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**Simultaneous Deterrence:
Some Policy Considerations for the UK**

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Deterrence has once again become increasingly fashionable in Whitehall following a long hiatus after the Cold War. Unfortunately, as with many fashionable terms, a clear and consistent conceptual underpinning is lacking, and there is little or no common understanding within Government about what the term means or with respect to what issues it should be applied. One further unfortunate consequence of this terminological faddism is that by over-emphasizing deterrence in the official discourse, many problems not previously discussed in terms of deterrence are then labelled and understood as deterrence problems.

To avoid the prospect of terminological overuse leading to underperformance when it comes to policy and strategy, an assessment is needed of what sort of security challenges can realistically be deterred either by the UK acting on its own, or with allies, and how this can most effectively be done with the means available. Yet even with strict limits placed on the number of contingencies that the UK can seek to deter, there is no escaping the basic problem of how best simultaneously to manage *multiple* deterrence priorities.

In most discussions of deterrence, the topic is viewed through the narrow lens of a single case of success or failure at a given moment of time. For countries with limited interests, typically in a local regional setting, such a view may be sufficient. However, due to Britain's very active role on the world stage – which even with Brexit shows no sign of fundamental change despite some recent questions about whether the UK will remain a 'Tier 1' military power² – such a narrow approach is *insufficient*.¹ As UK Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson explained, specifically with reference to British sea power:

We have got to start explaining so much more clearly that a deterrence is not just four nuclear boats ... It is about aircraft carriers, it is about a presence in the Pacific, a presence in the North Atlantic, a presence in the Mediterranean and in the Gulf ... Because with conventional frigates and destroyers we will be able to say that Britain is interested, Britain cares, Britain will protect our interests and our values ... If we do not have that conventional deterrence, and the ability to deter from conventional forces, then what we'll find ourselves in, is a place that none of us wish to be in, and having to turn to the greatest deterrence of them all.³

Instead, a more appropriate prism is 'simultaneous deterrence', in which numerous deterrence activities are ongoing simultaneously across the world, often using the same overstretched capabilities, and must be managed in such a way as to minimize the risk of both a specific, and more general deterrence failure. In a classic military sense, this concept might apply to cases where overcommitting military resources in one theatre of operations would expose gaps in other theatres. Thus, adversaries that would otherwise be deterred from taking hostile action

¹ Defence Studies Department, Kings College, London.

² D. Haynes, S. Coates and L. Fisher, 'Theresa May Stalls Over UK Role as a Top Military Power', *The Times*, June 22, 2018.

³ Gavin Williamson Speech at the RUSI Sea Power conference speech, 24 May 2018. Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/rusi-sea-power-conference-speech>

begin to see weaknesses that can be exploited. To take a very simple example, in Shakespeare's *Henry V*, when the king and his advisers are contemplating a war in France, they also discuss the risk of the conflict escalating into a two-front war against the Franco-Scottish 'Auld Alliance'. If Henry were to neglect the home defences there was the risk that, 'To her unguarded nest the weasel Scot ... Comes sneaking and so sucks her princely eggs'. Consequently, in Shakespeare's version at least, the bulk of Henry's army was obliged to remain in England.⁴ Had these forces been available to him in France, this would have meant that the Battle of Agincourt would have been a rather different affair, and perhaps less of a 'close run thing'. It is in these sorts of cases where a 'simultaneous deterrence' awareness and approach would seek to limit exposure by utilizing a range of different means to free up resources to deal with a current international crisis, or to deal with a new deterrence challenge, without undermining deterrence elsewhere.

To examine the concept of 'simultaneous deterrence', this paper is divided into two parts. It begins by identifying the concept of 'simultaneous deterrence' as a policy problem, as well as highlighting the broader relationship between simultaneity and deterrence. It will then discuss two ways of approaching this policy problem, what I have labelled 'Deterrence Substitution Measures' and 'Deterrence Posture Replacement'. As the aim of this paper is merely to highlight the existence and importance of 'simultaneous deterrence' as a policy problem, and to suggest some general categories with which policymakers may seek to frame their approach to the subject, it will refrain from suggesting what sort of problems should be considered as fit for deterrence, as opposed to some other policy option, nor will it discuss strategies, postures or capabilities for deterring adversaries in specific cases.

Simultaneous Deterrence

'Deterrence' has been practiced for centuries and long before the early Cold War period when the term became popular and the concept received a great deal of attention from theorists. Over the last six decades or so, the basic idea of what deterrence is has remained the same although the concept has been applied in an increasing number of contexts. This has resulted in numerous sub-concepts as well as a proliferation of versions of deterrence. For instance, the nuclear theorist Herman Kahn discussed the idea of three 'Types' of deterrence (to counter direct attack, extreme provocations or moderate provocations). There was also 'conventional' or 'non-nuclear' deterrence. Deterrence could be 'extended' to cover allies. The time dimension was also recognized as being an important factor and thus a distinction between 'general' and 'immediate' deterrence emerged. For the Israelis, there was the idea that an identifiable phenomenon of 'cumulative' deterrence could be observed after the Israelis defeated successive Arab armies leading the Arab leaders to recognize the need for a political solution. One could try to deter conflict between two third parties – what was described as 'pivotal' deterrence.

Given the supposed multi-varied nature of post-Cold War security threats there was the need to think about 'complex' deterrence, although despite claims of a 'fourth wave' of deterrence research, topics such as the deterrence of terrorism and insurgencies had already received a great deal of attention, albeit forgotten, during the Cold War. Following its use in the 2006 US Quadrennial Defense Review, the term 'tailored' has increasingly been used to discuss context-specific deterrence. And with the rising concern over 'cyber war', or even less serious acts of cyber-terrorism and cyber-crime, there has been a great deal of discussion about 'cyber-deterrence'. The list of types of deterrence, things to deter, and what to deter them with, is a very long one indeed.⁵

⁴ W. Shakespeare, *Henry V*, Act I, Scene II. Shakespeare's source for this 'strategic debate' among Henry's advisers was probably Edward Hall. See: Sir R. Grafton and Sir H. Ellis, *Hall's chronicle: containing the history of England, during the reign of Henry the Fourth, and the succeeding monarchs, to the end of the reign of Henry the Eighth, in which are particularly described the manners and customs of those periods* (London: Printed for J. Johnson etc., 1809). Hall's work was originally printed in 1548. In this text, the Duke of Exeter advises King Henry: 'Passe the sea your self with an armie royall, and leue my lorde of Westmerlande and other graue capitaines of the Northe with a conuenient nombre to Defend the Marches if the subtill Scottes encouraged by the Frenchmen will any thyng attemp durying your voyage and absence', pp. 45-46 (appears here as in the text of the 1809 edition).

⁵ Lawrence Freedman, *Deterrence* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2004); J. Knopf, 'The Fourth Wave in Deterrence Research', *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 31, no.1, 2010, pp.1-33; H. Kahn, *The Nature and Feasibility of War and Deterrence*, RAND Corporation Paper P-1888-RC, Santa Monica, RAND, 1960; E. Bunn, 'Can Deterrence be Tailored?' *Strategic Forum*, no. 225, 2007; K-H. Kamp and D. S. Yost, *NATO and 21st Century Deterrence*, Rome, NATO Defense College, May 2009; U. Bar-Joseph, 'Variations on a Theme: The Conceptualization of Deterrence in Israeli Strategic Thinking', *Security Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1998, pp. 145-81; T. V. Paul, P. M. Morgan, and J. J. Wirtz (eds), *Complex Deterrence: Strategy in the Global Age*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2009; T. W. Crawford, *Pivotal Deterrence: Third-Party Statecraft and the Pursuit of Peace*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2003.

In the current UK discourse on deterrence, the term has been increasingly linked with reference to a 'full spectrum' of capabilities.⁶ Unlike the aforementioned types of deterrence, this discourse does not seem to be associated with any particular deterrence concept. Its recent lineage seems to have emerged not from the classical deterrence literature but more from the relatively recent upsurge in interest, largely derived from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, of improving the ability of the UK Government to tackle conflict situations in a more 'comprehensive' and 'integrated' way. Thus, it is the approach that is emphasized rather than the object that is to be approached. In other words, it is the 'full spectrum' of capabilities that can be used to deter that has received more attention than what sort of activities they are intended to deter and how they can deter them. As the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review states, '[w]e will use the full spectrum of our capabilities – armed force including, ultimately, our nuclear deterrent, diplomacy, law enforcement, economic policy, offensive cyber, and covert means – to deter adversaries and to deny them opportunities to attack us'.⁷

Despite its shortcomings, the recent interest in 'full spectrum' deterrence provides a useful opportunity to re-examine the extant deterrence literature, and update and 'tailor' it, for the present context. One aspect that naturally assumes increasing importance at a time of overstretched resources is the need to think about the problem of simultaneity in relation to deterrence. Traditionally, deterrence has been talked about in the singular, with *one* threat that is to be deterred, or *one* failed attempt at deterring a threat. Similarly, when discussing the means to deter a particular actor, or a specific action of that actor, one is almost always referring to a single case at a single moment in time rather than multiple cases at a single moment in time. The problem with this approach is that it very rarely reflects reality. It is quite rare to find instances of only one single actor or action being deterred at any given moment; rather, there are often many things that are being deterred simultaneously. A few examples will suffice to illustrate this point.

During the Cold War, NATO sought to deter the Soviet bloc from attacking the territory of its member states with nuclear and/or conventional weapons, as well as having to deal with other indirect means of undermining the Alliance. The concept of 'massive retaliation' was envisaged as being able to offer both nuclear *and* conventional deterrence almost entirely by threatening to use nuclear weapons in response to an act of military aggression against Western Europe, with NATO's comparatively limited conventional forces intended primarily as a trip-wire. But 'massive retaliation' was criticized on the grounds that it lacked credibility since nuclear retaliation seemed unlikely in response to a more limited Soviet bloc incursion, such as seizing West Berlin. Thus, by the late 1950s there was a stress placed on building up conventional forces to counter minor incursions, with the understanding that this would enhance the Alliance's deterrent posture more generally. This was then extended in the 1960s, with the onset of 'flexible response', in which the new ambition was to counter a full-scale invasion with conventional means, or at least to delay any decision to escalate to tactical and then strategic nuclear use.⁸ In addition to deterring an attack along the 'Central Front', NATO also had to deter attacks along its Northern and Southern flanks.⁹

It was not simply Soviet *military* aggression in *Europe* that needed to be deterred, however; the prospect of Soviet expansion and intervention in the Third World was also a problem – if not for NATO as a whole then certainly for some of its more prominent members. There was a great deal of concern over Soviet support to national liberation movements, as well as its more general subversive activities. The balance in Europe might have appeared stable but this only seemed to have raised fears about instability elsewhere. Thus, the basic problem emerged of having the ability to fight wars and defend other national interests at the same time as deterring large-scale aggression by the Soviets in Europe or the Chinese in Asia.

Several examples can be cited where this caused complications. Until the early 1960s, French military efforts to defend its colonial possessions in Indochina and Algeria meant that a disproportionately large element of its military resources were committed outside of Europe rather than available to counter a Soviet invasion. From

⁶ See for instance, Wyn Bowen, 'SDSR and the Return of Deterrence', *Defence-in-Depth blog*, 27 November 2015. Available at: <https://defenceindepth.co/2015/11/27/sdsr-and-the-return-of-deterrence/>

⁷ See https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478933/52309_Cm_9161_NSS_SD_Review_web_only.pdf

⁸ For further discussion on this point, particularly the similarities and differences in the NATO strategic concepts MC 14/2 and MC 14/3, see: J. S. Duffield, 'The Evolution of NATO's Strategy of Flexible Response: A Reinterpretation', *Security Studies*, Vol. 1, No.1, 1991, pp. 132-156.

⁹ B. Lemke (ed.), *Periphery or Contact Zone? The NATO Flanks, 1961-2013*, Frieberg, Rombach Verlag KG, 2015.

1965 through the early 1970s, with the Americanization of the Vietnam War, hundreds of thousands of US troops were deployed in Southeast Asia, to the detriment of the US presence in West Germany. One practical problem this raised for the US was how to minimize the impact on the NATO deterrent and European perceptions of the US commitment by – among other things – demonstrating to its allies that it could re-deploy forces back to Europe in a crisis.¹⁰

Similarly, the strength of the British Army of the Rhine was weakened, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, by the need to deploy troops to Northern Ireland. The ability to return UK troops to West Germany at short notice was connected to perceptions of NATO's overall deterrent posture.¹¹ These are just several examples, but numerous others could be cited. In fairness, it must be acknowledged that in none of these cases is there any clear evidence that the Soviet bloc saw an opportunity to attack when key NATO members were distracted with other crises. Nevertheless, policymakers in Washington, London, Paris, Bonn, and Brussels, *believed* that there were increased risks, if not of military attack, then at least of Soviet 'misbehaviour' or 'adventurism'.

There have also been cases where both the US and UK recognized the need to fight and/or deter multiple adversaries simultaneously in the same region and enacted certain measures to compensate for their weaknesses. The Korean War provides a useful example. For the Americans, the decision to intervene in South Korea following the North's invasion on 25 June 1950 was taken with wider regional interests in mind. In addition to sending US forces to fight in South Korea, Washington also dispatched the Seventh Fleet to the Formosa (Taiwan) Straits. The purpose of this move was twofold: to deter the People's Republic of China (PRC) from attacking Taiwan and to deter the Taiwanese from provoking the PRC.¹²

For US policymakers, having to fight in Korea meant leaving American forces in the region stretched thin and unable to fight a conventional conflict elsewhere. Therefore, the dispatch of the Seventh Fleet to deter major hostilities erupting between the PRC and Taiwan proved useful. Shortly thereafter, decisions were taken in Washington to provide additional military assistance to France to deter the PRC from attacking French Indochina, to triple the defence budget, significantly increase US military forces in Europe and to bolster radically the North Atlantic Alliance with the creation of an integrated military structure (often referred to as "putting the 'O' in NATO").¹³ Interestingly, these moves had one unintended deterrent effect: Stalin, who had originally thought the US would take no action to defend South Korea was apparently so shocked by the American reaction that he abandoned plans to invade Yugoslavia.¹⁴

The British also faced an important simultaneous deterrence dilemma due to the Korean War. On the one hand they agreed to join the UN effort to defeat North Korea. On the other hand, doing so meant using British forces based in the Far East that were needed for the defence of Hong Kong. British policymakers had to deal with the problem of sending forces to Korea whilst providing an adequate deterrent against a Chinese invasion. Yet with so few troops remaining in Hong Kong, and reinforcements from Europe not available, at least not immediately, the question then being asked was: was it still possible to deter a Chinese invasion, and with what means? The answer, according to the British Chiefs of Staff was 'giving the impression that there would be strong opposition' – in other words, 'a policy of bluff'. Translated into a practical approach, this meant relying increasingly on the Americans, or at least conveying to the Chinese that any attack on Hong Kong would draw in the US and escalate into a much wider conflict.¹⁵

It should be recognized that simultaneity in deterrence can operate on several levels either individually or in conjunction with others. One aim of deterrence may be to prevent international aggression in one or more cases

¹⁰ See for instance the US-German discussion on this point in: Memorandum of Conversation, 'Proposed Redeployment of US Forces from Germany', 14 April 1967. Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85G00105R000100190029-3.pdf>

¹¹ See for instance discussion of this point at a NATO Defence Policy Committee meeting in 1975: <https://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=262855&dt=2476&dl=1345>

¹² Editorial Note, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, East Asia and the Pacific, Volume VI. Can be found at: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v06/d195>

¹³ Robert Jervis, 'The Impact of the Korean War on the Cold War', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 24, no. 4, 1980, pp. 563-592.

¹⁴ J. Schindler, 'Dodging Armageddon: The Third World War That Almost Was, 1950', *Cryptologic Quarterly*, February 1998, pp. 85-94. Can be accessed at : https://www.nsa.gov/news-features/declassified-documents/cryptologic-quarterly/assets/files/Dodging_Armageddon.pdf

¹⁵ M. Chi-Kwan, *Hong Kong and the Cold War: Anglo-American Relations 1949-1957* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2004).

whilst heavily committed militarily in an ongoing conflict. For example, with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, both of which involved large-scale sustained commitments, the ability of the US or UK to deter other conflicts was reduced. In the British case, the ability to deter an Argentine attack in the Falklands was more limited than would otherwise be the case. Even if there was no evidence Argentina had any desire to do so at that time, UK policymakers could not ignore the possibility that a large military commitment in the Middle East and Central Asia might create a perception of weakness elsewhere and raise the risk of Argentinian adventurism.

Alternatively, it could be the case that a deterrent capability is withdrawn either because it is needed elsewhere, or simply because it is not deemed economical to maintain it. It is instructive, to return to the actual Argentinian attack in 1982: this was later blamed, in part at least, on the earlier decision to terminate the presence of HMS *Endurance* as a cost-saving measure. Interestingly, prior to the conflict, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher defended the decision to withdraw HMS *Endurance*, observing that this did not undermine Britain's deterrent: "Our judgement is that the presence of the Royal Marines Garrison, which unlike HMS *ENDURANCE* is permanently stationed in the Falklands, is sufficient deterrent against any possible aggression. HMS *ENDURANCE* herself, with her two Oerlikon guns, possesses a very limited military capability"¹⁶

This is not to say that wars automatically break out once one's deterrent is weakened. The decision to initiate a war involves many factors, only one of which is the ability of one's adversary to offer significant resistance. Rather, the salient point is that a weakened deterrent capability may increase the risk of conflict, though how much of an increase is impossible to say. At times, this logic can also be construed as a justification for inaction. For example, during the 1999 Kosovo conflict, then-SACEUR General Wesley Clark complained that when he was requesting ground options to supplement the struggling air campaign, he met resistance from the Pentagon as they seemed more concerned about maintaining sufficient forces to be able to respond to potential conflicts erupting simultaneously in the Persian Gulf and on the Korean peninsula.¹⁷

Deterrence, however, is not only about deterring conflicts. It is also about deterring certain actions an adversary could take *in the midst* of fighting a conflict – i.e. to deter whilst fighting. Having failed to deter the conflict itself, it may still be possible to ensure that both sides respect the 'rules of the game'. One notable example of this type of deterrence during the Second World War was the unwillingness of either the Allies or the Axis to use chemical weapons against the other, with some limited exceptions on the Eastern Front and in Japan's war on China. The British and Americans communicated threats to the Germans and Japanese that chemical use against any of the Allies would result in a chemical retaliation.¹⁸

Another example of 'detering whilst fighting' occurred during the Yom Kippur War. Despite its nuclear arsenal, to say nothing of its strong conventional forces, Israel was unable to deter a combined Egyptian-Syrian attack in 1973. But it *did* deter the Egyptians and Syrians from waging anything other than a limited war. Neither the Egyptians nor the Syrians intended to wage a military campaign to destroy Israel.¹⁹ They both recognized such a war could not be won, but that a war with lesser aims might be won. Thus at one level Israeli deterrence succeeded but at another it failed.²⁰ Moreover, as can be observed from the study of any number of other conflicts, different standards can apply within the limited vicinity of a single battlefield, with attackers successfully deterred from assaulting particular targets because the costs are considered too high.

Policy Approaches to Simultaneous Deterrence

¹⁶ See: Thatcher letter to Mrs Nichols, Feb. 3, 1982 [released 2013]. Available at: <https://c59574e9047e61130f133f71d0fe2b653c4f00f32175760e96e7.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/B00E046A9BDF44F89D9E819038A5E554.pdf>. Nevertheless, some have argued that whatever the vessel's military shortcomings, its withdrawal was expected to signal Britain's disinterest in defending the Falklands, thereby contributing to the Argentinian junta's motivation for seizing the islands. See: L. Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign, Vol. 1 The Origins of the Falklands War* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 59-61, 143-148

¹⁷ Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002), pp. 312-313

¹⁸ J. E. v. C. Moon, 'Chemical Weapons and Deterrence: The World War II Experience', *International Security*, Vol. 8, No. 4, Spring, 1984, pp. 3-35.

¹⁹ By contrast, the Israeli Defence Minister, Moshe Dayan, after witnessing the initial successes of the Egyptians and Syrians, was 'transformed into a prophet of doom'. Believing the existence of the state of Israel was at stake, he considered a nuclear 'demonstration'. See: Avner Cohen, 'When Israel Stepped back from the Brink', *The New York Times*, October 3, 2013.

²⁰ See discussion in: E. Lieberman, 'Deterrence Theory: Success or Failure in Arab-Israeli Wars?' *McNair Paper* 45, Washington, D.C., National Defense University, October 1995.

Having identified the concept of ‘simultaneous deterrence’ and highlighted some examples of the importance of simultaneity with respect to deterrence, the policy question of how to approach it must be considered. It is useful to categorize the ways in which ‘simultaneous deterrence’ can be addressed as a general policy problem. Two approaches stand out, and for our purposes here, we will assume that when a ‘simultaneous deterrence’ predicament arises, the existing deterrence measures are primarily military. We will also assume that it remains Government policy to rely on deterrence, as opposed to abandoning it.

The first approach can be referred to as ‘Deterrence Substitution Measures’ (DSM). This approach applies in cases where a shortfall in military capabilities occurs – these being capabilities that would otherwise be deemed *essential* for maintaining the deterrent. In this situation, other *military* measures will need to be taken to compensate for this shortfall. The second approach will be referred to as ‘Deterrence Posture Replacement’ (DPR). Similar to DSM, this approach applies in cases where a shortfall in military capabilities occurs. Unlike DSM, however, *non-military* measures would replace, or significantly augment the existing military means, thereby constituting a radically different deterrent posture.

A simple illustration of how DSM or DPR might apply can be provided if we return to the Falklands case once more. In a situation in which RAF fighter-jets were withdrawn from the islands, thereby undermining Britain’s deterrent against invasion, one could envision two potential policy responses. DSM would apply if the UK Government chose to substitute the loss of fighter-jets with other types of military aircraft, or with a larger ground or naval presence. By contrast, DPR would apply if the UK Government decided against military reinforcement of the islands but chose instead to base a new deterrent posture on threats of economic sanctions or massive cyber-attacks should Argentina ever attempt an invasion. Put another way, instead of relying on a deterrent posture aimed primarily at increasing the military costs of an invasion, it would rely on a deterrent posture aimed primarily at increasing the political and economic costs for the aggressor.

To return to the point made earlier, there are many different ways of approaching deterrence. Threats intended to deter hostile action can involve raising costs from different perspectives – military, diplomatic, economic, political – both in the immediate and the longer-term. Therefore, when adopting a policy of deterrence, there are numerous options available. It should not automatically be assumed that military means are always the most effective; hence the current emphasis on ‘full spectrum’ is a useful approach, at least in theory, even if it has been harder to achieve in practice. As applied to ‘simultaneous deterrence’ it should come as little surprise that, from a bureaucratic perspective at least, it would be natural to expect that, difficult as DSM may be to achieve, it will be that much harder to take a DPR approach. After all, DSM comes closest to retaining the status quo – the substitution of military means with alternative military means, possibly only temporarily. By contrast, DPR would replace the military lead with a non-military lead, and once an alternative form of deterrence had been put in place, it would probably be difficult to revert back to the earlier version.

Where does this leave us today? Is Britain better able to deter adversaries in 2018 than in 1998 or 1978? The answer to this question depends of course on a number of factors, most notably the means available to deter, the extent to which adversaries take these seriously, the number and degree of adversaries and challenges that are being deterred, and so forth. Consequently, there is no easy answer.

A related question is to ask whether British policymakers are better able to emphasize deterrence as a policy priority today than they were twenty or forty years ago. Again, there is no easy answer. Anecdotally, there is the widely held assumption that Britain forgot about deterrence after the Cold War, or at the very least, considerably de-emphasized it. Though the evidence is hardly conclusive, it is probably fair to say that when it came to major decisions involving the British military during the Cold War, especially decisions to deploy the military for non-NATO contingencies, its impact on UK deterrence priorities, especially British commitments to NATO, was more likely to have been raised as a matter of course.

In the absence of any significant increase in UK national security spending, and if it is to be assumed that there is unlikely to be any radical change in the structures and tools the UK maintains for home defence, external interventions, and deterrence activities more generally, then the question becomes one of ensuring that the existing system is operating as effectively as possible. It is also crucial not to lose sight of the multinational context. As in the recent past, Britain is unlikely to be unilaterally deterring adversaries, but doing so alongside allies, either as

part of an ad-hoc coalition or an Alliance. In some cases, the UK may be a relatively junior partner; in others, it may be a major or leading partner.

With these considerations in mind, some general observations can be made about ‘simultaneous deterrence’ and the UK. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and their associated counterinsurgency and stabilization doctrines, provide an example of the risks the UK can incur by fighting a war in a long duration and relatively large-scale way that undermines its deterrent credibility. In many respects, Britain was extremely fortunate that no major crises emerged from the time of the buildup ahead of the Iraq War to the official 2014 withdrawal of combat troops from Afghanistan.

Such was the need to deploy and rotate as many as 10,000 British military personnel on a permanent basis for a full decade, to say nothing of all the supporting infrastructure, that Britain would have been very hard pressed to respond to a major crisis elsewhere in any significant way. From an elementary strategic perspective, that is one of the most important reasons why these sorts of operations are best avoided. The one major conflict that Britain did participate in during this time, Libya, was a campaign shaped by the limits of deployable ground forces, and perhaps more importantly, a mentality that ground force deployments would risk becoming embroiled in a quagmire and therefore were best ruled out from serious consideration. Indeed, this mentality that opposes the possibility of deploying significant numbers of combat troops was also quite evident in the campaign against ISIS/Daesh.

At the same time, one can question the effectiveness of Britain’s contribution to the campaigns in Libya (Op Ellamy) and Iraq/Syria (Op Shader) by relying almost entirely on airpower – and a relatively limited amount at that (in the low dozens of fighter aircraft and UAVs). The air option served as the preferred *alternative* to a ground option, though in fairness there was very little appetite among Britain’s allies to commit ground forces either. Regardless, by taking certain actions off the table either because the Government is *unwilling* to commit forces, or is *unable* to do so due to too many other commitments, it leaves a space for state and non-state actors to take advantage of. Nevertheless, an important caveat must be mentioned: Just because the British military is unable to take large-scale military action does not automatically mean that Argentina will invade the Falklands again, Russia or China will launch a war, Sudan will invade South Sudan, and so forth. The decision-making of these actors is based on a whole range of factors, many of which have nothing at all to do with the risks of British military intervention, alone or with allies.

Nevertheless, with certain military options either taken off the table completely, or now lacking credibility, the challenge for UK policymakers is to creatively use combinations of its remaining military and non-military capabilities to maximize the fears of actors that are contemplating activities London considers unacceptable to ensure that they refrain from doing so. This is precisely where ‘full spectrum’ and ‘simultaneous deterrence’ approaches are valuable and inter-connected.

A few examples can be cited here. For instance, on numerous occasions the mere movement of forces, even when the actual military value of these forces is recognized as being negligible, can serve to deter hostile action by raising the risk of escalation, and provide an opening for de-escalation and negotiations. Should this prove infeasible, it may still be possible, through the use of effective messaging, to create the *impression* of increased military activity.

There are also numerous non-military tools – e.g. cyber, legal, diplomatic, economic, and covert – that can be used to compensate when military force is unable to be employed for one reason or other, though with the current emphasis on ‘full spectrum’ they will probably be employed anyway even when military forces *are* available. But due to its historical legacy, deterrence continues to be viewed mainly as a Defence prerogative, with the consequence that non-military means receive less attention from both theorists and practitioners. In any event, although the precise mix of means chosen to deter adversaries will vary from case to case, the important point to emphasize with respect to ‘simultaneous deterrence’ is that UK policymakers recognize the value of *being seen* by potential adversaries as able to deal with several crises at once, and not so distracted by crises elsewhere that they cannot handle another one. In such instances, it may be necessary to discard military logic, with its emphasis on capabilities, and substitute it with deterrence logic, with its emphasis on manipulating perceptions. This, however, requires a much more nuanced and sophisticated approach to understanding the perceptions held and decision-making processes actually used by the leaderships that are to be deterred.

Conclusion

The UK has had plenty of practice engaging in 'simultaneous deterrence' even if it has not used the term or thought of the concept in that way. This paper has sought to introduce this term into UK national security discourse so that the concept it describes can receive more attention alongside the growing emphasis on deterrence more generally. Being able to put a label to this concept will hopefully allow UK policymakers to think *more readily* in these terms when making decisions about the issuing of threats, the deployment of UK military forces, the retention, abandonment and procurement of military capabilities, and in the development of deterrent postures, particularly those that emphasize non-military means.

As UK policymakers continue to seek to reconfigure policies and practices to enhance Britain's ability to deter, especially at a time when the numerical decline in military capabilities has not led to any similar interest in significantly altering the military's role in dealing with global problems, appreciation of the importance of simultaneity *in* deterrence, and the need to think in terms of 'simultaneous deterrence', is increasingly vital.

That being said, the *limits* of 'simultaneous', or any other type of deterrence need to be recognized and appreciated rather than written off as being immaterial. Deterrence is not a panacea to avoid fighting wars nor is it the most effective policy approach to dealing with the 'full spectrum' of threats, and even with abundant resources dedicated to understanding its requirements and bolstering one's own capabilities, failures will occur. These limitations notwithstanding, to the extent conceptual and practical innovations can be pursued, potentially leading to more effective approaches to deterring adversaries, these should be encouraged.

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