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Tactics of Strategic Competition

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Gray Zones, Redlines, and Conflicts before War

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Defense analysts and policy makers now refer routinely to the challenges of operating in a "gray zone" of conflict, which coincides with recent scholarly efforts to analyze more rigorously conflicts short of traditional coercion or war.[1] Yet despite its frequent contemporary usage, the term *gray zone* does not seem to describe anything new. However, it does highlight something that is underconceptualized: the use of tactics that challenge the status quo without resorting to war. This article proposes that the gray zone is not a new concept, but that the term conveniently describes a broad class of events involving nonwar yet conflictual interactions—what might be considered "normal" or "stable" strategic competition. Taking policy makers' concerns seriously, I argue that at least three types of interrelated tactics are historically common, if underconceptualized, ways of pursuing competitive gains while deferring the decision for war: sidestepping established defender "redline" commitments; employing intermediary actors as aggressors; and presenting faits accomplis to defenders.

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Each of these tactics has ample historical precedent; yet, as discussed below, each is also vastly undertheorized, which might help to explain why security practitioners have reached for the term *gray zone*. Bringing these tactics to the analytic fore gives us a different way to think about aspects of crucial cases etched in popular historiography, such as the invasion of South Korea, Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal, and the start of the Cuban missile crisis. The ability to draw on such marquee events to illuminate the logics of these

revisionist tactics also undermines suggestions that the gray zone of conflict represents a brave new world. What is more, recognizing when such tactics are in play has payoffs for how we might expect conflict interactions to unfold—the presence of each tactic plausibly biases the outcomes of strategic interactions in favor of those who take the initiative, while also introducing the classic risks of unintentional escalation.

The remainder of this article proceeds in three parts. The first part introduces the modern usage of the term *gray zone,* its conceptual limitation, and three interrelated tactics that simultaneously try to avoid inciting crisis or war while pursuing revisionist aims—the essence of the gray-zone challenge, as explained by its advocates. The second part makes a prima facie attempt to identify the ways in which these revisionist tactics logically complicate competitive interactions in international relations (i.e., how their employment plausibly affects the interplay of conflict, on the basis of their presence in familiar historical examples as well as the causal logics identified in the sparse but relevant literatures). The final part surveys a diverse range of modern cases of international competition to illustrate the centrality of these revisionist tactics to explaining those cases.

UNDERSTANDING THE GRAY ZONE . . . OR NOT

The term *gray zone* appears almost nowhere in scholarly literature. Among security practitioners, the broadest and most consistent use of the term seems to describe what amounts to a realpolitik state of competition short of war.[2] Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert O. Work acknowledged that "agents, paramilitaries, deception, infiltration, and persistent denial" constitute "what some people have called 'the gray zone,'" arguing that it is the type of conflict for which U.S. forces are least prepared.[3] The former Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisitions, Technology and Logistics similarly eschewed the term itself but addressed the crux of the problem by describing the category of conflict in a 2015 internal memo as one "that occurs again and again. These conflicts are regional, may be presented by an insurgency against a standing government, military and political activities within a sovereign nation conducted by a neighbor, disputes over territory between neighboring nations, or terrorist or criminal activities within ungoverned territories or within failing states."[4] The memo even explained why these activities are a problem: "In these conflicts it has been very difficult to assess the situation and to determine what U.S. interests are at stake, . . . determining what actions should the U.S. take to protect those interests, who our allies and adversaries are in the particular situation, and what end-state would be best to protect our interests and result in the most favorable outcome."[5]

But the gray zone is not a concern only for the U.S. government. In track 1.5 meetings with U.S. officials and analysts, South Korean and Japanese officials

have expressed rising angst that gray-zone challenges may erode the credibility of U.S. commitments.[6] In particular, the government of Japan, which started using the term in 2010, has defined *gray zones* as "armed incidents that fall short of a full-scale attack."[7] Examples that officials have offered to illustrate what Japan means by the term *gray zone* range from Chinese special operations forces infiltrating the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dressed as fishermen to drone intrusions or cyber attacks aimed at compelling Japan to stand down in the event of a remote confrontation in the East China Sea.[8] Japan's *Defense of Japan 2014* annual white paper also articulates concerns that gray-zone situations will present the country with scenarios in which a military response might be necessary, but only its coast guard or law-enforcement agencies would have the authority to act.[9] A number of scholars and pundits additionally have seized on the term to describe contemporary cases of competition, ranging from recent North Korean violence and Russia's annexation of Crimea to China's East China Sea policy and its ongoing artificial island building in contested areas of the South China Sea.[10]

Although the term *gray zone* is not inherently problematic, it risks obscuring the actual observed behaviors that are raising concerns among policy makers. If focusing on the gray zone amounts to nothing more than identifying the numerous types of conflict short of war, there is little obvious benefit in aggregating them into a master category labeled *gray zone*. The term can be a convenient descriptive shorthand for referring to nonwar competition, but its use leaves unresolved any adequate explanation for how and why the behaviors of contemporary international actors apparently vex security practitioners to the point of leading many to reach for a new term.

But these public discussions of gray zones highlight a policy-relevant theoretical lacuna regarding revisionist tactics short of launching conventional war that make it possible for revisionists to establish new status quo baselines, secure gains at the expense of a competitor, and shape future bargaining contexts, all without automatically requiring coercive diplomacy, crisis, or war. From scanning the range of cases and definitions of gray zones that the practitioners and scholars mentioned above have advanced, three interrelated ideal-type tactics emerge: revisionism that avoids defender commitments; employment of intermediary actors; and faits accomplis.

The most obvious way to pursue an advantage while avoiding war is to avoid challenging any commitment a defender has defined as a casus belli. In other words, this means engaging in only those revisionist actions that sidestep defender redlines, the latter term understood as a commitment threshold for punishment or reaction.[11] During the early Cold War period, Henry Kissinger and others wrote of the need to defend the "grey areas" of the globe, meaning those countries the NATO umbrella did not cover (i.e., the places where U.S. commitments were

sparse and of questionable credibility).[12] Kissinger's argument was a critique of President Eisenhower's massive retaliation doctrine, which Kissinger believed basically prevented the United States from reacting to aggression in all situations other than a large-scale Soviet invasion of Europe. Kissinger feared that Cold War adversaries around the world would pursue political and military expansion in areas where the U.S. willingness to wage war or incur risks of conflict had not been established or was less than obvious. Much more recently, it has been argued that competitive states historically have exploited—and have enduring incentives to exploit—what Daniel Altman also calls "gray areas," challenging a defender not where its resolve is clearest but rather where its commitments or retaliation thresholds have weaknesses, which come in several varieties.[13]

As I describe it here, though, the tactic of redline avoidance shares more in common with Kissinger's "grey areas" than Altman's "gray areas." The difference is subtle but conceptually and practically meaningful. With the tactic of redline avoidance, the revisionist is choosing a site of contestation involving issues or geographies where it views a defender's redline commitments as being absent. The tactic does not constitute exploitation of a weak redline but rather exploitation of the absence of one. In 1962, the U.S. redline against Soviet invasion of Europe was strong, while no redline existed against Soviet missiles in Cuba prior to the Cuban missile crisis; in other words, there was not a weak redline against Soviet missiles in Cuba, but rather no redline whatsoever. By contrast, Altman's redline typology and corresponding "gray areas" describe revisionism that exploits loopholes in perceived redlines. Such revisionism encroaches on a redline without crossing it, rather than avoiding it.[14] The conceptual difference can be seen in the prelude to the Cuban missile crisis: Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev is said to have thought that there was no U.S. commitment with regard to missiles in Cuba (redline avoidance), which is different from saying that he thought he was exploiting a U.S. commitment (redline encroachment) that was weak or not credible.[15]

For policy makers, these are two fundamentally different problems. The former is about vulnerabilities where one allowed an absence of commitments, while the latter is about vulnerabilities arising from flaws in established commitments. To be sure, exploiting weak redlines is one way to challenge the status quo without resorting to war; that is a basic argument not only in this article but in the recent research on redlines.[16] However, as the historical example above illustrates, challenging the status quo while avoiding redlines altogether is tactically different from encroaching on weak redlines; I treat the latter (encroaching on weak redlines) as a subset of the discussion on faits accomplis, below.

One way that revisionists avoid a defender's redlines—a method that also can be used to encroach on a defender's redlines without crossing them—is through

the second revisionist tactic: employing intermediaries. From prisoners' dilemmas to games of chicken, theories of competition in international relations often employ a simplifying assumption of dyadic interaction.[17] But many conflicts short of conventional war involve an aggressor's third-party agents, not conventional military forces.

Intermediaries in international competition are conceptualized in at least three ways in the literature. First, in proxy wars, intermediaries are secondary states or rebel groups whose war fighting benefits, or at least is consonant with, the goals of a primary state. States resorting to proxy wars do so in part because they find themselves in rivalry or strategic competition with another state, yet are deterred by the prospective costs of fighting a war directly; this is also a prevailing logic of covert war.[18]

Second, in the literature on third-party or "indirect" deterrence, intermediaries are those actors to whom pressure is applied so that they may in turn apply pressure to still another actor.[19] A common, if faulty, argument about how best to pressure North Korea has been to pressure China, which has unique economic leverage over North Korea and might succeed in coercing North Korea where the United States and South Korea have not.[20]

A third conceptualization of intermediaries that more commonly fits the kind found in the gray zone of conflict comes from the literature on state-sponsored terrorism.[21] Intermediaries in this context are the agents in a principal-agent relationship and the state is the principal or patron, but the tie between them is an ambiguous or tenuous one. Agents in this sense sometimes are described colloquially as "little green men" or the "fifth column" to capture the deniable manner in which a patron may employ them.[22] They can be any agents of a state that traditionally do not play a signaling role in executing the "high politics" of international security, such as law-enforcement authorities or guerrillas, or more-autonomous actors that implicitly act on behalf of an aggressor, including terrorist groups, computer hackers, fishermen, and even members of social movements or an ethnically bonded diaspora.

The distinction is meaningful because the use of militaries activates instrumental logics of either deterrence or battlefield efficiency between competitors.[23] Intermediaries, by contrast, do not activate such logics as readily, which, as discussed below, is one of the reasons their presence both can "stack the deck" of interaction in favor of defender restraint and can generate distinct risks of miscalculation or blowback.[24] Thus, China's coast guard or its maritime militia—the latter is affiliated with the central government but is not a war-making instrument of the state—may engage in confrontational actions in the East or South China Sea. Such actions force defenders to ponder the extent to which—especially in contrast with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy under comparable
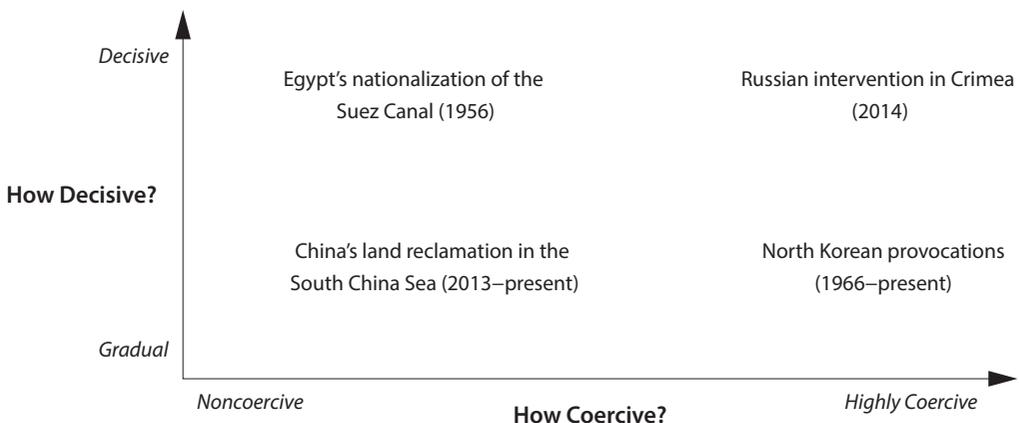
circumstances—they reflect a deliberately aggressive design by Beijing.[25] The military instrument brings with it certain kinds of expectations and implied risks with regard to confrontation, while the actions of other agents of a state introduce at least the possibility of doubt about the logic governing their behavior.

An aggressor that employs an intermediary obscures culpability by obscuring identification of authority, assumptions of control, or intent. From the defender's perspective, the use of intermediaries in any competitive interaction raises logical questions about these same factors. If the defender cannot know the answers to these questions with any great degree of confidence, then neither can it know whom to influence or how to do so.

Intermediaries in conflicts short of war are not passive or trivial actors. Often, they present defenders with a fait accompli, which is to say an "initiative that forces the opponent to initiate" or to stand aside.[26] Faits accomplis have a long history in international politics, and in crisis bargaining in particular, but prior to recent research by Ahmer Tarar and Daniel Altman they were entirely untheorized.[27] This may be due in part to what faits accomplis are: unilateral acts that come at the expense of a competitor's preferences.[28] They often present defenders with the choice of taking no direct action (i.e., backing down) or initiating a coercive interaction; in other words, they can, but do not inherently, constitute coercive actions themselves. Because faits accomplis often sidestep deterrence and compellence and leave the decision to initiate such hostilities to the defender, paradoxically—and sometimes intentionally—faits accomplis potentially transform a defender into a seeming aggressor.[29]

As illustrated in the figure, faits accomplis can be gradualist or decisive, and coercive or noncoercive. In the coercive bargaining literature, some gradualist fait accompli strategies are what Thomas C. Schelling famously called "salami

VARIATIONS OF THE FAIT ACCOMPLI

	Decisive	
	Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal (1956)	Russian intervention in Crimea (2014)
How Decisive?		
	China's land reclamation in the South China Sea (2013–present)	North Korean provocations (1966–present)
	Gradual	
	Noncoercive **How Coercive?**	Highly Coercive

tactics": deliberate erosion of a defender's redline by consciously attempting to stay below the perceived threshold for reaction.[30] Salami slicing presents defenders with situations, "none of which in isolation amounts to a casus belli, but which add up over time to a substantial change in the strategic picture."[31] While "not quite invoking the commitment," in other words, they manage to make "the commitment appear porous and infirm."[32] Faits accomplis that take the form of salami tactics are revisionist attempts to exploit a weak redline, providing specific revisionist paths of least resistance (or windows of opportunity, if one prefers), considering the nature of the redline's weakness.[33]

But faits accomplis need be neither gradual nor coercive. They also can be decisive; alternatively, they can involve no threat making or redline erosion whatsoever. For example, a sudden military operation aimed at quickly seizing and occupying a swath of territory presents a defender with a fait accompli that is decisive, not gradual. One recent study found that territorial acquisition by fait accompli (defined as a unilateral, noncoercive "landgrab") is both more common and more successful than attempts to acquire territory by coercion.[34] Another study, also focusing narrowly on military faits accomplis that pursue decisive "landgrabs," finds that they are often the consequence of a commitment problem in which the revisionist believes the defender will undertake military preparations (regardless of promises to the contrary) that would nullify or raise the costs of a fait accompli.[35] Moreover, states may perform research and development on advanced weaponry or deploy military assets in outer space as ways to shift the military balance without intending to challenge or threaten an adversary; in such instances, an adversary not only may not have thought to introduce a redline but may not know whether such a situation warrants one.[36]

Even the convergence of these tactics—intermediaries and faits accomplis, put to the service of exploiting ambiguities in defender commitments or avoiding defender commitments altogether—does not make gray zones a category of conflict that stands independent of coercive diplomacy, hybrid conflict, or other types of bounded conflict interactions short of conventional war. Such an understanding would conflate conflict tactics with conflict types. Instead, the *gray zone,* should the term be used at all, reflects a convenient description of normal strategic competition. The tactics we find in the gray zone are deployable in any competitive setting.

REVISIONIST TACTICS AND CONFLICT DYNAMICS

As a starting point for understanding how these tactics matter, this section draws on the applicable literature as well as classic historical examples to construct plausible claims about their causal implications.

How Avoiding Redlines Affects Conflict

There are several ways in which aggressors can challenge the status quo while encouraging defender restraint. The most prominent way of doing so while avoiding war is by steering clear of a defender's clearest redlines entirely, pressing only where one believes defender commitments do not exist. Deterrence theory long has identified an inherent trade-off when it comes to threat making: when a defender establishes clear redlines for the sake of credible deterrence, "there is a good possibility of a gap emerging."[37] An adversary may interpret issues and areas that go unmentioned as permissible arenas for actions that will be less likely to trigger retaliatory commitments. When Secretary of State Dean Acheson outlined the "defense perimeter" of U.S. commitments in Asia in January 1950, he failed to mention Korea. This proved to be one of several reasons North Korea's Kim Il Sung and the Soviet Union's Joseph Stalin thought North Korea could invade South Korea quickly; by leaving Korea out of the articulation of U.S. defense commitments, Acheson inadvertently may have signaled that North Korea could advance there without risking a larger war with the United States.[38] This example illustrates how an opportunistic aggressor may target issues and geographies where defender commitments are absent, expecting that it can do so at less cost and risk. Acheson's announced defense perimeter and the outbreak of the Korean War constitute merely one of the best-known examples in a twentieth century full of them.[39] Kissinger's 1955 call to defend "grey areas" (that is, non-NATO areas of U.S. interest) was an explicit recognition of this kind of possibility.[40] The reactive temptation for defenders facing this exploitive tactic is simply to add new or clarifying commitments to cover those ambiguities where an adversary may assert itself. But such a defender strategy involves high risk and brings diminishing returns, because there comes a point at which the accumulation of commitments to employ force logically outstrips the ability to maintain them credibly. Such an aggressor tactic thus encourages the defender to be discerning, and somewhat restrained, about adding new commitments or clarifying existing ones.

Before its eruption into the Cuban missile crisis, Khrushchev's attempt to place nuclear-armed missiles in Cuba can be seen as an initially noncoercive move intended to shift the military balance by taking action in an area other than Europe, where commitments were more entrenched. The Soviet Union, in other words, may have believed "that there was no tacit commitment on Kennedy's part to oppose such a deployment."[41] By shifting the military balance in its favor while avoiding U.S. redlines, the Soviet Union was attempting to gain a geostrategic advantage without engaging directly in a coercive contest.

But, as with North Korea's invasion of South Korea, Khrushchev's decision to place Soviet missiles in Cuba illustrates the risk an aggressor incurs when altering the status quo in places and on issues where defender commitments

seem unclear, weak, or absent: underestimating the defender's resolve. In neither case did the aggressor seek to precipitate what became the Korean War and the Cuban missile crisis, respectively, but in neither case was the United States willing simply to allow the aggressor's actions to stand. Even though by using this tactic—challenging the status quo in a manner that avoids a defender redline, while targeting issues or areas high on uncertainty and low on precedent—aggressors aim to achieve gains while avoiding conflict, doing so risks crisis or conflict anyway. In cyberspace, for example, there are indications that U.S. strategic ambiguity about cyber attacks may reflect the uncertainty of U.S. officials about the conditions that might lead to U.S. retaliatory attacks.[42] If the United States is unclear about its own retaliatory thresholds, then surely state-sponsored hackers in China, North Korea, and elsewhere are as well.

How Faits Accomplis Affect Conflict

Regardless of whether a fait accompli is coercive or noncoercive, decisive or gradual, it presents defenders with incentives either to back down or to take coercive action themselves. The deliberate use of faits accomplis, as opposed to some other type of aggressive action, involves an implicit wager that the action taken will encourage restraint and not provoke defender retaliatory measures.[43]

It can do this in at least two different ways. The first is by moving too quickly and completely for the defender to react because of material or capability constraints. North Korea's 1950 invasion of South Korea was intended to do just this, presenting the United States with a situation on the ground that was so far gone it could not plausibly be reversed. In his memoir Khrushchev recalls that Stalin's decision to permit Kim Il Sung's invasion of South Korea was premised on the assumption "that if the war were fought swiftly . . . intervention by the USA could be avoided."[44] The second way a fait accompli encourages defender paralysis is by making the action such a small or gradual challenge to a defender's redline that the defender finds it difficult to justify mustering a retaliatory response. Such gradualism can be seen in China's repeated intrusions into the airspace surrounding the highly disputed (with Japan) Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea. Each such occurrence forces the Japan Self-Defense Forces to scramble fighter aircraft to intercept and turn back the intruders. Between 2006 and 2014, the frequency of such high-friction encounters in the areas surrounding the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands has risen steadily, reaching a peak of 464 aerial intrusions in 2014.[45] Each incident is too minor for Japan to base thereon a credible threat of retaliation, but such incidents nevertheless repeatedly put Japan in the position of either scrambling fighters to confront intruders or simply allowing Chinese intrusions to go unchecked. The latter would establish a de facto precedent of Chinese presence in Japan-administered territory against the latter country's will.

When deployed during noncrises and nonwar situations, faits accomplis thus "stack the deck" of strategic interaction in favor of the aggressor at the expense of the defender's preferences by encouraging restraint in the latter. But, as with any wager, there is a risk of being wrong. With faits accomplis, from the aggressor's perspective, the cost of being wrong takes the form of unintentionally triggering coercion or retaliation from the defender. Inadvertent conflict and escalation are possible if an aggressor attempting a fait accompli has misjudged where a defender's redline is (i.e., what its retaliatory commitments are) or its resolve (i.e., its willingness to retaliate when its redline proscription is violated).[46] From the defender's perspective, the costs of inaction when presented with a fait accompli must be weighed against the costs of initiating retaliation and the risk of escalating a conflict. Kim Il Sung's gamble that the United States would not intervene to reverse North Korea's invasion of South Korea in 1950 certainly ended up incurring a high cost. But miscalculation-based escalation also can result from faits accomplis that do not involve military invasions or "landgrabs." For instance, when Egypt's president Gamal Abdel Nasser presented his famous fait accompli of nationalizing the Suez Canal in 1956, he inadvertently catalyzed British, French, and Israeli coordinated war plans, leading to Israeli ground forces' seizure of the Sinai Peninsula.[47] Nasser's unilateral yet noncoercive declaration proved to be a gamble that did not pay off for Egypt.

Even if an aggressor has not misjudged an adversary's likely reaction to a proximate incident, there are broader risks from second-order or ancillary reactions. Between the United States and North Korea during the 1960s, for example, North Korean salami tactics, in the form of small-scale violence, repeatedly were met with either U.S. decision paralysis or conciliatory offers to resolve an incident peacefully.[48] While this might be framed as North Korea besting the United States in a string of specific incidents, the larger history worked against North Korea. The United States may have been "boxed in" to de facto acceptance of North Korea's violent provocations—because the incidents were too minor to warrant retaliation—but it coped with that unsavory reality in ways anathema to North Korean interests: by redoubling its commitment to ally South Korea, enhancing the U.S. military presence on the Korean Peninsula, providing greater financial assistance to South Korean military modernization, and conducting grander military exercises.[49]

How Intermediaries Affect Conflict

The presence of intermediaries in conflict interaction represents either some degree of delegation of authority from a principal to an executing agent or the deceptive appearance of delegated authority. From a defender's perspective, it may be unclear what degree of autonomy an intermediary has, the degree to which an intermediary is compliant with an aggressor's prerogatives, and whether there

even is a principal-agent relationship between the aggressor and the intermediary. Consequently, the presence of aggressor intermediaries structures strategic interaction in several ways that are potentially favorable to the aggressor—but with distinct risks.

One way, similar to the fait accompli approach, is to induce defender inaction or decision paralysis by complicating the task of identifying retaliatory targets. Attribution, a common problem with cyber attacks in particular, is essential for mounting retaliation or countercoercion.[50] And even if a defender can link intermediaries and their patrons together accurately, ambiguities remain about the extent to which an intermediary is a mindless agent of a patron as opposed to a rogue actor.[51] The United States quickly traced the 2014 hack of Sony Pictures Studios to intermediaries acting on behalf of the North Korean regime, but it was not immediately clear what exactly that meant.[52] Were the perpetrators Chinese hackers for hire? Were they government operatives executing orders received from the regime in Pyongyang? Or were they autonomous actors launching attacks and making threats out of symbolic or identity solidarity with the North Korean regime?

The use of intermediaries also can enhance the credibility of aggressor threat making if it ties the hands of an aggressor, which can induce defender restraint through successful coercion. Daniel L. Byman and Sarah E. Kreps claim this as a major motivation of state-sponsored terrorism in the Middle East.[53] Iran employs Hezbollah and Palestinian terror groups as intermediaries against Israel in part to credibly threaten retaliation for any and all grievances with Israel, whereas the relatively poor state of Iran's military does not allow it to make such blanket retaliatory threats directly.[54] Credible threats of retaliation come in the form of support to intermediaries because direct interstate conflict per se would not favor Iran, in contrast with terrorist groups that are openly at war with Israel and credibly can engage in continuous retaliation if called on to do so.

A third way intermediary agents benefit the aggressor state is by giving it greater freedom of action through plausible deniability.[55] An aggressor may seek openly to associate itself with, and claim responsibility for, intermediary actions, but only after they occur; plausible deniability allows it to take such a "wait and see" approach. Conversely, an aggressor may seek to distance itself from the actions of autonomous intermediaries whose actions go too far, crossing a defender's redlines, or with whose tactics they disagree. The aggressor thus may employ intermediaries to give itself the latitude either to claim the benefits or to avoid the costs of intermediary actions. The plausible deniability that intermediaries offer also may allow for more aggressive salami tactics than a revisionist might pursue using direct military force.

Although intermediaries may skew interaction in the patron's favor in multiple ways, risks of backfire or negative feedback remain. Delegating a task inherently involves some amount of risk (e.g., of the agent committing unintended errors or taking undesirable independent actions).[56] By relinquishing direct control to a degree, an aggressor may have its hands undesirably tied. And when the linkage between an aggressor and its intermediary is grounded in a shared identity or raison d'être, the aggressor may find it difficult to disassociate itself from the intermediary, should it seek to do so. States that employ relatively autonomous intermediaries run a risk of being "chain-ganged" into escalation of conflicts they sought to avoid.

Use of intermediaries also risks engendering defender reactions of retaliation or escalation. If an intermediary takes actions the defender finds unacceptable, plausible deniability may not be enough to stifle a defender's revenge-motivated reaction. Decision makers are often willing to impose certainty on and form beliefs about situations that are fundamentally uncertain.[57] Politicians in a defending state may feel public pressure to react quickly and forcefully and to find a retaliatory scapegoat even if attribution is not immediately known— sometimes uncertainty is no excuse for inaction. Even if an intermediary complies perfectly and precisely with the intent of an aggressor, moreover, it nevertheless may be the case that the aggressor misjudged either the defender's willingness to respond or its mode of response. Escalation logically could follow either type of misjudgment.

DEGREES OF GRAY

As with all theoretical choices, analytic narratives constructed with a "revisionist tactics lens" foreground some elements over others to explain events. This is not to trivialize other factors, nor to claim that contexts that exclude revisionist tactics do not also bedevil policy makers. But there is a mismatch between the academic literature's lack of emphasis on redline avoidance, intermediaries, and faits accomplis and policy makers' growing concern about them.

Event Selection

The table compares several contemporary cases involving revisionism that avoids or defers decisions for conventional war. These specific events with these specific actors merit attention because they have been at the center of debates between critics and advocates of the term *gray zone*. Demonstrating that the aforementioned revisionist tactics played a nontrivial role in the unfolding of events supports both aspects of my claim about the gray-zone debate.

First, the causal logics articulated in the prior section derived in part from examining important historical cases in the security and strategic studies canon. This demonstrates that they have explanatory power in contemporary cases,

IDENTIFYING GRAY-ZONE TACTICS IN THE CONTEMPORARY SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Event	Intermediaries Involved?	Defenders Faced a Fait Accompli?	Aggressor Avoided Defender Redlines?	Outcome
North Korean artillery attack (2010)	No	No	Yes	Defender restraint, but adoption of "proactive deterrence" doctrine
North Korean naval attack (2010)	No	Yes	Yes	Defender restraint, but international investigation
North Korean hack of Sony Pictures (2014)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Defender restraint
China's ADIZ declaration for the East China Sea (2013)	No	Yes	Yes	Defender restraint, but defiance of Chinese claims
Chinese artificial island building in the South China Sea (2013–present)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Defender restraint, but increased U.S. patrols and regional security aid
Russian intervention in Ukraine (2014–present)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Defender restraint, but renewed U.S. emphasis on NATO; military aid to Ukraine

undermining notions that there is something new about the gray-zone security challenges of the present.

Second, narratives of these cases would be incomplete without accounting for revisionist tactics short of war, which repudiates claims that there is no explanatory value added in conceptualizing these tactics. Parsing any of these cases solely with reference to logics of coercion, conventional war fighting, or game-theoretic crisis bargaining not only would offer limited explanatory value but would sacrifice understanding of the similar role that redline avoidance, intermediaries, and faits accomplis played across cases.

The range of cases reveals a common tendency (regardless of whether one or all three revisionist tactics were employed): defender paralysis in response to the immediate tactic, but inevitable second-order consequences in the form of indirect responses.

North Korean Provocations

Twice in 2010, North Korea engaged in isolated acts of violence against South Korea.[58] The first was a torpedo attack that sank a South Korean naval ship in

March of that year, killing all forty-six sailors on board. The second attack, eight months later, was an artillery barrage against South Korean–administered islands in a disputed maritime area near North Korea's western coast, killing four South Korean marines and critically injuring a mix of dozens of marines and civilians on the island. North Korean conventional military forces conducted both attacks.

The torpedo attack, for which North Korea denied responsibility, was a covert action in international waters, taking place far from the view of any onlookers. The artillery attack, by contrast, was conducted close to the Korean Peninsula's coast and was filmed and broadcast in near real time on South Korean news stations. North Korea not only accepted responsibility for the latter attack; it claimed the attack was a punitive measure in response to a South Korean military exercise in the area, against which North Korea had issued warnings.

The torpedo attack effectively forced South Korea to choose between doing nothing or retaliating despite North Korean denials of culpability. By comparison, the artillery attack is understood better as a coercive battlefield action, not a fait accompli. Both were isolated, limited attacks that fell well short of triggering a U.S. or South Korean invasion of North Korea, but did risk some retaliation. Whereas the March torpedo attack generated political controversy within South Korea about whether North Korea was actually responsible (a debate that prevented South Korean officials from being able to retaliate), the November artillery attack nearly led to South Korean punitive bombings of North Korea; these were avoided narrowly, only because senior U.S. officials intervened with their South Korean counterparts to prevent retaliation.[59]

Although in a crisis-bargaining sense North Korea came out of these interactions unscathed and succeeded in encouraging U.S. and South Korean restraint, second-order consequences reified the hostility that gave rise to North Korean violence in the first place. The March 2010 attack led directly to an international investigation and the later imposition of punitive "5/24 sanctions" that cut off North Korea from most sources of South Korean currency.[60] The November 2010 attack, meanwhile, triggered the adoption of a South Korean "proactive deterrence" doctrine of preemption, acceleration of South Korean precision-strike missile programs, and a discourse in support of South Korea developing an independent nuclear capability.[61]

Contrasting with these attacks was North Korea's 2014 cyber attack against Sony Pictures Studios in response to the latter's insulting and subversive (from North Korea's perspective) movie *The Interview,* whose comedic plot centered on two journalists who assassinate Kim Jong Un. This incident featured all three gray-zone tactics. The hacker group, whose members called themselves the "Guardians of Peace," nominally was an independent entity, yet was acting in the

interests of the North Korean regime.[62] The group issued a number of threats—of a digital and physical nature—aimed at preventing the public release of *The Interview*. Although the threats were to no avail and the movie eventually was released without any violence, the hackers did disrupt Sony's computer systems and stole and released to the public proprietary internal company information, including embarrassing e-mails from Sony executives.[63] The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation eventually traced the Guardians of Peace back to North Korea, but slowly, and never definitively.[64] To this day, North Korea refuses to take responsibility for the Sony hack, and some (a minority) in the technology sector in the United States persist in doubting North Korean culpability.[65]

The surreptitious intrusion into Sony's internal information network and subsequent public revelation of stolen information was a coercive, decisive, and nonviolent fait accompli. It presented not only Sony but the U.S. government with multiple types of direct threats, and forced both into a position that favored not attempting any meaningful retaliation.

China's East China Sea ADIZ Declaration

China long has contested the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands with Japan, which the latter administers. Every year since around 2006, China has increased the frequency of its attempted air and naval intrusions into the area surrounding the disputed islands, requiring Japan to increase the frequency with which it responds by scrambling fighter aircraft to escort intruding Chinese assets out of the area.[66] Some of these confrontations involve Chinese civil vessels and aircraft, but frequently they have involved Chinese military assets as well. Although most of these confrontations have been resolved without incident, some have escalated to militarized crises, leading to both sides issuing redline threats. Japan, for example, has threatened that any Chinese drone that unlawfully enters Senkaku airspace will be shot down, while China has counterthreatened that any shoot-down of a Chinese drone would be an "act of war."[67]

Despite the highly contested nature of the East China Sea, in November 2013 China's Ministry of National Defense declared an air defense identification zone (ADIZ) over most of the area. Imposition of an ADIZ would require incoming aircraft to identify themselves to Chinese authorities and, if military, to request permission. As with all ADIZs, a Chinese ADIZ over the East China Sea would allow China to "identify, monitor, control, and react to aircraft entering this zone."[68] China also claims the right to take "defensive emergency measures" against noncompliant aircraft, although it has not done so—yet.[69] Although ADIZ declarations have been common since the United States established the first zone in 1950, the United States and China's neighbors view China's ADIZ

as a provocative fait accompli because it was declared unilaterally, without prior consultation, over a maritime area that is heavily contested with Japan.[70]

As an act of defiance that constituted a fait accompli of its own, the United States flew a nuclear-capable B-52 bomber through China's "ADIZ" only two days after its proclamation. The aircraft neither announced itself nor sought permission.[71] Notwithstanding the symbolism, the B-52 flight was an isolated act of signaling that changed nothing with respect to China's ADIZ declaration. While the United States, Japan, and South Korea do not recognize the East China Sea ADIZ, they have not attempted to compel China to roll it back—which preserves China's de facto "right" to enforce the ADIZ at will. A U.S. Congressional Research Service report assessed that China was "asserting a maximalist position, then seeming to back down, while preserving some incremental gain."[72] Secretary of State John F. Kerry accused Beijing of "an attempt to change the status quo in the East China Sea."[73] The ADIZ declaration involved no intermediaries but, from the perspective of the United States and Japan, was indeed a decisive fait accompli that also avoided triggering any kind of retaliatory commitments from either the United States or China's neighbors.

Chinese Artificial Island Building in the South China Sea

Although not the first country to do so, China since 2013 has engaged in a rapid process of "land reclamation"—the construction of artificial islands—in the disputed South China Sea. In less than two years, it developed more than 2,900 acres of "land" in a space of overlapping exclusive economic zones between China and other South China Sea claimants.[74] Since their construction, China has positioned weapons systems and military infrastructure—including radars, artillery, runways, and military barracks—on them despite their being highly contested, and despite Chinese claims that it is not "militarizing" the islands.[75]

China has not issued threats in relation to these artificial islands and has not used them as yet to blockade others' freedom of navigation. However, U.S. intelligence officials openly express concern that China gradually is putting in place the physical ability to impose and enforce constraints on freedom of navigation through the South China Sea, should it choose to do so.[76] While the United States maintains a commitment to freedom of navigation and open sea-lanes, that commitment is open-ended and abstract. The U.S. redline concerning freedom of navigation is "arbitrary" and "imprecise"; the United States has issued no specific "redline" threat to resort to military force to fulfill such a commitment, particularly in the South China Sea.[77]

This makes China's land-reclamation activity a gradualist fait accompli that does not overstep directly any retaliatory boundaries, and is not inherently coercive or aggressive—even if such actions improve China's position should

it take aggressive actions in the future. Any direct military action to blockade or attack Chinese artificial islands would require a decisive act of aggression disproportionate to the mundane (if strategically significant) activities of engineers building artificial structures in international waters. So, while the United States has increased its "presence" in the South China Sea in response to China's actions—including through maritime patrols, freedom-of-navigation military exercises, and enhanced security assistance to Indonesia and the Philippines—none of these actions have been aimed at, nor have they had the effect of, curbing or rolling back China's land-reclamation activity, which effectively establishes a new status quo in the South China Sea.[78]

Russian Intervention in Ukraine

In 2014, Russia employed all three revisionist tactics in a campaign that culminated in the annexation of Crimea, formally and formerly part of Ukraine. Although the conflict had political antecedents dating back to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, what immediately precipitated it was pro-European social forces in Ukraine mobilizing to oust the country's then president Viktor Yanukovych, who was seen as subservient to Moscow. Within days of Yanukovych's removal, Russia capitalized on Ukraine's domestic turmoil to insert large numbers of "little green men"—undesignated and unidentifiable yet armed forces, widely believed to belong to Russian special forces—who occupied key choke points and government buildings in Crimea, claiming to be separatists.[79] Russia denied responsibility for these forces. Once the "little green men" established territorial control, a controversial referendum of secession was held in Crimea, which led to Russia's formalized annexation of it.[80]

As these events evolved, in March 2014 the Donbas region of Ukraine filled with anti-Ukrainian protests conducted largely by members of an ethnically Russian diaspora. These pro-Russian, anti-Ukrainian protests quickly militarized, and separatists in Donbas unilaterally declared independence from Ukraine. As fighting continued throughout the year and into 2015, the Russian military provided arms and logistics to the separatist forces—some members of whom were Russian citizens—that were fighting against the Ukrainian government. Russia denied any military involvement in and culpability for the events.[81] Thus, under the cover of mobilized separatist forces in Ukraine, Russia waged what some describe as a "hybrid war" against the Ukrainian government to secure the political independence of a region of sovereign Ukrainian territory.[82]

Russia's "little green men" perpetrated a decisive fait accompli, and they did so in a manner that avoided triggering retaliation or military incursions from NATO or the United States. U.S. and European observers were quick to recognize that Russia was behind the intervention of the "little green men" in Crimea.[83]

Moreover, mounting evidence increasingly made Russian involvement—especially in providing logistics support to the Donbas separatists—undeniable to outside observers, although the use of such intermediaries allowed Russia to continue its narrative of denial.[84] But the rapid ability of the West to attribute the conflict to Russia did not translate into any kind of military reaction, and Russia's aloofness made it virtually impossible to negotiate a cease-fire. As Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov responded when confronted with evidence of Russia's role in events in Ukraine and demands for a cease-fire, "[B]efore demanding from us that we stop doing something, please present proof that we have done it."[85]

At the end of the Cold War, the United States, along with Russia and the United Kingdom, agreed to the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, which afforded Ukraine underspecified "security assurances" after the latter relinquished the Soviet nuclear weapons remaining there.[86] But this security commitment was ambiguous in terms of what was required of the United States, and at any rate was not formalized in a treaty. In response to accusations that standing by while Ukraine was being ravaged damaged U.S. and NATO credibility, the United States was quick to point out that Ukraine was not a NATO member and that Russia's intervention in Ukraine did not invoke NATO's article 5 collective defense requirement; neither did the Budapest Memorandum require U.S. military commitments to Ukraine's security.[87]

As a former U.S. defense official observed, Russia effectively succeeded in "avoiding alliance tripwires while still subversively contributing to instability, unrest, and violence in Ukraine."[88] By July and August 2014, Russian rank-and-file conventional forces, including artillery units, were crossing into Ukraine. Yet even when Ukrainian forces captured Russian soldiers—a seeming "smoking gun" of Russian culpability—Moscow persisted with its denials, claiming such soldiers had crossed the border by mistake.[89]

Subsequently, the United States and NATO, both of which were unable to do much beyond monitoring the situation from the outside, have strengthened their ties to and presence in Eastern Europe. They have attempted to make clear that a Crimea-like intervention would not be acceptable in a NATO country—even if the populations of some of them, such as Estonia, contain sizable ethnic Russian minorities.[90]

This article has attempted to examine several underlying tactics found in what contemporary security practitioners sometimes reference as a "gray zone" of conflict. Tactics other than war that seek to revise the status quo are historically common yet undertheorized. As an initial remedy, this article has proposed that avoidance of a defender's clearest commitments, use of intermediary actors, and

presentation with faits accomplis are indeed old tactics, long wielded by actors seeking to challenge the status quo without resorting to conventional military force.

But just because something is not new does not mean it has been conceptualized adequately. Revisionist tactics plausibly condition strategic interactions in important ways: they encourage defender inaction, strengthen aggressor threat credibility, allow aggressors to obscure culpability, and introduce proximate escalation risks resulting from aggressor misjudgments or intermediaries going rogue. As international politics becomes defined more in terms of a "diffusion of power" and increasingly complex interdependencies, motivations for revisionism are likely to endure. Such an environment may increase reliance on the tactics examined here.[91]

While the gray zone is not a new concept, as an area of concern to military commanders and policy makers it is understudied. This article has attempted to fill that gap by identifying and examining the role of tactics in conflicts short of conventional war, and by showing that such tactics make it possible for revisionists to secure gains while paralyzing defenders. This bolsters the claim that these tactics constitute something distinct in international security and are worthy of study, even if they are not new.

NOTES

1. For pioneering work in this area that I use as a point of departure, see Michael J. Mazarr, *Mastering the Gray Zone: Understanding a Changing Era of Conflict* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, 2015); Ahmer Tarar, "A Strategic Logic of the Military Fait Accompli," *International Studies Quarterly,* July 3, 2016, www.isanet.org/; Daniel Altman, "By Fait Accompli, Not Coercion: How States Wrest Territory from Their Adversaries," *International Studies Quarterly* (forthcoming), www.isanet.org/; Daniel Altman, "Red Lines and Faits Accomplis in Interstate Coercion and Crisis" (PhD dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2015); Daniel Altman, "Advancing without Attacking: The

Non-use of Force in Crisis Strategy" (working paper, 2015); and Daniel Altman and Nicholas L. Miller, "Red Lines in Nuclear Nonproliferation" (working paper, 2016).

2. See, for example, testimony before the House Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities (March 18, 2015) (statement of Joseph L. Votel); Joseph S. Dunford Jr., "General Dunford's Remarks and Q&A" (presented at the Center for a New American Security Next Defense Forum, Washington, DC, December 16, 2015); Ronald O'Rourke, *A Shift in the International Security Environment: Potential Implications for Defense—Issues for Congress,* CRS Report R43838 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2016), pp. 14–15; and Claudette Roulo, "SOCOM Commander: Success Depends on Total Force Readiness," *Defense Media Activity,* March 26, 2015, www.defense.gov/. The U.S. Army Special Operations Center of Excellence also launched an

initiative called Project Gray, which intends to build knowledge among academia, government, and the military about this category of warfare; see www.projectgray.org/.

3. Robert Work (speech, Army War College Strategy Conference, Carlisle, PA, April 8, 2015).

4. Frank Kendall, memorandum for Chairman, Defense Science Board, "Terms of Reference —Defense Science Board 2016 Summer Study on Capabilities for Constrained Military Operations," November 3, 2015, available at www.projectgray.org/.

5. Ibid.

6. See, for example, Brad Glosserman, "Struggling with the Gray Zone: Trilateral Cooperation to Strengthen Deterrence in Northeast Asia," *Issues & Insights* 15, no. 13 (November 10, 2015).

7. Nobyhiro Kubo, Linda Sieg, and Phil Stewart, "Japan, U.S. Differ on China in Talks on 'Grey Zone' Military Threats," Reuters, March 10, 2014, www.reuters.com/.

8. Ibid.

9. Ministry of Defense of Japan, *Defense of Japan 2014* (Tokyo: 2014), p. 2.

10. With regard to North Korea, see Brad Roberts, *The Case for U.S. Nuclear Weapons in the 21st Century* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 2015), p. 75, and testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific (February 26, 2015) (statement of Van Jackson). With regard to Russia, see Mazarr, *Mastering the Gray Zone,* p. 1. With regard to China, see Zack Cooper, "America's Massive Military Dilemma in Asia: Visibility vs. Vulnerability," *The Buzz* (blog), *The National Interest Online,* January 15, 2015, nationalinterest.org/.

11. For a contemporary discussion on redlines, see Bruno Tertrais, "Drawing Red Lines Right," *Washington Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (Fall 2014), pp. 7–24.

12. Henry A. Kissinger, "Military Policy and Defense of the 'Grey Areas,'" *Foreign Affairs* 33, no. 3 (April 1955), pp. 416–28.

13. Altman, "Red Lines and Faits Accomplis," p. 15; Altman, "Advancing without Attacking"; Altman and Miller, "Red Lines in Nuclear Nonproliferation."

14. Altman, "Red Lines and Faits Accomplis."

15. Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1974), p. 539.

16. Tertrais, "Drawing Red Lines Right"; Altman and Miller, "Red Lines in Nuclear Nonproliferation."

17. For criticisms of analyzing actor relations dyadically, see Paul Poast, "Dyads Are Dead, Long Live Dyads! The Limits of Dyadic Designs in International Relations Research," *International Studies Quarterly,* March 24, 2016, isq.oxfordjournals.org/.

18. Michael A. Innes, ed., *Making Sense of Proxy Wars: States, Surrogates & the Use of Force* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2012), pp. xiii–xvi; Austin Carson, "Facing Off and Saving Face: Covert Intervention and Escalation Management in the Korean War," *International Organization* 70, no. 1 (January 2016), pp. 103–31.

19. Alexander George, "The Need for Influence Theory and Actor-Specific Behavioral Models of Adversaries," *Comparative Strategy* 22, no. 5 (2003), pp. 463–87.

20. Ji-Hye Jun, "Seoul Pressures China with THAAD," *Korea Times,* January 26, 2016, www.koreatimes.co.kr/.

21. For a critical review of this literature, see Lee Jarvis and Michael Lister, "State Terrorism Research and Critical Terrorism Studies: An Assessment," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 7, no. 1 (2014), pp. 43–61.

22. Dan Altman, "The Long History of 'Green Men' Tactics—and How They Were Defeated," *War on the Rocks,* March 17, 2016.

23. Robert Powell, "Absolute and Relative Gains in International Relations Theory," *American Political Science Review* 85, no. 4 (December 1991), pp. 1303–20; David L. Rousseau, "Motivations for Choice: The Salience of Relative Gains in International Politics," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46, no. 3 (June 2002), pp. 394–426.

24. Austin Carson argues that covert actors—a kind of intermediary—are often employed to manage escalation risks better, in part by avoiding audience costs. See Carson, "Facing Off and Saving Face."

25. This military versus nonmilitary distinction is one of the features that separates the 2009 *Impeccable* incident between the U.S. Navy and China's PLA Navy forces from the many other incidents that have occurred at sea in the twenty-first century. For a discussion, see Oriana Skylar Mastro, "Signaling and Military Provocation in Chinese National Security Strategy: A Closer Look at the *Impeccable* Incident," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 34, no. 2 (2011), pp. 219–44.

26. Oran R. Young, *Politics of Force: Bargaining during International Crises* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), p. 338.

27. For rare exceptions, see Altman, "Red Lines and Faits Accomplis"; Altman, "By Fait Accompli, Not Coercion"; and Tarar, "A Strategic Logic of the Military Fait Accompli." The fait accompli typology developed here accounts for, corrects, and subsumes the debatable conceptualizations of Altman and Tarar.

28. Young, *Politics of Force;* Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 66–68; Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977), p. 227; Altman, "Advancing without Attacking," p. 4; Tarar, "A Strategic Logic of the Military Fait Accompli."

29. Snyder and Diesing, *Conflict among Nations,* p. 227.

30. Schelling, *Arms and Influence,* pp. 66–68.

31. Robert Haddick, "America Has No Answer to China's Salami-Slicing," *War on the Rocks,* February 6, 2014.

32. Schelling, *Arms and Influence,* p. 68.

33. Altman and Miller, "Red Lines in Nuclear Nonproliferation," pp. 13–17.

34. Altman, "By Fait Accompli, Not Coercion"; Daniel Altman, "Modern Conquest: Land Grabs Are on the Rise" (infographic), *Foreign Affairs,* www.foreignaffairs.com/.

35. Tarar, "A Strategic Logic of the Military Fait Accompli," p. 5.

36. See, for example, regarding the burgeoning Sino-U.S. competition in hypersonic vehicles, Joshua H. Pollack, "Boost-Glide Weapons and US-China Strategic Stability," *Nonproliferation Review* 22, no. 2 (2015), pp. 155–64.

37. Patrick M. Morgan, *Deterrence Now,* Cambridge Studies in International Relations 89 (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003), pp. 83–86.

38. David S. McLellan, "Dean Acheson and the Korean War," *Political Science Quarterly* 83, no. 1 (March 1968), pp. 16–39.

39. For a list of historical examples, see Tertrais, "Drawing Red Lines Right," p. 12.

40. Kissinger, "Military Policy and Defense of the 'Grey Areas.'"

41. George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy,* p. 539.

42. Benjamin Brake, "Strategic Risks of Ambiguity in Cyberspace," Contingency Planning Memorandum 24, *Council on Foreign Relations,* May 2015, www.cfr.org/.

43. Altman, "Advancing without Attacking," p. 4.

44. Nikita S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), p. 368.

45. Ministry of Defense of Japan, *Japan Defense Focus* 64 (May 2015), p. 7.

46. Tertrais, "Drawing Red Lines Right," pp. 13–14.

47. Russell J. Leng, *Bargaining and Learning in Recurring Crises: The Soviet-American, Egyptian-Israeli, and Indo-Pakistani Rivalries* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2000), pp. 130–46.

48. Van Jackson, *Rival Reputations: Coercion and Credibility in US–North Korea Relations* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2016).

49. Ibid.

50. Thomas Rid and Ben Buchanan, "Attributing Cyber Attacks," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, nos. 1–2 (2015), pp. 4–37.

51. Daniel Byman and Sarah E. Kreps, "Agents of Destruction? Applying Principal-Agent Analysis to State-Sponsored Terrorism," *International Studies Perspectives* 11, no. 1 (February 2010), pp. 1–18.

52. Mark Seal, "An Exclusive Look at Sony's Hacking Saga," *Vanity Fair,* March 2015, available at www.vanityfair.com/.

53. Byman and Kreps, "Agents of Destruction?," pp. 1–18.

54. Ibid., p. 4.

55. Byman and Kreps discuss this benefit in the context of state-sponsored terrorism, but it is also a focal point in writings on gray-zone coercion. See Amy Chang, Ben FitzGerald, and Van Jackson, *Shades of Gray: Technology, Strategic Competition, and Stability in Maritime Asia,* Maritime Strategy Series 7 (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2015).

56. Arthur Stein, "Coordination and Collaboration: Regimes in an Anarchic World," *International Organization* 36, no. 2 (Spring 1982), pp. 299–324; D. Roderick Kiewiet and Mathew D. McCubbins, *The Logic of Delegation: Congressional Parties and the Appropriation Process* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1991).

57. Jennifer Mitzen and Randall L. Schweller, "Knowing the Unknown Unknowns: Misplaced Certainty and the Onset of War," *Security Studies* 20, no. 1 (2011), pp. 2–35.

58. The chronology for both attacks is fully described in Jackson, *Rival Reputations,* pp. 170–90.

59. Robert M. Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War* (New York: Knopf, 2013), p. 497.

60. Rob York and Ha-Young Choi, "May Day: Are the 5.24 Measures Holding Back Inter-Korean Relations?," *NK*NEWS.ORG,* October 8, 2015, www.nknews.org/.

61. "Korea's Military to Shift Focus from Active to Proactive Deterrence," *Dong-A Ilbo,* March 7, 2014.

62. Seal, "An Exclusive Look at Sony's Hacking Saga."

63. Ibid.

64. Kevin Johnson, Oren Dorell, and Elizabeth Weise, "Official: North Korea behind Sony Hack," *USA Today,* December 17, 2014, available at www.usatoday.com/.

65. Kim Zetter, "The Evidence That North Korea Hacked Sony Is Flimsy," *Wired,* December 17, 2014, www.wired.com/.

66. For a tabulation and contextual history of these interactions, see William Choong, *The Ties That Divide: History, Honour, and Territory in Sino-Japanese Relations,* Adelphi Series 445 (London: IISS, 2014).

67. "Tokyo's Incitement Incurs Dangerous Cycle," *People's Daily,* October 28, 2013, en.people .cn/.

68. Yang Yujun, spokesman, Ministry of Defense of the People's Republic of China, press conference, November 23, 2013, available from www.cfr.org/.

69. "China Bolsters East China Sea Claim, Warns of 'Defensive Measures,'" Reuters, November 23, 2013, www.reuters.com/.

70. John Kerry, "Statement on the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone," press statement, November 23, 2013, available at www .state.gov/.

71. Phil Stewart and David Alexander, "Defying China, US Bombers Fly into East China Sea Zone," Reuters, November 26, 2013, www .reuters.com/.

72. Ian E. Rinehart and Bart Elias, *China's Air Defense Identification Zone,* CRS Report R43894 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2015), p. 12.

73. Kerry, "Statement on the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone."

74. David Alexander, "China's Land Reclamation in South China Sea Grows: Pentagon Report," Reuters, August 21, 2015, www.reuters.com/.

75. James Clapper, U.S. Director of National Intelligence, to Senator John McCain, February 23, 2016, available at news.usni.org/.

76. Ibid.

77. Altman and Miller, "Red Lines in Nuclear Nonproliferation," pp. 13–16.

78. U.S. Defense Dept., *Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: 2015), pp. 19–33.

79. Maksymilian Czuperski et al., *Hiding in Plain Sight: Putin's War in Ukraine* (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council of the United States, 2015), p. 4.

80. These events are chronicled in Uri Friedman, "Russia's Slow-Motion Invasion of Ukraine," *The Atlantic Online,* August 29, 2014, www .theatlantic.com/.

81. Gabriela Baczynska, "Russia Says No Proof It Sent Arms, Troops to East Ukraine," Reuters, January 21, 2015, www.reuters.com/.

82. Alexander Lanosczka, "Russian Hybrid Warfare and Extended Deterrence in Eastern Europe," *International Affairs* 92, no. 1 (2016), pp. 175–95.

83. "NATO Accuses Russia of Violating Ukraine Sovereignty," *BBC News,* August 29, 2014, www.bbc.com/.

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90. Tom Batchelor, "US Troops Deployed to Poland in Response to 'Russian Aggression,'" *Independent,* January 9, 2017, www.independent.co.uk/.

91. Charles A. Kupchan, *No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013); Waheeda Rana, "Theory of Complex Interdependence: A Comparative Analysis of Realist and Neoliberal Thoughts," *International Journal of Business and Social Science* 6, no. 2 (February 2015), pp. 290–97. For a statement to the effect that both increasingly define international security, see U.S. National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds* (Washington, DC: Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2012).