AFTER DETERRENCE: EXPLAINING CONFLICT SHORT OF WAR

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Puzzle



- What is gray zone conflict and is it new?
- Why do powerful countries intentionally limit the tools they use to fight wars?

Point

- Gray zone conflict is a policy choice by powerful actors who both prefer low-intensity to full-scale war
- Happens under two conditions:
 - 1. The target has raised the cost of full-scale war to an unacceptable level for the initiator (initiator is <u>deterred</u> from fighting full-scale)
 - 2. The initiator believes it can achieve its objectives at a lower intensity and cost than full-scale war (gray zone appears efficient)

Outline

- 1. Conventional understanding of gray zone conflict
 - a. Policymakers
 - b. Academics
- 2. New understanding of gray zone conflict
- 3. Implications and contribution
- 4. Conclusion and future directions

Current Policymaker Perspective

- Common characteristics of gray zone conflicts
 - 1. **Hybridity** they combine methods and strategic effects
 - 2. Menace to defense/military convention they do not conform neatly to a linear spectrum of conflict or equally linear military campaign models
 - 3. **Risk-confusion** they present a paralyzing choice between high-risk action and equally high-risk inaction

Current Policymaker Perspective

Common characteristics

1. Hybridity

· Gray zone means using less, not more

2. Menace to defense/military convention

 Partially; gray zone relies on subversion <u>and</u> convention. Limited war requires consensus.

3. Risk-confusion

• Largely just a story of conventional brinkmanship

Current Academic Perspective

- Explaining innovative warfare (Adams, Downie, Galeotti, Kinross)
 - a. New terminology
 - b. New means
 - c. New actors
- Trade-off between power and risk (Powell, Snyder)
 - More power means higher chance of winning but higher potential risk of escalation
- Calculated ambiguity and the upper limit of conflict (Arkin, Sagan)
- Limiting escalation through covert action (Carson)

New Deterrence Perspective

New definition

- Gray zone conflict is conflict involving actors who intentionally limit the intensity and capacity that they dedicate to fighting. In other words, gray zone conflict defines political conflict between peace and war where neither side is willing to escalate to full-scale war
- Gray zone conflict is a *strategy*, which means we need to look at the *context* in which this strategy is applied

New Deterrence Perspective

New causes

- a. **Deterrence success** they wish to avoid triggering escalation
 - The initiator's strategy is a compromise between what it does best militarily and what it fears will happen if it adopts its optimal battlefield strategy and tactics
 - Implication raising the cost of gray zone can cause initiator to stop without risk of escalation
- b. Limited war as a choice it's the initiator's preferred option
 - The initiator perceives that it is *likely to succeed in the gray zone without unnecessary costs*
 - Implication raising the cost of gray zone conflict risks encouraging the initiator to escalate

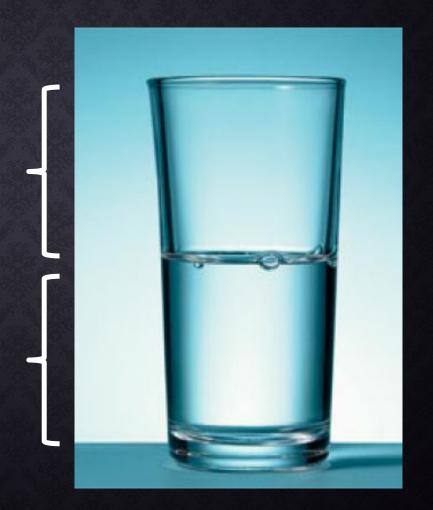
New Deterrence Perspective

- Distinct concept
 - policy choice, not just employing tools of the weak because capabilities are constrained
- Distinct relationship between limited and full-scale war
 - "[a] main consequence of limited war, and potentially a main purpose for engaging in it, is to raise the risk of larger war" (Schelling, Arms and Influence)
 - Powerful actors choose limited war to lower the risk of larger war

Implications

The initiator is unconstrained (uses its best military strategy)

The initiator is responding to deterrence (forced to choose second best military strategy)



Implications

Why was a gray zone strategy chosen?

 Raising the cost of gray zone changes initiator's options. What initiator chooses depends on the causal model: 1) <u>cost-aversion</u> vs 2) <u>preferred</u> <u>limited war</u>

• Deterrence vs. spiral model

 Whether the response to gray zone conflict inhibits (deterrence) or inflames (spiral) depends on whether the initiator's actions are influenced/motivated by previous round of deterrence success

Conclusion and Future Direction

- Empirical support via comprehensive dataset of gray zone conflicts
- Examine relationship between *types* of capabilities and *degrees* of violence