

European Deterrence for European Assurance: The United States and Russian Adventurism in the Crimea

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

European Deterrence for European Assurance: The United States and Russian Adventurism in Crimea, by LTC Larry V. Geddings, Jr., US Army, 49 pages.

This monograph is a security strategy analysis of conventional deterrence, assurance, and coercion in Europe leading up to and beyond the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. The purpose of this monograph is to examine historical concepts of deterrence, assurance, and coercion to determine whether the United States' European Reassurance Initiative, later relabeled the European Deterrence Initiative, was effective and sustainable in assuring allies and partners and deterring Russia. Deterrence of adversaries did not remain a centerpiece of US national defense policy as the threat of nuclear enabled assured destruction faded with the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s. Strategic assurance measures through extended deterrence gave way to an opportunity for the evolution of conventional assurance to partners and allies of the United States as global terror networks threatened them at the onset of the twenty-first century. However, as the Global War on Terrorism began to fade, a resurgent Russia began to seek a renewed regional hegemony in Eastern Europe. Russian actions in southeastern Europe forced the United States to reassure allies and rediscover a conventional deterrence theory to stabilize European fears. The seizure of Crimea required swift action by the United States to reassure allies and partners of its commitment to the security of Europe, but the assurances and deterrence of Russian adventurism came at a cost. The price America paid between 2014 and 2017 in terms of fiscal costs, military readiness, US Congressional support, and global influence was significant and unsustainable.

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Acronyms

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DoD	Department of Defense
EDI	European Deterrence Initiative
ERI	European Reassurance Initiative
ERP	European Recovery Plan
EU	European Union
GAO	General Accountability Office
GWOT	Global War on Terrorism
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSS	National Security Strategy
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
UN	United Nations
USEUCOM	United States European Command
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Introduction

The combination of Russian ambition and growing military capabilities creates an unstable frontier in Eurasia, where the risk of conflict due to Russian miscalculation is growing.

—2017 National Security Strategy

Contemporary events in Europe have brought renewed emphasis on the concept of deterrence. During the early twenty-first century, the United States and Russia faced challenges domestically and abroad since the fall of the Iron Curtain resulting in a muddling of internal and external responsibilities. Assurance of allies and partners and deterrence of adversaries through nuclear capabilities, once a hallmark of the Cold War, faded in the twilight of the twentieth century. The United States and Russia faced the challenge of asserting influence through conventional deterrence measures and assurance below the level of direct armed conflict with the other. The rules of assurance through alliances and deterrence by mutually assured destruction had changed with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. What had not changed was European desire for American assurances and America's deterrence of Russian aggression in Europe. Russian adventurism and soft power operations coupled with a lack of American interest in Europe due to a new fight against terrorism led to the seizure of Crimea by Russia in 2014.¹ Subsequent American efforts to stem the Russian aspirations of further expansion were swift and effective. Deterrent efforts in Europe, primarily led by the United States, are unfortunately unsustainable in the long term. To ensure lasting effects, efforts undertaken to protect eastern Europe must transform to a European solution led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) supported by the United States. Furthermore, Russia must understand the assurances offered by Europe to eastern Europeans are protective in nature. Defensive

¹ Lada L. Roslycky, "Russia's Smart Power in Crimea: Sowing the Seeds of Trust," *Journal of Southeast European Studies and Black Sea Studies*, 11 no. 3 (September 2011): 300-303.

conventional deterrent measures through NATO and strategic deterrence delivered by the United States must underpin the deterrence efforts to ensure a compliant Russian adversary.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the crash of Soviet influence in eastern Europe found the United States and Russia hunting for a peer-like competitor to reestablish a common frame of reference in a tumultuous time at the end of the twentieth century. The United States and Russia once again found a worthy contender in the other in the early twenty-first century. The race for global influence manifested itself on the periphery of the Russian Federation and became a skirmish line between the United States and Russia. The contest between the United States and the Russian Federation placed many nations historically aligned with each superpower in an unfavorable position on the international stage. Unfortunately, Ukraine was left to defend itself from a resurgent superpower without the benefit of a deterrent benefactor.

Russian and American governments attempted to refocus their respective nations through the withdrawal of military forces from regional engagements and longstanding military commitments between 2008 and 2010. Both governments intended to reduce military spending and quiet domestic clamor over military intervention abroad while reinvesting domestically. Russian President Vladimir Putin sought international explanation and resolution to perceived Western aggression in Kosovo while attempting to restore Russian influence and political control to former Warsaw Pact countries.² His efforts to regain regional hegemony on the periphery of the Russian Federation encouraged smaller countries within the Baltic and Caucasus regions to look for assurance and sponsorship of regional associations for protection. They were rightly concerned as Russia annexed Crimea in little less than a month. This action, more so than any other, demonstrated Russia's desire to restore its influence over Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. European nations along Russia's periphery perceived the Crimean annexation as a direct threat to

² Dmitri V. Trenin, *Getting Russia Right* (Washington, DC: United Book Press, 2007), 94.

their sovereignty and appealed to allies and partners, most notably the United States, for reassurance against an aggressive Russian threat.

The United States reassured allies through increased spending and military deployments in Europe. This included a return of US military forces to European countries as part of the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) beginning in 2014. American forces, once stationed in Europe, began temporary deployments on a rotational basis to train with allied and partnered forces to reassure host nations of the United States' commitment. The United States intended the commitment of American military and economic influence to reassure countries on Russia's periphery of the United States' resolve to prevent further Russian adventurism. These measures also demonstrated the United States' commitment to the right of self-determination and democratic ideals in Europe. The military deployments came at a cost to US force readiness. Additionally, the fiscal expenditure required to sustain those forces for an undetermined time to reassure allies and deter further Russian aggression was considerable.

The United States and the Soviet Union leveraged strategies of assurance and deterrence within their spheres of influence during the Cold War. Each superpower sought to influence the other through nuclear and conventional deterrence measures. The potential outcomes of nuclear deterrence by threat of assured retaliation were unacceptable, yet, required to establish the concept of extended deterrence.³ Credible and capable strategic missile, air, and undersea forces combined with the adversary's belief that weapons of mutually assured destruction would be used if prompted by provocative actions underpinned both American and Soviet deterrence strategies. The deterrence strategies of the Cold War maintained a firm and predictable status quo of borders and boundaries.

³ Stephen Cimbala, *Extended Deterrence: The United States and NATO Europe* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1987), 136.

As the stalemate of nuclear standoff grew and created little further advantage, the utility of conventional deterrence by denial enjoyed a resurgence in military thought while deterrence by punishment faded from popularity.⁴ The Cold War era defense of Europe by the United States and NATO allies was indicative of the continued effectiveness of deterrence by large standing armies. Deterrence by nuclear punishment was catastrophic with little use other than the wholesale prevention of nuclear war. Deterrence by large armies and forward positioning was expensive for the United States with little to show the American public other than a reassuring notion of stability.

After the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet Union dissolved, reliance on a long-held and novel narrative of bipolar deterrence was thought to have passed. The world saw the United States and Russia opponents on the European continent as early as the signing of the Atlantic Pact in 1949 with obligations to secure their respective allies.⁵ However, assurance and reassurance of allies and partners became important once again in the establishment and maintenance of multinational coalitions to combat the small-scale conflicts of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Economic, diplomatic, and military reassurances of coalitions manifested themselves through NATO peace-keeping action in Bosnia; a US led coalition actions against Al-Qaida and the Taliban in Afghanistan after the attacks of September 11, 2001 and against the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq; and finally, in operations against the Islamic State throughout the Middle East. Coalition building and actions against trans-national terrorism assumed the mantle once occupied by nuclear deterrence as part of the United States national defense lexicon during the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). As the threat of nuclear conflict seemed to fade,

⁴ Lawrence Freedman, *Deterrence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 84.

⁵ John F. Dulles, "Remarks on Europe and the Atlantic Pact in Philadelphia," March 23, 1949, in "Correspondence between Dean Acheson and John Foster Dulles, with Attachment, March 30, 1949," online by The Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum, *The Acheson Papers- Secretary of State File*, accessed April 4, 2018, https://trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/achesonmemos/view.php?documentVersion=both&documentid=65-02_66&documentYear=1949&pagenumber=1.

the threat of peer competition between the United States and the Russian Federation seemed to disappear with it. The United States viewed terrorism as the most significant threat to democracy and Russia as an ally in the GWOT. The United States was unaware of growing Russian animosity toward the West and the United States in particular. The US diplomatic corps hardly noticed the change in Putin's change in tone during his speech in Munich during the 2007 Munich Conference for Security Policy.

When the Russian Federation seized Crimea in 2014, the United States, NATO, and others were caught unaware of the threat posed by a resurgent Russia. Many did not appreciate the methods by which Vladimir Putin would go to protect his country from Western encroachment.⁶ The seizure of Crimea and portions of eastern Ukraine by Russian forces were opposed by the international community through diplomatic missives and several rounds of sanctions imposed by the United States and European nations. However, Russia was undeterred in its buildup, execution, or consolidation of its gains and justified the unilateral seizure of Crimea as a return of historically Russian lands inhabited by ethnically Russian citizens back to Russian Federation control.⁷

Russia justified the incursion into Crimea with a narrative similar to that used by the United States and NATO to strike, and later enter, Kosovo in 1999. In both Crimea and Kosovo, Russia nor NATO, were deterred from seeking extraterritorial authority by a legal or moral authority.⁸ A regional power, or even a global superpower, can only be deterred only through a proactive and anticipatory defense. The United States, its European allies, and partners had neither a proactive or anticipatory defense in March 2104 to deter Russian efforts in Crimea.

⁶ Daniel Treisman, "Why Putin Took Crimea: The Gambler in the Kremlin," *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 3 (May 2016): 47.

⁷ Igor S. Ivanov, *The New Russian Diplomacy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press, 2002), 12.

⁸ Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001), 165-166.

As the Russian Federation demonstrated its resolve by annexing Crimea on March 18, 2014, other states on Russia's periphery, particularly the Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the southern states of Georgia and Ukraine, were apprehensive and sought reassurances from the United States and NATO. These nations felt threatened and needed assurances of the prevention of further Russian adventurism and aggression. The United States responded at once with a military and economic reassurance package, the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI), which postured forces within eastern Europe. NATO later developed military force initiatives to better prepare for any future Russian incursions in Eastern Europe. The United States' intended to assuage European concerns while not provoking any further Russian action with reassurance measures. The implied assertion of deterrence was secondary in the implementation of the actions toward Russia following the intended effect of reassuring partners and allies.

In the future, deterrence and reassurance efforts by NATO and the United States will be limited by political will of their nations, fiscal constraints of prolonged transatlantic security efforts, and the parameters of military capabilities bound by national and international politics. More specifically, the United States' ability to reassure allies while deterring Russian aggression through conventional deterrence is not sustainable as a US led effort. European stability must result from a combination of assurance and deterrence measures resourced as a European solution to a European problem led by Europeans or risk a significant reduction of US economic and military means in the short to mid-term as competing world-wide challenges further reduce the United States' ability to manage crises across the globe.

Strategic Environment

The thawing of the Cold War marked the strategic environment of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The end of the Cold War resulted in the demise of a bipolar world of the United States and the Soviet Union and became a world of the United States and the rest of the world. The twenty-first century political landscape was a multitude of states interacting and crashing into each of the others seeking a position of advantage or favor in international relations with the United States role of the international helmsman. Hyper-competition and complexity between states and developing states in a post-Cold War world required a steady course with constant vigilance to ensure balance.

The End of the Cold War

Although the Cold War was “won” by the West and democracy, countries once behind the Iron Curtain felt the most disastrous effects of the Cold War when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989. The physical dismantling of the Berlin Wall in Germany was a stark representation of crumbling Soviet influence and the defeat of communism. The end of the Cold War began in earnest many years before President Ronald Reagan demanded Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev to “tear down this wall.”⁹ The conditions enabling the fall of the Soviet Union were not simply the product of forty years of US presidential administrations and their policies alone.

The United States perceived a “New Europe” after the Cold War that was welcoming of democracy and American notions of freedoms. The resultant thaw in continental relations needed less US military presence in Europe to protect democratic idealism. As the administrations of President George H.W. Bush and William J. Clinton looked to reap a peace dividend from the end of the Cold War and repurposing United States military forces stationed in Europe. American

⁹ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks on East-West Relations at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin,” June 12, 1987, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed April 1, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=34390>.

Presidents in the late twentieth century did not have to wait long to find new opportunities for the American Soldier. They found small scale contingencies throughout the globe requiring US troop commitments to fight small interventions in the Middle East and elsewhere. The once sizeable US military forces stationed in Europe dwindled from over 375,000 to less than 65,000 Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, and Marines during the final decade of the twentieth century.¹⁰ The vast US military forces were no longer required to deter a Soviet Union conventional threat racing across Europe. The massive commitment of US conventional capability was expensive to maintain and unnecessary in a new age as less reliant on a strategy of deterrence were among the first forces to be repurposed. The US economy grew during the 1980s, but, fell sharply after the crash of Wall Street and the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1990 leading to a global recession lasting nearly three years.

US Presidents have remained challenged, despite the end of the Cold War, to assert leadership given international demands for stewardship, domestic fiscal challenges, and an unknown, but emerging, global terrorism threat. Small scale military actions in Grenada, Panama, and Somalia; a regional intervention in Kuwait to expel Saddam Hussein's Iraqi Army from Kuwait, and peace operations in Bosnia pockmarked the final decades of the twentieth century. These military commitments drew the attention of politicians and the American public from national scandal and the economic frailty.

As America was minding the world's trouble spots, the Russian Federation elected President Boris Yeltsin in 1992 who immediately found himself embroiled in conflicts in Abkhazia and Chechnya.¹¹ These conflicts drained the Russian economy and drew Moscow's

¹⁰ Kevin Dougherty, "20 Years After the Berlin Wall: In Europe, U.S. Military Remains Committed to Ensuring Stability While Taking on New Threats," *Stars and Stripes* (November 9, 2009), accessed January 19, 2018, <http://www.stripes.com/news/20-years-after-the-berlin-wall-in-europe-u-s-military-remains-committed-to-ensuring-stability-while-taking-on-new-threats-1.96353>.

¹¹ Stephen Cimbala and Peter Rainow, *Russia and Postmodern Deterrence: Military Power and Its Challenges for Security* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2007), 42-43.

attention from the growing economic and criminal challenges of the nascent semi-capitalist country struggling to regain former prestige as a regional-power, and eventually, as a global super-power.

The European economy was likewise distressed due to the shadow of communist economic principles during the 1980s and dove into further despair as former communist countries tried to accept and embrace capitalist ways. Former Soviet Republics and Warsaw Pact countries faced significant debt and lacked effective systems transition their economies to market-based capitalism. This caused massive devaluation of entire segments of commerce within many countries and only deepened the pit of economic despair.

The Early Twenty-First Century: Opportunities and Challenges

The turn of the twenty-first century provided the United States with an opportunity to focus its energy and influence on a singular cause: The Global War on Terror. On September 11, 2001, the United States was attacked by a previously underestimated terror network in Afghanistan, a transnational terrorist organization called Al-Qaida. Al-Qaida's attack caused 2,977 casualties in the United States as four airliners crashed in a coordinated terrorist strike against the Pentagon, World Trade Center in New York, and a failed attempt to strike the White House that crashed short of its target in Pennsylvania. Less than a month later, combat operations primarily undertaken by the United States were conducted in Afghanistan under the title, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), with the intent to bring senior leaders of the terror network to justice. Within two short years after OEF began, a "coalition of the willing," consisting of partners and allies led by the United States launched Operation Iraqi Freedom to free the Iraqi people from the oppression of Saddam Hussein and prevent the use or proliferation of suspected weapons of mass destruction from Iraq.¹²

¹² Staff, "Bush: 'Join Coalition of Willing'" *CNN* (November 20, 2002), accessed December 13, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/europe/11/20/prague.bush.nato/>.

At the same time and on the other side of the world, Russian political control rested in the hands of Vladimir Putin. Putin's solid grasp of the reins of Russian power was fraught with domestic and international challenges. The beginning of the twenty-first century saw Russia re-engaged in Chechnya and endure a nine-year conflict before it withdrew in 2009, a Russian incursion into Ossetia, and a rise in domestic terrorism. These actions drew a tremendous amount of political, military, and economic capital from Moscow as it tended to a developing economy while trying to navigate a dual-pronged path of domestic infrastructure development and regional hegemony.

The global recession at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century affected both the United States and Russia. The fiscal austerity and market apprehension caused by recession hurled each nation's economy, as well as the global economy, toward a fiscal precipice. As the two global hegemonies of influence sought to reassure their domestic audiences by trimming foreign spending and recommitting sparse fiscal resources toward their domestic crises, many of the fledgling Eastern European countries found themselves, once again, in the cold with little aid to combat rising domestic strife, let alone defense spending. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria, and some nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), most notably, Ukraine and Kazakhstan were hardest hit by the recession with little to no outside aid.¹³

Ambiguity, angst, and a desire to understand a new international security paradigm with smaller military forces, resource constraints, and terrorism filled the global strategic environment of the early twenty-first century. Small scale counterterrorism actions around the world involving US and European powers drained public support, national treasure, and national attention from every country involved in the GWOT. The public malaise of sustained direct and indirect conflict

¹³ Nouriel Roubini, "A Global Breakdown of the Recession in 2009," *Forbes* (June 19, 2013), accessed January 18, 2018, https://www.forbes.com/2009/01/14/global-recession-2009-oped-cx_nr_0115roubini.html#3ba9edd6185f.

was pronounced as countries found themselves with less financial security while continuing to support actions against al-Qaida and other similar terrorist networks around the globe.

After the global recession, the most significant event to affect the globe since the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, was the 2010-2013 Arab Spring.¹⁴ The social media phenomenon known as the Arab Spring demonstrated an individual's ability through social media to influence entire social movements, populations, and nations. Social media and its use of the internet was able to highlight social injustices and repression, particularly of disenfranchised and subjugated peoples spanning the globe. Social media significantly changed how people engaged with each other, and the world, through personal computing devices, cellular phones, and hand-held computing devices was revolutionary. Instantaneous communication, real-time reporting, and the ability of anyone possessing a personal computing device to communicate with, and to, a global audience affected communities, nations, and generations. The "Facebook Revolution" gave the ability of the marginalized to voice their discontent digitally through typed word, vocal activism, and visual evidence leading to activist coordination and influencing others.¹⁵ The Arab Spring was the first significant demonstration of the power a globally connected and disenfranchised population could wield. The Arab Spring was a watershed moment for oppressed peoples as it gave an opportunity to show the world the injustices and atrocities perpetuated by others without a censor. The Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya served as an example of the power of the common person interconnected with innumerable others through technology against oppressive governments and inequality.

Domestic discord, counterterrorism related contingency operations, and a global fascination with the social media, human rights, and equality distracted America and its electorate in late 2013 and early 2014. Simultaneously, Russia enjoyed a reduction of competing domestic

¹⁴ Habibul Haque Khondker, "Role of the New Media in the Arab Spring," *Globalizations I*, no. 5, (2011), 675-679.

¹⁵ Walid China, "The Facebook Revolution," *New African*, Issue 503, no. 2, (2011), 24.

challenges and foreign relations commitments. An opportunity to seize on long held motivations to recapture the historical birthplace of Russian civilization, Crimea was offered to Putin in the nexus of a distracted America and an strategic environment that afforded Russian adventurism in eastern Europe.¹⁶ These events prevented a preoccupied and committed United States from preventing, or halting, Russian aggression against the nascent democracy of Ukraine from being bifurcated by the Russian ambition.

Russian Federation forces infiltrated Crimea and eastern Ukraine and caught the European Union and NATO forces flat-footed as they too were war wary, fraught with financial woes, amid member enlargement discussions, and preoccupied with general discord among European Union members. These European challenges, fermented by global insecurity and ambiguity, provided the Russian Federation an opportunity to act on a long-held desire, and belief of moral high ground, to repatriate the Crimean Peninsula with aspirations of a larger Ukrainian populist revolt resulting in a complete Ukrainian return to Russian control.

The United States' continued involvement in the Middle East and globally against terror networks prevented the United States from understanding the implications of a resurgent Russia. The lack of global awareness, outside of counterterrorism and the Middle East, by the United States placed it in a position of vulnerability in terms of global influence and leadership throughout the second decade of the twenty-first century. Elsewhere, Russia, China, and India enhanced their influence within the global environment through military, economic, political, and informational abilities while America remained embroiled in the Middle East.

Although Russia continued to face domestic terrorism, it withdrew completely from contingency operations outside of its borders after withdrawing from the Chechen insurgency in 2009. Russian President Putin reinvested in its armed forces, developed an asymmetric warfare strategy, and fortified its internal political base as part of his retrenchment from foreign conflict

¹⁶Trenin, *Getting Russia Right*, 52.

between 2009 and 2014.¹⁷ These efforts, unhindered by external conflict, enabled Russia to organize the seizure of historical Russian land on the protected periphery of Russia's western border.

Russian Ambitions

Vladimir Putin saw the West's distraction and global over-commitment as an opportunity to seize long held ambitions and act on what he believed were unlawfully elected officials improperly administering a Russian domain.¹⁸ The seizure of Crimea and expectations of Ukraine falling to a populist movement were motivated by the belief of Kiev, the capitol of Ukraine, being the birthplace of Russia during the 9th Century A.D during the Kievan Rus Dynasty. Vladimir Putin, a deeply nationalist and populist leader, believed it was within the rights of the Russian government to serve as the caretaker Russian citizens regardless of where they were situated. Putin professed a desire to reunite a greater Russia with all historic Russian Slav speaking peoples under a single government.

Elected to his third term as President in 2012, Putin enjoyed significant political latitude within the Russian Federation and sought to increase his burgeoning internal popularity by commandeering nationalist sentiment and evoking a romanticism for Russian regional and global superiority. The romanticism manifested itself in the seizure of Crimea in late February 2014.¹⁹ Having captured Crimea under the pretenses of returning a profoundly Russian area to Russian control, the attack against Ukraine was part of a larger influence and assurance campaign to reinforce Russia's standing as a regional power, if not a global power. The seizure of Crimea

¹⁷ Timothy Thomas, *Russia Military Strategy: Impacting 21st Century Reform and Geopolitics* (Fort Leavenworth: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2015), 96.

¹⁸ John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions that Provoked Putin," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5 (Sep, 2014): 77-89.

¹⁹ Benjamin F. Cumbo IV, and Robert Kaplan. *Russian Motives: An Essay Exploring Russia's Approach to Crimea and Eastern Ukraine* (Washington, DC: Center for New American Security, July 2015), 2, accessed August 5, 2017, https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/documents/CNAS_Report-Russian-Motives_Final_070815.pdf?mtime=20160906081916.

supported a Russian Federation's internal narrative of Western repression of the Russian state since the end of the Cold War.²⁰

Russia's narrative of forced compliance to Western demands resonated with Russians as they had felt the hardships of a failed communist economy. Understanding the impacts of new found capitalism and democracy challenged many Russians. Unfortunately, the expectations of immediate relief from decades of government controlled economic policies did not meet reality as cold winters and inflated prices shaped the narrative of Russian citizens and a perceived mistreatment by the West. State controlled media perpetuated many of the stereotypes and further fostered the idea of the noble central government being committed to raising their citizens from poverty through aid and assistance.²¹ The commitment of the government to protecting Russians was captured explicitly in the 2015 Russian National Security Strategy which outlined the government's responsibility to, "safeguard sovereignty, independence, and state and territorial integrity and to protect the rights of compatriots abroad."²²

The Russian Federation was deeply concerned with encroachment on its borders by NATO since the fall of the Soviet Union. The perceived intrusion into Russia's periphery created a *raison d'être* to establish a boundary area of countries to recreate a strategic buffer from incursions. The notion of a boundary outside of national boundaries to create a buffer of time and space was not without precedent and historical causality.

²⁰ Benjamin F. Cumbo IV, and Robert Kaplan. *Russian Motives: An Essay Exploring Russia's Approach to Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, 2.

²¹ Jill Dougherty, "How the Media Became One of Putin's Most Powerful Weapons: After Decades of Wielding Soviet-Style Hard Power, Russia is Developing a Subtler Form of Influence," *The Atlantic* (April 21, 2015), accessed December 13, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/04/how-the-media-became-putins-most-powerful-weapon/391062>.

²² *Edict of the Russian Federation President on the Russian Federation's National Security Strategy of 2016* (The Kremlin, December 31, 2015), 3, accessed August 5, 2017, <http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf>.

The German Army invaded Russia to annihilate the Slavic peoples to Germany's east as part of Operation Barbarossa in 1941. During Operation Barbarossa the Germans surprised Russian forces near the Russian western border. According to Russian doctrine at the time, Russian forces were relying on a strategy of defensive operations with the intent to trade vast expanses of land for time to prepare defensive positions. Russia located its forces within its national borders and, because of the unanticipated attack, limited their ability to maneuver or retrograde out of contact with massed German forces on the attack.

The Russian Army lost valuable distance to the advancing German Army the Russians could have used to prepare for defensive operations, develop greater informational awareness, and increase their readiness posture. Instead, because of their proximity to the front lines of the surprise attack by the Germans, the German forces caught the Russians forces unprepared with ill-equipped forces to defend against an invading army. Russian forces eventually stalled the German advance at Moscow and then reversed it, but, not before Germany captured parts of western Russia and portions of Ukraine.²³

The Barbarossa Complex, as some have termed it, led the Russian military and national leadership to seek a viable buffer of space, and hence time, beyond the national borders of the Russian Federation to prevent another incursion like the German attack in the summer of 1941.²⁴ The time and space provided by an external buffer on the periphery of the Russian homeland enabled a predictable security zone after the fall of the Iron Curtain. A portion of this buffer was the previously eastern Soviet Baltic republics of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia and the Ukraine to the south. The Russian Federation sought to prevent another Barbarossa type attack and leveraged lessons learned through the application of trading time for space to ensure they would not be surprised by another force encroaching on their borders.

²³ Cimbala and Rainow, *Russia and Postmodern Deterrence: Military Power and Its Challenges for Security*, 4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

The fear of encroachment and ensuring a buffer along the periphery of Russia's European border remained a significant concern to Russian leaders into the twenty-first century. As an example of a continual concern for Moscow, Putin outlined Moscow's designs to protect the Russian Federation throughout the depth and width of potential threats, particularly in the border areas in the 2015 Russian National Security Strategy.²⁵ This long-held protectionist sentiment and historical precedents of Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812 and the German invasion in World War II should have given pause to NATO, its desires for expansion, and the implications of perceived encroachment.

The conclusion of the Russo-Georgian War and the Chechen insurgency presented Russia with the means to achieve a more unitary Russian Federation and a buffer to encroachment in the Black Sea region. Russia concluded the short Russo-Georgian War and ended its involvement in Chechnya as it withdrew counterinsurgency forces for the second time a year later in 2009. These forces, along with Russia's investments in doctrine, manning, and material during the inter-conflict years presented Russia with a trained, combat tested, and regionally deployable the military force.

As the Russian Federation withdrew from its engagements regionally between 2007-2010, the United States tried to do the same in the Middle East, but, with less success and more distraction. Having withdrawn from Iraq in 2011, the United States remained challenged in Afghanistan with troop commitments of nearly 46,000 US troops at the end of 2013.²⁶ The combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq held the attention of both the Bush Administration and the Obama Administration with each attempting to determine the best way to ensure the safety and security of US interests in the region. Each Presidential administration struggled to defend

²⁵ *Edict of the Russian Federation President on the Russian Federation's National Security Strategy of 2016*, 10.

²⁶ Associated Press, "A Snapshot of US Troop Commitment in Afghanistan" *Daily Mail Online* (May 25, 2014), accessed December 13, 2017, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap/article-2638888/A-snapshot-US-troop-commitment-Afghanistan.html>.

the homeland while trying to return national attention to domestic agendas. The end of the first decade of the twenty-first century found America still contending with international terrorist attacks, in the midst of an economic downturn, and an unprecedented natural disaster in Superstorm Sandy to take the national attention of policy makers and the public away from Eastern Europe and an adventurist Russia with long-sought after opportunities within its reach.

Reassurance and Deterrence Defined

President Barack Obama announced reassurance measures in support of eastern European NATO allies and partners termed the European Reassurance Initiative on June 3, 2014.²⁷ With this commitment, the United States intended to reassure NATO allies of continued support of the Alliance in the aftermath of the Russian Federation's annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in March 2014 and deter further aggressive actions by Russia within eastern Europe. The United States supported the ERI with increased funding to military efforts and military related construction while it gave whole of government capacity building measures to allies and partners. The United States re-named its efforts the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) in 2017 to reflect desired deterrent effects toward the Russian Federation in addition to reassuring distressed allies and partners. The United States transition from ERI to EDI was a significant, albeit more difficult, task to achieve in support of United States interests in Europe.

Historically, assurance and reassurance were actions taken to assuage a perceived or actual threat to another entity by a third party.²⁸ Nations have assured other nations, populations, and individuals through their actions in much the same way as an older brother may have assured a younger brother of the absence of monsters under his children's bed at night— through presence, knowledge, and strength. The continued presence of an authority figure reassured a threatened sibling after the first assurances have either failed or its effects waned in the face of a perceived, or actual threat. Politics have leveraged the notion of a threatening monster and the image of a reassuring parent for centuries in the development of their interstate relations with their near and far neighbors.

²⁷ US Department of Defense, *European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) Fact Sheet* (Stuttgart: United States European Command Public Affairs Office, January 5, 2017), accessed August 5, 2017, <http://www.eucom.mil/media-library/document/35544/eri-fact-sheet.pdf>.

²⁸ Michael Howard, "Reassurance and Deterrence: Western Defense in the 1980s," *Foreign Affairs* 61, no. 2 (1982): 310.

Nations and international organizations, like the United Nations (UN) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), have assured audiences through actions, and at times, inaction, with elements of national power, commitment, and physical presence to achieve desired end states and objectives. The 1948 European Recovery Plan (ERP), more commonly referred to as the Marshall Plan, exemplified US aid in terms of economic and diplomatic assistance as assurance after the Second World War in an effort to reestablish European nations devastated by the war.²⁹ The direct benefits of the economic aid rebuilt the shattered European industrial base and served as an assurance of the United States' commitment to the displaced and distraught populations of Europe in the immediate aftermath of conflict. In addition to assuring European audiences, the Marshall Plan assured American citizens their efforts in World War II were not simply the destruction of the Third Reich, but the rebirth of many American's native homeland. Americans contributed to the rebuilding of Europe through the ERP with their tax dollars, personal contributions of money, effort, and an altruistic belief in a better future. The US government rallied the American public through a common goal of a free and reestablished Europe was an effect achieved through the reassurance measures of the Marshall Plan. These assurances to, and by, the American people fostered optimism and offered an opportunity to engender a feeling of commitment to the survivors of the war in Europe.

The establishment of the United Nations in 1945 demonstrated assurance through transnational organizations with nation-like capabilities. Since its formation, the UN has assured nations and their populations through a legally recognized and legitimate body of international actors responsible for the establishment and maintenance of international order and the settlement of disputes amongst nations.³⁰ The UN has served as a means of assurance to nations, peoples,

²⁹ Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), 180.

³⁰ United Nations, "United Nations Charter Preamble," (*United Nations*: 2017), accessed December 13, 2017, <http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/preamble/index.html>.

and entities throughout the world as it has mediated and, at times, enforced international norms in a world of inconsistent actions. Since its establishment, United Nations has served as a source of assurance through the development and protection of the downtrodden, assistance in times of humanitarian disaster, and gender equality measures throughout the world.

Victorious Allied Powers parceled the political and geographic landscape of Europe among themselves immediately after World War II for partisan favor and resource hegemony. This parceling caused the birth of the Cold War between the West, led by the United States and the Warsaw Pact led by Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The early years of the Cold War resulted in many war torn western European countries seeking American reassurance in the form of military basing and economic aid measures. It was the US government's intention to limit the growing threat in the east from seizing nascent democracies behind the curtain of Soviet communism. The Soviet Union's and the United States' reassurances resulted in two organizations (NATO and the Warsaw Pact) dividing and eventually commandeering, not simply Europe, but the entirety of the globe, under one of two competing ideologies.³¹ The ideologies were conflicting and at odds with another—the Western approach offered individual freedoms, democracy, and capitalism; while the Soviet approach directed communal equity, socialism, and communism. The two alliances formed around competing economic and political ideologies espoused by their leading benefactors. The Western approach leveraged military resources to reassure its commitment to democracy and capitalism through NATO in a less compulsory manner than the Warsaw Pact community defended the Eastern Bloc against the perceived evils of the free market system and democracy. Each alliance contributed to its members through military aid, economic development, deterrence, and diplomatic burden sharing in international venues.³² While the United States and NATO established favorable relations between allies and

³¹ Clive Archer, "Deterrence and Reassurance in Northern Europe," *Centre Piece: 6- Winter 1984*. (Aberdeen, Scotland: Centre for Defence Studies, 1984), 7.

³² Howard, "Reassurance and Deterrence: Western Defense in the 1980s," 323.

partners, the Soviet Union was more heavy handed in its approach to noncompliant members of the Warsaw Pact as demonstrated in the invasions of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Assurance and reassurance developed relationships between assured and assuring nations through a sense of shared responsibility and kinship against a common adversary. International affairs seldom remained true as an altruistic form of mutual, and fair, assistance. These dealings resulted in the weaker nation developing a dependent relationship on the more powerful of the nations. Imbalanced positions of power created the necessity of assurance or reassurance of a third party to restore a perceived balance of power. The feeling of the imbalance was dependent on the observer's vantage point as to whether the rebalancing was just or not. Sir Michael Howard described the actions leading to the assurances and reassurances of World War II by both the West and the Soviet Union as, "not just the negative role of a deterrent to Soviet aggression, but in the positive role of a reassurance to the West Europeans."³³

Deterrence

To deter an action implied a behavior modification by a deterring force resulting in a change to an expected behavior by the deterred. The simplest sense of deterrence was associated with the prevention of an action or behavior through fear or intimidation. However, medical professionals have referred to deterrence in a more precise manner describing it as the inhibition of criminal behavior by fear especially of punishment. The medical perspective of deterrence provided a more appropriate and useful in this monograph as it described the necessity of fear and punishment in the prevention of an action. The notion of coercion and manipulation as contributing factors in deterrence was refined by Austin Long when he stated simply deterrence was, "the manipulation of an adversary's estimation of the cost-benefit calculation of taking a

³³ Howard, "Reassurance and Deterrence: Western Defense in the 1980s," 310.

given action.”³⁴ More simply, deterrence was the prevention of an adversary from having achieved an outcome through the threat of unwanted action.

Deterrence by denial, or deterrence by defense, was primarily associated with conventional weapons and the ability to deter adversaries with standing forces. Those standing forces then prevented an aggressor from seizing an opportunity due to cost or scale of resources needed to achieve a favorable, or desired, outcome. Standing military forces were designed to inflict damage against other military forces when used in a strategy of denial.³⁵

Massive armies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as the conventional arms buildup of the Cold War in Europe, were examples of deterrence by denial and reinforce the logic of coercion by occupation. Large massed forces occupied large swaths terrain and, therefore, denied an adversary from occupying the same land. Large standing armies were costly in initial investment and maintenance requirements both in effort and financial resources. Large armies were the representation of force, and fiscal capacity, available to a leader to achieve a desired aim or outcome. Expansive formations of military forces were the capability to achieve a stated aim and served as a formidable deterrent due to the mass and size of an army. As stated above, the costs of the army’s fielding and the maintenance of an army on the march were significant; but the cost of having to replace a decimated army was unfeasible in both political and fiscal capital. The threat of losing an army was enough to prevent the use of it in the achievement of an aim by an aggressive neighbor if there was concern it would be lost and require regeneration. As a nation was considering the employment of an army against a neighbor, the costs of armies lost served as a deterrent. The potential loss was a component in the decision calculus of compellence and coercion.

³⁴ Austin Long, *Deterrence from Cold War to Long War: Lessons from Six Decades of RAND Research* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2008), 7.

³⁵ Robert A. Pape Jr., “Coercion and Military Strategy: Why Denial Works and Punishment Doesn’t” *Journal of Strategic Studies*. 15, no. 4 (December 1992), 425.

Whereas deterrence by denial was identified with conventional weapons and large fielded forces capable of denying aggressive action, the contemporary guarantor of deterrence by punishment was nuclear weapons and the incredible destructive capability they possessed.³⁶ The fear of massive retaliation entered an adversary's decision calculus through the logic of coercion. The cost of aggression that outweighed the potential benefits received by that aggression was the fundamental premise of deterrence by punishment.

The development of increasingly more effective nuclear weapons and the nuclear arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States furthered the concept of deterrence by punishment. At the height of the Cold War, each country was able to assure mutual destruction of the other with excess weapons remaining for second and third wave strikes. The punishment metered out by nuclear destruction was overwhelming and provided an effective deterrent to its use.³⁷

Deterrence by punishment through the threat of nuclear weapons lessened the financial and human cost of deterrence. Nuclear forces possessed more potential destructive power than standing forces several times their size for a fraction of the cost. In comparison to deterrence by denial and its focus on military vulnerabilities, deterrence by punishment impacted civilian vulnerabilities and influenced decision calculus through suffering.³⁸ As global economies began to slow in the 1970s and 1980s, so too did the desire to build massive standing armies to deter by denial. Nuclear forces, comparatively small compared to conventional force armies, were significantly less expensive than the large standing armies of the World Wars. These smaller, more lethal forces, had the potential of a much quicker and much greater impact on an adversary than any other option at the time of their introduction.

³⁶ Freedman, *Deterrence*, 38.

³⁷ Bernard Brodie, "The Weapon: War in the Atomic Age and Implications for Military Policy," in Bernard Brodie, ed., *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946), 76.

³⁸ Pape, "Coercion and Military Strategy: Why Denial Works and Punishment Doesn't," 425.

Conversely, smaller, non-nuclear countries, developed conventional deterrent measures and capabilities to enforce their national and regional ambitions outside of nuclear forces. In lieu of deterrence by punishment and exclusion from the nuclear powers, standing armies became the weapon of choice without nuclear capabilities. As smaller countries were building small armies to combat neighboring belligerents and insurgencies, the nuclear powers also sought non-nuclear warfighting capabilities to influence small scale contingencies in their region. With deterrence by punishment as a primary nuclear deterrent method, the United States and the Soviet Union were able to leverage deterrence by denial in essential locales needing a less forceful, and more visual, means of achieving national aims.

Coercion

Like assurance and deterrence, coercion is an essential tool used by one force to influence the behavior of another. A belligerent chose a strategy of coercion, not deterrence, to change a status quo and achieve a different, specific, end state or objective. Coercive actions were different from deterrent measures because coercive actions were meant to compel a change to the current state. Deterrent measures, however, were intended to maintain the status quo.³⁹ Coercion when applied as a part of a foreign policy was typically demonstrated through military and diplomatic means. The United States has used a combination of military and diplomatic coercion as an effective device to achieve national policy outcomes.

Coercion is an antagonistic measure employed by a state to achieve an end state not desired, and potentially resisted, by another state. Lawrence Freedman described the logic of nation-state coercion as the achievement of self-interest goals through intimidation or the denial of an adversary's anticipated outcome through "powerful incentives to choose in a particular way".⁴⁰ Analysis involved in the determination whether coercion was an acceptable method for

³⁹ Pape, "Coercion and Military Strategy: Why Denial Works and Punishment Doesn't," 424-425.

⁴⁰ Freedman, *Deterrence*, 24.

the achievement of intended outcomes was a cost-benefit analysis for each actor involved in the contest.

Author and theorist Robert Pape described the logic of coercion as an equation of the cost of an action compared to the potential benefit of the intended action. He proposed that to successfully coerce an actor and receive concessions, the coercing power must view that the value and likelihood of expected benefits must be greater than the value of the resistance by the aggressed actor as defined by the costs and likelihood of the anticipated suffering in the pursuit of the coercion.⁴¹ Much like deterrence, coercion is categorized as coercion by punishment and coercion by denial. Coercion by punishment increased the risk or cost of an action and coercion by denial leverages forces to deny an adversary the expected outcome through possession or increased presence.

A simplistic example of coercive logic was the calculation of a schoolyard bully in demanding milk money from the smaller children. As part of his decision calculus, a bully weighed the risk of being caught by a teacher, the likelihood of being able to intimidate a resistant adversary, and the resultant detention against the potential benefit of an increased share of school cafeteria milk. If the bully calculated the risk of discovery by a schoolyard monitor was high, or the risk of being overpowered by a fellow student outweighed the potential benefit of an added carton of milk, the bully simply declined the recess opportunity. However, if the bully calculated the chance of exposure harassing another student was slight, or if there was a particularly frail classmate alone on the playground, the bully's chances of successful coercion were enhanced. Furthermore, if a bully was discovered to be little more than a blowhard lacking ability to intimidate beyond words, his credibility was negated, and his loss of prestige was devastating to the point of himself becoming a victim of a lesser bully. The cost-benefit analysis of schoolyard

⁴¹ Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 16.

bullying, and nation-state coercion are not completely synonymous, but, has proven useful in proving the simple decision calculus of coercion.

A contemporary example of successful US military and diplomatic coercive measures was Operation Desert Storm in 1992.⁴² US and coalition efforts to remove Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's armed forces from Kuwait relied on the demonstration of untenable costs associated with the perceived benefits of remaining in an illegally annexed Kuwait. After months of diplomatic pressure to withdraw forces the US and its partners began military operations to eject Iraqi armed forces from Kuwait. The coalition's efforts were able to influence Saddam Hussein's decision calculus through diplomacy and military influence. These measures led to a forced withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait under duress. Shortly after land-based operations began, Saddam Hussein withdrew his military forces from the seized country of Kuwait because the force of military operations and international pressure.

Forms of Deterrence

The premise of power, credible threats of force, and a willingness to use force to achieve a desired outcome by a nation, or a schoolyard bully were necessary elements of coercion. The prevention of coercion was deterrence; and deterrence was in fact coercion from another perspective. Deterrence was the prevention of an action by actual, or perceived, threat and force. Henceforth, the draw on the schoolyard example, the ability of a group of children to bond against the forcefulness of a bully was form of deterrence to the bully's offensive actions.

Basic Deterrence

Basic deterrence was ability of a nation to secure its territory and population.⁴³ Furthermore, the ability of a nation to provide its own security means remained essential for a

⁴² Pape, "Coercion and Military Strategy: Why Denial Works and Punishment Doesn't," 460.

⁴³ Long, *Deterrence from Cold War to Long War: Lessons from Six Decades of RAND Research*, 13.

power to endure in the eyes of its population and the international community. The Allies militarily defeated Japan but the economic destruction and diplomatic isolation after World War II was crushing and needed the aid of many countries to rebuild Japan's instruments of national power. However, Japan was able to provide basic deterrence through its Japanese Self Defense Forces within a decade of the end of the war. Japan, like others, recognized and accepted a fundamental role of governance in being able provide basic deterrence for itself in terms of internal and external security. A political entity's inability to support a common defense of its people and internal stability mechanisms has showed a lack of governance and established a basis for a failing or failed state.

A useful example of deterrence in recent history was the deterrent effects of US and coalition efforts in Operation Desert Shield. During Operation Desert Shield in 1991 coalition forces successfully deterred an Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia.⁴⁴ The coalition rapidly deployed military forces, although lacking significant initial strength and capabilities, demonstrated commitment and resolve by a multinational coalition in defense of Saudi Arabia and further Iraqi aggression. The commitment and resolve displayed by coalition prevented further incursion and ensured Iraqi forces maintained a status quo of no further invasion throughout the buildup of forces in the Middle East. These forces would eventually lead to the ejection of Iraqi forces from Kuwait in Operation Desert Storm; however, Operation Desert Shield was an effort designed to prevent further change while the US and coalition partners prepared for subsequent military and diplomatic actions.

Extended Deterrence

Extended deterrence was the ability to deter adversaries beyond the recognized borders of a deterring power.⁴⁵ Furthermore, American commitments away from the American Homeland

⁴⁴ Pape, "Coercion and Military Strategy: Why Denial Works and Punishment Doesn't," 461.

⁴⁵ Cimballa, *Extended Deterrence: The United States and NATO Europe*, 135-137.

forced the United States to embrace extended deterrence. The ability of the United States to deter threats aimed toward American allies and partners required American adoption of extended deterrence.⁴⁶ During the Cold War, both the USSR and US deterrence theories relied on extended deterrence. Extended deterrence was potential military power and influence exerted beyond a nation's borders. Extended deterrence was achieved with the threat of nuclear weapons through the end of the Cold War. Extended deterrence theory suggested to prevent an aggressing nation attacking a deterring nation, a credible threat of an overwhelming counterstrike in the aggressor's homeland would occur after a first strike by the aggressing nation.⁴⁷ The concept of retaliation beyond the borders of one's nation was the difference between basic and extended deterrence. Extended deterrence relied on the credibility of the threat of overwhelming harm and was difficult, if not impossible, for countries to achieve without capable nuclear weapons. US and Soviet nuclear forces included elements of the nuclear triad of missile forces, strategic air forces, and submarine nuclear strike forces.

Cold War extended nuclear deterrence was provided by US missile, ground, and air forces based within Europe. The umbrella of nuclear deterrence provided by those forces extended to NATO allies in exchange for basing and other rights.⁴⁸ These US Forces deterred belligerent Soviet nuclear actions and ensured an equally disastrous response and swift retaliation to the Soviet Union if an attack on an allied nation had occurred. The coercive effect provided by extended deterrence prevented escalation of nuclear conflict beyond rhetoric for over five decades between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Strategic balance through extended deterrence was born from principles of conventional deterrence and evolved during the advent of nuclear weapons in the 1950s. The ability of nations,

⁴⁶ Freedman, *Deterrence*, 35.

⁴⁷ Cimbala, *Extended Deterrence: The United States and NATO Europe*, 125.

⁴⁸ NATO, "A Short History of NATO" (*NATO*: 2018), accessed December 12, 2017, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_139339.htm.

namely the US and USSR, to influence one another through the threat of nuclear engagement, nuclear first strike attack, and mutually assured destruction led to a policy of nuclear deterrence. Within the policy of nuclear deterrence, each adversary had an arsenal of weapons capable of causing the other to carefully consider the benefits of a pre-emptive strike, or “first-strike,” with the costs of an annihilating “second-strike” by the nation first attacked. This calculus needed a credible and sustainable capability with enough numbers of counter-strike weapons to prohibit a first strike in the minds of each, then, super power. Extended deterrence via nuclear weapons led to the strategic arms race of the mid- and late twentieth century prior to the fall of the Soviet Union. Nuclear weapons, and therefore nuclear deterrence, were very much a weapon and theory of deterrence by punishment because of the tremendous damage and destruction wrought by the weapons when used against an adversary.⁴⁹ Nuclear deterrence was aimed at not simply the political structures of a nation, but, at the whole of the nation and its civilization due to the annihilating capability of the weapons themselves if leveraged to wage war.

Nuclear deterrence was cataclysmic, but, it was also relatively affordable when compared to the manning, equipping, training, and supporting large military forces. Smaller and more capable nuclear forces, with ballistic missile or marine subsurface delivery capability were less expensive with greater return on investment than large standing armies with similar influence over geo-political decision making. Nuclear forces with strategic delivery enabled the US and USSR to influence the other globally while conserving defense capital during the 1960s and 1970s as each super power struggled through regional engagements and forces were whittled down in later peace dividends. Furthermore, nuclear solutions were not always the necessary solution for small scale contingencies or the best methods for achieving intended national end states. Small forces with multinational support demonstrated international resolve short of nuclear threats and achieved similar goals with much less global consequences.

⁴⁹ Freedman, *Deterrence*, 38.

Unsustainable Reassurance and Deterrence

The United States' conventional deterrence policy initially labeled the European Reassurance Initiative, and later re-titled the European Deterrence Initiative, was, and will remain, unsustainable in the face of a resurgent Russia in the early twenty-first century. The US deterrent strategy in Europe was in direct competition for US military presence and influence with other regions of the world. A perceived lack of return on investment, fiscal considerations, and a general weariness caused an erosion of American interest in a uniquely European problem. Without European allies and partners taking a front row seat in the security and stability of Eastern Europe, the threat of overt Russian adventurism will remain.

The United States' tenure as a patron in Europe will continue, but, at a less intensive level than the expenditure and effort seen between 2014 and 2017. The fiscal expenditure of continual Army Armored Brigade Combat Team deployments, colossal military construction costs for forward positioning air forces and basing, and the political capital spent for national and international consensus will certainly curtail as the tangible outcomes of the reassurance and deterrence efforts become more common and less palatable by the voting American public.

Fading images of "little green men" in Crimea from memory will lead to the questions of the necessity and effectiveness of US deterrence measures and the expected outcomes of those efforts.⁵⁰ Additionally, the sustainability of a forward positioned rotation of almost exclusively US forces against a patient adversary is fiscally unlikely. A persistent Russia looking to regain hegemonic power far away from American shores will tax the American citizen in time, dollars, and perseverance making the possibility of a long-term commitment untenable. Finally, America cannot afford to wager on the European theater as the next significant defense and political challenge with a rising China in the Asia-Pacific region.

⁵⁰ Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, *"Little Green Men": A Primer on Modern Russian Unconventional Warfare, Ukraine 2013–2014* (Fort Bragg: United States Army Special Operations Command, 2015), 43–44.

Current Russian Challenges to US Policies

The prosperity and stability of western Europe during the Cold War was essential in the defeat of the Warsaw Pact and the collapse of the Iron Curtain. United States policy in Europe since the Marshall Plan envisioned a strong and prosperous Europe, therefore enabling American strength and prosperity. Having remained a partner on the European continent, the United States kept a significant force structure in Europe since the end of the Second World War, through the Cold War, and only in the closing days of the Soviet Union began rolling back forces in Europe. Even with a reduction in postured forces in Europe, the United States stayed a stalwart partner in the development and security of the continent through bilateral and multilateral efforts to ensure a prosperous and stable Europe. The United States has kept a strong and forceful presence on the continent through NATO and other regional power sharing organizations with monetary and military commitments., Strategic partnerships within Europe remained a primary goal of US presidential administrations as recently as the Trump administration.

In the 2017 *National Security Strategy* (NSS) US President Donald J. Trump named a resurgent Russia as one of three major challenges to America's values and interests followed by China and North Korea.⁵¹ European prosperity has remained a key indicator of global wealth and has been essential to US financial markets and America prosperity. A shared experience and common ancestry have led the United States and Europe to maintain more intimate ties between the United States and Europe than with other regions. While the Atlantic Ocean has kept geographic separation over the past 200 years, the Pacific Ocean and its disassociated cultural and historical narrative from the United States has ensured a persistent and greater separation with the Far East.

⁵¹ The White House, *National Security Strategy* (December 2017), 25, accessed January 10, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905-2.pdf>.

The Far East and Europe have kept relationships with the United States since its founding; however, the relationship with Europe has remained stronger and more tied with that of the United States than with the Far East. The Western sense of democracy and shared history has allowed the United States to forge a longer and consistent relationship with western European nations. The United States' long held concepts of Manifest Destiny and global melioration, has historically driven the United States to share US economic and political ideals with others, including nascent states seeking to prosper after coming out from under the weight of the Iron Curtain at the end of the Cold War.⁵²

US desires to further democratic and western ideals globally had a tertiary effect in Europe as they led to an expansion of NATO. As NATO expanded eastward, Russia perceived the expansion as encroachment and led Russia to become more aggressive in its actions to counter, or deter, further intrusion. The Russian revulsion of encroachment along its borders was triggered through a nationalistic Russian ideology, a Russian desire to regain global superpower status, and the intention of lessening US influence in Europe- all designed to reassert Russian influence in Europe.⁵³

The United States' policy in Europe, as described in the 2017 NSS, sought to preserve the status quo and prevent the resurgence of Russia as a regional hegemon with interests outside of common goals.⁵⁴ The aspirations outlined in the 2017 NSS were informed and fashioned to prevent further Russian aggression in Eastern Europe, namely the Baltic region of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. The ends outlined in the 2017 NSS maintained many of the desires and published goals already in effect since the 2010 NSS, but, in more forceful and "America First" language.

⁵² McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776*, 173.

⁵³ *Edict of the Russian Federation President on the Russian Federation's National Security Strategy of 2016*, 6-7.

⁵⁴ The White House, *National Security Strategy*, 47-48.

The United States' sought to achieve strategic ends for European security and stability through a combination of political and military assurance and reassurance aimed toward allies and partners, while, trying to deter, coerce, and compel an adversarial Russia. These actions were not mutually exclusive, but, complementary in form and function. The United States deterred Russian aggression and incursions in the northern Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania through small unit military force rotations into each of the countries while simultaneously assuring the nations of the United States' commitment to a secure and stable Eastern Europe. These immediate unit deployments were a visible part of the ERI assurance measures in 2014 and later became a more credible deterrent action as the force size grew to larger US and NATO contingents.

The United States leveraged multinational organizations like NATO and the European Union (EU) to further its interests and achieve national aims in Europe. The desired outcomes and the expected pace of change has often born the United States the cost of the of being the leading protagonist in many engagements within the continent. As American interest increased in Europe between Operation Desert Storm in Iraq (1990-1991) and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan (2001), Europeans found an opportunity to focus on internal security and economic development instead of preparing for a patiently rebuilding Russia with intentions of reclaiming lost prestige. American persistence and desire to spread American values to European allies and partners was perceived by the Russia as intrusive and condescending to a historically Russian way of life.⁵⁵

America soon found itself embroiled in two Middle Eastern conflicts and other small-scale contingencies abroad and the focus on the Russian Bear faded in the early twenty-first century. With America and its coalition of partners becoming more engaged in international engagement and the Global War on Terror between 2001 and 2010, Russia tried to disengage

⁵⁵ Trenin, *Getting Russia Right*, 75.

from its conflicts on its periphery. Between 1999 and 2008 the Russian Federation fought two small wars, the War of Dagestan (1999) and the Russo-Georgia War (2008). Additionally, it found itself at war and then entangled with insurgents in Chechnya (1999-2008) for a second time since 1994. In 2008 Vladimir Putin descended from service as the Russia President to his serve as Prime Minister where he supervised the final withdrawal of Russian forces from Ossetia and Chechnya by mid-2009. Putin's efforts to withdraw from conflict were successful, but a rise in domestic terrorism hindered his ability to focus on exerting influence on former Soviet republics trying to gain more protections from international organizations and the United States. Putin regained the office of the President after a single four-year term as the Russian Prime Minister in 2012. After four short years of foreign conflict free administration President Putin had the resources in military force, political influence internally and externally, and the lack of a credible resistance to prevent him from securing both a historical Russian satellite and a major Black Sea port in Crimea and Sevastopol. American officials either disregarded the rise in Russian power and ambition or missed the indications entirely because of preoccupation with the Middle East.

In 2017, the United States' policy on European matters differed significantly from the Russian policy on Western encroachment. Russian differences in perspective and ends was detailed in the 2015 Russian Security Strategy (RSS). Just a year prior to the United States 2017 NSS, Russian President Putin outlined his vision of Russian national security for the Russian Federation and Russian citizens. In his speech to the Duma on December 21, 2015, Putin charted his intentions to regain influence in Eastern Europe, an aim to weaken US influence in Europe, the desire to regain "Great Power status" through a regional hegemony and preventing further encroachment by NATO expansion.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Anna Maria Dyer, *Bulletin no. 1 (941): The Russian Federation's New Foreign Policy Concept* (The Polish Institute of International Affairs, January 3, 2017), 2, accessed December 13, 2017, http://www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=22687_

President Putin's viewed NATO and the EU as adversarial and complicit in the encroachment on Russia as he intimated in his 2015 RSS.⁵⁷ Putin viewed both organizations as threats to Russian prosperity and stability at the behest of the United States. As part of his security strategy Putin looked to weaken the American influence in Europe by undermining transatlantic unity, weakening the credibility of the US commitment in Europe, and further weaken European institutions and governments- particularly in Eastern European border nations along Russia's periphery.⁵⁸ As America's perceived influence and power waned in Europe in favor of the Pacific, Russia intended to supplant US influence with their own as part of a strategy of regaining regional, and later global, hegemonic status. The declared US "Pivot to the Pacific" by then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2011 was interpreted as a change in the strategic center of gravity for the United States from Europe to the Pacific, in particular towards China.⁵⁹ The "Pivot to the Pacific" provided Putin a convenient distraction of US attentions from European politics and an opportunity to seize small historically significant outposts on the Russian periphery in the name of Russian righteousness. Putin began operations to seize portions of eastern Ukraine and Crimea in February 2014 with the US and its European partners distracted by counterterrorism operations. Putin with a surging popularity and a ready force of Russian agents and special operations soldiers, also referred to as "little green men," freed from other operations seized Crimea in spectacular time.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ *Edict of the Russian Federation President on the Russian Federation's National Security Strategy of 2016*, 27.

⁵⁸ *Edict of the Russian Federation President on the Russian Federation's National Security Strategy of 2016*, 27.

⁵⁹ US Congressional Research Service, *Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's "Rebalancing" Toward Asia* (R42448, March 28, 2012), 6, accessed February 24, 2018, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R42448.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, *"Little Green Men": A Primer on Modern Russian Unconventional Warfare, Ukraine 2013–2014*, 3.

China as a Competing Priority

In addition to Russia as a major challenge to American values and interests in the 2017 NSS, US acknowledged a renascent China and transnational terrorism as competing demands for American attention and national effort. China developed and refined economic and military means to mitigate many of the advantages the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. Chinese economic and militaristic rise combined with America's publicized Pivot to the Pacific elevated the Asia-Pacific region to the forefront of US policy and attentiveness. China's bold adventurism was manifested by island building in the South China Sea (SCS) to capture natural resources proved the United States inability to exert overwhelming influence globally. The inability to prevent Chinese aggression in the SCS was a result of US commitments in Europe and the Middle East. America had become spread too thin and distracted by prolonged commitment outside of the Asia-Pacific region. Challenges to American will remained present in the Pacific as America tries to support an equitable share of influence across the globe.

Of these challenges, Chinese military innovation led to a doctrinal challenge to the US military's Air-Land Battle concept with the advent of anti-access/ area denial (A2/AD) practices in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Political, economic, and the conceptual change in military thought, A2/AD, contributed to the "re-balancing" of military forces and capabilities to the Pacific in 2011 under US President Barak Obama. American war-planning had developed assumptions of unfettered regional access to forces like the access enjoyed by the US Armed Forces, allies, and partners in Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm in 1991. The advent of A2/AD capabilities by China and other adversarial powers as America was embroiled in the GWOT provided an impetus for reengagement with the Asia-Pacific region as American forces were returning from combat and non-combat operations in Iraq as part of Operation Iraq Freedom.

Chinese island building in the South China Sea in 2014 began a series of regional actions intended to intimidate smaller nations while weakening US influence within the Southeast Asia.

Chinese efforts to enhance perceived historical claims to larger swaths of the South China Sea challenged US allies and partners in the region to redouble their presence and influence in the region to combat Chinese efforts to coerce and bully neighboring nations for unlawful access to international economic zones. Other challenges associated with an increasingly aggressive China, including enhanced A2/AD measures and increased Chinese island building will force the United States to reassess its Pacific force posture and recommit scarce resources from around the globe, including European Command, to the Pacific Command as China becomes increasingly bolder in its actions. As Russian adventurism in Europe and Chinese aggression in the SCS continues, the United States must evaluate its ability to effectively manage conflict between each nation below the threshold of armed conflict to achieve its ends.

Sustainability of US Operations in Europe to Confront Russia

United States intended its ERI/ EDI operations within Eastern Europe to serve as a reassurance to Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia of America's commitment to a free and democratic opportunity to decide their future while preventing further Russian aggression through conventional deterrence efforts. These reassurance and deterrence measures adopted by the United States included immediate and continuous military force deployments to the region, military construction spending intended to prove US commitment to long term stability, and political resolutions to denounce aggression in any manner by Russia. The realized outcome from seizure of Crimea in 2014 to the end of 2018 was no further incursions or seizures of sovereignty by Russia. The cost of the deterrence and reassurance was significant and was not sustainable as Russia has proven strategic patience while the United States has a limited memory of crises abroad and a limited appetite for fiscal expenditure without a visible return on investment.

The United States faced significant challenges as it began replacing conventional military forces in Europe after having removed much of its forces from the region less than twenty years prior. The United States faced many questions in developing the types, quantities, and intended

effects of reassurance and deterrence forces in Europe at once following the seizure of Crimea and invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces in 2014. Military forces soon found challenges in the ensuring the right size of the force necessary, the distance from the United States Homeland, competing requirements for forces, and the cost involved in supporting a sizable force in Europe as they began planning for a military solution to Russian aggression in Eastern Europe.

Since the incursion into Ukraine and Crimea by Russian forces through early 2018, competition for US public attention and limited military forces were two Middle Eastern military operations, a regional engagement with North Korea over ballistic missiles, and the Global War on Terrorism. From 2014 to early 2018 the United States maintained between 8,000 and 37,000 service members supporting Operations Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Freedom Sentinel (OFS) in Afghanistan, it had an additional 3,000 to 6,000 service members in support of Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) in Iraq and Syria, 23,468 service members in United States Forces- Korea (USF-K), and approximately another 72,000 service members supporting the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).^{61,62} Funding remained consistent for OFS and OIR from 2014 through the 2019 budget proposal with an average of \$62 billion spent per year on Iraq/ Syria and Afghanistan through military OCO funding. Similarly, ERI/EDI funding increased since its inception, albeit at a significantly smaller total, rising to its highest budget of \$6.5 billion in the 2019 Presidential Budget Request.⁶³

⁶¹ Jeff Desjardins, “U.S. Military Personnel Deployments by Country” (*Visual Capitalist*, March 18, 2017), accessed December 13, 2017, <http://www.visualcapitalist.com/u-s-military-personnel-deployments-country/>.

⁶² US Department of Defense, *Defense Budget Overview: United States Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Request- Revised February 13, 2018* (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller). February 13, 2018), 4-2, accessed February 25, 2018, http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2019/FY2019_Budget_Request_Overview_Book.pdf.

⁶³ US Department of Defense, *Defense Budget Overview: United States Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Request- Revised February 13, 2018*, 4-3.

Fiscal requirements of military operations and the impact of further limited funds due to the Budget Control Act of 2011 speak little of the near constant deployment of service members since 2001 as part of the Global War on Terrorism and other operational requirements. Since 2001, the US Armed Forces have struggled with ensuring an equitable, fair, and consistent deployment to dwell ratio for service members in both the active and reserve military components. Within the Active Army, the service has not yet achieved their goal of a 1:2 ratio of deployment away from to dwell time at home station since 2001, and within the Army Reserve components, the goal of 1:5 has not occurred since the beginning of the GWOT, but, was established as goal for 2018. The impact of significant deployment on service members and their families was great; but it was also significant in the communities in which those service members, both Active and Reserve component, resided. The DoD has taken steps in both fiscally and in medical support to care for service members and their families as it tries to right-size the deployment schedule in support of national interests.

Fiscal Sustainability

The United States funded the European Reassurance Initiative from 2014 through 2018 as an Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) supplemental appropriation and thus did not have baseline budget funding in yearly US budgets. The usage of the OCO supplemental appropriation measures for ERI/EDI funding enabled a rapid and forceful response to the Russian annexation of Crimea and the potential of other military seizures within Eastern Europe. The Department of Defense's (DoD) use of supplemental funding created several internal budgeting and fiscal concerns. A Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report specified three significant findings with the use of OCO funding for ERI/EDI. These findings reflected the immediate requirement for action superseded, and continued to lack, the need for a proper analysis of fiscal resources to requirements. Specifically, the report identified numerous initiatives with a lack of prioritization against established posture guidelines and regulations; a lack of understanding long term

sustainment costs of past, current, and future funded projects through the supplemental appropriations process; and a lack of transparency with Congress in terms of future costs associated with ERI/EDI investments.⁶⁴

The inability to the Defense Department to outline ERI/EDI funding priorities led to poor evaluation of initiatives funded by OCO against base budget funding and potentially overspent funds on initiatives already supported in the base budget. In addition to the lack of comparison with the base budget funding lines, the inability to prioritize projects prevented the Defense Department from articulating the most important initiatives to Congress for future base budgeting inclusion.⁶⁵ Base budget inclusion of the prioritized unfunded could enable sustainable and predictable future funding.

The Defense Department's lack of understanding to the sustainment costs associated with the equipping and construction of ERI/EDI initiative has limited its ability to articulate the total cost of all programs. The unrealized costs of long term projects and facilities upkeep have prevented the DoD from giving a correct and true accounting of the real and incurred costs of reassurance and deterrence to the American people through Congress. As part of its report, the GAO determined the costs were significant and will need future funding to uphold necessary standards of performance and utility.

Furthermore, investments made in Europe through ERI/EDI are without long term funding for operations, maintenance, and upkeep since the investments in infrastructure, basing requirements, and military construction were funded through a temporary budgetary measure. The United States intended the OCO appropriations supplemental measures to fund short or no-

⁶⁴ US Government Accountability Office, *Report to Congressional Committees: European Reassurance Initiative- DoD Needs to Prioritize Posture Initiatives and Plan for and Report Their Future Cost* (Washington DC: Government Accountability Office, 2017), 20, accessed March 1, 2018, <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-18-128>.

⁶⁵ US Government Accountability Office, *Report to Congressional Committees: European Reassurance Initiative- DoD Needs to Prioritize Posture Initiatives and Plan for and Report Their Future Cost*, 15.

notice emergency actions falling outside of the regular Congressional budgetary process.⁶⁶ The ERI/EDI funding requests through the OCO process has continued through three Congressional budget cycles without its inclusion into the base budget process.

The DoD's inability to communicate future resources required to sustain interim and lasting impacts to European defense measures through ERI/EDI to the Congress hampered its future funding potential and potentially damaged the DoD's relationship with Congress.⁶⁷

Without congressional understanding of future costs and intended effects of the resources provided by Congress through the budgetary process, Congress was limited in its ability to give prompt and predictable long-term funding solutions. The lack of long-term funding avenues caused the DoD to create OCO budget requests to support misunderstood, or not articulated, requirements to support the Combatant Commander and services in their efforts to realize ERI/EDI effects. The well-intended efforts of the DoD led to the misunderstanding of the necessary requirements by Congress which in turn caused misappropriation of funds to either unnecessary or redundant requirements. The best intentions of the DoD and Congress led to confusion and eventual consternation between the two organizations causing misplaced trust or outright distrust.⁶⁸

Historically, American deterrence has been costly in terms of national treasure and political will. The US policy of reassurance and deterrence in Europe, ERI and EDI, came at a definitive and rising cost over the first four years of its existence. The fiscal costs associated with ERI/EDI are unsustainable in and present significant challenges to maintaining US deterrent

⁶⁶ US Congressional Research Service, *Overseas Contingency Operations Funding: Background and Status* (R44519, February 7, 2017), 3, accessed February 13, 2018, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R44519.pdf>.

⁶⁷ US Government Accountability Office, *Report to Congressional Committees: European Reassurance Initiative- DoD Needs to Prioritize Posture Initiatives and Plan for and Report Their Future Cost*, 3.

⁶⁸ US Government Accountability Office, *Report to Congressional Committees: European Reassurance Initiative- DoD Needs to Prioritize Posture Initiatives and Plan for and Report Their Future Cost*, 20.

capabilities across the globe. The American Soldier, Sailor, Airman, and Marine bore the brunt of the Global War on Terror with countless deployments to the Middle East and are now faced with the potential of continuous deployments to the Middle East, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific region with little reprieve in sight for the American public to have their legions return from abroad. The war-weariness of America to commit Soldiers and treasure to Eastern Europe is another of the challenges that make the possibility of a sustained troop commitments to Europe unrealistic and unsustainable without European leadership and commitment.

A concerted effort by European nations and their leaders to confront a resurgent Russia and its hostile action will contain Russia's advances westward while ensuring continued American support. US military forces supporting NATO and European led efforts are sustainable in the near and short term European diplomatic and military engagement with Russia. America remains committed to European, and global, efforts to enhance the quality of life, liberty, and justice; but not at the expense of a solely American price. US deterrence measures to prevent further aggression of Russian aggression during 2104 have yet to be fully evaluated and seem to need an increasing commitment of national treasure for successful accomplishment with a limited visual representation of return on investment for the American Taxpayer.

Conclusion

Deterrence and assurance have played roles in US foreign policy since the founding of the United States. However, these founding ties with Europe placed American interests invested in European security and stability since. American interests in Europe remained intrinsically bound by heritage, economic cooperation, diplomatic necessity, and a sense of global meliorism. These interests and desire to spread American values across the globe led to the fall of the Berlin Wall and communism. After the Warsaw Pact deteriorated under the newfound freedoms of an open Europe, Russia perceived the NATO enlargement in Europe and the rise of western European power through the EU and other regional associations growing.

The rise of western European power in the twilight of the twentieth century and dawn of the twenty-first century alarmed the Russian Federation as it sought to rediscover itself after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Russia, nevertheless, found its feet and resisted advancing western powers as it extracted itself from several small skirmishes in the Caucasus region and withdrew from Chechnya. Russia's military power and diplomatic influence within their western periphery enabled Russia to dominate its neighbors and intimidate former Soviet satellite nations overtly. The overt nature of the intimidation culminated in the seizure of Crimea and portions of eastern Ukraine in 2014.

Russia's bold adventurism in Crimea and Ukraine caught the West completely unawares and unprepared to respond. The West's lack of situational awareness was based on numerous causes, but the most significant concerns for future consideration were America's preoccupation with fighting terrorism primarily in the Middle East, an agenda of decreased foreign and military spending, and the final years of a Presidential administration seeking to focus on domestic challenges like poverty, education, and entitlement spending. America lacked the ability to respond forcefully in Europe with anything more than condemnation as it was already committed to warfighting efforts the Middle East. America had failed to deter undesired behavior in the world most Americans drew their ancestry—Europe.

America countered the aggressive Russian incursion into Ukraine and the seizure of Crimea through the implementation of the European Reassurance Initiative. The efforts within the ERI were focused on reassuring European allies and partners. The United States did not initially publicize the ERI as a deterrent measure and was not until 2 years later when it was re-introduced as the European Deterrence Initiative. The deterrent effects of the ERI and EDI consisted of military repositioning, posturing, and spending efforts. The intended audiences of the reassurance efforts were keenly aware of the messaging and initially felt reassured by American presence and commitment. The United States' reassurance efforts were short-lived and required additional, and unsustainable, spending and obligation to maintain allied and partner confidence. As the cost to national capacity and military readiness grew the United States continued to spend increasing amounts of fiscal and political capital to convey assurance and exhibit a credible and capable deterrence.

The United States, like other nations, has a limited fiscal capacity and little appetite for costly and difficult to discern successes in European countries far from the American Homeland. The high cost to America of military positioning, expenditures of political capital by US elected officials, and the readiness of US Armed Forces impact US commitment to a primarily American led and resourced effort. The problem of competing focus areas and national security challenges across the globe continue to place America in a tenuous position as it seeks to obligate an appropriate mix of national power to achieve America's goals and protection of interests. Chinese efforts in the Indo-Pacific region have challenged the DoD's efforts to focus on the European theater and reinforce the EDI as it seeks to gain a competitive edge in the region. Finite resources and the ability to sustain allocated forces to the European theater further challenge the United States' ability to support and lead European deterrence efforts solely. Because of the challenges associated with American involvement in Europe and the rest of the world, the United States cannot continue to solve European problems without a more substantial European involvement in the European security challenge posed by Russian adventurism.

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