CYBER-DETERRENCE

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Overview

Deterrence seeks to prevent someone from doing something by shaping their perception of costs and benefits to influence their decision-making

Deterrence strategies

- Deterrence by denial
  - Defense (goal denial) – success uncertain
  - Resilience (benefit denial) – success futile
- Deterrence by imposing costs
  - Penalty/Consequences/Punishment – success costly
  - Dependency/entanglement (success counter-productive)

Deterrence strategies

- General deterrence
  - Dissuade any potential attacker
  - Obama – Dec 2015
- Specific deterrence
  - Keep a specific adversary from acting
  - Biden Aug 2016
- Tailored deterrence
  - Tailored to specific actors, situations, capabilities, and communications
  - Obama – Nov 2016

Targets of deterrence

- Potentially subject to direct deterrence – first party
  - Nation states (peers, near-peers, lesser states)
  - Legitimate/identifiable organizations/group
- Potentially subject to indirect deterrence – second party
  - Proxies/hybrids/sponsors, terrorists/funders, criminals/home jurisdiction, individuals/ISPs,
- Not easily subject to deterrence
  - untraceable/ephemeral
  - “useful idiots”

Actions

- Cyber Attacks (syntactic)
  - Break systems or networks
  - Availability of Critical Infrastructure
- Malicious Cyber Actions
  - Unauthorized access (espionage)
  - Confidentiality of information
- Semantic/outcome (cf. information war)
  - “Weaponized information”
  - Integrity of systems for decision making

US policy is “effects” based

- CA/MCA intended to cause casualties
- CA/MCA “intended to cause significant disruption to the normal functioning of US society or government, including attacks against CI … used to provide key services”
- CA/MCA threatens military C&C, other assets
- MCA that undermines economic security, economic espionage or sabotage

Deterrence by imposing cost

- Requires:
  - Consequential threat
  - Adequately signaled
  - That is credible
  - And relatively incontestable
- Impacts:
  - Discloses victim (disincentive)
  - Punishes attacker (second party)
  - Warns others (third parties)

Consequential threat

- All instrument of national power DIME-LE
  - Whole Government/Whole Nation
- Cross-domain
- Escalation (proportionality)
  - Name and shame (Russia)
  - Law enforcement (China, Iran)
  - Diplomatic/economic sanctions (North Korea)
  - Cyber-attacks (disclosure problem)
  - Kinetic attacks (declared policy but …)

Clear statement

- “Whole point of a doomsday device is lost if you keep it a secret!” Dr. Strangelove 1964

- Signaling dilemma
  - Too precise trigger/red line becomes safe-harbor
  - Elicits precisely calibrated challenges
  - Obliged to respond
  - So, maintain strategic ambiguity for flexibility

  - Cf, US policy (too vague for declaration? CYA?)

Credibility

- Consequences likely to be imposed
  - Known/proven capability
  - Demonstrated intention or will
  - Political environment (bayonet)
- Credible on its face
  - “Kill people who kill bits?”

Contestability

- Effectiveness of deterrence based on its Certainty, Celerity and Severity
  - Probability of being held accountable
  - Swiftness of the punishment
  - Magnitude of the cost

  - ~what are chances of being quickly identified and punished?

- Contestability
  - Challenge (political, legal, normative) (JP Morgan hack)
  - Resistance (counter-force) (Russian banks)

Cyber-domain issues

- Scalability –
  - non-linear/can't calibrate blast radius
- Temporality –
  - instantaneous, no time for early warning or ladders of escalation
- Attribution –
  - ambiguous attribution and motivation (proof discloses sources & methods)
- Digital economics –
  - zero marginal cost of attack, no predictable ROI on offense or defense
- Contestability –
  - no testing, demonstration

Cyber response issues

- Can’t disclose sources and methods of attribution
- Can’t demonstrate capabilities
- Payloads/attacks have to be customized thus arms race (and everyone is “prepping”)
- Duality – civilian/military, offense/defense, probe/attack
- Infinitely asymmetrical (zero day exploit > any defense)

Case Studies

Russia