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# *The Shape of the Future Operating Environment*

*Or: How our adversaries have learned to stop worrying and ignore the bomb*

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*Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA) Reach-back Study in Support of USSTRATCOM  
Strategic Challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*



The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the US Government.

## Questions Addressed

[Q2] What are US competitors (Russia, China, Iran, DPRK) doing to shape the operational environment for future conflict?

[Q4] What are the biggest perceived threat to, and opportunity for, the interests of US nuclear competitors? What are the internal and external factors currently constraining them from acting on these?





# Introduction

Embedding nuclear deterrence theory and strategy within the broader operational environment



Dissatisfied powers are increasingly aware that they can subvert international rules and norms, and use non-military means to achieve their objectives, while staying below the threshold for military retaliation by the United States.

Military approaches are simply not sufficient to the challenges the US faces in an international environment where our adversaries are already deploying all levers of state power to achieve their objectives.



*"[Today] demands creative approaches that draw on all the sources of our national power: our diversity, vibrant economy, dynamic civil society and innovative technological base, enduring democratic values, broad and deep network of partnerships and alliances, and the world's most powerful military."*

2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance

*"The emphasis in the content of methods of confrontation shifts towards broad application of political, economic, diplomatic, information and other non-military measures implemented with the connection of the protest potential of the population."*

Valery Gerasimov

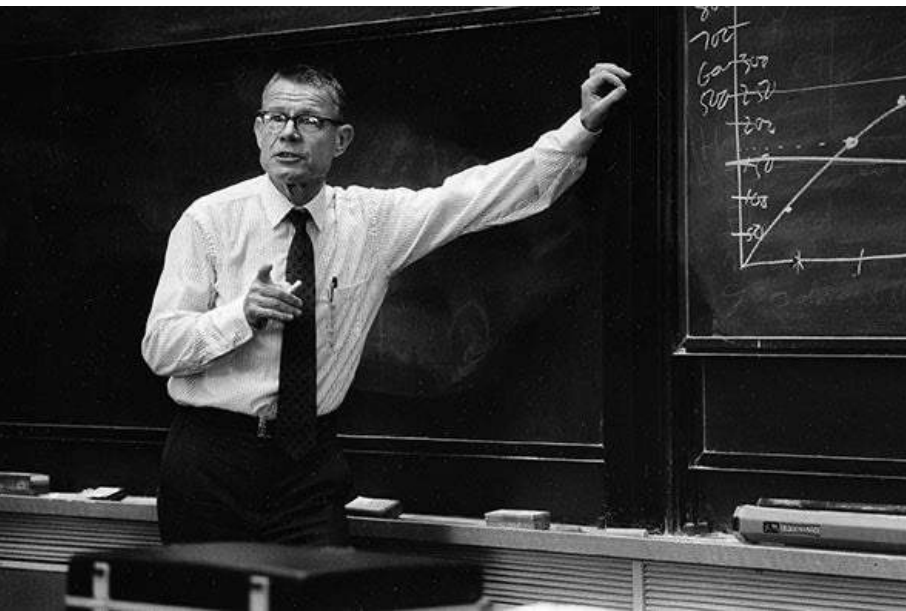
# Cold War deterrence thinking

Classic deterrence theory & strategy builds from the assumption that the adversary is a rational actor

Little attention is paid to the interests that motivate and drive that behavior...

...and most often nuclear deterrence strategy was (and still is) considered in isolation from other strategic considerations

- Assumes the strategic environment like Moab Utah; one road in.



# Why we need to think beyond nuclear

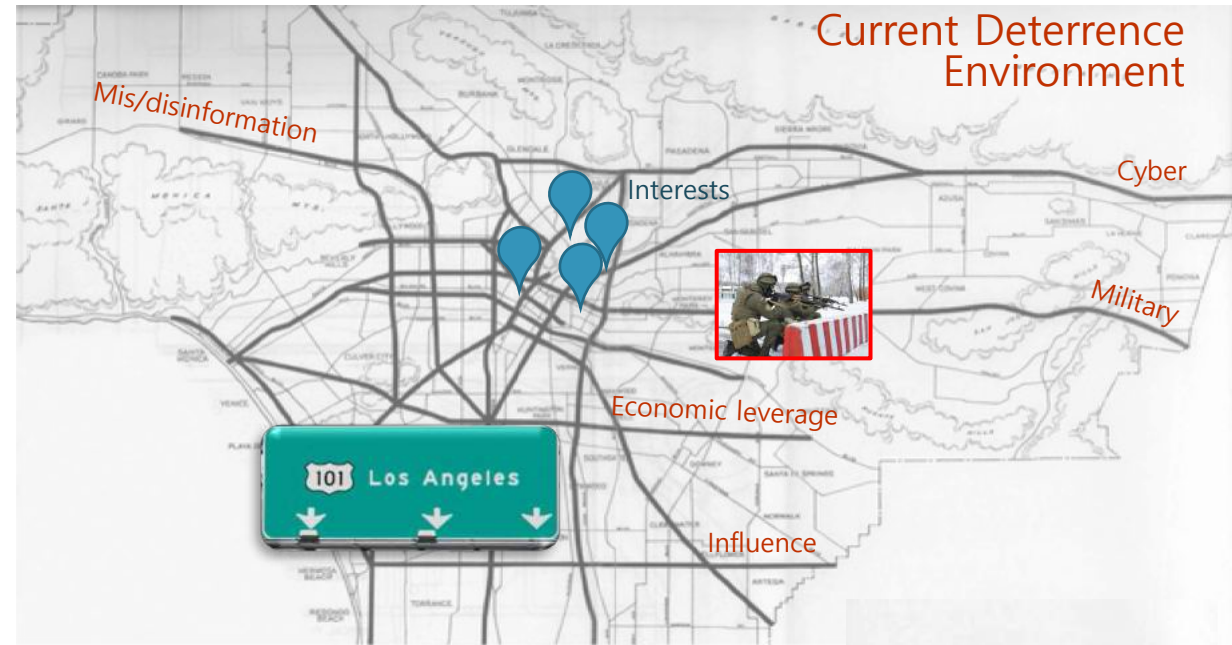
Rationality does not imply actors' interests change as the cost of achieving them increases.

- In fact, rationality assumes actors are goal-oriented, and take actions to secure those objectives.

All these nuclear competitors, even DPRK, have **multiple paths** they can, and do, take to forward and protect **multiple interests**.

- The strategic environment is actually more like Los Angeles: multiple roads in from all directions

*"I see in some circles this thought that somehow we can take nuclear in particular, put it off in its own little box to the side, has its command, had its own threat and we can decide how credible that threat is, and somehow there's this independent rheostat over here on how much risk we're willing to take and somehow that's completely separate from everything else DOD does. And to think about deterrence, one of the things I submit is you can't think about it in pieces...We need to be thinking much more broadly than narrowly at any one capability, in particular nuclear."*  
 STRATCOM Commander Adm. Charles Richard  
 (May 2021)



# The role of interests

## National Interests

All states, irrespective of regime type or leadership, share certain similarities in domestic governing structures, in addition to the structure of the international environment, that together condition how they can or must interact with that environment.

## Classifying Interests

*In general, any state has 5 categories of enduring national interests ...*

Domestic



Maintain regime legitimacy, popular support, & governing capacity

Economic



Sustain governing capacity & conditions for domestic economic activity

International Prestige



Exert influence over other actors & the outcome of int'l events

National Security



Sovereign control of territory, assets, & population

Identity / Values

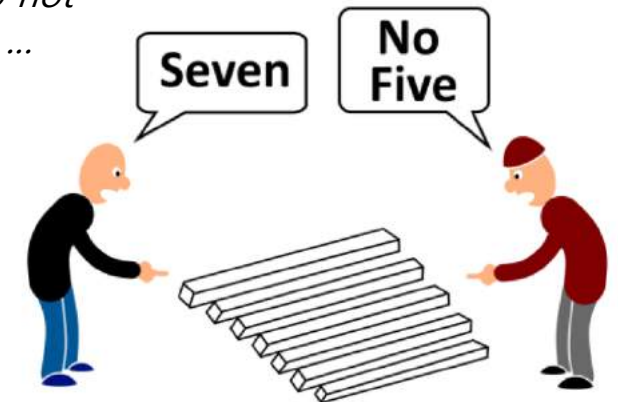


Protection of closely held values, ideology, & associated objectives

## Why it matters that we understand what other actors think

*If we assume that other actors are purposeful and do not behave in arbitrary, random, or self-destructive ways, ...*

Identifying the interests at stake in an issue **from the perspective of the other** provides critical information about which "game" we are playing and, thus, which behaviors we should expect from other players.



# How actors choose among actions

Actor interests cross multiple domains and, consequently, their actions in the international system rely on the use of **multiple forms of power**.



Soft power



Economic power



Political power

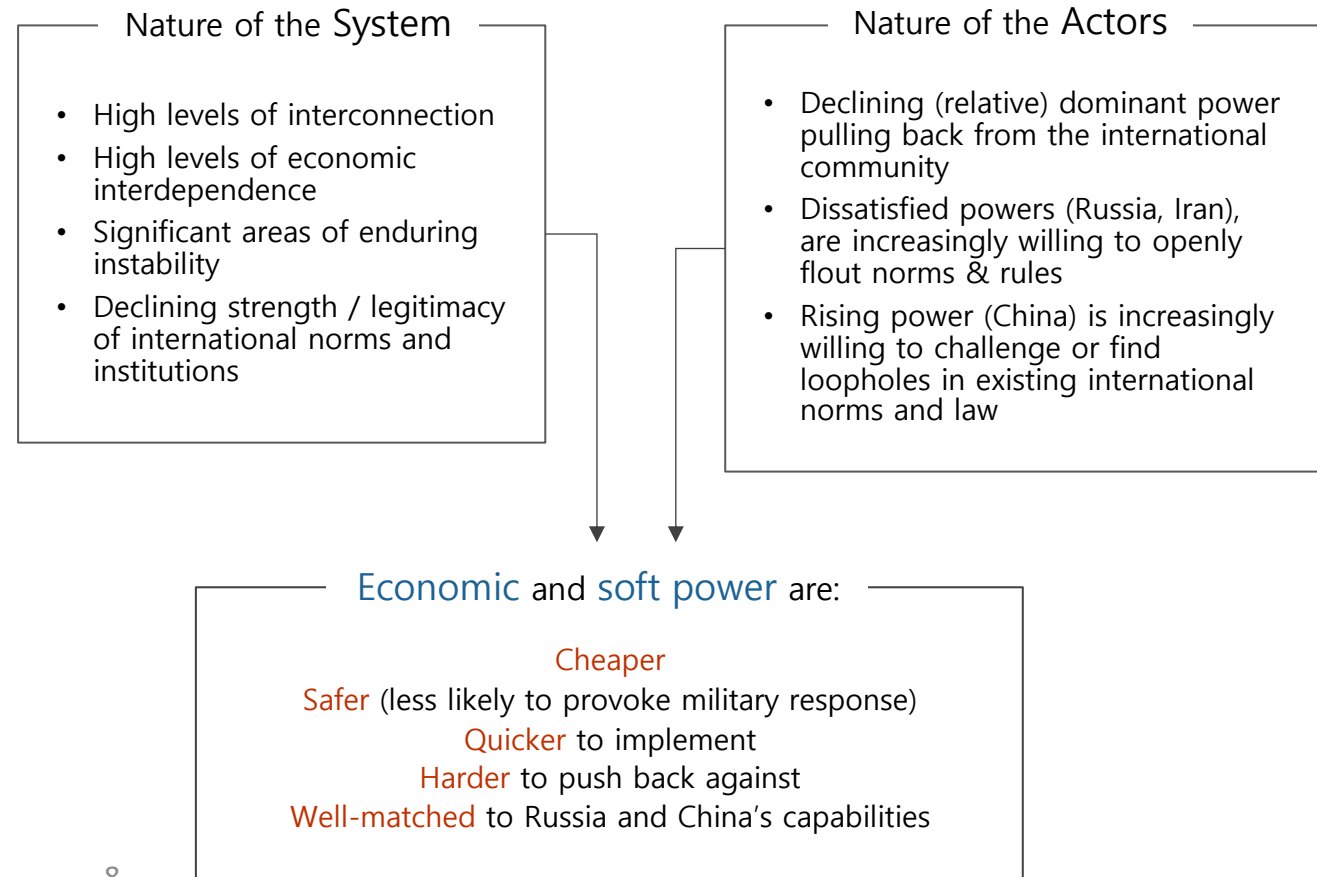


Military power

- The type of power you need depends on the type of change you want to affect (or prevent someone affecting) on the system.
- Power is fungible. The nature of the international system connects domains and, therefore, creates potential to use power in one domain to affect outcomes in another.

The form of power a state chooses to employ will be influenced by its own capabilities and preferences, as well as the nature of the system itself.

For Russia, China, Iran and DPRK, in the current operational environment



*I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail.*

Maslow 1966



# State Interests

What interests underlie the perceptions and behavior of Russia, China, Iran, and DPRK in the international environment?



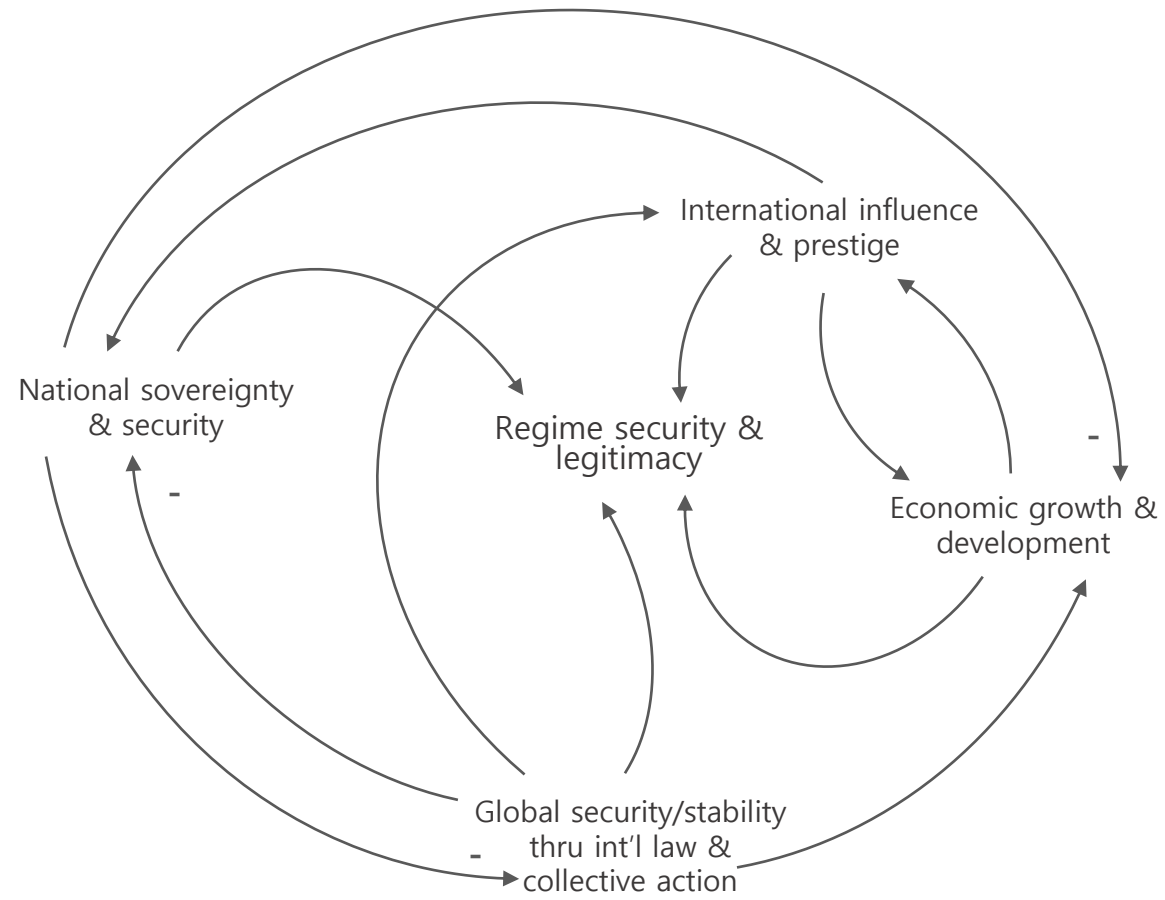
**TRYING TO UNDERSTAND  
THE BEHAVIOR OF SOME  
PEOPLE IS LIKE TRYING  
TO SMELL THE COLOR 9.**

# ...adversary interests & associated objectives

Russia



## Associated Interests

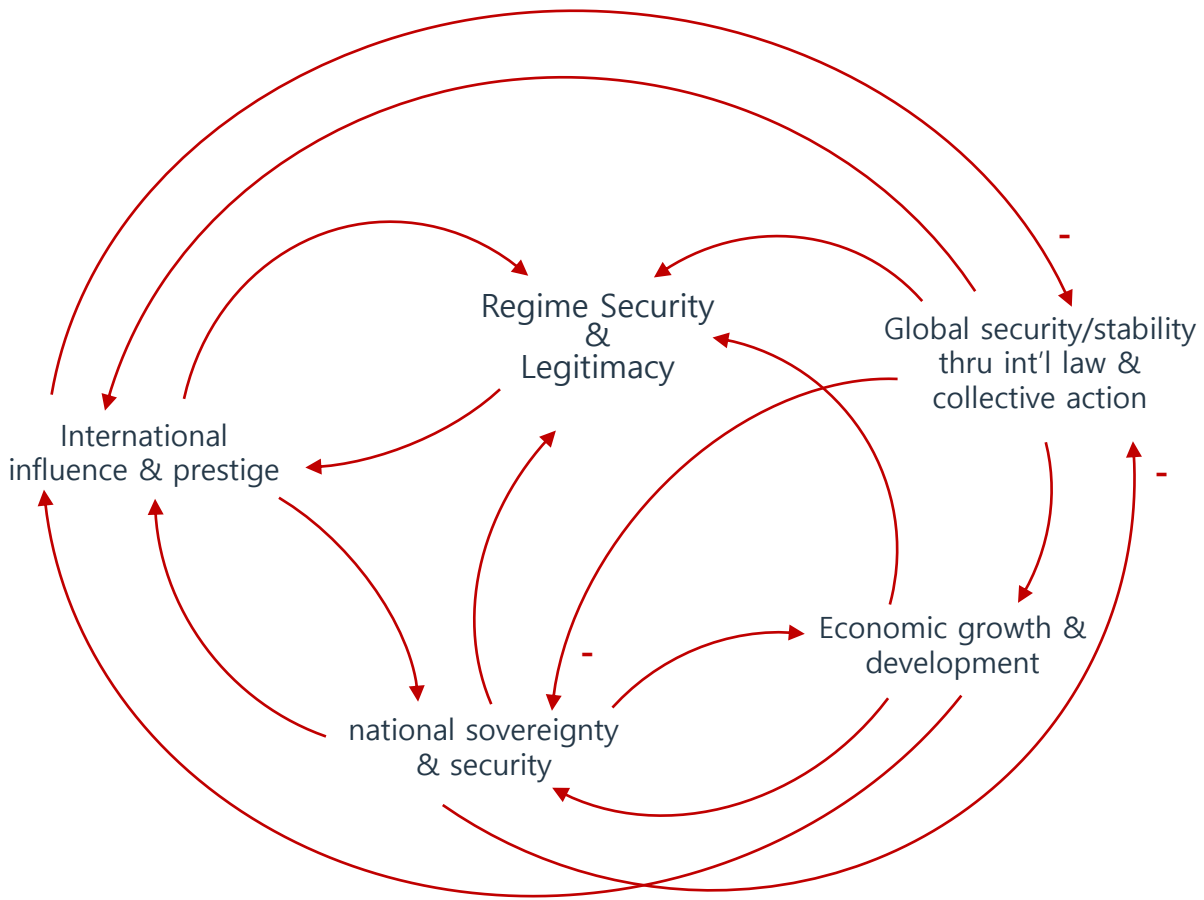


## Objectives

Objectives	Influence	Economic G&D	Global Sec/Stab	Nat'l Sov/Sec
Aid in peaceful settlement of territorial disputes				
Build ties through infrastructure development with other countries				
Control greater proportion of global ICT				
Control greater proportion of global natural resources				
Counter the threat of domestic terrorism				
Decrease influence of US and West				
Encourage joint economic ventures with Russia				
Engage with regional multilateral economic organizations				
Engagement with regional multilateral organizations				
Engage with regional multilateral security organizations				
Establish Russian influence over domestic policy of other states				
Expand military cooperation				
Formation of regional multilateral security organizations				
Harden domestic economy against sanctions				
Increase Access to Russian State Sponsored Media				
Increase cultural engagement / familiarity				
Position Russia as a critical link in global energy supply and transport				
Position Russia as a link between China and Europe				
Position Russia as an alternative partner to the West				
Push back against NATO/Western security infrastructure				
Restore relations with the EU				
Settle of territorial disputes in Russia's favor				
Strengthen and expand economic cooperation with non-Western states				
Support existing free trade regime				
Support freedom of navigation / maritime				
Support of international non-proliferation efforts				
Support sovereign rights of authoritarian governments				

# ...adversary interests & associated objectives

China

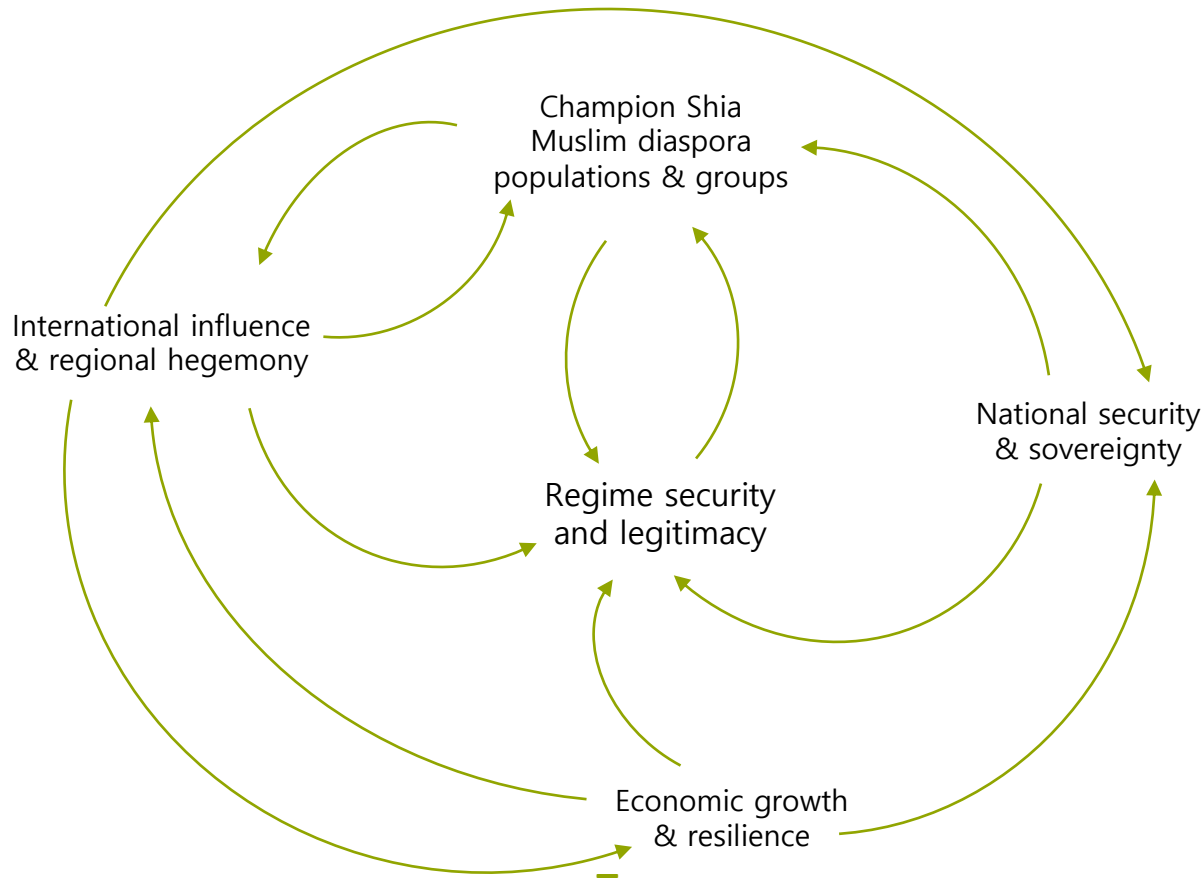


## Associated Interests

### Objectives

Objectives	Influence	Economic G&D	Global Sec/Stab	National Sov/Sec
Increase involvement in regional organizations [Pol/Sec]	█			█
Increase diplomatic presence	█			
Encourage authoritarian elements/policies in democratic or sympathetic regimes	█			█
Increase cultural engagement / familiarity	█			
Influence regional dialogue in favor of China	█			
Influence regional political agenda	█			
Become model for economic devel in authoritarian regimes		█		
Build economic capacity through infrastructure development		█		
Control greater proportion of global natural resources		█		█
Increase share of global FDI		█		
Scientific cooperation / technology transfer to gain knowledge		█		█
Attract skilled foreign labor to China (esp. tech)		█		
Diversify economic investments		█		
Expand and deepen export markets		█		
Increase involvement in regional organizations [Eco]		█		
Increase opportunities for Chinese workers in foreign countries		█		
Strengthen and expand economic cooperation		█		
Increase security/military cooperation				█
Devel infrastructure with dual use potential in strategically important areas				█
Invest in companies to gain / knowledge with potential military applications				█
Resolve outstanding territorial/maritime disputes in China's favor				█
Support actors at odds with the United States	█			█

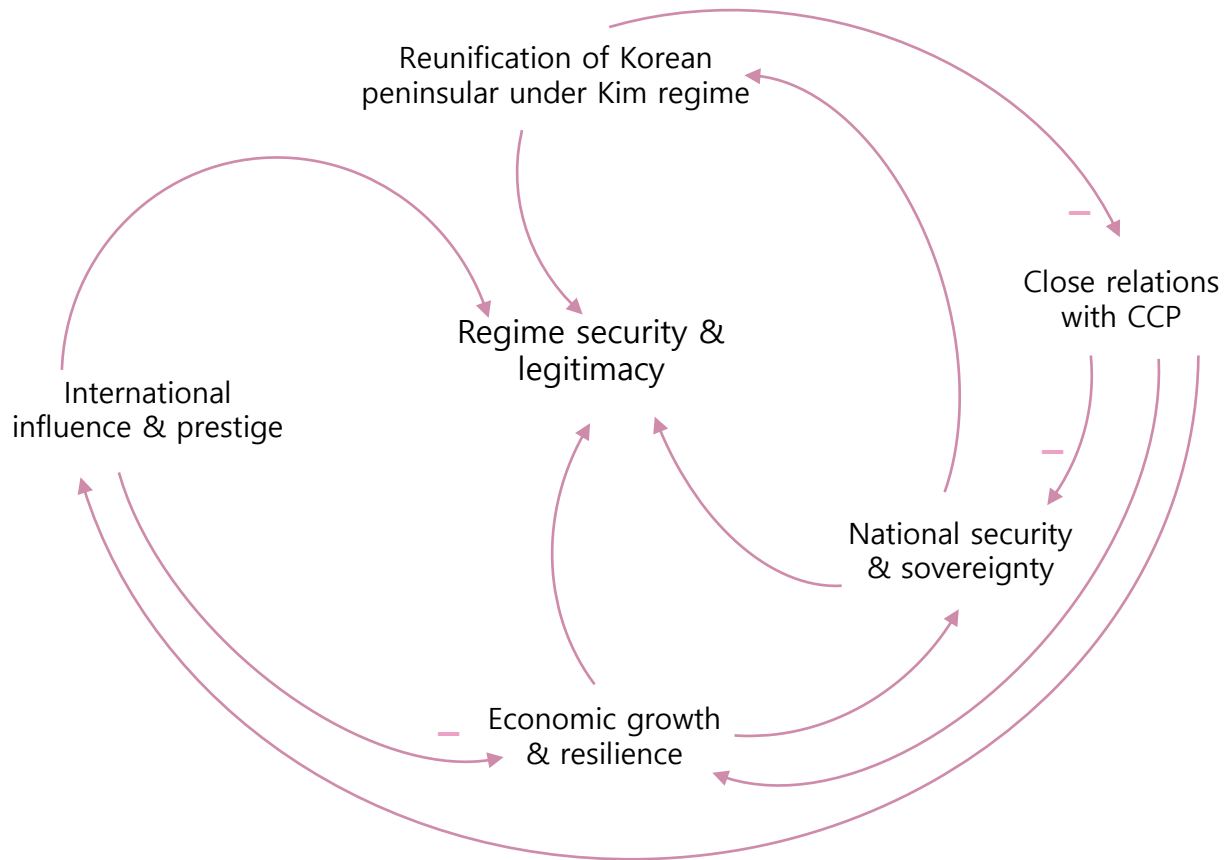
Iran



## Associated Interests

## Objectives

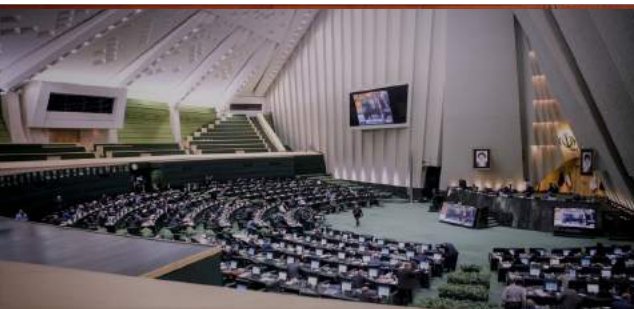
Objectives	Influence/ Hegemony	Eco Stab/Resilience	Champion Shias	National Sov/Sec
Build ties through infrastructure development with other countries	█			
Unhindered access & profit from key religious sites in Iraq	█			
Harden domestic economy against sanctions	█	█		
Influence regional dialogue in favor of Iran	█			
Influence regional political agenda	█			
Position Iran as a critical link in global energy supply and transport	█			
Strengthen and expand economic cooperation with Western Europe	█			
Strengthen and expand economic cooperation with non-Western states	█			
Gain foothold in post-conflict economies in Syria & Iraq	█			
Mitigate perceived threat from KSA			█	█
Decrease regional influence of US and its allies			█	█
Protect Shia communities globally, and export Islamic Revolution			█	█
Support Shia proxies in regional disputes			█	█
Encourage authoritarian elements/policies in democratic or sympathetic regimes			█	█
Build Iranian influence over domestic policy of regional states			█	█
Support actors at odds with the United States			█	█
Support sovereign rights of authoritarian governments			█	█
Diversify economic investments		█		
Protect illicit economic activities (trafficking, smuggling)		█		
Encourage joint economic ventures with Russia & China		█		
Control extraction of economic resources from regional proxies		█		
Counter the threat of domestic terrorism				█



Associated Interests

Objectives

Objectives	Influence	Economic stability	CCP Relations	Reunification	National Sov/Sec
Increase diplomatic presence on global stage	█				█
Decrease influence & regional presence of US and West	█				█
Expand regime's grey and black economic activity (restricted arms sales, drug trafficking; counterfeiting, cybercrime)	█	█			█
Develop, diversify, and retain nuclear weapons for as long as possible and secure a second-strike capability					█
Maintain illicit hard currency earnings	█	█			
Engage in illicit technology transfers	█				
Influence international dialogue in favor of DPRK	█				█
Drive a wedge between South Korea and the US	█				█
Maintain economic assistance from China while limiting its political leverage			█		
Diversify economic ties		█			█
Harden domestic economy against sanctions		█			█
Negotiate for sanctions relief					█



## Regime survival is the sine qua non for all actions—foreign and domestic

- Each regime's interest in maintaining its own security and legitimacy shapes its other key interests, motivating and directing its behavior in the international system.
- Knowledge of the domestic constraints and pressures each faces is crucial to understanding each regime's foreign policy actions and their likely responses to US actions.

## Adversaries share interests and constraints

Economic interests are regarded as a matter of national security

The democratic, rules-based international system is a constraint

Succession has the potential to threaten regime stability

Influence is seen as a zero-sum game

Interests are not always mutually reinforcing

What are the biggest perceived threat to the to each regime's security? What is the primary constraint stopping the regime from using force to resolve this threat?

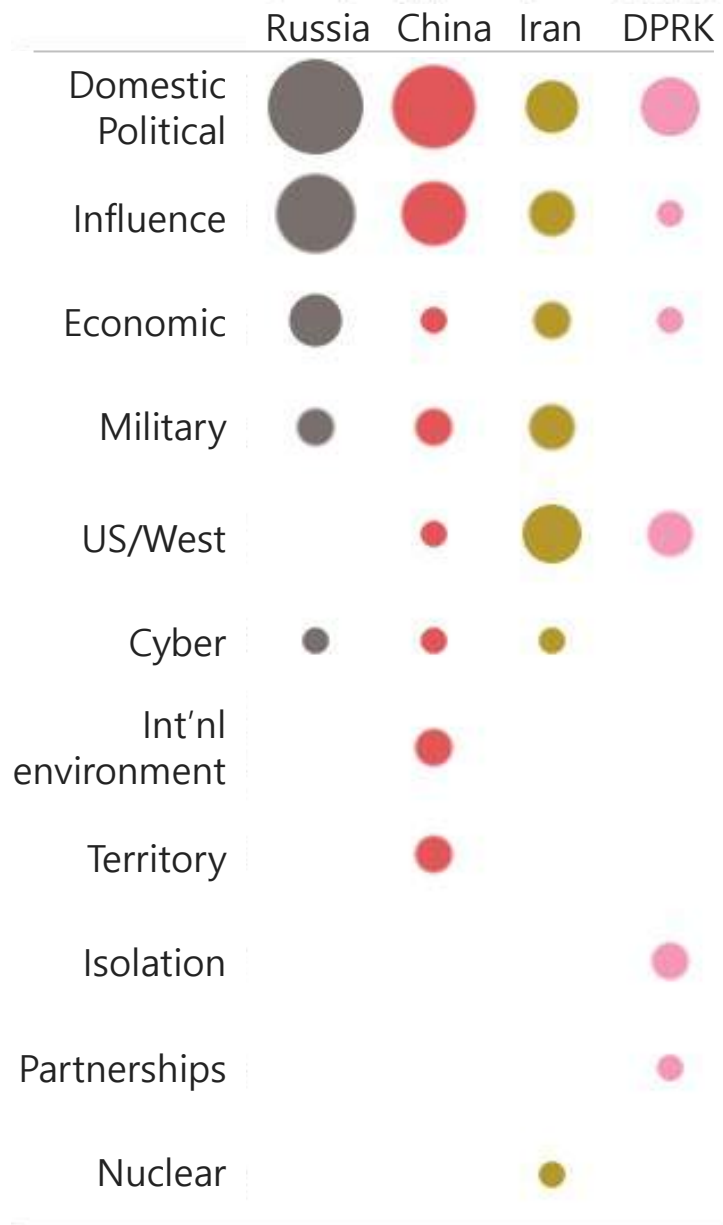


# Threats & Opportunities

What is the biggest perceived opportunity for bolstering the governing authority and legitimacy of each regime? What are the primary constraints stopping it from using force to realize this?



Data: SEEK survey, VITTa



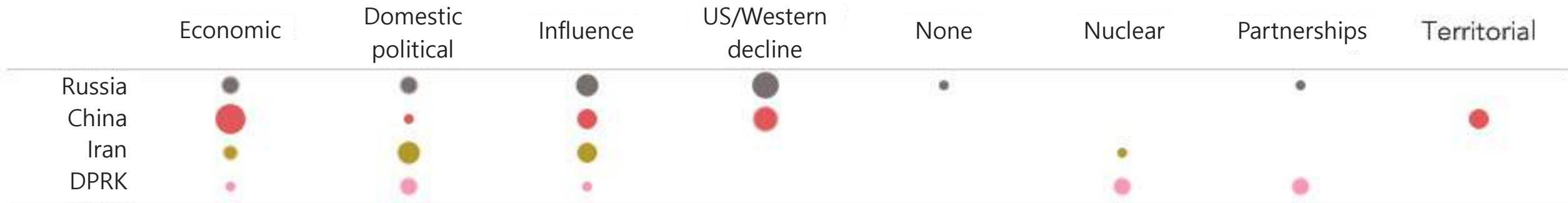
## Constraints on Use of Force

- Effectiveness of force is limited given the threats identified.
- Where it works, and there are few repercussions, all regimes have in fact used force.
- Negative economic consequences loom as large as of military retaliation.
- The potential for triggering domestic instability is an internally generated a constraint.





Data: SEEK survey, VITTA



## Constraints on Use of Force

- Military retaliation was identified as a constraint more often for Russia than China, Iran, or DPRK.
- Resource constraints were identified for multiple Russian and Iranian opportunities.



# Activities

What are US competitors doing to shape the operational environment for future conflict?

# Bottom line: Adversary activities

All states are acting to maximize their interests through multiple objectives, within the constraints imposed by their relative power capabilities (political, military, economic, soft).

Power imbalances lead to opportunistic behaviors

Opportunism leads to transactional cooperation

Relative to the US, all have limited soft power capabilities...but Russia and China are actively working to redress this imbalance

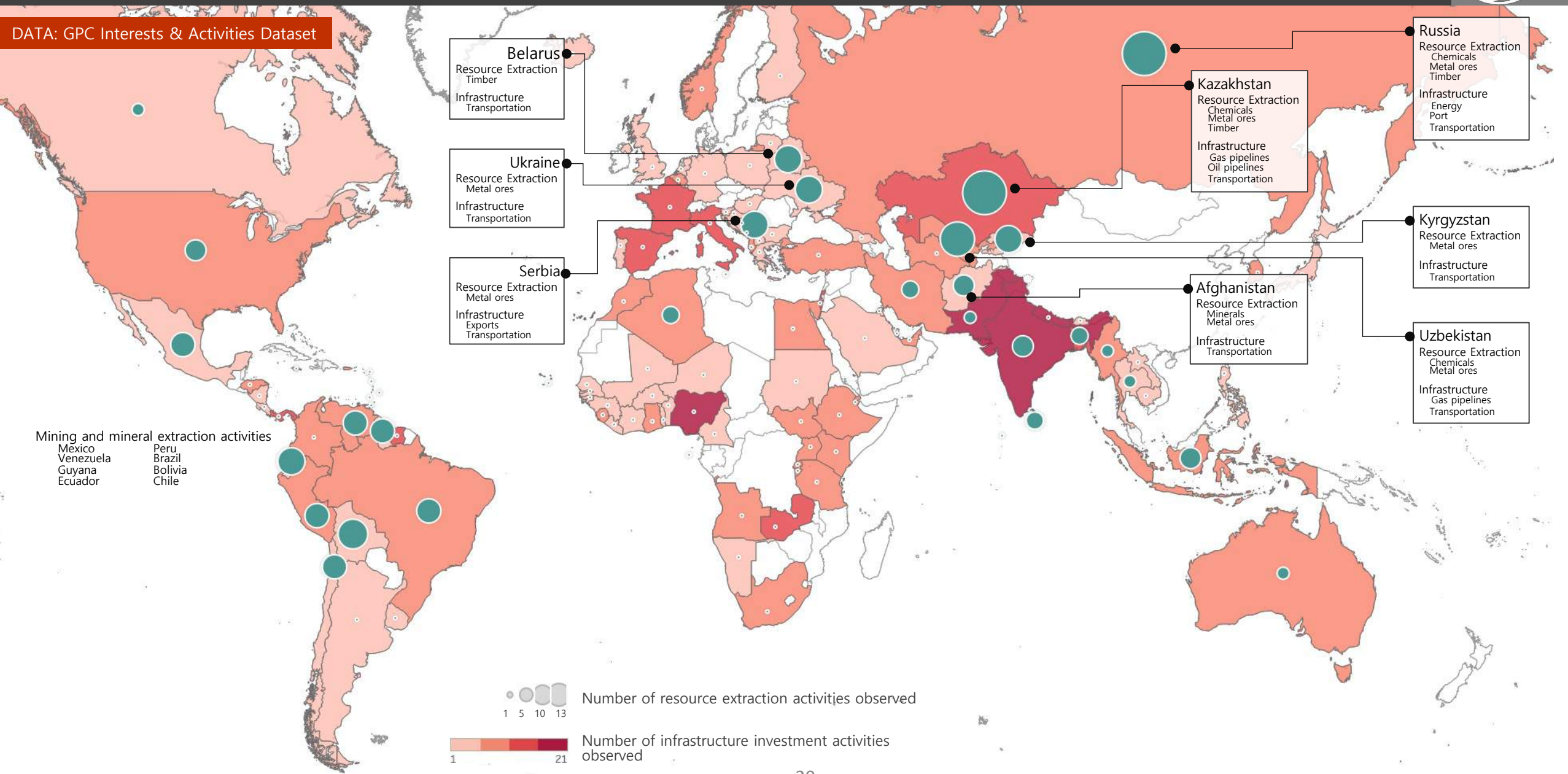
Targeting private entities & US allies can offset the US's power advantage

Activities reflect their common interest in building influence



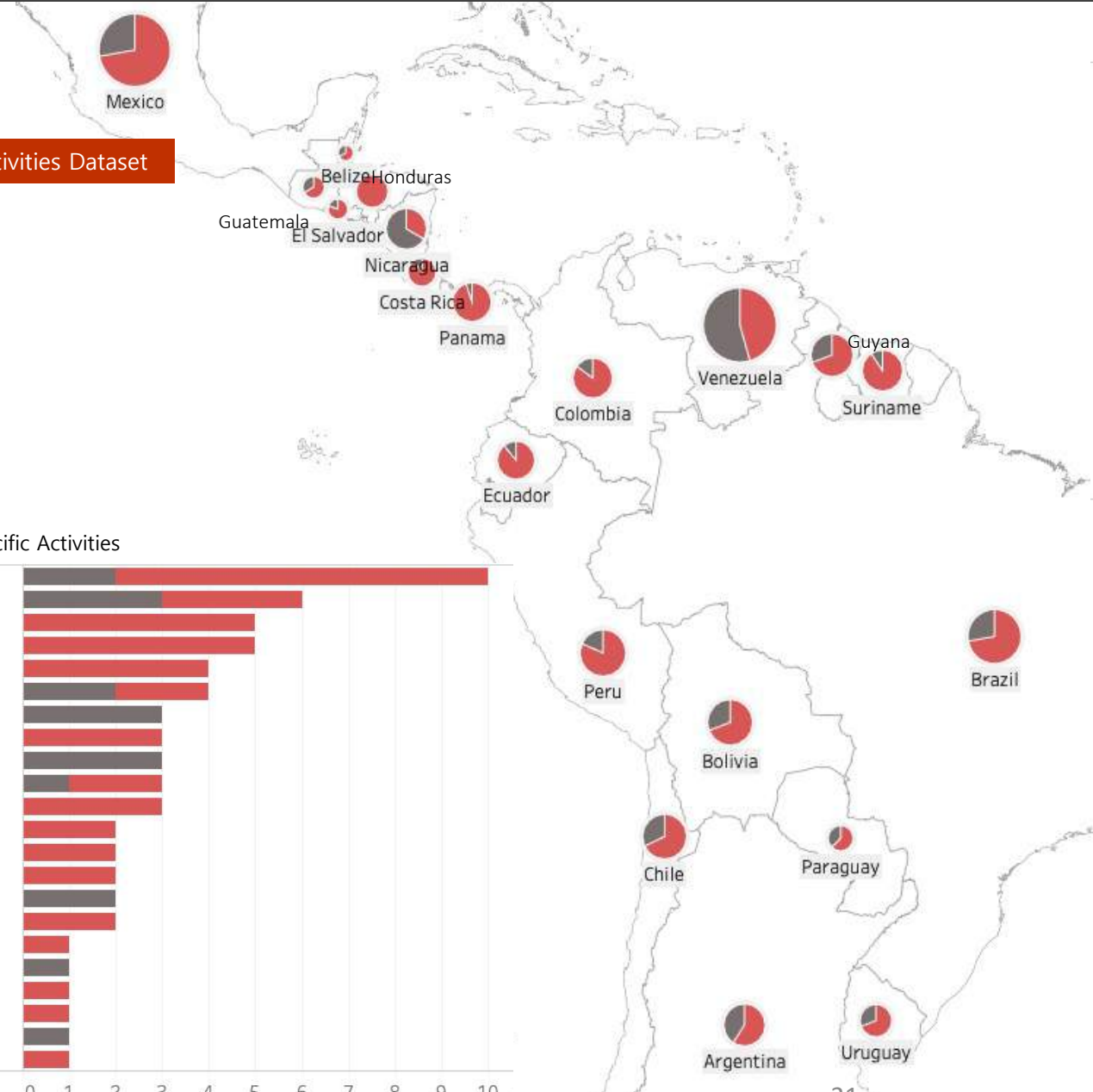
# Deeper dive: Chinese infrastructure & resource extraction activities

DATA: GPC Interests & Activities Dataset



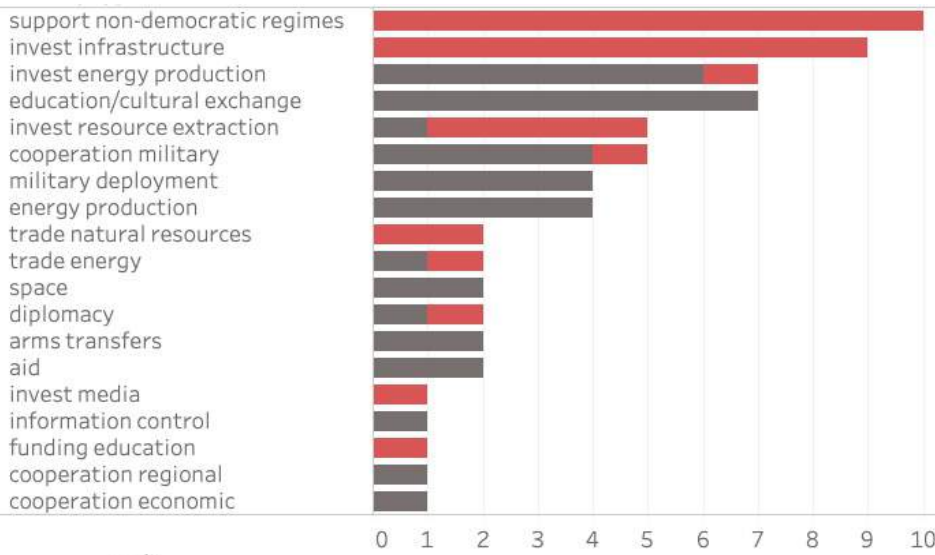
# Deeper dive: Chinese & Russian activities in Central & South America

China  
Russia

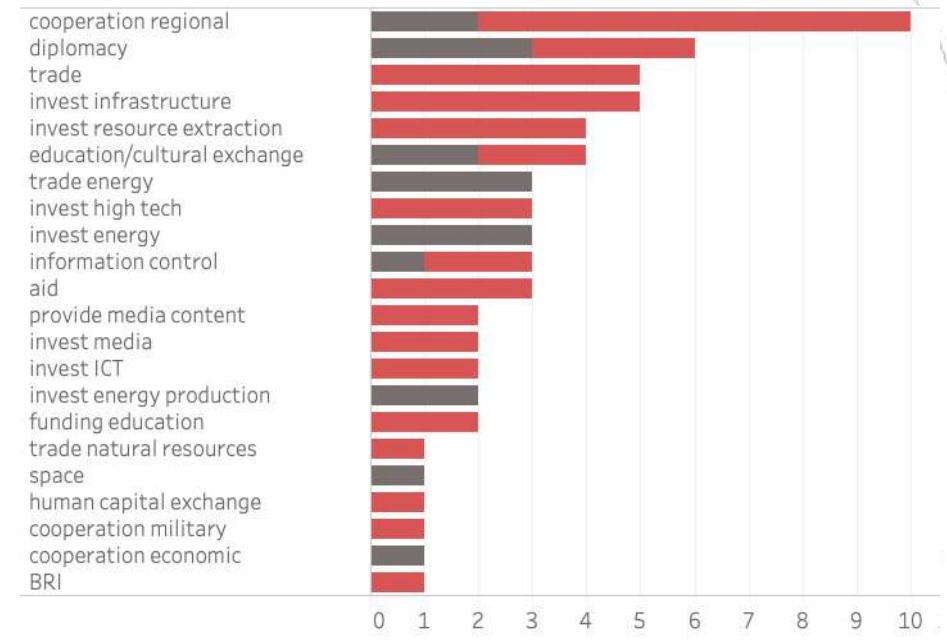


DATA: GPC Interests & Activities Dataset

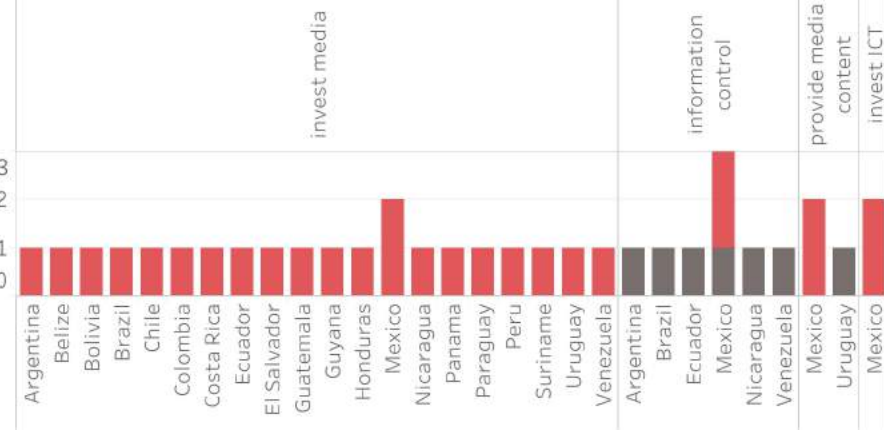
VENEZUELA Count of specific activities



MEXICO Count of Specific Activities



Media and Information Activities

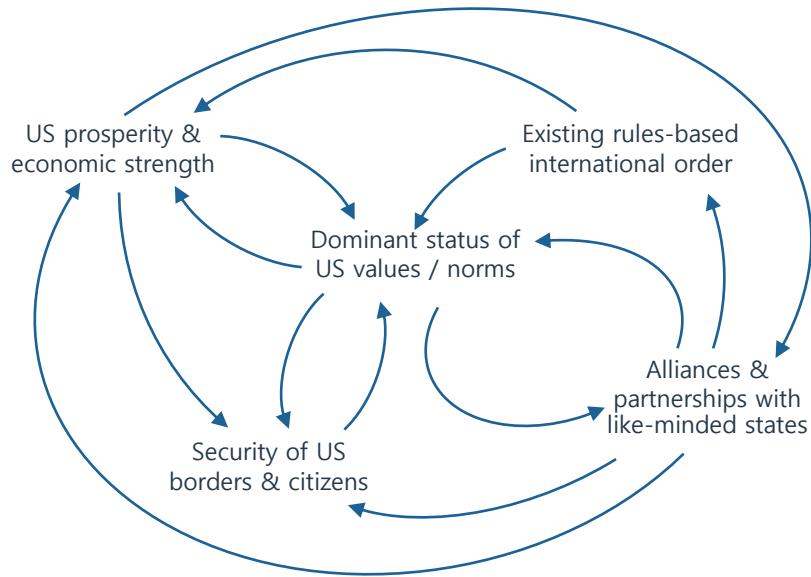


# Implications for US Interests

What are the implications of adversaries' activities for US interests and the shape of the operating environment more generally?

# Bottom line for the US

Adversaries' activities are too varied, and US interests too interdependent, for a single approach to deterrence to be sufficient.



Dual dependency undermines US deterrence

Reducing dual dependency can strengthen US alliances and partnerships

The US must address adversary soft power and influence activities



# Case study: US THAAD deployment in South Korea (2016-17)

## China's response

- Informal ban on organized tours to South Korea
- Import of South Korean television dramas & music frozen
- South Korean video games blocked from entering the Chinese market until Dec 2020
- South Korea's Lotte Group directly targeted and forced out of China

## Direct outcome: "the three no's"

South Korea would not

1. consider any additional THAAD deployments
2. participate in the United States' BMD network
3. consider joining an alliance with the US and Japan

## Implications

- Seoul has been careful not to anger China for fear of triggering fresh economic retaliation.
- China has used similar tactics against US allies Australia and Japan



Beijing's informal sanctions in response to THAAD cost South Korea at least \$7.5 billion



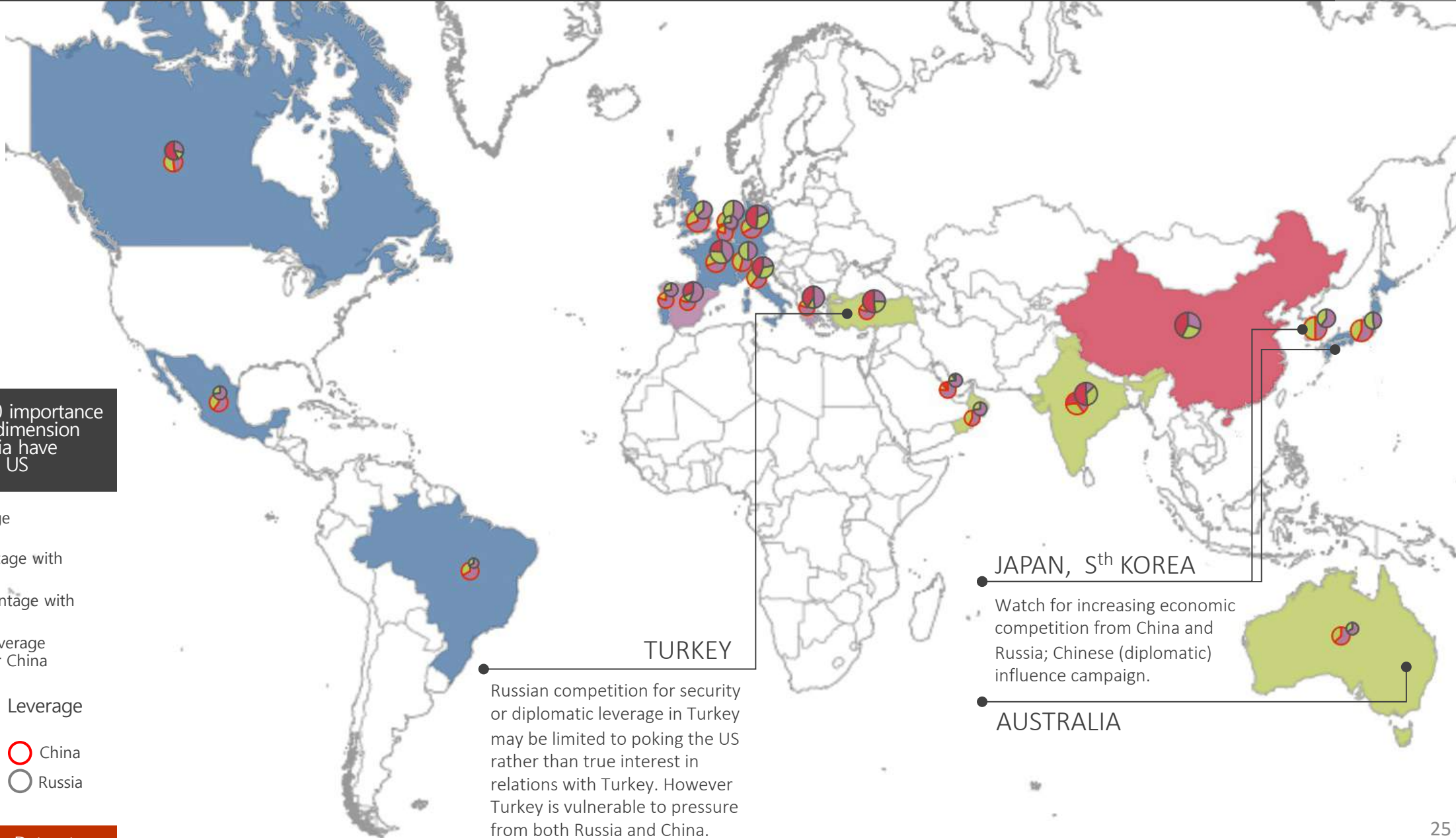
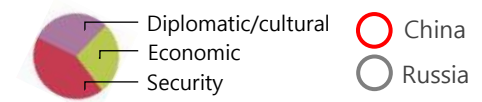


# Large-n: Chinese & Russian leverage globally

Map highlights US top 10 importance states coded to indicate dimension on which China and Russia have greater leverage than the US

- US highest on all leverage dimensions
- **Security** leverage advantage with Russia or China
- **Economic** leverage advantage with Russia or China
- **Diplomatic / Cultural** leverage advantage with Russia or China

China/Russia Proportional Leverage



**TURKEY**

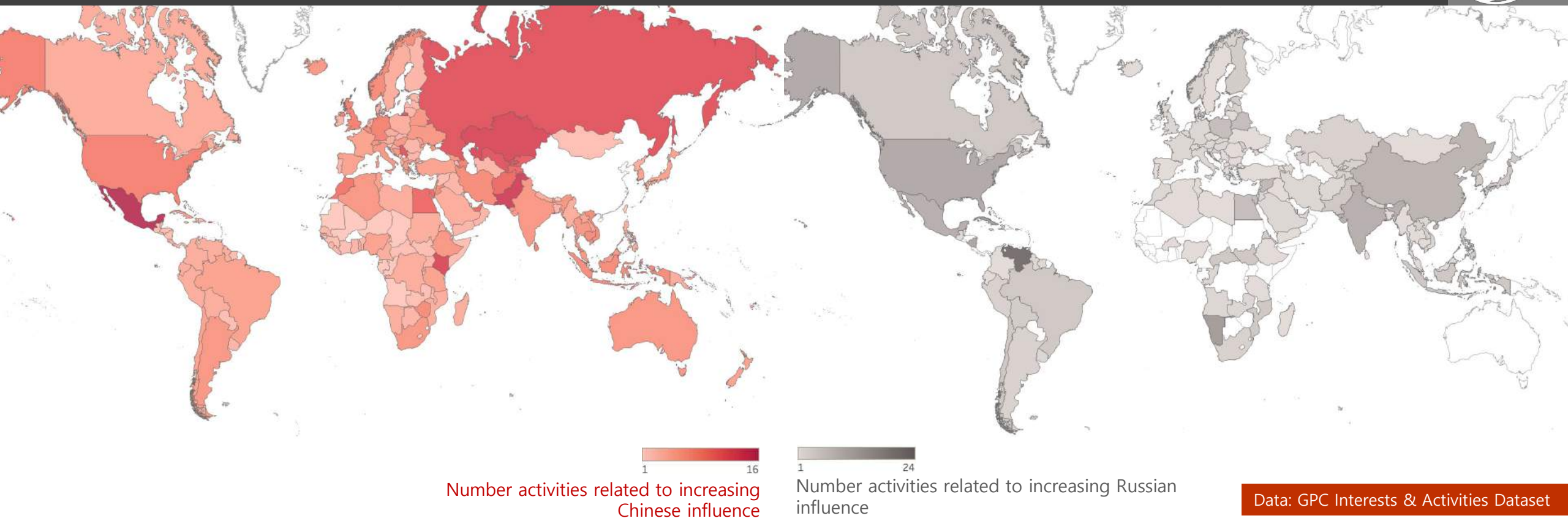
Russian competition for security or diplomatic leverage in Turkey may be limited to poking the US rather than true interest in relations with Turkey. However Turkey is vulnerable to pressure from both Russia and China.

**JAPAN, S<sup>th</sup> KOREA**

Watch for increasing economic competition from China and Russia; Chinese (diplomatic) influence campaign.

**AUSTRALIA**

# Large-n: Chinese and Russian influence activities



## Chinese Influence Activities

- aid
- Arctic
- BRI
- build political support
- cooperation economic
- cooperation gov-to-gov
- cooperation military
- cooperation regional
- cooperation science tech
- cooperation security
- diplomacy
- economic pressure
- education/cultural exchange
- funding education
- human capital exchange
- information control
- invest energy production
- invest ICT
- invest infrastructure
- invest media
- invest resource extraction
- provide media content
- space
- support non-democratic regimes
- trade

## Russian Influence Activities

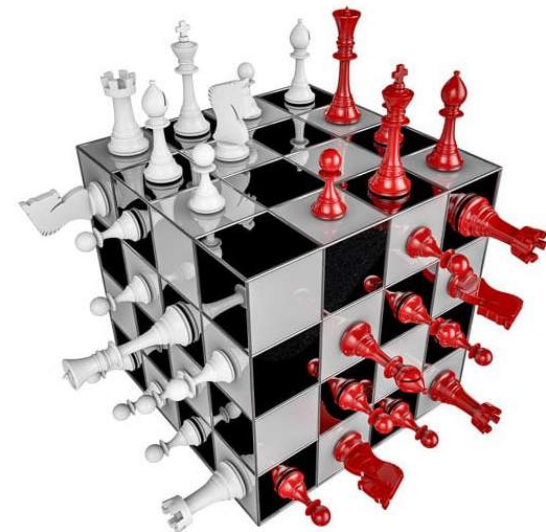
- Arctic
- BRI
- cooperation civil nuclear
- cooperation economic
- cooperation gov-to-gov
- cooperation nuclear security
- cooperation regional
- diplomacy
- Encourage investment in Russia
- energy production
- finance
- invest business
- invest energy
- invest energy production
- invest infrastructure
- invest resource extraction
- space
- trade
- trade energy
- trade natural resources

# Concluding Thoughts

Cross-domain strategies work to counter US deterrence, and US adversaries know it

Nuclear deterrence alone will not prevent US adversaries from pursuing interests and objectives detrimental to US interests

Maybe we are focused on the wrong multiple  
The challenge for 21<sup>st</sup> century deterrence strategy may be multidomain, rather than multiplayer games



*"We have to maintain strategic deterrence in all domains utilizing all of the elements of our national power. This is the reality we must contend with. We need to define the larger whole of integrated deterrence and how each of our parts fit into it"*

*STRATCOM Commander Adm. Charles Richard (Space and Missile Defense Symposium, 12 Aug 2021)*

# Appendix A: Threats & Opportunities

The following slides summarize the findings from our SEEK survey. For each of the four states (Russia, China, Iran and DPRK) we asked respondents the following four (open ended) questions:

- What does [Moscow, Beijing, Tehran, Pyongyang] perceive to be the most significant threat to regime security?
- What is the primary constraint stopping [Moscow, Beijing, Tehran, Pyongyang] from using force to resolve this threat?
- What does [Moscow, Beijing, Tehran, Pyongyang] perceive to be the biggest opportunity for bolstering the governing authority and legitimacy of the current regime?
- What is the primary constraint stopping [Moscow, Beijing, Tehran, Pyongyang] from using force to realize this opportunity?

# ...Threats and opportunities

Data: SEEK survey, VITTA

Russia

## Threats

	Regime security & legit	National sov / security	Int'l Influence	Eco growth & devel'mt	Global security / stability	Constraint (on use of force)
<b>Popular opposition</b>	■					Elite backlash; International image; increased sanctions
<b>Pull of the West</b>	■	■	■	■		Economic ties with near abroad; Military capacity; Time
<b>Elite opposition</b>	■					Limited utility of military force; Economic disruption
<b>Economic instability</b>	■		■	■		Resource constraints
<b>US/NATO</b>	■	■	■			NATO capabilities; US resolve; Resource constraints
<b>Foreign interference in domestic affairs</b>	■	■			■	Fear of military retaliation
<b>Successful demo regimes in near abroad</b>	■		■	■		NATO response under Article V; Resource constraints
Facts	■		■			—
Cyber attack against weapons systems	■	■			■	US cyber capabilities

## Opportunities

<b>Weakening of Western alliance</b>	■	■	■		■	Lack of partners; military retaliation; Resource constraints; time
<b>International influence</b>	■	■	■	■	■	fear of military retaliation; resource constraints
<b>Domestic control</b>	■					Conflicting goals; Intn'l opinion; Resource constraints
<b>European energy dependence</b>	■			■		Western resistance
<b>Partnership with China / Iran</b>	■	■	■	■	■	Military capability; Resource constraints
Increased economic performance	■			■		US alliances & partnerships
Success of authoritarian regimes globally	■		■		■	Time
US missteps	■	■	■			None

**BOLD:** More than one respondent listed as threat or opportunity

Data: SEEK survey, VITTA

**BOLD:** More than one respondent listed as threat or opportunity

Threats

Regime security & legit  
 Nat'l sov & security  
 Int'n'l Influence  
 Eco growth & devel'mt  
 Global security / stability

Constraint (on use of force)

Threats	Regime security & legit	Nat'l sov & security	Int'n'l Influence	Eco growth & devel'mt	Global security / stability	Constraint (on use of force)
<b>Domestic opposition &amp; instability</b>	■		■			Concern over loss of domestic control; Desire to maintain int'n'l trade & diplomatic relations; US / Western military intervention
<b>External influence supporting/amplifying domestic opposition</b>	■	■	■			None; Low risk tolerance
<b>Areas of self rule (Hong Kong, Taiwan), territorial dispute (SCS)</b>	■	■	■	■		External pressure, particularly economic; US deterrence (for territorial disputes)
<b>Internal power struggles within CCP</b>	■		■			—
<b>Military competition</b>	■	■	■		■	Military power relative US / Russia; US presence in Taiwan & ROK
<b>Successful Western models / actions</b>	■	■	■	■	■	Limited utility of military force
AI and cyber security	■	■			■	US cyber capabilities
Climate change	■	■	■	■	■	—
Demographic challenges	■			■		Unintended domestic instability
Economic competition	■		■	■		Economic power relative to US & Russia
Uncontrollable aspects of int'n'l enviro	■	■	■	■	■	Limited utility of military force
US opposition to China's agenda	■	■	■	■	■	US deterrence

Data: SEEK survey, VITTA

**BOLD:** More than one respondent listed as threat or opportunity

China

## Opportunities

Regime security & legit  
Nat'l sov & security  
Int'l influence  
Eco growth & devel'mt  
Global security / stability

## Constraint (on use of force)

	Regime security & legit	Nat'l sov & security	Int'l influence	Eco growth & devel'mt	Global security / stability	Constraint (on use of force)
<b>Economic growth</b>	■	■	■	■	■	None; Limited utility of military force; Economic cost
<b>Territorial expansion</b>	■		■			None; Lack of confidence in military capabilities
<b>Increase economic dependence on China</b>	■	■	■	■	■	Limited utility of military force
<b>Relative decline of US power &amp; influence</b>	■	■	■	■	■	Risk averse attitude of Chinese leadership; Capability gap
Western demo/eco failures	■		■			None
Demonstrate ability to stand up to US	■	■	■	■	■	—
Sustain nationalist, anti-US narrative	■		■		■	Limited utility of military force
BRI	■	■	■	■		None; Political cost
US domestic polarization and instability	■		■		■	Risk averse attitude of Chinese leadership; Capability gap
Build influence in Eurasia	■	■	■	■	■	—
Consolidation of domestic political control thru anti-corruption campaigns	■		■			Limited utility of military force
Bolster influence over diaspora communities	■		■			—
Control of international organizations (e.g.: UN and the WHO)	■	■	■	■		None
Undermine regional perception of US strength (eco, cult, mil)	■		■	■	■	Lack of confidence in military capability



# ...Threats and opportunities

Data: SEEK survey, VITTA

**BOLD:** More than one respondent listed as threat or opportunity

Iran

## Threats

Regime security & legitimacy  
 National sov & security  
 Regional hegemony  
 Economic stability  
 Champion Shia diaspora

## Constraint (on use of force)

Threat	Regime security & legitimacy	National sov & security	Regional hegemony	Economic stability	Champion Shia diaspora	Constraint
<b>Regional powers (KSA, Israel, US)</b>	■	■	■	■	■	Uncertainty regarding US & Chinese intentions; Technological inferiority; Limited utility / high risk of military force; retaliation
<b>Organized political opposition, social movements</b>	■	■	■			None; Desire to avoid backlash
<b>Foreign military intervention (US, Israel)</b>	■	■	■			relative military capability; limited utility / High risk of military force
<b>Foreign influence over politics / population</b>	■	■	■			None; Desire to avoid backlash
Proxy wars with Gulf States	■	■	■		■	—
Generation gap	■		■			Limited utility / high risk military force
Economic challenges	■	■	■	■	■	Limited utility / high risk military force
Economic & military rivalry with Gulf States	■	■	■	■	■	—
Regional & global power efforts to constrain Iran's regional ambitions	■	■	■		■	Desire to avoid retaliation
Diminished regional presence (MENA)	■	■	■		■	—
Nuclear weapons	■	■	■			Technological inferiority
Information and cyber security	■	■	■			Technological inferiority

## Opportunities

<b>Build trade partnerships</b>	■	■	■	■	■	Limited utility of military force
<b>Pacify domestic discontent</b>	■					None
<b>Improve quality of life for Iranians</b>	■		■		■	Limited utility of military force
Partnership with Russia & China	■	■	■	■	■	Limited utility of military force
Reduce capacity of US and allies	■	■	■	■	■	None
Progress toward nuclear capability	■	■	■			Israeli military power
Decreased US presence	■	■	■	■	■	Resource constraints; Fear of further sanctions
Expansion of Shiite power in region	■	■	■		■	Israeli military power
Internal control of information	■					

# ...Threats and opportunities

Data: SEEK survey, VITTA

**BOLD:** More than one respondent listed as threat or opportunity

DPRK

## Threats

**NOTE:** One SME argues against this threat, regarding Pyongyang as confident "China would always be its lifeline", no matter how bad DPRK-China relations become

	Regime security & legitimacy	National sovereignty & security	Int'l Influence & prestige	Economic stability & resilience	Reunific'n of peninsula under Kim regime	Good relations with CCP	Constraint (on use of force)
<b>Loss of control over elites / Coup</b>	■		■				None; Domestic backlash
<b>Interruption of China-DPRK relationship</b>	■	■	■	■	■	■	Limited utility of military force
<b>US regional presence, &amp; military capability</b>	■	■	■	■	■		Relative capabilities; retaliation; escalation
RoK cultural and economic power	■	■	■		■		—
Information dominance	■		■			■	US-RoK relationship; Chinese influence
Loss of control over mass population	■		■		■		Domestic backlash
Economic collapse	■	■		■	■		—
Well-being of KJU	■		■		■		—
Western attempts to reverse nuclear program, reduce KJU's int'l standing	■	■	■		■		Coordinated int'l effort to remove regime

## Opportunities

<b>Support of China</b>	■	■	■	■		■	China's disapproval
<b>Improving quality of life for domestic population</b>	■			■			Sanctions
Perception DPRK is a credible military threat	■	■	■		■		Dependence on China; Lack of military capability
Control of internal messaging	■		■				—
Progress on nuclear program	■	■	■				US military retaliation; Sanctions
International diplomatic attention	■		■		■		Dependence on China
Economic progress	■	■	■	■			Sanctions
Chinese dominance in East Asia	■	■	■	■			—
Maintaining nuclear umbrella and missile capacity	■	■	■				Fear of retaliation or escalation

# Appendix B: Activities

The following tables draw on the GPC Interests & Activities Dataset, supplemented by new research for Iran & DPRK

# Soft power & economic activities



## Soft Power

Activities	Russia	China	Iran	DPRK
influence foreign media	■	■		
cooperation science tech	■	■		
human capital exchange		■		
aid	■	■	■	
acquisition knowledge		■		■
invest in education & training		■		
ICT control	■	■		
education/cultural exchange	■	■		
information manipulation	■	■	■	■
provide media content	■	■		
space	■	■		
cooperation civil nuclear	■			



## Economic

Activities	Russia	China	Iran	DPRK
cooperation economic	■	■	■	
resource extraction	■	■		
invest infrastructure	■	■		
invest energy production	■	■		
trade energy	■	■	■	■
trade	■	■	■	■
invest transportation		■		
energy production	■		■	
invest business	■	■		
trade strategic resources	■	■		
cooperation energy	■	■		
FDI	■	■		
BRI	■	■	■	■
invest agriculture		■		
invest high tech		■		
Encourage investment	■		■	■
loans		■		
illicit economic activity			■	■

DATA: Analysis draws on GPC Interests & Activities Dataset, supplemented by new research for Iran & DPRK

NOTE: Gray zone activities and illicit economic activity are underreported in the GPC Interests and Activities Dataset, as it relies solely on open source materials.

# Military & political activities



## Military



## Political



Activities	Russia	China	Iran	DPRK
cooperation mil / security	■	■	■	
arms /tech transfers	■	■	■	■
space	■	■		
influence political	■	■	■	■
influence population	■	■	■	■
cooperation gov-to-gov	■	■	■	■
support non-demo regimes	■	■	■	
propaganda	■	■	■	■
cooperation mil / security		■	■	
cooperation security	■	■	■	
counterterror	■	■	■	
diplomacy	■	■	■	■
space	■	■		
cooperation nuclear safety	■			
cooperation regional	■		■	
political destabilization	■		■	■


DATA: Analysis draws on GPC Interests & Activities Dataset, supplemented by new research for Iran & DPRK  
 NOTE: Military activity such as troop movements and deployments are not included in the GPC Interests and Activities Dataset, as it relies solely on open-source materials.

# Appendix C: Implications for US

The following tables expand on the activities analysis (Appendix B), using new and existing research on US interests and objectives



# Implication of adversary economic activities

Data: GPC Datasets, new research

 Activities	Adversary				US interests affected by activity				
	Russia	China	Iran	DPRK	US prosperity & economic strength	Existing rules-based intn'l order	Alliances & partnerships with like-minded states	Security of US borders & citizens	Dominant status of US values / norms
cooperation economic	■	■	■		●	●			●
resource extraction	■	■			●				
invest infrastructure	■	■			●		●		●
invest energy production	■	■			●		●		
trade energy	■	■	■	■	●	●	●		
trade	■	■	■	■	●	●	●		
invest transportation		■			●	●			
energy production	■		■		●				
invest business	■	■			●		●		●
trade strategic resources	■	■			●		●		
cooperation energy	■	■			●		●		
FDI	■	■			●	●	●		●
BRI	■	■	■	■	●	●	●		●
invest agriculture		■			●		●		
invest high tech		■			●	●	●		
Encourage investment	■		■	■	●		●		●
loans		■			●	●	●		●
illicit economic activity			■	■		●		●	

# Implication of adversary military & political activities


Data: GPC Datasets, new research

Activities	Adversary				US Interest Affected by Activity				
	Russia	China	Iran	DPRK	US prosperity & economic strength	Existing rules-based intn'l order	Alliances & partnerships with like-minded states	Security of US borders & citizens	Dominant status of US values / norms
cooperation mil / security	■	■	■			●	●	●	●
 arms /tech transfers	■	■	■	■		●		●	●
space	■	■			●	●		●	●
 influence political	■	■	■	■	●	●	●		●
influence population	■	■	■	■		●	●	●	●
cooperation gov-to-gov	■	■	■	■	●	●	●		●
support non-demo regimes	■	■	■			●	●		●
propaganda	■	■	■	■		●	●		●
cooperation mil / security		■	■			●	●	●	●
cooperation security	■	■	■			●	●	●	●
counterterror	■	■	■			●	●	●	
diplomacy	■	■	■	■			●		●
space	■	■			●	●	●	●	●
cooperation nuclear safety	■					●		●	
cooperation regional	■		■		●	●	●		●
political destabilization	■		■	■	●	●	●	●	●



# Implication of adversary soft power activities

Data: GPC Datasets, new research

 Activities	Adversary				US Interest Affected by Activity				
	Russia	China	Iran	DPRK	US prosperity & economic strength	Existing rules-based intn'l order	Alliances & partnerships with like-minded states	Security of US borders & citizens	Dominant status of US values / norms
influence foreign media	■	■				●	●		●
cooperation science tech	■	■			●			●	●
human capital exchange		■							●
aid	■	■	■			●			●
acquisition knowledge		■		■	●				●
invest in education & training		■					●		●
ICT control	■	■			●	●	●	●	●
education/cultural exchange	■	■			●				●
information manipulation	■	■	■	■	●	●	●	●	●
provide media content	■	■				●	●	●	●
space	■	■			●	●	●		●
cooperation civil nuclear	■						●		



# What is SMA?

Established in 2000, Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA), Joint Staff, Deputy Director of Global Operations (DDGO) provides planning and decision support to combatant commands and other US government (USG) departments and agencies.

**SMA's mission** is to enable decision makers to develop more cogent and effective strategy and doctrine, bridging the gap between the academic research community and operators and planners.

Does NOT do policy!

**SMA mission areas** include

- information operations,
- counterproliferation,
- fragile state dynamics,
- countering violent extremism,
- gray zone,
- strategic & great power competition,
- warfighter technology gaps, and
- 21st century deterrence.

**SMA Outreach & Events** SMA built and sustains a community of interest comprising over 5,000 individuals with ties to 175 US universities, 20 foreign universities, 14 major think tanks, and 8 foreign militaries.

SMA holds weekly speaker series events featuring leading experts discussing emerging national security challenges facing the combatant commands, the Joint Force, US allies, and the world.

For any questions, or to be added to the SMA listserv please **contact** Ms. Mariah Yager, J39, SMA (mariah.c.yager.ctr@mail.mil).



## SMA Publications

Open Internet: <https://nsiteam.com/sma-publications/> NIPR (IntelDocs) requiring CAC/PIV certificate: <https://go.intelink.gov/QzR772f>

**NSI's Reachback approach** combines written and interview elicitation techniques (SEEK and ViTTa) with additional research and analyses to provide short summary responses to time-sensitive questions. In this instance, we were also able to draw on a wealth of recent SMA research across a number of related areas of concern, in particular gray zone and great power competition. A list of all materials drawn on for this report is provided in this reference section, including more detailed description of the Great Power Competition (GPC) Datasets.

## ViTTa®

### What is ViTTa®?

NSI's Virtual Think Tank (ViTTa®) provides rapid response to critical information needs by pulsing a global network of subject matter experts (SMEs) to generate a wide range of expert insight.

ViTTa® reports are designed to provide highly customizable and compelling analyses, summaries, and briefings that consider varied perspectives across disciplines, challenge assumptions, provide actionable insights, and highlight areas of convergence and divergence.

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## SEEK

### What is SEEK?

SEEK is a new, online SMA capability for tapping into the collective knowledge, experience, and wisdom of the 5000+ person SMA community of interest to generate crowd-sourced input on targeted questions of interest.

### SEEK Contributors

34 members of the SMA COI with experience varying from informed non-expert to subject matter expert for relevant countries.



## GPC Datasets

### Global Indicators Dataset

- Composite measures of importance and leverage for US, Russia, and China across 3 dimensions—security, economic, diplomatic/cultural—in 197 countries.
- Provides a high-level overview of where Russia and China may be motivated to, and capable of, challenging the US or where the US has leverage to challenge Russian or Chinese goals.
- Sources: Existing quantitative data, grounded in prior research and theory

### Interests & Activities Dataset

- Records of Russian and Chinese activities (2017-2020) across 197 countries.
- 4759 specific activities, 551 discrete activities, activity 38 types, all coded to specific actor objectives and interests.
- Sources: official policy statements and reports, press releases, SMEs, peer reviewed research, news reports, open-source data and analysis.

## Global Indicators (GI)

Provides a high-level overview of where Russia and China may be motivated to, and capable of, challenging the US or where the US has leverage to challenge Russian or Chinese goals.

### 2 Measures

#### Importance

Value of B to A  
(where "A" is US, RU, or PRC)

#### Leverage

Value of A to B

### For 3 Actors



### Across 3 Dimensions

Security	Economic	Diplomatic/Cultural
Contiguity	Trade	Diasporas
Alliances	Strategic trade	Gov presence
Basing		Cultural trade
Arms sales		



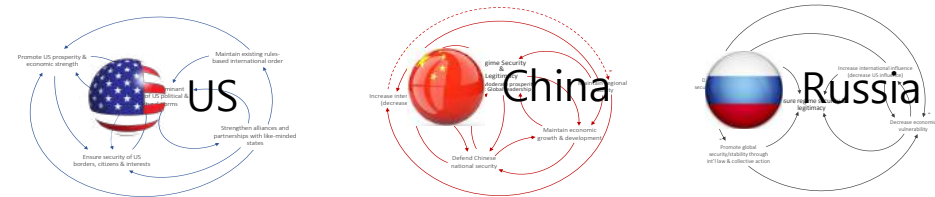
In 197 countries

SOURCES: Existing **quantitative data** grounded in prior research & theory

## Interests & Activities (I&A)

More detailed picture of the activities Russia and China are engaged in globally, and how these activities contribute to each actor's national interests and objectives.

### 3 Interests Analysis (why)



Assumes the interplay of actor interests is an important driver of regional relations. How well the existing conditions meets or threatens an actor's interests provides an indication of whether an actor will support or oppose a particular status quo condition. Each interest is pursued through multiple objectives

### 4759 Activities (what & where)

**551** discrete activities  
**38** activity types

Activities coded to specific objectives / interest

SOURCES: official policy & reports, press releases, SMEs, peer-reviewed research, news reports, online sources

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- Slide 3     **Top:** An unarmed AGM-86B air-launched cruise missile is released from a B-52H Stratofortress over the Utah Test and Training Range during a nuclear weapons system evaluation sortie on Sept. 22, 2014. (Staff Sgt. Roidan Carlson/U.S. Air Force) <https://www.defensenews.com/air/2021/07/06/raytheon-wins-2b-for-new-nuclear-cruise-missile/>  
**Middle:** Airmen from the 90th Missile Maintenance Squadron prepare a reentry system for removal from a launch facility on Feb. 2, 2018 in the F. E. Warren Air Force Base missile complex. (Airman 1st Class Braydon Williams/U.S. Air Force) <https://www.defensenews.com/smr/nuclear-arsenal/2020/06/30/pentagon-to-increase-control-over-nuclear-weapons-funding-under-senate-proposal/>  
**Bottom:** The Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine Nebraska transits the Hood Canal as it returns home Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor, Washington. (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Amanda Gray) <https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2020/02/10/defense-secretary-esper-says-new-us-missile-sub-is-the-navys-bill-setting-up-a-fight-with-congress/>
- Slide 4     First published in Latvijas Avize, Latvia, January 12, 2017 | By Gatis Sluka, accessed <http://g8fip1kplyr33r3krz5b97d1.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/russian-hackers-cartoon.jpg>
- Slide 5     Thomas Schelling, Harvard. Harvard Gazette <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2016/12/thomas-schelling-game-theory-pioneer-95/>
- Slide 14    **Top to Bottom**  
Russian President Vladimir Putin gives his annual state of the nation address in Manezh, Moscow, Russia on Wednesday. Putin highlighted the importance of global cooperation in ensuring strategic stability and invited major countries to discussions on issues regarding strategic weapons. "The subject of such negotiations would be the establishment of a mechanism of conflict-free coexistence based on a security equation," he said. Photo: VCG <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202104/1221765.shtml>  
President Xi Jinping, 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Beijing October 2021 [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/world/2017/10/672\\_238214.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/world/2017/10/672_238214.html)  
Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei addresses Iranian parliament 2021, <https://www.ncr-iran.org/en/news/iran-regimes-new-parliament-first-public-session-sign-of-an-absolute-deadlock/>  
Meeting of North Korea's Supreme People's Assembly. Photo: AP, <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/3118120/north-koreas-parliament-approves-kim-jong-uns-development-plans>
- Slide 15    **Top:** Student protesters gathers in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, on May 4, 1989, Peter Turnley/Corbis/VCG via Getty Images <https://abcnews.go.com/International/tiananmen-square-29th-anniversary-crackdown/story?id=55564966>  
**Bottom:** Surveillance cameras, Tiananmen Square, 2019. Qilai Shen | Bloomberg | Getty Images <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/10/08/china-is-exporting-surveillance-tech-like-facial-recognition-globally.html>
- Slide 18    From Russia social media. Accessed <https://www.businessinsider.com.au/putins-ukraine-trump-card-winter-2014-8>

- Slide 19 **Top:** NBA Global Games, NBA Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/nba/photos/live-from-shanghai-china-the-new-orleans-pelicans-face-the-houston-rockets-in-nb/10154423488838463>  
**Bottom (left to Right)**  
Medical equipment being loaded on to a Russian Aerospace Forces cargo plane as part of Moscow's coronavirus aid shipment to Italy in March 2020.  
Photograph: Tass <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/27/moscow-motives-questioned-over-coronavirus-aid-shipment-to-italy>  
May 27, 2020 Iranian oil tanker the Forest docks at Venezuela's second largest refinery, USIP Iran Primer <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2020/dec/21/timeline-iranian-fuel-shipments-venezuela>  
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- Slide 23 Craig Stephens, South China Morning Post <https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3032195/australia-pushes-back-against-china-western-world-watching-see>
- Slide 24 **(left to right)**  
THAAD missile defense system arriving in Seongju county, April 2017. Photograph: Yonhap/EPA <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/27/we-are-a-target-south-korean-village-frontline-with-north-us-thaad-defence-system-in-seongju>  
Closed Lotte Mart in China, April 2018, AFP/Greg Baker