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Deterring a Nuclear Russia in the 21st Century Theory and Practice

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Introduction

The philosophy of deterrence, and of nuclear deterrence in particular, is being seriously considered by the Alliance for the first time since the end of the Cold War. The Deterrence and Defence Review of 2012 considered the force structures and, to a limited and contentious extent, the declared policy, but went no deeper.² In the meantime, NATO deterrence strategy has atrophied along with the understanding of the principles and theory that underpin it. The Political Principles of Nuclear Planning and Consultation updated in 2012 after the Deterrence and Defence Posture Review and the Chicago Summit replaced a document previously revised in 1991.³ This paper considers contemporary philosophical and psychological principles supporting defence and deterrence theory, and how these concepts inform the current strategic thinking of Allies. In doing so, it suggests that Allies' differing interpretations of the lexicon of deterrence may engender difficulties in achieving consensus in the formulation of both Alliance policy and Alliance strategy. These various interpretations will need to be mutually understood and harmonised if the 28 Allies are to develop a credible deterrence and defence strategy for the 21st century.

This paper has a specific focus; it examines nuclear deterrence theory and its application by the NATO Alliance in considering deterrence and Russia; still the most likely state threat to Alliance peace and security. In 2010 the Alliance published the Strategic Concept,⁴ where it identified a desire for a strategic partnership with Russia. This document remains the core of Alliance doctrine. Since then, however, relations between the Allies and Russia have deteriorated and many of the confidence building measures in place in 2010 and 2012, when the Alliance Deterrence and Defence Posture

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² K.H. Kamp, NATO's New Nuclear Consensus, in M. Chalmers, (ed.) *A Problem Deferred? NATO's Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons after Chicago*, London, Royal United Services Institute, 2012, p.9.

³ See also T. Frear, Managed Instability: The NATO-Russia Strategic Relationship, in T. Stafford, & E. Dall, (eds.) *RUSI - Project On Nuclear Issues*, London, RUSI, 2015, p.16.

⁴ NATO Strategic Concept 2010, Active Engagement, Modern Defence, 19 November 2010.

Review was published, are either moribund or defunct.⁵ It is a working assumption of this paper that deterrence and dialogue are linked.⁶ Efforts to improve confidence, trust and security are an important part of Alliance deterrence and defence strategy; but so is the provision of appropriate security measures, including nuclear deterrence.

Perversely, the derivation of a deterrence strategy for the 21st century is going to be more complicated than it was during the Cold War because the relationship between NATO Allies and Russia is far more complex than it was with the Soviet Union. Russia and Allies have many common interests, from energy dependency and trading links to cooperation on counter-terrorism and trans-national crime cooperating in myriad ways that would have been unheard-of with the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and this significantly complicates Allies' decisions about deterrence. It is thus all the more important that the Allies' understanding of the principles underpinning their deterrence postures is robust enough to support a sophisticated deterrence and defence strategy within the context of a constructive relationship with Russia.

A 'traditional' military victory is only complete either with annihilation or when the loser acknowledges it; if he does not, if he is not convinced of his defeat, the conflict is unlikely to be over. Success in conflict is increasingly interpreted in the cognitive domain – it is about convincing your adversary that your desired outcome is acceptable to them in the prevailing circumstances. These circumstances might involve military defeat, or deterrence before conflict. Either aims to convince adversaries that the potential gains of their course of action are not worth the attendant risks. Of the two, arguably, deterrence is the surer and it is probably the less costly.⁷ Similarly, there is a cognitive element required to convince your own public of the virtue and necessity of your campaign⁸ and to reassure Allies or deter opportunist state and non-state actors.

First Principles

It should not be contentious to assert that deterrence is part of a strategy to mitigate the risk of war. The way one views war essentially determines the way one views deterrence, and the potential of nuclear weapons reduces the strategic options to two different ways of viewing war. One regards it as the extension of policy by other means; the use of force controlled and managed within a broader strategy based on rational and deliberate action as a tool to be exploited for political purposes. In this case, the (political and strategic) risks associated with conflict between nuclear-armed adversaries are mostly concerned with the control of escalation. Alternatively, those who consider that war is not controllable, but is dictated by fear, misperception and accident, tend to focus on the risks attendant

5 Perhaps most obviously significant for consideration of nuclear deterrence is the Russian breach of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty; "The United States has determined that in 2014, the Russian Federation continued to be in violation of its obligations under the INF Treaty not to possess, produce, or flight-test a ground-launched cruise missile (GLCM) with a range capability of 500 km to 5,500 km, or to possess or produce launchers of such missiles." U.S. Department of State, "Adherence to and Compliance With Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments," 5 June 2015, <http://www.state.gov/t/avc/rls/rpt/2015/243224.htm> accessed 17 April 2016.

6 The Harmel Report introduced the notion of simultaneous dialogue and deterrence and has underpinned Alliance thinking on this issue since 1967; it still holds good. 'The Future Tasks of the Alliance; Report of the Council' 13 December 1967, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_67927.htm accessed 18 April 2016.

7 Deterrence is less costly in terms of casualties. In financial terms, it is difficult to consider defence expenditure and deterrence expenditure separately since the two are symbiotic – more spent on deterrence might mean less spent on defence, but the overall deterrence and defence effect of specifically deterrent forces is likely to be significantly greater than the corresponding effect of purely defence spending.

8 J. De Hoop Scheffer, Framing the war in Afghanistan; an introductory note, in B. De Graaf, G. Dimitiu & J. Ringsmose, (eds.) *Strategic Narratives, Public Opinion and War; Winning domestic support for the Afghan War*; Abingdon, Routledge, 2015, p. xxiv.

with preventing conflict in the first place.⁹ These theoretical principles can have significant practical ramifications for an Alliance.

The United Kingdom has reverted to a single assured second strike nuclear capability; the ‘Trident’ submarine launched ballistic missile (SLBM). Notwithstanding economic and geographic factors, this is a profound indication of a nuclear deterrence strategy based on an understanding of war dominated by fear, misperception and accident. The UK reserves to itself the right to retaliate in some undefined manner against a threat to its vital interests, thus deterring the aggression in the first place. Neither the retaliation, nor the vital interests are defined, so the deterrence threat is deliberately ambiguous.

The USA has a ‘triad’ of nuclear weapons including aircraft-delivered bombs and cruise missiles, intercontinental ballistic missiles, and an assured second strike capability with Trident. This is a force structure adapted for a strategic understanding of war as a ‘rational deliberate action’; it is similar in scope to the Russian force structure. It offers the possibility of ‘escalation dominance’ with both sides in a conflict signalling to the other their willingness to progress to the next level of the ‘escalation ladder’ in order to terminate the conflict on terms consistent with their political objectives.¹⁰ This ‘model’ enables the concept of extended deterrence; only if there are levels of nuclear ‘engagement’ lower than an all-out strategic exchange can the concept of committing to a nuclear deterrent for anything other than the survival of the state be credible. The USA provides extended deterrence for its Allies in NATO.

NATO Allies operate ‘dual capable aircraft’ (DCA) which can deliver American B61 nuclear bombs based in Europe; this force structure is sustained by the rational deliberate action model and reflects the concept of extended deterrence. However, many of the ‘European’ NATO Allies appear to subscribe to the fear, misperception and accident model of war and deterrence; they do not buy into the escalation dominance model. This dichotomy is a critical issue for NATO nuclear policy derivation.

France, the third NATO nuclear weapon state, but not a member of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group, operates both SLBM and air-launched nuclear cruise missiles. French policy is based on the fear, misperception and accident model (assured second strike) with the capability to use DCA as a messaging tool to signal resolve early in a crisis. France’s declaratory policy explicitly separates nuclear deterrence and all other aspects of conflict.¹¹ While on one level this appears to mirror the Alliance declared policy, it does not reflect the strategy for which Alliance forces and doctrine are structured.

Russian military doctrine relies on the integration of the nuclear elements of military capability with the conventional and assumes escalation from conventional to nuclear capabilities in order to ‘de-escalate.’ The Russian perspective on the use of nuclear capabilities is based on the ‘deterrence by denial’ concept; Russia would use nuclear weapons as military tools to reassert dominance in a conventional campaign, thus denying success to its opponent or seeking to assure its own objectives. Conversely, the Alliance has declared that “The fundamental purpose of Alliance nuclear forces is deterrence. This is essentially a political function.”¹² NATO considers nuclear deterrence in terms of

9 Z. Zwald, *Imaginary Nuclear Conflicts: Explaining Deterrence Policy Preference Formation*, *Security Studies*, 22, 2013, pp. 640-671.

10 The concept of the Escalation Ladder was famously developed by Herman Kahn. See H. Kahn, *On Escalation; Metaphors and Scenarios*, New York, Frederic A Praeger, 1969, and also J. Wohlsetter, Herman Kahn: *Public Nuclear Strategy 50 Years Later*, in Hudson Institute (ed.), Washington, Hudson Institute, 2010.

11 President Hollande, *Speech on Nuclear Deterrence*, Istres, 2015 “Let me add that for France nuclear weapons are not intended to bring any advantage in a conflict. Because of their devastating effects, they have no place in the framework of an offensive strategy, they are conceived only for defense ... France can as a last resort indicate her will to defend our vital interests, by means of a warning of a nuclear nature aimed at re-establishing deterrence.” This is a clear delineation between conventional conflict and nuclear deterrence, and does not appear to permit the use of a graduated deterrence response for ‘escalation dominance.’

12 Unclassified extract from; NPG-D(2012)0002, *NATO Nuclear Deterrence; Political Principles for Nuclear Planning and Consultation*, 9 October 12 (NATO Classified document).

‘deterrence by punishment’ and would not use nuclear weapons for military effect but to deter threats to Alliance populations or territorial integrity.

NATO Allies also maintain conventional forces and missile defences that contribute to the collective Alliance deterrent effect.¹³ These forces contribute to the ‘deterrence by denial’ element of NATO’s overall deterrence strategy; in essence, the better the defence, the more it would deter a conventional attack. Although NATO enjoys nominal superiority in conventional forces, these forces are not concentrated on the defence of the Alliance and tend to be at mid-extended readiness for reinforcement of Alliance borders. The Alliance forces have not been postured to repel very short notice conventional action such as Russia has been rehearsing with its recent ‘snap’ exercises. The function of the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) announced at the 2014 Wales Summit begins to remedy this situation.¹⁴ The RAP is not synonymous with the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, but entails a wholesale revision of political decision-making and the command, control and posture of Alliance forces to facilitate rapid and substantial reinforcement, anywhere.

Deterrence Theory

The posture and capabilities of conventional forces available for defence has a significant effect on the nuclear element of the deterrence posture. The stronger the conventional deterrence by denial capability (defence), the ‘higher’ the threshold for deterrence by punishment becomes. Conversely, weaker defensive forces reduce the threshold at which nuclear deterrence becomes a significant factor. This is a direct echo of the debates of the Cold War, when one purpose of conventional NATO forces was to raise the threshold of nuclear use; they acted as a ‘nuclear shock absorber.’¹⁵ But this ‘echo’ of Cold War logic is not a well-understood factor in modern discussions and there is limited coherence between the deterrence by denial and deterrence by punishment elements of Alliance deterrence strategy.

In psychological terms, the difference between deterrence by denial and deterrence by punishment is profound. Deterrence by denial leaves control of the level of risk to which the aggressor is exposed in the control of the aggressor; the aggressor can decide at what point the course of action becomes too costly and terminate his aggression accordingly. The most severe risks to which the aggressor is exposed will have been carefully judged in the decision to mount the aggression. Deterrence by punishment gives control of the level of risk to which the aggressor is exposed to the defender.

Where a defender chooses a deterrence by punishment strategy, the aggressor will still be able to anticipate and to a certain extent manage some risks, but in addition the defender reserves to himself the right to respond to aggression with punitive retaliation of his choosing. Such retaliation could be proportional to the level of aggression already experienced, or proportional to the level of risk to which the defender believes he is exposed; the threat is deliberately ambiguous. This completely changes the aggressor’s calculus and denies him control of the most critical variable for an aggressor; the level of risk to which he is exposed. This is the logic of NATO’s assertion that it would not use nuclear weapons for military effect; that nuclear weapons are for deterrence. But it is not clear that Allies understand the implications.

When Allies collectively consider nuclear deterrence, they do not all appear to understand sufficiently the derivation of Alliance nuclear strategy in order to develop it for the far more nuanced world it is

13 NATO Deterrence and Defence Posture Review; PO(2012)0121, 18 April 2012.

14 Wales summit declaration: issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm?selectedLocale=en accessed 20 December 2015.

15 P. Bracken, *The Second Nuclear Age: Strategy, Danger and the New Power Politics*, New York, Henry Holt, 2012, p. 124.

facing today. NATO doctrine has evolved from use of nuclear weapons as ‘warfighting’ tools which could be used for their military effect in a conflict during the 1970s and 1980s, to the current declaratory stance that they are for deterrence purposes and have no military utility. There are today no Alliance plans to integrate nuclear weapons into any form of conventional conflict.

Applied Theory

Deterrence is a psychological process; it aims to interfere with the decision making of a potential adversary and persuade them not to follow a particular course of action. This begs the question: why do nuclear weapons form a discrete category of deterrence?

The deterrence value of nuclear weapons is not military. It is not that they can destroy other nuclear weapons, nor that they can destroy large formations of armed forces; with a very few exceptions, conventional munitions can do that. Nuclear weapons pose a unique risk to the only truly vital interest of the state: its survival and that of its population. The unpalatable truth about nuclear deterrence is that it has always come down to the ability to threaten an adversary’s population.¹⁶ On hearing of the attack on Hiroshima in August 1945, British Prime Minister Attlee wrote to President Truman; “The only deterrent is the possibility of the victim of such an attack being able to retort on the victor.”¹⁷ Seventy years later despite changes in technology and 40 years of cold war, at its most visceral level nothing has changed; nuclear weapons deter the way they do because a potential aggressor is forced to consider the risk of escalation to nuclear strikes against his population and cities.¹⁸

To deter, the defender does not need to have the intent to attack populations, merely to have convinced any potential aggressor that it is a credible potential retaliatory step.¹⁹ Obviously, no state can be expected to revel in such a stance publicly, but it is critical to consider even the unpalatable aspects of one’s own deterrence strategy *in camera*. Leaders must think *about* the unthinkable, not think the unthinkable.²⁰ The reality on which the psychological effect that is nuclear deterrence is based is brutal; it is not amenable to being couched in the language of contemporary international relations and norms-based society. However, until a mechanism to create a world free of nuclear weapons is found – omni-lateral disarmament if you will – NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance and nuclear deterrence will remain a core element of Alliance defence and deterrence policy.²¹ As the Allies consider development of policy for the evolving security environment of the 21st century, it will be important to relearn the lexicon of nuclear conflict and deterrence, however unpalatable. Only once these concepts are understood and internalised can they be used by Allies to decide what type of deterrence strategy they want, and how it should be delivered.

16 R. McNamara, *The No-Cities Doctrine*, University of Michigan Commencement, June 1962.

Also P. Bracken, *The Second Nuclear Age: Strategy, Danger and the New Power Politics*, New York, Henry Holt, 2012, Esp p.4 and 81.

17 Mr Attlee to President Truman 25 September 1945; quoted in M. Gowing, *Independence and deterrence: Britain and atomic energy 1945–1952, vol. 1*, London, Macmillan, 1974, p.79.

18 This was recently alluded to by the UK Defence Secretary Mr Fallon: “...to put their cities at risk to protect us in a nuclear crisis...” <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-case-for-the-retention-of-the-uks-independent-nuclear-deterrent> accessed 16 April 2016.

19 This is explored in detail in T. C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, ed. New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2008, especially pp. 185-188.

20 P. Bracken, *The Second Nuclear Age: Strategy, Danger and the New Power Politics*, New York, Henry Holt, 2012, p. 81.

21 NATO Strategic Concept 2010, Active Engagement, Modern Defence, 19 November 2010, para 17.

Applied Strategy

The difference between Russian and NATO thresholds and intent for nuclear use creates the risk of a range of negative strategic outcomes for the Alliance between the *status quo* and the threshold of contemplated Alliance nuclear use. Within this range, Russia, with its lower potential threshold, can operate with relative impunity; Russia uses nuclear intimidation in support of conventional objectives below those for which the Alliance currently contemplates nuclear deterrence as a factor. Recent Russian campaigns, such as that against Crimea and the current campaign in Ukraine, are set against a Russian nuclear deterrence element, directed at NATO.²² Western media and academic analysis of Russian nuclear messaging before and after March 2014 suggest that Russia understands and actively exploits this tool.²³

‘Salami slicing’ of strategic objectives; achievement of apparently minor strategic objectives followed by consolidation of the new *status quo*, fits with this model of creation of a range of negative strategy outcomes. No individual salami slice would appear to justify punitive Alliance retaliation or escalation, and therefore this strategy reduces the salience of Alliance nuclear deterrence and increases the relative role of deterrence by denial, or defensive measures. For instance, the Minsk Agreement of 5 September 14 is no longer mentioned in ‘western’ discourse, having been supplanted by the Minsk II Protocol of 12 February 2015. Both Minsk documents implicitly accept the ‘new normal’ of Russian occupation of Crimea.

The consideration of Russia as a potential adversary has more than political or rhetorical implications. If the Alliance is to address a perceived vulnerability to assertive Russian behaviour, and the core of the Alliance response is to deter Russia, that deterrence must be credible – not to Allies, but to Russia. Moscow must accept that the “supreme guarantee of the security of the Alliance is provided by the strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance.”²⁴ Current Russian strategy envisages the use of ‘tactical’ nuclear weapons as military warfighting tools. At present, Alliance infrastructure is critically vulnerable to a nuclear attack in Europe. Even with considerable warning, much of NATO’s European Command and Control and almost all second echelon forces would be significantly impaired in a post-nuclear strike environment. Obviously the use of a nuclear weapon would fundamentally change the nature of any conflict, but with Russia placing a greater emphasis on its nuclear strategic and tactical forces, renewed consideration of the resilience of NATO infrastructure will be an essential element of a credible deterrence posture. The Alliance must appear to Russia to be prepared, and able, to use force, and nuclear force, if necessary. It must, therefore appear capable of enduring at least a limited nuclear attack.²⁵

This is true whichever model of deterrence is considered, but it is more salient for those who advocate the ability to remain in control of escalation during a conflict. At present the Alliance capability to assure a response to a limited nuclear attack without resorting to the strategic nuclear forces of Allies is arguably not credible. The risk to which Russia may consider it is exposed would therefore be limited to a strategic response. This response could appear disproportionate to a Russian ‘salami slice’ objective and would inevitably be portrayed as such by Russia.

With Russian strategy such as hybrid warfare and widespread anti-access area denial development seeming to focus on the ability to ‘regionalise’ any conflict within Europe, this ‘decoupling’ of external support may well be an early Russian strategic objective in a crisis. In order to deter such a decoupling momentum, Alliance conventional and nuclear deterrence (denial and punishment) must

22 For a full consideration of this concept see J. Durkalec, *Nuclear-Backed Little Green Men*, Warsaw, Polish Institute of International Affairs, 2015.

23 T. Frear, L. Kulesa & I. Kearns, *Dangerous Brinkmanship: Close Military Encounters Between Russia and the West in 2014*, London, European Leadership Network, 2014.

24 NATO Strategic Concept 2010, Active Engagement, Modern Defence, 19 November 2010, para 18.

25 Jeffrey A. Larsen and Kerry M. Kartchner (ed.), *On Limited Nuclear War in the 21st Century*, Stanford University Press, April 2014.

be mutually coherent and absolutely credible. In the past the Soviet Union responded more to tangible demonstrations of resolve and strength than to rhetorical assertions, so the Alliance may need to resort to more overt ‘messaging’ in order to influence Russian thinking.

Theory in Practice

Regardless of the underlying theoretical model, deterrence is a ‘messaging’ function; its objective is psychological influence on the decisions of an adversary. An element of deterrence, especially nuclear deterrence, is existential; mere possession of a nuclear capability exerts a perpetual deterrent effect. In specific instances, this effect is enhanced by tailoring, such as suitable ‘messaging’ which conveys resolve and capability to a particular adversary, of which the Cuban Missile Crisis is probably the most notable example. Deterrence aims to convince a potential aggressor that the risks associated with a given course of action outweigh the benefits. It follows that deterrence is most effective prior to the adversary’s decision to act. Deterrence must be far more compelling if it is to influence an adversary once he is committed to a course of action.

The Alliance relies on its existential and perpetual deterrence to a very great extent and does not consider messaging for tailored nuclear deterrence for a particular crisis until the formal initiation of nuclear consultation. This restraint is entirely responsible since it avoids the dangers of early escalation of tensions through ‘brinkmanship’ but it does mean that the initiative and often the potential to tailor any specific deterrence message at the lowest level of risk are lost. It is therefore crucial that the existential deterrent is perceived as effective and credible.

Russia is using a very well-coordinated and intense strategic communications campaign to convey a narrative of strength to its own public and to intimidate its neighbours. Collectively, the Alliance is struggling to establish a suitably resolute narrative in response. Simply responding in kind to Russian ‘nuclear sabre-rattling’ would be irresponsible; the purpose of existential deterrence messaging is not to be responsive or agile, but to use carefully calibrated indications of resolve and capability to send the deterrence message in order to avoid the use of force. This might be strategic communications in the sense of media messaging, or diplomatic messages, or it might include military posture changes, exercises or deployments. At present, there is no indication that the Allies are able to agree an Alliance ‘narrative of resolve,’²⁶ although individual Allies are acting independently in accordance with national priorities.

The different views of the nature of deterrence find themselves in conflict on this ‘messaging’ issue. Those who subscribe to the rational decision and action model advocate activities that exercise Alliance forces in scenarios with simultaneous nuclear deterrence and conventional elements in order to sustain the deterrence message that the Alliance is prepared and able for intra-conflict escalation. Some of those who subscribe to the fear, misperception and accident model advocate a clear ‘fire-break’ between conventional and nuclear doctrine, training and exercises. Given the nature of the philosophical difference underpinning this debate, there is no clear compromise.

Collectively, the Alliance view of deterrence messaging remains under-developed; of course this is inhibited by the need to achieve consensus across 28 Allies, each with a unique perspective, and underwritten by two sets of principles which are potentially in conflict on messaging. That acknowl-

26 This is a perennial problem for the Alliance with different nations needing to satisfy their domestic audiences as well as to provide some kind of collective narrative. This tension between Alliance and national narratives is explored in depth as it pertained to the ISAF Mission at B. De Graaf, G. Dimitiu & J. Ringsmose, *Shaping Societies for war: strategic narratives and public opinion.* in B. De Graaf, George & J. Ringsmose (eds.), *Strategic Narratives, Public Opinion and War; Winning domestic support for the Afghan War*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2015.

edged, the development of the concept of deterrent messaging to incorporate the deliberate use of military posture and activity as tailored elements of a coherent strategic deterrence message in both peace and crisis will be the basis of a successful 21st century deterrence strategy, whether nuclear and conventional forces exercise together or not. For optimal effect, exercises and force posture changes should be considered for the message they send, and the media and public communications associated with each exercise carefully tailored to enhance this overall deterrence message. Such a coherent messaging strategy would build on an assumption of the leadership of potential adversaries as the target audience, and supporting military activities directed accordingly.

The worst conceivable outcome of superficial understanding of the nuances of nuclear deterrence and associated messaging is that the Alliance believes it has a credible deterrence posture which is not regarded as credible by an aggressor and is therefore tested. Such a failure could contribute to the very miscalculations deterrence aims to prevent, and make conflict more, not less, likely – and also more severe.

Conclusions

Russia actively uses nuclear forces for messaging purposes as part of an integrated approach to crisis and conflict. At present NATO relies exclusively on an existential deterrence posture and reactive media communications for deterrence messaging. Russia's sensitivity to NATO actions highlights the need for all military actions to be clear, unambiguous and purposeful, and carefully synchronised within a coherent deterrent communication strategy. Lack of such a coherent NATO 'narrative of resolve' may be construed simply as a lack of resolve.

Differences between Russian nuclear strategy and NATO nuclear policy make it likely that there is a range of policy outcomes involving Russian nuclear coercion below the level of NATO's perceived nuclear threshold that NATO would do well to consider carefully.

There are fundamental differences between the way Allies understand the principles underpinning nuclear deterrence, and therefore how Allies believe that deterrence and defence actually work, and how nuclear deterrence fits into the Alliance overall deterrence strategy. Correspondingly, NATO's nuclear deterrent force structure and strategy may not currently reflect the underlying philosophies on which some Allies believe they ought to be based.

In order to comprehend fully the nuances of their nuclear deterrence policy and posture, the Allies must re-educate themselves in the lexicon of difficult truths at the heart of nuclear deterrence in the 21st century. Allies may struggle to align their different principles within the framework of a common narrative for the Alliance's 21st century deterrence mission. Well-informed and truly open internal debate will be critical.



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