Avoiding Self-Deterrence in the Context of Nuclear Ambiguity

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June 2024

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SMA Perspectives

Emergent Issues for US National Security

24-P-0850

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Preface

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The context of this Report[1] has to do with Russia's use of nuclear ambiguity and implied nuclear threats leading up to and after its invasion of Ukraine—specifically, threats to escalate to the use of low-yield nuclear weapons to support conventional offensive operations for political or economic gains. It examines the implications of Russia's behavior beyond the Ukraine conflict, in particular, what lessons might other actors have taken away from the Ukraine war regarding the utility of threatening the use of low-yield nuclear weapons. We have intentionally cast a wide net to include a diverse set of perspectives on a range of actors. More specific questions of interest for this volume include, among others:

- the contours of Russia's coercion mechanism, ultimate goals, and the subsequent emergence of new norms;
- lessons learned by various observers, such as the role of nuclear weapons, self-deterrence, and the subsequent emergence of new partnerships;
- China's decision to field a substantial nuclear capability and the possibility of nuclear use in the event of a Cross-Strait conflict;
- what the United States and Japan should do to enhance the credibility of deterrence against China and how to reduce Chinese incentives to use military force; and
- the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK's) embrace of a new Cold War paradigm and its break with past strategic ambiguity.

[1] This paper was written for Strategic Multilayer Assessment's 21st Century Strategic Deterrence Frameworks project supporting USSTRATCOM.

Executive Summary

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The paragraphs below briefly summarize each of the contributions. These summaries are primarily meant to encourage the reader to read the full chapters and have intentionally been kept short.

In his article entitled, *"Russia's Emerging Deterrence Strategy and New Nuclear Normal,"* Dr. Dmitry Adamsky discusses the current state of Russian strategic deterrence, the contours of its emerging adjustments, and factors that are likely to shape the prospective reconstitution of Moscow's coercion mechanism. He states that as it entered the war, the ultimate goals of the Kremlin's coercion were to deter any form of Western intervention, paralyze NATO's responsiveness, and compel Kyiv to surrender. He observes that the Kremlin accepts its failure to compel Kyiv to surrender and the fact that its attempt to use coercion as a war termination mechanism was a failure. Coupled with Moscow's caution during escalation management, this inaction has devalued the credibility of the country's nuclear coercion in Western eyes. The Kremlin and the Russian expert community realize that the war has devalued Russia's strategic reputation and eroded the credibility of its nuclear and conventional coercion. As a result, Russia's nuclear brass has urged the Kremlin to modernize each leg of the nuclear triad to enhance the survivability of command-and-control, warning, and weapons systems. During the war, nuclear weapons have become a popular topic of conversation that has somewhat eroded the nuclear taboo, even if unintentionally. This process of nuclear normalization is corroding the norm against using these weapons. He concludes by stating the new nuclear normal is not an esoteric topic but a development with immediate practical implications.

In his article entitled, *"Lessons from Russia's War in Ukraine: Pyongyang's Perception for Regime Survival,"* Dr. Maorong Jiang offers a comprehensive view of the factors shaping the DPRK's provocative behaviors, and how those behaviors may be affected by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent Western response. He argues that it cannot have escaped Kim's notice that Russia, a nuclear power, has faced no direct military intervention from NATO since its invasion. By using the threat of low-yield weapons, Russia has been successful in keeping NATO forces out of Ukraine. He states that this encourages Kim Jong-un to pursue low yield nuclear weapons and reinforces the self-deterrence that the United States and its allies have already exhibited toward North Korea. In this context, North Korea might see low-yield nuclear weapons as a tool for achieving escalation dominance in a conflict, where they can determine the levels of escalation and potentially deter opponents without triggering a full-scale nuclear retaliation from the United States or its allies. The reluctance of the West to directly confront Russia militarily reinforces this belief, and to Pyongyang, the number one lesson is to never, ever surrender nuclear weapons. With regards to a closer Russia-China

partnership, Pyongyang is encouraged to side with Moscow and Beijing in a new world order, and the power dynamics on the Korean Peninsula look set to follow an emerging Pyongyang-Moscow-Beijing triangle. Pyongyang may expect that this triangle will reinforce their commitment to collective defense and ensure that any aggression against any member of the triangle will trigger a unified response. He concludes by stating that North Korea is drawing lessons from Russia's war in Ukraine and taking advantage of the "perfect storm" to forge ahead more aggressively with its nuclear weapons program.

In the opening paragraph of his article entitled, *"How Would China Use its Nuclear Weapons against Japan, and What Should We Do about That?"* Dr. Narushige Michishita states that with the outbreak of war in Ukraine and President Putin's suggestion that Russia might use nuclear weapons in the conflict, the possibility of China's nuclear use in the event of a Cross-Strait conflict is becoming an important topic of discussion in security communities in the United States and Japan. He goes on to say that if China were to use nuclear weapons, it would do so against Japan and/or Taiwan, which do not possess nuclear weapons, instead of the United States. He states that If China were to use nuclear weapons in a war across the Taiwan Strait, it would do so to neutralize Japan. He discusses the current status of China's nuclear and missile capabilities and the most likely scenario in which China would use nuclear weapons against Japan. These are two important concerns that Japan has related to that scenario and what actions the United States and Japan should take going forward. He contends that without Japan's commitment, defending Taiwan might still be possible but would be a much more difficult and dangerous venture. He posits that, learning lessons from Russia's experience in the Ukraine War, Chinese planners must think it necessary to win quickly before the United States, Japan, and other countries could coordinate a broad international response. He identifies at least three things that the United States and Japan should do to enhance the credibility of deterrence against China:

- Identify the limitations of China's nuclear weapons.
- U.S. and Japanese allies develop and study various scenarios in which China uses nuclear weapons, and devise plans and means to respond to those scenarios.
- The United States and Japan take steps to enhance their psychological defense capabilities.
- He concludes by stating that neutralizing Japan is one of China's most important objectives in a war across the Taiwan Strait and that the United States and Japan must work together to find the best way to deter China from using nuclear weapons and reduce their effectiveness if they are ever used.

In his article entitled, *"Avoiding Self-Deterrence in the Context of Nuclear Ambiguity: The Case of the People's Republic of China,"* Mr. Dean Cheng states up front that in the course of the Russia-Ukraine war, the PRC has seen self-deterrence in effect on the part of both the NATO coalition and Russia. He points out that self-deterrence may occur for several reasons such as non-nuclear escalation, the fear of loss of ability to manage other military contingencies, and

the fear of the loss of reputation, credibility, and support. Chinese decision-makers are therefore likely to have concluded that NATO has suffered from self-deterrence due to Russian nuclear capabilities, rather than fear of Russian conventional attack, and are therefore likely to be considering both how to engender self-deterrence on the part of potential adversaries, as well as how to avoid self-deterrence in their own strategy. He points out that Chinese assessments may also see Russian leaders as not immune from self-deterring considerations, and he provides several possible explanations for this, such as China's economic and trade ties to Ukraine and Russian claims of fraternal ties to the Ukrainian people. He states that the most important conclusion by Chinese decision-makers may be that the PRC needs to publicly field a substantial nuclear capability. Within this context, China's major nuclear expansion, including the discovery of several hundred missile silos in western China, will likely generate significant deterrent effects among China's neighbors, including self-deterrence. Another likely lesson derived by the Chinese is that the likelihood of Western self-deterrence is further enhanced if there is the potential for other threats or crises that result in an effort to exploit potential horizontal escalation scenarios. He points out that the PRC's vulnerability to self-deterrence is likely based on domestic opinion rather than potential external punishment. He concludes by saying that PRC decision-makers are likely to try to complement military elements of deterrence with economic, political, and public opinion deterrence measures and that they appear to be taking steps to ensure that China is less vulnerable to self-deterrence.

In the opening paragraph of his article entitled, *"Avoiding the Self-Deterrent Effect of U.S. Threats to Use Nuclear Weapons First in a War with China over Taiwan,"* Dr. Gregory Kulacki states that nuclear weapons may be used to threaten but cannot be used to fight and win wars. He goes on to say that there is little to be gained from attempting to demonstrate a credible threat to use U.S. nuclear weapons first in a military conflict with China. He states that Chinese decision makers minimize their fear of nuclear threats against China while maximizing their freedom to use conventional military force and that there is no indication the war in Ukraine has changed their minds. He further states that despite their long record of support to Russia, Chinese officials criticized Russian threats to use nuclear weapons, and indications are that the war in Ukraine has not altered their nuclear thinking but instead reconfirmed it. He discusses the PRC's disappointing decision to expand Chinese nuclear forces and states that it is best understood as a response to concerns about geopolitical and technological developments, rather than as a consequence of a change in China's nuclear posture. He suggests that the vulnerability of its comparatively small force of ICBMs is a more plausible explanation for China's decision to construct hundreds of new missile silos. He points out that China's no-first-use pledge puts the onus for nuclear escalation on the other side. He states that Chinese leaders seem to believe emphasizing their intention to never start a nuclear war gives them greater diplomatic latitude to use conventional military force. He goes on to say that China's unique historical experience with U.S. nuclear threats strongly suggests Chinese leaders are unlikely to believe the United States would start a nuclear war, and risk

Chinese nuclear retaliation to preserve Taiwanese independence. He concludes by making three recommendations:

- A U.S. decision to take nuclear first use off the table would make war in the Taiwan Strait less likely.
- U.S. officials should stop telling allies that U.S. nuclear weapons are essential to preventing or defeating conventional Chinese aggression.
- Reducing Chinese incentives to use military force may be more effective than increasing the costs.

In her article entitled, *"Key Impacts of Russia's War in Ukraine on the Korean Security Situation,"* Ms. Jenny Town highlights fundamental shifts by the DPRK, including the early embrace of a new Cold War paradigm and a breaking with past strategic ambiguity toward a clear and firm alignment with China and Russia. She reminds the reader that historically DPRK rhetoric has always characterized the country's nuclear weapons as conditioned on the United States maintaining its hostile policy. In the newly articulated policy, it would be compelled to consider nuclear use and, in some cases, nuclear first use. She states that the use of this kind of rhetoric has increased since Russia's invasion of Ukraine and points out that the Ukraine war reinforced the DPRK's own doubts about the credibility of security guarantees and hardened its position on the utility of having its own nuclear deterrent. She further states that one of the most important effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been the revival of concerns that nuclear weapons might be used in battle, not just for strategic purposes. Beijing has reportedly conveyed directly to President Putin that nuclear use is a red line and that if Russia chooses that option, it will cost it its relationship with China. On the other hand, Kim Jong-un is one of the few leaders who has openly pledged both political and tactical support to Russia from the beginning. Ms. Town points out that these trends in North Korea's nuclear capabilities and posture challenge South Korea's confidence in its own capabilities and the strength of its alliance relations, fueling debate over its own nuclear future, and she contemplates whether extended deterrence is sufficient in the long run. She concludes by stating that the cost of assurance failure in South Korea could easily lead to its nuclearization, likely to be followed by Japan, and the unraveling of the nuclear nonproliferation regime. Finding a new equilibrium on the Korean Peninsula to help prevent both kinds of failure requires finding ways to mitigate the negative security trends in the region.

In his article entitled, *"India's Perspective Regional Security in the Asia-Pacific in Light of Russia's Actions,"* Dr. Rajiv Nayan states up front that ever since the end of the Cold War, successive Indian governments have been investing heavily in the Indo-Pacific region. India strongly supports fair, transparent, reciprocal, and inclusive trade, promoting the interests of all. Regarding the Ukraine conflict, he observes that India does not support the war or armed hostilities and seeks a peaceful resolution of the conflict supported by dialogue. Regarding China, he states that India favors resisting Chinese expansion without directly confronting it. He observes that sanctions on Russia and disturbances in Ukraine have made the Indo-Pacific

region more important for India's economy. Like other countries of the world, India is wary of the close bilateral relationship between China and Russia. The emergence of a tacit but strong relationship between the two countries is considered very daunting, though Indian officials avoid making negative comments publicly or formally. He states that India understands that global security needs to connect the security imperatives of Asia and Europe and that instability in one region cannot leave the other region unaffected.

Russia's Emerging Deterrence Strategy and New Nuclear Normal

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This paper discusses the current state of Russian strategic deterrence, the contours of its emerging adjustments, and certain factors that are likely to shape any prospective reconstitution of Moscow's coercion mechanism. The paper is an excerpt from *The Russian Way of Deterrence* (Adamsky, 2023). It also builds on several recently published and forthcoming books and articles by the author (Adamsky, 2024; Adamsky, 2019b; Adamsky, 2019a; Adamsky, 2020).

The paper consists of three parts. The first part outlines how the Russian establishment estimates the effectiveness of its intra-war coercion. The second part discusses several likely directions of wartime adjustment and the subsequent reconstitutions of Russian strategic deterrence. The third part discusses Russia's new nuclear normal—the ideational climate within which the above adaptations are emerging and the possible consequences of the nexus between the two.

Part One: The Deterrence Balance in Moscow's View

Russia entered the war with a coherent framework of "strategic deterrence"—a Russian euphemism for coercion (both deterrence and compellence) across military (nuclear and nonnuclear) and nonmilitary domains (Adamsky, 2015).[1] Though far from perfect, it was the most elaborated theory of nuclear, conventional, and informational coercion that Russia has ever had (Adamsky, 2023; Adamsky, 2018). The ultimate goals of the Kremlin's coercion were to deter any form of Western intervention, paralyze NATO's responsiveness, and compel Kyiv to surrender.

In Moscow's own estimation the effectiveness of its coercion performance has been mixed. The Kremlin believes that it has managed to deter direct NATO intervention. It acknowledges partial success in preventing indirect involvement but believes that its coercive signals have shaped the tempo, quality, and quantity of Western support to Ukraine. The Kremlin accepts its failure to compel Kyiv to surrender and the fact that its attempt to use coercion as a war termination mechanism was a fiasco.

In the conventional realm, Moscow demonstrated a determination to escalate; coercion did not deliver, in the Russian estimate, because of the poor performance of the Russian military. In the nuclear realm, in Moscow's view, the situation is the other way around—the West does

[1] For the intellectual sources and evolution of contemporary Russian strategic thought, see: Dmitry (Dima) Adamsky, *Cross Domain Coercion: The Current Russian Art of Strategy* (Paris: IFRI, 2015).

not doubt Russian might but does question the Kremlin's resolve to opt for nuclear escalation. The Kremlin's conclusion is understandable: Russia's repeated nuclear intimidations have not been followed by Russian actions. Coupled with Moscow's caution during escalation management, this inaction has devalued the credibility of the country's nuclear coercion in Western eyes.

The Kremlin and Russian expert community realize that the war has devalued Russia's strategic reputation and eroded the credibility of its nuclear and conventional coercion. The Russian prewar deterrence strategy, as well as the posture supporting it, are obsolete and demand revision, modernization, and reconstitution—this is the main lesson from the war for the Russian defense community, nuclear establishment, and security experts. Moscow is seeking to restore its strategic reputation in both the conventional and nuclear realms.

During the past year, Russian military and foreign affairs periodicals and conferences, as well as statements by the country's defense intellectuals, have indicated that the Russian nuclear establishment is preoccupied with two issues: (1) adjusting the country's deterrence posture to repulse perceived threats within the new strategic reality, and (2) restoring its deterrence credibility, which has been devalued by the war. The former topic is explicit, the latter implicit but still easy to detect. Both are burning issues for the Russian deterrence strategy and are among the main directions of reconstitution.

The above themes are evident in an extraordinary splash of publications in *Military Thought*, the flagship journal of the Russian General Staff. Over the last year, about a dozen authors, including the commander of the Strategic Nuclear Missile Forces, his deputies, and other senior officers, have in its pages examined the future of Russian deterrence and nuclear warfighting. In terms of authorship, themes, numbers, and level of detail, this wave of articles is unprecedented. This outburst of nuclear graphomania is at once a coercive disclosure to buy time for rebuilding Russia's conventional might and a statement of intent that reflects how Moscow plans to allocate its resources and attention. The following two sections summarize these recent publications.

Part Two: Directions of Reconstitution

As of this writing, three conceptual and organizational novelties loom the largest in the realm of Russian deterrence adjustments. These trends are a mix of notions incepted prior to the conflict in Ukraine and others stimulated by the lessons that the Russian establishment is currently learning from the war.

New Operation of the Strategic Deterrence Forces and the Organ Coordinating It

The Russian nuclear establishment's main concern is a U.S. "prompt global strike" that could decapitate the Russian military's supreme command and nullify its nuclear retaliation capacity. This was a vector in Russian planning prior to the war; the latter has apparently given it further emphasis. Russian sources assume that to achieve these aims, the United States will employ nonnuclear offensive and defensive means, as Washington seeks to "demilitarize" and "de-

sovereign Russia" and then exploit the country's "territorial, natural, industrial, and human resources." The Russian military plans to deter this imagined blitzkrieg by demonstrating to Washington its capacity to repulse U.S. airspace strikes, suppress U.S. missile defense systems, and deliver unacceptable nuclear damage to the American homeland. Russia's nuclear brass has, therefore, urged the Kremlin to modernize each leg of the nuclear triad to enhance the survivability of command-and-control, warning, and weapons systems.

Apparently, the Russian General Staff is formulating a new concept—Operation of the Strategic Deterrence Forces—which will probably encapsulate the above innovations and be a novel employment pattern demonstrating resolve and capability. As of this writing, it is unclear whether the concept will cover only the nuclear dimensions of coercion or include all additional nonnuclear and nonmilitary aspects of strategic deterrence. In parallel, sources reveal that the Russian defense establishment is seeking to set up a national-level organization charged with the planning, execution, and evaluation of deterrence operations. Both the concept and the organ are major novelties. While the countermeasures to the "prompt global strike" have been discussed within the Russian strategic community for more than a decade, contemplation of the deterrence organ seems to have been instigated by the war. Currently there is no such body and no such strategic operation (the Russian doctrinal term for a generic framework of combat activities at the highest level of war in each theater of operations).

Refining the Escalation Ladder: Intermediate Rungs and Strategic Gestures

Two other issues—(1) producing intermediate rungs on the escalation ladder, and (2) polishing the art of "strategic gestures" (a Russian euphemism for demonstrative activities with nuclear and nonnuclear forces intended to deter and compel Moscow's adversaries)—feature in Russian professional discourse.

In the matter of intermediate rungs, chemical weapons (third-generation nonlethal munitions) and informational coercion are two likely candidates for expanding options on the escalation ladder. Russian military theoreticians were considering both options even prior to the war and are now likely to double down on them. The likelihood that the new generation of nonlethal chemical munitions will become a transitional stage between nonforceful and forceful coercion is greater than ever. The introduction of lethal chemical weapons as a step preceding nuclear coercion is less likely but still possible. Russian experts are also examining offensive and defensive means of mental war and doubling down on developing a mechanism to deter cultural (mental) aggression. As of this writing, this seems to be the most recent Russian variation on the theme of informational coercion and resonates with the Western notion of cognitive war.

As regards the second topic, the Russian high command has started seeing this war as an opportunity to learn and experiment with the art of "strategic gestures." The military realizes that the Kremlin is looking for more returns from Russia's nuclear saber rattling, especially in conventional contingencies. To meet this expectation, the military needs to contemplate new

intermediate rungs on the escalation ladder, but most of all to create new ways to manipulate nuclear alert levels and to carry out demonstrative activities of various kinds, apparently including limited nuclear use aimed at coercion. At least in theory, this novelty aims to expand the repertoire of coercive options on the ladder and thus slow down escalation, rather than speed it up. As the Kremlin seeks to coerce without a major nuclear exchange, it expects the military to expand its repertoire of nuclear muscle-flexing options. For the Russian military brass, the war is at once a testing range for the concept of "strategic gestures" and an opportunity (not to say a demand) to recharge the batteries of deterrence (as the Kremlin apparently senses that its coercive potential is approaching a critical inflection point).

Preemption

Besides the official discourse, several Russian security experts have even promoted the idea of launching a preemptive strike to repulse a knockout of Russia's nuclear arsenal. This destabilizing inclination predates the war. The latter, however, has given this notion purchase. Leading Russian defense intellectuals believed then, as they do now, that the United States has lowered the threshold for nuclear weapons use and that Washington thinks that a limited nuclear war would be manageable. They also believe that U.S. policymakers have an "escalate to de-escalate" approach—in keeping with which Washington would use a nuclear weapon in order to coerce other states to its political will—even as the United States accuses Moscow of adopting this same framework. Whether the Russian nuclear establishment adopts this proposition remains to be seen.

Part Three: New Nuclear Normal & Erosion of the Nuclear Taboo

Against the backdrop of these formal innovations, during the war, an extraordinary ideational climate emerged within the Russian public. Nuclear weapons have become a popular topic of conversation. Only the laziest of Russian media commentators have not offered their take on nuclear use. The notion that using nuclear weapons should be a last resort but not an unthinkable option has become routine in the Russian media and has framed common thinking about escalation in war. This recurring belligerent nuclear rhetoric—official and unofficial alike—has somewhat eroded the nuclear taboo, even if unintentionally.

The sources of nuclear normalization are unclear. It may be a naturally emerging, bottom-up phenomenon that reflects the zeitgeist. The war, after all, has routinized violence and brutality in the country's public consciousness, and the bellicose environment has radicalized much of the population. Wartime folklore—militaristic songs, video clips, performances, and military heraldry—also features religious symbols and apocalyptic motifs, further eroding the nuclear taboo. This folklore venerates Russia's nuclear might, threatens nuclear use, and glorifies Russian combat, past and present. For example, a popular Russian rock singer, who is close to the Kremlin and sanctioned by Ukraine, has produced a hymn to Sarmat, the country's newest class of intercontinental ballistic missile. A video clip of the song, with the military

orchestra of the Strategic Nuclear Missile Forces performing the music, highlights Putin's eschatological figures of speech in regard to nuclear weapons and the fate of the world, threatens the United States and NATO, and concludes with the words "God and Sarmat are with us" (Park Patriot Media, 2022).

The Kremlin could also be deliberately authorizing this public nuclear normalization to enhance its saber rattling, restore its coercion credibility, and recharge the batteries of deterrence. After all, Russia's nuclear threats might seem more credible if the country's people appear willing to risk Armageddon. The messianic-existential aura that the Kremlin and the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) have given to the war has also contributed to nuclear normalization. The ROC's pro-war stance and its legitimization of the Kremlin's nuclear assertiveness have contributed to this ideational climate. In their wartime speeches, both President and Patriarch have embraced the language of martyrdom, purifying sacrifice, and repentance—all for the sake of winning the war. Both are framing the conflict in almost transcendental terms as a clash of civilizations and a civil war within the Russian world. They present Ukraine as "a prodigal daughter" which has become a proxy for the forces of darkness, specifically the collective West that is seeking to destroy Russia spiritually and geopolitically.

The legitimization of the war by the Russian Orthodox Church is an extension of the years of ecclesiastical support for the Kremlin's foreign policy gambits and nuclear assertiveness. The Patriarch's wartime sermons have transformed him into somewhat of a national spiritual commissar. Prior to the war, the Kremlin actively portrayed itself as a faith-driven actor to enhance its coercive bargaining. Now, in war, the Patriarch's messianic and apocalyptic rhetoric, occasionally in unison with nuclear threats from the Kremlin, is apparently helping Moscow send signals that line up with the "madman theory"—persuading adversaries that it is crazy enough to go to nuclear extremes to achieve its aims. The Russian public is not the target audience for this messaging (Adamsky, 2023). But inadvertently, the religious-military rhetoric has made nuclear employment much more tenable in public consciousness.

So, although Moscow may have worked to get Russians to embrace nuclear use for external, coercive purposes, the tail might now be wagging the dog. Nuclear public discourse appears to have taken on a life of its own and may be detrimental to its master. Several Russian defense intellectuals and nuclear experts have been shocked by the unbearable nuclear lightness among the Russian public. These experts have said that public sentiment inaccurately represents the Kremlin's position and that it is irresponsible because of its dangerous implications. Although the polls, whatever their credibility, demonstrate an aversion of the majority of the Russian public to the use of nuclear weapons in war, Karaganov's piece advocating preventive nuclear use by Russia and the splash that it has produced is a derivative and a good illustration of the new nuclear normal in Russia.

The consequences of the new nuclear normal are clearer than its sources. For Russia's political leadership, it maintains the centrality of Russia's nuclear arsenal in national security, justifies the allocation of resources for the arsenal's modernization, and turns nuclear coercion into a

morally acceptable tool. The process of nuclear normalization is corroding the norm against using these weapons—especially when coupled with the military leadership's conceptual innovations and strategic concerns. This self-reinforcing climate affords an easier path to escalatory conduct: both assertive muscle flexing and possibly first nuclear use.

Also, there is a nuclear C2 stability–instability conundrum (Adamsky, 2019c). The impact of the eroding nuclear taboo and of the Kremlin's "faith-driven madman strategy" on Russian nuclear operators and the stability of the C2 system is an open question. Arguably, the new nuclear normal is likely to reinforce the obedience of operators to escalatory nuclear orders from the leadership. However, under conditions of civil-military instability it may increase the chances of unsanctioned use. As of now, it is unclear how the establishment is dealing with the intangible aspects of nuclear C2—the psychological state of nuclear operators, their motivation, morale, discipline, and ideological orientation. These are known unknowns that demand further research.

Finally, there is an issue with regard to the emergence of a just war theory and nuclear jurisprudence in Russia. Just war theory in Eastern Christianity is underdeveloped, not to say nonexistent, compared to Western Christian denominations. The growing involvement of the ROC in war and the growing prominence of nuclear weapons both within and outside the establishment could stimulate the ROC to develop a just war theory and nuclear-religious jurisprudence—a theological explanation for when, how, and for what purpose it is appropriate to use nuclear weapons. Prewar theological discussions in the ROC on nuclear affairs and wartime sermons by the Patriarch and ecclesiastical hierarchs will serve as the basis for this. Also, this new theology is likely to inform an emerging national ideology, the concept of mental war, and the conceptualization of deterrence of mental aggression (both topics are on the agenda of Russian military experts). Thus, the new nuclear normal is not an esoteric topic but a development with immediate practical implications.

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Lessons from Russia's War in Ukraine: Pyongyang's Perception for Regime Survival

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In this paper, the author offers a comprehensive view of the factors shaping the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK's) provocative behaviors, which are often viewed by the international community as threats, and how those behaviors may be affected by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Western response. Starting with a recap of North Korea's hierarchical culture and its fears, this paper also considers North Korea's desire to achieve recognition from the United States and other nations, especially after the high-profile meetings between Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump (June 2018 and February 2019).

With a focus on lessons Pyongyang is learning from Russia's war in Ukraine, the paper delves into the historical underpinnings of North Korea's reliance on nuclear prowess for regime stability, its manipulation of international relations, and its potential role in the geopolitics of power balance. Utilizing perception theory to understand the DPRK's decision-making processes, the paper outlines the challenges in the diplomatic process, including the varying interpretations of "denuclearization," economic sanctions, a history of mistrust, and the diverse interests of other regional stakeholders.

North Korea's ongoing missile tests highlight the challenges in dealing with the regime's provocative behavior and demonstrate Pyongyang's continued pursuit of strategic objectives and desire for international recognition. North Korea views nuclear threats as a critical tool to deter foreign powers, particularly the United States, from considering military intervention or regime change, helping to guarantee the regime's survival. By observing how the United States reacts to missile tests, North Korea seeks to assess the level of willingness for diplomatic engagement or potential concessions. It often attracts international attention and media coverage, allowing North Korea to assert its presence on the global stage and demand recognition as a nuclear state. The missile tests are also driven by a desire to assert its independence and autonomy in the face of international pressure and sanctions. By developing and testing missiles, North Korea projects an image of self-reliance and defiance against perceived external interference. Nuclear threats foster a sense of nationalism and unity within North Korea, consolidating support for the regime.

North Korea in the Asian Context: Learning from Neighbors

While this paper will examine the lessons North Korea might draw from Russia's war in Ukraine in terms of power dynamics and international responses, such lessons must be considered in

the historical, strategic, and geopolitical context of the Korean Peninsula and the Pyongyang regime's intense focus on its long-term survival.

North Korea's cultural, political, and military development has been profoundly influenced by the complex nature of its position in the Asian setting. In modern times, Korean politics, along with its identity and international relations, have been shaped by various cultural, political, and military influences of neighboring countries, particularly Japan and China.

From 1910 to 1945, Korea was under Japanese colonial rule, which left a lasting impact on the Korean Peninsula. During this period, Japan implemented policies aimed at assimilating Koreans into Japanese culture and suppressing their native traditions. Despite these efforts, Korean cultural identity and heritage remained resilient, and elements of traditional Korean culture endured even after independence.

After gaining independence, North Korea sought to forge its unique identity through its Juche ideology, often translated as "self-reliance." Juche emphasizes the importance of independence from foreign influence and promoting Korean culture and traditions. However, it is worth noting that Juche is an adaptation of Marxist-Leninist principles, illustrating the influence of socialist ideologies from the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China.

During the early 20th century, Japan experienced a rise in nationalism, emphasizing loyalty to the nation and its leader. Emperor worship became a central tenet of state ideology, portraying the emperor as a divine and unifying figure. Nationalistic propaganda promoted the idea of Japan as a divine land with a sacred mission to bring prosperity to Asia. This created a sense of duty and obligation among the Japanese people to follow the emperor's orders and serve the nation with any personal sacrifice. The militarization of society and the imposition of an authoritarian regime reinforced the notion of absolute obedience to the emperor and the state.

Communism, with its roots in Marxist-Leninist ideology, sought to overturn the existing societal order and create a classless society. Confucianism, on the other hand, is a philosophy with deep roots in Chinese history. Its teachings emphasize moral integrity, respect for authority and social hierarchy, the importance of education, and the pursuit of societal harmony. In the post-war era, these two seemingly contradictory systems began to intertwine in a distinctly Chinese manner (Sorensen, 1993).

In the face of international adversity, post-war China adopted a strategy of self-reliance. This approach was reflected in Mao's "Great Leap Forward" and "Cultural Revolution," aimed at achieving economic independence and ideological purity (Guo, 2000). The fusion of Confucian respect for hierarchy and the Communist emphasis on collectivism has fostered a unique societal structure, where the Confucian principle of self-cultivation parallels Communist self-reliance; with the two ideologies together guiding China's course of self-development.

Ironically, some behaviors in North Korea today mirror much of that in pre-war Japan in its militarization of the society, and post-war China under a dictatorship of a combined Confucius and communist hierarchical systems. North Korea's political landscape has been characterized by dynastic rule, beginning with Kim Il-sung, the country's founding leader. His ideology of "Kim Il-sungism," an extension of Juche, established a personality cult around him. This has continued through successive generations, with Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un following his leadership, cementing the Kim family's control over the country.

In North Korea, the hierarchical structure can be described as both systematic and arbitrary. These characteristics are primarily influenced by the country's political, economic, and cultural systems, which have evolved under the three-generation leadership of the Kim Family. Moreover, the hierarchy is not merely a reflection of political or economic power but is also embedded in North Korea's cultural and social fabric. Inspired by Confucian traditions, respect for authority and elders is highly valued. However, these traditions have been adapted to serve the state's agenda, reinforcing the political hierarchy and the cult of personality around the Kim Family.

Lessons from Russia's War in Ukraine

Almost two years have passed since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of a sovereign country, starting the largest land war in Europe since World War II and setting off a post-COVID social and political transformation, global economic fallout, and new geopolitical divide in the changing of strategic alliances among nations. While the war has simultaneously brought the United States and its European democratic allies closer together, it has also pushed Russia closer to North Korea and China.

Predicting North Korea's actions is notoriously challenging given the secretive and often erratic nature of its leadership (Florick, 2016). Russia's war in Ukraine, however, has provided a lens through which to explore North Korean thinking. In doing so, it is essential to differentiate between North Korea's primary goals and Russia's objectives in Ukraine. Russia's actions in Ukraine, particularly the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and subsequent invasion have been driven by a mix of territorial, strategic, historical, and geopolitical motivations. North Korea's primary goal appears to be regime survival rather than territorial expansion. The acquisition of nuclear weapons and their frequent missile tests can be seen as tools to deter external threats and cement the domestic legitimacy of the ruling elite. Their strategy has largely been about ensuring that external powers, chiefly the United States, do not threaten the regime's existence.

Pyongyang has been able to closely watch the global response to Russia's military action in a sovereign country and gauge the thresholds for international intervention, economic sanctions, and diplomatic isolation. North Korea can track the nature, depth, and consistency of U.S. and NATO support of Ukraine and better assess the willingness of the United States to defend its allies, especially in a far-flung crisis. This could help the DPRK calibrate its own actions in the future to achieve its objectives while avoiding catastrophic consequences.

In the meantime, observing the military techniques and strategies employed by Russia in its military action provides North Korea with insights into modern warfare, especially regarding nuclear deterrence, strategic alliance, low-yield weapons, and hybrid warfare.

Never Surrender Nuclear Weapons

The cruel irony in the eyes of Pyongyang is that Ukraine, one of the very few countries ever to have voluntarily given up a nuclear arsenal, is now under attack from the same country, Russia, to which it gave its warheads. Although there are plenty of lessons that North Korea would like to learn from the recent past and the current war in Ukraine, the DPRK has not lost any time to take advantage of this "perfect storm" to forge ahead more aggressively with its nuclear weapons program. North Korean leader Kim hopes to reduce international scrutiny while all eyes are on the war in Ukraine. Pyongyang is seeing the effect of nuclear coercion on the battlefield in Ukraine and beyond. Desperate to prevail, Russia has dangled the threat of nuclear retaliation against any Western-supported escalation. Pyongyang is certainly paying attention and may conclude that Putin's tactic of warning the West not to provide military support to Ukraine with subtle and explicit signaling of potential nuclear warfare has been effective. Western policymakers have demonstrated their concerns that Putin could use nuclear weapons as a last resort if Ukraine made a decisive move to recover Crimea from Russia. The fact that Ukraine has had to accept restraining signals from the West against pursuing maximalist victory over Russia proves the power of nuclear threat leverage. To Pyongyang, the number one lesson is never, ever surrender nuclear weapons.

On April 25, 2022, Kim made clear his intention to go full speed ahead with his nuclear program at an annual military parade. North Korea believes that possessing nuclear weapons provides a level of deterrence that makes direct intervention from major powers more complicated and riskier. The reluctance of the West to directly confront Russia militarily reinforces this belief.

The Pyongyang-Moscow-Beijing Triangle

Russia's unprovoked war against Ukraine grinds into its 19th month now. Its aggression has upended the post-war security mechanism in Europe and made the international multilateral system, including the UN Security Council, more fragile and ineffective than ever. In the meantime, great power competition has been overshadowed by Russia's war in Ukraine. The United States and its allies consider Russia their immediate threat, and China is the "only competitor," and "the most pressing strategic challenge."

Russia and China have cultivated a close strategic partnership in recent years, often referred to as a "strategic alignment" or "strategic partnership." They share common interests in challenging what they perceive as the dominance of the United States and its allies in international affairs. By supporting Russia in the Ukraine conflict, China aligns itself with a major power that challenges Western interests and positions (Gregory, 2019). For obvious reasons, Pyongyang sees an opportunity to capitalize on this Sino-Russian rapprochement. By

drawing closer to both powers, Pyongyang can seek economic, military, and diplomatic benefits. In past negotiations, North Korea has been adept at exploiting differences between stakeholders. A closer Russia-China partnership encourages Pyongyang to side with Moscow and Beijing in a new world order.

North Korea has historical ties with Russia dating back to the Cold War when the Soviet Union supported the North Korean regime. There has been military cooperation between the two countries. They support each other on issues such as the South Kuril Islands and North Korea's ICBM testing. On the first day of his most recent visit to Russia, Kim Jong-un pledged his full support for Russia in what he called a "fight against imperialism." Like the United States and NATO countries supporting Ukraine, there is reason to believe that Kim is likely to supply Russia with much-needed ammunition to fight the war in Ukraine (Time, 2023). North Korean and Russian militaries are now being subsidized by one another's defense industries as a result of this visit. Pyongyang's alignment with Moscow is part of broader efforts to enhance its regional posture and gain recognition as a significant player on the global stage. Engaging with other countries and regional powers could be part of this strategic consideration.

With U.S.-China relations at their lowest point, Pyongyang and Beijing recently renewed their Treaty of Friendship for another 20 years. Forged by the Korean War of 1950-1953, the endurance of the China-North Korea bond can be explained by the persistence of single-party state systems and shared geopolitical interests against a U.S. presence in the region (Jiang, 2019). With the renewal of the China-North Korea friendship treaty, the power dynamics on the Korean peninsula look set to follow an emerging Pyongyang-Moscow-Beijing triangle. The recent memory of the fallout of diplomacy with Trump reminds Kim of his more natural and lucrative allegiances with Moscow and Beijing. Realistically, Pyongyang may expect that this triangle will reinforce its commitment to collective defense and ensure that any aggression against any member of the triangle will trigger a unified response.

Develop Low-Yield Weapons and Advance Hybrid Warfare

North Korea's nuclear ambitions and its observed patterns in weapons development have been influenced by a mix of external events and its own strategic objectives. The DPRK could analyze and interpret Russia's actions in Ukraine and the Western response as a lesson in the dynamics of power politics.

It cannot have escaped Kim's notice that Russia, a nuclear power, has faced no direct military intervention from NATO since its invasion of Ukraine. This reinforces North Korea's belief in the deterrence value of low-yield nuclear weapons. Low-yield nuclear weapons can offer a sort of "middle ground" in terms of response, being more formidable than conventional weapons but less globally threatening than high-yield nuclear bombs. By using the threat of low-yield weapons, Russia has been successfully keeping NATO forces out of Ukraine. This will likely encourage Kim Jong-un to pursue low-yield nuclear weapons and reinforce the self-deterrence that the United States and its allies have already exhibited toward North Korea (B. Bragg, personal communication, September 4, 2023). North Korea might see low-yield nuclear

weapons as a tool for achieving escalation dominance in a conflict, where they can determine the levels of escalation and potentially deter opponents without triggering a full-scale nuclear retaliation from the United States or its allies.

North Korea has already conducted dozens of nuclear tests, showcasing a variety of yields. The possession of nuclear weapons, regardless of their yield, has already placed North Korea in a unique strategic position vis-à-vis its adversaries.

The current conflict in Ukraine has also underscored the importance of a multifaceted deterrence strategy that addresses not only conventional military threats but also hybrid tactics. Although it has shown mixed results, Ukraine's use of hybrid warfare has no doubt been noticed by Pyongyang. To North Korea, it is vital to maintain a credible military presence and conduct joint exercises with Russia and China to reinforce self-deterrence. In the meantime, Pyongyang may bolster preparation for hybrid warfare tactics that blend conventional military actions with cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, and irregular forces. In a future scenario of a second Korean War, hybrid warfare can provide an advantage to the offender over a defender, expand the gray areas that can be utilized, and achieve an advantage while maximizing asymmetry.

North Korean's Perception: Lessons for Regime Survival

Perception theory, increasingly used to explain decision-making in foreign policy, can be applied to understand North Korea's frequent defiance of international condemnation regarding its nuclear ambition and demand for total denuclearization. Understanding North Korea's perception of regime change as a fear factor and the lessons it has learned from external experiences is essential for formulating effective policies (Zhao, 2005).

Perception theory contends that political perception and action incorporate cultural, historical, and social baggage and cannot be explained without considering the values, goals, aspirations, orientations, emotions, and cognition of the political actors. Their decisions are the result of their self-image and perception of the contingent environment in which they are placed. Therefore, to understand why political actors make certain decisions, one must know the psycho-cultural factors that affect their perceptions of a situation. Regardless of the validity of their interpretation of each situation, their subjective perceptions have real consequences (Rozan, 1987).

Pyongyang's fear of regime change has been exacerbated by the presence of U.S. military forces in South Korea and joint military exercises. External factors like the "Axis of Evil" declaration and economic sanctions have further reinforced this perception. These elements have influenced North Korea's defensive foreign and economic policies and are critical to understanding the country's security calculations and ongoing strategies to safeguard its regime and national sovereignty against perceived hostile forces.

The high-profile meetings between Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump drew significant international attention and recognition of North Korea. There was indeed optimism that the summit would boost the chances for a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula. From Kim Jong-un's perspective, what the United States presented to the DPRK would give him strategic flexibility and significant prestige without substantially altering his regime's status (Perry, 2020). This step would afford Kim Jong-un the opportunity to return to the policy approach of his grandfather, Kim Il-sung, during the Cold War—multiple powers vying for North Korea's favor.

These summits elevated Kim Jong-un's standing on the global stage, providing him with a sense of legitimacy and the perception of equal footing with the United States. This short-lived rapprochement essentially offered Pyongyang a promise that the United States would not pursue regime change. In addition, it was hoped that the United States' promise and aid would offer North Korea a chance to develop both human and physical capital that would improve standards of living without losing the state's identity.

The relationship between the United States and North Korea is characterized by complex dynamics and challenges, with North Korea gaining advantages in certain areas while the United States struggles to achieve its objective of complete denuclearization. Today, the reality is that North Korea is drawing lessons from Russia's war in Ukraine and taking advantage of the "perfect storm" to forge ahead more aggressively with its nuclear weapons program. The history of mistrust between the United States and North Korea is a significant factor that hinders progress. Likewise, domestic political considerations of both the United States and North Korea play a role in limiting the scope and pace of negotiations. The involvement of other regional stakeholders, such as South Korea, China, and Japan, add complexity to the diplomatic process. These countries have different perspectives and interests in the Korean Peninsula's denuclearization, making it challenging to forge a unified approach (Ma, 2008). These issues underscore the complexities of dealing with North Korea and the need for a nuanced and coordinated approach by the United States and the international community to address the security concerns on the Korean Peninsula.

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How Would China Use its Nuclear Weapons against Japan, and What Should We Do about That?

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With the outbreak of war in Ukraine in 2022 and Russian President Vladimir Putin's suggestion that Russia might use nuclear weapons in the conflict, the possibility of China's nuclear use in the event of a Cross-Strait conflict is becoming an important topic of discussion in security communities in the United States and Japan. However, most of the scenarios discussed in the United States involve China using nuclear weapons against the United States. For example, in a May 2022 paper, Pettyjohn and Wasser presented a scenario in which China detonates a nuclear weapon off the coast of Hawaii as a threat to prevent U.S. intervention in a Cross-Strait conflict (Pettyjohn & Wasser, 2022). In addition, a war game conducted in the summer of 2022 by the Center for a New American Security showed China conducting an atmospheric nuclear test inside its territory and then attacking a U.S. military base in Guam with a low-yield nuclear weapon. The atmospheric nuclear test was intended to pose a threat to the United States and to increase the credibility of China's nuclear threats. The attack on Guam was intended to retaliate against a U.S. conventional attack on the Chinese mainland and to force the United States to get out of the war (Pettyjohn & Dennis, 2023, pp. 7-9). In my opinion, however, if China were to use nuclear weapons, it would do so against Japan and/or Taiwan, which do not possess nuclear weapons, instead of the United States.

In this article, I will discuss the current status of China's nuclear and missile capabilities, the most likely scenario in which China would use nuclear weapons against Japan, two important concerns that Japan has related to that scenario, and what the United States and Japan should do going forward.

China's Nuclear Weapons and Delivery Means

In 2021, the Office of the Secretary of Defense estimated that China's operational nuclear warhead stockpile had surpassed 500. If China keeps expanding its nuclear forces at the current pace, it will likely field about 1,000 nuclear warheads by 2030. China has also deployed 1,000 short-range ballistic missiles, 1,000 medium-range ballistic missiles, 500 intermediate-range ballistic missiles, and 350 intercontinental ballistic missiles. It also possesses over 300 ground-launched cruise missiles with a range of 1,500 kilometers or more (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2023, pp. 67 and 111). In 2021, China launched approximately 135 ballistic missiles for testing and training purposes. That was more than the number of all missiles launched outside of China, excluding those launched in conflicts (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2022, p. 167).

According to a 2021 report by Kristensen and Korda (2021), China is estimated to maintain approximately 60 nuclear weapons for tactical missions in the Indo-Pacific region. The missiles capable of delivering those tactical nuclear weapons include the DF-21A/E ballistic missile (with a range of over 2,100 kilometers operated on at least 40 mobile launchers), DF-26 ballistic missile (with a range of 4,000 kilometers operated on 200 mobile launchers, of which approximately 20 are designated for nuclear operation; an anti-ship version is also available), and DF-17 ballistic missile with a hypersonic glide vehicle (with a range of over 1,800 kilometers operated on at least 16 mobile launchers). It is believed that the DF-15 ballistic missile (with a range of 600 kilometers) can carry nuclear warheads, but there is no evidence of actual nuclear deployment. While it cannot be ruled out that China's cruise missiles can carry nuclear weapons, they are not currently engaged in substantive nuclear operations. Finally, due to the lack of capable delivery means, the Chinese Air Force's nuclear mission is limited, with only around 20 nuclear gravity bombs in its possession (Kristensen & Korda, 2021, pp. 320, 324, 327-328, & 331).

From their bases in northeast, central, and eastern China, DF-21A/E, DF-26, and DF-17 missiles can reach many of the targets lying between the Chinese east coast and the Western Pacific. In other words, they could hit any land targets in Japan and Taiwan as well as targets in the Sea of Japan, East China Sea, South China Sea, and Western Pacific. DF-26 missiles can hit targets in Guam from most of their bases.[1]

The Most Likely Nuclear Use Scenario

If China were to use nuclear weapons in a war across the Taiwan Strait, I contend it would do so to neutralize Japan. Here is the scenario.

> *China launches a war for "national unification" against Taiwan and strongly warns the United States and Japan against military intervention. It then detonates nuclear weapons, in a way that would not cause any physical harm, in the air over the Western Pacific, east of the First Island Chain, where US-Japan missile defense assets are not densely deployed. If the United States and Japan continue to provide support to Taiwan despite the warnings, China will launch tactical nuclear strikes against the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force's surface vessels. At first, China will attack a relatively small Japanese naval vessel while declaring that if the United States retaliates with nuclear weapons against Chinese naval vessels, it will launch further nuclear attacks against Japanese military assets such as naval vessels and the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force's anti-ship missile units deployed in the Southwestern (Nansei) Islands, such as Miyako and Ishigaki, located between Taiwan and Okinawa.*

[1] For the information on China's missile bases, see the following sources: Kristensen & Korda (2021, p. 325); and "PLA Rocket Force Organization." Ma Xiu. (2022, October 24). China Aerospace Studies Institute.

China would use DF-21A/E ballistic missiles for demonstrative detonation at sea and attacks against Japanese army units on the Southwestern Islands, and more capable, longer-range DF-26 ballistic missiles for anti-ship operations. China could also use DF-17 hypersonic glide missiles if it is deemed mature enough technologically.

Approximately 100 sailors would be killed or wounded if a small surface combatant is attacked, and some 500 would be killed or wounded if a large surface combatant is attacked. About 570 Japanese army personnel in Ishigaki and about 700 in Miyako would be killed or wounded if China uses nuclear weapons against those Japanese islands, although minimal collateral damage to civilians would be caused if they are evacuated early enough.

If Washington and Tokyo do not budge or if the United States launches retaliatory nuclear strikes against Chinese vessels, China will launch additional nuclear strikes against other Japanese naval vessels and/or the Japanese army units deployed in Miyako and Ishigaki.

China's most important objective would be to limit Japan's commitment and contributions to the defense of Taiwan. In a war across the Taiwan Strait, Japan would play two critical roles in the defense of Taiwan. The first is to provide main operating bases to U.S. forces. Taiwan is far from Guam and Hawaii—about 2,700 kilometers and 8,400 kilometers away, respectively. U.S. forces will not be able to fight effectively without using their bases in Japan.

Another role for Japan would be to provide an important addition to U.S. combat forces by committing its armed forces, called Self-Defense Forces, to defense operations for Taiwan. Without Japan's commitment, defending Taiwan might still be possible, but it would be a much more difficult and dangerous venture. In an extreme case, the United States might find it difficult to fight effectively without Japan's help and decide to abandon Taiwan. Even if Japan is not completely neutralized, limiting its commitment would help China.

Moreover, the use of nuclear weapons against Japanese naval vessels would make it difficult for the United States to operate its aircraft carriers near Taiwan. Even without the use of nuclear weapons, U.S. planners have long been concerned that China might use anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBMs) to sink their aircraft carriers. There is evidence that China has been conducting tests and exercises to attack U.S. aircraft carriers with ASBMs in the western Pacific. Although the likelihood of China using nuclear weapons against U.S. assets is low, U.S. Navy commanders would be forced to take extra caution when they operate carriers.

Japan's Two Important Concerns

Japan has two important concerns regarding the above scenario. First, China might use nuclear weapons against Japan despite Beijing's pledge not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states. China would not decide to invade Taiwan casually, and if it ever does, it would employ all available means of war to win quickly and overwhelmingly in that venture.

Chinese planners have seen how Ukraine, supplied by third parties, could put up a strong defense. Learning lessons from Russia's experience in the Ukraine War, Chinese planners must think it necessary to win quickly before the United States, Japan, and other countries could coordinate a broad international response. In addition, a while ago, the Chinese Communist Party's military channel posted a video discussing the possibility of treating Japan as an exception to its no-first-use policy. That video stated:

> *Japan is the only country in the world that has been hit by atomic bombs and has a deep memory of the atomic bombs from the government down to the people. And it takes the United States, which nuked it, lying down. It is exactly because Japan has such a unique feeling that nuclear deterrence against Japan will get twice the result with half the effort. By singling out Japan as an "exception" to our commitment not to use or be the first to use nuclear weapons in the world—Japan is an "exception"––we are warning Japan and informing the world that if Japan interferes militarily in our domestic affairs, including the unification of Taiwan by the mainland, nuclear weapons will surely be used against Japan and will be continuously used until its unconditional surrender. There will be no peace talks in the meantime; we will take back the Diaoyu Islands [the Chinese name of the Senkaku Islands] and the Ryukyu Islands [including Okinawa]. We will either manage them ourselves or let them be independent ("CCP Vows to Nuke Japan Continuously Until It Surrenders Unconditionally for the Second Time (中共軍事頻道威脅對日本實施連續核打擊，直到日本第二次無條件投降)," 2021).*

This is by no means China's official policy statement. However, it must be noted that there are people in China who understand Japan's vulnerability to nuclear coercion.

Second, there is some doubt about the credibility of the U.S. extended deterrence provided to Japan. For example, in one of the war games conducted by the U.S. government in 2016 to test how the United States might act in an "escalate to de-escalate" scenario, the United States failed to use nuclear weapons in retaliation when Russia used nuclear weapons (Kaplan, 2021, pp. 255-257). In that series, two war games were played—one on the deputy secretary level and the other on the secretary level. In both games, the same scenario was used: Russia invaded one of the Baltic countries, NATO fought back effectively, and to reverse the tide, Russia used a low-yield nuclear weapon against the NATO troops or a base in Germany. In the first game, played by the deputies, Colin Kahl—Vice President Biden's national security adviser—argued against nuclear use, saying that the United States should restrict its response to conventional combat and diplomatic ventures and isolate and weaken the Russian leaders, policies, and military forces. Kahl's view eventually prevailed and the United States did not use nuclear weapons. The United States did use nuclear weapons, however, in the second game played by the secretaries. While one official called for sanctions and diplomatic pressure, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter demanded the use of nuclear weapons, arguing that the allies would expect the United States to do so and that to fail to do so would be disastrous for U.S. alliances and credibility. However, it was not easy for the United States to come up

with an appropriate and effective response. The secretaries eventually decided to drop a few nuclear weapons on the former Soviet republic of Belarus though it had played no military role in that scenario. Moreover, there were some nuances among the players. General Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, agreed with Carter but in a more measured tone; and Antony Blinken, deputy secretary of state representing John Kerry, was undecided, seeing the logic on both sides.

Given the magnitude of the nuclear challenge, it will never be easy for an American leader to decide what to do in specific circumstances, and there will always be contending views. U.S. allies such as Japan understand that difficulty and uncertainty. Extended deterrence is, by its very nature, always harder to make credible than central/basic deterrence. Maintaining the credibility of U.S. extended nuclear deterrence would be a tremendous challenge for the United States and its allies.

What should the United States and Japan do to Enhance the Credibility of Deterrence against China?

There are at least three things that the United States and Japan should do to enhance the credibility of deterrence against China. First, they should identify the limitations of China's nuclear weapons. For example, working closely together, U.S. and Japanese forces could intercept China's nuclear ballistic missiles at sea with a fairly high probability. By now, the U.S. Missile Defense Agency has spent about $194 billion on missile defense and the Japanese government has spent about $26 billion (United States Government Accountability Office, 2023; Fumio Kishida, 2024). Together they are already two of the most capable countries when it comes to ballistic missile defense, and they are working together to develop and introduce cruise missile and hypersonic missile defense systems. In addition, they could use electric warfare operations and introduce ship protection measures to counter the Chinese missile threat. Also, we must not forget that the United States possesses far larger and more sophisticated nuclear forces than China. These quantitative and qualitative advantages do not necessarily determine the outcome, but they certainly help.

Second, the United States and Japan must develop and study various scenarios in which China uses nuclear weapons, and devise plans and means to respond to those scenarios. Any war and any use of nuclear weapons takes place in a specific context. Once the United States and Japan identified all likely scenarios in which China uses nuclear weapons, they could start developing plans to deter the use of tactical nuclear weapons and, if deterrence failed, to respond effectively to nuclear use with both nuclear and conventional tools. The U.S.-South Korea Washington Declaration of April 2023 is instructive in that regard. In line with what the United States and South Korea agreed to in the Declaration, the United States and Japan could agree to discuss nuclear and strategic planning, improve combined exercises and training activities on the application of nuclear deterrence, and establish a bilateral, interagency table-top simulation to strengthen their joint approach to planning for nuclear contingencies (The White House, 2023).

Finally, the United States and Japan should take steps to enhance their psychological defense capabilities. Since Chinese political and military leaders understand that an all-out nuclear exchange would devastate their country, they will likely use nuclear weapons in a limited but psychologically effective manner to coerce Japan, and possibly the United States, into neutrality. If they use nuclear weapons, they would do so while using other means of hybrid warfare such as disinformation operations, cyberattacks, detention of U.S. and Japanese citizens residing in China, assassinations, and conventional countervalue strikes. In that context, ballistic missile defense capabilities and civil defense measures offer two important ways to reduce the effectiveness of China's military coercion. In 2022, the Japanese Ministry of Defense estimated that Japan's missile defense interceptor inventory was "60 percent sufficient" based on its classified calculation method and announced its plan to make it fully sufficient by 2027 (Ministry of Defense, 2023). How the Ministry of Defense calculated the figure is not entirely clear, but 60 percent sufficiency is a fairly significant capability. If the Japanese people think that they are protected, China's coercion will be less likely to succeed. The Japanese government has also been conducting civil defense exercises based on missile attack scenarios since 2017. In FY2022, there were 12 civil defense exercises conducted in different places in Japan, including two in Okinawa. Civil defense exercises are important not only in reducing casualties but also in enhancing Japanese citizens' ability to resist China's military-psychological pressure. People who know how to respond to contingencies are less likely to panic when faced with armed coercion than those who don't. For example, when a huge earthquake hit northern Japan in 2011, the Japanese people demonstrated a tremendous ability to stay calm and united, which is good news for the country.

Conclusion

Limiting Japan's commitment and contributions to the defense of Taiwan is one of China's most important objectives in a war across the Taiwan Strait. China has deployed more than 500 medium-range ballistic missiles capable of reaching Japan partly for that purpose. China could use nuclear weapons to neutralize Japan in case of war, but there are ways to limit their effectiveness. Despite Putin's saber-rattling, Russia has not used nuclear weapons yet. The United States and Japan must work together to find the best way to deter China from using nuclear weapons and reduce their effectiveness if they are ever used.

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Avoiding Self-Deterrence in the Context of Nuclear Ambiguity: The Case of the People's Republic of China

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In the course of the Russia-Ukraine war that began in 2022, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has seen self-deterrence in effect on the part of both the NATO coalition and Russia. Chinese decision-makers are, therefore, likely considering both how to engender self-deterrence from potential adversaries as well as how to avoid self-deterrence in their own strategy.

Self-Deterrence

"Self-deterrence" is typically thought of in terms of one side choosing not to act for fear of engendering escalation. That is, the potential for escalation, especially nuclear escalation, is so fearsome that the deterred side is unwilling to undertake actions, *even if no explicit threat or commitment is made by the deterring side*.

Self-deterrence is, therefore, typically associated with an adversary possessing nuclear forces, where just the existence of such forces can cause one to be self-deterred, even if there is not a formal treaty or doctrine referring to nuclear employment.

But self-deterrence may also occur for other reasons.

- *Non-nuclear escalation.* One of the purposes of alliances is to signal the commitment of other states to support one side or the other. That support, moreover, may come in terms of not only nuclear support (in the form of extended deterrence), but also conventional military support, as well as economic, financial, and political support. These types of support suggest that an aggressor nation will face the prospect of a protracted conflict, and the infliction of higher losses.

  But while a formal commitment is more likely to create straightforward deterrent effects, the possibility of such support being provided even in the absence of a formal commitment (e.g., a treaty) may nonetheless impose self-deterrence. In the wake of the U.S. decision to intervene on the side of the Republic of Korea in 1950, despite the absence of a formal treaty commitment to the Syngman Rhee government, other states will have had to incorporate into their calculations the potential of U.S. intervention regardless of explicit guarantees.

- *Fear of loss of ability to manage other military contingencies.* Few nations have enough resources to address all of the potential threats that they confront. Any decision to commit forces against one contingency necessarily affects the risk calculation for others. Even if a nation chooses to use force against contingency 1, it may nonetheless feel that it must withhold some number of forces or types of capabilities to be prepared to handle contingency 2 or 3. In a very real sense, then, a state may be self-deterred from employing the full range of capabilities for fear of subsequent military needs imposed by other states, either during or after the current conflict.

- *Fear of loss of reputation, credibility, and support*. One side may be self-deterred from acting because of the attendant costs in political or diplomatic credibility and reputation. That is, in addition to fear of losses inflicted by the adversary or third parties, there are also costs suffered in terms of how a nation will be viewed through its use of force, especially as an aggressor. It may also suffer domestic losses, depending upon the political relationship with the target of aggression.

  The reputational aspect spans both international and domestic reputation. Domestic audiences, even in authoritarian systems, must be courted and assuaged that their cause is just. Use of certain types of weapons or tactics may, therefore be avoided, in a form of self-deterrence, if it would undermine domestic support. In democracies, there are always a variety of voices and interests, some of which are likely to oppose any military intervention, as well as the use of specific types of weapons or tactics.

With respect to Chinese decision-makers, they have seen both NATO and Russia choose to limit the weapons they have employed, as well as the tactics and policies they have pursued.

Western Self-Deterrence

NATO and Western nations, more broadly, have chosen to limit the types of assistance provided to the Zelensky government. No Western nation has been willing to provide Ukraine with actual troops. While there has been lively debate on whether, if ever, to extend NATO membership to Kyiv, there is little prospect for any near-term accession by the Ukrainians, for fear of drawing NATO into the conflict directly. This may be seen as the clearest example of self-deterrence, as NATO and the West are seeking to avoid direct confrontation with Russian troops.

Even in terms of military aid, NATO and Western nations have also been hesitant to provide substantial support to Ukraine, slowly evolving on what they were willing to sell. On the eve of war, initial German support, for example, was in the form of 5000 helmets, an offer so at odds with what was needed it reportedly left the Ukrainians speechless. Offers to provide Ukraine with MiG-29 jets from various eastern European inventories saw opposition from the United States, which considered such a move to be "high risk" and would escalate tensions with Russia.

Given the commitment of the overwhelming bulk of Russian conventional forces to the Ukraine conflict, Chinese decision-makers are therefore likely to conclude that NATO has suffered from self-deterrence due to Russian nuclear capabilities, rather than fear of Russian conventional attack. The unwillingness to commit military forces, and in some cases even to exert economic pressure, is also likely to be attributed in part to domestic political considerations, also leading to self-deterrence.

Where the West was not self-deterred was in its willingness to undertake financial and economic warfare against Russia. In the wake of the outbreak of hostilities, the West undertook a range of unprecedented economic sanctions. Various Western companies, ranging from McDonald's to BP, curtailed their operations in Russia. The Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications (SWIFT) financial messaging service, used to support international transactions among banks, took the unprecedented step of removing a number of Russian banks, effectively hobbling their ability to participate in global financial activities.

Arguably, there was little prospect of Western self-deterrence in terms of economic sanctions because of Russian economic weakness. Russia's economy, although the 11th largest in the world (as of 2023), is smaller at $2.06 trillion than Brazil's ($2.08 trillion) or Canada's ($2.09 trillion). Notably, Germany was far more reluctant to impose economic sanctions and resisted suspending the operations of the Nordstream oil pipelines. Given German economic ties to Russia, including energy sourcing, this might be seen as an example of economic self-deterrence.

Russian Self-Deterrence

If NATO and the West experienced self-deterrence, Chinese assessments may see Russian leaders as not immune from self-deterring considerations, either. It is unclear whether the Russian decision not to employ nuclear or other WMD in the opening phases of the conflict was due to self-deterrence or to a view that such weapons were unnecessary. It is difficult, however, to assess that it was due mainly to Western deterrent efforts since Ukraine was not a NATO member, nor had there been specific security guarantees extended to Kyiv by any of the Western nuclear powers. Nonetheless, the potential existed for a Western military, even nuclear response, which might have contributed to Russian self-deterrence.

One interesting possibility is whether China's economic and trade ties to Ukraine might have influenced Russian decision-makers. Ukraine was the third largest supplier of grain to the PRC in 2022, representing 8.9% of total grain imports. China was the largest destination for Ukrainian corn exports, and was a substantial customer for a variety of other Ukrainian agricultural products. Russia might have been worried about antagonizing Beijing, even though there was no political commitment from Beijing to Kyiv. If that is the case, this might constitute an example of Russian self-deterrence.

Another consideration is the Russian claim of fraternal ties to the Ukrainian people. Insofar as the Russian citizenry accepts the claim or values the sharing of religious ties, then undertaking

an attack involving WMD against Ukraine (as opposed to against its leadership) would arguably undermine popular support.

Likely Chinese Lessons on Self-Deterrence

PRC leaders are potentially likely to look at the Western and Russian self-deterrence and draw certain conclusions.

From both the Western and Russian records, perhaps the most important conclusion by Chinese decision-makers may be that the PRC needs to publicly field a substantial nuclear capability. The ability to threaten a substantial nuclear attack provides significant pressure to induce self-deterrence. Both popular and leadership opinion among China's potential adversaries is likely to question whether to intervene and how extensively to do so, in the face of a substantial nuclear risk. Revelations of China's major nuclear expansion, including the discovery of several hundred missile silos in western China, will likely generate significant deterrent effects among China's neighbors, including self-deterrence.

Notably, Chinese reporting later in 2022 highlighted the NATO nuclear exercise "Steadfast Noon." This was seen in a number of Chinese reports as reflecting a NATO effort to signal Russia about potential nuclear escalatory dangers.

Another likely lesson derived by the Chinese is that the likelihood of Western self-deterrence is further enhanced if there is the potential for other threats or crises. Given global concerns, the West maintained forces and surveillance over such disparate areas as the Persian Gulf and Taiwan Straits. Western ability to intervene was, therefore, likely affected by the need to prepare for these other regional contingencies. The Chinese expansion of their military training activities, including exercises with Russia and South Africa in the Southern Indian Ocean, and Russian and Chinese patrols near Alaska, may reflect an effort to exploit potential horizontal escalation scenarios to induce self-deterrence in Western circles.

From the Russian record, the challenges for avoiding self-deterrence are likely to not only include fears of nuclear escalation, as noted earlier, but also the possibility of economic and other pressures creating doubts. In this regard, the actual course of economic sanctions against Russia are likely to have reduced the impact of economic-led self-deterrence. Despite the imposition of some of the most extensive economic sanctions, Russia's economy has not collapsed. Although badly hurt initially, more recent figures suggest that the pain has been limited and that sanctions' effects are limited. Moreover, some Western companies have remained in Russia. If the West cannot hurt an economy that is neither a major customer nor a major supplier and whose financial capacity is limited, the likelihood that it will unify to punish the world's second-largest economy, which is often both a key supplier and an essential customer, are even more limited.

The PRC's vulnerability to self-deterrence, then, is likely to mainly be based upon domestic opinion, rather than potential external punishment (other than military escalation). Potential

factors pushing for self-deterrence would include extensive casualties and the effect on a population that is aging and whose young people are responsible for the health and maintenance of parents and grandparents. High casualties would potentially engender significant reactions among parents and grandparents who would have lost their main means of support, as well as what is still likely to be an only child.

Prospects for the Future

Over the past quarter century, the PRC has become a major military power, as well as one of the world's largest economies. Military modernization has seen the PLA develop significant conventional forces, an information warfare service with no parallel in any other military organization, and most recently a substantially expanding nuclear arm.

Chinese writings on deterrence indicate that the PRC leadership is well aware of the likely effect this expanding array of capabilities will have on potential adversaries. As important, PRC writings on integrated deterrence (*zhengti weishe*; 整体威慑) indicate that Chinese decision-makers are likely to try to complement military elements of deterrence with economic, political, and public opinion deterrence measures (Bo, 2015). For Chinese policy-makers, the expectation is that the combined effect of this range of coordinated efforts, which will occur in peacetime as well as in the event of a crisis or on the eve of war, will lead to self-deterrence on the part of adversaries.

At the same time, the PRC appears to be taking steps to ensure that it is less vulnerable to self-deterrence. Part of this may be rooted in the broad trend of minimal push-back against Chinese actions. Chinese violations of intellectual property, arrests of foreign citizens on Chinese soil, intrusions into neighboring territories, and the conduct of anti-satellite tests that generated substantial debris only evoked diplomatic responses, but rarely more significant reactions that imposed significant costs. PRC leaders, therefore, may well be acclimatized to assuming that there will be limited willingness to challenge Chinese actions.

Just as important, China has generally reacted to what they consider violations of their core interests, e.g., expanding relations with Taiwan. China has demonstrated a willingness to fire missiles over Taiwan in reaction to senior foreign visitors or to impose economic sanctions on states that even rename their representative's office in Taiwan. This consistency not only signals China's views to other states but makes it harder for the PRC to back away from its positions; in some ways, it sets the stage for ripping out the steering wheel, as posited by Thomas Schelling in *The Strategy of Conflict* (Schelling, 1960).

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Avoiding the Self-Deterrent Effect of U.S. Threats to Use Nuclear Weapons First in a War with China over Taiwan

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Russian threats to use nuclear weapons during the conflict in Ukraine reconfirmed two central tenets of Chinese nuclear thinking. The first is that nuclear weapons are "paper tigers" that may be used to threaten but cannot be used to fight and win wars. This is because Russia, like the United States in past military conflicts with China, threatened the potential use of nuclear weapons but did not follow through, even when the tide of battle turned against them. The second is that threats to start a nuclear war make it more difficult to prosecute a conventional one; they create a global fear of escalation that frightens allies, alienates neutrals, and strengthens the resolve of adversaries.

There are two implications of these Chinese reconfirmations for U.S. strategists and decision-makers. The first is that there is little to be gained from attempting to demonstrate a credible threat to use U.S. nuclear weapons first in a military conflict with China. They will not believe it, so it has no deterrent value. The second is that encouraging U.S. and all decision-makers to believe it is necessary to threaten nuclear first use to prevent or win a war with China creates a significant self-deterrent effect. The American public and U.S. friends and allies will be less willing to use conventional arms to defend Taiwan from Chinese aggression if they believe it will lead to nuclear war.

Chinese Nuclear Thinking

The Chinese communist leadership's perceptions of nuclear threats are best understood through the lens of their specific historical experience, rather than general U.S. theories of deterrence. That experience includes coping with U.S. nuclear threats during two military conflicts that occurred in the formative first decade of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

In the summer of 1950, despite PRC objections (Shen, 2017), Korean communist leader Kim Il-sung tried to unify his country by military means and failed. As U.S. forces approached the Chinese border, PRC leaders debated the possibility of U.S. nuclear attacks if they intervened to save Kim's government (Sun, 2013). Regional commanders reported fear that the bomb was creating serious morale problems among Chinese soldiers (Sun, 2013). Senior officers, including General Lin Biao, said they would not fight in Korea (Sun, 2013). Others argued a single atomic bomb on Shanghai or Beijing could bring down the new communist government (Sun, 2013).

A majority of senior PRC leaders concluded nuclear weapons were too destructive to be used on the battlefield and that atomic attacks on Chinese cities would be universally condemned

(Sun, 2013). After communist Chinese forces poured into Korea and began to drive U.S. forces back, the Truman administration threatened to use nuclear weapons to stop them (Leviero, 1950). Chinese leaders, having already decided to accept the risk, did not retreat.

At the same time, Chinese leaders began to consider building their own atomic bomb (Sun, 2013). Fourteen years later, on the day they succeeded, in their only public statement explaining why they did it, the peasant revolutionary leaders of communist China put it this way:

> *They have it and you don't, and so they are very haughty. But once those who oppose them also have it, they would no longer be so haughty, their policy of nuclear blackmail and nuclear threat would no longer be so effective… (People's Republic of China, 1964).*

It is an admission of fear that simultaneously expresses a determination not to be cowed. China's leaders may no longer be peasant revolutionaries, but their language and behavior consistently convey the same chutzpah.

In the spring of 1955, the Eisenhower administration threatened to use nuclear weapons to stop PRC leaders from reclaiming some and bombarding other small islands close to the Chinese coast that were held by the government of the Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan (Abel, 1955). It did not work. This time, in addition to accepting the risk, PRC leaders used U.S. nuclear threats to their diplomatic advantage (Shen, 2012). The PRC's most important objective in creating what came to be known as the Taiwan Strait Crisis was to open bilateral negotiations with the United States on its support for the ROC (Shen, 2012). Eisenhower eventually agreed to negotiations because of international pressure, especially from U.S. allies, to avoid a nuclear war (Kulacki, 2020).

U.S. nuclear threats also created international sympathy for the PRC, which helped the communist regime break out of the diplomatic isolation the United States imposed in 1949 (Durdin, 1955). PRC leaders were especially effective during and after the Taiwan Strait Crisis in cultivating relationships with non-aligned nations in what we now call the "Global South." This diplomatic opening eventually led to a UN General Assembly vote, which the Nixon administration tried to prevent, giving China's seat in the United Nations to the PRC and, consequentially, kicking the government in Taiwan out (United Nations General Assembly, 1971).

These two formative experiences encouraged Chinese decision-makers to develop a nuclear posture that is conscious of the military limitations and diplomatic costs of making explicit nuclear threats. Instead, they chose a posture that exploits the military and diplomatic benefits of a strong international taboo against nuclear use. Chinese decision-makers sought to minimize their fear of nuclear threats against China while maximizing their freedom to use conventional military force.

There is no indication the war in Ukraine has changed their minds. Chinese leaders have been sympathetic to Russian security concerns in Eastern Europe since NATO decided to militarily intervene in Kosovo without a mandate from the UN Security Council (People's Daily, 1999). Their unwillingness to criticize Russian aggression in Ukraine should not be a surprise and is not an indication of a significant shift in Chinese foreign policy. More importantly, despite that long record of support, China's official statement on Ukraine criticized Russian threats to use nuclear weapons (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2023). Chinese President Xi Jinping reportedly told Russian President Vladimir Putin he was concerned about those threats (Seddon et al., 2023). Both are indications the war in Ukraine has not altered Chinese nuclear thinking but instead reconfirmed it.

Chinese Nuclear Forces

The PRC's disappointing decision to expand Chinese nuclear forces by adding up to several hundred new silo-based ICBMs is best understood as a response to concerns about geopolitical and technological developments, rather than as a consequence of new leadership or a change in China's nuclear posture. Chinese perceptions of increasing geopolitical instability made the prospect of a major war with the United States appear more likely (Xi, 2018). Technological improvements in satellite imagery, radars, tracking, guidance, and precision munitions made Chinese nuclear forces appear more vulnerable to conventional preemption (People's Liberation Army Academy of Military Sciences, 2013). When considered together with missile defenses, the threat of Chinese nuclear retaliation could appear less credible and the consequences more tolerable to U.S. decision-makers.

China's apparent decision to increase the number of launchers, to put missiles in silos where they can be launched on warning of an incoming attack, and to equip them with re-entry vehicles that can evade missile defenses are predictable and effective responses to an adversary that is threatening to use nuclear weapons first and believes it can limit the damage from Chinese retaliation to a tolerable level. Those responses do not imply China's nuclear posture or the intentions of Chinese leaders have changed.

The size of the increase and the speed of construction are equally unsurprising. Chinese defense scientists and analysts have been warning their U.S. counterparts—for decades—that U.S. threats of first use, U.S. unwillingness to accept mutual vulnerability, and U.S. missile defense deployments would eventually lead to larger Chinese numbers.[1] In 2012, in his first address to Chinese missileers, Xi Jinping suggested he would raise the alert level of Chinese nuclear forces (Wei & Zhang, 2012). The following year, the Chinese Academy of Military Science concluded that concerns about the vulnerability of China's nuclear forces justified

[1] The author has heard multiple Chinese presenters discuss the probability of larger numbers at every arms control conference in China he has attended since 2002.

acquiring the ability to launch Chinese missiles upon warning of an incoming attack (People's Liberation Army Academy of Military Sciences, 2013).

The Trump administration's repudiation of the rapprochement between the United States and China established in 1972 (Shi & Kuo, 2021), which was based on U.S. recognition that the resolution of Taiwan's political separation from the mainland was a Chinese domestic matter (Foreign Relations of the United States, 1972), increased mounting PRC anxiety about the possibility of war with the United States (Xi, 2017). Xi, citing Marxist theory, warned senior Chinese military officers they need to accelerate military preparedness because the U.S. government could be attempting to distract attention from domestic failures by ginning up an external crisis (Xi, 2019).

These provocative changes in U.S.-China policy, following decades of Chinese concern about the vulnerability of its comparatively small force of ICBMs, and continued U.S. efforts to exploit that vulnerability, are a more plausible explanation for China's decision to construct hundreds of new missile silos than an unannounced official change in Chinese nuclear weapons policy inspired by the impatience or personal ambition of a single individual.

China's unwillingness to acknowledge it is constructing new silos is consistent with past practice and another sign that Chinese nuclear thinking has not changed. U.S. arms controllers have been complaining about Chinese opacity for many years (Yao, 2020). Some U.S. analysts argue China does not talk about the size or composition of its nuclear forces because Chinese strategists believe ambiguity offers a tactical advantage (Santoro, 2022). But China's initial and only official statement on nuclear policy strongly suggests the PRC prefers to downplay its nuclear status, especially to non-nuclear supporters and neutrals in the "Global South" (PRC, 1964). Moreover, China's no first use pledge—the only aspect of its nuclear policy it is willing to discuss—puts the onus for nuclear escalation on the other side. Chinese leaders seem to believe emphasizing their intention to never start a nuclear war—"under any circumstances"—gives them greater diplomatic latitude to use conventional military force. For them, making it clear throughout the leadership and the military that they will not escalate under any circumstance, as well as doing everything they can to convince allies, neutrals, and adversaries China will not escalate, is psychologically and diplomatically liberating. Is it a permission slip for Chinese leaders not to be deterred from aggressively using conventional military force against a nuclear-armed state, especially when supported by the conviction that any rational nuclear-armed adversary is highly unlikely to use nuclear weapons first if they know China can and will retaliate.

Implications for the United States

China's unique historical experience with U.S. nuclear threats and the nuclear thinking and capabilities it developed afterward strongly suggest Chinese leaders are unlikely to believe the United States would start a nuclear war and risk Chinese nuclear retaliation to preserve Taiwanese independence. Astute observations of human psychology and behavior as old as Shakespeare's *Hamlet* suggest that the harder U.S. officials try to convince China they would

take that risk, the less effective those protestations will be. Encouraging U.S. regional allies to believe in the efficacy and necessity of overt U.S. threats to use nuclear weapons first to prevent or defeat conventional Chinese military aggression plays the same counterproductive role (Kulacki, 2020).

Like Russian nuclear first use threats in Ukraine, U.S. threats to resort to nuclear first use in a war with China over Taiwan can be interpreted as an admission of conventional weakness. They convey a sense of desperation not only to Chinese leaders but to U.S. and allied decision-makers, the soldiers they command, and the citizens they serve. Moreover, acquiring, maintaining, and demonstrating the capability to use nuclear weapons first is expensive and shifts limited resources away from conventional military preparations, making the perceived conventional gap with China seem even wider.

Lack of confidence in the ability to prevail in a conventional war is highly likely to have a strong self-deterrent effect on U.S. and allied leadership if China starts a war. All sides understand the bar for nuclear use is exponentially higher than it is for the use of conventional military force. Nuclear first use opens the door to nuclear retaliation and further escalation that could result in mass civilian casualties and catastrophic levels of destruction, both in East Asia and the continental United States. In the absence of a clear and immediate existential threat to the United States, U.S. decision-makers are highly unlikely to take that risk.

Russian threats to use nuclear weapons first in Ukraine were met with near-unanimous international condemnation, including from allies like China and neutrals like India (Ray, 2022). Chinese decision-makers are predisposed to believe U.S. threats to cross the nuclear threshold in a war over Taiwan would invite the same response, creating enormous pressure for an immediate cessation of hostilities that could favor China. They are also pre-disposed to believe that if the United States crossed the nuclear threshold, it would weaken the moral authority of the United States and undermine the will of U.S. allies in the region and the rest of the world to continue supporting the U.S. war effort.

For Chinese decision-makers, U.S. threats to use nuclear weapons first in a conflict over Taiwan increase confidence in their ability to use conventional military force. From their point of view, it is a threat that, in the words of Thomas Schelling, doesn't leave much to chance.

Recommendations

A U.S. decision to eliminate nuclear first would make war in the Taiwan Strait less likely. It would be an emphatic expression of U.S. confidence in its conventional capabilities, making the probability of U.S. military intervention and allied support appear much higher to Chinese decision-makers than it does today. It would reduce the strong self-deterrent effect associated with an increased likelihood of nuclear war.

U.S. officials should stop telling allies that U.S. nuclear weapons are essential to preventing or defeating conventional Chinese aggression. This significantly raises the stakes and the

potential costs of allied support for U.S. military intervention in a future Taiwan crisis. It also exaggerates the military and psychological value of U.S. nuclear weapons. Explicitly confining U.S. extended nuclear deterrence assurances to retaliation after a nuclear attack is likely to make those assurances more credible, especially to allied decision-makers who worry their U.S. protectors may sacrifice foreign friends to save themselves (Kulacki, 2021).

"Projecting" strength is not the same as having it, and more often than not it signals self-doubt. High-level competitors in every imaginable sport understand this and so do most of their fans. Trash talk and trick shots are the hallmarks of losers. Russian nuclear threats in Ukraine convey that impression. It is unwise for U.S. officials to do the same in East Asia. Symbolic high-level visits to Taiwan and dramatic shifts in military spending and deployments send the same misguided message to Chinese leaders. They feed questionable but pervasive narratives about a supposed U.S. "decline" (Mahbubani, 2020). Quiet confidence, not alarmism, is more likely to keep the peace.

Reducing Chinese incentives to use military force may be more effective than increasing the costs. Whatever the outcome, Chinese communist leaders already know that a major U.S.-China war will cripple China's economy and could destabilize their government (Xi, 2019). A core principle of traditional Chinese military thought and political philosophy is that war is a grave danger to the state (Sawyer, 1993). Offering Chinese leaders acceptable non-violent alternatives, like restoring confidence in the modus vivendi reached between Nixon and Mao in 1972, appeals to that tradition.

Strong, unambiguous official U.S. efforts to restore governmental relations with Taiwan seriously undermine PRC confidence in the status quo (AP, 2021). Less frequent and intentionally vague U.S. statements supporting a "one China policy," especially from officials who are unwilling to recognize Taiwan is a part of "one China," will not restore that confidence (Cohen, 2023).

Holding to the present course, continuing to promote a U.S. narrative that imagines the personal ambition of a single individual matters more to the Chinese communist leadership than the dangers of a U.S.-China war, makes conflict seem inevitable and imminent (Rust, 2023). It also makes any U.S. effort to accommodate PRC concerns seem like a concession to a dictator. This leaves both governments with no politically acceptable way out of a military conflict neither wants. President Biden and other U.S. officials in both political parties should reconsider their restrictive and thinly sourced presumptions about Chinese intentions.

The United States government should also engage in imaginative, active, and sustained diplomatic efforts to bring the PRC and the ROC to the negotiating table. That could do more to preserve peace than solely focusing on deterring military aggression. Chinese leaders justify their sympathy for Russian aggression in Ukraine with references to unkept U.S. promises on NATO expansion (Ye, 2022). Relieving Chinese leaders of the anxiety that we are doing the same in Taiwan would significantly reduce their perceived need to prepare for war. The current administration has already made some encouraging steps in this direction.

Influential cohorts of decision-makers in both governments recognize that U.S.-China cooperation is essential to resolving many of the pressing problems humanity will face this century. They understand the climate crisis is unquestionably the most important, but they also know the management of powerful new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and rapid advances in bioengineering, also present the potential for unprecedented and potentially uncontrollable harm if they are not employed wisely and with some restraint.

Despite the relatively rapid deterioration of U.S.-China relations in recent years, restoring mutual confidence in the possibility of unquestionably necessary scientific and technological cooperation remains possible if we can come to a mutual understanding on our most contentious geopolitical disputes, especially Taiwan. The considerable intellectual and diplomatic effort it will take to accomplish that is an investment worth making.

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Key Impacts of Russia's War in Ukraine on the Korean Security Situation

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It would be a mistake to view North Korea's recent weapons of mass destruction (WMD) developments as simply following the same cycles of behavior observed in the past. Pyongyang has conveyed fundamental shifts in its strategic calculus and self-perception in recent years—since the collapse of negotiations with the United States and especially after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. These shifts include the early embrace of a new Cold War paradigm and a breaking with past strategic ambiguity toward clear and firm alignment with China and Russia. It also entails a fundamental reframing and institutionalization of its nuclear weapons program, demonstrating a new level of comfort and confidence in its decisions and status. These developments have materialized at a time that drastically increase North Korea's potential for helping Russia pursue its broader strategic interests, and their now deepening cooperation poses significant challenges to finding a new sense of equilibrium and stability in the region.

North Korea's Shifting Nuclear Policy and Doctrine

Pyongyang's calculus about its nuclear weapons program has fundamentally changed since 2019. Historically, North Korean rhetoric has always characterized the country's nuclear weapons as conditioned on the United States maintaining its hostile policy. This gave Pyongyang room to negotiate and change course on the matter if and when the political environment shifted in its favor.

However, in September 2022, North Korea announced a new "Law on DPRK's Policy on Nuclear Forces" (Naenara, 2022). In the new law, North Korea proclaimed itself a "responsible nuclear weapons state" that "opposes all forms of war, including nuclear war" and worked to create the case that its nuclear forces are for defending the country, safeguarding the country and its interests, and preventing war on the Korean Peninsula. It put forward a peace through strength rationale, asserting that articulating its nuclear policy and defining its legal conditions for the use of nuclear weapons would help reduce the risk of war by making its intentions and stipulations clear.

Unlike the previous nuclear law, North Korea outlined a set of conditions in this law under which it would be compelled to consider nuclear use, in some cases nuclear first use. These include 1) in case of a nuclear attack or perceived imminent nuclear attack; 2) in case of any kind of attack or perceived imminent attack on state leadership; 3) in case of attack or

perceived imminent attack on "important strategic objects"; 4) to prevent "expansion and protraction of war"; and 5) in case it is perceived that nuclear weapons are the only way to prevent "catastrophic crisis over the existence of the state." In addition, a clause under its command and control protocols authorizes automatic nuclear strikes in case of decapitation (Naenara, 2022).

In many ways, this new law and doctrine responds directly to South Korea's three-axis defense strategy, which emphasizes the right to preemption and a strategy to neutralize North Korea's nuclear threat by decapitation; it also echoes South Korea's own propagation of a "peace through strength" framing (Jung, 2023). Furthermore, it reinforces a position that North Korea's nuclear forces are no longer to be used as bargaining chips to extract material concessions from the United States or other countries, but that they serve the larger purpose of safeguarding the country's safety and future. The use of this kind of rhetoric has increased since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, perhaps influenced by Russia's use of overt nuclear threats, but perhaps also influenced by Ukraine's fate—yet another country that relinquished nuclear capabilities in exchange for security guarantees only to be attacked by a nuclear power in the end. While Ukraine has been able to sustain its defense operations with military assistance from the international community, its beleaguered efforts over the past nearly two years likely reinforce North Korea's own doubts about the credibility of security guarantees and harden Pyongyang's position on the utility of having its own nuclear deterrent.

With the announcement of North Korea's new nuclear law, the characterization of North Korea's nuclear forces in its national rhetoric has also fundamentally changed. At the time, during North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un's announcement of the new law to the Supreme National Assembly, he denounced future nuclear talks, stating "We have drawn the line of no retreat regarding our nuclear weapons so that there will be no longer any bargaining over them ("Respected comrade," 2022). Reinforcing that position, North Korea has removed the traditional conditional framing of its nuclear forces. Past formulations had always presented nuclear weapons as necessary as long as the United States maintained its "hostile policy" against North Korea. However, since September 2022, the program is no longer framed in this way, but rather, it is characterized as key to safeguarding the country and its interests.

In late October 2023, Kim announced that a constitutional amendment had been passed that "ensures the country's right to existence and development, deter war and protect regional and global peace by rapidly developing nuclear weapons to a higher level" (Respected comrade, 2023). This enshrines into North Korean law the legal and institutional basis to continue these pursuits, moving beyond a policy line and codifying it as a right and duty of the state. He explained how the country's nuclear weapons were for self-defense against a "protracted confrontation with the U.S.… and its vassal forces" and stressed the need for "exponentially boosting the production of nuclear weapons and diversifying the nuclear strike means and deploying them" (Respected comrade, 2023).

Evolving Nuclear Threats

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has had a substantial impact on the international community's thinking about the utility and potential use of nuclear weapons. One of the most important effects of the war has been the revival of concerns that nuclear weapons might actually be used in battle, not just for strategic purposes. Moreover, Russia's nuclear threats have not been limited to just its weapons. Its early seizure of the Chernobyl and Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plants have grossly violated global norms about the conduct of war and continue to threaten the potential for large-scale nuclear disaster in the course of a conflict. While Russia has not yet made good on these threats, it still could if the situation gets dire enough and if victory is Moscow's only acceptable outcome.

Beijing has reportedly conveyed to Russian President Vladimir Putin directly that nuclear use is a red line and that if Russia chooses that option, it will cost it its relationship with China (Porter, 2023). Although China is not open about its military support to Russia, there is evidence that weapons and provisions are being provided (Hawkins, 2023). Losing that support could be a game changer in Russia's ability to carry on its warfighting efforts.

Exactly how much weight Chinese President Xi Jinping's warning to Putin actually carries, however, is yet unknown. In November 2022, Xi told German Chancellor Olaf Scholz he "opposed the use of nuclear force in Europe," calling on the international community to "reject the threat of nuclear weapons" and advocating against nuclear war (Bloomberg, 2022). This was generally interpreted as China drawing a red line against both nuclear threats and nuclear use and sending a strong implicit message to Russia. But this did not end Russia's nuclear threats, at least not fully. Despite this warning, Russia started deploying tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus, testing the limits of what is considered a threat, as well as Beijing's resolve (Kelly & Osborne, 2023). Hence, Beijing's subsequent explicit warning to Putin was issued.

At the same time, it is unclear if China's red line would lead to only the loss of Chinese support or if it included a willingness for Beijing to join military efforts against Russia as well—the former likely being a warning Russia believes it could hedge against by building up other partnerships; the latter probably a much more consequential threat.

In this case, Moscow's recent focus and willingness to openly engage in military cooperation with North Korea makes sense. While North Korea offers nothing close to the level of support China can and has provided, it is a nuclear-armed state willing to support Putin's war in Ukraine, as well as his "war against the West." Kim is one of the few leaders who has openly pledged both political and tactical support to Russia from the beginning—a commitment that came at little political cost to Kim but was sure to be rewarded. And sure enough, he is now receiving those rewards in the form of deepening economic, political, and military cooperation at a level not seen since the Soviet era. How far that cooperation goes depends largely on whether Moscow only wants North Korea's supply of munitions to prolong warfighting or if it believes there is a role for a strong North Korean partner in Russia's war against the West.

It also provides a useful mechanism for sending implicit nuclear threats to Ukraine's supporters, trying to discourage further assistance, without openly threatening nuclear use against Ukraine.

Moreover, North Korea's heightened sense of confidence in its own nuclear status and place among the nuclear club has changed the way Pyongyang poses nuclear threats to its adversaries. Rather than previous, almost cartoonish assertions about turning Seoul into a "sea of fire," for instance, North Korea has opted for a more nuanced approach. This includes frequent reminders of its capabilities, emphasizing the ones of greatest concern (tactical), and announcing technologies it plans to develop further. Additionally, by enshrining its nuclear strategy and WMD development plans into law, it can pose indirect threats by simply reiterating these "obligations." For instance, a recent note by a "military commentator" used the formulation:

> *The armed forces of the DPRK are filled with the determination to faithfully fulfill their constitutional obligations for defending the national sovereignty and territorial integrity and the rights and interests of the people by responding to the reckless military provocations of war maniacs with prompt, overwhelming and decisive counteraction. The DPRK will as ever continue its military action to bolster up the deterrence and ensure the strategic security in the Korean peninsula and the region [Emphasis added]. (DPRK military action, 2023)*

In this sense, both Russia and North Korea are threading the needle of what Beijing might consider defying its warning and testing its red lines. The fact that they are both engaged in such behavior presents just enough solidarity to make both indirect threat strategies credible enough for its adversaries to question China's actual influence over the situation. In doing so, however, it puts Beijing in a bind, as both Russia and North Korea continue to engage in behaviors that work against Chinese national interests. Yet, due to larger geopolitical concerns—such as the U.S.-China rivalry and Beijing's perception of Western-led encirclement in East Asia—Beijing still sends bilateral signals of political support to both partners in its own hedging strategy against a hardening U.S.-led security bloc in the region.

Implications for South Korea and the U.S.-South Korea Alliance

These trends in North Korea's nuclear capabilities and posture challenge South Korea's confidence in its own capabilities and the strength of its alliance relations. Is the alliance prepared for potential nuclear use on the Korean Peninsula? Moreover, since the idea of tactical nuclear use seems more plausible than ever, there is greater questioning in South Korea of whether North Korea's nuclear first use is the only condition under which Washington would consider nuclear use against the North and if Seoul can really afford to take that risk. Should it even have to? These kinds of questions continue to fuel the South Korean debate over its own nuclear future, contemplating whether extended deterrence is sufficient in the long run and the feasibility of its alternatives. What is unclear is what level of overmatch South

Korea needs to feel confident in its own strength of forces and if that can truly be achieved without a nuclear deterrent of its own. This debate will only gain momentum as North Korea's capabilities expand.

Russia-North Korea military cooperation brings an undeniable Korean security component to the war in Ukraine, with growing reasons for Seoul to work to prevent a Russian victory. North Korea's support for Palestine and historic cooperation with Hamas and Hezbollah introduce a Korean security component to the war in Gaza as well, although one less compelling for South Korea as the net effect is less likely to directly affect power dynamics on the Korean Peninsula. Together, these conflicts test South Korea's role as an alliance partner and its self-declared status as a "global pivotal state." What kind of support of U.S. efforts beyond the Korean Peninsula is it both obligated and prepared to fulfill? Should it be doing more? Does the United States or the international community expect it to do more, and will there be consequences for falling short of expectations? Furthermore, does Russia's military cooperation make Seoul more or less willing to aid Ukraine, given the growing security dilemma on its doorstep? Certainly, Moscow is betting on it dissuading South Korea from getting more involved.

Amid this shifting geopolitical landscape, the uncertainty of America's political future is also a cause for concern for policymakers in South Korea and among other U.S. allies as well. Currently, with an administration in Washington focused on shoring up its alliances, it makes it easy for a conservative administration in Seoul to push for deeper alignment and cultivate a greater sense of collective security. But this progress should not be taken for granted, especially if and when the cast of political leaders in both countries will change. Building in as much institutionalization of consulting and cooperation mechanisms as possible now can make alliance relations more resilient to political winds in the future, but nothing is irreversible.

While the debate over South Korea's potential nuclearization has quieted for the moment, it still lingers. Scenarios, where a future U.S. president would again call for major increases in burden sharing and threaten to withdraw U.S. troops from the Korean Peninsula, would breathe new life into those debates and likely tip the scales domestically toward taking their chance, especially if North Korea's WMD capabilities continue to expand.

The cost of deterrence failure is likely a devastating war on the Korean Peninsula—one that is likely to involve nuclear use. The cost of assurance failure in South Korea could easily lead to its nuclearization, likely to be followed by Japan and the unraveling of the nuclear nonproliferation regime. Finding a new equilibrium on the Korean Peninsula to help prevent both kinds of failure will take more than bolstering relations with our allies but finding ways to mitigate the negative security trends in the region as well.

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India's Perspective on Regional Security in the Asia-Pacific in light of Russia's actions

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Ever since the end of the Cold War, successive Indian governments have been investing heavily in the Asia-Pacific region, now more popularly referred to as the Indo-Pacific region. However, some writings, especially some originating from Europe, maintain that the term Indo-Pacific is still in flux. Different understandings of the Indo-Pacific exist. India simultaneously engages all the major regional actors—the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Australia, Japan, South Korea, and the United States. The level, nature, and pace of engagement with these actors has varied; India's focus, for years, was on ASEAN and the United States.

India announced its Look East Policy in 1991, which later became the Act West Policy, initially focused on Southeast Asian countries but later moved eastwards to court Japan and South Korea. It was a two-pronged strategy: engaging institutionally through ASEAN and involving individual countries bilaterally. Although geoculture was not pronounced, and geoeconomics and geopolitics appeared to be the factors that counted in the strategy, gradually, India and other countries emphasized the cultural past in their points of connection.

The Look East Policy was pursued immediately after the end of the Cold War; it was a mix of economic, political, security, cultural, and other components. When India pushed its Look East Policy, the cultural element was subtle and greatly subdued. The predominant content of the Look East Policy was economic. The liberalized Indian economy was looking for new partners, and it was not disappointed after its pursuit of the Policy. However, even in the early years of its Look East Policy, India espoused the significance of the connection between economic and other issues. In his address to ASEAN, one Indian leader pointed out, "Attainment of peace, stability, and security in the most inclusive sense of the terms, accelerated economic growth and ecological sustainability require both ASEAN and India to play a cooperative role-bilaterally and plurilaterally" (Chidambaram, 1997).

By 1997, the Indian government acknowledged that the Asia-Pacific countries contributed to "over 50% of our cumulative foreign direct investment inflows since 1991 and for about 40% of our global trade" (*Opening Statement By H.E. Mr. P. Chidambaram Minister of Finance of India*, 1997, July 28). The biggest beneficiary of the investment was economic infrastructure, such as roads and power. Joint ventures became a new normal. Engagement with regional political organizations became part of the Look East Policy. Institutional engagement was accomplished through different stages, such as Sectoral Dialogue Partner and Full Dialogue Partner. India also became a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum. The Indian strategy

underpinning its Look East/Act West Policy struggled to succeed. The basic objective of the Indian strategy seemed to be the engagement with and construction of a new region for India going beyond South Asia, the region in which India was and still is perceived to be located. The Indian leadership never liked reducing the reference of South Asia to the binary—India-Pakistan. Moreover, it feels that the size of the country requires it to search for a proper region in which its potential and identity can find proper expression. Southeast Asia, an economically vibrant and culturally closer to India for several centuries, appeared as a candidate region. The Indo-Pacific region in general and Southeast Asia in particular have become relevant for its extended neighborhood policy as well. The same was the case with other actors. The United States, the sole superpower or great power, has become an Indian partner in the region, and has also come out with a strategy to involve its Atlantic partners in the management of regional affairs. Australia is also becoming active in the region; and the globally known Australia, United Kingdom (UK), and U.S. nuclear submarine deal (AUKUS) is highlighting Asia-Pacific security dynamics.

India's Economic and Security Interests

In 2015, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi called his government's Indo-Pacific strategy SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region), which means "ocean." This acronym captures the gist of Indian interests, and thus involvement, in the Asia-Pacific/Indo-Pacific. Modi envisioned that a secure and stable region may bring about peace and prosperity for all its inhabitants. In fact, even before the announcement, India understood the richness and diversity of the economy of the region and all the benefits of cooperating with such a region.

Today, India has increasingly been raising its stakes in the economy of the region for a number of reasons. Supply chain resilience is considered of the utmost importance for the countries of the Asia-Pacific. The world has realized the folly of over-concentrated and risky supply chains, and India endorses the thinking that underscores the need for a "transparent, trustworthy, dependable and reliable supply chain" (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, 2021, September 15). Although it is working towards this kind of supply chain with the friendly countries of other parts of the world, its focus in recent years has been on the Asia-Pacific.

India has joined the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) for Prosperity, launched in May 2022. The IPEF has four major components, namely, trade, tax and anti-corruption, clean energy, decarbonization and infrastructure, and supply chains. As of now, it may appear to be a framework involving only 14 countries, but quite significantly, these 14 countries contribute to 40 percent of global Gross Domestic Product and transact 28 percent of trade in global goods and *services* (*Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity,* n.d.). India strongly supports "fair, transparent, reciprocal and inclusive trade which promotes the interest of all" (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, 2021, September 15). In a framework meeting, India became part of the decision to set up an investment forum drawing

on the expertise of private and public sector participants to discover new clean energy sources. Regarding supply chain, one of the statements of the Ministry of Commerce declares:

> *Once implemented, the Supply Chain Agreement is expected to bring in several benefits to India and the other IPEF partner countries. Some of the key benefits expected are: potential shift of production centres in key goods/critical sectors to India; bolstering of domestic manufacturing capacities; giving a boost to Aatmanirbhar Bharat [self-reliant India] and Production Linked Initiatives schemes; mobilization of investments especially in production of key goods, logistics services and infrastructure; deeper integration of India in the Global Supply and Value Chains particularly of Indian MSMEs; enhanced exports from India; upward mobility in the value chains; mitigation of risks of economic disruptions to India from supply chain shocks/adverse events; creation of a seamless regional trade ecosystem facilitating flow of Indian products; enhanced trade facilitation including through digital exchange of trade documentation, quicker port clearances; joint Research and Development; and workforce development. (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, 2023, June 1)*

There was no direct discussion on the security implications of supply chain interruptions in the IPEF, based on information available in the public domain. However, India is aware of the impact of supply chain disruptions on India's security. From time to time, this fact is underlined in official documents and statements (for example, see Vice President's Secretariat, Government of India, 2022, February 24).

Like other countries in the region, India understands that the economic growth of the region will help its economy in multiple ways. It will enhance people's well-being and employment opportunities in the Asia-Pacific countries. Not only big companies but micro and small and medium Enterprises may find a new landscape for their development and innovation. New startups are also very active in the region and both exploring and realizing their potential. India is not shying away from economic competitiveness. The common prosperity of the economies of the region will bring prosperity to India as well. India also realizes that India's security and economic interests are well-connected in the region. The Indian Prime Minister stated,

> *Our interests in the region are vast, and our engagement is deep. In the Indian Ocean region, our relationships are becoming stronger. We are also helping build economic capabilities and improve maritime security for our friends and partners. We promote collective security through forums like Indian Ocean Naval Symposium. (Prime Minister's Office, 2018, June 1)*

Through different initiatives and partnerships, India is expected to reap benefits in new, advanced, and emerging technologies that are considered indispensable in a dynamic world. These technologies are considered essential for the renovation and modernization of industry

and security. Among these technologies, India is paying serious attention to Artificial Intelligence, and is expected to play a major role in promoting the digital economy with the Asia-Pacific countries. In IPEF meetings, India is highlighting its National Payments Corporation of India and Unified Payment Interface, which in turn tell the story of digital public infrastructure in India.

As mentioned, India sees benefits in partnership in vaccine and pharmaceutical production, as well as capacity building and transparency in its health information system, by engaging Asia-Pacific countries. The Quad countries are, of course, the natural partners in the pharmaceutical sector. South Korea, which is an established pharmaceutical power in the region, and the emerging pharmaceutical countries—Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia—are also being approached by India**.** These partnerships may enable India to emerge as a pharmaceutical hub. It has been working to introduce advanced technologies into pharmaceutical production, and collaboration with these countries may be beneficial. Indian companies may get a new market for their pharmaceutical products, especially generic drugs outside the region. India is already becoming a key player in health diplomacy. India also wants to collaborate with Asia-Pacific countries in areas such as semiconductors and critical minerals. These are considered relevant for security as well (Ministry of Defence, 2023, September 6).

For years, the Indian government has been reiterating "a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific Region in the pursuit of shared security and prosperity" (Ministry of Defence, 2023, September 6). Over the years, India has been raising its economic and strategic stakes in the Asia-Pacific; quite naturally, then, it has also deeply engaged in the security management of the region and shares the security concerns of regional countries. India understands that complex security challenges emanating from and in the region need a unique response pattern, on which India wants to work with its partners that have stakes in the region.

Traditionally, the Asia-Pacific, or Indo-Pacific, was essentially an arena of maritime security for India. Quite interestingly, China maintains a strong dominance over the top 15 seaports not only in Asia but in the world. India underlines the significance of sea lane protection and assumes the role of net security provider against regional state and non-state actors. Now, the Indian government wants to go beyond this construct and engage with the region as a "a full-fledged geo-strategic construct" (Ministry of Defense, 2023, September 26). However, that does not mean that it wants to get into the paradigm of the balance of power or act as a balancer of China. It is opposed to the aggressive designs of China in the South China sea. India seemingly favors resisting Chinese expansion without directly confronting China.

Indeed, the Asia-Pacific is in India's backyard, and connectivity is increasingly manifesting itself in the non-maritime dimensions. The ongoing or planned 30-plus projects in air, road, and railroad connectivity under the Belt and Road Initiative also raise serious security issues. The Indian government actively participates in initiatives such as the Indo-Pacific Armies Chiefs'

Conference, the Indo-Pacific Armies Management Seminar, and the Senior Enlisted Leaders Forum. Participation in these forums may help with better coordination and interoperability at the time of joint action.

Digital connectivity is adding further complexity to Asia-Pacific security. India recognizes the challenges of data protection and cyber security, as do almost all the forums active in the Asia-Pacific. In an interconnected and globalized world, security for one is basically security for all.

India also prefers sharing best practices for countering several other traditional and non-traditional regional security issues that require coordination and cooperation between states. Illicit networks transact not only goods for Weapons of Mass Destruction but other goods and services for criminals, money launderers, terrorists, small arms and drug traffickers, among others in the region. Handling these issues is necessary for India's security as well. India has also been highlighting its role as one of the first responders in disaster situations, and it contributes to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. India also has interests in managing many other Asia-Pacific non-traditional security issues such as food security and environmental security (Ministry of Defence, 2023, September 15).

India's defense industry has also been exhibiting its interests in the Asia-Pacific/Indo-Pacific. Recently, a total of 31 corporate India entities exhibited their ability to manufacture high-quality military equipment for the Asia-Pacific region. Some of the key highlights included drones, counter-drone systems, modular firing ranges, small arms, devices based on Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) technology, surveillance systems, protective gear, self-propelled artillery guns, military vehicles, and more. The countries of the Indo-Pacific region are confronting an aggressive and expansionist China. If these countries look towards China for their arms supply, they may have to compromise with China's aggressiveness. These countries will become or remain vulnerable. Indian defense industry may help the countries of the region in procuring cheap weapon systems or spare parts thus promoting affordable defense for the Indo-Pacific. The defense relationship will also facilitate the development of a complex security interdependence between India and these countries, which could be detrimental to regional security dynamics.

Has the War in Ukraine Changed India's National Economic and Security Interests?

India may have taken a position on the Russia-Ukraine Conflict that appears distinct or different from that of its key partners in the region, but its economic and security interests are still grounded in the reality of the Asia-Pacific. Most of the ASEAN countries have the same position that India has taken in the conflict. Like India, these countries do not support the war or "armed hostilities" in Ukraine, and "seek peaceful resolution" of the conflict, supported by dialogue (*ASEAN Foreign Ministers' statement on the situation in Ukraine,* 2022,

February 26). Moreover, ASEAN also maintains, "For peace, security, and harmonious co-existence to prevail, it is the responsibility of all parties to uphold the principles of mutual respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and equal rights of all nations" (Ministry of External Affairs, 2023). Initially, even Japan was hesitant to tow the strong European line on Russia, and India and Japan have aligned their interests, working very closely with other Quad partners.

In fact, the very existence of the IPEF began in the middle of the Russia and Ukraine conflict. The IPEF is meeting regularly and bolstering all four major verticals (1) trade, (2) supply chains, (3) clean energy, decarbonization, and infrastructure, and (4) tax and anti-corruption. The details of India's supply chain interests in the Indo-Pacific region were provided when the Russia-Ukraine conflict was on. The components of Indo-Pacific economic interests promoted through IPEF are even reflected in the New Delhi G-20 declaration (Ministry of External Affairs, 2023). Sanctions on Russia and disturbances in Ukraine have made the Indo-Pacific region more important for India's economy.

As for security, there is no change on the Indian stance. At the beginning of the conflict, it may have appeared that disagreement between India and the United States could adversely affect the Quad and the two countries' cooperative regional strategy. However, their shared interest in countering increasing Chinese assertiveness and aggressive behaviour reinforced the need to continue working together in the region. The Asia-Pacific security scenario and India's stakes in it have, by and large, remained unaltered. Not only is India participating in the IPEF, but it is also upholding its stance in favor of a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific.

Has the War in Ukraine Changed India's Perception of the Drivers of Regional Insecurity in the Asia-Pacific? Does the war in Ukraine Have Implications for India's Relations with Russia and China?

The war in Ukraine has reinforced the already close relationship between China and North Korea, as well as between Russia and China/North Korea. As discussed, China has been a major source of instability and insecurity in the region. The Indian government may not publicly state the global apprehension of the emergence of a Russia-China alliance, but informally, the Indian government does have that fear. In unofficial circles, the emergence of a tacit but strong relationship between Russia and China is considered very daunting, though Indian officials avoid making any negative comments on Russia-China relations publicly or formally.

Similarly, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's train diplomacy with Russia, which eventually resulted in space technology diplomacy, has negative security implications for the region. Although Atlantic groups are concerned over the possible supply of North Korean arms and ammunition to Russia, Asia-Pacific security analysts are worried about the procurement of

advanced technology by North Korea. As the North Korea-China-Pakistan network certainly benefits all the actors involved in the network, the three countries may modernize their arsenals to make both India and the region more insecure.

Many in India, as in the West, were initially, and to an extent still are, of the view that the Ukraine war is taking away U.S. attention and resources from the Asia-Pacific. Optimists think that the United States is ensuring the war does not affect Asian military infrastructure. The United States stated, "And just since 2020, we've invested nearly $1.2 billion in security cooperation funding to ensure that Indo-Pacific countries can detect malign actors and deter coercion" (Austin, 2023). The U.S. government has assured India that it will continue to invest in the Quad's maritime initiative and Maritime Domain Awareness. U.S. regulatory issues are becoming reoriented for defense industry cooperation. At this stage, it is difficult to quantify the support for either side. Possibly, both sides have apprehension because of the lack of proper information.

Because of the Ukrainian conflict, several European leaders like Macron and the President of the European Union rushed to engage China when it was confronting its neighbors, including India and Taiwan. The European leaders did not sprint to salvage the situation in Asia, but instead to persuade China not to collaborate with Russia. The world believed that Macron and others had followed an appeasement policy vis-à-vis China. Although the Indian government did not come out openly against Macron's China visit, informally, no one seemed to be happy with Macron's visit. Later, he became the chief guest of India's Republic Day parade on January 26, 2024. Even if he did not intend to harm India's security, his visit looked like an easing of global pressure on an aggressive China.

At the same time, the Ukraine-Russia Conflict is a wake-up call for the countries that were somehow complacent and had concluded that war is a matter of the past. The prolonged armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine demonstrates that a nation-state facing a belligerent adversary may have to review its weapons warehouse and inventory. A fast-depleting stock could be a sign of conceding an edge to its adversary. However, this ought not mean that regional states may be tempted by the use of force. We need to remember politics, not weapons, engenders a dispute.

Several defense companies have invested in manufacturing weapons because the conflict has exposed the defense preparedness of the countries supplying arms and ammunition to Ukraine. These companies' countries are reviewing the supply chain resilience of weapons manufacturing. India, too, has to undertake naval and general military modernization to instill special confidence and boost its plan for increased involvement in the region.

Are the Security of Asia and Europe Inseparable?

Fumio Kishida, the Japanese Prime Minister, wrote, "Ukraine is not only a matter of European security, but also a challenge to the free and open international order based on the rule of

law. Today's Ukraine may be tomorrow's east Asia. We are determined to uphold the rule of law, firmly rejecting the rule of force" (Kishida, 2023, May 19). Although a few Western countries resist the idea of merging the European and Indo-Pacific theaters, the United States has persuaded its North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) allies to expand their attention to the Indo-Pacific as well. In fact, the NATO 2022 Strategic Concept paper has highlighted the China problem quite explicitly. Several major European countries, including France, have announced their commitments to the Indo-Pacific.

Although Russia and China are careful about revealing the nature of their relationship after the beginning of the War in Ukraine, like the other countries of the world, India is wary of the close bilateral relationship between China and Russia. Notwithstanding the diversified military procurement base of Russia, China will be crucial for Russia. India is not supportive of Russia's military operation in Ukraine, but it has kept Russia engaged. China will try to take advantage of the situation. India understands quite well that global security needs to connect the security imperatives of both Asia and Europe. Instability in one region cannot leave the other region unaffected.

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Biographies

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Dr. Lawrence Kuznar is the Director of Cultural Sciences at NSI, Inc. He has a background in discourse analysis, decision theory, and mathematical and computational modeling. He has supported many U.S. Joint Staff Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA) projects, as well as work for the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL), the Army Corps of Engineers, and various private sector clients. Larry's discourse work has been used to provide anticipatory insights into violent non-state actors, such as ISIL and the Taliban, as well as state actors as varied as Iran, Pakistan, India, and North Korea. He has also contributed to NSI's computational modeling of social conflict. In addition to his position at NSI, Larry is an Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at Indiana University–Purdue University, Fort Wayne, and his published work can be found in journals, such as Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict, North Korean Review, American Anthropologist, Political Studies, Current Anthropology, Evolution and Human Behavior, and Social Science Computer Review.

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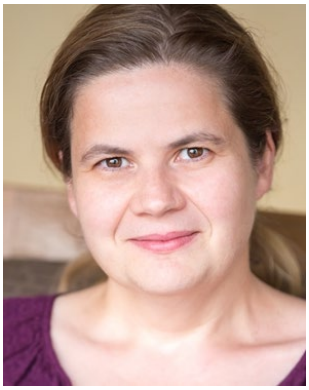

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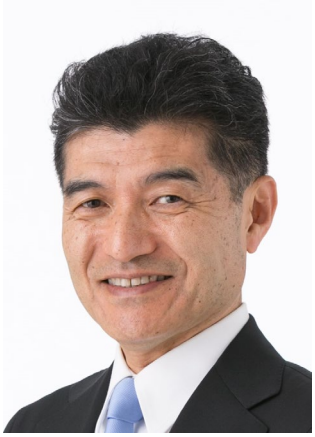

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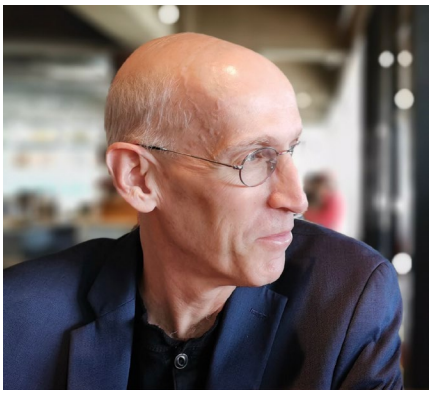

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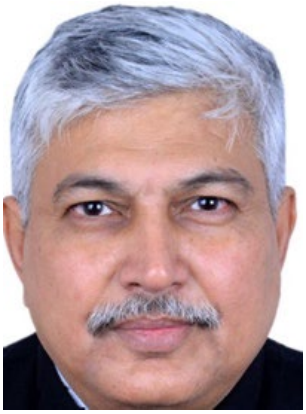
Ms. Town holds a B.A. in East Asian Studies and International Relations from Westmar University and a Master of International Affairs from Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs.

Dr. Rajiv Nayan



Dr Rajiv Nayan is a Senior Research Associate at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi. He has been working with the Institute since 1993, where he specializes in international relations and security issues, especially the politics of nuclear disarmament, export control, non-proliferation, and arms control. Rajiv was a Visiting Research Fellow at the Japan Institute of International Affairs, Tokyo, where he published his monograph- *Non-Proliferation Issues in South Asia*. He was also a Senior Researcher at the Peace Research Institute Oslo, a Senior Visiting Research Fellow at King's College London, and a Visiting Fulbright Scholar at the Center on International Cooperation, New York University. He holds a Ph.D., a Master of Philosophy in Disarmament Studies, and a Master of Arts in International Relations from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. In his doctoral dissertation, he studied the implications of the Missile Technology Control Regime for Indian security and economy.

Rajiv Nayan has published books, papers in academic journals, and book chapters. His single-authored book, *The Global Strategic Trade Management* was published by Springer. His edited book, *Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and India*, was published by Routledge in May 2011, and he coedited *Pakistan's Security Dynamics and Nuclear Weapons* in 2022. His articles have also appeared in journals such as the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* and *Strategic Analysis*. His articles also have appeared in *Jane's Intelligence Review*.

Strategic Multilayer Assessment

Joint Staff, Deputy Director of Global Operations (DDGO)

Established in 2000, Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA) provides planning and decision support to combatant commands and other U.S. 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.

SMA addresses complex operational or technical challenges that transcend typical department boundaries and lie outside the core competencies or expertise of a single command or agency. SMA executes projects that require mixed method, multidisciplinary approaches and creates teams combining expertise from across the USG, academia, international partners, and the private sector. SMA is agnostic to outcome, emphasizing scientific rigor and thorough examination and analysis. SMA does not write policy, plans, or doctrine and does not perform intelligence analysis.

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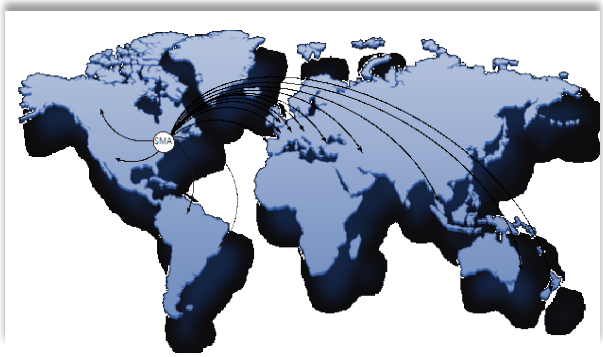

SMA holds weekly speaker series events featuring leading experts discussing emerging national security challenges facing the combatant commands, the Joint Force, U.S. allies, and the world. Access the event archives, which include audio or video recordings when available, written summaries of presentations, and speaker bios and briefing materials, at https://nsiteam.com/sma-speaker-series/

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For any questions, please contact Ms. Mariah Yager, SMA (mariah.c.yager.ctr@mail.mil).