NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

INFORMATION SERIES

Issue No. 595 August 1, 2024

Addressing Challenges to Allied Assurance in an Emerging Tripolar Nuclear Environment[1]

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Introduction: The International Context

The context in which the United States is managing its alliance relations is unprecedented. Much has been written lately about the rapid deterioration of the international security environment, particularly with regard to China's "breathtaking"[2] nuclear build up and Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.[3] These are fundamental developments requiring a wholesale re-evaluation of the U.S. approach to nuclear deterrence, allied assurance, and management. The problem of maintaining deterrence is more complex today, not only because of China's increasing nuclear arsenal, but also because of the emergence of new nuclear powers, including North Korea. Until recently, the United States has checked out of a nuclear competition, and it shows on its decrepit nuclear infrastructure.

North Korea continues to advance its nuclear weapon and missile programs, including by staging an exercise simulating a "tactical nuclear attack." It is collaborating with Russia in exchange of material and diplomatic support in Moscow's brutal war in Ukraine.

Russia has nuclear superiority over the United States. Take it from the horse's mouth. Putin recently noted "that we have more such nuclear weapons than NATO countries. They know about it and never stop trying to persuade us to start nuclear reduction talks. Like hell we will, right? A popular phrase. Because, putting it in the dry language of economic essays, it is our competitive advantage."[4] And Russia has used it to deter and slow down Western support for Ukraine.

While Russia, China, and North Korea are likely expanding and improving their respective nuclear capabilities, discussions in the United States are usually about whether Washington keeps too many nuclear weapons, whether nuclear weapons disparities matter at all, and how arms control will solve security problems.

How Are U.S. Allies Thinking About These Developments?

After Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, questions related to U.S. allied assurance gained increased salience, not just in Europe, but also in the Indo-Pacific region. The United States was one of the guarantor states of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum.[5] In the document, Ukraine acceded to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and gave up nuclear weapons on its territory in exchange of a pledge that its independence, sovereignty, and existing borders will be respected.[6] Since then, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Kuleba indicated it was a mistake for Ukraine to agree to the Memorandum[7], and former President Bill Clinton said he regretted his role in making Ukraine give up nuclear weapons.[8]

Even though U.S. guarantees to Ukraine are comparatively weaker than those made in other U.S. alliance treaties, countries are closely observing the dynamic of U.S. help to Ukraine. The conflict is somewhat of an indicator of the likelihood the United States would come to allies' defense. On one hand, Ukraine is not a formal ally; on the other, the conflict does not require U.S. direct involvement and therefore providing help should be easier politically than a conflict requiring "boots on the ground."

During the Cold War, the United States invested significant resources in mitigating perceived gaps in its extended deterrence and assurance, including deploying hundreds of thousands of troops and tens of thousands of nuclear warheads to Europe, the primary area of concern at the time. After the end of the Cold War, the West experienced a period of unquestioned U.S. leadership in a new world order. Many hoped this would mark the end of a nation-state conflict, large defense budgets, and nuclear competition. Defense might that America spent decades building up was dismantled in a few years and the defense industrial base atrophied. The prospects for its reconstitution are bleak in the short-term, even if Russia's 2022 invasion served as a wake-up call.

Practically speaking, there is no viable near-term alternative to the United States being the primary guarantor of allied security. That is why some allies concluded that questioning U.S. credibility publicly would be somewhat pointless and perhaps could even send a wrong message to adversaries and increase risks to NATO's frontline allies. Eighty percent of NATO's defense expenditures come from non-EU NATO allies.[9] They would have to spend much more on defense than they are to achieve a similar degree of capability, even accounting for additional investments since February 2022. It would take significant time and effort to develop key conventional enablers, e.g. airlift, that the United States currently provides. Allies could develop their own nuclear capabilities, a prospect discussed more often today than ten or so years ago. But that option is fraught with its own political, diplomatic, and fiscal difficulties.

Lastly, they could collaborate with adversaries, an option perhaps most damaging to U.S. interests. Hungary and Slovakia appear to be choosing this route with Russia (and China), potentially creating difficulties for NATO, which customarily operates by unanimous agreement.[10]

Openly questioning U.S. commitments warrants rather unpleasant follow up questions. If the United States cannot credibly guarantee allied security, which other country (or combination of countries) could do so? The alternatives entail large costs that the publics are unlikely to support. Striking a separate deal with an adversary has all the markings of a future disaster and is unlikely to be supported by the public either, although the pro-Russian shift in Hungary and Slovakia shows a concerning degree of plausibility regarding this scenario. Germany, with its years of pursuing cooperative policy toward Russia, has learnt the hard way that attempts at reconciliation bring more discord when strategic objectives and perceptions are fundamentally at odds, let alone opening one to massive intelligence penetration.[11] That Germany is not applying this hard-obtained knowledge to its relations with China is a matter of significant concern to some NATO countries, including the United States.

The nuclear aspect of allied assurance is not well understood among many allied politicians, even though "Every operational plan in the Department of Defense, and every other capability we have in DOD [Department of Defense], rests on the assumption that strategic deterrence, and in particular nuclear deterrence, … is holding right."[12] Just like the United States, its allies, too, took a break from thinking about nuclear deterrence after the end of the Cold War, and states that joined NATO since have not had to think seriously about it until fairly recently.

Many politicians in allied countries appear to take the credibility of nuclear deterrence for granted. They assume that nuclear deterrence is always there, working, and does not need to be thought of on an everyday basis. Perhaps these attitudes are a variable of these countries not possessing nuclear weapon capabilities. Non-nuclear allies implicitly trust that nuclear powers "know what they are doing with their nuclear weapons."[13] Rather than focusing their primary attention on nuclear guarantees, they are quick to point out the value of a steady U.S. conventional forward presence; permanent, if possible, rotational if need be, and, in the case of allies in Europe, from other NATO countries when the first two options are unavailable.

Perhaps there is a silver lining to so few politicians understanding the nuances of U.S. nuclear policy and infrastructure that supports it. U.S. nuclear modernization is already running into difficulties. A sorry state of the U.S. nuclear production complex should cause significant concerns for those relying on it as a part of deterrence. Perhaps allied politicians would not feel as assured if they wholly comprehended the serious problems that follow decades of neglect.[14]

A few interviewed experts raised concerns about whether the United States will be able to sustain its nuclear weapons modernization program, which is "desperately" needed. [15] They would not welcome the cancellation of the Sea-Launched Cruise Missile-Nuclear (SLCM-N) proposed by the Biden Administration.[16] Other interviewees commented on a lack of diversity in U.S. nuclear arsenal, particularly considering that nuclear deterrence is most likely to break

in a regional context. The United States "would seem to need not only more nuclear warheads, but more kinds of nuclear weapons, and—especially in the Indo-Pacific—more deployment options."[17] The United States ought to be thinking about a modern version of flexible response.[18] "There should be greater urgency in the United States to change things from a political perspective, including accelerating nuclear adaptation that we've done slowly in the past decades, but also in terms of capabilities," according to one interviewed expert.[19]

In a way, nuclear deterrence is a victim of its own success. The tacit assumptions, not wrong, are that first, nuclear deterrence is working in its most important aspect (preventing a nuclear attack against the U.S. homeland and allies). Second, because nuclear deterrence is working, it does not need to be questioned or publicly discussed very much (and in fact, it would be counterproductive to do so), and third, that the United States, the United Kingdom, and France know what they are doing with their nuclear arsenals, and it is not allied governments' place to comment on the particulars. At the end of the day, U.S. taxpayers bear consequences of U.S. armament choices and the details have to be worked out within the U.S. political process. But that does not mean that other counties consider U.S. forces posture decisions unimportant, as the case of the Japanese government's reaction to the retirement of a nuclear-capable Tomahawk illustrates.[20]

Allies are concerned over whether the United States maintains sufficient conventional capabilities to be able to uphold its global obligations. The principal question is whether the United States has (and will continue to have) enough conventional forces to support its alliances in both Europe and Indo-Pacific regions. A related question is how would it prioritize capabilities if it needs to do so, and how steadfast would be its commitment to both theaters. European allies are worried that the U.S. focus on China will diminish U.S. attention to Europe, while allies in the Indo-Pacific worry that U.S. focus on Ukraine diminish its focus on the Indo-Pacific.

The *2023 Strategic Posture Commission Report* stated that, paraphrase, "If the United States and its Allies and partners do not field sufficient conventional forces to achieve this objective, U.S. strategy would need to be altered to increase reliance on nuclear weapons to deter or counter opportunistic or collaborative aggression in the other theater."[21] The United States is self-inflicting some of these woes. This fiscal year, the Congress's inability to pass a regular budget cost the Department of Defense close to $300 million *a day*.[22] The last time Congress passed budget on time was in 1997.[23] The potential need for prioritization, maybe at the expense of one region over another, makes allies nervous and their nervousness is made worse by U.S. think tank and advocacy pieces proposing to focus more on one region over another.[24]

While few politicians understand the nuances of U.S. nuclear weapons policy, conventional forces are a visible sign of U.S. willingness to come to allied defense with more than diplomatic demarches. Therefore, one of the key elements of assurance in the eyes of interviewed experts would be to maintain U.S. forward- deployed forces at least at a current level or close to it.

European NATO members are not uniformly in agreement on the degree of threat, even if they appear so in public statements. If defense spending levels are a reasonable approximate for a state's threat perception, only 18 NATO member states are expected to hit the benchmark

of 2 percent of GDP for defense in 2024[25], up from 11 that met the threshold in 2023.[26] On the other hand, countries that did not meet the benchmark in 2023 include some of the richest members of the Alliance, including France and Germany.

While there is much to be criticized about setting 2 percent of GDP as a benchmark against which to judge whether a country is meeting its defense obligations, the threshold was formalized voluntarily among all member states after Russia's 2014 invasion of Crimea, prior to further deterioration in Europe's security environment. This begs a question whether 2 percent is enough to be able to deter and adequately respond to future conflicts. Perhaps some states' defense budgets cannot absorb such an increase in a short period of time. The challenge is to spend resources well, not just to spend them. Nevertheless, because so few states actually met the benchmark in the years following 2014, it will be a while before states generate new capabilities rather than recapitalize.

The more immediate challenge for those states in Europe that do meet the 2 percent threshold (or have been meeting it for years) is in the U.S. political discourse. They are effectively victims of Germany not paying enough. U.S. security guarantees to NATO member countries ought not depend on how much Germany spends on its defense budget. At the same time, it is plausible to suspect that the more assured U.S. allies feel, the less likely they are to contribute to their own defense. Could NATO states' recent budget increases be interpreted as an indicator of diminishing trust in U.S. security guarantees?[27] Could the UK's recent decision to increase its nuclear warhead cap reflect a perception that U.S. nuclear deterrent is stretched too thin?[28]

Some experts and policy-makers question whether Russia is a threat to NATO at all, given the abysmal performance of its forces in Ukraine. They argue that, irrespective of Moscow's imperialist rhetoric, Russia remains a serious threat only to its non-NATO neighbors, such as Georgia or Moldova.[29] On the other hand, the prospect of Ukraine losing undoubtedly increases NATO states' collective perception of danger.

Russia's capability loss in Ukraine means that it is less of a direct conventional threat to U.S. Indo-Pacific allies. But it also makes it more likely that Russia will increase its reliance on nuclear forces. This will likely create new problems for NATO. The Alliance has grown to see U.S. tactical nuclear weapons as a political rather than military tool.[30]

The disparity in NATO member states' threat perceptions has the potential to cause intra-alliance tensions. "Many countries in Europe wish that war would go away; many countries in Europe say the right things and do things symbolically in Ukraine, but they are not willing to do real things and explain them to their electorate," stated one interviewed expert.[31] States that feel more threatened are those geographically closer to Russia's borders and tend to be among the poorer members of the Alliance. They perceive Russia's conventional threat more acutely and may even see a silver lining in Russia's nuclear forces spending, because that spending is then not available for conventional forces.

While the increases in defense spending are supported by these member states' publics in general, a question "why are we spending so much while much richer countries are not" could overtime become a source of polarization. Moreover, it would not be surprising if this cleavage

became a target for Russia's influence operations. Nevertheless, "remaining cohesive is important so there isn't much of an appetite for airing these grievances in the public; countries don't like that others spend less but there doesn't seem much to be done on the intra-European level," according to one interviewed expert.[32]

Challenges to a Public Debate

The debate regarding U.S. nuclear assurance is often conducted in a broader context of the credibility of U.S. security guarantees, which involve more than just U.S. nuclear weapons. The debate is often poorly informed, particularly in countries that do not possess nuclear weapons themselves.[33] Allied states face the problem of paucity of military officers and government officials conversant on issues related to nuclear deterrence.[34] Sometimes, regional experts are not knowledgeable about nuclear policy issues.[35] There is also a generational divide between people who started their careers during the Cold War and those who started their careers during the post-Cold War era. The Cold War-era experience is not always applicable to today's challenges.

Some allies may prefer to avoid a public debate about most issues related to national security simply because their publics would not support the ongoing budgetary increases if these increases were in the spotlight. But lately, debates about the influence and importance of nuclear weapons have become more common, particularly following Russia's brandishing of nuclear threats against the United States and NATO.[36]

U.S. Domestic Polarization a Significant Source of Allied Concerns

U.S. domestic polarization kept appearing over and over as a major concern among experts interviewed for this article. This has to do with unpredictability and uncertainty that polarization brings into the U.S. political process, for example when Republican Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Michael Johnson refused to put further military assistance for Ukraine to vote for months. The Russians have already been able to take advantage of U.S. assistance delays on the battlefield and make gains in Ukraine. Polarization also fosters erratic decision-making, as witnessed by a lack of enforcement of "red lines" in Syria during the Obama Administration. More recently, the Biden Administration's hasty U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan damaged allied perceptions of U.S. credibility. Even if there may be some deterrence-related benefits to appearing erratic and unpredictable—possibly inducing some caution on the adversary's part—these features are also a significant long-term obstacle to alliance credibility.

Several experts expressed a concern over then-President Donald Trump's transactional management style. This concern was independent of the actual implementation of the Trump Administration's policy. It indicates that because a U.S. president is such a prominent foreign policy actor, his statements have a disproportional impact on how allies perceive U.S. collective willingness to come to their defense. Also important is the fact that it is rather difficult for allied

policymakers to understand the U.S. foreign and defense policy-making process and the different actors that shape it. While U.S. national security experts tend to pay attention to specific programs and capabilities and whether they match the rhetoric, some interviewees emphasized that foreign policymakers and experts tend to focus on general atmosphere and headlines rather than policy implementation.

What Can Washington Do About It?

The United States can take steps that would improve and support its allied assurance efforts. Washington would likely find willing partners, because especially on nuclear issues, U.S. allies tend to follow where the United States leads.

Solid Communication Is a Key to Allied Assurance

All interviewed experts emphasized the value of the United States promoting and sustaining communication with allied governments. Generally speaking, the more communication channels, the better. Some interviewees indicated that to U.S. allies, communication and U.S. declarations could be just as important as the make-up of forces the United States deploys in support of its global commitments. Communication also helps to build trust among allies and the United States overtime. The higher the government official that an allied government communicates with, the better. But other types of communication are valuable, including articles by U.S. government officials published in foreign media or press releases showcasing capabilities of a particular weapon system that mention allies. In fact, "the United States should link programs and weapon system rationales to their missions in the context of extended deterrence and assurance and communicate these," according to Dong-hyun Kim, South Korean National Security Journalist.[37]

Reiteration of U.S. commitment to NATO's Article V can help assure leaders in Europe. The higher the U.S. official making the commitment, the better. The U.S. president (and Commander in Chief) would be the most preferred person to articulate security guarantees. A general sense among NATO allies is that the United States ought to do so often and unequivocally, lest Russian leaders think they might have a window of opportunity to attack the Alliance.

The interviews also made clear that the United States lacks skilled communicators that could connect with the journalists, publics, and lower-level political representatives in allied countries. National security communities are small. U.S. allies welcome its lead on national security discussions, particularly those pertaining to nuclear matters. Washington can also help to develop a cadre of nuclear deterrence experts that could advise their governments in matters of public communication. These experts could help to explain the importance of U.S. nuclear guarantees to the political representatives who then could communicate more effectively with the public. This "bench" of nuclear experts should be deep enough to serve politicians regardless of political affiliation and party (or parties) in power.

Not all interviewed experts agreed that having a public discussion on nuclear deterrence issues was desirable at present due to polarization and a general low level of information. A discussion could split a ruling coalition and further diminish the fragile support for the necessary defense budget increases. An additional challenge is that adversaries are exploiting these potentially polarizing issues in information operations. Nevertheless, by not having a debate in the hope that one would not have to defend his position, he opens himself up to a potentially more successful disinformation attack. An informed debate could also mitigate politicians' ill-informed and ill-coordinated quips that could cause a challenge to assurance.

The United States and allies, including in the Indo-Pacific, should further operationalize and make known the relationship between nuclear and conventional weapons. Expanding the discussion about joint planning and operations to include allied publics would contribute to allied their assurance.

Russia's use of unmanned systems, indiscriminate shelling, and ballistic missiles against civilian targets underscores the importance of missile defense for regional conflicts.[38] The United States, given its capabilities, has a major role to play in terms of providing missile defenses and helping allies think through their utility, even if its capabilities cannot yet fully match Russia's or China's arsenal, especially on the long-range level.

The interviewed experts would welcome any steps the United States can take to increase the visibility of U.S. commitment to extended deterrence. Allies tend to feel safer when the systems are closer rather than far away, even if the main attribute of a system is its stealthiness, as in the case of nuclear submarines. For example, the United States sent an *Ohio*-class to Busan in South Korea in July 2023,[39] even though port calls potentially compromise the survivability of the system, even if temporarily. U.S. strategic bombers B-1B approached Russia's borders in October 2023.[40] With regard to NATO force deployments, "We should be doing more of what we are doing, and we should show more unpredictability to the Russians" to strengthen peacetime deterrence.[41]

Emerging Discussion on Future Dual Capable Aircraft

The United States has a unique opportunity to reinvigorate a strategic debate in countries that are planning on purchasing the F-35 fighter. If a country procuring the F-35 fighter is a NATO member state, it could contribute to NATO's nuclear burden-sharing, and perhaps plan on purchasing nuclear-certified fighters to further complicate Russia's calculus. Moreover, countries that joined NATO after the end of the Cold War might be interested in in expanding their participation in NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements, up to hosting U.S. nuclear forces.

There are other ways short of hosting U.S. nuclear forces in which NATO countries might adjust their posture to complicate Russia's calculus. For example, countries could increase their participation in military exercises that include a nuclear component, such as *Steadfast Noon* or participate in the SNOWCAT (Support of Nuclear Operations With Conventional Air Tactics) program.[42] NATO could designate several Polish airfields as potential Dispersed Operating

Bases to provide additional dispersal options, hence complicating Russia's targeting and "potentially increase survival and sortie rates."[43]

Arms Control Is Taking a Backseat

Even in arms control, the United States appears to have a public relations problem and its continuous efforts to engage Russia and China in the process remain largely overlooked, let alone appreciated. As Colin Gray concluded, arms control is about politics. Russia's stream of nuclear threats against western states supporting for Ukraine makes clear that Russia is not interested in the kind of arms control that would be mutually beneficial to both parties.[44] Even an appearance of dealing with Russia as an equal during an arms control process could be problematic for some governments, and some interviewed experts were of the opinion that arms control is not desirable or feasible at this time. On the other hand, "there might be some value in demonstrating willingness to do arms control to show the Global South we are trying our best,"[45] but allied governments would have to be informed about the process. Several experts interviewed for the article emphasized the importance of refraining from changing U.S. declaratory policy at this so that the option to strike first is preserved. Changes to this policy, particularly if executed without prior consultation with allies, would be highly detrimental to U.S. assurance goals.

Conclusion

There are many steps the United States can take to strengthen assurance and extended deterrence. Doing so is an imperative in an increasing threat environment so that the United States can keep its alliance structure intact. After all, allies are one of the main competitive advantages the United States has over its adversaries.

[1] This analysis draws on interviews the author conducted with experts in Japan, South Korea, and several NATO countries. This article is adapted from March 24, 2024, remarks to the Mackinder Forum. The remarks draw on Michaela Dodge, "Trends in Allied Assurance: Challenges and Questions," *Journal of Policy & Strategy*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, 2024).

[2] Statement of Charles A. Richard, Commander, United States Strategic Command, Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, March 8, 2022, p. 2, available at https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2022%20USSTRATCOM%20Posture%20Statement%20-%20SASC%20Hrg%20FINAL.pdf.

[3] For examples, see Keith B. Payne and David J. Trachtenberg, *Deterrence in the Emerging Threat Environment: What is Different and Why it Matters, Occasional Paper* Vol. 2, No. 8 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, August 2022), available at https://nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/OP-Vol.-2-No.-8.pdf; and Keith B. Payne and Michaela Dodge, "Emerging Challenges to Extended Deterrence, Assurance and the Future of U.S. Alliances," *Information Series*, No. 555 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, June 6, 2023), available at

https://nipp.org/information_series/keith-b-payne-and-michaela-dodge-emerging-challenges-to-extended-deterrence-assurance-and-the-future-of-u-s-alliances-no-555-june-6-2023/.

[4] Vladimir Putin, "Remarks at the Plenary session of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum," June 16, 2023, available at http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/71445.

[5] The other two being the United Kingdom and, ironically, the Russian Federation.

[6] *Memorandum on security assurances in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Budapest,* December 5, 1994, available at https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%203007/Part/volume-3007-I-52241.pdf.

[7] Victor Morton, "Ukraine foreign minister: Giving up nuclear weapons wasn't smart," *The Washington Times*, February 22, 2022, available at https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/feb/22/dmytro-kuleba-ukraine-foreign-minister-giving-nucl/.

[8] Azmi Haroun and Erin Snodgrass, "Bill Clinton says he feels 'terrible' for pushing a 1994 agreement with Russia that resulted in Ukraine giving up its nuclear weapons," *Business Insider*, April 4, 2023, available at https://www.businessinsider.com/bill-clinton-feels-terrible-convincing-ukraine-to-give-up-nukes-2023-4.

[9] Sabine Siebold and John Irish, "NATO chief says Europe meeting spending targets after Trump comments," *Reuters*, February 14, 2024, available at https://www.reuters.com/world/nato-chief-says-18-countries-meet-2-military-spending-target-2024-02-14/.

[10] Eric S. Edelman, David Manning, and Franklin C. Miller, "NATO's Decision Process Has an Achilles' Heel," *New Atlanticist*, March 12, 2024, available at https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/natos-decision-process-has-an-achilles-heel/.

[11] An instructive example are Angela Merkel's (and other German politicians') efforts to further relations with Russia. See Matthew Karnitschnig, "Putin's useful German idiots," *Politico*, March 28, 2022, available at https://www.politico.eu/article/putin-merkel-germany-scholz-foreign-policy-ukraine-war-invasion-nord-stream-2/.

[12] Quoted in, Amy Hudson, "Richard Says Nuclear Deterrence Connected to All Other DOD Capabilities," *Air Force Magazine*, May 7, 2021, available at https://www.airandspaceforces.com/richard-says-nuclear-deterrence-connected-to-all-other-dod-capabilities/.

[13] Zoom interview with Karel Ulík, Permanent Delegation of the Czech Republic to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, December 15, 2023.

[14] The 2023 Strategic Posture Commission Report highlights some of them. See Madelyn Creedon and Jon Kyl, et al., *America's Strategic Posture* (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, 2023), available at https://armedservices.house.gov/sites/republicans.armedservices.house.gov/files/Strategic-Posture-Committee-Report-Final.pdf.

[15] Zoom interview with David Lonsdale, Senior Lecturer, University of Hull, United Kingdom, January 17, 2024.

[16] Valerie Insinna, "Biden administration kills Trump-era nuclear cruise missile program," *Breaking Defense*, March 28, 2022, available at https://breakingdefense.com/2022/03/biden-administration-kills-trump-era-nuclear-cruise-missile-program/.

[17] Zoom interview with Rod Lyon, Program Director for Strategy, Australian Strategic Policy Institute of Canberra. December 7, 2023.

[18] Zoom interview with Lonsdale, op. cit.

[19] This expert wished to remain unnamed.

[20] Matthew R. Costlow and Keith B. Payne, "TLAM-N and SLCM-N: Lessons for Extended Deterrence and Assuring Allies," *Information Series*, No. 567 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, November 15, 2023), available at

https://nipp.org/information_series/matthew-r-costlow-and-keith-b-payne-tlam-n-and-slcm-n-lessons-for-extended-deterrence-and-assuring-allies-no-567-november-15-2023/.

[21] Creedon and Kyl, et al., *America's Strategic Posture*, op. cit.

[22] Elaine McCusker, "Congress is wasting time while danger builds," *The Hill*, February 16, 2024, available at https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/4470044-congress-is-wasting-time-while-danger-builds/.

[23] Gus Wezerek, "20 Years Of Congress's Budget Procrastination, In One Chart," *FiveThirtyEight*, February 7, 2018, available at https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/20-years-of-congresss-budget-procrastination-in-one-chart/.

[24] For a prominent example of this argument see Masahiro Okoshi, "China threat should be bigger U.S. priority than Ukraine: analyst," Nikkei Asia, April 20, 2023, available at https://asia.nikkei.com/Editor-s-Picks/Interview/China-threat-should-be-bigger-U.S.-priority-than-Ukraine-analyst.

[25] James Frater and Joshua Berlinger, "Record 18 NATO states expected to meet 2% defense spending threshold this year," *CNN*, February 14, 2024, available at https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/14/europe/nato-defense-spending-target-intl/index.html.

[26] NATO Public Diplomacy Division, "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014-2023)," July 7, 2023, available at https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2023/7/pdf/230707-def-exp-2023-en.pdf.

[27] Michael Hochberg and Leonard Hochberg, " Our Restraint Destroys Your Deterrence," *RealClear Defense*, February 10, 2024, available at https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2024/02/10/our_restraint_destroys_your_deterrence_1010986.html.

[28] Claire Mills, "Integrated Review 2021: Increasing the cap on the UK's nuclear stockpile," *House of Commons Library*, March 19, 2021, available at https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9175/.

[29] Zoom Interview with Michael Rühle, former Head, Climate and Energy Security Section, Emerging Security Challenges Division, NATO, December 13, 2023.

[30] Amanda Macias, "U.S. intel chiefs warn Putin is expanding his nuclear weapons arsenal as the war in Ukraine drags on," *CNBC*, March 28, 2023, available at https://www.cnbc.com/2023/03/08/us-intel-chiefs-warn-putin-is-becoming-more-reliant-on-nuclear-weapons.html.

[31] A quote in the New York Times alludes to the same dynamic: "Germans, and even the Social Democrats, "have come to the realization that Germany lives in the real world and that hard power matters," said Charles A. Kupchan, a Europe expert at Georgetown University. "At the same time," he said, "there's still this hope that this is all just a bad dream, and Germans will wake up and be back in the old world." Steven Erlanger and David E. Sanger, "Germany Braces for Decades of Confrontation With Russia," *The New York Times*, February 3, 2024; available at https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/03/world/europe/germany-russia.html.

[32] This interviewed expert wished to remain anonymous.

[33] As Bruno Tertrais pointed out, France is a special case, because "We are not gonna have a public debate on U.S. nuclear policy in France, and we don't need to; it is not really a relevant question for France."

[34] Zoom interview with Beatrice Heuser, Professor, University of Glasgow, November 27, 2023.

[35] Zoom interview with Bo Ram Kwon, Associate Research Fellow, Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, December 4, 2023.

[36] For a related discussion, see Michaela Dodge, "What Do Russia's Nuclear Threats Tell Us About Arms Control Prospects?" *Occasional Paper*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, January 2024), available at https://nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Vol.-4-No.-1.pdf. f

[37] Zoom interview with Dong-hyun Kim, South Korean National Security Journalist, December 22, 2023.

[38] For an elaboration of this point, see Michaela Dodge, "Will We Heed Lessons from Russia's War in Ukraine?" in David Trachtenberg (eds.), "Lessons Learned from Russia's Full-Scale Invasion of Ukraine," *Occasional Paper*, Vol. 3,

No. 10 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, October 2023), pp. 29-40, available at https://nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/OP-Vol.-3-No.-10.pdf.

[39] Heather Mongilio, "Guided-Missile Submarine USS Michigan Pulls Into South Korea," *USNI News*, June 16, 2023, available at https://news.usni.org/2023/06/16/guided-missile-submarine-uss-michigan-pulls-into-south-korea.

[40] Maxim Rodionov, "Russia sends fighter jets as two US bombers, drone approach its border," *Reuters*, October 24, 2023, available at https://www.reuters.com/world/russia-sends-fighter-jets-two-us-bombers-drone-approach-its-border-2023-10-24/.

[41] Zoom interview with Ulík, op. cit.

[42] "Poland's bid to participate in NATO nuclear sharing," *International Institute for Security Studies*, September 2023, available at https://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-comments/2023/polands-bid-to-participate-in-nato-nuclear-sharing/.

[43] Ibid.

[44] For a more detailed elaboration of this argument, see Michaela Dodge, "What Do Russia's Nuclear Threats Tell Us About Arms Control Prospects?" *Information Series*, No. 564 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, October 2, 2023), available at https://nipp.org/information_series/michaela-dodge-what-do-russias-nuclear-threats-tell-us-about-arms-control-prospects-no-564-october-2-2023/.

[45] Zoom interview with Ulík, op. cit.

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