

DETERRENT STRATEGIES AND TOTAL DEFENSE

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Abstract: Nations have a range of strategies at their disposal to shape their relations with other nations and non-state actors in international relations, including cooperation, deterrence, coercion, and control. Deterrence, or in other words, discouraging states from taking unwanted actions, especially military aggression, has once again become an important theme in the defense and security policies of many countries in the second decade of the 21st century. On the other hand, changes in the international security environment have changed the context of deterrence. The idea of a total defense concept is based on a combination of armed forces capabilities with developed civil defense and an attempt to link economic and political infrastructure into defense planning. The aim of the paper is to examine the compatibility of the concept of total defense with modern concepts of deterrence, especially its contribution to strengthening the resilience of the state and society, which should contribute to the effectiveness of deterrence based on the principles of denial and aimed at raising the costs of possible aggression by a potential adversary.

Keywords: strategy, deterrence, total defense, resilience, denial.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nations have a range of strategies and measures at their disposal to shape their relationships with other nations and non-state actors in international relations.

Deterrence strategy encompasses all forms of persuasion, including reassurance and inducement, that would lead an adversary not to pursue a particular course of action. Reassurance involves measures to alleviate the adversary's concerns by convincing the adversary that the situation is less dangerous or more benign than initially thought. Inducement involves "sweetening," providing incentives to achieve an outcome (Freedman, 2004).

The idea of the concept of total defense is based on the combination of armed forces capabilities with developed civil defense and the attempt to link economic and political infrastructure into defense planning. The aim of the paper is to examine the compatibility of the concept of total defense with modern concepts of deterrence, especially its contribution to strengthening the resilience of the state and society, which should contribute to the effectiveness of deterrence based on the principles of denial and aimed at raising the costs of possible aggression by a potential adversary.

2. DETERRENCE - BASIC THEORETICAL PROVISIONS AND STRATEGIES

Deterrence – or, in other words, discouraging states from taking unwanted actions, especially military aggression – has once again become an important theme in the defense and security policies of many countries. In Europe, the United States and its allies are seeking to deter what they describe as “potential Russian engagement in the Baltic states,” as well as activities within the “gray zone,” i.e. offensive activities that fall below the threshold of a classic war (Mazarr, 2018).

On the other hand, much of the scholarly discussion on the concept of deterrence continues to be characterized by unsubstantiated claims, which are at odds with empirical data and provide little guidance on the analysis of concrete events. Meanwhile, changes in the international security environment have changed the context of deterrence, which may have challenged earlier theoretical assumptions and created new demands (Vytautas 2020) This article draws on an analysis of a number of recent and earlier studies to reexamine the basic concepts and principles of deterrence (Freedman, 2004; Black Michelle, Obradovic Lana, 2022; Milkovski, Bozic, 2023).

The research suggests that a broader perspective on deterrence must encompass the intentions and perspectives of potential aggressors, the variables that play into their cost-benefit calculations of war, and the steps that are likely to make aggression appear more dangerous and less necessary, especially relative to other options. Thus, to understand what will make an aggressor abandon its aggressive plans, one must think in terms of what is defined as deterrence strategies, that is, a set of efforts to reduce the perceived utility or necessity of aggression.

The literature on deterrence makes a number of key distinctions in terms of the types and classifications of deterrence strategies (Miljkovic, Marjanovic, 2023). In this sense, the classical literature distinguishes two basic approaches to deterrence.

The strategy of deterrence by denial seeks to deter an adversary's action by making it infeasible or unlikely to succeed, thereby reducing the potential aggressor's confidence in achieving its goals—for example, by deploying sufficient military forces to prevent and defeat an invasion by the aggressor. Ultimately, this strategy can expose the potential aggressor to the risk of catastrophic loss. Deterrence by denial is, in effect, simply the application of efforts to defend some commitment by the aggressor. Deterrence and defense are analytically distinct, but in practice closely related concepts. The most common way to measure the actual capacity of deterrence through the method of deterrence is the immediate balance of forces in a given territory - but, as will be explained, the local balance of forces is not the only and most important factor. In this regard, deterrence through deterrence should not be equated solely with the balance of military forces (Morgan, 1983).

The strategy of deterrence through punishment, on the other hand, threatens to lead to serious consequences if a preemptive attack is actually launched, such as nuclear escalation or severe economic sanctions. These consequences or punishments come from local actors in the conflict or from the wider international community. The focus of deterrence through punishment is not direct defense, but the threat of the possible use of broader punishment that would increase the cost of the aggressor's attack. (Snyder, 1959,)

Most classical studies and theories suggest that deterrence strategies through deterrence are inherently more reliable than punitive strategies. They argue that the measures taken in a deterrence strategy, such as the engagement and deployment of significant military

capabilities directly against the effective aggressor, send clear and loud messages. On the other hand, the aggressor may doubt the defender's willingness to implement the punitive strategy. The aggressor may also convince himself that the defender will hesitate to implement punitive measures because of the attendant risks, such as further escalation of the conflict, and that the deterring state may not be willing to implement the punitive measures when the critical moment arrives. As Thomas Schelling noted, there are threats that a state would rather not carry out, and a weakness in deterrence can arise when the aggressor believes that the defender will ultimately prove to be unwilling to carry out his threats (Schelling, 1980).

3. DETERRENCE CHALLENGES FOR “SMALL STATES”

The categorisation of a state as “small” was considered in the context of international relations, foreign policy and security as a country that has no influence on the security of other states in the environment. Small states are seen as fragile entities in the turbulent sea of international relations. However, is this always and truly the case? There are many factors that influence the position of small states in international relations.

Given that the current literature currently does not have a generally accepted definition of a “small state”, mainly due to the difficulty of harmonising the criteria by which it would be possible to do this precisely, freedom has been left in the interpretation of this term, which for now relies on the perception of size that can be formulated based on the topic we want to deal with. In the field of security, according to some authors, small states are considered to be those that have: 1) a lack of autonomy in relation to more powerful states; 2) a limited scope of performing tasks; 3) they do not participate in creating the goals and methods of implementing international politics and security and 4) they have little importance in the system to which they belong and cannot represent it individually (Wivel, A., Archer, C., Bailes J.K.A., 2014).

Domestic authors, such as Misa Stojadinovic, believe that: “One of the greatest characteristics that makes small states interesting to study is precisely their limited power, which is best manifested in the context of stronger states. Great powers simply have more capacity to more easily implement their interests.” (Stojadinovic, 2019.)

Therefore, the concept of a small state is a relative term, and the qualification of a state can only be done by comparing it with another large state.

In the past practice, four models of strategic options and actions of small states in relations with large actors have been established: 1) voluntary coordination (balancing); 2) compliance due to external pressure (association); 3) counter-dependence, as a measure to reduce dependence (neutrality) and 4) compensation, as a method of quasi-opposition to large actors, but also cooperation with everyone (“wandering”). (Vaicekauskaitė, Z. M., 2017)

Research in the domain of theoretical and practical applications of deterrence of small states is topical. Recent reports on the Baltic states’ defense models suggest considering “innovative, low-cost approaches to defense” and that the Baltic states should look beyond conventional warfare to devise more creative and cost-effective approaches to defeating their enemies. These approaches have been dubbed the “hedgehog strategy” and point to the applicability of unconventional options, such as those that were part of the Swiss National Defense Strategy during the Cold War. Researchers at the American nonprofit global policy think tank The RAND Corporation (RAND) conclude that unconventional warfare can significantly support the Baltics’ deterrence and defense efforts (RAND, 2023).

From a small-state perspective, asymmetric deterrence theories arise from wars in which relatively smaller states win more. Asymmetric deterrence is also referred to in academic literature as unconventional or unorthodox. Simply put, asymmetric deterrence occurs when a weak actor deters a strong actor. This can be achieved by convincing the aggressor that any action will be met with an unconventional defense, for example, guerrilla warfare.

Common to the above theoretical frameworks is the consideration of an asymmetric approach to the use of military forces by using military forces in a guerrilla manner of warfare. In this way, there is a possibility that, in order to successfully deter aggression, the fear of a potential aggressor against a long-term and expensive engagement with large human and financial losses can be created and exploited. The theoretical framework suggests that the weaker side can win a conflict if it bases its strategy on a combination of the existence of broad social support, the conditions for conducting guerrilla actions, and the idea that can make sacrifices seem both necessary and noble in defending national interests. Essentially, this approach emphasizes the potential use of a small state's military forces in an unconventional manner to meet the credibility and verisimilitude of the threat as basic requirements for deterrence.

4. CONCEPT OF TOTAL DEFENSE

The idea of the concept of total defense originated, according to some authors, in Sweden during World War II. A total war, such as World War II, showed that armed forces no longer operated in a separate environment and that all segments of society were affected by war, so some states, in an attempt to find a response to possible external pressures and threats, came to the conclusion that it was necessary to organize an increasing number of participants in modern society for an integrated defense effort. Thus, the concept of total defense became the defining way of organizing and using forces in non-aligned and neutral states, such as Switzerland, Finland, Sweden, Austria, the SFRY, and Singapore in the period from World War II until the end of the Cold War. Total defense was based on a combination of the capabilities of the armed forces with a developed civil defense and an attempt to connect the economic and political infrastructure into defense planning. (Milkovski, Bozic, 2023.)

Total defense took on various forms of organization, and defense components such as military, economic, psychological, and civil defense in Sweden or military, economic, social, civil, psychological, and digital defense in Singapore were recognized. The Yugoslav concept of national defense and social self-protection from the mid-1970s represented the operationalization of the idea of total defense of that time in our region. The concept was based on the organized engagement of all available potentials of society based on the experience of World War II and the Marxist idea of an armed people. The most important definitions of the concept, excluding those that are ideologically colored, are its deterrent function in peace, state of emergency and war, as well as reliance on its own capacities.

In the post-Cold War period, the need for a comprehensive approach to the defense and protection of national interests is observed because it corresponds to the changes in the perception of the entire security paradigm in a globally connected world and the physiognomy of the current and future conflict in all dimensions of the environment. (Miljkovic, Jevtic, 2022)

Therefore, based on the previous discussion, the framework for defining and implementing the deterrence strategy of small states should be based on the developed capabilities of

military forces for an asymmetric approach in use and the capabilities of other state forces to act in all dimensions of the environment against state and non-state actors.

Defining and using forces capable of operating in different 5 dimensions of the environment ensures the comprehensiveness of the response, which "together with developed capabilities for a credible and credible threat, represents a necessary prerequisite for strategic deterrence." (Blagojevic, Radanovic. 2022.)

5. CONSIDERATIONS ON DETERRENCE FOR SMALL STATES

With the development of technology, states can act against each other below the threshold of warfare and affect the entire society of the adversary, and not just their military power. (Bowers, I., 2018) This change has also required a rethinking of theories of deterrence. Although classical deterrence theory includes the idea of force not used, such thinking is not optimal when it comes to, for example, the use of cyber capabilities. On the contrary, to increase the deterrence effect, it may actually be more beneficial to conduct cyber operations than to refrain from action. Cyber operations represent a strategic weapon with relatively low costs and allow for asymmetric moves, so that even a small state with fewer resources has, at least in theory, the potential to create credible deterrence. (Faesen, L., Sweijs, T., Klimburg, A., & Tesauero, G. 2022)

From a small state perspective, deterrence theories are approached from a broad perspective, examining alternatives. Two assumptions are made, based on the academic literature:

- (1) due to today's complex global relations and threat environment, it is not useful to draw a strict line between deterrence strategies and other strategies that protect state sovereignty.
- (2) small states should use all possible means to protect their sovereignty, even if the possibility of their success is uncertain.

According to the first assumption, the literature review is not limited to the strict framework of classical deterrence theory, but rather seeks alternatives that would meet the demands of the contemporary threat environment and world politics. The second assumption directs the focus of research on deterrence options for a small state and the opportunities and limits that must be considered when creating deterrence.

How states see themselves as part of the global world order is also important. Finland, for example, defines itself as a small country and seeks to act as an active member of the EU and as a member of NATO, just as Russia considers itself one of the great powers of the world (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2020). When considering the stated goals of Finland and Russia in international politics, as well as the opportunities for influence and autonomy, Finland appears as a small country compared to Russia.

The main strategy guiding Finland's national security is based on the principles of deterrence through denial and aims to raise the threshold of costs of possible military aggression by a potential adversary. It achieves this through the Comprehensive Security and Comprehensive National Defence Concept, which is a counterpart to the concept of total defence. The concept of comprehensive security, i.e. total defence, aims to build and maintain resilience in Finnish society. The vital functions of society are safeguarded by authorities, enterprises, organisations and citizens in accordance with their respective powers. Comprehensive national defence encompasses all national and international military and civilian efforts that provide the necessary conditions for military defence in times of crisis.

The results of the research conducted by Finnish experts have provided new insights into how a small state can be positioned in modern theories of deterrence, by introducing enabling and preventive national and international factors. These factors can be used in future analyses when investigating the status of a small state in international politics. The key finding of the study is that if a small state has a credible ability to defend its own territory with strong societal resilience, deterrence strategies that aim to minimize the impact of an attack on its own territory are the most suitable option. These national factors are suitable for signaling deterrence even when the state is militarily non-aligned.

It can be concluded that there are only limited options available to a small state in terms of building deterrence, but these options can be expanded by international factors that enable better deterrence, such as military and political alliances. Deficiencies in available military resources and international status can become negative factors affecting the success of deterrence because they create an image of weakness in the eyes of the aggressor. Also, the political intentions and history of the aggressor can appear as international factors, if they adversely affect decision-making. (Maria Keinonen, 2024).

The results of this study can be used in strategic research targeting small states, especially their means of deterrence and instruments of power. Since the behavior and goals of a state in international politics are influenced by its history, geopolitical position and national culture, there are differences in the deterrence strategies of small states. Therefore, research on several small countries could complement the factors presented in this study and further deepen our understanding of the realistic deterrence strategy options available to a small state.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the position of small states in a dynamic, unpredictable and uncertain international environment requires continuous adjustment of the chosen strategic option to geopolitical factors. Taking into account, first of all, the change in the configuration of the international system and the relatively rapid transition from bipolar to unipolar, and then the expected multipolar world order, small and medium-sized states must be sensitive to changes in the immediate environment that are the consequences of the clash of interests of great powers, but also to changes in the strategy and potential of states in the immediate environment. With good strategic thinking and timely foresight, it is necessary to project one's own image in the future and, accordingly, be prepared to correctly choose a strategic option, on the basis of which it will be possible to make a good choice of strategic goals, but also of the optimal way and effective means for their achievement.

In a changing strategic environment (global and regional), and in the face of diverse security threats, it is unlikely that single deterrence will remain the central type of strategy and will have an advantage over other strategies as it did during the Cold War. At the same time, the continued existence of security threats, such as military ones, has made it unlikely that deterrence will disappear completely. On the contrary, the complex nature of the modern security environment makes deterrence desirable in order to avoid conflict and prevent the enormous losses and setbacks in development that, for example, war brings. At the same time, the unpredictability of the security environment requires us to broaden our understanding of deterrence and consider its new forms that could prove more effective than traditional strategies.

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