

ICBM EAR Week of March 3, 2025, Prepared by Peter Huessy, President of Geo-Strategic Analysis, and Senior Fellow, National Institute for Deterrence Studies

Table of Contents/Summary:

- **Quotes of the Week;**
- **Events Past and Upcoming:** Homeland Missile Defense & China Threat and US Response
- **Congressional Developments:** Huessy Budget Essay;
- **ICBM News;**
- **Administration developments:** Appointees.
- **Strategic Developments** including China Chain; Russia Arctic; China Defense \$; Pacific Blues; Macron and European nuke deterrent; Iran;
- **Ukraine Corner** including EU defense \$; Russia border strategy; Miller and Edelman on Russia Cannot be Trusted; Pathway to Win?
- **Victor Hanson Essay of the Week;**
- **Four Special Reports:** (1) China Analysis from the WSJ; (2) Nixon Strategy 2.0? (3) Heritage on Nuke Mods; (4) Michaela Dodge and Arms Control;
- **News Nuggets.**

Quotes of the Week

Elbridge Colby, DoD Nominee for Under Secretary of Defense for Policy: “The risk of war with China is real and the United States risks losing the conflict unless greater preparations are made.”

President Trump: “It would be great if everybody would get rid of their nuclear weapons. I know Russia and us have by far the most. China will have an equal amount within 4-5 years. It would be great if we could all de-nuclearize because the power of nuclear weapons is crazy.”

Senator Dan Sullivan (R-AK): “President Trump has asked Congress to fund a state-of-the-art ‘Golden Dome’ missile defense shield to defend our homeland. @SenKevinCramer and I have introduced the bill to make this important vision a reality.”

Rep. Mike Flood (R-NE): STRATCOM already supports America’s nuclear triad here in #NE01 - they would do a magnificent job managing the Golden Dome to protect America!”

Chief of Staff, USAF: General Alvin: “Yes, absolutely, there’s a huge part for the Air Force to play,” on missile defense . “And more Air Force means more defense of the homeland. It also means more nuclear deterrence. The service is responsible for two-thirds of the U.S. nuclear triad and three-fourths of the nuclear command, control and communications systems, “so more Air Force means more nuclear deterrence.”

Chief of Staff, USAF General Alvin: “With two near-peer nuclear adversaries in China and Russia, “we have to have the most reliable, the most safe, the most effective nuclear deterrence, delivering on modernization programs such as the Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile, the B-21 stealth bomber and upgraded nuclear command, control and communications systems.”

Events of the Week

March 14, 2025

Gordon Chang and Richard Fischer on China Nuclear Developments and Implications for US Security, NIDS Nuclear Deterrent Seminar Series, 10-11am

David Trachtenberg, the VP of NIPP laid out the case for homeland missile defense. The technology is available; the strategic benefits are very positive; the rogue state and peer state threats must both be addressed; missile defense now compliments strategic nuclear deterrent; applies also to our allies; blunts aggressor attempts to “escalate to won.” March 7, 2025, NIDS, 10-11am, Huessy Nuclear Deterrent Seminar Series.

From the Archives:

Dear Leader Kim John-un of North Korea after being asked to support world de-nuclearization: “Sure, You First.”

Dr. John S. Foster: “I don’t understand why we go to the trouble of negotiating with a potential adversary with the understanding that the adversary is going to cheat.” (From NIPP’s new report by Michaela Dodge.)

Congressional Developments

ICBM EAR Essay of the Week

Explaining the Current Budget Debate

The big issue is the FY25 budget as the Continuing Resolution or CR runs out next week. However, to secure a final budget for FY25, which started October 1, 2024, the United States Senate needs 60 votes to move forward, including passing another continuing resolution. Since the Clinton administration, those in the minority have often used the threat of a government shutdown to secure what they want in budget negotiations where otherwise they do not have the 60 votes to get approval for their objectives.

According to the Senate Chair of the Appropriations Committee, the Senate has gotten general agreement on the level of domestic discretionary spending, including defense, but there is not agreement on whether a complete appropriations bill (not a CR) for all the US government can go forward.

Also, the work on the FY2025 spending bill is separate from the Senate budget resolution adopted by the Budget Committee, which is for FY26 which begins this coming October 1, 2025, some 7 months hence. That budget resolution would use a procedure known as reconciliation which needs only a 51 vote majority to be approved.

The proposal by the Senate majority leader and House speaker to go forward with a CR for the remainder of the fiscal year stems from an objective to get to work on the reconciliation package as soon as possible. However, with a CR for the remainder of the year, the defense budget would remain some \$8 billion under the Biden budget proposal for FY2025, let alone considerably below the proposals for FY2026. This would leave the US with a DoD budget for a full year at a CR level, which would be injurious to our nation’s defense needs, (which it would be).

However, left off the table for discussion is that the previous administration’s out year defense budget plans were for the US to eventually spend 2.3% of our GDP on defense which would be lower than any year since the beginning of WWII, and would have left defense spending at a historical low point as a percentage of discretionary spending. However, further complicating things are cuts in the current fiscal year, particularly affecting veterans.

The DoD has requested what are known as anomalies to exempt certain elements of the defense budget from having to go with a low level of spending and this includes some shipbuilding and particularly the nuclear deterrent Columbia class submarine.

I also believe members of Congress are supporting a CR for the remainder of the fiscal year as it would substitute for budget cuts that might be considered during a regular budget debate, which might not be adopted, and would leave US government spending higher than what would be supported by those seeking significant spending reductions to deal with what is now a \$2 trillion annual deficit. So, a CR gives you automatic spending cuts although they are across the board, reducing both good and bad spending.

Also, the fear of being responsible for shutdown of US gov makes Senate majority unwilling to risk failure of budget deal so a CR for the remainder of the year is the easier way forward. Now the SAC and SASC Chairs are not enthusiastic for a yearlong CR, even though Ms. Collins is a moderate and Mr. Wicker is considered a defense hawk. However, the key for Thune and Johnson is given the limited time they have available for using the reconciliation process to get a FY26 budget completed although with extending the current tax reform passed in 2017.

Now there is also error prone press coverage of an 8% cut in defense spending. There is no 8% cut. An 8% cut from the current NNDA would be some \$65 billion which is an absurd idea on its face, especially when placed into the context of the House and Senate Budget Resolutions pushing for defense increases.]

What is being proposed? The proposal by SecDef Peter Hegseth ***is that the transfer within the defense budget would be from low priority to high priority programs and it would be 1.6% a year each year for 5 years,*** and it would not touch at least 12 key program areas including nuclear deterrent modernization and sustainment. It is also unclear whether such an inter-DoD transfer could occur for the remainder of the current (FY25) fiscal year, so it would have to occur in the post-FY26 budget. Again, there is NO 8% annual budget cut in the proposal from the Secretary of Defense. And any such proposal would, as it is often said, be DOA, dead on arrival on Capitol Hill.

ICBM Developments

Vandenberg SFB to modernize intercontinental ballistic missile infrastructure starting Thursday
According to News Channel 3-12 (Santa Barbara, CA), Mar. 4 | Andrew Gillies. On Thursday, Lieutenant Colonel Suzanne Lamar will assume command of a group modernizing the testing and evaluation infrastructure at Vandenberg Space Force Base for intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM).

Administration Developments

- President Donald Trump's pick as NATO ambassador reassured senators at his confirmation hearing on Tuesday that the Trump administration's commitment to the military alliance was "ironclad."
- President Donald Trump's pick for a top Pentagon post testified Tuesday that Iran would pose an "existential threat" to the United States if it were allowed to develop a nuclear weapon and U.S. military force could be required to extinguish it.
- Pentagon policy nominee says U.S. must act or risk losing war with China unless greater preparations are made, President Trump's pick for a key Pentagon policy post told a Senate confirmation hearing on Tuesday.
- U.S. President Donald Trump's nominee for a top Pentagon post threw his support Tuesday behind efforts to bolster South Korea's role in the alliance with the United States as he addressed a question over the ongoing efforts for the transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON) to Seoul.
- Radcliffe: I think on the military front and the intelligence front, the pause that allowed that to happen, I think will go away, and I think we'll work shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine, as we have, to push back on the aggression that's there," Radcliffe said. "President Trump is going to hold everyone accountable to drive peace around the world."
- <https://newsreleases.sandia.gov/national-security-leader-laura-j-mcgill-named-next-director-of-sandia-labs/#:~:text=ALBUQUERQUE%2C%20N.M.%20%E2%80%94%20Laura%20J.,at%20the%20end%20of%20April>

Strategic Developments

British defence minister John Healey met U.S. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth in Washington on Thursday to discuss a peace plan for Ukraine, Britain's ministry of defence said.

The European Union Frees Up \$860 Billion More Defense Spending?

Europe is now talking about arming better to the tune of \$840 billion over 4 years and going up another 1.5% of GDP devoted to defense from the current levels of roughly 2.5%. Details are incomplete but the proposal is moving in the right direction. The EU's executive branch said the rule changes could free up over \$860 billion in additional defense spending and loans to Kyiv to purchase military equipment. Although it was unclear how fast the new defense money could be approved, the vote marked a sharp shift in European attitudes in response to the Trump administration's sharp break with traditional U.S. security policy. "Spend, spend, spend on defense and deterrence. That's the most important message," Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen told reporters.

China: Building an Island Chain of Hostility Around the United States:

<https://nationalinterest.org/feature/china-could-build-an-island-chain-around-america>

This essay details Russian hostility to US discussion of building up our capabilities in the Arctic:



China will increase its defense budget 7.2% this year
Associated Press, Mar. 5 | Christopher Bodeen

China said Wednesday it will increase its defense budget 7.2% this year, as it continues its campaign to build a larger, more modern military to assert its territorial claims and challenge the U.S. defense lead in Asia. China's military spending remains the second largest behind the U.S. and it already has the world's largest navy. The budget, which adds up to about \$245 billion, was announced at the National People's Congress, the annual meeting of China's legislature. The Pentagon and many experts say China's total spending on defense may be 40% higher or more because of items included under other budgets.

Admiral Paparo Raises Alarm

Military leaders have raised alarms over China's increasingly aggressive drills around Taiwan in recent years. Already in 2025, Beijing has sent [multiple spy balloons](#) and [naval warships](#) for "combat readiness patrols" around the island. Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense has also reported numerous incidents of [Chinese military aircraft](#) encircling the island. Navy Adm. Samuel Paparo, head of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, called these recent actions "[rehearsals for the forced unification of Taiwan with the mainland](#)," stressing that such People's Liberation Army activities are "not exercises."

Macron and Europe and Nuclear Deterrence

<https://apnews.com/article/france-nuclear-weapons-deterrence-ukraine-russia-trump-a53dc73395455c753287ae2ecbb7a9a5>

Sweden Says Not Now to Independent NATO Nuclear Deterrent

Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson says that as long as Russia has nuclear weapons it is good that European countries also have them. But the question raised by French President Emmanuel Macron about the future of a European nuclear deterrence, in light of US President Donald Trump's approach to Russia's war in Ukraine, **is not one that needs to be answered at present, he says. According to the leader of the opposition Social Democrats, Magdalena Andersson, it is not an option at the moment for Europe to have its own nuclear doctrine outside of Nato.**

Iran's Highly-Enriched Uranium

IAEA verified Iran increased HEU production rate sevenfold

- 60% Enriched Uranium
- Record Quarterly Increase

0100200300Apr2021Jun2021SepDec2021Mar2022Jun2022SepDec2022Mar2023Jun2023SepNov2023Feb2024May2024AugNov2024Feb300 kilograms

Source: IAEA data compiled by Bloomberg

The US has long suspected the Islamic Republic of using a decades-old civilian nuclear sector to shield a covert military dimension. Iran has repeatedly denied it wants weapons and insists its atomic work is for peaceful means including power stations that are partly financed by Russia.

The United Nation's nuclear watchdog on Monday [said the US and Iran should begin talks](#), and that it was holding high-level discussions with the White House on the issue. That follows its warning last week that Tehran's stockpile of near-bomb-grade fissile material had [surged more than 50%](#) since Trump's election.

Iranian officials are also under intense pressure to deliver economic relief to a population exhausted by [an acute cost-of-living crisis](#) that's been compounded by US sanctions under both Trump and President Joe Biden's administration.

Iran is also locked in a bitter shadow war with top US ally Israel and has vowed to keep fighting despite Israel having severely weakened Tehran's key proxies Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Both groups are designated terrorist organizations by the US and other countries.



IS 619.pdf

Nuclear Talks With Iran

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in response to questions sent by Bloomberg that “Russia believes that the United States and Iran should resolve all problems through negotiations” and that Moscow “is ready to do everything in its power to achieve this.” As two countries both heavily sanctioned by the US, Russia and Iran have deepened cooperation on trade and energy, as well as security, including Russia utilizing large numbers of Iranian drones in its war against Ukraine.

But it's unclear how receptive Tehran will be to any US overture delivered via Russia. Many hardliners, who dominate Iran's powerful institutions such as the IRGC and the judiciary, have publicly opposed engagement with Washington.

Last month, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Trump can't be trusted — since he withdrew from an Obama-era nuclear agreement during his first term — and that Iran wouldn't be bullied into negotiations.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, a reformist who supports reviving the nuclear deal, said last week that he would set aside his personal belief in the need for US engagement and back Khamenei's opposition to talks while Washington continues to sanction Iran's economy.

Despite the public posture, “both the United States and Iran are trying to find channels of communication, productive ones which would mark the start of a dialogue,” Nikolay Kozhanov, an associate professor at Qatar University's Gulf Studies Center, said. Any understanding between the US and Iran would be a “complex” one with the US offering sanctions relief and Iran agreeing to contain its regional ambitions, Kozhanov added.

The Ukraine Corner

The European Union Pushes For More Defense Spending

E.U. countries are supposed to keep their deficits — the gap between how much they spend and how much money they bring in through taxes and fees — to below 3 percent of their economic output, while limiting their debt. Failure to do so can result in fines. Eight countries, including Belgium and Poland, are already bumping up against the limits or are seriously in breach of them, as is France. Given that, Europe has been trying to find ways to allow individual nations to spend more on defense without making drastic cuts elsewhere, for instance to health care or social services.

Ms. von der Leyen suggested on Tuesday that a budget “escape clause” would be a central part of her plan. She suggested that if European nations used the space to increase spending by another 1.5 percent of gross domestic product — nearly doubling it from just under 2 percent now — that would add up to about €650 billion over four years. But even if the European Council approves the escape clause, it's not clear whether individual states would decide to spend the extra money and increase their deficits.

Russia's Border Build-Up and Security Strategy

While NATO's increasing military presence on its eastern flank is not very impressive in numerical terms, Russia has reacted by taking measures to counter this new challenge. In the Russian view, NATO still enjoys a clear

conventional advantage at the aggregate level, and any build-up closer to Russia's borders by an 'aggressive and expansionist' NATO must be met by increased deterrence.

At the same time, the fact that Russia currently lacks the military strength for strategic offensive attacks against NATO countries seems to be unimportant in NATO's reasoning (Golts 2016). Russian leaders underline that Russia has neither the military capability nor political, economic or real ideological interests in launching a strategic offensive against the West and have repeatedly held that the measures taken are of a purely defensive character (Putin 2016b; RT 2016a). However, such claims do not seem credible to Western military planners, who perceive Russia as an 'aggressive and expansionist' power.

While the role of nuclear weapons had been downplayed since the end of the Cold War and until the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis, they soon acquired new relevance in NATO–Russia relations. Over the past fifteen years, Russia has modernized its strategic deterrent and developed a strategy of 'escalating to de-escalate' through strategic conventional and, if necessary, nuclear strikes (Bruusgaard 2016; Colby 2016).

Already in April 2014 it was rumored that a squadron of Tupolev Tu-22M3 long-range bombers would be moved to the Crimean Peninsula; this move was openly announced in 2015 (BBC News 2015b). The rhetorical emphasis on Russia's nuclear deterrent seemed to be increasing.^[iii] In tune with Moscow's build-up of forces, changing patterns of exercises and increasing military posturing, the new Russian Military Doctrine adopted in December 2014 described NATO's military build-up near the Russian borders as the country's 'main external military risk'.^[iv]

In December 2015, a new National Security Strategy was presented: NATO was mentioned four times as a source of threat to national security. Russia was especially negative towards 'the alliance's increased military activity and the approach of its military infrastructure toward Russia's borders, the building of a missile-defence system, and attempts to endow the bloc with global functions executed in violation of the provisions of international law' (President of the Russian Federation 2015).

In the same document it is clearly stated that a system of European security based on a bloc approach (the EU and NATO) is not viable. Instead, Russia is 'prepared to develop relations with NATO based on equality for the purpose of strengthening general security in the Euro-Atlantic region' (President of the Russian Federation 2015). Especially when viewed in the highly distrustful perspective of NATO countries following the annexation of Crimea, these Russian policies and activities were repeatedly taken as proof of Russia's aggressive and offensive strategic agenda. Russian claims that all its actions were defensive simply did not appear credible.

Russia's Long Record of Broken Pledges and Treaty Violations

Why Volodymyr Zelensky is seeking security guarantees as part of any peace deal.

By [Eric S. Edelman](#) and [Franklin C. Miller](#)

March 7, 2025

"During the February 28 meltdown in the Oval Office among President Donald Trump, Vice President J.D. Vance, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, Trump—claiming that he alone can bring peace to Ukraine, thereby ending the largest war in Europe since World War II—declared, "I think President Putin wants peace." Earlier, when asked whether he trusts that Russia wants peace, Trump, seemingly based on publicly undisclosed conversations with the Russian dictator, said, "I do."

Zelensky, in the most polite and respectful way possible under the circumstances, had been trying to raise a fundamental issue about the Trump administration's approach to reaching an agreement: Putin is fundamentally untrustworthy. His track record, both with regard to the war in Ukraine and more broadly with respect to previous agreements made with the United States, is consistent—he lies and cheats. And that is why Zelensky and Ukraine require substantive security guarantees that go beyond mere pieces of paper.

Putin's previous broken pledges on Ukraine.

The premise that Ukraine is the party posing an inconvenient obstacle to peace because it insists that any agreement must be backed up by stronger guarantees ignores the history of Russia's failure to respect the unbacked guarantees it had already agreed to.

In September 2014—in the wake of Russia's illegal seizure of Crimea, its creation of irregular forces to take portions of the Ukrainian regions of Luhansk and Donetsk, and finally the insertion of regular Russian forces into those territories—the Ukrainian government, the Russian government, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) negotiated the Minsk Protocol and Accompanying Memorandum. Minsk I, as it came to be known, called for a ceasefire and prisoner exchanges. The fighting continued, however, with continued gains by both the Russian irregular and regular forces, and by January 2015 the agreement collapsed. Seeking to restore the peace, a Franco-German-led initiative resulted in a new agreement, dubbed Minsk II and again signed by representatives of the OSCE, Ukraine, and Russia, creating a second ceasefire.

Russian forces proceeded to violate that agreement and, after taking additional territory, halted—leaving an uneasy truce in place. Finally, in February 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin declared that Minsk II no longer existed and then proceeded to launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

It was this sorry history to which Zelensky was trying to draw Trump's and Vance's attention during the Oval Office debacle—and in fact, he had already provided U.S. negotiator Keith Kellogg with a list of some 25 Russian ceasefire violations since the 2014 destabilization of Ukraine. This tortured history, forgotten by most in the West, explains the Ukrainian position that any agreement must be backed by meaningful security guarantees for Ukraine.

This is even more the case since Putin's violations of the Minsk agreements built upon his disregard of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, in which security assurances were provided by the U.S., U.K., France, and Russia when Ukraine gave up any claim to the nuclear weapons left on its soil after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

The broader picture of Putin's duplicity.

The United States has its own long historical record of negotiations with Russia, which can be summed up by Ambassador Charles "Chip" Bohlen's famous axiom that the fundamental Russian negotiating stance is, "What's mine is mine, what's yours is negotiable." The late Secretary of State George P. Shultz (for whom one of the authors worked as a junior diplomat) amended Bohlen's adage by declaring that "What's mine is mine, and what's yours is mine too."

The Russian record of adherence to accords negotiated during or after the Cold War makes for depressing reading and underscores the necessity of vigilance and prudence when it comes to any effort to negotiate not just an end to the war in Ukraine but to any broader U.S.-Russian arms control or geopolitical agreements.

During the Cold War, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, along with the SALT I agreement, was regarded as the cornerstone of strategic stability, but the USSR was in violation of the treaty for years. Its construction of the **Radar contravened** both the letter and spirit of the treaty because it was built not on the periphery of the country (for defensive purposes, allowable under the treaty) but in the center (for battle management). The Russians for years denied that the radar was a treaty violation before finally giving up in 1989 and dismantling it.

Under Vladimir Putin, Russia has violated or disregarded nine separate arms control agreements and treaties he either inherited or signed, including:

- The [Helsinki Final Act of 1975](#), also known as the Helsinki Accords, wherein signatories pledged not to use military force to change borders in Europe
- The aforementioned [Budapest Memorandum of 1994](#)

- The [Istanbul Document of 1999](#) (in which Russia pledged to withdraw its military forces from Georgia and Transnistria in Moldova)
- The [Presidential Nuclear Initiatives](#) of 1991 and 1992 (in which Russia pledged to withdraw from active service various naval tactical nuclear weapons and to eliminate all ground-launched tactical nuclear weapons)
- The 1992 [Open Skies Treaty](#) (in which Russia blocked U.S. access to parts of Russia clearly provided for under the treaty and also deviated from agreed flight paths over the U.S. that were mandated by the treaty)
- The [1999 Vienna Document](#) (Russia falsified and concealed military exercise information which it had agreed to provide)
- The [1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces \(INF\) Agreement](#) (which Russia violated by covertly developing and then deploying a missile which exceeded the permissible range limits established by the treaty)
- The Convention banning retention of chemical warfare agents, and
- The [2011 New START Treaty](#) (Russia has withdrawn from participation in treaty-mandated working groups and inspections)

Additionally, Russia is [almost certainly violating](#) the [1972 Biological Weapons Convention](#) by maintaining an active bioweapons capability.

Russia also routinely violates the 1972 Incidents at Sea Agreement and the 1989 Dangerous Military Activities Agreement, including buzzing the USS Donald Cook in the Baltic Sea and unsafe approaches to U.S. aircraft operating in the Black Sea. Recent revelations of intelligence suggesting that Russia might be prepared to violate the [Outer Space Treaty](#) by putting a nuclear weapon into orbit are yet another indication of Moscow's contempt for solemn international obligations.

Given this deliberate and well-documented track record, the bar for holding Moscow accountable for its actions under any agreement it might sign regarding Ukraine's future, much less the kinds of nuclear arms control agreements in which President Trump has also [shown an interest](#), should be exceedingly high. Indeed, the first Trump administration demonstrated it would check Russian bad behavior when it removed any constraint that the INF Treaty and Open Skies Treaty imposed on the U.S. after Putin had gutted those pacts. The second Trump administration would do well to review the policies it pursued during the first term in office when it understood those dangers.

Would Putin tolerate a Western-oriented, independent Ukraine?

Putin may well seek to convince Trump he "wants peace." The question is, what sort of peace does he seek? Some Americans are convinced he would accept an independent, democratic Ukrainian state. But that hope-inspired approach surely misreads Putin's willingness to countenance an end to the conflict on any terms other than capitulation.

As former Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Gen. Richard Shirreff [recently told](#) the BBC's *Ukraine cast*, "What Russia is about is removing Ukraine from the map as a sovereign state. ... Because that's deep in the Russian DNA. And I think any American negotiator who doesn't understand that and thinks there can be a durable, lasting solution with a sovereign Ukraine, and that Russia will accept that, is deluding themselves."

Russian official statements since [last month's talks](#) in Saudi Arabia have validated Shirreff's judgments. Putin's representatives have and continue to indicate they will not make any concessions that allow the continued existence of an independent Ukraine tied to the West and have stressed that any settlement must resolve the alleged "root causes" of the conflict (code for preventing a sovereign Ukraine from choosing its own geopolitical orientation).

They specifically demanded an explicit reversal of the 2008 [NATO Bucharest Summit Declaration](#) welcoming Georgia and Ukraine's aspirations to join the alliance at some future date. As a result, short of a total surrender to

Putin's position—something no American president or Ukrainian president or NATO ally should accept—the prospects for a lasting, negotiated peace, are quite remote, as President Zelensky recently noted.

If Moscow really does want peace, as Trump claims, it faces two substantial challenges—to actually negotiate in good faith and to abide by what is eventually agreed to. Russia's lamentable history of noncompliance shows that either one, let alone both, might be impossible for Vladimir Putin.

[Eric S. Edelman](#)

Eric S. Edelman is counselor at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments and is a former U.S. ambassador to Turkey, Finland, and undersecretary of defense for policy.

[Franklin C. Miller](#)

Franklin C. Miller served for three decades as a senior nuclear policy and arms control official in the Pentagon and on the National Security Council staff. He is a principal at the Scowcroft Group.

<https://thedispatch.com/article/russia-history-broken-treaties-agreements/>

["Pathways To Trump Wins," https://cepa.org/article/pathways-to-trump-wins/, January 1, 2025, "How Trump Can Win In Ukraine," https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2024/11/27/how_trump_can_win_in_ukraine_1074924.html, November 27, 2024](https://cepa.org/article/pathways-to-trump-wins/)

The Ukraine Corner from Victor Davis Hanson

Fable One: Donald Trump Is Appeasing Russia?

Who wiped out the Wagner group in Syria? Who sold offensive weapons to Ukraine first? Who warned Germany not to become dependent on the Russian Nord Stream II deal?

Who withdrew from an unfair missile deal with the Russians? Who cajoled and berated NATO members to meet their military investment promises made following the 2014 invasion of Ukraine?

In contrast, who originally conceived a Russian "reset" in 2009? Who publicly virtue-signaled pushing the red "reset" button in Geneva with the current Russian Minister Sergey Lavrov?

Which ex-European leader got a million euros a year working for Russian energy companies?

Of the last four presidents, under whose watch did Putin not invade another country?

Which American president, in hot-mic style, offered to (and did) dismantle US-Eastern Europe missile defense plans in exchange for temporary Putin quietude ("space") to aid his 2012 reelection?

Fable Two: A Trade War?

Donald Trump is not wildly slapping tariffs on Europeans.

He is simply saying that 1945 is now 80 years past and that the asymmetrical tariffs that Europe imposes on U.S. imports should be corrected. The massive trade surpluses Europe accumulates each year should give way to fairer, more balanced trade.

If Europe does not want tariffs, then simply calibrate its own tariffs on what America places on European imported goods, and work down jointly to zero tariffs on both sides.

Fable Three: America Is Bullying Europe?

The U.S. does not actively interfere in European elections and politics.

In 2024, Europeans, especially the British Laborites, bragged about sending over campaign “volunteers” to work against Trump and, earlier, his conservative predecessors.

British subject Christopher Steele sought to sabotage an entire American 2016 election with a falsified “dossier.”

The Ukrainian ambassador in 2016 wrote an op-ed all but endorsing Hillary Clinton and trashing her opponent.

In September 2024, Mr. Zelenskyy was flown in on a Biden-provided US military jet to Scranton, Pennsylvania—at a pivotal time in the most pivotal swing state—to surround himself with Democrat politicians.

His media-frenzied presence signaled a partisan campaign theme that a Harris win and the continuance of massive Democrat aid to Ukraine would ensure manufacturing jobs, such as the artillery shell factory he selected to visit.

As to NATO, Trump’s pressure from 2017 to 2021 finally pushed more NATO nations to rearm. But even eleven years after promising to invest a mere 2 percent of GDP in defense, nine of the 32 members still have not complied.

Fable Four: Negotiating With Putin Is Selling Out?

In the long history of Western diplomacy with mass-murdering tyrants, Putin doesn’t even rank among the worst. Just ask his former reset partners Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton.

FDR fueled mass-murdering “Uncle Joe” Stalin’s Red Army as a way to defeat Nazi Germany.

Richard Nixon flattered and cajoled the greatest mass murderer in history, Mao Zedong, to triangulate China against the Soviet Union.

Ronald Reagan offered to share missile defense expertise with Soviet Russia.

Europeans have hosted almost every Palestinian murderous terrorist leader, as a way either of deflecting terrorism from their own shores or emphasizing their general loathing of Israel.

Fable Five: Europe Is Going To Save Ukraine?

Europe rushed to congratulate and celebrate with Zelensky after his preplanned White House blow-up. They are loudly announcing that a supposedly isolationist and appeasing U.S.—which has sent more aid to Ukraine than all nearby European nations combined—will now be supplanted by a “new” muscular and rearmed Europe.

We sincerely hope so.

But on every recent international moral question—ganging up on a lone Israel to appease terrorist forces in the Middle East, standing up to China’s mercantilism, neo-imperialism, and domestic oppression of minorities, or Russia’s prior 2008 and 2014 invasions—European outrage has been muted, real consequences nonexistent.

We are now witnessing European heads of state sending the same old, same old virtue signaling support for the brave Zelenskyy, who supposedly spoke truth to power to the mean U.S. Orange Man.

But where does such performance art lead after the cult hero Zelenskyy had gnawed the hand that gorged him?

To multitudes of European tanks, skies full of European jets, and division after division of crack European infantry now heading east to “back up” Ukraine—led on horseback by its new Joan of Arc, Ursula von der Leyen?

Aside from all the present posturing and mock-heroics, the only way to save Ukraine is for the U.S. president, Donald Trump, to reflect joint Ukrainian, American, and European interests in stopping the war, forcing Putin as far back eastward as possible where he started in 2022, and creating a credible deterrent along with a DMZ/industrial corridor tripwire to stop another 2008, 2014, and 2022 invasion.

Anything else is empty carnival barking.

China & The Administration Strategy on Security and Foreign Policy As Seen by The Wall Street Journal

With a domestic economy in crisis, Xi is playing defense, hoping to salvage as much as possible of a global trade system that helped pull his country out of poverty. Across the Pacific, Trump is intent on rewiring that very trading system, which he and his advisers see as having benefited the rest of the world—and China most of all—at the U.S.’s expense. It isn’t just trade. The competing agendas of the leaders of the world’s two largest economies.

They are poised to lead to precisely what China is trying to avoid: a superpower clash not seen since the Cold War, an all-encompassing rivalry over economic, technological and overall geopolitical supremacy. Trump, who highlighted the need to counter China throughout his campaign, returned to the White House with a comfortable victory and Republican control of Congress. He believes he can deal with Beijing from a position of strength, advisers said.

Early moves

Many of his early diplomatic moves should be viewed in that context, these people said. Trump is trying to end the conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine to better focus on China, they said. His recent enthusiastic embrace of Russia and its authoritarian leader, Vladimir Putin, is propelled in part by a strategic desire to drive a wedge between Moscow and Beijing. One reason Trump wants U.S. control of the Panama Canal is that he sees the Chinese infrastructure that has been built up there in the past three decades as a national security threat.

On Tuesday, he notched a victory of sorts, when a consortium of investors led by U.S. asset management firm BlackRock agreed to buy majority stakes in ports on either end of the Panama Canal from Hong Kong-based CK Hutchison. “All the stuff he’s doing is so that we can put more resources” to counter China, an administration official said. Trump on Tuesday added to existing tariffs on China, citing its role in the fentanyl crisis in the U.S., surprising Chinese officials who were still trying to figure out how to approach what they see as an erratic U.S. leader.

Back foot

China, which itself has tried to reshape the global order, aligning itself with Russia to challenge the West, now finds itself on the back foot. The vision haunting Xi is one where China finds itself cut off by trade restrictions and sanctions, suffering Soviet-style isolation with fewer outlets for its goods and limited access to crucial technologies. “Now China is in danger of becoming the target of a similar rivalry,” one of the people who consult with Beijing said. “Xi believes that must be avoided.”

Trump as Nixon 2.0?

Niall Ferguson, Hoover Institute

Niall Ferguson points out that Nixon’s presidency saw its share of failures. Oil shocks, stagflation and Watergate all took their toll. It was also easier for Nixon to pry China from the Soviet relationship than what Trump is attempting today, to carve Russia out of its “no limits” partnership with China. “The challenge is to take a leaf out of Richard Nixon’s book — without in the end having the book thrown at you. [Editor’s note: We ended up subsidizing China including annual grants to a host of Chinese entities as detailed by Michael Pillsbury in his “The 100 Year Marathon: Over time the US benefited China with trillions worth of economic growth and now China is our nation’s most dangerous enemy.]

Nadia Schadlow of the Hudson Institute, and former Deputy National Security Adviser to Trump, writes on the same subject: [Lessons from Nixon for Trump’s New World Order](#)

At the *Wall Street Journal*’s “Free Expression” podcast, National Security Visiting Fellow [Nadia Schadlow](#) tells the *Journal*’s editor-at-large Gerard Baker that how Richard Nixon thought “about the world and geopolitics and the balance of power just had some real parallels to the situation we’re facing today.”

As Schadlow notes, Nixon advanced a three-pronged formula, which he called “the durable peace”: (1) peace through strength, (2) shared responsibility, and (3) a belief in the importance of negotiations—even with adversaries.

“Nixon firmly believed in the importance of a balance of power and in keeping a balance of power,” Schadlow says, adding, “he wanted to prevent an adversary from accumulating marginal gains, which over time would overthrow the balance of power.”

[Editor’s note: We ended up subsidizing China with trillion in economic growth and now China is our nation’s most dangerous enemy.]

Listen [here](#).

Special Reports:

***A Road Map for Rebuilding America’s Nuclear Arsenal* Excerpt from the Heritage Foundation, Mar. 4 | Robert Peters**

The United States must rebuild and replace its Cold War–era nuclear deterrent, given the growing threats posed by the autocrats in Beijing, Moscow, Pyongyang, and Tehran. China is the fastest-growing nuclear power on the planet, building more than 100 new nuclear weapons per year. Russia has more than 10 times as many operationally deployed non-strategic nuclear weapons than the United States. North Korea regularly threatens the United States and its allies in South Korea and Japan with nuclear annihilation. And Tehran may be weeks away from the bomb. The United States must—immediately and continuing over the next four years—build and field a deterrent that is credible and can therefore deter, and, if necessary, defeat, adversary aggression and nuclear coercion.

Arms Control by Michaela Dodge of NIPP

The contrast between the veracity with which treaty advocates defended the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) during the Senate's advice and consent process and their subsequent silence regarding Russia's violations of the treaty is striking. The episode calls into question the Biden Administration's and particularly the State Department's assessment of treaty compliance and **is a sad commentary on Russia's treaty compliance record and America's inability to compel Moscow's adherence to treaty obligations. It also calls into question the U.S. ability and political willingness to respond to other countries' violations in a timely manner.** Until the government can become more realistic about arms control, more serious about enforcing compliance and punishing noncompliance, the country would be better off if it did not pursue arms control at all, despite President Trump's recent calls for "denuclearization" among Russia, China, and the United States.²

NEW: News Nuggets of Interest

Budget Futures

And underlying the budget fight and making things complicated is that the US is currently running annual deficits of near \$2 trillion. Many people believe the solution is relatively easy. Just raise tax rates.

A little history: the top income tax rate was 92% under Eisenhower, 70% under Kennedy; 50% and then 28% under Reagan; 36-39.6% under Clinton, 35% under Bush, and under Trump 37%.

Note that compared to the last time the budget was balanced, the current top tax rate is about 3% lower. Those folks in the top tax rate bracket declared income of \$3.3 trillion, or 22% of all income declared, on which they paid \$863 billion in income taxes, or 40% of all income taxes.

Assuming the income declared will not change, a 3% increase in tax rates for the top 1% would theoretically raise \$100B. Or 5+% of the current annual debt.

Raise all income tax rates by 3% for all taxpayers and one could raise \$440 billion.

To raise \$1.83 trillion, which is the estimated debt for FY2025, that would require tax rates to go up by 86% for everyone.

The Biden administration's proposed 10 year budget submitted in early 2021 was to rescind the tax reform of 2017 and raise an estimated additional \$5.7 trillion over a decade. But with companion proposed spending levels, the deficit over the ten year period was projected to increase by \$20 trillion to the \$56 trillion level, which could easily require some \$1.5 trillion in annual interest payments vs the near \$1 trillion being paid today. At the same time, the projected defense spending was markedly reduced as both a percent of all discretionary spending and as a percentage of our GDP.

The Nature of the USAF

When Reagan was elected average age of USAF planes was 12 years. When Obama left office average age of USAF planes was 26 years. When Biden left office average age of USAF planes was 32 years. The US used the USAF fleet very hard in the past decades. As a result, the USAF is the smallest and oldest it has been in its history. Wars don't modernize the force. Wars deplete the force and make it old.

Why Deficits? Here is a Contributing Factor

At the same time, the Congress majority is seeking to put a budget together than includes greater defense spending, lower discretionary and entitlement spending as well as extending and expanding the current tax framework. GO says the Federal government annually makes some \$250 billion a year in fraudulent payments, as well as payments made to migrants here illegally for food stamps, Medicaid and other social benefits. In order to get Obama Care passed, the Senate adopted a provision only affecting Nebraska that reimbursed Nebraska for 90% of its Medicaid

payments compared to the then law of 56%. To avoid the appearance of a special deal for just Nebraska, the Obama administration later on amended the reimbursement rate to 90% for all states. In the California budget just proposed by Governor Newsome, the reimbursement from the US government to California for Medicaid for the coming fiscal year was \$118 billion, which is larger than the **entire annual budget** for the State of Florida and nearly double the size of the Maryland state budget of \$63 billion and some 25% greater than the \$93 billion for the State of Virginia. There is also pending a DOGE review of the 10 largest defense support contractors and the estimated \$85 billion now spent at companies such as GD and SAIC and Booze Allen for example. And the \$118 billion is 200% of the annual cost of all nuclear deterrent forces and the companion modernization, as well as the entirety of the NNSA.