

Future of Great Power
Competition & Conflict



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Quick Concepts Series:

EXTENDED DETERRENCE

Extended deterrence encompasses pledges of military protection by a deterrent power to its allies and/or partners against a common potential aggressor. In the US case, these pledges constitute formal military commitments. These commitments can be, and have been, both nuclear and non-nuclear in nature. They imply, and typically reflect, not only common security concerns but also political and operational coordination between the deterrent power and its allies and/or partners.

For the last seventy years, a noteworthy feature of US deterrence has been the component termed “extended deterrence.” Though not explicitly delineated, this component of deterrence found expression in one of the very earliest policy recommendations dealing with nuclear weapons: “United States Policy on Atomic Warfare” (NSC 30) of 10 September 1948. NSC 30 specifically referred *inter alia* to the reassuring deterrent effect in Europe against the USSR afforded by US possession of nuclear weapons. Note that this reference predates the formal US military and political commitment to the European States *via* NATO, whose founding document, the North Atlantic Treaty (Treaty of Washington), was signed on 4 April 1949.

To be successful, extended deterrence must account for potential aggressors’ varying military and socio-economic potential, as well as their existing military-technical capability, over time. Constant adjustments to deterrence are thus required to meet these variables. Furthermore, while deterrence is usually understood primarily in a strictly military context, it should also be cognizant of important ancillary factors including, but not limited to, a potential or actual opponent’s domestic politics, economics, and geo-strategic ambitions, as well as sociological and less quantifiable components such as its history, religion, and ethno-linguistic identity.

Extended deterrence necessarily affects third-party states. For example, Actor A may be deterred by Actor B. However, if successful, such deterrence can also affect other regional entities (Actor C). Thus, Actor C, if also perceiving a threat from A, can feel reassured by B’s action. Actor B’s deterrent power is thereby extended, either explicitly or implicitly, to include C’s protection. Conversely, if C is considering aligning with A against B, the latter’s deterrence of A can also restrain C’s behavior by making A less attractive. In that event, C does not necessarily become B’s ally or partner, but C’s power-potential is not aggregated with A’s to the disadvantage of B.

Deterrence’s success relies to a remarkable degree on the matter of credibility. In direct, two-party deterrence, a potential aggressor must believe the deterrent power’s intentions and capabilities are credible, but that aggressor does not necessarily have to be 100% certain. In principle, a reasonable confidence on its part (assuming its leaders are rational) that the deterrent power can and will apply condign punishment in response to aggression beyond a certain unacceptable limit may suffice to prevent aggressive behavior. Thus, the “deteree” must calculate that whatever it holds dearest (regime’s survival, international status, internal stability, economic prosperity, etc.) stands under threat of destruction. Equally important, however, is that the deterrent power must have the clearest possible understanding of what that “dearest” thing is and be able to communicate that understanding effectively.

By contrast, extended deterrence arguably carries a much higher burden of proof in establishing its credibility because it is more complicated for the guarantor power than deterring a direct attack upon itself. Promises of extended deterrence beg the important question of whether a potential attack by an adversary against allied

and/or partner states is worth the deterrent power's own at-risk assets and interests. As the old saw put it regarding the United States' extended deterrence to partners in NATO, would a US president sacrifice Chicago for Hamburg?

Thus, both the adversary and the allied or partner states of the deterrent power must be sufficiently confident in the promise of protection afforded by the extension of the deterrent power's forces to shield them from aggression. But "sufficiently" does not mean "equally." As British Minister of Defense in 1964, Denis Healy, eventually quipped in his memoirs, "It takes only five per cent credibility of American retaliation to deter the Russians, but ninety-five per cent credibility to reassure the Europeans." The same might well be said for any state existing in a dependent relation of extended deterrence being provided by a guarantor power.

Extended deterrence is not a case of a "coalition of the willing." In any such coalition, states may indeed be formal allies and/or partners. To that extent, they may share formal understandings about common threats and how to respond to them. However, a "coalition of the willing," operates with a fundamental difference: it is essentially *ad hoc*. It does not attempt to marshal all the deterrent power's allies and/or partners precisely because it cannot. The coalition's very moniker indicates that it is temporary and incomplete. The label also tries to mask, not always effectively, the policy differences making such a coalition temporary and incomplete in the first place.

Extended Deterrence in Current Doctrine

Recent technological change and the emergence of digitally empowered non-State actors since 2001 continue to expand deterrence's parameters. To remain effective, deterrence now absolutely requires ever-vigilant consideration not merely of nuclear and conventional threats—that cannot change—but also newer kinetic technologies such as exoatmospheric and/or hypersonic systems, as well as cyber networks and artificial intelligence. Such newer considerations are reflected in current USG, DOD, and service-specific policy documents. These include, but are not limited to, the *2018 Nuclear Posture Review*; USAF's *Annex 3-72 Nuclear Operations: Extended Deterrence*; the *Deterrence Operations Joint Operating Concept (DO – JOC)*; the *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*; and the *National Defense Strategy* (see further reading below).

Application of this evolving school of extended deterrence is facilitated by US-based infrastructure beyond the physical limits of the continental United States. Having operational bases outside of CONUS allows the United States to overcome the "tyranny of geography." US forces stationed on the territory of allied and/or partner States—or in overseas US territory—are, as it were, already "in theater." This fact helps spare the critical element of time during reinforcement. It also can greatly enhance forward-deployed US ISR, an important element in early detection and characterization of potential threats. The earliest possible detection and the clearest possible characterization

of threats is vital to deterrence's overall effectiveness. Forward bases also help mitigate (but do not eliminate) threats to transatlantic or transpacific lines of communication and supply. In fact, these bases can find themselves targeted by an adversary.

More to the point, however, US forward bases impose significant infrastructural, social, and political burdens upon host nations. The same social and political burdens, though non-quantifiable, are often important factors affecting host-nation domestic politics. They involve significant risk for allies and/or partners to the extent that these states may provide dual-capable aircraft (DCA), bases, and storage for the employment of airborne nuclear weapons. This situation can cause such states acute political difficulty given popular opposition to even the mere presence of nuclear weapons in allied and/or partner states, much less a credible prospect of those weapons' use. This difficulty has existed both for European and non-European allies and/or partners of the United States since the early 1950s (Cf. NSC 162/2 *Basic National Security Policy*, 30 October 1953). Furthermore, this difficulty should never be overlooked by US leaders. And to the extent that any discussion of extended deterrence goes beyond the crucial element of nuclear weapons to include other components (BMD, conventional force levels, ISR capabilities, post-INF Treaty intermediate-range nuclear-capable systems, etc.), that discussion can obligate allied and/or partner states even more heavily and thereby further eliminate the canard that states enjoying the protection of extended deterrence are merely "free riders."

Further Reading

Annex 3-72 Nuclear Operations: Extended Deterrence. USAF Air University Curtis E. Lemay Center for Doctrine and Education, 2015: https://www.doctrine.af.mil/Portals/61/documents/Annex_3-72/3-72-D12-NUKE-OPS-Extended-Deterrence.pdf

Deterrence Operations Joint Operating Concept (DO – JOC). Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/concepts/joc_deterrence.pdf?ver=2017-12-28-162015-337

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Kroenig, Matthew. *The Logic of American Nuclear Strategy: Why Strategic Superiority Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

National Defense Strategy. United States Department of Defense: <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>

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Tsuruoka, Michito. "Why the NATO Nuclear Debate Is Relevant to Japan and Vice Versa." *Policy Brief*. German Marshall Fund of the United States. 8 October 2010.

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2018 Nuclear Posture Review. United States Department of Defense: https://dod.defense.gov/News/Special-Reports/0218_npr/

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Dr. Dorondo received his D. Phil. from the University of Oxford (St. Antony's College). He is a specialist in modern German history and has an abiding interest in military history. He is the author of *Bavaria and German Federalism: Reich to Republic, 1918-1933* (1992) and *Riders of the Apocalypse: German Cavalry and Modern Warfare, 1870-1945* (2012), as well as numerous articles and reviews. He is faculty advisor to the History Club and Phi Alpha Theta, and he won the College of Arts and Sciences Teaching Award for 2000-2001 and the Last Lecture Teaching Award for 2012-2013. He is also moderator of the Carolina Round Table on the World Wars.