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### **The Rise of a New Axis: Great Power Struggle and the Future of Conflict**

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#### **Introduction**

The Trump Administration has taken office during a period of perilous transformation that presages a new era in international security. This new era is unlike anything the United States has encountered since perhaps the period leading up to the Second World War. Its most prominent feature is the growing collaboration and coordination among revisionist and belligerent autocratic nations. They are building more lethal militaries while fueling crises and conflicts across Europe, the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific. To a large degree, these regimes are aligned in their opposition to the United States and the post-World War II security order established in the wake of American leadership.

China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran are pursuing concerted actions to further a common strategic aim, namely, strengthening each countries' military capabilities as a means, in the near term, to shift the balance of power in their respective regions, while in the longer term, altering the conditions under which future conflict with the United States and its allies would be waged. If this challenge is to be effectively countered, American political leaders must be clear on the



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nature of the strategic competition that is underway. While today's adversaries have varying individual regional interests and goals, they recognize the struggle to forge an alternative order of power can likely be achieved only through an entente that erodes American military preeminence, which is at the core of its freedom of action to deter aggression and prevail in conflict with acceptable risks and costs.

For President Trump and his incoming national security team, the priority should be the formulation of a national defense strategy which takes into account the danger posed by the rise of this latter-day axis and concentrates on rebuilding American military capability and capacity to counter the ambitions of its potential opponents. These ambitions contain echoes of the Axis powers that launched World War II. That period illustrates, in no small measure, how the failure of Western democratic powers to grasp the wider significance of the events surrounding the military compact between Germany, Italy and Japan and its allies, contributed to the rising tide of aggression and the eventual collapse of deterrence culminating in global conflict waged on multiple fronts in Europe, East Asia and across the Pacific.

### **Axis Powers 1.0**

It is said that while history doesn't repeat itself, it often rhymes. In this regard, it is useful to briefly recall some of the more salient features associated with the rise of the Axis entente to illustrate where today's developments might lead and how this might inform the administration's strategy to address the prospect of conflict with multiple challengers of the status quo. Not unlike present-day revisionist regimes, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the lesser authoritarian states who tied their fate to the side they believed would be victorious, were collectively dissatisfied with the existing international order created by the Western democracies in the aftermath of World War I. This hostility towards the status quo was reinforced by their ideological compatibility which held democracy and the democratic powers in contempt. Despite differing geopolitical aims, the Axis powers would come to understand that their strategic ambition of establishing a new international order could only be achieved by breaking the hegemony of western powers. By 1936, the three powers, chafing under Western imposed economic sanctions by the League of Nations to halt their expanding aggression in Europe, North Africa, and East Asia, would draw closer together to end their isolation, evade international restrictions, and begin preparing for large-scale conflict to remake the international political system. They signed a series of strategic agreements over the next 18 months pledging to consult and coordinate with one another in the event of war. Henceforth, the Axis states aligned their general policies and actions, while accelerating the buildup of their respective armies, air forces, and navies, under the broad banner of eroding and then dismantling the post-World War I international system – a system largely constructed by the United States with the declared aim of securing a lasting peace through a new global order based on democratic governance and self-determination.

In a manner not unlike the various "strategic partnerships" being put in place today by China, Russia, North Korea and Iran, the Axis powers focused their shared enmity on the



United States with the signing of the Tripartite Pact in September 1940. To bring forth a “new order,” they would “assist one another with all political, economic and military means when one of the three contracting powers is attacked by a power at present not involved in the European war or in the Chinese-Japanese conflict.”<sup>1</sup> The central goal of the Pact was to deter the United States from entering the war against either the Germany-led axis nations in Europe or Japan in Asia by warning the American leadership that if they did so they must be prepared to fight all of the axis powers. Within a short period of time, the United States would find itself in a global conflict confronting multiple major powers who had laid the foundation for war years earlier through the pursuit of a wide range of military measures, and the accumulation of advantages, both small and large. Unfortunately, it would take a surprise attack on the homeland to learn the costs of failing to prepare for aggression in peacetime.

### **Axis of Autocracies Redux?**

While caution should be exercised in drawing together too tightly historical parallels between axis powers past and present, such framing can offer useful insights to inform American and allied strategy and military preparation necessary to address the challenges posed by the emerging partnerships among today’s revisionist regimes. It can be argued, as some have, that the heightened military coordination and mutual support among China, North Korea, and Iran for Russia’s war on Ukraine is predicated on little more than an opportunistic alignment of like-minded anti-Western powers. According to this view, the alignment is either unlikely to outlast the resolution of the conflict or is vulnerable to fracturing through a Kissinger-esque diplomatic engineering of a modern-day Sino-Russian split.<sup>2</sup> However, the linkages being cultivated may belie a deeper and more enduring shift that should not be dismissed as isolated or transient events. Prior to 1936, the Axis states also operated quite independently of one another as they undertook their respective preparations for conflict in Europe and Asia. But this changed quickly as their shared antipathy towards the Western powers and the prevailing status quo hardened.

Today, there are two interrelated trends confronting the United States and its allies that are consequential. The autocratic powers are each challenging the status quo, seeking to compete across multiple domains of military power within the context of advancing their national aims while, concomitantly, coalescing their policies and actions into a common strategic front against the West.

Within the context of their own national agendas, China, Russia, North Korea and Iran are building up and modernizing their respective militaries, with Beijing and Moscow, in particular, constructing forces for global military campaigns.<sup>3</sup> China’s military modernization and growth now outpace that of the United States in terms of force size across land, sea, air, space-counterspace, and in the cyber domain.<sup>4</sup> Along with the largest army, navy and submarine fleet in the world, it is fielding long-range kinetic missiles, including hypersonic weapons, and non-kinetic weapons enabling the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) to carry out conventional global strikes against targets in the United States. In parallel with the ongoing



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transformation of its conventional forces to support long-range operations, China's strategic nuclear forces are undergoing rapid expansion. It is on a path to achieve at least deployed nuclear weapons parity with the United States by the mid-2030s. This change in the balance of nuclear power will provide Beijing with newly acquired "nuclear top cover" empowering the leadership with greater freedom of action to project military force and influence globally while pursuing more aggressive regional actions, particularly in areas like the South China Sea and Taiwan.<sup>5</sup> Russia, spurred on by its initial setbacks in Ukraine, is in the midst of a major rearmament program which also reinforces its broader revanchist ambitions to reclaim "lost territory" and establish a modern-day *cordon sanitaire* along its western European front. It is regenerating its conventional military posture while expanding its ground forces for high-intensity land warfare faster than American officials had originally forecast at the start of the conflict.<sup>6</sup> As part of the effort to rebuild its military for large scale operations, it is integrating space, counterspace, and cyber capabilities into its campaign planning to target NATO forces necessary to degrade the effectiveness of American and allied troops to project power into and across Europe during a conflict.<sup>7</sup>

Concurrently, Moscow continues upgrading and diversifying its arsenal of nuclear delivery systems, already the largest in the world, with advanced theater and strategic air-breathing and ballistic missile systems, including hypersonic weapons. Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, Russia's leadership has lowered the threshold in their military doctrine to allow the employment of nuclear weapons in response to conventional attacks on Russian territory.<sup>8</sup> Moscow's recent lowering of the threshold for nuclear use is made all the more dangerous by its threats to carry out limited nuclear strikes against the United States and its allies in order to weaken, through the West's fear of escalation, U.S. and NATO resolve to oppose continued Russian aggression in Ukraine.

Beyond China and Russia, North Korea and Iran present enduring threats to American interests at home and abroad, especially with regard to their programs for nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. Each seeks to position itself as the dominant disruptive regional military power committed to stoking crises, instability and conflict across, respectively, Northeast Asia and the Middle East. North Korea places the highest priority on its nuclear weapons and ICBM programs with the ability to threaten or strike the United States. Pyongyang is accelerating the testing and fielding of several new ICBM variants, which puts new pressure on U.S. missile defenses to protect the homeland against attack. Accompanying the qualitative and quantitative expansion in missile capabilities is an increase in the size of its nuclear stockpile which has been directed to grow by Kim Jong Un at "maximum speed."<sup>9</sup> In tandem with its nuclear and missile programs, North Korea, despite being one of the poorest countries in the world, maintains the fourth-largest conventional military, with more than 1.2 million personnel, capable of inflicting enormous damage on South Korea. Regarding Iran, its anti-status quo strategy remains fueled by a blend of religious zeal and geopolitical ambition focused on fomenting upheaval across the Middle East. Beyond its role as the leading sponsor of state terrorism around the world and its direct support for proxy forces in conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Gaza and Iraq, its military modernization centers around advancing its





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nuclear weapons, space launch and ballistic missile programs. Iran is a virtual nuclear weapon state today, reportedly with the ability to produce several nuclear bomb's worth of fissile material in a matter of weeks.<sup>10</sup> It possesses the largest missile force in the Middle East, which it employed in its first ever direct attacks on Israel in April and again in October 2024 when it launched some 300 and 200 missiles respectively (many of which were destroyed by American and Israeli missile defenses). Finally, Tehran remains committed to the development of a long-range ballistic missile to accompany its nuclear "breakout" potential. Building on its space launch vehicle program, which it is using to mask progress towards an ICBM, an Iranian long-range nuclear missile capable of holding American cities hostage to nuclear blackmail will likely arise quickly when the regime takes the political decision.<sup>11</sup>

Any one of these challenges to American security would be formidable on its own, but the accelerating military collaboration between Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran suggests a shift to a more direct and systemic confrontation with the United States and its allies. All are dissatisfied with the status quo and see it, and the United States in particular, in a state of decline. This is most notably reflected in a hardening of Russian and Chinese antipathy toward the U.S.-led post-World War II international security order. The current structure, in President Putin's view, is "irreversibly passing away," and an "irreconcilable struggle is unfolding for the development of a new world order."<sup>12</sup> This existential struggle with the West is marked by a "rapidly growing potential for conflict and fragmentation" over the existing geopolitical system. China's leaders hold views sympathetic to Russia's on challenging U.S. military power and reshaping the global order underpinned by it. Xi Jinping speaks about how Washington and its allies defend and perpetuate "an unfair and exclusive status quo" and that the time has arrived to "construct" a new order, presumably under Beijing's leadership.<sup>13</sup>

Within this shared strategic purpose among the aggrieved axis powers, is a deepening military and operational cooperation that is augmenting each countries' capabilities in ways that impose new or additional costs, risks, and vulnerabilities on the United States and its allies that will be borne out in future conflicts.

The most substantial development in this regard is the agreement reached between Presidents' Xi and Putin in February 2022 declaring a new strategic partnership that would know "no limits." Over the past two years, the no limits collaboration has only accelerated, making each more dangerous. For example, within the framework of the pact, China is providing military aid in support of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It is transferring dual-use technology such as machine tools and microelectronics to assist with Moscow's efforts to rebuild its conventional military and war supporting industry, including for the increased production of munitions, tanks, armored vehicles, and missiles.<sup>14</sup> This assistance not only advances Moscow's current wartime objectives, but increases its battlefield proficiency in the event of a wider future conflict in Europe with NATO. In return, Russia is furthering China's efforts to build advanced weapons through the transfer of technologies related to submarine operations, aeronautical design, including stealth that can be applied to manned and unmanned combat aviation, and improvements to missiles for more accurate targeting. The new technologies China is receiving boost its ability to wage high-intensity warfare against not



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just American ground, sea and land forces in the Pacific and staging bases such as Guam, but against the allied forces of Japan, Australia and South Korea.

Highlighting the expanding strategic cooperation are mutual defense pacts Russia has recently signed with North Korea and Iran linking their policies and actions to advance individual and joint military capabilities in support of common geopolitical aims. For instance, as a result of its deepening involvement in the war in Ukraine to redraw European territorial boundaries, Pyongyang is providing Russia's army with desperately needed ballistic missiles, artillery and other weapons. In addition to the material support, North Korea now has 11,000 to 12,000 troops fighting alongside the Russian army in what is the largest joint combat operation in Europe since the end of World War II. In exchange, North Korea is reportedly seeking from Russia military technology and expertise to accelerate improvements to its short-range nuclear weapons, reconnaissance satellites, ICBMs and missile launching submarines.<sup>15</sup>

This collaboration has a number of implications that expose the United States to greater risk. The augmentation of North Korea's conventional forces and tactical nuclear weapons, for instance, improves its ability to conduct a rapid, multi-layered attack against U.S. and South Korean forces. Additionally, these advances in both conventional and nuclear capabilities may embolden it to undertake (further) provocative military action against the South in a crisis, with unpredictable escalation dynamics that could well draw China into a conflict with American and South Korean forces, especially if Beijing intervenes to save its client from defeat.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, the military and technical assistance Russia is offering Pyongyang in the space and ballistic missile area generates additional risks to the United States by exacerbating the vulnerability of the U.S. homeland to North Korean nuclear missile blackmail and attack.

In tandem with the deepening strategic military ties described above, Tehran and Moscow are placing their wartime collaboration on a new and potentially more enduring footing. This is evident in the recent decision by Iran's leadership to aid Russian combat operations by providing weaponized drones and ballistic missiles to target Ukraine's troops on the battlefield and its critical civilian infrastructure. This cooperation is growing, and most recently includes the deployment of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in Russian-occupied Crimea and Kherson for the purpose of conducting Shahed drone attacks, along with the establishment of a joint manufacturing facility in Russia to mass produce Iranian-designed armed drones. Russia, in return, is transferring to Iran sophisticated weapons such as the Sukhoi Su-35 fighters, helicopters, anti-ship missiles and advanced air defenses, which Iran desperately needs to modernize its forces and which have been hobbled by decades of western sanctions. The improvements to Iran's air-defenses arising from this cooperation make it more difficult in a future crisis or conflict for the United States to blunt the regime's employment of its large arsenal of ballistic and cruise missiles, which will remain Tehran's chief means of threatening U.S. and partner military forces in the region.<sup>17</sup>



## **Next Steps: Preparation and Adaptation**

It is not necessarily the value of any individual development or particular advantage on the part of U.S. adversaries that should be accounted for when assessing changes that may alter the conditions under which a future war between the United States and its foes may be lost or won. Rather, it is the accumulated strategic effect arising from the many seemingly small and modest actions and advantages that can enhance military capability on one side while increasing risks and disadvantages on the other.

As the new administration formulates the nation's defense strategy, it must be centered on a strategic fact that rises above all others when framing the scope and scale of the threat and preparing responses. Namely, there is an accelerating shift in the strategic-operational linkages and cooperation amongst today's axis states driving regional instability and conflict across Europe, the Indo-Pacific and the Middle East, while simultaneously compounding the vulnerabilities to the American homeland. Not unlike the axis powers of the past, today's opponents are signaling to the United States that if it chooses to confront the aggression of one state it may have to engage multiple states. Indeed, the military cooperation and ties among today's revisionist powers are deeper and more expansive than those of Axis powers of World War II. What this suggests is that while the focal point of American defense strategy today on China as the "pacing" long term challenge is appropriate, it would be folly for U.S. policymakers to dismiss the prospect that our adversaries understand that dealing with the "American problem" requires that they collaborate and harmonize their actions during crises as well as in conflict.

It cannot be known whether the autocratic entente will fight together, or in what combinations. However, the current "one war" strategy and force posture that is centered on defeating a single major power disregards the axis nature of today's threats, leaving the United States ill-prepared to deter conflict and prevail on the battlefield, or more likely, battlefields. American national security planners would do well to recall the warning of Leon Trotsky, the father of the Red Army, who famously observed, "you may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you." Being prepared to deter, defend against and defeat more than one adversary in more than one region is not beyond the capacity of the United States and its allies. During much of the Cold War, the United States fashioned its military strategy, operational plans and force size and composition around the overarching concept of being prepared to fight two large conflicts and one smaller in overlapping timeframes. Deterring adversaries was grounded in the principle of convincing them that the United States and its allies had the military power to defeat multiple enemies, including the possibility of opportunistic aggression, in multiple regions. This standard was largely abandoned at the end of the Cold War.<sup>18</sup>

The United States is operating in a different strategic environment today, facing a combination of peer power and major regional power opponents with a shared disaffection towards the American-led order. Adopting a policy and planning framework that is aligned to this reality in order to shape force investments and modernization is a prudent place for the



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Trump Administration to start. It is not within the scope of this brief discussion to detail what those changes might look like or cost, which at any rate has been illustratively set out recently by both the *Strategic Posture Commission* and the *Commission on the National Defense Strategy*.<sup>19</sup> However, addressing the most significant and consequential risks and threats posed by the ambitions of today's autocratic entente, does point to a number of key areas requiring increased priority. These include space-counterspace, cyberspace, strategic and theater nuclear deterrent forces, homeland and regional missile defenses, advanced autonomous conventional systems and a revitalized defense industrial base responsive to an era of long-term multi-power competition. It is noteworthy that today, the United States spends around 3.5 percent of its GDP on defense, which is significantly lower than the Cold War average of around 10 percent. Adjusting defense spending upward to account for the new threats to American security is feasible. It is a matter of political will and leadership not affordability.

Taking seriously that our adversaries may be preparing for war, which must include measures to restore a defense posture, force structure and budget necessary to deter and defeat simultaneous aggressors, offers the greatest prospect for avoiding costly blunders and preserving peace.

<sup>1</sup> Details of the Tripartite Pact are available at <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/triparti.asp>.

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence A. Franklin, "Cracks in the New 'Axis of Evil': China, Russia, North Korea, Iran," Gatestone Institute, November 29, 2024, available at <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/21163/china-russia-north-korea-fracture>. See also Eugene Rumer, "The United States and the 'Axis' of Its Enemies: Myths vs. Reality," Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center, November 25, 2024, available at <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/11/the-united-states-and-the-axis-of-its-enemies-myths-vs-reality?center=russia-eurasia&lang=en>.

<sup>3</sup> See Eric S. Edelman and Franklin C. Miller, "We Must Return to and Maintain the Two Theater Defense Planning Construct," *RealClear Defense*, August 1, 2023, available at [https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2023/08/17/we\\_must\\_return\\_to\\_and\\_maintain\\_the\\_two\\_theater\\_defense\\_planning\\_construct\\_973522.html](https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2023/08/17/we_must_return_to_and_maintain_the_two_theater_defense_planning_construct_973522.html).

<sup>4</sup> See Department of Defense, *Report on Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China*, December 18, 2024 available at <https://media.defense.gov/2024/Dec/18/2003615520/-1/-1/0/MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA-2024.PDF>. Also see the *Report on the Commission on the National Defense Strategy*, July 2024, available at <https://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/NDS-commission.html>.

<sup>5</sup> The expansion of China's nuclear forces has been described as "breathtaking" by the former Commander of US Strategic Command, Admiral Charles Richard. Remarks available at <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2729519/china-russia-pose-strategic-challenges-for-us-allies-admiral-says/>.

<sup>6</sup> Noah Robertson, "'They've grown back': How Russia surprised the West and rebuilt its force," *Defense News*, May 21, 2024, available at <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2024/05/21/theyve-grown-back-how-russia-surprised-the-west-and-rebuilt-its-force/>.

<sup>7</sup> *Report on the Commission on the National Defense Strategy*, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Mark B. Schneider, "Russian Use of Nuclear Coercion against NATO and Ukraine," *Information Series*, No. 521 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, May 2, 2022), available at <https://nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/521-final.pdf>.





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<sup>9</sup> Jon Herskovitz, “North Korea Amends Constitution to Enshrine Permanent Growth of Nuclear Arsenal,” *Time*, September 27, 2023, available at <https://time.com/6318150/north-korea-exponential-growth-arsenal-constitution/>.

<sup>10</sup> One recent assessment concludes that Iran possesses sufficient weapons-grade uranium to construct its first nuclear weapon within a week and a total of six within a month. See “The Iran Threat Geiger Counter: Reaching Extreme Danger,” Institute for Science and International Security, February 2024, available at [https://isis-online.org/uploads/isisreports/documents/Iran\\_Threat\\_Geiger\\_Counter\\_February\\_2024\\_FINAL.pdf](https://isis-online.org/uploads/isisreports/documents/Iran_Threat_Geiger_Counter_February_2024_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Robert G. Joseph and Peppino A. DeBiaso, “Homeland Missile Defense: Responding to a Transformed Security Environment,” p. 41, *Journal of Policy & Strategy*, National Institute for Public Policy, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2024, available at <https://nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Analysis-Joseph-DeBiaso-4.2.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Remarks by Vladimir Putin in the plenary session of the 21st annual meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club. November 7, 2024, available at <https://valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/putin-plenary-session-2024/>.

<sup>13</sup> Ann Scott Tyson, “China’s new world order: What Xi’s vision would mean for human rights, security,” *Christian Science Monitor*, July 02, 2024, available at <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-Pacific/2024/0702/China-world-order-Xi>.

<sup>14</sup> Remarks of Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell. Stuart Lau, “US accuses China of giving ‘very substantial’ help to Russia’s war machine,” *Politico*, September 10, 2024 available at <https://www.politico.eu/article/united-states-accuse-china-help-russia-war-kurt-campbell/>.

<sup>15</sup> Michelle Ye Hee Lee, “Kim Jong Un has sent North Korean troops to Russia. What’s in it for him?” *Washington Post*, November 1, 2024, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/11/01/north-korea-troops-russia-ukraine-kim-putin/>. On September 13, 2023, Kim Jong Un met Russian President Putin at the Vostochny space launch facility in the Russian Far East. Asked whether Russia would help North Korea build its satellite launch capabilities, Putin replied, “That’s why we came.” Also see Guy Faulconbridge and Soo-Hyang Choi, “Putin and North Korea’s Kim discuss military matters, Ukraine war and satellites,” *Reuters*, September 13, 2023, available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/nkoreas-kim-meets-putinmissiles-launched-pyongyang-2023-09-13/>.

<sup>16</sup>Markus Garlauskas, “The United States and its allies must be ready to deter a two-front war and nuclear attacks in East Asia,” Atlantic Council, August 16, 2023, available at <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/the-united-states-and-its-allies-must-be-ready-to-deter-a-two-front-war-and-nuclear-attacks-in-east-asia/>.

<sup>17</sup> Courtney Kube and Carol E. Lee, “Russia is providing ‘unprecedented’ military support to Iran in exchange for drones, officials say,” *NBC News*, Dec 9, 2022, available at <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/russia-providing-unprecedented-military-support-iran-exchange-drones-o-rcna60921>.

<sup>18</sup> See 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/information\\_series/david-j-trachtenberg-how-the-lack-of-a-two-war-strategy-erodes-extended-deterrence-and-assurance-issue-no-590-june-17-2024/](https://nipp.org/information_series/david-j-trachtenberg-how-the-lack-of-a-two-war-strategy-erodes-extended-deterrence-and-assurance-issue-no-590-june-17-2024/). Also see David J. Trachtenberg, *The Demise of the “Two-War Strategy” and Its Impact on Extended Deterrence and Assurance*, Occasional Paper, Vol. 4, No. 6 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, June 2024), available at <https://nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Vol.-4-No.-6.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> For a broad range of recommendations on a U.S. military posture to address the prospect of conflict with multiple adversaries, see *America’s Strategic Posture: The Final Report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States*, October 2023, available at <https://armedservices.house.gov/sites/republicans.armedservices.house.gov/files/Strategic-Posture-Committee-Report-Final.pdf>; and *Report on the Commission on the National Defense Strategy*, July 2024, available at <https://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/NDS-commission.html>.

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