

# Coercion: A Credible and Capable United States Military Instrument of Power Key to Future US Foreign Policy Success (Defense)

Joint Forces Staff College

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To employ a successful foreign policy that protects United States (US) interests in the post-Cold War environment, US leadership will need to use a consistent, credible and capable military instrument of power to apply coercion. Recent attempts to coerce other nations to modify their behaviors or actions have met with mixed results, showing that simply having the largest or most powerful military force does not necessarily equal success. Coercion failures in Panama and Libya, as well as partial success in Bosnia and Kosovo, show senior military and political leaders could improve future efforts by applying lessons from prior coercion attempts. To back diplomacy with military force, US leaders must first determine the objectives and internally agree upon the coercive strategy using elements of power to employ. Next, they must communicate the desired objective clearly and consistently to the adversary without publicly limiting force options. Then threaten or apply chosen force options against the adversary to compel compliance. Only through consistent, credible and capable threats of force will the US achieve success in future coercion efforts.

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