



Research Article

Integrated Border Management as a Potential Deterrence Measure at the North-Eastern Flank of NATO and the Schengen Area

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Abstract: Considering the increasingly heterogeneous nature of nonlinear warfare and the gradual change in Europe's security posture, this article calls for the establishment of an integrated deterrence concept specific to the European Union. Recognizing the growing assertiveness in the so-called "grey zone," the article underscores the need for the European Union to articulate a domestic deterrence concept based on discouragement. While recent EU-level political communications acknowledge this necessity, they remain deficient in strategic and operational clarity. By way of illustration, the article examines the applicability of the EU's 2019 Integrated Border Management 3+ Generation concept to the implementation of integrated deterrence, particularly along the north-eastern external borders, which also serve as the sovereign frontiers of several NATO Allies. The article analyzes existing synergies and highlights potential avenues for convergence between military deterrence and EU-type "soft power" deterrence. In conclusion, the article advocates the development of a distinct EU deterrence posture that transcends the logic of self-deterrence. The proposed approach prioritizes solidarity, mindset, and societal resilience as core components of securing the EU and NATO's shared north-eastern flank, a critical frontier between divergent value systems.

Keywords: Nonlinear warfare, integrated deterrence, EU integrated border management, solidarity principle.

Introduction

Historical parallels may be drawn between the vicious regimes of Joseph Dzhughashvili (Stalin) and Vladimir Putin, both associated with war and atrocities. Such

patterns align with Karl Marx's 19th-century observation: "Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historical facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice." He forgot to add: "the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce."¹ Deterrence serves as one of the mechanisms to prevent both tragedy and farce.

This doctrinal research argues for the creation of a robust, unambiguous EU deterrence concept to address nonlinear warfare. The study raises two questions: (1) What constitutes the EU's current non-military deterrence posture? and (2) How can the European Union increase its "soft" deterrence potential? The author asserts that the EU Integrated Border Management (EUIBM) system has a sub-role and relevance within integrated deterrence. In light of the consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which began in February 2014,² the author argues that the EUIBM system may serve as one of the dual-use containment mechanisms, contingent upon the effective implementation of the core principle of EU solidarity.

The term "nonlinear warfare"³ in this article corresponds to widely accepted theoretical understandings of hybrid warfare.

The first section outlines the EU's current deterrence posture. It identifies gaps in approaches that fail to provide an explicit description of EU strategic deterrence. The second section addresses the Schengen area and the EUIBM system, which are increasingly shaped by the dynamics of nonlinear warfare. The third section presents proposals and a forward-looking vision for EU integrated deterrence, with an emphasis on mindset and cognition.

Understanding EU Integrated Deterrence

This section addresses the first central question: What constitutes the EU's current non-military deterrence posture?

EU Deterrence: Quid agis?

The European Union is a unique entity, integrating supranational and multijurisdictional governance and functioning concurrently at both the EU and Member State levels. Founded in the 1950s on economic and political grounds, the European Union has progressively developed capabilities of notable strength and po-

¹ Karl Marx, *Achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte* (original text in German), 3. Auflage (Hamburg: O. Meissner, 1885), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006032885>.

² The author asserts that Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine, preceded by multi-axis non-linear warfare, began in February 2014, not in February 2022.

³ David Petraeus and Andrew Roberts, *Conflict: The Evolution of Warfare from 1945 to Ukraine* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2023), 408-411; Mark Galeotti, *The Weaponisation of Everything: A Field Guide to the New Way of War* (Yale University Press, 2022), 9-12; Jānis Bērziņš, "Russian New Generation Warfare Is Not Hybrid Warfare," in *The War in Ukraine: Lessons for Europe*, ed. Artis Pabriks and Andis Kudors (Riga: University of Latvia Press, The Centre for East European Policy Studies, 2015): 40-51, <https://appc.lv/en/petijumi/the-war-in-ukraine-lessons-for-europe/>.

tential. The EU's geopolitical influence⁴ is projected differently across the economic, political, humanitarian, and technological domains. In the military domain and in deterrence, the European Union and its Member States predominantly relied on NATO concepts during the *Pax Americana* period. Given the differences between NATO and the European Union, the emergence of novel, non-linear warfare necessitated the development of a distinct strategic concept of integrated deterrence.

The application of non-military deterrence at the EU level was unclear during the last decade. The 2016 Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats primarily adopted a reactive, absorption-dominant self-deterrence posture, emphasizing endurance and response over prevention.⁵ This omission highlights the challenges inherent in realizing the EU's potential for integrated deterrence. In particular, the definition of resilience in Point 4 of the 2016 Joint Framework evidences a deficient level of political will, describing resilience as the capacity to withstand stress and recover, while being strengthened by challenges. It must be acknowledged that, two years later, the 2018 Joint Communication on resilience and capabilities to counter hybrid threats identified strengthened deterrence as a key objective of the strategic approach to enhancing cybersecurity.⁶ But this was limited in duration and scope. In 2022, in response to hybrid threats, the Council considered deploying the full range of available instruments, including sanctions, to deter Russia's malicious behavior.⁷ Almost concurrently, the 2022 EU Strategic Compass⁸ prioritized resilience and addressed deterrence

⁴ Veronica Anghel, "Why the EU Is a Geopolitical Power: Wartime Enlargement, Integration, and Reform," *Journal of European Public Policy* 32, no. 12 (2025): 2862-2885, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2025.2558974>; Milada Anna Vachudova and Nadiia Koval, "Ukraine's Challenge to Europe: The EU as an Ethical and Powerful Geopolitical Actor," *Ethics & International Affairs* 38, no. 3 (2024): 308-332, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0892679424000364>.

⁵ European Commission, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, "Joint Framework on Countering Hybrid Threats: A European Union Response," Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, JOIN (2016) 18 final, April 6, 2016, Brussels, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016JC0018>. For comparison, see Eitvydas Bajarūnas, "Addressing Hybrid Threats: Priorities for the EU in 2020 and Beyond," *European View* 19, no. 1 (2020): 62-70, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1781685820912041>.

⁶ European Commission, "Increasing Resilience and Bolstering Capabilities to Address Hybrid Threats," Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council, JOIN(2018) 16 final, June 13, 2018., Brussels, 8, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52018JC0016>.

⁷ Council of the European Union, "Council Conclusions on a Framework for a Coordinated EU Response to Hybrid Campaigns," Press Release, June 21, 2022, www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/06/21/council-conclusions-on-a-framework-for-a-coordinated-eu-response-to-hybrid-campaigns/.

⁸ Council of the European Union, "A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence: For a European Union That Protects Its Citizens, Values and Interests and Contributes to International Peace and Security," Doc. No. 7371/22, March 21, 2022, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7371-2022-INIT/en/pdf>.

solely in the cyber domain. The success of those sectoral ambitions remains ambiguous.

From Deterrence Theory to EU Strategy

Building on the foregoing, a brief examination of deterrence theory is appropriate. In his 1977 seminal work *Deterrence: A Conceptual Analysis*, Patrick Morgan⁹ emphasized the necessity of distinguishing between deterrence theory and strategy, and between “general deterrence” and “immediate deterrence.” According to Morgan’s 1998 study,¹⁰ deterrence strategy refers to the specific military posture, threats, and ways of communicating them that a state adopts to deter, while deterrence theory concerns the underlying principles on which any strategy rests. A failure to keep this in mind is largely responsible for the frequent but mistaken suggestion that there are many theories of deterrence. Morgan contends that there are mostly different strategies, not theories. The strategies differ in how they operationalize the theory’s key concepts and precepts.

In 2010, Amir Lupovici¹¹ demonstrated, through a review of theoretical and empirical trends in deterrence scholarship, the benefits of integrating these approaches. Dan Cox, Thomas Bruscino, and Alex Ryan argued that, in the military context, hybrid warfare constitutes a set of tactics rather than a coherent strategy and is more accurately described as “convergent trends in tactics.”¹² In 2016, Juha Vuori¹³ analyzed deterrence through the prism of speech act theory (illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts).

Accordingly, the scholarly analysis supports the view that, in the context of nonlinear warfare, an EU integrated deterrence grand strategy must be grounded first in research and subsequently in evidence-based policymaking. For more than a decade, the European Union has pursued notions of “preparedness” and “resilience.” These efforts appear as ambitious frameworks rather than concrete strategies. Moreover, the willingness of EU member states to learn strategic lessons and strengthen their individual resilience varies considerably, with levels ranging from minimal to robust.

⁹ Patrick M. Morgan, *Deterrence: A Conceptual Analysis*, Sage Library of Social Research Vol. 40 (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1977), 25.

¹⁰ Patrick M. Morgan, *Deterrence Now* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 8. To compare with concise consolidation of fundamental concepts and principles see Michael J. Mazarr, “Understanding Deterrence,” Expert Insight, No. PE-295-RC (Santa Monica: RAND, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.7249/PE295>.

¹¹ Amir Lupovici, “The Emerging Fourth Wave of Deterrence Theory – Toward a New Research Agenda,” *International Studies Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (2010): 705-732, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2010.00606.x>.

¹² Dan G. Cox, Thomas Bruscino, and Alex Ryan, “Why Hybrid Warfare Is Tactics Not Strategy: A Rejoinder to ‘Future Threats and Strategic Thinking’,” *Military Strategy Magazine* 2, no. 2 (2012): 25-29, <https://doi.org/10.64148/msm.v2i2.5>.

¹³ Juha A. Vuori, “Deterring Things With Words: Deterrence as a Speech Act,” *New Perspectives* 24, no. 2 (2016): 23-50, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2336825X1602400203>.

For the EU and NATO member states, there is no way forward that avoids robust deterrence.¹⁴ Moreover, non-military integrated deterrence measures must be developed to address threats stemming from China – the Taiwan problem is obvious.¹⁵ In light of the aforementioned, it is pertinent to recall the view of Thazha Paul in 2009:

As the twenty-first century dawned, deterrence had become complex because of changes along several dimensions of the international system: an increase in the importance of multiple-state and nonstate actors; the distribution of power (the United States has a large military edge over all other states in the system, but the system cannot quite be called unipolar); power relationships (these are evolving, although great powers are in a state of relative peace); and goals, ideals, and issues (asymmetric challengers want to alter the regional or international status quo). Deterrence operates best when there is clarity on these elements, while ambiguity in them makes deterrent relationships complex, in the realms of both theory and policy.¹⁶

Meanwhile, as Paweł Bernat and colleagues stated, Western countries' reaction to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014, both in terms of sanctions against the aggressor and military aid to Ukraine, failed to deter further Russian aggression.¹⁷ Similarly, Keir Giles pointed out that "the EU's deterrence towards Russia has failed."¹⁸ Frankly, the same applies to the United States. More broadly, the

¹⁴ "Ukraine and Beyond: Shaping Europe's Security Future," International Crisis Group, Europe Report No. 272, February 1, 2025, 33, https://www.crisisgroup.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/272-europe-security-future_1.pdf.

¹⁵ Peter Harris and Jared M. McKinney, "Strategic Clarity or Calamity? Competing Logics of Deterrence in the Taiwan Strait," *International Affairs* 100, no. 3 (2024): 1171-1187, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iaae071>; Ties Dams, "Taiwan and a European Doctrine of Deterrence: A Matter of Time," Clingendael Institute, March 21, 2024, www.clingendael.org/publication/taiwan-and-european-doctrine-deterrence; Thorsten Benner, "Why Germany Needs to Invest More to Preserve the Status Quo in the Taiwan Strait," *Internationale Politik Quarterly*, March 16, 2022, <https://ip-quarterly.com/en/why-germany-needs-invest-more-preserve-status-quo-taiwan-strait>.

¹⁶ Thazha V. Paul, "Complex Deterrence: An Introduction," in *Complex Deterrence: Strategy in the Global Age*, ed. Thazha V. Paul, Patrick M. Morgan, and James J. Wirtz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 8, <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226650043.001.0001>.

¹⁷ Paweł Bernat, Viacheslav Semenenko, Pavlo Openko, and Daniel Michalski, "Russian Proxy Use in the Hybrid War against Ukraine before the 2022 Invasion", in *Proxy Wars from a Global Perspective: Non-State Actors and Armed Conflicts*, ed. Paweł Bernat, Cüneyt Güner, and Cyprian Aleksander Kozera (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2025): 61-76; Antulio J. Echevarria II, "Deterring War without Threatening War: Rehabilitating the West's Risk-averse Approach to Deterrence," *Military Strategy Magazine* 9, no. 2 (2024): 4-11, <https://doi.org/10.64148/msm.v9i2.1>.

¹⁸ Keir Giles, *Russia's War on Everybody: And What It Means for You* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2024): 221-222. See also Jonas J. Driedger, "Did Germany Contribute to Deterrence Failure against Russia in Early 2022?" *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies* 16, no. 3 (2022): 152-171, <https://doi.org/10.51870/TLXC9266>.

question arises: Has liberal democracy succeeded in projecting its economic and political influence? The answer is: to a limited extent thus far. Russian and Belarusian regimes inherited the USSR's experience of political warfare and feel comfortable promulgating false narratives and political gaslighting. For example, in the 1970s, when extended deterrence theory was particularly relevant, Soviet behavior was characterized as follows:

Examination of the historical record suggests that the degree of Soviet aggressiveness is a function not only of the strategic balance but also of certain preferred political strategies, the experience of special failures, the style and character of particular leaders, and Soviet emphasis on political warfare.¹⁹

Viewed objectively, February 2014 constituted a repeated alert; February 2022 marked a *Zeitenwende* – a fundamental turning point in European history. However, the United States' 2024–2025 abandonment of the nearly 80-year Pax Americana policy period precipitated a decisive shift in the EU's strategic mindset. The United States National Security Strategy of November 2025²⁰ articulated polarizing strategic positions, including the claim that "strength is the best deterrent," criticism of Europe, and the view that a lack of self-confidence is most evident in Europe's relationship with Russia. Such criticism may also be directed at the EU's cross-domain deterrence policy, or rather the lack thereof.

Regarding the enhancement of Europe's buildup, the widely quoted Sauli Niinistö Report (2024)²¹ considered the historical pillars of general deterrence theory: deterrence by denial and deterrence by punishment. Accordingly, the Report affirmed that deterrence constitutes an integral element of EU security, resilience, and preparedness, and called on member states to address the issue with due seriousness.

The Report briefly articulates the required strategic mindset. Regarding comprehensive preparedness, the Niinistö Report states that deterrence is not how the European Union has traditionally defined its role in security, but that, in the face of a constantly evolving threat landscape, this must change. The European Union must make it as difficult as possible for threat actors to achieve any of their intended objectives.²² The Niinistö Report reiterates that, when it comes to options for responding to hybrid activities, there is a range of measures across

¹⁹ Herbert Goldhamer, "The Soviet Union in a Period of Strategic Parity," RAND Report R-889-PR (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1971), <https://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/R0889.html>.

²⁰ "National Security Strategy of the United States of America," The White House, November 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/2025-National-Security-Strategy.pdf>.

²¹ Sauli Niinistö, *Safer Together: Strengthening Europe's Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness*, European Commission, October 30, 2024, https://commission.europa.eu/topics/defence/safer-together-path-towards-fully-prepared-union_en.

²² Niinistö, *Safer Together: Strengthening Europe's Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness*, 10.

the diplomatic, information/intelligence, economic and financial, and legal domains.²³

First Steps

In his insightful 1968 analysis of European security during a transitional period, Pierre Hassner observed that the sense of change stemmed from Europeans witnessing the decay of the old, rather than from fear or hope for the emergence of the new.²⁴ As Europe undergoes another pivotal transformation, it is pertinent to note that adopting new approaches typically accompanies shifts from established perceptions to new realities. Accordingly, the development of EU deterrence should not be regarded as an insurmountable undertaking, but rather as a progression in response to contemporary and future security needs.

In an effort to ascertain the core principles underpinning EU strategic thinking, it is pertinent to examine the European Commission's central messaging as articulated in its Political Guidelines since 2014. A comparative discourse analysis, measured quantitatively against the latest Political Guidelines, yields the following word frequency data:

Table 1. Frequency of Particular Words in the EC Political Guidelines

	"defense"	"deterrence"	"preparedness"	"resilience" / "resilient"	"security"
2014–2019	9	0	0	2	4
2019–2024	4	0	0	3	12
2024–2029	30	1	11	31	47

Source: The European Commission webpage.

The European Commission's Political Guidelines for 2024–2029 include the short statement, "We must also work on integrated deterrence."²⁵ The notion of "integrated deterrence" is neither defined nor elaborated upon in these Guidelines. Accordingly, to avoid interpretative ambiguity, further analysis is required through the lenses of "resilience," "preparedness," and the "whole-of-society" approach. Notably, Germany's first-ever National Security Strategy (2023) was titled "Robust. Resilient. Sustainable: Integrated Security for Germany,"²⁶ thus reflecting a conceptual shift toward an integrated approach.

²³ Niinistö, *Safer Together: Strengthening Europe's Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness*, 109.

²⁴ Pierre Hassner, "The Changing Context of European Security," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 7, no. 1 (1968): 1-21, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.1968.tb00205.x>.

²⁵ Ursula von der Leyen, "Europe's Choice: Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2024–2029," European Commission, July 18, 2024, Strasbourg, 15, https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en.

²⁶ "Robust. Resilient. Sustainable: Integrated Security for Germany – National Security

The 2025 Union Preparedness Strategy acknowledged that EU crisis management remains predominantly reactive. The document extensively emphasized “resilience” and “preparedness” and outlined an initial vision for developing EU deterrence through civil-military cooperation.²⁷ In addition, possibly for the first time in EU history, a concrete step toward integrated deterrence was introduced. Under the “Foresight and Anticipation” thematic section, Action No. 7 mandates the development of tailored deterrence strategies, with an indicative implementation deadline set for 2025:

7. Develop dedicated threat-actor deterrence strategies where relevant to prevent, deter, and respond to specific threat actors targeting the EU through hybrid activities.²⁸

The viability of this brand-new initiative remains to be determined. The same applies to the 2025 Strategic Foresight Report (“Resilience 2.0”),²⁹ which acknowledged the ineffectiveness of prior predominantly reactive policies. In contrast to the 2020 report, the 2025 vision adopted a proactive and forward-looking approach. With a view to strengthening the EU’s internal and external security, “Resilience 2.0” (2025) was presented as a technology-savvy, anticipatory approach that should capitalize on civil-military synergies to deter ill-intentioned actors, in full consistency with EU values and international law. Among other priorities, the existing foresight capacities in border management should be strengthened, and security needs should be addressed through an integrated territorial perspective.

In the interim, a pragmatic, experience-based practice can be observed in Finland. In its fifth update since 2003, the Security Strategy for Society, adopted on January 16, 2025,³⁰ the Finnish Government introduced a comprehensive security operating model that incorporates the concept of “societal resilience.”³¹

Strategy,” The Federal Government of Germany, June 2023, www.nationalesicherheitsstrategie.de/National-Security-Strategy-EN.pdf.

²⁷ European Commission, “EU Preparedness Union Strategy to Prevent and React to Emerging Threats and Crises,” JOIN(2025) 130 final (with Annex), March 16, 2025, Brussels, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_856.

²⁸ European Commission, “EU Preparedness Union Strategy to Prevent and React to Emerging Threats and Crises,” Action no. 7 (Annex).

²⁹ European Commission, “2025 Strategic Foresight Report – Resilience 2.0: Empowering the EU to Thrive Amid Turbulence and Uncertainty,” Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council COM (2025) 484 final, September 9, 2025, https://commission.europa.eu/publications/strategic-foresight-report-2025_en.

³⁰ Finnish Government, “Security Strategy for Society: Government Resolution,” Security Committee, Ministry of Defence, January 16, 2025, 3, <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-383-817-8>; Charly Salonijs-Pasternak, “Finland’s Ambiguous Deterrence: Mixing Deterrence by Denial with Ambiguous Extended Deterrence,” in *Detering Russia in Europe: Defence Strategies for Neighbouring States*, ed. Nora Vanaga, Toms Rostoks (Routledge, 2018): 110-127.

³¹ Olga Reznikova and Oleksandr Korniiievskiy, “Resilience of the Ukrainian Society in Wartime: Components and Influencing Factors,” *Eastern Journal of European Studies*

This concept encompasses attitude, awareness, and the ability to act together. Fundamentally, at one level, it refers to a resilient population grounded in EU and national values, capable of identifying and countering narratives characteristic of nonlinear warfare. Additionally, the Swedish model of psychological defence, as articulated by the Swedish Psychological Defence Agency,³² offers a relevant framework for enhancing societal resilience and warrants EU-level consideration.

As noted by Peter Roberts and Andrew Hardie in 2015, there are useful models of economic, diplomatic, and law-enforcement deterrence. Modern strategies of deterrence must be nuanced and contextualized to particular enemies, adversaries, and geopolitical circumstances. Law-enforcement models of deterrence can be adapted to a strategic context.³³ As such, the prevailing approach should embrace integrated deterrence through political (diplomatic), economic, information, and legal means, areas in which the European Union holds substantial influence.

Schengen External Borders as Frontiers of Deterrence

It is pertinent to consider the Schengen external borders and NATO frontiers on the north-eastern periphery as a practical context for the potentially broader application of EU integrated deterrence.

EU Integrated Border Management Concept

One vector of nonlinear warfare employs non-kinetic means to undermine EU values, specifically by targeting the Schengen area of free movement. This area represents a key political and economic accomplishment of European integration, yielding substantial cross-functional benefits. Its vulnerability to nonlinear warfare presents both immediate and cumulative strategic risks, rendering it a valuable target for adversaries.

The 1985 Schengen Agreement laid the foundation for the gradual abolition of internal border controls within the European Communities, while the 1990 Schengen Convention set out the operational measures to implement a border-free area. The Schengen rules subsequently became a core part of EU law.

15, no. 1 (2024): 113-133, <https://doi.org/10.47743/ejes-2024-0105>; Sandra Kalniete and Tomass Pildegovičs, "Strengthening the EU's Resilience to Hybrid Threats," *European View* 20, no. 1 (2021): 23-33, <https://doi.org/10.1177/17816858211004648>.

³² Björn Palmertz, Mikael Weissmann, Niklas Nilsson, Johan Engvall, "Building Resilience and Psychological Defence: An analytical framework for countering hybrid threats and foreign influence and interference," Working Paper (Psychological Defence Research Institute, Lund University, 2024); James Pamment and Elsa Isaksson, "Psychological Defence: Concepts and principles for the 2020s," *MPF Report Series 6* (Psychological Defence Research Institute, Lund University, 2024), <https://mpf.se/psychological-defence-agency/publications>.

³³ Peter Roberts and Andrew Hardie, "The Validity of Deterrence in the Twenty-First Century," Occasional Paper, Royal United Services Institute, August 2015, https://static.rusi.org/201508_op_the_validity_of_deterrence.pdf.

Along with the aforementioned developments, the conceptual development of the EU Integrated Border Management (EUIBM) framework for guarding the Schengen area progressed steadily. The 1999 Tampere European Council agreed on the need for consistent control of external borders.³⁴ Subsequently, the 2001 Laeken European Council affirmed that Europe is a continent of solidarity and also emphasized that better management of the EU's external border controls would help in the fight against terrorism, illegal immigration networks, and human trafficking.³⁵ During this period, political discourse and expert consultations continued to evolve into a mutually accepted EUIBM concept.

More than a decade after the 1990 Schengen Convention, the "Made in the EU" four-tier access control model was agreed upon as the initial EUIBM concept. This non-binding framework was consolidated in the first *Schengen Catalogue on External Borders* in 2002.³⁶ Since then, notwithstanding various challenges, the EU's four-tier access control model has remained functional, demonstrating maturity and sustained relevance.

Between 2002 and 2006, the EUIBM concept underwent refinement.³⁷ In 2006, the Second Generation EUIBM was adopted, introducing five interrelated dimensions, including the operationally validated four-tier access control model.³⁸ Following the 2007 enlargement of the Schengen area, the 2009 *Schengen Catalogue on External Borders* reaffirmed the five-dimensional EUIBM framework as a fundamental cornerstone.³⁹

In response to developments at the external borders and to significant migration flows in 2015, Regulation (EU) 2016/1624 on the European Border and Coast Guard (FRONTEX)⁴⁰ underlined that EUIBM is a necessary corollary of free

³⁴ "Tampere European Council 15 and 16 October 1999 Presidency Conclusions," European Parliament, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/tam_en.htm.

³⁵ "Presidency Conclusions: European Council meeting in Laeken, 14 and 15 December 2001," Point 42, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/20950/68827.pdf>.

³⁶ Council of the European Union, "EU Schengen Catalogue. External Borders Control, Removal and Readmission: Recommendations and Best Practices," February 2002, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/31011/catalogue-en.pdf>.

³⁷ Commission of the European Communities, "Towards Integrated Management of the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union," Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, COM(2002) 233 final, May 7, 2002, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2002:0233:FIN:EN:PDF>.

³⁸ Council of the European Union, "Justice and Home Affairs, 2768th Council Meeting, Brussels, 4–5 December 2006, Brussels," *Press Release*, Doc. 15801/06 (Presse 341), <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST%2015801%202006%20INIT/EN/pdf>.

³⁹ Council of the European Union, "Updated EU Schengen Catalogue on External Borders Control, Return and Readmission," Note from the Drafting Group for updating of Schengen catalogue on External borders control, Return and readmission to Schengen Evaluation Working Party, 7864/09, Brussels, March 19, 2009, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7864-2009-INIT/en/pdf>.

⁴⁰ "Regulation (EU) 2016/1624 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 September 2016 on the European Border and Coast Guard and Amending Regulation

movement and a fundamental component of the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice. Article 4 of the Regulation introduced, for the first time, a legally binding EUIBM model comprising 11 components, thereby establishing the Third Generation EUIBM.

Three years later, acknowledging that the EUIBM framework still needed further improvement, Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 was adopted, establishing a revised mandate for FRONTEX.⁴¹ This Regulation significantly expanded the EUIBM concept (Article 3), which now comprises 12 core components and 3 overarching components. The four-tier access control model remained the structural basis of this, to a large extent, enhanced “EUIBM 3+ Generation” concept.

The legal basis for the functioning of EUIBM is grounded in Article 77 TFEU. Pursuant to Article 77(1)(c) TFEU, the Union shall develop a policy with a view to the gradual introduction of an integrated management system for external borders. Under Article 77(2)(d) TFEU, the European Parliament and the Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, shall adopt any measure necessary for the gradual establishment of an integrated management system for external borders.

Vitriolic Attacks and Lessons Learned

Since 2021, the Schengen area has been increasingly affected by nonlinear warfare employed by Russia and Belarus. The malicious engineering of human mobility, commonly known as migration instrumentalization, has targeted the EU’s north-eastern external borders. As a low-cost strategy with cumulative impact, such deliberate transgression has prompted the European Union to refine its resilience approaches.⁴²

Two decades of in-depth analysis of strategic, coercive, and engineered migration,⁴³ including work at the European Center of Excellence for Countering

(EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Repealing Regulation (EC) No 863/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Council Regulation (EC) No 2007/2004 and Council Decision 2005/267/EC (end of validity 31/12/2020),” *Official Journal of the European Union* L 251/1, September 16, 2016, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/1624/oj/eng>.

⁴¹ “Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 November 2019 on the European Border and Coast Guard and Repealing Regulations (EU) No 1052/2013 and (EU) 2016/1624,” *Official Journal of the European Union* L 295/1, November 14, 2019, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2019/1896/oj/eng>.

⁴² Monika Sie Dhian Ho and Myrthe Wijnkoop, “The Instrumentalization of Migration: A Geopolitical Perspective and Toolbox,” Report, Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, December 2022, www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/Report_The_instrumentalization_of_migration.pdf; Lucas Rasche, “The Instrumentalisation of Migration: How Should the EU Respond?” Policy Paper, Herti School, Jacques Delors Centre, December 16, 2022, <https://www.delorscentre.eu/en/publications/the-instrumentalisation-of-migration>.

⁴³ Kelly M. Greenhill, “Strategic Engineered Migration as a Weapon of War,” *Civil Wars* 10, no. 1 (2008): 6-21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698240701835425>; Myron Weiner, “Bad Neighbors, Bad Neighborhoods: An Inquiry into the Causes of Refugee Flows,”

Hybrid Threats, have yielded pragmatic conclusions – first and foremost, migration weaponization constitutes a low-cost tactic for perpetrators. The affected EU member states face the challenge of countering its effects while upholding migrants' rights. The EU's strategic choice lies between proactive and reactive responses, framed as "deterrence by denial" and "deterrence by punishment."⁴⁴ In practice, both approaches are applied in a calibrated and adaptive manner.

Notwithstanding the intensity of Russian and Belarusian migration weaponization tactics, several positive lessons emerged. First, the EUIBM system was tested. It underwent improvements and demonstrated overall maturity. Second, the response to the adversaries was asymmetric, though its sufficiency remains debatable. Third, all three pillars of EUIBM cooperation (international, interagency, and intraservice) underwent a practical stress test and were subsequently reinforced. Fourth, the consequences of a coercive, engineered migration cumulatively strengthened both the EUIBM framework and the national security of the directly affected states, pursuant to the national identity clause under Article 4(2) TEU. This list is non-exhaustive and acknowledges that the adversaries did not fully exercise their coercive capacity.

At the Madrid Summit in June 2022, NATO leaders adopted a revised Strategic Concept, establishing an ambitious baseline for deterrence and defense. The Alliance affirmed its commitment to "defend every inch of Allied territory at all times,"⁴⁵ signaling the adoption of a reinvigorated "Deterrence-by-Denial" strategic concept. This posture seeks to prevent and repel any attack on Allied territory at or before the point of incursion, ideally deterring aggression through the credible threat of an immediate and overwhelming response.

In light of the foregoing, the EUIBM system is strengthened by a two-pronged approach. In March 2025, the EU unveiled its ReArm Europe Plan / Readiness 2030 initiative, announcing the Joint White Paper for European Defence Readiness.⁴⁶ In the chapter on "Border protection," under the heading of "closing the gaps," the following statement appears:

International Security 21, no. 1 (1996): 5-42, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539107>; Michael S. Teitelbaum, "Immigration, Refugees, and Foreign Policy," *International Organization* 38, no. 3 (1984): 429-450, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300026801>.

⁴⁴ Henrik Praks, "Russia's Hybrid Threat Tactics against the Baltic Sea Region: From Disinformation to Sabotage," *Hybrid CoE Working Paper* 32, May 2024, www.hybridcoe.fi/publications/hybrid-coe-working-paper-32-russias-hybrid-threat-tactics-against-the-baltic-sea-region-from-disinformation-to-sabotage/; Christian Fjäder and Johan Schalin, "Building Resilience to Hybrid Threats: Best Practices in the Nordics," *Hybrid CoE Working Paper* 31, May 2024, <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/publications/hybrid-coe-working-paper-31-building-resilience-to-hybrid-threats-best-practices-in-the-nordics/>; Alia Fakhry, András Rácz, and Roderick Parkes, "Migration Instrumentalization: A Taxonomy for an Efficient Response," *Hybrid CoE Working Paper* 14, March 2022, www.hybridcoe.fi/publications/hybrid-coe-working-paper-14-migration-instrumentalization-a-taxonomy-for-an-efficient-response/.

⁴⁵ "NATO 2022 Strategic Concept," updated March 3, 2023, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_210907.htm.

⁴⁶ European Commission, "Joint White Paper for European Defence Readiness 2030,"

The defence of all EU land, air and maritime borders is important, in particular as regards the EU Eastern border. The project for an Eastern Border Shield is a noteworthy exercise by a number of Member States to confront the growing challenges in that region. It would establish an integrated land border management system that is designed to strengthen the EU's external land border with Russia and Belarus against military and hybrid threats. That would include a comprehensive mix of physical barriers, infrastructure development and modern surveillance systems.

This meaningful shift in thinking and action suggests that defense imperatives may extend to the EUIBM domain, yielding a dual-function outcome. Notably, border surveillance activities along the north-eastern flank have already been operating for several years within an increasingly blended environment of physical, electronic, and digital hurdles. These activities fall under not only the EUIBM component of border control but also the NATO "Deterrence-by-Denial" concept.⁴⁷ Furthermore, EUIBM components such as internal security risk analysis, international cooperation, and solidarity mechanisms may contribute more effectively to the EU's prospective integrated deterrence framework. In this context, Article 77(2)(d) TFEU, by permitting the adoption of "any measure necessary," and Article 80 TFEU, permitting "appropriate measures to give effect" to the solidarity principle, offer a sufficient legal basis for deterrence by denial.

Schengen Short-Stay Visa Dilemma

The issuance of Schengen C-category short-stay visas to nationals of states engaging in multi-domain, nonlinear warfare against the European Union constitutes a litmus test for the Union's professed values and principles. As Elisabeth Braw rightly noted in 2021,⁴⁸ visas are important from a deterrence perspective because they greatly benefit the individuals who receive them. Visas can also be used to signal prospective punishment not of countries, but of individuals of the deterrer's choosing. Western nations could enhance this effect by signaling that not only may individuals involved in gray-zone aggression lose their visa rights, but so may their family members and associates.

Schengen C-category short-stay visas remain an untapped element of the EU's soft-power-based integrated deterrence. Visa restrictions imposed by only some Schengen states, belated limitations on multiple-entry visas for Russian nationals,⁴⁹ changed Airport Transit Visa conditions, and the continued ac-

JOIN(2025) 120 final, March 19, 2025, Brussels, Point 4, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025JC0120>.

⁴⁷ Scott Lee, Andrew Michta, Peter Jones, and Lisa Bembienick, "NATO 2027: European Leadership Will Be Key to Deterrence Against Russia," MITRE / Atlantic Council, May 15, 2025, 14, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/NATO-2027-European-leadership-will-be-key-to-deterrence-against-Russia.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Elisabeth Braw, *The Defender's Dilemma: Identifying and Deterring Gray-Zone Aggression* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 2021), 225-231, https://eci.pe.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Braw_Defenders-Dilemma_Finalized.pdf.

⁴⁹ European Commission, "Commission Implementing Decision of 6.11.2025 Establishing

ceptance of non-biometric Russian passports (except by Germany, Denmark, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, France, the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Romania) remain below the EU's deterrent potential. The adoption of a new asylum and migration strategy and an EU Visa Policy Strategy may modify existing conditions.

From the EUIBM perspective, the border checks component remains essential, as a visa does not confer an automatic right of entry into any of the 29 Schengen states, particularly if limited territorial validity applies. While compliance by the visa holder is presumed, it is not guaranteed. Pursuant to Articles 6(1)(e) and 14(1) of the 2016 Schengen Borders Code,⁵⁰ a third-country national may be granted entry only if he or she is not considered a threat to public policy, internal security, public health, or the international relations of any member state. This requirement is interlinked with Article 21(3)(d) and Article 32(1)(a)(vi) of the 2009 Visa Code.⁵¹ The effective implementation of these conditions remains challenging.

With respect to individuals influenced by war ideology and seeking entry into the Schengen area, the Council Decision of 9 September 2022 suspending the 2007 EU-Russia Visa Facilitation Agreement⁵² was delayed and had limited practical effect. Visa statistics for 2024 suggested a weakening of the EU's restrictive stance, thereby raising ethical, legal, and policy concerns (Table 2)⁵³:

Population surveys in Russia indicate that 70–80% of respondents consistently support, or rather support, the military invasion of Ukraine.⁵⁴ Additionally,

Adapted Rules on the Issuing of Multiple-entry Visas to Russian Nationals Residing in the Russian Federation and Applying in the Russian Federation for Short-stay Visas," C(2025) 7552 final, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/409a8179-9885-49f8-ab40-9c1a07b1f581_en.

⁵⁰ "Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on a Union Code on the Rules Governing the Movement of Persons across Borders (Schengen Borders Code) (Codification)," *Official Journal of the European Union* L 77, March 23, 2016, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/399/oj/eng>.

⁵¹ "Regulation (EC) No 810/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 Establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code)," *Official Journal of the European Union* 243, September 15, 2009, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2009/810/oj/eng>.

⁵² "Council Decision (EU) 2022/1500 of 9 September 2022 on the Suspension in Whole of the Application of the Agreement between the European Community and the Russian Federation on the Facilitation of the Issuance of Visas to the Citizens of the European Union and the Russian Federation," *Official Journal of the European Union* L1 234/1, September 9, 2022, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2022/1500/oj/eng>.

⁵³ Of note, the article was published before the Schengen visa statistics for 2025 could be added. The European Commission is expected to publish the 2025 visa statistics in March or April 2026. Given the sensitivity of the subject matter, the timing of the statistics' publication may depend on the mid-term trends reflected in the data, as the Commission may require additional time to determine the accompanying political message. "Short-stay Visas Issued by Schengen Countries," European Commission, December 2, 2025, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen/visa-policy/short-stay-visas-issued-schengen-countries_en.

⁵⁴ Statista, "Russia: Opinion on Military Actions in Ukraine Monthly 2022–2025," June 7,

Table 2. Data on C-category Schengen Visas Issued to Russian Federation Nationals (Except Visas Issued at Border Crossing Points and Airport Transit Visas).

	Total C uniform short-stay Schengen visas applied for (in consulates)	Total C uniform short-stay Schengen visas issued (including Multiple Entry Visas)	Dynamics in %, issued visas year-by-year
2024	606 800	541 839	+ 20.7 %
2023	520 387	448 890	- 25.7 %
2022	687 239	603 955	+ 17.5 %
2021	536 241	513 811	- 19.2 %
2020	653 271	635 764	-

Source: the European Commission webpage

from 2005 to 2025, the proportion of individuals in Russia identifying Vladimir Putin as the “conscience of the nation” and their “moral compass” increased from 9 % to 21 %.⁵⁵ Russian nationals, including members of the younger elite and the offspring of sanctioned individuals, value Europe not only for its assets, shares, and family property holdings, but also for its educational and recreational advantages. That is not all. Schengen visas are also valuable for those who engage in subversive activities.⁵⁶

The foregoing raises considerations regarding the underutilized potential of the EU’s integrated deterrence, viewed through the lens of the principle of solidarity. A clear concern arises: individuals who support war crimes, crimes against humanity, and violations of the UN Charter should not be granted easy access to

2025, www.statista.com/statistics/1306904/russia-public-opinion-on-military-action-in-ukraine/; Maria Snegovaya, “The Reluctant Consensus: War and Russia’s Public Opinion,” Atlantic Council, December 17, 2024, www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/russia-tomorrow/reliant-consensus-war-and-russias-public-opinion/; Charles Maynes, “Independent Study Suggests Russian Support for the War in Ukraine Is Complicated,” *NPR Media*, September 24, 2024, www.npr.org/2024/09/24/nx-s1-5123628/independent-study-suggests-russian-support-for-the-war-in-ukraine-is-complicated.

⁵⁵ RFE / RL (USAGM), “Without Morals, but with Spirituality: How the Russian Government Is Eroding People’s Moral Compass,” *Current Time*, July 23, 2025, www.currenttime.tv/a/bez-morali-no-s-duhovnymi-tsennostyami-kak-vlast-v-rossii-lishaet-nravstvennye-orientiry-lyudey/33481051.html. – in Russian

⁵⁶ Seth G. Jones, “Russia’s Shadow War Against the West,” *CSIS Brief*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 18, 2025, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russias-shadow-war-against-west>; Lennart Maschmeyer, *Subversion: From Covert Operations to Cyber Conflict* (Oxford University Press, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197745854.001.0001>; Andrew Radin, Alyssa Demus, and Krystyna Marcinek, “Understanding Russian Subversion: Patterns, Threats, and Responses,” *Expert Insights*, RAND, February 18, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.7249/PE331>.

the Schengen area. This concern will intensify because, in addition to dozens of millions of brutal war supporters, over 1.5 million Russian nationals and nationals of other countries who have personally participated in the war in Ukraine since 2014 may seek Schengen visas in the future. This represents only one dimension of a broader and more complex issue for the coming decades.

Hypothetically, many tools may offer flexibility for proactive deterrence. But it must be emphasized that legal mechanisms alone are insufficient to address the underlying issues of mindset, political will, and the practical realization of EU solidarity. Beyond its surface meaning, solidarity becomes a complex notion with no clear-cut normative dimension or consensual conceptualization, thereby opening up diverse possibilities for meaning, scope, expectations, and implications.⁵⁷ Considering the views of Adam Henschke, Robert Reczkowski, and Andrzej Lis,⁵⁸ it seems that the commercialization of the short-stay Schengen visa mechanism, at the expense of EU internal security, the national security of affected member states, and the EU's integrity, when coupled with its moral implications, constitutes a vulnerability in the ongoing cognitive warfare.

Future Proposals and Vision for EU Integrated Deterrence

Building on the aforementioned, this section addresses the second central question: How can the European Union increase its "soft" deterrence potential?

Mindset First, Cognition Follows

As a fundamental step, it is necessary to understand the deterrence environment on the North-Eastern flank. The past three centuries demonstrate Russia's consistent aggression. Referring to over a decade of societal zombification within Russia, Jade McGlynn observed that the pro-Kremlin agenda seeks to create an emotional state in people that diminishes their critical thinking and to develop cognitive filters and heuristics that reject any alternative version of reality.⁵⁹ Moreover, Dmitry Adamsky noted that Western scholars tend to interpret Russian deterrence through the optics of Western strategic theory.⁶⁰ Consequently, the EU's integrated deterrence must account for adversaries operating under fundamentally different values and who cannot be trusted. The persistent adoption of

⁵⁷ Laura C. Ferreira-Pereira and Arthur John Richard Groom, "Mutual Solidarity within the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy: What Is the Name of the Game?" *International Politics* 47, no. 6 (2010): 596-616, <https://doi.org/10.1057/ip.2010.29>.

⁵⁸ Adam Henschke, "Foundational Moral and Political Values," in *Cognitive Warfare: Grey Matters in Contemporary Political Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2024): 199-229, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003126959-12>; Robert Reczkowski and Andrzej Lis, "Cognitive Warfare: What Is Our Actual Knowledge and How to Build State Resilience?" *Security Theory and Practice* 3 (XLVIII) (2022): 51-61, <https://doi.org/10.48269/2451-0718-btip-2022-3-003>.

⁵⁹ Jade McGlynn, *Russia's War* (Polity Press, 2023), 76-81.

⁶⁰ Dmitry Adamsky, "Quo Vadis, Russian Deterrence? Strategic Culture and Coercion Innovations," *International Security* 49, no. 3 (2025): 50-83, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00502.

the Kremlin's cutthroat strategic calculus, prioritizing money over morality and maintaining "business as usual" engagements, will inevitably lead to strategic losses.

Since February 2014, the historical imperative to think "outside the box" has remained pressing. This requires consideration of atypical containment actions outside the traditionally over-polite bounds of EU politics, embracing instruments that NATO does not possess or is not designed to have in its arsenal.

In evaluating the EU's security strategies, James Sperling asserted that the European Union holds the potential to endure and function effectively as a security actor. However, he posited that:

... when EU-mandated external security policies require the expenditure of blood and treasure, or internal security policies transparently alter the domestic social contract, then the cohesion and effectiveness of EU security objectives embedded in a grand security strategy will fall afoul of national electorates, who would then insist that political elites retain sovereign prerogatives despite the technical superiority of collective action.⁶¹

In essence, this view underscores that narrow, national-interest-driven policies frequently override internationally binding legal obligations, as political actors prioritize power retention and short-term social comfort over long-term security. Furthermore, without EU solidarity, external players can easily manipulate European countries, preventing them from taking strong steps to protect their democracies.⁶² Philosopher Maija Küle asserts that the contemporary world is transitioning from the Age of Reason to the Age of Will. Russian ideology exploits a peculiarity of the Age of Will: statements need not be coherent, reliable, or non-contradictory. The Kremlin declares what it wants, not what is reasonable. In this new configuration, events driven by violence necessitate a counterforce response.⁶³ Under this reasoning, the EU's integrated deterrence constitutes a clear element of that necessary "counterforce."

⁶¹ James Sperling, "The European Union and the Grand Security Strategy for Post-Westphalian Governance," in *EU Security Strategies: Extending the EU System of Security Governance*, ed. Spyros Economides and James Sperling (London: Routledge, 2017), 4, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315455297>.

⁶² Pabriks and Kudors, eds., *The War in Ukraine: Lessons for Europe*, 176; Alex Raufoglu, "'Swap Mush for Steel' – Lithuania Urges NATO to End Era of 'Self-Deterrence' Against Russia," interview with Lithuania's Foreign Minister Kęstutis Budrys, *Kyiv Post*, November 11, 2025, <https://www.kyivpost.com/post/63992>.

⁶³ Maija Küle, "The Age of Will: Introduction Into the Theme," *Ideology and Politics Journal* 1, no. 27 (2025): 4-19, <https://doi.org/10.36169/2227-6068.2025.01.00014>. To compare, see the statement "In a postmodern environment, traditional concerns like borders, national identity and state sovereignty are of less concern than the pursuit of prosperity, democratic governance and individual well-being" in Peter van Ham, *European Integration and the Postmodern Condition: Governance, Democracy, Identity* (London: Routledge, 2001), 15.

Camino Mortera-Martínez has noted that the European Union will not solve its trust problem through new laws or court rulings, because the problem stems from political, rather than legal, differences.⁶⁴ Building on this assumption through the lens of societal resilience, the quality of leadership is directly correlated with an educated electorate possessing the cognitive capacity to select politically competent decision-makers.

Looking Ahead

Kelly Greenhill posited in 2019 that asymmetric and hybrid means and strategies remain the exception in interstate conflicts, but that this is arguably changing and will continue to do so, perhaps even at an accelerating rate, as power (potentially) diffuses globally in the decades to come.⁶⁵ The realities clearly support her position.

Regarding EU responses, a potentially innovative approach may be required, given the EU's unique character and the relatively novel nature of grey-zone aggression. The synthesis of such broad concepts requires the structured involvement of EU-based think tanks and academic institutions to produce targeted research. Commissioning such studies aligns with the strategic direction outlined in the 2024 Sauli Niinistö Report and is consistent with the need to protect the EU's core values.

Consequently, due to historical context and direct exposure, the states in geographic proximity to Russia possess a heightened awareness of the Kremlin's aggressive posture. Their insights should be prioritized. North-Eastern Europe, as a regional center of expertise on Russia and Belarus, possesses the requisite capacities to contribute effectively to shaping the EU's deterrence concept.

Notably, components of the necessary framework have already been developed, though they have not yet been integrated. In other words, part of the bicycle has already been invented but not yet assembled. Several studies may be mentioned, although not all are in the non-military domain. In 2021, Wigell, Mikkola, and Juntunen analyzed the EU's resilience, societal resilience, preparedness, the whole-of-society approach, and deterrence. Their study suggested a way to frame the hybrid threats domain and argued for a processual model of comprehensive EU resilience that includes non-military deterrence.⁶⁶ In the

⁶⁴ Camino Mortera-Martínez, "Is There a Future for the EU's Area of Freedom, Security and Justice? A Plan to Build Back Trusts," *Policy Brief*, Centre for European Reform, January 26, 2022, <https://www.cer.eu/publications/archive/policy-brief/2022/there-future-eus-area-freedom-security-and-justice>.

⁶⁵ Kelly M. Greenhill, "Asymmetric Advantage: Weaponizing People as Nonmilitary Instruments of Cross-Domain Coercion," in *Cross-Domain Deterrence: Strategy in an Era of Complexity*, ed. Eric Gartzke and Jon R. Lindsay (Oxford University Press, 2019), 259-289, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190908645.003.0012>.

⁶⁶ Mikael Wigell, Harri Mikkola, and Tapio Juntunen, "Best Practices in the Whole-of-Society Approach in Countering Hybrid Threats," European Parliament, May 6, 2021, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EXPO_STU\(2021\)653632](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EXPO_STU(2021)653632).

same year, the Netherlands Defence Academy released a compendium of 25 articles on deterrence theory in dynamic contexts and offered an appraisal of contemporary deterrence thinking.⁶⁷ In 2021, the Hague Centre for Strategic Studies proposed five strategic options for countering hybrid threats, to be applied concurrently or sequentially.⁶⁸

The EU's efforts to enhance its "soft" deterrence capacity would benefit, *inter alia*, from incorporating the mindset and education approach originating in Northern Europe, which has proven effective. In this context, it is noteworthy that the threat assessments made by Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, especially since 2014, have proven accurate, though they were regrettably not fully acknowledged at the time. More broadly, North-Eastern Europe is increasingly assuming the role of a non-military security-maker, particularly where innovative asymmetrical approaches offer strategic value.

The EUIBM's "soft" deterrence potential is expected to expand, including through interactions between civilian and military deterrence. Nevertheless, given the nature of nonlinear warfare, the current EUIBM 3+ Generation concept may reach the limits of its effectiveness, warranting consideration of a 4th Generation EUIBM concept. At least two key realities are relevant in this context.

First, the EUIBM 3+ Generation concept was primarily developed in response to irregular migration pressures at the Schengen external borders between 2014 and 2016, with a geographic focus on the Southern flank. Consequently, the concept is centered on human mobility. However, especially since 2021, adversary state-facilitated nonlinear warfare has emerged as an equally serious threat. This has resulted in a marked shift in focus – from migration management to broader security concerns, and, critically, to the national security of directly affected EU member states. Second, while EU structural reform remains on hold, such reform continues to be considered in light of evolving 21st-century challenges. This broader process is expected to affect the EUIBM. Taken together, the foregoing considerations, though not exhaustive, may warrant revision of the EUIBM 3+ Generation concept. Finally, it cannot be unequivocally asserted that the current, sizeable EUIBM concept maintains a balanced equilibrium between human mobility and security, while also accounting for the continued relevance of trade facilitation.

Conclusions

This article contributes to the discussion on the European Union's lack of a clear, non-military, integrated deterrence posture. Despite the urgent need to project

⁶⁷ Frans Osinga and Tim Sweijs, eds., *NL ARMS Netherlands Annual Review of Military Studies 2020: Deterrence in the 21st Century – Insights from Theory and Practice* (The Hague: T.M.C. Asser, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6265-419-8>.

⁶⁸ Tim Sweijs, Samuel Zilincik, Frank Bekkers, and Rick Meessen, "A Framework for Cross-Domain Strategies Against Hybrid Threats," The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, January 12, 2021, <https://hcsc.nl/report/a-framework-for-cross-domain-strategies-against-hybrid-threats/>.

soft-power-based cognitive wisdom, progress toward establishing deterrence has been minimal over the past decade. The announcements issued between 2014 and 2025 lack clarity regarding the deterrence posture and fail to articulate a precise, coherent strategic vision.

When grounded in solidarity and mutual trust, the European Union possesses clear intellectual (including political and diplomatic), economic, informational, and legal superiority over Belarus, Iran, North Korea, and Russia. In these domains, if necessary, the European Union may credibly compete with the United States and China. The challenge lies in translating these advantages into decision superiority.

The EU's prolonged posture of absorption-dominant self-deterrence has proven ineffective and even perilous. Instead, countering multi-sectoral coercion demands coherent cross-domain deterrence. The development and implementation of a harmonized EU integrated deterrence posture comprising both proactive and reactive measures remains slow and wavering. Priority should be given to proactive deterrence. A renewed *Pax Europaea* requires such an instrument of influence.

The unreserved exercise of soft power constitutes a legitimate instrument of deterrence. Nevertheless, there is insufficient evidence to establish that the EU's cultivated notions of "resilience" and "preparedness" incorporate integrated deterrence. Determining whether they encompass deterrence remains a Sisyphean task. Deterrence is rarely referenced in the EU's cross-cutting initiatives addressing hybrid threats. Furthermore, Action no. 7 of the European Union Preparedness Strategy 2025 is not included under the two resilience-related thematic sections, but is instead categorized under "Foresight & Anticipation."

While several elements of non-military deterrence are already in place and functioning, a unified theoretical framework necessary to consolidate a general deterrence posture remains absent. To remedy this non-assertiveness and develop a long-term strategic concept, the European Union should first leverage its intellectual and research capacities. Given its epistemological understanding of Russia, North-Eastern Europe is best positioned to develop and propose an original, non-military EU deterrence concept.

An effective integrated deterrence posture depends on a high level of solidarity and coordinated civil-military interaction. In this context, the EUIBM 3+ Generation holds latent potential. *Inter alia*, for over a decade, North-Eastern Europe has consistently promoted EU solidarity through the deployment of highly professional border guards and technical assets to address illegal migration. In accordance with the principle of solidarity, North-Eastern Europe is likewise entitled to expect more reciprocal support in responding to strategically engineered coercive migration.

EU deterrence is not a panacea for confronting ideologies seeking to disrupt the European Union – the most successful initiative in European history. Accordingly, the context and conclusions of this article have broader applicability. If po-

litically endorsed and institutionalized, European integrated deterrence may address challenges beyond Russia and Belarus. The era of cognitive warfare demands cognitive preparedness, an essential component of which is integrated deterrence.

Disclaimer

The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Partnership for Peace Consortium, its participating institutions, or any governmental or international organizations affiliated with its governance structure.

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