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## Book Review

*Jonathan Wilkenfeld, Egle E. Murauskaite, & Devin Ellis (2021). Escalation Management in the Gray Zone. University of Maryland. 234 pages.*

'Escalation Management in the Gray Zone' is a complex ten-chapter report conducted by Principal Investigator Jonathan Wilkenfeld and Co-Principal Investigator Devin Ellis, in cooperation with a group of scientists from the United States, the United Kingdom and Lithuania. Both Principal Investigators represent the University of Maryland, College Park, College of Behavior and Social Sciences. Their integrated analytical research study is supported by START (National Consortium for The Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism) and ICONS projects. "Shaping Decision Calculus: From Theory to Causal Understanding Minerva Research Initiative" is a university-based social science research initiative that focuses on areas of strategic importance to the United States national security policy. For this reason, this book is primarily published in the United States.

The "Escalation Management in the Gray Zone" report focuses largely on Russia, China, and their proxies. It seeks to investigate options available during crises or other conventional armed conflict non-reaching situations. It primarily aims to identify the conditions under which different actions may or may not be effective. It also helps to shape the behavior of democratic and autocratic superpowers, as well as to strengthen the foundations for the strategic and operational decision-making process. This report covers problems of the gray zone in a complex way: it discusses issues from historical and conceptual perspectives and examines problem areas from the point of view of both autocratic and democratic states. A collection of articles of this nature intertwines harmoniously into a single holistic report about the grey zone. This kind of research is new and original because it develops and uses

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simulations of real-world threats and emergencies used by senior officials to manage potential crises. In addition, it also enriches ongoing NATO 2030 Strategic concept discussions and corresponds to the Alliance's 360-degree approach. Finally, one final point before going into a more detailed evaluation: research of a similar nature enriches the understanding of hybrid threats, works with new concepts, and provides a broad and in-depth picture of gray zones, which have received little study in Lithuania before.

This report is defined in a certain time frame (1918 to the present date) and covers key international events since 1990. For this reason, it logically starts with a 48-page **historical overview**. In chapter No. 1, Egle E. Murauskaite describes the historical reasons behind how the conflict environment was shaped in time and what practices are currently shaping the concept of Gray Zone warfare. She also provides definitions and tools to better understand the present grey zone threats. In chapter No. 2, Allison Astorino-Courtois offers a detailed discussion of the emergence of the grey zone concept from the perspectives of the three global powers: the U.S., Russia, and China. The report later narrows and concentrates on the object of this study. Thus, the two above-mentioned authors provide a historical view of theories in chapter No. 3 by describing conflict dynamics since the 1990s. This part of the study (chapters No. 1–3) is a foundation from which further models and frameworks are developed in the subsequent chapters. Definitions and tools from these three chapters are used in the preceding chapters and throughout the study; therefore, the study is coherent and clear.

Probably the most practical contribution in terms of the methodology of this research is provided in chapters No. 4–6. First of all, Jonathan Wilkenfeld and David Quinn start a deep dive into grey zone analysis and use statistics and the most recent data from **the International Crisis Behavior (ICB) database**. The authors review the century's trends in international crises' emergence, escalation, and management. This chapter, through multiple charts and diagrams, explains the key factors impacting security trends. It is also important to notice multiple classifications are analyzed in a shorter period of time in order to explore the likelihood of an actor using violence. This kind of **quantitative analysis** is executed using the so-called **power disparity theory**, which classifies adversaries (e.g., great powers vs. regional powers and marginal players), their regime types and state capability. In Chapter 5 Egle E. Murauskaite, David Quinn, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, Allison Astorino-Courtois, and Corinne DeFrancisci use **Democratic Peace (DP)**, **Diversionary Use of Force (DUF)**, **Asymmetric War (AW)**, and **Power Transition Theory (PTT)** to describe what drives a state's choices and actions during the crisis. These

theories are valuable examples of how one can examine choices and means as well as how to handle challenges, escalation, or de-escalation in various situations. While NATO doctrine uses the NATO Crisis Management System and various Crisis Response Options (CRO), including hybrid, are already recognized as deterrence measures. Usually, these questions are purely military in nature and fall under an operational field. For this reason, not many academic studies have analyzed prompt options on how to deal with gray zone/hybrid threats or (in)direct violence. These problems are particularly relevant to today's context in Eastern Europe. In chapter No. 6, the same group of authors as in chapter No. 5, together with Devin Ellis, dive deeper into the use of violent and gray zone tools during crises. In this chapter, they examine how the employment of proxies might be related to different types of crises and how they trigger them. This survey is also executed by using the **ICB dataset**. The findings of the survey included in this chapter suggest that the use of proxies is associated with a higher probability of violence, regardless of whether the initial crisis trigger was violent.

Chapters No. 7 and No. 8–9 cover the **public survey** and **two hypothetical case studies**. In Chapter 7, Catarina P. Thomson discusses the findings of the project's **Gray Zone Security Survey**, conducted in March 2021 in the U.S., UK, and Lithuania. During the survey, 6,300 people were questioned. The survey focused on current public threat perceptions and preferred policy responses. This public survey, representing the full typological spectrum of NATO member states, has revealed overall high levels of multilateralism among respondents. The survey results may be used in relevant NATO perception studies, as well as by those who are interested in multilateralism and militarism. However, this survey covers only three countries, and the support scale varies between these three countries significantly (i.e., NATO support); therefore, for future analysis, the survey would provide good methodological examples, but the survey itself does not necessarily represent the majority of the population or best sociological practices to reflect the position of the NATO member states. Using the **Pithya Timed Influence Net (TIN) model**, Alexander H. Levis presents two hypothetical case studies: 1) the Aegean Sea and South China Sea crisis and 2), Ukraine–Russia Interactions in the Donbas Region. These case studies will be particularly useful for those scholars interested in the U.S., China, and Russia. Alexander H. Levis explores the outcomes of different crisis scenarios between those three global powers and their proxies. The TIN model is something that will allow us to look closer at possible security studies in Lithuania. Particularly interesting are case studies of Ukrainian-Russian interactions. A certain critical point could be raised about the adaptability of work after the Russian Federation initiated a full-scale invasion of Ukraine

in 2022. More than three months of active fights have shown clear indications that authoritarian regimes have a far more reaching agenda in using Grey Zone warfare, and some real-life outcomes do not match theoretically proposed scenarios (consolidation of democratic world, impact of the corruption, doctrines, etc.). Thus, the Russian Federation grey zone doctrine cannot be limited to Gerasimov's doctrine, and this only proves how relevant and important complex studies of this kind are. This 234-pages report was released in December 2021. For obvious reasons, chapter No. 9 did not reveal the greatest threats posed by opponents nor Ukraine's ability to successfully defend itself against such challenges.

Chapter No. 10 not only concludes the report, but the outcomes of this report can also provide significant new insights for policymakers on data and empirically tested various tools for managing escalation and deterrence. This chapter might be valuable for both strategic-level (inter-agency) and operational-level (joint military) planning communities. Overall, this study and all methods in use result in an innovative and conceptual **escalation management model**.

Finally, it should be noted that "Escalation Management in the Gray Zone" can be useful not only for researchers interested in this field but will also find its readers among government representatives, non-governmental organizations, and active civil society members interested in the decision-making process, security related studies, and efficiency and transparency. It also can be used by strategists and planners to address the factors that drive complex conflict situations. This may allow planners and strategists to better understand conflicts, as well as to explore the causal dynamics driving international competition. It should also be mentioned that this study covers political, territorial, economic, ethnic, and religious domains. The book will be of interest to the audience of Lithuania and the Baltic States as it examines hybrid threats posed by the Russian Federation to neighboring states. Modern threats are often influenced precisely by non-conventional methods, and a systematic approach to the emerging hybrid warfare in the region has so far been lacking. The work will be of interest to an audience that methodologically examines gray zones and crises. It is especially useful as it presents a set of innovative methodologies previously not utilized in Lithuania.