This is why West Berlin was an ideal location for a tripwire. It was so geographically small that any attack would likely engage US forces. However, in a large geographic area such as the Baltics, or Chad, significant tactical mobility may be required by the

defender to thwart direct aggression. Figure 2.3 summarizes the process of attacker strategy selection.

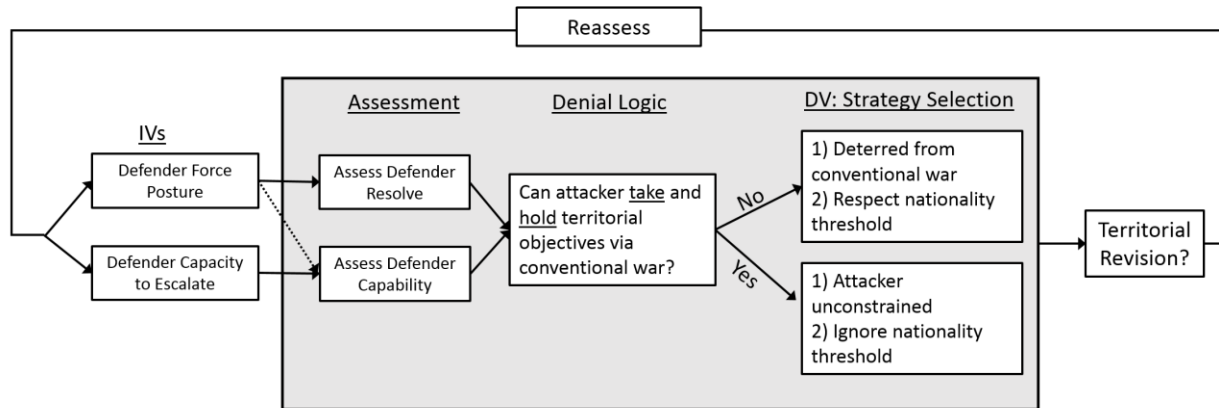


Figure 2.3 - Attacker Strategy Selection Process

2.6 Conclusion

To summarize, I propose that a tripwire force posture is an effective extended deterrent against conventional war when the defender state has the capacity to escalate. Under these conditions, a tripwire is a credible and intelligible signal to protect the protégé against strategies of conventional war. The tripwire does not alter attacker goals or motivations, but does constrain their reasonable strategies for altering the status quo to less effective strategies. A motivated attacker state limited to less effective means of altering the status quo will have a lower likelihood of successfully altering the territorial status quo. Chapter Three follows and outlines a research strategy to develop the theory. The chapter identifies a universe of tripwires in extended immediate deterrence, selects three cases for focused comparison, and discusses the methodological approach.

Chapter 3: Research Design

The purpose of this chapter is to formulate the objectives, design, and structure of the research strategy to develop a theory of conventional tripwire deterrence. Empirically, the dissertation seeks to answer if a tripwire force posture deters the selection of conventional war strategies, and if so, investigates the necessity of the capacity to escalate. The research design approaches the questions by identifying a universe of cases of tripwire deployments in extended immediate deterrence and selects cases from this universe for historical comparison. The research objective of the case studies is primarily heuristic and seeks to identify new hypothesis, causal paths, and variables.¹ The case studies have three purposes in this pursuit. First, through narrow time slice analysis and within case comparison, the cases investigate if and how changes in the presence or location of a tripwire constrain an attacker state's strategic choices. The second objective of the case studies is to evaluate the execution of attacker strategy during extended periods with a static defender force posture. The execution grants indirect evidence of the specific hand-tying nature of the nationalist threshold. Finally, the third purpose is to weigh the explanatory power of the theory against alternative explanations for deterrence outcomes. The theory specifies the independent variables as the presence of a tripwire force posture and the defender capacity to escalate (C2E), and the dependent variable as the attacker's strategy of aggression.

The remainder of the chapter discusses how the research is conducted. First, it outlines scope conditions and presents the universe of tripwires for the project. Second, it discusses the case selection strategy and introduces the three cases selected for further study. The third section

¹ Alexander George and Andrew Bennet, *Case Studies and Theory Development* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 75.

discusses the methodology for executing the cases and reviews the tradeoffs of the approach. Finally, the last section discusses the measurement of the independent and dependent variables.

3.1 Scope Conditions and Universe of Cases

This section identifies a universe of tripwire force postures in extended immediate deterrence.² Scoping the study to tripwires in extended immediate deterrence provides several advantages. First, immediate deterrence provides the hardest test for the theory because aggressors have already selected into immediate deterrence and are expected to be most resolved leading to increased likelihood of conflict and territorial aggression.³ Second, the roles of defender, protégé, and aggressor are well defined in immediate deterrence versus general deterrence.⁴ Third, because immediate deterrence involves crisis and the possible use of violence it offers an opportunity to look for variation in the actions of the adversary towards the defender and protégé's forces. The back-and-forth nature of crisis interactions associated with immediate deterrence increases opportunities for temporal and geographic variation in force posture. Before and during crisis, force postures shift in size, location, and composition during which variation in aggressor strategy can be identified while the capacity to escalate variable most often remains constant. The primary drawback in limiting the scope to immediate

² Huth defines extended immediate deterrence as having three components: "a) A potential attacker is actively considering the use of military force against a protégé of the defender; b) Policymakers in the defender state are aware of this threat; c) Recognizing that an attack is possible, policymakers in the defender state, either explicitly or by the movement of military forces, threaten the use of retaliatory force in an attempt to prevent the use of military force by the potential attacker." I draw the universe of all immediate extended deterrence cases from Huth (1988) and Huth, Bennet, and Gelpi's (1993) studies of extended immediate deterrence. Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, and Paul Huth, Christopher Gelpi, and Scott Bennett. "The Escalation of Great Power Militarized Disputes: Testing Rational Deterrence Theory and Structural Realism." *The American Political Science Review* 87 no.3 (1993): 609-623.

³ Fearon, "Selection Effects and Deterrence," 5-29; Harklett, "The Logic of Conventional Deterrence," 90.

⁴ On tackling these challenges in extended general deterrence see Jesse Johnson, Brett Ashley, and Ahra Wu, "Capability, Credibility, and Extended General Deterrence," *International Interactions* 41 no.2 (2015): 309-336.

deterrence limits the number of observations at the macro level. Given the methodological approach, this drawback is overcome by the benefits of identifying attacker states that are more likely to be resolved increasing the likelihood of meaningful variation in the dependent variable when examining historical cases. Finally, the period from 1945 to 1986 limits the study to nuclearized international system with a bipolar structure. While focused on conventional deterrence this dissertation does not argue that nuclear weapons do not provide a deterrent capability, much research shows that they do.⁵ Nor do the case studies compare the effectiveness of nuclear to conventional deterrence. Despite not comparing nuclear and conventional threats, the applicability and findings of conventional deterrence are still important in a nuclear world. Conventional deterrence may bolster extended nuclear deterrence and help address the stability-instability paradox.⁶

There are 36 cases of immediate extended deterrence from 1945 to 1986,⁷ 11 of which include the use of a defender tripwire before or during the deterrence encounter. The force posture of the defender was coded as a tripwire if the relative local balance of power was 8:1 or greater, with an absolute minimum of 300 military personnel. Each encounter was then coded for the defender's capacity to escalate by accounting for the relative balance of power and the presence of snap-forward capabilities. Table 3.1 is an overview of the tripwire universe.⁸

⁵ See for example: Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); Kenneth N. Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities," *American Political Science Review* 84.3 (1990): 731-746;

⁶ Glenn H. Snyder, "The Balance of Power and the Balance of Terror," in Paul Seabury, ed., *The Balance of Power* (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1965), 185-201. Many US policy makers believed nuclear deterrence to be weakening by the end of the Cold War and that a strong conventional deterrent was needed to reinforce it. See Huntington, "Conventional Deterrence," 32-34.

⁷ Huth, Gelpi, Bennett, "The Escalation of Great Power Militarized Disputes." And Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, 16

⁸ For a discussion on the coding, sources, and measurement of the variables in the universe see section 3.4.

Year	Attacker	Protégé	Defender	C2E	Predicted Outcome	Actual Outcome*
1948	USSR	Berlin	US	Y	Deterred	Deterred
1950	China	Taiwan	US	Y	Deterred	Deterred
1954	China	Taiwan	US	Y	Deterred	Deterred
1961	India	Goa	Portugal	N	Unconstrained	War
1961	N Vietnam	Laos	US	Y	Deterred	Deterred
1974	China	Mongolia	USSR	Y	Deterred	Deterred
1974	Turkey	Cyprus	Greece	N	Unconstrained	War
1975	Guatemala	Belize	UK	Y	Deterred	Deterred
1977	Guatemala	Belize	UK	Y	Deterred	Deterred
1979	US	Cuba	USSR	N	Unconstrained	Deterred
1983	Libya	Chad	France	Y	Deterred	Deterred

Table 3.1 - Universe of Tripwires in Extended Immediate Deterrence

* The outcome of ‘Deterred’ is the selection of any attacker strategy below the threshold of conventional war. ‘Unconstrained’ means the attacker is not deterred from selecting conventional war. ‘War’ is shorthand for the selection of a conventional war strategy by the attacker.

The immediate extended deterrence universe is useful in identifying the presence of a tripwire, the actors in a deterrence relationship, and increasing the likelihood of a resolved aggressor. It also shows that the hypothesis holds across the small universe. All eight cases with the presence of a tripwire with C2E resulted in attacker strategies below the threshold of conventional war. Two of the three cases without C2E ended in deterrence failure and the selection of conventional war. However, the small-N of the universe precludes identifying the statistical frequency in which the theory holds compared to occurring by chance.

The immediate deterrence universe yields just a single observation for each case. This often masks significant variation of defender force posture and aggressor strategies before, during, and after each deterrence encounter missing opportunities to increase our understanding of how tripwires operate. I seek to increase confidence in the theory by using the extended deterrence universe as a launch pad to identify and select cases with resolved attacker states and

then exploit the within case temporal and geographic variation of the defender force posture.⁹ In moving from the ‘data-set observations’ identified above to ‘causal-process observations’ within the cases I seek to increase confidence in the theory by generating insight about the context, process and mechanisms that underpin the tripwire as an extended conventional deterrent.¹⁰ The purpose of the case studies is theory generation¹¹ as “heuristic” case studies.¹²

3.2 Case Selection

The selection strategy is designed to investigate all the theoretically salient cells in the theory by selecting on variation of the independent variables. When nationalism is assumed universal and constant in the international system, the independent variables are the presence of a tripwire and the capacity to escalate. The selection strategy for the within case comparison focused on two conditions. The first condition was selecting for the most variation in the force posture variable over time and/or geography.¹³ Changes in defender force posture are the crucial opportunity to generate and refine the hypothesis. The second condition is repeated crisis interactions through time between the same actors. By keeping the actors constant and repeating interactions, the number of possible observations can be maximized for each case. I counted the

⁹ John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹⁰ Henry Brady, David Collier, and Jason Seawright, “Refocusing the Discussion of Methodology,” in *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse tools, shared standards*, ed. Henry Brady and David Collier (Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield, 2004), 12, 252-265.

¹¹ Arend Lijphart, “Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method,” *American Political Science Review* 65 no.3 (1971), 682-693.

¹² Alexander George and Andrew Bennet, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005).

¹³ Variations in the independent variable in location and time increases the number of observations to study within any one case. This increased variation should help the outcome effects stand out more against alternative explanations and noise. See: John Gerring, “What is a Case Study,” 344; Van Evera, *Guide to Methods*, 25.

number of crisis between the same defender, protégé, defender pairing before and after the extended deterrence encounter.¹⁴

Because the purpose of the dissertation is conventional deterrence, the case selection only considers crises with up to one nuclear-armed state. When only one state has nuclear weapons, there is empirical and theoretical evidence that the conventional-only power is not deterred by the nuclear capability of the defender state.¹⁵ This maybe because of the tradition or ‘taboo’ on non-use¹⁶ or because when only one side has nuclear weapons the crisis “lacks much of the inescapable upward pressure of mutual nuclear escalation.”¹⁷ Conventional deterrence may also operate concurrently with nuclear risk taking between two nuclear powers but this study will limit the analysis to just one nuclear armed power to simplify the analysis and preclude the logics of mutual destruction from consideration. Finally, while not a primary goal of the study, a range of cases was considered to investigate the applicability of a tripwire across the ground, naval and air domains.

A central challenge to this study, is determining if the attacker state intended to select a strategy of conventional war.¹⁸ Therefore, the most convincing comparative evidence that a tripwire backed by C2E constrained the selection of conventional war, would be a shift in

¹⁴ Michael Brecher and Jonathan Wilkenfeld, *A Study of Crisis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

¹⁵ Some examples: China attacked the US in 1950 in Korea, Egypt and Syria attacking Israel forces in 1973, Argentina attacked the UK in 1982, Libya attacking French protégé Chad in 1980s. Also, Huth finds that in 14 of 15 cases deterrence failed with one side having nuclear weapons. See Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, 81-82;

¹⁶ On theories of the tradition of nonuse and the nuclear taboo see: Paul, Thazha Varkey. *The tradition of non-use of nuclear weapons* (CA: Stanford University Press, 2009); Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons since 1945* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008).

¹⁷ Shimshoni, *Israel and Conventional Deterrence*, 30.

¹⁸ The use of the immediate deterrence universe addresses this somewhat, but even in case of immediate deterrence there are debates over the true intentions of ‘attacker’ states. This is a core challenge in all studies of deterrence. For example in the Taiwan Straits Crisis, there is debate over if the PRC had any intention in invading the island of Quemoy when it initiated the 1954 and 1958 crises. See Chapter 6 of this dissertation and: Gordon Chang and He Di, “The Absence of War in the U.S.-China Confrontation over Quemoy and Matsu in 1954-1955: Contingency Luck, and Deterrence” *The American Historical Review* 98 no.5 (1993): 1500-1524.

defender force posture from none to tripwire in the face of active attacker planning or ongoing conventional war operations against the protégé. A resulting change in aggressor strategy traced to concerns of the defender tripwire leading to defender escalation would be strong evidence in support of the theory. Conversely, a selection of conventional war with a tripwire in place backed by C2E would strongly impugn the theory. When a defender posture moves from tripwire to none, there may or may not be a change in aggressor strategy to conventional war. The theory does not specify when the aggressor will select conventional war, just that it will be constrained from doing so in the presence of a tripwire.

Comparison of C2E solely on within case is often not feasible because C2E generally changes very gradually over time.¹⁹ In addition, as the universe shows, the extension of a tripwire without C2E is relatively rare in immediate extended deterrence and the cross-case sample size is small, limiting the options for comparison.²⁰ Given the limitations of the data, the analysis of C2E will rely heavily on within case process tracing to bolster its investigatory power.

Figure 3.1 revisits the 2x2 of predicted outcomes overlaid with the cases selected for study. In order to develop the hypothesis I seek to compare observations in cells one and two while holding constant C2E and as many other theoretically salient variables as possible. Ideally, to develop the requirement for escalation capacity one would compare across cells one

¹⁹ There are exceptions to this; however, such exceptions are rare because power projection is expensive and difficult. Sudden loss of C2E is more likely than a sudden gain such as outcomes to wars, internal state collapse, or the loss of critical forward basing areas that may radically alter the relative balance of power or remove the C2E quickly. Each case study evaluates the C2E through each observation to account for any changes.

²⁰ Gerring, "What is a Case Study," 348. The rarity is expected since extending a tripwire, without C2E is a recipe for disaster given the nationalist consequences, without the capabilities to follow through. The dissertation does not attempt to explain the selection of suboptimal defender strategies, but does consider the phenomenon in Chapter 5.

and three but given the limitations of the data, I primarily rely on process tracing. Cell four is included for completeness but is not studied because there is no theoretical expectation that an attacker would be constrained in cell four if they are not constrained in cells two and three.

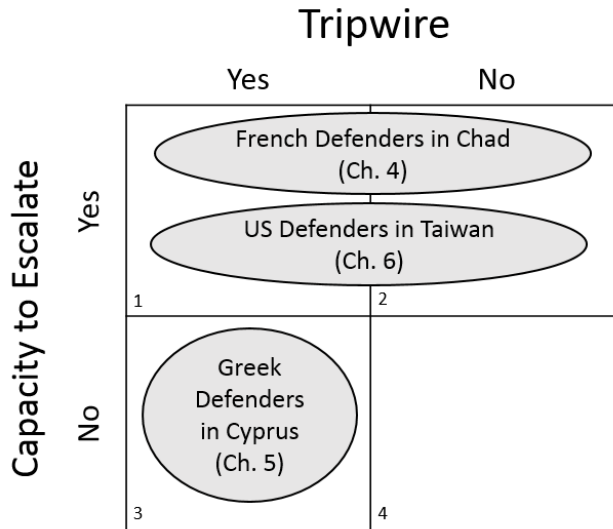


Figure 3.1 – Case Selection 2x2

Comparison across cells one and two is best accomplished through within case analysis. Within case analysis is strengthened by breaking a single longitudinal case into multiple before and after observations for most-similar case comparison.²¹ This method creates a controlled most-similar comparison by holding constant many of the structural explanations for extended deterrence outcomes, such as relative power, intrinsic interests, and reputation. It also, through narrow time slice analysis, allows me to carefully consider dynamic alternative explanations such as the issuance of verbal threats and sunk cost signals such as mobilizations or shows of force.²²

²¹ George and Bennet, *Case Studies*, 81;

²² Beyond the theoretically salient alternative explanations, the case studies also enable me to consider the role of actors outside the three-state extended deterrence paradigm. It is especially important to consider possible defenders to the protégé other than the defender explicitly identified in the universe. On both structural and

The primary objective of the case studies is to determine if a tripwire force posture backed by the capacity to escalate constrained selection of a conventional war strategy therefore lowering the probability of successful territorial revision. Each case is structured similarly. First, I discuss the primary actors and pertinent background of each case. Second, each case is broken into a series of observations where I measure the initial defender force posture and the initial aggressor strategy. Then, I trace if changes in defender force posture alter the attacker's strategy of aggression and if the attacker respects the nationality threshold across strategic choices. Finally, I compare the results with alternative explanations for the outcome to determine which theory holds causal weight.

The Chad case is a crucial case for the study in that it "must closely fit" the theory for there to be confidence in the argument.²³ The case has the most variation in the force posture independent variable. Unfortunately for the people of Chad, but to the benefit of investigating a tripwire's effects, Qaddafi regularly threatened and selected conventional war strategies at the extreme end of the dependent variable typology.²⁴ Additionally, during the course of the case, there is ample opportunity to consider structural and dynamic alternative explanations. The structural theories hold generally constant throughout the interactions and therefore cannot explain the DV variation. In addition, there is extensive use of verbal and sunk cost threats that vary independently of French force posture providing some comparative leverage in assessing alternative explanations of constraining Libya.

dynamic alternate explanations for extended deterrence outcomes, see: Danilovic, *When the Stakes are High*, 21-26; Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, Chapter 1.

²³ Harry Eckstein, "Case Study and Theory in Political Science," in Nelson Polsby and Fred Greenstein eds., *Handbook of Political Science* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1975), 79-183; George and Bennet, *Case Studies*.

²⁴ George and Bennett, *Case Studies*, 252-253.

The primary purpose of the Cyprus case is investigating the necessity of the capacity to escalate for a credible conventional tripwire deterrent. The case traces Turkish and Greek decisions and actions throughout the conflict and shows the critical variable for the selection of a conventional war strategy was the inability for Greece to reliably reinforce its tripwire once the conflict began. Thanks to US involvement, there are accessible sources that trace Greek decision-making early in the crisis where it is clear the Greek military did not have the capacity to escalate, which was critical factor in the failure of the tripwire. The Greek case also provides some within case variation of interest because of the presence of British forces on the island that vary in posture and location throughout the course of the conflict. The British military force, as a guarantor power to Cyprus, provides opportunities for comparison between Turkish strategies and behaviors towards Greek forces. Like the Chad case, there are significant verbal and sunk cost warnings to consider.

The final case is Taiwan from 1950 to 1958 as a pathway and historically salient case.²⁵ The US defender force posture has some temporal variation, but due to mobility of naval forces, it has significant geographic variation. The importance of tripwire position in constraining Chinese strategies provides evidence of both the nationality threshold in action and the increased relative deterrent power of a tripwire backed by C2E compared to even large shows of force that stay completely ‘offshore’. Importantly, because the US tripwire was primarily a naval, and sometimes aerial force, the case is an opportunity to investigate how the inherent mobility of the

²⁵ The case refines the hypothesis by introducing a case with significant strategic tripwire mobility and the issuance of nuclear threats. John Gerring, “Is There a (Viable) Crucial-Case Method?,” *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 3 (March 2007): 238–239.

forces affected the tripwire's effectiveness. Finally, like the Chad case, the Taiwan case involves a nuclear-armed defender against a conventional only attacker through all the observations.

Case	C2E	Power Relationship	Domain	Region	Nuclear Threats
Chad	Yes	D >> A	Land, Air	Africa	No
Cyprus	No	D << A	Land	Europe	No
Taiwan	Yes	D ≈ A	Sea, Air	Asia	Yes

Table 3.2 - Selected Case Summary

3.3 Methodology

To make the argument, I employ the case study method of “structured” and “focused” comparisons.²⁶ Case studies are used because when constructed well they enable a researcher to “peer into the box of causality” between a suspected cause and effect.²⁷ Case studies also bring internal validity by being able to define and measure variables in a precise manner that captures the theoretical intent.²⁸ First, I tightly define the tripwire force posture to isolate the theorized hand-tying effects of forward deployed forces from their propensity to alter the local balance of forces. Second, in the Chad and Taiwan cases I construct a most similar within case design by dividing the longitudinal cases into several observations centered on discontinuous change in the force posture variable. This allows within case comparison by using existing theory to identify alternative explanations and hold structural factors constant to carefully tracing any pertinent variables that covary with the force posture.²⁹ The case of Cyprus is a cross case comparison

²⁶ George and Bennet, *Case Studies and Theory Development*, 67, 83-84;

²⁷ John Gerring, “What is a Case Study and What is It Good For?” *The American Political Science Review* (98) no.2 (2004): 348.

²⁸ George and Bennet, *Case Studies and Theory Development*, 19.

²⁹ Van Evera, *Guide to Methods*, 51-52.

when C2E is not present. Process tracing bolsters all of the comparisons by tracing the actions, and when data is available, the decisions of attacker states in selecting and executing their revisionist strategies.

Case studies are criticized for single observations associated that cannot account for alternative explanations, suffer from omitted variables, and require comparison with other cases to address these shortcomings.³⁰ Given the small universe of cases, cross case comparison is of limited utility given the large number of confounding conditions to control for. Given this limitation, the drawbacks of the single case study method are addressed in two ways. The first is by increasing the number of observations by time slicing around variation on the independent variable decreasing the number of possible covarying explanations. Second, the cases employ process tracing to develop if the independent variables are causally linked to the outcome.³¹ Another argument against the use of case studies is poor generalizability of the theory beyond the narrow confines of the case.³² The tradeoff between comparability with the uniform conditions of within case comparison and limited generalizability is a natural tradeoff of the method. I am cognizant of this tradeoff and attempt to mitigate the drawback by selecting cases with a broad range of antecedent conditions and use process tracing to investigate the causal work of the hand-tying nature of the tripwire based on the nationality threshold.

The goal of the case study chapters is to map out the sequence of events with the finest level of detail available to investigate how different variables interacted to constrain the attacker

³⁰ Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. *Designing social inquiry: Scientific inference in qualitative research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 210-211.

³¹ George and Bennet, *Case Studies*, 221.

³² Gerring, "What is a Case Study," 348.

state's strategy selection.³³ In doing so, alternative explanations will also be weighed to analyze if they can better explain the outcome than shifts in the defender's force posture. Timing is critical in all the cases. By using narrow time slices around shifts in defender posture, I can isolate a corresponding behavior change from many alternative explanations.³⁴ Such shifts are by definition public, otherwise they remain below the threshold of a tripwire, and can be verified as public information by reviewing media sources and when possible, archival records and intelligence estimates to confirm the shifts were public and understood.

The within case comparisons are bolstered by tracing the process in which attackers select and execute revisionist strategies. Process tracing can increase confidence in the comparison and provide a check to determine if the conclusions from historical comparison is spurious.³⁵ Figure 2.2 outlines the process in which a motivated attacker state selects and engages in attempts to revise the territorial status quo. The process is broken into three steps. First, the attacker observes the defender force postures and its capacity to escalate. This information informs the attacker's assessment of its ability to alter the territorial status quo and selects a strategy from the typology of options discussed in section 2.5. This is often where deterrence studies end, did the aggressor take aggressive action and/or did the protégé accede to demands. However, as the case studies show, the decision to select and engage in territorial aggression is not encapsulated in a single event, it is a cyclic process for as long as the attacker is motivated to alter the status quo. There is variation throughout the cycle including in how the attacker both selects and executes its strategy. This dissertation exploits that variation in the

³³ Andrew Bennet, "Case Study Methods: Design, Use, and Comparative Advantages," in Detlef Sprinz and Yael Wolinsky-Nahmias, eds., *Models, Numbers, and Cases: Methods for Studying International Relations* (University of Michigan Press, 2004) 23-24.

³⁴ Van Evera, *Guide to Methods*, 52;

³⁵ George and Bennet, *Case Studies*, 221, 254.

within case analysis to explore the salience of the nationality threshold in constraining aggressor strategy and actions. After selecting the initial strategy, the attacker reassesses by considering progress and updating its information on any changes in force posture and reinitiates the cycle for as long as it is motivated to alter the status quo.

In keeping with the basic requirements of developing a theory, the following lays out expectations of what should be observed at each step in the chain if the theory is valid or false.³⁶ Evidence is marshalled from the structure of events and when able from testimony of actors as to why they acted as they did.³⁷ If the theory is valid, at the strategy selection phase when a tripwire and C2E are present, the attacker should select a strategy short of conventional war. This is a weak hoop test³⁸ because an attacker may select a strategy of aggression below conventional war for various reasons unspecified by the theory.³⁹ Conversely, if the aggressor selects conventional war when the tripwire and C2E are present, the theory would be strongly impugned.⁴⁰

Evidence to support the theory would be the following. Decision makers considering the presence of the defender's tripwire as a challenge to achieving their territorial aims, despite its diminutive size and inability to hold territory. We should find evidence of the denial logic that the attacker believes that they ultimately cannot take and/or hold its territorial objectives if it selects conventional war. Therefore, the development of their revisionist strategy should take

³⁶ Van Evera, *Guide to Methods*, 56; Bennett, Andrew, and Jeffrey T. Checkel, "Process tracing: from philosophical roots to best practices." In Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey Checkel, eds. *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*. Cambridge (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), chapter 1.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁸ Ingo Rohlfing, "Comparative Hypothesis Testing Via Process Tracing," *Sociological Methods and Research* 43 no.4 (2014): 606-642

³⁹ The aggressor may choose to employ a less effective strategy such as a proxy group or political subversion due to lower cost, domestic resistance, alliance politics, or many other factors.

⁴⁰ This would be a 'smoking gun' against the theory. See, Rohlfing, "Comparative Hypothesis Testing," 606-642.

care to avoid tripping the wire. Decision makers should also be assessing their ability to achieve their territorial aims in relation to the defenders capacity to escalate with follow on forces. Evidence against the theory would be attacker state dismissing the tripwire backed by C2E as a nuisance or negligible force in the face of overwhelming local attacker superiority or if concerns of follow on conventional punishment dominate the decision making process.

Second, if the tripwire does operate through a nationalism fueled hand-tying mechanism, evidence supporting the theory would be observations of the attacker state respecting the nationality threshold if a tripwire with C2E is present. Evidence can be marshalled by examining decision process from attacker leadership such as top-down directed rules of engagement designed to limit overt attacker and defender encounters or decision makers weighing the risks of targeting a location with defender forces. Evidence can also come from the structure of events.⁴¹ When observing execution of direct aggression strategies, attacker states should be avoiding the attributable use of violence in locations with defender forces or changing plans when the defender force posture has geographic variation. Evidence against the theory would be deliberate targeting of defender forces with attributable violence and violating the nationality threshold. If a defender deploys a tripwire without C2E, then the theory predicts that in the execution phase, no matter the strategy selected, that the aggressor will be unconcerned about killing defender forces and will therefore not limit their tactical and operational options by avoiding defender military forces.

I use a wide range of sources in tracing the process of attacker revision using primary and secondary sources, histories of the conflicts, and when able archives or memoirs of decision

⁴¹ Van Evera, *Guide to Methods*, 56.

makers. I draw heavily upon journalistic accounts to develop a broader context in which decisions and actions were being made.⁴² When using the material I am cognizant of different perspectives and try to account by triangulating with a broad array of accounts and evidence.⁴³

3.4 Measurement

The independent variables are the force posture of the defender, and the defender's capacity to escalate. Each case will establish the dichotomous value of the capacity to escalate which is then only reconsidered at the start of each observation. Defender force posture will be traced throughout observation for variations in time and geography. The defender's capacity to escalate is assumed when it is significantly more powerful than the attacker state. 'Significantly more powerful' is defined as a state that holds a two to one advantage in relative power over its adversary. The relative balance of power between the attacker and defender was coded using *The Correlates of War Project's* National Military Capabilities index.⁴⁴ The index was adjusted to account for the loss of power as the distance increases from the defender to the protégé.⁴⁵ If the ratio of adjusted national material capability was in the range of $0.5 < \frac{Power_D}{Power_A} < 2.0$, then the defender and attacker were coded near power parity. Outside this range was considered

⁴² "Sources and Methods in Cold War History: The Need for a New Theory-Based Archival Approach," presented at conference on "History and International Relations Theory: Respecting Differences and Crossing Boundaries," Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, January 15-18, 1998; Referenced in: George and Bennet, *Case Studies and Theory*, 97 footnote 15

⁴³ Cameron Thies, "A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International Relations," *International Studies Perspectives* 3, no. 4 (2002): 351-72.

⁴⁴ Singer, J. David. 1987. "Reconstructing the Correlates of War Dataset on Material Capabilities of States, 1816-1985" Version 5. *International Interactions*, 14: 115-32. Retrieved from: <http://www.correlatesofwar.org/datasets/national-material-capabilities>

⁴⁵ The adjusted national capabilities score was calculated using the following formula to account for the loss of strength gradient when trying to project power over a distance outside a state's border: $NMC_{adjusted} = NMC^{\log[(\frac{miles}{500}) + (10^{-e})]}$. See, Bruce Bueno De Mesquita, *The war trap* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 102-107; Also see: Kenneth Boulding, *Conflict and Defense: a general theory* (New York: Harper, 1963).

significantly stronger or significantly weaker. When an attacker and defender are near parity the defender must possess a demonstrated ‘Snap-Forward’ capability to quickly reinforce its tripwire after the attacker selects and begins a conventional war strategy against the protégé. Snap-forward capacity is a dichotomous variable measured via several indicators. First, if the defender has a regional military presence outside the protégé’s territory with large forces or basing agreements outside the protégé’s territory and the sea and/or air lift to reinforce the protégé in a matter of weeks. Second, if the defender has undertaken large scale exercises or shows of force that shifts large numbers of troops to the protégé or the surrounding region. Finally, recent military operations involving large defender forces to deter or fight adversaries in the region. When possible, assessments by political and military leadership bolster the evaluation of snap-forward capability. These assessments from declassified intelligence reports, memoirs, or archives, increase confidence of an attacker’s perception of the defender’s capacity to escalate.

Each case traces the variation in defender force posture. Measuring and coding the force posture follows the theoretical implications of a tripwire explained in section 2.4.2 and are summarized here. The maximum size of a tripwire force is an 8:1 local force balance in the attacker’s favor.⁴⁶ For defender troops to qualify towards the force posture they had to be overt combat units located within the protégé’s territory. These units are defined as military forces with visible markings (such as defender uniforms), that are designed to engage in violence in a force-on-force encounter with another nation-state employing conventional (non-nuclear) weapons.⁴⁷ Noncombat advisors, special and covert operations, or support only troops were not

⁴⁶ For example, a 10:1 or 8:1 ratio is a tripwire posture but a 7:1 ratio is a large posture.

⁴⁷ Dual use weapon systems such as strategic bombers, fighters, or aircraft carriers are all considered conventional combat forces unless actively armed with nuclear weapons. Nuclear only weapon systems such as ICBMs are not considered conventional forces.

considered towards the ratio for a tripwire. Naval forces were only considered if the geography required an amphibious assault. Air forces were only counted towards the force posture if home based within the protégé’s territory, or providing continuous 24/7 air patrol of the protégé’s territory.⁴⁸ In addition, the location of defender force posture was traced to examine how the nationality threshold interacted with aggressor strategies below the threshold of war.

The aggressor portion of the ratio was identified as any forces readying for invasion, and/or any active duty troops that could reach the protégé in a matter of weeks.⁴⁹ When possible, the ratio accounts for aggressor troops tied down in other conflicts or internal security as unavailable. I primarily used histories, almanacs of crisis, and the International Institute for Strategic Studies’ *Military Balance* to source the number and type of troops deployed by the aggressor and defender. When available, this information was supported by declassified intelligence estimates of aggressor forces and memoirs of military officers and politicians involved in the crises.

None	Tripwire	Large
- Less than 300 military personnel	- 300 personnel up to an 8:1 A:D local force ratio	- Greater than the 8:1 ratio A:D local force ratio
- Covert forces	- Overt Combat forces	- Overt Combat forces
- Combat forces outside protégé territory	- Located in protégé territory	- Located in protégé territory

Table 3.3 - Defender Force Posture Coding Summary

⁴⁸ Aircraft or naval vessels executing a ‘stop-over’ or port visit are not counted towards the defender force posture. Air forces that are based in the region and overflying the protégé are only counted if they are on a continuous patrol of the protégé’s territory.

⁴⁹ This is in line for the standards in Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, 88.

The dependent variable is the strategy of aggression selected by the attacker state against the protégé. The strategy is coded as conventional war when the attacker state uses overt combat forces to alter the territorial status quo by taking and holding protégé or disputed territory claimed by both the protégé and attacker. Conventional war is often defined by its scale and level of destruction.⁵⁰ However, because this project is interested in strategy selection, consideration of the resulting scale of destruction is unnecessary. Strategies are coded as conventional war when uniformed and overt attacker state ground forces are used to take and hold protégé territory. At a minimum, ground forces (such as infantry, armor, and artillery) are required for the strategy to be conventional war but may also include other services such as naval and air forces and any other required supporting ground forces.⁵¹ Actions that take territory but rapidly retreat without holding it are not coded as conventional war.

Direct aggression is the attacker's overt use of its military forces to perform attributable violence against the protégé or defender to incur a cost on the protégé and/or defender without taking and holding territory. Instances of direct aggressions can occur as part of a conventional campaign but are also often employed independently. Direct aggression is often localized and not part of a campaign to take territory in of themselves, instead seeking to change the territorial status quo by increasing the cost or risk to the protégé or defender for maintaining the status quo. Examples are border raids, cross border shelling or airstrikes, aerial bombing of civilian centers or naval and air skirmishes. Direct aggression can occur independently in ground, sea, or air domains. Because such actions are often localized they can be further differentiated in how they

⁵⁰ For example see the often referenced scale of militarized disputes in: Daniel Jones, Stuart Bremer, J David Singer, "Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816-1992: Rationale, coding rules, and empirical patterns," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 1 no. 2 (1996): 171-173.

⁵¹ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 87.

target. Restrained targeting respects the nationality threshold and seeks to avoid attacking locations where defender forces are known or suspected to be present out of fear of a defender response. Unrestrained targeting shows little to no concern over the nationality threshold and targets defender, protégé, and civilian locations alike.

Indirect aggression is the use of the attacker's military forces without initiating attributable violence. This is broken into two variations. The first is nonlethal military action that uses overt military force but does not initiate violence. Examples are blockades, providing noncombat logistics support to a proxy force, or deploying noncombat advisors. The second is non-attributable aggression. This form of indirect aggression seeks deniability in the use of military violence. Examples are covert military action that employs violence, sending volunteer military forces, deploying soldiers masquerading as mercenaries, or proxy forces to carry out terrorist attacks.

The final strategy of aggression is nonmilitary aggression. Nonmilitary aggression employs means to alter the status quo without the use of attacker military forces. Examples are political support to a subversive party, providing sanctuary to rebel groups, propaganda, or verbal threats. If attacker military forces are deployed within the protégé's territory, or in a manner that disrupts the protégé economic or military activity, then the strategy does not qualify as nonmilitary aggression.

The next three chapters put the research strategy into action to investigate how a tripwire affects the strategy selection of attacker.

Chapter 4: Chad

4.1 Introduction

The French defense of Chad is a crucial case for theory development. The independent variable, the French defender force posture, exhibits significant variation across its full range through multiple crisis iterations with the same three actors, France, Chad and Libya. The case shows that the French force posture was the key variable in constraining Libyan aggression and ultimately determined if the status quo would be altered by territorial aggression. Given the large power disparity between France and Libya, a tripwire was effective in communicating French resolve to defend Chad and escalate intervention if tripped. Furthermore, the absence of French troops, despite other attempts to signal resolve, failed to prevent Libyan selection of conventional war against Chad. Crucially, while the defender force posture shows significant variation, the alternative theories show little to no variation in their independent variables over time, or do not correlate with their theorized outcomes and therefore cannot explain the aggressor strategy selection, and ultimately extended deterrence success or failure.

France's on-again off-again deployment of combat forces to its beleaguered protégé, Chad, is a unique opportunity to study the role of a defender's force posture, especially the tripwire, in constraining attacker strategies and ultimately preventing territorial aggression. At its core, the Chadian conflict was a domestic power struggle between rival factions within Chad and an international struggle between France and Libya to maintain/gain a sphere of influence. France's decisions to deploy or withdraw troops cannot be derived from any one factor. They maintained a strong reputational interest in upholding its sphere of influence in the region and

had strong regional economic and military alliance ties.¹ However, France was wary of the perceptions of imperialism given its recent colonial past. These tensions intensified under the auspices of the Cold War with Soviet meddling in Africa and US encroachment on a historically French sphere. Additionally, France's domestic politics affected the calculus for intervention, but not in any predictable fashion.² Gaullist factions generally favored stronger intervention, while socialist and communists opposed it, but leaders of different parties chose paths contrary to their platform at times. France also maintained economic ties with Libya for oil exchanging arms despite their confrontations.³ Additionally, the fractious domestic politics in Chad meant a revolving door of protégé leaders, some of whom were pro-French, and some who were not. No one factor consistently predicted the actions of the French. If anything, all the contrasting forces reinforce the inherent challenges in divining a state's intentions, even if their motivations or interests are clear.⁴

In contrast, the French force posture was an unambiguous and mutually understood signal of resolve to the Libyan state which otherwise was left to evaluating a host of competing and contrasting signals from France, the United States, and regional African states. Table 4.1 summarizes the periods of French military forces in Chad from 1978 to 1987 with a macro view of the variation in defender force posture and attacker strategy.⁵ Time slice analysis was utilized

¹ Oye Ogunbadejo, "Qaddafi's North African Design," *International Security* 8 no.1 (1983): 161-162; Alain Rouvez *Disconsolate Empires: French, British, and Belgian Military Involvement in Post-Colonial Sub-Saharan Africa*, London: University Press of America, 1994), 151; J Millard Burr and Robert Collins, *Africa's Thirty Years War Libya, Chad, and the Sudan 1963-1993* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 24-26,172-173; Pierre Lellouche and Dominique Moisi, "French Policy in Africa: A Lonely Battle Against Destabilization," *International Security* 3 no. 4 (1979): 123. CIA, "Africa and France, an Enduring Relationship," (Virginia: CIA, 1983), 2, 6-8.

² Lellouche and Moisi "French policy in Africa" 108-110;

³ Ogunbadejo, "Qaddafi's North African Design," 169.

⁴ Rosato, "The Inscrutable Intentions", 48-88;

⁵ French forces were involved in Chad since independence in 1960, however the majority of French forces were involved in counterinsurgency (counter guerilla) operations and internal control until 1978. This study is focused on conventional aggression therefore the starting point is 1978 when the conflict transitioned from a guerilla

to analyze these subcases, tracing the shifts in French force posture and resulting changes in aggressor strategy. Each subcase centers on a shift from an initial force posture and initial aggressor strategy to a new force posture and resulting strategy generating five observations for controlled within case comparison.

Year	Change in Defender Force Posture	Initial Aggressor Strategy	Resulting Aggressor Strategy
1978	None to Large	Conventional War	Indirect
1980	Large to None	Nonmilitary	Conventional War
1983	None to Tripwire	Conventional War	Nonmilitary
1984	Tripwire to None	Nonmilitary	Indirect to Conventional War
1986	None to Tripwire	Conventional War	Nonmilitary

Table 4.1 – Chad Subcase Identification

Across all five observations, France maintained the capacity to escalate in Chad against Libya. France maintained at least a 5:1 advantage in relative power adjusted for distance⁶ and a robust regional network of bases as shown in Figure 4.1. In 1978, France had 14,000 troops deployed across 20 African states with regular access to airbases in Mauritania, Chad, Djibouti, Senegal, Central African Republic, and Zaire.⁷ Throughout the case, France maintained a network of bases in the region with small forward deployed ground and air forces.

strategy to a conventional strategy fueled by Libyan support. See: Kenneth Pollack, *Arabs at War Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 376-377; Burr and Collins, *Africa's Thirty Years War*, 125-129.

⁶ Version 5 of, David Singer, "Reconstructing the Correlates of War Dataset on Material Capabilities of States, 1816-1985" *International Interactions*, 14 (1987): 115-132.

⁷ Lellouche and Moisi "French policy in Africa," 7.

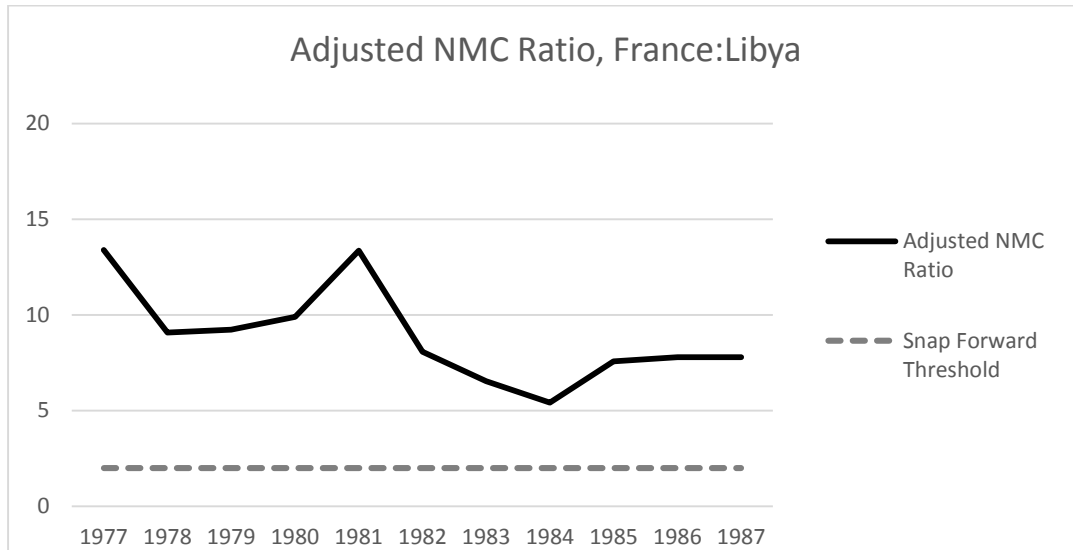


Figure 4.1 - France:Libya Adjusted NMC Ratio

Three primary findings emerge through the observations of the case. First, the French tripwires deterred Libya from selecting a strategy of conventional war and executing an effective *fait accompli* over an especially weak protégé. Without French forces in 1980, Libya conquered Chad in under 10 weeks. In 1986, less than a week before Libya attacked, a CIA report estimated Chad could fall in as little as 2 weeks without French intervention.⁸ The deployment of tripwire forces in 1983 and 1986 communicated French resolve constraining Libyan options for further aggression.

Second, general deterrence indicators of French resolve were insufficient in deterring direct aggression. The French history of intervention in Africa and Chad, France's regional economic and military ties, and reputational concerns were all insufficient in preventing aggression. Furthermore, the use of sunk cost mobilization signals or verbal threats were also

⁸ "Chad: Prospects for Escalation of the Conflict, An Intelligence Assessment," CIA February 1, 1986. Retrieved from: <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP88T00768R000100090001-6.pdf>

insufficient in presenting enough new information to convince Libya that the French were resolved to defend Chad. This situation was certainly exacerbated by unofficial borders and questions over whether the French were resolved to defend all of Chad, just southern Chad, or just the capital. The tripwire and large force presence of the French proved sufficient in deterring the selection of conventional war strategies when these other efforts failed.

Finally, the French tripwire was not risk free. Because the presence of overt French forces did not deter all forms of direct and indirect aggression, French troops were still at risk, even if the threat did not emanate from overt Libyan forces. For example, during Operation *Epervier* the protégé Chadian forces went on an unrestrained offensive against Libyan bases. These assaults threatened Libya to the point where Libya became willing to risk a possible war with France by attacking locations with French troops. Finally, on multiple occasions Libya was able to salami slice at the tripwire, by maneuvering around it, or avoiding air detection.

The remainder of the chapter is structured as follows. First, is background on the Chadian conflict providing context for the subsequent subcases. The background is followed by five chronological subcases, which comprise the bulk of the chapter. These subcases trace each period of French force posture transition and any resulting changes in aggressor strategy. The structure of the subcases is a brief overview and discussion on the initial balance of forces and initial aggressor behavior. Then they review the change in force posture and trace the resulting changes in Libyan strategy. In doing so, the subcases consider other possible confounding factors and other actors that may be influencing Libyan behavior. By carefully accounting for the timing of events, theory informed alternatives, and what actions Libyan decision makers were likely to be aware of, I attempt to isolate the effects of France's force posture. Finally, the

chapter concludes by considering the alternative hypothesis of balance of power, interests, and verbal and sunk cost signals.

4.2 Background

Since decolonization, France has maintained a strong interest in access and stability of sub-Saharan Africa. Chad achieved independence from France on 11 August 1960 from which point France was regularly involved in her internal and external security. France signed an agreement of political, economic, and military assistance with Chad as part of her independence in 1960. The military assistance agreement guaranteed French military logistics support on Chad's request.⁹ The military cooperation agreement was updated in 1976 which stated France will "make available the French military personnel it needs for the organization and training of the Chad armed forces."¹⁰ France kept between 1,000 and 3,500 troops in Chad for internal stability and counter insurgency operations from 1960 to 1975. Starting in 1969 France's role grew from assisting in upholding internal security to also maintaining regional stability and countering Libyan influence. In addition to reputational concerns amongst its African allies, France maintained economic interest in Chadian uranium mines and the more fertile agricultural south. But most of all, France feared a domino like effect through other francophone African regimes if Chad was to fall to external aggression. Countering Libya's influence in the region became

⁹ *France et Chad, Accord concernant l'assistance militaire technique (avec annexe). Signé à Fort Lamy le 11 août 1960.* Retrieved from: <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20821/volume-821-I-11741-English.pdf>

¹⁰ "Agreement Between The Government Of The French Republic And The Government Of The Republic Of Chad On Technical Military Cooperation" *United Nations Treaty Series*. p. 183-189 Retrieved from: <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201092/v1092.pdf>

France's chief objective. This was sharpened by Cold War dynamics with the Soviet Union providing financial, material, and personnel support to Qaddafi.¹¹

Chad's domestic politics were fractious and violent from the start. There is a centuries old north-south cleavage rooted in a Muslim north that would raid the Christian south for slaves to sell along the Mediterranean. The north controlled the caravan routes through the Sahara and therefore dominated trade in the region. The south was agrarian and relatively fertile and considered by the French to be 'useful Chad' (Tchad-utile).¹² There is also significant ethnic variation and resulting cleavages. When Chad gained independence from France, Francois Tombalbaye, a southerner and ethnic Sara, rose to power and instituted a government run by fellow southerners. His regime was repressive and moved to consolidate control over any possible competitors. This was ineffective and violent politics became the norm. In the late 1960s, the Front de liberation nationale du Tchad (FROLINAT) rebelled in the northwest of Chad and began merging with insurgents throughout the north. Initially, FROLINAT and the rebels did not receive major external support. That changed with the rise of Qaddafi. Libya's interest on the surface was both in supporting fellow Arab Muslims, but its strategic interest was in maintaining a weakened state to its south and expanding Libyan control.¹³ Libya laid claim to the Aouzou strip, which is a potentially mineral rich 450-mile by 90-mile strip of territory running along the northern border of Chad and Libya.¹⁴ In addition to opportunities for

¹¹ Rouvez, *Disconsolate*, 151; Lellouche and Moisi "French policy in Africa" 108-110; Ogunbadejo, "Qaddafi's North African Design," 169.

¹² Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, *Conflict in Chad* (Berkeley: University of California, 1981), 141; Keith Somerville, *Foreign Military Intervention in Africa* (London: Pinter's Press, 1990), 61.

¹³ Evidence of Qaddafi's veil of religious righteousness is in his support to various factions in the fluid internal dynamics of Chadian domestic politics. With realignments favoring both Muslims and Christians.

¹⁴ There are competing claims to the Strip whose origins lead back to colonial disputes between France and Italy. Chad claims it under the colonial partition, which the African Union recognizes as the legitimate border. Libya claims the territory as part of the unratified Rome Treaty with Italy in 1935. Lemarchand, "The Case of Chad," 108.

extraction, rebel elements opposing Qaddafi would base out of the strip and attempt to destabilize the Libyan regime. The presence of French support to Chad furthered Qaddafi's concerns of subversion from the south. Finally, Qaddafi's later dreams of a pan Arab state drove his ambitions to dominate Chad.¹⁵

President Tombalbaye protested Libya's support for FROLINAT and diplomatic relations between Libya and Chad were broken in 1971. Relations warmed in 1973 where Libya offered to cease support to FROLINAT, provide financial aid to Chad, and tacit agreement that Libya would control the Aouzou strip. Tombalbaye had little recourse to refuse. France had reduced its forces in 1972 removing all its troops from the north and without them, Chad had no realistic means to control the restive Strip or battle a Libyan supplied FROLINAT. Libya moved forces into the Aouzou denying sanctuary to anti-Qadhafi regime elements and developing a future launch pad into central Chad. Goukouni Oueddei, a rebel leader, openly supported Libya's absorption of Aouzou and other actions gaining him Libya's patronage in the ongoing civil war. Factional leader Hissène Habré bitterly opposed external intervention in Chad's politics and would become Goukouni's long-term rival.¹⁶

On 13 April 1975, Tombalbaye was overthrown and killed in a military coup led by junior officers whose superiors had been arrested and purged by Tombalbaye in what ironically appears to have been a failed coup-proofing strategy. General Félix Malloum was installed as the head of the military council and espoused a platform of national reconciliation and unity.¹⁷

France and Malloum's relationship was uneasy and Malloum demanded the withdrawal of all French forces in the fall of 1975 after France began direct negotiations with the rebel Habré over

¹⁵ Ibid., 109-111.

¹⁶ Somerville, *Military Intervention*, 62-64; Lemarchand, "The Case of Chad," 114-116; Rouvez, *Disconsolate Empires*, 153.

¹⁷ Thompson, *Conflict in Chad*, 45-49, 65-69; Rouvez, *Disconsolate Empires*, 153.

the kidnapping of a French journalist.¹⁸ The Guokouni-Habre split widened after the French withdrawal and Habre's forces clashed openly with Libyan forces. Goukouni, fueled by Libyan support became the defacto leader of FROLINAT.

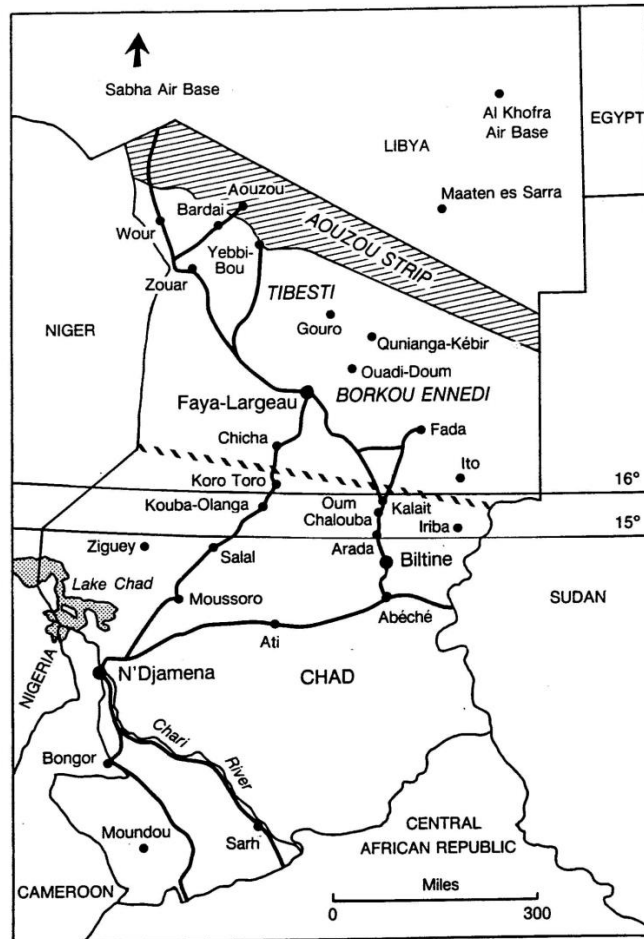


Figure 4.2 – Map of Chad; SOURCE: Lorell, "Airpower," 33.

4.3 Operation *Tacaud*, 1978-1980

In early 1978, France maintained a small cadre of noncombat military advisors to assist Chadian government forces. Libya selected a strategy of conventional war against Chad in

¹⁸ By October 1975, all French forces were removed. In 1976 some French logistics troops returned to open 'stop-over' facilities for aircraft, and in 1977 small numbers of covert French advisors returned.

February of 1978. The French force posture in 1978 shifted from None to Tripwire in response to the aggression at the request of the Chadian government. Libyan strategy shifted from conventional war to indirect aggression through their proxy the rebel group FROLINAT. The tripwire was not effective in preventing the indirect aggression. After two French soldiers died in a firefight with Libyan backed rebels, France increased its force posture to Large. The large posture also failed to deter an indirect strategy and the French fought FROLINAT defeating them in key engagements pushing them out of southern Chad.

The following sections will trace Libyan behavior as the French force posture changed. There are several takeaways. First, the initial force presence of French advisory troops did not constrain Libyan from selecting conventional war against Chad but the shift in French force posture to a tripwire correlates with Libya moving to an indirect aggression strategy. Second, neither the tripwire nor following large French force posture deterred Libya from pursuing indirect aggression. Only the French success in defeating FROLINAT limited further aggression to nonmilitary. Finally, the case shows the unreliability and risk associated with indirect strategies. Libya’s proxy force had their own interests in breaking a ceasefire to attack despite the tripwire, challenging Libyan control and increasing the risk of French reprisal.

Force Posture	Initial Aggressor Strategy	Resulting Strategy
None to Tripwire	Conventional War	Indirect
Tripwire to Large	Indirect	Indirect ¹⁹

4.3.1 Initial Defender Force Posture - None

¹⁹ The increase to a large force presence did not deter an indirect strategy. The French force had to defeat the proxy forces in several battles for the strategy to switch to nonmilitary.

In 1977 to 1978 Libya's army numbered only 22,000 of a total military strength of 29,000 although it was increasingly well equipped with modern Soviet and French hardware. Libya had 9,500 troops tied down on the Ugandan and Egyptian borders leaving at most 17,000 combined army and air force personnel available.²⁰ An unknown additional number of these personnel were tied down with internal security in 1978.²¹ By 1983, the army would nearly double, and by 1985 triple its 1978 size.²² Prior to 1978, Libya maintained between 500 and 1,000 soldiers in the annexed Aouzou Strip.²³

The initial French force posture in Chad was 'None'. France had three hundred noncombat military advisors and special forces soldiers in Chad deployed after the departure of French combat forces in 1975.²⁴ The advisor troops integrated in the Chadian military, trained Chadian forces and were directed to avoid combat or internal stability operations. There were also French civilian mercenary pilots flying four A-1 Skyraider light attack aircraft for the Chadian government.²⁵

4.3.2 Initial Aggressor Strategy – Conventional War

In February 1978, Libya initiated a conventional war strategy against Chad. FROLINAT rebels and Libyan forces attacked Chadian government forces at the strategic juncture at Faya

²⁰ Five thousand Libyan soldiers were on the Egyptian border and 4,500 were operating in offensive operations in Uganda.

²¹ Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 365, 371, 373; *The Military Balance 1977-1978*, (London: The International for Strategic Studies, 1978);

²² *The Military Balance 1983-1984*, (London: The International for Strategic Studies, 1984), 38; *The Military Balance 1985-1986*, (London: The International for Strategic Studies, 1986), 80.

²³ Lemarchand, *The Green and the Black*, 117.

²⁴ Koven, Ronald, "Left May Change France's Africa Policy," *The Washington Post*, March 4, 1978, A15; Rouvez, *Disconsolate Empires*, 153-154; Rene Lemarchand, "The Crisis in Chad" in *Africa Crisis Areas and US Foreign Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 246; Lorell, "Airpower in Peripheral Conflict," 34.

²⁵ It is not clear whether the French pilots were covert French forces or actual mercenary pilots. Agnes Thivent, "L'impossible Mission de L'armée Française," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 1980, p.21 ; Lorell, "Airpower," 9, 35.

Largeau in northern Chad. Libya directly engaged Chadian forces with 4,500-6,500 Libyan troops including heavy tanks, air power and artillery. Libya also outfitted about 2,000 FROLINAT regulars with advanced weapons and logistic support.²⁶ The use of Libyan firepower was new to Chadian wars that were historically light affairs with fast moving raids. Libyan firepower crushed the five thousand-man government garrison, killing or capturing a quarter of the total Chadian army strength in a single battle.²⁷

After the victory at Faya Largeau, Libya garrisoned the town with 800 troops and reorganized the disparate rebel forces under the command of Goukouni Oueddei who would continue as a long time, but unreliable Libyan proxy. With the Chadian army in disarray, Libya and FROLINAT continued their advance with an open path to the capital. On 18 February, President Malloum called upon the French to intervene and honor its commitment to defend its 'weak friends'.

4.3.3 First change in Defender force posture - Tripwire

In response to Libyan intervention and the stunning Chadian defeat, French President d'Estaing approved operation *Tacaud* to defend southern Chad from further rebel and Libyan attack.²⁸ In February, France quietly deployed the first 230 airborne troops to organize the defenses in threatened towns of Moussaro, Abéché, and Mongo joining the 300 hundred French advisors already present in Chad.²⁹ These initial forces had a twofold mission, advise the

²⁶ Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 376; Burr and Collins, *Africa's Thirty Years War*, 119; Lemarchand, "The Case of Chad," 118.

²⁷ Burr and Collins, *Africa's Thirty Years War*, 118-119; Rene Lemarchand, "The Crisis in Chad," in *African Crisis Areas and US Foreign Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 247.

²⁸ The purpose of the coming French troops was not to roll back gains in the north of Chad but instead to deter further aggression south towards the agrarian and political center of Chad.

²⁹ "National Intelligence Daily Cable," *CIA* March 15, 1978, 6; Tonquedec, *Face à Kadhafi*, 35-36; Lorell, "Airpower," 34; "National Intelligence Daily Cable," *CIA* April 4, 1978

Chadians and prepare conditions for the arrival of follow on combat forces.³⁰ Hundreds followed through February and by mid-March approximately 700 French combat troops including marines and legionnaires with accompanying lift and attack helicopters were deployed along the Moussoro-Abeche line.³¹ This placed the French line of deployment along the likely avenues of approach to the capital. These were light infantry combat units wearing French uniforms and operating as functional combat units. This contrasts to the special operations and advisory force that often wore Chadian uniforms and did not operate as standalone units. The presence of French military forces in Chad was public knowledge, but the combat reinforcements in February were sent quietly due to upcoming French legislative elections.³²

4.3.4 Resulting Aggressor Strategy - Indirect

As the French posture shifted from None to Tripwire, Libya altered its aggressor strategy to indirect. While willing to employ Libyan military force in the north of Chad where French forces were not present, Libya halted its drive south. Instead, Libya switched to a strategy of indirect aggression, providing manned logistic support and material aid to its proxy forces pushing further south. Meanwhile, given the losses in the north, the Chadian government headed by President Malloum, sought a cease-fire with Libya. On 27 March, the Benghazi Accords were signed for a 10 April ceasefire contingent on the Chadian government withdrawing objections about the Libyan annexation of Aouzou Strip at the UN.³³ Days later on 15 April, Goukouni argued that the presence of French combat troops violated the terms of the ceasefire

³⁰ Centre de Doctrine d'Emploi des Forces, "Repertoire Typologique des Operations, Tome 2," 35.

³¹ Thivent, "L'impossible Mission," 21.

³² Tonquedec, *Face a Kadhafi*, 36; Rouvez, *Disconsolate Empires*, 154.

³³ Michael Brecher and Jonathan Wilkenfeld, *A Study of Crisis, A comprehensive study of the causes and consequences of war in the twentieth century* (Michigan: University of Michigan, 1997),87; Bearman, *Qadhafi's Libya*, 212-213.

and FROLINAT launched a new offensive south. Libya did not initially direct the offensive but continued its strategy of indirect support using military forces for logistic support to FROLINAT but did not provide combat units or air strikes in the renewed attack south. On 15 April FROLINAT forces struck Salal capturing the small town opening the door to a direct assault on the capital of N'Djamena.

On 16 April, a reinforced squadron of French Marines accompanied by Chadian government soldiers and supported by French light attack helicopters approached the town of Salal recently overrun by FROLINAT.³⁴ They encountered a force of 500 rebels armed with Libyan weapons, losing two French soldiers killed in action in the opening salvos.³⁵ The combined Chadian and French force attacked four times over several days but were unable to dislodge FROLINAT.³⁶ The deaths of French forces and inability of the small French units to dislodge the rebels at Salal forced a public reckoning of the situation in Chad and accelerated French combat reinforcements.

4.3.5 Second Change in Defender French Posture - Large

On 21 and 22 April, western media reported the death of two French soldiers at Salal and the deployment of more French combat troops.³⁷ France confirmed the deployment of 1,000 additional men and a dozen fighter-bombers to Chad joining the French light infantry forces.³⁸

³⁴ The French marine escadron is equivalent to a company.

³⁵ The rebels were armed with modern anti tank and anti air weapons and about 30 vehicles.

³⁶ Tonquedec, *Face à Kadhafi*, 39.

³⁷ "Foreign Legionnaires are rushed to Chad," *The New York Times* April 21, 1978, 9; "Chad Says Troops Repel Rebel Attack," *The New York Times*, April 22, 1978, 4; TCHAD : la Libye ne parait pas hostile à l'envoi de renforts français" *Le Monde* April 28, 1978.

³⁸ "Nouveaux Renforts Français au Tchad" *Le Monde* May 4, 1978; Tonquedec, *Face a Kadhafi*, 39-41; "French Forces in Chad" *The Washington Post*, April 28, 1978; Burr and Collins, *Africa's Thirty Years War*, 119; Lorell, "Airpower in Peripheral Conflict," 34; "TCHAD : la Libye ne parait pas hostile à l'envoi de renforts français" *Le Monde* April 28, 1978.

In May, the total number of French forces would reach between 2,500 and 3,000 with an eventual 24 fighter aircraft.³⁹ These forces joined the existing forces spread along the 13th parallel to defend the routes south to the capital with the remaining forces in the capital itself.⁴⁰ President Giscard reiterated that the French presence was to assure security, and never take the offense.⁴¹

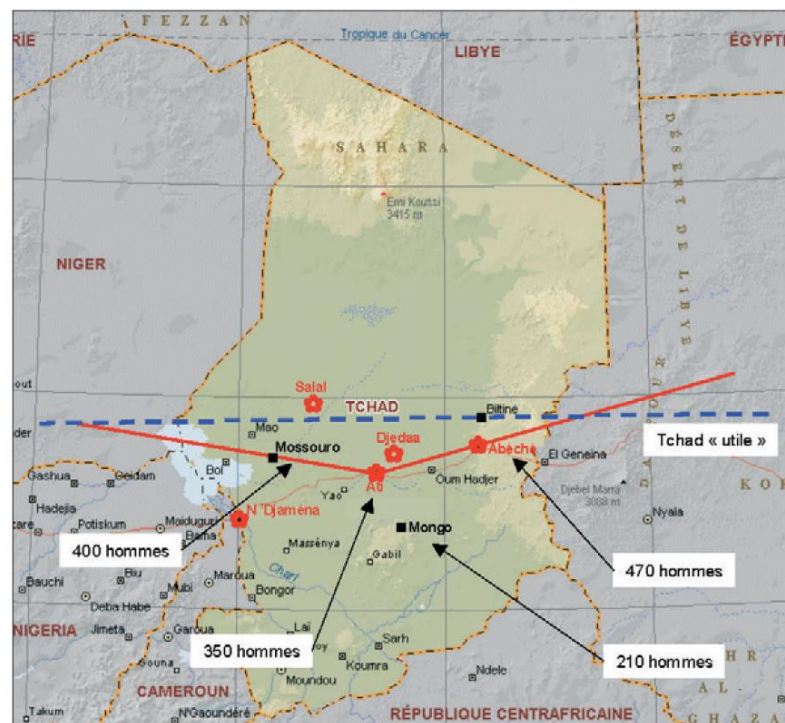


Figure 4.3 - Operation Tacaud Forward French Locations and sites of battles at Salal, Ati, and Djedda
 SOURCE: Centre de Doctrine d'Emploi des Forces, "Répertoire Typologique des Opérations, Tome 2," 38

Libya did not have the forces available nevertheless the logistics, to surpass an 8:1 advantage over the reinforced French.⁴² If every available Libyan active duty body could deploy

³⁹ Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 376; Burr and Collins, *Africa's Thirty Years War*, 124, Rouvez, *Disconsolate Empires*, 154.

⁴⁰ Lorell, "Airpower in Peripheral Conflict," 34; Thivent, "L'impossible Mission," 21.

⁴¹ "«Nos moyens militaires n'exerceront à aucun moment d'action offensive» affirme M. Giscard d'Estaing" *Le Monde* May 2, 1978.

⁴² Assuming every available Libyan could be lifted to Chad, they still could not surpass an 8:1 ratio against the Tacaud force at its peak.

to Chad, assuming none were tied down on internal control, Libya could only muster a 6.8:1 ratio versus the French defender forces in Chad.⁴³ Therefore, by May, Operation *Tacaud* changed the French force posture from Tripwire to Large.

4.3.6 Resulting Aggressor Strategy - Indirect

Despite the increase and overt presence of French forces, Libya continued its strategy of indirect aggression. Libya supported its proxy factions with logistic support, and noncombat military forces north of the French line. Additionally, Libya organized a failed terrorist attack on the French airbase on N'Djamena.⁴⁴ In May, Ahmed Acyl led the Volcan Army, a proxy of Libya and faction of FROLINAT, to attack French and Chadian positions in a renewed push to the capital in May.⁴⁵ The continued aggression by Libya's proxy ignored the nationalist threshold and they were not deterred by the French presence. Only defeats at the hands of the French would halt the indirect strategy.

On 19 May, Acyl's force of 800-1000 men attacked the combined French and Chadian garrison including 450 French personnel at Ati.⁴⁶ French ground and airpower proved decisive destroying much of the proxy force and forcing the rest to retreat. On 31 May, a similar engagement occurred when French forces expelled FAP forces from Djedaa to secure the important road at Ati. French fixed-wing airpower was decisive in both encounters despite the presence of Libyan supplied SA-7 surface to air missiles. Libya did not extend any combat ground forces or air cover to the rebels in the south. French action at Ati and Djedaa stabilized the defensive line across Chad and instituted a north-south stalemate across Chad with Libyan

⁴³ FROLINAT could only muster an estimated 2,500 troops in spring 1978. Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 376.

⁴⁴ Burr and Collins, *Africa's Thirty Years War*, 124.

⁴⁵ Tonquedec, *Face a Kadhafi*, 41; Lorell, "Airpower in Peripheral Conflict," 35; Thivent, "L'impossible Mission," 21.

⁴⁶ Lorell, "Airpower in Peripheral Conflict," 35.

supported forces in the north, and French and government forces in the south.⁴⁷ The import of the north-south cleavage would decline as the Chadian government collapsed in the coming year and the state descended into civil war.

4.3.7 Chad in Chaos

After the French victories, FROLINAT retreated and rearmed with their Libyan patrons and consolidated control in the north of Chad. It was now clear the proxy forces could not challenge the combination of French air and ground power and avoided future military engagements. By August of 1978, relations between Goukouni and Libya broke down over authority on military actions. Fighting erupted in Faya Largeau and Goukouni expelled Libyan advisors and military forces from the north.⁴⁸ Libya altered its strategy to nonmilitary, continuing to provide aid and material to Ahmed Acyl's rebel faction but without Libyan military forces in combat or support roles.

The split between FAP factions and Libya began a series of alliances and fractures among both government and rebel forces. N'Djamena became a civil war battlefield as Habré split from the government and attacked sitting president Malloum. France stayed neutral during all of the inner turmoil refusing to become involved in the broiling civil conflict.⁴⁹ France's role was to prevent external aggression and maintain its sphere of influence, the individual or political party in charge of Chad was less significant. The fighting temporarily subsided with the creation of a unity government (GUNT) which included Goukouni and Habré, but no domestic agreement would last long.

⁴⁷ Tonquedec, *Face a Kadhafi*, 41-48; Burr and Collins, *Africa's Thirty Years War*, 124.

⁴⁸ Nolutshungu, *Limits of Anarchy*, 111-112.

⁴⁹ Thompson and Adloff, *Conflict in Chad*, 49

In April 1979, Libya continued its strategy of nonmilitary aggression in the south where the French forces were deployed. However, in the north the Libyan strategy returned to conventional war. Libya responded to the new Chadian GUNT government that lacked representation of Libya's preferred faction. A mechanized force of 3,000 Libyan troops reentered northern Chad from Kufra, Libya and motored down to oppose the French perimeter in Eastern Chad but remained north of the French forces and did not engage them. Libya would not drive towards the capital and risk attacking French forces, instead only targeting units of Habré's fighters in the north. Habré's forces counterattacked and defeated the Libyan force in a series of small battles from April to August 1979 forcing the Libyans to retreat to the Aouzou Strip and southern Libya.⁵⁰

4.3.8 Conclusion

The *Tacaud* observation illustrates the power of the tripwire, and the more generally the nationality threshold, in deterring strategies of conventional war but its ineffectiveness in preventing indirect aggression. The case has several takeaways. First, the presence of 300 French advisors in the south and existing France-Chad military cooperation agreement clearly did not prevent a conventional war strategy in February 1978. After the resounding FROLINAT and Libyan victory at Faya Largeau there was little Chadian military resistance left to defend against a drive south leading Malloum to call for further French assistance. The resulting French tripwire of light combat forces correlates with Libya altering its strategy to indirect aggression. Second, it is clear that the interim French tripwire and its large presence were ineffective in deterring indirect aggression. Libya was not willing to risk killing French soldiers with Libyan

⁵⁰ Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 377 ; Burr and Collins, *Africa's Thirty Years War*, 130; Tonquedec, *Face a Kadhafi*, 62-63.

troops in Libyan uniforms but was willing to provide noncombat forces and equipment to support FROLINAT and another faction, the Volcan Army. The Volcan Army showed no concern for the nationality threshold and continued their attack south against French positions even as France surged to a large posture. It took two resounding battlefield defeats in April and May for the proxy forces to halt their attempts south. The large French presence including French airpower denied rebel forces any further chance of successful attack. The result was a new status quo and de facto partition of Chad into north and south.

Finally, the *Tacaud* observation highlights the reduced effectiveness of indirect aggression strategies in altering the status quo. Libyan proxy forces proved unreliable, disobeying orders, fracturing, and some elements flipping to attack Libyan positions. It also shows that indirect support is not a risk free venture. There is evidence Libya did not approve the 15 April attacks, violating the nascent ceasefire and killing French soldiers leading to the large French force posture.⁵¹ Despite its military victories, the French presence could not hold together the fragile Chadian government alliance and the southern half of the country descended into a civil war the French had no intent of intervening in. The domestic turmoil in Chad combined with the cost of the French presence would leave to a departure of all French combat forces from Chad in the second half of 1980.

4.4 French Withdrawal and Libyan Victory, 1980-1982

4.4.1 Overview

The complete departure of French combat troops in May 1980 is an opportunity to evaluate aggressor behavior in response to a reduction in defender force posture. The theory of

⁵¹ France would ultimately suffer 18 killed and 27 wounded from combat and accidents during *Tacaud*. "Repertoire Typologique," 38.

conventional tripwires predicts an attacker will be unconstrained from selecting a conventional war strategy, however it makes no predictions on the attacker state’s actual selection.⁵² The subcase is structured as follows. First, it provides an overview of the subcase and a snapshot of the balance of local forces. Then it traces Libyan behavior in response to the change in force posture, the French reaction, and any resulting changes to Libyan behavior. Finally, it concludes by comparing alternative explanations for the outcome.

The purpose of this case is to compare Libyan behavior and the resulting outcomes when French force posture shifted to ‘None.’ The case shows that the change resulted in near immediate selection of conventional war, only taking the time to refit their defeated GUNT proxy forces. The poor information environment coupled with the speed at which Libya was able to project power against a much weaker neighbor enabled Libya to present France with a near *fait accompli* by the time France issued a verbal threat. The result is Libyan occupation of the capital, installation of a compliant regime, and announcing plans for union between Chad and Libya.

Force Posture	Initial Aggressor Strategy	Resulting Strategy
Large to None	Nonmilitary	Conventional War

4.4.2 Initial Force Posture and Initial Libyan Behavior

France was in an awkward position in 1980. Operation *Tacud*, while unpopular at home was successful in altering the local balance of power, deterring Libyan conventional war, and in defeating Libyan backed FROLINAT in key battles. 1979 led to the creation of the brittle Chadian Transitional Government of National Unity (GUNT). Various Chadian factions were

⁵² The attacker state may still choose revisionist options below the threshold of conventional war.

brought under former FROLINAT commander Oueddei Goukouni as president with his former rival Hassan Habré as defense minister. With the perceived reduction of threat from Libyan expansion and the growing violence between factions as successive unity efforts failed, France sought to withdraw its forces, which had become neutral bystanders in a civil war.

The Chadian domestic alliances did not last and Habré left the government and rebuilt his rebel faction reigniting civil war. With the departure of Habré, Goukouni now represented the official government of Chad and the French were in a position as defenders of Goukouni, despite Goukouni's long relationship with Libya. Nigeria sent 1,800 troops to stop the domestic fighting on 16 March but they were wholly ineffective. The fighting between factions was fierce with at least 3,000 killed and another 7,000 wounded fighting in the capital alone. Habré successfully retook the capital and defeated Goukouni who retreated to rearm in Libyan sanctuary. Goukouni's GUNT forces continued to clash with Habré but Goukouni's GUNT suffered heavy casualties and was decidedly losing to Habré.⁵³

The initial Libyan strategy, while French forces were present was one of nonmilitary aggression. Libya provided GUNT forces with arms, funding, and sanctuary in Libya. Libya had not challenged the French in the south or undertaken violent aggression since their retreat in 1979.⁵⁴ Chadian domestic politics were in disarray yet again but Habré appeared to be handling the Libyan backed GUNT. On 27 April 1980, France finally announced the withdrawal of its combat forces from Chad in accordance with the Lagos accord but maintained its defense cooperation agreement with Chad.⁵⁵ The situation in Chad was too fluid and France sought to

⁵³ Ibid, 132-133.

⁵⁴ Nolutshungu, *Limits of Anarchy*, 138.

⁵⁵ "La France met en œuvre sa décision de retirer ses troupes" *Le Monde* April 29, 1980; Burr and Collins, *Africa's Thirty Years War*, 131;

delegate its peacekeeping role to the francophone members of the OAU.⁵⁶ On 16 May, the last French troops departed Chad but France did signal its continuing interest, with the President issuing a statement that French cooperation will return after calm is restored.⁵⁷ French forces remained in neighboring Cameroon and the Central African Republic.

4.4.3 Resulting Aggressor Strategy

Libya quickly began preparations for a strategy of conventional war against Chad after the French withdrew. On June 15, Libya and Goukouni signed a treaty of cooperation and mutual defense against internal and external threats.⁵⁸ Also in June, Libya accelerated construction of infrastructure in the occupied Aouzou strip and southern Libya.⁵⁹ Airfields in the Aouzou Strip and northern Chad would be critical to move heavy Libyan combat power into Chad at a scale that was previously not possible. In August, three months after the French withdrew, Libya began mustering forces in southern Libya and the Aouzou Strip.⁶⁰

On 7 October 1980, a combined Libyan and GUNT force invaded Chad from southern Libya. In total, Libya would send 14,000-15,000 men south accompanied by 300 tanks and supporting artillery. Six to seven thousand GUNT regulars joined for a total force between 20,000 and 22,000.⁶¹ Furthermore, Libyan fighters, light attack aircraft, and attack and lift

⁵⁶ Nolutshungu, *Limits of Anarchy*, 133-135.

⁵⁷ "Le Retrait Des Forces Françaises Est Achevé" *Le Monde* May 19, 1980.

⁵⁸ Paul Balta, "Une partie subtile et déroutante entre, Paris, Tripoli et N'Djamena," *Le Monde*, December 5, 1980 ; Rouvez, *Disconsolate Empires*, 154.

⁵⁹ CIA, "Libyan Military Activity in Chad" December 1980, retrieved from: <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/search/site/102550010-1>

⁶⁰ The staging of Libyan forces in Aouzou and southern Libya alters the local balance of power because these forces are available within weeks for conventional aggression in Chad.

⁶¹ Bearman, *Qadhafi's Libya*, 217; Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 379; Burr and Collin, *Africa's Thirty Years War*, 150; Somerville, *Foreign Interventions*, 68; EG Joffe "Libya and Chad" *Review of African Political Economy* n.21 (1981): 90-91.

helicopters moved to forward airstrips in northern Chad.⁶² The movement and use of these forces would be denied and obfuscated by Libya until December when Libyan forces joined the assault on the capital. In comparison, Habré fielded just 4,000 men without airpower or heavy weapon systems.

After massing in southern Libya and in the Aouzou strip with airlifts, the combined GUNT-Libyan forces struck south to the small but strategic town of Faya Largeau. GUNT provided advance columns of infantry as the primary assault force while the Libyans provided the firepower of heavy artillery, air strikes, and armor.⁶³ The standard practice was to bombard Habré's FAN fighters with Libyan firepower which would often scatter the local defenders. This included the use of Tu-22 heavy bombers against positions in Faya Largeau and against other targets across Chad.⁶⁴ When bombardment was insufficient, GUNT infantry would launch assaults at FAN positions with Libyan tanks supporting.

Despite the large size and direct nature of the Libyan intervention, French intelligence and reporting from northern Chad was unreliable. Information was received second hand by the media and western intelligence on Libyan behavior. By 7 November, there were unverified reports of Libyan troops and "heavy equipment" in both Faya Largeau and entering the GUNT controlled portion of the capital.⁶⁵ It appears that western intelligence was uncertain what strategy Libya was pursuing whether indirectly supporting GUNT forces, or engaging in

⁶² Lorell, "Airpower in Peripheral Conflict," 39; CIA, "Libyan Military Activity in Chad" December 1980;

⁶³ Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 379-380.

⁶⁴ Lorell, "Airpower in Peripheral Conflict," 39-40.

⁶⁵ Edward Cody, "Libya's Qaddafi Strengthens Forces Fighting in Chad War," *Washington Post* November 7, 1980; "L'armee Libyenne Au Tchad?" *Le Monde* November 6, 1980.

conventional war. This is a critical distinction because Habré's forces, with western aid, were more likely to defeat a force with indirect support compared to a direct Libyan invasion.

By late November, concern was beginning to mount in the West, although the French still took a muted public tone. On 19 November, the French foreign minister, Jean François-Poncet, stated that there were serious reports of Libyan troop movements but that the purpose was not clear and promised France was following the situation closely.⁶⁶ On 20 November, the United States Secretary of State was briefed on the build-up of Libyan forces although the brief did not mention their participation in combat. Despite the direct combat nature of Libya's forces, the denials and lack of first-hand accounts created doubt in decision makers as to the aims and use of Libya's military.⁶⁷ On the same date, the CIA assessed only 3,500 Libyans were in Chad although they accurately assessed the aims of Libya to remove Habré forces.⁶⁸ However, the public discourse was still muddy and the activity of Libyan forces unclear. The information environment for France and the US was poor. The French lacked intelligence assets in the north and journalists relied on second hand accounts hundreds of miles from the northern battlefields.⁶⁹ Additionally, both sides in the Chadian civil war had incentive to mislead and misrepresent events for their advantage.

Finally, on 21 November, the US Department of Defense publically announced that Libya intervened directly in the civil war with Libyan forces fighting on behalf of Goukouni.⁷⁰ This report was followed by a French press report on 22 November of direct Libyan involvement

⁶⁶ "Tchad M Jean Francois-Poncet : l'objectif de l'intervention libyenne n'est pas clair" *Le monde* 21 November, 1980.

⁶⁷ Department of State, *FRUS*, North Africa 1977-1980, Vol XVII;

⁶⁸ CIA, "Warning Report: Sub-Saharan Africa, No 25" November 20, 1980;

⁶⁹ Centre de Doctrine d'Emploi des Forces, "Repertoire Typologique des Operations, Tome 2," 38 ; Edward Cody, "Libya's Qaddafi Strengthens Forces Fighting in Chad War" *The Washington Post*, November 7, 1980.

⁷⁰ "Libya sends 4,000 troops, planes to aid of Chad leader in civil war," *Reuters* November 21, 1980.

in the conflict involving Libyan soldiers, attack helicopters, and artillery.⁷¹ These reports describe a strategy of conventional war. Despite these two reports, a public debate developed about the purpose of Libyan troops. Habré's forces claimed irrefutable evidence of Libyan forces including Libyan prisoners, but western journalists visiting N'djamena from Cameroon could not confirm the presence of ground forces.⁷² Additionally, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported it was unable to confirm the existence of a Libyan ground force near the capital.⁷³ The specific French concern over Chad's capital would become a recurring theme. The French were not necessarily willing to fight for northern Chad, but in the future would intervene when the south was threatened. This ambiguity and contradiction with official borders likely exacerbated the challenge of divining French intentions. During November, French officials appeared to be publicly playing down the role of Libya in Chad's civil war while the fighting was in the north. They continued covertly arming Habré in an attempt to limit French involvement while providing Habré with additional material to defend against Libya.⁷⁴

Despite the building public evidence, Qaddafi continued to deny the involvement of Libyan forces in combat despite being confronted with reports of 'unidentified' bomber aircraft or wounded Libyans returning to hospitals in Libya. By 29 November, he claimed that Libyan activities were at the request of the government and that Libyan forces were providing humanitarian aid.⁷⁵ GUNT also denied the direct role of Libyan forces. The GUNT deputy, Lt

⁷¹ "Avec L'appui Terrestre Et Aérien De La Libye Les forces du président Goukouni tenteraient de venir à bout de M. Hissène Habré à N'Djamena" *Le Monde* November 22, 1980.

⁷² Although the journalists did witness the bombing by unmarked Tu-22 and artillery fire.

⁷³ Many western reporters stayed across the Chari river in Cameroon, in sight of N'Djamena. Additionally, the evacuation of western diplomats further degraded understanding of the situation. *Le Monde* November 24, 1980.

⁷⁴ Burr and Collins, *Africa's Thirty Years War*, 133-135.

⁷⁵ "Le Colonel Kadhafi Dément Avoir Accordé Une " Aide Militaire Directe " À M. Goukouni Oueddeï," *Le Monde*, November 29, 1980 ; "Nous soutenons le gouvernement légitime de N'Djamena qui contrôle la situation, déclare le colonel Kadhafi" *Le Monde*, December 2, 1980.

Colonel Kamougue, obfuscated the role of Libyan troops despite reports of captured Libyans, and bombings. He called the US reports of Libyan forces a ‘fable’ and in reference to sightings of Tu-22s bombing FAN positions by western journalists, he replied that they come from an unknown ally, and GUNT did not know who sends them.⁷⁶ At other times, he admitted the use of Libyan material, but nothing more. Meanwhile, France deployed four French Jaguar ground attack fighters to Gabon and then on to the Central African Republic, within striking range of targets in Chad. The flight was officially on a training mission but the French press speculated on their use in Chad and on reassuring regional allies.⁷⁷

In early December, Libya air lifted forces to the town of Dougia, 35 miles north of the capital and began preparing it as a staging area.⁷⁸ The *New York Times* described Libya’s actions as “increasing involvement” in the conflict and that Qaddafi’s intentions were suspicious.⁷⁹ The force preparing to assault N’Djamena was later revealed to include up to 5,000 Libyan regulars and 300 tanks.⁸⁰ Some French officials became concerned that Libya would try to destroy Habré’s forces in the contested capital. When confronted, Qaddafi continued to lie about the nature of the Libyan presence claiming the reported forces were advisors and guards.⁸¹

On 8 December, only 9 weeks after entering Chad in force, Libya launched an overt armored assault on the capital. The Chadian defenders found initial success in rebuffing the first armored push into the city resisting an attack supported by Libyan T-55 tanks.⁸² The FAN destroyed an estimated 20 Libyan vehicles and shot down at least one Mi-25 attack helicopter

⁷⁶ « Tchad: les Libyens installent une base à 60 kilomètres de N’Djamena » *Le Monde*, November 26, 1980.

⁷⁷ « La France Envoie Quatre Avions Jaguar À Libreville » *Le Monde*, November 27, 1980.

⁷⁸ Lorell, “Airpower in Peripheral Conflict,” 37-38.

⁷⁹ James Markham, “Libya Steps up Role in Chad’s Civil War” *The New York Times*, December 3, 1980.

⁸⁰ Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 380.

⁸¹ Markham, “Libya Steps up Role”.

⁸² Michel N’gangbetm, *Peut-on encore sauver le Tchad* (Paris: Karthala, 1984), 45-47.

halting Libya's first attack into the city.⁸³ The last veil of doubt over Libyan involvement and intentions was finally lifted as its conventional war strategy became overt and widely reported. On 12 December, the Libyans fired an estimated 10,000 artillery shells into the city accompanied by airstrikes from heavy bombers and light attack aircraft.⁸⁴

Western press located in the capital and a few miles away in Cameroon could now observe the true nature of Libyan direct aggression. They reported that for the first time, uniformed Libyan troops were being used in a direct assault on Habré's forces.⁸⁵ The risk of Chad falling into Libyan hands became strikingly clear. The assault on the capital crossed a threshold for the French who had previously downplayed the role of Libyan involvement. On 13 December, France issued a verbal warning⁸⁶ to Qaddafi that France,

"is gravely preoccupied by the new deterioration of the situation . . . resulting from the intervention of armed foreign elements. France warns against the continuation of that intervention . . . that threatens the stability of the region. France will support any collective effort that the African states may undertake to reestablish peace in Chad, preserve its unity and maintain its independence."⁸⁷

Augmenting the verbal warning was placing three paratroop battalions on alert and leaking detailed plans to deploy them.⁸⁸ Additionally, a squadron of Jaguar fighter-bombers flew to the Central African Republic.⁸⁹ France hinged its threat on the support of other African nations,

⁸³ James Markham, "Libyan Troops Control Chad's Capital," December 16, 1980.

⁸⁴ Cooper et al, *Libyan Air Wars*, Ch6

⁸⁵ "Des blindés libyens soutenant les forces de M. Goukouni ont subi des pertes à N'Djamena » *Le Monde*, December 13, 1980 ; "Around the World" *The New York Times*, December 12, 1980.

⁸⁶ Huth acknowledges that France issued a verbal warning in 1980 but discounts the warning since it was retracted weeks later. However, France only retracted the threat after Libya had effectively captured the state, and therefore the threat had moved from one of deterrence to compellence. See Huth, *Extended Deterrence*, 99.

⁸⁷ Ronald Koven, "France Tells Libya to End Role in Chad's War; French Warn Libya To End Role in Chad," *Washington Post* 13 December, 1980.

⁸⁸ Ibid; and Walter Schwarz, "France Warns Chad," *The Guardian* December 15, 1980.

⁸⁹ "Mouvements d'unités françaises," *Le Monde* December, 13, 1980.

which were becoming increasingly vocal about Libya's role. Many publicly denounced Libya's actions and privately called for French assistance. Three states broke diplomatic relations with Libya, and Gabon and Senegal publically spoke out in favor of French intervention.⁹⁰ France's late recognition, or acceptance, of the threat to Habré may have been rooted in a "myth of invincibility" where western observers had high confidence in Habre's ability to defeat GUNT forces, even with indirect support from Libya.⁹¹ Indeed Habré had previously scored a string of tactical victories over Libyan forces, even when at a great firepower disadvantage. This was a critical miscalculation.

Libya's reaction to the French threat was conciliatory verbal statements, but unchanged behavior. Colonel Jalloud, Qaddafi's second in command, stated that Libya wanted to remove any misunderstanding and improve relations with France.⁹² However, military victory was within Qaddafi's immediate grasp and the offensive continued. The capital fell three days later to Libyan and GUNT forces on 16 December with Habré and his remaining forces retreating to sanctuary in Cameroon and to the eastern town of Abéché. In January, Libya announced plans to annex Chad into a union with Libya.⁹³

4.4.4 Conclusion

Without a French force presence, Qaddafi saw an opening to pursue the longstanding interest of expanding influence in Chad. This was against the stated interest of France as a protector to Chad and several other Francophone states, to preserve its sphere of interest. France

⁹⁰ Ogunbadejo, "Qaddafi's North African Design," 169-170; Schwarz, "France Warns Chad"; "Qaddafi blooded, west Africa scared, France shamed," *The Economist*, December, 1980 27-28

⁹¹ Nolutshungu, *Limits of Anarchy*, 139-140.

⁹² "France Warns Chad," *The Guardian* December 15, 1980.

⁹³ Rouvez, *Disconsolate Empires*, 155; Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 381;

continued to supply Habré in the hopes he could hold off Libyan backed forces. Libya, for its part, was uncertain about French intentions to intervene as is evidenced by its decision to send significant air defense forces despite Chad lacking a functional air force.⁹⁴ Qaddafi took advantage of the poor information environment and pursued a conventional war strategy while issuing denials and counterclaims to initial reports until the presence could no longer be hidden on the verge of victory. The direct attack on the capital, and the sudden likelihood of FAN's destruction,⁹⁵ resulted in France's belated public recognition of the Libyan strategy and the threat to Chad's independence. The combination of the invasion's speed and covert nature contributed to slow French action. In other words, Libya presented the French with a near *fait accompli* when in December France issued its ineffective verbal threat to Libya. Once Libya took the capital and Habré's troops were routed, France's threat became one of compulsion to leave, not deterrence.

Key to the invasions speed was the logistic prowess of the Libyan military. The Libyans, despite mediocre and unimaginative battlefield tactics, utilized impressive logistics throughout the conflict.⁹⁶ This was in part fueled by the airfield construction and expansion in Libya and northern Chad. The airstrip at Aouzou became operational in 1980 and became the first major runway in northern Chad.⁹⁷ This increase in logistic throughput enabled Libyan power projection into Chad to quickly leverage its manpower and material advantages.

The speed of Qaddafi's advance and the lack of French troops were the critical factors in Qaddafi's victory in Chad in 1980. The alternative explanations of balance of power, reputation,

⁹⁴ The defenses included radar guided ZSU-23 anti-aircraft cannons, SA-7 man portable surface to air missiles, and more sophisticated Soviet SAM systems. Lorell, "Airpower in Peripheral Conflict," 39.

⁹⁵ This contrasts to some earlier FAN successes in holding the capital versus GUNT assaults.

⁹⁶ For a discussion on Libyan logistics see Pollack p. 397-401.

⁹⁷ CIA, "Chad: Geographic Perspectives on a Country in Conflict," September, 1983.

verbal threats, and intrinsic interests cannot explain Libya's behavior. First, the relative balance of power between France and Libya remained unchanged from 1978 to 1986.⁹⁸ Despite France's capacity to escalate given its overwhelming advantage in both latent and military might, and a previous reputation for intervention, it failed to prevent Libyan aggression. Although delayed, France issued a verbal threat against foreign interference that was widely reported as a serious warning to Libya.⁹⁹ France's relative advantage coincided with a snap-forward capacity with a dedicated rapid reaction force for contingencies in Africa with a continued light regional force posture.¹⁰⁰ Given previous French interventions and its light regional presence, the large power advantage and snap forward forces from France, the French capacity to escalate was common knowledge but insufficient on its own.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, media reports emanated from Paris of plans to activate the regional battalions for action in Chad generating further credibility to the verbal threat. However, the verbal threat failed. The lack of French ground forces enabled Qaddafi to directly enter Chad and take advantage of the information environment to secure a quick and cheap victory over Chad.

The striking Libyan victory over Chad and the announcement of annexation shocked many in the west and within Chad. In fact, Libya's own proxy forces, including Goukouni did not support the annexation of Chad after Libya's victory. Facing increasing resistance in Chad, and international pressure, Qaddafi relented in October 1981 and withdrew his forces from Chad.

⁹⁸ See Figure 4.1.

⁹⁹ The media widely reported it as a stern threat and warning. For example see David White, "No Interference in Chad, Paris tells Libya," *The Financial Times*, 24 December, 1980; "Qaddafi blooded, west Africa scared, France shamed," *The Economist*, December, 1980 27-28.

¹⁰⁰ On the evolution and increasing capability of France's rapid reaction force, see Lorrel "Airpower," 2-22.

¹⁰¹ To be clear, the theory predicts that the large relative power advantage of France over Libya will be sufficient if a tripwire in place. The purpose here is to highlight the fact that neither the capacity to escalate in time, nor France's snap forward capability was sufficient without a tripwire presence in deterring a strategy of conventional war.

For the time being Libya was content with its claim in Aouzou and with Goukouni, its proxy, although of limited reliability in power in N’Djamena. With the retreat of the Libyans, Goukouni was vulnerable and Habré attacked from his sanctuary displacing Goukouni in June 1982. Goukouni again fled to Libyan sanctuary to rebuild and rearm.¹⁰²

4.5 Operation *Manta* – the Red Line in the Desert, 1983-1984

4.5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this observation is to examine the effects of the defender force posture moving from ‘None’ to ‘Tripwire’ on Libya’s strategy of territorial revision. In 1983, France responded to a Libyan strategy of conventional war with Operation *Manta* deploying a French tripwire composed of ground and air combat forces. The purpose of the force was to halt Libyan territorial advances, and if possible, restrain France’s aggressive protégé Hissène Habré.¹⁰³

Manta was successful in halting the Libyan advance and deterring any further loss of the protégé’s territorial control. Libyan forces avoided contact with French forces that deployed along a ‘red line’ across the 15th parallel in Chad. The deployment of troops was matched with diplomatic warnings to not cross the 15th parallel and to reinforce that the purpose of the French forces was for deterrence.

Force Posture	Initial Aggressor Strategy	Resulting Strategy
None to Tripwire	Conventional War	Nonmilitary

The remainder of the section is structured as follows. First is the relative balance of forces during Operation *Manta*. Second is tracing the initial Libyan strategy before the tripwire’s

¹⁰² Nolutshungu, *Limits of Anarchy*, 187-188; Rouvez, *Disconsolate Empires*, 154-156;

¹⁰³ Burr and Collins, *Africa’s Thirty Year War*, 171-175.

imposition. Third is evaluating the initial actions of three possible defenders, France, the US, and Zaire. Fourth is the deployment of the tripwire and tracing changes in Libya's strategy selection and execution. Finally, it concludes with the limitations and challenges of employing the tripwire during Operations *Manta*.

4.5.2 Initial Force Posture

The initial balance of forces heavily favored Libya. In 1983, Libya had 68,000 regular military personnel with half being tied down on the Egyptian border and providing internal security.¹⁰⁴ This left a maximum of over 30,000 Libyan regulars available plus the GUNT and remains of the battered Islamic Legion forces outfitted with Libyan weapons of Soviet design. While providing indirect assistance to GUNT forces estimated at 3,000-4,000, Libya maintained 11,000 troops in the annexed Aouzou Strip with a few thousand operating inside Chad itself. When Libya escalated to conventional war, it airlifted an additional 11,000 men to Aouzou but initially only sent 2,000 to 4,000 troops of those troops into Chad.¹⁰⁵

Libya had proven capability to move large numbers of forces into Chad. Despite Libya's haphazard tactical performance, it had excess material and logistic capacity. The 1980 invasion displayed Libya's ability to move 15,000 to 18,000 troops into Chad in a matter of weeks, and the redeployment from Chad to Libya in 1981 moved the entire force in three weeks including the recovery of much of its damaged heavy equipment.¹⁰⁶ Thus, given Libya's logistics capacity

¹⁰⁴ *The Military Balance 1983-1984*, (London: The International for Strategic Studies, 1984); Ogunbadejo, "Qaddafi's North African Design," 161-162.

¹⁰⁵ Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 380-384.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 381; Tonquedec, *Face a Kadhafi*, 112; Cooper, *Libyan Air Wars*, Ch 6;

and its geographic advantage with troops forward staged, it likely had the capacity to muster at least 26,000 Libyan and GUNT troops in Chad within weeks.

Conversely, France did not have any combat forces in Chad from 1980 until the initiation of Operation *Manta*. Again, there were former French air force pilots flying Chad's three ground attack aircraft as contractors. Additionally, there was a covert intelligence team deployed prior to *Manta*. These forces do not meet the requirements of a tripwire force. First, the French pilots did not represent the French flag or the French nation, and therefore their deaths in combat are not expected to trigger the nationalistic response of a uniformed soldier. The intelligence detachment was not designed to fight force on force. Indeed, the intel team's presence at Faya Largeau did not deter Libya's coming assault there and when it became likely the town would fall, France evacuated them.¹⁰⁷

In the opening month of *Manta*, France deployed 1,750 men to Chad that would ultimately grow to reach 3,300 troops in Chad and the surrounding states. This force comprised 2,700 ground combat and support troops, with 600 Air Force and Naval combat and support personnel. The initial deployment included a paltry four Jaguar fighter-bombers and four Mirage air-to-air fighters, which would vary in number but at its peak would reach fifteen combat aircraft.¹⁰⁸ This is in comparison to at least 92 Libyan combat aircraft operating inside Chad.¹⁰⁹ At the peak of Operation *Manta* the force ratio became 8:1 in Libya's favor.¹¹⁰ As the following will show, Libyan behavior changed well before the ratio approached 8:1.

¹⁰⁷ Spartacus, *Operation Manta*, 13-33.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 147, 245-253; Jerome de Lespinois, "L'emploi de la force aérienne au Tchad" *Air and Space Journal – French* 3 (2009):45-46; Lorell, "Airpower in Peripheral Conflict," 40-44; Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya*, 222-224;

¹⁰⁹ Cooper, Grandolini, and Delalande, *Libyan Air Wars*, chapter 6.

¹¹⁰ This estimate is conservative because it only includes Libyan forces in Chad, the Aouzou Strip, and southern Libya. It assumes over 50% of active duty Libyan forces are unavailable for deployment to Chad, nor reserves

4.5.3 Initial Aggressor Strategy

Libya's initial strategy was indirect aggression that escalated to conventional war when that indirect aggression failed to punch through to the capital. Habré's victory in taking the capital during June of 1982 sent Goukouni fleeing to Algeria enroute to Libya, to seek support from his tenuous Libyan patrons. Goukouni began rebuilding his forces under the name Armée de Liberation Nationale (ALN) in Libyan sanctuary.¹¹¹ By the end of 1982, supplied, armed and protected in Libyan sanctuary, Goukouni and the ALN/GUNT established a shadow government in the far north of Chad and began attacking south. Habré's forces initially were able to hold out and engage ALN forces in the north. However, in June of 1983 ALN launched a major assault on Faya Largeau.¹¹² Libya provided indirect assistance to the aggression with noncombat military forces including logistic and communication support in addition to providing arms and material. This indirect aggression included a few thousand Libyan regulars in support roles.¹¹³ On 24 June, the strategic town of Faya Largeau fell and the Chadian government requested French air and ground support. France did not reply to the request. France and the United States continued to provide covert financial and military aid to Habré including vehicles, ammunition, radios, and small arms.

On 1 July, ALN/GUNT with Libyan indirect support launched an offensive south into Chad towards N'Djamena. The push south is consistent with recurring Libyan interest in imposing a pliant regime in N'Djamena that would support Libya's claims to Aouzou and

being activated. The estimates to Libyan strength is limited to forces that can reach the front in a matter of weeks. See Huth, *Extended Deterrence*. This differs from Huth's own analysis which underrated either the number of Libyan forces available for lift, or the lift capacity which Libya displayed in its invasion and retreat in 1980 and 1982.

¹¹¹ The following will use ALN and GUNT to identify Goukouni's force as the Libyan proxy.

¹¹² Nolutshungu, *Limits of Anarchy*, 187-188; Rouvez, *Disconsolate Empires*, 156;

¹¹³ Lemarchand, *The Green and the Black*, 118; Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 381-382;

support continued Libyan influence in Chad. On 8 July, Abéché a strategic border town in the east fell to GUNT forces. Chadian forces rallied with personal leadership from Habré and blunted the ALN offensive preventing a decisive drive to the capital. Habré followed his defensive victories with a counteroffensive to retake the north and on 30 July, government forces retook Faya-Largeau and Fada.

Three hours after Chad retook Faya Largeau, Libya escalated from indirect to conventional war.¹¹⁴ The Libyan Air Force began air strikes against Chadian government positions in and around Faya-Largeau using advanced fighter-bomber aircraft of Soviet and French design.¹¹⁵ The following day Habré again began requesting French ground and air support to counter the direct Libyan intervention. Libya bolstered its forces in Aouzou, airlifting in an additional 11,000 troops including tanks and armored vehicles and began readying for invasion.¹¹⁶ Of this force, Qaddafi sent about 2,000 Libyan ground forces, in two armored columns in its initial push south towards Faya-Largeau to reinforce GUNT.¹¹⁷ Libya's strategy was now conventional war.

4.5.4 Initial Defender Response to Conventional War

Chad had several possible defenders to counter the latest iteration of Libyan aggression. The French had intervened in Chad since its independence, had a military cooperation agreement, and maintained its web of interests in sub-Saharan Africa. The United States

¹¹⁴ Lorell, "Airpower in Peripheral Conflict," 41.

¹¹⁵ Initial strikes were conducted by MIG-23s, Su-22s, and Mirage F-5Ds. In comparison, Chad had three remaining A-1 Skyraiders manned by contract French pilots in its inventory and Zaire had 6 aircraft in N'Djamena but were unable to fly them.

¹¹⁶ Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 383; Somerville, *Foreign Military Intervention*, 69; Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya*, 222.

¹¹⁷ Spartacus, *Operation Manta*, 28; Somerville, *Foreign Military Intervention*, 70; Cooper et al, *Libyan Air Wars*, Ch 6; CIA, "Deployment of Tanks from Libya," August 4, 1983, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom>.

relationship with Libya was steadily deteriorating. The US opposed the expansionist tendencies of Qaddafi and was concerned over Soviet support for Libya. Finally, the sub-Saharan African states, especially Zaire, opposed Qaddafi's meddling and were concerned over their security. This section traces the response of these three states as Libya escalated to conventional war and three points emerge. First, efforts short of France's deployment of forces did not halt the Libyan strategy. Second, the Zairian military force was ineffective as a deterrent. This is an outgrowth to the power disparity between Libya and Zaire. Finally, US deployment of combat aircraft to the region did not alter Libyan behavior, but did assist in the execution of the French deployment.

Zaire began building its presence in Chad as Libyan indirect support in the north intensified. By 15 July, there were approximately 1,000 Zairian combat troops in the capital with three fighter aircraft and three ground attack aircraft.¹¹⁸ The combat aircraft did not fly any sorties against the Libyans nor did the ground component move north to engage Libyan or GUNT forces.¹¹⁹ These forces meet the type and size requirements of a tripwire force. Zaire's forces were symbolic support for Habré and Chad and the Zairian troops could help keep the peace in the capital. Concretely this freed up more of Habré's forces to move north.¹²⁰ The theory of conventional tripwire deterrence suggests that the Zairian troops, because of Libya's large relative power advantage, lacked the capacity to escalate against Libya.¹²¹ The theory therefore predicts a Zairian tripwire would be an ineffective deterrent against Libya selecting conventional war. The evidence of the case supports this prediction. There does not appear to be

¹¹⁸ Nolutshungu, *Limits of Anarchy*, 188; This number would grow to 1,800. LeMarchand, "The Crisis in Chad," 249.

¹¹⁹ Cooper et al, *Libyan Air Wars*, Ch 6.

¹²⁰ Roulez, *Disconsolate Empires*, 156; CIA, "Daily Intelligence Brief," July 28, 1983 ; CIA "Daily Intelligence Brief," March 15, 1984, p. 8; Nolutshungu, *Limits of Anarchy*, 191.

¹²¹ Libya held an approximate 10:1 advantage in latent power in the National Material Capability index.

any change to Libyan behavior with the emplacement or enlargement of Zairian forces, which would reach over 2,000 by August. Unfortunately, because the location of the troops were in the capital geographically separated from the front line, there is no direct test if Libyan or its proxy's behavior differed when facing Zairian, Chadian, or French forces. However, the case does show that presence of Zairian troops in the capital did not alter Libya's behavior in the north or halt southward aggression.¹²² Indeed, during this timeframe Libya escalated from indirect to conventional war.

When Libya escalated, the United States immediately and publically accused Libya of directly intervening in Chad. The State Department released a statement on 31 July accusing Libya of "open aggression" and called the airstrikes an "unprovoked outside intervention" and condemned the "overt intervention" as dangerous to regional stability.¹²³ Furthermore, the State Department stated that Libya should cease its bombing and remove its military forces from Chad. On 1 August, President Reagan approved a secret plan to send shoulder launched surface to air missiles to Chad along with three US instructors. Additionally, he approved sending E-3 AWACS surveillance planes to Egypt with F-15 fighter escorts ahead of schedule to monitor the situation in Chad. Finally, he ordered the Sixth Fleet to conduct exercises in the Gulf of Sidra.¹²⁴ These plans were quickly discovered or leaked and reported in the American press and were therefore public to Libyan decision makers.¹²⁵ Finally, the US publically announced \$25 million in emergency aid to the Chadian government.¹²⁶ On 8 August, President Reagan officially

¹²² Somerville, 69;

¹²³ Edward Burks, "US accuses Libya of bombing raids against Chad city," *The New York Times*, August 1, 1983.

¹²⁴ CIA, "Activities in Support of Chad," August 1, 1983. Retrieved from: <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp85m00363r001102550013-8>

¹²⁵ Edward Burks, "US sends AWACS to Egypt, advisors to Chad," August 4, 1983.

¹²⁶ Nolutshungu, *Limits of Anarchy*, 188; Associated Press "Chad says its army is pursuing rebels," reported in *The New York Times* August 3, 1983.

informed Congress of US efforts to support Chad and the White House announced that Libyan soldiers were actively involved in Chad and were readying to attack Faya-Largeau.¹²⁷

Throughout this period, similar to Libya's aggression in 1980, Libya vehemently denied its strategy of conventional war in Chad.¹²⁸

The United States was also pressuring the French to oppose the Libyan invasion.¹²⁹ France's socialist President Mitterrand campaigned against French imperialism in Africa and extended interventions there.¹³⁰ Despite France's standing interest in preventing Libyan infringement on France's traditional sphere of influence, and their concern over other French protégés, France also maintained economic interests in Libya.¹³¹ Even if previous behavior could be an indicator of French intentions, France's previous behavior was inconsistent, intervening in 1978, but not intervening in 1980. In sum, France's intentions based on past actions could hardly be known or straightforward to Libya.

France publically responded to Libya's direct involvement by increasing military aid to Chad with the delivery of anti-aircraft weapons.¹³² France was also providing intra-theater logistics support flying material to Habré's forces in northern Chad.¹³³ Habré repeatedly

¹²⁷ Steven Weisman, "Congress Notified on Chad Support," *The New York Times*, August 9, 1983.

¹²⁸ Burks, "US accuses Libya," Aug 1; Jean-Claude Pomonti, "Les Occidentaux vont aider le gouvernement tchadien Pour faire face aux bombardements libyens les États-Unis vont, comme la France livrés de l'armement anti-aérien aux autorités de N'Djamena" *Le Monde*, August 3, 1983.

¹²⁹ Bearman, *Qaddafi's Libya*, 222-224.

¹³⁰ In fact, US intelligence predicted that it would be difficult for Mitterrand to send combat forces. See: CIA, "Note for the Director of the CIA: Chad," August 3, 1983. Retrieved from: <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85M00363R001102550010-1.pdf>; Also see Rouvez, *Disconsolate Empires*, 156.

¹³¹ Ogunbadejo, "Qaddafi's North African Design" , 169.

¹³² Jean-Claude Pomonti, "Les Occidentaux vont aider le gouvernement tchadien Pour faire face aux bombardements libyens les États-Unis vont, comme la France livrés de l'armement anti-aérien aux autorités de N'Djamena" *Le Monde*, August 8, 1983.

¹³³ Alan Cowell, "Pilot presented by Chad as Libyan asserts planes dropped napalm," *The New York Times*, August 9, 1983.

requested French fighters to protect his forces against Libyan airpower but France demurred.¹³⁴

On August 5, Charles Hernu, the French minister of defense, stated that the president was following the situation closely but the conflict was a civil war. He implied that because there was no direct foreign intervention, direct French military involvement was unwarranted.¹³⁵

There are two points to be made on the initial public French response. First, France increased its ongoing indirect support to Habré in a low cost attempt hoping that Chad could defeat indirect Libyan support with western aid.¹³⁶ Second, France's rhetoric was significantly different from the United States. The US immediately declared the Libyan interventions as direct and denounced it, reiterating its strong strategic interests in the region.¹³⁷ Yet the French publically argued as late as 5 August that the conflict was a civil war with foreign implications and warned against foreign intervention. In other words, France was publically stating that Libya's involvement was indirect, and hoped to stabilize the situation without committing combat forces with all the attendant risks.¹³⁸ The US was trying to push the French to intervene overtly while the French searched for the lowest cost and lowest risk solution. On 9 August, France announced 180 paratroopers were crossing from the Central African Republic to N'Djamena. However, the force was announced as instructors for the Chadian military and were to avoid all

¹³⁴ Pomonti, "Les Occidentaux vont aider," August 3, 1983.

¹³⁵ Jean-Claude Pomonti, "Faya-Largeau est attaquée par les rebelles qui auraient reconquis deux positions dans l'Est M. Mitterrand est constamment tenu informé de la situation," *Le Monde*, August 8, 1983.

¹³⁶ France hoped to be able to provide enough material support to Habre against the current levels of Libyan engagement. There was no way for France to arm Habre enough to prevent a full scale Libyan invasion with tens of thousands of Libyan regulars. The question remained if Libya would escalate. See CIA, "Daily Intelligence Brief – 3 August, 1983," retrieved from: <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/>

¹³⁷ Pomonti, "Faya-Largeau est attaquée par les rebelles," August 8, 1983.

¹³⁸ CIA, "Daily Intelligence Brief," August 2, 1983, p.1; For public commentary see Alan Conwell, "France rules out troops or planes to help Chadians," August 8, 1983.

combat operations.¹³⁹ Such force would not be expected to engage Libyan forces and therefore do not qualify as a tripwire force.

4.5.4.1 Libyan Reaction prior to *Manta*

US, French, and Zairian efforts prior to the deployment of *Manta* failed to deescalate Libyan intervention or change the selected strategy or its execution. On 6 August, there was a lull in Libyan airstrikes but they resumed on 8 August in preparation for a direct Libyan assault. On 10 August, GUNT and Libyan ground and air forces attacked Faya-Largeau in a combined infantry and armor assault supported by Libyan airstrikes. Chadian defenses crumbled.¹⁴⁰ Libya and GUNT forces paused in Faya-Largeau as Libya reinforced its position with second echelon forces from Aouzou in preparation for further action.¹⁴¹ These forces included heavy weapons such as large bore artillery and heavy tanks, heavy lift vehicles for transport, as well as advanced air defenses.

To summarize, by 10 August Libya was engaging in a strategy of conventional war in northern Chad with heavy combat forces and massing further conventional combat power. Diplomatic efforts from the US, France, and the Organization of African Unity were ineffective in preventing the direct aggression. Additionally, the movement of US forces to the region and the presence of Zairian forces failed to constrain Libya from selecting conventional war. On the night of August 10th, France would begin Operation *Manta*, bringing a relatively small number of French combat forces into Chad, shifting the force posture from None to Tripwire.

¹³⁹ "France sending 180 soldiers to Chad as instructors," *The New York Times*, August 10, 1983.

¹⁴⁰ Lemarchand, *The Green and the Black*, 119; Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 383; Nolutshungu, *Limits of Anarchy*, 190.

¹⁴¹ Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 383; and CIA, "Libya-Chad Conflict," August 13, 1983, document CIA-RDP84T00171R000200290001-9;

4.5.5 Change in Force Posture: Operation *Manta*

Despite the outward reticence of the French government, early August saw rapid planning for a French response to Libyan aggression. On 5 August, President Mitterrand met with his crisis council to consider what action to take.¹⁴² They recognized the selection of conventional war and discussed two primary plans. The first was a direct air strike on Libyan forces in the Aouzou Strip named Operation *Orque*. This was deemed too risky given Libyan air defenses and the ranges involved in striking so far from established bases.¹⁴³ The resulting plan was the development of a “cordon sanitaire” in the desert south of Faya Largeau. France would deploy ground forces in a line of outposts across the Chadian desert with a small contingent of fixed wing air support deployed to the capital. Additional air and manpower would reside in regional bases and on call in France. Any aggression by Libyan forces south would place them in direct contact with the French forces arrayed along the three likely avenues of approach. On the night of 10 August, the first 130 French combat forces moved into Chad from the CAR with a follow on force of 378 men arriving by air on the 11th, 12th, and 13th. On the 13th 143 men arrived at Abéché in the east on the road from Libyan held Fada to the Chadian capital.¹⁴⁴ The deployment of the French tripwire called Operation *Manta* had begun. In the first week, just 900 men would be moved into country armed with light weapons, armored cars and mortars. These forces arrayed in an east-west line of small outposts south of the Libyan advance.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² There appears to be two primary concerns in these meetings. The first is the French reputation in sub-Saharan Africa as a reliable defender. The second is the possibility of increasing US influence in sub-Saharan Africa displacing the historic French position.

¹⁴³ Spartacus, *Operation Manta*, 23-28.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 33.

¹⁴⁵ Centre de Doctrine d'Emploi des Forces, “Repertoire Typologique des Operations, Tome 2,” 51-59 ; Lorell, “Airpower in Peripheral Conflict,” 45.

France continued diplomatic overtures with the ongoing deployment of French combat forces. President Mitterrand dispatched his trusted advisor, Roland Dumas, to meet with Qaddafi on 15 August to explain the French position. Dumas describes the meeting as difficult but much more successful than earlier overtures in August before Operation *Manta* began. In this meeting, Dumas explained that the purpose of French troops was to protect Habré and the capital, and that French forces would not be used to attack north. This echoed public statements by Mitterrand.¹⁴⁶ In the meeting, Dumas reiterated that any Libyan advance south of the line would be a *casus belli*. There was mutual understanding that the 15th parallel would be a “red line” not to be crossed and an informal partition of Chad.¹⁴⁷ Meanwhile, France made it clear that French forces would not be an auxiliary to Habré nor used in offensive operations north of the 15th parallel.¹⁴⁸ President Mitterrand publically stated that if attacked the French would not only defend themselves, but also strike back.¹⁴⁹ Chadian government (FANT) forces remained north of 15th parallel after the French arrived.

By 23 August, there were 1,525 French troops in Chad along the lines from N’Djamena to Salal, Abéché, and from Moussoro to Biltine.¹⁵⁰ This deployment covered the major routes of advance toward the capital from the north. If the Libyans wanted to come south in force they had to engage French combat forces. Each outpost along the “red line” consisted of several hundred French soldiers supported by light weapons given strict rules of engagement to not

¹⁴⁶ Transcript of televised interview from: Jacques Amalric and Eric Rouleau, “Nous avons mis en place les moyens de répondre militairement et vite a une nouvelle offensive,” *Le Monde*, 26 August, 1983.

¹⁴⁷ Roland Dumas, *Affairs Etrangères, Tome 1, 1981-1988* (Fayard, 2007), 308-311.

¹⁴⁸ Burr and Collins, *Africa’s Thirty Years War*, 173, 175.

¹⁴⁹ Amalric and Rouleau, “Nous avons mis en place,” 26 August, 1983.

¹⁵⁰ On the exact timing and size of French forces arriving at specific outposts on the red line see “Annexe 2: Chronologie de la montée en puissance de Manta Du 10 Aout au 14 Octobre 1983” in Sparatcus, *Operation Manta*, 245-253.

engage the enemy unless fired upon.¹⁵¹ The French would patrol in groups of 80-100 men in vehicles with light anti-tank weapons supported by light helicopters to detect any ground elements attempting to infiltrate the line. The forward forces along the line had the minimum of air defense in American shoulder launched Stinger missiles.¹⁵²

Manta also deployed minimal fixed wing airpower to Chad. Four Jaguar ground attack aircraft and four Mirage F1 air-to-air fighters were deployed to N'Djamena.¹⁵³ Four additional Jaguars were stationed at regional bases in Bagui or Libreville that could be called upon in crisis.¹⁵⁴ This is in contrast to the 80 combat aircraft Libya employed just in its initial assault on Faya Largeau.¹⁵⁵ Additionally, the French ground to air defenses were minimal with three Crotale SAM batteries in the capital, which were less than the minimum of five required for effective coverage. Even with later improvements, radar coverage only provided a 15-minute warning of incoming aircraft to scramble French interceptors.¹⁵⁶ The *Manta* deployment lacked the mass to threaten the position in the north, but was large enough to cover the routes of advance in a large state such as Chad.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ Lorell, "Airpower in Peripheral Conflict," 43; Centre de Doctrine d'Emploi des Forces, "Repertoire Typologique des Operations, Tome 2, 51-59.

¹⁵² Ibid., 47; Spartacus, *Operation Manta*, 104.

¹⁵³ This contrasts to the twenty Jaguars deployed in 1978.

¹⁵⁴ Spartacus, *Operation Manta*, 106; Pollack, *Arabs at War*,

¹⁵⁵ Lorell, "Airpower in Peripheral Conflict," 43; Alan Cowell, "Mobutu, on a visit to Chad, renews Zairian support," *The New York Times*, August 20, 1983.

¹⁵⁶ Spartacus, *Operation Manta*, 107.

¹⁵⁷ William Foltz, "Libya's Military Power," in *The Green and the Black* (Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1988), 65.

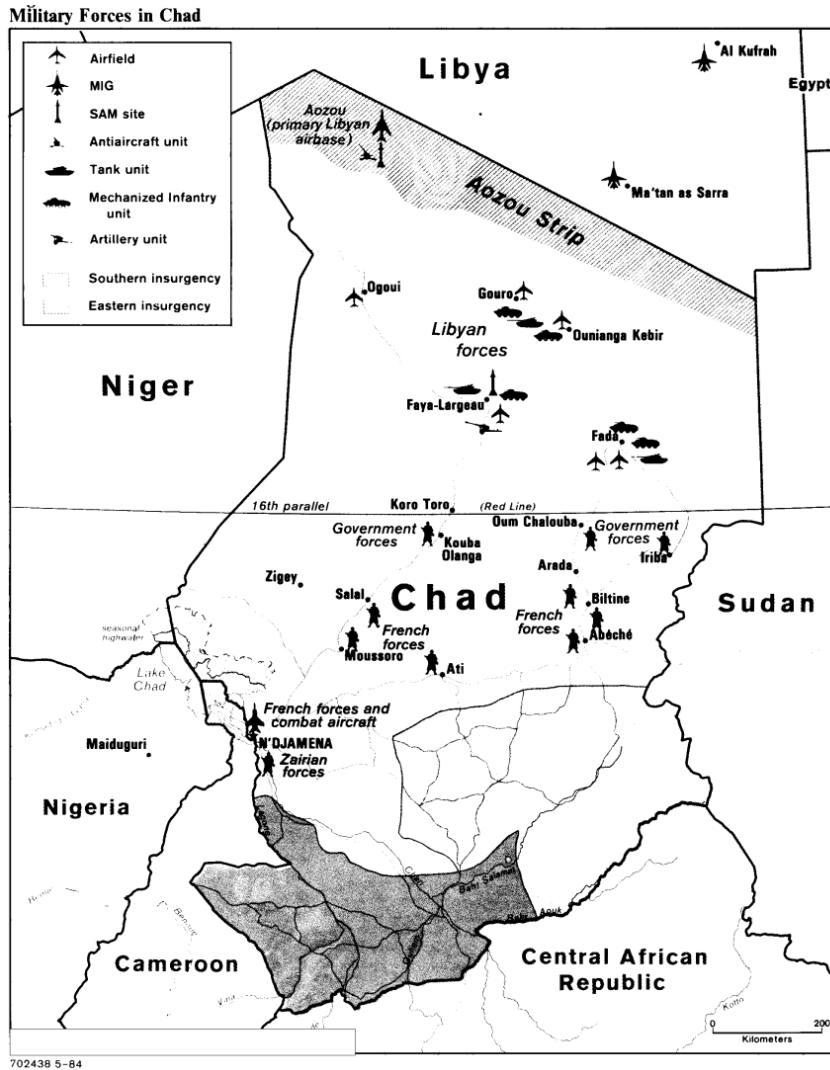


Figure 4.4 - Final Manta Force Disposition, May 1984.

SOURCE: Central Intelligence Agency, "Chad: Habré's fragile position, an intelligence assessment," May 15 1984, p. vi. Retrieved from: <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/>

4.5.6 Resulting Aggressor Strategy

The initial *Manta* deployment halted the Libyan strategy of conventional war south towards the capital, which remained Libya's ultimate objective. Libya halted its air strikes against government forces at Oum Chalouba on 12 August, just as the initial forces of *Manta* were departing for outposts on the redline. A tacit agreement emerged between Libya and

France to not engage each other's forces.¹⁵⁸ Libya switched strategies back to indirect aggression supporting GUNT/ALN forces probing just north of the red line and direct aggression north of the red line where rebel forces continued to attack protégé outposts. South towards the 15th parallel, Libya did not continue direct or indirect territorial aggression.¹⁵⁹ This change in aggressor behavior cannot be accounted for by any efforts prior to *Manta*'s deployment, the static power differential between actors, or the unchanged French regional posture.

The execution of Libya's direct aggression strategy respected the nationality threshold and avoided the French outposts. Libyan combat forces would not approach French forces for the duration of their deployment,¹⁶⁰ and Libyan air forces were given strict rules of engagement to stay north of the redline and did not cross it.¹⁶¹ GUNT elements undertook brief probes of French resolve by attacking outposts with Chadian forces. GUNT forces sortied out of Fada on 2 and 6 September attacking FANT only forces just north of the red line at Oum-Chalouba. French forces were within 12 miles of the attack causing two Jaguars to scramble but headquarters in Paris insisted on only engaging if the French were directly threatened.¹⁶² FANT forces counter attacked taking two towns in northern Chad. Libya responded to the loss by indiscriminately bombing Chadian towns north of the 15th parallel.¹⁶³ On 11 September, GUNT again deployed a column towards government positions. The French launched Jaguars that executed low-level passes over the column. The column turned around without engaging French

¹⁵⁸ Somerville, *Foreign Military Interventions*, 70-71; Rouvez, *Disconsolate Empires*, 157-158.

¹⁵⁹ GUNT did test French resolve by skirmishing with FANT positions and launched one raid south of the 15th parallel.

¹⁶⁰ The exception are a few reconnaissance flights near the red line and single reported instance of an unarmed Libyan IL-76 approaching the red line. French aircraft intercepted it and the IL-76 turned back north. Lorell, "Airpower in Peripheral Conflict," 47.

¹⁶¹ Cooper et al, *Libyan Air Wars*

¹⁶² Lorell, "Airpower in Peripheral Conflict," 46.

¹⁶³ Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 384.

or government forces. These were the last instances of GUNT or Libyan aggression as a ceasefire set in until January of the following year.¹⁶⁴

The *Manta* force reached 2,850 men by November with the arrival of additional support personnel operating radars in Biltine and Abéché to increase early warning, and light wheeled tanks in the capital.¹⁶⁵ Exact numbers are unknown but it is estimated that the Libyans moved around 5,000 troops into northern Chad in 1983, which would grow to over 10,000 by mid-1984.¹⁶⁶ The remaining Libyan forces stayed in Aouzou or southern Libya. Libya also expanded its construction and expansion of runways in Aouzou and northern Chad to increase the range of its fighters, and increase its logistics throughput.¹⁶⁷

January brought the only violation of the ‘red line’ during the *Manta* period. A GUNT column advanced surreptitiously south of the red line hugging the border with Niger to assault a Chadian outpost near Ziguey. The GUNT column avoided areas with French forces and struck a Chadian only outpost. Neither Chadian nor French forces recognized there was an attack until unanswered radio checks the following day and a reconnaissance flight confirmed the outpost was overrun. France launched several air sorties north of the 15th parallel to search for the column. A reconnaissance flight identified the column protected by ZSU-23 radar guided anti-aircraft cannons and took some anti-aircraft fire. A follow-on flight received permission to attack the column. One French Mirage aircraft was damaged by ZSU-23 fire and a SAM-7 shoulder launched missile downed a French Jaguar in the engagement. The air strikes destroyed

¹⁶⁴ Ibid; Lorell, “Airpower in Peripheral Conflict,” 46.

¹⁶⁵ Spartacus, *Operation Manta*, 253.

¹⁶⁶ Rouvez, *Disconsolate Empires*, 159-161;

¹⁶⁷ Of note, the runway at Faya-Largeau was being retrofitted and a new airfield at Ouadi Doum was being built to accept heavy lift aircraft and would be expanded to over 8,000 feet long. Simmons, *Libya and the West: from independence to Lockerbie*, 57; Lorell, “Airpower in Peripheral Conflict,” 48.

the rebel column. The death of the Jaguar pilot became the first French casualty of the deployment.¹⁶⁸

France replied to the test of the red line and the downing of the Jaguar by extending the red line 100 kilometers north to the 16th parallel and moving an additional seven combat aircraft into Chad. The new buffer was identified as a free fire zone where French airpower could “engage hostile troops if they enter the new zone.”¹⁶⁹ The additional airpower brought the total French force to around 3,300. The French avoided explicitly stating if the Libyans were present in the raid or in the downing of the Jaguar, but blamed Libya for the renewed aggression. Neither Libya nor GUNT would test French resolve with conventional forces for the remainder of the operation and France continued to pursue a diplomatic solution to restore territorial integrity to Chad.¹⁷⁰ In April 1984, Libya agreed to negotiations and the Paris-Tripoli agreement of September 1984 was signed for the mutual withdrawal of French and Libyan forces within 45 days.

4.5.7 Manta Conclusion

The French tripwire was successful in constraining Libyan selection of conventional war and effectively deterred meaningful aggression south of the 15th parallel. Efforts by France, the US, and Zaire prior to the tripwire did not constrain Libyan from selecting a strategy of conventional war. As initial French forces were deployed, Libya was amassing second echelon forces in northern Chad emblematic of a continued offensive. The offensive did not materialize

¹⁶⁸ Somerville, “Foreign Military Intervention,” 70-72; Spartacus, *Operation Manta*, 125-140. Jean-Claude Pomonti, “Gadafy’s Hand behind French Pilot’s Death?” *The Guardian*, January 27, 1984, 11; Lorell, “Airpower in Peripheral Conflict,” 48; Michael Dobbs, “French Plane Downed, Pilot Killed in Chad” *Washington Post*, January 25, 1984.

¹⁶⁹ EJ Dionne, “France’s Soldiers ordered to widen control in Chad,” *The New York Times*, January 27, 1984, 1.

¹⁷⁰ Centre de Doctrine d’Emploi des Forces, “Répertoire Typologique des Operations, Tome 2,” 55; Roulez, *Disconsolate Empires*, 157; Somerville, “Foreign Military Intervention,” 70;

in the face of the French tripwire. Second, the presence of the French troops did not prevent several tests of French resolve. GUNT forces probed French resolve by using strategies of indirect aggression attacking protégé forces in the north and by going around the French line to strike south of the 15th parallel. The nature of these probes lend indirect evidence of the mechanisms of a tripwire because Libya behaved in a manner consistent with the nationality threshold. First, Libya only struck targets in the north of Chad where there was no chance of encountering French troops. In the only incursion south, Libya chose to have GUNT forces undertake the probe, instead of Libyan forces, showing a concern over escalation if their forces inadvertently clashed.

Finally, the emplacement of the tripwire after Libyan conventional war already occurred created a de facto partition of Chad and a new status quo. The tripwire was effective in deterring further aggression, but as a sunk cost signal of interest, it was insufficient to compel Libyan forces to depart northern Chad. Despite the agreement for mutual withdrawal agreed to in September 1984, Libyan troops would remain in Chad until Habré's forces would eventually go on the offensive in 1987 to restore the territorial integrity of Chad.

4.6 "Mutual" Withdraw, 1984-1985

4.6.1 Introduction

The following observation traces the not so mutual withdrawal of French and Libyan forces from Chad. The French force posture moved from Tripwire to None and Libya maintained combat forces in the north of Chad. The Libyan aggressor strategy remained one of nonmilitary aggression for 15 months providing aid and sanctuary to rival Chadian factions. However in early 1986, despite standing French warnings against Libyan aggression and

additional French verbal threats leading up to the attack, Libya selected a conventional war strategy against Chad. The theory does not predict the selection of attacker strategy, but predicts that the presence of a defender’s tripwire or large posture will communicate the resolve to defend the protégé, and when backed by the capacity to escalate constrains the selection of conventional war. The absence of defender forces leaves all options for aggression available to the attacker. This section is more evidence that verbal warnings and the French regional presence was insufficient to deter conventional war.

Force Posture	Initial Aggressor Strategy	Resulting Strategy
Large to None	Nonmilitary	Conventional War

4.6.2 Change in Force Posture

France completed its withdrawal of combat forces from Chad on 7 November 1984. The United States continued its effort to squeeze France to increase pressure on Libya by releasing intelligence information that Libya was not fully honoring the withdrawal, but France downplayed the Libyan presence to complete its redeployment.¹⁷¹ Between 4,000 and 7,000 Libyan soldiers remained in northern Chad at its major bases at Fada, Faya Largeau and Aouzou. France continued to warn against foreign interference in Chad, despite the departure of its troops. The French president announced in December 1984 at a summit of African Francophone leaders that France would send troops back if Libyan-backed forces crossed the 16th parallel. Of the 16th parallel, Mitterrand stated, “This is the limit where we have stopped and where we will stop any intrusion.”¹⁷² French inaction to compel a Libyan withdraw, along with the verbal threat of

¹⁷¹ John Vinocur, “Mitterrand Contradicted By French Intelligence On Troops In Chad,” *The New York Times* November 21, 1984, 4.

¹⁷² Glenn Frankel, “French-African Summit Ends Without Criticizing Libya,” *The Washington Post*, December 14, 1984, A42.

returning if Libya resumed aggression, solidified the de facto status quo of the 16th parallel. The French stance to protect “Tchad utile” was bolstered by the continued French regional presence. This included 2,000 troops from Operation *Manta* redeployed to the neighboring Central African Republic.¹⁷³

4.6.3 Resulting Aggressor Strategy

The status quo continued through 1985 as Libya pursued a nonmilitary strategy of supporting factions with aid and providing sanctuary to rebel factions. Libya and Chad both took time to reinforce their forces.¹⁷⁴ By 1986, Libya had 8,000 regulars in northern Chad including 300 tanks and 60 combat aircraft along with at least 7,000 GUNT regulars.¹⁷⁵ Additionally, Libya continued to develop the infrastructure in the north including the building of Oadi Doum airfield that could accommodate all the high performance fighters and bombers in Libya’s inventory.¹⁷⁶ In February 1986, a CIA report assessed that Habré could resist an initial all-out assault from combined Libyan and GUNT forces, but that without French intervention, Chad could fall in as little as two weeks.¹⁷⁷

France was aware of the Libyan force buildups and became increasingly concerned in late 1985 and early 1986 of the Libyan concentrations in northern Chad, which Roland Dumas referred to as the “sound of boots.”¹⁷⁸ France had a standing threat that any Libyan intervention

¹⁷³ Paul Webster, “Policy on Chad Reviewed,” *The Guardian* December 13, 1984.

¹⁷⁴ “Chad: Prospects for Escalation of the Conflict, An Intelligence Assessment,” *CIA* February 1, 1986. Retrieved from: <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP88T00768R000100090001-6.pdf>

¹⁷⁵ Somerville, *Foreign Military Intervention*, 72; Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 391. In early Feb 1986 CIA only assessed 4.5-6k Libyans, but advised that Libya had the means to be surreptitiously moving heavy forces.

¹⁷⁶ The runway at Oadi Doum was over 12,000 feet long. Lespinois, “L’emploi de la force,” 46;

¹⁷⁷ “Chad: Prospects,” *CIA*, p.9.

¹⁷⁸ “Un irritant dossier,” *Le Monde* February 15, 1986.

south of the red line would result in French military intervention.¹⁷⁹ France issued at least two additional verbal threats in the months before the next Libyan aggression. Mitterrand stated that France would “honor its obligation” to Chad and “do whatever has to be done” to protect Chad from external aggression.¹⁸⁰ Finally, France sent two additional squadrons of fighters to CAR and raised the alert level of French forces there.¹⁸¹

The French verbal warnings and regional presence did not prevent Libyan direct aggression. On 10 February 1986, a combined GUNT and Libyan force attacked across the 16th parallel on three axis. It is estimated five to seven thousand Libyans and seven thousand rebels took part in the initial attack. Libyan forces included armor, artillery, airpower as well as indirect support of logistics and communications.¹⁸² Habré’s forces lost ground but within days counterattacked the Libyan thrusts. I do not hope to explain why Libya selected this particular moment in time to escalate to conventional war, only that Libya was unconstrained from selecting such a strategy despite the standing French warning, continuing French interests, regional force posture, and history of past intervention.

4.7 Operation *Epervier* – the Airborne Tripwire, 1986-1987

4.7.1 Introduction

¹⁷⁹ Bernstein, “France Keeps Its Guard Up,” 3; “Policy on Chad Reviewed,” *The Guardian* December 13, 1984;

¹⁸⁰ Louis Wiznitzer, “Mitterrand hopes to outwit Khadafy in Chad showdown,” *The Toronto Star*, February 23, 1986, B3; Also see Mitterrand’s December warning at the Francophone Africa summit: “Un irritant dossier,” *Le Monde* February 15, 1986.

¹⁸¹ “Chad: Prospects,” 3.

¹⁸² Lespinois, “L’emploi de la force,” 42-47; Richard Bernstein, “France Keeps Its Guard Up in Central Africa,” *The New York Times* February 23, 1986, 3; Pollack, *Arabs at War*, Lorell, “Airpower,” 51; Burr and Collins, *Thirty Years*, 200;

France replied to Libyan conventional war by issuing yet another verbal warning, putting more forces on alert, directly striking a Libyan airfield in northern Chad, and then deploying a new tripwire to Chad in Operation *Epervier*. The operation would grow from its original strength of 600 to a height of approximately 2,300 men before tapering back down. Like *Manta*, *Epervier* was announced publically with a stated purpose of deterring further Libyan aggression.

Force Posture	Initial Aggressor Strategy	Resulting Strategy
None to Tripwire	Conventional War	Nonmilitary ¹⁸³

The *Epervier* subcase has three primary findings. First, the deployment of a tripwire was a clear signal of resolve where previous verbal threats had failed. Second, it is an example of the risks of a tripwire to the defender when a protégé is unrestrained. When Libya came under duress by surprising Chadian victories, it was willing to risk escalation by executing direct aggression against targets that had French forces. Finally, it highlights the challenges of instituting an effective mobile airborne tripwire.

4.7.2 Initial Force Posture and Initial Strategy

France did not maintain any overt military forces in Chad since the withdrawal of Operation *Manta* in 1984. Libya and GUNT had a combined 15,000 regulars in northern Chad, following *Manta*, and Libya had the logistic capacity to add approximately 10,000 in a matter of weeks.¹⁸⁴ The aggressor strategy was conventional war as described in section 4.6. Ultimately, Libya would end up sending over 20,000 troops into Chad.

¹⁸³ Libya would reinstate a conventional war strategy in the north, but switched to nonmilitary in the south where France forces were stationed.

¹⁸⁴ Somerville, *Foreign Military Intervention*, 72; Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 391.

4.7.3 Change in Force Posture - Tripwire

On 13 February, France publically warned Libya to withdraw its and GUNT's forces or France would respond.¹⁸⁵ Concurrently, France initiated a demonstration of force putting 2,000 regional troops based in CAR and Gabon on alert as well as rapid reaction units in France. Additionally, 12 Jaguar fighter-bombers and 4 Mirage air-to-air fighters moved to Bangui, CAR with the required refueling aircraft to grant the range to strike targets in northern Chad. Finally, the French Defense Minister and Chief of Staff travelled to Chad and CAR.¹⁸⁶

On the evening of 14 February President Mitterrand approved Operation *Epervier*. The stated purpose, like Operation *Manta*, was deterrence of Libyan aggression.¹⁸⁷ Mitterrand sought to limit the total number of French troops with the primary purpose of deterring attack on the capital, especially the airport, to ensure the continued flow of French and US material aid to Habré to counter Libyan support.¹⁸⁸ *Epervier* began as an air deployment with the goal to deter Libyan air power south of the red line with a mobile tripwire.¹⁸⁹ Before launching *Epervier* French defense planners recommended an opening air strike against Libyan targets in Chad. Of significant concern was the expanded airstrip at Ouadi Doum. Libya had lengthened and supported the runway to accommodate modern fighters and bombers and given its location 150

¹⁸⁵ Nolutshungu, *Limits of Anarchy*, 213; Burr and Collins, *Thirty Years*, 200.

¹⁸⁶ Michael Dobbs, "Chad Said to Halt Rebels; France Considers Military Intervention," *The Washington Post* February 15, 1986; Richard Bernstein, "French Alert Troops In Africa As Fighting Imperils Balance In Chad," *The New York Times* February 14, 1986, 3; "N'Djamena demande l'envoi de troupes françaises" *Le Monde* February 14, 1986; Lorell, "Airpower," 52-54.

¹⁸⁷ Richard Bernstein, "French Report Libyans Raid An Airport In Chad" *The New York Times*, February 18, 1986, 3.

¹⁸⁸ "La France prête à repousser une nouvelle attaque au Tchad," *Le Monde* February 20, 1986.

¹⁸⁹ Lorell, "Airpower" 55; Lespinois, "L'emploi de la force," 47-48.

miles from the 16th parallel, Libya could easily interfere with the pending French air bridge projecting the *Epervier* forces into Chad.

France launched eleven Jaguars to strike the Ouadi Doum runway in the early morning of 16 February damaging the runway. Despite significant air defenses, French surprise was complete and no aircraft were lost. The strike was focused on the runway using munitions designed specifically to crater runways and avoided striking Libyan men and material. Libya did not suffer any apparent casualties. The damage sustained on the runway opened a window before repairs could be made and resulted in reduced Libyan capability to interfere with the launch of Operation *Epervier*.¹⁹⁰ France began an airlift moving French military material and equipment to N'Djamena immediately.

Libya responded to the 16 February attack on Ouadi Doum with a retaliatory airstrike against N'Djamena airfield. On the morning of 17 February, a lone Tu-22 bomber flew undetected from southern Libya to drop three bombs on the airfield. A single bomb struck the runway cratering it about 1/3 of the way from the end.¹⁹¹ Like the French strike, the design of the airstrike was to damage the runway, not induce casualties.¹⁹² Hours later, the French Minister of Defense publically announced the initiation of Operation *Epervier*.¹⁹³

The next day on 18 February France began deploying 600 men and twelve fighter aircraft to N'Djamena along with modern air defense systems. The minister of defense stated that the purpose of the deployment was one of deterrence. By 25 February, the main forces were in place

¹⁹⁰ Lespinois, "L'emploi de la force," 47-48 ; Lorell, "Airpower" 52-55; "Le général de Litre précise les conditions du bombardement de la piste d'Ouadi-Doum," *Le Monde*, February 22, 1986; Wiznitzer, "Mitterrand Hopes," 3 ;

¹⁹¹ The runway suffered a 26-foot deep crater that took engineers 36 hours to repair. The damage prevented larger transports from landing, but smaller DC-8s continued to land. Lorell, "Airpower" 55.

¹⁹² Wiznitzer, "Mitterrand hopes to outwit, B3.

¹⁹³ Richard Bernstein, "French Report Libyans Raid an Airport in Chad," *The New York Times* February 17, 1986, 3.

which would grow to 25 combat aircraft and a radar station was deployed to Moussoro, north of the capital, which of course necessitated a small company sized security element.¹⁹⁴ By March, the total number of French troops in Chad numbered 1,000 based in the capital and at Moussoro. The operation did not initially deploy troops along the red line as they had in 1978 or 1983. Instead, the French focus was on deterring attempts at disrupting the air bridge to N'Djamena and relied upon launching aircraft as a mobile tripwire along the red line. This 'mobile tripwire' lacked the permanence of a ground presence and relied upon early warning to intercept possible incursions south. This requirement for an effective airborne tripwire proved challenging on multiple occasions.

4.7.4 Resulting Aggressor Strategy - Nonmilitary

The emplacement of the French tripwire precipitated a Libyan strategy shift to one of nonmilitary aggression south of the 16th parallel and a return to stalemate along the 16th parallel. Libyan and GUNT forces would continue direct and conventional strategies north of the 16th parallel. On 14 February, before *Epervier* commenced, French intelligence assessed massing Libyan forces. This included two armored columns and a larger Libyan assault force massing to follow the initial attacks.¹⁹⁵ After the deployment of French forces, some clashes continued between Chadian, Libyan, and rebel forces north of the 15th parallel but no such attack or ground offensive south materialized.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid; Lespinois, "L'emploi de la force," 42-49 ; Rouvez, *Disconsolate Empires*, 160; Lorell, "Airpower in Peripheral Conflict," 56.

¹⁹⁵ Nolutshungu, *Limits of Anarchy*, 213; Lorell, "Airpower," 52; "Tchad : la France prête à riposter" *Le Monde* February 17, 1986 ; "La France prête à repousser," *Le Monde*.

In March, Chadian forces took back the lost territory along the 15th parallel without French support.¹⁹⁶ Afterwards, Habré remained restrained in the south and relative calm allowed France to pursue diplomatic measures with Libya.¹⁹⁷ However, the rebel GUNT coalition began to show signs of strain starting in June and Libyan's relationship with its proxy force appeared tenuous into the summer. On 22 October, Goukouni's faction split from GUNT and from the Libyans and regrouped as the Forces Armées Patriotiques (FAP). By November, FAP began attacking their former Libyan allies in the far north of Chad.¹⁹⁸

In December, there were intelligence reports of a large Libyan column forming in the north including T-62 main battle tanks to attack the embattled FAP units holding out in the north.¹⁹⁹ Habré saw an opportunity with the Libyan's loss of manpower to the flipped rebel elements and the distractions in now fighting them. On 16 December, Chad sent a column north of the 16th parallel for the first time to support the FAP units. On 16 and 17 December, France flew airdrop resupply flights into the north to the FAP elements. However, France refused to send combat aircraft north in support of the rebels or of Habré's government column.²⁰⁰ Libya launched a major counter offensive against the FAP and government forces in northern Chad. The Chadian government replied by opening a second offensive thrust north of the 16th parallel. Chad sent a second column of four to five thousand Chadian regulars from a small eastern base at Kalait.²⁰¹

4.7.5 Protégé Unrestrained

¹⁹⁶ Burr and Collins, *Thirty Years*, 201.

¹⁹⁷ Lorell, "Airpower in Peripheral Conflict," 56.

¹⁹⁸ William Foltz, "Libya's Military Power," 65.

¹⁹⁹ Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 390; Nolutshungu, *Limits of Anarchy*, 214; Lorell, "Airpower in Peripheral Conflict," 57;

²⁰⁰ Nolutshungu, *Limits of Anarchy*, 215-216; Lorell, "Airpower in Peripheral Conflict," 57

²⁰¹ Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 390; Lorell, "Airpower in Peripheral Conflict," 58.

Habré was now unrestrained in his drive to reunify Chad. France refused to provide air support to Habré's actions in the north and verbally opposed Chad's attack north. However, France quietly provided logistics for Habré's offensive.²⁰² On 2 January 1987, Chadian forces overran a 1,200 to 2,000-man Libyan garrison at Fada in the northeast striking a stunning blow well north of the 16th parallel. The resulting damage killed over 700 Libyan soldiers, destroyed 100 tanks, six aircraft, and numerous missiles and rockets. Simultaneously FANT was engaged in an attritional fight with Libyan forces in the mountainous North West tying down about 1/3 of Libyan forces in Chad. Fada was the first major defeat for Libya and showed that previously 'impervious' dug-in Libyan redoubts were now vulnerable to the growing and increasingly sophisticated Chadian army.²⁰³

Libya responded to the loss in Fada in two ways. First, it doubled down on its forces in Chad, launching counterattacks and immediately dispatching reinforcements south raising the number of Libyans in northern Chad to between 11,000 and 13,000 with another 8,000 in reserve at Ma'tan as-Sarra and Kufra in southern Libya.²⁰⁴ Second, they engaged in direct aggression south of the red line by launching an airstrike and one ground raid. Tu-22 bombers struck the Chadian towns of Arada and Biltine south of the red line on 4 January devoid of French forces but killing a score of civilians.²⁰⁵

The French air force failed to intercept the incursion and the Libyan aircraft were unmolested. The French replied to the Libyan incursion by striking a radar facility at Ouadi

²⁰² French dissatisfaction with Chadian assaults had to be tempered with countering US influence with its overt support to Chad. See Foltz, "Libya's Military Power," 66.

²⁰³ "Le gouvernement français étudie une riposte aux bombardements libyens" *Le Monde* January 6, 1987 ; Rouvez, *Disconsolate Empires*, 161; Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 390-392; Lemarchand, "The Case of Chad," 121.

²⁰⁴ Burr and Collins, *Africa's Thirty Years War*, 220; Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 392.

²⁰⁵ Rouvez, *Disconsolate Empires*, 161; Curr and Collins, *Africa's Thirty Years War*, 217; "Le gouvernement français étudie".

Doum on 7 January. The strike was limited to a single radar-seeking missile that guides to an actively emitting radar and did not target men or aircraft. Finally, France moved four additional aircraft into Chad from the CAR.²⁰⁶

Libya made another tit-for-tat effort in a follow on air strike and ground raid. Libya bombed the Chadian position at Kouba Oulanga, 40 miles south of the 16th parallel but more importantly, they also launched a ground raid against the joint Chadian and French base at Kalait on 11 January. Kalait was a small outpost and important Chadian supply base for the Chadian assault north to Fada. At the base were 50 French support personnel such as doctors, and a 150-man infantry unit as force protection.²⁰⁷ The Libyans launched a small raid on all-terrain vehicles to lob rockets towards the base. None hit the base and there were no casualties.²⁰⁸ The Chadian army pursued the attackers. French media claimed the attackers were Libyan, but Libya denied any involvement in the attack. The French Minister of Defense Andre Giraud attempted to deescalate arguing that the French would not engage in tit-for-tat reprisals with Libya and reiterated that France did not support Habré's offensive into the north.²⁰⁹

The raid was a minor tactical action but stands out because for the first time Libya struck a location known to have French forces.²¹⁰ Libya's actions came after Libya suffered its first major conventional defeat at the hands of Chadian government forces. For the first time, the Libyan position in the north was vulnerable to the military might of an unrestrained protégé. If

²⁰⁶ Lespinois, "L'emploi de la force" 47; Nolutshungu, *Limits of Anarchy* 216

²⁰⁷ The presence of French forces was public for at least eight days prior to the raid. "Le conflit au Tchad Tripoli appelle à la "guerre sainte" contre des soldats tchadiens et français contre le président Habré Attaque libyenne à Kalait," *Le Monde* January, 13, 1987 ; Nolutshungu, *Limits of Anarchy* 217

²⁰⁸ "Le conflit du Tchad Raid libyen au-dessous du 16e parallèle " *Le Monde* January 13, 1987.

²⁰⁹ Lorell, "Airpower in Peripheral Conflict," 59.

²¹⁰ There were technically about 200 French troops at N'Djamena when the Libyans bombed the runway in February 1986. However, the French presence was not yet public and Operation *Epervier* was announced several hours after the strike.

Chadian forces could overtake a Libyan stronghold without French air cover, the Libyan position was tenuous indeed. For the first time, Libya was willing to risk killing French forces and the resulting escalation. It was clear the French did not approve of Chadian attacks north, and the Libyans may have calculated that risking French escalation was worth trying to force the French to restrain Habré. Despite this risky tactic, Libya still attempted to downplay its direct role in the raid.

The upturn in Chadian performance was likely due to two reasons. The first is the splintering of GUNT, which robbed Libya of its most advanced proxy force and its core infantry fighters. As a reminder, Libyan tactics generally involved GUNT infantry assaults with Libyan firepower in the form of armor, airstrikes, and artillery. Worse still for Libya, many of these fighters did not disappear, rather they turned on Libya and joined a tenuous alliance with the Chadian government. Second, the flow of western arms and modern weapons with updated Chadian ‘toyota tactics’ swarming Libyan formations was effective in destroying cumbersome Libyan units.

4.7.6 Testing the Tripwire in Defeat

French intelligence believed Chad government forces in the north could not hold against a coordinated Libyan attack but still refused to provide air cover in the north. Instead, France and the United States continued to provide aid, including heavy weapons, and the French provided logistical support and shared intelligence in Habré’s push north.²¹¹ Libya hoped to recapture Fada in the north and prepared for a counteroffensive. Libya augmented its

²¹¹ Rouvex, *Disconsolate Empires*, 160-161; Lorell, “Airpower” 60.

reinforcements in Chad with a force of 2,000 Libyans sent into Sudan to outflank Habré's forces in Fada and attack from the east.

The French responded to the new threat from the east, and the multiple infringements of its aerial tripwire, by increasing its presence in Chad. In February and March of 1987 France deployed an additional 1,000 troops to Chad with two purposes. The first was extending and reinforcing the early warning system with a series of assets from N'Djamena to the northeast up to the red line. The second was the extension of a ground tripwire with an increased ground component in the east. France deployed infantry forces to Biltine and Abéché and extended patrols out to the Sudanese border. This presence would force any assault from Sudan south of the red line into likely contact with French forces. The total number of French troops now reached 2,300 bringing the French to Libyan force ratio to 9:1.²¹²

Habré did not wait for the coming Libyan offensive. On March 19 and 20, Habre's 'toyota brigade' twice ambushed Libyan columns outside Ouadi Doum killing between 800 and 1,000 Libyans. On March 22, Habré struck directly at the large Libyan air base at Ouadi Doum, thought by western analysts to be impregnable. There were still 4,000 to 5,000 Libyans on the base with 200-300 armored vehicles and tanks.²¹³ The Chadian forces struck an astonishing blow to Libya and surprised the West with their success in destroying the fortified Libyan base. In four hours, Libya lost between 1,200 and 2,000 soldiers, and \$500 million worth of advanced equipment including eighteen aircraft. The remainder of the Libyan force in Ouadi Doum fled

²¹² This calculation only includes Libyan forces in northern Chad, southern Libya, and maneuvering in western Sudan. It is likely further in Libya's favor if one considers the availability of further forces that could be transported by air within weeks to northern Chad. Burr and Collins, *Thirty Years*, 222; Lorell, "Airpower," 59;

²¹³ Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 392; Nolutshungu, *Limits of Anarchy*, 217.

north. The loss also forced the Libyans to abandon the now exposed strategic outpost at Faya-Largeau on 27 March.²¹⁴

With Libya retreating to Aouzou and southern Libya, the red line at the 16 parallel suddenly did not hold any particular meaning. Habré had unified Chad by force and the Libyans pulled back to the Aouzou Strip. Given the circumstances, the French deployed noncombat forces in the north to Faya Largeau and Ouadi Doum to deploy another early warning radar, demining teams, and a 300-man security element. Additionally, with a Libyan attack across the 16th parallel as no longer likely, France reduced its overall force to 1,200 men.²¹⁵ Libya continued bombing Chadian military and civilian positions in the northern half of Chad throughout the summer, but did not attack French positions.²¹⁶

Habré was not content with victories in northern Chad. Against the protests of France, Habré launched an attack into the Aouzou Strip in August, occupied by Libya since 1973. Chadian forces won another tactical victory by capturing the key town of Aouzou on 8 August. On 12 August, France issued a warning to Libya that France would use military means to protect the territorial integrity of Chad, and the French operations in the north of Chad. However, the defense minister reiterated that the Aouzou Strip did not concern France.²¹⁷ Libya responded by increasing its forces in the Aouzou Strip to 15,000 and with 3 counterattacks, including intense air attacks, retook the town of Aouzou on 28 August and pushed government forces out of the Strip.²¹⁸ Given the turnaround, France again considered returning ground forces to the red line.

²¹⁴ Lemarchand, "The Case of Chad," 121-122; Burr and Collins, *Thirty Years*, 222; Nolutshungu, *Limits of Anarchy*, 217;

²¹⁵ Lorell, "Airpower," 61.

²¹⁶ "Chad Reports Its Forces Entered Libya and Destroyed Base There," *The New York Times* September 6, 1987, 1.

²¹⁷ "M. Giraud : « La France ne s'interdit aucun moyen militaire au Tchad »" *Le Monde* August 13, 1987.

²¹⁸ Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 395; Burr and Collins, *Thirty Years*, 227.

Instead, Mitterrand publically announced on 3 September the presence of French forces in the north.²¹⁹

Habré refit his forces and secretly planned an attack against Libya proper. Supported by US intelligence, on 6 September Habré launched an assault against the large Libyan air base at Ma'tan as-Sarra in southeast Libya. Chadian forces took the defenders by total surprise and destroyed the base, inflicting over two thousand Libyan casualties and destroying 30 aircraft.²²⁰ France claimed they had no prior knowledge of the attack and repeatedly stated they did not support offensive Chadian action.²²¹

Libya again publically blamed France and the United States for Chad's aggression and launched aircraft with the intent to threaten French positions. On 8 September, Libya launched three Tu-22 bombers to attack N'Djamena and Abéché, both of which had French contingents. The French shot down one bomber with a surface to air missile while approaching the capital and the second aircraft retreated without dropping its bombs. The third bomber successfully dropped its munitions on Abéché, damaging the runway and killing one civilian.²²² France again downplayed the Libyan reprisal action, reiterating that France did not back Chadian attacks into Aouzou or Libya proper.

The OAU called for a cease-fire and on 11 September Libya accepted having lost up to 7,000 dead, and billions of dollars in equipment destroyed or captured since February 1986.

²¹⁹ Lorell, "Airpower," 61; Nolutshungu, *Limits*, 225

²²⁰ Steven Greenhouse, "Chad Says Troops are Razing Base Captured in Libya," *The New York Times* September 7, 1987, 1; Nolutshungu, *Limits*, 228; Burr and Collins, *Thirty Years*, 228.

²²¹ Greenhouse, "Chad Says Troops are Razing Base"; Steven Greenhouse, "Big Libyan Losses Claimed by Chad," *The New York Times* September 8, 1987, 11.

²²² Lorell, "Airpower," 60-62; Steven Greenhouse, "Libyan Plane is Downed in Chad by French Forces," *The New York Times* September 7, 1987, 1;

Although there were several cease fire violations in the coming year, relations between Tripoli and N'Djamena improved and by 1989, the two states agreed to diplomatic discussions on the Aouzou Strip backed by the International Court of Justice.²²³ France maintains a tripwire force to present day and Libya did not again initiate a strategy of conventional war against Chad.²²⁴

4.7.7 *Epervier* Analysis and Conclusion

Operation *Epervier* yields more evidence of a tripwire deterring a relatively weak attacker from selecting conventional war. It also highlights in this case how much more effective such a posture was over verbal warnings, even when backed up with regional power and clear defender interest. However, *Epervier* also provides evidence of the risk and limitations of tripwires. With an aggressive protégé threatening the status quo, France's forces in Chad were at risk of attack potentially instigating a larger war France wanted to avoid. Finally, the failure of the airborne tripwire to identify and intercept incursions at the border exacerbated the risk. The following section analyzes Chad's unrestrained attacks north and Libya's reactions.

Many academics and policy makers have debated over the dangers of an unrestrained ally or protégé.²²⁵ The concern is a weak ally could drag its defender or patron into a war against the interests of the defender. This concern looms large in *Epervier* and deserves further analysis as one of the possible risks of a tripwire. Habré did go on the offensive, and did so against the

²²³ Lyse Doucet, "Desert ceasefire agreed," *The Guardian* September 12, 1987; Lemarchand, "The Case of Chad," 106; Rouvez, *Disconsolate Empire* 161-162; Nolutshungu, *Limits*, 227; Burr and Collins, *Thirty Years*, 228.

²²⁴ The French posture in Chad was renamed Operation Barkane in 2014 in support of broader counter-extremist operations in the Sahel.

²²⁵ Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, "Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation," *International Security* 21.4 (Spring 1997): 16; Barry Posen, *Restraint a New Foundation for US Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 44-50; Glenn Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1997); For counters to entrapment see: Michael Beckley, "The Myth of Entangling Alliances: Reassessing the Security Risks of US Defense Pacts," *International Security* 39 no.4 (2015): 7-48; 1 Victor D. Cha, "Powerplay: Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia," *International Security* 34, no. 3 (2009): 158-196.

wishes of the French. A tripwire is a potent deterrent because it risks escalation from the defender if its forces are attacked. However, by definition, the defender does not want a war with the attacker state. Thus there is always a risk of entrapment, where an erstwhile protégé starts winning against the attacker state' and the attacker paradoxically now calculates that the risk of war with the defender is worth it to convince the defender to halt the protégé. However, I believe the conditions that led to this possible scenario were rather unique: it required a sudden shift of local protégé capabilities and encroachment of an outside power threatening to outbid French support.

The first factor in an unrestrained Chad was the disintegration of the rebel GUNT coalition. Libya lost its primary infantry force and those with deep local knowledge of the terrain. Even worse, these forces flipped to the government receiving material aid from N'Djamena and airdrops from the French. Second, US involvement in Chad reduced France's bargaining leverage to constrain Chad. The US supported aggressive action against Libya, including explicit support to Chad's attack into Libya. US material aid reduced the control France had over Chad, and similar to *Manta*, France feared that if France pulled support the US would supersede it in the region. Finally and most transferable to other cases is that France underestimated the capabilities of the Chadian military and overestimated those of Libya. Chad's government forces had grown to 30,000 by 1986 and their tactical skill and morale exceeded the expectations of France, the US, and Libya. They successfully employed swarming tactics, which combined with precision weapons supplied from France and the US, were

devastating on the slow Libyan forces.²²⁶ The Libyan's tactical performance was dismal, and became much worse with the loss of their proxy forces.

Once the GUNT force flipped, Libya found itself losing the war in Chad. The loss of its garrison at Fada was the first time a fortified Libyan garrison had been defeated. Libya responded with airstrikes of Chadian villages and the rocket attack on Kalait with collocated French forces. Libya attempted to deny involvement of the raid, but the use of Libyan forces to execute the raid still risked escalation. The loss of the airbase in Libya resulted in the direct attack of French locations, although ostensibly targeting runways. This time Libya did not attempt to divert responsibility.

As the Libyans began losing the war, their calculus changed. The coming status quo if Chad won would eliminate Libya's gains in northern Chad, put Libya's claim to the Aouzou Strip at risk, and place a military threat on Libya's southern border. Faced with this possibility, Libya was willing to risk war with the French if it could increase pressure on France to restrain Chad.

Finally, the imperfect French mobile air tripwire exacerbated the risk of escalation. France failed to detect incoming Libyan aircraft in time to scramble interceptors to meet the Libyans at the red line. In order for a mobile tripwire to be effective, it must have the responsiveness to be in place when tested. In the case of airpower, 24/7 air patrols along the red line were not feasible. Therefore, an air tripwire depends upon early warning of incoming aircraft and the ability to scramble and meet the possible threat at the border. If Libyan aircraft were met at the red line, they would be forced to decide whether to run the risk of engaging with

²²⁶ Foltz, "Libya's Military Power," 66; Nolutshungu, *Limits of Anarchy* 218-219; Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 410-413.

French aircraft or turn back. Certainly, the Libyans could launch an all-out air assault and challenge French airpower, but a tripwire that could reliably intercept incursions would limit the possibility of direct aggression air raids against French positions limiting the possibility of escalation.

4.8 Alternative Explanations

The power of the nationalist threshold and the tripwire deterrent is the best explanation for Libyan strategies of aggression. When French forces were introduced, Libya halted its conventional war strategies on each occasion. Once French forces were present, Libya was constrained from reselecting direct aggression strategies. Furthermore, Libyan execution of its strategies once French troops were in place highlights their mutual understanding of the nationality threshold. Libya avoided attacking or bombarding locations with French forces while continuing to strike Chadian-only military or civilian targets. Only when Libya faced defeat did it risk killing French forces, and even then, it did so in ways that mitigated the risk by denying involvement, targeting runways unlikely to kill French forces, or using minimal methods such as mortars. The alternative arguments cannot convincingly explain variation in Libyan strategy selection or execution. The following will discuss the power, interests, and signaling alternatives and where they fall short.

4.8.1 Power

The power school of thought has two different expectations. The first is that the defender needs to match the local balance of forces to deter aggression by making any attack costly or unlikely to achieve victory from the start. The second expectation is that a significantly more powerful defender's deterrent threats are credible because a weak power will not risk conflict

with such a powerful adversary. Figure 4.1 captures the disparity in relative capabilities between France and Libya comparing index of their national military capabilities. Despite the decline in relative French power, it remained at least five times as powerful as Libya, well above the 2:1 threshold for considering a state much more powerful. Despite this large relative power advantage and verbal warnings against Libyan aggression, Libya selected conventional war against Chad in 1978, 1980, 1983, and 1986. All when there were no French overt forces present. Perhaps it is because of the local balance of forces as opposed to overall national capabilities?

The local balance of forces was certainly in Libya's favor when no French forces were present. Chad's economy and military were diminutive and the state faced continuous domestic threats and civil war. Chad was ripe for the picking and Libya could reasonably expect a cheap and quick victory in a 1:1 confrontation as played out in 1980. However, the balance of forces was still most often heavily in Libya's favor when French forces were present. Despite the Libyan local advantage, the introduction of small French forces correlates with the near immediate halting of Libyan conventional war strategies. The following table summarizes the balance of forces with the ratio of French forces to Libyan and Libyan proxies available for conventional actions. France certainly held a large qualitative advantage in training, but Libya had the latest Soviet (and French) equipment, nearby staging areas, and a superb logistics operation. From 1980 forward, Libya displayed the ability to quickly move large numbers of units and heavy equipment, and at times did so while avoiding western intelligence collection.

Summary of Balance of Forces					
Observation	French	Libya/GUNT	Ratio	Force Posture	Outcome
Tacaud, Initial	700	> 6,500	1:9.2	Tripwire	Indirect
Tacaud, Peak	2,500	< 17,000	1:6.8	Large	Indirect
Manta, Initial	1,750	26,000	1:12	Tripwire	Nonmilitary
Manta, Peak	3,300	26,000	1:8	Tripwire	Nonmilitary
Epervier, Initial	1,000	25,000	1:25	Tripwire	Nonmilitary
Epervier, Peak*	2,300	20,000	1:9	Tripwire	Nonmilitary

Table 4.2 – Chad - Local Balance of Forces Summary

* Libya surged its forces in Chad and southern Libya during Epervier, however the GUNT coalition fractured losing significant strength. Therefore, the total number available declines over time.

As table 4.2 shows, the French forces had a negligible impact on the local balance of forces outside of Operation *Tacaud*'s Peak deployment. Libya deescalated its strategy almost immediately after the *Manta* and *Epervier* tripwire deployments. French forces must have been altering the perception of French resolve to sway Libyan calculus. But were there other indications of French resolve that can better explain Libyan strategy?

4.8.2 Interests

France had clear historic interests in Chad and the region, which continued through the period of the case study. France served as the post-colonial protector of Chad and had troops stationed there overtly for internal control and external protection from independence until 1975. In 1977, three hundred French noncombat military advisors returned to help train Chadian forces. Additionally, Chad received significant French economic and military aid throughout the observations. Chad and France were trading partners although Chad was very poor. However while poor, Chad is strategically located among economically important French trading partners

including uranium rich Niger and oil and cocoa producing Gabon. Central and northern Africa accounted for over 10% of French trade exports from 1978 to 1986.²²⁷

France had significant bilateral ties with Chad throughout the case including an ongoing military cooperation agreement. Starting with independence in 1960 and revised in 1976, the states agreed that France would supply French military personnel to organize and train Chadian military forces, and provide material aid in exchange for French stopover rights.²²⁸ Successive Chadian leaders in the face of Libyan aggression invoked this military cooperation agreement. France and Chad also had bilateral agreements on administrative assistance, health, education, law and economic and financial cooperation. France also consistently provided Chad with financial and military aid. Figure 4.5 shows the levels of financial aid from 1974-1986.²²⁹ The aid flow data do not correlate with aggressor strategies or deterrence outcomes. The only data point that could be considered evidence that economic aid was strongly indicating French resolve would be the 1980 drop-off in aid. However, this point coincides with the collapse of the Chadian government and ongoing civil war in the capital. The other observations of conventional war in 1978, 1983, and 1986 are all observed with near average or above average levels of financial aid.

²²⁷ "World Integrated Trade Solution," *World Bank*, 2018: <https://wits.worldbank.org/>

²²⁸ "Agreement Between The Government Of The French Republic And The Government Of The Republic Of Chad On Technical Military Cooperation" *United Nations Treaty Series*. p. 183-189 Retrieved from: <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201092/v1092.pdf>

²²⁹ OECD, *Geographical Distribution of Financial Flows to Developing Countries* (Paris: OECD, 1974-86).

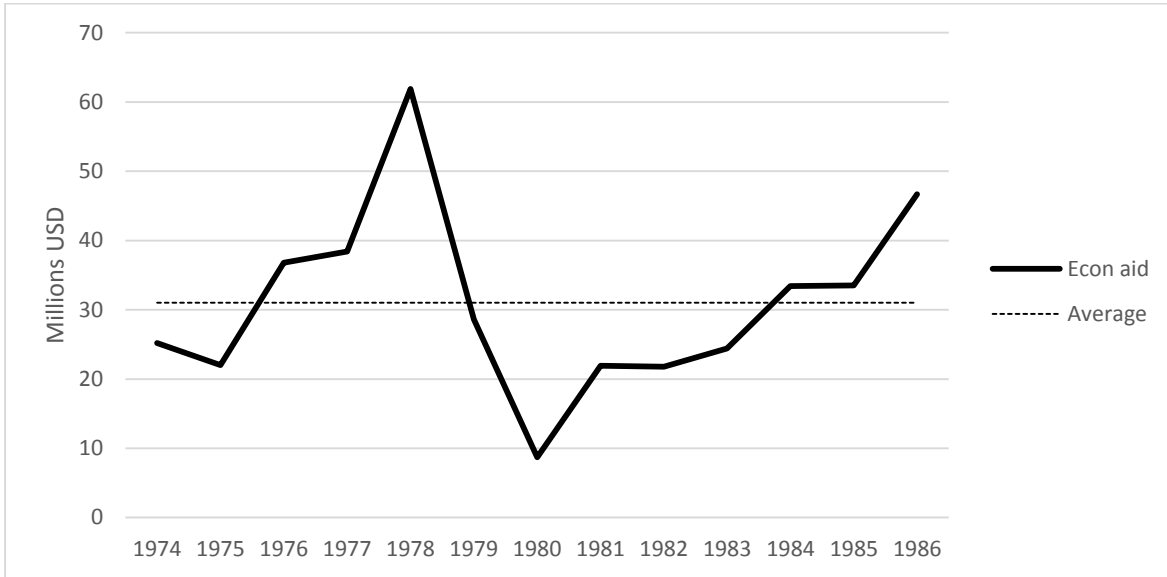


Figure 4.5 - French Financial Flows to Chad

France’s regional force posture was a consistent light posture throughout the case. In 1975 and 1976, President Giscard d’Estaing reoriented French grand strategy to countering threats in the ‘Global South’ and pushed for flexible mobile forces.²³⁰ Despite early hesitance by Mitterrand, he too returned to a strategy reminiscent of Giscard.²³¹ French strategy in Africa involved the forward stationing of small forces in regional bases while maintaining a large Rapid Reaction Force (FAR, Force d’Action Rapide) in France on alert. France maintained bases in Senegal, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Gabon, CAR, and sometimes in Chad. While the exact numbers of forces varied, they never approached the levels which Rovner and Talmadge would consider large.²³² The forward bases ensured access for power projection in time of crisis and

²³⁰ Pierre Lellouche and Dominique Moisi, “French Policy in Africa: A Lonely Battle against Destabilization,” *International Security* 3 no.4 (1979), 119-123.

²³¹ Rouvez, *Disconsolate Empires*, 51-67.

²³² For comparison, in 1960 France had 60,000 troops in sub-Saharan Africa and 300,000 in Algeria. By 1970, the number had fallen to 7,000 spread across six countries. In 1986 it was approximately 8,500. See Lellouche and Moisi, “French Policy,” 127-128; and Lorell, “Airpower,” 1-7.

the small forward combat forces provided limited power that could respond immediately. The bulk of the force rested in the FAR which grew from 14,000 men in 1979 to 47,000 men in 1986. Rovner and Talmadge argue that a light posture and/or a tripwire will be perceived as a bluff in deterring a revisionist state. Their prediction holds in this case that a light posture was insufficient in deterring Libyan aggression against Chad. However, shifting to a large regional presence was not necessary to deter the Libyans. A small tripwire force posture inside Chad effectively communicated France's resolve when all other efforts failed.

Finally, past actions and reputation are considered as signals of resolve. France had a record of overt military intervention throughout sub-Saharan Africa from 1960 through 1986 as captured in Table 4.3. Narrowly, with regard to Chad, France also had a long history of overt intervention. Of the four instances of Libyan direct aggression, only 1983 was preceded by an instance of France not following through on a deterrent threat to Libya. The post-*Manta* timeframe may also be of concern because Libya reneged on the agreement to redeploy from northern Chad, but France continued with its redeployment. However, since 1978 France had demarcated the 15th and 16th parallels as the status quo, not northern Chad. Therefore, past deterrence actions and a reputation for intervention are deemed poor predictors of Libyan aggression.

French Overt Military Interventions, 1960-1986	
Cameroon	1959-1964
CAR	1979
Chad	1960-1975, 1978-1980, 1983-1984, 1986
Congo	1960, 1962
Djibouti	1967, 1974, 1976-1977
Gabon	1960, 1962, 1964
Ivory Coast	1970
Mauritania	1956-1963, 1977, 1978
Niger	1973
Senegal	1959-1960, 1962
Zaire	1977, 1978

Table 4.3 - Overt French Interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa. SOURCE: Lorell, "Airpower," 5-6, 22.

4.8.3 Costly Signals in Crisis Bargaining

In a rational bargaining framework, intrinsic interests and reputation are both known when a state selects into a crisis. The theory argues that once a crisis develops states bargain to reveal new information about resolve. This section will contrast the effectiveness of sunk cost signals in terms of force mobilizations, shows of force, and military aid with hand-tying signals of verbal threats and tripwires.

The case demonstrates that sunk cost signals were ineffective at constraining Libyan direct aggression. Placing regional or metropole forces on alert, deploying fighter aircraft, or increasing military aid (both French and US) were ineffective in changing Libyan behavior in crisis. The force mobilizations, aid, and deployments were public and reported in western media and therefore assumed to be received and understood by Libya. Additionally, French verbal threats, whether pre-crisis threats, or reiterated deterrent warnings failed to halt Libyan direct aggression unless paired with the deployment of military forces to Chad. The only consistently

effective signal across these crises was the deployment of French combat forces inside Chadian territory.

Additionally, there is evidence of the hand-tying nature of the tripwire and the nationality threshold in the execution of Libyan strategy. First, in 1978, Libya still pursued a strategy of indirect aggression against the French tripwire and large force. Libya would not violate the threshold and instead provided military forces to the proxy forces for logistics, communications, and other support functions and those proxy forces could attack Chadian and French positions. Also, Libyan forces themselves avoided attacking French forces throughout the observations. The only exceptions occur during *Epervier* after Libyan forces suffer large defeats at the hand of the Chadian protégé. Even then, Libya employed raids with low probability of killing French forces, but risking them by targeting bases with a French presence. Additionally, Libya's rocket attack at Kalait was further softened by Libya's denial of its involvement. The only overt assault with unquestionable Libyan forces was the air raids in 1987 after Libya proper was invaded by Chadian forces. Libya's hesitance to attack the French, especially the capital airport that was the main supply hub for French and American weapons, is indirect evidence of a mutual understanding of the nationality threshold.

4.9 Conclusion

The case of French defenders in Chad is a laboratory for investigating the necessity of a tripwire in signaling resolve against a motivated attacker. France maintained the capacity to escalate throughout the case but the defender force posture varied significantly. The case brings considerable support to the theory that the tripwire backed by the capacity to escalate was effective in halting or deterring a Libyan strategy of conventional war against Chad. The case

also highlights several limitations and risks of the tripwire. First, as many conventional deterrence theorists argue, motivated attacker states will seek clever strategies to circumvent the defender's conventional deterrence strategy. Libya pursued a full range of revisionist strategies short of conventional war when the French forces were present in southern Chad. However, these strategies were markedly less effective than the quick conventional war victories Libya scored when French forces were not present. The proxy forces proved unreliable such as the continued push south against the French tripwire in 1978 resulting in a large French presence the proxy force could never hope to defeat. During Operation *Epervier* the proxy force fragmented and some flipped against their Libyan patrons. Second, the deployment of a conventional tripwire deterrent could not rectify the continuous internal political violence inside Chad. It was only effective in halting external aggression. Finally, Libya respected the nationality threshold throughout the case until Chad became unrestrained in its drive north. When Chad began attacking north and directly threatened the status quo, and Libya proper, Libya was finally willing to employ a direct aggression strategy against locations with French forces.

Chapter 5: Cyprus

5.1 Introduction

The Cyprus case examines the deployment of a defender's tripwire without the capacity to escalate. The chapter shows that the Greek tripwire failed to constrain Turkey from selecting conventional war against Cyprus because Greece lacked the capacity to escalate with follow-on forces. Greece could not threaten to deny Turkey's territorial aims on Cyprus, only a general war of punishment across their shared border. The case will trace Turkish and Greek decisions and actions throughout the crisis illustrating that Greece could not escalate and that Turkey perceived the Greek tripwire as an incredible deterrent threat because of Turkey's dominant power position. As a result, Turkey was unconstrained in selecting a conventional war strategy, repeatedly attacked Greek positions on the island, and struck suspected reinforcements at sea without concern about an effective Greek riposte. Turkey would ultimately achieve its territorial aims of partition in under a month capturing 38% of Cypriot territory. With the death of Greek forces in combat and the inability to honor its commitment to Cyprus after Turkey attacked, the Greek government quickly collapsed.

The primary purpose of this case is investigating the Greek capacity to escalate and tracing how Turkey was unconstrained in its strategy of aggression. Second, there is some within case variation of interest. In addition to the Greek, Cypriot, and Turkish forces on Cyprus, Britain maintained Sovereign Base Areas on Cyprus manned by British military forces. The British forces remained within their SBAs at the onset of the crisis, but sortied out to create a tripwire around the Nicosia airport during the Turkish invasion.

The case is structured as follows. First, is a brief background on the conflict, identifying the actors, pertinent history, and interests at stake. Second, is a discussion of the initial force posture and balance of power in and around Cyprus. The third section follows the initial strategy of Turkey, the aggressor state, as conventional war against Cyprus. The fourth section traces the Greek response to Turkey's aggression focusing on the political tension to go to war and the military reality of Greece's vulnerability to Turkey's dominance preventing Greek power projection. Finally, the fifth section contrasts Turkey's military actions against Greek forces with its actions towards UK military forces also on the island.

5.2 Background

Cyprus was a British colony for the first half of the 20th century under which the Greek and Turkish Cypriot community chafed. The 77% majority Greek Cypriot community viewed themselves as Greek nationals and sought union, or enosis, with Greece. The minority Turkish community bitterly opposed enosis given Greek discrimination against ethnic Turks and pushed for partition of the island into Greek and Turkish zones.¹ The sides clashed throughout the 1950s with each other and against the British. In 1959, Greece, Turkey, and Britain agreed on a compromise and the creation of an independent Cypriot state.² The three powers and Cyprus signed the Treaty of Guarantee in August 1960 to protect the nascent Cypriot state. The treaty forbade any state from supporting efforts towards union or partition. Article IV granted Britain, Greece, and Turkey the right to take unilateral action to restore the status quo if any state or actor

¹ On the history of Ethnic tensions of Cyprus see: Nancy Crawshaw, *The Cyprus Revolt: An account of the struggle for union with Greece* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1978); Parker T. Hart, *Two NATO Allies At the Threshold of War: Cyprus, a Firsthand Account of Crisis Management, 1965-1968*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 3-47; TW Adams and Alvin Cottrell, *Cyprus between East and West* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1968), 6-13.

² Bruno Coppieters, Michael Emerson, Michel Huyseune, Tamara Kovziridze, and Gergana Noutcheva. *Europeanization and conflict resolution: case studies from the European periphery* (Academia Press, 2004), 63-65.

breached the treaty agreement of an independent Cyprus.³ Additionally, Greece was granted the right to station 950 combat troops on Cyprus and Turkey was allowed 650 troops.⁴ Britain maintained two sovereign base areas (SBAs) with thousands of British troops and power projection facilities to enable UK presence in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East.⁵ The series of unique three-way agreements created three possible defenders to independent Cyprus should its independence come under threat from union or partition. The Cypriots themselves were to have a combined Greek and Turkish Cypriot police force. However, this force devolved into a Greek Cypriot National Guard that served as the sanctioned military force on the island. The Turkish Cypriots responded with the continuation of militias first developed under British rule.⁶

Turkey and Greece both maintained an interest in Cyprus due to the ethnic minorities on the island but also for security concerns. The Greek and Turkish membership in NATO did not erase the historic rivalry between the two nations and Turkey saw a unified Greek Cyprus as an encirclement of Turkey threatening its access to the Mediterranean.⁷ Crises erupted in 1964 and 1967 over Greek and Greek Cypriot atrocities against Turkish Cypriots. In 1964, Greece surged its forces to a large posture moving approximately 10,000 troops to Cyprus, and building coastal defenses shifting its force posture to large.⁸ Turkey and Greece mobilized their forces in each

³ "Cyprus Treaty of Guarantee," no. 5475, *United Nations*, retrieved from: <https://peacemaker.un.org/cyprus-greece-turkey-guarantee60>.

⁴ Parker T. Hart, *Two NATO Allies At the Threshold of War: Cyprus, a Firsthand Account of Crisis Management, 1965-1968*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 9.

⁵ Polyvios Polyviou, *Cyprus, Conflict and Negotiation 1960-1980* (New York: Holmes Meier, 1980), 15-16.

⁶ Hart, *Two NATO Allies*, 9.

⁷ On Turkish fears of Greek control of Cyprus see: Chris Ioannides, *Realpolitik in the Eastern Mediterranean: From Kissinger and the Cyprus Crisis to Carter and the Lifting of the Turkish Arms Embargo* (New York: Pella, 2001), 76-86; Hart, *Two NATO Allies*, 7, 36; and Mehmet Ali Birand, *30 Hot Days* (London: K Rustem, 1985), 3.

⁸ Nicholas Sambanis, "United Nations Peacekeeping in Theory and in Cyprus: New Conceptual Approaches and Interpretations," (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1999), 157-159; Makarios Drousiotēs, *Cyprus 1974: Greek Coup and Turkish Invasion* (Mannheim: Bibliopolis, 2006), 211; Lawrence Fellows, "Recent History of the Crisis in Cyprus

crisis, but neither escalated to war. The result of the 1967 crisis was an agreement negotiated by the US and UN for Greece to remove its 10,000 troops on Cyprus in violation of the 1960 agreements. Greece complied with this agreement and in 1968 force levels on Cyprus returned to pre-1964 levels as stipulated by treaty.⁹

Greece, and its strongman leader atop the junta regime, Demetrios Ioannides, would precipitate another crisis in 1974. Greece upended the political balance on July 15, 1974 by engineering a coup of the Cypriot president Makarios whom had presided over Cyprus since independence. Greek officers infiltrated the Cypriot National Guard and violently installed Nicos Sampson as president who was a veteran of the intercommunal violence in the 1960s and a vocal supporter of enosis.¹⁰ Makarios escaped Cyprus on a British aircraft and was flown to London.¹¹ Turkey largely viewed Sampson as a murderer devoted to enosis and many believed it would now be simple for Greece to declare unification.¹² In early morning discussions on the 16th, Turkish leaders concluded the act was a violation of the 1960 London and Zurich Agreements and a threat to Turkish security. Turkish preparations began immediately for diplomatic and military intervention.¹³ Greece responded to Turkish moves by increasing the level of military alert, canceling soldiers' leave, and forward stationing some forces on the island

Points Up the Heightening of Community Clashes," *The New York Times*, August 9, 1964; "UN Force on Cyprus is \$20-Million in Debt," *The New York Times*, July 20, 1974.

⁹ Polyviou, *Cyprus, Conflict and Negotiation*, 47-61; Clement Dodd, *The History and Politics of the Cyprus Conflict* (New York: Macmillan, 2010), 67-90; Sambanis, "United Nations Peacekeeping," 159.

¹⁰ Ioannides, *Realpolitik*, 75.

¹¹ Harold Wilson, *The Final Term: The Labor Government 1974-1976* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nelson, 1979), 61.

¹² Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 3-4.

¹³ Turkey had long-standing contingency plans for intervention first developed in 1967. See: John Hughes-Wilson, "The Forgotten War," *The RUSI Journal* 156 no.5 (2011): 86; and Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 5-6, 15-19.

of Crete.¹⁴ However, Greece did not mobilize its military nor did it reinforce Cyprus out of fear of provoking a Turkish response.¹⁵

On 17 July, Bulent Ecevit, the Turkish Prime Minister, lobbied the UK to join Turkey in a joint military intervention in Cyprus. When Britain turned down the request, Ecevit asked the British Foreign Secretary James Callaghan if Turkey could land its forces in the British Sovereign Defense Areas, which was also rejected.¹⁶ Turkey threatened war if Sampson was not removed from power and Turkish Cypriot safety could be guaranteed.¹⁷ British and US intelligence warned of a possible Turkish invasion, but there was continued debate as to Turkey's intentions.¹⁸

The United States wanted above all to avoid a conflict between Greece and Turkey and therefore the chief objective of the US after the coup was to prevent a Turkish military intervention. The US sought to delay any military action fearing two NATO allies at war and increased Soviet influence.¹⁹ The US tried to avoid coming down on either side and pushed for negotiations between the UK, Greece, and Turkey. However, the State Department and US Department of Defense held the opinion that Turkey viewed the situation as a militarily ideal time to intervene with Cypriot factions fighting each other and that little action short of military

¹⁴ Jan Asmussen, *Cyprus at War: Diplomacy and Conflict during the 1974 Crisis* (London: IB Tauris, 2008), 77.

¹⁵ Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 210-217.

¹⁶ Panagiotis Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence in Cyprus, From the Great War to Middle East Crisis* (London: IB Tauris, 2010), 135-136; Dodd, *The History and Politics of the Cyprus Conflict*, 111-112.

¹⁷ Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 8-9.

¹⁸ The verbal threats and posturing were similar to those of the 1967 crisis, which did not result in war. In 1967, Turkey had activated its contingency plans, mobilized forces, undertaken naval and airborne shows of force and even loaded landing craft but did not invade. Richard Eder, "Accord on Cyprus in Sight After Day of Falling Hopes," *The New York Times*, November 18, 1967, 1,3; Polyviou, *Cyprus, Conflict and Negotiation*, 50; Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence*, 140-141.

¹⁹ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXX, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, 1973-1976*, eds. Laurie Van Hook and Edward C Keefer (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2007), Document 97.

force would dissuade them from intervening.²⁰ A reconnaissance aircraft confirmed British fears on the morning of 20 July when it identified a Turkish invasion fleet approaching Cyprus.

5.3 Force Posture and Relative Power

5.3.1 Aggressor and Defender

In 1974, Turkey had the largest army in NATO with 365,000 in active duty ground forces, and 453,000 total active duty.²¹ Turkey also held a more than 4:1 advantage over Greece in the National Material Capabilities Index when adjusted for the distance to Cyprus.²² Seventy percent of Turkish ground forces were on the Greek border or postured for Aegean contingencies throughout the crisis.²³ Turkey had over 100 landing craft for amphibious operations supported by a navy consisting of 40,000 personnel.²⁴ Turkey would end up slating 33 landing ships for the assault against Cyprus, likely holding the rest in reserve for a possible expanded conflict in the Aegean. Since 1967 Turkey had the 39th Marine Infantry Division at Mersin (about 40 miles from Cyprus and 100 miles from the eventual landing beaches) slated as the primary force to intervene in Cyprus.²⁵ The division was estimated to have 20,000 men that trained regularly for amphibious assault.²⁶ There were also approximately 15,000 Turk Cypriot irregulars clustered in

²⁰ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXX, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, 1973-1976*, eds. Laurie Van Hook and Edward C Keefer (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2007), Documents 99, 100.

²¹ Drousiotēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 204; *The Military Balance 1974-1975*, 26; Drew Middleton, "Turks Said to Have Military Edge in Numbers," *The New York Times* July 20, 1974, 8.

²² Given Turkey and Greece also share a land border, Turkey maintained a 2.75:1 advantage in the NMC index with no distance correction. See David Singer, "Reconstructing the Correlates of War Dataset on Material Capabilities of States, 1816-1985" *International Interactions*, 14 (1987): 115-132

²³ Drousiotēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 204.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 212, *Military Balance 1974-1975*, 26.

²⁵ Hughes-Wilson, "The Forgotten War," 86.

²⁶ "Turks Land Troops in Cyprus, Intervene After Military Coup," *The New York Times* July 20, 1974, p. 1,8.

Turkish enclaves on Cyprus.²⁷ Turkey hoped to link up with these forces to bolster its invasion forces. Turkey also maintained its 650-man contingent on Cyprus per the London Zurich agreement and covertly deployed dozens of troops to serve as advisors to Turkish Cypriot militias.

Greece had 121,000 personnel in the army and 161,100 total active duty forces with a reserve one-third the size of Turkey's reserves.²⁸ The Greek Navy was roughly half the size of Turkey's in manpower, submarines, and destroyers. On Cyprus, the Greeks maintained a 950-man 'Greek Contingent' consisting of two infantry battalions armed with mortars and anti-tank artillery.²⁹ Greece did not station any combat aircraft on Cyprus. This is critical because Cyprus was at the maximum operational range of the Greek fighters, which precluded Greece from projecting effective airpower to the island.³⁰ This contrasts with Turkey whose coastline is a mere 40 miles north of Cyprus and Turkey could easily provide air cover to its naval and ground forces on Cyprus. The Greek Cypriot protégé forces had 9,300 troops and up to 30,000 reservists lightly armed with aging equipment, although they did have some artillery and tanks. Six hundred and fifty Greek officers and NCOs served with the Cypriots as advisors.³¹

At a minimum, Turkey had the capability to land the 39th division of about 20,000 troops on Cyprus in a matter of days to weeks. If Turkey captured a port, the rate of reinforcement would go up considerably and could rapidly project its manpower advantage to Cyprus. As the

²⁷ Hughes-Wilson, "The Forgotten War," 88.

²⁸ *The Military Balance*, 23.

²⁹ The Greek Contingent was often referred to by its acronym the ELDYK, which consisted of highly trained forces. Ibid. 23; Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 212; Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence*, 235; "Greece will proceed with Normal Military Rotation on Cyprus," *Central Intelligence Agency* July 17, 1974.

³⁰ Even when forward based on Greek islands, any action by Greek fighters against a Turkish invasion would be a one-way trip without landing on Cyprus to refuel. Hart, *Two NATO Allies*, 67; Sambanis, "United Nations Peacekeeping," 118; and "Turkish Military Capabilities on Cyprus," *Central Intelligence Agency* August 13, 1974, 3.

³¹ Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence*, 135; Hughes-Wilson, "The Forgotten War," 88; Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 205.

following will show, Turkey believed it had complete supremacy in the Mediterranean vis-à-vis Greece in naval and airpower and therefore were confident in their ability to land forces and prevent Greece from escalating on Cyprus. Turkey was confident that if war was the outcome and Greece escalated horizontally by attacking Turkey directly, that Turkey could bear the cost, and stop and defeat Greece.³² Even if Turkey did not bring any of its other ready forces, the 20,000 strong Turkish division relative to the 950-man ‘Greek Contingent’ well exceeds the 8:1 ratio required to identify a tripwire.

5.3.2 British, US, and UN Force postures

Britain also maintained military forces on the island of Cyprus in its two Sovereign Base Areas in southern Cyprus. The general purpose of these bases was facilitating British power projection in the region and the defense of British citizens, not to deter Turkish invasion. Nevertheless, given British concerns over a pending invasion on 18 July the UK doubled its military presence on Cyprus sending an additional 3,300 combat troops to the SBAs. There were also British tanks and helicopters supported by two squadrons of fighters and two squadrons of light bombers.³³ These ground and air forces were augmented by the arrival of a naval task force in the vicinity of Cyprus. The task force consisted of an aircraft carrier task force supported by a destroyer, two frigates, and a submarine with associated support vessels. These forces were also in place by 18 July. Before the start of hostilities, British ground forces remained within the confines of the SBAs and therefore do not qualify as a large or tripwire presence since they resided in British territory on the island of Cyprus.³⁴

³² Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 5-6, 14.

³³ Ioannides, *Realpolitik*, 122.

³⁴ Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence*, 140.

The United States dispatched the Sixth Fleet including an aircraft carrier in response to mounting tensions on Cyprus. On 19 July, the US fleet moved to between 100 and 150 miles from Cyprus, which gave the force an amphibious response time of 10 hours.³⁵ The fleet included 1,800 marines and associated landing ships. The US naval aircraft onboard the aircraft carrier could reach Cyprus in a matter of minutes. The US military developed plans for evacuation of US personnel but did not intend on intervening on the eve of the Turkish invasion.³⁶ Finally, the UN maintained a 2,300-man peacekeeping force in Cyprus since 1964 to prevent conflict between the Turkish and Greek Cypriots.³⁷ This force had a narrow mandate to control the relationship between the two Cypriot communities, not deter outside aggression.³⁸

To conclude, both Greece and Turkey had a tripwire presence on Cyprus and the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee technically made both states defenders of Cyprus. The 1974 crisis illustrates the impotence of tripwires as a tool of extended conventional deterrence when a defender faces a significant disadvantage in relative power. Greece first employed nonmilitary aggression to alter the status quo by overthrowing Makarios with Sampson whom espoused enosis. The presence of the Turkish tripwire did not deter the Greeks from supporting a coup because the nonmilitary aggression did not threaten violation of the nationality threshold of the Turkish contingent. Conversely, Turkey would be unconstrained in selecting conventional war due to its large power advantage over Greece. The Turkish response would violate the

³⁵ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXX, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, 1973-1976*, eds. Laurie Van Hook and Edward C Keefer (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2007), Document 98, 326.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 328.

³⁷ The UN force consisted of troops from Australia, Austria, Britain, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, and Sweden.

³⁸ The UN mandate was even weak for policing the communities with no rights to search or disarm, and required to request permission from Greek Cypriots to patrol. Kurt Waldheim, *In the Eye of the Storm, a memoir* (Maryland: Adler and Adler, 1986), 85; Lawrence Fellows, "Recent History of the Crisis in Cyprus Points Up the Heightening of Community Clashes," *The New York Times*, August 9, 1964; "UN Force on Cyprus is \$20-Million in Debt," *The New York Times*, July 20, 1974.

nationality threshold in deliberately seeking out attacking the Greek contingent in a strategy of conventional war. Greece could not reinforce its tripwire in the face of overwhelming Turkish military advantage, nor did it have a reasonable chance of winning a war. Turkey initiated its strategy of conventional war five days after the coup with an invasion of Cyprus.

5.4 Initial Aggressor Strategy – Conventional War

Turkey selected a strategy of conventional war launching a joint amphibious and air assault against Cyprus on the morning of 20 July 1974. The Turkish plan had four major components. The first component was air strikes against Cypriot bases and defenses. Turkish intelligence knew that the Cypriots were not in their coastal positions following the coup and sought to strike them in their inland bases and dispersed post-coup locations.³⁹ The second component was amphibious landings to create a beachhead for follow on reinforcements. Third, paratroopers would drop in Turkish enclaves to link up with Turkish Cypriot irregulars and defend the ethnic Turks. Finally, the invasion sought to link the beachhead with the cluster of Turkish Cypriot enclaves around the capital Nicosia. The invasion's purpose was to create a permanent Turkish military presence to prevent the new Cypriot government declaring enosis with Greece.⁴⁰

Turkish decision makers were aware of the risks of attacking Cyprus. They assessed that the Greek ability to escalate the conflict on Cyprus with reinforcement or interfere with the landing was minimal. Furthermore, they were aware that the conflict risked expansion to general war with Greece.⁴¹ The probability and cost of the risk were manageable for Turkey. Turkey's

³⁹ Drousiotēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 208; Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence*, 136.

⁴⁰ Crawshaw, *The Cyprus Revolt*, 389; Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 17; Drousiotēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 205, 208.

⁴¹ Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 5-6, 11, 14.

large power advantage meant a general war with Greece, while potentially costly, would very likely end in Turkey's advantage.⁴²

Turkey initiated Operation *Attila* with the launching of the amphibious flotilla from Mersin at 1030 on July 19th. Turkish and western media covered the departure and rumors circulated on Cyprus, but the Cypriot government denied the reports.⁴³ A decoy fleet of merchant ships accompanied the invasion. The fleet approached Cyprus under darkness and Greek radar picked up a fleet of ships. The fleet then turned back towards Turkey around 2am. This deception furthered Greek beliefs that the Turks were only conducting exercises.⁴⁴ The actual flotilla arrived 15 miles offshore Cyprus around 0400. At 0445, Turkish fighter-bomber aircraft began striking targets on Cyprus.⁴⁵

Two Cypriot torpedo boats approached the invasion fleet but were quickly destroyed by Turkish air and naval forces. This suicidal charge would be the only attempted attack on the Turkish fleet. The Turkish Navy landed its forces unopposed by sea or air.⁴⁶ At 0605, Turkish transport aircraft began airdropping paratroopers and supplies into the Turkish enclaves. Eighty lift helicopters transporting men and material inland supported this action. Turkish landing craft hit the beach 5 miles west of Kyrenia at 0715, about an hour behind schedule. Despite being within range of Cypriot artillery, the Turks landed unopposed and faced no initial fire. The first wave of landing forces consisted of 1,500 men supported by 15 tanks. It would take over two hours for the Turkish landing forces to come under fire. Turkish aircraft flew unopposed over

⁴² Dodd, *The History and Politics of the Cyprus Conflict*, 110; Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 111; Drousiotēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 228.

⁴³ Alvin Shuster, "US Puts Pressure on Greeks and Turks," *The New York Times*, July 20, 1974; Drousiotēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 204; "Turks Land Troops in Cyprus," 1,8;

⁴⁴ Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence*, 134.

⁴⁵ Ioannides, *Realpolitik*, 124.

⁴⁶ Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 40; Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 112.

Cyprus striking any Cypriot units they discovered moving north, further slowing any resistance at the beach.⁴⁷ By nightfall, the Turks had landed 6,000 troops and about 40 tanks, but their performance was underwhelming considering the haphazard Cypriot defense.⁴⁸ Despite landing unopposed and achieving strategic surprise, the Turkish force floundered at the tactical level struggling to secure the beaches and surrounding high terrain. In the opening day, the Turks failed to expand their initial beachhead and made little progress towards linking with the Turkish enclaves near Nicosia.⁴⁹

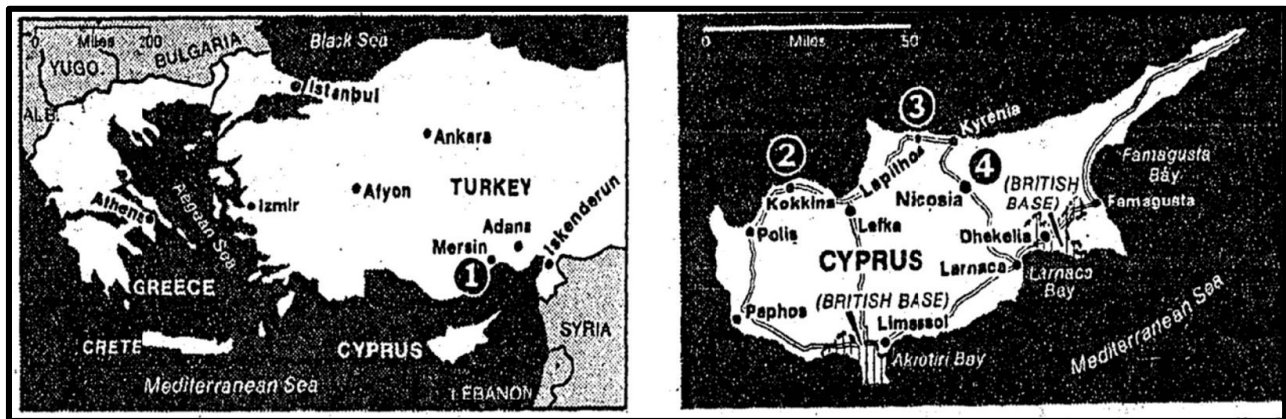


Figure 5.1 - Map of Cyprus – Operation Attila I.

* Markers on Map: 1) Launching point of Turkish invasion at Mersin, 3) Initial landing beaches west of Kyrenia, 4) Initial Turkish paratroops north of Nicosia. The areas marked with vertical lines are the two British SBAs. 2) Is a mistakenly reported second landing site. Source: "Wide Fighting Rages in Cyprus, Turks Control Road to Nicosia; Greeks Mobilize, Shift Troops," *The New York Times*, July 21, 1974, 1.

Throughout the opening hours and days of fighting, Turkey sought to strike Greek targets on the ground and at sea. The Turkish Air Force directly attacked the Greek tripwire by including strikes on the Greek Contingent base camp in the first rounds of airstrikes. The Greek Contingent was one of the only units who received warning of a pending invasion and managed

⁴⁷ Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 209-211.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 213; Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 105.

⁴⁹ Andrew Boroweic, *Cyprus: A Troubled Island* (Westport: Praeger, 2000), 87; Crawshaw, *The Cyprus Revolt*, 390; Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 105-106, 148.

to disperse before the strike.⁵⁰ On the 20th and 21st Turkish intelligence incorrectly reported that a Greek convoy of eleven ships including destroyers and troops ships was approaching Cyprus to reinforce the island. Turkey knew that intercepting Greek reinforcements in the early stages would be critical, especially given the slow initial progress of the landing forces. Turkey, after attacking Greek and Cypriot positions, also fully expected Greece to attempt reinforcements of its tripwire, despite US reassurances to the contrary.⁵¹ These conditions left Turkey blind to a coming blunder.

On 21 July, the Turkish High Command ordered the navy to dispatch three destroyers towards the reported Greek flotilla around Paphos.⁵² Enroute the destroyers encountered three Cypriot patrol boats mistaking them for Greek vessels. The Turkish task force sunk two of the Cypriots vessels believing they were Greek.⁵³ The task force continued in search of the Greek fleet. Later that day, the Turkish High Command gave orders to the Air Force to attack the suspected Greek naval force focusing first on the landing ships. Ecevit called Kissinger to warn him that if the Greek fleet continued it would be attacked. US diplomats were confused because they received no intelligence of a Greek convoy moving towards Cyprus. The strike package of Turkish fighter-bombers located three destroyers in the expected target area and attacked with bombing and strafing runs. The destroyers turned out to be the Turkish naval task force. The Turkish aircraft fatally hit the Turkish destroyer *Kotsiatepe* and damaged the other two before the attacking aircraft recognized their error.⁵⁴ The Turkish interdiction against what they

⁵⁰ Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 208.

⁵¹ On the expectations for Greek reinforcement and betrayal of their word see the conversation between Ecevit and Kissinger quoted in: Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 222-223.

⁵² Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 221.

⁵³ Ioannides, *Realpolitik*, 127-128; Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 40; Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 112.

⁵⁴ Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence*, 143; Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 41-42.

presumed were Greek forces was driven by political calculus, not by over aggressive local commanders seeking to engage Greek forces. Ecevit and the Turkish high command were monitoring and actively directing the naval task force and gave the orders for the aircraft to attack. The willingness to strike Greek targets is consistent throughout the case contrasting with deep Greek hesitance in striking Turkish forces directly, even after suffering attack.

5.5 Defender Response

The Greek response to the Turkish invasion was slow to develop. Ioannides and other political leaders had convinced themselves that like previous crises Turkey would not invade and that the threats were a bluff.⁵⁵ The false preconceptions muted the warning signs of imminent invasion and delayed responses from Cypriot and Greek forces in the opening hours of the invasion. Most importantly, as the crisis developed it became clear that Greece lacked the military capacity to project power to Cyprus. Furthermore, Greece did not have a reasonable chance of winning a wider war with Turkey. The Greek military was acutely aware of the inability to challenge Turkey and the split between the politicians pushing for escalation and the military pushing for restraint led to the collapse of the Greek junta regime. The following section will discuss the standing Greek plans to repulse a Turkish invasion, the initial reaction of political and military leaders, and the resulting actions of the Greek military forces.

Greek officers developed the military plans in case of Turkish invasion in 1964, and failed to update them to the strategic shifts in the decade after. The plans were developed when there was a large Greek force posture of 10,000 Greek regulars stationed on the island. The plan, called *Aphrodite I*, would include an immediate Greek counterattack against any beachheads and

⁵⁵ Crawshaw, *The Cyprus Revolt*, 390; Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 208-209.

a rapid reinforcement from the mainland including naval forces to counter the amphibious fleet. Despite the dramatic reduction in Greek force posture from ‘Large’ to ‘Tripwire’ in 1968 and the increased Turkish capacity to land forces, the Greeks failed to adjust the *Aphrodite I* plan to counter an invasion.⁵⁶ Therefore, for Greece to have any chance of success in implementation it required the rapid mobilization of Cypriot reserves to take the place of the 10,000 Greek regulars to counter a large Turkish invasion. The Greek Contingent was to hold in reserve and counterattack with the National Guard against any beachheads that Turkey managed to establish. The updated *Aphrodite* plan also called for Greece to send a squadron of fighters that would land on Cyprus and operate from the island since the distance from Greek territory was too great for sustained fighter operations. The Greek navy would dispatch two torpedo boats and at least one Greek submarine to attack the landing fleet when it was most vulnerable in landing. All these forces were envisioned to be in place before the invasion so that they could attack the incoming forces at their most vulnerable point.⁵⁷

Between July 15 and July 20, after the Cypriot coup, Greece did not implement the initial plans to support *Aphrodite*. Greece did not mobilize the Cypriot reserves nor reinforce the island for two reasons. First, the Cypriot active forces were dispersed to hunt opposition to the coup and maintain security after the political upheaval.⁵⁸ Therefore, the Cypriot regulars were not operating many of their defensive positions along the coast, which Turkish intelligence observed. Cypriot and Greek leadership was cautious to mobilize National Guard troops in such political uncertainty. An example of concerns about mobilizing the Cypriots comes from Major Dokos,

⁵⁶ Sambanis, “United Nations Peacekeeping,” 159; Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 210-211.

⁵⁷ The plan to reinforce Cyprus was coded named ‘K’ and even if the reinforcements arrived, they were much too small to overcome the large Turkish advantage. See: Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 211-214.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 206-208; Hughes-Wilson, “The Forgotten War,” 88.

Cypriot commander of the artillery brigade responsible for covering the invasion beaches. When asked why there were no guns in their batteries he reportedly said, “...all these are Makarois supporters. They’ll turn the guns on us.”⁵⁹

Second, Ioannides thought invasion unlikely post-coup but was concerned that mobilizing the Cypriot reserves would give Turkey the pretext to escalate the crisis. US CIA advisors to Greece also pushed this narrative hoping to defuse the crisis between two US allies. The Greek’s were aware of Turkey’s superiority and the fear of instigating a response further undermined their already questionable capability to defend Cyprus. Similarly, the planned Greek reinforcements were also not immediately dispatched for fear of Turkey’s reaction.⁶⁰ Greece settled for limited military measures prior to invasion. Greece placed its military on a higher state of alert, canceling leave for its active duty forces and calling up limited reserves. It also deployed some fighter aircraft and paratroop forces to the island of Crete.⁶¹ With the Cypriot forces facing inward, and no Greek air or naval support deployed forward, Turkey launched its invasion.

As Turkish aircraft struck targets on Cyprus, the Greek high command was in such disarray that they responded to the initial Cypriot National Guard requests for military assistance stating not to resist and that it was just a Turkish exercise. Meanwhile, from the Cypriot headquarters in Nicosia, National Guard leadership could see Turkish paratroopers falling, helicopters landing, and Turkish airstrikes. Finally, at 0900, Athens gave orders to the local Cypriot and Greek forces to mobilize and resist the attack.⁶² However, instead of massing to

⁵⁹ Quoted in: Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 210.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 212-213, 216-217.

⁶¹ Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 77.

⁶² Ioannides, *Realpolitik*, 124-125; Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 210.

oppose the beachhead, on the morning of the 20th Athens directed the counterattack against the Turkish enclaves and the irregular Turkish Cypriot fighters.⁶³ Thus, the already suspect *Aphrodite* plan deteriorated further. Despite all the disadvantages, several Cypriot units managed to fight their way to the beach and offer some resistance to the Turkish ground forces. The stubborn fighting of a few Cypriot units combined with the initial tactical ineptitude of the Turkish forces stymied Turkish progress.⁶⁴ The failure to breakthrough to the Nicosia enclaves and not prioritizing capturing the deep-water port at Famagusta meant Turkish reinforcements would have to arrive at the beach or by airdrop slowing the prospects of a quick victory.⁶⁵

Reports state that upon hearing of the Turkish landings, Ioannides was shocked and surprised. US ambassador Henry Tasca joined the junta's leadership gathered in a crisis meeting at 0600. Tasca told the Greeks not to go to war with Turkey and that he would stop the invasion through diplomatic means.⁶⁶ Ioannides rejected the US call for restraint threatening that Greece would go to war unless there was an immediate ceasefire and Turkish forces depart Cyprus.⁶⁷ Ioannides had another outburst with his war council and American officials at 0700 yelling he would declare war. Meanwhile on Cyprus, the Cypriot National Guard had not received any direction from Athens and had standing orders to hold position and not counter attack against Turkish forces. Greece's War Council met again at 0800 and there were several loud hawkish voices calling for war.⁶⁸ However, consensus was reached that no attacks should be made

⁶³ Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 100; Hughes-Wilson, "The Forgotten War," 88; Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 212-213.

⁶⁴ Turkey's performance was so poor that Kissinger requested the JCS development an assessment of how Turkey's underwhelming performance affected NATO planning. See, Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 106.

⁶⁵ Drew Middleton, "Lagging Turkish Drive," *The New York Times*, July 23, 1974, 16; Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence*, 143.

⁶⁶ Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 216.

⁶⁷ Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 97.

⁶⁸ Christopher Hitchens, *Cyprus* (London: Quartet Books, 1984), 95; Crawshaw, *The Cyprus Revolt*, 390.

against Turkish forces.⁶⁹ The council did decide to declare general mobilization of the Greek military and reserves. The Greek reserves were ordered to report for duty across Greece and President Gizikis announced on TV that Greek forces were fighting back against Turkish invaders.⁷⁰ Grizkis invoked nationalist language common in times of crisis and specifically mentioned Greek forces fighting on Cyprus, even though at this point it is unlikely the Greek Contingent had yet engaged in combat. While announcing the invasion on television he stated that:

“The Greek nation has never provoked or harmed the Turks. At this moment, the Greek forces in Cyprus are defending the island. True to our traditions, we will defend our national interests. The Greek forces have confidence that they have the powers and ability to defend Greek interests against this flagrant provocation. We remain confident to our traditions. We all have to respond to the expectations of our nation.”⁷¹

Greece presented an ultimatum to the Turkish Ambassador. It claimed the Greek Contingent was attacked, stated that Greece had declared mobilization, and demanded the cessation of Turkish military activities and retreat of its forces. The alternative presented was war.⁷² Despite the ultimatum, Greek military leaders feared a war with Turkey would be disastrous and wanted to avoid attacking Turkish forces, even those invading Cyprus.⁷³ At 0900, the Greek Contingent on Cyprus was ordered to attack Turkish Cypriot enclaves instead of the landing beaches. Both Greek and Turkish forces were alerted and moved to their shared border in Thrace but the region remained quiet outside of one small shelling incident.⁷⁴ Turkey

⁶⁹ Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 217.

⁷⁰ Alvin Shuster, “Reserve Call-Up Could Involve 160,000 Men,” *The New York Times*, July 21, 1974, p. 21.

⁷¹ Quoted in: Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 98.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 98; Shuster, “Reserve Call-Up.”

⁷³ Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 217; Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 37.

⁷⁴ “Cyprus – Briefing for 22 July WSAG Meeting,” *Central Intelligence Agency* July 22, 1974, p.3; Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence*, 142; Shuster, “Reserve Call-Up,” 21; Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 101.

reviewed defensive plans in the Aegean, evacuated villages in Thrace bordering Greece, and the media stated people should prepare for war.⁷⁵ Otherwise, Turkey ignored the Greek ultimatum.

Finally, in the evening of the 20th, the Armed Forces Headquarters in Athens ordered the Cypriot National Guard and Greek Contingent force to wipe out the Turkish beachhead “as a priority, and at any cost.”⁷⁶ Note, that the counter attack was ordered without any reinforcements being dispatched from Greece as originally planned, and with forces that were trying to mobilize under air attack. The Greek Contingent and Cypriot forces attempted to attack down the Nicosia-Kyrenia road to prevent Turkish landing forces from connecting with the paratroopers in the enclaves, then assault the beach. The darkness prevented Turkish air support, which minimized the effects of Turkish air dominance. The Turkish Contingent and amphibious forces met the attacking Greeks and through 12 hours of fighting rebuffed them marking the first direct ground engagement between Turkish and Greek forces. When dawn broke Turkish airstrikes resumed striking the Greek Contingent and Cypriot National Guard positions.⁷⁷

In the morning of the 21st, Ioannides declared he would send reinforcements to Cyprus. The same morning the US ambassador was informed that by midday Greece would withdraw from NATO and declare war on Turkey.⁷⁸ The Greek military service chiefs and deputy chiefs balked and all expressed worry that Greece would not win a war with Turkey. They also knew successfully reinforcing Cyprus without air support and a significant naval disadvantage was foolhardy. The Greek military knew they did not have the capacity to successfully project power to Cyprus and they knew that if the conflict escalated, they would lose badly in a general war

⁷⁵ Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 39.

⁷⁶ Drousiotēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 214.

⁷⁷ Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 30-32, Crawshaw, *The Cyprus Revolt*, 390.

⁷⁸ Shuster, “Reserve Call-Up,” 21.

with Turkey.⁷⁹ In other words, due to Greece's weak power projection and disadvantage in relative power, it lacked the capacity to escalate on Cyprus.

The military chiefs cited the gathering Turkish forces in western Turkey and refused to agree to reinforce Cyprus.⁸⁰ After the meeting, the acting Foreign Minister and Commander in Chief, Bonanos, dismissed the deputies but stayed to discuss the tenuous situation with the chiefs of the military forces. In this meeting, they decided to stage a coup to remove Ioannides and transfer power to other civilian politicians restoring a democratic government. The risk of war with Turkey was too great. The Greek military leaders secretly coordinated with American diplomats and intelligence personnel whom they had a long-standing relationship to arrange a ceasefire on Cyprus while they refused, slowed, or avoided orders that would bring more Greek forces into contact with the Turkish military.⁸¹ With that decision complete, the chiefs recalled two Greek submarines enroute to attack the Turkish flotilla north of Cyprus and continued undermining political orders to escalate the conflict until they were prepared to replace Ioannides. Turkey replied to the verbal threats with several precautionary moves. First, they ensured they had direct contact with US diplomats. Second, defense planners reviewed war plans in the Aegean. Third, Turkey evacuated villages in Thrace along the border. Finally, media began stating that the populace should prepare itself for general war.⁸²

That evening in Athens, not yet ready to stage the takeover, the military chiefs again met with Ioannides. Ioannides reiterated his intention for war declaring Greece would attack across the Maritsa River into Turkey. The generals repeated their refusal to send air or naval forces to

⁷⁹ See footnote #44 in Sambanis, "United Nations Peacekeeping," 127; and Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 37.

⁸⁰ Drousiotēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 224.

⁸¹ Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 107; "Cyprus – Briefing for 22 July WSAG Meeting," *Central Intelligence Agency*, July 22, 1974, p.4.

⁸² Drousiotēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 224; Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 39-41.

attack Turkey directly or the Turkish landings on Cyprus. They did acquiesce to sending a special operations commando team to help secure the airport at Nicosia and two army regiments to be sent by sea.⁸³ That same evening a transport ship departed with the army forces and the commandos began an airlift. Again, the military interfered with the reinforcement. While the transport ship was underway, the military redirected it to the island of Rhodes away from Turkish forces falsely claiming the island was under attack.⁸⁴ The small commando team did make it Cyprus but in attempting to land came under friendly fire from the Cypriot defenders at the airport. At least one aircraft was shot down and there were reports of multiple explosions after they began landing.⁸⁵ Of the fourteen aircraft that landed, only seven were observed to depart. It is estimated the operation brought 200 Greek commandos and supplies to Cyprus and would be the only Greece reinforcement of its tripwire on Cyprus.⁸⁶ The Turks responded to the reinforcement with direct aggression against the Greek commandos. Within thirty minutes of the landings, Turkish aircraft heavily bombed the airport and continued to strike it throughout the day.⁸⁷

On July 22nd Ioannides again tried to find a way to militarily reinforce Cyprus. Meanwhile, Greek Cypriot forces identified incoming Turkish helicopters on radar and soon the second wave of Turkish air and seaborne troops began reaching the beachhead and enclaves. Ioannides supporters managed to get orders out to scramble its F-4 fighters now forward based at Crete to strike the Turkish wave of reinforcements. Two minutes later Bonanos overrode the

⁸³ Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 36-38.

⁸⁴ Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 227.

⁸⁵ Boroweic, *Cyprus: A Troubled Island*, 88; Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 225, 227.

⁸⁶ Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 110; Dimitrakis, *Military intelligence*, 151; Sambanis, "United Nations Peacekeeping," 118, 127. Sambanis states that Greece also launched two warships that were turned back by the US 6th fleet. It is not clear if these ships were recalled by the military command like the submarines and other reinforcements, or due to the US fleet.

⁸⁷ Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 110.

order before the aircraft could depart.⁸⁸ The Turks would land their second wave unopposed at 0800 and remain unmolested for the several hours required to unload. Around noon, heavy armor began landing and all were successfully ashore by midafternoon. Again, at 1224 an order was given to launch Greek aircraft to attack the landing beaches. Yet again, Bonanos intervened to prevent their launch. The same game played out with naval forces. Ioannides factions ordered the two submarines to return to its task of opposing the landings, only to receive countermanding orders a day later. Boannos later reported that he countermanded the orders because they would lead to general war with Turkey. A war Greece would not win.⁸⁹

Turkish forces finally broke out of the beachhead on 22 July securing the road south towards the enclaves around Nicosia and linking with the paratroop forces on 23 July.⁹⁰ This second push from Turkish forces expanded Turkish control from the small 10-mile strip it had been bottled in. However, Turkey did not secure the airport at Nicosia and despite assaults on the town of Kyrenia, had not yet secured a port to lift in heavy forces.⁹¹ Meanwhile in Athens, Ioannides reached a breaking point accusing the generals of treason and again called for war with Turkey.⁹² That day, the military chiefs met with political representatives and agreed the political change should occur immediately. Ioannides was summoned and facing the unified opinion of the military leaders, he stepped down peacefully. In stepping down Ioannides agreed to not interfere with the transition or military operations.⁹³ Several meetings with political leaders followed discussing the issue of transition from the junta regime to a democratic one and the

⁸⁸ Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 226.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 227; Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 47.

⁹⁰ Middleton, "Lagging Turkish Drive," 16; Crawshaw, *The Cyprus Revolt*, 390.

⁹¹ Boroweic, *Cyprus: A Troubled Island*, 89.

⁹² Hitchens, *Cyprus*, 95; Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 227.

⁹³ Drousiōtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 229.

crisis on Cyprus. Former Prime Minister Constantine Karamanlis returned from exile in France to form a new government.⁹⁴ The same day, Sampson stepped down from his weeklong tenure as President of Cyprus, replaced by Glafkos Clerides as acting President.⁹⁵

Turkey and Greece agreed to a UN brokered ceasefire, but Turkey continued to reinforce its position and expand its perimeter generating many reports of ceasefire violations.⁹⁶ The UN contingent reported that Turkish forces were expanding in every direction.⁹⁷ By 28 July, Turkey had 20,000 men on Cyprus and consolidated its toehold in the north controlling 8% of Cyprus.⁹⁸ On 30 July, Turkey and Greece issued the Geneva Declaration including a renewed ceasefire agreement.⁹⁹ However, Turkey continued to land troops and armor and slowly expanded its zone of control. During this ‘ceasefire’ both Cypriot and Turkish forces initiated military actions as Turkey slowly expanded its foothold.¹⁰⁰ The Turkish reinforcements angered Karamanlis. He requested that the UK stop the reinforcements and the territorial expansion, by military force if necessary. He argued that a renewed Turkish offensive to take the island would lead to a losing war and another collapse of the Greek government.¹⁰¹ The UK refused to intervene militarily beyond the earlier bolstering of its units supporting the UN mission and instead argued for continued diplomatic efforts.

⁹⁴ Crawshaw, *The Cyprus Revolt*, 391;

⁹⁵ Boroweic, *Cyprus: A Troubled Island*, 89.

⁹⁶ Polyviou, *Cyprus, Conflict and Negotiation*, 157; Ioannides, *Realpolitik*, 129-130; Crawshaw, *The Cyprus Revolt*, 391.

⁹⁷ Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence*, 146.

⁹⁸ Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 178; Ioannides, *Realpolitik*, 130.

⁹⁹ Sambanis, “United Nations Peacekeeping,” 117;

¹⁰⁰ Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 179; Hughes-Wilson, “The Forgotten War,” 88.

¹⁰¹ Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence*, 146.

5.6 The Second Offensive

On 13 August, the US intelligence reported to the State Department that Turkey could achieve its objective of capturing the northern half of the island in three to six days after commencing an assault. The analysis estimated that Greece would be unable to meaningfully reinforce the island and that the Turks would likely be successful in capturing the whole island if it chose to do so.¹⁰² Greece faced a difficult decision as it became evident the talks were failing and Turkey gained massive local superiority. If the talks failed, and Turkey resumed the offense, would Greece declare war? Despite the new government in Greece, the strategic calculus had not changed. Greece maintained its tripwire force on Cyprus but without outside assistance, Greece still lacked the capacity to escalate because it lacked reliable power projection and faced a large differential in relative power. The Greek Defense Minister summarized the primary factor when he told Robin Hooper, the British Ambassador, on 10 August that Greece would not initiate a war with Turkey “if only because the disparity in forces was so great.”¹⁰³

Karamanlis, assumedly knowing his country’s inability to fight a war based on the continuance of the same military leaders who forced out Ioannides, began laying the groundwork to avoid the repercussions of the hand-tying mechanisms associated with the nationalist threshold. He was able to do so by pinning the blame for the Cyprus conflict squarely on the Ioannides regime. On 10 August, Greek media stated that Karamanlis emphasized that Greece will “do its full duty despite the appalling difficulties bequeathed by the reckless policy of its predecessors and the absurd reactions of those who were responsible for the present Cypriot tragedy.” He went on to emphasize that the current government was confronted with a fait

¹⁰² “Turkish Military Capabilities on Cyprus,” *Central Intelligence Agency* August 13, 1974, 2-3

¹⁰³ Quoted in Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 219.

accompli, one that had happened before he took office.¹⁰⁴ Karamanlis followed a simple strategic logic, that Greece did not have the capacity to escalate and win, and therefore sought to minimize the political damage associated with the vulnerability of the Greek tripwire. This avenue to limit the political damage was only available because Ioannides authoritarian regime had begun the conflict and already collapsed; Karamanlis was seeking to escape it.

All pretenses of a ceasefire and a negotiated solution were shattered as the Geneva talks broke down. On 13 August, Turkey submitted an ultimatum to the conference for 34% of Cyprus' territory. Greece and Cyprus asked for 36 hours to generate a response, which Turkey rejected. Turkey welcomed the breakdown in talks because they could secure significant gains by military force at low risk given the Greeks inability to escalate.¹⁰⁵ Turkey resumed bombing Nicosia, and on 14 August, launched *Attila II*, its second ground offensive of the campaign.¹⁰⁶ Turkey now had overwhelming superiority on the island with 36,000-40,000 troops and 240 tanks.¹⁰⁷ Greece had failed to meaningfully reinforce the island and the fighting had ground down the Cypriot National Guard.¹⁰⁸ The acting commander of the Cypriot National Guard described the force in late July as follows, "Units have reached the verge of dissolution, there have been serious cases of units' self-destruction that are taking on the aspect of a revolt."¹⁰⁹ On August 13, Athens believed that if Turkey attacked, the only possible course was retreat. This estimate was clairvoyant as Cypriot defenses were quickly overwhelmed in the east and west in the face of firepower and numerical superiority leading to mass desertions.¹¹⁰ The initial Turkish

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 219.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 214-215.

¹⁰⁶ Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence*, 151; Ioannides, *Realpolitik*, 134.

¹⁰⁷ "Turkish Military Capabilities on Cyprus," *Central Intelligence Agency* August 13, 1974, 2-3; Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 78; Drousiotēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 254; Ioannides, *Realpolitik*, 135-137; Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 225;

¹⁰⁸ Crawshaw, *The Cyprus Revolt*, 393.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Drousiotēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 254.

¹¹⁰ Hughes-Wilson, "The Forgotten War," 90.

advance was deliberately slow, averaging three miles per hour despite the lack of organized resistance from the Cypriots.¹¹¹ When Turkish forces met resistance, they used heavy firepower and airstrikes to overwhelm the opposition.¹¹²

The Greek Contingent defended the center of the Cypriot line outside Nicosia and like the *Attila I* offensive, Turkey directly struck Greek positions. Turkish regulars attacked the Greek positions with airstrikes and a determined ground assault supported by 17 modern M48 tanks. The fighting lasted all day before the Greeks retreated suffering approximately 100 killed, over 10% of the force.¹¹³ The Greek regulars offered stiff resistance for a day but could not hold out against such superiority with no hope of reinforcements or air cover. Turkey was willing to directly attack the Greek forces because they knew Greece could not reach Cyprus and that even if they declared war, Greece would lose.¹¹⁴ Hooper reported from Athens that with the renewal of hostilities the Greek public was resigned to war with Turkey as Greece recalled released reservists and activated contingency plans in preparation for war.¹¹⁵ Despite Karamanlis' earlier public posturing to place blame for the crisis with the previous regime, he felt compelled to respond to the renewed offensive. Greece had been concentrating an elite division of about 10,000 men in Crete to potentially reinforce the Cypriot National Guard and Greek Contingent on Cyprus. The plan was to create a defensive 'demarcation line' that would challenge total Turkish conquest of the island but not directly attack the current status quo or roll back the Turkish gains on Cyprus. However, as discussed previously, Greek ships would be highly

¹¹¹ The speed of the advance was likely to allow Greek civilians to flee reducing the future burden of managing refugees and the ethnic displacement would ease follow on governance. Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 125; Drousiotēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 225.

¹¹² Henry Giniger, "Troops Enter Famagusta and Push to Split Island," *The New York Times*, August 15, 1974, p. 1.

¹¹³ Hughes-Wilson, "The Forgotten War," 89-90.

¹¹⁴ Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 111, 214-215.

¹¹⁵ Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 220.

vulnerable to Turkish air and naval power when approaching Cyprus. Therefore, on the evening of the 14th Greece requested British air support to escort the Greek convoy after it left the range of Greek land based air cover. Greece was developing the reinforcement plan since at least August 5, but for the first time requested British assistance.¹¹⁶

After consulting with the US, the British denied the request. Callaghan believed sending Greek reinforcements would lead to war. Additionally, British and US intelligence believed Turkish aims were limited to taking the northern half of Cyprus and a large Greek force posture along a defensive line in central Cyprus would not prevent that outcome and was not large enough to roll back Turkish gains.¹¹⁷ The Greeks continued to threaten the UK that they would send the convoy without air cover under the cover of darkness to land on Cyprus. British Prime Minister Wilson warned Greece such action would be foolhardy. However, once there would be no British or American air cover, it is unlikely Karamanlis was realistically considering sending the force, and more likely trying to use it as leverage against his NATO allies to take firmer action. Additionally, like in late July, despite hawkish attitudes from some corners of the military the Greek generals were unwilling to engage in a losing war with Turkey.¹¹⁸

On 15 August, Karamanlis gave a speech on national radio reiterating much of the narrative from the 10 August media story. He recounted the “folly of the dictatorship” and the “sinful past” under the junta that had caused the current situation. He went on to attack Turkey as the aggressor and reiterated the fault of the Ioannides regime stating that because of the “irresponsible and senseless action by the previous regime, three weeks ago Turkey had landed

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 221.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 221-222; Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence*, 151; Turkish Military Capabilities on Cyprus,” *Central Intelligence Agency* August 13, 1974, 2-3

¹¹⁸ Drousiôtēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 254.

military forces in Cyprus.” He further emphasized Greece’s inability to reinforce the island due to the distance and large power differential with Turkey. He also stated that any effort to do so would weaken Greece from a direct Turkish invasion in the Aegean.¹¹⁹ The New York Times summarized the logic in quoting a diplomat on the speech, “Caramanlis and his chiefs knew that if they went to war they would suffer a humiliating defeat. They felt the humiliation of not going to war was a lesser evil.”¹²⁰ In other words, Greece still lacked the capability to escalate. Greece could not reliably get second echelon forces to Cyprus, nor did they have a reasonable chance of winning a war with Turkey. Because Britain and the US had failed to assist Greece against Turkey, Karamanlis announced Greece’s withdrawal from the military alliance of NATO, congratulated the Greek people in their patriotism, and commended the military.¹²¹

Once the Turkish advance achieved its limited objectives on the island the fighting dropped off significantly. Limited skirmishes continued but Turkey did not intend on taking the whole of the island. On August 16, Turkey declared a ceasefire halting its offensive operations having captured 38% of Cypriot territory and 73% of its economic potential.¹²²

5.7 British Response

The following section traces the force posture of British in and around Cyprus and the effects Britain’s military posture had in constraining Turkish strategies of aggression. Unlike Greece, Britain had demonstrable power projection in the Eastern Mediterranean. Its Sovereign Base Areas on Cyprus itself were built in beachheads to reinforce its UK contingent already

¹¹⁹ Steven Roberts, “Caramanlis on TV, Premier says troops would face enemy holding advantage,” *The New York Times*, August 15, 1974, p. 1; Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 223-224; Drousiotis, *Cyprus* 1974, 254-255.

¹²⁰ Roberts, “Caramanlis on TV,” 1-2.

¹²¹ Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 233-234; Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence*, 152.

¹²² Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence*, 153; Ioannides, *Realpolitik*, 137-138.

present. Additionally, a British naval task force including the aircraft carrier Hermes reached Cyprus on July 18th which outmatched Turkish naval capabilities in the region.¹²³ On the eve of Turkish invasion, Britain had over 6,000 troops in the Sovereign Base Areas of Dhekelia and Akrotiri.¹²⁴ As the crisis began with the coup, the primary objective of the force was to protect the estimated 17,000 UK civilians on the island. The secondary objective was to deter a Turkish invasion. However, America constrained British diplomatic and military options before and during the crisis. The UK would not threaten, nevertheless use, military force to deter or rollback Turkish efforts unless the US supported military action. British Foreign Secretary Callaghan repeatedly requested US support for a joint UK-US military action that the US consistently refused.¹²⁵

Given US reticence to threaten force, the local British force posture of none and large regional force posture failed to deter the Turkish invasion. On July 19, the UK foreign Office laid out the details of its revised approach to the crisis given US reticence to intervene. The British objectives were to protect its citizens, avoid a UK military entanglement, limit Turkish aims, and prevent Greek reinforcement and a wider war in the Aegean.¹²⁶ Thus, the focus moved from deterring a Turkish invasion to limiting its scope and deterring a Greek response. That evening, a British Nimrod reconnaissance aircraft spotted the Turkish invasion and decoy fleet heading towards Cyprus.¹²⁷

¹²³ Ioannides, *Realpolitik*, 122.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 122; Henry Giniger, "Troops Enter Famagusta and Push to Split Island," *The New York Times*, August 16, 1974, 1-2.

¹²⁵ Ioannides, *Realpolitik*, 123-124; Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 92.

¹²⁶ Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 91.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 79.

The 23rd of July brought the tensest period between Turkey and Britain. Fighting broke out around the Nicosia airport at 0930. At 1230, the UN force at the airport declared a ceasefire. 500 UN troops, made up primarily of Canadian force occupied the airport as Greek Cypriot forces withdrew.¹²⁸ Confusion developed between Turkish, Greek, and British leaders as to who controlled the airport while a Turkish armored unit massed two miles from the airport. These forces began deploying around the airport in places some 500 yards from UN forces.¹²⁹ This confusion was compounded by Turkish announcements of intention to take the airport, especially from local military commanders to the local UN commander.¹³⁰ Turkey had not originally planned to take the airport, but the Greek commando resupply, despite its strategic impotence, arose fears of the airport as a possible Greek resupply hub.

In response, the British extended a tripwire of ground forces to reinforce the UN force at the airport with troops from the SBAs. They sent 777 total troops including two companies of infantry, armored cars augmented by a flyover of attack aircraft, and the positioning of F-4 fighters to British airbases in the SBAs.¹³¹ Callaghan responded to the Turkish threat by invoking the nationalist threshold specifically identifying the British Contingents as distinct from the UN force. He told Ecevit that if Turkey attacked they would “come up against the UN and British Contingent” and that “Her Majesty’s Government would not stand by if our forces were attacked: we would not allow them to be slaughtered.”¹³² Ecevit responded that he believed the airport to be already under Turkish control. All British SBA units were placed on alert.¹³³

¹²⁸ Ibid., 126-127; Ioannides, *Realpolitik*, 136.

¹²⁹ Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence*, 143; Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 127.

¹³⁰ Waldheim, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 84; Birand, *30 Hot Days* 54-55.

¹³¹ Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 128-130; Waldheim, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 84.

¹³² Quoted in Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 128.

¹³³ Ibid., 128-129; Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 55.

On 24 July, Ecevit informed the British that Turkish aircraft were going to strike the airport but that they knew the location of British forces and would only target UN forces. British Prime Minister Wilson called Ecevit and said that British and Canadian troops were in close proximity to other UN forces and that if attacked, British fighters would shoot down the Turkish aircraft.¹³⁴ Ninety minutes later Ecevit backed down and Turkey announced it would not attempt to take the airport by force or coercion.¹³⁵ Wilson describes the event as besides the Suez crisis, “probably the nearest that Britain came to war with another nation since 1945.”¹³⁶ The case can be made that Turkey’s incentive to take the airport was low given that Turkish forces controlled or overlooked all ground avenues into the airport, and the airport was damaged by earlier Turkish airstrikes limiting its potential use.¹³⁷ Turkey essentially removed the Nicosia airport as a potential hub for Greek reinforcements and therefore did not have a big incentive to risk escalation with British or UN forces. However, it is a useful illustration of the common understanding between the actors of the threat. Ecevit, Callaghan, and Wilson all used language consistent with an understanding of the nationality threshold and that an attack on British forces would lead to British escalation to defend the airport. The British tripwire was supported by obvious power projection capabilities to reach the airport with air and land power in the SBAs and the naval flotilla offshore.

Following the airport incident, Britain observed the buildup of Turkish forces and the creeping expansion of Turkish lines during the ‘cease fire’ in late July and early August. British intelligence accurately assessed Turkey’s goal as capturing northern Cyprus for partition. Britain

¹³⁴ Wilson, *The Final Term*, 63-64.

¹³⁵ Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 131; Ioannides, *Realpolitik*, 136.

¹³⁶ Wilson, *The Final Term*, 64.

¹³⁷ Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 57.

sought through the ongoing negotiations in Geneva and diplomatic posturing to prevent a renewed Turkish offensive to cut Cyprus in two. Callaghan personally supported extending a combined UN-British tripwire in front of the Turkish avenues of advance.¹³⁸ Reportedly, Callaghan mentioned to the British press that UK troops could be used in such a way and stated that “I wish to make it quite clear, if a single British soldier of the UN Peace force is fired upon, our troops and planes will go into action to protect British lives.”¹³⁹ Callaghan repeatedly asked Kissinger for unified opposition with a threat of military force to prevent a second Turkish offensive. On 11 August, Callaghan received in certain terms that the US disapproved of any military action or deterrent threats against Turkey.¹⁴⁰ The British Ministry of Defense also sought to avoid employing military force against any Turkish operations and sought to draw down the British force presence now totaling 11,700 to support other regional missions.¹⁴¹

Thus, when the Turkish offensive resumed, Britain made no moves to deploy force in front of the Turkish assault. UN Secretary-General Waldheim asked Callaghan about further British reinforcements for the UN force at the Nicosia airport. Callaghan agreed that the current combined British and UN force would be unable to hold the airport in the face of the large Turkish force. Callaghan continued that Turkey feared the political repercussions of attacking the force and further small-scale UK reinforcements would not change the calculus.¹⁴² Callaghan believed the British and UN force was an effective tripwire to deter aggression against that specific location, and that is why he had sought to expand the British tripwire beyond the airport.

¹³⁸ Dodd, *History and Politics*, 120.

¹³⁹ Quoted in Birand, *30 Hot Days*, 89. Also see “Turkish aide urges fast Geneva action,” *The New York Times*, August 11, 1974, 3.

¹⁴⁰ Dodd, *History and Politics*, 121; Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence*, 147-151.

¹⁴¹ Ioannides, *Realpolitik*, 130-134; The redeployment from Cyprus was scheduled by MOD but then canceled as negotiations broke down. “Turkish aide urges fast Geneva action,” *The New York Times*, August 11, 1974, 3.

¹⁴² Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 218.

When hostilities broke out anew with *Attila II*, Turkish forces took care to avoid British forces around the airport and the SBAs. Troops received strict rules of engagement to avoid British base areas and UK forces.¹⁴³ .

5.7 Conclusion

The invasion and partition of Cyprus demonstrates the necessity of escalation capacity for a credible tripwire deterrent. Turkey selected a strategy of conventional war despite the presence of the Greek tripwire on Cyprus. Turkish leaders knew that doing so risked war with Greece but they were confident in their capacity to halt Greek attempts at projecting power to Cyprus, and were willing risk the costs of winning a protracted war. Once hostilities commenced, Turkey made no efforts to avoid Greek tactical positions. The Turks actually sought out the tripwire force in the opening salvo of airstrikes, and then engaged it in ground combat on at least two occasions. Additionally, Turkish high command gave orders to strike what they believed to be Greek reinforcements onboard the ‘ghost’ convoy. Finally, Turkey responded to the insertion of commandos at Nicosia with airstrikes within an hour of their arrival. Turkish operational targeting of Greek forces contrasts sharply with Libyan behavior in Chad. Libyan forces were very careful to specifically target Chadian forces with direct aggression, avoiding French forces until suffering large losses at the hands of an unrestrained protégé.

Greek political leadership sought to reinforce Cyprus after the Turkish invasion, despite the lopsided power differential and high risk of failure. The Greek military knew it did not have the capacity to escalate vertically on Cyprus or horizontally against Turkey with any reasonable

¹⁴³ Despite the orders, there was an incident of inadvertent shelling of an SBA and a lost Turkish tank that violated SBA territory. Neither incident resulted in casualties and local British officers were able to defuse the situation and identify the locations of boundaries for Turkish forces. *Ibid.*, 231; Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence*, 144.

chance of success. Therefore, Greek military leaders slowed, refused, and interfered with reinforcements before completing a coup and transitioning power to a new democratic government. A new government did not bring any new military capability, but it did allow political leaders to rationalize the lack of military response by blaming the previous regime for the situation. Despite this political scapegoat, Karamanlis still felt compelled to respond and sought British military support to project reinforcements to the island. The United States also helped limit the escalatory potential by supporting the coup against Ioannides and applying diplomatic pressure against Greece to prevent escalation of the conflict. The US threatened to withdraw military aid and the stated purpose of the US 6th Fleet (and the British naval task force) was to prevent a Greek response that would escalate the conflict.¹⁴⁴

Finally, while this dissertation is not interested in determining why states select one deterrent strategy over another, it is worth addressing here the selection of the Greek tripwire since it was an irrational strategic choice to deter aggression against Cyprus. Greece stationed 10,000-12,000 troops from 1964 to 1967, which would make a Turkish invasion significantly more challenging and would, at a minimum, generate a larger cost against a Turkish invasion. However, Greece forfeited its large presence in the face of mounting international and Turkish pressures in the wake of atrocities on Cyprus.¹⁴⁵ Greece was constrained from selecting the optimal strategy of deploying a large force posture due to US pressure and therefore employed a tripwire force posture as specified in the 1960 agreements.

¹⁴⁴ On US crisis diplomacy efforts to restrain the Greek response see: Asmussen, *Cyprus at War*, 96-99; Drousiotēs, *Cyprus 1974*, 217; Dimitrakis, *Military Intelligence*, 141;

¹⁴⁵ Chaim Kaufmann, "When All Else Fails: Ethnic Population Transfers and Partitions in the Twentieth Century," *International Security* 23 no.2 (1998), 149-152; Parker Hart, *Two NATO allies at the threshold of war: Cyprus, a firsthand account of crisis management, 1965-1968* (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 1990), 22, 60, 102-108.

Chapter 6: Taiwan

6.1 Introduction

The series of crises in the Taiwan Strait between China and the United States in the 1950s has received considerable scholarly attention studying the causes of the crises, deterrence outcomes, and the role of nuclear threats.¹ The purpose of this chapter is not to give another full recounting of the events, but to examine the specific role of American military forces in constraining the options of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in initiating and executing strategies of aggression. In 1950, the impending invasion of Taiwan was interrupted by the continuous US force posture in the Taiwan Straits until 1969.² Centrally, despite President Truman's initial refrain in the summer of 1950 that the Seventh Fleet would neutralize the Taiwan Strait, the US Navy maintained just a small tripwire of ships and aircraft in the Taiwan Strait during the majority of the period of interest covering three crises between 1950 to 1958.

The case has two major contributions to theory development. The first is investigating the use of mobile tripwires in the naval and air domains in constraining attacker strategies and deterring both conventional war and direct aggression strategies. This is salient given the unique

¹ For example see: Jonathan Howe, *Multicrisis: sea power and global politics in the missile age* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971); Thomas Christensen, *Useful Adversaries, Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1959* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Thomas Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore Islands* (New York: Sharpe Inc, 1985); Nancy Tucker, *Patterns in the Dust: Chinese-American Relations and the Recognition Controversy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 200; Allen Whiting, "China's Use of Force, 1950-96, and Taiwan," *International Security* 26 no.2 (2001): 103-131; Harold Hinton, *Communist China in World Politics* Vol. 5. (Houghton Mifflin, 1966); Nancy Tucker, *The China Threat: Memories, myths, and realities in the 1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); Richard Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance* (Washington DC: Brookings, 1987); George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, 266-294 and 363-389; H. M. Halperin, *The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis: A Documented History* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1966); Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

² Bruce Elleman, *Taiwan Straits, Crisis in Asia and the Role of the US Navy* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 112-113, 151.

geography of the theater that lends itself to the use of naval and air tripwires. The US naval tripwire was tactically mobile in navigating the Taiwan Strait on a continuous patrol. Its exact location was not certain, but it was always present somewhere in the Strait and maintained port on the island of Taiwan. The tripwire was also strategically mobile in that one or two destroyers from the tripwire would temporarily sortie out from the continuous patrol area to steam in other areas or escort convoys. Second, the case establishes a clear US capacity to escalate with snap forward air and naval forces into the region. The US held an insurmountable advantage in those domains and regularly demonstrated the capability to reinforce the tripwire by surging forces into the region.

The chapter primarily exploits geographic variation in the US force posture to explore its interaction with PRC strategy. The 1950 case provides evidence that the PRC had the intention to attack Taiwan and were actively training and planning to launch a conventional war strategy. The outbreak of the Korean War and imposition of the Seventh Fleet altered those plans. After 1950, the PRC initiated crises but showed no intention of invading Taiwan given the US force posture there and eventually the US defense treaty. Instead, the case gains insights by evaluating the selection and execution of aggressor strategies against peripheral geographic locations where the US commitment was ambiguous and its force posture had variation. The chapter is broken into four sections. The first is background on the interests of the attacker and defender in the region and the capacity of the United States to escalate a conflict around Taiwan. The following sections cover the crises of 1950, 1954-55, and 1958 in order. The 1950 crisis discusses the initial deployment of the tripwire and the change in PRC's strategy selection. The 1954-1955 crisis broke out with PRC threats against the offshore islands opposing the signing of the Nationalist-US mutual defense treaty. In it, the strategic mobility of the US naval tripwire

delayed the execution, but failed to change the selection of a conventional war strategy against the Dachens. Finally, the 1958 offshore island crisis explores the extension of a US tripwire to protect nationalist convoys to resupply Quemoy under a naval and artillery blockade.

Year	Location	Change in Defender Force Posture	Initial Aggressor Strategy	Resulting Aggressor Strategy
1950	Taiwan	None to Tripwire	Conventional War	Nonmilitary
1954/55	Dachens	Variable	Nonmilitary	Conventional War
1958	Quemoy Convoys	None to Tripwire	Direct Aggression	None

Table 6.1 - Taiwan Subcase identification

6.1.1 Background

The series of Taiwan Strait crises were a continuation of the Chinese civil war under the international auspices of the Cold War. During the Chinese civil war, the United States provided an estimated two billion dollars to the Nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) including weapons and ammunition against Mao's communist insurgent force (CCP).³ Mao was wary of openly siding with his Soviet neighbors despite the US's alignment with the KMT. The CCP and USSR engaged in diplomatic and military exchanges but Mao was skeptical of Stalin's motivations. Stalin advised against reinitiating civil war in 1945, advised Mao to renegotiate with the KMT after hostilities broke out, and warned against the final campaign to push the KMT off the mainland.⁴ Mao and the CCP showed significant independence from Stalin and continued to seek possible overtures to the United States as Mao disregarded Stalin's council and resumed the offensive against the KMT in April 1949.⁵ Many US policy makers believed the KMT cause was doomed and considered opening up to the CCP. The CCP also pursued quiet outreach to the

³ Hao Yufan and Zhai Zhihai, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War: History Revisited," *The China Quarterly* 121 (1990): 95.

⁴ Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 66-68.

⁵ Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 59.

US probing for a relationship. However, that hope ended with Mao's "lean to one side" speech on 30 June 1949 officially aligning the CCP with the USSR. The CCP pushed the remaining KMT forces off the mainland to Taiwan and the offshore islands in December of the same year after proclaiming victory in October with the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The Sino-Soviet alliance signed in February of 1950 was primarily an outgrowth of CCP security concerns over the US although its ideological connections played a role as well.⁶ During the renewed civil war, Mao and the CCP were unsure over US intentions and became concerned about the United States directly intervening to support the KMT. The CCP responded by stationing troops in coastal areas and developing plans to counteract a possible coastal invasion.⁷ In late 1948 and early 1949, Mao concluded that the CCP could defeat the US if the US became directly militarily involved in the civil war on the mainland, as they had defeated the Japanese and would soon defeat the KMT.⁸ However, the fear of US intentions remained as the US continued supporting Chiang and refused to recognize the CCP as the legitimate government. Concurrently in Vietnam, communist forces were engaged in guerilla turned conventional war against French colonial forces. From China's perspective, they had conflicts on their northeast, east, and southern borders pitting communist forces against western forces.⁹

As the CCP drove to end the civil war by force, the United States was adapting to its post-World War II role. The Truman administration began developing a radical new grand strategy to oppose Soviet advances and perceived communist aggression. The United States

⁶ Chen, *China's Road*, 64-91.

⁷ Yufan and Zhihai, "China's Decision," 98-100.

⁸ Mao was making these considerations as he began the final campaign to push the KMT off the mainland. *Ibid.*, 97.

⁹ For example, a stated rationale for joining the war in Korea, Peng Dehau (after consultations with Mao the night prior) argued the US would be in a position to launch attacks against China from Korea and from Taiwan. Alexander V. Pantsov and Steven I. Levine. *Mao: the Real Story* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013), 383.

adopted the strategy of containment, seeking to deter Soviet aggression in Europe by building a strong alliance system there, rebuilding Western Europe, and maintaining a large peacetime military. In 1948, US strategist George Kennan did not consider communist China to be of great concern to the US or as a puppet of the USSR. In other words, Kennan did not see communism as a universalist threat and the US could pursue different policies with China and the Soviet Union. Kennan's views were similar to George Marshall who believed the KMT could not win and understood the nationalist appeal of the CCP apart from the shared communism with the USSR. Either way, both believed the Communists would win the civil war without an unrealistic full commitment from the US.¹⁰

In early 1949, the US National Security Council drafted NSC 37 that argued keeping Taiwan free of communism was in the US interest, but it was not vital to US security.¹¹ The primary strategic benefit of Taiwan was in the defense of the Philippines. Given the limited US strategic interest, untenable KMT military position, and burgeoning US global burden, the Joint Chiefs and NSC argued US military action to defend Taiwan would be ill advised. There were dissenting views, including General MacArthur, but Secretary of State Dean Acheson argued for the abandonment of Taiwan.¹² On 5 January, President Truman announced that the US would not use military force to defend Taiwan (Formosa) and that no further aid or advice would be provided to the Nationalists.¹³ On 12 January, US Secretary of State Acheson gave his famous speech on the US defense perimeter in the Pacific, omitting mention of Taiwan and Korea,

¹⁰ Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 36-39, 52, 59-61.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹² John Marolda, "The US Navy and the Chinese Civil War, 1945-1952" (PhD diss., George Washington University, 1990), 144-146.

¹³ Roderick MacFarquhar, *Sino-American Relations, 1949-71* (New York: Praeger, 1972), 70.

stating that those outside the perimeter were the responsibility of the United Nations.¹⁴ A rebellious Congress managed to push through a bill including \$106 million in economic aid to Chiang in late January that complicated the White House's hands off approach.¹⁵ Despite the contradictory efforts, through the spring of 1950, the US State department considered informal recognition of the CCP regime and admission to the UN.¹⁶

6.1.2 Defender Capacity to Escalate

Throughout the three crises studied in the chapter, the United States maintained the capacity to escalate a conflict in the Taiwan Strait. The United States had a large industrial and technological advantage over the nascent PRC and emerged from the Second World War as the most powerful nation on earth. However, China held an advantage in population of 3.6:1 over the United States and had a combat proven army that defeated Japan and the KMT in brutal decades long fighting. Most importantly, the US industrial base was across the Pacific Ocean, an immense challenge to projecting power. Due to such a distance, the adjusted national material capabilities ratio places the US and PRC into a near-peer category when competing over Taiwan from 1950 to 1958.¹⁷ Therefore, the theory predicts the United States must maintain a snap forward capability for a tripwire to be a credible deterrent threat. This is summarized in figure 6.1.

¹⁴ Dean Acheson, "Speech on the Far East," January 12, 1950, accessed from: <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/1950-01-12.pdf>

¹⁵ Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 116.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 132-133.

¹⁷ Version 5 of, David Singer, "Reconstructing the Correlates of War Dataset on Material Capabilities of States, 1816-1985" *International Interactions*, 14 (1987): 115-132.

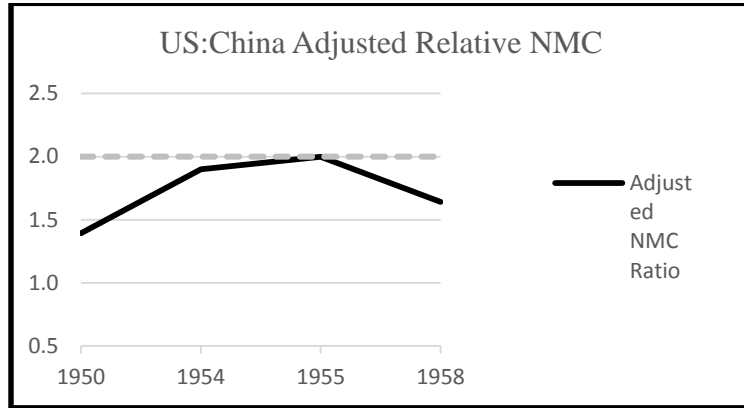


Figure 6.1 - US:China Adjusted Relative NMC.

The US demonstrated a snap forward capability throughout all three Taiwan crises. The US deployed a large forward military presence in East Asia after World War II. In 1950 before the outbreak of the Korean war, the US had over 146,000 troops in Japan and the Philippines with numerous naval and air hubs in East Asia facilitating power projection. The total number of US forces in East Asia would average 354,000 throughout the case and after the Korean War would stay above 195,000.¹⁸ Furthermore, the US maintained a string of bases across the Pacific in Hawaii, the Marshalls, Guam, and several other smaller outposts while US ships made regular port visits across East Asia.¹⁹ By 1950, the Seventh Fleet had reduced its presence in the Western Pacific to one carrier, two destroyer divisions, the required supporting ships, and a smaller task force assigned to Japan. The outbreak of the Korean War rectified the relative shortage of naval assets in the Pacific as sixteen US carriers rotated into East Asia with all the supporting naval forces. The large forward presence continued after the war with US

¹⁸ Tim Kane, "Global US Troop Deployment." <http://www.heritage.org/defense/report/global-us-troop-deployment-1950-2003>

¹⁹ Edward Marolda, *Ready Sea Power: A history of the US Seventh Fleet* (Washington DC: Department of the US Navy, 2012), 19.

Congressional approval to fund three carriers forward deployed to the Seventh Fleet, with three more in the Far East.²⁰

The US had recent demonstrations of its capability. In World War II, the US displayed its ability when fully mobilized to project power across the Pacific and Atlantic simultaneously projecting power in a two front war. At the conclusion of the war, the US navy and air force initiated large-scale shows of force over China, with flyovers of major cities and important sites such as the great wall. US Marines established small bases in North China as part of post-war agreements to repatriate Japanese forces and transition to the Chinese Nationalist government. The US Seventh Fleet and marines had a base at Qingdao, China until 1949 when they moved to Guam in reaction to the KMT evacuation of the mainland for Taiwan. In 1945 and 1946, the Seventh fleet demonstrated its ability to employ massive lift of ground forces employing 369 ships to redeploy over two million US personnel back to the US from East Asia.²¹ As will be detailed below, throughout the crises the US would regularly surge naval and air forces into the region for short durations demonstrating the snap forward capability backing the tripwire threat.

6.2 1950: Neutralizing the Taiwan Strait

In 1950, the PRC was actively preparing to invade Taiwan. These plans were interrupted by the near simultaneous invasion of South Korea and the imposition of the US Seventh Fleet into the Taiwan Strait. Given the narrow time interval between both actions and the interconnectedness of them, it is not possible to disaggregate their effects from within case comparison alone. The following marshals evidence from PLA actions and PRC decision-

²⁰ Ibid., 38.

²¹ Ibid., 15-20.

making that the outbreak of the Korean War is insufficient on its own in explaining the change in the PRCs strategy against Taiwan. The PRCs top priority remained Taiwan until conditions on Korea flipped and the US and UN began routing North Korean forces. Despite Taiwan remaining the priority interest, Mao and PRC leadership almost immediately ordered decreased acute planning for invasion as US naval and air assets arrived in the Strait. Planning for intervention in Korea did not gain momentum until North Korea stalled around Pusan and the US counterattacked up the peninsula. The following sections examine the planned strategy of conventional war against Taiwan, the imposition of a US tripwire in the Taiwan Strait, and then traces the change in PRC planning and execution.

6.2.1 Initial Force Posture - None

The initial US defense posture in and around Taiwan was None in early 1950. The US did not provide overt military forces to the KMT during the civil war although some economic and military aid continued to flow despite Truman's January speech. The US provided civilian advisors in the form of retired military officers to assist Jiang, but no overt military presence.²² The PRC had an army of 2.5 million, with 800,000 stationed in southeast China available for short notice action in the Taiwan and offshore islands theater.²³ China lacked a modern navy limited to 50 destroyer escorts, gunboats, and other assorted small combat ships.²⁴ The PLA navy relied on a fleet of converted civilian vessels and junks to serve as sealift.²⁵ The PLA had

²² Richard Probst, "The Communist Conquest of Hainan Island" (PhD diss., George Washington University, 1982), 24.

²³ Xiaobing Li, Allan Millet, and Bin Yu, *China's Generals Remember Korea* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001): 2-11; Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 168 footnote 105; Probst, "The Communist Conquest," 213.

²⁴ Marolda, "US Navy and Chinese Civil War," 160.

²⁵ Given the vast difference between western amphibious operations, Probst refers to PRC amphibious operations as 'maritime-assault'. Probst, "The Communist Conquest," 19.

200 combat aircraft within 250 miles of Taiwan, which could be reinforced from other airfields.²⁶ Finally, in 1949 China sent 50,000-70,000 ethnic Korean ‘volunteers’ from the PLA to serve in North Korea.²⁷

6.2.2 Initial Aggressor Strategy – Planning Conventional War

In the summer of 1950, the PRC was actively planning conventional war against Taiwan. This section will highlight the PRC’s intention and capability to invade Taiwan prior to the imposition of the US Seventh Fleet. Mao Zedong and the nascent PRC continued with plans to conclude the civil war with a strategy of conventional war. The continuation of the KMT regime was a direct threat to the legitimacy of the CCP despite the retreat of Chiang’s forces to the periphery and offshore islands. The US State Department Consular General in Shanghai summarized the sentiment that the destruction of remaining KMT armies and the taking of Taiwan was the paramount interest of the PRC regime.²⁸

In order to end the civil war, the PRC was actively planning an amphibious assault to ‘liberate’ Taiwan. Planning began in June 1949 with Mao ordering PLA commanders to “pay attention to seizing Taiwan immediately.”²⁹ Mao pushed for an autumn planning phase with a winter invasion. However, this was delayed to 1950 because of less than expected support from the USSR.³⁰ The PRC military was a ground based power and lacked a modern navy and therefore relied on converted fleets of junks and civilian sailors to perform amphibious

²⁶ Marolda, “US Navy and Chinese Civil War,” 160.

²⁷ Jian, *China’s Road*, 55.

²⁸ Thomas Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore Islands* (New York: Sharpe Inc, 1985), 35-36, 53-54; Marolda, “US Navy and Chinese Civil War” 122-125.

²⁹ Jian, *China’s Road*, 165.

³⁰ The USSR limited their military support to aid for the development of the PLA navy and air force.

operations. On 10 January 1950, the PLA held a conference outlining the campaign plan to take Taiwan and the other offshore islands.³¹

Throughout 1949 and early 1950 the PLA struck offshore islands all around its periphery. Most importantly, was the PLA capture of Hainan Island, the 2nd largest island behind Taiwan. On 16 April 1950, the PRC launched an invasion of Hainan Island using naval swarm tactics with large numbers of junks to defeat the 160,000 Nationalist defenders and overwhelm their naval and air superiority.³² The PLA moved 142,000 troops without air support using converted junks numbering 1,400 to 2,000. Like engagements in the civil war, and soon in Korea, the PLA used massed attacks willing to sustain high initial casualties to overcome defenses.³³ The Nationalists were soundly defeated and despite their air and naval superiority only managed to evacuate 66,000 of their troops to Taiwan.³⁴ The loss of Hainan was a serious blow to KMT morale and led to the abandonment of several offshore islands.

An assault on Taiwan would be more difficult than the assault on Hainan. First, the distance to Taiwan is much greater. The Taiwan Strait averages 100 miles wide versus the 9 to 21 miles between Hainan and the mainland and the Taiwan Strait is known for difficult sailing conditions and rough waters.³⁵ Additionally, despite many PLA victories, the PLA did suffer a dramatic defeat in late 1949 losing 20,000 men in a failed attempt to capture Quemoy just off the Chinese coast, which surprised many PLA commanders leading to more planning and revisions for the assault on Taiwan and consideration to delaying the date of invasion.³⁶ Despite these

³¹ Probst, "The Communist Conquest," 17.

³² Marolda, "US Navy and Chinese Civil War," 125.

³³ Probst, "The Communist Conquest," 120-122.

³⁴ Marolda, "US Navy and Chinese Civil War," 133.

³⁵ Elleman, *Taiwan Straits*, 32-34.

³⁶ Jian, *Mao's China*, 161; Probst, "The Communist Conquest," 20.

challenges, the PRC assembled an estimated 5,000-7,000 junks manned by 30,000 sailors to move a planned 200,000 troops from the 3rd and 4th Field Armies to Taiwan in the first wave of invasion.³⁷ The PLA was also conducting regular training for the assault and had 800,000 troops (of the PLA's 2.5 million) overall available for action in the theater. The air force was being developed for action over Taiwan and the Third Army staff coordinated with Lin Biao's veteran commanders from the Hainan campaign.³⁸

In spring 1950, many within the US military and State department viewed the invasion of Taiwan as imminent. The US State department scaled back on personnel, began evacuating equipment, and ran essentially a skeleton crew to send updates on the situation.³⁹ In February, the US was trying to prepare and reassure the Philippines to the fall of Taiwan.⁴⁰ US Naval Intelligence reported on the gathering invasion fleet and the training of armies for amphibious assault and believed the Nationalists could not hold Taiwan under determined attack. Based primarily on US intelligence, military, and diplomatic assessments, Marolda concludes that by the end of June 1950 the PLA was willing and ready to launch an invasion.⁴¹ At a minimum, the PLA was in the active planning stage and showed all intentions of attacking sometime in the near future.⁴²

³⁷ These troops were veterans of both the civil war and the amphibious assault on Hainan. Elleman, *Taiwan Straits*, 20-21, 34-35; Marolda, "US Navy and Chinese Civil War," 159.

³⁸ Xiaobing Li, Allan Millet, and Bin Yu, *China's Generals Remember Korea* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001): 2-11; Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 168 footnote 105; Probst, "The Communist Conquest," 213.

³⁹ Edwin Martin, *Divided Counsel: the Anglo-American Response to Communist Victory in China* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 153-154. Sec State Dean Acheson also believed Taiwan's fall was imminent, Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 109

⁴⁰ Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 135.

⁴¹ Marolda, "US Navy and Chinese Civil War," 121-122, 159-162.

⁴² Allen Whiting, "China's Use of Force, 1950-96, and Taiwan," *International Security* 26 no.2 (2001): 107; Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 161.

6.2.3 Change in Defender Force Posture - Tripwire

On 25 June 1950, communist North Korea invaded South Korea pitting its armored force against a lightly armed South Korean military.⁴³ The timing of the attack came among a heightened fear in the US of nuclear competition with the Soviet Union and US foreign policy concerns of a monolithic communist bloc bent on aggression. The attack, along with ongoing communist insurgency in Indochina reinforced the appearance of an aggressive communist block under Soviet guidance.⁴⁴ Two days after the invasion of South Korea, President Truman ordered the US 7th Fleet to neutralize the Taiwan Strait to “prevent any attack on Formosa” but also called on the Nationalists to “cease all air and sea operations against the mainland.”⁴⁵ Zhou Enlai, the PRC foreign minister and trusted confidant of Mao, expressed outrage and reiterated China’s interest in ‘liberating’ Taiwan.⁴⁶

The following day a US destroyer visited Keelung, Taiwan, the first visit of a US ship since Truman’s January speech. On 29 June, a US fleet comprising of an aircraft carrier, two destroyer divisions, two submarines, and a host of support ships steamed through the Taiwan Straits in a show of force. This show of American naval power outclassed the entire PLA Navy in 1950. This briefly shifted the US force presence in the region from None to Large. However, despite the wording of Truman’s public statement, a large US presence would not remain in the Strait. The Seventh Fleet’s show of force continued north to position itself to support operations

⁴³ On the disparity in Korean forces, North Korea had a 2:1 advantage in troops, 7:1 in machine guns, 13:1 in automatic rifles, 6.5:1 in tanks, and 6:1 in aircraft. See: Pantsov and Levine, *Mao*, 378.

⁴⁴ Christensen is unsure if the outbreak of the Korean War changed Truman’s assessment of the importance of Taiwan. However, at a minimum it empowered US domestic elements that had been crusading against the dangers of communism. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 78-79, 107; MacFarquhar, *Sino-American Relations*, 78.

⁴⁵ MacFarquhar, *Sino-American Relations*, 83.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

in Korea. The Navy would be hard pressed to commit an entire fleet to just steaming around Taiwan given the new shooting war on the Korean Peninsula.⁴⁷ This was exacerbated by concerns of a possible Soviet naval presence and possible interference with US efforts around Korea.

On 10 July, another destroyer visited Taiwan carrying Admiral Struble the commander of the seventh fleet. He met with Chiang and top Nationalist military leaders. On 12 July a 7th fleet liaison was established with the Nationalist government where they developed the plan that the US would establish open sea defense and the Nationalist Navy would focus on defense within 10 miles of Taiwan.⁴⁸ They also agreed to an aerial patrol of the Strait by US aircraft. Within a week of the meeting the US established a 24/7 aerial patrol of the Taiwan Strait, flying dual use reconnaissance and light attack aircraft. These aircraft were not based out of Taiwan but provided near continuous presence in the Strait, often buzzing suspected communist junks and overflying PRC airspace and the mainland. In addition to their overt aerial displays and primary role of intelligence gathering, Admiral Struble and General MacArthur agreed such patrols should be publicized and their presence clear to have a deterrent effect.⁴⁹

Despite the aerial patrols, the carrier fleet show of force, and intermittent visits, in mid-July the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CIA, and many American diplomats still believed a communist attack to be possible to probable.⁵⁰ Local US Navy commanders also believed they could not dissuade an amphibious assault with only air patrols of aircraft. The US National Security Council concurred that the initial US presence of an air only patrol was insufficient to deter a

⁴⁷ Allen Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu; the Decision to Enter the Korean War* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 49.

⁴⁸ Elleman, *Taiwan Straits*, 37; Marolda, "US Navy and Chinese Civil War," 170-171, 202.

⁴⁹ Marolda, "US Navy and Chinese Civil War," 177.

⁵⁰ There were also two submarines on patrol in the second half of July, however these vessels were covert and used for intelligence collection only, not deterrence. *Ibid.*, 179-180.

possible PRC assault. In response on 26 July, the 7th fleet diverted a cruiser and three destroyers to Taiwan to base out of the port at Keelung, Taiwan. In the following week, the composition of the force would change slightly and on 4 August, Admiral Struble established the Formosa Patrol (Task Group 77.3), to later become known as Task Force 72, or the Taiwan Patrol Force (TPF).⁵¹

The TPF served as a “cordon sanitaire” in the Taiwan Strait. The Patrol Force initially consisted of one cruiser and two destroyers. The force composition would change slightly overtime but the average presence was four US destroyers based in Taiwanese port with one to two on patrol at any one time. The other ships would be in maintenance or crews on rest. The Patrol Force provided 24/7 continuous patrol of the invasion route from the mainland to Taiwan. Although sailors often had the impression of steaming aimlessly up and down the Strait continuously, this behavior is exactly what is to be expected of a mobile tripwire. The TPF provided tactical mobility by providing 24/7 patrol of an invasion’s probable route while having the strategic permanence of being based locally out of Taiwan. A destroyer captain summarized the purpose of the patrol: “The patrol’s primary purpose was symbolic, to indicate an intention to come to Taiwan’s aid if it were threatened by mainland China.”⁵² Elleman considers the TPF “a trip wire for bringing in larger ships, including aircraft carriers.”⁵³ He concludes that the TPF acted “as moving trip wires, which if provoked, could quickly call in massive reinforcements from the Seventh Fleet.”⁵⁴ The asymmetric tactics of PLA amphibious operations further disadvantaged the small TPF force in any defensive capability. Swarms of junks launched at

⁵¹ Ibid., 179-183.

⁵² Elleman, *Taiwan Straits*, 43.

⁵³ Ibid., 29-30.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 149.

night or day would quickly overwhelm the handful of destroyers on patrol.⁵⁵ If operations began in daylight, the US force would be especially vulnerable to PLA mainland air assets.⁵⁶

Truman did not originally envision neutralization as a long-term plan.⁵⁷ Because of the demand of the Korean War it was not possible for the US Navy to maintain a large presence in the Taiwan Strait while offsetting the threat of possible PRC and Soviet intervention in the Korean theater. Therefore the nearest naval reinforcements were one day away from Taiwan based in Buckner Bay, Okinawa. The second rung of naval forces directly supporting the Korean theater would take at least two days. Naval planners estimated that it would take a day for a PLA flotilla to reach Taiwan, and could possibly launch at night like other PLA maritime attacks.⁵⁸ In an emergency, the US could muster overwhelming naval and air superiority in the Taiwan Strait in about 24 to 48 hours. Such a snap forward capability was evident to the PRC given the huge US regional presence and recent naval show of force early in the crisis.

Thus from Truman's announcement on 27 June, the US force presence momentarily shifted to large with a show of force and demonstration of the US snap forward capability through the Taiwan Strait. Shortly thereafter the US began 24/7 air patrols of the Strait and regular visits by naval destroyers became permanent with the establishment of the TPF and a strategically static naval tripwire.

6.2.4 Resulting Aggressor Strategy

⁵⁵ The junks were especially hard to sink with multiple watertight components making even hits below the waterline largely ineffective. The US considered the use of napalm from the air since the junks were wood construction.

⁵⁶ Marolda, "US Navy and Chinese Civil War," 217.

⁵⁷ Tucker, *Patterns in the Dust*, 200.

⁵⁸ Marolda, "US Navy and Chinese Civil War," 167; Whiting, *China Crosses*, 49.

The resulting strategy of the PRC shifted from planned conventional war to nonmilitary aggression as the PRC delayed then abandoned plans for the invasion of Taiwan. Several scholars point to two factors that prevented the planned PRC invasion, the outbreak of the Korean War and the imposition of the 7th Fleet in the Taiwan Strait.⁵⁹ These two events are inextricably linked given Chinese perceptions of its security and Truman's decision to intervene based on the outbreak of the war. Therefore, it is not possible to fully disentangle the role of the TPF tripwire from the effects of the Korean War in constraining PRC action against Taiwan. However, the following will marshal evidence on four axes to shed light on the specific impact of the US force posture.⁶⁰ The first vein of evidence is the timing of PLA troop movements. The second is documentation of internal accounts of the CCP and PLA decision-making process. The third are public statements by PRC officials and analysis of CCP propaganda. Finally are western intelligence assessments of CCP intentions after the tripwire was emplaced.⁶¹

Despite suspicion and fears of US intentions throughout the 1940s, it appears Mao and the upper echelons of the PRC were surprised by US actions moving the 7th Fleet into the Strait.⁶² Given the recent rhetoric in January and the hands-off approach as the PLA assaulted offshore islands, they did not think the US would intervene in the civil war. On 30 June as the 7th Fleet elements arrived, Zhou Enlai ordered the PLA Navy to postpone the invasion. PLA army commanders then received orders to postpone invasion planning in mid-July. Within a

⁵⁹ Jian, *Mao's China*, 166-167; Martin, *Divided Counsel*, 153-157; Hinton, *Communist China in World Politics*, 211-214; Whiting, *China Crosses*, 68, 83-91; Jian, *China's Road*, 217; Tucker, *Patterns in the Dust*, 195-197, 206.

⁶⁰ This method is analogous to Gerring's view of process tracing as 'detective work' employing different types of evidence that are themselves incomparable but all shed light on a single inference. See Gerring, *Case Study Research*, 172-173.

⁶¹ US policy and intelligence assessments are least useful given they are 'best guesses' with the information available at the time. However, they are still useful in evaluating the defender's perception of the nationality threshold.

⁶² Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 161; Jian, *China's Road*, 87; Yufan and Zhihai, "China's Decision," 99-101.

matter of weeks, troop concentrations began to disperse from marshalling areas.⁶³ In early July 30,000 PLA troops from the 3rd Field Army departed the region.⁶⁴ The portions of the Fourth and Third Field armies that moved north to the Shangtung region continued to train and did not receive economic assignments as other units from the civil war did. Importantly, these forces were between Taiwan and the Korean Peninsula and positioned such that they could respond to a crisis in either theater.⁶⁵ Additionally, CCP leadership was concerned that the US could directly attack the mainland and strengthened coastal and urban defenses against possible invasion.⁶⁶ The PRC had not yet decided to send overt forces to Korea and given the understrength US ground units in the Pacific, a busy US 7th Fleet, and a demoralized KMT army, the conditions to strike Taiwan were likely the best they would be.⁶⁷

The remainder of the Third Field Army in the South East continued to train for amphibious invasion through July and August, but at a reduced pace from June. Additionally, the PLA continued to marshal amphibious vessels on the central Chinese coast but things continued to quiet from the June peak.⁶⁸ Thus, the PLA posture showed a slackening of immediate preparations to assault Taiwan shortly after the outbreak of the Korean War and the 7th Fleet's arrival but still maintained a presence that could quickly shift to resume preparations. In other words, it appears the PRC adopted a wait-and-see approach to both the Taiwan and Korean theaters.

⁶³ Tucker, *Patterns in the Dust*, 206.

⁶⁴ Marolda, "US Navy and Chinese Civil War," 195-196; Whiting, *China Crosses*, 64-65.

⁶⁵ In 1954, a CIA analysis estimated that forces from Shantung in the north to Fukien in the south could threaten the offshores and Taiwan. "The Chinese Offshore Islands," *CIA*, 29-30.

⁶⁶ Yufan and Zhihai, "China's Decision," 101-102.

⁶⁷ Whiting, *China Crosses*, 49.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 65; Marolda, "US Navy and Chinese Civil War," 191.

The outbreak of the Korean War certainly effected Mao's initial decision-making regarding Taiwan, but the war cannot alone explain the decrease in acute planning to invade Taiwan. Mao had discussed with Stalin a possible North Korean invasion of South Korea but was surprised at the timing, and had planned to take Taiwan first.⁶⁹ The Central Military Commission in mid-July ordered the raising of an army for the defense of northeast China and the PLA mobilized four armies totaling 255,000 soldiers that coalesced in the border region at the end of July and early August.⁷⁰ By mid to late July, the plan to invade Taiwan was delayed due to the US presence but not canceled.⁷¹ MacFarquhar concludes that the PRC's focus remained on Taiwan until August although reduced in acute planning.⁷² On 11 August the Central Military Commission (CMC) recommended delaying the invasion of Taiwan until 1952.⁷³

In mid-August PLA commanders received orders to start considering operational plans for entering Korea. This shift correlated with the reversal on the Korean Peninsula around Pusan, with the first US and UN victories between 7 and 11 August.⁷⁴ In late August, Chinese officials were concerned about the overstretched North Koreans and warned of a possible American amphibious landing north of North Korean positions.⁷⁵ The landing at Inchon, and the reversal of the war with US forces driving north of the 38th parallel created an acute threat for Mao. If the Americans were victorious, he would face large US land forces across the border from one of China's primary industrial zone. The likelihood of this threat drove Mao's decision to intervene

⁶⁹ Jian, *Mao's China*, 54-55.

⁷⁰ Jian, *China's Road*, 136-138.

⁷¹ Jian, *Mao's China*, 88.

⁷² MacFarquhar, *Sino-American Relations*, 79.

⁷³ Jian, *Mao's China*, 166.

⁷⁴ Whiting, *China Crosses*, 71; Jian, *China's Road*, 142-145.

⁷⁵ Nie Rongzhen, "Beijing's Decision to Intervene" in *Mao's Generals Remember Korea* edited by Xiaobing Li, Allan Millet, and Bin Yu (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001): 40.

in Korea. By 1 October the emphasis had firmly shifted to Korea although there were still those within the Politburo arguing Taiwan was a greater threat than the war in Korea.⁷⁶ In a series of meetings with CCP leadership from 1 to 5 October, there was significant deliberation and debate over the question of Chinese intervention in Korea but Mao with Peng Dehau's support announced that China would intervene.⁷⁷ It is clear that by this time, Mao saw Korea as the immediate threat to Chinese security, but he was still torn on the decision to intervene in Korea.⁷⁸ In October, as overt Chinese forces intervened in Korea, Mao finally canceled plans for Taiwan indefinitely.⁷⁹

Public statements from the CCP and state media discourse continued to focus on Taiwan after the Truman statement through the end of July.⁸⁰ However, the nature of the discourse changed from one of imminent action to one of delayed or unknown time horizons. Take for example Zhou Enlai's statement on 28 June. Zhou called for the liberation of Taiwan but did not call for an invasion or crushing the US. Additionally, an influential article admitted the futility of attacking Taiwan as long as the American tripwire was present and that US naval dominance would deny the PRC its goals.⁸¹ The CCP set up a propaganda committee to "Fight against US Invasion of Taiwan and Korea." They began emphasizing both theaters and started a campaign in late July with a week designated "Special Week for the Movement of Opposing the US Invasion of Taiwan and Korea."⁸² Whiting concludes that the propaganda in July and early

⁷⁶ Yufan and Zhihai, "China's Decision," 104-105.

⁷⁷ Pantsov and Levine, *Mao*, 380-382; Chen, *China's Road*, 173-183; Peng Dehau, *Memoirs of a Chinese Marshal*, trans. Zheng Longpu (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), 473.

⁷⁸ On the vacillation of Mao's decision-making process after his declaration, see: Pantsov and Levine, *Mao*, 380-382. Also see Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 163.

⁷⁹ Jian, *China's Road*, 145.

⁸⁰ Whiting, *China Crosses*, 53-54, 58, 62.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 62-65.

⁸² Jian, *China's Road*, 141.

August was not intended to mobilize the populace for a Korean war. In late August, there was a change in the propaganda, stating that US action in Korea directly threatened China and that China's security was tied to the fate of North Korea. Whiting concludes that the Taiwan invasion was postponed indefinitely for as long as the 7th Fleet tripwire remained in the Strait.⁸³

In July, US decision makers and intelligence held diverging opinions if an invasion of Taiwan was still planned. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded that if the TPF remained present US intentions would be credibly communicated.⁸⁴ On 8 August, George Kennan concluded the PRC would have captured Taiwan if the Seventh Fleet elements had not intervened. Given the precarious US military position engaged in the war in Korea he thought there was a 50/50 chance the PRC would launch an attack in the next month and a half. By October, the CIA assessed that the PRC would not attempt an assault noting decreased acute preparations.⁸⁵ However, such assessments must be taken within the context of the situation. US intelligence was very far from understanding the inner workings of the PRC and missed the signals of decreased activity starting in July and the monumental miss of massing Chinese forces along the Korean border. These assessments show two things. First, many within the US viewed the tripwire as an effective tool to deter an invasion when backed with the full force of the US navy. Second, that US intelligence was capable of missing the readying of an intervention force. The second point is salient because when early warning is not assured, then a surprise attack is possible. This is captured in the future crises where US intelligence was concerned that China could launch an invasion of the offshores with little to no advanced warning. A permanent tripwire presence is most valuable in these circumstances where it is

⁸³ Whiting, *China Crosses*, 68, 83-91.

⁸⁴ Marolda, "US Navy and Chinese Civil War," 172-173, 181.

⁸⁵ Martin, *Divided Counsel*, 159.

unknown if a tripwire could be emplaced in time upon discovery of an imminent or underway invasion.

6.2.5 The Role of Nuclear Weapons

In 1950, the United States had clear-cut nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union and China had not yet acquired nuclear weapons. And yet, China was not deterred from attacking US and UN forces in Korea risking its forces and cities to tactical and strategic nuclear weapons. Scholarship shows that CCP and PLA leadership discussed American nuclear weapons and considered their possible effects. The PLA gave three rationales for downplaying the role of atomic weapons. First, they argued the conflict would be decided by the will of the people, not a few atomic weapons. Second, they were of limited tactical use because they would also harm US forces. Finally, they considered the international shock the US would face if nuclear weapons were used.⁸⁶ Chen Jian concludes from the PLA leadership conference planning Korean intervention that “the dominant voice of the conference favored the CCP Politburo’s opinion that China should not be scared by the bomb.”⁸⁷ These conclusions echoed those espoused by Mao throughout August to October.⁸⁸ The bottom line is that CCP leadership considered American use of nuclear weapons in Korea and weighed the risk. In the end, Mao concluded that the war was likely to remain conventional and regional while fearing the threat of a large US presence along the Yalu River should North Korea collapse.

⁸⁶ Du Ping, “Political Mobilization and Control” in *Mao’s Generals Remember Korea* edited by Xiaobing Li, Allan Millet, and Bin Yu (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001): 63; Jian, *China’s Road*, 144.

⁸⁷ Jian, *China’s Road*, 144

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 153-154, 178-179, 218-219.

6.2.6 1950: Neutralizing the Taiwan Strait Conclusion

The observation begs the natural question: if the PRC was willing to attack US forces in Korea, why did the TPF tripwire deter PRC aggression in the Strait? Two reasons. First, the large US presence in Korea with the collapse of the North Korean offensive created an acute military threat to Chinese security. This contrasts with the political threat emanating from Taiwan that did not pose an immediate military threat beyond harassing blockades and raids. Ultimately, with the US push north of the 38th parallel, Mao saw the fall of North Korea as an imminent military threat, where the fight for Taiwan was a long term objective that posed a less salient military threat although a potent political one. Second, Korea would be a ground war, where the PRC lacked the firepower of the US but had a massive manpower advantage over the US and UN.⁸⁹ The CCP had significant experience fighting in large ground combat and would be fighting close to home. In other words, Mao and the PLA saw the possibility of success in achieving its territorial objectives of preventing the United States from reaching the Yalu. This was not the case for Taiwan. A *fait accompli* was likely attainable against Taiwan before the US tripwire. It was also possible if one just considers the negligible defensive capabilities brought by tripwire of the initial airborne patrol and then TPF force. However, when backed by US snap forward capabilities in response to an attack the US would gain immediate naval and air superiority. Given the inherent difficulties of amphibious assaults and the total dominance of the US in the air sea domains, the PRC no longer had the ability to take Taiwan. Deterrence worked

⁸⁹ The PLA outlined their advantages vis-à-vis the US in an August conference on possibly entering the Korean war. First, they highlighted a 3:1 local manpower advantage. Second, the US was constrained by other global commitments. Third, PLA supply lines would be much shorter. Finally, they believed world opinion would support the PRC. See Jian, *China's Road*, 144, 178-179;

across the Taiwan Strait because the PRC was convinced it would fail in reaching its territorial objectives in taking Taiwan.

The US deterrent threat and deployment of elements of the Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Strait changed the PRC's planned conventional war strategy against Taiwan. This is despite the fact that a large-scale PRC effort to take the island would certainly overwhelm the US tripwire force and enfeebled Nationalist forces in the opening engagements. The imposition of the Seventh Fleet elements and Korean War outbreak led to a reduction in training and marshaling of ground forces for an invasion. The public and private CCP and PLA emphasis, although reduced, remained on Taiwan until the reversal of communist fortunes on the Korean peninsula.

6.3 1954-1955 Crisis and Mobile Tripwires

The purpose of this section is to investigate the use of a US naval tripwire in constraining the selection and execution of PRC revisionist strategies during the 1954 and 1955 crisis. Mao considered Taiwan unreachable with conventional force due to the US force posture so he sought alternate means to exert pressure to disrupt proceedings towards a US-Taiwan defense agreement. The PRC ultimately selected a strategy of conventional war against the Dachen Islands and a direct aggression strategy with artillery bombardment against Quemoy where the US commitment was intentionally ambiguous. The following section traces how the strategic mobility of the US tripwire with periodic extensions to the Dachens delayed but ultimately did not constrain the selection of a conventional war strategy. The case identifies the nationality threshold as a critical factor in shaping the selection and execution of PRC strategy by examining Mao's focus on the presence of US combat forces as a disqualifying condition for initiating a conventional war strategy in the Dachens. Furthermore, the nationality threshold was a key

factor in constraining how the PLA executed its strategy of direct aggression. The PLA was restricted with strict rules of engagement and timing of direct aggression against protégé forces to avoid US forces. This lends relative weight to the hand-tying nature of tripwire forces contrasted with the sunk cost logic associated with shows of force where exact location is not a concern.

The remainder of the case is structured as follows. First, the case reviews some background conditions for context of the crisis. Then it discusses the initial force posture of the United States and traces how the posture changed which altered the planning and execution of PRC strategy. Finally, the last sections discuss the issuance of nuclear threats in the spring of 1955 and the overlapping roles of nuclear and conventional deterrence.

6.3.1 Background

Truman's temporary call for the seventh fleet to neutralize the Strait gained permanence with the continued presence of the TPF and the burgeoning US Military Assistance and Advisory Group (MAAG) advisory presence on Taiwan. In 1953, the United States signed a defense treaty with South Korea. In late 1953, Taiwan was trying to institutionalize the US presence beyond the current ad hoc deployment with an alliance of their own. With the cessation of fighting in Korea, the PRC's primary foreign policy interest continued to be "liberating" Taiwan although as long as the US tripwire was present, an invasion was not feasible.⁹⁰ Given the US presence, the PRC sought two objectives through 1954 and 1955. The first was to prevent the signing of a mutual defense treaty and the second (albeit related) purpose was to test US resolve

⁹⁰ Stolper, *China, Taiwan and the Offshore*, 35-36, 53-54; Chang and Di, "The Absence of War," 1509-1510.

to defend different territory in the region.⁹¹ Throughout the 1954-1955 period, there was significant ambiguity as to what the US was willing to defend in the region. The US commitment to defend Taiwan was clear, as Truman's executive order stated and the presence of the US tripwire based in Taiwan and patrolling the Strait. However, it was unclear if the US was willing to defend Nationalist territory on the string of offshore islands. The US deliberately sought this ambiguity in verbal statements as a means to attempt to deter aggression without having to pledge to defend the islands. Many within the US military believed the offshores to be indefensible without the use of tactical nuclear weapons and not vital to Taiwan's security and were therefore loathe to commit to protecting them. The eventual defense treaty signed in December of 1954 pledged only to protect Taiwan and the nearby Pescadores and formalized the existing ambiguity by stating the US security guarantee was "applicable to such other territories as may be determined by mutual agreement."⁹²

The purpose of this observation is threefold. The first is the unique importance of overt conventional US forces in constraining the use of conventional war strategy throughout the 1954-1955 crisis. The second takeaway is the limitation of a strategically mobile tripwire in constraining conventional war. Finally, the overlapping roles of conventional and nuclear deterrence are explored in a crisis where conventional and nuclear threats coincided. The structure of this observation differs from previous, because the US surged naval forces into the region on multiple occasions. Instead of breaking down each movement of forces, the narrative

⁹¹ Most other military threats on the PRC's borders were rectified in 1953 and early 1954. Whiting, "China's Use of Force," 108; Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 194-195; Stopler, *China, Taiwan and the Offshore*, 34, 37-38.

⁹² Retrieved from: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/chin001.asp

will explore how the geographic variation in the US tripwire did or did not constrain Mao's selection and execution of revisionist strategy.

6.3.2 Initial Force Posture

The US force posture in Taiwan in 1954 was a tripwire. The US force posture in the offshore islands was None. The overt US force presence in the Taiwan Strait continued despite the end of the Korean War. The four destroyers of the TPF maintained the 24/7 patrol with one or two destroyers active in the Strait.⁹³ US reconnaissance aircraft from the Philippines and Okinawa patrolled the coast to gather intelligence. Additionally, US military advisors joined the TPF as part of a MAAG consisting of about 800 personnel in 1954. There were no US ground combat forces stationed in Taiwan.⁹⁴ Some of these advisors were privately deployed to Quemoy to assist the Nationalist forces there. There were also many visits to Taiwan by US air and naval forces, and prominent political leaders.

⁹³ Henry Lieberman, "Formosa 'Little War' a Big Risk for US," *The New York Times*, November 21, 1954, p.4.

⁹⁴ Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore*, 59.

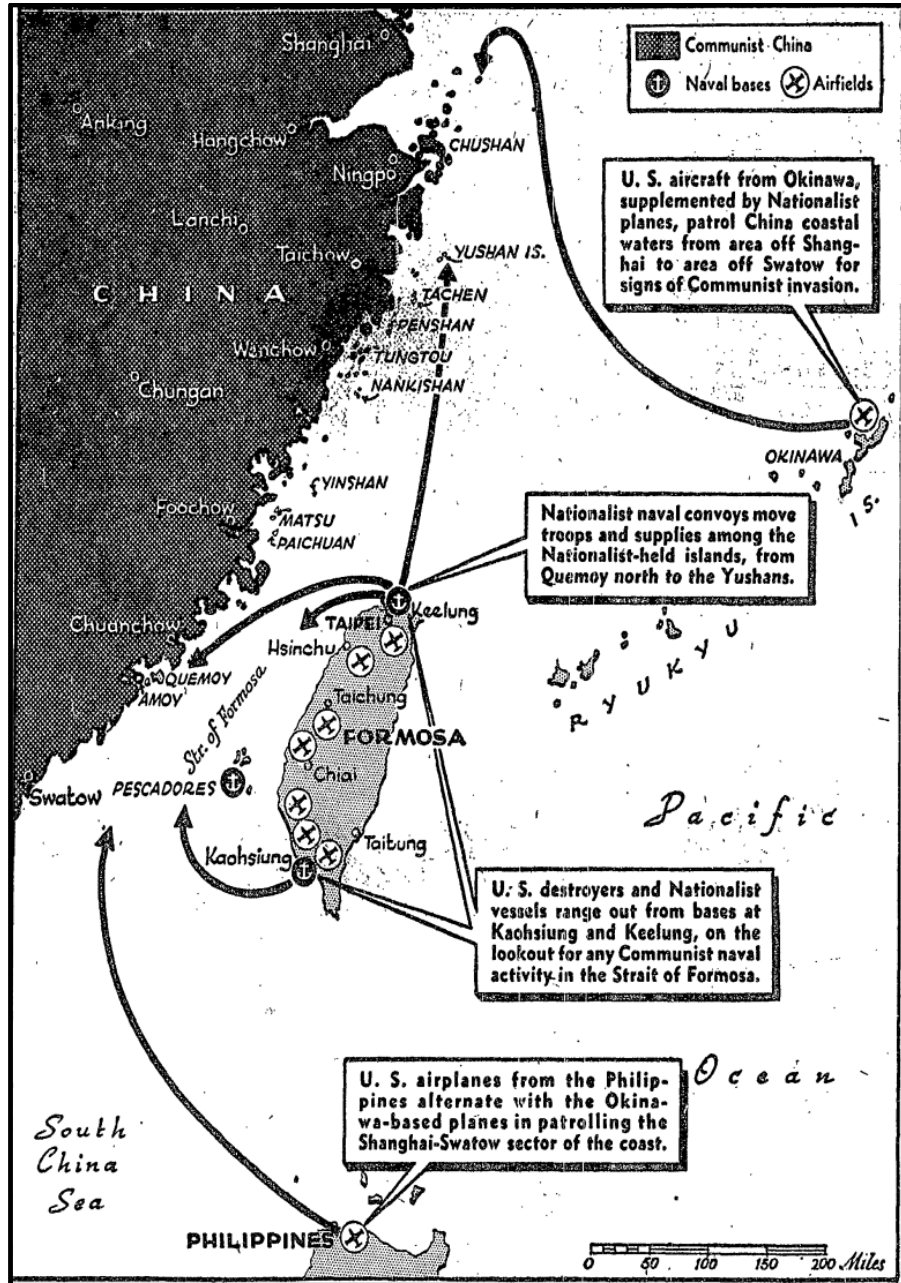


Figure 6.2 - Map of US Tripwire Force Posture, 1954. SOURCE: "Formosa 'Little War' a Big Risk for US," *The New York Times*, November 21, 1954, p.4.

The PRC maintained approximately 450,000 troops in the region with three armies within 150 miles of Quemoy. One hundred and fifty thousand were in the vicinity of Amoy directly

adjacent to the island of Quemoy.⁹⁵ The PRC total active duty military strength was 2.2 million with over a million more in reserves. The PLA Air Force maintained 1,500 aircraft including 700 Soviet MIG fighters. In September 1954, the CIA assessed that the PLA Air Force could gain air superiority over Taiwan if facing only Nationalist forces. The report also believed 400,000 troops would be used on an assault against Taiwan, but only 100,000 could reach the island in the first wave due to PLA sealift limitations.⁹⁶ The CIA concluded that without US intervention, Taiwan would quickly fall to a concerted PLA effort. Thus, the steady state US force presence still qualified as a tripwire force posture.

6.3.3 Aggressor Strategy Selection

In late 1953, the PRC was concerned that Taiwan and the US would sign a defense treaty and wished to prevent it.⁹⁷ Constrained from attacking the US tripwire around Taiwan, Mao sought alternative means to exert pressure on the US to prevent the treaty. In December 1953, Chen Yi, the commander of the eastern military region, requested five armies, new airfield construction, and railheads to prepare for a Quemoy invasion. Military action against the offshores would highlight the risk of war the US would face in signing a long-term defense treaty with Taiwan. Mao initially approved the request but instead chose to focus on Yijiangshan and the Dachen Islands.⁹⁸ In January, the CMC approved operational plans to attack the islands and slated the first half of 1954 to prepare. In March the PLA lightly shelled Quemoy and there were naval and air clashes between PLA and Nationalist forces around the Dachens. In late May, serious

⁹⁵ Dwight Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change 1953-1956* (New York: New American Library, 1965), 463.

⁹⁶ "The Chinese Offshore Islands," *The Central Intelligence Agency*, September 8, 1954, 21-22, 27, 32.

⁹⁷ Jian, *Mao's China*, 169.

⁹⁸ The Dachens blocked access to Shanghai and therefore were an acute nuisance for the PRC with Nationalist naval raids. Additionally, Fujian province adjacent to Quemoy lacked infrastructure making it more difficult to mass enough forces to attack the now heavily defended Quemoy. *Ibid.*, 167.

fighting broke out with significant air and naval battles in the Dachens. These clashes continued until the Seventh Fleet arrived in the Dachens in early June. The presence of US forces stopped the PLA attacks.⁹⁹ The initiation of these clashes coincided with the leaking of possible defense treaty details in the mainstream American press.

The PRC planned and then selected a conventional war strategy against the Dachens and added a direct aggression strategy against Quemoy. In July, Mao changed the emphasis from just the pending assault on the Dachens to also include a propaganda emphasis on Taiwan. This began a propaganda campaign to liberate Taiwan. Mao also added the idea of shelling Quemoy to the PLA plans.¹⁰⁰ Mao saw the planned shelling of Nationalist positions on Quemoy as “armed propaganda” and an extension of the ongoing “liberate Taiwan” campaign.¹⁰¹ Mao assessed the risk associated with shelling Quemoy as low and did not foresee it generating an armed standoff with the United States.¹⁰² He was much more concerned about the planned conventional war operations in the Dachens because it risked direct clashes with US combat forces. Mao followed the planning and execution of the Dachen campaign closely but was largely unconcerned about the shelling of Quemoy.¹⁰³

Mao cabled his military commanders planning the invasion on 2 June, 23 and 24 July, 21 August, 11 December, and 2 February all reiterating not to attack Nationalist forces if US combat forces were in the area.¹⁰⁴ The 21 August memo stated, “Please note, only after verifying that there are no US ships or planes present can we launch the attack on the Dachens.

⁹⁹ Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore*, 24-25.

¹⁰⁰ Jian, *Mao's China*, 168-169; Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore*, 34-37.

¹⁰¹ Chang and Di, “The Absence of War,” 1504.

¹⁰² Tucker, *The China Threat*, 71-73

¹⁰³ The idea that the shelling of Quemoy could be prelude to a planned invasion has been largely discounted. Chang and Di, “The Absence of War,” 1507, 1510, see footnote 13.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, footnote 19.

Otherwise do not initiate any military action.”¹⁰⁵ The intermittent presence of elements of the TPF and 7th Fleet in the Dachens repeatedly delayed the assault on Yijiangshan (just north of the Dachens) and the Dachens archipelago. On 20 August 1954, the PLA planned to begin the invasion between 1 and 5 September. However, the presence of 7th fleet ships drove Mao to order the attack delayed until there were no US forces present. The PRC rescheduled the invasion for 20 December but on 11 December, again Mao directly delayed the assault due to US ships in the Dachens region.

In addition to delaying the invasion of the northerly offshores, Mao ordered the PLA to never directly engage US forces.¹⁰⁶ Mao ordered that the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) could not engage US aircraft or ships, even if the US aircraft were within PRC airspace. The PLAAF commander spoke personally with the pilots to make sure that there would be no PLAAF initiated confrontation with US forces.¹⁰⁷ Mao repeatedly acted to restrain his commanders in 1954 and early 1955 to not provoke US forces and for the PLAAF to avoid areas with a possible US presence.¹⁰⁸ Mao approved attacks on Nationalist forces contingent on the absence of US combat forces.

The US also understood the power of the nationality threshold in constraining the PRC options. In August 1954, when asked about the US defense of Taiwan if the communists attacked in force, President Eisenhower responded that “any invasion of Formosa would have to run over the Seventh Fleet.”¹⁰⁹ As often written and described at the time, the ‘Seventh Fleet’

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 1512-1513.

¹⁰⁶ Tucker, *The China Threat*, 77.

¹⁰⁷ Whiting, “China’s Use of Force,” 109.

¹⁰⁸ Chang and Di, “The Absence of War,” 1512.

¹⁰⁹ Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change*, 463.

was the tripwire detachment of the Taiwan Patrol Force steaming in the Strait. The implication was that attacking Taiwan and US military forces would trip the wire and lead to open war.

6.3.4 Defender Response: Large around Taiwan, Intermittent tripwire to Dachens

The PRC commenced its “armed propaganda” direct aggression strategy on 3 September with the shelling of Quemoy Island. The five-hour barrage launched approximately six thousand shells onto the island killing two American MAAG advisors. Reports of the deaths of the two officers disclosed the heretofore-secret presence of US military forces on Quemoy.¹¹⁰ It is unknown if CCP leadership was aware of the US advisor presence on Quemoy. However, given Mao’s ardent concerns of US combat forces and his later in-depth deliberation on US advisors in 1958, it is unlikely Mao knew of the risk to US advisors. Even if they were aware, the nonpublic presence grants the PRC deniability of knowledge of US forces before undertaking the shelling. This highlights the importance of the publicity of forces in developing an intelligible tripwire and is in sharp contrast to PRC concerns over the overt presence of US air and naval combat forces when planning the Dachens invasion.

The US responded to the strategy vigorously. On 4 September, three aircraft carriers and their associated support vessels including three destroyer divisions began steaming for the Strait.¹¹¹ The US approved Nationalist requests to take ‘defensive’ action including heavy air and naval strikes on Amoy flying over 100 Nationalist sorties on 8 September alone.¹¹² Additionally, three of the four Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs recommended the US bomb military

¹¹⁰ “2 US Officers Die in Quemoy Attack by Chinese Reds,” *The New York Times* September 5, 1954, p. 1.

¹¹¹ “The Chinese Offshore Islands,” *CIA*, 18.

¹¹² Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore*, 39-42.

targets such as airfields on the mainland, which Eisenhower rejected.¹¹³ Mao did not expect such a reaction and he quickly made moves to deescalate. The PLA quickly reduced its shelling after 3 September, and on the 5th announced the removal of seven divisions from North Korea.¹¹⁴ By mid-September the Strait was relatively quiet and the US fleets redeployed after three weeks in the immediate area. On 22 September, the PLA lightly shelled Quemoy but the remainder of the month and October were quiet.

The calm broke on November 1st with more direct aggression. Large-scale aerial clashes between Nationalist and Communist forces ensued around the Dachsens. This included the first bombing of the Dachsens by PRC medium bombers and a continued buildup of land forces opposite Taiwan.¹¹⁵ The US responded by temporarily dispatching two destroyers from the TPF to the Dachsens ceasing the PLA air activity.¹¹⁶ There was relative calm again until 14 November when four PLA torpedo boats attacked and sunk a Nationalist destroyer escort despite the presence of two TPF destroyers in the Dachsens area.¹¹⁷ This was one of only six in the entire Nationalist inventory and one of Chiang's largest ships.

On 2 December, the US and Taiwan signed the mutual defense treaty. The treaty formalized the US commitment to Taiwan and the Pescadores but also formalized the ambiguity of US intentions to defend the offshore islands. The ambiguity in the treaty and lack of a static tripwire left Mao unconstrained in selecting conventional war against Yijiangshan island and the

¹¹³ Tucker, *the China Threat*, 74.

¹¹⁴ Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore*, 41.

¹¹⁵ Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change*, 465.

¹¹⁶ Henry Lieberman, "Formosa 'Little War' a Big Risk for US," *The New York Times*, November 21, 1954, p.4.

¹¹⁷ "Formosa Warship Sunk by Red Navy off Chinese Coast," *The New York Times*, November 15, 1954, 1; "Red Navy's Foray Held Test of US," *The New York Times*, November 16, 1954: 9.

Dachens. The invasion of Yijiangshan was delayed yet again in December due to a TPF patrol, but without a regular presence, an intermittent tripwire could only delay the assault.

The primary question in attacking Yijiangshan and the Dachens was one of US intentions to defend the islands. Without the US, the PLA's air superiority and massive advantage in ground forces would be able to overwhelm Nationalist defenses. On 10 January when no US overt forces were present, 100 PLA aircraft attacked the Dachens. On 18 January, the PRC launched a daylight amphibious assault against Yijiangshan Island.¹¹⁸ The 10,000 PLA soldiers overwhelmed the thousand-man garrison on Yijiangshan in two hours.¹¹⁹ The PLAAF also increased pre-invasion airstrikes against the Dachens archipelago. Because of the invasion, Eisenhower requested from the US Congress presidential powers to defend Taiwan. On 29 January, Congress approved the *Formosa Resolution* that granted Eisenhower the power to use military force to defend Taiwan but also to determine if military force should be used to defend further offshore islands in interpreting Article VI of the mutual defense treaty.¹²⁰

The US convinced Chiang to evacuate the Dachens in the face of overwhelming PLA superiority. The US persuaded Chiang by privately assuring him that the US would defend Quemoy and Matsu.¹²¹ On 8 February, the evacuation began with Chiang refusing to pursue a ceasefire during the operation. The US warned the PRC not to interfere with the evacuation and assisted with a 200-man shore party and a huge naval flotilla. The Seventh Fleet once again converged on the region bringing over 70 US ships including six aircraft carriers. Vessels from the TPF escorted Nationalist ships to Taiwan. Finally, three squadrons of US fighters deployed

¹¹⁸ Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change*, 465.

¹¹⁹ Change and Di, "Absence of War," 1514.

¹²⁰ Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change*, 467-469.

¹²¹ Gordon Chang, "To the Nuclear Brink: Eisenhower, Dulles and the Quemoy-Matsu Crisis," *International Security* 12 no.4 (1988): 104.

to Taiwan for added air support.¹²² The evacuation was completed on 12 February with no interference from the PLA.¹²³ The US fleet and air forces redeployed after the evacuation except the TPF and one fighter squadron, which remained in Taiwan on a continual rotation.¹²⁴ Once US and Nationalist forces were evacuated, the PLA took the islands unopposed.

February 9th brought the only clash between US and PRC combat forces during the 1954/1955 conflict. A US A-1 Skyraider aircraft was shot down by PLA anti-aircraft fire southwest of the Dachens while supporting the evacuation. The crew of three survived and was rescued by Nationalist forces.¹²⁵ The following day the commander of the Seventh Fleet stated that the aircraft had strayed over the Chinese mainland due to navigation errors in bad weather and therefore viewed the engagement as a purely defensive move by the PLA.¹²⁶

6.3.5 Nuclear Threats

March brought a new round of tensions as the mutual defense treaty was ratified in the US Congress. The PRC continued to build infrastructure and artillery emplacements adjacent Quemoy which the US perceived as possible preparations for an assault.¹²⁷ The US forcing the Nationalists to evacuate the Dachens could be construed as a signal that the US was unlikely to fight for the offshores in the future. Meanwhile, many in Washington perceived its actions as a strong show of force with the influx of forces but some were concerned that Mao might view the

¹²² Jacob Van Staaveren, *Air Operation in the Taiwan Crisis of 1958* (USAF Historical Division, 1962), 7-8.

¹²³ Elleman, *Taiwan Straits*, 64-65.

¹²⁴ Staaveren, *Air Ops*, 8; "US Considering Sending Formosa Unit of Marines," *The New York Times*, April 29, 1955, p.1.

¹²⁵ Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore*, 76-77; "US Plane Downed by Reds in Tachens," *The New York Times*, February 9, 1955, p.1.

¹²⁶ Henry Lieberman, "US Won't Avenge Tachen Plane Loss," *The New York Times*, February 10, 1955, p. 1, 10.

¹²⁷ Chang, "To the Nuclear Brink," 105.

US as weak after the retreat.¹²⁸ The uncertainty of intentions combined with inaccurate US intelligence of building PRC forces generated fear in policy makers in DC. Dulles made a personal visit in February to Asia, and returned convinced of pending PRC aggression.¹²⁹ This resulted in repeated public warnings from the White House that it was willing to use nuclear weapons against China.¹³⁰

On 13 February, after the evacuation of the Dachens, Eisenhower approved Operation *Teacup*, a public test of tactical nuclear weapons in Nevada.¹³¹ On the 12th and 15th Dulles mentioned the possible use of nuclear weapons if war broke out in the Strait. Eisenhower followed with his infamous statement during a 16 March press conference that one could employ tactical nuclear weapons “just as you would use a bullet or anything else.”¹³² These statements were supported by Eisenhower and Dulles’ purported willingness to use nuclear weapons in a conflict with China, but only as a last resort after conventional weapons were tried.¹³³ The US military and JCS had long advocated for the use of tactical nuclear weapons in defending Taiwan and Quemoy usually making an efficiency argument that knocking out airfields and artillery with conventional weapons would be very difficult.¹³⁴

In late April, Zhou Enlai made a speech at Bandung stating that China sought to liberate Taiwan by “peaceful means as far as possible.”¹³⁵ The US took this statement as a conciliatory gesture and the crisis deescalated. Betts argues that the nuclear threats given by the US cannot

¹²⁸ Tucker, *China Threat*, 78-79; Chang and Di, “Absence of War,” 1515.

¹²⁹ Chang, “To the Nuclear Brink,” 106.

¹³⁰ Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance*, 54-61.

¹³¹ Steven Ambrose, *Eisenhower, The President Volume Two* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 245.

¹³² *Ibid*, 239; Maqfarquhar, *Sino-American Relations*, 103.

¹³³ Chang, “To the Nuclear Brink,” 111.

¹³⁴ Tucker, *China Threat*, 74-75.

¹³⁵ Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail*, 61.

be dissociated from the PRC backing down with conciliatory language. However, recent research shows that the PRC likely had no intention or capability of launching an immediate assault on Quemoy and Matsu.¹³⁶ Mao's aims for territorial revision had been focused on the Dachen which were already successful.

Concern for the US's nuclear arsenal certainly affected Mao's calculations. Several scholars have argued that the use of US nuclear threats during the crisis prompted China's drive to acquire nuclear weapons.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, Mao's selection and execution of strategy was also shaped by the US conventional tripwire and capacity to escalate in the Strait. He was acutely aware of the inability to overcome US conventional strength if the US military snapped forward to oppose a conventional war strategy. China and the US had recently concluded a conventional war in Korea, which despite nuclear threats stayed regional and conventional. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that PRC calculations involved both conventional and nuclear considerations when contemplating revisionist action throughout the 1954-1955 crisis.¹³⁸ The 1954-1955 observation shows that by the time the US was issuing strong nuclear threats, the PRC had already achieved its limited aims in the Dachen. Even if the PRC could have still contemplated an assault on Quemoy as Betts argues, the evidence shows that conventional concerns of US naval and air power overlapped with possible nuclear weapons use.

¹³⁶ Stolper, *Offshore Islands*, 86-87; Chang, "To the Nuclear Brink," 102, ft 13.

¹³⁷ Tucker, *China Threat*, 101-102; Lewis and Xue, *China Builds the Bomb*, 73.

¹³⁸ Mao often referred to the US and even nuclear weapons as a 'paper tiger' in public and private deliberations. In 1949, Mao called nuclear weapons a paper tiger to US journalist Anna Louise Strong. In 1957 in Moscow Mao boasted to Khrushchev what little difference it would make if a billion people died in a nuclear war. In 1954 and 1955, he told foreign diplomats he did not fear the US arsenal arguing that China was large in population and territory and that the US's small stock of nuclear weapons could not destroy it. Additionally, Mao stated that the US and UK governments would be overthrown if they used nuclear weapons in China. However, much of this may have been bluster or reassurance to domestic audiences. Research shows that Mao considered the US's nuclear arsenal at each crisis when weighing what strategy to pursue. See: Pantsov and Levine, *Mao*, 428, 444-446; Lewis and Xue, *China Builds the Bomb*, 7.

6.3.6 1954-1955 Crisis Conclusion

There are three primary takeaways from the 1954-1955 crisis. The first is the efficacy of a tripwire's mobility. Each time TPF elements steamed into the Dachens region (about 200 miles north of the normal TPF patrol), the PLA delayed plans to attack. However, the PRC did not cancel invasion plans and therefore as a 'show of force' the naval maneuvers were a failure. They did not constrain Mao from continuing with the conventional war strategy in the future. The TPF was effective in the Dachens when present as a tripwire. Concern over direct contact between PLA and US forces postponed the Dachens invasion. The failure of the tripwire was its impermanence. The TPF had a static presence in the Taiwan Strait with nearly 24/7 patrols and making port in Taiwan. The tactical mobility of the TPF in the Strait was effective. The strategic mobility up to the Dachens was not, and could only delay a conventional war strategy.

The second takeaway is the power of the nationality threshold when backed with the capacity to escalate. The evidence builds confidence in the hand-tying nature of the nationality threshold in deterring conventional war and some direct aggression strategies versus the sunk cost logic of large scale shows of force that are either impermanent or not located in the possible line of advance. Mao viewed the Dachen operation as higher risk than the shelling of Quemoy because it risked direct combat between PRC and US combat forces. Mao viewed the shelling of Quemoy as low risk because it would not pit PLA and US military forces against one another. Ironically, the initial salvo killed nonpublic US advisors, and the US responded with a massive influx of naval and air power.

The PRC's concern for the nationality threshold is visible in the strict rules of engagement to avoid US combat forces contrasting with the approval of attacks against

Nationalist-only forces. Mao forbid air attacks on the Dachen when US naval ships were in the area. In doing so, Mao showed concern escalation by the PLA air force and US naval forces coming into direct contact despite the ROEs. It appears that the PLA was more willing to allow naval operations against Nationalist forces when US forces were in the region in contrast to air power. This may be because PT boats have more time to accurately discriminate targets and identify nationality before attacking where air forces were more prone to mistakes. Like the French forces in the Chad case, it is difficult for a tripwire force posture to prevent low levels of direct aggression against protégé only forces because the aggressor military can avoid the small numbers of tripwire forces in limited raids associated with direct aggression. However, the tripwire force is effective in preventing a strategy of conventional war where avoiding the tripwire would be highly unlikely.

The final point is the overlapping nature of conventional and nuclear deterrence in the crisis. Mao and PLA planners clearly wanted to avoid engaging and killing US combat forces. While Mao considered and was concerned about the US nuclear arsenal, there is evidence he believed the PLA could fight a limited conventional war against the US on the Chinese mainland, but with US naval and air superiority China assessed the chances of taking Taiwan or the offshores as very low. He was also acutely aware that the overwhelming US conventional superiority with snap forward forces meant that attacking and killing US forces would bring massive reinforcements making any amphibious conventional war strategy unlikely to succeed.

6.4 1958: Blockade and Convoys

Crisis returned to the Taiwan Strait in 1958 with the PRC's selection of direct aggression via an intense artillery barrage against Nationalist Quemoy followed by an artillery and naval blockade of the island. The US responded with a large influx of forces and began convoying Nationalist resupply efforts. The 1958 crisis has two primary takeaways. First, the imposition of a mobile tripwire in escorting Nationalist naval and air convoys to resupply Quemoy was successful in deterring direct aggression against the convoys as long as US forces were present. Second, the selection of a direct aggression strategy against Quemoy helps refine how the nationality threshold is perceived and highlights the risk to forward deployed forces to strategies short of conventional war. Mao deliberately sought a confrontation with the US in 1958, but sought to keep that contest below the threshold of war.

6.4.1 Background

In late December 1957, Mao began planning his next moves in the Strait by considering sending fighter aircraft to recently completed airfields in South East China adjacent Taiwan.¹³⁹ The following month, the PLA completed the railway to Xiamen that created a reliable logistics artery to the Quemoy area. Thus, two of the factors that drove Mao to focus on the Dachens instead of Quemoy in 1954 had been rectified, reliable air cover and a logistics link that could move quantities of men and material. In March, Mao approved Peng Dehuai's plans to occupy the airfields in the coming summer. By April, detailed plans to shell Quemoy were developed and approved by CCP leadership.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Allen Whiting, "New Light on Mao: Quemoy 1958: Mao's Miscalculations," *The China Quarterly* no. 62 (1975), 266.

¹⁴⁰ Jian, *Mao's China*, 171-172.

Scholars have argued three overlapping rationales for the PRC initiating the crisis in 1958 with the heavy shelling of Quemoy. The first is another probe of US resolve to defend the offshore islands. The ambiguity in the Taiwan-US mutual defense treaty and the lack of an overt US force posture on the offshores created uncertainty whether the US would defend the offshores or push for the Nationalists to retreat as in the Dachens.¹⁴¹ Second, is viewing the crisis as a move to pressure the Nationalist to come to the bargaining table after failed negotiations. Finally, several scholars argue the primary logic was to build revolutionary fervor to support the devastating domestic reforms of the 'Great Leap Forward.'¹⁴² Despite the varied possible rationales for initiating the crisis, the PLA strategy was an artillery and naval blockade of Quemoy.¹⁴³ The use of overt and attributable violence by the PLA, that was not seeking to take and hold territory, categorizes the strategy as one of direct aggression.

Quemoy remained geographically unimportant to the United States and Taiwan.¹⁴⁴ It was distant from Taiwan and hard to defend which led to a litany of US officials recommending the abandonment of the offshores for some time. However, Chiang saw large symbolic value in the offshores and created military importance by stationing a staggering 86,000 troops on Quemoy and 23,000 on Matsu.¹⁴⁵ This force constituted a third of the Nationalist fighting power and was wholly reliant on resupply from Taiwan, and was within range of hundreds of PLA aircraft and reportedly 10,000 artillery pieces.¹⁴⁶ US intelligence estimated the PRC could establish air and

¹⁴¹ "Mao Zedong's Handling of the Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1958, Chinese Recollections and Documents," trans. by Li Xiaobing, Chen Jian and David Wilson., *CWIHPB* no.6-7, 209.

¹⁴² Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, Chapter 6. Jian, *Mao's China*.

¹⁴³ Leonard Gordon, "United States Opposition to Use of Force in the Taiwan Strait, 1954-1962," *The Journal of American History* 72 no. 3 (1985): 645; Jian, *Mao's China*, 179, 183-184;

¹⁴⁴ Howe, *Multicrisis*, 189; Tucker, *China Threat*, 144.

¹⁴⁵ Halperin, *The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis*, 6-7; Gordon, "United States Opposition," 645; Howe, *Multicrisis*, 172;

¹⁴⁶ Xiaobing et al, "Mao Zedong's Handling," 208.

sea dominance around the offshores if the US did not directly intervene in a conflict.¹⁴⁷ Analysts worried that a withdraw from Quemoy could cause the collapse of the Nationalist regime. Furthermore, Quemoy became militarily important because Taiwan could not afford to lose such a large number of forces.¹⁴⁸

6.4.2 Initial Force Posture - None

In the summer of 1958, the PRC had approximately 138,000 troops in Fujian province opposing Taiwan with 80,000 troops within 50 miles of Quemoy.¹⁴⁹ In July, the highways in Fujian province were jammed with PLA traffic moving southeast to reinforce these numbers.¹⁵⁰ Tensions heightened with the move of PLA fighter aircraft to the four airfields completed a year earlier in southeast China. From August 2 to August 13, 173 PLA aircraft moved into the unoccupied bases and began operations including overflight of the offshores.¹⁵¹ Several air battles between Nationalist and Communist air forces resulted in July and August.

US intelligence was unsure on the potential for invasion of Quemoy noting a lack of visible sealift assets.¹⁵² However, on the eve of shelling a Joint Chiefs of Staff report estimated the PRC had the capability to lift 230,000 troops to Quemoy with 2,000 junks resulting in the likely fall of Quemoy without direct US intervention.¹⁵³ President Eisenhower voiced concern

¹⁴⁷ Halperin, *1958 Taiwan Straits*, 14.

¹⁴⁸ Tucker, *China Threat*, 144; Halperin, *Taiwan Straits*, 98, 334; Hinton, *Communist China*, 172.

¹⁴⁹ Halperin, *1958 Taiwan Straits*, 3.

¹⁵⁰ Jian, *Mao's China*, 177; Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 195-196.

¹⁵¹ Halperin, *1958 Taiwan Straits*, 29-30; Gordon, "United States Opposition," 640.

¹⁵² Howe, *Multicrisis*, 172-187.

¹⁵³ A US special national intelligence estimate also estimated that the PLA could move rapidly and without detection. See Halperin, *1958 Taiwan Straits*, 3, 14, 87.

that the PRC could take Quemoy quickly and “with little advance notice.”¹⁵⁴ There was also significant concern that if Quemoy fell Chiang’s regime was in risk of collapsing on Taiwan.¹⁵⁵

The US force posture in the region was largely unchanged from 1955 with a tripwire around Taiwan and a posture of None on Quemoy and the offshores. The TPF continued to patrol the Strait with four to six destroyers based out of Taiwan. Six F-100 fighter/reconnaissance aircraft deployed to Taiwan on 3 August augmenting the existing TPF force. Six F-86 fighter aircraft followed on 8 August.¹⁵⁶ The US maintained a small number of US noncombat advisors on Quemoy and had several thousand advisors on Taiwan proper. The US did not have ground combat units on Taiwan or the offshores.

US interests in Taiwan also remained largely unchanged. Taiwan remained in the defense perimeter against the perceived monolithic communist threat now bolstered by the mutual defense treaty. The US provided 230 million dollars a year for Taiwan’s defense, and its army was the second largest in Asia.¹⁵⁷ Notably, in August, the US approved transferring 60 F-86F fighters to the Nationalist air force along with US trainers.¹⁵⁸ However, the US intentions regarding the offshores remained ambiguous.

6.4.3 Aggressor Strategy – Direct Aggression

¹⁵⁴ Howe, *Multicrisis*, 188.

¹⁵⁵ See Halperin, *Taiwan Crisis*, 368, footnote 58. This is in contrast to a State Department study that concluded it was unlikely the Taiwan government would fall if Quemoy fell. However, Secretary Dulles agreed with the CIA assessment and was concerned that actions on Quemoy could lead to insurgency or regime failure on Taiwan. *Ibid.*, 433-444

¹⁵⁶ Jacob Van Staaveren, “Air Operations in the Taiwan Crisis of 1958,” *USAF Historical Division* (1962): 15-19; Halperin, *Taiwan Crisis*, 62-65.

¹⁵⁷ Howe, *Multicrisis*, 167-174.

¹⁵⁸ These aircraft were capable of firing the advanced US sidewinder missile, which would finally tilt the advantage in the air to the Nationalists. Staaveren, “Air Operations,” 14.

The initial strategy of the PRC was direct aggression against the garrison on Quemoy through artillery bombardment, air strikes, and naval torpedo boat attacks.¹⁵⁹ On 23 August, the PLA fired 20,000-40,000 rounds against Quemoy.¹⁶⁰ On the 24th, the PLA fired 30,000 more rounds, the PLAAF struck the island in the only air attack of the crisis, and the PLAN used PT boats to attack several Nationalist supply ships sinking at least one.¹⁶¹ The artillery focused on the airfields and harbors, while the PT attacks focused on attacking Nationalist supply ships.¹⁶² The artillery barrage decreased in ferocity after the first few days.¹⁶³

Unlike in 1954, we know Mao was acutely aware of the risk of killing Americans in the heavy artillery attack on Quemoy.¹⁶⁴ On 21 August in discussions on the coming aggression, Mao asked Ye Fei, the PLA general in charge of the operation, if the shelling would risk killing Americans. The general knew there were US advisors at the battalion level and responded it was possible Americans could be killed. Mao asked if it was possible to eliminate the risk and General Ye Fei answered no. Mao abruptly ended the meeting and thought about the implications of risking US deaths through the evening. The next day Mao told Ye Fei to carry out the planned shelling despite the risk but to limit the most intense shelling to a few days.¹⁶⁵

The theory of tripwire deterrence argues that attacking a tripwire force with a strategy of conventional war triggers the defender's intervention in the conflict to defend its protégé against

¹⁵⁹ While the strategy of direct aggression is normally associated with an assault with ground troops, the 1958 Quemoy incident fits the definition of direct aggression. The PLA was overtly committing violent acts against protégé military forces attributable to only the PLA. The strategy of a 'artillery blockade' is unique in that it uses overt violence that risks killing any defender forces and triggering a nationalist response. This is counter to a purely naval blockade that did not risk or inflict violent harm.

¹⁶⁰ Stolper, *China, Taiwan and the Offshore*, 117; Halperin, *Taiwan Crisis*, 160.

¹⁶¹ Jian, *Mao's China*, 183; Halperin, *Taiwan Crisis*, 160.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁶³ Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 228.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 228-230; Jian, *Mao's China*, 181.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, and Whiting, "China's Use of Force," 110.

invasion. While the US presence on Quemoy does not qualify as a tripwire because it consisted only of advisory troops, one should still expect some form of nationalist response if the advisory forces are killed. Other CCP leaders were also concerned about the risk. Lin Biao recommended warning the US before shelling so that US advisors would not be killed in the opening salvo. This recommendation was rejected but as a result, Mao did decide in the 21 August meeting to limit the most intense shelling to the opening three days. Mao's decision to risk the death of US advisors is in stark contrast to Mao's concern over engaging US combat forces constituting the tripwire. Like 1954 and 1955, the PRC instituted several measures to avoid contact with US combat forces including ordering its air force to not fly in international waters or past Quemoy. Airstrikes against Quemoy beyond the second day were also denied due to concerns of encountering American air forces.¹⁶⁶ Additionally, even if US naval forces entered Chinese waters, they were not to be fired on.¹⁶⁷

So why did the public US advisory presence fail to deter the direct aggression of shelling? The answer lies in how a conventional tripwire operates and what the intentions of the PRC were. First, the tripwire operates through a logic of denial. When a tripwire force is attacked as part of a conventional war strategy, the defender's hands are tied to honor their commitment to defend the protégé and deny the attacker's territorial aims. Because Mao had no intention of initiating a strategy of conventional war against Taiwan or Quemoy, a US response to deny an invasion with a large scale influx of US forces to the region would not necessarily prevent or deny the PRC strategy. Killing Americans may trigger some retaliatory punishment incurring some cost to the PRC, but that action would not deny a nonexistent invasion plan.

¹⁶⁶ Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 228-230.

¹⁶⁷ Xiaobing et al, "Mao Zedong's Handling," 209, 211, 215.

However, the US recognized that a conventional war strategy was not imminent and implemented a clever strategy of mobile tripwires to protect Nationalist resupply convoys. Second, unlike the previous crisis, or Libya's aggression against Chad in Chapter 4, Mao sought a confrontation with the US. Scholars have put forward evidence that Mao pursued an international incident with the United States to develop a crisis short of war.¹⁶⁸ Mao sought the creation of a strong external enemy to rally support and build revolutionary fervor supporting the disastrous economic reforms of the 'Great Leap Forward.' Under this thinking, Mao may have miscalculated on the speed of US response but he sought to exploit the US presence to create a confrontation.¹⁶⁹ Ultimately, no Americans died during the shelling or the wider crisis, although at least one was wounded on Quemoy.¹⁷⁰

6.4.4 Defender Response – Tripwire Convoys

Eisenhower and US officials' primary concern was convincing the PRC that any military action in the Taiwan Straits would bring the PLA into contact with the US forces and involve a clash.¹⁷¹ US force posture in and around Taiwan immediately surged to large. On 24 and 25 August, the Seventh Fleet converged on the Taiwan Strait. The Sixth Fleet and two additional carriers from Pearl Harbor augmented the formidable force. Ground based US fighter aircraft also converged on Taiwan. By early September, there were six aircraft carriers in the region bringing the total ground and naval US fighter aircraft to over 500 in and around Taiwan. The US force posture remained none on Quemoy since no US combat forces deployed there. The US

¹⁶⁸ Jian, *Mao's China*, 182; Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 219.

¹⁶⁹ Whiting, "New Light on Mao," 265; Stolper, *China, Taiwan and the Offshore*, 216-127.

¹⁷⁰ Artillery fire wounded one American on Quemoy in mid-September. "GI Hurt on Quemoy," *The New York Times*, September 19, 1958.

¹⁷¹ Halperin, *Taiwan Crisis*, 121, 124-125.

Navy did not patrol the narrow waterway between Quemoy and the mainland and US aircraft did not provide an air patrol over Quemoy.¹⁷²

US officials overcame initial confusion and concluded that the PRC was attempting to blockade Quemoy and that an invasion was unlikely.¹⁷³ Many scholars agree that the PRC did not intend to launch an amphibious assault on Quemoy in the immediate future and did not have the lift capability amassed.¹⁷⁴ US intelligence believed a blockade would likely be successful in strangling the garrison without US assistance and identified that resupplying Quemoy was the central challenge.¹⁷⁵ Nationalist supply ships were coming under accurate artillery fire when they attempted to land on Quemoy. Additionally, PLA PT boats continued to harass Nationalist supply missions. The Nationalists failed to resupply the islands once the blockade began.¹⁷⁶

On 29 August, President Eisenhower approved JCS plans to convoy Nationalist supply ships to Quemoy and escort Nationalist aircraft on airdrop missions over Quemoy.¹⁷⁷ As a precaution, Eisenhower ordered US naval forces to remain outside of 3 miles from Quemoy and ordered US aircraft to not engage any PLA fighters encountered over Quemoy.¹⁷⁸ On 7 September, the first US-escorted convoy landed on Quemoy with the US ships halting 3 miles offshore. The convoy was successful. PRC artillery and naval forces did not attack or harass the convoy. The initial escort was a US cruiser and three destroyers on 7 September. Follow on escorts were limited to one or two US destroyers that would sail with the Nationalist ships up to

¹⁷² Stolper, *China, Taiwan and the Offshore*, 118.

¹⁷³ Halperin, *Taiwan Crisis*, 111.

¹⁷⁴ Stolper, *China, Taiwan and the Offshore*, 118; Tucker, *The China Threat*, 143-144; Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 229-231; Howe, *Multicrisis*, 198.

¹⁷⁵ Halperin, *Taiwan Crisis*, 143, 183.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 162, 178-179.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 198-199, 204, 207.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 372, 375.

the designated 3-mile limit.¹⁷⁹ In effect, the US extended a mobile tripwire to the Nationalist convoys, deterring any attacks against them that could unintentionally damage or destroy the US ships. The PLA Navy was given orders that it was not to fire on US ships, even if fired upon.¹⁸⁰

The PLA responded to the observed 3-mile limit on the second convoy attempt. After the Nationalist landing ships had docked, the PLA waited two hours to ensure US ships would not approach, and then unleashed a barrage on the harbor forcing the Nationalist ships to retreat. The PLA gave every indication they were avoiding engaging US combat forces.¹⁸¹ There was also decreased PT boat activity after US convoys were instituted. However, on 24 September, the USS Hopewell, a US destroyer, responded to an isolated Nationalist landing ship under attack from PT boats. When the Hopewell arrived, the PT boats ceased the attack and circled the Hopewell but both sides held their fire.¹⁸² The United States also provided airborne escort flying Nationalist airdrop missions over Quemoy starting on 13 September. The PLAAF did not attack the airdrops that proved effective in resupplying the garrison independent of the naval supply.¹⁸³

When it became apparent that the Quemoy could be effectively resupplied by air or sea, Mao sought to deescalate the crisis. Mao tried to justify the failure by announcing that by its presence, the US was caught in a ‘noose’ to be tightened whenever the CCP wanted to pull it. However, this explanation was only espoused after it became apparent Quemoy would not fall and was likely meant to address the domestic audience that had been mobilized for the crisis.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 370, 407.

¹⁸⁰ Jian, *Mao's China*, 191; Whiting, “China’s Use of Force,” 110.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 296, 335.

¹⁸² Elleman, *Taiwan Straits*, 93.

¹⁸³ Halperin, *Taiwan Crisis*, 304-305, 373.

¹⁸⁴ Jian, *Mao's China*, 187, 199-200.

On 6 October, the PRC called for a one-week ceasefire and by 25 October moved to shelling only on odd days that continued at low levels until US relations improved in 1979.

6.4.6 1958: Blockade and Convoys Conclusion

In a theater and crisis purposively plagued by ambiguity of commitment, the US used overt combat forces to communicate where red lines existed. It is unlikely the PRC sought to capture Quemoy with a conventional war strategy and scholars debate if Mao viewed the blockade as a strategy likely to succeed in altering the territorial status quo. However, Mao's deliberation over US forces before considering the shelling, and the issuance of rules of engagement to the PLA illuminate the concern over the nationalist threshold. The PRC showed its motive and intention to attack the convoys by using force to prevent Nationalist resupplies from reaching Quemoy. The US extension of its tripwire to the Nationalist convoys and airdrops clearly delineated the US resolve of defending the convoys to the PRC. PRC direct aggression immediately stopped against the supply effort once the tripwire began contingent on the continued proximity of US ships and aircraft. A massive naval and air reinforcement to the region backed the tripwire demonstrating the US ability to snap forward forces to deny any possible attempts to escalate to conventional war.

6.5 Conclusion

The US tripwire in the Taiwan Strait backed by the snap forward capability of the US Navy and US Air Force constrained the PRC from selecting a strategy of conventional war against Taiwan. The PLA was actively planning an invasion of Taiwan when the Korean War broke out and elements of the Seventh Fleet rushed to the Strait. Throughout the observations,

the liberation of Taiwan continued as a central goal of the PRC, however they were limited to pursuing indirect and nonmilitary strategies against Taiwan proper due to the US tripwire. The PRC was not constrained from selecting conventional war and direct aggression strategies against the offshore islands when US combat forces were not present, or only intermittently present.

In selecting strategies for aggression in the offshores, Mao and PRC leadership displayed consistent concern over the nationality threshold with US forces. The geography of the Taiwan case lends itself to investigating how tripwire mobility can be a help or hindrance to deterrence. The tactical mobility of the TPF steaming up and down the Taiwan Strait was effective in concealing the precise location of US forces in the Strait, while the permanence of being based out of a Taiwanese port ensured the TPF's strategic presence. This ensured a strong and effective tripwire deterrent against conventional war targeting Taiwan. The temporary movement of TPF forces to the Dachens and Yijiangshan region contrast to the permanent presence around Taiwan. When TPF elements moved to the Dachens, the PRC delayed invasion plans of Yijiangshan and the Dachens, but given its temporary nature, did not deter the eventual conventional war strategy. A tripwire's deterrence, because it operates through hand-tying, is predicated on the attacker perceiving the force will likely be present when a strategy is selected. Strategic mobility of a nonlocal force, or the threat of a future presence, was insufficient. Tactical mobility, or varying the tripwire's precise location, is effective in deterring conventional war and complicates any attacker efforts at direct aggression that only target protégé forces.

The tactical mobility of the US naval and air forces were also useful in creating a mobile tripwire to escort Nationalist ships. The mobile tripwire effectively deterred direct aggression from PLA air, naval, and ground forces. The PLA regularly received restrictive rules of

engagement to avoid inadvertently engaging US combat forces. When Nationalist ships were not being covered by US forces, they were shelled and struck by PLA raids. Quemoy island which lacked a tripwire suffered consistent direct aggression with shelling continuing (albeit at very low levels) until 1979.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This dissertation sought to answer the following question: is a tripwire an effective extended deterrent against conventional war and if so, under what conditions? The nuclear literature argues that the nationality threshold associated with a tripwire is an important limit that functions as a deterrent through the risk of mutual destruction. Thus, the idea of a tripwire as a hand-tying mechanism of resolve was developed but its deterrent power rested on the risk of nuclear Armageddon. Therefore, the nuclear framework is incomplete for considering tripwires as a conventional deterrent. The conventional deterrence literature generally focuses on the first phase of war where the capability to prevent a quick and cheap victory is paramount. The focus is on the local balance of capabilities and a strategy of denial that communicates to a potential attacker that a war would fail to quickly achieve their territorial goals or enter a long attritional phase with high costs and unknown outcomes. In this framework, the tripwire does not augment the local balance of capabilities and therefore does not deter an attempt at a quick aggressor victory. The conventional deterrence literature is also pessimistic on tripwires because attackers may design clever revisionist strategies that circumvent the tripwire.

The main theoretical contribution of this dissertation accounts for how the politics of a tripwire can serve as a credible conventional deterrent threat, when backed by the capability to deny an attacker state from achieving its territorial aims. The defender's capacity to escalate denies the attacker the ability to take and/or hold its territorial objectives by projecting sufficient forces to the protégé's territory after the onset of conflict. The theory presented in this dissertation provides a logic for constraining the selection of an attacker state's strategy of aggression with implications for the likelihood of territorial revision. Moreover, it provides

empirical evidence that the need for a large force posture that can deter across all domains is not always empirically true. When paired with the capacity to escalate, a small tripwire posture serves as a credible deterrent threat to protect the protégé against conventional war.

7.1 Summary of Findings

The primary motivation for the dissertation is to address the gap between the conventional and nuclear literatures to develop a viable theory of conventional tripwire deterrence. By considering the necessity of both capabilities and resolve in conventional extended deterrence, I show that paradoxically the diminutive tripwire can be an effective conventional deterrent via denial. The tripwire ties the hands of the defender to honor its commitment to the protégé due to the nationalist response in the defender state. This signal is credible when backed by the defender's capacity to escalate.

The conventional deterrence literature largely focuses on the potential for a quick initial victory of an attacker or its ability to take territory. The capacity to escalate as presented in this dissertation is predicated on preventing the attacker from not just taking, but also holding onto its territorial objectives. When a resolved defender is significantly more powerful than an attacker, even if the attacker scores an initial victory over the protégé, the defender's massive advantage in power will threaten the attacker's gains and prevent the attacker from holding them. Speed is less significant in this scenario than predicted in the existing literature. The defender's hands are tied to respond by the tripwire, but it can take its time to mass its forces and then project them back into the protégé's territory with massive advantage. Conversely, if the defender and attacker are near power parity, speed does matter. The defender must have demonstrable 'snap forward' capability to quickly deploy shield forces before the attacker captures the protégé.

These shield forces must be of significant quantity and quality to slow the aggressor's advance for the arrival of heavy defender forces risking a long war of attrition between the attacker and defender. Finally, I take seriously the contention that attackers design strategies to circumvent conventional deterrents and that attackers will therefore seek to undermine a conventional tripwire. However, just because conventional deterrents may be designed against, does not mean tripwires are ineffective. The case studies show resolved aggressors seek strategies short of conventional war when a tripwire with C2E is present. These other strategies are less effective means of aggression therefore lowering the probability of territorial revision.

A few historical cases cannot prove the theory. However, the dissertation presents a viable alternative theory that explains how a conventional tripwire constrains the selection of aggressor strategy and ultimately explains deterrence outcomes with the presence of a tripwire better than the existing wisdom. The argument has several benefits of theoretical import. First, the dissertation develops a denial logic consistent with expectations in the conventional deterrence literature while applying the hand-tying effects of the tripwire introduced in the nuclear literature. Second, this logic is not a static accounting but provides a dynamic alternative where motivated attacker states update their strategies of aggression to pursue revisionist aims while avoiding the tripwire. Third, the theory of conventional tripwires expressly predicts how an aggressor will be deterred from conventional war and certain direct aggression strategies but not from other strategies below the threshold of conventional war.

I employed one case study each to show: variation in the independent and dependent variables, the necessity for the capacity to escalate, and how mobility affects the tripwire deterrent. In all three cases, I assessed the defender's force posture and capacity to escalate and how they varied over time. In order for a tripwire to deter, it must be backed by the capacity to

escalate and have a permanent presence. When the capacity to escalate is not present, the attacker state is unconstrained in its strategy selection, and does not respect the nationality threshold in execution.

7.1.1 French Defenders in Chad

The French on-again off-again ‘red line’ through central Chad is a crucial case. Libya habitually selected a strategy of conventional war when the French tripwire was absent despite French verbal and sunk cost threats, local and regional interests, and a history of intervention. When France deployed its tripwire, Libya altered its strategy to avoid violating the nationalist threshold and was deterred from selecting conventional war. France’s capacity to escalate was never in doubt. France had a large advantage in relative power and a robust regional base network throughout the observations. Shifts in French force posture reveal a close relationship between the tripwire and constrained Libyan aggression. The deployment of a relatively small tripwire force served as a clear signal of French intentions to defend southern Chad through the often contradictory and noisy alternate explanations of verbal and sunk cost threats, past actions, domestic politics, and intrinsic interests.

The case also brings to the fore several risks in using a tripwire strategy. First, French troops were vulnerable to indirect aggression risking a cost and possible domestic unrest. Second, a sudden shift in the relative power of Chad vis-à-vis Libya with the defection of rebel factions and continued western arms transfers empowered a once weak protégé to take the offensive against Libya. Once the status quo was threatened, Libya was willing to shift from respecting the nationalist threshold in the execution of direct aggression to targeting locations known to have French tripwire forces. Libya appears to have been hedging by using tactics not

designed to cause large numbers of personnel casualties, such as targeting runways, but the execution risked killing French forces and was a marked shift. The sudden shift in Chad's capabilities highlighted the risk of entrapment with a tripwire.

7.1.2 Greek Defenders in Cyprus

The purpose of the Greece case was to investigate the necessity of C2E to underpin the tripwire as a credible deterrent threat. Because rigorous cross case comparison is not realistic given the number of varied background conditions, this case employed within case tracing to evaluate the role of C2E. The case shows that in strategy selection Turkey was unconstrained in selecting a conventional war strategy because Greece lacked the capability to reinforce Cyprus in a meaningful way once it was under attack. In executing the strategy, Turkey ignored the nationality threshold and directly sought out and attacked the Greek tripwire on Cyprus and struck its own fleet thinking it was a Greek flotilla. Additionally, evidence shows that Turkey knew a war with Greece in the Aegean or along their shared border was a potential outcome. Despite the potential costs that Greece could impose in those theaters, Turkey proceeded with the invasion believing they could achieve their territorial aims on Cyprus.

The case also presented the possible stark domestic consequences in Greece for a tripwire coming under attack and failing to follow through on supporting a protégé. The Greek political leadership threatened war against Turkey, mobilized its military, moved forces to their shared border and gave multiple orders to reinforce Cyprus. Greek military leaders believed reinforcing the island was folly against Turkey's air and naval dominance. They also knew a war with Turkey would be a disaster. The Greek military leaders therefore undermined the orders to send reinforcements to Cyprus and conspired to overthrow the Greek regime. The Greek regime

collapsed early in the crisis as Turkey continued to reinforce its beachhead before ultimately capturing its territorial objectives for the northern half of the island.

7.1.3 American Defenders in Taiwan

The case of US defenders in Taiwan examines a case with defender snap forward capabilities and the advantages and limitations of tripwire mobility. The deployment of the American Taiwan Patrol Force to the Taiwan Strait served as an effective conventional deterrent throughout the observations of the case. The PRC perceived the US commitment to Taiwan as strong, both before and after the mutual defense treaty. The massive US advantage in naval and air power, its regional proximity, and regular surges around Taiwan's island geography communicated the American clear snap forward capability.

The mobility of the US forces created opportunities for geographic variation in the tripwire, and opportunities to assess the effects of mobility on deterring conventional war. First, the TPF maintained tactical mobility in the Taiwan Strait, steaming up and down the band of water separating Taiwan from the mainland. This mobility meant determining an exact position in advance would be difficult and therefore challenging to design around. The permanence of the TPF presence maintaining a 24/7 patrol and basing out of Taiwan also meant the PRC could not wait out the tripwire. Second, the strategic mobility inherent in US blue water naval forces lead to temporary extensions of the US tripwire beyond Taiwan. In the 1954-1955 crisis the TPF extended naval forces to the Dachen for short-term patrols. When US forces were present, the PRC delayed invasion plans. However, because this presence was temporary, the PRC was ultimately unconstrained in selecting conventional war. Again, during the 1958 crisis the US extended a mobile tripwire, this time as convoy escort. This tripwire was effective in deterring

direct aggression when US forces were present, but if Nationalist ships were found unescorted they were struck by PRC naval or artillery forces.

Finally, although China lacked nuclear weapons, the US employed nuclear threats in two of the crises. The cases show that the deterring effects of the tripwire operated independently from the US nuclear threats. China's delay of invasion plans around the Dachen, the strict rules of engagement for PLA forces, and the variation in attacking nationalist convoys all operated independently of the issuance of nuclear threats. Because the US had nuclear weapons, it is not possible, and I do not attempt to claim, that nuclear weapons did not play some part in deterring Chinese aggression. However, the variation in PRC strategy cannot be explained by the presence or threats of US nuclear weapons. Indeed, in 1950 China selected conventional war against the US, knowing the potential risk of nuclear weapon use, because the PRC believed it could achieve its territorial objectives in Korea. The US tripwire backed by snap forward naval and air forces denied any such viable strategy of conventional aggression against Taiwan.

7.2 Policy Implications

One must be careful when extrapolating lessons from a few case studies. However, the logic of tripwire deterrence offers several salient points for policy makers considering different tools to deter aggression against a protégé state. The following section will first consider a contemporary scenario of tripwire deterrence to contrast the differing policy implications that flow from the literature versus those put forward in this dissertation. Second, the section will consider the selection of tripwires in countering aggression in the 'gray zone' below the threshold of war. Finally, the section discusses how technology and the rise of anti-access area denial strategies may affect conventional tripwires.

7.2.1 A Contemporary Tripwire: The Baltics

In order to clearly identify how the logic of tripwire deterrence departs from the ‘conventional wisdom’ of conventional deterrence and how these differences impact foreign policy the following will evaluate the contemporary use of an American tripwire in Eastern Europe to deter Russian aggression against NATO allies. The purpose of this brief section is not to present a full net assessment or war-gaming of the scenario. Instead, the section’s purpose is to highlight the differing policy prescriptions that flow from the underlying differences of the logic. The following analysis assumes that conventional war is possible between two nuclear powers.

Recent Russian revisionist adventurism in Crimea, Georgia, Ukraine, and Syria worries US and NATO policy makers about possible aggression against Eastern Europe allies such as the Baltic States and Poland. The United States and NATO responded to the perception of the increased threat, including Russian border exercises involving 80,000 soldiers,¹ by deploying a 4,000-man tripwire force to Eastern Europe as part of Operation *Atlantic Resolve* in 2017.² The US tripwire deployment continues today with about 4,500 combat troops in the Baltics and Poland and thousands more in other Eastern European states.³ The overall US regional force

¹ Max Bearak, “This tiny stretch of countryside is all that separates Baltic States from Russian envelopment,” *The Washington Post* June 20, 2016.

² Thomas Gibbons-Neff, “NATO to send ‘combat-ready’ battalions near Russian border,” *The Washington Post* June 14, 2016.

³ Eric Schmitt, “In Eastern Europe, U.S. Military Girds Against Russian Might and Manipulation,” *The New York Times* June 27, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/27/us/politics/american-allies-russia-baltics-poland-hybrid-warfare.html>. For information on the locations of the force also see: <http://www.eur.army.mil/AtlanticResolve/>

posture in Europe is at a historic low, with 34,000 total personnel in six main bases with 204 aircraft.⁴

The 'Conventional wisdom' in Eastern Europe

An oft-cited 2016 RAND study of the US and NATO presence in the Baltics and Europe concluded that it was insufficient in defending against a Russian fait accompli against Estonia and/or Latvia and therefore ineffective at deterring conventional war.⁵ The report estimates that Russian forces would reach the capitals in under 60 hours from the commencement of hostilities. The report gamed several scenarios and found that the local balance of forces strongly favored the Russians. The 22 Russian battalions in its Western Military district would quickly overwhelm the protégé forces before encountering light US forces in the capital that could engage in urban combat but could not be reinforced or resupplied in a timely fashion and would inevitably fall.⁶ Open source estimates place the total number of active Russian forces in their Western District at 330,000.⁷ The geography of the Baltics also favors Russia. The Baltics share a border with Russia and Russia's ally Belarus. Additionally, the geography of the Russian enclave Kaliningrad and Belarus create a roughly 60-mile wide corridor known as the Suwalki Gap. Almost all US and NATO ground forces would have to travel through the Suwalki Gap to reach the Baltics from Europe during the run-up to a crisis.⁸ This constrains the speed in which

⁴ Joe Gould and Valerie Insinna, "Poking the bear: US Air Force builds in Russia's backyard," *Defense News* June 25, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.defensenews.com/smr/nato-priorities/2018/06/25/poking-the-bear-us-air-force-builds-in-russias-backyard/>

⁵ David A. Shlapak and Michael Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁷ Ben Hodges, Janusz Bugajski, Peter Doran, *Securing the Suwalki Corridor: Strategy, Statecraft, and Defense* (Washington DC: Center for European Policy Analysis, 2018), 3, 33.

⁸ Agnia Grigas, "NATO's Vulnerable Link in Europe: Poland's Suwalki Gap," *The Atlantic Council* February 9, 2016; Julian Barnes "Closing the Gap: NATO Moves to Protect Weak Link in Defenses Against Russia," *The Wall Street Journal* June 17, 2016; Bearak, "This tiny stretch of countryside."

US and NATO ground forces could respond to a crisis in the Baltics with the deployment of heavy forces.⁹ The authors argue that in the event of a Russian selection of conventional war the US would be faced with three bad options: build up forces for a costly counter attack to retake the Baltics, threaten nuclear war, or concede the Baltics in defeat.¹⁰



Figure 7.1 - Baltic Geography; SOURCE: Max Bearak, “This tiny stretch of countryside is all that separates Baltic states from Russian envelopment” *The Washington Post* June 20, 2016.

The key to the analysis is the focus on defending in the opening stages of the fight following the conventional wisdom that deterrence fails when an aggressor perceives a quick and easy victory over its target. The principle concern with speed is captured by the former top US

⁹ Recent reporting also finds that there are significant administrative and physical challenges to moving heavy US forces across Europe. See: Michael Birnbaum, “If they needed to fend off war with Russia, U.S. military leaders worry they might not get there in time,” *The Washington Post* June 24, 2018.

¹⁰ Shlapak and Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank*, 6-7.

Army general in Europe stating, “We have to be able to move as fast or faster than Russia in order to be an effective deterrent.”¹¹ In other words, the speed of the Russian advance is the danger in the Baltics and the crux of the analysis is that the speed of the Russian attack puts the US in a difficult position that would present only bad options including admitting defeat. Because Russia may doubt that the US and NATO is willing to pay the cost to roll back the aggression, deterrence is likely to fail. This leads the authors to recommend the deployment of a mid-sized defender force that would be large enough to slow the Russian advance long enough for follow on forces to arrive in strength and give airpower enough time to attrite the Russian ground forces before the fall of NATO capitals.

Tripwire Deterrence in the Baltics

A recent Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) report concurs with the premise of the RAND report also applying the conventional logic doubting the effectiveness of tripwire forces in the Baltics citing three problems. First, the tripwire could be designed against by maneuvering around its static location. Second, the temporary nature of the ongoing tripwire deployment allows Russia to select conventional war at an appropriate time when the tripwire is not present. Third, the tripwire and local forces cannot buy enough time for heavy reinforcements to arrive.¹² The first two challenges can be met with fixes to how the tripwire is deployed, while the third critique of time is the primary theoretical difference between conventional and tripwire deterrence also cited in the RAND report. The following will briefly address how to adjust the tripwire deployment to meet the first two challenges. Then the section

¹¹ Birnbaum, “If they needed to fend off war with Russia.”

¹² Hodges, Bugajski, Doran, *Securing the Suwalki Corridor*, 1-61.

will outline how the logic put forward in this dissertation generates different policy prescriptions when the speed of reinforcement is no longer salient.

The current US deployment stretches 4,500 troops across Eastern Europe, often visiting states for a period. They are augmented by regular exercises that flow in larger NATO forces and practice power projection with local protégé militaries. The CEPA report is correct in criticizing the current American deployment and it should be adjusted to provide a more effective tripwire. First, the US should identify the states most at risk and begin a permanent rotation of tripwire forces. The Taiwan case illustrated the dangers of temporary tripwire forces in the face of a resolved aggressor. Mao simply delayed invasion plans when the TPF extended its patrol into the Dachens region, and then launched a *fait accompli* when US forces were not present. Poland seeks the solution of a permanent presence, requesting a US base in Polish territory that the Polish are willing to fund at a cost of 1.5 to 2 billion dollars.¹³ Polish decision makers are right to want a permanent US presence so that Russia is certain that if it attempts to invade Poland that it will meet US combat forces, tying the hands of the United States to honor its Article 5 commitment. Second, the tripwire forces deployed to the Baltics or Poland should be deployed along critical invasion routes or important political areas that must be captured such as the capitals. These forces should also employ tactical mobility just as the French forces did in patrolling the desert by engaging in mobile patrols at unknown intervals so that their exact location can never be known with any certainty and therefore cannot be easily bypassed.¹⁴

¹³ Ben Wolfgang, "Russia seething: Poland wants permanent U.S. military base, willing to pay \$2 billion for it" *The Washington Times* May 28, 2018; Schmitt, "In Eastern Europe, U.S. Military Girds Against Russian Might and Manipulation."

¹⁴ This recommendation is clearly outlined as the first policy recommendation in the CEPA report. *Ibid.*, 5-6.

Tripwire deterrence accepts that the small US and NATO forward contingent in the Baltics would be unable to defend against or slow down a Russian conventional war strategy. However, it predicts that a tripwire is likely an effective deterrent to Russian conventional war. The US has a large advantage over Russia in relative power. When adjusted for distance to the Baltics the US maintains a 2.5 to 1 advantage in relative power over Russia. US power would also likely draw upon the combined strength of its NATO allies.¹⁵ The US also holds a qualitative military advantage over its Russian adversary forces. For example, despite the proximity of Russia and local quantitative advantage, the RAND study estimates that the Russian air force could only create temporarily and geographically localized bubbles of air superiority for a matter of days against NATO airpower over the Baltics.¹⁶ In their analysis, this is sufficient to secure a *fait accompli* due to the lack of US heavy ground forces. Beyond NATO's military forces and latent power, the NATO allies also provide regional access for the massing of the requisite US power to roll back the Russian advance.

Tripwire deterrence argues that because the US and the NATO allies hold such an advantage over Russia, the speed of the US response is much less important than the conventional wisdom suggests. Shlapak and Johnson argue that the US faces a decision after the fall of the Baltic States and the destruction of US forces there. The choice is between responding with a slow conventional buildup and eventual rollback, an unrealistic compellent nuclear threat of massive retaliation, or acceptance of the defeat. Tripwire deterrence counters that the US does not face such a decision. The public and overt death of American forces by uniformed Russian

¹⁵ If all NATO partners are considered with no losses to alliance inefficiencies, the ratio balloons to over 5 to 1 NATO advantage. The data uses the National Military Capability from 2012, the latest year available. Version 5 of Singer, J. David, Stuart Bremer, and John Stuckey, "Capability Distribution, Uncertainty, and Major Power War, 1820-1965." in Bruce Russett (ed) *Peace, War, and Numbers* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1972), 19-48.

¹⁶ Shlapak and Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank*, 9.

combat forces will inflame such a nationalistic response that US hands will be tied to respond to honor its commitment to its NATO allies. As Glenn Snyder argued ‘no response’ is no longer an option once military forces are engaged in overt combat.¹⁷ Given the large advantage in American and NATO power, once enough forces are massed they will counterattack against Russian’s initial gains. In effect, if the Russians achieve a fait accompli over the Baltics and a US tripwire, they are essentially selecting a limited aims strategy that will likely result in the eventual loss of their initial gains, or at best, a war of attrition with a much stronger foe.¹⁸ Tripwire deterrence argues that Russia comprehends this dynamic and Russia is therefore deterred from ever selecting conventional war.

The speed of defender response is only salient when the attacker and defender are near power parity and the capability of the defender to mass and project enough power to roll back an aggressor is in doubt. In this case, the logic of two big armies standing toe to toe developed in the conventional literature reigns supreme and the auspice of quick victory leads to deterrence failure. In tripwire deterrence, when at parity, a defender’s capacity to escalate requires speed in a snap forward capability to reinforce the tripwire and slow the attacker’s advance for heavy follow on forces threatening a long war of attrition. This does not mean that recent US investments in power projection with increased spending on infrastructure construction and prepositioned equipment is a bad plan.¹⁹ Facilitating power projection before crisis lowers the time and cost of US and NATO response if a crisis or conflict does break out.

¹⁷ Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*, 21-25.

¹⁸ Some unclassified analysis concurs that Russia lacks the conventional military power to hold the Baltics for a long period of conventional war. See Nicholas J. Myers, “Holding On: Russian Military Modernization Versus the Declining Force-to-Space Ratio,” *EDM* 14(160) (11 December 2017) cited in: Hodges, Bugajski, Doran, *Securing the Suwalki Corridor*, 36.

¹⁹ On recent US investments see: Gould and Valerie Insinna, “Poking the bear.”

Baltic Conclusion

The American tripwire in Eastern Europe needs some adjustments to increase its deterrent effectiveness, but the requirements of a large force as outlined by RAND are not necessary. In effect, their game scenario ended too early with Russian forces approaching the capitals. To have a clear picture of the effects of a tripwire the analysis should extend in time beyond the opening moves and game what a US and NATO response with heavy forces looks like through time with US decision-making constrained by the hand-tying effects of the tripwire.

7.2.2 Deterring in the Gray Zone

The tripwire, when backed by demonstrable C2E, was effective in the case studies in convincing the attacker that a strategy of conventional war would fail to achieve their territorial objectives. However, the conventional tripwire is far from a panacea for deterring all forms of territorial aggression. The cases of immediate extended deterrence identified resolved attacker states that were motivated to alter the status quo. The presence of a tripwire did not change the motives of the attacker, nor did it prevent them from searching for means to alter the status quo. The attacker states consistently pursued direct, indirect, and nonmilitary strategies in attempts to alter the status quo without tripping the defender wire. Libya pursued direct aggression against Chadian targets bombing Chadian towns and attacking Chadian only military units while the French tripwire was deployed. Neither the French tripwire nor the follow-on large presence in 1978 deterred Libyan indirect aggression with proxies attacking south. Only defeat halted the strategy. Libya also sought to use proxy terrorist groups to attack French targets at N'Djamena airport. In the Taiwan case, the PRC regularly selected direct aggression against Nationalist only targets.

Thus when considering the use of tripwires, policy makers should explicitly consider what they plan to deter. Tripwires are effective in deterring conventional war, and often successful in deterring localized direct aggression in the immediate vicinity of the tripwire force. However, tripwires are generally ineffective in deterring indirect strategies involving proxy forces or direct aggression against locations that do not have a defender presence. Therefore, when considering the use of ‘gray-zone’ warfare to alter the status quo with means short of war, a tripwire may have limited utility in deterrence.

A recent skirmish in Syria illustrates the limits and risks of a small overt combat force in deterring indirect aggression. On 7 February 2018, a detachment of about 500 pro-Syrian fighters, most of whom were Russian speaking, attacked a small outpost of US combat forces and allied Kurdish opposition fighters.²⁰ In the run up to the attack, the US observed the massing forces and alerted the Russians of the intelligence. The Russian Syrian high command told the US that there were no Russians involved. The attack involved Russian made hardware including tanks, artillery, and mortars. The US forces fought back with anti-tank missiles and small arms before calling in withering airstrikes against the Syrian-aligned fighters killing an estimated 200 to 300 fighters in the four hour battle. No US or Kurdish soldiers died. In reporting since, the attackers have been revealed to include a large number of personnel from the Wagner mercenary

²⁰ David Brennan, “A Total F***up’: Russian Mercenaries in Syria Lament U.S. Strike That Killed Dozens,” *Newsweek* February 23, 2018. Retrieved from: <http://www.newsweek.com/total-f-russian-mercenaries-syria-lament-us-strike-killed-dozens-818073>; Ellen Nakashima, Karen DeYoung and Liz Sly, “Putin ally said to be in touch with Kremlin, Assad before his mercenaries attacked U.S. troops,” *The Washington Post* February 22, 2018; Christoph Reuter, “American Fury: The Truth About the Russian Deaths in Syria,” *Der Spiegel* March 2, 2018, retrieved from: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/american-fury-the-truth-about-the-russian-deaths-in-syria-a-1196074.html>.

group, a Russian proxy made up of Russian veterans.²¹ Russia initially denied Russians were there, and then downplayed their casualty numbers.

At the current time, Russian motivations are unknown for the mercenary attack. Three main hypothesis have been put forward.²² First, Moscow may have sought to impose a cost on the US for its continued presence with plausible deniability of Russian involvement in the attack. This theory is in line with an attacker strategy of indirect aggression. The second theory is that the Wagner group acted without orders from Moscow and was pursuing their own profit interests to seize oil and gas fields.²³ Finally, the third explanation is bureaucratic infighting between different sources of power within the Russian elite which led to a tacitly approved strike, knowing the physical consequences to the Wagner group fighters.²⁴

The unknowns over Russian command or approval of the attack illustrates the effectiveness of indirect strategies in undermining a tripwire force. Several months after the attack, there is no public US consensus on who ordered the attack. If the attack was actually directed by the Kremlin, then the Russians have certainly achieved plausible deniability in attacking and attempting to kill US forces. However, it also highlights the reduced effectiveness of such strategies. First, Russia could not use airpower or advanced defenses to maintain its deniability; therefore, the US was easily able to destroy the attacking force. Second, if Wagner group went rogue in an undirected attack, the incident highlights the reduced reliability of proxy

²¹ Thomas Gibbons-Neff, "How a 4-Hour Battle Between Russian Mercenaries and U.S. Commandos Unfolded in Syria," *The New York Times* May 24, 2018.

²² On a concise analysis of three hypothesis on Russian activities, see: Kimberly Marten, "The Puzzle of Russian Behavior in Deir al-Zour," *War on the Rocks* July 5, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://warontherocks.com/2018/07/the-puzzle-of-russian-behavior-in-deir-al-zour/>

²³ Neil Hauer, "Russia's Mercenary Debacle in Syria: Is the Kremlin Losing Control?" *Foreign Affairs* February 26, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2018-02-26/russias-mercenary-debacle-syria>.

²⁴ Marten, "The Puzzle of Russian Behavior in Deir al-Zour"

forces in achieving attacker objectives. Finally, no matter the cause, the attack highlights the risk to a tripwire by aggression below the threshold of war. Tripwire forces cannot deter such attacks effectively and are vulnerable to insurgent or proxy attacks that may overtime erode the defender's public confidence without a clear enemy to riposte against.

7.2.3 Technology, A2AD, and Snap Forward Capabilities

The case studies selected had relatively clear delineations on the defender's capacity to escalate. The French held such an advantage over Libya it was clear that Libya could not hold territory versus the French military, especially if France mobilized for a long war. The US advantage over China in the naval and air domains during the 1950s was astounding and the US clearly demonstrated its ability to snap forward its forces into the Taiwan Strait quickly to slow and halt amphibious operations against Nationalist territory. The Cyprus case was one of a woefully out matched Greek defender force, that had no reasonable options of projecting power to Cyprus and was very unlikely to win a long war with Turkey.

The clear capacity to escalate in the cases was useful in the development of the theory but this masks the possible complexity of determining conventional snap forward capabilities. The specific challenge arises when the attacker and defender are at near parity and the defender must demonstrate snap forward capability to have a credible tripwire deterrent. For deterrence to operate, the capabilities of the defender must be communicated to the attacker. This dissertation argues that recent combat demonstrations, large-scale shows of force, or exercises are all means to communicate such snap forward capabilities to attackers. The dissertation is also agnostic on the role of technology in the balance of capabilities or on the defender capacity to escalate. However, the potential rise of theater wide anti-access areal denial (A2AD) technologies

threatens to deny even the United States from continuous command of the commons required for projecting power over long distances.²⁵

Whether A2AD is currently, or will ever be effective in truly denying a powerful defender state is debated. Some argue that in a future conflict between near peers, the attacker and defender will both extend A2AD spheres creating no-go zones of “mutual denial” where neither state can achieve territorial gains.²⁶ If this view of dual denial comes to fruition, then conventional tripwire deterrence should still hold. In “mutual denial,” the defender still maintains the capacity to escalate by projecting power and engaging the attacker in an attritional fight between overlapping spheres of denial. In effect, the snap forward forces of the defender are its long-range air, space, missile, and subsurface systems denying the attacker state the required movement to capture the protégé. If theater wide A2AD technologies and strategies proliferate and asymmetrically favor the defense, there would likely be significant negative implications for tripwire deterrence.

Asymmetric A2AD favoring the defense would prevent the rapid reinforcement of the tripwire by forcing the defender state to first disrupt the A2AD capability. This is likely to be a costly and time intensive operation, and when considering a near peer, potentially prohibitively so.²⁷ If a near peer attacker does develop sufficient A2AD, it may perceive that it can force a defender to start a slow attritional fight far from the protégé preventing the required snap forward

²⁵ Stephen Biddle and Ivan Oelrich, “Future Warfare in the Western Pacific: Chinese Antiaccess/Area Denial, U.S. AirSea Battle, and Command of the Commons in East Asia,” *International Security* 41 no.1 (2016): 7-48; Posen, “Command of the Commons,” 5-46.

²⁶ Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth, “The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers in the Twenty-first Century: China’s Rise and the Fate of America’s Global Position,” *International Security* 40 no.3 (2015/16): 49-52; Biddle and Oelrich, “Future Warfare in the Western Pacific,” 9-15.

²⁷ For the challenges of projecting power against a rising China see: Evan Montgomery, “Contested Primacy in the Western Pacific: China’s Rise and the Future of U.S. Power Projection,” *International Security* 38 no.4 (2014) 115-149; also see, “Stay well back: Using clever technology to keep enemies at bay,” *The Economist* January 25, 2018.

force. However, A2AD technologies are unlikely to alter the predictions of tripwire deterrence with a significantly stronger defender. Again, when a defender is much stronger than an attacker, speed is not important when responding to an attack on the tripwire. A strong defender can take its time to disrupt the A2AD capability, even if costly, or exploit discovered weaknesses and build up its forces and project power back into the denied territory. Thus, if A2AD does fundamentally alter conventional conflict to favor the defense, then it likely undermines the tripwire strategy in near peer conflict but is unlikely to embolden weak attacker states.

7.3 Future Research

I lay out three paths for future research. The first is more research with different methodological approaches and empirical evidence to investigate the hand-tying mechanism associated with tripwires. Survey research could explore the reaction of the populace and analysis of policy makers' records may be able to shine light on their perceptions and implications of defender troops coming under attack. This research may establish if there is lower threshold of deaths that must be sustained to engage the hand-tying mechanism posited by the dissertation. The second vein is a test of effectiveness of tripwires versus other signaling devices in extended deterrence. The French case considered several alternative explanations that could theoretically explain deterrence outcomes, but does not attempt to compare effectiveness across different signaling means. Specifically, a test comparing shows of force that do not enter the conflict area versus deployment of defender military forces into the territorial confines of likely conflict may increase insight on the hand-tying versus sunk cost value of military deployments. Finally, the findings of conventional tripwire deterrence could be explored underneath the frame of nuclear competition. This dissertation selected cases based on no, or

one nuclear actor to isolate the competition in risk taking dynamics associated with nuclear crisis. However, the role of conventional tripwires may bring more clarity to how states act in nuclear crises as well. For example, did the dearth of Soviet capability to snap forward reinforcements to Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis inform the strategy of the United States? Or were decisions based purely on the risk of mutually assured destruction and brinksmanship?

If the theory presented in this dissertation is correct then policy makers should carefully consider the utility of a conventional tripwire. A tripwire when paired with the capacity to escalate is a credible and legible deterrent threat against conventional war. However, tripwires are of limited utility in deterring aggression below the threshold of war. Tripwires are also not cost free. Deploying forces forward risks suffering direct or indirect attacks with possible domestic ramifications. Furthermore, the principal cost of a tripwire comes in maintaining the capacity to escalate. When at near power parity, snap forward capability is expensive and must be developed over the course of years. Maintaining the future capability to project power into a near-peer's neighborhood is never assured and requires continued investment. Despite these challenges, tripwires offer policy makers a potent tool to strengthen deterrent threats against conventional war, which should lower the likelihood of territorial revision and increase regional stability.

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