# Domain Awareness Negative

## Notes

#### What is this file?

This is a file that the negative will use to respond directly to the Domain Awareness affirmative. It includes direct responses to the aff’s two advantages (miscalculation and competition). For a description of what those advantages say, you can look at the notes in the affirmative file.

This file also includes two offcase arguments that are specific to the domain awareness affirmative.

Strategic stability disadvantage:

This disadvantage argues that the affirmative would make nuclear attacks on the United States more likely because it would make Russia fear that they would be vulnerable to an aggressive US attack. Both Russia and the US are nuclear-armed countries with the two largest nuclear arsenals (by a lot). Nuclear weapons can be categorized into two categories: first strike and second strike capabilities. First strike capabilities are those that can be used when a country wants to initiate a nuclear attack. They are primarily offensive in purpose. Second strike capabilities are those that can be used to respond to a nuclear attack. These are generally hidden in some way (on nuclear submarines, underground, etc) to ensure that they can survive a country’s first attack.

This disadvantage argues that when both countries have roughly similar capabilities, “strategic stability” emerges because of “mutually assured destruction.” The US doesn’t want to attack Russia because they know Russia could respond with a powerful nuclear second strike. Russia doesn’t want to attack the US because they know the US could respond with a powerful nuclear second strike. The resulting deterrence ensures stability regardless of if diplomatic relations are good or not.

This disadvantage argues that the aff makes Russia fear that their second strike capabilities are no longer adequate. Enhancing domain awareness enhances missile defense against cruise missiles and allows the US to detect Russia’s nuclear submarines. Those two technologies are very important to Russia’s second strike.

If Russia fears their second strike capabilities are inadequate, then they will feel more pressure to launch a first strike against the US, since they feel like they would not stand a chance against the US if the US were the country to launch first.

Diplomacy CP

The diplomacy counterplan tries to prevent miscalculation and authoritarianism using trilateral talks (between the US, Russia, and China) and establishing crisis hotlines with the US. The cp argues that this solves miscalculation because we can have direct military-to-military communication to clearly articulate our intentions activities. It also argues that it solves the competition advantage by giving the US the ability to constrain aggressive Chinese behavior without having to overstretch our military capabilities.

#### How to use this file

In the 1nc

You want to read the 1NC header for offcase arguments. You may choose to read the offcase arguments from this file, or choose arguments from another negative file (for example, the China Soft Power disadvantage). If you introduce one of these offcase arguments, you need to read every card under the 1NC header during the 1NC.

You also must answer the affirmative’s 2 advantages by reading the “1NC Miscalculation Advantage Frontline” and “1NC Competition Advantage Frontline”. Ideally, you would be able to read every card under the 1NC header, but you may choose to take out some cards if you need to save time.

In the 2nc or 1nr

If you are extending an offcase argument, you need to directly respond to the arguments that the 2AC made against you. This file has cards under headers that start with “They Say:” that you can and should read. However, BEFORE you read the cards from a certain header, you should explain the 1NC evidence that makes that argument as well. So for instance, if you are extending the Strategic Stability DA, if you are answering “No Missile Defense Link”, you will want to explain the 1nc evidence that talks about why missile defense upsets strategic stability before reading the new cards.

If you are extending arguments on the advantages, you can read cards under the “Extend:” headers. Before you read those cards, you should explain the 1NC card that makes the argument you are extending. For example, if you are extending “Domain Awareness Fails” you will want to explain the 1NC “domain awareness fails” card before reading new 2NC or 1NR “domain awareness fails” extension cards.

In the 2nr

You should not be reading new evidence. You should be explaining the evidence that you read in the 1NC, 2NC, and 1NR.

## Strategic Stability Disadvantage

### 1NC Strategic Stability Disadvantage

#### The [first/next] offcase position is the Strategic Stability Disadvantage

#### The plan upends US-Russian strategic stability—the combination of submarine detection and missile defense cause Russian use-or-lose pressures

Kattan 19, policy analyst at Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), where he supports the Defense Science Board (Ari Kattan, 2-1-2019, “Emerging Submarine Detection Technologies and Implications for Strategic Stability” Center for Strategic and International Studies http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep22545.9) wtk

The U.S.-Russia relationship is defined by Russian fear of its own weaknesses (economic, technological, etc.) and paranoia about U.S. and NATO threats to its security. Russia currently fears U.S. conventional superiority20 and has invested in capabilities and tactics to circumvent it.21 It is embarking on a modernization program for its nuclear weapons in part because it feels insecure about the survivability of its nuclear forces as the United States increases its progress on ballistic missile defense. If the United States were able to track Russian nuclear-armed submarines with increased confidence, it could exacerbate these Russian fears even more, causing Russia to respond in destabilizing ways.

While it is true that Russia has never relied as much on submarine-based weapons as the United States has, the degradation of the survivability of Russia’s nuclear-armed submarines would likely cause Russia to compensate for this new vulnerability. This is especially true if continued advancements in precision strike make Russia’s air- and land-based nuclear forces more vulnerable. If Russia can no longer rely on hardening and concealment for survivability, they may double down on redundancy, producing and deploying larger numbers of nuclear weapons to complicate U.S. targeting and increase the odds that a retaliatory capability survives any U.S. first strike. This, in turn, could put the final nail in the coffin of arms control and lead to an arms race with the United States that drains resources, intensifies mistrust, and makes miscalculation more likely. In short, a significant U.S. advantage in submarine detection (which would likely develop in parallel with a U.S. advantage in remote sensing and precision strike capabilities in other domains) would likely be destabilizing due to Russian sensitivity over its technological inferiority.

This could compel Russia not only to increase redundancy with a larger number of warheads, but to change the doctrine governing their use as well. It is possible that in an environment of degraded second-strike stability, Russia could move further towards a first-use doctrine to deter escalation and to avoid the “lose them or lose them” dilemma.

#### Upending strategic stability causes extinction-risk arms races, nuclearization of space, and drives adversaries together against the US.

Kluth 25, writer at Bloomberg, former Lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley, MS in International Relations from the London School of Economics, BA from William’s College (Andreas Kluth, May 23, 2025, “A ‘Golden Dome’ Could Make America Less Safe,” Bloomberg, https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2025-05-23/a-golden-dome-could-make-america-less-safe)

Start with the so-called security dilemma that afflicts all major (and minor) powers, with or without nukes. Hoping to makes itself safer, country A develops new defenses, but those defenses in turn make country B feel less safe, prompting it to arm or escalate and thereby increase the threat to country A. At worst, both A and B enter a spiral toward war that leaves everybody more vulnerable, or even dead.

Even short of that, any major new weapons system, offensive or defensive, is destabilizing. One example was Reagan’s SDI. The nuclear confrontation between the US and the Soviet Union had by the early 1980s become stable thanks to Mutual Assured Destruction: Both powers were vulnerable to a first strike by the adversary but also had enough nukes to answer with a second strike that would obliterate the enemy, so that each deterred the other.

Star Wars promised (Americans) and threatened (Soviets) to remove one element of this MAD balance: America’s vulnerability. The Kremlin, from 1985 led by Mikhail Gorbachev, didn’t know whether SDI would ever work but had to assume it could. In such a scenario, Washington might feel protected from a second (retaliatory) strike by Moscow, which could predispose it in a conventional conflict to escalate to a preemptive nuclear attack. As a result, Star Wars, even though it was defensive, made the Soviets feel less safe.

The Kremlin had no good options. Economically and technologically, the Soviet Union was so far behind the US that building its own missile-defense system was out of the question. If SDI had come close to realization, the Soviets would have had to contemplate their own preemptive strike against the US before it became invulnerable — the ultimate disaster. As it was, Gorbachev made SDI, along with missiles and warheads, the subject of his arms-control negotiations with Reagan. (A different leader might have acted less sagely.)

The situation today is different. First, the US faces not just one threat but several: the old nuclear “peer” in Russia, the “near-peer” rising nuclear power of China, the rogue atomic actors in North Korea (and possibly Iran if it builds a bomb), and unpredictable players such as Pakistan. The main antagonists in war games are Russia and China. They could collude in an attack on the US. Unlike the old Soviet Union, China in particular can also match the US economically and technologically and build its own dome or new and more diabolical weapons.

It is already doing that, in fact. Like the US and Russia, China nowadays has much faster missiles that can take more eccentric flight paths and carry more independently targeted warheads, overwhelming almost any defensive system by sheer numbers. Beijing also has a hypersonic glide vehicle. Whereas ballistic missiles have to re-enter the atmosphere in a predictable arc, these vehicles can maneuver in the atmosphere, concealing their target — and all of it at many times the speed of sound. If Golden Dome mainly looks up at the skies, it might not catch these death darts coming in low from the sides.

Moreover, many of the Golden Dome’s sensors and interceptors would be in space. As Seth Moulton, a congressman on the House Armed Services Committee, pointed out during a hearing, the Russians are reportedly preparing to place nukes up there. Why wouldn’t they, or the Chinese, detonate those at the start of an attack to take out the American space interceptors first? (Responding to Golden Dome, the Chinese this week warned that it might turn “outer space into a battlefield.”)

And why only look up if the threat could also come from below? As Moulton observed, submarines can launch nukes too and “you can run a boat up into Los Angeles Harbor, right? It’s clear that Golden Dome is not designed to defend against that.”

In short, new American defenses, even before they become operational, will force adversaries to recalculate their own assumptions and strategies. The Chinese have already said that they are “gravely concerned” about Golden Dome and worry that it will jeopardize “strategic balance and stability.” One of their fears is that the US, feeling secure from retaliation, could blackmail them with nuclear threats to stand down in a conflict over Taiwan.

### They Say: “Case Turns DA”

#### If we win arguments on the case that prove arctic war won’t happen in the status quo, we beat this argument

#### US-Russia tensions are decreasing which increases the chance of effective arms control

Huasheng 25, Professor, Fudan University; Senior Fellow of Beijing Club for International Dialogue. (Zhao, 3-14-2025, “The New ‘Reset’ of US-Russia Relations and Its Possible Prospects” https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/the-new-reset-of-us-russia-relations/) wtk

Since the Ukrainian crisis, and especially since the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in 2022, US-Russia relations have been on a downward spiral, a trajectory many believed would remain “stable” for a long time, even after the conflict’s end. However, almost overnight, without any prior warning, the United States changed its policy, initiated dialogue with Russia, and quickly began efforts to restore relations. Simultaneously, US-EU relations deteriorated, and Ukraine was effectively abandoned by the United States. In the history of great powers, such a sudden and subversive shift in a country’s diplomatic trajectory, without any fundamental changes in conditions, is extremely rare, though not unprecedented. This development defies the general laws of international politics. The changes in the United States have dramatically altered the international landscape and significantly transformed the course of Russian-American relations.

US-Russia relations have experienced numerous ups and downs over the past three decades. In the early 1990s, under the enthusiastic efforts of Presidents Boris Yeltsin and Bill Clinton, the two nations entered a “honeymoon period,” and in 1993, they declared themselves strategic partners. However, this optimism was short-lived. Due to NATO’s eastward expansion, the Kosovo War, and disputes over Iran, Iraq, arms control, Chechnya, and other issues, US-Russian relations deteriorated into a “cold peace.”

The inaugurations of George W. Bush Jr. and Vladimir Putin in 2000 renewed hopes for improved relations. Following the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001, US-Russian relations warmed rapidly, reaching a level of near “comrades-in-arms.” In May 2002, George W. Bush Jr. visited Russia and announced a new strategic partnership between the two countries. However, this rapprochement did not last long. After the US launched the Iraq War in 2003, US-Russian relations cooled once again.

In 2008, both the United States and Russia underwent presidential transitions, with Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev assuming office. This renewed optimism in US-Russia relations led the Obama administration to propose a “reset” strategy. While relations improved slightly, the effort was underpowered and hesitant. The “reset” proved unsustainable even before Medvedev’s presidency ended and was definitively abandoned when Putin returned to the Kremlin in 2012. The Ukraine crisis followed, along with a series of conflicts and sanctions against Russia, driving US-Russian relations to a new low.

In 2017, Trump, who was widely perceived as sympathetic toward Russia, became the US president. Many predicted that he would usher in a new era for US-Russia relations. Contrary to these expectations, however, domestic political constraints in the United States not only prevented any improvement but further strained the relationship. The US began supplying weapons to Ukraine and imposed additional sanctions on Russia. During a heated exchange with Zelensky in the Oval Office on February 28, 2025, Trump proudly declared that while his predecessor had given Ukraine “sheets,” he had provided missiles.

What, then, are the prospects for US-Russia relations this time? Will the two nations repeat the cycle of past failures, or will they break free from this seemingly fatalistic pattern?

This latest shift in US-Russia relations differs from previous ones in several important ways, the most notable being that it has alleviated some of the persistent contradictions that have plagued the bilateral relationship since the Cold War.

Over the past 30 years, NATO’s eastward expansion has been the most significant obstacle in US-Russia relations. Russia vehemently opposes NATO’s expansion, viewing it as a strategic security threat, while NATO insists on continuing its enlargement. This has created an insurmountable barrier to improving US-Russian relations. The United States has been the primary driver of NATO’s expansion, often taking a more aggressive stance than Europe. At the 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest, it was President George W. Bush who pushed for Ukraine and Georgia to join the alliance, a move only thwarted by opposition from German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

Now, the Trump administration has made it clear that Ukraine is unlikely to join NATO in the near future, effectively ruling out the possibility. While this does not fundamentally resolve the issue, it marks a significant shift. Russia insists on formal guarantees at the level of international law, which it wants included in any final peace treaty. The process of Ukraine’s accession to NATO has been ongoing since the 2008 Bucharest summit, and at the February 2025 Washington Summit commemorating NATO’s 75th anniversary, it was declared that Ukraine’s path to membership was “irreversible.” From Russia’s perspective, these political positions must be formally corrected.

In any case, the new US policy has significantly eased tensions between Russia and the United States, raising hopes of removing one of the most contentious issues in their relationship. If Ukraine were to join a European-oriented military alliance in the future, the resulting conflict would primarily involve Russia and Europe, not Russia and the United States. Should NATO continue to fragment and weaken, or even disintegrate, the issue of NATO enlargement would naturally disappear from the US-Russia agenda.

Security issues have always been central to US-Russia relations. The US has long viewed Russia as a security threat and adversary, a stance enshrined in official strategy documents, including the National Security Strategy (2017) and the National Defense Strategy (2018) during Trump’s first term, as well as the 2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance and the 2022 National Defense Strategy Report under Biden.

Since his return to office, however, Trump’s perspective has shifted. He now downplays Russia’s security threat to the United States, viewing Russia primarily as a threat to Europe. America’s new Secretary of Defense, Pete Hegseth, speaking at a meeting of the Ukrainian Defense Contact Group in December 2024, stated that the US security focus would shift from Europe to the Asia-Pacific, with Europe taking primary responsibility for its own security. This indicates that while the Trump administration has not yet formally redefined Russia’s security threat, the trend is clear: Russia’s perceived threat to the US has diminished. If the Russia-Ukraine conflict can be resolved through a peace agreement, it would further reinforce this shift. Although both China and Russia are officially defined as security threats by the US, China is considered a “comprehensive and persistent threat,” while Russia is seen as an “acute threat,” largely due to the ongoing war in Ukraine. Should the war end, Russia’s perceived threat level would likely decrease further.

To a certain extent, Trump has moved away from value-based diplomacy, a traditional pillar of American liberal foreign policy and a major source of tension in US-Russia relations. Value-based diplomacy is fundamentally incompatible with Russia’s diplomatic philosophy, leading to ideological and policy clashes between the two nations. The US often divides the world based on ideology, transcends international law, and interferes in other countries’ internal affairs under the guise of promoting democracy, even orchestrating “color revolutions” to legitimize the overthrow of governments.

It is important to note that value-based diplomacy is not purely ideological; it is also driven by geopolitical interests. The regimes targeted by “color revolutions” are often those disliked by the West, while the new governments that emerge are typically pro-Western. The West has labeled Russia an authoritarian state, opposing its values and branding it an “outcast” in the global political moral system. This has created an invisible barrier between the West and Russia. Trump, however, is notoriously dismissive of ideology in favor of practical interests. He is willing to engage with any country for mutual benefit and will not hesitate to confront any nation, regardless of its ideology, if interests conflict. In doing so, Trump has at least reduced the impact of ideological factors on US-Russia relations.

Since Trump’s return to office, there is a possibility that Russia and the United States could restart strategic arms reduction negotiations. Nuclear arms control has long been a cornerstone of US-Russia security relations. The New START Treaty is set to expire in February 2026. Given the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, negotiations on a new treaty have been stalled. If Russia and the US can resume talks and reach a new agreement, it would have a significant positive impact on easing tensions between the two nations.

### They Say: “Strategic Stability Fails”

#### Strategic stability works in the status quo because Russia and China don’t perceive BMD as threatening their second-strike

Brown 25, Professor of Political Science at Temple University (James D. J. Brown, 5-19-2025, “What Will the U.S. Golden Dome Missile Defense Mean for Russia?” https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2025/05/golden-dome-missile-russia?lang=en) wtk

There are practical reasons for the development of Golden Dome. The United States’ existing system of ballistic missile defense centers on forty ground-based interceptors at Fort Greely, Alaska, plus a further four at California’s Vandenburg Space Force Base. That system is over twenty years old and was designed to offer protection against an accidental or rogue missile launch, not the strategic arsenals of Russia or China. Additionally, the ground-based interceptors provide limited protection against hypersonic weapons.

#### Putin’s shift under the Trump administration creates conditions for strategic stability

Charap and Rief 25, \*Distinguished Chair in Russia and Eurasia Policy and a senior political scientist at RAND. \*\*senior international/defense researcher at RAND, served as US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Threat Reduction and Arms Control. (\*Samuel Charap, \*\*Kingston Reif, 6-5-2025, “Can the US and Russia return to dialogue on nuclear arms control?” https://tomorrowsaffairs.com/can-the-us-and-russia-return-to-dialogue-on-nuclear-arms-control) wtk

While then-President Joe Biden’s administration did attempt to engage the Kremlin on the issue of strategic stability, Putin rejected these overtures, stating that the US could not hope for strategic stability if it sought Russia’s “strategic defeat” in Ukraine.

Putin’s shift

But the situation has changed. In a little-noticed shift after Trump took office, Putin called for bilateral engagement on arms control without explicitly insisting on a full halt to US military aid to Ukraine as a precondition.

Putin’s shift and Trump’s stated desire to “denuclearize” has created an opportunity for the US and Russia to prove that nuclear arms control is still viable.

### They Say: “No Missile Defense Link”

#### Enhancing US BMD causes Russian nuclear modernization and exotic weapons

Brown 25, Professor of Political Science at Temple University (James D. J. Brown, 5-19-2025, “What Will the U.S. Golden Dome Missile Defense Mean for Russia?” https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2025/05/golden-dome-missile-russia?lang=en) wtk

What does all this mean for Russia? Trump presents Golden Dome as a mechanism for promoting stability and peace. He has long been skeptical of nuclear weapons, describing them as “big monsters” and saying: “It would be great if we could all denuclearize.” His hope is that Golden Dome will allow the United States to reduce its reliance on nuclear weapons. This is because if the United States has a reliable means of ensuring the failure of an attack on its homeland (deterrence by denial), it will need less capability to strike at adversaries (deterrence by punishment).

Needless to say, this is not how strategists in Moscow view matters. In 2002, the United States unilaterally withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Since then, Russian officials have consistently warned of the destabilizing effects of missile defense. In 2019, Russia’s foreign ministry condemned the United States’ then more modest missile defense plans as proof of “Washington’s desire to ensure uncontested military domination in the world.” Their concern is that, secure behind its defenses, the United States could not be deterred from aggression.

Washington’s response was always that its missile defenses were only to counter the limited threats from North Korea and Iran, and in no way undermined Russia’s large, sophisticated arsenal. This argument—which was never fully accepted by Moscow—has now been cast aside. In what represents an epochal change in U.S. policy, Golden Dome is explicitly directed not only against “rogue adversaries,” but also against “peer” and “near-peer” states (i.e. Russia and China).

Moscow’s experts will remain confident that even with its current capabilities, Russia’s strategic arsenal could overcome Golden Dome thanks to countermeasures such as decoys and jamming devices. There is also the option of “saturation,” i.e. overcoming defenses by launching more missiles than can be intercepted.

However, high confidence is not sufficient in the world of deterrence. Since the survival of the nation is at stake, strategists must proceed from the worst-case scenario and assume that Golden Dome would be effective at least against a Russian second strike.

Russia will therefore need to respond. That will entail accelerating existing efforts to modernize each leg of the nuclear triad by replacing Soviet-era delivery systems with newer Russian designs.

We can also expect renewed emphasis on exotic weapons that promise to evade all conceivable missile defense systems. In 2018, Putin famously unveiled what were subsequently dubbed his nuclear “super weapons.” These include the Burevestnik, a ground-launched, nuclear-powered cruise missile with supposedly unlimited range, and Poseidon, a nuclear-powered torpedo that is intended for strikes on aircraft carrier groups or coastal infrastructure. Since Golden Dome focuses exclusively on aerial attacks, it is likely that Poseidon will become an even greater priority.

Another probable response is a redoubling of Russian interest in nuclear anti-satellite weapons. The advantage of such weapons is that they could quickly eliminate a whole constellation of U.S. military satellites. The downside is that they would cause tremendous collateral damage, eliminating numerous civilian satellites and causing untold disruption to life on earth. However, if the choice were between losing a nuclear war and destroying much of the world’s space infrastructure, the Kremlin would undoubtedly select the latter option.

Golden Dome will therefore press Russia into a new arms race, forcing it to devote yet more resources to its strategic forces at a time when the country can least afford it. The Russian defense budget is already overstretched by the war in Ukraine, and rebuilding Russia’s conventional forces will take years. These vast outlays will require further diversion of funds from civilian sectors, with predictable consequences for the long-term health of the Russian economy.

Russia’s hurry to develop “super weapons” and nuclear weapons for space bring further dangers. Poseidon and Burevestnik have been much hyped by the Kremlin, yet they remain in the development stage and the risk of accidents is high. The nuclear-powered Burevestnik attracts particular concern and has been labeled “a flying Chernobyl.” A failed test in 2019 is reported to have caused the death of five engineers.

#### Missile defense makes preemptive strikes on the US more likely.

Giltner and Logan 25, \*Research Associate at the CATO Institute, \*\*Director of Defense and Foreign Policy Studies at CATO, MA in International Relations from the University of Chicago (\*Benjamin Giltner, \*\*Justin Logan, May 25, 2025, “Trump’s ‘Golden Dome’ Will Raise the Risk of Attack on US,” CATO, https://www.cato.org/commentary/trumps-golden-dome-will-raise-risk-attack-us)

Second, a Golden Dome would make it more likely that America’s adversaries would launch preemptive strikes against the United States during a crisis. US policy holds open the prospect of launching nuclear weapons first. America’s adversaries could well view this first-strike option, coupled with the prospects of an elaborate missile defense system, as dangerous. If the United States can rest securely behind its Golden Dome, what is to stop the United States from launching a first-strike itself? By posturing their missiles for preemptive strikes, America’s rivals can work to prevent the United States from escaping the condition of mutually assured vulnerability. This creates a dangerous situation. One lapse of judgment or misinterpreted action could lead to one side launching its missiles.

#### The aff can’t solve deterrence because missiles are cheaper than interceptors---enemies will find ways around defense.

Holmes 19, Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation (Deverrick Holmes, June 25, 2019, “Congress is not asking the right questions about missile defense,” Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, https://thebulletin.org/2019/06/congress-is-not-asking-the-right-questions-about-missile-defense/)

Following a recent successful “salvo” interception test, Senator Dan Sullivan of Alaska (where the bulk of the GMD program is located) boasted, “…this test gives our enemies pause, making them doubt the effectiveness of their offensive capabilities.” Sullivan is correct that these tests make enemies question the effectiveness of their deterrent, but that’s the problem. US adversaries view their offensive capabilities as fundamental to their security, and they will take any and all steps to maintain those capabilities. US attempts to undermine the deterrent forces of other countries create a dangerous cycle in which each side is compelled to find new and increasingly destabilizing ways to maintain the upper hand. Increases in defense only drive US adversaries to find ways to counter those defenses.

For example, both Russia and China are developing hypersonic missiles, specifically hypersonic boost- glide vehicles. Unlike traditional intercontinental ballistic missiles, these new systems fly along an unpredictable path, and the GMD system is not capable of dealing with such a threat. Russia has also unveiled evasive and creative new delivery systems, including a nuclear torpedo and a nuclear cruise missile. These new Russian offensive missiles are in direct response to US insistence on strategic missile defense—and exist solely for the purpose of defeating it.

Adding to the challenges, missile interceptors are far more expensive than offensive missiles. That makes it cost-effective for US adversaries to just build more and more missiles to overwhelm US defenses. In turn, this prompts the United States to respond by making more and more interceptors, virtually ensuring a new arms race. That sort of instability is exactly what the United States should try to avoid. In fact, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty was enacted to deal with this exact scenario. Unfortunately, the United States pulled out of the treaty in 2002, due in part to advice from current National Security Advisor John Bolton, who worked as Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security at the time.

### They Say: “No Submarines Link”

#### Increasing UUV’s disrupts strategic stability—it makes SSBNs vulnerable

Mishra 19, Researcher at the Institute for International Science and Technology Policy at George Washington University. (Sylvia Mishra, 5-9-2019, “Could unmanned underwater vehicles undermine nuclear deterrence?” https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/could-unmanned-underwater-vehicles-undermine-nuclear-deterrence/) wtk

Nuclear deterrence rests on the ability of strategic assets to survive an enemy’s first strike and to retaliate, ensuring mutually assured destruction.

Nuclear-powered ballistic-missile submarines (SSBNs) are considered to be the most survivable of all nuclear platforms due to their stealth capabilities, mobility and discretion. Placing nuclear assets underwater puts them at a safer distance from a crippling first strike. But as technology improves and the ocean battlefield becomes more complex, these advances could undermine the survivability of strategic forces around the world and make them far more vulnerable.

Emerging technologies like unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs) add to the complexity of the battle space and disrupt the status quo. Swarms of autonomous underwater drones could be deployed to hunt ballistic-missile submarines, targeting a cornerstone of nuclear deterrence.

In their 2017 article ‘The new era of counterforce’, Keir A. Lieber and Daryl Press argue that for most of the nuclear age, the survivability of retaliatory forces seemed straightforward. However, improvements in counterforce technology have eroded this cornerstone of nuclear deterrence. As new technology continues to raise the potential for major shifts in the military realm, the rapid advent of these drones may reduce the credibility and effectiveness of SSBNs.

UUVs can function without the direction of a human operator and have wide dual-use (that is, civilian and military) applications. Some are used for commercial purposes, hydrography and oceanographic research. Lockheed Martin’s yellow Marlin drone submarine inspects offshore rigs and underwater pipelines, a task that’s worth around a billion dollars a year in the Gulf of Mexico.

But UUV technologies have been evolving from defensive to more offensive roles. UUVs increasingly play a critical role in antisubmarine warfare (ASW) and perform missions such as placing and monitoring sensors on the sea floor to track enemy submarines. They can gather intelligence on opponents, detect and neutralise mines, hunt submarines and chart the ocean floor. They could, potentially, detonate warheads. And they could take part in a coordinated attack on an enemy submarine in conjunction with ‘friendly’ submarines and surface vessels.

The United States, Russia and China are investing in this technology to bolster their ASW capability and it’s evident that UUVs will be deployed in the near future in combat operations.

The US Navy released a UUV masterplan in 2004 that set out nine priority areas for future UUV capabilities. In 2015, Brigadier General Frank Kelly became the first deputy assistant secretary of the US Navy for unmanned systems. In 2016, the Department of Defense reportedly spent US$232.9 million on procuring UUVs (US$86.7 million more than in 2015). In 2018, the US Office of Naval Research awarded Raytheon a US$29.7 million contract for developing a naval prototype of a ‘low-cost UAV swarming technology’, or LOCUST, system that can overwhelm an adversary.

Russia and China aren’t far behind. Several reports indicate that Russia has been working on a ‘killer underwater drone’ since 2015. The ‘Cephalopod’ is designed for the underwater battlefield. Undersea warfare expert H.I. Sutton says that it can target shipping but its torpedoes are intended to destroy submarines. In a March 2018 speech to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, President Vladimir Putin highlighted Russian military development of an underwater drone aimed at transforming underwater warfare. A RAND Corporation report, Emerging trends in China’s development of unmanned systems, said Beijing had been funding 15 different universities for research programs for UUVs. Reports indicate that China is also developing low-cost unmanned UUVs for a variety of military applications, including ‘suicide’ attacks on enemy vessels.

These trends indicate that the proliferation of UUVs will have an impact on the stability of the undersea warfighting domain. Emerging capabilities suggest that the sea-based leg of the triad of missile submarines, land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles and crewed bombers will increasingly become vulnerable.

However, some experts argue that underwater drone technology is still in a nascent stage of development and faces challenges in autonomous operations and communication. The density of seawater makes it difficult for UUVs to complete complex tasks that require real-time decision-making. Former Chief of US Naval Operations Admiral Jonathan Greenert noted that one of the biggest obstacles for underwater drones is that they run on batteries that last only a few hours and communication is difficult because data passes very slowly through water.

It will take time for underwater drone technology to mature and pose a serious threat to well-hidden SSBNs, but when drones swarm in packs, it will become harder for submarines to escape detection. Advances in UUV technology will undermine the stability of deterrence and usher in a new underwater arms race that will increase the risks of escalation in a crisis.

#### Subs are the most critical second-strike assets

Egeli 25, Faculty Member at the Izmir University of Economics (Dr Sitki Egeli, 3-21-2025, “Threat From the Depths: Uncrewed Underwater Vehicles” https://rsdi.ae/en/publications/threat-from-the-depths-uncrewed-underwater-vehicles) wtk

A growing concern is the potential use of AUVs to detect and continuously trail ballistic missile-carrying submarines (SSBNs). Such heightened surveillance could erode the ability of SSBNs to remain undetected, [threatening]th4reatening their survivability. SSBNs are the most critical second-strike assets for leading nuclear-weapon states. If adversaries can successfully track and target these submarines, it would risk compromising the credibility of a nuclear-armed state’s second-strike capability, retaliatory capability, which is fundamental to the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) and strategic stability.[8] UUVs are also used in mine hunting and are being used not only to detect mines but as moveable mines themselves, lying quietly on the ocean floor until activated.[9]

#### Arctic subs are key—it’s the cornerstone of Russian second-strike

Friis 25, Research Professor in NUPIs Research group on security and defence. (Dr. Karsten Friis, 5-29-2025, “Arctic Spillover? Military Signalling in the European Arctic Before and After the Full-Scale Invasion of Ukraine” Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies, 8(1), https://doi.org/10.31374/sjms.375) wtk

Given that the Russian Northern Fleet hosts the majority of the country’s sea-based strategic nuclear arsenal, these are important questions for global security. Russia’s Arctic-based strategic submarines (SSBNs) are a cornerstone of its nuclear second-strike capability, and therefore pivotal to global nuclear stability. Increased or more assertive military activity in the European Arctic could destabilize this strategic balance.

### They Say: “Russia/China Development Independent”

#### Unliteral efforts to achieve domain awareness in the Arctic will undermine strategic stability – that increases Russian aggression in the region

Eric Brewer, Rebecca Hersman, and Maxwell Simon, 1/6/21, Center for Strategic and International Studies, “Deep Dive Debrief: Strategic Stability and Competition in the Arctic,” https://www.csis.org/analysis/deep-dive-debrief-strategic-stability-and-competition-arctic, mm

There are four broad Arctic strategies that could theoretically be pursued by the United States to achieve its objectives in the Arctic, accounting for the strategic asymmetries in the region. A direct rebalance approach would call for U.S. efforts to unilaterally improve military capabilities and unilaterally work to curb Russia’s advantage through a competitive approach. A coalition-based offsetting approach would prioritize working with Arctic and near-Arctic allies to mitigate Russia’s actions. A domain-based offsetting approach would require focusing on economic and resource aspects of competition in the Arctic zone to maximize U.S. advantages. Finally, a stability approach centers on enhancing transparency and pursuing areas of U.S.-Russia (and China) cooperation where interests overlap. Participants argued that a direct rebalance would heighten Russia’s threat perception, require immense resources, and be inconsistent with the United States’ current economic footprint and overall interests in the region. This approach would likely heighten existing Russian fears, lead it to pursue a more aggressive strategy, and potentially undermine strategic stability. Given Russia’s geographic proximity to the region and its resources, participants also agreed that establishing economic parity with Russia through a domain-based offsetting approach would be an uphill battle. As such, while U.S.-Russia dynamics may increasingly be framed in competitive terms, the United States should not seek to “match” Russia in the Arctic.

#### Denying Russian capabilities in the arctic is counter-productive—they will only act aggressively in response to the US

Roberts 21, Department of Economics, Justice, and Policy Studies, Mount Royal University, Calgary, Canada (Kari, “Understanding Russia's security priorities in the Arctic: why Canada-Russia cooperation is still possible,” Canadian Foreign Policy Journal, 27.2)//BB

After the Ukraine crisis, and especially after its interference in Western elections, fear and mistrust of Russia have understandably surged. This climate has fuelled talk of a new Cold War in NATO capitals and in Russia itself, and this language has been extended, by some, to the Arctic (Huebert, Citation2019). For some, the region can no longer be considered in isolation from the pervasive tensions in Russia-West relations (Boulègue, Citation2019). Realism holds that rivalry among great powers is a feature of the international system, but to deny the importance of cooperation among them, especially in the Arctic where there is a strong record of engagement, is unwise. Ostracizing and provoking Russia is unproductive (Graham, Citation2019) and will not bring Canada closer to realizing its Arctic goals.

The Arctic region presents a host of opportunities, and there is much common ground to be rediscovered. This paper has suggested that this is best achieved by better understanding and accepting Russian interests in the region, and critically, revisiting often heard assumptions about Russia as disruptor of the global order and therefore underserving of collaboration in the Arctic. The unpopular reality is that Russia benefits from aspects of the existing order, and possesses interests, both globally and within the Arctic, that drive its actions. The West's denial of Russian interests has for too long put Russia on the defensive and, while not the only driver of Russian behaviour, has not enabled an environment of mutual understanding. The Arctic has been an exception, but the current tone of Russia-West relations jeopardizes the cooperation that has been achieved. Accepting that Russia has interests, chief among them a desire to remain (or become) a great power, doesn't cost much; this is doable. Delegitimizing Russia's interests and pushing them into a defensive posture may do more to renew its determination to flex its muscles.

There are lessons from the past to be mindful of here as well: one of the key lessons from the Cold War was that de-escalation only came from engagement. Demonizing an “evil and expansionist” Soviet Union legitimized an aggressive policy of containment (Roberts, Citation2017; Legvold, Citation2016), which only served to elevate tensions. But, “when we began to understand Soviet leaders as interest-based actors it became easier to empathize, to understand their interests, and to find common ground. This was how the Cold War ended” (Roberts, Citation2019). Russia is open to engagement when its interests are legitimized. Russia enjoys a relative position of strength in the Arctic, and so it makes little sense to adopt measures that would weaken its position there, especially given NATO's growing presence in the region. While there may be elements of revisionism in Russian foreign policy, the arrangement in the Arctic, by and large, works for Russia. Russia has “consistently opted for a generally pragmatic and accommodating diplomatic course combined with a wide-ranging modernization and reinforcement of Russia's military capabilities in the region” (Kristense & Sakstrup, Citation2016, p. iii). While some see this “dual approach” as cynical (Baev in Tynkkynen Citation2018b, p. 114), it is not unlike the actions of other powers, which themselves express dual, and at times contradictory interests, and yet expect consistency from Russia. In a way, the presence of dual approaches in the Arctic reflects Russia's orientation toward the global order in general and it provides the tools Russia requires to pursue security and economic development, all the while remaining a leader in Arctic governance. Ultimately, Russia benefits from the aspects of the liberal international order that confirm its influence and its national sovereignty. While Russia is no champion of liberal principles, it has echoed its support for treaty obligations and process, especially in the Arctic, a position that renders it, like Canada, a status quo power in the region. Rather than agitating to revise the liberal order, the preference among the Russian leadership appears to be to adhere to the rules that work for it, and attempt to tweak the ones that don't (not unlike other powers). This is why it is so essential to understand just what Russia's interests in the Arctic actually are, rather than presuming motives that imperil cooperation and risk raising the stakes of doing business in the region. There is more evidence of success in Canada-Russia Arctic relations than in Russia-West relations in general. But instead of raising alarm bells about not doing enough to securitize the Arctic, we should instead consider embracing this success as a model for future engagement.

## Diplomacy Counterplan

### 1NC Diplomacy Counterplan

#### The [first/next] offcase position is the Diplomacy Counterplan

#### The United States federal government should establish crisis hotlines with and promote a trilateral Arctic dialogue with the governments of Russia and China.

#### A trilateral dialogue solves the miscalculation advantage by eliminating security ambiguities in the Arctic

Ian Anthony, Ekaterina Klimenko, and Fei Su, March 2021, SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security [Stockholm International Peace Research Institute], “A Strategic Triangle in the Arctic? Implications of China-Russia-United States Power Dynamics for Regional Security,” https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/sipriinsight2103\_arctic\_triangle\_0.pdf, mm

Despite increasing rhetoric over geopolitical competition in the Arctic it is still largely agreed that there is low probability for a military conflict in the Arctic. At the same time, one cannot ignore the rising concerns over military security dynamics and their impact on the region. Failure to address these concerns increases the likelihood that relations among Arctic states and with non-Arctic states will further deteriorate. Durable improvements in geopolitical relations requires a new political framework that can only be created by the most senior leaders, something that seems improbable today. However, there are measures that can contain if not reduce emerging military risks. The increase in military activity in the Arctic introduces several risks. When military forces from different states operate in proximity with one another there is a risk of accidental collisions or misjudgements that can lead to a loss of life or serious damage to very expensive equipment. Military activities can increase the risk to civilian activities, such as the confusion caused in a commercial fishing fleet on the sudden arrival of a large Russian naval force conducting an exercise in the Bering Sea noted above. Whenever possible, military exercises to develop professional competence should be carried out in uncontested spaces, ideally in locations where sovereign control is undisputed. Arctic states could do a lot to develop professional competence without ever moving beyond their own territory. It is nevertheless inevitable that some military activities will take place in more sensitive locations. If such activities are without prior notification, or if notification provides partial information at a late stage, it would be a step back to the secrecy that promoted military planning based on worst case scenarios. Worst-case planning might in turn promote an action/reaction dynamic that could accelerate the militarization of the Arctic. The tendency for worst-case planning might be fostered in the absence of organized frameworks for security dialogue and military-to-military contacts. A prior notification system to increase transparency could be established as a politically binding stand-alone confidence- and security-building measure open to all states that plan military activities in the Arctic region. Submarine operations and the military use of space are of growing importance to Arctic operations, but they are invisible by their nature. Therefore, the contours of a notification system for the Arctic would require a focused peer-to-peer military dialogue to establish tailored reporting requirements based on realistic expectations of what can be revealed. The increased number of military activities, and their larger scale, inevitably increases the probability of accidents or misjudgements. There is a human cost to such incidents. In August 2019 an accident at a military facility near the White Sea killed 19 Russian citizens.133 Furthermore, serious environmental damage could arise from an incident involving, for example, the nuclear reactors that power some naval vessels. The Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP) works to improve the ecology of the space covering north-west Europe from the Arctic and Sub-Arctic areas, including the Barents and White Seas, to the southern shores of the Baltic Sea. A dialogue in the framework of NDEP could build on the work already being carried out by that grouping in the so-called ‘nuclear window’.134 In a deteriorating security environment states will continue to invest in the capabilities they feel they need to safeguard themselves and their allies. However, the potential for military actions to trigger a reaction from potential adversaries should be factored into their planning. A weak force that is not seen as combat credible might not deliver the intended assurance and deterrence signal, while deploying a robust force that could compete militarily against a sophisticated adversary may be seen as a provocation—particularly if it is deployed forward in a crisis. A trans-Atlantic dialogue on the appropriate balance between, for example, permanent or continuous forward presence, on the one hand, and what can be termed ‘offshore balancing’, on the other, is needed. This kind of dialogue can address the question of what Europeans are willing and able to do militarily as the centre of gravity as US thinking refocuses on China. In 2018 NATO leaders endorsed a ‘Package for the South’ to address security issues in the Middle East and North Africa coherently, and established a ‘Hub for the South’ within NATO’s Allied Joint Force Command in Naples to act as a focal point for the southern dimension, including cooperation with partners.135 A ‘Package for the North’ might be timely, along with a dedicated Hub to provide the necessary support to implementation. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has developed frameworks that might act as an inspiration for Arctic Council initiatives. The ASEAN states continue to organize a wide range of forums and working groups in which only members participate. However, they have supplemented their internal work with an ASEAN Regional Forum where 17 non-members come together with the ASEAN member states to discuss security issues. ASEAN Plus Three is a forum where ASEAN member states come together with China, Japan and South Korea to discuss issues of mutual interest.136 A more inclusive dialogue could be also organized in the framework of an established event such as the bi-annual Regional Seapower Symposium (RSS) organized by the Italian Navy. The RSS has evolved from a meeting of Chiefs of Staff of Black Sea and Mediterranean navies into a high-level event with global participation to discuss public order of the oceans. How existing rules apply in the Arctic could be discussed in a working group convened under the auspices of the Symposium. One conclusion of this paper is that a China–Russia–USA strategic triangle does exist. The awareness that each point of this triangle can cause immense damage to the other two creates a shared interest in what Thomas Schelling named the ‘diplomacy of violence’ and it is also what prompted the Trump Administration to explore the feasibility of a trilateral arms limitation agreement.137 As one former US official has noted, ‘although the Trump administration mishandled its diplomatic proposal to include China in US–Russian nuclear arms control negotiations, its overarching objective of seeking to include China was strategically sound.’138 Of three sides of the strategic triangle—China–USA, China–Russia and USA–Russia—detailed consultations only take place along the China–Russia vector. Discussions among the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council have been proposed as a platform to discuss all issues that affect global strategic stability. These five states have met multiple times to discuss nuclear matters, but discussions mainly appear to focus on technical risk reduction measures. Such measures may be necessary and useful, but they cannot unlock the political agreement that is a precondition to reversing the step-by-step increase in the influence of military factors in global politics. A trilateral strategic dialogue between the three major military powers could help achieve a better understanding of future plans. A willingness to explain to the outcome of their deliberations in different regional settings, including the Arctic, could be a valuable first step towards maintaining the region as one of low tension and effective cooperation.

#### The counterplan also solves the competition advantage by using strategic diplomacy

Mitchell 25, Principal and Co-Founder of the Marathon Initiative. He served as U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia from 2017 to 2019. (A. Wess Mitchell, 4-22-2025, “The Return of Great-Power Diplomacy” *Foreign Affairs* https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/return-great-power-diplomacy-strategy-wess-mitchell) wtk

Since returning to office in January, U.S. President Donald Trump has sparked an intense debate about the role of diplomacy in American foreign policy. In less than three months, he initiated bold diplomatic overtures to all three of Washington’s main adversaries. He opened talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin about ending the war in Ukraine, is communicating with Chinese leader Xi Jinping about holding a summit, and sent a letter to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei about bringing that country’s nuclear program to an end. In parallel, his administration has made it plain that it intends to renegotiate the balance of benefits and burdens in Washington’s alliances to ensure greater reciprocity.

Trump’s opening moves have drawn howls of protest and prompted accusations of appeasement. But the fact is that Washington was in dire need of a new kind of diplomacy. After the end of the Cold War, the United States moved away from using negotiations to promote the national interest. Convinced that history had ended and that they could remake the world in America’s image, successive U.S. presidents came to rely on military and economic force as the primary tools of foreign policy. When they did use diplomacy, it was usually not to enhance U.S. power but to try to build a global paradise in which multilateral institutions would supplant countries and banish war entirely.

For a time, the United States could get away with such negligence. In the 1990s and the early years of this century, Washington was so powerful that it could achieve its aims without old-fashioned diplomacy. But those days are gone. The United States no longer possesses a military that is capable of fighting and defeating all its foes simultaneously. It cannot drive another great power to ruin through sanctions. Instead, it lives in a world of continent-size rivals with formidable economies and militaries. Great-power war, absent for decades, is again a real possibility.

In this dangerous setting, the United States will need to rediscover diplomacy in its classical form—not as a bag carrier for an all-powerful military or as a purveyor of global norms, but as a hard-nosed instrument of strategy. For millennia, great powers have used diplomacy in this way to forestall conflict, recruit new partners, and splinter enemy coalitions. The United States must take a similar path, using talks and deals to limit its own burdens, constrain its enemies, and recalibrate regional balances of power. And that requires engaging with rivals and reworking alliances so that Washington does not need to take the lead in confronting Beijing and Moscow simultaneously.

Talking with China and Russia and insisting on reciprocity from friends is therefore necessary. If done right, it could help manage the gaps between the United States’ finite means and the virtually infinite threats arrayed against it, something many other great powers have used diplomacy to accomplish. Indeed, the essence of diplomacy in strategy is to rearrange power in space and time so that countries avoid tests of strength beyond their ability. There is no magic formula for how to get this right, and there is no guarantee that Trump’s approach will succeed. But the alternative—attempting to overpower everybody—is not viable, and a good deal riskier. In other words, strategic diplomacy is the best shot America has at shoring up its position for protracted competition.

### They Say: “Permutation Do Both”

#### The perm links to the strategic stability disadvantage because it would still allow the US to detect submarines and missiles which undermines second strike capabilities

#### The perm fails—strengthening missile defense undermines diplomacy and makes strategic stability impossible

Kimball 25, Executive Director of the Arms Control Association (Daryl G. Kimball, June 2025, “Golden Dome: Doubling Down on a Strategic Blunder” https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2025-06/focus/golden-dome-doubling-down-strategic-blunder) wtk

If Trump’s strategic missile defense plan is eventually implemented, however, it would destabilize the already precarious nuclear balance of terror that exists among the major nuclear-armed powers. It would heighten the danger that space will become a war zone and push China and Russia to further improve and expand their strategic offensive capabilities.

Moscow is already developing new systems—such as an undersea torpedo, a hypersonic glide vehicle, and a nuclear-powered cruise missile—to ensure it can overcome any future U.S. missile defenses. It is also developing a capability for a nuclear-armed anti-satellite weapon, which underscores the vulnerabilities of a space-based interceptor network. Beijing, meanwhile, has already begun to respond to U.S. missile defense and conventional long-range strike capabilities by increasing its nuclear-armed ballistic missile force.

These factors make it even more vital that Russia and the United States engage immediately in strategic stability talks and negotiations to cap or reduce their massive strategic nuclear arsenals before the last remaining treaty, the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, expires in 2026. China, too, needs to back up its complaints about U.S. unilateralism, strategic missile defense, and space-based interceptors by agreeing to participate in direct, high-level, strategic risk-reduction talks with the United States.

If Trump, Russian strongman Vladimir Putin, and Chinese dictator Xi Jinping continue to bicker in public rather than negotiate mutually beneficial limits on strategic offensive and defensive weapons, the world faces a more dangerous future.

### They Say: “China Dialogue Fails”

#### US-China hotlines solve escalation because they are focused on crisis mitigation, not empty dialogue

Yi 25, Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow at Schwarzman College, Tsinghua University, specialising in international relations, military and strategic studies, and China’s foreign policy. She earned her PhD in Chinese Studies Research from King’s College London. (Sophie Wushuang Yi, 6-19-2025, “US-China: Rather than mutual understanding, strive for competition without conflict” https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/us-china-rather-mutual-understanding-strive-competition-without-conflict) wtk

The focus must shift to managing consequences. Four practical measures could significantly reduce escalation risks while acknowledging persistent misunderstanding.

First, establish a 24/7 crisis hotline protocol modelled on US-Soviet precedents. Military-to-military communication channels must operate independently of diplomatic tensions. When carrier groups encounter each other unexpectedly, professional naval officers need direct communication lines, not diplomatic bureaucracy.

Second, implement an exercise notification agreement requiring 48-hour advance notice for major naval operations beyond the Second Island Chain. This wouldn't eliminate misperception about intent but would reduce surprise and create predictable windows for preparing measured responses rather than reactive escalation. ASEAN’s ongoing efforts to conclude a South China Sea Code of Conduct with China by 2025 could provide a regional framework for such mechanisms.

Third, create separate nuclear and conventional signalling channels combined with joint protocols for preventing escalation during carrier incidents. Dual-use ambiguity – where conventional exercises might appear as nuclear strike preparation – represents the highest-risk escalation scenario.

Finally, establish quarterly Track 1.5 interpretation forums focused on explaining each side's strategic logic rather than changing it. Regional actors such as Singapore and Malaysia, which maintain balanced relationships with both powers, could host these dialogues, providing neutral ground that neither Beijing nor Washington dominates.

The critical point bears repeating: the communication measures that follow are not designed to eliminate misperceptions or achieve mutual understanding – both impossible goals given structural realities. Instead, they accept that misreading intentions is inevitable and focus solely on preventing those inevitable misunderstandings from triggering dangerous escalation.

Misperception may be inevitable, but escalation is not. The key lies in building systems that function despite misunderstanding.

#### Confidence-building measures resolve insecurity and prevent conflict

Benjamin Schaller, 2018, OSCE Yearbook 2017, “Defusing the Discourse on ‘Arctic War’: The Merits of Military Transparency and Confidence-and Security-Building Measures in the Arctic Region,” https://ifsh.de/file/publication/OSCE\_Yearbook\_en/2017/Schaller-en.pdf, mm

Though the Arctic currently enjoys high levels of co-operation and stability, the potential positive effects of a regional CSBM [Confidence-and Security-Building Measures] regime should not be overlooked. Moreover, existing CSBM regimes explicitly encourage the adoption of additional regional measures within their areas of application.30 Drawing from the experiences of the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe], a regional CSBM regime in the Arctic could not only contribute to safeguarding the already high levels of cooperation but even further strengthen them, while also enabling a more cooperative approach to military security. It could increase overall levels of military transparency, establish mutual understanding of the military intentions of the Arctic states, and provide reassurance about the defensive nature of military activities, troop deployments, and modernization plans for the region. This could also send a strong signal of the Arctic states’ full commitment to international law and the peaceful settlement of disputes, thereby making an essential contribution to defusing the discourse about military confrontation in the High North. To conclude, while the Arctic has so far represented a region of high stability and co-operation, it does not, despite its apparent remoteness, exist in isolation from the rest of the world. To protect the already high level of regional co-operation, it might thus be worthwhile to consider proactive steps to increase military stability and predictability and to reduce the risk of unintended military escalation. Inspiration for this endeavour could be drawn from the 40 years of experience of the OSCE, more particularly from its CSBM regimes.

### They Say: “Russia Dialogue Fails”

**An upgraded hotline solves de-escalation---communication works, Russia says yes.**

**Nadtochey 22**, PhD, associate professor at the Department of World Politics at MGIMO University. (Yury, 10-27-2022, "Staying in Touch During Escalation," Fletcher Forum of World Affairs, http://www.fletcherforum.org/home/2022/10/27/staying-in-touch-during-escalation)

The partial mobilization announced by the Russian authorities and President Putin’s threats to use nuclear weapons against those who interfere with what he calls a “special military operation” in Ukraine significantly raise the degree of tensions between Moscow and the West.

In the face of growing uncertainty, which could bring Russia and NATO to the edge of a direct clash, it is time to think about the means of **prevention**. At first glance, there are not many of them, but they do exist. The **communication hotlines** between the **Russia**n military and **NATO**, and Russian and U.S. decision-makers are **crucial** to this prevention.

Although this tool should not be overestimated, neglecting it could turn out to be very costly for both parties. The exchange of information during a conflict **prevents** decision-makers from making **miscalculations** which could result in **aggravat**ing the conflict. Disregarding this principle could be highly risky for the conflicting parties and could lead to catastrophic consequences.

Moscow and Washington have long recognized this fact. Since the first communication hotline was established between the Kremlin and the White House in 1963, the two superpowers have sought to prevent situations in which a lack of information could produce misinterpretation of one’s military intentions. Direct communication made it possible to correctly evaluate the other party’s actions. This created predictability and minimized the probability of a preventive nuclear strike resulting from a fear of being attacked first.

This principle was long adhered to in the Cold War environment. With each decade, confidence-building measures in the field of nuclear weapons use have been improved through the development of new mechanisms and agreements. As a result, we have a fairly advanced multi-channel system that facilitates communication between Russian and American leaders, in contrast to what we had in the early 1960s. However, what about the possibility of creating hotlines when it comes to conventional weapons use? Could they provide the same level of confidence as those established between nuclear forces?

Conventional weapons still play the dominant role in the Russia-Ukraine War. This weaponry, along with battlefield aircraft and drones, could easily reach NATO positions in the border areas of Russia and Belarus. Today, Russian and NATO forces are separated by just a few dozen kilometers in the areas surrounding the Poland-Belarus border.

Moreover, this issue extends beyond the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine. It encompasses a broader scope of activities such as military maneuvers, drills, strategic aviation flights, and the patrolling of air and sea borders. Are hotlines so effective when it comes to these activities? The answer is not as clear as it is in the case of nuclear weapons.

When it comes to the navy or air force, diplomats and the military cannot boast of such achievements as happened in highly sophisticated strategic arms control agreements. However, during the Cold War, some preventive mechanisms and agreements were developed in order to deal with potentially dangerous military activities and to prevent incidents or accidents at sea and in the air. These include the bilateral U.S.-Soviet Incidents at Sea Agreement (INCSEA), the Agreement on Prevention of Incidents on and over the High Seas, and the Prevention of Dangerous Military Activities Agreement (DMA), as well as multilateral agreements such as the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREG).

Unfortunately, these agreements were not designed to be real-time risk management tools and therefore did not provide stable communication channels for the rapid exchange of information among the parties concerned. Moreover, they proved to be even less effective after the collapse of the Soviet Union as the geopolitical landscape in Europe had changed dramatically. That became clear in the 2000s due to NATO enlargement, U.S. military initiatives (such as America’s anti-ballistic missile (ABM) installations in Poland and Romania), and the renewal of Russia's military activities in Europe and the Atlantic. Long hikes of Russian warships and military aircraft (including strategic long-range bombers) became more frequent, producing more encounters and incidents at sea and in the air with NATO forces.

Moscow and NATO members have long worked to solve this problem, **achiev**ing only short-term successes. In 2002, just one year after the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) started the so-called Cooperative Airspace Initiative (CAI). This mechanism was designed to create a more reliable system of communication and coordination between Russia and NATO in order to prevent dangerous incidents in the air involving both civilian and military aircraft. Unfortunately, the initiative was paralyzed with the suspension of NRC activity in 2014, and timid attempts to revive CAI did not lead to any substantial results.

But does this failure signal the irrelevance of communication hotlines? **Not at all**. One example of a deal that was made in the aforementioned area is the Memorandum of Understanding of Air Safety in Syria, signed by defense officials in October 2015. Though this accord was only active for a couple of years, it nevertheless turned out to be an **excellent collision prevention tool** that stopped U.S. and Russian forces from entering into **inadvertent conflicts**. Moreover, the memorandum of understanding (MoU) was a subtle but effective way of addressing the lack of transparency between the U.S. and Russian militaries. More importantly, it is probably the only case in which accords have been developed in order to reduce the risks of unintentional clashes of warplanes during wartime conditions rather than in peacetime.

What conclusions can be drawn? Why has the example of cooperation in Syria been more positive than the multilateral initiative in Europe and the Euro-Atlantic? One explanation lies in the intentions and aspirations of the negotiating parties. In Syria, the United States and Russia sought to prevent accidental collisions in the zones of military operations. In Europe, neither Russia nor NATO regarded such incidents as crossing a line which would precipitate a full-fledged military clash. But with the escalation of the war in Ukraine, there is clearer evidence that things could get out of hand. The good news here is that **both the Kremlin and** **NATO** members **have signaled their readiness to stay in touch with each other** in order **to** keep things under control and **avoid misinterpretations** or miscalculations of each other’s intentions and actions. Russia raised the issue of management of dangerous military activity in two so-called “security guarantees” agreements projects with the U.S.and NATO” drafted in December 2021, but consultations with the West were doomed to fail. However, on March 1, 2022, just a week after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a de-escalation military-to-military line was established between the U.S. European Command in Stuttgart, Germany, and the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

Ultimately, there is no doubt that Moscow and Washington are ready to go all-in to achieve their goals in Ukraine. That could be a very scary scenario. Almost all the confidence-building and transparency mechanisms in Europe, either bilateral or multilateral, were designed to prevent war, but not to manage military activity while cannons speak, and diplomats remain silent. For the sake of all parties involved in the Russia-Ukraine War, **it is crucial to** develop and **implement a more reliable** and protective **communication arrangement** that can meet the challenge of wartime conditions.

**Deconfliction lines create trust and are resilient to tensions.**

**Brustlein 21**, PhD, Director of the Security Studies Center at the French Institute of International Relations. (Corentin, “Strategic Risk Reduction between Nuclear-Weapons Possessors”, *Proliferation Papers*, No. 63, Ifri, pg. 51-53, https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/brustlein\_risk\_reduction\_nuclear\_weapons\_possessors\_2021.pdf) DCL = direct communications link (also known as the “Hotline”) between Washington and Moscow

Risk-reduction measures can be **resilient to tensions**

CBMs have been there for decades, although they have been much less visible than formal, treaty-based arms control. While some risk-reduction measures have been part of formal treaties, most of them have taken the form of political commitments rather than legally binding agreements. The downside to this lower visibility has been that the constraints placed on each party’s ability to inflict harm on the other are more easily reversible in the short term.

The upside to this, however, is that this low visibility has spared some of those measures the fate of **treaty-based arms control**, which has not only been more and more criticized as an instrument of cooperative security, but has become deeply polarizing on political and ideological grounds. In the US, those risk-reduction measures have remained largely under the control of the executive branch and have been less affected by Congress’s rejection of constraints on American power than formal treaties that the Senate has to ratify. This nonbinding character could have made these measures short-lived, but most have remained active and implemented – although compliance issues did unsurprisingly appear for some of them, such as the 1975 Helsinki Final Act or the Vienna Document, mostly in relation to local conflict disconnected from relations between nuclear weapons possessors. 112

Like other arms-control measures, risk-reduction measures have been criticized for being at best naïve and at worst dangerous in creating misguided expectations of cooperative behavior with unfaithful adversaries that could thus be better able to cheat and deceive their faithful counterpart. 113 Efforts to promote transparency and to establish new channels of communications for crisis prevention and management were met with skepticism from critics who assumed that those very channels such as the DCL would be used for deceptive purposes. 114 The track record, however, has provided **no evidence** of such **attempts to deceive**. On the contrary, the uses of the DCL have proven the **value** of this channel of communications to **clarify intent** and **share info**rmation in times of crisis. Not only has there been **no public report** of unfaithful use of the DCL, either before or after the Cold War ended, but **on the contrary** the DCL seems to have helped to **create personal trust** between US and Soviet leaders.

Thirty years ago, Colin Gray criticized arms control for being trapped within a paradox: as an instrument meant to strengthen security, arms control would presumably not be useful whenever it is achievable (when the state of political relations allows for an agreement) and not possible when it might be useful – when there is deep mistrust and tensions. 115 The paradox, however, is only true at first sight, and disappears when one takes a longer-term view to assess the effectiveness of risk-reduction measures. Tensions will continue to rise and fall, but what matters is that the **instruments have remained in place** and kept on **delivering** their effects – arguably limited – on **stability**, including during crises. For instance, the patterns of responsible behavior developed after the signature of the INCSEA agreement have generally held during times of tensions. 116 More recently and importantly, the risk-reduction measures included in the New START treaty and in the 1988 agreement on ballistic missile **launch notification** have been faithfully implemented by both parties – and **even during** the crisis in **Ukraine**, during which the Russian strategic rocket forces conducted no less than six strategic ballistic missile launches117 .

The fact that state parties to an agreement continue to take risks and to exert coercive pressure on each other during crises despite the existence of the agreement does not mean that the latter has failed. In fact it continued to deliver its effects throughout the crises, lowering the chances that inadvertent escalation would happen. Risk-reduction measures can help mitigate the most wide-ranging and dramatic consequences of the security dilemma but cannot be expected to make instability at the lower level of conflict wholly disappear.

Political and operational resilience over time is thus very valuable as it only takes a few years for political relations to take sudden negative turns. Even if risk-reduction measures such as CBMs can appear of remote utility when concluded during a period of relatively low tensions, their ultimate value and importance can only appear later on, over the longer term. One cannot anticipate how the record of compliance with CBMs will look in the future, but the past decades provide evidence that **nuclear** weapons **possessors** have benefited from the effects of these agreements and that these measures could still influence their behavior when it matters most: during major international crises.

**Hotlines solve miscalc and crisis communication.**

**Shah** & Walker **21**, \*Sahil, Master of Philosophy and Politics, Senior Fellow and Program Manager at the Council on Strategic Risks (CSR)’s Janne E. Nolan Center on Strategic Weapons, Senior Fellow and Program Manager at the Council on Strategic Risks' Janne Nolan Center on Strategic Weapons. \*\*Leah, future digital security fellow at the Institute for Security and Technology; on the team developing Catalink. (4-19-2021, “Zoom Won’t Stop a Nuclear War,” Foreign Policy, https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/04/19/zoom-hotline-red-telephone-nuclear-war-cuban-missile-crisis/)

Despite the nearly one dozen hotline links that now exist, not all countries with nuclear weapons are linked up at the level of **heads of state** or, in some cases, at any level. Astonishingly, in an age when any nuclear crisis or conflict could not be contained with certainty to two states, there are currently no **multilateral comm**unication **lines** that can be **trusted**. After all, trust is the issue: trust in the identity of the interlocutor; trust in the system itself, including its robustness under the most extreme conditions; and trust in the messages it carries.

In South Asia, where tensions remain high among India, Pakistan, and China over border disputes, there are no hotlines between the heads of states of any of these three countries and only limited bilateral ones at other levels of seniority between India and Pakistan, and, very recently, India and China. It is unclear if the military and political bilateral links in this area are reliable or have even been used consistently in real crises.

The military-operated India-Pakistan hotline established after the 1971 war was seen for decades as “noisy and unreliable with frequent breakdowns” and thus has not always been used when one would expect. In February 2021, it was resurrected after a number of years to discuss and agree to the current cease-fire between the two countries. The problem with this hotline is that, while it has been tailored to help de-escalate tensions related to the Line of Control, the issues between India and Pakistan are much more substantial. On the political side, the 1989 hotline between Indian and Pakistani Prime Ministers Rajiv Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto, which has been turned on and off multiple times ever since, and the 2004 nuclear hotline between the Indian and Pakistani foreign ministers are assumed by experts to be moribund.

When it comes to India and China, a hotline between the Indian Director General of Military Operations and the Chinese Western Theater Command was set up only in 2020 after years of protracted discussions. The Indian and Chinese foreign ministers also agreed to a political hotline in February of this year. Both were created in the wake of the 2020 border crisis between India and China.

While there is no leader-level hotline between the two nuclear neighbors, since Narendra Modi became the Indian prime minister in 2014 and until the crisis began last summer he and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in person at least 18 times. While such levels of personal engagement are quite rare, threats posed by sophisticated hacking, spoofing, or even simple voice imitation could even deceive leaders who have a high level of familiarity with one another. Several radio show hosts have even managed to talk to various heads of state while pretending to be a high-profile individual.

The world is increasingly riddled with emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence-produced audio or videos known as deepfakes, that heighten the risk of miscommunication and miscalculation. Even in cases where leaders such as Modi and Xi are familiar with and maybe even personally trust one another, interfering technologies, which are becoming more and more convincing each day, could cast a dark enough shadow of doubt that existing hotlines would not be trusted. Deepfake audio is already well advanced and, in one case, was used by hackers to mimic a CEO’s voice to great success.

As demonstrated by the shaky telecommunication quality of the first India-Pakistan military hotline, there are also technical challenges to communicating securely over long distances, particularly when the environment has been degraded by natural disasters, by conflict, or in the simultaneously worst and most necessary case of a nuclear detonation.

On top of these physical shortcomings, there is also the constant hailstorm of official announcements and documents, statements to the media, and tweets and other social media commentary, generating a great amount of information, both true and misleading, to filter through. As such, it is clear that existing communications pathways are not fit for today’s nuclear threat environment, and there is a blatant need for clarity in nuclear crisis management for the 21st century. A Zoom call might be adequate for world leaders to exchange pleasantries or insults, but it is neither assured nor secure enough for sensitive discussions when at the brink of nuclear war. Nor could it be relied upon in a degraded communication environment, where cellular networks and the internet might be down.

Emerging technologies, such as Prompt Global Strike and precision targeting, hypersonic missiles, and artificial intelligence, are already quickly changing the nuclear landscape, contributing to an environment where the potential use of nuclear weapons is more ambiguous and less easy to anticipate.

Nuclear-armed states are reemphasizing the role of nuclear weapons in their security doctrines as they engage in modernization efforts and in some cases are lowering the threshold of potential nuclear retaliation to include a broader range of significant nonnuclear strategic attacks, including cyberattacks. As a result, robust communications are critical, and any new multilateral hotline would have to be made resilient in the face of hacking; signal interception; firmware, software, and hardware vulnerabilities; environment degradation; and other threats such as electromagnetic pulses, which have previously fried satellites. As technology evolves, the next generation of hotlines must be secured from new risks and hardened technically.

While currently technically vulnerable, some hotlines have been useful in aiding communications in **complex** and **hostile environments**. The hotlines between the U.S. and Russian forces in Syria proved very effective in **deconfliction**, and North Korea and South Korea operate numerous hotlines between their militaries, presidential offices, and the inter-Korean liaison office to deconflict and communicate on everything from air traffic to maritime issues. The problem is that while hotlines are difficult to set up and secure, they are also easy to disconnect and discard, which North Korea has done in the past, in times of diplomatic spats and increased tensions.

These **existing hotlines are not**, however, **the solution** to dealing with nuclear crises. The dangers and complexities of nuclear crises demand a **leader-to-leader capability** uniquely dedicated to the avoidance of nuclear detonations and the rapid **de-escalation** of nuclear conflict when other efforts have failed.

As nuclear-armed states seek to reduce the risk of nuclear conflict in a new era of multipolar great-power competition, rethinking hotlines should be at the **top of their agenda**. In many ways, **this** is low-hanging fruit that **could serve as the** technical **catalyst for expanded trust and dialogue**. Indeed, France, as the new chair of the P5 Process, has embraced the concept of “strategic risk reduction” and will make improving crisis communication technologies like hotlines a key priority for discussion among the United Nations Security Council’s permanent five members ahead of and beyond the planned Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty this August.

In turn, various governmental and nongovernmental voices have made broad proposals for nuclear-weapons states to consider whether they are serious about improving the security environment. For example, the 16 countries participating in the Stockholm Initiative have identified a list of “stepping stones” toward nuclear disarmament, which includes improving hotlines. At the same time, another coalition of 12 countries that form the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative has also included the need for crisis-proof communication lines in its “landing zones,” or areas of potential agreement, to reduce nuclear risks. The Global Enterprise to Strengthen Non-Proliferation and Disarmament has also pointed out that communications links between nuclear weapons states “are not universal, and those that do exist warrant review.”

Our organizations—the Institute for Security and Technology and the European Leadership Network—are looking at nuclear weapon decision-making in the face of technological complexity. In particular, the Institute for Security and Technology team has closely examined global nuclear command, control, and communications systems and outlined what an innovative global hotline—dubbed “Catalink”—could look like. This project has gone beyond the conceptual stage and is ready for evaluation by the nuclear-armed states. Such an evaluation could be undertaken without change to their policies, postures, or arsenals, and it would feature well into their effort to take a more strategic approach to nuclear risk reduction while tensions rise in conflict zones across the globe.

Given the very real risks of nuclear escalation through misinterpretation of rhetoric or actions, or the miscalculation of responses due to ambiguity and secrecy, **leaders must have the ability to speak** clearly, confidently, and **confidentially**.

Maintaining stability and preventing nuclear use in an unstable multipolar world that includes nine nuclear-armed states is impossible using the bipolar logic and inadequate systems of the Cold War. Modern, robustly **encrypted**, and **survivable** multilateral **comm**unication **systems** available to nuclear decision-makers are needed to face the perils of the 21st-century nuclear reality. Hotlines are due for an **urgent upgrade**.

### They Say: “Can’t Solve Competition”

#### Diplomacy helps the US constrain Chinese aggression while bolstering support of US allies

Mitchell 25, Principal and Co-Founder of the Marathon Initiative. He served as U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia from 2017 to 2019. (A. Wess Mitchell, 4-22-2025, “The Return of Great-Power Diplomacy” *Foreign Affairs* https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/return-great-power-diplomacy-strategy-wess-mitchell) wtk

There is no contradiction for Washington between engaging with China and attempting to rebalance relations with Indo-Pacific allies. Great powers throughout history have often found that rivals can act as a productive fillip to friends. Bismarck, for example, used talks with Russia to prompt Austria, Germany’s treaty ally, to strengthen its military—which in turn pushed Russia toward accepting Bismarck’s demands. The key is making sure that allies know there is a limit to how far their patron’s engagement with adversaries will go. Diplomacy with adversaries is about gaining temporary advantages that constrain the other side; diplomacy with allied states is about longer-term entanglements that give the central power more freedom. Calibrating the two in a way that motivates allies but does not alienate them is the art of diplomacy.

So far, the Trump administration’s moves with China augur well. The White House is holding out the possibility of a summit with Xi, but it has been coy about the timing. In the interim, it has concentrated on amassing leverage through tariffs and by prioritizing the Indo-Pacific in new defense spending plans. Should détente with Russia, U.S. efforts to rebalance its portfolios with allies, and the use of diplomacy in the Middle East pay off, Washington will enjoy an even stronger position vis-à-vis Beijing.

All of these policies will, of course, take time to bear fruit. But if the administration can combine the threads effectively, the United States will have the best shot at restructuring its relationship with China since the 1990s, when it fatefully opened up to its adversary.

BACK TO BASICS

The United States is bound to confront many challenges as it works to revive strategic diplomacy as a tool of foreign policy. But in comparison with those of earlier great powers, the country’s circumstances are auspicious. The United States has a unique ability, rooted in its open political system, meritocratic society, and dynamic economy, to undo unforced errors and rejuvenate itself as a global power. Diplomacy can help this effort along by translating these advantages into strategic gains in key regions that improve the U.S. position for long-term competition.

## Answers to: Miscalculation Advantage

### 1NC Miscalculation Advantage Frontline

#### Go to the Miscalculation Advantage:

#### 1. Domain awareness fails—we don’t have enough icebreakers and technology faces capacity constraints

Abbie Tingstad et al., 11/1/23, RAND, “Report on the Arctic Capabilities of the U.S. Armed Forces,” https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\_reports/RRA1638-1.html, mm

Although the United States has substantial strategic capabilities for operating from or through the Arctic, its capacity and capability for conducting operations to secure its Arctic interests are more limited than those of other Arctic countries. This is even more of an issue for instances of the USCG operating alone in the region, rather than with joint and interagency partners. Per the FY 2021 NDAA request, we have noted in this report why the USCG operating alone is not advantageous from the perspectives of domain awareness and self-defense or protection from threats. Our findings suggest that the benefits of operating jointly and with like-minded partners in the Arctic are not specific to these two areas. In general, other Arctic countries have scaled their capabilities and capacity to their respective Arctic needs, considering natural hazards, military threats, and the sizes of their populations and economies. Even Russia’s investments, including its now famously large number of icebreakers and well-publicized efforts to refurbish Cold War–era infrastructure, are at least roughly aligned with its massive Arctic territory, including just over 50 percent of the circumpolar coastline, and its equally sizable economic ambitions for the region. White House, DoD, DHS, and service component Arctic strategies have sought to rectify this gap, but sufficient resources have not yet been allocated. Similarly, China’s polar investments mirror its scientific and economic ambitions. It is not alone among countries without polar territory in owning icebreakers. The fact that China has multiple ice-capable vessels and is planning for more does not directly threaten the United States. Still, we assessed that those concerns about China utilizing Arctic activities for opportunistic dual-purpose activities and for strategic messaging are potentially valid. Yet domain awareness and communications are admittedly difficult for everyone operating in the region. However, other regional stakeholders’ focus on the Arctic does give them some advantages. In some cases, geography is also advantageous. For example, the Nordic countries are small, and even their non-Arctic portions are nonetheless very close and quite similar climatically to the Arctic, so many of their capabilities are suitable for the region. One other exception would be some aspects of Russia’s military buildup in the Arctic, a limited number of which could be interpreted as posturing aggressively, not purely defensively. The issue that the United States faces has been most visible with respect to icebreaking; like others, we have noted the severe capacity problem arising from the United States maintaining only two operational polar icebreakers. Continuing to sustain funding for the PSC program and potentially obtaining funding for an ASC program will be essential for right-sizing the icebreaking fleet relative to needs, which exist at both poles and are likely to continue increasing in the future Arctic as science missions continue and demand increases for participation in exercises, SAR, and law enforcement. The United States will need more than these icebreakers and strategically focused assets, such as submarines, fighter aircraft, and bomber aircraft, to maintain a credible Arctic presence across its sizable Arctic territory. The existing inventory is necessary for demonstrating presence, but it is not sufficient for practicing ongoing presence and readiness for a wide array of plausible contingencies in the Far North and asserting strategic influence. Principal among the capabilities that should not be lost in the discussion of icebreakers are domain awareness, communications, and logistics for sustainment. We have highlighted three types of domain-awareness challenges the United States will face if increasing its Arctic presence: • First, the existing system in place for strategic warning and response has not yet been fully evaluated and adapted for threats designed to elude legacy sensing architectures or target modernized critical infrastructure. • Second, this existing system was not designed with law enforcement and other Arctic regional needs in mind. • Third, the emergence of the region as one of strategic competition could leave the USCG and other tactical regional operators with limited means of identifying potential threats to their platforms. As noted elsewhere, in the appendix that is not available to the public, we examine all-domain awareness, as well as other capabilities and various threats, in greater depth. Similarly, much of the Arctic communication available to the United States was not designed for sustained presence and mobility in the context of operations in (rather than from or through) the Arctic. The limitations we have described come in different varieties. These include physical limitations on extending communications available farther south to work in the Arctic; competition among armed forces for access to strategic communications; limited depth in the sequence of primary, alternative, contingency, and emergency communications; few tangible options for supporting higher-bandwidth applications; and dilemmas with respect to policy about communicating among partners (both between U.S. internal organizations and with external countries). Another common theme from our TTXs and interviews that we have emphasized is the issue of sustaining presence once initiated. The only U.S. Arctic presence sustained year-round is at Thule Air Base in northwestern Greenland. Creating and sustaining more presence in and around far northern Alaska and maintaining a capability to deploy a sustained presence elsewhere (e.g., to the Greenland–Iceland–United Kingdom [GIUK] gap between the European Arctic and North Atlantic) will require substantial investment in infrastructure, inventories, personnel, and plans. This would include better leveraging the Army’s ground presence in Alaska, planning between the USCG and the USN for maritime infrastructure and capabilities, coordinating between the USCG and the USAF to enable more-regular tactical air presence, planning for prepositioned stock and south-to-north movement of supplies (including determining routes), and collaborating with Alaska state, Indigenous, commercial, and other partners. It is also true that other Arctic countries do not have the global reach and responsibilities the United States does. The Arctic, as a historically peaceful and difficult-to-access region, has typically not been a high priority for U.S. armed forces, homeland security, SAR, environmental response, and law-enforcement investments, except during the height of the Cold War, when the region played a key strategic role in the overarching U.S. deterrence and homeland defense strategies. However, this is already beginning to change: As White House, DoD, DHS, and service component Arctic strategies have noted, the Arctic is again becoming a zone of major power competition.

#### 2. The plan doesn’t solve crisis decision-making—more data doesn’t lead to better military policy

Szewczyk 23, serves in the 3rd Multi-Domain Task Force, degree in computer science and information systems. (Captain Zachary Szewczyk, 6-27-2023, “The Three Wicked Problems Inhibiting Data-Driven Decision-Making in the Army” https://mwi.westpoint.edu/the-three-wicked-problems-inhibiting-data-driven-decision-making-in-the-army/) wtk

Military leaders have sought hard data to drive their decisions for decades, perhaps most famously beginning with Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara’s so-called Whiz Kids in the 1960s. As retrospective analysis of McNamara’s data-driven approach to strategy made clear, however, data alone does not good decisions make. Errors in collection, transmission, and presentation decimated the efficacy of this initiative. The Vietnam War is a cautionary tale in data-driven decision-making gone wrong, an important reminder that modernity’s insatiable need for ever more data may be no more a silver bullet today than it purported to be sixty years ago.

Reasons for data’s failure to enable perfected decision-making are legion. Careful attention must be paid to the assumptions underlying the trend toward centralized decision-making, a concept that relies on complex, brittle systems of systems, demolishes agility and adaptability, and runs counter to the decentralized mandates of mission command. Here, too, we must not only ask whether or not we can enable certain functions with data, but also whether or not we should. Important questions regarding the efficacy of data-driven decision-making must also be addressed, especially in a world where data overload is not a danger but rather a given. Finally, well-studied biases threaten to make efforts to achieve data-driven decision-making little more than a quest for decision-driven data. Here, however, I deal only with the substantial technical challenges facing the joint force in making data-driven decisions. These challenges fall into three categories: collection, transport, and presentation. They represent the most significant barriers to meeting the threefold requirements for analysis—(1) correct and complete data, (2) in a suitable platform, with (3) the requisite analytics to answer decision-makers’ information requirements. And each challenge is a wicked problem, one for which no perfect solution exists, only progressively better ones.

#### 3. Missile defense fails—adversaries develop countermeasures

Billings and Lewis 25, \*senior editor at Scientific American, \*\*director of the East Asia Nonproliferation Program at CNS. (\*Lee Billings, \*\*Jeffrey Lewis, 5-22-2025, “Why Some Experts Call Trump’s ‘Golden Dome’ Missile Shield a Dangerous Fantasy” https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-trumps-golden-dome-wont-shield-the-u-s-from-nuclear-strikes/) wtk

So you’re telling me there’s a chance! No, seriously, I see what you mean. The arguments in favor of this working seem rather contrived. No system is perfect, and just one missile getting through can still have catastrophic results. And we haven’t even talked about adversarial countermeasures yet.

There’s a joke that’s sometimes made about this: “We play chess, and they don’t move their pieces.” That seems to be the operative assumption here: that other nations will sit idly by as we build a complex, vulnerable system to nullify any strategic nuclear capability they have. And of course, it’s not valid at all. Why do you think the Chinese are building massive fields of missile silos? It’s to counteract or overwhelm this sort of thing. Why do you think the Russians are making moves to put a nuclear weapon in orbit? It’s to mass kill any satellite constellation that would shoot down their missiles.

Golden Dome proponents may say, “Oh, we’ll shoot that down, too, before it goes off.” Well, good luck. You put a high-yield nuclear weapon on a booster, and the split second it gets above the clouds, sure, you might see it—but now it sees you, too, before you can shoot. All it has to do at that point is detonate to blow a giant hole in your defenses, and that’s game over. And by the way, this rosy scenario assumes your adversaries don’t interfere with all your satellites passing over their territory in peacetime. We know that won’t be the case—they’ll light them up with sensor-dazzling lasers, at minimum!

#### 4. No Arctic war—Russian forces are overstretched by Ukraine

Tormod Heier, 2025 - Norwegian Defence University College, Norway “How the Ukraine War Stopped Arctic Brinkmanship” Arctic Review on Law and Politics

Vol. 16, 2025, pp. 58–80, https://arcticreview.no/index.php/arctic/article/view/6837/11032 //DH

Based on available data in an open-source environment, there was no military antagonism nor any provocative exercises between U.S. and Russian forces in the Arctic between 2022 and 2024. This contrasts the 2015–2021 period where the two rivals provoked each other outside the coast of Norway. Why have U.S. and Russian forces stopped antagonizing each other? Using Brinkmanship as a theoretical model of explanation, this study finds the Ukraine War to be an Arctic tranquilizer. This is partly due to fear of nuclear escalation but also due to strategic necessity: neither U.S. nor Russian forces can afford an overstretch problématique in the contemporary international environment. As both protagonists forge self-imposed restraints, Russia’s 2022 invasion has inadvertently led to more Arctic stability.

#### 5. No escalation or miscalculation risk—all sides are showing restraint

Tormod Heier, 2025 - Norwegian Defence University College, Norway “How the Ukraine War Stopped Arctic Brinkmanship” Arctic Review on Law and Politics

Vol. 16, 2025, pp. 58–80, https://arcticreview.no/index.php/arctic/article/view/6837/11032 //DH

Analysis

Based on the empirical description, how can the slide from malign to benign operations be explained? Or more precisely, why have U.S. and Russian forces since 2022 seemingly stopped antagonizing each other outside the coast of Norway? Using Schelling’s theory of brinkmanship and Lebow’s warning of inadvertent wars, the empirical expectation suggests that in the post-Ukrainian environment, U.S. and Russian forces are incentivized to move away from the Arctic brink of war; restraints on military activities and respect for each other’s sphere of interest is safer than “manipulating the risk of war”. Analyzing this assumption, two explanations seem particularly plausible: broader security concerns and strategic necessity.

On broader security concerns, it can be argued that the Arctic brinkmanship strategy has become too dangerous. Since the 2022 invasion, hundreds of thousands of troops across the Euro-Atlantic region have been mobilized and stand on a higher readiness status. U.S. and Russian nuclear forces have thus increased their patrolling and attained a key role in strategic deterrence.78 As the two nuclear powers are forced to operate under more unpredictable circumstances, the current situation seems to be characterized by a shorter strategic warning time. A security environment where transparency, trust and confidence gradually wither may lead to inadvertent spirals of escalation and war. As assertive brinkmanship induces tension, and thus lower prospects for nuclear escalation, the alternative of regaining control over the situation is probably much safer for both protagonists. The alternative, where crisis unfolds in ways that neither Russian nor U.S. defense officials can fully control, is simply too risky after Russia’s attempt to invade Ukraine.

The post-Ukrainian restraints thereby signify an important aspect of Arctic security, namely that U.S. and Russian forces are intimately tied together by one mutual interest; neither side wants to see the Arctic become a staging ground for a risky brinkmanship strategy that subsequently leaves everyone worse off. On the contrary, by showing restraints in the Norwegian and Barents Seas, state leaders in Washington D.C. and Moscow are allowed to take active steps away from the brink of war. A plausible interpretation, therefore, is that Ukraine is not worth an increased risk for an existential nuclear war, neither as seen from a U.S. or a Russian perspective. As wars always unfold in unexpected ways and consequently are hard to predict, managing the fear of inadvertent escalation is safer than continuing to “manipulate the risk” in the Arctic.

### Extend: Domain Awareness Fails

#### Budget and staffing shortages mean operation of tech fails

Castleberry 25, Former Senior Advisor, Bureau for Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State U.S. National Security and Foreign Policy Expert (Asha, 5-26-2025, “What did Trump’s First 100 Days Tell Us about the Next National Security Strategy?” https://trendsresearch.org/insight/what-did-trumps-first-100-days-tell-us-about-the-next-national-security-strategy/?srsltid=AfmBOoplzaif76CsHhdCHT5JUEq9XKpVfaOXf28fgidZRaXClpFtp\_-B) wtk

Going beyond a published national security strategy, Trump’s implementation process may not align with his priorities. The American people must consider that bipolarism will likely occur with Trump meeting his priorities. Trumpian leadership is known to be inconsistent with policy decisions. In addition, major unforeseen domestic and global developments will likely impact some of Trump’s U.S. national security priorities, which organically happens all the time in almost every presidential administration.

Another critical point about policy implementation is ensuring the administration has adequate resources to carry out its priorities. Given the significant budget cuts that are happening to the federal government, the Trump administration needs to make sure that they have both “the ways” and “the means” to carry out their national security priorities. During his first 100 days, President Trump expressed interest in building next-generation missile defense systems.[xxv] It is difficult to build and operationalize these missile defense systems if you do not have the personnel and resources in place. Once again, a significant reduction in the federal budget that dismantled many critical departments across the government may have positioned the Trump administration to be more vulnerable to not meeting its national security priorities.

#### And capacity limitations overwhelm solvency

Bouffard et al. 25, \*Director – Center for Arctic Security and Resilience Assistant Professor of Arctic Security, College of Business and Security Management University of Alaska Fairbanks. \*\*Canada Research Chair in the Study of the Canadian North, and Professor, School for the Study of Canada at Trent University. \*\*\*Global Fellow; Director, Centre for Defence and Security Studies (CDSS); Professor, Political Studies, University of Manitoba. (\*Troy Bouffard, \*\*Whitney Lackenbauer, \*\*\*Andrea Charron, “The “Iron Dome” and Implications for the North” https://gbv.wilsoncenter.org/article/iron-dome-and-implications-north) wtk

Missile defense and modernizing early warning systems in the North American Arctic are complicated by the lack of persistent satellite communications capabilities above 60 degrees latitude. Today’s effective missile defense systems are extremely information-intensive, and future versions will only be more so. One of the reasons the F35 is so hotly anticipated in Canada is because it is a data and information vacuum, but managing such information flows requires new communications’ capabilities. Technical issues posed by the Arctic location include frequent low cloud cover, aurora effects, maintaining a stable power supply, thermal management for optics, ice formation, protecting sensitive optical components, and complex atmospheric turbulence, amongst many others. Adequate supply chains and industry capacity are other challenges.

#### Electromagnetism means Arctic satellites will fail

Lee and Poling 23, \*director of the Acquisition and Technology Policy Program at RAND, \*\*research analyst with the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies. (\*Caitlin, \*\*Aidan, June 2023, “Bolstering Arctic Domain Awareness to Deter Air & Missile Threats to the Homeland” Mitchell Institute Policy Paper Volume 41. https://www.mitchellaerospacepower.org/app/uploads/2023/06/41-Bolstering-Arctic-Domain-Awareness-FINAL.pdf) wtk

Second, satellites operating over the Arctic are plagued by a unique electromagnetic phenomenon that occurs in the northern tier. Ionospheric scintillation, the flickering and distortion of radio waves, is more prominent at the poles. While this phenomenon does not damage satellites, it does interfere with the transmission and reception of their signals, which include signals received from position, navigation, and timing satellites such as the Global Positioning System.71 In addition, the Earth’s magnetic poles trap charged particles that can create electro-magnetic anomalies that hamper space-based sensor collection operations.72

### Extend: Can’t Solve Crisis Decision-Making

#### Even with perfect data, crisis decision-making fails

Helfrich 20, Technology Editor for Military Embedded Systems (Emma Helfrich, 8-4-2020, “Managing the military’s big data challenge” https://militaryembedded.com/ai/big-data/managing-the-militarys-big-data-challenge) wtk

With every second that ticks by, the amount of data gathered by the U.S. military grows, as does the desire and need by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) to extract and use this data to form actionable intelligence. This situation directly results in an intense demand for military technology manufacturers to quickly produce both software and hardware capable of first processing the zettabytes of data that exist on Internet of Things (IoT) devices and then accurately analyzing its value. Successful gathering, processing, and analyzing will effectively change warfare as it is understood today.

The digital age, the age of information, the computer age – all are terms used as identifiers to depict how the 21st century has brought with it nearly unfathomable amounts of data. Knowing that the information is there and how to access it is one thing, but making sense of it and using it for both defense and commercial purposes is what makes it so-called big data.

The challenge for both warfighters and the manufacturers that provide them with their technology: Acquiring that data in contested environments and relaying it in an efficient way. Making this task more difficult is the reality that conflict often occurs in data-denied areas, making it near-impossible for these systems to access the information the military wants or doesn’t yet know it needs.

### Extend: Missile Defense Fails

#### Countermeasures overwhelm solvency

Greenwood 19 [Matthew Greenwood works for the Government of Ontario and has 17 years of experience in public sector communications. He has a master’s degree in Environmental Studies from York University. 4/30. "Missile Defense: Does It Really Work" https://www.engineering.com/DesignerEdge/DesignerEdgeArticles/ArticleID/18971/Missile-Defense-Does-It-Really-Work.aspx]

But the GMD system also has its critics—in fact, the Union of Concerned Scientists doesn’t think the system actually works: “though the idea of a missile shield may sound attractive, today’s homeland system is hugely expensive, ineffective, and offers no proven capability to protect the United States—and no credible path forward for achieving success.” The organization’s main concern is that the GMD system can’t handle countermeasures deployed by an enemy. An ICBM could launch decoys during the midcourse phase to distract the interceptor: those lightweight decoys would follow the same trajectory as the real ICBM in space, making it hard for the interceptor to determine which is the real warhead. This could force the GMD system to use up its interceptors—there are currently only 44—before the real threats are launched. Additionally, the ICBM could be equipped with a “cooled shroud,” which lowers the temperature of the warhead. Since interceptors rely on infrared sensors to track their targets, it would take them longer to home in on the ICBM—that is, if they see it at all. Both of these countermeasures are within reach of countries like Russia, Iran and North Korea, which are building ICBMs. But the Pentagon has still invested over $40 billion in missile defense. Also, while the military points to the two-shot salvo test as proof that the GMD system works, others are more skeptical about the test results. “The simulated attacking missile’s trajectory, its exact coordinates, had to be programmed into the intercepting missile’s guidance system—an entirely unrealistic way to track an evasive drop of rain in a ballistic hurricane,” said Doug Vaughan, a defense reporter who has covered missile defense since SDI. “And for all that, they still failed more often than not.” The test was performed on a “threat-representative ICBM”—not a real one. The U.S. military isn’t about to launch a ballistic missile at itself to test the system, so there’s no way to really tell if the system will perform successfully until someone launches an ICBM at the U.S. homeland. While missile defense technology may have progressed since the Reagan era, its effectiveness is still in doubt—especially when conventional deterrence is doing a much more effective job at keeping the U.S. safe. In fact, the GMD system may just be pushing U.S. adversaries to develop technologies to counter it—potentially making the system obsolete before it even gets used. Russia and China are already working on new strategic weapons to counter the interceptor. One example is hypersonic weapons technology—missiles that could move too fast for U.S. missile defense systems to intercept. But the lack of evidence of the system’s effectiveness doesn’t seem to be slowing down the Department of Defense. The existing arsenal of 44 GMD interceptors could soon be increased, as the Pentagon has requested funding for 20 more. “What the Pentagon is now hyping is a plan to throw ‘salvos’ of more, better, faster, smarter rocks at enemy rockets and, at best, knock down maybe 10 percent of the incoming missiles,” said Vaughan. “The other 90 percent—or even 1 percent—that get through will kill millions.”

### Extend: No Arctic War

#### Strict rules of engagement and force deployment limits prevent miscalc

Tormod Heier, 2025 - Norwegian Defence University College, Norway “How the Ukraine War Stopped Arctic Brinkmanship” Arctic Review on Law and Politics

Vol. 16, 2025, pp. 58–80, https://arcticreview.no/index.php/arctic/article/view/6837/11032 //DH

Hence, as U.S. and Russian forces tacitly agree to maintain a subtle sense of crisis stability in the Norwegian Sea, defined as an absence of mutual provocations, the rivals nevertheless need to display presence and agility. But contrary to the malign 2015–2021 period, post-2022 deployments are more tempered. Cautiously confined to mutually exclusive zones of operations, Russian NOTAMs are absent in the Norwegian Sea while U.S. maritime task groups are absent in the Barents Sea. Abstaining from provocative exercises also means that the two adversaries pursue a stricter rule of engagement. Careful not to invoke an Arctic escalatory “tit-for-tat” logic, this “gentleman’s agreement” can be interpreted as a sort of tacit cooperation. It allows state leaders and military commanders to buy time in case of unintended accidents. In the post-Ukrainian environment, technical or human errors close to Russia’s second-strike capabilities on the Kola Peninsula should be avoided. The operative restraints thereby provide the two opponents with more room for maneuver. If tension inadvertently spirals out of control, U.S. and Russian defense officials are allowed to calm down, communicate, and clarify misperceptions or misunderstandings. Paradoxically, therefore, Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine has contributed to a sense of Arctic predictability; a sense of crisis stability where both rivals are tied to a common interest of war avoidance.

#### Russia and China lack the capability to initiate military operations in the Arctic

Alex Little, 2024 - Alex Little is an M.S. graduate of Georgia Tech and specializes in Russian and Central Asian affairs. “NATO’s Arctic Strategy Is an Overreaction” The American Conservative, 4/26, https://www.theamericanconservative.com/natos-arctic-strategy-is-an-overreaction/ //DH

Despite its increased operations in the region over the past few years, Russia’s ability to mount an Arctic offensive is negligible as it remains entrenched in the quagmire that is the Russo-Ukrainian War. Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine has been mired with various failures and shortcomings, including poor planning and running out of necessary supplies. Shortages have become enough of an issue for Moscow to resort to increased cooperation with pariah states, such as North Korea, to attain necessary equipment.

Regarding China, Beijing’s interest in the Arctic beyond economic endeavors is minimal. China’s main preoccupation has consistently been the Taiwan Strait, as Beijing has used various coercive tactics short of armed conflict aimed at wearing down Taiwan to capitulate to its aim of unification with the island. Military activity in the Arctic would rank extremely lowly in importance regarding Beijing’s military initiatives.

#### Prefer our evidence – theirs is based upon Arctic mythmaking about resources, shipping routes and Russian bases – the reality is that there are clearly defined borders, no resource disputes and economics makes shipping and resource races nonviable

Rebecca Pincus, 2024 - Ph.D., is director of the Polar Institute at the Wilson Center. “Small Ocean, Big Hype: Arctic Myths and Realities” War on the Rocks, 5/3, https://warontherocks.com/2024/05/small-ocean-big-hype-arctic-myths-and-realities/ //DH

Global dynamics, from climate change to the decline of American hegemony and technological revolution, are reshaping the Arctic. Unfortunately, mythmaking about the Arctic continues to distort the narratives available to both public and elite audiences. Heather Exner-Pirot beautifully explains how easy this can be and, as Josh Tallis has written, the phantom of Arctic misgovernance can be used to raise alarm about an unusual gap in Arctic security governance. In reality, though, the Arctic is profoundly normal.

The following is an effort to disassemble the leading myths about the Arctic Ocean and to underscore nuggets of truth underlying the legends. The natural tendency, noted above, for people to process their understanding of the Arctic through the most dramatic filter possible, is not easy to counteract by listing mundane realities. But falling for the hype is not a good way to make policy. Refuting these myths can put the focus back on more mundane, but ultimately more valuable, solutions.

The Legendary Arctic Scramble

Most of the modern Arctic myths and legends are spicing up mundane realities with added drama. For example, it’s common to see the Arctic referred to as a battleground for valuable natural resources. It’s the “$1 Trillion Ocean”, holding massive reserves of oil and gas (or one trillion dollars’ worth of critical minerals, take your pick), with echoes of Dr. Evil. Competition over resources is framed as a “race” or “battle,” although it is often unclear what winning might mean. Industry and science have long known that the Arctic holds a significant endowment of natural resources. Prospecting and development in the Arctic lag behind that of other regions due to the significant logistical challenges and resulting extra costs relating to arctic operations. Resource deposits in the Arctic must be of a higher grade or size to attract investors and overcome the added risk to capital. In short, it has historically been cheaper to look elsewhere. And that largely remains true: There has not been a flood of investment and new development into the Arctic.

Rather than unclaimed, ungoverned space, the Arctic Ocean and surrounding landmass are almost entirely sovereign lands and waters of the eight Arctic states. Yes, there is a small area of high seas, the central Arctic Ocean. This area is under a fishing moratorium and can only be accessed through traversing an Arctic state’s waters (plus likely stopping in an Arctic state port). And yet the myth of an Arctic wild west persists: “As a consequence of the rapidly disappearing polar ice caps, there has been an increase in unclaimed ocean and land territory, beyond any nation’s control, that countries are attempting to claim jurisdiction over,” proclaims one analysis. While this is a common argument, it is factually incorrect. It is linking two separate issues into one misleading causal chain: the decline in Arctic sea ice due to climate change, and the ongoing process of defining boundaries and spaces under international law. In fact, there is no unclaimed land territory in the Arctic. And there is just one maritime boundary disagreement, between the United States and Canada, over a tiny slice of the Beaufort Sea.

Perhaps the “Great Arctic Race” is about the overlapping claims to the central Arctic Ocean seabed. The U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) permits coastal states to claim areas of the extended continental shelf beyond the 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone, if they can prove that these areas are a natural prolongation of their continental shelf. Russia, Denmark (via Greenland), and Canada have overlapping claims in the central Arctic. Thus far, they have all adhered to the process of defining these claims in accordance with international law. Russia’s law-abiding approach to the Arctic shelf claims is a rare bright spot in the country’s foreign policy.

The U.N. convention and seabed claims have been in the spotlight recently as interest grows in seabed mining for critical minerals. Seabed mining is not likely to drive conflict over Arctic shelf claims. The central Arctic Ocean — over 200 nautical miles from any coast — is also an incredibly inhospitable area for resource extraction. The Arctic Ocean still freezes in the winter, and is sunk in the frigid darkness of the polar night. The seabed mining industry, like most global industry, is likely to look for less costly options in warmer latitudes. While it cannot be assumed that Russia will continue pursuing its shelf claims in accordance with international law, it is likely to use lower-cost tools like lawfare or information warfare to complicate central Arctic Ocean claims, rather than apply high-cost and hard-to-sustain military options.

The Myth of Increasing Accessibility and Arctic Shipping

The idea that climate change is increasing accessibility in the Arctic is repeated so often that it is taken for granted. There is an element of truth here — the thick cap of multiyear Arctic sea ice that has shaped the region for thousands of years is melting away and will soon be gone. But that is just one piece of a bigger puzzle, and the net effect of climate change in the Arctic is making human activity harder, not easier.

Shrinking sea ice leaves coastlines unprotected from stronger, more frequent storms. Coastal erosion is higher in the Arctic than anywhere else, threatening U.S. radar installations. Thawing permafrost causes subsidence, destroying infrastructure and saddling Arctic states with massive costs — highest in Russia. Permafrost thaw will cause many more disasters in coming years, in Russia and elsewhere. Massive wildfires further endanger communities and infrastructure in the North. At sea, increased storminess and stronger waves create hazards, along with increases in drifting ice. At the heart of it all lies uncertainty — a powerful dissuading factor.

Arctic shipping lanes replacing Suez and Panama is another related myth. When crisis erupts in the Red Sea, the Suez Canal, or the Panama Canal, it is tempting to point north to emerging Arctic shipping lanes as alternatives. On paper, Arctic shipping routes appear to offer considerable savings of distance, time, and fuel between northern ports in Asia, Europe, and North America. However, in practice, these shipping routes remain largely notional. Over the last decade, destinational Arctic maritime activity has ticked up, mostly driven by Russia’s Yamal liquified natural gas project and expansion at Canada’s Mary River Mine. Container ships and roll-on roll-offs are barely present, and this type of traffic has showed no change in the past decade.

It is clear that Canada has no interest in opening the Northwest Passage to international shipping. Furthermore, the complex routes of the passage have draft limitations, significant remaining ice, and inadequate charting. While Russian President Vladimir Putin has been personally driving the effort to develop the Northern Sea Route, imposing an ambitious timeline for cargo growth, reality is not keeping pace. The route is plagued by its own draft limitations and lack of supporting infrastructure, as well as unpredictable ice hazards. International shipping vanished following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, and while cargo totals have rebounded and grown in the past two years, the Northern Sea Route is functionally a route for Russian-flagged ships of all sorts to carry oil and gas to Asian markets (and bring in construction materials for future developments, which have been weakened by sanctions).

The Myth of Russian Dominance and American Indifference

A large body of mythmaking threatens to create a security crisis in the Arctic by sketching a 10-foot-tall Russia intent on conquering the region and controlling the ocean and casting the United States as an impotent weakling. These outsize legends are used to justify massive spending increases in the Arctic, as well as significantly stronger measures against Russia, both of which could contribute to escalation in the region and also ripple across the global balance.

Russia’s so-called “dominance” of the Arctic has been treated as gospel. It is true that over half of the Arctic coastline is Russian territory, and nearly half of the people living in the Arctic live in Russia. And yet the discourse of Russian dominance in the Arctic goes beyond geography. It also presents Russia’s position as a threat to the United States and to the entire Arctic Ocean. Of course, Moscow does everything it can to nourish this sense of threat. Planting a flag at the seabed of the North Pole — possibly the most effective Russian public relations stunt ever — was a purely symbolic act, but continues to serve as a reference point. Dropping paratroopers at the North Pole, or unfurling a giant banner on the ice, are also gestures that feed the legend.

Arguments about Russia’s so-called dominance of the Arctic reveal more about America’s own insecurities than the facts on the ground. This framing creates a sense of unnecessary urgency and relies on a set of measures that together would badly warp U.S. strategic planning. Part of this is the legendary icebreaker gap, thoroughly debunked by Paul Avey. Does Russia dominate the Arctic with its icebreakers? Or does it just have a reasonable number of icebreakers for its 24,000 kilometer Arctic coastline, along which Putin is desperately thirsting to build an international shipping lane that has so far failed to catch on? Sober analyses of Russia’s power and strategy in the Arctic need to be facts-based, rather than dealing in terms of dominance.

Yes, Russian military capabilities and capacities in the Arctic are substantive. It is widely recognized that Russian leadership began to rebuild and expand Arctic military capabilities and capacities as soon as it was able to, starting in the early 2000s. Most authoritative analyses note that these installations and systems are primarily defensive in nature, intended to help control and protect Russia’s economic and strategic interests in the Arctic, although they could of course be useful in supporting aggression and, as Katarzyna Zysk notes, Russian strategic thinking does not clearly differentiate between offence and defense. All great powers have military bases along their coastlines, and Russia has both strategic and economic interests to protect in its Arctic territory.

And if fears over Russia are not enough, another myth holds that China is coming for the Arctic. Or that Chinese-Russian cooperation will open the door for Chinese dominance in the Arctic. As Marc Lanteigne has explained, relations between Beijing and Moscow in the Arctic are far more complicated. And others have noted that the myth of China’s growing influence in the Arctic is mostly serving Beijing’s interests. It is important to watch the broader trajectory of Russian-Chinese relations and not rush to assumptions about China’s future in the Arctic.

In parts as a result of fears over Russian dominance, claims that the U.S. Department of Defense “needs to do more in the Arctic” have also become commonplace. The United States has identified several critical gaps in operational capabilities and capacities in the Arctic, including in the National Strategy for the Arctic Region as well as the Department of Defense’s Arctic strategy. The most significant gap is the North Warning System, and the ongoing effort to replace this critical system. Canada has also underscored its commitment to upgrade the key continental defense architecture, most recently in an Arctic-focused defense policy update. But it’s also important to note that the United States has significant Arctic military capabilities, including the highest concentration of fifth-generation aircraft in the world, as well as an airborne division in Alaska, along with a North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) region. U.S. Navy submarines operate and train regularly in the Arctic Ocean.

In the current budget context, in which the Department of Defense faces flat and tight budgets, there are not free-floating resources to build up any but the most vital capabilities in the Arctic. Broad calls for significant spending increases in the Arctic are divorced from the reality of spending needs in the Indo-Pacific and Europe, and from U.S. national strategic priorities.

#### The threat of missile launches is low

Cirincione 25, nuclear policy analyst and author with over 35 years of experience in the field. (Joe Cirincione, 2-4-2025, “The national missile defense fantasy—again” https://thebulletin.org/2025/02/the-national-missile-defense-fantasy-again/) wtk

Doomed to fail. Trump’s executive order is a jumble of false claims and imaginary solutions. It begins by declaring that the risk of a missile attack “remains the most catastrophic threat facing the United States.” That would surprise most experts on existential risks. The climate crisis, the threat of new pandemics, artificial intelligence, and crippling cyber attacks are all at least as likely catastrophic events as nuclear weapons delivered by other means. But threat inflation has always been a key part of efforts to justify urgent action and massive investment.

Trump claims that “over the past 40 years, rather than lessening, the threat from next-generation strategic weapons has become more intense and complex.” Despite being utter nonsense, this claim has gone largely unchallenged.

While it is true that new technologies have increased the lethality of missiles, the missile threat to the United States has decreased dramatically. Arms control treaties and the collapse of the Soviet Union slashed the number of nuclear weapons and nuclear-armed missiles threatening the United States.

In 1985, the Soviet Union deployed 2,345 land-based and submarine-based missiles carrying over 9,300 nuclear warheads. That was the threat Reagan hoped to render “impotent and obsolete” with his missile shield.

Thanks to negotiated agreements, today’s Russia fields only 521 missiles, carrying 2,236 warheads. China’s land-based nuclear-armed missiles capable of reaching the United States have increased from around 20 in 1985 to some 135 today (carrying 238 warheads) and perhaps 72 single-warhead submarine-based missiles. In sum, the United States today faces roughly one-fifth the number of enemy missiles compared to 40 years ago and one-quarter of the nuclear warheads (728 vs. 2,365 missiles and 2,546 vs. 9,320 warheads). That is still a very dangerous threat but by no means a greater one.

### Extend: No Escalation

#### No risk of Arctic war – military capabilities are overstated and environmental conditions make conflict impossible

Benjamin Schaller, 2018, OSCE Yearbook 2017, “Defusing the Discourse on ‘Arctic War’: The Merits of Military Transparency and Confidence-and Security-Building Measures in the Arctic Region,” https://ifsh.de/file/publication/OSCE\_Yearbook\_en/2017/Schaller-en.pdf, mm

The harsh Arctic climate not only has severe consequences for the profitability of Arctic resource extraction, but also places practical constraints on the conduct of military operations. With the large Arctic Ocean covered in ice for most of the year, and temperatures that can drop below minus 40 degrees Celsius, the overall military presence in the Arctic is still relatively low in comparison to other regions. Sustaining military infrastructure and even conducting military activities (e.g. exercises) are highly expensive and pose severe challenges to service members and equipment. Consequently, armed forces in the Arctic region are often more a symbol of national sovereignty and prestige than of military power projection. An exemplary illustration is provided by the Danish elite navy unit “Slædepatruljen Sirius” (Sirius Dog Sled Patrol). Studies have shown that the extreme cold and darkness have a considerable impact on the physical and psychological health of the participating soldiers.17 The unit, consisting of twelve soldiers split up into dogsled teams of two, patrols approximately 16,000 kilometres of coastline in Northern Greenland.18 Due to the extremely low temperatures, the unit is equipped with the M1917 Enfield, a bolt-action rifle used during the First World War. More modern, gas-operated semi-automatic rifles are far less reliable in the cold environment of Northern Greenland and put the soldiers at greater risk of attack by polar bears. The Arctic also places constraints on the deployment of other conventional military equipment such as battle tanks and heavy artillery, which require a far more elaborate military infrastructure in low temperatures (e.g. for preheating engines or maintenance) than currently exists in the region.19 Military capabilities in the Arctic and national modernization plans in the region also seem to be overstated. Despite warnings of “militarization” or an “arms race” in the Arctic, two consecutive studies by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) from 2012 and 2016 draw a less alarming picture. They both conclude that the military presence in the region continues to be small in scale and far below Cold War levels. Arctic military modernization and procurement plans – which tend to be particularly costly – often proceed slowly or are even completely called off. Most changes that do take place have little to do with offensive military postures and the safeguarding of territorial claims; instead, they are connected with protecting and policing territorial waters and existing state borders and supporting Search and Rescue (SAR) operations.20 Looking, for example, at the sparsely populated northern parts of Russia and Canada, it is not surprising that these tasks are undertaken, or at least supported, by specifically trained and equipped military personnel. As the former Chief of the Canadian Defence Staff, General Walter Natynczyk, once put it: “If someone were to invade the Canadian Arctic, my first task would be to rescue them.”21 To sum up, there are good reasons to believe that military conflict is highly unlikely to break out in the Arctic. In fact, the harsh Arctic climate and rudimentary infrastructure have always fostered particularly close cooperation in the sparsely populated High North, and the Arctic littoral states in particular have much more to lose than to gain from military confrontation if they intend to make the Arctic economically useable. In addition, the level of military presence in the Arctic is often exaggerated, and many practical constraints are usually overlooked.

## Answers to: Competition Advantage

### 1NC Competition Advantage Frontline

#### Go to the Competition Advantage:

#### 1. No Russia-China axis in the Arctic – cooperation is limited and doesn’t pose a threat to the Western Order

Elizabeth Buchanan, 5/8/24, (Dr Elizabeth Buchanan is a former Australian Department of Defence employee who is currently a senior fellow with the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) and an Associate Researcher with the French Ministry of Armed Forces’ strategic research institute (IRSEM).), The Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, “Why Russia and China Won’t Go the Distance in the High North,” https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/why-russia-and-china-wont-go-distance-high-north, mm

Closer engagement between Russia and China has fueled assumptions of an emerging axis. The Arctic is often cited as evidence of Sino-Russian alignment due to their growing Arctic ties across the security, strategic and commercial spheres. Beijing frames its Arctic relationship with Russia often in terms of ‘win-win’ agreements and strategies. This term, ‘win-win’, reflects Beijing’s Confucius thinking, and indicates that the two countries’ bilateral mutually beneficial interests in the region remain far short of the increasingly popular assumption of a brewing Arctic alliance. Resources and transportation (that is, the future history of global maritime trade) are the two primary strategic interests driving China’s Arctic gambit. All components of the Arctic resource ‘prize’ are of interest to Beijing and feature across various policy statements and indeed within China’s 2018 Arctic Strategy. As a burgeoning global trade power, the ability to cut logistics costs and, indeed, transportation times, is of central interest to China. Here, the Northern Sea Route (NSR) – largely hugging the Russian Arctic coastline – links Asia to Europe. Through the Arctic Ocean, the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans are connected. Travel time between Asia and Europe via the NSR is about 23 days on average, compared with the Suez Canal’s 37-day average. In 2013, the first Chinese merchant ship transited the NSR and was the first container vessel ever to do so. China’s Arctic interest dates to 1925, when it acceded to the Spitsbergen (now Svalbard) Treaty. The treaty benefited the signatories economically by facilitating access to mining rights on the Svalbard archipelago, while agreeing to protect Svalbard from any military buildup. This Arctic archipelago’s scientific and research value was further tapped by China in 2004 when Beijing built the Yellow River Arctic research station – cementing Chinese presence in the region. In addition, the Xue Long (Snow Dragon), China’s first icebreaker, has conducted numerous Arctic research expeditions since 1999. Today, it is joined by Xue Long-2, China’s first indigenously built icebreaker. Murmurs of a nuclear-powered icebreaker about to roll off China’s production yard further point to Beijing’s growing polar capability. In securing observer status to the Arctic Council in 2013, China inserted itself into the Arctic governance ecosystem. But this does not place Beijing at the decision-making table – observers do not vote or lead multilateral discussion within the Arctic Council. Beyond transportation, Beijing seeks to diversify its energy imports across the globe. This makes the resource-rich Russian Arctic Zone (both inland and offshore) an attractive component of China’s diversification strategy. While the Sino-Russian Arctic relationship is predicated on economic foundations, for now, Russia has yet to fall into Beijing’s ‘debt-trap diplomacy’. Moscow maintains stringent domestic legislation on joint ventures and ownership of sovereign energy deposits. This is a delicate balance. Russia relies on sustained future Chinese demand for Arctic liquified natural gas (LNG), but Moscow has also worked to diversify its capital pools. India, Japan, Saudi Arabia and South Korea are all linked to Russian Arctic energy ventures in one way or another. China does not have a majority share in either of the two key LNG projects on the Russian Arctic’s Yamal Peninsula. Beijing’s share in the Yamal LNG venture is 29.9%, while Russia’s Novatek holds a controlling 50.1% and France’s Total holds 20%. In the Arctic-2 LNG project, China holds 20%, Novatek 60%, Total 10%, and the remaining 10% is held by a Japanese consortium. Russia’s upcoming Arctic energy projects, located in proximity to the existing Yamal Peninsula ventures Ob (LNG), Vostok (oil), Arctic-1 (LNG) and Arctic-3 (LNG), can be expected to attract diverse capital pools. Likewise, on the NSR or ‘polar silk road’ front, Russia maintains the upper (controlling) hand. The NSR wraps along the Russian coastline for most of its route. This is important to Russia for two reasons. First, much of the NSR falls within Russia’s exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and therefore Moscow has deemed it necessary to charge transit tariffs. The tariffs have been accompanied by Russia’s introduction of tight rules and domestic laws for foreign firms looking to use the route. Second, Russia insists vessels can only navigate the NSR when accompanied by Russian nuclear icebreakers. Tapping into NSR potential is thus subject to strict Russian directives. While mutually beneficial interests – and the overall sense of ‘win-win’ agreements – facilitate close engagement between Beijing and Moscow in the Arctic, it is still problematic to assume an Arctic ‘axis’ is forthcoming. China’s efforts to increase its engagement in the Arctic are occurring far beyond the Russian Arctic Zone. Iceland was the first European state to sign a free-trade agreement with Beijing, and China’s first intergovernmental framework in the Arctic was struck with Iceland in 2012. Various Chinese state energy interests have been floated in geothermal resources in Iceland – but to date the projects have been abandoned. In 2018, the China–Iceland Arctic Science Observatory opened and continues to operate. Iceland strategically presents as a logistics hub that would act as a key shipping port between Europe and Asia along the NSR. It seems clear that Chinese Arctic strategy is to ‘internationalise’ the Arctic in a way that features and promotes China’s strategic benefit. China is also driven by great power ideology and the prestige afforded by having a global polar footprint. Russia is aware of this simmering rationale for Chinese Arctic strategy. Efforts by China to move beyond the agreed terms of its mutually beneficial arrangement with Moscow within the Russian Arctic Zone, and how closely China adheres to the existing legal and sovereign arrangements of the Arctic Ocean, will certainly be a litmus test for the Sino-Russian Arctic ‘alliance’. Indeed, Sino-Russian strategic tensions remain, well beyond the overhanging fear of centuries of mistrust and the issue of the Russian Far East. In June 2020, Moscow accused one of its leading Arctic scientists, Valery Mitko, of spying for Beijing. Mitko was charged with treason for handing over classified information on Arctic research and submarine sensor technology to China. But perhaps more telling is the way that both countries have hushed up the incident, with neither formally commenting on the arrest. For now, Beijing and Moscow appear to agree to disagree – so long as Arctic LNG business is booming. The narrative of Moscow and Beijing working together to carve up the Arctic riches and take control of new global transport corridors has started to make its way into the policy and defence planning documents of Arctic-rim states. Washington’s litany of Arctic strategic planning documents – Naval, Air Force and Coast Guard strategies – feature renewed great power competition in the Arctic as a central security threat. However, the notion that there is a Sino-Russian Arctic alliance is a misinterpretation of the realities that drive China and Russia together in the Arctic. The realities of the Sino-Russian relationship (dubbed by both as one of ‘mutual benefit’) in the Arctic is best grasped when the limits of the partnership are considered. There are, first and foremost, limits in terms of geographical boundaries. The Russian Arctic Zone is the lion’s share of the Arctic region, home to the NSR and a vast percentage of Arctic resources. The Russian Arctic Zone is also the geographical ‘limit’ of Sino-Russian Arctic ‘cooperation’ as well. Of the eight members of the Arctic Council, Russia took the most convincing to grant China its observer status in 2013. Moscow approved membership, and with it, legitimacy, on the basis that Beijing explicitly acknowledged the sovereignty of Arctic-rim states and reaffirmed its commitment to the legal architecture of the Arctic region – the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Russia watches, with tempered suspicion, Beijing’s Arctic high sea missions and scientific research agenda in what China sees as a global commons. Yet within the Russian Arctic Zone, Russia welcomes Chinese engagement, but on Kremlin terms. Since 2014, with Western sanctions over Russia’s annexation of Crimea and sustained aggression in Ukraine, Moscow has had a cashflow problem. Despite key economic strategic partnerships in the Russian Arctic, China is busy diversifying itself throughout the region. China is actively engaging with other Arctic-rim powers and has commercial ventures, investment plans and entrenched soft-power strategies in Norway, Canada, Iceland and Denmark (through Greenland). Russia’s Arctic strategy is built on both economic security and frontier border security objectives. The Sino-Russian relationship lends itself to these economic security interests and ambitions, but it is less effective at navigating Russia’s Arctic ‘siege mentality’. This is largely because of the kind of increased interest and activity that China is undertaking in the Arctic – and against which Russia seeks to secure its vast open frontier. Any deterioration in Sino-Russian ties could threaten this delicate balance. Russian efforts to securitise its economic interests in the Arctic fall short of an expansionist agenda. Beyond the posturing, ultimately Moscow’s Arctic priority remains regional stability. Continued regional cooperation with its NATO-member and Western Arctic neighbours remains a central strategic objective. After all, keeping the arena free of conflict is crucial to ensuring the NSR (and Russia’s future economic resource base) remains open and commercially viable. Russia needs to be able to deliver secure, trusted and unimpeded energy supplies from its northern frontier to Asian and European energy clients. The same cannot be assumed of Chinese Arctic interests, with clear indicators of an emerging expansionist agenda. While much of Beijing’s recent Arctic Ocean missions have been primarily about ‘raising the flag’ and promoting soft-power public relations campaigns for domestic consumption, it is evident that China is set to stay in the Arctic. While much of the Arctic Ocean is delineated by territorial seas and agreed maritime boundaries, the central Arctic Ocean does hold international waters, which facilitates Chinese engagement. Fragmentation of Sino-Russian relations in the Arctic context might yet emerge from the outcomes of the Arctic continental shelf debate. Via the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, Russia, Canada and Denmark have all submitted formal, yet overlapping, claims to this continental shelf. Should a claim be upheld, the awarded state will then claim exclusive rights to the seabed and the resources beneath the area of the North Pole. This would block China’s access to seabed or resources in the international Arctic waters around the North Pole. Overall, continued efforts to put Moscow and Beijing in the same ‘basket’ when it comes to great power competition in the Arctic ‘great game’ is short-sighted and misses critical opportunities to futureproof the Arctic as a zone of international cooperation, collaboration and low tension. Sino-Russian Arctic ties will continue to be predictable to a large extent. Ties will remain mutually beneficial – until they are not. Predicting this point should be the priority for Arctic stakeholders. The problem appears to be, for now, that many stakeholders assume a fractured or fragmented Sino-Russian Arctic relationship does not exist. Russia and China’s Arctic relationship is not an alliance – it is driven by ‘win-win’ thinking. Such framing is extremely subjective and prone to change. Despite mutually beneficial interests in the region, commercial realpolitik is at the heart of their engagement. For now, the partnership in the Arctic navigates existing fault lines elsewhere, such as Beijing’s failure to acknowledge Russia’s annexation of Crimea and Moscow’s nonalignment in the developing India–China conflict. Sino-Russian mutually beneficial cooperation and engagement within the Russian Arctic Zone is not a Sino-Russian alliance in the Arctic. In a somewhat Confucius-informed position, Beijing wants to ‘seek harmony and keep differences’ when it comes to engagement with Russia in the Arctic. Both countries will remain engaged proactively and collaboratively across industrialisation projects, diplomatic relations and various commercial dealings in the Russian Arctic Zone. But when this ‘win-win’ situation sours, Western Arctic states may indeed be faced with another Arctic security threat – a conflict between Russia and China in the Arctic.

#### 2. Aff can’t solve cooperation with Japan and South Korea—Trump undermines diplomacy

Kanodia 25, Schwarzman Academy Fellow, US and the Americas Programme. (Kanishkh Kanodia, 2-20-2025, “The unpromising future of Japan–South Korea–US trilateral cooperation” https://www.chathamhouse.org/2025/02/unpromising-future-japan-south-korea-us-trilateral-cooperation) wtk

Hurdles to trilateral cooperation under Trump

Trump’s return to the White House imperils the trilateral on two accounts.

First, unlike Biden, Trump views alliances as dependencies to be exploited by extracting maximum benefits to suit his America First agenda. Trilateral cooperation will struggle to muddle through the volatility and incongruency of bilateral demands coming from the Trump presidency towards not just one, but two, allies.

Disagreements over cost-sharing of US forces in Japan and South Korea, their balance-of-trade with the US, Trump’s plans for reciprocal tariffs, and military expenditure could all affect the trilateral mechanism.

How Trump handles North Korea, China and Russia could also undermine trilateral cooperation. Strategic misalignment was already emerging at Munich.

The Japanese and South Korean foreign ministers spoke jointly about the connectivity of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific security theatres, noting that the nature of a peace settlement in Ukraine will directly affect East Asian security. Trump’s team, meanwhile, could not have gone farther to stress how it considers the two theatres as unambiguously separate.

Trump’s penchant for dealing directly with autocratic leaders to showcase his ability to extract the best deals will also whittle the trilateral’s primary goals and mode of functioning, notably the ‘Commitment to Consult’ agreed at Camp David.

Second, US willingness to mediate between Japan and South Korea has previously created space amid the two nations’ historic animosities and contentious political issues.

With the US in the room, the Japan–South Korea relationship can be framed on more strategic grounds where they can converge. Polling also suggests strong domestic support in both countries for security cooperation with a US presence to stabilize the Korean peninsula and contain China’s rise.

However, unlike his predecessors, Trump did not facilitate diplomacy between the two allies. In 2018, relations between Japan and South Korea had reached their lowest point since normalization in 1965.

The two sides implemented export controls and suspended an intelligence-sharing agreement. Trump reportedly responded by scoffing, ‘how many issues do I have to get involved in?’. Domestic political gridlock now in South Korea could yet sour Seoul’s ties to both Washington and Tokyo, further risking the trilateral.

#### 3. Aff can’t solve democracy-- Trump is actively destroying the rule of law

Pilkington 25, chief reporter for Guardian US. (Ed, 3-9-2025, “‘Nothing like this in American history’: the crisis of Trump’s assault on the rule of law” https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2025/mar/09/trump-assault-rule-of-law?scrlybrkr=04ba8ef9) wtk

Trump has done more than that – he has opened a Pandora’s box that might, in time, give the chief justice pause. The president has indicated that he has another target in his sights: the very judiciary over which Roberts presides.

“He who saves his Country does not violate any law,” Trump posted on Musk’s X earlier this month, channeling Napoleon Bonaparte. The comment, combined with overt threats that Trump and his people have made against judges who dare stand in their way, have prompted a question that previously would have been unthinkable: is the president willing to defy the rule of law itself?

“We’ve seen the many ways in which Trump has sought to undermine Congress, and now he’s seeking to undermine the judicial bench,” said Nancy Gertner, a Harvard law school professor. “This is a president who is arrogating to himself the powers of a dictator.”

For 17 years, until she retired in 2011, Gertner sat as a federal judge in the district court of Massachusetts. There she dealt with the defiance of individual defendants.

“I had people who had been sentenced and didn’t follow the rules of their release, for sure,” she said.

Not once in almost two decades of service, however, did she have to confront a public officeholder openly flouting her authority. “Governmental officials defying the court? It never came up. Literally, never happened.”

Now Gertner is observing Trump’s belligerence towards the courts unfold with mounting concern. “There’s been nothing like this in American history. There have been people who threatened not to obey the law, especially post the civil war, but this is a sustained attack on the courts we haven’t seen before.”

#### 4. Authoritarianism isn’t an existential threat – their evidence misunderstands modern autocracies – empirical data shows that economics and international relations constrains illiberal regimes

Daniel Treisman, 6/3/25, [Professor of Political Science at UCLA], The Conversation, “Autocrats don’t act like Hitler or Stalin anymore - instead of governing with violence, they use manipulation,” https://theconversation.com/autocrats-dont-act-like-hitler-or-stalin-anymore-instead-of-governing-with-violence-they-use-manipulation-256665, mm

President Donald Trump’s critics often accuse him of harboring authoritarian ambitions. Journalists and scholars have drawn parallels between his leadership style and that of strongmen abroad. Some Democrats warn that the U.S. is sliding toward autocracy – a system in which one leader holds unchecked power. Others counter that labeling Trump an autocrat is alarmist. After all, he hasn’t suspended the Constitution, forced school children to memorize his sayings or executed his rivals, as dictators such as Augusto Pinochet, Mao Zedong and Saddam Hussein once did. But modern autocrats don’t always resemble their 20th-century predecessors. Instead, they project a polished image, avoid overt violence and speak the language of democracy. They wear suits, hold elections and talk about the will of the people. Rather than terrorizing citizens, many use media control and messaging to shape public opinion and promote nationalist narratives. Many gain power not through military coups but at the ballot box. In the early 2000s, political scientist Andreas Schedler coined the term “electoral authoritarianism” to describe regimes that hold elections without real competition. Scholars Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way use another phrase, “competitive authoritarianism,” for systems in which opposition parties exist but leaders undermine them through censorship, electoral fraud or legal manipulation. In my own work with economist Sergei Guriev, we explore a broader strategy that modern autocrats use to gain and maintain power. We call this “informational autocracy” or “spin dictatorship.” These leaders don’t rely on violent repression. Instead, they craft the illusion that they are competent, democratic defenders of the nation – protecting it from foreign threats or internal enemies who seek to undermine its culture or steal its wealth. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán exemplifies this approach. He first served from 1998 to 2002, returned to power in 2010 and has since won three more elections – in 2014, 2018 and 2022 – after campaigns that international observers criticized as “intimidating and xenophobic.” Orbán has preserved the formal structures of democracy – courts, a parliament and regular elections – but has systematically hollowed them out. In his first two years he packed Hungary’s constitutional court, which reviews laws for constitutionality, with loyalists, forced judges off the bench by mandating a lower retirement age and rewrote the constitution to limit judicial review of his actions. He also tightened government control over independent media. To boost his image, Orbán funneled state advertising funds to friendly news outlets. In 2016, an ally bought Hungary’s largest opposition newspaper – then shut it down. Orbán has also targeted advocacy groups and universities. The Central European University, which was registered in both Budapest and the U.S., was once a symbol of the new democratic Hungary. But a law penalizing foreign-accredited institutions forced it to relocate to Vienna in 2020. Yet Orbán has mostly avoided violence. Journalists are harassed rather than jailed or killed. Critics are discredited for their beliefs but not abducted. His appeal rests on a narrative that Hungary is under siege – by immigrants, liberal elites and foreign influences – and that only he can defend its sovereignty and Christian identity. That message resonates with older, rural, conservative voters, even as it alienates younger, urban populations. In recent decades, variants of spin dictatorship have appeared in Singapore, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, Russia, Ecuador and Venezuela. Leaders such as Hugo Chávez and the early Vladimir Putin consolidated power and marginalized opposition with minimal violence. Data confirm this trend. Drawing from human rights reports, historical records and local media, my colleague Sergei Guriev and I found that the global incidence of political killings and imprisonments by autocrats dropped significantly from the 1980s to the 2010s. Why? In an interconnected world, overt repression has costs. Attacking journalists and dissidents can prompt foreign governments to impose economic sanctions and discourage international companies from investing. Curbing free expression risks stifling scientific and technological innovation – something even autocrats need in modern, knowledge-based economies. Still, when crises erupt, even spin dictators often revert to more traditional tactics. Russia’s Putin has cracked down violently on protesters and jailed opposition leaders. Meanwhile, more brutal regimes such as those in North Korea and China continue to rule by spreading fear, combining mass incarceration with advanced surveillance technologies. But overall, spin is replacing terror.

### Extend: No Russia-China Axis

#### No Russia-China axis – espionage and deep distrust in the Arctic prevent close cooperation

Paul Sonne and Anton Troianovski, 6/7/25, [Sonne is an international correspondent, focusing on Russia and the varied impacts of President Vladimir V. Putin’s domestic and foreign policies, with a focus on the war against Ukraine.; Troianovski is the Moscow bureau chief for The Times. He writes about Russia, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.], The New York Times, “Secret Russian Intelligence Document Shows Deep Suspicion of China,” https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/07/world/europe/china-russia-spies-documents-putin-war.html, mm

In public, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia says his country’s growing friendship with China is unshakable — a strategic military and economic collaboration that has entered a golden era. But in the corridors of Lubyanka, the headquarters of Russia’s domestic security agency, known as the F.S.B., a secretive intelligence unit refers to the Chinese as “the enemy.” This unit, which has not previously been disclosed, has warned that China is a serious threat to Russian security. Its officers say that Beijing is increasingly trying to recruit Russian spies and get its hands on sensitive military technology, at times by luring disaffected Russian scientists. The intelligence officers say that China is spying on the Russian military’s operations in Ukraine to learn about Western weapons and warfare. They fear that Chinese academics are laying the groundwork to make claims on Russian territory. And they have warned that Chinese intelligence agents are carrying out espionage in the Arctic using mining firms and university research centers as cover. The threats are laid out in an eight-page internal F.S.B. planning document, obtained by The New York Times, that sets priorities for fending off Chinese espionage. The document is undated, raising the possibility that it is a draft, though it appears from context to have been written in late 2023 or early 2024. Ares Leaks, a cybercrime group, obtained the document but did not say how it did so. That makes definitive authentication impossible, but The Times shared the report with six Western intelligence agencies, all of which assessed it to be authentic. The document gives the most detailed behind-the-scenes view to date of Russian counterintelligence’s thinking about China. Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, Moscow’s new bond with Beijing has shifted the global balance of power. The rapidly expanding partnership is one of the most consequential, and opaque, relationships in modern geopolitics. Russia has survived years of Western financial sanctions following the invasion, proving wrong the many politicians and experts who predicted the collapse of the country’s economy. That survival is in no small part due to China. China is the largest customer for Russian oil and provides essential computer chips, software and military components. When Western companies fled Russia, Chinese brands stepped in to replace them. The two countries say they want to collaborate in a vast number of areas, including making movies and building a base on the moon. Mr. Putin and Xi Jinping, China’s leader, are doggedly pursuing what they call a partnership with “no limits.” But the top-secret F.S.B. memo shows there are, in fact, limits. “You have the political leadership, and these guys are all for rapprochement with China,” said Andrei Soldatov, an expert on Russia’s intelligence services who lives in exile in Britain and who reviewed the document at the request of The Times. “You have the intelligence and security services, and they are very suspicious.” Mr. Putin’s spokesman, Dmitri S. Peskov, declined to comment. The Chinese Foreign Ministry did not respond to requests for comment on the document. The Russian document describes a “tense and dynamically developing” intelligence battle in the shadows between the two outwardly friendly nations. Three days before Mr. Putin invaded Ukraine in 2022, the F.S.B. approved a new counterintelligence program called “Entente-4,” the document reveals. The code name, an apparent tongue-in-cheek reference to Moscow’s growing friendship with Beijing, belied the initiative’s real intent: to prevent Chinese spies from undermining Russian interests. The timing almost certainly was not accidental. Russia was diverting nearly all of its military and spy resources to Ukraine, more than 4,000 miles from its border with China, and most likely worried that Beijing could try to capitalize on this distraction. Since then, according to the document, the F.S.B. observed China doing just that. Chinese intelligence agents stepped up efforts to recruit Russian officials, experts, journalists and businesspeople close to power in Moscow, the document says. To counter this, the F.S.B. instructed its officers to intercept the “threat” and “prevent the transfer of important strategic information to the Chinese.” Officers were ordered to conduct in-person meetings with Russian citizens who work closely with China and warn them that Beijing was trying to take advantage of Russia and obtain advanced scientific research, according to the document. The F.S.B. ordered “the constant accumulation of information about users” on the Chinese messaging app WeChat. That included hacking phones of espionage targets and analyzing the data in a special software tool held by a unit of the F.S.B., the document says. The possible long-term alignment of two authoritarian governments, with a combined population of nearly 1.6 billion people and armed with some 6,000 nuclear warheads, has stoked deep concern in Washington. Some members of the Trump administration believe that, through outreach to Mr. Putin, Washington can begin to peel Russia away from China and avoid what Secretary of State Marco Rubio has called “two nuclear powers aligned against the United States.” “I’m going to have to un-unite them, and I think I can do that, too,” Donald J. Trump said shortly before his election in November. “I have to un-unite them.” Read one way, the F.S.B. document lends credence to the theory that, with the right approach, Russia can be cleaved away from China. The document describes mistrust and suspicion on both sides of the relationship. China is conducting polygraphs on its agents as soon as they return home, tightening scrutiny of the 20,000 Russian students in China and trying to recruit Russians with Chinese spouses as potential spies, the document says. But another reading of the document leads to the opposite conclusion. The fact that Mr. Putin is apparently well aware of the risks of a closer relationship with China and has decided to push ahead anyway could suggest little opportunity for the United States to get Russia to change course. “Putin believes that he can go much deeper into this Chinese embrace, and it’s not risk free, but it is worth it,” said Alexander Gabuev, the director of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center, who reviewed the document at the request of The Times. “But we also see there are people within the system who are skeptical of that approach.” Mr. Putin has courted Mr. Xi for years, in more than 40 personal meetings, and has cemented a far deeper partnership with China since invading Ukraine. The two countries have a natural economic synergy, with Russia being one of the world’s largest energy producers and China the world’s largest energy consumer. That poses a delicate challenge for Russian counterintelligence agents. The document shows them trying to contain the risks posed by Chinese intelligence without causing “negative consequences for bilateral relations.” Officers were warned to avoid any public “mention of the Chinese intelligence services as a potential enemy.” Most likely written for circulation to F.S.B. field offices, the directive offers a rare glimpse into the inner world of one of the most powerful parts of the Russian intelligence establishment: the F.S.B.’s Department for Counterintelligence Operations, known as the D.K.R.O. The document was written by the D.K.R.O.’s 7th Service, which is responsible for countering espionage from China and other parts of Asia. Anxiety about Russia’s susceptibility to an increasingly powerful Beijing dominates the memo. But it is unclear how common those worries are across the Russian establishment, beyond the counterintelligence unit. Even allied nations regularly spy on one another. “To go back to the old adage, there is no such thing as friendly intel services,” said Paul Kolbe, a senior fellow at Harvard’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, who served for 25 years in the C.I.A. Directorate of Operations, including in Russia. “You don’t have to scratch very deep in any Russian military or intel official to get deep suspicion of China. In the long run, China is, in spite of the unlimited partnership and how useful they are, also a potential threat.” Soon after Russian troops pushed across the border into Ukraine, officials from Chinese defense firms and institutes tied to Chinese intelligence began flooding into Russia. Their goal, according to the F.S.B. document, was to better understand the war. China has world-class scientists, but its military has not fought a war since a monthlong conflict with Vietnam in 1979. The result is anxiety in China about how its military would perform against Western weapons in a conflict over Taiwan or the South China Sea. Chinese intelligence officials are eager to understand Russia’s fight against an army backed by the West. “Of particular interest to Beijing is information about combat methods using drones, modernization of their software and methods for countering new types of Western weapons,” the F.S.B. document says, adding that Beijing believes the war in Ukraine will become drawn-out. The conflict has revolutionized warfare technology and tactics. China has long lagged behind Russia in its aviation expertise, and the document says that Beijing has made that a priority target. China is targeting military pilots and researchers in aerohydrodynamics, control systems and aeroelasticity. Also being sought out, according to the document, are Russian specialists who worked on the discontinued ekranoplan, a hovercraft-type warship first deployed by the Soviet Union. “Priority recruitment is given to former employees of aircraft factories and research institutes, as well as current employees who are dissatisfied with the closure of the ekranoplan development program by the Russian Ministry of Defense or who are experiencing financial difficulties,” the report says. It is not clear from the document whether those recruitment efforts are limited to hiring Russian specialists for Chinese ventures or also extend to recruiting them as spies. The document also shows that Russia is very concerned about how China views the war in Ukraine and is trying to feed Beijing’s spies with positive information about Russian operations. And it commands Russian counterintelligence operatives to prepare a report for the Kremlin about any possible changes in Beijing’s policy. Western leaders have accused China of providing Russia with essential weapons components and working to conceal it. The F.S.B. document lends support to that claim, stating that Beijing had proposed establishing supply chains to Moscow that circumvent Western sanctions and had offered to participate in the production of drones and other unspecified high-tech military equipment. The document does not say whether those proposals were carried out, though China has supplied Russia with drones. The F.S.B. memo also hints at Chinese interest in the Wagner mercenary group, a Russia-backed paramilitary group that propped up governments in Africa for years and fought alongside Russian troops in Ukraine. “The Chinese plan to use the experience of Wagner fighters in their own armed forces and private military companies operating in the countries of Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America,” the directive says. The wording of the report does not indicate whether the F.S.B. believes that China wants to recruit former Wagner fighters for its own formations or simply wants to learn from their experience. Russia has long feared encroachment by China along their shared 2,615-mile border. And Chinese nationalists for years have taken issue with 19th-century treaties in which Russia annexed large portions of land, including modern-day Vladivostok. That issue is now of key concern, with Russia weakened by the war and economic sanctions and less able than ever to push back against Beijing. The F.S.B. report raises concerns that some academics in China have been promoting territorial claims against Russia. China is searching for traces of “ancient Chinese peoples” in the Russian Far East, possibly to influence local opinion that is favorable to Chinese claims, the document says. In 2023, China published an official map that included historical Chinese names for cities and areas within Russia. The F.S.B. ordered officers to expose such “revanchist” activities, as well as attempts by China to use Russian scientists and archival funds for research aimed at attaching a historical affiliation to borderlands. “Conduct preventative work with respect to Russian citizens involved in the said activities,” the memo orders. “Restrict entry into our country for foreigners as a measure of influence.” The concerns about China expanding its reach are not limited to Russia’s Far East borderlands. Central Asian countries answered to Moscow during the Soviet era. Today, the F.S.B. reports, Beijing has developed a “new strategy” to promote Chinese soft power in the region. China began rolling out that strategy in Uzbekistan, according to the document. The details of the strategy are not included in the document other than to say it involves humanitarian exchange. Uzbekistan and neighboring countries are important to Mr. Putin, who sees restoring the Soviet sphere of influence as part of his legacy. The report also highlights China’s interest in Russia’s vast territory in the Arctic and the Northern Sea Route, which hugs Russia’s northern coast. Historically, those waters have been too icy for reliable shipping, but they are expected become increasingly busy because of climate change. The route slashes shipping time between Asia and Europe. Developing that route would make it easier for China to sell its goods. Russia historically tried to maintain strict control over Chinese activity in the Arctic. But Beijing believes that Western sanctions will force Russia to turn to China to maintain its “aging Arctic infrastructure,” according to the F.S.B. document. Already, the Russian gas giant Novatek has relied on China to salvage its Arctic liquefied natural gas project, after previously using the American oil services firm Baker Hughes. The F.S.B. asserts that Chinese spies are active in the Arctic, as well. The report says Chinese intelligence is trying to obtain information about Russia’s development of the Arctic, using institutions of higher education and mining companies in particular. But despite all of these vulnerabilities, the F.S.B. report makes clear that jeopardizing the support of China would be worse. The document squarely warns officers that they must receive approval from the highest echelons of the Russian security establishment before taking any sensitive action at all.

#### Incompatible strategic cultures limit Russian-Chinese Cooperation in the Arctic – long-term power dynamics thump short-term cooperation

Jørgen Staun and Camilla T. N. Sørensen, 2023, Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies, 6(1), 24-39, “Incompatible Strategic Cultures Limit Russian-Chinese Strategic Cooperation in the Arctic,” https://sjms.nu/articles/10.31374/sjms.178, mm

While they share the overall focus on confronting what both Moscow and Beijing see as a hostile and threatening U.S., Russia and China have conflicting ends when it comes to their views on their respective roles in the future international system. Russia wants to be a leading great power but realize that role will become increasingly difficult if the world moves towards a bipolar standoff between China and the U.S. Even if China officially adheres to multipolarity, it increasingly measures and positions itself solely in relation to the U.S. China thus assesses its strategic cooperation with Russia in terms of the benefits this cooperation brings in China’s confrontation with the U.S. As the power asymmetry continues to grow to China’s advantage, it is highly likely that a more confident Beijing will increasingly feel entitled to set the tone in the strategic partnership with Russia and will push for emphasis on Chinese concepts and ideas – on the development of the future international order, for example. We are already seeing strong signs of this, most recently in the 2022 Joint Statement, in which Beijing expressed support for the Russian critique of NATO enlargement for the first time. When it came to describing the preferred international development, however, Chinese concepts and ideas were clearly dominant (President of Russia, 2022). To leave the dominant role and the initiative to China does not come easily for Russia, being incompatible with Russian great power identity. The Russian reservation shines through in some of the formulations of its official statements: The Russian side notes the significance of the concept of constructing a “community of common destiny for mankind” proposed by the Chinese side to ensure greater solidarity of the international community and consolidation of efforts in responding to common challenges (President of Russia, 2022). According to Lukin (2021, p. 166), Beijing’s intensified effort to push Chinese concepts and official statements on various issues and thus to shape the narrative of joint declarations and treaties provokes a growing discontent in Russia. As seen in the 2022 Joint Statement, Russia has accepted the Chinese concept of “community of common destiny” as well as “the new era of Sino-Russian relations” – but not without internal dissent (see Denisov & Lukin, 2021, pp. 545–546). Such internal dissent in Russia is likely to grow with the increase in Chinese confidence and assertiveness. As China develops its goal of becoming a world class military power and a maritime great power, Russia’s deeply ingrained insecurity and feeling of vulnerability will also grow. As demonstrated above, it will be particularly so in the Arctic, given that Russia’s great power identity is closely connected to the region. Moscow will therefore find it extremely difficult to make room for and to accommodate China as the leading great power there. In other words: while Russia and China have expanded their strategic cooperation in the Arctic in recent years, there are serious stumbling blocks to further expansion. Russia wants to retain its position as the leading power in the Arctic and to preserve the privileges of the Arctic states in relation to Arctic governance. Such ends will increasingly be challenged by a more assertive China insisting on being respected and included in the region as a great power, and on gaining a decisive role and influence on the region’s governance regime. As mentioned above, China shows a preference for non-Arctic specific agreements and regulations, which until now has been met with strong resistance in Russia. Here it is worth noting the statement by the Russian Foreign Ministry’s Special Envoy to the Arctic, Nikolay Korchunov that it is impossible to disagree with U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo’s statement made in May 2019 that there are two groups of countries — Arctic and non-Arctic … He said so in relation to China, which positioned itself as a near-Arctic state. We disagree with this (quoted in Wishnick, 2021) In this one sentence, Korchunov says that China, in Russia’s view, is not an Arctic state and therefore should not enjoy comparable rights. Arctic governance, in other words, is for Arctic states. It should be remembered that Russia initially opposed China’s observer status in the Arctic Council until China agreed to recognize the privileges and rights of the Arctic states (Wishnick, 2020, p. 6). However, Beijing has since gradually moved and is increasingly challenging Russia’s – and the other Arctic states’ – position in line with its overall ambition of becoming “rule-maker” instead of “rule-taker”. Increasing Chinese lawfare activities, especially, are to meet strong resistance in Russia. Seen from Moscow, it is crucial to maintain and demonstrate Russian sovereignty in the Russian Arctic. Moscow, in other words, will not allow serious questions or challenges to its economic sovereignty or to its security, its military dominance, in the Russian Arctic. Such challenges are not unthinkable, however, should the Chinese military, through dual-use activities and facilities, increase its presence in the region, or if Chinese companies (large state-owned shipping, infrastructure construction or resource-extraction companies, for example) or banks gain a dominant stake in projects in the Russian Arctic. Indeed, following Western sanctions associated with the war in Ukraine, such scenarios have become more likely. It is not only a question of the Russian side losing control over the projects and missing out on actual profit or other material gains, but also the potential for the area to be decreasingly recognized as Russian territory, a vital constituent of the Russian sphere of influence and, hence, a pillar of Russian great power status. If Moscow is no longer able to uphold the picture of Russia as the Arctic great power, it will cost it the recognition and respect more generally of it being a great power. Consequently, it is likely that Russia and China, sharing complementary interests and a perception of a hostile U.S., should remain committed to further developing their strategic cooperation in the Arctic in the near term. They will thus seek to manage the sources of concern and tension. And due to its dire economic position as a consequence of the war in Ukraine, Russia will most likely be able and willing to accept more than it otherwise would. We may be partly seeing the framework for this being set in the new Foreign Policy Concept from 2023, where it is stated that Russia in the Arctic will give priority to “establishing mutually beneficial cooperation with non-Arctic states pursuing a constructive policy towards Russia and interested in carrying out international activities in the Arctic, including the infrastructural development of the Northern Sea Route” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). In our view, this is mainly addressed to China. Taken together with Russia’s new borne reservations vis-à-vis the Arctic Council and other multilateral Arctic fora and prioritisation of “relations with foreign states on a bilateral basis”, as stated in the amendments to its 2020 Arctic strategy (2023), it points towards more Russian-Chinese cooperation in the Arctic in the near future and possibly also further alignment of Russian interests with Chinese wishes. In the long run, however, we argue that widespread accommodation to China is not sustainable, as Russia will not accept its relatively declining position and excessive dependence on China. Besides being incompatible with the Russian great power identity, with time it will also come to restrict Russia’s policy options and force unwelcomed concessions. The Chinese side, employing its ways and means more assertively, will come to be less diligent in its reassurances and respect concerning Russia’s need for great power recognition.

### Extend: Aff Can’t Solve Cooperation

#### Korea and Japan say no to cooperation—they don’t have the bandwidth for it

Matsuo 25, Non-Resident Fellow at the Korea Economic Institute of America. (Terrence Matsuo, 1-9-2025, “The Prospect for US-Korea-Japan Trilateralism in a Second Trump Administration” https://keia.org/the-peninsula/the-prospect-for-us-korea-japan-trilateralism-in-a-second-trump-administration/) wtk

Challenges for Trilateralism under Trump

However, ongoing political turmoil in South Korea following Yoon’s abortive martial law declaration and subsequent impeachment poses challenges to maintaining progress in trilateral relations. In the near term, South Korea’s interim leadership is hamstrung by its focus on stabilizing affairs and mitigating risks. As this drama plays out, South Korea may have limited bandwidth to focus on external issues like trilateral cooperation. Moving forward, if South Korea’s Constitutional Court upholds President Yoon’s impeachment, he may be replaced by his former rival and Democratic Party (DP) leader Lee Jae-myung, who leads in the polls. In a recent conversation with the Japanese ambassador to South Korea, Lee said managing relations with Japan and advancing US-Korea-Japan trilateral cooperation are “critical tasks.” Furthermore, Lee reportedly instructed fellow DP members to revise the National Assembly’s original impeachment resolution and remove language criticizing Yoon’s “Japan-centered foreign policy.” Yet, given Lee’s past comments critical of Japan, South Korea’s foreign policy would likely shift under his or another progressive leader’s administration.

While it is unlikely that Japanese Prime Minister Ishiba Shigeru will be removed from power in the near future, he faces an opposition-controlled lower house of the legislative National Diet and a contentious race to maintain control of the upper house this upcoming summer. This could pose obstacles for the government to pursue bold foreign policy moves to maintain stable relations with South Korea or strengthen the trilateral partnership.

### Extend: Aff Can’t Solve Democracy

#### US institutions are being dismantled—we can’t effectively promote democracy

Evans-Pritchard 25, World Economy Editor of The Daily Telegraph. (Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, 6-19-2025, “We are witnessing the death of American democracy” https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2025/06/19/we-are-witnessing-the-death-of-american-democracy/) wtk

What Donald Trump has done by activating the California National Guard against the protest of the governor, and then bringing in US Marines – both of which his critics argue are unconstitutional – is a very light version of Preußenschlag, but in some ways it is worse. The street protests in Los Angeles were the result of his own theatrical stunt. You could be forgiven for thinking he deliberately provoked the alleged “rebellion” in order to set this precedent.

One can see now why Trump moved so fast to purge the top echelons of the US defence department, including the three judge advocates general. These officials rule on whether military orders are legal, and when they should be disobeyed. They are legally independent by Congressional statute.

Pete Hegseth, the defence secretary, told us why they had been sacked: it was to stop them posing any “roadblocks to orders given by the commander-in-chief”.

Did Trump mean it when he told his generals to “just shoot” American protesters during the Black Lives Matter riots in 2020? We may find out.

He also fired the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff and others deemed symbols of “diversity, equity, and inclusion”, although one might suspect another motive.

An earlier chairman – General Mark Milley – refused to ratify the Putsch of Jan 6 2021, and therefore stopped it stone dead. “We don’t take an oath to a king, or to a tyrant or dictator. We take an oath to the Constitution,” he said.

Trump is attacking California on several fronts at once, shrewdly judging that Governor Gavin Newsom is the perfect foil. He is stripping the state of its powers under the Clean Power Act to impose tougher pollution rules than federal levels. He has signed an order blocking California’s plan to phase out petrol cars by 2035, and another stopping it capping nitrogen oxide emissions. He now is threatening to withhold federal disaster aid for wildfires.

Trump called him “Governor Newscum” and added in his inimitable style: “You know, hatred is never a good thing in politics. When you don’t like somebody, you don’t respect somebody, it’s harder for that person to get money if you’re on top.”

Forgive me for sounding jaundiced, but decades ago I covered the Republican crusade under Speaker Newt Gingrich to restore states rights and check the usurpations of federal power. Gingrich and his party are now egging on the federal military occupation of states that stand in Trump’s way.

James Carville, veteran Democratic strategist and Clinton-fixer, says the Democrats should bide their time and “play possum”, betting that Trump will self-destruct under the contradictions of his own policies. The bond markets will do the job for them. Congress will drop back into Democrat hands like a ripe fruit in the 2026 mid-terms.

I never expected to find myself impugning the ruthless Mr Carville for credulous naivety. Declaration of interest: he once carried out a black ops campaign against me personally from an office in the White House, which I no doubt deserved, all is forgiven anyway.

Playing possum is what the German Social Democrats did in the early 1930s. Reading the first two volumes of Sir Richard Evans’s magisterial trilogy, The Coming of the Third Reich and The Third Reich in Power, I am struck again and again by the refusal of the moderate middle to face up to what was happening. They had a touching faith that the courts would save them.

But the judges were ideologically captured, or frightened, or did what most human beings do in turbulent times: they pre-emptively adapted to keep their families out of trouble.

The Social Democrats made another fatal error. They assumed that Hitler’s eccentric mish-mash of economic policies would lead quickly to a crisis, greatly underestimating the lift from neo-Keynesian rearmament, so like Trump’s gargantuan deficits.

American democracy has much deeper roots but the imminent bombing of Iran by the US air force gives pause for thought. There may be excellent reasons to knock out Iran’s nuclear capability, though doing in this way, flippantly, like a power-drunk despot, conflating non-proliferation with regime change, drives the final nail in the coffin of Western moral credibility.

That said, polls suggest that almost 80pc of Americans would applaud the destruction of the Fordow nuclear site, and most would support cutting off the head of the serpent in Tehran. Trump might face a Maga revolt on the edges but the larger bounce in popularity would let him steam roll opposition to his tariff war, his climate war, and his “beautiful big bill” – a giant transfer of income from poor to rich. I don’t believe Steven Bannon’s warning that intervention will “tear the country apart”, unless the bombing mission goes awry.

The strongman glow will open the window further for Trump’s takeover of the deep state. He has already fired the heads of the FBI’s intelligence, counterterrorism, criminal investigations, as well as the heads of the Washington and New York offices. He has purged the justice department, now run by a Lord High Executioner from The Mikado, openly touting an enemies list of “conspirators”. He has forced private law firms to bend the knee.

He has put in a loyalist in charge of the CIA, who inconveniently reported in March that Iran was not building a nuclear weapon. But that was then, when Trump stood for America First, and staying out of forever wars was policy. He has fired the head of the eaves-dropping National Security Agency and its top officials. He has purged the head of the Federal Trade Commission, who is independent by law, like the chairman of the Federal Reserve.

America in 2025 is obviously not Germany in 1932. The Weimar republic was already a cauldron of political violence. That year was the worst of the Great Depression. The country was seething with rage over the cultivated myths of the 1918 “stab in the back” and the Carthaginian peace of Versailles.

It is even less like Germany in 1933 when the Nazis used their three cabinet seats to take over the Prussian and federal interior ministries. Within five months the Social Democrats leadership was dead, or in Dachau, or in exile. All rival parties were shut down. No independent newspaper survived. Every organisation from the labour unions, to male choirs, sports teams and beekeeper clubs came under Nazi control.

But it is not the same America that was my home for long stretches of the late 20th century. Over the last few days alone: a Democratic US senator was manhandled to the floor, handcuffed and dragged away for asking a question; the Democrat comptroller of New York was seized and handcuffed by masked federal agents after demanding to see a judicial warrant; a Democratic state legislator in Minnesota was murdered with her husband at home, and a state senator was shot and badly wounded, both by an assassin with a hit list of 45 officials.

Judges have so far issued more than 60 rulings that curb or restrain Trump’s legal overreach. A shocking number have either been threatened, directly or through their families, or face calls for impeachment.

“Our constitutional system depends on judges who can make decisions free from threats and intimidation,” warned judge Robert Conrad, director of the administrative office of the US courts, in testimony to Congress. To no avail: the House judiciary committee shrugged it off, more or less blaming the victims.

The drift of events was disturbing even before Iran offered Trump a fresh gift from Mars. I fear that many more lines in the sand will be crossed in the heady aftermath of a surgical video war on the Ayatollah, if that is where we are headed.

Play possum if you want. Trump will eat your lunch.

#### Checks and balances fail—our democracy will inevitably face crisis

Kanu 25, Prospect staff writer and award-winning reporter (Hassan Ali Kanu, 1-31-2025, “The Trump Administration Will Truly Test the Supreme Court” https://prospect.org/justice/2025-01-31-trump-administration-test-supreme-court-tiktok/) wtk

The U.S. Supreme Court will likely undergo an even greater institutional stress test during President Donald Trump’s second term. Trump’s reaction to the recently concluded Supreme Court case about ownership of the social media giant TikTok has been particularly telling on this point.

The suit by TikTok challenged a law enacted last year that banned the app from operating in the U.S. unless its Chinese owner, ByteDance, sold it to a non-Chinese buyer within 270 days. Lawmakers have said the policy is necessary because China is a “foreign adversary,” and due to (classified) national-security concerns stemming from TikTok’s routine collection of Americans’ personal data, including from government workers and officials.

The companies ultimately lost the case, and the Supreme Court issued a January 17 ruling upholding the law—which meant that as of the January 19 deadline, it became illegal for TikTok to continue operations, and illegal for other companies to work with them.

Yet, as things stand, Trump has effectively instructed a private company to break federal laws, and to violate a fresh-off-the-press Supreme Court order. “It’s basically saying, there is a law that has passed that I don’t think should be a law, and therefore my enforcers will not enforce it,” said Zephyr Teachout, a law professor at Fordham University and a former antitrust enforcer at the New York attorney general’s office, on a recent episode of the Organized Money podcast.

Trump and the company telegraphed their intentions quite openly and plainly, in worldwide press releases. And, as of today, the president and his collaborators have carried out their plans, flouting Congress’s law and the Supreme Court’s order daily, in the most public manner possible, and apparently with total impunity.

Perhaps just as important, no one is even raising questions about what it means for the president to summarily overrule the justices, or whether the Court can or should have an opportunity to react. With other challenges to Trump actions sure to move through the court system, it’s an ominous sign for the Court’s legitimacy and its practical powers, even before you get to other questions about our traditional “separation of powers.”

THE FIRST COUPLE WEEKS OF TRUMP’S second presidency have been characterized by a series of unprecedented exercises of power, and an equally extraordinary attempt to arrogate even more powers to the office—and in the individual executive himself—not seen during any other administration in recent memory.

The administration has tried to freeze trillions in government grant money; fired and suspended hundreds of government workers, while trying to terminate as many as 200,000 in total; pardoned supporters who were convicted of conspiring against the United States and attacking the seat of government; rolled back long-standing civil rights protections; and sought to change the Constitution’s post–Civil War citizenship amendment in order to enable mass deportations.

And the White House has undertaken these massive policy changes largely unilaterally, by executive order. Trump himself has candidly admitted that some of the moves appear unconstitutional, that the administration fully expects lawsuits, and that their arguments will hopefully fall on kind ears at the Court.

Here’s how Trump responded last Monday when reporters asked about whether the birthright citizenship order is unconstitutional (as a federal judge held shortly afterward), for example:

“Could be. I think we have good grounds, but you could be right,” Trump said, according to a report by The Washington Post. “We’ll find out … People have wanted to do this for decades.”

No one is even raising questions about what it means for the president to summarily overrule the justices.

Many of the major policy changes are expected to end up before the justices. Courts have already blocked some of the central policies, including a conservative-appointed judge who remarked that the citizenship order was perhaps the most “blatantly unconstitutional” executive action he’d reviewed in more than four decades. The order to freeze federal spending was issued Monday night, challenged in federal court on Tuesday morning, blocked by the judge that afternoon, and was rescinded by the administration less than 24 hours later.

Meanwhile, administration officials have continued arguing that Trump has a mandate to implement whatever policies he sees fit, pointing to the simple fact that he won the election.

The president’s attorneys neatly summed up his stance upon taking office in a legal brief to the justices in the TikTok case, describing Trump in very intentional, highly unusual terms, as “the incoming embodiment of the Executive Branch.”

Although that case has concluded, the truly remarkable developments since then indicate that the Supreme Court’s legitimacy in the eyes of the public—and many public officials—will likely continue to plummet, and the Court will be assailed, from all sides, over the next four years.

### Extend: Authoritarianism Isn’t Existential

#### Autocracies aren’t more war prone—control over the population makes them more stable

Rustam Seerat, 3/11/23, Medium, “The upcoming era of autocratic peace,” https://medium.com/kabul-dairies/the-upcoming-era-of-autocratic-peace-d3abbbcb7f7e, mm

In international relations scholarship, a widely-known theory is called the democratic peace theory. The democratic peace theory in international relations suggests that democracies are less likely to go to war with each other. This theory asserts that because democracies are characterized by a commitment to individual rights and a system of checks and balances, they are less likely to behave aggressively toward other democracies. The theory argues that democratic countries share common values, norms, and institutions and are more likely to resolve disputes through peaceful means such as negotiation, mediation, or arbitration. Additionally, democratic leaders are said to be more accountable to their citizens, who are more likely to resist war and support diplomatic solutions to conflicts. There is also a lesser-known theory called the autocratic peace theory. The autocratic peace theory in international relations proposes that autocratic regimes or authoritarian governments are less likely to engage in war with each other compared to democracies. This theory suggests that authoritarian leaders are more interested in maintaining power and stability within their countries rather than expanding their influence through military aggression. The autocratic peace theory argues that autocracies are more capable of controlling their societies and suppressing internal dissent, which reduces the likelihood of internal conflict and makes it easier to avoid external conflict. Additionally, autocratic leaders are said to have less accountability to their citizens, which allows them to make unpopular decisions, such as pursuing diplomacy instead of war, without fear of losing power. The expansion of NATO and the EU to Ukraine that triggered the Russian invasion is ingrained with the notion of democratic peace. The argument goes, if we bring democracies to the countries around the world, then we will not have to go to war with them. Hence, we should prop up democracies and support democratic governments. The evidence for the democratic peace theory is strong. For example, we can see that democracies in the Global North (North America, Europe, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, and Australia) are significantly less likely to go to war with one another. On the other hand, autocratic regimes go to war with one another but less often. The Sino-Soviet border conflict of 1969 is one example; another example is the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s. Nevertheless, autocratic regimes do seem to develop more amicable relationships than authoritarian and democratic regimes. In recent years, especially after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the glue in the relationship among autocracies has significantly increased. China is getting more cheap oil and gas from Russia, and Russia receives “non-lethal assistance” from China. Iran is selling military drones to Russia. But the pivoting in the relationship between China and Saudi Arabia is more noteworthy. Traditionally, Saudi Arabia was seen as a puppet of the US in its foreign policy, which seems to be changing. Saudi Arabia eliminated the dollar from its oil trade with China as a means of exchange and replaced it with Yuan. The Iraqi cabinet voted for the same, replacing the dollar with the yuan. Another shift is China playing the mediator role between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Seven years ago, they severed their diplomatic ties and decided to restore them due to an agreement brokered by the Chinese among them recently. The upcoming autocratic peace is a byproduct of the return of China to the club of great world powers. A world with China as the leading power is attractive for all autocratic regimes worldwide. China would not question human rights violations, dealing with marginalized ethnic groups, gender disparity, etc., in countries with authoritarian regimes — treating them as internal matters. The problem with the US-dominated world for autocrats is that it sometimes uses human rights violations, women’s oppression, and the rights of minority groups to pressure its adversaries. For instance, The US points out Iran’s human rights violations more often than when it is committed by Saudi Arabia, which is worse. The US not only ignores what Saudi Arabia is doing in Yemen, but it also helps it. In contrast, China does not support one autocrat against another; its stance is more like, “Hey guys, work out your differences so that it does not disrupt trade.”

#### The premise of the impact is false – democracies are not inherently more peaceful than autocracies

Robert Skidelsky, 9/5/22, [Skidelsky is a member of the British House of Lords and Professor Emeritus of Political Economy at Warwick University], International Politics and Society (Journal), “The false promise of democratic peace,” https://www.ips-journal.eu/topics/democracy-and-society/the-false-promise-of-democratic-peace-5915/, mm

Through persuasion, exhortation, legal processes, economic pressure, and sometimes military force, American foreign policy asserts the United States’ view about how the world should be run. Only two countries in recent history have had such world-transforming ambitions: Britain and the US. In the last 150 years, these are the only two countries whose power – hard and soft, formal and informal – has extended to all parts of the world, allowing them plausibly to aspire to the mantle of Rome. When the US inherited Britain’s global position after 1945, it also inherited Britain’s sense of responsibility for the future of the international order. Embracing that role, America has been an evangelist of democracy, and a central US foreign-policy objective since the fall of communism has been to promote its spread – sometimes by regime change, when that is deemed necessary. In fact, this playbook dates back to US President Woodrow Wilson’s time. As historian Nicholas Mulder writes in The Economic Weapon: The Rise of Sanctions as a Tool of Modern War, ‘Wilson was the first statesman to cast the economic weapon as an instrument of democratization. He thereby added an internal political rationale for economic sanctions – spreading democracy – to the external political goal that…European advocates of sanctions have aimed at: inter-state peace.’ The implication is that, where the opportunity offers, military and non-military measures should be used to topple ‘malign’ regimes. According to democratic peace theory, democracies do not start wars; only dictatorships do. A wholly democratic world thus would be a world without war. This was the hope that emerged in the 1990s. With the end of communism, the expectation, famously expressed by Francis Fukuyama’s 1989 article, ‘The End of History?,’ was that the most important parts of the world would become democratic. US supremacy was supposed to ensure that democracy became the universal political norm. But Russia and China, the leading communist states of the Cold War era, have not embraced it; nor have many other centres of world affairs, especially in the Middle East. Hence, Fukuyama has recently acknowledged that if Russia and China were driven together, ‘then you would really be living in a world that was being dominated by these non-democratic powers…[which] really is the end of the end of history.’ The argument that democracy is inherently ‘peaceful,’ and dictatorship or autocracy ‘warlike,’ is intuitively attractive. It does not deny that states pursue their own interests; but it assumes that the interests of democratic states will reflect common values like human rights, and that those interests will be pursued in a less bellicose manner (since democratic processes require negotiation of differences). Democratic governments are accountable to their people, and the people have an interest in peace, not war. By contrast, according to this view, rulers and elites in dictatorships are illegitimate and therefore insecure, which leads them to seek popular support by whipping up animosity toward foreigners. If democracy replaced dictatorship everywhere, world peace would follow automatically. This belief rests on two propositions that have been extremely influential in international relations theory, even though they are poorly grounded theoretically and empirically. The first is the notion that a state’s external behaviour is determined by its domestic constitution – a view that ignores the influence the international system can have on a country’s domestic politics. As the American political scientist Kenneth N. Waltz argued in his 1979 book, The Theory of International Politics, ‘international anarchy’ conditions the behaviour of states more than the behaviour of states creates international anarchy. Waltz’s ‘world-systems theory’ perspective is particularly useful in an age of globalisation. One must look to the structure of the international system to ‘predict’ how individual states will behave, regardless of their domestic constitutions. ‘If each state, being stable, strove only for security, and had no designs on its neighbours, all states would nevertheless remain insecure,’ he observed, ‘for the means of security for one state are, in their very existence, the means by which other states are threatened.’ Waltz offered a bracing antidote to the facile assumption that democratic habits are easily transferable from one location to another. Rather than trying to spread democracy, he suggested that it would be better to try to reduce global insecurity. Though there is undeniably some correlation between democratic institutions and peaceful habits, the direction of causation is disputable. Was it democracy that made Europe peaceful after 1945? Or did the US nuclear umbrella, the fixing of borders by the victors, and Marshall Plan-fuelled economic growth finally make it possible for non-communist Europe to accept democracy as its political norm? The political scientist Mark E. Pietrzyk contends that, ‘Only states which are relatively secure – politically, militarily, economically – can afford to have free, pluralistic societies; in the absence of this security, states are much more likely to adopt, maintain, or revert to centralised, coercive authority structures.’ The second proposition is that democracy is the natural form of the state, which people everywhere will spontaneously adopt if allowed to. This dubious assumption makes regime change seem easy, because the sanctioning powers can rely on the welcoming support of those whose freedom has been repressed and whose rights have been trampled underfoot. By drawing superficial comparisons with post-war Germany and Japan, the apostles of democratisation grossly underestimate the difficulties of installing democracies in societies that lack Western constitutional traditions. The results of their handiwork can be seen in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, and many African countries. Democratic peace theory is, above all, lazy. It provides an easy explanation for ‘warlike’ behaviour without considering the location and history of the states involved. This shallowness lends itself to overconfidence that a quick dose of economic sanctions or bombing is all that is needed to cure a dictatorship of its unfortunate affliction. In short, the idea that democracy is ‘portable’ leads to a gross underestimation of the military, economic, and humanitarian costs of trying to spread democracy to troubled parts of the world. The West has paid a terrible price for such thinking – and it may be about to pay again.