



Calhoun: The NPS Institutional Archive

Center on Contemporary Conflict

CCC-PASCC Research in Progress Ripsheets

2012

Coercive Nuclear Campaigns in the 21st Century: Understanding Adversary Incentives and Options for Nuclear Escalation

Center on Contemporary Conflict

Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School



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 PASC research. For more information, please contact ccc@nps.edu.



Coercive Nuclear Campaigns in the 21st Century: Understanding Adversary Incentives and Options for Nuclear Escalation

Performer: Georgetown University & Dartmouth College

Project Leads: Keir A. Lieber & Daryl G. Press

Project Cost: \$99,808

Fiscal Year(s): 2012-2013

Demand:

Since the Cold War's end, the United States has maintained a conventional force far superior to any potential enemy. This fact has driven adversaries to unconventional tactics, but what happens if a weaker adversary has nuclear capabilities? Coercive escalatory incentives for nuclear weapon use do exist for weaker adversaries in conflict with America. There is a need for a comprehensive understanding of the strategic alternatives of weak nuclear weapon states. In East Asia and the Middle East the United States faces related strategic predicaments, and thus this project will provide much needed analysis.

Objective:

The project leads will examine why and how regional powers armed with nuclear weapons may employ them coercively during a conventional war. More specifically, a set of research questions will provide insight on the paths of nuclear escalation, weak state strategies of coercive escalation, and the type of targets regional powers may strike to pursue escalatory strategies.

Approach:

The central deliverable will be a final written report and a set of briefing slides. The monograph will rely on a mining of literature on escalation during crises and wars, and analyze a set of research questions through two plausible conflict scenarios regarding American conflict with North Korea and an Indo-Pakistani war.

NPS Center on Contemporary Conflict