The idea for this book was conceived at the 1982 annual meeting of the International Political Psychology Association, held in Washington, D.C. At the invitation of Ralph White, Robert Jervis organized and chaired a panel on psychology and deterrence. Papers were presented by Henning Behrens, Richard Ned Lebow, Patrick Morgan, Jack Snyder, and Janice Gross Stein. George Quester and Silvan Tompkins served as discussants.

As sometimes happens, the panelists found themselves in agreement with respect to a number of key questions, among them the need to evaluate the psychological underpinnings of deterrence and to do this by marshaling evidence from empirical case studies. The panelists also discovered that their papers were to a great extent complementary. These realizations led to the decision to revise or even to rewrite the papers with a view to publishing them as a book. *Psychology and Deterrence*, the result of this collective effort, represents an attempt to use history to shed light upon the most fundamental assumptions of deterrence theory and to test their validity in a broad variety of geographical, cultural, and temporal circumstances. This is not the first time historical case studies have been employed to study deterrence; Alexander George and Richard Smoke, Glenn Snyder and Paul Diesing, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein have all carried out research of this kind. We make every effort to build upon their findings.

What distinguishes our effort from its predecessors is the common attempt by the several co-authors and contributors to draw on
propositions and concepts from major areas of psychology in order to understand how deterrence works—or fails to work—in practice. We have chosen this approach because deterrence is fundamentally a psychological theory. It is based on a series of “hidden” assumptions about the relationship between power and aggression, threat and response, and the ability of leaders to influence the calculations and behavior of their would-be adversaries. Until recently, these assumptions had to be accepted or rejected as matters of faith as there was little evidence that could be mustered in support of or opposition to them. This is no longer true. A growing corpus of empirical research, to which the case studies in this volume make a significant contribution, permits us to evaluate the psychological underpinnings of deterrence and to conceptualize about them in a more sophisticated manner. Needless to say, insights of this kind have important policy implications.

Chapter 1, by Robert Jervis, discusses the need to treat the theory and practice of deterrence not as a deductive model based on the assumption that people are highly rational, but inductively, by looking at historical cases in some detail and by applying perspectives of cognitive psychology. The cognitive approach is valuable, Jervis argues, because the ways in which states actually behave present many puzzles for deterrence theory, some of which can be explained by taking into account the process by which statesmen respond to information and reach decisions. In the next chapter, Jervis applies some of the ideas and findings of psychology to a problem that classical deterrence theory puts to one side: just how decision makers decide that others are a threat to their vital interests and need to be deterred. He finds that a number of important biases are at work in this process and lead to systematic perceptual errors.

The next two chapters, by Janice Gross Stein, explore Egypt’s decisions to use force from 1969 to 1973 and Israel’s attempts to dissuade Egypt from doing so. They draw on recent psychological research to demonstrate how both challengers and defenders behave in ways that contradict some of the most important assumptions of deterrence theory. Stein argues that the explanation for much of this behavior can be found in policy makers’ proclivity to distort reality in order to make it consonant with their personal, institutional, and political needs. She demonstrates how such a process influenced Egyptian and Israeli behavior and was responsible for serious misjudgments in both countries.

The following chapter, Richard Ned Lebow’s analysis of the origins of the Falklands-Malvinas War, attributes it to two serious and mutually reinforcing misjudgments. These were the belief in
London that Argentina would not invade the contested islands and the expectation in Buenos Aires that Britain would accommodate itself to their military “liberation.” He makes the case that both misjudgments can be explained by reference to many of the same kinds of cognitive and motivational biases that Stein found to have been important in Egyptian and Israeli policy making in 1973.

Chapter 6, by Patrick M. Morgan, represents an imaginative effort to explain the well-documented U.S. fixation with demonstrating resolve in terms of psychological principles. Morgan argues that it derives from what he calls the “paradox of credibility.” Leaders of nuclear powers are uncertain as to how they would respond to a major challenge by another nuclear power because of the suicidal nature of nuclear war. As a result, they become more disposed to uphold lesser commitments because these are the only ones in defense of which they can safely fight. By doing so, they seek a reputation for resolve in the hope that it will discourage challenges of more important commitments. A concern for reputation, Morgan argues, may be less a rational extension of the art of commitment than it is an effort by policy makers to hide their insecurity over what to do if their most vital interests are challenged.

Jack L. Snyder’s contribution explores another aspect of the deterrence dilemma: the ways in which deterrence policies can intensify adversarial feelings of insecurity and thereby elicit the very behavior they seek to prevent. Snyder attempts to explain the outbreak of World War I in terms of such a cycle of action and reaction. In doing so, he employs the concept of the security dilemma and describes three different kinds of security dilemmas that he believes were operative in the years before 1914. Snyder also discusses some of the policy implications of the 1914 experience for contemporary international relations.

This theme is further explored in Richard Ned Lebow’s subsequent essay on ways out of the deterrence deadlock. His premise is that deterrence fails to address what may be the most common cause of aggression; this is the perceived need to pursue a confrontational foreign policy because of weakness at home or abroad. He proposes a policy of “reassurance” to address this problem and offers it as an alternative or parallel strategy of conflict management. The chapter also explores some of the implications of reassurance for Soviet-U.S. relations.

The conclusion, also the work of Lebow, pulls together the findings of the individual chapters in the form of a critique of deterrence both as a theory of international relations and as a strategy of conflict management. It attempts to explain much of the observed
variance from the predictions of deterrence theory in terms of various psychological processes. In doing so, it demonstrates the utility of psychological insights for the study of international relations.

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Two of the chapters have already appeared in the form of articles, and are used with the kind permission of the editors of the journals concerned: Chapter 5, "Miscalculation in the South Atlantic: The Origins of the Falklands War," was published in *The Journal of Strategic Studies* (1983); Chapter 8, "The Deterrence Deadlock: Is There a Way Out?" was published in *Political Psychology* (1983).

The two-year collaboration among the co-authors and contributors was profitable for all of us above and beyond the product it resulted in. We established much closer personal and intellectual relationships from which we, Empire Airlines, and various telephone companies continue to benefit.

Ned Lebow