

# Summaries

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## The Psychology of Nuclear Brinkmanship

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Conventional wisdom sees nuclear brinkmanship and Thomas Schelling's pathbreaking "threat that leaves something to chance" as a solution to the problem of agency in coercion. If leaders cannot credibly threaten to start a nuclear war, perhaps they can at least introduce uncertainty by signaling that the decision is out of their hands. It is not so easy to remove humans from crisis decision-making, however. Often in cases of nuclear brinkmanship, a human being retains a choice about whether to escalate. When two sides engage in rational decision-making, the chance of strategic nuclear exchange should be zero. Scholars have explained how risks associated with accidents, false warnings, and pre-delegation creep into nuclear crises. An investigation of how chance can still produce leverage while leaders retain a choice over whether and when to escalate adds to this scholarship. There remains an element of choice in chance. For a complete understanding of nuclear brinkmanship, psychology and emotion must be added to the analysis to explain how leaders make decisions under pressure. Human emotions can introduce chance into bargaining in ways that contradict the expectations of the rational cost-benefit assumptions that undergird deterrence theory. Three mechanisms of nuclear brinkmanship—accidents, self-control, and control of others—illustrate how a loss of control over the use of nuclear weapons is not a necessary element of the threat that leaves something to chance. Choice does not have to be eliminated for a risk of catastrophic destruction to remain.

52–94

## Social Cohesion and Community Displacement in Armed Conflict

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What are the origins of conflict-related population displacement? Why do some communities in conflict zones suffer mass casualties while others evade conflict violence? Whether civilians migrate before or after belligerent operations in their vicinity influences the scale of casualties and population displacement in war. "Preemptive evacuation" is a specific manifestation of forced displacement, in which whole communities leave their homes before

belligerents attempt to seize control in their local area. In conflicts involving strategic civilian-targeted violence, social cohesion, by promoting collective action, enhances communities' capabilities to mobilize collective migration, thereby increasing the likelihood of preemptive evacuation. An investigation of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War probes the plausibility of the theory. Detailed information about Arab Palestinian villages in the previously restricted Village Files is used to construct a village-level dataset, which measures social cohesion and other social, political, and economic characteristics. These documents and data provide crucial sources of evidence to researchers investigating Palestinian society and development, the origins of Israel's statehood, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Findings suggest that areas where communities lack social cohesion may suffer higher casualties from targeted violence, signaling a need for urgent diplomatic and humanitarian prevention or mitigation efforts.

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The Cult of the Persuasive: Why U.S. Security Assistance Fails

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Security assistance is a pillar of U.S. foreign policy and a ubiquitous feature of international relations. The record, however, is mixed at best. Security assistance is hard because recipient leaders are often motivated to implement policies that keep their militaries weak. The central challenge of security assistance, then, is influence. How does the United States aim to influence recipient leaders to improve their militaries, and what drives its approach? Influence in security assistance can be understood as an escalation ladder with four rungs: teaching, persuasion, conditionality, and direct command. Washington increasingly delegates security assistance to the Department of Defense, and the latter to the U.S. Army. U.S. Army advisers tend to rely exclusively on teaching and persuasion, even when recipient leaders routinely ignore their advice. The U.S. Army's preference for persuasion and aversion to conditionality in security assistance can be traced to its bureaucratic interests and to the ideology that it has developed—the cult of the persuasive—to advance those interests. A case study examines the bureaucratic drivers of the U.S. Army's persistent reliance on persuasion to influence Iraqi leaders to reform and strengthen the Iraqi Army. Qualitative analysis leverages over one hundred original interviews, as well as oral histories and recently declassified U.S. Central Command documents. The findings illustrate how the interests and ideologies of the military services tasked with implementing U.S. foreign policy can instead undermine it.

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Push and Pull on the Periphery: Inadvertent Expansion in World Politics

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Why do great powers engage in territorial expansion? Much of the existing literature views expansion as a largely intentional activity directed by the leaders of powerful states. Yet nearly 25 percent of important historical instances of great power expansion are initiated by actors on the periphery of the state or empire without authorization from their superiors at the center. Periphery-driven “inadvertent expansion” is most likely to occur when leaders in the capital have limited control over their agents on the periphery. Through their actions, peripheral agents effectively constrain leaders from withdrawing from these newly captured territories because of sunk costs, domestic political pressure, and national honor. When leaders in the capital expect geopolitical consequences from regional or other great powers, such as economic sanctions, militarized crises, or war, they are far less likely to authorize the territorial claims. A mixed-methods research strategy combines new quantitative data on great power territorial expansion with three qualitative case studies of successful (and failed) inadvertent expansion by Russia, Japan, and France. Inadvertent expansion has not completely gone away, particularly among smaller states, where government authority can be weak, control over states’ apparatuses can be loose, and civil-military relations can be challenging.

#### NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS

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