

Red Lines in Coercive Nonproliferation

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Red Lines and Coercive Demands

- Every threat makes a demand
- Every demand sets a red line
 - Red lines divide compliance from noncompliance
 - Demands do not simplify to how much is demanded
- Five additional characteristics of red lines
 - Each of these poses a vulnerability
- These vulnerabilities provide openings for variants of the *fait accompli*
 - E.g., steps toward a nuclear arsenal



Vulnerable Red Lines Are

1. Imprecise
2. Arbitrary
3. Narrow
4. Unverifiable
5. Attributable



Vulnerable Red Lines Are

1. **Imprecise:** It is ambiguous whether or not potential adversary actions would violate it.
 - Tempts the adversary to concede the gray area rather than escalate
2. **Arbitrary:** It is little different from possible alternatives.
 - The problem of limited noncompliance
 - Ideal of all-or-nothing choices
 - Non-arbitrary demands rely on focal points



Vulnerable Red Lines Are

3. **Narrow:** the adversary can achieve the object of the demand while still complying with it.
 - Flanking strategies
4. **Unverifiable:** it will not be immediately known whether the adversary has violated the red line.
5. **Attributable:** it is clear that the adversary complied due to the threat, not for other reasons.
 - International reputation and the domestic audience
 - Strong incentives to make attributable demands



Iran

- Demand that Iran end its nuclear program
 - Imprecise: what is a nuclear program?
 - No adequate barrier against limited noncompliance
- Demand that Iran not build another centrifuge
 - Arbitrary: why there and not one more?
 - No adequate barrier against limited noncompliance
 - Tradeoff : Arbitrary or Imprecise
- Demand that Iran not build a nuclear weapon
 - Narrow: Allows HEU
 - Unverifiable: Difficult to detect if HEU has been weaponized
- Allowing Iran to keep a limited enrichment capability
 - Attributability



North Korea

- Demand that North Korea close Yongbyon
 - Narrow: What about uranium enrichment?
- Further demand that North Korea not enrich uranium
 - Tradeoff: Narrow or Unverifiable
- Further demand thorough inspections
- The Puzzle of the Nuclear Test Red Line
 - Extremely Narrow: Untested nuclear arsenals
 - But very strong on the other four dimensions



The Coercive Demands Checklist

1. Is it clear precisely what my demand does and does not include?
2. Does my demand set an arbitrary red line that is a little different from other possibilities?
3. Can my adversary achieve the object of my demand while still complying with it?
4. Will I know immediately if my adversary has complied with my demand?
5. If my adversary complies, will it be clear that he did so due to my demand?