



# After Deterrence: Explaining Conflict Short of War

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**Abstract** Gray zone conflict is a policy choice by capable actors who both prefer low-intensity conflict to high-intensity conflict

## Initiator's Motivation

**1. Deterrence** – cost of full-scale war is too high

Result: initiator compromises and avoids optimal strategy

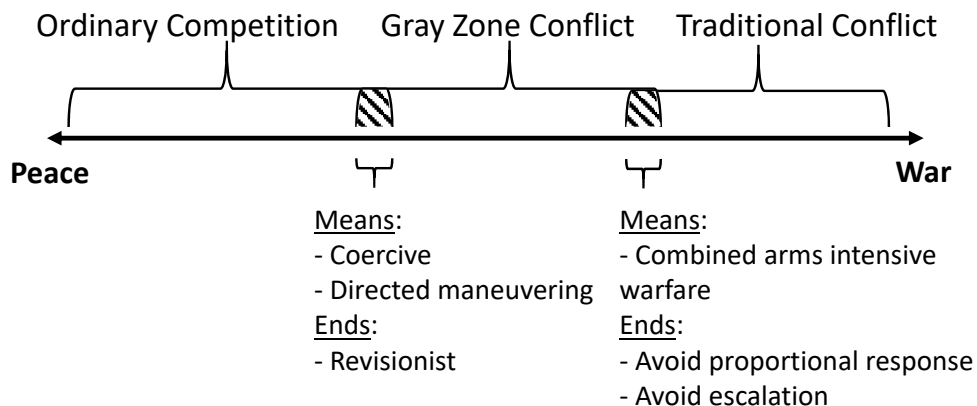
Implication: raising cost of gray zone conflict **discourages** escalation

**2. Efficiency** – objectives can be achieved at lower intensity

Result: initiator expects success without unnecessary costs

Implication: raising cost of gray zone conflict **encourages** escalation

## Thresholds



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## Innovations

### Choice

Limited conflict is chosen to lower the risk of larger conflict

### Capable actors

Distinct from terrorism, insurgency, civil conflict, etc.

### Preference-oriented

Mutual desire to avoid escalation

## Implications

Motivation should determine response

Two-sided situations:

- Fear of escalation
- “Horns of strategic dilemma”

		Ends	
		Limited	Not Limited
Means	Limited	Limited War	N/A
	Not Limited	Gray Zone	Traditional Conflict

Escalation **Ability** + **Unwillingness** = Gray Zone