# Domain Awareness Affirmative

## Notes

This affirmative case aligns with the 2025-2026 NFHS Novice Case Limits for Policy Debate, under “Early Warning Awareness.”

#### What does this aff do?

This aff argues that the US should increase its exploration of the Arctic by increasing our ability to sense and detect activity occurring in the arctic. Domain awareness is the ability to have knowledge about the environment, activities, or threats within a particular domain. The Military considers 5 different domains: Land, Sea, Air, Space, and Cyberspace. This aff mostly deals with the first 3 (land, sea, and air), with some interaction with space (satellites that observe earth).

The plan would increase the deployment of several technologies:

* Early warning radars, which use radio waves to detect activity at long distances and operate at lower frequencies (which makes them less disrupted by weather)
* Uncrewed aerial vehicles (UAVs), which are drones that can fly around without an on-board pilot in order to surveil areas
* Uncrewed underwater vehicles (UUVs), which are the same thing as UAVs but in the ocean
* Satellites, which are space-based objects that help collect and communicate information about earth.

#### Why should we enact the plan?

This aff argues there are two reasons to enact the plan:

Miscalculation Advantage

This advantage argues that in the status quo, the Arctic is a place where escalation of conflict between the US, Russia, and China could occur. Geopolitical tensions and great power rivalries that occur in any area of the world may effect the arctic region. In particular, because the arctic is a shorter flight path for missiles (since the earth is narrower at the poles), adversaries like Russia and China could launch attacks over the arctic. This is all magnified by a lack of information- countries may misinterpret other countries activities or intentions and think that war is imminent.

The aff argues that the plan would help prevent miscalculation in two different ways. The first way is that more awareness and information about what is occurring in the region gives military decision makers the ability to make better judgements about when crisis is imminent and when it is not. This allows them to engage in diplomacy and crisis management rather than resorting directly to military confrontation. The second way is that better sensors help us transition from a missile defense posture to a missile defeat posture\*, which helps us deter missile launches and more effectively shoot down missiles that have been launched.

\*Missile defense vs missile defeat: This distinction is described in several of the Lee and Poling cards. Missile defense is primarily focused on detected an already-launched missile and intercepting it (shooting it down). Missile defeat is a broader process that tries to detect activity that may lead to a missile attack (for example, detecting nuclear-equipped submarines in the ocean) to give us more advanced warning and allow leaders to take “left-of-launch” (before launch) actions to prevent the launch in the first place.

Competition Advantage

The competition advantage argues that in the status quo, melting ice in the arctic is going to create a competition among countries to access valuable minerals, resources, and trade routes. Because these areas are very difficult to navigate, the countries that are best able to map and understand activity in the Arctic are going to have an advantage in becoming the leaders in Arctic trade. The plan, by increasing US awareness over the Arctic, gives the US an advantage. The US will use this advantage to cooperate with allies like Canada, Japan, and South Korea to maintain control over the Arctic.

The aff argues that this cooperation is necessary to help prevent authoritarian states like China from gaining an advantage in these crucial shipping routes. In doing so, the aff sends a strong signal to the world that the democratic world order should prevail, preventing a rise in global authoritarianism.

#### How to use this file

In the 1ac:

You should read the part under “1AC”. That includes everything under “1AC—Plan”, “1AC—Miscalculation Advantage” and “1AC—Competition Advantage”. It is possible that you may not be able to get through everything in 8 minutes. If that is the case, keep practicing! You can also de-highlight some of the evidence or take some evidence out of the first advantage.

In the 2ac:

When the negative makes arguments that directly answer the miscalculation advantage or the competition advantage, you need to respond to the exact points that they made. This file includes some evidence in headers that start with “They Say”- these cards do not have to be read in the 2ac. Your primary job should be explaining 1ac evidence that addresses the argument that they have made. Only after doing that should you then read an additional card.

When the negative makes offcase arguments like disadvantages, counterplans, or kritiks, you should read the “2AC Answers to” section. For the strategic stability DA and the diplomacy CP, those arguments are in this file. For other offcase arguments (for example, the China DA), you may find the aff answers at the bottom of the da file.

In the 1ar:

By the 1ar on the advantages, you should mostly be explaining evidence read from the 1ac and 2ac. You likely will not have to read any new evidence in the 1ar.

In the 1ar on offcase positions (DA, CP, K), your primary job is explaining the 2ac arguments that you have read. There are some cards that are under “1AR Extend:” headers that you can read if you have extra time. But you should mostly focus on talking about the cards already read in the debate.

In the 2ar:

You should not be reading any new evidence. Instead, you should be explaining the cards you have already read earlier in the debate.

## 1AC

### 1AC—Plan

#### The United States federal government should increase its deployment of domain awareness technology, including early warning radars, uncrewed aerial and underwater vehicles, and satellites, in the Arctic.

### 1AC—Miscalculation Advantage

#### Advantage 1 is Miscalculation

#### The Arctic is on a collision course for nuclear escalation between the US, China, and Russia—it is a key battleground in potential fights over Atlantic and Pacific conflicts

Brady 25, national defense fellow in forward defense at the Atlantic Center’s Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security. (Aaron, 4-4-2025, “Greenland’s Military Possibilities for the United States” https://warontherocks.com/2025/04/greenlands-military-possibilities-for-the-united-states/) wtk

Moscow aggressively claims vast Arctic territories and has heavily invested in building a formidable Arctic military presence. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine proves its willingness to use force in territorial disputes. Expanding access and growing military capabilities are making the Arctic increasingly volatile. While Russia has not yet destabilized the region, provocative actions, such as dropping paratroopers near the North Pole, signal its willingness to escalate. Competition in the high north will only intensify.

In a conflict, Russia’s expanding Arctic maneuver space and long-range missile capabilities pose a major security challenge. Opening seas allow Russian and Chinese forces to move between the Pacific and Atlantic, while aircraft and naval vessels can launch long-range missile strikes on North America or the North Atlantic from the relative safety of Russian-controlled waters and airspace.

More concerning, Russia and China are rapidly developing “precise mass” — autonomous air, sea, and undersea forces. China is building the first drone aircraft carrier, while Russia already operates autonomous maritime vehicles. The Russian Sarma autonomous undersea vessels can conduct long-endurance missions, enabling a persistent Russian presence unmatched by occasional American, Canadian, or Danish patrols.

Reframing Arctic Strategy into America’s Geostrategy

As the Russia-China-Iran-North Korea axis strengthens, traditional American geostrategic views are outdated. Conventional threats no longer come only from the east or west — the Arctic now presents a growing danger beyond the existential risk of nuclear attack. It has become a zone of daily competition and a potential battleground in future Atlantic or Pacific conflicts. Modern threats extend beyond bombers and intercontinental missiles to include a diverse array of air and sea systems. Autonomous vehicles will fight alongside traditional ships and aircraft in large numbers.

America’s line of contact with adversaries stretches from the First Island Chain, through the Bering Strait, across the Arctic Ocean to Norway, then down the NATO’s eastern border to Turkey.

American national security depends on defeating Arctic-based threats to North America while blocking Russian and Chinese power projection into the North Atlantic and North Pacific. Greenland is the geostrategic linchpin connecting the Arctic, North America, and Europe — a potential the United States and Denmark have yet to fully leverage.

#### But current technology used to monitor the arctic is outdated, undermining domain awareness and disrupting our ability to monitor and respond to threats

Boulègue et al. 24, \*Non-resident Senior Fellow with the Transatlantic Defense and Security Program at the Center for European Policy Analysis. \*\*Non-resident Senior Fellow and Senior Advisor at the Center for European Policy Analysis. \*\*\*Director of the Transatlantic Defense and Security program at the Center for European Policy Analysis. \*\*\*\*Program Manager with the Transatlantic Defense and Security Program at the Center for European Policy Analysis. (\*Mathieu Boulègue, \*Minna Ålander, \*Charlotta Collén, \*\*Edward Lucas, \*\*\*Catherine Sendak, and \*\*\*\*Krista Viksnins, 12-5-2024, “Up North: Confronting Arctic Insecurity Implications for the United States and NATO” https://cepa.org/comprehensive-reports/up-north-confronting-arctic-insecurity-implications-for-the-united-states-and-nato/) wtk

1) Arctic-specific capabilities

Continued investments in Arctic-specific hardware and equipment are paramount for successfully deterring Russia’s contestation efforts and Chinese regional encroachments. More than ever, Arctic capabilities must respond to specific missions.

NATO and allies must define what capabilities they will require to operate in the region. As noted above, across the NATO 7 nations critical capabilities gaps abound, in cold weather hardware, ice-strengthened assets, ice-capable ships with anti-aircraft and anti-submarine capabilities,129 infrastructure suited for effective early warning threat detection systems and air defense,130 radar coverage and aerial domain awareness, subsea sensing, and Arctic-related logistics and resupplies, among others.

An essential part of the US DoD Arctic strategy’s “monitor-and-respond” approach is to enhance US Arctic capabilities in critical areas such as domain awareness and dedicated cold weather equipment.50 Yet the US and the Arctic 7 as a whole have a low starting point in terms of cold weather and ice-strengthened capabilities.

Regarding conventional capabilities, the current environment has shown the need to increase physical access and presence in the region thanks to icebreakers. Recognizing that it will not close the “icebreaker gap” on its own, the US recently unveiled a trilateral partnership with Canada and Finland called the Icebreaker Collaboration Effort, or ICE Pact.131 The ICE Pact will help build polar icebreakers and other surface assets in the logic of burden sharing and comparative advantages — although it heavily leans on ensuring job security and retaining skills in US shipyards.

Another paramount priority in conventional capabilities is the continued modernization of North Warning System assets and NORAD more widely. The 2023 incident with “Chinese spy balloons”132 depicted not only the importance of NORAD for threat identification and destruction but also how vulnerable the system was in terms of blind spots, especially early threat identification and wider domain awareness. NORAD modernization is slow to materialize but essential: A modern and robust air defense is instrumental in keeping the whole Arctic secure, and not just North American skies. As part of North Warning System upgrades, new over-the-horizon radars will partly solve the issue of early threat detection and tracking. This must happen in parallel with improvements in multilayered and multipurpose remote sensing capabilities, including for space-based threats.

#### Specifically, sensors are outdated in all domains

Brady 25, national defense fellow in forward defense at the Atlantic Center’s Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security. (Aaron, 4-4-2025, “Greenland’s Military Possibilities for the United States” https://warontherocks.com/2025/04/greenlands-military-possibilities-for-the-united-states/) wtk

Arctic Monitoring

U.S. Northern Command Commander Gen. Glen VanHerck repeatedly called for increased awareness across multiple domains, including better sensors and data sharing. The U.S. military defines five domains: space, air, land, maritime, and cyberspace. Some of the domains are broken into sub-domains (e.g., the maritime domain can be broken into surface, subsurface, and seabed). Effective monitoring boils down to maintaining coverage of these domains with appropriate sensors, synthesizing the collected data, then interpreting it to understand the situation and make decisions. Realizing the monitoring goal in the Arctic requires effort across these areas, but the primary shortfall is sensors, especially air and maritime sensors.

I will not dive deeper into space monitoring, since this is a well-researched area. Pituffik Space Base’s primary purpose today is as a crucial node of space detection capabilities, particularly for missile defense and polar orbits. The necessary investments are already being made, or at least debated, within the Department of Defense. Air and sea sensors, though, are a different story.

Air Domain Awareness

Most discussions on Arctic air domain awareness focus on space-based sensors, over-the-horizon radars, and occasional deployments of airborne assets such as large surveillance aircraft like the E-3 or unmanned aircraft. Shorter range radar systems, such as those in the Cold War-era North Warning System, receive little attention since long-range and maneuverable missiles have diminished their effectiveness.

The U.S. Space Force plans to field a space-based sensing constellation for air and surface tracking. The United States should increase this investment to add satellites with this functionality and seek Danish support. A robust polar low Earth orbit constellation would ensure full Arctic coverage while enhancing surveillance in other theaters. Additionally, the Danish Joint Arctic Command in Nuuk should have access to this space-based intelligence.

The United States should complement space-based sensors with air-based platforms, building resilience that improves tracking precision and bolsters communications capabilities, thereby enabling very long-range weapons. Large air surveillance aircraft like the E-3 are overburdened today and demand for its replacement, the E-7, will increase in wartime. High-altitude, long-endurance autonomous aircraft flying from Greenland could significantly improve Arctic surveillance, support American industrial base growth, and provide re-deployable assets for global sensing grids.

Existing systems like the RQ-4 are viable, but cost-effective off-the-shelf options can be rapidly acquired. Many companies offer stratospheric long-endurance autonomous aircraft carrying payloads up to 1,000 kilograms. Arctic weather presents challenges, but flying in the stratosphere mitigates most environmental impacts, with only sensor effectiveness and launch and recovery affected.

Basing these assets in Greenland facilitates patrolling both west across the northern line and east across the Greenland-Svalbard-Norway gap. The US footprint in Greenland would be minimal, potentially fewer than one hundred personnel, similar to a drone launch and recovery unit. Many positions could be contracted, reducing the need for uniformed personnel.

Maritime Domain Awareness

Like in the air domain, a space sensing network can provide surface detection, but the United States should expand its undersea surveillance beyond regular submarine patrols. A moderately sized autonomous maritime force in Greenland, similar to U.S. Central Command’s Task Force 59, could provide persistent coverage of the Arctic east of the Lomonosov Ridge and throughout the Greenland and Norwegian Seas. This force should leverage unmanned surface and undersea vessels, with undersea systems playing a particularly vital role.

Much like high altitude, long-endurance aerial drones, many companies offer surface and undersea systems that the United States could capitalize on quickly. Other unconventional opportunities exist, such as a self-sustaining autonomous system proposed by engineers for Arctic operations featuring a wind- and water-powered surface craft carrying both aerial and undersea drones.

#### Improved Arctic domain awareness is key to prevent miscalculation and accidental escalation for two reasons:

#### 1. Domain awareness provides key information for crisis decision-making and makes diplomacy more effective

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, 10-5-2023, “Deterring Arctic Threats” https://www.airandspaceforces.com/article/deterring-arctic-threats/) wtk

Establishing Information Dominance

Arctic domain awareness and information dominance hinge on the ability to get timely information to decision-makers—that is, both the broad understanding of the operational environment left-of-launch and the tactical information required to make an intercept right-of-launch.

To achieve that dominance, the U.S. must invest to improve several capabilities. Satellite communications are the first requirement, essential for early threat indications and warning because they provide a means to share intelligence with remotely piloted UAVs flying in the farthest regions of the Arctic, control their operations, and pipe their feeds back to decision-makers. Today, satellite communications coverage is sparse in the Arctic, but both OneWeb and SpaceX’s Starlink are expanding their network of commercial proliferated LEO communication satellites to improve coverage in the high north. The SDA’s ongoing fielding of a satellite communications transport layer in LEO will also provide high-speed data connectivity for U.S. warfighters operating in remote regions worldwide, including in the Arctic.

Connectivity between UAVs and any other aircraft to the space-based transport layer requires the benefits of optical communications technology. Laser communications leverage the highly resilient, satellite proliferated transport layer now being fielded by the SDA. The result is high-speed, flexible, and secure communication links across the air defense network that enables not only force projection abroad, but also homeland defense. Allies and partners can contribute: Norway’s Arctic Satellite Broadband Mission (ASBM) will launch two satellites into highly elliptical orbit by 2024, and these will provide improved broadband satellite communications within the Arctic region.

While environmental sensing deep into the Arctic can be facilitated by an all-weather UAV like the MQ-9B, there is a need for a multi-faceted approach to sensing weather that affects air, sea, and land operations in the Arctic. However, the Defense Meteorological Satellite Program (DMSP) is well past its lifetime as a defense-dedicated weather sensor that covers the Arctic in a polar orbit, and the U.S. Space Force is developing its Electro-optical Infrared Weather Satellite Program (EWS), which will ultimately need to be disaggregated as a constellation of satellites that provide both higher performance and resilience against attack by an adversary. While the Space Force is handling the program well, Congress needs to ensure adequate resources are available to keep the program on track.

Artificial intelligence could help get the right information to the right decision-makers at the right time. NORAD and NORTHCOM have conducted global information dominance or (GIDE) experiments to fuse sensor data from a variety of platforms and dramatically reduce the time required to get threat information to decision-makers. Once one sensor picks up a potential threat, AI cross-cues that data with other sensor information to confirm, identify, and attribute the threat. VanHerck said this enables U.S. forces to go from being reactive to proactive.

Battle management platforms, including AEW&C aircraft, can add to tactical information dominance once a threat is incoming.

This overlapping, layered approach to missile defeat in the Arctic can give U.S. leaders more time to proactively shape adversary behavior and manage escalation. Early threat detection buys time to more effectively apply non-kinetic options, including diplomatic, economic, or strategic signaling actions, such as revealing U.S. capabilities or moving U.S. forces.

#### 2. Domain awareness is key to a comprehensive missile defeat strategy—the Arctic is key because it’s the shortest path for missile attacks

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, 10-5-2023, “Deterring Arctic Threats” https://www.airandspaceforces.com/article/deterring-arctic-threats/) wtk

Since the dawn of the Cold War, the high north has been seen as an attractive attack vector for long range strike for one simple reason: it provides shortest distance between the United States and Eurasia. Today, the Arctic it is still seen by U.S. adversaries like Russia and China as an appealing attack vector for their missiles and long-range aviation assets given both the Arctic’s geography and insufficient monitoring by the United States. The growing Arctic presence of China—a self-proclaimed “near-Arctic state” and custodian of an increasingly robust long-range aviation and missile inventory—reinforces the region’s significance as a staging ground for conventional air and cruise missile attacks.

Yet the U.S. ability to detect, track, attribute, and counter attacks coming from the north has significantly diminished since the end of the Cold War, even as America’s potential adversaries have prioritized development of missiles of all types over the same three decades. China and Russia have explored options to employ long-range, conventional weapons to deter U.S. leaders without provoking a nuclear response. Chinese doctrine describes precision strikes as a means of “war control” to manage escalation and frame power-projection nodes. Missile warfare is becoming a premier means for Russia to project power; in Ukraine, Russia has launched hundreds of ballistic and cruise missiles, as well as suicide drones, targeting power grids and other critical infrastructure in an attempt to force Kyiv into a settlement.

As the 2022 Missile Defense Review noted, missile threats to the U.S. homeland have “rapidly expanded in quantity, diversity, and sophistication.” Modern conventional cruise missiles pose the greatest threat; they are harder to detect, track, target, and intercept than ballistic missiles.

Adversaries have begun to favor cruise missile development over ballistic missiles because they greatly complicate detection and early warning. This is part of a broader missile development trend that favors increasingly maneuverable designs. Hypersonic cruise missiles, for instance, fly at Mach 5 or faster. While hypersonic missiles produce a greater heat signature and are less maneuverable, their extreme speed produces a considerable advantage. China’s fractional orbital bombardment system, or (FOBS), takes this capability to a still more striking level, with a highly maneuverable hypersonic glide missile that is launched into orbit and then re-enters the earth’s atmosphere on an unpredictable trajectory.

To date, the U.S. has only mounted a tepid response to these threats. Throughout the post-Cold War period of the 1990s and early 2000s, Arctic defense planning took a backseat to other geopolitical concerns for both the United States and Russia. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Russian economy imploded, and its Northern Fleet and air assets fell into disrepair. Post-Cold War arms reduction treaties, combined with a major shift in the U.S. military’s focus toward operations in the Middle East after Sept. 11, 2001, contributed to DOD reducing its Arctic focus. DOD closed or downsized almost all of its bases in Alaska and significantly shrank other capabilities for defending the northern approach to the United States. This is reflected by NORAD’s continued reliance on the aging North Warning System (NWS), a network of 47 long-range and short-range radars first fielded in the 1980s and equipped with 1970s-era technology.

This system was only designed to identify approaching Soviet bombers after launch and flying within radar range. Today, it cannot provide early indications and warning of adversary force posture changes in the Arctic, which could be a prelude to an attack. Nor can the NWS detect air and missile threats launched from inside Russia or bombers, cruise missiles, drones flying too low or too far to be detected by its radar.

As Russia and China develop stealthier cruise missiles and diversify their cruise missile launch options to include land-based, surface, and subsurface platforms, the gaps in the North Warning System’s effective radar coverage will continue to increase.

“Imagine a solid fence shrinking to a picket fence,” notes Gen. Glen D. VanHerck, head of the North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command. “And now you have cruise missiles that can get through your capability to detect.”

The legacy U.S. air and missile defense paradigm, focused as it is on kinetic intercept, remains important and needs to be urgently modernized, but an overreliance on kinetic kill platforms, delivery systems, and weapons alone limits warfighter options.

A network of ground-based radars—including those in the North Warning System—and a small number of fighters on air defense alert at air bases around the country provide today’s air defense of the contiguous United States. These fighters are on alert status to rapidly respond to and intercept foreign military aircraft, such as Russian bomber patrols that routinely fly near and occasionally into U.S. airspace. Air Force fighters also intercept unidentified aircraft, aircraft that have strayed from planned flight paths, and aircraft that are not properly communicating with air traffic control.

The small numbers of fighters and the lack of a system of sensors that can detect low-flying targets over long ranges limit the system’s effectiveness against modern cruise missiles and other threats. Air defense systems such as Patriot, Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), or the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System (NASAMS), which is used to defend the Washington, D.C., National Capital Region, offer some defense against low-volume missile threats, but these low-density, high-demand assets are extremely costly; they cost more per shot than the missiles they defend against, and are ineffective against many types of cruise missile and drone threats.

U.S. defense leaders have gradually adopted a new emphasis over the last decade on a holistic concept called “missile defeat.” and then than narrowly focusing on kinetic kill options to deny adversary attacks, missile defeat involves using the entire spectrum of options to prevent and defeat missile threats, from countering proliferation to early indications and warning and, of course, detection, tracking, and intercepting cruise missiles. It also seeks to integrate defensive, offensive, passive, kinetic, and non-kinetic capabilities, such as cyber warfare, directed energy, and electronic attack.

NORAD/NORTHCOM embraces this new emphasis on domain awareness and information dominance. Early detection of a potential threat can open up decision space for U.S. leaders, enabling moves left-of-launch or even left-of-conflict to reduce the risk of an attack in the first place. As VanHerck notes, “If I’m shooting down cruise missiles and ballistic missiles, we’ve failed in deterrence, and that’s not where we want to be.” Domain awareness and information dominance likewise remain prerequisites for any actions to defeat missiles right-of-launch—after kinetic or non-kinetic attacks have occurred.

However, the new emphasis on domain awareness and information dominance is not without challenges. VanHerck testified to Congress that the missile defeat approach, which favors detection over tracking and countering, is at risk because of a sheer lack of capabilities in the Arctic. The January 2023 intrusion of a Chinese spy balloon into U.S. airspace by way of northwest Canada caught the nation off-guard and highlighted this severe lack of domain awareness in the Arctic. VanHerck told lawmakers: “We are not organized, trained or equipped to respond in the Arctic.”

Another Arctic expert, Ketil Olsen, formerly Norway’s military representative in NATO and the European Union, who now heads Andoeya Space, a Norwegian state-controlled company that tests new military and surveillance technologies, called the region “a dark area on the map.” The lack of domain awareness prevents the United States from obtaining the early warning and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) information necessary to anticipate and take actions to deter air and cruise missile attacks.

#### Effective missile defeat deters attacks and defeats cruise missile strikes

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

The Arctic has remained an attractive attack vector for both U.S. and Russian long-range aviation and missiles since the earliest days of the Cold War. The growing Arctic presence of China, a self-proclaimed “near-Arctic state” possessing an increasingly robust long-range aviation and missile inventory, reinforces the region’s significance as a staging ground for air and cruise missile attacks.

The U.S. Department of Defense continues to invest billions to defend against limited ballistic missile attacks, but the U.S. military’s ability to detect, track, and defeat a cruise missile strike emanating from the Arctic has degraded significantly over the past 30 years. China or Russia could exploit this shortfall using conventional cruise missile attacks to deal a quick blow that keeps U.S. military forces at distance and avoid a nuclear response.

Bolstering deterrence against conventional air and cruise missile threats in the Arctic starts by improving U.S., ally, and partner domain awareness and information dominance capabilities. Adversaries will be disinclined to launch strikes on the U.S. homeland if they know the United States is anticipating the attack and creating options to dissuade it. Achieving better domain awareness involves efforts to provide indications and warning of attacks through the detection, tracking, characterization, warning, and attribution of modern threats.2 Establishing information dominance enables U.S. leaders to access decision-quality information more quickly than adversaries. Domain awareness and information dominance can underwrite a comprehensive “missile defeat” strategy, left and right of launch, that gives U.S. leaders more options to deter an attack on the U.S. homeland.

#### The Arctic is key because of its unique geography

Berge and Bergmann 24, \*Visiting Fellow, Europe, Russia, and Eurasia Program, \*\*director of the Europe, Russia, and Eurasia Program and the Stuart Center in Euro-Atlantic and Northern European Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. (\*Jonas Vidhammer Berge, \*\*Max Bergmann, 12-17-2024, “Addressing Arctic Vulnerabilities” https://www.csis.org/analysis/addressing-arctic-vulnerabilities) wtk

The strategic utility of an Arctic presence is considerable for early warning purposes. Its geographical location makes the Arctic an important vantage point for monitoring potential ballistic missile launches and other airborne threats.12 Russia and the United States—with its allies—depend on Arctic infrastructure for their early warning systems, both through ground-based radars and ground stations for satellite communications (SATCOM). Russia and China are increasingly collaborating in developing defense technology, decidedly prioritizing space and new technologies, and it is with Russia’s cooperation that China is seeking to develop and deploy its own early warning infrastructure.13

More broadly, with their increasing dependence on space-based capabilities for advanced warfare, states seeking global or Arctic regional coverage for their space systems are reliant on ground infrastructure in the Arctic due to its latitude-restricting coverage.14 The Arctic is also an ideal location for this type of infrastructure. Particularly for states with ambitions of global space-power projection such as the United States and China, this incentivizes a growing physical presence in the Arctic to support developing space infrastructure, including dual-use projects.15 China has advanced its global space capabilities drastically in recent years, and reports have emerged that Russia is becoming reliant on Chinese satellite imagery of Ukraine.16 Moreover, the geopolitical tension between NATO and Russia heightens the risk for assets such as Norway’s K-SAT satellite station on Svalbard and the space-launch capabilities in Andøya, Norway, and Kiruna, Sweden.17

#### Arctic war escalates through conventional, gray-zone, and accidental warfare

Wallin 25, ASP’s Chief Executive Officer and Masters in Public Diplomacy at USC. (Matthew, 5-12-2025, “Is the Arctic Destined to be the Most Likely Flashpoint for a Nuclear War?” https://www.americansecurityproject.org/is-the-arctic-destined-to-be-the-most-likely-flashpoint-for-a-nuclear-war/) wtk

Amidst these tensions, melting polar ice is opening Arctic sea lanes to increased shipping traffic, resource exploration, and military posturing. NATO’s newest members, Finland and Sweden, are Arctic nations. Russia currently dominates the Arctic region, holding 53% of its total coastline, operating the world’s biggest icebreaker fleet, and has been upgrading its Arctic military bases. China is also increasingly playing a role, conducting joint Arctic military exercises with Russia and employing an icebreaker fleet of its own, despite its complete lack of territory in the Arctic Circle.

But is the Arctic destined to be the most likely flashpoint for a nuclear war? Let’s look at the possibilities.

Despite being so cold, the Arctic is no stranger to military conflict, holding major strategic value and serving as a passageway to both the Atlantic and Pacific. During World War II, the Battle of the Atlantic extended into the Arctic and ships carrying American war supplies to the Soviet Union traversed the Northern Sea Route. Germany invaded Norway, and the Soviet Union invaded Finland in the Winter War of 1940. As the Cold War evolved, the Arctic became a major theater for submarine activity.

Today, President Trump’s insistence on acquiring Greenland “one way or the other” highlights the growing importance of the Arctic to the security interests of the United States. Greenland’s geographic location, combined with the U.S.’ operation of Pituffik Space Base in the high north, provides key “missile warning, missile defense, and space surveillance” capabilities. The shortest flight paths for nuclear missiles between the U.S. and Russia exist over the Arctic Ocean, and the loss of this base on account of a diplomatic blunder could open a key blind spot in America’s strategic defense. Alternatively, the loss of this base to a Russian attack aimed at disabling American missile detection infrastructure is unlikely due to the danger of immediate retaliation and escalation.

Currently, the most likely path to a potential nuclear exchange in the Arctic would be through a conventional or “gray zone” Russian attack on a NATO member. Border skirmishes, cyber-attacks, airspace incursions, reckless military intercepts, and support to separatist groups intentionally sit in the “gray zone” between peace and outright war, but could ultimately lead to open conflict that escalates to nuclear war. Conceivably, a gray zone or overt attack on other Greelandic infrastructure, or an information operations campaign aimed at dividing the U.S., Greenland, and Denmark, are not outside of the realm of possibility.

With NATO’s addition of Sweden and, more importantly, Finland—which shares a 1,343 km border with Russia—there is increased opportunity that a NATO Arctic state could be attacked. Highlighting this risk, American forces in Alaska recently staged a drill in which hundreds of troops were flown to Finland to defend against a mock Russian invasion. Yet rather than an overt invasion of a NATO member, Russia is far more likely test the waters by conducting provocative and destabilizing small-scale gray zone activities. The disastrous results of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine have likely raised doubts in Moscow about its ability to achieve its objectives in a direct attack on a nuclear armed country, let alone a large NATO ally, making a direct attack unlikely. It is not entirely clear where the red line on gray zone activities would be for Finland or what would trigger an Article 5 collective defense declaration short of a direct attack across the border.

Though the threat of American nuclear weapons has long-served to deter a Russian attack on the European NATO members, President Trump’s many public pronouncements expressing doubt about his willingness to defend a NATO member that comes under attack has shaken confidence in Europe about America’s commitment. As a result, France and the UK are considering expanding their arsenals, signifying an increased reliance on nuclear posturing for deterrence, including for the defense of Arctic NATO members. France is reconsidering whether it wants to decommission its current warheads as it brings replacements online, potentially doubling of the size of its arsenal. It is simultaneously upgrading an airbase closer to the German border to be able to host nuclear weapons. The UK, which has been historically dependent on the U.S. for its nuclear arsenal, is recently questioning that dependence, and may seek other options to assure an effective and reliable deterrent. This could foretell a new nuclear arms race.

The upcoming February 2026 expiration of New START, the last remaining strategic nuclear arms treaty between the U.S. and Russia, portends a period of nuclear proliferation that could echo the nuclear arms buildups of the Cold War. Meanwhile, China, which has been operating in the Arctic, has been engaging in its own rapid nuclear buildup in an effort to potentially exceed 1,000 warheads by 2035. China has consistently rejected efforts to join a multilateral nuclear arms reduction treaty with the U.S. and Russia, citing its comparatively much smaller nuclear arsenal.

Navigation issues in the Arctic could also lead to military escalations reaching the nuclear level. The Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS), which includes satellite constellations like the American GPS system or Russian GLONASS, sees decreased reliability and accuracy in the Arctic. The reasons for this are abundant, like the orbital inclination of the satellites themselves and ionospheric interference. With increased incidents of Russian GNSS jamming in Europe, it’s conceivable that Russia may employ similar tactics in the Arctic, including spoofing, for the purpose of disruption or causing navigational errors to trigger an exploitable international incident. Military or civilian vessels straying into Russian territory could be captured, their cargoes seized, or crews held hostage for the purpose of conducting hostage diplomacy. Resolving such a confrontation military could quickly spiral out of control.

Yet considering these combined factors, the Arctic does not exist in a vacuum, and there are other regions in which nuclear tensions are rising.

The threat of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan is the most likely scenario for a direct confrontation between the United States and another nuclear power. Though he has not signaled any specific intent to attack, President Xi aims for the Chinese military to be capable of invading Taiwan by 2027. While President Biden indicated his intention to directly aid Taiwan if this occurred, President Trump appears to defer to the traditional American position of strategic ambiguity over the island. Should China decide to invade, and the U.S. responds to defend Taiwan, it is difficult to see Washington opting to detonate a nuclear weapon over an issue that does not directly threaten the U.S. mainland or a NATO ally. On the other hand, a subsequent attack on Chinese mainland military sites in order to disable an attacking Chinese invasion force could plausibly incite a nuclear response.

What is most concerning is that provocative military behavior anywhere could lead to an unintentional cycle of escalation that ultimately results in a nuclear exchange. As the Arctic opens to more military and commercial activity, the frequency of encounters between military forces is likely to increase. As those encounters increase, so too does the probability that an accident or unintended attack may occur. As Russia routinely flies patrols into the Alaska Air Defense Identification Zone, an area of international air space in which the U.S. identifies all aircraft, aggressive behavior by Russian pilots raises the risk of a routine encounter evolving into an international incident. But these aggressive incidents are much more frequent elsewhere, like the Baltic and North Seas. For example, in 2022, a Russian SU-27 fighter jet fired two missiles against a British RC-135 surveillance jet over the Black Sea, but fortunately neither missile hit their target. Similarly, China is known for conducting frequent unsafe intercepts of foreign aircraft in the East and South China Seas.

### 1AC—Competition Advantage

#### Advantage 2 is Competition

#### Melting ice is changing the power balance in the Arctic—access to new shipping routes and mineral deposits is causing a great power competition between the US and the Russia-China axis

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As the Arctic’s melting ice opens new shipping routes, thaws previously ice-protected shores, and unlocks access to untapped resources, the far north takes on new strategic importance. Indeed, the Bering Strait—expected to become the Arctic’s Gibraltar—is already a chokepoint for global shipping and military operations. Furthermore, Russia’s militarization of Arctic territories and China’s growing Arctic ambitions demand our urgent attention. In order to safeguard our national interests and promote global stability, the United States must ignore the red herring of climate debates and instead accept the reality of ice melt by honing a comprehensive and aggressive Arctic strategy. We have not a moment to waste: already lagging years behind our competitors in this arena, such a combined effort among US military, federal, and private entities will require decades of planning.

#### Increased domain awareness is key to US-Canada-Japan-Korea cooperation over shipping routes in the Arctic which cements Western leadership over norms

Odgaard 25, nonresident senior fellow at Hudson Institute, PhD in political science from Aarhus University. (Liselotte, 4-22-2025, “A Response to China-Russia Arctic Dominance Could Bolster US-Canada Ties” https://www.hudson.org/national-security-defense/response-china-russia-arctic-dominance-could-bolster-us-canada-ties-liselotte-odgaard) wtk

Russian state-owned nuclear energy corporation Rosatom and Chinese shipping company Hainan Yangpu NewNew Shipping announced in 2024 that they would cooperate on operating an all-year-round container shipping route through the Arctic. Since then, shipping interruptions at flashpoints from the Panama Canal to the Red Sea have thrown the global economy into turmoil. Worse, increasing military and technological collaboration between Beijing and Moscow has escalated the security threats facing the United States and its allies.

To counter this cooperation, the United States should consider working with its Canadian allies to open and maintain an equivalent shipping route — an “Ice Canal” across the Northwest Passage — to bolster their commercial and strategic presence in the region.

All-year-round shipping through the Arctic would require significant infrastructure and promises high costs for fuel, equipment, and manpower. But these investments would generate considerable economic returns. The Northwest Passage can reduce shipping distance between London and Tokyo by about 3,780 nautical miles, or approximately 7,000 kilometers. And the priceless strategic benefits of bolstering U.S. and allied nuclear security should incentivize public cooperation with the private sector, defraying costs further.

Moscow and Beijing recognize the region’s significance. Their agreement involves building five ice-class container ships and investing in infrastructure such as deep-water ports and refueling and repair facilities along the Northern Sea Route along Russia’s Arctic coastline. These container ships are dual-use, meaning they can be used for commercial purposes and military sealift operations such as weapons systems and troop transport. The initiative signals that Russia and China prioritize regional mobility, allowing them to cooperate on increasing the profitability of Russia’s Arctic coastline and on strategic interoperability across the region.

A competing dual-use project, led by the U.S. and Canada, would help engage Japan, South Korea, and other Arctic NATO allies in strategic and economic cooperation across the region.

The first step to opening this route is to find out what we do not know. Because very few people have been to the Northwest Passage in winter, assessments are largely based on theoretical models and historical and satellite data. These means of data collection are insufficient to create a reliable and detailed map of the geographical and seasonal shipping challenges. Shipping along the Northwest Passage will require initial efforts to map sea ice movements and wind patterns throughout the year.

Canada has 20 vessels in its icebreaker fleet, two of which are heavy icebreakers. These are expected to be replaced with two new polar vessels capable of operating in moderate multiyear ice conditions in 2030. To complement research, approximately five years of all-year-round icebreaker presence is needed to map the geographical locations and timing of choke points created by multiyear ice and wind patterns.

The data collected by the icebreaker presence will be used to identify locations for deploying unmanned aerial vehicles or helicopters supplying ice and weather data to vessels and aircraft transiting the Northwest Passage. Icebreakers will be on call all year round to assist vessels transiting ice choke points. This would allow for safe all-year-round passage of container ships and give U.S. and Canadian forces invaluable real-world experience operating jointly and across domains in Arctic conditions.

Additionally, a permanent Western presence along the Northwest Passage would give U.S. and allied militaries invaluable situational awareness and the ability to respond swiftly to the outbreak of conflict in critical strategic areas. This is particularly important because the shortest routes for Russian intercontinental ballistic missiles are through the poorly surveilled airspace north of the Arctic Circle.

In the Atlantic, the Greenland–Iceland–United Kingdom gap and the Barents Sea are the primary strategic locations for Russian nuclear-armed ballistic missile submarines. Insufficient underwater surveillance in these areas, as well as the Bear Gap between Norwegian Svalbard and Scandinavia and along Greenland’s east coast, allows Russian SSBNs more freedom to operate undetected, strengthening Russia’s second-strike capability toward North America and therefore weakening U.S. deterrence.

On the eastern end of the supercontinent, the Bering Strait — the entrance to the Pacific between Russia and Alaska — has become a critical chokepoint. Russia has fitted submarine bases near its eastern port city of Vladivostok with hardened shelter pens and additional repair and maintenance facilities to avoid dependency on Barents Sea facilities. Russian-Chinese base-sharing arrangements at the entrance to the North Pacific strengthen interoperability. And Beijing and Moscow have signaled their willingness to extend cooperation to their strategic nuclear forces with a joint air patrol with four nuclear-capable bombers in Alaska’s air defense identification zone.

CHINA ANGLING FOR ‘INCREASED ENGAGEMENT WITH GREENLAND,’ INTEL COMMUNITY SAYS

A container route along the Northwest Passage would do much to establish presence, connectivity, and interoperability between Canada, the U.S., and other allies with Arctic interests and represent an important countermove to Russia-China collaboration. Canadian leadership in establishing and operating the new container route is advisable to avoid ramping up international tensions, thanks to its rights and responsibilities as a coastal state.

As Moscow and Beijing prepare for dual-use operations from the Barents Sea to the Bering Strait, it is imperative for purposes of deterrence and situational awareness to establish an all-year-round North American strategic presence from the North Atlantic to the North Pacific. The Northwest Passage offers an opportunity to demonstrate North American leadership by collaborating with allies, commercial actors, and local communities to promote a prosperous and secure Arctic region.

#### Stronger cooperation from the “Arctic Quad” is key to preventing global authoritarianism

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The Arctic Quad’s Collective Strength

To counter these escalating dangers, the US and Canada should turn to Japan and South Korea — two pivotal treaty allies with strategic interests and unique capabilities that could bolster Arctic security.

First, the two countries’ engagement can significantly bolster the defense capabilities of the alliance. Tokyo has been playing a leadership role in promoting maritime security norms and environmental stewardship. By lending its world-class ocean radar and remote sensor technologies — refined over decades by heavy reliance on fishing and regular confrontations with natural disasters — Japan can significantly enhance Canada’s monitoring capability. The Canadians recently announced a plan to invest $1.4 billion over 20 years to improve Arctic maritime sensors.

South Korea, a shipbuilding titan that outcompetes China, may hold the key to accelerating the modernization of aging allied Arctic maritime fleets. Plus, as Canada has vowed to spend $18.4 billion over 20 years to acquire a more modernized tactical helicopter capability in the Arctic, South Korea with its advanced arms manufacturing can help there too.

Such deeper defense-industrial collaboration would fortify Arctic security architectures while deepening military interoperability. Moreover, pooling efforts within multilateral governance bodies would enable the US-led democratic coalition to collectively shape the north Pacific. Coordinating positions in forums like the Arctic Council and Trilateral Summit between Japan, South Korea and China would safeguard their converging interests as the Arctic’s future contours are determined.

What about the benefits to Tokyo and Seoul?

South Korea had been heavily reliant on Russia in implementing Arctic developmental projects before the Ukraine war, and now needs to find other options. The burgeoning military alliance between Russia and North Korea — including arms transfers and potential missile technology-sharing — poses unacceptable risks. Russia’s reliance on Pyongyang amid its international isolation renders continued cooperation with Moscow untenable for Seoul.

Concurrently, the deepening Sino-Russian axis fueled by Beijing’s tacit backing of the Ukraine invasion portends long-term dangers for Japan. From Tokyo’s perspective, Chinese economic encroachment into the Russian Arctic represents the leading edge of a broader expansionist agenda that could fatally undermine Japan’s regional security down the road.

Given these factors, all four countries should come to realize that formal and robust coordination between like-minded states is needed. Even when direct military provision may be unfeasible, Seoul and Tokyo can still contribute through defense cooperation focused on areas like maritime security and cold-weather operations — signaling a commitment to deter unilateral aggression without violating the Arctic’s fragile ecosystem.

With climate change rendering the Arctic’s resource wealth more accessible, the window to cement a rules-based regional order is narrowing rapidly. Left uncontested, the Sino-Russian blueprint to remold the High North as an authoritarian sphere of influence could become reality.

For nations upholding the liberal international order, forging a democratic Arctic alliance is an existential necessity. Its success or failure will reverberate globally as an example of whether revisionist autocracies can be held in check.

#### Global authoritarianism causes extinction—only strong influence by democratic states solve

Haydn Belfield, 2023 – Research Associate and Academic Project Manager at the University of Cambridge's Centre for the Study of Existential Risk “Collapse, Recovery, and Existential Risk,” in *How Worlds Collapse: What History, Systems, and Complexity Can Teach Us About Our Modern World and Fragile Future*, p. 74-76. Accessed online via University of Michigan //DH

A world dominated by totalitarian states would be more incompetent, more war-prone, less cooperative, and more inhibitive of progress than one dominated by democratic states. Our current world is not particularly competent, peaceful, cooperative, or progressive—a totalitarian-dominated world would be worse. It would increase the risk of another collapse and extinction and could shape the future toward less desirable trajectories (Beckstead, 2013).

Totalitarian states are incompetent. They are bad at forecasting and dealing with disasters (Caplan, 2008).16 This can be seen most clearly in the great famines of Communist China and the USSR, in which millions died (Applebaum, 2017; Becker, 1996; Dikötter, 2010; Snyder, 2010). In comparison, functioning multiparty democracies rarely, if ever, experience famines (Sen, 2010). “Established autocracies” (or “personal”/“sultanist”) are particularly bad, as there are few checks or restraints on arbitrary rule and the whims and ideology of the single individual, even from other elites (Svolik, 2012). From the inside, the “inner circle” around Mao, Stalin, and Hitler seems incredibly chaotic, with elites strongly incentivized to conceal information and encouraged by the autocrat to squabble and feud—so they are divided (Conquest, 1992; Kershaw, 2008; Zhang & Halliday, 2006). If totalitarian states are worse at addressing social, environmental, and technological problems, then a world dominated by them would likely be worse at responding to risks of collapse and extinction.

A world dominated by totalitarian states is more likely to have major wars. States with near-universal adult suffrage rarely (if ever) go to war with one another (Barnhart et al., 2020), so a world dominated by democracies has fewer wars. Miscalculation might be a particular problem for totalitarian states due to personalization and disincentives for accurate information, leading to well-known strategic disasters such as Hitler and Stalin’s blunders in World War II (Bialer, 1970; Noakes & Pridham, 2001), or at a smaller level, Saddam Hussein’s rejection of diplomacy (Atkinson, 1993). War makes collapse and extinction more likely, by raising the chance of weapons of mass destruction being used.

Linked to this, totalitarian states are less cooperative than democratic states. While cooperation is possible (Ginsburg, 2020), their internal norms are characterized by paranoia and treachery, and their lack of transparency limits their ability to credibly commit to agreements. This is bad for all risks that require cooperation such as pandemics or climate change (Tomasik, 2015).

Finally, continued social and scientific progress is likely to reduce risks of collapse and extinction. Social progress could reduce global inequality and other risk factors. Scientific progress could help address natural risks and climate change (Sandberg, 2018), differentially increase defensive rather than offensive power (Garfinkel & Dafoe, 2019), and solve safety challenges in AI or biotechnology (Russell, 2019). However, as we will now discuss totalitarian states would likely inhibit social progress.

A central question from a longtermist perspective is: Which values should shape the future? I would argue that we should prefer it to be shaped by liberal democratic values. This is not to say that the current democracy-dominated world is perfect—far from it. The fate of billions of factory-farmed animals or hundreds of millions of people in extreme poverty makes that abundantly clear. However, democracies have two advantages. First, democracies have space for cosmopolitan values such as human rights, plurality, freedom, and equality. These are better than those that characterize life under totalitarianism: Fear, terror, subjection, and secrecy. Second, they have within themselves the mechanism to allow progress. In the last 100 (or even 50) years, the lives of women, LGBT people, religious minorities, and non-white people have dramatically improved. Our “moral circle” has expanded, and could continue to expand (Singer, 1981). The arc of the moral universe is long, but given the right conditions, it might just bend toward justice (King, 1968). A global society dominated by these values, and with the possibility of improving more, has a better longterm potential. A totalitarian-dominated world, on the other hand, would reduce the space for resistance and progress—distorting the human trajectory.

We should be particularly concerned about “bottlenecks” at which values are particularly important—where there is a risk of “locking-in” some particular set of (possibly far from optimal) values. While they are currently faroff, future technologies such as artificial general intelligence, space settlement, life extension (of autocrats), or much better surveillance could enable lock-in (Caplan, 2008).17

Conditional on them avoiding new catastrophes, world orders dominated by totalitarians could be quite long-lasting (Caplan, 2008). Democracies can undermine authoritarian and totalitarian regimes through the following ways: Control, including conquest; contagion through proximity; and consent, promoting receptivity toward democratization (Whitehead, 2001). Democracies can actively undermine these regimes through war, sanctions, hosting rebellious exiles, or sponsoring internal movements. Passively, through contagion, they offer a demonstration that a better, more prosperous life is possible. For example, in the final years of the USSR, ordinary Soviet citizens were able to see that the West had a higher standard of living—more innovation, more choice, and more consumer goods. The elites were able to read books from the outside, and travel—Gorbachev’s contacts and friendships with European politicians may have made him more favorable to social democracy (Brown, 1996). Democracies can undermine the will and capacity of the coercive apparatus (Bellin, 2004). However, in a world not dominated by democracies, all these pressures would be far less.

A world in which, say, totalitarian regimes emerged as dominant after World War II (for example if the USA was defeated) could be self-reinforcing and long-lasting, like the self-reinforcing relationship of Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia (Orwell, 1949). Orwell’s fictional world is characterized by constant low-grade warfare to justify emergency powers and secure elites, and with shifting alliances of convenience as states bandwagon and balance, thereby preventing any resolution. A totalitarian-dominated world order could be rather robust, perhaps for decades or even centuries.

A long-lasting totalitarian-dominated world would extend the period of time humanity would spend with a heightened risk of collapse or extinction, as well as increased potential for distortion of the human trajectory and the possibility that a “lock-in” event may occur. This example illustrates the possibility of a “negative recovery,” resulting in a trajectory with less or no scientific and social progress and a less favorable geopolitical situation, which would threaten the destruction of humanity’s longterm potential.

## Miscalculation Advantage

### They Say: “Domain Awareness Fails”

#### Domain awareness technology is advancing dramatically

Trachtenberg 25, Vice President of the National Institute for Public Policy. (David J. Trachtenberg, 3-17-2025, “Defending America: The Next Steps in Homeland Missile Defense” https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2025/03/18/defending\_america\_the\_next\_steps\_in\_homeland\_missile\_defense\_1098187.html) wtk

In addition to the development of space-based kinetic and non-kinetic intercept capabilities, the United States should move forward expeditiously with improvements to both terrestrial and space-based sensors that can provide early warning and detection of offensive missile launches—whether ballistic, cruise, or hypersonic—as well as improved tracking and discrimination capabilities. The technology has advanced dramatically and a “layered sensor architecture” can enhance the effectiveness of all intercept systems.[19]

#### The plan’s specific technologies are sufficient to solve domain awareness

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, 10-5-2023, “Deterring Arctic Threats” https://www.airandspaceforces.com/article/deterring-arctic-threats/) wtk

Analyzing the risks and opportunities in the Arctic, the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies has developed a framework for a layered missile defeat approach in the Arctic, with particular emphasis on left-of-launch detection and tracking.

The first layer is regional threat awareness, consisting of networked sensors operating in multiple domains to provide early indications and warning of potential threats. Adversaries may show signs of intent by making force posture changes and logistical preparations in the days, weeks, and even months prior to an attack. Today for instance, Russia is building up its military bases in range of Alaska. By tracking activities that could be a prelude to hostilities, U.S. leaders could be better equipped to manage the threat, providing more time and options for the United States to deter or prevent an attack.

ISR satellite assets that can be used to map out activity and detect changes in adversary behavior are one obvious and attractive solution to improve indications and warning in the Arctic. Already, commercial companies and U.S. partners and allies operating satellites with Arctic coverage could help fill current DOD satellite gaps.

DOD and Congress: Next Steps

To create the capabilities needed for this multi-layered defense, Congress and DOD must work together to:

Establish a Joint Capability Technology Demonstration Focused on Cruise Missile Defense of the Homeland. DOD and Congress should launch a joint capability technology demonstration (JCTD). After acquisition responsibility for cruise missile defense of the homeland moved from the Missile Defense Agency to the U.S. Air Force, a previous JCTD to examine a layered approach to cruise missile defense was scaled down to focus on the National Capital Region. Congress and DOD should fund a broader JCTD to experiment with air, space, surface, and subsurface capabilities that could provide an overlapping, layered cruise missile defense for the Arctic.

Create a Dedicated Fund to Bolster Deterrence in the Arctic. A new North American Deterrence Initiative focused on increasing investments for cruise missile defeat and bolstering physical military presence in the Arctic would shift awareness left-of-launch and help to reduce overall costs of missile defeat. The Congressional Budget Office assessed that a comprehensive missile defense strategy for the contiguous United States would cost from $75 billion to $465 billion for an architecture with relatively robust funding for right-of-launch defense. Emphasizing left-of-launch capabilities in the Arctic might better bolster deterrence and reduce costs. A second focus of the new fund would be physical infrastructure improvements, including pre-positioned, hardened shelters to store aircraft equipment, spares, and other logistics needs, and modernizing Pituffik Space Base, DOD’s northernmost installation (formerly known as Thule Air Base, in Greenland). Expanding the U.S. military’s physical presence in the Arctic is another key to bolstering deterrence in the region.

Deepen Ally and Partner Ties to Support Arctic Missile Defeat. The U.S. Government should strengthen and deepen bilateral and multilateral relationships with Arctic nations to bolster deterrence against air and cruise missile threats in the region. Allies have their own incentives to pursue increased capabilities in the Arctic. Denmark, for example, has already allocated $245 million to improve drone surveillance in the Arctic and is modernizing air surveillance in the Faroe Islands, while Canada is acquiring new drones for Arctic domain awareness. Norway is already working with the United States to launch communications satellite payloads.

In addition, uncrewed aircraft that are operational today—such as the MQ-9 Reaper and RQ-4 Global Hawk—can also contribute to regional threat awareness. The MQ-9 can carry a variety of sensors, including maritime surveillance radar and a signals intelligence payload. The high-altitude, long-duration RQ-4 carries a synthetic aperture radar that can persistently map an adversary’s Arctic infrastructure and activities on a persistent basis. They can also be equipped with defensive payloads, such as electronic countermeasures, to help dissuade or prevent adversaries from targeting these assets.

If indications and warnings suggest an adversary is posturing for missile strikes, NORAD/NORTHCOM needs the means to track suspected strike platforms in the threat detection and attribution phase of the framework. Examples might include a Russian bomber taking off from an Arctic base where a ship full of cruise missiles unloaded the week before, or a submarine is thought to be headed toward Canadian waters.

Routine patrols of MQ-9s equipped with maritime surveillance, signals intelligence, and electro-optical/infrared sensors could be valuable in helping to identify the number and type of potential threats. Likewise, crewed P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft could augment MQ-9 tracking operations.

Once a specific threat is detected, defenses must maintain tracking custody; at this threat tracking point, strikes are expected, and the goal is to provide target-quality data to kinetic and non-kinetic effectors, which could take action to deter, prevent, or respond to a missile launch.

Initial air, surface, and subsurface threat detection and attribution information could be passed to an over- the-horizon radar (OTHR), which bounces radar energy off the ionosphere to track targets over very long ranges—up to 4,000 nm. An OTHR could pass target location information on to other inhabited and uninhabited aircraft and land-based radars in the North Warning System that can reconfirm the type and number of threats.

If available, airborne early warning and control aircraft could be cued by other sensors to establish a track on airborne threat aircraft and direct fighters or other effectors to the right place at the right time to counter those threats if necessary. If available, fighter aircraft such as F-35A Lightning II jets, with their integrated sensor suites, could help track and intercept missile launch platforms before they could launch their missiles.

In the absence of available inhabited aircraft, however, it is possible that an augmented OTHR and the North Warning System could help maintain custody. Current generation UAVs possess neither the radar capabilities nor the high speeds needed to keep pace with enemy strike aircraft. But UAVs could be deployed to provide overwatch of likely launch vectors, accepting cueing data for threats from OTHR and then using on-board electro-optical and infrared sensors to verify and characterize threat aircraft. Long-duration UAVs could employ their maritime surveillance radar to locate and track potentially hostile ships and could be equipped with sonobuoys to help monitor submarine threats.

### They Say: “Plan doesn’t solve crisis decision-making”

#### Accurate domain awareness infrastructure allows the military to be competitive in the Arctic

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In order to compete in the polar region, it would be premature to flood the area with warships or icebreakers without a robust supporting infrastructure. Domain awareness and communications capabilities are at the forefront of requirements. Frankly, we have ignored the development of networks over the poles due to competing priorities.

There is currently limited capacity for Western geosynchronous orbiting satellites over the poles as well as limited land based supporting infrastructure. SpaceX has launched more than 5,000 Starlink satellites in the last few years. Intended for commercial use, Starlink has quickly adapted to military requirements, particularly during the war in Ukraine. The network currently has 200 dedicated satellites over in the polar region, but it is insufficient to rely on a sole source commercial solution to solve the current gap in bandwidth and military requirements.

Essential next steps

Clearly, more must be done.

U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) has identified the critical need and is programming resources to fill the void. Meanwhile, we should take advantage of commercial solutions and provide incentives for others to follow suit.

The Saint Lawrence Island, which is part of Alaska, presents both a strategic foothold in the Bering Sea and opportunities for infrastructure investment. Since the Saint Lawrence Island is sovereign U.S. territory, it would be prudent to base the first tranche of land-based infrastructure in support of space operations there with deference to environmental concerns.

The need for infrastructure in the Arctic is not just pertinent to the ability of the U.S. to maintain a presence in the region and ensure freedom of passage through the global commons. The tangible threat to the homeland represented by Russia, and increasingly China, necessitates a close look at this issue in the context of our ability to effectively defend the homeland.

Specifically, substantial gaps exist in Arctic domain awareness and in the ability to command and control homeland defense forces in the far reaches of the region. A robust ability to communicate and to move data across the broad expanse of the Arctic is essential to both. The existing communications backbone organic to the Department of Defense (DOD) is wholly inadequate to the task, but there is strong potential to leverage commercial assets currently in place and planned for the future. DoD must redouble its efforts to engage with commercial partners if they are to invest commensurately in the capabilities required to meet defense needs.

### They Say: “Missile Defense Fails”

#### Missile defense fails because it isn’t holistic—missile defeat solves

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

Missile Defeat vs. Missile Defense

Comprehensive missile defeat, as defined by Assistant Secretary of Defense for Space and Missile Defense Policy John Plumb, encompasses the “full spectrum—how do you prevent and defeat adversary missiles in all domains along all timelines with both kinetic and non-kinetic capabilities.”

Missile defense is an important component of missile defeat. It encompasses the mechanical process of finding, fixing, tracking, targeting, and, if required, destroying a hostile missile after it has launched. Missile defense capabilities thus include everything from missile warning and tracking satellites and ground-based sensors to electronic warfare, cyber capabilities, and kinetic interceptors. They do not, however, encompass the tracking of enemy ground, ship, subsurface, or air launchers.

#### The plan solves by increasing pre- and post-launch responses

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

Domain awareness and information dominance are the keys to this missile defeat framework. The United States can improve both capabilities in the Arctic, which will help create more options for responding to cruise missile threats left of launch and right of launch. As the blue triangle at the bottom of Figure 9 depicts, being able to identify threats early opens up new options to counter them, which in turn bolsters deterrence.

### They Say: “No Arctic War”

#### Deterrence won’t prevent conflict in the Arctic – multipolarity and declining cooperation break the assumptions of classical deterrence theory

Rebecca Rempe, 5/9/23, Security Distillery, “The Meltdown: Nuclear Relations in the Arctic,” https://thesecuritydistillery.org/all-articles/the-meltdown-nuclear-relations-in-the-arctic, mm

Arctic security can be characterised as a nexus between multipolar nuclear conflict and climate change. Multipolarity is defined as a global balance of power between multiple actors [3]. Climate Change is making seaways and resources more accessible, which is leading to a thawing of territorial conflicts which were formerly frozen [4]. China’s increasing economic interests in the Arctic means it must be considered as a regional actor despite its near-regional status [5]. Russia has recently threatened to use nuclear weapons against the United States (U.S.) due to its objections to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine; this sets a precedent for heightened nuclear tension in the Arctic, which is the most nuclearized area in the world and has seen a steady buildup of nuclear and conventional forces by regional actors [6]. These factors have led to direct tensions between three major nuclear actors (namely, NATO, China, and Russia) in a region that is becoming increasingly competitive [7]. These tensions cannot be adequately explained by existing deterrence models, which rely on Cold War-era bipolar game theory [8]. Due to climate change, geopolitical tension, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, nuclear relations in the Arctic are unstable and present serious security risks that cannot be contended with through the use of classic deterrence theory [9]. The Arctic region is 66.5° north of the equator and encompasses the United States, Canada, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Russia, and Iceland, all of whom are members of the region’s governing body, the Arctic Council [10]. The region’s international legal status currently lies under the United Nations Convention for the Law of the Sea, however, due to climate change, polar ice is melting, making the region more accessible by sea and opening up its vast oil and gas deposits for extraction by regional actors [11]. Sino-Russian cooperation along sea routes has given China significant influence in the region, which it wants to develop into a “Polar Silk Road” as outlined in its 2018 Arctic White Paper [12]. Chinese development interests do not align with Russia’s geopolitical goals in the Arctic, and China’s ownership over Arctic infrastructure represents an economic threat to Russian interests [13]. There is growing competition between these regional actors which is exacerbated by overlapping territorial boundary claims by Denmark, Canada, and Russia. In addition, the Arctic Council has suspended cooperation due to its chairmanship by Russia until the end of 2023 [14]. Classic nuclear deterrence is steeped in Cold War bipolarity and relies on two rational actors basing their decisions on what they believe their opponents' actions will be [15]. Classic deterrence is expressed through the Chicken Game [16]. As seen in the figure below, a player’s options are to defect and pursue a foreign policy objective or to cooperate and maintain the status quo [17]. The best outcome for an actor is to defect against a cooperating partner; however, this runs the risk of both players defecting, leading to nuclear annihilation [18]. This classic deterrence game does not contend with the possibility of conflict between multiple nuclear actors, which is a key feature of Arctic security [19]. Though a three-player chicken game has been applied to theoretical problems, such as two out of three players needing to complete a task that all would rather not complete, this model has yet to be applied to nuclear relations [20]. China, NATO, the U.S., and Russia’s nuclear doctrines are informed by deterrence theory, which is problematic due to the theory’s assumption of a bipolar world order [21]. Nuclear multipolarity in the Arctic is unstable because it no longer falls within the traditional game theory matrix, and there is an increased risk of nuclear action due to a larger number of nuclear actors and significant regional tension [22]. Preemptive nuclear strikes are more prevalent in multipolar nuclear politics due to a greater perception of threat from other actors [23]. Though China promotes itself as a No First Use (NFU) state, meaning that it will not strike unless struck upon in a nuclear capacity, Russia has threatened to strike first, and America’s position on NFU is vague [24]. NATO is a nuclear deterrent organisation in the Arctic region, only Sweden is not yet a full NATO member and Finland has just recently gained NATO membership [25]. In multipolar deterrence, regional conflicts are more likely to escalate into total nuclear warfare, and de-escalation relies on political bargaining as opposed to rationality modelling. Thus, it is unclear how political bargaining will take place in an increasingly polarised Arctic [26]. Though the U.S., China, and Russia have all acceded to or ratified the Treaty of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NNPT), both Russia and the U.S. have backed out of data-sharing obligations under the New START treaty [27]. This breakdown in communication between Arctic actors due to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and Russia’s recent threat to use nuclear weapons against the U.S. indicates that future regional disputes over Arctic resources, navigation, and territory may give rise to nuclear crises [28]. Climate change in the Arctic has rendered the region more accessible to its actors; this has inflamed tensions between the NATO bloc and Russia over territorial disputes and Russia’s war in Ukraine and between China and Russia due to diverging economic development goals [29]. As temperatures warm, the region may become a nuclear flashpoint that cannot be analysed using classic deterrent models [30].

#### We’re barrelling toward war now

Werfelli 24, Researcher and lecturer specializing in International Relations (Wissal, 10-14-2024, “The Arctic: A Risk of Escalating Conflicts” *Trends* https://trendsresearch.org/insight/the-arctic-a-risk-of-escalating-conflicts/) wtk

The Arctic is rapidly emerging as one of the most geopolitically significant regions in the 21st century. Climate Change and the melting of the ice floes in the Arctic Ocean have presented new opportunities, which has generated the issue of managing the polar region among the major international powers. The Arctic is once again becoming a major strategic problem due to two factors. The first is global warming which accelerates the prospects for exploitation of natural resources and of transit through sea lanes that shorten distances and push the riparian states to assert their interests and sovereignty over these spaces. The second is the global strategic competition between the United States (U.S.) and its allies, Russia and China: it antagonizes relationships and exacerbates disputes hitherto managed through cooperation. The Arctic has been barreling toward conflict for a long time. As one of the only physical meeting points between three great powers (the U.S., Russia, and China) it could be argued that it was inevitable to become a geopolitical conflict zone, especially considering the long-standing conflicts between these three countries.

### They Say: “No Escalation or Miscalc”

#### Accidental and miscalculated conflict escalates quickly

Tingstad and Savitz 23, \*adjunct senior researcher at RAND. \*\*senior engineer at the nonprofit, nonpartisan RAND Corporation (\*Abbie, \*\*Scott, 12-20-2023, “The U.S. Military May Not Be Ready for Arctic Competition” https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/us-military-may-not-be-ready-arctic-competition-208075) wtk

The U.S. needs to better secure its Arctic territories and waters, while working more with its allies to better secure theirs. Although the Arctic has been relatively peaceful since the end of the Cold War—a recurring mantra has been “high latitude, low tensions”—U.S. military forces need to be prepared for unexpected conflicts that can erupt quickly, like Putin’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine and Hamas’ devastating attack on Israel.

The U.S. military’s ability to operate effectively in the Arctic is impeded by various factors. As we described in a recent report, chief among these are the fact that it has so few assets that can operate in the region and so little infrastructure there, particularly in comparison with Russia. Increased investments in platforms, infrastructure, equipment, communications, multidomain awareness, and enhanced tactics and training would enable the U.S. to better secure its critical interests in the Arctic.

These interests span the vast Arctic region: the U.S. needs to work alongside NATO allies to secure North America’s Arctic approaches and its European allies’ long, vulnerable Arctic coastlines and borders with Russia. It also has a key interest in countering Russian submarines at the Arctic’s edge, where the gaps between Greenland, Iceland, and Britain are gateways for Russian submarines to enter the Atlantic. The U.S. also has homeland security responsibilities within its own Arctic territory and waters, where thousands of Americans live. This area also harvests roughly half of the nation’s seafood, plus substantial amounts of oil, zinc, and other resources. As sea ice abates during parts of the year, the Arctic’s maritime routes are becoming increasingly important shortcuts between oceans.

The importance of the region to overall U.S. interests is highlighted in the Implementation Plan for the National Strategy for the Arctic Region, released in October 2023, and in the 2022 National Security Strategy. It was also underscored by the U.S. Coast Guard’s publication of its Arctic Strategic Outlook Implementation Plan just a week ago. Although Coast Guard operations in the Arctic are particularly visible to civilians, the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and Space Force also conduct training, exercises, and operations there.

Challenges from both Russia and China underscore the urgency of improving Arctic military capabilities. Russia was building up its Arctic military and civilian capabilities in the years before its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This included re-opening Arctic bases that had closed after the Cold War, conducting more extensive training and exercises, stationing more forces in the Arctic, and operating more throughout the region. It also has over 50 polar icebreakers, far more than any other country. The U.S., by comparison, currently has two, though more are being acquired.

China has also become increasingly involved in the region. Both of its polar icebreakers have been extensively collecting information on the Arctic’s physical environment. It has invested, or tried to invest, in Arctic properties from Greenland and Europe to Siberia, and has secured the diplomatic status of an observer at the Arctic Council. In an effort to achieve a greater role in the Arctic, China has alternately referred to itself as a “near-Arctic state” and to the Arctic as a shared environment belonging to all nations, neither of which is accurate. Beijing’s increasing collaboration with Moscow across all areas has also been deepening in the Arctic. The two countries have operated naval vessels together in the approaches to Alaska during the last few summers, and also recently signed a maritime law enforcement agreement that facilitates further Arctic collaboration.

For the U.S., Arctic-specific capabilities are needed because of the effect of the region’s unique environment on operations. Any system that was not specifically designed for that environment is likely to fail: fuels gel, materials shatter, lubricants freeze, and batteries do not work. The environment is even harder on people, who struggle to just to survive in extreme temperatures. Arctic operations are further impeded by the region’s tremendous internal distances and its remoteness from the rest of the world. Sparse infrastructure that is relentlessly battered by the elements, limited satellite coverage, and unique electromagnetic effects that degrade communications also contribute to challenges. Climate change is also degrading coastal infrastructure and contributing to less predictable conditions.

U.S. military services can also make themselves more effective by more extensively emulating the tactics, training, and equipment choices of allies that specialize more in Arctic operations than the U.S. does. These include Canada, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and even non-Arctic Britain and the Netherlands. Expanding already substantial training, exercises, and operations alongside these nations can improve both U.S. capabilities and interoperability.

Our report on the U.S. military’s ability to protect U.S. national interests and people in the Arctic primarily focused on the Coast Guard’s operations there, but also considered those of other services. It recommends investing in additional Arctic-capable platforms and infrastructure. Beyond vitally needed icebreakers, other investments include a deepwater port in Nome, more ground transportation infrastructure, more communications infrastructure, and systems that contribute to multidomain awareness. Given the destructive power of the Arctic environment, these investments will require more intensive and frequent maintenance than is required for comparable systems at lower latitudes.

## Competition Advantage

### They Say: “No Russia-China Axis”

#### Russia and China are working together to militarize the Arctic against US security interests

Odgaard 24, nonresident senior fellow at Hudson Institute, PhD in political science from Aarhus University. (Liselotte, 10-3-2024, “Russia and China’s cooperation in the Arctic is a rising nuclear threat” https://www.politico.eu/article/russia-china-arctic-cooperation-military-nuclear-threat-defense-nato-us-missiles/) wtk

As the Russia-China axis further aligns itself against the U.S. and its NATO allies, the power struggle has expanded to a new, previously ice-locked frontier: the Arctic.

When American fighters intercepted two Russian and two Chinese bombers in the U.S. Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over Alaska in July, the unprecedented move underscored this increasingly assertive and expansive partnership. And while Beijing and Moscow have been working to establish a strategic foothold in the region for more than a decade, Washington and Brussels are just now waking up to the threat.

The clock is ticking, and the West is on thin ice.

Just how important the Arctic is to Russia in terms of maintaining its threatening nuclear posture toward the U.S. cannot be overstated. In a nuclear exchange, Moscow would likely fire long-range ballistic missiles — from ballistic missile submarine bases near the Kola Peninsula — through the poorly surveyed airspace over Greenland. And hindered by low visibility in the Arctic, U.S. forces would be ill-prepared to detect and counter the strike.

Russia has been building up this Arctic force since its 2014 invasion of Crimea. In its efforts, melting sea ice has presented both opportunities and challenges for the country. On the one hand, the economic importance of Russia’s Arctic coastline is growing because of its commercialization as a feasible shipping route, allowing Moscow to profit from providing short shipping routes for commercial vessels carrying cargo between Asia and Europe. However, more traffic also means Russia’s control of its vast Arctic coastline — stretching from the Barents Sea in the west to the Bering Strait in the east — is now threatened.

So, using a dense network of air defense, aviation and ground forces at its Northern Fleet bases, Russia has been focusing on closing off access to the Kola Peninsula at the Barents Sea to protect its strategic submarine force and preserve the fleet’s year-round access to the Atlantic. It has also invested heavily in precision-guided missile technology to threaten distant targets and achieve sea denial without having to deploy traditional naval or air forces.

Additionally, in order to maintain and operate a strategic submarine force near Alaska without relying on Northern Fleet repair facilities at the other end of Eurasia, Russia has constructed new hardened submarine shelter pens and repair and maintenance facilities south of the Bering Strait near Vladivostok.

Amid all this, as further evidence of its “no-limits” partnership with Russia, China has been developing its dual-use Arctic capabilities too, bolstering Russia’s ability to threaten the U.S. and its NATO allies while diverting attention from the Indo-Pacific. It has also increased its regional civilian and military cooperation with Moscow, linking its polar Silk Road to the Russian Arctic by investing in infrastructure.

As it stands, China’s polar satellites, unmanned underwater vehicles and research vessels — three of which are icebreakers — give Beijing an edged in terms of tracking shipping routes, mapping the Arctic seabed and monitoring sea-ice and aerial movements. And with the joint venture between Russia’s state-owned nuclear energy firm Rosatom and China’s Hainan Yangpu NewNew Shipping company, the two countries will now cooperate on building infrastructure and ice-class container vessels to operate a year-round Arctic route. The collaboration empowers Moscow to monitor and control activities along its Arctic coastline, and to better protect Russian ballistic missile submarines as well.

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

#### Trump can strengthen relations with Japan and South Korea

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

Trump and US-Korea-Japan Trilateralism

Despite running a campaign that questioned the value of US alliances, the first Trump administration began working toward strengthening US relations with South Korea and Japan as early as 2017. During a trip to the region, which included stops in Seoul and Tokyo, President Trump said he “had the honor of sharing our vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific — a place where sovereign and independent nations…can all prosper side-by-side, and thrive in freedom and in peace.” His 2017 National Security Strategy emphasized the Indo-Pacific region, committing to “encourage the development of a strong defense network with our allies and partners” such as South Korea and Japan. In 2019, the Trump administration released its Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy, adopting and advancing a regional concept that had been promoted by Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo for much of the 2010s. Other states, including Korea and Japan, have released their own versions of an Indo-Pacific strategy. While President-elect Trump is known to quickly change his mind, these developments suggest it is unlikely he will reverse course on the Indo-Pacific, where South Korea and Japan are critical partners.

Although Trump has not yet been sworn into office, the contours of his national security and foreign policy team suggest his administration will support trilateralism. Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) is expected to serve as the secretary of state and has strongly supported trilateral relations. When President Yoon and then Prime Minister Kishida Fumio visited Camp David in August 2023, the senator wrote on social media that a “trilateral alliance between the US, Japan, and Korea would be a crucial foundation that furthers our joint efforts in the Indo-Pacific.” Representative Mike Waltz (R-FL), who has been tapped as national security advisor, also seems to view the Indo-Pacific in a manner that supports trilateralism. Waltz, like Rubio, is one of the co-authors of an April 2024 congressional report on the need for a national maritime strategy. The document identifies China as a significant threat in this domain and calls for “mutually beneficial relationships with treaty allies, exploring comparative advantages to lower cost, time, and the complexity of rebuilding America’s domestic shipping and shipbuilding industry.”

Elbridge Colby, a member of the first Trump administration who has been tapped to be undersecretary of defense for policy, shares such concerns about China. Colby has been outspoken in identifying the Taiwan Strait and Korean Peninsula as potential conflict areas. He has stressed the need for South Korea to take on the overwhelming responsibility for its own defense (potentially including its own nuclear deterrent) and the interconnectivity between South Korean and Japanese security and promoted a rethinking of the US force posture on the Korean Peninsula and the broader Indo-Pacific region to more flexibly address simultaneous conflicts and threats from China. For his part, Pete Hegseth, former Fox and Friends Weekend host and Trump’s nominee for secretary of defense, has said little about the Indo-Pacific. However, his past news commentary on Fox News suggests he would be a vociferous supporter of Trump’s national security decisions, whatever they might be. Taken together, these prospective Trump administration officials suggest there will be voices supporting trilateral cooperation in dealing with security challenges in the Indo-Pacific.

### They Say: “Can’t Solve Democracy”

#### Trump is not the death knell for democracy—checks and balances solve

Nye 25, dean of the Harvard Kennedy School and a U.S. assistant secretary of Defense. (Joseph S. Nye Jr., 5-21-2025, “Does American soft power have a future?” *LA Times* https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2025-05-21/donald-trump-china-soft-power-foreign-policy) wtk

American democracy is likely to survive the next four years of Trump. The country has a resilient political culture and the Constitution encourages checks and balances, whatever their weaknesses. In 2026, there is a reasonable chance that Democrats will regain control of the House of Representatives. Moreover, American civil society remains strong, and the courts independent. Many organizations have launched lawsuits to challenge Trump’s actions, and markets have signaled dissatisfaction with his economic policies.

### They Say: “Authoritarianism Isn’t Existential”

#### Democracies are significantly more peaceful than autocracies

Michael Doyle, 6/18/24, [Professor of International Affairs, Law, and Political Science at Columbia University and the author of Cold Peace: Avoiding the New Cold War], Foreign Affairs, “Why They Don’t Fight,” https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/why-they-dont-fight-doyle, mm

Few hypotheses in international relations are more influential than democratic peace theory—the idea that democracies do not go to war with one another. The idea, the political scientist Jack Levy wrote, “comes as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations.” It has motivated U.S. foreign policy for nearly a century. In the early 1900s, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson embraced democracy promotion as a means to peace. During the Cold War, successive administrations spoke of the standoff with the Soviet bloc using grand ideological terminology. No distillation was grander than President Ronald Reagan’s address before the British Parliament in 1982, in which he claimed that the West exercised “consistent restraint and peaceful intentions” and then proceeded (seemingly without irony) to call for a “campaign for democracy” and a “crusade for freedom” around the world. Democratic peace theory became especially influential once the Cold War ended, leaving the United States truly ascendant. In his 1994 State of the Union address, President Bill Clinton claimed that “the best strategy to ensure our security and to build a durable peace is to support the advance of democracy elsewhere.” His administration then surged aid to nascent post-Soviet democracies. Clinton’s successor, George W. Bush, was equally vocal about the need to advance liberalism in order to promote peace, telling the 2004 Republican National Convention, “As freedom advances, heart by heart, and nation by nation, America will be more secure and the world more peaceful.” As president, Bush even used democratic peace theory as one of the justifications for invading Iraq. In a speech on the war in November 2003, he declared, “The advance of freedom leads to peace.” The idea that democracy breeds peace, however, is at best half true. The United States has repeatedly attacked other countries. Europe’s major democracies also have a long history of intervening in other regions, such as the Sahel. And rather than marking the permanent triumph of liberal democracy, the post–Cold War period is now defined by growing divisions and conflict. As is now plain, the spread of liberalism does not by itself curtail fighting. Yet the proliferation of wars carried out by democracies does not disprove democratic peace theory wholesale. Liberal states may not act peaceably toward everyone, but they act peaceably toward one another. There are no clear-cut cases of one democracy going to war against another, nor do any seem forthcoming. In fact, the global divisions emerging today confirm democratic peace theory: once again, the line runs between liberal states and authoritarian ones, with the United States and its mostly democratic allies on one side and autocracies, most notably China and Russia, on the other. The world, then, could be peaceful if all states became liberal democracies. But until that happens, the world will likely remain mired in a dangerous ideological standoff. Democratic peace theory has a long history. In 1776, the American revolutionary Thomas Paine argued that liberal states do not fight one another, writing that “the Republics of Europe are all (and we may say always) in peace.” When Paine’s country gained independence and then drafted its constitution, the document implicitly referred to the idea that democracies should be conflict-averse. It placed the authority to declare war in the legislature—the branch with members directly elected by the public—in part to prevent the country from entering unpopular conflicts. Democratic peace theory had early proponents across the Atlantic, as well. Its most influential initial champion was the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. In 1795, Kant published Perpetual Peace, an essay that took the form of a hypothetical peace treaty and that established the concept’s theoretical foundations. Representative republics, Kant explained, did not fight one another for a mix of institutional, ideological, and economic reasons. Kant’s writings called for states to adopt a representative republican form of government with an elected legislative body and a separation of powers among the executive, judiciary, and legislative branches—all guaranteed by constitutional law. Kant’s republic was far from a modern democracy; only male property holders could vote and become what he called “active citizens.” Nonetheless, he argued that elected representation would inspire caution and that the separation of powers would produce careful deliberation. Although these forces would not guarantee peace, he admitted, they would select for rational and popular conflicts. If “the consent of the citizens is required to decide whether or not war is to be declared,” Kant wrote, “it is very natural that they will have great hesitation in embarking on so dangerous an enterprise.” For doing so, he continued, would mean calling down on themselves all the miseries of war, such as doing the fighting themselves, supplying the costs of the war from their own resources, painfully making good the ensuing devastation, and, as the crowning evil, having to take upon themselves a burden of debt which will embitter peace itself and which can never be paid off on account of the constant threat of new wars. But under a constitution in which the subject is not a citizen, and which is therefore not republican, it is the simplest thing in the world to go to war. For the head of state is not a fellow citizen, but the owner of the state, and a war will not force him to make the slightest sacrifice so far as his banquets, hunts, pleasure palaces and court festivals are concerned. He can thus decide on war, without any significant reason, as a kind of amusement, and unconcernedly leave it to the diplomatic corps (who are always ready for such purposes) to justify the war for the sake of propriety. Kant also called for republics to make commitments to peace and universal hospitality. The former idea entailed a commitment to peaceful relations and collective self-defense, rather like NATO’s. The latter meant treating all international visitors without hostility, offering asylum to people whose lives were at risk, and allowing visitors to share their ideas and propose commercial exchanges. This combination, Kant said, would build security, create mutual respect, and generate economic ties that lead to tranquility. And thus, republic by emerging republic, the combination would create peace. Kant did not argue that his ideas would stop tension and conflict between republics and autocracies. In fact, he argued that representative republics might become suspicious of states not ruled by their citizens. But he did believe that liberal values such as human rights and respect for property would curb a country’s desire for glory, fear of conquest, and need to plunder—three forces that drive states to war. He therefore thought that liberal republics would be respectful and restrained when addressing one another, even as they remained suspicious and fearful of nonrepublics. Views similar to Kant’s on liberty, republics, commerce, and peace spread throughout nineteenth-century Europe and beyond. French Foreign Minister Francois Guizot, a conservative liberal who served from 1840 to 1848, spoke enthusiastically about mutual freedom as a foundation for an entente with the United Kingdom. British Prime Minister William Gladstone, who led his country for much of the latter half of the 1800s, was a proponent. And when U.S. President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, it helped tilt liberal opinion in Europe toward the Union and away from the Confederacy. It was not, however, until World War I that the full democratic peace proposition became central to foreign policy. Wilson’s war message in April 1917—in which he declared that the battle between autocracies and democracies would establish “the principles of peace and justice”—was the clarion call. The clash between democracy and autocracy continued to shape policy as the decades went on. The behavior of the United States during the Cold War, for example, was often motivated by a belief that spreading liberal values would yield peace. As Secretary of State John Foster Dulles declared in his 1953 Senate confirmation hearing, “We shall never have a secure peace or a happy world so long as Soviet communism dominates one-third of all the peoples that there are.” President John F. Kennedy echoed that theme in his 1963 speech in West Berlin, declaring that “when all are free, then we can look forward to that day when this city will be joined as one and this country and this great Continent of Europe in a peaceful and hopeful globe.” But that same month, in a powerful address at American University, Kennedy warned of the complementary dangers of ideological confrontation with the Soviet Union. “Let us not be blind to our differences—but let us also direct attention to our common interests and the means by which those differences can be resolved,” he said. “If we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity.” As liberalism endured and spread, intellectuals began empirically testing whether democratic peace theory actually held true. In 1939, the American journalist Clarence Streit published a qualitative historical analysis to see whether liberal democracies tended to maintain peace among themselves. Discerning that the answer was yes, he proposed that the decade’s leading democracies form a federal union, which would help protect them from fascist powers. In 1972, Dean Babst, building on Quincy Wright’s magisterial A Study of War from 30 years earlier, carried out a statistical analysis that also suggested a correlation between democracy and peace. In 1976, Melvin Small and J. David Singer confirmed this finding but demonstrated that democratic peace was limited to relations between democracies. Republics, they showed, were still prone to fight autocratic regimes. In the decades since, international relations scholars have continued to study the democratic peace paradigm. They have shown that the relationship between democracy and peace is statistically significant even when controlling for proximity, wealth, and trade. They have determined that the theory holds even when states attempt to constrain each other. Academics have advanced a wide variety of explanations for why the concept is so sturdy. Some have argued that part of the reason lies in the disproportionate influence that international institutions have with liberal countries. Research shows that democracies tend to delegate a lot of policymaking to complex multilateral bodies, such as the European Union and the World Trade Organization, in part because their leaders can use these groups to entrench policies before cycling out of office. Other scholars have argued that liberal norms favoring peace, human rights, and respect for fellow democracies hold sway over policymakers and publics. And still others have pointed to the benefits of trade and economic interdependence associated with relations among capitalist democracies. States that frequently trade, after all, will lose wealth if they fight one another.

## Answers to: Strategic Stability DA

### 2AC Answers to: Strategic Stability

#### Go to the strategic stability disadvantage:

#### 1. Case turns the DA—winning miscalculation and arctic war are coming now takes out the uniqueness for the DA because it proves the status quo is unstable

#### 2. Strategic stability fails now—BUT the plan is key to deterrence

Cropsey and Halem 25, \*president of Yorktown Institute, \*\*senior fellow at Yorktown Institute (\*Seth Cropsey, \*\*Harry Halem, 5-17-2025, “Delivering missile defense requires leveraging American industry” 5-17-2025, https://thehill.com/opinion/5304714-trump-administration-defense-initiative/) wtk

Unlike during the Cold War, when the U.S. confronted only one major nuclear threat, by the mid-2030s it is likely to confront several concurrent nuclear threats of varying sophistication.

Strategic stability through mutual vulnerability is extremely difficult to generate with a greater number of nuclear powers. Moreover, advances in hypersonic weapons have increased an attacker’s ability to hit hardened silos more reliably, while the promise of space-based submarine detection has also increased, potentially jeopardizing the Cold War era’s assurance of a naval second strike.

The Golden Dome program is strategically crucial considering the investments America’s rivals have made in their nuclear arsenals and advances in military technology. Delivering the capability requires the rapid integration of new technologies with proven capabilities to deliver hardware at scale.

A full-scale national air and missile defense system requires technological advances to rapidly and accurately integrate data from multiple ground and space-based early-warning sensors, track incoming targets, discriminate between incoming missiles, warheads, and decoys, and cue interceptors to the right targets. Modern defense-focused technology companies can help in this respect, particularly if they can leverage foreign experiences, namely Israel’s design of its multi-tier interceptor system and Ukraine’s remarkably successful attempts at wartime sensor integration.

#### 3. No missile defense link—BMD deters conflict

Costlow and Soofer 23, \*Senior Analyst, National Institute for Public Policy, Ph.D. Candidate, George Mason, \*\*Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council’s Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security (\*Matthew Costlow, \*\*Robert Soofer, November 2023, “US Homeland Missile Defense: Room for Expanded Roles,” Atlantic Council, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Costlow-Soofer-Homeland-Missile-Defense.pdf)

Sparking International Conflict

The second major counterargument to improving and expanding US homeland missile defenses is that doing so might spark fears in China and Russia that the United States was gaining a significant military advantage. For China’s and Russia’s leaderships, this military advantage might be so severe and enduring that it would become unacceptable and require a correction or minimization through military force— be it a first strike or limited strikes. According to this line of reasoning, China and/or Russia would feel compelled to either prevent or disrupt US improvements or expansion of its homeland missile defenses because, if they became fully operational, they could threaten their continued existence. Often implicit in this criticism is the belief that expanded and improved US homeland missile defenses could enable a successful US first strike against Beijing or Moscow, or, at least, it may appear that way in each respective capital—thus requiring preemptive action.

Here too, there is little historical evidence to support this criticism. The United States, for instance, had a clear first-strike capability against the Soviet Union for over a decade early on in the Cold War, and yet it chose not to employ that capability. Indeed, China itself has existed for decades with its “minimum deterrence” nuclear force in the shadow of a nominal US first strike capability, and yet it did not believe it had to take drastic action. Additionally, as the acquisition history of major US weapon systems demonstrates, any significant change in policy and capability is likely to be measured in decades, making the need for sudden and drastic decisions (such as preemptive war with the United States) in Beijing and Moscow seem unfounded.

Finally, the notion that a nation like Russia or China would opt for a nuclear first strike against the United States during a crisis simply because it feared that going second would leave it at a disadvantage in the nuclear balance strains credulity. It would be irrational, in this scenario, for a nuclear power to strike another nuclear power that had survivable nuclear forces, which is the case for Russia, China, and the United States. As one scholar has asked, why would China intentionally start a devastating nuclear war against the United States because it feared losing a devastating nuclear war against the United States if it waited?41 Indeed, beginning a nuclear war for fear of eventually losing a future (potential) nuclear war would be to commit suicide for fear of death.

#### 4. No submarines link— even if subs can be detected, countries will be able to protect their second strike capabilities

Stefanick 25, Nonresident Senior Fellow, Strobe Talbott Center on Security, Strategy, and Technology, The Brookings Institution (Tom A. Stefanick, 2-10-2025, “Undersea nuclear forces: Survivability of Chinese, Russian, and US SSBNs” Journal of Strategic Studies Volume 48, 2025 - Issue 2, accessed via KU Online Libraries) wtk

There are two broad reasons that the United States, China, and Russia will be capable of preserving some level of survivable second-strike forces at sea over the coming two decades.

Search, detection, and tracking is difficult and can be disrupted

The first reason is that new physical sensors and data fusion algorithms will always be constrained by the problems associated with searching for, identifying, and tracking multiple SSBNs in the presence of background noise, deliberate jamming, sensors, and deceptive decoy signals produced by adversaries. There are fundamental limits on the ability of computer algorithms to extract useful information about submarines from noisy, cluttered, and deceptive data. There are many ways to inject uncertainty into each of the many stages of strategic ASW search, detection, identification, and continuous tracking over the course of a long crisis or conventional war.

Technology for undersea warfare is increasingly available for SSBN protection

The second reason that entire SSBN fleets will be difficult to destroy with high confidence stems from the fact that improvements in sensor hardware and sensor data processing applicable to tracking submarines at sea are likely to proceed in parallel between the US and its allies on the one hand, and China and Russia on the other. Advances in searching for, detecting and tracking undersea threats including submarines and other vehicles are easier to install, maintain, and use in oceans close to home territory than they are as part of a distant oceanic sensing architecture. Over the course of a long conflict, combinations of existing and new sensors, ocean vehicles, and signal processing methods are likely to be successfully used for defending one’s own SSBNs near home territories before they are widely and effectively deployed for the much more challenging and costly tasks of detecting, tracking, and destroying the SSBNs of a distant adversary. For the United States, this will provide the intelligence community with opportunities to collect data about the state of Russian and Chinese ASW technology.

#### 5. Russian and Chinese military development is independent, not in response to US capabilities

Costlow and Soofer 23, \*Senior Analyst, National Institute for Public Policy, Ph.D. Candidate, George Mason, \*\*Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council’s Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security (\*Matthew Costlow, \*\*Robert Soofer, November 2023, “US Homeland Missile Defense: Room for Expanded Roles,” Atlantic Council, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Costlow-Soofer-Homeland-Missile-Defense.pdf) [[Footnotes]]

Starting an “Arms Race”

Perhaps the most common response to proposals to improve and expand US homeland missile defenses is that such action would inevitably prompt an adversary reaction in the form of producing greater numbers of offensive missiles to overwhelm the defensive system. According to this line of thought, at best the action-reaction cycle will be a waste of resources for no net gain in security, and, at worst, the action-reaction cycle will continue unchecked and deepen the sense of security loss, leading to an arms race, worsened political relations, and potentially conflict.

While simple to understand as a concept, the offense-defense, action-reaction construct lacks a substantial historical foundation for its claims.34 For instance, the United States continued to improve and expand its homeland missile defenses after withdrawing from the ABM Treaty in 2002, and yet—contrary to the action-reaction hypothesis—Russia did not engage in an arms race with the United States to overcome those defenses.35 Indeed, during that time period, Russia engaged with the United States in agreeing to multiple nuclear arms control treaties while knowing that these treaties would not substantially limit US homeland missile defenses.36 As Ambassador Robert Joseph has observed, “while the conclusion of the ABM Treaty in 1972 led to the largest Soviet strategic nuclear build-up in history…the U.S. withdrawal from the treaty 30 years later was followed by an actual decrease in Russia’s strategic nuclear arsenal.”37 US actions on missile defenses simply are not as tightly linked to Russian reactions as the arms race hypothesis would suggest.

[[FN 34-7]]

34 For a scholarly treatment of arms racing, see Matthew Kroenig, The Logic of American Nuclear Strategy: Why Strategic Superiority Matters (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018) 143-158.

35 For additional commentary on these cases, see Matthew R. Costlow, “The Missile Defense ‘Arms Race’ Myth,” Strategic Studies Quarterly 15, no. 1 (Spring 2021), https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/SSQ/documents/Volume-15\_Issue-1/Costlow.pdf; and Matthew R. Costlow, Vulnerability Is No Virtue and Defense Is No Vice, National Institute for Public Policy, Occasional Paper 2, no. 9 (2022), https://nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/OP-Vol.-2-No.-9.pdf.

36 Robert Soofer, “Missile Defense Is Compatible with Arms Control,” War on the Rocks, April 29, 2021, https://warontherocks.com/2021/04/missile-defense-iscompatible-with-arms-control/.

37 For an excellent critique of the action-reaction theory, see David Trachtenberg, Michaela Dodge, and Keith Payne, “The Action-Reaction Arms Race Narrative vs. Historical Realities,” National Institute Press, 2021. The quote by Ambassador Joseph is found on page 66.

[[END FN 34-7]]

While Russia today portrays its new strategic nuclear programs as a reaction to US missile defense deployments, this was not the view of senior Russian officials a decade ago. In 2014, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated, “I don’t think we are on the verge of a new arms race. At least Russia definitely won’t be a part of it. In our case, it’s just that the time has come for us to modernize our nuclear and conventional arsenals.”38 Russian President Vladimir Putin also stated in 2001 that the US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty “does not pose a threat to the national security of the Russian Federation.”39 These and other statements indicate Russian officials play up purported threats to their nuclear forces from US homeland missile defenses when it suits their needs, but often dismiss such threats and the risk of an arms race.40

Critics may respond that Russia may not fit the action-reaction hypothesis, but China’s vast nuclear expansion beginning around 2021 appears to conform to the predicted reaction. Yet, even in this case, it is far from clear that the primary driver of China’s nuclear expansion is an (unrealized) expansion in US homeland missile defenses. Indeed, the Biden administration signaled its reticence to significantly expand US homeland missile defenses in its “2022 Missile Defense Review,” reiterating that it sought to deter Chinese strikes on the homeland with US nuclear forces alone. Moreover, gone is the concept of “layered” homeland missile defense from that review and official Biden administration talking points. Adding to the unlikelihood that US homeland missile defenses are the primary driver of China’s nuclear missile buildup is the fact that China’s nuclear forces began growing rapidly all at once— making a break from the slow and steady buildup of decades past. Indeed, the action-reaction hypothesis would predict that, as the United States made incremental improvements to its homeland missile defenses, China would react in a similar manner. Instead, China made a sharp break from past practice, indicating an internal change in policy rather than a reaction to unrealized US homeland missile defense advances.

### 1AR Extend: Strategic Stability Fails Now

#### Strategic stability fails—Ukraine, new tech, and Chinese weapons development

Bolt 25, Professor of Political Science at the United States Air Force Academy. (Paul J. Bolt, 1-2-2025, “Strategic stability in a new era” Front. Polit. Sci., 02 January 2025 Sec. International Studies Volume 6 – 2024 [released in January 2025], https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/political-science/articles/10.3389/fpos.2024.1504361/full) wtk

In conclusion, strategic stability is being undermined in the contemporary world. Russian threats to use nuclear weapons to end the war in Ukraine, China’s rapid buildup of nuclear weapons and three new silo fields without official explanation or comment, and fears in Moscow and Beijing that American conventional weapons might threaten their second-strike capabilities all undermine strategic stability. Technological advances in hypersonic weapons, AI, counter-space capabilities, and cyber add to the uncertainties as these weapons too threaten warning systems and second-strike forces. Because China’s nuclear plans are opaque, and the United States and Russia will no longer be bound to declare the status of their forces after New START expires, transparency is not likely to improve. North Korea’s continued development of warheads and missiles adds to the sense of threat.

#### Conventional forces eradiate strategic stability.

Sabbagh 24, Defense and security editor (Dan, 9-4-2024, “US arms advantage over Russia and China threatens stability, experts warn,” https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/sep/05/us-arms-advantage-over-russia-and-china-threatens-stability-experts-warn/)

The US and its allies are capable of threatening and destroying all of Russia and China’s nuclear launch sites with conventional weapons, creating what two experts describe as a potentially unstable geopolitical situation.

Prof Dan Plesch and Manuel Galileo, from Soas University of London, describe a “quiet revolution in military affairs” reflecting increased US military power relative to Moscow and Beijing, particularly in missile technology.

They argue that this could create the conditions for a fresh arms race as China and Russia try to respond – and even create a risk of miscalculation in a major crisis as either country could resort to launching nuclear weapons to get ahead of the US.

In a paper published on Thursday, Plesch and Galileo write that the US has “a plausible present day capacity with non-nuclear forces to pre-empt Russian and Chinese nuclear forces” – giving it a military edge over the two countries.

There are, the authors estimate, 150 Russian remote nuclear launch sites and 70 in China, approximately 2,500km (1,550 miles) from the nearest border, all of which could be reached by US air-launched JASSM and Tomahawk cruise missiles in a little more than two hours in an initial attack designed to prevent nuclear weapons being launched.

“The US and its allies can threaten even the most buried and mobile strategic forces of Russia and China,” the authors write, with an estimated 3,500 of the JASSM and 4,000 Tomahawks available to the US and its allies.

New developments also mean that JASSMs (joint air-to-surface standoff missiles) can be launched on pallets, using the Rapid Dragon system, from unmodified standard military transport aircraft, such as the C-17 Globemaster or C-130 Hercules.

“Our analysis predicts that only Russian mobile and Chinese deeply buried strategic systems may be considered at all survivable in the face of conventional missile attacks and are far more vulnerable than usually considered,” they add.

Plesch and Galileo argue there is insufficient public discussion about the strategic capabilities of the US if there were to be a major confrontation, arguing that debates about a conflict involving Russia and China tend to be focused on regional dynamics, such as the war in Ukraine or a possible invasion of Taiwan.

“US global conventional firepower is underestimated, which threatens both the realities and the perceptions of strategic stability,” they write, adding that any hybrid use of nuclear weapons alongside conventional missiles would complicate an already fraught picture.

### 1AR Extend: No Missile Defense Link

#### Missile defeat solves deterrence by giving decision-makers multiple options to de-escalate conflict

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

Bolstering deterrence against conventional air and cruise missile threats in the Arctic starts by improving U.S., ally, and partner domain awareness and information dominance capabilities. Adversaries will be disinclined to launch strikes on the U.S. homeland if they know the United States is anticipating the attack and creating options to dissuade it. Domain awareness and information dominance can underwrite a comprehensive “missile defeat” strategy, left and right of launch, that gives U.S. leaders more options to deter an attack on the U.S. homeland.

#### Zero chance of crisis instability---US retaliatory capabilities make the chance next to none.

Costlow 22, Senior Analyst, National Institute for Public Policy, Ph.D. Candidate, George Mason (Matthew Costlow, 2022, “Vulnerability is No Virtue and Defense is No Vice: The Strategic Benefits of Expanded U.S. Homeland Missile Defense,” NIPP, Occasional Paper, Vol. 2, No. 9, https://nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/OP-Vol.-2-No.-9.pdf)

Critics will likely respond, however, that even if U.S. leaders are unlikely to be tempted by the option of a first strike, adversaries will still believe the United States is preparing for a first strike – thus increasing their incentive to strike first before they are potentially disarmed. A major unstated assumption in this criticism, of course, is that adversaries will indeed believe they are vulnerable to a U.S. first strike and their threatened response will be ineffective for deterrence. Given the authoritarian nature of the regimes in Moscow and Beijing, there will be, at least, strong incentives for civilian and military officials to tell their respective rulers that their state is not vulnerable to a U.S. first strike – lest the dictator wonder why they have failed to secure the state against a first strike. Indeed, one pertinent historical example illustrates the competing incentives that adversary leaderships will face should the United States seriously pursue an expanded U.S. homeland missile defense system. Then-Soviet leader Yuri Andropov responded to U.S. President Reagan’s announcement of the Strategic Defense Initiative by stating that the United States, in pursuing its missile defenses, was actually pursuing a first strike capability against the Soviet Union; but simultaneously stated that “All attempts at achieving military superiority over the Soviet Union are futile. The Soviet Union will never allow them to succeed. It will never be caught defenseless by any threat.”65

This commentary, in fact, highlights what is likely to be the standard reaction by Russia, China, and North Korea to the prospect of significantly improved U.S. homeland missile defenses. Their leaders will likely employ apocalyptic-sounding language, meant to shock and dismay U.S. and allied audiences and erode support for these kinds of defenses. There are significant indications that this is Russia’s current strategy against the far more limited U.S. homeland missile defense system today.66 When Russia’s and China’s coercive strategies for achieving their revisionist aims depend upon missile-based threats against the U.S. homeland, it should be no surprise that they will protest loudly against any threat to their strategy and goals. Critics, at this point, will interject that Russian, Chinese, and North Korean leaders will still have reason to fear these developments even if they do not overtly pursue their revisionist aims – the United States could still attempt a first strike to eliminate a potential threat. In that case, under this assumption, adversary leaderships have strong incentives to strike first before they are potentially disarmed by the United States.

The obvious flaw in the logic of this criticism is that adversary leaderships have very strong incentives not to attempt a first strike against the United States – because doing so would turn the possibility of suffering existential damage into the near certainty of existential damage. The presence of U.S. active defenses does not degrade the deterrent effect of U.S. retaliatory capabilities. That is, when faced with the possibility of a United States with very credible damage limitation capabilities, an adversary certainly could decide to strike the United States with everything that it possessed, but what would this accomplish? U.S. forces capable of delivering a devastating response could make the adversary’s first strike the worst possible outcome for the adversary. It would, as Otto von Bismarck famously quipped, be a case of committing national suicide for fear of death. Historically, the Soviet Union continued to function under a U.S. nuclear monopoly from 1945-1949, and clear U.S. strategic first strike advantages from 1950 to the early 1960s, even during times of crisis. China, likewise, has continued to function while at a clear disadvantage relative to the United States for its entire existence as a nuclear power, since 1964. In short, Russia, China, and North Korea have decades of historical experience living under the theoretical possibility of a U.S. first strike without seeing a first strike of their own as a strategic necessity. U.S. defenses to deter and defeat coercive threats would not fundamentally change that circumstance for them.

#### The plan isn’t perceived by Russia as threatening

Simon and Huber 19, \*program coordinator and research assistant with the Project on Nuclear Issues in the International Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). \*\*research intern with the International Security Program at CSIS. (\*Maxwell, \*\*Alexandra, 12-20-2019, “Bad Idea? Aggressively Countering Russian Action in the Arctic” https://defense360.csis.org/bad-idea-aggressively-countering-russian-action-in-the-arctic/) wtk

The United States and its allies must find a way to preserve their influence in an increasingly important region without making military conflict more likely. For one, improving intelligence, reconnaissance, surveillance (ISR) and communications infrastructure is a pivotal, though less antagonistic, way to improve Arctic operational readiness. The United States and its allies could utilize unmanned aerial systems, high altitude balloons, and satellites in highly elliptical orbits (HEO), which spend extended periods over the Arctic, to close the positioning, navigation, and timing (PNT) gap and monitor Russian assets in the region. Perhaps more importantly, since there is currently no Arctic security forum that includes Russia, Arctic states should use NATO’s established dialogue channels with Moscow through the NATO-Russia Council, as Dr. Rebecca Pincus has advocated. While NATO’s military function would be counterproductive, its political-organizational function could help to lower the likelihood of miscommunication. This forum would also open the possibility for greater collaboration on rules to govern the region as it becomes more accessible to other actors.

### 1AR Extend: No Submarines Link

#### It’s easier and cheaper to defend subs than it is to attack them

Stefanick 25, Nonresident Senior Fellow, Strobe Talbott Center on Security, Strategy, and Technology, The Brookings Institution (Tom A. Stefanick, 2-10-2025, “Undersea nuclear forces: Survivability of Chinese, Russian, and US SSBNs” Journal of Strategic Studies Volume 48, 2025 - Issue 2, accessed via KU Online Libraries) wtk

Conclusions

This chapter has explained the ASW processes of search, detection, and tracking and shown how existing and emerging technology will tend to favor the pro-SSBN side. I have emphasized the probabilistic nature of ASW search and the complexity of multi-target tracking in the presence of noise and false alarms, since these are some of the essential sources of uncertainty in ASW. Clever operations, logistical advantages, and technology will enable the pro-SSBN side to increase uncertainty about their SSBN fleet more quickly and cost-effectively than the anti-SSBN side can sweep it away. The following sections summarize my conclusions about the prospects for SSBN security for the United States, China, and Russia.

US SSBN Security

The US will continue to leverage its geographic and oceanographic advantages to keep the extraordinarily stealthy SSBNs of the Ohio and Columbia classes secure in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. This does not mean that adversary attack submarines can be ignored as a threat to US SSBNs as they leave port to begin patrols, however. Relatively quiet Russian submarines now patrol in the Atlantic and the Pacific, and while these submarines would be highly unlikely to detect and track US SSBNs, the US maintains measures to protect them as they transit to the open ocean.Footnote122 It is always possible that over the next 20 years, the US Navy could choose to adopt some of these pro-SSBN measures to disrupt the potential threats to SSBNs near its ports.

Space-based architectures for surveillance of US SSBNs over millions of square kilometers would require a large number of mainly active sensors revisiting critical ocean areas on a regular basis. It is critical for the US to continue to investigate the physics of the ocean and test new sensor concepts in order to avoid missing some new combination of physical phenomenology, sensor combinations, data fusion, and tracking architectures that might yield some ability to track US SSBNs. However, the global sensing and communication architectures required to establish a reliable long-term surveillance threat against US SSBNs would be visible and could be countered using all manner of deception, jamming, and decoys well in advance. With strong support for research in oceanography, sensors, and signal processing, as well as SSBNs and their crews, US SSBNs at sea are essentially invulnerable now and will likely remain so for the next 20 years and beyond.

China’s SSBN Security

It appears that China is developing systems capable of increasing the probability of finding SSNs that enter their bastion areas. In the event of an intense crisis or conflict, Chinese SSBNs could go to sea and the PLA Navy could put in place defensive measures against US SSNs such as decoys, mines, and surveillance systems in these bastion areas. If SSBNs are not continuously trailed over the course of their patrols or some other means to track them is not available, the time required to search for them is likely to stretch into many months and be highly uncertain. As this search time increases, the opportunities for pro-SSBN countermeasures grows.

In a crisis scenario, there would be an increased demand for US SSNs from the Pacific Fleet to support many tasks unrelated to strategic ASW. The most prominent example is that SSNs would be key elements in any military capability to deny the Chinese Navy from operating in a scenario involving a threat to Taiwan. In addition, it is likely that US SSNs would be used in such a crisis to monitor key locations from the Bering Strait to Russia’s Kamchatka Peninsula, to the coasts of North Korea. US SSNs will also be called on to protect US aircraft carriers and critical logistics ships from attacks by Chinese submarines and ships in the Philippine Sea, to Hawaii, and to the continental US.

Although there is no evidence in China’s military policy writings that the PLA sees a benefit to placing its SSBNs at risk in order to draw in US attack submarines,Footnote123 the fact remains that US attack submarines allocated to the strategic ASW mission of trailing Chinese SSBNs will not be available for these other urgent missions. The survivability of Chinese SSBNs will be somewhat conditional on decisions by the US to deploy SSNs in direct support of conventional warfighting objectives.

Future developments in uncrewed systems such as UUVs or USVs for anti-SSBN operations in bastions do not appear to have an overwhelming advantage against countermeasures that could be developed against them. Uncrewed air and surface vehicles would likely face direct attacks as long as China was able to use surveillance radars over their bastions. Uncrewed undersea vehicles would need to transit relatively frequently in and out of bastion areas, and would be subject to all the delousing measures and deception measures that would be used against SSNs. Uncrewed systems are not likely to pose a large threat to Chinese SSBNs operating in bastions.

Russia’s SSBN Security

Most of the technical arguments for China’s SSBN survivability apply also to those of Russia so I will not repeat them here. It is worth addressing the rapidly changing geopolitical environment in Russia’s Arctic bastion areas. The most recent intelligence threat assessments from both the United States and Norway indicate that because the war in Ukraine has weakened Russia’s conventional capability, it’s nuclear capabilities have taken on greater importance.Footnote124 In this context, the Russian SSBNs in the Northern Fleet are an critical nuclear capability, leading to increased importance on the defense of the northern bastion and the Barents Sea in addition to carrying out longer SSBN patrols in the Barents Sea.Footnote125 Russia’s SSBNs and some attack submarines are already relatively difficult to track covertly using US SSNs, and Russia appears to be investing in the kinds of undersea systems to disrupt NATO surveillance, to enhance its own undersea surveillance, and to provide decoys for SSBNs.

With the accession of Finland into NATO, the most sensitive bases supporting SSBNs in the Russian Barents Sea and the White Sea are now within 200 kilometers of NATO territory. While Norway has typically constrained the use of its territory and airspace for intelligence gathering against Russian installations on the Kola Peninsula near Norway, Finland now does allow the US to fly intelligence-gathering flights in Finnish territory to collect data from Russia.Footnote126 Thus, Russia is likely to continue to focus efforts on securing its Northern Fleet region in order to protect the SSBNs operating there.

In the Pacific, Russia’s excessively broad interpretation of the United Nations decision regarding its continental shelf in the Sea of Okhotsk, as well as the increasing militarization of the southern Kuril Islands have resulted in a more militarized perimeter around that bastion.Footnote127 With the greatly expanded presence of NATO near Russia’s Barents Sea bastion, the protection of the Sea of Okhotsk for Russian SSBNs is likely to continue to remain an important part of Russia’s strategic nuclear basing. As in the case of China, the degree to which the US can threaten Russian SSBNs depends to a large extent on the level of commitment that the US makes early in a crisis to attempting to trail Russian SSBNs. As the pro-SSBN technologies improve and become more cost-effective, it is less likely that a moderate commitment of US SSNs to the anti-SSBN mission over the course of an extended conflict would have a decisive impact on eliminating Russia’s SSBN fleet.

### 1AR Extend: Russia/China Development Independent

#### Modernization is wrong---other factors are determinative and missile defense won’t cause fast breakouts.

Costlow 22, Senior Analyst, National Institute for Public Policy, Ph.D. Candidate, George Mason (Matthew Costlow, 2022, “Vulnerability is No Virtue and Defense is No Vice: The Strategic Benefits of Expanded U.S. Homeland Missile Defense,” NIPP, Occasional Paper, Vol. 2, No. 9, https://nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/OP-Vol.-2-No.-9.pdf)

Misunderstanding the Nature of Arms Competitions. The assertion that building improved U.S. homeland missile defenses will likely cause an arms race is based on assumptions, much like the criterion on cost effectiveness, that adversaries will react in the particular manner, and for the reasons, that critics posit. But, as demonstrated above, history demonstrates that opponents have responded very differently from what critics have asserted as being virtually inevitable. In fact, there is nothing either automatic or predictable about what weapons a state develops, why, and when. This dynamic indicates that real world defense acquisition is driven by far more factors than simply reacting to what the United States is doing. Russia, China, and North Korea all have their own domestically-driven considerations (bureaucratic power struggles, funding battles, budget limits, technical capability), ideological considerations (how particular weapons represent the state’s status on the world stage, contribution to grand strategy, a weapon’s potential propaganda value), and operational considerations (geographic limitations, contribution to short-term military goals, synchronization with other defense programs, infrastructure delays). The fact that Russia and China developed ICBM-centric nuclear arsenals while the United States developed an SLBM-centric nuclear arsenal, and the long-standing difference in overall force size levels, is indication enough that there is no mechanistic relationship between U.S. defense priorities and those of other states.

It is especially important to note in this regard that even if Russia or China directly increase their missile arsenals in response to an expanded and improved U.S. homeland missile defense system, that in and of itself would not negate the value of the system. Since the system would be designed to deter and defeat coercive attacks against the U.S. homeland, larger Russian or Chinese arsenals per se would not necessarily demand a further increase the capabilities of the U.S. missile defense system in response. While larger Russian and Chinese arsenals may place greater deterrence requirements on U.S. nuclear forces above the level of coercive attacks on the homeland, the original purpose of the expanded and improved U.S. homeland missile defense system would still stand and be of value. If adversary strategic nuclear arsenals grow in response to expanded U.S. homeland missile defenses, far from a certainty, that would only increase the importance of raising the threshold for nuclear war by deterrence threats of punishment and defense-based deterrence threats of denial.

The notion that expanded U.S. missile defenses will likely cause an arms race is further discredited when one considers how un-race-like the U.S. defense acquisition process is – with major defense program timelines from design to deployment often measured not in single years, but in decades. An expanded and improved U.S. homeland missile defense system will not happen overnight and given the open nature of U.S. political debate and shifting political power between two major parties, adversaries will likely be able to follow U.S. missile defense developments in near real time as timeline and capability projections shift. In short, this arms dynamic is hardly worthy of the name “race,” which should temper concerns about arms race or crisis instability – there is no need for other states to act rashly when the system in question may be more than a decade, or more, away from a reality.

In conclusion, before submitting to the seemingly appealing logic of “action-reaction” dynamics at play with U.S. missile defenses, U.S. policymakers should consider the range of options available to adversaries beyond “racing,” the historical record that contradicts arms racing theory, and the inherently complicated and multi-factored defense acquisition process that plays out differently in each country according to their unique characteristics. In short, arms racing in response to an expanding U.S. homeland missile defense system is neither guaranteed nor reflective of the value of the system. Additionally, critics of U.S. homeland missile defense, as Herman Kahn pointed out over 50 years ago, “…really cannot have it both ways. They point out, presumably correctly, that on paper it is easy to counter and largely nullify the [thin missile defense] system (subject of course, to the uncertainties I have already discussed). They then argue that the Soviets will be so concerned… that they will react in a serious and dramatic way, accelerating the arms race.”89 Whether or not Russia, China, North Korea, or some other power will be concerned at the prospect of an improved and expanded U.S. homeland missile defense system, the United States cannot allow an adversary’s potential concerns to have veto power over whether it should pursue a system that, in its net effect, will contribute greatly to its national interests around the world.

#### Russian modernization arguments are wrong.

Soofer 21, Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council’s Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security (Robert Soofer, April 29, 2021, “MISSILE DEFENSE IS COMPATIBLE WITH ARMS CONTROL,” War on the Rocks, https://warontherocks.com/2021/04/missile-defense-is-compatible-with-arms-control/)

Why Russia Really Opposes U. S. Missile Defense

According to official statements, Russia opposes U.S. missile defenses because they could someday provide the United States a strategic advantage during a nuclear exchange. While elements of Russia’s position are no doubt genuine and rooted in its confidence in America’s technological prowess, there are likely other, more compelling reasons for Russia to oppose U.S. missile defense, ones having more to do with geopolitics than nuclear strategy. In short, Moscow appreciates that it can use this issue as leverage with the United States while creating tension among its allies.

Obama understood this. In commenting about Russia’s opposition to the deployment of U.S. missile defense systems in Europe, he observes in his recent book that Putin “correctly understood that the main reason Poland and the Czech Republic were eager to host our system was that it would guarantee increased U.S. military capabilities on their soil, providing an additional hedge against Russian intimidation.” Russia’s opposition to U.S. missile defense in Europe was not because it feared that 10 ground-based interceptors could jeopardize Russia’s nuclear retaliatory capability, but rather such cooperation was an affront to Russia’s former influence in Eastern Europe. Russia also viewed this as an opportunity to sow dissension among the allies.

The modernization and expansion of Russian nuclear forces has not been driven by U.S. missile defense deployments. Since pulling out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the U.S. has deployed a modest 44 ground-based interceptors (40 in Alaska and four in California) for the protection of the nation against North Korean intercontinental ballistic missiles. That number is projected to rise to 64 should the Biden administration follow through with plans initiated by the Trump administration.  Russian leaders surely realize Russia deploys more homeland defense interceptors than the United States, and that their S-400 and S-500 air defense systems are comparable to U.S. theater missile defense systems. Finally, Putin himself has noted that by 2021, 90 percent of Russia’s nuclear forces will be modernized and, in his words, “capable of confidently overcoming existing and even projected missile defense systems.”

## Answers to: Diplomacy Counterplan

### 2AC Answers to: Diplomacy Counterplan

#### Go to the diplomacy counterplan:

#### 1. Permutation: do both—combining domain awareness with diplomacy would help assure Russia and China that our capabilities are purely defensive, but still provide us with the ability to stop accidental launches

#### 2. Can’t solve the miscalculation advantage:

#### a. Dialogue with China fails—they just give the illusion of progress

Scobell 24, senior political scientist at the RAND Corporation (Andrew Scobell, Ph.D., 6-12-2024, “Three Troubling Takeaways on U.S.-China Relations from the Shangri La Dialogue” https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/06/three-troubling-takeaways-us-china-relations-shangri-la-dialogue) wtk

The recently concluded 2024 Shangri La Dialogue in Singapore provided another useful opportunity for senior U.S. and Chinese national security officials to engage in face-to-face bilateral discussions and interact with officials and experts from other states. While these engagements have value in theory, they highlight three persistent problems in the practice of U.S.-China relations. First, the United States and China tend to talk past each other. Second, the United States and China have dissimilar systems, which makes identifying and engaging with appropriate counterpart officials very difficult. Third, the United States and China possess fundamentally different understandings about the role of third countries in managing confrontation and mitigating conflict.

The Dismal Art of Talking Past Each Other

While U.S.-China dialogues on security matters are almost always better than the alternative, discussions as performative art can have little if any value. At best, they can permit the two sides to clarify each other’s policies and stances. The problem is that dialogues can produce holding patterns while giving the illusion of progress or fuel false expectations. More worrisome is the potential for exacerbating existing mutual suspicions and distrust if one side concludes that the other is negotiating in bad faith. Given the current abysmal state of U.S.-China relations, one side drawing conclusions about what is driving these bad faith actions could engender an even more toxic environment.

While this year’s Shangri La Dialogue saw U.S. and Chinese defense chiefs meeting in-person for the first time since 2022, Austin and Dong’s meeting held a familiar pattern of high-level officials talking past each other. Chinese Minister of National Defense Dong Jun in a speech warned that “anyone who dares to separate Taiwan from China will only end up in self-destruction” and blamed an array of actors for fomenting instability and elevating the threat of conflict in the Taiwan Strait and elsewhere in China’s extended neighborhood. China itself remains a blameless victim — at least in its own telling. Dong reiterated long-standing Beijing talking points about China “never provoking incidents or easily resorting to the use of force” to resolve its “border and maritime disputes.”

U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin meanwhile did not stray far from the usual U.S. talking points about “respect for sovereignty and international law” as well as “freedom of the seas and skies.” Austin spoke of “openness, transparency, and accountability.” He reiterated U.S. preferences for “the peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue” over resolution via “coercion or conflict.”

The Perennial Problem of Appropriate Counterpart National Security Officials

Austin and Dong were the highest-level U.S. and Chinese officials in Singapore. On the surface these two leaders appear to be appropriate counterparts: each hold a similar title that suggests that he is the most senior official from their respective military establishments. Yet nothing could be further from the truth.

While in the United States, the secretary of defense is the most senior civilian official in the Pentagon, in China the minister of defense is a largely ceremonial position always occupied by uniformed general officer — Dong is an admiral in the People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) Navy. China’s minister of defense might best be characterized as the PLA’s “chief foreign liaison officer.” The incumbent typically derives his power and authority from concurrently occupying a seat on the Central Military Commission. However, Dong is an unusual defense minister in that he is not a member of the CMC. He was selected in a somewhat haphazard fashion in late 2023 to fill the vacancy created by the mid-2023 purge of the last minister (who did occupy a seat on the CMC).

The dialogue between Secretary Austin and Minister Dong was a serious mismatch. The two are clearly nowhere close to being counterpart defense officials. While the former is President Joe Biden’s most senior military advisor located at the apex of the Pentagon chain-of-command, the latter is not even comparable to a U.S. service chief. His exclusion from the CMC signals that Dong is certainly not roughly equivalent to a member of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (the former organ has been compared to the latter). Dong almost certainly does not have the ear or confidence of China’s commander-in-chief and chair of the CMC, Xi Jinping, in the same way that Austin has close and routine contact to Biden.

#### b. Russian dialogue fails because of concentration of military power

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The psychology and emotions of decision-makers matter in a crisis because they introduce an element of individual difference that may not be easily captured by looking at averages. Some leaders see risk where others see opportunity, and some are more willing to risk catastrophic consequences. Moreover, individuals differ enormously in their ability to accurately recognize emotions in others and, thus, accurately interpret who might fight and who might back down. They also vary even more in their ability to manage and regulate their own emotions in the context of loss, threat, or frustration. Leaders such as Putin may be rare, but those who emerge prove enormously consequential. Particularly when the authority to launch nuclear weapons rests in the hands of a single leader (as in the United States) or a very small group of leaders (as in Russia), individual differences in impulsivity, narcissism, or risk-taking can exert a decisive difference in responses to threat. Both sides in a crisis may fail to understand the true meanings of the signals they receive and not comprehend the ways that the signals they send may be misperceived by the other side. Uncertainty can compound as each side interprets the same information in different ways. Fear and anger can induce leaders to take risks they might not have if they had more time to consider their options, were not acting under the pressures of crisis or threat, or did not have to be concerned about domestic and international reactions. Incorporating a more psychological perspective into analyses of nuclear brinkmanship suggests that revisions to existing policies and approaches to nuclear risk reduction may be in order. For instance, traditional arms control treaties and other risk reduction mechanisms are undoubtedly valuable when they make material changes to nuclear warheads and delivery vehicles that can reinforce deterrence or reduce the tyranny of haste in a nuclear crisis. But disrupting irrational processes requires more than just buying time—it matters what decision-makers do with that time. The most valuable use of that time would involve checking their emotions and biases. This can be improved, most simply, by requiring more than one person to agree before authorizing the use of nuclear weapons. Dedicated procedures and protocols for decision-making based on those successfully implemented in other fields, such as medicine, could also be developed and implemented to help reduce common biases. Launch officers must follow checklists, but political leaders do not. We suggest that should change. The past few years should make clear to all observers the outsized role of individuals in the conduct of foreign policy. We all share common intuitions about the circumstances that tend to make even our friends react with fury, if not violence: when they are frustrated, when they are backed into a corner and do not see any way out, when they are tired or hungry or scared, when they are lonely and feeling isolated. Similarly imperfect human decision-making remains a crucial part of nuclear brinkmanship. Yet, if we know what circumstances are most likely to generate alarm, we can begin to work toward ways to increase the likelihood that the choices leaders make in such situations create less chance and more control.

#### 3. Can’t solve the competition advantage—diplomacy and dialogue between the US and China fails because of structural issues

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China and the United States are trapped in a cycle of misperception that threatens to escalate into conflict. The problem is structural, not something better communication can fix.

Recent events demonstrate this dynamic perfectly. China’s deployment this month of both its aircraft carriers in major regional exercises offers a textbook case of identical military activities generating completely opposite interpretations. China’s official media consistently frames these exercises as “routine training” and “defensive in nature”. Yet US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth’s warning that the United States is prepared to “fight and win” against China demonstrates how the Trump administration’s deterrent messaging often gets misinterpreted by Beijing as preparation for pre-emptive action, and vice versa.

This isn’t deliberate misrepresentation – both sides genuinely believe in their interpretation. It instead reflects fundamentally different worldviews about legitimate security behaviour and international order.

The tempting solution is a call for better communication. Surely if both sides explained their intentions more clearly, misunderstanding would diminish? Unfortunately, the evidence suggests otherwise.

Consider US Freedom of Navigation Operations, or FONOPs. China consistently interprets these as “provocative military activities” as evidence of “gunboat diplomacy”. The US frames identical operations as “routine naval activities” upholding international law. But regional actors add another layer of complexity. Members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations hold divergent views, even among themselves. The Philippines actively confronts Chinese activities, Vietnam quietly builds island outposts while managing tensions, and Malaysia maintains that disputes won’t hamper ASEAN’s blue economy goals despite ongoing maritime confrontations.

Meanwhile, Australia faces direct Chinese military pressure, shown by a Chinese naval group circumnavigating the country and conducting live-fire exercises in the Tasman Sea, while China accuses Australia of “deliberate provocation” for routine surveillance flights in the South China Sea. Japan responds by deepening defence cooperation with Philippines through military aid and reciprocal access agreements, creating new alliance networks that complicate traditional bilateral dynamics.

Several factors explain why communication cannot resolve these misperceptions. First, there’s a crucial distinction between technical misunderstandings and structural disagreements. Technical problems can be clarified through dialogue – different time zones for military exercises, equipment specifications, operational procedures. But fundamental disagreements about international order persist despite diplomatic engagement.

Second, nuclear dimensions amplify misperception risks. Carrier operations near nuclear-capable missile bases create dual-use ambiguity, where conventional exercises appear as potential nuclear strike preparation. Modern warfare’s compressed timelines leave no opportunity for clarification during crises, creating a speed-versus-understanding trade-off that favours suspicion.

Finally, political communication styles matter. The Trump administration’s characteristically direct rhetoric – intended as deterrence – frequently gets interpreted by Chinese analysts as aggressive rather than defensive posturing. Research shows that seven years of FONOPs have seen China move “from measured rejection of US messages to more explicit hostility.”

### 1AR Extend: Dialogue with China Fails

#### China distrusts hotlines---they won’t pick up.

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However, the United States and PRC hold different assumptions and goals about hotlines.

The United States views them as a tool to deconflict and de-escalate and communicate between forces during a crisis. The PLA harbors deep suspicion about crisis communications with the United States, and perceives US proposals for new channels as an excuse to engage in provocative military activities near PRC claimed waters and territory.

Beijing regards crisis communications as subservient to broader political goals of “crisis management,” which encompass exploiting crises to its advantage and manipulating risk calculations. Hotlines are not meant to resolve the crisis but to empower higher level organs within the PRC to signal resolve, assign blame, and stall until Beijing stakes out a position of maximum pressure and leverage over the United States during negotiations.

This incompatibility has not stopped senior US defense officials from holding out hope that hotlines and personal relationships with PLA leaders might ease tensions. In his recent book, for instance, former US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper says he could rapidly contact his “counterpart,” Minister of National Defense General Wei Fenghe, to clear up misunderstandings.

Such hopes could be misplaced. Not only could hotlines fail to solve crises, but they might also not perform as intended. As Kurt Campbell, the Biden administration’s National Security council Coordinator for the Indo-Pacific, has said: hotlines tend to “ring endlessly in empty rooms.”

#### Dialogue fails and takes forever

Scobell 24, senior political scientist at the RAND Corporation (Andrew Scobell, Ph.D., 6-12-2024, “Three Troubling Takeaways on U.S.-China Relations from the Shangri La Dialogue” https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/06/three-troubling-takeaways-us-china-relations-shangri-la-dialogue) wtk

Implications Amid Strained Relations

The implications of these troublesome takeaways are significant. First, the number and frequency of ongoing security dialogues — whether bilateral or multilateral, whether track 1, track 2, or track 1.5 — should not be used as a reliable barometer of U.S.-China relations. Moreover, one should be wary of analyzing the substance and tenor of these dialogues to discern positive trends in bilateral relations. Dialogues can proceed for many years without tangible outcomes or achievements. Talking about tough issues is not unimportant but one should not equate one or both sides blowing off steam with the building of meaningful trust or the formulation and implementation of concrete policy solutions.

### 1AR Extend: Dialogue with Russia Fails

#### US-Russia hotlines fail because

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With U.S-Chinese and U.S.-Russian relations becoming increasingly conflictual, existing cooperative security arrangements, such as hotlines and arms control agreements, are likely to become less effective, while new agreements are unlikely to be possible to negotiate. In this environment, avoiding a nuclear apocalypse will depend on increasing unilateral approaches—prudence by key decisionmakers in Beijing, Moscow, and Washington in managing escalation risks in peacetime, crises, and perhaps even conventional wars. Over the last year, I have come to believe that forecasting has the potential to be genuinely useful to them. For it to live up to this potential, however, not only will decisionmakers and their advisors need to become more open to adopting new tools, but the forecasting community will have to adapt its approach to meet the realities of the policy-making process.

### 1AR Extend: Can’t Solve Competition

#### Our East Asian Allies will feel betrayed by the counterplan because it injects uncertainty into alliances

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On the other hand, an engagement strategy to encourage and maintain dialogue with the PRC while attempting to avoid direct confrontation with China has increased uncertainty regarding US commitment to its Allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region. US failure to preempt or adequately respond to Chinese aggressive or irresponsible behavior has hindered US influence and capability in the Pacific region and worldwide. This strategy continues to allow China to exert influence over US foreign policy, weaken US credibility in the region, and freely propagate its brand of Communism globally, undermining US liberal hegemony without incurring costs. This is demonstrated by continued Chinese military aggression in the South China Sea wherein smaller countries, at times, acquiesce to Chinese demands or fail to denounce Chinese actions due to their uncertainty regarding US commitment in the region. This sows doubt across the international community regarding America’s credibility and strength to act freely and secure its interests in the region with states questioning continued alignment to the US, threatening US access and influence in the Indo-Pacific theater.