

## Alternative Deterrence in Modern Great Power Competition

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### Abstract

This paper examines the application of traditional deterrence theory, including deterrence by denial and deterrence by punishment, to Russia's strategy of New Generation Warfare. It considers steps taken by the United States and NATO to deter Russian military threats to Europe and how those are inadequate and should be further augmented. The paper further examines Russia's conduct of New Generation Warfare and cross-domain coercion to establish an understanding of the types of activity requiring deterrence and the domains in which that deterrent should reside. The paper then discusses recommendations, both concrete and abstract, for employing deterrence in the current paradigm. Finally, the paper briefly examines risks associated with these deterrent steps and methods for risk mitigation.

## **Alternative Deterrence in Modern Great Power Competition**

The United States (U.S.) and its allies are engaged in a struggle with the Russian Federation reminiscent of the Cold War. Russia has invaded neighboring countries, violated treaties, interfered in the election processes of the United States and other nations, supported a brutal dictator in Syria, and assisted in his campaign that has killed thousands of civilians, murdered political opponents at home and on foreign soil, resumed provocative long range aviation, naval, and submarine patrols, aggressively buzzed NATO ships and aircraft, and has recklessly boasted about Russia's low threshold for the use of nuclear weapons. Russian President Vladimir Putin has declared on numerous occasions, the most recent in an *Interfax* interview on March 2, 2018, that the one thing he regrets most in history is the breakup of the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> Simply put, President Putin is determined to reverse Russia's course as a declining former superpower, and he sees his ambition realized only through dismantling the current international order, the diminution of the United States and the disintegration of NATO.

The period immediately following the end of the Cold War saw the United States basking in the glow of the "unipolar moment." In all elements of national power, military, diplomatic, economic and informational, the United States was unmatched. Its archenemy since the end of World War II, the Soviet Union had broken up into 15 separate countries and was undergoing momentous turbulence and change as those countries struggled to establish civil societies and political and economic structures. Russia, the largest and most populated of the former Soviet Republics, retained the bulk of the military and the economic potential of the Soviet Union. Once Ukraine agreed to the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, relinquishing their nuclear weapons in return for

security guarantees from Russia, the United States and the United Kingdom, Russia remained the only former Soviet Republic with a nuclear arsenal.<sup>2</sup> However, the general consensus was that Russia, with assistance from the West, could become, at best, a partner and export market for manufactured goods and, at worst, a benign and marginalized power.

Less than a quarter of a century on and Russia is one of the five primary challenges facing the United States.<sup>3</sup> Though strapped with economic and demographic difficulties and considered a nation in irreversible decline by many experts, Russia is challenging the United States and its allies around the world as President Putin seeks to reestablish Russia's sphere of influence and reclaim great power status.<sup>4</sup> As part of this reassertion of regional influence, Russia's military spending has increased every year since 1998.<sup>5</sup> They employed economic coercion in Ukraine during the Orange Revolution by cutting off gas supplies over the 2004-2005 Winter and they used coercive force to redraw Europe's boundaries by invading Georgia in 2008. However, it was the occupation and annexation of Crimea in 2014, followed by the invasion of the Donbas and support to separatist rebels in Ukraine that finally spurred the West to action.

In the aftermath of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and invasion and support of separatist rebels in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions of eastern Ukraine, the United States and allies took several steps to punish Russian aggression and deter any future Russian use of force, specifically against NATO Allies. These deterrent steps, while a good start towards preventing overt Russian military action against NATO Allies, are wholly inadequate to address Russia's application of their strategy of New

Generation Warfare. The United States, in concert with allies and partners, must develop new methods of deterrence, both by denial and by punishment, in order to contain Russian ambitions as they continue their malign campaign of competition just below the threshold of conflict. These methods of deterrence, differing and apart from the classic deterrence paradigms of conventional force and nuclear force deterrence, must be employable in the realms in which Russia is currently taking aggressive actions.

This paper will briefly examine classic deterrence theory to determine a framework for the development of alternative deterrence strategies. Next, it will consider the steps towards deterrence and compellence that the United States and partners have taken in the wake of Russia's actions and discuss why those steps are not adequately effective and what immediate additional steps to take to enhance traditional deterrence. From this point, the paper will explore Russia's concept of New Generation Warfare and how they are employing it in cross-domain coercion.<sup>6</sup> Following that, the paper will offer concepts for alternative deterrence and some concrete examples that should be employed to deter Russia from malign actions below the level of open conflict. Finally, the paper will examine the risks and counter arguments to further deterrence measures and how the risks are manageable.

### Deterrence Theory

Deterrence, broadly defined, is persuading an adversary to not do something they may be inclined to do because the perceived benefits of that action are outweighed by the costs of the action and the risks against successful achievement of the objective.<sup>7</sup> Put another way, deterrence is achieved "when an attacker believes that his probability of success is low and the attendant costs will be high."<sup>8</sup> This definition

illuminates the two main types of deterrence that are generally discussed, that of deterrence by denial and deterrence by punishment. Deterrence by denial is generally considered defensive in nature. This deterrence takes the form of actions to harden targets or put in place such a robust defense that the successful accomplishment of the objectives of an attack are in doubt. In this way, the anticipated cost of an attack is outweighed by the potential benefits because the receipt of those benefits is in doubt or denied.

Deterrence by punishment is deterrence that punishes an aggressor after they have acted in an undesirable manner. It is more offensive in intent, in that the status quo power (the one not initiating the hostile act) will retaliate to punish the aggressor to a degree that anything gained by the aggression is outweighed by the losses incurred due to the punishment. Like deterrence by denial, deterrence by punishment entails a cost benefit analysis by the aggressor to determine if the potential benefits of an action outweigh the likely costs.

Deterrence by punishment, and deterrence by denial to a lesser extent, requires the deterrer to determine something of critical value to the aggressor and to possess the capability and willingness to put that thing at risk.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the potential punishment meted out for the transgression has value only if the aggressor genuinely cares about what that punishment can accomplish. In nuclear deterrence theory, population centers were often considered these types of targets. In deterring cross domain coercion, the status quo power must identify and put at risk something of value commensurate with the damage caused by the aggressor's actions. In other words, the United States would

lack credibility if its stated “deterrence by punishment” actions were to destroy the entire Russian electricity grid in response to the theft of John Podesta’s emails.

When determining the application of deterrents, the status quo power must determine the costs and effectiveness of denial based deterrents as opposed to punishment based deterrents. An effective deterrent formula will likely have a mixture of both and leaders are left with the choice of how to invest the resources available to achieve effective deterrence.

Both methods of deterrence are based on three core premises at the heart of deterrence theory: the deterrer must have sufficient capability to threaten the aggressor; the threat of use of the capability must be credible; and the status quo power must be clear in communicating the threat to its adversary.<sup>10</sup>

A key assumption of deterrence theory is that the party to be deterred, the aggressor, is a rational actor. As previously noted in applying deterrence, the aggressor is assumed to conduct a cost benefit analysis to determine if the cost of a given course of action are appropriately outweighed by the likely benefits of that course of action. Logically, if the costs exceed the benefits then the aggressor will be deterred.<sup>11</sup> This “rational actor” assumption lends an additional level of complexity to deterrence in that it assumes that the deterrer has perfect insight into the motivations of the potential aggressor and therefore can sufficiently determine the right amount of deterrence to prevent conflict, while not applying too much deterrence that could spark conflict.

Finally, it is critically important not to conflate deterrence with compellence. As stated, deterrence is about creating an inducement wherein the aggressor chooses not to act because the costs would be too high. Compellence, on the other hand, is about

persuading an adversary to relinquish or undo that which has already been done.<sup>12</sup> It is generally more difficult to achieve than deterrence in that the adversary must be forced to “back down” and write off whatever costs were associated with achieving his objective in the first place. However, unlike deterrence, compellence is much more easily assessed. Assessing successful deterrence requires perfect knowledge of an adversary’s intent and calculus because it is counterfactual because one must essentially prove a negative (A soldier’s adversary would have attacked had the soldier not taken the deterrence steps; therefore, the soldier successfully deterred his adversary’s actions.). Assessing compellence is, however, more straightforward. The object of compellence efforts either acquiesces to the demands, often accompanied by unacceptable levels of pain, or maintains his course. An example of successful compellence in the First Gulf War in 1991 when Iraq was compelled to abandon their conquest of Kuwait in the face of military assault and political and economic isolation by the successful coalition.

#### Deterrence and Compellence So Far

Immediately following Russia’s aggression in Crimea and subsequent actions in support of separatists in eastern Ukraine, the United States, the EU and other international partners imposed multiple sanction regimes on Russia. These sanctions were imposed to compel Russia to withdraw from Ukrainian territory, suspend support to separatists and comply with the Minsk series of agreements negotiated between the governments of Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany. Additionally, the United States and partners embarked on a program to rapidly train and equip the Ukrainian military. The purpose of this action was to deter future aggression by the Russians by ensuring the Ukrainians could impose costs on Russia and deny Russia the ability to easily

achieve military objectives. Over the intervening four years, Russia, through the separatist proxies, has varied the level of conflict in Ukraine to influence the politicians and populace to accept Russian regional hegemony and political influence in Ukraine. As a result, the United States has increased assistance to enhance both capability and capacity of the Ukrainian military, culminating in President Trump's recent approval of lethal defensive aid.

Russia's actions in Ukraine revealed to NATO members, specifically those in Eastern Europe most vulnerable to Russian malign actions, the extent to which Russia was determined to reassert her influence. In June 2014, in an effort to reassure vulnerable allies, President Obama announced the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) and earmarked \$985 million in contingency funds for the defense related expenditures in Europe. Funding for ERI (recently renamed the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI)) has continued every year with a total of nearly \$10 billion requested through FY18.<sup>13</sup> The initiative has funded new bilateral and multilateral military exercises and greater deployments of U.S. forces to the continent, supported by the placement of more U.S. military equipment, including artillery, tanks, and other armored fighting vehicles, in central and eastern Europe. These moves not only are increasing U.S. combat readiness, but also will save the country millions of dollars relative to what it would have cost to repeatedly send similar assets to Europe. Additionally, the funds have provided critical infrastructure improvements essential for the rapid deployment of forces and equipment to the continent and equally rapid movement of forces within the continent.<sup>14</sup> Critically and most visibly, the United States has deployed a rotational armored brigade combat team (ABCT) and a combat aviation brigade (CAB) to Eastern

Europe to augment the Stryker brigade combat team (SBCT), partial strength CAB and partial strength airborne infantry brigade combat team (IBCT) permanently assigned in Europe. These rotational forces, forward deployed into Poland, the Baltics, Romania and Bulgaria, provide a tangible sign of the commitment of the United States to European security.

At NATO's Wales Summit in September, 2014, the Alliance committed to concrete steps to assure vulnerable Allies. This was followed up by commitments at the NATO Warsaw Summit in July 2016 to take actions to strengthen NATO's ability to respond to crises and deter Russian military advances. To achieve these aims, NATO put in place the Readiness Action Plan. This plan increased the size and scope of NATO exercises and stepped up air policing efforts in the Baltics and Black Sea regions. NATO also developed the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). The VJTF is a fully equipped and enabled brigade sized element (in excess of 5000 troops) ready to deploy anywhere in Europe with a 48-hour notice to move. As part of this effort, NATO also expanded the NATO Response Force (NRF) to over 40,000 troops.<sup>15</sup> NATO increased the number of operational headquarters to enable rapid expansion of force structure and emplaced NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU) in vulnerable nations to assist in the integration of deploying NATO units with host nation forces. Most recently, NATO stood up the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) multinational battlegroups in the Baltics and Poland. These battlegroups provide multinational forces close to the border with Russia to closely integrate with host nation forces and blunt an initial Russian attack.

In a relatively short period of time, the capability and capacity of US and NATO forces in Europe has significantly increased. In late March 2013 the last U.S. tanks left Germany and shortly thereafter unit deactivations cut the Army strength in Europe to around 30,000 Soldiers.<sup>16</sup> Defense budgets, in both North America and across Europe, were in decline, and NATO's relevance was being questioned. Now, four years later, rotational armored formations are along the Russian and Belarussian borders and NATO defense spending has increased for three consecutive years, adding approximately \$46 billion to military budgets.<sup>17</sup> In his March 8, 2018 testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, Commander of European Command (EUCOM) General Curtis Scaparrotti stated that, "Our highest strategic priority as a Combatant Command is to deter Russia from engaging in further aggression and exercising malign influence over our allies and partners."<sup>18</sup>

#### Current Inadequacies and Traditional Deterrence Steps

These steps, however, are inadequate to deter an irredentist Russia determined to expand territorially and reestablish a geographic buffer to protect the core Russian state. The economic sanctions put in place in 2014 were initially effective as Russia scrambled to adjust. However, Russia was able to use their reserve fund of nearly \$90 billion, amassed during periods of high oil and gas prices, to mitigate some of the budget shortfalls associated with the dual impact of sanctions and lower oil prices.<sup>19</sup> In June 2014 oil prices for Brent crude hit a high of \$112/bbl, falling sharply to less than \$31/bbl by January of 2016.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, Russia rapidly adjusted their budget planning from a \$93/bbl basis in 2014<sup>21</sup> to a \$50/bbl basis in 2016<sup>22</sup> and a \$40/bbl basis since 2017.<sup>23</sup> Oil prices, however, have been above \$50/bbl since April, 2016.<sup>24</sup> As a result, after reaching a high of deficit spending of 3.5% of GDP in 2015, Russia is

forecasted to deficit spend at about 1.6% of GDP for 2018.<sup>25</sup> Simply put, though Russia's economy is not strong, the economic levers employed against Russia are not adequately effective.

In terms of military deterrence on the European Continent, according to a 2016 RAND study, given the current correlation of forces in Europe, Russia could rapidly gain regional overmatch and capture any of the Baltic States with 60 hours, effectively presenting NATO with a *fait accompli* that would be extremely costly to undue at a speed that NATO cannot match.<sup>26</sup> Any NATO hesitation to enter in to direct conflict with Russia to free a Baltic ally, thus putting every NATO member at risk of Russian attack, would cripple the Alliance and completely alter European security. Further, a recent study by Dr. John Deni of the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute found that it costs approximately \$135 million more annually to rotate an ABCT to Europe than it would cost to permanently station one there. Furthermore, the study looked not only at financial costs, but also at more nuanced costs such as retention rates, training readiness, partner interoperability and effective deterrence, and found the rotational model wanting.<sup>27</sup> Though not the subject of this paper, the United States and NATO Allies should strongly consider an increase in both capability and capacity on the continent to achieve effective military deterrence, in both the conventional and nuclear forces.

#### Gerasimov's New Generation Warfare

Russia plans to invest \$46 billion in 2018 on defense spending.<sup>28</sup> By comparison, the United States plans to spend \$700 billion on defense in 2018.<sup>29</sup> Granted, the United States has extensive global requirements and the assets that money will buy are not solely focused on the Russian threat. NATO countries, not including the United States,

collectively spent \$254 billion on defense in 2016.<sup>30</sup> These numbers are meant only to demonstrate that Russia cannot realistically believe that it can defeat NATO in a drawn out, fully engaged conventional military conflict. President Putin also knows that he cannot militarily challenge the United States around globe as he attempts to reassert Russian influence. Russia is employing an economy of force strategy that looks to emplace the best available capabilities against appropriate objectives. Simply stated, Vladimir Putin is employing all elements of national power--military, diplomatic, economic, and informational--in a whole of nation approach in order to achieve his objectives. Aside from simple military aggression, Russia is effectively using the other elements in an aggressive and malign manner to achieve effects that may rival successful military operations, but at a level below that considered open conflict. Dmitry Adamsky coined the term “cross-domain coercion” to describe this trend in Russian coercive activities.<sup>31</sup> He maintains that Russia practices coercion “by merging military and non-military forms of influence across nuclear, conventional and informational (cyber) domains.”<sup>32</sup>

Chief of the Russian General Staff, Valery Gerasimov, first wrote about this “New Generation Warfare” in the Military-Industrial Courier in February, 2013.<sup>33</sup> In it, Gerasimov maintains that the character of war is changing and that the concept of “War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will” is just as true even if overt military force is not required.<sup>34</sup> He sees conflict to achieve an objective as existing across a spectrum or continuum that highlights non-military coercion. He argues that this methodology has been at the heart of the West’s attempts to change regimes in the spate of “Color Revolutions.” Gerasimov illustrates methods the West has employed

where non-military means are employed four times as frequently as military means to achieve an objective (Figure 1).<sup>35</sup> Ultimately, he concludes that Russia must learn to practice this sort of coercive strategy across all domains to compete with the West, and the United States in particular.

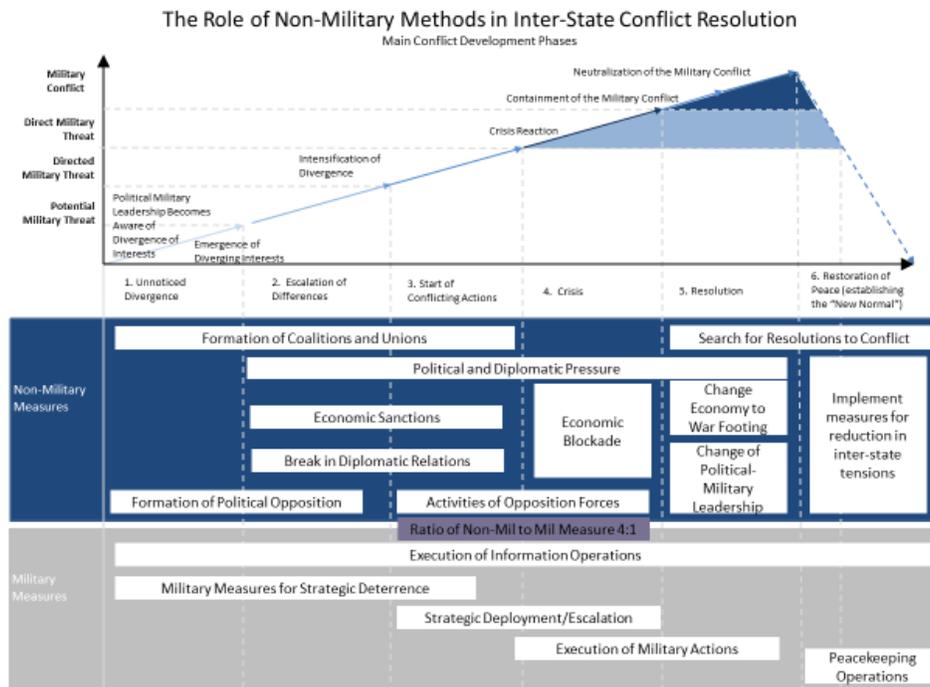


Figure 1. Gerasimov’s Representation of the Spectrum of Conflict and the Importance of Non-Military Means to Achieve Objectives<sup>36</sup>

The elements of this strategy are obvious to even the most casual observer. Beginning February 28, 2014, Russia utilized deniable forces, “Little Green Men,” to occupy government buildings in Crimea and further discredit a government in Kiev already in disarray.<sup>37</sup> Russia vehemently denied that any Russian personnel were in Crimea, aside from those military forces stationed there on bases leased from Ukraine. It was not until mid-April 2014, after Crimea’s annexation was complete, that Putin admitted they used military forces to occupy Crimea.<sup>38</sup> Russia employed disinformation

campaigns to sow doubt as to their involvement not only in that operation, but in the civil war in Donbas as well.

Russia intervened in the Syrian Civil War in 2016 when Assad's forces were on the brink of defeat. Russia has used primarily air power and long range missile strikes in support of Syrian and Iranian ground forces to achieve a permanent presence at Tartus in the Eastern Mediterranean. Their actions have ensured that a regional ally remains in power, from whose territory Russia can influence both Southeastern Europe and the Middle East. Though Russia employed military forces in this effort, the bulk of the "heavy lifting" on the ground was accomplished by Syrian and Iranian forces and militias.

Russia has repeatedly used economic coercion against Georgia, banning the import of Georgian wine; against Ukraine, cutting off gas supplies to gain concessions; and against Moldova, also banning the import of Moldovan wine. Further, Russia has manipulated gas prices to combat attempts to diversify European energy markets, prompting the European Union to adopt the "Third Package" unbundling energy suppliers from transport network operators to fight Russia's monopoly on supplying gas.<sup>39</sup>

It is, however, in the political and informational realm where Russia seems to be most active and most effective. Russia actively supports nationalist and populist parties across Europe, including the National Front in France, Jobbik in Hungary, the Freedom Party in Austria and many others. The ideological differences among these parties indicate that Russia's primary intent is to sow discord into European politics, weakening European unity.<sup>40</sup>

In a move meant to weaken NATO and continue destabilizing actions in the Balkans, Russia orchestrated an attempted coup in Montenegro in 2016. This coup, coinciding with Montenegro's election, would have likely led to a delay or stoppage of Montenegro's efforts to join NATO.<sup>41</sup>

In another step against NATO, Russia has used political discord between Turkey and many of her NATO Allies as an opportunity to sow additional discontent. Turkey's disagreements with EU nations over membership accession, ongoing conflict with Greece over Cyprus and territorial disputes, and, most recently, U.S. support for Kurdish fighters in Syria, have allowed President Erdogan to use the prospect of a strengthening Russian-Turkish relationship to his advantage. To wit, Turkey has recently signed a deal with Russia to purchase S-400 air defense systems. These systems, though very capable, are completely incompatible with NATO IADS and the acquisition of these systems is antithetical to NATO's weapons system acquisition goals. Gaining positive influence over Turkey will not only allow Russia to weaken NATO, but also give Russia a tremendous edge in further domination of the Black Sea.

Most recently, in March 2018, Russia is strongly suspected of carrying out a nerve agent attack on a former GRU officer convicted of espionage for the U.K. Sergey Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, were attacked in Salisbury, England, by a sophisticated nerve agent believed to be possessed only by Russia. The nerve agent also severely sickened a police officer responding to the scene. This attack follows the assassination by radiation poisoning of another Putin enemy, Alexander Litvinenko, in London in 2006. These brazen attacks are meant to send messages to Russia's enemies that Russia will

operate well outside of accepted international norms and believes they can do so with impunity.

Most disconcertingly to Americans, U.S. intelligence agencies have concluded, with a high degree of confidence, that Russia used social media platforms, cyberattacks, state owned media enterprises and third parties to influence the 2016 U.S. elections. The conclusion determined that this operation was likely ordered by President Putin with the intent to undermine confidence in the electoral process, denigrate Hillary Clinton and harm her likely future presidency.<sup>42</sup> The United States is not alone in Russian attempts to undermine the political process. According to a report by the Alliance for Securing Democracy, Russia has meddled in the internal political affairs of at least 27 countries since 2004. These attempts started with ham-handed tactics, primarily in former Soviet Republics and progressed to the sophisticated efforts seen in the United States, Germany, Canada and the U.K., amongst others.<sup>43</sup>

Aside from their efforts to undermine democracy in the United States, recent findings indicate that Russia has attempted to deepen the schisms within society by creating false and inflammatory narratives on social media networks. These findings include evidence that Russia attempted to capitalize on the unrest caused by the Neo-Nazi protests in Charlottesville, Virginia; the election of President Trump; and the recent school shootings in Parkland, Florida.<sup>44</sup> Russian social media and web presence are actively seeking to destabilize America from within.

Though the United States and its allies have taken steps to deter Russia militarily in Europe, they have not taken adequate steps to deter Russia's malign actions across the other elements of national power. The United States has the capability and indicates

that it has the proof for attribution but has chosen not to act publicly in retribution to deter in the form of punishment. If the United States has responded, those activities have primarily been clandestine in nature. Though there is certainly an argument for not revealing the full measure of allied capabilities, the undisclosed nature of any response limits its deterrence value and allows Putin to portray to the Russian people that the United States lacks the resolve to respond. Ultimately, this not only strengthens Putin domestically, but it also weakens the United States in the eyes of its allies.

There are valid concerns regarding deterrent responses outside traditional domains. One of the most controversial steps are those of offensive cyber operations. The United States and a few allies have recently stepped up efforts to establish both capability and clarity in intent with respect to cyber deterrence. However, the West's fear of destabilizing escalatory counter attacks and unclear policies regarding offensive cyber seem to hobble the implementation of these capabilities.<sup>45</sup> From the Russian perspective, it seems as if the United States and its allies are self-detering--or as if Russia has succeeded in deterring them.

The concept of self-deterrence is essentially based on the premise that a nation chooses to deter itself from acting even though it possesses the capability to do so.<sup>46</sup> Self-deterrence is generally rooted in nuclear deterrence doctrine, but the concepts can be adapted to the current situation. Russia's stated strategy of "escalate to de-escalate," the brazenness of their nefarious actions and their penchant for nuclear saber rattling creates an environment where the United States is reluctant to employ deterrence by punishment because it believes that Russia is willing to out escalate, or that they are more willing to "pay the costs" to achieve their objectives. It is important to note,

however, a quote from a previous Vladimir who led Russia. Vladimir Lenin, when discussing how to move an effort forward, said, “Probe with a bayonet; if you meet steel, stop! If you meet mush, then push.”<sup>47</sup> The United States and its allies must present steel, not just on the plains of Central and Eastern Europe, but also across all the domains of competition where Russia seeks to harm their interests.

#### Applying Deterrence Theory to New Generation Warfare

The same concepts of traditional deterrence hold true when applied against today’s Russia challenge. The United States and allies must pursue both deterrence by denial and deterrence by punishment strategies for an effective and comprehensive approach to dissuade Russia from actions harmful to their interests. The United States is already practicing some deterrence by denial activities, but it must increase its efforts to build and maintain sensitive systems from Russian attack.

A recent Center for Strategic and International Studies report discusses some methods for defense. The report stresses that “the U.S. government must act urgently to secure our most sensitive infrastructure from direct interference.”<sup>48</sup> President Trump’s infrastructure initiative seems primarily focused on the nation’s physical infrastructure and it is, indeed, in need of attention. However, the criticality of the technological infrastructure, the power grid security, and the sanctity of the electoral processes demand the focus of infrastructure investment separate from repairing roads and bridges.

In light of recent revelations about Russia’s social media manipulation and misinformation campaigns, Facebook and Twitter have taken steps to remove automated bots and disinformation from their platform. These companies, along with Google, have also instituted transparency measures to ensure the sources of

information are easily discernable. European countries are also considering measures to impose responsibility on social media platforms for their content.<sup>49</sup>

The public, however, remains the most vulnerable and susceptible link in the chain for Russian malign influence. The first step is education. The government and other responsible organizations should undertake programs to help citizens become more discerning consumers of news. This program should focus on multi-source fact verification as well as an understanding of potential external influencers on the quality of news. This is important not only for those social media news sources that Russia can easily influence, but also for mainstream news outlets whose content is so politically slanted that it borders on falsehoods. These news sources, whether U.S. news organizations or Russian propaganda, serve to polarize the population of the United States and create an environment where manipulation of the society is easier.

This leads to the next area where the West must strengthen defenses to deny Russia an opportunity. U.S. allies and partners most vulnerable to Russian interference must work to create strong civil societies that can resist cross-domain coercion. In countries like Estonia, Latvia, and Ukraine, where large Russian minorities live, those nations must take proactive measures to include those minorities as full citizens and to integrate them into the functions of society. Alienation and isolation will make them easy targets for Russian subversion. The United States should gently nudge these vulnerable partners in the right direction as a sort of quid pro quo for the military resources committed to their defense. However, if America intends to influence partners to reduce their vulnerability to malign influence, it also needs to better manage its own internal relations. Another CSIS study suggests that the West must “shore up our

vulnerabilities...to all that makes Russian coercion possible, including the tone and polarization of our politics,...the disengagement and disenchantment of our publics, growing income inequality....”<sup>50</sup>

Another step in the denial process is to increase intelligence sharing with partners and allies and also within the agencies of the intelligence community. Methods that Russia uses to foment discontent or spread disinformation should be widely disseminated to allies to allow them to counter those methods before they can be employed. Further, the necessary intel sharing can identify specific actors involved in those activities and allow actions specifically sanctioning those actors. Finally, greater sharing of intel will allow countries to immediately counter propaganda and false narratives in a collective fashion. The increase in connectedness of individuals and groups across the globe necessitates a rapid counter-narrative that combats misinformation everywhere it exists. If it is not attacked in this fashion, the misinformation will reemerge and be credited as a separate source that verifies the content of the original misinformation.

These steps to implement a more robust deterrence by denial are relatively non-contentious and simply require a determination to execute them and resources to put against them. As they are generally defensive in nature, the risk to the United States and its allies in taking these steps are minimal and can only serve to strengthen nations regardless of Russia’s intentions. Deterrence by punishment steps, however, can entail risks if implemented. That said, the West should not self-deter. Until now, the United States and allies have largely refrained from punishing Moscow for their actions since

the invasion of Ukraine and Russia, finding more rhetoric than resolve, seems to have been emboldened to greater activism.<sup>51</sup>

As previously discussed, effective deterrence relies upon capability, credibility and communications. The United States and its allies clearly possess the capability to punish Russia for actions outside of international norms. They can respond across all elements of national power and out compete Russia simply because the West possesses a comparatively unlimited resource base to apply against Russian interests. What is lacking, however, is credibility. To build upon that credibility the United States must first ensure that communications with Russia are very clear. The United States should announce to Russia that cross-domain coercion practiced against the United States or its allies in their sovereign affairs will be considered a hostile act and that there will be a proportionate response with the intent to impose costs as punishment for Russia's actions. It is important that the United States does this now as its past actions have not indicated a willingness to adequately respond and the threat of unintentional escalation is higher if intentions are not clear.

An example of this type of clear signaling was recently given by British Prime Minister Theresa May when she announced that Britain would consider the nerve agent attack against Sergey Skripal as an "unlawful use of force on British soil" undertaken by the Russians against the U.K.<sup>52</sup> That type of terminology hints at Britain accusing Russia of violating the United Nations Charter and potentially even a call for the invocation of NATO Article V wherein an attack on one member of the Alliance is considered an attack on all.<sup>53</sup> It is too soon to judge if Britain's response will adequately punish Russia but it appears that Britain will expel Russian diplomats and suspend "high

level contacts.”<sup>54</sup> If this is the extent of punishment meted out to Russia, it probably falls short of imposing adequate costs to prevent further malign activities and will decrease Britain’s credibility.

Building credibility, especially after several years of inadequate responses to provocations, requires that the United States take action. The first steps toward that action are to determine something that Vladimir Putin values and to place it at risk. The key areas to consider are Russia’s economic security, Putin’s political security and the personal fortunes of Putin and his cronies.

From an economic security perspective Russia is at risk. The economy is not sufficiently diversified to weather shocks in key sectors. Specifically, Russia is overly dependent on hydrocarbon extraction and exports. A 2015 Carnegie Moscow Center study estimates that when all hydrocarbon related segments of the economy are calculated, 67-70% of Russia’s GDP is hydrocarbon related.<sup>55</sup> Deterrence steps aimed directly at Russia’s hydrocarbon industry will put the Russian economy at risk.

The first step is an increase in sanctions specifically tailored to the energy sector that targets natural gas exports. The key to successful sanctions is the participation by many nations. The United States is not a significant trading partner with Russia; however, many European allies are. Secondary sanctions that target businesses or individuals conducting transactions with Russia entities are a gently coercive measure to bring additional participating countries online. Current sanctions against Russia do target the energy sector, but the Russian gas industry is excluded from sanctions. A publicized sanctions regime targeting the export of Russian natural gas that can be triggered by Russian malign actions would send a clear signal to Russia. If those

triggered sanctions also included secondary sanctions to punish countries or businesses expanding natural gas trade with Russia, it may have a chilling effect.

An important example of this deterrence would be to put the planned Nord Stream 2 pipeline at risk. Bypassing traditional transit countries such as Poland and Ukraine, the pipeline is meant to increase the gas flow directly from Russia, under the Baltic Sea, to Germany. This pipeline will only serve to increase European dependence on Russia gas and isolate potential targets of Russian aggression. Sanctions may cause the European companies such as Royal Dutch Shell, OMV, and Engie that are investing in the \$11 billion Nord Stream 2 pipeline project to reconsider their decisions.<sup>56</sup> It would be difficult to eliminate the Nord Stream 2 pipeline at this point, but pressure may dissuade future investment in Russia sourced energy.

Another step targeting Russia's economy would be to provide alternatives to Russian gas, both depriving Russia of the economic gains associated with the exports to U.S. partners and depriving them of the coercive levers that accompany those exports. The United States is the largest producer of petroleum and natural gas hydrocarbons in the world.<sup>57</sup> Though the United States uses much of what it produces, the reduction of American dependence on imported energy frees up supply worldwide. The U.S. should provide low interest loans and grants to finance liquefied natural gas terminals in allied and partner nations most at risk from Russian energy coercion. In addition to the terminals, the United States should help stimulate investment in a pipeline network that supplies landlocked nations, or those whose coastlines are at risk from Russian actions. Bulgaria, which relies on Russia for 90%<sup>58</sup> of its gas supply, is a valid example. Currently there are only two LNG terminal on the Balkan Peninsula and

one in the Baltic States, but an additional eight are planned for those regions.<sup>59</sup> An influx of resources could quickly bring these aspirational plants online, threatening the Russia gas monopoly in vulnerable countries.

European economic realities, however, are the most challenging barriers to truly effective deterrence on the economic front. To put it simply, reliance on Russian gas is difficult to deter because it is cheap, plentiful and the infrastructure already exists to bring it to European markets. There are some other economic levers that should be considered. The first possible venue is the financing of Russian debt. Russia depends on Western investors to finance sovereign debt. The existing sanctions regime does not prohibit U.S. and European entities from purchasing the hard currency debt that Russia issues to meet external debt obligations. For example, in mid-March 2018, shortly after British Prime Minister Theresa May accused Russia of using nerve agent on British soil, Russia issued \$4 billion in Eurobonds, half of which were purchased by entities in the U.K.<sup>60</sup> Sanctions targeting Russia's debt would put them not only at risk of default but would also have a chilling effect in those countries not party to the sanctions regime.

A final consideration for economic deterrence is to attempt to encourage the expropriation of Russian intellectual capital. The implementation of a visa regime in the West that seeks out and rewards the flight of Russian engineers, scientists, and entrepreneurs could have real effects on Russia's long term economic viability. The current visa restrictions in the United States for Russians reflects a broad attempt to punish the Russian people for the actions of the government. However, an open and encouraging, but merit-based visa system may bring capable intellectual capital to the United States.

Holding Putin's political security at risk carries risk of its own. President Putin has, over nearly two decades in power, built a kleptocracy designed to reward loyal friends, punish enemies, and, most importantly, keep Putin in power. Along the way he has enriched himself and those close to him with fruits of the state's resources by amassing a personal fortune estimated between \$70 billion and \$200 billion on an annual salary of \$133,000.<sup>61</sup> The United States must use the tools of transparency and information to put Putin's position at risk. However, putting him at too much personal risk may lead to unanticipated escalation so the steps taken must be measured and gradual.

In response to actions targeting the electoral processes or social fabric of the nation, U.S. intelligence agencies should reveal concrete and verifiable information about President Putin's assets as well as the source of those assets. The methods through which he amassed his fortune will reveal to the Russian people how much he has gained while they continue to suffer a struggling economy.

This method goes to the larger concept of shedding light and revealing the tangled web of lies with which Russia deludes its citizens. The United States should increase funding of information services such as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and focus on creating Russian language information sources that use social media platforms to distribute factual information countering Russian internal propaganda. This information must target not only the population inside Russia but must also focus on the Russian diaspora throughout the world. Many of them continue to have deep ties to Russia and their opinions and perceptions have influence in Russia. The West must find a way of penetrating the shield of state-controlled media and information services in

Russia to provide accurate information to the population. The Russian people will be much more effective at mitigating Putin's actions than external powers.

There are other actions the United States should take in the information and cyber sphere that will send a deterrence signal to Moscow. First, the President must grant broader authorities for cyber response to the Commander of U.S. Cyber Command (CYBERCOM). The current restriction on authorities precludes timely response and needlessly undercuts our efforts to deter.<sup>62</sup> A cyberattack against the country is an attack. The United States would not expect the EUCOM Commander to wait for approval from Washington to respond if U.S. Soldiers in the Baltics were attacked by Russian forces. CYBERCOM deserves the same authorities, limited only by consideration as to the severity and duration of the cyber response and the degree of creditable attribution.

Next, the United States must respond proportionally to cyberattacks and cyber intrusions. For example, Russia's habitual hacking of email accounts and the release of emails to discredit key U.S. officials demands a response. The United States should sanction and "name and shame" the officials behind these acts when specific attribution is possible and respond with cyber measures designed to inflict pain. Short term distributed denial of service attacks on key government institutions would send an appropriate signal without escalating to an unacceptable level.

These are only a few examples of deterrence steps that the United States and its allies must take to more effectively deter Russian actions. To this point, responses, if executed at all, have been half measures that seem to have emboldened Putin. Secretary Mattis recently stated in his remarks addressing the new *National Security*

*Strategy* that, “The paradox of war is that an enemy will attack any perceived weakness. So, we in America cannot adopt a single preclusive form of warfare. Rather we must be able to fight across the spectrum of conflict.”<sup>63</sup> Through New Generation Warfare and cross-domain coercion, Russia has expanded the spectrum of conflict and the United States must expand deterrence to meet it.

### Risks of Alternative Deterrence

This strategy of expanding deterrence repertoire carries some risk. In understanding and respecting that risk, however, the United States must be careful not to self-deter by constraining actions to the point that Russia has unfettered freedom of maneuver. Specifically, the steps described to achieve deterrence by punishment carry the greatest risk. Key to mitigating these risks is clear communications with Russia that convey the unacceptable actions they took and the steps the United States is taking to respond. Depending on the situation, this clarity can be conveyed in private, or publicly to ensure audiences in both the United States and Russia understand the punishment and the actions that precipitated it. At this point much of the Russian public sees little downside to Putin’s aggressive actions. Publicly revealing the costs directly related to those actions may curb Putin’s high domestic approval ratings. Correspondingly, actions taken to hold at risk Putin’s political position likely carry the most risk of rapid Russian escalation. These steps should be taken only incrementally and, at least initially, with the intent to demonstrate a capability and credibility more so than to achieve an endstate. Each deterrence measure must be closely evaluated to determine the results of the punishment and to make sure it is not ultimately destabilizing.

The risk to deterrence, however, is frequently overstated in an effort to cling to the fantasies of rapprochement with Russia. German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter

Steinmeier accused his NATO Allies of “warmongering and saber-rattling” for the conduct of exercise ANAKONDA on Poland in 2016. This exercise involving approximately 30,000 NATO troops was defensive in nature, simulating response to an invasion of Poland.<sup>64</sup> In contrast, Russia and Belarus recently conducted exercise ZAPAD in Belarus. The official number of participants stated by Russian officials is 12,700 soldiers (conveniently remaining below the 13,000 threshold above which requires external monitoring by OSCE observers), but Western experts estimate up to 80,000 soldiers may have been involved.<sup>65</sup> An argument that NATO’s prudent preparations are warmongering simply reinforces Lenin’s instruction to “keep pushing.”

### Conclusion

This paper examined classic or traditional deterrence methods as they should be applied to deter Russia from malign activities while they pursue their New Generation Warfare strategy. The United States and allies have taken steps to deter Russian military threats in Europe but have failed to act in response to non-military threats. This failure has only emboldened Russia to more and more brazen steps in their efforts to dismantle NATO, reassert their sphere of influence, and reclaim great power status. Using the elements of deterrence by denial and deterrence by punishment the West can begin to reestablish a relationship with Russia that will still be competitive in nature, but sees Russia deterred from acting outside of international norms.

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