

Deterring Russia in Europe

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Abstract

Russia seized Crimea by force, intervened militarily in Eastern Ukraine, and has shown no sign of stopping its aggression. The U.S. wants to deter Russian aggression but has been unable to find the right formula, especially when faced with fiscal constraints and other demands. Imperial Roman systems of deterrence, conventional deterrence theory, and examples of U.S. deterrence during the Cold War all provide insight into the current U.S. predicament in Europe. The U.S. must deter against both Russian conventional attacks and its so-called hybrid war. In order to do so, the U.S. should station a Joint Task Force-capable division headquarters, additional enablers, two additional armored brigade combat teams, and additional equipment in Europe to deter Russia through denial. Combined with effective diplomacy and deliberate communication, clear when required, vague when necessary, the U.S. will deter Russian aggression while maintaining a free and friendly Europe in furtherance of U.S. interests.

Deterring Russia in Europe

Russia seized Crimea by force, intervened militarily in Eastern Ukraine, and has shown no sign of stopping its aggression. Russia's motives are varied and not always clear, but for the purposes of assessing deterrence strategies, the reasons do not particularly matter. What matters is that Russia seems energized to further action by ineffective Western reaction. Russia seized Crimea in March 2014 and then, not perceiving a serious western response, they incited a separatist movement and became directly militarily involved in Eastern Ukraine. The U.S. wants to deter Russian aggression but has been unable to find the right formula, especially when faced with fiscal constraints and other demands, not least the so-called "pivot to Asia."

According to strategic analyst Edward Luttwak, Imperial Rome faced a similar need for deterrence. Rome's ultimate strategic goal was somewhat different than the current U.S. problem, in that it was seeking to defend a land frontier at the lowest possible cost. Since a standing military is a wasting asset that begins to deteriorate as soon as one begins using it, deterrence is generally the preferred cheaper strategy. Political circumstances forced Rome into two different forms of frontier management, hegemonic and preclusive territorial, but deterrence and economy remained central to both. Under the first system, the Roman Empire was essentially hegemonic, relying on supporting client states on its edges to provide a territorial buffer between outside threats and the Roman core. The clients independently absorbed many threats (and associated costs). Rome later shifted to a preclusive territorial empire, relying on frontier fortifications in many places to provide an economy of force for central army forces to preclude large scale enemy invasions. Both models can provide some insight into the current U.S. predicament in Europe.

In addition to the Roman example, one can apply other methodologies to the current problem. Some basic aspects of conventional deterrence theory are useful, and are applicable to both the Roman example and modern Europe. One can also consider the U.S.' approach to deterrence in Korea in 1950, Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Iran in 1946 in order to glean further lessons. One can then use historical examples, the Roman models, and theory to analyze how the U.S. currently attempts to deter Russia and to make some basic recommendations. As we will see, those recommendations include stationing additional forces in Europe. The United States must make some difficult choices and must adopt a more determined stance, thereby signaling resolve to both clients and potential enemies. Borrowing from the Romans and using some clear and rigorous strategic thinking, backed by action, the United States can deter Russia in Europe in support of its allies while maintaining a free and friendly Europe in furtherance of U.S. interests.

One must begin with the threat. Russia's behavior over the last ten years suggests a grand strategy of return to great power status through revanchism particularly in its perceived sphere of influence—Russia's "near abroad."¹ Specifically, in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, Russia has sought to achieve that strategy by executing what has become known as "Hybrid War." Russian strategy draws heavily on the ancient Indian strategist Kautilya: the state is constantly in conflict and the state uses all elements of its power in this pursuit.² Russia's Grand Strategy is "the link between all available (rather than only military) means and political ends—in times of both war and peace."³ A natural outgrowth of this strategy is that Russia's operational approach seeks

to impact not only the enemy's army but also their culture and society in order to reduce morale and decrease their will to resist.⁴

To enable this continuous conflict and to address shortcomings identified during its 2008 invasion of Georgia, later in 2008 Russia began reforming its military's personnel, readiness, and equipment as well as portions of its bureaucracy.⁵ Russian reforms resulted in a military that can be employed quickly, in support of other elements of national power, in a decentralized, offensive, and expeditionary manner.⁶ The depth and extent of these reforms suggest that Russia considers hybrid war a useful approach and American defense planners need to consider this as a central threat requiring deterrence. While hybrid war is not particularly new, it achieves its effectiveness partially through its specific targeting of Western security vulnerabilities and the West's very concept of what constitutes war itself.⁷ Recent campaigns further suggest that Russia will use its military to achieve limited ends. The West must be able to either react quickly or be in a position to deter.

Russia's effective employment of hybrid war in Crimea and to an extent in Eastern Ukraine demonstrated the effectiveness of its military reforms combined with its political reforms (streamlining its bureaucracy). In Crimea, Russia successfully combined different elements of national power to accomplish its goals without resorting to open war.⁸ In doing so, Russia employed several notable techniques: they smoothly transitioned from irregular/special forces to high readiness conventional forces to solidify gains; effectively employed escalation control; and they made it difficult for others (adversaries) to determine if Russia was involved.⁹ Through deception and the active use of subterfuge, Russia then presented the world with a *fait accompli*.¹⁰ The

West was thus forced to either accept or react once facts on the ground were largely settled.

In much the same way as they had done in Crimea, Russia's actions in Eastern Ukraine demonstrated a deliberate attempt to subvert the society prior to any military action through economic means including undermining or corrupting entrepreneurs who were not favorable to Russia. Russia also attempted to isolate Ukraine from the European Union (EU) by cutting imports and using Russian military, intelligence services, businesses, and politicians to drive a wedge between the EU and Ukraine.¹¹

In response to Russia's actions in Crimea, NATO developed several initiatives at its September 2014 Wales summit to deter Russia and to reassure its members. Disagreements remain, however, not just about the adopted initiatives' implementation and effectiveness but also about NATO's larger deterrence strategy. NATO also committed to several specific initiatives including the establishment of a Very high readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), a Combined Joint Expeditionary Force, and the announcement of the framework nation construct whereby several larger member nations agreed to take the lead for, and provide the bulk of forces for, specific NATO multi-national force elements.¹² In spite of these initiatives, however, some contend that a comprehensive NATO (and individual member-state) strategy still has not emerged that will deter Russia.¹³ Disagreements remain about the relative benefits, importance, or feasibility of territorial defense, regional defense, centralized response forces, and "civil-military crisis management operations."¹⁴ There is also significant disagreement about the benefits of stationing NATO or U.S. forces in central and Eastern Europe—some consider it essential while others consider it provocative to Russia.¹⁵ Although

NATO adopted several measures including exercises, and air and maritime patrols, it has been unable to come to an agreement on a comprehensive strategy to deter Russia.¹⁶ In the short term, therefore, the U.S. must lead.

As a result of Russia's actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine and the seeming lack of a suitable and sustainable western and U.S. response, something must be done. A deterrence plan must effectively deny the Russian asymmetric threat by preventing or interdicting its subversion elements, its transition from its special to its conventional forces, and its isolation of target countries.¹⁷ Furthermore, to deter through denial the U.S. must overcome its inherent time/distance challenges.¹⁸ The West's response to Crimea and to Eastern Ukraine has been insufficient and ineffective, and has left the West looking indecisive and weak.

The U.S. seeks to deter Russia from further aggression while reassuring its European allies.¹⁹ In the simplest definition, deterrence "refers to the effect when a person, institution, or polity decides not to take action that otherwise would have been taken, because of the belief or strong suspicion that intolerable consequences would ensue from such action."²⁰ Deterrence is difficult to do and difficult to prove mainly because it involves so many different variables, is inherently a human endeavor, and resides in the mind(s) of the actors.²¹ It requires several basic components: (1) an adversary or an action to deter, (2) perceived credibility of the actor desiring to deter and (3) perceived will or intent of the actor desiring to deter to take the threatened action.²²

Two basic categories of deterrence exist, denial or punishment. "Denial" means that the adversary does not have a viable option—the costs of his planned action are

visible and clearly too high. As comically discussed in the movie *Dr. Strangelove*, deterrence forces cannot be secret.²³ Deterrence by “punishment” means that the adversary could pursue his action, but it would be punished to such a degree that it would not be worth it.²⁴ Between the two forms, denial is more reliable since there are no choices, or the choice has already been made. In punishment, the aggressor (the one who is being punished) must determine how much punishment it is willing to take, but simultaneously is assessing the will of the deterrent actor to actually punish. The deterrer must *both* signal willingness and then execute it when necessary to maintain a credible deterrence reputation.²⁵ During the Cold War, for example, nuclear deterrence relied on the perception of a very high punishment effect and on the credible threat of its use. Conventional deterrence is inherently less clear, because it lacks the certainty and clarity of a nuclear-level confrontation. It seems exceedingly unlikely that the U.S. would use its nuclear deterrent against current forms of Russian aggression and so must craft some other form of conventional land- and air-power-based deterrent, capable of disrupting Russian hybrid methods. The focus here is on landpower.

Landpower’s primary source of power stems from its conventional forces. According to strategist Dr. Gary Guertner’s theory of conventional deterrence, early nuclear deterrence theory suggested that a state only required nuclear weapons because they could deter across the spectrum of conflict. In contrast, conventional deterrence theory suggests that there is a threshold below which nuclear weapons are not effective, because the threat of their use is not credible. They will neither act as a denial nor as a punishment deterrent. In these more likely and more frequent cases, conventional weapons provide the main means of deterrence. In addition, if deterrence

fails, a conventional response is still required.²⁶ In contrast to nuclear deterrence, conventional deterrence requires a demonstration of capability in order to be credible—the actor who is the target of the deterrence effort must believe that the actor seeking to deter has capability and credibility. In fact, conventional deterrence may require wars (which are failures of deterrence) to reinforce deterrence itself—to demonstrate will, capability, and credibility.²⁷ Conventional deterrence concepts apply to Europe because of Russia’s recently demonstrated techniques to obfuscate, deceive, and confuse, making a nuclear response unlikely.

More specifically, according to John Mearsheimer’s conclusions in his practical, example-laden, and aptly named study, *Conventional Deterrence*, conventional deterrence succeeds under a few specific circumstances and fails under other specific circumstances. Very simply, conventional deterrence will work if an aggressor nation thinks it will face a protracted war, because of both a protracted war’s vast costs and its uncertain outcome.²⁸ Deterrence will fail, on the other hand, if a war’s aim is limited and it appears unlikely to become protracted. Even a more decisive aim is considered practicable if an actor believes he can achieve it in a short time, blitzkrieg-style.²⁹ The third case where deterrence likely fails is if the political leadership is determined to go to war for reasons unrelated to accurate military calculation—a regime seeking distraction from domestic crises, for example. In such circumstances, political leaders will likely force an acceptable (although maybe not feasible) blitzkrieg “strategy.”³⁰ Crimea demonstrated two conditions under which deterrence was likely to fail—limited war aims achieved with a blitzkrieg-like approach. If Mearsheimer is to be believed, then the best option for conventional deterrence is to convince an adversary that a blitzkrieg will not

work. In other words, deterrence by denial, but the denial systems and forces must be focused on an enemy using blitzkrieg-like operational methods supplemented by subversion and obfuscation.

Still, deterrence remains difficult to achieve and difficult to prove because it is an attempt to prove a causal negative: an actor did not do something because of the actions of another actor. Yet deterrence remains an attractive approach, perhaps because it appears more appealing than the alternatives. This appeal comes from deterrence's hidden assumption that it is a relatively cheap and peaceful way to avoid conflict while still furthering an actor's interests. According to Colin Gray, however, deterrence is inherently unreliable since "the history of wars, events which history has registered in abundance, is a history of deterrence failures."³¹ Unfortunately, deterrence is hard, it involves an incalculable number of variables, and it relies on an unreliable adversary. Based on this, the best course is to limit the damage of deterrence failures or increase the perceived level of deterrence against an adversary.³² Deterrence theory's apparent simplicity conceals some contradictions: it appears logical, yet it involves many variables so logic may not rule; and deterrence failure in some ways reinforces deterrence. Illustrating the employment of deterrence in a historical context will provide greater clarity.

Imperial Rome successfully employed two different versions of deterrence at different times over the period from 27 B.C. to 181 A.D. (after that period there were many deterrence failures and changes in the defense system, but they lie beyond the scope of this paper). At those times, Rome faced a situation comparable to what the U.S. faces now in Europe. The Roman Empire, as explained by the strategic analyst

Edward Luttwak in *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire*, successfully defended an advanced culture against multiple threats over a long period of time.³³ Rome chose different methods of defending their empire based on their perceived threat and their goals. The Romans faced complex strategic choices including how to defend their empire while remaining commercially viable and “true” to their system of government.³⁴ Luttwak contends that a complex combination of ideas and actions that harnessed Rome’s military strength contributed to Rome’s longevity. It was not Rome’s military strength itself, but rather the threat of that force combined with money and diplomacy, that contributed so significantly to Rome’s long-term foreign policy success both in terms of deterrence and compellence.³⁵ In many ways, Rome’s military restraint increased its power and its ability to deter. Rome learned that it was more advantageous to not have to use their military to achieve their goals. Rome preferred to keep the military in reserve, preserving the threat of its use; it deterred and intimidated.³⁶ Luttwak captures Rome’s approach nicely, “[it is] [m]uch better to *conserve* force and use military power indirectly, as the instrument of political warfare.”³⁷ Luttwak’s Hegemonic Empire system (used from 27BC to 67AD) and the Preclusive Defense of the Territorial Empire system (used from 68AD to 181AD)³⁸ provide the most insight.

The Hegemonic system allowed the Romans to control a large empire with a relatively small army—relative to the size of the land mass it was defending. It was based on Rome’s assessment that internal threats were at least as dangerous as external threats.³⁹ At that time the Roman Empire faced no single large threat but rather multiple low-level threats.⁴⁰ Logically then, instead of a perimeter defense the Romans

employed “reserve” legions as “mobile striking forces,” on the strategic defensive, primarily designed to deal with internal but unforeseen threats.⁴¹ Since the Romans had insufficient forces (even accounting for colonies and auxiliaries) to handle every low level or local threat throughout the empire, they relied on a combination of diplomatic pressure and **the threat** of force which was possible due to the residual savings gained by not having legions defending the Empire’s perimeter.⁴² Client states on the edges of the empire were critical to this system. Client states, while not part of the Roman Empire, were part of the Roman system. They provided security for the Roman Empire against low level threats by handling these threats themselves (absorbing them in some cases and in some cases enlisting Rome’s help). Since client states were not part of the Empire, they did not have to be as successful against these low-level threats as Rome would have had to have been in order to maintain Roman credibility. While Rome did not fully tax the client states (since they were not provinces) neither was Rome forced to provide for their full security. The client states absorbed the low level threats and provided their own internal security thus freeing up the imperial forces for other tasks.⁴³

Basically, under this system Rome increased its security, rather than that of the client states, while not expanding its army.⁴⁴ The main downside to this system occurred when enemy forces overwhelmed a client state; the invader would only be defeated after he had caused significant damage because it took time for the Roman legions to get there. The principle trade-off associated with the Hegemonic Empire system resulted from the determination of whether the benefits of the efficient use of imperial forces outweighed the damage caused by these invasions.⁴⁵ The efficient use of Roman legions “worked” (was appropriate) as long as the invasions were infrequent, or the

damage was not significant (to Rome). However, the relationship between Rome and the client states did not remain static. Beginning around A.D. 70, a series of complex political changes led Rome to annex the majority of its client states. This necessarily changed the relationship between Rome and the former client states, since they were now a part of the empire.⁴⁶ As a result, Rome adapted its defensive strategy to a preclusive territorial model.

Under the Preclusive Defense system, the Roman “central government” accepted responsibility for what had before been the responsibility of the client states, most notably internal revolt (now internal to Rome) and low level foreign threats.⁴⁷ Rome designed this system to ensure the peace and prosperity of the empire. Client states no longer existed—they were now a part of the empire.⁴⁸ The Roman Empire based this system on a balanced threat assessment that the empire faced both external and internal threats. In its simplest form it used a system of barriers against low-level and constant threats while mobile striking forces would fight and defeat conventional threats beyond the frontier—before they reached the barriers—thus the term “preclusive.”⁴⁹ The barriers were not continuous across the entire Empire, nor in many cases were they even locally continuous; they served as a portion of a larger integrated system.⁵⁰ Despite the economy of force provided by the wall systems, there was less “disposable” or “residual” combat power available to Rome than under the hegemonic system, and so each military expedition had a higher relative cost (the hegemonic system had ready reserves and no forces committed to “frontier” defense). Overall, Rome had less power in reserve.⁵¹

Under the Preclusive Defense system, Rome accepted responsibility for both low and high level threats while overall security improved for its new provinces (former client states), but it came at a cost. Rome had less flexibility to deal with unforeseen threats or threats from unexpected areas. The Hegemonic model had identified major external threats and internal rebellion as the primary threat and left the low-level, external threats to the client states. Essentially the client states traded *their* space for time against major external threats. Rome itself remained untouched. This allowed Rome greater flexibility but the client states paid the price for invasions until Roman legions arrived—deterrence of external threat was primarily punishment based. Preclusive Defense on the other hand, while more expensive, sought to balance the risks and the approach. It attempted to preserve the integrity of Rome's provincial tax base, since any military disruption in the new provinces (former client states) now more directly impacted Rome, instead of impacting mainly the client states. Understanding that it faced both threats and that it was uniquely positioned to defeat both types, the Romans opted for this type of defense in order to better preserve their entire empire as a functioning whole. Preclusive territorial defense employed and paid for deterrence through both denial (frontier fortifications, their forces, and mobile strike forces) and punishment (mobile strike forces [again] and strike forces to attack beyond the frontier in a preclusive mode).

In one sense, the U.S. has been managing a hegemonic empire since World War II, initially intended to contain the influence or expansion of the Soviet Union (USSR). During that period, case studies involving Korea, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Iran demonstrate both the success and failure of conventional territorial deterrence and shed some light on the nature and possibilities of deterrence in the modern world.

This analysis will contribute to determining under what conditions, what kind of forces, using which concept of force employment best deter.

North Korea invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950 and by June 28th had captured Seoul, the South Korean capital. The South Korean Army steadily retreated south on the Korean peninsula. The U.S. President, Harry Truman, did not decide to commit U.S. ground forces until June 30th; they first came into contact with North Korean forces on July 5, 1950.⁵² Although the U.S. did intervene in Korea, that was not the plan. Well in advance of North Korea's actual invasion, the U.S. had decided that it would not become directly involved militarily (except by providing training and equipment) to South Korea, even in the event of a North Korean invasion. The U.S. simply could not actively combat communism everywhere. Essentially the U.S. government decided that South Korea was not a vital or important interest; the U.S. was far more concerned about China, Taiwan (Formosa) and Japan.⁵³

Since the Soviets and the Chinese, North Korea's main allies, wanted to avoid direct confrontation with the U.S., the U.S. did not effectively communicate its concern.⁵⁴ Debate surrounds the role that the U.S. had in attempting to discourage North Korea's invasion, but both Joseph Stalin, the Soviet leader, and Mao Tse-tung, the Chinese leader, agreed to allow North Korea's offensive.⁵⁵ It appears that neither Mao nor Stalin received the U.S.' intended message until after the invasion when the U.S.' originally vague message gained clarity.

In spite of its poor, or at best, mixed signaling, the U.S. intervened in Korea. Truman wanted to maintain worldwide U.S. credibility and he wanted to demonstrate to a domestic audience that he was tough on communism. Furthermore, he wanted to

avoid the taint of appeasement while re-assuring Europe that the U.S. was prepared to defend Europe rather than liberate it again.⁵⁶ While Truman initially approved air and naval forces support of South Korea, he did not commit ground forces until a week after the invasion, basing his decision on General MacArthur's June 30th suggestion that only U.S. forces could prevent North Korea from conquering the south. Until then Truman had only given the authority to establish a beachhead in South Korea in case all U.S. citizens had to be evacuated.⁵⁷

The U.S. attempt at deterrence failed, if ever it intended to deter. Certainly deterrence by denial failed and the U.S. instead attempted to punish. Deterrence failed because of a combination of poor signaling (neither the Soviet Union nor China expected the U.S. to intervene) and because neither the Soviet Union nor China considered the U.S. a credible threat—they calculated that the U.S. could not generate sufficient force in Korea quickly enough to affect the outcome.

U.S. deterrence also failed in Hungary in 1956, and in a manner not unlike its failure in Korea. Political developments within Hungary led Imre Nagy, the Hungarian Prime Minister, to demand the withdrawal of Soviet troops, stationed in Hungary as part of its Warsaw pact agreement. When this did not happen Nagy declared Hungary's neutrality and its intention to depart the Warsaw pact. Soon thereafter, in early November 1956, the Soviets launched a major attack and crushed the revolution in four weeks.⁵⁸ U.S. signaling was weak—both before and after the Soviet invasion. It is even questionable, much like in Korea, whether the U.S. attempted to deter Soviet intervention in Hungary at all. However, unlike Korea when the U.S. did intervene, in Hungary, the U.S. chose not to intervene. Part of President Eisenhower's calculus was

whether the U.S. even had the capability to realistically intervene, short of nuclear punishment, which was being revealed as inappropriate to regional crises.⁵⁹

During the Soviets' internal debates concerning intervention in Hungary, they expressed great concern about the U.S. reaction, particularly in regards to nuclear weapons. However, in the days leading up to the critical point of the Hungarian revolution (Nagy's announcement), the U.S. communicated to the Soviets (in the form of three public statements—October 27-29) that the U.S. had no desire to make Hungary an ally.⁶⁰ This removed any doubt regarding U.S. intentions and its ability to deter or punish.

The U.S. chose not to intervene (punish) for several reasons: President Eisenhower was primarily concerned with the Suez crisis. He assessed that the U.S. was in no position to act unilaterally and the Europeans were unlikely to play an active, unified role; he did not want to provoke the USSR as they were potentially facing a loss in their East European security arrangement (Warsaw Pact); and the U.S. did not have any direct commitment to Prime Minister Nagy, the new Hungarian leader.⁶¹ In this case conventional deterrence failed partially because the U.S. knew it lacked a credible threat and made this clear through its signaling. Secondly, the U.S. was already consumed by the Suez crisis, so perhaps much like military power which, as soon as it is applied is consumed in use and cannot be used elsewhere, so too can attention be. Regardless, deterrence failed—the U.S. removed any credible threat by signaling a lack of interest; this gave the Soviets a free hand.

Czechoslovakia in 1968 provides another example of deterrence failure in the Cold War era. In order to prevent a Czechoslovakian reformist government from

continuing in power, on August 20, 1968, the Soviet Union and several Warsaw Pact allies invaded Czechoslovakia. Worried that other states under Soviet influence would follow Czechoslovakia's reform agenda, the Soviets quickly dominated the country and emplaced a friendly government.⁶²

Similar to both the Korean and Hungarian cases, communication and signaling played an important role. Beginning in 1966, well before the events in Czechoslovakia, the U.S. signaled a desire to improve relations with the Soviet Union or at a minimum to reach some level of détente; little resulted from these desires. Then in late July of 1968, during the period of Czechoslovakian unrest immediately preceding the Soviet intervention, U.S. Secretary of State Rusk communicated to his Soviet counterpart that the U.S. had no role in inciting or encouraging the Czechoslovakian unrest—this likely increased the likelihood of Soviet intervention.⁶³ Similarly, U.S. forces in Europe received orders to avoid provocative actions on the Czechoslovakian border (like increased presence or patrols) that could be construed as supporting the unrest.⁶⁴ The lack of action on the part of U.S. forces may have had a reverse-deterrence effect. Regardless, it provided a clear signal to the Soviets that the U.S. was not particularly concerned with Czechoslovakia.

Again, consistent with its signaling, the U.S. attempted neither to deter through denial nor punishment. Several external factors contributed to the U.S. not seriously considering intervention: the U.S. had just endured the Tet Offensive in Vietnam and was experiencing increased domestic unrest, the Johnson administration was attempting to reach a level of détente with the Soviets, and the U.S. had established a precedent by not acting in support of other coups (Czechoslovakia 1948 and Hungary

1956).⁶⁵ Considered differently, the U.S. provided a clear signal that it was not trying to deter Soviet aggression. When the U.S. recognized that it did not pose a credible threat (it had neither capability nor will) it communicated its lack of interest to the Soviets, so there no longer remained a question of deterrence. This resulted in a better result, broadly, for the U.S. than if it had attempted to deter and then had its bluff called.

In contrast, one example where deterrence appeared to work was in Iran in 1946. Following the end of World War II, Soviet troops remained in Iran after the agreed-upon withdrawal date of March 1946 established during the Japanese surrender. The Soviets may have remained for several reasons, including a desire to make Iran a client state, to incorporate it into the Soviet Union, or merely to get oil concessions. Towards this end, the Soviets incited various elements within Iran to advocate independence for the area where Soviet troops were stationed and to generally spread unrest. When Iranian troops moved to quell the rebellions, Soviet troops blocked them. The Soviets also blocked food to Iran from the north and began increasing their troop strength. Only when President Truman notified three U.S. combat divisions in Austria to be prepared to deploy to Iran did the Soviets withdraw their troops in May of 1946.⁶⁶ This may have been supplemented with President Truman's supposed nuclear ultimatum to the Soviets, but this remains unsubstantiated.⁶⁷ Regardless, this is an example of clear signaling and perhaps a case where deterrence (or at least compellence) worked. The punishment that the U.S. threatened was more than Stalin thought it was worth to risk.

These cases reinforce that deterrence is difficult to prove and in many ways relies upon clear communication. In only one of these cases, Iran, did deterrence "work" and even that is open to interpretation. U.S. forces may have been in a position to deter

in Korea, but neither the North Koreans, nor the Chinese, nor the Soviets considered them (or any of the other U.S. forces in the theater) a deterrent because the U.S. government appeared unwilling to commit them to combat on the Korean peninsula. U.S. action in Korea may have served to signal credibility in deterring future crises, but that conclusion remains speculative and mainly in the minds of the U.S. adversaries, or potential adversaries. This is the conundrum of deterrence: one cannot necessarily *know* that deterrence "worked." And indeed, U.S. troops were not a factor in the Soviet intervention in Hungary or Czechoslovakia—unless one makes a considerable stretch and contends that U.S. troops deterred the Soviets from expanding their intervention further into Europe—but there is no evidence of this in the Soviet intent. Only in Iran did the threat of a U.S. troop deployment (possibly underwritten by an overt nuclear threat) result in some sort of deterrence—more exactly compelling the Soviets to remove their troops.

In each of the cases, however, communication played a critical role. In Korea, the U.S. did not communicate clearly the importance it (later) placed on South Korea. This may have been because the interest was not necessarily South Korea itself but rather the spread of communism and the U.S. failed to realize this until after the invasion. In Korea, however, the U.S. signaled a lack of interest but then intervened to punish (deterrence through punishment) when its original (weak) attempt at deterrence failed. In both Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the U.S. signaled to the Soviets that they would not intervene—so deterrence was not a factor in these cases. However in Iran, the U.S. signaled very clearly that it expected the Soviets to withdraw, and reinforced this signal

by alerting three combat divisions (possibly reinforced with a nuclear ultimatum). In this case, it worked.

Interestingly, each of these cases can also be understood through Luttwak's analysis of Roman frontier policy. In Roman territorial empire terms, both Czechoslovakia and Hungary represented non-client states beyond the line. The U.S. had neither the obligation, nor had it signaled the intent to deter Soviet interference in those countries, and so the U.S.' broader credibility as a deterrent power remained intact. In contrast, the U.S. treated South Korea much like a client state in the Roman hegemonic system, expecting South Korea to absorb its own defense costs. A major invasion, however, precipitated a "punishment" response from the U.S., greatly enhancing U.S. deterrence credibility, but also putting the U.S. in the position of enforcing a territorial line, effectively transitioning to a territorial defense of South Korea. As a result U.S. troops have defended the Korean frontier for more than fifty years, at substantial cost.

Both the Roman models and these more recent cases of deterrence must also be compared to the current situation in Europe and the Russian and U.S. land force dispositions there. Comparing Russian and U.S. land forces demonstrates that the U.S. currently has insufficient forces to deter Russia in Europe. This imbalance, then, suggests a need to re-assess the U.S. approach by applying the Roman experience, deterrence theory, and the previous case studies.

Russia has fifty-two Battalion Tactical Groups (BTGs, smaller than, but comparable in terms of capability, to a U.S. Brigade Combat Team) divided between the two military districts that border Eastern Europe. They are likely able to quickly

concentrate forty BTGs for a particular offensive action, something they have demonstrated as part of several readiness exercises. Russia conducted multiple planned and no-notice exercises involving between 9,000 and 150,000 personnel from February 2014 to September 2015.⁶⁸ An analysis conducted by the RAND Corporation, as part of a wargame they conducted, developed slightly different numbers. RAND determined that Russia could concentrate twenty-two battalions (all mechanized, motorized, or armored with attached artillery) within a week for an offensive directed against the Baltics.⁶⁹ Likely some variation on these numbers reflects the conventional component against which the U.S. would have to array its own deterrent force.

According to the United States Army Europe (USAREUR) “Strong Europe” brief, the USAREUR headquarters includes a deployable army headquarters, a division-level mission command element, and various brigade level enabling headquarters (signal, sustainment, military intelligence). The deployable army headquarters comes from the USAREUR headquarters itself while the division mission command element rotates on a six month basis as part of the continental United States (CONUS)-based Regionally Aligned Force (RAF).

For maneuver, United States Army Europe can employ two combat brigades, an aviation brigade, as well as a rotational armored brigade. At any one time, these units are typically dispersed across Europe training and participating in exercises; they are not held in a large reserve nor are they explicitly deployed defensively. The theater sustainment command in Europe simultaneously supports these units as well as two other geographic combatant commands.⁷⁰

In order to compensate for their relative shortage of troops (in comparison to the Russians) U.S. land forces undertook several initiatives to reduce their crisis reaction times and to increase their relative force level. To reduce reaction times USAREUR sought to improve their freedom of movement throughout Europe “enabl[ing] NATO’s interior lines of communication,” through readiness tests and by testing the CONUS-based global response force. To further reduce response times, USAREUR sought to emplace European Activity Sets (EAS) and Army Prepositioned Stocks (APS). The EAS (currently slightly less than an Armored BCT worth of equipment) allows an Armored BCT (ABCT) not based in Europe to train there without having to deploy their own equipment (a cost and time saver).⁷¹ The APS, on the other hand (anticipated to consist of less than a division’s worth of equipment) is generally not used for training and would be employed only in case of a crisis; the APS is more accurately regarded as war stockage. In combination with the EAS, the APS would provide a division-level capability by 2021.⁷² Of this, likely only the EAS portion, a BCT (+) would be readily available, except in a crisis. USAREUR also embarked on a marked increase in exercises, particularly with allies, designed to increase interoperability and hence to increase available forces in times of crisis.⁷³ If allied armies can effectively fight together, then the Russians would face more than just U.S. land forces, they would also face the forces of other nations, either as part of NATO or separately (bi-laterally or multi-laterally).

Even accounting for USAREUR’s measures to increase its own responsiveness, Russia maintains a significant numerical advantage in conventional land forces. Recall that Russia can likely concentrate forty BTGs (slightly smaller than a BCT) for a

particular offensive action while the U.S. can field three BCTs, composed of the two BCTs assigned to Europe and the rotational BCT (assuming it is neither deploying nor redeploying).⁷⁴ Based on analysis and data from the Center for Strategic and International Studies' (CSIS) recent publication, *Evaluating Future U.S. Army Force Posture in Europe* this is an insufficient deterrent force. CSIS validated the generally accepted 1:3 ratio of defenders to attackers by analyzing Russia's recent experience in eastern Ukraine. Applying the 1:3 ratio, the U.S. and NATO require thirteen BCTs; if NATO contributes five BCTs, then the U.S. must generate eight BCTs.⁷⁵ The RAND Corporation reached a similar conclusion following its recent series of wargames. RAND assessed that NATO could provide seven light BCTs (mainly from the Baltic states), which meant that the U.S. must produce six to seven BCTs, composed of at least three armored BCTs, in order to effectively deter Russia.⁷⁶ Clearly, the U.S. must generate more BCTs than it currently has stationed in Europe to present a convincing conventional deterrent to Russia.

With an understanding of the Roman models, the basics of deterrence, and some instances of deterrence in practice (successful and otherwise), how can one re-imagine the current problem of deterrence in Europe facing an assertive Russia. Based on its numerically insufficient forces resident in Europe and its apparent reliance on follow-on forces deploying from the United States to re-claim any territory that Russia may have seized as part of an aggressive act, it appears that the U.S. currently relies on a punishment model of deterrence.

In deterrence theory, deterrence through denial is preferable to deterrence through punishment because it removes the choice of the deteree—Russia. Deterrence

through denial presents Russia with no realistic choice of whether or not to take a particular aggressive action (although of course Russia can always choose to not be deterred). Through denial, Russia is denied the option to be aggressive because it does not stand a realistic chance of success.

If denial fails then the U.S. must have the capability and the will to punish. Deterrence through punishment is not preferable since it involves more variables. Disadvantages include that Russia could decide what level of punishment it could endure (which could be quite a bit) and Russia likely could achieve limited objectives before punishment could be applied. Practically, if Russia overran and reinforced a portion of Central or Eastern Europe prior to the U.S. (and NATO presumably) meting out punishment, then the punishment may not be worth it. So, given the option, the U.S. should deter through denial.

Mearshimer's theory of conventional deterrence further reinforces these ideas by focusing on three main goals: avoid a fait accompli, aim for denial, or make a long war appear likely. Currently, the U.S. is not in a position to prevent a fait accompli nor is it practicing denial. The U.S. does, however, through the NATO alliance, make a long war appear likely as long as NATO remains united. However, relying on one out of the three elements of conventional deterrence seems an un-sound policy when the interests are vital; it would be far better to combine all three elements.

The Romans' Hegemonic model assumed that their client states would absorb low-level threats; if the threat elevated to a certain degree then the large central Roman reserve would deploy and repel (punish) the invaders. The Romans practiced deterrence by punishment, although with repeated "punishments" Roman credibility was

very high and denial became more prevalent. Applying this to the current situation, two major factors inhibit the hegemonic model: (1) the U.S. does not have a large mobile reserve in Europe capable of punishing, so that force would have to originate in CONUS; (2) the NATO nations that this would involve are not prepared to absorb even low-level threats on their own. By the founding charter of the NATO alliance, an attack on one is an attack on all, so neither the U.S., nor likely NATO, would remain non-committal while a NATO member absorbed a certain amount of destruction—the U.S. would become involved immediately. However, in order for the U.S. to bring its heavy, mobile punishment forces necessary to dislodge Russian forces from their gains into theater would take weeks or months.⁷⁷ Furthermore, these forces would have to overcome Russia's anti-access and area denial measures (A2AD). Although if the Russians used their A2AD measures against U.S. forces moving into the theater, they would lose escalation control dominance and would then likely be in an open (likely protracted) war with the United States (and NATO). The veil of subversion and obfuscation would be lifted.

Unlike in the hegemonic model, the Romans based their preclusive territorial defense system more on denial than on punishment, although both models contain elements of both. The Romans designed their territorial model against both an exterior and an internal threat. In this case the internal threat could be roughly approximated to the subversion inclusive in hybrid war. Although both models employed mobile reserves, the territorial model employed mobile reserves further forward, reinforcing other forces dedicated to frontier defense. Together these forces achieved deterrence by denial rather than punishment, but still retained the capability, if required, to punish.

The U.S. does not have sufficient forces to accomplish either of these missions separately. The American aversion to conducting pre-emptive attacks beyond its borders (as the Romans did), also undercuts this model. The U.S. is attempting to employ the territorial model, mainly using the NATO charter (as a demonstration of will) as a pseudo-denial measure because it does not have sufficient forces for frontier defense (on the proverbial wall) nor does it have a large mobile reserve. Therefore, similar to the hegemonic model, a “mobile” reserve would have to come from the continental United States. Effectively executing the territorial system requires two types of forces: those that could help handle internal unrest and those that could defeat a significant conventional invasion. Only the second type is currently marginally present.

U.S. treaty obligations force it to act as if it is employing the territorial defense model while lacking sufficient forces to achieve deterrence by denial and without the policy willingness to conduct pre-emptive attacks. U.S. force employment is more commensurate with the hegemonic model but lacks both a sufficient force level and the appropriate disposition to punish, and is bound to a policy that will not allow client states to absorb low-level threats.

The U.S. should base its deterrence on the territorial system, which is much more closely aligned with what the U.S. purports to do anyway. It would also resolve some of the inconsistencies between U.S. policy (vis-a-vis NATO) and its land force posture. In truth, applying the hegemonic model to a Europe with NATO would be attempting to fit a model to a reality that does not exist. It is not currently politically feasible for the U.S. to allow its NATO allies to absorb aggression and then liberate them later. With this in mind, it is important to remember that it is not just a conventional

force which the U.S. is attempting to deter; it is also the forces and capabilities resident in hybrid war.

To adopt a modified territorial system the U.S. must take several steps to modify force posture, types of forces, and authorities. First it must increase its investment in walls and barriers—not structural ones, but forces that would serve the same purpose as the Roman walls. This translates into forces that would assist U.S. allies against subversion. While infantry and armor units may play a role in this, elements within the U.S. government and law enforcement would likely be more effective. They could assist U.S. allies to strengthen themselves against subversion in a variety of ways: economically, through cyber defense, and through intelligence assistance. But that may not be possible because of various U.S. and related allied laws and authorities.

In addition to strengthening U.S. allies against subversion, forces (or capabilities) that can assist with reliable (and shareable) early detection of a Russian incursion or Russian-incited unrest in a country are critical. This would assist the U.S. and its allies by buying time and legitimacy for more robust deterrence measures. Enhancing the current state partnership program, whereby U.S. states send National Guard units to train with their partnered European nations, provides an excellent opportunity. American states could send dual capability forces and personnel (those that have both a civilian and a military role) to partner with their respective nations. This could increase both the nations' capability of combating hybrid threats while providing the U.S. military with some much needed niche capabilities in theater (although on a temporary basis). This may also require an altering of the relationship and authorities between the state partnership forces and the active U.S. forces in Europe.

If none of these proposals prove feasible, then land forces and their enablers could serve this dual role of strengthening against and detecting subversion. Furthermore, the land forces could disrupt the changeover between the Russian irregular forces and the conventional forces. Employing conventional forces in this role would require clear agreements with the host nations as well as refined Rules of Engagement.

The mobile strike force comprises the other critical component of the territorial defense model. This force should (ideally) remove from Russia's calculations the possibility of a quick blitzkrieg-type victory. Recall that to provide deterrence through denial (as opposed to punishment) the U.S. must generate between six (RAND wargames) and eight (CSIS 1:3 ratio) BCTs quickly or have them already in position. Since generating eight BCTs is more difficult to achieve and can be scaled downward more easily, the recommendations will use that target. Considering Russia's robust anti-access and area denial capabilities most of these eight BCTs should be in Europe. Two BCTs are currently stationed in Europe, not including the RAF rotational BCT. Therefore, two additional U.S. BCTs should be stationed in Europe, bringing the total to four. A short-notice rotating force could be employed if tensions elevated (bringing the total to five). Another option for a fifth (or a sixth) BCT could be deployed to Europe on short notice—the Global Response Force (GRF) (an airborne, light Infantry BCT from the 82nd Airborne Division) could be deployed within ninety-six hours if tensions escalated significantly. Either of these forces could use the European Activity Sets (or the Army Pre-positioned stocks in the case of a crisis). The remaining two BCTs should be accounted for with EAS. This translates into a requirement for three additional EAS

in Europe (one already exists for the short notice rotational force, one required for the GRF, two required for the remaining two BCTs). The equipment sets could also be rotated or alternated with the APS for additional cost savings and efficiencies. The mobile strike force must pack a punch, must be mobile, and must be employable very quickly. These criteria suggest Armored BCTs (ABCTs) or Stryker BCTs (SBCTs) rather than light Infantry BCTs (IBCTs) because of their superior tactical mobility and greater firepower.⁷⁸

These additional units will achieve deterrence through denial, prevent a fait accompli, make a long war appear likely, as well as have some potential to intervene between Russian irregular forces and conventional forces, but still leave a few capability gaps. A Joint Task Force (JTF)-capable headquarters to employ and synchronize the additional BCTs and other force enablers will fill many of the remaining capability gaps. Currently a division forward command post from the RAF performs these functions.⁷⁹ A JTF-capable division headquarters would not only improve the *integration* of enhanced intelligence, interagency, and multi-national elements, it would also provide some organic enabling capabilities including intelligence gathering, intelligence analyzing, and communications. Furthermore, the headquarters would provide a framework under which additional forces from CONUS (surge forces) and potentially NATO forces could operate. This headquarters could provide the intelligence, analysis, and forces required to identify and potentially interdict subversion by contributing to a common understanding of the situation amongst the U.S. and its allies thereby reducing the uncertainty/confusion upon which hybrid war relies for success. The headquarters could also assist in interdicting the transition between Russian special and conventional

forces by anticipating the adversary's moves, coordinating with allies, disseminating information, and synchronizing the positioning of troops.

With these improved capabilities in place, the U.S. must also communicate its resolve to deny Russia an easy victory against any NATO nation, and even in some respects against non-NATO countries. The U.S. should maintain its clear, unambiguous communication strategy regarding NATO. The clearest communication of U.S. resolve with respect to NATO is the positioning of additional U.S. forces in the region. A complementary communication effort should emphasize that the size and positioning of these forces is not an offensive threat to Russia. Rather, these forces will be employed to assist NATO allies. President Obama exemplified this approach in his 2014 remarks in Estonia when he clearly reinforced the importance of each NATO member and the U.S. commitment to collective defense.⁸⁰ Integrating these additional units into the various national and NATO defense plans—both with civilian and military agencies would reinforce this message with actions.

The U.S. should not deter Russian aggression only against NATO countries but also elsewhere in Europe, areas that may be vulnerable like Sweden, Finland, or Georgia. While NATO is certainly a vital interest, the U.S. should remain ambiguous about its intentions in these other areas and treat any aggression against them on an individual basis. This approach provides the U.S. the greatest flexibility in its responses as well as accounting for other events that may be occurring simultaneously. Remaining ambiguous would create doubt in Russia about U.S. intentions and may cause them to pause before taking aggressive action.

Reinforcing communication and military deployment with effective diplomacy is absolutely critical. Diplomacy is the essence of true deterrence. The United States seeks to deter without employing its forces (thereby preserving its power); therefore its diplomatic effort must holistically encompass its other efforts by communicating an unambiguous message of the U.S. government's intent and commitment to defend NATO. Simultaneously, the diplomatic effort must remain ambiguous about the U.S.' likely actions against other Russian aggression. In order for the diplomatic effort to be effective, though, it must be backed by credible military force—the additional BCTs and the division headquarters provide this credibility.

Undoubtedly, stationing two additional BCTs and a division headquarters in Europe would incur additional costs, especially the initial start-up costs of military construction and infrastructure improvement. The cost of re-introducing and maintaining a division headquarters and two BCTs in Europe should be fairly simple to determine based on historical data. Based on the RAND study, the cost of two additional BCTs would likely be approximately \$1.8 billion annually.⁸¹ However, these costs should be compared to the current cost of rotating a RAF BCT on a regular basis (currently approximately every six months). Some estimate the cost of rotating a BCT as \$500 million per year, although this likely does not capture the full cost.⁸² The main difficulty, of course, is that costs are difficult to assess. It is difficult to properly account for the cost of the RAF's reduced readiness as a result of multiple transits, disrupted training cycles, family hardships, and overall turmoil resulting from multiple deployments.⁸³ It is also unclear how long the Army can continue to rotate the RAF. If the assumption that Russia will continue to be an adversary or at a minimum a competitor for the

foreseeable future holds true, then rotating forces indefinitely appears fiscally unwise. Finally, regardless of the cost, it is not clear that a rotational force effectively deters Russia.

Partially because of the increased initial costs associated with stationing additional U.S. forces in Europe, it is the clearest communication of U.S. commitment and will. Stationing additional units would remove any lingering doubt surrounding the U.S. willingness to intervene. Operationally, it would also strengthen relationships in the region and would similarly provide a greater awareness and ability to detect indicators and provide warnings. Identifying indicators earlier and providing clearer/less ambiguous warnings buys time to bring more forces into theater to fall in on the prepositioned equipment and deter. Having a JTF-capable division headquarters and the additional ABCTs decreases response times because of position but also because of their increased familiarity with the terrain, procedures, and coordination measures required for mission execution. A valuable by-product of additional forces in Europe is that it may increase the force capabilities of other nations through improved interoperability, so the mobile strike force would eventually require fewer U.S. forces.

Deterring Russia in Europe has attracted significant attention and debate lately. Even as this paper neared completion, the U.S. Department of Defense requested additional funding for Europe and the Commander of the U.S. European Command seemed to request consideration for additional forces to be stationed in Europe.⁸⁴ Russian aggression is simply too serious to ignore and too unpredictable to allow to run its course. Deterrence theory, successful Roman systems of deterrence, and select examples from the Cold War provide valuable insights into the U.S.' current situation.

The U.S. must take clear steps to increase its capability and credibility without needlessly provoking Russia. The U.S. must deter by strengthening its allies resistance to subversion, increasing its own ability to detect and identify irregular forces and their activities, and by fielding a capable conventional force with which the Russians would be forced to contend. By stationing an additional headquarters, combat enablers, capabilities, and armored forces in Europe the U.S. will position itself to deter Russian aggression regardless of its form—conventional attacks or subversion and obfuscation. Still, this increase in capability will prove insufficient if it is not combined with a commensurate increase in credibility, artfully expressed through effective diplomacy. Understanding, of course, that deterrence is imperfect, the U.S. must also be prepared for its failure.

Endnotes

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⁷² United States Army Europe, "Strong Europe."

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Hicks and Conley, *Evaluating Future U.S. Army Force Posture in Europe*, 2, 12; United States Army Europe, "Strong Europe."

⁷⁵ Hicks and Conley, *Evaluating Future U.S. Army Force Posture in Europe*, 12.

⁷⁶ The RAND wargames operated on the assumption that Russia could concentrate twenty-two maneuver (motorized, mechanized, and armored) battalions while NATO only fielded twelve, seven of which were very light. RAND concluded after multiple iterations that six to seven BCTs, composed of at least three armored BCTs would have a good chance of deterring Russia. Shlapak and Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank*, 5, 8.

⁷⁷ Shlapak and Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank*, 8.

⁷⁸ The National Commission on the Future of the Army recommended stationing one additional ABCT in Europe. National Commission on the Future of the Army, *Report to the President and the Congress of the United States* (Arlingotn, VA: National Commission on the Future of the Army, January 28, 2016), 52, <http://www.ncfa.ncr.gov/> (accessed March 18, 2016).

⁷⁹ United States Army Europe, "Strong Europe."

⁸⁰ President Barack H. Obama “Remarks by President Obama to the People of Estonia,” Nordea Concert Hall, Tallinn Estonia, September 3, 2014, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/03/remarks-president-obama-people-estonia> (accessed March 30, 2016).

⁸¹ RAND calculated \$2.7 billion for 3 BCTs which equates to \$.9 billion for 1 BCT and \$1.8 billion for 2 BCTs. Shlapak and Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO’s Eastern Flank*, 11.

⁸² LTC Gerald S. Thompson, email message to author, March 3, 2016. LTC Thompson is an officer familiar with the initial cost estimates of a rotational BCT.

⁸³ For a brief discussion of the disadvantages of rotational forces compared to forward stationed forces see the NCFA report. National Commission on the Future of the Army, *Report to the President and the Congress of the United States*, 52.

⁸⁴ The White House, “FACT SHEET: The FY 2017 European Reassurance Initiative Budget Request,” February 2, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/02/02/fact-sheet-fy2017-european-reassurance-initiative-budget-request> (accessed March 20, 2016); General Philip Breedlove, “U.S. European Command Posture Statement 2016,” February 25, 2016, <http://www.eucom.mil/media-library/article/35164/u-s-european-command-posture-statement-2016> (accessed March 20, 2016).