

ICBM EAR, July 28th edition, Prepared since 1981 by Peter Huessy, President of Geostrategic Analysis and Senior Fellow at the National Institute for Deterrent Studies.

Quotes of the week:

Alexander Stepanov, Russian Academy of Political Sciences: “Such strategic synergy between Russia and China should get those geniuses at the Pentagon to take a more balanced approach in their plans of flirting with the use of strategic nuclear delivery vehicles” comments made to TASS re the recent Russia and Chinese joint exercise of strategic bombers off the coast of Alaska.

Mark Schneider of NIPP: “In short, an undercounting of Russian nuclear capabilities could misinform the formulation of U.S. nuclear policies for both deterrence and arms control. This study details what may be a systematic undercounting of Russian strategic and non-strategic nuclear forces and addresses why these issues should be a matter of great concern to the American people and U.S. policy makers.”

H.R. MacMaster, Hudson Institute, July 22: And so, we and our allies have to be strong because what’s going to deter them, hard power is going to deter them. Hard power is going to deter them. Not threats of sanctions, not declassifying intel. We saw all this in the run-up to the re-invasion of Ukraine in 2022, not allaying their security concerns as the Biden administration tried to do. “Hey, these are our red lines, everything else I guess is fair game,” **Putin thought. We pulled our ships out of the Black Sea. We suspended lethal aid to Ukraine. We listed all the things we weren’t going to do to support Ukraine. Then we evacuated our advisors and evacuated and scuttled our embassy. Okay, now that combined with the Afghanistan disastrous surrender to a terrorist organization withdrawal, you can see why there’s this perception of weakness.** You can see why there’s this impetus for them to coalesce into this Axis of Aggressors because they think we’re done. If deterrence is capability times will, they think our will is zero.

Nuclear Archives

Links to CBS Radio and John Batchelor’s Eye on the World re nuclear deterrent issues

Here is a link to the twenty 2023-4 John Batchelor CBS radio shows where the ICBM EAR discussed nuclear issues. <https://audioboom.com/channels/4002274-the-john-batchelor-show?search=Huessy>

Three New Publications

US Nuclear Warhead Numbers:

<https://fas.org/publication/united-states-discloses-nuclear-warhead-numbers-restores-nuclear-transparency/>

NIPP’s new Journal

: <https://nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Vol.-4-No.-2-1.pdf>

CRS issues a report on the Nuclear Navy Sea Launched Cruise Missile

<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12084>

Summary

US nuclear stockpile is not 5000 warheads but considerably less at 3748; Professor Wang head of the Sam Nunn school I Georgia laid out his view of China and how the US must handle the challenge; Mark Schneider lays out the various views of the size of the Russian nuclear arsenal; Mr. Kinzer says the prospect of nuclear war has replaced global climate change as the most pressing challenge facing the globe; winning the war in Ukraine is possible with the right tactics, strategy and weapons; the ranking member of the HASC is highly critical of the management of the Sentinel program; even though the increased costs recently projected for the Sentinel will show up beyond the current contract with NG, Andrew Hunter of DoD says new competition for some elements of the program could be possible; and reports are that China is actually “speeding up” its strategic nuclear modernization effort even as the US scheduled modernization has slipped.

. Nuclear Fact of the Week

There were 3,748 warheads—including both operational and non-operational—in the U.S. nuclear stockpile as of September 2023 newly declassified information showed. This gives a good approximation of the warheads available over time to buildup the US arsenal if that is a decision of the US administration and Congress that goes beyond the program of record. This number is considerably less than that possessed by the USSR. See the following essay by NIPP expert Mark Schneider on the size of the Russian nuclear arsenal.

Key Events of the Week

We are hosting Dr. Jill Hruby, the head of the NNSA at breakfast on Monday, July 29th, 2024, at 7:45-9am at the Capitol Hill Club. If you wish to attend, please contact the ICBM Ear at phuessv@thinkdeterrence.com today and we will make every effort to accommodate you.

A New International Security Paradigm: The Dangerous New Quartet?

Background: In the past few weeks, there has been a **growing assessment of the cooperation** among Russia, China, North Korea and Iran, particularly military, economic and political joint efforts, described as an axis of evil, the evil quartet, or the brothers mayhem. Some have compared this axis to that of Germany, Japan and Italy during WWII, while others have reminded that Japan and Germany both had strong relations with Russia, both signing non-aggression pacts, for example. The current axis in many respects say experts is much more serious in that three of the four have nuclear weapons, and their political and military objectives are similar—the taking down of the United States. One new development was China getting all the Palestinian entities to join together in one political entity to “govern” Gaza and the West Bank.” Not unlike Fidel Castro’s similar push in 1962 to unify the guerilla groups in El Salvador under the banner of the FMLN.

The NIPP hosted a discussion of these issues with Ambassador Chris Ford and the VP of the AFPC Ilan Berman, as well as former State Department Official Joseph DeTrani. Particularly worrisome was that each of the nations might formerly or informally work together to harm the United States through initiating military conflict in various parts of the globe, overstressing the US capability to deter or stop conflicts.

Th NIDS hosted Professor Wang, the head of the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs at Georgia Tech. He spoke to a NIDS nuclear deterrent seminar on July 27, 2024, and made some highly informative points about the growing threat from China, its objectives, and what options the US has to deter China as well as change the direction of that nation's security policy.

His major point was that there can be no reconciliation and cooperative work between the US and China as long as the CCP rules. There can be no peaceful coexistence, the professor warned. The PRC challenge cannot be wished away, either as previous US administrations have lost sight of the objectives of the CCP.

China's goal is to resist, reduce and replace US power—militarily and economically. The CCP also seeks to reorganize the world order with a new Chinese imperial order, and eventually an empire of world communism. All within the context of a near zero-sum geopolitical game.

The professor thinks there are four possible outcomes: America retreats; China is defeated; a new Cold War begins; or a US-China military showdown occurs. The US goals must be three: (1) to protect and safeguard the Westphalian world order; (2) avoid and deter a hot war with China; and (3) transform China internally.

The professor noted there are also three areas where the US should push back against China. (1) While the goals of the NPT are laudable, it may be time to reconsider whether the ROK or Japan should have nuclear weapons on their territory---a prospect that would push the PRC to reign in the nuclear program in North Korea. (2) The US must also use Taiwan as leverage; and (3) Drain the CCP of financial resources especially re China's raising of trillions in US capital markets and having to deal with the reality of so many Chinese companies being listed on the US stock exchange, companies that are not private but really extensions of the CCP and communist state. .

US ICBM/Sentinel Costs Reviewed

Pentagon Says Northrop Shares Blame for ICBM's 81% Cost Increase

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/companies/pentagon-says-northrop-shares-blame-for-icbm-s-81-cost-increase/ar->

[BB1qyNTM#:~:text=The%20Pentagon%20and%20the%20top%20House%20Democrat%20on,ballistic%20missile%20program%20to%20at%20least%20%24141%20billion.](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-07-24/pentagon-says-northrop-shares-blame-for-icbm-s-81-cost-increase)

By: Tony Capaccio for Bloomberg News // 1d

(Bloomberg) -- The Pentagon and the top House Democrat on defense policy have called out Northrop Grumman Corp. for a share of the blame for a projected 81% increase in the cost of the new Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile program to at least \$141 billion.

“Appropriate steps have been taken consistent with the terms of the Air Force’s contract with Northrop Grumman to address shortfalls in contract performance with a continued focus on accountability,” the Pentagon said in a statement to Bloomberg News. “Going forward, the government and industry will both have to be part of the solution.” A US official following the program said the carefully worded statement underplayed internal Pentagon criticism of what’s seen as poor performance by Northrop contributing to cost growth and schedule delays for the complex launch and command facilities needed to operate the new nuclear-armed missiles.

The company was hampered by severe hiring shortages in the first three years, according to the official, who asked not to be identified discussing the sensitive matter. Northrop’s financial stake in the Sentinel program is enormous. The Air Force’s fiscal 2025 budget request of \$4.5 billion is expected to grow to \$6.6 billion in fiscal 2026 and \$8.5 billion in 2027. Air Force officials have said the funds to cover projected cost increases wouldn’t be needed until later in the decade.

Northrop, which reports second quarter earnings Thursday, said in a statement that it’s “making important progress on this highly complex weapon system” and meeting its contract commitments as “we move toward delivery of this essential national security capability.” But Representative Adam Smith of Washington State, the top Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, said in an interview that he was unsparing in his criticism during a July 11 meeting in his Capitol Hill office with Kathy Warden, Northrop’s chief executive officer.

“It’s shocking,” Smith said. “There’s gross malfeasance here both by the people who oversee the program and the contractor.” William LaPlante, the undersecretary of Defense for acquisition, said on July 8 that government planners had failed to predict the true cost of the ground elements of the program — such as silos and more than 7,500 miles (12,000 kilometers) of fiber cable. “There are reasons for this cost growth but also no excuses,” he added, without singling out Northrop, which will oversee Bechtel Group Inc. in designing and constructing the launch infrastructure.

Smith didn’t elaborate on Northrop’s management shortfalls, citing concern not to reveal classified information, adding “let’s just say the program was not well-run.” Smith said he told Warden “you’re in charge of making this work and you didn’t.” He said, “they just kept taking the money and they kept moving forward without making the corrections that I think they fairly clearly should have made.” He said Warden “basically acknowledged that and they were committed to doing better.” Northrop didn’t respond to a request for comment on Smith’s meeting with Warden.

[How many nuclear weapons does Russia have? \(PDF Above 130pgs\)](#)

[How many nuclear weapons does Russia have The size and characteristics of the Russian nuclear stockpile.pdf](#)

The size and characteristics of the Russian nuclear stockpile

By: Mark B. Schneider National Institute for Public Policy, Fairfax, VA, USA // 25JL24

Executive summary

Introduction Putin's war of aggression against Ukraine, backed by frequent nuclear threats, has focused attention on the scope of Russia's nuclear capabilities and the possibility that it will initiate the first use of nuclear weapons.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as the left-of-center Federation of American Scientists (FAS) estimate the size and composition of the Russian nuclear force, but those estimates may consistently undercount the delivery capability of the new and modernized Russian strategic missiles. Nevertheless, FAS estimates are cited globally as if authoritative and definitive; they clearly are not.

They may not provide a realistic portrayal of Russia's strategic and non-strategic nuclear capabilities, potentially hampering an informed understanding of the size and scope of the Russian nuclear threat. It is impossible to determine if what appear to be systematic low estimates of Russian nuclear capabilities are deliberate, but they seem to lean consistently in that direction. The potential for underestimating Russian nuclear capabilities, particularly if doing so suggests that Russia is in compliance with arms control agreements, is extremely troubling.

Doing so would essentially misinform the U.S. public and, potentially, members of Congress regarding the true value of treaties intended to control the number of Russian arms. Perhaps more importantly, undercounting Russian nuclear capabilities could misinform the U.S. public and congressional leadership regarding the adequacy of U.S. forces to meet deterrence requirements because the adequacy of the U.S. deterrence posture must be shaped by a realistic understanding of Russian nuclear capabilities.

In short, an undercounting of Russian nuclear capabilities could misinform the formulation of U.S. nuclear policies for both deterrence and arms control. This study details what may be a systematic undercounting of Russian strategic and non-strategic nuclear forces and addresses why these issues should be a matter of great concern to the American people and U.S. policy makers. To understand why possibly erroneous depictions of Russian nuclear doctrine and quantitative and qualitative errors in the presentations of Russia's nuclear capabilities.

These are important, it is necessary to examine Russian nuclear doctrine and policy, the size and scope of Moscow's strategic and non-strategic modernization programs, as well as the failure of arms control agreements to provide a reliable basis for measuring Russian nuclear forces or to constrain the growing nuclear threat.

Mark B. Schneider To cite this article: Mark B. Schneider (2024) *How many nuclear weapons does Russia have?* The size and characteristics of the Russian nuclear stockpile, Comparative Strategy, 43:4, 305-433, DOI: 10.1080/01495933.2024.2363738 To link to this article:

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Time to Quickly End the War in Ukraine

https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/right-way-quickly-end-war-ukraine?utm_medium=newsletters&utm_source=twofa&utm_campaign=The%20Right%20Way%20to%20Quickly%20End%20the%20War%20in%20Ukraine&utm_content=20240726&utm_term=FA%20This%20Week%20-%2020112017

Instead of Abandoning Kyiv, Washington Should Give It the Tools to Win

By: [Jakub Grygiel](#) for Foreign Affairs // July 25, 2024

The United States has hit a wall in Ukraine. President Joe Biden’s incrementalist approach is not working.

Instead, it has led to a long and tragic war of attrition. Ukraine’s faltering performance in the past year has raised the grim prospect of a Russian victory, which would see Kyiv fall under Moscow’s imperial dominion. Former President [Donald Trump](#) has promised to change the U.S. approach if he wins reelection in November, insisting he could end the war “in 24 hours.” And Trump’s running mate, U.S. Senator J. D. Vance, has written that Ukraine should limit itself to a “defensive strategy” to “preserve its precious military manpower, stop the bleeding and provide time for negotiations to commence.

” The solution both Trump and Vance seem to favor is a negotiated settlement that would allow Washington to focus its attention and resources elsewhere. The war does need to end—and end quickly. The answer is not to cut off all U.S. aid or rush into a lopsided deal with Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#). The United States can still get out of an untenable situation and also avoid handing Russia a win.

To halt open-ended U.S. expenditures and preserve Ukraine’s independence and security, the United States and its allies need to give Kyiv one last serious chance at victory—defined not as a return to Ukraine’s 2013 borders (as Kyiv would prefer) but as a sustainable restoration of roughly its 2021 borders. To make that outcome possible, Washington and its allies must substantially and speedily improve [Ukraine](#)’s military position with a large infusion of weapons—and place no restrictions on their use.

The most realistic chance for peace will come if Ukrainian troops can launch a decisive push that sends Russian forces back across the pre-2022 lines. A new U.S. president could catalyze the policy shift to make this happen; an incoming Trump administration, for instance, could seize the opportunity to signal American strength and put the conflict to bed, shoring up the United States’ international reputation and allowing Washington to turn to other priorities. But no matter who is in the White House, a short-term boost of unrestricted military aid offers the best chance for long-term peace on Europe’s frontier.

FOREVER WAR

The Biden administration’s current strategy is unsustainable both for the United States and for Ukraine. In 2022, after Russia attacked and Ukraine showed remarkable determination to fight back, Washington and some of its allies gradually and tentatively began to send military aid to

Kyiv, placing restrictions on how and where Ukrainian forces could use the more advanced capabilities. They feared that a more resolute response would trigger Russian escalation, potentially extending the conflict beyond Ukraine and putting the West in harm's way.

Putin's nuclear saber rattling has so terrified U.S. and European officials that even though they claim to seek a Ukrainian victory, in practice they provide Kyiv only enough support to keep it from crumbling under the Russian onslaught. The apparent goal is not to defeat Russia on the battlefield but to sustain Ukraine "as long as it takes"—that is, hopefully, until Moscow concludes that further aggression will be self-defeating and ends the war itself.

More than two years into the fighting, Kyiv has not folded, but neither have its Western partners given it the tools to win. A long war of attrition is likely to end in Ukraine's collapse. Kyiv does not have enough manpower to send reinforcements into the trenches for years to come, and away from the frontlines, the rest of the country is struggling. Three-quarters of Ukrainian businesses are experiencing labor shortages because of emigration and military conscription (and the casualties that follow).

The agricultural sector has lost fertile acreage: for some crops, the amount of harvested land has decreased by about a third. The loss of ports, such as Mariupol, has caused serious problems for producers looking to export. A February [report](#) cosponsored by the World Bank estimated that rebuilding Ukraine's housing, infrastructure, and industry will require close to half a trillion dollars. As time goes on, the situation will only get worse.

Time is not on the side of Ukraine's Western partners, either. European countries have claimed that Russia's war is an existential menace to the continent, but for the most part, their recent military investments have been modest and they have been reluctant to disburse large sums of money to prop up Ukraine's economy. Countries on Europe's eastern frontline are the exception; Poland will spend more than four percent of its GDP this year, and Finland, a new member of [NATO](#), plans to double its artillery ammunition production by 2027.

But even these countries will be forced to recognize that every artillery shell they deliver to a weakening Ukraine is one fewer that will be available to their own forces. If Russia makes further gains in Ukraine and ramps up its threats to the West, those countries may no longer accept such a tradeoff.

The war needs to end—and end quickly.

For the [United States](#), there is no benefit in bankrolling a protracted conflict. Biden's strategy of providing incremental aid will not prevent Ukraine's eventual destruction, and it will keep United States bogged down in a war without a path to victory. It is also politically unsustainable: in the wake of decades of deeply unpopular "forever wars," American leaders can no longer promise indefinite financial outlays and weapon supplies on the basis of a strategy with no prospect of success.

The United States is also taking larger strategic risks by restricting its support for Ukraine to incremental armament. Moscow can lean on its war economy and has no need to negotiate as long as it is confident that it can bleed Ukraine to a surrender and outlast Western support for

Kyiv. And Ukraine cannot afford to negotiate from its current position of weakness, either, having lost territory and access to the Sea of Azov, a crucial waterway for its agricultural exports, and lacking the means to reverse either loss.

This means the war will drag on—and the longer it does, the more time Russia has to create problems for Europe and the United States in other parts of the world. Moscow may expand its cooperation with North Korea by sharing satellite and ballistic missile technologies, devote more military forces to destabilize countries in sub-Saharan Africa and the wider Mediterranean region, and jam GPS signals across an increasingly large region in Europe.

China, meanwhile, is building up its own military, and it could take advantage of persistent volatility in Europe to advance in the Pacific. At the same time, Washington and its partners should not be overly worried about provoking Russia. Western fears of a Russian escalation have been exaggerated. Throughout his rule, Putin has been careful to avoid a direct clash with the West, conscious perhaps of Russia's economic and military inferiority.

Now, Moscow has an interest in containing the fight to Ukraine because it would have a hard time matching Western firepower and combined forces in an expanded war. Russia threatens to escalate but backs down when confronted with strength. Still, there are limits to what the United States and its allies should do; namely, they should not challenge the Russian army on the frontlines by sending their own troops to Ukraine.

DECISIVE ACTION

Instead of dragging out this war, the United States' goal should be to end it quickly, helping Ukraine defeat Russia and in the process deterring Moscow from pursuing further imperial ambitions. Stabilizing Europe first would allow Washington to concentrate its efforts in the Asian theater, where it faces a looming threat from China, sequencing its strategy rather than risking confrontation with two revisionist powers at once.

The most plausible way to achieve this goal is to surge weapons to Ukraine and place no restrictions on their use. Ukraine needs artillery, armor, and airpower, and it must be able to strike military targets in Russia, such as airports, ammunition and fuel depots, and military factories. By lifting usage restrictions on Western weapons, especially medium-range missiles, Washington would give Kyiv the opportunity to degrade Russian forces and prevent large-scale attacks on Ukrainian cities and infrastructure.

Ukraine cannot defend itself from behind a trench and with a dwindling supply of expensive anti-air capabilities. This surge would give Ukraine one last chance at a tactical breakthrough to restore or approximate its pre-2022 territorial status. From this position, Ukrainian forces could continue to threaten the gains Russia made in its 2014 invasion, especially Crimea. Although Kyiv's longing to reclaim the country's pre-2014 borders is understandable, its horrific losses and national exhaustion make a less ambitious definition of military victory much more realistic.

By degrading and pushing Russian forces from the territory they took since early 2022, Kyiv would win itself political options. Such a military achievement could impose sufficient material and reputational costs to force Russia to the negotiating table. Even without negotiations, which in any case may not quell Moscow's desire to restore its empire in Europe, a rapid and decisive battlefield victory would inflict enough damage on Russian forces to buy Ukraine time to rebuild its infrastructure and industry, regain fertile lands for agricultural production, and strengthen its military capacity to deter further Russian offensives.

A long war of attrition is likely to end in Ukraine's collapse.

The United States and its allies will have the resources to implement this strategy by the time the [U.S. election](#) in November has passed or a new president takes office. By early 2025, Western production capacity will have ramped up enough to supply Ukrainian forces with sufficient quantities of artillery shells. U.S. plants are on track to produce 80,000 shells per month by the end of 2024 and 100,000 shells per month sometime in 2025.

Add that to the 100,000 or more shells per month that European industry is expected to produce by late 2025 and Ukraine could not just maintain its defensive positions, which requires an estimated 75,000 shells per month, but also initiate offensive action. The U.S. army also has plenty of excess equipment, including older models of tanks and other vehicles, sitting in storage. So far, the United States has sent only 31 tanks to Ukraine, mostly to force Berlin's hand at providing tanks, but there are hundreds more in storage that could be refurbished and shipped.

Ukraine clearly needs more than it has received, as losses quickly thin out its armor stock. A small number of Western fighter jets in the hands of Ukrainian pilots is also scheduled to join the fight in the next months, but there are scores more that European countries could offload to Kyiv. Greece, for example, is considering giving several dozen jets. Although Washington and its allies cannot send their own soldiers to Ukraine, they can provide additional military training for Ukrainian troops. Manpower is a growing problem for Kyiv.

Conscription-age Ukrainians who have emigrated abroad should be called on to come home and join the fight. In the European countries where many of them now reside, governments could form Ukrainian military units and train the new recruits before sending them back to Ukraine. The decisive factor would be the speed and quantity of lethal aid. If Ukraine can manage a breakthrough on the frontline and force a return to the territorial status quo ante February 2022, it could deal Russia a clear defeat.

Crimea would remain under Russian occupation, but it would also remain a weak spot that the Ukrainian military can target to deter Moscow from resuming a large-scale war. The port of Sevastopol, several Russian military bases, and the Kerch Strait Bridge (which connects the Crimean Peninsula to the Russian mainland) have already proven to be vulnerable to Ukrainian sea drones and, in the case of the bridge, a truck bomb. Ukraine should be given more capabilities—such as U.S. ballistic missiles and British, French, and German cruise missiles—to strike these places now and keep them under threat in the event of a cease-fire.

By internationally recognized law, they are part of Ukraine's own territory, so military operations there would not carry the same escalation risks as hitting targets in Russia proper. Only Moscow (and a handful of minor powers) considers Crimea to be part of Russia, and when Ukraine has attacked it in the past two years, Russia's response has not been any different than its response to Ukrainian attacks on the frontlines.

Even in the best-case scenario, there is no reason to expect a defeat of Russia so dramatic as to fundamentally alter Moscow's strategic outlook. Russia will remain a powerful nuclear state, nurturing deep aspirations to restore its imperial greatness. But to achieve that goal, it needs Ukraine, which would give it the ability to threaten the rest of Europe and hold sway over European politics. Without Ukraine, Russia is only an Asian power, swiftly losing ground to China.

Kyiv cannot change Moscow's strategic imperatives with victories on the battlefield, but it can deny Russia control of its lands. A rapid and significant supply of Western arms would give Ukraine its best chance to push back Russian forces and create the space and the time it needs to rebuild, refit, and deter another Russian advance. There is no strategic rationale for Washington to prolong the conflict with drop-by-drop delivery of supplies; policies designed primarily to avoid escalation will not save Ukraine or stabilize Europe's eastern frontier. Instead, it is time for the next U.S. president to take decisive action.

A Second cold war? China, Russia defy West with 'Beijing Declaration' - analysis

<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-811969>

Russian-Chinese interest in Palestinian reconciliation is perhaps in fact a method of strengthening an anti-Western bloc as a whole.

By: [OHAD MERLIN](#) JULY for the JPost // 25, 2024 21:36 -- Updated: JULY 25, 2024, 21:56

This last week saw an interesting development in the inner Palestinian arena, as Hamas and Fatah officials were among signers of a declaration of unity under Russian and Chinese auspices.

Signed by major Palestinian terrorist organizations, including Muslim Brotherhood branch Hamas, Islamic Republic aficionado Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and the Marxist-oriented Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), as well as organizations no longer formally recognized as terror groups despite their admitted and active participation in both the October 7 massacre and other violent acts, such as Fatah and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP).

The "[Beijing Declaration](#)" as it was branded featured nothing new nor did it delve into too many details. The Palestinian factions agreed to commit to the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, reaffirmed the Palestinians' right to 'resist occupation,' pledged to combat the siege on Gaza and any alleged Israeli attempts of evacuation, rejected any foreign intervention in the question of the "day after" in Gaza, expressed support for 'the resistance,' and commended the shaheeds and the prisoners.

The declaration also claimed that the factions will work to [form a unity government](#) which would wield power over both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and it even featured a clause committing to prepare the ground for the carrying out of general elections and a “developing” of the PLO. The familiar content of the declaration notwithstanding, the prospects and auspices were ostensibly the main variants this time.

Past attempts have been made to reconcile the bitter Islamist and Muslim-nationalist rivals, but they were usually overseen by Arab states, symbolizing the Arab interest – and more importantly the global disinterest – in the issue of Palestinian reconciliation. This time, however, [Russia and China](#), both mentioned cordially in the declaration, were involved as both main actors and hosts, which clearly calls for an explanation.

The question that arises is: what do two of the largest superpowers in the world in terms of economy, population and territory find in the inner bickering of an Islamist murderous group with another very-Muslim-yet-more-nationalist murderous group, both numbering no more than a few millions and both located thousands of miles away from Moscow and Beijing?

Three interrelated explanations come to mind.

1. The question of the day after

The first explanation that comes to mind is the timing. Roughly nine months after the October 7 massacre and into the retaliatory war, both Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Gallant have hinted in the past few weeks that the intensive part of the war on Hamas would be over soon, paving the way to the looming ‘day after’ issue. Brokering a deal between the main parties affected from the ‘day after’ and involved in one of the most widely covered wars would allow the great rivals of the US to have a stake in overseeing the implementation of the day after.

While at the same time having a foot in the door. In this context it is worth pondering whether, if Israel is seen by its great ally as a bastion of democracy and Western values in the midst of an ensuing totalitarian jungle, perhaps these rival actors would want to see the Palestinian state as a bastion of disdain for the West, all the while contributing to Israel’s most immediate adversaries.

2. The global theorem

The second possible explanation lies in deep economic and political questions of rivalry. Hamas leaders have repeatedly stated that one of the reasons they launched their murderous campaign against Israeli communities was to annul any progress toward normalization between Saudi Arabia and Israel. Though the fight against normalization has religious and political repercussions, some analysts suggested that Israeli-Saudi normalization would further facilitate the energy bridge announced by US President Joe Biden which aimed to connect India with Europe through the Arabian Peninsula and Israel.

This would've been a devastating blow to Russian President Vladimir Putin in his quest to ensure Russian domination over energy supply to Europe, a matter clearly demonstrated during the invasion of Ukraine and the 'mysterious' cutting of natural gas supply during the winter to those who acted too starkly against Russia. It should be stressed again that this is not to say that Hamas's launch of the October 7 massacre was coordinated with Russia; rather that this was a converging of interests between many actors for whom normalization may be seen as a serious threat.

For this reason, Hamas is seen as an asset for the anti-Western bloc, echoing the words of Hamas leader Osama Hamdan who thanked Russia and China in a webinar a couple of months ago for their rejection of the criminalization of Hamas at the UNSC, adding that there is "an understanding on the Russian and Chinese side that the power of this axis of resistance is in favor of the international role of Russia and China." If his words are true, perhaps Russia and China want to make sure specifically that Hamas will be left in charge the 'day after.'

3. The second Cold War

And perhaps this Russian-Chinese interest in Palestinian reconciliation is in fact a method of strengthening an anti-Western bloc as a whole. The war in Gaza created ripple effects across Western nations, triggering a generation of self-loathing young citizens to take to the streets and express their disdain and disgust towards the countries they live in, their heritage and their history. These youngsters are filled with hate for their country, its values, its freedoms, its history – undoubtedly stained, yes – and even their own security forces.

Examples of this vary, from calls of 'down with US imperialism' in protests, referring to cops as 'pigs' on social media. While these convictions are undoubtedly sincere on the individual level, they are inflamed by the West's adversaries through social media and academy. In the US, participants were NGOs related to the Chinese Communist Party such as the People's Forum and even North Korea sympathizers such as Nodutdol.

On the other hand, Qatar's financial tentacles, through the acquisition of entire faculties, promote anti-Western sentiment, as well as by fanning the flames of divisive issues in American politics such as the case of AJ+, a social media publisher owned by Al Jazeera. Iran is also present with the Mapping Project and religious centers. NGOs openly swear allegiance to Qasem Suleimani and the supreme leader of Iran, as do the Muslim Brotherhood which pushes all the while through lobby organizations, NGOs and religious groups across the country.

All of these converge in the attempt to recreate a bi-polar world, in which "The West" stands against "the global south." They brand the West as violent, colonialist and exploitative; and the South as peaceful, indigenous and exploited, forgetting "global southern" imperialism, suppression of indigenous ethnic groups and rejection of self-determination for peoples in their empires' domain. Nevertheless, this time it appears that the "global south" bloc has learned its lesson.

Focusing on pushing, pulling and exercising pressures from within, popularly dubbed "breaking the house with the master's tools." What unites all these loosely related groups is their hatred of the West, their tyrannical politics, and their open endorsement of an organization which

murdered thousands of innocent civilians. Making sure that Hamas stays relevant, and promoting Hamas-Fatah rapprochement, sends a message of ‘uniting the bloc,’ and taking charge of the affairs of the so-called ‘Global South.’

Russia and China are ideologically as distant as can be from caliphate-seeking jihadist militias such as Hamas. Russia and China might seem to be mirroring US Cold War actions in Vietnam, Korea and Afghanistan. However, in their quest to block the US and its perceived ‘agents’ in pursuit of a bipolar world, it seems they find that endorsing terrorists who burn families alive, and kidnap toddlers and babies, is a must.

Space Force mulling nuclear protection for missile-tracking satellites

By [Courtney Albon](#)

Jul 26, 2024, 01:49 PM

Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman are building satellites as part of the Space Force's Next-Generation Overhead Persistent Infrared program. (Lockheed Martin)

The Space Force has launched a study to consider what capabilities to host on future satellites that detect and track advanced, high-speed weapons.

Col. Rob Davis, who oversees space sensing acquisition efforts for the service, said Thursday that as part of that work, the Space Force is weighing the right approach for ensuring such spacecraft can survive a nuclear threat.

“We’re currently working with the Space Warfighting Analysis Center, the SWAC, to help us figure out what’s the next generation of those capabilities,” Davis said during a virtual National Security Space Association event.

The service is in the early days of a long-term plan to [strengthen its missile tracking capabilities](#) against threats from China and Russia, both of whom are developing hypersonic missiles that can travel and maneuver at Mach 5 speeds. The two countries are also building, and in some cases testing, anti-satellite weapons that could impede safe operations in orbit.

The Space Force currently relies on large, expensive satellites to perform its missile warning mission. These spacecraft, part of the Space-Based Infrared System, are radiation-hardened, which means they’re equipped with structures and materials that allow them to withstand a nuclear attack.

<https://breakingdefense.com/2024/07/space-force-analyzing-next-gen-missile-warning-tracking-nc3-options/>

Xi's China To 'Speed Up' Nuclear Force Buildup

Newsweek Online, July 26 | Ryan Chan

China's leader Xi Jinping ordered his country to "speed up" the development of strategic deterrence forces as Beijing demands the United States make "nuclear concessions."

The Central Committee of ruling China's Communist Party adopted a resolution on "further deepening reform comprehensively to advance Chinese modernization" on July 18 during its third plenary session in Beijing. The full text of the resolution was published on Sunday.

Only the Central Committee has the power to make decisions on major national policies, according to the party's constitution. It carries out resolutions, directs all the party's works, and represents the party in external relations when the National Congress is not in session.

Xi has been the general secretary of the party since 2012. He is also the president of his country and the chairman of the Central Military Commission, the highest national defense organization in China.

he decision to accelerate development of nuclear forces was mentioned briefly under the section of "deepening reform of joint operations systems" in the resolution, which also touched on issues such as developing new-domain forces with new combat capabilities.

Beijing has never disclosed the size of its nuclear arsenal. In a U.S. Defense Department report in 2023, the Pentagon estimated China has more than 500 nuclear warheads in operational and "will probably have over 1,000 operational nuclear warheads by 2030."

The report also said China continued its rapid nuclear expansion by increasing the number of nuclear delivery platforms, or the "three legs" of its nuclear triad. They are composed of land-based ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and strategic bombers.

Each leg of the nuclear triad has its unique attributes. Land-based missiles can be launched and strike targets within minutes, while it is hard to track ballistic missile submarines as they are always on patrol. Bombers placed on alert can provide a variety of nuclear options.

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) assessed China might have put 24 nuclear warheads in deployed status with launchers for the first time.

There were 3,748 warheads—including both operational and non-operational—in the U.S. nuclear stockpile as of September 2023 in comparison with China, newly declassified information showed. The U.S. military is modernizing and upgrading its aging nuclear triad as "foreign nuclear threats growing."

Meanwhile, China repeated its "nuclear demands" to the U.S. on Tuesday during a session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, or NPT, held in Geneva, Switzerland.

Both China and the U.S. are the parties to the treaty. Sun Xiaobo, director-general of the Department of Arms Control under China's Foreign Ministry, urged the U.S. to abandon nuclear sharing and extended deterrence arrangements with its NATO and Asian allies.

"The two countries with the largest nuclear arsenals must continue to fulfill their special and primary responsibilities for nuclear disarmament," he said without naming the U.S. and Russia. SIPRI estimated Moscow maintained 4,380 nuclear warheads as of January.

China refused to join the nuclear disarmament process unconditionally unless the U.S. and Russia "further significantly and substantially reduce their nuclear arsenals in a verifiable, irreversible and legally binding manner," Sun hinted in his statement to the committee.

He proposed the five nuclear-weapon states—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the U.S.—to negotiate a treaty or issue a political statement on "mutual no-first-use of nuclear weapons." Beijing has long claimed its commitment to this nuclear weapon policy.

The U.S. representative questioned China's nuclear proposal on Thursday. Bruce Turner, senior bureau official for Bureau of Arms Control, Deterrence, and Stability, said his country has concerns about how the proposed no-first-use treaty would operate in practice.

China's "rapid and opaque" nuclear weapons build-up has raised questions about its ambiguous, stated no-first-use policy, Turner said to the NPT Preparatory Committee.

The unacceptable, growing risk of nuclear war

Boston Globe Online, July 26 | Stephen Kinzer

For years it has been clear that the greatest threat to the survival of humanity is climate change. No more. The specter of a baked planet is horrific, but over recent months another threat has become even more frighteningly real: nuclear war.

This danger has been growing for years, but war in Ukraine has made it more acute. Russia has signaled that it may consider using nuclear weapons if that is the only way to avoid losing the war. Ukraine's NATO allies, also nuclear-armed, are in an equally combative mood. Add to that the possibility of war over Taiwan, plus the wild card of North Korea, and you have the makings of a perfect nuclear storm.

Russian military units are being trained in the use of battlefield nuclear weapons, and Russia has launched a satellite that American analysts fear could be a prototype for an orbiting nuclear platform. Both China and the United States are engaged in major "modernization" of their nuclear arsenals. Some of Donald Trump's supporters are hoping that if he is elected president, he will resume nuclear weapons tests, which the United States and other nations halted more than 30 years ago.

Jens Stoltenberg, secretary general of NATO, recently suggested that the alliance is putting more nuclear missiles on alert. "I will not go into the operational details of how many nuclear

warheads should be in the operational inventory and how many should be in storage,” he said, “but we must consult on these issues, and that is exactly what we are doing.”

While leaders of nuclear-armed nations are in no mood for compromise, several leaders of smaller countries have sounded alarms. “We are approaching a global conflagration,” President Gustavo Petro of Colombia asserted last month. President Aleksandar Vučić of Serbia told an interviewer that “we are getting close to a real disaster. . . . I cannot say a third world war, but that big confrontation, I believe we are not far from it.”

The last time the world faced the prospect of imminent nuclear war was during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. It was averted because leaders on both sides understood the danger. “Mr. President, we and you ought not to pull on the ends of the rope in which you have tied the knot of war,” Nikita Khrushchev wrote to John F. Kennedy at the height of the crisis. “If there is no intention to tighten that knot and thereby doom the world to the catastrophe of thermonuclear war, then let us not only relax the forces pulling on the ends of the rope, let us take measures to untie that knot.”

Such wisdom is sorely lacking at the top of world governments today. Victory-or-death rhetoric has displaced diplomacy. Few in Russia, China, or the United States speak of peace and what must be done to achieve it. The only peace they seek is the one that follows total victory — a concept that loses meaning when war is nuclear.

Although Ukraine is the flashpoint most likely to set off nuclear war, it is hardly the only one. The possibility of an accidental launch caused by false reports of enemy attack is considerable. So is a sudden strike by a rogue power.

In a terrifying new book called “Nuclear War: A Scenario,” the investigative journalist Annie Jacobsen considers how this might happen. She imagines that the North Korean leader, angry at new provocations, launches three nuclear missiles toward the United States. One is a dud, a second hits the Diablo Canyon nuclear plant in California and triggers a meltdown, and the third vaporizes Washington. The United States responds with a nuclear counter barrage. Some of those missiles pass over Russian airspace. Russian forces detect them, fear their country is the target, and launch a full-scale attack on the United States.

Under US law, no one may veto a decision by the president to launch nuclear weapons. Decisions by a head of state in Moscow, Beijing, or Pyongyang would probably be just as hard to countermand. Daniel Holz, a physicist who works with the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, made the obvious observation: “It's insane that one person can destroy civilization in 30 minutes.”

Given this stark reality, why are major world leaders more focused on defeating adversaries than preventing nuclear catastrophe? One reason is that nuclear war is almost unimaginable; what we have never experienced seems diffuse and faraway. Another is that leaders in Russia, the United

States, and other nuclear-armed nations may consider their war aims so vital that they must be pursued regardless of risk.

Robert McNamara, who was secretary of defense during the Cuban missile crisis, spent his last years warning that nuclear war had become probable and “it will result in the death of nations.” Half a century later, another former secretary of defense, William Perry, not only repeats that message but laments that “most people are blissfully unaware of this danger.”

Geopolitics, like all politics, presents painful choices. Often the best options are highly unpalatable. Nuclear war, however, is beyond unpalatable. Preventing it should be an urgent goal for world leaders and the people they govern.

--Stephen Kinzer is an award-winning author and foreign correspondent who has covered more than 50 countries on five continents. His articles and books have led the Washington Post to place him “among the best in popular foreign policy storytelling.” He was Latin America correspondent for The Boston Globe, and then spent more than 20 years working for the New York Times, with extended postings in Nicaragua, Germany, and Turkey. He is a visiting fellow at the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University. His most recent book is “The Brothers: John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, and Their Secret World War.”

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[Air Force could reopen competition for Sentinel ICBM ground infrastructure, Hunter says](https://breakingdefense.com/2024/07/air-force-could-reopen-competition-for-sentinel-icbm-ground-infrastructure-hunter-says/?utm_campaign=dfn-ebb&utm_medium=email&utm_source=sailthru)
https://breakingdefense.com/2024/07/air-force-could-reopen-competition-for-sentinel-icbm-ground-infrastructure-hunter-says/?utm_campaign=dfn-ebb&utm_medium=email&utm_source=sailthru

“I think there are elements of the ground infrastructure where there may be opportunities for competition that we can add to the acquisition strategy for Sentinel,” said Andrew Hunter, the Air Force’s top acquisition official.

By: [VALERIE INSINN for Breaking Defense](#) // [A](#) on July 20, 2024, at 9:47 AM

RIAT 2024 — As the Air Force [considers how to restructure](#) the procurement of its massively over-budget nuclear ICBM replacement, one option on the table could involve stripping away portions of Northrop Grumman’s current contract and opening them back up for wider competition, the service’s top acquisition official said today.

Earlier this month, the Pentagon determined that it would continue the [LGM-35A Sentinel](#) program despite an [81 percent increase in cost](#), mostly driven by problems associated with revamping ground-based infrastructure like missile silos. But just because the Pentagon made the decision not to terminate the program doesn’t mean it will continue in its current incarnation, [Andrew Hunter](#) told reporters here today. The Air Force is required by law to formulate a new acquisition strategy that could contain an alternate approach for developing Sentinel’s infrastructure.

“Both Secretary Kendall and I are big fans of competition. So, we’re going to take a look at the right approach to getting after, particularly, the ground piece going forward,” Hunter said. “I think there are elements of the ground infrastructure where there may be opportunities for competition that we can add to the acquisition strategy for Sentinel.” That potential scenario could shake up the program for prime contractor Northrop Grumman, which was awarded a \$13.3 billion contract in 2020 after Lockheed Martin was eliminated from the competition and Boeing — the lone remaining company vying for the program — dropped out. (A Northrop official [previously told reporters](#) that the company’s “main construction partner” is Bechtel, and that Clark Construction is serving an advisory role.)

Northrop referred back to a previous statement on the program, which states that, “DoD’s certification and funding validates continued confidence in the Sentinel weapon system and its critical role in safeguarding global security. In partnership with the Air Force, Northrop Grumman is making important progress on this highly complex weapon system.” While Hunter stressed that no final decisions on how to restructure the program have been made, he said the Air Force may be able to facilitate competition by breaking up the infrastructure portion of the contract into “smaller bites,” allowing a wider number of companies to bid only on projects where they could drive a reduction in price.

“To get more competition, you’re going to look at not just taking a giant chunk of the program out but just the tasks that are more easily computed,” he said, adding that, “it’s something to look at.” The Defense Department most recently estimated that total costs for Sentinel could reach as high as \$141 billion unless major steps are taken to drive down the price. Despite the spiraling costs, the department opted to continue on with the program because “no alternatives” were equally viable and less costly, Pentagon acquisition czar Bill LaPlante said earlier this month.

In the wake of its Nunn McCurdy breach — the congressionally-mandated cost threshold that forces the Pentagon to review whether a program should continue — the department rescinded the program’s Milestone B declaration while the Air Force figures out how to revamp its acquisition strategy. The timeline for reinstating the Milestone B declaration could take about 18 to 24 months, Hunter said. “The acquisition strategy we will have to have early in that process, because it’s fundamental to the entire approach. You need to know what the acquisition strategy is,” he said. “So, we’ll work the acquisition strategy on the front end, but to get to a final new plan will take some time.”

Despite the difficulties on the ground-based portion of the contract, work on the actual missile system by Northrop Grumman is proceeding well, Lt. Gen Andrew Gebara, deputy chief of staff for strategic deterrence and nuclear integration, said earlier this month. “It is important to remember [for] the program that stage one, two and three of the missile have been successfully test fired already. I’m not going to say that retired every risk on the missile. But largely the issues of the missile are known issues that can be worked, and are largely okay,” he said.

Atlantic Council's President, Frederick Kempe Discusses the 75th Anniversary of NATO

During NATO's seventy-fifth anniversary summit in Washington last week, my private conversations with allied officials almost always landed on concerns about this year's US elections, given former President Donald Trump's doubts about NATO's value and growing questions about US President Joe Biden's durability. That was before this weekend's assassination attempt against Trump at a Pennsylvania rally, which likely has only heightened allied concerns about US domestic volatility and unpredictability around the election—when gathering global challenges demand a steadiness that will be difficult to provide.

Over a decade of remarkable leadership, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has navigated an unruly Alliance of flawed democracies through some of their greatest historical challenges, including Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine. In my on-stage [interview](#) with him at the NATO Public Forum, which the Atlantic Council co-hosted, Stoltenberg addressed doubts over whether NATO will continue to forge common cause, as he prepares to step down on October 1.

“The reality is that despite all these differences, which are part of NATO, we have proven extremely resilient and strong,” he said. “Because when we face the reality, all these different governments and politicians and parliamentarians, they realize that we are safer and stronger together . . . That's the reason why this Alliance prevails again and again.”

These new concerns over the direction of the United States were made all the more urgent by the Alliance's recognition that NATO now faces a new axis of authoritarians—with China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea in the lead—that are working more closely together on defense-industrial issues than any such grouping before them, including Germany, Italy, and Japan in the 1930s and the Soviet Union and China in the 1950s.

The NATO Summit was expected to focus on Russia's brutal war on Ukraine, and so it did, in ways that were both encouraging and disappointing. What was encouraging was that the Alliance did well in providing Ukraine additional military and financial support and even a devoted Alliance command, based in [Wiesbaden, Germany](#). It fell far short by dodging two issues crucial to Ukraine's immediate and long-term security.

First, and for reasons increasingly difficult to defend—especially in a week when Putin greeted the NATO Summit by striking a Kyiv children's hospital in a deadly [missile barrage](#)—the Biden administration stubbornly refuses to let Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy use US missiles to hit military targets in Russian territory that are killing his people. Second, Biden also continues to [stand in the way](#) of any language promising a more certain and time-defined path to NATO membership for Ukraine, even though membership is what will provide Ukraine lasting security.

The less anticipated development of this past week—and the one with the most historic importance—was the summit's remarkable consensus that the world has fundamentally changed

since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. NATO now acknowledges the need to better address an axis of autocrats bent on revising the global order: China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea.

As Stoltenberg [wrote](#) in *Foreign Affairs* ahead of the summit, foreshadowing its decisions, "Putin shows no intention of ending this war any time soon, and he is increasingly aligned with other authoritarian powers, including China, that wish to see the United States fail, Europe fracture, and NATO falter. This shows that in today's world, security is not a regional matter but a global one. Europe's security affects Asia, and Asia's security affects Europe."

That's powerful stuff—and a significant rethink of the threats facing this transatlantic Alliance.

The bottom line, though not quite stated that way, was: Our autocratic adversaries have joined in common cause globally against us, and thus we must do more ourselves to address this gathering threat. The alternative is to live in denial until the threats advance past the point of being able to address them.

No more having it both ways

One of the more concise NATO Summit [declarations](#) I've read, which is worth reading to gain an overall feeling of the landscape, lambasted the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a "decisive enabler" of Putin's war. Beyond that, it focused on significantly deepening relations with the so-called Indo-Pacific Four (IP4): Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea, all of which were represented for the third consecutive NATO Summit.

Thirty-two allies met with their Indo-Pacific partners in encouraging harmony about the challenges China poses. The declaration's tough, unprecedented language on the PRC is worth reading in full but note the unusual clarity in its call to action, coming from a multilateral Alliance in which language negotiations can be stultifying: "We call on the PRC . . . to cease all political and military 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 defense sector."

In my interview with Stoltenberg, he said that although Iran and North Korea were growing more important to Russia's war effort, "China is the main enabler." The PRC, he said, is "delivering the tools—the dual-use equipment, the microelectronics, everything Russia needs to build the missiles, the bombs, the aircraft, and all the other systems they use against Ukraine."

The declaration said: "The PRC cannot enable the largest war in Europe in recent history without this negatively impacting its interests and reputation." In his swan song summit as NATO leader, Stoltenberg told me that China "cannot have it both ways," meaning it cannot maintain "a kind of normal relationship with NATO allies" while fueling the North Atlantic's "biggest security challenge" since World War II.

It's fair criticism that for all the growing recognition of China's crucial enabling role in Russia's war, around which there is now a welcome NATO consensus, there isn't any agreement on what to do about it.

The sad truth, one worth saying out loud several times to recognize the gravity of the situation, is that for the moment the PRC is having it both ways. It is threatening Europe and profiting from Europe at the same time.

The world has changed much more dramatically in terms of autocratic common cause since February 2022 than Western leaders and voters have digested.

Still, this past week was a good beginning.

“I think it’s important that we recognize the reality [of China’s role], and that’s the first step toward any action,” Stoltenberg told me. “Let’s see how far we’re willing to go as allies.”

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg speaks with Atlantic Council President and CEO Frederick Kempe at the NATO Public Forum on July 10, 2024.

Ukraine is the new West Berlin

Stoltenberg stressed that despite the presence in Washington this week of the IP4, “there will not be a global NATO. NATO will be for North America and Europe.” But, he added, the North Atlantic region faces global threats, from terrorism to cyber to space. “And, of course, the threats and challenges that China poses to our security [are] a global challenge.”

Perhaps Stoltenberg is right that there won’t be a global NATO, but this week marked the significant beginning of a NATO that understands that its global responsibilities and threats are inescapable. That realization might have started with international terrorism after 9/11, but the increasingly close China-Russia strategic relationship is now at the core of it.

Speaking to the NATO Public Forum, Senator James E. Risch, the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, guided the Alliance to a newly published [report](#) from the committee’s Republican staff, “Next Steps to Defend the Transatlantic Alliance from Chinese Aggression.”

It lays out a powerful list of recommendations for the transatlantic community, including increased national and local collaboration on countering malign influence and interference from China, as well as improving institutional knowledge about everything from the workings of the Chinese Communist Party to the operational capacity of the People’s Liberation Army.

In the spirit of NATO’s growing Indo-Pacific focus, the Atlantic Council’s Matthew Kroenig and Jeffrey Cimmino recently [published](#) a “Memo to NATO heads of state and government” on the importance of engaging with the region.

“Some analysts argue that the United States should disengage from Europe and pivot to the Indo-Pacific, while European countries take on greater responsibility in Europe,” they write. This is the “wrong answer,” Kroenig and Cimmino explain. “Instead, Washington should continue to lead in both theaters. European countries should take on greater responsibilities for defending Europe, but they should also assist Washington to counter China and address threats emanating from the Indo-Pacific.”

With all that as context, this week's NATO Summit perhaps should have done even more to ensure that Ukraine prevails and Russia fails. But allies did at least more clearly recognize that Putin's criminal war on Ukraine isn't just a national or even primarily a European security matter. Ukraine is the front line of a global struggle, a role that West Berlin played during the Cold War and a fact that China and Russia long ago acknowledged in their "no limits" partnership on the eve of the 2022 invasion.

Now comes the hard part

This past week, the contours unfolded for what might be NATO's greatest struggle yet, after seventy-five years of existence.

Republican Congressman Mike Turner, the chair of the House Intelligence Committee, told me on the sidelines of the summit this week that the burden allies share isn't only a question of defense spending but also whether they still have the political will to defend democracy and freedom.

Having this week recognized the challenge as global and focused on Russia and China, having more closely embraced Indo-Pacific partners, now comes the hard part for the world's most enduring and successful Alliance.

What does NATO do next?

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*This edition is part of Frederick Kempe's *Inflection Points* newsletter, a column of dispatches from a world in transition. To receive this newsletter throughout the week, [sign up here](#).*