The Power of Deterrence

Why do actors persist in using force to enhance their deterrent posture, even though it is far from clear that it works? To answer this question, this book develops an innovative framework that views deterrence as an idea. This approach clarifies how countries institutionalize deterrence strategy, and how this internalization affects policy. The United States and Israel have both internalized deterrence ideas and become attached to these practices. For them, deterrence is not just a means to advance “physical” security, but it constitutes their very selves as deterring actors. As a result, being unable to deter becomes a threat to their identity, evoking strong emotional responses. This book, in recognizing these dynamics, provides a fresh perspective on the American war in Iraq (2003) and the Israeli war in Lebanon (2006), both of which can be seen as attempts to repair the respective state’s shaken sense of self.

Amir Lupovici is a senior lecturer in the Department of Political Science at Tel Aviv University. His research interests include constructivism, cyberspace, securitization, and deterrence. His previous publications have appeared in, among others, *International Studies Quarterly*, *Review of International Studies*, *International Studies Review*, and *Foreign Policy Analysis*. 
The Power of Deterrence

*Emotions, Identity, and American and Israeli Wars of Resolve*

Amir Lupovici

*Tel Aviv University*
For Michal and Boaz
## Contents

### Acknowledgments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Constitution of the Deterrer Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ontological Security, Deterrence, and the Use of Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The United States and the War on Terror</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Israel and the Lebanon War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### References

193

### Index

224
Living in Israel it is quite hard to ignore the discourse of deterrence. It is so prominent that even sport reporters often refer to how a team “enhanced its deterrent posture” after a victory, or, following a loss, saw its “deterrent posture eroded.” This clearly illustrates how attached Israel and the Israelis are to this strategy – many even obsessed with it. Constant references to deterrence made me intrigued as to how actors become attached to this strategy. In fact, I became obsessed myself with this strategy in studying it. I began working on deterrence more than a decade ago when I started my doctoral thesis at the Hebrew University, and since then have examined the issue on a number of projects. I also developed the somewhat odd instinct of looking for “deterrence” conjugations, basically in almost everything I read: articles, news, tweets, and even sports reports. The first thing I usually do after opening a new book is to search in the index for “deterrence.” I hope this project will help to free me from this habit – although I can think of more dangerous ones.

While I had been thinking of writing this book for a long time, the project only came to maturity in 2012. From the beginning it was clear to me that I wanted to contrast the Israeli practices of deterrence with the American ones, and particularly the war in Iraq (2003) with the Israeli war in Lebanon (2006) and its war with Hamas in the winter of 2008–9. However, since 2012 I have closely traced two additional meaningful episodes of violence between Israel and Hamas. Not only did I feel that these episodes needed to be addressed in the book, but these unfortunate events also allowed me to sharpen my arguments. This is because, overall, the level of violence between Israel and Hamas had increased from operation to operation. Although Israel aimed to deter Hamas and create a cumulative deterrent effect, Hamas not only increased the number of rockets it launched over Israel, but also increased their range, targeting more parts of the country. This was especially noticeable in the last round with Hamas in the summer of 2014. As I was finalizing the manuscript before the initial submission to the publisher, about 150 rockets targeted
Acknowledgments

Tel Aviv and the area, and people were often instructed to take shelter – sometimes more than a few times a day. While the situation in Gaza was much worse for the people there, it was somewhat ironic to be writing a book on the discourse and attachment to deterrence, consuming the declarations of senior Israeli officials about the deterrent effects of the actual use of force, and at the same time having to repeatedly halt the intellectual activity in order to go down to the shelter with my pregnant wife and my five-year-old daughter. There we met the neighbors and discussed with them, based on the sounds of the explosions, whether they were rockets or the intercepting missiles of Iron Dome, and how close they were. The declarations of senior Israeli officials about the deterrent effects of this operation would have been much more convincing if they hadn’t voiced the very same messages in the previous rounds of violence.

At the end of that summer I became even more determined to address this pattern of behavior of attachment to deterrence. Toward this aim I developed a theoretical framework that integrates strategic studies with scholarship on emotions and identity. I suggest that for some actors that have been attached to the practices of deterrence, inability to deter is not just about physical insecurity, but a threat to their very self – that is their ontological security – and it is therefore a very emotional situation they need to repair. In such situations, the internalization of the ideas and practices of deterrence is a powerful tool that affects the usage of force.

My attempt to take this book and specifically connect security studies, emotions, and identity could have not been fulfilled without the invaluable assistance I received from so many on this long road. My friends Nahshon Perez and Ilan Danjoux implanted in my mind the need to pursue this project. Others provided me with excellent feedback, suggestions, and advice on different parts of the manuscript, including on very preliminary drafts I presented over the years in different forums: Janice Stein, Brent Steele, Vincent Pouliot, Pertti Joenniemi, Mira Sucharov, Brent Sasley, Christopher Twomey, Galia Press-Barnathan, Tal Dingott Alkopher, Piki Ish-Shalom, Arie Kacowicz, Oren Barak, and Oded Löwenheim.

I am also thankful for the department of Political Science at Tel Aviv University, where I have found an intellectual home in recent years. I am fortunate to be part of it, and highly benefited from the extremely helpful suggestions, encouragement, and support I received from colleagues and friends. Especially, I would like to thank Azar Gat, Yossi Shain, Uriel Abulof, Udi Sommer, and Yael Shomer. I am also thankful for the generous financial support to complete this manuscript granted from the department.
x  Acknowledgments

I had also the pleasure of taking part in two fascinating workshops on ontological security: one workshop at Koç University in Istanbul organized by Bahar Rumelili exploring the connections between ontological security and peace anxieties; the second one at Lund University (Sweden) organized by Catarina Kinnvall and Jennifer Mitzen focusing on Ontological Security in World Politics. I deeply thank the organizers and all the participants for a stimulating learning experience. While I did not present this specific project on deterrence in these workshops, I received invaluable feedback and was able to clarify to myself what ontological (in)security means.

Another trip that enormously assisted this project was the few months I spent in CRIC (Centre for Resolution of International Conflicts) at the University of Copenhagen. Not only was it an extremely rewarding experience due to the hospitality of the people in Copenhagen and an energizing atmosphere that allowed me to significantly progress with writing the manuscript, but I received excellent feedback on different aspects of the work. Especially, I would like to thank Ole Wæver; and also Poul Poder; Karen Lund Petersen; Ulrik Pram Gad; Lene Hasen; Stefano Guzzini; and Anna Leander.

This book could not have been thought of without Emanuel Adler, whom I had the great honor of having as my PhD advisor. Emanuel opened for me the door to interpretative approaches and inspired my research in so many ways. However, it is not only his intellectual inspiration, knowledge, and curiosity that I am thankful for, but also his personality, care, and kindness. He has always been a great and solid source of encouragement and support.

I am also grateful to John Haslam from Cambridge University Press for seeing the merit in this project, for supporting it, and for thinking of excellent reviewers to evaluate the original manuscript. The two anonymous reviewers’ close reading, constructive and supportive feedback, and numerous extremely useful comments and suggestions reflected an impressive bulk of knowledge that I appreciate they were willing to share. Their feedback significantly assisted in clarifying and sharpening my arguments. Thinking about and engaging with their suggestions has been a stimulating learning and intellectual experience. In addition, Carrie Parkinson, Robert Judkins, Aishwariya Ravi, and Robert Swanson from Cambridge University Press provided much appreciated help during the production process.

Colette Stoeber was an excellent help with linguistic and copy editing, patiently helping me to understand what I want to argue and skillfully making the text clearer, more coherent, and accessible.
Acknowledgments

My parents – Hanna and Adi – have encouraged me through the years not only to ask questions, but also to find answers to them. From my first steps in academia until writing this book – I couldn’t have done it without them. They always have been a source of care, cheering, and support I could rely on. Gathering often on weekends in their house with my siblings, Alon and Rami, and Rami’s family was really refreshing and empowering, and I also owe Rami a big thanks for his patience and technical help whenever needed, especially when my computer crashed. I would also like to thank my mother-in-law Naomi Lindenstrauss for her kindness and support in so many ways and whenever needed. Her assistance was crucial to the completion of this manuscript.

And lastly, I thank my beloved wife, Gallia Lindenstrauss. Her critical eyes, wise suggestions, and unlimited support and encouragement made writing this book less daunting. Her contributions are evident in many parts of this book, and, while obviously less evident though nonetheless crucial, also in many other arguments she advised against. I am happy and proud to be her partner, and to share my life with her and with our children – Michal and Boaz. Seeing them growing so quickly, learning and experiencing the world, is a source of inspiration, joy, and excitement. I hope they will be able to live in a country that is not so obsessed with its deterrent posture. This book is dedicated to them.