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Document No. 1. Congressional Testimony of James E. Fanell, CAPT USN (Retired) before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Accountability Hearing on “Defending America from the Chinese Communist Party’s Political Warfare, Part II” June 26, 2024, Select Excerpts

Document No. 2. Washington Summit Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington, D.C., July 10, 2024, Select Excerpts

Document No. 3. Sweden’s National Security Strategy 2024, Select Excerpts

Document No. 4. Summary of the Commission on the 2024 National Defense Strategy, Select Excerpts

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B.A. Wellnitz, Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory panel on tactical nuclear warfare. Report of the fifth meeting (short title: TAC-5), April 5-6, 1977



EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to the third issue of Volume 4 of National Institute's online *Journal of Policy & Strategy*—a quarterly, peer-reviewed publication. In this issue's "Analysis" section, readers will find thoughtful articles by Mark Schneider, Michael Rühle, Kyle Balzer, and Masoud Kazemzadeh and Penny Watson. The topics include China's nuclear arsenal, Germany's views on extended deterrence, Iran's role in the Middle East conflict, and James Schlesinger's impact on the shift in U.S. nuclear policy toward tailored deterrence.

This issue also includes interviews with David Lonsdale, Senior Lecturer at the University of Hull in the United Kingdom and Bruno Tertrais, Deputy Director of the Foundation for Strategic Research in Paris. Dr. Lonsdale discusses the value of extended deterrence and its importance in the Anglo-American security relationship. He also comments on the impact of Russian and Chinese nuclear force developments on UK defense policy. Dr. Tertrais assesses the French role in NATO and addresses concerns over the credibility of the U.S. extended nuclear deterrent. He also discusses implications for the alliance of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the issue of NATO burdensharing, and the relevance of arms control.

This issue of the *Journal of Policy & Strategy* also provides proceedings from National Institute's regular online symposia, or "webinars," moderated by David Trachtenberg. These proceedings are drawn from three different symposia held in May, June, and July 2024 that focused on: "Adapting U.S. Missile Defense Policy to Evolving Threats"; "The Impact of Arms Control on Extended Deterrence and Assurance"; and "Emergence of A New Quad: The Growing Entente Between China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran."

This issue's "Literature Review" includes a review of five books: Keith Payne reviews *Duty to Deter: American Nuclear Deterrence and the Just War Doctrine*, by Rebecah Heinrichs. Michaela Dodge contributes reviews of Ilan Berman's book, *Challenging Moscow's Message* and Matthew Kroenig's and Dan Negrea's book, *We Win, They Lose: Republican Foreign Policy & the New Cold War*. David Trachtenberg reviews *America's Cold Warrior: Paul Nitze and National Security from Roosevelt to Reagan*, by James Graham Wilson. And Matthew Costlow reviews Aaron Bateman's book, *Weapons in Space: Technology, Politics, and the Rise and Fall of the Strategic Defense Initiative*.

The "Documentation" section includes select excerpts from the June 26, 2024 Congressional Testimony of James E. Fanell, CAPT USN (Retired) before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Accountability Hearing on "Defending America from the Chinese Communist Party's Political Warfare, Part II"; portions of the Washington Summit Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington, D.C. on July 10, 2024; relevant passages from Sweden's National Security Strategy, published in July 2024; and select excerpts from the summary of the 2024 report of the *Commission on the National Defense Strategy*.

Finally, this issue's "From the Archive" section presents a 1977 report by B.A. Wellnitz on the fifth meeting of the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory panel on tactical nuclear weapons. The proceedings of the panel meeting focus on the European view of nuclear deterrence, defense, and arms control, summarizing the thinking and logic of the late Professor Colin Gray on the subject, which remains insightful and relevant almost half a century later.

As always, the editors strive to make each issue of the *Journal of Policy & Strategy* informative and useful to our readers and hope that you find great value in the contents of this issue.





ANALYSIS

CHINA'S NUCLEAR DELIVERY VEHICLES

Mark B. Schneider

China has the world's largest missile modernization program. Delivery vehicle modernization and force expansion are the most visible aspects of China's nuclear efforts. With the exception of the possibly dual-capable (nuclear and conventional) DF-27 ICBM/IRBM, all Chinese strategic missiles are nuclear armed. The size of the Chinese nuclear arsenal will be significantly impacted by the scale of China's missile and bomber programs

In 2021, then-Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) General John Hyten pointed out that over the past five years the United States had conducted nine hypersonic missile tests while China had done hundreds.¹ In 2014, Lee Fuell, a technical intelligence specialist with Air Force Intelligence told the Congressional China Commission that, "At this point" Air Force Intelligence believes that China's Wu-14 hypersonic vehicle is "associated with their nuclear deterrent forces," although it could also stage conventional strikes.² (U.S. hypersonic missiles are conventional.)³ In 2021, the *Financial Times* (in a story later confirmed) reported that, "China tested a nuclear-capable hypersonic missile in August [2021] that circled the globe before speeding towards its target, demonstrating an advanced space capability that caught U.S. intelligence by surprise."⁴

The annual Department of Defense (DoD) reports are the most authoritative unclassified treatments on China's military power but have a poor record in assessing China's nuclear threat. In combination, the 2022 and 2023 DoD reports stated that China had 500+ "operational" nuclear warheads in May 2023, growing to 1,000+ "operational" warheads in 2030, and is "on track to exceed previous projections," i.e., about 1,500 warheads in 2035.⁵

¹ Arpan Rai, "Retiring top general says US has done 9 tests of hypersonic weapons while China does hundreds," *The Independent*, October 29, 2021, available at <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/general-china-hypersonic-missile-tests-b1947528.html>.

² Bill Gertz, "Inside the Ring: Pentagon goes hypersonic with long-range rapid attack weapon," *The Washington Times*, March 19, 2014, available at <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/mar/19/inside-the-ring-pentagon-goes-hypersonic-with-long/>.

³ Bill Gertz, "China now leads the world in nuclear and conventional hypersonic missiles, U.S. intelligence warns," *The Washington Times*, March 12, 2024, available at <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2024/mar/12/china-now-leads-world-nuclear-and-conventional-hyp/>.

⁴ Demetri Sevastopulo and Kathrin Hille, "China tests new space capability with hypersonic missile," *Financial Times*, October 16, 2021, available at <https://www.ft.com/content/ba0a3cde-719b-4040-93cb-a486e1f843fb>.

⁵ Mark B. Schneider, "Will the Pentagon Ever Get Serious About the Size of China's Nuclear Force?," *Real Clear Defense*, December 15, 2022, available at https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2022/12/15/will_the_pentagon_ever_get_serious_about_the_size_of_chinas_nuclear_force_870335.html.: Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2023* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, October 2023), pp. VIII, 55, 59, 67, 104, 110, 111, 188, available at <https://media.defense.gov/2023/Oct/19/2003323409/-1/-1/2023-MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA.PDF>.: Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2022* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 2022), p. 98, available at <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Nov/29/2003122279/-1/-1/2022-MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA.PDF>.



These numbers may undercount China’s nuclear arsenal significantly. If DoD’s warhead projections are correct, China will achieve rough numerical parity with the United States in the mid-2030s. If the DoD is wrong, China may achieve superiority—several thousand nuclear weapons—within a few years. If so, Washington will likely be much less capable of deterring China than is expected based on DoD’s estimates.

The annual Federation of American Scientists (FAS) China nuclear report is often treated in the media as authoritative, but it may substantially undercount China’s nuclear weapons and future force growth.

The Chinese ICBM Force

The following chart from the October 2023 DoD China military report provides estimates of the number of Chinese land-based nuclear missile launchers and missiles.⁶

CHINA'S ROCKET FORCE			
System	Launchers	Missiles	Estimated Range
ICBM	500	350	>5,500 km
IRBM	250	500	3,000-5,500 km
MRBM	300	1,000	1,000-3000 km
SRBM	200	1,000	300-1,000 km
GLCM	150	300	>1,500 km

The chart contained important new information. It elaborated on the notification to Congress that China had exceeded the U.S. ICBM force.⁷ The DoD’s conclusion that China is building ICBM launchers faster than it is building missiles and building ICBMs faster than warheads creates the potential for large undercounting.

The new Chinese ICBMs are more modern and reportedly have much greater throw-weight than the 1970-vintage 1,150-kilogram throw-weight three warhead U.S. Minuteman III (which has been downgraded to one warhead).⁸ Reportedly, 1) the MIRVed DF-5 has a

⁶ *Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2023*, op. cit., p. 67.

⁷ Bryan Harris, “China surpasses US in number of ICBM launchers,” *Defense News.com*, February 7, 2023, available at <https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2023/02/07/china-surpasses-us-in-number-of-icbm-launchers/>.

⁸ “The Minuteman III ICBM,” *Nuclear Weapons Archive*, October 7, 1997, available at <https://nuclearweaponarchive.org/Usa/Weapons/Mmiii.html>.

throw-weight of 3,000-4,000-kilograms.⁹ 2) the newer version of the DF-31 has a throw-weight of 1,750-kilograms,¹⁰ and 3) the MIRVed DF-41 has a throw-weight of 2,500-kilograms.¹¹ (The Chinese People's Liberation Army Rocket Force's [PLARF] disclosure of a six 650-kiloton and ten 150-kiloton warhead option for the DF-41¹² suggests to this author it has a throw-weight of about 3,200-kilograms.)

The high throw-weights of China's ICBMs mean it can potentially deploy two-three times as many warheads than assessed by the DoD in 2035.

Chinese ICBM Silos

The new ICBM silos were unexpected. The 2023 DoD China report said there are "at least 300" completed ICBM silos, some probably armed with DF-31s (the oldest modern Chinese ICBM), despite the fact they could house the more capable DF-41.¹³ The report indicated China is "...building more silos for DF-5 class ICBMs; increasing the number of brigades while simultaneously increasing the number of launchers per brigade – though there is no indication this project will approach the size or numbers of the solid propellant missile silos."¹⁴

The 2024 FAS China nuclear report said China had "320 new silos for solid-fueled ICBMs [DF-31s and DF-41s]" and "will increase the number of DF-5 [which the DoD credits with "up to five" warheads] silos from 18 to 48."¹⁵ In 2022, then-STRATCOM Commander Admiral Charles Richard said there would be "...at least 360 solid fueled intercontinental ballistic missile silos..."¹⁶ Hence, the difference in the reported silo numbers is modest. Much more important is the missile deployed in the silos (DF-31 vs. DF-41) and whether the DF-41 carries three warheads, according to DoD, or up to ten as stated by senior U.S. military leaders.¹⁷

⁹ Center for Strategic and International Studies, "DF-5" (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 23, 2024), available at <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/df-5-ab/>.

¹⁰ Center for Strategic and International Studies, "DF-31 (Dong Feng-31 / CSS-10)" (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 23, 2024), available at <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/df-31/>.

¹¹ Center for Strategic and International Studies, "DF-41 (Dong Feng-41 / CSS-X-20)" (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 23, 2024), available at <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/df-41/>.

¹² Colonel (Ret.) Vinayak Bhat, "#China #PLARF ppt slide #DF41 range14000km 1,6or10MIRVs yields 1x1600kg 5.5megaton," March 6, 2017, available at <https://x.com/rajfortyseven/status/838921803057758208>.

¹³ *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2023*, op. cit., pp. 104, 107.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

¹⁵ Hans M. Kristensen, Matt Korda, Eliana Johns, and Mackenzie Knight, "Chinese nuclear weapons, 2024," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, January 15, 2024, pp. 50, 62, available at <https://thebulletin.org/premium/2024-01/chinese-nuclear-weapons-2024/>.

¹⁶ "Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing: Nuclear Weapons Council," May 4, 2022, available at <https://www.stratcom.mil/Media/Speeches/Article/3022885/senate-armed-services-committee-hearing-nuclear-weapons-council/>.

¹⁷ *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2023*, op. cit., p. 107; and, Bill Gertz, "China Tests Missile With 10 Warheads," *Free Beacon.com*, January 31, 2007, available at <https://freebeacon.com/national-security/china-tests-missile-10-warheads/>.

In 2021, then-Vice Chairman of the JCS General John Hyten said that the DF-41 could carry 10 warheads.¹⁸ In 2022, Admiral Richard said the new silos could house missiles with “up to 10 warheads on top of it.”¹⁹ Bill Gertz rightly pointed out that, “If 10 warheads are deployed on the DF-41s in the new silos, China’s warhead level will increase to more than 4,000 warheads on its DF-41s alone.”²⁰

China is reportedly developing a new heavy ICBM which could carry many more warheads than even the numbers presented by Gen. Hyten and ADM Richard. It will be discussed below. China expert Richard Fisher believes China’s new silos may be large enough to house this new heavy missile.²¹

Since there is a MIRVed version of the DF-31,²² deployment of the more capable DF-41 in the new silos is not necessary to achieve DoD’s 1,500 warheads in 2035. If the silos house DF-41s, the number of Chinese warheads likely is considerably higher and their main mission may be a counterforce first strike against the United States.

Even if the new silos are being built from super concrete, they are obviously less survivable than China’s so-called Underground Great Wall (UGW), 5,000-km of missile tunnels reportedly hundreds of meters underground,²³ which protect Chinese mobile ICBMs. The rationalization of the UGW as defensive²⁴ was based upon the discredited belief that China would maintain a small nuclear force. The astronomically expensive UGW is probably 50-100 times longer than is necessary to protect any plausible number of Chinese mobile ICBMs or, indeed, the entire Chinese mobile missile force. Indeed, in 2011, this author, in Congressional testimony, noted that irrespective of the number of U.S. nuclear weapons, it was “virtually impossible to target.”²⁵

¹⁸ John Grady, “Hyten: China’s ‘Unprecedented Nuclear Modernization’ Chief Concern,” *USNI News*, September 14, 2021, available at <https://news.usni.org/2021/09/14/hyten-chinas-unprecedented-nuclear-modernization-chief-concern>.

¹⁹ Admiral Charles Richard, Speech, 2022 Space and Missile Defense Symposium, August 11, 2022, available at <https://www.stratcom.mil/Media/Speeches/Article/3126694/2022-space-and-missile-defense-symposium/>.

²⁰ Bill Gertz, “EXCLUSIVE: China building third missile field for hundreds of new ICBMs,” *The Washington Times*, August 12, 2021, available at <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/aug/12/china-engaged-breathtaking-nuclear-breakout-us-str/>.

²¹ “23rd Nuclear Triad Symposium,” *YouTube*, July 22, 2022, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-77jWb8mH8>.

²² General Anthony Cotton, “STATEMENT OF ANTHONY J. COTTON COMMANDER UNITED STATES STRATEGIC COMMAND BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES 9 MARCH 2023,” p. 6, available at <https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2023%20USSTRATCOM%20Congressional%20Posture%20Statement%20-%20SASC.pdf>.

²³ Hui Zhang, “The defensive nature of China’s ‘underground great wall,’” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, January 16, 2012, available at <https://thebulletin.org/2012/01/the-defensive-nature-of-chinas-underground-great-wall/0>.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, House Armed Services Committee, “NUCLEAR WEAPONS MODERNIZATION IN RUSSIA AND CHINA: UNDERSTANDING IMPACTS TO THE UNITED STATES,” H.A.S.C. No. 112-78, October 14, 2011, available at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-112hhrg71449/html/CHRG-112hhrg71449.htm>.

Chinese Mobile ICBMs and IRBMs

In the context of China's dynamic nuclear expansion, there is always uncertainty concerning deployed mobile missile numbers because they are very difficult to count. China's UGW creates a new level of monitoring problems because of its gigantic concealment potential.

Until the discovery of the new silos, it was believed that China had switched to mobile ICBMs and for that reason built the UGW. China has DF-31 and DF-41 mobile ICBMs and DF-26 mobile IRBMs. The 2023 DoD Rocket Force chart reproduced above suggests about 150 Chinese mobile ICBMs and it indicates there are 250 IRBM launchers and 500 missiles. The chart indicates that, given the number of IRBMs, China has a substantial reload capability—two-five missiles per launcher. However, it apparently assumes about 150 empty ICBM launchers and no reload missiles for mobile ICBMs, which creates the real possibility for considerable undercounting in DoD's 2023 estimate of 500+ warheads.

The 2023 DoD China report provides no number for DF-41 launchers or missiles. The 2024 FAS estimate of 28 deployed DF-41s apparently assumes DF-41 brigades with six launchers.²⁶ This is based on "the number of garages at the bases..."²⁷ Missile base garages are not necessarily a good indicator of deployment numbers if China is attempting to hide its DF-41 numbers. (The Russians demonstrated it could base SS-25 mobile ICBMs outside of normal base facilities in one of its START Treaty violations.)²⁸ Fisher estimates 24 DF-41s per brigade.²⁹

China reportedly has a rail mobile DF-41 program.³⁰ Fisher projects up to 100 possible rail-mobile DF-41s by 2030 or soon after.³¹ If true, this would further increase Chinese ICBM launcher and warhead numbers over those presented in DoD and FAS reports.

The 2023 DoD report states that "...sources indicate a 'long-range' DF-27 ballistic missile is in development," with a range of "...5,000-8,000 km, which means the DF-27 could be a new IRBM or ICBM."³² The *South China Morning Post* said it can attack all major U.S. Pacific bases and *has been operational for four years*.³³ The 2024 FAS China nuclear report stated "...a US intelligence assessment of February 2023 notes that 'land attack and antiship

²⁶ Kristensen, Korda, Johns, and Knight, "Chinese nuclear weapons, 2024," op. cit., pp. 50, 59.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 64.

²⁸ Department of State, *Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control and Nonproliferation Agreements and Commitments* (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, August 2005), p. 13, available at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/52113.pdf>.

²⁹ Richard Fisher, "PLA Sprint To Nuclear Superiority: A New Existential Threat," Mitchell Institute Nuclear Deterrence Forum, August 5, 2021, mimeo, Slide 2.

³⁰ Kristensen, Korda, Johns, and Knight, "Chinese nuclear weapons, 2024," op. cit., p. 64.

³¹ "23rd Nuclear Triad Symposium," op. cit.

³² *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2023*, op. cit., p. 67.

³³ Minnie Chan, "China's advanced DF-27 hypersonic missile which can strike parts of US has been in service for several years, source says," *South China Morning Post*, May 20, 2023, available at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3221198/chinas-advanced-df-27-hypersonic-missile-which-can-strike-parts-us-has-been-service-several-years>.

variants [of the DF-27] likely were fielded in limited numbers in 2022....”³⁴ It also noted that a 2021 Chinese exercise possibly featured the DF-27.³⁵ This may be another instance of the DoD report being years behind open press reporting.

If the DF-27 has a range of 8,000 km, it is probably a follow-on to the DF-31, which was apparently originally designed against Russia. However, it could target Hawaii and Alaska. The DF-27 may be the first dual-capable ICBM, also carrying an anti-carrier hypersonic vehicle.³⁶ Bill Gertz writes that leaked Pentagon documents say the missile is “an intermediate-range, ballistic missile-class, ‘multi-role’ hypersonic glide vehicle....”³⁷ China is rumored to be developing an advanced version of the DF-27 called the DF-27A with improved accuracy and range.³⁸

Any missile’s range can be extended by mounting a light nuclear warhead. Conversely, a heavy conventional warhead could reduce it to IRBM range. The DF-27 is reportedly much lighter than the DF-31A,³⁹ hence, it is likely more mobile. Its hypersonic capability would make it important, but it apparently is not a major driver of Chinese nuclear weapons numbers unless it is given a MIRV capability. However, if operational, it is not being counted in any of the DoD or FAS estimates of existing Chinese nuclear weapons.

Fisher says Chinese sources report the development of a new mobile ICBM “[s]ometimes called the DF-45 or DF-51, [and] it is clearly intended to outperform the DF-41.”⁴⁰ He also says that in 2020 China shut down the blogs that were reporting about it.⁴¹ Bill Gertz reported, “The DF-45 would have a takeoff weight of 112 tons and a payload weighing 3.6 tons and be armed with seven 650-kiloton warheads.”⁴² It is unclear whether the DF-45/DF-51 is one or two systems. If it is two systems, one might be a replacement for the DF-41 and the other for the DF-5.

There are other reports of a DF-51. For example, there is a passing reference to it in a 2006 article in a Hong Kong publication.⁴³ One report indicates that: 1) its launch-weight is 130-tons, 2) it can carry three five- megaton MIRVs, and 3) it can carry China’s Fractional

³⁴ Kristensen, Korda, Johns, and Knight, “Chinese nuclear weapons, 2024,” op. cit., p. 64.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance, “DF-27,” *Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance*, April 2023, available at <https://missiledefenseadvocacy.org/missile-threat-and-proliferation/todays-missile-threat/china/df-27/>; and, George Allison, “America has the medicine for the DF-27 ‘aircraft carrier killer’ hypersonic missile,” *Telegraph.com*, March 4, 2024, available at <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/03/04/usa-hypersonic-missile-defence-htbss-satellites-aegis-gpi/>.

³⁷ Bill Gertz, “Documents leaked by airman reveal China’s advanced hypersonic arms,” *The Washington Times*, April 19, 2023, available at <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2023/apr/19/inside-ring-documents-leaked-airman-jack-teixeira/>.

³⁸ “DF-27 Missile System,” *China Arms.com*, June 21, 2024, available at <https://www.china-arms.com/2023/07/df27/>.

³⁹ “DF-27,” op. cit.

⁴⁰ Bill Gertz, “China building new generation of mobile ICBMs,” *The Washington Times*, March 6, 2024, available at <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2024/mar/6/exclusive-china-building-new-generation-of-mobile/>.

⁴¹ “23rd Nuclear Triad Symposium,” op. cit.

⁴² Gertz, “China building new generation of mobile ICBMs,” op. cit.

⁴³ Ibid. In 2017, the PLARF reported a six 650-kiloton warhead option for the DF-41.

⁴⁴ Dr. Mark B. Schneider, “Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission Hearing on ‘Developments in China’ Cyber and Nuclear Capabilities,” March 26, 2012, p. 5, available at <https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/3.26.12schneider.pdf>.

Orbital Bombardment System.⁴⁴ Another report says it has a range of 15,000-km and can carry 14 warheads.⁴⁵ The U.K.'s *Telegraph.com* says 10 warheads.⁴⁶ Both ten and 14 relatively light warheads are reasonable numbers for a missile more capable than the DF-41.

Chinese Ballistic Missile Submarines

China may be building a ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) force about as large as that of the United States or Russia. All Chinese SSBNs can carry MIRVed SLBMs and China is not arms control constrained on MIRV numbers.

DoD's assessment of China's SSBN capability appears to be one of its most serious threat assessment blunders. In 2020, the DoD assessed eight Chinese SSBNs in 2030 and did not project MIRVed SLBMs until the late 2020s.⁴⁷ Until November 2022, DoD did not mention JL-3 deployment on China's type 094 SSBNs. Yet, in August 2021, Admiral Richard said that there were "...six second-generation JIN-class ballistic missile submarines with JL-3 SLBMs...."⁴⁸ The DoD's May 2023 500+ warhead estimate could not have assumed that JL-3s were MIRVed, which is explicitly stated in the 2024 FAS report.⁴⁹ Yet in 2020, the DIA assessed the JL-3 carried "multiple warheads."⁵⁰

Many of the differences among the alternative estimates of the growth of China's nuclear warheads are based upon different assessments of the number of warheads on Chinese MIRVed ICBMs and SLBMs. These are illustrated in the following chart:

⁴⁴ "[R&D] DF-51/Chinese Fractional Orbital Bombardment System," *Reddit.com*, 2021, available at https://www.reddit.com/r/GlobalPowers/comments/qfrwm3/rd_df51chinese_fractional_orbital_bombardment/?rdt=35512.

⁴⁵ "Why has the Dongfeng-51, which has a range of 15,000 kilometers and carries 14 warheads, become a nightmare for the West? Can't intercept at all?," *INF News*, July 2, 2023, available at <https://inf.news/en/military/42b0da027e7d87d73d57140c8d6de592.html>.

⁴⁶ Roland Oliphant and Freddie Hayward, "China replaces North Korea as Japan's top security threat in annual military assessment," *Telegraph.com*, September 27, 2019, available at <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/09/27/japan-sees-china-bigger-threat-north-korea-report-indicates/>.

⁴⁷ Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2020), p. 45, available at <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>.

⁴⁸ Admiral Charles Richard, Speech at "2021 Space and Missile Defense Symposium," August 23, 2021, available at <https://www.stratcom.mil/Media/Speeches/Article/2742875/2021-space-and-missile-defense-symposium/>.

⁴⁹ Kristensen, Korda, Johns, and Knight, "Chinese nuclear weapons, 2024," op. cit., p. 50.

⁵⁰ Defense Intelligence Ballistic Missile Analysis Committee, *2020 Ballistic and Cruise Missile Threat* (Wright-Patterson AFB, OH: NASIC, July 2020), p. 33, available at https://media.defense.gov/2021/Jan/11/2002563190/-1/-1/1/2020%20BALLISTIC%20AND%20CRUISE%20MISSILE%20THREAT_FINAL_2OCT_REDUCEDFILE.PDF.

MAXIMUM WARHEAD LOAD FOR CHINA'S MULTIPLE WARHEAD (MIRVed) MISSILES				
Type	DoD	FAS	Alternative Estimates	Sources for Alternative
DF-5	5	5	6	Fisher
DF-41	3	3	10	General Hyten, Admiral Richard, Liberation Army Rocket Force
DF-45/DF-51	n/a ^a	n/a ^a	7-14	Gertz, Fisher, other press reports
DF-31A	1 ^b	1	3? ^c	General Cotton ^d
JL-2A	1 ^b	1	3	People's Liberation Army Rocket Force, Asia press reports
JL-3	1 ^b	"multiple warheads" ^e	3-10	Fisher, Defense Intelligence Agency says "multiple warheads"

a Does not mention the DF-45/DF-51. May be one type of missile or two.

b Does not list it as a MIRVed missile.

c No nation has built a MIRVed missile that carries less than three warheads because of the weight of the MIRV bus.

d General Cotton indicated it was MIRVed but gave no warhead number.

e While the FAS attributes "multiple warheads" to the JL-3, it counts it as one in its warhead chart.

The 2023 DoD China report said China had: 1) "six operational TYPE 094 JIN-class SSBNs" armed with up to 12 JL-2 or JL-3 missiles, 2) that the "next generation SSBN, the TYPE 096 is expected to enter service the late 2020s or early 2030s," and is "probably intended to field MIRVed SLBMs," and 3) will be operated concurrently with the 094.⁵¹ It provides no estimate for the size of the 096 force. Fisher predicts China may build six 096 SSBNs with 14 missiles each and noted that Chinese sources say three-ten warheads.⁵² The Global Security Organization reports that one source said five-seven 35-kiloton MIRVs.⁵³ In 2019, Bill Gertz reported a JL-3 test with a hypersonic vehicle.⁵⁴

⁵¹ *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2023*, op. cit., pp. 59, 108.

⁵² "23rd Nuclear Triad Symposium," op. cit.

⁵³ "Julang-3 (JL-3) / JL-2C," *Global Security.org*, July 19, 2019, available at <https://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/world/china/jl-3.htm>.

⁵⁴ Bill Gertz, "China Tests New Sub-Launched Strategic Missile," *Washington Free Beacon*, June 13, 2019, available at <https://freebeacon.com/national-security/china-tests-new-sub-launched-strategic-missile/>.

The older JL-2 SLBM is counted as a single warhead missile.⁵⁵ Yet, in 2017, the PLARF said JL-2A SLBM carried three 60-kiloton warheads.⁵⁶

The pattern of Chinese modernization suggests a successor to the JL-3 SLBM – either an improved version or a JL-4 for the new 096 missile submarine. While ambiguous, the DoD reports may be assuming this.

Chinese Nuclear Bombers

The Chinese bomber force is made up of H-6 bombers, based on the Soviet Tu-16. The “heavily reworked” H-6K, introduced in 2006, has advanced avionics, upgraded engines, improved range, higher speed and, since 2018, the ability to launch six CJ-20s cruise missiles.⁵⁷

The recent DoD reports may substantially undercount the number of Chinese bomber nuclear weapons. DoD is assessing the H-6N as China’s only nuclear-capable bomber. It carries nuclear-capable 3,000-km range DF-21 ballistic missiles.⁵⁸ DoD described it as restoring China’s nuclear bomber capability.⁵⁹ This capability may never have gone away. China reportedly retained a regiment of older H-6 bombers for the nuclear mission.⁶⁰ The 2019 DoD China report said, “Since at least 2016, Chinese media have been referring to the H-6K as a dual nuclear-conventional bomber.”⁶¹ The 2024 FAS report credits China’s H-6K with nuclear bombs.⁶² In July 2024, China’s military released a photograph of the H-6K carrying four YJ-21 1,500-km range ballistic missiles.⁶³ *The War Zone* reports that the Pentagon assesses that the YJ-21 “...is likely available in nuclear-capable and conventionally armed versions,” and has an anti-ship and a land-attack capability.⁶⁴

DoD’s May 2023 500+ warhead assessment apparently assumes no Chinese nuclear-capable cruise missiles. Yet, a declassified 1995 CIA report stated that a 1995 Chinese

⁵⁵ 2020 *Ballistic and Cruise Missile Threat*, op. cit., p. 33.

⁵⁶ “China Ballistic Missiles and Nuclear Arms Threat,” *Sino Defense Forum*, September 25, 2017, available at <https://www.sinodefenceforum.com/china-ballistic-missiles-and-nuclear-arms-thread.t5881/page-233>.

⁵⁷ Ryan Cunningham, *China Military Aircraft* (London: Amber Books Ltd., 2023), p. 48; and, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2023*, op. cit., p. 68.

⁵⁸ “Ankit Panda, “Revealed: China’s Nuclear-Capable Air-Launched Ballistic Missile,” *The Diplomat*, April 10, 2018, available at <https://thediplomat.com/2018/04/revealed-chinas-nuclear-capable-air-launched-ballistic-missile/>.

⁵⁹ “STATEMENT OF CHARLES A. RICHARD COMMANDER UNITED STATES STRATEGIC COMMAND BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,” April 20, 2021, available at <https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Richard04.20.2021.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Andreas Rupprecht, “The Dragons’ Wings,” *Air Combat*, February 2012, p. 63.

⁶¹ Office of the Secretary of Defense “Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2019” (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2019), p. 41, available at https://media.defense.gov/2019/May/02/2002127082/-1/-1/1/2019_CHINA_MILITARY_POWER_REPORT.pdf.

⁶² Kristensen, Korda, Johns, and Knight, “Chinese nuclear weapons, 2024,” op. cit., pp. 50, 66.

⁶³ “China’s H-6K Bomber Displays High Ballistic Missile-Carrying Capacity,” *Sputnik News*, June 3, 2024, available at <https://sputnikglobe.com/20240702/chinas-h-6k-bomber-displays-high-ballistic-missile-carrying-capacity-1119218676.html>.

⁶⁴ Thomas Newdick, “China’s H-6K Bomber Seen Firing Air-Launched Ballistic Missile For First Time,” *The War Zone*, May 1, 2024, available at <https://www.twz.com/air/chinas-h-6k-bomber-seen-firing-air-launched-ballistic-missile-for-first-time>.

nuclear test may be aimed at developing “a cruise missile warhead and may involve safety upgrades to existing systems.”⁶⁵ In 2000, *Jane’s Defense Weekly* said that, “China’s development of a nuclear-armed cruise missile was reported in a 1995 Russian document, which also suggested that the complete production facility was transferred to Shanghai,” and that the CJ-20 was “probably associated with the [Russian] Kh-55 (AS-15 ‘Kent’).”⁶⁶ (The KH-55 is a long-range nuclear Air-Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM).)⁶⁷ In 2009, the Air Force’s National Air and Intelligence Center said the DH-10 (the ground- and sea-launched CJ-20) was nuclear capable.⁶⁸ In 2013, then-Commander of the U.S. Global Strike Command Lieutenant General James Kowalski said that China’s CJ-20 was a nuclear-capable ALCM.⁶⁹ In 2013, Russian Colonel General (ret.) Viktor Yesin wrote that China’s DH-10 was nuclear-capable.⁷⁰ In 2019, *The War Zone* reported the CJ-10K and CJ-20 land-attack ALCMs were dual capable.⁷¹ In 2021, General Hyten said China was rapidly building nuclear cruise missiles.⁷² A 2024 report of the International Institute for Strategy Studies (IISS) stated that China had nuclear-capable long-range cruise missiles.⁷³

The 2023 DoD report states that China is “...developing new medium- and long-range stealth bombers to strike regional and global targets.”⁷⁴ This has the potential to increase dramatically China’s air-launched nuclear capability. The H-20 reportedly is a stealthy subsonic nuclear-capable heavy bomber with a 10,000-km+ range and a 45-ton weapons

⁶⁵ Director of Central Intelligence, “China Nuclear Test [Deleted] Nuclear Test,” *National Intelligence Daily*, March 7, 1995, available at <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB200/19950307.pdf>.

⁶⁶ “China’s new cruise missile programme ‘racing ahead’,” ASIA PACIFIC,” *Janes’s Defense Weekly*, January 12, 2000, available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20090604083602/http://www.janes.com/articles/Janes-Defence-Weekly-2000/China-s-new-cruise-missile-programme-racing-ahead.html>.

⁶⁷ Center for Strategic and International Studies, “Kh-55 (AS-15)” (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 23, 2024), available at <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/kh-55/>.

⁶⁸ National Air and Space Intelligence Center, *BALLISTIC AND CRUISE MISSILE THREAT*, NASIC-1031-0985-09, (Wright-Patterson AFB: NASIC, April 2009), p. 29, available at <https://irp.fas.org/threat/missile/naic/NASIC2009.pdf>.

⁶⁹ Lieutenant General James M. Kowalski, “Air Force Global Strike Command,” May 7, 2013, p. 5, available at <http://fas.org/programs/ssp/nukes/nuclearweapons/AFGSC-CommandBrief-May2013.pdf>.

⁷⁰ Viktor Yesin, “On China’s Nuclear Potential without Underestimates or Exaggeration” (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, May 12, 2012), p. 3, available at https://www.strategicdemands.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/YESIN-China-s-Nuclear-Potential_2012.pdf.

⁷¹ Tyler Rogoway and Joseph Trevithick, “Intel Report Confirms China Developing Stealthy Tactical Bomber In Addition To Strategic Bomber,” *The War Zone*, January 16, 2019, available at <https://www.twz.com/25989/intel-report-confirms-china-developing-stealthy-regional-bomber-in-addition-to-strategic-bomber>.

⁷² John A. Tirpak, “New Threats Demand Nuclear Modernization,” *Air and Space Forces.com*, March 2, 2021, available at <https://www.airandspaceforces.com/new-threats-demand-nuclear-modernization/>.

⁷³ Veerle Nouwens and Timothy Wright, “Long-range Strike Capabilities in the Asia-Pacific: Implications for Regional Stability” (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, January 2024), p. 9, available at https://www.iiss.org/globalassets/media-library---content--migration/files/research-papers/2024/01/iiss_long-range-strike-capabilities-in-the-asia-pacific_implications-for-regional-stability_012024.pdf.

⁷⁴ *Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2023*, op. cit., p. 63.

payload.⁷⁵ The medium stealth bomber may be the enigmatic JH-XX which may be supersonic with fighter-like maneuverability.⁷⁶

Fisher credits China with 150 H-6 bombers in 2023, increasing to 250 bombers in 2035, including the H-20.⁷⁷ Fisher assesses their potential as 950 nuclear ALCMs in 2023, growing to 1,700 in 2035.⁷⁸

China's Non-Strategic Nuclear Delivery Vehicles

In June 2024, Captain (ret.) James Fanell, former Senior Intelligence Officer for the U.S. Pacific Fleet, told Congress that, "Beijing already possesses more tactical nuclear weapons and theater forces than does the U.S."⁷⁹ This is not difficult because the United States has a small non-strategic nuclear force (only B-61 bombs).

China has vast numbers of non-strategic missiles (see the DoD chart reproduced above), the only questions being which are nuclear-capable and the number of nuclear warheads. In February 2024, STRATCOM Commander General Anthony Cotton said China "...has approximately 1,000 medium and intermediate-range dual-capable...ballistic missiles...."⁸⁰ Recent DoD China reports credit only the DF-26 IRBM and two versions of the DF-21 MRBM as nuclear-capable.⁸¹ Very few Chinese non-strategic nuclear warheads can fit into DoD's May 2023 estimate of 500+ nuclear warheads.

In 2007, noted China expert Colonel [ret.] Dr. Larry Wortzel pointed out that China "...put[s] nuclear and conventional warheads on the same classes of ballistic missiles and collocate them near each other in firing units of the Second Artillery Corps [now the Rocket Force]...."⁸² This may mask a signature of nuclear capability and contribute to DoD undercounting. Despite China's 2006 announcement that it had "tactical operational [short range] missiles of various types,"⁸³ the DoD reports have ignored this announcement.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 9, 63, 92; and, Gabriel Honrada, "China's H-20 stealth bomber ready for take-off," *Asia Times*, July 14, 2022, available at <https://asiatimes.com/2022/07/chinas-h-20-stealth-bomber-ready-for-take-off/>.

⁷⁶ Steve Trimble, "China Teases New Bomber, But Timing Remains Unclear," *Aviation Week.com*, October 13, 2022, available at <https://aviationweek.com/shows-events/ausa/china-teases-new-bomber-timing-remains-unclear>.

⁷⁷ "23rd Nuclear Triad Symposium," op. cit.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ "Congressional Testimony of James E. Fanell, CAPT USN (Retired)," House Committee on Oversight and Accountability, June 26, 2024, p. 6, available at <https://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Fanell-Testimony.pdf>.

⁸⁰ Cotton, "STATEMENT OF ANTHONY J. COTTON COMMANDER UNITED STATES STRATEGIC COMMAND BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES 9 MARCH 2023," op. cit., p. 4.

⁸¹ *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2023*, op. cit., pp. 66-67; and, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2022*, op. cit., p. 95.

⁸² Larry M. Wortzel, *China's Nuclear Forces: Operations, Training, Doctrine, Command, Control, And Campaign Planning* (Carlisle, PA: Army War College, May 1, 2007), p. 31, available at <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1680&context=monographs>.

⁸³ *China's National Defense in 2006*, *China.org.cn*, December 2006, available at http://www.andrewerickson.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/China-Defense-White-Paper_2006_English-Chinese_Annotated.pdf.

In 2001, a Taiwan Defense Ministry official reportedly said that China's short-range M-11 (DF-11) missile "...can fire a variety of warheads ranging from nuclear and chemical warheads to electromagnetic pulse warheads."⁸⁴ Colonel General (ret.) Viktor Yesin characterized the DF-15 and the DF-11 as China's operational tactical nuclear missiles, and said that China has 5- to 20-kiloton nuclear warheads for the DF-15A, the DF-15B, the DF-11A, the DH-10 cruise missile and Chinese fighter aircraft.⁸⁵ He repeated this in 2016.⁸⁶ Yesin implies that essentially all Chinese regional strike missiles are nuclear-capable and many are nuclear-armed. Fisher has discussed many types of Chinese non-strategic nuclear missiles and suggests most or all may be dual capable.⁸⁷

DoD is silent on nuclear-capable Chinese fighters. Yet, retired Russian Colonel Yuriy Sumbatyan wrote that "as many as 500 or 600" of China's combat aircraft "are capable of carrying nuclear weapons."⁸⁸ In 2014, noted Russian expert Alexi Arbatov, former Deputy Chairman of the Defense Committee in the Russian Parliament (Duma), wrote "authoritative Russian assessments" credit China with "more than 1,100 [nuclear] warheads," including "570 gravity bombs and air-launched cruise missiles on 400 airplanes," and nuclear warheads on 204 land-based tactical ballistic missiles...⁸⁹ A 2024 report of the IISS stated that, "China possesses several different types of both [MRBMs and IRBMs], as well as long-range cruise missiles that could be used for a variety of different regional conventional and nuclear missions."⁹⁰ China's stealth fighters are obvious candidates for the nuclear mission.

Reportedly, nuclear-capable DH-10s are carried by Chinese type 052D guided missile destroyers and type 093A nuclear attack submarines.⁹¹ DoD's assumption that China has no nuclear-capable cruise missiles can dramatically undercount China's nuclear weapons.

Except for anti-ship ballistic missiles, the DoD reports do not credit China with tactical nuclear weapons (i.e., designed to attack ground forces, naval, anti-air or anti-missile targets). In 1988, China tested a neutron bomb,⁹² which opens a range of advanced tactical nuclear weapons options. By the late 1980s, China reportedly could deliver "super-miniature

⁸⁴ Cited in Schneider, "Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission Hearing on 'Developments in China' Cyber and Nuclear Capabilities'," op. cit., p. 4.

⁸⁵ Yesin, "On China's Nuclear Potential without Underestimates or Exaggeration," op. cit., p. 3.

⁸⁶ Richard D. Fisher, Jr., "Taiwan: Theater nuclear missile deceptions," *Taipei Times*, March 4, 2024, available at <https://www.taipetimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2024/03/04/2003814406>.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Cited in Schneider, "Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission Hearing on 'Developments in China' Cyber and Nuclear Capabilities'," op. cit., p. 5.

⁸⁹ Alexei Arbatov, *ENGAGING CHINA IN NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL* (Moscow: Carnegie Moscow Center, October 2014), p. 3, available at https://carnegie-production-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/static/files/Arbatov_China_nuclear_Eng2014.pdf.

⁹⁰ Nouwens and Wright, *Long-range Strike Capabilities in the Asia-Pacific: Implications for Regional Stability*, op. cit., p. 9.

⁹¹ Jeffrey Lin and P.W. Singer, "China Shows Off Its Deadly New Cruise Missiles," *Popular Science*, March 10, 2015, available at <https://www.popsoci.com/china-shows-its-deadly-new-cruise-missiles/>.

⁹² Jonathan Ray, *Red China's "Capitalist Bomb": Inside the Chinese Neutron Bomb Program* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for National Strategic Studies National Defense University, January 1, 2015), available at <https://inss.ndu.edu/Media/News/Article/652871/red-chinas-capitalist-bomb-inside-the-chinese-neutron-bomb-program/>.

nuclear warheads” with yield of “10 to 100 tons of TNT....”⁹³ A declassified 1993 CIA report said in a nuclear test, “China could be seeking to confirm the reliability of a nuclear artillery shell....”⁹⁴ Another declassified report said a 1990 nuclear test “may be related to development of a warhead for a Chinese short-range ballistic missile.”⁹⁵ In 2002, Russian Lieutenant Colonel O. Moiseyenko and Captain 1st Rank A. Smolovskiy wrote that China had tactical nuclear missile warheads and artillery rounds.⁹⁶ (In 2006, there was a similar report in a Hong Kong publication.)⁹⁷ In 2002, a Hong Kong journal with reported close ties to China’s military stated, “China has achieved progress by leaps and bounds in its tactical nuclear weapons, making nuclear weapons practical and facilitating their use in future high-tech, local wars.”⁹⁸

Much of the historic difference between the DoD estimates and the higher estimates of China’s nuclear arsenal appears linked to assessments of how many tactical nuclear weapons China has. Regarding the actual expected growth in China’s nuclear warheads through 2035, the following chart compares the DoD and FAS estimates of Chinese nuclear weapons numbers from 2023 through 2035 with the alternative credible estimates.

⁹³ Mark Schneider, *The Nuclear Doctrine and Forces of the People’s Republic of China* (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, November 2007), p. 20, available at <https://nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/China-nuclear-final-pub.pdf>.

⁹⁴ Director of Central Intelligence Agency, “China: Accelerated Nuclear Test Schedule,” *National Intelligence Daily*, February 19, 1993, available at <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB200/19930219.pdf>.

⁹⁵ Director of Central Intelligence Agency, “China New Nuclear Test,” *Science and Weapons Review*, July 31, 1990, available at <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB200/19900731.pdf>.

⁹⁶ *Section II. Minimum Deterrence: Fragile Hope of a Constant and Benign Threat Environment* (Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, September 2014), p. 509, available at https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/FOID/Reading%20Room/Litigation_Release/Litigation%20Release%20-%20Section%20II%20Minimum%20Deterrence%20Fragile%20Hope.pdf.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Cited in Schneider, “Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission Hearing on ‘Developments in China’ Cyber and Nuclear Capabilities,” *op. cit.*, p. 4.

ESTIMATES OF CHINESE NUCLEAR WEAPONS NUMBERS			
Year	DoD	FAS	Alternative Estimates
2023	500+ ^a	500 ^c	1,570-2,206 – Fisher (2023) ^b 976 – Yeaw (2024)
2030	1,000+ ^a	n/a ^d	1,000-1,500 – Creeden (2023)
2035	~1,500	n/a ^d	6,108 – 6,734 – Fisher (2023) ^a 3,390 – 3,740 – Howe (2019) 3,584 – Yeaw (2024) ^e

a “Total Operational.”

b Strategic only. The numbers are calculated using open source numbers from both Chinese and Western sources concerning the MIRV potential of Chinese ICBMs, SLBMs and the nuclear ALCM delivery potential of Chinese bombers.

c Of the 500, the FAS says 440 are “operational.”

d The 2024 FAS report discusses the DoD numbers but does not explicitly support or deny them.

e Estimates are for 2034. See, Dr. Christopher Yeaw, “Geopolitical Nuclear Force Context with a Focus on China,” *Triad Symposium*, Louisiana State University Shreveport, June 20, 2024.

Conclusion

At the 2024 Chinese Communist Party third plenum, its Central Committee pledged to “speed up the development of strategic deterrence forces.”⁹⁹ Concurrently, China’s Foreign Ministry attacked the American “nuclear umbrella” of its allies.¹⁰⁰ The Chinese nuclear and military buildup began after the threat to China had evaporated due to the demise of the Soviet Union and the post-Cold War cuts in American nuclear and military capability. It is neither defensive nor intended only to deter aggression against China. Rather, it coincides with Beijing’s aggressive, expansionist policies in which nuclear weapons provide coercive leverage for regional expansion and the ultimate means in war-fighting strategies.

The most costly aspect of a nuclear deterrent is the delivery vehicles. China already has enough modern systems to deploy thousands of nuclear weapons now. This will increase as China deploys 096 SSBNs, more bombers, probably more ICBMs, improved strategic missiles

⁹⁹ Hayley Wongin and Amber Wang, “China’s third plenum shows it is ‘not in the mood’ to slow down on nuclear arms,” *South China Morning Post*, July 24, 2024, available at <https://www.newsweek.com/china-makes-nuclear-weapons-demands-us-1928848>.

¹⁰⁰ Ryan Chan, “China Makes Nuclear Weapons Demands to U.S. and Allies,” *Newsweek*, July 23, 2024, available at <https://www.newsweek.com/china-makes-nuclear-weapons-demands-us-1928848>.

with better accuracy and more warheads, and a variety of dual-capable non-strategic missiles.

The 2035 estimate of 1,500 Chinese nuclear warheads (DoD, FAS and SIPRI) may turn out to be very low. Indeed, a 2023 Rand Corporation analysis concluded that even small, poor and technically backward North Korea was aiming at 300-500 nuclear weapons.¹⁰¹ The numbers presented in the DoD and FAS reports appear to undercount the Chinese nuclear arsenal because there seems to be an analytical disconnect between the rapid visible growth in Chinese delivery systems and the slower assessed growth in deployed nuclear warheads. The DoD assessed only 500+ Chinese nuclear warheads in May 2023 despite crediting China with 350 ICBMs, two types of multiple warhead ICBMs and 72 deployed SLBMs, which alone add up to 422 warheads without even assuming a single MIRVed missile. This leaves only about 100 assessed warheads to cover China's MIRVed ICBMs, MIRVed SLBMs, non-strategic nuclear warheads (medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles), and air-delivered nuclear weapons. Any one of these categories could push China's number above 500+ and in combination the total should be substantially higher. Questionable assumptions in both the DoD and FAS reports include: 1) a large number of China's ICBM silos are complete but empty; 2) less capable DF-31 ICBMs are probably being deployed in the new silos; 3) China's numerous H-6K bombers are not nuclear-capable; 4) China lacks nuclear-capable short-range ballistic missiles; and, 5) China has no nuclear-capable cruise missiles. These assumptions contradict many open sources including statements by senior U.S. generals and admirals and, in some cases, previous DoD China reports.

Due to Chinese secrecy, deception, the inherent difficulty in counting mobile missiles and the concealment potential of the UGW, the United States may not grasp the full scope of Chinese nuclear systems. Another factor may be DoD's unwillingness to acknowledge that U.S. policy has misjudged China, being optimistic in the extreme, and remains lethargic as China achieves a larger, more modern and sometimes more capable force than the Cold War legacy American nuclear deterrent.

Nothing in current Chinese behavior suggests that it will use superiority in a responsible manner. China does not support a rules based international order. Its foreign policy is driven by strong nationalism and expansionist goals. President Xi is attempting to revive Communist ideology. China is becoming increasingly involved in Europe in support of Russian aggression. It appears to seek nuclear superiority to preclude American support to its allies against Chinese attack and assure Chinese victory in a future war.

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¹⁰¹ Bruce Bennett, "How Kim Jong Un's Fears Shape North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Agenda" (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, April 19, 2023), available at <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2023/04/how-kim-jong-uns-fears-shape-north-koreas-nuclear-weapons.html>.



ANALYSIS

GERMANY AND EXTENDED DETERRENCE

Michael Rühle

Introduction: Extended Deterrence as a Constant of German-U.S. relations

Extended nuclear deterrence has become a central pillar of the international order. Today, well over 30 countries in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region are considered to be under the U.S. “nuclear umbrella.” Critics of this concept often assert that the U.S. would never risk its own destruction in order to protect its allies; hence extended deterrence was nothing but a convenient fiction. Yet, despite this inherent credibility dilemma, the United States and its allies consider this arrangement to be of existential importance. As Lawrence Freedman has observed, nuclear weapons “can have a deterrent effect well beyond their logical limits.”¹ By explicitly extending its nuclear (and conventional) deterrence to other countries, Washington sends a powerful signal that it regards their security as a fundamental national security interest.

Germany’s preferences regarding the U.S. nuclear “umbrella” has shifted over times depending on the state of transatlantic relations. What has remained constant over many decades, however, has been the concern that the United States might withdraw its protection, be it because geopolitical or power shifts left it with no other choice, or because of a major political alienation between Europe and the United States. In addition, like in other European countries that relied on U.S. military protection, there always remained a tension between craving this very protection while at the same harboring concerns that this arrangement cemented an unhealthy infringement of national sovereignty and status. In a similar vein, Germany’s need for extended deterrence had to be balanced against the need not to have these security arrangements interfere with specific national interests, e.g., “Ostpolitik” vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in the 1970s.

Yet another constant is the fact that Germany has cultivated only a small group of experts who were familiar with the U.S. strategic debate and thus could explain (and advise on how to respond to) shifts in U.S. defense policy or posture. The most important aspect of continuity, however, is the fact that Germany’s perception of the health of extended deterrence is directly linked to how it perceived the overall health of the U.S.-German or U.S.-European relationship. Hence, despite lingering doubts about the credibility of the U.S. extended deterrence, its value has largely been taken for granted, and thus discussed only when unwelcome political or military changes seemed to threaten its continuation.

¹ Lawrence Freedman, “Disarmament and Other Nuclear Norms,” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (2013), p. 102, available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/0163660X.2013.791085>.



Extended Deterrence Becomes Real

The signing of the Washington Treaty in April 1949 marked the beginning of U.S. extended deterrence for Western Europe. Four years after World War II, the Treaty, which later evolved into the NATO alliance, was hardly more than a unilateral U.S. security guarantee for a devastated and demoralized Europe. Although West Germany would not join NATO until 1955, its exposed geographical situation made it a military centerpiece of Western defense against the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies. This postwar phase also saw the beginning of a pattern of cooperation between the United States and West Germany that would last for decades and went far beyond the military realm. After having suffered an unprecedented military and moral defeat, West Germans eagerly embraced close ties with the United States, as this country seemed to not only epitomize values like freedom and democracy, but also displayed a degree of magnanimity with its former wartime enemy that Germans very much appreciated.

West Germany's accession to NATO in 1955 marked its return into the international community. Although the need for Germany to rearm was highly contested among the German population, the country's political leadership was aware that building new armed forces was the necessary price to pay in order to achieve the broader objective of getting West Germany back into the group of civilized nations. A year before joining NATO, West Germany had accepted a legal obligation to abstain from producing nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.² Within a rather short period of time, the German *Bundeswehr* was stood up, a sizeable force featuring modern, mostly U.S.-made, equipment. Due to conscription, the West German armed forces possessed considerable potential to grow in crisis and wartime, making it a major asset for the collective defense and deterrence in a region with little strategic depth.

The United States had played a major role in getting West Germany into NATO. It was strong enough to quell the fears of a resurgent Germany that were still prevalent among that country's neighbors, and its massive investments in European security gave its warnings that Germany was essential for the defense of NATO's Central Front considerable credibility. When the concept of a European Defense Community failed in 1954, because the French Parliament was more afraid of a resurgent Germany than of the Soviet Union, the path was clear for an arrangement that became essential for West Germany's security policy: notwithstanding occasional European defense initiatives, the country's key provider of hard security would be the United States.

² The formula that Germany would not produce Weapons of Mass Destruction *on its own territory* was briefly discussed as a potential loophole to allow for a nuclear capability, see Peter Siebenmorgen, Franz Josef Strauss, *Ein Leben im Übermaß* (Munich: Siedler, 2015), p. 127.

The Paradoxes of Extended Deterrence

The difficulties of organizing a coherent defense for Western Europe contributed to the symbiotic relationship between West Germany and the United States. The lack of strategic depth led Washington to lobby for West German membership in NATO, and for decades that country would remain the major staging ground for U.S. and other allied forces. By dint of geography, West Germany hosted U.S. nuclear weapons early on, and most German political and military leaders embraced the logic of nuclear deterrence. This acceptance of nuclear deterrence, however, was not without caveats. First, while West German military planners were constantly worried about the Warsaw Pact's conventional superiority, they wanted to avoid a situation where the United States would initiate nuclear use on German soil. The fear that nuclear employment would result in the devastation of the very country that one was supposed to defend became a recurring theme in the German discourse on nuclear deterrence and extended deterrence.

These fears led to a second caveat regarding deterrence: a growing distinction between deterrence and warfighting. Despite the large numbers of battlefield nuclear weapons deployed in Western Europe, and despite their potential military value in defending against Soviet and Warsaw Pact tanks, West Germans did not want to contemplate the actual battlefield employment of these weapons, given their fearful consequences. Hence, while it was seen as advantageous to threaten the Soviet Union with nuclear weapons, for example to prevent Moscow from massing its tanks, any actual employment was increasingly deemed unthinkable.

This differentiation between deterrence and warfighting became most evident in the debates following the Kennedy Administration's taking office in 1961. It argued that a U.S. deterrence threat of "massive" nuclear retaliation was likely credible only to deter a Soviet attack on the U.S. homeland, but not a Soviet attack on an ally. Given the Soviet ability to strike the U.S. homeland in response, the concern was that Washington's massive nuclear threat on behalf of a distant ally simply lacked sufficient credibility to deter. To address this questionable credibility of the nuclear umbrella, the Kennedy Administration proposed "Flexible Response" as an alternative. This was a clear step in favor of emphasizing the conventional defense of allies and away from a massive nuclear deterrent threat to Moscow as the basis for extended deterrence.

However, "Flexible Response" met with fierce resistance, not only from West Germany, but by all European allies. They disliked the strategy's emphasis on conventional forces, which they deemed not only too expensive but also to be of a lesser deterrence value than nuclear weapons. And they equally disliked the idea that nuclear deterrence would become less central, fearing that this would weaken deterrence overall. The U.S. argument that massive nuclear retaliation was likely incredible for extended deterrence because it burdened the U.S. with risks it was not willing to bear, did not have traction among the allies.

Consequently, it took several years before "flexible response" was officially adopted by NATO. The controversy showed that for West Germans, very much like for their European allies, their understanding of what constituted credible extended deterrence differed

markedly from U.S. views. For Washington, what mattered most was to reduce risks to its own security while maintaining the U.S. extended deterrence commitment under more difficult circumstances. The European allies, by contrast, did not focus on the political and military intricacies of the U.S. extended deterrence construct, but rather on their estimate of the overall deterrence value of nuclear weapons. Paradoxically, what the U.S. understood as a necessary adjustment to allow the continuation of extended deterrence credibility was interpreted by the allies as an attempt by the United States to reduce its commitment to European security. Such differences were to become a recurrent issue in the U.S.-German security relationship.

Germany's Short-Term Nuclear Flirtation

West Germany's embrace of U.S. extended deterrence remained firm, as the United States was seen as the ultimate guarantor of peace in Europe. However, some West German political leaders repeatedly toyed with ideas that were at odds with the country's obligation *not* to acquire its own nuclear deterrent. Doubts about the U.S. commitment, concerns about a lack of influence over U.S. nuclear planning and employment, uncertainties regarding the country's political status, but also the perception of nuclear power becoming a crucially important emerging technology led West Germany to not only explore the peaceful use of nuclear energy, but also investigate opportunities for a national nuclear weapons option.

In November 1957, the defense ministers of France, Italy and West Germany signed an agreement on the joint production of nuclear weapons. However, the rapid failure of this project led Bonn to reconsider. Instead of trying to complement the transatlantic nuclear relationship with a European option, the focus moved to changing the nuclear dimension of Germany's relationship with the United States, to allow for a better reflection of German interests. Accordingly, Germany, as well as some other European countries, pushed Washington to allow allies a greater say in nuclear strategy and employment planning.³ Not least because of Washington's desire to have its allies sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the United States sought to accommodate these allies. While one such attempt at accommodation—the ill-conceived Multilateral [European nuclear] Force—failed, the standing up of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group and deeper involvement of allies in the nuclear mission provided the necessary steps that many European countries deemed sufficient to preserve their interest in a world in which the NPT would freeze the status quo and their lack of independent nuclear capabilities.⁴

³ On the many different approaches pursued by Bonn to minimize the NPT's impact and to increase its own say on nuclear matters, see Andreas Lutsch, "In Favor of 'effective' and 'non-discriminatory' Non-dissemination Policy: The FRG and the NPT Negotiation Process, 1962-1966," in Roland Popp, Liviu Horovitz and Andreas Wenger (Eds.) *Negotiating the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: Origins of the Nuclear Order* (London/New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 36-57.

⁴ For the crucial role of an ally's perceived political status in determining the success or failure of U.S. non-proliferation policy, see Jonas Schneider, *Amerikanische Allianzen und nukleare Nichtverbreitung. Die Beendigung von Kernwaffenaktivitäten bei Verbündeten der USA* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2016).

Irrespective of their ongoing discussions with Washington on greater participation in the formulation of nuclear strategy, successive West German governments opposed the NPT as a means by the established nuclear weapon states to cement their unique power status at the expense of non-nuclear countries. It took intensive lobbying by Washington to cajole Bonn into signing the Treaty in 1969.

A degree of German unease remained, however, which was reflected in a statement published in the context of West Germany's ratification of the NPT in 1975. In this statement, Germany reiterated certain conditions that it regarded as central to its interpretation of the NPT, namely that the Treaty would not hinder the eventual development of a nuclear armed European Union, and, more importantly, that Germany would remain protected by NATO.⁵ Although this statement came at a time when fears of a German bomb had long been put to rest, it was a reminder that the NPT, although often hailed as one of the most important security agreements, was in essence the result of a complex bargain—a bargain that might hold only as long as the security situation of its signatories was not fundamentally altered.

Challenges to Extended Deterrence

Extended deterrence again became a theme of discussion in the context of the U.S.-Soviet Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), which resulted in a number of agreements in 1972. In Europe, such superpower bilateralism was often regarded with suspicion, as it always entailed the risk of Washington negotiating “over the heads” of Europeans, thus neglecting allied concerns. The case of SALT, however, appeared particularly worrying, as the agreements were a reflection of the Soviet Union having achieved strategic nuclear parity with the United States., thereby challenging the credibility of extended deterrence. The U.S. sought to address European concerns by emphasizing the flexibility of the U.S. nuclear arsenal and U.S. “limited nuclear options,” which would allow for limited nuclear escalation threats in defense of the allies.⁶ Still, some West German analysts claimed that strategic parity amounted to a power shift that would make extended deterrence less credible.⁷

Throughout the 1970s, West German worries about the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence co-existed with worries about the consequences of what was perceived as a dramatic shift in U.S. policy away from détente and towards a more confrontational approach vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Whereas West Germany felt that it should try to at least salvage some elements of its accommodation with Moscow (“Ostpolitik”), the United States looked at concrete Soviet actions, from intervening in Afghanistan and putting pressure on Poland's

⁵ See “Statement of the Federal Government in the context of the deposit of the ratification instruments,” May 2, 1975, reprinted in Matthias Küntzel, *Bonn und die Bombe: Deutsche Atomwaffenpolitik von Adenauer bis Brandt* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 1992), p. 329.

⁶ See Keith B. Payne, “James Schlesinger’s Lifelong Creed of Public Service and the Schlesinger Doctrine,” *Information Series*, No. 439 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press), March 6, 2019, available at <https://www.nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/IS-439.pdf>.

⁷ See Andreas Lutsch, *Westbindung oder Gleichgewicht? Die nukleare Sicherheitspolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland zwischen Atomwaffensperrvertrag und NATO-Doppelbeschluss* (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2020), chapter VI.

democratic movement, to Moscow's continuing buildup of strategic and theater nuclear forces, and concluded that a conciliatory policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union was no longer possible or desirable.

Irrespective of these differences, however, the strategic community of both countries looked at Soviet military developments with considerable alarm. With Moscow's nuclear force expansion, notably including the deployment of a new category of "Eurostrategic" nuclear missiles, Moscow appeared bent on "de-coupling" the United States from the European theatre. Consequently, NATO's ailing nuclear deterrence posture was considered to be in urgent need of repair, with many analysts arguing in favor of deploying new U.S. medium-range nuclear missiles in Europe.⁸

Deterrence and Reassurance

These Western attempts to re-dress the potentially negative consequences of Soviet nuclear modernization led to a major crisis among the NATO allies, in particular between West Germany and the United States. U.S. plans to deploy a new type of nuclear weapon in West Germany, the "enhanced radiation weapon," had to be cancelled due to political resistance in Bonn as well as public outcry. While this controversy about the "neutron bomb" was largely a bilateral U.S.-West German affair, the use by anti-nuclear politicians and activists of slogans and imagery to exploit perennial nuclear fears turned out to be a harbinger of a much more severe controversy that followed shortly thereafter: NATO's so-called dual-track decision of December 1979.

This decision, according to which NATO would respond to Soviet "Eurostrategic" nuclear missiles (largely the SS-20) with the deployment of somewhat similar U.S. Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) sparked the largest anti-nuclear protests in Europe's postwar history, including in Germany. Paradoxically, Germany had been a major driving force behind NATO's INF deployment decision, with Chancellor Schmidt arguing as early as 1977 that the West was about to face a dangerous imbalance in "grey area" weapons, i.e. nuclear systems that were not covered by existing arms control agreements.⁹ However, even though NATO's "dual-track" decision contained an arms control offer to Moscow, it became a lesson of the limits of Western nuclear policy.

For the first time in decades, issues of nuclear deterrence, including the consequences of the employment of nuclear weapons, were discussed by a broader public that proved unprepared for such delicate matters. Already worried by the breakdown of détente and by the confrontational rhetoric by some members of the Reagan Administration, many Europeans became outright afraid of an impending war that would engulf Europe while sparing the "sanctuaries" of the Soviet Union and the United States.

⁸ See *Ibid.*, chapter VII.

⁹ See Noel D. Cary, "Review Essay: Helmut Schmidt, Euromissiles, and the Peace Movement," *Central European History*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (March 2019), pp. 148–171.

The fact that Chancellor Schmidt was brought down by his own party's anti-nuclear base was another reminder of the risks a government would run by making the case for a publicly controversial nuclear deployment decision, even if this decision had been taken by all NATO allies. This entire debate revealed, in the words of British military historian Michael Howard, that the focus of Western governments on acquiring new military capabilities to restore deterrence had led them to lose sight of the political imperative of reassuring their own publics.¹⁰

The crisis was further aggravated by the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), a research program to investigate ballistic missile defense technologies that, according to President Reagan, was intended to overcome mutual nuclear deterrence via a "balance of terror," which he criticized as immoral.¹¹ Although Reagan Administration officials were quick to point out that U.S. homeland missile defense could augment rather than replace deterrence, and that a less vulnerable United States would be a more reliable/credible protector, European views remained mostly negative. Like with the shift from massive retaliation to flexible response more than 20 years earlier, Europeans, including West Germans, worried less about America's vulnerability concerns and extended deterrence risks than about the motives they believed were behind this apparent shift: a desire to shed the burden of extended deterrence for Europe, by allowing the U.S. to withdraw into "fortress America" behind a missile defense shield.¹²

In stark contrast to large parts of the German strategic community and the media, the West German Government sought to calm the waves. Realizing the low likelihood of an "astrodome"-type defense, but acknowledging the new technical opportunities such a research program might provide, Germany, like several other European nations, concluded agreements with the U.S. on technical cooperation. The mostly negative reception of missile defense remained, however, all the more so as it was seen as a major obstacle for meaningful arms control with the Soviet Union.

Ultimately, the INF and SDI controversies had a happy ending. Moscow finally accepted Western proposals, which resulted in the historic 1987 INF Treaty that banned this entire weapon category, while SDI became a major instrument for eliciting Soviet arms control concessions. However, European governments had learned that any public discussion of the nuclear dossier risked becoming emotionally charged and politically counterproductive and, hence, had to be avoided. The price they had to pay for ending this crisis—to allow arms control to trump nuclear strategy considerations—was considerable.

The point of NATO's dual-track decision—namely, to prevent a "de-coupling" of Europe from the U.S.—had almost disappeared in the heated debate. SDI, in turn, had introduced the specter of the United States leaving the system of mutual deterrence altogether, thus highlighting the tensions between a strategic deterrence strategy based on mutual nuclear

¹⁰ See Michel Howard, "Reassurance and Deterrence: Western Defense in the 1980s," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (Winter, 1982), pp. 309-324.

¹¹ See Donald R. Baucom, *The Origins of SDI, 1944-1983* (Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Press, 1992), chapter 8.

¹² See Christoph Bertram, "Strategic Defense and the Western Alliance," *Daedalus*, Summer, 1985, Vol. 114, No. 3, pp. 279-296.

vulnerability and the perennial instinct of the protector to minimize the risks stemming from its extended deterrence commitments. However, the crises also demonstrated the continued willingness by Bonn and Washington to maintain the foundation of their defense and security relationship. This partnership allowed both countries to play a key role in winding down the Cold War when the Soviet empire started to collapse.

Extended Deterrence after the Cold War

The end of the East-West conflict, which resulted in German unification, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, and, ultimately, the collapse of the Soviet Union, reinforced the role of the United States as a key player in European security. Like in the 1950s, when Washington had acted as honest broker for West Germany's re-joining of the democratic club, Washington was once again instrumental in ameliorating European fears of a reunified Germany. Germany, in turn, was clear about its preference to see the United States remain in Europe. The enlargement of NATO to include the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, was to a large degree inspired by the United States and Germany.

The end of the erstwhile Soviet threat allowed the NATO enlargement process to evolve with little apparent concerns about matters of nuclear deterrence in general and extended deterrence in particular. Washington reduced the number of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe dramatically, and NATO's "three nuclear no's," which ruled out the deployment of nuclear weapons in the new NATO members states, pre-emptively de-fused any potentially self-destructive political debate on the subject among allies or with Russia.¹³ All new member states accepted NATO's nuclear position, however, and joined the Nuclear Planning Group. Moreover, the security challenges confronting the West, notably the threat of terrorism in the wake of the "9/11" attacks, put extended deterrence concerns further on the back burner. In large part to demonstrate its solidarity with the United States, Germany sent forces to Afghanistan, becoming the third-largest troop contributor of the U.S.-led international coalition. Transatlantic disagreements, such as the U.S.-German rift over the war in Iraq in 2002 and 2003, had no extended deterrence dimension, although they pointed to a more fundamental divergence in both countries' threat perceptions.

The Obama Administration's nuclear disarmament rhetoric led to a certain degree of "bandwagoning" in Europe, with the German Foreign Minister championing the removal of the remaining U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe. The fact that the United States, Germany's traditional protector, was leading the quest for nuclear disarmament, made it appear to be the new transatlantic mainstream opinion, and put the traditional pro-nuclear Atlanticists on the defensive.¹⁴ However, German disarmament proposals were heavily caveated,

¹³ Final Communiqué, Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Defence Ministers Session, December 18, 1996, available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25057.htm?selectedLocale=en.

¹⁴ For a typical endorsement of the Obama Administration's policy, see Harald Müller, "Security in a Nuclear-weapons-free World: Thinking out of the Box," in David Atwood and Emily J. Munro (Eds.) *Security in a World without Nuclear Weapons: Visions and Challenges* (Geneva: Geneva Center for Security Policy, 2013), available at (<http://dam.idesso.com/files/2y10TehBC3qMHopw7eNDBc0sY3qTEQhzNW9PuYpfHl1wzbhtmurNFq>); for a critique

revealing a desire not to upset existing arrangements too much, too soon. NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept, in turn, gave lip service to the goal of a nuclear-free world by putting the emphasis on creating the conditions for such a world, thereby effectively pushing it aside. When Washington finally made it clear that NATO's nuclear dimension was not going to be undermined, the issue faded away.

What remained, however, were worries about Germany's continuing willingness to remain one of several European "DCA countries," i.e. allies who hosted nuclear weapons and provided certified dual-capable aircraft (DCA) for NATO's nuclear mission. Since their military value was questioned by some,¹⁵ and since purchasing the logical successor for the ageing *Tornado* aircraft, i.e., the U.S. *F-35*, was deemed expensive and potentially controversial, successive German governments delayed the decision and implemented life-extension measures for the existing *Tornado* fleet. Given Germany's important role in NATO, some analysts worried that an eventual German decision to leave this unique part of NATO's nuclear sharing arrangement might tempt other countries, notably Belgium and Holland, to follow suit.

The fact that NATO's collective decision not to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of the new member states had increased the responsibilities of the established DCA countries was never discussed. Without a concrete threat to worry about, Germany—like many of its neighbors—paid little attention to nuclear matters. On the contrary, the brief flirtation with nuclear disarmament also showed that a considerable part of the German strategic community was willing to discard traditional calculations about alliance cohesion and extended deterrence for the sake of manifestly infeasible global disarmament hopes.

Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in March 2014 fundamentally changed security perceptions in Europe, including in Germany. In 2008, Russia had conducted a short campaign against Georgia to arrest its Western orientation. However, in 2014, the first time since World War II, European borders had been changed by force. Consequently, NATO's statements started to put much greater emphasis on deterrence, both conventional and nuclear. Moreover, after 20 years of focusing on expeditionary missions, the emphasis began to shift back to NATO's core function of collective defense. Given the disappointing results of "out-of-area" engagements in Afghanistan and Libya, such a return to NATO's original purpose seemed all the timelier. However, since Russia was not seen as a threat to NATO proper, but only to its immediate neighbors like Ukraine or Georgia, many Allies, including Germany, did not implement the 2014 agreed decision to raise defense expenditures to at least 2 percent of their GDP. To strengthen deterrence, Germany participated in the

focusing on the incompatibility of Obama's nuclear disarmament vision with extended deterrence see Michael Rühle, "Global Zero" and the future of non-proliferation," in Reiner K. Huber, Klaus Lange, and Daniel F. McDonald (Eds.), *Implications of Nuclear Disarmament for Global Security*, Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung, *Studies & Comments*, No. 11, 2010, available at <https://latinamerica.hss.de/download/publications/suc11-Implications1.pdf>.

¹⁵ See Karl-Heinz Kamp and Robertus Remkes, "Options for NATO Nuclear Sharing Arrangements," in Steve Andreasen and Isabelle Williams (Eds.) *Reducing Nuclear Risks in Europe: A Framework for Action, The Nuclear Threat Initiative* (Washington, D.C.: Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2011), pp. 76-95, available at https://media.nti.org/pdfs/NTI_Framework_full_report.pdf.

deployment of NATO forces on the territory of the geographically exposed allies in NATO's East. However, it also remained among those allies who continued to believe that Russia could be accommodated with diplomatic and economic engagement.

Across the West, the events of spring 2014 led to a renaissance of the concept of deterrence. In Germany, the number of articles on that subject increased markedly. This discussion was further amplified by a debate on hybrid threats, which was sometimes portrayed as a new and successful way of war. Although much of this debate often lacked intellectual rigor, it contributed to a greater awareness that Europe was not at peace, and that Germany had to play its part in what looked increasingly like a competition between the West and its challengers, be it Russia or an emerging China, or both.

Renewed Doubts about Extended Deterrence

Since West Germany's inclusion into the democratic West, and in particular after the end of the Cold War, German observers repeatedly harbored doubts about the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence. While some focused on the logical inconsistencies of the very concept, or criticized U.S. or NATO force postures as being ill-suited for such a task, most observers worried about a gradual U.S. disengagement from Europe and European security.¹⁶ Such a disengagement, it was feared, would also lead to the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Europe, leaving the European states to their own devices and, bereft of their "American Pacifier,"¹⁷ possibly provoking greater competition among them. U.S. views, according to which a lower American profile would force the Europeans to cooperate more closely, were not shared by German observers, who maintained that the U.S. political and military presence and leadership in Europe was indispensable for the Old Continent's stability.

Most Germans understood that the United States, as a global power, also had to pay attention to other regions, notably the Asia-Pacific. German media also reported extensively on the increasing political polarization in U.S. domestic politics, as well as on the generational change that would inevitably weaken the transatlantic bond that had been forged in the Cold War. However, the view prevailed that the continuing interest of the United States in remaining a "European power" (including for political and economic reasons) would rule out any major short-term changes. Moreover, since President Obama's "Asian pivot" did not materialize, and with Russia's militarism requiring more rather than less U.S. engagement in Europe, Washington did not appear to be moving away from the Old Continent. Perennial U.S. complaints about having to shoulder an unfair amount of the common defense burden, it was hoped, could be alleviated by gradually increasing allied defense expenditures. All in all, Germans assumed that the fundamental transatlantic bargain would remain intact, and so would extended deterrence.

¹⁶ Such worries were expressed, *inter alia*, with respect to the Vietnam War, the Nixon Doctrine, or the various Congressional amendments that sought to punish insufficient European defense efforts with an eventual U.S. troop withdrawal.

¹⁷ Josef Joffe, "Europe's American Pacifier," *Foreign Policy*, No. 54 (Spring, 1984), pp. 64-82.

The 2016 U.S. election campaign seemed to turn Germany's complacency into a panic. Candidate Donald Trump built his campaign on the transactional narrative that the United States had been taken advantage of by free-riding allies. He called NATO "obsolete," and mused about Asian allies getting their own nuclear weapons so as to relieve the United States of the extended deterrence burden.¹⁸ Views like those of Candidate Trump had always been around, but this was the first time that a serious contender for the U.S. Presidency voiced them so unequivocally. For some German observers, this meant that the United States was about to shed its extended deterrence commitments.

Consequently, Germans increasingly talked openly about an alternative means of protection: a German or European nuclear capability. Within a few months, several articles appeared that made the case for various nuclear schemes to replace U.S. extended deterrence.¹⁹ Such proposals, which included the case for a "German bomb," did not gain much traction, however, all the less so as the Trump Administration, while severely criticizing Allies for not spending enough on defense, did not question extended deterrence, and indeed emphasized extended deterrence in its policy documents.

However, the nervousness displayed by the German strategic community had once again demonstrated how vital U.S. extended deterrence is for German security. Moreover, as Germany had emerged as the main object of the President's wrath—culminating in his decision to redeploy some U.S. troops from Germany to Poland—the Trump Presidency became a traumatic period in German-American relations. While Central and Eastern European allies viewed Trump's policies in a more favorable light, many German observers regarded them as the beginning of a much rougher and less predictable transatlantic relationship. The shift in U.S. attitudes vis-à-vis global engagement in general and Europe in particular finally seemed to have arrived. When Joe Biden defeated Trump in the 2020 election, the German media labelled him the last true "trans-Atlanticist" President, indicating that a return to the status quo pre-Trump was no longer possible.²⁰

The "Zeitenwende" and Its Nuclear Dimensions

Russia's second assault on Ukraine in February 2022 came as a shock to the entire West, but particularly to Germany. Berlin had to admit that its policy of still seeking areas of accommodation with Russia after 2014 had failed, and that the new security situation required a major re-orientation of German security policy. Chancellor Scholz proclaimed a

¹⁸ See "Japan and South Korea hit back at Trump's nuclear comments," *CNN Politics*, March 31, 2016, available at <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/03/31/politics/trump-view-from-south-korea-japan/index.html>.

¹⁹ For a comprehensive overview, see Ulrich Kühn, Tristan Volpe and Bert Thompson, "Tracking the German Nuclear Debate," Carnegie Endowment, August 15, 2018 (updated March 5, 2020), available at <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/08/15/tracking-german-nuclear-debate-pub-72884>; Hans and Michael Rühle, "German Nukes: The Phantom Menace," *Information Series*, No. 419 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, March 22, 2017), available at https://nipp.org/information_series/ruhle-hans-and-michael-ruhle-german-nukes-the-phantom-menace-information-series-no-419/.

²⁰ Ines Pohl, "US president opts to prioritize trans-Atlantic ties," *Deutsche Welle*, February 3, 2022, available at <https://www.dw.com/en/opinion-us-president-opts-to-put-trans-atlantic-ties-over-popularity-at-home/a-60988438>.

“Zeitenwende” [a turning point in history], which included additional funding for the German armed forces, a commitment to nuclear sharing, and a substantial increase in Germany’s troop presence in Lithuania.²¹ Germany also became the second-largest contributor of military and financial aid to Ukraine after the U.S.

For years, Germany had been debating the deplorable state of its armed forces, which had been under-funded by successive governments. Russia’s belligerence now injected a sense of urgency into this debate, as many observers no longer could rule out a Russian attack on NATO’s Eastern allies. While the United States is now heading into another Presidential election, there is speculation about how Washington might draw down the U.S. role in European security and shift the support of Ukraine to a European responsibility. Germany is now confronted with a double dilemma: an aggressive Russia to its East, and the prospect of a potentially unpredictable future U.S. Administration to its West. What has followed has been almost a repetition of the 2016 debate, only with more participants, and with a stronger focus on a European instead of purely German independent nuclear option.²²

As with the brief debate in 2016, the arguments for a European nuclear deterrent were advanced mostly by academics. Maximilian Terhalle, a German academic who in 2016 had been the most vocal advocate of a German national option, and whose subsequent publications toyed with different nuclear schemes, proposed in February 2024 that Germany should buy 1.000 mothballed warheads from the United States, preferably while President Biden was still in office.²³ Since his proposal neither covered crucial technical aspects, such as delivery means, nor political questions, such as the effective destruction of the NPT by such a move, it had no positive echo. Rather, it was mocked by other discussants as an example of the intellectual recklessness of some participants in Germany’s “Euro-Nukes” debate.²⁴ Similarly, Herfried Münkler, a well-known and widely respected German academic, received criticism for his proposal to have a “nuclear suitcase rotating” among major European countries.²⁵ Despite—or because—of this criticism, Münkler never elaborated on his proposal.

²¹ Policy statement by Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and Member of the German Bundestag, February 27, 2022 in Berlin, available at <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/policy-statement-by-olaf-scholz-chancellor-of-the-federal-republic-of-germany-and-member-of-the-german-bundestag-27-february-2022-in-berlin-2008378>.

²² See Michael Rühle, “German Musings about a European Nuclear Deterrent,” *Information Series*, No. 571 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, January 3, 2024), available at https://nipp.org/information_series/michael-ruhle-german-musings-about-a-european-nuclear-deterrent-no-571-january-3-2024/; for a comprehensive analysis from a liberal arms control perspective see Ulrich Kühn (Ed.), *Germany and Nuclear Weapons in the 21st Century: Atomic Zeitenwende?* (London: Routledge Press, 2024), available at, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/oa-edit/10.4324/9781003341161/germany-nuclear-weapons-21st-century-ulrich-k%C3%BChn>.

²³ Maximilian Terhalle, quoted in, “Uns fehlen mindestens 1000 strategische Nuklearsprengköpfe” (“We are lacking at least 1.000 strategic nuclear warheads”), *Die Welt*, February 14, 2024, p. 5.

²⁴ See Karl-Heinz Kamp, “Nuclear Hot Air: The German Debate on Nuclear Weapons,” German Council on Foreign Relations, *External Publications*, February 20, 2024, available at, <https://dgap.org/en/research/publications/nuclear-hot-air-german-debate-nuclear-weapons>.

²⁵ Herfried Münkler, quoted in, “Europa muss atomare Fähigkeiten aufbauen” *Stern*, November 30, 2023, p. 73.

Ekkehard Lübckemeier, a retired German diplomat whose earlier career included working as a defense analyst in a think tank of the Social Democratic Party, made a strong case for a European nuclear deterrent based on the French arsenal.²⁶ In addition to the usual arguments about having to prepare for a disengagement of the United States, he also focused on issues such as sovereignty. Following the argument of the late Egon Bahr, the so-called architect of German Ostpolitik, he hinted at the fact that in a nuclear world, only countries with nuclear weapons could be truly sovereign.²⁷ In February 2024, he published a “Plan B for Germany,” building on the Franco-German Aachen Treaty of 2019, which contains a mutual support clause. In the longer run, he argued, both countries should do more to align their policies, bring their strategic cultures closer together, undertake common armaments projects and draft common arms export guidelines. French nuclear weapons could be based in Germany, while the Franco-German Security and Defense Council would be augmented with a nuclear consultation group.²⁸

Former German Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger, a frequent commentator on international security affairs, joined in the debate as well, arguing that Germany had for too long ignored French offers to bilaterally discuss the European dimension of its nuclear deterrent. Ischinger argued that a common criticism launched against such proposals, namely that only the French President would decide over any nuclear use, was “ridiculous,” since the same was true for the American President in the context of U.S. extended deterrence. However, in order to avoid any misunderstandings, he suggested that the United States be included in confidential Franco-German talks on that subject.²⁹

Uniformed military analysts have been largely silent in this debate. A notable exception was an article by Jacques Lanxade, Denis MacShane, Margarita Mathiopoulos, and Klaus Naumann. In a paper that was published both by a German newspaper and the U.S. Atlantic Council, they argued that Europe had to prepare for the inevitable U.S. shift to the Asia-Pacific theater. This preparation should also entail the nuclear dimension of European defense. To this end, the authors made a concrete proposal that deserves to be quoted in full:

Europe needs a credible nuclear deterrent of its own, under NATO command. Only a trilateral British, French, and German nuclear umbrella, combined with a US umbrella, all under the command and control of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) will be a credible deterrent for Russia. This would require that France and Germany find a solution for equipping their joint Future Combat Air

²⁶“Nuklearmacht Europa. Braucht Europa gemeinsame Nuklearwaffen? Ein Für und Wider. Pro: Aufbruch zu einer europäischen Selbstverteidigungsunion,” *Internationale Politik*, January 2, 2024, available at, <https://internationalepolitik.de/de/nuklearmacht-europa>.

²⁷ In 2009, Bahr had written that Europe could exert self-determination only on the level of conventional defense, see “Der nukleare Traum des Michael R.,” *Die Welt*, May 2, 2009, available at, https://www.welt.de/welt_print/article3662161/Der-nukleare-Traum-des-Michael-R.html.

²⁸ Eckhard Lübckemeier, “Voilà, ein Plan B für Deutschland,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, February 17, 2024, p. 10.

²⁹ Wolfgang Ischinger, “Ständiger Sitz im Sicherheitsrat ist nicht zwingend notwendig” (A Permanent Seat in the UN Security Council is not absolutely necessary), *Handelsblatt*, September 20, 2023, available at, <https://www.handelsblatt.com/meinung/kolumnen/geoeconomics-staendiger-sitz-im-sicherheitsrat-ist-nicht-zwingend-notwendig/29400146.html>.

System—a new generation of advanced fighter jets—and the German F-35 dual capable aircraft with French nuclear weapons. Germany would not have its own nuclear weapons, so this arrangement would not violate the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The NATO command structure must be tailored in such a way that Europe can fight a conflict in which neither Americans nor Canadians may wish to get involved, while taking advantage of NATO commands and systems. To this end the deputy SACEUR has to be European, and a headquarters-based Combined Joint Task Force must serve as his or her operational command.”³⁰

This proposal went unnoticed in Germany, presumably because it contained too many politically and militarily unrealistic elements.³¹ While other observers have also argued for a NATO command structure to function independently from Washington, their rationale is not driven by nuclear considerations but rather by preparing for eventual conventional contingencies that would not involve the United States, or in case the U.S. were to initiate its gradual disengagement from NATO.³²

As during the brief debate in 2016, several German politicians also publicly made the case for a European nuclear deterrent. Katarina Barley, a former cabinet minister who had become the Social Democratic Party’s top candidate for the European Parliament, argued that a European nuclear deterrent was an issue that warranted consideration.³³ Her Christian Democratic colleague, Manfred Weber, also expressed support for exploring such an option.³⁴ Several other German politicians made similar remarks. However, the German Government did not embark on any speculation about a Euro-deterrent. On several occasions, Chancellor Scholz stated categorically that current arrangements in NATO plus the independent French and British nuclear arsenals were sufficient, thereby indirectly criticizing some within his own party for their public musings about an EU-based

³⁰ “Europe needs a nuclear deterrent of its own,” *New Atlanticist* (Atlantic Council), July 11, 2023, available at <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/europe-needs-a-nuclear-deterrent-of-its-own/>. Adm. Lanxade was Joint Chief of Staff of the French Armed Forces and served as a defense advisor to French President Francois Mitterrand; Denis MacShane is a former UK Minister of Europe and a former UK delegate to the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO; Gen. Naumann served as chairman of the Military Committee of NATO and was Germany’s Chief of Defense Staff. Margarta Mathiopoulos is a lecturer on foreign and defense policy.

³¹ Moreover, the nuclear issue was only a small part of the paper. As the title of the German original version (“Wir brauchen eine Europäisierung der Nato”—We need a Europeanization of NATO) implied, the authors focused on much broader questions.

³² See Nicholas Williams and Simon Lunn, *NATO’s revival of collective defence and the challenge of national Commitments*, European Leadership Network, July 2024, available at <https://europeanleadershipnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/NATOs-revival-of-collective-defence-and-the-challenge-of-national-commitments.pdf>.

³³ See James Rothwell, “EU will need own nuclear deterrent if Trump wins, Scholz ally warns” *The Telegraph*, February 13, 2024, available at <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2024/02/13/eu-nuclear-deterrent-nato-trump-olaf-scholz/>.

³⁴ See Jack Schickler, “Centre-right leader Weber supports Macron’s call for European nuclear deterrent,” *EuroNews*, May 10, 2024, available at <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/05/10/centre-right-leader-weber-supports-macrons-call-for-european-nuclear-deterrent>.

deterrent.³⁵ Some parliamentarians, including from the major conservative opposition party, agreed, arguing that Germany's involvement in NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements was the preferable path, and that an EU-based deterrent was prohibitively expensive.³⁶

A Lack of Specifics

With the exception of the aforementioned proposals by Lübckemeier as well as the article by Lanxade, Naumann et.al., most other contributions to the Eurodeterrent-debate are devoid of details. While the need for such a deterrent—to have a “Plan B” in case the United States disengages from Europe—is sometimes cogently explained, almost all authors shy away from offering any detailed steps to implement such a project. Most of them seem to pursue rather minimalist aims, i.e., to explore how far the French would be willing to go towards “Europeanizing” their deterrent, and to launch a broader strategic debate about the future of nuclear deterrence in Europe. In part, their reluctance may be explained by a desire to avoid the impression that one was welcoming any U.S. disengagement. However, the main reason for their vagueness is clearly a lack of expertise.

Equally noteworthy is the fact that most German defense experts who joined the debate did so either in order to speak out against a Eurodeterrent, or to shed some light on the obstacles that such a project would have to overcome. Many pointed out that President Macron's 2020 speech,³⁷ which supporters of a Eurodeterrent often referred to as the key indicator for a French change of mind, was rather vague and hardly differed from statements by previous French Presidents. For example, Germany's premier security policy think tank, the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), published several studies that provided more detail on the difficulties of implementing a Eurodeterrent, and also argued that a second term of Donald Trump should not be equated with an end of extended deterrence.³⁸

It is worth noting that the sceptics regarding a Eurodeterrent option constitute a heterogeneous group. Criticism of such proposals comes from traditional Atlanticists, who see Germany's security best served by maintaining strong ties with the United States, but also from commentators on the liberal-left side of the political spectrum, who generally

³⁵ See, “Kanzler Scholz gegen eigenen europäischen Atomschirm,” *Der Spiegel online*, February 16, 2024, available at <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/olaf-scholz-gegen-einen-europaeischen-atomschirm-a-b88c1513-c633-4e8d-8882-87a2262f1dbc>.

³⁶ See Max Biederbeck, “Ein EU-Atomschirm ist finanziell nicht umsetzbar,” *Wirtschaftswoche*, February 14, 2024, available at <https://www.wiwo.de/politik/deutschland/nato-ein-eu-atomschirm-ist-finanziell-nicht-umsetzbar-/29653748.html>.

³⁷ *Speech of the President of the Republic on the Defense and Deterrence Strategy*, February 7, 2020, available at <https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2020/02/07/speech-of-the-president-of-the-republic-on-the-defense-and-deterrence-strategy>.

³⁸ See, for example, Liviu Horovitz and Lydia Wachs, “France's Nuclear Weapons and Europe: Options for a better coordinated deterrence policy,” *SWP Comment*, No. 15, March 2023, available at https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/comments/2023C15_Frances_NuclearWeapons.pdf; and, Liviu Horovitz and Elisabeth Suh, “Trump II and US Nuclear Assurances to NATO: Policy Options Instead of Alarmism,” *SWP Comment*, No. 17, April 2024, available at https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/comments/2024C17_TrumpII_NATO.pdf.

oppose nuclear weapons and want Germany to play a greater role in nuclear disarmament, e.g., by signing the Nuclear Ban Treaty. This scepticism by different political camps is another factor that suggests that Germany is not likely to actively push for a Eurodeterrent, let alone for a national option.

Acknowledging the dearth of nuclear expertise in Germany, some observers have argued that the first step for Germany was to “raise the nuclear IQ,” i.e. to make a more determined effort to educate decision-takers and the successor generation.³⁹ Predictably, this has drawn criticism by liberal observers, who see this as a thinly veiled attempt to promote traditional pro-deterrence arguments. However, Russia’s war against Ukraine has changed German security perceptions so much that the traditional arguments by the liberal arms control community now have little traction.⁴⁰ By contrast, a concerted attempt by the government, universities and think tanks to teach the basics of deterrence appears most timely, as it would help to put the German nuclear debate on a more solid intellectual foundation.

Alternatives to U.S. Extended Deterrence?

Notwithstanding the flurry of publications about a German national or a Euro alternative to U.S. extended nuclear deterrence, Germany has very few alternative options that appear realistic.

A German national nuclear option remains politically inconceivable in the absence of a dramatic worsening of the threat environment. While there are many technical hurdles—Germany has abandoned nuclear power generation and thus no longer has an infrastructure that could support a nuclear weapons program—the main obstacles are political. Even though proponents of such a national option argue that a radically changing security environment would inevitably change the goalposts of what would be considered politically acceptable, a “German bomb” nevertheless would send political shockwaves far beyond Europe, evoking memories of that country’s militaristic past. Germany would likely risk provoking counter-coalitions of mistrustful European nations, thus ending up in a worse situation than before. Finally, while the German population is not principally anti-nuclear, it is difficult to assume that it would support a national nuclear program.⁴¹ Hence, any quest for nuclear self-sufficiency is more conceivable in a broader European context.

³⁹ See Karl-Heinz Kamp, “Den nuklearen IQ Deutschlands stärken: Ein Plädoyer für mehr Realismus und eine besser informierte Debatte,” *Working Paper*, No. 2/24, Federal Academy for Security Policy, available at https://www.baks.bund.de/sites/baks010/files/arbeitspapier_sicherheitspolitik_2024_2.pdf.

⁴⁰ For an overly dramatic assessment of the current German nuclear debate see Ulrich Kühn, “Germany debates nuclear weapons, again. But now it’s different,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March 15, 2024, available at <https://thebulletin.org/2024/03/germany-debates-nuclear-weapons-again-but-now-its-different/>.

⁴¹ Throughout West Germany’s postwar history, certain individuals had been advocating a “German bomb,” usually because they harbored doubts about the U.S. willingness to defend Europe, or because they wanted Germany to free itself from U.S. “hegemony.” However, these voices were considered exotic and never received much attention. For one such example, see Peter Scholl-Latour, “Deutschland muss atomar aufrüsten,” *CICERO*, March 19, 2014, available at https://www.focus.de/politik/cicero-exklusiv/deutschland-muss-atomar-aufruesten-cicero-exklusiv_id_1797719.html.

The most plausible option in the current debate is Germany's closer cooperation with France. After Britain's "Brexit" from the EU, France is the only nuclear power within the Union, and Berlin would most likely seek to extend its long-standing cooperation with Paris in defense matters into the nuclear realm. This option, however, would suffer from major deficiencies in potential practice.

First, the French nuclear arsenal is quite small, and thus does not send the powerful deterrence message the U.S. arsenal is capable of sending. Moreover, as a highly centralized country, France is particularly vulnerable to a nuclear strike on key decision centers (i.e. Paris), which could limit its bargaining power in a crisis.

Second, Paris—like Washington—will maintain full control of the decision-making process on nuclear targeting and employment. The fact that France is the only NATO ally that does not belong to the Nuclear Planning Group suggests that Paris will not accept any arrangement that might infringe on its nuclear sovereignty. Moreover, the July 2024 elections pushed France further to the left, reinforcing doubts about the leeway of President Macron on nuclear matters. Indeed, the election results appear to have made an unlikely option even more remote. Consequently, the hope expressed by some German observers that by contributing financially to the French *force de frappe*, Germany could buy nuclear protection, is likely to be dashed.

Third, France continues to harbor doubts about Germany's stance on all things nuclear, given its occasional anti-nuclear impulses on nuclear weapons as well as its complete—and largely ideologically motivated—exit from nuclear power generation. All this suggests that a Franco-German nuclear partnership would be a nervous one, and not remotely on a par with the established relationship with the United States.

A considerable wildcard regarding the French role in an eventual Eurodeterrent is the Future Combat Air System (FCAS), a complex network of fighter jets and drones. Currently led by France and Germany, with Spain and Belgium also participating, the plane is supposed to be dual-capable, which would imply the option of carrying French warheads. This has led some observers, including the aforementioned Lanxade and Naumann, to speculate about Germany engaging in a French-based nuclear sharing system, akin to the current one centered on the United States.⁴² However, the FCAS project has been in political and financial turmoil from its very start, with some insiders expressing doubts that it will ever come to fruition. At the very least, persistent disagreements between Germany and France over technical specifications, funding and political control of the project would threaten considerable delays and cost overruns, which renders speculations about Franco-German nuclear sharing moot at this stage.

Another option would be to adopt a broader approach and also include the United Kingdom in a new nuclear deterrence architecture for Europe. However, the U.K.'s arsenal is closely tied to the United States and NATO, which would likely lead London to approach European-only schemes with great hesitation. Even if the new Labour Government will turn out much more pro-European than its predecessor and has already reached out to Berlin on

⁴² See also Liviu Horovitz and Lydia Wachs, "France's Nuclear Weapons and Europe," *op. cit.*

defense issues, and irrespective of the U.K.'s investment in the modernization of its nuclear arsenal,⁴³ the nuclear dimension is unlikely to be on the front-burner in the UK's relationship with the EU or Germany. Hence, while German skepticism about a French-based solution may grow due to political changes within France, London, which has committed its nuclear capabilities to NATO, is unlikely to replace Paris as the centerpiece of a future Eurodeterrent.

The argument that some countries in Central and Eastern Europe would hasten to acquire their own nuclear deterrent⁴⁴ appears even more unrealistic, as the technical and political hurdles would seem too high. Judging from these countries' past behavior, it seems far more likely that they would seek bilateral agreements with the United States, emphasizing their willingness and ability to pay their dues as good allies.

In sum, the most plausible steps that Germany might take would be to launch an institutionalized dialogue—bilaterally with France, multilaterally within the EU—on nuclear deterrence. This could lead to modest innovations, such as seminars and table-top exercises, visits to French and British nuclear installations, and, eventually, the participation of EU countries in French or British nuclear exercises. However, these steps would have to be designed so as not to interfere with or even contradict ongoing activities within NATO. A true leap forward could be achieved if France (and, eventually, the UK) would publicly declare that they would extend their nuclear deterrent to cover all of EU/NATO Europe and establish a corresponding EU-based planning group.

While the additional deterrent value of these two arsenals has long been acknowledged in NATO statements, a more explicit commitment to a genuine European “nuclear umbrella” might assure European, including German, publics that, even after a U.S. retreat from Europe, nuclear deterrence was still available. Even if many analysts would be quick to uncover the flaws of these new arrangements, a change in rhetoric may offer the simplest quick fix to avoid a situation where Europe would feel that Washington had pulled the rug from under their security.

How Should the U.S. Respond?

Any move by allies—in Europe or the Asia-Pacific region—towards a national nuclear arsenal would constitute a major blow to U.S. non-proliferation policy. This policy was a driving force behind the NPT, for nuclear sharing arrangements, and for extended deterrence more generally. All these steps were intended to assure allies that their security concerns

⁴³ For different views on the U.K.'s nuclear options see, “How could the UK augment its nuclear forces?,” *Britain's World, Council of Geostrategy*, March 28, 2024, available at <https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/britains-world/how-could-the-uk-augment-its-nuclear-forces/>. See also, UK Government, Defence Nuclear Enterprise, *Delivering the UK's Nuclear Deterrent as a National Endeavour*, March 2024, available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6622702b49d7b8813ba7e576/Defence_Nuclear_Enterprise_Command_Paper_v6.pdf.

⁴⁴ See Ulrich Speck, “A separate nuclear umbrella for Europe? The prospect of a Trump victory is spurring a new debate over nuclear weapons,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (English edition), January 18, 2024, available at <https://www.nzz.ch/english/the-prospect-of-a-trump-victory-spurs-debate-over-nuclear-weapons-in-europe-ld.1774685>.

were being taken care of, and that they would not need to acquire nuclear weapons of their own. The logic of this policy remains eminently sound, as it remains in the U.S. interest to contain the spread of nuclear weapons and thereby avoid the risks of an unpredictable multi-nuclear world.

At the same time, however, the United States is seeking relief from the burden of international commitments and has become increasingly impatient with what it considers continuing European foot-dragging on providing stronger conventional forces. In this context, former President Trump's transactional view of the transatlantic security relationship, which even led him to publicly question the U.S. role as a protector of its allies, was unusual in terms of style, but not in terms of its underlying message: Washington's patience was running out. Trump's strategy worked in part, as some European allies, who had already become worried about Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, were keen to demonstrate their unflinching commitment to the transatlantic security pact by increasing their defense budgets.

However, as the German nervousness about extended deterrence showed, the same approach will not work in the nuclear domain, because Germany, in the current context, cannot "do more" in terms of nuclear burden-sharing, except arresting anti-nuclear reflexes with a strong commitment to nuclear sharing and by a clear rejection of other steps that could de-legitimize nuclear deterrence, such as the Nuclear Ban Treaty. Instinctively, Chancellor Scholz's "Zeitenwende" speech contained such pro-nuclear messages, thereby forcing his own, latently anti-nuclear political party to accept the basic tenets of transatlantic security and extended nuclear deterrence. Assuming that Germany will continue on this path, it would have delivered as much as a non-nuclear ally can deliver.

Should the United States (and some of its European allies) conclude that Russia's continued belligerence requires the deployment of new nuclear systems in Europe, Germany would likely face a potentially controversial debate that it would much rather avoid. While such deployments would constitute a clear reaffirmation of U.S. extended deterrent, and thus would be welcomed by parts of the German strategic community, any German government would be hard pressed to "sell" such a decision, if the threat posed by Russia has not increased substantially. The initial discussion on the U.S.-German agreement to deploy U.S. long-range *conventional* missiles in Germany starting in 2026, in which some observers have evoked the specter of another INF-debate, indicates the potential difficulties of such decisions.⁴⁵ As pointed out above, Germany's perception of the health of extended deterrence depends less on specific force posture decisions, but on its perception of the health of the overall German-U.S. relationship and the character of the threat. Hence, a cordial transatlantic relationship would be the prerequisite for successfully managing eventual new nuclear deployments.

⁴⁵ See Thorsten Jungholt, "Was hinter dem Tomahawk-Deal des Kanzlers steckt," *Die Welt*, July 12, 2024, available at <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article252481964/Marschflugkoerper-in-Deutschland-Was-hinter-dem-Tomahawk-Deal-des-Kanzlers-steckt.html>).

In sum, while Washington is well advised to continue its pressure on the European allies—and notably Germany—to do more on conventional defense, raising doubts about the continuing U.S. commitment to extended nuclear deterrence for Europe would be self-defeating. As Germany's nervous debate about an alternative European nuclear option demonstrates, any American signaling of a withdrawal of its extended nuclear deterrent would lead only to a political alienation that both countries can ill-afford.

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ANALYSIS

“KNOWING YOUR ENEMY”

JAMES R. SCHLESINGER AND THE RISE OF TAILORED DETERRENCE

Kyle Balzer

In the years ahead, the United States will confront an unprecedented geopolitical challenge that threatens its far-flung alliances and, more directly, the security of the American homeland. For the first time in the nuclear age, the United States will face two peer nuclear adversaries, China and Russia. The bipartisan Strategic Posture Commission recently addressed this unparalleled situation, concluding that the United States “must urgently prepare for the new reality, and measures need to be taken now to deal with these new threats.”¹

But *how* should the United States prepare for a two-peer threat environment? The strategic sensibility of James R. Schlesinger, a pioneering Cold War strategist who confronted the rise of a peer nuclear adversary, can help address this question. Given the confounding nature of the emerging strategic landscape, it may seem puzzling to turn to the past. Schlesinger, after all, thought and wrote about deterring just one great-power adversary. And though he faced the rise of a peer nuclear rival in the Soviet Union, the Soviets—contra China today—were isolated from the global economy and suffered from a relatively weak defense-industrial base.

Notwithstanding these acknowledged differences, Schlesinger recognized a fundamental feature of peacetime competition that transcends time, space, and number of peer rivals: Adversaries hold distinctive values and behavioral tendencies that defy “rational” mirror-imaging. Moreover, a wise competitor, as Schlesinger understood, will exploit his opponent’s self-damaging proclivities to secure competitive advantages. U.S. nuclear strategy, as such, should be tailored to adversary thinking—not that of American planners. The totality of Mutual Assured Destruction—the idea that the nuclear balance is inescapably stalemated—has not nurtured a community of like-minded nuclear powers. Nor has it erased the need to compete for comparative advantage.

This paper proceeds in three parts, stretching Schlesinger’s career as a University of Virginia economics professor (1956-1963), RAND Corporation analyst (1963-1969), and secretary of defense (1973-1975). First, it examines Schlesinger’s early work as an economics professor and strategic analyst, underscoring the behavioral asymmetries existing between peer competitors. Second, it treats his approach to peacetime nuclear

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¹ Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States, *America’s Strategic Posture: The Final Report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States* (Alexandria, VA: Institute of Defense Analyses, October 2023), p. v, available at <https://www.ida.org/research-and-publications/publications/all/a/am/americas-strategic-posture>.



competition, stressing the need to tailor planning to adversary strategic thought. Finally, it explores Secretary of Defense Schlesinger's and his successors' exploitation of Soviet thinking, emphasizing that targeting doctrine and force development are a function of adversary perceptions. The conclusion offers lessons for today, underscoring that "knowing your enemy" is a demanding challenge that deserves sustained attention, even in the shadow of the Balance of Terror.

Diagnosing the Enemy

"Strategy," Schlesinger wrote in 1968, "depends on the image of the foe."² He lamented, then, that projections of the Soviets in the 1950s and 1960s had swung wildly from "commie rats who only understand force," to enthusiastic partners-in-detente "who are just as urbane, civilized, and intent on the eradication of differences as are those on our side."³ While the former engendered illusory fears of Soviet nuclear dominance in the 1950s, the latter nurtured misguided expectations that the Kremlin would forego a costly strategic arms buildup in the 1960s. Both projections, Schlesinger contended, arose from a flawed image of a "rational" adversary that shared American values and behavioral predispositions.⁴

In a series of RAND papers, Schlesinger criticized U.S. analysts for ignoring two "non-rational" factors of strategic analysis: historical legacies and organizational behavior. Regarding the former, he argued that profound national experiences helped explain why U.S. nuclear superiority lasted through the mid-1960s. An "underlying Pearl Harbor complex" had compelled the United States, a maritime power experienced in global power projection, to rapidly build up heavy bombers and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) to close presumed, though imaginary, deterrence gaps.⁵ Assuming the Soviets shared the same strategic values, it was only natural for U.S. analysts to project that the Kremlin—whose command economy allowed for vast military expenditures—was far ahead in long-range missile and bomber production. Notwithstanding American expectations, however, Soviet defense planners, imbued with a continental mindset, had actually programmed "skimpy" intercontinental forces in favor of shorter-range capabilities.⁶ While U.S. intelligence

² James R. Schlesinger, "The 'Soft' Factors in Systems Studies," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 24, No. 9 (November 1968), p. 17.

³ James R. Schlesinger, *On Relating Non-Technical Elements to Systems Studies* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, February 1967), RAND Paper P-3545, p. 18, available at <https://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P3545.html>.

⁴ See, for example, James R. Schlesinger, "The Changing Environment for Systems Analysis," in James R. Schlesinger, *Selected Papers on National Security, 1964-1968* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, 1965), pp. 35-54, available at <https://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P5284.html>; *Arms Interactions and Arms Control* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, September 1968), P-3881, available at <https://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P3881.html>; and, Schlesinger, *On Relating Non-Technical Elements to Systems Studies*, op. cit.

⁵ James R. Schlesinger, *European Security and the Nuclear Threat Since 1945* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, April 1967), RAND Paper, P-3574, p. 17, available at <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/papers/2008/P3574.pdf>.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

estimators later complained about the “difficulty understanding the Soviet rationale,”⁷ Schlesinger surmised that the devastating German invasion in 1941 had focused the Soviets on “an attack from Western Europe – this time abetted by the United States.”⁸

Schlesinger maintained that historical legacies also conditioned Soviet organizational behavior, the second non-rational factor of analysis. On this point, RAND colleagues Joseph E. Loftus and Andrew W. Marshall, who had examined long-term trends in Soviet military spending,⁹ shaped his thinking. Loftus and Marshall diagnosed that the Soviets, scarred by the Nazi German invasion, were predisposed to invest heavily in territorial air defenses and theater-range nuclear forces.¹⁰ Unlike the Americans, the Soviets had a separate air defense service that enjoyed a preeminent position within the defense establishment.¹¹ Moreover, the Soviet Ground Forces, which did not share the U.S. Air Force’s interest in intercontinental strike, initially controlled the strategic missile arsenal.¹² Even after the Strategic Rocket Forces came online in 1959, Soviet planners prioritized continental missions. Schlesinger and his colleagues thus concluded that the Kremlin “was pursuing the competition with the United States in quite different ways.”¹³

Schlesinger characterized Loftus and Marshall’s work, along with the literature on organizational behavior, evolutionary anthropology, and psychopolitical analysis, as “a revelation on the road to Damascus.”¹⁴ In the mid-1960s, he joined Marshall on trips to Harvard Business School to exchange ideas with management experts.¹⁵ Schlesinger and Marshall also discussed anthropologist Robert Ardrey’s book, *The Territorial Imperative*,¹⁶ which emphasized the deep-seated primal instincts that drove humans to commit self-damaging behavior, as well as the psychopolitical analysis of Nathan Leites, a RAND

⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, *Soviet Capabilities for Strategic Attack* (Washington, D.C.: CIA, October 18, 1963), National Intelligence Estimate 11-8-63, p. 3, available at https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000267776.pdf.

⁸ Schlesinger, *European Security and the Nuclear Threat Since 1945*, p. 18.

⁹ Joseph E. Loftus and Andrew W. Marshall, *RAND Research on the Soviet Military* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, February 21, 1958), RAND Draft Memorandum, D-4943.

¹⁰ For a summary of Loftus and Marshall’s classified work, see Graham T. Allison and A. W. Marshall, *Explanation and Prediction of Governmental Action: An Organizational Process Model* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, May 1968), RAND Research Memorandum, RM-5897-PR, pp. 19-21.

¹¹ Steven J. Zaloga, *The Kremlin’s Nuclear Sword: The Rise and Fall of Russia’s Strategic Nuclear Forces, 1945-2000* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2002), pp. 125-125; and Dima Adamsky, “The Art of Net Assessment and Uncovering Foreign Military Innovations: Learning from Andrew W. Marshall’s Legacy,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 5 (2020), pp. 611-644.

¹² Zaloga, *The Kremlin’s Nuclear Sword*, pp. 58-59.

¹³ Andrew W. Marshall, “The Origins of Net Assessment,” chapter in, Thomas G. Mahnken, ed., *Net Assessment and Military Strategy: Retrospective and Prospective Essays* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2020), p. 4.

¹⁴ Schlesinger quoted in Mie Augier and Andrew W. Marshall, “The Fog of Strategy: Some Organizational Perspectives on Strategy and the Strategic Management Challenges in the Changing Competitive Environment,” *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (2017), p. 279.

¹⁵ For Schlesinger and Marshall’s trips to Harvard Business School, see Jacqueline Deal, “Mr. Marshall as a People Person,” in Andrew May, ed., *Remembering Andy Marshall: Essays by His Friends* (USA: Andrew Marshall Foundation, 2020), p. 147.

¹⁶ Andrew W. Marshall, *Reflections on Net Assessment* (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, 2022), pp. 10, 25, 132. See also Marshall, interviewed by Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 15 June 1992, pp. 74-75, 132.

colleague working on the cultural roots of national perceptions.¹⁷ This eclectic body of work crystalized for Schlesinger that the Soviet defense establishment “should be viewed organizationally—as sluggish organisms, dominated by doctrines based specifically on obsolescent strategic views...”¹⁸ Moreover, such a broad perspective illuminated why, exactly, the Soviets “were doing remarkably little to build up their intercontinental strike forces,”¹⁹ and why the Soviets poured staggering resources into territorial air defenses – notwithstanding the diminished threat of heavy bombers relative to ICBMs.²⁰ Soviet historical legacies, Schlesinger believed, were thus “reinforced by bureaucratic tendencies reflecting routinized functions and outlooks.”²¹

Schlesinger concluded that “soft” non-rational factors blended with “hard” realities – namely, economic and technological constraints—to generate a distinctive Soviet posture. The Kremlin, for instance, initially relied on theater-range nuclear forces due to “the greater ease of such a deployment for a nation with limited resources and with limited experience in advance R&D.”²² Schlesinger lamented that in the standard American assessment, Soviet resources “are assumed, like manna, to be supplied by a Kindly Providence.”²³ Mainstream analysts, he believed, erred in projecting a Soviet command economy that would transcend opportunity costs and compete more efficiently.²⁴

Schlesinger, however, had a more optimistic long-term outlook. Dating back to his tenure as a University of Virginia economics professor, he had criticized the image of a Soviet economic miracle. The Kremlin, laboring under severe resource constraints, could not escape the burden of choice by spending its way out of every dilemma. Indeed, his 1960 book *The Political Economy of National Security* indicted the intelligence community for “drastically underestimating” the “immense” Soviet defense burden.²⁵ An extended peacetime competition would be a significant drag on the Soviet economy. When Schlesinger departed Charlottesville for Santa Monica in 1963, he suspected Soviet military spending “might be so high as to be unsustainable in the long run.”²⁶

In retrospect, Schlesinger’s diagnosis of the Soviets has aged well. Soft factors like historical trauma and organizational behavior did, in fact, generate peculiar predispositions.

¹⁷ James R. Schlesinger, “Nathan Leites: An Old World Figure in a New World Setting,” in *Remembering Nathan Leites, An Appreciation: Recollections of Some Friends, Colleagues, and Students* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, 1989), pp. 55-62.

¹⁸ Schlesinger, *Arms Interactions and Arms Control*, op. cit., p. 5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁰ Schlesinger, *On Relating Non-Technical Elements to Systems Studies*, op. cit., p. 28.

²¹ Schlesinger, *European Security and the Nuclear Threat Since 1945*, op. cit., p. 18.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²³ Schlesinger, *Arms Interactions and Arms Control*, op. cit., p. 4.

²⁴ As late as the mid-1980s, esteemed Western economists believed a peacetime military competition favored the Soviet economy. See, for example, John Kenneth Galbraith, “Reflections,” *The New Yorker*, September 3, 1984, pp. 54-65, esp. 61.

²⁵ James R. Schlesinger, *The Political Economy of National: The Political Economy of National Security: A Study of the Economic Aspects of the Contemporary Power Struggle* (New York: Praeger, 1960), p. 36.

²⁶ Quoted in Gordon S. Barrass, *The Great Cold War: A Journey Through the Hall of Mirrors* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 252.

Nazi German air raids on Moscow left a searing “psychological imprint” on Soviet leaders, who, from 1945 to the early 1960s, plowed more resources into obsolescing air defenses than strategic offensive forces.²⁷ Even as the United States drew down continental air defenses in the 1960s, the Soviets dedicated 15 percent of military expenditure to this mission. Prioritizing regime survival and political control above all else, the Kremlin even committed a shocking 1-2 percent of GDP to the construction of a vast network of underground command centers.²⁸ Perplexed U.S. defense planners, like Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, disparaged these efforts as “the greatest single military error in the world.”²⁹ Soviet history and organizational culture, however, said otherwise.

Moreover, “hard” technical constraints limited Soviet intercontinental forces until technological breakthroughs enabled the massive buildup of the late 1960s. The first-generation Soviet ICBM “proved so poorly suited to the rapidly changing strategic environment that the program had to be curtailed.”³⁰ The Soviets, thus impaired, were forced to divert scarce resources to theater-range ballistic missiles. Even if more “rational” calculations had driven planning, Moscow still lacked the defense-industrial base to match its rival. The Kremlin depended on nuclear brinkmanship until it was ready to vie for strategic superiority.

Amidst the uncertainty that characterized the Soviet buildup in the late 1960s, Schlesinger’s diagnosis of Soviet tendencies equipped him to assess the evolving situation. His empirical approach allowed him to move beyond McNamara’s abstract image of a like-minded opponent and accurately diagnose the nature of the competition.

Diagnosing the Competition

In the wake of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, McNamara presumed the Soviets drew the same lesson as he did: Pursuing nuclear superiority was both strategically worthless and a senseless allocation of national resources. After all, in the emerging era of Mutual Assured Destruction, the inferior Soviet arsenal could survive a large-scale attack and still inflict catastrophic damage on the United States. McNamara thus concluded, “Our numerical superiority, great as it was, on the order of 20-to-1, could not be translated into usable military power.”³¹ Competing for nuclear superiority, then, was delusional *and* cost-ineffective.

Believing his logic universal, McNamara insisted, in a 1965 interview, that “the Soviets have decided that they have lost the quantitative [arms] race, and they are not seeking to

²⁷ Adamsky, “The Art of Net Assessment and Uncovering Foreign Military Innovations: Learning from Andrew W. Marshall’s Legacy,” *op. cit.*, pp. 611-644.

²⁸ Zaloga, *The Kremlin’s Nuclear Sword*, *op. cit.*, pp. 126, 166-167; and Barrass, *The Great Cold War*, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

²⁹ McNamara quoted in Edward J. Drea, *McNamara, Clifford, and the Burdens of Vietnam, 1965-1969* (Washington, D.C.: OSD Historical Office, 2011), p. 351.

³⁰ Zaloga, *The Kremlin’s Nuclear Sword*, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

³¹ Robert McNamara, as quoted in, “Interview with Robert McNamara, 1986 [1],” *GBH Archives*, February 20, 1986, available at https://openvault.wgbh.org/catalog/V_DF35A31CD90545FE83A077DE010DD044.

engage us in that contest.”³² The Kremlin would, instead, scale back its militarized economy, forgo a costly strategic arms buildup, and pursue a more “rational” consumer society.³³ Conflating American values with those of the Soviets, McNamara predicted that economic diversification “will tend to limit the size and help determine the character of the Soviet military program.”³⁴ To entice the Soviets down the consumer-driven path, he capped strategic force levels, which started leveling off in 1965. The Kremlin would, presumably, reciprocate.

The Soviets nonetheless spurned McNamara’s goodwill. In the aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis, the Kremlin had finally recognized the import of intercontinental weaponry and, from that point on, considered itself locked in a “struggle for strategic superiority.”³⁵ Stability, for Moscow, was a function of *Soviet* nuclear primacy—not Mutual Assured Destruction. Alas, even as U.S. strategic forces plateaued, Soviet missile construction hurtled toward its rival’s self-imposed ceiling of 1,054 ICBMs and 656 SLBMs. McNamara, however, continued to be blinded by his modernist assumptions, which he simply recast to fit changing circumstances. Rather than a sprint toward superiority, he believed the Soviet nuclear breakout confirmed his universal logic. Moscow was merely reacting, albeit irrationally, to the since-completed U.S. missile buildup, maintaining its ability to hold American cities and industry at risk of “Assured Destruction.” As the defense secretary warned in a 1967 address, “*actions ... relating to the build-up of nuclear forces necessarily trigger reactions by the other side.*”³⁶

Accordingly, McNamara moved to extinguish this *action-reaction phenomenon*. Opting for restraint once more, he dramatically drew down strategic air defenses and, on the offensive end, slashed development of a heavier missile and terrain-hugging bomber—programs that would have enhanced counterforce targeting in the 1970s. Strategic forces capable of the Assured-Destruction mission—which required relatively unsophisticated capabilities to kill “soft” urban-industrial assets—were deemed sufficient for deterrence. This decision effectively curtailed the range of attack options, as the lightweight Minuteman ICBM and B-52 bomber—despite several rounds of modernization—could not reliably conduct discriminate strikes on hardened targets. Such handicaps were precisely the point, however: As one of McNamara’s deputies later argued, the Soviets “were more apt to emulate than capitulate.”³⁷

³² McNamara interview, *U.S. News & World Report*, April 12, 1965, p. 52.

³³ For McNamara’s “rational,” modernist assumptions, see James Cameron, *The Double Game: The Demise of America’s Missile Defense System and the Rise of Strategic Arms Limitation* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 62-66.

³⁴ Robert McNamara, as quoted in, U.S. Senate, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1964* (Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 1964), p. 37.

³⁵ General-Colonel Danilevich interview, 21 September 1992, in John G. Hines, Ellis M. Mishulovich, and John F. Shull, eds., *Soviet Intentions 1965-1985, Vol. 2: Soviet Post-Cold War Testimonial Evidence* (McLean, VA: BDM Federal, Inc., September 22, 1995) p. 33.

³⁶ Robert S. McNamara, “The Dynamics of Nuclear Strategy,” in *Department of State Bulletin*, LVII, No. 1476, October 9, 1967, p. 443. Emphasis added.

³⁷ Paul C. Warnke, “Apes on a Treadmill,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 18 (Spring 1975), p. 28.

The Soviets, however, notwithstanding McNamara's sanguine diagnosis, proved far more eager to compete than emulate. American restraint could not alleviate the Kremlin's anxiety about regime survival, and it continued to invest heavily in air defense. And offensively, in 1969, the Soviets blew past the U.S. land-based missile posture. By 1975, the Soviets had amassed 1,572 ICBMs and 815 SLBMs—a quantitative advantage in overall numbers *and* heavy missiles that the 1972 Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) codified. Contra McNamara's action-reaction diagnosis, this offensive buildup was fueled, according to a senior Russian official, by "a kind of internal arms race inside the [Soviet] defense industry"—*not* U.S. force development.³⁸

In the late 1960s, at the RAND Corporation, Schlesinger and his close friend and colleague, Andrew Marshall, pioneered an analytic alternative to the action-reaction stalemate. They believed that the image of spiraling arms race had rationalized a blind pursuit of stability. Instead of a stalemated nuclear rivalry, in which the *sole* object was nurturing restraint with a like-minded opponent, the RAND analysts envisioned a long-term competition.

Drawing from their earlier work, Schlesinger and Marshall assessed that the Soviets would struggle to compete with the United States over the long run. That the Kremlin would—or even could—offset every American initiative defied reality, given its weak technological base and self-damaging tendencies. The Soviets, instead, would be slow to abandon standardized outlooks and behavior, as evidenced by their delayed intercontinental missile buildup and heavy investment in air defense. As Schlesinger wrote in response to McNamara's 1967 address, the action-reaction model "presupposes a degree of responsiveness to the deployment decisions of a rival that is historically questionable."³⁹ McNamara, who imagined "a game of subtle move and countermove based on high sensitivity to the logical implications of the opponent's actions," had obscured "the slowness of arms responses, the lost opportunities, and the perseverance of [Soviet] vulnerabilities."⁴⁰ As such, Schlesinger lamented that the defense secretary "allowed logic to drive policy to an extent ... not entirely suited to this world."⁴¹

Schlesinger and Marshall's long-term competition framework emphasized the psychological and behavioral asymmetries between the superpowers. By stimulating certain Soviet tendencies, like a propensity to drain resources on air defense, the United States could spur its opponent to double down on self-damaging behavior. As Marshall later recalled, "Schlesinger arrived at RAND with the idea that the object was outlasting the Soviets and encouraging them to devote resources to activities that were less threatening or even favorable to the United States."⁴² To do so, Schlesinger encouraged planners to recognize that "the response of an opponent to actions on our part is more likely to be related to

³⁸ Vitalii Leonidovich Kataev interview, May 1993, in Hines, ed., *Soviet Intentions*, Vol. 2, op. cit., p. 97.

³⁹ Schlesinger, *Arms Interaction and Arms Control*, op. cit., p. 14.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴¹ James R. Schlesinger, "The Office of the Secretary of Defense," in Robert J. Art, Vincent Davis, Samuel P. Huntington, eds., *Reorganizing America's Defense: Leadership in War and Peace* (New York: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1985), p. 262.

⁴² Marshall, "The Origins of Net Assessment," op. cit., p. 7.

internal group norms and values than to the logic of the situation.”⁴³ He fully embraced, then, the challenge of “knowing your enemy,”⁴⁴ and urged “far greater effort than heretofore into what are the true attention cues for particular [Soviet] organizations...”⁴⁵ However, at this early stage, Schlesinger and Marshall had already identified U.S. counterforce capabilities as one such attention cue. Hard-target-kill capabilities would intensify the Kremlin’s fixation with regime survival and political control, spurring another round of defensive expenditures.

Both analysts, therefore, condemned McNamara’s repudiation of advanced counterforce weaponry—an area where the United States enjoyed a significant lead in on-board digital guidance systems. In a paper codifying their long-term competition framework, Marshall emphasized, “A general theme of strategy development should be the seeking of areas of U.S. comparative advantage, and the steering of the strategic arms competition into these areas, where possible.”⁴⁶ The terrain-hugging bomber and heavier ICBM, as such, represented a missed opportunity to capitalize on targeting advantages and develop war-fighting concepts the Soviets could not emulate. In the late 1960s, Schlesinger developed such operational concepts, believing the strategic posture—at that time, designed to execute massive and indiscriminate strikes—required flexible attack options to offset the Soviet buildup. “Providing this instrument,” he wrote in a 1967 draft memorandum, “requires forces which can strike a wide variety of targets either incrementally or simultaneously and with weapons and accuracies which minimize collateral damage...” He continued: “It is critical that *the values of the country being deterred* be utilized in the calculations of the levels of destruction required for deterrence.”⁴⁷

Schlesinger, therefore, regretted the decision to forswear weapons capable of holding at risk valued Soviet assets. Hedging with a large-payload ICBM, he advised in a 1965 paper, would have positioned the United States to render obsolete generational Soviet investments in hardened missile silos (which eventually came online in the 1970s).⁴⁸ Similarly, hedging with terrain-hugging bombers and advanced cruise missiles would have nullified low-altitude Soviet air defenses (which emerged, at great expense, in the late 1960s and early 1970s).⁴⁹ Rather than drive up the costs for the Soviets to maintain these cherished investments, however, U.S. defense planners had eased pressure on what Schlesinger believed to be an unsustainable defense burden.

Dismayed by the direction of the strategic posture under McNamara, Schlesinger could not have known that in the years ahead, he would have the opportunity to steer nuclear

⁴³ J. R. Schlesinger, *Some Notes on Issues of Strategy* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, September 21, 1962), RAND Draft Memorandum, D-10508, p. 4.

⁴⁴ Schlesinger, *On Relating Non-Technical Elements to Systems Studies*, op. cit., p. 16.

⁴⁵ Schlesinger, *Arms Interactions and Arms Control*, op. cit., p. 6.

⁴⁶ A. W. Marshall, *Long-Term Competition with the Soviets: A Framework for Strategic Analysis* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, 1972), RAND Report, R-862-PR, p. 35, available at <https://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/R862.html>.

⁴⁷ Schlesinger, untitled draft memorandum on nuclear options, James R. Schlesinger Papers, Library of Congress, Box 40, Folder 5 Strategic Forces, 1967-68.

⁴⁸ Schlesinger, *The Changing Environment for Systems Analysis*, op. cit., p. 49.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

policy in a more competitive direction. In the 1970s, as a key policy maker in the Nixon and Ford Administrations, he would translate his diagnosis of the competition into a prescription to win the strategic arms rivalry.

Prescribing Victory

After joining the Richard M. Nixon Administration in February 1969, Schlesinger enjoyed a meteoric rise from assistant director of the Bureau of the Budget (1969-71), chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission (1971-73), director of the Central Intelligence Agency (1973), to secretary of defense (1973-75). At each stop, the analyst-turned-policymaker was a staunch advocate of limited counterforce targeting. As defense secretary, though, he launched a full-fledged revival of American nuclear strategy, the impact of which endures today.

Declaring himself a “revivalist” of a military establishment racked by the Vietnam War and loss of nuclear superiority,⁵⁰ Secretary of Defense Schlesinger categorically rejected the somber national mood that defined the 1970s. As *Time* magazine cast doubt on capitalism’s future,⁵¹ and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger desperately chased a SALT II agreement, Schlesinger instead asked, “Why the hell should we lose?”⁵² Indeed, his optimism so unnerved Kissinger’s staff that they believed he wanted to “beat the Soviets in an arms race”⁵³—a not entirely unfounded concern. Though he harbored no desire to outbuild the Soviets, the defense secretary certainly intended to lock in asymmetric advantages below the threshold of all-out nuclear warfare. The Soviets, as he reminded Congress shortly upon taking office, were not “ten feet tall.”⁵⁴

As such, Schlesinger’s strategic overhaul advanced along two interrelated tracks: targeting doctrine and weapons procurement policy. Together, these initiatives would push America’s lead in digital technology and develop strike systems to execute limited nuclear options—which would exacerbate the Kremlin’s fear for regime survival and its territorial integrity. Moreover, if the Soviets attempted to match these sophisticated attack options, given their comparatively weak technological base and restrictive defense burden, they would have to compete on American terms. As Schlesinger revealed in a then-classified 1973 lecture, “We certainly desire to develop a strategic edge in terms of hypothetical war-fighting capabilities against a slowly reacting Soviet Union.”⁵⁵

Regarding the first track, targeting doctrine, Schlesinger assumed office at an auspicious moment, just as bureaucratic momentum was building for his strategic philosophy. On July

⁵⁰ James R. Schlesinger, “Watching Birds and Budgets,” *Time*, Vol. 103, No. 6 (February 11, 1974), p. 16.

⁵¹ “Can Capitalism Survive?” *Time*, Vol. 106, No. 2 (July 14, 1975).

⁵² Mckittrick and Angevine, eds., *Reflections on Net Assessment*, op. cit., p. 78.

⁵³ Jan M. Lodal to Secretary Kissinger, “Secretary Schlesinger’s Presentation at the NSC Meeting,” September 13, 1974, Digital National Security Archive (hereafter DNSA), *U.S. Nuclear History, Pt. II*.

⁵⁴ Schlesinger testimony, U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *U.S. Forces in Europe* (Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 1973), p. 80.

⁵⁵ Schlesinger lecture, National War College, August 21, 1973, available at <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP80B01554R003500170001-9.pdf>.

13, 1973, only weeks into his tenure, he endorsed an interagency report on U.S. nuclear policy, overseen by John S. Foster, Jr., director of Defense Research and Engineering, which recommended broader attack options.⁵⁶ The report fleshed out the findings of an ad hoc Defense Department panel led by Foster that had convened the previous year, which Schlesinger's work at RAND had directly influenced.⁵⁷ The "Foster Panel" echoed Schlesinger when it proposed "attack options which, when withheld, can credibly threaten targets *highly valued by the enemy leadership* for the purpose of deterring escalation across those boundaries."⁵⁸ When Schlesinger forwarded his approval of the interagency report to the White House, he enclosed draft guidance to adjust the existing targeting policy. An objective of limited nuclear employment, it read, should be "holding some *vital enemy targets hostage* and threatening their subsequent destruction" to negotiate a war termination on favorable grounds.⁵⁹

When President Nixon authorized a refined version of Schlesinger's proposal in January 1974, tailored attack options were incorporated into official policy.⁶⁰ After issuing guidance for the employment of nuclear weapons in April, the defense secretary directed planners "to codify the target system—to hit things which destroyed the regime; to get military forces, including conventional forces which could attack after a nuclear exchange." He insisted they "look at the political details. For example, Russians are less than 50% of the population of the USSR. Should we say we will hit Russians and let the 'Golden Horde' take over?"⁶¹ Moreover, Schlesinger insisted that selectively disclosing these plans—as he did in classified hearings sanitized for public release—would "enhance deterrence by creating grave uncertainty on the part of current conservative Soviet leadership."⁶² The idea was to unambiguously hold at risk what the Soviet *leadership* valued most: its political, economic, and military grip on society.

For a better sense of the "political details," Schlesinger appointed Andrew Marshall as director of the newly inaugurated Office of Net Assessment in October 1973. Marshall's primary task was to assess functional military balances. But Schlesinger also tasked his friend to initiate a research program on Soviet perceptions and the political-psychological impact of military forces. "The idea," Marshall later recalled, "was to try to look at... 'What is

⁵⁶ Cover letter from Schlesinger to Kissinger, "Response to NSSM 169," July 13, 1973, enclosure to NSSM 169 *Summary Report*, DNSA, *U.S. Nuclear History, Pt. II*.

⁵⁷ Terry Terriff, *The Nixon Administration and the Making of Nuclear Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 99-100.

⁵⁸ The Foster Panel's report remains classified, though there are numerous supporting memorandums and documents that summarize its findings. See, for example, Memorandum from OASD(SA) to OSD, "US Policy for Employment of Nuclear Weapons," July 7, 1972, DNSA, *U.S. Nuclear History, 1969-1976: Weapons, Arms Control, and War Plans in an Age of Strategic Parity* (hereafter *Nuclear History, Pt. II*). Emphasis added.

⁵⁹ Draft National Security Decision Memorandum, July 13, 1973, attachment to cover letter from Schlesinger to Kissinger, DNSA, *U.S. Nuclear History, Pt. II*.

⁶⁰ National Security Decision Memorandum 242, "Policy for Planning the Employment of Nuclear Weapons," January 17, 1974, DNSA, *U.S. Nuclear History, Pt. II*.

⁶¹ Memorandum of Conversation, August 2, 1973, DNSA, *The Kissinger Conversations, Supplement: A verbatim Record of U.S. Diplomacy, 1969-1977*.

⁶² Limited Nuclear Option (LNO) Discussion, December 2, 1974, DNSA, *Nuclear History, Pt. II*.

it that [the Soviets] pay attention to about us? What sorts of things seem to give us high scores in their books? What things don't matter or give us low scores?' In other words, how can we then start to do those things or show those characteristics which impress them and influence their assessments?' Studying Soviet perceptions "was one of [Schlesinger's] absolutely fundamental views about things."⁶³

Marshall, who participated in subsequent targeting revisions, located Schlesinger's view as "something that runs through a lot of [military posturing] in the '70s."⁶⁴ Indeed, the Jimmy Carter Administration subsequently adopted Schlesinger's tailored approach, concluding: "Since the Soviets appear to have a concept of military victory, even in nuclear war, we should seek employment policies that would make a Soviet victory as seen through Soviet eyes, as improbable as we can make it in any contingency."⁶⁵ Soviet eyes, then, demanded U.S. capabilities to "attack, in a selective and measured way, a range of military, industrial, and political targets"⁶⁶ and to "maintain roughly equal counterforce capabilities."⁶⁷ Marshall's ongoing research program had revealed that "the top Soviet leadership ... were very much focused on counterforce and therefore they looked at us with that perspective." As such, Soviet values "required us to get into the counterforce business for deterrent purposes."⁶⁸ This targeting emphasis carried into the Reagan Administration, which fully embraced selective and discriminate nuclear options.

Though nuclear forces lacked flexibility in the mid-1970s, Schlesinger's weapons procurement policy, the second track of his strategic revival, aimed to make discriminate options a reality in the 1980s. While his predecessors either refrained from or failed to make the requisite upgrades,⁶⁹ he successfully launched a counterforce revolution that locked in competitive advantages during the Reagan Administration.

Laying the groundwork for limited strategic options, Schlesinger moved aggressively to improve existing missiles and to program next-generation systems. Regarding the current Minuteman III ICBM, he advanced a new higher yield warhead and upgrades to the guidance system—which would enhance the lightweight missile's counterforce capability. He also proceeded with the next-generation ICBM and SLBM, the MX and Trident D5, whose heavier throw-weights embodied the large-payload hedge he had advocated in 1965. If the Kremlin

⁶³ Marshall, *Reflections on Net Assessment*, op. cit., p. 132.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁶⁵ *Nuclear Targeting Policy Review: Summary of Major Findings and Recommendations*, attachment to Secretary of Defense to the President, Nuclear Targeting Policy Review, November 28, 1978, available at <https://www.archives.gov/files/declassification/isca/pdf/2011-064-doc39.pdf>.

⁶⁶ Harold Brown, *Department of Defense Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1981* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, January 29, 1980), p. 66.

⁶⁷ *Nuclear Targeting Policy Review*, op. cit.

⁶⁸ Andrew W. Marshall, interviewed by Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, *OSD Historical Office*, June 15, 1992, p. 39, available at https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/oral_history/OH_Trans_MARSHALLAndrew06-15-92.pdf?ver=2018-04-10-070012-207.

⁶⁹ Defense Secretary Melvin Laird aspired to lead a precision-guidance revolution, but Congress thwarted his efforts. For his technological vision, see John D. Maurer, *Competitive Arms Control: Nixon, Kissinger, and SALT, 1969-72* (Yale University Press: New Haven, CT, 2022).

refused to reduce its payload advantage at the negotiating table, Schlesinger planned for the MX missile, equipped with 12 highly accurate warheads, to come online to render obsolete hardened Soviet silos. "The key issue, in terms of hardware," he recalled, "was for us to be confident that we could destroy all of their missile forces."⁷⁰ To round out the strategic modernization program, Schlesinger threw fierce support behind the troubled B-1 bomber, which developed out of McNamara's vetoed aircraft. A terrain-hugging bomber like the B-1, Schlesinger enthused, would "create uncertainty in Soviet attack and defense planning ... and force large air defense expenditures which could otherwise be diverted to other more worrisome Soviet programs."⁷¹ These strike systems would, in combination, bring credibility to limited strategic operations and drive up the cost for the Soviets to maintain valued investments.

To further amplify Soviet fears, Schlesinger laid the groundwork for regional nuclear forces capable of discriminate attacks deep within Soviet territory. Approving advanced development of the joint Navy/Air Force cruise missile program, he expected these air-breathing missiles to "impose on the Soviet Union large additional expenditures for air defenses to counter them."⁷² Cruise missiles exploited the terrain contour matching (TERCOM) navigation system, which allowed for low-altitude penetration of radar-guided air defenses. "Our cruise missile technology," Schlesinger raved in a 1975 National Security Council meeting, "is far, far ahead of theirs with regard to accuracy. For the next decade, we will be alone in the ability to deploy our [TERCOM] very accurate guidance systems."⁷³ Schlesinger's deputy, William P. Clements,⁷⁴ emphasized this point, explaining to Kissinger that the cruise missile "will drive [the Soviets] up the wall because their defense will not protect them ... and they know it."⁷⁵

In keeping with Clements' spirit, Schlesinger also made the momentous decision to extend the range of the Pershing II ballistic missile, whose terminal guidance system dramatically improved accuracy.⁷⁶ The system's extended range would allow for deep strikes in the western Soviet military districts. Moreover, its ballistic flight profile would augment the low-flying cruise missile, expanding the range of azimuths and trajectories that Soviet air defenses would encounter. The Pershing II and multi-platform cruise missile, as

⁷⁰ Quoted in Barrass, *The Great Cold War*, op. cit., p. 181.

⁷¹ Memorandum from Schlesinger to President Ford, U.S. Strategic Forces, 4 December 1974, M. Todd Bennett, ed., *FRUS, 1969-1976: National Security Policy, 1973-1976* (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 2014), Vol. XXXV, p. 224.

⁷² James R. Schlesinger, *Department of Defense Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1976* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, February 5, 1975), p. II-39.

⁷³ Minutes of NSC Meeting, September 17, 1975, GFPL, Digital Collections, National Security Adviser's NSC Meeting File, Box 2, available at <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0312/1552394.pdf>.

⁷⁴ William P. Clements is rightfully known as the father of the modern cruise missile. See Clements National Security Papers Project: <https://ns.clements-papers.org/william-p-clements-jr>.

⁷⁵ Minutes of NSC meeting, July 25, 1975, GFPL Digital Collections, National Security Adviser's NSC Meeting File, Box 2, available at <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0312/1552393.pdf>.

⁷⁶ Michael David Yaffe, *The Origins of the Tactical Nuclear Weapons Modernization Program, 1969-1979* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 1991) Dissertation, pp. 553-554.

Schlesinger predicted, would compound the Kremlin's obsession with self-preservation and drive up the cost of defensive countermeasures.

After Schlesinger's dismissal in November 1975, his successors carried forth and operationalized his nuclear overhaul for strategic effect. In the mid-1980s, the Soviet leadership, to defend against the sophisticated strike assets that now bristled its vast border, ramped up spending on territorial air defenses, which increased by 8 percent.⁷⁷ The Reagan Administration had fielded the B-1 bomber, Pershing II, and multi-domain cruise missile, for which the Soviets had no answer. As a dejected Soviet planner later admitted to an American interlocutor, "our air defense systems were not designed to detect such missiles. You had hardly deployed 1/3 of these missiles and we were already compromising."⁷⁸ The Soviets subsequently signed, out of desperation, the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 1987, which banned all land-based long-range theater weapons but allowed the United States to retain its advantage in air- and sea-launched cruise missiles. As the Soviet general secretary, Mikhail Gorbachev, warned the Soviet Politburo in 1986, "If we won't budge from the positions we've held for a long time, we will lose in the end."⁷⁹

Regarding Schlesinger's ambition to render obsolete hardened Soviet silos, by the end of the 1970s, the Minuteman III was retrofitted with the larger-yield W78 warhead and had undergone guidance-system upgrades. These adjustments dramatically improved its hard-target-kill capability. And in 1986, the Reagan Administration began fielding the MX ICBM, the centerpiece of Schlesinger's counterforce revolution. In a paper that Marshall, still nestled in the Office of Net Assessment, received in 1981, the MX featured as a "cost-inflicting move" to "induce [the Soviets] to spend resources on more ICBM shelters, sea-based systems, or land mobile systems."⁸⁰ The MX deployment and Minuteman III upgrades accomplished just that: even as the Soviet economy teetered on the brink of collapse from its hulking defense burden, the Kremlin invested in a new class of mobile ICBMs to improve survivability.⁸¹

In the final years of the Soviet empire, Schlesinger's approach had thus moved the strategic competition into areas of U.S. advantage. Tailoring deterrence to Soviet values and behavioral tendencies had encouraged the Kremlin to devote more resources to defensive countermeasures even as it struggled to match the U.S. counterforce revolution. As Marshall Nikolai Ogarkov, chief of the Soviet General Staff, confessed to an American interlocutor in 1983, "The Cold War is over and you have won."⁸²

⁷⁷ Peter Westwick, *Stealth: The Secret Contest to Invent Invisible Aircraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 194.

⁷⁸ Danilevich interview in Hines, ed., *Soviet Intentions 1965-1985*, op. cit., p. 34.

⁷⁹ Anatoly Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), p. 84.

⁸⁰ H. Rowen, "Thoughts on MX," April 9, 1981, Henry S. Rowen Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Box 43, MX Missile, 1981.

⁸¹ John A. Battilega, "Soviet Military Thought and the U.S. Competitive Strategies Initiative," chapter in Thomas G. Mahnken, ed., *Competitive Strategies for the 21st Century: Theory, History, and Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 119.

⁸² Quoted in Chris Miller, *Chip War: The Fight for the World's Most Critical Technology* (New York, NY: Scribner, 2022), p. 159.

Conclusion

There are, generally, two opposing schools of thought concerning nuclear deterrence in the United States: an “easy deterrence” school—which depicts deterrence requirements as universal and predictable—and the “difficult deterrence” school—which emphasizes the broad attack options and capabilities required to deter distinctive adversaries.⁸³ Schlesinger’s strategic sensibility favors the latter—and for a good reason.

America’s victory in the Cold War strategic arms competition bears witness to the value and difficulty of “knowing your adversary.” In the 1960s, McNamara’s acceptance of the logic of Mutual Assured Destruction—the idea that the Soviets thought like the Americans—effectively restrained U.S. counterforce capabilities. If the Soviets shared the perception of a stalemated nuclear balance, if the Soviets accepted that competition was futile, logic dictated that deterrence requirements were predictable. Moreover, if the United States demonstrated restraint, the Soviets would follow suit and plan nuclear forces accordingly.

As Schlesinger understood, however, the Soviets held values and exhibited behavioral tendencies that diverged sharply from American strategic thought. Moscow did not abide by the logic of Mutual Assured Destruction—and planned nuclear forces accordingly. The Soviets, as Schlesinger later remarked, “did not tailor their forces to meet ours, and they probably would not have cut back if we had.”⁸⁴ Nuclear deterrence was thus an unending process that demanded deep insight into the Soviet mindset. Targeting doctrine and force development, as such, needed to be tailored to Soviet perceptions.

Furthermore, given the unending nature of nuclear deterrence, Schlesinger’s long-term perspective eschewing the idea of an action-reaction stalemate allowed the United States to exploit Soviet tendencies. A wise competitor would, as Schlesinger counseled, seize the initiative and steer the competition into favorable areas. Mutual Assured Destruction had not erased the superpowers’ distinctive traits.

Notwithstanding the stark contrast between the Cold War and the present, Schlesinger’s strategic sensibility illuminates three enduring lessons that can guide strategists today. First, knowing your enemy is a challenging yet vital and unending task. A strategic competitor will defy “rational” logic and exhibit perplexing behavioral tendencies. Second, investing in research programs on the adversary mindset is an urgent priority. It was, unfortunately, not until the latter years of the Cold War that the Office of Net Assessment had a robust empirical database on Soviet thinking. The United States can avoid this shortfall by adopting the 2023 Strategic Posture Commission’s recommendation for “increased collection, processing, exploitation, and analysis on Chinese nuclear strategy, planning, and employment doctrine.”⁸⁵

⁸³ The schools of deterrence are drawn from Keith B. Payne’s work. See, for example, Keith B. Payne, “The Great Divide in U.S. Deterrence Thought,” *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Summer 2020), pp. 16-48.

⁸⁴ Schlesinger interview, October 29, 1991, in Hines, ed., *Soviet Intentions 1965-1985*, op. cit., p. 130.

⁸⁵ Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States, *America’s Strategic Posture: The Final Report*, op. cit., p. 24.

Third, given the array of modern threats and disruptive technologies, tailoring deterrence will confound even the most perceptive strategic analyst. Getting inside the mind of one peer rival was challenging enough in the Cold War. Today, however, the United States faces two great-power adversaries alongside lesser threats like North Korea and Iran. Disruptive technologies like artificial intelligence and cyber payloads inject further complexity into the deterrence equation. U.S. defense planners, then, would benefit from Schlesinger's counsel to hedge against uncertainty, as he had advocated with the large-payload ICBM and low-flying cruise missile in the mid-1960s.

Given the enduring nature of these lessons, strategic analysts grappling with today's challenges should attune themselves to Schlesinger's legacy. His strategic thought can help strategists navigate the emerging threat environment and manage an uncertain future. To ignore his strategic contributions would be to disown a tremendous comparative advantage.

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ANALYSIS

ISRAEL-HEZBOLLAH WAR AND THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

Masoud Kazemzadeh and Penny L. Watson

Lebanese Hezbollah is widely regarded to be the Islamic Republic of Iran's most powerful proxy militant group.¹ It might become its Achilles heel. There is a high likelihood that after Israel destroys or greatly undermines the political and military infrastructures of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, it will go to war with Hezbollah.² What would Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) do if Israel and Hezbollah enter a full-scale war?

Despite numerous warnings from officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) that if Israel would continue the bombing of Gaza or enter Gaza, the war would spread, we have observed little direct action from IRI's own forces. We observed that it has only been the IRI's proxies that have attacked Israel or the United States. On October 8, 2023, Hezbollah began firing on Israel. There has been a persistent low intensity exchange of fires between the two sides. According to Reuters, between October 8, 2023, and March 12, 2024, the casualties included more than 200 Hezbollah terrorists, about 50 civilians in Lebanon, 12 Israel Defense Forces (IDF) personnel, and six civilians in Israel.³ Agence France-Presse, utilizing various sources, compiled the number of deaths between October 8, 2023 and August 5, 2024. According to this report, 527 people in Lebanon were killed, most of them combatants. In Israel 46 persons were killed, about half of the soldiers. About 160,000 persons have been displaced on both sides of the Israel-Lebanon border. Most estimates are that more than 100,000 persons in Lebanon have been displaced.⁴ Israel has systematically killed top Hezbollah commanders.⁵ Foad Shokr was killed on July 30, 2024. Shokr was the

¹ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Iran's Networks of Influence in the Middle East* (London: Routledge, IISS, 2019), several chapters available at <https://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-dossiers/iran-dossier>; Brian Katz, *Axis Rising: Iran's Evolving Regional Strategy and Non-State Partnerships in the Middle East* (Washington, D.C.: CSIS, October 11, 2018), available at <https://www.csis.org/analysis/axis-rising-irans-evolving-regional-strategy-and-non-state-partnerships-middle-east>; and Thomas Bergeson and Ari Cicurel, "The US must help Israel deal with Hezbollah before it's too late," *The Hill*, December 23, 2023, available at <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/4373758-the-us-must-help-israel-deal-with-hezbollah-before-its-too-late/>.

² Julian Borger, "Fears grow of all-out Israel-Hezbollah war as fighting escalates," *The Guardian*, December 17, 2023, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/17/fears-grow-of-all-out-israel-hezbollah-war-as-fighting-escalates-lebanon>.

³ "Israeli jets hit Lebanon's Bekka Valley for a second day," *Reuters*, March 12, 2024, available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/lebanons-hezbollah-fires-more-than-100-katyusha-rockets-onto-israel-2024-03-12/>.

⁴ Adel Miliani, "Understanding the tensions between Hezbollah and Israel in five key dates," *Le Monde*, August 5, 2024, available at https://www.lemonde.fr/en/les-decodeurs/article/2024/08/05/understanding-the-tensions-between-hezbollah-and-israel-in-five-key-dates_6709662_8.html.

⁵ Azadeh Akbari, "Israel systematically eliminated top Iran proxy leaders," *Iran International*, August 4, 2024, available at <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202408017299>.



highest-ranking military commander of Hezbollah.⁶ Several hours later, Ismail Haniyeh, leader of Hamas, was killed in Tehran on July 31, 2024. Mohammed Nasser, head of one of Hezbollah's three regional divisions in south Lebanon, was killed on July 3, 2024. On June 11, 2024, Taleb Sami Abdullah (known as Hajj Abu Taleb), was killed in an airstrike attributed to Israel. Abdollah was the highest-ranking Hezbollah commander that had been killed by Israel between October 8, 2023, and July 2, 2024.⁷

In this article, we argue that a full-scale war between Israel and Hezbollah would have different consequences than the full-scale war between Israel and Hamas. The relationship between the IRI and the Lebanese Hezbollah is completely different than between Iran's rulers and Hamas.⁸ The relationship between the IRI and Hamas is primarily transactional.⁹ Hamas is a Sunni fundamentalist group and the IRI provides them funds, weapons, and training for the purpose of attacking Israel. The IRI's assistance to Hamas is not due to political and ideological affinities. The IRI's assistance to Hamas is due to their mutual hatred for Israel. For example, in the Syrian civil war, Hamas sided with the Sunni Islamist opposition while the IRI supported Bashar al-Assad.¹⁰

The Lebanese Hezbollah is a Shia fundamentalist group that regards the Supreme Leader of Iran as its Supreme Leader.¹¹ In other words, Hezbollah takes orders from Iran's Supreme Leader rather than Lebanon's president. Hezbollah is organically intertwined with the IRGC and may be best described as the Lebanese section of the IRGC's Qods Force. Moreover, bonds of blood and marriage have forged close-knit relations between Hezbollah and the IRGC. For example, Imad Mughniyeh, the notorious terrorist mastermind and number two in Hezbollah, had an Iranian wife.¹² Zeinab Soleymani, the outspoken hardline daughter of Gen. Qassem Soleymani (the Qods Force's former chief who was considered the second most powerful official in the IRI before his killing by the United States in 2020), is married to Reza Safieddine, a son of Hashem Safieddine, the current number two in Hezbollah.¹³

⁶ "Hezbollah leader's 'right-hand man' killed in Israeli airstrike on Beirut," *Iran International*, July 30, 2024, available at <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202407306612>.

⁷ Akbari, "Israel systematically," op. cit.

⁸ Devorah Margolin and Matthew Levitt, "The Road to October 7: Hamas' Long Game, Clarified," *CTC Sentinel*, Vol. 16, No. 10 (October/November 2023), pp. 1-10. Also see "Hamas," *European Council on Foreign Relations*, available at https://ecfr.eu/special/mapping_palestinian_politics/hamas/.

⁹ Erik Skare, "Iran, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad: A marriage of convenience," *European Council on Foreign Relations*, December 18, 2023, available at <https://ecfr.eu/article/iran-hamas-and-islamic-jihad-a-marriage-of-convenience/>.

¹⁰ Skare, "Iran, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad," op. cit.; and Phillip Smyth, "The Path to October 7: How Iran Built Up and Managed a Palestinian 'Axis of Resistance,'" *CTC Sentinel*, Vol. 16, No. 11 (December 2023), pp. 25-40.

¹¹ Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004), pp. 32-36.

¹² "Imad Mughniyeh's daughter granted Iranian citizenship," *Ya Libnan*, May 30, 2014, available at <https://yalibnan.com/2014/05/30/imad-mughniyehs-daughter-granted-iranian-citizenship/>. Mughniyeh had two wives, the first one was a cousin from Lebanon and a second wife was Iranian.

¹³ U.S. Department of Defense, "Statement by the Department of Defense," *Defense.gov*, January 2, 2020, available at <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2049534/statement-by-the-department-of-defense/>; and "Hashem Safieddine," *Counter Extremism Project*, no date, available at <https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/hashem-safieddine>.

Sitting on the fence and watching the slaughter of Hamas fighters has been painful and humiliating for Ayatollah Khamenei and the IRGC.¹⁴ Khamenei might have been surprised at Israel's strong and effective response to Hamas. Khamenei might have been even more surprised at President Biden's support for Israel and sending two aircraft carrier strike groups and an Ohio-class submarine to the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf.¹⁵ Khamenei's response, however, was expected. He used his usual strategy of low intensity harassment of Israel and the United States through the IRI's proxy groups in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen. Khamenei's strategy has been to gradually bleed Americans out of the Middle East while avoiding a direct war with the United States and/or Israel.¹⁶

Israel's New Grand Strategy

The Hamas terrorist attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, and Israel's responses will probably change the Middle East in far more profound ways than we assume today. The old security paradigm is cracking and might soon crumble. Before the October 7 attacks, Israel's grand strategy was based on the assumption that it could live with militant Islamic fundamentalist groups on its borders: Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)¹⁷ in the Gaza Strip, militants in the West Bank, and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Periodically, Israel would attack these groups and degrade their military capabilities.¹⁸ Some analysts used the analogy of "mowing the grass" for this strategy.¹⁹

Until the early 1980s, secular nationalists and leftists dominated Palestinian politics. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was considered by many as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Many across the political spectrum in Israel thought that the rise of ultra-right wing Islamic fundamentalist groups would divide the

¹⁴ For basic information on the IRGC, see Matthew M. Frick, "Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps: An Open Source Analysis," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (2008), pp. 121-127.; and, "IRGC," United Against Nuclear Iran, no date, available at <https://www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com/report/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>.

¹⁵ Stephen Blank, "Two Theaters but One War: Why We Should Support Ukraine and Israel," *Journal of Policy & Strategy*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2024), pp. 37-50.

¹⁶ Masoud Kazemzadeh, *Iran's Foreign Policy: Elite Factionalism, Ideology, the Nuclear Weapons Program, and the United States* (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 74-89.

¹⁷ PIJ is a Sunni fundamentalist group, but it is very different than Hamas. PIJ has very close relations with the IRI, receives funds, weapons, and training from the IRI. PIJ has taken an absolute neutrality in the sectarian conflicts between Shia and Sunnis in the region. PIJ is primarily a violent terrorist organization that engages in violent attacks against Israel. During the Syrian civil war, despite tremendous pressure from the IRI, PIJ refused to take a position on that conflict. PIJ also does not engage in politics and elections that Hamas does. Kacper Rekawek, "An Interview with Erik Skare on the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)," *International Center for Counter Terrorism*, November 10, 2023, available at <https://www.icct.nl/publication/interview-erik-skare-palestinian-islamic-jihad-pij>.

¹⁸ Eitan Shamir, "Israel," chapter in Thierry Balzacq, Peter Dombrowski, and Simon Reich, eds., *Comparative Grand Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 217-238.

¹⁹ Raphael S. Cohen, "Opinion: The problem with Israel's futile Gaza strategy, explained," *Los Angeles Times*, October 19, 2023, available at <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2023-10-19/israel-gaza-hamas-palestinian-attack-ground-war-netanyahu>; and, Adam Taylor, "With strikes targeting rockets and tunnels, the Israeli tactic of 'mowing the grass' returns to Gaza," *The Washington Post*, May 14, 2021, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/05/14/israel-gaza-history/>.

Palestinians and undermine the PLO's hold on the Palestinians; therefore, it would be advantageous for Israel to allow such Islamists to grow. In the early 1990s, with the Oslo process, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat agreed to abandon armed struggle, engage in peace process with Israel, and accept the two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The two-state solution would require Israel to withdraw from the West Bank, parts of East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, and accept Palestinian sovereignty of those. Not only liberal (e.g., Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, Ehud Barak, and Yair Lapid), and centrist (e.g., Benny Gantz) Israeli prime ministers have embraced this policy but also many moderates in the right-wing Likud Party (Ehud Olmert, Tzipi Livni) have done so as well. However, Benjamin Netanyahu and many on the right-wing side of the Israeli politics considered the West Bank as part and parcel of historical Israel and did not want to leave these territories. The advocates of the Greater Israel refer to the West Bank by its Biblical term "Judea and Samaria," and closely cooperate with Jewish settlers in that territory. The two-state solution and Greater Israel are incompatible. Prime Minister Netanyahu and his allies on the right pursued a policy of undermining the Palestinian Authority under Arafat and President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and began allowing massive assistance to Hamas from Qatar.²⁰ By 2006, Hamas was able to undermine the PLO and by 2023, Hamas was more powerful than the Palestinian Authority.

The rise of Hamas allowed Netanyahu to deflect pressures from the United States, the European Union, and the moderate Arab governments (e.g., Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain) to avoid making the concessions necessary for the two-state solution such as withdrawing from the West Bank.²¹ The periodic low intensity violent conflict with Hamas and PIJ undermined those in the center and left within Israeli politics who wished to pursue accommodationist policies towards the Palestinians. In other words, terrorist actions by Hamas and PIJ undermined the Israeli peace camp and Netanyahu's violent actions against the terrorists increased his popularity. Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak has called Netanyahu's policy a "poison pill."²² According to Barak:

...if you mention as a matter of fact that this [Netanyahu] government doesn't want to see a two-state solution, that's objectively accurate. A real set of theories that were promoted by Netanyahu along the last, almost a generation collapsed. There

²⁰ "Qatar, Iran, Turkey and beyond: Hamas's network of allies," *France 24*, October 14, 2023, available at <https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20231014-qatar-iran-turkey-and-beyond-the-galaxy-of-hamas-supporters>; and, David Ehl, "What is Hamas and who supports it?," *Deutsche Welle*, May 5, 2021, available at <https://www.dw.com/en/who-is-hamas/a-57537872>; and, Nima Elbagir et al., "Qatar sent millions to Gaza for years – with Israel's backing. Here's what we know about the controversial deal," *CNN*, December 12, 2023, available at <https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/11/middleeast/qatar-hamas-funds-israel-backing-intl/index.html>. According to *Deutsche Welle's* report, Qatar provided Hamas about \$1.8 billion dollars between 2012 and May 2021 with the consent of the Israeli government.

²¹ Ehud Barak interview with Ian Bremmer, "How Netanyahu used Hamas to avoid talks of a two-state solution," *YouTube*, November 18, 2023, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4-OWRu5HtY>.

²² *Ibid.* Ehud Barak was also Chief of Military Staff, a Lieutenant General, along with two others the most decorated soldier in the IDF, Defense Minister, and Foreign Minister. He is considered one of Israeli's top strategic thinkers and statemen.

was a collapse of the idea that he promoted for more than five years, that basically Hamas is an asset and Palestinian Authority is a liability, rather than the other way around. And the idea was politically motivated. He basically said, as long as he can keep the Hamas active, kicking and alive and suppressing the Palestinian Authority, whenever you or the EU or the UK or the Americans would come to us and ask, “Why the hell you don’t negotiate with the Palestinians about something reasonable?” You can tell, “Oh, we are ready, but what can we do?” Abu Mazen doesn’t control half of his own people, the half in Gaza. And no one expects us to deal with Hamas because it’s a terrorist organization. So, it was a kind of poison pill against any viable political process.²³

The October 7 terrorist attacks have up-ended Netanyahu’s “poison pill” policies.²⁴ Hamas’ actions, such as slaughter of children, rape of women, and beheadings, were shocking behavior that Hamas had not engaged in before.²⁵ Such tactics were hallmarks of ISIS. We have observed only some Shia fundamentalist groups close to the IRI in Iraq and some groups in the Syrian Civil War also engage in such cruelties. Hamas’ tactics were not only not condemned but were applauded by Ayatollah Khamenei and Hassan Nasrallah (Hezbollah’s leader).²⁶

Hamas has not provided the rationale for its new tactic. We surmise three rationales. First, by such extreme cruelties, Hamas wanted to close off any prospects for the two-state solution in the foreseeable future. In other words, Hamas intended to undermine the support among Israelis for the two-state solution, which appears to have succeeded. Second, Hamas was also looking to influence the politics of the region. The policies of various players in the region are divided between rejectionists and accommodationists. Rejectionist camp includes Hamas, PIJ, IRI, Hezbollah, Houthis’ Ansarullah, pro-IRI Shia fundamentalist groups in the Hashd al-Shaabi in Iraq, al-Qaeda, and ISIS. Accommodationists include the Palestinian Authority and most of the moderate governments in the Middle East and North Africa. Hamas’ shocking cruelties were intended to compel Israelis to wage a more violent response to Hamas than their previous retaliations. Knowing about the sympathies for the Palestinian cause and the enmity towards Israel and Jews, a violent war would undermine accommodationists in the region, which would benefit the rejectionists. Except for Bahrain, other moderate regimes have frozen or postponed their normalization process with Israel. Third, Islamic fundamentalist groups are far more violent and cruel than other groups in the region and the rise of these groups since the late 1970s have drastically increased cruelties and violence. This has given rise to a pool of people willing to engage in and support such

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Smyth, “The Path to Oct 7,” op. cit., p. 25.

²⁶ Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, “Islamic world must not remain silent in the face of Zionists’ crime,” *Khameni.ir*, October 10, 2023, available at <https://english.khamenei.ir/news/10169/Islamic-world-must-not-remain-silent-in-the-face-of-Zionists>; and, Hassan Nasrallah, “Chief of Hezbollah Hassan Nasrallah delivers speech on Israel-Hamas conflict,” *YouTube*, November 3, 2023, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-OfB1to0sw>.

extreme violence and cruelties. This has given rise to competition among fundamentalist groups to attract and recruit such people to their organizations.

The October 7 terrorist attack by Hamas has caused many Israelis to abandon the notion that they could deter major attacks from the Lebanese Hezbollah on their northern border. Many Israelis have come to discard the strategy that they could coexist with militant Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups on their borders.²⁷ Thus, there is a high likelihood that the low intensity conflict may escalate into full-scale war. The Biden Administration has been very much against the spread of the war to Hezbollah.

Since around 2002, a primary role of Hezbollah has become the IRI's deterrent to Israeli surgical strikes on Iran's nuclear weapons facilities. By 2023, Iran has become a nuclear threshold state.²⁸ If Khamenei were to order a breakout and it were to be detected, then the United States and/or Israel would have the option of striking the IRI's nuclear facilities. Israel attacked Iraq's and Syria's nuclear programs in their relatively infant stages. The massive missile forces of the IRI and Hezbollah serve as a deterrent to Israel that if it were to attack the IRI's nuclear facilities, then they will retaliate with massive missile attacks on Israel. If in the case of a breakout, the United States would participate in military strikes on the IRI's nuclear facilities (and its retaliatory capabilities), then Israel could handle retaliation from Hezbollah. However, if the United States decided to live with a nuclear Iran, then Israel would have to attack the IRI by itself. Thus, Israel will face simultaneous attacks from the IRI and Hezbollah. There is little doubt that the IRI and Hezbollah have the ability to inflict great pain and cost on Israel. Perhaps, the ratio of benefits and costs has been the main reason that many in the Israeli national security establishment have not supported military attacks on the IRI's nuclear facilities. However, as the likelihood of the IRI pursuing a breakout and the doubts about the certainty of American military attacks on the IRI increase, the ratio of benefits and costs changes drastically against Israel's interests. Therefore, it would be in Israel's national interests to substantially degrade Hezbollah's capabilities before it strikes the IRI's nuclear facilities so that it would have to defend against only the IRI's retaliatory strikes.

Ayatollah Khamenei's Dilemmas

The situation today, therefore, is very different than in 2006 when there was a 33-day war between Israel and Hezbollah. Like 2006, Khamenei today would want to avoid a direct war with either Israel or the United States. Unlike 2006, after October 7, 2023, Israel does not believe that it is safe to live next to Hezbollah, which is far stronger than Hamas. Therefore, Israel would not be satisfied to merely teach Hezbollah a lesson through punishing

²⁷ Julian Borger, "Fears grow of all-out Israel-Hezbollah war as fighting escalates," *The Guardian*, December 17, 2023, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/dec/17/fears-grow-of-all-out-israel-hezbollah-war-as-fighting-escalates-lebanon>.

²⁸ Masoud Kazemzadeh, "U.S.-Iran Confrontation after Hamas-Israel War: Proxy Wars, Nuclear Strategy, and Eschatology," forthcoming.

bombardments. The mutual deterrence relationship that was established after the 2006 war has evaporated as the small-scale cross-border attacks since October 7, 2023, demonstrate.

Khamenei could live with a limited war between Israel and Hezbollah. However, a war in which Israel's objective would be the elimination of Hezbollah's military power poses serious dilemmas for Khamenei and his regime. Khamenei knows that unlike 2006, his regime is very fragile today, substantially weakened by mass protests in recent years.²⁹ Any military confrontation that would weaken his coercive apparatuses would, in all likelihood, lead to mass uprisings and the overthrow of his regime. What happened to Moamar Qadhafi of Libya and Benito Mussolini of Italy might happen to Khamenei.

Khamenei's policy has been to avoid direct war with Israel and the United States. Khamenei has been using the IRI's proxies to harass Israel and the United States but not to use massive force that would provoke either Israel or the United States to enter an all-out war with either Iran or Hezbollah. An immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hamas would have allowed Khamenei to achieve all his objectives. However, the longer the Hamas-Israel war goes on and small-scale confrontations between the IRI's proxies and the United States and Israel continue, the higher the likelihood will be of either Israel or the United States entering into major wars with Hezbollah and or the IRI.

The IRI's grand strategic goals include: expulsion of the United States from the greater Middle East; abolishment of the state of Israel; establishment of a Shia bloc (IRI, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait); overthrow of the pro-United States moderate regimes in the region (Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco); conversion of Sunnis to the Shia denomination of Islam; and replacement of the liberal international order under American leadership with an anti-liberal multipolar system with a pole of Muslim Ummah under the leadership of the IRI working with China and Russia to balance the global West and undermine the United States.³⁰ The fundamentalist regime has been remarkably consistent in pursuing this grand strategy since 1979. The regime has been willing to pay truly substantial costs in blood and treasure in the pursuit of its grand strategy.

Virulent anti-Israel policy has been one of the main pillars of the fundamentalist regime's grand strategy and foreign policy. The regime's name for the expeditionary section of the IRGC is "Qods Force."³¹ The word "Qods" is the Islamic term for Jerusalem. After coming to power in 1979, the founder of the fundamentalist regime, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, designated the last Friday in the holy month of Ramadan as "International Qods Day." The Iranian government spends huge amounts of money every year to organize large marches on this day around the globe to condemn Israel and call for the liberation of Jerusalem. After Saddam's forces were expelled from Iranian territory in 1982, many argued that Iran should accept large sums as reparations, not enter into Iraqi territory, and accept peace.³² Ayatollah

²⁹ Masoud Kazemzadeh, *Mass Protests in Iran: From Resistance to Overthrow* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023).

³⁰ Masoud Kazemzadeh, *The Grand Strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran* (forthcoming).

³¹ Pierre Bousset, "The Qods Force in Syria: Combatants, Units, and Actions," *CTC Sentinel*, Vol. 16, No. 6 (June 2023), pp. 1-9.

³² Mansour Farhang, "The Iran-Iraq War: The Feud, the Tragedy, the Spoils," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Fall 1985), p. 675. Saudi Arabia alone had offered to provide \$25 billion reparations.

Khomeini justified the entry into Iraqi territory (and the prolongation of Iran-Iraq war for six years) by saying “*rah-e Qods az Karbala migozarad*” [the road to Jerusalem goes through Karbala]. This sentence by Khomeini became the main slogan of the war between 1982 and 1988. In other words, Khomeini justified the continuation of the war with Iraq on the argument that it was a pathway to the main war against Israel. Both Khomeini and Khamenei have called Israel a “cancerous tumor” that must be eradicated. The fundamentalist regime officials have been promising to “wipe Israel off the map.” The regime explicitly opposes the existence of Israel. The fundamentalist regime utilizes various mechanisms to cultivate, excite, and galvanize anti-Israel feelings of its supporters.³³

Since October 7, 2023, the extremist hardline fundamentalists in Iran have become very frustrated with what they consider the regime’s lack of strong response to repeated attacks by Israel.³⁴ On the one hand, for 45 years the regime has used incendiary rhetoric against Israel. On the other hand, when there is an actual war, the regime appears afraid to directly enter into the conflict with Israel. The regime’s extremist rhetoric of promising “*entegham sakht*” [extreme revenge] has created heightened expectations among the regime’s social base. The extremist hardline fundamentalists who are frustrated with the actual policy of the regime have been expressing their frustrations on social media using the hashtag of “*enfeal sakht*” [extreme passivity] to ridicule the regime’s leaders.³⁵

It is one thing to watch Israel pummel Sunni Hamas. It is a very different emotional feeling for Shia fundamentalists in Iran to watch Israel pummel Shia Hezbollah. If Israel were to attack Hezbollah the same way it has been attacking Hamas, Khamenei will be put in a precarious position. If Khamenei were to enter the war against Israel, then devastating attacks by Israel and or the United States would, in all likelihood, cause the overthrow of his regime.

If Khamenei were to stay out of the war, there is a likelihood of a coup by the IRGC to remove him and install an IRGC junta, so that this new military government would enter the war against Israel. The IRGC is the home of the extremist hardline fundamentalists.³⁶ Some in the IRGC believe that Iran is much stronger than Israel and could defeat it. For these IRGC commanders, Khamenei’s reticence to enter the war against Israel is cowardice and/or miscalculation. For others in the IRGC, although Iran is clearly weaker than the United States, it is clearly much stronger than either the Taliban or Saddam’s regime. These IRGC

³³ Kazemzadeh, *The Grand Strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, op. cit.

³⁴ “Anger of the Expert for the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, We Kept Saying Hard Revenge But Did Not Hit Back and They Kept Hitting Us,” *Voice of America, Farsi*, April 2, 2024, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtLpHi5kt_8.

³⁵ “Revolutionaries Ridicule the Regime with the Hashtag ‘severe passivity,’” *Iran Emrooz*, December 28, 2023, available at <https://www.iran-emrooz.net/index.php/news2/more/111888/>.

³⁶ Kasra Aarabi, *Beyond Borders: The Expansionist Ideology of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps* (London: Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2020), available at <https://institute.global/sites/default/files/2020-01/IRGC%20Report%2027012020.pdf>; and, Saeid Golkar and Kasra Aarabi, *Iran’s Revolutionary Guard and the Rising Cult of Mahdism: Missiles and Militias for the Apocalypse* (Washington, D.C.: Middle East Institute, May 3, 2022), available at <https://www.mei.edu/publications/irans-revolutionary-guard-and-rising-cult-mahdism-missiles-and-militias-apocalypse>.

commanders likely predict that the Biden Administration, which has observed the end-results of American wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, would not enter a war with Iran.³⁷ And even if the Biden Administration did enter the war with Iran, these IRGC commanders believe that they could ultimately triumph, as did the Taliban. For some in the IRGC, the bonds of blood would require entry into the war with Israel, for not doing so would be an insult to their honor. For these men, such lack of honor would be such that they could not live with that shame the rest of their lives.

Conclusion

If Khamenei were to enter the war as the result of a full-scale war between Israel and Hezbollah, there is a very high likelihood that his regime would collapse. In a war in which the IRGC is seriously weakened, the regime would lack the means by which to subjugate the Iranian people. If Khamenei does not enter the war, there is little doubt that there will be great frustration and anger among the regime's social base. Whether or not the anger would cross the tipping point remains to be seen. We may find out whether or not those frustrations could reach the level of a coup against Khamenei. If the IRGC resorts to a coup, it is not clear whether the coup would be overt, or if it might secretly kill Ayatollah Khamenei and replace him with a more pliant person.

The Biden Administration's policy has been to contain the conflict and prevent the spread of the war to Hezbollah. The current policy is not in the long-term interests of either Israel or the United States. If the military and political infrastructure of Hamas are not destroyed, then it would be able to rebuild itself after a ceasefire and attack Israel again. If the military and political infrastructure of Hezbollah are not substantially weakened, then it could attack Israel when it best suits the interests of itself and that of the IRI. Israel clearly possesses military power to go to war with Hezbollah and substantially weaken it. The weakening of Hezbollah would serve both the national interests of Israel and the national interests of the United States. Therefore, it is in the long-term interests of the United States to support Israel's operations against these terrorist groups.

What appears certain is that a war between Israel and Hezbollah would greatly undermine the stability of the fundamentalist regime in Iran. If it were to lead to the collapse

³⁷ There is a widespread perception that, at least since the Obama Administration, the U.S. policy has been to leave the Middle East. Those who hold this perception believe that President Biden is far more against the use of American military power than either the Obama or the Trump Administrations. Those who hold this perception also believe that because of such perception of the Biden Administration, America's enemies are emboldened to challenge both the U.S. and its allies. This widespread perception is held by many fundamentalists in Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, and among the Palestinians. This perception is also held by anti-fundamentalists in the Middle East, many American allies, as well as many American observers. See Hossein Aghaie Joobani, "The Biden Iran Gamble: Between War And Diplomacy," *Iran International*, July 4, 2023, available at <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202307043293>; and, Len Khodorkovsky, "Unmute The Iranians - Enough From The Regime, Let's Hear From The People," *Iran International*, May 31, 2022, available at <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202205315649>; and, Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, "Petro Diplomacy 2023: Geopolitical Shift and New Alliances," *YouTube*, June 27-28, 2023, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-sFcXTrCCE>.

of the fundamentalist regime, it would be the greatest strategic victory for the United States since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

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INTERVIEWS

As part of its continuing effort to provide readers with unique perspectives on critical national security issues, National Institute has conducted a series of interviews with key subject matter experts on a variety of contemporary defense and national security topics. In this issue of National Institute's *Journal of Policy & Strategy*, we present two interviews: one with David Lonsdale, Senior Lecturer, University of Hull, United Kingdom; and one with Bruno Tertrais, Deputy Director, Foundation for Strategic Research, France. The authors offer their perspectives on the importance of the alliance with the United States for their respective governments, discuss implications of the deteriorating national security environment, and share their views on the importance of nuclear weapons in the light of these developments. The interviews were conducted by Michaela Dodge, Research Scholar, National Institute for Public Policy.

An Interview with David Lonsdale, Senior Lecturer University of Hull, United Kingdom

Q. What are the British government's views regarding the value of the U.S. alliance? How important is it for the government?

A. It is pretty clear that the British government regards the alliance with the United States very highly. We still insist on using the special relationship title. In fact, the United States is our most important ally. We value the alliance for benefits to international security; we share and exchange military technologies, which is particularly important in the nuclear realm. We collaborate on military training, weapon systems' interoperability, and intelligence sharing.

Q. What is the value of extended nuclear deterrence?

A. Certainly, the British government generally recognizes that U.S. extended deterrence and forces, including nuclear, are essential to North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) security. The United Kingdom (UK) values the extended deterrence aspect of the U.S. nuclear posture, whilst also recognizing the significance of a European contribution to deterrence (complicating decision-making, etc.). The government recently increased the UK's warhead cap. It is not entirely clear as to what the rationale for the increase is. Some academics speculate whether there is a concern that U.S. extended deterrence is being stretched too thin, and perhaps the UK feels it may have to do more and make a bigger contribution to western deterrence.

The nuclear debate does not seem to engender large passions in the UK. The British public is, on balance, in favor of retaining the nuclear capability (particularly after Russia's invasion of Ukraine). Perhaps that is tied to perceptions of the UK as a medium power.



Nuclear weapons allow the UK to punch above its weight (e.g., as a Permanent Member of the Security Council of the United Nations and such). There was some debate about Trident replacement but, unsurprisingly, the replacement is moving forward. There is also some limited debate about the possible re-deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons to the UK.

Q. What is the British government's view of the credibility of the U.S. nuclear umbrella?

A. It would be surprising if the government openly expressed concerns. Nonetheless, the UK was unhappy about the U.S. handling of the Afghan withdrawal. Seemingly, UK advice was ignored; we were not really involved at all. Ultimately, the withdrawal seemed to be largely about U.S. domestic politics. The matter is not tied to assurance directly, but it raises concerns about how reliable the United States is as an ally. That being said, there have been moments in history when the alliance has not seemed as strong (e.g., Suez, Vietnam, etc.), but we have generally remained firm allies.

Q. What are the British government's views of the force posture requirements for extended deterrence?

A. Not surprisingly, the British government does not articulate specifically what the Western alliance needs.

From my perspective, it is important that we take steps to enable U.S. nuclear weapons on British soil if required, and that the British government speaks to the need to forward deploy U.S. forces to Europe. There should be greater U.S. presence in Europe's security environment, and we ought to consider expanding NATO's tactical nuclear options.

There is a vague sense that we need some increased flexibility and need to be able to match the Russians a bit more in terms of low-level capabilities. There is a strong sense that Russia's actions in February 2022 have changed the game. In the past, we feared escalation and antagonizing the Russians; now, their actions have opened the door to further debate on Western nuclear posture. At the same time, the British government is not discussing getting a new delivery capability in addition to Trident replacement. We will probably stick with the Trident replacement and create some flexibility with lower yield warheads.

Q. If the United Kingdom has concerns regarding the credibility of the U.S. extended nuclear deterrent, what are the root causes of these concerns with regard to the government's views and their priority?

A. We do not know for sure that there is a credibility issue with U.S. extended deterrence. U.S. force modernization programs are reasonably encouraging and desperately needed. Self-evidently, the requirement for U.S. force modernization stems from the Chinese and the Russian nuclear modernization programs.

From a UK perspective, Trident and warhead replacement are essential for the UK to credibly stay in the deterrence game. We also see discussions about the need for more

Western joint planning and more communication. Of course, the West needs enhanced capabilities, but also the West must be more coordinated.

There is also the matter of burden-sharing and how much we are spending on defense. Europe needs to do more. The UK public generally supports increased defense spending, which is driven by Russia's aggression and a little bit by China's military buildup and revisionist policies. On the other hand, there has been a long-standing debate in the UK about how much British forces were left to deteriorate over the past generation. That is changing, and hopefully the UK can lead the way and set an example for other NATO allies in Europe to follow. The UK sees NATO as the centerpiece of its security. In a British Foreign Policy Group poll from 2023, 75 percent of respondents think the UK is safer with NATO.¹ That is why the UK is eager to see more effective use of NATO.

Q. How does the U.S. extended deterrence need to change given the negative security developments, particularly China's rise and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine?

A. Russia's aggression is regarded as the biggest threat in British public opinion polls, with China also identified as a security concern. In this sense, Russian actions seem to have driven a lot of changes in government policy, certainly in terms of emphasis.

Moreover, our government now shares an understanding that nuclear weapons are back in business. The UK never seriously discussed abolition, although successive governments aspired to some degree to arms control and disarmament. Officially, that stays the same, but it is a much more pragmatic approach and a realistic appraisal of the position. There is a recognition that we have to take nuclear strategy much more seriously, and we are a bit more conscious of tailored deterrence.

While substantial details are unavailable, there is some notion of flexibility in the UK's nuclear strategy, and some thinking is being done on enhancing NATO cooperation. The dual-capable aircraft (DCA) mission is seemingly a big factor for NATO, and the Alliance is discussing more broadly cross-domain deterrence.

My opinion is that to prevent a breakdown of deterrence in a regional context, we need a modern flexible response, even if U.S. strategic nuclear forces will always be the ultimate guarantor.

Q. One of the problems for extended deterrence is that some allies spend too little on their conventional defense. How does the United Kingdom perceive this unequal burden sharing on the part of some of the other well-off NATO members?

A. In some respects, the asymmetry does not seem to be a big debate, not in the way it is in the United States. The UK does not seem to feel that it is being short-changed by other European allies, perhaps because the UK is still trying to establish its relations with them

¹ Evie Aspinall, "Britons' Enduring Support for NATO," *British Foreign Policy Group*, July 11, 2023, available at <https://bfpgrp.co.uk/2023/07/britons-enduring-support-for-nato/>.

post-Brexit. Additionally, there is a broader recognition that we have allowed our defense sector to atrophy too much, and so we feel that we have to make these investments for our own security.

We still realize how valuable our Europeans relations are, but we are also trying to establish an independent position free from the European Union. We are also trying to build closer relations with the United States. In some respects, the UK seeks to continue to act as the link between the United States and continental Europe. Moreover, there is a general sense that NATO remains essential as the security environment continues to change.

Q. What steps could allied countries practically take to improve bilateral communication related to communicating their assurance requirements to the United States?

A. One of the problems for Western security is what is going on in U.S. domestic politics and the resultant instability in the U.S. decision-making process. While one always gets changes in presidential transitions, it seems like there used to be more consistency. For example, there was a consensus on the need to defeat the Soviet Union, but now there is some lack of consistency in U.S. positions and what the United States stands for. That is a problem, because we look to the United States for Western leadership. The call of the Western alliance during World War II was a call to defend our way of life and our shared common principles and notions.

Q. In your opinion, what would be the best way to promote an informed debate on U.S. nuclear weapons policy in the United Kingdom?

A. The general level of debate about nuclear strategy and policy is extremely poor. A part of it is naivete, because instinctively people want to take the minimum deterrence mindset and do not want to think about the unthinkable. That is a problem when it comes to a policy debate, because the policymakers can take the path of least resistance (for example, being in favor of a like-for-like replacement without considering warfighting or new capabilities).

More broadly, the West has lacked political leadership. We have not had good leaders since Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. They had principles and clear positions, and they were excellent communicators. We need leaders like that again.

An Interview with Bruno Tertrais, Deputy Director Foundation for Strategic Research, France

Q. What are the French government's views regarding the value of the U.S. alliance? How important is it for the government?

A. For all the talk about the French being independent-minded and sometime tricky allies, I think it is fair to say that the U.S. alliance is very important to them. The United States-France alliance is one of the oldest ones in the world, if not the oldest. The French have always been staunch defenders of Article V, believing that collective defense is NATO's core business.

Q. What is the most likely option to address the problem of the credibility of U.S. assurances in the French government's view? What is the government's primary driver behind this position?

A. Starting in the late 2000s, the French wanted to emphasize NATO as a nuclear alliance and the French were worried about some allies wanting to rely on missile defense more than nuclear deterrence (Germany in particular). The French wanted to emphasize that nuclear deterrence is the heart of the transatlantic alliance.

France is not a part of NATO's nuclear sharing, but nuclear sharing is important to the French. We welcome that as many European allies as possible are immersed in and participate in NATO's nuclear mission, because it gives these allies an idea of what the nuclear responsibilities are and allows them to share at least a modicum of strategic culture with France and the United Kingdom, the other two nuclear-armed states in Europe. The only reservation the French have is that the nuclear mission leads some of the NATO non-nuclear allies to buy F-35s at a cost that the French tend to think is an excessive drag on the defense budget.

A key question today is whether the dual-capable aircraft (DCA) mission should have a military credibility. Up until the mid-2010s, one could hear quite often in the transatlantic circles that the DCA mission was more political than military and that the military credibility of DCA was less important. Now, with the revanchist Russia and the next generation of aircraft becoming operational, the question is whether the military credibility of the DCA should become once again important. That is something that the United States and its allies should clarify.

Q. If France has concerns regarding the credibility of the U.S. extended nuclear deterrent, what measures could the United States take to help address these concerns?

A. There doesn't seem to be a consensus that Russia is a threat in the United States, not just in Europe. One can argue it is a case of a half-full, half-empty cup. The related question is

whether Russia is perceived as a threat and whether it will be perceived as such in the future. That Russia is weaker than it was thought is widely recognized. The Europeans see the reality that the United States is more present today than it was in the early 2010s. The United States is saying to the Europeans that they should increase their share of the defense burden, but why would they do that when they see that the Americans are more present than ever?

The United States being a geographically distant ally, the French have never believed in the very nature of U.S. extended deterrence. They do not believe that a distant country would risk its cities and populations for an ally (whether the belief is mistaken is a different problem). So the French have always considered the very notion of extended deterrence in Europe problematic. When the United States extends deterrence to Canada, it is more credible than the United States providing extended deterrence to Germany because Canada is much closer. Furthermore, anytime the United States refrains from supporting an ally, it is seen in Paris as a dent in the credibility of extended deterrence. In particular, President Obama's abstention in Syria was seen as undermining U.S. credibility and was a shock to the French. It underlined their concerns regarding U.S. credibility.

But the French believe that the mere existence of their own nuclear force provides a modicum of protection to their neighbors.

Q. One of the problems for extended deterrence is that allies spend little on their conventional defense. Why does France spend just below the NATO agreed threshold of two percent?

A. I am not sure that is the problem in itself. Why should it? Defense spending remains a sovereign decision. The two percent is a very poor metric to measure the actual contribution by allies to burden sharing. One has to look at the trajectory of defense spending over the past six years or so. The French perceive they are carrying their fair share.

From Europe's standpoint, the United States is there and picking up the slack. It would take a shock of a second Trump election to do that. Why should the Europeans do more just because the United States is asking them? It takes a lot of time for a country like Germany to change the political course. Now, a political course has been set but it will take time.

Q. How does the U.S. extended deterrence need to change given the negative security developments, particularly China's rise and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine?

A. There are two opposite narratives. One, that what we do in Ukraine does not matter for China. The other, that what we do in Ukraine matters for China. But it is impossible to gauge whether Xi Jinping saw our collective attitude as glass half-full or empty. Our actions probably have bearing, but not to the point that they are the only critical factor.

Q. The United States continues to promote arms control policies and to expect that arms control policies can solve security problems. Some of these U.S. arms control endeavors appear to have damaged U.S. capabilities for extended deterrence and assurance (e.g.,

No First Use or NFU, Tomahawk Land Attack Missile/Nuclear retirement, or Presidential Nuclear Initiatives). What does the French government think about the tensions between pursuing arms control goals and the damage these goals cause to extended deterrence and assurance in the long term?

A. This is an issue where the French see the “software” more important than the “hardware.” We tend to believe that U.S. statements, declaratory policy, and actions ultimately matter for extended deterrence more than how many warheads on which delivery systems the United States has. The French do not care that much about what the United States used to call the “second to none” policy. All things being equal, the perception of credibility of U.S. extended deterrence is more dependent on statements and declaratory policy than the offense-defense calculus.

Arms control is probably reconcilable with credible deterrence as long as one does not hamper extended deterrence. The French were and remain opposed not only to NFU but also to a “sole purpose” policy – they believe it would affect the very credibility of nuclear deterrence.

So the idea is that the attitude to nuclear deterrence matters more than the exact makeup of nuclear forces. That said, if a strongly stated commitment to nuclear deterrence and extended deterrence was accompanied by a complete divestment from U.S. nuclear modernization and infrastructure, then we would see incongruence and be nervous.

With regard to nuclear infrastructure, we do not doubt intentions of U.S. administrations to modernize and sustain the nuclear complex, but we look at results and think they are not there yet. On the other hand, we do not see it as absolutely critical for what we do see as the most important aspect of nuclear deterrence, which is whether Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping would believe that a U.S. president would be willing to use nuclear weapons on behalf of allies. We were concerned during the Trump Administration because the president’s statements were erratic. Perhaps there was some benefit of being a bit unpredictable. The North Koreans were completely perplexed about President Trump, and maybe that was good for deterring them. But that very unpredictability may also be an obstacle to the credibility of extended deterrence in the long run.

Q. How does the French government communicate its policy preferences to the United States?

A. Washington and Paris maintain a strong bilateral dialogue on nuclear deterrence initiated in the 1990s. These are in-depth and very frank discussions that cover all topics of nuclear deterrence. And both countries – though I would say especially the United States – have been very transparent to one another. The dialogue is very important to the French who have always used it to speak their mind to the United States, perhaps more than in the public. Also, the French were consulted during the past two iterations of the Nuclear Posture Review process.

Q. What steps could the United States take to improve bilateral communication related to U.S. nuclear weapons and extended deterrence?

A. The United States at NATO should discuss how much NATO's DCA mission should be political rather than practical. One cannot invest as much as we do in the DCA mission if military credibility does not matter and that is something that is not very clear in the public debates. We want Russia to consider that mission militarily credible because the Alliance could be implicated rather early in a nuclear crisis (and this message should be made clear by the U.S. administration).

Q. How do we ensure that the military credibility is restored in the eyes of Moscow?

A. We should not foreclose the option of putting theater nuclear weapons in Poland, if only as a political signal to Moscow, and even though I don't think there would be a consensus in NATO for that. But we need to make clear to Russia that there are consequences for putting nuclear weapons in Belarus. Also, we have not yet discussed whether events in Ukraine should change missile defense policy in Europe and how that would change the nuclear posture in Europe.

Q. What steps could allied countries practically take to improve bilateral communication related to communicating their assurance requirements to the United States?

A. France does not have a large strategic community. The issue is fairly consensual within the government. Our strategic community takes a pretty realistic, hard-nosed view of the world (which differentiates us, for example, from the Germans, although they have made some headway).

Q. In your opinion, what would be the best way to promote an informed debate on U.S. nuclear weapons policy in France?

A. We are not going to have a public debate on U.S. nuclear policy in France, and we do not need to. It is not really a relevant question for France.

The problem we have is that some allies are very uncomfortable discussing nuclear weapons policy in Europe without the Americans being in the room. For example, it is difficult to foster a real debate between France and Germany, because some Germans would not discuss it without the United States being present. Perhaps it would be good for the United States to say that it is okay for allies to discuss these matters without the United States in the room.



PROCEEDINGS

ADAPTING U.S. MISSILE DEFENSE POLICY TO EVOLVING THREATS

The remarks below were delivered at a symposium on “Adapting U.S. Missile Defense Policy to Evolving Threats” hosted by the National Institute for Public Policy on May 15, 2024. The symposium examined growing missile threats to the U.S. homeland and considered options for countering those threats. It also identified both short-term and longer-term efforts to improve deterrence against coercive nuclear threats from Russia and China.

David J. Trachtenberg (moderator)

David J. Trachtenberg is Vice President of the National Institute for Public Policy and served as Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy from 2017-2019.

Let me begin by making a few preliminary comments.

First, U.S. homeland missile defense policy has long adhered to the Cold War notion that mutual vulnerability is stabilizing. The 1972 ABM Treaty codified this notion. The idea that the United States should remain defenseless against missile threats in the interest of “stability” remained intact for three decades, until President George W. Bush withdrew the United States from the ABM Treaty in 2002. Two years later, the United States deployed an initial and rudimentary homeland missile defense system intended to defend against rogue state missile threats from countries like North Korea. But it remained U.S. policy to focus on defending against limited threats.

This emphasis on limited threats remains official policy to this day. In fact, this year’s National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), signed by President Biden last December, explicitly declares that the United States will “rely on nuclear deterrence to address more sophisticated and larger quantity near-peer intercontinental missile threats to the homeland of the United States.”¹

I believe it is past time to reconsider this policy.

It perpetuates a Cold War approach that is unresponsive to, and out of sync with, contemporary realities. As both Russia and China expand their nuclear arsenals and make unprecedented nuclear threats against the United States and the West, ignoring the possibility of coercive Russian and Chinese nuclear threats is imprudent and dangerous—and may actually *encourage* opportunistic aggression by either or both acting in concert.

This was recognized by the bipartisan congressional Strategic Posture Commission, which recommended that “The United States develop and field homeland IAMD [Integrated Air and Missile Defense] that can deter and defeat coercive attacks by Russia and China.”²

¹ Section 1663 of the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024*, Public Law 118-31, December 22, 2023, available at <https://www.congress.gov/118/plaws/publ31/PLAW-118publ31.pdf>.

² Madelyn R. Creedon, Jon L. Kyl, et al., *America’s Strategic Posture: The Final Report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States*, October 2023, pp. x, 72, 105, available at <https://www.ida.org/-/media/feature/publications/a/am/americas-strategic-posture/strategic-posture-commission-report.ashx>.



Consistent with the Commission's recommendations, Congress should seriously revise U.S. missile defense policy to align it with current strategic realities and to bolster deterrence against such coercive threats. Indeed, the Congress has such an opportunity in the FY2025 NDAA. Moreover, the House Armed Services Committee just released its proposed NDAA for the upcoming fiscal year, which would call on the Secretary of Defense to report to Congress on plans to implement the Commission's recommendations.³

Second, the United States has always emphasized the need to stay ahead of the rogue state missile threat. Yet, as those threats increase and become more sophisticated, U.S. missile defenses must also adapt and improve in ways that may provide some degree of latent capability against nuclear peer threats as well.

We will likely reach an inflection point where the desire to effectively counter expanding rogue state missile threats on the one hand may be seen as inconsistent with policy direction NOT to defend against Russian and Chinese missile threats on the other and to continue to rely on deterrence to prevent coercive peer nuclear threats. This tension may impact the willingness of industry to improve U.S. missile defense capabilities, if providing some protection against Russian and Chinese missile attacks is perceived as running counter to U.S. policy established in law.

In addition, the Department of Defense has acknowledged that U.S. defenses against hypersonic missile threats are "inadequate."⁴ This also suggests that U.S. missile defense efforts are not keeping up with evolving threats.

Third, and importantly, it is time to invest more in space-based defenses. This was another of the Strategic Posture Commission's recommendations. The Commission called for "new approaches" for missile defense, "including the use of space-based and directed energy capabilities, as simply scaling up current programs is not likely to be effective."⁵

Indeed, technology has advanced significantly since the 1980s and defending the homeland from space can provide a more effective defensive capability than relying exclusively on terrestrial-based systems. In fact, the evolution of threats using multiple warheads, decoys, and other sophisticated means argues for space-based systems capable of defeating missiles in their boost and ascent phases, where they are arguably easier to detect and more beneficial to counter, rather than limiting shot opportunities to the mid-course and terminal phases of flight.

Despite continued criticism by some against "militarizing" space, a more robust space-based homeland missile defense posture can not only help deter attacks in the first place but can improve protection of the United States should deterrence fail, for whatever reason.

³ See section 1625 of the proposed House Armed Services Committee Chairman's Mark of *H.R. 8070-Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement and National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025*, available at <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/AS/AS00/20240522/117296/BILLS-118HR8070ih.pdf>.

⁴ Testimony of John Hill, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Space and Missile Defense, cited in Guy Taylor, "Pentagon official admits U.S. hypersonic defenses 'inadequate'," *The Washington Times*, May 9, 2024, available at <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2024/may/9/pentagon-official-admits-us-hypersonic-defenses-in/>.

⁵ Madelyn R. Creedon, Jon L. Kyl, et al., op. cit., p. 67.

In addition, there have been calls for the Missile Defense Agency to integrate advanced directed energy technologies for the air and cruise missile defense missions. Israel has been developing its “Iron Beam” directed energy system, which, if successful, could revolutionize the offense-defense cost equation in favor of the defense. Our panelists today have written and commented on the need for greater investment in advanced missile defense technologies, including directed energy and space-based systems, to meet emerging missile threats to the homeland. I look forward to their comments.

Robert G. Joseph

Robert G. Joseph is Senior Scholar at the National Institute for Public Policy and former Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security.

Thank you, David. Good morning, everyone. Peppi is going to talk about our paper in some detail, especially our views on the implications of the shift in the threat environment for our future missile defense policies and programs. I will try to set the stage with a few general observations—and several lessons learned—from past homeland defense policies and programs, some dating to the Reagan Administration but that remain salient today.

President Reagan gave his SDI speech more than 40 years ago. Despite the mischaracterizations, SDI was never about building an impenetrable dome or shield—that was an image manufactured by critics in the arms control community and their supporters on the Hill and in the media. From the earliest days, then Senator Biden was in the anti-missile defense camp. I don’t want to be snarky, but what was it that Secretary Gates said about Joe Biden? I raise this only because it bears directly on what we can expect if there is a second Biden term.

Anyway, from the outset of SDI, the purpose was to strengthen deterrence. To quote from a January 1988 SDIO report to Congress:

The military objective of Phase I would be to enhance the US deterrence posture by being able to deny the Soviets their objectives in an initial ballistic missile attack. Achieving the Phase 1 objective would enhance deterrence in two ways. *One, it would decrease the Soviet confidence that the objectives of its initial attack would be met. Two, it would increase the likelihood that the US and its allies would be able to respond to aggression effectively.*

The deployment of the Phase I SDI would compel Soviet operational adjustments and compromises by reducing the confidence of Soviet planners in a favorable outcome of a Soviet ballistic missile attack.⁶

⁶ Strategic Defense Initiative Organization, *Report to Congress on the Strategic Defense System Architecture*, January 1988, pp. 4-5, available at <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA195476.pdf>. (Emphasis in original)

Keep this thought in mind when you think about Russian and Chinese coercive threats and, more broadly, about the role of defenses in a tri-polar deterrence context.

President Reagan was clear that his goal was to bring together the best of American science and technology capabilities to see if we could develop defenses that could reduce our reliance on nuclear weapons and move away from the concept of mutual assured destruction which he found highly dubious on both strategic and moral grounds.

The Bush-41 Administration inherited a much different strategic threat environment with the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. Yet, homeland missile defense remained a priority for both Russia and the United States—not as enemies but as potential partners. In fact, following President Yeltsin's UN proposal to create a global protection system, President Bush offered GPALS, a DOD program of record at the time, to be the United States contribution to Yeltsin's initiative. Many of you will remember that GPALS consisted of ground launched and space-based interceptors, the latter known as Brilliant Pebbles.

With Bill Clinton's election, and based solely on politics and ideology, there was a 180-degree turn on strategic defenses, despite no real change in the strategic environment. On day one of the administration, Secretary Aspen announced to the press that he was "taking the stars out of Star Wars," killing all components of GPALS. For the next 8 years, at every U.S.-Russian summit, the two leaders described the Cold War era ABM Treaty—a treaty that codified mutual assured destruction—as the cornerstone of strategic stability. In fact, the Clinton team tried but failed to strengthen the ABM Treaty by negotiating so-called demarcation provisions that would ensure that theater capabilities could not have the ability to intercept strategic missiles. What could go wrong with that goose chase?

The Bush-43 Administration came into office committed to withdrawing from the ABM Treaty and deploying a homeland defense against rogue missile threats, most notably North Korea. This was viewed as essential to countering emerging threats—threats that have now emerged. Prior to 9/11, this was the number one priority—and it succeeded on both counts, with Fort Greely reaching IOC in October 2004. This initial deployment was an important achievement but was accurately described at the time as a rudimentary capability against North Korean missiles in small numbers. The commitment was to move forward with spiral development to stay ahead of the threat—which we have failed to do. Today, 20 years later, and again this is my view, we have little more than a rudimentary capability against a threat that has outpaced our ability to deter and defend against. The reason why is not lack of funding or technology barriers—it is policy failures.

With the election of President Obama, and again without any significant change in the threat environment, we had another 180 on homeland defenses—with the cancellation of all Bush programs that were intended to keep pace with the rogue state threat—Airborne Laser (ABL), Kinetic Energy Interceptor (KEI) and Multiple Kill Vehicle (MKV). Homeland defense was more of a bargaining chip in the high-profile effort to achieve lower offensive numbers on the path to global zero. The Obama Administration even cancelled the third site in Europe, replacing it with the phased adaptive approach which included a fourth phase that called for the development and deployment of the SM-3 Block IIB, which was to have the ability to engage ICBM class missiles. But that program, entirely predictably, would also be cancelled.

One footnote on Fort Greely. I believe that, had we not deployed Ground-Based Interceptors (GBIs) in 2004, we would not have any homeland defense today. Obama would certainly not have deployed defense; and I doubt that the Trump team would have done so—in the latter's case, not because they didn't support homeland defenses but because they likely could not have overcome the antibodies in the interagency, especially in the Pentagon.

The Trump Administration, at least in my view, is best thought of as a lost opportunity regarding homeland missile defense. We had a president that said all the right things about the need for an effective defense of the homeland against threats from all sources—but the words bore no connection to the policies and programs of the DOD. I still marvel at the total disconnect between the President's statement at the Pentagon on the day the *Missile Defense Review* (MDR) was released and what was actually in the MDR. In any case, we ended up with the Next Generation Interceptor (NGI) as the future centerpiece of our homeland defense posture.

Now here is where I may differ with some of my friends: My view at the time—and today—is that NGI was the wrong answer and remains the wrong answer—even for defending against the rogue threat alone. While NGI will clearly be a major advancement over the current GBI force, you simply cannot scale up ground-based defenses to meet the deterrent and defense requirements that we have today—especially Russian and Chinese coercive threats. But the irony—I must concede—is that NGI—which importantly includes a multiple kill capability—may actually be the best that government can do given all the antibodies and all of the bad ideas that have held us back from pursuing an effective homeland defense for over 40 years.

So very briefly, what are these bad ideas—ideas that I fought against for my 26 years in government? The first is that homeland defenses are destabilizing—that they will create an arms race and incentives to strike first. While this idea has been around since before the ABM Treaty was negotiated in the Nixon Administration, it is—while admittedly seductive—simply counterfactual. But it was prevalent in the Clinton and Obama Administrations and, no doubt, in the Biden Administration. Here again, one has to ignore the facts and disbelieve your lying eyes. When we left the ABM Treaty, Putin announced that this was not a threat to Russia and that Russia would continue to make major reductions in its offensive forces.

Much more recently when Israel was attacked by Iranian drones, cruise, and ballistic missiles, its homeland defense systems worked spectacularly well—even according to the Biden Administration which praised the defensive operation. The result was anything but destabilizing. The Israelis took their time and decided on a very proportionate (and stabilizing) response. The Biden Administration has also supported Ukraine's air and missile defense capabilities in the name of providing stability. But don't for one minute think that these same officials will apply this view to U.S. homeland defenses. The old myths will never die with those wedded to ideological dogma.

I don't have time to deal with all of the other bad ideas—such as defenses won't work, or defenses cost too much. Recent events speak to them. But one other persistent and pernicious idea is the so-called militarization of space. Never mind all that Russia, China, and our other adversaries have been doing to militarize space, or even that our Joint Chiefs have

described space as a contested environment, President Biden has reportedly stated that he does not want to be the president that militarizes space. Speaking of space, you have to ask what planet is he living on? Talk about being wedded to a dangerously bad idea—there can be no better example.

Let me cut to the chase—and here I depart somewhat from the options we lay out in our paper. My position is that, to have an effective and affordable defense of the American homeland, and to strengthen deterrence of both rogues and Russian and Chinese coercive threats, we must aggressively pursue a space-based capability with thousands of small satellites (think Starlink) that provide both sensors and killers. I am confident, talking with experts who know the current state of technology, that this can be achieved in 4 to 6 years, or perhaps 5 to 8 years. What is important is that we begin now. Are we up to the task or will we continue to cling to the established pattern of failure? I will let others answer the question.



PROCEEDINGS

THE IMPACT OF ARMS CONTROL ON EXTENDED DETERRENCE AND ASSURANCE

The remarks below were delivered at a symposium on “The Impact of Arms Control on Extended Deterrence and Assurance” hosted by the National Institute for Public Policy on June 26, 2024. The symposium examined the ramifications of past arms control practices and agreements on the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence security guarantees. It also outlined principles for future arms control efforts that would avoid undermining extended deterrence and the assurance of allies.

Keith B. Payne

Keith B. Payne is President of the National Institute for Public Policy and was former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Forces Policy.

I look forward to our discussion today. As Dave mentioned, the panel’s presentations follow from an on-going study at National Institute, the complete results of which will be published before the end of the year.

One topic from this study is how unintended consequences of the U.S. arms control agenda now jeopardize the U.S global alliance system. There are very few discussions of the inconvenient truth that the U.S. arms control agenda has fallen far short of its *own goals*, and while doing so, has contributed to the contemporary extreme pressures on the U.S. alliance system. This is a true, but unfashionable story.

I will briefly present seven points in this regard:

First Point

The U.S. system of global alliances is critical to U.S. security, and credible extended deterrence is the primary means of assuring allies, which in turn is essential for alliance cohesion.

Allies have emphasized that coming under the U.S. extended deterrent, including nuclear deterrence, is their main reason for aligning with the United States. Finnish officials have said this most recently.

Allies, including Germany, have also said that *credible* U.S. extended nuclear deterrence is the security guarantee that enables them to refrain from their *own* independent nuclear capabilities, and that if U.S. extended deterrence is no longer credible, they will need to pursue alternatives for their security. Most of those alternatives hold potentially severe downsides for alliance cohesion and U.S. security.

It is no overstatement to conclude that credible extended deterrence is essential to allied assurance, alliance cohesion, and to non-proliferation. If credible extended deterrence crumbles, assurance will crumble, alliances will crumble, and we will likely see a cascade of nuclear proliferation; the relationships are that direct and serious.



Second Point

Since the end of the Cold War, structural problems have arisen that undermine credible extended deterrence, and thus the U.S. system of alliances. By structural problems, I mean political and material realities that cannot be papered over by robust words or declarations. Structural problems have no easy fixes.

These structural problems include America's greatly reduced relative and absolute conventional and nuclear military capabilities since the end of the Cold War. Washington dramatically cut capabilities with little apparent appreciation of the prospective harm done to extended deterrence and assurance.

Third Point

Structural problems are inherent in the nature of U.S. alliances. But America's greatly reduced relative and absolute military position is a self-inflicted wound, caused *in part* by a long-standing U.S. arms control agenda and, more basically, the ideas driving that agenda.

For example, for almost two decades after the Cold War, Washington acted as if the expected cooperative new world order was real. Such an expectation was, of course, grossly mistaken. Yet, Washington proceeded as if its priority goal was to set a wise and virtuous arms control example for the rest of the world: supposedly, if we restrained ourselves, enemies would show the same restraint. This "action-reaction" theory driving U.S. self-restraint is alive and well, but contrary to the harsh truth that foes *don't* consider Washington's behavior to be wise or virtuous, nor do they emulate it. Nevertheless, the "action-reaction" theory typically is the rationale for arms control endeavors that threaten credible extended deterrence and alliance cohesion, including No First Use (NFU) and the continuing push to reduce the number and role of nuclear weapons.

Fourth Point

Multiple internal contradictions are inherent in the U.S. arms control agenda and near certain to *frustrate* Washington's arms control goals and to *degrade* extended deterrence credibility. Washington's arms control agenda is twice a loser; quite an accomplishment. I will mention *only four* of these contradictions now; there are more:

- Contradiction 1: U.S. force reductions following the Cold War were meant to provide a virtuous arms control example for the world, but instead created gaps in U.S. capabilities, contributed to allied doubts regarding extended deterrence, and increased interest among some allies for independent nuclear capabilities.
- Contradiction 2: U.S. nuclear force reductions during and after the Cold War were meant to encourage opponents to follow suit, but they instead led Moscow to disdain America's pleading for arms control because U.S. forces are increasingly

aged while Russia's *are not*. Why eliminate modernized Russian forces when U.S. forces are aging out anyway?

- Contradiction 3: Washington based its post-Cold War rationale for pushing nuclear disarmament on its overwhelming conventional force superiority, but then quickly gave up that conventional force superiority while *still* pushing to reduce the role and number of nuclear weapons as if nothing had changed. It did so while foes worked to expand both their conventional and nuclear capabilities.
- Contradiction 4: In the past, the United States minimized homeland defenses to promote deterrence stability and arms control. Yet doing so led to *increased* Soviet investment in its Strategic Rocket Forces and the *destabilizing* vulnerability of U.S. strategic nuclear forces. The continuing minimization of U.S. homeland defenses leaves Washington fully vulnerable to enemies' nuclear coercion—undercutting the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence for allies.

These are only four examples of how the U.S. approach to arms control has degraded extended deterrence and allied assurance.

Fifth Point

By undercutting extended deterrence, the U.S. pursuit of arms control has increased incentives for some allies to acquire independent nuclear capabilities. So, Washington now must *scramble to solve a proliferation problem* it has helped to create.

Sixth Point

Multiple separate case studies illustrate how specific U.S. arms control measures under Republican and Democratic administrations have undercut extended deterrence and assurance. These case studies include:

- The ABM Treaty and its enduring arms control and stability rationale;
- The INF Treaty;
- The Presidential Nuclear Initiatives;
- The past elimination of TLAM-N and current opposition to SLCM-N; and,
- Washington's continuing aspiration for NFU.

Seventh and Final Point

As I mentioned earlier, several of the structural problems now confronting the U.S. alliance system are inherent. In contrast, the U.S. arms control agenda that has contributed to contemporary deterrence and assurance problems can be corrected—but *only if Washington*

will undertake a realistic, zero-based review of its approach to arms control. Such a review will be opposed strenuously by both individuals and institutions deeply invested in traditional U.S. arms control thinking and norms. But it is necessary.

I will conclude here so my colleagues can discuss *how* several of the specific U.S. arms control measures I listed have unintentionally endangered extended deterrence, and by doing so have contributed to the structural problems confronting U.S. alliances.

Matthew Costlow

Matthew Costlow is Senior Analyst at the National Institute for Public Policy and former Special Assistant in the DoD Office of Nuclear and Missile Defense Policy.

Today I will be presenting on a topic that many of you are likely quite familiar with: the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty). But the real focus of my remarks will be on the treaty's effects on extended deterrence.

As Dr. Keith Payne explained quite nicely, today the warning signs are flashing red among U.S. allies and partners. Their threat perceptions have shifted dramatically, and thus, their assurance and extended deterrence requirements have also shifted dramatically. But what makes these developments particularly dangerous for the U.S. network of alliances and partnerships is that the United States self-evidently cannot adapt its nuclear force posture in ways or at a pace that could improve alliance relations in the near term. One of the reasons for that lack of U.S. flexibility, and thus diminished allied perceptions of U.S. credibility, is the long-term effects of the INF Treaty.

To begin, what occasionally gets lost in discussions about the INF Treaty is that its origins lie in another time period when U.S. allies were dissatisfied with the state of U.S. nuclear forces—the late 1970s. It was clear by the early 1970s that the Soviet Union would not be satisfied with parity in overall nuclear force levels with the United States. And by the late 1970s, the Soviet Union made it even more clear that it intended to gain coercive leverage over NATO with its substantially larger intermediate-range forces (the SS-20 being the main culprit). When President Jimmy Carter cancelled the “enhanced radiation weapon” or “the neutron bomb”—allied concerns grew to a roar.

The “dual-track” decision for the United States to develop and deploy intermediate-range ballistic and cruise missiles in Europe while pursuing arms control with the Soviets helped ease allied concerns. In 1987, President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev signed the INF Treaty which eliminated all ground-based intermediate-range systems in the two states' inventories. U.S. allies were quite supportive of the INF Treaty and so was the U.S. Senate, winning support in a 93-5 vote. Among the reasons that proponents supported the treaty were that it removed a larger number of Soviet weapons than it did U.S. weapons and helped solidify alliance relations.

Those who had concerns about the INF Treaty, or were against it, were small in number but notable in their dissent at the time. James Schlesinger, for instance, ultimately supported the INF Treaty but noted his concern that eliminating intermediate-range nuclear forces

would place additional extended deterrence burdens on U.S. strategic nuclear forces at a time when the Soviet Union had an overwhelming lead in that area. The scholar William Van Cleave, who ultimately did not support the INF Treaty, extended Schlesinger's concern by noting that the INF Treaty not only placed a greater extended deterrence burden on an outnumbered U.S. strategic nuclear force, but also on greatly outnumbered U.S. and NATO conventional forces. Another scholar, Colin Gray, summarized these concerns by explaining that if the United States and NATO Europe were not willing to invest more in non-strategic nuclear forces below the intermediate-range, or conventional forces to meet the Soviet Union while staying at the conventional level of war, then the United States by necessity would likely need to escalate to strategic nuclear weapon employment in a conflict with the Soviets—something inherently not in the U.S. national interest.

Of course, the United States and NATO Europe sought to strengthen their conventional and non-strategic nuclear forces as a way to win approval for the INF Treaty in the Senate—almost every witness that testified before Congress supported such improvements. But the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union made those improvements appear irrelevant and wasteful in the new, far less threatening international environment. In essence, the end of the Cold War delayed a U.S. and allied reckoning about the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence threats in the wake of the INF Treaty. The Presidential Nuclear Initiatives of 1991-1992 eliminated most of the U.S. non-strategic nuclear weapons, leaving only nuclear gravity bombs and dual-capable aircraft for regional extended nuclear deterrence and assurance.

Now, just as those who had concerns with the INF Treaty feared, the United States is forced to rely largely on the threat of strategic nuclear escalation to deter regional conflict. What is worse, this over-reliance on intercontinental forces comes at a time when those same forces are being asked to bear an even greater deterrence burden to counter growing Russian and Chinese strategic forces. And, when one considers that the United States today lacks the nuclear infrastructure to make any major changes to the U.S. nuclear force modernization plan, then the true scope of the danger for U.S. alliances and partnerships becomes clearer.

In short, U.S. allies and partners have greater assurance and extended deterrence requirements at precisely the time the United States is least able to meet those new requirements.

The INF Treaty and the PNIs are not solely responsible for this development, but neither can their role be dismissed. Where does the United States stand today? China has the largest intermediate-range missile force in the world today, Russia has deployed its INF Treaty-violating missiles, and the United States only a few months ago deployed its first missile that would have violated in the INF Treaty on a temporary training assignment. And, as the Biden Administration has noted several times, the United States only has plans for conventional intermediate-range systems.

I do not have time in my remaining minutes to examine all the lessons that can be learned from the INF Treaty episode that relate to extended deterrence, but I will conclude by noting the old maxim that we in the United States seem to forget every time: that arms control

agreements simply shift competition from the areas covered by the arms control agreement to the areas NOT covered by the agreement. Sooner or later, this competition will resume, and the United States must anticipate that. For now, as the 2023 Strategic Posture Commission recommended, U.S. officials should focus on building adaptability into the U.S. nuclear infrastructure and force posture to meet increasingly severe extended deterrence and assurance challenges.

Michaela Dodge

Michaela Dodge is Research Scholar at the National Institute for Public Policy.

My contribution to the debate will concern the impact of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty on extended deterrence and allied assurance. It may not surprise you that I will argue that the ABM Treaty and its legacy continue to undermine both extended deterrence and allied assurance just at the time when we need them to be more effective.

ABM Treaty as the Basis of Deterrence Stability

During the Cold War, U.S. and Soviet homeland vulnerability was considered the basis for deterrence stability. The degradation of the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence and allied assurance was an unintended consequence of this vulnerability. Extended deterrence and assurance depend on allies and adversaries believing that the United States would come to its allies' defense. But how can the United States be credible if its homeland is vulnerable to a catastrophic missile attack?

As early as 1961, French President Charles de Gaulle famously doubted that the United States would be willing to trade New York for Paris. In 1979, Henry Kissinger addressed the question directly: "Our European allies should not keep asking us to multiply strategic assurances that we cannot possibly mean, or if we do mean, we should not want to execute, because if we execute, we risk the destruction of civilization."¹ This was the condition deliberately enshrined by the ABM Treaty.

But that was not the treaty's only unintended consequence that impacted allies.

The Clinton Administration decided that the United States would not build certain radars to provide theater-range interceptors with the best possible data while the ABM Treaty was in force. This decreased their potential effectiveness and set back progress in U.S. regional missile defense. As the need for these systems became more urgent, the United States started to press up against its interpretation of arms control restrictions that originally had nothing to do with theater missile defense. Had the Clinton Administration been successful in setting limits on theater missile defenses with a "demarcation" of the ABM Treaty, U.S. regional

¹ Henry Kissinger, "The Future of NATO," in *NATO, The Next Thirty Years*, Kenneth Myers, ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981), p. 8.

missile defenses today would be even more hampered, leaving allies and U.S. forces abroad more vulnerable.

Why are theater missile defenses important for allies? This audience is well familiar with the Iraqi use of Scud missiles against Israel in an effort to draw it into the First Gulf War. This would have disrupted the U.S. coalition with other Arab states.² Saudi Arabia reportedly waited four days to request U.S. intervention in Iraq following the fall of Kuwait, partly due to the lack of Saudi confidence that the United States would be able to shield it from ground and air attacks.³

The Bush Administration withdrew from the ABM Treaty in 2002. But the treaty is the ultimate zombie. We may have thought it was dead, but its Cold War “balance of terror” thinking continues to shape U.S. missile defense policy.

Beyond the Legacy of Mutual Vulnerability

Considerable opposition has existed against U.S. homeland missile defense beyond those capabilities designed against rogue states, even though the nuclear security environment is becoming worse. The United States is continuing to choose this vulnerability, and it struggles to stay ahead of North Korea’s missile and nuclear programs. The arguments for remaining so vulnerable harken back to the Cold War notions of relative cost, and deterrence and arms control instability.

Today, Washington relies on expensive, fixed, ground-based interceptors with limited effectiveness. There is continued opposition to strategic missile defenses capable of countering a modest number of rogue offensive missiles because it could be appreciably effective against limited Russian and Chinese missile attacks. The lack of funding for advanced missile defense concepts illustrates the point.

I would be remiss not to mention that some allies believed the United States would retreat to a “fortress” if it had a robust missile defense system, or that they bought into U.S. arguments that missile defenses are destabilizing, too expensive, and a direct cause of an arms race. This should not stop us. On strategic issues, allies usually follow where the United States leads. In fact, there is no better example of this dynamic than the ABM Treaty.

We went from allies buying into the ABM Treaty logic, to them supporting the U.S. withdrawal, to now having a NATO-wide agreement on the need to protect populations from missile attacks. We also have a robust international cooperation. We literally cannot produce missile defense assets fast enough to satisfy allied demand. That is partially a reaction to Russia’s missile use against Ukraine.

² Michael W. Ellist and Jeffrey Record, “Theatre Ballistic Missile Defense and US Contingency Operations,” *Parameters*, Vol. XXII, No. 1 (Spring 1992), pp. 11-12, available at <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA246696.pdf>.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

U.S. Alliances Would Benefit from Strong Missile Defense

In as much as the United States is not developing missile defenses to counter adversaries' systems, it is undermining the credibility of its extended deterrence and allied assurance. At a minimum, a homeland missile defense designed to defeat a major adversary's coercive capabilities would strengthen deterrence. It would raise the threshold for their attack since an adversary would have to consider using a larger number of weapons to have a high degree of confidence he will achieve his objectives.⁴ Protecting military infrastructure, often co-located with populated areas, could give the United States more time to implement a strategy with the highest potential for de-escalation and save a number of civilian lives in the process.⁵ Perhaps in a sign of a more hopeful future for missile defense, the bipartisan 2023 Strategic Posture Commission recommends the United States develop and field homeland integrated air and missile defense that can deter and defeat coercive attacks by Russia and China, and determine the capabilities needed to stay ahead of the North Korean threat.⁶ The strategic benefits of a comprehensive missile defense system would be even greater, because they would obviate massive investments our adversaries have made in their missile forces.

Importantly for extended deterrence and assurance, having a comprehensive homeland missile defense system would strengthen U.S. credibility. It would make it more believable that the United States will, indeed, come to defense of its allies, even at the risk of an adversary's retaliation against the U.S. homeland.⁷ Missile defenses could also lower damage should deterrence fail, including in instances of accidental launches. They are essential in an environment with two nuclear peers, where the United States has to be concerned by China's in addition to Russia's nuclear weapons.⁸

David J. Trachtenberg

David J. Trachtenberg is Vice President of the National Institute for Public Policy and served as Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy from 2017-2019.

I'd like to take a few minutes to offer some of my thoughts on how arms control has impacted extended deterrence and assurance and what we should do about it.

⁴ Matthew Costlow, *Vulnerability is No Virtue and Defense is No Vice: The Strategic Benefits of Expanded U.S. Homeland Missile Defense, Occasional Paper* Vol. 2, No. 9 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, September 2022), pp. 25-25, available at <https://nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/OP-Vol.-2-No.-9.pdf>.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁶ Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States, *America's Strategic Posture, The Final Report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States*, Institute for Defense Analysis, 2023, p. x, available at <https://www.ida.org/-/media/feature/publications/a/am/americas-strategic-posture/strategic-posture-commission-report.ashx>.

⁷ Costlow, "Vulnerability is No Virtue and Defense is No Vice: The Strategic Benefits of Expanded U.S. Homeland Missile Defense," *op. cit.*, pp. 33-36.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

First, it seems clear that the way the United States has practiced arms control in the past has contributed to growing allied concerns over the efficacy and credibility of American extended deterrence security guarantees. The examples provided by my colleagues reinforce this conclusion. And while the current prospects for arms control appear grim indeed, the possibility that arms control will once again become a U.S. priority cannot be discounted.

With this in mind, the United States should adopt some fundamental principles in order to ensure that any future arms control agreement serves U.S. national security interests, enhances overall deterrence, and assures allies of the credibility of the U.S. extended deterrent and American security guarantees.

For example, *first and foremost*, the United States must develop an adequate strategy for a two nuclear peer environment, resource it appropriately, and procure the necessary forces and capabilities before developing any arms control proposals. As the bipartisan Strategic Posture Commission concluded, this is a necessary prerequisite to ensure arms control aligns with national security requirements. The United States must place primacy on the requirements for deterrence, extended deterrence, and assurance, and any arms control proposals must be subservient to and consistent with U.S. deterrence objectives.

Second, any future arms control agreements should allow for sufficient flexibility such that the quantity and characteristics of U.S. forces can adapt to changing strategic circumstances. An agreement that allows the United States to possess a range of deployed and reserve systems is preferable to one that locks the United States into a static number over a period of many years. It would also be more responsive to possible shifts in U.S. extended deterrence and assurance considerations.

In this regard, an agreement like the 2002 Moscow Treaty, which allowed the United States to deploy between 1,700 and 2,200 strategic nuclear weapons, makes more sense in a dynamic security environment than an agreement like the New START Treaty, which imposed a static quantitative limit of 1,550 on deployed U.S. strategic weapons for 10 (now 15) years. In this case, the desire for greater predictability may actually work against the objective of stability.

Moreover, as Colin Gray recognized, equal numbers do not necessarily translate into an equitable outcome, especially since the United States is thousands of miles away from the areas of potential conflict while U.S. adversaries enjoy the advantage of geographic proximity. The tyranny of time and distance works to the U.S. disadvantage.⁹

Third, U.S. extended deterrence and allied assurance requirements must be considered in any arms control negotiation. To this end, the views of allies and strategic partners should inform the U.S. negotiating posture. An agreement that is seen by U.S. allies as eroding the credibility of American security guarantees will likely create instabilities that could negatively impact regional security and potentially undermine U.S. nonproliferation policy should allies decide to acquire their own nuclear weapons to ensure their own security.

⁹ For a more detailed elaboration on this point, see B. A. Wellnitz, *Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory panel on tactical nuclear warfare. Report of the fifth meeting (short title: TAC-5), April 5-6, 1977*, pp.73-78, available at <https://www.osti.gov/servlets/purl/7091279>.

Fourth, future arms control negotiations should focus on removing those areas of adversary advantage that directly undercut U.S. extended deterrence and assurance requirements. This includes seeking to reduce Russia's enormous advantage in non-strategic nuclear systems that pose a direct threat to NATO Europe. Putin's recent statement that the United States would likely not come to Europe's defense because Russia has "many times more" non-strategic nuclear weapons than the United States and that therefore Europe is "more or less defenseless" is an ominous commentary on the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence.¹⁰

In addition, China's expansive nuclear buildup is also a concern to U.S. regional allies. The United States should improve its deterrent against potential Chinese aggression. This might help to convince China that its reluctance to engage in arms control talks is more detrimental than beneficial to Beijing's long-term interests.

Fifth, arms control limitations on missile defenses must be avoided. Despite calls by some to encourage adversary interest in arms control by putting strategic defenses on the negotiating table, improved and expanded homeland missile defenses not only strengthen overall deterrence, but they help bolster the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence. By reducing the level of damage expectancy should deterrence fail and expanding the decision space for a possible response, U.S. resolve to confront aggression against allies is reinforced. As Herman Kahn noted, without some means of protecting the homeland, U.S. threats to defend allies may be seen as incredible, as Putin's comments suggest.

Finally, though verification protocols are essential for any arms control agreement, the United States must develop a clear compliance and enforcement policy to address any violations. This policy should be developed in consultation with U.S. allies. Fred Ikle's 1961 *Foreign Affairs* article, "After Detection—What?," remains relevant more than six decades after its publication. In that article, he stated, "detecting violations is not enough. What counts are the political and military consequences of a violation once it has been detected, since these alone will determine whether or not the violator stands to gain in the end."¹¹

In light of the history of arms control violations by the Soviet Union and Russia, any agreement that ignores this fundamental principle is unlikely to be in the U.S. national security interest and will likely cause fissures among allies over how to respond appropriately.

It should be recognized that, at present, the prospects for arms control that enhances the credibility of U.S. security guarantees to allies and strategic partners are slim, indeed. While U.S. deterrence policies should not be determined solely by allied considerations, as long as extended deterrence and assurance remain important ingredients in U.S. national security

¹⁰ "US wouldn't rescue allies in nuclear war—Putin," *RT*, June 7, 2024, available at <https://www.rt.com/russia/598987-us-allies-nuclear-war-putin/>

¹¹ Fred Charles Ikle, "After detection—What?," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Jan., 1961), p. 208, available at https://www.jstor.org/stable/20029480?saml_data=eyJzYW1sVG9rZW4iOiI0NzhkYWQwMC1mYTU1LTQxNzktYThlMC1iZDhlNDBjYTZiYzAiLCJpbmN0aXR1dGlvbkklkcyI6WyI5ZDY5N2Y2Mi01MzA4LTRkMzctOTM3ZC0wZDE1NWFmNWExY2UiXX0&seq=1.

policy, the United States can ill afford to ignore the concerns of its alliance partners. The stakes are simply too great.



PROCEEDINGS

EMERGENCE OF A NEW 'QUAD': THE GROWING ENTENTE BETWEEN CHINA, RUSSIA, NORTH KOREA, AND IRAN

The remarks below were delivered at a symposium on “Emergence of A New ‘Quad’: The Growing Entente Between China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran” hosted by the National Institute for Public Policy on July 23, 2024. The symposium examined the implications of this growing military entente for U.S. and allied security and the challenges posed by what some have called the “Axis of Authoritarians.”

David J. Trachtenberg (moderator)

David J. Trachtenberg is Vice President of the National Institute for Public Policy. Previously, he served as Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

In recent years, the military threats to the United States, its allies, and strategic partners have grown significantly. These threats originate from both peer nuclear states such as China and Russia as well as lesser powers including North Korea and Iran. Importantly, a military entente appears to be forming among U.S. adversaries, who are seeking to displace the United States as the dominant power on the international stage and recast the world order to their own liking.

Since Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping declared their mutual friendship of “no limits” in February 2022, both nations have developed closer ties and have collaborated militarily to improve their respective abilities to hold the United States and its allies at risk and to threaten U.S. interests abroad. Each has supported the other’s military aggressions and activities in tangible ways.

In addition, the ties between these two nuclear peer states and North Korea and Iran have grown tighter in what has been termed an “Axis of Upheaval.”¹ Former NATO Secretary General George Robertson recently called it “a deadly quartet.”²

Notwithstanding historical disagreements and areas of competition between them, this new “axis” or “quartet” represents a coordinated and substantial threat, not only to U.S. security, but to the international community of liberal, democratic states. It is arguably the most consequential foreign and national security challenge facing the United States today, driven by a common desire to overturn a world order that they see as unfairly dominated by the United States and decidedly prejudicial to their interests.

¹ Andrea Kendall-Taylor and Richard Fontaine, “The Axis of Upheaval,” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2024, available at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/axis-upheaval-russia-iran-north-korea-taylor-fontaine>.

² Dan Sabbagh, “UK and its allies face ‘deadly quartet’ of nations, says defence expert,” *The Guardian*, July 15, 2024, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/article/2024/jul/16/uk-and-its-allies-face-deadly-quartet-of-nations-says-defence-expert#:~:text=Britain%20and%20its%20allies%20are,head%20of%20Labour's%20defence%20review>.



Both China and Russia have supported North Korean missile tests in violation of UN resolutions and sanctions. North Korean missiles have been shipped to and used by Russia in its war of aggression against Ukraine. And Iran and its proxies in the Middle East have moved aggressively to undermine the security of U.S. allies and partners in the region, including Israel, supported by Moscow, Beijing, and Pyongyang.

In addition, China has become Russia's largest trading partner, building and expanding economic ties with Russian financial institutions. China has also supplied Russia with the microchips necessary to develop advanced weaponry. And Russia has provided China with technology for an early warning missile defense system. Joint Sino-Russian military exercises have also become increasingly common, with their fourth joint naval patrol occurring just over a week ago.³

Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran independently pose significant threats to American security and interests abroad. But what makes them even more dangerous is that they are acting in a deliberate and coordinated way to overturn the liberal world order created and nurtured by the United States since the end of the second World War—a system that has allowed freedom, democracy, and economic prosperity to flourish.

This emerging anti-American and anti-Western “Quad of instability” represents a serious new challenge, not only for the United States but for U.S. allies, friends, and strategic partners who have come to rely on the United States to help deter aggression against them. As Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran continue to develop and expand their military relationships and work together more closely to upset the established world order, America's allies and partners will be watching carefully to see how the United States seeks to counter this dangerous new entente.

If the United States fails to take the actions necessary to strengthen deterrence against the combined efforts of these adversaries, extended deterrence and assurance of allies will be dangerously weakened. Moreover, adversary leaders are likely to draw the conclusion that the United States is indeed a waning power and that their efforts to overturn U.S. dominance will inevitably be successful. This will only increase the risk of opportunistic aggression, undermine global stability, and weaken international nonproliferation norms as other countries seek alternate means of ensuring their own security—potentially to include the acquisition of nuclear weapons.

The threats to the global order posed by the emerging entente of Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran are unique. The dangers they pose are unlike any previous epochs in history. Three of the four new “Quad” members possess nuclear weapons and have made veiled and not-so-veiled threats to employ them against the United States and the West. The fourth reportedly may be on the verge of acquiring nuclear weapons. Accordingly, it will take a serious and coordinated effort among freedom-loving democracies to reinforce deterrence

³ Albee Zhang and Ryan Woo, “China, Russia navies conduct joint patrol in parts of Pacific, China media says,” *Reuters*, July 14, 2024, available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/china-russia-navies-conduct-joint-patrol-parts-pacific-china-media-says-2024-07-14/>.

and the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence commitments. Anything less is likely to lead to chaos, conflict, and potential catastrophe.

Finally, I would suggest that the political events of this past weekend cannot but factor into the calculations of U.S. adversaries as they implement a strategy to diminish U.S. global influence and build a new world order more to their liking. Transfers of presidential power in the United States usually occur over a period of less than three months—from November’s election to January’s swearing-in. And they are often considered periods of potential volatility and foreign challenges. But we are now faced with a lame-duck presidency for the next six months. How adversaries—and allies—will react during this unusual and potentially dangerous time remains to be seen.

Christopher A. Ford

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Thanks for inviting me to participate in this webinar on the “New Quad” of the brutal dictatorships of China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran. I myself prefer to think of these four as the “Dark Quad,” for in a sense they do form the perfect malevolently antithetical counterpoint to the valuable work of the *real* Quad—that is, the important quadrilateral dialogue between the developed democracies of the United States, Japan, Australia, and India.

It would probably be difficult to overstate the potential challenges that the “Dark Quad” presents to international peace and security—not to mention to our own country’s national security interests and those of our allies and partners, and indeed all who prize peace and wish to preserve their political autonomy as sovereign peoples. Time being short, I’ll mention just four big ones.

These remarks offer only my personal opinions, of course, and don’t necessarily represent the views of anyone else. They’re also pretty depressing, I suppose. But let me offer what insights I can.

My four warnings are all related to the fact that the military quasi-alliance of the Dark Quad includes both the world’s only two nuclear-armed revisionist great powers and the world’s two most prominent nuclear proliferators.

- Of the two proliferators, North Korea, of course, pursued nuclear weapons for years, signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in bad faith, immediately violated it, got caught, obtained a concessionary deal with the West in return for supposedly freezing its nuclear weapons work, violated *that* promise too, then pulled out of the NPT, and has since built itself a rapidly-growing and ever more sophisticated nuclear arsenal.

- For its part, Iran pursued nuclear weapons for years, got caught, faced international sanctions, obtained a concessionary deal with the West in return for temporarily delaying its nuclear progress, but is today busily at work enriching uranium and cementing its status as a so-called “latent” or “virtual” nuclear weapons possessor able to sprint toward weaponization at the drop of a hat.
- And the great power members of the Dark Quad are currently involved in their *own* nuclear build-ups. This means not just modernizing legacy systems, but more importantly also building entire new *categories* of delivery systems, and apparently conducting secret low-yield nuclear testing. In Beijing’s case, it also means expanding the size and scope of the Chinese Communist Party’s nuclear arsenal at a truly shocking pace despite China *already* being, in relative terms, the most powerful it has ever been vis-à-vis any potential adversary power since at least the 18th Century.
- But the problem doesn’t lie just in the *capabilities* of these four Dark Quad authoritarian dictatorships. They also exhibit grave *behavioral* pathologies far beyond just the internal brutalities of their ruling regime’s domestic repression.
 - One of them, (Russia) is actively involved in a vicious war of aggression to capture and annex a neighboring democracy.
 - Another (China) has been preparing itself for years to invade and destroy one of East Asia’s most vibrant democracies in Taiwan, even while also grabbing at bits and pieces of territory from other neighbors to the south.
 - A third (Iran) continues to nurse destabilizing dreams of theocratic hegemony in the Middle East, and expresses this by actively subverting and attacking other countries in its region.
 - And the fourth (North Korea) is ruled by a dynasty of reclusive dictatorial sociopaths who periodically lash out in violent affronts to the sovereignty and security of *another* vibrant East Asian democracy to their south.

So what, as the saying goes, could possibly go wrong? (A lot, obviously!) So, as a starting point, let me offer four warnings.

The Death Knell for Nonproliferation?

First, as a longtime nonproliferation diplomat, I should point out that the advent of the Dark Quad may sound a death knell for the nuclear nonproliferation regime. By that I don’t mean that it’s impossible for some rump, denuded shell of that regime to stumble along for a while. I hope it does, and there’s certainly still lots of important nonproliferation work that can still be done.

But with two veto-wielding Permanent Members of the U.N. Security Council and regional aggressors now in a *de facto* military alliance with the world’s two worst nuclear

proliferators, it's hard to see much real hope for the global nonproliferation regime being effective going forward. After all, the international community did a notably *bad* job of handling the challenges presented by the two proliferators of North Korea and Iran even back when there appeared to be a consensus among the great powers on the importance of nonproliferation. And now that Russia and China are putting the “pro” back into “proliferation”? You can probably forget it.

Pooled Adversary Capabilities

My second warning has to do with the implications of the fact that the four members of the Dark Quad now increasingly have the opportunity to pool their capabilities in various ways against the three things they hate most: the United States, the other countries of the West, and the current rules-based international order.

Part of the Dark Quad threat comes from the possibility of what might in some respects turn into a “pooled” adversary defense industrial base. We have seen from the Ukraine conflict that the requirements of modern, high-intensity conventional war in terms of equipment, materiel, and manpower are simply *enormous*. After decades of post-Cold War complacency and strategic myopia, however—years in which we assumed that our former strategic adversaries would “cooperate with us in diplomacy and global problem solving”⁴ and in which we built our national security strategy around the assumption that those powers were indeed “no longer strategic adversaries” at all⁵—such productive capabilities are far beyond our current capacity to supply them.

Yet already China is helping equip and bankroll Russia's war in Ukraine with financial support, technology, and other aid—thus recently eliciting a rare NATO rebuke of Beijing as a “decisive enabler” of Putin's war of aggression⁶—while North Korea supplies Russia with munitions with which to kill Ukrainians, and Iran likewise supplies drones. Russia, meanwhile, has promised to help North Korea with unspecified assistance⁷, China and Russia have both helped Pyongyang evade U.N. sanctions for years⁸, and China is also funding Iran's regional destabilization and aggressive missile program by buying Iranian oil.

We need, therefore, to be keenly aware of—and, if we can, move to counter—the threat that the Dark Quad will increasingly “pool” industrial and military capabilities in ways

⁴ The White House, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, February 1995, p. 1, available at <https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nss/nss1995.pdf?ver=pzgo9pkDsWmIQqTYTC60-Q%3d%3d>.

⁵ The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, p. 26, available at https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nss/nss2002.pdf?ver=oyVN99aEnrAWijAc_05eiQ%3d%3d.

⁶ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Washington Summit Declaration,” July 10, 2024, available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_227678.htm.

⁷ “Putin vows to support North Korea against the United States,” *The Straits Times*, June 18, 2024, available at <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/putin-vows-to-take-north-korea-ties-to-higher-level>.

⁸ David Albright, Sarah Burkhard, Bernadette Gostelow, Maximilian Lim, and Andrea Stricker, “56 countries involved in violating UNSC Resolutions on North Korea during the last reporting period,” Institute for Science and International Security, June 6, 2019, available at https://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/DPRK_Report_June_6%2C_2019_Final.pdf.

profoundly dangerous to the United States, our allies and partners, and indeed to any country with the bad fortune to have one or more of these predatory powers as a neighbor. This certainly doesn't necessarily mean that I foresee some kind of quadripartite analogue to China's own domestic "Military Civil Fusion" (MCF) strategy⁹ of trying in effect to *erase* all distinctions between the military and civilian sectors, for I can't see anything that elaborate or ambitious being possible among the Dark Quad powers.

At the very least, however, the Dark Quad will likely do *more* in this regard than it ever has before—and potentially a great deal more. We in the United States are no strangers to seeing each of the Dark Quad powers as a threatening problem state in its own right, of course. Nevertheless, we haven't yet gotten our minds around the possibility that their various different strengths as international malefactors could complement each other and become mutually reinforcing in a deliberately coordinated way.

From a deterrence and nuclear force posture planning perspective, U.S. planners are already struggling with the implications of the unprecedented challenge of facing *two* nuclear-armed near-peer adversaries at the same time. But the problem is bigger than that, also encompassing broader issues of Defense Industrial Base (DIB) capacity, critical supply chains, military-technological development, and even mobilizable manpower. (Already, for instance, Russian media have claimed that North Korean "volunteers" are being readied to be sent to Ukraine.¹⁰ How close might Dark Quad cooperation become in the future?)

It is not for nothing, after all, that the great 19th Century Prussian and then German statesman Otto von Bismarck referred in his memoirs to the "nightmare of coalitions" ("*le cauchemar des coalitions*") when contemplating the possibility that his country's potential enemies—and at that point he had Russia and Austria particularly in mind—might *coordinate* against it.¹¹ As American strategists contemplate a Dark Quad world, we need to keep an analogous *cauchemar* always in mind.

The Challenge of Coordinated Aggression

But this modern "nightmare of coalitions" goes well beyond simply the problem of aggregate—and potentially "pooled"—*capability*. Growing Dark Quad cooperation also raises the potential problem of coordinated *activity*.

U.S. officials have long been worried about the possibility of opportunistic aggression by one or more problem powers if the United States were to end up in hostilities with another of them. (China, for instance, might move against Taiwan in an attempt to take advantage of the Americans being distracted by a campaign against Iran.) Needless to say, from a force

⁹ Department of State, "The Chinese Communist Party's Military-Civil Fusion Policy," (undated), available at <https://2017-2021.state.gov/military-civil-fusion/#:~:text=What%20is%20Military%2DCivil%20Fusion,world%20class%20military>.

¹⁰ "North Korea offers Russia '100,000 volunteers' to fight Ukraine: state media," *South China Morning Post*, August 8, 2022, available at <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/3188052/north-korea-offers-russia-100000-volunteers-fight-ukraine-state>.

¹¹ German History in Documents and Images (GHDI), "The Nightmare of Coalitions': Bismarck on the Other Great Powers (1879/1898)," (undated), available at https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1855.

posture, asset-allocation, and logistics perspective, this is already a formidable problem for defense planners. There are certainly sound reasons for concern, as my Missouri State University colleague Dave Trachtenberg has pointed out, that the U.S. Defense Department's traditional "two-war" policy—namely, of being prepared to handle two simultaneous conflicts in different parts of the world—has been allowed to atrophy.¹²

But the "nightmare of coalitions" raised by the Dark Quad goes beyond merely opportunistic aggression. What if there were active *coordination*? In a merely opportunistic aggression scenario, our various adversaries would implement military plans that had presumably been prepared independently, each according to its own logics. Even worse than that, however, would be a scenario in which our adversaries implement military plans that have been deliberately *coordinated*, and do this in a *synchronized* way and with capabilities deliberately chosen in order to present us with the most horrendous challenge possible. That, needless to say, would be a very great threat indeed, and Trachtenberg is clearly right that we are today "ill-prepared to prosecute a two-war scenario, especially one involving Sino-Russian collaboration."¹³ Things would be even worse with "three-bad guy" or "four-bad guy" scenarios. We've got a lot of work to do.

The Challenge to American Nuclear Weapons Posture

Not incidentally, I'll also add—and this is my fourth warning—this *cauchemar des coalitions* also puts paid to some of the more persistent shibboleths of post-Cold War U.S. nuclear weapons policy. For decades, since the beginning of the post-Cold War era, U.S. defense planners have relied upon our country's unparalleled conventional military prowess as our first and best answer to adversary aggression, and president after president has promised to "reduce reliance upon nuclear weapons."

The possibility of opportunistic aggression by members of the Dark Quad, however—let alone that of coordinated aggression—suggests the conceptual bankruptcy of this longstanding ambition by signaling the possibility that even our vaunted conventional strength might be unequal to the operational demands of multi-theater conflict against the Dark Quad.

Already, the coercive nuclear threats Russia has been making over Ukraine, grounded in the Kremlin's huge superiority over NATO in lower-yield, theater-range nuclear delivery systems, have made clear our need to restore some loosely analogous capability of our own. This is why we in the Trump Administration developed the lower-yield W76-2 nuclear warhead and began to build the Submarine Launched Cruise Missile-Nuclear (SLCM-N), and it's why Congress has very sensibly prevented the Biden-Harris Administration from foolishly canceling the latter program. And it may well be—especially as China follows

¹² David J. Trachtenberg, "How the Lack of a 'Two-War Strategy' Erodes Extended Deterrence and Assurance, *Information Series*, No. 590 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, June 17, 2024), available at <https://nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/IS-590.pdf>.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Putin's footsteps in developing ways to use its rapidly-expanding arsenal as an "offensive nuclear umbrella" under which to conduct regional aggression¹⁴—that even *these* U.S. plans are not enough to restore deterrent stability.

But that's a *nuclear*-centric threat. The Dark Quad "nightmare of coalitions" also raises the threat that—for the first time in a *long* while—the United States may be unable to rely purely upon its conventional military power even vis-à-vis *conventional* threats. We may not necessarily be there quite yet, but the day may be coming in which we might need theater nuclear weaponry to make up for potential conventional overmatch by a Dark Quad coalition.

Despite this, Biden-Harris Administration officials continue to mouth shopworn platitudes about our aim of "reducing reliance upon nuclear weapons." Not to put too fine a point on it, but such statements are at this point, tragically, dangerous nonsense.

We saw some of this as recently as last month [June 2024], when National Security Council (NSC) Senior Director Pranay Vaddi told the Arms Control Association that the Biden Administration remains "committed to seeking ... a world without nuclear weapons" and to "reducing the global salience of nuclear weapons."¹⁵ His speech made headlines for his comment that if other powers are "unwilling to follow" our lead in reducing reliance upon nuclear weapons—and they "instead take steps to increase the salience of nuclear weapons—we will have no choice but to adjust our posture and capabilities to preserve deterrence and stability." We "may reach a point in the coming years," he said, "where an increase from current deployed numbers is required."¹⁶

Now, Pranay is a friend whom I've known for years from his previous service working on arms control issues as a career official at the State Department, and I like him personally. I also appreciate the importance of him giving notice to the Arms Control Association that the disarmament-focused framework around which they have constructed their conceptual universe is falling down around their collective ears.

Yet you may have noted Pranay's careful conditionalities and his effort still to distance the Biden Administration from the real point. He said that "*if*" our adversaries don't follow our lead, we "*may*" at some point need more nuclear weapons. But what he's carefully *not* saying is what is, in fact, unfortunately all too true. Namely: (a) we've been trying that for many years, and our adversaries *have not* followed our lead in reducing reliance upon nuclear weapons; (b) our effort to "lead" a path toward disarmament has been at best wildly unsuccessful and perhaps even counterproductive; and (c) if we are to restore deterrent stability, we need—not "in the coming years," but in fact *now*—more nuclear capabilities than we presently have.

¹⁴ Christopher A. Ford, "Offensive Nuclear Umbrellas and the Modern Challenge of Strategic Thinking," February 11, 2016, available at <https://www.newparadigmsforum.com/p2007>.

¹⁵ Remarks from Pranay Vaddi, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Arms Control, Disarmament, and Nonproliferation at the National Security Council, "Adapting the U.S. Approach to Arms Control and Nonproliferation to a New Era," Arms Control Association, June 7, 2024, available at <https://www.armscontrol.org/2024AnnualMeeting/Pranay-Vaddi-remarks>.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

These truths have, alas, been apparent for some while. Indeed, when I myself had Pranay's current role in the Trump Administration NSC in 2017, I spoke to a nuclear disarmament group called the Ploughshares Foundation to roll out the findings of an internal NSC review of U.S. disarmament policy I had led, which concluded that the United States' post-Cold War approach to disarmament had not produced the results it intended, that it had "run out of steam," and that new thinking was therefore necessary.¹⁷ All that is even more true today, and the advent of the Dark Quad is simply driving this point home with painful acuteness.

I desperately wish this weren't the case, but putting our heads in the sand about this during an election year is no way to meet the challenges with which our adversaries confront us.

Ilan Berman

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Today, we are witnessing growing coordination among Russia, China, Iran and North Korea in what some officials have termed to be an "axis of chaos."

This alignment is visible on the political front, including in the context of disinformation. In recent years, and in particular during the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw significant coordination between Moscow, Tehran and Beijing on anti-Western narratives—so much so that researchers from the Washington Institute of Near East Policy termed it to be an "axis of disinformation." Coordination can also be seen in the military domain, with increasingly frequent joint or trilateral exercises representing growing coordination of defense postures and strategic objectives on the part of the Kremlin, the Islamic Republic, and the People's Republic of China (PRC). And China, Iran and North Korea have all emerged as significant contributors to Russia's ongoing war on Ukraine.

The participation of Iran's clerical regime in this burgeoning axis is informed by a number of concrete considerations. A year ago, the Islamic Republic was grappling with three levels of crisis. At home, the regime was facing a growing challenge to its legitimacy as a result of the "women, life, freedom" movement that emerged after the September 2022 death of Kurdish-Iranian activist Mahsa Amini. In the region, Iran found itself marginalized amid Israel's growing ties to the Arab Gulf states—and the prospect of still more to come. And internationally, there was a growing consensus that Iran's increasingly mature nuclear program needed to be dealt with resolutely, including potentially through direct military action.

Today, the Iranian regime's strategic position has improved significantly, thanks to the brutal terror campaign carried out by its Palestinian proxy Hamas against Israel on Oct. 7th,

¹⁷ Christopher A. Ford, "NPT Wisdom for a New Disarmament Discourse," October 28, 2017, available at <https://www.newparadigmsforum.com/p2041>.

as well as to a timid administration in Washington that has taken great pains to avoid regional conflict at all costs. Nevertheless, as a result of its past political and economic difficulties, the Islamic Republic has sought the assistance and support of other rogues.

- With China, it concluded a massive \$400 billion, quarter century framework deal back in 2021 as a means of mitigating the economic pressure of Trump-era economic sanctions;
- With Russia, it has forged a new strategic balance, becoming an indispensable supplier of drones and military materiel for Moscow's ongoing war effort against Ukraine; and
- With North Korea, it has collaborated for years on the development of strategic systems. While a significant amount is known about this cooperative work on ballistic missiles, there are also telltale signs that Iran has benefited from North Korean assistance to its nuclear program as well.

This convergence creates a new, and daunting, challenge for the United States. For the first time in its history, America is facing not one but three former empires seeking to recreate their respective spheres of influence. Successfully confronting the resulting union requires the United States to think differently not only about the requirements of deterrence and defense. Policymakers in Washington also need to focus on competitive strategies by which the United States can work to pry apart this new anti-American partnership.

Joseph DeTrani

Joseph DeTrani is former Special Envoy for the Six Party Talks with North Korea and Special Adviser to the Director of National Intelligence. He also served in the Central Intelligence Agency and was Director of the National Counter Proliferation Center.

The Axis of Authoritarian States—Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea—has developed into a formidable alliance of autocracies/dictatorships that have two things in common: repressive regimes that threaten their neighbors. Witness Russia's invasion of Ukraine, China's actions in the South China Sea, Iran's support to Hamas and other proxies, and North Korea's conventional and nuclear threats to South Korea.

Unfortunately, this new Quad has generated greater interest in international organizations like the BRICS—Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)—China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and Belarus, with Afghanistan and Mongolia as Observer States and dialogue partners with fifteen countries. Some in the Global South—developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania—seem to be more attracted to Russia and China and their authoritarian forms of governance.

Indeed, it was the United States that defeated Nazism and ended the Second World War; the United States that established the Marshall Plan to rebuild a devastated Europe after World War II; the United States that normalized relations with China and aided in its economic development; and the United States that defeated the Soviet Union that led to its implosion in 1991; and currently it is the United States that is providing leadership and support to Ukraine in its war of resistance against a Russian war of aggression.

The question, then, is why is this new Quad more confident and aggressive and viewed favorably by a growing number of nations?

The short answer: U.S. policy toward the countries comprising the New Quad has been weak and inconsistent. Russia, China, Iran and North Korea are now more confident and determined in their pursuits, and aligned against the United States. Let's briefly look at each of these countries.

Russia

Literally got away with its invasion of Georgia in 2008, while ensuring Georgia does not join NATO. Russia also got away with its invasion and occupation of Ukraine's Crimea in 2014. And once knowing Putin was planning an invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the United States and NATO were unable to deter Russia from invading.

Going back a few years: Russia's September 2015 military support to the Assad regime in Syria, after Assad used chemical weapons (the Intelligence Community in June 2013 said, with high confidence, that Assad had used chemical weapons against his own people), defying a red line Assad was told not to cross by the Obama Administration. Assad crossed the red line with no meaningful consequences. Indeed, Russia continues to provide military support to the Assad government.

Most strikingly, Vladimir Putin's June 19, 2024, meeting in North Korea with Kim Jong Un and the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership between North Korea and Russia, with North Korea providing artillery shells and ballistic missiles for Russia's war in Ukraine, while Russia is likely to provide North Korea with nuclear, missile, satellite and conventional weapons assistance. This, despite 30 years of U.S. negotiations with North Korea.

In short, the United States has not deterred a revanchist Russian Federation. Rather, an emboldened Russia is a threat to peace and stability throughout Eurasia.

Iran

The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was meant to be transformative—changing Iran's domestic and international behavior, moderating the domestic excesses of a theocracy that uses the IRGC and its proxies— Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis—to foment dissension throughout the Middle East, with the goal of eventually destroying Israel.

The JCPOA was not transformational. It did, however, provide Iran with billions of dollars, the lifting of sanctions, and unfreezing of a significant amount of money held abroad due to their terrorist activities. Despite the JCPOA, Iran persisted with its ballistic missile programs and continues to be a “threshold” nuclear weapons state, initially enriching uranium at the 20 percent purity level and now at the 60 percent purity level, according to the IAEA. And according to the IAEA, Iran continues to deny IAEA monitors access to suspected nuclear weapons sites.

North Korea

After 30 years of negotiations with North Korea, and hearing from Kim il-Sung, Kim Jong il and now Kim Jong Un that North Korea wants normal relations with the United States, albeit while accepting them as a nuclear weapons state, as we did with Pakistan, North Korea is now aligned with a revanchist Russian Federation and providing artillery shells and ballistic missiles to Russia for their war of aggression in Ukraine. In return, North Korea most likely will receive sophisticated nuclear, missile, satellite, and conventional weapons assistance from Russia. This new relationship with Russia emboldens North Korea and could lead to greater instability on the Korean Peninsula with spill over instability in Northeast Asia.

A U.S. policy of “strategic patience” has been an abject failure. North Korea has developed an impressive nuclear weapons arsenal and the ballistic missiles to deliver them, to include the Hwasong-18, a solid fuel ICBM capable of targeting the entire United States. This, with North Korea’s new first use of nuclear weapons policy and codifying a nuclear doctrine of the preemptive use of nuclear weapons.

In short, North Korea, during the last three and one-half years, has evolved from a country seeking normal relations with the United States to an ally of a revanchist Russian Federation. And our policy of “containment and deterrence” toward North Korea failed. They are not contained and deterred from building more nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

China

It was the United States that Deng Xiaoping, when he took over from Mao and Hua Guofeng in 1978, looked to for economic development assistance. And the United States did not disappoint, providing billions in foreign direct investments, with hundreds of thousands of Chinese students attending U.S. universities and colleges; Most-Favored-Nation status for China was granted and the United States got China into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. This, while working with China to defeat the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and to monitor their strategic nuclear forces. Indeed, in 1969 the Soviet Union was prepared to use their nuclear weapons to destroy China’s nuclear infrastructure.

Xi Jinping threw out the Deng Xiaoping playbook -- bide your time, hide your strength and embrace collective leadership—with an assertive foreign policy in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait and enshrined himself as a dictator for life.

In February 2022, Xi met with Vladimir Putin, before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and spoke of a "no limits" partnership with Russia.

In short, the perception of U.S. weakness and policy mistakes contributed to the establishment of this New Quad.



LITERATURE REVIEW

Rebecca L. Heinrichs, *Duty to Deter: American Nuclear Deterrence and the Just War Doctrine* (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, 2024), 141 pages.

There is a seemingly endless supply of books and articles on the subject of nuclear arms and deterrence. Only a fraction of these reflect expertise in the subject areas—which is why the public canon on nuclear deterrence is a decidedly mixed bag. This is particularly true of the episodic public debates about the morality of nuclear deterrence and weapons.

Commentaries on the morality of nuclear deterrence by apparently comparable learned experts often confidently reach wholly contrary conclusions. Where is one to turn when authoritative voices reach contrary conclusions without any apparent uncertainty? The best that one can do is carefully work through the competing texts and logic and try to distinguish between that which is coherent and consistent with available evidence, and that which is activist hype or political agitprop, which may unknowingly be repeated by the unsuspecting novice.

In this text, *Duty to Deter*, Dr. Rebecca Heinrichs takes on the herculean task of examining, in a transparent and scholarly way, the moral dimensions of nuclear weapons and deterrence policy. Doing so credibly requires a fluent understanding of both moral analysis and nuclear deterrence analysis and policy—a diverse expertise that is exceedingly rare. It is an understatement to note that commentators on this arcane subject, at every level, typically appear to have a superficial familiarity with either moral analysis or deterrence policy, or both—which is one of the reasons the public canon on the subject is so uneven.

To the reader's great benefit, Dr. Heinrichs has spent years focusing on both moral analysis and nuclear deterrence policy. She brings these diverse areas of expertise to her analysis and has successfully accomplished that which, literally, only a handful of scholars has accomplished in the past almost half century—an analysis that reflects fluency in both moral analysis and nuclear deterrence policy.

Using the centuries-old Just War Doctrine and more recent Law of Armed Conflict as the moral and legal frameworks for discussion, Dr. Heinrichs has rigorously and unflinchingly examined the morality of nuclear deterrence, not in a contextual vacuum, but in full recognition of the harsh realities of international relations. The result is a uniquely valuable contemporary assessment for a new generation of policy makers and operators that applies the Just War Doctrine and legal principles to current questions of nuclear deterrence and possible employment options.

The historical backdrop for Dr. Heinrichs' study is important to understanding its value. During the 1980s, there was a flowering of analyses and commentary in the West on this subject, including by numerous church-based authors and institutions. This flowering received considerable attention but demonstrated decidedly mixed levels of expertise on the primary subjects. The majority of these works reached one of two conclusions: 1) neither the possession nor employment of nuclear weapons can be deemed moral, and correspondingly, policies of nuclear deterrence must be rejected, or; 2) the possession of nuclear weapons *for deterrence purposes* may be morally acceptable pending their



elimination under global surveillance and supervision, but *not* the employment of nuclear weapons. Two prominent Christian writers at the time went so far as to describe analysis advancing nuclear deterrence as “Satanic doublethink”¹—the strongest possible denunciation.

In contrast, a distinct minority of these 1980s analyses concluded that the possession of nuclear weapons for deterrence purposes is a moral and strategic requirement for the U.S. government—compatible with the Just War Doctrine—as are some prospective employment options in the event deterrence fails.

The rejection of nuclear deterrence as inherently immoral was wholly contrary to long-standing U.S. nuclear policies intended to deter war with the Soviet Union. When 1980s studies by church-based institutions reached this conclusion, the Reagan Administration took note for fear of the possible departure of pious professionals from U.S. efforts to sustain nuclear deterrence against the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, formal entry into this public debate by the Reagan Administration was limited. Instead, open argument against the moral rejection of nuclear deterrence fell to a small number of prominent scholars of the time, including Colin Gray, Herman Kahn, William O’Brien, and Albert Wohlstetter.

With the close of the Reagan Administration, vogueish moral criticism of U.S. nuclear deterrence policy subsided. And, less than a decade later, the subject largely disappeared altogether from public discussion with the end of the Cold War and the widespread expectation of a cooperative “new world order” in which nuclear weapons and deterrence would be relics of the past.

The decades-long, post-Cold War quiet on the subject came to an end in 2017 with the United Nations’ Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). A coalition of activist organizations promoting the TPNW, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), typically expressed emotive, moral outrage against nuclear weapons and deterrence rather than analytical arguments. This advocacy on behalf of the TPNW was, and typically remains, narrowly focused on the risks of nuclear deterrence and, on that basis, declares it to be inherently immoral.

Missing from this advocacy is any apparent acknowledgement of the realities of international threats and the risks associated with an absence of nuclear deterrence—risks illustrated during the first half of the 20th Century by the 80-100 million deaths from undeterred great power wars. In 2017, the Nobel Prize Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to ICAN for its lobbying on behalf of the TPNW that is unburdened by recognition of the need to deter increasingly severe nuclear threats.

Several geopolitical developments have roughly coincided with this ICAN advocacy and contributed to the revival of interest in the moral and legal analysis of nuclear deterrence. Russia, intent on recovering the power position of the collapsed Soviet Union, has expanded its nuclear arsenal and increasingly engaged in reckless, explicit nuclear threats, as has North Korea. China too is expanding its nuclear capabilities and pursuing a manifestly aggressive

¹ Ronald Sider and Richard Taylor, *Nuclear Holocaust & Christian Hope* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1982), p. 69.

foreign policy in the Indo-Pacific area. Initially slow to move in the direction of renewed nuclear capabilities, the United States established a program to rebuild its aged nuclear arsenal. In this darkening international context, the public debate about morality and nuclear deterrence has returned.

It is in this political context that Dr. Heinrichs' new contribution to the discussion of morality and nuclear deterrence has such meaning and value. Indeed, she rightly emphasizes that both moral and strategic analyses of nuclear weapons cannot be done adequately in a political vacuum. An understanding of the international threat context and the stakes at risk is essential: If there were no grave threats to be deterred confronting the United States and allies, it would be a simple matter to conclude that policies of nuclear deterrence provide no protection and instead entail only deadly risk—and therefore cannot be morally condoned. But, as Dr. Heinrichs explains, such international amity is not the reality, the current threat context is particularly harsh, and nuclear deterrence provides unique value to prevent war.

While acknowledging the risks of nuclear deterrence, Dr. Heinrichs meticulously takes the reader through a moral and strategic analysis that reaches a conclusion that is anathema to the secular activism in favor of the TPNW and contrary to much of the church-based analysis clothed in the Just War Doctrine: Policies of nuclear deterrence can be deemed strategically essential and fashioned to meet the strict demands of the Just War Doctrine regarding *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, i.e., the decision to use force and its actual employment. The entire artifice of the nuclear disarmament campaign is built on the arguments that nuclear weapons and deterrence are inherently immoral and harmful; Dr. Heinrichs' careful analysis persuasively concludes that sustaining nuclear deterrence not only can be moral, but is Washington's sacred duty, and that U.S. nuclear policy has been moving in the direction demanded by the Just War Doctrine and legal principles for decades.

This conclusion is profoundly counter to most of the church-based and secular commentary on the subject—commentary that typically refuses to acknowledge the manifest dangers absent nuclear deterrence in the real world. The result of Dr. Heinrichs' timely analysis is a valuable and near unique text that is carefully reasoned, scholarly and readable, and directly pertinent to contemporary questions of nuclear weapons policy.

Duty to Deter truly is a must read for anyone interested in this critical subject, but particularly so for those in government and uniform with responsibility for U.S. deterrence policy and strategy. As Dr. Heinrichs concludes, those working to help sustain U.S. nuclear deterrence strategies and capabilities can do so confident that they are contributing to an undertaking that is both moral and a fundamental responsibility of government. *Duty to Deter* also is essential reading for members of the clergy and laypersons seeking a scholarly analysis informed by the needed expertise for such a study, and by recognition of both the risks of nuclear deterrence and its value given the harsh realities of international relations.

Reviewed by Keith B. Payne
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Ilan Berman, *Challenging Moscow's Message* (Washington, D.C.: American Foreign Policy Council, 2024), 107 pages.

In *Challenging Moscow's Message*, Ilan Berman offers a useful short primer on the basics of Russia's influence operations and discusses the European Union's (EU's), Czech, Polish, Latvian, Estonian, Lithuanian, Swedish, and Finnish steps to counter Moscow's narratives. Lastly, the author discusses best practices and recommends steps that the United States can take to help counter Russia's disinformation efforts.

Using information to manipulate perceptions, and ideally cause states to voluntarily choose courses of actions beneficial to Russia, has been Russia's long-standing *modus operandi*. The method was originally necessitated by the Soviet Union's, and later Russia's, relative lack of economic and technological capabilities, which makes the prospective results of a head-on-head clash with the West unfavorable to Russia. Cheap social media make these techniques yet more potent and disruptive.

The EU's and various states' efforts to counter Russia's activities that the report chronicles are generally limited in scope, brittle, and underfunded, particularly compared to massive resources that Russia (and its friends) has been pouring into disinformation. Pro-active measures and using the same techniques against Russia in an offensive manner are barely discussed at all (in the book or in the counter-disinformation establishment), yet such activities ought to be an integral part of the West's response and as robust and comprehensive as they were during the Cold War. The case studies are rather short and provide introductory material relevant for the EU's and select countries' efforts to counter Russia's activities. They sometimes miss important context, for example, that the Czech Republic serves as a trial state for Russia's disinformation operations (to see whether the message would work in other states) or that Russia has to be extremely careful to cover its tracks in Poland, where any open affiliation with Russia compromises the disinformation efforts before they even begin.

There are significant differences between the examined countries and the United States potentially complicating efforts to replicate the more successful of their efforts in the United States. For example, the largest examined country, Poland, is a country of 38 million. Five of the analyzed countries used to be a part of the Warsaw Pact and possess good understanding of Russia's strategic culture, objectives, activities, and techniques. All of them share a societal consensus that Russia is a threat that directly challenges their national security interests.

Whole-of-society approaches, for example, would be extremely difficult to implement in the United States, a country that encompasses thousands of different cultures united under one creed. U.S. First Amendment protections (rightfully) limit the degree to which the U.S. Government can regulate the media environment relative to what is permitted on this matter in many European states. Trust in the government, which itself must be competent, is a prerequisite for a more effective government-led fight against disinformation. Polarization is at an all-time high in the United States. Berman highlights the importance of rapid

responses, coordination among different parts of the government (and with civil society and media), resilience in the form of increased media literacy, and professionalization of the field.

Lastly, the report identifies next steps in the fight against Russia's disinformation: regaining experience in Russian information warfare, which has severely degraded since the end of the Cold War; increasing resources dedicated to countering disinformation; encouraging allies, some of which are overly dependent on U.S. funding, to resource their counter-disinformation establishments independently of the United States; and, nurturing Russia's independent media. These would be good initial steps to start to reverse the asymmetry between Russia's success and the West's response. Yet, more would be required to truly counter Russia's activities, including making offensive disinformation a part of a comprehensive strategy to counter its actions.

*Reviewed by Michaela Dodge
National Institute for Public Policy*

James Graham Wilson, *America's Cold Warrior: Paul Nitze and National Security from Roosevelt to Reagan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2024), 306 pp.

In the annals of Cold War history, certain prominent individuals stand out for their unique influence on U.S. national security policy. One of those individuals is Paul H. Nitze. In his book, *America's Cold Warrior: Paul Nitze and National Security from Roosevelt to Reagan*, James Graham Wilson has produced a "political biography" of Nitze, arguing that "No other American in the twentieth century contributed to high policy as much as he did for as long as he did in both Democratic and Republican administrations."

Wilson describes Nitze's personal background and career in the private sector, including his time at Harvard, on Wall Street, and at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), which would later bear his name, as well as his government service from Franklin Delano Roosevelt to Ronald Reagan. He went from Democrat to Republican to Democrat again, and Wilson attributes Nitze's success across administrations to his "[f]inancial and political independence" and his view of himself as a "nonpartisan expert."

Wilson provides robust detail on Nitze's role in influencing the national security bureaucracy. He describes Nitze's views during the Cold War as favoring U.S. strategic superiority over the Soviet Union, and Nitze is perhaps best known as the primary architect of NSC-68, a policy document warning against the massive Soviet nuclear buildup and outlining the U.S. response. Wilson describes the period in the late 1970s when U.S. ICBMs were highly vulnerable to a Soviet first-strike, leaving U.S. leaders with the option of risking societal destruction in retaliation or capitulating, as the "Nitze Scenario," though he does not mention the term "window of vulnerability" commonly used at the time to describe this condition. Nitze was part of the "Team B" alternative assessment of Soviet military spending that led the intelligence community to revise its methodology and increase its estimate of the military burden on Soviet GDP. He was also a central figure in the Committee on the

Present Danger (CPD), a bipartisan group of former officials and national security experts who methodically and successfully helped defeat passage of the second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II), signed in 1979, while calling for a tougher approach toward the Soviet Union.

My work as a defense analyst with CPD introduced me to Nitze and I came to appreciate his intellect and the logic of his arguments against SALT II. Yet, the reader may surmise that Wilson views Nitze's role in helping defeat the treaty uncharitably, as Wilson describes Nitze's most significant contribution to U.S. national security as negotiating arms control agreements, including Nitze's failed 1982 "walk in the woods" initiative that later paved the way for the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. This view is consistent with those who share an affinity for arms control as a stabilizing good, but it is also wildly inconsistent with reality, as the history of arms control is one where the outcomes of agreements reached fell markedly short of the publicly stated expectations of U.S. officials.

Despite the author's apparent belief in the goodness of arms control and his assertion that "SALT II was hardly the abomination that Nitze alleged," Nitze's opposition to SALT II was based on an intellectually sound analysis that correctly identified the fatal flaws in the agreement and the troubling implications of ratifying a treaty that failed to stem the Soviet drive for strategic superiority. In this, Nitze and his CPD colleagues were on the right side of history.

Wilson also recounts Nitze's role in developing what came to be known as the "Nitze Criteria" for strategic defenses—a formula that some supporters of the Reagan Administration's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) characterized as an attempt to undermine, if not kill, Reagan's desire for a comprehensive missile defense system that could defend the homeland from Soviet missile attack. The "Nitze Criteria" stated that any U.S. missile defense system must be effective, survivable, and "cost-effective at the margin," i.e., so cheap to add defensive interceptors that the Soviets would have no incentive to add offensive missiles to overwhelm them. Yet, the focus on "cost-effectiveness at the margin" has repeatedly been used by some critics as a cudgel to argue against missile defense by asserting that the cost of defending against missile attack is greater than the cost of building offensive missiles to saturate the defense. These critics, however, ignore the distinction between cost and value. Indeed, the cost of rebuilding a city in the event of deterrence failure would far exceed the cost of adding defensive capabilities intended to prevent such a catastrophe in the first place. In this regard, the value of a missile defense system that prevents such a disastrous outcome has a value that far exceeds its cost.

Wilson recounts some additional positions Nitze advocated as he worked to achieve arms control agreements with the Soviet Union, including suggesting SDI could be scaled back and proposing to include British and French nuclear forces in a follow-on strategic arms treaty. Both suggestions met with criticism from more hawkish analysts. As Wilson notes, "Paul Nitze never stopped trying to get a strategic arms agreement," and he writes that the subsequent 1991 START I agreement "was based on the framework that Nitze" and other experts had developed years earlier.

Later in his career, Nitze argued for the elimination of nuclear weapons, supported ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), opposed NATO enlargement, and viewed climate change as the most significant post-Cold War national security threat. Wilson conveys that Nitze both “opposed limited nuclear war” and “total nuclear war.” Of course, I have yet to meet anyone who favored either. The debate has never been about who favors or opposes nuclear war, but rather what is the best way to prevent it.

The book provides rich detail on Nitze’s life, the evolution of his stature in government, and the ascendancy of his political views within multiple administrations. Despite Nitze’s strong differences with the Carter Administration, Wilson writes that he was a “formidable political force” and was “impossible to ignore.” Yet, the reader is left with a sense that Wilson views Nitze’s concerns over Soviet military superiority as overblown. “Nitze, as so often, painted a grim picture,” Wilson writes. Indeed, Wilson asserts that Nitze’s concerns about the Soviet leadership under Mikhail Gorbachev “leveraging its strategic advantage” did not materialize and “negated his entire theory of nuclear weapons and risk taking.”

In addition, Wilson’s portrayal of Nitze suggests that many of his positions were based on reactions to others’ criticisms, perceived slights, and resentments. For example, he implies that Nitze “bitterly attacked his onetime friend, Paul Warnke,” after President Carter nominated Warnke instead of him to lead the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and to be chief negotiator for SALT II. He also states that Nitze “resented that policy advisors within the Bush administration failed to consult him.”

Wilson contends that Nitze’s career “inspired those figures who had served in government and were attempting to shift the terms of national security debates while carving out roles for themselves in future presidential administrations.” While asserting that Nitze was “both correct and wrong about many things,” Wilson appears to believe that Nitze’s success was due, at least in part, to the advantages of race, gender, and social status. He attributes Nitze’s career and professional longevity to his “status as a white male born to privilege,” arguing that more people should consider following Nitze’s path in helping formulate U.S. national security policy, “especially people who did not come from the same elite background as he did.” Notwithstanding contemporary debates over “diversity, equity, and inclusion” in government, there is no disputing that Nitze’s intellect was formidable and his accomplishments in the national security realm substantial.

Whatever one thinks of Paul Nitze, *America’s Cold Warrior: Paul Nitze and National Security from Roosevelt to Reagan*, is well worth reading. No author is completely objective in their portrayal of historical figures and the policies they advocated, and Wilson’s book is no exception. Nevertheless, it is extensively documented, provides significant historical data, and tells a fascinating story.

*Reviewed by David J. Trachtenberg
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Aaron Bateman, *Weapons in Space: Technology, Politics, and the Rise and Fall of the Strategic Defense Initiative* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2024), 336 pages.

President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) was one of the most controversial decisions in U.S. Cold War history, in no small part because the assumptions behind it and its implications touched nearly every facet of defense policy: nuclear strategy, military operations, research and technology, and alliances to name a few. It is no small feat, therefore, that Aaron Bateman, an assistant professor at George Washington University, has written a dispassionate, comprehensive, and insightful study of the subject.

Indeed, Bateman evinces no ideological bias for or against SDI, a fact that sent at least one reviewer into near apoplexy—but which this reviewer found refreshing.² One hesitates to attempt summarizing such a vast project on such a vast subject, but in essence Bateman argues that SDI cannot be analyzed in a vacuum because it was part of a far broader U.S. political and military strategy that utilized, and even depended upon, space as a warfighting domain. The highly secretive nature of U.S. activities in space, combined with the cutting-edge technology deployed there, meant that historians have either overlooked or not been able to pierce the classification veil until recently—making Bateman's work highly valuable as the broader context around SDI becomes clearer.

Bateman begins his book in the decades before President Reagan's 1983 announcement of SDI and provides succinct summaries of the Outer Space Treaty, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and other key Cold War efforts aimed at controlling state behavior in space, among other measures. One of the stated purposes of Bateman's work is to demonstrate that SDI, and indeed many other programs, were the products of a host of factors, not just narrow military applications. They were often shaped by the international agreements mentioned above, plus the personalities of their supporters, political relationships, economic considerations, and diplomatic concerns. SDI, as the author reminds the reader often, was not just one program aimed at one problem, but rather a set of efforts in multiple domains with different goals, timelines, and political sensitivities.

Bateman argues convincingly that President Reagan viewed SDI as a vehicle for both competition and cooperation with the Soviet Union, an endeavor that appeared contradictory at times, but one that he believed would ultimately advance U.S. national interests. Indeed, President Reagan issued no fewer than six different national security decision directives (NSDDs) over his eight years that addressed the purposes behind SDI and how U.S. officials should discuss those purposes with various constituencies. Reagan Administration officials did not so much change SDI's goals, *per se*, but added on to them to meet the needs of the moment, both domestically and internationally.

Bateman's work also helpfully traces U.S. decision-making on key military space capabilities and demonstrates they were not driven by a mechanistic "action-reaction"

² Joe Cirincione, "Weapons in Space: Technology, Politics, and the Rise and Fall of the Strategic Defense Initiative," *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 54, No. 6 (July/August 2024), available at <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2024-07/book-reviews/weapons-space-technology-politics-and-rise-and-fall-strategic-defense>.

model that many presume formed the foundation for much of U.S. policy during the Cold War. Instead, much like U.S. decisions on nuclear and other missile defense capabilities, U.S. officials weighed the political, military, and economic tradeoffs in pursuing each space capability in ways that were unique to the American strategic culture and not in lockstep reaction to perceived Soviet actions.

Bateman's work is also useful in busting several longstanding myths surrounding SDI, such as: that the scientist Edward Teller was almost solely responsible for encouraging President Reagan's pursuit of missile defense; that most scientists at the time were dismissive about the prospects of space-based defense; and, that the majority of the costs associated with SDI were spent on exotic and never fielded interceptors.

Among the more interesting chapters in Bateman's work are those on allied reactions to and support of SDI. When examining the various sub-projects of SDI that were undoubtedly primarily tasked with enabling a capable weapon system, it is easy to focus almost exclusively on the military and political dimensions, but Bateman correctly points the reader toward a broader aperture that includes economic and diplomatic considerations. Some U.S. allied leaderships were in principle against upending the strategic orthodoxy of the day, or even appearing to question it, where mutual vulnerability claimed a near immutable place in nuclear strategy. But, in practice, they weighed these military / strategic considerations against the prospective economic and diplomatic benefits that might accrue from cooperating with the United States—and most chose open, if relatively muted, cooperation.

Bateman carries the narrative from the transition to "Brilliant Eyes" and "Brilliant Pebbles" from President Reagan to President Bush, and finally to these programs' demise in President Clinton's Administration. Although Bateman did not seemingly set out to write a "myth-busting" book about SDI, his evident commitment to a "just the facts" approach on a polarized subject nevertheless busts several more myths beyond the ones cited above, including revelations that DoD and allied officials believed there were no "showstoppers" in their assessments about the general technological feasibility of kinetic space-based interceptors, and that much of SDI's investments were in foundational intercept-enabling technology, not just "exotic" interceptors.

One element of the SDI story that Bateman does not address as much as might have been useful are what might be termed "SDI alarmists." Bateman, for good and justifiable reasons, spends a few pages on "SDI enthusiasts" as a driving force behind Reagan's thinking, both pre- and post-SDI announcement. The greatest hopes of the most enthusiastic supporters did not come to pass, clearly, but it would have been nice to include a balanced discussion on how the worst of the alarmists' predictions, specifically on the effect SDI would have on arms control, did not come to pass either.³

Bateman should be commended for his archival research, especially in the under-explored areas of internal Reagan Administration deliberations and allied reactions to SDI. *Weapons in Space* will serve as a useful case study in a number of subject areas and, given

³ See, for instance, Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1985), pp. 1026-1028.

the apparent renaissance in interest in homeland missile defenses in the United States, will offer valuable lessons for researchers and policymakers for years to come.

*Reviewed by Matthew R. Costlow
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Matthew Kroenig and Dan Negrea, *We Win, They Lose: Republican Foreign Policy & the New Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Republic Book Publishers, 2024), 220 pp.

Kroenig and Negrea's Plan for Winning the New Cold War*

These are turbulent times for the United States. Amidst Russia starting the largest land war in Europe since World War II, China's revanchism buttressed by massive nuclear and conventional modernization, and challenges from increasingly-capable actors like Iran and North Korea, the United States is sorely in need of an effective strategy to preserve the world order it has so painstakingly built and maintained over the past 80 years. The endpoint of American foreign policy is clear: we win, they lose. Yet, the roadmap to getting there remains a serious matter of debate. Matthew Kroenig and Dan Negrea, not ones to shy away from a challenge, offer organizing principles for a better U.S. foreign policy in their aptly-titled book, *We Win, They Lose: Republican Foreign Policy & the New Cold War*.

In seeking to build a strategy with the greatest chance of success in the contemporary threat environment, the authors analyze the foreign and defense policies of several past administrations, Republican and Democrat. Synthesizing these into a forward-looking approach, the authors offer an outline of a Republican foreign policy inspired by what worked well under Reagan and Trump. The authors support their case with sound analysis examining why progressive foreign policy approaches lead America to more peril, not less, providing practical illustrations from Biden's tenure. These cautionary lessons include lacking a coherent strategy and consistency in statements and actions in countering China's belligerence; the abysmal execution of the withdrawal from Afghanistan; failure to sustain pressure on Iran; choosing not to secure U.S. energy independence; and botching efforts to deter Russia in Ukraine.

In doing so, Kroenig and Negrea show that the Republicans are much less divided on foreign and defense issues than would seem so at first glance. Nevertheless, one can hardly shake the perception that serious divisions within the party do exist, and that implementing a consensus in practice will be difficult. Furthermore, if one can be achieved, little support can be expected from the Democratic Party with a very different concept of what best serves U.S. foreign and defense policy interests.

* This book review first appeared online on Providence's web site (<https://providencemag.com/>). The author is grateful for the permission to republish the piece here.

The book starts, however, with the more foundational question of why the United States needs a foreign policy at all. The authors go on to outline the broad areas where there has been bipartisan consensus, such as the need to defend the U.S. homeland; preventing a hostile power from dominating an important geopolitical region; maintaining peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East; stopping proliferation of nuclear weapons; countering anti-American terrorist groups globally; securing the global commons; advancing a free and fair global economic system; and making the world safer for democracy.

Regarding the areas of divergence between the parties, Kroenig and Negrea are incisive, asking what outcomes the distinct approaches produced in the past. “When America is strong, its adversaries will not mess with it. But a weak America invites aggression,” the authors remind us. Republicans generally know America is worth fighting for, that the United States must have the tools to prevail in the fight, and that these tools must be used correctly. In this, they differ from many Democrats, who see the exercise of U.S. power as the source of the problem, rather than a part of a solution. This worldview holds that voluntarily restraining the United States could show goodwill and make the world safer through our example.

Against this background, the authors discuss what is wrong with U.S. foreign and defense policy, particularly the myopathies of Biden’s foreign policy worldview. The authors analyze the connections between the Biden Administration’s suboptimal policies and the negative consequences for the United States and its allies. The authors’ clear critique of the failures of the Biden Administration is particularly welcome given the hesitancy of the foreign policy establishment to criticize Democratic presidents, something Negrea and Kroenig have no qualms about.

Kroenig and Negrea propose an alternative foreign policy inspired by Reagan’s “peace through strength” mantra as well as the sounder parts of Trump’s defense and foreign policy. Some may argue that the authors are too generous in overlooking the more problematic aspects of Trump’s foreign policy. Yet, not every Trump Administration’s decision was wrong and acknowledging as much is a necessary step in building the best strategies to counter contemporary challenges to U.S. interests. The alternative is to be distracted by polemics regarding the consequences of Trump’s behavior while our adversaries continue to gain ground. In this task, they succeed.

The book examines various instruments of state power from economics to American exceptionalism, a welcome addition lacking in the usual treatments of defense and foreign policy. The authors discuss theories of victory with respect to each of the most serious U.S. challengers: China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea, as well as how to successfully address energy and climate challenges, and—an issue of particular importance to the Republican base—border security and immigration.

The book is a useful primer for those interested in the betterment of U.S. foreign policy, but it also demonstrates that, contra perceptions of total discord within the Republican Party and society in general, there are points of consensus upon which future administrations can

build. More importantly, Kroenig and Negrea lay out foreign and defense policy approaches that are most likely to keep America and its allies safe well into the future.

*Reviewed by Michaela Dodge
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DOCUMENTATION

This section brings excerpts from three documents highly relevant for U.S. security and transatlantic relations. The first is testimony of James E. Fanell, CAPT USN (Retired) before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Accountability, in which he provides a cleared-eyed assessment of China's threat, highlights its political warfare against the United States, and discusses the sinister effect of continuous U.S. threat deflation, particularly in the intelligence community. The second document is excerpts from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) 75th anniversary summit declaration. The document affirms the Alliance's commitment to transatlantic relations and Ukraine's security. It discusses Russia's threat to NATO's interests, and China, North Korea, and Iran's complicity given their support for Russia. Third, Sweden's *National Security Strategy*, the first since the country joined NATO, elucidates the Swedish government's national security perceptions and prioritization of resources given these perceptions. Last is the summary of the *2024 Report of the Commission on the National Defense Strategy*. The bipartisan report concludes that the United States must strengthen its capabilities across the spectrum of instruments of national power and warns that the U.S. homeland would be a target in a potential engagement with adversaries, particularly Russia and China.

Document No. 1. Congressional Testimony of James E. Fanell, CAPT USN (Retired) before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Accountability Hearing on "Defending America from the Chinese Communist Party's Political Warfare, Part II" June 26, 2024, Select Excerpts

[...] Over the course of decades the CCP effectively misled our Executive Branch to ignore the PRC as a rising existential threat. In particular, the Department of Defense and the Intelligence Community were deceived by the CCP's skillful use of elite capture, deception, disinformation and propaganda programs. As a result, senior U.S. leaders unilaterally disarmed psychologically, intellectually, and militarily despite clear evidence that PRC had no intent to rise peacefully, and viewed America as its main enemy to be defeated through protracted war. Even worse, our leaders help fund and otherwise enable China's military, economic, and technological advances needed to destroy our military forces in the field and destroy our society and economy. [...]

We are not prepared intellectually, ideologically, organizationally, nor militarily. The extend of the PRC's Political Warfare is so deeply rooted with our government, that it is not clear at this point whether or not we can succeed in saving our nation. [...]



A CAPTURED ELITE'S STRATEGIC MISTAKES

The U.S. finds itself in this situation because of two fundamentally and related grand strategic mistakes.¹ First, we did not identify this threat from the PRC for decades. Second, we neglected to act to defeat it. [...]

The U.S. is now in a new Cold War. The Sino-American security competition is the great struggle of the 21st Century and promises to resolve the dispositive question of the age—whether the world will be free and protected by the U.S. or fall into a totalitarian abyss as sought by the PRC. The answer to this question will impact the lives of every American for generations. Specifically, the question will impact U.S. national security, those of its allies, the continuation of U.S.-led liberal order, and of the definitive political principles in international politics.

This perilous situation need not have happened. Over three decades, the U.S. had ample time to prevent the PRC's rise and to retard its growth, even to support the overthrow of the CCP, but it did not. Those strategic choices must be explained—why did the U.S. assist, not prevent, the rise of its peer challenger? Was it entirely the result of a masterful, protracted Political Warfare campaign by the masters of deception, the CCP?²

THREAT DEFLATION

At its base, this situation was a historically unique case of *threat deflation*—underestimating the threat, year after year.³ This persistent, deliberate *threat deflation* blinded elected officials, policy makers, and much of the American public to the CCP's insidious intent and of China's so-called "peaceful rise". Consequently, our leaders failed to balance against it. In fact, this wishful thinking and willful blindness led the U.S. to become the greatest enabler of China's malignant rise. The failure to honestly address the threat of PRC's malignant rise is the gravest strategic mistake ever made by the U.S., one which today imperils the U.S. homeland, economic prosperity, and national security.

The proclivity of states is to occasionally identify threats accurately, but more frequently states are prone to overestimate them. Thus, *threat deflation* is rare and is understudied. The result is that too few strategists questioned the true nature and intent of the PRC's rise and the consequences for the U.S. Further, threat deflation inhibited the creation of a *defined school of thought* regarding the PRC's rise as there are on other major strategic issues such as, for example, U.S. grand strategy or nuclear deterrence. Faced with the PRC threat, too few

¹ These issues are explored in James E. Fanell and Bradley A. Thayer, *Embracing Communist China: America's Greatest Strategic Failure* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2024).

² Each of these critical questions is addressed in Fanell and Thayer, *Embracing Communist China*.

³ See Fanell and Thayer, *Embracing Communist China*, pp. 2, 58-66.

national security strategists were willing or able to explain how the U.S. arrived at this position and why, decade after decade, America continued to support and fund the PRC's growth or to even to acknowledge that America was even at risk from the PRC which today threatens U.S. national security interests across the globe. Threat deflation also blinded the national security community to the greatest challenge to the U.S. military's ability to defend the country's national interests in a highly competitive security competition since the Soviet Union.

This multi-decade failing implicates the entire U.S. national security community. It reflects the woeful neglect of the PRC threat by presidential administrations, the U.S. intelligence community, centers of professional military education, national security think tanks, and Sinologists. It is also the result of external events like 9/11 and then the Iraq War which resulted in a decades-long involvement in southwest Asia. The military services adapted as ordered to the global war on terror, as did the focus of U.S. strategic thought. But in the process they were derelict in their duties by ignoring, and often abetting, the PRC's rise.

Now the U.S. faces a situation where the PRC is no longer "rising." It has risen—to the point where Beijing's expansionist aggression against Taiwan and other U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific will likely occur soon--within this decade. The period 2020 to 2030 is what I have long called "The Decade of Concern."⁴ In this decade, we will see the most catastrophic results of China's successful Political Warfare campaign and its military trajectory over the past 30 years.⁵

As example, the U.S. now faces new PRC kinetic military capabilities, like supersonic and hypersonic weapons, are now targeting U.S. carrier strike groups, which have insufficient hypersonic defensive capabilities. The strategic terrain has been altered dramatically since the days of unrivaled U.S. military power, where U.S. capabilities provided overwhelming deterrence and warfighting capabilities against its foes. China's massive military buildup combined with its Political Warfare successes across the Pacific Islands nations, Southeast Asia, Africa, and North and South America means that the U.S. now operates in an environment where the relative distribution of power has shifted against the United States.

America is going to be in this environment—a new Cold War—until it either defeats the PRC's totalitarian expansionism or the PRC destroys our country as we know.

⁴ James Fanell, "Now Hear This—The Clock is Ticking in China: The Decade of Concern Has Begun", USNI Proceedings, Vol. 143/10/1,376, October 2017, <<https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2017/october/now-hear-clock-tickingchina-decade-concern-has-begun>>

⁵ James Fanell, "Asia Rising: China's Global Naval Strategy and Expanding Force Structure," Naval War College Review, Vol. 72, No. 1 (Winter 2019), pp. 33-36. Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=7871&context=nwc-review>. Accessed July 14, 2023.

THE THREE REASONS WHY THE U.S. FAILED TO STOP THE PRC'S RISE

The United States underestimated the threat from the PRC for decades. There are three reasons why this occurred.⁶

First, the U.S. national security community failed on a massive level, a failure that deserves the closest investigation by the House Oversight Committee. It was at best derelict in its duties, seemingly oblivious to PRC deception but in some cases clearly co-opted by PRC Intelligence Operatives and Charm Offensives by United Front players. It is useful to recall the context of that era: the end of the Cold War yielded the triumphalism of the “End of History,” and thus caused the ideological and strategic disarmament of the U.S. where democracy and free market economics was triumphant. The U.S. did not perceive the PRC threat due to the dramatic change in the relative distribution of power in the U.S.’s favor due to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Thus the U.S. was perceived to be without a peer threat as the PRC was a minor power economically, militarily and diplomatically. As a result, U.S. national security mindset entered a period of structural threat deflation, where U.S. dominance and minor wars prevented the U.S. national security community from meeting the peer competitive threat of China and the requirements of high intensity warfare.

The firm belief was that modernizing states, including the PRC, were on the path to democratization and free market economics. The elite consensus was that the future would be globalization, while power politics in great power relations was an artefact of the past—a dangerous and unhealthy aspect of great power behavior that they needed at one time but now could be discarded. It was Utopian thinking, of course—fatally flawed now in hindsight but quite fashionable in the 1990s and well beyond.

For more than 30 years there was a lack of leadership from successive administrations as they failed to sustain a focus on peer competitive threats. [...]

The Scarborough Shoal incident in 2012 was a watershed event in PRC’s expansionist strategy, and the Obama administration’s failure of this test of strategic leadership has resulted in the PRC’s current violent attacks against our treaty ally the Republic of the Philippines’ Navy, Coast Guard, and civilian vessels in the West Philippine Sea. When the PRC attempted to seize the shoal in 2012, the U.S. brokered an agreement for both PRC and Philippines to withdraw. As soon as the Philippine vessels withdrew, the PRC reneged on the agreement and swept in to take the shoal. The U.S., in fear as a result of masterful PRC Political Warfare, failed to back the Philippines and hold Beijing accountable. The PRC had established itself as the sole naval power at the shoal, formerly the sovereign territory of the Republic of the Philippines. The PRC’s maritime forces seized the sovereign rights from a U.S. treaty ally—something never done before—without firing a shot.

⁶ The causes are examined in detail in Fanell and Thayer, *Embracing Communist China*.

Even worse, after the Arbitral Decision in 2016 which declared most of the PRC's claims to the South China Sea to be illegal, the Obama Administration pointedly refused to publicly support the Philippines on that decision. [...]

Beijing soon realized that there would be no serious pushback from the Obama administration and that the PRC could continue its expansion in South China Sea. Soon thereafter in early 2013, the world began to witness the PRC's building of seven artificial islands in the Spratly Islands.⁷ Three of the islands each contained a 10,000-foot runway capable of supporting PLA air force bomber, reconnaissance and fighter aircraft and enough pier space for any of the PLAN's aircraft carriers or large-deck amphibious ships. Despite assurances from Xi to Obama in 2014 that the PRC would not militarize the islands, today these are fully militarized bases, three of which are the size and capacity of Pearl Harbor.

Second, avarice and finance trumped strategy and set the perfect environment in which PRC Political Warfare could subvert U.S. national security interests from within.

U.S. business interests and financiers consistently and indefatigably sought economic cooperation with the PRC, treating the Chinese people as the source of cheap physical labor for manufacturing, investment, as well as inexpensive intellectual labor, including for research and development. This facilitated the PRC's rise through the sustainment of Most Favored Nation (MFN) trade status and its admission to the World Trade Organization (WTO). By engaging the PRC, the *Engagement School*, hereafter referred to as the *Pro-CCP school*, asserted, it would become wealthy and in time democratic. In addition, the U.S. welcomed hundreds of thousands of intelligent, serious, and diligent Chinese students to run U.S. and Western scientific labs and numerous academic departments in computer science and engineering, and in the life and natural sciences, especially chemistry, computer science, genetics, mathematics, and physics. By PRC law, each one of these Chinese citizens at U.S. institutions of higher learning must assist in PRC intelligence and Political Warfare operations. In essence, the U.S. willingly and enthusiastically taught and trained its enemy. Business interests and financiers also funded think tanks, including major national security think tanks, media, and universities which, in turn, contributed to a strong bias towards pro-CCP school, and thus the consistent underestimation of the PRC threat. [...]

The consequence was as the PRC became richer it siphoned off a substantial and consistent percentage of this new wealth to increase its military might, technological prowess, diplomatic influence, and Political Warfare capabilities. In addition, this new paradigm yielded a U.S. economy that was dependent upon the PRC for critical manufacturing and goods, including pharmaceuticals, personal protective equipment, and antibiotics. Today the

⁷ For specific details on what the PRC built in the Spratly Islands starting in 2013, see the CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative "China Island Tracker." Available at: <<https://amti.csis.org/island-tracker/china/>>. Accessed August 13, 2023.

PRC is more prosperous, more bellicose, and more determined to supplant the liberal order and the U.S. position in the world.

From a strategic perspective, there is no “Goldilocks” amount of safe trade in high tech with China. Indeed, the right amount is zero.

Third, the enemy of the U.S. was an exceptional strategist, particularly regarding Political Warfare and deception. Political Warfare is not new: it has been the key to winning wars and building empires in what is now the PRC for thousands of years. Notably, though, the PRC advanced a political warfare strategy to promote threat deflation under Deng Xiaoping. Deng profited from studying and improving upon Soviet efforts to penetrate U.S. society as well as learning key lessons from the Soviet Union’s mistakes in the Cold War. [...] For a generation, the PRC masked their intentions and framed their expansion as economic rather than strategic, and an unalloyed good that would benefit the world. It was a masterful political warfare campaign.⁸

WHY THE U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY COMMUNITY FAILED: FOCUS ON THE IC

[...] As such, the failures of the IC were first to identify the PRC as an existential threat—this would have included identifying Deng’s political warfare strategy of threat deflation precisely as a political warfare strategy to obfuscate and conceal the PRC’s vulnerability. Second, the IC did not compel senior national security decision-makers to address the PRC threat by illuminating the pernicious damage engagement policies were causing. At root, the IC aided Deng’s political warfare strategy of threat deflation because the IC had for decades consistently promoted threat deflation via the policy of engagement. The IC never perceived the PRC through the lens of the distribution of power; for many the notion that the PRC would ever become a great power was always viewed through the lens of “decades away.” Then when the PRC’s comprehensive national power had become undeniable even to the most ardent supporter of engagement, the IC chose to promote the CCP-supplied assertion that one must not “provoke” the PRC or else one risks thermonuclear war. [...]

Indeed, the PRC’s military has grown in every respect. The PRC’s nuclear capabilities have grown from a modest force to one that in the past three years, as noted by Admiral Charles Richard, former Commander of U.S. Strategic Command, has had a “strategic breakout.”⁹ The rapid, yet still opaque growth of the PRC’s nuclear arsenal may very well exceed the U.S.’s by

⁸ For a detailed overview of PRC Political Warfare, to include its history, goals, strategies, and organizations, see Kerry K. Gershaneck, *Political Warfare: Strategies for Combating China’s Plan to “Win without Fighting,”* First (2044 Broadway Drive, Quantico, VA 22134: Marine Corps University Press, 2020), https://www.usmcu.edu/Portals/218/PoliticalWarfare_web.pdf, pp. 3-58.

⁹ Charles Richard, former Commander, U.S. Strategic Command, “Virtual Event: A Conversation with Admiral Richard,” Hudson Institute, August 26, 2021. Available at: <<https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.hudson.org/Transcript-%20A%20Conversation%20with%20Admiral%20Richard.pdf>>. Accessed July 10, 2023.

2030, if not sooner. Beijing already possesses more tactical nuclear weapons and theater forces than does the U.S. Its conventional capabilities challenge, if not dominate, the U.S. military today in the Indo-Pacific, at sea, in the air, in the cyber domain, and in space. It utilizes this power to coerce Taiwan and Vietnam, as well as U.S. allies, including Japan, Australia, and the Philippines. Further, Beijing's diplomacy influences nations on every continent and from the Arctic to Antarctic. Its economic influence is ubiquitous, and is prevalent in the U.S. as well, where Silicon Valley keeps close ties to Chinese entities and where Wall Street continues to permit Chinese firms raise capital on U.S. markets and U.S. firms, such as Apple and General Motors, continue to invest in China. Where it is fair to say that today, the PRC's capabilities now match its Olympian ambitions.

As such, the Congress should investigate and demand an explanation of how senior national security officials and the U.S. IC permitted the rise of a peer competitor without forcefully alerting decision-makers and the American people that this was occurring and framing options for the response. [...]

The greatest intelligence failure in U.S. history occurred overtly, year after year, for roughly three decades because the IC failed to understand the malign intentions of the CCP—it simply did not take Communist ideology seriously—and made gross errors based upon benign assumptions of the CCP's strategic goals and objectives.

This is significant today because there are revisionists within the IC and academia who subtly assert that "nobody knew this" or "the Chinese only changed when Xi took over." These assertions are false [...]. In it Triplett gave a clear warning that "the West is about to be unpleasantly surprised by the emergence of a non-democratic military superpower in the world arena, armed with the most advanced nuclear and conventional arms."¹⁰ [...]

Secondly, the IC failed to follow the prime directive for intelligence professionals—knowing where the enemy is today and predicting where they will be tomorrow—out of fear of making a wrong predictive assessment. [...]

Third, and most worrisome, is the IC's adoption of a defensive attitude whenever their analysis and assessments are challenged in the public domain. This very same defensive attitude was prevalent among DC-based intelligence leadership, and their representatives in Hawaii, who spent more time trying to debunk and discredit challenges to IC assessment about the PRC, rather than in objectively assessing whether such challenges may in fact be valid.

¹⁰ William C. Triplett II, "'Inside China's Scary New Military-Industrial Complex,'" *Washington Post*, May 8, 1994. Available at: <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/1994/05/08/inside-chinas-scary-new-military-industrialcomplex/24d132d0-a7aa-453f-bd11-cd87c938ced3/>>. Accessed August 18, 2023.

There are many examples of the suppression of dissenting opinions in the IC as it relates to the PRC, but the most memorable is the issue of whether the PRC would pursue and build an aircraft carrier program. As early as 1992 the IC should have been cognizant of the PRC's stated intent to have an aircraft carrier program, but even as late as 2006, senior members of the intelligence community had made it clear that the PRC would not pursue an aircraft carrier program for decades, if at all. The effect of such messaging was to degrade, dilute and diminish IC collections, research, analysis and ultimately reporting on this critical issue. Now less than 20 years later we know the results of this threat deflation, the PRC has put three aircraft carriers to sea in just over a decade. [...]

The threat from the PRC's political warfare program didn't just affect intelligence assessments about aircraft carriers, but was found to be rooted much deeper. For instance, former Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Mr. Ron Monaperto who plead guilty in 2006 to illegally holding classified documents and to passing "top secret" information to Chinese intelligence officials.¹¹ [...] The revelation of Mr. Montaperto's espionage and influence activities in support of the PRC 18 years ago should have been a wake-up call and ushered in substantive reforms restricting the direct contact between IC analysts and the PRC's Ministry of State Security (MSS), the intelligence arm of the PRC. [...]

Today, as U.S. policy makers assess the speed and sustainability of the PRC's expansion it is therefore useful to look back on previous assessments the IC has made about the PRC's military power. Reasonably, we should expect to find errors and misjudgments when we look back— assessments of the future are hard—but the most notable feature of the IC's China assessments is that their misjudgments have been in the same direction, that is underestimating the PRC, perfectly fitting the definition of systematic error. [...]

WHY THE U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY COMMUNITY FAILED: FOCUS ON THE DOD

[...] Today, the PLA Navy is the largest in the world, as has been concurrently documented, for the first time, in the 2021 annual Defense Department report to Congress on military and security developments involving the PRC.

This advantage is not just in numbers of warships and submarines, but it also includes raw tonnage, where the PLA Navy has commissioned more tonnage than the U.S. Navy for most of the past decade. Add in platforms like the PLA Navy's 12,000-ton Renhai-class cruisers with its 112 vertical launch tubes for over-the-horizon weapons like the 300-kilometer ranged YJ-18 supersonic, anti-ship cruise missile (ASCM), and it is not a stretch to say that the PLA Navy now has achieved qualitative parity, if not superiority in the ASCM arena, with the U.S. Navy.

¹¹ Bill Gertz, "Ex-DIA analyst admits passing secrets to China", *Washington Times*, 23 June 2006, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2006/jun/23/20060623-120347-7268r/>

This compels the question of how it could be that for nearly 30 years that senior uniformed members of the Department of Defense allowed this to happen. While there was a small cadre of Flag and General Officers who were cognizant of the rise of the PRC and the threat from the PLA, they were, as one retired officer noted, “swimming against the tide.” [...]

In September 1994, the New York Times ran an article, again by William Triplett, that effectively expressed concerns members of the U.S. Senate were having regarding continued highlevel PLA visits and engagement with the Pentagon and various elements of the U.S. military. For instance, the report noted that “a group of high-ranking Chinese Army officers have toured American war colleges. As guests of the Pentagon, they are being briefed on the state of the art of U.S. military technology and strategy.” Triplett went on to warn that the “visit is the forerunner of a potentially dangerous program of military cooperation with China that the Clinton Administration has undertaken without informing Congress.”¹² [...]

Another instance was in 2007, when the PLA Fleet Commander Admiral Wu Shengli was given tours of the U.S. Navy’s largest and most important, East Coast base in Norfolk, Virginia, where the then Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Mike Mullen, ensured that Admiral Wu was allowed to visit a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier and even a U.S. nuclear submarine.¹³ Feedback from firsthand observers indicated that for every 100 questions Admiral Wu and his delegation asked during these visits, they received 99 transparent answers from their American hosts. But such transparency was not reciprocated. Whenever a U.S. officer would ask a question of their PLA Navy counterparts, they would be met with obfuscation or just no response.

In terms of why U.S. Navy flag officers would adopt such a profoundly dangerous attitude towards unconstrained and unaccountable engagement with their PLA Navy counterparts or their failure to understand evidence and thus fight for building a Navy that could deter China’s naval expansion and aggression, there are three main reasons.

First is the culture of the flag officer corps, which can be best described as “going along to get along.” [...]

Second is the impact of the pro-CCP school of thought, which argued that engagement with the PRC would normalize their behavior within the existing system of international norms that was created out of the aftermath of World War II and the Cold War. Not only were civilian analysts in the national security system susceptible to this

¹² William C. Triplett II, “Dangerous Embrace,” *New York Times*, September 10, 1994, Available at: <<https://www.nytimes.com/1994/09/10/opinion/dangerous-embrace.html?searchResultPosition=167>>. Accessed July 10, 2023.

¹³ See Fanell and Thayer, *Embracing Communist China*, pp. 102-104.

philosophy of engagement, but stunningly so too has been a generation or more of U.S. Navy admirals.

For example, just six days after the July 12, 2016, ruling by the PCA in the Hague that the PRC had “no possible entitlement” that would have justified China’s environmental destruction, seizure of resources, and military construction within the exclusive economic zone of the Philippines, the then U.S. Navy Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral John Richardson was photographed in Beijing shaking the hand of PLA Navy Chief, Admiral Wu Shengli, the same Admiral that had masterminded the PRC’s maritime revanchism against America’s ally, the Republic of the Philippines in the South China Sea.¹⁴ [...]

Third, and finally, there is the “frog in the pot” syndrome. In addition to the pernicious impact of going along to get along, the CCP has been very skillful in the timing and tempo of their military expansionism. [...]

Hence, if there is conflict with the PRC, it will be on, over, and below the high seas, from Okinawa to Guam to Honolulu, all the way to the West Coast and into the U.S. homeland. This will be a conflict the likes of which the U.S. has not experienced since World War II. [...]

Fundamentally, what is needed is a change of the culture of U.S. flag and general officer corps so that the enemy may be confronted and defeated, not engaged.

The Department of Defense also did not examine its assumptions regarding the PRC threat. There were three major assumptions that hindered the ability to define and respond to the PRC threat. Each had a significant effect and retarded the ability of the U.S. to see the existential threat developing in clear sight.

First, there was an overarching assumption that history was at its end, and great power threats were an artifact of the past. The influence of the “End of History” mindset was considerable and gave rise to the conceit that the U.S. was the acme of political and economic development and thus possessed the right structure to lead the world and cooperate with other states to assist them on the path to history’s end. [...]

Second, there was a bias that the U.S. had the luxury of time to address future problems and existential threats to the U.S. There existed through this time a corrosive assumption that the PRC remains “decades away” from being a threat to our national security community—that mindset exists today. And for decades, there was always a more demanding task or issue to confront than the PRC threat. The PRC threat advanced relentlessly but relatively slowly in relation to the minor war of the day, or the actions taken by Iran or North

¹⁴ “Freedom of Navigation Patrols May End ‘In Disaster’: Chinese Admiral,” *Reuters*, July 18, 2016. Available at: . Accessed August 11, 2023.

Korea, or the humanitarian or other cri[si]ses which invariable demanded immediate attention.

The third assumption was that no one took Communism seriously anymore and that the PRC will be positively transformed through the coterie of engagement policies. [...]

Another set of problems is that analysts became defensive around a certain narrative, such as the PRC's intentions are benign, or U.S. actions are responsible for compelling the PRC's expansion and belligerence. [...]

Presently, there is a constant focus on the daily briefing within the 24-hour cycle of the Department of Defense. As such, there is little time for senior defense officials to think about long-term, strategic issues, no matter how significant. In essence, analysts are on an endless treadmill.

Accordingly, there is value for a strategic team to be appropriately allocated to study national security threats within a longer-term period. For example, stronger connecting tissue between Intelligence and Plans is in order for our OPLANS to be informed by major threats without self-limiting thinking due to budget constraints or the preconceived assumptions already mentioned. [...]

SEVEN RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS THESE PROBLEMS

[...] The first recommendation to recovery is for the U.S. national security community to admit they failed. [...]

Second, American's must understand the existing distribution of power within the U.S. national security community is resistant to withdrawing from the pro-CCP school—their predilection will be to return the rudder of the ship of state to amidships and the course towards engagement with the PRC. [...]

Third, it should also be expected that executing this rudder change within the foreign policy community will take years of consistent effort to reverse—as can already be clearly seen from the sudden resumption of visits to the PRC by senior cabinet level officials from the current administration. Unfortunately, America does not have years to correct course. This Cold War with the PRC is not like the first Cold War because the strategists who built America's power during this fight with the Soviet Union experienced less resistance from the national security community compared to the present. Today, many American national security elites in and outside of the government are more interested in sustaining their involvement with the PRC—and because if this they will more actively fight against measures to confront and challenge Beijing's agenda of global expansionism.

Fourth, yet America's victory over these internal and external forces is only possible if action is taken now. [...]

Fifth, the Intelligence Community needs to create a dynamic "Team B" to address the threat. [...]

Sixth, the U.S. needs to have the same familiarity with the PLA's doctrine and ideology as with Soviet Communism during the Cold War. [...]

Seventh, the U.S. needs to take bold action to target the CCP directly.¹⁵ This requires a multifaceted approach, that will include the rollback the PRC's gains in the South China Sea, and the defeat of the PRC in its attempts at future territorial seizure like the PRC is currently conducting against the Philippines at Second Thomas Shoal. The U.S. and its allies should even be prepared to evict the PLA from facilities they have created in other countries like Djibouti, or are in the process of creating in Ream, Cambodia. Those are important and necessary measures to place Beijing on the strategic backfoot. But the center of gravity that the U.S. must attack is the CCP itself to ensure that the CCP, the Chinese people, and all global audiences know that it is illegitimate and that the U.S., working with the Chinese people and allies, is working to expel it from power. This requires employing all the arrows in the U.S. quiver, including a focus on political warfare that the U.S. did well during much of the Cold War, like the Active Measures Working Group, but has allowed to fall into disrepair in the post-Cold War years.¹⁶

These various tasks must be authorized and synchronized by competent authority in the form of, perhaps, a resurrected U.S. Information Agency. The key is to do it quickly across all levers of national power. The Engager's "it will take years" to fix mindset, while true to a degree, cannot overshadow or retard the impetus to act today. In essence, Americans must recognize that we are truly, for the first time since the Cold War, in an existential fight for our national survival. [...]

¹⁵ Lianchao Han and Bradley A. Thayer, *Understanding the China Threat* (London: Routledge, 2023), pp. 163-186.

¹⁶ Fletcher Schoen and Christopher J. Lamb, "Deception, Disinformation, and Strategic Communications: How One Interagency Group Made a Major Difference", Institute for National Strategic Studies Strategic Perspectives, No. 11, National Defense University Press Washington, D.C. June 2012, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratperspective/inss/Strategic-Perspectives-11.pdf>.

Document No. 2. Washington Summit Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington, D.C., July 10, 2024, Select Excerpts

1. We, the Heads of State and Government of the North Atlantic Alliance, have gathered in Washington to celebrate the 75th anniversary of our Alliance. Forged to preserve peace, NATO remains the strongest Alliance in history. We stand in unity and solidarity in the face of a brutal war of aggression on the European continent and at a critical time for our security. We reaffirm the enduring transatlantic bond between our nations. NATO remains the unique, essential, and indispensable transatlantic forum to consult, coordinate, and act on all matters related to our individual and collective security. NATO is a defensive Alliance. Our commitment to defend one another and every inch of Allied territory at all times, as enshrined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, is iron-clad. We will continue to ensure our collective defence against all threats and from all directions, based on a 360-degree approach, to fulfil NATO's three core tasks of deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security. We are bound together by shared values: individual liberty, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. We adhere to international law and to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and are committed to upholding the rules-based international order.
2. [...] Every nation has the right to choose its own security arrangements. We reaffirm our commitment to NATO's Open Door Policy, in line with Article 10 of the Washington Treaty.
3. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has shattered peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area and gravely undermined global security. Russia remains the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security. Terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, is the most direct asymmetric threat to the security of our citizens and to international peace and prosperity. The threats we face are global and interconnected.
4. Strategic competition, pervasive instability, and recurrent shocks define our broader security environment. Conflict, fragility and instability in Africa and the Middle East directly affect our security and the security of our partners. [...] Iran's destabilising actions are affecting Euro-Atlantic security. The People's Republic of China's (PRC) stated ambitions and coercive policies continue to challenge our interests, security and values. The deepening strategic partnership between Russia and the PRC and their mutually reinforcing attempts to undercut and reshape the rules-based international order, are a cause for profound concern. We are confronted by hybrid, cyber, space, and other threats and malicious activities from state and non-state actors. [...]

6. We welcome that more than two-thirds of Allies have fulfilled their commitment of at least 2% of GDP annual defence spending and commend those Allies who have exceeded it. Allies are stepping up: defence expenditure by European Allies and Canada has grown by 18% in 2024, the biggest increase in decades. [...] We reaffirm that, in many cases, expenditure beyond 2% of GDP will be needed in order to remedy existing shortfalls and meet the requirements across all domains arising from a more contested security order.
7. We have undertaken the biggest reinforcement of our collective defence in a generation. [...] We cannot discount the possibility of an attack against Allies' sovereignty and territorial integrity. [...] We are further accelerating the modernisation of our collective defence and are:
 - a. Providing the necessary forces, capabilities, resources, and infrastructure for our new defence plans, to be prepared for high-intensity and multi-domain collective defence. [...]
 - b. Conducting more frequent and large-scale training and exercises of our plans to demonstrate our ability to defend and rapidly reinforce any Ally that comes under threat. [...]
 - c. Taking urgent action to increase capabilities in accordance with the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP), including in the short-term, with our initial focus to include battle decisive munitions and air and missile defence. [...]
 - d. Strengthening our NATO command and control and assigning key leadership roles to nationally provided headquarters.
 - e. Strengthening our ability to move, reinforce, supply, and sustain our forces to respond to threats across the Alliance, including through effective and resilient logistics and the development of mobility corridors.
 - f. Training, exercising, and integrating NATO's Forward Land Forces into the new plans, including by continuing to strengthen our forward defences on NATO's Eastern Flank.
 - g. Taking full advantage of the accession of Finland and Sweden [...].
 - h. Accelerating the integration of space into our planning, exercises, and multi-domain operations [...].
 - i. Establishing the NATO Integrated Cyber Defence Centre to enhance network protection, situational awareness, and the implementation of cyberspace as an operational domain throughout peacetime, crisis and conflict; and developing a policy to augment the security of NATO's networks.

- j. Strengthening the protection of critical undersea infrastructure (CUI), and enhancing our ability to deter, detect and respond to threats, including through continued development of NATO's Centre for Security of CUI.
 - k. Investing in our Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear defence capabilities required to effectively operate in all environments.
 - l. Accelerating implementation of NATO standards and agreeing the necessary measures to increase and strengthen our interoperability.
8. We are resolved to deter and defend against all air and missile threats by enhancing our Integrated Air and Missile Defence (IAMD), based on a 360-degree approach. We have updated NATO's IAMD Policy and will continue to increase our readiness, responsiveness, and integration through various initiatives [...]. We are pleased to declare NATO Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) Enhanced Operational Capability. [...] Missile defence can complement the role of nuclear weapons in deterrence; it cannot substitute them.
 9. Nuclear deterrence is the cornerstone of Alliance security. The fundamental purpose of NATO's nuclear capability is to preserve peace, prevent coercion and deter aggression. As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance. NATO reaffirms its commitment to all the decisions, principles, and commitments with regard to NATO's nuclear deterrence, arms control policy and non-proliferation and disarmament objectives as stated in the 2022 Strategic Concept and 2023 Vilnius Communiqué. Arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation have made and should continue to make an essential contribution to achieving the Alliance's security objectives and to ensuring strategic stability and our collective security. NATO remains committed to taking all necessary steps to ensure the credibility, effectiveness, safety, and security of the Alliance's nuclear deterrence mission, including by modernising its nuclear capabilities, strengthening its nuclear planning capability, and adapting as necessary.
 10. NATO's deterrence and defence posture is based on an appropriate mix of nuclear, conventional, and missile defence capabilities, complemented by space and cyber capabilities. We will employ military and non-military tools in a proportionate, coherent and integrated way to deter all threats to our security and respond in the manner, timing, and in the domain of our choosing.
 11. Transatlantic defence industrial cooperation is a critical part of NATO's deterrence and defence. Strengthened defence industry across Europe and North America and enhanced defence industrial cooperation among Allies makes us more capable and better able to deliver against the requirements of NATO's defence plans in a timely manner. It underpins Allies' immediate and enduring support to Ukraine. We will continue to reduce and eliminate, as appropriate, obstacles to defence trade and investment among Allies. Building on the Defence

Production Action Plan agreed at the Vilnius Summit in 2023, we commit to doing more together as Allies, including to strengthen defence industry across the Alliance, act urgently to deliver the most critical capabilities, and reinforce our commitment to NATO standards. To that end, we have today agreed the NATO Industrial Capacity Expansion Pledge.

12. National and collective resilience are an essential basis for credible deterrence and defence and the effective fulfillment of the Alliance's core tasks in a 360-degree approach. Resilience is a national responsibility and a collective commitment, rooted in Article 3 of the Washington Treaty. Strengthening national and Alliance-wide preparedness for deterrence and defence requires a whole of government approach, public-private cooperation, and societal resilience considerations. [...]
13. State and non-state actors are using increasingly aggressive hybrid actions against Allies. We will continue to prepare for, deter, defend against, and counter hybrid threats and challenges. We reiterate that hybrid operations against Allies could reach the level of an armed attack and could lead the North Atlantic Council to invoke Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.
14. We will continue to develop our individual and collective capacity to analyse and counter hostile disinformation and misinformation operations. [...]
15. [...] We reaffirm our unwavering solidarity with the people of Ukraine in the heroic defence of their nation, their land, and our shared values. A strong, independent, and democratic Ukraine is vital for the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area. Ukraine's fight for its independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders directly contributes to Euro-Atlantic security. [...]. To help Ukraine defend itself today, and deter Russian aggression in the future, we have:
 - a. Decided to establish the NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU) to coordinate the provision of military equipment and training for Ukraine by Allies and partners. [...]. NSATU will not, under international law, make NATO a party to the conflict. [...]
 - b. Announced a Pledge of Long-Term Security Assistance for Ukraine for the provision of military equipment, assistance, and training to support Ukraine in building a force capable of defeating Russian aggression. [...]
 - c. Taken forward the establishment of the NATO-Ukraine Joint Analysis, Training, and Education Centre (JATEC), an important pillar of practical cooperation, to identify and apply lessons from Russia's war against Ukraine and increase Ukraine's interoperability with NATO.

- d. Welcomed the Secretary General's decision to appoint a NATO Senior Representative in Ukraine.
16. We fully support Ukraine's right to choose its own security arrangements and decide its own future, free from outside interference. Ukraine's future is in NATO. [...] As Ukraine continues this vital work, we will continue to support it on its irreversible path to full Euro-Atlantic integration, including NATO membership. We reaffirm that we will be in a position to extend an invitation to Ukraine to join the Alliance when Allies agree and conditions are met. The Summit decisions by NATO and the NATO-Ukraine Council, combined with Allies' ongoing work, constitute a bridge to Ukraine's membership in NATO. [...]
17. Russia bears sole responsibility for its war of aggression against Ukraine, a blatant violation of international law, including the UN Charter. There can be no impunity for Russian forces' and officials' abuses and violations of human rights, war crimes, and other violations of international law. Russia is responsible for the deaths of thousands of civilians and has caused extensive damage to civilian infrastructure. We condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's horrific attacks on the Ukrainian people, including on hospitals, on 8 July. Russia must immediately stop this war and completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its forces from Ukraine in line with UN General Assembly resolutions. We will never recognise Russia's illegal annexations of Ukrainian territory, including Crimea. We also call on Russia to withdraw all of its forces from the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, stationed there without their consent.
18. Russia seeks to fundamentally reconfigure the Euro-Atlantic security architecture. The all-domain threat Russia poses to NATO will persist into the long term. Russia is rebuilding and expanding its military capabilities, and continues its airspace violations and provocative activities. We stand in solidarity with all Allies affected by these actions. NATO does not seek confrontation, and poses no threat to Russia. We remain willing to maintain channels of communication with Moscow to mitigate risk and prevent escalation.
19. We condemn Russia's irresponsible nuclear rhetoric and coercive nuclear signalling, including its announced stationing of nuclear weapons in Belarus, which demonstrate a posture of strategic intimidation. Russia has increased its reliance on nuclear weapon systems and continued to diversify its nuclear forces, including by developing novel nuclear systems and deploying short and intermediate range dual-capable strike capabilities, all of which poses a growing threat to the Alliance. Russia has violated, selectively implemented, and walked away from longstanding arms control obligations and commitments, thereby undermining the global arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation architecture. We oppose any placement of nuclear weapons in orbit around Earth, which would violate Article IV of the Outer Space Treaty, and would gravely

- threaten global security. We are profoundly concerned by the reported use of chemical weapons by Russia against Ukrainian forces.
20. Russia has also intensified its aggressive hybrid actions against Allies, including through proxies, in a campaign across the Euro-Atlantic area. These include sabotage, acts of violence, provocations at Allied borders, instrumentalisation of irregular migration, malicious cyber activities, electronic interference, disinformation campaigns and malign political influence, as well as economic coercion. These actions constitute a threat to Allied security. We have decided on further measures to counter Russian hybrid threats or actions individually and collectively, and will continue to coordinate closely. Russia's behaviour will not deter Allies' resolve and support to Ukraine. We will also continue to support our partners most exposed to Russian destabilisation, as they strengthen their resilience in the face of hybrid challenges that are also present in our neighbourhood.
 21. We are determined to constrain and contest Russia's aggressive actions and to counter its ability to conduct destabilising activities towards NATO and Allies. For our next Summit, we will develop recommendations on NATO's strategic approach to Russia, taking into account the changing security environment.
 22. Countering terrorism remains essential to our collective defence. [...]
 23. We urge all countries not to provide any kind of assistance to Russia's aggression. We condemn all those who are facilitating and thereby prolonging Russia's war in Ukraine.
 24. Belarus continues to enable this war by making available its territory and infrastructure. Russia's deepening political and military integration of Belarus, including the deployment of advanced Russian military capabilities and personnel, has negative implications for regional stability and the defence of the Alliance.
 25. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and Iran are fuelling Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine by providing direct military support to Russia, such as munitions and uncrewed aerial vehicles (UAVs) [...]. We strongly condemn the DPRK's exports of artillery shells and ballistic missiles, which are in violation of numerous United Nations Security Council resolutions, and note with great concern the deepening ties between the DPRK and Russia. Any transfer of ballistic missiles and related technology by Iran to Russia would represent a substantial escalation.
 26. The PRC has become a decisive enabler of Russia's war against Ukraine through its so-called "no limits" partnership and its large-scale support for Russia's defence industrial base. This increases the threat Russia poses to its neighbours and to Euro-Atlantic security. We call on the PRC, as a permanent member of the

- United Nations Security Council with a particular responsibility to uphold the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, to cease all material and political support to Russia's war effort. This includes the transfer of dual-use materials, such as weapons components, equipment, and raw materials that serve as inputs for Russia's defence sector. The PRC cannot enable the largest war in Europe in recent history without this negatively impacting its interests and reputation.
27. The PRC continues to pose systemic challenges to Euro-Atlantic security. We have seen sustained malicious cyber and hybrid activities, including disinformation, stemming from the PRC. We call on the PRC to uphold its commitment to act responsibly in cyberspace. We are concerned by developments in the PRC's space capabilities and activities. [...] The PRC continues to rapidly expand and diversify its nuclear arsenal with more warheads and a larger number of sophisticated delivery systems. [...] We remain open to constructive engagement with the PRC, including to build reciprocal transparency with the view of safeguarding the Alliance's security interests. At the same time, we are boosting our shared awareness, enhancing our resilience and preparedness, and protecting against the PRC's coercive tactics and efforts to divide the Alliance.
 28. NATO's partnerships remain key to enhancing stability, positively influencing the global security environment, and upholding international law. [...]
 29. The European Union remains a unique and essential partner for NATO. [...] In the context of Ukraine, NATO-EU cooperation has become more significant. [...] The development of coherent, complementary and interoperable defence capabilities, avoiding unnecessary duplication, is key in our joint efforts to make the Euro-Atlantic area safer. For the strategic partnership between NATO and the EU, non-EU Allies' fullest involvement in EU defence efforts is essential. [...]
 30. We will meet with the leadership of Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea, and the European Union to discuss common security challenges and areas of cooperation. The Indo-Pacific is important for NATO, given that developments in that region directly affect Euro-Atlantic security. [...]
 31. The Western Balkans and the Black Sea regions are of strategic importance for the Alliance. [...] We remain committed to NATO's continued engagement in the Western Balkans, including through the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR). We reaffirm our continued support to Allied regional efforts aimed at upholding security, safety, stability and freedom of navigation in the Black Sea region including, as appropriate, through the 1936 Montreux Convention. We welcome the activation by the three littoral Allies of the Black Sea Mine Countermeasures Task Group. [...] NATO supports the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of interested countries in this region.

32. NATO's southern neighbourhood provides opportunities for cooperation on issues of mutual interest. Through our partnerships we aim to foster greater security and stability in the Middle East and Africa, contributing to peace and prosperity in the region. [...]
33. We have accelerated NATO's transformation to meet current and future threats and to maintain our technological edge, including through experimentation and more rapid adoption of emerging technologies, and through digital transformation. [...] We are closely monitoring technological advancements on the battlefield in Ukraine, and are launching new innovation initiatives with our Ukrainian partners.
34. We will continue integrating climate change considerations into all core tasks and will enhance our energy security efforts. [...]
35. We are committed to integrating NATO's ambitious Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Human Security agendas across all core tasks. [...]

PLEDGE OF LONG-TERM SECURITY ASSISTANCE FOR UKRAINE

1. Today, we affirm our unwavering commitment to Ukraine as a sovereign, democratic, independent state. To deliver that, Ukraine requires our long-term support. Since the start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, Allies have provided unprecedented political, economic, military, financial, and humanitarian support, including military assistance amounting to roughly €40 billion annually. Allies have also made their defence industrial capacity available to support Ukraine's needs. All of this is having a substantial effect, enabling the Ukrainians to defend effectively and inflict real and severe costs on Russia.
2. We affirm our determination to support Ukraine in building a force capable of defeating Russian aggression today and deterring it in the future. To that end, we intend to provide a minimum baseline funding of €40 billion within the next year, and to provide sustainable levels of security assistance for Ukraine to prevail, taking into account Ukraine's needs, our respective national budget procedures, and the bilateral security agreements which Allies have concluded with Ukraine. Heads of State and Government will re-evaluate Allied contributions at future NATO Summits, starting at the 2025 NATO Summit in The Hague.
3. Our commitment extends to costs related to the provision of military equipment, assistance, and training for Ukraine [...]
4. [...] To support fair burden-sharing, Allies will aim to meet this pledge through proportional contributions, including by taking into account their share of Alliance GDP.

5. Allies will report to NATO on support delivered in relation to this pledge twice per year, with the first report to include contributions delivered after 1 January 2024. [...]
6. In addition to military support covered by this pledge, Allies intend to continue providing political, economic, financial, and humanitarian support to Ukraine.

Document No. 3. Sweden's National Security Strategy 2024, Select Excerpts

[...]

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S MOST IMPORTANT TASK IS TO PROTECT SWEDEN'S FREEDOM, PEACE AND SECURITY

No task is more important for central government than protecting Sweden's freedom, peace and security. The ultimate responsibility for this task lies with the Riksdag and the Government. [...] Our vital interests are those that are worth the greatest sacrifices. We are prepared to allocate substantial resources to ensure our strategic interests.

The strategy then describes the global situation that forms the backdrop for [which] the work on national security is based. Compared to 2017, when the previous national security strategy was adopted, the international situation has changed drastically – and worsened in most essential respects. The security situation in our neighbourhood and in Europe is the most precarious it has been since the Second World War. Russia is waging a brutal war of aggression against Ukraine and constitutes a serious threat to Sweden and its allies. The assessment of the Government is that the deteriorated security situation will persist in the foreseeable future, and there is a risk that it will further deteriorate.

OUR NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS

Sweden's vital national security interests are to safeguard Sweden's security, democratic form of governance, freedom, independence, sovereignty and freedom of action; to protect the lives and health of the population; to defend Sweden and its Allies against armed attacks and uphold its territorial integrity; to maintain critical supplies and the functioning of society; and to uphold its fundamental values such as democracy, the rule of law, and human rights and freedoms. [...]

OUR SECURITY SITUATION

[...] Russia poses the most serious threat to our national security in the period up to 2030. An armed attack against Sweden or its Allies cannot be ruled out. Nor can the use or threat of military measures against Sweden or its Allies. Our democracy, the integrity of our public institutions and the cohesion of our society are also jeopardised by organised crime that poses a systemic threat, violent extremism, terrorism and anti-democratic values. [...]

Unforeseen events are inevitable, no matter how carefully analyses are made. Developments in recent years have also shown how difficult it can be to assess threats, how quickly they can change and how they can evolve faster than expected and in unexpected directions. It is therefore important to also have knowledge of and preparedness for threats that have previously been considered less likely.

GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS

Global developments are characterised by authoritarian states seeking to redefine international norms and undermine or reshape the rules-based world order, based on the UN Charter, to meet their goals and interests. [...] This democratic backsliding thus undermines support for the rules-based world order. This also affects Sweden, as its security is ultimately based on states respecting international law, including the rules of the UN Charter.

These developments also mean that the global security environment is increasingly characterized by the dynamic between China on the one hand and the United States and like-minded actors on the other. One consequence of this is that the security of our Euro-Atlantic region is becoming ever more closely linked with that of the Indo-Pacific regions. [...]

Sweden's national security is significantly affected by events in Europe's immediate neighbourhood, including in the Middle East and North Africa. [...] Instability in the Middle East and Africa can also affect Europe through crossborder crime, violent extremism and terrorism.

One of the factors defining our time is rapid technological development, especially in areas such as artificial intelligence (AI), quantum technology and biotechnology. This drives economic development, but it also has increasingly tangible security policy implications. Many states increasingly see access to, and the ability to apply, emerging technologies as crucial to the balance of military and economic power. [...]

For a country like Sweden, with highly internationalised business and higher education institutions, the increased control of technology, innovations and supply chains poses

problems, as it risks limiting the possibilities for international cooperation on cutting-edge technology. [...]

Technological development, coupled with the deteriorating global security situation, also contributes to the growing importance of space and infrastructure there. The risk of confrontation is increasing. Sweden is affected by this development because it has significant potential as a space nation, including through its satellite launch capability.

Digital development brings major benefits to society, but also increases existing threats and creates new ones. [...]

Social media and other internet platforms are being exploited to spread false rumours, disinformation, conspiracy theories and racist and antisemitic messages. These affect opinion formation, interpersonal trust, democratic discourse, community and, thus, national security. The risk of AI being used for such purposes is assessed to be particularly high, but it also has potential to respond to this use. With the help of digital technology, crime in Sweden can be led and organised outside Sweden's borders, which further exacerbates the fight against it. Good international and bilateral cooperation is necessary. At the same time, technological development can also provide law enforcement with new opportunities to more effectively prevent and combat crime, such as through camera surveillance and the use of AI in various contexts.

ACTOR-DRIVEN THREATS

The external factor that has had the greatest impact on our security situation for more than a decade is Russia's gradual development into a militarily armed, externally aggressive and internally repressive autocracy. Russia considers itself to be in permanent conflict with a Western world perceived to be led by the United States. The Russian regime does not hide its attempts to establish a new European security order based on spheres of interest instead of the right of each state to choose its own security policy path. It also seeks, systematically and forcibly, to expand its own power and influence, not only in neighbouring countries but throughout Europe. One instrument for achieving this is to create and exploit divisions both within and between countries in the EU and NATO. In other parts of the world too, Russia tries to undermine the EU and the United States. Russia's threats to use nuclear weapons are also a means used for this purpose.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is the most serious expression of the Russian regime's ambitions to date. It shows how far Russia's leadership is prepared to go to achieve its goals and the level of risk it is prepared to take. Although Russia has suffered heavy losses and the Russian economy is small compared to the combined economies of the EU and NATO, Russia's military strength remains significant. Russia's leadership is also redirecting its

economy to support long-term aggression and prioritizing military rearmament over other needs, while showing that it is prepared to use all available instruments to achieve its goals.

An armed attack by Russia on Sweden or one of our Allies is the pacing threat for the total defence that is now being built up within the framework of NATO's collective defence.

China is the world's second-largest economy and a key international actor. China's totalitarian development, geopolitical ambitions and efforts to reshape the rules-based world order pose a threat to Sweden's national security. China's military rearmament and modernisation affect security in Asia and throughout the world. China's modernisation and expansion of its nuclear capabilities, coupled with a lack of transparency or commitment to arms control and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons issues, can affect strategic stability and, in the long term, also have consequences for strategic deterrence in the Euro-Atlantic region. China's deepening partnership with Russia and indirect support for Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine contribute to the serious security situation in Europe. China has been moving in an increasingly totalitarian direction. The central role of the party is emphasised and the repression of dissidents and certain ethnic groups, such as the Uighurs, has worsened.

China's ambition to become a world leader in new technology and its use of cyber capabilities also have consequences for our security and competitiveness. Furthermore, China's 'military-civil fusion' requires private Chinese companies to share their technology with the Chinese military. Chinese actors also conduct systematic intelligence activities and security-threatening activities against Sweden and Swedish interests.

The broad range of methods that mainly Russia but also China, Iran and other actors use to influence Sweden can be grouped together under the heading of 'hybrid threats'. These actors strive to exploit all vulnerabilities in our society to achieve their political or other objectives. The threats are aimed at actors at all levels of the Swedish public sector, but also at civil society, the private sector and individuals. The methods include cyber attacks, undue influence, economic pressure, sabotage, impact on critical flows, migration as an instrument of pressure, unlawful intelligence activities and the execution of attacks and other acts of violence. Critical infrastructure has been a key target of Russia's attacks in Ukraine. Through repeated attacks on, for example, energy-related infrastructure, Russia has put the Ukrainian energy system under extreme stress and subjected the civilian population to difficult living conditions.

Internet-connected systems in all sectors of society in Sweden are exposed to cyber threats, not just those that are directly relevant to national security. These threats come from foreign intelligence agencies, criminal groups and individuals. It is often difficult to definitively attribute cyber threats to a specific actor. [...]

Our economic security is also threatened by attempts to use both legal and illegal methods to gain access to sensitive information, Swedish cutting-edge technology and knowledge, and control of essential public services and infrastructure such as transport and digital infrastructure. [...]

Sweden is vulnerable to unilateral dependencies in terms of supply of goods such as important components, pharmaceuticals and certain raw materials. [...]

The threat of violent extremism and terrorism has become more complex and difficult to combat, partly because violent extremism environments are constantly changing, and digital platforms offer new opportunities to disseminate information and plan violent acts. [...]

Infiltration, corruption, threats and undue influence are growing and, in the long term, pose serious threats to the integrity of our public institutions, but also to the business community. The same applies to criminal networks' attempts to establish parallel social structures and to challenge the State's monopoly on power and violence in some parts of Sweden.

Substantial migration flows to Sweden over time, combined with an undemanding integration policy, have led to widespread exclusion in parts of society, with an increased risk of the emergence of parallel social structures and separatism. [...]

Large migration flows also pose a risk, as people with antagonistic intentions can join large migration movements. Furthermore, the risk is that migrants are exploited as pawns to create instability ('instrumentalisation') and that they can be used as a means of pressure against Sweden. [...] This development thus poses a threat to the rule of law, trust in public institutions and, ultimately, democracy. Such a development is exploited by hostile state actors and other groups.

NON-ACTOR-DRIVEN THREATS

[...] The most serious threat, especially in the longer term, is the existential threat to humanity posed by climate change. [...] If no adaptation of society to the changing climate is undertaken, the costs of loss and damage are expected to increase. Climate change will thus have consequences for our ability to deal with other types of threats to our national security. Throughout the world, climate change deepens existing conflicts, partly because they affect access to resources such as fresh water, food and arable land. This leads to a higher risk of migration flows. [...]

Sweden will most likely be affected by new epidemics and pandemics. On a global scale, increased urbanisation, population growth, the spread of chemicals, loss of eco-systems and climate change entail increased risks. [...] International cooperation is a prerequisite for effectively managing major epidemics and pandemics.

Antimicrobial resistance is a significant and growing threat to human and animal health and our food production. [...]

Public health is of great importance for Sweden's resilience and thus ultimately for our national security. [...] Experience from other countries shows a risk of opioids, in particular, becoming a threat to internal security and public health unless preventive measures are effective and inflow and drug trafficking are stopped.

The increasing digitalisation of society has meant that many essential public services are currently entirely or partly dependent on digital tools and systems. [...] Swedish society is also becoming increasingly dependent on electricity. Disruptions can have extensive implications for large parts of society and risk affecting our national security.

PRIORITIES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

[...] Sweden needs to urgently strengthen its capacity to prevent and respond to the various threats and risks described in this strategy. This means that the strengthening of national security should be accorded great importance when balancing and prioritising different societal interests. Of particular importance are building up the total defence, Sweden's integration into NATO and the fight against organised crime that poses a systemic threat. [...] Against this background, the Government's work is based on five guiding principles:

- Urgency and pragmatism. [...]
- Capacity to act and make decisions under uncertainty. [...]
- Robustness and adaptability. [...]
- Involvement of the whole of society. [...]
- International cooperation. [...]

Focus areas [...]

Area 1: A safe and secure Sweden

Objectives 2030

- The democratic world's unity and global security policy footprint have been strengthened. Sweden has reinforced its relations with neighbouring countries, strategic allies and partners.
- NATO maintains an effective deterrence and defence through Sweden's and other Allies' efforts and is well prepared, within the framework of collective defence, to respond to an armed attack. Our total defence is strong, adequately sized and fully integrated into NATO.

- Sweden has a well-developed capacity to respond to hybrid threats from state actors threatening the country's security and its economic or security policy interests, across the entire conflict spectrum.
- The EU is strong, and cooperation within the Union in the field of defence reinforces European defence capabilities and contributes to Europe's security and resilience.
- Ukraine has received the support it needs to be able to achieve its objectives in the war of defence against Russia, for reconstruction, and for establishing the capacity to resist future attacks.
- Russia's capability to carry out military aggression against Ukraine or other states has been reduced.
- The security threat from authoritarian states such as China, Russia and Iran is prioritised and managed in cooperation with democratic countries.

Sweden's foreign and security policy is the first-line instrument to strengthen cooperation, prevent conflict and counter external antagonistic threats to Sweden's security. [...] The core of Sweden's security policy is the solidarity-based alliance policy pursued as a member of the EU and NATO [...]. The EU is Sweden's most important foreign policy arena and NATO is Sweden's most important defence policy arena. Swedish security policy requires active, broad and responsible international action, which includes strengthening democratic development globally, safeguarding the rule of law and promoting respect for human rights and freedoms. Membership of the UN remains central to safeguarding international law and addressing global issues such as climate change, humanitarian crises and widespread migration flows. [...]

Furthermore, an effective security policy requires the coordination of a range of mechanisms, including diplomacy, strategic communications, development assistance, economic, legal and military instruments, as well as a resilient society. [...] A good understanding of geopolitical developments, based on the work of diplomatic missions, defence intelligence agencies and security services, is of central importance. Equally important is our capacity to protect ourselves against foreign powers' intelligence gathering and attempts to influence.

Nato

Sweden will be a loyal Ally

NATO is the ultimate guarantor for European and transatlantic security. Full integration into NATO – political, civil and military – is the single most important and urgent measure to strengthen Sweden's security, and of great importance to our Allies. [...]

Sweden's geographic location and ability to support other Allies is crucial to NATO's ability to operate effectively in our region. Sweden shoulders this responsibility and fully embraces the opportunity to facilitate the collective defence not only of Sweden but also of our neighbours. Military defence will be adapted to the requirements attributed to Sweden as an

Ally. The credibility of NATO's deterrence is crucial to Sweden's security. Sweden supports NATO's strategic deterrence and will remain a strong voice for arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. The credibility of NATO's deterrence and defence is based upon cohesion within the Alliance and the development and maintenance of strong military capabilities by Allies. [...] Sweden's membership in a defence Alliance with binding mutual defence commitments constitutes a paradigm shift in Swedish security and defence policy, concerning all parts of the Swedish total defence. [...]

The European Union

Sweden will contribute to strengthening the EU

[...] Swedish action in the EU is guided by the insight that Europe must take greater responsibility for its own security. A better equipped EU contributes to a stronger NATO. The EU's role in security and defence needs to be strengthened in a way that favours the transatlantic link without compromising the competence of Member States. Defence industry and technology-related cooperation, which is also open to strategic partnerships, is important in this regard. The security situation and the experiences gained from Ukraine show that the EU's common crisis management capabilities, resilience and preparedness need to be strengthened. [...] EU enlargement is an investment in peace, democracy, security, stability and prosperity. One of the EU's most important tasks is therefore to complete the integration of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, as well as the countries of the Western Balkans, into the Union, once these countries meet the requirements. [...]

Total defence

Modernisation will be carried out swiftly and efficiently

Sweden is carrying out a comprehensive reinforcement of its total defence. [...] The modernisation of total defence is a complex task, involving major efforts by the whole of Swedish society, which necessitates trade-offs in relation to other societal interests. In view of the perilous global situation that has made this reinforcement necessary, activities of significance for total defence must be prioritised in such trade-offs. [...]

Hybrid threats

Capability to respond to state actors' hybrid threats will be strengthened

[...] These attacks are conducted by both civilian and military means and through cyberattacks and disinformation; influence operations, disinformation, attempts to affect critical information flows and critical infrastructure; strategic investments; infiltration of, for example, higher education institutions, and theft of technology and innovation. Countering these threats requires capabilities that are partly outside the structure and mandate of total defence. [...]

Ukraine

Sweden will contribute to the defence of Ukraine for as long as it takes

Together with the modernization of our total defence, the most important measure for security in our neighbourhood is to ensure that Russia does not achieve its objectives in its war of aggression against Ukraine. [...] Support to Ukraine is therefore the Government's top foreign policy priority. [...] Provided that democratic countries continue giving Ukraine the support it needs, the fundamental balance of forces, both economic and military, are not in Russia's favour in the longer term. However, this would require urgent reinforcements of, among other things, defence production capability. [...]

Russia

Sweden will counteract Russia's aggression and power expansion

It is of great importance to Sweden's national security to counteract Russia's influence, freedom of action and ability to target military and non-military threats against countries in the EU, NATO and Russia's neighbourhood. This requires Sweden, domestically and within the EU and NATO, to pursue a comprehensive, long-term and strategic policy to prevent Russia from expanding its power. Strong support to Ukraine is our best way to influence Russia's actions. EU sanctions against Russia and accountability for violations of international law committed during and through Russia's aggression against Ukraine are other key components of this policy. [...]

Key bilateral relations

Sweden will safeguard and develop its bilateral relations with key allies and partners

Bilateral cooperation with the United States, the Nordic and Baltic countries, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Poland is of particular importance to Sweden's security. The transatlantic link between Europe and the United States is crucial to Sweden's security. NATO is the principal expression of this link, but it is also manifested in our close bilateral military cooperation and other long-standing close ties between the United States and Sweden.

[...] At the same time, Sweden's security policy needs to take into account the shift in the focus of US security policy towards the threat from China and the fact that the United States' willingness to contribute to Europe's security could be affected by domestic political conditions. [...] Thus, we can also help reduce direct and indirect threats to Sweden through strategic bilateral and multilateral development assistance. [...]

Sweden will strengthen its cooperation with countries that are particularly important to us in Asia and Oceania. This is essential, not least because Europe's and Asia's security have become increasingly interconnected. Cooperation of this kind helps reduce vulnerability in Swedish businesses' value chains and strengthen Sweden's long-term competitiveness. For similar reasons, it is important for Sweden to strengthen its cooperation with democratic states in Latin America.

Sweden needs to maintain a dialogue and trade with China as well as cooperation in areas where it is appropriate and compatible with our national security. In order to strengthen our

economic security and resilience, we also need to reduce risks and vulnerable dependencies in relation to China. It is also important to enhance our knowledge of China. Sweden's relations with China must be anchored in a European strategy with close transatlantic cooperation.

Area 2: A safe, open and cohesive Sweden

Objectives 2030

- Sweden remains a cohesive, open and democratic society, characterised by respect for human rights and freedoms.
- There is strong mutual trust between the people and central government, regions and municipalities.
- The threat to the integrity of public institutions from organised crime, corruption, infiltration and undue influence is at a level that does not compromise the full functionality of our social structures.
- The terrorist threat has been reduced.
- Long-term preventive measures to ensure the cohesion of Swedish society are implemented in broad, cross-sectoral cooperation. [...]

The numerous and serious threats from different quarters that are directed against the cohesion of Swedish society require that strong continued measures are taken. [...] Movements that oppose our democracy and the values on which Swedish society is based also have the right, within the framework of the law, to exercise their freedom of expression to express their views. However, there is no reason why they should receive financial support and encouragement from the Swedish public sector. [...]

Area 3: A resilient and competitive Sweden

Objectives 2030

- Swedish society has resilience to all types of disruptions in society, in crisis and war.
- Effective management structures with clear mandates and developed cross-sectoral cooperation provide Sweden with sound capability to manage threats to its national security interests.
- Sweden can effectively provide and receive support to and from other EU and NATO members in order to manage disruptions in society and fulfil other tasks in civil defence.
- Collective situational awareness at national level allows for large-scale threats and risks to be identified and managed early and rapidly.
- Essential public services are adequately protected and robust.

- Through climate adaptation, Sweden is resilient to climate change.
- The Swedish economy and the Swedish business sector's production capacity continue to deliver prosperity, and Sweden's economic security is strong.
- The business sector, supported by high-quality compulsory and upper secondary school, higher education and research, continues to be dynamic, innovative and internationally competitive. [...]

Increased civil defence capability greatly helps strengthen crisis preparedness and the Alliance's collective deterrence. According to NATO's definition of civil preparedness, the critical functions that Allies have committed to being able to maintain are continuity of government, continuity of essential services to the population and civil support to military operations. The population's resilience to undue influence is an important component of a strong total defence. [...]

Leadership capability

National leadership capability in crisis situations will be strengthened [...]

In order to strengthen operational leadership capability at war or at risk of war, as well as during peacetime crises, the Government has carried out a reform of the civil defence and crisis preparedness structure, including the introduction of 10 preparedness sectors with government agencies responsible for sectors. [...]

Essential public services

Protection of essential public services will be strengthened [...]

[...] Our society's resilience is dependent on the ability to also maintain these essentials under very difficult conditions. [...] Climate adaptation is key to protecting people's lives and property, infrastructure and economic interests. A transition to becoming fossil-free in Sweden and globally, including to reduce dependence on exports of fossil fuels, is in Sweden's interest. [...]

Ensuring critical supplies

Supply of essential goods and services must be ensured [...]

Industrial policy is of fundamental importance for civil defence and to strengthen the robustness of key value chains, as well as to reduce unwanted risk exposure and undesirable strategic dependencies, particularly in relation to authoritarian states. The conditions to enable rapid reconfiguration of the supply structure for critical input goods will be strengthened. The sources of supply needs to encompass domestic production capacity, stockpiling, well-diversified imports that spread risk across countries and continents, and a deepened single market. [...]

Economic security

Sweden's economic security will be strengthened [...]

However, global developments in which financial resources are being used for political purposes, with states increasingly viewing technical know-how as a strategic asset, and where access to innovations, value chains and market access is being restricted, also require Sweden to take measures to safeguard its economic security. Without them, we cannot secure our future prosperity and create the resources required to develop our society and strengthen our national security. [...]

Competitiveness

Sweden's competitiveness will be strengthened [...]

The foundation of our future competitiveness is a school system that equips children and young people with necessary knowledge and abilities. Strong competitiveness requires high-quality education, training, research and innovation, particularly in cutting-edge technologies. [...]

IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP

This national security strategy sets out a direction for the Government's work on issues that are of importance to Sweden's national security. The strategy will be put into practice through concrete actions within the framework of the Government's regular work, such as in proposals to the Riksdag, and through the issuing of directives to government agencies and other government decisions. More detailed instructions for the implementation of this national security strategy are also provided in the Government's strategies for specific areas. On behalf of the Government, the National Security Adviser is responsible for follow-up of the national security strategy. Continuous follow-up will take place in the National Security Council. [...]

* * * * *

Document No. 4. 2024 Report of the Commission on the National Defense Strategy, Select Excerpts¹⁷

The threats the United States faces are the most serious and most challenging the nation has encountered since 1945 and include the potential for near-term major war. The United States last fought a global conflict during World War II, which ended nearly 80 years ago. The nation was last prepared for such a fight during the Cold War, which ended 35 years ago. It is not prepared today.

¹⁷ Jane Harman and Eric Edelman, et al., *Commission on the National Defense Strategy*, RAND, July 2024, available at <https://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/NDS-commission.html>.

China and Russia are major powers that seek to undermine U.S. influence. The 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) recognizes these nations as the top threats to the United States and declares China to be the “pacing challenge,” based on the strength of its military and economy and its intent to exert dominance regionally and globally.¹⁸

The Commission finds that, in many ways, China is outpacing the United States and has largely negated the U.S. military advantage in the Western Pacific through two decades of focused military investment. Without significant change by the United States, the balance of power will continue to shift in China’s favor. China’s overall annual spending on defense is estimated at as much as \$711 billion,¹⁹ and the Chinese government in March 2024 announced an increase in annual defense spending of 7.2 percent.²⁰

Russia will devote 29 percent of its federal budget this year on national defense as it continues to reconstitute its military and economy after its failed initial invasion of Ukraine in 2022.²¹ Russia possesses considerable strategic, space, and cyber capabilities and under Vladimir Putin seeks a return to its global leadership role of the Cold War.²²

China and Russia’s “no-limits” partnership, formed in February 2022 just days before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine,²³ has only deepened and broadened to include a military and economic partnership with Iran and North Korea, each of which presents its own significant threat to U.S. interests. This new alignment of nations opposed to U.S. interests creates a real risk, if not likelihood, that conflict anywhere could become a multitheater or global war.²⁴

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), *2022 National Defense Strategy of the United States*. The *2022 National Security Strategy* notes, “The PRC [People’s Republic of China] is the only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it” (White House, *National Security Strategy*, p. 23). The NDS refers to Russia as an “acute” threat. We believe this term inappropriately suggests a limited duration and prefer to label Russia a “chronic threat.”

¹⁹ Eaglen, “America’s Incredible Shrinking Navy.” This estimate was reinforced by Adm. Samuel Paparo, Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command: “According to Paparo, China’s military budget is likely three times what Beijing publicly claims, which would put it at about \$700 billion annually” (Rogin, “The U.S. Military Plans a ‘Hellscape’ to Deter China from Attacking Taiwan”). Other estimates of China’s defense spending are lower; see Fravel, Gilboy, and Heginbotham, “Estimating China’s Defense Spending.”

²⁰ Wu and Bodeen, “China Raises Defense Budget by 7.2% as It Pushes for Global Heft and Regional Tensions Continue.” The 7.2 percent increase was in relation to China’s official figures for defense spending, not the more accurate “all-in” estimates.

²¹ Cooper, “Another Budget for a Country at War,” pp. 8, 19; Dixon, “In Putin’s Wartime Russia, Military Corruption Is Suddenly Taboo.”

²² Cavoli, “Statement of General Christopher G. Cavoli, United States Army, United States European Command.”

²³ Kremlin, “Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development.”

²⁴ In addition to the military and economic support that Iran, North Korea, and China are providing to Russia’s war in Ukraine, the Director of National Intelligence testified in May 2024 that “we see China and Russia, maybe for the first time, exercising together in relation to Taiwan and recognizing that this is a place where China definitely wants Russia to be working with them, and we see no reason why they would not” (Senate Committee on Armed Services, “Hearing to Receive Testimony on Worldwide Threats,” p. 39). This partnership also complicates economic and financial sanctions and restrictions on proliferating technology to any of the four nations.

China (and, to a lesser extent, Russia) is fusing military, diplomatic, and industrial strength to expand power worldwide and coerce its neighbors. The United States needs a similarly integrated approach to match, deter, and overcome theirs, which we describe as all elements of national power. The NDS and the 2022 National Security Strategy promote the concept of “integrated deterrence,” but neither one presents a plan for implementing this approach, and there are few indications that the U.S. government is consistently integrating tools of national security power. The U.S. military is the largest, but not the only, component of U.S. deterrence and power. An effective approach to an all elements of national power strategy also relies on a coordinated effort to bring together diplomacy, economic investment, cybersecurity, trade, education, industrial capacity, technical innovation, civic engagement, and international cooperation.

Recognizing the indispensable role that allies play in promoting international security, the United States has successfully bolstered bilateral and multilateral alliances in the Pacific, strengthened the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and created new arrangements, such as AUKUS. The United States cannot compete with China, Russia, and their partners alone—and certainly cannot win a war that way. Given the growing alignment of authoritarian states, the United States must continue to invest in strengthening its allies and integrating its military (and economic, diplomatic, and industrial) efforts with theirs. Alliances are not a panacea, but the U.S. force structure should account for the forces and commitments from U.S. allies.

The Commission finds that DoD’s business practices, byzantine research and development (R&D) and procurement systems, reliance on decades-old military hardware, and culture of risk avoidance reflect an era of uncontested military dominance.²⁵ Such methods are not suited to today’s strategic environment. There are recent examples that demonstrate that DoD can move quickly, break with tradition, and engage industry, including the rapid stand-up of the Space Force, the Defense Innovation Unit, the Office of Strategic Capital, and the Replicator Initiative, but these examples remain the exception rather than the rule. The larger elements of DoD must follow suit. DoD leaders and Congress must replace an ossified, risk-averse organization with one that is able to build and field the force the United States needs.

The Commission finds that the U.S. military lacks both the capabilities and the capacity required to be confident it can deter and prevail in combat. It needs to do a better job of incorporating new technology at scale; field more and higher-capability platforms, software, and munitions; and deploy innovative operational concepts to employ them together better. The war in Ukraine has demonstrated the need to prepare for new forms of conflict and to

²⁵ See, e.g., Mazarr, *Defending Without Dominance*, p. 37: “The biggest barrier to effectiveness is arguably not defense spending It is a crushing bureaucratic managerialism that, in so many overlapping ways, drains the lifeblood from U.S. defense endeavors.”

integrate technology and new capabilities rapidly with older systems. Such technologies include swarms of attritable systems, artificial intelligence-enabled capabilities, hypersonics and electronic warfare, fully integrated cyber and space capabilities, and vigorous competition in the information domain. Programs that are not needed for future combat should be divested to invest in others.

The Commission finds that the U.S. defense industrial base (DIB) is unable to meet the equipment, technology, and munitions needs of the United States and its allies and partners. A protracted conflict, especially in multiple theaters, would require much greater capacity to produce, maintain, and replenish weapons and munitions. Addressing the shortfall will require increased investment, additional manufacturing and development capacity, joint and coproduction with allies, and additional flexibility in acquisition systems. It requires partnership with an industrial base that includes not just large, traditional defense manufacturers but also new entrants and a wide array of companies involved in sub-tier production, cybersecurity, and enabling services. The United States should coordinate and partner with its allies in mutually beneficial ways to increase industrial capacity, especially since the U.S. industrial base is unable to produce everything needed.

The Commission also believes that it is critical to develop innovative joint operational concepts to employ new capabilities and technologies. DoD's Joint Warfighting Concept (JWC), now in its third iteration, was intended to position the Joint Force for modern warfare against peer competitors. The JWC deserves credit for attempting to break down service stovepipes, but more work is needed to develop ways to overcome strategic challenges, impose costs and challenges on U.S. adversaries, and increasingly integrate U.S. allies.

Congress, DoD, and other agencies will need to rewrite laws and regulations to remove unnecessary barriers to adopting innovation, budgeting, and procurement. New authorities may be needed to promote jointness, strengthen the DoD workforce, and supplement the national security authorities of other agencies. Integration with allies requires dismantling barriers to information-sharing, coproduction, and exports.

The consequences of an all-out war with a peer or near peer would be devastating. Such a war would not only yield massive personnel and military costs but would also likely feature cyberattacks on U.S. critical infrastructure and a global economic recession from disruptions to supply chains, manufacturing, and trade.²⁶ Adversaries could seek to deny the United States access to critical minerals and goods needed to run the U.S. economy and build weapon

²⁶ According to U.S. government agencies, "PRC state-sponsored cyber actors are seeking to pre-position themselves on IT networks for disruptive or destructive cyberattacks against U.S. critical infrastructure in the event of a major crisis or conflict with the United States," and they have "compromised the IT environments of multiple critical infrastructure organizations" (Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, "PRC State-Sponsored Actors Compromise and Maintain Persistent Access to U.S. Critical Infrastructure"). See also DoD, "DOD Support to National Security Memorandum 22."

systems. They could also hold at risk U.S. space assets, which underpin much of our daily lives and are essential for military capabilities. Even short of all-out war, the global economic damage from a Chinese blockade of Taiwan has been estimated to cost \$5 trillion, or 5 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP).²⁷ War with a major power would affect the life of every American in ways we can only begin to imagine. Deterring war by projecting strength and ensuring economic and domestic resilience is far preferable to and less costly than war.

The U.S. public are largely unaware of the dangers the United States faces or the costs (financial and otherwise) required to adequately prepare. They do not appreciate the strength of China and its partnerships or the ramifications to daily life if a conflict were to erupt. They are not anticipating disruptions to their power, water, or access to all the goods on which they rely. They have not internalized the costs of the United States losing its position as a world superpower. A bipartisan “call to arms” is urgently needed so that the United States can make the major changes and significant investments now rather than wait for the next Pearl Harbor or 9/11. The support and resolve of the American public are indispensable.

The 2022 NDS force construct does not sufficiently account for global competition or the very real threat of simultaneous conflict in more than one theater.²⁸ We propose a *Multiple Theater Force Construct*. This is distinct from the bipolar Cold War construct and the two-war construct designed afterward for separate wars against less capable rogue states—essentially, one in northeast Asia and one in the Middle East. Neither model meets the dimensions of today’s threat or the wide variety of ways in which and places where conflict could erupt, grow, and evolve.

Our proposed force construct is the military backbone of our comprehensive approach. It reflects the likelihood of simultaneous conflicts in multiple theaters because of the partnership of U.S. peer or near-peer adversaries and incorporates the U.S. system of alliances and partnerships.

The United States must engage globally with a presence—military, diplomatic, and economic—to maintain stability and preserve influence worldwide, including across the Global South, where China and Russia are extending their reach.²⁹

²⁷ The cost of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan is estimated at \$10 trillion, or 10.2 percent of global GDP (Welch et al., “Xi, Biden and the \$10 Trillion Cost of War over Taiwan”).

²⁸ The NDS “sizes and shapes the Joint force to simultaneously defend the homeland; maintain strategic deterrence; and deter, and if necessary prevail in conflict” while still “deter[ring] opportunistic aggression elsewhere” (DoD, *2022 National Defense Strategy of the United States*, p. 17).

²⁹ See, for example, Richardson, “Statement of General Laura J. Richardson, Commander, United States Southern Command”; and Langley, “Statement of General Michael E. Langley, United States Marine Corps, Commander, United States Africa Command.” See also Stavridis, “China and Russia Are Beating the US in Africa.”

Specifically, the Commission finds that the Joint Force must leverage technology, expertise, and allies across domains to maintain existing and develop new asymmetric advantages against U.S. adversaries rather than seeking to match them platform-to-platform. We recommend that the Joint Force be sized and structured to simultaneously

1. defend the homeland, maintain strategic deterrence, prevent mass casualty terrorist attacks, maintain global posture, and respond to small-scale, short-duration crises
2. lead the effort, with meaningful allied contribution, to deter China from territorial aggression in the Western Pacific—and fight and win if needed
3. lead NATO planning and force structure to deter and, if necessary, defeat Russian aggression
4. sustain capabilities, along with U.S. partners in the Middle East, to defend against Iranian malign activities.

This force construct, even with more-capable allies, new operational concepts, and better technology, will require a stronger and integrated innovation ecosystem and DIB, as well as a larger Joint and Total Force. Although the DoD workforce and all-volunteer force provide an unmatched U.S. advantage, today's is the smallest force in generations. It is stressed to maintain readiness today and is not sufficient to meet the needs of strategic global competition and multitheater war.

Recent recruitment shortfalls have decreased the size of the Army, Air Force, and Navy.³⁰ Redoubled recruiting efforts, new incentives for service, and more flexible personnel systems are needed to offset a lack of propensity for and interest in military service among the eligible population. Military retention remains high, demonstrating that personnel in service largely choose to remain in uniform. The nation must also consider the possibility that future conflict could overwhelm the capacity of the active-duty force and should plan now to better prepare the reserve components and, potentially, a broader mobilization.³¹ More broadly, we support calls for increased levels of public and civil service to help provide a renewed sense of engagement and patriotism among the American people.

This proposal for strengthened national power is needed as the United States faces the most challenging and most dangerous international security environment since World War II. It faces peer and near-peer competitors for the first time since the end of the Cold War.

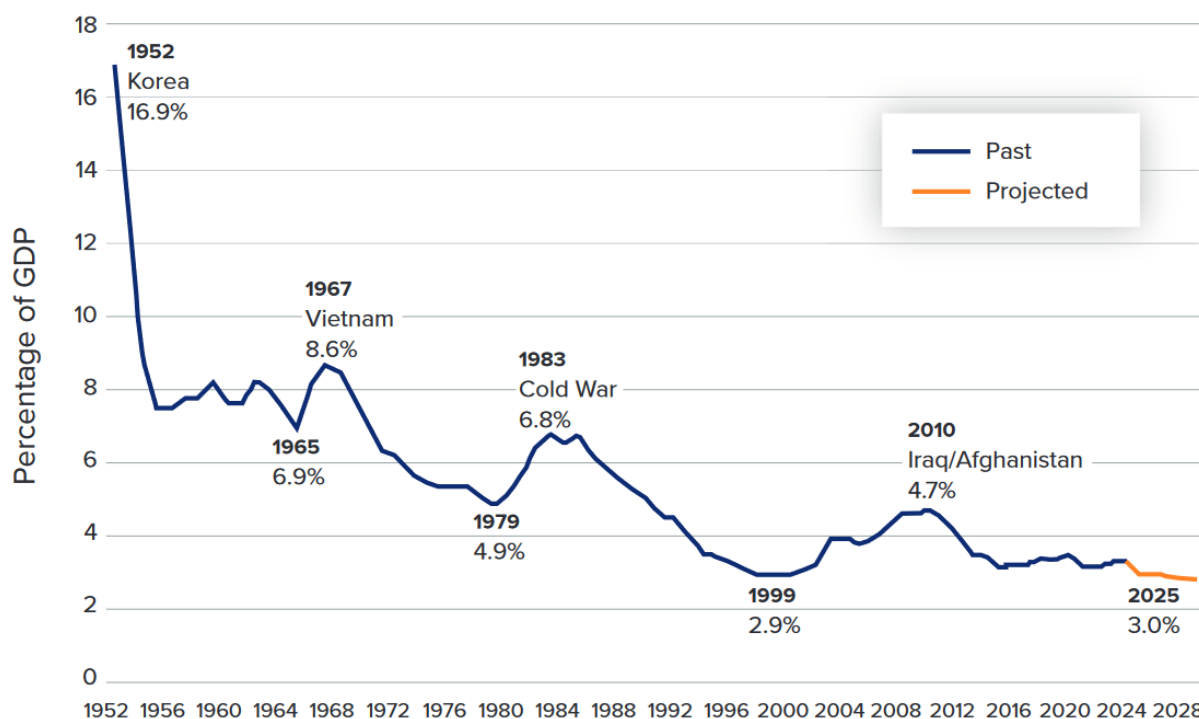
During the Cold War, including the Korean War and Vietnam War, DoD spending ranged from 4.9 percent to 16.9 percent of GDP (Figure S.1). The comparison to that period is apt in terms of the magnitude of the threat, risks of strategic instability and escalation, and need for U.S.

³⁰ Only the Marine Corps and Space Force met their fiscal year (FY) 2023 active duty recruiting goals, and only the Marine Corps met its reserve component goals (DoD, "Department of Defense Announces Recruiting and Retention Numbers for Fiscal Year 2023").

³¹ National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service, *Inspired to Serve*, pp. 93–123. See also Kuzminski and Sylvester, *Back to the Drafting Board*.

global presence. It does not reflect many significant differences between that period and today. Among these are advances in technology that fundamentally change the character of war and the shift from the government to the private sector as drivers of investment, R&D, and procurement and commercial production of hardware and software.³² When paired with improved operational concepts, these changes in the technological landscape have enormous national security potential that place the United States (and others) on the cusp of a revolution in military affairs. Another difference from the Cold War is how the network of U.S. alliances in NATO and Asia reshapes how the United States prepares for, deters, and wins conflicts.

Figure S.1
Defense Department Budget Authority as Percentage of Gross Domestic Product, FY 1952 to FY 2029



Sources: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), *National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 2025*, Tables 1-1 and 6-8, pp. 6 and 138-145; U.S. House of Representatives, "Division: Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2024," pp. 94-98; U.S. House of Representatives, "Division: Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2024," pp. 299-313; Keys and Nicastro, "FY2024 National Security Supplemental

³² In 1960, U.S. defense spending accounted for 36 percent of global R&D, but that figure was down to 3.1 percent by 2019 (Fontaine, "Foreword"). Eleven of the 14 critical technologies identified by DoD as "vital to maintaining the United States' national security" are primarily non-defense specific (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, "USD(R&E) Technology Vision for an Era of Competition," p. 3). See also DoD, *National Defense Science and Technology Strategy 2023*.

Funding,” p. 4; Office of Management and Budget, Fiscal Year 2025 Historical Tables, Table 10.1. Note: Includes DoD discretionary, mandatory, and supplemental funding.

The biggest difference between today and the Cold War is in the homeland. The Cold War demanded a national mobilization for military service, an economy geared more toward production for national security, and a unity of effort across government (including Congress) behind shared security missions that are missing today. Defense spending in the Cold War relied on top marginal income tax rates above 70 percent and corporate tax rates averaging 50 percent.³³ Using the Cold War as a benchmark for spending should be accompanied by acknowledging the other fundamental changes that could supplement America’s efforts to deter threats and prepare for the future.

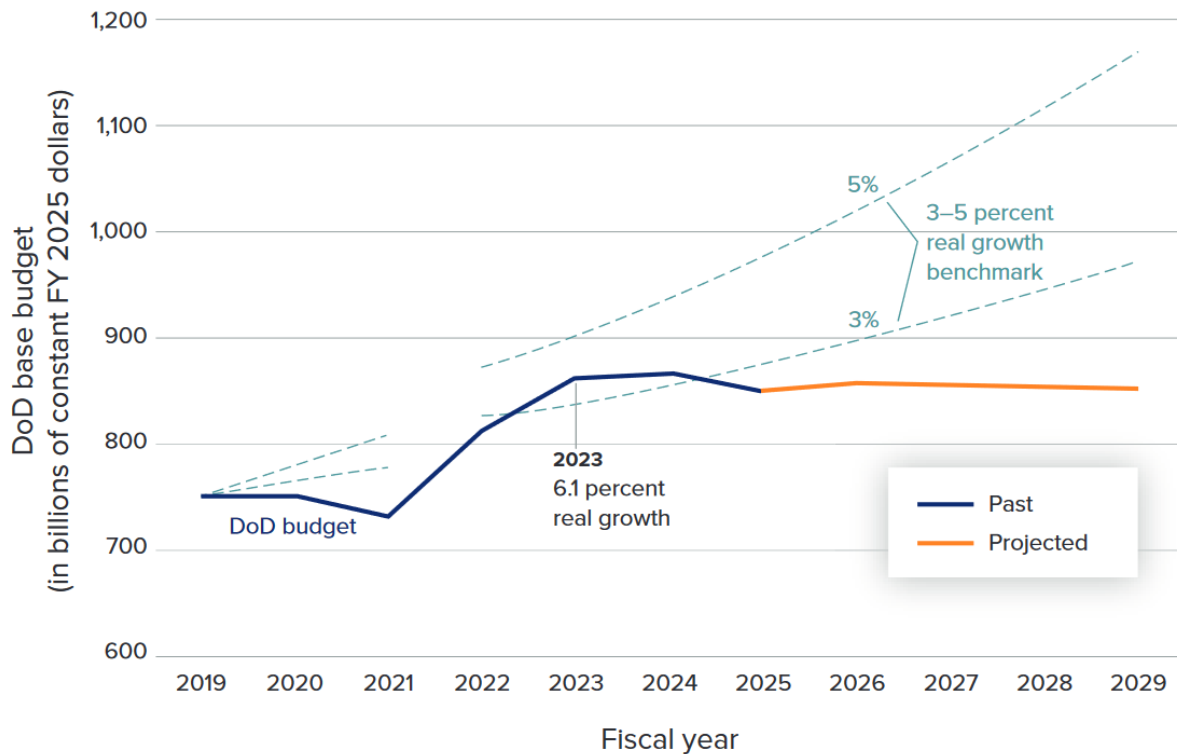
U.S. spending on defense far outweighs other elements of national power and will continue to do so. However, all these accounts (i.e., national security missions at the departments of State, Treasury, Homeland Security, Commerce, Education, and others) must be considered as part of a notional, overall national security budget.

The 2018 NDS Commission recommended increasing the base defense budget at an average rate of 3–5 percent annually above inflation. That has not been consistently achieved, and the world has grown more dangerous since that recommendation was made (Figure S.2).³⁴

³³ Ingraham, “The Tax Code Treats All 1 Percenters the Same. It Wasn’t Always This Way”; Peter G. Peterson Foundation, “Six Charts That Show How Low Corporate Tax Revenues Are in the United States Right Now.”

³⁴ The combination of merging Overseas Contingency Operations funds into the base budget and Congress increasing the FY 2022 and FY 2023 base budgets brought spending above the 3 percent benchmark in total, but budget projections are flat. Funding for allies, munitions, and submarines in the April 2024 supplemental appropriations law is also significant.

Figure S.2
Defense Department Base Budget Has Not Kept Pace with the Recommendations of the 2018 NDS Commission



Sources: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), *National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 2025*, Tables 1-1 and 5-6, pp. 6 and 63; Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)/Chief Financial Officer, “Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Request: Defense Budget Overview,” p. 24; Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)/Chief Financial Officer, “Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Request: Defense Budget Overview,” p. 7-1; U.S. House of Representatives, “Division: Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2024,” pp. 94-98; U.S. House of Representatives, “Division: Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2024,” pp. 299-313. Note: Discretionary base budget authority in constant FY 2025 dollars. FY 2022 benchmark values adjusted upward by \$42.1 billion to reflect merging \$14.3 billion for direct war requirements and \$27.8 billion for enduring requirements into the FY 2022 base budget.

The Commission makes the following resource recommendations for DoD and Congress:

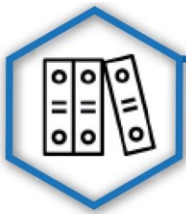
- DoD should immediately review all major systems against likely future needs, emphasizing battlefield utility and prioritizing agility, interoperability, and survivability. The Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff should be more empowered to cancel programs, determine needs for the future, and invest accordingly. DoD should invest more in cyber, space, and software, which have enabled warfighting for decades but are now central to conflict and have global reach.
- Congress should pass a supplemental appropriation immediately to begin a multiyear investment in the national security innovation and industrial base. Funding should

support U.S. allies at war; expand industrial capacity, including infrastructure for shipbuilding and the ability to surge munitions production; increase and accelerate military construction to expand and harden facilities in Asia; secure access to critical minerals; and invest in a digital and industrial workforce.

- DoD should immediately begin making structural changes and prioritization adjustments to spend national security funds more effectively and more efficiently. DoD should address its recruitment challenges, rewrite regulations to speed defense procurement (and address cultural impediments and risk aversion), and shift the R&D paradigm to adopt technological innovation from outside the department for warfighting purposes. The U.S. government should review national security authorities for agencies other than DoD and look for ways to enable and facilitate information-sharing, coproduction, and export controls to better work with allies.
- Congress should revoke or override the caps in the 2023 Fiscal Responsibility Act that serve as the basis for the FY 2025 budget request.
 - For FY 2025, real growth in defense and nondefense national security spending is needed and, at a bare minimum, should fall within the range recommended by the 2018 NDS Commission. While the reforms recommended above are being made and investments in capacity from the supplemental appropriation are underway, increased spending should be allocated to emphasize near-term readiness demands to restore and reinforce deterrence.
 - Given the severity of the threats, the FY 2027 and later budgets for all elements of national power will require spending that puts defense and other components of national security on a glide path to support efforts commensurate with the U.S. national effort seen during the Cold War.
 - Larger amounts of defense spending should be accompanied by sufficient resources to build capacity at the departments of State, Commerce, and Treasury; intelligence, trade, and investment agencies; the U.S. Agency for International Development; and the Department of Homeland Security and focus these organizations on national security missions. The United States should continue to provide support to its allies, which it relies on to fight with (or for) it.
 - The ballooning U.S. deficit also poses national security risks. Therefore, increased security spending should be accompanied by additional taxes and reforms to entitlement spending.

The lack of preparedness to meet the challenges to U.S. national security is the result of many years of failure to recognize the changing threats and to transform the U.S. national security structure and has been exacerbated by the 2011 Budget Control Act, repeated continuing resolutions, and inflexible government systems. The United States is still failing to act with the urgency required, across administrations and without regard to governing party.

This report proposes a new approach to spur the speed and scale of change. Implementing these recommendations to boost all elements of national power will require sustained presidential leadership and a fundamental change in mindset at the Pentagon, at the National Security Council and across executive branch departments and agencies, in Congress, and among the American public writ large.



FROM THE ARCHIVE

This issue's "From the Archive" section brings a part of a transcript from a 1977 Los Alamos meeting on the problem of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. The section features Professor Colin Gray's prescient thoughts on the problem of the United States willingness to run the risk "on behalf of foreigners abroad" that "may at some time in the future be felt to be incompatible with American well-being." Anticipating what will become a major U.S. foreign policy debate decades later, Gray argued that "it is unreasonable to believe there will always be American governments prepared to take the kind of risks that they appear to be taking today." Even if the context is much different, the transcript is a testament to the lasting value of sound analytical thinking derived from a deep understanding of lasting international relations principles.

B.A. Wellnitz, Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory panel on tactical nuclear warfare. Report of the fifth meeting (short title: TAC-5), April 5-6, 1977¹

The European View

Gray said that one very explicit strategic doctrinal linkage between the US [United States] and Western Europe, between theater and strategic levels of force, is the notion that if NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] gets into very serious trouble in Europe the US has a doctrine which says we think we are prepared to engage in a certain number of LSOs [Limited Strategic Options]. Looking out over the next ten years, the way the strategic balance may move and the way SALT [Strategic Arms Limitation Talks] may or may not energize certain defense reactions here, he sees various problems with LSOs. The principal criticism is that LSOs probably would not work as a linking device. We could not pressure the Soviet Union to return to its starting lines given the current and predictable state of the strategic balance at any time out over the foreseeable future. If we are really serious about LSOs, we must back them up with a major war-waging capability; otherwise we will be licensing a Soviet response that we have not really anticipated.

Central to much of the discussion at TAC-5 has been the fundamental political question Americans should ask themselves. How important is Western Europe to the US and in what particular ways? Until the US has seriously addressed this question, thought it through in a very rigorous fashion, sound conclusions cannot be drawn about the risks that various military strategies pose. The NATO Alliance, being an oceanic alliance, has a curious geography in that the principal security producer is an ocean away from the principal potential battlefield. This was all right before the North American homeland became vulnerable to direct attack from the USSR [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics], but over the medium to long term it is unreasonable for Western Europeans to expect the US to pick up

¹ Available at <https://www.osti.gov/servlets/purl/7091279>, pp. 73-78.



the kind of security check it is picking up at this time. Even aside from American calculations of self-interest, the problems of how to relink the theater to the strategic level or the credibility problems with regard to promising strategic use in response to damage in Europe will endure. At some point in the 1990s or perhaps 2000, some type of Mansfield amendment^[2] will succeed such that the West Europeans will have to face seriously the problem of how they live with a major superpower actually in Europe itself. In other words, the American security commitment is a temporary one; most Europeans, if they really think it through, would probably agree with that. The years since 1945 have been an extraordinary period. The kind of risks that the US runs on behalf of foreigners abroad, even though the American interest obviously is very substantial in Western Europe, may at some time in the future be felt to be incompatible with American well-being. This would be a very grave miscalculation on the part of the US but it is unreasonable to believe there will always be American governments prepared to take the kind of risks that they appear to be taking today.

Europe's Choices. Gray then turned to the three elementary choices that Europe faces. The first is the head-in-the-sand reaction, that is, Europeans are living in the best of all possible worlds and they cannot conceive of any preferred alternative to the US maintaining the kind of security connection it has today, so they just assume that NATO will continue forever more or less as it is. The US will pick up the principal check in terms of providing the theater and strategic nuclear resources to back up the conventional forces, and the transoceanic security connection and the notion of a reasonable equality of risk will continue forever. That is unreasonable; most Europeans would accept that at some point they will have to face the fact that the USSR is there and the US, in a geographical sense, is not.

The second alternative is for NATO Europe to accept the geopolitical reality that the USSR is there and the US is not and try to provide an in-theater balance for themselves. However, they cannot provide an in-theater military balance without providing a prior political structure. That is why there are discussions about pooling nuclear forces. A European defense community is impossible unless there is a single political authority; this is prerequisite to any really sensible and major military development. The major problem with this alternative is that the USSR does not look with favor upon the growth of a West European superpower armed with nuclear weapons. It certainly would have to be a major nuclear power; there will be no cut-price ways to provide a genuine in-theater balance in Europe, unless a West European superstate really were up to a superpower standard in terms of levels and types of armament.

Third is the Finlandization alternative, the notion that NATO European countries, in the context where the US decides it has run these risks and borne these burdens long enough when Europeans could do it for themselves, decide they would much rather seek the best terms they can from the USSR which has a long-term and fairly fixed determination to

² The 1971 amendment to the Selective Service Bill (HR 6531) introduced by Senator Mike Mansfield, would half the number of U.S. troops deployed to Europe.

secure hegemony over Western Europe. In other words, the Europeans just come to terms. The term “Finlandization” is inappropriate in this context because the peculiar security condition of Finland is determined substantially by the fact that neutral Sweden and heavily armed NATO are behind it. If there were nothing behind a Finlandized Western Europe, terms like “East Germanization” or “Polandization” might well be more appropriate; there would not be the local discipline on Soviet action that Finland, as a litmus-paper state, has in its favor.

The problem is that Europeans have a dilemma, when thinking about their military security and the political requirements to put together a sensible military structure to defend themselves, and that is that looking to a long term there is obviously a permanent geopolitical problem. At any point, which cannot be predicted, the US in a security sense may substantially “go home,” leaving the Europeans to cope as best they can. The implication is that they should face facts and get on with building something sensible in Western Europe to be phased in as the US phases out. The trouble is that this pessimistic prognosis may be out by some 30, 40 or 50 years; who knows how long sensible Americans are going to continue the existing security connection? And by tinkering and experimenting seriously with political and consequent military structures in Western Europe, the Europeans may well be hastening the very thing which they are trying to provide an answer for, that is, hastening American reconsideration.

A situation is conceivable where, as an alternative to NATO, one might have a genuinely politically united Western Europe—a single military power, but a power strong enough to resist American policy advice and be a nuisance to American policy managers. However, this state for a number of years would not be strong enough to resist the USSR if they really became unpleasant. Europeans are aware of this possibility and the present situation suits them fine. But they are also aware that at some point they have to face geopolitical reality, that the Soviet Union is there forever and has to be coped with substantially on an in-theater basis. The problems such as whether the Americans will suffer the risk of loss of American cities on behalf of Frankfurt will eventually be solved by geopolitics.

SALT. There are some serious definitional problems which impede our understanding of genuine defense issues and have a deleterious and unfortunate effect on the way in which we conduct ourselves in SALT and MBFR [Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions]. In fact, our defense terminology has become distinctly counterproductive for Western security as a whole. The distinctions between the theater and central systems, between strategic and tactical systems, are as flawed philologically as they are unhelpful to our security. The definition of a strategic weapon as being one which is able to strike a superpower’s homeland should not be acceptable. Many officials in the American and other governments do not find it acceptable but it is au courant and it has a certain functional authority in the SALT context.

The Soviets are sensible indeed to insist upon including American FBS [forward based systems] on the agenda for follow-on SALT negotiations but the Soviet deep-theater strike systems, SS-20, older M/IRBMs [medium/intermediate-range ballistic missiles], Backfire (if

not in SALT II) and certainly Fencer, should also be on the SALT III agenda. Gray is not worried about the Flogger; only the Fencer can reach London.

The central point of Gray's argument is that people should recognize in a more explicit fashion than they do that there is not a set of strategic problems distinct from theater problems. Under American strategic doctrine as it exists today, the US strategic forces are supposed to be relevant to defense and security problems in the European theater. Both pragmatically and logically we should design the strategic forces, and design arms control arrangements pertaining to them, taking full account of the threats to the West's assets in Europe. To pretend that there is a set of SALT central problems and also separate problems in Europe is intellectual nonsense and is going to cause grave problems over the decade ahead, given the substantially adverse trends in the various military balances. We should not design SALT regimes that either roughly or imperfectly balance the strategic forces of one side against the other.

Any sensible strategic arms control arrangement has to take proper account of the genuine and substantial geopolitical differences between the rival alliances. One side is an oceanic alliance, the other is a continental alliance; projecting power over 3000 miles of ocean is an exercise the Soviets do not have to face. If we try to design toward a fairly strict parity, we ignore some important political, particularly geopolitical, problems. The US strategic forces, with as much assistance as is manageable from the forward Allies, should offset SS-20s, Backfires and such frontal aviation systems as are offensive.

The fashionable handwringing over gray-area systems is nonsense in terms of Western security. The cruise missile has many varied applications, it raises a set of fairly novel problems and, from a strict technical arms view, it possesses horrific problems of verification, but, so what? Arms control is supposed to be instrumental; it is supposed to be about security. The fact that something poses problems for arms control is unfortunate, but in a way it is putting the cart before the horse. We have a gray-area problem because the SALT structure is grossly inadequate for managing the kind of weapons traffic that should be managed. In terms of the security of the US and its forward Allies in Europe, we should probably welcome the gray-area problem as helpfully eroding the forced, useless distinctions that should be eroded. Distinctions between theater and strategic systems are political conveniences; they are fashionable, we grew up with them, but if such usage ceases to speak to our security needs then it is time to re-examine the intellectual content of our ideas and categories rather than try to force weapons into categories where they do not fit in a security sense. In 75 other words, the distinctions between theater and strategic are totally outworn and should be eroded.

In an arms control forum it is difficult to suggest that the political reality of the geographical dispersion of the members of the NATO Alliance should be matched by, say, a numerical compensation on the part of the Soviets, although the history of SALT thus far has not shown the Soviets to be backward in claiming that their peculiar geography should be reflected in due compensation in SLBM numbers, for example. The US with a straight face and in a very serious arms control sense could claim interest in the excellent Soviet

concept of equal security and so the US should obtain numerical compensation for the very asymmetrical geographies of the rival alliances.

If the US really is serious about the defense of Western Europe, does the US also accept the proposition that the loss of Western Europe would be almost tantamount to the defeat of the US itself? If the Soviets either acquire, or acquire hegemony over, Western Europe, everything thereafter becomes possible around the globe. The consequences for American society of being in a fortress condition, the meaning this would have for the correlation of forces if the Soviets could mobilize the sources they had acquired, are such that there would be a monumental historical change in the correlation of forces between East and West. So it is not a case of Americans taking enormous risks with “those foreigners” who are not putting their lives and their money on the line for Western defenses, but it is of vital interest to the US indeed. The defense of Western Europe should be viewed by Americans as being the functional equivalent of the defense of California or Maine. If that is true, then US officials should accept the logical intellectual implications, in terms of their strategic theory, and should seek consciously to try to erode the theater/strategic distinction. The best place to begin trying to erode that distinction would be in the initial studies leading up to SALT III and preferably in SALT III itself. Obviously we would have to retitle the exercise.

Gray is aware of most of the difficulties facing his proposal that we erode this distinction and reorganize the way we go about negotiating on arms control, and is also aware that SALT is in trouble enough without increasing the agenda of weapons and increasing the national membership around the table. These are real problems but for once we would be addressing real security problems. If they cannot be solved through arms control, we will solve them through unilateral means. We cannot get away from the gray-area problem but Gray would force that down to the issue of how to count aircraft that have an operating radius of 500 or 600 miles. There would always be a threshold below which the arms control forum should not be concerned but the virtue of having a single arms control forum to get hold of these gray-area problems as well as the traditional strategic problems and also the deeper theater strike systems is that at least we could get hold of the total threat spectrum and the total set of Western assets that we wish to defend. Arms control and our security interests would be meshed for a change.

Of course, there would be major arms control problems in getting hold of theater strike systems, many of which can be configured alternatively for nuclear or conventional use. This gets away from strategic arms control issues in the strategic arms control forum, but it would be well worth attempting.

Alternatively, if the official American arms control community and the Soviets balk at this proposal to lump together the deeper theater strike systems and the strategic matters of SALT, and if we decide that we cannot make any mileage in the arms control forum by trying to incorporate FBS and Soviet strike systems, there is another route that could be taken. Going into SALT III (presuming SALT II is happily concluded) we say that we are not going to discuss FBS. Obviously if we have already written some kind of commitment to discuss FBS in SALT II, either in the treaty or in some protocol attached thereto, then clearly we have forsworn an opportunity. Nevertheless, we could say we are not going to

discuss FBS in SALT III but what we are going to do is for the first time take very seriously those deep Soviet theater strike systems. We are going to try to give the Soviets some incentive to talk seriously in an arms control forum about them. We are going to pose a major threat to the survivability of the Backfire, the SS-20, the Fencer and the IRBMs [intermediate-range ballistic missiles] of older vintage that the Soviets would retain. Many people who favor arms control fail to understand that one really has to arm in order to provide the other side with a reasonable incentive for striking a bargain.

Regardless of how we tinker with arms control processes, our whole military posture should have an integrity of itself; if we have a military posture that has integrity we will also have arms control leverage. We may not get arms control agreements for a variety of reasons, but we certainly will not get it if we do not have a military posture that makes sense quite aside from arms control criteria.

The Western Alliance needs to purchase extended-range land-based IRBMs for mobile deployment in Europe and we should deploy longer range cruise missiles in the European theater; these could be held to be usefully coupling in the political sense and they could give the West European Allies the ability to punish the Soviet Union itself—rather than Poland, East Germany or Rumania—for the sins of the Soviet Union. In the European perspective, although not in the American perspective, any collateral damage deliberately or otherwise imposed on Western Europe should be paid for in terms of dead and irradiated Russians and not in terms of hostage Poles, East Germans and Rumanians. Gray can see the American problem in vibrating to escalation control and not inviting the Soviets to take direct action against North America, but in terms of equality of risk throughout the NATO Alliance the Western Europeans would be unhappy with trying to match the SS-20s with shorter range systems. We need to get a matching theater capability—long-range cruise missiles and land-mobile IRBMs—a capability that would give what in previous days would have been termed a clear strategic capability. Soviet interests in expanding the terms of SALT and discussing their theater strike systems should increase markedly in a context where they see long-range cruise missiles and IRBMs appearing on the other side.

Gray noted that these are not really alternatives but they are synergistic and one should aid the other very substantially.

MBFR. In distinction to the above, one could suggest that the FBS, the Soviet medium and intermediate range ballistic missiles, Backfire and Fencers be added to the agenda of the MBFR. However, Gray feels that the West's hand is already weak in MBFR without adding new categories wherein we lack real leverage. It is just possible that we might be able to get a hand on constraining SS-20 deployments in MBFR, but what kind of leverage do we have in an MBFR context expanded to include the FBS? We could certainly develop and purchase it, but as of this moment our bargaining leverage is extremely weak indeed. Historically the Soviets have shown very little interest in measures of unilateral Soviet disarmament, and this is how they would regard expanding MBFR, given the current European balance and the way it apparently will move, unless we do something serious with regard to land-mobile cruise missiles and land-mobile IRBMs. If we think in terms of trading to get a handle on the SS-20, what incentive could we give them to show diminished

interest in deployment of that system? The Soviets would view our nuclear-capable, moderately obsolescent F-4s as being a rather unhealthy trade and Gray feels we just do not have the leverage to get hold of the SS-20 at the moment.

The real arms control problem is an American and West European military postural problem, not a case of tinkering with arms control structures or seeking new designs or coming up with new proposals. It is a simple matter that in arms control, as in many other things, you get what you pay for. If we have not paid for the requisite military muscle, here or credibly about to be here, we are not going to get balanced and noncosmetic arms control agreements. The Carter Administration has probably abrogated the sense in that point over the past few weeks. Gray has difficulty seeing what value MBFR is to the West, or even to the East, and he has found few people who share any contemporary enthusiasm for MBFR. In other words, if MBFR did not exist, he doubts that we would go to very great lengths to create it. On the other hand, MBFR does exist and obviously in a general way its fate is linked to East/West relations in Europe and elsewhere, and if SALT is in very serious trouble this cannot help MBFR. However, it is difficult to see what can be accomplished through MBFR; all Gray sees coming out of the exercise is a fairly token agreement to make token bilateral cuts which will have zero military effect. But in terms of any of the traditional hopes for MBFR, that it will lead to other things in the political realm or that something will really be done for European military stability—the Soviets are just too smart for that.

Nuclear Proliferation. Gray dismissed the nuclear proliferation issue on the grounds that it bears not at all on theater nuclear postures for NATO unless the US begins to take seriously the doctrinal problem of no first use, in which case interests in Europe and elsewhere in developing national nuclear arsenals might be considerably augmented. There are few, if any, substantial nuclear proliferation consequences of theater nuclear force issues in Europe. Even if there were, so what? Distinctly American interests in European security are such that we should do what is sensible in terms of West European security in the region. If Brazil or someone else is marginally encouraged to go nuclear, too bad; Gray is too concerned about security in Europe to take account of highly improbable scenarios wherein others are mildly encouraged to go nuclear as a consequence.

