

This chapter represents another of Mercer's case studies supporting his hypothesis that, since undesirable behavior tends to elicit dispositional attributions, it is that behavior—rather than “previous behavior”—which governs a decision-maker's explanation. (Using the events leading up to the Bosnia-Herzegovina Crisis, he also tries to test more rigorously for interdependence between decision-maker's beliefs and expectations during this crisis than was reasonably possible for the Moroccan Crisis).

***Because his evidence supports the hypothesis that undesirable behavior, rather than previous behavior, governs a decision-maker's explanation, commitments appear to be more independent than interdependent.

***Regardless, there is still enough interdependence between commitments to support his four propositions outlined in chapter two concerning when reputations for resolve can form: namely, adversaries can get reputations for having resolve, but rarely for lacking it; allies can get reputations for lacking resolve, but rarely for having it.

Perceptions during the Crisis—

Because the Germans yielded at Algeciras, the deterrence argument expects everyone to view the Germans as irresolute and likely to yield again. Mercer argues, however, that observers can only use past behavior which elicited dispositional attributions to predict behavior. Once the German's defeat at Algeciras is explained in situational terms, the Germans should no longer be viewed as irresolute.

German Perceptions:

Three lessons from their Algeciras defeat—1) Germany had a reputation for lacking resolve and other states would seek to exploit it; 2) Germany was alone in the world except for Austria and so Vienna must be supported; 3) Germany should avoid conferences when in the minority.

***Mercer concludes that German views of Austria illustrate his proposition that while allies rarely get reputations for having resolve, they can get reputations for lacking resolve.

French Perceptions:

French policy shows that, rather than assuming Germany to be solely irresolute, the French feared being dragged into an Anglo-German or Balkan war. Even though Clemenceau's views of German irresolution help confirm a tenet of deterrence theory, French policy, in general, seems more supportive of Mercer's dispositional argument. “It appears that only one French policy-maker held this view of only one German decision-maker, and it did not govern French policy.”

British Perceptions:

Holstein's fear and deterrence's expectation that the earlier German retreat would result in a British perception of German irresolution were wrong. The British learned a critical lesson from Algeciras: the Germans are aggressive and should not be trusted. The British, according to Mercer's evidence, clearly thought the Germans resolute and aggressive. This

illustrates the proposition that while adversaries rarely get reputations for lacking resolve, they can get reputations for having resolve.

Austrian and Russian Perceptions:

Because the Austrians and Russians did not have much involvement with the first Moroccan Crisis, this earlier crisis did not play a prominent role in their thinking during the Bosnian Crisis. For Russia, the revolutionary disturbances of 1905-1907 were a continuing concern and offered a compelling reason to avoid war. They never doubted Austrian or German resolve but did doubt French resolve, holding the French partially responsible for their defeat.

***British explanations of German behavior illustrate how dispositional attributions can be interdependent, continually highlighting aggressive German challenges. Rather than thinking them irresolute, the British assumed Germans were determined to avenge Algeciras and smash the Entente. While the British also stressed Russian irresolution, both Russia and Britain viewed the Dual Powers as dangerous: the longer a state's behavior is viewed as undesirable, the more easily a reputation will form. Similarly, because the Germans and Austrians used situational attributions to explain the Russians' Bosnian capitulation, they could not give the Russians a reputation for lacking resolve.

***Allies can get reputations for lacking resolve, but rarely get reputations for having resolve: 1) The British objected to the Russian capitulation and viewed them as irresolute. 2) Neither Vienna nor Berlin credited the other for being resolute in their Bosnian victory. 3) Neither Paris nor London gave the other credit for being resolute in their Algeciras victory. Decision-makers explained away their ally's desirable behavior.