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A Force in Adazi: Strategic Deterrence by Denial

Major Andrew McGregor

Introduction

Amid the 2020 pandemic, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) released its innovative *Pan-Domain Force Employment Concept* (PFEC) that "provides a robust framework for thinking about how to deter, counter, and mitigate adversary action."[1] This doctrine characterizes the present strategic context as one of the continuous, persistent, and global threats across all domains that can only be defeated or deterred through the full breadth of national and allied power instruments.[2] Canada has a

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[1] Department of National Defence (DND), *Pan-Domain Force Employment Concept (PFEC): Prevailing in an Uncertain World* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2020), p. 3.

[2] DND, *PFEC*, p. 4. Within PFEC, *continuous* refers to an unceasing state of competition, confrontation, and potentially conflict; *persistent and globally* implies threats are not bound in time or geography; *pan-domain* expands the traditional domains of land, air, and sea to include cyber, space and information; *instruments of national power* include diplomatic, economic, informational, and military ways of achieving national objectives; and *allies* are likeminded nations identified through bilateral agreement, multilateral institutions or regional partnerships.

tradition of complementing military power with diplomatic, economic, and informational instruments. As a founding North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member, Canada sustained combat forces in Europe throughout the Cold War while working to ensure that the Alliance would "promote political, economic and cultural bonds between its members… [and later] pushing for greater emphasis on civilian aspects of security."[3] Since 2017, Canada has once again deployed combat forces in Europe. Along the Alliance's eastern flank and opposite a revanchist Russia, NATO's "enhanced Forward Presence" (eFP) is an ad hoc deployment model: select members have agreed to *enhance* frontier nations' sovereign defence forces with a *forward presence* under a legitimate NATO mandate, but absent a formal NATO mission.[4] Each of the four Battlegroups is led by a different Framework Nation with attachments from other members. These combat-ready units are under the respective national command of Poland and the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania with the mandate to "deter and/or defeat adversarial incursions."[5]

As a Framework Nation alongside the US, UK, and Germany, Canada leads the eFP Battlegroup based in Adazi, Latvia, which implies a responsibility to provide personnel, material, and funding. Once the pandemic subsides, national ambitions will need to be reconciled with fiscal realities. Canada will likely rationalize its discretionary spending, including its expeditionary missions. This paper argues that Canada's eFP mission is a prudent contribution to NATO's strategic deterrence of the Russian threat. Specifically, this paper will present a novel strategic deterrence framework to establish that Russia remains the most significant threat to NATO, and by extension Canada. Subsequently, it will demonstrate that the eFP is conceptually an effective deterrence by denial mechanism. Lastly, it will discuss the implications of the Russian threat for

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[3] North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), "NATO – Declassified: Canada and NATO - 1949," last accessed 5 December 2020,
https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_161511.htm%3FselectedLocale%3Den
[4] Christian Leuprecht, "The Enhanced Forward Presence: Innovating NATO's deployment model for collective defence", *NATO Defense College Policy Brief* (October 2019): pp. 1-2.
http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep19859. The mandate without a mission was done to assuage fears of antagonizing the Russians. This does have operational impacts in terms of limiting access to certain NATO resources reserved for named missions. It also represents a consensus but not a willingness to make an actual contribution by all members.
[5] Leuprecht, *The Enhanced Forward Presence*, p. 2. Colloquially in NATO circles, the three Baltic nations and Poland may be referred to as "3B+P."

NATO and the CAF. The first step in deterrence is evaluating an adversary's "interests, motives, and imperatives."[6]

The Russian Perspective

NATO is a cornerstone of Canadian security policy and multilateralism. Any threat to the Alliance's cohesiveness is a direct and critical threat to Canada's national interests. Russia uses all instruments of national power to deliberately degrade and undermine the cohesion of Western liberal democratic institutions. Their goal is to raise their relative power by reducing Western influence. In undermining the West's political, economic, and security institutions, Russia is an existential threat to NATO, and by extension Canadian security. This section will explain recent irredentist behaviour in terms of Russian exceptionalism, Russia's strategic interests, and Russia's strategic options.

Russian Exceptionalism

Since rising to power in 1999, Russian President Putin has shown a clear willingness to use all national power instruments to restore the nation's prestige. Russian military adventurism in its perceived zone of privileged interest, and global influence operations, are the manifestation of Russian exceptionalism and nationalism. Despite the end of the Cold War, Russia continues to view former Soviet states and Eastern Europe as its exclusive sphere. However, the West has generally misunderstood or ignored Russia's regional hegemonic desires. The 1999 Chechnya and 2008 Georgia wars were poorly conceived and executed. The West dismissed the Russian military as an outdated Soviet vestige. Consequently, the West was stunned when Russia annexed Crimea in March 2014 using the *hybrid* methods of disinformation and unattributable military forces.[7] In April 2014, Russia employed these tactics to support separatist forces in Ukraine's Donbass region. These events constitute an inflection point in how the

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[6] Michael J. Mazarr, *Understanding Deterrence* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018), pp. 1-2. http://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE295.html

[7] Bettina Renz, "Russia and 'hybrid warfare,'" *Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 3 (2016): p. 283. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2016.1201316

West perceived and managed Russian ambitions in the post-Soviet era. Analysis of the Crimea and Donbass campaigns led to considerable debate about the emergence of a *new hybrid warfare* as part of a *Gerasimov doctrine*.[8] However, these efforts failed to evaluate the strategic thought behind the operational approach. Equally, they failed to understand the unique tactical considerations that enabled Russia's success in Crimea, which were not replicable in other theatres.[9]

Globally, Russia has aggressively expanded its influence often at the expense of the US, as demonstrated by the military intervention in Syria since 2015.[10] More recently, Russia has increased its military presence in Africa, the Mediterranean, the North Atlantic, the High Arctic, and the Caucasus. In the information domain, Russian persuasion campaigns targeted social and traditional media with a blitz of troll farms, state news outlets, and official press releases to interfere in the domestic affairs of foreign states.[11] NATO has observed that:

> In addition to its conventional military threat, Russia is deploying a broader hybrid toolkit including offensive cyber, state-sanctioned assassinations, and poisonings – using chemical weapons, political coercion, and other methods to violate the sovereignty of Allies. The return of geostrategic competition has also brought a proliferation of hybrid attacks. This grey zone activity has eroded the traditional boundaries of conflict. Domestic and international security bleed across into each other. The line between civilians and combatants is being blurred, through the use of proxies and private military companies, disinformation, and subversion. All of this, and the hybrid activity of terrorist organisations, seeks to weaken and divide Allies from within by undermining societal cohesion and our way of life.[12]

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[8] Mark Galeotti, "I'm Sorry for Creating the Gerasimov Doctrine," *Foreign Policy*, 5 March 2018. https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/05/im-sorry-for-creating-the-gerasimov-doctrine/

[9] Renz, *Russia*, pp. 284-288. These conditions were: pre-positioned forces and installations; weakened Ukrainian political and military leadership; a large pro-Russian population; and the element of surprise.

[10] Michael Kofman, "Raiding and International Brigandry: Russia's Strategy for Great Power Competition," *War on the Rocks* (14 June 2018): pp. 10, 13-14. https://warontherocks.com/2018/06/raiding-and-international-brigandry-russias-strategy-for-great-power-competition/

[11] Renz, *Russia*, p. 290.

[12] NATO. Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General. *NATO 2030: United for a New Era* (25 November 2020): pp. 16-17. https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf

The Russian regime's motivation for this meddling is to maintain domestic political power through nationalism and displays of Russian exceptionalism. Russian hegemony is "less about expanding Russian state power into foreign lands (as in the Soviet era) and more about restoring Russian leadership among ethnic Russians."[13] In 2002, Putin attempted to create a pan-Slavic and Russian-led Eurasian answer to NATO. The Collective Security Treaty Organization united the post-Soviet countries of Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan under Russian leadership. However, Ukraine among other former Soviet republics with large Russian populations remained separate and outside Russian control. Although Russian activities in Ukraine were unanticipated, the rhetoric of protecting ethnic Russians was consistent during previous actions in South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Transnistria, and Nagorno-Karabakh.[14] In hindsight, the West realized that Russia was attempting not to annex the Donbass but to coerce Ukraine into federalization, thereby giving Russia strategic influence in Ukrainian politics. However, the interim destabilization was also beneficial to Russian by preventing Ukraine's integration into the Euro-Atlantic community.[15] The formal association of Slavic nations with Western institutions directly challenges the illusion of Russian exceptionalism, and poses an existential threat to the Russian regime. Both regionally and globally, Russia has proven its willingness to use foreign interference to maintain the facade of Russian exceptionalism. For deterrence, it is necessary to understand how this motivation is operationalized into Russia's strategic policy objectives.

Russian Strategic Interests

Recent Russian nationalism is an anti-Western reaction to protect its national identity. Through a constructivist lens, modern Russia defines itself based on its relations with the West.[16] Russia's overall strategy is to leverage national power without

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[13] Kari Roberts, "Understanding Putin: The politics of identity and geopolitics in Russian foreign policy discourse," *International Journal* 72, no. 1 (2017): p. 40.
https://journals-sagepub-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/doi/10.1177/0020702017692609.

[14] Roberts, *Understanding Putin*, pp. 48-49.

[15] Kofman, *Raiding*, pp. 12-13.

[16] Roberts, *Understanding Putin*, pp. 28, 43-44.

decisive combat to reclaim a co-equal status congruent to the 1969-1979 détente.[17] For Russia, such recognition would guarantee its sphere of influence and elite status in the international system. This strategic objective permeates its foreign policy, security policy, and its approach to NATO.

The West perceives Russian aggressions as attacks on the liberal international order; however, the Russians interpret the international system differently. To them, NATO is simply a manifestation of US military power projection in an international system of US unipolarity.[18] In this way, Russia tailors its foreign policy and tools differently for the US, NATO, EU, and individual countries. From a Russian perspective, the greatest threats to their sovereignty are US-funded socio-political movements such as the early 2000s Colour Revolutions in former Soviet states, the 2010-2012 Arab Spring, and the February 2014 Maidan Revolution in Ukraine.[19] As noted by the renowned Russian observer Mark Galeotti: "the Russians honestly — however wrongly — believe that these were not genuine protests against brutal and corrupt governments, but regime changes orchestrated in Washington, or rather, Langley."[20] Similarly, international law is interpreted as a US mechanism for regime change. Russia accused the West of legitimizing aggressions through selective application of international law in the 1998 Kosovo intervention, the 2003 Iraq invasion, and the 2011 Libya intervention. Interestingly, Russia would use these same legal precedents for its actions in Ukraine.[21] Russia is also threatened by the encroachment of Western institutions into their sphere. All contemporary Russian presidents have underlined the perceived threat of NATO's continued eastward expansion and blocking NATO membership is presumed to have been an objective of the 2008 Georgia war.[22] Likewise, Russian activities in Crimea and the Donbass disrupted the expansion of EU political and economic institutions into Ukraine.

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[17] Kofman, *Raiding*, p. 10.

[18] Ibid., p. 7.

[19] Renz, *Russia*, pp. 286, 290.

[20] Galeotti, *I'm Sorry.*

[21] Renz, *Russia*, p. 286; Roberts, *Understanding Putin*, pp. 51-53.

[22] Roberts, *Understanding Putin*, pp. 30, 40.

Despite the expanded use of hybrid means below the threshold of war, the Russian military remains committed to conventional and nuclear forces.[23] According to Galeotti, the West must conceptually delineate the hybrid concept into two distinct approaches: military and non-military.[24] For the Russian military, the hybrid tactics in Ukraine were *active measures* to shape the battlefield. As such, the Russians can be expected to use hybrid methods to enable conventional combat operations. Furthermore, the military's approach has been characterized as "raiding actions" to achieve strategic ends with limited resources in specific contexts.[25] For example, in the Donbass, the Russian military has refrained from a direct invasion despite conventional superiority. The raiding concept does not preclude a large-scale campaign; however, it demonstrates limited military ambitions. Crimea would appear to be an outlier but the impetus and success in that theatre were manifestly unique as previously detailed. Therefore, the non-military hybrid power instruments also pose a unique challenge to NATO.

NATO 2030, the Alliance's recent strategic outlook, identifies numerous traditional and emerging security challenges including China for the first time. However, Russia is emphasised as the "most profound geopolitical challenge" in the Euro-Atlantic region.[26] As the US and NATO have a massive advantage in terms of economic, diplomatic, and military power, it has been argued that Russia is not capable of posing a serious threat.[27] Galeotti argues that the Russians acknowledge this imbalance and believe that NATO's mutual defense assurance places NATO nations out of bounds to direct military action. Instead, the Russians believe they can challenge Western cohesion, norms, and institutions using diplomatic, economic, informational, and covert-military means below the threshold of war. Despite the general alignment of Russia's foreign interference, there is no formal Russian doctrine or controlling agency for the various actors, which explains the difficulty in predicting their activities.[28] Each actor is independently determined to reduce the relative power of the US, which serves to elevate Russia in a multipolar system. Having identified Russian motivations,

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[23] Renz, *Russia, p.* 290.
[24] Galeotti, *I'm Sorry*.
[25] Kofman, *Raiding*, pp. 2-3, 5.
[26] NATO, *NATO 2030, p.* 16.
[27] Kofman, *Raiding,*p. 9.
[28] Galeotti, *I'm Sorry*.

strategic interests, and approaches, the significance of the threat to NATO, and by extension Canadian security is clear. A detailed understanding of Russia's strategic options will enable a discussion of how to deter them.

Russian Strategic Options

Designed specifically to address the NATO-Russian situation, the author's strategic deterrence framework takes into account the options for Russian power projection along a "continuum of conflict," which forms the adversary side of this framework (see Figure 1). Adopting terminology from PFEC and NATO, the framework sees three escalating phases of interstate-power struggle: Competition,[29] Threatening,[30] and Combat.[31] Within each phase are two stages that each represent a strategy option. An *Ends-Ways-Means* analysis provides an effective method of analyzing an adversary's strategy.[32] Applied to Russian options, the *ends* are strategic political objectives, the *ways* are the instruments of national power, and the *means* are the specific resources within that instrument.
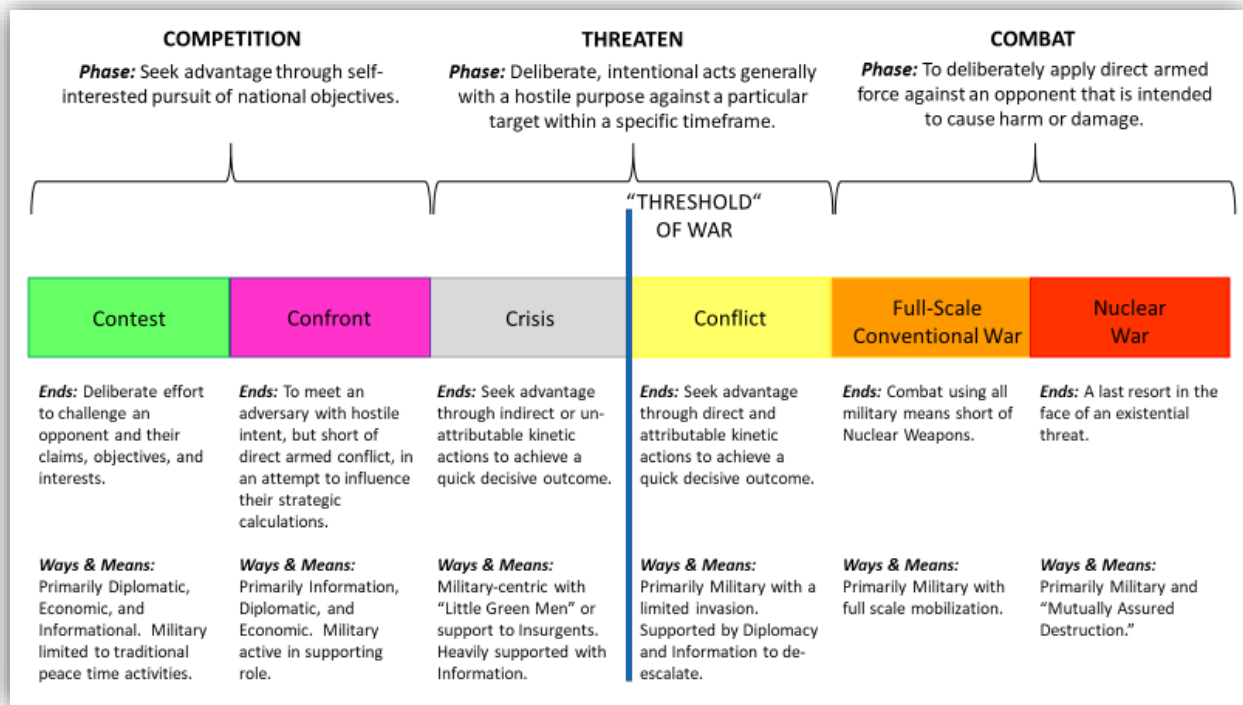
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[29] DND, *PFEC*, p. 49.

[30] NATO., *NATOTerm*. "The Official NATO Terminology Database." Last accessed 6 December 2020. https://nso.nato.int/natoterm/Web.mvc

[31] DND, *PFEC*, p. 49.

[32] Iain King, "Beyond Ends, Ways and Means: We need a better Strategic Framework to win in an era of Great Power Competition," *USMA: Modern War Institute*, 9 March 2020. https://mwi.usma.edu/beyond-ends-ways-and-means-we-need-a-better-strategic-framework-to-win-in-an-era-of-great-power-competition/. Note: To reflect the paper's scope of strategic deterrence, any discussion of means will be limited to military and will not go into the domain prominence of a specific resource.

Figure 1 – Continuum of Competition

	COMPETITION			THREATEN		COMBAT	
	Phase: Seek advantage through self-interested pursuit of national objectives.			**Phase:** Deliberate, intentional acts generally with a hostile purpose against a particular target within a specific timeframe.		**Phase:** To deliberately apply direct armed force against an opponent that is intended to cause harm or damage.	
				"THRESHOLD" OF WAR			
	Contest	Confront	Crisis	Conflict		Full-Scale Conventional War	Nuclear War
	Ends: Deliberate effort to challenge an opponent and their claims, objectives, and interests.	**Ends:** To meet an adversary with hostile intent, but short of direct armed conflict, in an attempt to influence their strategic calculations.	**Ends:** Seek advantage through indirect or un-attributable kinetic actions to achieve a quick decisive outcome.	**Ends:** Seek advantage through direct and attributable kinetic actions to achieve a quick decisive outcome.		**Ends:** Combat using all military means short of Nuclear Weapons.	**Ends:** A last resort in the face of an existential threat.
	Ways & Means: Primarily Diplomatic, Economic, and Informational. Military limited to traditional peace time activities.	**Ways & Means:** Primarily Information, Diplomatic, and Economic. Military active in supporting role.	**Ways & Means:** Military-centric with "Little Green Men" or support to Insurgents. Heavily supported with Information.	**Ways & Means:** Primarily Military with a limited invasion. Supported by Diplomacy and Information to de-escalate.		**Ways & Means:** Primarily Military with full scale mobilization.	**Ways & Means:** Primarily Military and "Mutually Assured Destruction."

In the Combat phase, nations are engaged in either the stages of Full-Scale Conventional War or Nuclear War. In this phase, the military is the primary instrument of power. The Russians will avoid these strategies in the face of NATO's overwhelming conventional power and the mutually assured destruction of nuclear war unless threatened existentially. Traditionally, peace has been the absence of war; however, this framing fails to capture continuous inter-state rivalry. In the *competition* phase, nations pursue strategic objectives without engaging in armed conflict, which includes the non-violent *contest*[33] stage or the provocative *confront*[34] stage. From a national power perspective, primacy is given to diplomatic, economic, and informational instruments, although military activities are possible, such as capacity building during *contest* and blockades during *confront*. Arguably, Russia's strategy is presently in the *confront* stage as "great power competition is ascendant, and the character of that competition favours disinformation, hybrid activity, and diplomatic subterfuge."[35] Militarily, the Russians

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[33] DND, *PFEC*, p. 49.

[34] DND, *PFEC*, p. 49.

[35] King, *Beyond Ends*.

are likely conducting supporting activities in the information, cyber, and space domains.

The Threatening phase covers deliberate yet limited hostile acts on both sides of the *Threshold of War*. This framework defines attribution of hostile forces as this threshold because this condition enables a declaration of mutual defence. As a transition phase, all national power instruments have a role and militarily all domains will be engaged. The *crisis* stage or *grey-zone* allows for kinetic activities by forces, such as insurgent, not directly attributable to a rival such as the *Little Green Men* in Ukraine. The Conflict stage assumes that not every kinetic engagement will escalate to full-scale war, especially if the aggressor is using a raiding approach or ceases hostilities. This phase incorporates lower-order hostilities created by the stability-instability paradox that finds effective nuclear and conventional deterrence is likely to result in conflicts below the threshold of war.[36] Functionally, a NATO mutual defence declaration is a political decision. It could occur on the *threshold*, before a *crisis*, or not at all, despite the conditions having been ostensibly met. Lastly, the framework can be applied separately to specific geographical regions, which means it is possible to have *conflict* and *competition* in separate theaters. While not specifically denoted in this framework, cooperation can also occur at any point, evidenced by continued Arctic Council and International Space Station cooperation despite Crimea. Armed with the potential Russian strategic options, this paper can now discuss effective deterrence mechanisms. In understanding an adversary's strategic ends, power can then be applied towards their critical ways or means to achieve deterrence and persuasion.[37]

Strategic Deterrence

In its basic form, deterrence is discouraging another nation from taking an unwanted action. An aggressor's motivations can be complex and deterrence requires influencing their cognitive process to preference non-violent alternatives to war. Defending nations can conduct direct deterrence to prevent an attack on their territory or extend deterrence to allies, such as the US nuclear umbrella over NATO during the

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[36] Kofman, *Raiding*, p. 5.

[37] King, *Beyond Ends*.

Cold War.[38] Broadly speaking there are three strategies of deterrence: retaliation, punishment and denial. Each strategy can be achieved in various ways, including through nuclear and conventional deterrence methods. In turn, each of those methods must be capable, credible, and clear in their ability to execute the intended threat to be effective. This section will explain deterrence strategies, introduce the defender side of the strategic deterrence framework and discuss deterrence effectiveness to demonstrate that the eFP Battlegroup in Latvia is an effective deterrence by denial mechanism within the broader deterrence framework.

Deterrence Strategies

Deterrence by retaliation aims to make the costs of aggression unacceptable by the destruction of possessions elsewhere, usually using nuclear weapons.[39] It is an all-or-nothing proposition used when facing an existential threat from which there is no return. Deterrence by punishment promises to exact continuous or escalating costs on an aggressor until it complies. As this is not an all-or-nothing situation, the aggressor is given the opportunity to abandon their gains in the face of mounting costs. Similarly, the defender does not need to automatically respond as the intent is not the protection of an objective. After deterrence fails, the defender can take time to apply the full weight of military capabilities or national powers, such as sanctions. The risk is that over time escalation may lead to nuclear war. Deterrence by denial makes the aggressor's ability to achieve their objective unlikely or unfeasible. A preemptive attack, probable defeat of the aggressor, or destruction of the objective may all be sufficient to deter territory seizure.[40] In essence, denial is the intent to defend even if the aggressor has a greater balance of forces.[41]

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[38] Mazarr, *Understanding Deterrence*, pp. 1-3.

[39] James J. Wirtz, "How Does Nuclear Deterrence Differ from Conventional Deterrence?" *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (Winter 2018): pp. 66-67. https://search-proquest-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/docview/2166948377?accountid=9867

[40] Wirtz, *How Does*, pp. 68-71.

[41] Mazarr, *Understanding Deterrence*, p. 2.

Deterrence Framework

In the framework (see Figure 2), the deterrence strategies have been represented from immediate to general based on proximity to the intersecting of the *threshold* and the red line separating the aggressor's side of the model. The literature defines general deterrence as persistent effort over the long term and immediate deterrence as short-term or urgent positioning during a crisis. The primacy of conventional methods shifts to nuclear as the deterrence strategy becomes more generalized. The inherent assumption in this model is that denial methods are less permanent than those of punishment and retaliation. This generally aligns with mobilization plans and capability development timelines, although not perfectly. An effective deterrent could contain a single method or multiple strategies. Most classical studies suggest conventional forces are more effective in denial strategies than punishment ones. Additionally, classical studies suggest general deterrence is easier and reduces the need for immediate deterrence; however, during a crisis it may be difficult to position sufficient immediate deterrence.[42]

Figure 2 – Strategic Deterrence Framework

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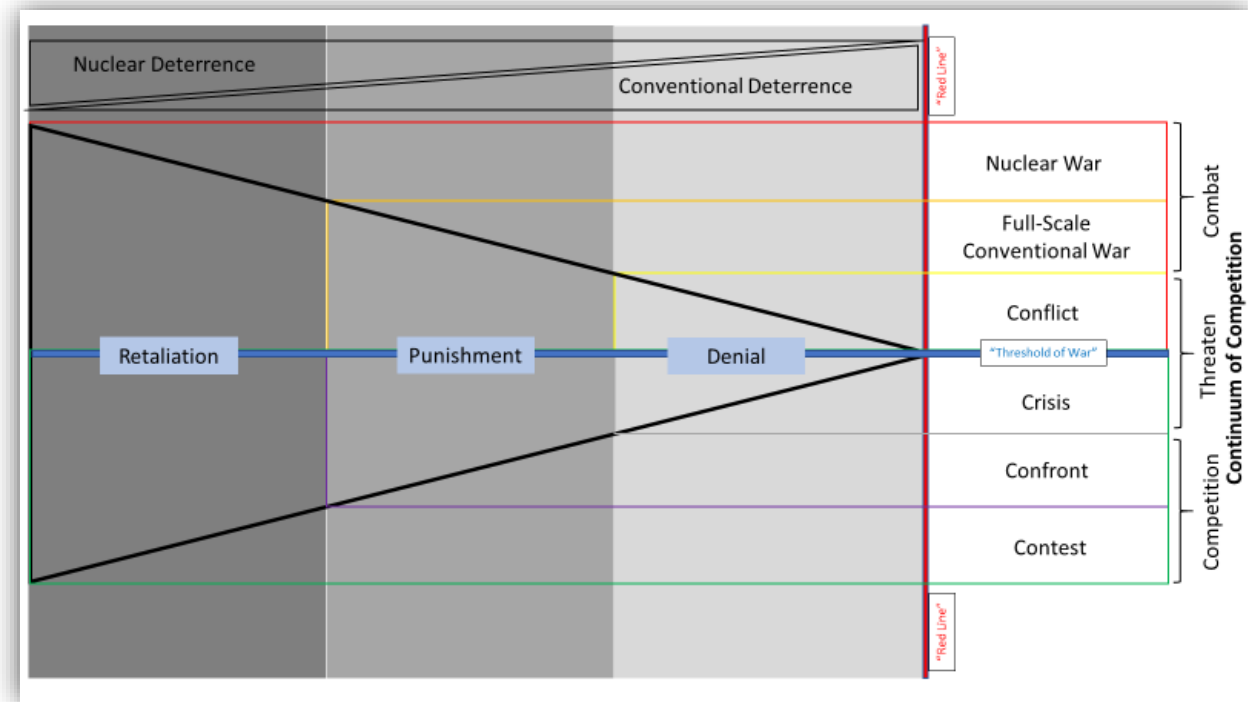
[42] Mazarr, *Understanding Deterrence*, pp. 2-4.

Deterrence Effectiveness

For a deterrent mechanism to be effective, it must be capable, credible, and clear with each component building on the previous. Capability is possessing the military forces required to execute the threat should deterrence fail. To be credible, the aggressor must believe that the threat could and would be executed if a red line is crossed.[43] Clarity communicates the credibility and capability of the deterrent to shape the aggressor's perception, which can be enhanced by demonstrating resolve and removing choice in executing the deterrent. The specific behavior being deterred or red line must be unambiguously clear to the adversary. Bluffing deterrence capability or resolve risks credibility as showcased by President Obama's Syrian chemical weapons blunder. Psychology plays a role in an aggressor's assessment of the risks. Conventional forces are contestable in that the aggressor can win even if outmatched; these cognitive biases have led to wars.[44] Conversely, the guaranteed loss associated with nuclear weapons is uncontestable. The credibility of both conventional and nuclear deterrence depends on the context and strategy regardless of contestability. However, nuclear credibility increases when the threat is existential and choice minimized.[45] The mandate of eFP Battlegroup Latvia is to "counter a limited incursion in a particular area of confrontation."[46] Conceptually, the force is conducting effective denial deterrence as an immediate, conventional force with a clear, credible, and capable design in the Threatening phase. In practice, the eFP's effectiveness depends on Russia's perception.

Implications of Strategic Deterrence

The implications of the Russian threat vis-à-vis strategic deterrence identifies unique considerations for NATO and the CAF. In categorizing NATO forces on the deterrence framework, eFP is the *tip of the spear* as a Denial mechanism. NATO Response Forces (NRF) comprise the Punishment mechanism. To deploy, this 40,000-

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[43] Wirtz, *How Does*, p. 64.

[44] Iain King, "What Do Cognitive Biases Mean for Deterrence?" *The Strategy Bridge*, 12 February 2019. https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2019/2/12/what-do-cognitive-biases-mean-for-deterrence

[45] Wirtz, *How Does*, pp. 64, 71.

[46] Leuprecht, *The Enhanced Forward Presence*, pp. 1, 4.

strong force requires a potentially lengthy process of unanimous consent.[47] Lastly, the extension of the US's nuclear umbrella, supported by France and the UK, is the Retaliation mechanism. Conceptually these capabilities can be placed onto the deterrence framework (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 – NATO Deterrence Forces
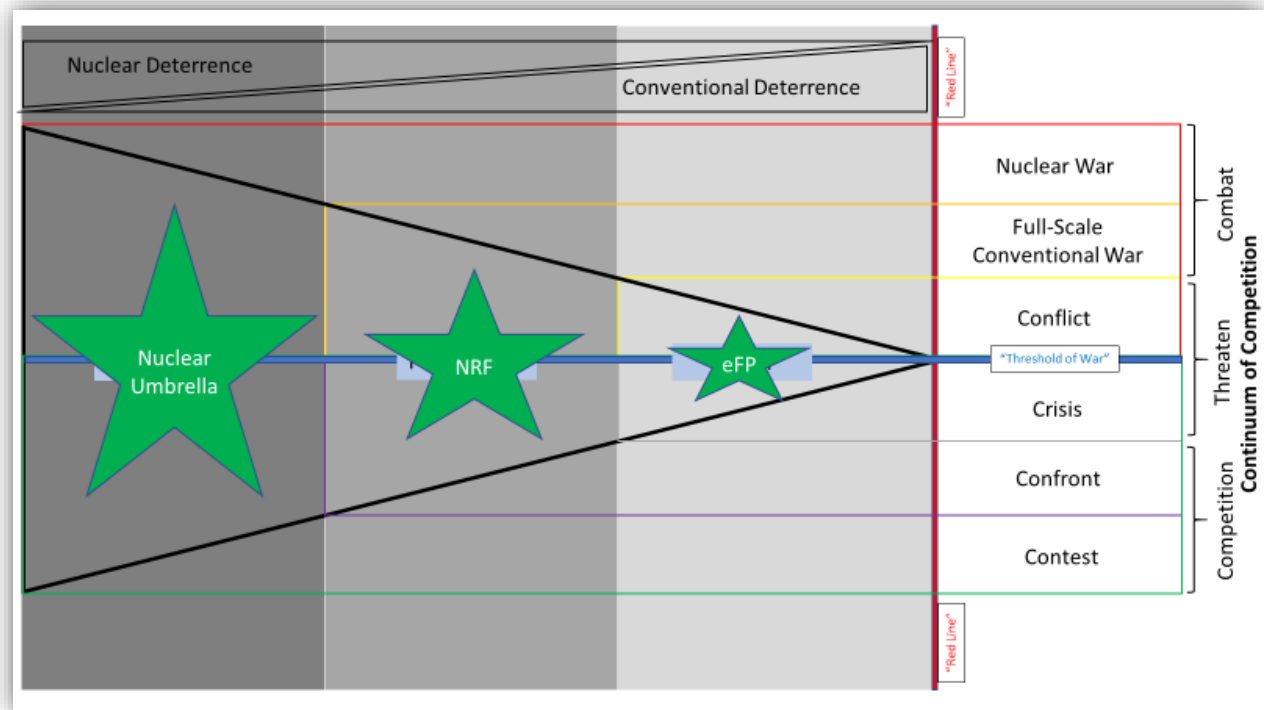
NATO and the Russian Threat

Before analyzing the implications of the Russian threat to NATO's deterrence mechanisms, the framework reveals that there is a potential gap in deterrence from the non-military power instruments of diplomatic, economic, and informational in countering hybrid threats below the *threshold* (see Figure 4). With clear messaging, the

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[47] Leuprecht, *The Enhanced Forward Presence…*, pp. 3, 5. The NRF is currently the largest standing NATO commitment, and conceptually represents all potential conventional forces: such as NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs), US Army Europe, member states' national forces, and eventually the "Four Thirties" NATO Readiness Initiative (30 Battlegroups, 30 squadrons, and 30 warships in 30 days in a crisis).

West may be able to establish deterrence norms in the non-traditional domains of cyber, space, and information. [48] Conceptually, the balance of conventional and nuclear deterrence within a military deterrence strategy shifts as the deterrent moves from immediate to general. A similar construct should be considered for hybrid threats with a shift from conventional military to deterrence through other instruments. Galeotti highlights this point:

> If the subversion is not the prelude to war, but the war itself, this changes our understanding of the threat, and therefore our best response. Maintaining serious armed forces as a deterrent is still necessary, but perhaps more emphasis ought to go on counterintelligence and media literacy, on fighting corruption (always a boon for the political warriors) and healing the social divisions the Russians gleefully exploit. [49]

While outside the scope of this paper, detailed analysis is required to determine how to use these alternate means to develop a capable, credible and clear deterrent to Russian hybrid activities.

Figure 4 – NATO Deterrence Gaps

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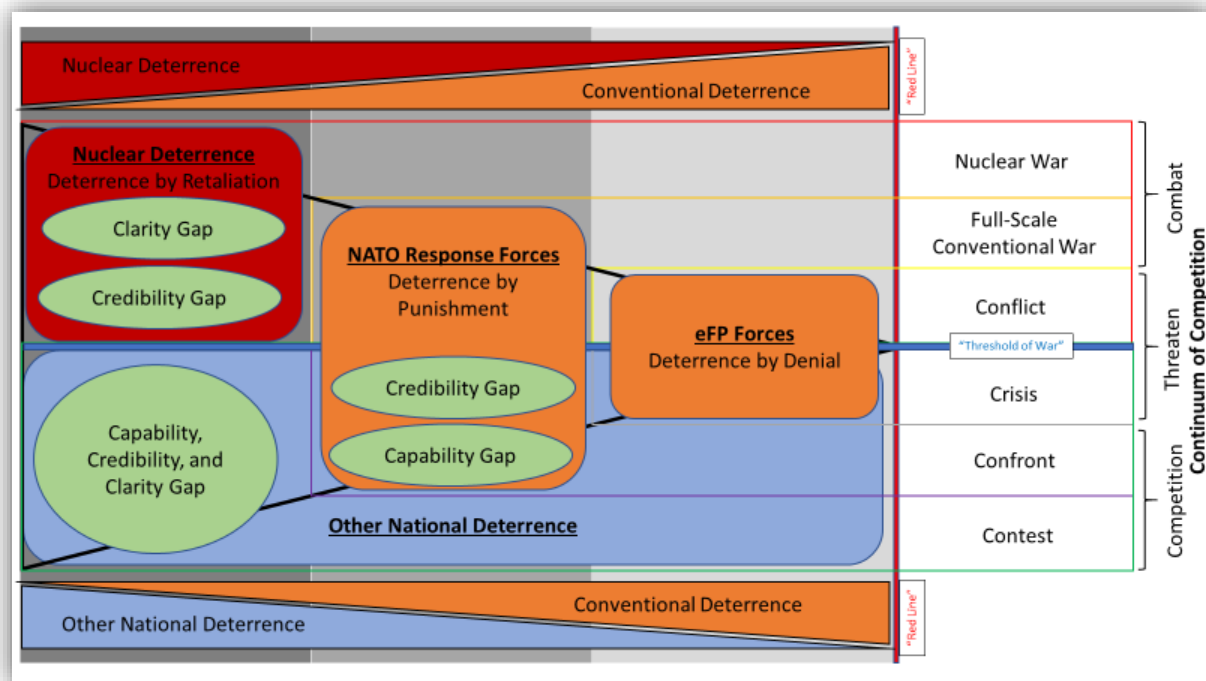
[48] King, *What Do*.
[49] Galeotti, *I'm Sorry*.

Nuclear Retaliation is a credible response to a nuclear attack. However, the destructive nature of nuclear weapons raises proportionality concerns if used in other circumstances.[50] Presumably, nuclear deterrence applies only above the threshold of war, which means nuclear deterrence does not apply during Crisis. A Conflict of limited scope poses a nuclear credibility gap due to proportionality. Thus, Punishment and Denial mechanisms must cover these spaces. Lastly, former President Trump's anti-NATO rhetoric may have introduced a nuclear clarity gap concerning the extension of the US nuclear umbrella in a Full-Scale Conventional War. In Punishment, NRF have a capability gap during Confront where the Russian hybrid threat is more adept at exploiting the domains of cyber, space, and information. Ideally, other national power instruments fill this gap. Russia's surprise annexation of Crimea demonstrated that punishment mechanisms are too slow in addressing covert military actions.[51] Therefore NRF have a credibility gap during Crisis. After careful consideration, NATO may find its interests require positioning eFP-like forces in non-member states as a means of extending deterrence to check Russian ambitions. During Denial, NATO and the CAF share responsibility to ensure that eFP forces are capable. NATO is responsible for reinforcements if Russia increases its forces. NATO must also ensure the eFP is operationally integrated with Punishment mechanisms if Denial fails.[52] Similarly, all NATO states should provide eFP soldiers to ensure that their commitments to Punishment and Denial deterrence remain credible.[53] A shared casualty burden from the onset mitigates some of the weaknesses inherent in extended deterrence. The ultimate implication is that no single deterrent mechanism is sufficient for the Russian threat. Mutual support is a principle of war. Overlapping deterrence mechanisms have a reinforcing effect. Gaps or solitary mechanisms of deterrence are susceptible to Russian exploitation. This applies equally to NATO and the CAF.

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[50] Wirtz, *How Does*, p. 69.

[51] Renz, *Russia and*, p. 288.

[52] Leuprecht, *The Enhanced Forward Presence*, p. 4.

[53] Mazarr, *Understanding Deterrence*, p. 3.

CAF and the Russian Threat

As the leader of the Latvian eFP, Canada has a responsibility to ensure that the force in Adazi remains a capable, credible, and clear mechanism of deterrence by denial in the Russia psyche. The Achilles' heel of conventional deterrence is their contestability.[54] The eFP must maintain a sufficient force balance and readiness such that the contestability of the force in a Crisis or Conflict stage is not in question. The rotational nature of the eFP requires sustained interoperability training to operate as a capable force. So far eFP integration has produced positive externalities in "building societal resilience and improved security cooperation among member states."[55] Importantly, the deciding feature of deterrence effectiveness is an aggressor's impetus and risk aversion.[56] As such, "Deterrence based on 'just enough' will not deter a motivated enemy."[57] To remain credible, the eFP forces in Latvia must continue to retain the authority to respond to a Russian threat without an Article 5 declaration or a NATO-designated operation, which mitigates the possibility of bureaucratic delays or a contributing nation opting out.[58] Furthermore, the eFP commander must be able to exercise this authority under the Latvian or NATO banner should either hesitate. In terms of strategic communications, NATO, Canada, Latvia, all contributing nations, and the Battlegroup itself, have clearly articulated and reinforced the mission's mandate to deter and if necessary, defend against a Russian incursion.

In summary, the evaluation of the Latvian eFP's Denial effectiveness is ultimately a subjective estimate of Russian perception, as is the presumption of potential Russian objectives. However, capability to win in combat is central. The author's experience in the Latvian theatre suggests that Canada's eFP Battlegroup is sufficiently combat capable to defeat a Russian vanguard element. Other observers disagree, comparing the capability to a tripwire or speedbump. If that were the case, the author still believes that the messaging, intelligence gathering, and shared casualty burden from even a largely futile delaying action makes the eFP effective as a Denial

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[54] Wirtz, *How Does*, p. 58.

[55] Leuprecht, *The Enhanced Forward Presence*, p. 1.

[56] Mazarr, *Understanding Deterrence*, p. 8.

[57] King, *Beyond Ends*.

[58] Leuprecht, *The Enhanced Forward*, p. 6; Wirtz, *How Does*, pp. 65-66.

mechanism because it is a component of an integrated and mutually supportive strategic deterrence framework. So far, the Russians appear to be in agreement.

Conclusion

At the 1949 signing of the North Atlantic Treaty, Lester Pearson, then Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, stated that "this treaty is not a pact for war, but a pledge for peace and progress."[59] Through the introduction of a strategic deterrence framework, this paper has covered the extant Russian threat, the theory underpinning NATO's deterrence, and the implications of deterring the Russian threat. This analysis has revealed that the Russians are still the most significant threat to NATO, and by extension Canada. Furthermore, the eFP mission is an effective deterrence by denial mechanism against Russian aggression. Lastly, Canada's leadership of a nuanced and critical aspect of NATO deterrence is a prudent contribution to collective security considering the Russian threat. More research is required to operationalize other national power instruments into deterrence. This framework should aid military planners as they define their manoeuvre space in the present strategic context. For the CAF, it will enable a military "approach to compete with, contest, confront, and – when necessary – combat our nation's adversaries."[60]

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[59] NATO, *NATO – Declassified*.
[60] DND, *PFEC*, p. 3.

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