# ***The ICBM Ear, Week of July 12th, 3034 Prepared by Peter Huessy, President of Geostrategic Analysis and Senior Fellow at the National Institute for Deterrence Studies***

## ***Quote of the Week:***

Speaker of the House Representative Johnson: "Republicans celebrate the peace and prosperity NATO has secured, and we'll continue to stand by our partners as we prevent needless wars. It was past time for all countries in the 32-member alliance to reach the benchmark of spending at least 2 percent of GDP on defense. It may even need to be closer to levels during the Cold War, but if we're all going to enjoy a future of peace and prosperity, we all need skin in the game."

## ***Hill Developments***

Senate appropriators added tens of billions more for both defense and nondefense programs, through the use of emergency designations and other means that don't violate statutory spending caps (PL 118-5).

Senate Appropriations Chair Patty Murray, D-Wash., and ranking member Susan Collins, R-Maine, agreed to add $34.5 billion in emergency spending on top of the overall levels negotiated as part of last year's debt limit deal. Of that, $21 billion will go to defense accounts (nearly matching the SASC approved increase) and $13.5 billion will go to nondefense programs.

House appropriators will have approved all 12 of their fiscal 2025 appropriations bills in committee by this Wednesday, as Speaker Mike Johnson had promised.

SASC Chairman Reed Concern with Spending Levels, from the NDAA Report:

In brief, I opposed this topline increase and the risk it creates because:
1) The Appropriations Committee would not be able to fund the topline increase without breaking FRA defense caps and triggering sequestration and across-the-board cuts in defense.
2) Sending an NDAA with an unrealistic topline to the Appropriations Committee would undermine SASC's relevance and ability to establish funding authorizations for DOD, instead allowing the Appropriations Committee to pick and choose which lines to support.
3) The House Armed Services Committee and House of Representatives passed a bill that matched the President's budget request level, so any Senate topline increase will be highly contested in conference unless the FRA is repealed or modified; and
4) Any increase for defense spending should be in the context of a broader negotiation for increasing appropriations allocations.
717

## ***Administration Developments***

The US Department of Defense and the USAF have approved a restructured Sentinel ICBM program to go forward but with a new contract framework to help control costs and improve program management. According to CQ, Senators are pledging to keep a close eye on the

Pentagon's planned restructuring of its program to modernize the ground-based leg of the U.S. nuclear triad after Defense Department leaders opted to continue the effort in the face of cost and schedule overruns.

Pentagon officials, including acquisition chief William LaPlante, briefed members of the Senate Armed Services strategic forces panel Monday on their decision to keep developing the Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile program that is now expected to cost 81 percent more than what was originally anticipated.

Sen. Mike Rounds, R-S.D., underscored the role Congress should play to ensure the modified program stays on track. That includes ensuring officials are able to "maintain" the new ICBM's timeline, log "legitimate" cost estimates, learn from past mistakes and "make sure that the program as envisioned can still move forward."

"It will provide us with protections for literally decades to come," he said Tuesday of the Sentinel program. "But it has to meet all of those criteria."

Asked about what lawmakers should do to monitor the program moving forward, subcommittee Chair Angus King, I-Maine, responded: "One word: oversight."

The program triggered a "critical" Nunn-McCurdy breach in January, which required the Pentagon to certify the program is essential to national security to avoid termination. Such breaches occur when procurement costs for defense acquisition programs increase by at least 25 percent of the acquisition program baseline.

DOD disclosed Monday that a "reasonably modified" Sentinel program is expected to cost $140.9 billion. But officials said cost growth won't be felt within the next five years.

King said that the period after that, however, is of concern. In the meantime, though, he highlighted two things: discovering "why this happened" and determining "if there are ways that we can solve the problem or the important role that the Sentinel will play in a more cost-effective way."

## ***Theme of the Week***

## ***The Prospects for Nuclear Deterrence in the Next American Administration***

***By Peter Huessy, Senior Fellow, NIDS***

### ***Summary***

The four years from 2025 promise to be a very difficult time for nuclear deterrence if the trends of the past decade and one-half since the completion of the New START treaty continue. As emphasized by the Nuclear Posture Review at the time, growing cooperation on nuclear matters between the US, China and Russia was anticipated to achieve three critical objectives: (1) continue the pursuit of global zero nuclear weapons; (2) continue the mutual cuts in nuclear weapons starting by the START treaty of 1991 and continued through the Moscow agreement of

2002, and (3) prevent any additional proliferation of nuclear weapons especially with respect to Iran including the eventual roll-back of the North Korean nuclear deployments.

Eight recent assessments of future prospects for strategic stability in light of growing nuclear dangers have been brought forward for consideration including (1) a Brookings Institute essay by Caitlyn Talmadge on the Biden and Trump approaches to nuclear deterrence; (2) Representative and Intelligence Chair Mike Turner's nuclear and space related remarks at CSIS; (3) Joe Cirincione's description of the Biden and Trump nuclear agenda's as dangerously bad and worse, respectively; (4) Professor Wittmer's complaint that everything Trump might do or has done on nuclear deterrence has accelerated the "arms race"; (5) Brad Robert's top-notch look into the future about what the LLNL program director describes as "unwelcome" truths that must be faced; (6) Mark Schneider's welcome assessment of what French President Macron is trying to do with extended nuclear deterrence in Europe and the related pitfalls; (7) Mathew Kroenig and Mark Massa review the value of ICBMs and particularly what is required for future ICBM related nuclear deterrence--and in their usual scholarly manner; and (8) commentary by Mike Albertson of LLNL and (9) Con Coughlin of Gatestone about what the US and its allies are facing over the next few decades in the nuclear arena and why meeting the deterrent challenge is both very interesting but also absolutely challenging. Coughlin's top concern is the US non-confrontational policy with respect to Iran and the relative loss of credible US deterrent capability.

## ***The Critics***

Talmadge, Wittmer, and Cirincione portray former President Trump as some kind of nuclear Mad Hatter or Dr. Strangelove who will bring about nuclear Armageddon, although all three largely get recent nuclear deterrent history wrong. However, their narrative is common with Hollywood and reflected in both the new Oppenheimer film, as well as in Annie Jacobson book that describes current US nuclear deterrent strategy as "Mad" and immoral. Cirincione even describes the Biden nuclear modernization program as highly dangerous even though its entirety fits within the confines of the New START agreement of 2010.

As for Whitmer's claim the "arms race" accelerated after 2017, the facts are that as of 2010, Russia had already planned the deployment of some 29 new types of strategic and theater nuclear weapons, which have remained on schedule and are now over 90% complete.

As for whether the US should have shown restraint, an amendment to kill the ICBM leg of the Triad was offered by Representative Garamendi in June 2021 in the HASC and House floor, with the Democrats in the majority, and lost 49-9 in Committee and 308-119 on the House floor. And as Dr. David Trachtenberg has shown in a previous essay, the idea that US restraint in US deployments of nuclear weapons will generate similar restraint among our adversaries is debunked by history. As former defense secretary Harold Brown once quipped, "We build, they build. We stop, they build."

## ***Steady as You Go & Enhancements Needed? .***

Another perspective comes from the essays of Dr. Roberts, Dr. Kroenig and Mr. Massa. They both are excellent contributions to the growing proposals of how to meet the challenge of what Admiral Charles Richard described as a projected two peer nuclear armed enemies of the United States by 2035. Both analyze the program of record which is based on the force structure planned in 2010 and which fits within the New START agreement which has been observed for the past three administrations, including that of President Donald Trump for 2017-21.

Kroenig and Massa explore former HASC Chairman Smith's proposal to eliminate all ICBMs. Their unique contribution is to point out if ICBMs are so needed they might be launched promptly during an attack, it makes no sense to eliminate their capability, especially as it would eliminate a key required deterrent capability while also leaving the US with roughly 12 targets on land and at sea which if eliminated would put the US out of the nuclear business. As former NDU President General Mike Dunn once explained, "Why would we make it easier for our enemies to disarm us?"

Dr. Brad Roberts explains the positive days of 2010 are now gone, and the unwelcome truths are that we are entering a very dangerous nuclear era but which we must squarely face. He is concerned a future US administration might fail to continue the US extended deterrent over NATO and our Pacific allies, with the possible consequence that our allies seek their own nuclear deterrent, which could have serious consequences for the nuclear non-proliferation regime. And his top concern is the relative lack of urgency with which US national leaders take to the nuclear table, as the consequence of inaction or delay could be deadly.

NIPP's Mark Schneider looks at what President Macron is proposing for extended deterrence in Europe as wholly inadequate for NATO's security but should be fully examined. It is important to note when discussing the US relationship with NATO that under the previous administration, the DoD resources devoted to defending our NATO allies increased significantly, as did the number of NATO members that met the 2% spending target for defense, completely consistent with previous President Trump's recent declaration that he is "100%" with NATO.

House Intelligence Chair Mike Turner explores with Dr. Kari Bingen of CSIS the big threats facing the US (which the critics reviewed here hardly mention). The Russian deployment of ASAT nuclear forces is a serious threat says Turner to US space assets, while the Posture Commission support for widespread missile defense capabilities is a big breakthrough and hopefully will lead to rapid new US deployments says the Ohio representative.

The highlight of the new NIPP study by Schneider is the chart on what Russia is currently building or has in development---some 26 new nuclear types of weapons while the US has five. The Russian force moderation is near 93% complete according to the Kremlin while the US modernization effort has yet to place its first SNDV or strategic nuclear delivery vehicle into the force.

## ***Program of Record Plus***

The three critics of current modernization are primarily concerned with four augmentations to the program of record, as well as the rhetoric and diplomatic actions of the former President,

even in the case of Cirincione thinking even the Obama era current program of record is highly dangerous.

As the Strategic Posture Commission report emphasized, the current program of record is necessary even critical but it is not adequate to the deterrent task before us. One thing being proposed by Brad Roberts, for example, is the development of a Navy cruise missile that would be nuclear armed, a Tomahawk technology removed from the theater nuclear force inventory by President Herbert Walker Bush but then dismantled by the Obama administration.

The stealthy, prompt and survivable at sea theater system would meet all the criteria needed for a sound theater deterrent and would meet the current gap between US vs Russian and Chinese theater systems in the European and Pacific theaters. The number that might be deployed would probably be in the intermediate dozens of such weapons, but certainly not anywhere near the 1900 Russian theater systems identified by the US intelligence community, to say nothing of what the Chinese may have deployed. But as Franklin Miller writes July 10th, "a U.S. nuclear sea-launched cruise missile would enhance deterrence and reassure allies in peacetime and crisis, and, in wartime, provide a President with additional options to prevent enemy nuclear escalation. The W 76-2 is an excellent weapon, but any President deserves more than one option; the combination of the ballistic W 76-2 and the airbreathing SLCM-N would provide a President with significant flexibility to manage a crisis.'

Another augmentation has been completed and that has been adding low-yield nuclear weapons to the D-5 missiles, again for a total number of such weapons in the low dozens at most, an added capability endorsed by the current administration. Both the low-yield D-5 and a SLCM-N would help rectify the current theater imbalance and be able to deter the use of such weapons at the low end of the nuclear spectrum, which itself enhances deterrence, avoiding what then Senator John Kennedy declared in 1959 was the bad choice between all out Armageddon, (massive retaliation), or surrender (standing down.) .

Additional elements of enhancing the US deterrent posture especially after New START expires would be adding warheads to the US ICBM and SLBM force of 692 missiles as envisioned by the 12 Columbia class submarines (the minimum needed) and 192 D-5 missiles and the 400 Sentinel missiles, although there are proposals on the table for also deploying the 50 reserve ICBMs allowed as a hedge under New START. As well as to upload our B52s and other bombers.

## ***Implementing the Hedge?***

When taken together, the US has a hedge capability of around 1000 additional warheads the US could add to its strategic nuclear posture and could do so over a period of 3-4 years depending on how fast the US could deploy additional ICBM warheads on either the legacy MMIII ICBMs or the new Sentinel system. Whatever is the case, the roughly 2800+ warheads the US could have in its strategic nuclear force by 2035 would be dwarfed by the projected Russia and China nuclear forces, which Professor Chris Yeaw, at the 20th of June Triad Symposium at LSUS, has projected will reach some 10,000 warheads.

In short, what proponents of nuclear enhancements vs nuclear restraint are arguing over is the deployment of some 1000 US warheads or an augmentation of the US strategic force of some fifty percent of the current US strategic, long-range force. Even if one adds in a force of 300 theater systems including the current gravity bombs in Europe and the projected new SLCM-N theater forces, the total buildup for the United States would at best reach 3000 warheads by the middle of the next decade. Or more likely the following decade some 20 years hence if the fully modernized force of 12 Columbia class submarines and SLEP D-5 missiles, 20 B21 bombers and associated cruise missiles and 400-50 Sentinel missiles, is fielded.

Given the breathtaking expansion of Russian and Chinese forces already underway, such a US response is nothing but practical and proportionate and well within a reasonable calculation of what is required, as Franklin Miller has noted, to right the current deterrent imbalance, without necessarily matching warhead for warhead the projected deployed Russian and Chinese forces.

The critics of enhancement, however, spend almost no time doing an informed review of how they would correct the current imbalance except to claim the US is unnecessarily leading a new arms race (demonstrably wrong), or as Cirincione put it, seeking to wage nuclear war (again demonstrably absurd).

## ***The next US Administration and the JCPOA, North Korea, INF and Arms Control.***

What the critics concentrate on is the rhetoric and diplomatic action of the previous administration. These actions include withdrawal from the JCPOA, the joint nuclear agreement with Iran, the withdrawal from the INF treaty, and the US relationship with North Korea and its nuclear and missile forces.

## ***North Korea and the Button***

The former President did remind the leader of North Korea that the US did have a more formidable nuclear deterrent than the DPRK and that our deterrent after decade of testing actually worked. Both comments were perfectly consistent with the time-honored point of the US deterrent strategy: (1) our deterrent is very large and (2) we have the will to use it should North Korea attack the United States. Interestingly, the NPRK did not test a nuclear weapon or test an ICBM range missile during 2017-20.

## ***Iran & The JCPOA***

The United Stats never ratified the Iranian JCPOA as the votes were not there in the US Senate. The deal could not be ratified because it was a bad deal. Instead, the previous Obama administration used a clever rubegoldbergian strategy to secure an occasional review of the agreement by the US Senate. The agreement allowed the Iranians to build up an enhanced capability to produce weapons grade nuclear fuel, with the requirement that the low-level produced fuel be exported---primarily to Russia. However, since all the provisions in the deal expire soon, where are the diplomatic efforts over the past 2 ½ years to extended the agreement or make it permanent if its provisions are so demonstrably good? The fact that Iran may have been adhering to the provisions of the deal does not magically change the terms of the deal from terrible to good!

And where is the diplomatic effort for the US to sign back up to the JCPOA and this time get the Senate to agree? In fact, much of the opposite has occurred including the US dropping sanctions against Iran, which then provided to Tehran tens of billions in hard currency. On top of which, despite the US restraint, Iran has attacked the US some 170 times between October 2023 and January 2024.

Including killing and wounding US servicemen and women, to saying nothing of planning, arming and financing the horrible Hamas slaughter of Israel's last October and the launching of hundreds of missiles and rockets against Israel this spring. No such attacks occurred during the previous administration as Iranian hard currency reserves fell to around $10 billon, which is near 1/10$^{th}$ their current level, and contributed significantly to the Iranian lack of resources to conduct its serial terrorist activities.

Even more dangerous is that Iran in cooperation with China, Russia, and the terrorist group Houthis, has engineered a new form of piracy where ocean borne freight traffic, including oil tankers are denied access to the Red Sea and Suez Canal unless they agree to abide by new Chinese rules, a kind of ocean toll road regime, as outlined recently by the group Committee on the Present Danger-China.

And as a former US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff told Congress about the Somalia based "pirates," they could only locate ships at sea with the use of GPS---which as only the US and Russia could provide such technology it was obvious with what country the pirates were doing business.

## ***INF & Arms Control Prospects?***

The previous administration did try and bring China and Russia do the arms control table but were harshly criticized for thinking China would agree to any such warhead ceilings while trailing the US inventory—although the Soviets did just that in SALT I with respect to the balance in strategic forces in 1972. And despite being outgunned 2000/1 by the Soviets SS-20 deployments, President Ronald Reagan successfully secured the removal of all Soviet SS-20 missiles from both Europe and Asia, while strengthening NATO and our Pacific alliances.

As for the INF treaty, it is widely known the Russians were serially cheating on the agreement. Having only one party to a treaty that is complying with is hardly the way international agreements work, although perhaps the critics have some suggestions which were absent from their essays.

## ***The Record of Arms Control Deals***

The tendency for the critics of former President Trump is to claim those with whom they disagree are somehow "against arms control," in favor of arms races and want to fight nuclear war. These claims were made against President Reagan, who in fact once quipped his domestic critics were harsher in their opposition to his nuclear modernization plans than was the USSR!

In hosting some multiple hundreds of arms control seminars from 1983 through 2024, the actual facts are startling: Republican Presidents cut US strategic long-range nuclear forces from over

10,000 to roughly 2200, and reduced theater nuclear forces by additional multiples of ten thousand warheads, while also securing --for a multiple of reasons-- massive reductions in Soviet and then Russian nuclear weapons amounting to also multiple tens of thousands.

## ***Where and When Did Modernization Start?***

Unfortunately, as retired General John Hyten explained during the last ten years of his military leadership as Deputy Commander of the USAF Space Command, then as Commander of US Strategic Command, and then Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Putin had a plan to fully modernize his forces starting in 2004 and not continue on the path of further nuclear reductions but to actually augment the Russian force to multiples of the New START allowable force.

According to Rick Fisher and Bradley Thayer and Mark Schnieder, the Chinese too had plans to build up to over 1500 strategic nuclear warheads, fully adopted in the 2008-9 timeframe, both demonstrably before the Trump administration, which completely obliterates Professor Wittmer's complaint that the Chinese and Russian nuclear buildups are all Trump's fault.

## ***The Great Unravelling***

Indeed, the arms control progress assumed to be holding from START I to New START has come unraveled. Although it's tempting to "always blame America" for the rogue behavior of Xi and Putin, their nuclear transgressions are all their own as the Posture Commission explained--- to them nuclear weapons are instruments of coercion and blackmail, to serve not to deter the interests of military aggression.

But on the current administration's watch as Ms. Talmadge admits, things no longer hold: "Iran is now closer to a nuclear weapon. North Korea's arsenal can more directly threaten the United States. China's nuclear arsenal is expanding as it becomes increasingly confrontational toward Taiwan…and Russia is now engaged in a major conventional war on NATO's border.' The origin of the relative loss of US deterrent capability may be a complicated subject, but that the US has lost some deterrent strength is unquestioned. The key will be, as the Strategic Posture Commission boldly explained, to restore US deterrent strength on a bipartisan, lasting basis so we can successfully meet the challenges of the new nuclear era.

## ***Here are the nine links:***

I am including the nine links to the reviewed essays but also including the full text of eight of the essays---Brad Robert's essay link is available but the text cannot be copied and included in the weekly report. However, if you are reading the report after having printed it, and no longer have access to your computer and internet, I have included the text of these essays for ease of access. However, I will also send a version of the ICBM EAR to you with only the links below and not the full text of the essays.

Here are the links for the nine (9) essays by Brad Roberts, Mark Schneider, Mathew Kroenig and Mark Massa, Professor Whitmer, Caitlyn Talmadge, Joe Cirincione, Representative Mike Turner, Con Coughlin, and Mike Albertson.

Roberts TWQ New Chapter.pdf

IS 592.pdf

https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/dont-cut-corners-on-us-nuclear-deterrence/

By: Matthew Kroenig and Mark J. Massa for the Atlantic Council // July 3, 2024

**Nuclear arms race intensified during Trump's presidency**

https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-would-trump-and-biden-handle-us-nuclear-policy-upon-reelection/

Trump has a strategic plan for the country: Gearing up for nuclear war - Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (thebulletin.org)

Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy: A Conversation with HPSCI Chairman Mike Turner (csis.org)

Adopt Deterrence: US Waning Support for Ukraine, Israel and the Philippines Is a Threat to the Free World :: Gatestone Institute

It's an Interesting Time to Work on Nuclear Issues—That's Both a Challenge and an Opportunity - IGCC (ucigcc.org)

## Macron's European Union Nuclear Deterrence Initiative and Extended Nuclear Deterrence

**Dr. Mark Schneider**

*Dr. Schneider is a Senior Analyst with the National Institute for Public Policy. Before his retirement from the Department of Defense Senior Executive Service, Dr. Schneider served as Principal Director for Forces Policy, Principal Director for Strategic Defense, Space and Verification Policy, Director for Strategic Arms Control Policy and Representative of the Secretary of Defense to the Nuclear Arms Control Implementation Commission. He also served in the senior Foreign Service as a Member of the State Department Policy Planning Staff.*

In a speech at the Sorbonne in April 2024, French President Emmanuel Macron: 1) noted that Europe is threatened by Russia and that it "can die"; 2) called for an open debate on the role of nuclear weapons in European security; and, 3) proposed the idea of a European Union nuclear deterrent based upon the French nuclear deterrent.[1] It has been suggested that this was an election ploy. However, elements of the Macron speech reflect French policy going back many decades. Indeed, his speech was very close to what he said in 2017.[2] In response to a similar Macron speech in 2020, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg dismissed his call to put France's nuclear deterrent at the center of European defense strategy, saying the United States, France and Britain already "provide an effective security umbrella."[3] Other elements of the 2024 Macron speech are

relatively new, reflecting a belated French realization of the malevolence and danger of Putin's imperialism.

French policy with regard to the Russian threat changed drastically after the February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, the announced Russian nuclear alert, its large February 2022 nuclear exercise, and Russia's frequent nuclear war threats.[4] In response to these Russian actions, France, for the first time since 1981, deployed more than one of its nuclear ballistic missile submarines to sea at one time—indeed, three submarines.[5] France even put its nuclear-capable aircraft carrier under NATO command.[6]

Current French policy on nuclear weapons can be traced to the presidency of Charles de Gaulle who was impacted by his World War II experience; he believed he and France were not treated with sufficient deference by the Allies. President de Gaulle even adopted what was called an "all-azimuth" nuclear targeting strategy under which the United States was regarded as a potential enemy.[7] This view was never taken seriously in France and the formulation evolved into "without any azimuth."[8] This was a significant change from the original "Atlanticist" rationale for the French nuclear deterrent in which nuclear weapons were seen as a mechanism for France to have more clout in the NATO alliance.[9]

In 1959, President de Gaule evicted all U.S. military forces from France including a large U.S. Air Force contingent with great nuclear potential, effectively reducing the possibility of NATO defending against Soviet attack with conventional weapons. This may have been the intended impact because President de Gaulle did not believe that conventional defense against the Soviet hordes was possible. In 1966, President de Gaulle pulled France out of NATO's unified military command.[10] For decades France has not participated in NATO's nuclear planning.

President de Gaulle spoke differently in private. He told President Eisenhower that, "The Soviets know me. They know that if I have the strike force to respond to an invasion of Western Europe, I will use it, and that will be an additional deterrent for them."[11] He is also reported to have said that the French nuclear force would automatically protect NATO, "Much better than the American force! For the simple reason that we are European, while the Americans are not. The interest of the Americans in not allowing Europe to be destroyed is tiny compared to ours. If Europe is invaded, we are toast."[12] One can see a strong echo of de Gaulle's approach in Macron's emphasis on the need for European control of the decision for nuclear weapons first use.

President de Gaulle's idea may have been that France could force the United States to defend Europe with nuclear weapons by launching nuclear strikes against the Soviet Union which would precipitate nuclear strikes against the United States which would then force the United States to introduce nuclear weapons earlier than it desired in order to better control nuclear escalation.[13]

France, which had experienced defeat in the Second World War and the horrendous occupation by Nazi Germany, is determined to never be invaded again. The French nuclear deterrent appears to have worked. Since the end of the Cold War, the Warsaw Pact war plan has been made public. The 1964 Warsaw Pact war plan (before France had achieved a significant nuclear deterrent) sought to capture Lyon (a major city in Eastern France) on day nine of the attack.[14] The late Warsaw Pact war plan, in a timeframe in which France had obtained substantial nuclear capability, ended its advance at the Rhine (the French border). Under this war plan, there were no planned nuclear strikes against France and the United Kingdom, the two European nuclear powers.[15] By the late 1980s, both had achieved significant nuclear capability.

It has sometimes been suggested that the combined French and U.K. nuclear capability could be the basis for a European nuclear deterrent. The United Kingdom, which was heavily bombed by Germany during the blitz and late in the war by the V-1 and V-2 missiles, also believes that

nuclear deterrence is critical to its security. Indeed, in March 2024, the U.K.'s Defense Ministry published an important report on its nuclear weapons which declared that the U.K. nuclear deterrent was a "national endeavour." It noted that, "Nuclear risks are rising. Having illegally invaded Ukraine and broken its former commitments, Russia is trying to use reckless nuclear rhetoric to stop others from sending help. China is rapidly increasing its warhead numbers and expanding its range of delivery systems."[16]

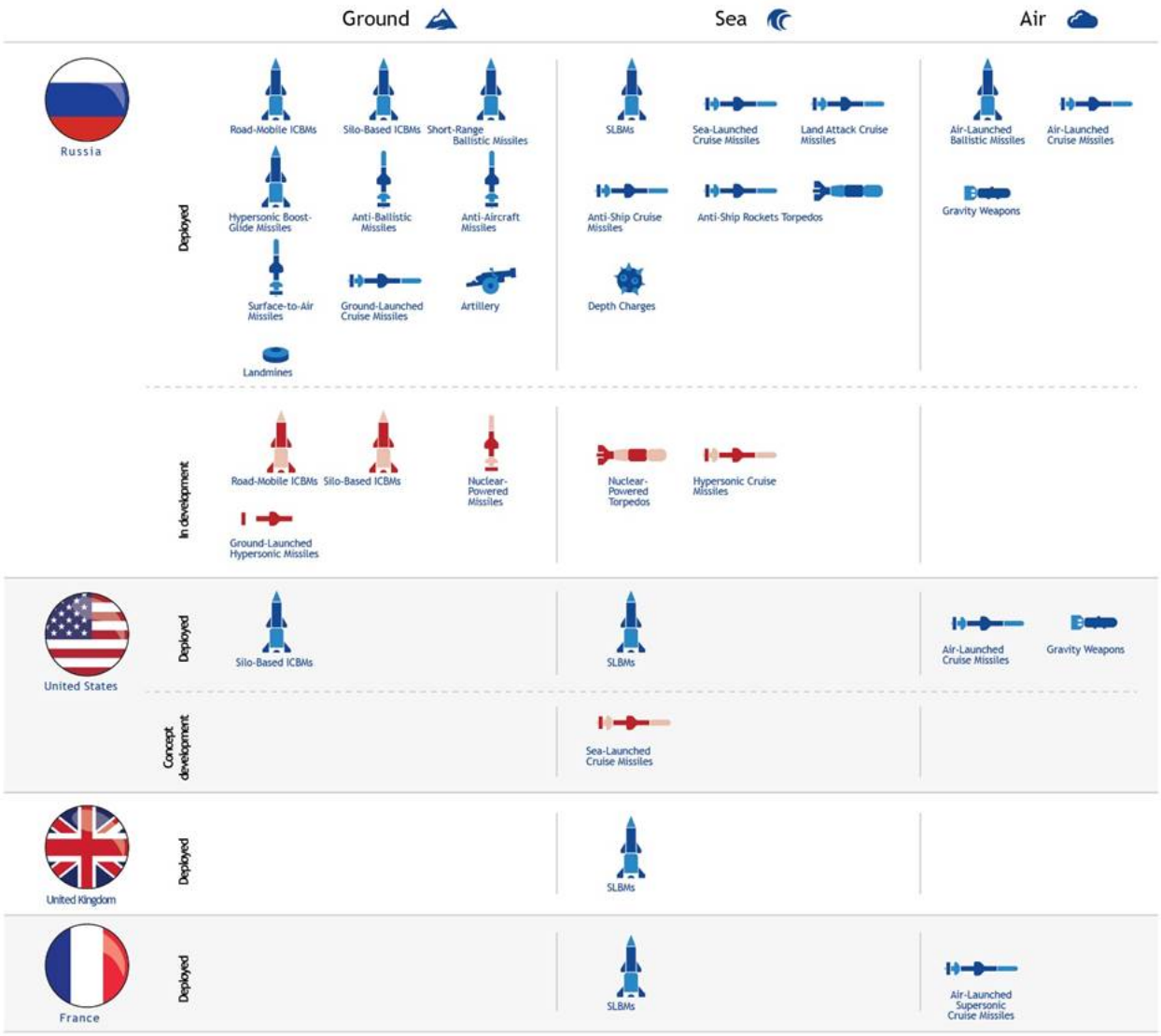
Regarding the feasibility of Macron's proposed EU nuclear deterrent based upon the French nuclear force (Britain is no longer a member of the EU), it is noteworthy that France has substantially reduced its nuclear deterrent compared to what existed in the late Cold War period. France has: 1) eliminated all of its land-based nuclear missiles, 2) cut a ballistic missile submarine, reducing to one the routine number of French submarines survivable at sea, 3) reduced French alert nuclear forces (both the number of "weapon systems on alert and the response time"), and 4) limited its nuclear forces to under 300 warheads, reaffirmed in 2020 by President Macron.[17]

The United Kingdom dramatically cut its number of nuclear warheads from an announced Cold War peak of 540,[18] and reduced to a single submarine system armed with the U.S. Trident missile.[19] Even before Putin's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the United Kingdom had identified Russia as its most important threat and increased its nuclear arsenal. The last announced self-imposed U.K. nuclear warhead limit was up to 260, an increase in response to Russian aggression, which had festered since Russia's 2014 seizure of Crimea and *de facto* military seizure of two provinces in Eastern Ukraine. The 260 warhead limit was described as "…a ceiling not a target and is not the UK's current stockpile."[20] The U.K.'s Defense Ministry has stated that, "Since 1992, the UK has given up: the nuclear Lance missile and artillery roles we undertook previously with US nuclear weapons held under dual-key arrangements; our maritime tactical nuclear capability, so that Royal Navy surface ships no longer have any capability to carry or deploy nuclear weapons; and all of our air-launched nuclear weapons."[21]

The Alliance-wide requirements for extended nuclear deterrence either by the United States, the United Kingdom or France is an important and complex issue that will not be discussed here. Suffice it to say, it likely requires a nuclear force significantly more diverse and capable than what is necessary to deter an attack on an individual, modest-sized nation like Britian or France.

Russia clearly has the largest and most diverse nuclear arsenal in the world.[22] Russian nuclear forces dwarf those of France or even Britian and France combined. Figure 1 below, produced by NATO, indicates the scope of the difference between French and U.K nuclear forces and those of Russia:[23]

# Figure 1: Comparing Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons Arsenals




Source: Jens Stoltenberg, *The Secretary General's Annual Report*, 2020

The disparity in non-strategic or tactical nuclear weapons is the greatest. The French ASMP and ASMP-A supersonic cruise missiles are capable but their number is small and it is not known for certain whether France has low-yield nuclear weapons. Noted French international security expert Bruno Tertrais has written that, "The option of exploding only the first-stage primary may

have been exploited, since it is known to be an easy adaptation from a technical point of view."[24] In addition, French SLBM warheads have recently been reported to have variable yields.[25] An absence of French low-yield nuclear weapons could be a significant problem for extended deterrence of a Russian low-yield nuclear attack. As then-Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter stated in 2016 "…it's a sobering fact that the most likely use of nuclear weapons is not the massive nuclear exchange of the classic Cold War-type, but rather the unwise resort to smaller but still unprecedentedly terrible attacks, for example, by Russia or North Korea to try to coerce a conventionally superior opponent to back off or abandon an ally during a crisis."[26]

Compared to UK and U.S. assessments, Macron's Sorbonne speech was much more Gaullist. The China threat is minimized except in the economic context. According to Macron:

> The United States of America has two priorities. America first, which is legitimate, and China. Europe is not a geopolitical priority in the coming years and decades, no matter how strong our alliance and how fortunate we are to have an administration that is very committed to the Ukrainian conflict. And so, yes, the days of Europe buying its energy and fertilizers from Russia, outsourcing to China and relying on the US for security are over.[27]

The "America first" priority which Macron refers to as "legitimate" is not that of former President Trump, but Washington's more traditional, globalist notion of national interest. And President Macron does not even mention the strongest argument in favor of his proposal, the U.S. de-emphasis on nuclear deterrence since the end of the Cold War.

The Biden Administration's 2022 Nuclear Posture Review, as weak as it was on nuclear deterrence, probably does not fully reflect the White House's thinking because of the influence of the U.S. military on the report.[28] A much more accurate indication of the Biden Administration's reasoning is its consistent refusal to enhance the U.S. nuclear deterrent capability or credibility, or to enhance the survivability of U.S. nuclear forces, despite near weekly Russian nuclear threats during the current Ukrainian war.[29] Instead of improving nuclear deterrence as many in Congress are urging, Mr. Sullivan said "…we're investing in cutting-edge non-nuclear capabilities that will help sustain our military advantage for decades to come. Capabilities like conventionally-armed hypersonic missiles that can reach heavily-defended, high-value targets—in contrast to the nuclear-capable missiles of similar kind that Russia and China are developing.[30] This conclusion appears to be based on a fundamental misunderstanding about the relative power and military effectiveness of nuclear and conventional weapons. Moreover, Mr. Sullivan does not take into account the vast number of Chinese ballistic and hypersonic missiles.

Mr. Sullivan even said, "…capabilities like new space and cyberspace tools … will help the United States retain its advantage across every domain."[31] These capabilities are very important but they have little or no relevance to deterring or responding to a nuclear attack. Thousands of cyber-attacks happen every day.[32] Russia is one of the leading perpetrators.[33] To compare their significance to a nuclear attack is amazing. There are no American nuclear or conventional offensive or defensive weapons deployed in space and the United States is not developing them.[34] Significantly, President Biden has banned the testing of U.S. anti-satellite weapons.[35]

In President Biden, the free world has a weak leader. Former Director of Central Intelligence and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has stated that, "I think he has been wrong on nearly every major foreign policy and national security issue over the past four decades."[36] What this means for nuclear deterrence cannot be prudently ignored. Former Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev has written that Putin and the Russian elite believe that President Biden is "mentally

inept" and that the European Union is "toothless."[37] These perceptions are the likely motivations for President Macron's proposal of a European Union nuclear deterrent based on French nuclear forces.

President Biden supports Ukraine but has no vision of how victory can be achieved or how the war can be ended. He demands restraints on Ukrainian use of American weapons that may facilitate a Russian victory.[38] Putin is willing to accept very high costs to achieve victory and territorial expansion. Indeed, former Russian diplomat Boris Bondarev believes that Putin would be willing to lose "10 or 20 million soldiers" to win the war with Ukraine.[39] As Piotr Smolar writing in *LeMonde* noted, **"***By seeking to avoid escalation without ever imposing the conditions for a resolution, the United States has lost credibility*."[40] (Emphasis in the original).

In the West's current crisis situation, any reasonable proposal for enhanced nuclear deterrence should be examined. However, President Macron's proposals are inconsistent. On one hand, he proposes reducing tensions with Russia. On the other hand, he suggests sending troops to Ukraine. In his April 2024 Sorbonne speech, President Macron states, "Of course, the European pillar within NATO that we are in the process of building … is essential."[41] Yet, his basic proposal is linked to the belief the NATO-based regime is seriously inadequate. President Macron proposes a completely new deterrent system based upon the European Union. However, he ignores the inadequacy of the European Union governmental structure which lacks an elected President, creating a command structure that is problematic, particularly with regard to any future nuclear command and control for an autonomous European deterrent.

President Macron has certainly gotten Russia's attention. The Russian Foreign Ministry's May 2024 nuclear threat against NATO singled out Macron with particular venom. It stated:

> We regard the statements made by President of France Emmanuel Macron about the possibility of sending French and other NATO troops to Ukraine as completely irresponsible and careless. Moreover, the Western media have reported that a number of mercenaries from the French Foreign Legion are already in Ukraine. This can only be regarded as evidence of the readiness and intent to enter into direct confrontation with Russia, which would amount to a head-on military clash between nuclear powers. We have taken note of a number of France's actions, including military exercises and other activities, which are likely designed to fortify Macron's statements with the demonstration of Paris's nuclear capability.[42]

In light of Russia's aggressively expansionist foreign policy,[43] getting Moscow's attention in this way probably is a good thing since it reflects Russia's fear of the possible consequences of its reckless behavior. Despite the bravado from Moscow, except in nuclear weapons, Russia is relatively weak, not in self-defense but in implementing Putin's agenda of neo-fascist expansion against Europe.

There are some aspects of the Macron Sorbonne speech that are worthy of consideration. For example, he points out that Europe "…has forgotten to take responsibility for and [to] protect its external borders — not as impenetrable fortresses, but as boundaries between the inside and the outside. There can be no sovereignty without borders."[44] This fundamental truth is obvious to Macron but lost on the Biden White House. President Macron also noted that, "Between 1993 and 2022, gross domestic product per capita in the United States rose by almost 60%. Europe's has grown by less than 30%."[45] Thus, even the "America Last" economy that Trump is campaigning to invigorate has provided more than twice the economic growth of "socialist" Europe. This truth is ignored not only by the Biden White House but by America's leftwing establishment.

President Macron's call for a credible European defense is certainly important. However, what he believes to be credible is dubious. President Macron stated, "We also need to press ahead with implementing the Strategic Compass, which we concluded under the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and in particular to set up a rapid reaction force to be able to deploy up to 5,000 military personnel in hostile environments by 2025, particularly to come to the aid of our citizens."[46] This is hardly going to impress Russia. This program is anemic even by NATO standards. The NATO Response Force High Readiness Joint Task Force is about 20,000 strong.[47] Beyond that, NATO has placed, "300,000 troops on higher readiness, backed by substantial air and naval power."[48] Arguably, even this is an inadequate deterrent vis-à-vis the prompt attack threat Russia will likely pose—particularly after the end of its war against Ukraine.

In addition to the small size of the existing French nuclear force, France before Macron (and to a lesser extent President Jacques Chirac) was reticent in making any *firm* commitment to extending nuclear deterrence over other states. In this regard, the British commitment to extended nuclear deterrence appears more credible than that of France. Historic French security policy exploited the reality that Russia must defeat NATO before it can threaten France with invasion. The credibility of Macron's proposal is further reduced by the lack of any indication that France will make any increase in its nuclear capability.

Thus, from the standpoint of enhancing European security, President Macron's proposal is flawed. However, it should not be completely dismissed in light of President Biden's demonstrated inability to function as President and leader of NATO. His flawed national security policies include: 1) allowing the Taliban to take over Afghanistan and taking no military action to rescue threatened Americans; 2) reducing the planned U.S. nuclear deterrent modernization in the midst of a brutal Russian invasion of Ukraine and constant high level Russian nuclear threats; 3) eliminating "hedging" against uncertainties as a requirement for U.S. nuclear policy; 4) reducing the real level of defense spending and cutting defense procurement in the worst crisis period since the 1930s; 5) opening U.S. borders with its great impact on welfare costs, crime and likely domestic terrorism; 6) increasing the national debt one trillion dollars every 100 days with catastrophic consequences for the U.S. economy and national power; 7) seeking to prevent Israel from destroying Hamas including cutting off military assistance to its war effort; 8) seeking to prevent Israel from retaliating against an Iranian attack involving over 300 missiles and drones; and 9) planning for the *de facto* importation of a large number of Hamas terrorists into the United States in the name of humanitarianism. These are hardly policies designed to inspire confidence in Washington's decision making and extended deterrence credibility.

Recently, Putin said that a 2024 Biden election victory (a man he routinely threatens with nuclear war) is better for Russia**.**[49] Biden's chaotic and tentative defense and foreign policies clearly are a reason Putin expects to gain effective coercive leverage from Moscow's threats of nuclear escalation**.**[50] Russia's theory of victory is based on the belief that Russia's first use of nuclear weapons will panic the West and the United States will not retaliate**.**[51] President Biden's national security policies hardly inspire confidence anywhere that President Putin will believe that the United States will retaliate in-kind against a Russian nuclear attack, particularly if it is relatively small and directed against a U.S. ally. It is only in this harsh context that Macron's problematic proposal for a European nuclear deterrent based on French forces warrants any consideration and may gain traction.

[1] "Emmanuel Macron: Europe—It Can Die. A New Paradigm at The Sorbonne," *Geopolitique.eu*, April 26, 2024, available at https://geopolitique.eu/en/2024/04/26/macron-europe-it-can-die-a-new-paradigm-at-the-sorbonne/.

[2] Gerardf Araud, "'Our Europe is mortal. It can die.' Decoding Macron's Sorbonne speech," *Atlanticcouncil.org*, April 29, 2024, available at https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/our-europe-is-mortal-it-can-die-decoding-macrons-sorbonne-speech/.

[3] "NATO Chief Rejects Macron Call To Put French Nukes At Center Of European Strategy," *RFE/RL*, February 16, 2020, available at https://www.rferl.org/a/nato-soltenberg-dismisses-macron-call-french-nuclear-deterrence/ 30436632.html.

[4] Mark B. Schneider, "Russian Use of Nuclear Coercion against NATO and Ukraine," National Institute for Public Policy, *Information Series* No. 521, May 2, 2022, available at https://nipp.org/information_series/mark-b-schneider-russian-use-of-nuclear-coercion-against-nato-and-ukraine-no-521-may-2-2022/.

[5] "France Triples Sea-Based Deterrent Patrols," *Warships International Fleet Review*, May 2022, p. 7.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Bruno Tertrais, "French Nuclear Deterrence Policy, Forces, And Future: A Handbook," Foundation pour la Recherche Strategique, February 2020, p. 26, available at https://www.frstrategie.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/recherches-et-documents/2020/ 202004.pdf.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., p. 39.

[10] "1967: De Gaulle pulls France out of NATO's integrated military structure," NATO, March 3, 2009, available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_139272.htm.

[11] Tertrais, "French Nuclear Deterrence Policy, Forces, And Future: A Handbook," op. cit., p. 40.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] "Taking Lyon on the Ninth Day? The 1964 Warsaw Pact Plan for a Nuclear, Parallel History Project on NATO and the Warsaw Pac, (PHP)," May 2000, available https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/108642/warplan_dossier.pdf.

[15] Kyle Mizokami, "Revealed: How the Warsaw Pact Planned to Win World War Three in Europe," *The National Interest*, July 2, 2016, available at https://nationalinterest.org/feature/revealed-how-the-warsaw-pact-planned-win-world-war-three-16822.

[16] "Delivering the UK's Nuclear Deterrent as a National Endeavour," U.K. Ministry of Defense, March 2024, p. 4, available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6622702b49d7b8813ba7e576/Defence_Nuclear_Enterprise_Command_Paper_v6.pdf.

[17] "Speech of the President of the Republic on the Defense and Deterrence Strategy," *Elysee*, February 7, 2020, available at https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2020/02/07/speech-of-the-president-of-the-republic-on-the-defense-and-deterrence-strategy: Bruno Tertrais, The Last To Disarm? The Future of France's Nuclear Weapons," *Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 14, No. 2, July 2007, available at https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/npr/npr_200707/npr142_tertrais.pdf.

[18] "The hidden threat: how serious is the nuclear arsenal of Britain and France," *VPK News*, February 26, 2024, available at https://vpk.name/en/830642_the-hidden-threat-how-serious-is-the-nuclear-arsenal-of-britain-and-france.html.

[19] Claire Mills, "Nuclear Weapons at a Glance: United Kingdom," House of Commons Library, May 3, 2023, p. 4, available at https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9077/CBP-9077.pdf.

[20] "The 2021 Integrated Review: nuclear frequently asked questions," U.K. Ministry of Defense, April 27, 2021, available at https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-2021-integrated-review-nuclear-frequently-asked-questions.

[21] Ibid.

[22] "Annual Threat Assessment of the U,S, Intelligence Community," Office of the Director of National Intelligence, February 5, 2024, p. 16, available at https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ATA-2024-Unclassified-Report.pdf.

[23] Jens Stoltenberg, *The Secretary General's Annual Report, 2020* (Brussels, BE: NATO, 2021), p. 32, available at https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/3/pdf/sgar20-en.pdf.

[24] Tertrais, "The Last to Disarm? The Future of France's Nuclear Weapons," op. cit., p. 256.

[25] "The French Nuclear Deterrent," House of Commons Library Briefing Paper, No 2079, November 20, 2020, available at https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN04079/SN04079.pdf.

[26] Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, "Remarks by Secretary Carter to troops at Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota," U.S. Department of Defense, September 26, 2016, available at https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/956079/remarks-by-secretary-carter-to-troops-at-minot-air-force-base-north-dakota/.

[27] "Emmanuel Macron: Europe—It Can Die. A New Paradigm at The Sorbonne," op. cit.

[28] U.S. Department of Defense, *2022 Nuclear Posture Review* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2022), available at https://media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/27/2003103845/-1/-1/1/2022-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-NPR-MDR.PDF.

[29] Mark B. Schneider, "Dealing With Vladmir Putin's Nuclear Crisis – The Case for Maximum Deterrence," *Real Clear Defense*, November 17, 2022, available at https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2022/11/17/dealing_with_vladmir_putins_nuclear_crisis__the_case_for_maximum_deterrence_865351.html; "U.S. sees 'no reason to change' nuclear alert levels at this time -White House," *Reuters*, February 28, 2022, available at https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-sees-no-reason-change-nuclear-alert-levels-this-time-white-house-2022-02-28/.

[30] "Remarks by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan for the Arms Control Association (ACA) Annual Forum," The White House, June 2, 2023, available at

https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/ 2023/06/02/remarks-by-national-security-advisor-jake-sullivan-for-the-arms-control-association-aca-annual-forum/.

[31] Ibid.

[32] "Top Cybersecurity Statistics for 2024," *Cobalt*, December 8, 2023, available at https://www.cobalt.io/blog/cybersecurity-statistics-2024.

[33] "Russia Cyber Threat Overview and Advisories," National Coordinator for Critical Infrastructure and Resilience, no date, available at https://www.cisa.gov/topics/cyber-threats-and-advisories/advanced-persistent-threats/russia.

[34] Charles Q. Choi, "Pentagon Official: U.S. Is Not Developing Space Weapons." *Space.com*, February 20, 2009, available at https://www.space.com/3607-pentagon-official-developing-space-weapons.html.: "Pentagon Leaders Emphasize 'Responsible' Options for Countering Space Weapons." *Air and Space Forces.com*, July 24, 2023, available at https://www.airandspaceforces.com/pentagon-responsible-options-space-weapons/.

[35] "To Slow an Anti-Satellite Arms Race, White House Bans U.S. Tests of Space Weapons," *Time.com*, no date, available at https://time.com/6168148/space-weapons-ban-harris/.

[36] Philip Bump, "Robert Gates Thinks Joe Biden Hasn't Stopped Being Wrong for 40 Years," *The Atlantic*, January 20, 2014, available at https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/01/robert-gates-thinks-joe-biden-hasnt-stopped-being-wrong-40-years/356785/.

[37] Justin Huggler, "Vladimir Putin is bluffing over nuclear threat, says Yeltsin minister," *Telegraph.com*, March 7, 2022, available https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2022/03/07/vladimir-putin-bluffing-nuclear-threat-says-yeltsin-minister/.

[38] Jonathan Sweet and Mark Toth, "Ukraine cannot win if Biden bars attacks on Russian soil," *The Hill*, June 22, 2023, available at https://thehill.com/opinion/4060085-ukraine-cannot-win-if-biden-bars-attacks-on-russian-soil/.

[39] Kelly Hayes, "Putin willing to sacrifice '20 million' soldiers to win Ukraine war, ex-Russian diplomat says," *Fox 13*, October 25, 2022, available a https://www.fox13seattle.com/news/putin-willing-sacrifice-20-million-soldiers-win-ukraine-war-ex-russian-diplomat.

[40] Piortr Smolar, "Ukraine, Gaza: Joe Biden's foreign policy is mired in contradictions," *Le Monde*, April 20, 2024, available at https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/04/20/ukraine-gaza-joe-biden-s-foreign-policy-is-mired-in-contradictions_6669011_4.html.

[41] "Emmanuel Macron: Europe—It Can Die. A New Paradigm at The Sorbonne," op. cit.

[42] "Foreign Ministry statement on the Russian Armed Forces' exercises held to practice for the use of non-strategic nuclear weapons," Russian Federation Foreign Ministry, May 6, 2024, available at https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/1948486/.

[43] Taras Kuzio, "How Putin's Russia embraced fascism while preaching anti-fascism," *Atlantic Council*, April 17, 2022, available at https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/how-putins-russia-embraced-fascism-while-preaching-anti-fascism/.

[44] "Emmanuel Macron: Europe—It Can Die. A New Paradigm at The Sorbonne," op. cit.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] "NATO Response Force," NATO, July 27, 2023, available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49755.htm#contribute.

[48] "Speech by NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoană at the 2B Secure Forum in Budva, Montenegro," NATO, October 7, 2023, available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_219040.htm?selectedLocale=en.

[49] Yuliya Talmazan, "Putin says Biden is better for Russia than a Trump presidency," *NBC News*, February 15, 2024, available at https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/putin-says-biden-better-russia-trump-presidency-rcna138942.

[50] Stephen Blank, "Russian Nuclear Strategy in the Ukraine War: An Interim Report," *Information Series*, No. 525 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, June 15, 2022), available at https://nipp.org/information_series/stephen-blank-russian-nuclear-strategy-in-the-ukraine-war-an-interim-report-no-525-june-15-2022/.

[51] Jacob W. Kipp, "Russia's Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons," *Military Review*, May-June 2001, available at https://ia903101.us.archive.org/9/items/2001_05_01_Russia_s_Nonstrategic_Nuclear_Weapons_Kipp/2001-05-01%20Russia%27s%20Nonstrategic%20Nuclear%20Weapons%20%28Kipp%29.pdf.

**The National Institute for Public Policy's *Information Series* is a periodic publication focusing on contemporary strategic issues affecting U.S. foreign and defense policy. It is a forum for promoting critical thinking on the evolving international security environment and how the dynamic geostrategic landscape affects U.S. national security. Contributors are recognized experts in the field of national security. National Institute for Public Policy would like to thank the Sarah Scaife Foundation for the generous support that made this *Information Series* possible.**



## 3. US Must Adopt Strong Deterrence

https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/20769/adopt-deterrence

*Waning Support for Ukraine, Israel and the Philippines Is a Threat to the Free World*

By: Con Coughlin for the Gatestone Institute // July 9, 2024, at 5:00 am

- ***The US neglect of vital security issues, from waning support for Ukraine and Israel, to its refusal to acknowledge the threat posed by Iran's nuclear programme, is inflicting serious damage to America's status as a global superpower.***
- ***America's alarming non-confrontational policy towards the mullahs -- even asking Europe not to censure Iran for its growing nuclear weapons program -- has been a mainstay of both the Biden and Obama administrations. Their encouragement of Iran to acquire nuclear bombs has led the mullahs and their proxies to expand their malign activities throughout the region. Biden's impotence has effectively invited Hezbollah, the Iran-backed militia that controls most of Lebanon, to escalate its attacks against Israel with the aim of opening a new front on Israel's northern border...***
- ***Another area where Washington's incompetent handling of key security issues is the Pacific, where apparent US aversion to upsetting the Communist dictatorship headed by Chinese President Xi Jinping has recently led to an increase in aggressive Chinese military conduct towards the Philippines as part of Beijing's efforts to expand its control over the South China Sea.***
- ***Washington's persistent dithering on China, as well as other vital issues of global security such as Ukraine, Iran, and failing wholly to back Israel fighting not only for its own existence but protecting freedom in the West from aggressive autocracies, will certainly lend encouragement to Putin and other dictatorial regimes in Beijing and Tehran that the US will not present a serious challenge to their efforts to expand their global influence.***
- ***If the current administration allows terrorists and aggressors to win, what message does that send to all terrorists and aggressors?***
- ***The only way for the US to reclaim its global stature as the leader of the free world, after having tried everything else, is finally to adopt deterrence: warn every US adversary that if it provokes Washington, the response to each of them and their regimes will be a cost they do not wish to contemplate.***

Whether US President Joe Biden remains in office or not, his recent debate with former President Donald J. Trump and has exposed the global catastrophe that US policies under the current administration have wrought. The US neglect of vital security issues, from waning support for Ukraine and Israel, to its refusal to acknowledge the threat posed by Iran's nuclear programme, is inflicting serious damage to America's status as a global superpower.

Arguably the most damning examples of America's increasingly faltering grip on key foreign policy issues were Biden's recent decisions to slow-walk arms deliveries to Israel and failing to show sufficient solidarity for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. In a move that will be interpreted by hostile states such as Russia, China and Iran as a sign of America's waning influence, Biden opted not to attend a two-day conference held in Switzerland to discuss the war in Ukraine.

One of the principals aims of the conference, titled the "High-level Summit for Peace in Ukraine", was to encourage a large number of countries to declare their support for Ukraine's sovereignty. Biden's decision to absent himself from the conference will be interpreted in Moscow and elsewhere to mean that Western support for Ukraine is on the wane. As the summit's final communiqué declared, its purpose was to "enhance a high-level dialogue on pathways towards a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for Ukraine."

Given Biden's constant declarations that his administration fully supports Ukrainian efforts to resist Russian aggression, the US president's presence was deemed vital to ensure the summit achieved a positive outcome. The importance of Biden's personal participation at the summit was made clear by Zelensky beforehand, when he made a personal appeal to the American president that any no-show on his part would send a strong message to Russian President Vladimir Putin that Washington was not serious about helping Ukraine to achieve victory.

The Ukrainian leader said that Biden's absence would not only "be applauded by Putin, personally applauded by Putin... it would be a standing ovation". With Biden keeping his distance, it was perhaps unsurprising that the summit, which was attended by delegations representing 92 nations across the globe, fell well short of giving Zelensky the unequivocal declaration of support he was seeking.

A number of countries, including Brazil, India and Saudi Arabia, declined to sign the original draft declaration over concerns that the communiqué might appear to blame Russia for provoking the conflict. This meant only 80 of the countries attending the summit at the Swiss resort of Bürgenstock signed the final declaration. The final statement declared support for the UN Charter and said "respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty... can and will serve as a basis for achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine.

"We believe that reaching peace requires the involvement of and dialogue between all parties," it added. Even so, the final declaration was something of a compromise. While it made mention of the "ongoing war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine", it also focused on other issues, such as protecting civilians and securing grain corridors, rather than laying down next steps for peace. In Biden's absence, the summit unfortunately failed to produce the type of uncompromising demand Zelensky had sought, calling for Russia to withdraw its forces from all occupied Ukrainian territory -- including Crimea -- as the basic pre-condition for starting peace talks. Zelensky has also called for the formation of an international tribunal to try Putin's government for war crimes.

Even more grievous has been America's persistent refusal, in both the Obama and Biden administrations, to acknowledge the threat posed by Iran's nuclear programme, as well as the wider threat Iran poses to the security of the Middle East, which has resulted in Iran now being in a position to enrich uranium to weapons grade virtually on demand. The latest estimate of the progress Iran has made on developing material for nuclear weapons, produced by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), concludes that Iran's nuclear program has reached the point at which Iran might be able to enrich enough uranium for five nuclear weapons within three weeks.

America's alarming non-confrontational policy towards the mullahs -- even asking Europe not to censure Iran for its growing nuclear weapons program -- has been a mainstay of both the Biden and Obama administrations. Their encouragement of Iran to acquire nuclear bombs has led the mullahs and their proxies to expand their malign activities throughout the region. Biden's impotence has effectively invited Hezbollah.

They are the Iran-backed militia that controls most of Lebanon, to escalate its attacks against Israel with the aim of opening a new front on Israel's northern border – in the same way as the US surrender of the Afghanistan a terrorist group, the Taliban, along with assuring Russian President Vladimir Putin that a "minor incursion" would be acceptable, doubtless encouraged Russia to invade Ukraine.

The Biden administration's refusal to confront Iran directly over its conduct has also resulted in Iran seeking to deepen its ties with the Al-Shabaab terrorist movement based in Somalia. Establishing a foothold in Somalia or Sudan would enable Iran, which also backs Houthi rebels in Yemen, to cripple shipping passing through the vital Red Sea trade route as well as to be able to attack Israel from the south.

Another area where Washington's incompetent handling of key security issues is the Pacific, where apparent US aversion to upsetting the Communist dictatorship headed by Chinese President Xi Jinping has recently led to an increase in aggressive Chinese military conduct towards the Philippines as part of Beijing's efforts to expand its control over the South China Sea. In the most recent incident, China's Coast Guard seized two Filipino ships on a resupply mission to an outpost on the Second Thomas Shoal in the Spratly Islands, severely wounding a number of navy personnel, according to Philippine officials.

The shoal is claimed by both Manila and Beijing, and has been the scene of several clashes in recent months, which many regional officials believe could have been avoided if the Biden administration had taken a more robust approach to acts of Chinese aggression. Washington's persistent dithering on China, as well as other vital issues of global security such as Ukraine, Iran, and failing wholly to back Israel fighting not only for its own existence but protecting freedom in the West from aggressive autocracies.

This will certainly lend encouragement to Putin and other dictatorial regimes in Beijing and Tehran that the US will not present a serious challenge to their efforts to expand their global influence.

If the current administration allows terrorists and aggressors to win, what message does that send to all terrorists and aggressors? The only way for the US to reclaim its global stature as the leader of the free world, after having tried everything else, is finally to adopt deterrence: warn every US adversary that if it provokes Washington, the response to each of them and their regimes will be a cost they do not wish to contemplate.

4.
5.
6.

# It's an Interesting Time to Work on Nuclear Issues

https://ucigcc.org/commentary/its-an-interesting-time-to-work-on-nuclear-issues-thats-both-a-challenge-and-an-opportunity/

That's Both a Challenge and an Opportunity

By: Mike Albertson at the University of California IGCC // July 03, 2024

Engagement on nuclear topics has changed dramatically over my professional life.

When I started twenty years ago working as an analyst on Russian nuclear issues, senior-level interest in the field was low. The United States was deeply engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan. The primary U.S. focus was counterterrorism and conventional dominance. A declining Russian nuclear force was not seen as worthy of further arms control attention. The Chinese nuclear force was small and was expected to remain so. North Korea and Iran would be solved via international cooperation.

Opportunities for young nuclear professionals to engage with mentors or learn the subject matter were limited. Today, the challenges and opportunities in the field are many. Nuclear expertise and analysis are in high demand. Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea are in the news for all the wrong reasons, and arms control has eroded or vanished in many key areas. New challenges have brought increasing engagement. Nuclear experts travel all over the world to participate in conversations. Senior-level officials read fresh analysis with great interest.

Think tanks and national laboratories host a wide variety of visitors looking to get smart quickly on the subject. Organizations have devoted significant time and resources to next-generation programs to bring new people into the field. In all of these engagements, I am constantly asked "what do you think" about the latest nuclear headlines or topic of discussion. The answer I invariably give off the cuff is simple: "it's really interesting—here's why…"

To me, "interesting" is a sincere thing to say for a couple of reasons. First, there are a lot of difficult problems in the nuclear world which may never be solved—that's what makes them interesting. From understanding interactions between nuclear armed states and achieving the many varieties of deterrence, to ensuring arms control, non-proliferation, and the peaceful use of nuclear energy—these are all interesting problems without easy solutions.

Second, there is now much more room for creative thinking than in the past. Longstanding approaches or ways of thinking about nuclear security have eroded or disappeared. Established certainties are giving way to deep conversations and new ideas. And nuclear issues are no longer off on their own island—they are now an integral component of most geopolitical discussions. Third, the conversation is more vibrant and diverse, mixing U.S. and allied experts, experts from other domains, seasoned veterans, and emerging professionals.

All of this makes for a more engaging discussion. Yet eyebrows tend to go up when I use the word "interesting." The word delivers more positive connotations than the questioner was

expecting. “Interesting” implies importance and future investment—the topic is worthy of one’s time and attention. And it conveys hope—“interesting” means “I want to help solve or ameliorate the problem, and I think I can do that.”

**Interesting Times Can Be Hopeful as Well**

People expect me to reply with a word a little darker, like “worried” or “scared.” The opening paragraphs of most national security articles emphasize the dangers we face. Nuclear weapons based on their destructive power are already scary things. Like the media, the national security community tends to catastrophize—this tendency is often well-intentioned, meant to convey the seriousness of these risks so people will pay attention.

But catastrophizing leaves a false impression of hopelessness, despite the fact that policymakers are hard at work addressing these issues, that useful dialogues are taking place with allies and adversaries around the world, and that important new ideas are being generated by the nuclear expert community. As the saying goes, living in interesting times is both a blessing and a curse. Non-interesting times can be peaceful but boring; interesting times can be both stimulating and calamitous. Interesting times are full of risks—but they are also full of hope as renewed interest drives a new generation to find solutions to an era’s most challenging problems.

**An Interesting—and Growing—Field**

“Interesting” is drawing people in. A large and diverse group of younger experts is gravitating toward nuclear policy. They want to learn and do meaningful research—they also want to carve out fulfilling careers in this field. There likewise remains a small but strong cadre of deeply experienced nuclear experts, many of whom devote significant time and energy to mentoring this next generation.

Despite the many unjustly given pejoratives about the “nuclear priesthood,” you’ll find many of these priests outside of the cathedrals trying to bring a new generation into the field. And contrary to assertions, there’s a decent number of mid-career nuclear experts serving as a bridge between these two generations. Mid-career professionals come with experience and credentials, bringing curiosity and a continued desire for growth while still remembering what it’s like to start out in this field.

Nuclear policy engagements like the Public Policy and Nuclear Threats (PPNT) Boot Camp bring these generations and perspectives together on a regular basis. With many more now getting the opportunity this summer to actively engage on nuclear topics—whether through summer positions or in immersive programs like PPNT—we have an important opportunity to get more ideas and solutions into the nuclear field at this interesting moment. This opportunity is a two-way street both for participants and presenters.

**For the Next-Generation of Nuclear Thought Leaders**

**Listen and Learn**

Those entering the field should seize the opportunity to listen and learn. Many of these programs did not exist a short time ago. Absorb as much as possible in this short amount of time. Some of the information may have immediate relevance to a project or paper; some of it may become useful further down the line. Take full advantage of the opportunity to learn a great deal quickly, either in the big conference room or in informal settings like lunch or a coffee break.

**Keep an Open Mind**

There are many bureaucratic cultures and tribes in the nuclear field. You will be exposed to many over a long career. Avoid stereotyping a speaker or participant based on their age, their partisan or institutional affiliation, their work experience, or what you have read from them or about them. Very few things are absolute truths—either factual or moral—in this field. Information about capabilities and intentions is incomplete. Empirical data is lacking. Debates are longstanding. Remember that compromise is almost always required to get big things done, so it is best to think about where ideas overlap rather than where they diverge.

**Ask Good Questions**

The best opportunities will offer plenty of chances to find your voice and engage in the conversation. Take advantage of them in the right way. Ask speakers to elaborate on a point you find particularly interesting, to comment on a hard problem, or to provide a topical story to show how an issue works in the real world. If you want to challenge a point, do so respectfully and use the engagement to learn rather than to convince or play to the crowd. Sometimes the best questions are very short ones aimed at just the right point.

**Pick Interesting Projects**

There is a vast number of relevant and interesting research projects to pursue in the nuclear field. Senior policymakers, military leaders, and allied and partner governments are all looking for work to be done exploring these problem sets. But there is an unfortunate tendency to re-examine already overexamined issues with yet another new methodology or data set. Another is to focus on an overcomplicated question or methodology rather than focusing on the potential findings, leading a nuclear practitioner to quickly dismiss your work. Pick something that is interesting to you and relevant to the reader. Highlight up front why the issue matters. Make it readable to both an expert and an outsider. Leverage your unique skills to gather and analyze data to provide new perspectives.

Make Lasting Connections

Any professional community of national security expertise is a small one. Those I work with closely now, we all came up together doing many of these same programs or working in the same offices over the last twenty years together. You will run into the same people over and over. You can form lasting friendships from events like PPNT and end up at the same conferences or on the same panels over the years. People here could end up being your boss or decide whether you come into their institution. Make friends, engage constructively with your

potential future co-workers or co-panelists, and avoid making lasting enemies over minor intellectual disagreements.

**For Their Mentors and Teachers**

Test New Ideas Out. For those participating as briefers or mentors, these programs are likewise a learning opportunity. As a young professional eager to learn, there is nothing more stultifying than listening to a seasoned expert going through the motions on a well-worn briefing that may have grown out of date or out of touch. Use the summer to update your presentations in line with changing events in the world. Try out new arguments with a different audience. Be honest about what you do not know, or where you have gaps or biases. Ask for feedback.

**Engage in Two-Way Conversations**

Everyone says they want to have voices from the next generation in the room, but those voices will want to engage and ask hard questions. They will challenge findings and assumptions, sometimes less tactfully than you experience in other settings with your peers or subordinates. These engagements can be useful for sharpening talking points, identifying blind spots or areas of confusion, clarifying your argument, and coming up with ideas for future papers.

**Provide Interesting Ideas for Future Work**

Given the vast array of challenges, someone starting off in the field may find it difficult to focus on the right topic, to establish the proper scope or level of ambition for a project or identify potential publication venues. All of us have topics we find interesting but do not have the time to research ourselves. Presenters can be instrumental in helping focus the time and attention of emerging scholars in directions where they can make a positive difference.

**Give Hope**

As bad as things may seem compared to ten or thirty years ago, try to end on a positive note rather than impressing upon the audience that the topic is a lost cause. Provide ideas for future work. Note that every moment has its national security crises and debates. Present historical analogies where predictions were wrong in a positive direction. Demonstrate that the severity of the situation means more opportunities for meaningful work.

Hope is what ultimately inspires the interest that brings a new generation into the nuclear policy fold. Good mentors should ensure that this next generation's interest in creating positive change will remain with them for decades to come. Mike Albertson is the deputy director for the Center for Global Security Research at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. The views expressed here are the private views of the author and should not be attributed to the institutions with which he is affiliated.

As the 2024 Public Policy and Nuclear Threats Boot Camp commences, Mike Albertson, deputy director for the Center for Global Security Research at the Lawrence Livermore National

Laboratory, reflects on what it means to work in such an "interesting" field and imparts his advice on the next generation of nuclear policy leaders and their mentors.

**Don't cut corners on US nuclear deterrence**

https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/dont-cut-corners-on-us-nuclear-deterrence/

By: Matthew Kroenig and Mark J. Massa for the Atlantic Council // July 3, 2024

The nuclear threats to the United States and its allies are growing.

To deter these threats, the bipartisan Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States (a commission on which one of the authors, Matthew Kroenig, served) recently recommended that the United States plan for its first strategic forces buildup since the end of the Cold War. In contrast to this bipartisan consensus, House Armed Services Committee Ranking Member Adam Smith (D-WA) argued in Newsweek in May for adjustments and cuts to the US intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) force.

Smith's argument that the United States should consider mobile basing for a portion of its ICBM force has merit, but his other arguments do not stand up to scrutiny. Rather, bipartisan support for modernizing and expanding the US nuclear arsenal will be essential for ensuring that the United States and its allies have the strategic forces they need to deter aggression in the face of hostile, nuclear-armed, autocratic rivals.

**There are several problems with Smith's arguments.**

> **First,** he questions whether land-based nuclear forces are needed at all. Yet, every presidential administration since the 1950s has considered this question and concluded that ICBMs are necessary. Indeed, as we have argued at length elsewhere (see here and here), ICBMs contribute to the major goals of US nuclear strategy—they deter adversaries from launching a strategic attack, assure allies, and give the United States the ability to respond if deterrence fails.
>
> There is simply no room to cut the number of ICBMs at this moment.
>
> **Second,** Smith argues that an enemy nuclear attack on vulnerable ICBMs could force a US president into a use-them-or-lose-them situation and a "rushed" decision to launch a nuclear attack. But the president is not forced to launch nuclear weapons as soon as a possible enemy missile launch is detected. The president has the option to ride out the attack and retaliate with other, more survivable forces, if necessary. Moreover, it does not make sense to argue that ICBMs are, on the one hand, so important that the president would need to launch them if under attack and, on the other hand, the United States should slash their numbers. ICBMs are either important or they are not. If ICBMs are expendable, then there is no reason for the president to launch them if under attack. If they are important, as we believe they are, then it is unwise to curtail them.

**Third,** Smith argues that US ICBM silos are uniquely dangerous because they invite an adversary to target its nuclear weapons in the US heartland, and that such an attack could kill millions of people. But the purpose of nuclear weapons is, of course, to deter nuclear attack in the first place. If ICBMs continue to deter effectively, as they have for the past half century and more, then an attack will not come. Moreover, if the adversary did not need to target its nuclear weapons on missile silos in the isolated high plains of Montana and North Dakota, for example, then the attacker could reallocate those weapons toward major US cities, which would only result in more US deaths in the event of a nuclear war.

**Fourth,** Smith continues by arguing that, even if the United States does maintain some silo-based ICBMs, the Department of Defense should purchase fewer of them. But again, this argument does not stand up to scrutiny. The bipartisan Strategic Posture Commission argued that the current US nuclear modernization program of record—which includes the new Sentinel ICBMs,* new ballistic missile submarines, new strategic bombers, and new air-launched nuclear cruise missiles—is necessary but not sufficient to maintain strategic deterrence. There is simply no room to cut the number of ICBMs at this moment.

**Fifth,** Smith argues that, if the United States keeps the same number of nuclear weapons, then it should shift warheads from ICBMs to the submarine leg of the nuclear triad. But there is not much room to shift large numbers of warheads to the sea-based leg without increasing the total number of submarines, and the United States is already straining to produce the planned number of Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines on time. Moreover, if the United States were to build more submarines, that would be inconsistent with Smith's stated concern about costs. Building and operating more submarines is much more expensive than modernizing ground-based missile silos.

**Sixth,** Smith worries that the Department of Defense does not have the resources to complete the US nuclear modernization program while making necessary investments in conventional forces. It is true that the Department of Defense must make tradeoffs in some areas, but not with nuclear deterrence, which is its highest priority. Congress should ensure that the United States has sufficient resources at its disposal to build and deploy the necessary nuclear and conventional forces.

Smith's strongest argument is that the United States should consider putting some portion of its ICBM force on mobile launchers instead of in silos. In fact, the bipartisan congressional commission recommends this option to enhance the survivability of the ground-based leg. But this option would not result in cost savings, contrary to what Smith suggests. A mobile option would require building new missile garrisons and also result in higher operational and security costs. Given the worsening international security environment, land-mobile missiles should be a complement to, not a replacement for, the ICBM program of record.

Now is not the time to be making cuts to the US nuclear arsenal. As the bipartisan Strategic Posture Commission argued in its consensus report, the United States must urgently complete its

nuclear modernization program of record and take actions today to enhance its strategic posture. The future of international peace and security depends on it.

**Matthew Kroenig** is vice president of the Atlantic Council and senior director of its Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security. He is currently a commissioner on the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States and was a senior policy adviser in the Pentagon in support of the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review. **Mark J. Massa** is the deputy director for strategic forces policy in the Forward Defense program within the Scowcroft Center. Note: The Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security conducts work on nuclear and strategic forces that is sponsored by donors including Los Alamos National Laboratory, Northrop Grumman Corporation (which has the sole contract from the US Air Force to engineer and manufacture Sentinel ICBMs), the Norwegian Ministry of Defense, the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United States Department of Defense, the United States Department of Energy, and the United States Department of State, as well as general support to the Scowcroft Center. This article did not involve any of these donors and reflects only the authors' views.

*--Zeeshan Aleem is a writer and editor for MSNBC Daily. Previously, he worked at Vox, HuffPost and Politico, and he has also been published in, among other places, The New York Times, The Atlantic, The Nation, and The Intercept.*

## Nuclear arms race intensified during Trump's presidency

### The Hill Online, July 5 | Lawrence S. Wittner

*Over the last decade and more, nuclear war has grown increasingly likely.*

*Most nuclear arms control and disarmament agreements of the past have been discarded by the nuclear powers or will expire soon. Moreover, there are no nuclear arms control negotiations underway. Instead, all nine nuclear nations (Russia, the United States, China, Britain, France, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea) have begun a new nuclear arms race, qualitatively improving the 12,121 nuclear weapons in existence or building new, much faster, and deadlier ones.*

Furthermore, the cautious, diplomatic statements about international relations that characterized an earlier era have given way to public threats of nuclear war, issued by top officials in Russia, the United States and North Korea.

This June, UN Secretary General António Guterres warned that, given the heightened risk of nuclear annihilation, "humanity is on a knife's edge."

This menacing situation owes a great deal to Donald Trump.

As president of the United States, Trump sabotaged key nuclear arms control agreements of the past and the future. He single-handedly destroyed the INF Treaty, the Iran nuclear agreement and the Open Skies Treaty by withdrawing the United States from them.

In addition, as the expiration date for the New START Treaty approached in February 2021, he refused to accept a simple extension of the agreement — action quickly countermanded by the

incoming Biden administration. Not surprisingly, Trump was horrified by the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons — an UN-negotiated agreement that banned nuclear weapons, thereby providing the framework for a nuclear-free world.

In 2017, when this vanguard nuclear disarmament treaty was passed by an overwhelming majority of the world's nations, the Trump administration proclaimed that the United States would never sign it.

In fact, Trump was far less interested in arms control and disarmament than in entering — and winning — a new nuclear arms race with other nations. "Let it be an arms race," he declared in December 2016, shortly after his election victory. "We will outmatch them at every pass." In February 2018, he boasted that his administration was "creating a brand-new nuclear force. We're gonna be so far ahead of everybody else in nuclear like you've never seen before."

And, indeed, Trump's U.S. nuclear "modernization" program — involving the replacement of every Cold War era submarine, bomber, missile and warhead with an entirely new generation of the deadliest weapons ever invented — acquired enormous momentum during his presidency, with cost estimates running as high as $2 trillion.

Eager to facilitate this nuclear buildup, the Trump administration began to explore a return to U.S. nuclear weapons testing. Consequently, it announced in 2018 that, although the U.S. government had ended its nuclear tests in 1992 and President Bill Clinton had negotiated and signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1996, Trump would oppose U.S. Senate ratification of the treaty.

The administration also dramatically reduced the time necessary to prepare for nuclear weapons test explosions. In 2020, senior Trump administration officials reportedly conducted a serious discussion of U.S. government resumption of nuclear testing, leading the House of Representatives, then under Democratic control, to block funding for it.

Though many Americans assumed that a powerful U.S. nuclear arsenal would prevent an outbreak of nuclear war, Trump undermined this wishful thinking by revealing himself perfectly ready to launch a nuclear attack. During his 2016 presidential campaign, the Republican nominee reportedly asked a foreign policy advisor three times why, if the U.S. government possessed nuclear weapons, it should be reluctant to use them. The following year, Trump told the governor of Puerto Rico that, "if nuclear war happens, we won't be second in line pressing the button."

Indeed, Trump appeared remarkably close to launching a nuclear war against North Korea. In August 2017, responding to provocative comments by Kim Jong Un, Trump warned that further North Korean threats would "be met with fire, fury and frankly power the likes of which this world has never seen before."

Trump's threat of a nuclear attack triggered a rapid escalation of tensions between the two nations. In a speech before the UN General Assembly that September, Trump vowed to "totally

destroy North Korea" if Kim, whom he derisively labeled "Rocket Man," continued his provocative rhetoric. Meanwhile, the White House chief of staff, Gen. John Kelly, was appalled by indications that Trump really wanted war and, especially, by the president's suggestion of using a nuclear weapon against North Korea and then, blaming the action on someone else.

According to Kelly, the military's objection that the war would — in the words of Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis "incinerate a couple million people" — had no impact on Trump. In early 2018, the U.S. president merely upped the ante by publicly boasting that he had a "Nuclear Button" that was "much bigger & more powerful" than Kim's.

What finally headed off a nuclear war, Kelly recalled, was his appeal to Trump's "narcissism." If Trump could forge a friendly diplomatic relationship with North Korea, the general suggested, the U.S. president would emerge as the "greatest salesman in the world." And, indeed, Trump did reverse course and embark on a flamboyant campaign to pacify and denuclearize North Korea, remarking that May that "everyone" thought he deserved the Nobel Peace Prize.

Eventually, however, the U.S.-North Korean negotiations, including a much-heralded "summit" between Trump and Kim, resulted in little more than handshakes, North Korea's continued development of nuclear weapons, and Trump's return to public threats of nuclear war — this time against Iran.

Given this record, as well as Trump's all-too-evident mental instability, we have been fortunate that the world survived his four years in office.

But our good fortune might not last much longer, for Trump's return to power in 2025 or the recklessness of some other leader of a nuclear-armed nation could unleash unprecedented catastrophe upon the world.

Ultimately, the only long-term security for humanity lies in the global abolition of nuclear weapons and the development of a united world community.

*--Lawrence S. Wittner is Professor of History Emeritus at SUNY/Albany and the author of "Confronting the Bomb" (Stanford University Press*

**Trump has a strategic plan for the country: Gearing up for nuclear war**

By Joe Cirincione | July 2, 2024

Illustration by Thomas Gaulkin / DonkeyHotey (Flickr, CC BY-SA 4.0) / VectorStock

President Joe Biden has a terrible nuclear policy. A re-elected President Donald Trump's would be much worse.

Biden has authorized the largest nuclear weapons budgets since the Cold War, delayed then squandered his chance to contain Iran's nuclear program, and apparently has no policy for containing North Korea's missiles and weapons. But a re-elected Trump would put nuclear

weapons programs on steroids, trash what remains of the global arms control regime, and likely trigger new nuclear weapons programs in more other nations than we have seen at any time since the early 1960s.

Trump's nuclear policy is all spelled out in a new conservative manifesto by Project 2025, a coalition of over 100 far-right groups led by the Heritage Foundation, which is widely seen as the template for a possible Trump 2.0 administration. If readers of the *Bulletin* have heard of Project 2025, chances are that they did not go through its 900-page book "Mandate for Leadership." They should. This policy agenda, dubbed the "Conservative Promise," is a blueprint for the most dramatic take-over and transformation of the US democracy in history.

The Project 2025 coalition members are staffed by over 200 former officials of the first Trump administration. These sophisticated Trump-movement MAGA operatives now know how to work the levers of government and have learned from what they see as their main mistake during Trump's first term: leaving the "deep state" intact. These conservatives proudly served Donald Trump through his administration and attempted insurrection. They are now ready to help him complete the job and their plan is here for everyone willing to see.

"Our goal is to assemble an army of aligned, vetted, trained and prepared conservatives to work on Day One to deconstruct the Administrative State," writes Paul Dans, a former chief of staff of the Office of Personnel Management during the Trump administration and now the director of Project 2025, in his foreword to the report. Russ Vought, the chief of staff of the Office of Management and Budget under Trump and now the president of the conservative think tank Center for Renewing America, agrees: "We have to be thinking mechanically about how to take these institutions over." Vought vows to be "ready on Day One of the next transition," adding, "Whatever is necessary to seize control of the administrative state is really our task."

In the nuclear realm, "seizing control" would mean implementing the most dramatic buildup of nuclear weapons since the start of the Reagan administration, some four decades ago. If this hawkish political coalition gets its way in November, the scope, pace, and cost of US nuclear weapons programs would increase all at once. Their plan, which seeks to significantly increase budgets and deployments of nuclear weapons and related programs and destroy the remaining arms control agreements, would dramatically increase the risks of nuclear confrontation as a result.

**Nuclear proposals.** The nuclear proposals are a key part of the Project 2025 coalition's recommendations to reshape the Defense Department. This chapter is led by Christopher Miller, a former US Army special forces colonel who served as Trump's last defense secretary. As Michael Hirsch reports in *Politico*, the agenda "is far more ambitious than anything Ronald Reagan dreamed up." (In 1980, President Reagan ordered a massive nuclear buildup, which scholars now consider to have greatly escalated the Cold War.)

In condensed and translated form, Project 2025 proposes that a second Trump administration:

- Prioritize nuclear weapons programs over other security programs.
- Accelerate the development and production of all nuclear weapons programs.

- Reject any congressional efforts to find more cost-effective alternatives to current plans.
- Increase funding for the development and production of new and modernized nuclear warheads, including the B61-12, W80-4, W87-1 Mod, and W88 Alt 370.
- Develop a new nuclear-armed, sea-launched cruise missile, even though neither the administration nor the Navy has requested such a weapon, and the Navy has not fielded this type of weapon since they were retired by President George H.W. Bush in 1991.
- Increase the number of nuclear weapons above current treaty limits and program goals, including buying more intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) than currently planned.
- **Expand** the capabilities of the National Nuclear Security Administration's weapons production complex, including vastly increasing budgets, shedding non-nuclear weapons programs at the national laboratories (such as those devoted to the climate crisis) and accelerating production of the plutonium pits that are the cores of nuclear weapons.
- Prepare to test new nuclear weapons, even though the United States has signed the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty that prohibits such tests and has not tested a full-scale nuclear device since 1992.
- Reject current arms control treaties that the coalition considers being "contrary to the goal of bolstering nuclear deterrence" and "prepare to compete in order to secure US interests should arms control efforts continue to fail."
- Dramatically expand the current national missile defense programs, including deploying as-yet-unproven directed energy and space-based weapons, or as the report puts it: "Abandon the existing policy of not defending the homeland against Russian and Chinese ballistic missiles."
- Invest in a sweeping, untested "cruise missile defense of the homeland."
- Accelerate all missile defense programs, national and regional.

These proposals would add unnecessary new weapons to an already expansive nuclear arsenal. If implemented, these new and expanded programs would accelerate the nuclear arms race the United States is already engaged in and encourage the expansion—or initiation—of new nuclear weapons programs in other nations around the globe.

It is not as if the United States needs to spend more on nuclear weapons.

At $70 billion, President Joe Biden's Fiscal Year 2025 budget request is already the most the country will have spent on nuclear weapons since the Cold War. Under Trump and now Biden, the United States has engaged in a sweeping replacement of nearly all existing nuclear weapons systems, including a new generation of strategic bombers (the B-21), strategic missile submarines (the Columbia class), intercontinental ballistic missiles (the Sentinel), several new warhead programs, and the development of new nuclear weapons, including smaller, "more usable" nuclear warheads and air-launched cruise missiles.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the currently planned nuclear weapons programs will cost $750 billion over the next decade (2023-2032). And the costs will rise every year:

Biden's requested $70 billion for the next budget is a 22 percent increase from last year. The total cost of the programs will approach $2 trillion. And there is more. The Biden administration also requested $30 billion for Fiscal Year 2025 for missile defense programs, much of which will be devoted to weapons designed to intercept long-range, nuclear-armed missiles.

The policy recommendations made by the Project 2025 coalition would substantially increase these costs. Unlike other generalized calls for more weapons, these conservative authors have developed a detailed plan for how to implement their apocalyptic vision and minimize any opposition. It is a far more specific plan than any before it, and more developed than anything groups trying to save what remains of the global arms control regime have even attempted.

**Implementation plan.** In March, the Heritage Foundation detailed the steps necessary to implement these proposals in asking the president to "revitalize the US strategic arsenal." The authors propose that the next US president—meaning Donald Trump, but never mentioning him—immediately upon assuming office:

- Make a major speech soon after inauguration to "make the case to the American people that nuclear weapons are the ultimate guarantor of their freedom and prosperity."
- Direct the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), which is charged with producing all nuclear weapons fissile materials and the manufacture of all warheads, to provide monthly briefings in the Oval Office and to submit its budgets separately from the Energy Department, within which department the agency resides.
- Direct the Office of Management and Budget to submit to Congress a supplemental budget request to accelerate key NNSA projects and Defense Department nuclear weapons delivery systems (missiles, bombers, and submarines).
- Increase the number of deployed nuclear warheads by directing the placement of multiple warheads on each of the currently deployed Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles. (Each missile in the current fleet of 400 ICBMs holds one warhead. Under this plan, the next president would order each missile to deploy multiple warheads by 2026. The new, replacement ICBM, the Sentinel, would also be fielded with multiple warheads.)
- Direct the production and deployment of new nuclear weapon types, including the sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM-N) and putting nuclear warheads on Army ground-launched missiles. (Both capabilities were eliminated by President George H.W. Bush in 1991.)
- Add nuclear capabilities to several hypersonic systems currently under development as non-nuclear missiles.
- Direct the Air Force to examine a road-mobile version of the Sentinel ICBM. (President Reagan investigated such a program in the early 1980s and found it to be highly controversial, expensive, and impractical.)
- Direct the expansion and enhancement of US nuclear weapons capability across the globe, including by pre-positioning nuclear bombs and aircraft in Europe and Asia. (The United States currently deploys 100 nuclear bombs abroad at five bases in NATO Europe.)

- Direct the NNSA to "transition to a wartime footing," including the expansion and construction of facilities to produce plutonium and plutonium cores for nuclear weapons.

**Implications for national security.** Should these recommendations be implemented, they will result in a sharp decline in the security of Americans and a dramatic increase in the risk of regional and global conflicts. At the very least, the proposed programs will explode the national debt. With the defense budget already at $850 billion for Fiscal Year 2025 and the budget for nuclear weapons and related programs at over $100 billion, these new projects could add hundreds of billions of dollars to weapons development, production, and deployment costs. The Heritage Foundation estimates that these additional programs will cost "tens of billions," but this is a gross underestimate.

The existing US strategic arsenal already exceeds what is required for any conceivable nuclear mission. The United States currently maintains a stockpile of some 3,708 nuclear warheads for delivery by missiles and aircraft. Of those, approximately 1,770 warheads are deployed, ready for use within minutes of an order to launch. The rest of the operational stockpile (1,938 warheads) is held in reserve for potential use. In addition, the United States has approximately 1,336 retired, intact warheads in storage awaiting dismantlement. The explosive yields of most of these weapons are 10 to 30 times greater than the bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

To put the power of this arsenal in perspective, one city destroyed by just one nuclear weapon would be a level of destruction not seen since World War II. Ten weapons burning 10 cities would be a catastrophe unprecedented in human history. One hundred such weapons would destroy not only the targeted nation but likely unleash a nuclear winter and subsequent famine that could destroy virtually all human civilizations—even those far from the conflict.

Increasing the US arsenal at the scale recommended by the Project 2025 would likely compel rival nations—including Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea—to increase their defense budgets, warfighting plans, and nuclear weapons developments and deployments to match what they will see as an increasing threat from the United States. Allied nations will also be caught up in the competition, fueling an already existing nuclear arms race: Japan, South Korea, and even Germany could be pushed over the nuclear line.

This would be the unintended consequence of an unleashed nuclear modernization. While each nuclear-armed state sees its programs as defensive, their adversaries see them as offensive programs striving for a military advantage. Each move engenders a countermove; each nation believes it is responding to the other. That's how the security dilemma has spiraled since World War II. But the Project 2025's recommendations go one step further: They are based on the belief that the United States would win any arms contest through superior technology, resources, and political will.

In 2019, former President Trump's arms control negotiator Marshall Billingslea said: "We know how to win these races and we know how to spend the adversary into oblivion. If we have to, we will."

But such programs would further weaken nuclear guardrails that are already gutted by the withdrawals from major arms control agreements—including most significantly, Trump's withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action that reduced, contained, and controlled the Iranian nuclear program and his withdrawal again from Reagan's Intermediate Nuclear Forces agreement that eliminated most nuclear weapons deployed by the United States and Russia in Europe.

The erosion of the arms control and non-proliferation regime is not a defect of the proposals; it is one of its central goals. The Project 2025 authors believe that arms control has failed, and that treaties negotiated with both allies and rivals weaken Americans, rather than are protecting them. These views are not shared by most US allies. Those allied nations committed to restraining or eliminating nuclear risks will, therefore, increasingly doubt US leadership in international relations, weakening the alliance system so essential to US national security since the end of World War II.

Importantly, these proposed programs and activities will almost certainly have the United States abandon its commitment not to test nuclear weapons under the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Should the United States conduct new nuclear tests, other nations will almost immediately follow suit, adding more fuel to the nuclear fire.

Taken together, the policies and programs advocated by the Project 2025's self-proclaimed "mandate for leadership" would push the United States onto the precipice of an expensive, dangerous, and destabilizing nuclear confrontation—something not seen since the darkest days of the Cold War.

Brookings Institution, Caitlyn Talmadge

Few issues are as potentially consequential as U.S. nuclear policy. What are Donald Trump and Joe Biden likely to do with respect to deterrence and arms control if reelected? Their previous terms in office suggest important differences—not only on specific nuclear policy issues but also in their overall approach to managing nuclear risk. These differences matter because of the enormous presidential latitude with respect to nuclear decision-making, including presidents' sole authority to launch nuclear weapons without authorization from other parts of the government.

While in office, Trump was often confrontational in his dealings with other nuclear powers and was openly skeptical of the alliance relationships that depend on U.S. nuclear guarantees. He was actively hostile toward arms control. By contrast, Biden has been relatively cautious in the nuclear domain, prioritizing stability in relationships with other nuclear powers and

strengthening American nuclear assurances to allies. While valuing a robust deterrent, Biden also has a long-standing commitment to arms control.

**What Trump did on nuclear policy while in office**

Trump's decision to renege on the Iran nuclear deal—despite the State Department certifying that Iran was complying with its terms—was likely the most significant nuclear policy decision of his time in office. Since then, Iran has progressed steadily closer to a nuclear weapon, much closer than it would have had the deal remained in place.

Coming in a close second in terms of consequential nuclear decision-making was Trump's policy toward North Korea. Much fanfare accompanied his summit with Kim Jong Un in Singapore in June 2018, but the meeting produced no substantive restraints on the North Korean arsenal. In fact, North Korea significantly expanded and improved its nuclear arsenal on Trump's watch, gaining the ability to hit the continental United States with a nuclear-tipped ballistic missile. Furthermore, Trump actively stoked a dangerous nuclear crisis with North Korea in the period leading up to the summit. He threatened that North Korea would be "met with fire, fury, and frankly power, the likes of which this world has never seen before," which most observers took to be a thinly veiled nuclear threat. At another point, he tweeted of Kim, "Will someone from his depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works!" Trump was later revealed to have privately considered using a nuclear weapon against North Korea while falsely blaming it on another country.

Finally, the Trump administration was highly skeptical of arms control with other nuclear powers. It withdrew the United States from the long-standing 1992 Open Skies Treaty, and it failed to reach an agreement with Russia to extend New START, the only treaty regulating strategic nuclear weapons in the world's two largest nuclear arsenals. Trump also withdrew the United States from the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty, though long-standing Russian violations of the treaty deserve more blame for that than the Trump administration. In addition, the Trump administration deployed a new low-yield submarine-

launched ballistic missile and initiated a program to build a new nuclear sea-launched cruise missile.

**What Trump might do on nuclear policy if reelected**

The first Trump administration provides a good guide to what to expect on nuclear policy in a second Trump administration: active hostility toward arms control and a cavalier attitude toward nuclear risk. There is little reason to think that Trump's views on nuclear issues have changed over the last four years in ways that would alter his policy course.

What has changed, unfortunately, is the propensity for Trump's tendencies to produce more serious nuclear risks. Iran is now closer to a nuclear weapon. North Korea's arsenal can more directly threaten the United States. China's nuclear arsenal is expanding as it becomes increasingly confrontational toward Taiwan. And Russia is now engaged in a major conventional war on NATO's border. Any of these situations could produce a nuclear crisis during a future Trump administration—one that Trump might be prone to escalate rather than tamp down, though he has also claimed his administration would somehow end the war within 24 hours of taking office.

Trump's deep disdain for U.S. alliances is also likely to have important implications for nuclear proliferation if he is reelected. These alliances extend U.S. nuclear protection to countries such as Japan, South Korea, and NATO members partly to ensure that they forego building their own nuclear weapons. Were Trump to return to office and seek to reduce or eliminate these commitments, these countries would have good reason to fear the reliability of the U.S. nuclear umbrella. They might seek their own nuclear weapons or accommodation with nuclear-armed adversaries such as China and Russia as a result.

**What Biden has done on nuclear policy while in office**

Biden's most important nuclear achievement has been successfully deterring Russian nuclear escalation over the war in Ukraine: Russia has not used nuclear weapons against NATO members or against Ukraine itself. Despite Russian saber-rattling and serious Western concern that Moscow might turn to its arsenal when facing conventional setbacks on the battlefield, Russia has repeatedly pulled back from the brink. This is in significant part because Biden has effectively communicated that the United States will defend NATO, and also that it would respond forcefully (though almost certainly not with nuclear weapons) to Russian nuclear use in Ukraine. While providing unprecedented conventional military aid to Ukraine, the Biden administration has nevertheless been careful to avoid provoking Russia. For example, it has (mostly) constrained Ukraine's ability to conduct longer-range attacks on Russian territory with U.S.-supplied weapons.

Furthermore, the Biden administration has taken steps to stabilize the overall strategic nuclear relationship with Russia. For example, it postponed a nuclear missile test in March 2022 in order to avoid any Russian misperceptions of U.S. nuclear intentions. And it has continued to adhere to the central limits of the New START treaty, even though Russia has suspended its participation. Indeed, the treaty is still standing only because Biden quickly negotiated an extension during his first weeks in office, and the administration has expressed continued interest in strategic arms control if it can find a willing partner in Moscow.

The Biden administration has also worked to stabilize relations with China, a country whose nuclear arsenal is undergoing a rapid expansion. After a rocky start, Biden's relationship with Xi Jinping has defrosted a bit, and the two countries have restored military-to-military communications. These actions make it less likely that a crisis between the two states could escalate into a war that would inevitably entail nuclear risks.

Biden also deserves credit for bolstering the U.S. nuclear umbrella, an important non-proliferation tool. The administration has strengthened NATO through its leadership regarding aid to Ukraine. It has also fortified the defense relationship with South Korea through the Washington Declaration, which will engage the two countries more closely on nuclear deterrence matters.

**What Biden might do on nuclear policy if reelected**

As with Trump, Biden's first term in office provides useful guidance as to his likely nuclear policy priorities were he to be reelected. A second Biden administration surely would continue focusing on strengthening the alliance relationships that undergird the U.S. extended deterrent and on stabilizing interactions with nuclear-armed adversaries. For example, Biden seems likely to continue to seek to deepen U.S. ties to NATO, Japan, and South Korea, while also working to maintain lines of communication with Russia and China. Perhaps most important, Biden seems likely to carefully manage nuclear risks in the event of a serious crisis erupting with a nuclear power, for example over Taiwan, Ukraine, or the Korean Peninsula.

The Biden administration also seems likely to try to salvage some form of arms control when New START expires in 2026. Whether it will actually be able to do so, especially in the form of treaty-based limitations or reductions, is questionable. Russia has already suspended its participation in the treaty, and the rapid growth of China's arsenal raises serious questions about whether bilateral, treaty-based U.S.-Russian arms control is even the right approach. But the administration seems likely to at least attempt to engage in less formal risk reduction measures with both countries, with an eye toward reducing the likelihood of misperception and miscalculation. Overall, Biden is likely to remain committed to a strong U.S. nuclear deterrent while seeking to carefully manage the escalation risks inherent in such an enterprise.

- **Download the Transcript**237kb

*HSCI Chair Mike Turner Speaks at CSIS*

*This transcript is from a CSIS event hosted on June 20, 2024. Watch the full video here.*

Heather Williams: Right. Good morning. Thank you all for joining us. I'm Heather Williams. I'm the director of the Project on Nuclear Issues, affectionately known as PONI, here at CSIS. And we are really excited to have you join us today for a conversation with Congressman Mike Turner, Chairman of the House Permanent Subcommittee on Intelligence.

I'd actually like to begin by first thanking Chairman Turner for so much of his time. Immediately before this event, he spent an hour meeting with the PONI nuclear scholars who are also in the room today. And this is a group of next-generation nuclear experts. And Chairman Turner kindly shared his views on a lot of – a lot of the issues that we're going to hear more about, along with some professional advice. And so just really grateful for all the time that you've given us today.

Before we begin today's event, I do need to share with you our building safety precautions. Overall, we feel secure in our building. As a convener, we have a duty to prepare for any eventuality. I will be your responsible safety officer at this event. And please follow my instructions if the need arises. And finally, please familiarize yourself with the emergency exit pathways. They're probably going to be behind you or at the sides there.

So PONI and the Aerospace Security Project are really honored to have Representative Michael Turner with us today to talk about a variety of strategic challenges, including the Russian ASAT threat, along with the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. foreign policy. And I know all of you in this room know, this conversation is coming at a really important moment for U.S. policymakers as they face crucial decisions about nuclear modernization and also about the future of arms control and the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. foreign policy. But also, the American public is reengaging with nuclear weapons in a way that we really haven't seen since the Cold War. So, this is a very important moment for this conversation.

The 2023 bipartisan Strategic Posture Commission highlighted a, quote, "sense of urgency" – a sense of urgency around strategic issues. And just before we start the conversation, I want to highlight three of those. First is the sense of urgency around the U.S. nuclear enterprise and modernization. The Strategic Posture Commission report found that current modernization plans are, quote, "necessary but not sufficient." And they recommended the current modernization program should be supplemented to ensure U.S. nuclear strategy remains effective in a two nuclear peer environment.

More recently, just a – just a week or two ago, National Security Council Senior Director Pranay Vaddi stated that absent a change in the trajectory of adversary arsenals, we may reach a point in the coming years where an increase from the current deployed numbers is required. The report also called for the U.S. to address concerns from allies regarding extended deterrence, where there's an ongoing debate among allied countries on their nuclear options and the credibility of the U.S. deterrent.

A second important trend from the Strategic Posture Commission report is about the worsening security environment and adversaries' build-up of strategic systems. While America prioritized arms control and nuclear reductions, our adversaries moved in the opposite direction and took advantage of that moment. To highlight just one example, which the Chairman was involved in reviewing, was the Russian ASAT threat, which the administration acknowledged could be a violation of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. China continues to expand its nuclear arsenal, including production of fissile material, and the Department of Defense anticipates China's nuclear arsenal will reach 1,000 operational nuclear warheads by 2030.

A final topic requiring a sense of urgency is in the search for solutions, potentially to include arms control. After a meeting in November of last year, China has declined for follow-on talks with the United States on this topic, and Russia has backed out of several arms control commitments, including suspension of the New START treaty, violations of the INF Treaty, and de-ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. So overall, these raise really important questions, many of which are time-sensitive, on the role of U.S. nuclear weapons in foreign policy and strategy. And that's why we are so thrilled to have Chairman Turner here today to offer his insights and thoughts, to include the potential role for the IC in addressing these new strategic challenges.

To quickly go through Chairman Turner's biography, Congressman Michael Turner was first elected to Congress in 2002. In Congress Turner is a senior member of the House Armed Services Committee and has previously served as the lead Republican of the Tactical Air and Land Forces Subcommittee, as well as the Strategic Forces Subcommittee. The subcommittees oversee Army and Air Force acquisition programs, all Navy and Marine Corps aviation programs, nuclear weapons, missile defense, and space systems. After serving on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence since 2015, Congressman Turner was elected as the chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. The committee has oversight of the nation's 17 intelligence agencies. He was the president of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and he now serves as the vice chairman of the Defense and Security Committee of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. An additional fun fact about Chairman Turner is that he was mayor of Dayton, Ohio, during the Dayton Peace Accords. So, bringing a lot of expertise is an understatement to today's session.

But this will be moderated by Kari Bingen, who is director of the Aerospace Security Project and senior fellow at the International Security Program here at CSIS. Representative Turner will provide his keynote address followed by a fireside chat with Kari and questions from the audience. If you would like to submit a question you should have a QR code either on your chair or there's a giant one right behind me. Please just scan this on your phone and submit questions and Kari will field them as they come in.

So, with that, Chairman Turner, I'd like to turn it over to you for your remarks. Thank you. (Applause.)

Representative Michael Turner (R-OH): Well, thank you, and good morning. I want to thank CSIS for giving me this opportunity, for Kari Bingen to be leading this and for her leadership on the issue of nuclear weapons and the risks that our nation faces.

The Space Age began when Russia launched Sputnik in 1957. The eyes of the world turned to the sky and wondered how space and technology would now change life on Earth. The Space Age will end when Russia launches its nuclear anti-satellite weapon into orbit. General Saltzman, chief of staff of the United States Space Force, has referred to the potential launch date of Russia's nuclear anti-satellite weapon as day zero, because from that day no one can count on space the next day. From that day forward, the assumption on Earth must be, in order to preserve our economic, social, and military structures, that we must have an alternative to space.

Right now, there isn't one. Trillions and trillions of dollars and time that we don't have will be required to build duplicative and redundant systems just to preserve what we have accomplished in the Space Age. For some things, no alternative exists. The United Nations Outer Space Treaty – entered into force in 1967, signed by the Russian Federation, the United States, and the United Kingdom – declared, "States shall not place nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in orbit or on celestial bodies or station them in outer space in any other manner." The treaty was entered into based upon the promise to mankind of advances on planet Earth that might arise from the exploration and utilization of space. The signatories could not have imagined a world of today where agriculture, medicine, commercial transactions, communications, maritime navigation, international security, and even our ability to tell time is space-dependent.

Similarly, we cannot imagine a world not space-dependent. On day zero, at the end of the space age, we will have to. The Biden administration, only after having been challenged by a group of bipartisan members of the House Intelligence Committee, reluctantly declassified that Russia is developing a nuclear antisatellite weapon intended to be placed in orbit in outer space. No additional information has been released.

News reports have speculated that the weapon is past development, it exists and is preparing to launch. Additional news reports have speculated that Russia already has a satellite in orbit as a test. First phase of Russia's antisatellite nuclear weapon system. Without confirming or denying the accuracy of any of these reports, the questions they raise must be answered by the Biden administration immediately, regardless of Russia's timing or the possible immediate impact of this evolving threat. This crisis is the Cuban Missile Crisis in space. And the administration is failing. The advances that mankind has made during the space age are at risk, and the administration is sleepwalking into an irreversible day zero.

Dr. Plumb, former assistant secretary of defense for space policy, testified before the House Armed Services Committee that Russia's antinuclear satellite – Russia's nuclear antisatellite weapon, if detonated in low Earth orbit, would indiscriminately decimate all satellites within low Earth orbit, and would render that orbit in space unusable for likely at least a year. Mankind would be unable to repopulate low Earth orbit satellites during this period, and manned space exploration would be deadly. This threat would mean that our economic, international security, and social systems come to a grinding halt. This would be a catastrophic and devastating attack upon Western economic and democratic systems. Vladimir Putin knows this. Checkmate.

Day zero can be avoided. Imagine how different the world would have been if President Kennedy had allowed Khrushchev to place nuclear weapons in Cuba. Europe would not be free. The United States would have been too fearful to challenge Russia and Europe with nuclear weapons just off the coast of Florida. Just as Khrushchev could have held the United States hostage with nuclear threats from Cuba, Vladimir Putin will hold the world's space assets hostage to counter attempts to stop him from reassembling the Soviet Union.

There is precedent for Russian-United States nuclear weapons control treaties, to include the dismantling of destabilizing weapons, inspection regimes, and prohibitions against deployment. But such treaties are negotiated through strength, something the Biden administration seems

incapable of showing. In order to avoid day zero, the Biden administration must immediately declassify all known information concerning the status of Russia's nuclear antisatellite weapons program. Vladimir Putin thrives in secrecy. Putin's plans and weapons programs must be fully disclosed by the administration and understood by the world. In addition, the United States and its NATO allies must join together to declare the resolve to enforce the U.N. Outer Space Treaty. I call on the Biden administration to do so.

There are risks in confronting Russia. The Biden administration is incredibly reluctant to take any action that would appear to be escalatory. However, Russia is the escalatory aggressor. Escalation has already occurred. Now the United States must stand with our allies to stop day zero and preserve space as the U.N. Outer Space Treaty intended, for the betterment of all mankind. Thank you. (Applause.)

Kari A. Bingen: Chairman Turner, those were incredibly sobering remarks for all of us. I do want to start out by saying that I was fortunate to work with you for many years on the House Armed Services Committee and when you were chairman of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee. And what really struck me was how often you were right in the middle and leading on tackling really tough issues, complex issues – missile defense, New START, nuclear modernization – and I always appreciated your and the committee's bipartisan approach.

You took your briefings together, you took your trips together to get firsthand knowledge, and you were voracious in consuming information to make sure you really had all aspects of the issue understood.

And I've seen you take that same approach with the House Intelligence Committee, and we'll talk more about what the intelligence committee is doing. So, I will start on the Russia nuclear anti-satellite threat, but we'll also cover nuclear deterrence, other international security issues, and the Intelligence Committee's priorities.

I will remind everyone here in person scan the QR code if you have questions, and for folks online go to the event web page and you can also submit questions there.

So, again, incredibly sobering remarks about day zero. You see all the intelligence, all the threat assessments. Russia has long had an ability to detonate nuclear weapons in space via their ballistic missiles.

What makes this threat today different and why is it so significant, and why did you take that unusual step back in February to raise this serious national security threat? You took flak from members in your own party, from the other side of the aisle. Why did you do that?

Rep. Turner: Well, first off, I want to begin by thanking Kari because in addition to being an incredible expert on all of these issues you have always been a mentor and an educator on these issues. It's great that you're here at CSIS because you're continuing that. Thank you for including me and to be able to have a dialog and a discussion about these issues.

One of the aspects of your work is not just the policy that you've helped to effect, but the fact that you really want to educate others to ensure the dialogue on nuclear weapons and deterrence. I mean, this is the greatest destructive force known to man and the fact that you advocate for, you know, knowledge, understanding, and policy debates really is extraordinary. So, thank you for doing that.

First off, there's bipartisan, you know, overwhelming work of the House Intelligence Committee to call on the administration to make public that this threat was emerging. The fact that it took the House Intelligence Committee to do so I think shows you some of the – really, the waste of time that the administration has had – the fact that they don't have a response to this.

You've raised the issue of that, you know, Russia could take an ICBM and explode it into space and, perhaps, destroy that the satellites that are there and, you know, why is this different.

Well, it's different enough that they are undertaking to do this, right? The administration says that they're developing this and what I call on them is to tell the world what is the status of this, and development – does that mean that this is drawing on a – you know, on a drafting board?

Does this mean this is a research project in a lab? Does this mean that it's something in a manufacturing facility? Does it mean that there's nuclear warheads that have been created? Is there a satellite? Is there a missile?

All of these are the natural resulting questions from the administration and they're avoiding this discussion because they're avoiding having to admit that they're not really doing anything.

The outcome that was different in the Cuban missile crisis is that we had President Kennedy. We need leadership by the administration, and we certainly need a dialog worldwide to understand and call out, really, what are the Russians doing and what should the response be.

Ms. Bingen: Well, and that leads into my next question here. There is likely exquisite intelligence sources and methods involved in collecting this kind of information. So, you're calling for the declassification of intelligence.

What are – and you just highlighted some, but what are some of the specifics that the American public, that policymakers and others, need to understand? What are we missing? But then also how do you weigh that against protecting those sensitive sources and methods?

Rep. Turner:

Right. This should not be permitted to go into orbit, period, and the administration does not even have that on their to-do list. Part of informing what would be the to-do list is the issue of what is this – what do they mean by development, that Russia is developing an anti-satellite nuclear weapon?

Now, obviously, you know, they've been engaged with the intelligence committees and, certainly, we're aware of what this evolving threat looks like. The administration, though, I

believe is reticent to have the discussion because they don't want to admit that they're not doing anything, and we are sleepwalking into what will be an irreversible day zero effect.

The aspect of this being in space is not just, well, it's there in space; it's not destructive unless they use it. No, it's destructive on day one – as General Saltzman said, day zero, which is the next day, because suddenly we will not be able to count on any of the systems that are there. And if we can't count on those systems, we're going to have to construct alternative systems or literally it would be catastrophic economically, militarily, communication, to society.

Ms. Bingen: So given everything you know, you think there are ways to convey more information about this program without revealing sensitive sources and methods.

Rep. Turner:

Absolutely.

Ms. Bingen:

1. OK. And then all of this leads into the question of: Now what? So, we have this insight. The U.S. government has sought to increase international pressure on Russia with other international partners – a U.N. resolution in April sponsored by the U.S. and Japan reaffirming the Outer Space Treaty, which Russia vetoed, and China abstained. So, you know, the question, I think, now becomes – and you were hinting at this – is, what actions do you think we are going to be willing to take to uphold the Outer Space Treaty and prevent this from happening?

Rep. Turner:

Right. So, I liken the administration going to the U.N. Security Council on this issue as the principal of a school going to the student body to have a labor dispute with their teachers. The aspect here is that the administration needs to exert leadership. We have allies. We have – I mean, the understanding by the world of what this weapon means and what its outcomes would result in needs to be discussed by the administration as they garner what would be worldwide support in opposition to Russia placing a nuclear weapon in space in violation of the space weapons treaty.

Ms. Bingen: China now has a lot to lose in space. Is there room for us to work with China and perhaps others?

Rep. Turner: Absolutely. I don't think – I don't think that the administration has done enough to inform, which is why I'm calling for the administration to inform both our other adversaries and allies as to what this threat is. You can't garner support for something that you're not discussing, and I firmly believe that the administration is avoiding discussing this topic because they don't want the gap between what they should be doing and what they are doing to be publicly discussed.

Ms. Bingen: Well, if I think about the DIME framework, we're pursuing diplomatic and international pressure options. Are economic sanctions on the table? Should military options be on the table? You oversee intelligence capabilities. What should be on the table here?

Rep. Turner: Well, I think all of it. I think – the biggest sign, I think, would be – I mean, this is so catastrophic. Secretary of Defense Austin took – you know, in front of the Armed Services Committee said this would be catastrophic. Well, if this is catastrophic, there should be someone every day in the administration that gets up to make certain that this isn't occurring. And there is no one who has that responsibility. And there's no one who's executing that to-do list. This is something they're aware of. This is something that they've informed us that Russia is undertaking. But this is not a priority of the administration. This needs to be a priority.

Ms. Bingen:

And how well is the intelligence community, I guess I'll say, postured to understand the intricacies of this threat?

Rep. Turner: Well, I think enough so that the administration was willing to come forward and say that Russia is developing an antisatellite nuclear weapon. I mean, the administration has confirmed this. This is not speculative. This is not something that people are, at this point, having differing opinions. There probably are differing opinions as to what needs to be done, but that's the dialogue that we need to be having. What should be done? And the administration is not having that debate within itself, or with the American public, or worldwide with our allies.

Ms. Bingen:

Well, and it's interesting, as chairman of the Intelligence Committee, I just think you see – you see everything. You have this global picture of the security environment. This is obviously one very sobering and consequential threat here. But there are a lot of other things happening in the world, I'm assuming, are consuming a lot of folks' bandwidth as well. So, you know, how do you – if you can take a step back for us and look at that global security environment, what else are you worried about? But then also, how do you see this threat in the context of everything else happening right now in the Middle East, with China, technology advancements, et cetera?

Rep. Turner: Well, I don't know. I think I'd start with if there's something that's going to touch every human being on the planet, that's probably something that should be at the top of the list. And I think that's one that I think the administration, in focusing, needs to understand that there should not be tolerated that this be in orbit. I honestly think that there may be portions of the administration who believes that we can tolerate this in space. As General Saltzman said, you can't tolerate this in space because the next day, day zero, you have to assume that none of the space capabilities that we have are available the next day. And you're going to have to plan for alternative uses, alternative sources, which we – which we don't have. Which is what I mentioned in the speech, you know, trillions and trillions of dollars and certainly time we don't have.

But there are threats, obviously. You look at both on the nuclear side – China increasing its nuclear weapons inventory, North Korea doing the same, Russia fielding exotics, which – and both China and Russia moving to hypersonics. Even in the nuclear threat that's not space, you have the capabilities gaps between what the United States is currently doing and what our adversaries are certainly doing. And that creates a vulnerability. And then, of course, you have the conflicts of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and Israel-Gaza, and the, really, Iranian influence with Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthis, that all needs to be addressed with respect to Iranian aggression.

Ms. Bingen: It's interesting, to your point here, in some respects it shouldn't surprise us that Russia is doing this, given all the other modernization efforts it has underway in its nuclear forces – whether it be the cruise missile, the undersea vehicle, the ICBMs. You know, why not space? But, man, it's at the extreme end of the space threat spectrum

Rep. Turner: Right. If you take Avangard, their hypersonic; Skyfall, their nuclear weapons cruise missile that orbits the Earth; Poseidon, the underwater unmanned missile that can surface, with the intention of destruction of coastal cities; all of those would have been not even imaginable 15 years ago. But it certainly shows, as you were just indicating, an intent on the part of Russia to significantly invest in nuclear weapons capabilities. And we need to be able to respond.

Ms. Bingen:

And if I can pivot a bit here to talking specifically on nuclear modernization, you know, I would observe there are few members of Congress that really understand nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence. How do you explain this to other members of Congress, of what those threats are, why do we need to modernize our nuclear weapons and infrastructure, and what really is at stake?

Rep. Turner: Right. I think, you know, the most common analogy that people use is just your own personal vehicle. You know, I have a 1964 Cadillac convertible. I wouldn't use it to commute every day. You upgrade, you look to increase technology, if you think of how many different iPhones you've thrown away and replaced. But yet, we look at decades-old technology as our nuclear weapons deterrent and assume that, you know, we have a nuclear weapon, we don't – we don't need to modernize. Well, of course we do. They decay. Their capabilities and their technology age. And our adversaries' capabilities increase, which results in vulnerabilities.

It really should be a continuous process, not something we park in a garage and come back decades later and say, let's kick the tires and see what needs to be done. If, you know, we have the resolve that nuclear weapons are necessary in order to deter our adversaries, and certainly our nuclear adversaries, then in that commitment it's going to require that we invest and we modernize.

Ms. Bingen: And when I think about it, that nuclear deterrence really is the foundation for our conventional forces and other decisions that we make in our security apparatus. So, on modernization, we're fortunate at CSIS to have a phenomenal group of junior scholars. So, I'm going to weave in a question here from Joseph Rodgers.

In its final report, the bipartisan Strategic Posture Commission established by Congress concluded that the existing nuclear program of record, which is – which is the current modernization program that's being pursued, is necessary but not sufficient. Can you share some congressional perspectives on this "necessary but not sufficient" conclusion? What investments are needed? And what pace of activity is needed?

Rep. Turner: Right. So go back to the iPhone again. You know, when you – when you get a new iPhone, you're increasing the functionality. You're not just getting one that works better or that is going to do the same things only more reliable. Our modernization is really looking at our nuclear weapons, the inventory, as doing the same things and only, you know, modernizing it to make it do those things better but not looking at additional things that we need to do. Now, one thing that was really interesting about the nuclear posture commission is that they, really also looked at our need to have an enhanced missile defense capability, because we have not availed ourselves of missile defense as a part of the overall equation of deterrence and defense, both with modernization and with missile defense on a defensive capability, having our adversaries question whether or not they're even able to hit their target

Ms. Bingen: Well, and you – in both your roles on the Intelligence Committee as well as Armed Services for a long time, you've been out to the nuclear weapons labs, the production facilities, strategic command. What is your view of the state of the weapons complex and the industrial base where we're at right now to deliver? And you know, some of these modernization programs that are running behind schedule over cost, can our nation afford what's ahead of us here in modernization?

Rep. Turner: Well, I mean, obviously, we can't afford not to.

Ms. Bingen: Yeah.

Rep. Turner: But you know, certainly, the systems that we have now are working. We have deterrence. We have nuclear weapons capabilities that are deterring our adversary, and that's – adversaries – and that's, of course, why. You know, we don't have people in – looking to have conflicts with the United States.

But at the same time, they're looking at the next 10, 15 years of how do they change that calculus where their capabilities increase vulnerabilities as we stay stagnant. And that delta, that change of our adversaries' capabilities, we've not – I mean, you and I have not lived in a world where Russia and China had greater weapons capabilities than we have had. That's a scary place to be. And that's why the Nuclear Posture Commission called on that we need to do more than we're doing, because if we're running in place and our adversaries are running a marathon we're currently losing.

Ms. Bingen: Well, and you know – what we didn't have before that you're really seeing now is it's this two-peer nuclear challenge, is China from a few hundred to, what, a thousand, 1,500 trajectory that they're on with their nuclear forces. How well postured is the intelligence community to collect and analyze on these threats – the two-peer challenge, perhaps the risk of opportunism by one of the parties? How do you look at the IC's ability here?

Rep. Turner: Well, my serious concern, which you and I have discussed, is the issue that the capabilities that Russia and China are seeking are what we'd call first-strike capabilities, capabilities where it would cause them to change their calculus and look at whether or not they could undertake an attack on the United States which would prevent us to have an ability to respond and that would significantly diminish our ability to be able to deter them by having those first-strike capabilities.

But I think on the intelligence side, what's really important is that there's a lot of things that publicly we know; we're just not having the public discussion. Right now, anyone can pull out their iPhone and they can Google "Chinese ICBM missile silo expansion," and you will get a space picture of the silos that China is building to put in new nuclear weapons. Then, if you Google "U.S. response to China's expansion of nuclear weapons," you're not going to find anything that's going to be helpful. That's where our dialogue and discussion need to be. That's why it's so important what you're doing here at CSIS is taking actually what is occurring, saying it needs to be placed in the dialogue so that we can have a policy response, and then in that, you know, real action on the part of the United States to respond to these threats.

Ms. Bingen: Yeah. I want to shift to the topic of extended deterrence. And you do a lot of engagement with our allies and partners. You are – you were the president of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and still heavily involved in a leadership role there. I don't think, you know, if you look at the broad American public, that we fully – or fully appreciate the concept of extended deterrence. And the premise is that our allies don't develop nuclear weapons, you know, we don't proliferate nuclear capability, in exchange for us extending a nuclear umbrella to them. So, with all of the threats that we've discussed – with China, with what North Korea's doing; you know, it has even been striking to see South Korea and Japan start having a bit of a nuclear dialogue here – how – in all your discussions, how confident are our allies and partners in our nuclear umbrella? How is their thinking shaping our nuclear policy, shaping what – how Congress is viewing these issues?

Rep. Turner: So, we had this discussion with your nuclear scholars here at CSIS, and what's interesting is, is, you know, you have to – you have to go to the next step on what extended deterrence policy was.

So extended deterrence was where the United States, through its nuclear umbrella, said: We will cover other allies who don't develop nuclear weapons and provide them our umbrella. If they're attacked, we will – we have – we will pledge both in defense and our nuclear umbrella as a response if they do not develop nuclear weapons themselves. The intention was not just that our allies not develop nuclear weapons, although we were being for nonproliferation. That certainly was a win that our allies not become nuclear states. But it was also intended to be a disincentive for our adversaries to expand their nuclear weapons, because if our allies – those who are on our team – built up their nuclear weapons, the thought was that our adversaries would have to build up their nuclear weapons. And so, you would have this proliferation not just with our allies, but our adversaries would have more because they'd have to counter-deter both us and our now-nuclear allies.

The problem is that that didn't happen. China is expanding. Russia is expanding. North Korea is expanding. Iran is continuing to march toward the ability to make a nuclear weapon.

So the extended deterrent umbrella has failed to cause the response from our adversaries that we intended and has been because of the enormity of the expansion, as you just described – that the multiplication that China has undertaken in its expansion has caused our nonnuclear allies to then wonder would the United States utilize its nuclear weapons as a deterrence umbrella to protect them, and I think it's a valid question for them to have as they look to, now, what is an increasing threat from – as South Korea looks not only at North Korea but also at China.

Ms. Bingen: Well, and then that leads into the topic of arms control and risk reduction. New START expires 2026. China thus far, I think, has declined arms control talks with the U.S.

So, what is the future of arms control and do you see a path forward for bipartisan consensus not just on, I'll say, arms control and strengthening nonproliferation but perhaps like New START originally struck is there was this greater deal or compromise between, yes, we will undertake arms control in New START; at the same time, we have a need to modernize our nuclear deterrent.

Do you see something like that playing out here, going forward?

Rep. Turner: I mean, Ronald Reagan's life – excuse me, Ronald Reagan's line of peace through strength is not just a political slogan. The reality is that you're never going to get anyone to the bargaining table, whether it's in a business transaction or nuclear weapons negotiations, where they don't believe – if they don't believe that they have anything to gain from you.

You don't sit across from someone to negotiate where you believe that voluntarily, unilaterally, the other side is already giving up what you might want from them and that's the situation we've placed ourselves in.

We have – Russia and China are expanding their nuclear weapons. They're expanding their nuclear weapons capabilities. We have something we want from them. But they don't believe that we have either the will or the interest or the means currently to undertake going in any direction, even expansion, that would be a benefit to them to restrain us, and so we're stalled in any opportunities for nuclear weapons reduction negotiations.

I am for arms control. It has proven to work. It has concluded many times. You know, as I said in my speech the dismantling of a destabilizing weapons inspection regime so that – you know, we had numerous individuals both on the Russian and the American side who knew each other well and knew their facilities well. All of that has gone by the wayside and, certainly, we're less safe because of it.

Ms. Bingen:

And to your point on Reagan, President Reagan also believed that we could pursue a nonproliferation agenda, an arms control agenda, but do it through, as you said, a position of strength while also making sure that we had a strong nuclear deterrent.

Here's an interesting question from another one of our junior scholars, Lachlan MacKenzie: Nuclear myths – what is one misperception about nuclear weapons or nuclear risks that you wish you could clarify for the American public?

Rep. Turner: I truly believe that the American public think that we have a missile defense system in place that is operational and would defend us against China and Russia and, unfortunately, as we've gone through the Obama administration and then the short term of the Trump administration to the Biden administration you have policies that have been anti-missile defense.

Remember, missile defense when it was first proposed by Ronald Reagan it was viewed as escalatory, that it was destabilizing, and that your adversary would think we need more nuclear weapons because you have missile defense – that it wouldn't work and that it was too costly.

Well, what we've seen is it's actually de-escalatory, not escalatory. We saw that in Iran shooting 300 missiles at Israel that we worked collectively with them using missile defense technology to take those down.

Imagine if Israel had been at the receiving end of 300 missiles the response that would have had to have gone to Iran. Instead, it was de-escalatory. It works. You can see in every aspect of what we have proven in technology. You and I worked on that on Capitol Hill including with the deal with Israel for shared technology for the Iron Dome.

And then, of course, the cost is proven in that you don't have the destructive force that you're able to eliminate through missile defense technology.

Ms. Bingen: And that was a great point that the Strategic Posture Commission in a bipartisan manner emphasized as well, was to recommend we expand our missile defenses not just against the strategic missile threats, but also these more coercive cruise missiles and other threats that can now target the homeland.

Rep. Turner: We can protect the homeland, and we should.

Ms. Bingen: NATO. So, you're a senior leader in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. NATO Summit will be in D.C. in a few weeks, marking the 75th anniversary. Can you share your thoughts on where NATO is at today, where it needs to go in the future. And I'm going to weave in a question from the audience, from Natalie Grishin, the Ukrainian Culture Association of Ohio. Got to get the Ohio piece in here: Thank you, Chairman Turner, for a clear and to-the-point presentation. What do you think the White House administration position on the Ukraine path to NATO should be in the coming NATO Summit? So maybe just also hit on your assessment of the situation Ukraine, and where that goes from here.

Rep. Turner: This is an exciting NATO Summit, because the success of the summit has already occurred before everybody convenes. And that success is the expansion of NATO to include Finland and Sweden, and the fact that they will be at the table full members, which shows the failure of Putin's policies of attempting to push NATO back. He's actually pushed people into NATO. Both Sweden and Finland come to NATO with some of the highest levels of military capabilities of all of the NATO countries. So, they're increasing the capabilities of NATO.

Their joining and sitting at that table I think is a reflection of really the success of NATO as an alliance and the failure of Putin's aggression, and the real calculus that there is a risk here. Sweden and Finland didn't join NATO because of Ukraine. They joined – Finland and Sweden joined NATO because they knew that other countries were next. And that's why we're supporting Ukraine. That's why we need to continue to support Ukraine.

I think at this summit, there should be just a, you know, recommitment to the Bucharest statement. In Bucharest, the NATO stated Ukraine will be a member of NATO. That is the strongest statement – both Georgia and Ukraine received that – strongest statement that NATO has made in aspiring nations that want to join NATO. And that, I think, is a – is a standing commitment by NATO. And you're seeing it in the billions of dollars of weapons and capabilities that are being provided to Ukraine to defend itself against Russia.

Ms. Bingen: And you were one of the leading voices on the Hill articulating the need to pass that legislation to ensure that Ukraine does receive the security assistance and munitions from the United States and others. So, thank you for that.

Technology and emerging technology. Several areas are emerging. We've talked space. There's cyber, hypersonics, AI, biotech, all with warfighting and intelligence community benefit, but also with security risk, when you look at what, perhaps, China is doing in these areas. So how do you think about these technologies and what the intelligence community needs to do to maintain its advantage?

And I'm also going to weave in that – a question from Alexander Givin on nuclear: nuclear weapons have shaped how conflict is perceived and conducted since their conception. So how do you see artificial intelligence and cyber interacting with nuclear weapons? So broader emerging technology question as well as nuclear with AI and cyber.

Rep. Turner: Right. So, AI is one of the most important developments because of what it is able to provide as an analytical capability and assistance. I had an opportunity to sit with Henry Kissinger just shortly before he passed. And he was – he had just written a book the year before on AI. He was still continuing to publish on artificial intelligence. And he was talking about the importance of AI in strategic planning.

But he went the next step to say, as policy we should never implement AI where there's not a requirement that AI inform us of how it's coming to conclusions that it's doing, that it's – that it's offering to us, or the advancement of human knowledge will stop, and computers and machine learning will advance. He was very adamant about that connectivity. And I think the human element in utilizing AI is going to be incredibly important. And I don't think AI should

ever be used with respect to any decision making with respect to nuclear weapons, or even as we look to the prosecution of conflicts. Obviously, strategy, the assessment, discernment, it's going to be incredibly important. But decision making should remain with the human factor.

Our biggest threat in AI is that our adversaries get there first. China, with its surveillance society where it has implemented this surveillance culture to be able to further suppress its population, has attempted to export that. They've also coupled that with cyber efforts to access and download data to get an understanding of other countries, populations, and their activities. The utilization of AI for an authoritarian regime is probably the biggest threat that we have seen in the longest time to mankind and to the issue of freedom and liberty.

Ms. Bingen:

Really appreciate that. In other technology areas, hypersonics. And I don't want to steal your thunder, but you and I have talked about this. But as it relates to Title 10, which is Department of Defense authority, and Title 50, which is an intelligence community authority, you are one of the few members that see that total picture. So, when we're looking at these different technology areas, what concerns you about red? What is blue doing about it? Talk to us about, I guess, some of the tension that you see there, but also how do you bring greater integration across Title 10, DOD, and Title 50, the intelligence community?

Rep. Turner: Right. So further on your description, you know, on the intelligence world side we look at our adversaries. What are our adversaries doing? On the national security and defense side, we plan what we're going to do. Sometimes those don't match, and the information doesn't get from one side to the other. And there was a period, obviously, where we were much more advanced than our adversaries. So, the – an understanding of what adversaries were doing was important, but at the same time it didn't inform the gap between our capabilities and theirs.

And that evolution of that gap, that identification of it, is, I think, embodied most in the – in the issue of hypersonics, where the United States was vastly ahead, technology was stolen, China and Russia now have hypersonics programs fielded. Hypersonic weapons are in the hands of our adversaries. We do not have, currently, a hypersonics weapon that has been delivered or even capable of being deployed. And this is public. If you look at what you know that our adversaries are doing in hypersonics, and then what you know the United States is doing, even if we accomplish everything that we have on the drawing board tomorrow in our hypersonics programs, we still fall short of where they're currently performing.

And so that needs to be resolved as to never, you know, allowing ourselves again to be setting – first off, abandoning a program, and then setting the bar lower than what we know our adversaries are already capable of. And this is – I think, if there was one thing that occurred in the last several years of China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, that's probably the most haunting that people should focus on is – and we all got to see it. President Xi is standing next to Vladimir Putin. He went to Moscow to show his support of this, you know, unlimited friendship, of no limits with Vladimir Putin.

And what we would call a hot-mic moment, where they're not doing their presentation, but the mic is open, President Xi is caught. And he says to Vladimir Putin, what we are bringing about – we, meaning them together – is a change that hasn't happened in 100 years. Pause on that for a second. We know what happened 100 years ago. That's World War I and World War II. That is the fight between authoritarianism and democracy. And that's what they're saying. They're saying, we, together – they want to re-prosecute the conflict between authoritarianism and democracy. And they believe that they will win. They certainly can win if we don't rise to the occasion of making certain that they do not have capabilities for which we cannot respond.

Ms. Bingen: And you just had that happen again this week with Vladimir Putin visiting North Korea with Kim Jong-un. So, the question comes from Rachel Oswald at CQ Roll Call: How worried should the U.S. be, that Russia may now provide North Korea with technological assistance to improve North Korea's long-range ballistic missiles and their ability to directly target the United States?

Rep. Turner: Well, that they have that ability now. Certainly, the cooperation between Russia and North Korea would enhance their ability to do so. I think we've all sort of felt intuitively that China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, are working together in both their development of capabilities and in their threats to the United States. These symbolic meetings, I think, are – should allow us to focus on this is a threat that has already been occurring.

Ms. Bingen:

And I'm going to just jump around here with some additional questions from the audience. This is from one of our aerospace interns here at CSIS, Annalise Johnson, who happens to be an Ohio State University student: How do you foresee continued sanctions against Russia affecting their space and nuclear program? And then what level of engagement with Russia should the U.S. strive to have?

Rep. Turner: This is a great question, because the question is: Would sanctions significantly impact Russia's path, as stated by the administration, for developing a nuclear antisatellite weapon? Well, I think we should certainly try. I think we need to try every – you do not hear the administration saying this is such a red line, this is such a change and catastrophic dynamic that places at risk all of the accomplishments that we have in integrating space in the economy, our international defense, our communications, that that red line is so great that we are going to implement an additional regime of financial restrictions, of sanctions, and even look to what are we going to do with our allies in NATO to make such a strong statement as to have Russia understand that this is – this is not something that is going to be accepted.

Ms. Bingen: OK. And you briefly mentioned Iran at the outset here, but I want to come back to this. Paul Tervo from the Institute for Science and International Security: Iran's recent IAEA-confirmed expansion of its nuclear enrichment plants, the Institute for Science and International Security estimates that the time it would take for Iran to now produce a nuclear weapon has been reduced dramatically, under a third of a month. So how do you think Iran's capacity and capability here will influence Middle East policy going forward?

Rep. Turner: Well, really, all roads lead to Iran when you look at the instability in the – in the Middle East: their franchises – Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis; areas in which they have challenged, you know, Saudi Arabia, our other allies; and what we've seen, of course, in the conflict that has unfolded with Israel. These still relate back to the destabilizing effect of Iran, and it needs to be countered by the administration.

Ms. Bingen: This is a question from Polly Keim from the National Nuclear Security Administration, NNSA. This is interesting: What do you think we should conceal versus reveal to assure allies and deter adversaries? And I recall we've had these discussions in the space domain as well as others is, you know, under what circumstances would you reveal a capability versus, obviously, protecting the exquisite nature or the performance of that system. So how do you think about conceal versus reveal?

Rep. Turner: Well, intelligence is gathered so you can impact the outcome; it is not so we be casual observers. If you're not using intelligence to impact the outcome, the intelligence has no value. We're not doing intelligence merely to inform ourselves. And in this instance, you know, as I've called for the administration to declassify the status of this program, there's no risk to means, methods, and techniques to actually call Russia's program as to what is its stage in development. And then from that we can inform: What is our to-do list? What do we need to do? What do our allies need to do? How do we need to work together as the world, Western economic community to address this?

Ms. Bingen: Well, and then a question from Ajay Gokul, who's a McHenry fellow pursuing a master's at Georgetown University: What role does India play here? So how can the U.S. leverage India to play a constructive role, particularly on the nuclear proliferation or nuclear nonproliferation front? You know, they have an interesting historical relationship with Russia, but also increasingly adversarial relationships with China and with Pakistan. These are all nuclear states. So, what role do you see India playing going forward?

Rep. Turner: Well, I do think is important, because if you look at India and if you look at Africa, their development has occurred not because they went back and put in infrastructure that we had in the '70s and '80s; it's because they jumped forward in infrastructure and technology. Their ability to establish communications systems, economic infrastructure, energy, all of it is dependent upon space. Africa and India today are what they are today because of space. If space – if the space-age advancement ceases to exist, Africa and India will become isolated.

Ms. Bingen: I want to come back to your role as Chairman of the Intelligence Committee. A great credit to you and to Ranking Member Himes for your Beyond the SCIF series, where rather than do everything in classified form you've both been very deliberate about getting out publicly to talk about things that the committee is concerned about.

Related to that, I want to hit on this issue of, I'll say, trust in the intelligence community. You know, in recent years there's been this drumbeat of media reports and commentaries that suggest that trust in the intelligence community has eroded, and frankly trust in U.S. national security institutions writ large. I got to see the best of what the military intelligence community is doing. I

know you've seen plenty of that in your role. So how do you think about how can we build trust in our intelligence institutions given the vital security role that they play?

Rep. Turner: Right. Well, we give our intelligence community exquisite tools that have great risks if they are used against the American public and can be destabilizing to a democracy. Of the things that we have seen, and certainly of the discourse that we've had in the public of the most egregious violations, they're largely resident in the Department of Justice and in the FBI, which are not an intelligence community generator but intelligence user. And I do think we need significant focus on reforming the way in which the Department of Justice and the FBI marry themselves and utilize intelligence.

When we did the renewal of the Foreign Surveillance Act Section 702, we put in 54 reforms targeting largely DOJ and FBI and their utilization of intelligence, and making certain that the court system is involved in those oversight, and that they are restrained and restricted. That is going to be a continuing issue. And I think the American public see it as they look at the news stories that clip by them, that both in inequality in the manner in which justice is pursued, but also in the manner in which this information is utilized. And that is a real issue.

Ms. Bingen: And you just passed your intelligence community – your Intelligence Authorization Act, your IAA, out of committee. So, congratulations on that. You mind just spending a minute here talking about the committee's priorities? But also, you've hinted at there are some broader intelligence community reforms that your committee might be tackling.

Rep. Turner: Right. I think, well, one of the biggest concerns that we all have right now is the administration's reticence to share intelligence with allies. Ukraine has been forced to fight Russian aggression on their own soil with one arm tied behind their back. The administration has been slow to give them the type of lethal weapons that can make a difference on the battlefield. Very slow to give them authority to actually use those within Russia to attack systems that are actively sending missiles and attacking Ukraine, but also the weapons infrastructure where they're quadrupling their output of missiles to attack Ukraine. And they're hesitant to provide intelligence as to what Russia is doing within Russia for Ukraine.

In the beginning, the administration refused to give Ukraine any intelligence as to where the Russians were – where the Russians were in Ukraine. The House and our Intelligence Committee had to push. The administration ultimately changed their position. And the effect was so dramatic that they ran to the microphone to claim credit for changing their own policy. So instead of acknowledging that the policy was wrong, they wanted credit for the change on the battlefield as a result of them lifting their own restrictions.

Ms. Bingen: So, I know we're running out of time here. I want to end – well, we've had a pretty sobering conversation across a whole range of issues. I want to end on a bit of a note of optimism here. Earlier this morning you talked to our next-generation nuclear scholars here at CSIS. So, I'm curious what you told them, what do you want these young scholars thinking about as they embark on their careers? And, you know, nuclear weapons, nuclear antisatellite abilities, these are pretty dark subjects to talk about. What makes you then optimistic about our future going forward?

Rep. Turner: Right. Most nations, when they talk about a vulnerability, or they talk about an adversary, talk about actually actions against an adversary. For us, it really is a to-do list. As we look to what our risks are, we have to inform our to-do list and then accomplish it. Russia's economy is the size of Italy and, yet it dominates our defense policy discussions as to whether or not our huge economy and ingenuity and capability will even be applied to respond to some of the things that they're accomplishing.

We have great capability and, as long as we do the to-do list, there's nothing we're going to be able – not be able to accomplish. There are many nations who have wish lists. We have to-do lists. We just have to fill out the to-do list and get to work.

Ms. Bingen: And you have a phenomenal group of young nuclear scholars that want to engage in these issues and work on them for the betterment of security, going forward. So –

Rep. Turner: They're incredibly bright. It was amazing to see not just what they're currently doing but what they want to do in the future, and their questions were so incredibly informed.

The next generation coming up, especially since they've seen what has been occurring, are absolutely dedicating – dedicated to a strong United States because they know it translates into freedom and liberty, and without it we're all at risk.

Ms. Bingen:

Well, Chairman Turner, thank you so much.

I will say it is very rare for us to get the chairman of a full committee to CSIS, not just to do this kind of public discussion on a whole range of topics but also for you to spend time with our young scholars. So, thank you for that.

Thank you for bringing greater awareness and urgency to the Russian nuclear anti-satellite threat. It is absolutely a day zero – I mean, we are back to the 1950s if this does go forward and the threat that it poses is just incredibly grave.

So, thank you very much for your leadership and all that you are doing on the Hill internationally and in educating the American public.

For folks here in the audience we will have a lunch reception out in the foyer here, so it's an opportunity to network and to continue the conversation.

Again, Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Rep. Turner: Thank you. (Applause.

***Stephen Blank, Global Security News, NIDS***

The Russia-North Korea mutual security pact, Moscow's unceasing nuclear threats, Russia's global nuclear power sales drive, Iran's race for nuclear weapons, and China's "breathtaking" nuclear expansion, are the stuff of daily headlines. They all point to increasing nuclear proliferation, multiplying nuclear threats, and the emergence of an increasingly cohesive bloc of powers fully willing to threaten and possibly employ nuclear weapons.

Consequently, both nonproliferation and deterrence are under sustained attacks on multiple, interactive fronts as is any concept of international order or security. These threats challenge not only Washington but also allies in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. This is leading to significant increases in conventional and nuclear weapons spending in Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia (India) and East Asia in reaction to Russo-Chinese, Russo-North Korean, and other threats.

It is important to understand that these nuclear and conventional threats are linked. In Ukraine, Putin began brandishing nuclear threats early in the war to allow the Russian army to proceed without the threat of Western intervention or sustained weapons supply. Iran too uses its accelerating nuclear, missile, and drone programs to extend its deterrence to its terrorist clients so that they can put Israel and Red Sea shipping at risk. The Russo-North Korean alliance similarly raises the likelihood of Pyongyang acquiring new satellite, missile, and, possibly, nuclear technologies with which it can emulate Moscow and Tehran. Meanwhile, China continues to threaten Taiwan, the Philippines, and even India, always with the threat of more attacks in the background. At the same time, Chinese aid to Russia, in the form of technology exports, is probably vital to Russian aggression.

Thus, deterrence, nonproliferation, the international order, and, more specifically, the US and its allies are all under growing threat. Rhetoric aside, the next president after the November 2024 elections must confront these unpalatable facts and speak frankly about how the nation must meet them. To sustain and reform, and it is clear the Pentagon is failing to meet the challenge, it is necessary to rebuild both conventional and nuclear deterrence as allies in Europe and Asia are doing.

To do that, the American economy requires reinvigoration. The necessity for higher defense spending is competing with unprecedented levels of social spending at a time when the nation now spends as much each year to service the national debt as it spends on defense. This economic approach is unsustainable. Unfortunately, there is no royal road to fiscal stability other than raising taxes. The best hope for the country is to grow the economy and exercise fiscal discipline while rebuilding the nation's military.

The revitalization of American defenses requires extensive and continuous modernization of both the conventional and nuclear forces. That probably includes both a qualitative and quantitative increase in the nuclear arsenal. Undoubtedly the partisans of anti-nuclear policies will be outraged by this. But the conclusions of governmental reports and America's adversaries' unrelenting nuclear programs are stubborn facts that these partisans refuse to acknowledge at ever-rising risk to international security. The only way to prevent or at least arrest proliferation and threats to deterrence is this dual-track policy of conventional and nuclear modernization and reform. And this truth applies as well to allies who have already begun to implement this policy.

An improved allied conventional capability in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East allows the United States and its allies to deter future threats at the lowest level of deterrence or thwart aggression because of improved strategic unity and military superiority, backed by economic primacy. This will also deter attempts to use, for example, Russian nuclear weapons as a shield for a failed conventional war in Ukraine. It is also important to deter terror groups like Hamas and Hezbollah from attacking Israel, the United States, or other Western targets. This includes Houthi attacks on international shipping.

Moreover, the launching of such projects will also make clear to Putin, for example, that his attempts to globalize the failed war in Ukraine to rescue his regime by threatening nuclear or peripheral wars are doomed to failure. If the United States and its allies engage in the efforts suggested, it is also likely that Beijing will conclude that it cannot overcome allied deterrence in India, the Philippines, the South China Sea, Taiwan, or elsewhere. The objective is always the maintenance of peace.

Critics will complain that this program of defense growth and strengthening is a wartime program. Unfortunately, they have yet to realize that the American-led international order is under sustained and continuous attack and has been for several years. China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia are all states that validate the American radical Randolph Bourne's insight that "[w]ar is the health of the state." Indeed, it is the only way they can sustain their states. Therefore, in a nuclear world they must be deterred now before they can infect others with their poison.

*Stephen Blank, PhD, is a Senior Fellow at the National Institute for Deterrence Studies. Views expressed are the author's own.*