

Review of: Erik Gartzke and Jon R. Lindsay, *Elements of Deterrence: Strategy, Technology, and Complexity in Global Politics*

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1 Introduction

Thomas Schelling's canonical *Arms and Influence*, first published in 1966, synthesized early Cold War thinking about what was at the time the relatively new subfield of deterrence theory (Schelling 1966). Developed in a bipolar era, and largely focused on adapting to the reality of threatened nuclear holocaust through mutually assured destruction, Schelling's authoritative work shaped generations of deterrence scholars and defense policymakers around the world and remains a key resource for understanding deterrence (Knopf 2010; Biddle 2020). However, much has changed in the 59 years since *Arms and Influence* was published. Increasing great power tensions, maturing operational domains in cyber and space, and emerging military technologies are just a few of the factors necessitating an update to deterrence theory. Erik Gartzke, John Lindsay, and their co-authors tackle this complexity, reconsidering deterrence for the 21st century in their 2024 book, *Elements of Deterrence* (Gartzke and Lindsay 2024). This landmark contribution to the deterrence subfield is sure to influence strategic competition scholarship and policymaking in the years to come.

The authors broadly consider how new domains (i.e., cyber and space), emerging technologies, and distinct state preferences and strategies all interact to impact deterrence outcomes. They synthesize volumes of existing deterrence into cohesive theory that is useful for scholars and policymakers alike. International relations scholars will undoubtedly benefit from these important theoretical contributions. Defense leaders, military planners, and security analysts who read this book will earn a nuanced understanding of how doctrine, force design, forward posture, and multi-domain force employment, all interact with selected strategies to shape deterrence efficacy. Below, I summarize the author's key arguments, highlight the book's contribution to the deterrence subfield, and conclude by exploring their work's implications for US national security policy.

2 Elements of Deterrence Summary

The author's primary thesis is that: "Successful (or unsuccessful) deterrence is not just a single coherent outcome, but rather, an ongoing interaction among different tools and . . . different strategic objectives. As a result, actors will usually not be able to have all of the things they want, equally and simultaneously (Gartzke and Linsday 2024)." In exploring this complexity, the book considers how a variety of military tools impact deterrence outcomes and illuminates how certain tools are "incompatible" with certain strategies and political objectives. Importantly, the authors explore these tradeoffs across the entire range of coercive diplomacy, which includes deterrence (preventing a future action) and compellence (stopping an ongoing action). The book's four-part structure logically supports this thesis, enabling the authors to consecutively build theory, incorporate maturing domains, introduce empirical evidence, and examine the means-ends tradeoffs that impact deterrence policy. I briefly review the book's four parts below.

Part I reviews the deterrence literature, synthesizes the bargaining model of war with deterrence theories (Gartzke and Linsday 2024), explores states' distinct political preferences, and details the diverse means states use to pursue those preferences. Importantly, the authors allow for varying state preferences which pragmatically reflects how states often pursue more than one strategy at a time. They identify four political preferences that predominate in the deterrence realm: political influence (i.e. protecting or changing the status quo), military effectiveness (i.e. military power to win); policy efficiency (i.e. low-cost policy options); and strategic stability (i.e. avoiding war through accommodation (Gartzke and Linsday 2024)). However, in pursuit of these ends, new technologies and military capabilities have expanded the ways and means available to policymakers, complicating a state's strategic decision-making when practicing deterrence. Specifically, when states employ distinct policy instruments (various military capabilities and tools) and strategies (i.e., coercion, defense, deception, or accommodation) in pursuit of one political goal, the authors show how these means and ways may be detrimental to the state's pursuit of other political goals (Gartzke and Linsday 2024). When states simultaneously pursue multiple objectives, then tradeoffs will inevitably emerge, forcing states to prioritize which goals matter most.

Part II explores how the cyber domain impacts deterrence, illuminating the tradeoffs that are inherent when employing secretive cyber tools. Chapters here examine cyber within the bargaining model of war framework, the cyber domain's role in strategies of deception, and the risks of cyber tools targeting nuclear command and control. Part III examines empirical evidence supporting their arguments, with chapters examining land, sea, air, and space power's varying impacts on deterrence outcomes. While the empirical evidence and tests in Part III are quantitative, the authors take care to present it in a manner that does not require a detailed understanding of statistics. Part IV expands their analysis beyond military means, with chapters considering how economic interdependence, global internet connectivity, and gray zone conflicts impact contemporary deterrence. The authors conclude by considering policy and theoretical implications and applying their framework to better understand ongoing tensions between the United States and China.

3 Connection to Deterrence Literature

While *Elements of Deterrence* is clearly at the cutting edge of deterrence research, it is not able to cover all aspects of a burgeoning deterrence subfield. However, the book's main academic contribution is its compelling theoretical framework, which helps us better understand the evolving deterrence subfield, and the tradeoffs their theory accounts for. As an example, given the Indo-Pacific's geography, much attention has been focused on the US Navy and US Air Force's role in Taiwan contingencies. However, the book's sea power chapter cuts against this conventional wisdom, suggesting that increase naval forward presence might increase tensions in a crisis, since hard-to-detect naval platforms may increase insecurity in a crisis (Gartzke and Lindsay 2024). At the same time, significant effort in the US Army is being invested in understanding the service's role in Indo-Pacific joint force (Finkelstein 2020; Devine 2021), and *Elements of Deterrence* aids in the effort by synthesizing a growing body of literature focused on land power's important role in extended and conventional deterrence (Mearsheimer 1983; Pape 1996; Post 2019; Frederick et al. 2020; Blankenship and Lin-Greenberg 2022). Along those lines, while Gartzke and Lindsay do not cover all new military technologies (i.e. hypersonic weapons), their work pairs nicely with recent scholarship which more explicitly focus on emerging technologies (Brose 2020; Krepinevich 2023; Watling 2023). Gartzke and Lindsay's theory helps us understand how these innovations might differently impact deterrence given the selected strategy they are employed with, and the political preferences they are used to attain (Reny 2020; Sankaran 2022).

Beyond synthesizing the bargaining model of war with deterrence theories, Gartzke and Lindsay partially reconcile the scholarship of deterrence skeptics, who are focused on misperception and bounded human rationality. This alternative perspective considers how bounded rationality, faulty assumptions about an adversary's goals, misperceptions about coercive signals, and countervailing pressures to satisfy domestic and international audiences all combine to challenge classical deterrence theory's rationality assumption (Jervis 1982; Lebow 1984; Stein et al. 1989; Jervis 2017). While *Elements of Deterrence* does not explicitly explore how non-material factors (i.e. historical understandings, norms, values, beliefs) impact actor preferences, their theory usefully accommodates these disparate perspectives on deterrence. Gartzke and Lindsay's allowance of distinct state preferences allow scholars and analysts to consider how those non-material factors shaped a state's preferences in the first place. Collectively, their work updates deterrence theory for the new context of the 21st century, providing a significant step forward in the study of deterrence.

4 Conclusion and Policy Implications

Elements of Deterrence helps us understand profuse complexity in the contemporary practice of deterrence and I strongly recommend it. Beyond helping us understand the past, Gartzke and Lindsay's work helps us understand the future. The authors' suggest that ongoing US efforts to implement "Integrated Deterrence" are problematic, given the challenges involved by simultaneously deploying multiple policy tools (stealth fighters, ground forces, cyber tools, unmanned submarines, etc.) in pursuit of disparate objectives (i.e. stability, cost, efficiency, or power; U.S. Department of Defense). As the United States and China seek to navigate their complicated relationship, Gartzke and Lindsay's policy prescriptions will help both sides think carefully about the nuanced tradeoffs that

are inherent when various means are employed in pursuit of multiple ends.

There is something here for everyone: policymakers across the interagency, political scientists interested in the study of war and peace, historians examining deterrence case studies, and students hoping to learn more about deterrence. In particular, military readers from all branches will benefit from a greater understanding of the joint force's role in US deterrence efforts. As suggested by Jeffrey Michaels, deterrence scholarship is currently experiencing a new, fifth wave of research, largely focused on deterrence's role in renewed great power competition and emerging military technologies (Michaels 2024). *Elements of Deterrence* is clearly at the forefront of this fifth wave, and the book's useful framework will help scholars and policy-makers understand the nuanced ways various instruments of state power impact deterrence outcomes as new technologies, doctrinal concepts, and strategies emerge in the coming years. As the authors suggest in the book's closing sentence: "The hardest problem is figuring out what matters most (Gartzke and Lindsay 2024)." Just as Schelling's *Arms and Influence* continued to impact the study and practice deterrence for decades, Gartzke and Lindsay's *Elements of Deterrence* is posed do the same in the years ahead.

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