

# The Validity and Limitations of Tailored Deterrence

Captain NAKATANI Hiroshi

February 3, 2021

What is beyond doubt, however, is that we effectively deterred the Soviet Union from using military force to achieve its political objectives...We have become rather expert at deterrence: in the hands of such masters as Paul Nitze it made it possible for us to win the Cold War.

—Sir Michal Howard<sup>1</sup>

Deterrence, in common with love, happiness, and security, cannot be bought directly.

—Colin S. Gray<sup>2</sup>

[T]he assumption not that war is abnormal but that peace is difficult to achieve. If that becomes the future orientation of strategic thought, strategic assumptions can no longer provide a quick-fix solution to the tragic nature of human existence in international society.

—Philip Windsor<sup>3</sup>

## Introduction

The salience of deterrence diminished significantly as the Cold War ended with the demise of the Soviet Union. Deterrence was seemingly a solution of the past in the so-called “Unipolar Moment.” There are, however, no signs of losing its relevance to the present. It is still too premature to relegate deterrence to the dustbin of history; on the contrary, deterrence once again has come back to the frontline of world politics due to

---

<sup>1</sup> Michael Howard: “Lessons of the Cold War”, *Survival* Vol. 36 No. 4 (1994), p. 161, p. 164.

<sup>2</sup> Colin S. Gray: “Deterrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, *Comparative Strategy* Vol.19 No.3 (2000), p. 237.

<sup>3</sup> Philip Windsor: *Strategic Thinking: An Introduction and Farewell*, ed. Mats Bedal and Spyros Economides (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers., 2002), p. 181.

the rise of a wider array of threats from global terrorism, the so-called rogue states armed with Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), to the resurgence of peer competitors like Russia and China. The collapse of a bipolar international system has ushered in a more complex, volatile and multipolar world with more formidable challengers involved.

In the face of the new security environment, it is natural to wonder whether the Cold War deterrence framework developed in the United States (US) is still applicable to the new context. Shortly after the end of the Cold War, the distinguished British historian Sir Michael Howard boldly claimed that *we became masters of deterrence as noted above*. Should that bold assertion be correct, we will not need a new deterrence concept for the 21<sup>st</sup> century: that is, *we know how to deter adversaries with considerable confidence*. Is that true? Whether or not this claim is true remains unknown, there is one thing clear about Cold War deterrence theory developed in the US. It generally hinged on the false optimism and self-complacency that an adversary was essentially rational and would behave like the US (therefore, completely predictable). It also obsessively addressed one arithmetic question: How much is enough to deter a rational opponent? It completely set aside key contextual (in particular socio-cultural) factors. In short, US Cold War deterrence was essentially one-sided, overlooking the other side of the world.

It is important to note that deterrence is fundamentally relational and context specific. No one can assume that a foe's behaviour is given and foreseeable; he has an independent will to think, decide and act. Cold War deterrence theory tragically slighted this aspect. One important lesson learnt from US Cold War intellectual and policy discourse is that deterrence needs to be viewed from a broader perspective beyond the Cold War balance of terror terms.

While it is often suggested that a credible capability and resolve is essential for successful deterrence, this thinking is still one-sided unless one examines how a

potential aggressor perceives them and have one's threat fit the nature of him. For deterrence to succeed, therefore, it is imperative to *know your adversary* well: what he values, thinks and prefers as each actor is unique by nature.

With that in mind, the concept of “tailored deterrence” was devised to shift away from Cold War deterrence and address the new security challenges in a more nuanced and inclusive way. This concept is overdue and well needed to make a more informed judgement especially in the Indo-Pacific where strategic competition among regional powers is increasingly competitive. For them, deterrence has become practical or even everyday issues. Effective deterrence policies doubtlessly have tremendous benefits, settling a dispute without resort to physical violence and bloody costs. If successful at all, deterrence ultimately enable us to avoid war. That is what counts not least when the security environment is increasingly competitive and complex. Tailored deterrence offers us a framework to evaluate what it takes to deter specific adversaries.

To be sure though, tailoring deterrence does not guarantee deterrence success. Deterrence fails when an opponent chooses to go ahead and take the course of an unwanted action (even after the deterrence threat is issued, signalling the line not to cross). Bearing that in mind, this paper will examine to what extent the concept of tailored deterrence is valid and limited to developing a practical deterrence posture for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It aims to offer a framework to consider what it would take to deter adversaries.

### **What is deterrence?**

To begin with, it is important to explore the key term of the paper, *deterrence*. At a glance deterrence is often associated with nuclear weapons from the dire Cold-War days, stirring the spectre of mutual assured destruction (MAD). It was due to the scale of

unprecedented devastation nuclear weapons could cause, blurring the differences between victor and vanquished. With the advent of nuclear weapons, therefore, it became more crucial to avert (nuclear) war in the first place rather than to wage it.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the cornerstone of US Cold War strategy was deterrence against her sole rival, the Soviet Union—more precisely Soviet nuclear strikes against the US and her key allies.<sup>5</sup> While it is true that deterrence rose to great prominence during the Cold War, it was nothing new at all.<sup>6</sup> Humans have always practiced deterrence with a view to accomplishing a desirable state without actual use of force. As the brilliant British strategy analyst Lawrence Freedman suggests, “Liberating deterrence from its nuclear associations also made the concept analytically more interesting. Explicit nuclear threats were few and far between but in principle there were numerous instances of conventional deterrence, going well back into history.”<sup>7</sup> Exactly what is deterrence then?

Deterrence essentially seeks to preserve the status quo by the use of threats. It aims

---

<sup>4</sup> Bernard Brodie (ed): *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company., 1946); Robert Jervis: “Deterrence, Rogue States, and the U.S. Policy”, in T. V. Paul, Patrick M. Morgan and James J. Wirtz (eds): *Complex Deterrence: Strategy in the Global Age* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press., 2009), p. 136; Phil Williams: “Deterrence”, in John Baylis, et al., (eds): *Contemporary Strategy: Theories and Policies* (London: Croom Helm., 1975), p. 67.

<sup>5</sup> Philip Bobbitt: *Democracy and Deterrence* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), pp. 9-10; M. Elaine Bunn: “Can Deterrence Be Tailored ?” *Strategic Forum* No. 225, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University (January 2007), p. 2; John Foster Dulles: “Policy for Security and Peace”, *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 32 No. 3 (Apr 1953), p. 353; Jeffrey A. Larsen: “Extended Deterrence”, in Eric A. Croddy, James J. Wirtz and Jeffrey A. Larsen (eds): *Weapons of Mass Destruction: an Encyclopedia of Worldwide Policy, Technology, and History. Volume II* (California: ABC-CLIO., 2005), p. 123; Lawrence Freedman: “General deterrence and the balance of power”, *Review of International Studies* Vol. 15 No. 2 (Apr 1989), pp. 199, 206-207; Janne E. Nolan: *Guardians of the Arsenal: The Politics of Nuclear Strategy* (New York: Basic Books., 1989), p. 37; Andrew O’Neil: *Asia, the US and Extended Nuclear Deterrence: Atomic Umbrellas in the twenty-first century* (London: Routledge., 2013), pp. 16-20 ; Keith B. Payne: *Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky., 1996), p. 17, 31.

<sup>6</sup> Bernard Brodie: *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959, ppb. 1971), p. 271; Lawrence Freedman: *Deterrence* (Cambridge: Polity Press., 2004), pp. 6-9; Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke : *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy Theory and Practice* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 12; Richard Ned Lebow: “Thucydides and Deterrence”, *Security Studies* Vol. 16 No.2 (Apr/ Jun 2007), pp. 163-188; Jeffrey W. Knopf: “Three Items in One: Deterrence as Concept, Research Program, and Political Issue”, in T. V. Paul, Patrick M. Morgan and James J. Wirtz (eds): *Complex Deterrence: Strategy in the Global Age* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 33-34; Jeremy Stocker: *The United Kingdom and Nuclear Deterrence*, Adelphi Paper 386 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2007), p. 43.

<sup>7</sup> Lawrence Freedman: “Introduction—The Evolution of Deterrence Strategy and Research”, in Frans Osinga and Tim Sweijs (eds.) *NL ARMS Netherland Annual Review of Military Studies* (The Hague: T.M.C. Asser Press, 2020), p. 5, available at [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6265-419-8\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6265-419-8_1), accessed on 21 December 2020.

to discourage an adversary from undertaking a course of undesirable actions (e.g. the prevention of an armed aggression) that he might otherwise have done.<sup>8</sup> It is about inaction and non-event. In other words, deterrence clearly fails when something undesirable happens and it becomes necessary to implement the threatened action.<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that being discouraged is not a quantifiable science but a state of human mind. Deterrence is, thus, an arcane art of manipulating an aggressor's psychological perception of the threat and decision making.<sup>10</sup> More precisely deterrence is a psychological function of an attacker's fear and anticipation of the dire consequences of his own behavior, convincing him that the action in question may lead to a negative outcome he wants to avoid desperately.<sup>11</sup> For instance, the US Department of Defense defines deterrence as “[t]he prevention from action by fear of the consequences. Deterrence is a state of mind brought about by the existence of a credible threat of unacceptable counteraction.”<sup>12</sup>

As deterrence is essentially about influencing perceptions of adversaries by means of threats and keeping them from doing something undesirable, instruments for such a practice are not necessarily limited to military in nature, but they crucially include

---

<sup>8</sup> John Baylis: *Ambiguity and Deterrence: British Nuclear Strategy: 1945-1964* (Oxford: Oxford University Press., 1995), p.4; Andre Beaufre: *Deterrence and Strategy*, trans. R. H. Barry (London: Faber and Faber., 1965), p. 24; Barry Buzan: *An Introduction to Strategic Studies: Military Technology & International Relations* (New York: St. Martin's Press., 1987), p. 136, 139; Robert Jervis: “Deterrence and Perception”, *International Security* Vol. 7 No. 3 (Winter 1982/83), pp. 3-30; Patrick M. Morgan: *Deterrence: A Conceptual Analysis* (Sage Publications: London., 1977), p. 20

<sup>9</sup> Lawrence Freedman: “Deterrence: A Reply”, *Journal of Strategic Studies* Vol. 28 No.5 (2005), p. 790; Lawrence Freedman: “Framing Strategic Deterrence”, *The RUSI Journal* Vol. 154 No.4 (Aug 2009), p. 46.

<sup>10</sup> Andre Beaufre: *Strategy of Action*, trans. R. H. Barry (London: Faber and Faber., 1967), p. 12; Paul Bracken: *The Second Nuclear Age: Strategy, Danger, and the New Power Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press., 2013, ppb. 2013), p. 43; Bunn, “Can Deterrence Be Tailored?”, pp. 2-3; Colin S. Gray: “Gaining Compliance: The Theory of Deterrence and its Modern Application” *Comparative Strategy* Vol. 29 No. 3 (2010), p. 280; Patrick M. Morgan: *Deterrence Now* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 2003), p. 2; Robert Jervis “Introduction: Approach and Assumption”, in Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein (eds): *Psychology & Deterrence* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press., 1985, ppb. 1989), p. 1; Keith Payne: “Maintaining flexible and resilient capabilities for nuclear deterrence”, *Strategic Studies Quarterly* Vol. 5 No. 2 (2011), p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> Richard K. Betts: *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution., 1987), p. 3; Freedman, “General deterrence and the balance of power”, pp. 200-201; Gray, “Deterrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, p. 256; Jeffrey W. Knopff: “Wrestling with Deterrence: Bush Administration Strategy After 9/11”, *Contemporary Security Policy* Vol. 29 No. 2 (2008), p. 231; John J. Mearsheimer: *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983, ppb. 1985), p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> Department of Defense: *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Publication 1-02 (Washington, D.C. : Government Publication Office, 17 Oct 2017), p. 160.

political, diplomatic, economic, judicial and even cultural ones. Deterrence indeed can take on various forms.<sup>13</sup>

### **Categorising Deterrence**

While the forms of deterrence can be diverse, in general two fundamental approaches to deterrence are conceptually distinguishable: *deterrence by denial* (denying gains) and *deterrence by punishment* (threatening penalties).<sup>14</sup> On the one hand *deterrence by denial* seeks to deter a potential attacker by denying the chance and the ability to attain his objectives. That is, the adversary can be deterred by the prospect that his intended action will not succeed (failure).<sup>15</sup> In theory, if a deterrer possesses prevailing military capabilities, he can readily deny an attack and even overwhelm a potential aggressor in the case of an armed aggression, making it physically infeasible to achieve his objectives. Or in a more modest sense, the probability and anticipation that sufficient local forces can resist an enemy and frustrate his efforts alters the estimate of the success for any potential gains.<sup>16</sup> In principle the stronger can defeat the weaker as the former can deny the prospect of achieving the latter's intended action.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, deterrence by punishment seeks to deter a potential attacker by means of the threat of retaliation against an act of aggression. It rests on the capacity to inflict heavy reciprocal damage upon on the opponent.<sup>18</sup> The aggressor can succeed

---

<sup>13</sup> Knopff, "Wrestling with Deterrence: Bush Administration Strategy After 9/11", p.231; Patrick M. Morgan: "Reflections on Lawrence Freedman's 'Deterrence'", in Benedict Wilkinson and James Gow: *The Art of Creating Power: Freedman on Strategy* (London: Hurst & Company, 2017), p. 63; Michel Quinlan: *Thinking about Nuclear Weapons: Principles, Problems, Prospects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press., 2009), pp. 31-32; Joshua Rovner: "After Proliferation: Deterrence Theory and Emerging Nuclear Powers", in Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes (eds): *Strategy in the Second Nuclear Age: Power, Ambition and the Ultimate Weapon* (Washington, D.C.: George Town University Press., 2012), p. 24.

<sup>14</sup> On this point see Glenn H. Snyder: *Deterrence and Defense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press., 1961).

<sup>15</sup> Matthew Kroening and Barry Pavel: "How to Deter Terrorism", *The Washington Quarterly* Vol. 35 No.2 (2012), p. 23.

<sup>16</sup> Freedman, *Deterrence*, pp. 37-40; Karl P. Mueller: "Deterrence and Coercive Diplomacy", in John Andreas Olsen (ed): *Routledge Handbook of Air Power* (Abingdon: Routledge., 2018), p. 254.

<sup>17</sup> On this point see Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*.

<sup>18</sup> Albert Wohlstetter: "The Delicate Balance of Terror", *Foreign Affairs* Vol.37 No.2 (Jan 1959), p. 225, 230.

and achieve his goals but not without incurring a considerable price or pain. He will suffer more than he thinks he can gain and bear. In this respect, the destructive nature of nuclear weapons plays a decisive role; an opponent will likely fear nuclear retaliation not least because there was no effective defensive shield for nuclear weapons, and they can immediately destroy a whole country without first having to defeat his armed forces.<sup>19</sup>

While the two approaches to deterrence are conceptually distinguishable on paper, these are not mutually exclusive but complementary in practice. Deterrence, after all, “involve[s] anything that influences an actor not to do something based on the actor’s expectation it will get a negative result.”<sup>20</sup> The way it is employed essentially depends on the nature of adversaries and circumstances, not necessarily a specific capability or resolve. Deterrence is after all “the product of a relationship, it is not something one can generate unilaterally. And it is a variable; it is a shifting value.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Dominant Cold War Deterrence Theory and Its Serious Flaws**

As the preceding section has briefly noted, deterrence predates the Cold War. On the contrary, it has always been part of human practice. That said, it is true that deterrence theory was hugely elaborated during the Cold War.<sup>22</sup> It was due largely to the advent of the nuclear age that “turned strategy into deterrence, and deterrence into an esoteric intellectual exercise.”<sup>23</sup>

Another new phenomenon unique to the Cold War was that the civilian strategists

---

<sup>19</sup> Buzan, *An Introduction to Strategic Studies*, p. 136; Jervis, “Introduction: Approach and Assumption”, p. 2; Avery Goldstein: *Deterrence and Security in the 21st Century: China, Britain, France and the Enduring Legacy of the Nuclear Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press., 2000), p. 28.

<sup>20</sup> Knopff, “Three Items in One: Deterrence as Concept, Research Program, and Political Issue”, p. 41.

<sup>21</sup> Gray, “Deterrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, p. 256.

<sup>22</sup> George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy Theory and Practice*, p. 12.

<sup>23</sup> Henry Kissinger: *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster., 1994), p. 608.

assumed a dominant and influential position in US policy discourse.<sup>24</sup> A newly established think tank, the RAND Corporation, was the intellectual forefront of thinking about nuclear deterrence theory elaborated by such key figures as Albert Wohlstetter, William Kaufmann, Thomas Schelling and Herman Kahn.<sup>25</sup> These Rand researchers spearheaded the so-called “Golden Age of Deterrence Theory.”<sup>26</sup> This unique period between the 1950’s and 60’s witnessed profound intellectual innovations. Deterrence theory was thoroughly studied, nurtured and theorised at the time.<sup>27</sup>

The deterrence theory (including once the influential model of game theory) developed during this period rested predominantly on the assumption of “Rational Actor Model.” It regards a state as a utility-maximizing unitary actor (who always seeks to maximize utility, minimize losses and pursue self-interests) stemming from abstract economic propositions.<sup>28</sup> Rational deterrence theory (RDT) built on this model “dominated postwar academic thinking on strategic affairs” and “provided the intellectual framework of Western military policy in the same period as well.”<sup>29</sup> This

---

<sup>24</sup> Fred Kaplan: *The Wizards of Armageddon* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press., 1983); Quinlan, *Thinking about Nuclear Weapons*, p. 21. See also Stephen M. Walt: “The Renaissance of Security Studies”, *International Studies Quarterly* Vol.35 No.2 (Jul 1991), pp. 213-214; Williams, “Deterrence”, p. 67.

<sup>25</sup> John Baylis and John Garnett: *Makers of Nuclear Strategy* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1991); Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon*; Keith Krause: “Rational and Deterrence in Theory and Practice”, in Craig A. Snyder (ed): *Contemporary Security and Strategy* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press., 1999), p. 123; Austin Long: *Deterrence From Cold War to Long War: Lesson from Six Decades of RAND Research* (Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, 2008), chapter 2.

<sup>26</sup> Lawrence Freedman: *Strategy: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press., 2013), pp. 146-150; Colin S. Gray: *Modern Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press., 1999), p. 334; Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon*; Krause, “Rational and Deterrence in Theory and Practice”, p. 123; Douglas MacLean (ed): *The Security Gamble: Deterrence Dilemmas in the Nuclear Age* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld., 1984), p. ix; Walt, “The Renaissance of Security Studies”, pp. 214-215.

<sup>27</sup> Freedman, “Introduction—The Evolution of Deterrence Strategy and Research”, p.3; Colin S. Gray: *Strategic Studies : A Critical Assessment* (London: Aldwych Press., 1982), pp. 15-20 ; Howard, “Lessons of the Cold War”, p. 165; Joseph S. Nye, Jr and Sean M. Lynn-Jones: “International Security Studies: A report of a Conference on the State of the Field”, *International Security* Vol.12 No.4 (Spring 1988), p.9

<sup>28</sup> Christopher H. Achen and Duncan Snidal: “Rational Deterrence Theory and Comparative Case Studies”, *World Politics* Vol. 41 No. 2 (Jan 1989) , p. 150; Bradley A. Thayer: “Thinking about Nuclear Deterrence Theory: Why Evolutionary Psychology Undermines Its Rational Actor Assumptions”, *Comparative Strategy* Vol.26 No.4 (2007), pp. 311-323; Honore M. Catudal, Jr: *Nuclear Deterrence: Does it deter?* (London: Mansell Publishing Limited., 1985), p. 56; Michael Mccgwire: “Nuclear Deterrence”, *International Affairs* Vol.82 No.4 (July 2006), pp. 771-774; Robert Jervis: “Introduction: Approach and Assumption”, in Jervis, Lebow and Stein (eds), *Psychology & Deterrence*, p. 1, 5; Janice Gross Stein: “Threat Perception in International Relations”, in Leonie Huddy, et al.,(eds): *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed* (New York: Oxford University Press., 2013),p. 372; Wohlstetter, “The Delicate Balance of Terror”, pp. 230-231.

<sup>29</sup> Achen and Snidal, “Rational Deterrence Theory and Comparative Case Studies”, p. 143.

Cold War deterrence framework postulates that actors are expected to behave in a utility maximizing manner or “deterrence is founded upon the assumption that in deciding whether or not to be deterred policy-makers will react to threats by making very rational cost/ gain calculations.”<sup>30</sup> The destructive nature of nuclear weapons considerably simplified the calculations since a nuclear attack/ retaliation would readily outweigh the predicted costs and benefits of aggression.

Arguing along similar lines, some influential American theorists advocated their thought about the “nuclear revolution” maintaining that the sheer destructive capability of nuclear weapons transformed the whole idea of statecraft and strategy.<sup>31</sup> For them, nuclear weapons were, if anything, political weapons that had utility in non-use.<sup>32</sup> The advent of the nuclear age rendered traditional ideas of war obsolete, meaning there would be no winner in an all-out nuclear war. War could no longer be a continuation of politics by other means.<sup>33</sup> The often-cited Bernard Brodie’s statement captured the mood of the time: “Thus far the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars. From now on its chief purpose must be to avert them. It can have almost no other useful purpose.”<sup>34</sup> The annihilistic consequences of nuclear exchanges significantly raised the costs of war and generated the strong sense to avert war between nuclear powers regardless of their history, culture or character. The possession of nuclear weapons would have similar effects on all the countries.<sup>35</sup> In this sense,

---

<sup>30</sup> John Garnett: “Limited War”, in Baylis, et al., (eds), *Contemporary Strategy*, p. 114.

<sup>31</sup> On the Nuclear Revolution, see Robert Jervis: “The Nuclear Revolution and the Common Defense”, *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 101 No. 5 (1986), pp. 689-703; Robert Jervis: *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press., 1989) and Michael Mandelbaum: *The Nuclear Revolution: International Politics Before and After Hiroshima* (New York: Cambridge University Press., 1981). On the critical views of the nuclear revolution, see Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press: *The Myth of the Nuclear Revolution: Power Politics in the Atomic Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press.,2020) and Joshua Rovner: “Was There a Nuclear Revolution? Strategy, Grand Strategy, and the Ultimate Weapon”, *War on the Rocks* (6 March 2018), <https://warontherocks.com/2018/03/was-there-a-nuclear-revolution-strategy-grand-strategy-and-the-ultimate-weapon/>, accessed on 1 February 2021.

<sup>32</sup> Bernard Brodie: *War and Politics* (London: Cassell.,1974), p. 381.

<sup>33</sup> Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution*; George Kennan: *Memoirs: 1925-1950* (Volume I) (Boston: Little Brown., 1967), pp. 474-475; Mandelbaum, *The Nuclear Revolution*, p. 4; Andreas Herberg-Rothe: *Clausewitz’s Puzzle: The Political Theory of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press., 2007), p. 145.

<sup>34</sup> Brodie (ed), *The Absolute Weapon*, p. 76.

<sup>35</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz: “More may be better”, in Scott D, Sagan and Kenneth D. Waltz: *The Spread of Nuclear*

deterrence was somewhat easy and universal.<sup>36</sup>

A rational actor would avoid provocations that could lead to nuclear retaliation. This parsimonious concept basically suggests that the US rival could be readily deterred by the prospect of suffering severe nuclear punishment insofar as the US possessed sufficient nuclear capabilities to retaliate an aggressor after absorbing the enemy's first nuclear blow. In this sense, deterrence is easy, reliable and universal.<sup>37</sup> A rational actor would avoid provocations that could lead to nuclear retaliation. This parsimonious concept basically suggests that the US rival could be readily deterred by the prospect of suffering severe nuclear punishment insofar as the US possessed sufficient nuclear capabilities to retaliate against an aggressor after absorbing the enemy's first nuclear blow.

As far as RDT is concerned, regardless of whether decision makers actually act in a rational manner, *by default* both American and Soviet leaders are assumed to act according to the same rational principles.<sup>38</sup> In other words, RDT theoretically predicts how national leaders should think and behave in a predictable manner. In the face of a novel weapon with little historical guidance, the application of this deductive (rather ideal-type and ahistorical) theory might have been somewhat unavoidable. Those civilian strategists, however, did not address a fundamental question, why in the first place the Soviet Union would challenge the status quo, which would significantly affect Soviet strategic behaviours. Rather, they took it for granted that the Soviet Union was

---

*Weapons: An Enduring Debate* (New York: Norton & Company Inc, 2013), pp. 3-40.

<sup>36</sup> Keith B. Payne : "The Great Divide in US Deterrence Thought", *Strategic Studies Quarterly* Vol. 14 No. 2 (Summer 2020), pp. 17-21. See also Jeffrey W. Knopff: "The Fourth Wave in Deterrence Research", *Contemporary Security Policy* Vol. 31 No. 1 (2010), p. 8.

<sup>37</sup> Keith B. Payne: "The Great Divide in US Deterrence Thought", *Strategic Studies Quarterly* Vol. 14 No. 2 (Summer 2020), pp. 17-21. See also Jeffrey W. Knopff: "The Fourth Wave in Deterrence Research", *Contemporary Security Policy* Vol. 31 No. 1 (2010), p. 8.

<sup>38</sup> Achen and Snidal, "Rational Deterrence Theory and Comparative Case Studies."; William W. Kaufmann: "Limited Warfare", in William W. Kaufmann, et al., (eds) : *Military Policy and National Security* (Port Washington : Kennikat Press, 1972) , pp. 117-118; Keith B. Payne: *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001), pp. 10-11,17-20.

an expansionist by nature.<sup>39</sup>

Referring to RDT, Keith Payne, the Brilliant American nuclear strategist, contends that “[d]eterrence is easy...only because of the presumption at work here: virtually all state leaders will be rational *as defined*, and thus their expected utility calculations will be governed by familiar, predictable Western Parameters.”<sup>40</sup> He goes on to say that “[d]uring the Cold War confident conclusion about the reliability of nuclear deterrence were the norm.”<sup>41</sup> Additionally, a renowned political scientist Scott Sagan critically observes that “[t]he assumption that states behave in a basically rational manner is of course an assumption, not an empirically tested insight.”<sup>42</sup> If this assumption is completely false, it will likely invite a dreadful surprise. Given that deterrence is a matter of a country’s lethal business or even survival, it cannot be built on a false assumption.

At its core RDT also calls for three requirements: *capability*, *credibility* and *communication* (often summarised as three Cs).<sup>43</sup> The requirement of capability is straightforward in that a deterrer possesses the physical capability to harm an adversary, deny his goal and to reciprocate severely even after his surprise attack.

The credibility requirement is concerning the degree of credibility of a threat the deterring party can pose; that is, a resolve to implement such a threat. Credibility is more than a matter of making clear commitments and it must make a potential attacker aware that the threat is genuine otherwise one’s bluff may be called. In other words, it

---

<sup>39</sup> Walt, “The Renaissance of Security Studies”, p. 215. The famous top secret report, NSC 68, was written in line with such an estimate. On NSC 68, see *Foreign Relations of United States, 1950 National Security Affairs, Foreign Economic Policy* Vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.,1977) Document 85, pp. 234-292.

<sup>40</sup> Italics in original. Keith B. Payne: “Understanding Deterrence”, *Comparative Strategy* Vol.30 No.5 (2011), p. 395.

<sup>41</sup> Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence*, p. 17.

<sup>42</sup> Scott D. Sagan: “More Will Be Worse”, in Scott D, Sagan and Kenneth D. Waltz: *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate* (New York: Norton& Company Inc, 2013), pp. 41-81.

<sup>43</sup> Robert Jervis, ‘Introduction: Approach and Assumption’: *Psychology & Deterrence* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press., 1985, ppb 1989), pp.1-12; T.V. Paul: “Complex Deterrence: An Introduction”, in Paul, Morgan and Wirtz (eds), *Complex Deterrence*, p.2; Stocker, *The United Kingdom and Nuclear Deterrence*, pp. 43-44. See also U.S. Department of Defense: *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 11, 2011), p. xx.

must be clear that the readiness to fight is unquestionable and the deterrer has the will to inflict severe damage upon the adversary.

As for communication, one must clearly and effectively inform a potential attacker about one's capability and resolve. The message received must be loud and clear. Theoretically for deterrence to work, it must meet these three requirements.<sup>44</sup> Yet nothing in international politics is absolutely certain and meeting them all does not guarantee deterrence success in practice at all.<sup>45</sup> The three Cs approach is, if anything, dogmatic. Meeting all the requirements may not mean anything to a potential aggressor. The success of deterrence probably hinges upon the predisposition of specific actors and contingencies. There is no single answer to this conundrum. The US approach to deterrence completely overlooked the fact the adversary was not a static but voluntary actor driven by his own unique calculations and socio-cultural norms.<sup>46</sup> The strategist of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Colin Gray, uses a mundane analogy to explain this point. "Deterrence, in common with love, happiness, and security, cannot be bought directly."<sup>47</sup> That is, the choice is not ours but ultimately left with him. It is important to stress that the challenger is the one who solely assesses the exact deterrent effects of one's three Cs and decides whether or not to be deterred on the basis of his own rationality and threat perception. These key aspects of deterrence were deliberately left largely untouched.

On the basis of RDT the Cold War deterrence theory was, however, taken to the extreme or absurd degree of abstraction.<sup>48</sup> The conceptual height of the day was arguably "assured destruction" built on qualitative modelling of nuclear retaliation. The Pentagon posited that the Soviet Union would be deterred if the US could destroy

---

<sup>44</sup> William Kaufmann: "The Requirements of Deterrence", in William Kaufmann (ed): *Military Policy and National Security* (London: Kennikat Press., 1972), pp. 20-22; Williams, "Deterrence", pp. 70-76.

<sup>45</sup> Gray, "Gaining Compliance", pp. 278-279.

<sup>46</sup> Gray *Modern Strategy*, pp. 337-338; idem, "Deterrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", pp. 256-257; Morgan, "Reflections on Lawrence Freedman's 'Deterrence'", p. 59; Payne, *Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>47</sup> Gray, "Deterrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", p. 257.

<sup>48</sup> Freedman, *Deterrence*, p. 22; Gray, "Deterrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", p. 257.

approximately 30 percent of its industrial capacity and two-thirds of its population.<sup>49</sup> The important question of whether this destruction rate was truly unacceptable to the Soviet leaders was left unexamined. In effect, the figure outlined above had nothing to do with cost-benefit calculations of the Soviet leaders. Rather it was the simple output of Alain Enthoven's computer modelling.<sup>50</sup> As Gray severely criticises, "The underlying assumption was that the requirements of a stable deterrence can be calculated mathematically and hence shown graphically *with some precision*. Alas, the whole idea is nonsense. No force posture can guarantee success in deterrence."<sup>51</sup> He also contends that having more missiles does not automatically bolster deterrence as deterrence is the dialectic of two living wills.<sup>52</sup> This technical calculation of "how much is enough" without any serious consideration of the rival was, nevertheless, the heart of the strategic debate in the US during the Cold War.

In this respect, we now know that Soviets leaders did not really embrace the Cold-War concept of "MAD" widely supported by US policy makers (the concept of mutual nuclear vulnerability: the material conditions under which either side is incapable of successfully carrying out a disarming first strike against the other) although it is widely believed that it successfully prevented a nuclear World War III from breaking out.<sup>53</sup> It was because of its inherent sense of insecurity about surprise attacks deeply rooted in

---

<sup>49</sup> Alain Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith: *How Much is Enough?: Shaping the Defense Program 1961-1969* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 207-210.

<sup>50</sup> Alain Enthoven was an American Economist who served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Kennedy administration. See Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon*, p. 317.

<sup>51</sup> Italics in original. Gray, "Deterrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", p. 257.

<sup>52</sup> Colin S. Gray: "Deterrence and the nature of strategy", *Small Wars & Insurgencies* Vol.11 No.2 (2000), p. 18, 20.

<sup>53</sup> Catudal, *Nuclear Deterrence*, pp. 202-204; Stephen J. Cimbala: "The Cold war and Soviet military strategy", *The Journal Slavic Military Studies* Vol. 10 No. 3 (1997), pp. 25-55; Janne E. Nolan: *Guardians of the Arsenal: The Politics of Nuclear Strategy* (New York: Basic Books., 1989), p. 146; Richard Pipes: "Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War" *Commentary* (July 1977) pp. 21-34; Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence*, pp. 24-26; Jack Snyder: "The Concept of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor", in Carl G. Jacobsen (ed): *Strategic Power USA/ USSR* (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press., 1990), p. 7; V.D. Sokolovsky (ed)(Raymond L. Garthoff, ed and trans): *Military Strategy: Soviet Doctrine and Concepts* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publisher,1963), chapter 4. On the absence of the war, see for example John L. Gaddis "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System", *International Security* Vol.10 No. (Spring 1986), pp. 99-142; Kenneth N. Waltz: "More may be better", in Scott D, Sagan and Kenneth D. Waltz: *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate* (New York: Norton& Company Inc, 2013), pp. 3-40.

Russian history.<sup>54</sup> In fact it could be irrational and indeed *mad* to keep oneself unprotected and vulnerable to a massive nuclear attack and relied on the goodwill or rationality of the enemy, hoping that the other would follow suit without any firm evidence.<sup>55</sup> As scholar Christophe Meyer observes, “[T]hreat perceptions might be quite independent of a potential enemy or the communication of an enemy threat, but are influenced by a ‘lesson learned’ from past experiences. These in turn lead to the emergence of standards of appropriate or inappropriate behaviours and fears of certain scenarios or options being realized.”<sup>56</sup>

In effect, the Soviet Union always put great stress on war-fighting strategy and preferred defence and unilateral damage limitation (ensuring more defence than vulnerability: deterrence by denial than that by punishment) for the sake of survival of the communist regime.<sup>57</sup> The American concept of MAD was alien to the security-conscious Soviet leaders who firmly believed that the socialist states “must be prepared, above all, to wage war under conditions of the mass use of atomic weapons” as Marshal Sokolovsky articulated.<sup>58</sup> In short, they deemed MAD irresponsible as a strategy and never followed the Western rationality as opposed to the US false belief.<sup>59</sup> As far as the Soviet leadership was concerned, “the capability to wage nuclear war” was “a crucial element of its visible ‘deterrent.’”<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> Alexey Arbatov : “Understanding the US-Russia Nuclear Schism”, *Survival* Vol 59 No. 2 (2017), pp. 44, 47-49, 52-54; Joseph D. Douglass, Jr: Amoretta M. Hoeber: *Soviet Strategy for Nuclear War* (California: Hoover Institution Press., 1979), pp. 9-10, 14-15; Denis Healey: *The Time of My Life* (London: Michael Joseph., 1989), p. 246; Howard, “Lessons of the Cold War”, p. 161; David E. Hoffman: *The Dead Hand: Regan, Gorbachev and the Untold Story of The Cold War Arms Race* (London: Icon Books., 2009, ppb. 2011), p. 23; Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence*, pp. 23-26. See also David R. Jones: “Soviet Strategic Culture” in Jacobsen (ed), *Strategic Power USA/ USSR*, p.35, 38.

<sup>55</sup> Catudal, *Nuclear Deterrence*, pp. 191-192.

<sup>56</sup> Christophe O. Meyer: *The Quest for a European Strategic Culture: Changing Norms on Security and Defence in the European Union* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan., 2006), p.44.

<sup>57</sup> Freedman, “Deterrence: A Reply”, p. 794.

<sup>58</sup> Sokolovsky (ed), *Military Strategy*, p. 188.

<sup>59</sup> Catudal, *Nuclear Deterrence*, pp. 202-203, 210-211; Lawrence Freedman: *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan., 2003), chapter 17; Colin S. Gray: *Nuclear Strategy and National Style* (London: Hamilton Press, 1986); Roger Speed: *Strategic Deterrence in the 1980s* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1979), pp.9-11.

<sup>60</sup> Catudal, *Nuclear Deterrence*, p. 210.

Although the rational actor model treats a country as a unitary actor, it is self-evident that the decision-making cannot be reduced to a simple uniform process, and interpreting some signal or message from an aggressor is truly complex.<sup>61</sup> As former US defence practitioner Fred Ikle observes,

In the real world, nuclear forces are built and managed not by two indistinguishable ‘sides,’ but by very distinct governments and military organizations. These, in turn, are run by people, people who are ignorant of many facts, people who be gripped by anger or fear, people who make mistakes-sometimes dreadful mistakes.<sup>62</sup>

Decisions are not always shaped solely in the rational actor mode but they could be influenced by multiple factors such as “ideology, religion, cognitive process, government structure, internal politics and unique cultural drivers.”<sup>63</sup> Yet the potential benefits of investigating “the particular beliefs of the Soviet leadership in establishing the U.S. deterrence policies intended to control the Soviet Union generally was dismissed in favor of simply assuming that ‘sane’ Soviet leaders behave as U.S. leaders (‘mirror imaging’); they would, by definition, be deterrable because they would be rational. The deterrence tautology was firmly in play.”<sup>64</sup> The often forgotten and overlooked aspect of strategies is the significance of the local contexts: “[u]nderstanding the strategic choices that faced past decision-makers requires a grasp of the circumstances, opinions, and assumptions with which all strategists contend.”<sup>65</sup> A national security specialist

---

<sup>61</sup> David S. Yost: “NATO and Tailored Deterrence: Surveying the Challenges”, in Karl Heinz Kamp and David S. Yost (eds): *NATO and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Deterrence*, Forum Paper No. 8 (Rome: NATO Defense College, May 2009), pp. 18-20.

<sup>62</sup> Fred Charles Ikle: “Nuclear Strategy: Can There Be a Happy Ending?”, *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 63 No. 4 (Spring 1985), p. 810.

<sup>63</sup> Payne, “Understanding Deterrence”, p. 398. See also Stephen J. Cimbala: *Clausewitz and Escalation: Classical Perspective on Nuclear Strategy* (London: Frank Cass., 1991), p. 8 and James E. Nolan: *An Elusive Consensus: Nuclear Weapons and American Security After the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution., 1999), p. 19.

<sup>64</sup> Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence*, p. 18.

<sup>65</sup> Murray and Grimsley, “Introduction: On Strategy”, p. 6.

Harry Yarger maintains further that “[t]he role of belief systems, worldviews, and cultural perceptions of all the players is important in the formulation of strategy.”<sup>66</sup> Gray boldly claims that “all knowledge is local knowledge, all policy is made domestically, and every maker of policy and strategy has been encultured by a particular tradition and society.”<sup>67</sup> In a similar vein, the American deterrence authority Patrick Morgan points out that “the operational conceptions of deterrence and the specifics of both challenge and response are so elaborate, that it is inevitably lodged in the varying national and political character of conflicts, shaped by the social and cultural details.”<sup>68</sup>

While RDT says that states as rational actors make the most of lucrative opportunities, in reality they are not the same at all but complex and diverse. Their perceptions can in fact “diverge both from ‘objective reality’... and from the perceptions of other actors.”<sup>69</sup> The Cold-War American policy makers had trouble imagining that the rival might have different views. It was just comforting for US policy makers and intellectuals to pretend that an adversary would behave in the predictable manner.<sup>70</sup> This false complacency encouraged American policy makers to promote and embrace this “one-size-fits-all” or universal approach of deterrence. For that reason, RDT was the dominant model for this period.<sup>71</sup> Yet it did not take into account the fact that rationality could be different from actor to actor. Instead, it depended too heavily on deduction. It is truly questionable that the American concept of rationality is universal;

---

<sup>66</sup> Harry R. Yarger: *Strategic Theories For The 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Little Book on Big Strategy* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College., 2006), p.10. See also Raymond Cohen: “Intercultural Communication between Israel and Egypt: Deterrence Failure before the Six-Day War” *Review of International Studies* Vol. 14 No. 1 (Jan 1988), p. 1.

<sup>67</sup> Colin S. Gray: *The Second Nuclear Age* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), p.61.

<sup>68</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, pp. 285-286. e

<sup>69</sup> Jervis, “Deterrence and Perception”, p. 3.

<sup>70</sup> Thayer, “Thinking about Nuclear Deterrence Theory”, pp. 311-323; Jennifer Sims: “What is Intelligence? Information for Decision Makers”, in Roy Godson, Earnest R. May, and Gary Schmitt(eds): *U.S. Intelligence at the Crossroads: Agendas For Reform* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s., 1995), pp. 18-19; Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence*, pp. 10-11, 17,22-23, 36; Keith B. Payne: *The Great American Gamble: Deterrence Theory and Practice From the Cold War to the Twenty-First Century* (Fairfax: National Institute Press, 2008), pp. 190-194, 441; idem, “Understanding Deterrence”, pp. 393-397.

<sup>71</sup> Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence*, pp. 17-22; idem, *The Great American Gamble*, pp. 190-195; John Stone: *Military Strategy: The Politics and Technique of War* (London: Continuum., 2011), p. vii.

“irrationality’ may turn out to be simply behaviour that does not conform to one’s own culturally-conditioned preconceptions.”<sup>72</sup>

An obsession with the “Rational Actor Model” was in fact a mere reflection of US intellectual and cultural assumptions.<sup>73</sup> As the European security specialist Beatrice Heuser aptly puts it, “Westerners, applying culturally blind mirror-imaging, began to assume in the 1950s that the Soviet leadership must share this view.”<sup>74</sup> This point was also criticized by Gray that “American defense intellectuals have tended to believe the other cultures either share, or will come to share, American values and strategic ideas.”<sup>75</sup> Once the image of the Soviet Union as a rational actor was falsely established, it might have been quite difficult to reinterpret and correct it. People tend to process new information through their existing beliefs (what they have already believed) in order to avoid complexity, ambiguity and dissonance.<sup>76</sup>

It is actually not surprising that American understanding of the Soviet strategy was bounded: “US officials tend to conceive of the enemy in their own image...However, the Soviet leadership, which tends to view the international situation in terms of its own unique experience and worldview, can be counted on to respond in the same way our leaders would.”<sup>77</sup> There was a bizarre assumption that “nuclear danger could somehow be handled by the United State alone.”<sup>78</sup> Moreover, the British war philosopher Christopher Coker raises a critical question about homogeneity of states behaviours.

---

<sup>72</sup> Cohen, “Intercultural Communication between Israel and Egypt”, p. 3. See also Thayer, “Thinking about Nuclear Deterrence Theory”, pp. 311-323.

<sup>73</sup> Ken Booth: *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (London: Croom Helm., 1979), p. 190; Fritz W. Ermarth: “Contrasts in American and Soviet Strategic Thought”, *International Security* Vol. 3 No.2 (Fall 1978), p. 140; Robert Jervis: “Review: Deterrence Theory Revisited”, *World Politics* Vol. 31 No. 2 (Jan 1979), pp. 296-297; Gray, “National Style in Strategy”, pp. 44-45; Jack L. Snyder: *The Soviet Strategic Culture for Limited Nuclear Operations* (Santa Monica CA: Rand Corporation Report R-2154-AF, September 1977), p. 6; Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence*, pp. ix-xiii, 17.

<sup>74</sup> Beatrice Heuser: *The Evolution of Strategy: Thinking War from Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 2010), p. 359. See also Cimbala, *Clausewitz and Escalation*, p. 100 and Richard Smoke: *War: Controlling Escalation* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press., 1977), p. 275.

<sup>75</sup> Gray, “National Style in Strategy: The American Example”, p. 38. See also Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence*, pp. x-xi, 7, 23.

<sup>76</sup> Jervis, “Deterrence and Perception”, pp. 24-29; Stein, “Threat Perception in International Relations”, pp. 371-372.

<sup>77</sup> Catudal, *Nuclear Deterrence*, pp. 64. See also Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>78</sup> McGeorge Bundy: “To Cap the volcano”, *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 48 No. 1 (Oct 1968), p. 4.

He points to a fundamental but key aspect of international politics. “Societies have different cognitive styles, different cultural beliefs and different ways of perceiving the world and their own place within it.”<sup>79</sup> Abstract concepts designed by US civilian strategists neither addressed the reality nor understood how what the Soviet leaders interpreted its nuclear strategy.<sup>80</sup> As Ryan Henry, who served as Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy in the Bush administration, acknowledges, America’s “efforts to understand Soviet leaders and organizations during the Cold War were fraught with flaws” indeed.<sup>81</sup>

The civilian strategists slighted the simple fact that every country was unique.<sup>82</sup> Cold War deterrence theory was in fact “traceable to hubris, unwarranted expectations, and the need for convenience and comfort, however false.”<sup>83</sup> Consequently, the Cold War deterrence framework predicated on the erroneous assumptions about an adversary did not offer any empirical insights. What was missing in the strategic discourse in the US during the Cold War was the serious examination of the rival and an effort to know him. If the processes of interrupting one’s intended message passes through a psychological and cultural filter, a fine-tuned signal specific or tailored to an enemy is essential.<sup>84</sup> This obviously requires knowing one’s adversary in detail beyond simple rational cost-benefit calculations; otherwise misinterpretation and misunderstanding will likely occur. Yet throughout the Cold War, “rationality was often

---

<sup>79</sup> Christopher Coker: *The Improbable War: China, the United States and the Logic of Great Power Conflict* (London: Hurst., 2015, ppb. 2017), p. 12.

<sup>80</sup> Colin S. Gray: *Strategic Studies: A Critical Assessment* (London: Aldwych Press., 1982), pp. 136-141; Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon*, pp. 390-391; Patrick M. Morgan: “The US Approach to Deterrence” in Jacobsen (ed), *Strategic Power USA/ USSR*, p.3; Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence*, pp 18-19.

<sup>81</sup> Jason Sherman: “QDR will Advance ‘Tailored Deterrence’ For Wide-Ranging Threats”, *Inside the Navy* Vol. 18 No. 50 (December 19, 2005), p. 7.

<sup>82</sup> Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*; Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, p. 173; Walt, “The Renaissance of Security Studies”, p. 215, 217.

<sup>83</sup> Payne, *The Great American Gamble*, p. 441.

<sup>84</sup> Gray, *Strategic Studies : A Critical Assessment*, p. 140 ; Samuel P. Huntington: *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London: Simon & Schuster., 1997, ppb. 2002), p. 34; Jervis, “Deterrence and Perception”, p. 27; Joachim Krause: “Threat Scenarios, Risk Assessments, and the Future of Nuclear Deterrence”, in Stefanie Von Hlatky and Andreas Wenger (eds): *The Future of Extended Deterrence: The United States, NATO, and Beyond* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2015), p. 23.

described in narrow terms, without any reference to cultures other than the American culture.”<sup>85</sup> As the distinguished naval strategist Toshi Yoshihara and the American sea power specialist James Holmes asserts, “Rationality is a fragile thing, subject to countless intervening factors. In all likelihood competitors will assign different values to their national interests and political stakes.”<sup>86</sup>

After all, in a purely abstract sense, rationality is a key and useful factor, but the reality is far from the abstract world. Whether or not a country can be deterred is ultimately determined in the minds of the national leaders of the country.<sup>87</sup>

### **The Development of Tailored Deterrence**

While it is true that the end of the Cold War significantly reduced a global nuclear threat, to Francis Fukuyama’s disappointment it did not end history.<sup>88</sup> It was just the end of concentrating exclusively on a single adversary followed by the outset of multiple challenges in ever evolving security conditions.<sup>89</sup> Indeed a wider range of threats from global terrorism, WMD proliferation to the return of great power rivalry emerged in the new global security environment.<sup>90</sup> It was increasingly clear that a bipolar world shifted into a more complex, unstable and fluid world: “in comparison to the Cold War,

---

<sup>85</sup> Therese Delpech: *Nuclear Deterrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Lessons from the Cold War for a New Era of Strategic Piracy* (Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, 2012), p. 55.

<sup>86</sup> Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes: “Introduction”, in Yoshihara and Holmes (eds): *Strategy in the Second Nuclear Age*, p. 2.

<sup>87</sup> Colin S. Gray: *War, Peace and Victory: Strategy and Statecraft for the Next Century* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), p. 122.

<sup>88</sup> Francis Fukuyama: *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992).

<sup>89</sup> Bunn, “Can Deterrence Be Tailored?”, p. 2; Kroening and Pavel, “How to Deter Terrorism”, p. 23.

<sup>90</sup> Some scholars call the post-cold war period the Second Nuclear Age. On this point see John Baylis: “The Concept of ‘Tailored Deterrence’ in the ‘Second Nuclear Age’”, *St Anthony’s International Review* Vol. 4 No. 2 (Feb 2009), pp. 10-11; Bracken, *The Second Nuclear Age*, pp. 1-14; Victor D. Cha: “The second nuclear age: Proliferation pessimism versus sober optimism in South Asia and East Asia”, *Journal of Strategic Studies* Vol. 24 No. 4 (2001), pp. 79-120; Gray, *The Second Nuclear Age*; Payne, *Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age*; Brad Roberts: *The Case for U.S. Nuclear Weapons in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press., 2016), pp. 14-21; Ashley J. Tellis, Abraham M. Denmark and Travis Tanner (eds): *Strategic Asia 2013-14 Asia in the Second Nuclear Age* (Washington D.C.: The National Bureau of Asian Research., 2013). See also Sherman, “QDR will Advance ‘Tailored Deterrence’ For Wide-Ranging Threats”, pp. 7-8.

U.S. deterrence goals will have to be expanded: the list of players to be deterred has to be expanded, as do the types of behavior to be prevented.”<sup>91</sup>

Concomitantly, it was also increasingly obvious that the Cold War deterrence framework was insufficient and inapplicable to the new circumstances, stimulating more discussion of deterring new threats notwithstanding initial confidence in Cold War deterrence because it worked in the Cold War (the Third World War being avoided), it should work in the new era too.<sup>92</sup> It was not sensible to assume that the Cold War framework that was focused principally on the Soviet Union could be used against the lesser threats emerging from the new environment. As Payne accurately observes, “Most of what we then believed about deterrence is of questionable value now because the stakes, the opponents, the context, and our deterrence goals now differ so dramatically from those of the Cold War.”<sup>93</sup> Simply put, a new era required a new deterrence concept.<sup>94</sup>

As such the end of the Cold War created an opportunity for US intellectuals and policy makers to critically review Cold War deterrence such as one elaborated by Payne.<sup>95</sup> One of the crucial lessons drawn from the Cold War academic debates is “any deterrence strategy has to be fine-tuned to the respective threat scenario.”<sup>96</sup> In the words of Gray, “deterrence is always specific”<sup>97</sup> and “one needs to understand the enemy culturally.”<sup>98</sup>

As noted above, the foundation of the Cold War framework, however, rested on a unitary rational actor and largely failed to take into account of the impact of non-

---

<sup>91</sup> Payne, *Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age*, p. 17.

<sup>92</sup> Keith B. Payne: “The Great Divide in US Deterrence Thought”, *Strategic Studies Quarterly* Vol. 14 No. 2 (Summer 2020), p. 18.

<sup>93</sup> Keith B. Payne: “The Nuclear Posture Review and Deterrence for a New Age”, *Comparative Strategy* Vol. 23 No. 4-5 (2004), p.411.

<sup>94</sup> Kenneth Waltz famously argued otherwise. On his argument, see Waltz, “More may be better”, pp. 3-40.

<sup>95</sup> See for example Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence*; idem, *The Great American Gamble*.

<sup>96</sup> Krause, “Threat Scenarios, Risk Assessments, and the Future of Nuclear Deterrence”, p. 23. See also Gray, “Gaining Compliance”, p. 281 and Payne, *Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age*.

<sup>97</sup> Gray, “Deterrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, p. 259.

<sup>98</sup> Gray, “Gaining Compliance”, p. 278.

material or intangible factors (e.g. value systems, mindsets and culture) on an adversary's decision calculus. As we have seen, what was obviously missing in the Cold-War strategic discourse in the US was the serious examination of the rival and an effort to know him in detail. For successful deterrence, at least one needs to accurately understand an adversary's perception of expected costs and benefits of a contemplated course of action and to influence them.<sup>99</sup> It also depends on motivations, preferences, values, interests, reactions and perceptions unique to the challenger. In the case of world politics, non-material variables like national honour, interests and reputation are also consequential.<sup>100</sup> Gray makes a critical observation that “[e]nemy perceptions of political determination generally are more important for deterrence than is military muscle per se.”<sup>101</sup>

It was also not surprising that Payne castigated Cold War deterrence for its “one-size-fits-all” or “universally applicable approach.” He reiterated it was inadequate and a new approach to deterrence was crucial in the post-Cold War environment. Cold War deterrence theory does not provide any practical guidance supported by empirical evidence to the new challenges.<sup>102</sup> Instead, he proposed a framework for “tailoring deterrence” to specific opponents and contingencies in 1996.<sup>103</sup> Its key principle is quite straightforward: *know your enemy* as each actor is unique driven by an independent will. Tailored deterrence requires a deterrer to have his threats fit the nature of a specific opponent and situation on the basis of the “strategic profile” of the adversary.<sup>104</sup>

---

<sup>99</sup> Kroening and Pavel, “How to Deter Terrorism”, p. 22; Jervis, “Review: Deterrence Theory Revisited”, pp. 306-308; idem, “Deterrence and Perception”, p. 3; Thomas M. Nichols: *No Use: Nuclear Weapons and U.S. National Security* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press., 2014), p. xi;

<sup>100</sup> Cohen, “Intercultural Communication between Israel and Egypt”, p. 3; Freedman, “Deterrence: A Reply”, p. 790; Jervis, “Deterrence and Perception”, p. 6; Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, p. 164; Payne, “Understanding Deterrence”, p. 399; Mueller, “Deterrence and Coercive Diplomacy”, p. 254.

<sup>101</sup> Gray, *War, Peace and Victory*, p. 121.

<sup>102</sup> Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence*, p. 103; idem, *The Great American Gamble*, p. 441.

<sup>103</sup> Payne, *Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age*, pp. 128-129, 156-157; idem, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence*, pp. 102-103, 183; idem, *The Great American Gamble*, pp. 368-371.

<sup>104</sup> As Payne acknowledges, this approach is nothing new and it certainly originates from Sun Tzu's key axiom of “Know your enemy.” See Payne, *Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age*. pp. 123-129.

Payne stresses the importance of this approach as follows:

Unless one knows how the opponent makes decision, what factors that particular opponent will take into account in its decision-making and how they will be weighted...grandiose and confident claims can be based on little more than how we believe an opponent 'should' behave if it is as rational and sensible as we suppose. Little certainty can be attached to any such prediction.<sup>105</sup>

As a German security specialist Joachim Krause summarises well, the concept is a serious attempt to address the flaws in RDT and “understand deterrence not in the sense of massive nuclear retaliation but to give it a new and more differentiated meaning in a world with threats that are hardly comparable to those of the Cold War era.”<sup>106</sup>

Indeed, knowing an adversary requires the US to move away from the lamentable universal rational actor model embraced in the Cold War to a case-specific approach, calling for much closer attention to a specific adversary and context since there is no universal prescription for successful deterrence. Rather, “[t]he feasibility of deterrence varies from case to case. Strategies to deter must vary so as to fit the particular case. One size does not fit all cases.”<sup>107</sup> As noted above, the Cold War deterrence framework was particularly obsessed with the capability or “how-much-is-enough” calculus. By contrast “tailored deterrence” requires a deterrer to know a specific adversary in detail, so rather its approach is “how much you know your opponent.”<sup>108</sup> As Ryan Henry explains, “The key thing here is understanding an alien culture, and an alien way of

---

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, pp. 46-47.

<sup>106</sup> Krause, “Threat Scenarios, Risk Assessments, and the Future of Nuclear Deterrence”, p. 23.

<sup>107</sup> Gray, “Gaining Compliance”, p. 281. See also Payne, *Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age*, p. 117.

<sup>108</sup> Bunn, “Can Deterrence Be Tailored?”, pp. 1-8; Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence*, pp. 188-189.

thinking, an alien value system.”<sup>109</sup>

Notably today Payne’s concept of “tailored deterrence” is widely prevalent and embraced by the US and Western defence community.<sup>110</sup> That being said, the idea of tailored deterrence was not formally endorsed in the US until the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century. The shock of 9/11 and the emergence of the so-called “Axis of Evil” drastically changed the atmosphere.<sup>111</sup> Knowing other cultures for effective deterrence has become far more consequential owing to this tragedy and the subsequent prolonged conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq; “a cultural perspective helps in understanding the characteristics of each group and the differences among groups.”<sup>112</sup> Moreover, “[a]n understanding of cultural influences also can shed light on how U.S. decision makers and planners perceive reality and make judgments in ways that affect the ability to deter others; awareness of how culture influences U.S. behavior and how others perceive U.S. actions can be critical to the effectiveness of a deterrent strategy.”<sup>113</sup> When faced with novel threats and unfamiliar opponents, logically an initial step one needs to take is to know them carefully.

In accordance with this line of logic, it was the Bush administration that formally outlined the concept of “tailored deterrence” for the first time to address distinctive security challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Under the Bush administration, Payne acted as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Forces Policy and was a leading architect of the 2001 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR).<sup>114</sup> According to Payne, the Bush

---

<sup>109</sup> Sherman, “QDR will Advance ‘Tailored Deterrence’ For Wide-Ranging Threats”, p. 7.

<sup>110</sup> Since 2006, the Pentagon formally has started to employ the concept of tailored deterrence. See Department of Defense: *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, D.C. : US Government Printing Office, 2006) available at <https://archive.defense.gov/qdr/report/Report20060203.pdf>, accessed on 25 June 2020. See also Keith B. Payne: “Nuclear Deterrence In a New Era: Applying ‘Tailored Deterrence’”, *National Institute For Public Policy Information Series Issue No. 431* (May 21 2018), p. 5 available at <https://www.nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/IS-431.pdf>, accessed on 16 July 2020.

<sup>111</sup> Bunn, “Can Deterrence Be Tailored ? ”, p. 2; Sean P. Larkin: “The Limits of Tailored Deterrence”, *Joint Force Quarterly* Vol. 63 (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2011), p. 51.

<sup>112</sup> Payne “Understanding Deterrence”, p 409. See also Jeffrey S. Lantis: “Strategic Culture and National Security Policy,” *International Studies Review* Vol. 4 No. 3 (Autumn 2002), pp. 87-113.

<sup>113</sup> Payne “Understanding Deterrence”, p 409.

<sup>114</sup> Anna Peczeli: “The Trump Administration’s Nuclear Posture Review : Back to Great Power Competition”, *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament* Vol. 1 No.2 (2018), p. 240 ; Roberts, *The Case for U.S. Nuclear*

administration incorporated the ideas of tailored deterrence into the NPR report and shifted its attention away from the one-size-fit-all approach to more flexible and wider range of deterrent options and defensive measures including long-abandoned missile defence capabilities. It formerly sought to reduce dependence on nuclear threats.<sup>115</sup> Instead it focused more on non-nuclear options as the latter were more adaptable to the new environment. As a result, “the NPR heralded a needed paradigm shift away from the Cold War concept of deterrence stability, and toward a much more adaptive approach.”<sup>116</sup>

Reflecting key ideas in the 2001 NPR, the report of 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR) further enunciated US commitments to tailor deterrence to the new circumstances. The 2006 QDR demanded “the forces and capabilities needed for deterrence, reflecting a shift from ‘one size fits all’ deterrence toward more tailorable capabilities to deter advanced military powers, regional WMD states, or non-state terrorists.”<sup>117</sup> Later that year the US Defense Department produced *Deterrence Operations Joint Operating Concept* (version 2.0) that was basically in line with the QDR, calling for understanding specific adversaries and strategies tailored to their perceptions, values and interests.<sup>118</sup>

Although it placed a great priority on non-proliferation and nuclear security, the basic ideas of tailored deterrence were reaffirmed by the Obama administration. For instance, it adopted a tailored deterrence approach to address specific regional challenges. The 2010 QDR also stressed as follows:

---

*Weapons in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, pp. 21-22. The 2001 NPR report is classified.

<sup>115</sup> Sherman, “QDR will Advance ‘Tailored Deterrence’ For Wide-Ranging Threats”, p. 8.

<sup>116</sup> Payne, “The Nuclear Posture Review and Deterrence for a New Age”, p.409.

<sup>117</sup> Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report(2006)*, p. 4,

<sup>118</sup> Department of Defense : *Deterrence Operations Joint Operating concepts*, Version 2.0 (Washington, D.C. : Department of Defense, December 2006), available at [https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/concepts/joc\\_deterrence.pdf?ver=2017-12-28-162015-337](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/concepts/joc_deterrence.pdf?ver=2017-12-28-162015-337), accessed on 25 June 2020.

Credibly underwriting U.S. defense commitments will demand tailored approaches to deterrence. Such tailoring requires an in-depth understanding of the capabilities, values, intent, and decision making of potential adversaries, whether they are individuals, networks or states. Deterrence also depends on integrating all aspects of national power.”<sup>119</sup>

More recently, the Trump administration fully adopted a tailored deterrence approach and reflected it throughout its NPR of 2018. Aware of the return of great power politics it dedicated virtually two chapters to tailored deterrence. Therefore, the tailored approach to deterrence has become a common practice in the US national security strategy.<sup>120</sup>

Overall, the intuition behind tailored deterrence is quite straightforward as each actor varies and has a unique characteristic. As a defence analyst Jerrold Post aptly puts it, “There is ‘no one size fits all’ deterrence, and what deters one adversary can be an incitement for another.”<sup>121</sup> In a similar vein, as one defence analyst observes,

Every case has unique combinations of features that make it vital for strategists to specify whom they intend to deter from doing what, and under what conditions. Different adversaries will often call for different deterrence approaches even in response to seemingly similar threats, and deterring the same opponent from doing several different things may call for as many different coercive strategies. Moreover, until these strategies are put to the test, and often even afterward, the question ‘how much is enough?’ to deter or compel will

---

<sup>119</sup> Department of Defense : *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, D.C. : Department of Defense, February 2010), p. 14, available at <https://archive.defense.gov/qdr/QDR%20as%20of%2029JAN10%201600.pdf>, accessed on 25 June 2020. For the Obama administration’s nuclear and deterrence posture, see also Department of Defense : *Nuclear Posture Review* (Washington, D.C. : Department of Defense, April 2010), available at [https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/defenseReviews/NPR/2010\\_Nuclear\\_Posture\\_Review\\_Report.pdf](https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/defenseReviews/NPR/2010_Nuclear_Posture_Review_Report.pdf), accessed on 26 June 2020.

<sup>120</sup> Department of Defense : *Nuclear Posture Review* (Washington, D.C. : Department of Defense, February 2018), available at <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Feb/02/2001872886/-1/-1/2018-NUCLEAR-POSTURE-REVIEW-FINAL-REPORT.PDF>, accessed on 26 June 2020.

<sup>121</sup> Jerrold M. Post: “Actor-Specific Behavioral Models of Adversaries: A Key Requirement for Tailored Deterrence” in Barry R. Schneider, Patrick D. Ellis (eds): *Tailored Deterrence: Influencing States and Groups of Concern* (Alabama: USAF Counterproliferation Center, May 2011).

not be one that can be answered with precision.<sup>122</sup>

With that in mind, deterrence must be reconstructed in order to meet new challenges today. Now we will consider what it means to tailoring deterrence.

### **The Validity of Tailored Deterrence**

Tailored deterrence, by definition, assumes that each actor is unique and distinct, naturally corresponding to threats differently. It demands that a deterrence posture be tailored to take into account his characteristics and the unique context in which he is placed.<sup>123</sup> In view of this more actor or case specific approach, tailored deterrence has several valid points. That said, some of those might be a double-edged sword: that is, they can be both a strength and a weakness, which will be discussed in the next section, but first things first, we will explore the validity of tailored deterrence.

***More Flexible Approach:*** This is an obvious feature of tailored deterrence. Since tailored deterrence attempts to identify “the various factors...that may be critical to the functioning of deterrence and coercive threats in a specific case”, its approach to deterrence is non-static and case-specific.<sup>124</sup> It broadens deterrence threats encompassing both deterrence by denial and deterrence by punishment and considering the full spectrum of capabilities—both the wide range of military (space, cyber and conventional) and non-military (diplomacy, economy and information) capabilities and instruments tailored to the requirements of a range of contingencies and types of adversaries. With those available means, it certainly helps to develop a flexible deterrence posture.<sup>125</sup>

---

<sup>122</sup> Mueller, “Deterrence and Coercive Diplomacy”, p. 254

<sup>123</sup> Payne, “The Great Divide in US Deterrence Thought”, p. 3,32.

<sup>124</sup> Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence*, p. 103.

<sup>125</sup> Bunn, “Can Deterrence Be Tailored?”, p. 1; Krause, “Threat Scenarios, Risk Assessments, and the Future of

Deterrence should not be considered only in military (and especially the balance of terror) terms as in the case of the Cold War, but also in broader terms. As it is ludicrous to employ a nuclear instrument to deter a local terrorist group from carrying out terrorism, one will select more appropriate capabilities and means to deter the targets. If we limit ourselves to a fixed option, it will be absolutely challenging to address a black-swan event. By nature, tailored deterrence is designed to flexibly adopt a deterrence approach to a changing threat environment as well as a diversity of foes. Needless to say, greater flexibility with a broad range of options at one's disposal appears essential to keep deterrence credible in a more fluid and complex context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>126</sup>

***Think Through Deterrence:*** This point may be unclear first, but it will be clear when we discuss why deterrence is non-static and non-linear. As noted above, the key principle of tailored deterrence is to *know your adversary*, and based on detailed knowledge of him, a deterrence strategy is formulated to have one's threat fit the nature of him. To be sure, this approach itself is nothing new. One US military thinker is quite critical, claiming that tailored deterrence seems "old wine in a new jar" since it just reaffirms classical postulates of strategy.<sup>127</sup> In principle strategies are always devised with reference to a specific adversary.<sup>128</sup>

Yet, Cold War deterrence theory totally neglected this point and was taken to an extremely abstract level. It may sound less obvious as a valid point, but it is important to note that tailored deterrence requires us to think through deterrence predicated on an assumption that deterrence is demanding and difficult to achieve and sustain, and

---

Nuclear Deterrence", p. 35; Payne, "The Nuclear Posture Review and Deterrence for a New Age", p.418; Yost, "NATO and Tailored Deterrence: Surveying the Challenges", p. 16.

<sup>126</sup> Baylis, "The Concept of 'Tailored Deterrence' in the 'Second Nuclear Age'", pp. 12-13; Freedman, "Introduction – The Evolution of Deterrence Strategy and Research", pp. 7-8; Paul, "Complex Deterrence", pp. 7-9.

<sup>127</sup> Larkin, "The Limits of Tailored Deterrence", p. 52. See also Patrick K. Morgan: "Evaluating Tailored Deterrence", in Kamp and Yost (eds), *NATO and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Deterrence*, , pp. 32-33.

<sup>128</sup> Andre Beaufre: *An Introduction to Strategy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), p.22.

there are no given requirements for successful deterrence.<sup>129</sup> As Wohlstetter aptly puts it, “deterrence...is neither assured nor impossible but will be the product of sustained intelligent effort and hard choices, responsibly made.”<sup>130</sup> He asserts further that “the requirements for deterrence are stringent.”<sup>131</sup> As such, we need to treat deterrence with great care and consider what constitutes better informed deterrence threats.

When thinking out deterrence, it may be natural to pay heed to how to deter an adversary effectively. During the Cold War, a common definition of deterrence was “the manipulation of an adversary’s estimation of the cost-benefit calculation of taking a given action.”<sup>132</sup> Yet what do costs and benefits actually mean to potential opponents? Needless to say, an understanding of the concept of cost-benefit is different from actor to actor. Each actor has a different level of unacceptable costs and loss of benefits. To deter an enemy requires a deterring party to unfold the expected cost-benefit calculation. There is also a possibility that an enemy will be deterred for a reason that has nothing to do with the enemy’s cost-benefit calculation. Freedman similarly observes that “[w]ith deterrence the objective is inaction, Inaction can have many causes, including a lack of interests in action. So even when inaction is the result of anticipating another’s potential responses this may not be because of any overt threats.”<sup>133</sup> Deterrence is doubtlessly non-static and non-linear.<sup>134</sup>

The same goes for the common requirements of deterrence. During the Cold War, the three Cs were largely taken for granted. In fact to date, it is widely believed that successful deterrence requires them.<sup>135</sup> Responsible strategists of course must question

---

<sup>129</sup> Wohlstetter, “The delicate balance of terror”, pp. 211-234; Payne, “The Great Divide in US Deterrence Thought”, p. 28.

<sup>130</sup> Wohlstetter, “The delicate balance of terror”, p. 211.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, p.211.

<sup>132</sup> Long, *Deterrence From Cold War to Long War*, p. 7.

<sup>133</sup> Freedman, “Deterrence: A Reply”, p. 790.

<sup>134</sup> Gray, “Deterrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, pp. 257-258.

<sup>135</sup> Stocker, *The United Kingdom and Nuclear Deterrence*, pp. 43-44. See also U.S. Department of Defense: *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 11, 2011), pp. xx-xxii, available at <https://www.benning.army.mil/mssp/security%20topics/Global%20and%20Regional%20Security/content/pdf/jp3>

this critically. What do we mean by meeting the three Cs? They imply meeting them leads to successful deterrence. Yet, does every deterrent situation require the exactly same requirements? It is important to stress that the challenger is the one who solely assesses the exact deterrent effects of the three Cs and decides whether or not to be deterred on the basis of his own rationality and threat perception. At best, these general requirements of deterrence are ambiguous in practice. As we have seen, what the US believed to deter the Soviet Union was not really something he deemed vital. This suggests that the requirements for deterring a specific adversary be fully examined and always revised in light of his characteristics and the context.

Should adversaries be all the same, successful deterrence would require the same elements. It would be just a simple task. They are, however, different, and the requirements, therefore, have to be tailored to a specific enemy. We need to think through what constitutes effective deterrence that varies from case to case. Tailored deterrence inevitably requires us to analyse carefully what it takes to deter a specific adversary, posing several critical questions: when a foe faces a threat of force, how will he react? Will he react in the predictable or totally unpredictable way? What is a sufficient capability? What is a credible threat? How can one deliver a desirable message to an adversary and make it understood by him without raising any question and provoking counterproductive reaction? These questions force us to face the severe reality that deterrence is not easy. The requirements for successful deterrence are not given. Tailored deterrence essentially prompts us to think through what can ensure deterrence success. In short, we need to treat deterrence with greater care.

***Know Yourself***: Thinking out deterrence will naturally lead to knowing a specific adversary, for deterrence being relational and context based. Once we know him, we need to consider how to deter the target.<sup>136</sup> Sun Tzu famously contends that “know the

---

[0.pdf](#), accessed on 25 August 2020.

<sup>136</sup> Paul I. Bernstein : “Post-Cold War US Nuclear Strategy”, in Jeffrey A. Larsen and Kerry M. Kartchner (eds):

enemy and know yourself; your victory will never be endangered.”<sup>137</sup> This claim is of course overexaggerated. Knowing your enemy and yourself, nevertheless, will likely increase the chance of deterrence success if not absolute.<sup>138</sup> When considering deterrence, it means thoroughly and critically examining what you can do (ability), what options you have (means) and how it can be employed(ways) to the adversary in question.

It is important to reiterate that deterrence is concerning an adversary’s anticipation of dire consequences of his action. Deterrence is, thus, a combination of any means available to influence an enemy and purposefully create this anticipation upon him. Tailored deterrence requires us to think out what we have and how to employ them for the purposes of deterrence. Through the critical and inclusive examination of ourselves, it may be possible to assess and judge that what we think we are doing right turns out to be a poor choice; meanwhile we may come up with a newer and better approach to deter an adversary with some existing assets but underutilized before. In other words, knowing yourself helps us to assess what we do not know yet about our enemy and ourselves and create an opportunity to revise the current deterrence posture. To adjust capabilities and means to a specific adversary sounds sensible, but it is always possible that a deterrence posture is not thought through. For that reason, it will not produce the desired effect. This can be avoidable if we make serious commitments to investigate an adversary, think through deterrence and face ourselves.

### **Limitation of Tailored Deterrence**

Tailored Deterrence is not a perfect solution. Nor is it immune from criticism. It

---

*On Limited Nuclear War in the 21st Century* (Stanford : Stanford University Press, 2014), pp. 102-114.

<sup>137</sup> Sun Tzu: *The Art of War*, ed. and tans. Samuel B. Griffith (Oxford: Oxford University Press., 1963), p. 129.

<sup>138</sup> Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence*, p. 114.

certainly has some limitations as with any strategy. Tailored deterrence is also much easier said than done “*because understanding how to adjust the character of deterrence strategies in practice across different adversaries and contexts is a significant challenge.*”<sup>139</sup> This is probably true to any country regardless of whether it is small or large, but especially so for smaller powers since their available resources are limited. It can also be too complicated and broad in practice. Know your adversary is fine, but exactly how can you know him? How can you judge whether the gathered information and an understanding of him is refined and correct? When it comes to evaluating an enemy, we might also perceive him from a biased image or ethnocentric view.

***Vast Resource and too Complicated and Broad:*** Flexibly adjusting deterrence approach to a specific adversary and situation is sound. That said, tailoring deterrence goes through a complicated process by tailoring to each unique adversary and contingency and adopting a variety of strategic instruments. If the process become too complicated, it also gets too hard to devise a well-tailored deterrence posture in a timely manner. If we do not limit ourselves, we will end up posing too many and broad questions and easily get lost.<sup>140</sup> There might be too many factors to examine if we want to say confidently that we know what our enemy is up to (e.g. how he perceives and reacts). Practically speaking, tailored deterrence has a considerable difficulty in implementation when including and broadening deterrent options to address a wide variety of threats.<sup>141</sup>

First, tailoring deterrence may demand vast resources if we seek to deter a wide spectrum of threats and multiple targets. Tailored deterrence posits that each actor and situation is unique and thus, deterrence approaches need to be tailored to fit the nature of an enemy and a situation. Yet if each case is unique, “it is logical that the

---

<sup>139</sup> Italics in original. Payne, “Nuclear Deterrence In a New Era”, p. 2.

<sup>140</sup> Larkin, “The Limits of Tailored Deterrence”, p. 56.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, p. 40.

requirements for deterrence will differ with each party that we might try to deter and may well differ in each circumstance or scenario.”<sup>142</sup> On the one hand, the more resources one has, the more likely a tailored approach to deterrence achieves a desired effect. On the other hand, the less resources one has, the less options one has to tailor deterrence against wider threats. In this respect, a critical aspect of tailored deterrence is its feasibility. How feasible is it for a deterring party to tailor deterrence to prevent an unwanted action from happening?

On top of this, as far as tailored deterrence is concerned, a first key principle is to know an adversary in detail. Needless to say, knowing any actor deeply is not an easy task. Substantial intelligence is essential. Yet, even efforts to know a single adversary during the Cold War was a significant challenge. In fact, US efforts were not really successful. Indeed, intelligence failure is a common theme throughout history.<sup>143</sup> How does one know whether the accumulated information is credible? What key information is missing? Does one have enough information to make an important decision?<sup>144</sup> If one faces multiple opponents and a wide range of threats, the task can become much more complicated.<sup>145</sup> It may involve a multidisciplinary approach to analyse him and call for a global intelligence network. Sustaining these efforts requires vast resources and costs.

Second, the combination of military and non-military means seems critical to deter various actors while in practice having more tools can improve options but also complicate decision making at the same time.<sup>146</sup> More importantly, blending military instruments and non-military tools requires a country to work closely with different government agencies across the country. In practice this whole-of-government approach to deterrence is a serious challenge. One natural barrier to this effort is an absence of

---

<sup>142</sup> Bunn, “Can Deterrence Be Tailored ? ”, p. 3.

<sup>143</sup> Morgan, “Evaluating Tailored Deterrence”, p. 42; Sherman, “QDR will Advance ‘Tailored Deterrence’ For Wide-Ranging Threats”, p. 7.

<sup>144</sup> On this point, see Kevin R. Murphy: “Defending an Analytic Framework for Tailored Deterrence: Contributions of Social Science Research”, Workshop Report (May 2009), pp. 13-14.

<sup>145</sup> Baylis, “The Concept of ‘Tailored Deterrence’ in the ‘Second Nuclear Age’”, p. 16.

<sup>146</sup> Larkin, “The Limits of Tailored Deterrence”, pp. 55-56; Morgan, “Evaluating Tailored Deterrence”, p. 40.

previous cooperation in the implementation of security strategy among them. Needless to say, if their peacetime collaboration is unsuccessful, they will find it more difficult to work together for this common ground during a crisis.

There also is a potential governmental rivalry especially between the Foreign Ministry and the Defence Ministry. In this respect, peacetime coordination including some learning, training and information sharing within the country is essential. Through the exercise, key decision makers might learn that some tailored deterrence options are simply infeasible in practice. As the famous Prussian General Carl Von Clausewitz points out, “But move from the abstract to the real world, and the whole thing looks quite different. In the abstract world, optimism was all-powerful and forced us to assume that both parties to the conflict not only sought perfection but attained. Would this ever be the case in practice?”<sup>147</sup>

Furthermore, a well-crafted option out of a complex process may fail to make itself understood by a foe as it can also become complex through the process. Naturally speaking, it will be more likely for the opponent to misread the tailored threats and personalised deterrent messages, even provoking counterproductive reactions if they are terribly complex.<sup>148</sup> In the worst case, he will discount the messages and therefore, deterrence will fail too. Another problem is that a tailored message issued can be taken as mere provocation rather than a warning because a foe is not completely certain about his rival’s intention.<sup>149</sup> This is especially so if he regards a deterring party as a hostile actor rather than a status quo power. If it is taken as former, he may react forcibly by countering the issued threat, contrary to what tailored deterrence aims to achieve. In other words, it is important to keep in mind that depending on a tailored message, it

---

<sup>147</sup> Carl von Clausewitz: *On War* trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press., 1984, ppb. 1989), p. 78.

<sup>148</sup> Knopff, “Wrestling with Deterrence: Bush Administration Strategy After 9/11”, pp. 230, 253-255.

<sup>149</sup> Charles L. Glaser: *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press.,2010), pp. 81-85.

may make a situation worse off.<sup>150</sup> Having more tools does not necessarily mean having better options. A tailored threat has to be still clear and simple.

***Distorted Interpretation of adversaries:*** To interpret information about an enemy from one's own perspectives is difficult to avoid as each individual is essentially encultured as Gray boldly suggests.<sup>151</sup> Ideally, we try to see issues on the opponents' terms while in reality our view naturally reflects our own culture and bias. Even worse, we may make an ethnocentric interpretation of our adversary. The worst thing we can do in tailoring deterrence is that we pretend that we know an enemy and consider a deterrence effect upon him from our vantage point: "the mistaken belief that other societies think and behave exactly as we do"<sup>152</sup> We can easily misunderstand and distort him. This is what Ken Booth calls "fog of culture"—prone to see other cultures through the lens of our own culture.<sup>153</sup> Once we create a certain image of an adversary (e.g. hostile or friendly), whether or not it is correct, it is difficult to change the existing image.<sup>154</sup>

This is an irony since it is the exact problem tailored deterrence seeks to avoid desperately. Mirror imaging is still a norm although it is avoidable provided that we always keep in mind that there are different worlds out there and our intelligence estimates and understanding of an adversary is always incomplete and biased, to some extent. What one thinks tailored to a specific actor and situation is not in fact adequately tailored to the intended target but to a hypothetical or imagined adversary in our mind. The truth is that we cannot know our adversary absolutely correctly as we can never read his head. <sup>155</sup>

***Deterrence Tailored but so what?:*** As with any deterrence including nuclear

---

<sup>150</sup> On this point, see Robert Jervis: *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press., 2017), pp. 62-76.

<sup>151</sup> Gray, *The Second Nuclear Age*, p.61.

<sup>152</sup> Cohen, "Intercultural Communication between Israel and Egypt", p. 3.

<sup>153</sup> Ken Booth: *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (London: Croom Helm., 1979).

<sup>154</sup> Larkin, "The Limits of Tailored Deterrence", pp. 54-56.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 55-56.

deterrence, tailored deterrence can fail. It is not flawless. This point is rather a limitation of any theory of deterrence. Payne acknowledges it and explains that “[e]ven when information about the challenger is available and efforts are made to tailor deterrence to the occasion, its effectiveness will not be ‘ensured’ or ‘conclusive.’”<sup>156</sup> In reality, we cannot ever be sure about what an enemy really thinks and exactly how he assesses our intended threat. In effect, we cannot conclude with appreciable confidence how an adversary will behave in the face of a tailored threat even after a thorough examination of him.<sup>157</sup>

To be sure, we might be able to increase the probability of deterrence success by tailoring deterrence. In the words of Payne, “The point here is to reduce the margin of ignorance, and to be more aware of what is not known, so that...deterrence policies can be established on a more informed basis, and thus be more likely to work in practice.”<sup>158</sup> That said, still tailored deterrence alone cannot explain whether an unwanted action has been avoided as a result of the intended effect of tailored deterrence. Generally speaking, deterrence has a serious problem of proving negative. As a renowned American political scientist, Robert Art, plausibly asserts, “Explaining why something did not happen is more difficult than explaining why something did.”<sup>159</sup> Tailored deterrence will not change the fact that deterrence is ultimately conjectural exercise. Since deterrence fails, and we do not know exactly why an unwanted action is avoided, deterrence regardless of any form is not completely reliable. Simply put, the combination of a variety of deterrence instruments is not a panacea.<sup>160</sup> It is ultimately an adversary who chooses whether or not to be deterred even when he is acutely aware

---

<sup>156</sup> Payne, *Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age*, p. 156. See also Payne, “The Great Divide in US Deterrence Thought”, p. 40.

<sup>157</sup> Payne, *Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age*, p. 157; Yost, “NATO and Tailored Deterrence: Surveying the Challenges”, p. 16.

<sup>158</sup> Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence*, p. 114.

<sup>159</sup> Robert J. Art: “To What Ends Military Power?”, *International Security* Vol. 4 No. 4 (Spring 1980), p. 8.

<sup>160</sup> Robert Peter, Justin Anderson and Harrison Menke: “Deterrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Integrating Nuclear and Conventional Force”, *Strategic Studies Quarterly* Vol. 12 No. 4 (Winter 2018), p. 33.

of credible threats and the dire consequences of his action.<sup>161</sup>

### **Key Considerations for Tailoring Deterrence**

Having looked at the importance, merits and complications of tailoring deterrence to each threat and challenge, one question inevitably arises: how can policy makers practically tailor deterrence? To tailor deterrence is actually easier said than done. Deterrence is after all contextual and relational: it is designed and implemented in particular hostile, geographic, social, and cultural contexts. Viewed in that respect, it is worth quoting Andre Beaufre's definition of strategy: "the art of the dialectic of force or, more precisely, the art of the dialectic of two opposing wills using force to resolve their dispute."<sup>162</sup> In the light of the existence of a living will to deter, it is imperative to study "the unique perceptions, goals, interests, strengths, strategies and vulnerabilities of different potential adversaries" in order to distinguish what threats might deter specific opponents.<sup>163</sup> Consequently, it is not so surprising if each case may well require different requirements for deterrence.<sup>164</sup> In this respect detailed knowledge of a specific adversary is essential.

Therefore, as a first step toward tailoring deterrence, it is important to analyse a specific opponent's worldview and/or mindsets shaped by his history, culture, priorities and values. In addition, it is important to examine "the behavior, strategies, decision-making, and interests of each specific opponent – above all, the interests as the opponent defines them."<sup>165</sup> More practically, it is vital to study his potential means and ways to achieve his objectives, his motivation and determination, his own estimate of

---

<sup>161</sup> Freedman, "Deterrence: A Reply", p. 790; Gray, "Deterrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", p. 256, 258.

<sup>162</sup> Beaufre, *An Introduction to Strategy*, p.22.

<sup>163</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review 2018*.

<sup>164</sup> Bunn, "Can Deterrence Be Tailored ?", p. 3.

<sup>165</sup> Yost, "NATO and Tailored Deterrence: Surveying the Challenges", p. 18.

strength and weakness, his likely reactions to a deterrer's issued threats, and overall, what factors can induce his restraint, carefully examining what will likely affect an enemy's anticipation of the dire consequences of his own behavior.<sup>166</sup> This is at least what "know your enemy" means. Drawing on the strategic profile of the opponent, a deterrer will tailor his approach to deterrence more concretely.

In this respect, Elaine Bunn, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear and Missile Defense Policy, identifies and outlines further the three key facets of tailoring deterrence: "tailoring to specific actors and situations", "tailoring capabilities" and "tailoring communications."<sup>167</sup> These facets basically suggest that a deterring party have "the means to determine what assets an adversary holds dear and wants to protect; an ability to identify which military tools can be used to threaten those assets, and an effective means of communicating to adversaries that the military can target their most important assets and destroy them."<sup>168</sup> As Payne suggests, "the more that is known about the factors determining the challenger's decision-making the more effective should be...deterrence policies."<sup>169</sup> With these three aspects in mind, it is vital to explore some key considerations for tailoring deterrence slightly further by addressing the following key questions.

***Tailoring to specific actors and situations:*** First, it is imperative to address fundamental and critical questions: exactly whom and what action under what circumstances does a deterrer seek to deter? Do all the leaders share the same risk and threat assessment? What are the perceived stakes in this situation? How determined is an adversary to engage in this situation? What is the dominant motivation behind it? What is the nature of the relationship between those involved in this situation?

---

<sup>166</sup> Baylis, "The Concept of 'Tailored Deterrence' in the 'Second Nuclear Age'", pp. 12-13; Murphy, "Defending an Analytic Framework for Tailored Deterrence", pp. 13-16; Payne, *Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age*, pp. 123-124; Paul, "Complex Deterrence", p. 13; Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence*, pp. 104-111; Yost, "NATO and Tailored Deterrence: Surveying the Challenges", p. 15.

<sup>167</sup> Bunn, "Can Deterrence Be Tailored ? ", p. 1; Morgan, "Evaluating Tailored Deterrence", p. 32.

<sup>168</sup> Sherman, "QDR will Advance 'Tailored Deterrence' For Wide-Ranging Threats", pp. 7-8.

<sup>169</sup> Payne, *Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age*, p. 157.

Unless a deterrer knows exactly who assesses a threat and makes a key decision, it is impossible for him to tailor deterrence threats vis-a-vis the challenger and contingency. Depending on a decision-making structure, regime types (e.g. democracy or autocracy), political culture and a leader's character –risk averse or risk tolerant–, a deterrence posture inevitably varies. It is also important to know the balance of interests (what he is fighting for) and where a fight for the interests is taking place (specific context). Moreover, depending on the motivation and determination of an adversary, deterrence can be considerably demanding. In other words, deterrence failure is quite likely. Concomitantly, it may not be easy to back down if those in the contingency engaged are in a longstanding strategic rivalry. By implication backing down in one occasion may have long-term consequences for one's global reputation and standing.<sup>170</sup>

***Tailoring Capabilities:*** Second, another crucial task is to identify what sorts of capabilities would be needed for deterring specific targets on the basis of the detailed knowledge of them. What deterrence means are available to ourselves? Will the available means including non-military ones be likely to deter the intended actor and action? What are practical and suitable ways to employ them? A seemingly tough aggressor cannot be deterred by military means, but he may be deterred by his concerns about international economic sanctions and eroding his reputation in international politics by influencing the international community and making it united against the aggressor. Of course, the opposite is also possible. As noted above, deterrence is no longer about nukes or mere weapons. Deterrence threats must be backed by realistic threats. However grandiose they can be, they will be completely useless unless they can be executable. Threats must be carefully designed to the adversary: “what matters most is not our capability, but rather what the enemy believes our capability to be.”<sup>171</sup>

---

<sup>170</sup> Murphy, “Defending an Analytic Framework for Tailored Deterrence”, pp. 7-12.

<sup>171</sup> Gray, “Gaining Compliance”, p. 279.

***Tailoring Communication:*** Third, specifically what messages should he deliver to the target in question for the purpose of deterrence? How can he make the messages perceived in the very way he wants the opponent to perceive in order to avoid misinterpretation and provoke counterproductive reactions?<sup>172</sup> Depending on a specific adversary and contingency, for instance, deeds (non-verbal message) can be louder than words (verbal message), and vice versa. If the tailored message is considerably complex, an adversary will be more likely to misread it. As Bunn suggests, “The clarity and credibility of...messages in the mind of the deterrence are critical to tailoring deterrence threats.”<sup>173</sup> Simply put, the messages must be comprehensible, credible and have nearly no room for misinterpretation and confusion. It is also important to consider what communication tools can be effectively used to make him aware of the issued threats. Public announcements can be ignored unintentionally while strong actions can be clearer in a certain situation. To avoid unintentional misinterpretation, multiple communication channels including both official and unofficial ones need to be fully exploited.

If one cannot have clear answers to those questions above, deterrence may not produce the desired effect. To be blunt, deterrence is irrelevant in this opportunity. Another option may do a better job.<sup>174</sup> At least by identifying and addressing the critical questions such as those noted above, “we can reduce the complexity and uncertainty inherent in attempting to tailor deterrence strategies, but substantial challenges remain” as one analyst suggests.<sup>175</sup> To be sure though, answering all these questions correctly is a daunting task. It is also important to assess whether a tailored

---

<sup>172</sup> Bunn, “Can Deterrence Be Tailored?”, pp. 1-8; Jervis, “Deterrence and Perception”, p. 81; Payne, *The Great American Gamble*, pp. 368-373; Schuyler Foerster: “Deterrence, Crisis Management, and Nuclear War Termination”, in Larsen and Kartchner (eds), *On Limited Nuclear War in the 21st Century*, pp. 194-197; Robert A. Pape: *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), chapter 2; Daryl G. Press: *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

<sup>173</sup> Bunn, “Can Deterrence Be Tailored?”, p. 1-2.

<sup>174</sup> Payne, *Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age*, pp. 123-124; idem, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence*, p. 107.

<sup>175</sup> Murphy, “Defending an Analytic Framework for Tailored Deterrence”, p. 14

deterrence approach is feasible and realistic. No matter how excellent the approach is, it will be of no use if it cannot be executable.

To reiterate the key considerations for tailoring deterrence, it is imperative to specify exactly whom and what action one seeks to deter by what available means and in what suitable ways and what personalized messages to be communicated to him in a particular setting and at a particular time.<sup>176</sup> Given that, deterrence involves a variety of means and operates in multiple domains beyond the nuclear dimension. Tailored deterrence is indeed applicable to the new domains like cyber and space. What one has to bear in mind though is that each actor and context is unique in itself. One needs to know not only an adversary but also what means one can use to deter him. These factors are particularly crucial when developing a tailored deterrence strategy among allies. They need to reach and share a common understanding of what it takes to tailor deterrence not least when working together for the common cause.

### **Some Concluding Thoughts**

Tailoring deterrence is unquestionably much more difficult than it appears. Tailoring deterrence calls for not only knowing your enemy but also critically analysing yourself. In other words, it is not sufficient to know what he fears and values the most. It is also vital to critically review what means available to us first and how effective those means are to deter an adversary. Depending on a specific context, a military means can be just detrimental to effective deterrence, but a non-military option can do the best job. The fundamental goal of deterrence is to prevent a foe from taking an undesirable action. So long as this can be achieved, deterrent options do not have to be limited to military.

---

<sup>176</sup> Bunn, "Can Deterrence Be Tailored ? ", pp. 1-2.

Tailoring deterrence is difficult because deterrence is hard to establish and sustain. As Gray observes, “If we ‘tick all the boxes’ that the textbooks on deterrence helpfully provide, surely all will be well? We will deserve to be rewarded with deterrence success. But, behavior in the real world does not always match what theory predicts. Deterrence can fail when it should not.”<sup>177</sup> More importantly, since deterrence is part of strategy, “it is planned for contexts that literally have not occurred and might not occur the future has not happened” as Gray aptly puts it.<sup>178</sup> In other words, deterrence is designed for influencing consequences that are yet to come. It is essentially a matter of guess work.<sup>179</sup>

Moreover, even after undergoing a rigorous process of tailoring deterrence, nothing would guarantee deterrence success; the choice is not ours but theirs. What deterrence does is to give him the choice to cooperate or not. In this sense, deterrence is not completely reliable. A significant contribution of tailored deterrence to strategic thinking, nevertheless, does reorient us to facing the chaotic nature of strategy. There are more than two living and independent wills to clash each other for imposing one’s will on the other(s). Today strategy does not end with deterrence but strategy may start with it. At any rate flexible and resilient capabilities required for tailored deterrence are after all well needed to address a wider range of threats and ever evolving security situations should deterrence fail.<sup>180</sup> By facing this reality through serious consideration of tailoring deterrence, we may self-educate ourselves and come up with a better option to contend with strategic issues today. It is not only about facing our adversary seriously but also rediscovering ourselves.

---

<sup>177</sup> Gray, “Gaining Compliance”, pp. 279-280.

<sup>178</sup> Colin S. Gray: “Why Strategy is Difficult”, *Joint Force Quarterly* No.22 (Summer 1999), p. 8.

<sup>179</sup> Payne, “The Great Divide in US Deterrence Thought”, p. 16.

<sup>180</sup> Payne, *Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age*, pp. 158-159.

Disclaimer: “The views expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Japan Air Self-Defense Force, the Ministry of Defense, and the Government of Japan.”