Book Review

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Improving Deterrence Concept for 21st-Century Needs: Review of Deterrence in 21st Century: Statecraft in the Information Age'
Edited by Eric Ouellet, Madeleine D'Agata, and Keith Stewart

Whether and how deterrence works in the 21st century is a vital question for many states neighboring Russia, China, or any other authoritarian regional powers. For smaller states like the Baltic states, NATO´s credible deterrence posture has become a religion-like belief that keeps hope and ensures their survival. However, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, many doubts have arisen about whether deterrence actually works against powerful nations with completely different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Communication and the ability to deliver our information to adversaries while resisting their hostile deterrence activities is the center of gravity of the deterrence struggle in the informational age. Academic debate and high-quality analysis can greatly support military planners and political leaders, especially in intercultural cases

of the 21st century, where information spreads very quickly but tends to be understood differently.

'Deterrence in the 21st Century: Statecraft in the Information Age' is a collection of academic essays from numerous authors addressing the main questions of deterrence from different aspects in theory and practice. While some chapters have a practical orientation, there are also ones that are 'from academics to academics', intending to improve methodological and conceptual bases for future research.

What is especially beneficial for the reader is that the book is published under an open-access license and is freely available. As the paperback version is at the same time rather bulky and packed, the digital version is more comfortable to read and carry.

The current deterrence-oriented collection is the 14th issue of the book series 'Beyond Boundaries: Canadian Defence and Strategic Studies Series.', covering different aspects of security and defense policy and research. The Calgary University Press published it with the help of the Defense Research and Development of Canada, which means it has a specific Canadian footprint regarding content and institutional expectations regarding the outcome.

The collected volume's editors represent the same institutional and academic expectations. **Eric Ouellet** is a full professor at the Royal Military College of Canada in Defence Studies, teaching to mid and senior-level officers at the Canadian Forces College. **Madeleine D'Agata** was a defense scientist at Defence Research and Development Canada. **Keith Stewart** has worked at Defence Research and Development Canada's Toronto Research Centre for a 30-year career, including working for private industry and government service.

Among the authors, there are some well-known names, but also some young or starting scientists. Among the authors, the reader will find Christopher Ankersen, Yair Ansbacher, Oshri Bar-Gill, Stephen J. Cimbala, Maddie D'Agata, Molly Ellenberg, Leandre R. Fabrigar, Rachel Lea Heide, Nicole J. Jackson, Pierre Jolicoeur, Christian Leuprecht, Adam Lowther, Sarah Jane

Meharg, Eric Ouellet, Ronald D. Porter, Anthony Seaboyer, Ron Schleifer, Miniqian Shen, Anne Speckhard, Keith Stewart, Joseph Szeman, and Alex Wilner. Surprisingly, Alexander Lanoszka and Stefanie von Hlatky from other Canadian deterrence-oriented research centers were not among the authors.

The book's content is otherwise neutral, taking a distant and descriptive look and is not challenging most Western mainstream views on deterrence. Mostly, it covers the relevant content and offers good sources of the chosen focus, but it does not actively attempt to solve research or practical problems. Readers would appreciate more intrigue and original ideas for future looks or studies in specific areas, adding new perspectives to the functional logic of deterrence as a concept. Most chapters are information-heavy, and the reader needs time to digest them; more visuals and examples would have benefitted this aspect.

Altogether, the reader finds 14 chapters divided into four sections. Sections cover first the theoretical and conceptual challenges and developments of deterrence. The second section looks into the wider strategic context and relevant experiences. A specific Canadian content section follows it. The final section is future-looking by covering emerging tools and approaches.

For the Baltic reader, the most interesting chapters are the ones covering Russia´s approaches to informational warfare and the one covering the evolution of China´s information exploitation of COVID-19. I personally found very useful also the chapter 'Assessing Influence in Target Audience that Won´t Say or Don´t Know How Much They Have Been Influenced'. The need for a more measurable and practically implementable impact and influence calculation methodology is a key variable when countering Russian hostile disinformation campaigns in Baltic states and Central and Eastern Europe. What the Baltic readers would miss is an analysis of how deterrence works or could work for small states with big and hostile neighbor, but with NATO membership.

Most probably, there will be very few readers who will read every single chapter of this book. But on the other hand, everyone interested in deterrence will find at least a few interesting chapters.

What is this book's focus and original value next to numerous classical texts and sources on deterrence? Recent years have seen the rise and refinement of conflict enacted in the world of information, with tactics including seeding disinformation, the theft of sensitive data, confusing or obscuring public opinion to forward specific goals, and beyond. *Deterrence in the 21st Century* asks how, and if it is indeed possible, to deter an enemy in the realm of information warfare. As deterrence is about communication and information, it can also be impacted by adversaries' disinformation. For example, losses of equipment and casualties in Ukraine constantly used to demotivate adversaries and mobilize its own audience are good examples of it. Russian and Ukrainian military leaders probably receive periodical overviews about their and their adversary's losses on the battlefield and are impacted by these.

While the editors of the collected volume claim that this is a new original concept, disinformation and manipulation campaigns have been part of deterrence from ancient times; however, the informational age in the 21st century has changed the way that the way things are presented in virtual reality sometimes has more impact than actual circumstances in the battlefield. A second important aspect to be researched more is how people from different cultural and informational spaces receive and understand the information that impacts their resilience and deterrence postures.

Setting the stage with an overview of key concepts of deterrence in the information age, the book presents specific conceptual approaches and their possible applications both in specific domains or geographic areas. Additionally, more illustrative material, practical examples, comparisons, graphs about trends, and data that can encourage readers to make their own analytical outcomes and conclusions would be beneficial. A more structural approach with a strong methodology leading to scientific outcomes with useful recommendations would benefit readers from regions with challenges in keeping NATO`s credible deterrence effective against Russia.

Sources were mostly traditional Western academic sources. In some cases (for example, Russian disinformation campaigns and Chinese informational warfare), this, however, limits the empirical input and the analytical outcome as cultural and linguistic factors are the key to measuring and improving our deterrence outcome. If we expect to use deterrence as a psychological tool, it is most important if our adversaries receive and understand our messages and if they can comply.

While the Canadian view on deterrence is interesting and alternative to the ones of the US, UK or France, it offers little practical help for three small Baltic states having currently very high pressure from Russia, doubting if NATO deterrence posture is fully functional and what should they do themselves or ask from bigger allies to get back safe zone of credible deterrence.

To conclude, this book is a valuable contribution for any libraries of military academies or research centers; an open-access version is also useful for specialized researchers, mostly needing only 2-3 specific chapters from the collection.