



## Calhoun: The NPS Institutional Archive

---

Center on Contemporary Conflict

CCC-PASCC Research in Progress Ripsheets

---

2012-03

# Rationality, Culture, and Deterrence

Center on Contemporary Conflict

Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School

---

<http://hdl.handle.net/10945/24949>



Calhoun is a project of the Dudley Knox Library at NPS, furthering the precepts and goals of open government and government transparency. All information contained herein has been approved for release by the NPS Public Affairs Officer.

**Dudley Knox Library / Naval Postgraduate School  
411 Dyer Road / 1 University Circle  
Monterey, California USA 93943**

<http://www.nps.edu/library>



The Center on Contemporary Conflict has a respected track record for providing research and timely analysis on a variety of topics to leading decision makers in the U.S. national security community. Located in the Naval Postgraduate School, the CCC is the research wing of the Department of National Security Affairs.

The CCC's **Project on Advanced Systems and Concepts for Countering WMD** is a program planning and implementation office, research center, and intellectual clearinghouse for the execution of future-oriented studies and dialogues for the Defense Threat Reduction Agency.

*Research in Progress* describes ongoing PASCC research. For more information, please contact [ccc@nps.edu](mailto:ccc@nps.edu).



Published 1 March 2012

## Rationality, Culture, and Deterrence

Performer: NPS

Project Lead: Jeffrey W. Knopf

Project Cost: \$84,704

Fiscal Year(s): 2012-2013

### Demand:

Why does Tehran believe it needs nuclear weapons? How will China react to America's pivot toward Asia? Diplomats and defense analysts constantly calculate what drives a potential enemy's decision making. For decades, only two frameworks for interpreting state actions have dominated, the rational choice model and the cultural model. However, states are seemingly as unpredictable as ever and a new framework may be needed.

### Objective:

The project lead will explore alternative frameworks for understanding what drives the foreign policy decisions of states. The research will seek to identify and integrate different bodies of relevant existing scholarship and to assess the implications for deterrence planning and operations.

### Approach:

This academic effort will provide a review of the existing dominant approaches, and judge the strengths and weaknesses of their alternatives. Newly relevant psychological and neuroscience frameworks will receive special attention. A written paper summarizing the project lead's findings will be the prime deliverable, and briefings to various agencies and Combatant Commands will provide a more comprehensive approach to understanding decision making.

*NPS Center on Contemporary Conflict*